

Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (<https://www.ncronline.org>)

June 12, 2010 at 8:51pm

Peter C. Phan receives John Courtney Murray award

by Thomas C. Fox



Peter C. Phan

Cleveland

Georgetown professor of theology, Peter C. Phan, is the recipient of the 2010 Catholic Theology Society of America's John Courtney Murray Award, which is the highest honor bestowed by the society on a theologian. It is named after John Courtney Murray, the great American theologian known for his work on religious liberty.

The award was announced at a CTSA banquet here June 12.

He was the first person of non-European descent to serve as president of the CTSA.

Phan, a native of Vietnam, emigrated as a refugee to the U.S.A. in 1975. He was profiled in *NCR* in February, 2000.

(More 2010 CTSA convention coverage can be found at NCR Today.)

He obtained three doctorates, the Doctor of Sacred Theology from the *Universitas Pontificia Salesiana*,

Rome, and the Doctor Philosophy and the Doctor of Divinity from the University of London. He has also been awarded an honorary Doctor of Theology from Chicago Theological Union.

He began his teaching career in philosophy at the age of eighteen at Don Bosco College, Hong Kong. In the United States, he has taught at the University of Dallas, Texas; at the Catholic University of America, Washington, DC, where he held the Warren-Blanding Chair of Religion and Culture; at Union Theological Seminary, N.Y.; at Elms College, Chicopee, MA; at St. Norbert College, De Pere, WI, and at Georgetown University, Washington, DC, where he is currently holding the Ignacio Ellacuría Chair of Catholic Social Thought.

He is also on the faculty of the East Asian Pastoral Institute, Manila and Liverpool Hope University, England.

His publications range wide in theology. They deal with the theology of icon in Orthodox theology (Culture and Eschatology: The Iconographical Vision of Paul Evdokimov); patristic theology (Social Thought; Grace and the Human Condition); eschatology (Eternity in Time: A Study of Rahner's Eschatology; Death and Eternal Life); the history of mission in Asia (Mission and Catechesis: Alexandre de Rhodes and Inculturation in Seventeenth-Century Vietnam) and liberation, inculturation, and interreligious dialogue (Christianity with an Asian Face; In Our Own Tongues; Being Religious Interreligiously). In addition, he has edited some 20 volumes (e.g., Christianity and the Wider Ecumenism; Church and Theology; Journeys at the Margins; The Asian Synod; The Gift of the Church; Directory on Popular Piety and Liturgy). His many writings have been translated into Italian, German, French, Spanish, Polish, Chinese, Japanese, and Vietnamese. He is general editor of a multi-volume series entitled Theology in Global Perspective for Orbis Books and a multi-volume series entitled Ethnic American Pastoral Spirituality for Paulist Press.

In December, 2007, the Committee on Doctrine of the U.S. bishops' conference faulted Phan for creating "considerable confusion" about Catholic teaching regarding Christ, the church and other religions, as it referred to a book he had written in 2004, "Being Religious Interreligiously."

The committee accused Phan of "significant ambiguity," not actual doctrinal error. He was not subjected to any disciplinary action.

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He holds the Ellacuría Chair of Catholic Social Thought at Georgetown University in Washington. He is widely regarded as a bridge between Catholic theological currents in Asia and in the West.

The statement caps a two-year review by the doctrinal committee, which is led by Bishop William Lori of Bridgeport, Conn. The statement charges that Phan's book, published by Orbis, "does not express adequately and accurately the church's teaching," and asserts "a distortion in its methodology as a work of Christian theology."

Previous John Courtney Murray award recipients

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