

NEWS • Saint Mary's University of Minnesota

Dec. 17, 2019

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Saint Mary's presents Signum Fidei Awards to De La Salle Christian Brother Districts

WINONA, Minn. — On Dec. 7, Saint Mary's University presented Signum Fidei Awards to two districts of De La Salle Christian Brothers, in coordination with and in honor of Blessed Brother James Miller's beatification ceremony that day in Guatemala.

Signum Fidei Awards were given to De La Salle Christian Brothers Michael Ferhenbach, FSC, Visitor, Midwest District, and Alberto Mairena Floripe, FSC, Visitor, Central America-Panama District, in recognition of Brother James' ministry in both the Midwest and Central American provinces.

Brother James Miller, who earned his graduate and undergraduate degrees from Saint Mary's in 1966 and 1974, was only 37 when he was shot and killed as he was mending a wall outside a school where he worked in Huehuetenango, Guatemala, in 1982. It is suspected that Brother James was killed because he and the other De La Salle Christian Brothers fought to keep their young students from being forced into the military. He is the only Christian Brother from the U.S. to have been beatified.

The Signum Fidei Award was established by the university as a way to honor the life and work of Brother James. It is bestowed on an individual, group, or organization in recognition of extraordinary service to the vulnerable and marginalized members of society. It also recognizes and honors work that promotes human solidarity. Its name, signum fidei (or "sign of faith"), is taken from the great seal of our Lasallian family, the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

The Signum Fidei Award is the university's most prestigious award and has been presented only two previous times. It was first awarded in September 2014 to the Bishop (now Cardinal) of Huehuetenango (the place of Brother James Miller's death), Álvaro Leonel Ramazzini Imeri. The second was to Pope Francis, given at St. Peter's Square in Vatican City in April 2015.

The award itself is a miniature bronze bust of Brother James atop a piece of limestone that was quarried in Winona. The bust is a replica, prepared by Minnesota artist Alec M. Smith, of the life-sized memorial to Brother James that was installed at the entrance of Residencia Santiago Miller, a student residence hall on the Winona Campus, and was dedicated during the university's centennial celebration in 2013.

The fact that the same casting of the life-size bust will now have a second permanent home at the center where Brother James gave his life connects and unites Saint Mary's and Casa Indígena Santiago Miller in a special way.

To learn more about Brother James, go to smumn.edu/brotherjames.

About Saint Mary's University of Minnesota

Saint Mary's University of Minnesota awakens, nurtures, and empowers learners to ethical lives of service and leadership. At Saint Mary's, students find in every classroom – whether in person or online – a relationship-driven, person-centered education. Through intense inquiry, students discover the truths in the world and the character within. Founded in 1912 and accredited by the Higher Learning Commission, Saint Mary's University of Minnesota enrolls 5,600 students at its residential undergraduate college in Winona and its Schools of Graduate and Professional Programs, based in Minneapolis but extending worldwide. Saint Mary's offers respected and affordable programs in a variety of areas leading to bachelor's, bachelor's completion, master's, certificate, specialist, and doctoral degrees. Learn more at smumn.edu.