

## **Catholic Theological Union Receives 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gift from Muslim Philanthropists to Enhance Islamic Studies and Christian-Muslim Relations Program**

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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CHICAGO, IL – Catholic Theological Union (CTU) is delighted to announce a three-year, \$652,000 commitment from a family of Muslim philanthropists to CTU’s Catholic-Muslim Studies Program (CMSP). The purpose of the gift is to advance CTU’s signature interreligious dialogue efforts by expanding programming in Christian-Muslim understanding, mutual esteem, and cooperation for justice. “We know CTU can be a model of greater understanding, mutual esteem, and collaboration between Muslims and Catholics, and be the role model for faith based people,” said a spokesperson from the family. “As the national conversation around Islam grows increasingly fraught, coarse, and driven by fear and misinformation, the good work being done in the Catholic-Muslim Studies Program at CTU is even more important than ever.”

### **Key Initiatives Funded by the Gift**

Among the key initiatives funded by this generous gift will be the appointment of an additional Muslim faculty member with expertise in Islamic and intercultural studies, as well as new full-tuition scholarships for Muslim students seeking either masters- or doctoral- level degrees in interreligious dialogue or related fields.

Another key initiative funded by the gift is the *Beloved Community Internship Program*. This program—scheduled to begin in the Fall of 2018—is designed to afford students the opportunity to integrate their theological studies with work for social transformation. CTU’s *Beloved Community* Interns will dedicate themselves to the dream of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. as they hone their skills in faith-based community organizing while serving as interns for partner institutions working in Chicago’s Marquette Park neighborhood.

### **The Gift and the Mission of CTU**

Founded in 1968, in the immediate aftermath of the Second Vatican Council, and at the height of the struggle for civil rights in the U.S., Catholic Theological Union has been dedicated to the conviction that effective formation for theological scholarship and ministry can only happen through active engagement in real-world settings. In the realm of interreligious dialogue, CTU believes that what the Church refers to as the “dialogue of action” for justice is an indispensable dimension of how people of faith can contribute to the greater solidarity of the human family.

“This tremendous gift will enhance CTU’s commitment to interreligious dialogue, which is an integral part of the Church’s mission as a sacrament of healing, reconciliation, and solidarity in a world torn by the ravages of poverty, violence, hatred, indifference, and environmental degradation,” said Mark Francis, CSV, president of CTU. “A key step in the journey of dialogue is to cultivate authentic mutual understanding by deepening our awareness of the important similarities and differences between the faiths we profess and practice. Equally important, however, is discerning the work God is calling us all to do—Catholics and other Christians, Muslims, Jews, and people of other faiths and no particular faith—to make the world a better place.”

### **About the Catholic-Muslim Studies Program (CMSP)**

Rooted in the sacred teachings of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the Holy Qur’an, the CMSP educates and contributes to the spiritual formation of leaders in the ministry of interreligious dialogue who can effectively promote mutual esteem, understanding, reconciliation, and cooperation for justice between Muslims and Christians for the sake of the greater solidarity of the human family. Founded in September of 2000, and ably directed ever since by Scott C. Alexander, Ph.D., CTU’s Professor of Islamic Studies and Christian-Muslim Relations and chair of the Theological Education Committee of the American Academy of Religion, the Catholic-Muslim Studies Program has come to be recognized both nationally and internationally as helping to set the standard for comprehensive interreligious studies and engagement programs in graduate theological education.

To learn more about CMSP, go to [ctu.edu/catholic-muslim-studies](http://ctu.edu/catholic-muslim-studies).

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### **About Catholic Theological Union**

CTU is a Roman Catholic graduate school of theology and ministry. Its mission is to prepare effective leaders for the Church, ready to witness to Christ’s good news of justice, love, and peace. CTU’s 4,000 lay and vowed religious graduates are serving in 60 countries worldwide.