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Women & Spirit: Catholic Sisters in America Reveals Untold Stories

Opening at Maltz Museum Mother's Day, May 9, 2010

Cleveland, Ohio – March 3, 2010 – A stunning chronicle of the brave and innovative women who played a significant role in shaping our nation, *Women & Spirit: Catholic Sisters in America* reveals the remarkable story of pioneering women who established schools, hospitals and other enduring institutions and continue to work for peace and social justice. A limited engagement at the Maltz Museum of Jewish Heritage directly follows a successful appearance at The Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C.

First arriving on America's shores almost 300 years ago, Catholic sisters built and led schools, hospitals, orphanages, colleges, and other social institutions at a time when women had few professional opportunities. This fascinating compilation of first-person accounts, rare artifacts, compelling films and important photographs reveals a new perspective on American history, and includes stories with special significance in this region.

Women & Spirit is a project of The Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) in association with Cincinnati Museum Center. It comes to Cleveland through the generosity of lead sponsors Sisters of Charity Foundation of Cleveland, Notre Dame College, PNC and Ursuline College/Ursuline Sisters of Cleveland, with additional support from The Cleveland Foundation, Cuyahoga Arts and Culture, Marymount Hospital/Cleveland Clinic, the Mt. Sinai Health Care Foundation, The Ohio Arts Council, the Samuel H. and Maria Miller Foundation, and Sisters of Charity Foundation of Canton.

"This intriguing look at how Catholic women contributed to our country and culture fits perfectly with the Museum's focus on diversity and tolerance and our key themes," notes Judi Feniger, Maltz Museum Executive Director. "There are many parallels to the role of Jewish women in shaping our society, here and nationally, and shared experiences – the challenges and rewards of immigration to America, how our nation's cities and bedrock institutions were built, the lingering effects of prejudice and discrimination, the importance of collaboration, and how one person or group can change the world".

In Cleveland, *Women & Spirit* will include locally-created material that tells the story of Women Religious in Northeast Ohio. With more than a dozen congregations headquartered in the region, and numerous sister-sponsored hospitals, colleges, schools, and outreach organizations, this uplifting perspective on our civic life is sponsored by a regional collaborative organization of religious orders.

The national exhibition includes stories of two area sisters. When Sr. Ignatia Gavin, CSA, worked with Alcoholics Anonymous co-founder Dr. Bob Smith to admit the first alcoholic patient to St. Thomas Hospital in Akron, it became the first hospital in the world to treat alcoholism as a medical condition. Sr. Dorothy Kazel, OSU, born in Cleveland to Lithuanian-American parents, taught here before joining the Diocese of Cleveland and going to El Salvador, providing relief services, education and work with refugees before her murder (along with three Maryknoll sisters) by members of the El Salvadoran National Guard. For the first time in Salvadoran history, members of the military were found guilty of assassination and sentenced to prison. The murders are the subject of several films and books.



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A season-long offering of provocative programs, performances and lectures at the Museum and around town will complement themes of the exhibition, and a film by Steven Hacker created exclusively for the Maltz Museum adds an interreligious approach, highlighting the role of spirituality in the lives and work of area women of various faiths.

Docent-led tours are available daily for adult and student groups of ten or more, with discounts for groups of 15+. Reservations are required for group tours. The Museum Store, open whenever the Museum is, will carry Women & Spirit note cards and bookmarks and related merchandise and offers free gift wrapping. Parking adjacent to the Museum is free, and includes close-in handicapped spaces. Wheelchairs are available by advance reservation. The Museum is available for a range of private events with exclusive viewing of the exhibition, details and pricing on request.

Learn more about the exhibition or the Maltz Museum, www.maltzmuseum.org or 216-593-0575.

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About the Maltz Museum of Jewish Heritage: An American Story

Opened in 2005, the Maltz Museum of Jewish Heritage introduces visitors to the beauty and diversity of that heritage in the context of the American experience, promotes an understanding of Jewish history, religion and culture and builds bridges of tolerance and understanding with people of all religions, races, cultures and ethnic backgrounds. It includes *An American Story*, tracing Ohio's immigrant history and heritage, and The Temple-Tifereth Israel Gallery, an internationally-recognized collection of Judaica. One admission fee includes unlimited access, and all levels of membership include unlimited admission. The Museum was created as a partnership of The Maltz Family Foundation, the Jewish Community Federation's Centennial Initiative and The Temple-Tifereth Israel, with research support from the Western Reserve Historical Society.

About the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR): *Women & Spirit: Catholic Sisters in America* is organized by the LCWR, an association of leaders of congregations of Catholic sisters in the United States. LCWR represents about 95 percent of the 59,000 sisters in the United States. www.lcwr.org. In recent years, LCWR has worked with communities of sisters to research and catalog rare, heretofore unseen artifacts, vivid first-person accounts, photographs, and video from many historical turning points from the Civil War, Depression and Civil Rights Movement through Hurricane Katrina. National Sponsors are the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, The Catholic Health Association of the United States, and Catholic Health East.

About Seruto & Company: Exhibit design was conceived by Bob Weis Design Island and produced by Seruto & Company, an Exhibit Producer managing design and production for such renowned touring exhibitions as *Tutankhamen* and *America I Am: The African American Imprint* for AEG, and *CSI: The Experience* and *Top of the Rock*. www.seruto.com.

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