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University of Dayton longtime vice president for mission and rector, Father Jim Fitz, S.M., to semi-retire; assist with transition of new VP for mission and rector

The University of Dayton today announced a leadership transition for its vice president for mission and rector position, a role central to upholding the University's Catholic, Marianist identity.

After 15 years of dedicated service as vice president for mission and rector and many more years in service at UD, Father Jim Fitz, S.M., will transition to semi-retirement by Jan. 1. Brother Tim Driscoll, S.M., a long-time Marianist and respected member of the University's board of trustees, will assume the role of vice President for mission and rector designate, effective Aug 1. Father Fitz will assist Brother Driscoll in his transition during the fall semester.

Father Fitz's legacy at the University of Dayton is profound, extending a nearly 50-year family history of leadership that includes his brother, Brother Ray Fitz, S.M., who served as president for 23 years. Father Jim, who graduated from UD in 1968, has been involved and dedicated to the University for more than 36 years, as the head of campus ministry and a religious studies instructor and then as vice president for mission and rector. Besides serving on the board of trustees while in Marianist leadership positions, he has served as an *ex officio* member of the University's board of trustees for 15 years.

"It's been a gift to me to serve here," Father Fitz said. "This has always been an energizing ministry and work. I've never thought about being here as a job - it is a vocation. I always remember a passage from scripture that reminds us, the gift you received from God, do your best to give others - I think I've done that. I'm not stepping down because I don't want to do it anymore, it's because this transition has to be done right and this is a good time to do it."

University of Dayton President Eric Spina lauded Father Fitz as a person and in his work including strengthening the Marianist Educational Associates program and leading board of trustees formation lessons on Catholic social teaching.

"Father Jim has been a guide, a mentor and a friend. His commitment and contributions to UD's Catholic, Marianist vision, mission and identity have been outstanding. His embodiment of the Marianist charism has been invaluable to the university," Spina said. "He ensures every new employee is properly welcomed into UD's Marianist family, and has worked collaboratively with every division of the University to strengthen our commitment to our Catholic and Marianist mission. His pastoral approach to care for people, his prayers, benedictions, and blessings anchor all the work we do and helps us remember our identity and mission."

Father Oscar Vasquez, S.M., provincial of the Marianist province of the United States, expressed deep gratitude for Father Fitz's dedication. "We the province are thankful to Father Jim because his commitment to UD has been awesome. He's given his life and energy to supporting the mission of the Marianists. His ability to work with faculty, staff and students is admirable; he's always willing to accompany people in their faith and life journey."

While Father Fitz will scale back his full-time duties, he will remain at UD in a part-time capacity to assist with liturgies and campus ministry.

Brother Driscoll brings a wealth of experience to his new role. His association with UD began in 2018 when he joined the board of trustees, where he demonstrated a deep appreciation for Marianist education and a "people approach" to leadership.

Brother Driscoll, a lifelong resident of Long Island, New York, found his vocation while attending a Marianist high school. He holds a bachelor of arts in English and theology from St. John's University and a masters degree in studio art from Adelphi University. His extensive background includes teaching English, literature, studio art, and religion at Marianist high schools and elementary schools, as well as serving as Marianist provincial of Meribah from 2016-2024 and assistant for education from 2008-2024.

"I'm excited for this challenge. This was not something I was expecting - but I always try to say 'yes' when asked to do something; I feel that is part of my vocation," Brother Driscoll remarked. "The request to join UD comes from our province here (in Meribah) and the U.S. province. I'm coming to it humbly and to listen and to learn and understand what it means for Marianist education to flourish on UD's campus - I'm coming into this as a bridge builder, as Pope Leo XIV said, to help us work together to strengthen our community so we can better serve our students and our mission."

The vice president for mission and rector plays a pivotal role in guiding the University through strategic adaptation while ensuring its unwavering commitment to its Catholic, Marianist identity.