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Saint Leo University's Center for Catholic-Jewish Studies to Celebrate 25th Anniversary with Dinner, Presentation of 19th Eternal Light Award

Event Planned for Oct. 26 at Glazer Jewish Community Center, Tampa

ST. LEO, FL - For 25 years, Saint Leo University's Center for Catholic-Jewish Studies (CCJS) has built mutual respect and understanding between Catholics, Jews, and all people of goodwill. Now, everyone is invited to a special celebration of the silver anniversary of the CCJS, founded in 1989 by Rabbi A. James Rudin, and Dr. Arthur Kirk, Saint Leo president *emeritus*.

The 25th anniversary celebration, including dinner and presentation of the 19th Eternal Light Award, will take place 6 – 9 p.m., Thursday, October 26, at the Shanna and Bryan Glazer Jewish Community Center, 522 N. Howard Ave., Tampa, FL 33606.

Since 1999, the Center for Catholic-Jewish Studies' Eternal Light Award is presented to an individual who has made outstanding contributions to the cause of Catholic-Jewish relations. Receiving the award this year is **Rabbi David Fox Sandmel, PhD, chair of the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations**. This is the consortium of Jewish organizations that is the official Jewish dialogue partner of the Vatican, the World Council of Churches, and the Ecumenical Patriarch of the Orthodox churches.

He has been with the Anti-Defamation League since 2014 and serves as senior advisor on Interreligious Affairs. Prior to joining the staff at the ADL, he held the Crown-Ryan Chair of Jewish Studies at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago and served as senior advisor on Interreligious Affairs to the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism.

His keynote address will be *Why Catholic-Jewish Relations Matter Today*, and **Father Dennis McManus** will give the response. McManus is a consultant for Jewish Affairs for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Chairs for the 25th anniversary celebration are **Bishop Gregory Parkes** of the Catholic Diocese of St. Petersburg and **Joseph Probasco**; honorary chairs are **Maureen Cohn** and **Gail Whiting**.

Individual tickets are $75 and student tickets are $35. Table sponsorships also are available. **RSVP by October 12**. Tickets may be purchased at https://your.saintleo.edu/ccjs-25th-anniversary. Students must use the discount code **STUDENT** and show their student ID.

For more information or special accommodations, contact sasha.bergstrasser@saintleo.edu.

History of Saint Leo's CCJS

The importance of the interchange of ideas and dialogue among Catholics and Jews prompted the formation of Saint Leo University's Center for Catholic-Jewish Studies in 1998. Rabbi A. James Rudin said he noted at that time that Florida had an increasing population of Jews and Catholics, and that dynamic demographic trend was likely to continue. "There was no Christian-Jewish academic center south of Baltimore at that time," he said.

Rudin met with the then-Saint Leo College President Arthur Kirk Jr., who liked the rabbi's proposal of creating an interreligious center on campus. Kirk, Rudin, and Bruce M. Ramer, then-president of the American Jewish Committee, signed a joint statement establishing CCJS.

As the college grew and became a university, the late *Bishop Emeritus* John J. Nevins of the Catholic Diocese of Venice (FL); and now *Bishop Emeritus* Robert Lynch of the Diocese of St. Petersburg (FL) became co-founders of CCJS. These leaders recognized the need in the state for an academic center devoted to the biblical and theological study of Catholic-Jewish relations and interreligious dialogue, as emphasized by the Second Vatican Council.

Today, the CCJS is a leading academic center for the study of Catholic-Jewish relations. While it started as a stand-alone, lay-driven- and financed project at Saint Leo, it became fully integrated into the university in 2013.

-30-

Photos attached of Rabbi David Fox Sandmel and Father Dennis McManus

About Saint Leo University

Saint Leo University is one of the largest Catholic universities in the nation, offering more than 60 undergraduate and graduate-level degree programs and specializations to more than 15,300

students each year. Founded in 1889 in the Benedictine tradition, the private, nonprofit university is known for providing an education to learners of all backgrounds and ages. Saint Leo is regionally accredited and offers a residential campus in the Tampa Bay region of Florida, at education centers, and through an online program for students anywhere. The university is home to more than 104,000 alumni. Learn more at saintleo.edu.

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