

Marquette University: History professor honored with Haggerty Research Award

Posted on Tuesday, Jul 28, 2020

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MILWAUKEE — Rev. Steven Avella, professor of history in the Klingler College of Arts and Sciences, is the 2020 recipient of the Haggerty Research Award.

A full-time member in the Department of History since 1991, Father Avella has effortlessly combined his vocations as an ordained priest and a scholar in his teaching, community outreach and scholarship. He was one of the first historians in the U.S. to integrate social and political contexts into diocesan histories, and his work has helped explain the complicated transformations in the Catholic Church in the decades since World War II.

Father Avella is known as a fluid and eloquent speaker. Students recall feeling as if they are transformed into “active participants” instead of feeling as if they are simply being lectured at during class. He is excited to share his knowledge and love of the subject and regularly provides workshops and orientations to seminary students in Milwaukee, Chicago, Iowa and California.

With one of the most diverse teaching portfolios in the department, Father Avella is responsible for the department’s undergraduate and graduate courses in 20th century cultural and social history, American religious history, and the American West. He has also taught courses and supervised dissertations on American foreign relations and urban history.

“Father Avella is a master of the ‘new Catholic institutional history,’ which emphasizes contexts and analysis and avoids the tendency of the old-styled history to collapse into chronicle without treating controversy and conflict,” one colleague

wrote.

Father Avella is a member of the American Catholic Historical Association, a century-old organization with an international membership of 1,100 historians, theologians and religious educators. He served on the ACHA Executive Board from 2007-2011, and was program chair of the ACHA's annual spring conference on three occasions (1995, 1997, 2010). He was elected vice president and president-elect in 2008, taking over as president in 2010.

Father Avella has previously been recognized as the Robert and Mary Gettel Teaching Excellence Award recipient in 2010.

The Lawrence G. Haggerty Faculty Award for Research Excellence recognizes scholarly distinction at Marquette University. The award is Marquette's highest honor for research and scholarship.