



Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family  
at The Catholic University of America

Susan M. Shaughnessy Award

Pope John Paul II founded the Institute to advance a “civilization of love” centered in a “culture of life.” At the heart of these lies a vision of reality rooted in the Beatitudes that, as stated in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, “depict the countenance of Jesus Christ and portray his charity.” Blessed are the innocent and those who suffer: the unborn, the alone, the terminally ill. Blessed indeed is all of creation in the simple givenness of its truth, goodness, and beauty. This award honors the memory of Susan M. Shaughnessy (17 January 1978–17 November 2008), who received her Master’s degree and later served as a member of the staff at the Institute. Susan embodied in a remarkable way this love of the suffering innocent and of creation in its defenseless simplicity. She once said that she had learned while at the Institute not to wait for a “perfect” moment to do God’s work; that “Jesus is calling us right now in whatever we are doing to love.” Further, she wrote in one of her papers that our apprenticeship for love “begins with another, and this *sense of others* leads to the beginning of the *sense of home*.” “It is at home with another that one feels safe to open himself up . . . , to give and receive . . . .” “Love calls us to participate with our whole being, . . . to give our whole self.” “The deepest desire that every person has is for love and this love ultimately is fulfilled only in and with God—God who is love, God who is a community of persons, the Triune God.”

The Susan M. Shaughnessy Award is given annually to a graduate in the Master of Theological Studies program who exemplifies—in his or her intellectual achievement, engagement with fellow students, and spirit of family-centered love and life—the truths expressed in these words of Susan, which she articulated with the whole of her being in whatever she did.

The award is the single general award given by the Institute, and the name of its recipient each year is recorded on a plaque displayed permanently at the Institute.

Office of the Provost/Dean  
Feast of the Immaculate Conception  
8 December 2008