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www.thirteen.org

1333 H Street, NW
Washington, DC 20005
Contact: Mary Schultz
tel : 202.216.2394
fax: 202.408.0608

press information

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RELIGION & ETHICS NEWSWEEKLY ADDRESSES 2008 TOP NEWS STORIES AND FOCUSES ON LIKELY NEWSMAKING EVENTS IN THE COMING YEAR

Washington, D.C. — **RELIGION & ETHICS NEWSWEEKLY**, the acclaimed PBS newsmagazine series produced by Thirteen/WNET New York, will feature consecutive studio discussions of this year's top stories in the world of religion and ethics and those expected to make headlines in 2009. The segments will be included in the December 26, 2008 and January 2, 2009 programs to be distributed at 5 p.m. ET (check local listings) to public television stations nationwide.

E.J. Dionne, columnist for *The Washington Post* and a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, Kim Lawton, **RELIGION & ETHICS NEWSWEEKLY** correspondent and managing editor, and Roland Martin, *CNN* commentator join host Bob Abernethy for the December 26 discussion of the top religion news stories of 2008. Among the topics addressed are: the election of America's first black president and Barack Obama's message of unity to rebuild the country; the role of religion in the presidential campaign; the ethical implications and impact on religious institutions resulting from the recession; divisions within the Anglican Communion and the Episcopal Church over homosexuality and interpretation of Scripture; reaction to Pope Benedict XVI's visit to the U.S.; and the consequences of California's vote to ban gay marriage.

The following week, John Allen, Vatican correspondent for *National Catholic Reporter*, joins Abernethy, Dionne and Lawton to discuss the major stories expected to make headlines in the New Year. Their predictions of newsmaking events for 2009 will include: the challenges facing the new Obama administration both domestically and abroad, particularly peace efforts in the Middle East and the relationship with the Muslim world; the Vatican's increasing focus on Africa and its interest in improving Christian-Muslim relations; the role of young evangelicals in shaping the future of their church; and continuing battles over gay civil unions and marriage.

Major funding for **RELIGION & ETHICS NEWSWEEKLY** is provided by Lilly Endowment Inc. with additional support from Mutual of America Life Insurance Company, the Henry Luce Foundation, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and individual supporters. Executive editor and host for the program is Bob Abernethy; executive producer is Arnold Labaton; WNET executive-in-charge is Stephen Segaller.



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