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MEDIA CONTACTS: Catherine Wynn, Clare Gallery 860-643-6369
Laura Soll, Carmon Community Funeral Homes 860-688-4499, Cell 860-833-4466

**CONNECTICUT DEBUT OF POWERFUL “GRACE BEFORE DYING” PHOTOS & QUILTS
REVEALS REVOLUTIONARY IN-PRISON HOSPICE PROGRAM
*Premieres Sept. 9 at Hartford’s Clare Gallery***

HARTFORD, CONN., August 11, 2015 – A powerful photography and quilts exhibition, revealing the innovative in-house hospice program that helped to transform one of the most dangerous maximum security prisons in the U.S. into one of the least violent, will make its Connecticut debut this Fall. *Grace Before Dying*, a traveling display of photographs by award-winning visual documentarian Lori Waselchuk, along with hospice quilts that were crafted by the Angola prison hospice volunteers themselves, **will premiere on Wednesday, September 9 and be open daily through Sunday, November 1, 2015 at Clare Gallery, Franciscan Center for Urban Ministry at 285 Church Street in Hartford.**

This exhibition of human dignity and transformation will be **co-sponsored by Clare Gallery at the Franciscan Center for Urban Ministry** (part of St. Patrick-St. Anthony Church) **and by Carmon Community Funeral Homes**, a family-owned firm based in Windsor, Conn. It features a series of Waselchuk’s dramatic black & white images of elderly or terminally ill inmates at the Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola, photographed with their fellow inmates, who volunteer as their caregivers. Poignant quotes from the incarcerated hospice volunteers and patients accompany the searing photographs that chart the development of the program, started in 1998.

Admission is free to Connecticut’s *Grace Before Dying* exhibition and to several related special events at Clare Gallery during the two-month Hartford exhibition. They include an **Artist’s Reception with Lori Waselchuk** on **Tuesday, October 13 at 6:30 p.m.** that invites the community to come meet her as she shares her story. On **Friday, September 25 at 7 p.m.**, there will be a special showing of the film **“Music from the Big House.”** In this documentary, Rita Chiarelli, Canada’s “Queen of the Blues,” uses the shared bond of music to draw striking revelations from the prison’s inmates, climaxing with an historic jailhouse performance.

“Clare Gallery is extremely honored to present this extraordinary exhibition, *Grace Before Dying*, highlighting the courage and empathy of this nationally recognized hospice program, which was started in 1998 by a prison warden, staff nurse, and a team of inmate volunteers,” explains Nancy Wynn, Chair of Clare Gallery. “Their efforts were influential in changing the tone of the prison from ‘dismissive dishonor’ to humane dignity and reverence toward terminally ill inmates. The works also challenge stereotypes of the incarcerated and help viewers better understand what life is like ‘on the inside’ for terminally ill inmates, as well as those serving long-term and life sentences.”

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“When we learned about Lori Waselchuk’s poignant project, we were determined to bring it here to Connecticut and share it with state residents and with our clergy, hospice, and corrections communities,” says Frank W. Carmon, IV, CFSP, a licensed funeral director at Carmon Community Funeral Homes. “We all can learn a great deal about humanity from this exhibition. It dramatically reminds us that every single life – no matter who it is – is special and meaningful.” Carmon is a third-generation funeral director whose grandfather founded the firm in 1946.

Lori Waselchuk is a visual documentarian whose photographs have appeared in magazines and newspapers worldwide, including *Newsweek*, *LIFE*, *The New York Times Magazine*, and *The Washington Post*. Her work is exhibited internationally and is part of many collections including the New Orleans Museum of Art, the Portland Museum of Art and the South African National Gallery. Waselchuk is a recipient of the 2014 Leeway Foundation’s Transformation Award, the 2012 Pew Fellowship for the Arts, the Aaron Siskind Foundation’s 2009 Individual Photographer Fellowship, a 2008 Distribution Grant from the Documentary Photography Project of the Open Society Institute, the 2007 PhotoNOLA Review Prize, and the 2004 Southern African Gender and Media Award for Photojournalism. Waselchuk was also a nominee for the 2009 Santa Fe Prize for Photography, a finalist in the 2008 Aperture West Book Prize, and a finalist in the 2006 and 2008 Critical Mass Review. Visit www.gracebeforedying.org and www.loriwaselchuk.com.

The Grace Before Dying Exhibition will be on display from Wednesday, September 9 through Sunday, November 1, 2015 at Clare Gallery at 285 Church St. in Hartford. Days/hours: Mondays through Thursdays from 8:30 a.m. to 7 p.m.; Fridays from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.; Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.; and Sundays from 9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Admission is free. Limited free parking for those visiting Clare Gallery is available directly across from the Church and Urban Center. For more information about Clare Gallery and the Grace Before Dying exhibition, visit www.spsact.org/clare2 or call 860-756-4034.

Clare Gallery primarily features exhibitions that emphasize world religions or interfaith themes, as well as social justice themes, on either a global or local level. The gallery is housed in the Franciscan Center for Urban Ministry at 285 Church Street in Hartford, Conn. The Center is part of St. Patrick-St. Anthony Church, a vibrant and active downtown faith community. Clare Gallery receptions and artist lectures are free and open to the public. Clare Gallery Committee promotes the arts through its exhibits and educational programs that focus on world religious, interfaith, and social justice themes.

Carmon Community Funeral Homes has been serving families for nearly 70 years, today with nine funeral homes in North Central Connecticut: Avon; Granby; Hartford; Rockville; South Windsor; Suffield; Vernon; and Windsor (2 locations), and its own on-site Mt. Laurel Crematory. The Windsor-based family-owned firm has always been a trailblazer in developing community programs that provide education and support to people who are planning funerals or coping with death. The staff works closely with clergy and physicians to provide team support to families. Staff members have participated in crisis teams and loss awareness programs at local high schools and colleges to help students deal with loss. Eighteen years ago, Carmon Community Funeral Homes created “Mary’s Place, A Center for Grieving Children and Families” in Windsor, which provides a trusting atmosphere for Connecticut children and teens who have experienced the death of a parent, sibling or another significant person. Carmon Community Funeral Homes also offers support groups for young widows and widowers and “Begin Again” self-help programs. Visit www.carmonfuneralhome.com or call 1-888-688-8475.

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