FAITH STARTS AT HOME

HOW POPE FRANCIS INSPIRES US TO BUILD UP FAMILIES IN AMERICA
Catholic Extension has published Extension magazine since 1906 to share with our donors and friends the stories illustrating our mission to build faith, inspire hope and ignite change in communities across America.

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COVER STORY

Faith starts at home 22

As Pope Francis comes to lead the World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia, our collection of stories celebrates the family as a place to build faith, provide comfort and heal wounds.

COVER ILLUSTRATION BY TIM O’BRIEN

We did not publish a Summer 2015 issue of Extension magazine to allow us to complete the move to our new, redesigned format. This year we will only publish three issues: Spring, Fall and Winter. We apologize for the missed issue and any resulting inconvenience or confusion. Thank you for your understanding.
Extension Lay Volunteers gather

NEWS BRIEFS | Volunteers hold 55th reunion

Peace Walks

GALLERY | Salinas residents bring peace to violent neighborhood

Meet 10 Catholic heroes

LUMEN CHRISTI AWARD | This year’s inspiring finalists

Sometimes faith needs dust removal

COVER STORY | Michigan parish renewal

Home-grown bishop

BISHOP’S PULPIT | Bishop Thomas on faith and family

Put me in, coach

SEMINARIAN Q&A | Father Christopher Lebsock hears the call

Letter from Father Wall
Papal Page
Mission Map
Connect
Flat Francis
Donor Profile
Artful Prayer
Answering Pope Francis’ call

HERE AT CATHOLIC EXTENSION we are truly looking forward to Pope Francis’ upcoming visit to the United States. We feel that the pope’s repeated call for the Church to be tangibly present in a very close and concrete way among the poor and at the “peripheries” connects powerfully with Catholic Extension’s mission in the poorest communities of the United States.

Over the past two and a half years, the pope has been crystal clear about the need for Catholics to recommit ourselves to the Gospel mandate to bring good news to the poor. Pope Francis reminds us that as a Church we cannot be self-referential, that our faith is not about a privileged membership in our Church but about participating in God’s work of transforming our lives and communities, our country and the world.

Living out that call among the poor in the United States, in concrete solidarity with our brothers and sisters, is not a burden or an add-on; it is at the heart of who we are as American Catholics. And when Pope Francis tells all of us to “go out to the peripheries,” Catholic Extension can provide a very powerful way—a vehicle that can make that happen for American Catholics.

What the pope has been urging us to do reminds me of what was said about the saint whose name the pope chose when he was elected. St. Francis of Assisi, it was said, created the Franciscan community precisely to give people who wanted to love the poor a way to love the poor. I think that is exactly what Pope Francis is doing today and it is what Catholic Extension is striving to do as well.

I strongly believe that engaging in the very mission to which Pope Francis is calling us is not only transformative for the communities that we serve but also transformative for our own faith. When we encounter people in these communities who have come to the realization that they are more than the often very difficult circumstances they face, that message rebounds to us, and reminds all of us that we too are more than our circumstances.

On my travels to our mission dioceses, I often meet Catholics who seem to embody the “joy of the Gospel” that Pope Francis talks about, a joy that is deep within them. They have realized that what matters is not what we possess, but how we live out the truth that God loves us and that God instills in us a desire to be that love for others. That realization can free
Last fall Catholic Extension President Father Jack Wall met Pope Francis after his general audience in Rome. The pope asked Father Wall to pray for him. As Pope Francis prepares to travel to the United States this September, please join Father Wall and the Catholic Extension movement in a special prayer for our pope.

Francis traveling to Philadelphia to the World Meeting of Families, we thought it would be a good occasion for us to highlight some of our many initiatives that support families and help build what we often call the “domestic Church.”

Our families are the first place where we come to know and experience what it means to embody and to give witness to God’s love. In faith we believe that in each of our hearts and at the heart of our familial relationships is an infinite wellspring of divine love for us. Each family member is being invited every day and in countless ways to participate in God’s life-giving love by incarnating that love to one another.

Experiencing God’s love for us in our families shows us the way and gives us the courage and vision to then in turn become that love for others. In its essence, Catholic Extension is a movement for us American Catholics to experience and express that presence, purpose and love God has for our world.

This issue also introduces you to the 10 finalists of this year’s Lumen Christi Award of Catholic Extension. They are inspiring youth ministers, catechists, pastors, immigrant advocates, prison ministers and school principals. They are laypeople, religious sisters and priests. And above all they are for us glimpses of the “light of Christ.” May they inspire all of us to be “lights of Christ” as well. God bless,

Rev. John J. Wall
PRESIDENT, CATHOLIC EXTENSION
Let us kneel down before poor families

Many poor families ... try to live their daily lives with dignity, often openly entrusting themselves to God's blessing. ... We should kneel down before these families, who are a true school of humanity in saving societies from barbarity.... The Church is a mother, and must not forget this drama of her children. She too must be poor, to become fruitful and respond to so much poverty.

—General Audience, June 3

POPE FRANCIS continues to speak about missionary discipleship and how to live out the Gospel's call to serve those at the margins. On this new regular “Papal Page,” Extension magazine will highlight some of Pope Francis' inspiring words.

Mediating God's tenderness

The family is also a small Church, a “domestic Church,” which ... mediates God’s tenderness and mercy. In the family, we imbibe faith with our mother’s milk. When we experience the love of our parents, we feel the closeness of God’s love. ...

[In the Gospel story of the wedding at Cana,] everyone went on to enjoy the finest of wines. And this is the good news:

The finest of wines will come for every person who stakes everything on love. ... The best wine is yet to come for those who today feel hopelessly lost. ... God always seeks out the peripheries, those who have run out of wine, those who drink only of discouragement. Jesus feels their weakness, in order to pour out the best wines for [them]. ...

Let us ... be thankful that ... the new wine, the finest wine, will make us recover the joy of being a family, the joy of living within a family.

—Homily in Guayaquil, Ecuador, July 6

Pope keeps his head

Pope Francis once again displayed his sense of humor. When a gusting wind blew his skullcap off for at least the second time during his trip to Latin America, he ad-libbed:

As long as my head doesn’t blow off, there’s no problem.

—Address at Palmasola Prison, Santa Cruz, Bolivia, July 10

POPE FRANCIS waves to the crowd before celebrating Mass in Guayaquil, Ecuador, on July 6. In his homily that day he said, “God always seeks out the peripheries.”
Good news from around the country

Young people in Salinas, California take part in weekly Peace Walks to show that “Catholic youth can make a difference,” said Sául Hernández, shown at right. Photo essay on page 12.
**ARCHDIOCESE OF AGANA GUAM**

More than 5,800 online votes were submitted for their Lumen Christi Award nominee (see page 16).

**DIOCESE OF CAROLINE ISLANDS**

More than $30,000 has been granted to provide staffing support to the diocese in the Pacific. Economic struggles on the island have made it necessary for outside help to fund diocesan office staff.

**DIOCESE OF RAPID CITY SOUTH DAKOTA**

Holy Cross Church in Timber Lake received $60,000 as a match to the $154,119 the community raised to build its new parish hall.

**DIOCESE OF BAKER OREGON**

Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church in Ontario, supported by Extension since 1911, received $70,000 for church renovation projects, including an elevator.
DIOCESE OF NASHVILLE
TENNESSEE
In June Bishop David Choby ordained five priests. More than $350,000 has been provided to the diocese since 2012 for seminarian support.

DIOCESE OF RICHMOND
VIRGINIA
A campus minister will continue to be supported with the gift of $135,000 over three years to serve a cluster of college campuses and to act as a pastoral associate at four parishes who share one pastor.

CATHOLIC EXTENSION
MISSION DIOCESES
HIGHLIGHTED PROJECTS
IN MISSION DIOCESES
NON-MISSION DIOCESES

Catholic Extension recently committed to three years of financial assistance for a youth minister to work with high school students at St. William and St. Lawrence parishes.

#FlatFrancis made it to all 50 states. Read about our social media campaign on page 44.
Volunteers gather to reminisce and learn about the future

On June 26–28, Catholic Extension hosted the Extension Lay Volunteer (ELV) 55th Reunion in Deerfield, Illinois. The nearly 140 attendees from 40 states reminisced, rekindled friendships and discovered how their legacy of lay leadership continues today. Key speakers included Sister Hilda Mateo, a Guadalupan Missionary of the Holy Spirit, and two current Young Adult Leaders, Casey Bustamante and Kathy Williams. The ELV program was operational from 1960 to 1971 and involved almost 2,000 volunteers serving the poorest of the poor.

“I cherished my years in the program and will add this wonderful weekend to my memories,” said Sister Rita Feeney, a former volunteer and now a Franciscan Sister of Perpetual Adoration.

“Thank you for reminding me that there are still ways I can serve my Church,” added Linda Schuster, another volunteer.
WASHINGTON, CANONIZATION

On Sept. 23, during the pope’s visit to Washington, he will canonize Junípero Serra, a Spanish missionary priest who helped establish the mission system in 18th-century California. Serra will be America’s first Hispanic saint, canonized by the first Hispanic pope, and also the first saint canonized on U.S. soil. Of the total 21 missions in California, 8 are located in the Diocese of Monterey, a Catholic Extension mission diocese.

ROME, PALLIUM CEREMONY

Catholic Extension President Father Jack Wall joined our chancellor, Chicago Archbishop Blase Cupich, in Rome for the blessing of the archbishop’s pallium—a cloth worn over vestments to symbolize his connection to the pope. Archbishop Cupich will officially receive his pallium in August at Holy Name Cathedral in Chicago. The archbishop also had the opportunity to meet privately with Pope Francis.

DOMINICAN OFFICE, PUERTO RICO

Dominican Sister María Yelitza Ayala, one of 34 sisters taking part in Catholic Extension’s U.S.-Latin American Sisters Exchange program, made final vows to join the Dominican Sisters of Fátima in Guánica, Puerto Rico on July 5. She was given a crown of thorns to imitate Jesus by “offering to serve God, even in suffering.” She returned to complete her five years of serving Hispanic communities in Tyler, Texas.

CATHOLIC EXTENSION, ANNIVERSARIES

This year we celebrate two big anniversaries. On Oct. 18, 1905, 110 years ago, Father Francis Clement Kelley of Michigan created the Catholic Church Extension Society to serve mission dioceses. Two years later, its headquarters were moved to Chicago. On June 7, 1910, 105 years ago, Catholic Extension became a papal society, under the guidance of the pope, who appoints the president of Catholic Extension.

This summer 175 seminarians attended a 10-week program called Spiritual Formation for Diocesan Seminarians at the Institute for Priestly Formation of Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska.

Through the program seminarians pray, deepen their personal relationship with God, sharpen their tools for discernment, and learn to become contemplatives even while in action. Catholic Extension funds many of the participants for either seminarian formation or attendance at the Institute.

Seminarians, funded by Extension, study in Omaha.
Responding to Pope Francis’ call to go to the margins and wanting to make their neighborhoods safer, parishioners from Christ the King Church in Salinas, California, in the Diocese of Monterey have created a movement called Salinas Peace Walks.

Weekly, a group of 10 to 20 gather in the most dangerous neighborhoods of Salinas to literally walk the streets, bringing a peaceful presence and reaching out to residents. These neighborhoods face staggering poverty, drugs and gangs, and rarely get a break from violence. Walkers, who begin and end their journey with prayer, want to show the community an alternative.

—PHOTOS BY RICH KALONICK
Salinas, population of 155,000, is a major agricultural region and called the “salad bowl of the world.” Parents work long hours in harvesting and packaging, leaving children at home and vulnerable to gangs. In recent years violence has increased, particularly on the east side.

“We use faith to inspire hope in the streets of Salinas, to ignite change in these gang-plagued areas and to make a presence for peace,” said Saúl Hernández, director of youth and young adult ministry at Christ the King Church, which Catholic Extension has supported since 1951.
“We are extending the presence of Christ by walking to those who feel alone, left out and hopeless,” said Víctor Suárez, faith director at Christ the King Church and volunteer coordinator of the Peace Walks.

Daniella Jiménez, Saúl Hernández and Millie López (from left) hope to expand the Peace Walks to other places, to find enough participants to walk daily and to work with non-Catholic communities as well. “We want people to spend time outside without fear of violence and gangs … to enjoy the love of Christ,” said Hernández.
We’ll show you how! When you invest in a Catholic Extension Charitable Gift Annuity, you are investing in your future and the future of the Catholic Church. ▪ Lock in our great rates, secure your income for life, and receive tax benefits. Best of all, your gift will directly help 13 million Catholics in poor mission dioceses experience faith through building projects, vibrant ministries, and the support of ordained and lay leaders. ▪ Lock in a payout rate today and know that you are securing more than just your income — you are securing the future of our faith.

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The Escárcega family of Colorado Springs, Colorado, meets weekly with other Catholic families to keep their faith traditions strong. Story on page 24.
KEVIN AN DELGADO
Archdiocese of Agana, Guam

KEVIN AN DELGADO FOUND HIS CALLING early in life: At age 13, he was an altar server at Santa Teresita Church in Mangilao, Guam, and by age 15 he had founded the youth ministry MAGIC – Manhoben (youth) And God Inspiring Community.

More than 20 years later, MAGIC still inspires and leads the parish youth through its contemporary and youth-driven programming.

As program director at Santa Teresita Church, An Delgado has brought the light of Christ to youth ministry, becoming a godfather to more than 400 young men and women and helping develop over 30 parish ministries to build faith, morals and leadership within the hearts and minds of young people.

Today, those youth are doctors, lawyers, teachers, entrepreneurs and educators, and they thank An Delgado and his programs for their success.

BRAGG MOORE
Diocese of Biloxi, Miss.

“TO KNOW BRAGG IS TO SEE the light, to feel the love, and to watch the hands of Christ in action.” These are just some of the glowing words that have been used to describe Bragg Moore, who has served as a youth minister for 33 years, the last 25 as director of the Office for Youth Ministry for the Diocese of Biloxi.

Moore is one of the most respected youth ministers in the nation and is a mentor for diocesan directors throughout the Southeast region. He lives the Catholic life and inspires youth through his actions and words. Nebraska Burton said, “Without a father figure at home, Mr. Moore is the most important person in my life.”

As a community activist, Moore passionately promotes social justice issues, and after Hurricane Katrina he helped those in this devastated area find the grace of God amid great tragedy.
They don’t wear capes. They don’t scale tall buildings. But these 10 unsung Catholic heroes are shining the light of Christ in some of the most remote and poorest areas of the United States. Their efforts are strengthening the Catholic Church by answering Pope Francis’ call to go to the margins and serve others.

Since 1978, Catholic Extension has been honoring these faithful servants with its Lumen Christi Award. The Latin phrase, taken from the Easter Vigil liturgy, means “Light of Christ.”

The award, given to one of these 10 finalists later this fall, will honor an individual or group who demonstrates the transformative power of faith. Lumen Christi recipients—and finalists—are laudable not only for the light and hope they bring to forgotten corners of the country, but for inspiring those around them to be “Lights of Christ” as well.

Go to www.catholicextension.org for more information on the award and for more in-depth profiles of the 2015 finalists.

GUADALUPAN MISSIONARY SISTERS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT
Diocese of Birmingham, Ala.

SINCE 2002 THE GUADALUPAN Missionary Sisters of the Holy Spirit have been serving the multicultural needs of the Diocese of Birmingham, focusing on the growing immigrant population.

In 2010 they founded the Multicultural Center to provide a safe environment where thousands of Hispanic families find counseling, food, housing, evangelization, educational resources, legal advice and spiritual support.

The center has been so successful that the bishop asked the sisters to expand their ministry into rural Alabama. The sisters are leaders in the state and advocates for immigrant rights and are widely known as a source of support, information, direction and education.

But more than that, they provide love and support through their faith, loving all as Christ loves each of us.

SISTER KATHLEEN ATKINSON, OSB
Diocese of Bismarck, N.D.

WHEN BENEDICTINE SISTER Kathleen Atkinson heard that one of her Bible study students at North Dakota’s state penitentiary was released and expected to rebuild his life in an unfamiliar city, she was called to help. She founded the Ministry on the Margins to support those who often fall through the cracks during times of transition, including former prisoners, the homeless and at-risk youth.

Since 2014 the program has served more than 2,000 people and provided basic support including food, gas vouchers and household items.

Among the prison population, the national recidivism rate is 33 percent; Sister Kathleen’s ministry has reduced that rate among her participants to just 7 percent.

Throughout the entire state of North Dakota, her light shines brightly as an advocate for the marginalized.
FA THER PETER GORGES
Diocese of Juneau, Alaska

FATHER PETER GORGES
worked in Alaska as a parish pastor for more than 30 years, going above and beyond to not only serve parishes but visit remote villages and camps accessible only by ferry or float plane. Ordained in 1968, he has worked throughout the state in a wide array of capacities: ministering to school children, working with Catholic Charismatic Renewal and serving local ecumenical programs—everything from vicar general to missionary.

He retired from parish ministry in 2001, but unlike most priests, Father Gorges stayed on in Juneau and began filling in for other pastors on a voluntary basis. He routinely visits the diocese’s far-flung parishes, bringing a familiar face to the people who depend on him for their spiritual development.

So willing to help out is Father Gorges that last summer he visited churches at four remote Eskimo villages, ministering to the communities while living without amenities like running water.

MARÍA GUADALUPE GONZÁLEZ
Diocese of El Paso, Texas

THE MILES RACKING UP on María Guadalupe (“Lupe”) González’s car tell her story best: Each week she logs more than 700 miles traveling across rural West Texas to minister to more than 1,100 Hispanic Catholic youths and their families. She brings her sleeping bag and often sleeps on the floor.

As the coordinator for the religious formation ministry of the Diocese of El Paso, González visits these communities weekly with the aim of providing high-quality faith formation opportunities.

A participant in Catholic Extension’s Hispanic Lay Leadership Initiative, she meets the growing needs of the most underserved populations in the diocese through programming and religious education curricula.

According to Bishop Mark Seitz, González demonstrates daily how the power of faith through hard work and dedication not only transforms lives, but also fosters the people’s faith, hope and spirituality.

MADELINE LYON
Diocese of Gallup, N.M.

HIGH IN THE NORTHERN MOUNTAINS of New Mexico near Lumberton, the small St. Francis School educates and ministers to over 100 children in grades 1–8 as the only Catholic school in this remote, impoverished area.

More than 85 percent of the students are Native Americans from the nearby Jicarilla Apache Nation in Dulce. At the school’s helm is Madeline Lyon, a one-time volunteer teacher who is now the principal.

“The Light of Christ is needed here to cast out the darkness,” she says. Students can have many obstacles, including alcoholism, early parental death, and suicide. Lyon and her volunteer teachers work tirelessly to overcome social issues and to raise the standards of education within a nurturing Christian environment.

“Connection to God is our greatest hope,” she says.
ST. FRANCIS CONNECTION CENTER
Diocese of Marquette, Mich.

After the K.I. Sawyer Air Force Base closed in 1995, primarily low-income families moved into the isolated and impoverished area that struggled to build community.

The St. Francis Connection Center was started by the Sisters of St. Paul de Chartres seven years later to visit and minister to the families living there. After discovering that many families struggled with food insecurity, the sisters started a bread distribution program, and in 2007 the nuns’ work and the center were formally recognized.

The center distributes food to 49 families, but it primarily helps spread the Catholic faith through religious education programs, prayer and community gatherings.

Without the St. Francis Connection Center, the Sawyer area would not have been able to build a community of faith, hope and love.

STEVE RAMÍREZ-PALMER
Diocese of Sacramento, Calif.

A YOUTH MINISTER IN RURAL, AGRICULTURAL Yolo County, Steve Ramírez-Palmer reaches out to youth of all income levels and strives to replace negative behavior with positive activities. He specializes in working with high-risk, low-income youth and is dedicated to keeping youth out of prison, believing that “sometimes teens just need to be redirected.”

Through traditional parish worship, social events and service projects, participants learn that friendship and fellowship are possible with others who may not look like them, speak the same language or come from the same income level.

Steve believes that this ministry is a “purely relational” one and that “God works through people.” He invests time in young people with the goal of figuring out their needs and their gifts. He says, “Outreach is my talent. It’s all about hospitality and building relationships.

FATHER FREDY ÁNGEL
Diocese of Savannah, Ga.

From Bogotá, Colombia, Fredy Ángel came to the United States as a missionary in 2001. Just four years later, he became an ordained priest and shortly thereafter was pastoring four churches in southern Georgia.

Today, as the pastor of Queen of Peace Parish in Lakeland and Ray City, Father Ángel has grown a once-struggling parish in rural Georgia into a dynamic and thriving multiethnic community.

Thanks to his perseverance and inspiration, the parish is bursting out of its two locations and now requires the building of a new larger church.

Construction on what is to be the new St. Anthony of Padua Church is now in full swing.

Another impressive feat: Father Ángel has brought together all of his parishioners, who come from diverse ethnic backgrounds into a multicultural community. Father Ángel has also been a founding member of the diocese’s Hispanic Ministry Council, which acts as an advocate for the region’s Latino Catholics.
During his visit to the United States, Pope Francis will highlight our faith’s family foundations.
“HOW PRECIOUS IS THE FAMILY AS THE PRIVILEGED PLACE FOR TRANSMITTING THE FAITH!” Pope Francis said to pilgrims at the 2013 World Youth Day in Rio de Janeiro. He called the family “the essential cell of society and the Church.”

In September Pope Francis will visit the United States to attend the World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia. This congress, started in 1994 and held every three years, is the biggest gathering of Catholic families in the world. The aim is to celebrate families and to fortify the bonds that keep them strong.

“The great mission of the family,” the pope said at a general audience last year, is “to make room for Jesus who is coming, to welcome Jesus in the family, in each member: children, husband, wife, grandparents... Jesus is there. Welcome Him there.”

And how families fare, matters for all of us. During a homily in Australia, Pope St. John Paul II observed, “As the family goes, so goes the nation and so goes the whole world in which we live.”

For many decades Catholic Extension has bolstered families as parents carry out the important work of fostering Catholic values and passing on the faith to their children. So often in mission dioceses, where the institutional presence of the Church is scarce, families face an added responsibility in keeping the faith alive. Our lay leaders support families through home visits and small faith-sharing groups—making the grassroots Church viable in the midst of very challenging circumstances.

Families play an important role not only in building up the faith, but also in providing comfort, healing, forgiveness and reconciliation in times of struggle, particularly in our fast-moving world. Families face economic pressures and, in the search for employment, are often separated by migrations. These fractured families, especially, are searching in many directions for support. They extend...
outward to grandparents, aunts, uncles, friends and neighbors—forming new family structures.

In the following pages, we present several stories that show how Catholic Extension supports families and faith-sharing groups in mission dioceses by bringing the Church and faith to places where there are neither priests nor church buildings. We strengthen grassroots efforts—the heartbeat of the faith. We fund a variety of ministries—ones that reach directly into homes, youth groups, healing programs and academic programs that educate families in Scripture and the fundamentals of Catholicism. Helping families become stronger units of faith is a centerpiece of our mission.

Walking with families is a great investment of our time and efforts and offers endless possibilities for evangelization. As Pope Benedict XVI reminded us in his last World Day of Peace message in 2013, “It is in the family that peacemakers, tomorrow’s promoters of a culture of life and love, are born and nurtured.”

During his visit to the United States, Pope Francis will continue to preach about the family, reminding us, as he did last year, that “Jesus was born in a family. He could have come in a spectacular way, as a warrior or an emperor ... , but no, no, He was born in a family.”

“THE CHURCH IS HERE WITH YOU”
Javier Cervantes, Colorado Springs diocesan minister, strengthens immigrant families

Claudia Rosales, of Leadville, Colorado, hosts weekly gatherings in her home so Catholics can pray the rosary, read the Bible, and share their faith.
Javier Cervantes has an important message for families: “We journey with you. No matter where you are, no matter what you face, the Church is here with you. We accompany you. You are not alone.”

As the first director of Hispanic ministry in the Diocese of Colorado Springs, Colorado, he believes that assurance is meaningful to the 16,000 Hispanics in his diocese. “It’s a population that struggles. The experience of daily life is hard,” he said. “The Church can’t solve all their problems, but the Church can be at their side.”

Cervantes began his post in July 2012 after working in lay ministry in El Paso, Texas. His salary is funded by Catholic Extension.

Cervantes’ job is to harness the energy that the growing immigrant population brings to the Church. “I want to empower the family,” he said, “the nuclear family and the small communal groups that act as extended family.”

Cervantes himself recently attended a two-week training at Boston College’s School of Theology—one that is part of Catholic Extension’s Hispanic Lay Leadership program. “To improve my performance, I need more tools,” he admitted. “I am thankful for this opportunity.”

Cervantes believes that “families and small faith-sharing groups are the base of the Church. To have a strong Church, we need a strong foundation.”

Javier Cervantes works with diverse communities

In his short tenure, Cervantes has made an impact by creating several diocesan-wide programs:

- **The Guadalupan Institute for Adult Faith Formation** develops church leaders. There are two tracks of study. This year the intense track will graduate 16 men and women who have completed a two and a half-year program studying theology, the sacraments, Church history and ministry. They will all work either professionally or as volunteers in their local parishes. The less rigorous track has 40 participants who can’t make the same time commitment but are also eager to further their knowledge of the Church and participate as eucharistic ministers, lectors and catechists.

- **A branch of the international Christian Family Movement** promotes Christian marriage and family life through small neighborhood groups. Four to six families meet every two weeks in a family’s home. Adults and children have separate discussions guided by a layperson or a priest. “One of the best parts,” notes Cervantes, “is that children get to see their parents attend faith meetings. This is good.”

- **The Spanish sector of Cursillos in Christianity** is a worldwide apostolic movement that “fosters strong communities and encourages families to stay active in their parish,” Cervantes said. Jorge Escárcega coordinates the local chapter and organizes annual retreats.

- **Six “Hispanic centers”** offer Spanish-language Masses and sacraments every Sunday, allowing Hispanics from the most remote mountain communities to worship consistently.

- **This September Cervantes will host a two-day event in Colorado Springs called Family Encounter 2015.** He hopes to attract 500 people of all ages. “We as Christian families need to rebuild the culture of marriage and family and motivate others to give back to the Church,” he said.
ONCE a week, on Wednesday evenings, a group of 40 teens, ages 12 to 18, meets at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Dodge City, Kansas, to pray. While it is serious business, it’s also fun. Good, old-fashioned fun—singing, playing games and laughing. It’s a chance to leave behind their technology-driven world, which is often isolating, and to work on relationships with their peers and with Christ.

Occasionally they do incorporate technology into their activities, as seen in the video they made last year for Catholic Extension’s Extension Day video contest. Their video, “Teens put themselves in the shoes of the less fortunate,” was one of six finalists that were sent to Pope Francis and is a must-see (extension day.org).

Catholic Extension has supported youth ministry programs in the Diocese of Dodge City since 1988, totaling over $600,000.

The leader of this group is David McHugh. A youth minister for 12 years, McHugh knows that it’s easy for teens to get lost in the crowd—at school, at the large Cathedral of Our Lady of Guadalupe with 4,000 families, and even at home in a busy household. He also knows that when one feels overlooked, one is not being challenged, held accountable or remembered in a personal way. That’s not the relationship God intends for us.

“Our faith should be...
personal and intimate with God,” he said. “We should be in solidarity with others. Faith-sharing groups allow for these relationships. Youth groups help teens unpack the things they experience daily, the things that God is presenting to them. It keeps them connected and grounded.”

“If the kids are on fire,” McHugh continued, “parents are pulled in too.” Parents often help with the youth group: setting up for youth night, providing supplies, giving presentations and attending worship services together. “Parents are seeing that their teens are spending more time on their interior lives and cultivating a presence of Jesus in their hearts. It changes everything.”

Sacred Heart Church in Ness City, Kansas, was built in 1911 with Catholic Extension funding. Its pastor, Father Henry Hildebrandt, is the only Catholic priest in the county. With the next Catholic Church about 30 miles away, the 320 families who belong to the parish are close-knit. They are also devoted to the church school, which has 80 students.

“The school is a ministry of the Church,” said Father Hildebrandt, whose salary Catholic Extension funds. “We have an important dynamic.” The parish office is also the school office; the parish and school secretary is the same person. Father Hildebrandt eats lunch everyday with the students and also teaches a religion class.

The school creates a strong sense of family, structuring activities for older and younger students to do together. Parents get drawn in too.

This year alone, the parish had nine baptisms for children connected to the school—mainly children whose parents had been inactive Catholics. “Children who haven’t been baptized start desiring baptism when they are at school, especially in the second grade, when all their classmates are receiving first holy Communion,” said Father Hildebrandt.

He explained that Sacred Heart School has a special tradition for baptisms: They take place during the Easter season, at school, during the weekly all-school Mass on Wednesday. The Mass is followed by a big celebration and lunch to which the whole community comes. “This has a powerful evangelizing effect,” he said.

Sacred Heart School supports family life. “More and more, as children come from fractured homes, the school is a stabilizing and nurturing influence,” he said. The school emphasizes values such as empathy, acceptance and concern for others.

“Everything that takes place in this building—every interaction, every exchange—we are forming the kingdom of God,” said Father Hildebrandt.

“The family which experiences the joy of faith communicates it naturally. That family is the salt of the earth and the light of the world, it is the leaven of society as a whole.”

—HOMILY, OCT. 27, 2013
As pastor of Holy Angels Parish in Sturgis, Michigan, Father Germán Pérez-Díaz has developed several programs to support and strengthen the families in his parish. “Parenting,” he said, “is a eucharistic activity because from the first moment of conception, children ‘consume’ us, our flesh, blood, energy, time and resources. If we didn’t sacrifice ourselves, our children would not have life. This is the ‘priesthood of parenting.’ Christ is present in this self-sacrifice.”

Residents of Sturgis started attending Mass in people’s homes in 1864 and established Holy Angeles Parish in 1921—now a diverse parish.
SOMETIMES FAITH NEEDS DUST REMOVAL

Michigan priest nurtures a family-focused parish where laypeople take the lead

For Father Germán Pérez-Díaz, ministering to families at Holy Angels Parish of Sturgis, Michigan, has been a calling. During his early years as a priest, Father Pérez-Díaz repeatedly asked God to show him how he could accomplish what he saw as his primary mission as a priest: evangelization.

“I would ask for help to accomplish this mission more effectively and quickly,” he said. “The Lord responded to me that my mission was to the family. That day I thanked the Lord that He had answered. It was a revelation. Sometimes as pastors we are so focused on so many things. The family became very important to me.”

He is currently a doctoral candidate in ministry at the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, Texas, slated to complete his degree in 2017. Catholic Extension supports his education.

Focusing on families has allowed Father Pérez-Díaz to find many people of faith. But, he said, sometimes that faith is “covered in dust.” He and his parish must “clean up” and clear the vision.

“Once the dust is gone, a family can see a light,” he said. “That light can warm their lives and they can become alive. They have faith but we have to know how to remove the dust that is burying them.”

Father Pérez-Díaz has developed programs designed to build all sides of the family, including religious education attended by 140 men and women each Sunday. Six couples lead the program, and he particularly enjoys seeing the “men with Bibles under their arms.” He noted, “Usually with catechism, only women come. Here it’s men and women, and they both come together and support one another.”

Also, twice a month on Friday evenings, the parish members gather for Mass, to pray the rosary, recite psalms, sing and share their daily experiences. Children participate in evening adoration, followed by all-night adoration for adults. Teens also meet twice a month in groups of four to six to discuss their faith and their challenges. This, Father Pérez-Díaz said, helps them have a church community they trust implicitly, and makes them more likely to be evangelizers of the Church in future years.

The programs bring families from different ethnic backgrounds together, a unity that, in his experience, doesn’t always happen in diverse parishes. And the structure of the parish has changed: Although Father Pérez-Díaz is the formal leader, he has given much responsibility to families. Parishioners now often look to their neighbors for leadership. “We’ve become a lay parish where the real leaders are the laypeople,” he said.

Catholic Extension funds much of the lay training at Holy Angels. Father Pérez-Díaz is grateful that “through generosity and commitment, Catholic Extension is helping to raise the saints of this century.”

His plan has two goals: to encourage every parishioner to have a personal encounter with Jesus Christ, and to cultivate families to become excellent evangelists. Parents will teach Catholic traditions to their children, who will in turn pass them along to their children. The home, he said, becomes a place of mission, a territory for evangelization. And if parishioners can evangelize their homes, they’re on their way to making progress elsewhere.

“It’s like a cell; it reproduces itself,” he said. “The family is the first soil for the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. There’s no better place to preach.”
As laypeople expand their role in ministering to families by leading small faith-sharing and Bible-study groups, their formation in Catholic teaching is essential.

In the dioceses of Brownsville, Texas, and Knoxville, Tennessee, Spanish-speaking parishioners were eager to serve but lacked training. So they turned to the Escuela Bíblica Católica (EBC), the Catholic Bible School at the University of Dallas, a four-year program that covers the entire Bible.

One Saturday each month for 10 months, participants from ages 17 to 85 attended day-long Bible classes led by professors from the university’s School of Ministry. Students learned the basic tenets of the Catholic faith, studied the Old and New Testaments and received leadership training. After two years participants earned a certificate of basic biblical studies. To help the 150 participants, the University of Dallas lowered tuition costs. Catholic Extension funded tuition, books and travel expenses for many students.

**Deacon Luis Zúñiga,** director of the Lay Ministry Institute in the Diocese of Brownsville, said Catholic Extension’s support made this program possible for the 48 four-year graduates from his region.

While this part of Texas is predominantly Catholic, many parishioners don’t have more than a sixth-grade education or a solid understanding of sacred Scripture, he said. Parishioners need to better understand their faith for the good of their families, communities and the life of the Church.

“The goal is for the laity to go back to their parish and then organize Scripture-study groups in the parish,” Zúñiga said. “That, in turn, builds the family, keeps the family.”

The understanding of Scripture was important to participants from the Knoxville diocese, too, said **Lourdes Garza,** the director of Hispanic ministry there. Located in the Bible Belt, only 3 percent of Knoxville residents are Catholic and as a result are often questioned and converted by proselytizing Pentecostal, evangelical or fundamentalist Christian groups, Garza said. Shortly after she joined the diocese in 2009, she dreamed of opening a Spanish-speaking Bible institute to help Catholics in her diocese.

“To have a Bible institute, we needed people prepared to teach about the Bible,” she said. Now Garza and several EBC graduates are starting that institute and hope to open Bible-study groups in each of the diocese’s 51 parishes.
Survivor of domestic violence now helps others

A fter suffering domestic violence from an abusive husband, Teresa Latino said she was no longer able to feel God’s presence. She is grateful that her church told her that she did not need to stay in an abusive marriage, and after receiving legal help and counseling, she was eventually able to put her life back together.

One thing that really helped her was a lay leadership formation program of the Diocese of Kalamazoo, Michigan. “The first thing I had to learn there,” she said, “was that God was actually always with me. Even in the midst of my suffering, God never abandoned me.” Although participation in the program meant significant sacrifices of time and expense, Latino found that it empowered her and gave her the courage to step up as a leader in her community.

Latino now helps other women who are victims of domestic violence. She started by volunteering at her parish. When she noticed the tell-tale signs of domestic abuse in others, she got involved, first by talking with her priest, and later by connecting people with different services and resources. Because of her volunteer work, she was eventually hired by a social-service organization to work full-time on domestic-violence cases. Now, after a change in her job, Latino is back to volunteering at her church and at a women’s shelter.

Helping people in her own parish can sometimes be difficult. “Knowing the abuser as a fellow parishioner is hard,” she said. But she also experiences a lot of support from her parish.

“I am so blessed,” Latino said. “Because I feel that God is telling me that I need to use the talents He has given me, I try to help wherever I can.”

One other way in which Latino helps where she can is by serving as a mentor in the Diocese of Kalamazoo’s Hispanic lay leadership formation program. The program, known as the Instituto San Agustín, has become a national model, and Catholic Extension helped fund it over the past four years.

“I have a lot of passion [for this program],” Latino said. “I like to encourage the students to graduate because I know the struggles they face when they sign up for this three-year program. … I’ve seen many positive changes in the people who are participating in it.”

“When we hurt one another within the family—that is the worst thing! … When [a family’s] soul is wounded in some way, the infection spreads to everyone.”

—GENERAL AUDIENCE, JUNE 24, 2015
Every other Tuesday during the summer, Dominican Sister Margaret Mary O’Doherty drives a busload of children from the Rocky Boy Indian Reservation in Box Elder, Montana, up to the nearby Bear’s Paw Mountains. The children range from fourth-graders to 10th-graders.

“We go up in the mountains and spend the day hiking and swimming,” said Sister Margaret Mary. “We’ll come down to have a picnic.”

After leading trips for 20 years, she said the number of children varies but her purpose does not: She wants the children to encounter beauty.

“It’s so beautiful here in the mountains, right in their backyard, but some of the children have never been here,” she said.
Focusing on the good parts of life is pivotal to Sister Margaret Mary’s work at Rocky Boy, where she has been a pastoral assistant at St. Mary Parish for 32 years. Originally from Elmhurst, New York, Sister Margaret Mary entered the Dominican Sisters of Sparkill in 1957. She earned her master’s degree in religious education and taught in St. Louis, the Bronx, and Middletown, New York, before coming to Rocky Boy, a reservation of 5,000 people. In September she will be 80 years old.

Although she is not a Native American, Sister Margaret Mary loves learning Chippewa-Cree traditions, which have been incorporated into the church.

“The spirituality on this reservation is beautiful, and it gives me life to see people continuing it,” she said. “For me, that’s the most vital thing we need to do here: to help them keep connected to the creator and all the gifts we have here.”

As part of her ministry, Sister Margaret Mary builds relationships with families all over the reservation. She leads a food pantry twice a week at St. Mary’s and teaches religious education at St. Anthony Parish in Box Elder.

“Most of the people on the reservation are baptized, but they are not that involved [in the church],” Sister Margaret Mary said. “So it’s a matter of working with all the people on the reservation, all the people who are here, no matter what they believe.”

Drug abuse, alcoholism and unemployment are common. As a licensed drug and alcohol addiction counselor, Sister Margaret Mary teaches drug prevention classes at the public school. She focuses on “positive action” to keep children “on the straight and narrow.”

“I try to spend more time on showing them what they can do rather than what they shouldn’t do,” she said. “I don’t want to be blowing up the problems. I want to show them they can make healthy choices and that they can walk in a different way.”

Many of the children Sister Margaret Mary works with come from broken homes. Her goal is simply to be supportive of them.

“It’s hard for the kids ... to explain to them that it’s not that they’re loved less, it’s just that there’s a difference. I just try to talk to them about what’s going on. The main thing all of us need to know is that we’re loved by God.”

Since 1979 Catholic Extension has extended more than $350,000 to support the Rocky Boy Reservation. In addition to funding Sister Margaret Mary’s work, funds have supported the building of St. Mary Church and the salary of Father Peter Guthneck, who has been at St. Mary’s since 1977 who serves two other parishes as well.

Father Guthneck was officially adopted into the Native American community—a gesture of respect—and was given the native name “Walking Buffalo.” Like Sister Margaret Mary, he is loved by the families of Rocky Boy.
Maine-Ly Catholic
Diocese’s outreach helps Catholic Church grow again

As the most northeastern state of the country, Maine is known for rocky coastlines, maritime activities and lobster. Less well known to outsiders are its harsh winters and heavily wooded interior. More than 85 percent of the state is forested—the highest percentage of any state—with 18 million acres of forestland. Mission territory.

Maine has long been considered a missionary state for Catholics. In 1604, years before the Pilgrims arrived in America, French missionaries settled in Maine. It is the only New England state with a Catholic history deeply rooted in the Colonial period.

While Catholicism is the largest organized religion in Maine, the number of Catholics had been dwindling in recent years from 283,000 in 2000 to 170,000 in 2014. However, there’s been a shift. This year the 55 parishes of Maine are reporting bubbles of new activity. In March a five-part series in the Bangor Daily News examined “How the Catholic Church is growing again in Maine.” It cited four reasons for growth: a reorganization of the parish structure that offers more flexibility, increasing diversity in pulpits and pews, ambitious outreach efforts to bring young people into the faith, and the messaging of Pope Francis.

Contributing to this growth is the increase of Catholic immigrants who come for work in the state—harvesting blueberries, making Christmas wreaths, processing seafood—and because the state is “tranquilo” with little violence.

When the Flores family settled in Maine in 1997, after years of moving throughout the United States, they were eager to find a church. They were greeted by parishioners at St. Michael’s Church in Cherryfield, who were friendly but uncertain how to integrate immigrants into the Church.

Sister Patricia Pora, a Sister of Mercy and the director of Hispanic ministry for the Diocese of Portland, came to help. She knew that the Church needed to be welcoming. “For Hispanics, relationships are critical. If they are cut out from the Church and don’t feel welcome, we lose them. We need to create leaders and environments so that they can develop relationships.”

Sister Pora, who spent 13 years in rural ministry in Peru, has found ways
to extend the Church’s reach. While based in Portland, she spends hours crisscrossing the state in her car and provides faith formation and pastoral care through home visits and faith-sharing groups.

Gaby Cortez sought out Sister Pora for help. She wanted to have her children baptized. Cortez lives in remote Knox, with her husband, Sergio, a dairy farmer who tends 420 cows. The closest Catholic Church is 45 minutes away—in good weather—so practicing their faith requires flexibility.

In addition to baptismal preparation—Cortez just had her third child—Sister Pora visits regularly, bringing Catholic missals in Spanish and rosaries to Gaby, who now leads a prayer group for the area’s 16 Catholic families.

But the unmet needs of Maine’s Catholic immigrants are staggering. To respond, last year Catholic Extension designated Portland—a diocese that comprises the entire state—as a mission diocese.

One of the diocese’s challenges is that the number of active diocesan priests has fallen from 223 in 1970 to a mere 57 today. Only a handful of these priests are Spanish-speakers. At St. Michael’s Church, only one Spanish Mass was offered during the entire last year. Lay ministry is critical.

With funding from Catholic Extension, Sister Pora hired José Pérez as Hispanic ministry outreach coordinator. With his wife, Rita, he travels throughout the state offering catechetical programs, liturgical resources and sacramental preparation. They help Catholics keep their faith alive in the midst of their demanding work schedules, limited parish options and lack of transportation.

Sister Pora works with two Hispanic Holy Rosary sisters, also supported by Catholic Extension, who are Portland-based. Sister Elsa Telón-Roldán from Guatemala and Sister Miriam Maradiaga-Flores from Honduras offer Bible instruction, access to social services and a food pantry. People often visit them for conversation and prayer as well.

Many immigrants in Maine feel isolated, stuck between two cultures and not well accepted. “Simply having these sisters visit small towns, working with farmers, migrant workers and those in other low-paying jobs is an inspiration. They engage people in the Church and re-engage those who have stopped practicing,” Sister Pora said. “Hispanics like to celebrate their faith to brighten their hard lives. The sisters keep their lively Catholic traditions going.”

For immigrant families, the church is an important point of intervention—a place to strengthen faith, seek healing and build communities. It is their anchor.
MARRIED COUPLE HELPS PEOPLE TURN THEIR LIVES AROUND

Weekend healing retreats bear ‘many fruits’

Saúl and Anaberta Maldonado maintain their church building and tend to the spiritual needs of fellow parishioners.

Saúl and Anaberta Maldonado know the importance of spiritual healing firsthand—and the role that family and Church play in the process.

While struggling with alcohol, Saúl leaned heavily on his loved ones and his faith to help him straighten out his life. He has been sober now for six years; for the past three, he and his wife have dedicated their lives to helping others who struggle.

The Maldonados, who live in Sandhill, Georgia, in the Diocese of Savannah, lead weekend retreats through a 43-year-old movement called Juan XXIII, named after Pope John XXIII. They organize five retreats each year—two for men, two for women and one for couples. Each attracts about 50 people who are facing personal problems such as drugs, alcohol or marriage troubles—to the quiet rural town of Roberta, Georgia. The retreats open and close with a Mass and include Confession, discussions, readings, testimonials and conversions.

“We see many fruits,” said Saúl. “Drug and alcohol users quit. People get better. They turn their lives around and start to rely on faith. They begin to serve their community and Church.”

The Maldonados, who have lived in the area for 10 years and have three children and two grandchildren, are ecstatic to see their Church flourish. Their modest church, Our Lady of Guadalupe Mission Parish, serves 60 families. It holds its Masses in a doublewide trailer with secondhand pews.

Saúl voluntarily maintains the church’s property, and for years Catholic Extension has supported the salary of the pastor. But even though it may lack funds, the spiritual impact of the healing retreats has revitalized the church.

“If we want to change our Hispanic community, if we want our Church to grow, we need to change individual lives, one at a time,” Saúl said.
Jim O’Brien, an Extension Lay Volunteer, welcomes Pope Francis to the United States by sharing a Flat Francis at the 55th ELV reunion. Photo essay on page 44.
Tell us about your family and how it fostered your faith?

I grew up in Butte, Montana. Butte is a mining town that stands on the shoulders of hardworking immigrants who deeply revere their Catholic faith, cherish family ties and value lifelong friendships.

My father moved to Montana from our family farm in Kansas. Dad’s mother died shortly after his birth, and he was raised by his father and paternal grandmother. Dad was no stranger to hardship. Like other Kansas farmers, the Thomas family faced the vicissitudes of harsh weather, ever-shifting market prices, periodic drought and economic depression.

These realities gave my dad the gifts of resilience, unshakeable optimism, deep faith in God, appreciation of education and love of family and friends. His mantra was always “God will see us through.”

My mother was Butte-born, one of eight daughters, the fourth child of Irish parents. Her modest upbringing gave her a deep fondness of children and family, an unshakable Catholic faith, a love of our Blessed Mother, the gift of humor, a love of music, a spirit of altruism and a perennially joyful heart.

Butte was a veritable Catholic enclave. In a town of about 50,000, it boasted 10 parishes, nine Catholic grade schools, an all-boys’ and an all-girls’ high school and a Catholic hospital.

Growing up, the parish was the center of our known world.

I served early morning Mass (in Latin) and my sisters sang in the choir. Our parish school was staffed by sisters, and the town produced a steady stream of vocations to the priesthood and religious life.

Both my parents sacrificed greatly to provide me and my four siblings with a Catholic education, a happy home, a respect for clergy and religious and a prayerful reliance on the provident hand of God.

They also taught us by example that strong families and good marriages require hard work.

**How does the family provide a place of healing and renewal during times of need?**

During my adolescent years, there were many TV shows that viewed family life through rose-colored glasses. Programs like “Leave It to Beaver,” “My Three Sons” and “Father Knows Best” set unattainable standards and unrealistic expectations for ordinary families like yours and mine.

In his 1999 book “The Holy Longing: The Search for a Christian Spirituality” (Doubleday), Oblate Father Ron Rolheiser provides great insight into the reality of family life. He says that the ideal, truly functional family does not exist. Every family, he says, is touched by “sin, pettiness and betrayal” that lives alongside “grace, sanctity and fidelity.”

Looking at family life through this lens, we find something very different and good.

The healthy family redefined is one in which functions like forgiveness, prayerfulness, joy, kindness, laughter and helpfulness begin to outweigh dysfunctions like grudges, anger, the silent treatment, addiction, self-centeredness and pettiness.

**It is freeing for families to realize that there is no such thing as the perfect family.**

More important, it is highly liberating to realize that healthy family life is reachable when fami-
Bishop George Leo Thomas, a member of Catholic Extension’s Board of Governors, serves immigrant families.

Bishop George Leo Thomas, a member of Catholic Extension’s Board of Governors, serves immigrant families.

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Fifty years ago, the Second Vatican Council recognized the “importance of the family for the life and well-being of society,” while also wisely describing the family as a “domestic Church.” The Catholic Church treasures family life as that special place where parents give themselves in love to one another, introduce their children to Christ and immerse them in the spiritual treasures of the Church.

We all know from firsthand experience that not all families are two-parent families, and many live and labor under the duress of poverty, physical and mental illness, addiction, divorce and the rapid ascent of secular values, which are inimical to Christian family life.

The local Church, on both the parish and diocesan levels, is singularly suited to help families enrich and strengthen their family life. Across the country many dioceses and parishes are providing sound marriage preparation, founded upon a rich sacramental theology of marriage and couple-to-couple mentoring.

We teach parenting skills, and Catholic agencies offer counseling services to assist families struggling with mental health issues or addictive disorders. We have marriage enrichment retreats and seminars. We also help families with literacy and English as a Second Language classes, employment networking and affordable day care for working parents.

How can Catholic Extension help?

I am highly encouraged by the Synod on the Family, the second part of which our Holy Father, Pope Francis, will convene in October. It is an effort to underscore and strengthen the irreplaceable role of the family in both Church and society.

In the Diocese of Helena, Montana, Catholic Extension is generously assisting in the formation of strong families and sound parishes by helping with our youth and young adult programs, supporting our campus ministry efforts, aiding with seminarians’ formation, supporting priests present in rural communities and assisting sisters working in our Native American communities.

In the months ahead, Catholic Extension Society will have the opportunity to ask how our organization can strengthen and enhance family life in light of the Synod on the Family.

We can be certain that the investment will pay high dividends for both Church and society.
You were just ordained. Tell us about it.

It was amazing! I walked into the church as a deacon, went through the Rite of Ordination—an ancient ritual in the Church—and Bishop George Leo Thomas did a “laying on of hands” on my head, invoking the Holy Spirit to be passed onto me. I was transformed and walked out as a priest—to intercede for the people of God and become an avenue for mercy.

Who was there to witness?

My family, friends and fellow priests—those who have been praying for me and “gave me” to the Church. They’re invested and proud, but for my family especially, it’s a sacrifice.

For my first year of seminary, I could talk to family only once a week. I also studied in Rome, far from home. I’m the oldest of five boys, and we missed each other.

I heard that you were born premature at three pounds, and your mother told God that if you lived, you would be “all His.” How has your family fostered your faith?

My parents come from families of seven children. My maternal grandparents always gathered us—aunts, uncles, cousins—for Sunday Mass, followed by a big brunch. My dad, a high school teacher and football coach, prays Adoration at 4 a.m. every Thursday. My mom, a homemaker and special education teacher, has a weekly rosary group at church. Faith is a foundation of our family.

Growing up, we attended religious education classes, but they were basic. I wanted to go deeper.

In high school my Protestant friends decided to read the Bible. I’d never read it. Of course, typical boys, we made it into a competition and started racing to finish it.

By my first year of college, I finished, and came to know God in a new way.

Is that when you started thinking of being a priest?

It had crossed my mind, but I wanted to be a doctor and have a family. So I went to Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota, to study pre-med and play football. But during sophomore year, I was on the sideline, injured and praying the rosary. Suddenly I felt a nudge from God, suggesting I be a priest.

I wasn’t ready.

But I became closer to Jesus. Sports and competition—and the suffering and pain they bring—have always helped me understand myself, what’s in my heart and what Jesus is asking of me. The vision of Jesus on the cross came to mind during my toughest sporting moments.

I went to med school at the University of Washington in Seattle, but I said to God, “Let me know how I can serve you and humanity best.”

And He did. While in med school, I went to a missionary priest from Africa, seeking direction. He said, “If you don’t step up to be a priest, who will? At some point, you have to make a commitment.” He reminded me of a football coach and this time, it all made sense.

What are you looking forward to doing?

Strengthening the Catholic culture in the United States. Unlike in Europe, we’ve never had a strong Catholic identity here. In Italy, Catholic feast days are national holidays.

But Americans have a pioneering, entrepreneurial spirit. We are fighters and we’re leaders in missionary work, right here in our country.

American Catholics engage Scripture in new, exciting ways—individual responsibility for the faith. Our love of faith is contagious. The world is watching.

How does Catholic Extension help?

As Catholics, we have a universal call for holiness and to be missionaries. Catholic Extension helps people answer the call. In our diocese, you fund people to be trained and educated, so lay leaders develop and the faith spreads.

Catholic Extension works in remote areas—with people who have good values and strong families—but who need better access to Catholic culture. There’s so much potential in rural settings.

Bringing people to the Eucharist is the new evangelization, and everyone has to be involved.
On June 26, 2015, Father Christopher Lebsock, of Billings, Montana, was ordained at the Cathedral of St. Helena in Helena by Bishop George Leo Thomas. Father Lebsock attended St. John Vianney Seminary in Denver and the Pontifical North American College in Rome. This summer he will be a youth minister at Legendary Lodge in Montana, and will return to Italy in September to continue his studies. Catholic Extension partially funded his formation, and the Diocese of Helena participated in our Seminarian Endowment Challenge in 2012.
Dear Catholic Extension,

CONGRATULATIONS ON THE redesign of Extension magazine in your spring issue. It is truly a work of journalistic art. The art and layout simply lure the reader to come in for a better look.

Best wishes for your continued success.

Larry Doherty | Lincolnshire, Ill.

Dear Catholic Extension,

DUE TO THE ACTIONS of Catholic Extension and your generosity, I now have the privilege of working very closely with teachers and students in an environment of strong Catholicism where the youth are formed to live the Gospel as they prepare for the world. What an honor I have been given!

Father Kregg W. Hochhalter | Dean of Students, Trinity Junior High and High School
Dickinson, Diocese of Bismarck, N.D.

Dear Father Wall,

I HAD TO SEND this booklet on to you. It was printed in 1952 by Catholic Extension. Enjoy and share! God bless all the great work in our USA.

Mr. and Mrs. Richard Hunsaker | Newport Beach, Calif.

Dear Catholic Extension,

BOWLING FOR SEMINARIANS in El Paso was a hit! Thank you for the opportunity to raise funds for seminarian education. In the process we’ve raised awareness and shown our seminarians lots of love and support.

El Paso bowled for seminarians on July 4.

Dear Catholic Extension,

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HOLY FAMILY PARISH SUPPORTS ST. MARY’S MISSION

Catholic Extension recently accepted a check from Holy Family Parish in Inverness, Illinois supporting St. Mary’s Mission at Red Lake in the Diocese of Crookston, Minnesota. Their partnership was featured in the spring issue of Extension magazine. The funds were raised through their 2015 Lenten Service Project, surpassing $70,000.
Dear Catholic Extension,

MY UNCLE, FATHER Jacob Bauer, passed away on January 3. The reason I contact you is because my dad informed me that Father Jacob* could not have gone to the seminary if it had not been for the support of Catholic Extension. Father Jake spent the past 70 years serving the Lord, and this was all possible because of your assistance. Thank you!!!

Kathleen Otte | Winter Park, Fla.

*Jacob stayed home to farm with his father the first year after high school. He could see there was a great need for priests in the diocese and knew he was being called to serve the Lord. His family was unable to provide the funds needed to attend the seminary. Through the support of Catholic Extension, it all became possible. In 1941 Jacob entered St. John’s Home Mission Seminary in Little Rock, Arkansas, where he received his philosophical and theological training. Father Bauer was ordained in St. Mary’s Cathedral in Grand Island, Nebraska, on May 27, 1948.

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Dear Catholic Extension,

CATHOLIC EXTENSION generously provided an $84,000 challenge grant to our parish to build a new rectory, which was blessed by Bishop Thomas Daly on Saturday, July 11. Thanks to your support, we have not only a new rectory but also a renewed sense of stewardship in our parish. I want to thank you and the members of Catholic Extension for your efforts on behalf of our community.


Dear Catholic Extension,

THANK YOU VERY much for your generosity to St. Matthew the Apostle Catholic Church. What was once “our little parish” is no longer little. We have grown since the devastation of Hurricane Katrina along the Mississippi and Louisiana coastline. Thank you to the many donors who make the expansion of our quality Catholic mission work a reality as we respond to Jesus’ call to bring his message to the ends of the earth.

Darnell and Elbert Cuevas | Perkinston, Miss.

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GIFT FROM EL PASO

Catholic Extension received a beautiful Our Lady of Guadalupe cross, now hanging in one of our conference rooms, from Verónica Rayas, Lupe González and Elia Cárdenas of the Diocese of El Paso, Texas. All three women are beneficiaries of our university scholarship programs and other grants that support their lay ministry. During their recent visit to the Chicago office, they prepared a delicious Mexican fiesta meal for the staff of Catholic Extension. ¡Muchas gracias!
IN ANTICIPATION OF Pope Francis’ first visit to the United States, Catholic Extension launched our “Flat Francis” social media campaign to show Pope Francis the Catholic Church in this country. We asked Catholics to download our Flat Francis cutout and post photos with him that represented their experience of the Church.

We were overwhelmed by and grateful for the positive response! We received more than 1,500 photos that demonstrate the vibrancy, diversity, creativity and deep faith of American Catholics.

Flat Francis traveled to all 50 states and beyond, turning up at hundreds of churches, Catholic schools, youth groups, senior groups, religious orders, sporting events, scout meetings, Knights of Columbus events and more. He even met a few celebrities!

On behalf of Catholic Extension, thank you for participating in our Flat Francis campaign and demonstrating the energy and vitality of the Catholic Church in America. We are excited to use these photos to create a photomosaic that will be sent to Pope Francis. Visit www.flatfrancis.org to browse all of the submissions.
Do you have a plan?
Debunking the myths of planned giving

Experts agree that the worst thing someone can do is not have a will or trust. Then it’s up to the courts to decide where your money goes. Here are a few common questions and misconceptions about the estate planning process—with sound answers.

The words “trust,” “bequest” and estate leave most people feeling anxious or confused. But it doesn’t have to be that way, according to Melissa Babcock, director of planned giving for Catholic Extension. In fact, Melissa says, most people actually find greater peace of mind once they have a plan in place.

Call or email Melissa at 800-842-7804 or direct 312-795-6043 or MBabcock@catholicextension.org

1. What if I change my mind? Are my will plans reversible? Yes, we understand that circumstances and your needs may change. If you ever wish to amend your plan or revoke a charitable bequest in it, you can do so—easily and at any time.

2. I’m not “wealthy.” Is the Catholic Extension Legacy Club really right for me? Planned giving and membership in the Legacy Club aren’t just for the wealthy. As Father Jack Wall, president of Catholic Extension, has said, “No gift is too small to make a difference in the faith lives of others.” What’s more, people can give gifts that cost nothing in their lifetime by making a bequest of property or by naming Catholic Extension as a beneficiary of an insurance policy. There often are tax advantages to this approach.

3. Am I too young (or too old) to think about estate planning? No matter your age, it’s important to have a plan. In addition to ensuring that your wishes are carried out, it will help your loved ones during a difficult time. Having a will or trust will ensure that your assets go where you determine and not where the state determines.

4. It sounds complicated. How do I get started? If you have a financial planner or lawyer, consulting with them is a great first step to get the help and support you need. They can help you determine what assets you have and help you establish the proper vehicles. I enjoy talking with our donors and going through the myriad of options available to them.

5. Can I leave money to my heirs and to charity? Yes. Our goal at Catholic Extension is to ensure that you and your loved ones are taken care of first. As long as you have a plan that lays out your wishes, you can leave a lasting legacy to your heirs and the charities that you hold dear to your heart.

6. Can I specify what I want to support? We take great pride in fulfilling the requests of our donors. If there is a special ministry or initiative you would like to support, please let us know.

7. What is the process of becoming a Legacy Club member? Simply call us or fill out the slip on the facing page and mail it to Catholic Extension. In gratitude for your Legacy Club commitment, you will receive the knowledge that your bequest will provide for the most immediate needs of the people in poor Catholic communities in America, as well as a certificate of appreciation, a paperweight, a lifetime subscription to Extension magazine and a special annual Mass for the intentions of our Legacy Club members.
To learn how you can add Catholic Extension to your will or estate plan, contact Melissa Babcock at 1-800-842-7804, or MBabcock@catholicextension.org or mail the form below.

Please cut along the dotted line and mail to:
Catholic Extension, 150 South Wacker Drive, Suite 2000, Chicago, IL 60606

I have made Catholic Extension a beneficiary of my estate in the following manner:

I would like to know more about making a lasting gift through my estate plan. I’m interested in:

☐ gifts by will or living trust.
☐ gifts that provide me and/or my family with lifetime income.

Your generosity lives on, building faith, inspiring hope and igniting change in poor Catholic communities across America for years to come.

For it is in giving that we receive

Please include Catholic Extension in your will or estate plan today.

Your generosity lives on, building faith, inspiring hope and igniting change in poor Catholic communities across America for years to come.

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Actions speak louder than words

Longtime California donor finds myriad ways to live her faith

Judy Barrett is the kind of woman who ends her phone calls with a quiet “God bless.”

Barrett, a longtime donor to Catholic Extension, has been involved in spreading the word of Christ and sharing her Catholic faith for years.

But she doesn’t do it loudly. Instead, Barrett seeks to show her faith through actions, not words. And in her humble, pleasant way, she has made a big difference in Northern California and across the world.

Judy and her husband, Jim, married in 1979. Jim, who passed away in March 2013, owned Chateau Montelena, a winery tucked into the hills of Napa Valley. Famous for putting California Chardonnay on the map in 1976 with a historic wine at the Judgment of Paris wine-tasting competition, and highly acclaimed for its Cabernet wines, the successful vineyard is still going strong.
And as the vines have continued to bring forth delicious wine, Barrett has continued to donate to many Catholic causes.

“One of the guiding principles of our life together as a couple was that we had been blessed in so many ways,” she said. “And as Scripture says: When you’re greatly blessed with a lot of something, you need to share it and give it back. Because really, you have it in trust from God to use.”

Judy was raised Lutheran, with an upbringing that instilled those values. As she grew closer to her brother-in-law, Father Vincent Barrett, a diocesan priest in Los Angeles, she started thinking about Catholicism.

“Neither he nor Jim pushed me, but through gentle persuasion and conversations, I finally thought, ‘I have to do this,’” Barrett said. “Purely from within, led by the Holy Spirit, I made the decision.”

She became a Catholic in 1985, and the importance of stewardship only grew.

Over the years the Barretts fine-tuned their charitable giving by focusing on three areas: the poorest of the poor, Catholic education, and seminarians and religious life.

“It is so essential to the life of the Church that we have good priests and good sisters and brothers devoted to the Church,” she said. “And that is certainly one of the missions of Catholic Extension.”

Barrett’s connection to Catholic Extension goes back a long ways: In 1985 one of her husband’s relatives, Brother Mathias Barrett, a Brother of St. John of the Cross, was honored with a Lumen Christi Award.

The Barretts supported Catholic Extension annually from 1989 to 1998. They recently rekindled the relationship. Her renewed interest was fueled in part by the work of Bishop Robert Vasa, who began serving Northern California in 2011.

“He has really been trying to raise awareness of Catholic Extension. When it came back on my radar, I thought, ‘Yes! This is something I definitely need to support again.’

In 2014 Barrett joined the Socius Circle, and this year she was a judge for the Lumen Christi Award, discovering many new role models for her faith development.

“All of the nominees have such amazing stories, people doing all sorts of things for the church that are just astounding,” she said.

Judy’s support to Catholic causes includes donating her time as well. For nearly 20 years she served as the Diocese of Santa Rosa’s volunteer director of the Respect Life ministry.

Active in both the diocese and her parish, Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Calistoga, Barrett also contributes to a blog of the California
Catholic Conference, the public policy arm of the Catholic Church in the state. Barrett writes about advocacy issues in the state legislature. She also is a member of the Wyoming Catholic College’s board of directors.

She and a group of friends started a Catholic women’s book club, something she’s found beneficial not just for the literature, but also for the fellowship.

“I enjoy meeting people and introducing them to some new aspect of their faith, or to some new way they can help…. One-on-one is a great way to share our faith.”

Father Gordon Kalil, pastor at St. Helena Church in St. Helena, California, has known Barrett for 15 years. He said that through her many activities—including her work with the Fellowship of Catholic University Students and the Legatus Napa Valley Chapter, where Father Kalil is chaplain—Judy is truly putting her faith into action.

“She is an inspirational witness of Christ,” Kalil added. “Judy’s humility precludes any desire for recognition of what she does and who she is as a Catholic in the world.”

Long devoted to St. Francis of Assisi, Barrett likes his motto “Preach the Gospel at all times. When necessary, use words.”

“The example of our life is one of the best ways we can witness to our faith,” she said. “Accepting others where they are and realizing that everybody wants to be loved and to be treated with dignity, I try to approach everyone in that way.”

Catholic Extension donors Judy Barrett and her late husband, Jim, helped put California wines on the map.
THE CANTICLE OF THE SUN

BY ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

Most high, all powerful, all good Lord!
All praise is yours, all glory, all honor, and all blessing.
To you, alone, Most High, do they belong.
No mortal lips are worthy to pronounce your name.

Be praised, my Lord, through all your creatures,
especially through my lord Brother Sun,
who brings the day; and you give light through him.
And he is beautiful and radiant in all his splendor!
Of you, Most High, he bears the likeness.

Be praised, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars;
in the heavens you have made them, precious and beautiful.

Be praised, my Lord, through Brothers Wind and Air,
and clouds and storms, and all the weather,
through which you give your creatures sustenance.

Be praised, my Lord, through Sister Water;
she is very useful, and humble, and precious, and pure.

Be praised, my Lord, through Brother Fire,
through whom you brighten the night.
He is beautiful and cheerful, and powerful and strong.

Be praised, my Lord, through our sister Mother Earth,
who feeds us and rules us,
and produces various fruits with colored flowers and herbs.

Be praised, my Lord, through those who forgive for love of you;
through those who endure sickness and trial.
Happy are those who endure in peace,
for by you, Most High, they will be crowned.

Be praised, my Lord, through our Sister Bodily Death,
from whose embrace no living person can escape.
Woe to those who die in mortal sin!
Happy those she finds doing your most holy will.
The second death can do no harm to them.

Praise and bless my Lord,
and give him thanks,
and serve him with great humility. Amen.

[TRANSLATION BY BILL BARRETT]
WHAT'S COMING IN THE WINTER 2015 ISSUE

FAITH AND THE ENVIRONMENT
Our future in the Caroline Islands

LUMEN CHRISTI AWARD
Announcing the 2015-2016 recipient

NEW BISHOP ROBERT BARRON
Interview on seminary training