YOUNG CATHOLICS HAVE A PASSION FOR JESUS AND FOR HELPING PEERS

HEARTS ON FIRE

Lay Ministry Movement: Extension Lay Volunteers to Today
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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From plumber’s apprentice to a priest
SEMINARIANS | Jesús Mariscal discusses his vocation

Son of sharecroppers becomes a bishop
BISHOP’S COMMENTARY | Bishop Curtis Guillory shares his story

’60s movement keeps moving
FEATURE | Starting with Extension Lay Volunteers, lay ministry remains vital

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Welcome to our newly designed Extension

FROM THE EDITOR: ELIZABETH BOO

WE ARE EMBARKING on a new adventure!

We realize that our donors, from Millennials to the Greatest Generation, like to receive information from a variety of sources—print, digital and broadcast. We also know you like a range of topics, presented in different ways, from late-breaking news briefs to long-brewed feature articles.

In the past several months, we have been reimagining how to present our stories to you. We want to reach all donors in the ways that work best for each individual—at anytime. Additionally, we want our media platforms to be integrated, so that people can move seamlessly among them throughout the day.

To lead us through this redesign, we sought the help of Mario García and Reed Reibstein of García Media, a global consulting firm. We also contracted a new art director, Elio Leturia, of Columbia College Chicago.

You will see a few differences in the magazine: illustrated covers; new features, such as Roots; and new sections called BUILD, INSPIRE and IGNITE, based on our tagline, Building Faith | Inspiring Hope | Igniting Change.

On our website, you will see a new design with a greater focus on storytelling. The Extension magazine section of our website will contain enhanced digital versions of the stories found in the print magazine, as well as frequently updated news stories, photos, videos and more.

We hope you enjoy our newly designed means of communicating with you, our treasured donors.
FROM THE CONSULTANT: MARIO GARCÍA

IT’S A NEW EXTENSION you are reading today and it took a few months to give your favorite magazine a look and feel that will make your journey through each page faster and more enjoyable.

Magazines change their design for a variety of reasons, most important of which is to provide better navigation, more legible typography and appropriate color palette that will make the content more appealing.

We are all aware of the lifestyle of our busy readers today. It is an unparalleled revolution in the media, one in which print products, such as Extension, compete for the readers’ attention with not just newspapers and television, as was the case a few years ago, but with mobile devices such as smart phones and tablets. Very soon, there will be more platforms for consuming information as Apple introduces its much-anticipated smart watch.

All of these factors have been taken into consideration as we have crafted a new Extension that will offer you an easier way to navigate the table of contents, leading you to stories you want to read faster. Once there, the new design and storytelling strategies will guide you through the page so you can enjoy our stories better. Starting with the size of headlines, use of photography and internal navigation for longer pieces, as we know you are often interrupted when reading, we want to provide a more natural flow for the era of our “journalism of interruptions.”

It is also a fact that we bring our digital reading habits to print. We scan headlines, photos and captions. We read fewer articles in their entirety (although a good article is still as intriguing today as it was when Extension was first founded), and the editors hope to offer many of those. So the Extension magazine that is in your hands right now follows the patterns of what I call doing print happily: designing with the thought in mind that you are busy and it is our duty to provide you with a pleasant reading journey.

The new Extension aims to do that. We at García Media are honored to have worked with the talented team of Catholic Extension on this project. Let us know what you think.

Mario Garcia is CEO/Founder of Garcia Media. He is Senior Adviser on News Design at Columbia University’s School of Journalism.
A letter from Father Wall

WHAT AN ENERGIZING moment it is in the history of the Catholic Church in America to experience our Catholic Faith embodied and expressed so richly within the cultural diversity of our country! Every time you turn the page of Extension magazine, you enter into the exciting story of our brothers and sisters who are bearing witness to our One Faith while living it with vigor and vision within their own cultural heritage.

As you read this current issue of Extension, I hope that you will be inspired by the courageous journey of our African-American Catholics and their unique contribution to the vibrancy of the Church in the United States.

Before Pope Francis wrote the “The Joy of the Gospel,” or challenged us to walk among the marginalized, or stirred our hearts to be on fire with a passionate love of Christ and each other, we through Catholic Extension have been the inspired witnesses of the Spirit of God at work in our African-American Catholic Communities throughout our country.

And you our donors have been a bulwark of strength who have helped them keep alive the transformative gift of faith as they confront the forces of prejudice which oppress them both because they are Black and because they are Catholic.

Once again we enter together into the great mystery of Easter to encounter the Risen Christ who overcomes all the powers of darkness in our world. You our donors are an Easter people who recognize the presence of the Risen One among our brothers and sisters living in the most challenging circumstances and in the poorest places of our country. Together with them we are an Easter people joined in solidarity to give witness throughout our land to the joy of the gospel that the Risen Christ promises will never be taken from us!

Yours in Christ,

Rev. John J. Wall
President
In Alabama, a community without a church nearby, created a makeshift chapel in a garage. Photo Essay on page 16
From the dioceses

**DIOCESE OF FAIRBANKS**
**ALASKA**
$11,000 grant to install a navigation and communications system in a donated Cessna airplane used to transport priests to inaccessible parishes.

**DIOCESE OF CHEYENNE**
**WYOMING**
Building challenge grant to St. Leo’s Church in Lusk to improve physical accessibility to the church.

**DIOCESE OF RENO**
**NEVADA**
Funding for six seminarians who will help serve this diocese of 70,000 square miles.

**EPARCHY OF OUR LADY OF LEBANON**
**NATIONWIDE**
In Colorado, support to a new priest for the growing community of 80 families at St. Rafka Maronite Catholic Church, the only Maronite Church in the state.

**SAN ANTONIO**
**TEXAS**
On Facebook, more than 1,000 San Antonio “likes” make this city Catholic Extension’s biggest supporter on the social-media site.
**ARCHDIOCESE OF MOBILE**
ALABAMA
Building challenge grant to St. Joseph Catholic Church in Holy Trinity to develop a community center for the parish.

**DIOCESE OF DULUTH**
MINNESOTA
Support to six young priests for continuing education in pastoral ministry.

**DIOCESE OF PORTLAND**
MAINE
The diocese, comprising the entire state of Maine, receives 3-year funding for a Hispanic lay leader and two Sisters of the Holy Rosary.

**DIOCESE OF CHARLESTON**
SOUTH CAROLINA
The Spanish School of Faith Program trains 350 Hispanic students a year to become ministry leaders. Catholic Extension is committed to funding $105,000 over three years.

**ARCHDIOCESE OF SANTA FE**
NEW MEXICO
Support for a 3-year salary for a newly placed Spanish-speaking priest at a mission serving migrant families that have had no priest for years.
World War II veteran and extraordinary Extension partner goes home to God

Extension has lost a friend. Father Thaddeus Searles, age 90, who passed away on February 20, 2015, was the oldest parishioner at St. Joseph’s Parish in Holy Trinity, Alabama. Before joining the Missionary Servants of the Most Holy Trinity, Fr. Thaddeus, took part in wartime missions in the Pacific, along with some of his siblings. One brother died in Normandy.

Catholic Extension helped Fr. Thaddeus throughout his career, which included serving poor churches in Mississippi and Alabama. As a retired religious man, he received a monthly stipend of $200. Each month, he donated $50—or 25%—of his income to Catholic Extension. His sacrifice and generosity will not be forgotten.
Pope Francis has named two bishops to lead mission dioceses in Lexington and Spokane.

Father John Stowe, O.F.M. (left) will lead in Lexington, Kentucky, a diocese where only 3% of residents are Catholic, but Hispanic communities are growing. Fr. Stowe speaks Spanish fluently. He has served in the Diocese of El Paso, Texas and at the Basilica and National Shrine of Our Lady of Consolation in Carey, Ohio.

Bishop Thomas Daly, currently auxiliary bishop for the Diocese of San José, California, will become bishop of Spokane, succeeding Archbishop Culpich. Catholic Extension has supported the Diocese of Spokane since 1914—a diocese that now serves 90,000 Catholics in 82 parishes.

**DIOCESE OF LAS CRUCES, NEW MEXICO**

Mona Alvarez Chip, Catholic Extension Hispanic Lay leader and Associate Campus Minister at New Mexico State University is hosting this year’s Campus Ministry Leadership Institute in June, also supported by Extension. The meeting gathers students and ministers for five days of team building, project development, and networking. For the 150 participants, “this is an opportunity to learn how to better serve their faith communities,” she said.

**LOYOLA MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY, LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA**

On January 24, Loyola Marymount University and Catholic Extension co-hosted a conference, Building Bridges: A Symposium on the Future of Education and Ministry in the Church. With nearly 150 attendees, the keynote speaker was Los Angeles Archbishop José Gomez, followed by panelists Bishop Joseph Tyson of Yakima and 2014 Lumen Christi Award recipients, Sr. Emily Jocson and Sr. Fátima Santiago, Diocese of Brownsville, Texas.

**DIOCESE OF AMARILLO, TEXAS**

María Guadalupe Alvarez became a Catholic Extension Hispanic Lay leader at St. Joseph’s Parish in Amarillo, Texas. A parishioner since 2009, she believes that the lay ministry program will “create an open door for Spanish-speaking communities.” She wants the youth, in particular, to know that “they have a place in the parish and in the diocese.”

**DIOCESE OF FARGO, NORTH DAKOTA**

Serving the Chippewa and Metis Indians of Turtle Mountain since 1885, St. Ann’s Indian Mission is still active through a cluster of five parishes scattered throughout the Turtle Mountain reservation, including St. Ann’s Catholic Church in Belcourt. A local resident and Native American, David “Doc” O’Brien, is the development director for these churches, a position that Extension has funded.

**DIOCESE OF AMARILLO, TEXAS**

Maria Guadalupe Alvarez became a Catholic Extension Hispanic Lay leader at St. Joseph’s Parish in Amarillo, Texas. A parishioner since 2009, she believes that the lay ministry program will “create an open door for Spanish-speaking communities.” She wants the youth, in particular, to know that “they have a place in the parish and in the diocese.”
In Slocomb, a town of 2,000 in southwestern Alabama, Archdiocese of Mobile, the closest Catholic Church is 25 miles away. Because of difficulties traveling this far, Elsa and Javier Sánchez have created a makeshift chapel in their corrugated metal garage. On the walls hang the Ten Commandments in Spanish. A statue of Our Lady of Guadalupe watches over from the corner and a random assortment of chairs serve as pews. A Catholic Extension lay minister visits regularly for catechism classes and prayer. Once a month, a priest comes to celebrate Mass to a jam-packed crowd of 80. PHOTOS BY RICH KALONICK
Neighbors gather to reflect and pray together.

Right Javier Sánchez offers devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Olga Villar (in black), a Catholic Extension Hispanic Lay Leader, drives three hours to the chapel garage for her ministry.
ABOVE The garage is multi-purpose; the chapel is an interior room made holy.

BELOW Olga Villar (also featured in a story on p. 32) leads a prayer group.
ISTER Thea, originally Bertha Bowman, was born in Yazoo City, Mississippi, in 1937. Her father was a physician and her mother a teacher who wanted their only child to be educated. Without good public school options for African Americans, her parents saved money to send her to Holy Child Jesus School in Canton, staffed by the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration. Although raised Methodist, Bertha admired the sisters and their faith. At 10, she converted to Catholicism and five years later, despite her parents’ misgivings, joined the order in La Crosse, Wisconsin, as their first African-American sister. At the convent, she was a vibrant presence, often breaking into gospel-style song, and marveling everyone. She took her vows in 1958 and chose the name Thea, meaning “of God.”

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Student and Educator

Sister Thea taught elementary school in La Crosse and high school at Holy Child Jesus, her alma mater, where she was the first African-American nun. She graduated from Viterbo University in La Crosse, and pursued doctorates at Catholic University in Washington, D.C. and Boston College. She also helped found the Institute for Black Catholic Studies at Xavier University in New Orleans, where she taught. She helped many students pursue an education, often finding scholarships for African-Americans to attend Catholic colleges.

Bridge builder

Outside the classroom, Sr. Thea also brought people together, often through music. She formed choirs and helped write hymnals. One of her favorite songs “This Little Light of Mine,” is the early 20th Century gospel song, popular in the 1960s. When Bishop William Houck, President Emeritus of Catholic Extension, arrived as an auxiliary bishop in the Jackson Diocese in 1979, he worked with her while she was Director of Intercultural Awareness.

“She knew that each of us has unique gifts,” he said. “She loved those differences and those different gifts. She believed in Jesus Christ and wanted to promote His value system of loving each other as He loves us. She wanted people to share together in parish life.”

And faith is a powerful tool in civil rights and justice. “When you
realize that God loves you, it does something special for you. It elevates you,” the Bishop said. “But then you realize that I’m not the only guy on the block. That God loves others the same way. They too are worthy of his love. Sr. Thea reminded us that God loves us all. So we need to respect and live with our fellow humans, despite our different backgrounds, because we are all children of God. We all deserve human dignity.”

Leader

Sister Thea traveled around the U.S. with her message of community and reminded Catholics that black people are part of the Church, too. She believed that by recognizing the gifts of all participants, the Church would be a better place.

In 1989, she was invited to address the meeting of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in New Jersey about Evangelization among Catholic minorities. Dressed in a colorful African robe, she spoke and sang. “At the end, she asked us to stand, cross our arms, join hands and sing, We Shall Overcome,” said Bishop Houck. “It was an inspiration and deeply emotional.”

Diagnosed with cancer in 1984, Sr. Thea continued to speak out as robustly as possible—having pledged “to live until I die”—until she died at 52 on March 30, 1990.

Her legacy of faith and service continues. Schools, educational foundations, and residences for children are named for her. Catholic Extension continues to support her home diocese of Jackson, and its efforts to promote multiculturalism—with totals exceeding $12 million—since 1907.

“We are grateful,” said Bishop Houck. “Without support from Catholic Extension, the Diocese of Jackson could not carry out its needed ministries.”

“I think the difference between me and some people is that I’m content to do my little bit.”
—Sr. Thea Bowman
Before joining the seminary, what did you do?

After high school, I attended a five-year apprentice program and became a journeyman for the Plumbers and Steamfitters Local Union 598. In this job, I had to be disciplined and work with many kinds of people. God was already preparing me for seminary formation.

How did you discern your vocation?

This is the question that I asked every priest I knew. But I would always get disappointing, vague answers. No one could give me a concrete description. Now I understand them perfectly.

A series of events, comments, conversations and prayers brought me to take this path. There was one occasion, however, when I was 26, that was not a subtle call. I was planning to get married. As part of the preparations, my fiancé was confirmed. After the Mass, she and I greeted the celebrant Bishop, who looked at me and said, “How long will it be until you enter the seminary?” A spark was ignited.

With my former fiancé’s support, I entered the seminary.

What is the seminary like?

It is an adventurous expedition to a mysterious destination through uncharted terrain that—to me—represents the will of God.

God always has something new, challenging, and exciting for me, whether it’s something I learn or someone I meet, or a new demanding project, or winning a flag–football game with my class.

What motivates me is daily Mass, where there is no point of worrying or thinking about other things like exams. I simply relax and engage my self in celebration. The Eucharist is where I receive all that I need to continue in this journey full of surprises, sacrifices, struggles, and joys.

Why be a priest?

To fulfill the mission of the Church. To bring hope to the hopeless through the Gospel, whether they are poor, rich, marginalized or elite. I want to talk to young men and women about vocations to religious life or the priesthood without them saying, “why do you not try it yourself first?”

How will you appeal to young people?

By example. I strive to be happy and show that the Catholic faith is
Since 1992, Catholic Extension has funded over $2 million to educate seminarians in the Diocese of Yakima, Washington, including José de Jesús Mariscal Guzmán. In 2014, Jesús, graduated with honors from Mount Angel Seminary in Saint Benedict, Ore. with majors in Philosophy, Religious Studies, and Literature. Two months later, he arrived at Pontifical North American College in Rome to continue his theology studies.

Youth groups need attention and a stronger commitment from priests. Many parishes have separate youth groups, one for Hispanics and one for others, even when the Hispanics speak English. But this is often an unnecessary separation. There are differences among cultures and traditions, but this does not mean that they have to be separate. How can they learn to live in communion with each other and each other’s cultures, and earn each other’s respect if they are always in separate youth groups.

What do different cultures bring to the Church in the U.S.?

The two cultures that I know best, Hispanic and North American, complement each other and contribute much richness. North Americans tend to be more solemn in their worship. Hispanics are very devoted to Catholicism and their religious celebrations are festive, with lively music, and lots of processions and enactments of the Scriptures. 📜

Join us and together we can:
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- Support priests, women religious and lay ministers
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Minimum age is 55

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Parishioners at St. Anthony’s Catholic Church in Lafayette, Louisiana, bond together as a faith community. Story on page 22
Hearts on Fire
Teenagers, parishioners and lay ministers combine a passion for Jesus, Church and community.
ONE OF THE most courageous stories within the U.S. Catholic Church is that of African-American Catholics—a story of perseverance, joy and hope.

For years, black people felt invisible and not fully appreciated in the Church. But instead of leaving, they cultivated a faith that has fueled strength, freedom and exuberance.


Catholic Extension has a long history of supporting African-American churches and ministries that serve poor and neglected communities in the Deep South. In the last five years, Catholic Extension has granted over $3 million to African-American communities across 22 dioceses, among these the Diocese of Lafayette, Louisiana—with a large group of black Catholics, representing 30 percent of its Catholic population—is a big recipient.

Dominique Williams, 17-year-old chairperson of a recent Catholic Youth Congress in Lafayette is too young to remember segregation in the Church, but he imagines that he might have struggled to stay. But, he said philosophically, “God chose my ancestors to be Catholics. God wanted them there. He gave them the strength to sit peacefully in the back of the Church so that they could gain their rights.”

And by staying in the Catholic Church...
Church, their faith has become robust.

Despite comprising only 3 percent of U.S. Catholics, African Americans influence the Church in significant ways and bring gifts of leadership, passion and social-mindedness.

Leadership:

Becoming a lay minister

“I was born a Catholic in 1961 in Gueydan, Louisiana” said Stephanie Bernard of Lafayette. “There was one Catholic Church in town, and it was mainly white. There were two pews for blacks at the back of our Church. We couldn’t be ushers or lectors or hold leadership positions. We entered church through a side door. And we were last to receive Holy Communion. Blacks still abided by the laws of segregation and never ventured from their assigned area.” She paused.

“But even with all these rules, no one could regulate our relationship with the Lord. Our faith was freeing,” she said.

Stephanie’s father was Catholic and her mother a Baptist who had promised to raise the children Catholic. Growing up, Stephanie cleaned the Baptist church on Saturdays with her mother and siblings, never missed Mass on Sundays and occasionally attended Baptist services. She saw differences in the churches. The Baptists sang loudly, shouting “Amen” and “Alleluia” during services, and making her feel at home. The Catholic Church was solemn, but she felt committed to stay.

At age 16, she was confirmed in the Catholic Church, but soon longed for a deep belonging, to be in the choir, read during services and participate in church-sponsored events. She joined her mother’s Baptist Church.

“We are relational people,” she said. “We want to belong. To be loved. To be accepted. We want a safe place. In the South, people often ask, ‘Who’s your momma?’ We want to know who your parents are, who your family is. We want connections.”

After college she married a Catholic, and, like her mother, she promised her husband to raise the children as Catholics. She decided to rejoin the Catholic Church.

Our founder’s leadership

Catholic Extension’s founder, Fr. Francis Clement Kelley, felt an affinity to the African-American community, given that both blacks and Catholics were targets of prejudice by the KKK in many states of the South, where Extension provided support. He raised funds to support African American Catholic communities in rural areas of the country, in collaboration with the newly established, “Catholic Board of Negro Missions.”

Fr. Kelley was devoted to African Americans during his years as bishop of Oklahoma in the 1930s, becoming one of their strongest advocates among the U.S. Catholic Bishops and urging the Church to invest more in their communities. He also worked to break down racial segregation in the medical profession by helping enable black doctors to serve in Catholic hospitals in Oklahoma.

We are a holistic people. We like to express and feel with our whole body. When a pastor says something, we shout Amen. We’re passionate. It’s not me and God, it’s us and God.”—Stephanie Bernard, Director of Black Catholic Ministry in the Diocese of Lafayette, Louisiana, helped coordinate the congress.
But this time, her experience was different. Her husband’s church was mostly black. She joined the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) and a Bible study, and she could see a role for herself. In 1984, she started working for the Diocese as an audio-visual librarian, pouring over materials and falling in love with the Church. “I realized I needed the guidance and the structure of the Church and the strength of the Eucharist. I felt the joy,” she said.

That same year, African-Americans Catholics were recognized on a larger scale. In their 1984 pastoral letter, “What We Have Seen and Heard,” the U.S. African-American bishops stated, “Joy is the hallmark of Black Spirituality. Joy is first of all celebration. Celebration is movement and song, rhythm and feeling, color and sensation, exultation and thanksgiving.”

Today, in her positions with the diocese, Stephanie manages several programs, including eldercare, food banks and prison ministries. “Louisiana incarcerates more people per capita than any other state in the U.S.,” she said. “The prisoners appreciate visitors. When I go talk to young ones, they always say, ‘If only someone had told me these things earlier. If only I’d had the wisdom. If only I’d had the courage. If only I’d had the faith.’”

Another opportunity for Stephanie to guide young people in their faith is through an annual youth congress coordinated by the diocese. “This event allows black youth to come together to discuss values, talents, cooperation, finding their voice and ideas of excellence,” she said. “Many come from broken situations and they come to boost their self-esteem.” Catholic Extension offers support, primarily to fund participants who would not otherwise be able to afford this experience.

**Passion:**
**Fostering faith among peers**

The African American Catholic Youth Congress is a faith gathering. This one-day event attracts 600 teens—ages 13-18 and from 33 parishes—for an opportunity to stop and reflect on the direction of their lives and to build relationships with their peers. Many teens come from rural areas where there is no formal youth ministry, and this event may be the only time during the year they will be with other Catholic, African-American youth, talking about matters of faith.

The Congress features speakers, workshops, skits and a Mass celebrated by Bishop Michael Jarrell, vested in a Kente cloth chasuble and stole. The Congress uses a peer-on-peer ministry model. Most of the 50 facilitators are young. To prepare, they meet weekly, from the Sunday after Labor Day until the event in November, planning workshops and building leadership skills.

For last November’s Congress, the facilitators elected Dominique Williams as Chairperson and Derek Henry as co-chair.

Dominique participates in football, wrestling and track and field. He’s a member of the National Honor Society and student council. Yet, he has time for his faith. He’s the state president for Louisiana’s junior division of Knights of Peter Claver and a lector at his parish, St. Anthony’s. Faith is at the heart of everything he does.

Being part of the Youth Congress

Concluding with a Mass, the youth congress is a great boost for the faith life of teenagers.
is a family tradition. His father, Chris, was the first chair in 1981. His older brother, Bradley, was also a chair. His sister Christa attended as will his younger brother, Micah. His mother, Bonita, is a supportive Baptist. The family lives in Lafayette where Dominique attended a Catholic grade school — where he could “count the number of black kids on one hand.”

What’s the purpose of the Congress? “Youth are going through so much,” Dominique explained. “We need faith.”

“People struggle with bad decisions, I find myself doing that less and less as my faith grows,” he said. “This is a chance to talk about being black Catholics and express ourselves. There are stigmas that come with being black and being Catholic, so when kids can overcome those stigmas and give everything they have to God and community, these kids can do things they thought impossible. They become the next leaders of America.”

“Teens need to know what’s going on in the Catholic Church,” Derek added.

How do they share these ideas with others? “You give up yourself, so they trust you and the walls come down,” Dominique said. “For example, the bullying workshop is a large, popular one. You get down to bare bones and say — Have you been bullied? I have. Have you bullied? I have. You expose yourself to them so they expose themselves back.”

Faith can take you where injustices don’t affect you. When Jesus was persecuted, he was not outlandish, he was calm and regal.”

—DOMINIQUE WILLIAMS

There’s a workshop called “Black Educated Teens.” “Sometimes kids, particularly boys, don’t want to excel in school,” he said. “We show them it’s cool to go to school, and you should not be ashamed or let people put you in a box.”

Another workshop is “Tools for Combating Injustice.” “We talk about injustices, and profiling and what we are doing to make these stereotypes happen,” he said. “We as young blacks are the future and we need to know how to fight injustices calmly and not with anger.”

Faith helps, Dominique explained. “In the Bible, there are so many injustices and persecutions. Faith can take you where injustices don’t affect you. When Jesus was persecuted, he was not outlandish, he was calm and regal.”

The keynote speaker for the event was Fr. Joshua Johnson, newly ordained in the Diocese of Baton Rouge. He described how he had struggled with his own faith. “He talked about God’s plan being a mystery,” said Dominique. “We just have to do our part and God will do the rest.” Fr. Joshua has a unique skill among priests: he raps. Rapping Bible verses and spiritual messages, he was a hit.
The choir of St. Anthony Church in Lafayette sings mightily for weekly Mass sharing the joy of the Gospel through song.

The choir of St. Anthony Church in Lafayette sings mightily for weekly Mass sharing the joy of the Gospel through song.

The title for November’s Congress was Hearts on Fire because, Dominique explained, Jesus should be on fire in our hearts, and the mission of the Catholic Church is to have hearts on fire.

**Social-mindedness:**
**Sustaining community in Church**

Another gift among African American Catholics is a commitment to community and a sense of responsibility to neighbors—bonds felt in many churches.

One of the largest African-American parishes in the Diocese of Lafayette is St. Anthony’s Catholic Church—Dominique William’s home parish. On the north side of town—an area where drugs, gangs, prostitutions and poverty abound—this parish stands as a beacon of hope. The Catholic people of St. Anthony’s see these challenges on the streets not as reasons to move their operation to a safer location but as reasons to stay. The issues this community faces have only deepened parishioners’ commitment to helping their neighbors.

The pastor, Fr. Lambert Lein, a native of Indonesia and member of the Divine Word Missionaries, spoke - at a recent Mass - about shootings that had occurred in the neighborhood during the weekend. “The young people that are lost in the world—they need to find God. When God is not in our lives there is chaos. We need to ensure that the transformation that happens at Mass will also happen outside of here, and change our neighborhood.”

Part of what binds African Americans in church is their emotional richness. “We are a holistic people,” said Stephanie. “We like to express and feel with our whole body. When a pastor says something, we shout Amen. We’re passionate. If the Lord has done something for you, you have to tell it. It’s not me and God, it’s us and God.”

Another bond is history, Dominique explained. “Our ancestors were so determined. They were slaves without rights, and worked hard to gain those rights. They have taught us there’s nothing wrong with being black, it’s who we are.”

And of course, the energetic choirs— a source of pride and solidarity— bring people together. “We like to sing, clap, and feel the spirit,” said Dominique.

Churches in the Diocese of Lafayette have received significant support from Catholic Extension over the last 100 years. We have granted over $8 million to the entire diocese. Many of these grants—302—were for construction and repair of churches or church facilities.

When Dominique considers the future role of African Americans in the Church, he hopes more see themselves as pillars of the community. He hopes they “continue a joyful tone, singing to high heavens, how great God is,” with hearts on fire.
How did your childhood lead to your vocation?

I am the oldest of 16 children, born in Mallet, Louisiana, Diocese of Lafayette. We were sharecroppers and grew cotton, sweet potatoes and corn. Every night, the family prayed the rosary together. If you missed it, you better have a good reason.

Most days, our family finished our crops earlier than the other families because we had so many kids, so my parents would say, “Let’s go help our neighbors finish theirs.” This wasn’t always a popular idea with us kids, but we did it anyway.

Our pastor, Father Stripe, always showed up for everything in our farming community. Weddings, baptisms—any kind of celebration—he was there. That impressed me.

The moment that the priesthood really clicked for me was when I was studying theology and both my parents were hospitalized. Being the oldest, I thought I should come home. I called my mother. She asked, “Are you coming home because you don’t think you have a vocation or because you want to help us?” I told her to help. She said, “Stay where you are, God will provide.”

You joined the Society of the Divine Word in the 1960s and were ordained in 1972. What issues did African Americans confront in the Church then?

Segregation was the issue of the day. You had all-white churches, all-black churches and churches that were mainly white, but blacks could sit in the back.

As a kid, when I rode in the back of the Greyhound bus, I could feel something wasn’t right. But when I talked to my parents, they said, hopefully it will change, but that’s just the way it is. Most blacks and whites had a distant, but good relationship. Not a friendship, just existing side by side.

When I went to seminary in Mississippi for high school, there were students from all over. It was multi-cultural. It opened my eyes to the bigger world and to understanding that people are basically the same, with some really interesting variations. The Church was and remains universal and culturally diverse, but with segregation, it followed the dictates of society.

In 1996, you co-authored, Keep your Hand on the Plow: the African American Presence in the Catholic Church. What is that about?

From the beginning, when Spaniards formed the first Catholic community in St. Augustine, Florida, blacks were a presence—small, but consistent. As African Americans went through their struggles, Catholicism helped them stay focused. It helped them keep their eye on Jesus, to guide them. They kept their hand on the plow.

Blacks have a real love for the Old Testament—Moses and Exodus. They could relate. Faith would bring them to freedom. Faith kept them sane through it all.

That same year, you were the only...
As African Americans gained civil rights, they and others pushed for more black leaders in the pews and hierarchy. People began to realize that for cultural groups to fully participate as Catholics, they had to be represented in the leadership, which is exactly what the universality of the Church means.

Tell us about being a Bishop.
I am the leader of our Catholic community and I also have a role in the wider community. For me, this means:

- I have a ministry of presence. Just like my old parish priest, I want to be there.
- I am a shepherd that guides Catholics to a deeper relationship with Christ, through the sacraments.
- I am a sign of unity in a multi-cultural diocese.

What gifts do African Americans bring to the Catholic Church?
Seeing how strongly faith has sustained the spirit and life of African Americans, and how faith has carried us through our sufferings, is a wonderful gift to the Church and society.

African Americans also teach about extended families. Our traditional core families are strained now, just like other families in the U.S., but you can always count on our extended families—grandparents, cousins, aunts, and uncles.

The U.S. Catholic Church tends to be cerebral, but African Americans bring feelings. We have great music. The way we celebrate liturgies is a deep expression of our soul and makes for a more holistic experience.

Also, we connect more deeply with those who suffer, such as immigrants. African Americans are sensitive to issues of exclusion.

Catholic Extension has been a great assistance in this work of bringing forth the gifts of African Americans by building churches and developing ministries in rural areas where many African Americans—especially in the South—live.

This year is the 50th Anniversary of the Selma marches. What role does faith play in the pursuit of justice?
Faith should be the guiding light for all of us as we continue to seek and promote justice and equality, not just for African Americans, but for all people who are oppressed.

Faith keeps people out of the eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth business, and gives people a non-violent option and a sense of belonging.

Faith in the civil rights movement, particularly with voting rights, showed that a number of people could come together at the same time—Martin Luther King, President Johnson, Rosa Parks, Malcolm X, Catholic leaders, the marchers—in a unified way. Everyone could see the injustice and brutality and the need for change.
ABOVE Extension Lay Volunteers gather with Father King after teaching CCD classes at St. Francis Church in Canute, Oklahoma.

RIGHT Volunteers prepare to depart for their missions.

Lay ministry remains a source of "vitality" in the Church.

FOSTERING LAY LEADERS has long been the backbone of Catholic Extension. Lay leaders bring unique talents and gifts to the work of evangelization in the world and allow us to extend the reach of the Church. Today, two of our most promising lay initiatives, the Hispanic Lay Leadership and the Young Adult Leadership, can thank a program in the 1960s, Extension Lay Volunteers, for establishing Catholic Extension as a front-runner in this field.

RIGHT Helen “Bunny” Overlan (right) and the “Canute Cuties” horsing around.
“Laying” the groundwork

Inspired by Pope John XXIII’s 1959 encyclical, Princeps Pastorum, calling for more laity, Catholic Extension immediately took the lead by creating Extension Lay Volunteers (ELVs). It was revolutionary. For the next 11 years, more than 2,000 volunteers dedicated at least one year to working in mission dioceses. This groundbreaking program was further fueled by Vatican II, which also heralded the importance of lay workers.

Extension Lay Volunteers were mainly young adults, with more women than men. They served as teachers, nurses, catechists, social workers and campus workers for Newman Centers. Volunteers received training, transportation, room and board and a monthly stipend of $50.

For many, this experience proved life changing, planting a seed for volunteerism that grew throughout their lives—deepening their faith and instilling a lifelong desire to give back. Here are highlights from eight of those volunteers.

**JOANN [BARBERIO] ZIMMERMAN**

1963-1965 | PUEBLO, CO

JoAnn was one of four volunteers who served Catholic communities throughout the 4,000 square miles of Colorado’s “Western Slope” from 1963 to 1965. She taught religion and prepared children for First Communion, but mostly she visited people who taught her “when you give of yourself, you get one hundredfold back.”

Today she is known internationally. In 1980 she created Amanda the Panda, the bear who has comforted thousands of children throughout Iowa who are struggling with cancer or grieving the loss of a loved one.

**JOSEPH COYLE**

1967-1968 | HOLLIS, OK

Joseph Coyle believes that teaching English to migrant families and helping youth find employment in rural Oklahoma in 1967 had a “truly significant” impact upon his life. “I came to see the fantastic solidness of working people,” said the Washington, D.C. author and management consultant, who was struck by the family values he encountered among people who had little material wealth but tremendous “culture and class.”

**LINDA [HENNING] CONTRERAS** 1969-1971 | NEW ORLEANS, LA

Linda Contreras thanks Vatican II for giving rise to volunteer and professional opportunities within the Church for laypeople. Otherwise, only religious men and women would have had the teaching and youth ministry experiences she had in New Orleans. The ELVs provided safety, support and spirituality, she said. Years later, Linda turned to Catholic Extension again to provide partial funding for her master’s in religious education when she was working at a local parish. This degree has enhanced her work as director of religious education for more than 30 years in culturally and economically diverse parishes.
She's proud that her generation found a way to serve the Catholic Church: “Extension validated that different calling I had.”

MARY MIKEL
1966-1968 | FRESNO, CA
Mary, who grew up in Chicago, says being an ELV opened her eyes in many ways – from getting involved with the Church to experiencing the beauty of Hispanic and African-American Catholic cultures. And the experiences led to a job change. She became a social worker because “It was what God wanted me to do.”

A Eucharistic minister and minister of care, Mary believes every college graduate or young adult would benefit from doing a year of service. “It’s the future of the Church, doing the work that Christ wants us to do.”

HELEN [HODGSON] OVERLAN
1963-1965 | ELK CITY, OK
Helen Overlan’s years as an ELV included many firsts: it was her first year teaching and heading the local 4-H Club. “Being from Philadelphia, I had never seen a pig before. I almost fainted.” And Helen met her husband.

Helen believes being a lay leader “will never leave me.” She added, “Every day was an experience. We were there to be good teachers and good Christians.”

SUSANN [COONEY] TRNKA
1965-1967 | WELLINGTON AND WICHITA, KS
“We were out to change the world, but what happened is that we were all changed,” said Sue Trnka, remembering her two years as an ELV. The Pennsylvania native was in her senior year of college when a Catholic Extension recruiter visited campus. She was immediately sold.

“It changed my life.”
During her years of service, the Gospel message resonated: “You must love one another and do for one another.”

Lay leadership is essential, Sue maintains, because we all share the body of Christ and everyone is responsible for growing the community of believers. “It was an idealistic idea to minister to people in need but I think that, in the end, they changed us.”

JUDITH [STOCKERT] O’ROURKE
1965-1966 | LAGRANGE, TX
Judith O’Rourke gave up a teaching job when she became an Extension Lay Volunteer. “I believe that when you are blessed, you need to give back,” said Judith. “My father, however, could not understand how I would give up a teaching position to work for $50 a month!” Despite her father’s protests, Judith taught in Texas. “It built a foundation of service for the rest of my life,” she said.

She laughs recalling the day she and the other volunteers were called to the pastor’s office there. Convinced they had done something wrong, they were delighted when he instead said he had reviewed the grocery bill and was concerned they weren’t eating enough.

The need for lay leaders is even more critical now. The Center for Applied Research of the Apostolate at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., says the number of parishes without a resident minister was 549 in 1965; last year, the number was nearly 3,500.

Fortunately, lay numbers are increasing. The National Association for Lay Ministry says there are more than 30,000 lay ecclesial ministers in the U.S.

A 2005 pastoral letter from the U.S. Con-
Catholic Bishops called “Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord” affirmed the essential role of lay ministry to the future of the Church. It provides guidelines for developing lay ministers, in collaboration with ordained ministers, and emphasizes the need for innovative approaches to lay leadership.

In areas where Catholic Extension works,
ordained ministers are particularly scarce. Lay leaders keep the faith alive—in many creative ways—on many fronts.

“There is a wonderful expression in Spanish—‘gente puente’—which translates to ‘bridge people,’” explains Joe Boland, Vice President for Mission at Catholic Extension. “These are people who bridge social, economic and cultural gaps that impede the Catholic faith from being shared. ‘Bridge people’ figure out ways to overcome these gaps so that no one is denied the gift of faith. Lay leaders are natural bridge builders between different cultures and socio-economic groups in their diocese.”

Hispanic Lay Leadership Initiative

Catholic Extension continues to break new ground in lay leadership. In 2012, we created the first-ever Hispanic Lay Leadership Initiative in answer to the shortage of Hispanic leaders needed to serve the fastest-growing population in the Church.

This $15 million program—one of the single-largest investments in the Hispanic Catholic community today—offers “seed money” to fund bilingual, full-time Hispanic leaders to work in pastoral ministries.

Through this partnership,
Catholic Extension provides 2/3 the salary and benefits of each position for three years, while the diocese contributes the remaining 1/3. The goal is to create 100 new salaried Hispanic Lay leaders over the next few years. We have currently reached 45.

Olga Villar, the director of Hispanic ministry for the Archdiocese of Mobile, Alabama, and a Hispanic Lay Leader, ministers to Catholics throughout southeastern Alabama. Many live in towns so small that they do not have churches; Catholics worship in homes and converted garages. They may see a priest only once a month, but with Olga’s help they are building a community and strengthening the bonds of home and family through catechesis, retreats and youth and marriage encounters.

Olga is attending Miami’s Barry University for a doctorate in Hispanic ministry. For her, the Hispanic Lay Leadership program is “a godsend,” she said. “When I first started at the Archdiocese of Mobile, I was unfamiliar with many issues of Hispanic ministry. I went to MACC (Mexican American Catholic College, San Antonio) and it opened an ocean of knowledge.”

Being a part of the Hispanic lay leadership movement makes Olga feel she is part of something bigger than her own vocation.

“There is a tremendous richness in seeing them get involved with one another, of getting out of their little zone and discovering the joy of giving. I am extremely excited about the renewal of self and community.”

BELOW Extension magazine has featured stories about ELVs since 1960; here are four covers from 1963, 1965, 1968 and 1970.
she said, “My love for the Church is bigger than it ever was.”

Young Adult Leadership Initiative

Catholic Extension is partnering with Catholic universities to offer grant opportunities to young leaders aspiring to serve the Church in mission dioceses. Building leadership is currently the single largest funding request that Catholic Extension receives each year. This program enables students to gain hands-on pastoral experience while pursuing a master’s degree in graduate theological education.

Kathy Williams, who is a Young Adult Leader, runs a parish youth ministry, directs religious education, and works with Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults converts.

“At times I’ve thought of putting a cot in my office,” laughs the lay leader who ministers to more than 325 families at St. Martin de Tours in rural Vicksburg, Michigan. In addition to her duties, she says she needs to be trained in theology. “As lay leaders, we must understand catechesis and Church doctrine. We can’t help the priests out if we are not teaching accordingly.”

While working full-time at the parish, Kathy is studying for her master of arts in theology at the University of Notre Dame. The Diocese of Kalamazoo, Catholic Extension and Notre Dame share the cost of Kathy’s education.

Looking forward

As Pope Francis said, “The position of missionary disciples is not in the center, but at the periphery.” The Extension Lay Volunteers program was our first foray into sponsoring lay efforts on a large scale. It was monumental. This group changed the landscape of lay activity in the United States. They put Catholic Extension on the map as a significant player in the lay movement.

In future years, the role of lay leaders will expand even further. Catholic Extension will continue to seek and prepare lay leaders to represent the Catholic Church and encourage its growth in marginalized areas.

We will find new ways to remain on the cutting edge. We will carry the torch, lit by Extension Lay Volunteers.
Children at St. Mary’s Mission on Red Lake Reservation in Minnesota are growing in faith. For their Lenten Service Project, Holy Family Church in Inverness, Illinois will support this mission. Story on page 40
On a reservation, a church holds nothing back

Illinois parish partners with Extension to support a Minnesota mission that is empowering children

The Red Lake Reservation one of the most isolated in the United States, covers nine counties in heavily wooded northwestern Minnesota. Although it’s only 250 miles from the Twin Cities, it feels like another world.

“It was in the middle of nowhere,” said Rosemary “Ro” Geisler, who serves as parish manager at Holy Family Catholic Community in Inverness, Illinois, and was on an immersion trip to the reservation.

Father Terry Keehan, Holy Family’s pastor, and Sue Geegan, director of outreach and justice, also made the trip – the second trip for Holy Family staffers. In 2013, they visited mission parishes in Appalachia. That trip led to a successful Lenten Service Project through which Holy Family parishioners raised funds to support Catholic Extension’s work with St. Paul’s Church in McKee, Kentucky.

Last fall when Holy Family asked about another trip to witness the work of Catholic Extension, they were invited to St. Mary’s Mission Church and School, which serves the remote reservation.

For the 6,000 Ojibwe or Chippewa who live there, life is hard. The unemployment rate hovers around 60 percent. Homeless shelters are always full, and a cycle of dependency and despair contributes to alcoholism, violence and a high suicide rate, particularly among young people. One study of ninth graders at Red Lake High School found that 20 percent of boys and 48 percent of girls had attempted suicide.

“There’s a real sadness and poverty there, material and spiritual poverty,” said Father Terry.

But St. Mary’s is a source of light, and Catholic Extension has been by St. Mary’s side since 1979, providing financial support so this Catholic mission can continue to help educate and care for those who might otherwise be neglected.

St. Mary’s is led by Father Jerry Rogers, who...
Father Jerry Rogers empowers the children of Red Lake through the teachings of the Catholic Church.

Shoestring efficiency ties donors in

LAST YEAR, WHEN Todd and Joan Sloan learned about Holy Family’s Lenten Service Project – a partnership with Catholic Extension to support a mission parish – they looked at each other and said, “Let’s do it!”

The Sloans, who are part of Holy Family Catholic Community, a parish of more than 10,000 in Inverness, Illinois, were inspired by the story of Rebecca Koury and her work as the sole employee of St. Paul’s Church in McKee, Kentucky. Although they were not among the small group from Holy Family that visited St. Paul’s, they saw videos and heard firsthand accounts, which moved them – and many other parishioners – to make a donation. Sue Geegan, the parish’s director of outreach and justice, noted that the 2014 Lenten project had more parishioner participation than any other in Holy Family’s history.

According to Todd, the partnership with Catholic Extension and the focus on a specific area of the U.S. were a different approach for Holy Family. “Instead of just hyping how we could give to a charitable organization, there were videos and examples of her work,” he said. “It was close to home and it spoke to us, especially the outreach to youth.”

The Sloans also saw that Rebecca understood how to use limited resources to empower people. For example, she created a thrift store and gave store credits to those who participated in community service or took GED classes. “Everything was being done in an efficient, spiritual and fruitful way,” said Todd. “It was a shoestring operation that was doing great things.”

He added, “We saw that a ‘hand up’ could make a huge difference.”

arrived in 2009. Father Terry, Rod and Sue were awed by his energy, his passion for growth, and his respect for and devotion to those he serves.

Approximately one-third of the residents are baptized Catholics, but Father Jerry noted that even the non-Catholics on the reservation have a “fond relationship” with St. Mary’s.

“He (Father Jerry) is a Catholic priest, but he’s one of them,” said Father Terry. “He’s their leader, whether they’re Catholic or not.”

“Father Jerry is so uplifting,” said Sue. “He has such hope, and a connection to the people. It’s just beautiful to see.”

Father Jerry believes that educating and empowering children is the key to transforming lives – and futures. Along with a new principal, seven teachers and two aides, he is dedicated to St. Mary’s K-6 school, which serves nearly 100 children.
“The kids at St. Mary’s looked so happy and engaged in this tiny place with a makeshift library on a stage,” said Sue. “These children are cared for...they looked like they loved being there.”

She added, “Father Jerry understands that breaking the cycle of poverty starts with the children. He’s starting to see a spark. The kids want to go to school now.”

Father Jerry also is bringing the children closer to their faith. According to the visitors from Holy Family, they want to be in church. They’re encouraging their parents to come to Mass also.

“We watched as Father Jerry gathered those children around the altar,” said Father Terry. “It was so obvious that he’s engaged in the spiritual dimension of their lives. He’s feeding that in them. It’s a great thing.”

When the group from Holy Family returned home, they were inspired to act again. They are focusing their 2015 Lenten Service Project on St. Mary’s. “We want to do anything we can to give Father Jerry the tools he needs,” said Ro. “He’s got a hill to climb.”

The group noted that partnering with Catholic Extension has given them a deeper understanding of how to work through the Church to empower people for the long term.

“We used to think about charity more short-term,” said Sue. “We thought we had the answers. We’ve learned from Catholic Extension that we need to listen and learn, and think bigger. Catholic Extension is building souls.”

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Faith communities in northern Michigan in the Diocese of Gaylord are called to action.

‘Stop, Look and Listen’
Health and Wellness Ministries, an initiative of Catholic Human Services in Gaylord, Michigan is designed to promote healthy living, holistically.

“Our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit and it’s important to understand how your health and faith relate,” says Barbra Mikowski, a registered nurse and founding member of the initiative.

Health and Wellness Ministries mobilizes health professionals to lead healthcare programs. With support from Catholic Extension, they have executed five pilot programs, serving specific needs in different communities.

St. Ann’s parish in Cadillac, for example, instituted “Walk to the Cross,” a program encouraging people to exercise in the context of the church.

“The church is a safe environment and a place where the family still gathers,” Mikowski says, “People can come to improve their health at the same time that they improve their faith life.”

At St. Mary of the Woods in Kalkaska, the Health and Wellness Ministries team expanded a vegetable garden project to help encourage eating healthy foods. The community learned how to plant, harvest and prepare fresh fruits and vegetables for family meals.

Pairing health and spirituality allows the program to reach people in new ways, enriching body, mind and spirit. “In the context of faith, health isn’t just about sticking to a diet and exercising,” Mikowski said. “It is renewing your closeness to God and enriching your spirituality.”
Parishioners help renovate their church

St. Paul Church in Onaway is home to 168 Catholic families. The small parish community is comprised mainly of residents who retire after working in Detroit. “We’re a close-knit group,” explained parishioner Sandy Breed.

Recently, the parish’s beautiful church, constructed in 1951, needed renovating. The parishioners did what they could to contribute to the renovation, which included repairing cracks and foundation deterioration. “St. Paul parish is like a family,” explained Fr. Peter Eke, pastor. “We include everyone in our quest for spiritual growth. The call for holiness is a spiritual call. So is the call to maintain or rebuild the church, for everyone.”

To make ends meet, Catholic Extension provided a matching grant to help complete the masonry project. “God has a way of taking care of smaller churches,” said Fr. Eke. “What matters is that we are following the footsteps of Christ and praying for our spiritual growth. Our God is good, all the time.”

Alpena County: five parishes join together

The Catholic Community of the Sonrise Side is a cluster of five parishes in Alpena County, Michigan: St. Bernard of Clairvaux, established in 1864; St. Anne in 1883; St. Mary in 1883; St. Rose of Herron in 1897 and St. John the Baptist, in 1957. The parishes joined together in 2009 to share resources.

Catholic Extension funds a multi-year grant for a shared administrator, financial advisor, and development specialist to assist the five parishes. Each parish is able to offer unique community outreach programs open to all five.
Six nights a week, approximately 100 people flock to St. Bernard’s Friendship Room in Alpena, Michigan for a free, nutritious meal and social interaction. As guests enter the threshold for dinner, soup kitchen director and Alpena native Randy MacAuley warmly greets them.

Since its 1998 opening, the soup kitchen has served 500,000 meals, tremendously reducing hunger in the community. It now dishes out about 2,300 meals per month. “The need is great,” said MacAuley. “We provide a safe, hospitable refuge for anyone who needs one.”

The Friendship Room’s mission statement specifically mentions Matthew 25:35, “So I was hungry and you gave me food.” The soup kitchen operates with this scripture in mind, dedicated to serving meals in loving friendship. Everyone is welcome. Donated toiletries, cleaning supplies and clothing are also available on a take-away table.

Involved in the fight against hunger since 1985, MacAuley began volunteering at the Friendship Room in 2005. By 2009, he was one of two paid staff members. “I’m convinced no one should go hungry,” he said. “You can talk about it or you can act on it. I acted on it.”

Catholic Extension supports the Friendship Room, which also relies on nearly 200 volunteers. “The beauty of organizing a soup kitchen is you can measure what you do,” MacAuley said. “It’s not abstract—it’s in front of you and it’s real.”

Responding to need, St. Bernard’s offers free and nutritious meals
A shining leader in the Church

When do you hear about Catholic Extension?

I’M THE MIDDLE of nine children, with four brothers and four sisters. We grew up poor in Amarillo, Texas. At our parish, Our Lady of Guadalupe, Fr. Antonio Rodríguez always said, “Pray for Catholic Extension!” And we did. Catholic Extension provided much needed support to our Catholic grade school.

How did a Mexican American join an Irish order?

THE SISTERS OF Mercy taught at our grade school. My first-grade teacher, Sr. Xavier Price learned to speak Spanish coming over on a boat from Ireland. I quickly became bilingual. The sisters were great mentors, so I joined the order in 1959.

Did you enjoy teaching?

THE CHILDREN KEPT me laughing. One day, a second-grade boy in Mission, Texas, raised his hand to say that my hair was showing. “That’s okay,” I told him, pushing my hair back under my habit. “I’m a girl.” He popped out of his seat and screamed, “You’re a girl?”
You have worked with migrant children?

IN 1968, I STARTED three child-development centers—in Plainview, Lubbock and Hereford—for migrants. Back then, migrant parents were leaving their little ones under trucks to spend the day while they were working. Every morning from 3:00-5:00 a.m. we collected the children on a school bus, and brought them to a center for the day while their parents picked cotton.

We had infants all the way to age five. School officials weren’t sure what to think of us. A woman from the State Board of Education came to check us out and asked me, “Where did you get your education?”

“I attended grade school with the Sisters of Mercy, high school with the Sisters of Incarnate Word, Webster University in St. Louis and got my Masters in Theology at St. Mary’s University in San Antonio,” I said.

What did you do after Vatican II?

I WAS CALLED TO St. Louis to be on a “Renewal” team for our sisters, helping us transition through the Vatican changes. But after three years, I wanted to get back to the poor. I was assigned to Guatemala, working with the Claretians in a parish that served 60 villages. We made the rounds, mainly by foot or donkey.

How did you become Chancellor of a Diocese?

AFTER SIX YEARS in Guatemala, I went on sabbatical in 1985. But after one year, I got a phone call from Bishop Michael Sheehan of Lubbock asking if I’d be his Chancellor.

“But I’m a woman!” I said.

The Chancellor had always been a man, but I took the job and worked in the Diocese until 1993.

What happened then?

I STARTED GETTING mysterious notes about a job posting at the Mexican American Cultural Center (MACC) in San Antonio. A sister admitted to having placed the notes.

“But MACC has never had a woman president,” I told her.

The sister nodded.

So, you became President of MACC?

YES. THE BUILDINGS were falling apart, the staff hadn’t been paid in months and there was no money.

I asked the Sisters of Mercy for a loan. They immediately responded with a $50,000 gift. But the place was still a disaster. The Bishop came to visit and said, “There are more rats in this building than people!”

When I asked the architects about renovating, they said it would be cheaper to build something new. I went back to the sisters and they donated the first half million of the $6 million total. Six years later, after construction of our new campus—complete with a statue of Our Lady of Guadalupe—the Bishop came to visit and cried.

Since 1972, Catholic Extension has supported MACC with over $300,000. What is the role of the cultural center?

We offer bilingual and multicultural courses to educate and empower leaders to serve in a culturally diverse Church. I retired as President in 2006. Now, MACC is called the Mexican American Catholic College, under the leadership of Dr. Arturo Chávez.

We are so thankful for Catholic Extension funding that has allowed MACC to prepare religious men and women to better serve the poor, particularly the growing Hispanic communities, and welcome them to the Church.

What is your new role there?

I HAVE RETURNED as Spiritual Director for the Latin American Sisters Exchange Program, also funded by Catholic Extension. We have 36 sisters from Latin America who are here to serve in U.S. parishes for five years. Our Lady of Guadalupe continues to watch over us.
Dear Catholic Extension,

THANK YOU FOR the $3000 payment that completes the $9000 Catholic Extension grant to St. Paul’s Parish, Eufaula, Oklahoma. We will soon use this money to fix structural problems on the church building.

The church façade was starting to collapse, due to a decaying wooden header, while the rear wall has been taking moisture beneath the poorly installed siding. We will replace the header with steel beam and repair the rear wall.

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Catholic Extension has been of tremendous help to my parish. With the $9000, we have caught up our bills and returned to solvency, replaced the dangerous, antiquated lighting in our parish hall, and kept our walls, literally falling down in places, standing.

We owe you quite a debt, which we hope to repay with our prayers for your continued ministry to the Church. Again, thanks for your generous help.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Rev. Kevin L. Willis, pastor
Eufaula, Oklahoma

Dear Catholic Extension,

I AM GRATEFUL to God and to you for the many blessings I have received in the almost three years I worked in the Diocese of Boise. Catholic Extension has played a major role in my life: since my years in seminary to the missionary ministry as a lay person in the multicultural tapestry of southern Idaho. Without Catholic Extension’s support, young immigrants like me...
would have less voice and therefore our Church would be missing the necessary opportunities for integration that will ensure a promising future for the Catholic Church in this country and beyond.

▶ Jaime Gil | Pastoral Associate at St. Jerome Catholic Church

Dear Catholic Extension,

THANK YOU FOR the grant money we recently received for the continued efforts of our Diocesan Family Ministry Program. Your commitment to our success is truly appreciated. The funds from Catholic Extension Society received in this grant will enhance our ability to provide top-notch training and formation to our clergy and lay leadership across the diocese at this institute. We recently ordained two men to the priesthood here in our diocese. There is a connection between having healthy and holy families in our midst and the fostering of priestly vocations. Thus, it is imperative that we continue to provide opportunities for our families to grow in holiness.

This grant enables us to do just that.

▶ Deacon Vernon Dobelmann | Director of Pastoral Ministries Diocese of Cheyenne

Dear Father Wall,

I RECENTLY RECEIVED Catholic Extension’s 2015 Pope Francis calendar and am enclosing a donation. I am also enclosing an “O” gauge model of one of the Society’s former Chapel Cars, the Saint Peter. I am an “O” gauge hobbyist, and in my spare time I enjoy taking suitable commercially available train cars and redecorating them. I decided to decorate this one for the Saint Peter, and have enclosed it as a gift to the Extension Society.

▶ Alfred J. Wussler | San Antonio, TX

Dear Catholic Extension,

THANK YOU FOR the grant money made available by Extension, my parish in Logan, Utah on the campus of Utah State University is able to have Sister Marilyn Mark, a Benedictine nun, as our campus ministry director. Just a little over a month ago, she acted as my sponsor as I was received into the Catholic Church. Without her, I may have never made it to that point. She does a great work here, and I am so tremendously grateful to be able to have someone such as her help out in this great evangelization work on this college campus. It is much needed and we are so greatly benefited to have her.

▶ Bradley Zynda | Logan, UT

Dear Catholic Extension,

THROUGH YOUR GENEROSITY, five priests and two deacons are able to bring Christ’s healing presence to those who are at a weak stage in their lives. Your funding enables these men to serve at seven area hospitals and nursing homes as well as to make visits to inmates in the local jail.

These are people who are in a vulnerable stage of life and being able to be visited, prayed with, forgiven, and have Communion brought to them is a great blessing. In some cases, these are the only visits received. We thank you for your kindness and generosity and pray that the Lord will bless you in all your needs during our common journey together.

▶ Most Revered Michael Jarrell | Bishop of Lafayette