Contact: Lisa Gunggoll (National Media) FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

[lisa@lg-pr.com](mailto:lisa@lg-pr.com)

708.829.8669

Trey Salinas (Texas Media)

[tsalinas@3pointpartners.com](mailto:tsalinas@3pointpartners.com)

512.925.1688

**Texas missionary priest announced as 2020-2021 Lumen Christi Award honoree**

*Father Ron Foshage, M.S., recognized for bringing reconciliation to a divided and hurting community in Texas*

CHICAGO (September 16, 2020) – Catholic Extension has announced Father Ron Foshage, M.S., as the 2020-2021 [Lumen Christi Award](https://www.catholicextension.org/lumen-christi-award/) honoree for his tireless work confronting racial prejudice in his community. Latin for the “Light of Christ,” the Lumen Christi Award is Catholic Extension’s highest honor bestowed on a missionary working in the United States.

Father Foshage, a missionary of Our Lady of La Salette, a congregation of priests and brothers, was sent to Jasper, TX in the Diocese of Beaumont 35 years ago. He was determined to gain the trust of the community, working with the local Ministerial Alliance to bring people together regardless of color or religion.

In June of 1998, James Byrd Jr., a Black man living in Jasper, Texas, was brutally attacked and dragged to his death behind a truck driven by three white men. The event is considered one of the worst hate crimes in American history. The town of Jasper had been suddenly thrown into international headlines, labeled as brazenly racist. Father Foshage, a quiet, Catholic priest, accepted the call to be an instrument of healing and reconciliation.

Following this unfathomable hate crime, he knew he had to confront his community’s deep wounds. He reminded his parishioners, “we are a community that is hurting, not hating.” Father Foshage spent years repairing race relations by battling racism and prejudice head on. He has since become a champion for overcoming hate across the world, speaking openly about racism and, through his pastoral guidance, assisting leaders as they attempt to unify and heal their own communities. In 1999, the U.S. Justice Department officially recognized Father Foshage’s work. His testimony before legislators helped to spur a federal law in 2009 known as the Matthew Shephard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act.

From his work desegregating cemeteries and building homes for homeless veterans, to his pastoral care of Jasper’s growing Hispanic families and even cutting more than 30 lawns a week for the elderly in his community, Father Foshage’s imprint on southeast Texas is unmatched.

“At this pivotal moment, amid so much pain and tension in our nation, Catholic Extension is honored to recognize as our Lumen Christi honoree this humble servant of God who has stood up against hate and division,” said Father Jack Wall, president of Catholic Extension. “Father Foshage has been a leading voice of reconciliation for decades, and we are proud to lift his story up as a powerful example of how faith communities can transform our society by promoting unity and healing divisions.”

The Lumen Christi Award is accompanied by a $50,000 grant – $25,000 for Father Foshage and $25,000 for the Diocese of Beaumont – to support local ministries. Father Foshage was selected as the honoree from a group of eight finalists and 47 nominees, each of whom are heroes in our midst serving their communities selflessly to bring life and hope to the forgotten corners of our country.

*For a complete list of the 2020-2021 Lumen Christi Award finalists and to learn more about each one, visit* [*https://www.catholicextension.org/lumen-christi-award/lumen-christi-award-finalists/*](https://www.catholicextension.org/lumen-christi-award/lumen-christi-award-finalists/)

###

**About Catholic Extension:**Founded in 1905, Catholic Extension works in solidarity with people in America’s poorest regions to build up vibrant and transformative Catholic faith communities. For more information visit [www.catholicextension.org](http://www.catholicextension.org/); follow us on Facebook at [facebook.com/catholicextension](http://www.facebook.com/catholicextension) or on twitter at [@CathExtension](http://www.twitter.com/cathextension).