

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Catholic Extension Names Seven Lumen Christi Award Finalists

Diverse faith leaders across the nation are recognized as finalists for organization's highest honor

CHICAGO, IL – The Lumen Christi Award is [Catholic Extension's](https://www.catholicextension.org) highest honor given to people who radiate and reveal the light of Christ present in the communities they serve. Each nominee is an example of how faith and faith communities are still a relevant force in our society and culture.

40 Nominations for Catholic Extension's 45th annual Lumen Christi Award were submitted by dioceses from across the U.S., and now a diverse group of inspiring finalists are being recognized for their powerful impact.

Seven of this year's 40 nominees have been chosen as award finalists and will receive \$10,000 to support and enhance their ministries. From among these finalists, the 2022-2023 Lumen Christi Award recipient will ultimately be selected and given a \$25,000 grant, along with an additional \$25,000 grant for the nominating diocese. The award recipient will be revealed in September 2022.

"These finalists' testimonies and stories remind us that the light of Christ shines even amid great struggles," said Father Jack Wall, president of Catholic Extension. "We are proud to highlight these well-deserved Lumen Christi finalists, as they live out their purpose of making our county and their communities a more loving society."

Following are glimpses into each of the finalists' stories

- Gregory Crapo (Diocese of Biloxi, MS) – Gregory Crapo is the Director of De l'Epee Deaf Center in Biloxi. He and his staff promote independence and community appreciation for the deaf, hard of hearing, and disabled. Crapo oversees a wide array of social services including American Sign Language classes, a food pantry,

transportation, and outreach during emergency/disaster situations. The De l'Epee Deaf Center's outreach is at an all-time high. More and more hearing-impaired people are moving into the area for the Center's services. Bishop Louis Kihnemann credits Crapo's efforts with expanding the diocese's ministry to—and appreciation of—people of all disabilities.

- Father Stuart Long (Diocese of Helena, Montana) – Father Stu's impact in his short time as a priest is legendary. A former boxer who became a priest later in life, Father Stu was diagnosed with a debilitating terminal illness around the time of his ordination. That did not deter his energy and pastoral duties as he enthusiastically engaged all needing help—while in his wheelchair. Since his passing, numerous stories of his impact have come out—including marriages healed, wayward lives transformed and young people considering vocations. His amazing story is now being shared nationwide through the biographical film, "Father Stu."
- Very Rev. Simon Peter Engurait and Karen David (Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux, LA) – This dynamic duo has led spiritual and humanitarian relief efforts for thousands of vulnerable families impacted by Hurricane Ida's devastation in 2021. In the hurricane's aftermath, Engurait and David spent all their energy and efforts responding to the needs of the underserved, poor and most vulnerable. Their outreach focused on sharing hope and leading with faith. They truly exemplify how the Church always rises to the occasion, especially in times of difficulty.
- Sister Mary Lisa Renfer, RSM, DO (Diocese of Knoxville, TN) – Sister Mary Lisa's mobile clinic ministers to over 1,500 low-income patients a year. She has assembled a network of 100 health care professionals who lend their medical expertise to the clinic. She says, "Jesus comes to meet you in each person. Sometimes I can't fix them, but I have to walk with them. And the more you walk with them, the more you know how to help." Our Catholic faith comes alive when we stand in solidarity with those who suffer and Sister Mary Lisa shows us the way.
- Francis Leblanc (Diocese of Lafayette, LA) – For decades, Francis Leblanc's music ministry has enriched the lives of thousands. As music minister for a variety of parishes, his gifts are present at people's brightest and darkest moments. He is a leading fixture at the diocese's annual African American Youth Congress. This event, which is supported by Catholic Extension, invites young Black Catholics from across the state to celebrate and affirm their faith and culture and the gifts they bring to the Catholic Church. "His vocal talents provide an unforgettable and uplifting spiritual experience that transpires through all generations," said Bishop J. Douglas Deshotel.
- Deacon Casey Walker (Diocese of Sacramento, CA) – Deacon Walker, after the social unrest following the high-profile shooting of Stephon Clark in 2018, accepted his bishop's invitation to find a path for healing through dialogue in these divided times. Deacon Walker has led numerous listening meetings and training sessions, in parish schools and church leadership groups. As he says, "All I can do is go out and serve in the community and bring the hope, needs, and prayers of those I encounter back

to the altar and ask for the graces of God...so I may be a useful instrument of the Lord.”

- Jean Fedigan (Diocese of Tucson, AZ) – Jean Fedigan founded the nonprofit Sister José Women’s Center in 2009 while still serving as Chief Nursing Officer at University of Arizona Healthcare Hospital. The center is dedicated to the care of homeless and trafficked women living on the streets of Tucson. More than just providing shelter, the center seeks to ensure that these women feel loved, respected, and assured of their human dignity. Her compassion is freely offered to all without judgment because she sees the face of Christ in all whom she meets. Many guests have simply told her, ‘You made me feel human today.’

For more information on the 2022-2023 Lumen Christi Award finalists, visit <https://www.catholicextension.org/lumen-christi-award/lumen-christi-award-finalists/>

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