



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 26, 2022

Contacts: Laura Bowman or Molly Carr

Laura: 512.913.6624

Molly: 443.699.0330

Catholic Extension honors Sister Carol Keehan with 2022 Spirit of Francis Award

Sister Carol Keehan is celebrated for her advocacy for the poor and universal access to healthcare

Washington, D.C. — Catholic Extension honored Sister Carol Keehan, D.C. with its first-ever Spirit of Francis Award dinner in Washington, D.C. Sister Keehan is best known for her influential voice, devotion, and lifetime of advocacy work toward healthcare reform particularly in poverty-stricken communities. Sister Keehan has leveraged her relentless energy and tireless commitment to aid the underserved throughout decades of service. The Catholic Extension Spirit of Francis Award recognizes an individual or group who has made a significant impact on the mission of the Catholic Church in America through service or philanthropy.

Sister Carol Keehan, D.C. received the award at a May 25 dinner at the United States Library of Congress, where Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Christophe Pierre shared a message on behalf of His Holiness Pope Francis congratulating Sister Carol on receiving the Spirit of Francis Award, saying “His Holiness willingly associates himself with the recognition of her many years of dedicated leadership in continuing the healing ministry of Jesus Christ through the provision of quality healthcare for all, especially those most in need.”

Other notables such as Cardinal Wilton D. Gregory, Archbishop of Washington, and Cardinal Blase J. Cupich, Archbishop of Chicago and Chancellor of Catholic Extension’s Board of Governors, were in attendance.

Sister Carol Keehan leads the Health Task Force of the Vatican COVID-19 Commission, established by Pope Francis in March 2020 to respond to the global devastation caused by the pandemic. Prior to her current role, she served for 13 years as president and CEO of the Catholic Health Association (CHA), the largest group of nonprofit healthcare providers in the

nation. The CHA comprises more than 600 hospitals and 1,600 long-term care and other health facilities across the United States.

“Sister Carol stands in a long line of consecrated religious women who have led the way in providing quality healthcare that leaves no one behind,” Cardinal Blase J. Cupich, Archbishop of Chicago and Chancellor of Catholic Extension’s Board of Governors, said. “To this day, she continues to show great leadership, advising the Holy See on healthcare issues, and most recently, cooperating with Pope Francis’ initiatives to educate the world about COVID-19 vaccination.”

Father Jack Wall, president of Catholic Extension, who presented the award to Sister Carol, said “the connection between Sister Carol and Catholic Extension’s mission is undeniable. We both believe deeply in our vocation to live out the gospel by transforming our society, our country, and our world.”

Sister Carol, a member of Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul, earned a degree in nursing in 1964. She attended to patients in the emergency room for several years before entering hospital management. She served in various administrative and governance positions at hospitals sponsored by the Daughters of Charity, including 15 years as president and chief executive officer of Providence Hospital in Washington, D.C.

During her tenure at CHA, Sister Carol was a leading voice in promoting universal access to healthcare, especially for the vulnerable and those burdened by poverty. She led the CHA with distinction during a critical time for Catholic healthcare and for healthcare generally in the United States. She was instrumental in gathering political support for the passage of the Affordable Care Act. In 2010, she was named one of TIME magazine’s “100 Most Influential People in the World” and “Person of the Year” by the National Catholic Reporter. Sister Carol has been named to Modern Healthcare’s list of “100 Most Influential People in Healthcare” for several years, topping the list at number one in 2007.

The Spirit of Francis Award is inspired by its three namesakes: St. Francis of Assisi, Pope Francis, and Father Francis Clement Kelley, the founder of Catholic Extension—all of whom are known for embracing and helping the poor. Proceeds from this Spirit of Francis Award Dinner will benefit Religious Sisters and their Ministries.

###

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 or on Twitter at [@CathExtension](https://twitter.com/CathExtension).

Addendum to the press release, a message of Pope Francis:

Transmitted by His Eminence Cardinal Pietro Parolin on behalf of His Holiness Pope Francis.

HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS WAS PLEASED TO LEARN THAT THE CATHOLIC EXTENSION SOCIETY WILL HONOR SISTER CAROL KEEHAN, D.C., WITH THE SPIRIT OF FRANCIS AWARD AT ITS 2022 GALA DINNER. HIS HOLINESS WILLINGLY ASSOCIATES HIMSELF WITH THIS RECOGNITION OF HER MANY YEARS OF DEDICATED LEADERSHIP IN CONTINUING THE HEALING MINISTRY OF JESUS CHRIST THROUGH THE PROVISION OF QUALITY HEALTHCARE FOR ALL, ESPECIALLY THOSE MOST IN NEED. HE APPRECIATES AS WELL HER GENEROUS SERVICE TO THE HOLY SEE AND HER FIDELITY TO THE CHARISM OF SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL, CARRYING OUT THE APOSTOLATE OF CHARITY IN "THE CONSCIOUSNESS THAT WE ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE FRAGILITY OF OTHERS AS WE STRIVE TO BUILD A COMMON FUTURE" (FRATELLI TUTTI, 115). TO SISTER CAROL, AND TO ALL GATHERED FOR THIS HAPPY OCCASION, THE HOLY FATHER CORDIALLY SENDS HIS BLESSING AS A PLEDGE OF PEACE AND JOY IN THE LORD.