

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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One year after Uvalde mass shooting, Catholic Extension renews commitment to ongoing community support

Chicago, IL — [Catholic Extension](#), a Chicago-based nonprofit, whose mission is to build up vibrant and transformative Catholic faith communities among the poorest regions of America, visited Uvalde, Texas yesterday to stand in solidarity with the community—exactly one year after a gunman devastated the tightknit city, taking the lives of 19 innocent children and two loving teachers at Robb Elementary. For the past year, Catholic Extension has poured into Uvalde through both financial and tangible resources to support community healing. Though one year has passed, there's still work to be done; the focus is now to build up the "New Uvalde" as they look towards the future.

During the visit, Catholic Extension attended a community mass held at Sacred Heart Catholic Parish, celebrated by Archbishop Gustavo Garcia Siller. "Each of us is here. That means that love won," the archbishop said to the crowd that included family and friends of the 21 people who lost their lives. "God's love wins," he affirmed to family members who wore shirts with the faces and names of those killed last year.

Following his homily, the names of the deceased were read as a candle was brought to the altar by loved ones. At the end, 21 candles stood at the foot of the altar as the Eucharist was celebrated.

Father Jack Wall, president of Catholic Extension said, "Catholic Extension has a deep and rich history with Uvalde, and today we are renewing our commitment to continual support—in the best ways we can—to promote ongoing restoration in this faithful community we love, now and for the years to come."

To date, Catholic Extension has awarded 30 full scholarships to children of Robb Elementary who sought to transfer to Sacred Heart, the local Catholic school. Catholic Extension also launched Camp I-CAN, led by Uvalde native Sister Dolores Aviles, which provided students a safe place to heal and simply have fun, with activities ranging from fine arts projects to physical activities. Additionally, Catholic Extension deployed 40 nuns from all over the U.S. to provide onsite emotional assistance and walk together with the community as they create their "new normal."

Now, Catholic Extension has committed to extending scholarship support until the children graduate from high school, funding another year of Camp I-CAN, and ensuring that children and families have ongoing access to counseling services as they continue the grieving and healing process.

Sister Dolores Aviles said, "Catholic Extension's support has been a gift from God. When I first spoke with them, I expressed my vision of gathering the children together and helping them to smile again and have fun."

She continued, "This has been a beautiful, beautiful experience, and now we're able to have another year of Camp I-CAN. Thank you, Catholic Extension, for what you have done to help us."

During a group lunch with priests and religious sisters from across the U.S. at the St. Henry De Osso Center, a center where children are provided trauma intervention through art therapy, Catholic Extension reconnected and visited with Noah Orona, the first Sacred Heart scholarship recipient who was shot and survived the Robb Elementary shooting, as well as his parents, Oscar and Jessica Orona.

Oscar Orona welcomed the Catholic Extension group with these remarks, "Welcome to Uvalde. I sure wish it was under different circumstances, but we're all here with one common goal: to continue with the healing process, because our community is still hurting. The one-year anniversary is a recognition, but the struggle continues. It is by the sheer grace of God that our son, Noah, survived, and we thank God every day for shining His everlasting light on him."

Mr. Orona recounted his son's experience, and as Noah continues to heal from both the physical and emotional wounds, he said he and the family are now focused on one thing for their son: Noah's future.

"We could not be happier with the education Noah is receiving at Sacred Heart Catholic School. Noah was reluctant to return to a public school, but now he is embracing his education and classmates without fear and has been a large part in his healing."

He concluded, "Thank you for the support, Catholic Extension. Every day is a new day for us, and while we still have challenges to face, God is our compass. And with that, we cannot go wrong."

Uvalde was one of the first-ever communities Catholic Extension supported, helping build Sacred Heart Church in 1906, and Sacred Heart Catholic School in 1912, both of which remain relevant institutions to date.

For more information on ways to support the Catholic Church and children in Uvalde, please visit catholicextension.org/uvalde.

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