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Bishop Richard E. Pates honored with inaugural Minnesota Spirit of Francis Award

MINNEAPOLIS, MN — [Catholic Extension Society](https://catholicextension.org) honored Bishop Richard E. Pates, a beloved priest and bishop of the Twin Cities and bishop emeritus of Des Moines, Iowa, with its inaugural Minnesota [Spirit of Francis Award](#). The 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.

Bishop Pates—a Minnesota native and longtime servant of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis—was recognized for his efforts in expanding the Church’s outreach to the marginalized; reinvigorating the parishes, dioceses, and institutions he has served throughout the course of his life; and being a model of what it means to be a good shepherd who is close to his flock.

He received the award at the benefit dinner on Tuesday, May 13, at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota, where the venue was packed with hundreds of friends and supporters of the beloved hometown bishop. Other notables such as the current archbishop of Saint Paul and Minneapolis, Bernard A. Hebda, were in attendance.

Father Jack Wall, president of Catholic Extension Society, presented the award and said, “We’ve come together tonight to honor one among us who does his mission very, very well. Bishop Pates embodies the mystery of one who believes in the transformative power of the risen Christ.”

“I’m very honored to accept this award,” said Bishop Pates. “Especially so because it comes from Catholic Extension Society, which is a remarkable organization of faith that is organized to reach out and to enable others to develop in faith.”

Bishop Pates had served the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis as a beloved pastor, vocation director, vice chancellor and auxiliary bishop before leaving for Iowa. Bishop Pates served the Diocese of Des Moines, Iowa, for 11 years as their bishop, and his ministry emphasized the beauty and importance of the universal Church. He guided the diocese in welcoming more than 4,000 Catholics to the diocese, including Vietnamese and Hispanic parishioners.

Upon his retirement in 2019, Bishop Pates returned to his home state where the faithful in Minnesota welcomed him back. He has since come out of retirement three times to temporarily administer vacant dioceses in Minnesota, Illinois and Wisconsin.

"We all know and love Bishop Pates," said Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis Archbishop Bernard Hebda. "We know of his generosity to come out of retirement to help. He truly is a 'master pastor'."

Spirit of Francis Award recipients are laudable for their commitment "to reach out to the margins of society" in the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi, Pope Francis, and the founder of Catholic Extension Society, Father Francis Clement Kelley. The Spirit of Francis Award was first presented in 2014 to best-selling author, Mary Higgins Clark, in New York City.

Since then, the award dinner has been held annually in Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Houston, New York and Washington, D.C. Proceeds from the Minnesota Spirit of Francis Award Dinner will benefit the Mission of Catholic Extension Society.

The May 13th dinner in Minnesota marked the first time the Spirit of Francis award has been presented following the death of Pope Francis, one of the three 'Francis figures' from whom this award derives its name. In his acceptance speech, Bishop Pates remarked about his love of the late pope, "From his very first encyclical to the present day, by his words and actions, the Holy Father has shown us that the hearts of those who truly encounter Jesus Christ are filled with the joy of the Gospel," he said. "Our lives, Church, nation and world need that joy."

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