



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Catholic Extension Society announces the 2025-2026 Lumen Christi Award nominees**

CHICAGO — [Catholic Extension Society](#) is proud to announce the nominees for the 2025-2026 Lumen Christi Award, the organization's highest honor. Since its inception in 1978, the [Lumen Christi Award](#)—Latin for "Light of Christ"—is presented to people who radiate and reveal the light of Christ present in the communities where they serve.

Each year, [bishops](#) across the country submit nominations for the award recognizing the incredible work of people and institutions from their dioceses. This year's group of [41 nominees](#) are leading people closer to God and transforming their communities. From these nominees, a group of finalists will be selected, followed by the national recipient.

Father Jack Wall, president of Catholic Extension Society, said, "Each nominee radiates the Light of Christ in unique ways, and collectively their stories showcase the beautiful mission of the Church in action every day throughout our nation."

All 41 nominees will receive \$1,500 to support their ministry. Those chosen as award finalists later this summer, will each receive \$15,000. From this group of finalists, the Lumen Christi Award honoree will be named in the fall, along with \$100,000 (\$50,000 to their nominating diocese and \$50,000 to advance the honoree's ministry).

The 2025-2026 Lumen Christi Awards nominees are as follows:

San Rafael Geriatric Center | Diocese of Arecibo, Puerto Rico  
Barbara Shackil | Armenian Eparchy of Our Lady of Nareg  
Charlie Clupny | Diocese of Baker, Oregon  
Doreen Badeaux | Diocese of Beaumont, Texas  
Sam Burke | Diocese of Biloxi, Mississippi  
Keith Pettyjohn | Diocese of Boise, Idaho

Sister Stella Mary Okogie | Diocese of Charleston, South Carolina  
Sister Teresa Frawley, OSF | Diocese of Cheyenne, Wyoming  
Nancy Crompton | Diocese of Crookston, Minnesota  
McAnthony Window | Diocese of Davenport, Iowa  
Sister Petra Palau Oviendo | Diocese of Dodge City, Kansas  
Bethany House | Diocese of Duluth, Minnesota  
Monsignor Arturo Bañuelas | Diocese of Fairbanks, Alaska  
Monsignor John Nahal | Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon  
Paula F. Samia | Eparchy of St. Maron of Brooklyn  
Jesuits of Northern Alaska | Diocese of Fairbanks, Alaska  
Deacon Randolph Copeland | Diocese of Gallup, New Mexico  
Christina Kihn | Diocese of Gaylord, Michigan  
Ray O'Connor | Diocese of Grand Island, Nebraska  
Father Victor Cancino, SJ | Diocese of Helena, Montana  
Sherry Gesmundo | Diocese of Kalamazoo, Michigan  
Reverend Tom Charters | Diocese of Knoxville, Tennessee  
Deacon Carlos De La Peña | Diocese of Laredo, Texas  
Deanna Gibbs | Las Cruces, New Mexico  
Sister Pat Cataldi | Lexington, Kentucky  
Kristy Dunn | Diocese of Little Rock, Arkansas  
Deacon Adrian Jimenez | Diocese of Lubbock, Texas  
Didier Aur | Diocese of Memphis, Tennessee  
Jim Backes Jr. | Diocese of Mobile, Alabama  
Father Melvin Diaz and Carmen Alicia Rodríguez Echevarría | Diocese of Ponce, Puerto Rico  
St. Rita of Cascia Mission | Diocese of San Angelo, Texas  
Sister Maria Rosario Coronado, E.E.P. | Diocese of San Bernardino, California  
Father Rafael García Molina | Diocese of San Juan, Puerto Rico  
Latacia Avilia | Diocese of Savannah, Georgia  
Sister Anne Francioni | Diocese of Springfield-Cape Girardeau, Missouri  
Dick Russ Hlabse | Ukrainian Roman Catholic Eparchy of Saint Josaphat in Parma, Ohio  
Father David Cornett | Diocese of Steubenville, Ohio  
Superior District Council of the Society of St. Vincent De Paul | Diocese of Superior, Wisconsin  
Deacon Tony Underwood | Diocese of Tucson, Arizona  
Christine Tyler | Diocese of Tulsa, Oklahoma  
Cristina Hernandez | Diocese of Youngstown, Ohio

Read more about each nominee and their stories [here](#).

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**About Catholic Extension Society:** 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](http://www.catholicextension.org); follow us on Facebook at [facebook.com/catholicextension](https://facebook.com/catholicextension) or on X, formerly known as Twitter, at [@CathExtension](https://twitter.com/CathExtension).