

From the Christian Service Commission

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The Catholic Extension Society of America: (CESA)

Headquartered in Chicago and under the leadership of Father Jack Wall, the CESA has the mission of bringing Christ’s Word to some of the most remote areas of the United States. Founded in 1905, the Extension Society has to date raised the funds to build more than 12,000 Catholic churches in America’s rural communities.

One such church was St. Mary’s in Lamar, Missouri, the only Catholic Church in that entire county of southwest Missouri. For over 100 years, St. Mary’s was the faith center for about 90-95 families. Four years ago, an arsonist burned the church building to the ground leaving only a small parish hall for worship. Just a few months ago, with the help of a kind benefactor, the bells of a new St. Mary’s rang out loud and clear for those devout parishioners. Yes, that kind benefactor was the Catholic Extension Society of America.

Other rural Catholics who have benefitted from the CESA’s efforts can be found in places like Stillwell, Oklahoma, and in the growing Catholic Hispanic communities on the outskirts of Salt Lake City, Utah. It is estimated that some 11,000,000 US Catholics live in rural grace-filled communities, but their resources are few. Help is often found at the CESA.

The Extension Society filled over 1,000 grants last year to include funding of church construction, seminarian support, training of lay leadership, the institution of youth ministry programs and many other rural pastoral outreach programs. Missionary activity does not have to mean “overseas.” The SSPP support of the Catholic Extension Society of America strengthens this rural domestic missionary apostolate on a continuing basis.

The Archdiocese for the Military Services: (AMS)

Those who have served in the Military, or who are serving now, know how important and how welcomed is the presence of a Chaplain in the military setting. To receive the Sacraments, obtain some needed guidance or counseling or just to have a spiritual leader in their midst is a comforting help to those engaged in the difficulties of a wartime atmosphere.

Unfortunately, the number of active duty Catholic military chaplains has decreased from about 400 in year 2001 to 250 now due to retirements coming about faster than replacements. Additionally, another 250 Catholic chaplains are needed to serve the patients in 153 Veterans Affairs medical centers. Overall, about 1.8 million Catholics and their families depend on these 500 priest-chaplains for their spiritual sustenance.

The Archdiocese for Military Services is the largest geographical and only worldwide archdiocese. Archbishop Timothy Broglio and his four auxiliary bishops spend 65% of their time visiting their global flocks, a huge expense for the military archdiocese that is not covered by federal monies. Additionally, because of the shortage of active duty chaplains, many bases

and posts rely on contracted non-military priests to bring the faith and sacraments to the Catholic families living at those facilities. Because the AMS has no definitive territorial borders and hence no specific parishes for weekly financial support, it is very dependent on donations and benefactors. Archdiocesan solicitation of funds on military installations is severely limited by federal mandate. Donations and grants are of critical importance.

To solve the problem of Catholic chaplain shortages, the AMS has formed a co-sponsor program with several Catholic dioceses to identify and support active military men who may be discerning a priestly vocation. The cost of a seminarian's education is borne equally between the AMS and the contracted diocese. By agreement, the seminarian agrees to serve that diocese for three years after ordination, and then join the AMS as a chaplain for three or more years. At present, 30 co-sponsored seminarians from 22 US dioceses are studying in 16 seminaries under this AMS program.

Through the SSPP donation from the Christian Service Commission budget, you are helping to support our military chaplains and communities, especially in these threatening times of world turmoil. Thank you SSPP parishioners for that important financial assistance.