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**Federal government to invest in the Catholic Church for Puerto Rico Hurricane Recovery**

*Four Puerto Rican dioceses pre-awarded up to $82 million in FEMA Hazard Mitigation funding with help of Catholic Extension*

CHICAGO (July 7, 2020) – Up to $82M of resilience building projects were selected by COR3 to utilize Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) 404 “Hazard Mitigation Funding”. Four Puerto Rican dioceses (San Juan, Arecibo, Caguas, and Fajardo-Humacao) were selected to utilize this funding for post-Hurricane Maria construction of more resilient structures with a greater capacity to withstand future natural disasters and support the needs of more people.

The award comes as a result of ongoing efforts by Catholic Extension, in partnership with Catholic Management Services and Hagerty Consulting, to gain access to these funds to begin community recovery and healing following the wrath of Hurricane Maria, that devastated the island in 2017. The Central Office for Recovery, Reconstruction and Resilience (COR3) received 3,200 applications for these competitive 404 grants, awarding just 525.  The Catholic Church in Puerto Rico was the first private, non-profit on the island to submit its Letter of Intent last year, under Hagerty’s guidance.

These FEMA funds advances a multi-year plan, approved by Catholic Extension’s Board of Governors which is led by Cardinal Blase Cupich, to help dioceses of Puerto Rico repair approximately 1,000 church properties, including Catholic schools, damaged by Hurricane Maria.

“The federal government investing $82 million in the Catholic Church to build more resilient structures is a recognition of the pivotal role the Church has and will play following natural disasters,” said Father Jack Wall, president of Catholic Extension. “Following Hurricane Maria the Catholic Church of Puerto Rico demonstrated a remarkable ability to attend to the physical, educational, spiritual, and psychological needs of the Puerto Rican people, and this funding will ensure that the Church can be even more responsive and ready for action following future natural disasters.”

Catholic Extension’s mission is to work in solidarity with people in the poorest regions to build up vibrant and transformative faith communities. Since the time of its founding in 1905, Catholic Extension has financially supported the Church in Puerto Rico by rebuilding and repairing churches and supporting numerous ministries in remote and poverty-stricken areas.

“Following a disaster, the government has access to data and resources, but it is the Church that has access to the families and people impacted, even in abandoned or far-flung communities, which is why the Church is such a critical and effective institution in moments of crisis” added Joseph Boland, Catholic Extension’s vice president of mission. “As such, we believe that this investment is good news not just for the Catholic Church of Puerto Rico, but for all Puerto Ricans who benefit from the Church’s charitable services, advocacy and care for the poor and vulnerable of society.”

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**About Catholic Extension:**Founded in 1905, Catholic Extension works in solidarity with people in America’s poorest regions to build up vibrant and transformative Catholic faith communities. For more information visit [www.catholicextension.org](http://www.catholicextension.org/); follow us on Facebook at [facebook.com/catholicextension](http://www.facebook.com/catholicextension) or on twitter at [@CathExtension](http://www.twitter.com/cathextension).