



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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44 Religious Sisters Graduate University Together

Catholic Extension Society celebrates the academic and ministerial accomplishments of the women in its U.S. – Latin American Sisters Exchange Program

Chicago, IL — [Catholic Extension Society](#) today celebrates 44 women religious from the Global South graduating with university degrees upon their completion of the [U.S.-Latin American Sisters Exchange Program](#). The U.S.-Latin American Sisters Exchange Program provides an opportunity for Catholic sisters from Latin American religious congregations to pursue a university degree as they create new ministries in U.S. dioceses supported by Catholic Extension Society. According to U.S. Census data, more than 80 percent of the most impoverished counties in the country exist in these dioceses.

This year, 44 sisters completed the program with 28 sisters earning bachelor's degrees in health care and human services management. Another 16 sisters earned master's degrees in integrated studies with focus areas in human services and pastoral care. They all received their diplomas from St. Mary's University of Minnesota on May 4.

Fr. Jack Wall, president of Catholic Extension Society said, "I thank God for the gift of religious sisters, and today we celebrate their milestone of graduating with university degrees, which will only enhance their ministries as they serve the poor and marginalized. These women religious are the very face of God's love and channels of God's grace to those who need it the most."

Sister Gabriela Ramirez, who addressed her fellow graduates during a commencement celebration, said, "Thank you, Catholic Extension, for the opportunity to participate and graduate from this program. Some of us were the first in our family, or even in our village, to receive a university education."

She continued, "The impact of the education we received will be felt by every person we serve."

The program has three main objectives. First, it offers higher education degrees to Latin American sisters serving in the U.S., who would otherwise have no such opportunities. Second, as the sisters' study, they apply what they learn to their ministry, establishing new services and performing outreach initiatives to develop the human potential of tens of thousands of disadvantaged people. Meanwhile, their spiritual witness is a sign of hope to all they encounter.

Finally, the program seeks to create a robust, collaborative and mutually supportive network of sisters from multiple congregations.

More than 10 years ago, Catholic Extension Society first partnered with the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation to develop the U.S.-Latin American Sisters Exchange Program. During the past decade, a remarkable change has taken place within the hearts and minds of the 150 sisters that have been a part of the program—and the hundreds of thousands of people that the sisters have reached and empowered through their ministries.

Catholic Extension Society also welcomed a new cohort of nearly 60 sisters into this program this year. Many of these sisters are newly arrived in the United States, hailing from Colombia, Nicaragua, Mexico, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala.

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