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Medical Clinic Director Honored with Catholic Extension Society's Lumen Christi Award

Sister Mary Lisa Renfer, RSM, DO, of St. Mary's Legacy Clinic, brings quality health care to medically underserved people of eastern Tennessee

Chicago, IL — [Catholic Extension Society](https://www.catholicextension.org) proudly announces today that Sister Mary Lisa Renfer, who is a Religious Sister of Mercy of Alma, Michigan, as well as a physician, is the recipient of the 2024-2025 [Lumen Christi Award](#). Sister Mary Lisa is the medical director of St. Mary's Legacy Clinic, a ministry of the Diocese of Knoxville that provides health care to uninsured patients.

The Lumen Christi Award, established in 1978, is Catholic Extension Society's highest honor presented annually to people who radiate and reveal the light of Christ present in the communities where they serve.

This year, 37 dioceses submitted nominations for the award. These nominees have dedicated themselves to making positive change in an amazing variety of ways across our country. This year's award recipient, Sister Mary Lisa, will receive \$50,000 to support her work of providing health care and hope to underserved communities in rural eastern Tennessee.

As the medical director of St. Mary's Legacy Clinic, she and her team of staff and volunteers provide primary care to improve the lives of the medically uninsured. Driven by her faith and compassion, Sister Mary Lisa said the clinic's goal "is to bring the love of Christ to them so that they know they have dignity and that they have worth."

Sister Mary Lisa's journey of service began with a mission trip to Ecuador during college, where she witnessed the abuse and suffering of children. Inspired to make a difference, she went on to Michigan State University, graduating with a Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine degree. In 2020, after she completed her residency, she began her work as a leader and physician of St. Mary's Legacy Clinic.

"Sister Mary Lisa knows that her mission is about more than providing health services to those in greatest need," said Father Jack Wall, president of Catholic Extension Society. "It is clear she is also eradicating sickness in people's spirit. She is truly a light in their darkest moments, and for that, it is our great honor to recognize Sister Mary Lisa with this year's Lumen Christi Award."

Upon receiving the award, Sister Mary Lisa said, "It is a privilege and joy for me to be a part of this. My life goal is to serve the Lord forever in heaven and bring as many people as possible with me."

She continued, "And my goal here is to bring the light of Christ to each person I meet; that's the goal of all of us who work together at the clinic."

Last year, the free clinic performed nearly 1,500 patient visits and covered 11,000 miles. They recently added a new clinic site, bringing the total number up to 10. A majority of the patients served are not Catholic.

Through her efforts, the help of volunteers, and the support of healthcare professionals, Sister Mary Lisa Renfer has been able to provide exceptional medical care and compassion to many people in the community. During her time as medical director, the number of patients has nearly doubled. As needs in the area are increasing, they are expanding their services and welcoming more patients, averaging one new patient per day.

Catholic Extension Society has long supported the Diocese of Knoxville, especially helping rural communities and ministries to vulnerable populations of the diocese.

To read more about Sister Mary Lisa Renfer and the Lumen Christi Award, visit [here](#).

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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 Twitter) at [@CathExtension](https://twitter.com/CathExtension).