



A major project to revitalize the Catholic Church in Puerto Rico has begun
The comprehensive effort will extend across five dioceses of Puerto Rico

March 31, 2025; San Juan, Puerto Rico - Archbishop of San Juan, Roberto González Nieves, along with bishops from five dioceses of Puerto Rico, and Cardinal Blase Joseph Cupich, chancellor of the nonprofit Catholic Extension Society (CES), celebrated today the official launch of a major project to recover and rebuild the Catholic Church in Puerto Rico. This event was attended by representatives from the ecclesiastical, public, and private sectors.

In a presentation held at the *Catedral Metropolitana y Basílica Menor de San Juan Bautista* at Old San Juan (Metropolitan Cathedral and Minor Basilica of Saint John the Baptist in Old San Juan), the leadership of the Catholic Church in Puerto Rico unveiled the comprehensive inter-diocesan recovery program that will impact more than 600 Catholic churches, over 25 schools, and other church facilities across 5 dioceses of Puerto Rico, thanks to over \$400 million made available by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the Department of Housing, and private donations.

“This island and its people, full of joy and resilience, hold a very special place in my heart. After Hurricanes Irma and Maria struck Puerto Rico in 2017, Pope Francis sent me here to offer his support and encouragement to the Puerto Rican people and Church leaders, and to keep him informed of the situation. Since then, I have returned numerous times to monitor the progress of our efforts to restore Catholic churches and schools through the Catholic Extension Society’s Recovery Program,” said Cardinal Cupich.

“In 2020, following the devastating earthquakes, we expanded the recovery program to include more parishes and schools. And today, the construction phase begins! We know that by rebuilding churches and schools, we are not only serving the Catholic community, but also Puerto Rican society at large. This recovery project will generate a far-reaching economic, educational, and cultural impact, benefiting many communities and future generations.

We are grateful for the support of the Governor of Puerto Rico, as well as the FEMA team in Puerto Rico, and the Department of Housing, without whose support this mission would not be possible,” Cardinal Cupich added.

In 2017, following Hurricane Maria, the dioceses of Puerto Rico, with limited financial resources, continued to operate daily without electricity, while courageously responding to the humanitarian needs of their local communities. Faced with this situation, the dioceses of Puerto Rico asked Catholic Extension Society to lead the establishment of an island-wide recovery program. That same year, the organization began a close collaboration with 5 dioceses of Puerto Rico to make this extensive project possible.

Catholic Extension Society is a nonprofit organization within the Catholic Church whose mission is to work in solidarity with people to build up vibrant and transformative Catholic faith communities among the poor in the poorest regions of the United States and Puerto Rico. Catholic Extension Society has been supporting the Church in Puerto Rico for the past 120 years.

The Catholic Chief Recovery Office in Puerto Rico was recently established with the help of Catholic Extension Society. The office reports to the bishops of Puerto Rico and is staffed by excellent Puerto Rican professionals. Their services in the areas of finance, engineering, and management will help the Church build more resilient structures, ensuring the long-term sustainability of its presence on the island.

The recovery program, which is estimated to take 5 to 7 years to complete, will not only generate nearly 7,000 direct and indirect jobs, but will also strengthen Catholic infrastructure, allowing for greater spiritual and charitable care on an island where nearly 45% of the population lives in poverty. The reinforced Catholic Church buildings will provide greater shelter and security to save lives in the face of future disasters.

“For the past seven years, I have kept the Holy Father informed about the progress in Puerto Rico. Each time I have shared updates on the island with him, he expresses his deepest gratitude to the members of the Catholic Extension Society, the clergy, and the faithful of Puerto Rico, as well as for the contributions and solidarity of all of you involved in the reconstruction of this blessed island,” the Cardinal concluded.

After the event, Cardinal Cupich was scheduled to visit the *Capilla Sagrado Corazón de Jesús* (Sacred Heart of Jesus Chapel) in the Mariana neighborhood of Humacao, part of the Diocese of Fajardo-Humacao, a diocese he visited shortly after Hurricane Maria. The chapel suffered considerable damage and will be among the first church facilities to be repaired as part of this project.

For more information about the Catholic Church’s recovery program and ways to support ongoing recovery efforts in Puerto Rico, visit catholicextension.org/puertorico.

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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; follow us on Facebook at facebook.com/catholicextension or on X (Formerly Twitter) at @CathExtension.

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