



## Extending the Reach of the Faith

Every two years Catholic Extension hosts a conference in Chicago for bishops of “missionary dioceses” in the United States. This past week (September 22-24) I was one of 80 bishops to attend this year’s gathering.

Catholic Extension (formerly known as the Extension Society) was founded in Chicago in 1906 to extend the resources of wealthy, populous urban dioceses to poorer, smaller rural dioceses like ours. And Baker Diocese has been a conspicuous beneficiary of its outward-reaching concern. The 12,000 churches Extension has built in the United States in its hundred-year history include most of those built throughout Eastern Oregon in the 1940s, ‘50s, and ‘60s. And the story does not end there. Down to the present Extension’s forward-looking generosity has continued to help us build and maintain parish facilities and to train and equip people to bring those facilities to life in the service of the Gospel.

As its own mission has matured in the last ten years, Extension has creatively developed projects to help mission dioceses learn to help themselves. A prime example of this is its pilot program in our diocese to enhance the Bishop’s Appeal. Instead of providing us funds to form a new staff here, Extension contracted for development services elsewhere and granted them to us for two years to coach our existing staff in effective practices. In one year contributions

to the Bishop’s Appeal have doubled, and we think we have learned how to keep it growing. Having trained us well, Extension can now move on and put this valuable service at the disposal of another diocese.

Since 1978 Extension has presented its Lumen Christi Award to priests, women religious, and laypeople who make significant contributions to the life of mission dioceses. This year’s nine finalists come from Alaska, Texas, Missouri, Louisiana, New Mexico—and Oregon. At the conference I was proud to be presented a \$10,000 check to honor Deacon Gustavo Ruiz as a “shining example of Catholic Extension’s mission.” Deacon Gustavo, our Director of Hispanic Ministry, tirelessly crisscrosses the Diocese to encourage the Spanish-speaking with retreats and workshops on faith formation, liturgical training, and leadership development. Back in Bend he encourages his bishop with insight gained from long experience and with a spirit always open to collaboration. I am delighted to second Extension’s recognition of Deacon Gustavo’s faithful and invaluable service to the Diocese of Baker.

It is said that Catholic Extension is the best kept secret in the American Church. To learn more about it visit its website ([catholicextension.org](http://catholicextension.org)) and subscribe to its informative and inspiring magazine ([magazine@catholicextension.org](mailto:magazine@catholicextension.org)). You will be surprised—and pleased—by what you find.