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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CATHOLIC HOME MISSIONS APPEAL STRENGTHENS THE CHURCH AT HOME

**Close to 90 dioceses in the U.S. are considered “mission” territory today
Catholic Home Missions Appeal slated for May 1**

WASHINGTON—There are 87 Catholic *home mission* dioceses in the United States. Whether due to the rugged terrain or the poverty of the population, these dioceses are for the most part unable to fund by themselves the most basic and essential pastoral works. The Catholic Home Missions Appeal, sponsored by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), works to bridge the gap between need and available resources in mission dioceses, thus strengthening the Church here at home. The national date for the Appeal is May 1.

“The commitment of the Catholic Church in poor dioceses across the country is not without challenge, as many of the parishes in these mission dioceses are unable to support their core ministries,” said Bishop Michael W. Warfel of Great Falls–Billings, chairman of the USCCB Subcommittee on Catholic Home Missions. “Many parishes are also separated by long distances or rough terrain and face the realities of poverty and priest shortages. The generosity of their fellow Catholics in the U.S. makes a great difference in the life of these faith communities.”

For instance, with help from the Catholic Home Missions Appeal, the Diocese of Stockton in California created the innovative Latino Leadership Development Program. This program engages Catholics who have returned to the Church and are eager to participate in parish and community life.

The Catholic Home Missions Appeal funds an array of pastoral projects, including catechesis, seminary education, youth ministry, Hispanic and other ethnic ministries, and lay ministry training. It also provides aid to struggling parishes in poor dioceses.

“As I visit our parishes across northern Wisconsin, I am able to witness firsthand the many ways in which the lay people of our diocese assist our pastors in carrying out their responsibilities to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ,” said Bishop Peter F. Christensen, of Superior, Wisconsin. “The funding we receive from the Subcommittee on Catholic Home Missions continues to make it possible to provide training and support for those called forth to ministries of outreach and service in their parishes and the broader Christian community.”

Although the appeal primarily supports home mission dioceses, the subcommittee may also give grants to other dioceses for particular projects and to organizations and religious communities engaged in missionary work in the United States and its territories and former territories.

The U.S. bishops established the Catholic Home Missions Appeal in 1998. Additional information, including a map of U.S. home missions, can be found at <http://www.usccb.org/hm/>.

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