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CATHOLIC DISTANCE UNIVERSITY TO CELEBRATE 35 YEARS IN 2018

CHARLES TOWN, WV—Catholic Distance University will celebrate its 35th year in 2018. Founded in 1983 as the first catechetical institute in the United States to award the Catechetical Diploma and teach the Catholic faith to adults using distance education, today the university offers degree and continuing education programs completely online, continuing its commitment to provide a faithful Catholic education accessible anytime and anywhere.

Though many schools now offer online programs, CDU was among the first to do so and exclusively serves online students, gearing all of its educational resources to supporting students in the online classroom where other universities divide their expertise and resources between campus-based students in a traditional classroom and those in the online space. CDU President, Marianne Mount, explains, “Online learning is our expertise. We are wholeheartedly committed to the pedagogy of online and distance learning in theological education and religious formation for the 21st century. CDU is the flagship Catholic university in the digital space, inviting learners and teachers throughout the world with a hunger to deepen their encounter with Jesus Christ and his Church, through programs in fidelity to Catholic teaching that are delivered directly to each learner.”

The Hallmarks of Excellence in Online Theological Education

Online education offers a learning experience that is especially rich and rewarding in theological education and growth in faith development. CDU’s courses promote conversational learning in highly interactive classes using a style reminiscent of Jesus’ method of teaching his disciples in first-century Palestine. Today at CDU, this is carried out with well-trained, caring faculty who facilitate engaging dialogue to deepen cognitive learning and are always available for individual support. The weekly asynchronous rhythm allows students the flexibility to engage with classmates at times that best suit their schedule and learning preferences.

Chancellor Reflects on CDU

Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio of the Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA, serves as Chancellor of the University and Vice Chairman of the CDU Board of Trustees. “The thirty-fifth anniversary of Catholic Distance University is a milestone to celebrate,” he says. “The University’s pursuit of excellence and the search for truth coupled with a pioneer spirit in the world of distance learning make this educational community a model. Mindful of the confusion in today’s society, I give thanks for this instrument enabled to deepen knowledge of the Catholic faith in order to promote the New Evangelization.”

Universally Catholic

Unlike most Catholic universities, CDU is not tied to a specific spiritual tradition. This enables the University to be truly universal and committed to faithfully transmitting the teachings of the Church in fidelity to the Magisterium. This universality is part of what makes CDU so welcoming to a diverse body of students throughout the world.

Diverse Student Body and Faculty

Over its history, CDU has educated students in 60 countries. As a global university, CDU is conscious of the human and cultural diversity of the world in which students live and work. CDU's faculty are geographically

diverse, residing throughout the United States and in other continents such as Australia and Europe. CDU students share this geographical diversity, hailing from all over the United States, Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean, Europe, and Asia. CDU's student body is also ethnically and racially diverse, reflecting the diversity of the Church.

CDU educates a wide cross-section of students, including working adults, professionals, parents, military personnel, clergy, deacons, and those in religious life. Most wish to grow in their faith or acquire credentials for Church work or ministry. Many graduates agree that the study of theology—faith seeking understanding— informs all they do and enriches their lives in ways they had not expected.

Lan Nguyen, an active volunteer at Our Lady of La Vang Mission in Arlington, Virginia, says, "Going back to school as an adult is quite difficult. It's even harder when English is your second language." Lan's first language was Vietnamese. "With these concerns, I was excited to find that CDU has developed a very convenient online program with a great support system. Each course has introduced to me a different piece of the Church's doctrine and God's Word, where I then find truth and authentic love," she explains.

Affordability

CDU is committed to keeping education affordable for students. Unlike most universities, CDU has not raised its tuition since 2013. At \$305 per credit hour, CDU's fully online BA completion program is competitively priced; its \$450 per credit hour graduate tuition is highly competitive as well. CDU is committed to keeping tuition as low as possible, recognizing that its students are motivated by a desire to serve the Church. Because courses are taken completely online, students can live at home, work, and study at their convenience.

Cynthia Brewer earned a Graduate Certificate in Church History. She explains, "What I like best about CDU is that I can receive the highest quality graduate-level Catholic education through an online program for nearly the same cost of classes at a state university."

According to the Cardinal Newman Society's *Catholic College Guide*, "Catholic Distance University has been at the forefront of providing quality, faithful Catholic teaching to students seeking flexibility." The US Conference of Catholic Bishops also recommends CDU as a degree-granting Catholic university.

Serving the Universal Church

While the majority of CDU graduates indicate that they are not currently employed professionally by the Church, 93% of graduate students and 90% of undergraduates use their CDU degrees to serve as volunteers in some form of Church ministry in their local parishes or other Catholic apostolates. Half of CDU's undergraduates have indicated they chose a degree program to better serve the Church.

CDU alumni have contributed to the Church throughout the world. Many use their theological education to inform their secular professions of counseling, medicine, law, global and public health, and criminal justice. Others publish, teach at the university, high school, or elementary level, serve as directors of religious education and CCD teachers, or develop curriculum for dioceses.

Satisfaction

CDU has a 9:1 student to faculty ratio (according to the recent IPEDS report). CDU's small class sizes ensure that faculty members are able to provide students with the personal attention they deserve. In 2017, 98% of CDU students responded to a survey indicating their satisfaction with their courses. CDU's BA graduation rate is 62.5%, which is quite high for an online university. CDU's MA graduation rate is 88.2% for the 8-year program, and 61.1% for the 5-year program.

The results of end-of-program surveys for 2016 described 100% stating that they achieved their learning goals, 96% recommending CDU to a friend, and 96% expressing overall satisfaction with their studies at CDU.

A Growing University

CDU began offering an MA in Theology in 1996; it was in that year that the school changed its name from Catholic Home Study Institute to Catholic Distance University. CDU launched its Bachelor of Arts Completion Program in 2005; the program allows students with a minimum of 48 credits earned at another institution to complete a degree in Theology through CDU—even without prior Theology credits. In 2011 CDU began to offer the AA in Liberal Arts with a Concentration in Catholic Studies. In 2015, CDU added a Master of Arts Degree in Theological Education and Ministry and a Graduate Certificate for Catholic Educators.

Accelerated MA Track Added

In 2016 an Accelerated MA Track was offered for the first time, which allows students with approval to finish their undergraduate degrees and begin taking graduate-level courses during their bachelor's program. These credits can then be applied to the MA program requirements, allowing students to finish the program more quickly and to apply credits to both programs at a significant cost savings. The university has just created an Undergraduate Catechetical Coordinator Certificate program for those who wish to serve the Church as DREs, catechists, and volunteers and are seeking a comprehensive certification.

ABOUT CDU: A pioneer in distance learning, CDU was founded in 1983 as the first catechetical institute in the United States to award the Catechetical Diploma and teach the Catholic faith to adults using distance education. CDU offered its first degree program in 1996. Today CDU is a fully online accredited university offering BA and MA degrees in Theology, an MA in Theology and Educational Ministry, an AA degree in Liberal Arts with a concentration in Catholic Studies, several graduate certificates, an undergraduate certificate, and continuing education certificates and courses. The university also continues its active outreach to the incarcerated Church. Dr. Charles R. Wasaff is Chairman of CDU's Board of Trustees, Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio serves as Vice Chairman of the Board and Chancellor of the University, and Marianne Evans Mount, PhD, serves as President. For more information, visit cdu.edu.

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