



The Good News

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The mission of Catholic Distance University is to communicate the mind and heart of the Church in a digital world. Using distance education, the university educates teachers and learners worldwide in Catholic theology, the liberal arts, and faith development for the growth of faith, ecclesial service, and leadership for the New Evangelization.

A Publication for CDU Donors & Friends

Spring 2019

Help Us to Build Bridges for the Future

While accreditation has pushed us to work more thoughtfully and invest in longer work hours, the reward has been a remarkable blessing to the CDU Community. In November 2018, following an onsite visit at CDU with five evaluators and a follow-up trip to Chicago to meet with an additional committee of reviewers, CDU was awarded Candidacy by the Board of the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). Our comprehensive visit for full accreditation will take place April 27-28, 2020.

In June 2018 the full membership of The Association of Theological Schools (ATS) voted unanimously to welcome CDU as an Associate Member, the first step in seeking full accreditation. February 8, 2019, the Board of Commissioners of ATS awarded Candidacy to CDU and approved a comprehensive visit for full accreditation March 16-19, 2020. Our staff is diligently preparing self-study reports for both accreditors under the careful direction of Sister Mary Margaret Ann, SND, our staff liaison to the accreditors, and Sister Mary Brendon, SND, a CDU Trustee and accreditation expert.

The Strategic Bridge Initiative

It is impossible to speak about our accreditation success without speaking about investments that CDU has made to enhance the infrastructure, library, faculty, marketing, and staffing to meet the standards of regional and programmatic accreditors. Much of the cost of this investment has so far been carried generously by the Board of Trustees, which has launched a Strategic Bridge Initiative to raise \$1.5 million dollars over three years (2018, 2019, and 2020) to fully fund CDU's investments for full regional and programmatic accreditation. The Board is fully committed to the mission of CDU and the importance of CDU's credentials awarded to students and graduates.

The goal to raise \$1.5 million over three years is a University-wide challenge that must engage our entire CDU Community, including our loyal donors, alumni, students, staff, and friends. We are inviting each member of our community to sacrifice for the future so that each student and graduate will earn credentials that represent the highest academic quality and fidelity to the teachings of the Church, in addition to recognition of our expertise in the pedagogy of distance education that broadens the Church's missionary reach to "proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ and the Church to the ends of the earth."

Pope Francis has called us to "break down walls and build bridges." When you receive the invitation to give to the Strategic Bridge Initiative, please think of your gift as helping to build a new bridge that offers all members of the Church a door into the depth of the richness of the Catholic Church's teachings and traditions. Through CDU's pioneering vision, those teachings and traditions are now present on smartphones, tablets, laptops, and technologies awaiting us in the new millennium. As Pope Benedict reminded us in 2009, "These technologies are truly a gift to humanity and we must endeavor to ensure that the benefits they offer are put at the service of all human individuals and communities, especially those who are most disadvantaged and vulnerable" (*World Communications Day Message*, 2009).

Thank you for your continuing prayers and financial support for CDU and our growing learning community; we pray for you daily and for your sacrificial gifts that continue to advance our mission to make Jesus Christ present in a digital world.



Webinar Focuses on Family

We hope you were able to join us for *Raising a Catholic Family in the 21st Century*, featuring special guests Chris and Linda Padgett as well as Dr. Matthew Bunson. If you missed the webinar or want to share it with a friend, visit www.cdu.edu/raising-a-catholic-family-in-the-21st-century.

Chris and Linda Padgett have been married for over 25 years and have experience in fostering the faith of their nine children even in the busiest seasons of life. Whether you have toddlers, teenagers, or everything in between, this webinar is for you!

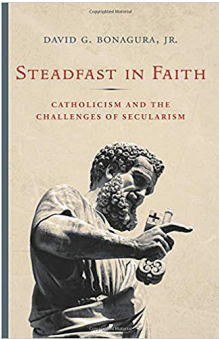
The Padgetts offers practical tips and advice regarding Mass attendance, prayers, smartphone/tech usage, and answering the big questions of our faith. View this timely webinar today!

Inspiring New Publications

New Book Offers Answers and Hope

Faculty member David G. Bonagura recently published *Steadfast in Faith: Catholicism and the Challenges of Secularism*. Aimed at meeting the needs of any Catholic who seeks a deeper faith and more abiding conviction in the message of Christ’s gospel, *Steadfast in Faith* addresses contemporary secular culture and how Catholics can practice the Faith amidst its questions, challenges, and conditions.

Who is God? Why should I believe in Him? What if I doubt his Word? What if I see contradictions between faith and science? What if I feel nothing when I pray? Why is Catholicism any better than, or different from, other religions? Why do evil and suffering exist, if God is real? With remarkable clarity, Bonagura presents an apology for faith in Jesus Christ, true God and true man, upon whom we are right to build our lives, our families, and our societies. The book is available on Amazon.



Apologetics Instructor’s New Book Explores True Happiness

Do you ever wonder why you’re not happy with what everyone says are the good things in life, including money, fun, and friends? *Search No More* provides clear, compelling, and concise answers to "big questions" about happiness, Jesus, salvation, and the Catholic Faith. In *Search No More*, author Steven Hemler, President of the Catholic Apologetics Institute of North America and CDU apologetics instructor, makes the case that the keys to truth and happiness are Jesus and His Church, as experienced by himself, the saints, and millions of others over the past 2,000 years.

Hemler says that his books focus on “strengthening Faith, equipping us with the tools to explain to others and to dispel doubts.” *Search No More* builds on Hemler’s’ first book, *The Reality of God, The Layman’s Guide to Scientific Evidence for The Creator*, which was written for atheist and agnostic people. The new book speaks to those who are spiritual but not religious or those who believe but do not attend church.

Hemler says, “*Search No More* has a happiness hook. Many people are seekers and are not quite happy, and they do not know why. This book will help people and draw them into the life of the Church.”

“Even though the clerical sex abuse and cover-up scandals are terrible and have damaged the credibility of the Catholic Church's witness, this does not negate the wisdom or truth of the Church's divinely inspired teachings nor prevent us from finding true happiness and joy in her service-oriented community and sacramental graces,” Hemler writes. Explore this claim for yourself and discover the happiness and truth you are searching for in life.

Search No More will be of interest to anyone seeking something more or examining the truth of key teachings of the Catholic Church. Available on Amazon, *Search No More* will dispel doubts, strengthen faith, and provide valuable information for discussion with family and friends who have questions about Catholicism.



THEO 343 Vatican II: The Church and Her Liturgy

Now is the time to enroll in this newly revised course about the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), a major event in Church history and perhaps the most misunderstood. The course, which is taught by Dr. Marie Nuar, features fresh video and instruction from Rome.

Documents issued by the Second Vatican Council included four Constitutions, the highest ranking documents issued by a Council: two on the Church, one on divine Revelation, and one on the Sacred Liturgy.

Specifically, this course will examine two documents that deal with the Church-*Lumen Gentium* and *Gaudium et Spes*-and one that deals with liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*.

Lumen Gentium is a dogmatic constitution focusing on the theology of the Church, or ecclesiology. It explains what the Church is, the way it works, and the role of the people of God, the hierarchy, laity, and religious. *Gaudium et Spes* is a pastoral Constitution that focuses on the way in which the Church carries the mission of Christ to the world.

Sacrosanctum Concilium, the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, explains what the Church’s liturgy is and how a person participates in it.

After completing the course, students will better understand their role in the Church, the mission given to us all through baptism, and the Church’s teaching on liturgy and how it is being implemented today.

Offered in the Summer I term, registration begins on March 11th, and the class begins on May 6th.

AA Grad Finds Her Future in Theology

Mary Kate Budd recently completed her AA degree in Liberal Arts while working full-time for the Diocese of Saginaw, Michigan. “CDU gave me a chance to study theology online in a way that would be easy for me as a working young adult,” she says.

With a passion for youth ministry, Mary Kate looks forward to using her education to share with young people the beauty of having a relationship with Jesus. “I can’t wait to use the tools that I have gained from CDU to accomplish what Christ is calling me to,” she says.

Mary Kate attended Franciscan University of Steubenville at first, where she planned to major in English for a career in education. While she loved the university, it was expensive. To avoid being saddled with student loan debt, she decided not to return following freshman year.

Her brother suggested that she look into studying theology, and Mary Kate found the major to be a perfect fit.

Knowing she would have to pursue her education online because she was working full time, she began researching programs and found Catholic Distance University. “It was with joy that I found out that I had been accepted and that a lot of my credits had also transferred,” she says.

“I liked how helpful CDU’s professors were and how concerned they were for their students,” Mary Kate says. “I also enjoyed the interactions I had with my fellow classmates from all different walks of life.”

Kathy Vestermarck, her first professor at CDU, was her favorite. She teaches *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. “Professor Vestermarck was always ready to help, and studying under her was such a pleasure,” Mary Kate says. Mary Kate grew up in a strong, close-knit, faith-filled Catholic family as the youngest of six children. “The Faith was just a part of our daily lives,” she says. As she grew older, the Faith fascinated her, and she wanted to learn more.

After returning from Franciscan, she joined a Catholic youth group at a local state university as well as a young adult group in her diocese that her sister had founded. “Through the young adult groups I met my future husband, Jason,” Mary Kate says. A former seminarian, he proposed to her in the Adoration chapel she had routinely visited as a child. Their wedding is scheduled for June, and they look forward to having a family someday.

“After our marriage, I hope to be able to find a job in youth ministry in our area if I can and to keep learning ... I hope to also enter the BA program at CDU at some point to earn my Bachelor’s degree in theology,” she says.

“But my biggest plan is, and will remain, God willing, that I will be able to help young people come to know, love, and serve God.”



ATS Grants Candidacy to Graduate School of Theology

At its February 7-8, 2019, meeting, the Board of Commissioners of the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) unanimously voted CDU’s Graduate School of Theology a Candidate for Accreditation. Founded in 1918, ATS accredits more than 270 graduate schools of theology and most Catholic seminaries in the United States and Canada.

CDU’s Graduate School of Theology provides a transformative learning experience in the digital space to develop leaders and teachers for the new evangelization in the 21st century. The school offers its two degree programs and three certificate programs completely online. Nearly 90% of our graduate alumni serve the Church in some ministry, including as youth ministers, directors of religious education, catechists, school teachers, liturgy directors, professors of theology, parish administrators, religious sisters, and diocesan staff.

Candidacy is the first step toward full accreditation, which would likely be achieved in a period of two years. CDU has been continuously accredited by the Distance Education Accrediting Commission, a national accreditor, since 1986 and is authorized to grant degrees through the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission. In November 2018, CDU was named a Candidate for Accreditation with the Higher Learning Commission, which accredits post-secondary educational institutions in a 19-state region that includes West Virginia, where the University is headquartered. CDU’s Board of Trustees, which is chaired by Dr. Charles Wasaff, has identified full regional and programmatic accreditation as the University’s foremost priority in its Strategic Plan.

CDU Is Expanding in Every Area!

In 2018 our Prison Ministry Program shared the Word of God with incarcerated students through 156 correspondence course enrollments, a 50% increase over 2017.

Since its launch in April 2018, CDU’s Digital Prison Ministry Program has educated incarcerated students through more than 10,000 course enrollments on tablets approved for use in prisons.

Our first three courses in Spanish will be available to incarcerated students on the tablets this month.

The number of academic students enrolled in the fall terms increased nearly 9% from 2017 to 2018.

Nearly half of students enrolled in fall 2018 were women.

Of those who chose to report race/ethnicity, 27% of all students enrolled in fall 2018 reported as belonging to a racial/ethnic minority group.

The most attended webinar in the last year was “Raising a Catholic Family in the 21st Century” with faculty member Chris Padgett and his wife, Linda.

The course with the highest student enrollment in 2018 was THEO 503 The Catholic Theological Tradition.

CDU’s online library had 56,841 page views in 2018. Our *New Catholic Encyclopedia* e-books usage has tripled, and statistics show a 33% annual usage increase for our EBSCO Host Databases in 2018. CDU is requesting support for additional digital library resources. Alumni are always welcome to use CDU’s online library.

CDU’s 4,652 Facebook followers get daily inspirational gospel messages, updates, and announcements. Like and follow CDU today!

Online Giving Is Easy!

It has never been easier to support CDU! We now offer an automated monthly donation option at www.cdu.edu/donate. Like our educational programs, online giving is mobile, convenient, and flexible to fit your busy lifestyle and budget. Give an unrestricted gift to help keep tuition affordable or to support students or the underserved. Your monthly donation can help cover tuition for a mission diocese scholar or offer free independent study courses for our brothers and sisters behind bars. Your support is vital to helping us share joy from the Truth and teach all nations. Thank you for your giving heart and loyal support.

Contact Annie at ahager@cdu.edu if you desire a customized plan.

How Are We Saved?

July 15 – August 5

Given our increasingly secular and atheistic society, many people today doubt the reality of heaven and the afterlife, especially young people. Given the proclamations on salvation made by evangelical friends, many Catholics are confused about how we are saved to eternal life in heaven. Therefore, the need to equip Catholics to credibly, convincingly, and compellingly explain and share how we can know that heaven and the afterlife are real and what the Catholic Church teaches about salvation has never been greater.

This seminar presents Catholic Church teaching on why it was necessary for Jesus Christ to suffer and die for us and how we can accept this most precious gift of salvation. Many New Testament passages are used to explain how we are called to a three-fold response to accept God's gift of salvation: faith, charitable good deeds, and partaking of the graces offered by the sacraments of the Church, especially baptism and holy eucharist. Attendees will come to understand what it takes to be saved and be better prepared to respond when asked, "Have you been saved?"

Register for this seminar after April 15 at <https://cdu.catalog.instructure.com/>.

Thank You!

Sharing your knowledge with others, introducing CDU to your friends, and supporting us with generous donations enables us to "Teach all Nations" and communicate the mind and heart of the Church online across the globe. We are grateful because we cannot fulfill His Plan without you!

Continue Your Lifelong Educational Journey

Would you like to learn more about Isaiah and the prophets, St. Thomas Aquinas, comparative religion, Vatican II, or Latin? Graduates of CDU's BA, MA, or Catechetical Diploma programs may audit courses at the academic level from which they graduated for a minimal fee of just \$300 per course. As valued alumni, you can easily continue your lifelong learning experience in our online campus.

Browse courses offered in our upcoming terms at cdu.edu/upcoming-terms/ and contact the registrar to audit a course.

Graduates also receive a discount on Continuing Education apologetics seminars and independent study courses. Contact Annie at ahager@cdu.edu for the promotional code and enroll today!

Digital Continent Focuses on the Diaconate

The diaconate, which was established in the early Church as written in the Acts of the Apostles, seemingly ceased to exist in the Latin Church, but it now flourishes again.

In June 1967, Pope St. Paul VI issued a papal decree that formally restored the diaconate as a permanent ministry in the Catholic Church. Now more than 50 years after the decree, there are more than 18,000 permanent deacons in the U.S. and another 15,000 worldwide. The latest issue of *Digital Continent* features recent MA graduate John P. Kramer's thesis, "The Historical, Ecclesial, and Theological Development of the Permanent Diaconate."

Kramer discusses the permanent diaconate that once existed and its purpose today. He writes, "What was reestablished was the order of deacons as a part of Holy Orders. Men of the Diaconate are ordained into the ministry of the Church, to share in some of the sacramental duties of the clergy. What led to the reestablishment of this order? Not as some have suggested, as an answer to the declining number of men called to the priesthood, but instead as an answer to the question: What can the Church contribute to the shaping and building of the world?"

Deacon is derived from *diakonos*, a Greek word that means "to serve." As the name suggests, the role is oriented toward service.

Enjoy reading *Digital Continent* on our website at cdu.edu/digital-continent-2/ and learn more about the decree and the need for deacons in the Church.

