



The Good News

115 West Congress St., Charles Town, WV 25414 • 1-888-254-4CDU • www.cdu.edu

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

Summer 2019

Message from CDU President Dr. Marianne Evans Mount

In a homily at the opening Mass in Lourdes, France, for the annual pilgrimage of the Order of Malta on May 2nd, celebrant Archbishop Vigneron of the Archdiocese of Detroit asked us why our Lady appeared to Bernadette in 1848 in Lourdes. His answer was simple: "Our Lady appeared to Bernadette because she came to evangelize; she is the greatest evangelizer in the Church."

Like her son, Mary, too, is an instrument of physical and spiritual healing. As a mother, she chose to appear to a poor, illiterate young woman of 13 or 14 much like herself. Bernadette, who witnessed 18 apparitions, became a saint in 1933, and today the site of the apparitions is a place of pilgrimage for six million people each year. As Archbishop Vigneron reminded us, a few will receive a miracle at Lourdes, but everyone will be healed.

My week in Lourdes was the perfect setting for my trip to the Diocese of Brooklyn on May 16th to celebrate the accomplishments of the first graduates of the Holy Spirit Institute for Leadership and Service in Brooklyn, which partners with CDU to provide certificates and degrees in Religious Education and Theology. The Holy Spirit Institute for Leadership and Service, which was formed to develop diocesan leadership, is sponsored by Bishop DiMarzio and the Secretariat for Evangelization and Catechesis, Mr. Ted Musco. At the graduation Mass, CDU was presented with a Collaboration Award from the Diocese.

As I met graduates and their families after the Mass, I was so inspired by their stories and excitement about how their CDU education has transformed them in their parish work. One woman who runs an RCIA program explained that while she has always loved her faith, she did not have the understanding or vocabulary to explain and defend it until she completed her certificate from CDU. In addition to the RCIA program, she has started a new program with Hispanic couples who live together to help them understand the importance of the Church's teaching on the Sacrament of Marriage. She is grateful to be able to communicate the beauty of the Church's teachings to those in her community who have not yet encountered the "Good News."

Another graduate, a Peruvian doctor who emigrated to Brooklyn, is very active in her parish. She is considering the MA Degree Program in Theology as her children and grandchildren are grown, and she liked the flexibility of studying online at CDU.

As we approach CDU's 36th anniversary on August 22, 2019, the Feast of the Queenship of Mary, we marvel at the presence of Our Lady, who is the Queen of CDU and the greatest evangelizer in the Church!



Faculty Focuses on Fidelity to the Church

CDU faculty members gathered at the Chancery of the Diocese of Arlington on April 9th to take the Oath of Fidelity to the Catholic Church and make the Profession of Faith. Trustee Bishop Michael F. Burbidge, DD, PhD, conducted the ceremony as the local ordinary. In keeping with Canon law, the Mandatum ceremony is held to ensure that faculty teach in full communion with the Church and reflects CDU's commitment to remain faithful to the Magisterium.

(Pictured l to r: Dr. James Kruggel, Dr. Peter Brown, Bishop Michael F. Burbidge, Father Bevil Bramwell, and Dr. Matthew Bunson. Dr. Marcellino D'Ambrosio and Dr. Marie Nuar attended remotely.)



Brooklyn Partnership Bears Fruit



Congratulations to the graduates of the Diocese of Brooklyn's Holy Spirit Institute for Leadership and Service.



More Than Nine Out of Ten Graduates Serve the Church

Our graduates are inspired to share their faith with others, and the needs of the Church and the individual calling of each graduate determine how each serves. After compiling data that includes our 2018 graduates, we found that our graduates are currently serving in the following roles:

- 35% as facilitators/catechists for children or adults, Bible study, or other parish ministries;
- 31% as directors, pastoral associates, or coordinators of religious education, spirituality, or faith formation;
- 16% as teachers of the Catholic Faith in educational institutions;
- 11% as writers or IT specialists in communications media for the Church;
- 9% as deacons or consecrated persons;
- 8% as students of higher education or studies for advanced Church positions;
- 4% as non-retired graduates with hopes to work full time for Church after retirement;
- 3% as prison ministry volunteers.

Women Serve the Faith

Fifty-two percent of Graduate School of Theology alumni are women. Since CDU was founded in 1983, its educational programs have offered women an opportunity to more fully enter into the life and leadership of the Church community. About one-third of the graduate school’s faculty members are women, and a number of women serve on its Board of Trustees.

Students Go the Distance

CDU academic completion rates continue to be strong. In 2018, eight out of 10 students who enrolled in the AA and MA programs graduated, while nine out of 10 BA students who enrolled graduated. We are blessed with committed academic students; their performance is well above average graduate program statistics at both public and private universities.

Did you know?

According to 2018 graduate program surveys:

100% of graduates would recommend CDU; **100% of graduates** achieved their goals; **100% of graduates** are satisfied with their studies.

Please continue to pray for our students and graduates.

CDU’s Prison Ministry Programs Touch Lives

CDU’s digital prison ministry program, which is celebrating its first anniversary, has served more than 40,000 free adult education enrollments to the incarcerated in the first 12 months. We continue to add courses in English and Spanish and hope to double our enrollments in the next year.

We also offer correspondence courses to the incarcerated, and since the beginning of 2019, correspondence course enrollments have increased 54%. We are grateful to all of our prison ministry donors for their commitment to the underserved. Please pray for the incarcerated.

Exciting News!

Former incarcerated student Jim Blum, who earned an MA degree in Theology, has founded My Father’s House, a non-profit prison ministry organization. He is working to secure grant funding for inmates in Colorado to take non-credit courses toward our Advanced Catechist Certificate program.

How Are We Saved?

Do near-death experiences reveal the reality of heaven and an afterlife? Why were Christ’s passion and death needed for our salvation? And how do we accept God’s gift of salvation? These questions and many others will be answered in CDU’s July 15 – August 5 online seminar on how we are saved.

Given our increasingly secular and atheistic society, many today doubt the reality of heaven and the afterlife, especially young people. And, 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 know that heaven and the afterlife are real and what the Catholic Church teaches about salvation has never been greater.

How Are We Saved? will be led by Stephen R. Hemler, president of the Catholic Apologetics Institute of North America (CAINA) and author of *The Reality of God: The Layman's Guide to Scientific Evidence for the Creator* and *Search No More: The Keys to Truth and Happiness*.

Enroll today to strengthen your faith and learn what the Church teaches about salvation: www.cdu.catalog.instructure.com

Double Graduate Authors Catholic Children’s Books

Laurie Schmitt (BA 2011, MA 2014) has written a new children’s book, *Giorgio’s Miracle*, which will be published by Marian Press this fall. The historical fiction book for children approximately 6 to 10 years old is based on a Eucharistic miracle.

Schmitt, a “nearly retired” homeschooling mother of nine, prayed during Eucharistic Adoration hour about how to use her education and was inspired to write. Discovering that there are very few chapter books that tell stories about Eucharistic miracles, she found her calling in authoring children’s books that aspire to represent Catholic culture in a positive, historically accurate way, especially by supporting the role of the clergy and the traditions of the Church.



Though researching and writing take second place to her busy household, she is already writing her third book. Her second book has been professionally edited and is being reviewed by Catholic publishers. Pray for Laurie’s vocation and look for *Giorgio’s Miracle* this fall on Amazon and ShopMercy.org.

Graduate Ordained in Massachusetts

BA in Theology graduate Dennis Skowera was ordained to the priesthood at St. Michael’s Cathedral in Springfield on June 1, 2019, by Bishop Mitchell T. Rozanski of the Diocese of Springfield.

The Rev. Dennis Skowera, a West Springfield native, is assigned to St. Anne Parish in Chicopee. His interest in a vocation began many years ago and intensified after the death of his wife of 31 years in 2013.

Father Skowera served 20 years with the U.S. Air Force and worked in management with several federal contractors prior to attending Pope St. John XXIII National Seminary. He served as a Eucharistic minister and lector at Sacred Heart Parish.



Photo (l to r): Rev. Paul Norman, Most Rev. Mitchell T. Rozanski, Rev. John Dwy Le, and Rev. Dennis Skowera. Photo by Fred LeBlanc, Catholic Communications.

Professor Hood Earns His PhD

Professor Joshua Hood, veteran professor of Latin and Greek, has earned his PhD in Semitics from The Catholic University of America. His dissertation was titled, “Songs of Supplication and Penitence: Onyātā from the Warda Collection in Mingana Syr 214.”

Professor Hood has studied many ancient and contemporary languages. “I was drawn to medieval Latin Catholicism as a teenager, and studying Latin in college was a natural first step in studying this,” he says. “I soon began studying Greek as well, and when I began graduate school at The Catholic University of America, my interests increasingly shifted ‘eastward’ as I moved from Biblical Studies to Semitics, concentrating in Syriac, but also studying Coptic, Arabic, and Hebrew.”

Subjects that particularly interest Dr. Hood include Eastern Christianity, Christian-Jewish-Islamic encounters throughout history, Christian apocrypha, and Syriac and Byzantine liturgy.



MA Grad Accepted into PhD Program in Sports Management

Doug Spriggs, a dedicated English teacher and high school football coach who is also involved in local parish ministry, has been accepted into a Ph.D. program at the United States Sports Academy for Sports Management. Through his sports career, he became a campus minister at the University of Arkansas and a leader in Fellowship of Christian Athletes.

His education in the Masters of Theology graduate program has benefited his professional life. In public schools, Doug strives to ensure that the English curriculum eliminates bias against Christian denominations, literature, and the Catholic Church. Moreover, his theological education allows him to refute many philosophical ideologies used to defend unethical behaviors and unfair treatment of student populations. Doug says, “The fidelity of my studies within the Catholic Faith guides all of my decisions as I advance my career outside of the Church. My rigorous study at CDU prepared me to succeed on a higher level.” I have been accepted into a Ph.D. program at the United States Sports Academy for Sports Management.”

Doug sees the impact his MA degree has in the secular world and is eager for the opportunity to effect a profound change within the growing world of collegiate sports.



Don't Miss Catholic Distance University's 2019 Gala

Catholic Distance University friends, supporters, faculty, and graduates will celebrate together at our 2019 Gala. The Academic Convocation Mass, graduation, and gala festivities will be held at the St. John Paul II Center in Washington, D.C., on Saturday, November 16.

The Most Reverend Christophe Pierre, a French-born prelate and diplomat to the Holy See, will be our Founder's award recipient. Archbishop Pierre, who serves as the Apostolic Nuncio to the United States, will address attendees with inspirational words about our Faith. The Diocese of Brooklyn will also be recognized for its innovative partnership with CDU through the Holy Spirit Institute, which prepares lay leaders for service to the Church.

The special evening will also include a cocktail reception, dinner, museum tour, and auction that includes international trips from our Amfund partner.

Mark your calendars for the 2019 CDU Gala. This is an event you will not want to miss.



The Most Reverend Christophe Pierre

CDU Print Library Now Loans Books

To ensure that students have sufficient resources for their classes, CDU has developed a print library to supplement the online library, which is accessible through Canvas. Staff, students, and alumni may borrow books from the print library. The print library catalog can be found at <https://www.librarycat.org/lib/cduedu>.

To borrow a book from the collection, request a title from the Librarian, Sister Rebecca Abel, raelabel@cdu.edu. Students may borrow up to four books at a time. While the books will be sent to you at no charge, borrowers must pay the return postage and return the books within a 4-week period. Books may be renewed for an additional 2 weeks by contacting the librarian.

Graduate Spotlight: Raymond Clement

CDU graduate Raymond Clement (MA 2018) of Jalan Novena Utara, Singapore, works as an in-house counsel for a bank.

"I decided to study theology after experiencing a nagging feeling for a number of years that I was not plumbing the inexhaustible richness of the Catholic Faith," Raymond says. "I also felt a keen awareness that in order to engage intelligently in the culture wars that are shaping the times we live in, I needed to be equipped with the right tools."

He chose CDU primarily due to its completely online teaching format. "Other universities I came across uniformly had a residency requirement that I would have found difficult to fulfill," he says. "CDU's faithfulness to the Magisterium and the quality of its faculty were also important considerations." Raymond enjoyed the sense of belonging to a Catholic community and the passion he developed for sharing the Faith with others while studying at CDU.

Despite working in banking—a field seemingly unrelated to theology—Raymond finds his degree useful in his work. "My knowledge of theology has helped me to see my work in a different light and shown me more opportunities to practice my faith in the workplace," he says.

Aside from advising churches on legal matters, Clement plans to volunteer more for the Church now that he has completed his studies.



Register online for
CDU's Holy Land Pilgrimage

www.crossroadsinitiative.com/pilgrimages

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

**Annual
Appeal 2019**

CDU could not fulfill our mission to communicate the mind and heart
of the Church in a digital world without partners like you!



Visit www.cdu.edu/donate today