

Sisters Honored at Catholic Distance University Gala in Washington, D.C.



On behalf of His Holiness Pope Francis, and at the request of His Excellency Archbishop Timothy Broglio, Archbishop of the Military Services USA and Chancellor of Catholic Distance University, the Papal *Cross of Honor Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice* (for the Church and the Pope) was presented to three members of the Catholic Distance University community in recognition of their outstanding commitment and service to the Church and the mission of the University:

- Dr. Charles Wasaff, the first lay chairman of the Board of Trustees of Catholic Distance University,
- Sister Mary Brendon Zajac, SND, Board Member, Catholic Distance University Instructor, Accreditation Consultant,
- Sister Mary Margaret Ann Schlather, SND, Catholic Distance University Dean of Catechetical Programs and Accreditation Liaison.

The Papal Medals were presented at the annual CDU Gala on Thursday, November 18, 2021, at the Saint John Paul II Shrine, in Washington, D.C.

Sister Mary Brendon had served on Catholic Distance University's Board of Trustees for nine years and had graciously contributed in many capacities, from teaching, educating, and mentoring incarcerated students to helping to shepherd CDU through the accreditation process. Sister Mary Margaret Ann had served as the Dean of Catechetical Programs for Catholic Distance University for nearly 20 years until her retirement in June. In his remarks, Archbishop Broglio acknowledged the influence of the Sisters of Notre Dame (Cleveland) in his own priestly ministry as well as in the founding of Catholic Distance University.

The medal, awarded in gold, is officially known as *Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice* (literally "For the Church and the Pope"). It is one of the highest honors that the Pope can bestow upon the laity and clergy. The medal depicts the Apostles Saint Peter and Saint Paul. On the left arm of the cross is the inscription *Pro Ecclesia*. On the right arm of the cross is *Et Pontifice*. At the point of the bottom arm of the cross is the coat of arms of the Pope. At the points of the other arms are small Greek crosses.

The Medal is accompanied by an authenticated certificate from the Holy See with the Latin inscription: The Holy Father, Francis, deigns to decree and bestow the distinguished cross For the Church and the Pope, to (name) for distinguished works and zeal (date).

Also honored at the same event was the Most Reverend Robert Barron, Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, and founder of Word on Fire Ministries. Bishop Barron received the CDU Founders Award, the university's highest honor, recognizing individuals whose service to the Church supports CDU's mission.