



## Lilly Endowment Inc. Awards Three Grants to Help Congregations in the Archdiocese of Chicago Thrive

**Archdiocese of Chicago, University of St. Mary of the Lake and St. Clement Parish each received \$1.25 million through Lilly Endowment's national initiative.**

---

**Chicago, (April 4, 2024)** – The Archdiocese of Chicago, the University of Saint Mary of the Lake in Mundelein and St. Clement Parish in Chicago each received a \$1.25 million grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. to be used for projects funded through Lilly Endowment's Thriving Congregations Initiative. The aim of the initiative is to encourage the flourishing of congregations by helping them deepen their relationships with God, enhance their connections with each other and contribute to the vitality of their communities and the world.

The Archdiocese of Chicago, the University of Saint Mary of the Lake and St. Clement Parish are among the 105 organizations that have received grants through a competitive round of the Thriving Congregations Initiative. Reflecting a wide variety of Christian traditions, the organizations represent mainline Catholic, Protestant, Evangelical Orthodox, Peace Church and Pentecostal faith communities.

"I am thankful to Lilly Endowment for not one but three grants to fund programs for the Archdiocese of Chicago that will create opportunities for renewal, growth in discipleship and ultimately an encounter with the Living Christ," said Betsy Bohlen, chief operating officer of the Archdiocese of Chicago. "We at the archdiocese are grateful for Lilly Endowment's confidence in our hard work and commitment to the renewal of Christ's church."

The grants will be used for the following programs:

The **Archdiocese of Chicago's Co-Implementation Model**, is a new archdiocesan effort focused on parish renewal for our times, with a particular emphasis on reaching out to those individuals less engaged or those who profess no faith at all. The program works hand-in-hand with a small group of parishes to test new approaches and put them into action. A dedicated team will work closely with parishes to share the renewal vision, train parish leaders, set new cultural practices, offer Christ-centered entry points and accompany parish members across a pathway of discipleship. Committed parish members will also be formed to use their talents in service and to be comfortable sharing their faith with others.

The grant for the University of Saint Mary of the Lake will support its **School of Parish Leadership and Evangelization (SPLE)** in efforts to:

1. Use a community action research approach to engage all 216 archdiocesan parishes in a curricular review process meant to revamp the existing formation curriculum for the Lay Leadership and Ministerio Laico Program.
2. Respond to the ongoing demographic shifts in the area and the need for lay leaders with enhanced skills and experience in multi-cultural ministry (with a special focus on the needs of Spanish speakers).
3. Leverage the recent shift to online instruction techniques and technology to increase the quality and accessibility of SPLE's lay leadership program.



The **Young Adult (YA) Engagement Pathway** is a program established by St. Clement Parish located in the heart of the city. The parish will use the funds to establish a program focused on spiritual renewal with young adults. The plan is aimed at forming a pipeline of young adult leaders that will impact the Church and enable the parish to become a learning hub for other churches and Christian faith communities through informal social gatherings, thought-provoking speaker-based discussion series, non-judgmental introductory faith courses, transformative experiences of worship and service to those in need.

The Thriving Congregation Initiative is designed to support organizations in the United States that work with congregations to develop new or strengthen existing programs to help churches understand better the changing social and cultural contexts in which they serve; gain clarity about their values and mission in light of these changes; and draw upon Christian practices that are rooted in the congregations' theological or ecclesial traditions to adapt and strengthen their ministries. Trends affecting faith communities are varied and include growing diversity within congregations and the communities they serve, the increasing religious disaffiliation among young people and the reliance of congregations on digital media to livestream worship services and conduct other ministries.

"Congregations play an essential role in deepening the faith of individuals and contributing to the vitality of communities," said Christopher L. Coble, Lilly Endowment's vice president for religion. "We hope that these programs will nurture the vibrancy and spark the creativity of congregations, helping them imagine new ways to share God's love in their communities and across the globe."

More information about the Endowment's Thriving Congregations Initiative can be found at: <https://lillyendowment.org/news/grants-will-support-programs-to-help-congregations-flourish/>

A complete list of 2023 grant recipients can be found here: <https://lillyendowment.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/thriving-congregations-2023-grants-list-2.pdf>

### **About the Archdiocese of Chicago**

The Archdiocese of Chicago, the third largest in the United States, serves more than 2.2 million Catholics in 216 parishes in Cook County and Lake County, a geographic area of 1,411 square miles. The Archdiocese, pastored by Cardinal Blase J. Cupich, has more than 13,000 employees in its systems and ministries, including Catholic Charities, the region's largest nonprofit social service agency. The Archdiocese also has one of the country's largest seminaries. The Archdiocese's 154 elementary and secondary schools comprise one of the largest U.S. private school systems. Its schools have received 96 U.S. Department of Education Blue Ribbon Awards.

### **About Lilly Endowment Inc.**

Lilly Endowment Inc. is a private foundation created in 1937 by J.K. Lilly Sr. and his sons Eli and J.K. Jr. through gifts of stock in their pharmaceutical business, Eli Lilly and Company. While those gifts remain the financial bedrock of the Endowment, it is a separate entity from the company, with a distinct governing board, staff and location. In keeping with the founders' wishes, the Endowment supports the causes of community development, education and religion and maintains a special commitment to its hometown, Indianapolis, and home state, Indiana. A principal aim of the Endowment's religion grantmaking is to deepen and enrich the lives of Christians in the United



States, primarily by seeking out and supporting efforts that enhance the vitality of congregations and strengthen the pastoral and lay leadership of Christian communities. The Endowment also seeks to improve public understanding of diverse religious traditions by supporting fair and accurate portrayals of the role religion plays in the United States and across the globe.

###

**CONTACT:**

Antonietta Colasanto  
Archdiocese of Chicago  
312.534.8238