

Local Catholics Honored with Papal Awards

SEATTLE, November 18, 2025 – The Archdiocese of Seattle honored 22 people with papal awards in recognition for their service and dedication to the mission of the Catholic Church in Western Washington.

“Giving thanks is at the heart of stewardship,” said Archbishop Paul D. Etienne who welcomed more than 200 people to St. James Cathedral on Nov. 16 for the Conferral of Ecclesiastical Honors. “This is our reason for gathering today, to recognize these men and women who have served the archdiocese so generously in recent years.”

Archbishop Etienne along with Bishop Frank Schuster and Vicar General Father Gary Lazzeroni celebrated a prayer and conferral service presenting medals and certificates to each of the recipients.

“It is good to recognize that all we have comes from God,” Archbishop Etienne said. “In the end, all service is a response to God’s love. Service is a response to grace. It is not a burden. The Church teaches that thanksgiving transforms duty into joy.”

The Benemerenti Medal

Originally established by Pope Pius VI in the 18th century as an award for soldiers in the Papal Army, the Benemerenti Medal has been awarded by popes since 1925 as a mark of recognition for people in service of the Catholic Church, both civil and military, lay and clergy alike. The Benemerenti Medal was given to Lucy Berliner for her many years of service on the Archdiocese of Seattle’s Review Board as a steadfast advocate for justice and healing for victim survivors.

The Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice

The second award was the Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice, which translates as “For Church and Pope.” The Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice Award is the highest medal bestowed by the Catholic Church on laypeople, clergy or members of religious orders who have dedicated their lives to advancing the Church’s mission. It was instituted by Pope Leo XIII and became a permanent papal distinction in October 1898.

This papal honor is conferred on individuals who have rendered exemplary service to the Church and the papacy. It serves as a recognition of their unwavering commitment to the Catholic faith, their outstanding contributions to the Church community and their embodiment of the virtues espoused by the Church. Recipients of the award have demonstrated exceptional leadership, engaged in charitable works or contributed significantly to the spiritual life of the community.

The Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice Medal was awarded to:

- Dr. Gregory “Gregg” Alex - For over 30 years of service, consistently living out his baptismal call to be the face of Christ to others, with humility and generosity.

- Michelle Audino - For her generous spirit, leadership and steadfast commitment to strengthening Catholic education and improving accessibility.
- Antonio “Tony” Audino - For serving our Catholic community through philanthropy, leadership and active support of Catholic education, the Fulcrum Foundation and parish life.
- Scott Burns - For his exceptional commitment to the financial strength and stability of the Archdiocese of Seattle’s resources, ensuring our ministries continue to grow and thrive in the years to come.
- Isabel Cisneros Rueda - For playing a key role in connecting families with essential services, advocating for their rights and strengthening community networks to ensure continued support in the future.
- SeVera Dowe - For her visionary leadership and instrumental dedication to supporting our Black Catholic Community and fostering a more inclusive environment within the Church.
- Richard Ferry - For his life of philanthropy and tireless commitment to the Church, especially Catholic schools, including scholarships for Catholic education for low-income students of color.
- Bill Hallerman - For his many years of inspiring dedication to social justice in the Church, managing multiple programs serving refugees, immigrants and other marginalized communities.
- Sister Linda Haydock, SNJM - For over 30 years of unwavering commitment to social justice, sustainability, and empowering women to create change in their communities.
- John Hempelmann - For his unbroken commitment to the Church over the years, supporting seminarian education and for being an example of the joy that comes from living our faith each day.
- Dr. Dora Krasucki – For decades of immersing herself in Christ’s work, faithfully serving vulnerable populations, providing many necessary tools for a flourishing community.
- Angie Lee - For her commitment to building and fostering a spirit of collaboration within the Church and advocating for the health and well-being of our Korean Catholic community.
- Tom Martin - For his many years of volunteerism and leadership within schools and parishes, while also serving as a source of strength and healing for his community.
- Robert “Bob” McLaughlin - For his contributions as chair of the Archdiocesan Finance Council, with a focus on lifelong faith formation, catechetical certification, retreats and resources for parishes and schools.
- Mirya Muñoz-Roach - For her compassionate leadership and development of culturally responsive services focused on education, family support and community engagement.
- José Ortiz - For his lifelong dedication to serving our Catholic community, focused on communities of color and a commitment to an environment where everyone has a seat at the table.
- Sister Sharon Park, O.P. - For 40 years of service, bringing the vision of Catholic social teaching to the public arena and influencing government policy on poverty, social justice, nursing home regulations and

prison ministry, among others.

- Mong-Tuyền Pham - For her remarkable faith, generosity and devotion to the Vietnamese Catholic community as a respected leader in youth formation, outreach ministry and other activities of parish life.
- Michael Reichert - For his unparalleled contributions to the mission of the Church as leader of Catholic Community Services for more than 45 years, compassionately developing community-based models that prioritize self-determination and empowerment.
- Joseph Tseng - For answering the call to serve, using his personal talents and desire to support his fellow Catholics in the Chinese community while also creating a foundation for growth and a deepening of faith.
- Irene Ward - For a lifetime of service on behalf of the most vulnerable, leading with humility and grace while strengthening the foundation of Catholic Charities.

About the Archdiocese of Seattle

The Archdiocese of Seattle encompasses all of Western Washington, stretching from Canada to Oregon and from the Cascade Mountains to the Pacific Ocean. There are 74 Catholic schools, 174 parishes, missions and pastoral centers in the archdiocese, with more than 500 weekly Masses celebrated in eight languages.

Archbishop Paul D. Etienne leads the archdiocese with his auxiliary bishops, Bishop Eusebio Elizondo and Bishop Frank Schuster. For more information about the Archdiocese of Seattle, please visit www.archseattle.org.

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