News

A man fills a plastic drum with spring water from a mountain in Utuado, Puerto Rico, Oct. 21, 2019. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Subcommittee on Catholic Home Missions announced Dec. 30, 2020, that it has awarded Catholic Extension a $1.5M grant to help support a large-scale effort toward disaster recovery for the Catholic Church in Puerto Rico. (CNS photo/Bob Roller)

by Catholic News Service

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A $1.5 million grant awarded by the U.S. bishops' Subcommittee on Catholic Home Missions will support Catholic Extension's ongoing disaster recovery work in Puerto Rico three years after two devastating hurricanes.

The money will be used for startup expenses in the six dioceses of island territory as church officials seek funds from the Federal Emergency Management Agency to rebuild properties damaged during the 2017 storms that caused widespread damage.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops said Dec. 30 the initiative is expected to generate hundreds of millions of dollars in federal aid for rebuilding schools and churches as parishes strive to continue pastoral ministry, especially in poor and vulnerable communities.

Bishop W. Shawn McKnight of Jefferson City, Missouri, subcommittee chairman, said in a statement that the USCCB "appreciates the innovative groundwork that Catholic Extension's staff has undertaken in the rebuilding efforts."

"We are pleased to be able to support its work to seek additional funding through FEMA and to continue our shared efforts to rebuild the church in Puerto Rico," he said.

The grant was funded by donations to special collections coordinated by the USCCB following widespread devastation in Puerto Rico caused by hurricanes Irma and Maria. The funds are in addition to $3.3 million given directly to five dioceses that requested support from the USCCB collections.

Catholic Extension since its founding in 1905 has financially supported the Catholic Church in Puerto Rico by rebuilding and repairing churches and supporting ministries in marginalized communities.

The subcommittee overseas the annual Catholic Home Missions Appeal in parishes. It funds various pastoral services, including those that focus on evangelization, religious education, ministry training for priests, deacons, women religious, brothers

and laypeople, as well as support of poor U.S. parishes.

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