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Mexican American Catholic College (MACC) has received a grant of \$1,236,838 from Lilly Endowment Inc. to help establish the *Praying and Learning con la Familia* program, to benefit children in developing their spiritual lives through enhanced prayer and worship experiences.

The program is funded through Lilly Endowment's Nurturing Children Through Worship and Prayer Initiative. The aim of the national initiative is to support faith-based organizations as they help children grow in faith and deepen their relationships with God.

Praying and Learning con la Familia is designed to offer training for priests, deacons, sisters, seminarians and lay leaders who support children in a parish or Catholic school setting. The program is designed to help parishes in under-served areas of the Archdiocese of San Antonio and in other dioceses in the Texas, Oklahoma and Arkansas region, with particular attention to rural congregations with limited resources and families with children with disabilities.

By expanding and strengthening course and workshop offerings in MACC's existing formation programs—especially for deacons and lay ministers—MACC will help deliver liturgical and prayer programs designed to engage children in innovative ways. These include programs focused on improving preaching in congregational settings and developing and leading children's Liturgy of the Word. By offering training to Catholic school teachers, the program will engage parents and their children in liturgy and retreat settings so that they will be involved with God's word in a ways that are relevant to their life experiences.

The program will also bring together the Hispanic Ministry Directors in the dioceses of Texas, Oklahoma and Arkansas (along with other selected diocesan colleagues) for an annual Encuentro in which participants will continue to increase their skills on how to minister to children and share learnings regarding program implementation.

"The *Praying and Learning con la Familia* brings fresh air to MACC's programs serving the Archdiocese of San Antonio and the Southwest region, and it will help deepen the region's appreciation for worship and prayer experiences that involve children well and are communal and family based," said Bishop Michael Boulette, Chairman of MACC's Board. "This will help many of our ministers and schoolteachers be more attentive to children's relationship to God and serve them in innovative ways that will help them as children grow and deepen their spiritual lives."

Sr. Mickey Espinoza, MCP, of the Diocese of Little Rock and Regional Coordinator of the Directors of Hispanic Ministry in Texas, Oklahoma and Arkansas, also expressed her gratitude and hope: "I am sure we will be able to do great things in our collaboration with MACC for this program. Certainly, highlighting how we can help children grow in their relationship with God by praying with their families and learning about our faith will be the centerpiece of our annual gatherings with other diocesan colleagues."

Lilly Endowment is making nearly \$32 million in grants through this invitational round of the Nurturing Children initiative. The grants are funding efforts to help organizations develop new and/or enhance existing programs that support congregations as they design worship services and prayer practices that more intentionally and fully engage children.

Mexican American Catholic College is one of 26 organizations receiving funding through the Lilly Endowment initiative. They represent and serve congregations in a broad spectrum of Christian traditions, including mainline Protestant, evangelical, Catholic, Pentecostal, Black church, Hispanic and Asian traditions. Many organizations also serve churches that describe themselves as nondenominational, ecumenical and multi-denominational.

Lilly Endowment launched the Nurturing Children initiative in 2022 as part of its commitment to support efforts that strengthen the religious education and formation of children and enhance the vitality of Christian congregations.

[About Lilly Endowment Inc](#)

Lilly Endowment Inc. is a private philanthropic 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. The 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.