

INSTITUTO FE Y VIDA RECEIVES GRANT FROM LILLY ENDOWMENT INC.  
THRIVING CONGREGATIONS INITIATIVE

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Instituto Fe y Vida sincerely thanks Lilly Endowment Inc. for its grant of \$999,913 to help establish the organization's new program: Thriving Catholic Parishes through Dynamic, Integrative and Continuous Ministry with Young People.

The program is funded through Lilly Endowment's Thriving Congregations Initiative. The aim of the national initiative is to strengthen Christian congregations so they can help people deepen their relationships with God, build strong relationships with each other and contribute to the flourishing of local communities and the world.

Lilly Endowment is making nearly \$93 million in grants through the initiative. The grants will support organizations as they work directly with congregations and help them gain clarity about their values and missions, explore and understand better the communities in which they serve, and draw upon their theological traditions as they adapt ministries to meet changing needs.

Bishop Jaime Soto of Sacramento, Episcopal Chair of the Fe y Vida Board of Directors, welcomed news of the award. He noted that Fe y Vida's Thriving Catholic Parishes Program calls for helping parishes with a significant Latino population to thrive by addressing two vital challenges facing today's Church: (a) forming leaders and ministers to work with Latino adolescents and young adults in the context of a multicultural parish; (b) filling the gap between Confirmation and the retention of young adults in the Church.

Over the five-year term of the grant, Fe y Vida will work with three cohorts of Catholic parishes, the first in Northern California, the second in Southern California and the third in another area of the country where bishops are interested in pursuing the goals of the program. Dr. Cervantes explained the goals: "In all three cohorts, we will be looking for parishes that value their mission and are willing to create and then implement a plan to accomplish it. The parish then has more control of its future. It can continue to strengthen over the years by utilizing the talents and abilities of young people. It also will be able to respond to major external changes, such as a pandemic, a natural disaster or significant demographic shifts."

Based on its work with the three cohorts, Fe y Vida will create a training program for leaders in other parishes who would like to benefit from establishing a pastoral plan that is anchored in comprehensive ministry with Latino adolescents and young adults in a multicultural setting. Fe y Vida will integrate the process into its Leadership Training System and make it available at the national and local levels.

Archbishop José Gomez of Los Angeles, Chair of Fe y Vida's Bishops Advisory Council, in his letter to Lilly Endowment, emphasizes that "Fe y Vida proposes that parishes cease to think of ministry to adolescents and young adults as challenges and drains on the budget and, instead,

recognize our young people as the ‘today and the future’ of the Church. [Fe y Vida] will teach parishes [...] to face the present and the future with faith, courage, and confidence.”

Instituto Fe y Vida was founded nearly 30 years ago by the De La Salle Christian Brothers of the Midwest Province with the mission of empowering young Latinos for leadership in Church and society. Dr. Carmen Cervantes, who served as founding Executive Director, pointed out that, while in the first two decades, Fe y Vida focused on young adult Latino immigrants, now it ministers also to older teens who were born in the U.S. but value their culture of origin. “Latinos constitute 70% of the growth of the Catholic Church in the U.S. since 1960,” she said. “Lilly Endowment’s focus on thriving congregations fits perfectly with Fe y Vida’s goals as discerned by our Board of Directors and staff. The grant gives us a great start on continuing our mission while meeting the needs of the Church. Our first step will be to recruit and hire a program assistant director to work full-time in this lifegiving initiative.”

Instituto Fe y Vida is one of 92 organizations taking part in the Lilly Initiative. They represent and serve churches in a broad spectrum of Christian traditions, including Anabaptist, Baptist, Episcopal, evangelical, Lutheran, Methodist, Mennonite, Pentecostal, Presbyterian, Reformed, Restoration, Roman Catholic and Orthodox, as well as congregations that describe themselves as nondenominational. Several organizations serve congregations in Black, Hispanic and Asian-American traditions.

“In the midst of a rapidly changing world, Christian congregations are grappling with how they can best carry forward their ministries,” said Christopher Coble, Lilly Endowment’s vice president for religion. “These grants will help congregations assess their ministries and draw on practices in their theological traditions to address new challenges and better nurture the spiritual vitality of the people they serve.”

Lilly Endowment launched the Thriving Congregations Initiative in 2019 as part of its commitment to support efforts that enhance the vitality of Christian congregations.

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

**Lilly Endowment Inc.** is an Indianapolis-based private philanthropic foundation created in 1937 by J.K. Lilly Sr. and sons Eli and J.K. Jr. through gifts of stock in their pharmaceutical business, Eli Lilly & Company. Although the gifts of stock remain a 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 exists to support the causes of religion, education and community development. The Endowment funds significant programs throughout the United States, especially in the field of religion. However, it maintains a special commitment to its hometown, Indianapolis and home state, Indiana. The principal aim of the Endowment’s grantmaking in religion 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 their pastoral and lay leadership.