

# Notre Dame News

## Rev. Gregory J. Boyle, S.J., founder of Homeboy Industries, to receive Notre Dame's 2017 Laetare Medal

Amanda Skofstad [\[link: /news/authors/amanda-skofstad/\]](/news/authors/amanda-skofstad/) March 26, 2017



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Rev. Gregory J. Boyle, S.J., founder and executive director of [Homeboy Industries](http://homeboyindustries.org/) [\[link: http://homeboyindustries.org/\]](http://homeboyindustries.org/) in Los Angeles, California, will receive the University of Notre Dame's 2017 [Laetare Medal](http://laetare.nd.edu/) [\[link: http://laetare.nd.edu/\]](http://laetare.nd.edu/) — the oldest and most prestigious honor given to American Catholics — at Notre Dame's 172nd University [commencement ceremony](http://commencement.nd.edu/) [\[link: http://commencement.nd.edu/\]](http://commencement.nd.edu/) on May 21 (Sunday).



Rev. Greg Boyle, S.J.

“For nearly 30 years, Father Boyle has served men and women who have been incarcerated and involved with gangs, and, in doing so, has helped them to discover the strength and hope necessary to transform their lives,” said Notre Dame's president, [Rev. John I. Jenkins, C.S.C.](http://president.nd.edu/about-the-president/) [\[link: http://president.nd.edu/about-the-president/\]](http://president.nd.edu/about-the-president/) “Father Boyle's solidarity with our sisters and brothers at the margins of society offers an inspiring model of faith in action. We are grateful for the witness of his life and honored to bestow this award on him.”

Upon learning of the award, Father Boyle said, “You want a university to be in the world what you invite the world to become. Notre Dame is like that. It's an honor to be recognized as the Laetare Medal recipient and I'm very grateful.”

Homeboy Industries, which began in 1988, is now the largest gang intervention, rehabilitation and re-entry program in the world. Homeboy's holistic approach — including therapeutic and educational offerings, practical services like tattoo removal and work readiness and job training-focused social enterprises — serves 10,000 men and women a year. The organization offers an exit ramp to those stuck in cycles of violence and incarceration and helps them develop the strength and skills to transform their lives and become contributing members of society.

While Homeboy's achievements are myriad — including the Global Homeboy Network that facilitates best practice sharing among 85 like-minded organizations around the world — Father Boyle insists that meaningful life change requires kinship, or welcoming ourselves and others into radical, mutual acceptance.

“At Homeboy, we try to hold up a mirror and say, ‘Here’s who you are; you’re exactly what God had in mind when He made you,’” said Father Boyle. “Then you have this moment with people when they become that truth.”

Inspired by such figures as St. Teresa of Calcutta, James Baldwin and Rev. Daniel Berrigan, S.J., Father Boyle said the Jesuits he studied under were the animating force of his spiritual formation. “They were hilarious, and they were prophetic. And I thought: That’s a combo I like; I want to be joyous and prophetic.”

The Laetare (pronounced Lay-TAH-ray) Medal is so named because its recipient is announced each year in celebration of Laetare Sunday, the fourth Sunday in Lent on the Church calendar. “Laetare,” the Latin word for “rejoice,” is the first word in the entrance antiphon of the Mass that Sunday, which ritually anticipates the celebration of Easter. The medal bears the Latin inscription, “Magna est veritas et praevalerebit” (“Truth is mighty, and it shall prevail”).

Established at Notre Dame in 1883, the Laetare Medal was conceived as an American counterpart of the Golden Rose, a papal honor that antedates the 11th century. The medal has been awarded annually at Notre Dame to a Catholic “whose genius has ennobled the arts and sciences, illustrated the ideals of the Church and enriched the heritage of humanity.”



[\[link: https://www.nd.edu/features/laetare-2017/\]](https://www.nd.edu/features/laetare-2017/)

Among the previous recipients of the Laetare Medal are Civil War Gen. William Rosecrans, operatic tenor John McCormack, President John F. Kennedy,

Catholic Work founder Dorothy Day, novelist Walker Percy, Vice President Joe Biden and Speaker of the House John Boehner, Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, labor activist Monsignor George G. Higgins, jazz composer Dave Brubeck and actor Martin Sheen.

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