

Teresa Pitt Green of Spirit Fire, a Christian restorative justice initiative founded by two survivors of clergy abuse in the United States, speaks to U.S. bishops Nov. 12, 2018, at the fall general assembly of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in Baltimore. The Catholic University of America in Washington announced March 20, 2024, that Pitt Green will receive an honorary doctoral degree at its May 11 commencement ceremony. (OSV News/CNS file, Bob Roller)

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The Catholic University of America in Washington announced March 20 that Teresa Pitt Green, a writer and speaker who promotes healing for survivors of abuse and their families in the church, would receive an honorary doctoral degree at its May 11 commencement ceremony.

She thanked Catholic University on X, formerly known as Twitter, and called the news of the honorary doctorate "one of the happiest moments" of her life.

Pitt Green told OSV News that her work with survivors of abuse is "necessarily very private and low visibility" and to receive this honor from Catholic University is "amazing" and an "additional joy."

She said that amid her work she encourages people to remember that "Jesus Christ is the Victor over all evil, even the evil in this church." She noted that people turn away from the church because they see the abuse, but they need to remember "that Jesus Christ as we meet him in the Eucharist, has already won that battle and so just come back, lean on him."

Pitt Green is herself a survivor of sexual abuse by Catholic clergy and has been an advocate for survivors for more than 20 years, writing several books and speaking numerous times to the U.S. bishops on the issue.

She is the co-founder of Spirit Fire, a Christian restorative justice initiative and fellowship of survivors of abuse in the church. She is also vice president of Healing and Recovery Ministries at St. Edmund's Retreat on Enders Island, Mystic, Connecticut, and she is among the founders of The Healing Voices Magazine, which was founded in 2014 and closed in 2020.

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Recently, she encouraged the Vatican's Synod on Synodality to include dialogue about the issue, telling OSV News in October that "if the synod is trying to make the church more welcoming to more people, it would be smart to restore a sense of safe harbor for the vulnerable and weak."

Pitt Green also works to combat human trafficking and raise awareness about the issue. She served on the leadership team of the Northern Virginia Human Trafficking Task Force until 2021.

The three other individuals receiving honorary doctoral degrees from the university at the May 11 ceremony are interfaith leader Rabbi Jack Bemporad; John Finnis, Professor Emeritus at the University of Oxford and University of Notre Dame Law School; and Father Piotr Nawrot, Roman Catholic priest of the Divine World Missionaries.

The university also announced that actor Jonathan Roumie, who stars in "The Chosen," a popular television series about the life of Jesus, would serve as commencement speaker at the graduation ceremony and receive an honorary degree.