

## **Christian Brands Purchases Jeweled Cross and George F. Berkander Companies**

### **May 22nd, North Attleboro, MA**

Christian Brands, a division of CBC Group of Phoenix, AZ has purchased both the Jeweled Cross and George F. Berkander companies of North Attleboro, MA.

Jeweled Cross, founded in 1923, is the oldest and best-known Catholic crucifix and Patron Saint medal firm in the United States. Mr. James S. Brennan, a North Attleboro electroplater, was asked by some local Catholic nuns to make a jeweled crucifix for their beloved sisters. The Catholic community throughout Massachusetts were favorably impressed with the creativity and quality of the crucifix and that experience led Mr. Brennan to start Jeweled Cross Company in 1923. The firm has remained in the family for many years and is known for having the best dies, sculpting and casting in the industry. Under Mr. Brennan's grandson, James Brennan II, the business flourished and grew and had a wonderful reputation for high quality and unprecedented new product development. Today, the Jeweled Cross brand is known and recognized throughout the world as a market leader for high-quality wood crucifixes with genuine pewter parts. Jeweled Cross product can be found in thousands of Catholic stores throughout the country and is distributed internationally in England, Ireland, Italy and Australia.

George F. Berkander, founded in 1909, is a leading manufacturer and importer of Catholic gift product with a wide range of product categories. Founded by George F. Berkander in Providence, RI, the firm got its start selling novelty jewelry to the Woolworth and Ben Franklin stores and at its height had 600 employees. Mr. Berkander, a true patriot, helped the war effort by making military parts during World War II. In 1950 George Berkander died suddenly and the business was sold to Earl Duggan. Mr. Duggan, along with his partner, Donald Burns, ran the company successfully until 1999 when Mr. Charles McConnell purchased the business and continued the growth of the firm.

Jay Brennan, former Jeweled Cross president, said, "We are very pleased that Christian Brands will continue the tradition of Jeweled Cross and will share our family's vision for the future. This team is well versed with the needs of our industry and can move us forward in new markets, as well as solidify our position as a leader in the Catholic crucifix field".

Charles McConnell, former George F. Berkander president said, "With their resources, and the help of their able Catholic field sales force we firmly believe George F. Berkander will grow dramatically in multiple channels and will continue to offer our customers the highest quality products at very competitive prices".

Paul DiGiovanni, CBC Group president, said, “We are thrilled to be a part of the great traditions at Jeweled Cross and George F. Berkander companies. The Brennan and McConnell families had the foresight and vision to build these companies by offering solid value and superior quality product for decades. Their insight and hard work have built these firms into industry leaders with brand recognition known by Catholics everywhere”.

CBC Group, founded in 1948 is a holding company consisting of various brands that sell product to an assortment of channels within the Catholic, Christian and gift field. Under the Christian Brands division are other well know Catholic brands such as Creed, Ambrosiana, Gerffert, Avalon Gallery and Aquinas Press. CBC Group is headquartered in Phoenix Arizona with manufacturing facilities, a call center and a distribution center in Lewisburg, TN.

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