Blog



People run past a heavily damaged church in Les Cayes, Haiti, Aug. 18, after a 7.2 magnitude earthquake rocked the area four days earlier. (CNS/Reuters/Ricardo Arduengo)



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Monday Starter

Editor's note: *Global Sisters Report's Monday Starter is a weekly feature from GSR staff writers that rounds up news from or about women religious that you may otherwise have missed.*

The 7.2-magnitude earthquake that struck southwestern Haiti on Aug. 14 killed more than 2,000 people and injured thousands more, the latest tragedy to afflict the impoverished Caribbean nation already grappling with political unrest on top of the pandemic.

Within days of the earthquake, the brewing tropical storm that became Hurricane Grace drenched Haiti as the hurricane headed west toward Mexico, leaving the Caribbean island vulnerable to flooding and mudslides.

In response to a call for help from Caritas, the Felician Sisters of North America have gathered clothing, shoes, medications and bandages, among other items, for Caritas to take to Les Cayes, one of the hardest-hit Haitian cities.


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Felician Sr. Mary Izajasza Rojek organizes donations for the victims of Haiti's Aug. 14 earthquake. (Courtesy of the Felician Sisters of North America)

"Our community in the U.S. will be shipping barrels to us in the coming weeks, and we ask for your support if you are able," the congregation wrote in a press release. "Every dollar you send directly supports the critical work we do at Felician Mission: Haiti."

For more information, go to the Felicians' website or contact Marcia Wallander, chief mission advancement officer, at mwallander@feliciansisters.org.

Related: Two Felician Sisters fly home after earthquake to organize shipment to Haiti

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St. Joseph sisters to host immigration forum

The Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange, California, invite the general public to an hourlong immigration forum via Zoom at 4:30 p.m. Pacific time on Tuesday, Aug. 31.

At this session, two sisters will share their recent experiences ministering at the U.S.-Mexico border, and a third will discuss the root causes of migration. A representative from Network, the Catholic social justice lobby, will also provide an update on immigration legislation.

Click here to register.

Sisters among the finalists for Lumen Christi Award

Three sisters are among the seven sets of finalists for Catholic Extension's Lumen Christi Award for 2021: Eloísa Torralba Aquino and María Imelda Quechol, Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Ad Gentes (together as one nomination), and Sr. Julia Huiskamp, a member of the Daughters of Charity.

The finalists are awarded $10,000 for their ministries. The winner of the Lumen Christi Award will receive $25,000 for their work, while the diocese in which they serve gets $25,000 to enhance that area of ministry.



Eloisa Torralba Aquino and Maria Imelda Quechol: Srs. Eloísa Torralba Aquino, left, and María Imelda Quechol, Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Ad Gentes. The two sisters are finalists for the 2021 Lumen Christi Award. (Courtesy of Catholic Extension)

Torralba and Quechol minister to the immigrant population of eastern Tennessee, where the Catholic Church helps support the largely Guatemalan, Mexican and Honduran people in the area. Spanning eight counties, the sisters' ministries include forming new faith communities, visiting camps of migrants, developing leaders, providing counseling and helping people find work, according to Catholic Extension. The pandemic has exacerbated the needs of this community.

With the help of the Diocese of Knoxville, the two sisters also developed two houses of prayer, or *casas de oración,* for people who live in hard-to-reach areas of Chattanooga. The Santa Cruz house of prayer serves 500 people as a church and center for activity, and Immaculate Conception regularly hosts 350 people for Mass, food distribution, marriage classes and medical aid.



Sr. Julia Huiskamp, a Daughter of Charity, has dedicated her life to the development of children in East St. Louis, Illinois. She is a finalist for the 2021 Lumen Christi Award. (Courtesy of Catholic Extension)

In nearby Illinois, Huiskamp ministers to children in East St. Louis, where systemic poverty and street violence have long compromised their futures.

Huiskamp's Griffin Center in the Diocese of Belleville is a community center that has offered summer camps and after-school programs to generations of the city's children since 1986, helping them develop their social and learning skills while deepening their character and faith. Today, the center serves about 350 kids a year.

"It's very important for children to know that they have a friend and a mentor and people who care about them," Huiskamp told Catholic Extension.

Huiskamp, a former journalist who earned a master's degree in social work, also spent 18 years serving children in Chicago's West Side before moving to East St. Louis, where she quickly became inspired to help local children.

The winner of the Lumen Christi Award will be announced in September.

New webinar series to highlight innovative Catholic fiduciaries

A new webinar series by Catholic Investment Services intends to spotlight the work of innovative Catholic fiduciaries and their institutions. The first event in this Ministry in Focus series, which launched Aug. 17, featured Sisters Rising Worldwide, a nonprofit platform connecting women religious around the world to share resources and strategies related to their ministries.

Mission in Focus: featuring Sisters Rising Worldwide

In the series' first event, St. Joseph Sr. Irene O'Neill, president of Sisters Rising Worldwide, joined Catholic Investment Services' founding chair, Jack Brennan, to discuss the platform's mission, infrastructure, future plans, and more.

The next event will likely occur at the end of the year.

Related: Q & A with Sr. Irene O'Neill, launching a platform for Sisters Rising Worldwide