News
Religious Life



Grand Rapids Dominican Sisters preach love with their lives and presence in their motherhouse neighborhood. (Courtesy of the Dominican Sisters of Grand Rapids)



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Thanks to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, many activities planned for the ninth annual Catholic Sisters Week will again take place online.

But this year's virtual events, which begin March 8, International Women's Day, and run through March 14, are more interactive than last year's: Rather than simply observing an event taking place at a convent or motherhouse, many of this year's events are about getting participants involved in the work sisters do.



(Courtesy of Catholic Sisters Week)

Stacy Spitler, director of communications for the Dominican Sisters of Grand Rapids, Michigan, and chair of the Communicators for Women Religious committee overseeing Catholic Sisters Week, said organizers have worked to ensure events are not only about the legacy of sisters' work, but what they do today.

"Let's take down the walls and engage with the charism and ministries and love that vowed sisters bring to the world," Spitler said. "Sisters are always about welcome and invitation, and I think Catholic Sisters Week is a call to the world to take a moment and pay attention to the wisdom and the experience and the inspiration sisters offer."

The theme for this year is "Caring for Earth, Caring for You," and Spitler said many events are incorporating an environmental focus or aspects of Pope Francis' 2015 encyclical "*Laudato Sí*' on Care for Our Common Home."

"Sisters have been caring for our Earth and caring for creation throughout their lifetimes," she said.



The Benedictine Sisters of Chicago Sisters and Oblates host friends at St. Scholastica Monastery, sharing about community, hospitality, love of learning, ministry and prayer. (Courtesy of Catholic Sisters Week)

The Amityville Dominicans will use the week to have participants join an eco-challenge aimed at reducing plastic waste by purchasing products with minimal or no plastic packaging and switching to reusable water bottles, utensils and bags. Similarly, Region IV of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious is getting participants involved in caring for the Earth with "events, prayers, calls to action, social media campaigns, and more." And the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth, Kentucky, are inviting participants to join a virtual walking tour of Louisville that traces the highlights of the congregation's co-founder, Mother Catherine Spalding.

Catholic Sisters Week also brings the final episode of "Exploring Intersections: Catholic Sisters on Racism, Migration and Climate," a project of LCWR's Region 10. For a year, the monthly program has explored the issues of racism, migration and climate and how they are intertwined. The March 9 episode, "Navigating the Road

Ahead," will focus on takeaways from the series and suggestions for continuing the conversation.

As always, there are "come and see" events and discussions about vocations and discernment opportunities, but Ginny Hizer, executive director of Communicators for Women Religious, which has overseen Catholic Sisters Week since 2020, said engaging with sisters does not have to be part of a recruiting effort.

"One of the things Catholic Sisters Week embraces this year is the concept of being engaged in the work," Hizer said. "It's taking the flavor and the mission of the sisters and actually living it out."

While laypeople are increasingly involved in the work of sisters through sponsored ministries and associate programs, Catholic Sisters Week opens those opportunities to a much broader audience, Hizer said.

"It allows everybody to participate and be part of that work," she said.

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The week's events also include at least three food drives, a virtual Celtic tea, and an invitation to join the Benedictine Sisters of Mount St. Scholastica for compline, or evening prayer. See all Catholic Sisters Week events.

"Catholic Sisters Week opens up many invitations to engage in contemplative study with sisters. You'll find webinars, liturgy celebrations," Spitler said. "Vocation is a piece of this, obviously, but it's also an opportunity for people to engage with the sisters in many different ways, both virtually and in person."

She said the engagement Catholic Sisters Week offers this year is especially important after two years of pandemic restrictions and the social isolation it has caused: Even as restrictions have eased, many people feel lost or alone, unable to connect with others and unsure of whether it's even safe to connect.

"Sisters are better than anybody at finding the hope and holding the hope and recognizing the abundance that surrounds our lives. If you want to experience a bit of that abundance, look to Catholic Sisters Week," she said. "You can get out of the dark, yucky, cold winter and get some motivation and a reminder of where our faith comes from."