Blog



The Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati partnered with other religious congregations in their region to place an anti-gun violence billboard along Interstate 75. The message is scheduled to remain there until May 5. (Courtesy of Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati)



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

Monday Starter

The Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati are joining with other Catholic religious congregations in the region to sponsor a billboard message to end gun violence and promote peace.

The congregation points to statistics from Everytown Research and Policy that show gun violence accounts for 120 firearm deaths and 200 more people wounded per day in America, and that the Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence states that the leading cause of death of children and teens in the United States is now firearms.

"Inaction in the face of this epidemic is unacceptable," the sisters said in a statement announcing the campaign.

The billboard went up April 8 along Interstate 75 and will remain until May 5. It reads: "Put the Guns Down! Nobody is Winning. Let Peace Begin with Me."

"Gun violence is a frequent item in our news reports. There is little for us to do to bring attention to the need for change. That is what prompted the idea for the billboard," said Sr. Marcel DeJonckheere in the statement. DeJonckheere took the idea to the community's leadership council. "Our hope is that we all find ways to be peacemakers. Owning a gun doesn't give power; it gives responsibility."

Sr. Barbara Hagedorn said many people feel helpless on the issue.

"When the idea of the billboard was proposed, it gave us a concrete way to respond and gave us our call to action," Hagedorn said in the announcement. "When the idea was mentioned to the other women's communities in the area, we received great support. ...We pray that the message has a positive effect on those who see it."

On the Sisters of Charity's Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation News/Action Alerts page, visitors can find sample letters to the editor and to legislators, and templates to act in support of the campaign.

Advertisement

Reflections for young people

The Easter season in the Catholic Church continues until Pentecost on May 19, and the National Shrine of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton is using the time to debut a series of reflections addressing the mental health crisis among youth.

The reflections by Catholic writer Paula Huston address the emotional, psychological and social challenges that young people face today and explore the spiritual wisdom that the first native-born American saint offers them.

The series, "Into God's Light with Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton," began April 6 and runs until May 19. Each reflection will be posted on a special section on the shrine's website and is available through email.

The effort is part of the shrine's mission of using the life and spirituality of Mother Seton as a guide for people to navigate their lives. This is especially critical for young people who are experiencing record levels of depression and suicide (which those at the Shrine believe is exacerbated by a loss of religious identity), citing data from the Centers for Disease Control showing that 44% of teens in the U.S. reported feelings of persistent sadness and hopelessness, up from 37% in 2019.

"The problems our young people are experiencing cry out for a compassionate response," said Rob Judge, executive director of the shrine, in the announcement. "Mother Seton struggled her entire life with deep disappointments and sadness and was forced to deal with many trials and obstacles. Through all of this, she never lost confidence in the healing power of God's love. We hope that through these reflections, we can help provide young people with the spiritual tools and comfort and inspiration they need."

In the series, Huston offers anecdotes from her own life and that of Mother Seton, relating them to the seven spiritual wounds of confusion, fear, rejection, abandonment, shame, hopelessness and powerlessness.

Huston is a National Endowment of the Arts Fellow and the author of two novels and eight books of spiritual nonfiction. Her essays and short stories have appeared in *Best American Short Stories* and in the annual Best Spiritual Writing anthologies.

"I was interested in exploring how Elizabeth Seton's absolute trust in God's will for her life and her spiritual resilience helped her overcome so many hardships on her journey to sainthood," Huston said in the announcement. "She offers us a love story that our young people — and those who care for them — need to hear."

The shrine is in Emmitsburg, Maryland, where Seton lived and worked.



Sacred Heart Sr. Florence de la Villeon (second from left), technical coordinator for the International Union of Superiors General, on April 3 was presented with the French National Order of Merit in honor of her decades of religious and humanitarian witness. (Courtesy of UISG)

UISG award recipient and upcoming webinar

The International Union of Superiors General announced that its technical coordinator, Sacred Heart Sr. Florence de la Villeon, on April 3 was presented the insignia of the National Order of Merit on behalf of the French government.

Members of her community, family and friends were there as the French ambassador to the Holy See made the presentation in honor of her religious and humanitarian witness over many decades.

In other UISG news, Mercy Sr. Sharon Euart, executive director of the Resource Center for Religious Institutes, will present a webinar on the canonical responsibilities of superiors general and provincials.

The two-hour webinar begins at 2 p.m. Central European Time/8 a.m. Central Daylight Time in the United States on April 23.

Euart, a canon lawyer, will explore the canonical authority of superiors general and other superiors (including advice and consent requirements and delegation), absence from a house of the institute according to Canon 665, personal patrimony, and the authority and relationship between the diocesan bishop and religious superiors.