Blog



More than 1,200 people in the Democratic Republic of Congo received healthy meals through Rise Against Hunger’s partnership with Salesian Missions. (Courtesy of Salesian Missions)



by Chris Herlinger

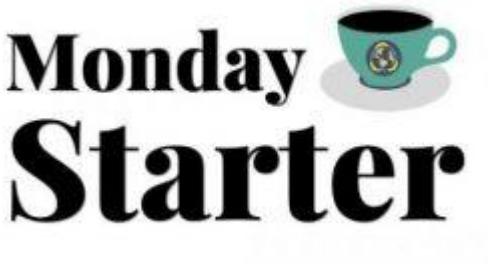
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Editor's note: *Global Sisters Report's Monday Starter is a feature from GSR staff writers that rounds up news from or about women religious that you may otherwise have missed.*



In the quest for peace at a time of violence and disruption in so many countries in the world, the International Union of Superiors General, or UISG, is calling for a global day of prayer on Aug. 14.

In an Aug. 6 announcement, UISG said it wants the date to be lived "as a day of fasting and prayer, seeking the intercession of the Mother of God, Our Lady of Peace, whose feast we celebrate on 15 August."

In the announcement, UISG noted numerous current humanitarian crises, saying that "in a world torn apart by war and inhumanity — in Gaza, Sudan, Ukraine, Myanmar, Haiti, Democratic Republic of the Congo and in so many other countries wounded by both visible and invisible conflicts — we cannot remain silent spectators."

"Each day we see faces marked by pain, lives shattered, peoples deprived of dignity and peace, especially the women and children."

Women of faith and hope who are "immersed in the wounds of our time," the announcement said, "feel a deep need to raise our voices and unite our hearts."

As women "at the frontiers, walking alongside those who suffer, listening to the cry of the poor and of the earth, we hold the responsibility to build communion, to protect life, and to call for justice."

As such, the Rome-based alliance said it is inviting sisters "in a spirit of communion and Gospel co-responsibility to join in a collective act of prayer, discernment and witness, so that peace may not only be hoped for, but built."

Specific suggestions for sisters and their congregations include:

- Encouraging moments of prayer and reflection "on the Word" within sister communities, "in light of the present suffering in our world, allowing ourselves to be inwardly transformed."
- Engaging with civil and ecclesial authorities in sisters' respective countries, "urging them to open paths of reconciliation, disarmament, the defense of human rights and the protection of victims."
- Supporting concrete acts of global solidarity, "through networks of humanitarian aid, welcome, and prophetic advocacy on behalf of the most affected peoples."

The UISG statement also said: "As women who keep watch in the night, we continue to believe that even in the darkest hour, a light can still shine — the light of the Gospel, of justice, and of fraternity.

"Together, we invoke the God of peace, that we may become instruments of his love, and we entrust this journey to the intercession of Mary, our Mother of hope."

UISG has developed a prayer for Aug. 14 events, which can be accessed here.

Salesians mark two international UN days this month

The development arm of the Salesians of Don Bosco, which includes Salesian sisters, are marking two international dates established by the United Nations — International Youth Day on Aug. 12 and World Humanitarian Day on Aug. 19.

Salesian Missions said the U.N. days are a way, respectively, to raise awareness about issues affecting young people and global humanitarian efforts that support people in crisis.

The U.N.'s International Youth Day is commemorated as a way to "bring youth issues to the attention of the international community and [celebrate] the potential of youth as partners in today's global society," the global body says.

Meanwhile, the U.N.'s Humanitarian Day was established in 2008 to coincide with the fifth anniversary of the 2003 bombing of the global body's headquarters in Baghdad, Iraq. That bombing killed 22 humanitarian aid workers.

"Humanitarian aid, particularly in the middle of natural disasters and civil strife, can often mean the difference between life and death," said Fr. Michael Conway, director

of Salesian Missions, which is based in New Rochelle, New York.

He noted that Salesian missionaries, who serve in more than 130 countries globally, "live in the communities they serve," and as a result, "they are often on the front lines of humanitarian disasters."

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Two examples of Salesian work that touch youth and fulfill humanitarian needs are in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Haiti.

In Congo, One Oeuvres Maman Marguerite, a network of Salesian centers in Lubumbashi, the nation's capital, received a shipment of food in 2024 through a partnership between Salesian Missions and Rise Against Hunger, an international humanitarian organization.

The shipment provided meals for six programs at a prison, a hospital, orphanages, a hospice for the elderly and training centers, the Salesians said. More than 1,200 people, including youths, were fed during the second half of 2024, the group said.

In Haiti, which is facing a serious humanitarian and political crisis, more than 2,300 young people received nutritious food through a partnership between Salesian Missions and Rise Against Hunger. The shipments of meals, also in the second half of 2024, were received by the Salesians of Don Bosco and then distributed to the three Salesian centers of Don Bosco