



Smoke and flames are seen as a wildfire spreads over the Burgohondo mountains in Ávila, Spain, July 23, 2026. In a statement July 27, the sisters of the Monastery of the Conversion in Sotillo de la Adrada said they were evacuated July 25 and "had no choice but to leave the monastery." (OSV News/Reuters/Ana Beltran)

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SOTILLO DE LA ADRADA, Spain — July 29, 2026

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Wildfires burning through central Spain forced a community of Augustinian nuns to evacuate their monastery as flames threatened the region.

In a statement published July 27, the sisters of the Monastery of the Conversion in Sotillo de la Adrada said they were evacuated July 25 and "had no choice but to leave the monastery."

The community said they were offered shelter at the Augustinian convent of Saint Ildefonso in Talavera, located roughly 26 miles south of their monastery.

"We are here, sharing as sisters, awaiting a grace that will allow us to return home," the statement read. "We especially ask for prayers for all the volunteers and security forces who are tirelessly working to extinguish the fires."

Wildfires across Spain and France have forced hundreds of thousands of people to evacuate. Firefighters face an uphill battle in combatting the flames as extreme heatwaves in both countries have made it difficult to extinguish the fires.

In an interview with the Spanish newspaper El País, Fernando Grande-Marlaska, Spain's interior minister, said taming the wildfire would be crucial before a major heatwave was forecasted to last until Aug. 2.

"We have to stay positive; we have control of the emergency. We do have to acknowledge that we are moving slowly because the weather conditions are not helping us at all," Grande-Marlaska told El País.

Over 120,000 acres of land in the province of Ávila alone have been burned and destroyed, making it the largest and most aggressive wildfire in Spain's recorded history, El País reported.

The Diocese of Ávila said July 26 it was cooperating with authorities to coordinate relief efforts and made the diocesan seminary and retreat house available to accommodate evacuees.

"The parish priests of the affected areas were evacuated along with their parishioners to designated shelters and remain with their neighbors," the diocese said. "Other priests in the area remain with the families of the affected villages, offering them support and making this difficult time more bearable."

In an interview with the Spanish Catholic weekly Alfa y Omega, Mother Prado González, superior of the Monastery of the Conversion, said the decision to evacuate was made in cooperation with police and military authorities.

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"We wanted a small group of us to stay behind, but ultimately they evacuated all of us," she said. "The situation was very complicated, and the flames had been approaching for days."

While praising the orderly evacuation of the monastery and surrounding villages, Mother González said she and her sisters felt "tremendous grief" not just for leaving their home "but for everything that is happening."

"Seeing that natural heritage destroyed — such a beautiful creation — causes immense pain. It is an ecological tragedy, a human tragedy and a social tragedy," the superior told Alfa y Omega.

Expressing her gratitude to the sisters of the Convent of Saint Ildefonso for receiving them, Mother González said she and her community were "experiencing true communion with the sisters and feel very supported."

"Above all, we are praying a lot for all the people who are still working there to control the fire, and for our neighbors who are going through a very hard time," she said.