Blog



The dome of St. Peter's Basilica is seen from the Vatican Gardens Oct. 5, the day after Pope Francis released *Laudate Deum*, an apostolic exhortation on the climate crisis. (CNS photo/Lola Gomez)



by Dan Stockman

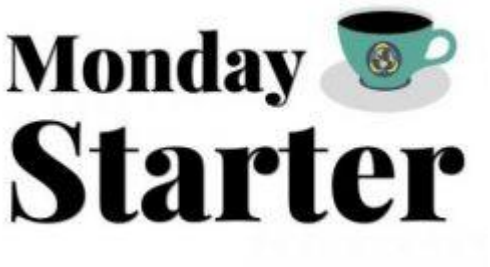
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Editor's note: *Global Sisters Report's Monday Starter is a feature from GSR staff writers that rounds up news from or about women religious that you may otherwise have missed.*



Mercy Sr. Mary Haddad, president and CEO of the Catholic Health Association, embraced Pope Francis' Oct. 4 letter *Laudate Deum* ("Praise God"), calling for urgent efforts to fight the climate crisis.

In an Oct. 5 statement, Haddad noted that the association and its members supported the Inflation Reduction Act, the largest investment in clean energy and climate action in U.S. history, and continue to work with policymakers to help health care reduce its environmental footprint. "Environmental health is critical to human health," Haddad said.

"In *Laudate Deum*, Pope Francis cites overwhelming scientific evidence that the world is facing a climate crisis that is caused by human activity. He warns us that as global temperatures continue to rise, we are pushing the planet towards a 'breaking point' and unleashing destructive changes that cannot be reversed and that disproportionately affect the health and well-being of poor and vulnerable communities," she said in the statement.



Mercy Sr. Mary Haddad (CNS/Courtesy of CHA)

"While he laments the ineffectiveness of international conferences and agreements to take meaningful, accountable action on climate change, he urges a 'multilateralism from below' and not simply determined by the elites of power and that 'citizens control political power,' " she said.

"Those of us who serve in Catholic health care must use this motivation to push more urgently for changes in how we live and work and heed Pope Francis' call to 'bring about large processes of transformation rising deep with society,' " she said. "As a leading ministry of the Church in the United States, we will continue to raise our collective voice to call for bold change in environmental policies and practices

that are critical to promoting human flourishing."

The Catholic Health Association of the United States is the national leadership organization of the Catholic health ministry, representing the largest nonprofit provider of health care services in the nation.

Anti-trafficking awards ceremony to be held in London

The awards ceremony for the first-ever Sisters Anti-Trafficking Awards is just three weeks away.

Arise, an anti-slavery organization based in London, is partnering with the International Union of Superiors General and the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation to sponsor the awards. (The Hilton Foundation funds Global Sisters Report.) The awards will be given in three areas:

- The Common Good Award for courage and creativity in addressing exploitation;
- The Servant Leadership Award for excellence in network building;
- The Human Dignity Award for lifetime achievement in addressing exploitation.

Officials say sisters have never received adequate recognition for their help to rescue victims, lobby government protection agencies, and coordinate international awareness-raising efforts. There are more Catholic sisters working against trafficking than there are total employees of any of the largest anti-exploitation organizations, officials say.

Nominations for this year's awards closed in June; the awards ceremony will be held in London Oct. 31.

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National network changes name to expand mission

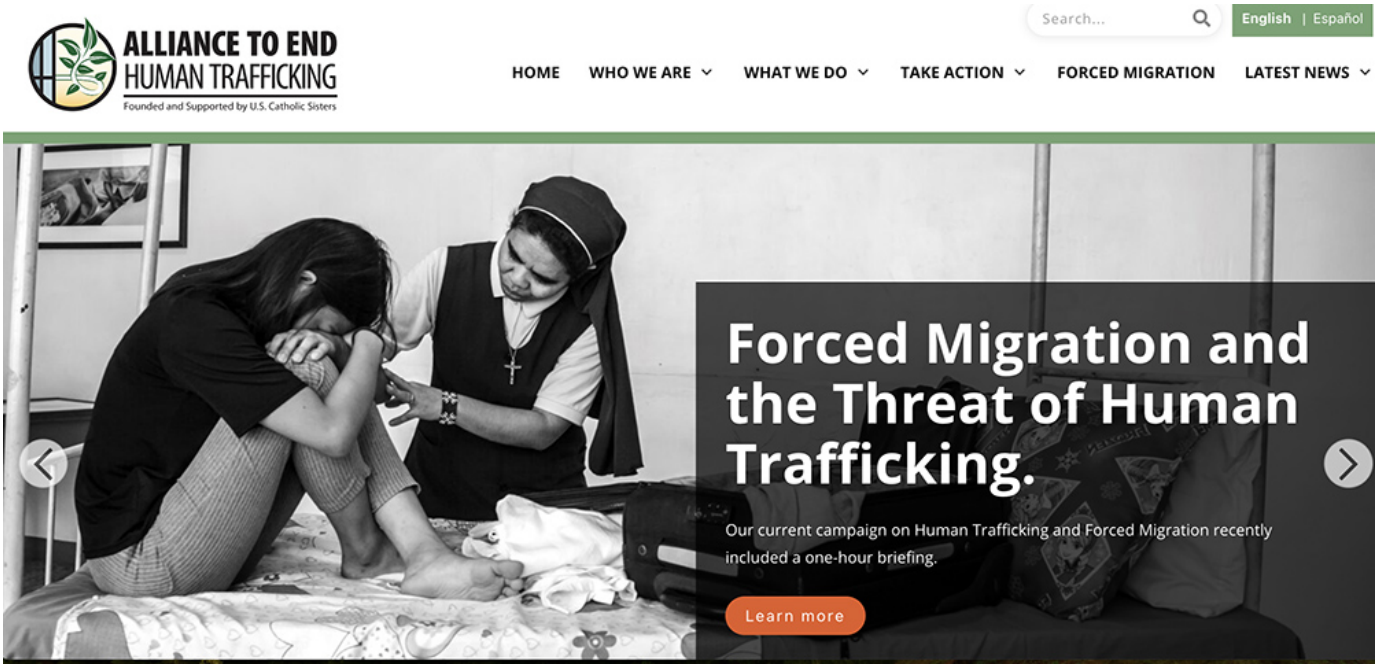
The U.S. Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking has a new and shorter name: The group announced at its annual conference in Chicago Oct. 4 it will now be known as the Alliance to End Human Trafficking.

The faith-based national network, which was founded by U.S. Catholic Sisters 10 years ago, hopes the change will expand collaboration efforts with other groups and religious organizations as the alliance continues its efforts to address the online exploitation of children and its support of the Equality Model, which calls for partial decriminalization of prostitution.

The alliance also announced its efforts to address human trafficking and forced migration through initiatives that will initially focus on work visas for migrants followed by supporting efforts related to the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act and support for migrant children.

Immaculate Heart of Mary member and alliance president Sr. Ann Oestreich said that, 10 years ago, there was no public Catholic voice advocating for change and speaking out on human trafficking. The sisters decided to focus on human trafficking: educating people about what it is, promoting prevention strategies to keep it from happening in the first place, and advocating for stricter laws to punish traffickers and assist survivors.

"We thought we could be that voice," Oestreich said. "Prevention is key to ending human trafficking, and we know how to advocate. We also know that women and men need access to services to help them heal so that became part of our mission."



The website of the Alliance to End Human Trafficking (GSR screenshot)

The alliance invited religious congregations, students, organizations, anti-trafficking agencies, and nonprofit groups to come together to "break barriers to end human trafficking."

During the conference, the alliance awarded to FADICA (Foundations and Donors Interested in Catholic Activities) a Margaret Nacke, CSJ, Bakhita Award for its support of the organization. International organization Talitha Kum was also presented the Margaret Nacke, CSJ, Bakhita Award for its work and partnership with ending human trafficking.

The alliance says human trafficking is the fastest-growing criminal industry in the world and is soon expected to surpass the illegal drug trade to become the most lucrative. It is a $150 billion industry with an estimated 50 million people ensnared in labor and sexual exploitation along with forced marriage.

"We are looking forward to a bright future as the Alliance to End Human Trafficking," said executive director Katie Boller-Gosewisch. "Our new name is truly an outer reflection of what we have become — an inclusive network of organizations, individuals, and congregations dedicated to eradicating human trafficking by exposing its root causes and working toward systemic change."