Blog

Religious Life



Nuns from the Catholic Health Association of India undertake a blind walk in Bengaluru, India, to spread awareness on eye donation and eye care. (Courtesy of Catholic Health Association of India)



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BENGALURU, INDIA — Catholic nuns from various congregations in India have pledged to donate their eyes and help people care for their eyes.

"Eyesight is one of the most beautiful gifts of God, and until we lose it, we don't realize the value of it," Sr. Victoria Narisetti, the past president of the Catholic Health Association of India, told Global Sisters Report.

In the last week of September, more than 200 nuns from around 100 congregations joined a blind walk through the streets of Bengaluru, southern India, as part of their campaign to promote eye donation and protect eyesight, especially among children and youth.

They tied a black ribbon across their eyes and walked while being guided by two blind persons. The program ended with the sisters and others pledging to donate their eyes when they die.

The sisters also launched a campaign to help children and youth protect their eyes by reducing screen time, and conducted a series of awareness campaigns across India to mark World Sight Day, which fell on Oct. 10.

The World Association of Eye Hospitals chose this year's theme, "Love your eyes," to promote eye care among children and young people. The health association, a network of 3,572 health care and social service institutions in India, serves about 21 million patients each year through its 11 regional units.



Catholic youth leaders from 21 Syro-Malabar dioceses participating in a Blind Walk in Bengaluru, southern India. (George Kannanthanam)

Narisetti, a member of the Congregation of Jesus Mary Joseph, said her association can play a crucial role in promoting eye donation in India.

An estimated 450 million children globally have a sight condition that requires treatment, but many are unable to access affordable, available eye care.

Claretian Fr. George Kannanthanam, the founder of Project Vision and the man behind the blind walk campaign, pointed out, "India has one-third of the world's visually challenged people."

Snehagiri Missionary Sr. Rani Tom, who coordinates a national convention of young people from 22 Syro-Malabar dioceses (who met in Bengaluru Oct. 10), told GSR that the blind walks have given them a firsthand experience of what it means to be blind. She said she hopes such a campaign will also make the youth responsible to "protect their eyes from excessive screen use and mobile addiction, too."

Communicators for Women Religious to become affiliate of LCWR

The Communicators for Women Religious — made up of sisters and laypeople in the United States, Canada, Italy, Ireland and Australia who are responsible for spreading the message of Catholic sisters — celebrated 30 years of existence at its annual conference Oct. 8-11.

And then members voted to radically change the organization.

The group, which has more than 200 members from 140 congregations around the world, will no longer be an independent, free-standing entity, but will become an affiliate of the U.S. Leadership Conference of Women Religious.

"This new affiliation agreement between CWR and LCWR will allow us to focus on our mission with less overhead and administrative burden," Kim Westerman, the immediate past board chair*, said in a statement to Global Sisters Report. "So many organizations that resource vowed religious life are facing the same constraints."

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Several members of Communicators for Women Religious said privately that congregational leaders, after decades of practicing humility and not seeking attention, are often understandably reluctant to take their advice on telling the story of women religious. They hope being part of LCWR will help leadership see the need to put sisters' light on a hill instead of under a bushel.

Communicators for Women Religious leaders are happy the affiliation will give the organization new life.

"We are grateful for LCWR's openness to collaboration in this new model," Westerman said in the statement. "By embracing something new, we can preserve our 30-year legacy."

Immaculate Heart of Mary Sr. Annmarie Sanders, the spokesperson for LCWR and a fixture at Communicators for Women Religious events, said the arrangement will help both groups.

"We believe that the new connection between CWR and LCWR will serve the mission of women religious well," Sanders said in an email to GSR. "Both organizations recognize that competent and professional communications are critical to the well-being of religious life. Our hope is that the new arrangement will serve as a strong support to all who carry on the role of communications for their religious institutes."

Webinar to address Catholic engagement with politics

How does one navigate the minefield of politics in the United States while being true to the Catholic faith?



Steven Millies (CNS/Courtesy of Steven P. Millies/Mark Campbell)

The Religious Formation Conference can help with the issue through a free webinar planned for 1 p.m. U.S. Central Time, "A Consistent Ethic of Life: Navigating Catholic Engagement with U.S. Politics" by Steven Millies, director of the Bernardin Center at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago.

The 30-minute presentation, based on Millies' book of the same name, will trace the history and development of the consistent ethic of life from the early 1970s to today and how to engage with the challenges to our conscience in our society, encouraging attendees to become partisans for life above political partisanship. The presentation will be followed by a 30-minute question-and-answer session.

The webinar is free but requires registration. On Dec. 10, the Religious Formation Conference will host a webinar by Sr. Mary Justine Naluggya, a canon lawyer and a Sister of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Reparatrix-Ggogonya. Her presentation, "Breaking Walls of Tension and Opening the Door of Hope," will take participants through different tensions of life's journey, exploring how the message of Isaiah comes in during Advent.

Workshop to show strategies to heal wounds of the soul

The Asociación de Hermanas Latinas Misioneras en América (Association of Latin Missionary Sisters in America) is presenting a free, online workshop in Spanish, "Wounds of the Soul and the Healing Process," showing participants how to identify the symptoms of the wounds and their causes, as well as strategies to begin healing.

The workshop (register here) is from 3-5 p.m. U.S. Central Time on Nov. 22 and will only be in Spanish; there will not be simultaneous translation.

The presentation is by Sr. Ileana M. Urroz Zamora, of the Society of St. Teresa of Jesus, from Nicaragua, who has served in educational ministry, human-spiritual and vocational accompaniment of young laypeople and those in initial formation of Teresian Religious Life.



Dominican Sr. Donna Markham (CNS/Catholic Standard/Jaclyn Lippelmann)

CTU hosting Sr. Donna Markham in lecture series

Catholic Theological Union's "Sundays at CTU" lecture series will feature Adrian Dominican Sr. Donna Markham, who last year retired as president and CEO of Catholic Charities USA and was given LCWR's Outstanding Leadership Award.

Markham, whose career spanned decades of breaking barriers and new ground, will present on "Perspectives on Leadership from a Woman Leader." Markham took the helm of Catholic Charities in 2015, becoming the first woman to head the agency in its 100-year history. She was chair of the nonprofit's board of trustees from 2008 to

2011. She served in the LCWR presidency from 1990 to 1993.

The Oct. 27 event begins at 3 p.m. with Mass, Markham's lecture is at 4 p.m., followed by a reception at 5 p.m. All times are U.S. Central Time. The in-person event will also be available for viewing via Zoom.

**This story has been updated to clarify Kim Westerman's position.*