News
Religious Life



Families and loved ones reunite following a shooting at Annunciation Church in Minneapolis Aug. 27, 2025. A gunman opened fire with a rifle into the church during Mass for Annunciation School's first week of classes, killing two children and wounding 21 people, most of them children. (OSV News/Reuters/Ben Brewer)



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Monday Starter

In the wake of the Aug. 27 shootings that killed two young students of Annunciation Catholic School in Minneapolis, Catholic sisters in the U.S. are addressing the issue of gun violence.

"Our response can no longer be 'thoughts and prayers' alone," the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas said in a statement issued the same day as the shootings, which occurred at Annunciation Catholic Church. In addition to the two deaths, the shooting injured 21 others.

"Children were literally praying during the attack," the congregation said. "We must act."

The sisters said, "The obsession with the gun ownership in the United States has denigrated our ability to respect the image of God and human dignity of all persons."

Meanwhile, the advocacy group Nuns Against Gun Violence also said on Aug. 27 that while it does not issue a statement after every incident of gun violence in the United States because "they are tragically too frequent," the school shooting at Annunciation "especially breaks our hearts and has catalyzed renewed national conversation about gun violence."

"While we continue to work for change, today we pray," the group said. "We pray for the victims, their families and community. May they find peace and healing. And we pray for the United States. May hearts and minds be opened so that we can end this epidemic of gun violence."

The Mercy statement also said that a commitment to nonviolence "underlies our lives and ministry as sisters. We must address this culture of violence with a culture of love. As followers of the nonviolent Christ, we continue to advocate for laws that

keep weapons out of the hands of those intent on harm. Guns remain the number one killer of our children and teens."

While the response of most Catholic archbishops in the U.S. to the shootings did not focus on concrete action, the killings prompted Pope Leo XIV to strongly condemn gun violence globally.

"We hold in our prayers the countless children killed and injured every day around the world," the pontiff said. "Let us plead God to stop the pandemic of arms, large and small, which infects our world."

45th-year pilgrimage will honor slain churchwomen



Clockwise from top: Maryknoll Srs. Ita Ford and Maureen Clarke, Ursuline Sr. Dorothy Kazel and Jean Donovan (CNS composite)

The Share Foundation and the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, or LCWR, plan a 45th anniversary pilgrimage to El Salvador and Honduras to honor four American churchwomen martyred in El Salvador in 1980.

The women were killed by U.S-trained death squads.

"We want to remember our sisters as they were then, and they are now — alive in the struggle for a better world," an announcement of the pilgrimage said. "We remember them by continuing to walk with the people of God in El Salvador."

The pilgrimage to El Salvador will be held Nov. 28-Dec. 6, and to Honduras Dec. 6-10.

Two of the three sisters killed were members of the Maryknoll congregation: Srs. Ita Ford and Maura Clarke; Sr. Dorothy Kazel was an Ursuline missionary. Jean Donovan was a volunteer laywoman.

The pilgrimage will include visiting the site of the murders, about 15 miles from San Salvador's airport. Family members of the women are expected to join the pilgrimage.

More information and a link to apply can be found here.

UISG plans online theological forum

The International Union of Superiors General, or UISG, is organizing its first online theological forum.

The forum is a key part of a global initiative by UISG to create an international network of women religious theologians from different congregations and continents.

The online event will be held twice on Sept. 25: 9 a.m.-11:30 a.m. Central European Time, and 5 p.m.-7:30 p.m. Central European Time.

The goal of the forum, UISG said in an announcement, "is to promote shared theological reflection and place theology at the service of consecrated life in creative and meaningful ways."

"The forum will provide a space of open dialogue for women religious theologians, Superiors General, Sisters, and all those interested in theological reflection attentive to the challenges and perspectives of religious life today," the announcement said.

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Livestream of Laudato Si' anniversary conference

UISG has also announced a livestream of Pope Leo XIV opening a global conference marking the 10th anniversary of Pope Francis' encyclical "*Laudato Si*', on Care for Our Common Home."

The event will be held Oct. 1 and is expected to be Leo's first major statement on climate change and environmental protection. It is part of the Raising Hope initiative, a yearlong campaign to celebrate integral ecology during the church's Jubilee Year.

UISG is one of the sponsors of the conference, along with the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development; Dicastery for Communication; Caritas Internationalis; Focolare Movement; International Cooperation for Development and Solidarity, or CIDSE; Ecclesial Networks Alliance for Integral Ecology; Borgo Laudato Si'; and the Laudato Si' Movement.

Others at the event will be high-level leaders from civil society, science and environmental policy.

The opening event will be livestreamed starting at 3:30 Central European Time. Register for the livestream here.

Two sisters among finalists for Lumen Christi Award

Two sisters are among the finalists for this year's Lumen Christi Award, the highest honor given by the Chicago-based Catholic Extension Society to those who "radiate and reveal the light of Christ present in the communities they serve."

Eight finalists were chosen from 41 nominees selected by U.S. Catholic bishops.





Left: School Sister of Notre Dame Sr. Anne Francioni founded the nonprofit service organization Whole Kids Outreach in southeast Missouri in 1999. Right: St. Francis Sr. Teresa Frawley has ministered to Native American communities in Wyoming for more than 40 years. (Photos courtesy of Catholic Extension)

The two sister finalists include St. Francis Sr. Teresa Frawley, who is originally from Ireland but who has ministered to Native American communities in Wyoming for more than 40 years. She serves the Eastern Shoshone and Northern Arapaho Native peoples on the Wind River Indian Reservation.

School Sister of Notre Dame Sr. Anne Francioni, the other finalist, is a registered nurse whose ministry in southeastern Missouri has helped reduce infant mortality in the Ozarks region. She founded the nonprofit service organization Whole Kids Outreach in 1999, which has gone on to serve more than 20,000 families.

"This year's Lumen Christi Award finalists are ordinary people doing extraordinary things in the name of their faith and on behalf of the Catholic Church," Fr. Jack Wall, president of Catholic Extension Society, said in a statement. "Their stories are a reminder to us of the hope and transformation the Church brings into communities throughout America every day."

Award finalists receive $15,000 to support and enhance their ministry. The award winner — to be announced in the fall — will be given a $100,000 award, split

between the honoree and their nominating diocese.

The Catholic Extension Society, founded in 1905, describes its work as being "in solidarity with people to build up vibrant and transformative Catholic faith communities among the poor in the poorest regions of America."