

Sr. Catherine Mutindi Awarded 2019 Opus Prize at Saint Louis University

Sr. Catherine receives \$1 million to benefit humanitarian efforts in the Democratic Republic of Congo

ST. LOUIS — Saint Louis University and the Opus Prize Foundation proudly announce that Sr. Catherine Mutindi, the founder of Bon Pasteur in the Democratic Republic of Congo, is awarded the 16th annual Opus Prize. The Opus Prize is awarded annually to a leader in faith-based humanitarian work.

Sr. Catherine is a member of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd (Good Shepherd Sisters), an international congregation of women religious, present in 73 countries, and known for their ministries for protection and empowerment of girls, women and children at risk and victims of human rights violations, including trafficking and sexual exploitation.

“Sr. Catherine is working to address modern-day slavery, in children as young as 4 and 5, working in highly-toxic cobalt mines, to earn enough to feed their families that day,” said Don Neureuther, director of the Opus Prize Foundation. “In a relatively short period, she has transformed the lives of 3,000 children and countless adults, and literally restored their humanity. She gives them hope.”

The Opus Prize, awarded each year in partnership with a Catholic university, is one of the world’s most prestigious recognitions for faith-based, nonprofit innovation and work. The \$1 million award and \$100,000 prizes for the other finalists make up one of the world’s largest faith-based awards for social entrepreneurship.

The work of Bon Pasteur has been recognized by the DR Congo government and numerous leading NGOs including Amnesty International as the only NGO working effectively to address the widespread human rights abuses against children, adolescent girls and women in the Kolwezi ASM communities. Moreover, the approach adopted by Bon Pasteur to mitigate child labor has been identified by the several Congolese national and local government offices as well as the UN, UNICEF, the World Bank, World Vision, and representatives of numerous international mining companies as a best practice initiative.

In 2012, Sr. Catherine started Bon Pasteur in the Democratic Republic of Congo after being invited by the local bishop to come to the city of Kolwezi to work with widows and orphans. Sr. Catherine first listened to the community and within 10 months developed a five-year plan which focused on addressing alternative livelihoods to mining, including farming; gender violence and the physical abuse of children; child protection policies and schooling for children; and civic strengthening given the “gold rush” environment of the mining entities.

on Pasteur’s vision is an inclusive and democratic Congolese society where the rights of girls, women and children are protected and promoted.

To realize this vision, Bon Pasteur has developed an extensive child protection program, which includes remedial holistic education, psychosocial support, a referral system for abused persons and human rights education, all of which seek to mitigate the phenomenon of Worst Forms of Child Labor for orphans and vulnerable children.

The other finalists received \$100,000 for their organization. They are:

- **Michael Fernandez-Frey, founder and director of Caras con Causa.** Caras con Causa is a non-governmental organization (NGO) serving economically poor families in communities bordering the Bay of San Juan, Puerto Rico. Caras con Causa, under the inspirational leadership of Fernandez-Frey, is committed to children's education, restoring the wetlands after the hurricane, and organizing communities to protect themselves against the destruction of their homes by the government.
- **Brother Charles Nuwagaba, Provincial Vicar of the Bannakaroli Brothers of St. Charles Lwanga** - Brother Charles oversees a primary school and vocational education program run by the Brothers of Charles Lwanga on the edge of the Kibera slum, the largest slum in Africa. The primary school currently enrolls 280 students and 260 young people, including teenage mothers who are enrolled in vocational programs. The vocational programs are an effective strategy in alleviating poverty and include programs in motor vehicle maintenance, hairdressing and beauty, hospitality, computer technology and more.

The Opus Prize Foundation

The Opus Prize Foundation is a private and independent nonprofit foundation. Established in 1994 by the founding chairman of earlier Opus Companies, the Opus Prize Foundation is a self-sufficient foundation independent from The Opus Group. The foundation selects universities as partners to organize and execute the Opus Prize selection process and award ceremony. Through these partnerships, students are challenged to think globally and inspired to live lives of service.

The Opus Prize Foundation has chosen Loyola University Chicago as its partner to manage the selection process and presentation of the 2020 Opus Prize. This honor will coincide with the institution's 150th anniversary and will include celebratory events, retrospectives, and robust programming engaging faculty, staff, students, alumni, and the Chicagoland community. For more information, visit LUC.edu/opus.

Saint Louis University

Saint Louis University is a Catholic, Jesuit institution that values academic excellence, life-changing research, compassionate health care, and a strong commitment to faith and service. Founded in 1818, the University fosters the intellectual and character development of more than 13,500 students on campuses in St. Louis and Madrid, Spain. Building on a legacy of nearly 200 years, Saint Louis University continues to move forward with an unwavering commitment to a higher purpose, a greater good.