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Kerry Alys Robinson is pictured in front of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. (CNS/Courtesy of Kerry Alys Robinson)

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The leader of an organization representing a national network of Catholic domestic humanitarian agencies will receive the oldest and most prestigious honor bestowed exclusively on American Catholics.

The University of Notre Dame announced March 30 that Kerry Alys Robinson, president and CEO of Catholic Charities USA, has been selected as the 2025 recipient of the school's Laetare Medal.

Robinson will be presented with the medal during the university's commencement on May 18.

The award's name points to Laetare Sunday, the fourth Sunday of Lent in the Catholic Church's Roman liturgical calendar. The day's entrance antiphon for Mass begins with the word "Laetare," Latin for "Rejoice," with the liturgy anticipating the joy of Easter.

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The inscription on the medal, "Magna est veritas et praevalerebit," is Latin for "Truth is mighty, and it shall prevail." The award, inaugurated in 1883 as a counterpart to the papal Golden Rose honor, is bestowed annually by the school to a Catholic "whose genius has ennobled the arts and sciences, illustrated the ideals of the Church and enriched the heritage of humanity."

Notre Dame's president, Holy Cross Fr. Robert Dowd, said the university named Robinson this year's recipient for her "boundless compassion, visionary leadership and inspiring example of faith-filled service."

He noted Robinson "has dedicated her career to serving the church, standing in solidarity with those on the margins so that they may experience the abundant love of God."

Robinson was appointed head of Catholic Charities USA in 2023, becoming the second layperson and second woman to lead the organization. A longtime advocate for greater leadership opportunities for women, youth and laity in the Catholic Church, she was invited by the Vatican in 2012 to advise officials on how to engage women leaders.

She took the helm at Catholic Charities after almost two decades at the nonprofit Leadership Roundtable, of which she was the founding executive director. Established in 2005 amid the clerical abuse crisis, Leadership Roundtable works to ensure transparency and accountability in the business operations of the Catholic Church in the U.S. Robinson later served as the nonprofit's global ambassador and executive partner.

Her appointment at Catholic Charities has coincided with an accelerating shift in the nation's public discourse on issues such as migration and outreach to those made vulnerable by natural disasters, economic hardship and other circumstances.

[**Read this next:** Catholic Charities agencies halt refugee programs in wake of US aid freeze](#)



The Golden Dome with its statue of Mary is seen Aug. 6, 2021, atop the administration building of the University of Notre Dame in Notre Dame, Ind. (OSV News/CNS/Chaz Muth)

However, Robinson has stressed that ministering to migrants and refugees, and all of the efforts undertaken by Catholic Charities throughout the U.S. and its territories, are a response to the call of the Gospel.

"The charitable services we provide are fundamental to who we are as Christians," she said in a Jan. 23 joint statement with Bishop Mark Seitz of El Paso, Texas, chair of the U.S. bishops' committee on migration, and Sr. Mary Haddad, a member of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas and president and CEO of Catholic Health Association of the United States.

The statement — issued in response to the Trump administration's lifting of restrictions on immigration arrests in "sensitive locations" such as houses of worship and schools — affirmed that human dignity "is not dependent on a person's citizenship or immigration status."

"I have always loved the church and held its potential in the highest esteem," Robinson said in Notre Dame's announcement of her selection for the Laetare Medal. "The church's explicit religious mission has formed the person I am."

Robinson was born into a devoutly Catholic, philanthropic family, a legacy Robinson said she has upheld since her earliest years.

Her great grandparents, John and Helena Raskob, established the Raskob Foundation in 1945, with John Raskob having made his fortune as a financial executive for DuPont and General Motors. He and Helena Raskob met while she was playing organ at St. Mary's Church in Wilmington, Delaware.

The family foundation has over the decades funded a wide array of Catholic efforts, including seminarian formation, humanitarian assistance, maternal and child care, and education, awarding over \$5 million in domestic and \$1.87 million in international grants in 2024.

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— Kerry Alys Robinson

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Robinson, who became a member of the Raskob Foundation for Catholic Activities as a teen, said in the Notre Dame announcement that five generations of her family have served as foundation volunteers.

"Through that experience, we are exposed to the very best of what the church does through the example of our applicants who are women and men, ordained, religious and laypeople," she said. "Their commitment to helping, healing and caring for those in need rendered them compelling role models whose example deepened my faith and inspired me to study theology and Catholic social teaching. I am grateful for so much of what our faith offers."

Describing herself on the social media platform X as "tenacious about hope" and "full of love of humankind," Robinson wrote in her 2014 book *Imagining Abundance: Fundraising, Philanthropy and a Spiritual Call to Service* that both philanthropy and fundraising require "a relinquishing of self, a disposition of humility before the great potential at hand, and the shared goal of blessing other people's lives."