

XXIII Plenary Assembly of the International Union of Superiors General

Women of peace at the frontiers

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As cardinals converged on Rome for the Conclave, the Superiors General (UISG) held their XXIII plenary assembly (May 5-8) at the Hotel Ergife. In her introduction, President Sister Mary Barron expressed hope that the plenary in this jubilee year would "represent a unique moment of listening, communion and renewal. It is a time to walk together as consecrated women at the service of the Church and the world." More than 900 superiors general from 75 countries discussed the theme, "Consecrated Life: A Hope That Transforms." The methodology adopted in the groups was that of "conversation in the Spirit."

Referring to UISG's 60th anniversary, Sister Barron recalled the spiritual legacy of Pope Francis and the importance of personal encounter with Christ, authority as service, vulnerability as a resource, the power of prayer and the value of synodality. Together with Sister Patricia Murray, UISG secretary general, the 2022-2025 Report was then presented. It highlighted key initiatives over the past three years: leadership and synodality training, the Talitha Kum network against trafficking, the Catholic Care for Children International project and other initiatives inspired by the encyclical *Laudato Si'*.

On the second day, Sister Simona Brambilla, a Consolata missionary appointed prefect of the Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life on Jan. 6, 2025, encouraged the sisters to consider how "consecrated life is called to shine like the moon: not with its own light, but reflecting the light of Christ, in the company of the stars, inhabiting the sky of communion." In her reflection, Sister Brambilla pointed to the fragility and smallness of religious life as the source of its prophetic power in a world that privileges power and visibility. Particularly valuable were the moments of participant sharing and questions about prophetic leadership and authentic formation. Emphasis was placed on the importance of "creating safe spaces in which to open the suitcase of the heart."

The strategic plan for the sexennial (2025-2031) will rest on three priorities: to give centrality to consecrated life, to enrich the Church with the gift of charisms, and to be a prophetic voice in the world. Among the most notable achievements at the Assembly was the launch of the new foundation *The Anna Trust*, designed to support the care of elderly sisters, which is a growing concern for many congregations.

The Assembly's Plenary Declaration reaffirmed the role of consecrated women as "bearers of a hope that transforms" in a complex global context. "Women who freely offer the gift of their lives by being present at frontier places, who refuse exclusion and discrimination and who give consolation and attention to those who are rejected... with 'strings of hope'

stretched toward one another, we have created an international network that connects us with all peoples and with the whole of creation."