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Clockwise from top left to center: Images from 2019 Global Sisters Report columns by Sr. Mary Ellen Brody, Barbara Wander, Sr. Nancy Linenkugel, Sr. Nazariya Mykhayliuk and Sr. Virginia Herbers (File photos)



by Michele Morek

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This may be the toughest assignment I have had at Global Sisters Report: Summarize the year of columns written by sisters and associates. I would love to tell you about every single column, but that would be cheating — and it would add up to about 225 columns! So I went looking for major themes and "surprises": new writers, unique ministries and new parts of the world we have heard from this year.

But first, a salute to all our faithful regulars who never seem to tire of writing wonderful reflections to share with our readership.

There is the group of younger religious who write for the Horizons column that comes out every Friday. Here they are, each name with a link to one of my favorite columns they wrote this year: Susan Rose Francois, Colleen Gibson, Virginia Herbers, Tracey Horan, Tracy Kemme, Christin Tomy, Nicole Trahan and Julia Walsh. We have three more young sisters who are going to write guest Horizons columns for us this year; watch for them.

Other sisters write regularly to help us reflect on current events or realities, like Judith Best, Ilia Delio, Margaret Gonsalves, Nancy Linenkugel and Nancy Sylvester. (I linked their names to my favorite columns, as well.)

Our writers are so good about keeping us in touch with feast days or the liturgical season, like the feast of St. Mary Magdalene or Easter.

In the category of "major milestones," we said goodbye in June to our second group of panelists for The Life and welcomed a diverse third class who have continued to give us insights into religious life around the globe.

Another goodbye this year was to Janet Gildea, who lost a long battle with cancer. Through her columns, she allowed us to accompany her on that journey. Janet had written for us since the beginning of Global Sisters Report and was an ever-faithful presence on the U.S.-Mexico border. May she rest in peace.

However, perhaps through Janet's intercession, we have welcomed several new writers who wrote for us on border issues, like Maria Louise Edwards, Mary Ellen Brody, Maryann Agnes Mueller, Kathy Roberg and Margaret Farrell.

Some topics continue to recur on GSR, and this year, the themes of homelessness, especially in Ireland, the United States and India, and trafficking have appeared in our columns.

We are lucky to have some sister-writers in unusual ministries, like the sister who is one of three women consultors that Pope Francis appointed this year to the secretariat of the Synod of Bishops. Another ministers to the transgender community, and one works in a funeral home. And check out the column that describes a begging ministry.

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There are sisters who have lived lives worthy of a book! One escaped from Vietnam right before the fall of Saigon and lived life for a while as an "itinerant Dominican." Another is facing several court charges as a result of her activities with the Rural Missionaries of the Philippines.

We are blessed with sister-writers from Africa, southeast Asia, Australia, the Philippines, and a few in South and Central America, but we were aware that there was a "hole" in our coverage of the sisters in continental Europe. Then we were gifted with The Life panelists from Switzerland and Spain! But what about Eastern Europe?

The first column from Eastern Europe this year was from a sister from Ukraine with a delightful column on painting icons, and from Latvia, we learned of a unique community that works with (and includes in its membership) female prisoners. And a recent story gave a fascinating glimpse into the lives of sisters behind the Iron Curtain in Romania.

One of our proudest accomplishments over the past few years has been to add to the number of our associate/oblate/co-member writers: Valarie Lee James, Tina Khan , Margaret Susan Thompson, Renee Schultz, Judy Principe and Barbara Wander all wrote for us this year.

Just for fun, you might enjoy dipping into some of those links, or taking forays into art, literature or biology. You can see why we love and appreciate all our writers.

The whole staff at Global Sisters Report wishes you a Happy New Year. We hope you plan to spend some time this year reading or writing for Global Sisters Report!

Read this next: Read again: 10 noteworthy stories from 2019

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