Religious Life



Women religious attending the 2022 plenary for the International Union of Superiors General pray for peace in Ukraine and for Vladimir Putin on May 6, the final day of the triennial plenary, in Rome. (GSR photo/Gail DeGeorge)

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The 2022 plenary of the International Union of Superiors General has included prayers, calls for peace and reflections about the ongoing war in Ukraine.

Pope Francis, meeting with congregational members for a papal audience May 5 at the Vatican, spoke of the need for the "noble way of peace" and urged the sisters to continue praying for the victims and survivors of the war.

He told UISG that the outside world must accompany Ukraine in its current pain, adding that many Ukrainians can't see any other paths in the face of the war, which he called a "monstrosity."

On May 6, the final day of the plenary, the Maryknoll Sisters and the Dominican Sisters International Confederation, which is based in Rome, suggested a pause in the meeting for prayer.

The sisters spent five minutes in deliberate silence, praying for peace and for Russian President Vladimir Putin, who launched the Russian invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24.

Afterward, as candles burned at the plenary's holy space next to the front dais, Sr. Mary Teresa Barron, superior general of the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Apostles, extended an invitation for the sisters to continue such public prayers of peace when they returned home to their congregations, calling it a needed "ripple effect."

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While Ukraine has been a particular concern for those gathered for the UISG plenary, sisters attending the meeting have also called for peace for other countries affected by war and conflict, including the Democratic Republic of Congo, Myanmar, Syria and Yemen.

Claretian Sr. Jolanta Kafka, UISG president, told Global Sisters Report at the close of the plenary May 6 that the sisters offered prayers for Putin because "only God can change the heart of the person."

"When we opened the plenary, we said, 'We think with sorrowfulness about our brothers and sisters in Ukraine and in Russia because the church is there, the religious are there, the priests are there, the Christians are there,' so we have to pray for them.

"Today, we made another step: that we need to pray for him, to hold this space of goodness, even for him. The spirit of good is extraordinary," she said.

"It isn't easy," she added. "I was praying also for those who have difficulty praying for him."

This story appears in the **UISG 2022 plenary** feature series. View the full series.