Columns
Religious Life



People gather for a Good Friday procession outside the Metropolitan Cathedral as the government banned Holy Week street processions this year due to unspecified security concerns, April 7 in Managua, Nicaragua. Parishes in Nicaragua conducted traditional Viacrucis processions on church grounds or inside churches. (OSV News/Reuters)



Flying in V Formation

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Editor's note: *Global Sisters Report's series Hope Amid Turmoil: Sisters in Conflict Areas offers a look at the lives and ministries of women religious serving in dangerous places worldwide. The news stories, columns and Q&As in this series will include sisters in Ukraine, Nigeria, Kenya, Sri Lanka, Nicaragua and more throughout 2023.*

A light shines on the path. ...

In the midst of a wounded and fragmented society, goodness and mercy peek through the dark tunnel of our days and renew our hope. The presence of God, Father/Mother of the universe, visits us in a particular way when the forces of the enemy seem to want to take hold of our daily lives.

It is impossible to not believe and trust in this God who walks with firm steps alongside people who suffer, and look for reasons every day to be rooted in all that gives life in abundance and plenitude.

The God of life, whom Jesus revealed to us, calls us with a powerful voice to listen to him and to turn our senses to him by connecting with the fruitful life that is renewed from within. He invites us to trust in the promise that we will not be alone or lost in the middle of our journey, and reminds us that he is on pilgrimage with people who search for truth, justice, peace and freedom.



God reveals to us in the book of Exodus (Exodus 3:7) that he is not indifferent to the sufferings of his people. He touches the hearts of oppressive executioners with his wisdom and destroys their plans. With his grace, he raises up and sends people, so that together they may show his face and his kindness in the most difficult moments of humanity. The strength of unity and goodness through prayer and the energy of life radiate the light of his truth.

Our Nicaragua is clothed in hope, just as a flower renews its buds. Hope rises from knowing that we are in the hands of God who fulfills his promises, and who has us engraved "upon the palms of my hands" (Isaiah 49:16).

There is renewed hope for the release of several of our brothers and sisters from their torture chambers, who — despite suffering exile and being declared stateless — are still alive, and able to meet and embrace some members of their families. Others are still sadly awaiting their release.

Although we feel "afflicted in every way, but not constrained ... persecuted, but not abandoned" (2 Corinthians 4:8-10) because though persecution and abuse are intensifying, we do not cease to cry out for justice and freedom. We continue to resist as did the small remnant of Israel.

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In the face of so much external provocation, we cry out: justice and freedom! Life and not death! Neither hatred nor revenge! Vested in the strength of mercy, we enter a new time in this long pilgrimage of martyrdom. As we take up our crosses, we fervently hope to find companions: brothers, sisters and friends who will help us — with hope, rather than resignation — to carry this heavy cross of fragmentation among brothers and sisters, which is due to ideology and power.

We feel that, like the people of Israel, Yahweh raises his voice again to tell us:

> Listen (Shema) ... Listen Nicaragua.
>
> I am still your God and there is no other.
>
> I sustain you and make straight your path,
> where hatred and revenge have no place.
>
> I help you and bandage your wounds.
>
> I am still the light that shines in the darkness of your days.
>
> I am the one who continues to walk with you and gives you courage to resist.
>
> I continue to be at your side and, like the dawn,
> continue to renew my desire to lift your head.
>
> And, though you may be pursued, my gaze does not stray from you.

As the church — the people of God on the way who are persecuted, humiliated and mistreated — we continue our pilgrimage with confidence in God's promises. We are called to resist, by the light of the Gospel. We are called to recover the prophetic vision in order to courageously tear down the enormous walls of division and ambition. We are called to join the clamor for justice, not revenge, that all people may have courage and not lose hope.

The Nicaraguan church is living in an apocalyptic time of constant struggle and resistance to keep our faith and convictions alive and strong; yet we are also challenged to reinvent ourselves, and be creative in accompanying the life and faith of so many people of goodwill who find their strength in Jesus. It is up to us to

continue sowing the seed of Jesus' life project, his reign, and his truth, in the midst of the merciless fury of people who have forgotten his goodness and would rather abuse than love.

We continue to trust and believe that we are not alone. Jesus goes before us, guiding us through this difficult stretch of our lives.

We wait in hope against all despair.