Columns



Parishioners attend a Mass at Santo Domingo de Guzman church in Managua, Nicaragua, Aug. 2, 2022. (OSV News/Reuters/Maynor Valenzuela)



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.*



We are accompanied by "a thick cloud of witnesses" (Hebrews 12:1-4).

Events occur in life that allow us to be firsthand witnesses and that transform our lives. From the dimension of faith, we are all primary witnesses of our own encounter with Jesus, who moves us, frees us from apathy, and leads us to be heralds and preachers of the good news, his resurrection.

A clear sign of the power of his Spirit, who guides and sustains, is being in places where life is crying out. It also leads us to take risks and, with courage, to fight for

the changes that are necessary for life.

We are accompanied in Nicaragua by a cloud of firsthand witnesses, a small remnant of people who continue to sustain everyday life, and endure with faith and hope, confident that this experience of death will pass. Sometimes, we think that evil incarnate, personified in the actions of a few in the country, have a well-structured timeline for attacking and digging their claws into the wounded heart of the people.

Consecrated life continues to stand firm with the people of God, being a witness of the mockery that is inflicted on congregations through countless obstacles put in their way to discourage them from remaining in the mission. They also endure endless struggles to avoid losing members, works and property that do so much good for the human and psycho-spiritual growth of Nicaragua.

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Consecrated life is a testament to the cruel operations of this nefarious dictatorship that is leading the country to a slow suicide in vital areas of people and institutions.

We know that our eyes are fixed on Jesus; however, it is very painful to see that mistrust is growing between religious men and women, and between the Episcopal Conference of Nicaragua and the members of local churches, as a result of the ideology that has blinded many of them and created even greater division. "Divide and conquer" is the tactic of evil, coupled with a noisy and often complicit silence that leaves much to be desired.

Those who speak out and try to denounce the situation or defend some political prisoner or other reality are imprisoned, their license to practice their profession is taken away, and they are murdered or exiled.

Juggling it all weighs heavily on our hearts, begging the Spirit to help us to know what to say and how to say it so as not to endanger the lives of the people. This is an apocalyptic experience because, in the midst of fear, uncertainty and persecution, we try to continue to announce, with our lives, the presence of Jesus, who is also a witness of this very harsh reality.

We feel small and persecuted, but not abandoned by the God of Jesus who has his hands on the people and blesses and sustains us. Now is the time to learn to

reinvent ourselves, and to contemplate our reality without comparisons or succumbing to pessimism, in order to continue weaving unity, fraternity and democracy with the threads of life.

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There are times when it seems that they want to rob us of the desire to dream. There are institutions that are dying, others have ceased to exist, and hunger and poverty are beginning to increase.

Being witnesses of the profound crises that we are living makes us fearless in trying to discover what God is asking in these moments of each Christian, and of persons of goodwill. We must fine-tune our senses to connect to those proposals that are timidly continuing to sustain life and faith.

It is up to us to discern how and where to continue being what we are called to be as disciples of Jesus — "leaven in the dough" — in these turbulent times of life. We have to be prophetic in the places where we are, recognizing that we are also vulnerable, and often outraged/powerless, strong/weak, collaborating with the people in the midst of fear and uncertainty.

We are a cloud of human witnesses, fragile, but with a heart that continues to long for that "great homeland" of which our poet Rubén Darío dreamed. We also dream of not leaving to our future generations more deterioration and breakdown of family, social, political and ecclesial fabric.



Postcards designed by the Museum of Memory against Impunity together with the Association of Mothers of April demand justice for the victims of April 2018, when protesters were killed by government forces in Nicaragua. (Courtesy of Flying in V Formation)

Together, we strive for transformation through the conversion of each person who has realized that we cannot close our eyes and separate life from events, because we understand that although faith is essential nourishment for the development of life, its consistent practice is what will lead us to true change.

Witnesses preach with their lives and transmit events, trying to be faithful to what they have observed, so that together we can re-read each one and learn lessons from them. It is necessary to continue learning, as people of God, to discern, according to the light of the Word and faith, what are the next steps and choices we will have to make in order to remain faithful to those intuitions of the Spirit present

in this desire of Nicaragua to be "reborn."

That cloud of witnesses was formed in April 2018, when Nicaraguan government forces killed protesters.

April is life and hope that beats strongly from the depths of each heart that knows that we are all interconnected by our convictions.

April is that which was dreamed one day and desired to come to life from the most ontological thing we have.

April is that tsunami of vital force that propels life and implies the internal movement of transformation. It cannot be contained or silenced and has the capacity to overwhelm and destroy the dams and barriers of the unjust, the insolent, and shameless.

April is written with the A for *amar* (love), because its name represents the strength of the living love that is in every fiber of the hearts of those of us who dare to dream of a better present and a better tomorrow.

This story appears in the **Hope Amid Turmoil: Sisters in Conflict Areas** feature series. View the full series.