Columns
Horizons
Social Justice



An image of Our Lady of the Rosary, sculpted in clay by Raul Reynoso in the prison of Jujuy, Argentina, exhibits the characteristics of the aboriginal women in this village, who live in the Argentine Puna. (Courtesy of Pamela Luna)



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What does it mean to find a spiritual home in the midst of uncertainty? In my small community in northern Argentina, Mary has become a beacon of hope in the darkest moments. When the journey becomes overwhelming, I look to Mary, the small, strong woman who, with her "yes," changed history. Capable of holding everything in her heart, she inspires me and encourages me to continue. My path has not been easy, but Mary has always been my faithful companion.

I arrived here as a Sister of the Congregation of Our Lady of the Rosary of Buenos Aires, with 10 years of consecration and very happy on the road I have traveled. I have served as a missionary, community animator, teacher of postulants, legal representative of schools, and general councilor. Our Lady of the Rosary, my "mother" from the beginning, was the one who formed me. My vocation was born in one of the sisters' schools, and I embraced the pillars of the spirituality: Christ as center, Mary of the Rosary as mother, and preferential love for the poorest.



"No more than simple servants of the least for the great love of He who first loved us." (Courtesy of Pamela Luna)

In January 2012, we arrived at this mission with the scorching sun and constant heat. The children were the first to welcome us with smiles. Poverty in this place was evident, but hope was being born, free and tiny, in every corner. I did not imagine then the impact that this mission would have on my consecrated life. The

experiences and challenges, over time, shaped my heart and prepared me for a new call that I could not ignore: to leave everything and start anew. In this process of discernment, Mary was at my side, giving me strength. The rosary and the Gospel of the poor were my shield at every step.

> 'Hope is not passive; it is active, like the confident leap of a child into its mother's arms. Mary lived that hope, and her example urges me to move forward, celebrating what is, and trusting in what is yet to come.'
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> —Sr. Elsa Porcario
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I began a new journey of consecration in 2017, moving from the Sisters of Our Lady of the Rosary to the Fraternity of Servants of the Poorest. This small community, marked by austerity, simplicity and service to the most excluded, was born out of the desire to listen to the cries of the people. I experienced firsthand the redemptive power of losing in order to win. I anchored my consecrated life here and burned my boat in a leap of faith. This journey has made me embrace the unknown, uncertainty and lack of recognition. I found comfort and strength on dark nights in Mary's lap, and through her I received the motivation to respond to God's new call in my life.

Like many, I have gone through times of fear, uncertainty, loneliness and discouragement. However, when I look at Mary, I see a woman who went through everything God put in her path without faltering. When I feel that I am in darkness, I return to her and find the hope that drives me on. Her "yes" encourages me to say "yes" every day, loving without knowing what is to come, trusting in strength in the darkness that brews.

Mary inspires and sustains me. Her littleness and her daily life reflect the immense power of God. She teaches me to transform the humble into fertile ground for hope. Looking to her, I learn to live in love, to trust and hope, even when everything seems unfavorable.

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A day of catechesis and recreation in the Wichí community of Pichanal, Salta province, northern Argentina, on Sept. 19, 2024 (Courtesy of Elsa Porcario)

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Children's Day in the Wichí community of Pichanal, Salta province, northern Argentina, on Aug. 24, 2024 (Courtesy of Elsa Porcario)



Srs. Elsa Porcario, Cynthya Segundo, and Pamela Luna of the Fraternity of Servants of the Poor, during the feast of Our Lady of the Assumption, on Aug. 15, 2023, in the city of Yrigoyen, Salta, Argentina. (Courtesy of Elsa Porcario)

I remember one day in particular when I was working with the sisters on a project to celebrate Children's Day in the Wichí community where we were doing our pastoral service. The idea was to find a sponsor who could give a toy to each child, in addition to providing them with games and a snack. At that moment, I approached Mary in an image that accompanies us: a small Mary, made of clay, dark, with the features of the local women, with the little child in her arms and a tiny rosary in her little hands. "Our little Mother," molded by the hands of men deprived of their freedom, dreamed especially to be the patroness and companion of our small community. I contemplated her in her humility, and she reminded me to trust, believe and hope for the impossible. I was amazed as I saw how people began to arrive, each gesture of love and solidarity making the miracle possible: a sponsor, a toy, a friend, and more than 150 smiles illuminated that day. Since then, we are able to repeat this activity every year, and more people are encouraged to share.

Recovering hope in the seasons when I feel that I lack strength is essential to move forward. My heart is filled with confusion and impatience when God's times and rhythms do not coincide with my own. I wonder if my steps are what God really expects, and if this response hides the novelty that will make the difference. And then I return to Mary, the woman who, with her "yes," not only embraced a divine mission, but also accepted human frailty. She reminds me that love and faith will show me the way, and that God is not looking for perfection in me, but for a heart willing to be transformed.

Mary's example of living hope constantly challenges me as a consecrated woman. Despite the darkness, she trusted in God's promises and never doubted that God would keep his word. Holding in her heart every detail of what she experienced, she has become my teacher, showing me that everything, even the incomprehensible, is part of God's plan. Every experience in my life is like a piece of a puzzle that, in God's time, will find its place. Mary's hope enkindles mine. Her active waiting, full of faith and love, invites me to believe that it is worth hoping against all hope.

Along the way, I have learned that hope is not passive; it is active, like the confident leap of a child into its mother's arms. Mary lived that hope, and her example urges me to move forward, celebrating what is, and trusting in what is yet to come.

I invite you to look to Mary in your daily life, to let her accompany you in every challenge, and to walk by your side to teach you to trust. Like her, trust! Keep a grateful memory and believe that every story has a happy ending in God's hands. Mary reminds us in the midst of trials that love sustains hope, and that every action done in faith can become a sign of the reign of God.

This story was first published in Spanish on Jan. 1.