Blog
Spirituality



(GSR graphic/Olivia Bardo)



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Over the years, Global Sisters Report en español has clearly witnessed the deep imprint Pope Francis has left on Latin America's religious life. His pastoral choices, his way of living the Gospel from the margins, and his dream of a Church that is closer, more merciful, and deeply committed to the poor have inspired countless religious communities. Francis has also lifted the voices and lives of women who make the Kingdom present in their daily lives.

This blog seeks to gather those living echoes — the fertile seed Francis planted along the paths of religious life in Latin America.

In Latin America, a legacy of tenderness as prophetic resistance

In a continent scarred by violence, inequality, and neglect, many sisters have found in Francis' tenderness a powerful way to live out prophecy. His visit to victims of armed conflict in Colombia (2017), his advocacy for migrants during his visit to Ciudad Juárez, Mexico (2016), and his support for indigenous peoples in Ecuador (2015) — early in his pontificate — showed his tenderness, empathy, and nearness to those the world often casts aside.

Francis reclaimed compassion, mercy, and deep listening, appealing to a church that is close to those who suffer and is committed to transforming unjust realities. Speaking in simple, stirring words, he urged religious and the people of Latin America to not "let the heart fall sleep, anesthetize the soul" during the 26th World Day for Consecrated Life on February 2, 2024.

Francis, fidelity to the Gospel:

> "*Pope Francis renewed the call of the Lord Jesus — to make our very lives a clear sign of the Kingdom, to choose with our lives what led Jesus to the cross: forgiving, standing with the poor, and letting go of the comforts and privileges that come with 'putting on' a cassock or habit.*" — María de Jesús Bringas, Sister of Charity of the Incarnate Word, United States

Francis, word and action:

"*He was all action and teaching. Every word he spoke was accompanied by a concrete action and a smile. I remember his visit to a prison, where he washed the feet of inmates... and those surprise phone calls that revealed his closeness and affection.*" — Liliana Andrada, Franciscan Missionary Tertiary Sister, Argentina

Francis, joy filled with fragrance of the Gospel:

"*Pope Francis was a shepherd who carried the fragrance of the Gospel — not just the smell of the sheep. He was profoundly close, deeply fraternal, with that particular warmth that distinguishes us as Latin Americans — and us Argentinians — who are family minded, who love gathering around the table to share life, to meet, to listen, to know one another. Francis knew how to rejoice and share joy. He had a way of spreading humor and making us smile.*" — Maite Fernández, Sisters of St. Dorothy (CENMO), Argentina

Francis, humility and closeness:

"*What struck me was his choice of a simpler life. Even as pope, he admitted he was a sinner and asked for prayers. His interactions with children — joyful, playful — touched me deeply. I also admired how, every Holy Thursday, he sought out prisoners and women to wash their feet. His example taught me not to take things too seriously, to interact and find the divine outside traditional structures.*" — Ana González, Dominican Sister of Peace, United States

Francis, always "making a mess":

"*Pope Francis has been a guiding light in my religious life. His closeness strengthened my desire to proclaim the Kingdom of God. Through his shepherding, I learned that beyond any misunderstandings of my gestures*

of love, it is God alone who knows my heart. With his gestures and words, our Latin American Pontiff moved me to "make a mess," to step out of myself, and to recognize in my own humanity the radiant life of Jesus, the Incarnate God!" — Carolina Lizárraga, Missionary Servant of the Holy Spirit, Argentina

Francis leaves us a Church on the move: a house with open doors, where consecrated women, Indigenous peoples, migrants, prisoners, and the most vulnerable find a place and a voice.

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Sr. Jenny Casteñeda, of the Ayllu Guadalupac Misioneracuna Congregation of Otavalo, Ecuador, participates in a weaving activity at the Indigenous Consecrated Life Seminar in Quito, Ecuador, Sept. 27-29, 2024. (Helga Leija)

Francis leaves a synodal and feminine church

Francis opened synodal processes that allowed for greater participation of women, giving many sisters the chance to speak from their experience and be heard — though much still remains to be done.

From the start of his papacy, Francis committed to a Church that confronts pain face-to-face and risks everything for the most vulnerable. In 2019, by publicly acknowledging the sexual and power abuses committed against sisters within the Church, he opened safer spaces for reporting, encouraged investigations, and listened intently to survivors' testimonies — a deeply evangelical act for many religious women.

He also showed particular concern for LGBTQ persons, extending a clear message of dignity, inclusion, and respect. In his compassionate, pastoral style, he declared that in the Church, "everyone, everyone, everyone" belongs.

Francis, builder of a Samaritan church:

> "*He broke down the structures of a hierarchical Church, building instead a Church that is near, compassionate, hospitable, and committed to social causes. Bearing the name Francis, like the saint who dared to rebuild a crumbling Church, he too rebuilt our Church — making it more Samaritan.*" — Yolanda Olivera, Franciscan Missionary of the Mother of the Divine Shepherd, Peru

Francis, guardian of "do not be afraid":

> "*He left us the most important inheritance: trust in a God who is close and present. With Jesus, he keeps saying to us, 'Do not be afraid' (Mt 28:10). We want to safeguard this 'Do not be afraid' so we can form and educate. May we not be afraid to announce and denounce, to share and to love freely, to lead and to grow, that all women may be mothers and teachers in the great school of life and humanity.*" — Laura Torres, Oblate of Jesus the Priest, Mexico

Francis, a home with open doors:

> "*He dreamed of a house with open windows and doors — and when he arrived at this great house, he flung them open wide. And in they came: the poor, the sick, the imprisoned, the sinners, the children, the women, the foreigners, the people of other faiths... in short, all of us, because we are all among them.*" — María Baffundo, Daughter of Mary Help of Christians, Uruguay

Francis, harmony with Mother Earth:

> "*Pope Francis taught us to care for our common home, which shelters and protects us. As a consecrated Latin American woman with Q'eqchi' Maya identity, I can say he was a man in deep harmony with humanity and Mother Nature. He taught me to live my vocation with humility and closeness, from the core of who I am: a woman who is deeply spiritual, in love with her vocation, and eager to grow in wisdom each day.*" — Dora Estela Tupil, Slave of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Guatemala

Francis, a Church for "everyone, everyone, everyone":

> "*It was Thursday, September 26, 2019, when I met the joyful gaze of dear Pope Francis [with the sisters of Talitha Kum]. Every day since, I feel sent and blessed by his words: 'You have chosen to be on the front line. Therefore, the numerous Congregations that have worked and continue to work as the "avant-garde of the Church's missionary action against the scourge of human trafficking deserve gratitude. This is also a model of how to work together. It is an example for the whole Church, and also for us: men, priests, bishops…You are giving a great example — keep at it.' Thank you, Pope Francis.*" — Ana María Vilca, Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary, Peru



Sr. Ana Maria Vilca, of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary in Peru and coordinator of the Kawsay Peru Network, attends an audience with Pope Francis during the 1st General Assembly of Talitha Kum — the global network of consecrated life against human trafficking — on September 26, 2019. (Vatican News photo / Courtesy of Ana Maria Vilca)

In every corner of this mestizo and dreaming American continent, where hope bursts forth among open wounds and the Kingdom quietly takes root — religious life

remains a seed of transformation.

Francis leaves us a Church on the move: a house with open doors, where consecrated women, indigenous peoples, migrants, prisoners, and the most vulnerable find a place and a voice. Today, those footprints still trace paths of nearness, prophecy, and synodality.

Thank you, Pope Francis!

This story appears in the **The Legacy of Pope Francis** feature series. View the full series.