Columns
Religious Life



Nearly 200 sisters under 65 gathered at Fraterna Domus Sacrofano in Rome for Hope 2025, with over 100 more participating virtually despite time zone differences. (Courtesy of the Leadership Collaborative)



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Almost 200 religious sisters attended the in-person convocation of the Leadership Collaborative in Rome June 3-7, with hearts full of joy, seeking inspiration to connect, celebrate and lead as part of the Jubilee of Hope. Additionally, more than 100 sisters attended virtually despite time zone differences.

The gathering, called Hope 2025, began with a meaningful opening ritual, where sisters from across six continents, representing the remarkable diversity from north to south and east to west, came together to establish connections and create a bond of unity and hope.

The central theme was hope, and the gathering was carefully planned to facilitate connections from the moment attendees arrived at Fraterna Domus Sacrofano. As the sisters came together in conversation and reflection, they began to open up, risking their vulnerability by sharing the joys, sorrows and struggles of their religious life.

In a shared journey of lamentation and healing, they forged a unique bond of sisterhood, moving from personal healing to communal support and rejoicing in their unique call to consecrated religious life.

The gathering was filled with many moments of hope as participants voiced their longings for a leadership that is inclusive, participatory and rooted in Gospel values in a nonhierarchical way.

They envision a leadership that acknowledges it may not have all the answers, but is willing to open itself up to lead with vulnerability, gentleness, empathy, deep listening and collaboration. This is a dream for all of us who are in leadership and who want to transform the world.

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The closing took place on the solemnity of Pentecost. That day, the sisters wore their traditional cultural attire during the liturgy, creating a beautiful and unique display of colors and fabrics. Through their participation in various aspects of the liturgy — and the choir led by Sr. Lovina Pammit of the Franciscan Sisters of the Sacred Heart — the sisters brought an incredible richness of culture, traditions and congregational charisms, making the closing celebration a truly special moment for everyone.

As I reflected on the beauty of inculturation and the closing liturgy, one moment that will stay with me is when African sisters lined up in two rows, moving in rhythmic dance, ululating and singing "Alleluia," as the word of God was brought forward in procession. Though I've never been to Africa, that extraordinary moment reminded me of Pope Francis' visits to Kenya and Mozambique, where the word of God was brought forth to feed souls amid joyful singing and dancing.

The closing liturgy was a memorable moment that prepared us to return to our communities filled with the Spirit and the richness we experienced through inculturation.

As an associate who collaborates with religious sisters, this convocation filled me with tremendous hope. I recall the words of the prophet Isaiah, who spoke of God doing something new. I witnessed a process, similar to an orchestra, that built a crescendo of healing, connection, celebration and deep communion, which allowed the sisters to discover St. Augustine's wisdom — a "beauty so ancient and new" — through meaningful, deep listening to one another in a truly synodal way.

The beauty of connection and joy from sisters who crossed the walls of indifference, language and race to create bridges of vulnerability and build global sisterhood is an inspiration, not only for laypeople ministering among them, but for everyone who seeks inspiration.

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