Columns
Horizons
Religious Life



Sisters of the Good Shepherd from all provinces — Mid-North America, Central South and New York-Toronto — gather in St. Louis, Missouri, during their regional meeting in October 2024. (Courtesy of Monique Tarabeh)



by Monique Tarabeh

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October 24, 2025

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In our life as Sisters and Partners in Mission of the Good Shepherd in the United States and Toronto, one expression rises again and again in our hearts: "all of us." No longer can we think in categories of "mine" or "ours alone." We are being drawn into a shared journey that calls each of us to move beyond what is familiar and to discover a deeper communion born of the Spirit.

Across our communities, the word *restructuring* has taken root. At first, it might have sounded administrative or organizational, but for us, it has become something sacred. It is not only about reorganizing structures or leadership models. It is about listening to the Spirit's invitation to grow together, to belong to one another more deeply, and to create a living communion that reflects God's own heart.

As you read this article, our three provinces — Mid-North America, Central South, and New York-Toronto — have become one region. What was once three separate entities with unique histories and customs has become a single body, united not just by governance but by relationship and shared mission. This moment marks more than a milestone; it is a new chapter in our collective story. It is a spiritual threshold, a movement of grace calling us to trust that God is already at work in what is being born among us.

Change is never simple. It stirs excitement and hope, but also uncertainty, nostalgia and questions about identity. Yet, as we began to gather monthly from across different parts of the region, something beautiful began to happen. These meetings became spaces of encounter and grace. We shared prayer, reflection and honest conversation. We listened deeply to one another's experiences, stories and dreams. We discovered that we are not only learning about each other, but we are also learning from each other.

In these monthly gatherings, we experienced what it means to be a living communion. The Spirit was quietly weaving connections of trust and tenderness among us. What could have remained an abstract concept, "restructuring," was transformed into a relationship. Each encounter helped us to see more clearly that belonging is not just a feeling; it is a choice, a commitment to walk together, to care for one another, and to allow each person, sister or partner, to be seen and heard.

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The search for belonging has been the key to our coming together. As we shared who we are and what we carry — our joys, our struggles and our hopes — we discovered that unity does not mean uniformity. True communion honors differences and allows each one to flourish. As Pope Francis reminded us, the church is called to live synodal lives: walking together, listening deeply, and discerning what the Spirit is saying in our time. That is what we are living now, not as a theory, but as a daily practice.

St. John Eudes, our spiritual father, said, "The spirit of charity unites us so intimately that we have but one heart and one soul." His words describe the grace we are experiencing. Slowly, we are becoming one heart and one soul, not by erasing individuality but by celebrating it within a greater whole. Together, sisters and partners in mission are learning that we share one charism, one call, and one mission inspired by the Good Shepherd's compassion for the world.

Our regional journey has also reminded us that real communion requires courage. We are learning to speak with honesty and kindness, to name what is difficult, and to listen with reverence. Silence that hides truth is not peace, and truth spoken without love is not healing. Our gatherings invite us to hold both truth and love together, trusting that the Spirit works most powerfully in the spaces where we dare to be vulnerable.

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St. Mary Euphrasia, our foundress, continues to guide us with her wisdom: "Have great charity. Never hurt another. Let all your words be for the edification of others." We are learning that restructuring, at its heart, is an act of charity, one that asks us to build relationships rooted in compassion, humility and mutual respect. As sisters and partners in mission, we are discovering new ways of collaboration, co-responsibility and shared leadership that strengthen the life of our region and expand our mission of mercy and reconciliation.

Through this journey, we have discovered new joy. The more we open ourselves to one another, the more we see how the Spirit animates our diversity. Far from shrinking, our charism is expanding. New life is emerging in our ministries and communities as we support each other across distances and generations. Our shared meetings have created bonds that give strength to our mission.

Restructuring has also asked us to let go of old habits, long-standing customs, and familiar ways of doing things. Letting go is never easy, but it has become a sacred act of trust. It is a letting go not into emptiness, but into God. We remember St. Mary Euphrasia's words: "Go forward, always forward … God will do the rest." Her confidence echoes in our hearts as we continue to walk together in faith.

Today, as the Sisters and Partners in Mission of the Good Shepherd in the U.S. and Toronto, we are living a new story. We are discovering that belonging is the foundation of communion, and communion is the soul of mission. To belong is to say yes to God, to one another, and to the future God is shaping in us.

Restructuring has not diminished us; it has deepened us. It has called us to live the Gospel more authentically, to listen with greater tenderness, and to believe that something new is being born. We are learning that we are stronger, freer and more creative when we walk together.

May we be animated by one same spirit, which is the Spirit of Jesus our Good Shepherd living and reigning in us. With hearts full of hope, we step forward as one region, one body, and one mission, trusting that the God who has begun this good work among us will bring it to completion.