



March 16, 2023

## Pope Francis: Understands, Appreciates and Trusts Women Religious

~ by Sr. Bridgita Samba Mwavasi and Sr. Rosalia Sakayombo for Global Sisters Report

"What would the church be without religious sisters and consecrated laywomen?" These were the words of Pope Francis in a [video released](#) Feb. 1, 2022, to mark his prayer intention for the month to be for consecrated women.



Pope Francis greets Claretian Missionary Sr. Jolanta Kafka, President of the International Union of Superiors General in May 2022 at the Vatican.

Pope Francis insisted in the video that "the church cannot be understood without them" — religious women and consecrated laywomen! Again, Pope Francis encouraged women religious to fight when they are treated unfairly, even within the church. This is a bold move from the pope of a church whose culture over the centuries has ensured women maintained a low profile with regard to crucial decision-making.

The church leadership structure has had little room for women's

involvement in important decision-making processes. The clergy have authority on matters spiritual, dogmatic and theological, and they administer all church goods, spiritual and secular. This has led to criticism that the church is too clerical. In some parts of the world, many parish councils that play an advisory role to the clergy have few, or no, women.

Yet the role of women religious cannot be overemphasized: They play a significant role in many aspects of church life. They act as spiritual leaders and guides, as educators, as key people for medical and social life issues as well as in catechesis of the young and old alike. Women religious journey with some of the most vulnerable groups of society. Institutions owned and run by institutes of women religious are grounds for imparting the Gospel and societal values and spaces for evangelization.

Despite this contribution to the church and society, women religious have continuously been overlooked in key decision-making processes and have had to keep a low profile while unpretentiously, yet joyfully, living their vocation among God's people.



As we mark the 10th anniversary of Francis' papacy, the church also celebrates a completely new perspective of women religious as demonstrated by this pope. Francis has consistently insisted that women religious keep their gaze on their mission, which is to selflessly serve humanity without being reduced to [servitude](#). According to Pope Francis, women religious should not be cheap labor for the church. To read the entire account, please click [here](#)

In the 10 years of his service as the vicar of Christ, Francis has taken every opportunity to openly show his appreciation and affection for women religious and their role in their communities, within the church and in society. He has opened a number of doors for the participation of women religious in church affairs. His faith in women religious can be seen in the [various appointments](#), often for the first time, of sisters to critical church positions and high-ranking Vatican offices. Trusting women religious with such critical and sensitive church offices is a sign that he is charting the path for inclusion and loudly stating that the church can no longer ignore the unique contribution of women religious to the life of the church and society.

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## Embodying the Essence of Shared Vocational Life

*~ by Carol Zinn, SSJ, for Global Sisters Report*

As women religious in the [Leadership Conference of Women Religious](#), we see in Pope Francis the essence of our shared vocational life: the critical place that prayer, community, service, fidelity, hope, passion and love hold in this life.

But it is his commitment to his religious vocation that captures our minds and hearts. It is palpably clear that Pope Francis seeks a "lifelong, undistracted, single-focused God-quest," the words Sr. Sandra Schneiders, a member of the [Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary](#) of Monroe, Michigan, uses to describe consecrated religious life. We see in him the depth of prayer; the evidence of the daily practice of discernment; the presence of the joy of a vowed life of poverty, consecrated chastity and obedience; the fullness of a life lived in community in which the common good takes precedence; and the interior freedom of one whose life is in God's hands and for God's purpose. We, the LCWR women religious, see in Pope Francis the embodiment of the psalmist's prayer that one's whole life is a journey to the heart of God now and for all eternity. To read the entire article, please click [here](#)

# A Most Fitting Tribute



As Catholic Sisters Week comes to a close, Cabrini of Westchester would like to honor our sponsors, the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. We also give special recognition to the 47 religious sisters who currently live at St. Cabrini Nursing Home as residents.

Fr. Ron Galt, Pastoral Care Director, explained, “During Catholic Sisters Week that took place from March 8-14, we had the opportunity to recognize and celebrate the vocation and ministry of all of our sisters here at Cabrini. A number of them in fact shared some of their stories with us during the daily Mass in the Chapel.”

One of the religious sisters who shared her story was Sr. Mary Frances Mills, OSF, who is a member of the Sisters of St. Francis of the Neumann Communities. Sr. Mary Frances said, “It seems like yesterday that I entered the convent and God blessed me with a full life, one that continues to let me serve our Lord. I retired from active ministry at the age of 81 and since then, my ministry is prayer. I pray every day for all of you and all the world. Being a sister for 66 years means being God’s instrument – it means both giving and receiving God’s love and blessing and I have been very blessed.”



Sr. Mary Frances Mills, OSF, shared her story of vocational call.

Fr. Ron concludes: “We are truly grateful and blessed to have so many Catholic sisters who are residents here at Cabrini. They bring so many gifts by their presence, faith and love of their vocation and we ask God to continue to guide, bless and be with each of them. Thank you, sisters, for inspiring us and for sharing your faith and love of God.” ~ submitted by Susan Herceg, Cabrini of Westchester

# “Voces de Mujeres”

## A Welcome Support for Women



“Voces de Mujeres” has proven to be a welcome support group sponsored by Cabrini Immigrant Services, NYC.

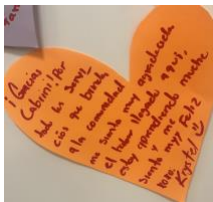
In November 2022 Cabrini Immigrant Services of NYC started the latest cycle of our support group for women, "Voces de Mujeres." While the group was supposed to end this month, we decided to extend the group due to its popularity and the meaningful relationships the women have developed. This virtual support group has provided a safe space for women to share, to heal, and to learn about themselves and other women’s struggles.

Some of the topics that women have requested are: grieving (honoring our dead), self-compassion, forgiveness, domestic violence, self-care, romantic relationships, women’s role in society, depression, and self-esteem.



Many group participants and their families gathered at the CIS-NYC

Yeniset, who has participated in the group said, “To listen to the other women helped me learn a lot through their experiences and to realize that we all go through difficult situations and that we are not alone.” This cycle nearly 80 women have participated in the group and benefitted from the support provided by their peers over the course of 12 sessions.



The heart message: Thank you, Cabrini for all the services you have provided to the community. I have learned a lot and am very happy.

~ submitted by Ella Nimmo, CIS-NYC

SAVE  
*the* DATE

CABRINI OF WESTCHESTER

*presents*

AN EVENING

*Under the Stars*

50<sup>th</sup> Gala

ANNIVERSARY

*Honoring*

HIS EMINENCE TIMOTHY CARDINAL DOLAN  
MICHAEL P. HOFFMAN  
SR. ARLENE VAN DUSEN, MSC  
SR. CATHERINE GARRY, MSC

**Thursday**

**May 25, 2023**

Abigail Kirsch at Tappan Hill Mansion  
Tarrytown, New York

6 pm - Cocktail Reception  
7 pm - Dinner



*Each week, as we journey through Lent, one of the Cabrini Lay Missionaries (CLM) will offer a reflection. For the Fourth Sunday in Lent, the reflection is given by former Cabrini Mission Corps missionary and CLM Marianne McGowan*

### Fourth Sunday in Lent

March 19, 2023

Today, we the faithful are encouraged to reflect on two intersecting realities, the Gospel of the Prodigal Son and the Feast of Saint Joseph, March 19<sup>th</sup>. If we listen carefully to the reading of this Gospel, we witness the word forgiveness lived out in the patient and abundant love of a father waiting for the return of his wayward son. We imagine this father, just a simple dad, opening his arms wide in the welcoming back of his son. Could this Gospel be teaching us that what we do, our behavior, is more important than what we say?

We also see this welcoming in Joseph, a simple dad as well, who encouraged his son Jesus to stand beside him and work with him. Joseph who gently taught his son how to handle carpenter tools. "Watch me," he might have said to Jesus. And so today we honor this Joseph as patron of fathers and laborers.



This week might be a good time for each of us to find specific ways in which our actions will be more meaningful than any words we speak. ~ Marianne McGowan, CLM

### **Cabrini Health Shares a Reflection for the Fourth Sunday in Lent**

**March 19, 2023**



#### **The Lord is my shepherd, there is nothing I shall want - Psalm 22**

This beautiful comforting psalm brings us to the middle of our Lenten journey and reflects on the journey of a life well lived. A life journey that is grounded in a deeply spiritual belief of a greater being or a guiding light. How are you travelling this Lent? Are you discovering your inner self, your spiritual centre? Each Lent we embark on a

unique journey that helps us grow in new and different ways. St. Frances Cabrini had a strong unwavering spiritual light that guided her through her whole life:

**"Knowing we are in God's hands, enclosed in the Heart of Jesus, renders us secure and serene in every event."** - St. Frances Cabrini

# Prayer Requests

## ***Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus***

As the meeting of the Missionary Sisters draws to a close today, we give thanks for the graces given during this past week and pray that everyone returns home safely to continue the work of the Lord.

## ***Anthony Russo***

Cabrini University staff member, Rosemary Gehrlein, asks for prayers for her brother Anthony (Cabrini College '75) as he faces major surgery. Please pray that the operation is successful, and his recovery is swift and without complications.

# With a Grateful Heart

## ***For Favors Granted***

A member of the Cabrinian community gives thanks for the prayers offered on his behalf. He asks continuing prayers for the favorable outcome of further medical tests.

