Blog
Religious Life



Sr. Elizabeth Niamat (second row, third from right) on May 31, 2024, in Rome. (Courtesy Elizabeth Niamat)



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In Muslim-majority Pakistan, Catholic sisters are using music, prayer and digital platforms to honor the late Pope Francis, whose legacy touched the country's small and often marginalized Christian community.

As tens of thousands gathered in St. Peter's Square on April 26 for the pontiff's funeral, Sr. Elizabeth Niamat of the Daughters of the Cross recorded a heartfelt "Farewell" song in a studio run by Good News Catholic TV in Karachi. The lyrics and melody were her own.

"During my 12-day retreat, I first recorded it on my iPhone and shared it on social media," said Niamat, who also serves as principal of St. Joseph's College for Women. "Later, I was invited to record it professionally."

Her tribute quickly gained traction across platforms like TikTok, YouTube and Facebook, with thousands of views.



Franciscan Sisters of the Heart of Jesus pay tribute to Pope Francis on April 24 at Nazareth House, Gulshan-Iqbal, Karachi, Pakistan. (Courtesy of Asif Nazir)

Niamat, who shares a Dec. 17 birthday with Francis, also used artificial intelligence tools to produce another song in tribute.

She fondly recalled meeting Francis in both 2014 and 2024.

"His vision was unique," Niamat said. "The Jubilee Year of Hope touches everyone — from workers and the sick to artists and digital missionaries. Who thinks like that? Francis cared deeply for the poor and marginalized. Amid global conflict, I pray the next pope continues his legacy."

In Lahore, Sr. Genevieve Ram Lal of the Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary — who serves as national director of the Catholic Women's Organization — posted a video reflection in Urdu, the national language, to reach both Christian and Muslim viewers.

Her tribute described Francis as "not just a name, but a movement."

"He dreamed of a just and peaceful world, called for equal rights for women and children, and modeled servant leadership," said Ram Lal. "His was a love-centered community, not law-centered. His efforts are not wasted."

In cities across Pakistan, women religious from congregations such as the Franciscan Sisters of the Heart of Jesus and the Daughters of the Heart of Mary continue holding rosaries, memorial sessions and prayer services for the late pontiff.

UISG plenary assembly opens May 5

Nearly 900 superiors of women's congregations will spend this week in Rome, not to mourn the death of Francis or to observe the start of the papal conclave, but to attend the long-planned plenary assembly of the International Union of Superiors General, or UISG.

Organizers said it is particularly apt that as the world mourns Francis, they will be reflecting on consecrated life as a transforming presence in the world.

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"In this Jubilee Year, the plenary is a unique time of listening, communion and renewal," said UISG president Sr. Mary Barron, a Sister of Our Lady of Apostles, in a statement. "It is a time to walk together as consecrated women in service to the Church and the world."

The participants are from 75 different countries, including for the first time a large number from Indonesia. The plenary will focus on synodality — making the church less clerical and more participatory.

Congregations lament US policies in open letter

The congregations of women religious in Region 3 of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious collaborated on an open letter published in the Philadelphia Inquirer April 27, calling on their "dear neighbors" to share their vision of a "future full of hope" and decry efforts to diminish our shared humanity.

"Even if we do not know each other personally, we feel compelled to reach out to you today to express our heartfelt sadness, grief, and lament as we witness sudden and devastating changes severely impacting people in our communities — people we know, love, and who are our neighbors," the letter said.

"Many actions we observe in our nation today seem to contradict values that underlie our shared humanity, values which we have nurtured and endeavored to embody in our actions — although not always successfully — over our lifetimes as Catholic Sisters. Love, compassion, empathy, radical hospitality, and mercy are central to our lives. These values shared among all the world religions make us genuinely human."

The letter said the sisters believe all life is sacred, the needs of the poor should be our priority, there is dignity in all work, we must protect our Earth, and justice is the way to lasting peace. "Only when 'We the people' lead with compassion and empathy will a future filled with hope for all generations be possible."

The letter was signed by 20 congregations and the U.S. Federation of the Sisters of St. Joseph.



The Loretto Community and the Dominican Sisters of Peace teamed up to place two billboards in Springfield, Kentucky, standing with those at the margins. (Courtesy of Loretto Community)

Sisters stand with marginalized via billboard

The Loretto Community and the Dominican Sisters of Peace teamed up to place two billboards in Springfield, Kentucky, standing with those at the margins.

The billboards feature a photo of the Statue of Liberty, and the simple question, "When did we see you hungry, homeless, ill, persecuted?"

The sisters hope the billboards will persuade people to stand in solidarity with those affected by unjust immigration policies, job loss and systemic discrimination, and to urge Congress to enact comprehensive reforms.

The billboard placement is being marked by a community gathering May 6 at one of the signs to join the sisters of central Kentucky in raising awareness of the issues, as well as challenge people of conscience to commit to the efforts.

Sisters of Charity Federation Board appoints new executive director

After a four-month discernment process, the Sisters of Charity Federation Board has announced the appointment of Maureen Reiser as the fourth executive director of the federation.

Reiser has a longstanding relationship with the federation, including membership on the 2026 Assembly of the Whole Planning Committee coordinating the 250th virtual celebration of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton's birthday.

Reiser will work at first alongside outgoing executive director Sr. Grace Hartzog before assuming full-time responsibilities.

"With deep gratitude, we thank Sr. Grace Hartzog for her faithful and dedicated service as executive director over the past seven years," wrote board president Sr. Donna Dodge in the announcement. "Grace has led the federation with enthusiasm, clarity, and professionalism, always embracing the charism and creating space for diverse voices and ideas. Her presence and leadership will be greatly missed, and we know the feeling is mutual."