Voices of Sisters
Horizons
Spirituality



Pope Leo XIV blesses the faithful after celebrating Mass on the feast of Mary, Mother of God, and World Peace Day in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican Jan. 1, 2026. (CNS/Lola Gomez)



by Sr. Colleen Gibson

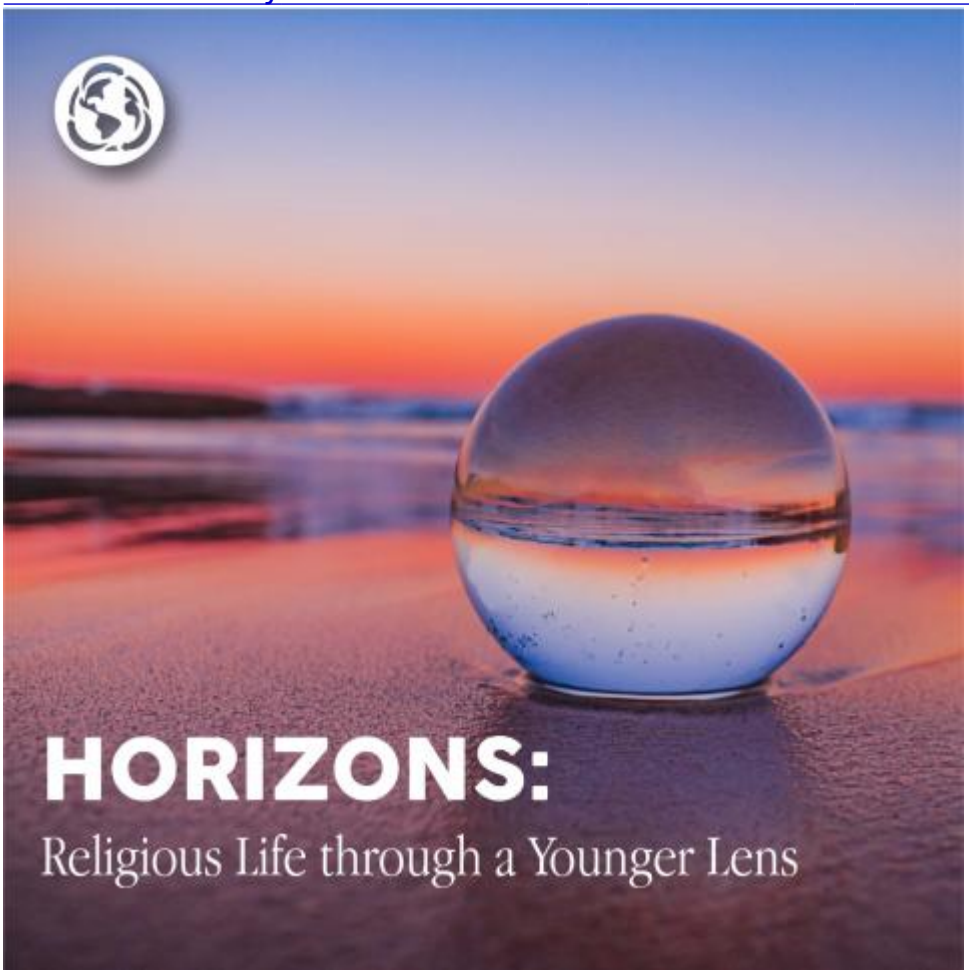
Columnist

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A few weeks ago, I found myself in a local coffee shop with a woman I had never met before. She was interested in religious life, and through a mutual friend, I had been deemed a fitting conversation partner.

Looking at her across the table, I wondered what, if anything, might come of our conversation. She was about my age, late in her 30s and pondering if and to what God might be calling her. Gripping my mug of tea, I listened attentively as she told me about the sisters she had met in her discernment journey thus far.

She had met with several women religious already, and our friend thought I might be able to offer a friendly ear free of the pressures of a more formal conversation.

As I listened, the voice of one of my own sisters reverberated in my mind from a candid conversation we'd had a few days earlier. "Be honest. Do you think anyone else will come to our congregation?" she asked with a frankness I had come to appreciate when we first lived together over a decade ago.

"I do." I told her just as frankly. "The question, though, is whether we can provide a community that can sustain her. If her spirit will be steadfast enough to follow her call."

Just that morning I had prayed the words of Psalm 51: *Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew in me a steadfast spirit.*

In an age of utter upheaval, with militarized presence on city streets and dehumanizing public policy, the petition for a clean heart and renewed spirit feels like a plea we could all make:

> Help us God, to see as you see; to have hearts so pure that we see the face of God amid the chaos; to sustain the spirit of right judgment and embodied compassion you have placed within us.

At the very least, as we steady ourselves and try to catch our proverbial breath, we might utter a prayer so simple and yet so profound that it fits in one desperate exhale: "*Kyrie eleison — Lord, have mercy*."

These it would seem are the only words that can meet this moment. A steadfast spirit, the only hope-filled way to greet the new day.



Federal agents stand guard after deploying tear gas as community members protest in Minneapolis Jan. 15, 2026, during ongoing demonstrations against U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. (OSV News/Reuters/Ryan Murphy)

As Pope Leo exhorted in his World Day of Peace message on Jan. 1, "Peace exists; it wants to dwell within us." This peace is the steadfast spirit God longs to renew in us. It is the foundation on which we build our lives — the Gospel truth we seek to live out.

"It has the gentle power to enlighten and expand our understanding; it resists and overcomes violence." Pope Leo continued. This peace, the peace of Christ that is renewed in us every time we celebrate in community, is not passive. It does not roll over in the face of injustice, nor does it seek simplistic mediation in place of authentic reconciliation. It is steadfast in the sense that it calls us to remain at the table, to listen deeply to God's call and to act.

"Peace is a breath of the eternal" Pope Leo concluded, "while to evil we cry out 'Enough,' to peace we whisper 'Forever.' "

Forever. That is God's promise to us and our enduring commitment to God. By virtue of our faith, we remain, grasping onto well-worn hope and renewing our spirits in the steadfast covenant of God.

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"People keep telling me I'll *just know* if I'm called. What is that supposed to mean?!" my new conversation partner demurred as I refocused on the conversation at hand.

"One sister told me that if I was called, I had to follow. But what the heck is a call supposed to feel like?" she queried, her bright eyes searching my face for an answer as if like a map I might point the way. "If it was that easy … if I knew I was called … of course I'd follow."

Deep within, I felt her grappling stir something in my being. "You know what?" I began as I watched her lean in to listen more closely. "I don't know if a call is always that clear. In fact, I know it isn't. But I also know that, sometimes, a call feels like a low hum, like a constancy that you can't ignore. It just keeps at it."

I watched as her eyes expanded and she leaned back in her chair, a faint smile on her face.

Within me, I felt the slow burn of my own call fan up into flame.

This, I thought to myself, *is what a steadfast spirit feels like*. This buzzing within you that won't be ignored, the reverberation that soothes your soul, the persistent hum that is buried in your bones. This is the hum of true humility — of being grounded in who you are and who you're meant to be. This is the resting purr of a heart set to its proper frequency.

In a world where most everything feels off kilter, that purr persists. It presses each of us onward.

> And so, together, we must remind each other of our call. We must let the fire within us burn in the words we speak, the prayers we hold, the love we

share, and the things we cannot let go unspoken.

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We may have to listen harder for it these days. As the din of daily living grows tiresome, we may have to press our hearts and minds to feel that small but sure hum. It is there, as surely as we are here.

And so, together, we must remind each other of our call. We must let the fire within us burn in the words we speak, the prayers we hold, the love we share, and the things we cannot let go unspoken.

This is what our steadfast spirits demand of us, what the steadfast Spirit of God requires of us: that we surrender ourselves, not in defeat but in the assurance that the atrocities of our day are no match for the call that hums within us. We must rise to the standard of the new life we have been given in Christ. And with renewed spirits, steadfast in love, we must harness the hum within our souls to be and become who God has made us to be.