News
Religious Life



Dora D'Rozario, coordinator of the Order of Consecrated Virgins in Bangladesh, shows her Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice Award from Pope Leo XIV in January. (Stephan Uttom Rozario)



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On Jan. 24, the Catholic Church in Bangladesh celebrated a special Mass for Dora D'Rozario, coordinator of the Order of Consecrated Virgins in Bangladesh, after she received the Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice Award.

The Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice Award is a prestigious medal awarded by the Catholic Church to laypeople, clergy, or members of religious orders who dedicate their lives to advancing the mission of the church. Pope Leo XIII instituted the award in July 1888, and it later became a permanent papal distinction in October 1898.

D'Rozario, 78, made her vow of perpetual virginity in 1985 while studying in Rome. Later, she returned to Bangladesh in 1990 and professed her vows before the archbishop of Dhaka.

She and the Order of Consecrated Virgins in Bangladesh, also known as the Friends of the Word Association, conduct retreats at Bethany Ashram, where various religious congregations and laypeople come to practice their spirituality. Bethany Ashram was built on D'Rozario's ancestral land with support from the association's family members and various institutions.

"We also travel to different areas of the country to conduct retreats and spiritual practices for Catholics, prepare prayer books and translate the Bible into local languages," D'Rozario told Global Sisters Report.

In Bangladesh, many congregations of women religious come to Bethany Ashram to participate in retreats and share their lives and stories. In addition, priests prepare for their ordination by participating in solitary meditation, prayer or worship while there.

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"Since 1990, our association has been conducting youth and spiritual seminars, solitary meditation, and spiritual care in various ways," Rozario said.

The association currently has 10 members. However, five have died since it began, and it is currently trying to increase membership.

D'Rozario explained that many do not want to join because it is a "challenging path."

She supports herself with her own money and is never guaranteed a place to stay in the future. "I believe that it is not possible to survive without a strong prayer and spiritual life," she added.

On Jan. 24, Auxiliary Bishop Subroto Gomes of Dhaka said, "Those who have been honored by Pope Leo XIV, including Dora D'Rozario, are our pride. We thank and express our gratitude to God and Pope Leo."

D'Rozario was happy when she heard the good news from the church authorities.

"A song started playing in my mind, 'Freely, freely you have received; freely, freely give.' And I remembered that Jesus told Peter that those who give everything in the name of God will receive everything in full."

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