Voices of Sisters
Religious Life



The Presentation Sisters of Africa Province arrive as the Malawi Presentation Sisters welcome them, in the Dedza Diocese in Malawi, August 2025. (Courtesy of Sr. Sandra Ndingwa)

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May 13, 2026
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"*Our loyalties must transcend our race, our tribe, our class, and our nation; and this means we must develop a world perspective.*"
—Martin Luther King Jr.

As Christians, our God-given task in this world is to grow towards greater unity and oneness. "May all be one" was the prayer of Jesus. In the past, we Presentation Sisters of different congregations had separately been committed to this mission and vision of Jesus. But in recent times we have found it necessary to seek greater collaboration and to work alongside other congregations and network with other organizations, embracing the African principle of Ubuntu: "I am because we are."

Most recently, three congregations of Presentation sisters witnessed the sprouting of a seed of collaboration in a joint gathering in the Diocese of Dedza, Malawi, in August 2025. We learned that the seed of this relationship was sown in the year 2000 at an Association of Consecrated Women in Eastern and Central Africa (ACWECA) meeting when Sr. Joyce Meyer, a sister of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, from South Dakota, founded by Venerable Nano Nagle in 1775 in Ireland, met Sr. Agatha Ziyaye, from the newly established Congregation of Presentation of the Virgin Mary Sisters of Dedza Diocese. A gentle tug of curiosity was aroused in these two around the shared title of their congregations.

It was a "Visitation" moment: an older woman representing an older congregation meeting with a younger woman belonging to a very new congregation. The seed that was planted began germinating and sprouting quietly in unknown ways through many other such encounters between Union Presentation Sisters of the Zambia/Zimbabwe unit and the Malawi Presentation Sisters.

In 2015, at an All-Africa Conference of "Sister to Sister," this bond was deepened by the call to religious women to nurture and support one another. It was a moment when religious women recognized that what unites is greater than what separates. Whether in Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi or the United States, the mission is the same: to be women of God, of compassion, and of hope in a divided world. Our unity and belonging are not defined by national geography or other affiliations. We are responding to life's call "to extend the circle of 'us' to include as much of the world as we possibly can."

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Our Africa Presentation unit decided to take a step in deep faith and courage to reach out to the Malawi Presentation Sisters and suggest a gathering to begin exploring our unity of spirit. The sisters were thrilled and excited to invite us to Malawi. Our entire province, all 28 of us, wanted to be part of this venture that would start with a retreat at Lake Malawi at the Chitsulo Conference Center. We had no idea what to expect.

The adventure began. Our groups crossed three borders, Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malawi, and faced many hassles along the way, including vehicle breakdowns, delays at borders, diesel shortage and fatigue. It was unknown territory, where no maps could guide us as such systems did not work in the rural parts of the Dedza Diocese. None of it mattered. We joyfully embraced these adventures with songs, laughter and stories as only our younger African sisters could do it. It took us a full day and night by road to arrive in the Dedza Diocese in the dark hours of the morning.

Hungry, thirsty and cold, we arrived at Chitsulo for the retreat. We were welcomed with hospitality and care, first of all from Bishop Peter Chifukwa, the bishop of Dedza. Even though the bishop had just arrived back into the country from his visit to Rome, he insisted on going out in the middle of the night as far as Salima town to meet our sisters who arrived late due to a breakdown of their vehicle on the way. He had already gone to the airport to meet our sisters who had arrived there. We often asked ourselves, "What had prompted this daring deed?"



Sr. Sandra Ndingwa, right, unit leader of the Presentation Sisters of Africa Province, greets Sr. Luiza Dzikolidaya, center, cofounding member of the Presentation Sisters of the Virgin Mary of Dedza Diocese, as another sister takes a picture. (Courtesy of Sr. Sandra Ndingwa)

We made a six-day, peaceful and restful retreat beside the beautiful Lake Malawi, our souls coming alive at the sight of the graceful seagulls and the calmness of the lake.

All these experiences added to our joy and made our trip to Malawi worth all the efforts. But we knew deep in our hearts the reason that brought us to Malawi was not any of these. The primary reason was our sisters, particularly our younger

sisters, sharing a similar congregational name and charism with sisters in Malawi. Refreshed and filled by the Spirit, we went like Mary, Jesus' mother, far into the hilly country side of Dedza to Presentation Convent.

The sisters greeted us with overwhelming joy, escorting us into a decorated quadrangle amid songs and dance, joy and excitement … truly it was Mary shouting out her song of Magnificat.

After a traditional African welcome cup of tea and snack, we gathered together and listened to the beautiful and moving stories of our congregations' charisms and beginnings, shared in songs and drama.

For the few hours we spent together, the three congregations experienced indescribable bonds, our hearts filled with gratitude to those early seeds planted so many years before.

How the future will unfold is not ours to ask or see. We have sown seeds that one day will take root and bear fruit in the same mysterious way that it all began. We can all take pride that we have answered the call of the time. Shared hopes and dreams were fulfilled, hearts overflowing with love and gratitude at the gift of companionship offered and received. They echoed the words Presentation Sisters use frequently: "Together we must imagine creatively, speak courageously and love inclusively as we accept our part in cocreating a more just and peaceful world."

And as always, the dream of Nano Nagle, our foundress, urged us one step beyond during the 250th anniversary of our foundation in Ireland in 2025: "There is no greater happiness in the world than to be in union."

A version of this column previously ran in the October 2025 issue of Presentation Sisters eNews.