Voices of Sisters
Religious Life



Sisters wrap the LCWR assembly with a fiesta Aug. 14, 2026. (GSR photo/Dan Stockman)



by Sr. Elia Cárdenas

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It is a blessing to our lives to be part of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious assembly, where different amazing leaders in consecrated life gather to celebrate the diversity of congregational charisms and to continue building relationships. As relational people, it is a joy to say hello to those we already know, and getting to know new leaders fills our hearts with excitement and energy. I can hardly describe the experience of putting a face to someone you have been dealing with through online meetings, emails or texts.

It is the culture of encounter present in those moments that allows us to create and continue building connections in our lives and ministries. What an amazing experience that fills our spirit with renewed energy in our call, for all of us who were present, enjoying this gathering with its meaningful messages, presentations, reflection time and moments of prayer. This was something encouraging for religious life and its service to the mission of the church.

As the Leadership Collaborative team, we had the opportunity to meet in person and say hello to Xavière Missionary Sr. Nathalie Becquart and School Sisters of Notre Dame Sr. Roxanne Schares, the executive secretary of the International Union of Superiors General, among many other amazing leaders and partners in mission.

The LCWR conference is also a wonderful opportunity to have small side events.

Leadership Collaborative had one as well, named "Sweet Conversations and Courageous Leadership" with past LCWR presidents. Dominican Sr. Rebecca Ann Gemma gave us a remarkable three-point essential insight of "Passion, Capacity and Availability" for all the leaders in religious life, stating that we are all important and that religious women who came before our time had no manuals, but they were great supporters to one another. Her mentors were people she could look up to, and she said, "I want to be like her."

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Gemma has surely impacted the lives of many, mine included. During her LCWR presidential address in 2023, I heard her invitation to "not fear to hope," which opened a new insight for me, and that's why I feel compelled to share some of her

remarkable insights for leaders.

Passion, as a gift of being called by God, and how our lives are a quest for God in every moment. Passion, because we are not only going to serve, but we will also meet new leaders and begin new friendships. Passion that will allow us to go to bed at night and be OK even with those situations or things that were difficult.

Capacity, in the broader sense that it is not just what we learn from books, self-help groups or webinars. Capacity, in learning not only who we are, but who is the sister in front of us, those we are in collaboration with — and who may perhaps also have had a very bad day but you need to be in communion with them. Capacity is not denying that we do have to do administrative work; to admit that maybe we do not have the energy or we do not know everything, but it is about broadening that support that brings us into a sense of fullness, recognizing that sometimes we do need to risk moving out of our comfort zone.

Availability to clear our hearts for the moments we did not expect, for the sister who needs loving attention, to say yes to others and include them in our lives. Availability, in which generosity does not turn into resentment but is a matter of free will. To read the room and be able to hear whose voices have not been included, that the tension is real but that the Spirit is alive, but maybe not in words yet.

Gemma's final words of wisdom and encouragement to us gathered for the Sweet Conversations were: "Leadership is wherever you find yourself, and it leads to a relationship with God."

She encouraged us to bring our uniqueness, with all the gifts and graces that were bestowed upon us, not only to serve others but also to build friendships and to show up every day.

The LCWR conference is a blessing and a gift to religious life and a great opportunity to greet those incredible religious leaders and say, "I want to be like them."

Who is the leader who brought that thought to you?

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