

# UNIDAS EN CRISTO

NEWSLETTER Vol. 2



Summer 2024



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Sister Alejandra Austria García, EIN and Sister Ignacia García Ramos, MHNSRF

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## Weaving Networks

By Sister Midory Wu, CDP

Our mission to weave networks to support, accompany and empower Latina Sisters in their ministry and service for consecrated life, for the Church and society in the United States, led us to create a campaign of phone interviews and community visits. This campaign involved not only the AHLMA staff but also the sisters of the AHLMA Board of Directors.

The organization of this campaign involved developing interview questions, determining informational materials, outlining regions of the visit, and creating a symbol or gift for the sisters who were visited.

So far, we have been able to interview more than 50% of the AHLMA member communities through a sister who represents them. The feedback from interviews with the sisters have been very positive and at the same time challenging. The sisters have expressed feeling welcomed and

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accompanied by the association. They have found spaces to meet and connect with other Latina sisters. They have also found information and opportunities for formation and education that enrich their consecrated and ministerial life. The sisters not only identify with one another culturally but also in their service to those most in need, especially the immigrant community. The sisters also spoke about the challenge of embracing American culture, language, values, knowledge of civil laws and religious customs. It is also a challenge making connections with other organizations for religious life and ministry. Teamwork with pastors and parish staff has been an area of growth.

For the community visits, we thought it would be nice to give the sisters a symbol or gift. We started looking for everything from stickers, to key chains, to thermoses, to a miniature loom. Finally, we saw the beauty of the Peruvian hand-woven fabric. We were convinced to buy the fabric from a company that pays artisans fairly for their work. From there, we searched for a person to help us embroider the AHLMA logo and our campaign slogan "Weaving Networks". We identified a Latina woman, Martha Mendoza Sifuentes, who is striving to start her own business. The embroidery has been a beautiful labor of art and has been greatly appreciated in our campaign.

Through our campaign we have witnessed AHLMA members weaving networks beyond the association, their parish, and society by living and sharing the mission of Jesus.

In this Newsletter, we want to share the beauty of the sisters' stories and their association with AHLMA. Each sister, each community, each culture, has a different color and style, which, when linked together, form a beautiful tapestry full of stories, smiles, tears, hopes and challenges. Let us celebrate this tapestry of the Latina face of Religious Life that we are weaving together.

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## Led by the Holy Spirit

By Sister Eugenia Mayela Ortega, HCJS

I have participated in four of AHLMA's national *Encuentros* (gatherings), the first two when AHLMA was in its beginning years. Over time, I have seen how the Holy Spirit has led this initiative to support the unfolding and growth of Hispanic consecrated life in this country. Before this, we were dispersed, we had no idea how many Hispanic sisters there were in the country, sometimes not even at the diocesan level. Many of us in our countries of origin have had the experience of this type of *Encuentros* through the Conferences of Religious and here we were lacking that. For this reason, I consider it a blessing that AHLMA is now established as a non-profit organization for the service and support of Hispanic consecrated life. In the *Encuentros* that I participated in, I was able to witness the joyful presence of the sisters with the richness of their gifts and diversity of charisms. The valuable contributions of each one and the search for new pathways have contributed to make visible our presence of Hispanic consecrated life united in mission.



*Sister Eugenia in the Basilica of Saint Peter in Rome, Italy.*

*Sister Eugenia Mayela is a member of the Sisters of the Sacramental Heart of Jesus. She is of Mexican origin. She has been serving in the United States for 28 years and currently resides in North Augusta, South Carolina.*



## MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**“Join me as we celebrate our sisters in this issue.”**

Dear Sisters,

A friendly hello and prayers on this special occasion of our second publication of our annual newsletter. I am honored to serve as Executive Director of the *Asociación de Hermanas Latinas Misioneras en América* (AHLMA) [the Association of Latin American Missionary Sisters]. The Association is a network of consecrated women, sent to journey, accompany, and encourage the People of God, especially the Hispanic community, the most vulnerable, and the poor.

Join me as we celebrate our sisters in this issue. We are proud to highlight their commitment and all the good works they have accomplished for the communities they serve and spread their joy in responding to their vocational call. We have gathered stories from the sisters who share both positive and challenging experiences. At the same time expressing the warmth and connection with other Latina sisters who share a common mission of solidarity, joy, and hope.

We have also been honored to participate in events to expand the message of

AHLMA with our sisters and brothers across this continent. It was a joy to participate in the IV Congress of the Latin American and Caribbean Confederation of Religious (CLAR by its Spanish acronym), entitled “Religious Life Artisan of Care” that took place in Bogotá, Colombia on November 24-26, 2023. AHLMA was blessed to be among 500 participants that came from all the Americas in person and more than 3000 by virtual presence.

AHLMA was also blessed to be present at the LIX National Assembly of the Conference of Major Superiors of Religious of Mexico (CIRM by its Spanish acronym) which took place on May 3-5, 2024, in Guadalajara, Jalisco. It was a profound experience to speak with and hear from close to 300 religious women and men. They shared their deepening understanding of the challenges this moment in the history of the country and the world present to religious and the Church. Placing all trust in the renewing and transforming power of the Holy Spirit, and the light of the Risen Lord, hope is renewed which mobilizes love towards the missionary outreach.

At the national level, we are privileged to continue to promote AHLMA and solidify our relationships with our partners in mission some of whom are the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, the Mexican American Catholic College, and the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, as well as being present at the National Eucharistic Congress, in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Of course, none of what AHLMA does would be possible without the great vision and leadership of a Board of Directors comprised of women religious from North America, Mexico, and Peru. We feel a great sense of unity as we work in service of our AHLMA sisters—it is truly a joyous and happy experience.

In Christ,

**Elizabeth Ann Guerrero**

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# AHLMA: Bridge and prophetic sign

By Sister Frances Aldama, MGSps

Sharing my experience in response to the question “for you, in what way is AHLMA a bridge and prophetic sign?”, leads me to contemplate the concept of “prophetism” from a theology applied in and from daily life, where God IS and manifests Himself in the lives of people. It is about identifying and naming as *prophetic signs*, those actions that manage to positively affect the life and/or history of people or of an entire people. Prophetism, to which Religious Life in general is called, is not a trait that can be self-given, but rather it is the recipients who are able to recognize in the actions the prophetic signs, by the impact on the lives of people in order to make a change of course in their lives and improve the social environment.

From this understanding, I want to consider three characteristics and visible actions from what I have heard and observed in the *Asociación de Hermanas Latinas Misioneras en América* applying the adjective prophetic.

What I have heard and observed in AHLMA, I will share using the analogy of a bridge.

Drawing on my experience, I have considered the benefits that bridges bring to society: they enable communication between people, they are there to be crossed from one side to the other, and they facilitate access to unexplored spaces or places. The fact of crossing a bridge, consciously and intentionally, stimulates the desire to be able to reach the other side, guaranteeing evident changes in the life of those who made the trip, as well as in their environment.

These are some of the features observed that reveal AHLMA as a bridge: Interconnection, Inter-Congregationality and Interculturality, which I consider to be progressively linked to each other.

## **Interconnection**

This aspect seems relevant to me because, in addition to having been key in the emergence of AHLMA, it continues to be a current task because it is part of our essence, since we were created for communion, with ourselves, with other people, with creation, with God. Making

connections is a call and a mission and it is the responsibility of all the sisters who belong to the Association. If the members of AHLMA place ourselves before the mirror of what describes our identity of “*Who We Are*”<sup>1</sup>, we would find there the reason to realize where and how far we are *crossing our lives* with the lives of others, including creation, either in our respective communities, or in the apostolate or other instances with whom we are related as an organization. We could ask ourselves the question: What facts testify that, because of the contact we have with other people, other living beings, their lives are in the process of transformation?

History shows us that, beginning with that fruitful meeting in Chicago before 2008, Sisters Ana Gabriela Castro, MGSps and Joan McGlinchey, MSC - even though they had a full-time pastoral job as a commission from their congregation - threw themselves into the work of *building bridges* when they only had the budget of their vision, teamwork, and relationship skills. They had the task of looking for ways to stimulate the sodality between Latina women religious present in the United States.

Some of the steps that the two pioneers took in their unprecedented journey were to make contacts with parishes where there were Latina religious; to speak with the Vicars for Religious Life in the different dioceses. They requested orientation and support from different organizations such as the National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO), Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) as well as from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation and some religious congregations, all of which shared what they had for the common good.

It is in these gestures of generosity that God manifests his wonders, which we can read as key to prophetic signs, since the beneficiaries were not only the first sisters, but such favors have transcended to new generations.

To dare to take the step, as Sisters Ana Gabriela and Joan did, is the task that corresponds to us

now. It asks of us to witness and continue the noble mission of interconnecting lives in a country and in a world where there is so much need to live what is ours, our essence: union, inclusion, compassion, and what asks us to be the presence of God. It requires audacity, taking risks and living as witnesses of the Spirit in the mission where God *IS Source of Communion* and asks us to *remain* connected to Him and to each other “Remain in me as I remain in you” (Jn. 15:4).

### **Inter-Congregationality**

From the trait of Interconnection, another characteristic that emerged in AHLMA was inter-congregationality, an aspect forged since the First *Encuentro* (gathering) that took place in Des Plaines, IL in 2008.

As a result of that gathering, the first AHLMA Coordinating Team was made official, which already sensed a new path for Hispanic-Latino Religious Life in a multicultural country. The crossing towards something new had already taken place and it was necessary to advance on the path from a different position, and that was and continues to be a challenge.

Just by looking at the initials after each name, it is clear that inter-congregationality, from the very beginning, reflected that Religious Life is not to be lived alone, but together and in collaboration, to be able to intuit where the Divine *Ruah* is leading us at the present time.

The sisters who formed the first coordinating team were:

Sister Ana Gabriela Castro, MGSpS  
Sister Joan McGlinchey, MSC  
Sister Ana Josefa Fajardo, HMCJ  
Sister Isabel Ordoñez, STJ  
Sister Sandra Martinez, CJC  
Sister Mayela Ortega, HCJS

After fifteen years of existence of the Association, the different *Encuentros* that have been promoted and convened, including the virtual ones, have been

spaces where we share life experiences that nourish the different areas of our life: human, community, spiritual, intellectual, and cultural. We have been affirming our own identity and showing the new face of Latina religious life: a young, cheerful, dynamic face, full of hope and proactive before other cases in this country of North America.

Another sign that I consider as prophetic is the initiative *Rivers of Hope*<sup>2</sup>, in which two sisters of my congregation had the opportunity to participate.



Sr. Frances in the desert of Arizona  
*Sister Frances Aldama is a Guadalupeana Missionary of the Holy Spirit of Mexican origin.*

One of them shared with me how good it was for her to have had the right space to touch, name, pray and share the unprocessed and therefore unhealed losses.

The sister, her voice trembling, expressed that “her losses are like a rushing river that requires containment.” She felt contained by religious sisters from other congregations whom she did not yet know.

Referring to the experience she had, I felt surprised when the sister said, “I feel in my heart as if this is the future of Religious Life, to work and share among different congregations because in this way we can also give better help in accompanying people

who face losses of different kinds in their daily lives.”

This shared fact shows that AHLMA is modeling new ways to continue *crossing to the other side*, to continue interconnecting with congregations and to make it possible to take the leap of passing to the other side. There where the most vulnerable people manage to feel humanized and humanizing –as well as these experiences generated through *Rivers of Hope*– is that they become a powerful sign of prophecy.

### **Interculturality**

For this characteristic, unlike the two previous ones, it would seem to be somewhat more complex to find indicators of prophetic character.

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## My experience with AHLMA

By Sister Alicia López, MGSpS

The first two have more characteristics in common, they offer a path that is to some extent easier to travel back and forth.

Living for 44 years in the United States, where more cultures live than I can imagine, makes me understand that interculturality is not a matter of cultures living side by side. Rather it makes it possible to build it based on the coexistence of different cultures, which implies entering the space of another culture. It requires us to listen to God, as Moses heard, "Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground." (Ex 3: 5). This requirement of entering another culture asks us to locate ourselves in our own identity and remove cultural prejudices, fears that stop us from crossing cultures, beliefs that we have to let go of to avoid acting from them, making comparisons between them *versus* me/us, competition, and everything that does not promote a free and healthy approach to other cultures.

I am experiencing this firsthand as I now find myself immersed in a *native culture* here in Arizona. I realize that having desired for so many years and having accepted to be in this place, gives me the opportunity to realize that *interculturality* requires conscious, constant, and progressive work. And this has no end because the Creator of human lives does not stop creating. Here it is to be a witness of life that continually emerges.

Reaching this horizon of interculturality implies locating ourselves, as a collective, where we find ourselves. Taking into account that interculturality most probably asks us to go against the current, while at the same time it asks us to trust in the best that we can offer to the society that requires our prophetism.

May the same Spirit that burst forth at Pentecost upon the community of disciples, among them Mary of Nazareth, continue to impel us to live as women in Communion and for Communion.

Citations:

1. <https://ahlma.org/en/declaracion-de-mision/>
  2. <https://ahlma.org/peregrinacion-rios-de-esperanza/>
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What I like about AHLMA is that it is not exclusively for sisters of Hispanic origin but has opened itself to the participation of religious from other cultures. I like the opportunities for ongoing formation to continue contributing the best of ourselves to the Church and religious life. Also, the mutual enrichment of getting to know and interacting with women religious from various congregations and their diverse charisms and cultures. I am motivated to encourage other congregations to participate.

I have participated in two *Encuentros* (gatherings). The last AHLMA gathering in San Antonio, Texas helped me to share and listen to each other in groups, especially in activities during the process where we interacted with many sisters and learned from each other. In the small group activities, there was openness in caring to translate in both languages to make sure that each sister knew she was heard.

During the gathering, I connected and networked with sisters from the Bay Area region of Northern California. We were motivated to take an initiative in our region or Diocese and to meet again. I recently moved from Stockton to Los Angeles.



Sister Alicia Lopez is a Guadalupeana Missionary of the Holy Spirit, originally from Mexico. She has been a missionary in the United States for 36 years.

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# We are a great family

By Sister Delia Ibarra Rodríguez, HSDR

I like that in AHLMA we are one great family. The religious communities may be different, but the passion for spreading the gospel, living fully as consecrated women is the same. Our unique and peculiar identity as a free gift from God, makes us beat in the same heart and seek the good of our brothers and sisters, discovering in them the face of God. AHLMA unites us to each sister of the different communities, regardless of the distance.

I also like that it provides us with workshops, meetings, seminars, retreats, formation, and continuous information. It keeps us, Latina sisters, in continuous movement within the United States.

My religious community is an exchange community in the United States. At the time of COVID-19, we were isolated like the rest of the people and that was very challenging when arriving in a foreign country, without knowing people, culture, location... added to the anxiety before the unknown. AHLMA was there with us accompanying us with workshops, conferences, retreats, material for spiritual retreats, with timely information. It also helped us financially with a grant from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation to acquire electronic equipment so that we could carry out our pastoral work online and be in continuous interaction in the mission of evangelization with the people of God. As such, we were able to help our people not to panic in the face of this difficult situation. In the moments of pain of our Hispanic people, we were able to reach every house using the media in a more adequate way. We were even able to reach other states and have conversations with different families and groups by using the equipment that AHLMA sponsored us.

Through AHLMA, we have connected with other

religious communities, religious conferences that offer workshops, human resource agencies and care agencies.

As for the participation in the AHLMA National *Encuentros* (gatherings), I think the most important thing has been the encounter with God and the other sisters, with myself, the topics, filling me again with that energy and recovering the horizon, where I am going and where God wants to take me. It is like a rebirth and at the same time a renewal of strength.

I feel that being a community of 3 sisters, in a country with so many challenges for everyone and having lived these 5 years without being able to travel to our central house, AHLMA helped me to keep myself well centered and strengthened. And also helps others through all the in

person and virtual programs and meetings that it organized for us in such a special way and with so much dedication.

Being in a foreign country, AHLMA gives me the confidence to live that unity among us and feel at home.

AHLMA helps and forms us to assume our role as consecrated women in today's world with all its challenges, gives us the tools to be bridging agents, the voice of those who have no voice and above all, to accompany the Hispanic community.

*Sister Delia Aurora Ibarra Rodriguez is a member of the congregation of the Servants of the Divine Face, she is Mexican, and has been residing in Michigan for 5 years.*



From left to right: Sisters Jaritza García, Daysis Uriarte y Delia Ibarra.

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# Evangelizing with Mary in the light of the Eucharist

By Sister Marilupe Mier y Terán, HMSS

What I liked most about AHLMA has been the motto “Consecrated women, striving to be the maternal face of God. Sent to journey, accompany and encourage the people of God” since it is evocative, encouraging, visionary and invites us to live our charisms within the different Institutes in which we find ourselves.

Recognizing ourselves as a bridge and prophetic sign is what certainly opens us to the encounter between cultures, congregations and lay organizations or of other beliefs. This invites us to live and share in true solidarity and fraternity the mission of Christ the Redeemer, by promoting Gospel values, according to our charism, in love and service without conditions and with the joyful freedom of knowing that we are messengers of goodness, truth, and kindness.

AHLMA's mission to *Weave networks to support, accompany and empower Latina Sisters in their ministry and service to consecrated life, the Church and U.S. society* is creative and futuristic while focusing on the biblical call to fishers of people. However, I dare to say that this “weaving of networks” not only accompanies and empowers Latina Sisters but many women who collaborate with us today and thus the American Church and society grows, is revitalized and becomes leaven in the here and now of our history.

AHLMA accompanies us day by day through the united prayer of each and every one of the Hispanic Sisters, which is a source of life; through the fraternity shared in the different meetings and events that vivifies, encourages and fosters solidarity. It also accompanies us through the help and counseling provided tirelessly and in facilitating us to be able to apply for grants or scholarships that help greatly in the economic part.

The economic subsidies/grants received have allowed us to serve the people of God with efficiency and professionalism. We have been able to pay attention to our elderly sisters who gave their lives in the apostolic mission in this country when their economic remuneration was almost nil but that they ignored doing everything by love, nothing by force and only by the force of love (Ma. del Refugio Aguilar y Torres). We have been able to

continue with studies that enable us to continue serving the people of God in new areas and apostolates such as “spiritual direction”.

Being a bridge connects different and distant places, people, and events that by interconnecting with each other make possible the joy of being together with others, of being able to embrace each other, of being sorority in the mystical body of Christ. We see each other in spite of differences and distance, we are the Body of Christ! Eucharist forged with and in Mary, Most Holy Virgin and Mother. AHLMA in this has been an unequalled “plus” that unites and strengthens us.

The Sisters who belong to AHLMA give a hand to each other and give a hand to those who need it, to those who don't know, don't want to or haven't even heard of sisterhood. Our bridge is built of smiles, words of tenderness, helping, lifting and connecting hands, namely FRATERNITY, SOLIDARITY and SORORITY. The heart of every sister in AHLMA is a heart attentive to the hunger of the brother/sister and we become Eucharist, food for life of others.



Mercedarian Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament in the convent for retired sisters.

*Sister Marilupe Mier y Terán, HMSS is a member of the Mercedarian Sister of the Blessed Sacrament. She is from Mexico City, teaches at the Little Flower School in San Antonio, and has been in the United States for about 55 years.*



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## Certificate in Intercultural Ministry

The Mexican American Catholic College (MACC) in collaboration with the the *Asociación de Hermanas Latinas Misioneras en América* (AHLMA), is currently educating, through the Certificate in Intercultural Ministry, 10 Latina religious sisters to serve in leadership roles in their ministries. This two-year certificate is designed to prepare the sisters to serve competently and effectively especially in Catholic parish ministries, religious education, spirituality and spiritual development, youth ministry and catechetical leadership conducted in the United States.

Thanks to the generous support of the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation and MACC, tuition for the Certificate in Intercultural Ministry formation program has been completely free for participating sisters.

Two of the sisters participating in the certificate share with us part of their experience in the program.

“What I like most about the Intercultural Ministry Certificate is the active participation, the presentations, discovering that we are called to be messengers of the Good News wherever we go and in the ministries in which we participate. My life has been enriched by the learnings of the Certificate program especially in the pastoral area, as I participate in the Catholic Charities Welcome Center for immigrants in San Antonio, Texas and I also collaborate in St. Timothy Parish in the preparation of adults for their sacraments of Christian initiation and as a catechist for students in grades 4-6 in ongoing faith formation.”

*Sister María Cruz de la Cruz Botello is a member of the Congregation of Divine Providence of San Antonio, Texas, is Mexican, and has been living in San Antonio since September 2023.*



Sister María Cruz de la Cruz in the *Centro de Bienvenida* (Welcoming Center) in San Antonio, Texas.



Ulises Gómez and Sister Mariana de Jesús Dueñas, MESST

“The Intercultural Ministry Certification has helped me to update my vision and mission in spiritual accompaniment with young people. I thank AHLMA for facilitating my meeting with MACC and for being a bridge of communication among sisters to better serve God and our young people.”

*Sister Mariana de Jesús Dueñas is a member of the Eucharistic Missionaries of the Most Holy Trinity, is Mexican, spiritual advisor in Youth Ministry in the Diocese of Orange, California, and has resided in the United States for 11 years.*

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## AHLMA Networking

Thanks to generous resources and technology, AHLMA sisters have been able to participate in events throughout the United States in keeping with AHLMA's mission of networking to support, accompany and empower Latina sisters in their ministry and service to consecrated life. Highlighted below are some of the wonderful virtual and in-person events in which we collaborated.

### **Richness and Implications of Living and Being a Missionary in the U.S.**



In our workshop on May 2023, Sister Maritza Cisneros, a sister of the Society of Teresa of Jesus (STJ), shared about the phases, challenges and richness of living the mission in a foreign land. The workshop was enriched by the experience shared by Sr. Brenda Hernandez, from the congregation of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate of Guadalupe during her five years of mission in North Dakota and her return to Mexico. The sisters who participated in the workshop expressed that they found it very practical, concrete, inspiring, and enriching. The workshop gave them tools to live the different stages of their missionary life.

You can watch the workshop recording in the following link: <https://>

[ahlma.org/project/riqueza-e-implicaciones-de-vivir-y-ser-misionera-en-estados-unidos/](https://ahlma.org/project/riqueza-e-implicaciones-de-vivir-y-ser-misionera-en-estados-unidos/)

### **Pilgrims of Hope, on the Path of Peace.**



The workshop Pilgrims of Hope, on the Path to Peace was presented by Sister Giselle Gomez, a member of the Society of St. Teresa of Jesus (STJ), in which 20 sisters from 15 different religious communities participated. Sr. Giselle led us in reviewing the challenging and painful events that happened during 2023. She then guided us to look at ourselves, our own weaknesses and to ask ourselves about our complicity in violence and injustice of the world. At the same time, she invited us to look at our gifts and potentialities to embrace our shadows so that they become light. Finally, she encouraged us to take care of a hope that is carried by faith and love. This involves humbly placing ourselves before God, trusting in his strength and grace to be converted,

to be born again, to open our hearts to empathetic conversations that lead to peace. Our being consecrated women leads us to a life of hope for the God who loves us and calls us to collaborate to create something new.

To watch past workshop recordings go to: <https://ahlma.org/eventos-y-talleres/>

### **AHLMA Members Passing the Torch**



From March 7-9, 2024, ten sisters representing different religious communities, along with their pastors and parish leaders, participated in a leadership transition workshop. At the workshop the sisters had the opportunity to present the journey of their ministries and the challenges for the future. The sisters, priests and laity initiated their plans for passing the torch, the leadership, and making an effective transition as they prepare to leave their respective missions. The sisters came to the U.S. through the *Catholic Extension's U.S.-Latin American Sisters Exchange Program*. For more information on Catholic Extension program, visit:

[www.catholicextension.org/?s=exchange+program](http://www.catholicextension.org/?s=exchange+program)



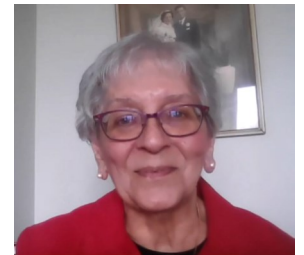
## Webinars with Religious Formation Conference

In collaboration with the Religious Formation Conference (RFC), AHLMA offered a series of webinars entitled *In the Breaking Bread, Walking Together*. The first two sessions were attended by 208 sisters from different religious communities from different countries. Those webinars were in Spanish with English interpretation.



The first session, entitled “Bread Shared, Blood Shed, Life Given,” was presented by Sister Giselle Gomez, STJ who helped us to broaden our horizons to live in fraternal relationship with one another as an effective sign of what we live in the Eucharistic celebration. Giselle led us to contemplate our tables, our guests, those included or excluded, our dialogues, our words of hope or division. She also invited us to commit our lives to our least sisters and brothers as an extension of the Eucharistic memorial where bread is shared, blood is shed, and life is given.

The session *Accept These Gifts* was presented by Sister Patricia Harvat, OP, who led us to reflect on our participation in the communion of the body and blood of Jesus as an acceptance of these gifts with the invitation to love not only God but ourselves and the stranger in our midst. Sr. Harvat referred to Scriptures, Vatican II documents, Church Fathers, and practical experiences of living the Eucharistic celebration. She also invited us to reflect on how Jesus takes our imperfections and blesses them, sustains us in our suffering and brokenness, and sends us to be witnesses of his love and forgiveness.



The third session, *Synodal Journey in Religious Life*, will be presented by Sister Jung Eun Sophia Park, SNJM on September 5<sup>th</sup>. For more information, see the announcements section.

You can watch the two past webinar recordings at <https://relforcon.org/breaking-bread>.

## Leadership Collaborative Gatherings Sisters Under 65

The Leadership Collaborative (LC) is an organization that supports sisters for transformative leadership in religious life and for the evangelical mission of today and the future. The LC offers inter-congregational and multigenerational meeting spaces for reflection and training on what is emerging today in religious life. AHLMA is happy to collaborate with LC.

Among other activities, the LC has had meetings of sisters under the age of 65 and meetings of sisters aged 65 to 75. Sr. Victoria Cutaia, BSPA participated in one of these gatherings in Chicago for sisters under the age of 65. Here is what Sr. Victoria shares with us about her experience of being a Latina nun in the United States.



“I am a member of the Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration in Clyde, Missouri. I was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina and moved to the United States when I was three years old. I entered religious life in August 2007. I made my first vows in December 2010 and final vows in January 2014. We are a contemplative community called to a ministry of prayer. Our sisters mostly came from Swiss origins. We aren't very multicultural. In fact, currently there are only 2 who are Hispanic, including me. It was like a breath of fresh air, knowing that there were many Hispanic sisters at the LC

conference. We had numerous conversations which included sharing our experience about living in community with many of the sisters being white and the challenges we encountered. Knowing that our experiences were very similar we connected in a deeper way. For example, I am from Argentina, not Mexico, there is a big difference. I may like Mexican food, but it's not my thing, give me a grilled steak and I'll be in seventh heaven. At first, I used to get frustrated with my sisters but now I use it as a teachable moment.”

# ANNOUNCEMENTS

## AHLMA Mini-ENCUENTRO

On September 2, 2024, we will hold a Mini-Encuentro (gathering) in the Archdiocese of Chicago from 8:30 am to 5:30 pm at the Felician Sisters' convent. We invite you to participate in this gathering to celebrate our charismatic mission of service in the Church and the United States. For more information, visit our website [www.ahlma.org](http://www.ahlma.org). Register with the QR code.



## RFC-AHLMA Webinar

*Synodal Journey in Religious Life* by Sr. Jung Eun Sophia Park, SNJM on September 5<sup>th</sup> from 1:00 – 3:30 pm (Central Time). Offered in English with Spanish interpretation. Register at the following link: <https://relforcon.org/breaking-bread>

You can find this Newsletter in English and Spanish on our website [www.ahlma.org](http://www.ahlma.org)

Rooted in a spirituality of *encuentro*, we give prophetic witness  
of unity, solidarity, joy and hope.



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