



# Franciscan Waves

*Pruning for Fruitfulness...  
...hope continues to bloom*

*Ripples of Connection, Spirit, and Mission*

**Bones of St Francis of Assisi go on public display in Italy**



In a moment of deep spiritual significance, the mortal remains of St. Francis of Assisi are on public display in Assisi, Italy, marking the 800th anniversary of his death. From February 21 to March 22, pilgrims from around the world are visiting the Lower Basilica of St. Francis to venerate the saint

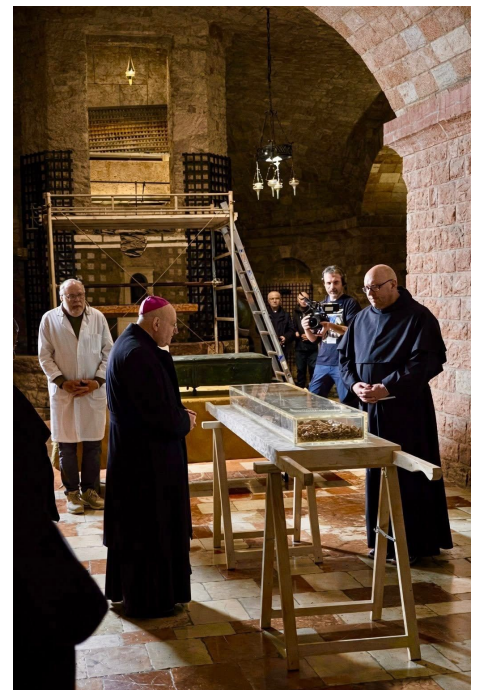
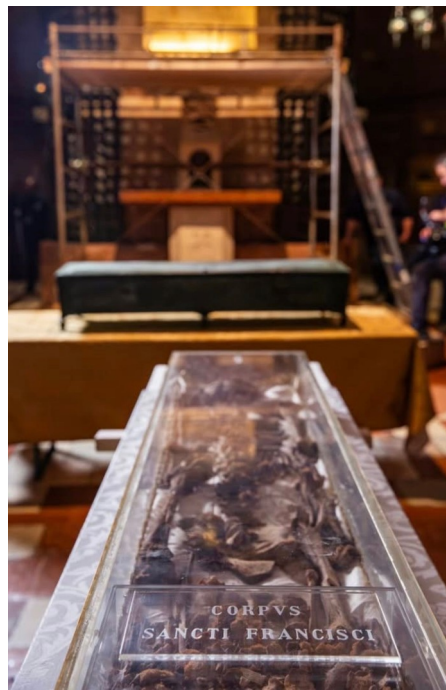


whose life of poverty, humility, and love for creation continues to inspire the Church.

The bones are preserved in a nitrogen-filled plexiglass reliquary placed before the altar. Although devotion to Francis has endured for centuries, his remains have rarely been seen. They were displayed publicly only once before, briefly in 1978 to a limited group. This historic exposition has drawn immense interest, with hundreds of thousands reserving places to pray before the relics.

Born in Assisi in 1181 or 1182, Francis renounced wealth to live among the poor and founded the Order of Friars Minor. Known as the patron saint of animals and the environment, he remains one of Christianity's most beloved figures.

This commemoration invites more than remembrance. It calls believers to renewed commitment to the Gospel values Francis embodied: simplicity, compassion, peace, and joyful trust in God.





## A Prayer for the Jubilee Year of St. Francis

Saint Francis, our brother, you who eight hundred years ago went to meet

Sister Death as a man at peace,

intercede for us with the Lord.

In the Crucifix of San Damiano you recognized true peace,

teach us to seek in Him the source of all reconciliation

that breaks down every wall.

You who, unarmed, crossed the lines of war and misunderstanding,

give us the courage to build bridges where

the world erects borders.

In this time plagued by conflict and division,

intercede so that we maybe come peacemakers:

unarmed and disarming witnesses of the peace

that comes from Christ.

Amen.



JUBILEE YEAR OF  
SAINT  
FRANCIS

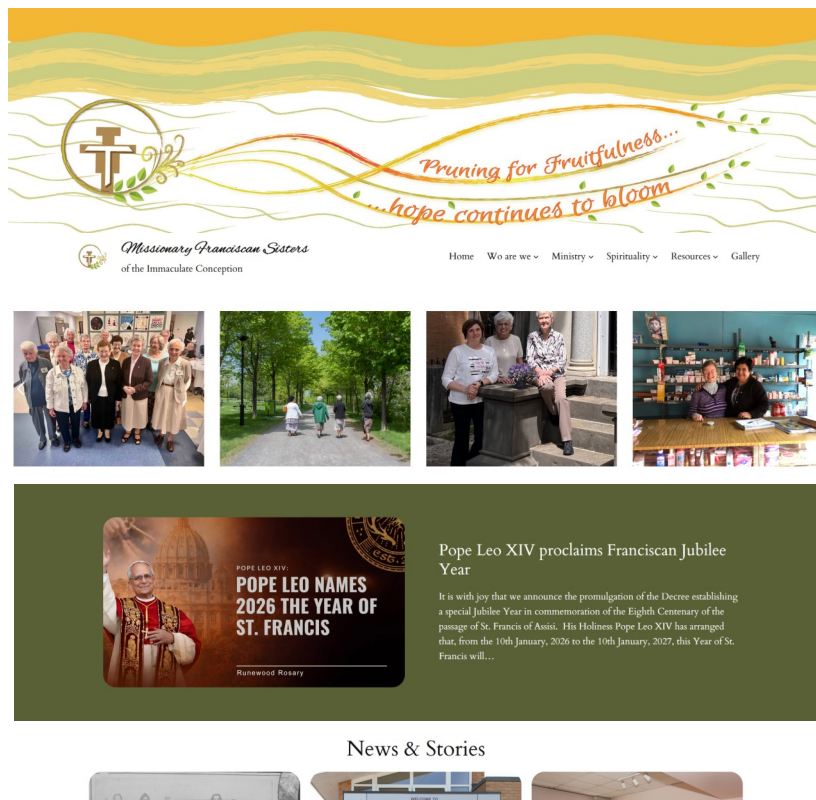
1226-2026



## A New Digital Home for the Missionary Franciscans of the Immaculate Conception

I am truly excited and filled with joy to announce the launch of the new website of the Missionary Franciscans of the Immaculate Conception. From the first moment the homepage opens, visitors are welcomed by a gentle and beautiful banner of flowing colors and a message of hope and fruitfulness that reflects the institute's charism and missionary spirit. The overall view is warm, clear, and inviting, making it easy and friendly to navigate. The photographs throughout the site are especially meaningful, as they connect sisters from different countries and communities, allowing each one to see the others and feel united across distances. At the center, the green space highlights a spotlight article or event. This feature will change from time to time to reflect important moments in the life of the institute, while occasionally remaining for a longer period, even for a whole year, when something particularly significant deserves sustained attention.

This website is meant to be a living home that grows through participation. I warmly encourage sisters, associates, staff, and friends to share news, stories, and experiences from their communities. These contributions truly matter because they allow the life and mission of the institute to be seen, celebrated, and shared widely. Each story, whether simple or extraordinary, strengthens the bonds that unite everyone as one family in mission. I am eager to receive all your sharing for the website and to link all of you together so that this space may truly feel like a common home, a place where you can know one another, rejoice in one another, and walk forward together with hope.



# WALKING WITH ELIZABETH HAYES

## *Walking with Elizabeth Hayes*

By M. Francine Shaw

'From silly devotions and sour-faced saints, may the good Lord deliver us!' said St. Teresa of Avila. Elizabeth Hayes and her Wantage companions studied the writings of this sensible, practical-minded C16<sup>th</sup> Carmelite. Through this Spanish mystic Elizabeth searched for help in her prayer life. Living for God alone and for the will of God were two ways that Elizabeth lived in the presence of her God as did Teresa. In Jamaica (1859-62) Elizabeth took time to reflect upon, record in her *Diary*, and practice Teresa's way of prayer.

Elizabeth was a trans-Atlantic traveller, yet few know of her visit to Spain because of her attraction to St. Teresa. In 1883 Elizabeth wanted to visit her Sisters in North America and decided to travel via Spanish ports. Besides investigating the possibility of opening a house in Spain, in Rabida, Elizabeth also planned to visit places of pilgrimage. Her companion was Sr Angelica Chaffee, whom she wished to take to Lourdes. They set out from Rome and travelled to Paris, then they moved south to Paray-le-Monial, to La Salette, to Lourdes and to Loyola.

At that time in Spain and Portugal numerous train routes were possible, so the travellers often had to change trains to accomplish their selected route. They visited Burgos, then Oporto on the west coast, and then moved inland to Avila and surrounds. They visited the convent where the heart of St. Teresa is venerated in Alba de Tormes before moving south to coastal Huelva and finally Gibraltar.

In the *Annals of our Lady of the Angels*, Elizabeth published from 1884 to 1886, 'A Peep into Spain' by Lady Elizabeth Herbert. This series of 12 articles included insightful descriptions of uncomfortable European train travel, hot, stuffy, crammed, smoky and dusty, that Elizabeth and her companion endured. In 1866 Lady Herbert had published a popular book, *Impressions of Spain* in which she explains that night trains were faster in her experience. This fact matches Chaffee's train story - including Elizabeth being left alone on Oporto's platform at night.

Distressing news reached Elizabeth about her African American novice, Federica Law who was sick and dying in Rome. Instead of gaining a passage to N. America, Chaffee records in her *Memories*, they 'took ship in Gibraltar for Naples'. Their ship encountered severe storms at sea, and it was forced to land at Malta under difficult and dangerous conditions. Eventually they took another ship for Naples and finally reached Rome.



From St Teresa of Avila. P.F. Federigo.  
Rome. 1837.

## Ongoing Formation and Information

By Pauline Robinson – General Minister

### YouTube: Leo from Chicago

If you haven't seen it yet, Vatican Media have launched a documentary, 'Leo from Chicago', about the background of Robert Francis Prevost, now Pope Leo XIV, in his native United States. Well worth watching.

[Watch on YouTube](#) 52 minutes



### Practicing God's Presence in Everyday Life - Brother Lawrence

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LRGZV2xihkU> 8mins52sec.

(Recommended by Pope Leo XIV)

### Julian of Norwich ~ All Shall Be Well ~ Christian Mystics (24 mins)

[Samaneri Jayasāra - Wisdom of the Masters](#)

Julian of Norwich (1342-c 1416) was the most important English mystic of the 14th century. She wrote the best known surviving book in the English language written by a mystic, Revelations of Divine Love. The book is the first written in English by a woman. Her spirituality is strongly Trinitarian and basically Neoplatonic. Through the Passion, Julian was led to visions of the Trinity and of the universe as it exists in God. Music: "Finding Stillness" - Chris Collins

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0DdDrU2XqYk> (23mins)

**Rome, 16 December 2025** – On the occasion of its **60th anniversary**, the **International Union of Superiors General (UISG)** presents a new **documentary** entitled Consecrated Life, a Hope that Transforms. This documentary traces the path of a worldwide network of women's religious congregations and shows the contemporary face of consecrated life through stories, cultures and continents. (A variety of languages are used throughout the video).

(**NB.16.21 minutes** into the video you will see Helen Neini mfc in Yambio, South Sudan at a meal table – front on the left)

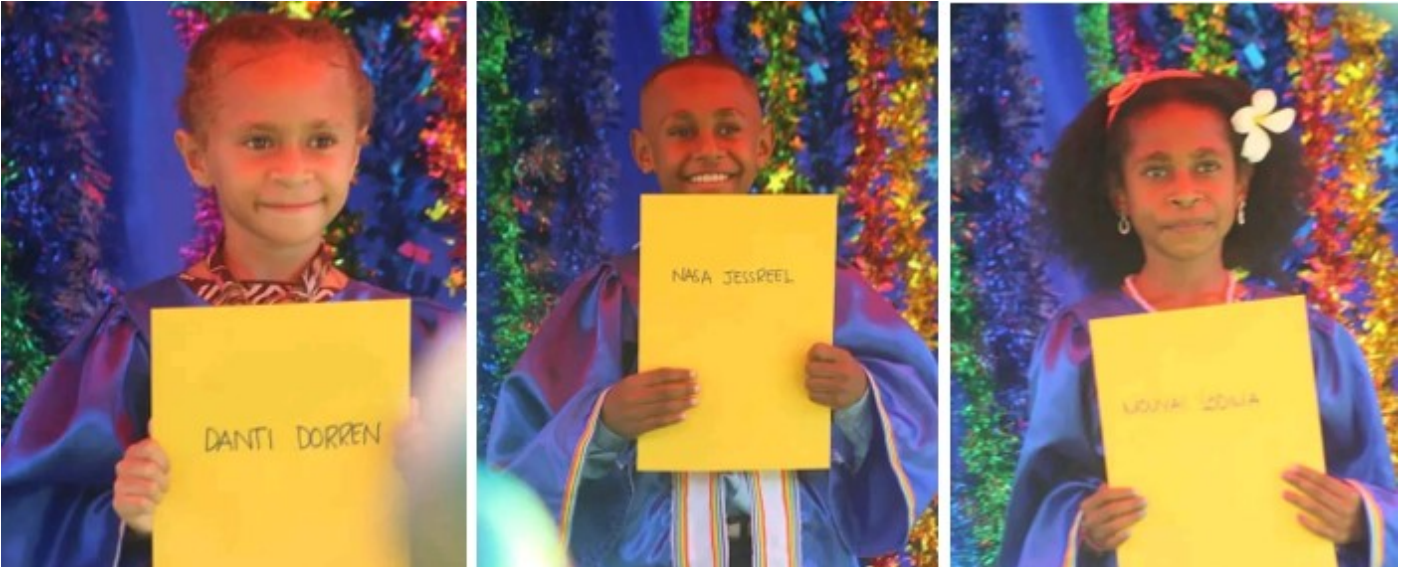
To celebrate this anniversary, **Pope Leo XIV** sent a **letter to the UISG**, praising its role in serving the communion and mission of the Church. 'Your commitment to cooperation and your willingness to remain at the forefront of the mission are an eloquent witness to the Gospel,' wrote the Holy Father.



# MINISTRY AND MISSION

## Elizabeth Hayes Early Childhood School: First Graduation 2025

*By Pauline Jamison, Teacher in Charge*



For many years, the ministry of educating young children aged three to five and teaching catechism in Papua New Guinea was carried out by sisters under trees in local settlements, and later in simple buildings. Recognizing the growing need for early childhood education, the sisters eventually established a permanent school and named it after Mother Mary Ignatius, whose vision continues to inspire this mission.



Elizabeth Hayes Early Childhood School, located in Papua New Guinea, opened in 2023 to provide quality education, nurture a love for learning from an early age, and form children in faith. Despite limited space and staffing, enrollment has grown from 109 students in 2023 to 150 students in 2025, reflecting strong community trust and need.

The year 2025 brought further blessings with the construction of a new School Administration Building. Work began in February with land clearing and was completed within five months and two weeks. Transporting materials from Wewak proved challenging due to blocked roads, forcing reliance on slow cargo shipping. Through these difficulties, the community experienced God's

# MINISTRY AND MISSION

providence through the intercession of Elizabeth Hayes. The building includes two offices, a tea room, and a conference room. It was officially opened and blessed on 25 November 2025 during the school's closing and thanksgiving Mass, followed by joyful celebrations of singing, creative dances, and a shared meal.

A comfortable sitting area for parents and guardians was also built near the administration block, providing a peaceful space while waiting for children.

The following day, 26 November 2025, the school celebrated its first Preparatory graduation. Thirty-seven students completed the program, leaving with confidence, joy, and readiness for the next stage of education. This milestone affirmed the school's mission to nurture young minds and hearts for the future.



# FORMATION AND EDUCATION

## **The Bent Over Woman**

**Trauma Healing Workshop | December 18, 2025 – January 15, 2026**

*By Dulcie Supunou*

On 16 December 2025, three novices, Jane Param, Aloisia Valaun, and Petronella Taliye, together with three professed sisters, Joyce Menchalo, Grace Nila, and Dulcie Supunou, traveled to the Diocese of Lae to participate in a Trauma Healing Workshop.

The program officially began on 18 December and concluded on 15 January 2026. Religious women from several congregations across Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands also attended, bringing the total number of participants to twenty-three.

The workshop was organized by His Lordship Bishop Rozario Meneses of the Diocese of Lae to support the healing and well-being of religious women in the region. The main facilitator was Sr. Nicole Rotaru of the Sisters of Mercy, Australia, assisted by Sr. Monika Steinburger of the Holy Spirit Sisters.



Inspired by the Gospel story of the Bent Over Woman (Luke 13:10–17), the program explored themes of healing, dignity, spiritual freedom, and God’s compassionate mercy. Through this biblical lens, participants reflected on personal and communal experiences of suffering and restoration.

The sessions included a variety of reflective and therapeutic activities such as mandala art, accompaniment, contemplative prayer, journaling, and guided sharing. These practices created a safe space for deep listening, self-awareness, and emotional expression. For many participants, the workshop became a profound journey of inner healing and renewal.

Each sister gained a deeper understanding of her feelings, memories, and responses to trauma, along with practical tools for healthy coping and resilience. Emphasis was placed on a holistic approach to self-care that nurtures physical, psychological, emotional, social, cognitive, and spiritual well-being.

The workshop was a grace-filled experience that strengthened hope, restored dignity, and encouraged participants to continue their ministry with renewed compassion and inner freedom.

# FIRST PROFESSION

## Formation News, Mother of the Word Governance Circle, PNG First Profession of Rita Ikai and Grace Nila

*By Rosemary Milur, Novice Directress*



From L to R: Fr Daniel, Sr Rosemary Milur, Roselyn Ikai (mother), Sr Rita Ikia, Bishop Siby, Sr Grace Nila, Fr Emanuel, Spiritan, Fr Dinghl, Fr Emmanuel, Gregoria Nila (mother) Sr Schol Banik.

December 8<sup>th</sup> was full of great jubilation as we participated in a double celebration, namely the Feast of the Immaculate Conception and the First Profession of Sisters Rita Ikai and Grace Nila. We celebrated Mary's "YES" to God's call to contribute to our salvation and that of others, as Sisters Rita and Grace confidently professed their vows for service in the Church and in the world.

The liturgy was simple, yet a very meaningful Eucharistic celebration, which was led by the novices and postulants with Marceline Pokah, a former member, as the coordinator. The main celebrant was Bishop Siby Mathew of Aitape Diocese and four priests concelebrated with him. After communion Sisters Rita and Grace explained their symbols from their own cultures.

Rita has the stick for chipping sago and Limbum for carrying food. The stick and the Limbum work together to serve the people – team work. In her reflection Rita sees herself as called to service, her life like the stick is to be life-giving to others. And the Limbum to carry food in it to feed the family and also to share with those in need in the community. For Rita it is a joyful service by sharing what she has for the reign of God.

Grace's symbol called the Garamut, is made out of wood. A special tree is cut to make the garamut. The wood is carved and carved until it looks beautiful and ready to be used. She is like the special tree chosen. In formation she was carved over and over again of some things in her life that were not lifegiving to herself or the community. The process continued until she was ready to profess



Rita has the stick for chipping sago and Limbum

# FIRST PROFESSION

her vows for the service of the Church. Like the garamut which is used to call people together, so too Grace is now ready to carry out the mission of Christ.

We had refreshment after mass and the special cake was cut and shared. Our Franciscan family gathered in the evening with the families of the newly professed sisters. The next day families began to travel back by vehicle and tracking on foot. The last of the families were those who travelled by plane.

Rita travelled home with her mother and will return to her new community in Wewak. Grace is attending a course in Lae. On her return, she will join her community in Vanimo.



Grace Rita cutting cake



Grace's symbol called Garamut made out of wood.



From L to R - Dulcie, Rita, Grace and Schol pronouncing vows

## Holiday Highlights at Carmel Terrace

*By Rose Bill*

Carmel Terrace hosted several holiday events. The season included its first Lessons and Carols coordinated by Sr. Rose, in the chapel with participation from Sr. Janet, Sr. Lorraine, staff and residents as lectors, accompanied by organ music. The program offered a meaningful reflection on the spiritual significance of Christmas.

Sr. Jeanette wrote in the last Franciscan Waves, about the Boston Symphony. We had our own concert here. A special concert showcased talented young cellists, ages 7-17, under the direction of a Boston Symphony orchestra member. Their performance of Christmas music was warmly received.

Residents enjoyed a Christmas party highlighted by a visit from Mr. and Mrs. Claus, who distributed gifts to residents, and spread cheer throughout the room. Special moments were shared as our Sr. Eileen and Sr. Jean received their presents.

Midnight Mass at 4:00pm was special in our chapel, featuring Christmas hymns led by a cantor and organist. A Jesuit from Boston College officiated at the service.

The New Year's Eve celebration included appetizers and sparkling grape juice, culminating in a joyful countdown to 2026.



## Highlights of life at Highland Glen,

*By Irene Laurence*

During the Advent Season, Jeremiah, Suzanne, Veronica, and I met once a week to share on the Advent readings. We then shared a continental breakfast as we continued our discussion. As Lent approaches, we will again join together using the booklet Time of Grace and Space.



**INTERFAITH SHARING---** Ringing of the Bells  
Suzanne and I were invited by our neighbor to attend a celebration at her church, The First Baptist Church of Westwood, for a concert celebrating music and composers during the Advent season. The Bell Ringers and their director were amazing. The director also gave a presentation on each piece of music,



the composers, and when the piece was written. It was not only a moving concert but also educational. At the end of the concert, to our surprise, one of the bell ringers was a former student from St. Clare's High School.

**Ash Wednesday: Franciscan Reflection by Suzanne**

“From the Manager to the Cross” was the reflection Suzanne gave to the parishioners at Corpus Christi/St. Bernard's on Ash Wednesday. Here is a small excerpt of the reflection.

“...the birth of Jesus changed our world for good, forever. It was this baby, lying in a wooden manger, that one day He would carry this same type of wood to Calvary on a Cross, to redeem our frail, bruised world and our fractured and helpless, sinful selves.”

Suzanne would be happy to share the reflection if you would like it. You can email her at [safondini@gmail.com](mailto:safondini@gmail.com)

### **Our Cemetery:**

Suzanne and I care for our graves in Malden. We placed a Christmas arrangement at the gravesite, and we will also bring an arrangement for Easter. A reminder that we stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before us. Let us remember our sisters whose legacy we continue as we live out our Franciscan Charism with others.



# REFLECTION ON CHANGE

## A REFLECTION ON CHANGE

*By Julie Franchi*

Here in Newton, Massachusetts, we're having a winter with very cold temperatures and more than the usual amount of snow. Despite the weather, life goes on, as we move toward handing over the administration of the United States Circle to lay collaborators during our April Chapter. We are blessed to have these wonderful men and women to serve us.

But I do find many mixed emotions within me. At 79, I no longer have the energy I once had, so I'll look forward to no more leadership responsibilities, and more time to do more fun things. On the other hand, change is never easy, and this change is no different. I grieve as I move toward letting go of the way it has been and accepting the way it will be. I know that God is with us on this journey, and that with God, all will be well. But I struggle to believe that deep within my being.

With all these mixed emotions and many others, I embrace the theme of our Chapter:

Called Daily to Spread God's Love, and Moved Deeply by Contemplative Hearts, Let Us Go Onward together, with Courage, Joy and Peace.

My prayer is that I can live this well, and that, with God as my companion, (our companion!) we each will continue to be the loving, contemplative, courageous, joyful, peaceful women our world needs us to be.



## Where Education and Love Transform Lives

by Helena Harney



Our mission in Coroico, La Paz, continues to bear abundant fruit, particularly in the field of education. The new school year, which began in early February, opened with an energetic rush of young people seeking placements at UAC Carmen Pampa and the Internado in Cochuna. We are deeply proud of our community's longstanding support of these institutions, as an increasing number of families have been able to escape extreme poverty through access to education.

Today, I would like to focus especially on the Internado. This boarding facility serves children and teenagers who live in remote mountain villages far from any secondary school. The Internado operates a working farm with cows, pigs, and sheep, as well as a two acre vegetable garden, helping to sustain both the students and the program itself. Although our institute will soon no longer have a physical presence there, the mission will continue. The Internado is a diocesan project that has been under the leadership of Sister Helena since 2001. The families it serves have very limited resources, yet through the financial support of our community, Dr. Jay, and many other generous benefactors, the project has flourished.



Two years ago, representatives of the Patiño Foundation from Belgium and Switzerland visited and were deeply impressed by the work being done. They decided to become partners in the mission. In addition to supporting our existing team of two full time teachers, three staff members, and a German volunteer, the Foundation has provided two specialized remedial teachers and a volunteer couple from France. Their comprehensive program includes educational, health, and agricultural components that perfectly match our needs. They have also helped improve internet access and facility maintenance.

Our regular staff have served faithfully for many years, demonstrating remarkable commitment and dedication. Thanks to their efforts, young people from distant villages now have a safe place near a

local school from Sunday evening through Friday afternoon that they can truly call home. With God's help, this ministry will continue to shape lives for many years to come.

Coroico, like many towns and villages, celebrates its special days with great joy and anticipation. Among these, our annual Christmas celebration for the elderly stands out as one of the most meaningful events of the year. For many poor elderly people, some of whom rarely leave their villages, it is the highlight of their year.

The year 2025 was particularly difficult. Long lines at gasoline stations, fuel shortages, and rising prices for basic food products affected everyone. Therefore, it was a joyful surprise when we realized that our Christmas celebration would not be impacted, thanks to the generosity of the Manning family and additional contributions received specifically for this purpose.

This celebration began over forty years ago under the guidance of Coroico's first bishop, Thomas Manning, OFM, who hosted the event at his residence. Over time, attendance has grown steadily. This year, nearly 600 elderly people gathered at the Tinglado, our current venue.

Preparations began the day before and involved intense activity. Sixty chickens were slaughtered and prepared, along with potatoes, sweet potatoes, plantains, onions, tomatoes, dinner rolls, and drinks. During the night, one team transported the food to a wood fired oven in town, while another group remained behind to prepare the chorrillana. Meanwhile, the Tinglado team ensured that everything was ready, including chairs, tables, gifts, microphones, and music.



The celebration began beautifully with the presence of Bishop Juan Carlos and several priests, who presided over the Eucharist. While meals were plated, the gathered crowd was entertained with songs and short speeches. Thanks to a large team of volunteers, everyone was served simultaneously. Each guest departed with joy, carrying a gift of food items and, of course, a delicious panettone.

In both education and pastoral care, the mission in Coroico continues to be a living sign of hope. Whether through sustaining young people in their studies or honoring the dignity of the elderly, these efforts reflect a community committed to compassion, solidarity, and the transformative power of shared generosity.



# CELEBRATING 90 YEARS

## News from Dublin, Ireland

By Elise Gorman

**Birthday Celebration:** The Sisters in Ireland always love to have reasons to get together, so they organized a celebration for Sister Helen Connolly's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. Helen resides at Santa Sabina Care Home in Dublin. On Thursday, 8<sup>th</sup> January, they all came together in the parish hall of Our Lady Help of Christians Church, which is close to the Sisters' residences. Mass was celebrated by Father Liam Sweeney who was a former chaplain to the Sisters in Braintree, England, and a friend of Helen. This was followed by dinner which everyone heartily enjoyed. The Sisters who were able to come enjoyed the day and the opportunity to catch up with one another.



*Shared by Margretta Flanagan*



**How the Light Comes.**

*I cannot tell you how the light comes.  
 What I know  
 is that it is more ancient than imagining  
 That it travels across an astounding expanse to reach us.  
 That it loves searching out what is hidden,  
 what is lost, what is forgotten or in peril or in pain.  
 That it has a fondness for the body,  
 for finding its way toward Hesh,  
 for tracing the edges of form, for shining forth through the eye,  
 the hand, the heart.*

*I cannot tell you how the light comes,  
 but that it does.  
 That it will.*



*That it works its way into the deepest dark that enfolds you,  
 though it may seem long ages in coming or arrive  
 in a shape you did not foresee.*

*And so  
 may we this day turn ourselves toward it.  
 May we lift our faces to let it find us.  
 May we bend our bodies to follow the arc it makes.  
 May we open and open more and open still  
 to the blessed light that comes.*



*Have news, photos, or story ideas for June issue?*  
**Email Monique Tarabeh @ [mtarabeh@gspmna.org](mailto:mtarabeh@gspmna.org)**  
and include captions, dates, and permissions for any images  
by May12, 2026.



**Missionary Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception**

Website: <https://mficgen.org>