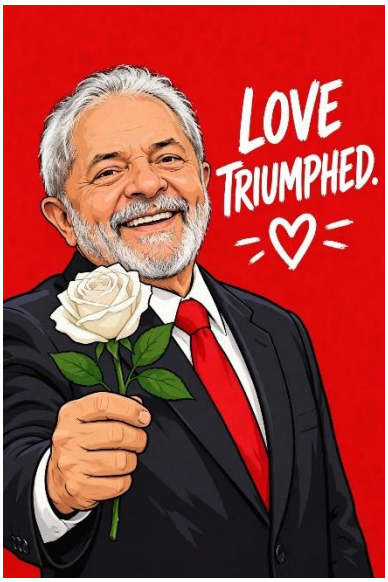
Esperança
NEWSLETTER
Nº 5 - 2026

REFLECTION!



"IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO STOP SPRING FROM COMING"

By: Sr. Elisângela Ferreira Belo

I saw it. I lived through it. I felt it. And even though I witnessed it all so closely, I still find it hard to believe what happened in Brazil. There were moments when it seemed as though hope was hanging by a thread, that the dreams of so many people were about to crumble. The feeling was one of anguish, disbelief, almost mourning, when the results of the first round of the elections were announced. How did we get to this point? How could a country with such riches, with a people so creative, hardworking, and full of courage, find itself facing such uncertainty?

On one side, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, a man who rose from the factory floor, from the labor union struggle, and from organizing workers. A native of the Northeast who knew poverty, felt this country's inequalities firsthand, and transformed his personal journey into a long political career. A man who became President of the Republic and placed hunger, education, health, and human dignity at the center of the national debate.

For millions of Brazilians, Lula represents the possibility that humble origins do not determine a person's destiny. His political journey is linked to significant social achievements, the expansion of access to education, and policies to combat hunger and poverty. His story reminds us that governing cannot mean merely managing numbers: it means caring for people, creating opportunities, and restoring dignity to those who have historically been overlooked.

Brazil is not merely a territory delineated on a map, but a vast treasure trove of human, cultural, and natural wealth. It is a country of fertile lands, abundant water, extraordinary biodiversity, and strategic minerals—home to the world's second-largest reserve of rare earth elements and the majority of the Amazon Rainforest. This heritage cannot be treated as a commodity to be handed over to imperialist interests. Brazil's wealth must serve the lives of its people, sustainable development, and future generations.

That is why national sovereignty matters. That is why we need leaders capable of engaging with the world without sacrificing our autonomy. Brazil is not the backyard of any imperialist foreign power; its people have the right to decide their own destiny.

The opposing campaign was led by Flávio Bolsonaro, the political heir to the imprisoned former president Jair Bolsonaro, who was convicted by the courts for attempting a coup d'état. This faction revived an agenda marked by deep divisions, denialism on fundamental issues, and attacks on social rights—a truly fascist agenda. We cannot ignore the immense risks that arise when disinformation, lies, and stifle genuine debate, when intolerance silences diversity, and when economic power attempts to override human dignity.

But history is not made solely by those who occupy palaces, control vast fortunes, or dominate the media. History is also made by ordinary people—people who work, study, care for others, dream, and, even when tired, find the strength to carry on. And it was just when many had lost faith that hope could blossom that the power of the people made itself heard once again.

Young people raised their voices. Young students took to the streets and reminded the country that the future cannot be decided without them. They defended education, universities, science, culture, and the right to dream of a better life.

On social media, young people, the working class, artists, serious journalists, and society as a whole joined forces against misinformation. Side by side, everyone used their creativity, time, and voice to combat fake news and open channels of dialogue. They shared fact-checked information, confronted lies, and proved that communication is a living tool of resistance and democratic participation.

It was an uneven battle. The monopoly and economic interests of the major tech platforms threatened public debate. There was direct foreign interference in the electoral process. The struggle was immense!

The LGBTQIA+ community was also on the front lines, taking to the streets and social media in an uncompromising defense of their very right to exist. With courage and pride, they turned affection into a shield and identity into a banner, reminding the country that a true democracy cannot leave anyone behind. Their struggle against prejudice and violence was a beacon of freedom, proving that diversity is a treasure that strengthens our people.

The elderly also rose up. Many left the comfort of their homes, braving fatigue and hardships to exercise a right won by so many generations: the right to vote. In their steps lay memory; in their hands, the history of struggles that did not begin today and cannot end tomorrow.

Religious men and women also joined this great movement, adding their voices to those of the people in the streets and on social media to fight for democracy and justice. The prophetic spirit inherent in religious life made hope shine brightly.

And there was something more. There was a force that could not be captured by statistics nor measured by polls. A force born of indignation in the face of injustice, of the memory of those who fought before us, of the faith that sustains so many steps, and of the love that unites different people around a common dream.

For many, this strength came from God. For others, from the protection of Our Lady of Aparecida, Mother of the Brazilian people. For still others, from trust in humanity, in justice, and in the possibility of building a more fraternal world. Different paths, different beliefs, but a shared desire for life to prevail over death, solidarity over selfishness, and dignity over exploitation.

On October 25, 2026, what seemed impossible became a reality: **Love Triumphed!** It became clear to all of us that **it is impossible to prevent the arrival of spring.** This historic victory proved the strength of the unity among young people, students, the working class, artists, journalists committed to the truth, and all of Brazilian society. Together, we stood up to economic power and the monopoly of big tech companies, which tried to control the public debate and dictate what the people should think. However, no structure was able to silence our voice. The lies were exposed, and genuine dialogue prevailed, marking an unforgettable turning point of hope and democratic resistance.

Let’s keep fighting! One battle has been won, and President Lula has been elected. But fascism continues to surround us, and that is why we will not give up. Lula’s victory represents an immense force for Latin America and the Caribbean. We will never accept that imperialist forces overthrow our democracy and our sovereignty. It is in the struggle that we find one another!

CRY OF THE EXCLUDED



The Cry of the Excluded held its **32nd edition on September 7, 2026.** The people took to the streets to affirm that there is no true independence without sovereignty, democracy, rights, and social justice. This event takes place across the country on Brazil's Independence Day, bringing together popular movements, unions, pastoral groups, churches, organizations, and groups committed to social struggles.

The first Grito took place on September 7, 1995, with the slogan **"Life First."** Among the reasons for choosing September 7 was to serve as a counterpoint to the official Declaration of Independence. There is no better date than this to reflect on national sovereignty, which is one of the cornerstones of the "Cry of the Excluded" movements. From this perspective, the event aims to move beyond passive patriotism toward active, participatory citizenship, contributing to the construction of a new society that is just, united, pluralistic, and fraternal. National Day, beyond being a day of festivity and celebration, is also becoming a day of political awareness, demands, and struggle for a new national and global order. It is a day to take to the streets, celebrate, reflect, make demands, and fight.

This year, the demonstrations were guided by the slogan: **"In defense of the Earth, Peace, and Housing, let us raise our voices: Women Alive and Sovereignty!"** The theme resonates directly with the CNBB's Fraternity Campaign and with the historical demands of the working class.



The 2026 edition focused on the realities where life is most threatened. The rally sent a powerful feminist message against the appalling statistics on femicide. Furthermore, the streets echoed with calls to combat racism and LGBTphobia, denounce land conflicts, and address the urgency of crucial labor issues, such as **ending the 6x1** work **schedule** and reducing the workweek without a pay cut.

For us, Sisters, participating in this movement is the essence of our mission: to walk side by side with the people and be part of their daily struggles. Just as Jesus made himself present in the needs of the most vulnerable of his time, being at these demonstrations means occupying the place where Consecrated Religious Life should be. Seeing the working class united in defense of their rights and democracy is deeply gratifying.

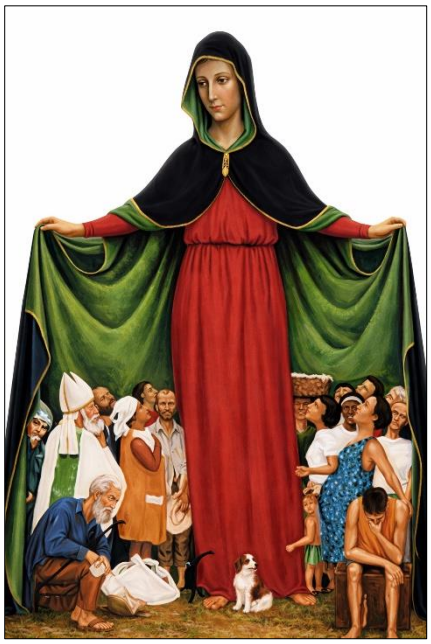
We understand that defending sovereignty goes beyond rejecting external interference or economic pressures against Brazil and Latin America; it means ensuring dignity in everyday life.



A truly independent country ensures employment, food, housing, health care, education, and land for its people.

This endeavor is inseparable from environmental and gender justice. There is no future with the predatory exploitation of our forests and rivers—**defending the Earth is defending life**. Likewise, there is no independence in a society that abuses and kills its women. Combating sexism and femicide is a non-negotiable part of our quest for equality and justice.

SEPTEMBER CELEBRATIONS



In Mariology and the Catholic liturgical tradition, September is a month deeply marked by devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary. It is the time when we celebrate the Nativity of Mary (September 8), the Most Holy Name of Mary (September 12), Our Lady of Sorrows (September 15), and the patroness of our congregation, Our Lady, Mother of Mercy (September 24). This feast honors the spiritual power, reverence, and grace associated with Mary, highlighting her role as a compassionate intercessor who brings God's mercy to humanity.

On the feast of Our Lady, Mother of Mercy, we gathered the children, staff, and teachers from the Mãe de Misericórdia and Madre Michele schools. We came together in prayer, joy, and celebration with the children's song and dance performances, which paid a beautiful tribute to the Blessed Virgin.







ANNUAL RETREAT OF THE MOVEMENT OF MERCY



From September 25 to 27, the Movement of Mercy gathered in our community in Cabedelo for its annual retreat. With the theme "Looking to the example of the saints: Am I aware of my role as a Christian?", the gathering was led by Sister Paula, who gave the talks and guided the reflections.

The members spent these days in an atmosphere of silence, personal prayer, group work, and sharing. It was a profound opportunity to deepen awareness of the Christian commitment in today's world, inspiring daily attitudes and actions based on the witness of the saints—especially the movement's patron saints: Our Lady, Mother of Mercy, and Saint Vincent de Paul.





The retreat concluded with a Eucharistic Celebration presided over by Father Xavier (Comboni Missionaries), during which the members solemnly renewed their commitment.





SISTER GRAÇA'S STUDY DAY IN MANILA



The International Province continues to invest heavily in intensive English language learning. In response to the Congregation's encouragement for all sisters to achieve fluency in the language, the province sends one sister abroad to study each year.

This time, the chosen sister was Sr. Graça, who departed on September 26 for the Philippines to attend an advanced course at *Assumption Language College* in Manila. Upon landing at Ninoy Aquino International Airport on September 28, she was warmly welcomed by the local sisters.

Currently, Sr. Graça is staying with the community in New Manila, which is just a 10- to 15-minute walk from the language school. Her classes officially began on October 5, with an intensive study schedule from 8:45 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.







PILGRIMAGE OF THE LAND



On October 17, peasants, religious leaders, and representatives from various rural and urban communities participated in **the 37th Pilgrimage of the Land** of the Archdiocese of Paraíba, organized by the Pastoral Land Commission (CPT) in partnership with churches and social movements. The march began at Sítio Terra Santa, in Café do Vento, Sobrado, Paraíba, and continued to the Elizabeth Teixeira Settlement—formerly the Antas Farm—located between the municipalities of Sobrado and Sapé, Paraíba.

With the theme **"Seeds sown, lives reaped, land conquered"** and the **motto "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will inherit the earth" (Mt 5:6)**, the pilgrimage united faith, spirituality, and social activism, celebrating the resistance of rural communities, the memory of the martyrs of the struggle for land, and the hope for building a more just and dignified society.



The Eucharistic celebration was presided over by Father Hermínio and concelebrated by Fathers Jean and Wancerley. Honored for his 80th birthday and his dedication to the journey of the communities, Father Hermínio recalled that **"the land is meant to be walked upon, to be worked, and to produce the food necessary for our lives."** He also highlighted the transformation experienced by the communities: whereas the CPT once brought food to families facing hunger, today it is the communities themselves that share the fruits of the land with the CPT and with the pilgrimage participants.

The arrival at the Elizabeth Teixeira Settlement held special significance: after more than six decades of struggle, 21 families from the Barra de Antas Community secured ownership of the land on February 5, 2026.







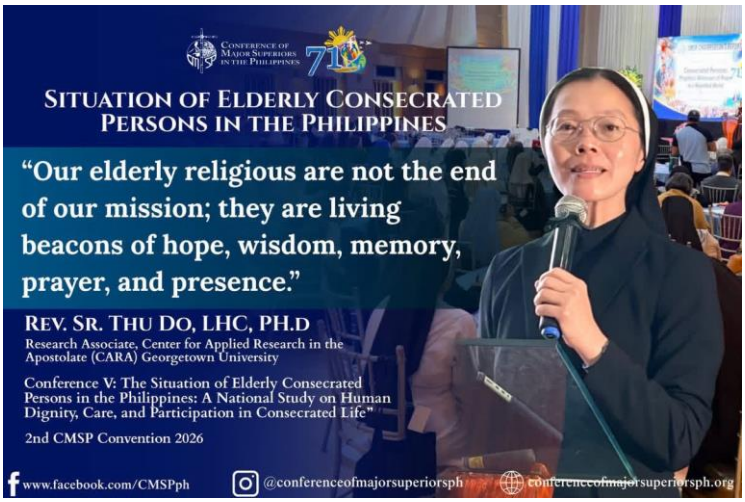


This achievement demonstrates the strength of grassroots organizations and reaffirms the importance of agrarian reform in ensuring food, rights, and dignity for rural communities.

For farmers, the pilgrimage is a reunion among comrades in the struggle, a space for sharing experiences, strengthening faith, and renewing their strength to continue resisting—also for the sake of future generations. For us, the Sisters, it is gratifying to witness the people organized, united, and committed to defending their rights.

Amid celebrations, songs, traditional circle dances, and the sharing of food, the pilgrims renewed their commitment to agrarian reform, social justice, and care for the land. The pilgrimage left a message of hope and solidarity, inviting more people to embrace this cause, so that all may live with dignity, having land, a home, and bread.

ELDERLY SISTERS IN RELIGIOUS LIFE: A LEGACY TO PRESERVE, A MISSION TO CONTINUE



2nd Convention of the Conference of Major Superiors of the Philippines (CMSP) – Zamboanga, Philippines – September 1–5, 2026.

Participation in the 2nd CMSP Convention provided an opportunity for meaningful reflection on the challenges and hopes of religious life. Among the presentations, Sister Thu Do, LHC, gave a notable talk on the place of elderly sisters in the life of the Congregation, the care they deserve, and the legacy they leave to the Church and future generations.

Elderly Sisters: A Treasure for the Congregation

Elderly Sisters have dedicated their lives to God, the Church, and the Congregation. Through prayer, service, sacrifice, and fidelity, they have helped build communities, strengthen the faith, and serve those most in need. Their value does not depend on their ability to continue working: even in frailty or illness, their vocation remains meaningful. Their presence, wisdom, and prayer continue to enrich the life of the Congregation.

We also remember the Sisters who have already passed away, whose legacy lives on in the works they began, the people they accompanied, and the spirituality they passed on. This legacy leads us to ask: **what legacy are we building today?** Do we want to leave behind only institutions and works, or also a witness of faith, charity, humility, generosity, and fidelity to our vocation?

A Legacy That Brings Responsibility

As Sisters of Charity of Our Lady Mother of Mercy (SCMM), we belong to an international Congregation, united by a common charism and mission. While some communities, especially in Europe, are declining in number, others, particularly in Asia, continue to grow.

This growth is both a blessing and a responsibility. We are called to embrace and pass on the legacy we have received, to deepen our spirituality, to strengthen our formation, to prepare younger Sisters for leadership, and to learn from the experience of our older communities. The differences among our realities should strengthen our solidarity, communion, and shared responsibility.

Preparing for the Future: Care and Financial Sustainability

The increase in the number of elderly Sisters and the decrease in the number of active Sisters require planning to ensure dignified housing, medical care, emotional and spiritual support, and sufficient financial resources.

Among the necessary measures are the creation or strengthening of a retirement and elder care fund, the regular setting aside of resources, the responsible management of assets, the development of sustainable sources of income, and the evaluation of the pension and social protection systems available in each country.

This planning must begin while resources and people are still available to make responsible decisions. Trust in Divine Providence must go hand in hand with prudent and compassionate stewardship.

Preparing resources for old age is not merely a financial matter, but an expression of gratitude, love, and justice toward the Sisters who have dedicated their lives to the Congregation. As an International Province, which brings together the communities of the United States, Brazil, and the Philippines, we are called to strengthen our collaboration and seek ways to support one another.

Lay Associates: A Spiritual Family

Lay associates and friends also contribute to the continuity of the SCMM's charism. Their participation in prayer, formation, and mission demonstrates that the desire to serve and remain faithful to the spirituality does not diminish with age. Although their form of commitment differs from consecrated life, they are part of our spiritual family and help transmit our charism to new generations.

Leading with Compassion and Responsibility

Today's challenges call for leadership that combines compassion, prudence, gratitude, and realism. We need to listen to our elderly Sisters, ensure they receive adequate care and support, and prepare the younger Sisters to take on responsibilities without leaving them to face these challenges alone.

This involves turning reflection into concrete actions: planning for care in old age, evaluating retirement benefits, strengthening financial management, analyzing the sustainability of our ministries, and expanding collaboration among communities.

Above all, each Sister is a person called by God, a member of our religious family, and a bearer of the charism. Our decisions must respect her dignity and be guided by the Gospel values of charity, justice, and solidarity.

Gratitude for the past, responsibility in the present, and hope for the future

The future of the SCMM will depend not only on the number of vocations or available resources, but also on the depth of our spirituality, the quality of our relationships, and our fidelity to the charism.

We are called to build communities where every Sister is valued at every stage of life, where the elderly receive the care they deserve, where young women embrace the mission with hope, and where our associates are recognized as part of our spiritual family.

The fundamental question is not merely how to sustain the Congregation, but **how to remain faithful to the mission God has entrusted to us**. We have received a precious spiritual heritage, and we are responsible for preserving it, living it out generously, and passing it on to future generations.

Our elderly Sisters have given us their lives; now, we are called to carry on the legacy they have entrusted to us. Their faith, charity, sacrifices, and love continue to live on in us. May we be worthy of this heritage, wise in preparing for the future, and courageous in carrying out our mission.



CELEBRATING LIFE: SISTER MEL RYLEY'S 80TH BIRTHDAY



On a sunny day in the United States, Sr. Mel Ryley gathered friends to celebrate her **80th birthday**, an occasion marked by joy, friendship, and gratitude. Amid sweets, cookies, and delicious food, everyone shared special moments, good conversation, and the warmth of those who walk alongside one another. It was a celebration of life, of the bonds of friendship, and of all that these 80 years represent: a story filled with experiences, encounters, and shared love.