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The sisters prayed, meditated and discussed specially about the following themes:

Broader environmental action

Catholic sisters have a unique opportunity and responsibility to lead efforts to curb climate change and environmental degradation as individuals, communities and a network of congregations worldwide. To share environmental practices many communities have adopted for decades the efforts of women religious who are putting Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'* into practice.

Sisters live and minister both in countries where lifestyle contributes to the rise in temperatures and in regions where climate change has the strongest effects.

"Sowing Hope for the Planet", which has a website in six languages, collects examples of congregations' environmental practices and serves as a resource base and platform for webinars on environmental topics such as the interconnectedness of Earth and people who are poor. The campaign is a collaborative effort with the JPIC Commission and the Global Catholic Climate Movement.

Abuse and challenges

During this year's assembly, UISG celebrated the 10th anniversary of the founding of Talitha Kum, the worldwide network of consecrated persons against human trafficking. Talitha Kum grew out of the 2003 assembly and is an example of the role of UISG and its assemblies in deepening religious life and ministries. It was launched in 2009.

Abuse within the Church: also in religious communities

In light of the ongoing abuse scandal within the Church, the executive board of UISG issued a statement condemning any abuse of power and the "necessity to form the members of our congregations so that relationships at every level are healthy, respectful and mutual." "It is important for us as leaders to speak up and to take appropriate action whenever and wherever needed."

UISG has responded to needs of its members by providing help with training formators and requests for canon law advice as well as focusing on intercultural community living. Use of webinars and other technology tools have enabled UISG to extend its training and reach.

Interculturality and interreligious dialogue

Adopting a true model of interculturality is urgent for congregations and the entire Catholic Church. Interculturality moves beyond a multicultural approach that recognizes differences to one that celebrates and integrates them in forging a new culture within a community.

There was provided a theoretical framework on moving from multiculturalism to interculturality and practical approaches on how to do so.

Many congregations were at the forefront of multicultural life for almost a century before the concept became more widespread in society. It is this capital of experience and knowledge that we are called today to share with one another and to put at the service of humanity and the Church.

As congregations adapt to a more intercultural approach, women religious can by example become "one of the seeds of prophetic hope" to sow in the world.

Good relations, communication and good coexistence, although very important and necessary, are not enough. The intercultural community is called to take a step beyond the tolerance of differences and to live a process of transformation or conversion that challenges it to create as a result of this interrelation a new culture.

This model is "diametrically opposed" to the assimilationist model that prevailed and, in many cases, still survives in how most congregations recruited vocations in so-called "mission countries". In that assimilationist model, the minority "or presumably underdeveloped, uncivilized cultures or pagans" had to adapt, conform and assume the superior or majority culture while abandoning their own. By contrast, the model presented by interculturality seeks to know, value, deepen and integrate these differences. As a result, a new culture emerges in which we can all give the best of ourselves, share our gifts and let ourselves be challenged by the encounter and the relationship with the 'different.'

This process is countercultural, one in which few people would feel comfortable because cultures "program" people to protect themselves from those who are different and their potential threats. Living interculturality is a vocation and a countercultural option and that, as such, appeals to the faith and to the life of grace. Humanly, we all tend to seek and interact with those with whom we feel identified and, therefore, understood.

Three elements are essential in introducing interculturality into communities. The first is preparation, including basic knowledge of the traits and characteristics of the interacting cultures. Preparation also requires creation of a "safe space" where members can express themselves without fear of judgment.

The second element is intentionality, which requires adopting tools for communication and resolution of expressed and latent conflicts. Work is also required on personal and community levels to strengthen the capacity for resilience and detect "the dangerous, conformist attitude that is content with a simple tolerance of the difference."

Spirituality is the third element, as intercultural life emerges from our 'catholic' (i.e., 'universal') faith and is a lifelong personal process of conversion.

As a spiritual path, intercultural life and mission is not so much a goal, but, rather, a search and a process. There are no recipes, nor are there quick solutions to the conflicts that it entails. Rather, interculturality challenges us to live with the paradoxes and the grey zones of the liminal spaces that open us to transformation and growth.

The assembly continued with a focus on interreligious dialogue and concluded with an audience with Pope Francis and the celebration of the 10th anniversary of the anti-trafficking network Talitha Kum.