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In this photo released by LongeviQuest, Sister Inah Canabarro, 115, puts her hands together in prayer, in Porto Alegre, Brazil, Friday, February 16, 2024. (Carlos Macedo/LongeviQuest, via AP)

by Associated Press

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A soccer-loving nun from Brazil is believed to have become the world's oldest living person at nearly 117 following the [recent death of a woman from Japan](#).

[Sister Inah Canabarro](#) was so skinny growing up that many didn't think she would survive childhood, Cleber Canabarro, her 84-year-old nephew, told The Associated Press.

LongeviQuest, an organization that tracks supercentenarians around the globe, released a statement on Saturday declaring the wheelchair-bound nun the world's oldest person validated by early life records.

In a video shot by the organization last February, the smiling Canabarro can be seen cracking jokes, sharing miniature paintings she used to make of wild flowers and reciting the Hail Mary prayer.

The secret to longevity? Her Catholic faith, she says.

"I'm young, pretty and friendly — all very good, positive qualities that you have too," the Teresian nun tells the visitors to her retirement home in the southern Brazilian city of Porto Alegre.

Her nephew spends time with her every Saturday and sends her voice messages between visits to keep her spirits up following two hospitalizations that left her weak, with difficulty talking.

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"The other sisters say she gets a jolt when she hears my voice," he says. "She gets excited."

Canabarro was born on June 8, 1908 to a large family in southern Brazil, according to LongeviQuest researchers. But her nephew said her birth was registered two weeks late and she was actually born on May 27. Her great-grandfather was a famed Brazilian general who took up arms during the turbulent period following Brazil's independence from Portugal in the 19th century.

She took up religious work still a teenager and spent two years in Montevideo, Uruguay, before moving to Rio de Janeiro and eventually settling in her home state of Rio Grande do Sul. A lifelong teacher, among her former students was Gen. Joao Figueiredo, the last of the military dictators who governed Brazil between 1964 and 1985. She was also the beloved creator of two marching bands at schools in sister

cities straddling the border between Uruguay and Brazil.

For her 110th birthday, she was honored by Pope Francis. She is the second oldest nun ever documented, after [Lucile Randon](#), who was the world's oldest person until her death in 2023 at the age of 118.

Local soccer club Inter — which was founded after Canabarro's birth — celebrates every year the birthday of its oldest fan. Her room is decorated with gifts in the team's red and white colors, says her nephew.

"White or black, rich or poor, whoever you are, Inter is the team of the people," she says in one [video posted on social media](#) celebrating her 116th birthday with the club's president.

Canabarro took the title of the oldest living person following the death of Japan's Tomiko Itooka in December, according to LongeviQuest. She now ranks as the 20th oldest documented person to have ever lived, a list topped by Frenchwoman Jeanne Calment, who died in 1997 at the age of 122, according to LongeviQuest.