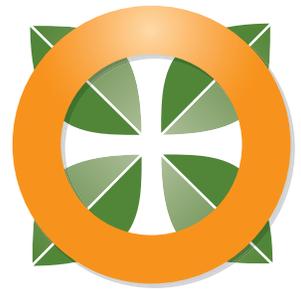


Mission Messages

A publication of the **St. Joseph Worker Program of Orange**

Winter 2021



Our Camino Year 2021

As the St. Joseph Worker Program enters its seventh year, we celebrate a sense of renewal. Like everyone else we have had to embrace the opportunity to face the everchanging world through a different lens with a new normal. Our Workers participated in an opening retreat, where they followed a simulation of the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage (the Way of St. James). Through lessons, prayer, and reflection our workers had the opportunity to experience not only “The” Camino, but “their own” Camino., carrying those lessons as they ventured out as St. Joseph Workers in 2021.

Representative of their unique cultures and values, our Workers continually share on a journey of spiritual growth. Throughout this journey together they work on building a strong community of sisterhood with awareness in understanding the sufferings of their neighbors. Each of them reflect in their own way and overcome challenges as they journey individually and together to apply the five Camino lessons. Directional symbols are used as guides along the Camino. Our Workers received a scalloped shell with these symbols, representing camaraderie with those journeying along the great pilgrm trail.

We invite you to walk your “Camino” with us and journey with our Workers in their own lesson reflections. How would you walk your Camino?

Mission

Empowering women to respond to the needs of the times in the tradition of the Sisters of St. Joseph.

Vision

We create a year-long service opportunity for women in preparation for a life-long commitment to social change and personal transformation. Individual growth and development is built on the values of leadership, spirituality, social justice and intentional community grounded in living simply and sustainably. Rooted within the spirit of the Sisters of St. Joseph, St. Joseph Workers live the mission: “Love of God and the dear neighbor without distinction.”

You're Invited

We invite women aged 21-35 to become St. Joseph Workers from August to June.

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A Ministry of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange

Lesson 1: We Each Walk Our Own Camino

When I first arrived in Orange, I didn't know what I should expect from this year or what I should even call this journey I was preparing to embark on. During our first retreat, I learned that the word I was looking for was Camino, a pilgrimage meant to make life more meaningful. Out of all the lessons from the Camino, it's the first that I've found most applicable to my everyday life. Lesson one reminds us that we each walk our own Camino, we set our own pace. I think that this lesson has stood out to me in part due to my placement site. At the Regina Residence, the population that I serve has a much different demographic than my own. Their Camino has challenges that mine doesn't and I think understanding that has helped me become more patient and understanding.

Emily Michaelis is from the University of Central Missouri currently serving as Activities Assistant, St. Joseph Center Regina Residence, Orange, CA



Lesson 2: Trust the Camino

Before coming to the program, I used to think: "I am never good enough to follow God. I don't go to Mass, I don't pray, and I will never fit the mold the Church wants me to be. I have never and will never know Him." However, the Camino Retreat changed my life and left me with this parting lesson at the end of the retreat: "God dwells in the service you do for others." At that very moment, I felt tears welling up in my eyes. I said that I was never good enough for Him. I said I never knew him. I turned away from Him because I was ashamed. However, service has always been instinctual for me. Serving others was my way of life. On that final day of the Camino, I learned I have always known God; I have always been good enough for Him; I have always loved to serve and that through my service, I was filled with His presence. That realization propelled me with immense power these past 100 days. I blossomed at Mission Hospital with new ideas for diversity, equity, and inclusion. I thirsted for prayer services and retreats with the Sisters of St. Joseph to learn about their relationship with God and how they help the poor and vulnerable in modern times. As I write this reflection, I come with a completely new version of myself, both spiritually and physically. I cut my hair for the first time in 10 years and donated it to Locks of Love as a symbol of my devotion and change of life. I give my whole self to the Camino, and to those I serve for God dwells in the service I do for others and so God dwells in me.



Jaesen Evangelista graduated from Catholic University of America in Washington, DC. She is currently serving at Mission Hospital/Family Resource Center, Lake Forest, CA.

Lesson 3: Be Open to the Sacred



Since coming to serve at St. Joseph School, I believe I have developed a much clearer awareness of what it means to be a teacher. During our Camino retreat, Sr. Mary Beth spoke about how we all, as humans, have a small part of our inner selves that simply wants to “love and be loved in return.” As I reflect on my first quarter of service, I could not help but think of how these words reflect so much of my experience with the children at St. Joseph. Just as adults do, children desperately want to be loved by their teacher even on their worst behaved days. They want to know their teacher will fight for them and choose to forgive them even when they make the same mistake over and over. When a child acts out, their teacher corrects them and moves on. As a perfectionist, I have had to learn the same lesson- to accept my mistakes as moments of growth and forgive myself so that I may move on.



Teaching is about knowing that every day is a new day and a fresh start. My first quarter at St. Joseph has not been easy, but these challenges have only made the successful days even more rewarding. My experiences have reminded me over and over again of my imperfection, but still that I can strive to do the will of God and to go where the spirit is leading me. Teaching is as simple and as difficult as unconditional love. To love and to be loved in return. To know that I may not be able to fix every single problem that arises, but I can choose to open my heart to one child at a time, as they have opened their hearts to me.

Emma Shay is from the Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio and is currently serving as Classroom Aide at St. Joseph School, Santa Ana, CA

Lesson 4: We Do Not Walk Alone

My Camino so far has been a road I could not have even imagined because of all the opportunities and surprises along the way. One of these opportunities’ centers around the core value of Social Justice. I am glad that I am walking on this part of my Camino with Jaesen, my counterpart at the other family resource center and project lead. We have been working on a series of webinars with amazing speakers to educate South Orange County on different cultures and the social justice issues which those communities face. Our first webinar on Latinx culture is very important because it focuses on a rich and beautiful culture that is very present in California and that faces a plethora of issues from healthcare to housing to food scarcity due to racism and other barriers. Jaesen and I have focused on finding speakers to shed more light on these issues to not only educate the community but ourselves. We hope to do the same for other cultures such as African, Asian, Native American, and Middle Eastern later in the year. This point in my Camino marks a turning point to something deeper.

Cindy Emenalo graduated from the University of Notre Dame and is currently serving at Mission Hospital/Family Resource Center, San Juan Capistrano, CA.



Lesson 5: Embrace Each Day



Taking things day by day has never been a strength of mine. I tend to look ahead to the next thing, failing to live in the present moment. I was asked to give a talk to some of the seniors at Rosary Academy on self-

identity and self-esteem. While brainstorming for the talk, I was flipping through my journal and found a quote I jotted down from the Camino Retreat by Macrina Wiederkehr, “O God, help me to believe the truth about myself, no matter

how beautiful it is.” I used that as the central point of my talk at Rosary. I said that it can be difficult to recognize the beauty that God has bestowed on us, and to bear that beauty proudly around others takes a new level of courage and vulnerability. In giving this talk, I realized that lesson was one that I needed to apply to my own life as well: do I hide my God-given beauty- my gifts, talents, passions- from others out of fear of rejection? Or do I bear that beauty proudly? Since the Camino Retreat, I’ve grown in vulnerability and recognition of my own beauty, both when I’m alone with God and when I’m with others.

Nina Dorsett graduated from The Catholic University of America in Washington, DC. She is currently serving as Campus Ministry Assistant at Rosary Academy, Fullerton, CA.

Re-imagining a Camino Beyond

I am one of those people who start the new year with a pen and a paper at hand, reflecting on the past year and planning for the next. Like everyone else following the same ritual, I did not see Covid-19 coming. Looking at 2020-2021 as a Camino, a pilgrimage that obscured in the unknown yet took shape in it, I gave myself the chance to be more fluid and flexible. I had my days and plans aligned at the start of the year yet the change that Covid-19 provoked took me on a route of focus, curiosity, and creativity.

Journeying with fellow St. Joseph Workers on the Camino that has been 2020-2021 shifted my paradigm from “what about the needs in our neighborhoods?” to “what about the neighbor behind the needs?” This I believe, is a Camino beyond, that I was able to embrace only through allowing

flexibility and fluidity in my journey.

Honorine Uwimana began her journey with SJWP in 2019.

After serving for 18 months, she

was accepted to the University of San Francisco for a Master’s degree in Public Health and Policy. She lives intentionally with current workers and attended the Camino Retreat with Sr. Mary Beth Ingham, CSJ a second time.



Help Us to Help the Dear Neighbor

Thank you for the many ways you support the St. Joseph the Worker Program – your presence, prayers and contributions - spreading the news and sharing your resources! Our financial needs are increasing as we move out of the Motherhouse to make way for Mercy Housing - Villa St. Joseph.

We welcome any amount to help us cover these expenses for one St. Joseph Worker:

- \$50 weekly food costs
- \$325 Monthly Medical Insurance
- \$150 monthly support for personal needs such as a cell phone to stay connected during the pandemic

Please consider a gift. Donations are graciously and gratefully accepted:

- Online at sjworange.org
- Checks to St. Joseph Worker Program may be mailed to 440 S Batavia St, Orange, CA 92868