

Mission Messages

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

Fall 2023



Branching Out from Strong Roots

A tree is a beautiful part of nature that starts off as a tiny seedling and grows into a marvelous creation. For the tree to reach its full potential, it must rely on its roots for nutrients. A tree's roots serve as the foundation to its growth, and the roots must absorb sunlight and water for it to grow. The tree must also be prepared to adapt to the various seasons that it will face. For every branch that bends or for every leaf that falls, the tree must persevere.

If you think about it, trees are a lot like us, and we can learn from them. For a person's growth, it is needed for their roots to receive love, support, and knowledge, among other necessities. And for a person to blossom, they must be able to adapt to change, remember their values, let go of what does not support them, and work towards embracing their current season.

In this edition of *Mission Messages*, the St. Joseph Workers (SJWs) of 2023-24 - Belle, Karina and Katelyn - reflect on the parallels they see between themselves and nature's trees.

You're Invited

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

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.

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A Ministry of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange



“We are adapting to this new season in our lives while also remembering where our roots were first planted back home with our families. Now, our roots are being cared for in Orange County within our service community. As SJWs, we receive guidance to branch out and to never stop growing.”

SJWs share where they come from via maps displayed in their house.

Belle: Adapt to Change

Like a tree, I strive to embrace the changes in my inner and outer environment so I may thrive and grow. This phrase speaks to me because I have begun to learn to push myself. I am more open to new ways of life. I adapted to a life of simplicity by being intentional about what I fuel my body with. In our house on Walnut, we also eat food from the garden and limit our use of plastic. It was a hard pill to swallow at first that I may not have Taco Bell for 10 months, however, I now look forward to eating at home with my community. These small moments in time with my community have made all the difference for me. Picking fruit in the garden or baking something new fills me with joy. I enjoy being present in the moment and cooking with my roommates who have become my best friends.

My adaptation to a change towards simplicity has drastically improved my ability to eat and feel healthy. I have also learned to adapt to new ways of sharing community and even communication. Though difficult at the start, adaptation has allowed me to open the doors to a new life that I did not know existed. In this adapted life, I feel rejuvenated. I am blossoming into a person that I am proud of.

Belle Morris is serving at Mission Hospital's affiliated Family Resource Centers.



Katelyn: Go Out On a Limb



The advice to take the chance and go out on a limb is a great example of what this service year has been for me. I was extremely excited to be a SJW, but it was also a major transition for me. I traveled across the U.S. to serve, and I was full of nerves on the way here. I knew that this opportunity felt right to me, but I began to overthink everything. I was worried that the distance from my family may be too hard to handle or that I would not fit into the program as smoothly as I hoped. But with all the worries aside, my trust in God's push to go out on a limb and to join the program was the best decision that I could have ever made.

By taking a major chance, I have now been given the opportunity to serve a local community, experience personal growth, and to build upon my relationship with God like I had hoped. I love every day more than I ever have before. I get excited to wake up in the morning and to head towards my placement sites. I find myself a much happier person when I dedicate my time to serving others and to see how a small amount of my time makes a major difference in their lives. Just as a tree may worry that a branch may not reach out as far as it thinks or that it cannot hold a branch that seems too big, sometimes giving yourself grace and going for the growth is what matters most of all. It did for me.

Katelyn Dewberry is serving at the Hub Resource Center and the Communications Office of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange.

St. Joseph Worker Program of Orange

Karina: Enjoy the View

Trees are silent teachers that offer us valuable lessons throughout their development process. On their journey, they face a series of challenges that can hinder their growth. Adverse weather conditions sometimes work against the needs of their roots, and pests and drought can become obstacles in their path. Nevertheless, they do not give up; they relentlessly strive to grow, reach their peak, and ultimately provide the fruits for which they were created.

Similarly, in our lives, discovering our purpose invites us to persevere despite adversity. We often find ourselves amidst the undergrowth threatening our growth or weathering storms that make us doubt our path. When I began to seek answers to the question of why God created me, my perspective changed completely. I realized that the “fertilizer” that I was using was not suitable, and I understood that continuing in that way could limit my growth. So, I made the decision to trust and change my approach, embarking on the SJW experience. Today, I understand that God’s message to me is clear: never stop growing.



In addition to this, there is this constant invitation from the Lord to enjoy the view along the journey. Each day, God bestows precious gifts upon us: the morning awakening, the gentle breeze, trees bursting with color, the diversity of flowers, the birds’ songs, and the constant expression of His love. Following the example of a tree, we can grow as much as God dreamed, yield the fruits He longed for, and relish the journey. As the sunset of life approaches, a new invitation unfolds: Embrace the present and fully enjoy this journey.

Karina Correa Yepes is serving at Christ Cathedral and at Regina Residence.

Our Goals of Growth

We desire for our roots to continue growing in the areas of the SJW Program’s values, and we are committed to these four values:

Community, Leadership, Social Justice, and Simplicity.



Our Community’s Mission:

“Together as a community, we commit to a journey of healing and growth amongst not only our St. Joseph Workers 2023-24, but the Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange community and beyond...”

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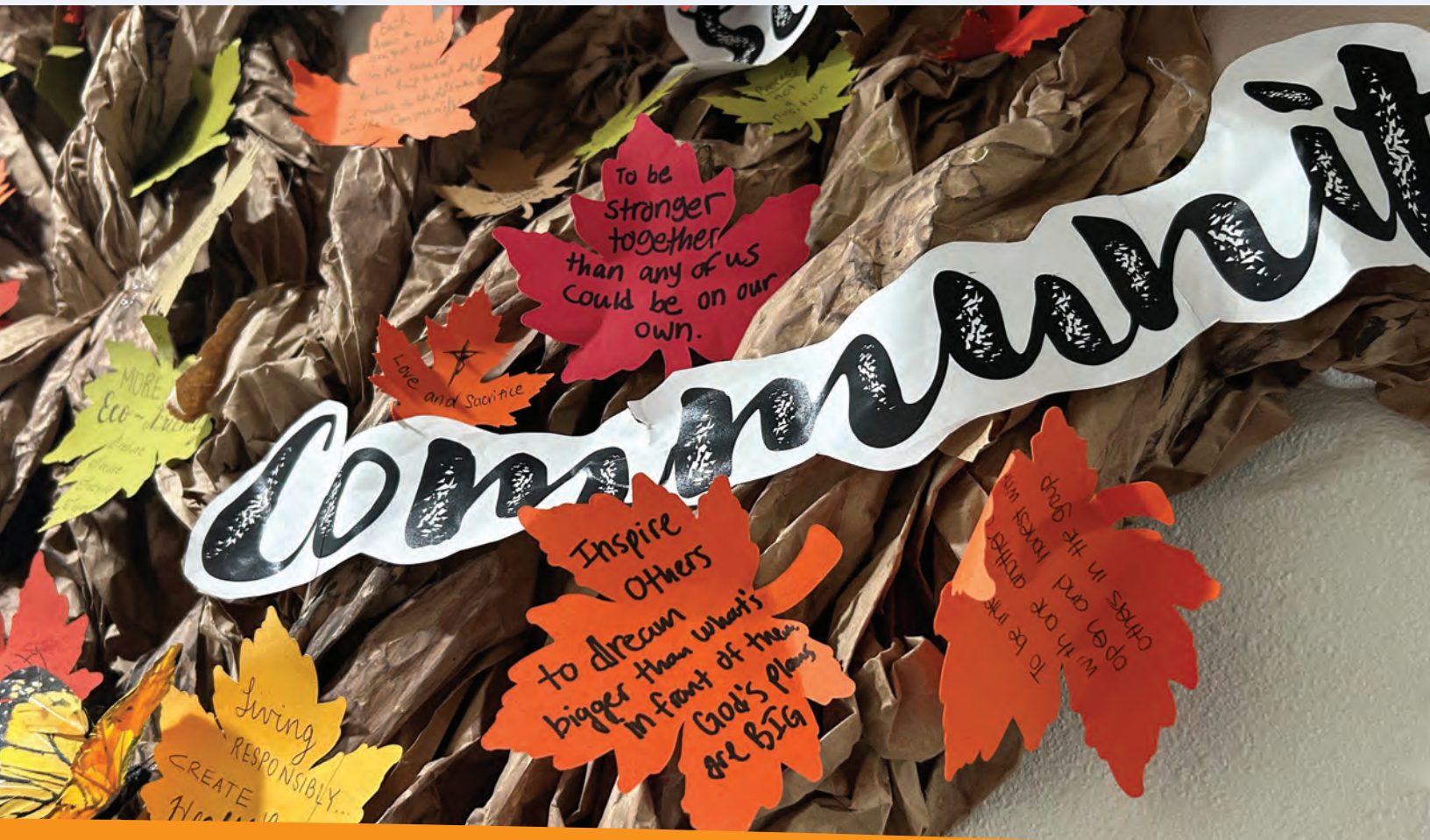
The Beauty of Transformation

As each of us continues to grow and change on our SJW journeys, it is important that we rely on the advice of the tree. We hope to adapt to change as we are learning new skills at our placement sites and learning new ways to grow as a community. We strive to go out on a limb and take chances when it comes to bettering ourselves.

And among all the growth, we must never forget the value of enjoying the view and the power of transformation. Our time as SJWs is a blessing, and it is wonderful to serve as additional branches on the tree that SJWs before us have

created. Their roots have provided us with the opportunity to transform the tree into an even more beautiful creation that will be left for the SJWs of the future.

- *In what ways are you growing as a tree or changing like the leaves do?*
- *How are you transforming into the beautiful creation that God created you to be?*



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! We welcome any amount to help us cover the \$18,000 annual expenses for one St. Joseph Worker: room and board, medical insurance, transportation, monthly stipend for personal needs, domestic violence advocate certification, empowerment training and retreats.

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