

# Formation and Vocation Update

*“We welcome into our community young women who share our call to live a radical evangelical life rooted in the Spirit. Through a process of growth in Christian and social awareness, in prayer, in community and in apostolic involvement, new members gradually become incorporated into our society until they are ready for a lifelong commitment to God, to all in our community and to its charism and mission.”*

*(From Life in the Spirit, Constitutions of the Sisters of Social Service)*



**Sr. Marie Lindemann,**  
*Vocation and Formation Director*

The Sisters of Social Service continue to be blessed by the vocations of women responding to God’s call here in California, Mexico, Taiwan and the Philippines. We would like to focus on **Sister Maria Elena Salinas Santos**, our Novice Director in Morelia, Mexico, and her experience with one of the Novices, **Sr. Maria Isabel Garcia Rodriguez**. Sr. Maria Isabel began her novitiate last September, and Sister Maria Elena accompanies her on her journey. Please keep her and our other novices in your prayers as they continue to discern their lives with ours as Sisters of Social Service.



*Sisters Maria Isabel and Maria Elena share their joy this Lent.*



*Above: International conversation at Assembly: In the U.S.: Sisters Naomi, Nodelyn, Gail and Vangie; in the Philippines by Skype: Sisters Sonia, Ada and Camille. Left: Sr. Maria Isabel with youth during Holy Week, 2013.*



## Walking with the Novices

**Sr. Maria Elena Santos**

I believe God gives us many gifts to be able to serve in the mission given to each person he has called.

To be responsible for the novices’ formation has given me new paths in how to relate with others that have the same mission. Along with my new responsibilities right now, I also must not forget my own dreams and hopes for my own professional development and as a human being.

Following Jesus’ call is not always easy, and I am conscious of the great responsibility I have in guiding these young women. It takes a complete self-giving—this is sometimes difficult and at the same time a refreshing experience. I have learned from Maria Isabel’s cheerful and profound response to the call she feels God has made for her to join our community of Sisters of Social Service. Of course, there are limitations in my part since as a human being I am not perfect but I am very open to keep learning together in this pathway of life.

For our SSS Mexican community, having women in formation brings us great joy and hope, both for the young women’s new gifts and the opportunity for our community to grow. It is a blessed challenge for all since all of us are somehow involved in formation: giving classes, leading a retreat or just sharing in the daily living.

This has been also an opportunity to know and interact with other sisters from other religious communities.

In the last few months this experience has been very enriching and full of challenges that are helping me to grow and value even more the life I’m living in this moment: I am happy to be able to give this service.

I only ask God to continue giving the necessary gifts to be a good instrument to continue this great mission.

## Novitiate Experience

**Sr. Maria Isabel Garcia Rodriguez**

During this time in my novitiate I am having beautiful moments and great challenges, including the opportunity to know and be with the sisters with whom I share the same vocation. This experience makes me understand how great my community is—it’s

*(Formation, continued on page 13)*



*Ri, Olga and Stella were present at Bishop Kussala's dinner on February 17, 2013. Olga and Stella are SSS Associates.*

*(Bishop, continued from page 12)*

people are ready to welcome any who wish to visit and share their gifts with the people there.

Besides having an unforgettable evening with Bishop, we were able to contribute a sizable amount for Bishop Kussala's ministry. I thought of Sr. Margaret's teaching "To spread around us the Spirit of prayer and love, this is the core of our calling." May we encourage each other to follow this teaching. ■

— Sr. Theresa Marie Chen and Sr. Deborah Lorentz

*(Formation, continued from page 5)*

very enriching to share studies and living experiences together and to know Jesus in a deep way.

**Jesus is not only a theory, he is also a living experience,** and in my apostolate in catechesis and in the shelter our work is allowing me to live some of the theories I'm learning. The most important experience is to be in touch with people because that has been a challenge to me. It is awakening my conscience about the reality we are living and makes me understand just how important the services we give are. I also find other lessons and have been questioning if my actions are being given to God or just to human kind.

Without a question, the time of novitiate is a time with different aspects, but I am very grateful for my sisters and their support and company in every moment during this time. I thank God that every day gives me an opportunity to strengthen myself and for being my guide to have come to this point in my life. ■

— Compiled by Jamey Fitzpatrick

*(Award, continued from page 7)*

Our goal was to lift up the needs of those living in poverty in our rich nation and to push back against Congressman Paul Ryan's proposal to severely cut safety-net programs that help struggling families. As a person of faith, I must confess that I find the effectiveness of our bus trip a tremendous gift, dare I say an explosion of the Holy Spirit.

While on the road, my spirit was touched—and renewed—by so many people we met and stories we heard. We met Wilbur, a single father raising his six girls while struggling with cancer. And Billy and his wife and two boys who, though he has a job, must still turn to food stamps and St. Benedict's dining room for food. We met Shiesha who is making a life for herself after having been in foster homes as a child, where she never learned stability. And Tia, who is learning to parent after being homeless at age 16.

There are so many stories from our bus trip that fill every space in my heart. Yet I find there is always room for more. There were the people who helped to support the bus trip, including a man who delights in his commercial construction business so that he can create jobs and beauty. A couple contributed a large amount of money in honor of two Catholic Sisters who work in one of the challenged cities of our nation. And a man from California sent what he could—\$2.50. We were all working together to support our mission.

This effort of our small organization has stirred up our people so that more see that government has a positive role to play in solving our nation's problems. People are beginning to realize that government IS the way that democracy gets problems solved and goals accomplished.

In our election last month, though corporations contributed hundreds of millions of dollars, their money in many races did not sway the election results. Our citizens saw through much of the rhetoric and millions of dollars of advertising, and they voted their consciences.

And more than ever, people with low incomes turned out, voted and used their power to express their perspective about the way forward. People got off their couches and realized they needed to be engaged together for the sake of our nation and our world.

In short, this election was a significant step forward to breathing new life into our 236-year-old democracy.

We still have much work to do. As a person of faith, I have hope that we will continue to build community, for at its heart that is what democracy is—as our Constitution says, "We the People...Forming a more perfect Union." And I pray that our campaign of Nuns on the Bus and this treasured award might be a further catalyst to helping my country take its appropriate piece of responsibility on the global stage. We all need to work together to ensure that there is a way for all voices to be heard.

As a person of faith, I know that we are all connected. In our Christian scriptures Saint Paul calls us one body. For me, democracy is the way that we organized this body and lift up the dignity of all. So I thank you all for recognizing our part in this global body by honoring our work. I would say that by this recognition, you have chosen to join us on the bus. Together, nationally and globally, we Catholic Sisters and all people of good will join together to drive for faith, democracy and justice. ■

— By Sr. Simone Campbell, SSS, and Executive Director of NETWORK



*Left: Jessica, Sr. Simone and NETWORK supporters march for peace.*

*Right: Sr. Simone helps explain budget ramifications on the safety net and critical needs.*

