

A PUBLICATION OF THE SISTERS OF LIFE WINTER ISSUE



IMPRINT

we were never meant
to be alone



This Christmas

reconnect with JESUS

What is it about a smile?

It can melt hearts on the spot. I've seen it again and again, in what may be the toughest of proving grounds: New York City. A genuine smile, a gentleness in the eyes, and a connection happens.

Throughout each day, we're seeking connections whether we're aware of it or not: we turn on our phone and check for texts and e-mails; we meet someone, ask where they're from and immediately: do you know so-and-so? Connections. We greet our children and spontaneously wrap them in a hug; we suffer a humiliation and call a friend who would understand. Connections. When an affective connection happens, somehow, we feel more whole—things seem more right. And they are. All day long we're looking for connections because we're made for connection—we're made for love. The greatest fear today is the fear of not being loved. It's terrible to suffer loneliness, dis-connection, the experience of being left out, on the sidelines, alone.

Whenever we experience disconnection—whether it's from misunderstanding or rejection, isolation caused by destructive choices, or the death of a loved one—we intuitively know something isn't right. Disconnection leaves us restless while connection allows us to rest secure in love.

All the beautiful connections in life are preludes to our ultimate communion with God, who even now is seeking each of our hearts as the lost coin, the lost sheep. Jesus says, "Come to me,

all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest." (Mt. 11:28) Our God doesn't shout these words across eternal canyons; He whispers, "Come to me," in the depths of your heart and mine. He has first come to us.

This is the never-diluted fact of Christmas: our God comes to us. He comes as a baby, with His arms open wide as any child would when seeking a connection. And He waits, ever-patiently, whispering, "Come to me." He waits and, in the waiting, He knows the sorrow of our loneliness, our experience of being on the side-lines, misunderstood, rejected—for who of us has not left our Lord there at some point? His love for us has no threshold. Regardless of how long we've made Him wait, He makes connecting with Him as simple as turning our hearts with sincerity in His direction.

This Christmas, take courage and renew your commitment to connect with your loved ones. Take courage and engage someone in need. Take courage and make your way to Jesus as did the Magi and the Shepherds that first Christmas. Turn to Jesus, who awaits you with a smile that will melt your heart and a love that will last forever.

Know that I am, and all the Sisters are, ever grateful for your friendship and support. We lift you and your loved ones before God as we welcome Him this Christmas and everyday.

In Jesus our Joy,

Mother Agnes Mary
Superior General of the Sisters of Life



Where do we live?

“A notion of freedom which exalts the isolated individual in an absolute way...gives no place to solidarity, to openness to others and service of them. Every man is his ‘brother’s keeper,’ because God entrusts us to one another. It is in view of this entrusting that God gives everyone freedom, a freedom which possesses an inherently relational dimension...If the promotion of the self is understood in terms of absolute autonomy, people inevitably reach the point of rejecting one another... Thus society becomes a mass of individuals placed side by side, but without any mutual bonds. In effect, it creates a culture of loneliness.”

-St. John Paul II

We were meant to be connected.

rejection vs connection

In college, Kevin was asked about his 10-year plan and he remembers the answer: to be happily married with two kids (a boy and a girl) and on the fast track of his career. After six years of marriage, and with two small children, Kevin thought everything was falling into place. He’d be at work from 6:30 am until 9:00 pm, always pushing to be the best. “I was so focused on material things and really thought I had what I wanted, but my wife wasn’t happy. She’d have these full days at home with the kids, and I’d feel defensive, having worked all day too. But she needed help. She needed me to be more present and connected to the family.

I began to see that I was doing things not because I had to, but because I wanted to. I was being incredibly selfish and even rationalizing that it was because I wanted all of this stuff for my kids. It was then I realized that being a father is not being a dad and being married is not being a husband.

It was not easy or immediate, but Kevin knew that he had to find his joy in being a dad, in being there for his wife. “Just because you think everything is right, doesn’t mean that’s true for your wife and kids. You have to communicate. I had to recognize I had to change and get back on the right path. I would stop in to St. Patrick’s Cathedral—it gave me the chance to be honest with myself, then my relationship with my wife and children became the center of my life.”

There is a hunger in every human person, a restlessness that sets us searching for what will satisfy. We see the young striving for success—financially, professionally, socially. They may achieve their goals and have plenty of this world’s pleasures and yet still feel painfully empty and lost, wondering if there is any meaning to their lives.

Too often we pursue personal fulfillment alone, as an isolated individual. But we are not meant to walk through life alone. Think about it, God creates every human being in a family, within a network of interconnectedness, in the midst of a community of mutual, unconditional love, encouragement and support. God entrusts us to each other and calls us to make our way back to Him hand in hand.

The following are interviews with several of our Co-Workers of Life, committed lay people that assist us, as we accompany women along their journey to bring new life into the world. Their experience reveals that investing in human relationships with those God places in our paths yields rich dividends—in this life and the next.

rejecting isolation and building bonds of real connection

Essentials

Measuring...stirring...mashing...sifting...there are many steps to a great recipe. Every stew or casserole dish at every potluck since the beginning of civilization requires adding so many ingredients to the mix...spicing it up or keeping it simple, the savory and sweet, classics and acquired tastes.

So too with relationships. Every mutually fulfilling relationship needs certain "ingredients" to nourish and sustain it.

**So here's the big question:
How much time and effort do we put into building strong and deep connections?**

Whether it is relating to a parent, spouse, neighbor, co-worker or friend, there is always room to grow in the capacity to receive the other, becoming more available, attentive, loving and compassionate. Learning to readily and easily engage and respond from the heart, accessing our emotions, allows trust to form and previously established ties to be strengthened.

What are some qualities that lend themselves to connecting with others at the heart level?

Recipe for Connection



let's see, 3 cans of empathy, 1 cup of attentiveness,
2 sautéed solidarity cloves and a pinch of delight.

Perfecto! Mama's best!

A healthy recipe for Connection

ATTENTIVENESS: 3 CUPS

This describes a posture of heart that is other-centered, reverent and attentive to another. Intentionally putting aside my own interests, mood or motives, I offer myself to another person by way of presence—being there for them—and listening in a way that shows I understand what they are feeling. I think of topics that might be of interest to this person. It can be helpful to ask open-ended questions and then to give others the space and time to unhurriedly share what they are thinking or feeling. Pay attention to their responses, to body language and to the emotions that are described or evoked.

EMPATHY: 4 CANS

To express empathy, first I have to get in touch with my own emotions and give myself permission to feel what the person before me is describing and feeling. I am not this person, and may never have been in their situation; however, I can use my memory and imagination, to unite myself to them with my heart. As St. Paul exhorted us to weep with those who weep and rejoice with the rejoicing, I join them in feeling what they are feeling, whether it be grief or anger, joy or excitement. And to be sure I truly understand what they are feeling, I check in with them, “That seems so painful,” or “How frustrating!” or “You must have been ecstatic!” This can also help someone to put words to their experience, feel supported, or work through it.

DELIGHT: 5 QUARTS

St. Therese said, “Every artist likes his work to be admired, and so does God, our Creator!” This is what we are doing in essence. It begins with looking for someone’s innate goodness and beauty and receiving it as a gift. As if holding up a mirror, with the eyes of love, I want to reflect back what I see, that this person may come to see and experience being delighted in for his or her own goodness and beauty. This is not imagining or pretending that this person may be good deep down somewhere...but I allow myself to be moved by a real good I perceive. By accepting another as they are, I affirm that they are worth my time, attention and care—it is food for the heart. It allows people to accept themselves, and also gives them the courage and inspiration to become their best self.

SOLIDARITY: 6 TO 7 CLOVES

This is a choice made in love, recognizing that life is a journey, enhanced by its companions and their mutual support, encouragement, and inspiration. It is a decision to become another’s ally, committing myself to them in solidarity. Its theme song is, “He ain’t heavy... he’s my brother!” It is humbling both to rely on another, and to be stretched in the gift of self, but it is in making a gift of ourselves that we find at our core what is most pure and beautiful. It requires patience, honesty, hope and perseverance. Sharing life side by side, hand in hand, this is the element of relationships that makes sturdy what is shaky, and brings interior healing and peace in its wake.

Reaching out



Kevin Dwyer is a devoted supporter and Co-Worker of Life.

Kevin shared a recent account of his experience with the power of connecting in relationship. While at a working lunch with Mark,* a relatively young and very successful businessman, Kevin started the conversation on a personal level by opening up and sharing a recent joy. He had just received news that he was a grandfather! Mark shifted

in his seat and said, “Funny you bring it up, my girlfriend just found out she’s pregnant.” She was equally successful and working for a New York law firm, both of them travelling a lot and living a comfortable life. Kevin congratulated him, but Mark shook his head, “Not really...it’s not a good time. It’s not something we can go through now.” Realizing what he was hinting at, Kevin replied, “You can go through it. There are other options...like placing the child for adoption. Life is a gift from God and not something to say ‘yay’ or ‘nay’ to...you would regret an abortion the rest of your life.” Pulling out his cell phone, Kevin showed Mark the sonogram image of his grandson and added, “Your child is growing as we speak.”

The picture was worth 1,000 words, and Mark said, “I’ll have to think about it with my girlfriend.” Respectfully moving onto other topics, they finished their meeting, not mentioning it again. It was weeks later Mark told Kevin he and his girlfriend had talked it over and decided to have their baby!

Asked how he was able to take the risk in responding to Mark’s comment, rather than avoiding the messiness or giving way to fear, Kevin shared, “It wouldn’t have occurred to me not to say something. As a father, it wasn’t an option for me. I knew Mark wasn’t planning on bringing it up, and I didn’t pry for details. It may have been a grace I received from being in relationship with the Sisters of Life for so long.”

Although they were not intimate friends, Kevin offered himself in a personal way, sharing his joy and excitement over his new grandson. This allowed Mark the opportunity to make himself vulnerable, feeling the safety that he could talk to Kevin about something so personal and even uncomfortable. Rather than brush over it, as their meeting was supposed to be business-oriented, Kevin was able to give him the encouragement he needed. “It was one of those rare moments where you can make a difference.”

**Name changed for anonymity.*

insights that change us



When I met Annie, I didn't know if she was my type, but I was so drawn to her. She was so good. That is the word I remember thinking, she is so good. That's what attracted me. My only regret is that I didn't marry her sooner. Now I have this woman I love and these kids, and something triggers inside of me every day. I know I need to step up to the challenge and be a better husband and father and keep growing in my relationships with others.

The other night I was out and there was this couple out with their little girl; she was probably eight years old. They were flipping through their phones and she was just staring off. And I was thinking, "Do I do that? How much am I missing when I am not fully engaged and intentional in my relationships?" Annie and I had Netflix and there are some good shows. But it got easier and easier every night to watch TV and not talk to my wife. And soon something which appeared to be good and was enjoyable is replacing something *really* good. So I talked to Annie about it and we decided to cancel Netflix.

When I was younger and not practicing Catholicism the way I am trying to now, I would get into these debates with people, it was pretty prideful. I went to a debate Msgr. Albacete had with Christopher Hitchens. I was thinking the entire time, "What is Albacete doing? He's not debating, he's doing a horrible job." And Hitchens was getting angrier and angrier and, sadly, drinking more and more. So I sent Msgr. Albacete an email saying that it was really an interesting debate. And he responded, "Daniel, what you don't understand is that I was not trying to debate Christopher Hitchens, I was trying to look at him with the same loving gaze that Our Lord gives to me." So it took me a while to realize that you are not going to win people over with ideas. That is part of it, but what is even more fundamental is that I have to be animated with the joy that comes from my relationship with Christ and seek to express that to another, in a way that connects with them.

◀ Growing goodness in our relationships

Dan married Annie while he was working at the Archdiocese of New York Family Life/ Respect Life Office with the Sisters of Life. They are both Co-Workers of Life and live in Connecticut with their children: Chiara, Danny, Mary, and Joseph.

Social media creates a forum where you can pick and choose what you want to share and everything is polished and edited to create the perfect portrayal of yourself. When I'm on Facebook I tend to scroll through pictures on the newsfeed. I find myself comparing my own life with someone else's (like someone who just posted a photo of themselves in Bali looking fantastic with the perfect tan, surrounded by their ten closest friends—also looking great.) The problem with this is it's not reality. People are sharing only what they want you to see. Yet it can often leave you feeling really empty because your own life just doesn't measure up to these standards. So what do you do? You add more friends on your Facebook account hoping that it will make you feel better—more connected. The paradox is that the more you dive into the social media the lonelier you find yourself.

It wasn't until I moved to Nashville a few years back that I realized what deep friendship and connection really was all about. I lived with four women who were different in so many ways, yet we all shared one thing in common. We each had a sincere relationship with God and that was the difference. In "real time" relationships, you have the opportunity to see the whole of the person and love them completely for who they are. This meant we had to come out of ourselves and go beyond the superficial. My roommates modeled what a real friendship looked like and allowed me to be freer in my affirmation and support of others in sincere love. Struggles came up, but no one ever walked away and we always took the time to talk it out. It became a place of real communion.



◀ the social media paradox

Therese is a Co-Worker of Life and works as a registered nurse at a major hospital in New York City.



◀ The strength of vulnerability

I realized I had bought into the lie of the culture that says—My goodness is about what I do. I had injured my ankle and needed to be in a wheelchair on a trip to Rome. It was so embarrassing and difficult for me to allow myself to be helped. But I couldn't go anywhere without someone pushing me or carrying me. At one point my friends and I wanted to see the Roman Forum but I couldn't get down there. And the guys in the group carried my chair shouting, "Make room for the queen!" It was astounding to me that people still loved me when I felt I had nothing to give. And that was really healing for me. I felt so connected to my fellow students in a way that would not have been possible without their love and generosity and without my willingness to be vulnerable.

In one of Rich Mullins' songs he says, "We are frail, fearfully, and wonderfully made." And so if we are going to be in a real relationship our frailty has to come forth if the relationship is going to be authentic. And that is terrifying for my generation. But in allowing ourselves to be weak and in finding ourselves received and accepted, community happens. Otherwise you spend the whole time hiding. You continue believing the lie—that if they really knew me they would walk away. You couldn't know their love and the depth of their commitment without it being tried.

Kristine is a Co-Worker of Life and is studying for her doctorate in Theology

THE SISTERS OF LIFE POSTULANTS!

Laura Zetzl

Age: 22
From: Indianapolis, Indiana
Studied: Indiana University
Degree: B.A. in Human Biology,
Minors in Spanish and Psychology
Fun Fact: I love hiking, cycling,
and all things outdoors, and on
my first mountaineering trip I
survived an avalanche!



Jeanne Ng Mei Mei

Age: 35
From: Auckland, New Zealand
Studied: University of Auckland
Degree: B.S. in Mechanical
Engineering
Fun Fact: I grew up in Malaysia
before moving to New Zealand
and have spent exactly half my
life in both countries before
joining the Sisters of Life.



Julissa Maria Espinal

Age: 26
From: Flushing (Queens), New York
Studied: St. John's University
Degree : B.S. in Human Services
Fun Fact: I love people and had the
opportunity to do mission work in
the mountain villages of Honduras.



Katie Crandall

Age: 23
From: Dallas, Texas
Studied: Texas A&M
University
Degree: B.S. Geography
Fun Fact: I studied Latin in
college and sometimes I have
dreams in Latin.



Kate Sweeney

Age: 33
From: Denver, Colorado
Studied: Franciscan
University of Steubenville
Degree: B.S. in Business
Administration; Marketing
Fun Fact: I've served on
two mission trips to Chile.



Lori Agnes Muhlenkamp

Age: 26
From: Geneva, Indiana
Studied: Purdue University
Degree: Double Majored in
Communications and
Religious Studies
Fun Fact: I was raised on a
Dairy Farm!



Jackie Zuppe

Age: 25
From: Waltham, Massachusetts
Studied: University of Vermont
Degree: B.S. in Animal Science
with a Concentration in
Pre-Medicine, Minor in Chemistry
Fun Fact: I practiced kickboxing
in high school.

Kelsey Conroy

Age: 23
From: Falmouth, Maine
Studied: Colby College
Degree: B.A. in English Literature,
Secondary Education minor
Fun fact: I am scuba diving
certified, and played with a
baby lobster on my first dive in
the ocean!

Charmaine de Jong

Age: 26
From: Edmonton/
Brooks, AB, Canada
Studied: Trinity Western
University/Redeemer Pacific College
Degree: B.S. in Nursing,
Minor in Catholic Studies
Fun Fact: My favorite
pets are cows.

Kelsey Ingold

Age: 23
From: Cresson, Pennsylvania
Studied: Christendom College
Degree: B.A. in Philosophy
Fun Fact: My confirmation
saint is Saint John Paul III!



Lea Lagalagot

Age: 22
From: Surrey, BC, Canada
Studied: Simon Fraser University
Degree: B.S. in Biology
(with an Ecology stream)
Fun Fact: I did martial arts
for six years before entering
the convent.

Teri Tolpa

Age: 29
From: Springfield, Virginia
Studied: College of William and Mary
Graduate studies, Augustine Institute
Degree: B.A. in International
Relations, M.A. in Theology for
the New Evangelization
Fun Fact: I went sledding down
a glacier in the Rocky Mountains
on a plastic bag.

Nancy Harris

Age: 26
Hometown: Columbus, Georgia
College: Georgia Institute
of Technology; Columbus
State University
Degree: B.S. in Industrial
Engineering; M.A.T. in
Secondary Math Education
Fun Fact: I studied abroad in
Singapore in the summer of
2009, and my whole group was
put in government quarantine
during the swine flu outbreak!



Nancy & Jim

a look at
marriage with new eyes

Jim and Nancy Rizzi, dear friends of the Sisters of Life, have been married for 50 years. They shared how making a decision to see the good in each other and to choose to love even when they didn't feel like it has helped them through many hard times. Through prayer and a firm commitment to each other, they have discovered the key to deep love and lasting joy.

Did you encounter any struggles in your marriage?

Jim: I entered marriage with a lot of expectations, the models of marriage that I had growing up. But life never turns out how we imagine it! I had a journey in mind for myself—I would work hard in my career, become rich, and have lots of kids. I started chasing after something difficult to attain and ultimately unfulfilling—accumulating wealth. Nancy and I settled into a routine, we were a married couple but living as though we had our separate lives—like “married singles.”

Nancy: Over time we lost our priority of having God at the center of our marriage. The attitudes of our culture were affecting us, so we each started living for ourselves, running on parallel tracks. I was experiencing loneliness and resentment at Jim. Our relationship began to lack intimacy. We were living individually on our own paths, which led to dissatisfaction, unhappiness, and disillusionment. We were in a rut, set in our ways, going through the motions.

How did you reconnect with each other?

Jim & Nancy: Our turning point was a Marriage Encounter Weekend we attended together. It turned our life around! We realized there was so much we didn't know about the Sacrament of Marriage. The presenters taught us a lot about communication, both as a couple, with the Lord, and with each other. We began to take time to stop and talk to each other every day.



Where connection begins and ends.

My life at Sacred Heart of Jesus Convent

- Sr. Marie Veritas, SV

Every day, I have to come face to face with my helplessness. I'm not big enough, strong enough...I can't love this pregnant woman with all the infinite love she deserves. A priest once told me: "what you're supposed to do or be for the women whom you serve doesn't depend on you, or begin or end with you. It begins and ends with your encounter with God." It's true. It's my daily encounter with Jesus, that breathes life into everything—into every situation, mission, and relationship. After I spent years making it more complicated than it was, the Lord showed me that connecting with Him requires only a simple turning to Him in the space of my day. He doesn't want flowery talk or formal niceties. He just wants me, the real, deep-down me, in all my nitty gritty, here and now. He is waiting for me, with great tenderness, in every moment. I can talk with Him as a friend, informally and openly; I can say His name when I'm elbow-deep in dishes; I can give over to Him the reality of my sins and burdens in the Sacrament of Confession; I can meet His gaze in Eucharistic adoration; I can hear Him speak to me in the Holy Scriptures; I can receive His very Body and Blood in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Connecting with God requires honesty about my desires, experiences, and limitations, and openness of heart and mind to receive whatever He wants to give. It's only in keeping the connection open, in having a real, personal relationship with Jesus Christ, that I find true happiness, peace, and joy, because it's the reality of His infinite love and mercy that is the beginning and end of everything.

We learned that to love is a decision, and it motivated us to recommit to each other. Marriage is a work in progress, a journey together, not a destination. There is no such thing as a perfect marriage, and we will never have it all together. But we realized we could work together on our relationship with the help of the Lord.

What has been your experience of living out your marriage vows?

Nancy: We know now that the marriage vows are a reality beyond the words you say on your wedding day. It wasn't until we went through trying times that the vows became flesh and called us to a deeper commitment. It would have been much easier to leave each other when we didn't get along...but as we have learned, true love is not a feeling but a decision. And you can only live this way with God at the center. This is what kept me faithful.

Jim: We went through tough times financially, and I had cancer at one point. During my treatments I saw the commitment of my wife to me through the sicker times, which I believe helped my healing and energy. I will never forget how Nancy was always there for me.

Part of our foundation was the realization that neither of us was going to leave. We were determined to find a way through struggles. When we experienced difficulties, God poured down the grace we needed to be faithful. We have learned that there has to be an other-centered attitude and awareness all the time. Arguments are a natural part of life, but our focus has been to make a decision to be happy, to work through things.

If you were to tell a young couple a few things they can do to deepen their relationship and make it last a lifetime, what would they be?

Nancy: There are so many things to say, but having a strong faith life and praying together is number one! Read Scripture together and say simple prayers with each other. Communication on a feelings level and romance are incredibly important. Ask for forgiveness with humility when you hurt your spouse. Choose to love, to keep working, to keep letting go of negativity and see the goodness of the other. Ultimately, you will find joy.





My Life

riding for mothers, fathers, and their children

Every day, I say a Rosary for these mothers, fathers, and their unborn children. You know, it starts with prayer. When I'm not there, I'm praying for the people that are there. Prayer is the key! It takes the Holy Spirit to pierce those walls. To pierce those hearts and souls. It's brought forth through grace—and this is where your faith has to be strong. - Tom Upshur

Tom, tell us a little about yourself.

I was born in Pincher Lake, MI, and joined the Marine Corps Reserve Program right out of high school. I came to New York as an artist in 1969, and I became very successful as an illustrator and designer. It was a tough experience, you know, as an artist, being successful and young. I wasn't the best guy in the world, believe me. I lost my way, put it that way...I didn't get back on track until I went on a retreat. The Holy Spirit came in and took me and I remember, all of sudden, looking at life in a whole different way.

When did you start biking?

I went on a photo shoot in Hawaii a few years ago, and the photographer and his two assistants rented Harleys and I drove the grip truck! There was the ocean, and the waterfalls...and I was like, what am I missing here? How do I get myself a Harley?!

How did the Pro Bikers for Life start?

At the March for Life 2009, Sr. Mary Loretta said to me "Tom, it would be great to get some guys together and become pro-life bikers." I kind of laughed and said, "I don't know, Sister. What does that entail?" And she said, "Oh, you know, you could go to the clinic and pray...the main thing is prayer. You could really connect with the guys...because you're not the usual fray. You're different, and you can catch their attention." She's right. I never knew how effective we would be.

What do you do?

We go to clinics, and we pray, and we also talk to the couples going in. When I am there a battle is going on inside my mind and heart, but I just have to go forward and reach out to try to help. The important thing is going to Mass before, receiving the Eucharist, and asking for the Holy Spirit to guide me, and He does! Once you're there, things start to happen, things start to connect. It's just amazing how it works.

How do the Pro Bikers for Life approach people?

My approach is simple. I just say that I'm a Pro-Biker for Life, that we ride to save the children in the USA, and that we have information here where you, or anyone you know that is pregnant, can get help. Sometimes I feel compelled to just stand in front of that clinic and pray for that person who has gone in. And I'll start to cry. That's how much I feel for that person. But there's never just one person doing it. We become vessels with each other, because we're a team. Lou (an electrician) is great, because he can get into a lot of details, and has such experience with hope and healing after abortion. And Michael (a retired police officer) is out there every week, and he gets his family involved, which is really beautiful. And they say I'm good with the guys. We're in it together.

What kind of encounters do you have on the streets of New York?

A lot of my encounters have been with people just passing by the clinic. There was a man who came back to us, and I offered him a brochure. I said, "If your girlfriend's pregnant and you ever need some help, there are people here—the Sisters of Life—who can give you assistance." And he said, "I can't

believe this. I cannot believe this is happening right now, because my wife and I are not in a situation to have a child, and she's pregnant." I said to him, "This child is life. This child is Christ. Christ is in all of us." He said, "I know, I know. And I prayed today that God would touch me somehow. And you just touched me. We're going to have this child." He was waiting for that...to know that God is truly there. And that's essential—to allow them to know that Christ is there. They know that they can't do it on their own. We all need the Lord.

I meet people all the time that are hurt and in pain. The amount of people affected by this is just amazing. One day, I was catching the bus. The bus driver was a pretty big guy, and I thought, "I bet you this guy's a biker." And he was! We talked a bit, and then I said to him, "I'm a pro-life biker." I gave him our card; he started tearing up a little, and said, "My chest is hurting. I've had this ache for thirty years, and it doesn't go away...Can I talk to you?" I was the only one on the bus at that point, and he was just barely moving down the street, because he wanted so badly to talk to me. I said, "Look, your child is with Jesus. He's never left you. The pain you have is the love you have for that child. That's powerful. And that child feels your love. And your child is with you." He just started crying. He couldn't believe that it was possible, because he felt that his child was lost forever. And so before we even got to the stop, he stopped the bus and gets up and hugs me. He said, "I'm free. I have carried this burden for so long..." Before I got off the bus, he stopped again and asked, "Can we pray again?" So we prayed together. And then he said, "Always, always, always, we gotta ride with Jesus Christ." And I said, "Amen." It was a beautiful experience with someone that had been hurting for a long, long time.

Is it important for men to be out at the clinics?

It's really important, because we meet so many guys who don't have any kind of male figure in their lives to give them constructive advice. They talk to us and sometimes they go in and bring their girlfriends out.

It sounds like people are not only waiting, they're hoping,—and they don't even know they're hoping—for someone to reach out.

There are so many people! When you talk to these people, there's a relief, a relief of their being that someone can hear them, someone can listen to something they've been burdened with so long...or for those who need help, that someone is there for them...It's the Holy Spirit that really picks them out. And it's really, truly a need in their souls, their hearts, for that closure of what's bothering them, or what they need to hear, to help them make the right decision. There's not enough people out there to give them the truth. So, that's why it's good for us to be out there, with the Truth, to counter what is so negative with the light of Christ. The Truth sets you free.

How has being a Pro Biker for Life changed you?

It gets pretty dark out there. You have to draw His Spirit into you, to be able to light that darkness that you're going into. Being a Pro Biker has changed me spiritually. It's brought me closer to God, because you're dealing with His gift of life.



Mother Agnes Mary, His Excellency, Bishop Frank Caggiano of the Diocese of Bridgeport, CT, and Sr. Maris Stella after the Mass of Profession at the Basilica of St. John the Evangelist in Stamford, CT



Sr. Maris Stella with her parents, Peter and Elaine Karalekas

Final Profession:
 Sr. Maris Stella, SV
 August 6, 2014

It was a gorgeous summer day, buzzing with the excitement of finishing touches and the joy of anticipation. Surrounded by the community, family, friends, Co-Workers of Life and some of the women she had accompanied through their pregnancies, Sr. Maris Stella made her definitive commitment to Jesus in the profession of her perpetual vows. On that day, the Transfiguration, we hear the words of God the Father, "This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased; listen to him." By permitting these words to permeate her life, and capture her mind and heart, Sister gave herself completely to the Lord of Life, responding in love to that invitation spoken in the silent depths of her heart.



First Profession:

(back row) Sr. Josephine Rose, SV, Sr. Faith Marie, SV,
Sr. Mary Margaret Hope, SV, Sr. Mary Pieta, SV,
(front) Sr. Maria Filumena, SV, Sr. Angelina Marie, SV

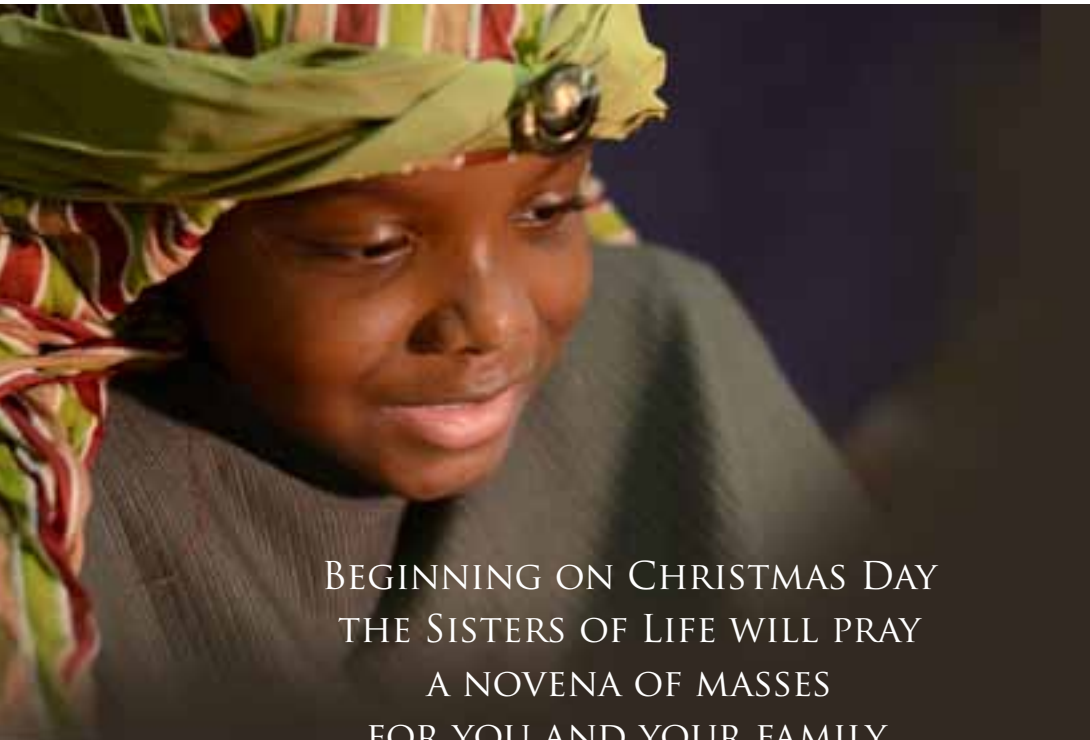
Their radiant joy after profession was but a reflection of the gift they had received in their consecration, now entering into a new, special bond with the Radiant One.

How grateful we were for the presence of so many of our beloved priests—dear friends, chaplains, confessors, spiritual directors and those who guide us on our retreats! It is no exaggeration to say that we would not be able to live our religious lives if not for these generous men of God, who stand in the person of Jesus, and bring Him to us day after day as they offer Holy Mass, hear confessions, and guide our souls on the path to holiness. Their spiritual fatherhood blesses us, as well as the women we serve and the retreatants who come in droves every weekend to Villa Maria Guadalupe. We are inspired by their selfless generosity and zeal, as well as their fidelity and courage. As Mother Agnes once said, “Every year is the ‘Year of the Priest’ for Sisters of Life.”



THE SISTERS OF LIFE
38 Montebello Road
Suffern, NY 10901

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BEGINNING ON CHRISTMAS DAY
THE SISTERS OF LIFE WILL PRAY
A NOVENA OF MASSES
FOR YOU AND YOUR FAMILY.

The mother of this child was served through the Visitation Mission

Annunciation

(Motherhouse: Generalate and Novitiate)
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Main Fax: 845/357-5040

St. Frances de Chantal Convent

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Bronx, NY 10465
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Sacred Heart of Jesus Convent

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New York Visitation Mission

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257 East 71st Street
New York, NY 10021 Pregnancy help call:
212/737-0221 toll free: 877/777-1277
Co-workers of Life call: 347/843-8900

Toronto Visitation Mission

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St. Catherine of Siena
1099 Danforth Avenue
Toronto, ON M4J 1M5 Canada
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Fax: 416/ 463-1687

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Hope and Healing After Abortion

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hopeandhealing@sistersoflife.org

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Wheaton, MD 20902 301/946-1249

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