Adventures in Service
Meet St. Joseph Workers Celina, Gena and Monica

Witnessing the success that a St. Joseph Worker movement was having in other regions, we hoped we could get a program started in our own backyard. Sister Joanna Rosciaczewska was appointed program director with the intent to launch our own SJW program in 2015. We are off the ground!

Three brave women answered the call to be our first St. Joseph Workers (SJWs). The program asks the women to live together in community for a year (August – June), serve at sites addressing the needs of the vulnerable, and participate in activities that nurture their experience, faith and relationships. We are thrilled to introduce these pioneering women of faith: Celina Roybal, Gena Gadient and Monica Patti.

Why did you decide to become a St. Joseph Worker?

CELINA: As a teacher of 13 years I felt that I was making a difference in the lives of my students and the community, but I felt a challenge within me to take my service to a higher level. I felt deep in my heart that the SJW Program would help me become more passionate about responding to the needs of the world and make me more of a leader. The ultimate question that came to me was, “Where does God need me to be today?” I felt a strong need to develop deeper into the person I was called to be, a leader. The ultimate question is “What is God’s calling to be my life for a new beginning and when I said “yes” to that new beginning. He generously planned an adventure I could not have imagined.

GENA: I am at Mission Hospital. My role is in the Community Benefits Department as a Health Educator. Some of the community outreach work I will be doing includes teaching spirituality and life skills classes at Family Resource Centers, educating the public on mental health awareness, and being a part of their Holiday Angel Program.

MONICA: My placement is at Taller San Jose Hope Builders in Santa Ana. As an Educational Assistant, I work closely with the trainees in the fields of: Technology, Clinical Medical Assisting, Administrative Billing Clerk, and Business Administration classes. My service at Taller San Jose also includes assisting St. Mary Rogers with spirituality by integrating the CSJ mission into the culture of the organization.

MONICA: My site is Mission Hospital working as a Health Educator on the Community Benefit team. We provide multiple programs to the community as a way for the hospital to give back. Some of the programs include medical and mental health services through Family Resource Centers, community presentations to raise awareness and reduce the stigma around mental health issues and much more. I partner on projects that provide much need services to the underserved and marginalized in South Orange County.

Describe your life living as a community.

MONICA: My little sister is also on a community life journey. She made a great statement: “For better or worse, we’re all on the same team.” I felt that described a truth that was so simple. “We’re a committed team.” We’re imperfect, we make mistakes and then worry that those mistakes will separate us. However mistakes really bring us together when we’re in it for the long haul. Every day we get a chance to give each other grace and keep going. And at the end of the year, our community will have built some unknown, intangible and beautiful creation.

GENA: The most beautiful thing about community life is that we all bring different gifts and experiences. What one of us can’t do, another can. We were pretty excited when we found out we were skilled in different areas of preparing food. We make pretty awesome meals when Celina is on the grill, Monica is cooking on the stove & I am baking something in the oven. Having different strengths also helps us deal with life’s struggles together.

CELENA: As a result, I have been blessed to see the power of what St. Matthew says happens where two or three have gathered together in Christ’s name, He is there in our midst. I can definitely feel the presence of Christ in this program, guiding not only my fellow program sisters but all who contribute to the program. I am certain that I’ve never been or felt to pray for in my entire life! It’s amazing!

What is challenging and/or inspiring about the SJW program?

CELINA: It is a blessing to live in community with two women that share the same faith values as I do. At Taller San Jose, working directly with people that are in need of my services and knowing that I make a difference in their lives is very gratifying and humbling. I can truly see God in their eyes through their triumphant victories, struggles, and gratitude, it brings me great joy to talk to my students after class as they express their gratitude for my services and mention that I helped them that day.

GENA: One of the most challenging parts of the program is leaving so many things that are familiar (friends, family, and career) and starting a new way of life. When we are in such new and often challenging environments we can be very vulnerable to fear, anxiety and doubt. Although this can be scary, it is also one of the most inspiring parts of the program because this place of vulnerability is where growth takes place. It really makes you trust and depend on God every minute, every day.

MONICA: One of my favorite and most inspiring things about our group has been spending intentional time together, especially in prayer. I feel so blessed to live in a community with other Catholic women because we share our spirituality and we have made worshiping together a priority. As a result, I have been blessed to see the power of what St. Matthew says happens where two or three have gathered together in Christ’s name, He is there in our midst. I can definitely feel the presence of Christ in this program, guiding not only my fellow program sisters but all who contribute to the program. I am certain that I’ve never been or felt to pray for in my entire life! It’s amazing!

Follow Celina, Gena and Monica’s adventures on their Facebook page at facebook.com/stJosephworkerprogramorange.

For more information or to apply for the next program, visit our website or contact Sister Joanna at peacejr56@yahoo.com.