

Vocation Discernment

DAUGHTERS of CHARITY
OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL



September 2015

daughters-of-charity.com

New Faith, New Growth, New Orleans

by Sarah, Discerner



From left: Sarah; Melissa; Father Jim Osendorf, CM; Lien; Jessica; Maricris; Sister Theresa Sullivan; Sister Denise LaRock; and Sister Lisa Laguna taking a beignet break at Café du Monde in New Orleans.

As a discerner of religious life for more than a year, I was very fortunate to be asked to attend the Search and Serve in New Orleans. There were four other girls who attended and we shared our stories, our faith and our discernment journeys—which was very helpful because we realized our struggles and our questions were not crazy! We realized we were not alone.

Search and Serve combines service projects and fun with prayer and reflection to aid in vocation discernment. Our first day started off right with the celebration of the Eucharist in a beautiful, intimate little chapel in the House of Charity, where we stayed for the week. We reflected on Pope Francis' writing, particularly *The Joy of the Gospel* and the letter to religious. We had a wonderful mini-retreat day, learning various forms of prayer, and had time for private reflection and prayer.

We spent some time exploring New Orleans. One of the Sisters of Charity brought us through the Upper and Lower Ninth Wards. Compared to the beautiful houses stacked side by side in

the Upper Ninth, the Lower was a sad ghost town. There was a glimmer of hope and some rebuilding, but it showed how truly devastating Hurricane Katrina was to the community 10 years ago. It made the stories real.

We were blessed to meet several persons who were homeless—lovingly called “guests”—at the Rebuild Center. I spoke with many of them as they waited for services Rebuild provides, including showers, Internet access, lunch, general or mental health clinic visits, or just having a safe place to sit and escape the sun. In my conversations, I learned these guests had jobs and lives and this homelessness is a temporary condition—that people like you or me could easily have the same bad luck. They told me one after the other that they were “real people.” What does that really mean though? To me, it meant they were human, worthy of respect and love. They were worthy of companionship. They were worthy of me.

We visited the museum at Carville, the former national leprosarium. The

Daughters of Charity served people with leprosy thrown out of their homes and towns. They touched the “untouchables” when no one else would. They were instrumental in caring and finding a cure for leprosy or Hansen’s Disease. I loved seeing pictures of Sisters and patients. We touched history in the chapel and toured the grounds.

We also spent time visiting with residents at the Chateau nursing home. I realized once again the humanity and “realness” of these folks. They were young once and have a story—or stories, I should say! They were grateful to have our attention and share with us, and we were glad recipients! We walked out of there with many sweethearts promising to pray for us.

It wasn’t all work and prayer, though! We went to the French Quarter and did touristy things like eat beignets and creole spiced foods, and walking along the river. I thoroughly enjoyed myself and the wonderful people around me!

During this time I felt a call deep within me to be present for the poor, marginalized and forgotten, to listen to their stories and their actual needs, not just what society says they need. These guests, residents and memories are now a part of me, and I want to continue to serve and be present—to find Christ in the encounters. Through these experiences and talking one-on-one with my fellow discerners, Daughters of Charity, Sisters of Charity and the Vincentian priest who celebrated mass each morning, I grew immensely in my discernment journey and my relationship with Christ. I am truly thankful for all the hearts and hands that played a part in that wonderful week. I would definitely recommend participating in this experience of a lifetime.

Love is Our Mission, Love is Our Name

by Sister Lisa Laguna, D.C.

"You tell us that to love God and neighbor is not something abstract, but profoundly concrete: It means seeing in every person the face of the Lord to be served, to serve him concretely. And you are, dear brothers and sisters, the face of Jesus." — Pope Francis Homily, May 21, 2013

"Let us love God, but let it be at the expense of our arms and in the sweat of our brow." —St. Vincent de Paul, V11, L25

"...A deep love for God in this life which will be shown by practicing His goodness, gentleness and charity toward my neighbor." —St. Louise de Marillac, L-A7

It's easy for us to think of "charity" as good works. People work with charities to help others, we have charitable giving, and so on. From a biblical sense and in the minds and hearts of our founders, charity is used in its original way: love—generous love—love of God lived out in us, bearing fruit for others, especially those who are poor. Is this the mission Pope Francis is talking about?

Jesus says it's easy to love those who love us back. He invites us to love our enemies. That's love. That's charity (Luke 6:32-35). *"No greater love has a person than to lay down one's life for a friend"* (John 15:13). No greater love! That's charity: Love

lived out beyond the boundaries of our comfort zones, beyond the frontiers that separate us, beyond those who love us back, beyond those who even recognize our love or sacrifice. Is this kind of love possible? We absolutely believe it is!

This is the charge for all Christians. However, it is our life and our name as Daughters of Charity.

"Therefore, you must live in conformity with the name you bear, since it's God who has given this name to the Company... Notice it was the people who, seeing what you were doing and the service of our first Sisters rendered to the poor, have given you this name... Therefore, preserve it carefully; strive always to have the robe of charity, of which the signs are love of God, love of our neighbor, and love of our Sisters, for fear that God may erase your names from the book of life." —St. Vincent de Paul, VX, C93

Love is our mission. Love is our name.

Today, Pope Francis is challenging us to love in that same way. Love beyond! The theme of the World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia is "Love is Our Mission"—not a feeling, not only words, but our *mission*—what we are sent out to do and be, what we do and who we are! When we *do* love, we are living out the great virtue of charity. Let us keep each other in prayer. Let us pray that we can live out this call to love, to live in charity, to serve Christ in our brothers and sisters. Let us do this in generous love.

We hope to see you in Philly!

#holychangoutdc

Join the conversation for our next live chat on YouTube! We'll be sharing about our trip to Philly for the papal visit and World Meeting of Families.

The Papal Visit

October 4 at 7 p.m. CDT

<http://youtube.com/daughtersofcharityus>



welcome, postulants!

Kara Davis, Martha Hidalgo and Michelle Hoffman all became postulants this summer. Keep them in your prayers as they continue their discernment journey!

upcoming events

Register online at <http://daughters-of-charity.com/retreats>

America's Got Sisters!

October 9-10, 2015 in Evansville, IN

October 30-November 1, 2015 in Chicago, IL

Come & See

October 16-18, 2015 in Los Altos Hills, CA

November 13-15, 2015 in Emmitsburg, MD

Advent Online Discernment Retreat

December 6-10, 2015

Dear Discerners,

We send this newsletter on the brink of Pope Francis' visit to the U.S. When you get this, we will be in Philadelphia joining our country in welcoming Pope Francis.

When you hear "Pope Francis," what word pops into your mind? One of them may be "encounter." He has redefined this word to mean what our founder St. Vincent de Paul meant when he said, "Look into the eyes of the poor and see Christ." In Philadelphia, we hope to encounter Christ in the witness and words of Pope Francis, in the presence of the Church gathered to celebrate, in reflections with our Sisters and discerners, in the faces of people on the street, etc. How will you encounter Pope Francis during his visit?

In this newsletter, Sarah talked about how she encountered Christ during our Search and Serve discernment retreat. Sister Lisa told of how "love is our mission." These are both examples of how we as Vincentians are called to live the Gospel message of "encounter." As you continue to discern, listen to how God is calling you to encounter Christ, those who are poor, etc. What does this say about your life call?

Blessings,

Sister Lisa, Sister Mary Fran, Sister Theresa, Sister Virginia Ann, Sister Patricia, Sister Kathy

from the directors