Blog
Religious Life



Lights on Earth, seen from space (Unsplash/NASA)

by GSR Staff

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

October 26, 2020
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

(GSR logo/Toni-Ann Ortiz)

Welcome to our fourth year of The Life, featuring a panel of 20 sisters who will reflect on issues that impact the lives of Catholic women religious around the globe.

We chose a panel from more than 60 applicants from around the world who reflect a diversity of ages, nationalities, religious congregations, ministries and charisms.

Our panelists this year have ties to or have worked in: Australia, Bolivia, Canada, El Salvador, England, France, Germany, Honduras, India, Ireland, Kenya, Mexico, New Zealand, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Peru, the Philippines, Portugal, Romania, Rwanda, South Sudan, Spain, Tanzania, Uganda, the United States, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

They include teachers and school administrators from all levels; parish ministers, theologians and spiritual directors; missionaries; sisters who have worked with youth, women, Dalits, Maoris, and people with HIV/AIDS; sisters in community leadership, social work, journalism, writing and speaking; a clinical psychologist, nurse, doctor; a former archdiocesan chancellor and NGO director, a university president, and a congregation founder.

Read some of their responses here to the prompt: "Describe a key lesson you have learned from your ministry or life as a sister."

Meet the 2020-21 panelists for The Life:



Donna L. Ciangio, United States

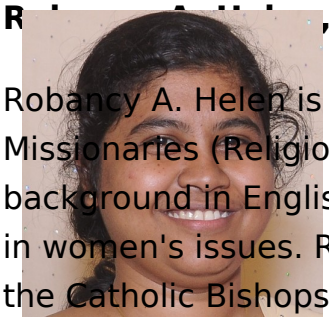
Donna L. Ciangio is a Sister of St. Dominic of Caldwell, New Jersey. With an academic background in fine arts, religious studies, education and ministry, she has been the director (U.S. and international) of Renew International and the director of pastoral services for the National Pastoral Life Center. She has worked extensively in church leadership consultation. Most recently, she has been a university adjunct professor and the chancellor of the Archdiocese of Newark. She speaks, writes and publishes extensively.

Nasreen Daniel, Pakistan



Nasreen Daniel is a member of the U.S. Sisters of Loretto. From Lahore, Pakistan, she obtained paralegal training and a master's degree in English in Pakistan. Further studies in India and the Netherlands included international law and theology, social studies, counseling and religious studies. She taught in seminaries in Pakistan and in academies in the United States and was a field worker and journalist for the Society for the Protection of the Rights of the Child, a Muslim/Christian consortium. She has published in English, Urdu and Dutch. Since 2016, she has been the chairperson for Major Superiors Leadership Conference of Pakistan.

R , India



Robancy A. Helen is from Tamil Nadu, South India, and is a member of the Idente Missionaries (Religious Institute of Christ the Redeemer). With an academic background in English, social work and theology, she has written about and worked in women's issues. Recently, she served for five years as the program coordinator in the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India's Office for Scheduled Castes/Backward Classes. She is currently working on doctoral studies and training Catholic youth in leadership and social issues.

Sujata Jena, India



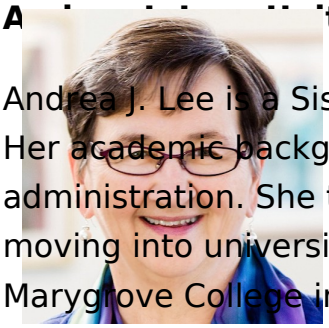
Sujata Jena is a member of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. She is a human rights activist, a freelance journalist and an advocate with a special interest for the cause of the poor, Dalits, tribal women, children, minorities and migrants. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, she has been actively involved in the safe return of the migrants and continues to work for their rights through advocacy and lobbying through networking with government administrations and civil society groups. Presently, she is working as the deputy director of the Excellent IAS Academy in Bhubaneswar, Eastern Indian State of Odisha. She is the coordinator of the social projects of the congregation.



Kathryn Keigher, England

Kathryn Keigher is from England, a member of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Loreto). Most of her ministry was spent teaching English and religious education in secondary school and college, but she taught English in Romania over the holidays. She also served at a Loreto mission in Bolivia for four years. She is the justice, peace and integrity of creation coordinator for her region and schools and worked for several months at the congregation's nongovernmental organization office in New York. She does volunteer work teaching English as a second language.

A ted States



Andrea J. Lee is a Sister, Servant of the Immaculate Heart of Mary from Wisconsin. Her academic background is in music, languages, education, and educational administration. She taught elementary school in Bonn, Germany, and Chicago before moving into university program administration. After administrative positions at Marygrove College in Detroit, Michigan, she served as president of St. Catherine University in St. Paul, Minnesota, and finally as president of Alverno College in Milwaukee. Beside serving on academic, community and civic boards and task forces, she continues to write and produce in the arts.

B , India



Dr. Beena Madhavath is from India, a member of the Congregation of Ursulines of Mary Immaculate. Her medical degree is in obstetrics and gynecology, and she has served as the medical superintendent, deputy director, consultant gynecologist and teacher at Holy Family Hospital in Mumbai, India. She is the provincial councilor for medical apostolate of her province, the national president of the Sister Doctors Forum of India, and a board member of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India-Coalition for AIDS and Related Diseases and India's Christian Coalition for Health.

Advertisement



Rita Malavisi, Australia

Rita Malavisi is a Sister of St. Joseph of the Sacred Heart from Melbourne, Australia, of Italian and Arabic ancestry. In Melbourne, she studied primary teaching, religious education and spiritual direction and worked in both elementary and high school education as well as parish ministry. While serving as information technology coordinator for her community, she did adult faith formation as well as pastoral care for asylum-seekers. She is currently working on a degree in pastoral studies at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago (graduating in May 2021), while serving in her congregation's immersion and discernment of call formation group.



A Mativo, Kenya

Agnes Musemba Mativo is a Kenyan member of the Religious Sisters of Mercy. Her ministries have included social work with HIV/AIDS patients in Zambia and in mission advancement at a Mercy Hospital. She pursued studies in clinical psychology at the Gregorian University in Rome and teaches psychology in two Catholic institutions. Currently, she works with men and women in formation as well as priests and religious, teaching and in psychological accompaniment. She has served as postulant mistress and continues as vocation promotor for her own congregation.



D eland

Deirdre Mullan is a Sister of Mercy from Ireland. At the height of unrest in Northern Ireland, Mullan spent 25 years as a teacher and administrator in schools. With a doctoral degree in the feminization of poverty, she has long been active in

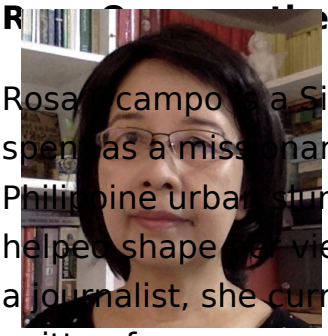
promoting the education of girls. She served as the executive director of Mercy Global Concern at the United Nations for more than 10 years, later directing the Partnership for Global Justice, a network of over 125 small congregations at the U.N. Her present ministry is with UNICEF, the United Nations Children's Fund, seeking ways to partner with religious communities.

M[illegible]akafu, Uganda / Honduras



Margaret Grace Nakafu of Uganda is a member of the Medical Missionaries of Mary. With an academic background in sustainable human development, as well as HIV counseling and computer science, she has lived and worked in six countries: Uganda, Rwanda, Kenya, Tanzania, Ireland and Honduras. Currently, she ministers in Honduras, doing parish pastoral work, advocating for youth, vulnerable families and the elderly.

R[illegible]e Philippines



Rosa[illegible]campo is a Sister for Christian Community from Manila. The five years she spent as a missionary in Peru and El Salvador, as well as her apostolate in the Philippine urban slums, have provided invaluable insights and experiences that helped shape her views on social justice and the preferential option for the poor. As a journalist, she currently writes for a travel trade publication in Singapore and has written for newspapers and magazines in the Philippines, Hong Kong, Singapore and Saudi Arabia.

R[illegible]g Oduol, Kenya / Ireland



Rosemary Achien'g Oduol, a Kenyan member of the Franciscan Missionary Sisters for Africa, has a nurse/midwife background with a graduate degree in public health. She has diverse experience in ministry, including nursing education and community nursing with HIV/AIDS patients in Kenya, Uganda and Zimbabwe. She has also worked as a CEO of a mission hospital in South Sudan and as a member of her area leadership team. Presently, she is ministering at the congregational headquarters in Ireland as assistant superior general.

K[illegible]ited States / Ireland



Kathryn Press is an Apostle of the Sacred Heart of Jesus from the U.S. state of Georgia. She professed her final vows in 2018. With a Master of Divinity and a

background in religious studies, she has taught every grade from pre-K through high school. After opening a convent in Ireland, she taught in New York City for three years before returning to Ireland in September 2020 to work in evangelization and parish ministry.

S[illegible] Canada



Stephanie Romiti is a Sister of St. Joseph of Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, Canada. Her academic training was in education, and she spent more than 30 years in Catholic education in the United States and Canada as teacher, principal, religious educator and in faith formation. Since obtaining a graduate degree in Christian spirituality with certification in spiritual direction and directed retreats, she has served as retreat and spiritual director both in person and via digital platforms. Stephanie enjoys nature photography, music and creative arts, and often incorporates these in ministry.



Blanca Alicia Sanchez, Mexico

Blanca Alicia Sanchez is a sister of the Verbum Dei Missionary Fraternity in Mexico City. She received early formation and education in Guadalajara, Mexico, a licentiate in Rome, and other courses in the Philippines, Portugal, Mexico and London. A teacher of dogmatic theology and a spiritual director, she has worked in vocations, retreats, and novitiate formation. She was a formator in the International Centre of Missionary formation in Spain and in novitiates in the Isle of Wight, United Kingdom, and Cebu, Philippines.

Mary Joseph Schultz, United States / Germany

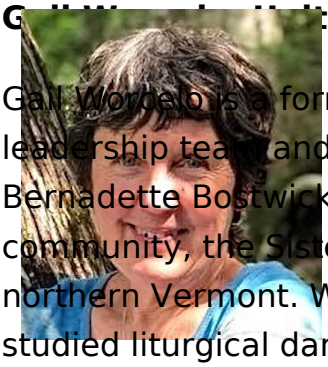


Mary Joseph Schultz of New Jersey is a member of the Sisters of Christian Charity. For many years, she taught theology in high schools before becoming president of Assumption College for Sisters in Mendham, New Jersey. During the Vatican apostolic visitation in 2010, she was chosen as one of the apostolic visitators of U.S. women religious. She went on to serve as campus minister for two colleges in New Jersey, as a member of her provincial leadership team, and later worked as parish pastoral associate. She is presently serving as first councilor and vicaress at the Sisters of Christian Charity generalate in Germany.



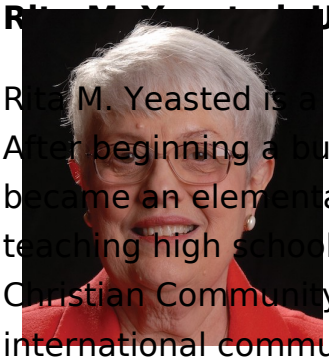
Susan Elizabeth Smith, New Zealand

Susan Elizabeth Smith, a Sister of Our Lady of the Missions, has worked in education at various levels: primary and secondary school teaching in New Zealand, university education in New Zealand and Australia, and with Duquesne University in Rome and Manila, Philippines. She has been involved in pastoral and catechetical formation in Papua New Guinea; in adult literacy and numeracy programs for Maori in New Zealand; in congregational formation programs in Davao City, Philippines, and St. Rambert, France. Currently, she volunteers as a budget adviser, helps with an emergency housing trust and some environmental groups, and writes for publications.



G ted States

Gail Worcelo is a former Passionist Nun of St. Gabriel's Monastery who served on the leadership team and as novice director. Presently she is the co-founder — along with Bernadette Bostwick and the late Passionist priest Thomas Berry — of an emerging community, the Sisters of the Earth Community at Green Mountain Monastery in northern Vermont. With degrees in Christian spirituality and clinical psychology, she studied liturgical dance and is a choreographer of that style. The founder of Homecomings: Center for Ecology and Contemplation, she travels around the world giving retreats and programs to religious men and women about the Great Work and the Universe Story.



R United States

Rita M. Yeasted is a Sister for Christian Community from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. After beginning a business career, she entered the Sisters of Divine Providence and became an elementary teacher. Completing graduate work in English, she began teaching high school and college English. In 1987, she transferred to the Sisters for Christian Community and just completed two terms as one of their team of international communication coordinators. Presently, she is a distinguished professor of English at La Roche University, her alma mater, and still teaches full-time.

This story appears in the **The Life** feature series. View the full series.