Blog



by GSR Staff

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Welcome to our seventh 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 65 applicants from around the world who reflect a diversity of ages, nationalities, religious congregations, ministries and charisms. They'll take turns writing responses to a prompt or a question about spirituality, religious life and other topics.

Our panelists this year have ties to or have worked in: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Guatemala, India, Ireland, Kenya, Lesotho, Nigeria, Peru, Rome, Spain, South Sudan, the United States, Vietnam and Zambia.

They include sisters in education, missionary work, development, congregational finances, hospice, retreat work, research, spiritual direction, pastoral work, formation, graphic art and marketing, psychotherapy; sisters who are attorneys, authors, nurses, administrators, congregational leaders and university students.

Read their responses to our request to write a reflection on Advent.

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Meet the 2023-2024 panelists for The Life:



Kathleen Noelle Cummings is currently a novice at Monastery Immaculate Conception, a Benedictine monastery in Ferdinand, Indiana. Before entering the community, she worked in communications at the University of Wisconsin, in marketing for an academic publishing house and taught music. She enjoys reading, writing and discovering how God is present in the moments of everyday life.



Agnes Motake, of Lesotho, is a member of the congregation of the Sisters of Holy Names of Jesus and Mary in Lesotho province. She joined the community in 2014 and professed her final vows in 2022. She has worked in ministries including teaching preschool and computer at SNJM College and working as a secretary at Holy Names High School. Currently she is a third-year university student, studying for a bachelor's degree in education.



Ann Gray is from Scotland and has served as a lay missionary in Sierra Leone and as a Missionary Sister of St. Columban in Hong Kong, where she studied Cantonese and co-established Action for REACH OUT, an organization providing services to female sex workers on the streets and nightclubs of Hong Kong. After a short time in China studying Mandarin, she was elected congregational leader. Since completing her term in leadership, she has been in Ireland working on the development of congregational spirituality.



Beatrice Kamau is a Kenyan from the Congregation of the Daughters of St. Anne and is a regional superior for its Kenya delegation. She is a trained catechist, formator

and a counselor. She has served as novices' formator and occasionally presents workshops to congregational leaders in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania for the program Professional Development of Congregational Leaders, or PDCL. She also does part-time counseling.



Begoña Costillo is a member of the Order of St. Augustine and lives in the Monastery of the Incarnation in Lima, Peru. She entered religious life in 2012; since then she has lived in Spain, Italy and Peru.



Pouiwindin Chantal Ouedraogo, a Dominican Sister of the Presentation, is from Burkina Faso. She holds a bachelor's degree in philosophy and letters and a teaching certificate. She has 10 years' experience teaching in primary schools, the majority spent teaching in Burkina Faso. In 2022, she was missioned to Cameroon, and for the past year, she has taught primary school in Mokolo, in the far north region of Cameroon. She also has been involved in pastoral activities that support young people.



Charity Bbalo, a Religious Sister of the Holy Spirit from Zambia, serves as the research and capacity development coordinator at the Centre for Research in Religious Life and Apostolate (CERRA). She obtained a bachelor of arts in education (English and religious studies) from the University of Zambia and a master's degree in multicultural and international education from Oslo University College, Norway. She has served as a senior lecturer in a teacher training college and now serves as deputy principal in a girls' high school. She is passionate about researching issues related to religious life, women and the girl-child. She enjoys reading novels and academic articles and writing.



Edith Eneh is a member of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, Province of Nigeria. Since her profession in 2011, she has worked as a bursar in various schools for eight years. Currently, she works in her province's development office.



Julian Cleary is a member of the Benedictine community of St. Placid Priory in Lacey, Washington. She is a licensed attorney, having worked for many years with adults and children with disabilities before entering the monastery. She has occasionally advocated for detained refugees and hopes to be more involved with this ministry in the future. Her current ministries include work as a spiritual director, participating in the monastery's health care team (she is a former nurse practitioner), liturgy committee, grant-writing and other projects.



Kathleen Feeley, a School Sister of Notre Dame, served as president of the College of Notre Dame of Maryland (now Notre Dame of Maryland University) 1971-92. She has taught college, high school and elementary students. After her college presidency, she taught literature in India, Australia, China, Japan and Ghana. Feeley has a master's degree in English from Villanova University and a doctorate from Rutgers University. She now teaches at Notre Dame of Maryland's Renaissance Institute, which serves lifelong learners over age 50.



Linda Buck is a Sister of St. Joseph of Orange, California. Her ministry is informed by transformative leadership, psychology, theology and transformational social change. She uses her academic and experiential background to promote culture change within current and emergent systems, including religious life. She is the executive director for the Leadership Collaborative. Prior to this, she was director of initial formation/novice director for her congregation, a psychotherapist and spiritual director.



Lucy Zientek is a Sister of Divine Providence, Melbourne, Kentucky, and currently serves on the leadership team of her congregation's U.S. province. She has 14 years' experience as a research and development scientist prior to entering religious life. She has served on parish pastoral teams in the areas of adult faith formation, Christian initiation and pastoral ministry. She also presents retreats and days of reflection. Supported by an educational background and career and ministry experience in science, theology and spirituality, her special area of interest is the relationship between science and faith.



Margaret Kerry, a Daughter of St. Paul, served as director of the Pauline lay Association of Pauline Cooperators for 15 years. For most of her 45 years of religious life, she was missioned to Pauline Book & Media Centers, serving as volunteer coordinator, outreach coordinator, manager and superior. For six years she served in the provincial government as councilor for the apostolate. Her studies were in organizational development at DePaul in Chicago and a master's in pastoral theology and ministry at Boston College School of Theology and Ministry. During studies, she initiated inner-city reading rooms for afterschool programs in collaboration with the Volunteers of America (New Orleans) and the Boys and Girls Club (Chicago) and began a reading program at Horizons for Homeless Children (Boston).



Maria Yen Do is a member of the Sisters of Mary, Queen of the World in Vietnam. She has been working for years as a catechist and kindergarten teacher and serving

as an organist and choir director in various faith communities. She previously taught English to novices and catechism to postulants in her community. She came to the United States to pursue higher education and is currently working toward a doctorate in religious education. Upon completing her studies, she hopes to serve her community and the church in Vietnam.



Mary Karuna Matthew is a native of India and is affiliated with the Congregation of the Sisters of Notre Dame of Coesfeld, Germany. Her areas of specialization include education, theology, formation and psychology. With a wealth of experience in education and formation, she currently serves as part of the general administration, where she oversees the congregation's formation program. She lives in Rome.



Maureen Ojil is a professed member of the Franciscan Sisters of St. Anne, a dedicated Kenyan working at the Archdiocese of Nairobi Secretariat as an associate administrative assistant in the office for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. She earned a bachelor's degree in education and a licentiate degree in canon law. Her passion lies in serving the people of God. She is involved with the Missionary Youth Movement at Our Lady of the Rosary Catholic Church, where she is committed to community service.



Patricia Wittberg is a Sister of Charity of Cincinnati. She holds a doctorate in sociology from the University of Chicago, and she taught the sociology of religion and religious organizations for 30 years at Fordham University and Indiana University (Indianapolis). She currently administers her congregation's Seton Enablement Fund, which gives low-interest loans to nonprofit organizations that help poor and marginalized people. She is also a research associate for the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, or CARA, at Georgetown University.



Hna. Ruth Karina Ubilus, Hermanas Educadoras de Notre Dame. (Foto: GSR)

Ruth Karina Ubillus, a member of the Congregation of the School Sisters of Notre Dame, was born in Peru. With 12 years of teaching experience in public schools, she joined the congregation in 2006 after her novitiate in Brazil, where her missionary calling began. During her journey, she discovered the significance of "inner child" work in Guatemala, emphasizing its crucial role in personal growth and development. She holds a diploma in spiritual direction. She previously lived in Brazil for four years and since 2020 has lived in South Sudan, where she is driven to help individuals in their journey of personal growth and development.



A Benedictine Sister of Chicago since 1988, Susan Quaintance currently serves as her community's subprioress; she also works part time as director of Heart to Heart, a ministry for seniors at a nearby parish. Classrooms are where she most feels most at home, having spent decades teaching in a Benedictine single-gender high school for young women and then directing an educational outreach program for older adults in downtown Chicago. She sits on the board of the United States Secretariate of the Alliance for International Monasticism and on the council of the Monastic Congregation of St. Scholastica.



Nancy Mancera is a Colombian missionary with the Verbum Dei Missionary Fraternity. She studied theology in Guadalajara, Mexico, and earned a degree in dogmatic theology from the Gregorian University in Rome. She has been involved in apostolic work in countries that include Mexico, Colombia, Belgium, Italy and Guatemala, serving diverse populations from children to adults. She has also established radio programs at the diocesan level to support apostolic group formation and conducted retreats for teenagers and university students. She currently lives in Guatemala.

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