Columns
Religious Life



Members of the Siervas de San José gather for a regional meeting in Bogotá, Colombia. (Courtesy of Siervas de San José Colombia)



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Within the formative journey of religious life is the novitiate stage, an experience I have been privileged to carry out almost entirely in Colombia. During this time, my deep desire to encounter the God of life — the God of love who dwells within me — has grown stronger. I have learned to live more freely, with fewer attachments, and with greater awareness of my path.

I have discovered his love in many beautiful people with whom I have shared this journey — in moments, events, creation and even in life's hardest realities. This encounter with him has led me to encounter others, to desire to "give freely what I have received freely," to serve others, and to offer the best of myself. The desire to welcome, to listen and to share the tools I have received has grown within me, helping to make present the kingdom of life, mercy and forgiveness to which Jesus invites us.

During this time, I have learned to live simply, sharing life with other sisters in both joys and difficulties. I encounter God in the ordinary — in my work and in my daily dedication. Developing a special sensitivity toward women and their processes of healing, freedom, growth and empowerment has been key for me as I seek a more dignified life, a "life in abundance" for all.

This time has allowed me to recognize in my sisters the spirit of our founders: the resilience, fidelity and courage of St. Bonifacia, as well as the sensitivity and attentive gaze of Fr. Javier Butiñá toward reality, especially toward the working poor and women. I have identified with them and rekindled the desire to continue learning about them and discovering how they lived Nazareth — that space of encounter with Jesus, who prays and works in the silence of everyday life.

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It has been a time of abundant life and inner growth. I have taken important steps to embrace my history, let go of burdens and gain freedom. I have learned to look at myself and others with greater love and mercy, to care for my body, to listen to myself, to respect my own rhythms, and from there, to respect the rhythms of others. Although it has been difficult, I have learned to set boundaries and to take my place.

I have discovered that community is both a gift and a task, built through the contribution and willingness of everyone. It has been a beautiful journey of opening myself to others and feeling that they, in turn, have made a place for me in their hearts. I learned that it is better to ask than to assume, and that creating space for dialogue builds healthier relationships. Speaking honestly from my heart and listening to others has been key to walking together.

This time has allowed me to savor the ordinary, deepen my relationship with Jesus of Nazareth, and become more attuned to his humanity. I have discovered him close to me — a friend, a companion on the journey, poor among the poor, a neighbor, a worker — a simple and coherent man who lived the small things deeply.

From the beginning of my formation, I have discovered work as a space for growth, dignity and encounter with God and others. During this time especially, I have identified with the humblest workers, offering my work for those who are unemployed and for those who perform undervalued and poorly paid tasks. In particular, I keep in mind the families who survive through recycling.

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The Conference of Religious of Colombia Study Center and the courses I have taken have broadened my vision, helping me to deepen and mature in my faith. Together with the community, this time has been an opportunity to value diversity and embrace cultural differences as a richness.

I am very grateful to have worked with children and adolescents in parish catechesis — a space of mutual learning. The workshops on personal growth, values and body work, along with the liturgical dance group, have helped me integrate tools to serve others. Sharing music in the guitar group, both with teenagers and adults, has been a gift that allowed me to experience music as a true blessing.

Of all the places where I have contributed, the most significant has been the project "Tú Importas Mujer" [Woman, you matter], a space dedicated to the personal growth and dignity of women. This project has been a profound experience of mutual learning, full of valuable encounters.

Reflecting on this experience, I feel invited to continue creating space for God, to welcome what he has already given me, and to prepare for the new — for life, for more names and to continue saying "yes" to this ending that is also a new beginning: the apostolic experience and my preparation for temporary vows, which I will make in Havana, Cuba. This is one more step in my journey of consecration.

May your prayers strengthen me so that I may live this time faithfully and joyfully, growing in trust, surrender and love for God and others.