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Marianna Torrano, RSCJ

Marianna Torrano, RSCJ was born into a tight-knit, Italian family on December 2, 1931 in Oakland, California. The second of six children, Sister Torrano remembers a happy childhood. Praying the rosary regularly and attending Sunday mass together were of high importance to her family. Both of her parents were in the medical field, her father a surgeon and mother a nurse, which may have played a role in Sister Torrano's decision to become a nurse.

Sister Torrano was aware of her religious calling as early as grade school. When she was asked what she wanted to be when she grew up, her response was always "I want to be a Sister." However, her mother was not too fond of this plan. It was when Sister Torrano added "...or a nurse" to the end of her answer that her mother found more comfort.

Although she was aware of her calling, Sister Torrano was unsure where she wanted to be. Throughout her life, she had been introduced to many different religious communities. She had been taught by both Holy Name Sisters and Notre Dame Sisters, lived down the street from Dominican Sisters, and knew Sisters of Providence from her brother, who had joined the Jesuits. However, none of these felt right for her, as she was looking for a contemplative order. It was in high school that she went to talk to a priest about her vocation. While she was there, they talked about the different types of congregations and Sister Torrano was advised to look at and visit the Society of the Sacred Heart.

In 1949, during her senior year of high school that Sister Torrano made this her visit to the RSCJ. Some of her classmates were planning to attend an open house at Lone Mountain College (the Society's school in the area), and she decided to join them. Sister Torrano recalls walking up the long stairway to the front door and getting to the top to see RSCJ at the end of the long corridor. It was then that she knew that this is where she was supposed to be.



Sister Marianna Toranno

She considers this to be the first of three life events in which she felt called so strongly pulled, that there was really no other option.

Sister Torrano believes that words cannot describe the essence of the Society of the Sacred Heart. Words can only do so much. Instead, the spirit of the Society is something that needs to be caught. The mission of the Society of the Sacred Heart is to make known the heart of Christ, but this can't be fully understood unless you have "caught it," as she did that day at Lone Mountain.

On June 19, 1952, Sister Torrano entered the Society, after a year and a half in a nursing program. She made her first vows on December 21, 1954 and began teaching in the Sacred Heart School in Menlo Park, California until leaving to study for and make her final profession on July 21, 1960.

Upon arriving back in the United States, she also returned to the classroom, this time at Convent of the Sacred Heart (Broadway) in San Francisco. She remained there, teaching and working as *surveillante* (akin to a dean of students), for seven years before returning to Menlo Park as Mistress General.

During this time, Sister Torrano knew that teaching was not what she was called to do. Instead, she felt the same pull to study psychology as she had felt to join the Sacred Heart. So, she returned to school and, over the course of eight years, obtained both a Master's degree and a Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology. While doing so, Sister Torrano worked as a psychological consultant to the Society's California Province, as a psychological intern at the Napa State Hospital and a psychological assistant in a private practice in Saratoga, California. In 1979, Sister Torrano assumed the director role at the Torrano Center in San Francisco. While still director, she also held the role of a clinical psychologist, working in psychotherapy and doing consultations and workshops.

Sister Torrano's favorite ministry is her current work on the Soboba Indian Reservation in Southern California. She began this service in 1994 after feeling the same irresistible pull toward it as she had twice before. Here, she covers many areas: fundraising, spiritual advising, choir directing, maintenance and construction work, and anything else that needs doing.

She and two other RSCJs play a vital role in restoring the relationship between the Native people and the church. Although many of the Natives had been baptized in the reservation's Mission Church, they continued to remember a very painful past in which they were held captive and abused by both government and church. Through their actions and demonstration of understanding and compassion, the presence of a religious has been a sign to them that the Church, and the Lord, really do care about them and want to be with them lovingly.

Keeping with the Society's commitment to education, Sister Torrano helped found St. Jude's Mission School on the reservation in 2002 in response to the extreme educational poverty she witnessed. "Seeing 8-year-olds who could not even write their names spurred me to advocate for a school." Since opening, the school has focused on specifically on meeting the educational needs of the children on the reservation.

In addition to working at the Soboba Indian Reservation, Sister Torrano spends time every month in San Diego doing psychological consultation and spiritual direction. She loves everything about her current positions, especially the close contact she has with the people she is helping.

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Society of the Sacred Heart, United States - Canada

Address: 4120 Forest Park Avenue, St. Louis, MO 63108

Phone: 314.652.1500

Fax: 314.534.6800



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