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Reyna Gonzalez, RSCJ



Reyna Gonzalez, RSCJ, developed an appreciation for being a member of a large and welcoming community at a young age. One of six children, she was born and raised by her grandparents and mother in LaBarca, Jalisco, a small town outside of Guadalajara in Mexico. Each Sunday, her entire family gathered at her grandparents' house for a weekly get-together, at which there would be upwards of fifty family members in attendance. She loved that her grandparents created a welcoming "open house with an open door" environment in their home, because this active and people-filled household taught her "the importance of working together and supporting one another, even if we do not always get along."

Growing up, her family was Catholic, and certainly spiritual, yet Reyna was not particularly drawn to the church. In fact, her introduction into the religious life was a bit rocky. When a group of nuns from her hometown invited her on

retreat, to learn more about their community, Reyna ended up skipping the event to spend time with friends. However, she continued to be pulled by an underlying desire to make a difference in the world and decided to give religious life a second chance. She accepted an invitation to join three nuns from her hometown for a month long trial to see if their community suited her. However, at the end of the month, they told her that she was not suited for a vocation, because she was far too independent, and her desire to follow her own wishes was too strong.

Welcoming Spirit of the Society

When that door closed, Reyna returned to her job as an accountant and continued to wrestle with the calling that she felt to work towards a life of greater purpose. Soon after resuming her post, she met several members of the Society of the Sacred Heart, with whom she felt an immediate sense of belonging, as she resonated with their commitment to community and justice. The welcoming spirit of the RSCJ mirrored the family environment she had loved growing up. “In my family’s house we always have people around and people are welcome in. To see this quality in the community made me feel that the RSCJs were normal, family, friends and community in the broadest sense.” On top of that, the Society’s mission of education and empowerment resonated with her strong desire to make a difference. She explains that she “was attracted by the spirit of educators in the commitment to justice and the poor through critical analysis.” Within just seven months of meeting the RSCJ, Reyna left her job to seize the opportunity of joining a community committed to bettering the world, and began the process of entering the Society.

The most pivotal experience on this path to becoming an RSCJ occurred when she worked with indigenous communities in Mexico. In this role, she spent the week traveling to different parishes within several communities, many of which did not have electricity or water. She refers to this time as her “school of life” because she “learned that to be a nun, you don’t have to protect yourself. You have to be exposed to the reality. We need to be living how the people are living.” She even learned a bit of theology along the way. She recalls that, as Ash Wednesday drew near, one of the community members told her that they would need ashes for the upcoming ceremony. To respond to this need, she began *creating* ashes by burning paper, and collecting the ashes from cigarettes. It was after this concerted effort that someone informed her that the ashes were created by burning the Palm Sunday palms from the previous year. She concludes, “I learned to be a nun with them.”

Since this formative time, Sister Gonzalez has participated in a wide variety of ministry roles as a member of the Society. Initially, she continued her work in Mexico, where she tackled the administrative and visionary tasks associated with creating new development initiatives. Additionally, she served as the vocation ministry director for the Society for more than six years. Although she has worn many hats over the course of her time in the Society, she explains that the common thread between each ministry is that “all these roles ignite [her] passion for creating new things and exploring new roads.”

Latest Ministry

Reyna’s passion for innovation is certainly reflected in her current work. She recently spearheaded the effort to create the **My Call Me Back** mobile application, which is geared toward helping young people come together to share and reflect along their spiritual journey. In addition to developing the app, she also works at Sherpa Educational, an organization that she co-founded to “work with non-profit organizations and educational institutions on strategic planning and leadership training and development.” She is passionate about Sherpa’s work because she “like[s] to see how organizations and individuals are able to move forward in realizing their vision.” She also belongs to Lyoloswa, a popular education network in Mexico, and LaRed, an international network.

The result of her strong work ethic, and commitment to many roles, is that people tend to view Reyna as “serious and kind of intense.” However, in the spare time she “likes to relax by reading magazines about movie stars and gossip columns.” Each year, she even throws a red carpet party with her community in celebration of The Oscars. Although a Hollywood-style celebration may seem out of character, the event truly is another manifestation of her love for bringing people together—a love that has been present beginning with her days on her family farm, and carried throughout her life’s work.

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