



MERCEDARIAN  
SISTERS OF THE  
BLESSED SACRAMENT

# Like the Dewfall



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NOVEMBER 2017

## ¡Viva Jesús Eucarístico! (V.J.E.)

Among religious institutes, it is a widespread practice to lead correspondence and other writings with an invocation that briefly highlights an aspect of their spirituality. One of the most common of these “headers” is “Viva Jesús” (Long live Jesus). Various communities use this invocation, including: the Teresians of Enrique de Ossó, and other congregations inspired by the Jesuits. It is also considered a common practice to follow the “Viva Jesús” with a suffix that further relates to the spirituality of the given community.

In the case of the Mercedarian Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament; our foundress Maria del Refugio, and her daughter Teresa, were acquainted with the phrase, “Viva Jesús” from their involvement with the Company of St. Teresa of Jesus from whom Teresa received her education.

Before founding the community, which would be the Mercedarian Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, Maria del Refugio is already recorded to have used the “Viva Jesús” when heading the rules she wrote for the Blessed Sacrament Boarding School, which was signed in 1909 by Herminia Bernal, and the school itself was inaugurated in 1910.

The greeting would change into “Viva Jesús Eucarístico” (Long live the Eucharistic Jesus) by the time that Maria del Refugio would write the directory of her congregation in 1916, following the outline of the Directory of the Company of St. Teresa of Jesus, which was printed in Barcelona in 1905.

From the beginning the abbreviated formula was: V.J.E.

Information given by Mr. George Foulkes  
Edited by Sr. Lourdes, Novice, First Year

“I have  
come to set  
the world  
on fire.”  
(Luke 12:49)

*“Arise, my beloved, my beautiful one, and come!” (Song of Songs 2:13)*



# First Profession of Vows!

*“What has He done  
for me?  
He has loved me  
and given me His  
whole self.  
What shall I do for  
Him?  
I shall love Him and  
give myself to Him  
without reserve.”*

-St. Ignatius of Loyola

Sister  
April Marie  
Josefina  
Candelaria,  
HMSS



Sister  
Katie Marie  
Chiara  
McCloskey,  
HMSS

Sr. Katherine Marie Chiara, HMSS, and Sr. April Marie Josefina, HMSS, made their first profession of vows on the Vigil of the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary on August 14, 2017.

Please keep our dear Sisters in your prayers as they journey with Jesus on this great adventure as vowed religious!

Signing  
their  
profession  
of vows on  
the altar



Sr. K.M. Chiara, HMSS



Sr. A.M. Josefina, HMSS





## Entrance into Postulancy

Solemnity of the Assumption—August 15, 2017



*What was one of the biggest changes for you?*

**Raquel Gutierrez**



“The biggest change for me, compared to being in the world, and now living in the convent, has been to be able to praise God more fully, like never before. To unite myself with the love of all time, my beloved, and also, more fully, intercede on behalf of the needs of the world and bring them to the threshold of our Loving Father. That’s the change! With a heart full of gratitude to God and to all those who with their love, prayers, spiritual direction, and words of encouragement journeyed with me and helped me on my way to the convent, I rejoice and I THANK YOU!  
“*Let the earth bless the Lord, praise and exalt him above all forever.*” -Daniel 3:74

**Tonia Borsellino**



“In becoming a Postulant, I originally didn't think anything would change other than the clothes I had to wear. But giving God my "yes" freely during the entrance was like giving God permission to come flooding through the doors of my heart with His love. My relationship with Him began to deepen, mature, and be purified, all while still remaining in awe of His glory like a child. I began to understand how much of a gift this calling truly is.”

## First Profession of Vows: From a Dad's Perspective



After the First Profession Mass: Sr. April Marie Josefina, HMSS, with her father, Lou Candelaria

"This weekend in Cleveland was a very special time for me. It was the first time in a few years my wife and I had all of our kids together in the same place; not since the wedding of our eldest daughter. This occasion was to celebrate another wedding, as our daughter April professed her vows to become a bride of Christ. Words cannot describe the immense joy, pride, and overwhelming love we experienced from the community of hundreds who attended this ceremony. Having the Bishop preside over such a beautiful mass, accompanied by over 20 priests and so many Mercedarian sisters all praying for my daughter and Sister Katie, was truly a sight to behold. I am so grateful for my family, and my ever-expanding extended family. I am humbled by the simplicity of the life Sister April has been called to, and the incredible sacrifice she makes for all of us."

Lou Candelaria  
Father of Sr. April Marie Josefina, HMSS

## A Reflection on Religious Life: From a Mom's Perspective

When April first approached me with the idea that she was thinking about becoming a nun, I was quite startled. Although April was very involved at St. Augustine's Catholic Church in Gainesville, she also had a great affinity for... guys. April said she would pray about it for the next two years and let me know. I thought, "Whew...I have two more years for April to fall in love with a boy and change her mind!" Well, she didn't change her mind. She spent the next two years praying, working, and contacting religious communities.

I still remember the overwhelming feelings of sadness and emptiness when April told me that she had decided to enter a religious community. I recalled a pact that I had made with God when he had called me to religious life while I was in college. I had told Him to "Take my daughter, but not me", and He did. I added "guilt" to my growing resume of unhappy feelings, but tried to be as supportive as possible with April's decision.

Eventually the day came when we drove April to Jacksonville to meet up with some of her friends who were driving both April and Katie to Ohio. I think one of the hardest things a parent has to do is to let his or her children go, even though it's a normal part of growing up. However, not only did I have to let April go, I also had to accept the fact that she was moving hundreds of miles away and future contact would be very limited. I felt like I just lost my daughter to a group of nuns that I knew nothing about.



Parents of Sr. A.M. Josefina processing with her

I tried to stay positive, but I cried a lot after April left. I prayed for courage and faith in giving my gift of April back to God, so that she could do His will. It wasn't until we met the Mercedarian Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament at a retreat in Baton Rouge that I was able to begin to understand why April was called to that particular Congregation. The Mercedarian Sisters were very welcoming, a family of holy women, filled with the joy of Jesus. April seemed to have an inner peace and happiness that one can only have if given by the grace of God. I felt much better leaving this time, knowing how happy she was with her new family.



**Sr. A.M. Josefina with her parents, two brothers, and two sisters**

The following year, we flew to Ohio to attend April's Novitiate Ceremony. It was a particularly emotional experience to watch as April's long, curly hair was cut off and her head was covered with a white veil. The ceremony made the realization of April's decision to become a Sister much more definite. A small part of me was still holding out for a husband and children, but that didn't seem to be in God's plan. She was the chosen one, giving of herself freely, openly, and honestly to God, which was something that I couldn't do. I'm sure the discernment process isn't always easy for April, so if she is going to fulfill God's will, she will need my full support. It might take me as many years as it takes her to discern her final vows, but I will give it.



**Sr. A.M. Josefina with her siblings (from left to right: Jessica, Tommy, [Sister] Louie, and Julia)**

In August, we attended April's First Profession of Vows. I had no idea that it was going to be so elaborate. The ceremony was attended by numerous religious men and women, priests, family, friends and the entire community. April's dad and I walked her down the aisle and witnessed a beautiful ceremony accompanied with heavenly singing. My daughter was filled with inner happiness and her face was glowing with the light of the Holy Spirit. She received the black veil and took the name of "Josefina" as an addition to her birth name. After the Mass, there was a dinner and reception with a white cake. It wasn't until then that I realized we were actually attending April's wedding ceremony!

I was reflecting on that beautiful day and realized that women don't wake up one day and say to themselves, "I think I want to be a nun." God seeks out very special women and calls them to lead his people. Discerning

religious life would be impossible without the grace of God, the guidance of Mother Superiors, and family support. I'm very proud that my daughter was one of the lucky few chosen by God. I no longer feel that I lost my daughter because I have gained 20 more Mercedarian daughters in addition to Sister April Marie Josefina.

In Christ's name,  
 Sherrie Candelaria  
 Mother of Sr. April Marie Josefina, HMSS



# Entrance to Novitiate

Sr. Lourdes Rebecca Bernadette Furnells entered the novitiate on the Solemnity of Our Lady of Mercy, September 24, 2017. Please pray for her as she begins her religious life in our Institute!



*"If anyone comes to me,  
I want to lead them  
to Him."*

*-St. Teresa Benedicta of  
the Cross (Edith Stein)*



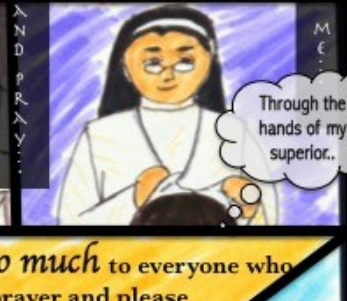
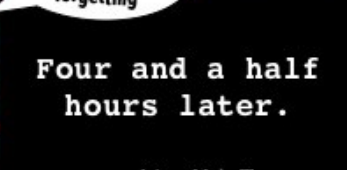
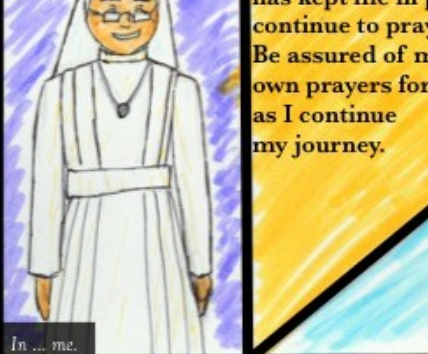
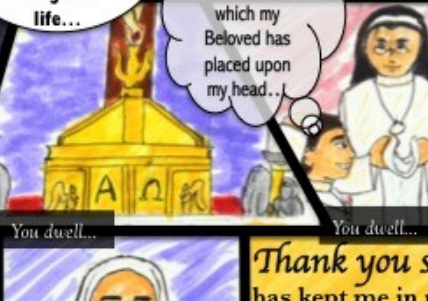
# Entrance Day!!

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Florida, 2001. 8 years old.



Cleveland, 2017, September 24<sup>th</sup>,  
Solemnity of Our Lady of Mercy.  
7:45 AM





# Return to the River

VJE

*On coming up out of the water he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit, like a dove, descending upon him. And a voice came from the heavens, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased." At once the Spirit drove him out into the desert, and he remained in the desert for forty days, tempted by Satan. He was among wild beasts, and the angels ministered to him. (Mk 10-13)*

During the Mass for our first profession of vows, I was deeply aware of the Father's love for me, my Sisters, and all who were gathered at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel on that joyful day. Upon processing out of the church, I knew I was different-----. By truly becoming a bride of Christ, I also became a "new creation" (2 Cor 5:17, Rev. 21:5).

In the days that followed, I sensed that Jesus was calling me to an even deeper surrender. This confused me since I thought that professing vows was the total surrender! Jesus began to teach me otherwise.

Mother Rosario, Sr. April Marie Josefina, and myself had plans of arriving in Jacksonville, FL, to begin our new foundation, but due to hurricane Irma, we were unable to leave Cleveland. As Jesus would have it, for 40 days we remained. These 40 days truly became a "desert" time for me. Prayer suddenly became super dry, and I was in a constant battle of fighting against all kinds of lies from the evil one. The struggle was real! All I could "say" during my times of Eucharistic adoration was, "Who are You?!"

Though I felt lost in the desert, Jesus did respond. He wanted me to enter even deeper into His Heart to solidify my calling as a spouse and mother, but He waited for my consent (this is a *relationship* after all!). After realizing that I wanted this too, it was as if Jesus took me by the hand and continued to lead me through the desert.

As the end of the 40 days approached, I kept hearing within me, "Return to the river." I had no idea what that meant, until one day in adoration, I experienced a powerful encounter with Jesus in prayer. I had this image where Jesus led me to a river and when I looked back at Him, He was suddenly covered in the wounds from His passion. I felt prompted to wash His wounds in the river, and He allowed me to do it. Then He said to me, "Now it is your turn." I found this very difficult to hear, yet, I understood what Jesus was saying.

I cannot be a good sister or spiritual mother to you, dear reader, unless I continue to receive Jesus and allow Him to *totally* receive me, with all of my wounds and imperfections. It is only in this way that I can be healed and sent out to wherever He leads me. This "river" that Jesus led me to was nothing other than the Love that flows from the Trinity. To be immersed in the Trinity is to "return to the river."

Please pray for us as we begin our next adventure in Florida! Be assured of our love and prayers for you as well and may you also "return to the river."

In the Heart of the Trinity,  
Sr. Katie Marie Chiara, HMSS



Receiving a "sending out" blessing from Fr. James Kulway on the Feast of St. Luke



# Pray for the new Sacred Heart Community in Jacksonville, FL!



Founding Sisters: (from left to right)  
Sr. AM Josefina, Sr. KM Chiara, and Mother Rosario

*"Grant me, O Lord my God, a mind to know you, a heart to seek you, wisdom to find you, conduct pleasing to you, faithful perseverance in waiting for you, and a hope of finally embracing you."*

*- Saint Thomas Aquinas*



Welcoming Bishop Nelson Perez as  
the Bishop of the Diocese of  
Cleveland!



# Iconography!

*Reflection of the experience from Second Year Novice, Sr. Yvelyne Bernard:*



Four of our Sisters had the opportunity to learn how to write icons in a one week workshop

In the beginning, the Spirit of the Lord hovered over waters of chaos and brought forth order, goodness, beauty, and light. Such was my experience while writing my first Religious Icon. The experience made me become acutely aware of the Holy Spirit's work and my symbolic participation in that work. Indeed, I saw a mere piece of blank wood transform into an image of Mother Mary right before my eyes, and all I used for the most part was watered down acrylic paint. How much more does the Holy Spirit transform mere bread into the Body of Christ with only human words of Institution. I witnessed layer after layer of messy, watery paint, slowly form into one harmonious display of colors; and I could not help but think of how the Holy Spirit breathes over our messy lives in order to guide us through chaotic waters of doubt, and lead us to peaceful shores. And truly, it is on those shores where we are able to look back at the storms we weathered in faith with gratitude and thanksgiving. There is so much more that could be said because iconography is bursting at the seams with symbolism. But the water symbolism definitely impacted me the most. With every stroke of my brush I breathed an intention over the watery paint until finally, I had a finished icon in my hand; and with every breath that the Holy Spirit takes over my life, the work of God is being done in me and one day it will be completed. Writing my first icon, especially of my dear Mother Mary, was a beautiful experience and I am so grateful that I was given the opportunity.

I LOVE ICONOGRAPHY! :D

## The Joy of Love!





# To seek Jesus is the greatest adventure!



Order of  
Mercy  
Celebrating  
800 Years!  
1218-2018





# *Mercedarian Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament*



## *Our Lady of Mercy, pray for us!*

We, the Mercedarian Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, consecrate ourselves to God, the source of all holiness. We conform ourselves to Christ the Redeemer in His Eucharistic Mystery through the profession of the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty, and obedience, and we work to spread the Kingdom of the Eucharistic Jesus throughout the world, under the maternal protection of Our Lady of Mercy. (Constitutions #5)

### Contact us

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### Upcoming Events

- Dec. 16 Claimed by Love –Diocesan Young Adults Retreat
- Dec. 22-29 Conferences with Mr. George Foulkes
- Jan. 2-6 Student Leaders Summit 2018 in Chicago
- Jan. 19-20 March for Life
- Jan. 28 Diocesan Basketball Game
- **April 13-15 , 2018 Spring Discernment Retreat**

**Register online!**