

Word™

A Publication of The Society of the Divine Word, Southern Province





VISION

The Holy Spirit Life-Learning Center is a non-profit institute in the Rogers Park area in Chicago, IL. We are committed to helping people to reach a better standard of living. In collaboration with other institutions and individuals as part of our mission's commitment.

MISSION

The Holy Spirit Life-Learning Center aims to support women and children in the Rogers Park area for sustainable living.

HOLY SPIRIT LIFE-LEARNING CENTER



COME AND SEE!
Our address is:
1020 W. Morse Ave
Chicago, IL 60645

SERVICES

- English as a Second Language Classes
- Computer Classes
- Basic Skills
- Reading Class
- Building and Constructing Class
- Bookkeeping
- Business Class Programs
- Consulting
- Women's Support Groups
- International Workshops
- Subsiding and Research Help



Growing Through Service

The Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters (SSpS) are an international community of religious women serving in 47 countries. Founded by Saint Arnold Janssen in 1889 the Sisters are involved in various ministries among the poor and marginalized, especially women and children. In whatever country the Sisters are working they commit themselves to :

- People who are searching for God and for meaning in life
- Women and children in situations of need
- People living with HIV/AIDS
- The integrity of the environment and creation

The Sisters are present in the United States and their motherhouse is located in Northbrook, Illinois. From Northbrook the Sisters reach out in various locations in the United States and the Caribbean. One of the places we here at *IN A WORD* recently visited was the Holy Spirit Life Learning Center (HSLLC) in the Rogers Park area of Chicago, Illinois. In 2011, the Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters of the U.S. Paraclete Province opened a new ministry site to serve primarily low-income, immigrant women in the Rogers Park area of the city.

The mission of the Holy Spirit Life learning Center is **“to work in a collaborative service with other institutions and community members of the West Ridge and Rogers Park areas and their surroundings; to support individuals, especially women and children, to reach a better standard of living by improving learning skills and developing self confidence.”**

The presence of the Sisters at the Center has made a profound impact on the lives of many. A wonderful example of their influence is Ms. Arantxa Martinez who is a lay staff member of the Learning Center. Ms. Martinez was featured in the [Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters Spring 2016 magazine](#). We found her story fascinating and when we met her on our visit we felt her story of growth through service needed to be retold.



Arantxa and Sr. Angelica



Arantxa Martinez

Her story of how she grew through service

I am an immigrant woman from a very humble background. My family and I moved to the United States from Mexico when I was a child. While growing up in Shelby Park Township, Michigan my parents tried to provide as much as they could for my five siblings and me though we lived with very limited resources.

Towards the end of summer 2011, I moved to Chicago to begin a masters degree program at Loyola University. I wanted to improve my life so that I could also help my family. The first few months in Chicago were some of the most difficult times of my life. I had never lived away from home and I felt terribly homesick. My family was unable to support me financially, the bills started to accumulate, and I could not find a job in my field. I began to work full time at a restaurant where all the employees were also immigrants, and let's just say the conditions and wages were not the greatest. I felt I had many skills and no one was giving me an opportunity to use them. My self-confidence started to suffer. Working and studying at the same time did not leave much room for socializing. There were times when I felt hopeless and defeated. I was facing many challenges to achieve what I thought was “success”.... wealth and a professional career.

One morning in January 2012, I met Sr. Aprilia Untarto, SSpS, at an event for students studying at the Institute of Pastoral Studies, Loyola University. She was studying counseling at the time. She shared briefly about the HSLLC and that they were in need of volunteers, especially

those who could speak Spanish. A few days later, I gave her a call and arranged to meet with her and Sr. Angelica Oyarzo Chavol, SSpS.

I volunteered to teach English (ESL) in the mornings two days per week. With that arrangement, I was now studying, working, and volunteering! Surprisingly, this combination made me feel much better. The Sisters were very friendly and supportive. They listened to my story. They gave me an opportunity to share my skills with others; but I received so much more. I also met the Sisters living in the SSpS Rogers Park Community (living in the same facility as the HSLLC). They, too, were friendly and welcoming! In August 2012, while looking for a place to do the internship for the master's program, I again met with Sr. Angelica and Sr. Monica Mabel Balbuena.

They gave me the opportunity to do the internship at the Life Learning Center. My task was to help conduct a social analysis of the area and to develop a domestic abuse program. Then in January 2013, Sisters Monica and Angelica offered me a part time position as a case manager. I was offered a job! I kept asking myself "Why me? Do they think I can do this?" That is when the 'self-confidence' issue kicked in. Of course I accepted the offer and quit my job at the restaurant. At the same time, I was scared. I did not want to let them down. I wanted to be the best case manager there was in Chicago.

In the summer of 2013, I graduated from Loyola University Chicago with a master's degree in "Social Justice and Community Development". That fall, the Sisters offered me a full time position as a case manager and development coordinator. It's 2016, and I am still here! What have these past years of experience done for me? How has the "mission" of the Holy Spirit Life learning Center impacted my life?

My standard of living and my skills have definitely improved as a result of my service at the HSLLC. I developed professional skills in areas such as non-profit management, fundraising, and public speaking. I've learned to maintain boundaries when working with people in crisis; and I've learned to listen and respond with compassion. When it comes to life skills, I have learned to be more resourceful and to not waste anything.

The Sisters make the most of the little that is available. For example, they recycle, use scrap paper, and they repair things when possible instead of buying new. I have learned to work with what is available, not with what I want. I've learned that it is important to take risks and when something does not work out, to keep trying until something does. My cooking and baking skills have improved, especially after a bake sale fundraiser we sponsored in 2013!



My self-confidence has grown significantly and is reflected in my interpersonal relationships. I can say that now I believe more in my abilities; and at the same time, I have learned to accept my weaknesses.

I feel more confident when I conduct awareness workshops about domestic violence to large groups. I have learned to stand up for myself and to defend my rights. I am comfortable asking questions when I do not know or understand something.

While working at the HSLLC and with the Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters, many of my dreams have come true. For example, I dreamed to travel, to meet people from different cultures. I have not traveled out of the country, yet I am meeting people from a variety of cultures. I work and interact with Sisters who come from different parts of the world: the Far East, Indonesia, Japan, India, Ghana, Chile, Argentina, and Germany, just to name a few. The SSpS United States Province has given me the opportunity to attend the Commission on the Status of Women at the United Nations, New York. I feel like the whole world has come to me, without me having to travel around the world.



Arantxa at the United Nations

I am very grateful to the Sisters and others for the various opportunities they have provided me: for a dignified job, for believing in me, for sharing their knowledge with me, and for providing a space where I could grow as a person. I invite you dear readers to join our missionary efforts with your energy, resources, and prayers. The Holy Spirit Life Learning Center and the various ministries sponsored by the Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters (SSpS) are transforming lives throughout the world - including mine!

in a word or two



For more information on the Missionary Sisters of the Holy Spirit and their work around the world go to:
<http://www.sspS-usa.org>



Through the years, many young people from Germany and Austria have come as lay missionaries to the Life Learning Center. Fabienne Fritzsching is a volunteer from Germany. Fluent in Spanish, English and German the young lady has dedicated a year of service at the Center. Fabienne is shown in photo on left with one of the many friends she has made at the Center.

For more information and how you can be a part of the work of the Holy Spirit Life learning Center contact:

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The United States Catholic Bishops Conference (USCCB) and Institute for Black Catholic studies (IBCS) will offer a program titled Building Intercultural Competence for Ministers from **July 4-8, 2016**

This first time offering of BICM will address issues of particular interest for African American Catholic ministry: How to reach Black Catholics in a multicultural context; Best practices for ministry within the African diaspora; and Appreciating the Catholic experience through other eyes.

Location: IBCS at Xavier University of Louisiana

Sponsored By: USCCB & IBCS

Registration is now open at www.xula.edu/ibcs

For more information, contact:

Donna Grimes, Director of African American Affairs,
dgrimes@uscgb.org
or 202.541.3178 or visit www.ibcsxula.com

The Divine Word Missionaries of the Southern Province gathered for prayer and celebration in Bay Saint Louis the first week of June. There were jubilee celebrations for Gus Wall, SVD, Borgia Aubespain, SVD, and Father Tom Mullaney, SVD. See more photos at the Southern Province website www.svdsouth.com



Please Note:

IN A WORD is not published during July and August.

Have a blessed and safe summer!

Divine Word Missionaries is an international missionary community of over 7,000 brothers and priests. In 1905 the SVDs began working among African Americans in the Southern United States. Today, Divine Word Missionaries work in over 35 parishes in Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas and Arkansas.

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Web page can be found at <http://www.inaword.com>