Blog
Spirituality



Never turn down an opportunity to show people that there is God in them. (Honorine Uwimana)



by Honorine Uwimana

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Editor's note: *Notes from the Field includes reports from young people volunteering in ministries of Catholic sisters. A partnership with Catholic Volunteer Network, the project began in the summer of 2015. This is our 10th round of bloggers: Honorine Uwimana is a St. Joseph Worker in Orange, California, and Samantha Kominiarek is an Assumption Mission Associate in Chaparral, New Mexico. This is Honorine's final blog post.*

Dear reader,

I knew this day would come, when my ink would get low. Before it happens, I would count you as my last thought.

I started drafting my last reflections a couple of weeks ago. I wanted to make sure to tell you what my year of service has brought me so far and highlight important moments before I rest my plume.

I am grateful for your attentive ear to my thoughts expressed out loud. This platform became a personal journal where I would rest my memories, feelings and opinions; I trusted you with my truth and my pages, and you responded with presence and support. I shared with the hope that my experience will uplift you, comfort you and show you what the world looks like through my lenses.

Be blessed for the words of encouragement and appreciation and for the hugs and handshakes that pushed me to write one piece after another.

Whether what you read was challenging or encouraging, a reason to dream or a reason to cast doubt on the possibility of a better world, you were right.

I may have made service sound hard or maybe easy, but service is a profound, continuous choice that requires more passion and vision than it requires skills.

Service comes with days of excitement in joining legends fighting the good fight of making the world peaceful, joyful and equitable, but it sometimes ends with evenings of uncertainty, when you are unsure about the impact you are making, when you heal one ill and see another one coming, when you have a team with which you share the same work but not the same drive, when the stage you are standing on doesn't seem high or central enough for your petitions to be seen and

influence to be mimicked, and when all prayers seem to be answered but yours.

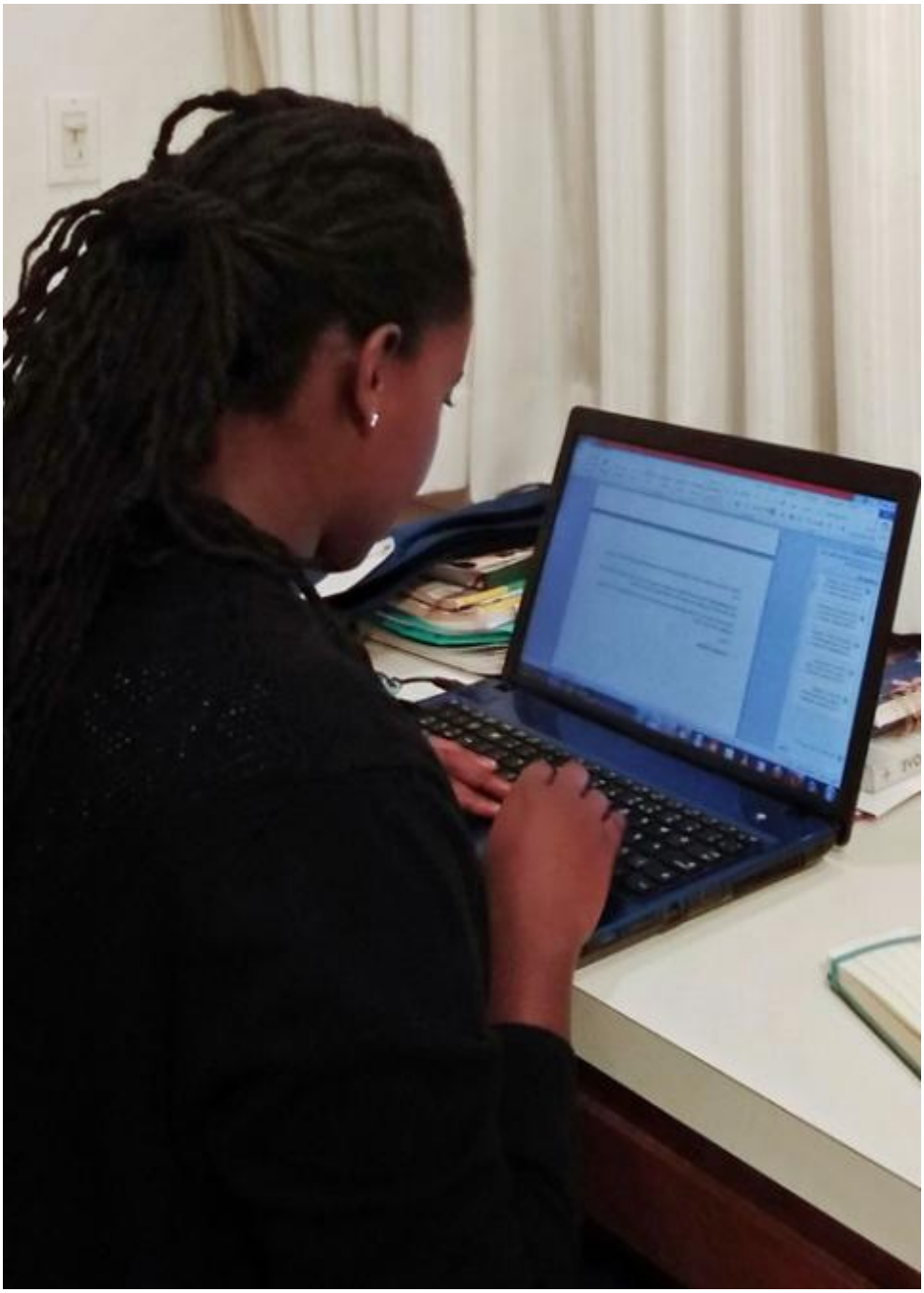
You will have days when the noise around you says you should not care or that you should quit the road less traveled, and it will be louder than the small voice in you that says: "Justice for one a day will be justice for all some days."

There will come other seasons when you will think you have reached the peak of your mission, when you will think that you love and understand the dear neighbor you serve better than anyone else. There will be days when you will want everyone to follow your steps, and you will judge others for not being as good and as committed as you. You will think your vision is the only vision and will condemn others for not buying into it, and without knowing, you will exclude some people from the circle you are called to love.

You will slowly hate administrative institutions for going astray from your definition of justice, people from other religious dominions for not understanding piety, the rich for not being simple, and even those you serve with for not understanding or living by the values you consider essential and ultimate. Blindly, your opinions will be more shaped by the things you are against than the things you are for.

Watch out. Though your actions may be good, do not let ego reign over love. When that time comes, pause. Pause to realize that in the process of serving those who are vulnerable, oppressed and marginalized by existing systems, you stretched the margin to those you do not agree with or those out of your sphere of influence. Always remember that there is no "them"; it is just "us." Practice acceptance to all, even when you disagree with some.

We have all failed to the divine love and purpose at some point. Without distinction, we all deserve grace and a chance to try again.



Practice humility every day, and wisdom will follow. (Honorine Uwimana)

A few months ago, I was strolling in a forest with three friends, sharing stories. One of them started a story: "When Barack Obama was elected president ..."

In a flash, I was taken back 12 years and realized that what was a big historical moment is now an old memory.

Before I see time winding, my mandate as a St. Joseph Worker will be over, and I will soon refer to my experience as one among many I had in the past. You will also remember me as a person who used to write for Global Sisters Report or used to serve with the Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange, California. I will carry the fruits of service and display a refined attitude toward the world, but I will also talk of this time in the past. That is the course of life, but I hope it becomes a landmark we will touch on, praising social justice activism.

Isn't it amazing that we talk of the world wars, the slave trade or the chicken pox in the past? Don't we owe a debt to our forebears, that they preserved us from such monstrosities? Isn't it a privilege that they buried those moments in history and opened up an El Dorado we are all part of?

Dear reader, if I am saying this, it is because I want you to shift from being just a reader and be a leader. I want to remind us that it would be awesome if the generation rising behind us can talk of homelessness, climate change, immigration challenges, human trafficking, white supremacy and racial bigotry as if it is in the past.

It is a debt we owe to the past generation for trying, to the present generation for being victims, and to the future generation for not deserving it. The time is ripe to talk with compassion about the person with whom we do not share the same wealth, identity or privileges.

And it takes your small steps in the right direction and minds with the right attitude to get there. It takes ordinary people to make a shift in our mindsets and structures, and I believe in me and you.

Dear ~~reader~~ leader, I hope that through your impact, you give me one more reason to refill my ink and write about the things you stand for and the impact you are making.

I hope that every story I wrote appealed to you not just as a piece of writing, but a call to action, a genuine call to love again.

Yours,

Honorine Uwimana

[Honorine Uwimana is a St. Joseph Worker from Rwanda serving at Regina Residence with the Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange, California.]

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