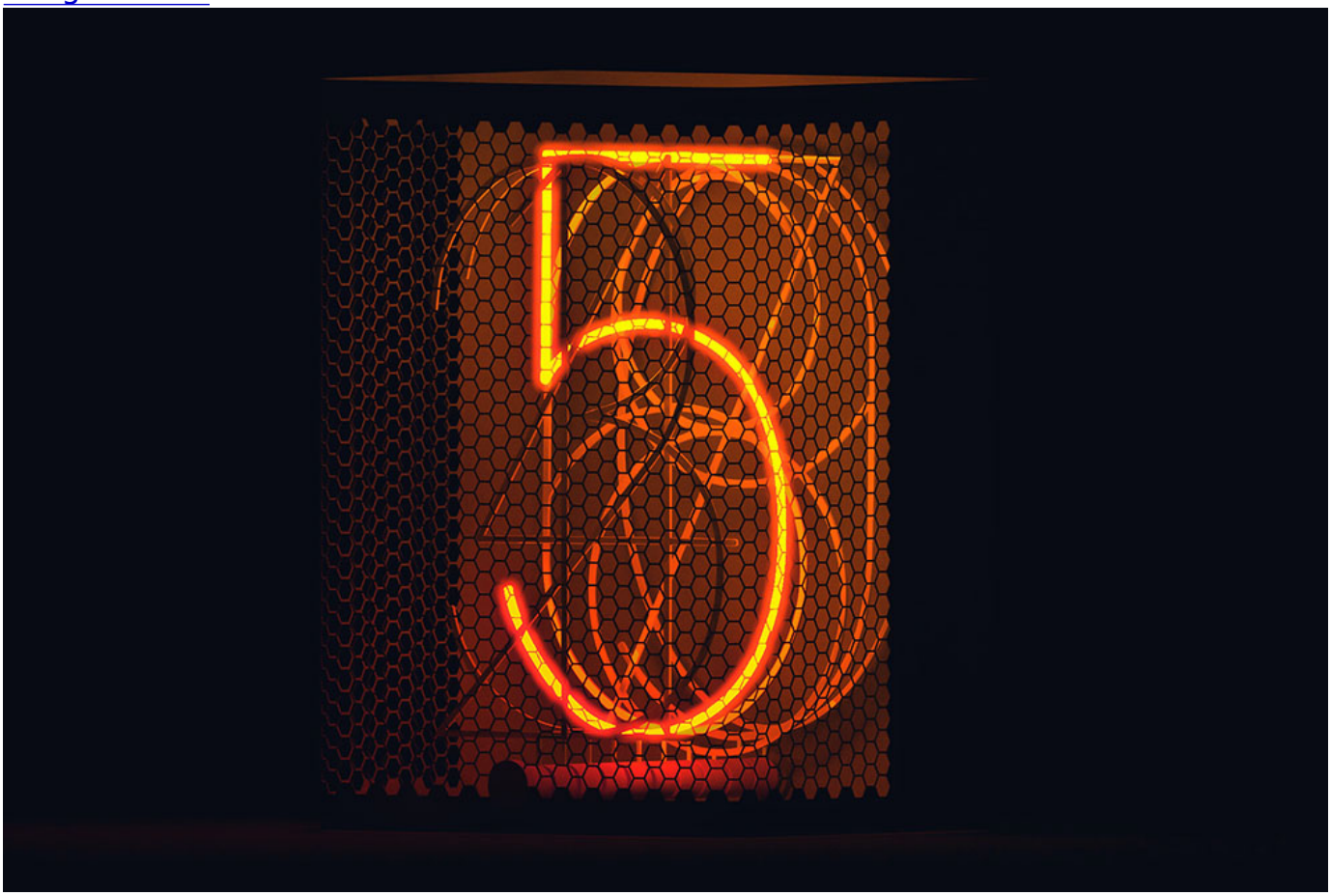
Blog
Religious Life



(Unsplash/Anirudh)

by GSR Staff

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November 29, 2021
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Welcome to our fifth year of The Life, featuring a panel of 20 sisters who will reflect on issues that impact the lives of Catholic women religious around the globe.

We chose a panel from more than 50 applicants from around the world who reflect a diversity of ages, nationalities, religious congregations, ministries and charisms. They'll take turns writing responses to a prompt or a question about spirituality, religious life and other topics.

Our panelists this year have ties to or have worked in: Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Bangladesh, Brazil, Canada, Cameroon, Cuba, Ethiopia, France, Guatemala, Haiti, India, Italy, Iraq, Kenya, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru, the Philippines, Portugal, South Sudan, Tanzania, the United States and Vietnam.

They include an archaeologist, psychotherapist, nurse/midwife; a student in first vows, a widow/grandmother; teachers and school administrators from all levels; parish and campus ministers, theologians, spiritual directors and counselors; missionaries; sisters who have worked with youth, women, refugees, climate migrants, First Nation people and tribals; sisters in social work, journalism, writing and speaking; sisters who work in peacebuilding and development, anti-trafficking, and sustainable development (water issues); and sisters with internal community ministries like leadership, vocations, oblates, formation and development.

Read some of their responses here to the prompt: Thinking about the reality of our world — like what's going on in your congregation/neighborhood/region/country/world — write a personal reflection, commentary or meditation on the theme of Advent.

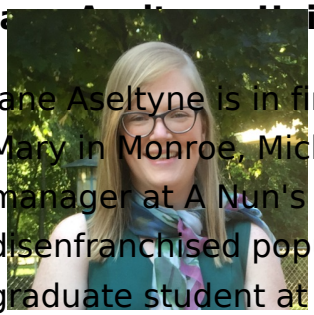
Meet the 2021-22 panelists for The Life:

A[illegible]ustralia



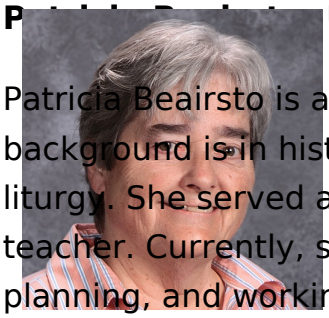
Annette Arnold is a Sister of St. Joseph of the Sacred Heart from Rockhampton, Queensland, Australia. She has an academic background in education, counseling, community development, mission studies, professional supervision and spiritual direction. She has taught in primary and secondary schools and conducted high school retreats and counseling. She has also worked as the executive office of the Brisbane Archdiocese's justice and peace commission and as the coordinator of the social action office of religious congregations. She has worked with First Nations women preparing to coordinate a safe house for victims of domestic violence and has served on her congregation's provincial and general councils and as a regional leader. She currently works in spiritual direction and professional supervision.

Ja[illegible]ited States



Jane Aseltyne is in first vows with the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in Monroe, Michigan. Before entering, she served as the communications manager at A Nun's Life Ministry and worked in various ministries focused on disenfranchised populations, including teenagers and the elderly. Currently, she is a graduate student at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, pursuing a master's degree in systematic theology and spirituality, and is involved in the Together Program, an intercultural cohort of young women religious who are studying at Catholic Theological Union and living in community.

P[illegible]United States



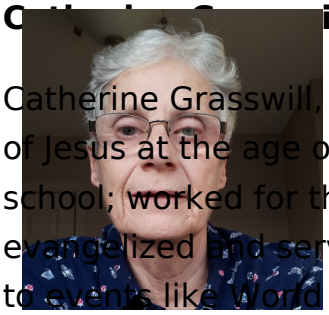
Patricia Beairsto is a Sister of Mercy from Rochester, New York. Her educational background is in history and political science, then theology, pastoral ministry and liturgy. She served as a high school campus minister and as a high school theology teacher. Currently, she is teaching theology, doing retreat work and liturgical planning, and working in mission effectiveness and the systemic dimensions of the work of justice.

M[illegible]avich, United States



Mary Kathleen Glavich is a Sister of Notre Dame from Cleveland. In early ministries, she taught every grade from first to 12th. Later, she served as a vocation director for her diocese and as a pastoral associate in a parish. A writer and editor, she has published many articles and more than 90 books and was a featured speaker at a catechetical conference in the United Arab Emirates and Oman.

C[illegible]ill, France/Canada



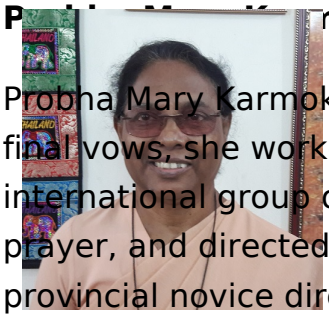
Catherine Grasswill, originally from France, joined the congregation of the Ursulines of Jesus at the age of 37. She was chaplaincy coordinator in a French secondary school; worked for the Catholic Delegation for Cooperation in Cameroon; and evangelized and served as a principal in Cameroon. She accompanied young people to events like World Youth Day as well as the Taizé community in several countries. She has worked with the wives of deacons and currently shares life with Spanish and Canadian sisters while giving workshops and retreats for the Francophone community in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

V[illegible]ilippines/Kenya



Vicenta Javier, a member of the Religious of the Assumption, is from the Philippines. After eight years of missionary work in Vietnam, she is now in her 11th year of missionary work in East Africa. She is an educator but has also been a formator of young sisters in the Philippines, Vietnam, Tanzania and Kenya. Currently, she teaches part time at the Center for Leadership and Management at Tangaza University College in Nairobi, Kenya.

P[illegible]nokar, Bangladesh



Probha Mary Karmokar is a Sister of Our Lady of the Missions in Bangladesh. Before final vows, she worked as a social worker in a rural village, lived with an international group of priests and religious of different congregations in a house of prayer, and directed an urban hostel. Later, she served in initial formation as provincial novice director and worked as a formator in Kenya. After studies in spiritual and pastoral theology, she served in Rome as a general counselor. Returning to Bangladesh, she was elected provincial superior for six years and is currently on the Bangladesh province leadership team.

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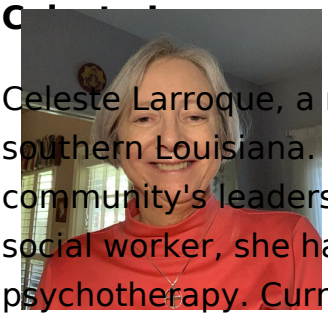
E[illegible]ia



Euginia Laloo of the Jaintia tribe of Meghalaya, India, is a member of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Province (Shillong) of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (Salesian Sisters of Don Bosco). With a background in media technology

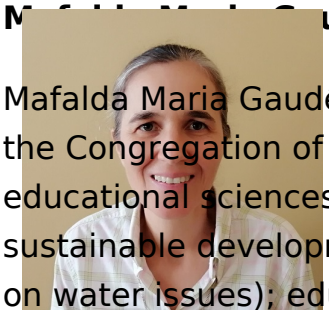
and English literature, she has worked in schools, especially with dropout students and in media ministry. Currently, she is writing the history of her province and serving as coordinator of social communication.

C[illegible] United States



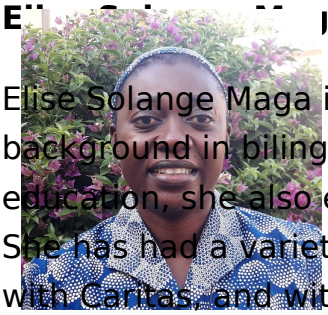
Celeste Larroque, a member of the Sisters of the Eucharistic Covenant, is a native of southern Louisiana. She has been in religious life for 47 years and currently is on her community's leadership team. She resides in Lafayette, Louisiana. A licensed clinical social worker, she has spent her career primarily in the areas of social services and psychotherapy. Currently, she is the delegate for religious in the Lafayette Diocese.

M[illegible]udêncio Franco Leitão, Portugal



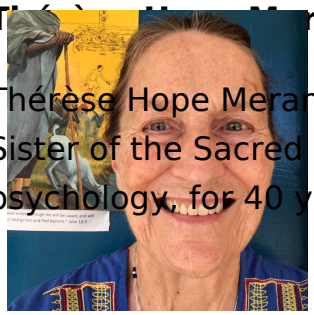
Mafalda Maria Gaudêncio Franco Leitão is from Lisbon, Portugal, and is a member of the Congregation of Servants of Our Lady of Fátima. With a background in educational sciences, her special research interests include education for sustainable development (training teachers in Portuguese-speaking African countries on water issues); education for global citizenship and integral education; and climate migrants and refugees. She taught physics and chemistry in secondary schools and worked in youth ministry in various parishes and dioceses. Currently, she serves as general counselor for her congregation.

E[illegible]ga, Cameroon



Elise Solange Maga is a Sister of the Divine Will in Cameroon. With an academic background in bilingual letters, pastoral theology for religious, and secondary education, she also earned diplomas in formation and vocational animation in Rome. She has had a variety of pastoral experiences and worked in justice/peace ministry with Caritas, and with children and young people, widows, the sick, and young people in vocational discernment. Currently, she teaches languages and religious studies at a bilingual college in Cameroon. She is also a parish catechist, animates the meetings of living ecclesial communities, and accompanies youth.

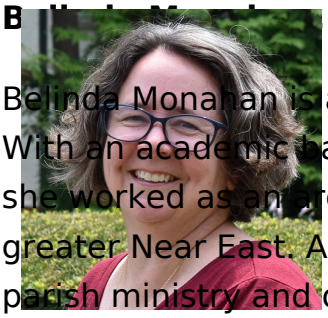
T[illegible]randi, United States/Brazil/South Sudan



Thérèse Hope Merandi is an American-born and naturalized Brazilian Missionary Sister of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. With graduate degrees in theology and psychology, for 40 years she did formation work with various groups, including

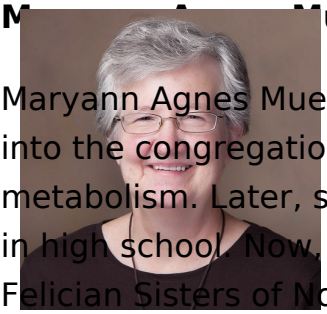
grassroots levels, in conflict areas, mostly in Latin American countries such as Nicaragua, Guatemala, Argentina, Cuba and Paraguay. She served in congregational general leadership and ministered for 20 years in African countries, including Ethiopia and Uganda. She is currently in South Sudan as part of the intercongregational pastoral team of Solidarity with South Sudan.

B United States



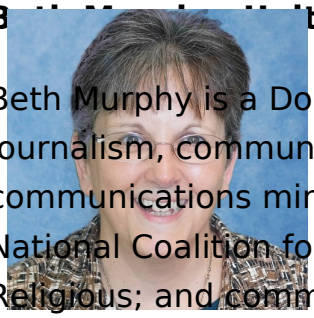
Belinda Monahan is a Benedictine Sister at St. Scholastica Monastery in Chicago. With an academic background in archaeology, anthropology and Eastern languages, she worked as an archaeologist, primarily as a faunal analyst in Armenia and the greater Near East. After making final monastic profession in 2014, she worked in parish ministry and on the executive committee of the managing board of the National Religious Vocation Conference. She currently serves as assistant campus minister at the Sheil Catholic Center at Northwestern University and as vocation minister for her community.

M ueller, United States



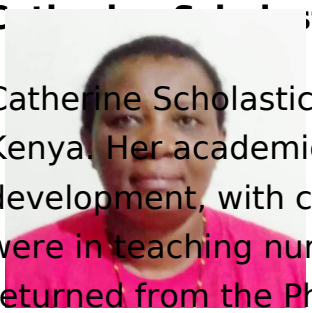
Maryann Agnes Mueller is a Felician Sister of North America. Before her entrance into the congregation, she worked as a dietician and research tech in cholesterol metabolism. Later, she worked as a certified diabetes educator and taught science in high school. Now, she serves as the full-time justice and peace coordinator for the Felician Sisters of North America in Enfield, Connecticut, and edits the congregational justice and peace newsletter. She serves on several boards; among them is U.S. Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking, for whom she publishes the Stop Trafficking Newsletter.

B ted States



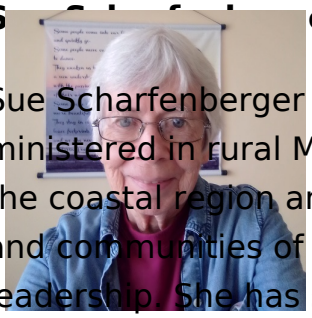
Beth Murphy is a Dominican Sister of Springfield, Illinois. With a background in journalism, communications and theology, she has worked mostly in communications ministry: diocesan communications director, manager of the National Coalition for Church Vocations' publishing arm, Communicators for Women Religious; and communications director for her religious community. In other ministries, she taught junior high, resettled Iraqi refugees in Detroit, and worked in a mostly Mexican parish in Chicago. She has been deeply engaged with the Iraqi Dominican sisters and friars and has traveled to Iraq four times.

C[illegible]stica K. Mutua, Kenya



Catherine Scholastica K. Mutua is a Religious of Notre Dame of the Missions from Kenya. Her academic background was in theology and religious studies, peace and development, with certification in early childhood and Scripture. Her first ministries were in teaching nursery school and coordinating the oblates. Recently, she returned from the Philippines, where she had been living and working for 21 years, primarily involved in peace-building and development programs. She hopes to continue similar programs in the Machakos Diocese in Kenya.

S[illegible]er, United States/Peru



Sue Scharfenberger is an Ursuline Sister from Louisville, Kentucky. An educator, she ministered in rural Mississippi and for the last 42 years has been with the people in the coastal region and the Central Sierra of Peru. Her ministry has been with circles and communities of women around issues of empowerment, nonviolence and leadership. She has served as facilitator for various religious communities in Central and South America and the Caribbean and currently represents her congregation as mission promoter with parents and teachers at Santa Angela Merici School, founded by the Ursuline Sisters of Louisville in 1965 in Carmen de la Legua, Peru.

R[illegible]razil



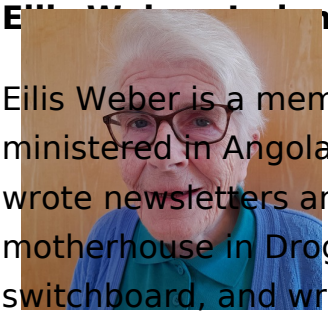
Rita Schneider is a member of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. She is originally from Brazil but worked for two years as a missionary in Haiti and more recently with Brazilian immigrants in the United States. She has an academic background in Portuguese, theology and sociology. Now back in Brazil, she is currently on the leadership team of her province and works on social projects with the poorest communities in south Brazil.

N[illegible]l States



Nancy Uhl is a member of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur. A late entrant to religious life, she is a widow, a mother and a grandmother. Before entering, she worked for a free clinic in Los Angeles with a medical health van that served the large homeless population living in downtown Los Angeles. After her entrance, she worked as a pastoral counselor in a parish and eventually became the United States vocation director and now serves on the vocation team.

E nd



Eilis Weber is a member of the Medical Missionaries of Mary in Ireland. She ministered in Angola as a nurse/midwife and in nursing education. In Boston, she wrote newsletters and appeals to benefactors. She currently ministers at the motherhouse in Drogheda, Ireland, working with elderly sisters, staffing the switchboard, and writing for the congregational newsletter and other newspapers.

Read this next: The unbreakable promise of Advent brings hope amid suffering
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