



Discover how our sisters contemplate some women they met. Those women don't often have public voice, even so they speak so much to our hearts ... Let's us be inspired by them and thanks for "our jayil" ...

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY



JAYIL IS AN HEBREW ADJECTIVE THAT CAN BE TRANSLATED AS "STRONG", "RESOURCEFUL", LIKE THE WOMAN DESCRIBED IN THE BOOK OF PROVERBS (31:10-31). (DOLORES A. RSCJ)
HERE ARE WOMEN WHO RICHLY DESERVE THAT TITLE:

"I envy my daughters who have the opportunity to study, because I didn't have it" said Marie.

A sentence that speaks and shows a true face of "our heroine"! Her great desire to learn and move forward in life, is accomplished in her effort to properly educate her children. To accomplish her dream she finds, in the village, multiple obstacles, but Mary is ONE:

Chadian woman aged 49, a massa, Orphaned at the age of 10, Married at 14, Widowed at 25, she became a woman of inheritance. Afterwards, quite quickly her brother, husband also died. Devoted mother of five children. President of a women's group "SUMGRONA" (in mass mother of children) Courageous woman who makes bricks and builds the huts of the house. Gardener who dares to introduce foods, little known in Massa culture. Cultivator in the rainy season! Smiling and welcoming woman in her way of being and living! Patient an persevering woman in the face of life's difficulties! Woman on a bicycle to transport the products of her effort (garden and field)! Woman who speaks from the heart because she lacks French! Woman who sits on the school bench to learn the French language. Its simplicity is marked by greatness of soul and character! Woman always ready to help and rescue more vulnerable! Woman who has little but gives a lot! Woman who testifies that life is stronger than death! It's Marie Ngoneye, a Chadian woman from a small village called Bougoudang! - Dorota Zych rscj (DRC-Chad)



"Marie"
 Chad

"Women of Hope in Haiti"



As the Society of the Sacred Heart we confirm our desire to share life and mission with the Haitian people. The community reintegrated in September 2023, we arrived at a place on the southern border called Anse-à-Pitres, next to the sea and the Dominican Republic. During this time we have had the opportunity to meet some women and talk with them, several know how to speak Spanish, others only Creole.

A very interesting space in which I am grateful to participate is in a group of entrepreneurial women merchants coordinated by Sister Clemencia Rodríguez, a Mercedarian Missionary from Barcelona, originally from Ecuador, who has organized it together with Madam Geralda, the leader who convenes them. We meet with about twenty ladies every Sunday at Geralda's house. For me it represents a possibility of a lot of learning.

I value Haitian women for their strength, bravery and resistance. They take care of their family and work tirelessly, from dawn until the end of the day. Inside the house they do household chores and also go out to work, looking to buy and sell different products, especially food and clothing. Some sell outside their homes, others in the market and others walk through the streets offering what they have, pushing wheelbarrows or carrying large trays on top of their heads. Several of them are heads of families, that is, they are responsible for the economic support of their sons and daughters.

I am struck by the ability they have to move forward despite the difficulties, they do not give up, but instead look for a way to achieve their goals, in short, they are very resilient. For example, Geralda and many others were deported after having lived several years in the neighboring country. The mutual support that exists between them is also beautiful, they are supportive, building a group and community, both the problems and the benefits are shared by all. A strong situation is that, despite living in vulnerable conditions, they are able to welcome into their home and take care of a child who is not theirs, or an elderly person who has no one to look after them, thus the family extends.

However, they live hope fighting every day, they always greet with a smile on their face, giving thanks to God. They celebrate in everyday life; The music, the dance and the multicolored expression are signs that they walk with joy.

- Maricruz Trigueros rscj (MEX-Haiti)

[Click here to watch a video interview with Gerarda \(in Spanish only\).](#)

Julietta, more commonly known as "Leng", is one of the members of Sampagita, a program of Saint Madeleine Sophie Foundation (SMSF) that supports mothers by providing them with training in sewing and embroidery, which they use these skills to produce items ordered at SMSF.

Leng is a mother of 10, with some of her children married, some working, and three still studying in school. She was born, raised, and continues to live in Rodriguez, Rizal, in an area near the river. In the daytime she works in Sampagita, and in the late afternoon she tends her small sari-sari store. The profit she gets from the store is used for the schooling of her children.

Leng draws her strength from her family, and she is thankful for the Sampagita group where she can share stories of struggles and hope with other mothers.

Her biggest dream is for her children to finish their education, and she dedicates all her work to this dream. She says, "the work I do is not for me, but for my children."

"Julietta"



Philippines

“Maria”



United States/Canada

When I first met Maria, she could hardly speak, much less smile. She was in shock from the violence she and her family had experienced in their homeland. She had arrived at the shelter with her daughters, grandchildren, and son-in-law, having fled the unspeakable. With time Maria and her family began to settle in, to open and begin to trust, and tell their stories. One day last December Mariachi musicians came to the shelter to play music as part of the celebration of the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. You should have seen the surprise and curiosity on the faces of the families gathered as the six Mariachis entered the gates and began to play their instruments. All watched, unsure of what was happening as the music played on. A young boy could no longer contain himself; the familiar sounds and rhythms piping through the air, led him to leap to his feet and begin to dance. The smile on his face: contagious delight. He danced alone at first, those gathered watching until Maria joined him... I stood in awe watching delight and joy fill the courtyard of the shelter; this was an act of resilience, to dance in the face of suffering. As other women and children joined in to dance, I marveled at such beauty permeating this tiny space at the US/Mexico border. - Lisa Busher rscj (USC)

Cristina, born on the Portuguese island of São Tomé, has five children but is on her own. She used to work in Madrid as a hotel house cleaner on a precarious contract. But she became unemployed and, when the crisis hit in 2008, they began to go hungry. She contacted a sister of hers in London who found her a job as a cleaner and she went there with her five children aged between 5 and 14, but without knowing a word of English. She managed to get low-cost housing (in those years the government provided it for large families...) and worked as a cleaner with very demanding working hours. She looked after the elderly in a nursing home and she worked in the laundry of the nursing home. She has gone through hard times, including back surgery as well as a number of lay-offs. She has continued to battle on and today her children are grown-up, they live independently except for the youngest. She dreams of returning to Spain because she says: "I'm very tired". She has an infectious laugh that is sometimes mixed with tears.

Dolores Aleixandre rscj (Spain)



“Cristina”

Spain

“Angie”

Ecuador



Angie was 15 years old when she was forced to leave her home in Colombia, due to the decade-long armed conflict in the country. She found refuge in Ecuador, where one specific encounter reshaped her life.

She has been living in Ecuador for eight years with her family. At first, it was not easy. Angie's journey as an activist started as soon as she arrived in Ecuador. "Upon my arrival, I came across several NGOs, including JRS, which trained me on themes such as discrimination, the culture of peace, interculturalism, new masculinities, and more broadly human rights.

Angie advocates for migrant and refugee women to be granted the right and tools to determine their own future. "A principle of equality must be established, guaranteeing equal conditions and opportunities in employment, and for this to happen gender stereotypes must be eradicated in various contexts and spaces. This initiative is even more important given that we, as refugees, are often victims of double discrimination."

To take her message to the international level, Angie joined the JRS delegation at the Global Refugee Forum in December, "it is time for governments globally to consider our needs, taking into account our voices and opinions, because we live and feel the reality of the migration process every day." © JRS [Read Angie's story here: JRS.NET](https://www.jrs.net)



“Pipita” Spain

Pipita, from Guinea Bissau, who had been abandoned by her husband, arrived in Madrid with a two-year-old child and was pregnant with twins. She was in such desperation that she was thinking of having an abortion, but when she saw the two children moving on the ultrasound scan, she decided she was going to have them. She spent two years living in a Caritas house for families in precarious conditions and is remembered there as an exceptional woman. She struggled to obtain social housing, she is an exceptional educator and her children, who are now in their teens, are doing very well in school. She works as a cook in a nursery school and has to spend more than an hour and a half commuting to work. She is now preparing to apply for Spanish nationality. When she began to read the Gospel, she said: "How beautiful!", and decided to enrol in a catechumenate to be baptised. Since then she has taken part in church celebrations, is involved in her parish and helps a sick sister-in-law. She is grateful to God and to life for the opportunities she has had. How fortunate to have met Cristina and Pipita and to regard them as true friends...! -Dolores Aleixandre rscj (Spain)

I would like to tell you about my beautiful friend, Sweeta, from Afghanistan. She arrived in Ireland two years ago, with her husband and little boy, just after the Taliban had taken over her country again in 2021. They wanted a safe place to bring up their little boy. They spent a year in special accommodation for refugees, in a hotel in the south of our country. It was not easy, living in only one room. Her husband, who works in I.T., got a job after a few months, but it was in the capital, Dublin, three hours' drive from their accommodation, so he had many hours daily, commuting to work. After some time, the offer came of a house available in Dublin- a former staff house in our rscj property, which had become vacant, and which we rscj had offered to the Irish Refugee Service. So, just over a year ago, the little family moved there. We rscj have been very happy to get to know the little family. There is a wonderful local group of volunteers who help them in many practical ways, and offer them great support and friendship. The little boy has started going to pre-school and is rapidly learning English, and making new friends. He has also acquired a little kitten, who is his special new friend.

“Sweeta” Ireland



Sweeta and I meet every week. We have a little time for English class together, but mainly we talk...about Afghanistan, its culture, which goes back to ancient Persian times, about the Muslim religion, about children, cooking, fashions, etc. I have learned so much from her, especially about the difficult situation for women in Afghanistan. When Sweeta was growing up, women and girls had freedom; she received a good education, went to university, she could wear what she wished, could go to markets, to the cinema, etc. Now, of course, women cannot go out alone, and when they do they must wear the abaya and niqab, and a male must accompany them. Girls cannot attend secondary school or university and most women are banned from working. The economic situation is very bad, and families are suffering, many do not have enough to eat. Sweeta often worries about her mother, sisters, nieces and friends in that situation.

What has struck me about my friend and her husband: is their openness, courage and generosity. They try to help their own families at home by sending them a little money from time to time. They are always so welcoming to all who call to their home, at any time. Sweeta immediately offers visitors tea and whatever food they have. I have learned that the most precious gift people can give them is to spend time with them; for me that time is precious too. I have learned from Sweeta that what keeps her going is her deep faith in God- Allah, who gives them strength to hope that peace and prosperity may once again come to their beloved Afghanistan. Her faith strengthens my faith.

“There is hope after despair and many suns after darkness.”

(Rumi, born in 1207, in Afghanistan) - Mary Shiel rscj (IRS province)