



A photograph of the Burbank local community shows the late Sister Blanca Sagles second from left. The remaining sisters in Burbank are (from left) Marilyn Charette, Rosa Nguyen, Teresa White and Mary Alice Miller.

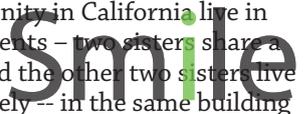
Sisters in Burbank, California, live the meaning of *community*

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Sisters are committed to sharing a communal life and ministry together for God’s mission. Sisters once lived in convents, spending their days and nights preparing and eating meals, sharing rituals, prayer and chores, and doing everything like a large family. Today, you’ll find many Sisters of Providence living in houses shared by a handful of sisters, or in single apartments.



How, then, can they live “community” as sisters? The Sisters of Providence in the Burbank local community in California live in apartments – two sisters share a unit and the other two sisters live separately – in the same building near Providence High School and Providence St. Joseph Medical Center.



They attest that, in their experience, their community life is “alive and well.”

The sisters each take a night to cook and they share evening prayer after the meal. Twice a month, they gather for faith sharing. They look out for each other, giving each other “space and grace,” and they get together for common ministry projects. One shared ministry that they participate in quarterly is Family Promise in St. Finbar Parish. This ministry is supported by parishes, churches and synagogues in the east San Fernando Valley, each taking a week to provide housing/meals et al for up to four families and their children.

At home, the sisters in the Burbank local community welcome visitors like Sister Mary Hawkins, a regent at Providence High School, and others when they come to southern California for meetings or vacations. They have an ongoing connection to Providence High School and often attend its Masses, graduations, drama and music performances, and the annual gala.

The Burbank local community began the year with six members, but now are down by two with the unexpected death of Sister Blanca Sagles and the withdrawal from the novitiate of Carolyn “Lyn” Lobo.

When Sister Blanca took ill last year in mid-December, the other sisters shared with her family, hospital

chaplains, mission integration staff and others in caring for her for two weeks. Sister Teresa shared: “Many of us had conversations of beautiful depth with her those days. We made sure that Blanca had someone with her most of the time.” After Sister Blanca was stable enough, she moved to Seattle for extended care. Her death a month later was a shock to the local community. Several of the Burbank sisters were able to travel to Seattle to celebrate Sister Blanca’s memorial vigil, funeral Mass and burial with her family and other sisters in February.

Sister Blanca remains in spirit with the Burbank local community, especially when they gather for faith sharing.

Here is a bit more about the sisters who are part of the Burbank local community -- Sisters Teresa White, Rosa Nguyen, Marilyn Charette, and Mary Alice Miller:



Teresa White, SP

Sister Teresa's background includes 30 years as a nurse, ministry on the novitiate and formation teams, and then as a chaplain for seven years. Now actively retired and recently experiencing a fall and surgery for a broken hip, she's discovering opportunities for community building and ministry in new ways. In the hospital, she felt God inviting her to slow down her pace to not only pay close attention to her caregivers' instructions, but also to share joy and encouragement in whatever way possible with the staff, patients and their families. "Being a Eucharistic minister at Providence Holy Cross, where I used to work as a chaplain, is so meaningful to me," she said, "especially ministering in the Sub-Acute Nursing Facility there with some patients and staff that I've known for over 10 years. Now I can take extra time to be present with them."

In her parish life, she is experiencing homeless persons in a different way. "When I was nursing, I got to

know the poor on a very limited basis when they were hospitalized in the sterile environment of clean sheets and patient gowns," she explained. "Now, I am meeting them at daily Mass, and in interactions with them on the streets. I've come to know much clearer their need of shelter, understanding, companionship and nourishment."

Sister Marilyn and Sister Teresa shared that they are looking beyond the Family Promise group and the senior meals at the church. "We are looking into how we, as a local community of sisters, parish and citizens of Burbank can support our homeless brothers and sisters and others." Sister Teresa said she feels "newly awakened and alive" in, and grateful for, her local community and her extended communities.

Rosa Nguyen, SP

"The Providence mission is very alive here," Sister Rosa says of her workplace, Providence High School (PHS). She is beginning her third year of full-time ministry in the school's Finance Department. She also happily makes time to support Nick Estrada in campus ministry, sharing her experiences with students and helping them with vocation class projects. "I witnessed God's providential love and see the charisma of Providence coming alive in those with whom I had met at work," she reflected. "I always feel that my call to serve God and his people becomes deeper and stronger



At Mass and special events, Sister Rosa Nguyen wears a veil, which is an important symbol for consecrated life in the Vietnamese culture.



Sister Teresa White takes a moment to bless "Dr. Danny" who is a popular volunteer at the medical center.



Sister Teresa helps a visitor fill out a request for a medical report at Providence Holy Cross Medical Center.

at PHS as I take this ministry into my heart each day. I am grateful to God for the gift of being among students, staff and faculty. Hearing the excitement from students and parents and to be a part of the Providence Pioneers means a great deal to me."

Sister Rosa is very involved with the Vietnamese Catholic community at St. Finbar Parish. She works with the youth group, teaching May Dance for Mary, writing a script for a play about the Vietnamese Martyrs, and giving youth retreats at Advent and Lent. Having arrived in the United States herself as a very young adult, this ministry offers Sister Rosa the opportunity to engage with youth and to renew her own native language and culture. She is pleased to talk with young people about the Vietnamese culture, what it means to be Vietnamese in this country, and how to balance two cultures. That is reflected in





Cathy Boucher, another Providence High School employee, confers with Sister Rosa Nguyen.

Marilyn Charette, SP

During her discernment regarding leaving the ministry in El Salvador, Sister Marilyn was asked to consider Burbank, California, to accompany Sister Rosa, who was beginning her ministry at Providence High School. During a retreat it was clear that this was God's call for her at this time, Sister Marilyn said.

"It's worked out very well," even with the adjustment of returning to the United States and into retirement, she said. "Our way of living local community provides a lot of support for me."

Accompanying Sister Rosa and returning to Burbank, where she had worked when she entered the religious community in September 1964, became her new mission. She has found plenty to keep her busy. She serves as lector in St. Finbar Parish, and she especially enjoys being on the committee with Providence Associate Lorraine Faiola that plans and serves the monthly meal to seniors. After Sister Blanca's death, Sister Marilyn was asked to consider being a Eucharistic minister at Providence St. Joseph Medical Center, where she serves one morning a week.

Sister Marilyn also responded to an ad by the public library downtown seeking tutors to assist adults learning to read. It has provided another welcome way to connect with people, to learn about their struggles and their lives and families.



Sister Marilyn Charette is a lector at St. Finbar Parish in Burbank.

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her decision, after prayer and discernment, and with the support of the Leadership Team, to wear a black skirt or jumper with a white blouse to work and to wear a veil at Mass and special events. "I feel a need to integrate my Vietnamese culture with my religious life," Sister Rosa said. "This is my heart's desire so I can feel really who I am as a Vietnamese Providence Sister. In the Vietnamese culture, wearing a veil is an identifying and important symbol for consecrated life."

The sisters in Burbank have shared Vietnamese culture with Sister Rosa through a Lunar New Year "Tet" celebration and other events at St. Finbar Parish. For those sisters, it has been a bridge to that community and appreciation of their culture.

Each ministry has given Sister Rosa a different understanding of her call to serve others, she explained. She has dreamed of being a sister since the sixth grade and hopes that dream will be fulfilled by making final profession of vows next year.

Smile

Sister Mary Alice Miller answers the phone at St. Robert Bellarmine Parish.



Mary Alice Miller, SP

Sister Mary Alice has been in southern California for 30 years and now serves in parish ministry at St. Robert Bellarmine Parish in Burbank. She is the parish receptionist, a part-time job except during the busy

months of November and December. She has a history of 10 years in the parish ministry and 19 years in the school. One of her favorite tasks is playing Santa Claus, delivering donated Christmas presents to four parishes, two in Watts and two in the Pacoima area. ●



Longtime educator Rafael Vega is awarded the **Mother Joseph statue**

