



## Engaging Spirituality Bearings Letter

O that today you would listen to God's voice, harden not your heart. *Psalm 95: 8*

We are “Las Servidoras,” the founders of the Latina Women’s movement in Louisville, Kentucky. Rooted in spirituality and justice, we support each other as we accompany the women and children who live at Casa Latina, a Catholic Worker house of hospitality. Our friendship and our commitment to empowering women propels us into wider circles of healing and solidarity with those who are vulnerable among us. We are diverse in our professions, countries of origin, migration stories, and spiritual foundations.

We are...

**Karina Barillas**, from Guatemala. I am the mother of two girls. I have Master’s degree in counseling and work as a bilingual family advocate for survivors of domestic violence.

**Connie Martinez** from Mexico. I have a PhD in Educational Psychology and work as an immigrant advocate for the Center for Women and families in Louisville.

**Lorena Marin** from Colombia. I have a teenage son and I am a writer for the local Spanish-language newspaper.

**Marilu Romero** from Peru. I have 4 teenage boys and work with 2-year olds at a bi-lingual Montessori program.

**Paty Robles** from Mexico. I have a teenage son. I work at a community center that serves our Hispanic people, where I have developed outreach services and ministries to this population.



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### Our Struggle

Dear Friends,

In our world, so full of troubles, what makes it difficult for us to hold onto our faith in God?

**Paty:** I have no doubt that God and Jesus are one, so I reflect a good deal on God's strength, peace and love for us. I see Jesus as our redeemer who gave such an example and showed us how to love. Over the years, life experience has taught me this, though I do not read the Bible much, and I do not care for images that sometimes portray Jesus and God as judgmental. My faith, those moments of peace, all demonstrate the great love that holds me, revealed in every moment of my life, above all in those less-easy times.

**Marilu:** There are certainly times when my faith is weak, anemic, when I am dealing with difficulties. Most often this occurs when I am hoping and working for things to change, and the change does not happen. In these moments I really struggle to remember that the results are NOT up to ME. It is all up to God, and ALL in God's time. I know we cannot always find a solution. This is when I need to trust my heart, telling me that even though there is darkness, the light will surely come, even though there's such a storm around me, there's calm after every storm.

**Connie:** When I am facing difficulties, even though I know there's probably a reason for what is going on, my first response doesn't usually involve faith or prayer, except the prayer that ends up moaning and complaining; "Why?" and "Why me?" Then I realize that this too is a kind of prayer.

**Karina:** I believe it is the Spirit-presence, that higher power that keeps me going. This is the Spirit that cannot be exclusive, or put in a box. This Spirit is bigger than me, and it is not a punitive but a loving and caring presence, like Jesus, who showed us the nature of the Spirit through his actions. I believe I cannot participate in my faith, praying the rosary, attending church and the like, unless I am also dedicating my strength to building a better world— a belief in faith in action. I know that being poor or needy does not mean being less. No one is less than me, especially immigrant people from Latin America. No one is less than me, and I cannot be patronizing to anyone.

**Lorena:** My struggle is to keep in mind that we are always growing. Everything is in a process of growing and changing. This is made clear in the experience of bringing up our children, or observing nature. In life we all have our projects and plans, and we all have to face changes. My struggle is to understand this, and keep in mind that everything has its time.



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### Our Practice

What do we do each day to remember the love and the presence of God in our lives?

**Paty:** When I become mindful of the rhythm of my breathing, I am reminded that God exists. I also love to pray. In the past I failed many times to set aside the time, and this would leave me feeling upset and unhappy, until I discover that the best way of reconnecting with God is knowing how to breathe.

**Karina:** Each time I jump in my car I say, “Here I am! Lead me!”

**Marilu:** As much as possible, every day, I try to connect with and value the natural world— creation, a sunrise, a person. Keeping these before my eyes, I realize after all that this is God’s creation, all in God’s hands.

**Lorena:** I rely on my husband. He keeps my feet on the ground and helps me deal with my concerns. Then, there’s the work in the garden. When I connect with growing things, I am given a physical reminder that we are just passers-by, that God’s involved in everything, that everyone is always growing, and no matter what, there is new life!

### Our Challenge

What should we all be doing these days to live faithful lives?

**Paty:** Be aware of everything that takes place in our lives, at every moment. See in that presence the supernatural strength, which is the manifestation of God, Jesus in our midst.

**Karina:** Our words and our actions must be congruent.

**Marilu:** Live every day with the deliberate decision to be happy. Be open to others, especially the ones who SEEM different. Trust in God’s presence and make the commitment to be joyful— in everything.

**Karina:** Keep in mind the great project behind everything— we all must acknowledge that. We need to remember that our ideas, our individual perspectives, are limited. It is so important that we listen to



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each other, and learn to be critical of ourselves. Any time we choose to listen to another, we must keep in mind that my culture, my values, my thoughts are not absolute.

*Lorena:* Remember this: Our faith is rooted in justice and love. Our faith is our strength and time is relative. God's time is not our time. No matter what happens we are in God's hands. Thank God as much for the bad as for the good. This is the meaning of gratitude.

Con Paz y Amor,

Las Servidoras



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