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Carla Bellone

INVISIBLE DISCIPLES – GIVING VOICE TO WOMEN WHO EVANGELISE IN SILENCE

In every part of the world, often far from recognition or public attention, countless women dedicate their lives to the service of others and to the quiet proclamation of the Gospel. They are teachers, doctors, missionaries, social workers, volunteers, and religious sisters who live their faith through tireless commitment, compassion, and courage.

Invisible Disciples is an initiative that seeks to make visible the hidden witness of these women — to give voice to those who evangelise in silence, offering their lives as a living testimony of God's love in the world. Through this project, we wish to recognise and celebrate their essential contribution to the Church's mission and to the transformation of human hearts through faith, hope, and charity.

Rooted in the Ignatian tradition, many of these women embody the spirituality of contemplation in action, seeking to find God in all things and to serve Him in every circumstance. The Ignatian principle of *Magis* — the desire to do more for the greater glory of God — inspires their generosity, guiding them to respond to

the needs of humanity with discernment and love.

Through a series of interviews, reflections, and personal testimonies, *Invisible Disciples* aims to offer a space for encounter and listening — a place where these voices, often hidden, can be heard and honoured. Each story reveals a unique path of faith, but together they form a single movement of grace, showing how the Spirit continues to work quietly yet powerfully in the world.

This series invites us to pause and contemplate the silent force of faith lived through daily acts of service. It reminds us that evangelisation does not always happen on great stages, but often in the humble gestures of those who serve, console, teach, and love — the true *Invisible Disciples* of today.

Carla Bellone is the Assistant to the Secretary for the Service of Faith and the editor of *Dimensions.faith* website.

Carla Bellone

- 3 **INVISIBLE DISCIPLES – GIVING VOICE TO WOMEN WHO EVANGELISE IN SILENCE**

Sr. Orla Treacy CJ

- 6 **FAITH AND RESILIENCE IN ACTION: SR. ORLA TREACY'S MISSION TO TRANSFORM LIVES IN SOUTH SUDAN**

Sr. Rosy Sor Moe SMF

- 9 **A FLAME OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE**

Sr. Anastasia Mazur CJ

Sr. Villana Kramartchouk CJ

- 11 **LIVING AND SERVING UNDER FIRE: INVISIBLE DISCIPLES ON MISSION IN WAR-TIME UKRAINE**

Maria Lia Zervino

- 15 **LA ESPERANZA TIENE ROSTRO FEMENINO: UNA MIRADA PROFETICA SOBRE LA IGLESIA ACTUAL**

Jules Gibson

- 20 **A JESUIT MISSION OF FAITH, COURAGE, AND COMPASSION**

Sr. Maria Constanza Cecilia Mattera

- 23 **WALKING WITH THE INVISIBLE: SISTER MARIA CONSTANZA'S JOURNEY OF FAITH AND SERVICE**

Clara Sayans

- 29 **AT HOME IN THE MAGIS: HIDDEN DISCIPLE IN EDUCATION, MIGRATION, AND THE QUIET WORK OF JUSTICE**

Cecilia Bock

- 33 **FROM ROME TO THE FRONTIERS OF THE WORLD: A MISSION AT THE SERVICE OF REFUGEES**



FAITH AND RESILIENCE IN ACTION: SR. ORLA TREACY'S MISSION TO TRANSFORM LIVES IN SOUTH SUDAN

A conversation with Sr. Orla Treacy CJ, on faith, resilience, and transforming lives in South Sudan. Hidden in some of the world's most fragile places are missionaries whose courage, compassion, and quiet perseverance reveal the face of Christ.

One of them is Sister Orla Treacy, an Irish religious sister of the Congregatio Jesu, who has spent nearly two decades serving in South Sudan. In this conversation, she reflects on her vocation, the struggles and graces of missionary life, and the hope that continues to take root among the women and young people she accompanies.

"I thought I'd stay for five years... and here I am, almost twenty."

Carla Bellone: Sister Orla, could you begin by telling us about your vocation and the path that led you to South Sudan?

Sister Orla: I am Irish and, until 4 November 2025, I was a member of the Loreto Sisters (Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary). Following the union of the

two congregations, I am now part of the Congregatio Jesu. After completing my university studies, I felt a deep calling to religious life.

In 2003, I entered the congregation, although I was fairly certain I did not want to be a missionary. Then, in 2006, after a period of discernment, I travelled with some sisters to South Sudan, responding to the bishop's invitation to open a girls' boarding secondary school.

We arrived in a country emerging from twenty years of civil war. There was nothing — not even primary education for girls. It was daunting, but I felt drawn to it. I thought I would stay five years... and I'm still here nearly twenty years later.

"Where there is suffering, there is the cross. And where there is the cross, there is Jesus."

Carla Bellone: How did you manage to live the contemplative dimension within such intense activity?

Sister Orla: The early years were extremely hard. We faced illness, isolation, and constant challenges. I remember sitting before the cross at night, weeping, asking God for strength.

Then a Jesuit priest told me: "Where there



is suffering, there is the cross, and where there is the cross, there is Jesus." Those words have carried me through every hardship.

Since then, my mission has become one of presence — simply enduring, staying, hoping. Each day I try to give thanks for something small. Sometimes it's just a good cup of tea that keeps me going.

"Community is everything here."

Carla Bellone: How important has community support been for you?

Sister Orla: It's been essential. In a place like this, community means survival. Peaceful relationships matter more than any structure or project. Over time, we've learned to build a community that includes not just the sisters, but also lay

people, staff, and our former students.

A few years ago, several graduates invited us to open a new mission ten hours away. They now live and work alongside one of our sisters. It's a living sign of continuity and shared mission.

Hospitality is huge here — everyone is part of your family. A visitor is a blessing.

"Our school became a refuge for young women."

Carla Bellone: Could you share a powerful experience from your years of mission?

Sister Orla: In 2013, one of our students, Rebecca, was forced into marriage. We tried to help her, but were too late. That experience opened my eyes to the deep injustices faced by young women.

Since then, we've established protocols to protect them. Parents must sign an agreement ensuring their daughters remain in school until graduation. Some girls live with us for months, unable to return home safely.

Over time, our boarding school became a refuge for girls escaping forced marriage. Families sometimes oppose us, but we've also seen remarkable change — many of our graduates are now supporting and protecting younger students. It's a slow but real transformation of culture.

"The Magis is not about doing more, but loving more."

Carla Bellone: Your congregation is deeply rooted in Ignatian spirituality. How does that shape your mission today?

Sister Orla: Discernment guides everything we do. The needs around us are overwhelming — hunger, illness, lack of education — and the danger is becoming purely social workers. But we are not an NGO; Christ is the centre of all we do.

The Ignatian Magis, the "more," doesn't mean doing more, but loving more — helping people rediscover their dignity.

When Pope Francis visited South Sudan in 2023, we organised a pilgrimage for our young people to meet him in Juba. It was simple — sleeping in churches and classrooms — but transformative. Afterwards,

they told us, "We want more of God, more prayer, more Jesus."

That's when I knew: our mission is not only to educate, but to lead others into a relationship with Christ's love.

"The Church is the people we walk with."

Carla Bellone: What message would you share with women who serve quietly in the shadows?

Sister Orla: I would remind them that the Church is not only about sacraments; it is the people we accompany — the women, the youth, the wounded, the burdened.

We never walk alone. The people we serve carry a deep wisdom of their own, even if they don't share our language or education. Listening to them and journeying alongside them has made me a better person and a better missionary.

No matter how dark things seem, keep hope alive — find small moments of gratitude each day. That is what sustains our mission and keeps Christ at the centre.

Hope and gratitude — even in small things — these are what keep us faithful to the mission.





Sr. Rosy Sor Moe SMF

A FLAME OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE

Safety doesn't exist in war-torn areas. And yet fear and anxiety grow in hearts. But outbraving all these situations and feelings is only a way for surviving. This is what most of those who suffer have experienced recently. However, through this experience, I have realised that Divine providence is alive in each suffering person. And yet it has nurtured our hope for a brighter day to come.

From the end of 2023, I have been living with refugee people in the conflict area. Many challenges have increased day by day. We have faced not only war-torn situations but also the effects of natural disaster, the drying out of goods, the rising of prices, transportation and communication shut down. What is more, life-safety, the right to education and healthcare are lost as well.

However, in the noise of conflicts and difficulties, there is no ceasing of praising God, day by day. Eucharistic celebration, teaching catechism, prayer meetings, recollection and short retreats are still animated among suffering people. Moreover, by the grace of God, accompaniment for the physical, psychological and spiritual distress of the people has been enlivened as well.

All in all, the providence of God is moving in daily sufferings. And yet, being in a risky area, lives are threatened day by day, and the providence of God becomes precious in every moment. By a flame of Divine providence, we are still alive for praising God, for supporting each other and hoping for our brighter days to come.

"Therefore, I tell you, do not be anxious about your life..." (Lk 12:22-32) And "you must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect..." (Lk 12:40)

Sr. Rosy Sor Moe is a member of the Missionary Sisters of Faith, serving in Myanmar.



Sr. Anastasia Mazur CJ

Sr. Villana Kramartchouk CJ

LIVING AND SERVING UNDER FIRE: INVISIBLE DISCIPLES ON MISSION IN WAR-TIME UKRAINE

Since the beginning of the war, the situation in Kyiv has been marked by daily air raid warnings. Those sometimes last all night or several times during the day, but the war has been going on for a long time, and people have to work.

Some of them take shelter immediately after the signal sounds first, and they check their mobile apps to see where and what is flying. If possible, they move further away from the windows in buildings. They only use shelters when they see that it is a serious attack. These can come unexpectedly, so it's a lottery. The soldiers try to shoot down the Shahids before they reach the city, but it is not certain that they will succeed every time. Especially when they fly low.

Somehow, we have to live in these conditions. I now work for Depaul, a non-profit organisation. In the morning, before leaving for work, I first check which bridges are passable as some are closed when there is a warning. Sometimes the app shows that rockets are flying, but people are stuck in morning traffic, so they just

wait in their cars to see how the situation develops. They could be hit at any moment. Sometimes it seems as if the commute to work is more important than life itself.

From my side, I can't say that the explosions and all the noise don't affect me. Sometimes there is an explosion first and then the warning because the missile is detected too late. When the war started, I was here with my own sister (Katarina, who is also a CJ member), and the provincial superior at the time asked us if we wanted to leave Kyiv for safer areas. However, she left the decision up to us saying that we had a better view of the situation on the ground. I am grateful for that because we immediately realised that it was necessary to get involved and help the local people. So we stayed and told ourselves that Kyiv was well guarded and that it could be worse elsewhere. At that time I was still working at a Charity. First, we converted the Charity building's kitchen and storage room in the basement into an air-raid shelter.

The first day of the war was challenging. My instinct of survival seemed to prevent me from accepting that what was happening was really happening. My subcon-

scious refused to accept the danger that I could lose my life at any moment. Yet in the early days, the explosions were most intense, and the Russian troops were close to the city. I focused on the fact that something had to be done. We received calls from sick people asking for medicine and food. It was difficult to obtain these things, and that kept me busy. There were huge queues for bread, and we had to go to several pharmacies to find anything at all. In those moments I understood that I was in the right place, that I was needed here and that I should stay.

Many people came to our shelter with small children. We helped the families who were leaving Kyiv to get at least to the outskirts of the city so they could continue on their way.

We tried to offer words of encouragement to frightened people. They felt reassured that there was someone who cared about them, who would take care of them. In the shelter, we tried to talk to them. We prepared games for the children to help them relax, and in the evening, we prayed together at least briefly. Now we are seeing many refugees arriving from war zones who have experienced all the horrors up close; you can sense even greater fear in them.

These are people who were afraid to leave because they didn't know where to go; they had no support network, and they didn't have enough money. Only now have they been forced to leave because the front line is passing right through their area. We are connecting with organisations that operate in these affected regions. Through them we are informing people that they should not be afraid to leave, and that we can provide them with free accommodation here in Kyiv until they settle down and find work. We also provide them with psychological support.

Some managed to flee with only the clothes on their backs. I admire how these displaced people help each other despite everything. They come from different regions of eastern Ukraine but they are like one family.

We heard many tragic stories from them. What helps us process them is surely faith, the sacraments, Holy Communion, and prayers offered for these people. And also, special webinars that we attend as social workers. There are indeed many difficult stories, especially now that socially disadvantaged families are being evacuated, as I mentioned. People who were able to leave the war zones did so long ago. But those who didn't know what to do stayed there until the last moment. Recently, a woman with four children who is missing her right hand came to us. Her husband died, and she is on disability. We are helping her as much as we can. Fortunately, she is doing quite well.

The sick, pregnant women, and other vulnerable groups have had a particularly difficult time. I remember how, in the early days of the war, we had a girl who was nine months pregnant. She was expecting her first child, and her husband was in the army. We drove her to the doctor; her mother was with her, and that gave her peace of mind despite what was happening outside. We didn't know what would happen when she gave birth, whether it would be possible to leave the shelter or not, so we also looked for a gynaecologist. Fortunately, she was able to give birth normally in the hospital, but I was very emotional about it.

The war has been going on for four years. Some people who have lost everything may think God has abandoned them. Most of the people fleeing the front lines in eastern Ukraine are non-believers. There are a few churches in those areas.

So, I haven't heard such questions from them. Nor do they ask what they have done to deserve this. They do not see it that way. Rather, they show solidarity with each other in order to endure everything together.

When I reflect on the whole conflict as a consecrated woman, I find it particularly difficult to understand the scale of human malice. When I used to watch films or documentaries about World War II on television, I couldn't comprehend that a person could be so full of anger. How is it possible to hurt another person so much? Now we are experiencing this as reality.

Many ask us if we expected this. To be honest, many of us in Ukraine were surprised that a bloody conflict of such proportions could break out in Europe.

Immediately before the war began, I did not perceive that it was coming. Of course, tensions had been rising since 2014. At that time, I had just moved from my former mission in Novochoerkassk, Russia, to our host bakery in Presov, from where I closely followed what was happening on the Maidan in Kyiv. Later, I went to another CJ community for three months to help out in the Russian city of Tyumen, and there I sensed that some people were speaking out against Ukraine. It did shock me.

From the beginning of the war, what hurt me more than the Russian president's decisions was hearing ordinary people in Russia on television approving the intervention in Ukraine. I felt physical pain from how much hatred there was in those words. How can one person wish that on another? I know they are influenced by propaganda, but common sense has not been abolished. No one has removed their brains and replaced them with others.

We have just celebrated the Jubilee Year 2025, which invites not only hope but also forgiveness. How can we forgive war crimes, the rape of women, and tens of thousands of deaths? If I answer not from the point of view of faith, but from a human perspective, that is, for ordinary people in Ukraine, then it will not happen in their lifetime. It will not be the case that when the fighting stops, everyone will be forgiven. For forgiveness to happen, there must first be repentance. And it will be many years before a new generation emerges in Russia that thinks differently. For this, I continue to pray and to work.

Sr. Anastasia Mazur CJ is a social worker for the non-profit organisation Depaul. She is responsible for a project to help war refugees adapt to life in Kyiv. Previously, she worked for a charity.

Sr. Villana Kramartchouk CJ arrived in Kyiv in the Summer of 2022. She is an art therapist and works as a coordinator of the St. Joseph's Centre in Kyiv. The Centre was established by the Major Religious Superiors Conference in Ukraine before the war as a psychological assistance centre. Since the beginning of the war, the Centre has aimed to accompany children and adults in their difficulties: individual consultations with psychologists, psychotherapists, and spiritual advisors; sessions with a speech therapist and child psychologist for the youngest children; art therapy groups that help people find their inner strength; meetings focused on emotional stabil-



LA ESPERANZA TIENE ROSTRO FEMENINO: UNA MIRADA PROFETICA SOBRE LA IGLESIA ACTUAL

En esta entrevista, Maria Lia Zervino ofrece una lectura profunda del presente y del futuro de la Iglesia, basándose en su claridad de pensamiento y su amplia experiencia eclesial, y estableciendo un diálogo entre la sinodalidad, la misión y la corresponsabilidad de las mujeres.

Sus respuestas entrelazan la experiencia personal y el discernimiento espiritual con una visión de servicio y compromiso vivida en las periferias de la sociedad y con una perspectiva sobre las mujeres como recurso para la Iglesia en las relaciones, las estructuras y los procesos de toma de decisiones. El resultado es una propuesta significativa y profunda para la renovación de la Iglesia, centrada en las relaciones, cuyo desarrollo y cuidado respetan la dimensión mariana del Evangelio.

Carla Bellone: Dr. Zervino, en su larga experiencia al servicio de la Iglesia, ha conocido a muchas "discipulas invisibles". Quiénes son estas mujeres para usted y por qué cree que es importante darles voz hoy en día?

Maria Lia Zervino: Por gracia de Dios he

conocido mujeres extraordinariamente "bellas", con belleza dinámica, como Madre Teresa de Calcuta y otras mujeres a quienes Gaudete et exultate llama: santas de la puerta de al lado, igualmente luminosas por su belleza dinámica, pero "invisibles" para la mayoría. Cuando la discriminación, la violencia y otras llagas sociales como la soledad, por ejemplo, hacen estragos, es urgente dar voz a mujeres que ejercen su diaconía con los pueblos originarios de la Amazonia, a otras artífices de paz porque han dejado las armas y han pasado a catequizar a los soldados, o a quienes se especializan en acompañar a las personas trans, abandonadas porque son las "leprosas" del mundo contemporáneo. En este Kairos que es el Jubileo, resuena en mi interior la expresión del Papa Francisco: la esperanza en la Iglesia tiene rostro femenino. (Bogotá, Discurso al Comité del CELAM, 7 de septiembre 2017)

Carla Bellone: ¿Qué es lo que más llama la atención del proyecto "Invisible Disciples" y cómo lo relaciona con la misión actual de la Iglesia Universal?

Maria Lia Zervino: Me sorprendió positivamente que "Invisible Disciples" fuera tan afín con el Observatorio Mundial de las Mujeres (WWO), proyecto que vi nacer en la Unión Mundial de las Mujeres (WUCWO) en 2021 y del cual soy asesora, que se focaliza en dar visibilidad a las mu-

jeros, especialmente a las más vulnerables que parecen "invisibles", a fin de inspirar y generar cambios que favorezcan su desarrollo integral. La Iglesia universal está comprometida en erradicar la distorsión de la autoridad eclesial, que se manifiesta en el uso del poder en beneficio propio y en los abusos sexuales, económicos, de conciencia y de poder por parte de los ministros de la Iglesia, tal como lo señala el Documento Final del Sínodo. Y, este proyecto constituye un aporte para erradicar ese clericalismo y ayudarnos a la positiva conversión de nuestras relaciones y estructuras.

Carla Bellone: En un momento en el que se habla mucho de "visibilidad", que valor tiene el testimonio silencioso en la vida cristiana y en la evangelización?

Maria Lia Zervino: No se ama, no se aprovecha y tampoco se reza por lo que no se conoce. Las testigos silenciosas, tantas mujeres en el mundo hoy, caen dentro de la globalización de la indiferencia y por ende, no son amadas ni aprovechadas y menos aun se reza por ellas. Solidaridad y cuidado de la Casa Común son dos realidades que suelen ir de la mano de cientos de mujeres casi imperceptibles. He tenido la dicha de conocer misioneras, artesanas de los vínculos, mujeres laicas y consagradas de todos los continentes, expertas en evangelización y en humanidad. No aparecen bajo los reflectores de los medios o en las redes sociales, pero sí, son visibles a los ojos de Dios, al igual que sus frutos, que El mismo bendice. Estoy convencida que es el Espíritu Santo quien conmueve las entrañas de sus corazones. Aman proclamar la Buena Nueva a su alrededor, cuidar de los más necesitados y de la naturaleza. Si se conociera el don que ellas aportan, nadie se lo quisiera perder.

Carla Bellone: Como han influido su formación como socióloga y su vocación con-

sagrada en su forma de ver el lugar de la mujer en la Iglesia y en la sociedad?

Maria Lia Zervino: Sin duda la sociología, con sus teorías científicas e investigaciones, siempre ayuda. Sin embargo, diría que es mi formación dentro de mi familia vocacional, la Asociación de Virgenes Consagradas: Servidoras, la que modela mi perspectiva sobre el rol y la responsabilidad de las mujeres en la Iglesia y en la sociedad. Nuestro fundador, hoy Siervo de Dios Luis María Etcheverry Boneo, concebía a la mujer como la clave para la sacramentalización de los vínculos, de las relaciones sociales y deseaba que nuestra consagración sirviera a todos sin excepción, pero en particular a las mujeres, vivificadoras y transformadoras de todas las instituciones sociales. Más allá de mis profesiones, de asistente social y socióloga, creo que es el carisma propio de las Servidoras que continúa irrigando mi ser y actuar en pro de las mujeres en el Pueblo de Dios.

Carla Bellone: Durante su mandato como presidenta de la WUCWO, represento a millones de mujeres católicas de todo el mundo. Cual es la lección más importante que aprendió de ellas?

Maria Lia Zervino: Estoy persuadida de que hay un denominador común en esos millones de mujeres miembros de las organizaciones que conforman WUCWO: su amor a la Iglesia. Me emociona verlas juntas, venidas de los diferentes puntos cardinales, cuando se reúnen con sus trajes típicos, con un abanico de colores en la piel y en los vestidos que reflejan sus diversas culturas, edades y modalidades. Incluso los objetivos de las organizaciones católicas a las que pertenecen son dispares: van desde la adoración nocturna hasta la construcción de pozos de agua para poblaciones musulmanas en medio de África, pasando por levantar la bandera de los

derechos humanos en los foros internacionales. No obstante esa riqueza de diversidad, ellas siempre me enseñaron que lo que nos une y caracteriza es el incondicional amor a la Iglesia.

Carla Bellone: El proyecto habla de mujeres que evangelizan "en las fronteras del sufrimiento". ¿Que le enseña su silenciosa fidelidad?

Maria Lia Zervino: Su fidelidad silenciosa me enseña que María estaba allí junto a la Cruz, en las tres horas más fecundas de la vida de Jesús. Ella se encontró "en los márgenes del sufrimiento" cuando en su corazón de Madre se gestó la Iglesia, la segunda encarnación del Verbo. Percibo un reflejo mariano en la dimensión testimonial, en particular de la vida religiosa, con un bajo perfil, en hermanas que viven su entrega generosa a Jesucristo con los postergados y descartados, experimentando aun hoy: desvalorización, injusticia y hasta violación y muerte. Son para mí un examen de conciencia, presentes en mi oración y vida cotidiana. Quizá la historia de la Iglesia merece ser rescrita desde la perspectiva de las mujeres, incluyendo su participación en la evangelización y su respuesta al grito de los pobres y de la Tierra, a lo largo y ancho del planeta.

Carla Bellone: Como podemos garantizar que estas mujeres no sigan siendo "invisibles", sino que su testimonio se convierta en fermento para toda la comunidad cristiana?

Maria Lia Zervino: En un diálogo que, por don de Dios, pude tener con el Papa León, el manifiesto que seguirá la línea del Papa Francisco en relación al rol y la responsabilidad de las mujeres en el camino hacia una Iglesia sinodal y misionera. Sin duda los cambios recientes introducidos en la Curia Romana y la Praedicate Evangelium constituyen una gran pantalla y un instru-

mento ejemplar y pedagógico para las diócesis y la sociedad civil. Pero en definitiva son las transformaciones desde las iglesias locales las que irán acortando la distancia entre lo dicho -el Magisterio- y lo hecho concretamente. Esperamos que los obispos, en las distintas regiones, según las necesidades del Pueblo de Dios a su cargo, instituyan nuevos ministerios para las mujeres, obviamente optimizando su formación. Ello implica una inversión en recursos humanos, tiempo y dinero para la formación, ecuanime para varones y mujeres, sin discriminación de género.

Carla Bellone: En que ámbitos considera que existe hoy en día una necesidad más urgente de una presencia femenina transformadora en la Iglesia y en la sociedad?

Maria Lia Zervino: A nivel de base: formando a las mujeres junto con los hombres, en escuelas de sinodalidad, a fin de se haga realidad el discernimiento eclesial en todas las instancias de decisión y así implementemos la misión.

En los Seminarios: incorporando mujeres idóneas dentro de los Equipos de Formadores, de modo que puedan contribuir con voz y voto al acompañamiento y formación de los futuros ministros ordenados.

En la Academia Pontificia: para capacitarse en el servicio diplomático vaticano, con la finalidad de colaborar en las nunciaturas, incorporando su mirada femenina en las relaciones con los gobiernos y en la selección de candidatas al episcopado.

Carla Bellone: El papa Francisco ha destacado en numerosas ocasiones la necesidad de "una Iglesia con rostro femenino". Como interpreta esta expresión a la luz del proyecto "Discipulos invisibles"?

Maria Lia Zervino: Me parece que esa frase indica el perfil que el Espíritu Santo va impulsando en varones y mujeres que caminan del brazo y asumen su corresponsabilidad diferenciada. Sueno con esa Iglesia de rostro y lenguaje femeninos, que es la Iglesia de las entrañas de misericordia, de la revolución de la ternura, del estar cerca del hijo que sufre, del cuidar la propia tierra, del ardor misionero de quien esta hecha para dar Vida con mayúscula... todas características de una madre. Auguro que el proyecto Invisible Disciples sea una fuente de inspiración y una fuerza impulsora de la etapa de implementación del Sínodo sobre la Sinodalidad, que es crucial para el Pueblo de Dios.

Carla Bellone: Que mensaje le gustaría enviar a las mujeres — religiosas y laicas — que prestan servicio pero a menudo pasan desapercibidas?

Maria Lia Zervino: Miremos a María. Digamos en voz alta las palabras del ángel para que resuenen en nuestros corazones como campanas que nos despiertan de un sueño profundo. Cuanto necesitamos escuchar: Alegrate! El Señor está contigo, no temas (Cfr. Lc 1, 28,30). Muchas veces podemos sentirnos un poco como esta joven de Nazaret, a la que nadie conocía, de la que nadie esperaba nada, a la que nadie miraba pero que estaba comprometida en servir a Dios todos los días de su vida, en la pequeñez, en la soledad de un pueblo escondido. Esas palabras que nos repite el evangelista en boca de Jesús, hoy nos las dice a nosotras: Alegrarse! El Señor está con ustedes, como siempre estuvo en el evangelio del lado de las mujeres. No hay motivo para temer, para bajar los brazos, para sentir que no podemos. Coraje! Ave María y adelante!

Carla Bellone: Por último, mirando hacia el futuro, que sueño alberga en su corazón para la Iglesia y para las mujeres que for-

man parte de ella?

Maria Lia Zervino: Así como en el Concilio Vaticano II la Virgen María fue repensada a la luz del misterio de la Iglesia, sueño con que llegue el momento de repensar la Iglesia a la luz del misterio de María, nuestra Madre, en un Sínodo del Pueblo de Dios.

Maria Lia Zervino es una virgen consagrada de la Asociación de las Servidoras y socióloga argentina. Ha prestado un importante servicio a nivel internacional como presidenta de la Unión Mundial de Organizaciones Femeninas Católicas (WUCWO) y actualmente es consultora del Observatorio Mundial de las Mujeres. Desde hace años acompaña procesos eclesiales y formativos en favor de la plena valorización de las mujeres en la vida y la misión de la Iglesia.





Jules Gibson

A JESUIT MISSION OF FAITH, COURAGE, AND COMPASSION

From a young age, I have felt a deep calling to live my faith boldly and authentically. Studying Theology at university opened my heart to the transformative power of African and Liberation Theology; expressions of faith rooted in justice, community, and hope. That passion led me to Ghana, where I spent a year in the heart of the equatorial rainforest, helping to build and establish a school. It was a

time of profound challenge and grace.

As a woman travelling alone, I was confronted with many barriers, navigating immigration systems, negotiating with village chiefs steeped in tradition, and battling bureaucracy to register the school, all while trying to bring light and learning to a forgotten corner of the world.

Often, I was seen as vulnerable, questioned, and underestimated. But through perseverance, prayer, and the support of others, I came to understand that love truly does triumph over hardship. I wasn't just building a school; I was planting seeds of hope.



That experience shaped my vocation as a Religious Studies teacher in a Jesuit school for 14 years. It was a joy to share stories from Africa, weaving a love for justice and compassion into the curriculum. I witnessed students' hearts open as we journeyed together to Zimbabwe and Uganda, encountering the realities of education and displacement. These moments were sacred, watching young people grow in faith and solidarity with the global south.

Immersing myself in Ignatian spirituality deepened my understanding of what it means to put faith into action. The Jesuit ethos taught me to begin with experience, reflect deeply, and move toward meaningful action. I found God not only in scripture and prayer, but in the faces of those I served, echoing Pope Leo's words in *Dilexi Te*, to see the face of Christ in others.

Eventually, I felt called beyond the classroom once more. Now, in my role at Jesuit Missions, I have the privilege of engaging with schools, parishes, and young adults, inviting them into a life of solidarity, compassion, and justice. It is a ministry of presence, of storytelling, and of

inspiring others to live their faith courageously.

As a woman in the Church, I've learned that dedication and sacrifice are not burdens; they are gifts. They are the ways we embody Christ's love in a world longing for healing. Inspired by St. Ignatius, I continue to seek God in all things, using my experiences to be a witness to the Gospel and striving always to do more, for love and for justice.

Jules Gibson joined Jesuit Missions in July 2025, following 14 years as a teacher and Head of Religious Studies and Philosophy at Stonyhurst College. She holds a Master's degree in Theological Studies from St Andrews University and a PGCE in Secondary Religious Education. Her international experience includes building a primary school and founding a charity in Ghana's equatorial rainforest in 2009. Jules has travelled extensively across Africa and Eastern Europe, focusing on educational out-



Sr. Maria Constanza Cecilia

WALKING WITH THE INVISIBLE: SISTER MARIA CONSTANZA'S JOURNEY OF FAITH AND SERVICE

God's call in my life did not manifest itself in a single way. I was very happy with my university life, my job, and my friends. Buenos Aires was a place I loved deeply. I had everything I needed.

The Lord had to struggle quite a lot so that I could recognise His voice amid my personal interests. I believe He used a marvellous tool: service. The sign I can clearly recognise throughout my life as a "vocational path, presence and voice of the Lord in my life" is the encounter with my most vulnerable neighbour. I always found meaning in my life through pastoral work in the Villas Miserias (slums) of Buenos Aires, volunteering with children with Down syndrome, accompanying the most forgotten members of society, and seeking their inclusion and dignity. My family also had a strong commitment to service, and this was another drop in the ocean that helped to shape my identity and find my vocation.

All this led me to make a decision: to dare to walk along the margins with those who, without choice, have no option but to accept that social destiny.

At one time, it might have been a utopia — perhaps mixed with a political streak so typical of Argentinians, and of my own family — but as the journey continued, it was purified. I found the Lord in this choice, which turned out to be His will for me: a choice that is not always easy, because one must battle one's own inner demons — rejection, prejudice, fatigue, doubts. But the Lord always shakes us up, brings us back to the starting point, and sends us forth on mission.

I have always felt a special vocation "on the street", among those who are unseen, those we do not see. And after a time of many difficulties for various reasons, everything began to unfold — step by step — we were guided towards this service of charity in our community in Rome.

At this moment, my life is dedicated, together with my community, to transgender women who, for various reasons, find themselves in situations of prostitution. But this mission does not end there "on the street, at night"; we also offer a path towards freedom. A pastoral community has been born, made up of brothers and sisters with whom we walk together. We also work pastorally with Roma children and women, alongside a team of lay people.

All this "saves" me, transforms me, changes

the way I think and judge others. It places me on my own path. Knowing their stories, listening, walking alongside these people for eight years without ever stopping has allowed me to understand, to put myself in another's place, to share their pain and to commit myself to their dreams and desires. We all long and wish to live deeply.

Society has a very superficial view of reality. Are we more spectators than participants in this reality? It's a good question to ask ourselves. It is easy to watch from the outside and to criticise.

There are many signs of God along this journey — my own, that of my group, and of the shared path with transgender women, Roma children and their families:

First of all, we are a "pastoral community": no one carries the weight alone or rejoices alone when steps of liberation are taken. Without a network, there are few possibilities; without community, it is impossible — and not worth it.

We also understand that we are a community with these women, that we grow together, that they have a place in our communities, that we can commit ourselves to their fundamental rights and social inclusion. As we walk together, creative and just responses have been born — ways to have an "excuse to be community". This is not only a sign of God, but a confirmation of His presence among us.

Our religious family's accompaniment — their participation, support, and understanding — opens new horizons and offers real signs of the Lord's presence.

In the same way, the Lord gives us strength in difficult times, when the road ahead is unclear. He always comforts us

and reminds us that beyond the results — which are always His grace — what truly matters is taking one step after another, not giving up or stopping.

I believe our journey is also marked by discernment, by the search for the Lord's will for these women, for the Roma children, and for ourselves. The diversity of our pastoral team is wonderful.

There is no action that is not purified by the way of Jesus. He shows us the how, one way or another. Our prejudices, personal pursuits, lack of faith, or moments of darkness are purified along the way — through prayer and through the presence of our brothers and sisters on the journey.

I have encountered many stories in this mission. I have seen children among us — needy, homeless, without the means that any other child would have — and I have "served", deciding to feed the most in need. I have seen strong transgender women face illness with enormous greatness, forgive many wounds, and care deeply for others — often much more than we do, than I do myself, who sometimes "has everything". This moves me deeply. And I learn the pure joy of service; I am confronted by my own selfishness and smallness.

I believe that silence in mission is born when we "return home" — both from the street and within our communities. To return home is not to overlook what has happened, but to keep it in one's heart, without offering absurd or ready-made answers. It means understanding how God dwells in each person, in everyone. It means believing that God loves us all as His daughters and sons.

To remember, to keep alive the memory of what we have lived — by listening and

embracing — allows something new to be born; it is always a new starting point.

As consecrated women, responding to the signs of the times, I believe we are called to "leave our peaceful communities" and go to the frontiers — where no one wants to go, where there is prejudice, marginalisation, invisibility — and give voice to those who have none. Daring to commit ourselves to this restoration is a human challenge, but also an utterly evangelical one. "To go out", as Pope Francis says, is nothing new; it is a return to the mission of the Lord Jesus — walking with our suffering brothers and sisters, seeking answers together, daring to take the journey!

Sister Maria Constanza Cecilia Mattera, a member of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Urgell, shares a profound testimony of vocation born from service and compassion. From the streets of Buenos Aires to the heart of Rome, her mission has led her to accompany transgender women in prostitution and Roma families, walking beside those society often overlooks. Through her ministry, Sister Constanza discovers the transforming power of Faith, community, and human dignity — an ongo-

La Hna. Maria Constanza Cecilia Mattera, miembro de las Hermanas de la Sagrada Familia de Urgell, comparte un profundo testimonio de vocación nacida del servicio y la compasión. Desde las calles de Buenos Aires hasta el corazón de Roma, su misión la ha llevado a acompañar a mujeres transgénero que se dedican a la prostitución y a familias romanas, caminando junto a quienes la sociedad suele ignorar.

CAMINANDO CON LO INVISIBLE: EL VIAJE DE FE Y SERVICIO DE LA HERMANA MARIA CONSTANZA CECILIA MATTERA (VERSION EN ESPANOL)

La llamada de Dios en mi vida no se ha manifestado de un modo único: era muy feliz con mi vida universitaria, de trabajo, con mis amigos. Buenos Aires era un lugar muy querido para mí. Tenía todo lo que necesitaba.

El Señor ha luchado bastante para que pueda reconocer su voz en medio de mis intereses personales. Creo que utilizo una magnífica herramienta: el servicio. El signo que puedo reconocer claramente a lo largo de mi vida como "camino vocacional, presencia y voz del Señor en mi vida" es el encuentro con mi prójimo más vulnerado. Siempre encuentro sentido a mi vida trabajando pastoralmente en las Villas Miserias de Buenos Aires, ofreciendo mi tiempo como voluntaria con niños con Down, acompañando a los más olvidados de las sociedades, buscando su inclusión y dignidad. También mi familia tenía una clara opción de servicio y esto ha sido una gotita más que ha colaborado para construir mi identidad y encontrar mi vocación.

Todo esto me ha hecho tomar una decisión: animarme a caminar por los márgenes con aquellos que, sin decisión, no tienen otra que aceptar este destino social.

Alguna vez, fue una utopía, quizás mezclada con un rasgo político muy propio de los argentinos, de mi propia familia... pero a lo largo del camino se ha ido purificando y fui encontrando al Señor en esta opción que a su vez más era el querer de Dios para mí: una opción no siempre fácil porque hay que combatir con los propios demonios interiores: rechazos, prejuicios, cansancio, para qué? Pero el Señor siempre nos sacude, nos vuelve al punto de partida y nos misiona.

Siempre he sentido una vocación especial en "la calle", con los que no se ven, con los que no vemos. Y luego de un tiempo de mucha dificultad por diversas causas, todo se fue presentando, un paso después de otro, fuimos orientadas a este servicio de caridad en nuestra comunidad de Roma.

En este momento mi vida está dedicada a las mujeres transgénero que por tantos diversos motivos tienen que estar en situación de prostitución, junto con mi comunidad. Pero esta misión no termina aquí "en la calle, de noche"; se ofrece poder caminar en libertad, ha nacido una comunidad pastoral con otros hermanos y hermanas con las que caminamos juntos. También trabajamos pastoralmente con niños y mujeres rom junto a un equipo de laicos.

Todo esto me "salva", me transforma, cambia mi modo de pensar y de juzgar a los demás. Me ubica en mi propio camino. Conocer la historia, escuchar, caminar con estas personas desde hace 8 años sin detenernos nunca, hace que pueda comprender, ponerme en el lugar del otro, compartir sus dolores y comprometerme con sus sueños y deseos. Todos y todas de-

seamos... y queremos vivir en profundidad.

La sociedad tiene una mirada muy plana de la realidad, Somos más espectadores que participativos en esta realidad? Es una buena pregunta para hacerse. Es fácil mirar desde fuera y generar una crítica.

Hay muchos signos de Dios en este camino, en mi camino, en el de mi grupo, en el camino compartido con mujeres transgénero, niños y niñas Rom y sus familias:

En primer lugar, somos una "comunidad pastoral", nadie carga con un peso único ni goza solo cuando hay pasos de liberación. Sin red no hay demasiadas posibilidades, sin comunidad es imposible. Y además no vale la pena.

Comprender que somos una comunidad también y sobre todo! con estas mujeres, que crecemos juntas, que tienen un lugar en nuestras comunidades, que podemos comprometernos con sus derechos fundamentales y su inclusión social, que vamos haciendo camino y, que también han nacido las respuestas justas, creativas para que podamos tener una "excusa para ser comunidad", es no solo un signo de Dios, es una confirmación de su presencia en medio nuestro.

Que nuestra familia religiosa acompañe, participe, apoye, conozca, abra nuevos horizontes y ofrezca signos reales de una presencia del Señor.

Del mismo modo, el Señor nos da la fuerza en los momentos difíciles o en los que no se ve muy adelante. Siempre nos conforta y nos recuerda que más allá del resultado — que es siempre una gracia suya — lo que vale es el paso a paso. El no decae ni se detiene.

Creo que nuestro camino también está marcado por el discernimiento, la búsqueda del querer del Señor para estas mujeres, para los niños Rom, para nosotros. La diversidad del equipo pastoral es magnífica.





No hay acción que no sea purificada por el modo de hacer de Jesús, Él nos muestra el cómo de un modo u otro. Nuestros prejuicios, nuestras búsquedas personales, nuestras faltas de fe u oscuridad, las va purificando en el camino, en la oración y a través de la presencia de los hermanos y hermanas del camino.

He encontrado muchas historias en esta misión: he visto niños y niñas que están entre nosotros, necesitados, sin casa, sin medios como cualquier otro niño, y "servir", decidir dar de comer a los más necesitados... He visto mujeres transgénero fuertes afrontar enfermedades con una grandeza enorme, perdonar muchas heridas, preocuparse de corazón por los demás, mucho más que nosotros, que yo misma, que a veces "tengo todo". Eso me conmueve. Y aprendo la gratitud de servir; me siento confrontada con mis propios egoísmos y pequeneces.

Creo que el silencio en la misión nace cuando "volvemos a casa", tanto en la calle como en nuestras comunidades. Volver a casa es no pasar por alto lo que sucede, es guardarlo en el corazón y no ofrecer respuestas absurdas o prehechas. Comprender cómo Dios habita

en cada una, en cada uno. Es creer que Dios nos ama a todos y todas como hijas e hijos.

Recordar, hacer memoria de las cosas que hemos vivido, escuchando, abrazando, dar lugar a que nazca algo nuevo; es siempre un punto de partida.

Creo que, como consagradas, dando respuesta a los signos de los tiempos, estamos llamadas a "salir de nuestras comunidades tranquilas" e ir a las fronteras, donde nadie quiere ir, donde hay prejuicios, marginalidad, invisibilidad y dar voz a los que no la tienen. Animarnos a comprometernos con esta restitución es un desafío humano, pero absolutamente evangélico. "Salir", como decía Francisco, no es una cosa nueva, es volver a la misión del Señor Jesús, hacer camino con las hermanas y hermanos que más sufren, buscar respuesta juntos, animarnos!



Clara Sayans

AT HOME IN THE MAGIS: HIDDEN DISCIPLE IN EDUCATION, MIGRATION, AND THE QUIET WORK OF JUSTICE

Ignatian spirituality has quietly shaped how I see and move through the world. Early on, I learned that faith is not something to hold but something to live, not just belief, but action.

Over time, I discovered that this action springs from a deeper movement: praising, reverencing, and serving God and neighbour. From that source flows a question that has accompanied me like a whisper since high school: How can I love and serve more?

That question has never let me look at the world the same way. It unsettles me — sometimes radically — until I cannot turn away. Through pastoral groups, volunteer experiences in Africa and Latin America, and the grace of the Spiritual Exercises, that whisper became a certainty: the profound freedom of surrendering to God. From there, I began to let myself be shaped — often impatiently, but always with serene joy. Slowly, untying knots and weaving bonds. Until recently, when I found myself able to put words to who I am and how I want to live: within a vocation that is a continuous call, never resting.

My vocation is education for justice: accompanying others in seeing reality, reflecting deeply, and transforming love into deeds. I walk with those who refuse to close their eyes to injustice, and I strive to be a window for those who have yet to discover. Then, to accompany them as they turn awareness into action, making real for the most vulnerable the words of Jesus in Revelation: "I have loved you."

From classrooms to courtrooms, from rural communities to renowned universities, from the collective to the individual, I try to bring encounter as the only path to transformation and hospitality as the only response to the unknown. This work is hard. It demands staying connected to the cry of the poor and translating that cry into hope. It means trusting, like a sower, that seeds will grow — even when the soil looks barren. My hope comes from my own story of salvation, from seeing how God transformed me. I rely on the One who alone makes change possible.

In these challenging times, serving migrants and refugees through education, advocacy, and organising — while being an immigrant myself in a country where my mother tongue is often targeted — I feel more "in place" than ever. The reality is harsh, but grace sustains me. God sustains me. My family sustains me.

This is not glamorous work. It is quiet, persistent, and deeply human. And yet, in this hiddenness, I find the Magis. Here, I am home.

Clara Sayans serves as the Outreach Officer at JRS/USA. She engages with individuals and institutions to foster spaces for learning, advocacy, and social transformation to build a more fraternal and welcoming society for our forcibly displaced siblings.





WE STAND WITH REFUGEES
QUIT REFUGEE SERVICE/USA





FROM ROME TO THE FRONTIERS OF THE WORLD: A MISSION AT THE SERVICE OF REFUGEES

As part of the Invisible Disciples project, this interview highlights the often unseen witness of women who live out the Gospel through their silent service. In this conversation, Cecilia Bock, who works with the Jesuit Refugee Service, reflects on her vocation and commitment to accompanying refugees and displaced persons in different regions of the world. Her experience reveals how compassion, listening and perseverance become concrete forms of faith in action.

Carla Bellone: Can you tell us how your vocation came about and how your current mission reflects the desire to "serve in silence" that the Invisible Disciples project aims to highlight?

Cecilia Bock: Imagine a modestly dressed woman standing on red earth, surrounded by drafts of wind and crowds of people walking along the road, because there are few cars there, and rows of huge mango trees dusted by the dry season. During one of my first Needs Assessment visits to

South Sudan, that woman told a young girl, who could have been her daughter, not to forget her, not to forget them, because she saw so many humanitarian workers like me coming and going without keeping their promises.

Well, I did my best, I went back many times. At that time, I was working with Caritas Spain, which supported schools, medical dispensaries, training courses and much more in that region of South Sudan. I believe that it was during that conversation that my desire was born, not only to keep my promises but to provide a concrete service, with simple gestures, without fanfare: to return, to listen, to make space, even when no one is watching.

Carla Bellone: How do you manage to live out the dimension of "contemplation in action" — that is, the union between prayer and concrete service — in your daily challenges?

Cecilia Bock: I learned from my colleague Tevfik Karatop, Project Manager at JRS Canada, that the difference between empathy and compassion is that the former means putting yourself in someone else's shoes, while in the latter situation, in addition to trying to understand other people's feelings, you are driven by the desire to support them, to find solutions, to

act on their behalf. I believe this is "contemplation in action", a kind of compassion that moves us and drives us to act, to take a stand. I also believe that compassion is nourished by silence, by that inner space where we stop to listen. It is there that actions find meaning, even before they take shape. It is not so much a prayer in the religious sense, but a way of returning to oneself, of breathing together with others, of remembering why we act.

Carla Bellone: What are the difficulties or most powerful moments you have experienced in your service, especially in the context of suffering or poverty?

Cecilia Bock: I never know how to define or even distinguish the most important moments in my service. In my current job, my office is based in Rome, from where I often travel to all the countries where we have offices and where we serve refugees and forcibly displaced people, from Africa to Latin America to Asia.

Every trip brings with it encounters that leave a lasting impression: the suffering of mothers who see their children losing years of schooling, the mental fragility of those who have lost everything, the lack of prospects, the indifference of communities that are unable to welcome them. These are difficult moments that stay with you.

Yet, if I had to choose a "most powerful" moment today, I would choose among many, a moment of rebirth. I think of the resilient looks on the faces, such as the one of the country director, who continues to rebuild bombed schools and houses in Myanmar, where the conflict restarted in 2021 has left a population exhausted but not defeated. In those people, I see the strength to start again, the same strength that reminds me that even in the most wounded places, something always con-

tinues to move, to sprout.

Carla Bellone: The project emphasises the importance of discernment and the Ignatian 'Magis'. How do these principles help you to guide your choices and find God in everything?

Cecilia Bock: I believe that my formation was influenced by the concept of Magis, which does not mean always to do or give 'more' to the point of exhaustion. Magis is the value of striving for the better, striving for excellence — taking it to the meaning of living fully, deeply, serving selflessly.

Certainly, the relationship with the Society of Jesus had an impact in my life, because I realised the importance of having a spiritual interest to open myself to the needs of the people we serve. In the humanitarian world, as in other areas, there is obviously a need for competence, preparation, experience, adaptability, flexibility and emotional intelligence. Having said that, I believe it is also crucial to have a kind of competence that I would define underground, that helps you put yourself in a deep listening condition because you have developed the ability to listen to yourself and others.

Carla Bellone: What would you like to say to other women — religious or lay — who work every day, often in the shadows, to spread the Gospel through service and love?

Cecilia Bock: To women who, with patience and dedication, often work far from the spotlight, I would like to say not lose faith in the value of their work. Many very essential things, in fact, grow in silence: relationships, hopes, gestures that hold communities together.



Photo source: Jesuit.media



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