*The Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet have recently welcomed three new candidates to our congregation! Sally Koch, Tracy Watson and Chizuru Yamada were all able to meet each other and join a huge delegation of our sisters, associates and partners in ministry at the Sisters of St. Joseph Federation Event in Orlando, Florida in July. The three of them come to us from different corners of the world—New York, Nebraska and Japan—but they are united in a draw to our charism of “love of God and love of dear neighbor without distinction.” We are excited to share each of their stories with you.*

Sally Koch (pronounced “cook”) joined our congregation as a candidate in May. She found us in a truly millennial way: via Google Search.

About two and a half years ago, Sally was starting to feel more open to a call to religious life. “I’d been having a voice in the back of my head like ‘maybe you could do that,’ and I just squashed it down, didn’t want to do that, got angry at God and all that. And finally I was like, you know if this is where I’m going to be most fulfilled and my best self, why am I holding myself back?” So Sally began googling to find a spiritual director. “It was kind of a two-fold thing,” she said. “I wanted a spiritual director, but why not get a spiritual director from a place where I could possibly see myself?”

Sally grew up on a small family dairy farm in Nebraska. She, her parents, two brothers and a sister lived right across from her grandparents. “It was definitely a lot of community living and teamwork,” she said. “Looking back, I’ve lived in community my entire life. That sense of belonging is really deep within me.”

After receiving a degree in psychology with a minor in music from the University of South Dakota, Sally headed for the coasts to serve. First, she was placed at a L’Arche house in Jacksonville, Florida by Catholic Volunteers in Florida, where she stayed for two years. Then she joined the Vincentian Service Corps and served in Santa Barbara, California for another year. Following her volunteer work, she earned her Master’s in Pastoral Ministry from Santa Clara University in California. From there, she worked as a Program Coordinator for the Jesuit Volunteer Corps Northwest and then for United Cerebral Palsy.

An attraction to St. Joseph and the charism of the Sisters of St. Joseph brought Sally to Los Angeles this summer. After job searching for two months, one of the sisters she lives in community with was able to give her a lead that led her to a position as Campus Minister and College Counselor at St. Joseph’s High School in L.A. “I literally couldn’t ask for a better position than to be there because what I felt then and what I hear from other people is that CSJ charism just oozes out of that school.”