



**Sisters of Notre Dame**

California Province

## **KRISTEN CASTELLANOS, *determined student-athlete***

Reflecting on her life as a young girl living in downtown Los Angeles, Kristen Castellanos recalls how her grandparents and her father raised her from humble beginnings. She recounts the countless sacrifices her family made in order for her to pursue her love of sports. She vividly remembers her family attending every practice, sports clinic, and tournament from the time she was five years old. These days her family sees first hand the fruits of their commitment, as Kristen was awarded a full scholarship to Loyola Marymount University. Kristen is now a senior at LMU and playing for their women's volleyball team--a Division 1 school for the sport. She serves as the team captain and her position on the court is libero--a defensive position. This position is challenging to play, as the libero remains in the game at all times, and is the only player not limited by the rules of rotation.

Volleyball has always been Kristen's passion, and she believes that her participation in sports has taught her countless life lessons. She has inspired classmates from St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic School in Los Angeles and from her high school, Notre Dame Academy. Vanessa Rivera, Director of Advancement at St. Thomas, commented on Kristen's accomplishments saying, "There are not many Latina student-athletes playing at the Division 1 level in college sports, especially in volleyball. However, Kristen serves as an example to our Latina students in the inner city, that **it is** possible! Our girls can now dream of playing Division 1 sports because someone in their community **has done it**. We may not have the same resources as other

schools have, but with hard work and determination one can compete and fulfill her dreams."

During her time at NDA, Kristen was selected for All-CIF in her freshman, sophomore and junior years. She completed her volleyball career as the all-time digs leader at NDA, as well as being named NDA Defensive Player of the Year in 2010 and 2011 and team MVP in 2012 and 2013. She was also named NDA Athlete of the Year as a senior. Aside from her sports at NDA, Kristen experienced meaningful interactions with members of the SND community. One in particular was Sr. Joann Schlarbaum, Assistant Librarian. Kristen recalls their exchanges fondly, noting "I always found Sr. Joann to be so sweet and positive. Although our interactions were brief, she truly inspired me to always be kind." The SND influence permeated the campus, giving Kristen a clear understanding of their mission and their deep passion for education. She realized that their influence allowed the faculty and staff to educate the whole person, allowing each student to reach her full potential.

Kristen is now completing her last semester at LMU. Next, she hopes to further her education on the graduate level at LMU, pursuing an M.A. in Educational Studies and possibly serving as a graduate assistant to the volleyball team.

Her future plans have been inspired by her years at NDA and the example of the SNDs: "The SNDs embody God's call to serve others, especially those in need. They are examples of what it means to do what sets your soul on fire!"