

Called by LOVE to love



God is love. I have experienced God concretely because I have been loved by my family, friends and teachers. I also experienced love from people of other religions and races. This realization came to me when I least expected it, which is during a vocation camp in November 2006. When I realized how much I have been blessed and loved, my heart opened up to the idea of sharing this blessing with others. I was open to reaching out to those who do not know God or refuse to acknowledge the existence of God because they have not experienced love concretely in their lives.

Why religious life? Why not single life or marriage?

During the discernment period from 2007-2008, I discovered that all I want is to be near Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament when I'm near death. The most possible place for that wish to happen is if I'm living in the convent! Secondly, I need sisters in the community. I have a strong will so I'm not confident that I will always do God's

will if I'm single. Living in the community, I would always have my sisters to tell me if I'm on the wrong track. Thirdly, I value the three vows that religious profess. The vows of poverty, obedience and chastity help me to love God and neighbor with all my heart, mind and soul. The vows free me and help me to live as the beloved child of God.

Why the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary?

The name did seem a mouthful to me initially. I wanted to follow Jesus as a religious but the name of the FMM does not have anything that attracted me. However, when I was told about the Foundress, Mary of the Passion and one of her sayings "My End is Love" – that saying struck me. That seemed to speak of what I experienced at the vocation camp. Touched by God's love, I too desire to let God lead me to all parts of the world to share God's love with everyone.

During the discernment period, I visited another congregation besides the FMM. Though I liked that other congregation's missions, I felt more at home with the FMM sisters. I felt that God wanted me to be open to any kind of mission He will be sending me to. It is not about what I like to do but about what God wants me to do. When I saw in the brochure that FMM sisters serve people of all ages, both male and female – that seems to be what God wants for me.

The more I lived the FMM charism, the more I feel called to be an FMM. The Franciscan values of simplicity, joy, minority, poverty and fraternity suit me. Though I was very afraid to step out of my comfort zone, I can see how God has been training me to be a missionary for the past ten years. At the beginning of my discernment, I did

ask why Mary? I wanted to follow only Jesus! Gradually, I began to recall the special relationship I have with our Lady. Through my devotion to Mother Mary as a child, I learnt to pray. When I was spiritually wandering in my 20s, it was Mother Mary who helped me to come back to God again.

Courage to take the leap

Being the only daughter in a small family like mine, it was difficult to make the decision to become a religious. God certainly gave me the grace to experience His presence throughout my discernment period. Those experiences were the ones that helped me to take the big leap. My discernment period took place during the sickness of my elder brother. He was diagnosed with Stage 4 colon cancer at the age of 34. When I was taking care of him, I experienced a deep peace - the kind of peace that only God can give. It was strange to experience peace because my whole family was saddened by the news of his illness. That peace gave me clarity of mind to help my family, especially my sister-in-law in taking care of my brother. Peace that gives me hope and to trust in God.

My brother suffered and eventually passed away. His two daughters had to grow up fatherless. A lot of money was spent on his treatment. However, God sustained us with His hope. Seen through the eyes of faith, there were many blessings as well and kind people who helped us during his illness. Those kinds of experiences convinced me that I can surrender my life totally to this God of love.

Continuous discernment

During the trying out period of one and a half years as a pre-novice, I understood myself a little more and also my parents. I became more patient and had more within me to listen to others. That is how I see it – if God calls me, my life and my relationship with others should be better.

I then moved to the next stage called the novitiate. It is a formal entry into the religious life. In this stage, I became more sure of God's voice, and I really fell deeply in love with God. Detachment from family and friends for two years really helped me to be silent enough to recognize God's ways in my life. At the end of my novitiate, I made my temporary vows. God continues to offer me opportunities to say YES or NO. I am offered luxurious items to have, delicious and expensive food to eat, nice men to date and marry if I want, and most of all, to understand this vow of obedience. I learnt to express my opinions, to dialogue freely and to obey my superiors. Through this obedience, I grew, and I learnt how to be more humble. Had I insisted on my own ways and wills without obeying first, I wouldn't have seen myself growing. I'm grateful for these 3 vows that I take – because they really help me in following our poor and humble Christ.

Stigmata of St Francis of Assisi

Starting my religious life on 17th of September 8 years ago in 2009 and able to make my perpetual profession on 17th September 2017 is very special for me. This is the date all Franciscans commemorate the event whereby St Francis of Assisi received the five wounds in his hands, side and feet. So closely did St Francis follow Jesus Christ showed visibly in his body that I too, am inspired to live our FMM charism, so that I make up in my body all that has still to be undergone by Christ for the sake of making our world a better place to live. A world that promotes life, peace and love.