

Vocation Through Conversion



My vocation journey is a love story where the power of Almighty God was manifested through His Mercy. Without any merit of my own, God called me out of sheer love to belong to Him in a special way in the contemplative life of Carmel.

Born in a Catholic family from a Catholic country, and baptized as an infant, I attended a Catholic School for girls since Kindergarten. In third grade I received my First Holy Communion and some years later, my Mom started taking me to Sunday Mass with my Grandma.

My faith grew during my childhood years as I observed the living faith of my maternal grandmother and the Salesian Sisters at school. They inspired me with a special love for Our Lady. Grandma, a widow, since her late 50's, had in her bedroom a large wall rosary. The holy rosary was a devotion she prayed daily. She also liked to go to Sunday Mass and to visit our National Basilica, as well as many other churches. Indeed, she was instrumental in my Faith and in keeping the Faith in my family.

The religious Sisters, on their part, gave us a good example of Christian life, teaching us good manners, religion, morals, and my favorite subject, music. I liked to go to their convent attached to the High School, and to peek into their kitchen. Even though the Sisters were seldom there at that time, at least I could smell their dinner while talking with the cooks. It always intrigued me that the students could not go into the private area of the Sisters' convent.

As a teenager, my Faith was enriched at the parish through youth and music ministries and missionary groups. I enjoyed going there and frequently, I would attend a youth group on Friday nights, and another one, on Saturday mornings! The involvement was such that my aunt told me, "Why don't you become a nun?" She was a little indignant because I preferred to go to the parish instead of staying longer at the family New Year gathering. Indeed the parish became like another home for me and I used to attend Mass even during the week, although not out of piety, but to meet friends and learn the latest news.

The idea of becoming a nun never seriously entered my mind until adulthood. The Sisters at school talked about religious vocations and how to discern one's call, but as a Senior in High School, I was only thinking of going to college and the prospect of a good career. At this stage in life I did not dream of getting married either.

So, how did this soul decide on religious life? The idea came about through a conversion. I was immersed in a consumerist society that pulled me away from God and even from myself. I had worldly attachments, especially television with its famous daily soap operas, internet, social media, the life of celebrities, entertainments, food. I was not happy, of course, neither had I felt peace. I could not understand the source of this sadness. The Lord, however, knew what was wrong in my life, and in His great Mercy, He changed the route I was taking.

In 2001, I learned about the upcoming World Youth Day 2002 in Toronto, Canada. Since 1993 as a Senior in High School, I knew about these events, when Saint Pope John Paul II would visit a country to meet the youth from all over the world, and since then, I wanted to attend. In 1987 the Pope visited my country, and my Mom took my sister, Grandma and me to attend the Mass in the public square. It was a great experience. I remember the big crowd. Now a young adult, working, and earning my own money, I began to desire to save money in order to go to Toronto until... my country suffered a drastic devaluation and I had to put that dream aside.

Another failure had to do with my studies. I did not do well in one of the subjects in my senior year in college. These and other disappointments put me on my knees and, for the first time in my life, I talked to God and asked Him, "Lord, what do You want from me?" It was Independence Day in my country and I came back from a parish festival. My Mom informed me that a former missionary group member now living in the USA called. She learned from her blood sister, my classmate, that I desired to go to Toronto, and she invited me and her sister as the two beneficiaries of a fundraiser, organized by one of the parishes in Detroit. In July 2002, my classmate and I travelled to United States of America to meet the youth groups and to travel with them to the World Youth Day in Toronto. Needless to say, it was a great experience, a miracle in itself! I was able to see the Pope very closely! A real blessing... still, religious life was not in the picture.

When the group returned from Canada, my heart was filled with zeal to spread the love of God. I offered my services to one of the churches in Detroit as a volunteer. After some months, I went back home to my country. I finished my college degree, began higher education on human resources and participated in evangelization through Arts. At this time one thing was clear: I would not work again for any company, only for non-profit organizations. Subsequently, I found a job in an association of professionals.

While I was in the midst of a busy life between college, work, parish, musicals, I received a call from the pastor in Detroit, where I had volunteered, inviting me to come back to the USA to work at his parish. After some consideration, I quit my job and discontinued my studies. In a few months I was back in North America working with the youth at a mainly Hispanic parish. Here the Lord taught me lessons of humility, working with immigrants like me. Though living in very poor conditions, their Faith was alive and contagious.

It was in this parish that I encountered the School of Evangelization... an instrument in my conversion. At this time I had to discern whether to look for another job or go back to my country. I was invited to a series of workshops called "New Life." Before saying yes, I needed to get a new job, and since for the Lord nothing is impossible, He found a job for me and I was thus able to attend the workshops. This was indeed *my* New Life. In it I received the so-called "Baptism in the Holy Spirit." As a new person I began to see things more clearly. The Holy Spirit was at work. This was a real blessing. However, religious life did not yet enter my mind, although some people and priests would ask me if I was considering it, and in a sense it began to come forth a little more.

Sometime after my “conversion”, I entered a community, a private association of the faithful. I made promises as an oblate. The charism was to pray for priests, religious and young people, especially hardened sinners. Having been one myself, having experienced the power of intercessory prayer in my life, having had Seminarians as friends, having worked with priests, religious and young people, made this community a perfect fit for me. The Lord indeed worked here in a mysterious way because the founder was one of the youth ministers that organized the World Youth Day in 2002.

During this time of discernment, my devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe became stronger. Now, a Religious Sister in a full habit, I had to go back to my country to get a new visa. I was able to visit the Basilica of Guadalupe in Mexico on my way there. As soon as I was in the air, I opened the Bible and found in the Book of Jeremiah, “Do not marry.” Well, for sure Heaven was clear. After that I never had any doubts about my vocation.

My community sent me to the Sacred Heart Seminary in Detroit to get a master’s degree in Theology. I was there for a couple of years. What a painful heart-break when my Superior informed me that my community would have to be dissolved! With confusion and uncertainty regarding my vocation, I continued my studies as well as my discernment, praying always to Our Lady for consolation and help.

My gaze turned towards the Carmelite Order. When I was in college, I read *The Story of A Soul* but my heart was not ready at that time to really understand the Carmelite vocation. It was at the seminary, after watching a movie on St. Teresa of Avila when it became clearer to me how beautiful it is to offer one’s life for the salvation of souls and especially for priests.

I went back to my country to visit my family and to search for a Carmel there. The local bishop gave me the name of a Carmelite nun. My visit with the Sister was an affirmation that the Lord was not calling me there. Having returned again to the United States, amidst work and studies, I continued my search to know where Jesus wanted me to dedicate my life to Him. At the discernment house where I was staying, I met a Secular Carmelite from the diocese of Marquette. She mentioned the Iron Mountain Carmel and was very willing to take me there for a visit. The community has a great spectrum of ages. Between young and old I could relate to these different ages as it is in a family and in society. There were also foreign Sisters like myself, manifesting openness to different cultures, yet all Catholic. The Divine Office is chanted or sung on special occasions. Having been musically minded, this really appealed to me. They pray the Rosary together as a community in front of the Blessed Sacrament, a devotion very dear to me, since it brought me back to God through the powerful intercession of Our Lady of the Rosary.

After finishing my Masters degree in theology I entered as a postulant on October 7, 2014. It was a very long and tiring journey ... now I am home.

The thought that I would not be able to go back to my own country where my family and relatives live, was very painful for my parents. But after they came to visit me here at the Carmel a few times, they became very supportive and thankful to Almighty God for choosing one of their two daughters to be a Spouse of Christ.