

## Religious here and now

God calls every one of us in different ways. The idea of living in Australia or any foreign country never existed in my life. When I prepared myself to enter religious life in Australia what someone said to me at the time inspired me. In the past, the missionaries came and brought faith to Vietnam, it is we who are the missionaries now. We owed them so much for their sacrifices. Now it is time for us to go back to foreign land and serve people by faith. At the time, I was motivated from that thought and that is why I chose to go to Australia.

Religious life is like other vocations. There is joy but it also has its own challenges. As a Congregation of the Sisters of Nazareth, we build up a strong community. We pray, share meals together and also, we work together in the place where we live. For me I love this way of living where the example of Holy Family is put in place. I feel so much joy and support from others. But it also has its own challenges because we are a group of women, who do not choose to live with each other. We choose to live only for God, and God alone. Community is the means to lead us to that desire and we are inspired to be with each other through the work of the Holy Spirit. Imagine, a group of women is quite complicated, we have our own emotional cycles. My emotions might come up today and others' turn tomorrow. How can I keep our life balance and create the harmony in community? It is up to me to discover myself deeper and to accept one another. Most of all, I am here to glorify the Lord. Therefore, community is a place where it reveals myself most and there are hundreds of opportunities for me to practice the gospel values and to grow in holiness.

Some people suppose religious life is the way that we choose to escape the world, or it sounds quite weird for some people to see the young people vowing chastity. Often, I saw some staff who are curious about this way of life. We all understand that we choose to live the vow of chastity to free us from the burden of having family to serve people. It frees us to move wherever we are asked to go without worrying about husband and children, without being attached to anyone or anything. However, it is easier to say than to do. The challenge for me is that sometimes I tend to prefer to serve people whom I want to serve. It is easier for me to go to the residents with a big smile, willing to help and to be kind to everyone, residents, staff and visitors. When I feel the situation arise, I just walk away to leave for someone else to do the rest. At least I do not have to live with them. However, when I came back to my own community, sometimes I am struggling even to smile to somebody who often gets on my nerves. I seem to forget to serve my sisters as well as the people outside. I sometimes choose to escape the challenges of community to go to the residents or to use social media to distract the reality. I should learn to face my challenges and to live in mindfulness. The vow of Chastity is a wakeup call for me to foster agape love and serve all people of God with unconditional love.

I heard this quote long time ago in a homily "Each day we will explore this mystery and no matter how old we live to be in religious life, we will never fathom its depth or search for understanding." It is true enough. Each day as I am entering my faith deeper in relationship with God and in communion with Sisters in community, the mystery of life itself is unfolded little by little. I will never understand it all until the day I die. Most of all, I know my call is to love and to serve the Lord and only for him.