

Community Life - the Journey to Holiness

Believing and following a relational God, religious community life has become a treasure and a pearl of great price to me. The same is also true for what I struggle most in living out my religious vocation - community life. This article attempts to share my gifts of living in a religious community which brings me the joy to move forward with human authenticity along the journey to holiness.

My first gift is personal prayer. It is truly a gift because only God's grace has drawn me into himself – the person of Jesus Christ. I am blessed with the SPC's Christocentric spirituality. Thus, from the first day of formation we are directed to focus on the person of Jesus Christ, his teaching, way of life, and mission; in short, the Paschal Mystery.

My second gift is the sense of gratitude. Having the relationship with Jesus and the commitment to his calling as the centre of my life makes me happy, contented, and grateful to God and to people. In becoming who I am to this day, I own a deep gratitude to the congregation, community members, individuals, and the Australian District of the Sisters of St. Paul de Chartres. I honour their inspiring commitment and their best efforts to live out the call in a radical way.

My third is the gift of being actively involved in the service of others, witnessing, and accompanying the happiness of others through different ministries entrusted to me. The Lord has expanded my heart to love in a way that is beyond my imagination through countless encounters with Him through the people of God. I have had the chance to be involved in children's, youth, and adult ministry, as well as ministering people in Residential Aged Care. I am very grateful each day for not only receiving God's love and mercy but being able to share God's primary work to God's creatures – the work of love.

Finally, there are graces of intimacy with Mother Mary and the link with my own founder Fr. Louis Chauvet, our First Sisters, and the Sisters who have gone before me. Truly this is a gift, and a gift that I have asked for, since I saw the fruitful life of many who have great love for Mother Mary and a deep gratitude to those who have shared the same life in the past.

By Sr. Theresa Maria Dao, SPC.

These are all graces and mercy given to me for a greater purpose within God's plan. They came to me beyond my imagination or dream; it is something much bigger than myself which has embraced my whole being, and I unceasingly give thanks with a great desire to share it with others.

One thing that I need to remind myself of often is that my first vocation is being a human being made in God's image and my true identity as a beloved child of God. Thus, my journey as a consecrated person to the Almighty Loving Triune God is also a journey toward living out the gift of community as God's desire for my calling.

In a society which promotes individualism and freedom, to me, living fully the gift of religious community life, is a beautiful journey to holiness – a journey towards LOVE.

By Sr. Theresa Maria Dao, SPC.