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## FINDING CHRIST THROUGH BOOKS



**M**y name is Piermaria Kondo Rumiko. I am the daughter of a carpenter and I was born in Ehime Prefecture, located in the northeastern part of the island of Shikoku, Japan. My family observes the traditional faiths of my country. When I was born, my parents offered me at the Shintoist Temple, in keeping with the Japanese custom. As a child, I always paid a visit to the Temple on the first day of each new year. When I was small, I followed the faith of my grandmother, who was very devoted to the practices of Shintoism and Buddhism. She would pray to Buddha whenever she saw a statue of him and this helped me to nourish a deep love for God.

Because I loved to read, I would often visit bookstores. There I found an abundance of titles that offered me incentives for my life. One day I picked up a book by Carlo Hilty entitled *For Sleepless Nights*. The text was filled with biblical citations. Those verses gave me great consolation and so I began to read the Bible.

I came to realize that no matter what happened to me in life, Jesus would never abandon me. This conviction was confirmed when I read in the Gospel of John: "Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, and I will not reject anyone who comes to me" (Jn. 6:37).

Later, through the words of a popular Protestant hymn—"Master, every offering of love is costly and sweet"—I seemed to feel the call of Jesus. I began to attend a Protestant church and little by little a yearning grew within me to dedicate myself to the Lord for all my life. When I told my Pastor about this desire, he suggested that I contact the Catholic Church because Protestant Churches were not organized in a way geared to meet the needs of people who wanted to follow a life of special consecration.

One day I made the acquaintance of a woman who worked at the reception desk in a Catholic parish. Later on, this woman would become my godmother. I told her about my desire to become a religious and she offered me guidance and encouragement. After two years of catechetical instruction and formation, I received the sacrament of Baptism. I became a Catholic at the age of 24, following a period of personal difficulties and health problems.

My godmother had two friends who were Daughters of St. Paul and through them I came to know the beauty of the Pauline vocation. The life witness of those sisters helped me understand in what direction the Lord was pointing me. And so I entered this marvelous religious Family.

For me, Faith was a tremendous gift and my vocation to the religious life made my happiness complete. My parents did not understand this but they allowed me to enter the Congregation of the Daughters of St. Paul, which I did, and in 2012 I made my perpetual profession. I never felt the need to try to convert my parents because faith is a grace and I was sure that they believed in God, even though they worshiped him in a different way.

Today, my father is no longer alive. My only brother does not understand my choice to become a religious and the same is true of my mother but out of love for me they continue to support my vocation, saying that they hope I am happy in the consecrated life.

*Piermaria Kondo Rumiko, fsp*

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