

MY VOCATION



When I was small, I attended the Protestant Church. It was only a few years ago that I learned my family descends from the Korean martyrs. Two of them, the first Catholics in my family, were martyred in 1801. The baptismal name of one of them was Josaphat, who was 26 when

he died. He wrote a catechism entitled *Heaven and Hell*, but it was not possible to print it before he died. His cousin, Baeksoon, was also martyred, receiving the baptism of blood. But no one in my family after them continued to practice the Catholic Faith until one of my great-grandmothers converted to it.

When I was 15, my mother invited my younger brother and myself to join her in preparing to enter the Catholic Church. Out of the six children in my family, I am the fifth and my brother is the sixth. No one would have ever guessed that I would become a religious and my brother a religious priest. Together with our mother, we enthusiastically studied the catechism, relishing the teachings of the Gospel. The three of us were baptized during the Easter Vigil and thus became children of God. I recall that day vividly. Purified of sin and worthless thoughts, I felt as if I were flying to heaven. Even today, I continue to thank the Lord profoundly for the gift of my baptism—the greatest gift of my life.

By nature, I was not an optimistic person. I was very worried about the many evils in the world. Contemplating its many injustices and the sufferings of the innocent, I was not able to live with a joyful heart. I couldn't understand why the Lord permitted so much suffering. But in preparing for my baptism, I came to better understand the mercy of God and to realize that Baptism is truly a new birth. My heart completely changed and I started to trust God more and more.

After becoming a Catholic, I began to feel a powerful attraction to the religious life so I can say that my vocation was born at my baptism. Our pastors, who were missionaries from Paris, France, and the sisters of my parish, influenced my vocation by their holy lifestyles. They taught catechism lessons every day to the children of the parish. In the afternoons, after school, I too

would help out as a catechist. I began to play the organ to accompany the hymns at Mass. My pastor, who was a musician, bought a music book and encouraged me to use it. After school, I would drop by to pick it up.

One day, I found him with a postulant of the Daughters of St. Paul, who was home on vacation. He said: "This young woman wants to enter the convent." I began to correspond with this postulant and through her I got to know the Congregation. I often visited the FSP community in Seoul and spent some time with the aspirants. I studied with them and worked in the bindery. I was even asked to answer the phone at the reception desk. I liked the joyous and simple atmosphere of the community very much. I attended classes with the aspirants and I still remember one of the lessons on Christian spirituality. The priest who taught the class asked: "What does it mean to live in grace?" One of the students replied that it means the Holy Trinity lives in us. These words struck me deeply and they often echo in my heart.

When I would return home after living for a few days with the aspirants, I would read many books, especially the lives of the saints. I also made an hour of Eucharistic adoration every day and went to confession every two weeks. My pastor was a special help in guiding me toward the religious life.

I would like to mention two Daughters of St. Paul who made a great impact on my Pauline life: Sr. Eulalia D'Ettore, who was my novice mistress, and Sr. Sara Schena, who was the mistress of my course of preparation for perpetual profession. Both these sisters loved me and had a lot of faith in me. They helped prepare me to carry out the role of novice mistress and I am deeply grateful for everything they communicated to me.

I felt inadequate and fearful about serving as novice mistress because I thought I was too young for the job. But Sr. Maria Cevolani, who was Superior General at that time, told me that the "defect" of being young would resolve itself effortlessly!

I thank God for my Pauline vocation and strive to live it as an immense and sublime gift. Having taken the name of the missionary Francis Xavier and studied missiology, I felt the call to be a missionary. God answered this yearning too because I was asked to accept an assignment to our Generalate community in Italy. I now work in the Congregation's General Archives, which preserve and maintain the history of our Institute. I praise the Lord for everything!

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