Columns
Spirituality
Religious Life



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Using the analogy of human love and human experience to explain passion for God entails paying attention to simple little things. The passionate religious must emulate the saints in their passion for Jesus. St. Therese of the Child Jesus affirmed that her vocation was "love," which meant doing ordinary things in an extraordinary way in her life. Every action of a religious woman needs to be performed with extraordinary passion with the intention of being united with Christ.

I was thinking about this in the context of making a difference. A religious woman making a difference is reflected in the advice Jesus gave to his disciples in Matthew 5:20: "If your virtue does not go deeper than that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven." Another version says: "Except your righteousness shall exceed or surpasses the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." I asked myself a fundamental question: Who are the scribes and Pharisees of today?

In our world today, some scribes and Pharisees can be compared to religious people who are enlightened and exposed to the teachings of Christ. They fast and pray, they know the laws and they keep them. But that is not enough.

One might think that the theologians, priests and women religious are supposed to know God more than other people. Women religious live close to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Their daily adoration gives them plenty of opportunity to reflect about God, and they celebrate the Holy Eucharist every day of their lives. What, then, is the Lord saying to us?

I imagine he is asking us to do more. It is not enough to perform all the daily routines and think that is enough. Of course, we should do all the daily routines with love and passion:

- morning offering;
- morning shower;
- dressing;
- prayers;
- eucharistic celebration;
- active participation and singing at Mass;
- eating meals and washing up;
- doing one's duties;
- studying;

- singing practice;
- cleaning the compound;
- handling community property;
- doing one's ministries; and
- walking.

What the Lord expects from scribes and Pharisees and invariably from us women religious is to make a difference in our ordinary duties by passionately going one step further: by doing them with extraordinary love, attention, dedication, commitment and wholehearted humility.

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In a film I watched many years ago, I saw a concrete and practical example of how passion can be translated into great success. It continues to make a deep impression on me every time I think about the characters and the message. It was a 2008 film, "Center Stage: Turn It Up," directed by Steven Jacobson, about teenage dancers Tommy, Kate and Suzanne, who are auditioning for a ballet academy.

Kate was from a poor family but was filled with passion; she had learned how to dance by watching videos of professional dancers. Suzanne was from a rich family and was put in a dancing academy at the age of 3. Kate used her passion to defeat Suzanne, who was an expert dancer but with little passion, in a final audition.

In the way I remember one scene, a ballet teacher told Tommy: "Dancing is about connection —connection with the partner and with the audience. But far beyond that, there is something you need that you may not get in the classroom. You might have to search outside the box ... you need fire or passion to be successful and to excel among many others."

I understood this as looking for something or someone that excites you and making it yours. Be creative, and you will see the difference. Tommy saw how Kate used her passion, and it helped him to discover excellence.

A friend of mine was taught by another colleague how to make pastries and cakes. She learned fast and could soon make them better than her teacher. She became an expert without going to school. She was committed to learning more: studying, researching on the internet, and using various ways to improve her skills. And Albert

Einstein demonstrated the importance of passion when he said, "I have no special talents. I am only passionately curious."

Sometimes, women religious can make one another lose their passion by creating unnecessary stress for one another, perhaps in punishing an individual action. Of course, there are ways to correct and encourage one another to grow without killing their passion.

We must make every effort to love one another passionately in such a way as to save the life and the soul of every member. We can do this by guiding and correcting their faults with passionate love as Jesus would do — with the objective of helping them grow in the love of Christ.