Columns
Horizons
Religious Life



Sr. Sujata Jena in July 2019 with elementary children in the "Glass of Milk" program coordinated by the Sacred Heart Sisters, Bagong Silang, Philippines (Courtesy of Sujata Jena)



by Sujata Jena

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

September 3, 2021

Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

My vocation to religious life comes along with an abundance of God's unconditional love and blessings.

As a religious, much has been given to me. I am blessed with the best health, affluence, knowledge, education, talents, skills, the luxury of time, and the like.

And the best of all is that I get to meet, know and be part of the life of very many people. They are rich/poor, young/old, slum/urban dwellers, Christians/non-Christians, and people of diverse culture, philosophy and worldview. Hundreds of rural families welcome, protect and treat me kindly — families who do not easily welcome politicians and or other significant officers.

I can contact appropriate spiritual guides, mentors and friends freely, and nurture my faith and life.

And today, India is suffering the world's worst COVID-19 crisis. Thousands have lost their lives. Many are still struggling between life and death. So many cannot find a way out of their health nightmare.

I had the virus, too — but I had it easy. I didn't have to go through hospitalization, oxygen, ventilators. I survived. And it was, comparatively, an easy process.

Millions have faced and continue to face the hardships of starvation, joblessness, homelessness, loss of loved ones, and hopelessness during the pandemic. I have been well-protected in the convent. And I am given every opportunity to stay away from these hardships.

But do I deserve these? Have I taken God's love for granted? Am I doing so little in return? Do I enjoy these privileges at the cost of others?

Advertisement

Do I truly follow the purpose of my vocation in how I reach out to the poor, hungry, homeless, women, children, Dalits, tribal, the needy for whom Jesus always took a stand?

Jesus said to his disciples, "To whom much is given, much will be required" (Luke 12:48). These words of Jesus hit me strongly at one point in my life and helped me reinvent myself.

That experience required me to shift my focus from myself and reach out to the needy with love, patience, compassion and recognition. It felt like gradually coming out of a cocoon.

Each step of the process was initially scary. I kept wanting to go back in, instead of breaking free to be a beautiful butterfly. I eventually enjoyed every bit of my time spent with and sharing life with these, God's beloved people.

I learned to foster my gift of patience, understanding, listening, caring and taking an interest in people — their stories of joys and struggles. It has helped me to build a relationship with different people from all walks of life. It is a sublime and another unmerited gift from Christ in following him exclusively.

In the end, I learned to spend time doing things that bring me more joy and that give me more of a sense of purpose, meaning and commitment. Already a smile touches my face as I see clearly how beautiful it is to share the gift of my life and live in communion with others, especially with the poor and vulnerable ones whom God is calling me to care for.



Sacred Hearts Sr. Sujata Jena, center, wearing white salwar, with the participants at a seminar on migrants Feb. 26, organized by the Commission for Migrants of the Archdiocese of Calcutta, India. (Courtesy of Sujata Jena)

I have so much to be thankful for, and I thank God every day and every night. As Mary's heart overflowed with gratitude at the realization of all her blessings, so is mine overflowing for the unmerited blessings received in the religious life. In jubilation, I wish to share my Magnificat in an expression of gratitude, joyfulness and thanksgiving.

Dark and gloom was the comfort zone

The womb of mother the living tomb

When your spark hit me strong

While in I evade your mighty sight.

First child, a baby girl or boy, special to all

But 5th, a burdensome or just a number

Yet what surprise, 7th September, the cry of a child

A joy to be called "Luckiest of all".

A humble yet spiritual ambiance

Blessing in virtuous growth

Village of faith and simple devotion

Completed in family prayer and charity.

No extraordinary intelligence neither commitment

A village girl in every sense in wonderland — but

You plucked out and planted in another land

In Sacred Hearts Community

To catch a glimpse of your call for humanity

To fulfilling your mission through the congregation.

When held on to your hand trustingly

As get more familiarized with the world

Success, happiness and comfort filled the cup

Deep into your own, blessings taken for granted

Joy hit the peak, pleasure overwhelmed

Your Spirit bothering the apparent peace and laxity

The Spirit piercing once again

This time deep and hard, at the right time and spot

Freezing every move, chocking the breath

To a point of total collapse, like stillborn

But fresh and new grace ascending

Wash my eye clean as a newborn babe

The boat now ready with your grace to sail to unknown

With sublime resonance enthralling the heart.

I trust in you lord Jesus!