Columns
Ministry



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"Whom shall I send; who will go for us?" (Isaiah 6:8). These words of the prophet Isaiah inspired me to become a religious in the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, to live for Christ and his people.

To become a beautiful and perfect statue, the stone has to allow itself to undergo a sacrificial process undertaken by a sculptor (master). By humbly submitting itself to the hands of the master, it becomes a beautiful, admirable and charming statue in the eyes of people.

Similarly, I surrendered myself to journey through challenges, experiences and different perspectives, and followed my conscience down the path toward becoming a missionary in 2019 in Ghana, West Africa.

During my novitiate program in India, South Asia, I gained a greater insight into the scope of our international missionary vocation. Just like anybody else, I had unwarranted views, anxieties, fears, and worries that made me hesitant about traveling to faraway countries.

Though there were mixed feelings and even some negative emotions dominating my inner self, I concealed the internal battles and pretended to be happy in the sight of others. But the Bible verse "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation" (Mark 16:15) echoed in my heart. This made me remain firm in my vocation and my determination to sustain it, no matter what happens, with God's grace, power and strength.

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Leaving their families, homeland and friends, the founder of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, Mary of the Passion (now Blessed) — and her companions came to India, my home country, as missionaries, just as they had traveled to other parts of the world to uplift the poor and marginalized in society.

Despite many hardships, they tried to be cheerful and patient, and willingly sacrificed their most precious lives for the glory of God. Undeniably, this encouraged me to meet unknown people of another continent, regardless of color, culture, tribe, race and language.

Our foundress always said, "The whole world is my homeland" and, "The people are waiting everywhere." Therefore, our community pledges to stretch our helping hands to any part of the world at all times.

In the beginning, the missionary experience in Ghana wasn't easy for me. I wanted to return to my motherland. Life had given me the best of everything until I reached Ghana. At home I was privileged with easily accessible amenities like medical facilities, food and water. But here in Ghana, I had to face the polar opposite of what I was used to back in India.

Besides, I was shocked to see a land where people struggled to access their basic needs. Although I was aware that such extreme situations exist in some parts of India, I had not encountered them. So, I made up my mind to be happy and to live my life with courage, optimism and effort for as long as I am in the land of my mission.

The mind is a powerful tool. It can do wonderful things if we feed it with positivity. As such, my mind brought tremendous changes within me by the grace of God. All my confusion, questions, anxieties and fears had yielded good results in my mission country Ghana after all.

Although I began my service ardently, with a certain style and joy, I completely lost my confidence as COVID-19 permeated the whole world and increased the distance between people.

During this ongoing pandemic, I became restless as the world came to a halt. Ghana faced a severe crisis during these unprecedented times. All the schools, organizations, churches, and borders were closed until further notice. I thought that my spirit would soon perish as I couldn't actively engage myself in any beneficial service to the people of Ghana.

As a manifestation of the proverb, "A friend in need is a friend indeed," Sr. Hilda, an Indian missionary in Peru, and other friends encouraged me to write articles, make greeting cards and edit videos conveying the word of God. Their emotional support and guidance rekindled my spirit and encouraged me to do many other things such as spending a lot of time praying for the world and its people, gardening, taking on writing projects and making rosaries.

One of my other adversities as a missionary was adapting to the local food, language and material needs in this foreign land. These are the biggest hurdles I have faced in life! The local cuisine is entirely different from the foods prevalent in my motherland. But I put this discomfort at the back of my mind. "We eat to live, but do not live to eat." I reflected on this bit of wisdom while eating whatever was offered to me, and learned to adjust to the local food and culture of the place.

Languages never become a barrier when we desire to do God's work. However, since I was not a linguist, I used to fear that my mission would be a complete failure if I didn't know the local language. Though English is the official language of Ghana, one needs to be well-versed in the local languages to communicate with people. But I felt that my presence made a noticeable difference to people, even when I was unable to communicate with them.

Sometimes, I occupied myself by crafting some artwork during my leisure time. Small issues — like the unavailability of materials — didn’t restrict the bounds of my creativity. The most important message that I valued during my rough journey was that if we find the ways to be satisfied, we will be happy in any situation in the holy presence of Jesus.

Over time, I have acclimatized myself to the local food, language, culture and people in Ghana. I told myself — for the sake of mission — all adversities, inconvenience and insecurities of life are to be entrusted to God and faced with faith. And by the power of God, I was strengthened to adjust, adapt and integrate into this new environment.

Above all I took comfort in the message of Jesus and the words of Blessed Mary of the Passion, which created in me the ability to go anywhere at any time — to be a missionary!

Being a valiant missionary is to go unknown people and lands. It entails walking alone, serving unknown people, often poor and needy. But with Jesus I am able to love others without reward. With Jesus, I can give peace and joy to one and all.