News
Q&As



Sr. Mary Rina Magdeline Cruze looks after patients at Kumudini Hospital in Tangail, Bangladesh, in March. (Sumon Corraya)



by Sumon Corraya

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Bangladeshi Sr. Mary Rina Magdeline Cruze, a member of the Associates of Mary Queen of the Apostles, has received the Mahatma Gandhi Peace Award 2022 from the South Asia Social Cultural Forum for her special contribution to the field of education in India.

The 62-year-old nun has served as principal of Kumudini Nursing College, a private nursing school in Tangail, since 1997. Before that, she worked as the college's matron from 1992 to 1996.

Cruze discovered her religious vocation when she was a student at a hostel run by nuns, whose behavior and holy life attracted her. Her mother also had a deep devotion to Mary.

She is the only nun who works as a principal for a non-Christian organization that produces hundreds of skilled nurses each year. Besides providing nursing training, she also spreads the values of Jesus Christ at her workplace, where 99% people are not Christian.

She said the nursing profession in Bangladesh has a huge opportunity to spread the Gospel. Many former students do well at their workplaces, and although previously women only came into the nursing profession, now, many men also come into this occupation.



Sr. Mary Rina Magdeline Cruze poses in front of a sculpture of R.P. Shaha, the Hindu founder of Kumudini Nursing College, in March. (Sumon Corraya)

"If anybody becomes a nurse, they can support themselves, they can support their parents and their father-in-law's family as they financially become rich," she told Global Sisters Report.

As a Catholic nun, she also faces various challenges, but she overcomes these with support of her workplace authority.

***GSR*: How are Catholic nuns involved with Kumudini Nursing College?**

Cruze: Kumudini Nursing College is a sister concern of Kumudini Welfare Trust. Its founder, R.P. Shaha, a Hindu who was born poor, became very wealthy through his business ventures only to give away all his wealth voluntarily.

Mr. Shaha and his only son were abducted by the Pakistan army in 1971 during the liberation war. They never returned. At that time, Mr. Shaha's wife and other relatives took shelter in Bottomley Home Orphanage run by our congregation. The wife of the late Shaha offered to serve in the Kumudini Nursing College as principal and their hospital as matron. Since then, Catholic nuns have served there.

Since 1992, I have been at Kumudini Nursing College. Although they are Hindu and I am Christian, I get immense support from them. I can work here independently, and I enjoy my work.

As a Catholic nun, how do you give your witness to people of other faiths in this Muslim-majority country, where Christians only make up less than 1% of the population?

I do my work properly with integrity as a principal. I don't do any cheating at my workplace. As the holy Bible has said, love each other and ensure justice.

This campus has a hospital and nursing institute with over 1,000 staff members. Many of them work under me. If there are any mistakes, I correct them, and they become happy.



Sr. Mary Rina Magdeline Cruze prays in the chapel on the Kumudini Nursing Institute premises in Tangail, Bangladesh. (Sumon Corraya)

I wear the cross of Jesus Christ. People realize that I am a person of Jesus Christ by seeing my work and cross. Sometimes, it is the first time a person has seen a Christian, and they ask, "Why do you wear this cross?"

I answer them: "I am a person of Jesus Christ." By my good lifestyle, honesty, integrity and forgiveness, I become a sign to them as a Christian and a nun.

Additionally, by my words, behavior and work, I preach the teachings of Jesus Christ. Sometimes, girls at the school don't want to follow the rules and regulations of the Kumudini Nursing College, and I counsel them so that they can understand that I love them from my heart.

I teach girls that abortion is a sin. I advise them that a child is a gift of almighty God, and you shouldn't kill them — we will support and take care of the child. People hear us. Many such children now have grown up and are adults, and I feel joy when I see

them. We support such vulnerable parents and mothers to bring their children into this world.

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How many students each year complete their study from this nursing institute, and where do they work after they graduate?

Each year from this nursing institute, a total of 250 students complete their diplomas and enter working life. Some students go abroad for higher education after graduation. Our former students easily obtain jobs and do well at their workplaces.

Girls of Kumudini Nursing College are in demand. They grow with morality and discipline. Hospital directors call me and say before our students pass their final examinations that they need nurses. They say, "Please give your students to our hospital, as they are skilled and honest." It makes me really happy.

In Dhaka, some noted hospitals such as Square Hospitals, United Hospital, Samorita Hospital, and Ispahani Islamia Eye Institute and Hospital have started taking our nurses. And many of them are now working in many hospitals as matrons.



The entrance of Kumudini Hospital in Tangail, Bangladesh, the home of Kumudini Nursing College (Sumon Corraya)

Our students give witness as they learn from us. One day, in a meeting that took place in a government office with health workers and nurses, the meeting room had dust on the chairs and tables. Participants wouldn't sit there.

One of our former students also went, and she found a duster and cleaned the dust from tables and chairs. A government official admired that nurse and asked, "Where are you from?"

She replied, "I am from Kumudini Nursing College." This story was shared by that government officer with me, and I became very happy.

Thousands of our former students work in government and nongovernment hospitals with courage. Runu Veronica Costa, a Catholic, is a former nurse of ours who received the first COVID-19 vaccine in Bangladesh in 2021. At that time, Costa was praised by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for her courage.



Sr. Mary Rina Magdeline Cruze with awards she has won, including the Mahatma Gandhi Peace Award 2022, in her office in Kumudini Nursing College in March in Tangail, Bangladesh (Sumon Corraya)

Please tell us about the Mahatma Gandhi Peace Award 2022 that you received.

When I heard about the award via letter, at first, I couldn't believe it. I thought it was fake. Later, they called me over the phone from India and again sent me the award letter, and I felt happy.

I didn't go to India to receive the award, but they sent it here, and I got it on Jan. 8. By receiving this award, my students and I have been inspired. Our hospital and nursing institute authority arranged a reception for me for my achievement.

Please share about your prayer life.

Although it is not a nuns' convent, 14 nuns live on the premises of Kumudini Nursing College. We all join morning prayer and evening prayer. We also pray the rosary with our 350 Christian students.



Nuns pose for a photo at Kumudini Nursing College. Fourteen nuns stay at the college: Two are staff members and 12 students. (Sumon Corraya)

Each Sunday, a Catholic priest comes to celebrate Mass. I love spending time with God in prayer, and I encourage others to do the same. Honestly speaking, prayer is power for me in this consecrated life. When I get time, I pray to Jesus Christ.

What kinds of challenges do you face as a nun, and how do you overcome these?

As the head of a nursing institute, naturally, I face many challenges and setbacks. One day, a student tried to commit suicide by setting her body on fire. Other students rescued her and brought her to the hospital. Later, the student told police that she had set herself on fire because of a family problem, and she later died during treatment. As the principal, at that time, I faced the police.

One student lied to her boyfriend and told him she needed 200,000 taka [$1,878] for tuition fees. After they broke up, her boyfriend filed a lawsuit against me. He demanded money from me. I brought it to my nursing institute authority, and our legal officer solved the issue. I get immense support from our authority when I face a problem.



Sr. Mary Rina Magdeline Cruze works at her office in Kumudini Nursing College in March in Tangail, Bangladesh. (Sumon Corraya)

Do you want to say anything else?

Nurses can lead their lives with honor in our society. By this profession, they become self-supported and can support their parents and their in-laws. In this country, people can easily get a government job if they finish nursing courses.

Nuns also benefit from this nursing institute. Twelve nuns from different congregations are taking nursing training, and they will serve later at their congregations' health centers. Over 50 nuns have received nursing training from this institute and now serve people of all faiths as signs of God.

We are thankful to this organization. Each day, I get many calls, as we provide free nursing education. I handle them aptly. I see a world where all people will live with dignity and hope.