Voices of Sisters
Ministry
Spirituality



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"Bloom where you are planted" is a much-used and still relevant saying in my religious life. I think the lives of many saints of the Catholic Church illustrate this quote. Undoubtedly, they were venerable and attained holiness. It is not easy to live the quote, but there is hope in the gradual practice that leads to "fully blooming" life.

Here, I would like to share about my religious experiences, which helped me to bloom entirely for God. When I joined the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, I was full of vigor, zeal and zest to work in the vineyard of the Lord, my Master.

I underwent all the training to form myself spiritually, pastorally, socially and emotionally, trusting that God had a plan for me. And I feel sure that each step of my life has been a milestone to shape and mold me.



Sujitha Sudarvizhi Jeyapaul (Courtesy of Sujitha Sudarvizhi Jeyapaul)

Whenever I was assigned to a new ministry in my life, I presumed that I was not fully ready to work among His people, not knowing that He was preparing me and shaping me for the future. But I have boosted my spirits with positive thinking to keep my flame burning continuously for the glory of God.

Among all our three vows, I think obedience may be the most significant for leading to the blossoming of our lives and mission as religious. Unlike some others, I came to Ghana, West Africa, in 2019, out of obedience to my superiors.

"Experience is the best teacher" is true in my life also. The experiences I have had in Ghana have been beautiful and awesome. It is not as important how many people you transformed or reached out to, but how much transformation took place within yourself that is important — because God is the author of life. He directs and animates us whenever we surrender and open ourselves fully to Him.

Ghana has taught me how to adjust, adapt, and accept diversities of nations, cultures, food and people. It has taught me how to be fruitful in every minute of my life.

I have learned to create my happiness in any environment, though my experience in Ghana. I can now say that it is not easy to be a missionary in an unknown land, but by the grace of God, with a conviction and love for Christ everything is possible.

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I am currently in Christ the King community, Jirapa, in the Upper West of Ghana. I am assigned to St. Francis Girls' Senior High School to assist in the library, teach information communication technology and catechism, and to do sacristy work in the school and community. These ministries help me to realize my hidden potential — how best I can contribute my energy, creativity and communication towards the mission.

There is a search that began within me, which motivates me to empty myself exclusively for the mission. The more I empty myself, the more possibilities open up exponentially within me.

Challenging situations draw us closer to God, strengthening and deepening our relationship with God, the Creator. Thus, my experiences have enabled me to travel deep within and get in touch with my inner voice.

The words of St. Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9), give me enormous joy in my ministry here.

The facility that I had enjoyed in my ministry, the relationships that I cherished, and my comforts were not easy for me to give up at first. Despite challenges, I grabbed every opportunity to learn about this nation and people. Gradually, the mission widened my heart and mind and helped me adjust with hope and optimism.



A group photo includes some of the people that the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary Sisters work with in Ghana (Courtesy of Sujitha Sudarvizhi Jeyapaul)

Blooming is not easy in difficult times, but my fidelity and love for Christ allow me to bloom where I am planted. Each time I feel low, the words of my foundress Blessed Mary of the Passion come to my mind. "I will not change in the darkest hour the decision that I took in the full light."

She was a great missionary who underwent a lot of hardships in life. I was also encouraged and inspired to be a missionary by the generosity, sacrificial life, enthusiasm, and love for Christ of Blessed Maria Assunta, the seven martyrs, and above all our seraphic Father St. Francis.

Saints were never born as saints, but they did ordinary things extraordinarily, and did them for the greater glory of God. It was their choice and decision to respond to God's grace and power. Reading and reflecting on the lives and works of saints, I am reminded of a quote attributed to Michael P. Watson: "We did not get to choose where life planted us. It is our choice, however, how well we bloom."

I also remember that every flower that ever bloomed had to contend with a number of things: soil, climate, water, manure, humans and animals.

We have to convert all our challenges into opportunities — as the tree gives fruit to those who throw stones at it, as the tree gives shade to the goats and cows who tried to eat it while it grew. As religious, we should neither mourn nor murmur about our ministry. To enjoy the religious life we should always keep in mind the quote "bloom where you are planted" and take advantage of the opportunities amid all their trials and tribulations:

My search began in Ghana

My thirst for God is immeasurable

My enthusiasm is to serve people around me creatively and generously

My wisdom and knowledge is being shared with others

My spirit leads me to break myself from within saying "*empty totally.*"

On the whole, I am happy with the place that I am assigned to be a missionary. That was where I began to bloom. The secret of this blooming is not in doing it alone, but integrating myself with God and emulating Him in my life — with the support and contribution of others in mission — bringing glory and praise to God through my humble missionary work to the people I love most.