Voices of Sisters

Arts and Media

Sr. Tessy Jacob (third from right), vice president of the Indian Catholic Press Association, is shown with the organization's national executive team. (Courtesy of Tessy Jacob)

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***Editor's note**: Global Sisters Report, the dynamic online community that reports on and gives voice to Catholic women religious around the world, is celebrating its 10th anniversary this year. Join us as we take another look at stories and columns published in 2014 with new updates and reporting.*

The university campus where I am currently studying has Mass every evening. One day after Mass, as I was spending some time in prayer, one of the students charged in, took a chair next to me and, leaning on my shoulder, began to narrate the awful situation she was undergoing. She is an undergrad student who is facing typical teenage issues. All I needed to do was lend her an ear while she spilled her troubles and worries. Occasionally, I would offer some thoughts or insights. At one point, she declared, "I have the extremes of my problems, and you have the right string to join them together. How do you get all this wisdom?" That was my eureka moment!

In 2015, I wrote my first column for GSR, titled "It's a joy to be a young Catholic nun in India." Nearly a decade later, when I was invited to reflect on my experience with GSR, it took me down memory lane, tracing my journey from an amateur journalist to developing expertise in the field. When I wrote my first column, I was throbbing with energy and a profound sense of getting hands-on experience with a professional pursuit rarely undertaken by a religious sister. Every byline mattered a lot to me, and there were people who entrusted and encouraged me to write often. Although I dreamt of becoming a beat reporter for some mainstream print publication, I found my mission in writing for and about the news within my religious circle. While a "nose for news" is the famed tagline for a journalist, my writings were not revolutionary in nature; rather, they came from the concept of "nose for news"

— finding the extraordinary in the ordinary.

I am well aware that the thoughts that manifest as words and information can strongly impact readers. Back in journalism class in my college days, media theories and models of communications were mere points for examination. Over the years, I have realized that they are the flesh and blood of media content, which validates its authenticity.

Sr. Tessy Jacob has been writing columns for Global Sisters Report since 2015. (Courtesy of Tessy Jacob)

I belong to that school of thought that believes that "the pen is mightier than the sword." Until a decade ago, when social media was yet to consume our logical

reasoning with junk information, we relied on every bit of information from various sources. The digital explosion did not occur in every country at the same time, marking a significant gap between digital immigrants and digital natives, particularly evident in India. This divide creates the danger of fake media consumption and social media addiction. There is a prevalent notion that "seeing is believing," and unfortunately, we encounter countless written and unwritten media texts on our nano screens, and often, we believe them uncritically. Irrespective of personal and professional status, no one is immune to fake media content. We have to maneuver through this mess unless we decide to unplug.

Reading is a choice, but writing is a responsibility. In the world of information overload, social media and AI, we need authentic and reputed platforms dedicated to sharing the real-life stories of working for Christ.

In my time writing for Global Sisters Report, I have learned that it's a great platform totally dedicated to recognizing the ministries of sisters around the globe. It provides a space for sisters to explore the art of storytelling. Storytelling, a unique genre of journalism, grabs the reader's attention while emotionally connecting with the protagonist of the story. The stories that appear in GSR have given life to stories of service that would otherwise go unnoticed.

The world needs to know the invaluable contribution of religious men and women. We live in a post-truth era, where the concept of truth becomes subjective and elusive. This phenomenon also causes the gradual erosion of the mission mandate of the risen Christ: "Go all over the world and proclaim the good news to every nation." Additionally, the sociopolitical circumstances in many countries often do not favor explicit visibility of our presence in society.

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However, we must not allow history to remember us solely as managers of institutions. Instead, we aspire to be recognized as co-architects of the modern world. Throughout history, the church has produced great scientists, physicists, scholars, physicians, communicators, anthropologists and philanthropists, many of whom come from religious orders. Every nation wants to rewrite its history, but without our presence etched on various platforms, future generations may not know the meaning of our existence.

In the spirit of humility and dedication to God’s mission, many of my fellow sisters may overlook the opportunity to share with the world the unique entrepreneurial spirit we apply in making the world a better place. Through stories featured in GSR, we have discovered many people like Mother Teresa, Father Damien, Teresa of Avila and many more. We live in a connected society where networking brings us closer to each other's knowledge. The knowledge we share becomes a valuable currency which can be invested by others facing a similar situation.

My eureka moment with the young girl I was advising was not an instant revelation; it came through a long process of growth. While she considered my advice "wise," I knew it didn't arise out of thin air. My experiences growing up as a "young Catholic nun in India" resonated with hers. I am grateful that GSR has provided me with the opportunity to write frequently, a gift I could have hardly used otherwise. Thank you, GSR, for not only encouraging my writing, but also giving me the opportunity and platform to share about my life as a young Catholic nun.

This story appears in the **GSR at 10 Years** feature series. View the full series.