Voices of Sisters
Spirituality



"Christ Healing the Blindman," a ca. 1725–30 American oil painting by Gerardus Duyckinck (Metropolitan Museum of Art)



by Sr. Maria Luisa Mesina

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

August 10, 2026

Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

This is my story of faith, which I have always considered life-defining. I was like a "sleeping beauty" during my first 16 years of life. I belonged to a Catholic family, and my parents instilled in my siblings and me the obligation to attend Sunday Mass. However, that was all. Faith in God was not something that gave me a reason to live until I finished secondary school.

I was 17 when I first met the missionaries of the Verbum Dei Missionary Fraternity. I was fascinated by the way they talked about God as someone very personal to them and with whom they could have a close, familiar relationship. They presented God as their friend, reason and strength behind their missionary self-giving. Their testimony awakened in me a deep desire to know God, and I started reading books about how to pray as well as liturgical commentaries.

I also listened to preaching about God. Little by little, I understood that faith was a relationship with a personal God, whose face and life was the person of Jesus Christ! Jesus became my friend, and this is the most beautiful event that has happened to me.

I experienced that Jesus gave his life for me as his friend, and I was worthy of his life. "The greatest love you can have for your friends is to give your life for them" (John 15:13). His friendship became my greatest source of love, joy, acceptance and encouragement.

The day I left it all behind — my family, my very promising career, my friends — to follow Jesus radically and dedicate myself exclusively to prayer, testimony of life and ministry of the word was an experience of trust and love for Jesus. The suffering within me after seeing my mother crying with so much pain and my father in deep sadness upon leaving them was insurmountable alone. It was not easy for them to accept my decision to follow Jesus, and it takes so much trust to answer the call, believing in God's plan, his call and his ways. Therefore, faith became my answer to his call to love him above all else.

I grew more when I went with the missionaries on house visits on the peripheries of Manila, like in the Smokey Mountain in Tondo. It was a shocking experience for me to have close contact with many families in poverty. A pervasive smell made me feel nauseated, and I thought I would not make it. In one small space, you could find the kitchen, sala, bed, dining table, and their things piled up or hidden behind the curtains, and there was no privacy. They struggled to provide enough food, money

or basic necessities. Many parents had low levels of education and could not afford to send their children to receive higher education, so their children were forced to work.

Compassion and pity filled my heart, but at the same time, I felt gratitude for their beautiful attitudes, as they were very welcoming, friendly and smiling. I learned to welcome them into my life by talking to them, showing interest in their lives and treating them as people for whom Jesus has given his life. During these visits, I came to understand that God was not indifferent to them and was deeply involved in their lives. God was also widening my heart and making me a sister to them.

Advertisement

They welcomed me into their small houses with shyness. I could not imagine how hundreds of people were living on a dumpsite and making their living from scavenging through mountains of garbage. They would search for plastics, metals and bottles, which they would later sell. Some of them said they would prefer to be called garbage pickers rather than suffer from hunger.

Visiting and talking to them was only a tiny gesture that alleviated their struggles and suffering, but their stories of helplessness and of not finding a way out from the dumpsite immensely fueled my passion for an evangelization that transforms human hearts and humanizes people; that awakens and moves people from indifference of injustices and struggles of many poor people searching for a better life and a more fraternal society; that makes others respect the rights and dignity of every human being as a child of God.

At this stage, others have become like my brothers and sisters, and I have become a sister to them. God has transformed me to enter the profound mystery of the human heart, where the boundaries of blood and birth melt away to reveal a larger, divinely woven family. We live out our faith in the loving God and are no longer strangers walking parallel paths, but kin traveling home together.

God has opened my heart to my brothers and sisters and not only as a matter of personal spiritual growth. This journey means taking others' sufferings, struggles and needs as my own. I also journey with them in their growth, in their knowledge of God and in living out the Gospel. Many times, I have asked myself how I could make

a difference in the world, and I found the answer in committing myself to others through this transformative evangelization.

Believing, following and living out God's ways has been a journey of traveling into the unseen and the unknown of new cultures, languages, contexts and even of being thousands of miles from the Philippines. I have traveled deeper into ways of loving, going beyond comfort, forgetting myself, crying with people who suffer, rejoicing with others' successes, consoling, and accompanying people in their realities, bringing people to know Jesus more closely. This is a journey of being at the service of my fellow missionaries, in their formation and in living out our mission.

There are times when I have been like Bartimaeus, who asked Jesus, "Let me see again." There are times when my weaknesses have made me feel that I don't see, and I don't know how to love and give more of myself. There, Jesus is like a transformative reservoir waiting only to be tapped. Jesus is there to send me again: "Go, for your faith has healed you."

In this journey, God has patiently interwoven his unconditional love and merciful love with all that I am and have, my past, present and future.

What is your story of faith in the Lord? No matter how slow or fast your journey is, believe and rejoice in what the Lord has done in your life! Your story of faith is a treasure to be cherished and shared, too.