

My Vocation Story

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Have you ever stood in the middle of a street with a tank and a battalion of soldiers on one side and angry protesters on the other, both of whom are ready for an encounter? Or watched at sneezing distance as a young girl who was supposedly being possessed tried but almost successfully freed from the grasp of four big men? Or walked kilometers to see and interview members of a tribal minority? As a reporter for a government-owned news wire, I did. It was never easy chasing news and people in the news day after day, but it was a job I really enjoyed and loved. All of these were fine for me until I covered an event that, like the snap of a finger in front of me, roused me from my sleep. That event was when the body of Fr. Roel Gallardo was brought home to his town in Castillejos in Zambales. Fr. Gallardo, along with other people, was held hostage by rebels in Basilan. He was eventually tortured and killed. We reporters have followed the story from the time Fr. Gallardo was kidnapped and now, as I stood along the side of the road and later before his coffin, I asked myself, "What am I doing here? This priest, although he died, was happy because he followed his heart. I who have been called, and I was sure of it, postponed my entering the convent." Two years ago at that time, on a New Year's Day, I met Sr. Teresa Gabriel, a Sister of St. Paul of Chartres, in our neighborhood. She was visiting her sister and she learned from one of our neighbors I have always wanted to be a nun. So she went to our house and she brought me to the Our Lady of Chartres Convent in Antipolo the next day to be interviewed by Sr. Consuelo Cells, then Vocation Promoter. Everything happened so fast, I had my discernment but I was really resisting because of my own fears, and wanting to have both worlds, the love of men and the love of God, I did not enter that August.

Since I was in Grade 1, in my hometown in Tarlac, when Sr. Flora entered our class and everybody suddenly seemed silent because of amazement, I have wanted to be a nun. It was peace and joy I saw on her face. Ever since, I joined the only two religious clubs we had in school — Little Missionaries and Marian Crusaders. In College, I was no longer under the protection of the nuns, but God further led me to him as I started attending the daily mass. When I was already working, I enjoyed going from house to house as a Legionary looking for unmarried couples, children yet to be baptized and confirmed to assist them in receiving the sacraments. Every night, my family would gather in front of the small altar in our home and pray the rosary. My parents were good people; they were good examples to me and my siblings. Most of all, God is good, he has helped me every single day to be know his call in my heart. After covering the "coming home" of Fr. Roel, I finally made my decision to enter. My parents were supportive of me, and so were all my friends and even my boss. Through the grace of God, I was happy and peaceful with my decision. During the first few months in the Aspirancy, however, there were moments when I missed home, like during the birthday of one of my brothers. And one early morning, when I had to wake up at 4:00 a.m. to do the marketing, I asked myself again, "Is this really the life for me?" My answer was "yes," and I have not taken back that word. Now that I have embraced the life of a Sister of St. Paul of Chartres, I feel blessed, especially after knowing that our Congregation was founded to serve the poor by caring for the sick and teaching the ignorant. Were it not for my childhood dream of entering the convent, Sr. Consuelo's constant communication, and God's patience, I would still be chasing after news stories and not be in the arms of Jesus, my true love as I am now.