

## Sally, Ex-Catholic, Philippines



I was brought up in a devout Catholic family and raised with Catholic values and traditions. At fifteen, I entered the monastery. While inside the monastery, I was happy because I could perform my duties as a nun and the people around me including my family were also pleased with me.

Until such time when I began to ask myself every night, “What am I doing here inside the monastery?” I stayed in our small and humble chapel and started to ask God if he is really listening to me, because I had learned in our catechism that God is present in the blessed sacrament.

Many questions were lingering in my mind. Doubts were cropping up particularly concerning the reality of Jesus Christ. However, I did not have the courage to ask the priest nor my co-nuns who were with me that time. I was so afraid that they might take it against me.

So I let all doubts linger. I even allowed myself to profess my first temporary vows. I kept renewing it every year for TEN YEARS! Until such time I could not take it anymore; my perpetual vows of chastity and poverty; professing the Jesus Christ as my God; and that he is Lord and son of God.

I started to pray harder, asking God for guidance and to show me the right path.

If I were to leave the monastery, it would bring great pain to my mother! My father actually didn't mind if I leave the church and have my own family.

But I did not want to hurt my family, particularly my mother, my two brothers who are both priests, and my four sisters who happen to be all nuns!

Above all, I do not want to be a hypocrite and pretend that I am happy practicing something which is against my underlying principle.

So I did not submit my application letter of perpetual profession. I talked to my superior general, informing her that I am leaving the monastery.

Without informing my family, I left to find a work to survive. After awhile I met a close friend of mine who is a priest and offered me to work with him in his church in Marawi City, as a parish coordinator.

Incidentally, my family heard the news that I left the church, and it was very hard for them to accept the fact. But they were hoping that one day I might come back to serve the church.

While working as parish coordinator, the priest who hired me was not treating me so well.

He did not even pay me salary and he tried to sexually abuse me. But, thank God, he was not successful with his evil intentions.

Again I started to pray asking God to be with me and to make me happy, because I have never been at peace with my life. My heart and mind were miserable.

## **A New Day**

On June 17, 2001, early morning, I heard a beautiful sound but I did not understand what it was. I thought it was coming from the mosque nearby. As soon as I heard the sound, I felt like I was dipped in refreshing water. I cannot explain the feeling.

That day I felt happiness entering my heart, even though I did not understand what I heard. After hearing this amazing sound, I said to myself these few words, “There is a new day, there is new beginning.”

I woke up that morning asking what the sound was and they told me it was call for prayers of the Muslims. Strange! I came to this city (Marawi) on the first week of May 2001, but I could hardly hear the sound until one morning of June 2001.

That day I decided to find out about Islam and the Muslims. I started to research through reading books until I finally left my work. I went back to my family in Pampanga and found out that my father had already passed away.

I was depressed for a while, but I did not stop researching Islam. So I went back to Manila hoping to find someone to explain to me about Islam. In my heart, I was ready to embrace Islam but I did not know how!

I did not give up, I search on internet. I went to the extent of joining chatting rooms, hoping to find a Muslim who can enlighten me about Islam.

On June 16, 2004, I met the brother in Manila. He started to explain about Islam. On the day, I declared;

***La ilaha illallah muhammadur rasulullah wa 'isa ibnu maryam abdullahi wa rasuli*** (There is no god worthy of worship except Allah, Muhammad is the messenger and that Jesus son of Mary, is a slave and messenger of Allah.)

That fateful day, I finally found a new home, the home of Islam: a home where you can find love, happiness and joy. Now I can smile, a smile that comes from my heart. On that day, I slept very well.

Every time I pray, I cry, not tears of sorrow, but tears of joy. A joy which money cannot buy. It is indescribable.

Now I remember when I had a conversation with my grandfather who is a Catholic priest ( my mother's uncle) He said; "If you want to change your religion, go back to Islam!" God is Great!

May Allah open the hearts of my family to the light of Islam, and may he protect us from Satan. Amen.

O brother and sister Muslims! Include me in your prayers!