

## Maria

Myanmarese



### **For nothing will be impossible with God (Luke 1:37)**

I am Maria from Myanmar, where the majority religion is Buddhism. I became Catholic because I grew up in a convent of the Sisters of St. Francis Xavier. This was the beginning of my vocation, I suppose. I wanted to join religious life since I was 18, but when I approached one of the religious congregations, the requirements were so complicated that I couldn't meet them. Because of that, I thought that religious life was not my vocation. I continued studying and finished university without knowing what I wanted to be or who I really was. After that, I started working in different professional fields, but still didn't feel comfortable or happy working in any of those places. I moved on in life with feelings of confusion and uncertainty, searching for the meaning of life for a couple of years.

I met the FCJ sisters in 2010, in a small restaurant that I had started in the church compound. Sr. Sisca, an FCJ sister from Indonesia, came to my restaurant and bought noodles, and we had a conversation. The following day, Sr. Marion fcJ (from Ireland) came and invited me to have dinner with their community. I was very excited to go for the dinner and it was the first time I had been invited by religious sisters in my life. I went to the FCJ house for dinner and enjoyed it very much, though the food was very simple. I enjoyed the conversation and sharing life stories with them, and I didn't feel that I was a guest. After we got to know each other, the sisters asked me to stay with them in their house to help them in practical things such as dealing with the local authority, managing the electricity and phone bills, etc. Since they were all foreigners, it was helpful for them to have a local person present in the house to help them navigate the local situation. We discussed further and I agreed to stay in the FCJ house. It was easy to make the decision because at that time I was staying by myself in a dormitory.

**“ I started experiencing the loving presence of God through the FCJ sisters, and felt at home instantly.**

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I was still working in my own restaurant and every time I came home I had the chance to share my experiences, both joyous and miserable. I felt safe in sharing everything and was encouraged by their words. I started praying regularly, and sometimes joined their community for prayers. Each sister in the community supported me in many ways, especially in the area of spirituality. All my odd ways of living began to change into more normal ways of living. The care of the sisters for me really touched my heart, and all my resentments about nuns from past experience totally turned to positive experiences. It was as if a miracle was happening in my life. Because of that, I wanted to know more about their spirituality and mission.

I began to ask who the foundress of their Society was, and about her words to the FCJ sisters. I eagerly read about the life of [Marie Madeleine d'Houët](#), and was inspired by her courage and confidence to stand at the foot of the Cross, as Mary and the holy women had done in Jesus' time. I deeply admired her for her response to the "thirst of Jesus and the thirst of the world". I fell in love with the spirituality of the Faithful Companion of Jesus.

The desire to become a religious strongly appeared in my prayers and my mind. I began the FCJs' "aspirant" program 2012, and found myself working as a social worker in a program for street children. At that time, I felt that I was in the right place, and I was sure that this was the way God wanted me to be. I continued working as a social worker until mid-2015. After that, I let go of my job and began full-time formation in the FCJ Community. I started my [postulant program](#) in 2015 in Yangon. As FCJ sisters live out Ignatian spirituality, I started to practice it in my daily life and my relationship with Jesus grew.

Gradually, it became clear to me that my relationship with God was getting stronger, and I decided to join the FCJ [novitiate](#) in Indonesia. It was my first time living outside my home country, and it was a great opportunity to learn the Indonesian language and about their culture, politics and way of living. I got involved in church activities, made pastoral visits to the neighbours, and taught English to the children. God always blessed me through the people I engaged with. I learnt many things from people to whom I ministered, such as kindness, openness and trust. At the end of the time of novitiate, I requested and received permission to make my [first profession](#) as a sister in the FCJ Society on the 8th of December 2018.

Now, I am missioned to study social work in Manila, and my formation is still ongoing. I ask from God the grace to welcome all the ups and downs of life lovingly, gently, patiently and humanly. The strength and courage of God are enough for me as I continue both my outer journey in Manila and my inner journey of the heart.

*Maria's vocation story first appeared in the [Weaving One Heart: Contemporary FCJ Voices](#) blog of the FCJ Sisters*



“ A little bit of mercy makes the world less cold and more just. ”

*Pope Francis*

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