

## **My Vocation Story**

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There were many people and things that influenced my vocation. First were my grandmother, my mother, and my father. My father, in the beginning, was not so happy about my thought of being a religious, but later on changed his mind. Secondly, my aunt who was a sister of another Congregation, and some of my Religious teachers, etc...were the source of my support.

I have a good memory of my grandmother. She was a person who had a great influence on my vocation. I was impressed by her charity, her caring, and love for the poor and the needy. Growing up in a wealthy and devout Catholic family, I am the first daughter who had a lot of attention from all the family members, especially from my grandmother and my parents. In fact, I was a spoiled, growing-girl in the family, and yet, I wanted to become a religious!



My vocation began when I was in third grade. I remember that at home we had a huge rice field, and my grandmother employed many people for the harvest. The workers were always adequately paid and they even got more bonuses besides the salary. If any of them got sick, my grandmother immediately would go to visit, to make sure that they had sufficient medication to get well, and enough food to eat. Her acts of charity were very much appreciated by the workers, and more importantly, it had a great impact on my thought of becoming a religious.

I really began to consider the religious life in the fifth grade as I, at the time, visualized how much good a religious person can do to help the poor like what my grandmother did. I had also noticed that my grandmother and my parents always prayed and encouraged me to join a religious life, even though at first, as I said earlier, my father was not in favor of my request, because I was still very small and he didn't want to leave me. But, with God everything is possible! Eventually, I visited different religious communities in different areas. I enjoyed very much the Spirit and charism of their communities. I was amazed by their holiness, kindness, gentleness, and caring for the poor and the needy. At that time, I really wanted to join the community where my aunt was one of the superiors in that Congregation. Instead, my father gathered all the information for me to join the community of the Sisters of St. Paul in Danang.

On July 15, 1967, I asked my parents to allow me to join a special program in Thanh-Tam boarding High School for young girls, who were interested in becoming a Sister in Danang, South Viet Nam, for seven years. On April 30, 1975 when I finished High School, I was supposed to enter the Novitiate, but due to the fall of Sai Gon, South Vietnam into the Communist Regime, we were sent home with no hope of returning to the Convent. During this time my father was imprisoned in the Re-educational Camp by the communist. A few months later, all of my older brothers escaped from Vietnam by boats one after another. I had to help my mom to take care and raise my younger brothers and sisters at this time. In addition, I had to face many challenges and hardships that could change the course of my life direction. In fact, at that time, the Communist government did not allow religious communities in the country to recruit new members for their congregations. I was discouraged and

almost gave up my vocation, but my father, whom I visited in prison, always encouraged and reminded me of my special vocation, and told me how proud he was of my being a religious person!

On August 5, 1975, I requested and was called back to the convent under a special arrangement of Mere Marie Rose. After a few months in the Provincial house, I was allowed to enter the novitiate on October 4, 1975 in secret. We were transferred secretly from Provincial house to the Novitiate by private car, two by two, out of the group of fourteen! The next year, in June 29, 1976, I received my habit. During this time, we were taught many courses of two-year program in the Novitiate, and yet, had to work hard in order to survive under the communist regime. Though our living condition was very poor and hard, we were all very happy, up lifted, and high in spirit because our life had a purpose – to serve God and one another in the spirit of Saint Paul of Chartres.

*“ I realize I was called by God to serve – to humble service, that I was not called to any great dramatic work – that I should not think of myself more highly than I am, but only to the measure of faith God has assigned to me”*

*Thomas Heath*

On July 2, 1978 I joyfully made my First Profession in the presence of the community, my family, and friends. We were very upbeat and positive of our life in our work and our services to help the poor neighborhood in the city; of course, everything was in secret. Usually, we made our Final Vow after five years of temporary vows, if we were chosen. With the strict condition of the Communist Government for the religious life, we had to wait nine years to make our final Vow.

Amid the progress of many things in my religious life, I suddenly got a serious sickness that I have to leave the convent to go home for the treatment. I believed that God gave me this to show me about God’s providence, and teach me how to have faith and live dependent on God. Regardless of all the disappointments, and all the hardships of my ailment, I had to live at home for almost two years, until I fully recovered from my illness. Once again, I could see the love and kindness of my parents and the entire family. I always felt their love and support, more importantly their prayers in all circumstances. Thanks to my father, who is very strong in mind, and loving in heart, and who did do everything he could for my treatments to help me to have a good recovery. Amazingly, I was allowed to return to the convent to continue the life of loving service of others in 1986 after almost two years of being away. One year later, I made my Final Vows on June 29, 1987.

In 1993, I was among the first sisters in Danang Province who was allowed to transfer to USA district after I emigrated with my family from Viet Nam, as political refugees. I stayed with my family in Burn Flat, Oklahoma for two months. Then I joined the Sisters in Marquette. Once again, I continued to walk on my journey of faith in the community of the Sisters of Saint Paul of Chartres with the conviction that, with God, nothing is impossible.