

"What do you feel?"... this was the question Bro. Eldy would always first ask us before we start our retreat. Remember? And if I am to answer that question again right now, right at this very moment, I would say "I feel so overwhelmed, so thankful and so Blessed by God"! So overwhelmed because of overflowing happiness in my heart that God poured upon me, thankful because I feel so loved seeing the people around here sharing this moment with me, and blessed, for God let me experience all these. This day, I was clothed anew to signify that I am for God and God alone, and it marks my entrance to a new world, to a new beginning and to a brand new life as a religious. I know I have chosen a road less traveled, so less that some people dreaded to take because of its unfathomable sacrifices behind it.

I know too well that this road doesn't promise me a smooth journey along the way, and yet, I am confident that despite everything that I will go through, God will be there to help and guide me, for He said that He will not put me in a place where I will be miserable. I am assured that where I am right now, is where my indescribable happiness lies and where my heart will be at peace. When I was still in kindergarten, I dreamt of becoming a nun, yet as time goes by, that dream was covered with different dreams. I became too idealistic about life, and I started to dream so high like any other people in the society...when I was in high school, I dreamt to follow the footsteps of my brother, who was at that time studying to be an engineer, however I wasn't good in math, so I forget about it, then I got curious of what's going on in the brain and so I dreamt of becoming a brain surgeon, but again I wasn't good enough with regards to science.

Then one day, I tried to look into my heart and listen to what it says. And, I realized, that I want to teach. I want to teach children with special needs. God knows how my heart melts whenever I see a special child. I always desired to get into their world and connect my life with their lives. And so when I became a Special Ed teacher, I really felt so blessed because God allowed me to touch the lives of these children and He gave me a heart that will love and accept them, whom others find it difficult to do. Being Special Ed teacher was a meaningful vocation.

I really thought it was where I was called for, that it was my destiny. I was teaching then at Makati and at the same time became active in the church activities, when suddenly during an encounter in one of my church activities, I was hit by another call, a call that left me tormented. My long lost desire suddenly had come alive out of nowhere. And from then on, it disturbs me, until such time that I had the courage to make a step towards it. It was my leap of faith. I started to be an outside aspirant without my family knowing it. My journey had been very

difficult. When I decided to enter the Congregation, I encountered a lot of struggles that test my desires of becoming a religious: Higher salary in the school where I first teach, Masteral degree. I was also offered to become a speaker in a Legion Congress, Seminar workshop in Zambales, to prepare me to be a part of the Curia of the Legion of Mary. And all of these incorporated my dreams. It was so tempting to choose the outside world because I foresee a lot of good things that would happen to me if I choose to stay outside, rather than be with my God, and be consecrated with Him. And so, I prayed and prayed and prayed to God to show me where I should be. And where I am right now is the sweet fruit of my prayers and with His grace that He poured upon me. Yes, I had good plans for my future, yet God showed me that He has greater and better plans for me. I believe that everything that I had gone through are God's way of preparing me for this kind of life. And indeed, my journey as a Hospitaller has been a great one. It molded me to be who I am right now. And it made my life a lot meaningful than you could imagine. I thank God for everything that's going on in my life. To all the blessings that He bestowed upon me, for loving me unconditionally, for the happiness that fills my heart everyday and for allowing me to be His worker in His vineyard.

Most of the time, I fail him but He love me so much that He never abandoned me despite of my imperfections. And He even showed me His infinite love through these people whom I want to thank for. (look at your audience and smile)

First, let me express my heartfelt gratitude to Sr. Camino Agos, our delegate superior, thank you very much for accepting me in the Congregation, and for giving me a new home to live.

Thank you as well to my New Manila community (my first community where I had my formation). It was there where I first learned who I really am and found another "home" and "family". I can still remember how terrible I was, hard-headed, stubborn, disobedient, lazy, and guarded about my feelings. It was there where I was confronted about how imperfect I am, and with the help of my community and my formator, Sr. Joy, slowly and gradually I learned how to go beyond those imperfections. (smile) If there's one person who knows me well, aside to my family it would be her. She taught me a lot of things about life. She removed me from the shell where I used to hide and encouraged me to face the world courageously. She taught me to do better and be a better person. She had been an instrument of growth to me. And even if she's not here, I want to thank her. (smile)

I want to thank also my Talamban community. I must admit that I had gone through some tough times during my stay there, and undertook a lot of adjustments and I had to withstand a lot of inner pains. I needed to outgrow my immaturity and laziness and learn how to act

appropriately. But no matter how difficult it has been, my experiences there fashioned me to be a strong person, taught me to be responsible to the things that I ought to do. And I guess, the greatest learning that I got there was that I learned what it is to love (more!). I never knew what love is until all my experiences there unfold it to me. I admit that my stay there changed me a lot. Thank you for the acceptance, love and care and for helping me get through those tough times. To my formator, Sr. Lorenza, (look at her), being my/our formator might have been a challenge for you, knowing how “obedient” I am. (wink..wink) But still I thank you for bearing with me despite my not so good attitudes. Thank you for believing that I can do a lot of things. (look at her and smile).

To my new community, Kasambagan Community, to Sr. Juliana, thank you for welcoming me into your humble abode, for letting me feel at home and comfortable while I’m still adjusting to my new life here. I’m looking forward for more great things here and a continual growth for me. (smile)

Moreover, I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the presence of Mama Ning, my Tita Espie. (look at her and smile) Thank you for coming over. Your presence means a lot to me. I want to thank you also for the home that you provided/shared for me and to my siblings when I was still in Manila, for making me feel that family will always be family no matter what it takes and for all the help that you have extended to our family and to the Congregation.

To Mama Fe, I know you will not miss this milestone of my life. If there’s one person who is so happy to see me wearing this habit, definitely it would be you! (wink..smile) It was your deep faith in God that I also got to know Him. Thank you so much Mama Fe for inspiring me with your life story! (smile, look at her)

To my family, to my parents, I would always be grateful to be part of the family. Whenever people ask me about my family I would always tell them how blessed I am to have my family. Thanks to my siblings for they never failed to let me feel that I am loved and accepted. I am confident that wherever I go and whatever I do they will always be there for me.

To Nanay and Tatay, thank you for bringing me into this world, for nurturing me with so much love and care, for supporting my plans and decisions in life. I remember, when I decided to take up Special Education in college, you two were so worried about me, coz you were afraid that I will have a hard time in that kind of profession, but then, you saw how I really wanted it and so you supported me all the way till I finished it. And even before that, when I decided to study in that school, everyone around me told me that I cannot make it there for I was not good

enough, yet no matter what other people say about me, I was never discouraged for you were always there to push me to be where I want. You made me believe in myself, that I can do a lot of things, that I am good enough. I made it to college because you were there, coz you believe that I can.

When I first work in Manila, I encountered how difficult my profession was, I was on the verge of giving up, and so I called up my parents and told them that I want to go home, yet my father told me "Kaya mo yan, Manila pa lang yan, kayanin mo kasi kaya mo para kapag pumunta ka ng Canada mas kaya mo na", those words gave me strength to continue, and he add "Not because it's difficult, you will give up, Sino na lang ang magiging Sped teacher kung lahat ganyan ang iniisip". My parents had been my strength that enableed me to surpass the challenges in my life. And now, that I am embracing a new life, I know it's not easy to accept things as it is now, yet, they are here. They chose to support me despite everything that's going on inside them, and for that I am so grateful and I am happy. Thank you Nay, thank you Tay.

And to Glycer, my college friend, who really came here to show her support, thank you! (smile)

And to everyone here, your presence means so much to me. Thank you! God bless us all. (smile)