



## **Sister Tryphena Tan, FMDM**

*One of our newer member shares her VOCATION STORY*

*Even when God gave me the riches of the world such as having a high paid job, an apartment, a car and a fulfilling career; all these still could not fill the emptiness inside me or make me truly happy.*

I am a Chinese Singaporean and made my first profession on 4<sup>th</sup> October 2014 with the Franciscan Missionaries of the Divine Motherhood (FMDM) in our Motherhouse at Ladywell Convent, England. I joined the FMDMs on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2011 when I entered the postulancy (Pre-novitiate) in Singapore.

### **What attracted me to the FMDMs?**

There are three main reasons why I was attracted to the FMDMs.

1. I was attracted to the congregation's charism: that is conceiving, birthing and nurturing the Word of God in my own life and in others. I feel that the congregation's charism is very meaningful as I receive the Eucharist daily; giving birth to the Word of God daily by sharing the Word with my sisters during the Office; and nurturing the word of God in my life by reflecting on and contemplating my daily human experiences. The charism is also a constant inspiration to me in my interactions with others in my ministry.
2. Mother Mary is the congregation's model. She is also my role model and I know she has interceded and taken care of me since I was young. At a young age, my mother instilled in me the importance of praying the rosary daily. We also promoted the rosary by joining a church group called the Confraternity of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour where we brought Our Lady's picture to different houses and said the rosary with the family.
3. I am attracted to the life of St. Francis who is my favourite saint. As FMDM is a Franciscan order, I naturally found my vocation to serve as a Franciscan sister.

### **My vocation story**

My journey towards religious life started when I was 17 years old. I recall that it was Mission Sunday and there were so many advertisements promoting different religious congregations in the Singapore Catholic News. I was attracted to the Franciscan religious congregations and wrote to all the Franciscan vocation directresses to ask for more information about religious life. I then started discerning with one of the Franciscan religious congregation for 6 years as an aspirant. However, I did not pursue my religious vocation after my undergraduate degree. I wanted to pursue my career and have a 'normal' life (have a family). Looking back, even though I faced many challenges, I still felt inner peace and my life was fulfilled during those 6 years. I never felt happier than during those 6 years.

In 2010, the company I worked for closed down suddenly and I lost my job overnight. In addition, the previous year I broke off with my boyfriend whom I had planned to marry. This was the turning point in my life. During this period, I was in Australia and my mother, who

had not seen me for almost 2 years because of my work commitments, asked me to return to Singapore for a visit and holiday. My initial plan was to go home for one month and then return to Australia to find another job. However, God had other plans for me. I stayed in Singapore for almost 10 months. During this period, my mother urged me to attend a 9 day guided retreat as I had not attended any retreat for a good number of years. This sparked off my vocation again. At the end of the retreat, I thought I heard God calling me to follow Him in religious life.

I guess I was scared and also knew that I had been running away from God for the last 10 years of my life. I really did not want to be a religious but there was a very strong nagging voice inside me to do something about the call. In the end, I contacted the vocation directress of the FMDM and also other religious congregations. I spent time going to different vocation camps and retreats to find out if I really had a calling and what to do about it. In the end, I made the decision to start my Aspirancy (Pre-Noviciate) with the FMDMs and continued my discernment with them in Australia.

As I reflect back, I was never completely happy in any relationship and I constantly felt empty inside me. Even when God gave me the riches of the world such as having a high paid job, an apartment, a car and a fulfilling career; all these still could not fill the emptiness inside me or make me truly happy. Now I can say that God has filled this emptiness inside me and I truly have inner peace though I still face challenges in my religious life as a temporary professed sister.