

FROM REFUGEE CAMP TO VOCATION:

By Ae Pa You Paw

Trusting God's Plan

I was born and raised in a Thailand refugee camp with limited opportunities to engage with religious people, whom I admired. After settling in Texas in 2012, my family faced challenges due to the language barrier and cultural adjustments, making it difficult for us to attend Mass and communicate with others. Despite this, my family advanced here in this country through the help of my mom's English teacher. She took us to church every weekend, although we still struggled to understand the Mass. After spending a year in Texas, my family moved to Minnesota, where we found a Catholic community consisting of our Burmese ethnic group known as Karen. Moving to Minnesota gave me hope and a sense of belonging in my Catholic faith again.

In 2014, I moved to Minnesota, where I was able to attend Sunday Mass in my language and engage with local religious communities, including the Franciscan Brothers of Peace and Missionaries of Charity. In 2017, a vocation director from the Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters (SSpS) visited and sparked a curiosity about the congregation. Later, I was invited to attend Mission Sunday at Divine Word College and continued to learn

more about the SSpS. Eventually, I participated in a "Come and See" experience in Techny, Illinois and engaged in various activities, including retreats and volunteered at a summer peace camp. Ultimately, I developed a strong connection with the community.

I visited Divine Word College multiple times and faced skepticism from my parish about joining the SSpS. Despite this, I felt supported by my family and defended my choice. I had previously known the Missionaries of Charity but determined that they were not the right fit for me due to some circumstances. This experience was interpreted as a sign that God was not calling me to that order.

Later, I received an offer to apply to DWC, which I saw as an opportunity to focus on my discernment. In 2022, I began attending school at DWC. Through my formation, ministries, and the examples set by others, I have learned that being religious is about my commitment to God and serving others, regardless of my appearance. I am grateful to God for guiding my vocation, and I thank my mom for her devotion. I may struggle to recognize God's presence, but I am beginning to see His plans for me. God's plan involves trusting Him rather than conforming to the expectations of others.



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