

Year of Consecrated Life

A peep into the year of Sr Lucy Chia RGS

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Singaporean Sr Lucy Chia, 30 years as a Religious of the Good Shepherd Sister, seen here with her artwork in the background.

How did you know you were called to Religious life?

“Take your love out of the freezer and share your big heart with many others!” These words jolted me out of my daily routine.

They were spoken in 1979 by my younger sister who was a young, temporary professed Religious of the Good Shepherd Sister. She told me stories of the mission of the congregation and I felt moved within me.

Can you share what was meaningful for you?

In these 30 years, I have worked in various ministries of the Good Shepherd, including being a missionary in the Czech Republic for eight years.

As a trained counsellor, my ministries were mostly in accompanying women, teenagers and children who were excluded or living in poverty or in abused situations – welcoming them in an environment with the possibility of a second chance in life, doing ordinary activities with them, being with them during difficult moments and seeing them grow to be more hopeful and positive about their lives.

How do you think Religious Life has changed you?

I am by nature timid and shy. However, when I saw the needs of those in our ministries I felt compelled to grow out of my shell. Slowly, I learnt to be more self-confident and to find resources with the help of others so as to be creative in my approach to help those in our shelters. Even though I still feel fearful at times, I am more able to step out of my comfort zone so as to be more effective in responding to the needs.



Sr Lucy's clay moulding of a woman holding a sheep

What has sustained your life as a Religious, especially in the face of challenges/changes?

My faith in God. I believe that God is moulding me to grow through the challenges. I have experienced how God has provided for me in my limitations, with the right people at the right time. I always remember the words of my mother, who is a faith-filled woman, "Don't wallow in difficulties." Such faith, values and principles drawn from my family, enable me to pick myself up and move on in the face of challenges.

How would you make vocations attractive to the youth of today?

How about asking it another way – how can youth be attracted to Religious vocation as a way of life? I think one of the places where vocations are sown and nurtured is in the family.

The foundress of the Good Shepherd Sisters, St Mary Euphrasia Pelletier, was influenced by the example of her parents helping the poor and needy.

I saw my parents helping three children to have an education even though we were poor ourselves. They brought many other youngsters and elderly into our house to stay temporarily or have a meal. My father said to us, "If we all eat one spoonful less of rice, we can feed someone who has nothing to eat." And so it was that our home always had "room for one more".

How would you summarise your life today as a Religious?

My call to Good Shepherd Religious life is to follow Jesus who has called me to continue "His redemptive mission in the Church" (Constitution of the Good Shepherd Sisters, Article 2). Everywhere He went, He touched lives.

I need to be awakened to the presence and love of God within me so as to listen more attentively to the call of the Spirit daily. Religious life is about turning towards God and letting God change my heart to be more compassionate to the needs of others. I am called as a Religious for others, not for myself, with the aim of making a positive difference in the lives of all whom I have the opportunity to meet.

How does your art speak to you about your Religious vocation?

I sometimes use art to express my prayer experiences. My best works are usually created during my annual retreat and on special days like my renewal of vows.

How does your art enable you to reach out to others, especially women and children in need?

I use clay moulding and drawing (with crayons and watercolours) in my counselling and prayer accompaniment sessions. They are helpful for people to express what's on their minds and in their hearts.

Often, programme participants tell me that they have not done clay moulding before. You can see that they are anxious, yet excited at the same time. When they hold the clay in their hands, they automatically begin to squeeze it, squash it, roll it, or flatten it. Gradually they begin to feel very comfortable with the lump of clay and you begin to see a shape forming. The completed piece expresses their feelings in a non-verbal way.

I would add that for me, art includes many various forms. Cooking for me is also a form of art, as is the way we plate and present the food.