

TESTIMONY OF SR. SARA MARIA AGNESE



In the name of the Lord: Peace and Good to all! My name is Sr. Sara Maria Agnese. I am Mexican, I was born on June 12, 1985, and I have a degree in industrial engineering. This is the testimony of how the Lord revolutionized my life; I did a complete about-face, 180 degrees, to come to form part of the community of the *Little Friars and Little Nuns of Jesus and Mary*.

WHO WAS I BEFORE MY CONVERSION?

I come from a broken family; I was about 14 when my parents separated, and they divorced a few years later. From the ages of 14 to 25, I was very rebellious, especially towards my mother. I became a very tense, impulsive, and restless person; my mother was honestly almost afraid of me because of the way I would react to things, and she had to think very carefully before telling me anything. I drank, smoked, and went to parties. My relationship with my last boyfriend lasted about three years, but every time I thought about having a family, I became anxious, lost the little peace I had, and couldn't stay calm. I understood that marriage was not for me, but I had absolutely no idea of what project God might have for my life. I thought I was *better alone than in bad company*, as the saying goes – but then again, I was also afraid of being alone. All this, combined with various other events (including a relationship that I had to break off because the person I was with asked things of me that went against my conscience), led me to the point of very profound suffering.

WHAT PUSHED ME TO SEARCH FOR THE WILL OF GOD?

When I turned 25, I was suffering greatly, and no longer found meaning in my life. I thought, “*ok, I work the whole week, then I have fun with my friends on the weekend. Then I work again, the whole week, and then, and then... will I go on like this forever? How many years can I live this way?*” This great restlessness led me to make an earnest prayer to the Lord. One day, tired of everything, I told God, “*If the only way to leave all of these vices behind is to come closer to You, show me how to do it and I will...at least I'll try.*” A short time after this prayer, while I was at work, I received an email that said, “*If you found yourself before God on Judgment Day and He asked you what good you had done in your life, what would you say?*” In that moment, I said to myself, “*I haven't done anything!*” – at least whatever good things I might have done didn't seem like enough to say that I'd really done good. Another thing that made me stop and reflect was something the priest said in church during his homily: “*if you feel tired, if you feel like you just can't keep going any more, if you can't live with yourself and you feel tense all the time... then come closer to Jesus!*” I felt like he was speaking straight to me, because he was describing exactly what I was feeling in that moment.

MY ENCOUNTER WITH THE COMMUNITY OF THE LITTLE FRIARS AND LITTLE NUNS OF JESUS AND MARY

One fine day a few months after I had made that prayer and promise to the Lord, I was invited to become an assistant catechist. At one of the meetings at the parish, I saw a Little Nun from this community for the first time, Sr. Stella, and she had such a huge smile!! My first thought was, “*what on earth are Franciscans doing here?!*” ...and then, as I looked at her, I thought, “*what's this? She's young, she's beautiful, she has such a beautiful smile...and she's a nun?! How is it possible?*” I was also very much attracted by the habit, and examined it from head to foot, in every particular.

One day, Sr. Stella started talking to me, asking me who I was, what I did, etc. I also asked her a few questions, and in her responses she was able to satisfy both my intellect and my heart...and then she started to talk to me about eternity. To put it simply, she helped me reflect on what a small thing were the few years of this life in comparison with eternity, and on the fact that not everything ends with this life! I told her that for many years I had felt like the Lord wanted something

more from me, but I didn't know what, and I was afraid of finding out! She told me not to be afraid, and reassured me. She recounted some of the story of St. Francis of Assisi, including the vision he had in a dream, when the Lord asked him, "*Francis, who do you want to serve? The servant or the master?*" and he responded, "*The master, Lord*" (cf. FF 1401), and I felt that these words were my very own. My way of seeing things was starting to change. From that moment on, the Lord gave me the great grace of leaving behind cigarettes, alcohol, certain unhealthy friendships, and my forceful way of speaking, and I no longer felt that tension in me that used to be an almost constant state of being. I had also read the "*Sacred Driver's License of the Christian*" that Sr. Stella had left me (one of the writings of our founder, Friar Volantino), where he speaks about the resurrection of Jesus in the Shroud of Turin and a scientist affirms, "*if [the Shroud] were fake...we would have to rewrite the whole history of technology, because it would mean that thousands of years ago they knew about techniques that we have still not discovered,*" and also, "*according to the mathematical calculations, it is more probable that the same number should come up 52 times in a row in a game of roulette, than that the Shroud is not authentic.*" These writings piqued my curiosity and I began to understand better what was meant by the resurrection of the body; before, when I'd thought about Paradise, I usually imagined something like a soul floating around in front of God, without a body – which was not something I found particularly attractive! After that meeting with Sr. Stella, I felt different; I still couldn't understand what was happening in me, and I cried a lot. I decided to ask her to help me spiritually, and I started to attend the moments of prayer led by the community.

LORD, WHAT IS YOUR WILL FOR ME?

One day I got on the bus without any destination in particular (though I had the sensation of looking for something), and I started thinking about how I felt good when I was with the community, how I felt like they were my family, like I had known them for a long time. In that moment, I asked the Lord for a sign: "*Lord, if you want me to continue to spend time with the community, if you want me to be with them, give me a sign: let Sr. Stella call me at this very moment!*" I knew that she was not in the city because she was on pilgrimage, and besides, she didn't have my cell number, but I thought, "*Lord, nothing is impossible for You.*" And – surprise! Less than two minutes after I made that prayer, my phone rang...and it was Sr. Stella!!! I was speechless, and filled with joy. I know that the sign I asked for was rather unusual, but in that moment it touched me deeply and gave me the help I needed. When we hung up, I quickly got off that bus and took the bus back; I felt as if I had found what I had been looking for.

Something else that struck me was this: in the "*Sacred Driver's License of the Christian*" there is a green flier which has the message of Our Lady of Fatima written on it: "*Come here (in prayer and sacrifice) for 6 consecutive months, and I will tell you who I am and what I want from you.*" When I read this, I told the Lord, "*Is this how it works, to understand? Prayer and sacrifice? Ok, I'll do it!*" From that day on – it was November 7, 2010 – I decided to live for a period of six months in more intense prayer and sacrifice: I offered what sacrifices I could, and, as Sr. Stella had advised me, I started to frequent the sacraments again, going to Mass every day, receiving communion, and trying to go to confession at least once a month (later on I also added in the meditated rosary). In the meantime, during these six months, I also started to have little experiences with the sisters there in Mexico, where the Lord gradually led me to understand that He was calling me to consecrate my life to Him in this community. At the end of these six months (when I was already preparing to go to Italy), on May 7, 2011 (it had been six months to the day!), I had a little dream where I saw myself with the sisters of the community and wearing the half-habit. This was even more striking because in the community it is really the case that, after six months of experience, one enters the Year of Test and is invested with the half-habit. Our Lady of Fatima had fulfilled her promise!

Trials, of course, were by no means lacking during the period before I left for Italy to continue my experience with the community. I received a good job offer from the famous beer "Corona" beer company – it had been my dream job when I was in the world, but with God's grace and my goodwill (and thanks in particular to all the signs that the Lord had given me to come to the community), I immediately understood that this was a test. Besides, I had already had many experiences in the world, and I rejected exactly what the world was offering me – because I had the Lord in front of me offering me (beyond comparison!) much, much more.

THE MEETING WITH FRIAR VOLANTINO

At the end of May 2011, I left for Italy to continue my journey with the community. I started the six months of experience, this time within the community, where the Lord did not fail to confirm (even more) His will for me – thanks to my discernment within the community and particularly to Friar Volantino, who gives us the necessary instruments (based on the Sacred Scripture and the Magisterium of the Catholic Church) to understand for ourselves what the Lord wants,

together with the help of our spiritual guide. (He himself always says, “*If I don’t speak to you with the Word of God and the Teaching of the Catholic Church, don’t listen to me! But if I speak with the Word of God and the Teaching of the Catholic Church, then, if you want, you can listen to me.*”) I have seen his acuteness in understanding and explaining the Sacred Scripture, the passion that he has in working for the salvation of souls, and the way he strives to help them draw ever closer to Jesus and His Church. He is ready to do anything (within his power and God’s will) to help others.

Thanks be to God (through the help of Friar Volantino), I succeeded in gaining the certainty that the Bible is really the Word of God, and in discovering the will of God for my life – and, furthermore, in gaining the certainty that if we persevere in doing God’s will, we, too, will rise from the dead, not only in soul but also in body: young, beautiful, and perfect in a blessed eternity which we call “the party without end” (since St. Paul says, “*Let no one condemn you in questions of food or drink, or festivals, new moons, or sabbaths: all these things are only the shadow of the things to come*” – Col 2:16-17). Having these certainties completely changed my way of living and gave meaning to my life. Indeed (remembering the Word of the Lord, who says, “*not all who say to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven!*” – Matt 7:21), if we try to do His Will to the very end, we will not only be able to take delight in Paradise together with all those we have helped, but we will also receive a crown that never fades, as the Scripture says: “*Be faithful unto death, and I will give you THE CROWN OF LIFE*” (Rev 2:10) (unlike the crown I was offered in the world by the beer company “Corona” (“Crown”), the crown which passes away and is subject to corruption). I have found the true meaning of life, true joy, peace, the reason why I am in this world.

IN CONCLUSION

I thank the Lord for having called me to be part of this religious community, helping me find my true family in Christ and helping me not only to grow as a person (morally), but above all, spiritually: helping me find true joy, peace, and freedom, and giving me the chance to find fulfillment – and, thus, to be able to help many other people (starting from the witness of my own life), to tell them that Jesus, yes, died on the cross...but above all, He is TRULY RISEN!

*All for the greater glory of God
and the salvation of the most souls possible,
for this is the aim and the eternal Crown of our faith! (cf. 1Pet 1:9)
Amen!*

*In faith,
Sr. Sara M. Agnese
18 February 2018*