

## ***My Testament (Sr. Veronica)***

In the words of our Holy Fr. St. Francis **“good evening, good people”**. First of all I would like to present myself to all of you here present in our Eucharistic celebration. I am Sr. Veronica from the Philippines. I come from a big family, I have five brothers and two sisters. I am the fifth child of the late Mr. & Mrs. Arquillano. I come from a good family upbringing.

I studied in university and got a good job. Years passed by and little by little God unfolded the seed of my vocation that was covered up in all the vanity that had enveloped me. Then God sent different instruments in many forms on my way but I did not pay much attention because I was so absorbed with personal affairs and fascinated by worldly things. The spiritual blindness hindered me to grasp what the Lord wanted me to do.

To make a long story short I met a religious sister who had an apostolate in our area and came regularly to our home and she had a good influence on me. For me then, I realised that there was more to life than partying and deep within me there was a sense of emptiness that all my external happiness could not satisfy. True to say God's intervention was so visible.

God in his own time awakened my vocation. My life then started to turn upside down. The stubbornness in my heart bows down before him. Then I learned to give a special room for him in my life. God was so pleased that one of his prodigal daughters had changed direction. Truly God is so powerful he picked me from the chaos of my life's journey and put me secure into his loving hands. Oh it is so amazing.... what a peculiar gift, for me that's how my creator works in my life. His ardent invitation to follow his steps is irresistible. At a certain point I couldn't resist any more and so finally in 1979 I entered the religious life.

Really it was a long road before I said **“Yes Lord here I am to answer your call”**. At last I found the treasure of all the treasures which no one can take away from me. From that time onwards I started to

surrender everything to his holy will. Yes, I did my part and God will do the rest for me. I am so happy inside the four walls in an enclosed life with no regrets at all. I responded to the call of God voluntarily, willingly and with full conscious. Besides nobody forced me to embrace this kind of life nor did I enter the religious as an escape from the world, nor from anybody else or from any responsibility in life. Instead I bring the whole world to the Lord in prayer.

In the 1950' & much earlier many Irish missionaries, priests and religious sisters very generously answered God's call for missions in the Philippines. We the Pilipino people owe a very big debt of gratitude to the Irish people for bringing the Catholic faith to my homeland. One of our missionaries, Fr. Carrigan, an Irish Columban priest spent 40 years in the Philippines. He is here with us this evening. The Irish missionaries are still with us in the Philippines. The Poor Clare sisters are in the Philippines since 1621. We have been so blessed with numerous vocations so we spread all over in various countries throughout the world. From very many congregations Pilipino priests and religious have answered God's call to serve on missions.

God is present everywhere, anywhere and in every situation in our life's journey no doubt. Yes, we need to keep the doors open in our hearts, that is one thing that inspired me to embrace the missionary life. Not to disregard, but to consider some adjustments to the difference in culture, weather, race, language, food and home sickness. These difficulties do not bother me despite the knowledge that I am a thousand miles away from my beloved family and homeland. Absolutely nothing can hinder in the service of God and neighbour, if it is accompanied with love.

Then my community in Mindanao received an invitation from the Poor Clare Sisters here in Graiguecullen. So without any hesitation we responded to the call for mission. My community in the Philippines is established 18 years ago and with 8 sisters. We generously met the needs of our sisters here in Graiguecullen. We take seriously these words "***Give and you shall receive***". Really it is a real experience. At

present my community in Mindanao, in the Philippines are increasing in numbers we have two novices and a good number of young girls are interested in entering the religious life.

It was December 2008 when I arrived here in this lovely Irish country. The sisters here in my new community and in the local community joyfully and affectionately welcomed me. Their care and concern enwrapped and helped me feel very much at home. How fortunate am I to receive such welcoming spirit. Up to this present moment, I still continue to taste your love and support. With my sincere gratitude I ask God to give each of you countless blessings for all your great kindness and generous hearts.

As you know my good friends we have another Filipina sister here with us – Sr. Martha, my contemporary in my formation some years ago. Another thing - a good number of Filipinos working here in Ireland came from Kilkenny and surrounding towns to attend a special Pilipino mass celebrated here in our church and secondly of course to say “**Hello**” to us.

I am so delighted that we have a Tridium for the feast of our Holy Mother St. Clare. May I tell you something – just an overview of the fame of our founders, St. Clare in the Philippines. We originated in Spain in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, a small group of Spanish Poor Clare sisters, headed by Mother Jeronima Della Assuncion courageously set foot in my homeland. Since that time onward and up to the present time thousands of devotees spread all over the country. It is so marvellous how it keeps on growing in numbers.

Our Holy Mother St. Clare then became very well known and God inspired many young ladies to join the Poor Clare sisters. As of now we have 24 Poor Clare Monasteries in the Philippines. Some of them with a large number of community members. Every year we have a very big feast of celebration in honour of St. Clare. A concelebrated Novena of Masses for 9 consecutive days with thousands of church goers. On the 11<sup>th</sup> August Holy Mother, St. Clare’s Feast Day, most of our Poor Clare monasteries have a big number of masses celebrated throughout the day with packed churches.

Now before I end up my sharing may I invite all of you to join with us in thanking our most High Glorious God for his memorable, special, extraordinary gift for our 800 anniversary celebration of the beginning of our order of the Poor Clares. Not to forget God's abundant blessings bestowed upon us throughout this 800 years as a powerhouse of prayer for the entire church of God. Evidently the little plant of Assisi Mother St. Clare 800 years ago, today that plant becomes a huge and fruitful tree. Its roots and branches widely spread to far off lands. We the Poor Clare sisters now number more than 20,000 in over 70 countries throughout the world.

Another thing in addition to, lets rejoice and give thanks to God for this wonderful gift you know why because at 10 o'clock Mass tomorrow I, Sister Veronica, will become fully incardinated into the Poor Clare community here in Graiguecullen and so for better or for worse I will be with you and for you in my little ways in serving God. Your joy will be my joy and your sorrow will be my sorrow.

We all unite in thanking you for being with us tonight. God Bless and reward each one of you for attending the Triduum and joining with us in prayer. May I conclude this talk with the blessing of our Holy Mother St. Clare

May the Lord Bless and keep you

May he show his face to you and be merciful to you

May he turn his countenance to you and give you his peace

May the Lord be with you always and wherever you are.

May you be with Him always.

Amen.