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Born: August 17, 1967
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BECOMING A DEACONESS



I grew up with my parents, Marcelino Ramirez and Corazon Peralta, members of the United Methodist Church in San Nicolas, Pangasinan. Their active role and participation in the church family made an impact in my young life.

However, even though I was active in the church, a hint of emptiness was in me until I attended a Youth Fellowship in Asingan, Pangasinan, in 1982. There, I was touched by the uplifting message of a Student Pastor named Marvin from San Quintin, Pangasinan. I felt God spoke to me, meditating on Romans 8:23-24: "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ." That moment, I decided to follow Jesus and committed myself to serving God.

At the time I decided to become a deaconess, my parents were in the United States. I was left in the Philippines under the guardianship of my two aunties – both devotees in the Catholic Church. I was quite excited to tell my parents about my decision because I knew they would be surprised, which they were. When they settled down, they blessed me - telling me that if it is God's will, then they will support me all the way through. On the other hand, my relatives were against this decision because they did not want me to live a life in poverty.

However, I was blessed with the close guidance and assistance of our deaconess at the time, Miss Eunice Aurello (now Mrs. Galindez). This woman has been one of my greatest inspirations in my life. Her sweet, humble, and loving image had consistently motivated me to become a deaconess.

HARRIS LIFE & THE MAKING OF A DEACONESS

My life at Harris Memorial College was not easy. Located in the heart of metropolis Manila, the campus housed a huge 3-storey building where all 400+ students, staff, and faculty lived, studied, worshipped, and socialized altogether. This new lifestyle of mine took some trying adjustments because I was not accustomed to dormitory/school life with its rigid schedule, chores and not-so-appetizing meals.

During my second year, I began to feel alone. I grew distraught by loneliness and even wanted to quit. I craved to experience what life had to offer outside my Harris lifestyle – I wanted to go out freely, visit my brothers during weekends, etc. It felt like I did not have any freedom at all being at school during weekdays, then at church assignments during weekends. By God's blessing, my mother came home from the States and visited me during this difficult time. God definitely used her to guide me back into remembering His purpose for me. Romans 12:2 says,

“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – His good, pleasing and perfect will.” I prayed for guidance and peace in my heart. By God’s grace, I was able to graduate in 1987, with special award “Best in Kindergarten Education!”

I believe God has used Harris Memorial College to prepare me for the beautiful field of service. My education and training have become a part of my growth as an individual, and have even prepared me to face many obstacles.

CHURCH ASSIGNMENT and Further Studies in Manila

After I graduated, I was assigned to San Jose City United Methodist Church, through the Northwest Philippine Annual Conference. I was in San Jose City, Nueva Ecija, from 1987 to 1991 where I served as a Kindergarten Teacher and Christian Educator.

I managed and taught at the Kindergarten school of this church founded in 1947. At the same time, I also filled the positions of Christian Educator, Pianist, Choir Director, an all-around Deaconess Church Worker.



I had two pre-school classes (one in the morning and one in the afternoon) with about 25-30 children in each session.

I enjoyed my stay in San Jose because I was granted the opportunity to use my passion in music – conducting the best choir at that time. Our cantatas, to please God, were appreciated by all church members.

In 1991, I was encouraged to pursue my studies. I took some courses at the Asian Institute in Liturgy of Music, “Choral Conducting” at Harris Memorial College, and Special Education at the University of the Philippines.

Though I had left in 1991, I continued my volunteer work as a choir conductor in San Jose until 1992. On weekdays I went to school and commuted from Manila to Nueva Ecija on weekends. In 1993, I also worked as a Preschool Teacher at Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City’s Evangelical Church under the amazing supervision of Deaconess Ms. Loreto Vicarme.

MIGRATION TO AMERICA

I immigrated to the United States in 1995. At first, I worked as a pre-school teacher in several church-related pre-schools. In 2001, I successfully completed graduate school studying Elementary Education at the University of Phoenix in San Diego, California. In 2003, I became a Supervisor for the Head Start Program, a non-profit organization that serves low-income families.

MARRIAGE + MY FAMILY



I met my future husband, Nolan Oreas, in San Jose City. When I left in 1992 to pursue Graduate studies, Nolan pursued and followed me in Manila. He became my boyfriend until he migrated to the United States in 1994. On September 9, 1995, we got married at the United Methodist Church on Camino del Rio S in San Diego, California. Today, my husband is a successful and hard-working nurse in San Diego, touching the lives of many – including my own. He is my best friend, my supporting motivator, and my partner in Christ.

We are proud of our three grown-up children: Timothy James (TJ is a nurse at UCSD), Maricris Joy (an SDSU grad with honors, English Education) and Shadrack James (will pursue a career either in engineering or business).

CONCLUDING REFLEXIONS

My favorite verse is Romans 8:28, which reads: “And we know that everything works together for good to those who love the Lord, who have been called according to God’s purpose.”

I believe that my ultimate journey in finding where I am today has been according to God’s purpose. I may not be serving actively as the deaconess I set out to be, but I know in my heart that I am actively serving God through my family and the communities. In my heart, I will always be a deaconess.

My husband and children share an amazingly close bond of love, friendship, and faith. We are blessed, we are privileged. Every day, we abide in what is written in Joshua 24:15b, “But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

