

fearless like St. Francis so that someday, if I had to go see a Pope, I would be ready. Later, I learned that it is an honor to bring up the Gift, and I do it on behalf of the whole Church. It can not be just about me, my birthday or my feast day that I should want to bring up the Gift. Even if I ask to have a Mass said for someone, I offer it for the Universal Church, for the Abbot, the brothers and then for whatever intention I would like to pray for. Once a woman abruptly took the Gift away from a person who had waited to bring up the Gift. Evidently, her reason was important for her, and she did not care what the reason was for the one from whom she took the Gift away. As I saw it Lord, You were so ready to grant the intention of the one who was humiliated.

Once I lived an embarrassing moment. I had to share with the spiritual father that I felt attracted to a man whom I did not even know well. To my surprise, Rev. Father said, "Thank God! You are normal and have the health to live your vocation." He said that it is normal for any healthy person to have feelings for the opposite sex. When a person is called to live a celibate life, he or she learns how to deal with it as to live chastely and faithfully to respond to Your call. He advised me not to pay too much attention to my feelings. If it were indeed You who had called me to live for You alone, the temptation would pass, and sure enough, it did. He told me a story about an abbess feeling attracted to him, and he to her. Knowing the temptation, he took the effort to go and talk to her. As he knew it, after a short conversation, it was clear that You are his everything. The temptation went away rather quickly. "You create what you fear" Abba told me. I, in turn did find certain brothers attractive. As Abba pointed out, it is normal. We strive to be good and love goodness. Therefore, we feel attracted to those who try to be good. I faced the feeling head on and with faith as Abba did. The temptation went away rather quickly for I know well that no one of us would ever be comparable to You, my Lord and my God.

First temporary vow

Soon after, Rev. Father and I planned for my first temporary vow as a consecrated virgin on the Solemnity of the Mother of God, January 1, 1999. The special day came. I made my first temporary vow before Mass with great peace and deep joy. Providentially, there was a Franciscan priest joining to concelebrate. During the Liturgy, he mentioned St. Francis and St. Clare. Smiling, Rev. Father told me afterward and reassured me that You, Lord, allowed the priest to mention the Saints' names as a sure sign of Your love and approval of my vow and intentions. I love You, Lord! After the vow, I continued to go out and gave talks about my conversion. I was very open and sincere in sharing You with everyone. My openness made certain people feel close to me in faith. Among them was a man almost my age. He was very nice and caring in an honorable way. That made me feel flattered, but I knew who I was. It would be the last thing I wanted to do, to lead someone on. So I made it very clear to myself and to him (whether it really applied to him or not) that You and You alone were the only one who got my full attention and love. Loving You, Lord wholeheartedly means I will learn how to love everyone selflessly and unconditionally because they all belong to You. I just have to be prudent as to how I convey that without misleading, especially in dealing with men. I trust that You will help me Lord. May You bless the gentleman for his kindness to me. Amen.

Rev. Father's open-heart surgery, the healing miracle and conversion of Beatrice

In 2000, when Rev. Father's family was visiting, he was rushed to the emergency room for a busted aorta. I was supposed to come for dinner that day. When it happened, he was taken to the

hospital, and I did not know anything. His family did not have my phone number to contact me. However, You let me find out from Br. Paul who happened to pick up the Abbot's phone when I called to see when I should come over for dinner. Once I heard, I rushed to the hospital. There was only one small problem. I did know how to get there. I called and Grandpa Tom gave me the direction as I drove. My guardian angel again helped keep me safe. I tried to call my sister Nomi who worked as a PA and specialized in cardiology at General Hospital where Rev. Father was rushed in for an immediate heart surgery. She was not home so I left her a message in hope she would get it later. I did not know where she went. Once I got to the hospital, I found his family and Abbot John waiting in the family waiting room. Then Nomi showed up. Thank You, Lord! She told me later that since it was a Friday afternoon, she had gone to the Mall after work. She planned to go to a friend's house after but when she got out of the Mall, You allowed her car to have problems. She did not feel too comfortable driving anywhere far so she headed home. That was when she got my message and went right back to the hospital which was a three minute drive from her apartment.

She was there in time for the open-heart surgery. Abba's poor family was very upset. They stayed until he was out of surgery, and everything looked okay. They headed home thinking he would be fine. However, there were serious complications, and Rev. Father was transferred to the ICU. I ended up staying with my sister in the city for almost 27 days while Rev. Father struggled to live. Daily, in tears, I talked and wrote to You. My sister saw how much I was grieving. (I am sorry Lord, that I myself had not been a very good sister to her. In the past, when her car broke down and she had to walk to work, I did not let her borrow my car. When she lived in the city by herself, I hardly came to visit her or spend time with her. Perhaps I was not supposed to get too close to her lest I had a hard time detaching from our natural ties of sisterhood. She was my little baby sister, and we always lived together. I remember when we were in high school, You already prepared her for her future vocation when she did not even know it. She was the only one who applied to work in a nursing home near our house. She helped serve food to the residents. She was particularly fond of the two single elderly sisters who were very close to each other. One day she told me how precious that was, and she said to me that when she and I grew old, perhaps we would live like that. Please Lord, keep a close eye on her for me and give her the spiritual strength and peace she so deserves. Her husband and two sons are a handful for her. I thank You! Soon she too got to know her patient, my Rev. Father. Like anywhere, there were politics at work. It was overwhelming. Rev. Father was not getting better. When he was taken to ICU, and his lungs were filled with fluid, she was very upset. She decided to take the day off to pray to You instead of working. Nomi, Vy and I went to different churches in the city to plead for Abba. At St. Anthony of Padua's, like the three visionaries at Fatima, we knelt in front of the Blessed Mother's statue and prayed for Rev. Father's recovery. The next day, Nomi went back to work. Rev. Father's lungs were clear, and he was doing much better. She looked in the medical report. A note said "unexplainable." For her, she knew it was a miracle that she had specifically prayed for, his prompt recovery and return to the monastery. O how she thanked You, dear Lord. Later when Rev. Father got well and went home, she visited him at the Abbey and shared with Abba her story. With Your mother's intercession, You granted her the desperate prayer request that if Abba got well and went home she would convert to be a Catholic. He blessed her and gave her a Christian name, Beatrice, after Blessed Beatrice of Nazareth, the Cistercian nun. Later I found out too that St. Clare had a sister named Beatrice! Thank You, Lord!

Becoming a Godmother and traveling to South Carolina for Beatrice's baptism

Nomi asked me to be her godmother. A few weeks before her baptism, Nomi let me know the date of the solemn day. I booked a plane ticket through Priceline. It was the cheapest since I did not have a lot of money. The only negative thing about purchasing a ticket on Priceline was that they would not let you choose the time of the departure nor arrival. You could only book the date and pay for it. If there were flight connections that could get you there, which was agreeable with the price you agreed on, your credit card would be charged without possibility of cancellation. Well, everyone got upset at me because my arrival time was too close to the ceremony. Someone would have to go pick me up at the airport, and we both would miss the first part of the Baptism. I could not change or cancel my ticket. I just humbly apologized. You, Lord, saved me. About three days before the departure date, there was an airline union strike. It did not happen everywhere, but just at the airport in Kentucky where I was supposed to make my connection flight. I received a call telling me that I must change my departure time. How thankful I was, and I knew it was You. I was able to depart earlier. Therefore, I arrived a few hours before the actual ceremony. When Nomi shared the story with her church, they all marveled at Your love and work of mercy, Lord! It was a happy day for everyone. She became a Catholic, and since, she had learned very hard to seek to love You faithfully. Every one said I was lucky. I said You, Lord, heard our prayer and had mercy on us, especially me! I thank You!

Rev. Father's Mission to the Philippines

One year later when Rev. Father reached his 75th birthday, according to the new rule of the Order, he had to retire. Abbot John Denburger was elected. Having been Abbot for almost 30 years, Rev. Father moved to Ascension hermitage so Abbot John could feel freer in leading the community. The hermitage was about a mile from the Abbey. It was very difficult for Rev. Father during that time. It was like being a father and taking care of a family for almost 30 years and all of a sudden, he had to leave it. He still had so much to give, Lord. So, soon You had a special mission in mind. One day he was asked by an abbot, Dom Brendan to help his daughter house. It was not an unusual thing. Even though he had retired, he was still very capable and was available. Our Lady of the Philippines Abbey needed help. After a prayerful period, Rev. Father accepted the new challenge. I was not happy to hear the news because he just had a serious heart surgery about a year before from which he almost died. The surviving rate of this kind of surgery is about 15%. In the Philippines, it was 0%, Rev. Father later was told by a Filipino doctor. He was still taking medicine and went for a check-up. When his doctor heard the heart murmur, I wrote up a prayer, and together we prayed to Pope John Paul II for a miracle to heal his heart. I proposed that Abba and I would say the special prayer intercession I composed at Lauds and Vespers. He did that in the Ascension hermitage, and I did so at home at the same time. Yes, thank you, St. John Paul II. Abba was healed. I gave Dom Brendon the benefit of the doubt that he did not know about Rev. Father's health and surgery! Knowing Rev. Father's reputation in the Order, Dom Brendan entrusted the great Abbot the job to help stabilize his daughter house. Rev. Father agreed to it for the love of You, Lord. I, of course was very sad that he would go so far away. Being worried about his health and feeling betrayed by the situation, I was upset but did not know whom I should get upset with. I did not ask him not to go. Instead, I wanted to go with him.