

What it means for me to be an LCM Sister in the 21st century.

Before joining religious life, I had often wondered what exactly it was about. I was of the idea that religious life is all about prayer and aiming for perfection in order to have eternal life. Then coming to join a religious family of the Sisters of the Little Company of Mary, I came to realize that there is more to religious life. Praying and caring for the sick, the suffering and the dying was also prayer.

An LCM Sister in the 21st century finds happiness in pastoral care. I recalled Mother Mary Potter giving guidance on what we ought to be to others - bringing the healing presence of Christ to all. Pastoral care does not only bring healing to the person who has been visited but also to the one ministering. As a sister involved in pastoral care, I was spiritually strengthened by experiencing and seeing what I'm reading from the books and reciting in prayers.

I can say in this 21st century, there is much learning in experiencing than in reading or hearing required. In ministering to the sick in hospital and those in their homes, I found it as the best way to go, spending time with the sick, listening and enjoying one another's company builds patience, tolerance, togetherness and love. It always gives a healthy mindset if someone is there present for you especially in moments of sickness. For I came to know that there is idleness, frustration and distrust in most of the sick people. Orientation to apostolic action was more life giving and helped me find God's will in my life. As a result, I found a change in my community, there was spiritual dialogue, listening to each other and welcoming differences. Eventually I got enriched and realized that discernment to a vocation is not about one person only, it requires the assistance of others as well.

Silence is an essential aspect in the life of an LCM Sister in the 21st century. Not having phones as we come to join religious life, showed me the importance of silence. I could behave the same way either in the kitchen or in the church. It was a help to be focused on where I am going rather than where I am coming from like people in a bus, who focus on where they are going not where they are coming from. With this, there was flexibility of purpose and abandonment before God and provided an opportunity to be grateful of all that I have and having to let go of everything including bad interpretation of life and health.

Accepting weaknesses and challenges helps an LCM Sister in the 21st century. Accepting one's weaknesses and challenges help me to integrate the personal narrative, looking at its past and present in order to make an intellectually and spiritually informed decision every time in my journey in religious life.

Conflict management is required by an LCM Sister in the 21st century. I found conflict management going together with the capacity for managing anger, anxiety or grief. It makes one conscious of their feelings and thoughts. That way, one owns their feelings and they do not express it negatively on the other person. There is a need of self-consciousness and maturity to be able to undertake that.

An LCM Sister in the 21st century needs to bring the healing presence of Jesus to our world as not only the sick patients need attention or this healing presence but also the bereaved for, they need emotional assistance after the loss of a loved one. I was able to attend funeral masses and services and at times listening with compassion. Offering this support, I realized and understood that people grieve differently. Some they are quick to say it's God's will whilst others take much time saying, "why me?". All this was leading to physical and spiritual growth for me.

I love what Mary Potter says about the dying, 'today they need your prayers for tomorrow will be too late. For me it's a reminder that praying for the dying is not limited but something crucial every second on a day-to-day basis. This is the duty of an LCM Sister in the 21st century.

As an LCM Sister in the 21st century, I still feel called to read more and embrace the charism of our congregation. To know and understand what I am called to be today and for the future, requires continuous reflection, pondering on the word of God, Creation and the writings of our Foundress. Reflecting if I need more than prayer and presence in trying to bring healing to God's own and in living out the charism.

By: Sr. Rutendo Chenjera L.C.M