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By Ae Pa You Paw

# Living God's Peace

I was born and raised in a Thailand refugee camp with limited opportunities to engage with religious people whom I admired. After settling in Texas in 2012, my family faced challenges due to the language barrier. I could not read, write, or speak English. I could not attend Mass and communicate with others. Despite this, my family advanced here in this country through the help of my mom's English teacher. She took us to church every weekend, although we still struggled to understand the Mass. After spending a year in Texas, my family moved to Minnesota, where we found a Catholic community consisting of our Burmese ethnic group known as the Karen. Moving to Minnesota gave me hope and a sense of belonging in my Catholic faith again.

In 2014, I moved to Minnesota, where I was able to attend Sunday Mass in my language and engage with other members of local religious communities, including the Franciscan Brothers of Peace and Missionaries of Charity. In 2015, I met a vocation director from the Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters (SSpS) who visited and sparked a curiosity about their congregation. Later, I was invited to attend Mass on Sunday at Divine Word College and continued to learn

about the SSpS. Eventually, I participated in the "See" experience in Techny, Illinois. I engaged in various activities, including retreats and prayer at a summer peace camp. Ultimately, I developed a strong connection with the community.

I visited Divine Word College multiple times and learned more about the mission from my parish about joining the Sisters. Before this, I felt supported by my family and friends in my choice. I had previously known about the Missionaries of Charity but determined that this was my path. A sign that God gave me was interpreted as a sign that God wanted me to follow that order.

I received an offer to apply to Divine Word College, which provided an opportunity to focus on my discernment and education. I began attending school at DWC. Through my studies, ministries, and the examples of the Sisters, I learned that being religious is a commitment to God and serving others, regardless of the challenges. I am grateful to God for guiding me and I thank my mom for her dedication. I strive to recognize God's presence in my life and to see His plans for me. God's plan is to love rather than conforming to the expectations of the world.