

# **“I discovered God little by little, through the affection of my friends”**

When Fiona was born, her parents decided not to baptize her so that, when she was older, she should decide for herself. It was thanks to the example her friends that this came about.

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Fiona grew up in a small town near Valencia, on the east coast of Spain. When she went to Pamplona to study nursing at the University of Navarra, she was going through a difficult moment in her life. For she had just lost someone very close to her whom she loved deeply.

In the midst of her sorrow, anger and sense of powerlessness, she arrived in Pamplona and found a place to live in the Center for Study and Work, where she resided for the first two years of her nursing studies. There she combined her studies with part-time work in the university's food services, thus covering part of her expenses. She also had time to take part in cultural and volunteer projects and activities of Christian formation offered in her student residence.

Fiona found this experience deeply moving. She wasn't accustomed to

having people around her who practiced their faith, especially those her own age. But one problem kept bothering her: if God exists and is so good, how is it possible that the person whom I loved so dearly was allowed to die?"

She used to see her friends going to Mass every Sunday, and some of them even went during the week. They prayed and spoke to God with great naturalness; they greeted Jesus in the tabernacle of the oratory when they reached the nursing school and said good-bye when they left. For her it was all something quite new.

Through their example and friendship, she began to draw closer to the faith, although hardly realizing it, in an indirect way. She envied the strength she saw in her friends to face up to their daily problems and difficulties. She saw how they tried to put care into little things, to be

concerned about the people around them, to give of themselves in serving others, to be grateful... And she, too, wanted to be like that, to have that interior strength.

She joined a reading club where people read books on ethical topics and afterwards spoke about Christian values. She began to attend talks on Christian formation, to speak with the chaplain, and to go to Mass with her friends, more out of curiosity than anything else. Then came Covid-19 in March 2020 and the lockdown. She went home and continued her university classes online.

**Fiona, would you like to receive instruction to prepare for Baptism?**

At home, she began to miss her routine of classes, friends, Mass, talks, work, practical training...

Summer came and the emptiness continued growing.

In September classes began again at the University in a hybrid format and she returned to Pamplona, although living now in an apartment with other young women who had been in her former student residence.

One day, when leaving class, a friend of hers suddenly came up and asked out of the blue: “Fiona, would you like to receive instruction to prepare for Baptism?” She replied right away: “Yes, certainly!” It was an idea she had been mulling over for quite some time, and she didn’t hesitate.

First, she told her parents. They reacted with joy and support, since they saw her strong conviction. Then she told her friends, both those in Pamplona and her old friends back in her hometown. She was a little nervous about how some of them would react, especially those far

from the faith. But to her surprise, they all expressed welcome and respect for her decision. Everyone saw how she was more peaceful, and so happy.

Thanks to the catechism classes, she began to discover the beauty of the faith and to see many aspects of the Church's teachings in a new light. She often asked questions and voiced her doubts: how God could be hidden in a piece of "bread," the mystery of grace and sin, human freedom... But as she continued learning, everything started making sense.

## **Meaning of suffering**

The practical nursing training helped her discover God in the sick, in those who suffer, in the needy. She experienced through her work how she could help relieve that suffering, and how it had a deep meaning if it was united to Christ's sacrifice on the Cross that is renewed every day at

Mass. And she came to realize that it is just as important to try to heal the wounds of the soul as those of the body, and decided to sign up for volunteer work in the ICU during the summer.

Finally, the great day arrived. On 15 May 2021, she received Baptism and Confirmation, and made her first Holy Communion. It was the most important day in her life. She felt an indescribable happiness. Her face was sore from so much smiling! It was deep joy that she couldn't contain inside.

That day, moreover, was the anniversary of the death of the dearly beloved person she had lost. Three years had gone by since then. Now, her sorrow and pain took on new meaning; she could face it serenely with the hope of meeting up once again in Heaven.

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