

I was born in Baladjay, San Remigio, Antique, Philippines to a family consisting of two devoted parents and six siblings. My parents were religious. Mother always went to church and made sure her children attended too. She was strictly dedicated to the traditions and ceremonies of the local Aglifayan Church that was the main spiritual influence in our Barangay. A small Convention Baptist Church was situated a few doors down the street from our home. Dad became interested in its services and attended there for a few years. From time to time during my childhood I remember our parents hosting missionaries from various groups. However, our family remained faithful to the Catholic doctrines of the Aglifayan Church, with one exception.

During my teens, my elder sister Erlinda accepted the Lord while attending services at the Southern Baptist Church in San Jose. In 1998, she affirmed on her death bed that she knew that she was saved and would go to Heaven when she died. I was at her bedside when she passed away peacefully.

As a teenage girl my motive was to "serve God and my fellow man." Therefore, I decided at the age of 17 to enter a convent and become a nun. I spent two years in the nunnery in Iloilo City before my Mother begged me not to continue. She influenced me to leave the convent, a decision that I would never regret.

I then entered Central Philippine University (C.P.U.) to study Education and specialized in Home Economics. I spent four years there and in that time had little or no Christian witness, despite the school being a Convention Baptist institution. After graduation, I went home to work briefly as a teacher and soon after, in 1970, accepted a permanent position to teach on the Island of Mindanao, in a place called Sultan Kuderat.

I enjoyed the teaching profession and had as my pupils both Catholic and Moslem children. I was still devoted to my novenas and idols, and had no interest in the Bible or any other faith. While in Mindanao I had an experience that changed my life. On a trip home to visit my family I and two other travelers were abducted by 2 robbers in Zamboanga and taken into the countryside. The men asked us for our money and possessions which I gladly gave. I begged them to let me go and they did along with an elderly woman. The doctor that was taken with us was probably murdered, as he was unwilling to part with his money. Had I died at this time I would have perished in Hell, but God graciously preserved my life.

After this incident I determined to leave the Philippines. The opportunity soon came to go to Hong Kong in 1981 where I was employed by Lincoln Chiu, a wealthy Hong Kong businessman. These were happy times. I enjoyed my friends and my work as a caregiver and administrative assistant. While in Hong Kong, I continued in the Catholic Church, and had no Christian witness to me during that time. I stayed with the Chius for four years before moving to Canada as God continued His leading in my life.

On September 25, 1985, I arrived in Calgary to work for Gil and Michelle Currie. The snow had just fallen and with wonder and excitement I entered my new life here. During the next several months I faithfully followed my Catholic traditions and walked to church no matter what the weather or the distance. At the time I roomed with three other Filipinas in an apartment near downtown. One of the ladies was a former teacher from my hometown. Angie invited me to attend Western Baptist Church where I met many friendly people including two young Filipino men who were conducting Bible Studies. I started regularly attending church and

the Bible meetings together with about 10 or 15 other ladies. While there I would ask Walter and Dom many spiritual questions and to my surprise they had most of the answers, which were all from the Bible. I was formerly taught to believe that if you read the Bible too much you would become crazy. But these Christians were certainly not crazy; they were loving and kind, and very knowledgeable about God's Word.

My big struggle was accepting my sin. In my mind, I was not a sinner. I had been baptized, gone to church, attended Mass and recited my novenas. I hadn't done anything really wrong in my mind. BUT..."*all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;*" (Romans 3:23). I had not drunk alcohol, smoked and certainly not partied. I did not realize at the time, "*If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*" (I John 1:8) I was a very religious idolater, and very much a Hell-bound sinner definitely not ready to meet God.

But, praise the Lord, God had not stopped working in my life! While at Gil and Michelle's, I heard a TV evangelist and his message spoke to my heart. However, I was still not ready to repent of my sin and accept Jesus Christ as my personal Savior. I continued on in my religion, unsaved and blind to my lost condition.

Then, on March 17, 1987, at Western's Sunday Service God performed a miracle in my life. As the pastor preached the gospel I came under the conviction of my sin by the Holy Spirit. The preacher explained that God loved me so much that He gave His only begotten Son on the cross FOR ME...for my sin, , so that I would not have to die in my sins and go to Hell. The truth of God's Word had so pierced my heart that when the invitation was given I literally rose from my seat and came forward to ask the pastor to show me how to be saved. Many others were in that service but to my knowledge I was the only one who came forward to accept salvation.

There at the altar, with Pastor Jones beside me, I recognized that I was a lost SINNER headed for Hell, and that the Lord Jesus Christ had personally died in My place for MY sin; shed his precious blood as the full payment for My SIN; and rose again from the dead on the third day for My justification. Sorrow came over me as I recognized how I had been resisting God's Holy Spirit for so long in my life, as a religious, BUT LOST, person. He had been so merciful to me! I repented of my sin there and then, and put my faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. I cried out to the Lord to forgive my sin and come into my heart and save me. He did, that very moment! "*For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*" (Romans 10:13) The burden of sin was lifted and peace flooded into my heart! I rejoiced!

From that day (March 17, 1987) forward I knew that I was saved and on my way to Heaven, and that the Blood of Jesus Christ had washed away my sins. On June 28, 1987, I was baptized by immersion as a public testimony of my salvation and my new life in Christ, and joined Western Baptist Church.

Since being saved I have experienced many answers to my prayers and felt God's hand of protection upon me. The Lord brought me a Christian husband and put us in a good Bible-believing church where we are able to serve Him.

Since my conversion I have had the blessing of witnessing the gospel to others. I am truly saddened that so many people remain unsaved, holding onto their own religion like I did, and refusing to let go of their sin. I look at the bleak condition of the world today and ask myself, "How much longer will God allow man's rebellion to continue?" Then I am reminded, "*The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any*

should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (II Peter 3:10) God is incredibly patient but this does not mean He will do nothing. Judgment is coming, and coming soon.

It saddens me to see my Filipino people so caught up in idols and religious traditions like I once was. Many of them are relying on the saints and sacraments of their Church, or their 'sinner's prayer' for salvation, and not on Jesus Christ alone. They say they believe in Jesus and the next moment pray to Mary or some saint, or depend upon their 'good' works to get them to Heaven. But Jesus said, "*I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*" (Luke 13:3, 5) and, "*Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.*" (Matthew 18:3) Repentance toward God and childlike faith in Jesus Christ is what God wants; and not prideful, or religious, works.

Equally tragic is the home grown Canadian who, in material complacency, neglects his or her own soul, "*For what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?*" (Mark 8:38) I have worked for wealthy Canadians who told me not to mention the name of Jesus to their children. They wanted the child find their own way when they were older. This is the recipe for Hell, for both parent and child.

The Christian life is a journey of faith that ends in Heaven. In the past, I had no assurance of salvation and never knew where I would go when I died. Now I KNOW on the basis of the Word of God where Jesus says, "*Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.*" (John 5:24)

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Mrs. Christian Crawford
'Mama C'

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To the Lord Jesus Christ

This is my Testimony