

Dear Eucharia,

I arrived in Canada on a cold winter morning in February 2013 from Nigeria. This was my first experience in another country as a missionary, but the presence of two Sisters that came to pick me up gave me much encouragement. After a few days of my arrival, I did volunteer work at the Holy Cross after school program. It was interesting to watch children engage in different activities of their interest as well as play games with their friends. Although I did not stay long in this program, it was educational for me.

The apostles of Jesus were frightened when they saw Him walking on the lake. Archbishop Albert LeGatt said to me on our way to Poplar River where I was to start my pastoral ministry, 'we are going to drive on the lake.' I asked, your Grace, how is that possible?' He said the lakes are all frozen, therefore roads are constructed on them to the North. Excitement and wonder filled my imagination which later turned out to be real. Eventually, we did walk on the lake before we continued on our eight-hour journey.

The orientation I got from some workshops at our congregation's headquarters in Nigeria helped me get acclimatized to some of the cultural differences. My experience up North is such of one on one encounters, hence the need for attentive listening. I notice and observe that people really need someone to talk to. Someone who could just listen to their worries, anxieties, hurts and more. Listen more and talk less if need be, is key.

Witnessing by being present enlivens many who are despairing. Embarking on home visits in good and cold weather is also powerful for me. The expression on some people's faces when visited reflects a huge amount of relief for them. The zeal for God's work which must be done at all cost no matter the inconveniences, is always my watch word. People appreciate my work more when I call them by their names as well as pray for them; they are drawn to me, and help them trust me. So I try to remember the names as much as possible and feel at home with them. They in turn accept me as one of them.

Another cherished experience is the quest of wanting to know more about God and how to overcome sin and temptation expressed by some people. This is amazing! Some phone from their communities just to seek spiritual enrichment. I find this challenging and call to mind Christ's mandate to 'go, then to all peoples everywhere and make them disciples'. I know their souls to be saved. This equally helps me to be more docile to my Unseen Guide, and to love Him more in the people I serve and work with.

The willingness and readiness of some members of the Church help spur on my pastoral ministry. I learned a lot of lessons working with children from different backgrounds. They all contribute a great deal in my pastoral experiences. I cannot end this letter to myself without mentioning the moral support received from some friends and others, who just by mere interaction and socialization, exclaim and encourage me for accepting to work up North as they call it. The pivot of all these experiences is prayer. In all, I am happy working with my people, my fellow children of God. To God be the glory.

Your older self