



## Ewa Bartosiewicz (POL)

I was born in Białystok, a city in eastern Poland, in 1983. I was brought up in a Christian family, but my journey with God was twisted and unsteady. As a little girl I had a mystical relationship with Him which had completely faded away when I was a teenager. Since then I was convinced that God was important, but only because He had the power to turn my life upside down, which I didn't want. I thought I was happy, studying Information Technology at Warsaw University of Technology and preparing to get married. Life was just passing by with not a lot of interference from my side.

All this changed in one moment when my fiancé decided to break up with me. My life took a dramatic turn and I had no idea what to do with myself. Caught in a big crisis and looking for people who could help me, I went to mass in a Jesuit chapel where my college friend was playing the guitar. One meeting led to another, and I found myself becoming a part of the family in that Jesuit chaplaincy. Slowly I learned how to communicate with God, and started loving Him more and more. By that time I was already opening myself to new possibilities in life – not only having a family – but it was not yet my time.

In 2009 there was a youth meeting in Kenya organized by the Jesuits and my chaplaincy planned to go. I was very excited to go to Africa! While there, I fell in love with Kenya and decided that I needed to return and stay for a longer period of time. It took me two years to plan that trip. I had to quit my job in a bank, and I asked my friends to help me with the finances.

By October 2011 I was ready to plunge into the unknown. I had only made plans for the first three months, which I spent in the community of St. Martin in Nyahururu – a beautiful ecumenical place filled with God's presence. The next eight months were going to be a surprise from the Holy Spirit and they certainly were!



In January 2012, I was invited to a Jesuit school in Nairobi – St. Aloysius Gonzaga - where I taught Computer Science for another three months. Then I had a wonderful opportunity to go north in very rural areas and meet people from Marsabit and the surrounding villages. It was an unforgettable experience to be with the people who live traditionally and who hardly have any education.

The biggest surprise however was an invitation that God Himself gave me during one of my three-day retreats. It was only one single word during prayer, but it was clear enough for me to me that He was guiding me towards religious life. At that time I did not know many congregations, and the ones I saw in different places did not seem to be the ones for me. I asked my Jesuit friend for advice and he gave me only one answer – Sacred Heart. Convinced by the reasons he gave me, I decided to explore this possibility.



Immediately after coming back to Poland, I began my adventure as a candidate of the Society of the Sacred Heart. My parents, though not happy at the beginning, were understanding of my choice. Seeing how happy I was, they grew into loving the Society.

I spent a wonderful year in Pobiedziska, where we now have a retreat center. There, I discovered that this Society has been in my heart since I was born. The spirituality of the Heart of Jesus, which is welcoming to all and which is always among the people, inspired me each day to look at the world with His eyes.



I have discovered all long the way that everything I have lived through had been preparing me to be a Religious of the Sacred Heart (RSCJ). In 2015, this dream became my reality when I made my first profession of vows! It is hard to describe how happy I continue to be as I see myself part of this beautiful, multicultural family of women who give their hearts to God.

After my first vows, I was sent to the community in Gdynia to be a catechist in a public school. Although this is a challenging ministry, it helps me to grow in many ways. This year I am also teaching Computer Science in a Jesuit high school. I still dream of being a missionary in faraway countries; but I also see how much work is to be done just here where I am.



I am sure that many surprises are still ahead of me, because my God is a God of great surprises!