

## **Personal testimonies: Discovering God's love in my life**

### **ELENA (Uzbekistan)**

I will tell my simple story about my faith. Jesus entered into my life as he embraced me in his wonderful love ten years ago when I was a student at Fergana State University. So you can see that I am not so old. I am just ten years old as a child of Jesus, a child of God. This has all recently reoriented my thoughts and actions. After many years I again know the loving God I first encountered.

As you know, I am from Uzbekistan, from the little town of Fergana. It is a Muslim country and our Church is very young and small. I remember when I was a little girl, we didn't even have a priest and a house in which to celebrate Mass on Sundays. My grandmother and other neighbours gathered money to buy a house in which to pray and they asked for a priest from the capital Tashkent. When I grew up I realised how strong their love was and their faith. My father was Orthodox and my parents decided to give me freedom to choose my Church. I entered the Catholic Church ten years ago and I learned that the next year I would be christened.

I do not know why I chose the Catholic Church. It is a mystery – a mystery for everybody, a mystery of God's love. I discovered, when I entered the Church, that my grandmother was praying for me and for her daughter my mother. Then we became Catholics. But before that, when I was a teenager, I argued with my parents and I went away from home. They were difficult times without parents and without God. Then I realised that I am not alone. I have my Father and He is always with me in my daily life. When I wake up, He smiles, and I realise that I have a Father, I have my parents.

My first experience of God's love brought about a profound change in the way I treated others. As my grandmother had prayed for me, I think that we should pray for others. We should pray for Muslims and for Christians of other confessions. Today and during the next few days we will speak about love. Where there is love, there is praying. There is no love without praying.

Then I became a teacher of children. I was a teacher of Muslim children, and I realised that we should love them also. In our daily lives we should recognise love in ourselves and in others. Every time I pray to God, I ask Him to make me an arm of his love, because we are living because of God's love. Thank you for your attention.