



Living Life

While I was overseas, I visited Arequipa in Peru, and toured around the Santa Catalina Convent. Founded in 1570, the convent is still home to 30 sisters, who range in age between 18 to 90. Their days begin at 5am, and includes praying, studying, doing manual work to win their daily bread, praying all the time for the world, and with the world. In their letter to the public, they write “in the serenity that our hearts have been originating during long hours of silence, listening to God, in the perseverant praise that springs up of the grateful soul, we are able to acknowledge the presence of God in the small events of everyday life”.

What a wonderful thing it must be to be able to spend all your days praying, listening to God. Not to be distracted by the busy clutteredness of our everyday lives, but to be still, and listen and have time for God. For that to be all that your ‘To Do’ list was for each and everyday – to praise, pray and reflect on God.

As I reflected on my life, it seemed like a very attractive option to be locked up in a convent (it was a very beautiful one!) and spend my life praying. For the real world is messy, and hard to live in. We are bombarded with temptation, influenced by the non-Christian world around us. Sin can cling to us so closely, that the world can seem a hard place to live in.

Yet we can find comfort in the fact that it is these very struggles with sin, it is the very messiness of the world we live in, that pulls us heavenward, and makes us seek God. For Jesus did not promise an easy ride. *“I have told you these things, so that you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”* (John 16:33). Locking ourselves away from the world is not the solution. I’m sure that the nuns in the convent are still sinful, and given to temptation – we are all sinful creatures, that is why Jesus came to save us. As we live in this world, we are to struggle and strive to be like Christ, given strength by the Holy Spirit poured out for us. But we can look forward to a day when the messiness and heartache of this world will end, and Jesus will return.



The letter to the public from the nuns ended “After more than 400 years we are still here, because our contemplative vocation is LOVE. This is our great secret of being happy: to be in love, neither with an ideal nor a project, but with Jesus Christ.” And perhaps, though we don’t live in a convent, that should be our goal too. Not to be focused on work, or family, but to be in love with Jesus, and let him guide all of our lives.