



# Mary Jean Reuyan

Living in a broken family is not a hindrance to success. My life has always been simple and ordinary. I am Mary Jean Reuyan and I was born on the 31st day of December in the year 2006. I live in Portland Cahumayan, Danao City, Cebu, eldest daughter of Lilet and I don't really know what exactly is the name of my father because he left us when I was just 2 years old. I have only one younger sister but I also have other siblings from the new families of my parents.

During my childhood times, we used to live with my grandparents because my mother was still young since I was born when she was still 17 years old and by the time my father left us, my mother was still carrying in her womb my younger sister, Junlit. Since that day onwards, I have treated my grandfather as my true father already.

When I was not yet studying and my mother still has to go to school, I and my younger sister were left under the care of my grandmother and there was even a time when only the two of us were left home and my father suddenly came and wanted to get me and bring me with him to his hometown, Negros, but he hasn't succeeded since our neighbors called my mother from school right away.

While I was growing up, my mother was forced by my grandmother to stop studying so that she could help in taking care and raising us and her younger siblings since she was the eldest and she was already in 3rd year college by that time, taking education. After she stopped studying, she applied to a lot of jobs and supported me and my sister in our studies and raised us alone but with the help of my grandparents also.

When I was in daycare, I was always sick and oftentimes admitted to the hospital. In kindergarten, my health was recovering and I was a jolly and very talkative child as my teacher was always telling me. In grade 1, I already learned

how to do household chores like washing the dishes, cleaning, and even a little washing of clothes because my mother and grandmother are always telling me that I must learn those things especially since I'm the eldest. By that age, I was also very naughty at school and my card always had a phrase that stated "most talkative". In grade 2, my past teachers were shocked because I was in the top 2 for the first time and I had already excelled in class but I was still the same girl who was very talkative and jolly that others may think I didn't have any problem in life. In this grade also, I joined the MTAP-Math Challenge for the first time and we ranked 7th. In grade 3, aside from my math contests, I also joined chess, daMath, and many more. By this time, my sister was already in grade 1 and I was always held responsible for her at my young age. In grade 3 also, I joined the Supreme Pupils Government (SPG) in our school as the batch representative. In grade 4, we placed 2nd in the MTAP-Math Challenge and I became an honor in that contest also. By this time also, my mother met my stepfather who was still very good at that time. In grade 5, I already had a half-brother and by this time, my mother decided that we live in another house and so, my grandfather together with my stepfather built a new house near the farm of my great grandfather and when I was almost in grade 6, we transferred there.

When I was in grade 6 I had to make a lot of decisions in life. One time, my father went home because he wants me to go with him to Negros because his sister died. I didn't come because my mother and my grandparents didn't allow me. On October 8, 2018, my great grandfather died. That made me very sad because he was like a father to me. By this year level, I also had to decide on where I should have my high school, whether to stay with my mother or to be with my father. It was a difficult one but in the end, I decided not to choose between them. If I stay with my mother, I would be giving her a hard time. I also have my stepfather who cannot be trusted. If I would be with my father, I don't know him well and he also had a new family. So, on December 10, 2018, I took the entrance examination for Sisters of Mary School. When I received the letter that said I passed I was very happy but I also felt very sad because I really didn't want to leave my mother and my family but I had for my future and for a lot of reasons. On April 2, 2019, I graduated from elementary and on April 22, 2019, I went to high school, at the Sisters of Mary School.

There are a lot of reasons why I decided to study here. Of course, first and foremost, we are poor and I don't want my mother to suffer anymore. Another is that I was influenced by my uncle because he is a graduate of the Sisters of Mary

School-Boystown in Minglanilla.

Also, another reason is my stepfather. Ever since he came, my mother became different and my life became full of fear. At first, I thought he would be a good father to us but as time passed his true colors started to show. Since he came and became part of the family, my mother was influenced to not go to mass and she became aggressive. Just like many of the cases about having a stepfather, he is also the kind of person who is full of lustful thoughts, desires, and actions towards us since we are not really his daughters in the first place. I won't state what really happened because it was a traumatic experience that I don't want to remember anymore. That is one of the main reasons why I don't want to stay at home. At first, I just kept it to myself for the sake of my younger brother who was still very young at that time. Also, I knew that my mother wouldn't believe me because it was impossible for him to do that since I was not really girly at that time. But when I was already here in this school, one time we wrote about our unforgettable experience and I wrote about my stepfather. By that time Sister knew about it and she told my mother about it during the visiting day in 2019. After my mother knew about what happened she decided to break up with my stepfather but because of my younger brother whom I love so much, she couldn't because she knew that I wouldn't allow my brother to experience what I experienced which is having a broken family.

Every vacation, I am always watchful and during my grade 7 vacation, I told him that I would forgive him if and only if he didn't do to my sister what he did to me but sadly, he did. During my grade 10 vacation, my sister opened up to me about what my stepfather was doing which made me very angry with him. I really want them to break up but I can't for the sake of my younger siblings since now they are already 3. I would prefer to sacrifice myself than to let them live without a complete family because I never want to let them experience the pain of being jealous of others for having a father.

My high school life is also a memorable one when I entered the Sisters of Mary School last April 22, 2019. At first, I felt like giving up and I wanted to go home but soon I realized that I must not give up because it is for my future. In grade 7, I was able to join the MTAP-Math Challenge and we won the championship. I was also able to join the youngsters' essay writing competition and I was in the top 4 of our batch in grade 7. In grade 8, I was still on the list of honor students. When I was in grade 8, COVID 19 came and there were no contests anymore and what saddened me more was that there was no vacation so

for the first time, I was able to have my birthday without my family. In grade 9, my immune system was very weak. I was isolated for 2 months and I was even sent home for a month to rest because I had a lot of sickness at that time. But thanks be to God, I recovered and after all I still belong to the honor students. In grade 10, during the first quarter, I was sick again and I had to be isolated for almost a month because I had pneumonia which is communicable. After I recovered, I struggled a lot to catch up with the discussions, and with the help of those people around me, I survived. During my grade 10 vacation, I knew that my sister went to our biological father and stayed there for months but sadly my father did something towards her that left my sister a traumatic experience and added an anger in my heart towards him. Last January 2024, I was informed that there was an international contest. At first, I was afraid to fail but still I tried. We joined the Philippine International Mathematical Olympiad and during the heat round, we won silver, and also during the final round we still won silver thanks to the help of our teachers and the support of the sisters and our fellow students. During our moving-up ceremony, I was very happy to receive the award of being the Best in Mathematics and being an honor student. I am currently having my OJT at the Meraki Tech Precision Corporation under the Engineering Department and I'm still looking forward to many challenges in life. I do hope to conquer it all through God's help.

Even though sometimes I feel like giving up, I'll keep going for a better future and for my sister. I really don't know yet what course I would like to take in college because I just rely on the scholarships I can get because I will just be the one to sustain myself and my sister in our studies but I really want to become a Civil Engineer someday. I just hope in the future that I can fulfill my dreams for my sister, make my mother proud, and show that living in a broken family is not a hindrance to success because I still have a mother who never gave up on us even though she is already tired. I am really very grateful for all the opportunities I received in the Sisters of Mary School and all those people who continue to support me in my daily endeavors.