

MISSION BRIDGING CULTURES

Sendai, Japan

Sister Joanne Esijema coordinates a Child Care Center in Sendai. The name of the Center is Sayuri Hoikuen (sayuri is a small lily). The facility provides day care support for many children. Some are children from single parent families, some have disabilities, and some just need a loving home.

Sister Joanne tells her story

In my Bible lesson with our 38 children ages 3, 4 and 5, I was inspired to integrate the English lesson. I invited Sr. Ana from our community to join me. She is a Filipina, who loves to sing with her guitar. I was so happy when she generously accepted my invitation to join me. She agreed to teach the children for at least 10 to 15 minutes immediately after my lesson. This will happen only once or twice a month depending on the schedule I give her.



We actually started working together last June 18, 2019. Sr. Ana was so amazed with the children introducing themselves. When the 4 and 5 years old introduced themselves in English their voices were not so loud. But when the 2 and 3 years old introduced themselves in Nihongo or in Japanese, they were so loud. Our children were so wonderful.

I started the lesson in Creation Story which Sr. Ana followed up by showing the children all the subjects of creation story (sun, moon, etc). I and the children including their teachers were so delighted with her creativity in teaching English. She made the children actively participate in her lesson by motivating them to speak loudly and clearly. She actually knows how to deal with

the children and to get their attention. She called first the well versed child so that the other children would imitate and follow this child. She also applied the group age method of learning which in turn the children learned, with joy and happiness. Likewise the lesson was easily retained to their mind. They could easily identify and describe the sun, the moon, the river, the mountain etc. in random immediately. Added to this, her skills in music and playing stringed instruments intensified the children's interests in learning the lesson. The moment she opened the case of ukulele and played the *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star* song, our children immediately imitated her. They were even more enthusiastic when she sang the ABC song. Again, our children in their innocence repeated the song so clearly. They could sing well and beautifully. Indeed, God is truly present with these children.



When I started the lesson with the children, they seemed very attentive to my discussion on the Creation story. However, when they saw Sr. Ana seated at the back, they were so excited, and half of their attention was with her especially when they saw that she had the ukulele with her. Our children are very welcoming. They're simple enough to accept a new teacher with her culture. Truly, our ***culture is actually a bridge while being in mission.*** .

This is one positive result of a unified Philippines-Japan Province for which I am so thankful to God. This opportunity to take care of these children is our mission that bridges each one's cultures. This makes us joyful in sharing God's love and abundant blessings. The minimal presence and service of a Philippine sister brought maximum blessings of happiness in fulfilling our mission in Sendai, Japan.

Sr. Joanna Esijema