

MY MEMORABLE EXPERIENCE IN SINGAPORE

30th July 2018 was a memorable day for me. That was the day I joined other sisters and lay mission partners as participants of the “Learn English in an International Community” program organized by the Good Shepherd Sisters at Restful Waters, Singapore.

I arrived in Singapore on 29th July with many thoughts and concerns on my mind. However, the warm welcome of Sr. Lucy Chia and Melina wiped away all the doubts and fears I had. I felt at home. We were nine in the group from different Asian countries, namely, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Indonesia, Korea and Vietnam. Living with three lay mission partners and other sisters from different cultures was an enriching and wonderful experience. We learnt much from each other. I felt the interconnectedness and the spirit of St. Mary Euphrasia (SME) as we came together as an international Good Shepherd (GS) family.



Standing from left: Selestina Sendiri (Indonesia), Sr Sumaira Yousaf (Pakistan), Sr Chrishanthi Basil (Sri Lanka), Sr Francesca Do Thi Thai (Vietnam), Sr Thilini Rupasinghe (Sri Lanka), Veronica Kim (Korea)

Seated from left: Sr Lucy Chia (Singapore), Sr Nilusha Kiriwella (Sri Lanka), Sr Afrida Sri Maryani (Indonesia), Ms Maryann Yong (Korea)



good opportunity for me to improve my skills.

We began the program with a prayer service led by Sr. Lucy and Melina. The prayer service helped me to see the days ahead with hope and trust. From that day onwards, we had creative prayer almost every morning, where I experienced God’s powerful presence among us. I was enriched by everyone’s sharing, especially Sr. Lucy’s inspirational sharing which guided me to reflect from different perspectives. Having to lead each morning’s prayer was a

Sr. Lucy, Melina and the team had organized this program very well. Though it was named “Learning English”, it was more than this. True, we had Grammar lessons, writing assignments on different topics, presentations, etc., but we learnt much more.

The teachers were not just teachers. They were very simple and committed, even to the extent of volunteering to carrying out the little tasks. Their commitment, GS spirit, the way they taught us using the scriptures and other congregational documents and their passion for the mission serve as a tremendous inspiration for me. They were all drawn by the spirit of SME. I really liked the word “OUR” which most of them used whenever they spoke about anything related to the GS mission or the Congregation. This showed the love, belongingness and the oneness they had within, as a GS family. I experienced this not only from the teachers but also from each and every one who was engaged in the different GS ministries in Singapore.



Participants with their teachers and programme contributors present at the Closing Ceremony
Front row: Sr Afrida Sri Maryani, Ms Maryann Yong, Sr Francesca Do, Sr Sumaira Yousaf, Sr Nilusha Kiriwella.
Middle row: Sr Lucy Chia, Ms Joan D’Cotta, Sr Thilini Rupasinghe, Sr Chrishanthi Basil, Ms Selestina Sendiri, Ms Melina Ong. Back row: Sr Joan Lopez, Ms Morene Sim, Ms Agnes Yeo, Ms Kuang Ser Yee, Ms Veronica Kim, Ms Susanna Chan, Ms Agnes Ee, Ms Cecilia Lim, Ms Cecilia Ee, Ms Nan Bandara



The session on St. John Eudes, St. Mary Euphrasia and their mission partners, facilitated by Sr Helena Vytialingam and Sr Maria Dipal led me to re-think and update my past knowledge besides thinking about my responsibility as a mission partner to bring together our lay mission partners in Sri Lanka, at least in my ministry.

The discussions and sharing we had on social issues and the ministries carried out by the different provinces enriched and empowered us to feel and understand each other's struggles, pain, hopes and dreams for the future. We were taught presentation skills and given opportunities to identify our capabilities which we were not aware of. We were also able to build our self-confidence by relating stories and sharing our views.



The "Knowing Self and Others" session facilitated by Sr Lucy and Melina was helpful for me. It helped me to understanding myself and others better. No doubt it will also help me to relate to others whom I come into contact with in the future.

The Peace Prayer Walk was another touching and new experience for me. I felt the love and concern of the volunteers towards the women on the streets in the red light district of Singapore. The volunteers were so eager to show the women their understanding, acceptance and kindness. Though we wanted to talk to the women, that was not encouraged due to the presence of the pimps. We could only offer our silent prayers and wish them peace.



Peace Prayer Walk with Cecilia Ee, Agnes Ee and team

The excursions and visits to places of attraction in Singapore brought me much happiness and joy. As a group we experienced joy and togetherness in those moments. The creativity and the passion of the people who built those places were amazing. On 9th August, which is Singapore's National Day, we realized that as a nation, Singaporeans had labored and made sacrifices to bring their country to this level of development.



When I came to Singapore, my dream was to learn and improve my English, especially my presentation skills in order to use them for my mission and to gain some international experience. Today, as I look back, I feel really happy and grateful to God for the opportunity to learn much more than I expected. I was also able to enrich myself in countless ways.

In conclusion, I remember with a grateful heart, the late and dear Sr. Susan Chia who initiated such a useful and helpful program. My heartfelt gratitude goes also to Sr. Joan Lopez, Province Leader of Singapore-Malaysia Province. I am very grateful to Sr. Lucy, Melina and the team for their hard work and the spirit they put into organizing this program so well, which helped me immeasurably. I also appreciate my own Province Leadership Team for providing me with this opportunity to participate in the program. This experience will definitely help me carry out my mission more efficiently and effectively.

Written by: Sr Thilini Rupasinghe



Proudly holding their book, “Our Learning Journey”, a compilation of stories and personal reflections written during the one-month programme

Sr Chrisanthi Basil of Sri Lanka shared, “The days I spent in Singapore enrich my life to make it more effective in my dedication to serve the people of God...

Coming to know different cultures and listening to social issues and problems of the different countries paved the way for me to think globally. The reality is in many ways very challenging...

I was challenged to see and experience the commitment of the mission partners. Their dedication is so amazing. It is evident that they are really God given gifts to the Good Shepherd mission in Singapore. Apart from English lessons, the sessions we had on diverse topics were so inspiring and added knowledge. All the activities were inspiring and significant. I was touched by the session given on Leadership. It made me reflect more deeply about my own commitment. There were many inputs which I may practice in my life.

I realized there were some personality changes in me. I am so grateful to God for His presence with me. For leading me, enriching me, for allowing me to get in touch with my own self. It is very important during the past month that I really tried to give time for myself. Here I was able to listen to myself more than what I do when I am in my home country. Thank you, Lord.”

Veronica Kim of Korea wrote, “It has been a challenging and valuable time in Singapore. I am grateful for all the participants. Every single day, I feel that God is around us. The programme consists of creative prayer every morning, English grammar class, discussions about the Good Shepherd mission and presentations to practice speaking in English clearly. I’d like to recommend this English programme to all Good Shepherd partners to learn English and to have a new vision of the Good Shepherd Mission in an International Community. It is a time of grace and also a time of supreme experience with Good Shepherd values through the best partnership between Sr Lucy, who is in-charge of Restful Waters and mission partner, Melina, Manager of the Cross-Border programme in Singapore.

Sr Marie Jean, Province Leader of Korea has a plan for “The Shepherding Course”. I am a member of the committee for preparation of “The Shepherding Course”. All the experiences here such as the international community, seeing the bigger picture, the way people are treated, will help me as we prepare for “The Shepherding Course”.

Sr Francesca Do of Vietnam said, “It has been an enriching experience with much happiness. I wish more mission partners, like me who was so afraid of speaking in English will have the opportunity to attend this course. This course has given me the confidence and daringness to speak. I will continue to speak and learn this beautiful language. I dance with joy with new found courage.”

