

'Every Response Matters'

(by Good Shepherd Partners-in-Mission, Singapore-Malaysia)

4th of August, 2020... an explosion in the centre of Beirut...devastating an area the radius of 4 miles from where the explosion happened, destroying over 300,000 lives. The image of people who themselves had lost their homes going around with brooms and dustpans to help clean up the debris in their neighbours' homes in the devastated area in Beirut was heart wrenching. It gave us a peek into the hearts of people who we do not think about every day. But this is not an everyday occurrence. It is a catastrophe that sadly could have been avoided. Still, the people of Beirut, awoke the next day, rose up out of the ashes to brace themselves and face the future with dignity and hope. We felt the strength of their spirit as if it was a tremor within our hearts too and we rose up to respond.

'Every response matters' is the view taken by Good Shepherd partners-in-mission from the moment the news reached our ears. Today 4th of September, 2020, exactly a month of space between these two dates, the hearts that have been touched, the word that has been spread, the pockets that have been dug into, the cheques that have been issued, the online money transfers that have been done all contributed towards being in solidarity with the affected people of Lebanon who lost loved ones and all their possessions. Good Shepherd people mobilized fund raising efforts across the Province; with programme participants, friends, family and volunteers. It began with bringing to their awareness the plight of the victims and survivors of the explosion. Then, we shared a little more - about ordinary people like each of us, who are beyond our borders, beyond our region – a people so battered by years of war and violence and who now had to face yet another tragedy.

Words of Saint Mary Euphrasia, "Even if we have ten cents, we will share it," is a profound call to action for us and it ever encourages us to roll up our sleeves and get to work, every time there was a crisis and a call for help. Good Shepherd Restful Waters led the initiative in Singapore with their signature response of home-made delicacies of baked pineapple tarts, marmalade, chilli sambal and moringa leaf powder. Partners-in-mission of the social services of Marymount Centre, Good Shepherd Kindergarten and Marymount Pre-school rallied to support this initiative and volunteered with friends and family and even programme participants to join the production line or the purchasing line.



In Malaysia, Good Shepherd Sisters were backed by the social services Good Shepherd Services and Global Shepherds who carried out projects within their programmes and churned out a good collection of funds to add to the total collection made by generous donors. Family and friends along with the church in Malaysia affirmed the efforts with their collective contributions. Sumptuous cakes and pies baked, steaming hot 'nasi lemak' (coconut rice) cooked, chutney's and jam's made, bottled and were sold in no time. How wonderful was the response of so many; and so quickly across the Province!

'Every response matters'. Small ones and big ones. All, so that we can together reach out to a suffering group of people far off and away, but, who we know are our sisters and brothers who are at this moment in time in severe need of any kind of assistance. A few teenage girls heard about our project and came looking for our place. They contributed USD3/- each, sheepishly wondering if we would take it. A woman who works in the cleaning section in

one of our programmes brought USD30/-. Considered an insignificant amount by some, it in fact is a huge portion of this generous woman's income and she insisted it was a small donation that she was making. These for us, were some of the most magnanimous of gestures and replicated our Congregation's and our Province's Chapter themes 'Drawn by Love' and 'Impelled by Love'. What else, but 'love' brought about by a deep spiritual experience of concern and connection moved them and us with intention and with urgency to do something good for those afflicted in Lebanon.

'Every response matters' is visible in some of these experiences shared...



Seeing so many people volunteering in this fund-raising project was very inspiring and motivated me. Even though my shoulders and back ached from the kneading and stirring I did, I looked forward to waking up to the work every day as it is nothing compared to the pain of the people suffering in Beirut. I have an opportunity to contribute productively. (Sr Rose Le)

We did not have enough rest because of the many orders we received for our home-made food items. Although the work is tiring, I am happy to do it, as it is for people who are in more need than us. (Ms Nan Sandar Oo)



Although we started our work at 6am and completed it at 9pm, I did not feel tired at all. I was just so happy that we could do something. Jesus' words, "I have come that they may have life, life to the full," inspires me. I truly felt 'a beautiful oneness' in our Province as we jointly did simple fund raising projects in every place we are located at. (Sr Lucy Chia)

It was not at all difficult for me to clean, cut, chop, cook, bottle, label and pack the food products. I felt so good to be able to reach out to help the people who are suffering in Lebanon. (Ms Lwe Lar Zar -



I simply went about doing the necessary. I had a vivid picture in my mind; a picture of women and children with outstretched hands begging for food in this devastation. (Ms Gloria Bon)

Comprising staff and shelter residents who were eager to contribute, the project gave the women a sense of purpose and empowerment. Having been through suffering themselves and despite their own personal struggles and limitations, they were touched and overcome with emotion at the thought of being able to do something to make a difference in someone else's life. (Ms Harbans Kaur)

Initially, I was embarrassed to appeal for donations again so soon after a previous appeal for poor families affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. However, as soon as I sent out the appeal, I was very touched by the love, generosity and spontaneity of the kind people who responded. God bless them all! They even thanked me for thinking of them and felt privileged to be invited to participate in another Good Shepherd project. (Sr Dorothy Khaw)



Many people, on seeing the images of the aftermath of the explosion in the newspapers and TV screens felt moved to respond, but did not know how to help. They were relieved to know that Good Shepherd people were doing something for Lebanon and together with us they could do their part. I am glad we were able to respond immediately and at the same time come to know so many people who cared. (Ms Melina Ong)

For me, every cent counts and love embraces all. I am amazed and filled with gratitude that so many people are able to look beyond themselves to reach out to those in dire need especially during this difficult time of the Covid-19 crisis. All is not lost; Love-God is with us. Here are what some people said, "It was good of you to organise this worthy cause, thank you," "Praise God that God has enabled us to do our small bit through all of you." (Sr Theresa Heng)

Knowing that no effort is in vain, spurred us on to keep at it for this entire month. Each day, yet another person heard about our efforts and came to give a donation, adding to the funds to be channelled through Good Shepherd International Foundation to the people most affected by the Beirut explosion.