

Life-Giving Water

**“Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said,
rivers of living water will flow from within them.” John 7:38**

"You must come!". That was the urgent plea from Sr Jacinta Duong of Vietnam Sector. Jacinta's sharing of the yellowish and sour water which 300 children and the sisters have been consuming over the past 10 years moved us. The drinking water was pumped from a bore hole located in Binh Hung Hoa cemetery area in Ho Chi Minh (HCM) city. We did not hesitate to answer this call to 'come', and bring potable water to Tan Son Nhi Elementary Charity School, a school run by the Good Shepherd Sisters since 2009.



We sprang into action following an email from Sr Theresa Pham, sector leader of Vietnam inviting us to help despite the fact that planning had started from the day we heard Jacinta's story. The sisters in Vietnam were most helpful and patient, answering all our queries and requests; even to the extent of providing lab test results on the quality of the water, photographs, measurements, architects' report on the structure of the building, etc. Such information was invaluable and critical to the evaluation and planning of the water filtration project.

Five contaminants were identified from the lab results...Our initial proposal of a BioSand Filter System was found to be insufficient. We needed a more sophisticated Reverse Osmosis (RO) System as advised by our volunteer consultant.

We were blessed with a sponsorship for the system.

Just as we thought all was progressing well according to plan one week before we left for HCM, we received news that the shipment carrying the RO system would not arrive in time. Trusting God to be on our side, we set forth on the journey on 13 March 2018.

Looking back, I realised that it was all in God's plan. The delayed arrival of the RO system enabled us to focus on the piping and iron works which required a longer time than planned. It also allowed all five team members (Sr Lucy Chia, Mr Roger Tan, Ms Morene Sim, Ms Cecilia Lim and Ms Melina Ong) to participate fully in the activity for all the children of the school. We are also thankful for the opportunity to sit down and have meaningful discussions with all the sisters in community. We learned about the ministries in HCM, the challenges they faced, and we witnessed the zeal, creativity and audacity of all the sisters in there.

The RO system finally arrived just-in-time on 15 March and was installed successfully. Clear and quality water began flowing through the taps at 7.35pm. There were cheers all around.



Construction of the iron stand for the water tank



Feeling thankful when the system finally arrived – Sr Agnes, Sr Assumpta, Sr Theresa



Training on monitoring and maintaining the system



Children having their first taste of the uncontaminated water

It was the co-operation and teamwork between the sisters in Vietnam, especially Sr Agnes Nguyen who was the assigned co-ordinator for the project and the team from Restful Waters Singapore, especially Mr Roger Tan, that the project was carried through successfully.

We would like to express our grateful thanks to Truong, the plumber and his two assistants for their commitment, all sisters in community for their hospitality, Sr Theresa Pham and Sr Joan Lopez for entrusting us with this important mission, Sr Jacinta Duong for bringing to our attention the water issue at the school, Mr Roger Tan for his professional and technical advice, and all donors for their contributions towards the activity for the children and sponsorship of the RO System.

Truly, God has blessed the mission trip, its participants, the children of Tan Son Nhi Elementary Charity School and the Sisters of Saigon Community.

“I am grateful for the chance to welcome you to Vietnam. Through your presence and inspiration, you have given us much encouragement and motivation in networking for the mission.

It was also a great opportunity for our young sisters through listening to your stories of taking risks for mission. How happy are the faces of sisters by sharing their desires, hopes and plans for the future!

I am convinced by the words of Sr Paul, “we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us.” (Rm 10:13) Sr Theresa Pham, Sector Leader, Vietnam



Celebrating togetherness as one Good Shepherd Family – Sisters & Candidates from HCM and the Singapore Team

1st Row R to L: Sr Theresa Pham, Sr Josephine Tran, Maria Tran, Sr Agnes Nguyen, Anna Nguyen, Theresa Nguyen, Maria Vu, Sr Rose Virginie Le, Anna Nguyen, Sr Francesca Do, Maria Tran

2nd Row R to L: Maria Ly, Sr Assumpta Tran, Lucia Nguyen, Anna Le, Maria Nguyen, Maria Nguyen, Cecilia Lim, Morene Sim, Sr Lucy Chia, Roger Tan, Melina Ong

Personal Reflections:



Roger, Lucy, Jacinta, Melina, Cecilia, Morene

“I have always been concerned about the water our students and sisters drink every day. It was our wish to have good water to drink whenever we felt thirsty. Good water to drink is a necessary need for everyone. I am happy that Restful Waters team has come and from now on we have good quality water to refresh our bodies after work and study.” Sr Jacinta Duong

What touched me most is the vibrancy of the sisters in doing what they do. Though the sector may have limited resources, you are all very rich in your heart with compassion and zeal. You are all very sincere and ready for action for Good Shepherd Mission. For example, when we said we wanted to bring peanut brittle back to Singapore, sisters readily agreed without hesitation. You want your stories to be heard, and we could feel the passion for the mission in each one. Despite your busyness you went all out to see to our comfort. Nothing seems too difficult for you to carry out as I experience the exuberance of love and joy of the community.” Sr Lucy Chia

“I feel happy and thank God for the team’s visit. I can’t imagine that Sr Lucy, who is nearly 70 years old, is so full of zeal. I will always remember the image of her assisting us in the kitchen, making peanut brittle with joy and professionalism. She inspires me through her simple and gentle words. I can see the zeal in the hearts of everyone in the group. They encouraged me. I am touched by their generosity. I appreciate everything they did for us and I have very good experience from their visit.” Sr Josephine Tran



Sr Lucy with Sr Rose cooking peanut brittle



Activity for the children

“During the three days we got to know the group personally. I am inspired by their enthusiasm and words of motivation. “Never give up when you do for the poor”, that sentence from Sr Lucy inspires me.” Sr Rose Virginie

“I feel truly blessed by my encounters with the Good Shepherd Sisters in Vietnam. They toil in God’s “farm” joyfully, and love every single child that God sends to them. They are excellent “farmers” who patiently nurture and develop the children under their care. They are able to do so much with so little! I am amazed by their creativity, energy and hard work. Each sister is an inspiration to me. They are multi-talented and use their talents to do God’s work cheerfully despite the challenging conditions and limited resources. Thank you, Good Shepherd Sisters of Vietnam!” Morene Sim

“You come to us as guests from God. With your presence, I see God’s help through you. Your sincerity and zeal really touched me and made me more engaged in my mission. Thank God for your presence here with us, and I hope to co-operate in the Good Shepherd Mission.” Sr Francesca Do

“I really admire your spirit. Everyone has a good heart and kindness. You want to help us in whatever you see. You inspire me to commit myself for Good Shepherd mission especially for the dignity of the poor. I hope to have a chance to learn from you about school management. So grateful to you all.” Sr Assumpta Tran

“I had the opportunity to partake in the RO project with the group, Sr Lucy, Melina, Morene, Cecilia and Roger. Through this project I benefited and learnt both the process of carrying out a project professionally and the spirit of readiness to share, support and respond to the urgent needs at Asia Pacific level. It has shown a radical way of networking. “Do well all that you do” (St Mary Euphrasia), I am hopeful for the future... our cooperation for Good Shepherd Mission.” Sr Agnes Nguyen

“My plan was to go and fulfil the water project at the school in Ho Chi Minh, but I received much much more. I see young sisters so dedicated and energised. The common good, the gathering of sisters exudes team-spirit and sisterly love among one another...” see how they love one another”. It was truly a God-filled experience, even when the water system did not arrive on time as scheduled, everyone showed patience and made us feel at ease.

I was also very touched by Sr Agnes’ perseverance, never giving up, going personally from office to office to ensure that the RO system arrived before we left.

I am grateful for the open and honest sharing we had with all the sisters and was very taken in and inspired by Sr Theresa’s leadership.” Melina Ong