

“Learn English in an International Community” organised by Good Shepherd Convent Restful Waters, Province of Singapore-Malaysia

The 4-week holistic programme’s primary objective is learning English in an immersive environment. Other objectives included offering participants a broad spectrum of experiences and learning such as community living in an international community, building relationships, understanding of the different cultures, witnessing Good Shepherd partnership in action, creative prayer, knowing self and others by understanding the personal coping stances, and deepening of Good Shepherd spirituality. Secondary objectives are aimed at introducing the evolution story, cosmology, as well as data gathering and documentation practices. The programme culminated with each participant giving a presentation on a project they plan to carry out in their country and the support needed. Through the programme, participants acquired both hard and soft skills necessary to be more effective in mission.

MY LEARNING EXPERIENCE IN SINGAPORE

by Sr Mary Saima Preetum

I am Sr. Mary Saima Preetum from Pakistan. I am happy to share with you my experience in Singapore while participating in the “Learn English in an International Community” program held from 28 July to 25 August 2019. We were a group of eight Good Shepherd Sisters, four from Sri Lanka, one from Pakistan and three from Vietnam. We arrived in Singapore on 27 July 2019.



From left to right at the Dragonfly Lake, Gardens by the Bay, Singapore:
Sr Faustina Nguyen (Vietnam), Sr Sumithra Eliyaspillai (Sri Lanka),
Sr Veronica John (Sri Lanka), Sr Bernadette Nguyen (Vietnam),
Sr Rose De Leema (Sri Lanka), Sr Nilmini Perera (Sri Lanka),
Sr Saima Preetum (Pakistan), Sr Patricia Bui (Vietnam)

It was a loving journey to be in Singapore and it was my first visit to the country. We were warmly welcomed by Sr. Lucy Chia and Ms Melina Ong. Both were very generous, kind and full of compassionate love. Every day after Mass we began our session with creative prayer. It was a sacred and precious time for each of us as we reflected on the Gospel of the day. As we shared our reflection with the group, we made personal commitments to live the day such that the Word of God takes on flesh in our lives. This helped us to form ourselves in the image of Jesus the Good Shepherd.



Morning Prayer at the Chapel in Restful Waters



Morning Prayer amidst nature

During our English lessons, we learnt tenses and practiced using the language through speaking, writing and listening. We were also given assignments on the different topics. Our teachers were lay mission partners who were full of zeal in the way they taught us English, as well as vocabulary.



Teachers proudly posing with their “graduates” and holding their commemorative books of the Sisters’ learning journey in Singapore.

(Standing from left: Ms Agnes Yeo, Sr Lucy Chia, Ms Joan D’Cotta, Ms Jane Marie Ng, Ms Kuang Ser Yee, Ms Cecilia Ee, Ms Morene Sim, Ms Agnes Ee and Ms Cecilia Lim.

From row: Sr Rose De Leema, Sr Sumithra Eliyaspillai, Sr Patricia Bui, Sr Veronica John, Sr Nilmini Perera, Sr Faustina Nguyen, Sr Saima Preetum, Sr Bernadette Nguyen.

Not in picture are Ms Susanna Chan, Ms Wu Siew Mei, Sr Helena Vytialingam, Ms Michelle Anne Koh, Mr Nick Jarvis Tan and Ms Melina Ong.)



Each sister shared their ministry experience and by listening, we enriched ourselves and gleaned insights into how the sisters are committed in order to reach out to the poor and the marginalised. The most interesting session was on leadership. Leadership is about serving and having a listening heart, and how we influence others.



One of our teachers, Ms Joan D'Cotta taught us how to write a project proposal - the necessary elements in writing a project proposal and how to organize a presentation of the proposal for an audience. We put into practice what we learnt as each of us took turns to make our presentation to an audience consisting of teachers, volunteers, sisters and friends.



We had the opportunity to visit the Good Shepherd ministries in Singapore. We were all inspired by the sisters and their commitment. We also had a session on the story of the cosmology and human transformation. It helped us to think of creative ways to use the natural resources carefully, especially water.



Computer Room of Marymount Convent School



Eco Garden of Marymount Kindergarten



Taking part in the Peace Prayer Outreach

I would also like to share with you our outings. On the very first day after our session, we went to the airport and visited the Jewel @ Changi Airport. It was a very beautiful place with lots of greenery and even a waterfall which we all enjoyed very much. After the scenic walk, we had delicious dinner at a Chinese restaurant. We also went for a tour of Singapore and visited different places of worship such as, the Cathedral of the Good Shepherd, the Armenian Church, Sultan Mosque, Thian Hock Keng Temple and the cultural heritage centres of the Indians, the Malays and the Chinese communities. We saw and learned how in Singapore people of different race and religion lived harmoniously with one another, respecting each other's culture and religion. We ended the day with Mass at the well-known Novena Church.



Jewel@ Changi Airport



Novena Church

The most interesting place that we visited was the Singapore River. It was very clean, and people were not allowed to fish at this river. In the past, there were many fishing and trade activities in this river, resulting in the river being very dirty and polluted. It took 10 years to clean up this river and the water is now very clean.



We also went for a picnic at the Gardens by the Bay where we had the joy of admiring God's creation through the beautiful flora and fauna. We felt we were in paradise.

Another interesting place of visit was the SEA Aquarium at Sentosa. It was an artificial sanctuary for fish and water creatures, but it was very beautiful.

We had the opportunity to visit the red-light district of Geylang. Each Saturday evening, mission partners visit the ladies in order to share with them the Good News and to pray with them. The ladies are grateful and would request for prayers with special intentions for their families.

On some days we went out for dinner to have a taste of the local foods. But the most heart-warming thing was that Sr. Lucy cooked delicious food for us every day and her cooking was done with lots of love. May God continue to bless her with abundant blessings and graces. I felt that Singaporeans were very kind and generous people. At the end of this journey, my heart was full of gratitude to my Shepherd Lord who gave me this opportunity to visit Singapore.

“Through our one-month experience of living together – praying, learning, studying, eating, outings together, we bonded as a family, a Good Shepherd family. We supported and encouraged each other especially in times of struggle. We celebrated each other’s joys and achievements. This experience has helped us to realise our similarities and differences. There is a wealth of knowledge and talent that each one possesses. Coming together in this experiential journey of learning, we have come to better understand our internationality as Good Shepherd Sisters and appreciate even more the heritage which Mother Foundress had passed down to us.

As I continue my learning and one-year international experience in Singapore, I have come to understand the different cultures and way of life. I am blessed to have met so many mission partners and sisters from different countries during my stay.” **Sr Faustina Nguyen, Vietnam**

“The session on St John Eudes, Sr Mary Euphrasia and their mission partners facilitated by Sr Helena Vytialingam made me re-think and inspired me to work more closely with lay mission partners.” **Sr Veronica John, Sri Lanka**

