

Living Stories: In Her footsteps

VOLUME 2

Good Shepherd Sisters
Province of Singapore-Malaysia

ON THE COVER:

“The Good Shepherd and I” is a painting by Faith Tan, Sapphire Ann Poh, Aviel Tey and Wang Zixuan, Primary 6 pupils (2012) of Marymount Convent School, Singapore.

The Good Shepherd cares for everyone.
No matter how different we are, He cares for us just the same.

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In Her footsteps*

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Foreword

In stories, whether oral or written, we create and experience a narrative.

The Mission Link Committee's latest publication, *Living Stories: In Her Footsteps Volume 2*, as in the first volume, is a collection of stories which, taken together with the symbolisms, offers a spiritual and social construction of the organisation we know as the Good Shepherd Province Singapore-Malaysia.

This publication shares the spiritual and social construction and current reality which we wish to communicate to our partners, and we hope, will also get passed on to the next generation so as to inform and integrate a new generation into the current reality.

Every story in this publication has a point of view. Some are multi-layered and multi-faceted while others may be less so. Nonetheless, as each storyteller engages in the construction of the personal meaning in her own storytelling, the Province, in tandem, is similarly engaged in constructing its narrative through these very stories. The stories not only inform our readers of the Good Shepherd Mission, but its identity and organisational culture as well. They serve to inspire the Good Shepherd family and enrich the Province's history.

The Mission Link Committee acknowledges with gratitude, the precious and generous contribution of all our storytellers and partners. As we read the stories, we are touched by what they encapsulate - the spirit, love, courage, zeal and compassion of St Mary Euphrasia. The stories are heartwarming, inspiring, and refreshing.

We would like to thank all our contributors, partners, sponsors, and the publication workgroup of Cecilia Lim, Sharon Khoo, Theresa Symons and Anna Low. You have all shared generously and given of your time, energy and financial support to make this publication possible. We appreciate and thank you.

It is our pleasure to dedicate *Living Stories: In Her Footsteps Volume 2* to all the Sisters and lay partners, past and present, for your commitment to the Good Shepherd Mission, and for your love and care for the poor and marginalised women, children and youth.

As we continue on our journey for mission effectiveness, may we continue to be points of light, walking with love in the footsteps of St Mary Euphrasia. In doing so, we are also walking in the loving footsteps of Jesus, our Good Shepherd.

Blessings,
Mission Link Committee

Introduction

In 2009, the Mission Link Committee completed a publication project “*Living Stories: in Her Footsteps*” to commemorate the Good Shepherd Heritage Year. Members of the Good Shepherd family had many stories to tell, and thoughts and experiences to share and they were captured in the publication.

The publication was well received and appreciated within the Singapore-Malaysia Province and beyond, with many asking for more stories to be published as a testimony of the rich blessings to all who have been blessed with the opportunity to be part of the Good Shepherd Mission, family and heritage.

The publication workgroup members are honoured to participate as co-weavers of the written tapestry of rich experiences. As we read and edit your stories, and open our hearts to hear the “Mary Euphrasia” in each of you, we are mindful of the need to preserve your voice.

It is our greatest hope that *Living Stories: In Her Footsteps Volume 2* will be a blessing to all who read it.

To all our readers, feel free to read the stories sequentially or randomly. As you read the stories, listen closely also to your own story that may resonate with them; or is emerging in your heart.

We wish you a fruitful journey in the footsteps of St. Mary Euphrasia.

**Cecilia Lim, Sharon Khoo,
Theresa Symons & Anna Low**
Publication Workgroup

CHAPTER 1

Role-Modelling
The Good Shepherd

The Place

For five years, I stayed at “the place” - Pusat Kebajikan Good Shepherd (PKGS) Teenage Centre.

A Form One student at the time, I was the youngest among the girls. When I arrived at the place, it was Sr Laurina Loh who welcomed me. When I first saw the place, my first thought was that it was a welfare home.

During the first few days, I was required to clean the room, and share it with people I did not know. And then there were the dogs! I really hated the place! But I had no choice. I did not have parents to live with. It was either this place, or the streets. At the same time, I was attending a school whose teachers did not care much about their students. I hated the school, and the place.

As the days went by, the other girls began to talk bad about me. Then, I did not know how to stop them from gossiping about me. I kept this matter in my heart. I also hoped there was someone I could talk to. I prayed to God to send me an angel.

A few months went by. The angel came in the form of none other than Sr Laurina. She helped me to open up and talk about my many problems since childhood. Since young, I never knew who my parents were. I was abused by my babysitter, all because my parents failed to pay her for the babysitting service. Having experienced constant abuse, I did not trust the people around me. When I saw familiar faces from the past, I would experience negative emotions. I would feel frightened as I thought they would hurt me again, just like before.

Being at the place allowed me to learn and grow - self-esteem, self-confidence, patience, manners, and how to trust people again. More importantly, I learnt to accept my past, and grow as a person.

When I left the place, I never thought I would miss it. But I did. While I was residing there, I had often thought of running away. But I did not. The Sisters and counsellors patiently helped me to deal with my difficulties and issues.

I am really thankful to all the staff and sisters for their care and patience in teaching me and helping me to become who I am today. They are really good to me and great role models for me!

Esther

(A former resident of the Teenage Centre)

Pass It On

At 56, retired and a newly-minted grandmother, a life of leisure beckoned.

But it was not to be. Hungry to learn and traverse new grounds, the opportunity to do just that came from the Good Shepherd Sisters. It was in the mid-1990s that they started me on a journey to share God's love, and "pass it on". Since then, I have served as a volunteer at a hospice, children's home and now, at a prison.

My personal encounter with Jesus came through the Sisters of the Good Shepherd Convent, in particular, Sr Cecilia Cheang and Sr Dorothy Khaw. Both helped me to acknowledge and believe that I am a child of God and I can be of service to Him.

The Sisters are truly God's instrument of mercy and love. Looking back on my early years, my first Christmas dress came from Sr Rose Poon. I never understood the spirit of Christmas till she dressed me in it. Mother Winifred Doyle taught me cross-stitching and from which I learnt to be meticulous and careful. From the different Sisters, I received kindness and patience, and learnt the meaning of love and the value of life skills.

Sr Dorothy also helped me to grow in self-confidence and pursue my dreams and goals. From her, I received guidance and advice which had helped me to make many right choices in my business and personal life.

Today, many people quote one of Steven Covey's seven habits of thinking, "Begin with the end in mind". Long before his book was published, I had already learnt this from the Good Shepherd Sisters!

The Sisters had generously shared and passed on God's love to me. It's my turn to do my part and "pass it on".

ALK

(A former resident)

Others Before Self

It seems like yesterday, but actually, it has been more than ten years since I started teaching. I had worked at several other kindergartens before I came to Mariaville, Ipoh.

“All right, here you go, same old routine - teach children to read, write, and prepare them for the year-end concert, and another year would pass by,” I thought to myself on my first day at Mariaville Kindergarten. But my Mariaville experience turned out to be something quite unexpected, and different. What I saw was the commitment and active participation of everyone in the school in the many activities and events. I was very impressed. Never before had I seen such good, joyful and harmonious teamwork.

I recall being invited to a Mission Link gathering to celebrate Good Shepherd partnership in Kuala Lumpur. I was both curious and anxious to find out what it was all about. A chartered bus brought the entire staff team to Kuala Lumpur. I could not sleep throughout the three-hour journey because everyone in the bus was laughing and having such a jolly time. What struck me was the strong bond amongst the teachers.

When we reached Madonna Heights, the Sisters and some lay partners were present to welcome us. They were very friendly and warm. They made me feel at home and very, very comfortable indeed. Throughout the weekend, everyone I met was very friendly. I had the opportunity to meet with other Sisters, and many lay people who were working with the Sisters in the various ministries and schools. I even made a few friends from Singapore and the other States.

When the weekend came to a close, I left with a heart full of praises. I had participated in the activities, and I had experienced respect, care and patience from the Good Shepherd Sisters and lay partners. Regardless of race or religion, all had participated actively and happily. No matter the position, all were treated equally, and with gentleness too!

Beyond the gathering in Kuala Lumpur, another touching and memorable experience was the staff trip to India. There was a heavy downpour when we were visiting a Hindu meditation hall. The bus was parked some distance away. Sr Dorothy Khaw and I made a dash down the steps. As we were running towards the bus, I held Sr Dorothy's arm and I remembered her asking me if I was fine. That moment made a big impact on me. I did not expect that even when Sr Dorothy was thoroughly drenched, she was more concerned for me. It was a case of others before self. I was very touched by her kindness.

It was Sr Dorothy who gave me the opportunity to work with, and understand the Good Shepherd Sisters and their special calling. I feel privileged to be part of the Good Shepherd Mission. As I reflected on my work at the kindergarten, I realised that I am at a good place and in a nurturing environment where I am accepted for who I am.

In summary, I have experienced the Good Shepherd Sisters as caring, open and willing to share of themselves to help the less fortunate. They embody compassion and zeal, and serve as good role models to me on how I can interact with my students and others in a similar way. I am happy to participate in the Good Shepherd Mission meaningfully as a teacher in Mariaville Kindergarten.

Katherine Chee

Mariaville Kindergarten, Ipoh

I Am Respected

I was given a job as a cleaner at Mariaville Kindergarten in 2007, but I left for Kuala Lumpur in 2008. When I returned to Ipoh, I was fortunate to be re-employed at the same kindergarten.

I am very happy to work here as I can feel God's presence. Sometimes when I am sad, I will talk to Sr Dorothy Khaw. She is a mother figure to me. I lost my parents when I was young. Although I have siblings, we are not close to each other. The staff team of Mariaville has become my family. They show me compassion and love. Whenever I am not sure about what to do or how to do something, I only need to ask and I will be shown what to do. I am respected here even though I am just a cleaner.

Working here makes my heart feel light, happy and secure. I know that whoever comes to Mariaville Kindergarten will feel the same.

Mariamah

Stand In The Shade

I am Seevalingam. I worked as a security guard in a private company for more than twenty-one years before I retired.

Seven months ago, I came out of retirement to work at Mariaville Kindergarten as its security guard. Not many people at age fifty-seven get employed. I'm glad to be the lucky few.

In many organisations, even if there are events, the security guards have to perform their duties according to their role. For example, as a security guard, I am responsible for the car park and traffic control only. But in Mariaville Kindergarten, I find the atmosphere different. If there are events in the school, we all work happily as a team. No matter what position, and how long our service, everyone helps out - decorating, cleaning, gardening, ensuring security or helping with technical work. People are helpful and I feel involved, so I'm happy to work in Mariaville Kindergarten.

As a security guard, I should not be bothered about the weather. Whether rainy days or sunny days, I still have to do my duty to control the traffic. One hot day after school hours, while I was standing in the sun and managing the traffic, I heard someone calling my name. It was Sr Dorothy calling me from the office. So I walked to her office and just when I reached the door, she said, "Mr Seeva, you don't need to stand in the hot sun. You can stand in the shade and observe the traffic from here. If there is any traffic jam, then you go and solve it."

I have not heard any story of an employee anywhere being treated this way by his employer. This "boss", our Sr Dorothy Khaw, really cares for the staff. I pray to God for her good health and long life so that she can continue her great service in Mariaville Kindergarten.

I am really thankful to God for giving me a caring sister in Sr Dorothy, and a caring brother in Mr Yeong, my colleague who is also our gardener. Also not forgetting the twenty-eight beautiful and loving teachers!

Seevalingam

Love and Compassion

My first introduction to the Good Shepherd Sisters was in 1981, in Kuala Lumpur at the office of Messrs Chooi & Co where I was working. My dealings with the Good Shepherd Sisters then were strictly professional. To me, they were “the nuns” who came for free legal advice.

When I moved to Sabah in the late 1980s, I encountered the Good Shepherd Sisters again. This time, I was seeking their help. I brought women and children to the Good Shepherd shelter. From there, “the nuns” got to know me, I got to know them better. Since then, I know each one by name, and our relationship developed.

What sustained me in this relationship is the kind of work and issues that the Good Shepherd Sisters do and what they stand for. The friendly and supportive environment also played a major part. The Good Shepherd community (meaning both the religious and lay) is always available to discuss and support each other, and are also fun to be with.

In 2007, when the Sisters started talking about human trafficking, I was curious and excited although I knew very little about the issue. I attended a talk on Human Trafficking by Sr Maria Dipal. Her talk not only shocked and stirred me, but convinced me to join her in educating the youths in schools on this issue. I was only to assist her, she promised. But there was an occasion when she was not available and I had to conduct the session on my own. That was when I was “forced” to learn to make posters, prepare PowerPoint presentations and embark on a recruitment drive to get friends to help me do all that, plus conduct part of the session.

Another experience I recall is the time when I sat down with Sr Angelina Peter and Sr Kelly Ngai, with five women in the Convent. I gained insights into lives that I would otherwise not have known. For the first time, I was meeting women who were deceived into coming to Sabah and then exploited upon their arrival. After listening to their stories and experiences, my perception of the women reported in the daily newspapers (particularly those rounded up during raids) changed radically.

Before this encounter, I used to sympathise with them, thinking, “What a pity, they have no choice but to go into prostitution. It’s just unfortunate that they are caught, while the pimps go scot-free.”

But now I see a real woman. She has a name. She has parents, a husband and children at home, relying on the money that she is sending home. I understand now - her anxiety while on the boat ride after discovering that she has been given a false passport by the agent; her fears and uncertainty of what will happen if she was arrested while in transit in a strange country; even if she arrived safely, the likelihood of her being locked up in a house and told not to peep out of the window in case someone spots her; the trauma of discovering upon arrival that she has been sold and prostituted; her physical confinement, and being guarded round the clock. I can hear her cries of despair and regret. I can feel her frustration and anger when she finds out that the case against the traffickers and pimps has been postponed

indefinitely at her expense as she cannot go home until the case is over. I can see the confusion and disbelief in her eyes when she is advised against going out because it is not safe for her, while the traffickers and pimps are out on bail, enjoying their freedom!

Through this privileged experience, I got to meet many remarkable people.

The late Finardo Cabilao, social worker and attaché at the Philippines Embassy whose commitment was unwavering. He was there whenever help was needed, and never missed a day in court if he was in town, just to ensure that everything was in order. The respect he accorded the women, and the kindness he demonstrated is worthy of emulation. Although I could not understand their conversation, there was never a harsh word or sign of impatience on his part, even when the women were venting their anger and frustration at him, after being told that the case had been postponed and that they could not go home.

The staff members at the shelter were often tested to the limits by the women (on bad days) but they proved, and showed, their love and compassion.

Sr Angelina was of course the beacon in the storm. She was my strength and my guide. I remember being nervous and anxious while accompanying five girls to court and having to face the pimps and traffickers, but she was there with her smile and exuded calmness. I thought, "Isn't she a wee bit scared at all?"

On the last day of their stay, this group of women cooked a scrumptious dinner to appreciate those who had journeyed with them. They wrote poems and sang songs that inevitably brought tears to everyone's eyes. The Good Shepherd community gave them back their dignity and confidence, and taught them to trust again. They responded with gratitude and gentleness which were concealed from public view, until that night before their departure for home.

Angela Foo
(Volunteer)

Just Love

The sound of water jet spray went on and on. The ceaseless noise began to annoy as it became jarring on the ears.

From the second floor, I looked down and there he was, a skinny, elderly man working the jet spray machine, cleaning every groove and tile of the driveway. Looking at him, I thought to myself, 'This man has no work system. He's just spraying over and over the same area,' I sighed.

She came out, stood at the corridor and looked down too. She saw the same man working. Without saying a word, she went back into the house.

I continued observing the man at work. Minutes later, I saw her downstairs, walking to him with a cup of hot coffee in one hand, and a plate of snacks in the other. She smiled at him, and said something to him. He smiled back in appreciation, grateful for the care and concern extended to him.

What I had witnessed left a deep impression on me. While I had only noticed his shortcomings, she saw his goodness and pain. She saw someone working very hard to make an honest living. Despite the hot sun, he continued with his task at hand. His arms were tired from moving the spray left to right, up and down; his bare feet pale and wrinkled from the long hours soaked in dirty water.

She just loved. Her action, simple as it was, was a lesson on love and compassion for me. Yes, such a simple but loving act goes a long way, not only for the recipient, but also for me, a witness to love.

To me, she had brought to life the words of the Gospel "...I say to you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers or sisters of mine, you did it to me."
Matthew 25:40

Etched deeply in my heart and mind, this loving act by a Good Shepherd Sister is something I will carry with me for the rest of my life. It is a reminder of how I, too, can look kindly upon others, and reach out in simple and loving ways.

HS

CHAPTER 2

Good Shepherd
Experience & Identity

Symbol, Identity, And Belonging



All the Sisters, both apostolic and contemplative, wear this Congregational Symbol, which identifies us as Sisters of the Good Shepherd.*

The Two Hearts...

represent the hearts of Jesus and Mary united as one. We draw our spirit of zeal from this Heart - an evangelical spirit of Welcome, Kindness, Understanding and Loving Service, which gives witness to the value of each person.

It also represents the reality that we love with two hearts: our own small, limited heart and the great heart of God.

The Crook...

represents the extension of the Shepherd's own self, used to rescue the sheep that is lost or in trouble.

Through the Church, Jesus continues to encompass with love all who are afflicted with human weakness. He looks for the lost ones, brings back the strays, tends the injured and makes the weak strong. Jesus reveals the Father's mercy through a love which overcomes all sin and infidelity.

The Cross...

reminds us of the cost of the shepherd's self-giving, even to lay down one's life.

We give our total gift of self, which is rooted in the following of Christ and in his paschal mystery, leading through the cross and death to resurrection.¹

24 April 2006 – a significant date for me as I put on the Good Shepherd symbol for the first time. I was at the Novitiate of Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, when I made my First Profession as a Temporary Professed Sister in the Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd. Since then, this symbol has reminded me daily to die to myself so that I may live in God.

Waking up early the next morning, and standing in front of the mirror to wear this symbol, I prayed, “Oh God, thank you for calling me to serve in your vineyard. St Mary Euphrasia, pray for me. Help me to mirror the love of Jesus, the Good Shepherd, to those whom I shall meet today.”

In reaching out and meeting women, children and families at-risk and in hardships, I realised that often, I failed to love with the great heart of God. Instead, I love only with my own limited heart. Hence, when troubles visit, I feel very down and discouraged; and my soul is weary. Thankfully, God always sits a while with me, and raises my spirit again.

With the passing of the years, I begin to understand this prayer and exhortation, ‘Rise above difficulties and go straight on. Let us give ourselves entirely to the good of souls, and with such courage that we may be ready to give even our lives for

them. In this way, we shall glorify the Hearts of Jesus and Mary, where our names will be written for all eternity,' St Mary Euphrasia.

With two hearts, a crook and a cross, I now begin each new day with the **Prayer to Belong**:

When my heart is heavy and my fear is strong,
Good Shepherd, please show me where I belong.
The world can cast shadows that stretch far and long,
Good Shepherd, I need you to help me belong.
My path can be winding, my turns can be wrong,
Good Shepherd, just guide me, to You, I belong.

Sr Kelly Ngai, rgs

**Adapted from <http://www.goodshepherdsisters.org/symbol.htm>, the web page of Good Shepherd Sisters in North America.*

One Single Cell

My parents decided to send me to Marymount Kindergarten and then, when time came for enrolment into Primary 1, to Marymount Convent School. This was typical of far-sighted parents in Singapore at the time. The plan was to provide me with a quality, faith-based education, with the emphasis on “quality.”

In the years to come, I would prove to be a test of faith for my parents; and in being such, I actually found my own faith, one that I'd like to think, has grown stronger with time.

Apart from the incredible friendships I made and positive academic outcomes my parents had hoped for, my entire Marymount experience was actually a bit mysterious. I was not a baptised Catholic when I first set foot into Marymount Kindergarten. I continued to attend Ethics and Moral Education classes all through to Secondary Four while the Catholic girls attended Mass and Catechism classes.

The segregation piqued my curiosity, and I spent much of my time wanting to do what they did, my friends who were Catholic. The few times non-Catholic girls were invited to attend chapel services made a huge impact. I was moved both by the music of the services and the prayerful silence in-between. I loved the presence in our little chapel - the calm and ... passion? Conviction? It was quite something. So I used to head over to the chapel whenever I could, during recess, most of the time. I usually didn't make it to school early enough to allow a visit to the chapel or Mary's Grotto before the bell rang.

Things all fell into place for me in Secondary Two, when Sr Madeleine Lee took us for Science. It was the first time I was actually taught a secular subject - Science! - by a religious sister - in a habit! All those questions I had about how the universe as explained by Darwin was the same as that created by God (in six days, no less!) were answered at the end of one lesson - about cells and ... amoeba? And Sr Madeleine said, “And mind you, it doesn't matter that we all came from one single cell - God breathed a soul into each one of us.” That, I thought, is the whole point. Sr Madeleine said a lot more: “What a beautiful flower!” “That's a prayer!” - and, of course, there were other wonderful teachers that we had - but, it was because of what Sr Madeleine said in that class that got me through the rest of my life to date... well, honestly.

I got baptised after graduating from the National University of Singapore, and now, my husband and twelve-year-old daughter attend Mass with me every week. I even taught Sunday School for a while - at my busiest, I taught Kindergarten, Third Grade and Confirmation. My daughter is an aide for the four-year-olds right now and volunteers at a Catholic retirement home.

It's not quite the same practising Catholicism in California, where I've been living these past twenty years - there are regional differences in the way things are done, in spite of the same Missal being used. Americans, unlike Singaporeans, hug and shake hands quite fervently while giving each other the Sign of Peace. But I

remember how we all come from one single cell, and how God breathed a soul into each of us. That, I think, is the most significant aspect of my experience with the Good Shepherd Mission, and my parents couldn't have made a better life choice for me, way back then.

Michelle Lee

(Class of '83, Marymount Convent School)

Mariaville Boleh!

It's been four years since I arrived at Mariaville Kindergarten. My first day at work seemed like just yesterday. I still recall how nervous I was when I reported for work; just like a student on his or her first day at school!

Mariaville Kindergarten is very different from the previous kindergarten where I taught. It's a "teamy" place to work and where I learnt a lot about teamwork. Mariaville is like one big family. We learn to help each other and be patient when dealing with parents and children. I used to be very hot tempered but during these recent years, I have changed a lot. I attribute this to the mission, vision and values of Mariaville which have helped me to be a better person.

I acknowledge that there were times when we had our arguments in the course of preparing and organising activities, perhaps due to stress, but when everything was over, we would get together and celebrate a job well done. We are able to laugh at our little mistakes, and even about our arguments! I have learnt so much from the planning and execution of many activities.

I have just completed my course in Early Childhood Education and will receive my Diploma this year. I am really excited. The reason for furthering my studies is because I want to be a better teacher at Mariaville Kindergarten. This stems from the motivation and satisfaction of belonging to this Good Shepherd Kindergarten. I feel that 'Mariaville Boleh*', and so can I!

Lim Khai Ann

**"Boleh" - A Malay word which means "can" or "can do"*

Laughter... In Misfortune

In my entire life, at least until I encountered the Good Shepherd Sisters, I had not met anyone, who, despite being overwhelmed by problems, could still laugh over his or her misfortune.

It was on a Sunday morning. When I first met the Good Shepherd Sisters, their cooking utensils had been stolen and their kitchen was stripped bare. I had expected to hear indignation, anger, or complaints. Instead, I heard laughter! As the Sisters laughed and shared their misfortune, I thought to myself, "If I was the victim, I would have cursed the thieves and sought revenge!" The Sisters chose to forgive the thieves.

This incident got me curious. I wanted to find out more about this unusual community of Sisters. By the grace of God, we were invited to dinner at the residence of the late Denis Koh, where we met the Good Shepherd Sisters again – Sr Dorothy Khaw, Sr Barbara Lip and Sr Salomi Cruz.

Once again, we were attracted by their behaviour at Denis' house. They made themselves a family in the home of the late Denis Koh. This led my family and me to find ways to deepen our relationship with the Sisters. By the grace of God, we received an invitation from the Sisters to participate in a variety of activities at the Good Shepherd Convent, situated at the foot of the Carmelite hill. All these eventually led Rose and me to join the Lay Associates of the Good Shepherd Congregation following an invitation from Sr Dorothy.

Our response to the call of Jesus, our Good Shepherd, and our service and association with the Good Shepherd Sisters... they all started with laughter... in misfortune!

Peter Chia (Story-teller) & Rose Chia (Scribe)

Lay Associates of the Good Shepherd Congregation, Sabah

My Second Home, And I Love It

“How fortunate to be teaching at Mariaville Kindergarten!” I thought. As the only Muslim working here, I never once felt excluded, or not respected.

I started work at Mariaville Kindergarten in February 2009. I am very happy to be employed here as I have gained a lot of new experiences. This Good Shepherd Kindergarten has given me a chance to upgrade myself, and I am proud that I have a Teaching Permit. My former employer did not encourage nor give me an opportunity to attend courses. At Mariaville, Sr Dorothy Khaw makes it a point for everyone to be trained and be competent to teach the children well.

The staff members at Mariaville Kindergarten are also very different from the previous kindergarten where I worked. Here, we always work together as a team. When we go for our annual outings, or attend kindergarten activities, my Supervisor, Sr Dorothy, and the staff are very considerate. They will make sure that my meals are ‘halal’*. Whatever problems I have, whether it is financial or personal, Sr Dorothy and my colleagues show me a lot of concern and support.

At staff meetings, the Good Shepherd mission, vision and values are always highlighted and serve as reminders to us. This motivates me to be a better person. I am thankful to be given this opportunity to be part of this Good Shepherd family.

Mariaville Kindergarten is my second home, and I love it!

Haslinda Bte Abdullah Sadki

**halal – a term designating any object or an action which is permissible to use or engage in, according to Islamic law*

An Experience Of Difference

Like many of my colleagues, I had thought Mariaville Kindergarten was just like the other kindergartens. That was before I joined as an employee. I knew nothing about the Good Shepherd Congregation then.

My first “real” experience of difference was when I attended a charity drive at the Menteri Besar’s house. Rose Virginie Good Shepherd Centre was invited to set up a stall there. Many of my colleagues had volunteered to help out. I was excited as this was the first time I was doing something different. I had a wonderful time, and especially so when I knew this charity drive was for a good cause.

Since then, I have been involved in all the kindergarten activities. I find a lot of teamwork, love and care among the staff. Mariaville is a kindergarten with a difference. At my previous kindergarten, I was often bullied and under a lot of pressure. At Mariaville Kindergarten, I am respected and cared for.

I thank my Supervisor, Sr Dorothy Khaw, for giving me the opportunity to work here and be part of the Good Shepherd family. I also thank my colleagues who care for me. Indeed, “One person is of more value than the whole world.”

Ruby Lim

Come And Serve

'I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me — just as the Father knows me and I know the Father — and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.' (John 10:14-15).

"Come and serve as a Lay Associate of the Good Shepherd Congregation," said Sr Teresa Chye. This was some years ago.

I remember feeling very enthusiastic, thinking of the ways I could contribute to their many projects involving rural children, young girls and women in crisis and poverty in the rural areas. I was excited just thinking about how I was going to work on areas close to my heart, having spent many of my working years in rural development.

Following the invitation, I attended several sessions where all the Lay Associates prayed together. I got to know the history of the Foundress of the Good Shepherd Congregation and its organisation around the world. I memorised St Mary Euphrasia's prayer and each morning, would dutifully recite it. At the same time, I wondered how every beat of my heart could be a prayer for grace and pardon for sinners when I myself needed such prayers.

I really wanted to play a meaningful role but somehow, could not get into the flow; it might be because I had several other commitments and hence, lack time. Nevertheless, I was drawn to attend bible study classes and prayer meetings. I heard Him telling me, "Just look around you. You don't have to go far to be a good shepherd yourself. There are so many people around you who need your love and care."

It reinforced my deepest feelings - that we should always first help those closest to us. Charity truly begins at home. After all, 'whoever does not love the brother whom he can see, cannot love God whom he has not seen' (1 John 4:20).

Back in the late 1960s, when my father was under political detention for almost three years, we could feel God's protective hand over our family. We spent much of our time closely involved with the church and participated actively in various church groups. However, I 'retired' from all church activities during the early years of married life, citing young children to look after. I was called to serve on the St Simon Pastoral Council in 2003, at a time when my children were older and my husband had been baptised. It seemed that God was willing me to come back lest I be like the seed that fell among thorns, get choked by all the worries of the world, and in the end produce nothing. That was also the time I was invited to join as a Lay Associate of the Good Shepherd.

Today, my husband of twenty-five years - born a Buddhist but who by the grace of God chose to be baptised ten years ago - and I have been asked to co-ordinate the Family Life ministry of St Simon Church. It is a task which we feel vastly unworthy and unequipped. But I remember Jesus' words, 'Courage, do not be afraid. Only have faith.' (Mark 6:50) And so in the spirit of the Good Shepherd, we found ourselves

forming a community among the families of St Simon Church.

I believe that my experience with the Good Shepherd Mission was by design - God's way of guiding my husband and me to prepare ourselves spiritually and mentally, for this role and any other that He has planned for us. And that in doing so, He will reveal to us many more surprises along the way, just like the invitation to be a Lay Associate of the Good Shepherd Congregation!

Vera Chin

Run By Nuns

My professional encounter with Catholic nuns started in 1972 when I was offered a job at a Canossian Convent in Segamat, Johor. I worked there for twelve, happy years. I still treasure those memorable times simply because the Sisters treated the staff with much love and compassion. There was never a moment of suspicion, mistrust or harsh words.

With that good impression of Catholic nuns, I did not hesitate to enrol my son and daughter into Villamaria Good Shepherd Kindergarten, knowing it was run by nuns. I wanted to give them a good foundation to their education and guide them to be responsible people.

Putting my children in the kindergarten was only the first step. Recalling those happy years at Segamat Convent, I confidently walked into Villamaria Good Shepherd Kindergarten one day in 1999 to ask if my services were needed in any way. I was thrilled when the answer was a “Yes.” As the saying goes, the rest is history. I have nothing but praise to this day, simply because the people whom I work with have been patient, and humble and they do their job and perform their duties with kind thoughts, love and compassion.

This is an opportunity for me to extend my sincere thanks and gratitude to all the capable Sisters, the management team and my colleagues for creating a conducive working environment in the kindergarten.

May God bless Villamaria Kindergarten and all who are connected with it.

Irene Khoo

Still Here

My first three years working in a pre-school confirmed my love for teaching young children. This prompted me to move to a Christian kindergarten to learn and gain more experience teaching young children. Thirteen years ago, I came to work at Marymount Kindergarten. Today, I am still here.

What caught my attention when I joined the kindergarten was the big board outside the principal's office. On it was a picture of Jesus the Good Shepherd and the words, "One person is of more value than the whole world." At that time, I had no inkling of who St Mary Euphrasia was, and what her congregation was all about. I was just happy teaching the nursery children and telling them bible stories. I believe the seeds sown in these young hearts would sprout and grow one day.

Besides teaching, I wanted to serve God in other ways. So very naturally, I offered to help in the Children's Liturgy every Sunday at one of the parishes.

Over the years, I learn more about the Good Shepherd Sisters - their perseverance, challenges, work for the vulnerable, and their sacrifices - all these touch my heart. "What is it about St Mary Euphrasia that makes them want to walk in her footsteps?" I wondered.

The answer was revealed to me last year when I visited the Mother House in Angers, France.

St Mary Euphrasia's loyalty to God, the pope, the church, her family, her friends and the Sisters of her convent, is one of the answers. In her lifetime, St Mary Euphrasia's mission was to give glory to God and work for the salvation of souls. This must be the answer, for I am moved by her and it has led me inquire into the purpose of my life here on earth. I often check myself and ask, "Will I live my life in vain?"

I will also not forget St Mary Euphrasia's words, "Gratitude is the memory of the heart." She has taught me to be grateful to the people around me, and to show gratitude for any kind deed I receive.

The legacy of St Mary Euphrasia lives on in the convents and Good Shepherd ministries around the world. "They that wait upon the Lord, shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles. They shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint." (Isaiah 40:31)

"They" are the Good Shepherd Sisters and lay partners. "They" are the Good Shepherd family of which I am a part of.

Betty Choong

Teacher, Marymount Kindergarten

A “Family” Experience

In the twenty-five years that I have been working at the Good Shepherd Convent Kindergarten, the most memorable experience was the mission trip to Angers (France) together with several Sisters and lay partners.

The beautiful memories never fail to warm my heart whenever I recall the days I spent in Angers. I could still see the welcoming faces of Sr Noreen O’Shea, Sr Tarcila Abano and their team, besides our very own Sr Susan Chia. They welcomed us with joy and affection. I was filled with excitement in anticipation of what God had in store for us in the days to come.

Being physically present in Angers gave me a sense of pride and a feeling of special identity as I mingled with all the participants from different parts of the world. This helped to strengthen my sense of belonging to the Good Shepherd family and feeling on partnership.

In Angers, each day was like being in heaven! The environment was so peaceful and sacred. Each time I walked along the path lined with trees and its fruits, and flowers in bloom, my heart would be filled with gratitude as I immersed myself in the sight, sounds and natural beauty of that peaceful surrounding. My heart sang praises to God for the gift of St Mary Euphrasia.

It has been said that of all great hearts, ‘The greatest is the heart of a Saint,’ and this was what I had discovered about Mary Euphrasia as a person. She was a creative, loyal and collaborative leader whose love for souls was beyond comprehension and she was also a grateful person. She lived by her twin beliefs: “One person is of more value than the whole world” and “Nothing is impossible to love.”

St Mary Euphrasia was a woman who looked beyond the horizons, spending her life expanding and nurturing missionary vocations. She was a holy woman with a heart flowing with love for people, especially those who needed the mercy and the loving care of Jesus. My heart was captivated as I pondered on the spiritual life of St Mary Euphrasia.

My trip to Angers was most valuable, touching, enlightening and helpful. To have had this opportunity to learn the different aspects of Mother Foundress - her life experiences, ministries, family, suffering, benefactors and commitment - gave me a better understanding of the Good Shepherd Mission.

The “Tunnel Experience” was indeed unforgettable as I could feel God’s presence guiding me through a dark journey. Without fail, in our daily struggles, He brings us out of darkness into His marvellous light. The Tunnel Experience gave me more opportunities to build and bond, and strengthen my commitment, as I journeyed together with others as Good Shepherd partners.

Serving the Lord is a personal response and while life may be hard sometimes, God is good all the time. Our work is to provide care and God’s work is to care! “Life is

not about the prizes we win but the people we love”.

Though my stay in Angers was short, the experiences of the powerful presence of God and the spirit of our Foundress continue to live in my heart. I pray that more people may embrace a Godly way of life - in conduct, love, faith and purity - like St Mary Euphrasia.

In gratitude, I want to thank Sr Dorothy Khaw and the lay partners for organising this mission trip, and Ms Tan Poh Cheng, for the opportunity to participate in it. It was a wonderful and unforgettable experience. I returned with more knowledge, experiences, and a greater appreciation of our Mother Foundress. It was truly a privilege to journey with my fellow sisters-in-Christ, and to enjoy a “family” experience together.

Cynthia Lee

Admin Officer, Good Shepherd Convent Kindergarten

A Dream Come True

Six years into my career as an early childhood teacher at a childcare centre, I received a call from an ex-colleague enquiring if I was interested to work at a Catholic kindergarten. I could not believe my ears! This was a dream come true as I had always wanted to work in a Catholic environment.

In 1993, I officially entered my dream school, Good Shepherd Convent Kindergarten, at Nallur Road. I was awestruck by the open air playground with various types of play equipment, a sandpit, a water play area, slides, a big ship, and swings. What really caught my attention was the tree house. I thought the school management was really creative and adventurous to build a tree house in the kindergarten compound. As a matter of fact, many past students of the kindergarten often returned to visit and would recount fond memories of the time they had spent with their friends climbing the tree house. This tree house is somewhat an icon of the school.

Working at Good Shepherd Convent Kindergarten is not without its challenges. The reality is that there will always be one or two children with learning difficulties such as attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), autism, dyslexia and others, or those with poor discipline, or emotional hurt as a result of their broken family background.

These children are sometimes disruptive and they also test my limits during lessons. Often, as I reflect on the struggles and challenges of the profession, inevitably St Mary Euphrasia's quote comes to mind, "one person is of more value than the whole world" and this serves to remind me of my personal mission. I realise that I am much blessed by God and placed by Him in this kindergarten to teach, and reach out to the little ones in need of support. They are all unique and special in God's eyes.

I am eternally grateful to God for directing me to this mission of teaching in the Good Shepherd Convent Kindergarten and for the privilege of teaching and nurturing these young children under my care. It is indeed a joy to be part of the Kindergarten, and I must declare that I am extremely proud to be a part of the Good Shepherd Mission, to feel belonged to the Good Shepherd family, and to serve our Almighty Lord! Amen.

Margaret Spruyt

Teacher, Good Shepherd Convent Kindergarten

A Real Soccer Ball!

I love staying at the hostel because I have many friends to play with. Here, I learn to look after my own belongings and understand personal and general cleanliness. Also, I can watch television as our television set at home is broken. The food here is good and we have fruits after meals.

But the main reason I love staying at the hostel is that I can play football with a real soccer ball!

I used to play football at our village but our ball is very small, not the same as what we have here. I really enjoy playing soccer very much. I am just so happy whenever I get to kick the ball, or catch it!

I have also learnt to help my parents by doing some housework at home. When I complete my primary school education, I hope the hostel will still be open and running, in 2017. I wish for this so that my friend, who is seven years old now, will have a place to stay until he completes his primary school education too.

Aloysius Gimpin

(9 year-old Resident)

A Stronger And More Caring Person

I have been staying at Asrama Gereja St James Tenghilan since I was in Form 2. When I came to this hostel, I was a quiet girl. This is my second year away from my family. All my friends are from my village, so I do not know people outside of my village. I still cry when I think of them because I miss them.

Fortunately, there are many advantages and experiences in staying at this hostel. I have made new friends and there is so much that I can learn from them. I can also learn to improve myself and be a better person. I have learnt many basic life skills through doing and practice, observing and watching how others work, live and behave, being sensitive to others, and listening and thinking more about people and things around me. I have also learnt important values like integrity, gratitude, compassion, respect and zeal. I cherish especially, the values of respect and zeal.

I feel that within a short time of staying at the hostel, I have become more aware of others around me and also more independent. I do my own laundry and realise that I am a creative cook. My spiritual life has also grown and I am able to lead the hostel group in prayer.

One of the best things which I learnt is to share my blessings. I did this through the "Pay-It-Forward" programme where we helped other communities in gotong-royong* projects and also in conducting the children's programme.

I am very happy for the opportunity to enjoy this Good Shepherd hostel experience which has made me a stronger and more caring person.

ShaNtTey Jimmy

**gotong-royong - A Malay term for community initiated effort and mutual help*

Gratitude Manifested

My year in Sabah was so full... full of life!

From September 2011 to July 2012, I was a Good Shepherd Volunteer (GSV) in Sabah, Malaysia. Being a GSV means many things, but mostly it means loving those you live and work with. And I certainly loved my one year there.

While we were in Sabah, Courtney, my volunteer partner, and I lived and worked at three different sites. For two months, we lived and worked at Asrama Gereja St James Tenghilan, with teenage girls. The next two months, we lived and worked at Seri Murni Crisis Center in Kota Kinabalu, with pregnant women. The last seven months, we lived and worked in Pukak, a rural community. We lived with an amazing host family. And we worked at Asrama Desa Pukak as well as the Good Shepherd Rural Training Center located in the village.

I have so many stories I could share from that year, but one of the memories that burns most brightly in my mind is of a very ordinary scene - lunch time. It was the first time I had chef's duty and I decided to fry eggs. I was nervous because I wasn't sure if the children would be picky about how I cooked the eggs. Dora, the hostel manager, told me not to worry, the children would be grateful for anything. Nevertheless, I was still worried, and little did I know how true her words were.

I sat down beside nine-year-old Rozienny, aka Nini. I would later find out that Nini was already a naturally slow eater, but the way she ate each morsel of food on her plate slowed her down even more. And I was so grateful to be sitting next to her at that first meal which I had cooked. As lunch proceeded, I watched Nini eat most of her rice and veggies with relish. Then she made a little cut in the egg yolk, to happily slurp up the runny bit. Next, she carefully cut the egg white and ate that in little bits. Not until the rest of her plate was spotless and empty, did she eat the creamy yellow yolk - the grand finale!

Surprisingly, all the children ate in this manner. They relished any little bit of meat or egg or fish. And they did not ask for more than they needed. I've been saying grace before mealtimes my whole life, but mostly as a robotic habit. Not until this year did I truly and emotionally feel the importance of offering such thanks.

I come from a consumer culture of waste. We take, take, take and don't give back, and on top of that, usually forget to say thank you! But these children did not waste a single grain of rice!

It seems like such a simple no-brainer thing. But the children at Asrama Desa Pukak really opened my eyes to what it means to be grateful. Perhaps they weren't consciously aware of their gratitude. I don't think they necessarily ate every grain of rice thinking, "I love this grain of rice, I'm so grateful for this grain of rice." They're children, after all. But that's the beauty of it. They weren't merely grateful, they were gratitude manifested. And perhaps that's what St Mary Euphrasia meant when she said "Gratitude is the memory of the heart."

Lara Torii

A Little Seed

My life is like a little seed that is sown on rocky ground, a metaphor from “The Parable of The Sower” found in Mark 4:1-20.

I am a resident of the crisis centre. When I first came to the centre, I was very sad and scared. I did not know what to expect. I took things easy and over time, adjusted to life at the centre. Gradually, I began to like the place, and it also helped that everyone was kind and friendly.

The staff taught me much - good manners, prayers before and after meals, controlling temptations like over-eating, watching too much television, and avoiding misunderstandings with other girls at the centre.

In the past, I would be watching my favourite TV series or movies for long hours at a time, I would sleep at anytime of the day, and prayer time was always the next time! I am glad that the staff, Sister and volunteers are patient, take good care of me and guided me.

On one occasion, one of the girls in the house irritated me until I lost my temper. I hit the wall so hard to relieve my anger. Later, I calmed myself down and prayed to God for forgiveness. I even prayed to God to bless the girl who hurt my feelings. Surprisingly, a few days later, that same girl came to apologise to me. I was embarrassed, yet glad, and felt peace in my heart and in the house. God heard my prayer, and I was truly happy.

I had read about St Catherine of Siena who once exclaimed to the Lord: “Where were you when my heart was so sorely troubled with temptation?” The Lord replied: “Daughter, I was in your heart, fortifying you by my grace.” Wow... when I read those words of St Catherine, I knew God was (and still is) with me in times of temptation and hardship.

Staying in the crisis centre is never boring. We start with daily prayers in the morning and end the evening with prayers too. These prayers encourage me as a person. There are a lot of activities such as cooking, prayers, group cleaning, exercises, handcraft work, health lectures and health care. I particularly enjoy the handcraft sessions. We learn skills to make handcrafts which are sold to support the crisis centre.

Group cleaning was always hard for me because I seldom did housework at home. Whatever work I did, I always offered my work to God. Like St Theresa of the Child Jesus, she always offered her work to God, even little things like wiping the window and watering the plants. She even wrote that she was a very little soul who could only offer very little things to the Lord. I admire her and her efforts, and I can learn from her.

What I have learnt here at the hostel are: patience, love for others, and ways to control my temper and temptation. Prayers give me peace and strengthen my mind and soul.

I am looking forward to a new life in the future - a life with my baby. While it is a very difficult decision to make, that is to keep my baby, I know it is the right thing to do.

I want my baby to be the little seed that was sown in good soil, to be close to Christ Jesus always, and to receive His blessings.

A Grateful Resident

Fulfilment and Joy

“Hah! Teaching again? After happily retiring from teaching for over a decade! Can I make it?” I was apprehensive at the thought of teaching again – especially to school girls with problems. That was sometime in September 2010. A good friend had asked me to help three students residing in Rose Virginie Good Shepherd Centre. They were supposed to take their P.M.R. (Form 3 examination) but due to some problems at home, they were unable to attend school.

“OK, I will give it a try,” I told myself after a meeting with Sr Laurina Loh. So there I was, a reluctant volunteer. Armed with my teaching experience, coupled with my former role as a school counsellor, I thought I would manage somehow. Instead, I found the trio carrying so many problems on their young shoulders and it was a real challenge to teach them. So each week, before I started on a lesson, I would ask my friends, who were still actively teaching in school, for tips on likely “hot” topics which might come out in the examination. The girls had only a few weeks to revise with me for their P.M.R. I felt like a teacher as well as a mother again, encouraging and lecturing them as I once did with my own children.

The hard work paid off when Sr Laurina informed me some time later that the girls did quite well in their examination. Naturally, I felt very happy, and proud of them.

A second request came when Sr Laurina asked me to teach another group of girls in crisis. I felt privileged to be chosen to help. I thought to myself, “Hey, not bad, this retiree is still useful to society.”

Teaching in such an environment opened my eyes – I saw the injustice inflicted to innocent girls and women. Unlike teaching in a regular government school, here at the centre, I have time to concentrate on teaching individual girls according to their needs and personality – a more personal approach. I don’t have to rush to complete a set of syllabus for the year.

Often, just before the girls left Rose Virginie Good Shepherd Centre, they gave me little hand-made cards expressing their appreciation and gratitude. I am touched by their gesture. I have seen them letting go of the past and looking forward to a better future. They have become more positive, thanks to the support and encouragement of the Sisters and staff of Rose Virginie Good Shepherd Centre. I too find it meaningful helping out as a volunteer.

The good work of the Centre has rubbed off on me. I am doing more volunteer work to help others, instead of work that benefits only myself.

May God bless all at the Centre.

Chun Yoot Larn

CHAPTER 3

*Inspiring &
Journeying*

My Road to Emmaus

In the Gospel of Luke (24:13-32), two disciples were on their way to Emmaus and were discussing the events which led to the crucifixion of Jesus when they were met by a stranger. They did not recognise that the stranger was the resurrected Jesus until He broke the bread. Like the two disciples, I too had failed to recognise the presence of Christ until He performed a miracle.

I was brought up in a typical Chinese family that practised a mixture of Taoist and Buddhist beliefs. My mother used to secretly take my sister and me to a Baptist church where we attended 'Sunday School'. We thoroughly enjoyed the class and would look forward to each weekend.

It was not long before our little secret was exposed. We were all carted to the temple to do penance. As I reached my teens, I distanced myself from Jesus Christ, especially after news on the various cults broke out, and after I was relentlessly pursued by over-enthusiastic Evangelists who stationed themselves at bus stops to preach the Word of God.

In 2002, when I was teaching a graduating class at a secular secondary school, my Catholic co-Form Teacher suggested that we attend nine weeks of Novena Devotion, on behalf of our students, for wisdom. Our prayers were answered. I was 'impressed' by what Jesus could do for me, and began to pray for my own intentions whenever I felt I needed some divine intervention.

Two significant events happened in 2010 which made me realise that I had been like those two disciples on their way to Emmaus. The first event related to my feelings of frustration at my workplace, yet I was unwilling to leave my comfort zone. I returned to the Novena Church and asked God if there was an alternative path.

In His quiet way, the Lord guided me to a school under the Good Shepherd Congregation, that is, Marymount Convent School. I submitted my resume to the Principal, not expecting any success because I knew that the Ministry of Education might not approve of my transfer from a secondary school to a primary school. As I waited for the Ministry's approval, God slowly made me recognise His presence through the second event.

I was playing with my then fourteen-month old daughter one Sunday in July when I heard a voice telling me to have my daughter's left eye checked. I looked into her eyes but could not detect anything amiss. So I dismissed the 'little voice'. True enough, her left eye deteriorated rapidly within two weeks. This was later diagnosed as retinoblastoma (Rb). Her left eye was eventually enucleated, just four days after the diagnosis.

I was devastated. I needed much emotional and spiritual support then. My friends rallied around me to provide the emotional support, but I was constantly grieving over the loss of her eye. I sought solace at the Novena Church. I tuned my heart to listen to God and His plans. In my many quiet moments with God, I realised I had

many blessings to thank for: firstly, the cancer was discovered early; secondly, the paediatric ophthalmologist who specialised in Rb was available to treat my daughter; thirdly, a most kind-hearted dental surgeon would be constantly moulding my daughter's prosthetic eye as she grew older; and finally, I was able to rely on a strong Retinoblastoma Network where parents of these survivors act as pillars of support for one another.

God had not abandoned me in my hour of dire need. Instead, He was walking with me throughout this ordeal. He had worked His miracle through my daughter to bring the entire family back to Him.

Today, I am teaching at Marymount Convent School and am grateful for this opportunity to teach in a school that is rich in culture and rooted in the values of the Foundress. Two of St. Mary Euphrasia's quotes act as anchors in my healing process. In the first quote, "You have to adapt to all circumstances. Do the best you can, while remembering that, according to the spirit of our calling, we must be everything to everyone." I have much to adapt, to learn and to give. I was previously teaching teenage boys, but now, I am teaching pre-teen girls. At home, I have to adapt to my daughter's feisty mood swings as she gradually becomes aware of her condition.

Teaching at Marymount Convent School has thus become my process of learning and healing. In St. Mary Euphrasia's other famous quote, "A person is of more value than the whole world", I have become more compassionate towards pupils who come from less-privileged backgrounds or who have disabilities, even more so now that I have come to terms with my daughter's disability.

My personal journey to Emmaus has indeed been long and emotionally draining. Nevertheless, it eventually led my family and me to finding Christ and inviting Him into our lives. We received the gift of Baptism at Easter 2012. Our Lord Jesus Christ has renewed our faith and strength in Him so that we may "glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope." (Romans 5:3-4)

Wong Lai Lin

Marymount Convent School

Against All Odds

Many successful women have been publicly acknowledged for their contributions to society and nation. Still, we do not know their private lives and how they have arrived at where they are. Chances are that they have their fair share of struggles and challenges - arising from their background, culture or gender - before they get to where they are.

When I visited Jane in her four-room HDB flat in Jurong, I saw a large portrait of her - flanked by her two daughters and a son in their graduation gowns - proudly displayed on the wall of the living room. All three children hold a Master's Degree each, one in education, one in engineering, and the youngest in architecture.

What's so great about that? One might think.

Well, Jane is illiterate. She is also a single parent.

It didn't seem that long ago when I was managing the shelter for battered women. But eighteen years have gone by since Jane was brought to the shelter by her elder brother. With her were two young children in tow. Her face and arms were battered and bruised by her marine engineer husband. Jane had been married to a divorcee whose first marriage ended because of his violent behaviour. Chang promised to turn over a new leaf and be a loving husband if given a second chance. Jane was his second chance.

Jane came from a family of six children - two girls and four boys. Her parents favoured the boys and so, the girls were deprived of an education and a promising future. When Chang became available for marriage, Jane, the older of the two sisters, was match-made with him.

A demure, good old-fashioned woman, Jane did all she could to be a good wife, and mother when the children came along. However, it didn't take long for Chang to revert to his old ways. He became unreasonable, easily angered and demanding. Jane found herself an unappreciated full-time homemaker with mounting fears for herself and the children whenever Chang could not control his aggression. He would hit his wife, bang her head against the wall, throw things at her, and smash household furniture and equipment to vent his anger. The children were fearful and helpless. She did everything within her power to placate him but to no avail.

Within two days of her admission, Chang had traced his wife to the shelter and arrived with a beautiful bouquet of roses, Jane's favourite, to appease her. He had resorted to this tactic to win back her trust and confidence each time he physically abused her, and it had worked for at least ten years.

Trembling with fear, and ignoring his plea, Jane took the flowers and threw them into the bin in full view of onlookers, much to Chang's displeasure and humiliation.

Jane had lost count of the times she had forgiven him. For the sake of the children, she had stayed on and tolerated Chang's violent behaviour. This time, it was the last straw. She was determined to leave him. It was difficult but she had left her son at home with

Chang. She had had enough... the cycle of violence must be broken. She would not allow another repeat of a violent attack.

Following extensive counselling, the couple acknowledged their irreconcilable differences and decided to work towards a separation. It was an arduous process. Chang continued to harass and threaten his wife and children after they had returned home and despite a personal protection order taken against him. An exclusion order became necessary for some relief at home, but threats via the phone became frequent.

Jane and the children were financially dependent on Chang so he had the upper hand. However, with moral support from the staff of the shelter and a supportive brother, Jane went out to work for the first time. With no paper qualification, employment with good remuneration was out of her reach. She became a part-time house cleaner and worked as many hours as time permitted, while caring for her school-going children.

Jane was keenly aware of the value of an education and put in every effort to ensure her children would not miss out on any opportunity. On weekends, she would take her children to the public library and stayed on with them until the library closed. It was undoubtedly hard for her. When the children were at school, she slogged away to earn a living. When the children returned from school, her time and energy were focused on them. She knew her sacrifice would not be in vain and was confident all their struggles would end someday. All she wanted was for peace to prevail in her family and for her children to succeed in life. No matter how hard life was, she persevered.

I met her once, after a house-cleaning job. She shared that she had to struggle with dust allergy, cramped fingers and wobbly legs. She was already fifty years old then. Still, she strove to complete the race she started. Up to this day, she had not changed the house telephone number just so that her former husband could be in touch with the children, if he wanted to. He never once called.

I am amazed at how well brought-up her children are. They are respectable and respectful, consistently in and out of their home. They greatly appreciate their mother's sacrifices. Indeed, Jane's struggles had not been in vain. She has every reason to be proud of herself and her children.

When I saw her two weeks ago, Jane was radiating peace and joy. She spoke of her past with absolutely no trace of bitterness. Her children are successful, and wonderfully unassuming.

Jane's elder daughter, who is teaching in a secondary school, made a comment which struck me. She said, "There are many students in my school who are in the same boat as I once was. The difference is that their mothers are so helpless."

Indeed, Jane's children have their mother to thank for. A caring, resolute and sacrificial woman - that's Jane.

Sr Delphine Kang, rgs

She Strives On

LeeLee is in her forties. For two years, she had been sharing a rented room at \$250 per month.

She has just moved to another rented room, paying \$450 monthly out of her meagre \$900 monthly income from working at a petrol station. Her new room-mates are a couple. A curtain separates them. Life is miserable for LeeLee. The couple disallowed her to use the common washroom before they have used it first each morning, no matter what time it may be – not even when LeeLee gets up a full hour before them.

Two years ago, LeeLee was driven out of her matrimonial home by her mother-in-law. Her happiness was short-lived after her marriage. Problems surfaced when LeeLee's firstborn was a girl. Her mother-in-law accused her of being a bringer of ill-fortune. Her husband, Ben, tried to protect her initially, but was eventually won over by his mother. Things did turn around for a while after she gave birth to a son. That was short-lived, however, for LeeLee is hearing-impaired, and consequently has a speech defect.

One day, LeeLee tripped and fell outside her house and broke a mirror. Not long after that, Ben lost his job. Her mother-in-law was quick to accuse LeeLee of being a jinx. Though Ben managed to obtain alternative employment in odd jobs, he began to vent his frustrations on his wife. Nothing she did was satisfactory to him. Her husband and mother-in-law controlled and manipulated the children, and ultimately forced LeeLee to leave home.

LeeLee is big-hearted and forgives easily. She made the best of whatever life dealt her and continued working while trying to better her own life. Until recently, she was given weekly access to her children but she could only meet them outside her matrimonial home. Her husband and mother-in-law forbade her to enter the house for fear of her 'bad luck contagion'. Still, seeing her children gave her comfort.

Recently, that comfort was taken away from her. She is now allowed to see only her daughter and is expected to provide her with pocket money. The people who were once closest and dearest to her now manipulate her for money. LeeLee yearns to see her son. She constantly cries out, "Is it asking too much to see my son?" Though a non-Christian, she finds solace in prayer whenever she goes to Church.

LeeLee's move to rent another room appears to be a solution, but it is ironic that the very solution is itself another form of violence against her. Despite the many setbacks, LeeLee has an indomitable spirit and she strives on, without blaming her abusers, or the circumstances. She believes she has the strength to overcome as long as she keeps trying.

Violence against women does not regard social, religious, economic or any other background. It can happen to anyone in an unfortunate situation. One local article reports on an increase of victims even among educated, established and eloquent women.

It is said, 'A woman's life is a history of love'. Unfortunately, love does not always beget love. Whether we know it or not, whether we acknowledge it or not, many women suffer discrimination of sorts at some time in their lives. And this will continue for a long time yet. But a woman need not be cowed by it or play the blame game. Women need to believe in themselves, like LeeLee (and Jane in the previous story), and know that they have the power and the ability to overcome discrimination and violence against them. They can seek support and help from the many services or programmes available. They are capable of doing their part to get out of any violent or difficult situation to improve their lot.

Women can be what they are really meant to be – as inspiration, nurturer, love and variety.

Sr Delphine Kang, rgs

My Life's Tunnels

In my quiet moments, I often found myself reflecting on Mother Foundress' many strengths and asking, "How am I like our Mother Foundress? What virtues do I uphold that she could be proud of me if she were here with me today?"

Having heard the many stories of her life, I realised that she was as human as me. In her lifetime, she too faced many challenges in the course of her service to the weak and poor. She had her share of stress and worries, and would fall ill too. She had admitted, "I am not as invulnerable as you think I am."

So she was just like anyone of us. But what kept her going? I learnt that she was a courageous, compassionate and loving woman, and she had clarity of mission and vision. She loved and cared for the girls just like any mother would; she gave them food, shelter, lodging and beyond meeting such needs, she gave them unconditional care and love.

I was, and continue to be, inspired by her vision and determination.

Alone, I stood in front of the tunnel at Motherhouse one cold morning. I peered through the gate. It was dark. I could not see the other end as it was excavated in an 'S' pattern. I knew the code to open the gate, but I hesitated. Struggling with many uncertainties and fears, I remember asking myself, "What's inside? Will anything happen to me along the way? How long is the tunnel? Will I reach the other end? Will I be able to make a U-turn half-way through?" I hesitated, and decided against being too adventurous. I walked back to Mother House. For me, the tunnel represents the unknown and the uncertain.

This "tunnel hesitation and decision" reminds me of the time when I had to make a major decision in 2004 to quit my desk-bound job of over 20 years to take up a course in Early Childhood education. Many people close to me said I was out of my mind. It was basically impossible to survive financially. Though apprehensive, my husband gave me his support. Life after this move was anything but rosy. There was a time when I could not even afford my son's \$5 school fees! Supported by courage and passion, I pressed on.

Just when I thought I was seeing light in this tunnel, my husband was diagnosed with cancer in 2007. "Oh dear, another tunnel; an even darker one!" I thought to myself then. During the six months of his treatment, life was tough but I persevered - mainly through the love for the work and the courage of a mother in the family. For whatever reason, I was led to the Good Shepherd Convent Kindergarten, my next tunnel. No doubt there were many uncertainties and obstacles too. However, I had good company - the love and support from all at Good Shepherd, Sr Cecilia Liew and Tan Poh Cheng.

Today, I am serving at Marymount Kindergarten. I am amazed at how far I have come in my career. While this is no maze, nevertheless it is another tunnel that I am journeying with confidence that there is light at the other end. The inspiration from

Mother Foundress offers me that light.

Fiona Kew

Principal, Marymount Kindergarten

Pilgrimage Reflection

After hearing so much about the Motherhouse and stories like the tunnel, the gardens, the green door, and others, I was finally able to experience them all! In the evening of 23 May 2011, I set foot on Maison Mère, Soeurs du Bon Pasteur.

It was an exciting and meaningful experience to be at the very places where St Mary Euphrasia was. The physical environment was very comforting and serene. At the Motherhouse, I saw where her tomb lay in Angers, the gardens, the famous tunnel, the charming green door, her house at Noirmoutier and the beautiful beach where she grew up. I was most excited to learn that the room for my stay was located in the same block as Mother Foundress' room. I could sense Mother Foundress' presence and a close connection with her work and vision.

My most cherished times were the mornings when Sr Noreen O'Shea shared about Mother Foundress, which tickled my imagination! The creativity, gratitude, charism and loyalty of the benefactors touched me as I listened to the joys and struggles Mother Foundress encountered. No wonder people said she was awesome! As I walked through the gardens and enjoyed the roses, cherries and plums, I finally spotted the tunnel entrance. I realised I was truly benefitting from the hard work of Mother Foundress and all the Sisters and benefactors. I felt unworthy, as I had endured so little, yet I was privileged to walk the grounds of such "giants of faith and action".

The fellowship and friendships formed with fellow pilgrims, especially during meal times, was the icing on the cake. Witty, friendly and engaging, it was enchanting to hear the pilgrims from various nations and their involvement with the Good Shepherd Mission. To me, it felt like we had all gathered as "children" in the place that Mother Foundress had prepared for us!

I was especially inspired by the green door experience where we were all "sent off". It was significant as it was as if Mother Foundress herself had approved and encouraged me to step out of my comfort zone to help those in need wherever they might be. In a strange way, as the pilgrimage ended, it also seemed like it had just begun.

I know I will hold dear to me, every inspiration and thought that had materialised, and I remain grateful always for having been a part of the Good Shepherd Mission.

Ms Chen Sheau Ing

Assistant Director, Marymount Centre (2009 to 2012)

To Help Is To Love

During the first year that I worked with the Good Shepherd Sisters, one of them said to me, “They need our help.” She said this when we were considering discharging a girl who was constantly causing trouble. At that time, I didn’t really understand what she meant by ‘help’.

Seventeen years on, I am reminded of her words again and again, through St Mary Euphrasia’s vision of ‘one person is of more value than the whole world’.

John, not his real name, was a difficult person who had a bad attitude. Today, I consider it a privilege to have worked with him for four years. Even though he had made considerable improvements since he first entered the shelter, I still feel inadequate to ‘help’ him sometimes, unlike the other residents. Often, I wanted to give up and send him home, but somehow, I always had a change of heart whenever I think of his future and his rights.

Each time he misbehaved, I would remind myself to keep my cool and value him as a child of God. There were times when I asked Jesus why He gave me a resident who caused so much trouble and heartache. I am still committed, and learning, to ‘help’ John. I may not always be able to hear him, or understand the needs that underlie his “troublesome” words and deeds. But I understand the Sister’s words - “They need our help.” It is more than just providing food and shelter. It is also about offering guidance, companionship and love. This is the ‘help’ needed by John and his fellow residents.

I have John to thank for helping me to come to this realisation. John may not know this, but in journeying with, and helping him, he had in turn helped me to grow. I also thank Jesus for putting John, and the other children, in my life. It is beautiful to learn one of His lessons - to help is to love.

Dora Lansan

Learning And Growing

I checked into St James Hostel at the age of fourteen. A very shy person by nature, I did not speak to anyone then. I did not know how to socialise with the other residents. I only nodded when spoken to.

It was a different story five months later. I made friends in this hostel, which has become my second home. The staff in the hostel almost gave up on me initially. Fortunately, I did not give up on myself. Step by step, I learnt to improve myself by picking up skills to communicate and socialise with others. Slowly, I grew more confident.

One day, I was invited to lead in a prayer. I had never done this before and did not know how to go about it. I trembled with nervousness and my heart thumped so fast! I was really not confident but I still did it anyway. I was so proud of myself! Looking back, I was glad to have taken up the challenge and the opportunity to overcome my fears.

Staying at the hostel has helped me learnt independence and responsibility. Now, I can cook, do my own laundry, discipline myself to study with a timetable I had drawn up, and many other life skills. Another important area of learning for me is in getting along with people who have very different personalities. It is sometimes hard to build strong friendships. I have learnt to be open-minded and to accept people for who they are.

I have the opportunity to go for Mass regularly. I often pray to God to strengthen my faith. God knows my needs and he answered my prayers by sending a friend, Marvin, who led me to Jesus. Marvin taught me how to pray the Divine Mercy prayer and the rosary. He reminds me to be prayerful. He shared his life's stories with me and his relationship with God. He is an altar server. I want to be like Marvin. He is cool. Sometimes, I feel he is like Jesus. He tells me that Jesus is always with me and to believe.

I am grateful, as St Mary Euphrasia has taught us, for the friendships and the many opportunities to learn and grow at the hostel. I have many stories to tell of my life at the hostel - good and beautiful stories. I will keep them for another day.

Clara Thomas

My Learning Journey Has Just Begun

As I write this little story, my work record at Asrama Gereja St James Tenghilan is only five months as an Education Assistant.

However, during this short period, I had experienced all sorts of emotions; from joy to sadness to many indescribable feelings. I struggled to share my life with the female residents and my colleagues. My values are so different from theirs because we come from vastly different backgrounds.

There is a positive side to this though in not knowing each girl's background, name, age, where they came from, their families, and their childhood stories. This lack of knowledge enabled me to communicate and interact more actively to know them better and to relate with them without being judgemental.

Getting to know them was not easy. I was a stranger to them. I needed to build trust with them. Thankfully, with Jesus on my side, the Good Shepherd journeyed with me in this process thus far.

As I get to know their respective life stories, I know I will be able to journey and understand them better, especially their challenges. For the few who had the courage to share with me, these experiences had given me joy and touched me deeply.

So far, the residents have offered me a glimpse of the joy of young people. I know I have much to learn from them even as I befriend and care for them. I realise my own learning journey has just begun.

Clarice Juslin

A Privilege

With permission from my parents, and much encouragement from my friend, Imelda, I entered the hostel with confidence. Imelda had shared a lot about her experience staying in a youth hostel run by the Good Shepherd Sisters.

At the hostel, I made friends and I learnt things about myself that I was not aware of. I also attend Mass regularly. I am happy that I am growing in my faith as I am encouraged to pray daily.

I treasure the advice of one of the staff members who had also kindly shared about her childhood. Her stories helped me realise that my own childhood was not as difficult as hers. I feel privileged to stay here and discover more about myself, and how I can be a better person to my family and society.

The staff team here has observed, and commented that I have grown in many ways since the day I first stepped into the hostel. They affirmed my leadership skills and said I could lead my friends or any small group.

My experience living in the hostel has, so far, been enriching. It is a privilege that not many young people have. This privilege is a gift from God and I thank Him for allowing me to journey with the hostel staff and the new friends I have made.

Clay Jonas

Am I A Dinosaur?

“Am I a dinosaur here?” I thought to myself recently. I have volunteered and worked in Seri Murni for four years now. Staff members have come and gone, and even the Sister-in-charge has changed, not once, but thrice.

Working here is also a journey of self-discovery for me. I realise I am not a good house-keeper. I marvel at the energy of the two staff members and the residents in keeping the home ship-shaped. Everything has its place, and usefulness. My mentors, Rachel and Irene, know every nook and cranny of this home and where things are kept.

Unlike me, Rachel is very good with her hands, especially in cooking and craftwork. Amongst the staff members, she is the only one who knows how to use the sewing machine; until Pauline joined us later.

I have also discovered that I am not able to deal with girls on the verge of delivering their babies. One day, I was alone with the girls when one of them had heavy bleeding. I was so flustered and nervous, as I did not know what to do. It must have been very obvious. I contacted Sister for help. Meanwhile, and fortunately, the older girls helped to keep the situation manageable. Since then, I am often teased over this flounder of mine. The girls never let me forget it. Even the youngest resident has fun at my expense. I accept it in good spirit. It’s our common experience after all.

My teaching skills and experience come in useful though. I thought I’d never need to use them now that I have retired from teaching. I zealously teach craftwork and English; batch by batch. It does become repetitive as one group of girls will come and another leaves. It’s like going back to square one for every new girl admitted. It was a challenge at the beginning, but it is a norm now.

Learning is a two-way street. While I try to impart knowledge and teach English to the girls, I, in turn, learnt many things from them. For instance, one of the girls is so good at crochet that she has become my “sifu”. I learnt to crochet so that I can teach the other girls.

The girls do not stay long. As soon as they are ready, they will leave to make their own life. I often wonder how they are faring on their own. It is hard to let each one go as I know I am unlikely to see them, or hear from them again. However, before I get too sentimental and sad, other girls will be waiting to be admitted, and will need my attention.

So, dinosaur or not, I continue to serve at Seri Murni. Life goes on, as in the ebb and flow of the tides. But I am happy for having crossed path with the girls briefly in their lives, as theirs in mine.

Maureen Wong
(Volunteer)

Trust In God

A kampung boy went on a journey; he moved to a big city called Kuala Lumpur (KL); he started off as an apprentice and today, has found a permanent job in the big city. This is his story.

My name is Jaclay John. I grew up in Malawa Telipok, Sabah. I am one of the youths who graduated from the Youth PREP Link programme some time ago. I consider myself an active youth back then; one who loved to get involved in any charitable or voluntary work with the Good Shepherd Mission. I enjoyed being part of all these activities, working alongside with the Sisters, and youths from different backgrounds.

One day, I received a call from Chin Poh Choo (Director of PKGS Sabah) about an apprenticeship opportunity. It was from out of the blue; I had no clue what it was all about. I believe this was God's answer to my prayer. I had prayed and asked for His wisdom to show me the way to my future. Poh Choo informed me that the internship required me to leave Sabah for a 2-year contract with the company. This was a difficult decision to make. Never in my life had I thought of leaving Sabah. In fact, I had already applied for a place at the university.

I was in a dilemma. I prayed daily for God's guidance. I had to make a decision soon. It sounded exciting, yet I had my anxiety. Anyway, I finally said "yes" to the apprenticeship.

The next step was to prepare myself for this new "adventure". The Good Shepherd Welfare Centre team had designed a 3-month preparatory course to support those of us who had decided to go for the apprenticeship.

It started with ten youths indicating their interest and being placed on the course but due to other commitments, only five eventually remained on the running track. The good news was that all five of us were selected for the apprenticeship following an interview with the Country Manager of the company.

18th January 2010 was the first day of the apprenticeship. All five of us had mixed feelings - worry, anxiety, excitement, happiness, sadness. We were leaving home for the first time; we did not know what to expect or what the company expected of us. In our minds, two years was a very long time and we wondered how we could sustain ourselves during this period. These questions floated in our minds: "What if we failed? What next then?"

Life in a big city is so real and full of temptations. Being away from home and living alone added to the difficulties.

I can still remember clearly the day I cried because I missed home so much and the training and work were so tough. Besides the training, we had to complete our reports, assignments, and at the same time, revised what we had learnt from our daily tasks. We also had to deal with all kinds of attitudes from colleagues, office politics, gossips, and mistreatment by some senior staff members. They thought we

were cheap labour. I would say the apprenticeship really challenged me emotionally, physically, mentally and spiritually.

I wanted to give up and return home, back to my simple life in Sabah. It was a really challenging and crazy two years in KL for me. What helped was staying positive, praying, clinging on to God, and letting Him intervene in my life and for me to offer up everything to Him; no one else but Him alone.

In the blink of an eye, 18th January 2012 arrived. It was a joyful day as I had completed the apprenticeship and fulfilled the two-year contract. The hardship my friends and I underwent had finally ended. The company organised our graduation day on 11th Feb 2012 and we celebrated with joy and relief. Deep inside me, I thanked and praised God for what He had done for me.

Happily, I received a job offer together with compliments from the company. I accepted the appointment. Imagine, I am officially a permanent staff of the company! Of the five of us, I was the first to receive a job offer. The company also decided to recruit another apprentice, my cousin. I thank God for the gift and opportunity He had given me, blessing my life abundantly - a career, a caring and helpful boss, a supportive and kind church community, Christ-like brothers and sisters, a decent shelter and lots more.

The two years had toughened me and contributed to my self-development and confidence. Mixing around with the right group of people also helped to motivate and support me. I found them in church. More importantly, I learnt to always trust in God and include Him in everything I do.

Sincerely from my heart, I want to express my gratitude to so many people who had helped me along the way, and also for their constant prayers. May God continue to bless all of them. I appreciate them, and they have a special place in my heart.

Jaclay John

Work Worth Giving Your Life For

"I can understand why she wanted to be a nun," I thought to myself after listening to her sharing.

That was also when I first encountered the work of the Good Shepherd Sisters on a particular Saturday at Novena many years ago. Sr Gerard Fernandez had just shared her experience of working with the teenage girls in the Good Shepherd home. I remember listening intently as the stories were so interesting, unlike any I had heard before.

"Ah, this is work worth giving your life for," I said to myself.

What I did not know then was that a seed had been planted, only to sprout much later when I felt an urging in me that I could not ignore. Until that encounter, my life's goal was to try and be a millionaire by age forty, and then retire to "enjoy life". It was the "fashion" at that time to entertain such a goal!

This life's goal was rudely interrupted when I resigned from my occupation in search of vocation. I was looking to live a life that would count, that would make a real difference, whatever that meant. Looking back, I can say that it was a turning point in my life. My sentiments are reflected in Robert Frost's poem, *The Road Not Taken*:

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveller, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I--
I took the one less travelled by,
And that has made all the difference.

I am still "on the way". Indeed, way has led on to way for me. Having taken the road I took has made a difference to me, at least. I pray that it has also made a difference to those whom I had met along the way, for they have been my teachers - on the things that really matter.

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CHAPTER 4

Touching Lives

A Defining And Continuing Legacy

My journey with the Good Shepherd Sisters began in 1974. I came to Madonna Heights at the age of nineteen, to begin a career in teaching. Six years later, I was appointed School Principal of Sekolah Khas Pusat Kebajikan Good Shepherd (PKGS) where I worked till I left for Australia. Currently a Vice-President, Learning and Teaching at a Christian college of higher education in Australia, I owe much of my leadership skills, my vision for empowerment, and my faith in young people to the Sisters of the Good Shepherd. They formed, trained and supported me through my early teaching and administrative career.

Working with the Good Shepherd Sisters was an empowering and exhilarating experience. I was blessed to work with Sisters and teachers who were passionate and committed to the Good Shepherd Mission. There was so much we had gained from being a community connected to a vision of renewal and transformation. We learned much and loved much. We were humbled by the lives, the challenges and the hopes of our students. In turn, they had so much to teach us. Indeed, I have valued my time with my PKGS students and the Sisters as the most valuable, and meaningful part of my career.

One of the most empowering aspects of working with the Good Shepherd Sisters was the unveiling of my mind to the beauty, character and potential of those who are most dispossessed. I see today the fruits of labour and love of the Good Shepherd mission in the success, faith and energy of the many young people around the world who are blessed to have been part of the Good Shepherd family. It has been really fulfilling to see how so many young students from PKGS have blossomed into very responsible, passionate, visionary and sensitive adults. It was most heartening for me to attend several reunions with my ex-students, as recently as 2011, and to learn of their success, their courage and resilience in the face of many odds - a gift of their lives at Madonna Heights.

I am most grateful to the Good Shepherd Sisters who I believe, moulded and inspired my faith and vision in Christian service. I have travelled through several countries and felt that the Good Shepherd mission towards the less fortunate, and their vision for healing and transformation, is an antidote to the world's suffering. I recognise the work of the Good Shepherd Sisters as the cornerstone of hope in a world that is reeling from crisis to crisis.

The Good Shepherd charism continues to be a dominant aspiration in my life. The values of love, hospitality, trust, goodwill, concern for those in need, risking all for 'one' are hallmarks of the Good Shepherd mission. I cannot pretend to have lived up to all of these values, not even during my time at PKGS, but I can say that the Good Shepherd charism remains a strong and persistent framework for the ideals I aspire to achieve.

The beauty of being part of the Good Shepherd family is the space the Sisters give you to believe in yourself despite all your limitations, to grow despite all your circumstances, to reach for love when all else fails you, to believe that forgiveness and compassion

are always available, and most of all, to invest in the vision of the gracious and healing power of God. For both staff and students, this is life-forming and life-changing.

I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to the Good Shepherd Sisters, who, as giants of inspiration, graced my life with their love and gifted my life with their prayers and talent. Their dedication to the Good Shepherd mission, their loving attendance to duty, and their ability to nurture and inspire a healthy work ethic and leadership skills have advanced the careers of many who had spent the early years of their career with them.

I look back to the days of teaching and operating the school with great fondness, gratitude and humility. I owe much to the Good Shepherd Sisters, who each served to extend my love for the ministry of teaching and my deep and abiding love for God. In this regard, I am grateful for being mentored by Sr Dorothy Khaw, Sr Helena Vytialingam, Sr Therese Thong, Sr Veronica Anthonysamy, Sr Cecilia Liew, Sr Jean Fernandez and so many others whom I honour with my gratitude and love. They each played a role in enabling me through their wisdom, their graciousness and friendship.

Casting my mind back, I owe many of the Sisters, a debt of thanks which I cannot fully do justice with words alone. This is but an attempt to honour the work of those who impacted my life significantly.

To Sr Therese Thong, my thanks for nurturing my early understanding of the mission and service to the Good Shepherd cause. To Sr Veronica, my thanks for her faith in enabling a young, raw, nineteen year-old to walk into a classroom and teach. To Sr Cecilia Liew, my thanks for her encouragement of my administrative work and my scholarship. To Sr Lourdes Wong, my thanks for her patience and graciousness during my short stint as Aspirant at the Convent. To Sr Jean Fernandez, Sr Barbara Lip and Sr Loyola Loh and so many others, my thanks for their kind and loving friendship.

I have reserved the last two debts of gratitude for the two Sisters who exercised the greatest influence on my life. To Sr Helena Vytialingam, I am indebted for my vision for teaching. Her extending the literacy programme and the social work component of PKGS, mentoring me and so many others into embracing a professional and pastoral vision of teaching, has gone far in influencing the classes I had taught and managed in Australia. Her balancing of love and discipline has supported my pedagogical rationale and philosophy. Her personal and loving nurturance of me had given me a deep understanding of joy-filled work and compassion.

Finally, the most significant influence on my life, both during my time as Principal at PKGS and beyond, has been the strength, confidence and visionary leadership of Sr Dorothy Khaw. She inspired me personally and professionally to be more than I ever imagined possible. Sr Dorothy tutored me with diligence and confidence, nurturing in me something of her own vision of grace and charity, enabling me to carve for myself the mind and wings to soar without fear, yet remaining grounded in real

world needs. She inspired me to dream big, lead with conviction, and to remain passionately and intimately engaged with life's evolving challenges. I owe my success in administration and the heart of my Good Shepherd journey to her influence on my life.

I am indebted to the Good Shepherd Sisters for their duty of care, their unconditional love, their enduring vision of recreating lives, their ability to sow the seeds of faith in broken lives, their love for God and community, and their modelling of selfless devotion to the principles of Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd.

I will continue to cherish the Good Shepherd family whose love I carry, and which keeps me connected to the things in life that matter. Their motto 'one person is of more value than the whole world' continues to inspire me through my teaching and administrative experience here in Australia.

I return today in memory, my gratitude to the Good Shepherd Sisters for the story of my life, embellished appropriately in the words of St Mary Euphrasia: "Gratitude is the memory of the heart". Their mission is a defining and continuing legacy of God's grace to the world. And for this I, together with so many others, am most humbly grateful.

Dr Jane Fernandez

We Did It!

“Dream it. Wish it. Do it.”

The opportunity to do just that came in the form of an opportunity to help the children of Kitale, Kenya.

In January 2011, we were exposed to life's harsh reality when we encountered the people in Kitale, Kenya. No, we did not visit the country. It was through Ms Alona's powerpoint presentation. It was a collection of vivid photographs of women and children in Kitale. It touched our hearts deeply when we saw their living conditions; houses were actually basic shelters made from rubbish collected and compacted. We were also shown the list of names of 122 children of Kitale who were receiving help from the Good Shepherd Sisters there.

The impact of the presentation left was pondering about the poverty in Kitale and somehow, we felt a call to step forward to help. Following a discussion among the group, we came up with the idea of saving RM 0.20 from our pocket money out of RM 1.50 everyday. The purpose of this saving and collection was to support the provision of meals to these deprived and hungry children.

Not long after the presentation, on Valentine's day, 14 February 2011, Sr Susan Chia was invited to our centre to share about her visit to Kitale, Kenya. She also showed us some of her pictures with the children. The joy and happiness of Sr Susan with the children was very visible. These people must be very special in her heart. In our session with Sr Susan, we also shared what we had learnt and how the people of Kitale had taught us to appreciate what we have - food, lodging and the gifts of our own families and education.

The involvement and exposure to the Kitale project made a huge impact on the 17 of us at the centre. It helped us build a more positive outlook in our personal life, and taught us that making a difference in the lives of others also contributed towards creating a deeper meaning in our own life journey. We discovered that lending a hand to others is a very generous act. This experience had opened our hearts and taught us to be compassionate and active in reaching out to others in need, regardless of the geographical location. More importantly, we achieved our project goal. We did it!

Postscript:

The project participants of the Teenage Centre saved a total of RM280 from their pocket money from February to October 2011 to support the children of the Good Shepherd Daycare Centre in Kitale, Kenya.

Rachael Julius

From Desperation To Joy

I am a mother of three children and my husband works in a factory.

Six years ago, I was desperately looking for a job as my husband and I were having financial problems. I used to pass by Mariaville Kindergarten on my motorbike to drop my daughter off at the kindergarten. One day, out of sheer desperation, I decided to enter the kindergarten and asked if there was a job vacancy. I knew my chances of getting a job there were slim. After all, I had no teaching qualification or experience.

“We can take you in to assist a Pre-One teacher,” Sr Dorothy Khaw said with a smile. Imagine my joy then! The condition that came with the offer was that I had to undergo training in Early Childhood Education. I was more than happy to accept this condition. I have since completed the course successfully. I am now trained!

I remember when I first started work, I found it very challenging as everything about teaching in a kindergarten was new to me. However, the staff members were very kind and helpful towards me.

Over time, I learnt a lot, especially about the Good Shepherd Mission. At every event in our kindergarten, I found teamwork and care among the staff. The Good Shepherd value on respect alone taught me a lot; that it is important not to gossip, because it causes pain to others. Working there, I have grown to become a better person. The Good Shepherd Sisters’ vocation and dedication have taught me how I, too, can be compassionate, loving and humble.

I am happy to belong to the Good Shepherd family. Today, I am working not because I need a job, but because I love what I am doing. I pray that God will bless me with good health so that I will be able to continue working at this wonderful place.

Ganeswari

Into The Deep End

“Would you consider teaching the residents to bake and cook?” Sr Agnes Claire Koh asked me at one of our weekly staff meetings. Hesitantly, I responded with a “yes” but my heart was heavy. I thought to myself, “I’ve been cooking for a family of five. Am I qualified to teach forty-five international residents how to bake and cook? I do not even possess any culinary or baking qualification!”

Filled with self-doubt and fears, I practised and perfected the recipe at home, a day before I conducted the cooking lesson for the residents. This went on for about a month and I derived no joy in my work. I was feeling frustrated and unhappy.

One morning, just before I headed to work for another lesson with the residents, I decided to put my trust in the Lord, and let Him do His work. By God’s grace, my first impromptu baking lesson was not as fearful as I thought. I grew in confidence with each lesson. I learnt to cast aside my self-doubt and fears and I began to share in the residents’ success and joy of learning.

Today, the residents are able to bake their own birthday cakes, and cook a variety of local dishes - Peranakan, Indian and Chinese. With their new-found skills, the residents are also able to find better job opportunities in Hong Kong and Taiwan. As I found out, some residents eventually brought the skills back to their homeland and baked cookies during their local festivals to earn extra income.

I would like to thank Sr Agnes Claire for seeing the potential and talent in me which I was unable to see in myself. I also thank God for giving me the courage to dive into the deep end, to help the residents pick up cooking and baking skills and develop such talents in them.

This baking and cooking challenge was truly an experience that allowed me to resonate with what Mother Foundress had said: “I possess no great talents but I love and love with the strength of my soul.”

Truly, there is no need to fear the deep end. Miracles do happen if we trust in our Lord!

Margaret Koh

Residential Supervisor, Good Shepherd Centre

I Cannot Read, But I Can Feel

My husband and I have our reasons for sending our children to the hostel.

The first year was the hardest. I visited my children at Asrama Desa Pukak (ADP) at least twice a week. Each time I left the hostel, it was so very difficult, especially for my nine-year old girl. The same went for me as well. She would cry; she wanted to return home with us. I cried too, but silently in my heart. I hardened myself and refused to ask for permission to let her return home. I hid my tears and pushed away my sadness.

I felt bad as I thought I was not a good mother to my children. I am not able to teach or help them with their school work. My neighbours said my children were 'stupid'. I took my neighbours' comments to mean that I am stupid and so my children are stupid like me. I am embarrassed and feel useless as a mother. This is so unfair to my children.

I am not literate. But even though I cannot read, I can feel. I do not want my children to be illiterate like me. I also do not want others to look down on them all because of my own weaknesses. I am willing to sacrifice my feelings and desires; I am also prepared to force my children to sacrifice their precious time with us so that they will have an education and a better future.

When my husband and I had heard that ADP is able to provide a learning support programme for children, we decided to make enquiries. We are grateful that ADP still had places at the hostel for our children. I want them to get the best education and I know that they will have that opportunity at ADP.

After attending a few sessions on parenting skills and understanding children's rights at ADP, I am now more aware that parents cannot deny their children's rights, or force them beyond their abilities.

I am proud of the decision I made for our children. I know we are giving them the opportunity for a better future. I also know my children have adjusted to life at the hostel and are enjoying themselves there. I can see it on their faces every time they come back home.

Maity Ginil

The Love Within

Life is not just about finding oneself; it is also about shaping one's personality. I love St James Hostel. Every person who has journeyed with me at this hostel has taught me much and shaped my personality in some ways. They taught me to manage my problems and not to "facebook" it. They taught me to deal with challenges in school, at the hostel and in the family.

Staying at the hostel allows me to meet different types of people. Some are funny, others are shy, noisy, brave, intelligent, ugly, beautiful and hot-tempered. Still, all have love within them. Each is special and each can make me feel special. They always have something to share with me, or learn from me. I believe nobody is perfect.

At the hostel, everyone is my sister. A few years ago, I was going through a rough patch and was feeling really upset. A "sister" said to me, "If you fail once, get up, try, try, and try again; do not give up. But if you feel like crying, just cry; it's okay to cry. It shows that you are still alive and need to live until the very end." It was so comforting then. They also taught and guided me on how to express myself, helped develop my communication skills, and trained me to be confident. Sometimes, they made me cry, angry, laugh, happy, got me upset and a bit crazy!

A few years ago, we hosted seven visitors from Scotland. Even though they were intelligent and were university students, they did not know how to use a simple hoe. From this, I learnt the meaning of the saying, 'Don't judge a book by its cover'.

The Sister, staff and fellow residents who had journeyed with me had shown me how I could love others without judging them. Indeed, I have learnt to love the people around me. Although I may not fully love all of them, at least I respect them as valuable persons.

Together with the love within me, I will bring all the values I have learnt at the hostel to my community, and especially to my own family.

Fiona Saimin

Prayer And Praying

Hostel life is different and unique in many ways. Living in the hostel gave me the opportunity to make many friends, learn how to live together with others, respect each other, and be open to receive advice from others in a positive way.

One of the important things that I learnt at the hostel is on prayers and praying. Previously, I had never prayed for those in need. Through our daily prayer, I learnt to pray not only for myself and my family, but for others as well.

At the VOICE OUT 2011 concert organised by the Youth Prep Link, I was given the opportunity to lead a team to dance at One Borneo Shopping Mall. The preparation was good and helpful; I learnt to be brave, daring in developing my own talent, and leadership skills. It was a challenge to dance in front of many people but through our team spirit, zeal and courage, we performed very well.

When we pray and trust in God, and believe in ourselves, we can achieve our goals.

I pray that whatever values I had learnt and skills that I had acquired during my stay at the hostel will carry me to the next step of my journey to be a better person and to face any future challenge with courage.

Shenny Jimmy

Timmy

“One person is of more value than the whole world.” These words of St Mary Euphrasia teach me to uphold the dignity of each person and enlightened me that each one of us is wonderfully moulded according to our purpose in life.

My journey with PKGS, especially in working with children and their community, has helped me to understand what it means to nurture young lives, and to uphold their dignity. I will illustrate this through the story of Timmy. This five year-old comes from a broken family, and has three other siblings. The children are cared for by their father. Timmy is among the many children actively involved in our programme. Rain or shine, sick or well, hungry or full, Timmy will turn up for our programme.

One day, he turned up soaking wet due to the heavy rain. I had to bring him home for a change of clothes, otherwise he might catch a cold. Another time, he arrived when everyone was ready to go home. When his friend chided him for being late, tears started to well up and he kept silent. I said to him gently, “I thought you were not coming?” Looking embarrassed, he replied, “My brother told me there is no programme at the *balairaya** today. When I found out he had lied to me, I ran all the way here,” he said as he wiped away his tears. I turned to look at his brother who was standing beside Timmy. He gave me a cheeky smile and dashed off quickly before I could say anything. I gave Timmy a pat to assure him everything was all right.

Our early encounters with Timmy were challenging. He was a bundle of “trouble” during our programme. I still remember how we had to intervene and break up his fight with his second brother. We had to separate the siblings and not let them sit together. We had to be extra alert throughout the two-hour programme. Each time we went to Timmy’s *kampong* to conduct our programme, we had to be careful that he would not disrupt it. One of us would always give him “extra attention”.

Over time, Timmy learnt to co-operate. He enjoyed the learning and the fun that went with it. These days, no matter what, we would have an enthusiastic and co-operative Timmy attending the programme. In all of these, Timmy has really captured my heart, never mind the frustrations of the early days.

This is an educational programme where children can learn and have fun. While it teaches them good values and develops their character, it challenges me to reach out to them and accept them as they are. I can see that the values that we pass on to them will help them to uphold their dignity.

There are many Timmys that I encounter as I work with children in need. They serve to challenge me to go beyond the PKGS mission statement – “We are committed to reaching out with compassion and respect, empowering each person to wholeness and full potential”. It is truly a joy to witness their growth from the little that I have to offer.

Evelyn Sikul

**balairaya* - A Malay term for community centre

Dare To Dream

I was all fired to serve God, coming fresh from completing my term as the head of my campus ministry. I had offered an earnest prayer to God upon my graduation from Universiti Malaysia Sabah in 2009. My prayer included my wish to work with youths in a Christian setting.

While I was praying, I had also thought that this might not be possible as there were not many job openings like the one I was seeking here in Kota Kinabalu. Little did I know what God had in store for me.

While waiting to attend convocation, I decided to fill my time with some work. I met Sr Jossie Sili at St Simon Church. We talked and she found out that this mathematics major was not employed yet. She asked if I would like to volunteer my time to teach mathematics to some youths who were not strong in this subject. I did not say “yes” immediately. “Volunteer? No pay?” I thought. I said I would get back to her on this request.

Somehow, I had always felt that there was something missing in my service to God. I attended daily Mass, I attended a youth ministry weekly, but there was something missing. I had always felt a “disturbance” whenever I read or heard words from the gospel relating to service to the poor, needy or discriminated. ‘For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink...’ (Mat 25: 42-43).

I thought hard about Sr Jossie’s request and decided this would be a good time to start real service! I telephoned Sr Jossie to say “yes”.

Four months passed and my students were ready to fly out to Kuala Lumpur. A smiling Sr Jossie approached me once again. This time, she asked, “Are you interested to work with us in the youth ministry?” I thought, “Wow, God heard and answered my prayer!” I cried tears of joy and without hesitation this time, I said, “Yes!” Sr Jossie later told me that it was the best expression and response she had ever received from a job-seeker.

My family was not too happy about it though. “How much are they paying you?” was the first question I got after telling my family excitedly about the offer. I was determined not to let this opportunity pass. I negotiated with my family and said that I would take the job for a year and if I did not like it, I would look for another job. Fortunately, they agreed to my suggestion.

Three years have passed since. I am still working with the PKGS. I have never regretted the decision I made. PKGS has stretched and shaped me to be the strong woman that I am today. Through the organisation, I have found my passion in advocating for human rights, especially those of the youths and migrants. Because of PKGS, I am dreaming big dreams for myself in the future, which I have never dared to dream before. They have empowered me, and instilled the discipline and values I need to become a leader in my community.

I believe that one day, my dream will come true. I thank PKGS and all the people in it for the wonderful journey we had taken together; and for the journey yet to come. God has led me to the best place to equip me for the big plans He has in store for me, especially through the exemplary leaders in the organisation who taught me what servant leadership is all about. They have always looked out for me, including offering opportunities for me to grow, and gain more knowledge and experience. They have taken care of me, even during my personal trials, and supported me throughout my journey with them.

To me, PKGS feels more like a family than an organisation or office. I am indeed very blessed to be part of the PKGS family.

Mary Anne K. Baltazar

A Precious Gift

“Your job requires you to reach out to, and work with Indonesian migrants in Sandakan,” I was told on my first day at work. Initially, I was a little resistant. My perception of the migrants was somewhat negative due to my lack of exposure and interaction with them, and insufficient information and knowledge about them. That was two years ago.

The person who played an important part in changing my perceptions is Sr Maria Dipal. From her, little by little, I learnt about the work of PKGS and Seri Murni Crisis Centre in Sandakan. Her sharing and guidance motivated and inspired me. Gradually, I began to understand the life of migrants more and more, and through my work, I found myself falling in love with the Good Shepherd Mission.

My involvement in the Children’s Learning Programme (CLP) for the Indonesian migrant children, aged 7 to 12, had drawn me closer to the Indonesian migrant community. My regular encounters with them also opened my eyes to see how fortunate and blessed I am, especially in being able to access a proper education from early childhood.

I can still remember the first time I taught my class of children. As I wrote on the whiteboard, they were filled with amazement at how the simple marker pen worked, and were more amazed when I erased the words with a “magic duster”. I was surprised by their simplicity, or was it ignorance? As I worked and grew closer to them, I wished they were given the opportunity, like me, to attend a mainstream school.

As the months and years passed by, I discovered more and more about their poverty-stricken lives, the dilapidated condition of their houses, the unhealthy and unhygienic surroundings where they lived beside chicken and pig farms, and much more. I saw their financial struggles, problems with documentation, lack of access to transportation, and others. At times, I felt totally helpless, and pessimistic for them. Given my own limitations, it seemed like all I could do was to just listen to them.

It has become very clear to me that education is so important for everyone. From my experience with the migrant community, the lack of an education is one of the greatest disadvantages to their lives, and this has a huge impact on their thinking, outlook, personality and behaviour. The parents’ lack of awareness on the importance of an education, poor parenting skills, poor problem-solving skills, unhealthy lifestyle, lack of moral values, and many more, are enormous challenges in working with them.

Cultural differences contribute to the challenges too. I observe that the parents discipline their children very harshly. To them, this is regular and natural. As I reflect on the ups and downs of journeying with the Indonesian migrants, I almost cannot believe how much I have grown and transformed from who I was before my work with the migrants. My experiences with the unfortunate and marginalised children and women had in many ways, enriched my life and strengthened my faith as a Christian. For the many challenges and difficulties that I had undergone, each had been an opportunity

for me to better understand God's living words and call through loving service.

The Good Shepherd Mission is very challenging, yet empowering and enriching as it provides opportunities for each person to experience God's love in special and different ways. My experiences have reached and touched the deepest part of my heart. I had never thought that I would be willing to sacrifice time and energy to serve this group of people at the margin. But I did. I now acknowledge them as my friends.

I am grateful for the opportunity to serve God and grow through the Good Shepherd Mission. It is God's precious gift to me.

Jellferlyne Joseph

A Refugee's Grateful Heart

"Gratitude is the memory of the heart." This statement holds a lot of meaning for me; it is sealed in my heart, the heart of a refugee.

Life away from my family was, and still is, very hard. Many times I wanted to give up and return home. Danger lurks everywhere – in people and places – for someone like me living in a new country. But all the pain and hardships are more bearable knowing God is with me. In my lonely moments, I ask God, "Where are you? I cannot understand your plan for me." In reality, I am not alone. God has surrounded me with Good Shepherd Mission people. I can feel the Holy Spirit leading me and God protecting me.

I have been thinking of all that the Good Shepherd Mission has done for my sister - Rosa who has been resettled in the US - and me. We will never ever forget our life in Malaysia. I will share our experiences with others wherever I go. Many wonderful and incredible people had helped and guided me. Among them is Theresa Symons, the first person I got to know here. She is one person whom I admire, for she is my benefactor, counsellor and friend. She encourages me and helps me to change from a negative to a positive person. She taught me on how to walk the right path so that I will not make mistakes.

The day I started work at Villamaria Kindergarten was a day of shock and surprise. The children were not "regular" children – they were all very intelligent! I felt inadequate to work with them as I did not have the qualifications. Regardless, I felt comfortable and realised God had already opened this door for me even before I walked in. With the help of the Good Shepherd Sisters and the staff of Villamaria, I learnt to cope and get this far.

The Good Shepherd Sisters and the lay staff are wonderful people. They empowered me and helped me to feel more confident and courageous. I have not met such good people before.

I imagine that if I ever meet St Mary Euphrasia, this is what I will tell her: "You encourage us and you walk together with us. You value everyone regardless of her background and status in life. You are my shelter, boss, counsellor, and friend. I like your vision of 'One person is of more value than the whole world'. You do not discriminate. Villamaria is like my parents in Malaysia. Gratitude will remain in my heart forever. I am proud to be part of the Good Shepherd Mission started by you. I am happy with my life in Malaysia."

There is so much more I want to say and share but I cannot find the words to express them. May God bless all the people of the Good Shepherd Mission, and may the Holy Spirit guide your every footstep.

Thank you, very, very, very much!

Postscript: Cecilia was successfully resettled in the US in July 2012.

Cecilia Nang Lamh Niang

Afterword

Living Stories: In Her Footsteps, Volume 2, is the shared experiences and stories of many persons who have chosen to live in a purposeful way with courage and belief as a guiding light for them. As a result, difference has taken place, positive change has emerged and new life has been birthed, in each story teller's life and in many others. The stories in these pages share insights and the message of connection, relationship, compassion and reconciliation; all requiring the essential elements of courage to risk, belief in the dignity of persons and the power of the human spirit to overcome odds. These are gifts generously endowed to us all by our loving Creator.

I marvel at the lives that have been touched, that have evolved, that have been renewed through the contact, involvement and efforts of each Good Shepherd Partner in Mission and by each person who came and who continue to come through the doors of the different ministries that we serve in. Like the 'Magnificat' experience of Mary and Elizabeth - two women carrying new life within them, these experiences have been meeting points of persons; where the unearthing of stories embedded deep in their hearts, the breaking through their struggles, the celebration of their successes have happened and have brought forth life. These have been the crucial opportunities where each of you have supported and worked at making an empowering difference in your own and in another's life, and, have been instrumental in shaping reality in a new way and carving out history for new generations.

With a deep sense of humility and gratitude, I thank all who contributed their stories to the *Living Stories: In Her Footsteps, Volume 2*, to the Publication Work Group, to Ms Bridget Ling who sponsored the cost of publication, to the Mission Link Committee for sharing their creativity, to Sr Dorothy Khaw, Chairperson and Ms Morene Sim, Co-Chairperson for their committed leadership in the Mission Link Committee. In partnership, you have all enabled the emergence of the evolving story of hope and transformation.

May we together, and, you who are blessed to read the written life-stories in these pages, continue to birth forth the consciousness that each of us who are differently made can offer a sturdy hand and act as a joyful resource especially when another is experiencing a difficult hurdle at a moment in time in their life's journey. May we see these moments as an invitation from God's divine energy within us to come to that meeting point of connection and be moved to reach out with compassion...

"...for we all find ourselves and our meaning in each other's stories." - Jan Phillips-

Joan Lopez, rgs

Province Leader

Good Shepherd Mission

Province of Singapore-Malaysia

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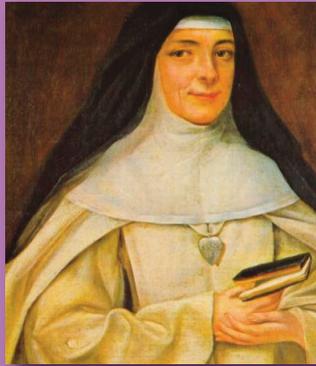
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St. Mary Euphrasia Pelletier

**“Dwell deep in God’s heart where you will find
indescribable peace, and where you will always be given
more than you had ever thought of.”**