



*Living Stories:  
in Her Footsteps*

**Good Shepherd Sisters**  
Province of Singapore-Malaysia

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Province of Singapore-Malaysia

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# Contents

	Page
<b>FOREWORD</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1: ATTRACTION</b>	<b>8</b>
An Attraction And A Privilege	9
Yes, I'll Go	11
Don't Worry, It's All Right	14
The Awakening	15
A Call To Journey	17
Love And Hope	19
Partners In Mission	20
Part Of An MNC	21
<b>CHAPTER 2: RESPONSE</b>	<b>23</b>
Take Your Love Out Of The Freezer!	24
Beyond Familiar Pastures	26
They Lifted Me Up	28
A Three-Part Harmony	30
Dorothy's Family	32
Uplifting, Encouraging And Empowering	34
The Courage To Believe	36
Closer To God's Heartbeat	38
Caught And Held By St. Mary Euphrasia	40

<b>CHAPTER 3: GROWTH</b>	<b>42</b>
A Dream Come True	43
My Longest Ministry	45
Growing Through Volunteering	47
The Call To Serve	48
Same Ground, Same Path	50
A Clothes Peg	52
Two Sticks Of Ice-Cream	54
<b>CHAPTER 4: BELONGING</b>	<b>56</b>
Automatic Membership	57
To Form And Be Formed	59
Hook, Line And Sinker!	61
Accepted For Who I Am	63
A Bold Switch	65
Giving, Growing And Gaining	66
Can't Afford To Pay For Two	68
I Salute You, Sisters!	70
Touching And Transforming	71
Sheltered, Supported And Secure	73
<b>CHAPTER 5: MUSINGS</b>	<b>75</b>
A Listening Ear And A Compassionate Heart	76
Happy And Proud To Be Back	78
I Am Grateful	79
Caring Management	80
Amazed By The Numbers	81
Plain Rice And KFC Fried Chicken	82
There For Me	83
My Personal Mantra	84
We	85
<b>AFTERWORD</b>	<b>86</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>	<b>88</b>

# Foreword

*MISSION LINK marks another milestone with this publication of **Living Stories: In Her Footsteps** from Sisters and Lay Partners of Singapore and Malaysia to commemorate GOOD SHEPHERD HERITAGE YEAR in the Province!*

*The Mission Link Committee, or MLC, was formed by the Province Leadership Team in June 2007 to address the need for formation and development of Good Shepherd partners for mission effectiveness, among other things.*

*I take this opportunity to thank all our contributors for generously sharing their personal experience of Good Shepherd mission with us. It is heartening to see how the spirit, love, passion and unflagging zeal of St. Mary Euphrasia continue to touch the lives of our mission partners to reach out to the poor and marginalised. Reflecting on these stories, I feel a sense of their sacredness and am inspired to reawaken and revitalise my own vocation and mission. It also gives me a renewed consciousness of our membership and partnership in this Good Shepherd family.*

*May this collection of living stories be a pinwheel of grace, inspiration and encouragement that whirl outward to everyone we come in contact with.*

*I would also like to congratulate and thank those who had persevered successfully in persuading the Sisters and Lay Partners to share their valuable stories.*

*The generosity of our donors and sponsors has made possible the stories to be published and shared. I am grateful to all of them.*

*My appreciation especially to the publication workgroup of Melina Ong, Anna Low and Morene Sim of Mission Link Committee who had worked hard to compile the stories and assist in the publication of this book.*

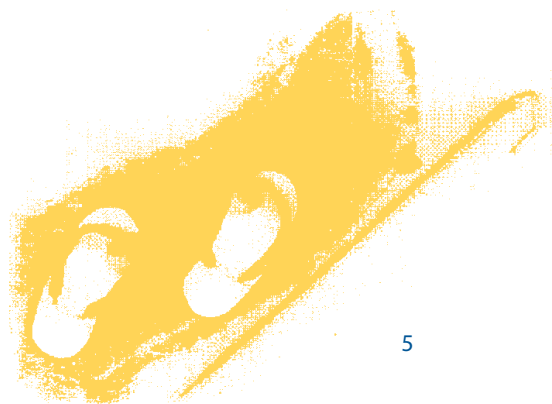
*We would like to dedicate this book to all our Good Shepherd Partners in mission as we continue to work together for mission effectiveness - all for the glory of God and the salvation of persons.*

*May St. Mary Euphrasia continue to be the beacon that directs our life and mission, as we walk in her footsteps, we are also walking in the footsteps of Jesus Our Good Shepherd.*

**Sr. Dorothy Khaw, rgs**

Chairperson

Mission Link Committee



# Introduction

*When the Mission Link Committee initiated this publication project to commemorate the Good Shepherd Heritage Year, we could not anticipate how it would turn out. What we did know was that members of the Good Shepherd family had their own stories to tell, and their thoughts and experiences to share.*

*With nothing else but faith and hope, we decided to simply invite all who were working in the various ministries to contribute to the Good Shepherd heritage. We saw the need to "collect the fragments", scattered throughout the Province of Singapore-Malaysia, and weave them into a tapestry for the picture that is the Good Shepherd heritage in our generation, in our time.*

*To all our writers and contributors, thank you for the precious "fragments" that we have received. The publication workgroup members are privileged and 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 one of you, we are mindful of the need to preserve your voice.*

*Together, as co-weavers of this unique and colourful tapestry, it is our hope that **Living Stories: In Her Footsteps** will be a blessing to all who read it.*

*To our readers, we have grouped the stories according to five themes that had emerged from the contributions received. They are: Attraction, Response, Growth, Belonging and Musings.*

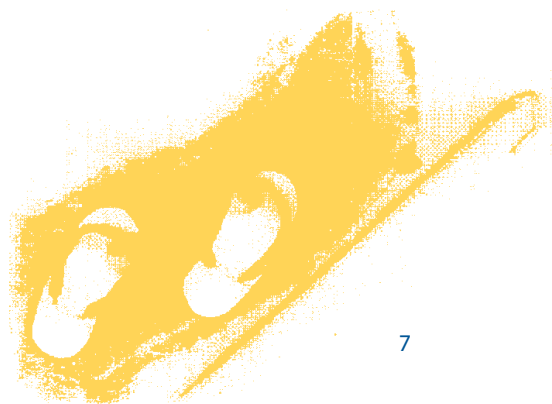


*Feel free to read them sequentially or randomly. As you read the stories, listen carefully also to your own story that may resonate with them; or is emerging in your heart.*

*We wish you a blessed Good Shepherd Heritage Year, and a fruitful journey in the footsteps of St. Mary Euphrasia.*

***Anna Low, Melina Ong and Morene Sim***

*Publication Workgroup*



# Chapter 1

# **Attraction**

# An Attraction And A Privilege

*In* 1999, I was a writer in search of meaning, my sense of importance diminishing in the face of others' suffering. I signed up for a counselling course, and interned at the Good Shepherd Centre in Yishun. The healing I witnessed in that centre has remained with me to this day.

During a group counselling session based on the centre's Six-Step Programme, an Indian maid stood up and, for the first time, in a soft, tremulous voice, spoke of being abused by her former employer. She had cried for hours when she first came to the centre, traumatised by the shock of having her arms and body slashed with a fruit knife. A young Chinese woman, speaking in halting Mandarin, had been so cruelly abused by her father-in-law that her body shook, her voice quavered, and she gasped for breath when she tried to describe how her father-in-law had abused her. How could she have allowed herself to be so wounded psychologically, you wonder. How could years of verbal abuse create this shivering rabbit, afflicted by arthritis? And she was only aged 30, with a six-year-old daughter and a sickly husband in hospital. Her in-laws had blamed her for her husband's illness. Another young woman was cruelly abused by her father when she was a child. He beat, slashed and hit her till she bled whenever she failed in her schoolwork. Today, she shrank from human touch. Touch signalled pain. She avoided it instinctively. And yet as a nurse, she had to touch and sometimes be touched. She sought help from the centre.

These women of diverse ethnicity and backgrounds came to the centre for help. And help was given (with a large dose of hope and courage) daily and unstintingly by the Good Shepherd sisters, staff and volunteers. During the two years I was there as an intern, and later as a volunteer, I saw the healing that took place in the women despite their pain, troubles and tears.

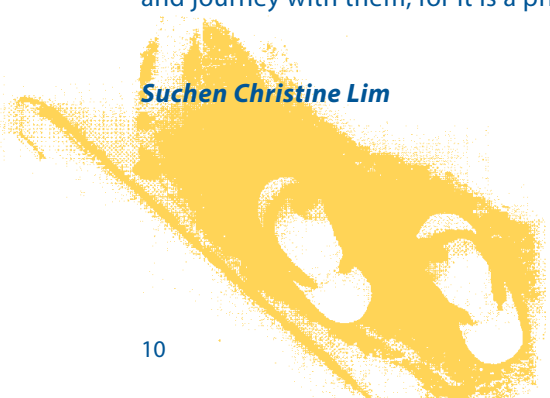
A visit to the centre by Sr. Cecilia Liew piqued my interest. This grave sister was a quiet rebel. I liked the keen critical intelligence tempered by humility. I had often thought it must be hard to be an intelligent, yet humble nun in a male-centred church. And then came the

unexpected meeting with Sr. Susan Chia by the dustbin just outside the convent in Nallur Road, a nun who overturned my assumptions about the mothers superior of the Religious of the Good Shepherd (RGS). I was drawn to their work and way of life. As a writer, I was curious. What made these women choose to live this way? And the sisters have opened up to me most generously. Sr. Susan and Sr. Joan Lopez, indeed many of the sisters in the community (too many to name) have humbly subjected themselves to my questions about the RGS's way of life and their interpretation of 'charism' and 'zeal'. Their humility, their openness in speaking of their struggles, doubts and pain in facing change, and willingness to listen to the sceptical lay person; all these are lessons for me. I too will grow old and be questioned by sceptics some day.

And one more thing that drew me to the RGS - the community's care of the old in their midst. From the sisters who cooked and sewed, to those who taught and served in schools and churches, everyone's past contributions are recognised. I have witnessed how the sisters in Marymount had looked after Sr. Ita, who was frail and blind before she returned to the Lord. This acceptance of frail old age and disability, and the sisters' daily act of care and communication with the feeble members in their midst, speak so loudly of their charism and zeal. I cannot help but marvel at the silent devotion of Sr. Cecilia Cheang leading a blind Sr. Ita daily to the dining table and settling her down. Is this special care for Sr. Ita alone? The thought had crossed my mind. I checked past records in their Annals. The answer is 'No'. Other aged, sickly sisters had been similarly cared for. But sadly, due to the dwindling number of young sisters and the increasing number of the old, this act of sisterly care might have to change.

After knowing such women, how then to break away? I have to stay, and journey with them, for it is a privilege.

***Suchen Christine Lim***



# Yes, I'll Go

*"Yes, I'll go,"* my simple response to a friend's invitation. Or so I thought. She had wanted my company to visit Restful Waters for the purpose of making a small donation in support of the Sabah girls' concert in Singapore. That was in 2006.

My instant "yes" was motivated solely by a curiosity to see the inside of a convent of which I had heard much but seen little, other than the exterior. Little did I expect this one visit to change the course of my future; a future that sees my personal and spiritual growth, a future that sees my career closely intertwined with the Good Shepherd mission.

Standing at the doorway of Restful Waters was this lady who introduced herself simply as Lucy. She did not wear a nun's habit or the signature veil. She was very friendly and cheerful though. I forgot about my curiosity behind the visit. I remember leaving Restful Waters that afternoon thinking she could not be a nun as she was not dressed like one. Today, this recollection never fails to bring on a smile. I have since realised that my perception of a nun then was as obsolete as the typewriter. The Good Shepherd sisters have indeed moved on with the times.

As Lucy shared earnestly with us the hardships of the rural poor and the programmes being run by the Good Shepherd sisters in Sabah, I could not help feeling drawn to the Good Shepherd mission. I wanted to remain in contact, to understand more about the Good Shepherd Sisters, their ministries, history, foundress and mission. As the saying goes, the rest is history.

At Restful Waters, I never fail to feel a sense of welcome, warmth, love and peace. There is something very special about the place, a special feeling which I cannot fully explain. Over morning coffee, Sr. Lucy and I will reflect on the day's gospel reading and how it relates to us in today's context. These morning sessions are very inspiring to me as I start each day. I now read the Gospel and see people and things in

a very different light. The Gospel has become very real and I have learnt to relate it to my life. Reading the Gospel is now a totally new experience. It is more than reading the text, it is also about listening to the special message that Jesus has for me each day. This marks the beginning of my spiritual growth.

As I got more and more involved, from being a participant in Restful Waters' programmes, to being a volunteer and now a member of the staff, I take pride in being among ladies who have the audacity and courage to face the challenges that come with change. Personally, it took a while before the imaginary barriers I had put up with the Sisters started to crumble. Hence, I can understand the difficulties of the Sisters in accepting lay people into their fold as partners in mission.

I am privileged to witness many instances where Good Shepherd partners rose to the challenge to answer the call for help - from human trafficking to education for children, from victims of natural disasters to women who experience abuse. The Sisters and partners had been quick to respond and take appropriate action.

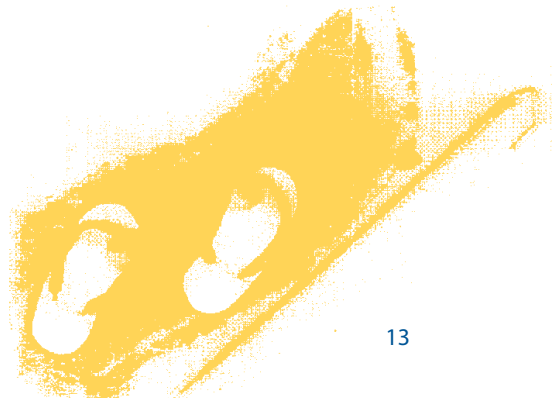
I recall one Easter Sunday night. The phone rang. It was a call from someone in Malaysia. It was for the Province Leader. She took the call. Her face suddenly looked grave, and her tone was serious. After she hung up the phone, she informed the few of us at Restful Waters that a group of 14 trafficked women needed help. A flurry of activities followed - making telephone calls, co-ordinating with relevant groups, information gathering, packing foodstuff, blankets, towels, toiletries, plates, cups, and cooking utensils. Within one hour, the Province Leader set off with a small group, driving across the causeway to provide shelter, care, love and support to the trafficked women.

It was an Easter experience with a difference for me that night. I saw the love of the Sisters reaching out to the helpless women. I saw their courage in action, driving to Johor in the night, never mind that they were not very familiar with the directions. I witnessed how God provided for His people. It was divine providence that a friend had left her car at Restful Waters for the Sisters' use as she was going to be out of town for a few days. I saw hope for the hapless women. And I saw a new purpose and direction in my own life.

As I continue on my life's journey, happy and blessed to be a part of this Good Shepherd family, I am confident that with ever increasing zeal and unity among us, we can make a difference in touching lives and giving hope.

I conclude with the words of Jerry Ellis who said, "We're all only fragile threads, but what a tapestry we make!"

***Melina Ong***



# Don't Worry, It's All Right

*F*rankly, I knew nothing about the Good Shepherd Sisters until I joined Mariaville Kindergarten in 2003 as a temporary relief gardener. I am really glad that I took on the job. It has since become my permanent job.

To me, the whole Good Shepherd organisation is built on two very important values - LOVE and RESPECT. I can see that employees are treated with respect, regardless of whether you are white, yellow or black. I may be a gardener, but the love and respect that I get from the Sisters are by no means any less than any other employee.

We have many problems in life, but the Sisters are always there to help with their famous advice - "Don't worry, it's all right." Simple words but very comforting and assuring!

The nature of my job requires me to work outdoors. Believe it or not, it pains my supervisor's heart to see me out in the hot sun! If this is not compassion, I don't know what is.

After working six years in Mariaville, I have definitely grown. Today, I am a more patient person. I also feel needed in Mariaville, and this knowledge motivates me to work even harder, knowing that my services can help lessen the everyday burden of my colleagues. I am very proud to say that Mariaville sees me as more than just a gardener. They see the person in me.

I intend to stay on in Mariaville for as long as my health permits. My only regret is not having joined the Good Shepherd organisation earlier!

***Yeong Chee Kong***





# The Awakening

What attracted me first was actually the Good Shepherd Himself. Sr. Dorothy's invitation to join the Lay Associates came at a time when I was searching to deepen my faith life. I felt like I was being led along a certain path.

In the 60's and 70's, Sunday mornings were a painful rush. It was a "going to church chore" with Mass at 10.30 a.m. This meant leaving the house at 10.15 a.m., church bells would be pealing and I would be "crawling" in behind other late-comers. Arriving in the nick of time, getting a parking lot was of course difficult. I would eventually make my way into the church to find a space among all the other "upstanding Catholics". Needless to say, I was certainly not in a frame of mind to pay attention, much less to pray.

Going with family to Madonna Heights at Christmas and Easter was a little better. There was no rush of any kind. However, one Good Friday sometime ago, I woke up with promptings in my heart. I asked myself two questions - Where was I going? What was I doing with my life? Something within me led me to make my confession, after a long lapse. That experience was an awakening, a sort of home-coming as well. I felt the Good Shepherd stretching out His hands to bring me back into the fold. It felt very good.

The stirrings within continued, and I wanted to know more about this Good Shepherd, because somehow I knew that henceforth, He was going to be very much a part of my life. I found books to read and tapes to listen to. And O what joy, I found myself in Fr. Griffon's bible class. I learnt to make the bible my friend. It was, and still is, there that I found encouragement and hope. It was also within those pages that I found solace.

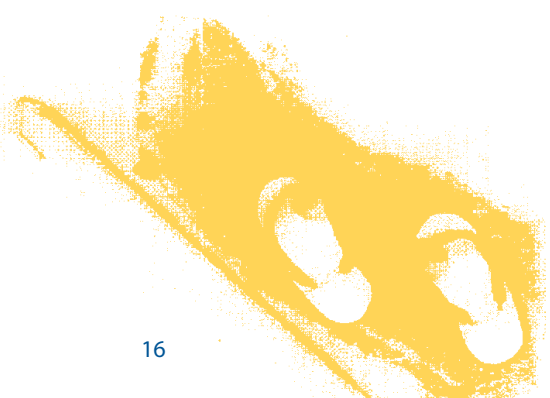
Sr. Dorothy's invitation opened even more doors. I learnt to pray, to be more compassionate. I learnt to listen. St. Mary Euphrasia's inspirational sayings kept me from straying and I am ever mindful of the Good Shepherd in my life. Her wisdom and her words, like, "O how

dear persons should be to us. There should be no limit to our zeal and generosity in assisting them", or "A desire to be noticed and applauded is a great misery," are guiding posts.

Consequently, I have made Psalm 131 (130) my own. It is as if the psalmist had me in mind when he wrote:

"Yahweh, my heart is not haughty,  
I do not set my sights too high  
I have taken no part in great affairs  
In wonders beyond my scope.  
No, I hold myself in quiet and silence  
Like a little child in its mother's arm  
Like a little child, so I keep myself.  
Let Israel hope in Yahweh  
Henceforth and for ever".

***Dr. Carol Gunn***



# A Call To Journey

*My* experience of being attracted or drawn to the Good Shepherd mission is a story of journeying with people from all walks of life. This story began in St. Bridget College, a school founded by the Good Shepherd Sisters. I studied social work and had my practicum with the street children and youth from the urban area. This was also my first exposure to the real face of poverty and deprivation. And so, the seed of vocation to religious life started to sprout.

After college, Sr. Cora Demetillo invited me to work at the Euphrasian Residence (a teenage centre in Quezon City, Philippines). It was to be a four-year intimate relationship with St. Mary Euphrasia. I remember putting her photos on my table, and pasting some on the wall where I could see her each time I counselled a girl, because deep in my heart, I knew I was not alone. Indeed she was ever present, touching the lives of every girl under our care.

In June 1997, I joined the Good Shepherd congregation. During my Juniorate years, I was missioned to Good Shepherd Home, Legazpi City, Bicol and St. Bridget College, Batangas City. Journeying with students, youth and women in poor barangays was an experience of shepherding and being shepherded in return. Their stories were my stories too.

In January 2005, I felt God calling me to another way of life; a call to leave the congregation and be a lay person. My only prayer then was for God to lead me to be part of any Good Shepherd ministry. The following year, I worked with the Good Shepherd Sisters in Tagaytay in their ministry for priests and women religious.

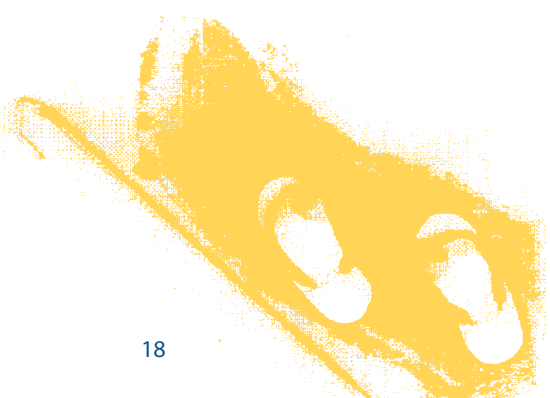
It was in Tagaytay that I met Sr. Susan Chia. She invited me to work at the Teenage Centre, Ampang. I arrived on 18th December 2007. I started working with five girls. Today, we have 17 girls full-time with us and another two on weekends. It has been a challenging mission. My consolation is the untiring support and guidance of the staff and Sisters here. Theresa Symons initiated a staff fellowship once or twice

a month. It's an opportunity to have peer support, games and laughter; to have dinner and break the word of God together. Each time we meet, it is like drinking fresh water from the wellspring, and I am nourished and ready to move on and give of myself again for the mission.

The mission of compassion and reconciliation attracted me most in the Good Shepherd. As I continue to give myself to the mission, I am being moulded in the process.

As I conclude, I offer this prayer, "Jesus, my loving Shepherd, thank you for calling me into the Good Shepherd fold. You have been journeying with me in pasture and peril. Thank you for the gift of St. Mary Euphrasia and St. John Eudes. Their presence is very much alive as the Good Shepherd people carry out their mission in response to the signs of the times."

***Alona Aguila***



# Love And Hope

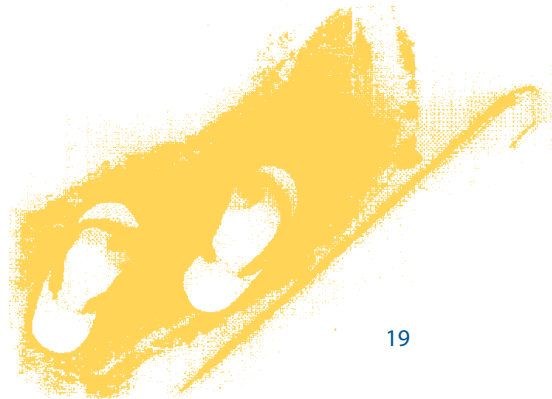
I am a teacher by profession. I started my teaching career in 1995, working at various educational institutions, including government schools. During those years of teaching, I came across many suffering children who lacked the means to continue their education. I had tried to support them, to the best of my ability, to further their studies.

In 2008, I had the opportunity to join Mariaville Kindergarten in Ipoh. Since then, I have come to understand more about this voluntary organisation and its services. I was particularly attracted to the Good Shepherd mission and its emphases on welfare and education - the provision of child care and free education for children from poor families, shelter for women and children from abusive families, and social and recreational activities to encourage parent-child interaction and relationship-building.

I had opportunities to participate in other ministries through our kindergarten's activities and projects, for example, collecting donations for victims and families of cyclones, flood and other natural disasters.

Here, I am able to experience Good Shepherd people extending their hands to the poor and needy, offering love and hope.

***Paramasiry a/p Selvaduray***



# Partners in Mission

*We* joined Mariaville Kindergarten simply because we both needed a job. When we were first employed to teach at Mariaville, we thought it would be just like any other kindergarten.

As days went by, we discovered that there was much more to it. It was unlike any other kindergarten. In fact, we became partners in mission with the Good Shepherd Sisters.

We found the Sisters to be very compassionate. And respect is shown to all staff members as individual persons. They are also very open about the mission they are engaged in.

The compassion and zeal shown by the Sisters and other lay partners to the less fortunate have opened our eyes to the sufferings of the world. This has led us to be thankful and grateful for who we are, and what we have.

Their willingness to share, and the opportunity for us to be part of the mission, has encouraged us to be more caring and compassionate too. It also helps us to be persons of integrity.

We thank God for bringing us to Mariaville and the opportunity to be part of the Good Shepherd mission.

***Sandy Ng and Hannah Chan***



## Part Of An MNC

After more than a year working at the Marian Center, which has since changed its name to Good Shepherd Student Care, I embarked on my first ever "business trip" in 2006. I made my way to Sabah, Malaysia. That changed my notion of Marymount Centre.

I realised that it is not just another voluntary welfare organisation in Singapore. It is actually a multi-national corporation (MNC). Malaysians, Indians, Filipinos, Australians, Koreans, Africans, Thais, and more, are some of my counterparts. We are part of an MNC, bound together by the Good Shepherd Mission.

During the few days that I was in Sabah, I participated in the annual Asia-Pacific Conference. When I heard the Sisters in my group sharing about their ministries in their own countries, I was inspired as they were involved in more challenging social issues. Through them, the Good Shepherd mission became more apparent to me, and I started to really feel the impact of the Euphrasian line, "one person is of more value than the whole world."

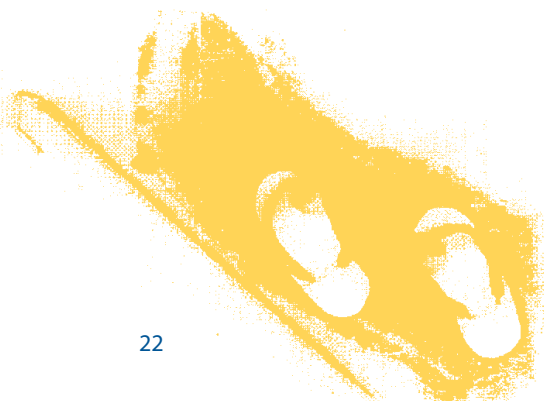
What got me really excited was when I was brought to Tenghilan, a town about an hour's drive from the state capital, Kota Kinabalu. I was told that the Sisters in Sabah ran a student care service in a nearby village, the same kind of service we have back in 790, Thomson Road, Singapore. Upon reaching the "office", which was actually a room in a modest house near the village church, I was asked to plan and organise an activity. I got down to my task with much gusto.

I was expecting the children to come to the house but no, we had to go to them instead. I was brought to the community centre of the village, a big building with zinc roofing, dirt flooring and a few noisy fans. The children had just finished their meal. I was told that the organisers needed to provide a meal, otherwise, the parents would not send their children to the session after school. The parents had no issue with their children roaming on their own after school, without the need to complete their homework. It was so different from what

I was used to in Singapore. Resources were far more in abundance back home and what we deemed as important would be casually dismissed here due to cultural differences.

The Sabah experience opened my eyes and heart to take a more active role in our Good Shepherd mission. As a lay partner, I am motivated to teach values through meaningful and fun activities in my ministry. No doubt this experience has laid the foundation for my zeal to continue providing values formation to our children in Good Shepherd Student Care Centre.

***Shirley Woo***





# Chapter 2

# **Response**

# Take Your Love Out Of The Freezer!

"Take your love out of the freezer!" these words jolted me out of my daily routine.

They were spoken by a young, temporary professed Sister with the Good Shepherd Sisters in 1979. She would share with me the work of the Sisters - loving and caring for the "marginalised and the rejected" in society. She would tell me the life stories of the teenage girls staying in the home run by the Sisters. I felt moved with compassion towards the girls. The next thing she did was to invite me to a weekend vocation camp. I replied with a firm "No" and gave a million reasons why religious life was not appropriate for me. I felt inadequate for that kind of work.

She persisted and said to me, "Lucy, why do you put so many obstacles along God's path? Why do you keep your love in the freezer? Why not take it out and share it with those in need?" This person is also none other than my own younger sister.

For a period of time, the questions kept pounding in my ears and churning in my heart. And in my quiet moments, I could not avoid them. I was so pre-occupied with them that I started to ask myself, "If I were to be a religious, in what way could I help those girls? Could I even be a religious?" It sounded so impossible. I was happy with my life at that time and was reluctant to change it. Yet, I felt that if I allowed myself to be led by God, surely God will make the impossible, possible.

It has been 30 years since I attended that vocation camp. I left home at 29 to become a Good Shepherd religious. Over the years as I cared for many women and girls, heard their stories, and seen how their lives had changed, I also witnessed God's merciful love at work. And as I witnessed their courage and hope in rebuilding their lives, despite the painful realities, I felt the broken bits of me being healed as well.

Today, I feel blessed by God's intervention in my life. Religious life has changed and formed me into who I am today. I see God's love at work - the graces God gave to me to respond to God's call, the many people sent to touch my life, even the life-threatening illness which struck me in 1994. I was then on the threshold of death. Surviving the illness has led me to live my life to the full and in authenticity. It was a passage to the deeper places within me where I realised both my limitations and my potential. I was able to remove my mask and embrace the person that I am.

Now, I find much joy and meaning in what I do. A friend teased me recently, "Lucy, the only thing you keep in the freezer today is food!"

I am grateful for the transforming action of God in my life, which is still at work today. I am grateful to my own family, especially my parents, for their unwavering and unconditional love for me. Let me share the following words of Nelson Mandela that have inspired me to keep growing:

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate.  
Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.  
It is our light, not our darkness that frightens us.  
We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous,  
talented, fabulous?  
Actually, who are you not to be?  
You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world.

There is nothing enlightened about  
shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you.  
We are born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us.  
It is not just in some of us; it is in everyone.  
And as we let our own light shine,  
we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same.  
As we are liberated from our own fear,  
our presence automatically liberates others.

***Sr. Lucy Chia, rgs***

# Beyond Familiar Pastures

1999 was the year I was missioned to Sabah. Arriving in Sabah, I felt I was in another country. I didn't think that I was still in Malaysia. It was just so different from the West Malaysia I'd lived in all my life until then. The culture, customs, life-style and languages of the people in Sabah are very different.

In my heart though, I sensed that the Good Shepherd was leading me to where St Mary Euphrasia would have loved to pitch her tent!

A folktale on rice cultivation in Sabah introduced me to this beautiful "land below the wind". Over the years, as I worked in our outreach ministries in Tenghilan, helped families, teenage girls, women and children of Seri Murni Crisis Centre, youth on our Youth PREPLink programme, and the urban pastoral ministry, I've found that it is important, sacred and most useful to be familiar with local traditions and practices, values, native laws, beliefs and the cultural background of our clients.

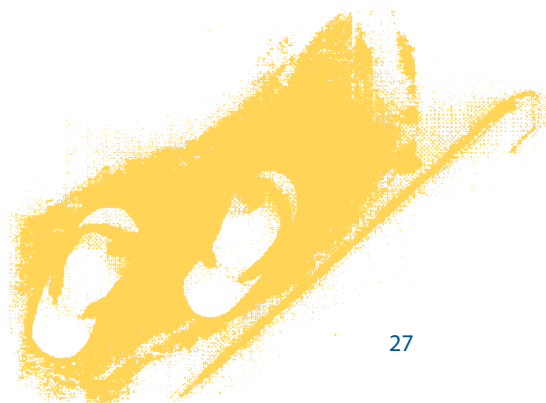
For me, this positive approach to the Good Shepherd mission enables me to relate with each person armed with our Good Shepherd values of understanding, respect, appreciation, patience, caring, compassion, dignity and justice. As much as it is challenging, it is also rewarding, and not without its own surprises. I've learnt a lot about rural, semi-urban and urban people of various ethnic and social backgrounds through the many relationships formed, and they have certainly given me a greater awareness and acceptance of the uniqueness of each person.

During the past year, I got more involved in the pastoral ministry in our parish. I believe that all my varied experiences from working in Good Shepherd sponsored ministries have equipped me to continue my Good Shepherd mission beyond familiar pastures, into dark valleys and restful waters, led by the Good Shepherd Himself. I can see that our mission of reconciliation is very much needed and appreciated everywhere. My present pastoral ministry is very meaningful, hopeful,

encouraging, as well as challenging for me as I live my Good Shepherd charism and spirituality.

Together with our lay partners, and Associates of the Good Shepherd who are also involved in pastoral ministries, our Good Shepherd presence continues to spread beyond the familiar pastures of traditional Good Shepherd ministries in residential care.

***Sr. Teresa Chye, rgs***



# They Lifted Me Up

*I* have known the Sisters since the age of 15. It has been a golden 38 years with the Good Shepherd Sisters.

In 1971, a young and naive girl, raised in a single-parent family, went in search of "love". Not knowing what the real world had in store for me, I ended mixing with the wrong company. My mother was desperate as she did not know how to help me.

Fortunately, she learnt through a friend about Madonna Heights. Together with my sister, she brought me there to be sheltered for the next five years. While at Madonna Heights, I completed my studies and later, was offered a job as a clerk in Pusat Kebajikan Good Shepherd. I spent two years working there.

Not long after, the Sisters were kind enough to recommend me a job in a legal firm. Subsequently, I got married to a man whom I thought would take good care of me. I never imagined it could happen to me but it did. I had married a "love his family" conman. By the time I discovered the truth, I already had a daughter. Living with this conman husband was leading a life of fear - fear of creditors showing up and threatening the family.

Despite this situation, I still loved my husband very much and was hopeful that he would change. Carrying this hope, I continued living with him. He went in and out of jail. Each time, I was hopeful he would change. He was given chance after chance to change. I was beginning to see an "empty hope".

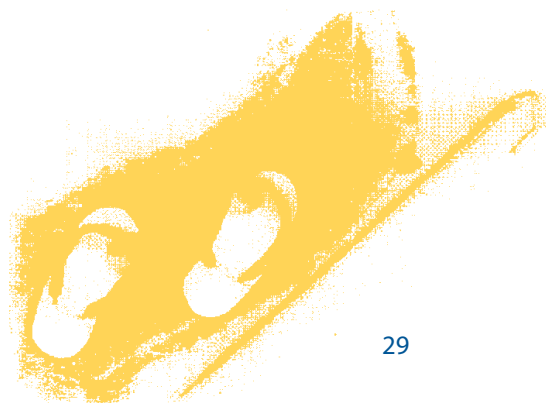
Many times, I turned to the Sisters for help - accommodation, work, counselling, and more - you name it, the Sisters had been through it with me. They were always there for me. In spite of their many disappointments with me, the Sisters took me in each time I was "in trouble".

By the time my second child arrived, my husband still had not changed one bit. The last straw was my discovery of his unfaithfulness to me. That was it. I really couldn't take it anymore. I left home with my two children and sought help from the Sisters, again. This time I was very strong and decisive. I filed for divorce.

The Sisters helped me navigate through this very difficult time. I was really down in the dumps. I felt helpless and hopeless. It was the Sisters' patience, love and care that saw me through and lifted me up. They offered me a job in the Kindergarten. I have been working there since. My two children have grown up. Without the Good Shepherd Sisters, I would not be what, and where, I am today. They taught me to be strong. "They can because they think they can," and "Gratitude is the memory of the heart," - these words of encouragement from the Sisters are inscribed in my heart.

I am truly grateful to the Sisters. I will never ever be able to repay their kindness, not in this lifetime.

***Anonymous***



# A Three-Part Harmony

## *i. On Deeds*

Giving and receiving has a role in my life. Together they constitute "love".

The moral of the life of Jesus in His own words are, "Love one another as I have loved you." To me, loving is giving to others whatever I have received from God. Receiving from others is my willingness to be influenced by others.

I have been enriched by the many stories of persons I had met. They have been an inspiration to me. I know of a woman who had been chaste, yet she was infected with HIV by her husband. I saw how she stood by him and stayed in the marital relationship. I often wondered to myself, "If I were in a similar situation, would I have responded in the same manner?"

Sometimes, I feel challenged by the people around me who seem to live out the vows I have taken more fervently than I do. Their faithfulness and commitment in life push me on to be faithful to my God, and the mission He has entrusted to me.

More important than what I do is the reason behind why I do them. The motivation and intention underlying my actions are important, besides my openness to be at home with failure and turning to God when things don't work out the way I want it.

## *ii. On Experience*

My experience journeying with those whom I serve has been one of feeling with them, and feeling for them - feelings of anger, frustration and helplessness over the evil and injustices around; feelings of joy and hope on possibilities; and feelings of happiness and satisfaction on the good that I have contributed.



My personal experience of God is His companionship which gives me a sense of security and calm in the midst of storms. I know what He has done, far more than I can count, for me, with me and in me. The Lord of love has reached out and touched me; He is truly my shepherd God. In the words of Robert Doran, "Who I am is a far more extensive and rich story of experiences, feelings, insights, judgments, decisions and religious commitment than what I do."

My lived experience in the 24 years of my religious life has encompassed the good and bad, pleasant and painful, wise and foolish, all these and more have been raw materials for greater self-understanding following my reflection on them. Anthony de Mello once said, "The master was an advocate both of learning and of wisdom." "Learning," he said in reply to a question, "is gotten by reading books or listening to lectures. And wisdom? By reading the book that is you."

### *iii. On Self*

"You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second resembles it, "you must love your neighbour as yourself." (Matt. 22: 37-39).

Over the years, living my life as a Good Shepherd Sister has taught me that self-realisation is a starting point for responding to other human beings in a non-exploitative way. And so I try to apply this in my ministry as well.

In summary, encountering and listening to the stories of others energise me; looking at my own past, my sacred history, helps me understand its role in shaping the person that I am.

My past and present have come together, teaching me to dream for my future; to create a dream that dares me to plan, to take calculated risks, to be different, and to go beyond my fears and barriers. For I know that going beyond is the "I and Thou" experience. This knowledge alone urges me on.

***Sr. Mercy Daniel, rgs***

# Dorothy's Family

*H*er youthful looks belie her age and she has a vigour that matches the children under her care. Her name is Dorothy Loke. And she is the longest-serving employee at the Villamaria Good Shepherd Kindergarten in Kuala Lumpur. Twenty-five years of service! What a testimony of her commitment to the Good Shepherd mission! Still, her association with the institution goes back even further.

At the age of five, her mother passed away. Dorothy and her siblings were split up. There was a lot of change and uprooting in her life. She was raised and educated at different places. However, at age 13, she was sent to the Good Shepherd Home in Ulu Klang where she continued her studies at the Vocational School. It was here, for the first time, that her life took on some form of permanence and stability.

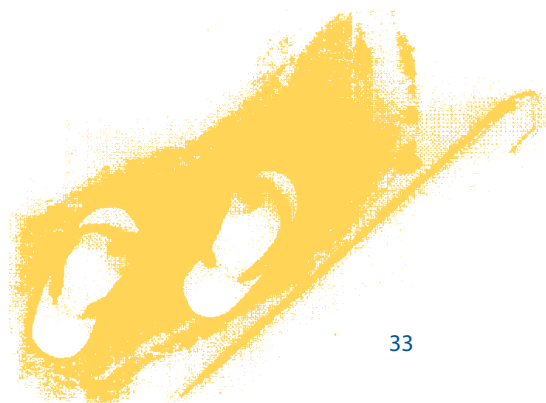
"I witnessed the kindness of the nuns and fully appreciated their kindness to me. Sr. Ita was the Mother Superior then, and they all treated me like family," she recounted. This kindness led Dorothy, upon completion of her studies, to work at the Good Shepherd Convent in Jalan Ampang. As an assistant teacher, Dorothy also helped out in the canteen, book-shop and the office.

When the Villamaria Good Shepherd Kindergarten was opened in 1978, Dorothy was part of the pioneering team sent to get the kindergarten up and running. She proudly said, "It was an exciting time. I wanted to repay the kindness of the nuns. I was willing to do anything and everything to help make the kindergarten a success."

Dorothy took a three-year break to raise her daughter. She rejoined the kindergarten in 1984. Twenty-five years on, she is still committed to the Good Shepherd mission, working as an assistant teacher and still "ready to do anything and everything as long as I am needed," she quipped.

When I asked Dorothy what had sustained or motivated her loyalty all these years, she looked a little perplexed, then simply said, "This is my family. I have children of my own, but this is my family too. We have our ups and downs like any family. We may disagree, but the next day, everything is OK. I have a lot of joy working here. And there's a lot of laughter, too!"

***Debbie Leon***



# **Uplifting, Encouraging And Empowering**

1988 was the year when I first met the Good Shepherd Sisters. A team of them came to Sabah to set up the Women's Crisis Centre. Years went by, but I knew little about the Sisters other than what I had heard from the church network that they were still active in Sabah.

I left the seminary in 1993 and pursued my studies while working at Outward Bound Sabah, Singapore, Hong Kong and Australia. Having to work and support myself through school, and other personal struggles, I felt a strong urge and passion to work with youths and families in their natural family setting.

My own deep love for my parents and family led me to organise gatherings and camps for my family members, including nephews and nieces, to build family bonds. Gradually, these activities were extended to my village families, communities, NGOs and churches in Sabah. Due to the popular demand, I decided to turn it into a business.

One day in 2003, I was surprised to receive a call from Sr. Imelda and Sr. Sandra asking for a Youth Teambuilding Programme. This was the start of my involvement with the Good Shepherd mission. I was very happy to meet local Good Shepherd Sisters helping local youths, a much-needed service.

At the end of the programme, Sr. Sandra invited me to be on their list of partners to help out with future programmes. I accepted the invitation readily. This led to much co-operation and collaboration in running youth programmes over the next few years.

In 2006, the youth programme was expanded to include the Uplift, Encourage and Empower (UEE), Youth Leadership and Facilitation (YLF) and Family Building and Reconciliation (FBR) to cater to different groups and needs. They were developed in consultation with Sr. Maria Dipal, who is currently overseeing the development of the programmes

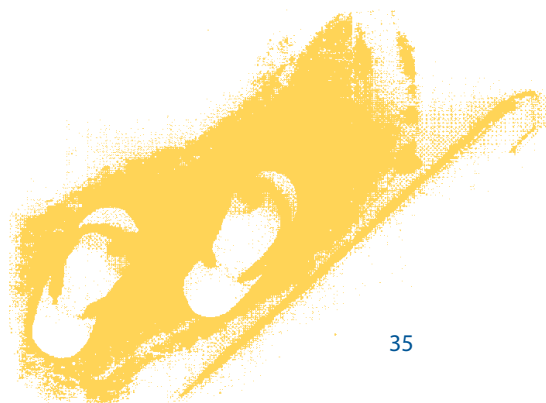
in the Archdiocese of Kota Kinabalu, and the Dioceses of Keningau and Sandakan. Sr. Maria helped to design and deliver the programmes. It was challenging, but fulfilling and enriching work. Many participants experienced changes in their lives after attending the programmes.

The good responses to the programmes served to motivate me and allow me to be God's instrument of change. The programmes and activities are my way of helping the participants to experience the love and presence of God. I must say that the Sisters are very hospitable and friendly and they make me really feel at home working with them and learning from them.

As a family man and businessman, I do have challenges managing my time. But I see it as a matter of priority to also devote time to the youth programme. I thought, "If not me, then who?" The words of Mother Mary, "Let your will be done," strengthens my commitment to carry on. Hopefully, I'm able reach out to the many people in need via the Good Shepherd Sisters in Sabah, and in the spirit of St. Mary Euphrasia, to touch many hearts.

The solid support from the Good Shepherd Sisters has been really uplifting, encouraging and empowering to my family and me. Thank you, Sisters.

***Terence J Dolinting***



# The Courage To Believe

*My* first encounter with the Good Shepherd Sisters, specifically Sr. Cecilia Liew, was in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah. That was in 1991 during an outreach programme called "Kem Kemahiran Menggereja" which caught my attention. I was full of admiration for their dedication and commitment to the Good Shepherd mission of reconciliation. I wondered how anyone could love a "broken" person more than the whole world. That idea was so strange to me, but it was edifying to me at same time. While I saw myself as the lost and wounded one, in need of healing and reconciliation, I also deeply yearned to be like the shepherd who loved and cared.

Indeed there was something about the Good Shepherd charism that attracted me to the Mission and community. I was very much drawn by the Good Shepherd's image of compassion. That was how my journey with the Good Shepherd family began. No doubt, the last 17 years of my Good Shepherd journey were at times rough and winding.

Today, as I look back, I can say that it has been a journey of falling and rising, dying and living. Yes, it is sometimes difficult and challenging. There were times when I asked myself, "Why am I staying on? What is keeping me here?" Let me share one of my "shepherding" stories.

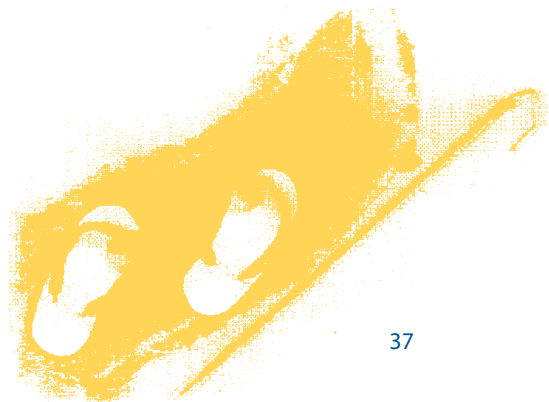
My reflection on my own family life from 1992 to 2008 has brought me to a realisation of the deepest yearning and desire to understand, to seek, and to find meaning and purpose in being part of a Christian family today. As I experienced the reality of my family issues - brokenness, woundedness, crisis, anger, hatred, and the hurt of poverty, shame and guilt of family violence - I sincerely desired for families to be healed, transformed and reconciled. I dreamt and I yearned for a "better way" to be a family. I envisioned a family of humanity in communion with believers of peace and reconciliation. I wanted to keep striving to help rebuild the wounded hearts with love, and uphold the sacredness of family life. I believed, and still do, that every member of the family has the potential for growth and change. Armed with this belief and vision for families, I designed, and will continue to develop, the Family Building and Reconciliation (FBR) Outreach Programme in the rural setting of Sabah to benefit families.

When the FBR programme was first introduced to the parishes at the rural communities in Sabah, I had challenging questions like, "Has this programme been proven effective? Will it be successful?" Honestly, I didn't have the answers then. I was simply hopeful, and grateful, for some of the uplifting, encouraging, and empowering stories that were told, and which I heard and experienced, as I conducted this programme.

I recall vividly one of the FBR sessions, where a woman plucked up courage to stand in front of more than 180 people to share her story. For the first time, as a mother and a wife, she openly shared the pains of an abusive and violent spousal relationship, the hurts of betrayal and rejection. I stood beside her, holding on gently to her hand, as she related her sufferings. "He does not even allow me to enter our bedroom," she said weakly. At that moment, I felt her helplessness and anguish. However, to my surprise, she continued in a firmer tone, "All I want is for my husband to love me and my children. Everyday, I pray for him to love me again and care for our children. I have forgiven him from my heart." I couldn't help myself and my tears just flowed. This woman had shown me what true strength is - of a woman, a devoted mother and a faithful wife. When I looked at the audience, I saw many teary-eyed faces, including the men's. I was just pleased that this woman had found a space and time in this programme to stand tall, and courageously share her story. I was definitely uplifted, encouraged and empowered by her sharing! She gave me the courage to believe, and a reason to hope.

So, is the FBR programme successful? To me, it is a resounding YES! It is more than a success story; it is a story of the faithfulness of God's love and compassion. The words of St. Mary Euphrasia are real to me, "If we cannot accomplish great things, let us be content with doing a little... find fresh courage in God." I did.

***Sr. Maria Dival, rgs***



# Closer To God's Heartbeat

*I*t must be the tranquility and calmness of Marymount Centre and its surroundings. They calmed my nerves as I approached the office for an interview. I was generally not nervous to present myself for interviews, except for that one time. I was entering a different sector, one which I wasn't familiar with.

Walking up the slope towards the office, I thought, "Will the interviewers believe me when I tell them I wish to place God's ministry first?" The cynic in me taunted, "Would you be surprised if some people in Christian organisations scowled at your naivety of 'christian grandeur'?" If this should happen, I consoled myself, I would still continue to trust in God who must have a better plan for me.

I didn't need to worry, as I soon discovered. Ms Tan Poh Cheng and Sr. Cecilia Liew put me at complete ease. They were kind and thoughtful, accepting my reason for ministry work with genuine belief. I was immediately delighted to find such ministry-mindedness at Marymount Centre. I left the interview room that day feeling very much lifted and drawn to the mission and purpose of the work at Marymount Centre.

After a brief stint with the children and staff to "test" out the job, I became even more convinced that this was the place for me, given the liveliness and exuberance of the children. I feel rejuvenated and young again! I am so grateful to God for directing me to Marymount Centre. Indeed, it must be God, working as always for "all things work for the good of all who believe!"

I was offered a job at Marymount Centre, which I accepted immediately. Amazingly, I discovered in the months that followed, that it was indeed a spirit-filled organisation with a good management that was nurturing and encouraging. This is truly rare in our present time.

The work at Marymount Centre is very interesting, with every case and child needing a different approach. Sr. Cecilia is a wonderful advisor, who has good insights into each case. With her experience, guidance

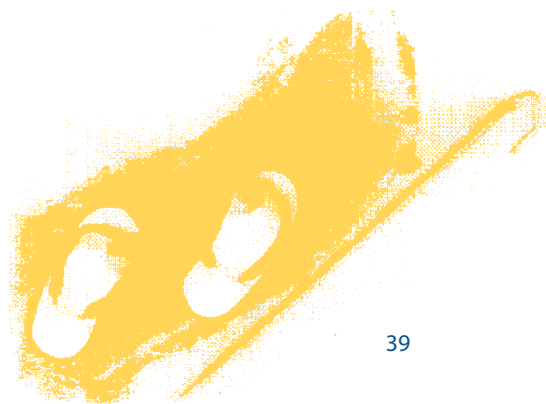


and humour, I learnt so much that I would not have if I had simply been a volunteer. Her stories and accounts of the Sisters and the mission are always exciting and inspiring, and they illustrate how God can use anyone with a willing and humble heart for His purpose. Before joining Marymount Centre, I did not know much about the Good Shepherd Sisters. I thought and imagined them to be just praying and fasting all day long! So I was completely surprised and awe-struck to find a Sister who really walks the talk and goes the extra mile!

I am also very privileged to have a very supportive management. Ms Tan has staff welfare at heart, and I am very impressed and humbled that the Executive Director has no airs and will lend a helping hand, whenever and wherever. Her laughter and fun-loving ways also go down well with staff and children alike. Even during the times when she has to be stern, she carries a loving heart. She takes time to share with me, her various experiences working with the Sisters. This really helps me to understand quickly the work, the processes and expectations at Marymount Centre.

I am still journeying with the Good Shepherd mission and enjoying every moment of it. As the Psalmist says, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." Sharing the mission draws me closer to God's heartbeat, and allows me to reach out to the lost, poor and helpless. I pray that the Good Shepherd mission will continue to draw out the best in me for God's mission.

***Chen Sheau Ing***



# Caught And Held By St. Mary Euphrasia

*S*he handed me the book entitled, "The Little White Shepherdess", certain that my place was with the Sisters of the Good Shepherd. There was no hesitation whatsoever in Sr. Columba Cannon's mind and heart that St. Mary Euphrasia's life would touch mine.

The holy picture of St. Mary Euphrasia portrayed a stern-looking woman. But it was the gentle stare in her eyes that captured my attention. I saw in them the heart of a kindly woman, who loved deeply, those young women and girls of her time whose lives were so messed up, and who found God's unbounded mercy through her.

On my first visit to Marymount Convent, I saw the same pair of eyes beholding the young girl whom I met in the Home dormitory. I decided there and then, "This is where I want to spend my life helping young teenagers with problems, to find hope and affection."

One of the first sayings of St. Mary Euphrasia which touched me deeply is, "One person is of more value than the whole world." "The whole world?" I couldn't fathom this until I read the book, "Redemption", by Gabriel Francis Powers. St. Mary Euphrasia embraced the whole of humankind not only in her heart but she had actually put that same fire in the hearts of her Sisters as she sent them to different parts of the world. That same Good Shepherd mission continues to this day, not just in the hearts of the Sisters, but also in our Lay Associates and Good Shepherd people.

Can I catch that same fire today? What does it burn on?

"The love of God, above all things, and the love of her neighbour, were in her soul like a glorious sun, filling her whole being with its splendour, and inflaming her will with that zeal, as ardent as it was universal, enabling her to extend to the five parts of the world the glory of God and the work of the salvation of souls," these descriptions of St. Mary

Euphrasia come from Mirror of the Virtues, and is translated by Sr. Rose Virginia Warnig.

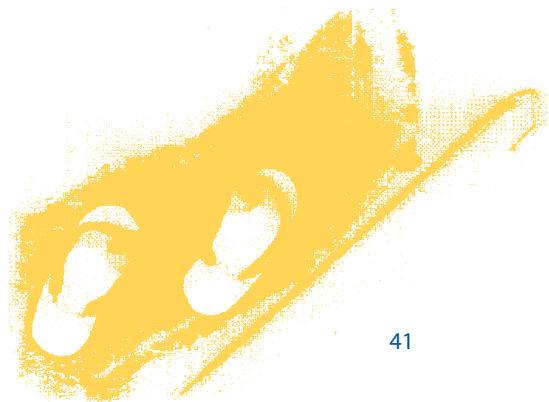
Every person, no matter how wretched, bears the imprint of the image of our God, and when I experience God's love for me, I am able to believe the words of Isaiah 43:5, "You are precious to me and I love and honour you." St. Mary Euphrasia understood God's tremendous love for each person.

I have had the privilege of being Directress of the Girls' Home in Singapore, Indonesia and Kuala Lumpur. They were difficult girls. They tested me to the very core of my being. I wearied of their devious ways and spent many nights praying for them to come back after they had run away from the Home. Often, I turned to Mother Euphrasia in desperation and even questioned her, "How can you say one person is of more value? They are just so naughty!"

Today, her words continue to renew my strength, and I remember, "If you wish to win the girls' hearts, to soften their characters and correct their faults, you must first be kind and thoughtful for them and show them endless patience," (Saint Mary Euphrasia Pelletier by Gaetan Bernoville). How true! How often have I seen this miracle - the transformation of persons just by experiencing a gesture of love and care. How glorious is our call to follow the Good Shepherd! She said words so simple, yet so profound, "I was not possessed of great talents but I love, and I loved with all the strength of my soul."

To emulate St. Mary Euphrasia is beyond my small efforts. But I know she is close to me, and she makes this possible in the many broken ones I meet.

***Sr. Gerard Fernandez, rgs***



# Chapter 3

# **Growth**

# A Dream Come True

Recently, I was asked this question, "How did you get orientated to the Good Shepherd mission, vision and values?"

Reflecting on this question brought me back to when I was a little girl of five, entering Marymount Kindergarten late in the year because my parents forgot to enrol me at the start of the school year. It's one of those things that first-time parents tend to do with their eldest!

My very first encounter with a Good Shepherd Sister was with Sr. Gabriel, Irish and loud, but with a heart of gold. Through Sr. Gabriel, and many other Sisters like Sr. Gerard Fernandez, Sr. Eugene Png, and Sr. Regina Chin who taught me catechism during my school years, I was orientated into the Good Shepherd mission.

As a child, I admired the Sisters from afar. I dreamt of being a missionary like them, bringing Jesus to others and spreading the love of God through their good work. But something in me stopped my aspiration to put on "their habit". It looked uncomfortably hot to me. I always marvelled at how the veil managed to sit pretty the whole day. Besides, as schoolgirls, we always approached the Convent with a certain degree of trepidation and awe, and fear of receiving a scolding for making too much noise or for trespassing.

If someone had told me then, that it was possible to share in the work of the Sisters and yet marry and have children, I would not have believed it. It looked like an exclusive club that came with restrictions which I was not prepared to accept.

That was more than 30 years ago.

Today, I am truly blessed. I have a loving husband and two beautiful boys, and yet, I am an active participant in the Good Shepherd mission. How did this come about? How was this possible?

I can only say that it must be part of God's plan. He created windows of opportunity, and all it took was a simple "yes" from me to each opportunity.

Until November 2004, my working relationship with the Good Shepherd Sisters was generally, "Yes, Sister, what can I do for you?" and "Sure, Sister, I'll be happy to do that for you. Is there anything else you would like me to do?"

All that changed when the Province Leader, Sr. Susan Chia, said "yes" to my request. My bold request was to descend on the Sabah community with my family to spend five days directing an outreach programme for children in one of the rural villages.

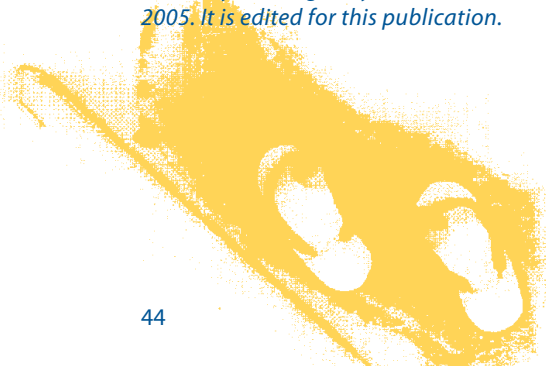
I was very touched by the warmth and acceptance I received from the Sisters in the Sabah community. They prayed over us and with us, giving us spiritual support. They looked after our physical needs, and gave us the freedom to run the programme as we saw fit. It was one of the most beautiful partnerships I had ever experienced. Truly, the Spirit of God was with us throughout that mission trip. Both Sisters and lay volunteers had various concerns, given our different training and background, but we were united in our common mission of serving the poor through that particular programme.

My girlhood dream had come true. I was playing a part in the mission of the Good Shepherd Sisters. Better still, I was doing it with my husband and sons!

### **Jane Marie Ng**

**Note:**

*This story was originally written for the RGS Congregational Newsletter, November 2005. It is edited for this publication.*



# My Longest Ministry

*I* was 19, serving my National Service. At the same time, I was serving as a member of the Legion of Mary together with a group of ex-Catholic Junior College mates. We were young, energetic and eager for opportunities to do some 'work' for God. We visited homes for the elderly, but language was too much of a challenge. Although we could perform some "labour of love" - cleaning, painting the place and gardening - we felt that interaction was more important.

Perhaps we could work with younger people as they would speak English, we thought. Somehow, God led us to contact Sr. Julia. She welcomed us with open arms as she needed volunteers to tutor the girls at Marymount Centre. Tutoring was a new experience for me but not too difficult as I could communicate with the girls. As it was to be God's way, not my way, I did not evangelise but managed to keep to my role as a volunteer tutor. Eventually, I was the only person in the Legion to persevere as a tutor while my friends went on to do other work.

One day, Sr. Julia invited me for a chat. She tried to interest me on the Lay Associates of the Good Shepherd, which was to be formed soon. I decided to check it out. I liked what I saw; the charism attracted me and the words of Mother Foundress made a lot of sense to me particularly "zeal for the salvation of souls "and" one person is of more value than the whole world."

I joined the first batch of Good Shepherd Lay Associates (GSLA) that had a two-year formation programme. In 1990, we took our first commitment. I had the honour of being the youngest member of the pioneer batch of Good Shepherd Lay Associates.

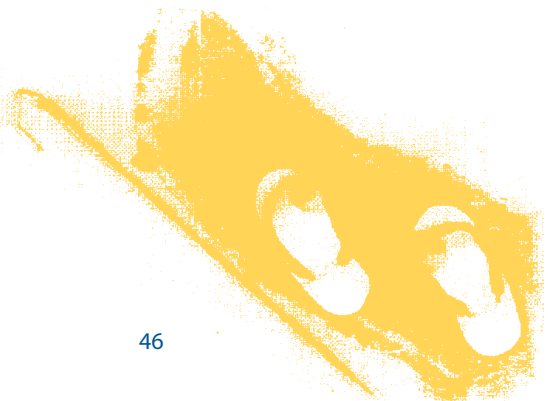
A few years later, due to studies and work, I stopped volunteering as a tutor with the Legion. I also ceased serving my favourite ministry, the Altar Boys, as I was an adult by then. Happily, I have remained a GSLA. I continue to attend monthly meetings and prayers and help out with ad-hoc projects.

I grew up with the GSLA as I progressed through various stages of my life - National Service, studies, work, marriage, and family. My beautiful wife, Luz, joined the GSLA soon after our marriage. Our three children visited Marymount Convent often.

I am involved in other Church ministries now, but GSLA remains the longest ministry that I have been involved in. I love the GSLA as it reminds me that Jesus is the Good Shepherd, leading while serving His sheep. As I try to follow Jesus, I realise that I have learnt much more being the 'sheep' rather than what I have given.

I thank God for all the blessings of being a GSLA, and all that He has given to my family and me.

***Gerard Anthony***





# Growing Through Volunteering

*I*t was in December 2005 that I got to know Pusat Kebajikan Good Shepherd (PKGS) and their Youth PrepLink (YPL) programme. I participated in the YPL programme which transformed my passive lifestyle. From this programme, I received a lot of guidance on a variety of issues such as grooming, time and money management, socialisation skills, and knowledge on globalisation.

Upon completion of the YPL programme, I felt attracted to the youth service of PKGS. I was invited by my cousin, Elia Donius, to be a volunteer. It was then that I met other volunteers of YPL - Mr. Gerry, Mdm Wendy, Miss Sheila, Miss Catherine, Mdm Flory, Auntie Alica, Auntie Mary and Auntie Leonara. I also got to know the Good Shepherd Sisters a little better.

Working together with the other volunteers was a meaningful and hard-to-forget experience for me. I learnt a lot from them - cooking, conversational English, dancing, singing, and lots more. The volunteers also became my friends as we served together on this programme.

Presently, Sr. Jossie is in charge of the YPL programme. Her zeal in serving the youth energises us to serve with PKGS, moving from being participants to becoming leaders. The programme offers me opportunities to learn, develop and practise my leadership skills. With the help of the Good Shepherd Sisters, I am also more aware of my own strengths and weaknesses. As I volunteer, I grow.

I feel very blessed to have Sr. Jossie as my mentor, and for the opportunity to be involved in the YPL programme.

**Joshua John**

*Originally written in Bahasa Malaysia*



# The Call To Serve

*I*t was through Sr. Mercy Daniel that I first came into contact with the Good Shepherd Sisters. That was 17 years ago. She was giving a session to the catechism teachers at my parish. I had attended many vocation camps with other congregations but had never heard of the Good Shepherd Sisters.

Out of curiosity, I decided to volunteer at the crisis centre now known as the Rose Virginie Centre. I knew that as a volunteer I would not be able to do anything much, but I always held on to the words of Mother Teresa, "Do small things with great love." After a while, I started to enjoy spending time with the ladies at the centre. Little did they know that I was learning so much from them! I never imagined that through the years, I would become a part of something very much bigger.

The opportunity to get to know the Good Shepherd Congregation, and what made them different, came when I was employed as a kindergarten teacher at Mariaville Kindergarten by Sr. Patricia Lim. I have to admit that where I had worked previously, there was no vision to begin with. I did not know where the organisation was heading, nor was there a sense of mission. However, during the past eight years at Mariaville, I have grown to understand that teaching children is part of my mission.

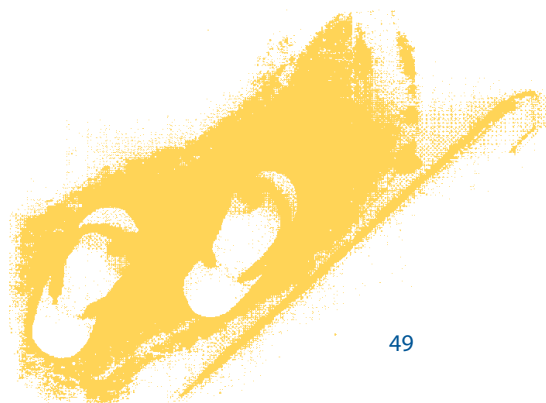
A very personal and striking thing that I want to share is dinner time with my husband. We would sit down at the dinner table and I would share with him the little "happenings" in my classroom. This routine has become such an important part of our lives, so much so that if I kept quiet, my husband would ask, "What did the children do today?" Whenever I share with him about the children, I realise how much they mean to me. What makes this place different from the previous kindergarten? Actually, I know answer. I'm not just working and waiting for my pay cheque every month; I can somehow feel the Good Shepherd charism in Mariaville Kindergarten that makes me want to be a part of the children's lives.

As I write this, it gives me great joy to realise how much I love what I am doing. I enjoy getting up in the morning, knowing there is so much I can do for the children under my care. I am reminded of the words of St. Mary Euphrasia, "God blesses you visibly; each day there are new benefits, let us give thanks to God." They help me to do better each day, and to practise the values that the Good Shepherd family has taught me.

Looking back at my journey as a volunteer of the Rose Virginie Centre and as a staff of Mariaville Kindergarten, I can see that I have grown spiritually. I'm able to respect and show compassion to each individual, adult or child. I have learnt to give of myself unconditionally.

I thank God for the call to serve in these ministries of the Good Shepherd Sisters. I am grateful to Sr. Helena and Sr. Dorothy who have constantly given me much support and many opportunities to serve in both ministries.

***Christina Angeline Joseph***



# Same Ground, Same Path

"Mdm Lo, can you start work at Mariaville on 18th July?" the voice of Sr. Dorothy asked on the other line. "Yes, sure," I answered without hesitation. She didn't know it then, but I was only too pleased to accept the offer!

Retiring on 24th April 2007 from the government service, I had prayed hard for an opportunity to return to the school setting to do some work, and at the same time continue with my community service. The kindergarten's offer fulfilled my wishes.

I first read about the good work of the Good Shepherd Sisters through the kindergarten magazine. Subsequently, I had opportunities to find out more through the Mission Link programme, "Celebrating Good Shepherd Partnership Weekend" in Singapore, and again on 17th Jan 2009 when Theresa Symons shared her discovery, and studies on St. Mary Euphrasia. The more I learnt about the ministries of the Sisters - outreach programmes for single mothers, unmarried ladies, young girls in trouble, human rights and justice issues, especially trafficking of women and children - the more respect I have for them.

Last December, at the Mariaville Family Gathering, Sr. Dorothy surprised the staff by presenting each one with a bunny door stopper. Later, I found out from Mr Yeong that the "bunnies" had been hand-sewn by the ladies at the Crisis Centre in Singapore, and personally stuffed and stitched by Sr. Dorothy and Sr. Lucy over a few weeks. This kind gesture really touched my heart. Every stitch reflected their loving and tender care for the staff. Where else can I find such good partners?

Each morning, I wake up with a sense of contentment. I tell myself, "Today, I am going to work, at Mariaville. I'll be hearing the chatter and laughter of the children, and seeing the caring attention of the teachers." Believe me, this is more than I can ask for in a job! As the Mariaville Kindergarten song goes, "Mariaville is a joyful place where we meet with a happy heart and face."

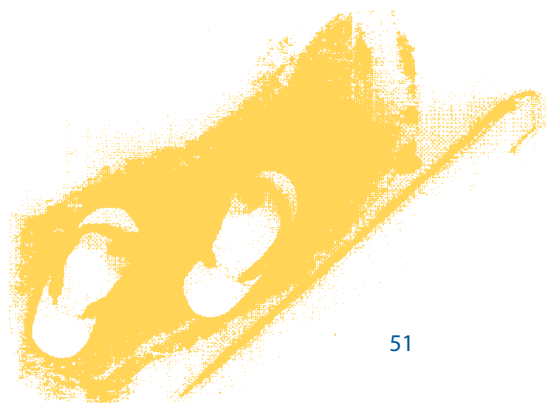
I must say that at times, there are "headaches" too. "Customers are always right," such is the expectation. We have to satisfy our clients' needs and that includes the parents! So, my wish for all at Mariaville is to always work as a team, and perform quality work to meet the varying needs and expectations of our clients.

As I stand in front of Mariaville Kindergarten, I think of the many Sisters, staff and thousands of children who had stood on the same ground, and walked the same path since 1980. We mustn't forget our history, lest we also forget to appreciate the hard work and difficulties our predecessors had gone through to build Mariaville into a kindergarten of choice today.

I am very proud to be a Good Shepherd partner. I thank Sr. Dorothy for giving me the opportunity to be a part of Mariaville, and for her guidance and support. I also thank all my colleagues for their cooperation.

As a partner of the Good Shepherd mission, I will try my best to cooperate fully with the Good Shepherd Sisters, and uphold the mission, vision, and core values by following their good example of love and compassion.

***Lo Chen Fan***



# A Clothes Peg

*I* was recently asked to find something that symbolises my role in the Good Shepherd mission.

After some reflection, the idea of being a 'connector' came to me. As I surveyed the surroundings, I spotted a clothes peg. Right away, I identified it as a symbol of my role in the mission. You may ask, "Why a clothes peg?" Just as a clothes peg is used to keep clothes from being blown away, my role in keeping the accounts for PKGS (Sabah) helps to keep good intentions and projects from being blown away too! It would be a great pity if this happened due to poor financial management, inaccurate book-keeping, and lack of accountability.

I am able to connect accounting and financial management to mission work when the funds are responsibly accounted for. Because most of our funds come from donors and benefactors, we have a huge responsibility to account for every cent we receive. When we are able to put figures to mission work, it makes the work of my colleagues, whose duty it is to obtain funding for the ministries, a lot easier!

With proper and professional accounts-keeping and reporting, our ministry will be perceived as professional in our work. Consequently, this gives greater confidence and will attract bigger corporate benefactors, which means better funding for our projects. In turn, we can reach out to more people in need.

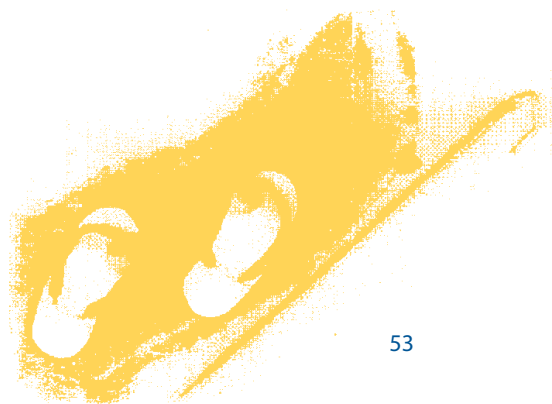
Just as a car without petrol is useless, good intentions and ideas without funds will be fruitless! They will remain just good intentions!

Although I may not be in the forefront to carry out direct mission work, I feel that my role in keeping proper accounts is, nevertheless, just as needed and important. I am one of the pieces in the big jigsaw puzzle of the Good Shepherd mission. I have come to realise that it is not by

chance that I am part of the Good Shepherd family. It is God who has chosen and called me by name. He knows the mission needed a clothes peg as well!

May the name of the Lord be praised!

***Wendy Carvalho Chin***



# Two Sticks Of Ice-Cream

"Need help to carry your things?" This is a common refrain from the street-children, mainly of Filipino descent, offering services in exchange for some loose change. They are often gathered at the fish section of the wet market in Kota Kinabalu. During my many trips to purchase groceries for the various ministries, I had been approached countless times by these enthusiastic and raggedly dressed kids. I would either side-step, or brush them off with a polite smile. While I do feel for their deprivation, at times, I cannot help but see them as a menace or a nuisance because there is a sizeable number of them loitering at the market.

One Friday morning in late March 2009, as I was on my way to the Good Shepherd Rural Training Centre, I had to swing by the market to buy groceries for a group of youths participating in our Youth PREPLink programme and also for the children staying in our hostel in Pukak.

I made a beeline for the fish section, located at the extreme end of the car park, to purchase 10 kilos of fish. The shopping load was more than usual due to the large number of participants attending the youth programme. As the food load began to pile up, I was approached by a skinny child, no more than 10 years old. "I can help," he offered. On this occasion, I was actually thankful for the service and readily handed him two plastic bags of fresh fish. He walked alongside me as I continued with the purchases, waiting patiently at each stop, and offering to carry more groceries.

It was a scorching hot day. I was perspiring profusely as I made my way through the market. Somehow, my little helper seemed unperturbed by the heat. I didn't see a single drop of perspiration on him. When the weight of the purchases appeared overwhelming, I decided it was time to load the groceries in the vehicle. As I headed towards the car park, I took out RM2 from my wallet. I gave it to my little helper with a signal that his services were no longer needed.

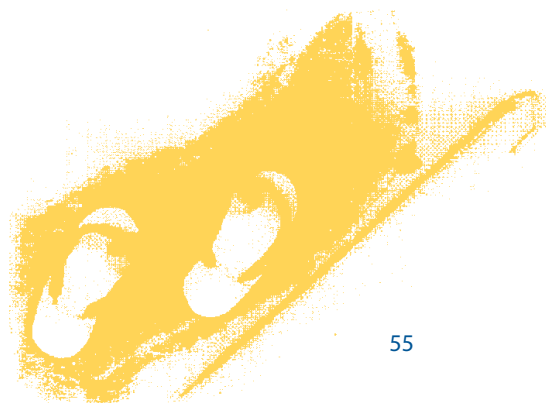


After locking up the car, I made another trip to the market for a final purchase. As I was returning to my vehicle, I saw my little helper standing beside it. I smiled at him. Before I could open the car door, he held out two sticks of ice-cream to me. He gestured to me to pick one, either a durian flavoured ice-cream or a red bean ice-cream. At that moment, I was totally dumbfounded! Then tears began to well up in my eyes. The kindness, generosity and thoughtfulness of this little street boy touched me very deeply. Here is a poor child, so thoughtful and so willing to share the little that he had just earned!

God has blessed me with this encounter that will forever be etched in my mind and heart. My little helper is an inspiration as I continue to serve in the Good Shepherd ministries in Sabah. He is a reminder that every child belongs to God, including the street children who are no lesser than you or me.

What St Mary Euphrasia said a long time ago still holds true today, "As long as we have ten cents, we will share it." My little helper taught me how to live it!

***Chin Poh Choo***



# Chapter 4

# **Belonging**

# Automatic Membership

*M*y journey with the Good Shepherd Mission began on 3 April 2004, when I first learnt about the ethos of St. Mary Euphrasia that "one person, is of more value than the whole world."

I see my ministry at Good Shepherd Convent Kindergarten, as a calling for me to reach out to the staff, parents, children and visitors with the compassionate heart of Jesus, our Good Shepherd. Each day, I'm reminded and challenged to treat everyone with love and respect, which at times can be very trying and tiring. However, the love, encouragement and support from Sr. Cecilia Liew and Ms. Tan Poh Cheng give me the courage to persevere and continue in this beautiful mission of sharing God's love with the people I come across.

I am grateful to God for blessing me with this opportunity to work in collaboration with Sr. Eugene and the staff of Marymount Kindergarten to minister to the parents and their children. A gentle smile, a warm hug, or a listening ear given to the staff, parents, children and visitors is a priceless gift, and one I can give. I see it as a means to connect them to God, and to allow them to experience His abiding and healing presence in our complicated world.

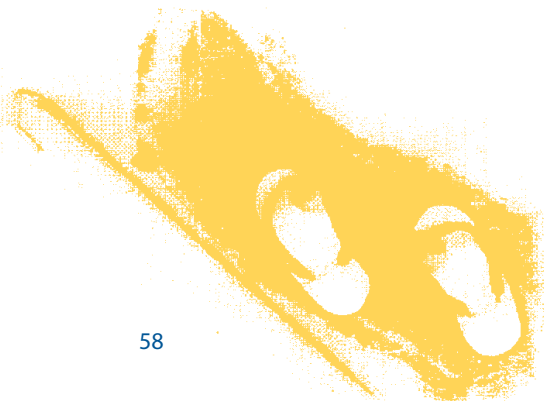
Indeed, I am blessed to be a part of this extended family at Marymount Centre. During the past five years, I have grown spiritually and professionally.

The various events, like the annual Foundress Day celebration, retreats and sharing sessions on personal growth organised by Mission Link Committee and the Marymount Centre management have provided me with opportunities to learn more about the spirit of St. Mary Euphrasia. In the process of working in partnership with others, I have learnt the importance of having a shared vision and mission to further the charism of the Good Shepherd Sisters where lives can be touched, and hope can be offered to the community.

What is most exciting at this stage of my life is the golden opportunity to network with other Good Shepherd members from the region. I am proud to be granted automatic membership to a "regional family" through the Good Shepherd Mission Link. My hope for the future is that all who work in the various ministries will truly feel a sense of belonging to the Good Shepherd family and be committed to make Jesus known and loved.

I dream of the day when I will be able to serve in a third world country; to continue the Good Shepherd mission of bringing love and compassion to my fellow human beings in this world.

***Marie Rose Ng***



# To Form And Be Formed

God does everything for a purpose. I was called to work in Mariaville in 2003 but my answer then was, 'I will definitely do so one day'. Three years later, the church took over the place where I was operating a kindergarten. That 'one day' finally came, and I made good on my promise. I joined Mariaville in 2007.

The experience of working with so many teachers in Mariaville was a major difference. I enjoyed the many programmes organised, and appreciated the good school management and teaching systems. As I got to know more about the Good Shepherd Sisters, their mission and various ministries, I was even more impressed and I felt a sense of security working here.

Five months into my teaching job at Mariaville, I was offered a position in another kindergarten with better pay. I handed in my resignation with a heavy heart at the end of 2007. As I was familiarising myself at the new kindergarten during the December holidays, I felt sad and uncomfortable.

I heard a voice inside me asking, "Why are you at a place where you don't belong? Mariaville is the place for you." Heeding this voice, I headed sheepishly back to Mariaville wondering at the same time if they'd accept me back. I was overjoyed when I was allowed to withdraw my resignation letter! Like a lost sheep, I'd returned to the fold.

My time at Mariaville has enabled me to experience the vision and mission of the Good Shepherd Sisters. I have truly experienced the hard work of the loving sisters and lay workers, especially during our mission outreach to Sabah. They serve God and society with a thirst in their hearts. My most memorable experience of that mission was the simple, humble women working day and night to bring cheer and comfort to the poor.

The trip opened my eyes to the Sisters' untiring effort in building and repairing lives, and bringing joy to the village people. I'm reminded of what the bible says, 'And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose,' Romans 8:28.

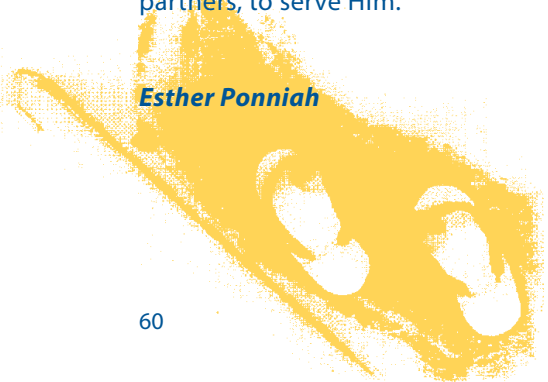
Working at Mariaville is not without its challenges. I recall being offered to teach the 4-year-old children even though I had requested to teach the 6-year-olds. This meant that each day, I would have to deal with crying, vomiting, and peeing children! What should I do? I found my answer in Jonah chapter 3. Jonah finally obeyed the Lord and decided to carry out his mission.

I agreed to take up the challenge and give of my best. I also decided to stop the home tuition service for which I'd spent much money obtaining the home-based licence. Giving up the licence and the additional income was not easy, but necessary if I were to do a good job at Mariaville.

Being part of the Good Shepherd mission is a great honour. It has impacted and changed me as a person. I'm now more patient, caring, and humble, and I want to be a blessing to others. I'm happy that my work at Mariaville and my participation in the Good Shepherd mission is a continuation of my early ministry which started when I was aged 16. I was teaching rural children and helping their families, besides praying with them. I have found the place and team to continue my ministry.

I remember the words of St. Mary Euphrasia printed on the special calendar which said that she loved everyone with her soul and strength. I find her words inspiring, uplifting and healing. God has placed me where I am, to form and be formed by this family of Good Shepherd partners, to serve Him.

***Esther Ponniah***



# Hook, Line And Sinkers!

*T*hirty-one years ago, when my family moved to the vicinity of Amfang, my children and I became regulars at the Chapel in Madonna Heights for the Sunday Mass. My interaction with the Sisters then was an occasional "Good Morning." Little did I know that I was "spotted" by them.

In 1999, I was invited to some "serious sessions" together with a group of close friends. I began to learn about the life of St. Mary Euphrasia and her work. We were expected to chalk up a minimum percentage of attendance for the monthly meetings before we could be invited to be a Lay Associate. I thought, "Am I worthy? What does that mean to me?" Initially, I was reluctant to accept the invitation. For some unknown reason, I made a last minute decision to give it a try. From then on, there was no turning back. I developed a close relationship with the Sisters, assisting them whenever, and in whatever ways I could.

I started out by being their debt collector! The Sisters operated a sewing "business" to supply school uniforms to schools. There were outstanding sums of money due to them by several schools. Wearing a skin as thick as the school uniforms, I parked myself often enough in those schools until the management had no choice but to pay up! The entire debt collection took close to a year of work. The experience taught me that patience and perseverance do pay, literally! Naturally, I experienced a great sense of satisfaction and achievement. It was mission accomplished!

Not long after, I was "spotted" once more. This time, I was offered to take up the position of principal of Maryvale Kindergarten. It was supposed to be a temporary appointment. As it turned out, I remained the principal for close to nine years until its closure at the end of 2007. Throughout that period, there was always a voice telling me that I should stay with the kindergarten. I was "hooked". Challenges and struggles were aplenty each school day. Nonetheless, I also felt a sense of fulfillment when positive changes were achieved. Furthermore, I

had tons of opportunities, big and small, to share the Good Shepherd mission and values to the teachers, administrative staff, children and the parents as well.

My most memorable experience was the 3-day outreach project organised by the teachers and staff to serve 174 poor and marginalised children from 17 villages in Tenghilan, Sabah. That was in 2004. The joy on the faces of the children spoke of the love they experienced by our presence.

In November 2005, I was "spotted" yet again. I was asked to be the contact person for the Justice, Peace and Solidarity in Mission (JPSM) Office. "What on earth is that?" I had asked. A visit to the Social Justice Office in Melbourne cleared up my ignorance. Four months down the road, in March 2006, the JPSM Office for the province was set up at Madonna Heights. I was "hooked" once again. Together with the Good Shepherd people, I strive for social justice, respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

As a lay partner in the Good Shepherd mission, I have experienced the warmth, love, compassion and life-giving spirit of the Good Shepherd Himself. I thank the Sisters for the many opportunities given to me to share in their mission. I must admit that I fell for it - hook, line and sinker!

***Gloria Bon***





# Accepted For Who I Am

*How* time flies! Ten memorable years! I've been a part of Mariaville since 1999 during which time I've grown tremendously, and am very happy and comfortable here.

When I first came to Mariaville, it had an enrolment of slightly more than a hundred pupils. Today, the enrolment has reached nearly 430. Isn't that amazing? Of course, the credit goes to the management and team of dedicated staff of Mariaville. I really feel proud to be part of this success story.

To me, Mariaville is like a second home. The children here are like my family, my own children. The staff gets to be involved in the many activities that the Sisters do for others. I'm very happy to be invited to work closely with them. I reach out to the poor children in our school to tutor them for free. It gives me much joy to be able to volunteer my services whenever the Crisis Centre needs my help. I also get to work with the Sisters to reach out to the victims of the Tsunami, the flood in Kota Tinggi, Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar, and the residents of Loyal Home for the Handicapped.

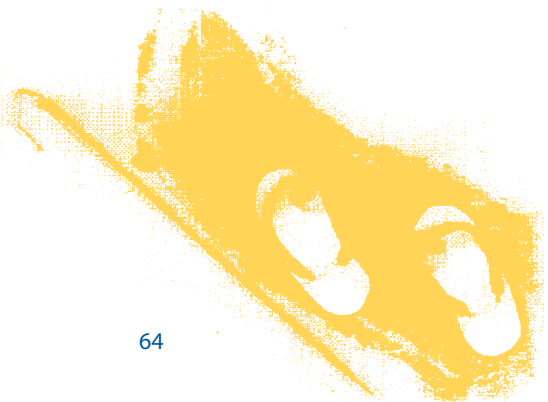
I want to take this opportunity to thank the Sisters for trusting me and giving me the opportunity to serve them and the children. In reality, I've gained much more than what I had given. I used to be self-conscious and shy when speaking in public. Not anymore. At Mariaville, I'm accepted for who I am. I'm given the space to be myself and to receive guidance. In this whole system of shared responsibility and teamwork, I've gained self-confidence.

I was a nervous wreck when I was going through a personal crisis two years ago. Fortunately, the strong support of the Sisters saw me through this period. I am now able to stand confidently on my own again. My experience has enabled me to be a support to my colleagues who experience difficulties in their lives.

I will continue to give of my best in all that I do, and to everyone I meet, with God's grace and the Sisters' loving guidance and care.

Thank you, Sisters, especially Sr. Dorothy, for inviting me to share in your mission. I feel very privileged. May God bless you all for the good work you are doing.

***Angie Chai Lee Yoen***



# A Bold Switch

*I* got to know Mariaville through my landlady in 1990. She told me that it was a "special kindergarten" run by the Good Shepherd Sisters. That got me curious.

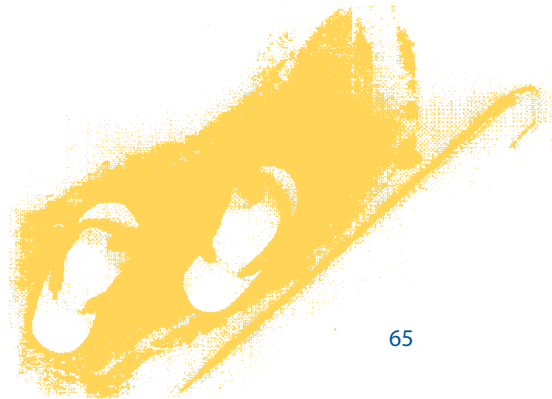
I was very impressed by what I saw during a visit, especially the multi-racial environment of Mariaville Kindergarten. A field with green grass, lots of potted plants in the garden, a big playground with suitable equipment, water and sand pits, and spacious classrooms - these facilities and the environment were most unexpected in a kindergarten. It seemed more like a primary school.

Years after that visit, in January 2006, I decided to make a bold career switch. I joined Mariaville Kindergarten as a teacher. It was a totally different field from my previous profession as an engineer, which paid a high salary. Many friends and former colleagues thought I was crazy. Maybe I was. But with confidence, I told them that I won't regret my decision. I was very sure I wanted to nurture the children for a better future.

Three years on, I am happy to say, "I belong to this Good Shepherd family!" From time to time, my fellow teachers and I receive training from the Sisters as well as external consultants to upgrade our professional and personal skills so that we can be more effective, committed and dedicated to our profession and mission.

My experience of the zeal and compassion of the Good Shepherd Sisters makes me feel loved, cared for, secure, and respected. I am very proud, and grateful, to be part of the Good Shepherd mission.

**Janice Lam**



# Giving, Growing And Gaining

Where shall I begin? Strangely, I can't even remember exactly when my involvement with the Good Shepherd mission began!

All that I remember was a telephone call from Angela Foo. From then on, together with Maureen Wong, all three of us were chauffeured weekly by David on weekends to tutor the girls in Asrama St. James in Tenghilan. It was an enjoyable and meaningful year of spending some time during the weekends with the girls. They were a very responsive and appreciative lot.

Later on, we were approached by Sr. Teresa Chye to give tuition to the girls in Sri Murni Centre. Sometimes, Sr. Patricia would ask me to be with the girls when she and Emilia needed to attend meetings, or when they needed transport to bring the girls to the clinic. I enjoyed those moments with the girls, especially during the night prayers because I really experienced the peace and harmony in their spiritual life despite the trials they were undergoing.

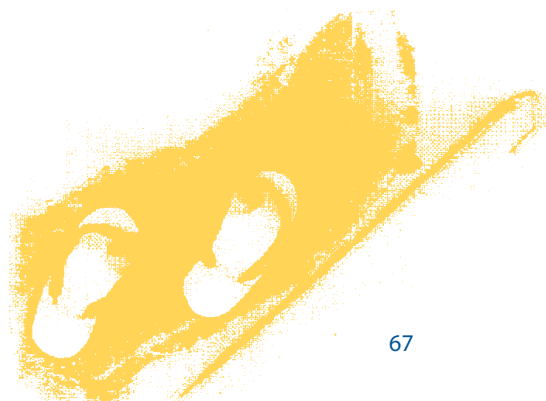
Exercise times with the girls brought a lot of fun and enjoyment. In a way, those times forced me to stretch and flex my "lazy body" too. In giving a little of my time, I discovered that I grew and gained abundantly from the experience. In fact I reaped more than I sowed!

The greatest impact on me, and I'm grateful for it, came from the love and care of the Good Shepherd Sisters and the girls. Their prayers, spiritual and physical support, when my late husband was ill and hospitalised, provided much comfort. Sr. Teresa visited and prayed for him, and promptly agreed to baptise him. When he returned to the Lord, the Good Shepherd Sisters and the lay associates prayed for his soul and attended the requiem mass. Their presence and prayers were the greatest support I needed and received at that traumatic time of my life. I wouldn't know what to do if not for them.

I thank my dearest God for the blessing of knowing the Good Shepherd Sisters who have given me so much help. They are not only helpful in times of need, but also very caring and concerned all the time. They always make me feel welcome and at home in their midst. I can see that the girls in Asrama St. James and the Sri Murni Centre have learnt good values from the Sisters and their examples.

I feel I'm a part of the family with the girls and the Sisters. How can one even think of being separated from one's family? I want to remain a part of the Good Shepherd mission; to belong to the Good Shepherd family.

***Emily Lee***



# Can't Afford To Pay For Two

I arrived in Sabah in 1976 to work in Sandakan, and thereafter in Ranau. Four years later, I returned to Kampung Flores Adonara, Indonesia, for a two-month holiday. It was during this holiday, that I met my future wife, Katarina Jawa. When the holiday ended, I returned to Sabah with a promise to marry her three years later.

However, due to negative peer influence and the distraction of worldly pleasures, I did not keep my promise. Instead, Katarina came to Sabah in 1982 to work as a domestic helper. Soon, we resumed our relationship. We finally got married on 6 February 1986. Katarina stopped working after our marriage. I worked in a tyre factory as the sole breadwinner.

Our first child came on 1 November 1986. At that time, we had financial difficulties. We prayed that I'd get a good job, preferably one near a church so that we could be involved in church activities.

On 2 January 1988, our second child was delivered. Our prayers were finally answered when the Good Shepherd Sisters offered us work at the newly opened convent. In the 12 years that I worked at the convent, my family and I were happy even though the living condition was modest. Our children had an education from kindergarten to secondary school. We noticed that children from other migrant families could not afford to attend school.

We were blessed with another child on 3 May 1992. We named her Rose Virginie. My fourth child, a boy, arrived in 2000 but God took him home immediately upon his delivery. We received emotional support from the Sisters during this time. For years, we had received many blessings, advice and care from the Good Shepherd Sisters.

At the end of 2000, we returned as a family to our village in Flores during the school holidays. At about the same time, the Sisters had relocated the convent to Likas. The new convent was smaller and did not need a gardener, so we could not go with them. However, the

Sisters helped to ensure that we had an income by working at the old convent premises under the management of the Bishop. Although we worked for the Bishop for six years from 2001 to 2006, we felt closely connected with the Good Shepherd Sisters still as they came to visit us often, and assisted us with food and money. And I would go over to work the garden at Likas for half a day, twice a month.

In 2002, we received the bad news that the government did not approve the student passes of migrant children. We had no choice but to send our children back to Indonesia to complete their education. When our eldest child entered university, we were short of money. We prayed to God to send help with our child's university fees. We need to send at least one to university. Our second child was highly unlikely to have a chance of a university education, given our family's financial circumstances. We can't afford to pay for two, I remember telling my family. We prayed fervently for help to come.

Again, God answered our prayers through the Good Shepherd Sisters. In 2006, the Sisters offered me a job in Kuala Lumpur. We accepted their offer readily. A long process followed, which required us to return to Indonesia to apply for a new visa at the Malaysian Embassy in Jakarta, and also to undergo a medical checkup. We managed to get both done in one and a half months. Finally, on 5 May 2007, we arrived in Kuala Lumpur to begin work at Villamaria Good Shepherd Kindergarten.

As it turned out, our second child managed to get into the university. Our third child is now in Secondary 4. All these were made possible by God who answered our prayers through the Good Shepherd Sisters. My family had been through many ups and downs, and encountered many challenges. We believed all these were part of "the way of God".

God is so good to us and continues to bless and secure our family through the care of the Good Shepherd Sisters as our employer. We are thankful to the Good Shepherd Sisters for their constant prayers and care for our family all these years.

***Petrus Manoch & Katarina Jawa***  
*Originally written in Bahasa Malaysia*

# I Salute You, Sisters!

*I* needed a job and was offered one in Mariaville Kindergarten. That was 27 years ago. Through the years, I have seen the focus, determination, commitment and relentless efforts of the Sisters.

I have been treated with kindness and respect. When I failed my M.C.E., it was one of the sisters who accompanied me to the principal's office so that I could re-sit my examinations. When my mother passed away in 1979, I got a letter and note from the Sisters (I still have them) to comfort me. When I was preparing for my wedding mass, it was one of the Sisters who helped me. They were present at my wedding. They visited me at home when my three children were born. When I went through a personal crisis, they listened without judging. They are a big presence in my life.

Working in the Kindergarten in the early years was just a job, but with time I found fulfilment and happiness (I don't know how to describe them fully) that stays with me. I know I had made mistakes and caused hurt while working with the children, and for these, I seek God's forgiveness and healing power.

I see a big difference in the Sisters' interaction with the lay people then and now. I think it's a brilliant move on their part to include us in their ministries. It was an eye-opener for me to personally see the scope of their work in Sabah.

What makes me stay on in the job is that I can see my contribution to society. Working with the Sisters has made me more aware of the social problems and injustices around me, the need to change and adapt to the times (I'm still trying) and to make an effort to contribute, never mind that it may be small.

I salute you, Sisters!

***Celena Moorthi***



# Touching And Transforming

*A* long time ago, before I came to work at the Good Shepherd Convent Kindergarten, I was working in a kindergarten operated by a protestant church. One key difference at my previous work place was that my colleagues were mainly male, except for the Principal. The male staff members were mainly pastors and elders of the church. At the Good Shepherd Convent Kindergarten, I work mainly with women. And so it has been for twenty-two fruitful and eventful years.

Throughout this time, I have met many Good Shepherd Sisters who have enriched my life, and given me many unforgettable memories.

There were Sisters who worked in the kindergarten as supervisors, teachers and volunteers as well. Not only did they build lasting relationships and worked in partnership with the staff, they also made strong connections with the children and had good rapport with the parents.

Events that we organised at the kindergarten like fund-raising, food fair, sports day and concert were always cheerfully supported by the Sisters. They would take note of, commend and appreciate our hard work.

Our last fund-raising and food fair saw the Sisters turning chefs. They cooked a wide range of food to contribute to the fair, in addition to the various types of beautiful handicrafts made by them. Their support is much cherished by us.

Two years ago, I had to undergo major surgery. The whole community of Sisters prayed for me before I went under the knife. I am truly thankful to Province Leader, Sr. Susan Chia, and all the Sisters, for their loving care and for going the extra mile for me.

Our Advisor, Sr. Cecilia Liew, is an energetic and confident person. She believes in promoting peace, goodwill and harmony to people around her. She helps to set goals and achieves breakthroughs. She strives for continual improvement to benefit the children and staff members.

Recently, Sr. Lucy, in spite of her tight schedule, volunteered to take part in our school assembly and helped organise a meaningful Foundress Day celebration. She baked tarts and cookies with the children. Proceeds from the sale were donated to the Children's Cancer Foundation.

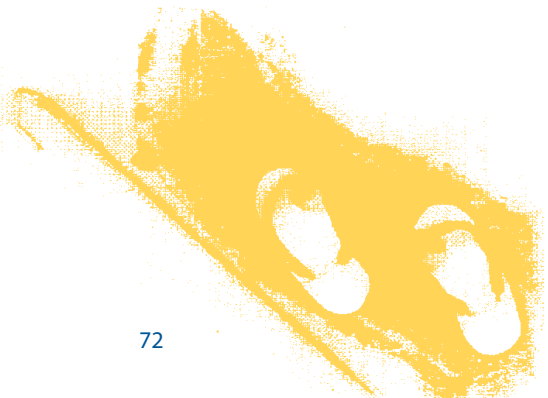
The work that the Good Shepherd Sisters did, and are doing, is about fulfilling their mission. They are passionate about developing people spiritually. They touch and transform the lives of the underprivileged, and the underachievers. They give strength and encouragement through their words and deeds. They are great counsellors. And they are respected by many.

The Good Shepherd Convent Kindergarten and I want to thank the Sisters for their sincerity, compassion, kindness, humanity, gentleness, patience, dedication, selflessness, and tirelessness in the service of God.

I am very grateful to all of them. Their commitment is encouraging to me and helps me find new meaning in my life. I'm motivated to work wholeheartedly each day.

May God richly bless the Sisters.

***Cynthia Lee***



# Sheltered, Supported And Secure

*T*he title summarises my experience with the Good Shepherd Sisters.

I've always wanted to work with children. You may wonder why Mariaville Kindergarten and not any other kindergarten? I cannot answer that question except to say that I trust in God's will. So, when He led me to Mariaville as a teacher in 2000, I was very happy and excited.

I find the teachers and staff in Mariaville very friendly. Each morning, they will greet one another and that makes me feel happy. I believe I've joined a good group of teachers and support staff. I feel like we are a big family, regardless of colour and creed. We laugh often, and we also care for one another.

The main attraction for me to stay on is the children. I love teaching them. I'm thankful to God for granting me the wisdom and knowledge to teach and share with the little ones. It's an opportunity to guide and mould them. It's God's gift to me.

The Good Shepherd Sisters provide shelter to women and children in need. As a member of the staff, I too feel sheltered, not physically, but emotionally. The Sisters readily support us in our times of need. When I was going through some personal difficulties, the Good Shepherd Sisters kindly listened to me. I'm especially grateful to Sr. Dorothy for her care and support. I truly feel good to know someone like her. Every person needs to feel secure, only then can he or she feel comfortable. Well, I feel very secure in Mariaville.

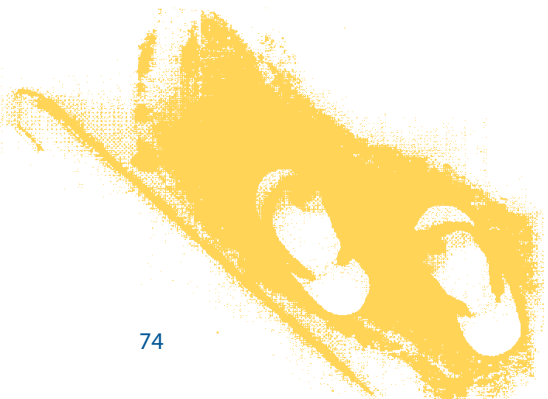
I've been in and out of Mariaville due to personal reasons. I was away for a-year-and-a-half. On my return from London, there were many job opportunities available to me. However, I wanted to be back at Good Shepherd Mariaville. The decision was not difficult to make. I simply followed the voice in my heart. I prayed about it and allowed God to guide me back to Mariaville.

Working with the children brings me great joy. The little things they do and say make me laugh and keep me young and joyful. I do have challenges though, but I don't really think I should give up what I enjoy doing just because of them. Challenges are not necessarily bad; they allow me to grow. I take challenges positively and I try to overcome them. I tend to get disappointed when things go wrong for me. I overcome the disappointments by talking to my husband who is a good listener. Sometimes I feel pressured and unhappy. That is when my health is poor. During such times, I can't really concentrate on my work. But I've God to draw strength from, and I surrender all things unto Him.

Working in Good Shepherd has moulded me too. When I first joined, I used to wear a sad face until one day Sr. Dorothy brought it to my awareness. That was an unforgettable day. It turned out to be a breakthrough for me. Since then, my countenance has changed to a smiling and joyful one. It seems like the real me has emerged.

Thank you Good Shepherd Sisters. May God bless your mission.

***Vailat Joseph***



# Chapter 5

# **Musings**

# A Listening Ear And A Compassionate Heart

*P*resently, I work at Marymount Kindergarten, teaching music and movement to the nursery and pre-nursery children. I have been working here for the past nine years.

At work, I try to reach out to the children and parents of the kindergarten. I remember encouraging some of the Catholic parents to get together for bible sharing but the idea didn't work out. I find that the energies of Singaporeans are so absorbed in educational success, business and money-making that many seem to have little energy for much else. Since I cannot get a group going, the other alternative is to try and evangelise one on one.

Outside of work at the kindergarten, I volunteer at the Church of the Holy Family as Choir Directress of the 7.15 am Mass on Sundays. I have over twenty members whom I try to minister to, as best I can. I try to keep them happy in order to sustain their interest and commitment. As you know, it's not easy to sustain people's interest nowadays.

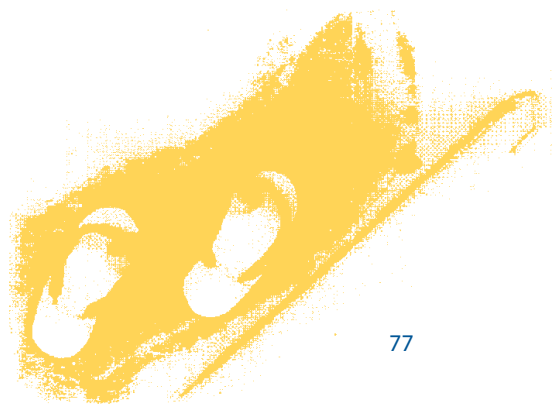
Whenever I can, I visit some of our children and old girls from Marymount Centre just to keep in touch.

Since 1985, the Lord has sent me several widows and single women, two of whom have lost their husbands and as for the others, their husbands have deserted them for other women, a common trend in Singapore these days. I often ask, "Lord, why do you choose me; you know that I have not attended formal counselling courses?" I can hear Him say to me, "I only need a listening ear, and a compassionate heart."

I have been journeying with these unfortunate women, listening to their stories and woes, and at times, lending them a shoulder to cry on. This work tells me that the charism of the Good Shepherd is alive and vibrant. There is always work to be done in our society and opportunities to serve our Lord. It also finds expression in so many varied ways that often surprise me.

And this brings me to the end of my tittle-tattle.

***Sr. Eugene Png, rgs***



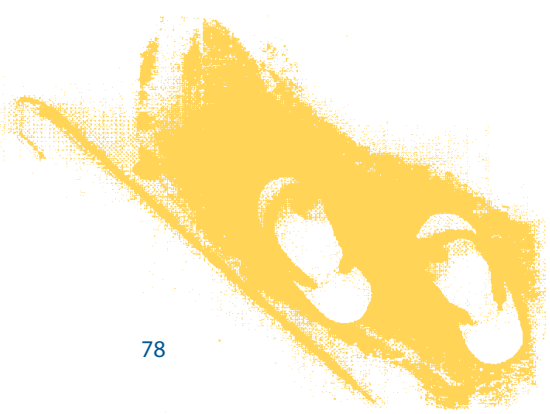
# Happy And Proud To Be Back

*I* was employed to work at Mariaville Kindergarten in 1999. At that time, I felt fortunate to be given the opportunity to be a part of such a well established and prestigious kindergarten in Ipoh. Sadly, after four months, I had to leave this kindergarten for personal reasons.

However, my happy experiences of the love and good times I had enjoyed brought me back to Mariaville again in May 2005. I am so happy and proud to be back as a member of this kindergarten. Here, we work as one big, happy family despite our differences in race, language and ethnicity. We stand together as one happy team to bring out the best in the children under our care.

I have learnt so much personally during all this time at Mariaville. I am very grateful to Sr. Dorothy, the Supervisor, for standing by me, especially during a family crisis.

***Joginder Kaur***

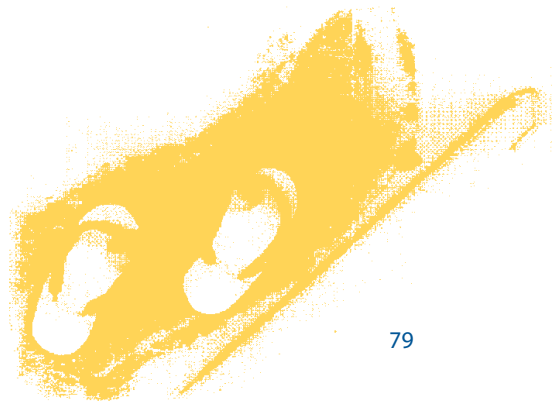




# I Am Grateful

*I* have been working at Mariaville Kindergarten since August 2004, when I was employed as a cleaner. The Sisters are very caring and compassionate. They treat all the staff very well, and their concern for us and our families touch me. I am happy to be part of their work and am grateful for all that they have done for me.

***Lai Say Han***



# Caring Management

When I first joined the school in 1999, somehow I immediately felt a sense of belonging. My workplace is like my second home. During the past three years, I have been given the opportunity to head a department. In this new leadership role, I grew and became more confident. As part of professional development, I was sent to Singapore on a training programme for pre-school teachers to acquire knowledge and learn new skills.

I like working in Mariaville as all staff members are expected to treat every child with love and care, regardless of race or religion.

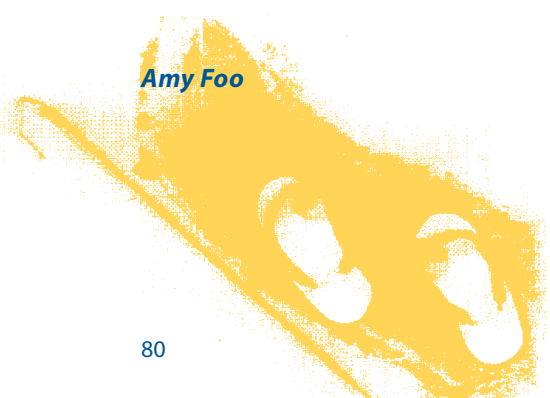
Mariaville is really different from other kindergartens. The management takes care of the staff very well, and pays us on time. Whenever there's a festive occasion, we get to receive our salary earlier even though the management may not have collected fees from the children yet.

A yearly trip is organised for the staff, and is partly sponsored by the management. This has offered me opportunities to see and explore places I have not been to, both within Malaysia and outside.

When we went on an outreach to the village children in Sabah, I had the opportunity to see the indigenous children there. It raised my awareness of their limited means and simple lifestyle and taught me not take things for granted. The exposure made me more appreciative of the blessings that I enjoy.

I want to say a 'big thank you' to all the Good Shepherd Sisters for their care, guidance and support in helping me to be a better person.

**Amy Foo**



# Amazed By The Numbers

*We* decided to teach at the kindergarten for more or less the same reasons. We thought it would be easy, relaxing and a good way to pass our time. We couldn't be more wrong! The teachers in this kindergarten have many responsibilities. We are expected to show compassion, and practise the core values. We are tasked to nurture the children with hope, self-respect, and good moral values, besides teaching them to achieve academic success. In order to keep updated and motivated on the mission and core values of the Good Shepherd, the staff team meets often to carry out team-building and other sessions.

We had no idea of the Good Shepherd mission until we joined Mariaville. Since then, we have learnt much about the many welfare and educational services that the Sisters provide. We are amazed by the number of projects they have undertaken, and the many accomplishments. Their commitment on issues concerning migrants, child sexual abuse, human rights and justice, are especially appreciated and highly commended.

Although we are not directly involved in any of the Good Shepherd centres, we are happy to have played small roles in supporting their efforts to collect funds for the victims of the 2004 Tsunami, Kota Tinggi flood and Myanmar cyclone. We feel blessed to have been able to participate in Mariaville's staff outreach to the village children in Sabah. We gained and learnt a lot from the Sisters and the villagers.

Our respective family commitments hinder us from doing more for the Good Shepherd. Nevertheless, we are very proud to be part of the Good Shepherd family. The Good Shepherd Sisters have not only helped us to be more aware of the social problems around us, but also to recognise our own responsibility in helping others by walking in the footsteps of the Good Shepherd.

***Miss Vasunda & Mrs Mohan***

# Plain Rice And KFC Fried Chicken

*I* didn't plan a teaching career in a kindergarten. My interest and passion have always been in the arts. I spent two and a half years developing this interest. Unfortunately, I had to put an end to this pursuit owing to some personal commitments. So I went into teaching instead. There is a significant experience I would like to share during my short stint of service in the Good Shepherd ministries.

In August 2007, a group of us, Mariaville staff and family members, were given an opportunity to travel to Sabah as part of an annual trip. I took along my two younger sons, then aged seven and eight respectively. We spent the most memorable and educational days in one of the Sabah villages.

There were approximately 100 children that we met at the village. They were from poor families. What really caught my attention was an episode witnessed over lunch. The children were noisily, but happily, tucking into their lunch boxes containing plain rice and two pieces of KFC fried chicken. However, we observed that several children ate only the rice. We were curious and wanted to understand their behaviour. "Why did they not want to eat the fried chicken? Was it not to their taste and liking?" I asked one of the staff members in Sabah. We found out that they had wanted to bring the fried chicken home to share with their family members at dinner. This tells a lot about the children's love and generosity for their family despite their financial hardship and circumstances.

This touching experience taught my children and me to look at life from different perspectives. For my sons, they had learnt a valuable lesson on the value of money and about sharing. For me, the lesson is about loving and valuing my family.

I thank the Good Shepherd mission for these precious lessons which have definitely made a vast difference in my life.

**Monica Lee**

# There For Me

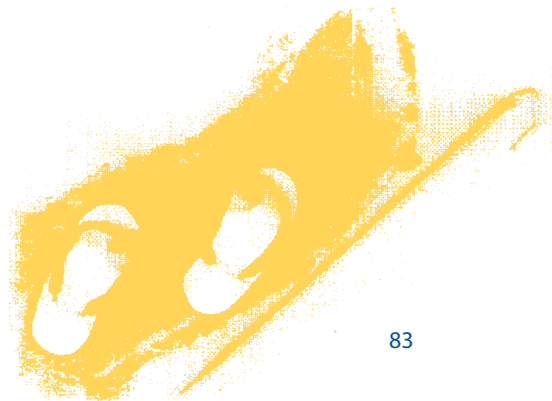
*I*n the many years that I've worked with the Good Shepherd Sisters, there have been certain things that have touched me very much.

I recall the time when I was going through a very distressful period in my life. That was when my daughter was about to undergo an operation in the United States. Following soon after that was my husband's turn to undergo a heart bypass surgery.

The compassion shown by the Good Shepherd Sisters was so comforting, and a great consolation to me. Their prayers and well wishes lifted my spirit. As a result, I was able to manage the stress and go through the situation more confidently.

I thank the Sisters for being there for me in my time of need.

**Anne Gomez**



# My Personal Mantra

"One person is of more value than the whole world." I used to read these words of St Mary Euphrasia each day as I passed the old convent next to the school. I thought to myself, "This one person must be Jesus." It was only years later that I came to understand that this "one person" refers to each one of us. This insight is gleaned from an experience one Christmas.

I remember clearly the occasion when I joined my colleagues to distribute Christmas hampers, school uniforms, and school shoes to children and families in need. We had to park our car at a distance and walk on highly uneven and difficult grounds, carrying the hampers to the poor. Interestingly, we even visited a bungalow to distribute the presents. I was surprised and had wondered why we were helping a rich family. Soon, I found out that we were visiting a young boy living with an elderly couple in the bungalow. The boy's mother, who worked as a maid for this couple, had died. The boy was about seven years of age. He looked like a 'little monk'. He had shaved his head bald according to Hindu custom. This is required of the children when a mother dies. When we handed the gifts to the young boy, he was so happy, it showed in his eyes. In that few moments, he forgot his sadness and loss. For me, it was such a striking experience.

Being with the Sisters has been a learning journey for me. The many experiences - like not having enough water to clean ourselves in Sabah, meeting the poor and seeing how they managed their lives with make-shift toilets next to ant hills or snake pits - all these were new and eye-opening to me. I must add that we had also been to better and more pleasant places with the Sisters, all very memorable to me. Being part of the Good Shepherd mission is very satisfying to me.

I wish to thank the Sisters for being there for all of us and our families. In my possession is a picture which relates to the work of the Sisters and how they give tirelessly of themselves in the service of God. I look at this picture everyday and the words, 'one person is of more value than the whole world' has become my personal mantra.

***Thanaletchimy Namasivayam***

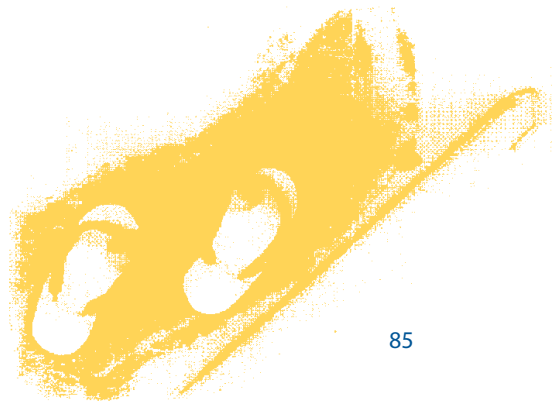
# We

We listen, we speak  
We sing, we dance  
We shout, we whisper  
We draw, we act  
We laugh, we chant  
We ask, we answer  
We practice,  
Over and over again.

We share, we revise  
We discuss, we solve  
We play, we run  
We encourage, we coax  
We eat, we pray  
We learn, we accept  
We grow,  
And help each other grow.

**Gerry Benjamin**

*(On his Youth PrepLink Experience, Kota Kinabalu)*



# Afterword

*Footsteps... some tentative, some soft and gentle, while others are more definite and heavier. These are the myriad of footsteps I hear, as my fellow religious Sisters and our lay partners trudge and tread challenging paths to serve in the various ministries within the Province. No doubt all have left, or will leave, their footprints behind not only in the lives of the people we serve, but in the life of the Province as well.*

*Returning from the Congregational Chapter in Angers, France, recently, I walked right into the midst of the Publication Workgroup, whose members were proof-reading the "living stories". I had the privilege of listening to the stories being read aloud. As I listened to the stories, I was filled with vivid memories and nostalgia. I recalled the significant moments of joys and challenges that I had been a part of. Faces of persons whom I hold dear in my heart as Sisters, friends and companions and, others who were strangers at one point but who welcomed me nonetheless, came to mind. I felt a deep sense of gratitude in remembering how their footsteps and footprints have influenced me to grow in my commitment and love to God's mission call.*

*As I reflect on our Province's mission stories, I take courage that we, Good Shepherd Sisters and lay mission partners, are constantly and ceaselessly bringing something new to birth, and something more, to those whose footsteps are trampled, ignored or erased. This collection of living stories is about our shared moments of being with each other in our struggles to work around obstacles and discouragements; our growth as we seek resources in our scarcity; and our courage to believe that together, we can find new possibilities of walking more closely with unnamed footsteps.*

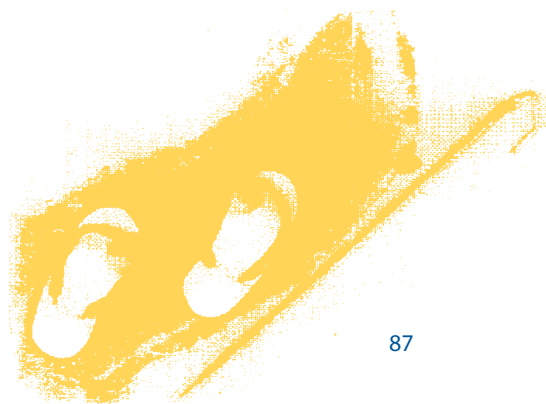


*I am on the threshold of a new journey, and will be writing a new chapter of my life. As I transit from the Province to take on my new role in the Congregational Leadership Team, I am in need of courage to steady and ready myself to take my first step into a distant mission land. Though my heart feels the pain of separation, and a fear of the unknown, I gather strength from remembering our shared living Galilee and Emmaus stories - wherein lie not only our human encounters, but also the recognition of God's presence with us at the margins. These living stories will surely be my company as I welcome new footsteps, ahead of, and beside me.*

*May **Living Stories: In Her Footsteps** invite even more living stories to be documented and told. And may it inspire those who read it to share in our mission journey as we walk with confidence in the footsteps of our Mother Foundress, St Mary Euphrasia.*

**Sr. Susan Chia, rgs**

*Province Leader, Singapore-Malaysia*



# Acknowledgements

*The Mission Link Committee wishes to acknowledge and appreciate the following people who have shared and contributed in various ways to make this publication a reality:*

*All the 43 religious and lay partners, for writing and sharing candidly and courageously, their thoughts, reflections, experiences and stories.*

*Sr. Dorothy Khaw, MLC Chairperson, for penning the Foreword and cheering the team on.*

*Sr. Susan Chia, the Province Leader, for believing in the project and contributing the Afterword.*

*The Province Leadership Team, for supporting and encouraging the embarkation of this landmark publication of the Good Shepherd Sisters.*

*Sr. Lucy Chia, for putting in hours of hard work baking and selling pineapple tarts to raise funds for the project, as well as permission to use her artistic creation on the cover of this publication.*

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*The Publication Workgroup comprising Anna Low, Melina Ong, and Morene Sim, for their commitment and labour in conceptualising, co-ordinating, editing, and supervising the production of this book.*

"Wisdom" is a painting by Sr. Lucy Chia. The "seed" in the figure on the left symbolises wisdom, a rich and powerful inner resource residing in each person. The warm, cheerful and bright colours radiate and energise, as each individual is capable of radiating love and using our energy to serve others. The two figures symbolise the importance of human connections and communication. If we are able to recognise and tap our wisdom and life-force, we can use them for the betterment of self and others - sharing, enriching, and growing together.

*"Though old stars burn out and die,  
look to new horizons and even beyond."*



*St. Mary Euphrasia Pelletier*