

Canossian Myanmar Mission News Update 24 (Jan - May 2020)

Dear Friends & Mission partners, Greetings from Myanmar!

Here we are to share with you not only the events but also our reflections during this very unusual time of our lives. The Covid-19 Pandemic has caused such a big disruption in the daily life of people all over the world, spreading fear and insecurity with the rising number of people of all ages infected with this virus which caused the death of thousands of people.

Due to the lockdowns of cities and countries and the suspension of flights by airlines to stop the spread of the virus, our mission too was cut off from our Sisters and volunteers in Singapore as from late March. Our apologies to our volunteers who have planned and even paid their air fares for their mission trips for March and April especially the Papango Team, the Project Micah Team and the SIT students. The Graduation of our Preschool children and Educators had to be brought forward.

News from Canossa Home

6 March: 20 of our children finished their 1 to 9 standard exams. During their holidays, they learned baking and cooking. They made doughnuts, curry puffs & buns for sale. The children also had sewing lessons, learning how to sew shorts for young children, including their younger siblings back home.



18 March: 3 of our teenagers Amy, Theresa & Nolene finished their 10 Standard Exams which began on 11 March. All the children stayed back for the Graduation of the Educators. They were happy to take part in the Graduation concert on 19 March. On 21 March all the children returned to their villages for the school holidays.

Some of them have come back when travel restrictions were lifted towards the end of May. Educators Roselyn & Julia will go on 3 June to fetch a few more. The new academic year will only be able to start on 21 July instead of 1 June.

17 March: Graduation of 18 children of Canossa Preschool. The children of the different classes put up a very entertaining programme of songs & dances for their parents. The guest of honour was Fr. Muthu Sein Htun, our former parish priest.



19 March: Graduation of the 12th Batch of 17 Educators was held in Canossa Home, as Card Charles Bo had sent a circular to suspend Masses and big gatherings in Churches. They were then sent to the Boarding Houses in different parts of Myanmar to take care of the children. Ms Lucrecia from the Episcopal Commission of Education of Myanmar, Sisters of Canossa Home and Formation House were present together with volunteer Clama from Singapore. The educators expressed their **GRATITUDE** with a fantastic programme of songs, dances and a skit. The Guest of honour, Fr. Muthu, our parish Priest, presented the certificates to the graduates.



The children of Canossa Home happily participated in the celebration with their song and dance.



Visitors from Singapore

4 Feb: Lucy Ong popped in for a visit to Canossa Home and gave us a generous donation.



11 Feb: Tony Tay our good friend from Willing Hearts and his wife Mary paid us a visit with his Myanmar friends. They also gave a donation for the home. Later, Tony sent 37 sacks of rice for the Home, some of which were distributed to poor families in Yangon & the villages of our children's families in the Ayerwaddy Delta area.



14 – 24 March 2020: Volunteer Clama Rocky

came to Canossa Home. She taught the children dances & songs and a simple Passion Play for Lent. She was present at the graduation ceremonies of the Preschool and the Educators.



Mr. Charles Tee a friend of M3 Ms Theresa Goh paid us a visit on 19 January. He is a lecturer in Singapore and has trained several of his Myanmar students in hospitality. Theresa has approached him to help us train at our Gate of Hope vocational training centre and he was looking forward to do so in June. But due to the pandemic, it will have to be postponed to a future date.

Other Singapore friends were also unable to visit due to the Covid-19 pandemic.



News from Canossian Formation House Myanmar: Jan – May 2020

Sisters & Postulants in CFHM community

27 Feb: Celebrating Sr. Heza's Birthday



Sharing How We Spent Our Time During The Pandemic In Myanmar

Sr. Marion shares: We live in one of the ten Townships with a high number of Covid-19 infections, so we were under strict lockdown. In solidarity with those affected by Covid-19 Pandemic, we offer daily half an hour of prayer and fasting on Friday. Our community distributed 50 gift packs to the poor in our parish. The St Vincent de Paul and other Church groups prepared the list of needy families and the Parish priest provided the transport.



Sr. Antonia shares: Myanmar Institute of Religious Study (MIRS) which I was attending, had to close earlier because of Covid-19. On 25 March the certificates were presented to the Third Year students by Fr. Maurice, Professor of MIRS. After the completion of MIRS, I was able to spend more time in prayer, community life and ministry. We had daily online Mass from the Archdiocese of Singapore and Mandalay Archdiocese of Myanmar.



Sr. Heza shares: When corona virus pandemic came unexpectedly, our lives have been affected in so many ways. Along with this crisis, the inner beauty also has bloomed in the hearts of many people around the world. During my home leave with my family in our small farm land, I had more time to be in touch with nature as I did the planting and fed the rabbits and chickens. As I interacted with the farmers from our neighbourhood, I saw they were generous to share their grains and vegetables with those in need. No matter how poor they were, in these challenging moments, they were more united and connected. Even though they could not sell their produce during this season, without losing hope, they still tried to plant and move on with their lives. I also had the joy of seeing the new born baby from the neighbouring farmers and new born rabbits from our own farm. The baby boy was able to give and receive love and joy in the midst of the pandemic and poverty. When I saw my Mom teaching the Lord's Prayer to my little niece like home Catechism, I realized nothing can stop us from sharing what we treasure in our hearts. I believe that

trusting in the Lord and guided by the Holy Spirit, in spite of the social distancing, uncertainty, fear and anxiety, our hearts will continue to burn with the fire that embraces our brothers and sisters in new, creative and practical ways. So let us be united in spirit and connected in our hearts.

Postulants Flora & Susanna & Searcher Teresa share:

Flora: I have more time to pray, to relate to others in community. I spent more time to deepen my relationship with God.

Susanna: I have more time to reflect about myself and tried to spend more time in prayer. Moreover, I spent more time to read spiritual books.

Teresa Nan Moon: I learnt about St. John's Gospel and had English lessons given by Sr. Antonia. I also learned to help in the household chores. Additionally, I know more about God than before during this period and am able to spend more time in prayer.



Magdalena & Anita share their experience in the Novitiate in Manila

Magdalena: Because of the lockdown many things happened and our classes were cancelled. We continued with online lectures on one of our subjects: 'Synoptics and Acts' at IFRS. It was my first experience to study online and I found it challenging because I could not participate fully by asking the teacher many questions. However, we have more in-house classes with Sisters. Every Saturday we have 12 hours Adoration to pray for the end of the Covid-19 pandemic. During Adoration I realized I have a passion for the Blessed Sacrament. Every Tuesday I have a chance to cook and pack food for our poor brothers and sisters street dwellers. Even though the Covid-19 lockdown forced us to be inside the convent, our formation journey continued in prayers and learning about our Rule of Life and Charism. Neither did it stop us from helping the poor. This is the reality and I need to be more open to accept it, especially when I don't know when this Covid-19 will stop.



Anita: It has been two and a half months that San Juan City, where we are staying, has been in lockdown due to Covid-19. The pandemic had brought many changes to us, yet we are safe and well protected by God's providential love, care and support through our Sisters. Our Sisters are the front-liners who do everything on our behalf at this period of pandemic. This lockdown moment has brought me the awareness that God is the creator of all and we are His created beings. Despite the challenges we are continuously hoping and praying (Eucharistic Adoration) for healing and protection for suffering humanity. Let us hope for the best, as our Foundress says *"Those who hope more will obtain more"*.



CANOSSA HOME

Sharing How We Spent Our Time During The Pandemic In Myanmar



Sr. Angela shares: During the COVID 19 pandemic, our Parish Church was closed. So we participated in online Masses from Lent to Pentecost. We were thankful for the enriching homilies from Archbishop William Goh and also the prayer sessions conducted by Monsignor Philip Heng.

We packed food packs of rice, oil, onions, garlic and beans for 15 poor families of our children. We also bought boxes of noodles to give 10 packets of instant noodles per family for 539 families of the 3 poor villages in Bagolay. We spent S\$1,500 from donation received.



Sr. Joana DS shares: In the past the Divine Mercy Prayer did not attract me but during these days when we pray this prayer daily, I felt the great need of imploring our Lord to have mercy on the world. The news that we follow daily of rising infections and deaths also made me very sad.

Sr. Maria JaAwn shares: While I was back in Myitkyina for my home visit, I had the chance to visit my sister in Sumprabum, Kachin State where I was born. I celebrated the feast of St Magdalene together with some friends and children from the neighborhood. I shared about St Magdalene's life story and then we had home-make donuts with Myanmar tea.



Mariecelin shares: Hazel, Martha, Roslyn, Christina and I stayed on in Canossa Home with Srs. Angela and Joana during this time of the Pandemic. At first we were really scared even to go out to the market and we were also worried about our country. Our daily time table now includes online Masses and devotions of the Divine Mercy Chaplet, besides our usual Rosary and adoration on Fridays.

Besides our household chores we also learn new skills like cooking and sewing and we translated posters on Covid-19, some lesson notes prepared by our volunteers namely, Tr. Brenda (Preschool Lessons), Tr. Veronica (Value Education) and Tr. Florence (Science). Sr. Angela guided us with our own lesson planning and we are working hard to incorporate relevant media materials. This has helped us improve in our IT skills and our creativity as we collaborate and share our ideas with one another.



Happenings @ Gate of Hope

On 8 Feb. the 4th batch of 11 trainees started their course in housekeeping and restaurant management skills and Front House reception. Sr. Angela came to be with us for the opening Mass celebrated by Frs. James and Peter. Perpetua came with the 2 educators Monica and Lucy and the children of Bro. Felice Orphanage next door for Mass. Theresa and Goretti from St. Bakhita Boarding House in Hopon came with their 11 children to join us in the celebration.

We welcomed Veronica Mee Mee Cho who came back in February after her 6 months Internship in Shangrila Hotel Singapore, to join our team of trainers together with Lucia and Mary Si`.



Rose shares: What do we do during the Pandemic?

1. Learning Journey & Renewing Lessons Plans

Due to Covid-19 pandemic, the trainees were sent home. Our team: Mary Si, Mee Mee Cho, Lucia and I have time to discuss about our Value Education lessons and plan how to teach in future. At the same time we revise our lesson plans on hospitality and tourism. For these we spent a lot of time going through our books and materials from volunteers to make our lessons more relevant especially after this



Pandemic. Sr. Angela has sent us 2 new laptops and we have also installed free Wifi in our centre. That helps us greatly to make our lessons more attractive with media resources and our own powerpoint presentations.

We also learnt how to make snacks from online recipes and our mango jam is really delicious. Perpetua from Brother Felice Boarding House next door came over to buy some for her children after tasting our complimentary package. Theresa who was working in a nearby hotel came to stay with us since the hotel was closed for the summer break. She and Veronica love cooking.



**Making
Mango Jam
& Jelly**

2. Helping Community and ourselves to grow Spiritually

We helped Sr. Angela to translate Covid-19 posters from English to Myanmar. We do pray for our brothers and sisters who are suffering in other countries especially. At our Novena to the Holy Spirit we pray that the Pandemic will end and we will learn to change our way of life so that things will be better.



3. Cleaning

Besides our usual cleaning, we also did some thorough cleaning and small repairs of the toilets by removing the limestone inside the toilet bowl and water tanks. We repaired some of the water pipes that were blocked by limestone and there is more to be done.

The front part of our centre has a small flower bed and we grew some vegetables for our own consumption. Sometimes we share our food with the poor children in our neighbourhood.



NEWS FROM OTHER BOARDING HOUSES

Educators teaching cleanliness to the children in the Boarding houses



13 March: Graduation at St. Magdalene's Preschool: Sr. Angela went to Pathein for the Graduation of the first batch of 15 children who attended St. Magdalene's Preschool in Mg Chuang Village (Ayerwaddy Division), run by 2 of our educators, with 30 children. They were each given a gift bag of books and a set of school uniform. The children happily danced and sang songs. The 2 educators are hoping to have a proper building in future.



SISTERS & VOLUNTEERS IN SINGAPORE

Anthony Lim & Veronica Lee share:

Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, a typical way of connecting for the VOICE team with Sr Janet would have been a weekend afternoon tea with a spread of bite-sized kueh-kuehs. Now, that is all impossible with the strict social distancing measures in place. But despite the intense physical disassociation practices to safeguard ourselves from contracting the virus, no distance is too great to keep the VOICE team away from the Sisters and the Myanmar mission. We were forced to re-imagine our connection, with the aid of new technology and a love for the charism of St Magdalene of Canossa.

And so, on 1 May, Veronica and I organised our first VOICE virtual tea session, using ZOOM with Sr. Christina and Sr. Janet - each enjoying our own tea & snacks in front of our computers in our own home. We were so excited that Sr. Angela & Sr. Joanna were able to join in the virtual session from Canossa Home in Myanmar. Truly, physical distance is no longer an issue for us to meet the Sisters! This successful first virtual meeting gave courage to VOICE to imagine bigger... and gave birth to the idea of a ZOOM prayer session for the larger Canossian family in honour of St. Magdalene's feast on 7 May.



Sr. Janet shares: On the Feast of our Mother Foundress, St. Magdalene of Canossa, we conducted a prayer meeting online with ZOOM. About 40 Sisters, volunteers & friends participated in it. The script with the theme **“Magdalene the Connector”** was prepared by Sr. Christina Yeo. Sadly, I will not be able to go to Yangon in June due to travel restrictions. We continue to pray for our mission in Myanmar, for safety from Covid-19 infection, for good health for all, above all, for harmony and peace in the world.



Sr. Jacq shares: How do I spend time during this Covid-19 pandemic? Simply living out my everyday life and trying to grow in greater sanctity. Here in St Joseph's Home, I await the end of the circuit breaker in Singapore. My days are filled with different activities ... I share my gifts and talents in doing some gardening, cooking and reading as well as reflecting on the ways that God calls me to live at this time with some of the staff and Sisters in the Home. This pandemic period is also God's glorious graced time. It reminds me that we always have two choices in life (Rom 1:25). Either we live in pursuit of the creation or we live in pursuit of the Creator. So, this graced time, I pray that I try to look for satisfaction and meaning in life, finding it in the Lord.



Sr. Joanna Tong shares her Experience in Myanmar:

My recent trips to Myanmar before the onset of Covid-19 were most impactful. I had the opportunity to stay in the Canossian Formation House with Sr. Marion, Sr. Antonia, Sr. Heza and our two postulants, Flora and Susanna.

In Dec 2019, we joined Sr. Angela for the Christmas celebrations: lunch at Canossa Home and dinner in a restaurant with volunteers Lena, Lee Beng, Kelly and Ana Bao who came to bring Christmas cheer. We also visited a retired priest and residents at a Catholic Elderly Home with the children from Canossa Home.

I had the opportunity for some formative sessions and individual conversations with Flora and Susanna. I was impressed by their openness and honesty in sharing their journey. In the month of March, an aspirant, Teresa came to join us. We all enjoyed our extended dinner time recounting experiences of the day. These were precious moments of laughter therapy. The daily hour-long encounter was well spent as it helped us to know ourselves and each other better.

I was so touched by the love and service shown by the Sisters who woke up early to cook before going for Theology classes or went to the market after a long day of teaching to buy food or fruits that we needed. I was very enriched by the whole experience: the simplicity of persons and their simple life-style.

**We pray daily for all our benefactors, volunteers, supporters & friends,
asking God to keep you and your families safe and healthy.**

Myanmar Mission Team

Sr. Angela, Sr. Joana, Sr. Maria Ja Awn, FED Leaders, Educators & Children (Canossa Home Myanmar)
Sr. Marion, Sr. Antonia, Sr. Heza, Postulants Flora & Suzana (Canossian Formation House Myanmar)
Novices Magdalena & Anita (Philippines)
Rose, Lucia, Mary Si, Veronica & Trainees (Gate of Hope Myanmar)
Sr. Janet, Sr. Jacqueline, Sr. Joanna Tong with VOICE & M3 Volunteers (Singapore)

DONATIONS: Cheque to: **Canossian Daughters of Charity**
Write behind the cheque: **for Gate of Hope or Canossa Home or Myanmar Formation House**
Mail to: **Canossian Daughters of Charity, 100 Jalan Merbok, Singapore 598454.**
Kindly include your postal address, so that we can send you a receipt.



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