

# CANOZEST

Issue No. 5

January – March 2012

*We are companions on the journey..*



*In this issue..*

*Combined Formation Session*

*Lentern Journey*

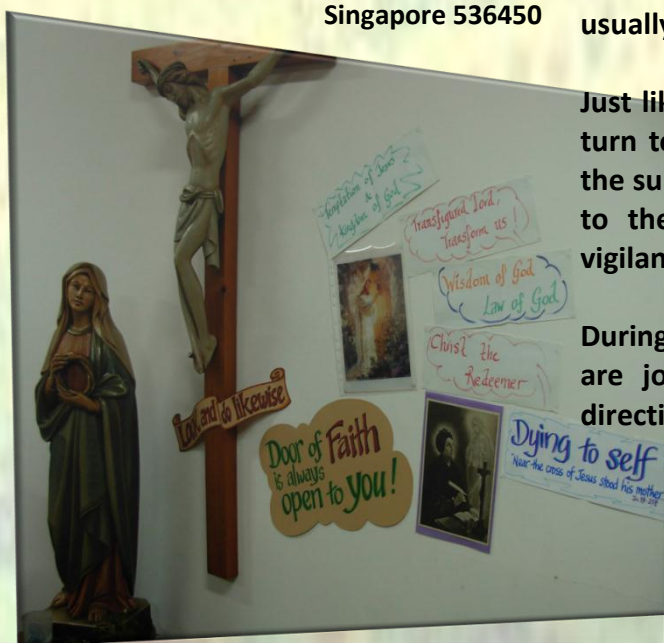
*Easter Triduum*

Canossian Formation House  
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Sunflowers usually turn and follow the direction of the sun and once the sun sets, they can no longer follow it and will usually move back towards an easterly direction.

Just like that of sunflowers, in each of our journey, we would turn to the sun (Son of God) and follow His direction. When the sun sets (at times of darkness- Lent), we would move back to the place where He was, prepare ourselves and wait vigilantly for His rising once again.

During this quarter, we have many sunflowers (searchers) who are journeying closely to Christ Jesus in search for their directions in life.





# Combined Formation Session Singapore + Malaysia

On 29<sup>th</sup> January 2012, I visited Singapore with Jennyfer, Sr Retta and other two sisters. It was my first time there. The main reason for the visit is to attend the Golden Jubilee of six sisters (4 from Singapore, 1 from Malaysia and 1 from Australia). Sr Retta took this opportunity to arrange a combined formation session by Sr Jessica, together with Adeline, postulant in Singapore.

We left Melaka early in the morning by van and we stopped by Kluang to fetch other sisters. This first trip to Singapore gave me some joy and in the meantime I was so excited. We arrived at Singapore when it was nearly lunch time. The sisters had prepared lunch for us. Their hospitality and warm welcome really made me feel welcomed and at home. As we only had a short time, we hurriedly took a shower and went for the celebration.

I met Adeline (postulant), two Indonesian sisters and also other sisters from Canossian congregation at Church of St Stephen. This is also my first time to be involved in the 50<sup>th</sup> Golden Jubilee celebration. We proceeded to Formation House after the function to stay there. We had our dinner with the sisters from the formation house community. I was touched by their warm welcome, hospitality and also the joy of being together as Canossian family. I laughed a lot and I felt welcomed and accepted as a member of their community. All the sisters looked joyful and cheerful no matter where they are either eating time or praying time or when doing things. I was moved to follow to be cheerful wherever I am, so that my presence will bring joy to others.

The next morning after Morning Prayer and breakfast, we had a formation session with Sr Jessica on Family Dynamic System. Although I had studied this topic previously, it was a good revision for me. We shared our experiences which really helped me to look deeper into my family system and how I was brought up and my personality and attitude at present. The sharings from Sr Retta, Sr Jessica, Adeline and Jennyfer have also helped me to see the different kind of family lifestyle. It helped me to widen my knowledge of how each of us has our own challenges of growth.

We had lunch at Formation House and the food was tasty and in varieties. We went to the sea side to relax after that and had our good time together. Adeline, Jennyfer and I, shared our own vocation stories. We also shared



our own experiences living in community. We encouraged each other and had fun sharing a lot of things. The time spent with Sr Jessica and Adeline at sea side was something memorable. We spent nearly three hours at the sea side. Later, we went to China town to have our dinner and we walked around there. At 9pm, we came back home and had a good rest.

Next morning, we took our breakfast outside and packed up our things to prepare ourselves to return to Malaysia. I had a wonderful experience with the sisters and also with Adeline. I really treasured these moments with them. Their warm welcome, hospitality and kindness really touched me. I am really thankful to the Singaporean sisters especially to Sr Jessica for all the arrangement made for us. I am also thankful to Adeline, for her warm welcome. Many thanks to Srs Jane, Gerry, Elizabeth and Margaret. Not forgetting the two Indonesian sisters and mostly to God who has been leading me through and through.

- Eliz Mark



## Day 1

On 29 January 2012, Eliz Mark n I, together with sisters from Malaysia were present at the "Diamond and Golden Jubilee" celebration of the Canossian sisters in Singapore. I would like to thank my formatter, Sr Retta, for arranging such opportunity to visit the sisters from another country. I experienced the warmth of the Canossian sisters and their hospitality. After the celebration, Sr Retta brought us to the formation house for stay over.

After reaching the formation house, we had dinner with the sisters in community. The sisters and Adeline (postulant) welcomed us with cheerful greetings, smiles and shared their joyful life experience. The sister took great care to make us feel at home.

## Day 2

Early in the morning, I joined the sisters for Morning Prayers. Sr Jessica brought us to the Church of Nativity of Blessed Virgin Mary for mass. After breakfast, Sr Jessica gave us a formation session on "CULTURAL/ SYSTEMIC APPROACHES". She asked some questions related to the topic in between the session so as to allow us to apply the theory to our lives. We shared our own experiences. I was able to understand the meaning of the family systems theory and wished to reflect about my life, identify and my role. It was very helpful for me when she shared with us her own experiences. Her sharing helped me to understand better.

After lunch, Sr Jessica brought us to East Coast beach [Sr Jessica, Sr Retta, Eliz Mark, Adeline and I]. We went there by bus from formation house. We enjoyed our time at the sea side. We shared and learned a lot from each other. This outing had brought Eliz Mark, Adeline and myself closer to each other. We shared about our call experiences. We concluded this section of the outing with Evening Prayer.

Since it was dinner time, we went to China Town to have our meal. China Town was filled with decoration in conjunction with "Chinese New Year". We went to a food corner filled with sumptuous dishes. After dinner, we walked around China Town. The huge dragon decoration the road was simply marvelous.

## Day 3

On 31 January 2012, we had our breakfast immediately (after mass) at a nearby coffee shop and returned to pack our things to return to Malaysia. Sr Jessica suggested that Adeline accompanied us to Kanji bus stop where we will then be able to find our own way back to Malaysia. We left Singapore with a grateful heart to Sr Jessica and Adeline. We arrived to the Sacred Heart Canossian Convent at Malacca, Malaysia.

Once again I am very thankful to God and Sr Retta for this opportunity. A word of thanks must also be mentioned to all the sisters at the formation house in Singapore who showered us with much care, concern, love and warmth of the hospitality. A Big "Thank You" to Sr Jessica, Sr Retta and Adeline for their time spent with me despite their busy schedule. Thank you for all the lovely and memorable time together. A time that will always be remembered in my heart. I had an enjoyable and meaningful time.



JENNYFER

JOSEPH



# *When the time comes to meet Malaysian Aspirants*

## *- Eliz and Jennyfer (29/1/2012- 31/2/2012)-*

### **In the past..**

In the modern day society where there are few new blood in religious congregations, then- Provincial, Sr Marilyn, has often reminded me that I am not alone. She has been concerned that I would feel alone on this journey and had often reminded my Postulant Mistress to arrange for opportunities for me to meet up with other Postulants/ Aspirants from various women congregations.

These serve as opportunities to provide us with our own space to share our thoughts, feelings and experiences among ourselves because there might be things which are not convenient to share with Srs. Most importantly, such chances will allow us to know that we have each other on this journey and we are not alone.



### **In preparation..**

The visitation of Sr Retta, Eliz and Jennyfer came as a surprise to me because I did not expect myself to have the chance to see any postulants/ aspirants from the Canossian families (except for Maria Jaawn and YaQin who are from Myanmar and China, who entered postulancy at the same time as me). I was expecting to see people from other congregations instead. Well, I was very happy to know that I have another 2 friends who are just a checkpoint away from me who shares the same charism and are undergoing the same formation.

This visit was confirmed sometime in mid January and I had been looking forward to this day. They would be here for the Srs Jubilee Mass Celebration on 29 January 2012 and would stay on for another day for session and interaction. The formators had arranged to conduct a formation session for us the following day.

### **Jubilee Mass Celebration**

I was rather anxious on this day trying to spot my new friends among the so many unfamiliar faces. I believe there must be some chemistry among us such that they

knew who I was (not just because of my dress code) the moment they saw me and I knew who they are despite been hidden among so many unknown faces.

Greetings were exchanged and we were so excited that we would love to start our sharing of experiences immediately. It was as though our hearts and mind could no longer contain the anxieties and excitements such that we just wanted to pour them all out.

As I was taking charge of the preparation of food on the other end of the reception, I did not see them until it was time to return. We returned to Formation House in the evening and began our initial interactions over the dining table. We ate, we laughed and we joked, together with other Srs in community.

### **Time to be serious- Formation Session**

We were introduced to the study of Family Dynamics on the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of their visit. I would often hear Sr Jessica speak about this area of theory during our individual conversation (by applying it into my family's own structure) and this session was a good start for me to put all things together in a more systematic way.

Time was given to reflect upon our own family systems/culture and how our beings have been influenced and shaped to become who we are today. Whatever we had experienced from the family upbringing influences the way we behave but that does not mean we are stuck there. It is certainly with God's grace that we are able to identify such distorted areas and grow towards the fullness of life. Eliz, Jennyfer and I shared about our own family structures and tried applying the various theories to ourselves. Upon hearing from individual participant's sharing, we were able to uncover and identify areas which seem to have been hidden in the dark.







### **Time for some fun- Outing at East Coast Park + Chinatown**

The long- awaited time has finally arrived for us to let our hair down. I was very happy today because we get to go for an outing. Sr Retta, Eliz and Jennyfer have decided that they would like to visit our beach and we spent our afternoon there.

We had a small fruity picnic under “our” big shady tree where all of us could lie or sit around. We chatted and shared about our journeys. Thoughts and prayers were exchanged as a form of support and encouragement for one another. We took turns to stroll along the seaside and we picked up seashells. Eliz and Jennyfer took turns to run the current in the open sea. It was as though they wanted to jump in for a swim!

I thank God for the good weather, for holding the clouds, for the big tree and most importantly, for making the get- together a very pleasant one by giving us a clean beach.

It was almost dinner time when we decided to go to Chinatown. As it was still Chinese New Year season, we probably thought it might be a good time to bring the sisters to visit the popular tourist attraction.

We prayed our vespers together at the beach before heading to Chinatown, thanking God for that wonderful day and for all His creations

We left the seaside and headed for Chinatown. We visited the famous hawker centre at Pearl Centre and had our fill. We then proceeded to search for the gigantic dragon which we were told was the main point of attraction at Chinatown during Chinese New Year. We walked around the overhead bridges, hoping to find the

trail of it. Indeed, we found it and we took turns to take photos.

It was 9pm and we headed home.

### **Time to say “Good Bye”**

When there is a hello, there is a good bye. Time has come for us to part. Motivated by the love of our Srs and wanting to spend each precious moment together, we sent Sr Retta, Eliz and Jennyfer to Kranji bus stop where they could take a bus to Malaysia. We bade our farewell and exchanged our blessings.

### **Moving on..**

I thank and praise God for this opportunity given which has helped and allowed me to be more rooted in this faith, knowing that I am not alone in this journey. This opportunity has also further allowed me to be more aware of what is going on in the other provinces and has helped me to be more tactful in doing things. I am certainly looking forward to more chances to be together.

For all these blessings received, I thank & praise God.

Love,

*Adeline*

Postulant

Canossian Daughters of Charity



# LENT

PRAYER, FASTING & ALMSGIVING



*Coming together to experience the love of Christ crucified..*





# LENT

PRAYER, FASTING & ALMSGIVING





# WISDOM OF GOD, LAW OF GOD

The first thought/reaction is attraction to the word "wisdom" and repulsion to the word "law", because "law" always bring to mind words and experiences related to control, external force, inflexible, disregard.

Yet this shows that I have a very limited understanding of "God's law". A fine example was given during the sharing: our body functions according to certain laws, the blood must flow this way, a particular joint must move that way, each organ has its own specific role. If our body didn't follow the law given, we wouldn't be able to move, or even survive.

Law can be life-giving too. Specifically, the Law of God IS life-giving. I just had never experienced it in that way (or my eyes had yet to be open to it).

Law of God also means/brings justice and love (unfortunately, I can't remember how I arrive at that, only that I jotted it down, and it resonates with me. These will probably become more of the things-to-chew-on going forward).

The other thing that stayed with me was the people in my sharing group. It happened that they were people I don't know well and have never been in a group with, yet somehow (God's arrangement?) the reflections we had were very similar, to quote one of them, "its beautiful how our sharing all flowed in the same direction". I'm very glad (blessed?) to have this chance to encounter them.

The final part occurred yesterday, when I was reading a book and came across the words "the Law of Love". Without the above-mentioned experience on Sunday, I would never have been able to appreciate these words (would likely have run far away at the sight). The experience really doesn't stop after we leave the room! (Sr Jessica, though it may not be how you meant it, it certainly hits home what you said when we were going off on Sunday.) So, thank you for organizing the session and giving me the chance to grow in understanding.

Brigit Ng





## THEY ARE AS HUMAN AS I AM..

Our sharing and prayer during Lent give me an opportunity to journey with the Sisters. I enjoy the whole process of singing, praying, reflecting, and sharing sessions. We share the journey together and it was wonderful to listen to Sister's sharing. I somehow become understood that Sisters are as human as I am.

The first week of Lent was about us invited to the "wilderness". Lent is a season to fast, repent, and abstinence from temptation. Lent is a season to give. My theme for this Lent is to be more loving and forgiving. I find it hard at times, to be loving and forgiving those who are constantly trespassing against me. I ask for God's grace and love to show me that there is goodness in everybody's heart and mind. I am still learning.

The intense weekly prayer and fellowship has helped me to realise that reading Bible everyday is not enough, but I also have to constantly reflect upon God's Word and God's Will. I thank Sisters for their warmness and kindness in welcoming us every week and share with us openly.

Risela



*Under the golden light of Helios, we can expand and become aware of our transcendent self without neglecting the Earthly part of our existence.*

## CROSS: BEYOND WHAT WE CAN SEE..

Even though I had missed many weeks of the Sunday Lenten prayers, my sudden participation and the reflections on the crucifix helped me to see the Cross of Christ in a greater light - seeing It beyond the sorrows and sufferings. Coming to know that Christ died in Peace and Joy because He died for Love - love for humanity. It was indeed a great prayer session as it takes my mind off from work and help me to focus on the inextinguishable Love of God. =)

Peace,  
Dominica



## SIMPLY UNSATISFIED TO GIVE LITTLE LOVE..

As I reflected on the serpent mounted on the cross, I thought of the medical symbol and the many joys and struggles of a medical student. A student's journey is one filled with so much joy and satisfaction, but there are struggles too – I often struggle to be Christ-like to my patients and friends, and to be a conscientious student. when it comes to difficult patients / friends / or the inertia to study, my thoughts and actions are such that I do not offend anyone/ fulfill the basic requirements; and things are done so little love. I feel that Jesus is challenging me to learn to love my neighbours more. When I ask myself how do I love His creation more, I wouldn't be satisfied doing the minimum, instead I would strive to love more, work harder, and strive to glorify His name.

Diane





# GOD WANTS ME TO CLARIFY MY DESIRE INSTEAD OF CONTINUING MY “CLIMB”...

“Hope to get ‘Climb’” I made that wish under my breath. Alas, Sr Jessica passed me the passage on ‘Clarification’!

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Lenten Journey –Transfiguration

A group of ladies gathered in the room to ponder about the day’s Gospel. To further enrich our experiences, each of us was given different passages to meditate. There were four passages in its proper sequence of ‘Climb’, ‘Clarification’, ‘Contemplation’ and ‘Command’. That’s where I got ‘Clarification’.

God must have a reason to let Sister pass me THAT passage. 2 sentences ‘hit’ me. First, ‘immerse yourself in scripture’ and second, ‘Jesus would lead his people out from slavery to sin by the blood of the Lamb’. From a short trip to the Philippines last year, I came back to Singapore certain that I want to stop being a single by joining a religious order to be a Sister. I found it intriguing because I’m already forty years old. Twenty years ago, I had done numerous search-ins but came out feeling sure that I was not cut out for it. Now, that desire is back! But why so late?

Yes. I want a clarification from the Lord! Have I not been listening or it was an impulsive thought, something like an after-trip high? Thus, I’ve started to ‘immerse myself in scripture’ so that as the passage assured ‘As we grow in knowledge of Scripture, our vision grows, our understanding deepens, and we see things differently’. I have often wished that the Lord could just send me an SMS or e-mail to let me know His will for me but it’s strange that I overlook the Book that He’s placed in our hands from years before technology became so advanced. Now I know why I was prompted to sign up for the Bible course on ‘Pearls for Wise Living’. Let me start with a short book first. One step at a time.

Secondly, God opened my eyes to see that He wants to help me. Once, I did something that had hurt Him. I felt really guilty and had even gone for confession. The sad thing was that I continued to beat myself up after that. The reminder that the blood of the Lamb will lead me out of slavery to sin really comforted me – that if God has forgiven me, so who am I to not forgive myself? That I’m not alone in this struggle to start anew, that He is with me during this time of struggle.

Upon reflection, it’s interesting how God works. If Sr Jessica had really passed me ‘Climb’, I would have missed the two important messages. I would like to use this opportunity to thank the Sisters for being the Lord’s instruments.

Come, join us on Sunday afternoons. You’ll not be disappointed : )

Yours humbly,

*Christina*





**.. as they say,**

## ***“God makes all things beautiful in His time”***

The beautiful, clear blue skies did little to lift my spirits as I quickened my steps to the Canossian Formation House on a Sunday afternoon. Behind the sunny façade was a blazing afternoon sun, the last thing that I need on a Sunday filled with activities and multiple errands to run.

As I hurried along, I began to wonder why I even agreed to go. After all, this Lenten Reflection on Palm Sunday was my first time, but it was also the last Reflection session for this season of Lent since it would be Easter the following week. I felt a tad reluctant and this feeling within was exacerbated by the sweltering afternoon heat and hurried strides.



**.. as they say, “God makes all things beautiful in His time”**

The session started punctually at 4.30 pm. Sr Jessica said it would be a long one but I wasn't too surprised, as the Gospel Reading on Palm Sunday was traditionally the longest one in the entire Liturgical Year. She would be screening an extract of the movie, “Jesus of Nazareth”, specifically the part just before Jesus' Passion, up to and including His burial.

This was not an entirely new movie to me. I had watched this film many moons ago, in my younger days. At that time, I had focused my attention on the physical sufferings of Jesus during His Passion. I had tried to imagine what the Servant-King had been through physically, the brutally harsh and cruel treatment He received but did not deserve. This re-screening in 2012, however, had me re-look at the movie with “fresh eyes”.

A dreamer at heart, I always liked to imagine, especially when I watched good period dramas, how it would be like, if I were living in that era, or if I were an actual character in the show itself. This time I imagined how it would be like if I were a bystander watching Jesus during His Passion.

### ***Betrayal***

One of the first things which attracted my notice was the feelings of Jesus when he knew of Judas' betrayal. Four years ago, I experienced a form of betrayal too, from very trusted friends. Although their betrayal did not eventually lead to my death (obviously as I am still alive to write this piece), it led to my finding it extremely difficult to forgive them. It was not until some 3 years later that I came to terms with what had happened and tried to put behind me the very unpleasant episode.

The screening of the film ended shortly after Jesus' body was taken down. We were invited to share our thoughts in small groups. I was slightly overwhelmed, not knowing where to begin - too many thoughts had entered my mind and heart in one sitting. Watching the Passion this time enabled me to see in a different light, the different lessons that perhaps Jesus meant for us to bring home, particularly in the week that followed - the Holy Week.

I did not expect this, but I certainly did not leave with any regrets attending this session. In fact, thereafter, I went on to participate, at the kind invitation of the Sisters, in their Easter Triduum - a 3 day retreat from Holy Thursday night till Easter. Again, it was something that I had entirely not planned for, as I already had prior commitments. To the Canossian Sisters who had specially and patiently set aside so much of their time and put in so much effort to help participants learn and benefit from this session, thank you. God's Hand is indeed upon you. ☺





# Triduum Retreat Evaluation

## Q1: How has the triduum been for you? What is/are your take away point?

Answers:

- First time journey with Jesus from Holy Thursday night till Easter Sunday. This is my first time experience the washing of the feet. I felt clumsy but a humbling experience. To see the sisters washing one another's feet, witnessed the respect the younger sisters had for the older ones. This helped me to see the deeper insight of community life (though not my first time staying with the sisters in their community).



- It's a different Easter experience for me. To do the washing of the feet and watch Jesus in Gethsemane, and the Way of the Cross, I am able to experience and give meaning to each of this activity. Through these various experiences, Jesus' passion death and resurrection became so real to me. Our sharing about our personal journey made me realised that sisters are human, who have their own struggles and emotions too. They are distant from me. With this retreat, I am able to treasure and serve Christ better.

- It was a very good experience. In the entire retreat I felt the invitation to forgive and ask for healing. Most importantly, to trust in God especially area that I might have difficulty to see from God's point of view, yet choose to believe.
- As a newly baptised Catholic, I did not quite understand the meaning of triduum. From this retreat, I learnt about community, the love of God, about myself and more about Catholic faith. I am beginning to understand a little better that every suffering will bring towards resurrection.



- This whole triduum retreat was very rich. I see God's invitation for me to have faith and trust in Him. Like Peter, who had denied Jesus three times, yet Jesus still call him. God has prepared the way for me, He knows what is the best for me. Like Peter, I must hang on/rely on Jesus regardless of my ups and downs.





# Triduum Retreat Evaluation

(continued..)

## Q2: What was not helpful for you?

Answers:

- Nothing
- I think a program/schedule would be useful prior to the starts of the Retreat. Free time/meditation time indicated on program would be useful.
- Realised my in and out of the retreat to attend to my personal commitment was a distraction.
- Need more time for meditation and reflection
- The “interruption” was to go to mass. This might have taken away the momentum built up and I do experience the restlessness when I came back to the convent. However, I do feel the mass was essential and important.

## Q3: How do you like to be follow up from here, be it with sisters or on your own?

- I would like to be followed up by the sisters.
- At this point of time, I would like to be in touch with the sisters more, although not contemplating religious life. On my own, prayer and meditation will help me to be in touch with God and with myself.
- I would like to continue with the sisters in this journey.



- I would continue with the invitation that God has opened up to me with personal prayer and meditation.
- I would like to continue with this community and may be go for spiritual direction and counselling to understand myself, especially about my calling /purpose in life. Most importantly, I want to thank the sisters for allowing me to experience unconditional love throughout this retreat.



*With heartfelt gratitude to...*

