

OUR MISSION IN LAOS



Lao Children

Background to the Call to Laos

Through the Sisters in Thailand and the then Singapore Ambassador to Laos, Mr Dominic Goh, there were calls to respond to mission especially in the area of education and formation in Laos.

Laos is a landlocked country. The GDP is the lowest in this region which translates to abject poverty for the people especially those living in the remote villages.

The Seed is sown

At the IJ Asian Forum held in Bangkok in November 2016, after discussion and discernment, the Sister participants at the Forum affirmed the call and asked that a feasibility study be made to explore the response we can make to mission in Laos. As it is a collaborative effort of the Provinces of Asia, the Asian Mission Team (AMT) was formed with one representative each, either a religious sister or a Lay Partner, from Thailand, Malaysia, Japan, Myanmar and Singapore, under the leadership of Sr Woranuch, a Thai Sister.

This year 2022 marks the sixth anniversary of the Asian Mission Team. In the last two years the Lao borders were closed to us because of the Covid virus. This Lao Mission, to quote Sr Brigitte, is a gift that brings us together, this gift of God, when received by good hearts, multiplies, spreads and adjusts to cultures and times.

Our Visits

In 2017, the Team met and made 2 visits to Laos that year: In early 2017 the team made its first trip to Vientiane, capital of Laos. The Singapore ambassador to Laos, Mr Dominic Goh, introduced us to the Cardinal and the Minister of Education. At our invitation, the Minister of Education came to Singapore and visited St Nicholas Girls school. Another visit followed, this time by the full team in September.



In April 2018, the Team visited the Bokeo area; an area close to the IJ Thai Community of Chiang Khong. Some background work – contacts and visits - had already been commenced by the Thai Sisters.

The members of the AMT crafted the following goals.

- To assist each child to receive an education
- To equip the students with proficiency in English for better job opportunities
- To build teacher capacity and upgrade their teaching skills
- To train teachers in teaching the English Language

This is in line with what we read in the book Better than Light “that the plight of young people preoccupied Fr Barre constantly. He remained convinced that the lack of human and religious education lay behind many of their sufferings”.

After the visit, the Team was keen to partner 3 schools – Namhodthai Primary School, Huayjod Primary School and Danthin Secondary School.

When we visited Namhodthai Primary School, there was no water supply, no electricity and no toilet facilities. There are 110 students and six staff members.



The next school is [Huayjod Primary School](#).



- Total number of classes: 5 (Primary 1 to 5)
- Total number of teachers: 6 (two males and four females).
- Total number of students: 120 (including some students from the kindergarten and nearby leper colony)
- Subjects taught: Mathematics, Environment studies, Physical education, Art and Handicraft
- School hours: 9am to 11am and 2pm to 4pm (students go home for lunch between 11am to 2pm)
- Students learn the English language from Primary 3 onwards
- The Principal requests for assistance with the teaching of the English language.
- Classrooms are generally bare, except for a blackboard. Nothing is left in the classrooms as they cannot be locked.
- The students share the textbooks that are provided by the government. These textbooks are handed down from class to class.
- The school is greatly in need of library books. There is currently no existing school library.
- The Laos government is promoting oral hygiene amongst students. The school has insufficient funds to build a trough required to teach the students how to practise good oral hygiene.

[Huayjod Primary School](#) is helmed by a proactive Principal and many projects can take off. This school has 100 primary school pupils and 20 kindergarten pupils.

[Pana Primary School](#) is at the foot of the mountains. It serves mainly children from the tribal groups. Most children in Pana belong to the Lahu tribe. The tribal children are the most marginalised, have no IDs and thus have no access to health care and education. There are 120 pupils taught by 6 teachers.





Danthin Secondary School



Our team with staff members and some students of Danthin Secondary School

Danthin Sec School has 34 teachers serving 470 students.

- Subjects taught: Lao, Mathematics, English, History, Social Studies, Geography, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Physical Education and Art
- This Secondary school takes in graduating pupils from Huayjod Primary School and another Primary School.
- The teachers are keen in learning the English language.
- The school is in need of library books, a science laboratory and computers for the teachers to work more efficiently. These are almost non-existent at the moment.



In November 2018, a Mission Outreach was organised for 5 Singaporean Volunteers, 1 Interpreter and 2 Team members. During this visit, the Namhodthai Primary School was not included as the Team had been advised that another Group had adopted the School as their mission work.

Another visit to Huayjod and Danthin was made in September 2019 to discuss in greater detail the areas of partnership and collaboration.

Snippets from the Mission Trip to Danthin Secondary and Huayjod Primary Schools, Bokeo, 26 to 29 November 2018.

1. **IT Workshop** - The teachers wanted to learn to use computers to research and develop better teaching resources for their classes and also to give the students hands-on practice in using computers. They also want to build a computer lab.
2. **Health Workshop** - The workshop focused on the infectious diseases and how to limit the spread through good hygiene practices such as frequent hand washing.
3. **Interaction with Students** – Team members played games and sang English and Laotian songs with students. Folding Paper planes excited the children
4. **Presentation of gifts** – English Text books to all students; Science equipment (magnets, microscopes, test tube stands, 2 laptops, compasses, tuning forks, thermometers)
5. We also presented the Principal of Huayjod Primary school with a **cash gift** to build a water trough to put into practice handwashing and tooth brushing habits.

Completed Projects

Water supply: Danthin Secondary has been purchasing its potable water from suppliers and aims to get their own clean water. We connected them to an Organisation in Cambodia that has not only brought clean drinking water to communities but is also involved in educating those communities on its sustainability. Two other schools have also requested for clean water.



The Clean Water Project is completed for all the three schools. Wells are dug and water is stored in **water tanks**. The school community now has clean water to drink and wash themselves. During the dry season the villagers nearby come to collect water. This has forged a closer relationship between the nearby villagers and the school.

Water is filtered before drinking. Children are encouraged to bring a bottle of clean water home.

Another completed project is the **water trough** in Huayjod Primary. This is for pupils to brush their teeth and wash their hands. The Ministry of Education encourages all schools to install the water trough to improve hygiene. However, the school was not able to do so without financial assistance.



On going projects

More than a year ago Huayjod Primary has embarked on the Lunch Project (**Food and Nutrition Programme**). The pupils bring a ball of glutinous rice for lunch. Some of them go without lunch. The lunch project provides each pupil an egg on two days of the week and some meat and noodles on a third day. This source of protein is much needed for growing children. The teachers reported that the children are more alert and look healthier.



Parents roster themselves to boil the eggs and cook lunch three days a week.

The school projects see the parents helping to dig wells, paint the classrooms and cook lunch. They are more engaged in the school life.

The school has requested for a **library** for the pupils. The steel cupboard (as rats gnaw through wooden cupboards) in Huayjod Primary staff room serves as a central library of books in English and Lao. The baskets are used to bring the books to the classrooms - their mobile library.



Sr Wonaruch is our team leader.

A nursery room was built for the kindergarten students aged 3-5.

The list of completed projects is not exhaustive. Others like stationery and school bags for all children and sports equipment for the pupils are needed.

Future projects.

Some schools have only one toilet to serve the whole school community. Namhodtai Primary has no toilet. This will be an immediate project AMT will embark on.



- The Principal and some teachers are keen on a two-day educational trip to Chiang Khong, Thailand to visit the IJ school there for **exposure**. This is part of the upgrading of the teachers' project.
- **English Language Training for Teachers**. The proposal is for the English Language teachers to receive training during their school holidays. We will source for trainers and a venue for training.



Teachers meeting part of the team

Fr Bounty is a local priest who works closely with the Pana school while ministering to about 1000 parishioners in the Bokeo region. The Lao Mission Team has expressed our wish to work with Fr Bounty.



Fr Bounty



Fr Bounty's parishioners

The various visits by the Thai Sisters, Mission Team members and volunteers; the discussions with the Principals and teachers have seen some **positive outcomes**:

- Villagers and parents got together in April 2019 to paint Huayjod School.
- In May 2019, with the help of Principal Boon Nheaw and support of Fr Rangsiphon, the villagers helped to build the road up to the Church.
- Villagers donated the grilles for the windows in the teachers' room so that materials may be stored safely.
- The Asian Mission Team is ever grateful for the partnership of Mr Damien Lam. He has been very generous in offering his advice and assistance with regard to policies and protocols in Laos.

With Mr Lam's extensive help, we could purchase text books for the students in Danthin Secondary School. He is also helping us to source for Laotian Children's Story books to add to the collection of English books that he helped to transport to Vientiane and onward to the schools.

We in the Lao Mission Team are reminded by **Pope Francis** "to show particular solidarity with the most vulnerable of our brothers and sisters. We are called to reach out to those who find themselves in the existential peripheries of our societies and to show particular solidarity with the most vulnerable of our brothers and sisters: the poor, the disabled, the unborn and the sick, migrants and refugees, the elderly and the young who lack employment..."

Please continue to pray with and for us as we reach out to our brothers and sisters who need a helping hand!

Thank you and God bless!

Contact:

To communicate with the IJ Sisters about the Lao Mission Team, kindly email us at ijsisters.sg@gmail.com

Sr Neriza's Journey from discovering her vocation to her present mission

God works in strange and mysterious ways!

Sr Neriza, a Filipino sister, had never dreamt of becoming a religious sister.

As a farmer's daughter, she enjoyed the freedom of being free and happy. She often missed the family prayer time at 6 pm as she was not at home, but out happily helping people to carry firewood and water.

She did well in her studies - both at primary and secondary levels, and was accepted to do Accountancy at the University. However, those were challenging years as the family could not afford her university fees. In her desire to achieve her dream, she worked in an import-export company and studied at the same time. When the company was declared bankrupt, she was out of work and did not have the means to complete the last few months of her course at university.

At this desperate moment, she turned to God and God is a forgiving father who welcomed her home with open hands after the years of remaining a weekend believer.

Life in Hong Kong

As one door closes, another door opens. A job offer to work in Hong Kong came and with only gratitude in her heart of getting the means to complete her studies and to help her family, she left her home and her country to work in a foreign land. In her years in Hong Kong, she was blinded by wanting to work hard to get money to fulfill what she saw was necessary to fulfill her wants and dreams.

On reflection, she realised that the three years left her with a spiritual vacuum. During those years, especially the last year, she felt the need for God and for meaning in her life. "What is the purpose of my life? kept resounding in my heart." Sr Neriza shared.

Again, in low moments, one is drawn to God. This Sr Neriza did. It took a turning point in her life. She turned to God and prayed and she became actively involved in many religious organisations, ministering to Filipinos and conducting evangelisation seminars together with the priest and the religious sisters. Through her involvement, she felt a 180-degree turn to follow Jesus and there was no turning back. She looked forward to every Sunday to be immersed in an environment where God takes centre stage in her life and a community where she can work with to offer her time and service to the Filipino community who are far away from their home. She was always at hand when some Filipinos needed help - spiritual and temporal. The joy of serving and being with the people made her Sundays fulfilled.

The Call

One day, during mass, she heard the hymn, "*Whom Shall I Send?*" Though she said, "*Here I am, Lord*", it took a long time struggling to let go and let God take control of her life. The call was getting stronger every day. With the help of Our Lady, she responded, "*Yes Lord*". She was ready to take the step to follow Jesus in religious life if this was where the Lord was calling her.

Sr prayed and read several vocation promotion brochures. She was invited to stay with a religious sister in her community for three days. None of those stays made any impact on her. Surprisingly three weeks after she came back from her holiday in Europe with her employers, she came across some magazines produced by the SVD missionaries.

Her journey started when she was drawn to a magazine article of a Filipino group using the Infant Jesus Convent in Malaysia for their celebration. It was the call to the unknown by God and the unfolding of her call to mission. Her heart leaped with joy. She strongly felt this was it.

Sr did not know who to ask for more information, so she prayed for guidance. She met with a Spiritual Director who listened and advised her to follow her intuition to take the leap. One thing she discovered was her love for the Infant Jesus, God's love for us in becoming a vulnerable baby, to save us.

With daring courage, in 1988, she posted her first letter to the IJ Convent in Malaysia, but there was no reply. She sent a second letter but there was still no reply. The reply to her third letter was, "*Come and See*".

In 1989 Sr flew to Malaysia for the first time not knowing whom to meet. She felt welcomed and at home in that unknown place. After two weeks visiting each community and interviews, she felt at peace and prayed that God will show her the way.

She returned to Hong Kong and waited patiently for a positive response. It finally came and she was invited to come and stay. Without hesitation, after three years of waiting, she told her employers of her need to resign and made her journey to Singapore.

Departing Hongkong with mixed feelings and tears but with confidence in God, she ventured to Singapore not knowing the people and their culture.

Life in Singapore

When the plane landed in Singapore that evening, there was an immigration problem. Sr was not allowed to enter Singapore because she did not have a return ticket! Though she was interrogated, she was not perturbed. Even though she knew nobody in Singapore, she truly believed Someone up above had planned for it. After four hours, Sr was finally allowed to enter Singapore.

Two sisters, Sr Celine and Sr Philomena, and Angie their friend, welcomed her. At first, they were strangers but soon she too became a daughter of Fr Nicolas Barre.

From the airport they headed to the Marsiling community, her first home. Another four Sisters, Srs Bernard, Joseph, Simone and Agnes, welcomed her. The following day she went out with Sr Joseph for her first exposure to the less privileged families around.

Sr Joseph worked in the Marsiling centre where children came to learn the basics of Maths and English. Sr Neriza assisted her daily in teaching those slow learners. It was an inspiring experience working with Sr Joseph who loved and believed in the children whatever their background.

Then she was sent to look after 17 women who were physically challenged and had been looked after by the Sisters since they were babies left at the Gate of Hope at the sisters' quarters in Victoria Street. This she did at the Ang Mo Kio Home where the sisters still cared for them as these women had multi-disabilities and needed care in a safe and secure environment where they are accepted, provided for and loved. Here she was tested for her patience, love and understanding - a very challenging apostolate. But to Sr, it was a sanctuary where she learned to care, love and serve those who were unable to care for themselves. It was a humbling experience as well as the recognition of the gift of her service to those in need.

Sr's next involvement was at Galilee Centre in Jalan Kayu with Sr Grace and Sr Jocelyn, There, they taught the children Maths and English, gave them space for growth, taught them values in life, respected their dignity, built harmonious relationships with mothers and gave them meals.

All the experiences were a gift and blessing as they prepared Sr for her mission later in Nigeria and the Philippines.

Sr made her first Profession in May 1995.

Life in Nigeria

Sr volunteered to be sent on mission to Nigeria from 1999 to 2006.

Life in Nigeria was a great challenge. Basic necessities like water and electricity were lacking. Food was a scarcity and children were suffering from malnutrition and there was little or no education for them. The heat was hardly tolerable. However, to Sr Neriza, Nigeria was a gift to her. It was an avenue to learn the spirit of humility and acceptance. The fruit of her mission was her self-transformation. She was made Administrator of St Monica's Nursery and Primary School, a school which Sr Cecilia Koh, an IJ Sister from Singapore, started from scratch. It was a great responsibility and Sr was able to grow it from strength to strength.

The school was a normal co-educational school where boys and girls were given equal rights to education. The Infant Jesus Sisters had spearheaded the opening of the school where girls were given the priority to study. The curriculum of the government was followed but some revision on some subjects befitting the IJ vision was made. For better communication, English was implemented as the language in school without neglecting their mother tongue.

The greatest challenge was getting enough funds to sustain the mission but thanks to God's Providence, through the sisters and lay partners from Singapore, there was enough money each year to run the school. Sr and her team of teachers helped in improving the learning environment, inculcating values and creating a safe and secure environment where the children could be themselves and enjoyed going to school and learning.

Following the example of Blessed Nicolas Barre, the formation of teachers was important and every help was given to the teachers to learn pedagogy and content needed to teach, and at the same time getting enough teaching resources.

A Call to return home to the Philippines

Sr's present mission is in a little village called Cogeo in Antipolo, Philippines.

It was in 2010 that she discerned God's call to return as a native missionary to serve her people in the Philippines. She had been away for several years serving God in his people in Hong Kong, Singapore and Nigeria.

The re-entry to her homeland was indeed very challenging. Society has changed and so has the Philippines. It is still changing to respond to world trends and developments. Sr had to learn to adapt to her people and country.

Sr was trained in Montessori and Teacher Training but in the Philippines, one needed to get a licentiate for teachers to work in the Philippines. After years of active ministry like overseeing the growth and development of a school for the children in Nigeria, it was no easy task to start studying again. Sr managed to pass the exam for the licentiate at the first try.

After getting her licentiate, she was open to let God send her to a place where she can serve in the Philippines. After three months of visiting parishes and schools and speaking with the relevant people, God directed her to a parish in the small village of Cogeo in Antipolo City. The church is named "The Infant Jesus of Prague" as the people there have a great devotion to the Infant Jesus of Prague. The parish priest and the catechists welcomed her as she was the first sister in the parish and in Cogeo.

On July 4, 2010, together with the catechists, Sr was commissioned to serve the parish as a teacher of religion in the schools in the district, a pastoral worker and a spiritual director of the faith formation of the laity.

Sr first stayed at the Charles Borromeo Convent in Manila. Travelling daily to Cogeo was very time-consuming especially during the rainy season. After much prayer and discernment with her Provincial, Sr rented a small room in Cogeo. The parishioners welcomed Sr and they have a support in the mission Sr is involved in.

Sr taught catechism and formed the children in values in public schools. Each class has 80 to 100 children and a Primary school has an average of 7000 or 8000 children. The children were receptive to Sr's teaching.

Though Sr is the only IJ sister in the Philippines, she is supported by her IJ sisters, lay partners and benefactors in her Singapore Province where she belonged and her new and extended community of lay people in Cogeo.

Sr has complete trust in God. The words of our founder, Blessed Nicolas Barre - *"God's excessive love is our only security"* and *"Whatever happens, be always at peace and trust in God"* have always been an inspiration and given Sr courage when she meets with difficult challenges.

In Jan 2012, Sr joined a team of health personnel (doctors, nurses, midwives) and social service providers. Sr's task is to help in the spiritual nourishment of the indigenous families at the margins of society. (most of them are typhoon victims, the urban poor and the informal settlers). The adults and children are as eager to learn values and the Catholic faith. The whole community spend time praying and singing hymns and songs, followed by fellowship with some snacks.

Many other children and their parents have asked to join the weekly gathering. Sr is happy to contribute to the character development and faith formation of the community. The youth are also interested in what the team is doing.

Within two years, Sr can see the mustard seed growing in the little ones. The children are happy spending time with God in prayer and practise small acts of kindness expressed in their thoughtfulness and generosity with each other. The other committed team members provide the children with some food, and see to their health and medical needs, especially during the vulnerable years of their growth. Walking along with both the team members and the children have kept the spirit alive in Sr's heart.

With the overwhelming response from both the children and their parents, the team recognised that the group ought to be given a name. The inspiration to call them "The Little Ones of the Infant Jesus" will continue to remind the team to help them and the children grow and develop in the image and likeness of God.

The IJ mission is to present Jesus as a saviour to all people. Education is necessary to bring the Gospel values to the children, appreciating that each child is precious and unique in God's eyes.

Sr now has a small centre where the poor children can pray, play and learn. The children are developed holistically especially in academic areas where they are weak.

Every day Sr and her team visit 6 different villages with the same goal to provide for the families in need and to provide character development and faith formation to the children.

Sr and her team are aware that the children need help in their studies. The mothers need a place to come together to share and support each other and be self-reliant. One member of the team, Dr Olive, has kindly offered her garage to be used for the education and formation of the children every Thursday. On weekends the parents come with their children after mass to Dr Olive's place.

Sr meets with the lay groups regularly to break the Word and share the faith and love of God while the children have their values and faith formation studies.

As more children request to be included in the group, and mothers asking for a place to come together for their faith formation, share the Word of God and pick up skills to be self-reliant, Sr looked forward to finding a suitable place for this mission centre to realise their dream.

(Sr did find a place, refurbished it and there was great rejoicing. However, the owners took it back after a few months.)

Every Sunday the children look forward to come together to pray, learn, bond, sing, dance and celebrate life. Many of them will linger a little bit longer creating joyful bonding and laughter. Dr Olive's garage is no longer the space for the car but home for the "Little Ones".

With the realisation that many children go to school without breakfast, it was decided that the children be provided with a simple meal, eggs twice a week, when they come for help in their studies at Sr's place.

Thus, from 2016, Sr Neriza's home has become a multi-purpose place - classroom, prayer room, meeting room, place for meals and playground for these lovable children eager to fulfil their dreams.

In 2017, despite the limited space, Sr accepted twenty-six children, eleven of them for the morning session and fifteen for afternoon classes, to coach them in their studies. At the end of the year, remarkable results were achieved. The children were more positive in their behaviour and became more hardworking, giving priority to their studies. They have developed self-confidence and even performed for the public.

The house becomes the study area from nine in the morning to three in the afternoon. There are four adults running this tutorial programme. Two mothers have volunteered to be in charge of the food and two volunteer teachers assist the children in their academic studies.

Sr's priorities are directed towards developing study habits, working projects and completion of assignments. Values like self-discipline, respect for each other and self-confidence are instilled. The children are helped to develop their skills and take up responsibilities. A timetable has been drawn up to guide their daily work. There is time to play, to exercise their creativity and patience. This would help them develop teamwork, working and sharing with others. Recognising their potential talents and providing adequate help contributes a lot to a responsive child. Thus, the integrative components of having a good meal, supervised studies and prayers have helped a child grow more holistically.

Now, Sr Neriza, together with a team of volunteers, manages the IJ Centre. Sr has three sessions from morning to night taking in a minimum of 30 pupils each day. On weekends, she reaches out to another 30 pupils and she has a gathering of mothers too. With the provision of food at the IJ Centre, and the self-disciplined and self-directed learning approach, Sr has seen an improvement in the children's focus, studies, self-esteem and self-confidence. With help from Sr and the volunteer teachers, one of the students topped the class. Another was third, yet another fourth and sixth in their respective classes. Given the right support, the children can achieve.

Young adults who are equally passionate to want to make a difference in the lives of the children and youth, offer their time, skills and experience. A few of the children and youth, now young adults, who have passed through the portals of the IJ Centre and have now graduated, are coming back to help the children and youth in the Centre.

Sr Neriza continues to meet the Mothers' group on a weekly basis.

In addition, many opportunities in the form of activities are offered and at times, the suggestions come from the children and young people themselves. These include learning how to use the computers and access the internet for e-learning and communication, community building activities, and learning creativity and team work through games. Some have learnt to play the guitar, sing, dance and are involved in drama, health and nutrition awareness sessions to help them develop a positive attitude towards life, gratitude and resilience as they face challenges in life. Imparting Moral and Spiritual values is an important component as this will help them find their moral compass and spiritual anchor in their lives.

The IJ Centre has become a sanctuary for all who come. The children feel they are loved and welcomed.

Covid Times

The COVID-19 Pandemic has affected all sectors of society and caused massive global suffering.

In the Philippines, poor families are suffering. When the breadwinners do not work, there is no income. The longer the lockdown, hunger becomes the worst enemy of the poor. Day by day, people knock on Sr Neriza's door asking for food. Their children are hungry. The children come too with these heart-wrenching words, "*Sister, we will not die of Covid-19 but we will die of hunger. Sister, we are hungry.*"

Hearing their cries and feeling so much for the children and their families, Sr requested help from Singapore. Support from the Infant Jesus Sisters, the lay partners and friends came almost immediately, in the form of funds to buy rice, eggs and vegetables for each of the 100 families that would help sustain them during the lockdown. The gratitude of the recipients to the generous donors testifies that God will never abandon his people.

GENEROSITY BREEDS GENEROSITY

The Covid-19 pandemic may have its deadly effect but, in some situations, it has its creative power. Now that the pandemic has eased, we have embarked on a transformative journey to recovery.

The community spirit becomes alive during these difficult times. We still hear the people's cries of helplessness. We have tried to alleviate the pangs of hunger in those families who really need it most. It is heartening to note that in spite of the little they have, these families were willing to share with their neighbours who have less.

BIG CHALLENGE FOR ACADEMIC RECOVERY

Getting an education during this time is challenging enough. Our country has just resumed face to face classes. The first day of school, after a long lockdown, was a day of excitement, hope and possibilities. It is a long road to recovery to reclaim the loss of lessons.

The cramped homes are hardly conducive to learning. The students are disadvantaged in having no access to the internet and computers to aid them in their home-based learning.

With easing pandemic restrictions, opening our IJ learning centre to the children and youth meant that they would have a nutritious and balanced meal cooked by the mother volunteers, have access to computers and the internet to do their assignments and enjoy opportunities for learning, social interaction and spiritual growth. For the children, the IJ learning centre is a haven and a home away from home where they feel welcomed and loved.

The joy of giving has empowered each one. Love in our hearts for the little ones makes her day complete. Some of the older youth, now high school and university students, who had benefitted from the help in the centre, come back to coach the younger children. The centre has become alive with the children's laughter and that makes life worth living!

WHEN MOTHERS ARE ROLE MODELS

It is not enough to teach the children. Sr felt the call to journey with the mothers. Together with the Parish Social Service Team, she gave formation classes to the mothers. Seventeen of them made it. As they walk together in life, they discover and learn from one another.

The mothers have grown in their relationship with God and become committed parishioners. These are the mothers who had little in life, struggling to live each day, yet, they have offered their service voluntarily in the parish for almost ten years. Prominent church members noticed this group of women maintaining the church cleanliness and ensuring that health measures are met so that the parishioners can safely return to church for mass and devotions.

The Parish Priest recognises and appreciates their invaluable contribution to the church. He exclaims, "When poor people offer their services, it is out of love!" The mothers truly exemplify the spirit of self-giving, worthy of emulation.

With gratitude in their hearts, the mothers, the children and the youth shared, "We have experienced God's love and His manifold blessings especially through the generosity, support and kindness of Sr Neriza, the IJ sisters, their lay partners and benefactors in Singapore. They have been a source of strength for us and shared generously with us and we are truly grateful. Though we have nothing, it does not stop us from wanting to give back to God and the people."

In her little way, Sr and her team have become beacons of hope and encouragement to those underprivileged families in the community.

A Home is where the Heart is. Sr's place is a centre fully open to welcome the little ones. It is a Home where transformation takes place.

TO GOD BE THE GLORY!

Shared by Sr Neriza IJS (attached to the Singapore Province) serving her people in the Philippines.

"Whatever happens remain always at peace and trust the Lord." – Blessed Nicolas Barre



Children at their studies



Children using the computers



Recreation time



Sr with the adults receiving their parcels of food

Contact:

To communicate with the IJ Sisters about Sr Neriza and her mission, kindly email us at Ijsisters.sg@gmail.com