



A Thirst for Purity and Joy

For a few days now I have been back in Bucharest with one beautiful memory after another. At Păltiniș, a ski resort, I had an immense desire for purity and joy and I realized that I had a thirst for this in a way I had never had before. I found myself looking for them in nature as I had made so much effort to get there.

It is right that snow covered mountains should offer us a powerful image of purity and joy. Many of us had a really clear sense of being in the presence of God who seemed so near and we wanted to make "three tents", so that we could stay there. But I now realize that joy and purity are available to us, are within our reach, wherever we find ourselves!

I can find it here and now in this thought. In uniting my joy to that of the tourists, it occurs to me that maybe this becomes a "space" of companionship. We must thank God for making this wonderful adventure possible. We, for our part, have a duty to keep the adventure alive in the "tent" of our self-offering.

Purity and the joy of giving, are also to be found in the liturgy. If only those paths towards joy which we seek so much could be found so much closer to home, in the "tents" we can make in a church near home.

Finding myself there at the summit of the mountain and flooded with a spirituality enriched through communion with Companions in Mission, I offered Jesus this thought and hope for each person I met.

Marina Fara - CiM Romania

**"Deep within us lie many unanswered questions,
and there too lies the way forward"**

(from Celebrating Marie Madeleine Reflections)

By Lisa Gilead, CiM, Calgary



This has been my reflection, my prayer, my life these last 10 months. The passing of my sister and the increased work load that I am now carrying has been a roller coaster ride.

I feel that Marie Madeleine would understand what I feel just because of the obstacles and hardships she herself went through. Emptying myself to hear that small voice within, to understand what it is to thirst for the One who loves me, has been difficult.

I have found comfort in being with my Companions in Mission and FCJ Sisters. Their support has been a blessing. I am looking forward to being part of the lay pilgrimage in July. To follow in the footsteps of Marie Madeleine with other CiM from around the world, I know will be a gift of healing.

In this issue of the newsletter, we share thoughts and reflections on the theme 'I thirst'.

Perhaps it is the 'thirst' or need of others, perhaps our own 'thirst' or need, or, perhaps it is Christ's 'thirst' for each one of us.....

May what we read, encourage us to share more deeply our companionship, and reach out to others around us, sharing the Good News of God's love for everyone.

Hugawng Valley In Grief

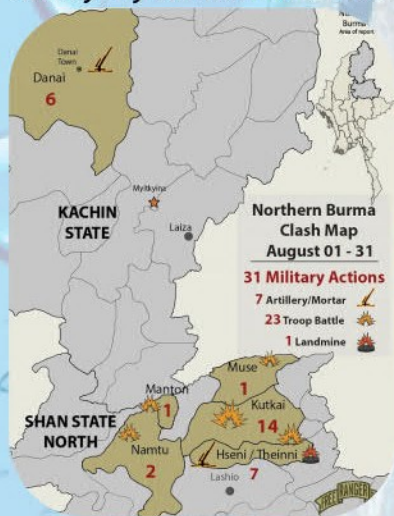
By Genevieve CIM (Myanmar)

I am grateful for having experience of living in a typical Kachin town when God's were abundant and beautiful. My hometown, Danai, nestled in Hugawng Valley north-west of Kachin State, much closer to north-east India than mainland was inhabited by indigenous people since unknown time. This region is known for and numerous ponds, streams, and three rivers teeming with fish as well as pristine up in a period of transition, I have witnessed the good and bad of old and new times.



blessings in the Myanmar, its fertile soil forests. Growing

Up to early 1990s, life in the valley had been tranquil with a very strong sense of community. People seemed to know each other well and readily lent a hand in time of need such as building a house or preparing for a funeral. It was an absolutely perfect spot in which to raise children as the narcotic drug called 'Ya Ba' and heroin were unheard of. Surrounding places were ideal for children's play and they explored together, interacting with and taking care of each other. The typical family size was ten but feeding one's family was easy as edible vegetation grew everywhere and fish were plentiful. We used to entirely rely on what mother nature had to offer.



However, since the arrival of newcomers, things have changed completely. Initially, several hundreds of people were brought in by a couple of local individuals to work in their business. These people were to chop cane which grew abundantly in the wild. Before this natural resource was sent on to China or elsewhere, piles and piles of cane took up the entire access to the river where we bathed, did laundry and fetched water as well as the sand dune where children played. Noise from heavily-laden wooden boats propelled with Chinese-made engines, running up and down the river was ear-splitting. They only came to a halt to unload the cane on the shore where this resource was reloaded onto lorries before heading to mainland China. When this raw material was almost exhausted, most workers left but some remained in my hometown making their living as fishermen..

Then came a gold-rush. This time tens of thousands of people from different parts of Myanmar arrived in the valley with their heavy machines for digging gold. Alas, our little town was overwhelmed with endless streams of people. In fact, we could hardly see the local people in the marketplace: strangers everywhere.

By then, fishing and hunting had become problematic. Demand to feed this whole crowd led to overhunting wild animals and overfishing in any possible way. As a matter of fact, a particular fish species (Parkap) which used to thrive in the valley is now on the verge of extinction and the number of other fish species has depleted. Also, there is a danger of wild animals becoming extinct if hunting is not soon regulated. Still, no one seems to bother about it.

Within two decades, the town became over-populated. More people means more waste and noise. Where does this waste go? To the river and even at the site near the communal burial ground which is supposed to be sacred. Poor waste disposal from human activities and mining upriver contaminated once our pristine water. And now we cannot drink water from the river. Nor can we leave our houses unlocked, unlike before when theft rarely occurred. The peace and quiet of town life has gone once and for all

To help combat drug addiction, religious leaders from different Christian communities – Catholic, Baptist and Anglican - set up a rehabilitation center in my town. In spite of their good intentions, the volunteers are not professionals and the success rate of the rehab is very low. Only a very few can overcome the struggle and temptation once they leave the centre and are once more thrown into the environment where drugs are so readily available.

Another major concern is the number of refugees arriving in Danai because of the decades-long civil war between KIA (the Kachin ethnic armed group) and the military. These refugees are given shelter by the church. Apparently, the refugees only receive support from a Catholic humanitarian aid group.

We long for peace so that we can restore our home one day. We long for good governance and regulations so that no wild species go extinct. We long for an end to the exploitation of the people and the land of Hukawng Valley. Our only hope is in God. We trust in the work of Holy Spirit, that we may stand against the destructive forces arrayed against us. Like Marie Madeleine, when she experienced the horrors of the French Revolution and sorrow and uncertainty in her time, showed trust and fortitude in God, we too, pray that God will protect us and our valley.

I am not alone... You are not Alone

I am alone. I don't have anyone to share my feelings with.

I am alone. I don't have anyone to share my sufferings and sadness with.

I am alone. No one is there to help and understand me.

I am alone. No one sees my pain and struggles, and sacrifices.

I am alone. No one knows of my existence. No one cares for me.

I am alone. No one sees my wounds and accepts my scars.

I am alone. All they see are my failures and mistakes.

I am alone. No one sees my tears.

I am alone. No one accepts my imperfections.

I am alone. They say i am too complicated to be with.

I am alone. I feel empty, scared, and abandoned.

I am alone. I have sinned.

I am alone. No one loves me.

These are some of our thoughts when we feel so all alone that we can't even feel god's existence. These are experienced by so many people as seen in our surroundings, news and social media, both in the Philippines and throughout the world. We, too, have experienced these feelings and frustrations. There were times when we only saw darkness and felt cold. Each of us experienced and said those things. Each of us felt lonely and isolated at some point of our lives. Each of us has had our own battle and bears wounds, and scars. It was painful that no one listened to our sentiments. We were scared to know that no one will understand and share our feelings. It felt so tired and empty inside.

When we encountered God, everything changed. Jesus is like our constant buddy. We can be our own selves with him. We can express everything to him without having fears of being judged and criticized. We didn't feel we were rejected because of our flaws and imperfections. We didn't feel abandoned. I am not alone. We are not alone. God is a true representation of the line "Just call my name and I'll be there". Actually, even if we don't call him, he is always there for us. He knows our problems, our sufferings, and the deepest desires of our hearts. He never leaves us. He is our hope. He is our life. He walks with us. He guides us to make us closer to him. Our faith in our loving savior is what keeps us strong. Through him, we will not let our disappointments steal our joys and love in fulfilling our mission as CiM. He gave us courage to face every trial just as Marie Madeleine did and we trust in him. He gives us strength to continue to live and hope. We are not alone because he is our Companion and we reach out to others because of this.



We have seen and felt the lord and so we are gladly sharing our faith with others. And with our own little ways such as simple gestures of kindness, smiling at a stranger, greeting a neighbor, listening to the sentiments of someone who is experiencing pain, accompanying a friend even in silence, comforting those who are grieving, reaching out to those who are in need, praying for our family, a friend, a stranger, and even those who hurt us. May all of these actions of Companions in Mission inspire, encourage, and bring them hope and love, so they may realize and feel that they are not alone.

You are not alone. I am here to listen to you.

You are not alone. I am willing to share in your sadness. You are not a burden.

You are not alone. I understand you.

You are not alone. I see your pain and struggles. I am here to help you.

You are not alone. I care for you.

You are not alone. I see your wounds and scars and I will share their burden.

You are not alone. I will cry with you.

You are not alone. I accept you for whoever you are.

You are not alone. You are not complicated.

You are not alone. I will fill your heart with love and laughter.

You are not alone. I am with you. Do not be afraid.

You are not alone. I forgive you.

You are not alone. I love you.



Along the journey, we will find a companion who will make our journey a fruitful and happy one because actually, we were never alone. Jesus is our Faithful Companion. Forever and always.

~ Cim group 2 – Philippines

Streams of Life-giving Water

Laura Krefting CIM, Canada

I don't often thirst for committee work. Nor, after 10 years of being a CiM does the theme of 'I Thirst' thrill my soul. Moreover, I am in a season of spiritual greyness and feel as flat as the Canadian prairies. I dutifully read the words offered in the morning and evening prayer but rarely do they lead me to an honest conversation with God. Then how is it that I find myself on the annual CiM retreat committee with the theme of 'I Thirst'? Never doubt the power of the Spirit working in a reluctant soul.



Huddled around Sr. Susan Donahue's computer, Skyping with pioneer CiM Dolores D'Amour in Calgary, I am excited in spite of myself. As we begin brainstorming and exchanging material about the 'I Thirst' theme, the Spirit let me know, in no uncertain terms that I had barely scratched the surface.

*O God, you are my Beloved, and I long for You, my soul thirsts for You.
All that is within me thirsts,
as in a dry and barren land with no water.
So I have called you in my heart, sensing your power and your glory. **

Psalm 63 invites me to honestly identify for what or who I am thirsting. Digging deeper, I ask myself about the nature of that thirst. Is it a little scratchy dryness which I can largely ignore or completely forget about in the busyness of life? Is it one of those desperate "I'm dying of thirst" that one might feel after an hour of exercise on a hot day? Am I easily distracted from my thirst by social media or am I running on empty? My answer? I am parched without even a drop of saliva in my mouth. It is as if I forgot to take the jar to the well and I am standing in a stupor under the midday, July sun. I am so dry I could hardly call out to God. And what will I call out? I wish it was something amazingly spiritual, pleading for a closer union with God or total surrender to his will. The truth is I want God to give me back my familiar, comfortable life. And while he is at it, he might as well renovate a few of its features, a more reliable memory and a couple of new knees would be welcome. And if not that, God could at least make what he is offering me more tolerable.

*Like a sponge,
dried up and brittle
I wait, longing to be soaked, softened and
made heavy by God's eternal reservoir.....
ever longing to be filled and swelled by God in me. ***

Edwina Gately describes well how I am feeling and for what Jesus would invite me to thirst. However, it is still all about MY thirst and what LAURA needs. The Spirit is not through with me yet. When Sr. Susan mentions 'Apostolic Thirst', the thirst to go beyond myself to others, my reaction is; "That is definitely not what I thirst for right now. I am just trying to survive. I am too busy, too tired, too worried, too committed to too many people to even think about it. But two lines of Scripture wake me up.

*"Jesus stood up and said in a loud voice. "Whoever is thirsty should come to me and drink. As scripture says, 'whoever believes in me, streams of life-giving water will pour from their hearts.'" ****



Back to the retreat. Once again to my dismay, I find myself volunteering to talk about apostolic thirst! It is the week of the retreat, my mind is still blank, and I am just short of panic. The Spirit looks kindly on me this time. In the middle of the night, Jesus' voice wakes me up. Believe me, this almost happens in my life. He asks; "What did I do on the cross? Who were my neighbours? Even when my life blood was pouring out, I became the life-giving water. I offered forgiveness and salvation to the Good Thief and a home for my widowed mother, kneeling at the foot of the cross."

*Jesus' words convert me. The Spirit reminds me, "Jesus did not heal every leper in Israel and don't forget about that mustard seed." Now each time I go into a store I use the cashier's name and try to make a personal connection. I phone a few people who I know are lonely but avoid because they talk so long my ear gets numb. I make a coffee date with a troubled friend that I am sure I don't have enough energy for. Small things but a start. And so it is that in the midst of my greyness when all I know is the "poor me" thirst, I become a fountain of life giving water. Now I pray with Mary Oliver that "I wake with thirst for goodness I do not have" but know that the Spirit can provide. *****

** from Psalm 63 in 'Psalms for Praying' by Nan C. Merrill*

*** from the poem 'Dryness' in 'Growing into God' by Edwina Gateley*

**** John 7: 37-38.*

***** from the poem 'Thirst' in the book of the same name by Mary Oliver*

FCJ General Chapter

The FCJ General Chapter will take place in the FCJ Christian Life Centre, Calgary, Canada, from 4 - 31 October 2019. Discernment of God's will is an essential part of what takes place during this time, so there will be a 6-day retreat for the delegates in the days before the Chapter begins.



The theme for the Chapter, echoes the deeply held belief of Marie Madeleine, that 'God, goodness itself, did everything', in beginning and sustaining the Society and its members.

In the same spirit and with the same belief, the Chapter is called for the purpose of planning the Society's future directions and for the election of a General Superior and General Assistants.

A general Chapter is always a key moment for each FCJ sister, as they look at their lives both individually and communally so that they may be led by the Holy Spirit into the future. It is a time for individual and collective renewal. It is a moment of conversion and an important moment of searching '... in faith for God's will in the contemporary Church and world.' (FCJ Constitutions [276])

Information from CiM Gatherings held in Western Canada, London and Australia, over the last couple of years will be shared with the FCJ sisters, elected as delegates to the Chapter.

As Companions in Mission, let us prayerfully support the sisters in this period of preparation for the Chapter. May we all search for God's will in our lives, as we look to the future and may the Lord bless us all and continue to sustain the work he began in the heart of Marie Madeleine more than two hundred years ago.

FCJ
Bicentenary
Celebrations

Celebrate with us
as we mark the
bicentenary of the
beginning of the
Society of Sisters
Faithful
Companions of
Jesus.

The flame, ignited
in the heart of
Marie Madeleine
during Holy
Thursday Night,
30th March 1820,
still burns as
brightly today

September 21st 2019
[Marie Madeleine's
birthday] will mark the
beginning of
celebrations,
culminating on the
feast of Christ the King,
November 22nd 2020

September 21st
2019
-
November 22nd
2020

Holy Thursday March 30th 1820

200
YEARS

March 30th 2020

LET US CELEBRATE
TOGETHER

The Gap Between the Poor and The Rich

The Gap between the Poor and the Rich

I would like to begin with a Bible verse taken from 2 Samuel 12:1-4,

“Then the Lord sent Nathan to David. And when we had come to him, he said to him: Two men were in one city: one wealthy, and the other poor....

Since then, thousands of years ago, the gap between the poor and the rich has existed in society. A gap is the unfilled space or hole between two objects.

Poverty to me is the insufficiency or lack of money to live at a normal or comfortable standard, whereas, wealth is having a great deal of money or assets and abundance in all aspects of life.

Based on my personal experience and the reality here in the FCJ Center, Bagong Silangan, Philippines, where I am working, people who are living in the peripheral and slum areas are really poor. They are deprived of access to good quality health facilities, clean water, education, good conditions of housing and clothing. Most of all they are people who only eat once or twice a day or sometimes are unable to eat even once a day. They are unable to access basic needs due to lack of education and confidence to approach people with a higher level of education or in a position of authority. Most poor people depend only on God in their daily lives. Poor people have great faith in God and it's the reason why they survive in their everyday life. In terms of justice, poor people have no capacity to defend their rights. But often poor people are most blessed because they are people who are content and satisfied with whatever they have. In short, they are not greedy.

On the other hand, wealthy people have plenty of money and they have every access to all they need. Usually rich people are better educated, have a lot of courage and confidence to fight for their rights and to obtain what they want. What I experience is that rich people are usually unaware of the lives of poor people. For example, they might own plenty of land but they are unwilling to give even a very small lot to people with nothing. They often hold positions of great power in society and use it to oppress poor people.



As a Companion in Mission I am committed to doing what I can to close the gap between the poor and the rich. My work is mainly with mothers of families and I believe that they can be powerful agents of change in society. I offer skills training to mothers to enable them to generate additional income for their families. I also teach them household budgeting to help them identify their needs and wants and to encourage them to save.

There is a cooperative with 131 members, mostly mothers of families. This is one way in which women can become independent and grow as a way of empowering women.

In summary, every day as I observe, the gap between the poor and the rich widens especially in the economic aspect. Many rich people seem content to let this gap continue. There are people who try to lessen the gap, but they are few. However, when we read the scriptures we see that poor people are blessed for the Kingdom of God is with them. They manifest the characteristics of simplicity, contentment and humility and I see the Reign of God in them. Even in times of suffering and darkness poor people are very resilient. You can see in their eyes and faces joy, happiness and gratitude for their everyday life. Let us continue to hope and work for a more just and equal world.

Roselle Casas CIM

There is always.....a need!

In September 2018, I began work as the 'Parish Evangelisation Coordinator' in my local parish. It was a new role, so there wasn't a blueprint to follow and although there was a job description, that has long since 'gone out the window'!!

On countless occasions since then, I have been reminded so often, of Marie Madeleine heard on the feast of the Sacred Heart. The answer is never 'No', whether it be to how to begin reading Scripture or the third person that day who turns up at the door. That conversation will often begin with 'I'm not a Catholic but...'



as she responded to the 'I thirst', someone wanting advice about door, homeless and in need...

I have found myself in situations that I wouldn't have imagined possible a year ago... park to raise funds for the shelter that we run with the local churches and Gurdwara reflections' on the Sunday readings, with two thousand parishioners!

'sleeping out' in the church car or sharing 'my thoughts and

I have stopped wondering 'Can I...?' and I'm learning to trust that if I am here, God will do the rest....

Here is what I shared with my Parish on the theme of 'The New Evangelisation'...

The readings we have just heard, remind us of the importance of remaining faithful to God and to the mission which has been entrusted to us by Jesus, through our baptism.... In the Psalm we are reminded of the need to be faithful. '... Hope in him, hold firm and take heart. Hope in the Lord!'

... It is a reminder that, as Christians, we are called, in baptism, to follow Jesus, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life - and nothing is more important than that. So, what is it that we are called to do?

'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.' (Matthew 28)..... In another talk that I listened to, earlier this week, I was reminded that 'The whole of Christ's mission was to reveal who God is and who we can become. So, we are called to make disciples and, like Jesus, reveal who God is and who we can become - which brings me to the Gospel Reading from Luke.

Jesus takes three of his most trusted companions and goes away to pray, to spend time with his Father in heaven. During this experience of being with God, he is transformed, transfigured. His divine nature is revealed. The fact that he is the Son of God is made known, even if it is not fully understood by the disciples...

The disciples failed to understand what they were witnessing. ... We too, fail, which is why we should profit from this Lenten period in the Church's year to focus again on God, our loving and merciful Father and redouble our efforts to be the person that he wants us to be.

When I began work here, in September, I discovered many wonderful things about this Parish. It is an amazing Parish with many dedicated 'missionary' minded members. I realised that the questions 'What have I done for Christ?', 'What am I doing for Christ?' had, in part at least, been answered. There are many things which go on in the Parish which reach out, to a huge number of people in our Parish Community and further afield. It makes a real difference in the lives of so many people. I was 'blown away' by the generosity of people during the Advent appeal, when so many of you shared what you had with others. I see the work that is done, on a daily basis, to ensure that those who come to the shelter have a clean bed, food to eat and clothes to wear. So many good, generous things happen in this Parish, but the temptation for all of us, is to think it is enough. We avoid the question 'What more can I do for Christ?' Four years ago, now, I had a very full-time job in central London. Apart from the job, which was demanding, I also spent up to three hours a day travelling to and from work. I told myself that even if I wanted to, there wasn't time in my life to do more in the Parish - but then, I received a text message from Father - and here I am!!

Peter says to Jesus, 'Master, it is wonderful for us to be here; so, let us make three tents, ... What he wants to do is a good thing. He recognises that something important is happening/has happened... But God wants more.... He wants more from the disciples, he wants more from us. It isn't enough for us to look at what is happening in our Parish, know that it is good and think that there is no more to be done. How will God be revealed to each person in my life if I do nothing more? What the disciples are glimpsing is the divine nature of Jesus. They are thrown into darkness and confusion, but God says to them, 'This is my Son, the Chosen One. Listen to him.' If we want to be closer to God, if God is important in our lives, we must listen to his Son, Jesus, who, having lived as one of us, shows us how to truly become children of God.

This is God's invitation to each one of us. He is constantly inviting us into a deeper, more personal relationship. He wants to create a covenant with each of us, with every single human being, as he did with Abraham.

If we look at the banner in the centre, can we allow Jesus to gaze lovingly upon us? Can we return that gaze? What is your response, as you realise that Jesus loves you unconditionally? What more are you willing to do for Jesus, in response to that love? ... Why has God chosen YOU? What is the FRUIT that he wants you to bear? or, to put it another way, what is the purpose that he has in mind for YOU? Are you willing to put aside some time, during this Lent, to focus, again, on Jesus, to make your 'home' in him, as he makes his in you?



We, like the disciples, might be very surprised at how much God can achieve through us, if we but cooperate with him. If each person here were to do 'one more thing' for Jesus, in response to his love for us, how many more people in the world would become aware of 'who God is and who we can become?' Then we really would become the 'missionary disciples' that Jesus commissioned at the end of Matthew's Gospel. Then we really would proclaim the Good News that God loves us. Then we really would be evangelisers in the truest sense of the word. It is both a challenge and an invitation... How will you respond?

Sue Cawley CiM, London.

Voting with our Wallets

Inspired by the 'I thirst' of Jesus which Marie Madeleine heard from the Crucifix and also the words of Jesus as spoken in St. Luke's Gospel, 'Be compassionate as your father is compassionate', Brigid Hayes one of the Limerick group of Companions in Mission, when preparing for our recent meeting felt called to do something about 'Justice for the oppressed'. She entitled the meeting 'Voting with our wallets'. She reminded us that 'To care for the poor and excluded does not only call for acts of charity', but also to make sure that social and economic opportunities are accessible to them. She told us that St. Ignatius said that 'love is expressed more clearly in deeds rather than in words', and that 'there is greater love in giving than in receiving'.



She challenged us by saying that a practical way to show compassion for those in the world who are not as fortunate as we are, is to use our purchasing power to better effect and to be assured that our individual purchasing powers do matter. We have the power to force the industry to do better – some brands pay less than the minimum wage and their workers are forced to work long hours in poor conditions in order to hit production targets. As consumers we can force brands to stop treating clothes like they are disposable, cut down on pollution and treat their workers with more dignity. She highlighted for us the huge disaster in Bangladesh in 2013 when 1,138 garment workers were killed and 2,600 more injured when their shoddily built factory collapsed. She reminded us of some of the well known chain stores that used these workers to make cheap, throw away garments.



Brigid had a selection of Fairtrade goods to show us and also some relevant photos from the Developing world.

'When these tragedies happen thousands of miles away' she said, 'it is easy to become apathetic and believe that there is not much we can do to change the 'status quo'! – But she urged us to live out the words of the Gospel and to have compassion for our fellow human beings, saying 'we can change our behaviour and think carefully about where we choose to buy our next pair of jeans or shoes'.



Considering, together, some statistics that were shared.

As our city of Limerick is a 'Fairtrade City' she asked us to be aware that in terms of our grocery shopping we should look out for Fairtrade brands. Fair trade is about better prices, decent working conditions, local sustainability and fair terms of trade for farmers and workers in the developing world. She said that Fairtrade gives us the power to change the world every day. With simple shopping choices you can get farmers a better deal. This means that they can make their own decisions, control their future and lead the dignified life everyone deserves.

While things might not change immediately, over time it's clear that wallet activism works and some consumers are keen to buy from brands that are doing good in the world.

The group committed themselves to using their wallet power; to being more conscious of the brands and products they will buy in the future; to actively seek out Fairtrade brands and to engage in advocacy on behalf of those who are being treated unjustly. It was decided that one thing we could do here was lobby our Munster European MP, Deirdre Clune. She is a member of the famous Barry's Tea Empire Family and it was suggested that we ask her to make their products come under the Fairtrade label.

I THIRST.... IN 2019

What does the "I thirst" experience mean to us in 2019? I took time to think about this as I was preparing my most recent formation meeting for four women who are interested in becoming Companions in Mission. This group of women are older, very faith filled, and excited to learn about Marie Madeleine. Most have had some interaction with Jesuit spirituality at some point in their lives, so they have loved learning Marie Madeleine's story. For my part, I love sharing what I know about Our Venerable Mother. I know each time I reread any part of her story, I learn something new.

For our most recent meeting, I chose two gospel readings... Matthew's story of the the garden, and Jesus wanting to do "God's will", and John's gospel where Jesus says We all had read Marie Madeleine's 'founding experiences' so our discussion was what might have been thinking about each time she heard a voice in the summer of 1817. That led to a great discussion on our knowing what is 'God's will for each of us', and what does the "I thirst" mean for us in 2019. We took some time to reflect and then shared.

It has been 14 years since I made my first commitment as a CiM, and this quote is one that I have reflected on often. Like most scripture verses, each time I do take time to reflect, something new occurs to me. Marie Madeleine interpreted these words as Jesus "thirsting for the salvation of souls".

As we learn her story, Marie Madeleine is a strong woman, who, when she finally begins the FCJ, sets out to try to help the poor in France by educating women and children. She knows just what she wants to accomplish.... sets out to do it in 1820, and is undaunted when her efforts don't work in every situation. Marie Madeleine finally has been gifted with the courage and confidence needed at the time to take on priests and bishops if necessary, to establish schools and educate children. Her indomitable spirit is something to be envied.

My challenge, while reflecting, was how do I bring about the salvation of souls in Portsmouth, RI, in 2019? I am retired now, but do volunteer in my parish, my former school, and at a local Christian ministry, but am I 'thirsting for souls'? After our time of reflection.... I remembered Marie Madeleine's 's final words... "good example does much good". In today's world, there is so much anger, and divisiveness about so many issues.... within my country and my church. I have learned that arguing with people over various issues doesn't get you anywhere. Perhaps the best way I can help the world is to be a good example to others. I have been gifted with energy and the ability to organize, so I try to do what I can, when I can for whomever asks. By listening, perhaps suggesting something without causing heated arguments and trying to do "the next right thing" I hope I am helping people see the joy I feel because of my companionship with Jesus as a CiM.

Jennie Abbate, CiM, Portsmouth, RI

We believe that we have received the grace of salvation from God and that we are urged to continue the mission. We were dead but now we are alive. We live by faith and we need to grow in it too, because growth is the sign of life. As Catholics who are lay people, the place where we can grow in faith is in our 'lingkungan', our Basic Ecclesial Community (BEC), which is the very basic form of community in our parishes here.

My wife and I live in Indonesia where the majority is non-Catholic. Being able to live in a 'lingkungan' is such a blessing. We can easily plan gatherings for activities, either devotional, catechetical or liturgical. We can share our struggles in life and our understanding of God's mercy without hesitation with other participants because they are our own neighbours. We meet each other each day. Nevertheless, in a relatively small group like our 'lingkungan', having good guides for those activities is truly a privilege. Sufficient materials have been provided, but still a qualified guide is inevitably needed. In a meeting a guide is not just to manage the flow of discussion nor read the text, but also to act as a source of knowledge and information concerning the topic discussed. Both my wife and I are guides for our 'lingkungan'. Occasionally we are asked to guide a worship or a kind of Bible Study. We both feel that actually we are not good enough to meet their needs that we are not good guides.

Thank God we are fortunate and we feel grateful to be allowed to join CiM. On many an occasion in the past we have been enriched and refreshed by the way our coordinators have led prayers and rituals during meetings. We enjoy taking time and being silent during times of meditation and contemplation. We hope in our hearts that we in our turn will be able to lead prayers in our 'lingkungan' by introducing some of the prayers we have used and methods we have learned in CiM. We hope that we can share more deeply on the Word of God and at the same time live up to them in the way we live.



agony in
"I thirst".

Marie Madeleine

Thirsting to Serve Others

Pak Bing, CiM, Indonesia and wife, Sue



THIRSTING FOR COMPASSION AND JUSTICE

I RECEIVE MORE THAN I GIVE

Shirley Yau, CIM, Melbourne

In the past six years I have been volunteering once a week answering calls on the emergency welfare line of the St. Vincent de Paul Society in Melbourne. The Call Centre operates five days a week, staffed by volunteers. On a very good day we have 8 people on duty, most days may be 5 or 6. We answer about 400 calls each day. Most calls are for food relief, requesting household items, furniture, assistance with bills, petrol, rent, or prescription medication. Sometimes we have people seeking simple advice or wishing to have someone to talk to.

When I was a novice in the Call Centre, I could not believe that there were so many people needing food assistance in Melbourne, one of the world's most livable cities. I was annoyed when we could not offer immediate help. I was shocked with cases of domestic violence, mental ill health, drug abuse and homelessness. I found it difficult to understand the lack of organization ability and basic common sense in some people, the rudeness, and the sense of entitlement in others. In short, I was riding on an ignorant high horse.

I learn to live a more compassionate lifestyle, stand up against a consumer culture which affects others and the planet. To be just, having my own fair share of the world's resources. Never, never to waste food. There are many millions of hungry people on this planet.

After six years what have I learned? I learn to be non-judgemental as I do not fully understand the circumstances of our callers. Judging others keeps me comparing and angry. I learn to lead with my heart more than my brain. I acknowledge there is plenty that goes wrong in this world. There are lots of pain and problems, and people inadvertently may make mistakes harming themselves and their families. All I can do is to recognize their suffering and offer whatever assistance I can.

To be compassionate does not excuse bad behavior. I learn to stand firm and to refuse greedy and unjust demands from callers. I learn to calm angry and rude callers and tell them I will finish the call if they do not stop swearing. Maybe that is the teacher in me!!

I grow to be more appreciative of my good fortune, to be grateful for my education, my upbringing, my family and my faith. I thank God for his generosity. I learn never to take things for granted.

Most importantly I learn to educate myself in the common issues affecting our callers, to protest and demonstrate for what I believe in and act out of my new understandings. To speak out for those who have no voice to defend their rights.

You see by giving some of my time, I have definitely been enriched and enlightened. Maybe you can also volunteer your time and talents for a worthwhile cause.



A Day With the Diffabled

CiM and FCJ helping to run a day for the diffabled - Written by Srs. Meita Indrayanti and Clare Hand, FCJ

Sr Meita FCJ works with diffabled persons and their families. In Indonesia we use the term 'diffabled' for persons with disabilities. On Sunday 10th March she wanted to bring the families together to enjoy a time for recreation and celebration and also to give parents and family members time for sharing on their experience of having a diffabled person in the family.

The venue for the day was Sarasvita FCJ Spirituality Centre. Meita's aim was to invite about twenty five families to take part and enough volunteers to run the day. They would divide into two groups: persons with disabilities; and family members. The plan was that there would be activities and entertainment for the diffabled led by a team of volunteers and a sharing for parents and family members led by a psychologist from Sanata Dharma University, Dr Monica Eviandaru Madyaningrum.

In order for the day to go well it was important to have a good number of volunteers to help wherever possible. Last year CiM and FCJ had worked with Meita visiting diffabled persons and their families so we were happy to take part in this new venture. Fourteen CiM and all the FCJ sisters in Yogyakarta offered their services and were willing to help in any way they could. Three days before the meeting some of us attended a briefing to prepare for the day. Meita shared her hopes for the day and gave us an outline of the main events. It was great to note the commitment and enthusiasm of the CiM/FCJ team. Two of the CiM prepared the refreshments for the briefing, others helped to serve and to clear up afterwards. We took notes on our parts for the big day and looked forward to fulfilling them.

On the day of the meeting some of the CiM set off three hours in advance to travel to distant villages to pick up participants. Others arrived early to make sure that all was ready in Sarasvita. Twenty-one families came, totaling fifty four persons. There were forty volunteers ready to help, all ready to take up our assigned tasks. As people started to arrive CiM and FCJ were there to welcome them. Some of us accompanied the diffabled, others helped with the parents' meeting and still others helped with the activities or serving refreshments and other practical matters. Activities for the diffabled were a combination of singing, dancing, games and short films. These were interspersed with copious amounts of food.

Dr Monica brought four of her students to help with the meeting for parents and family members. She used games to help the participants share their experience and feelings. Some of the CiM helped to facilitate this meeting. After lunch the whole group came together to watch a magician who surprised us all. He was so funny that many of us laughed till we cried. At the end of the day participants received simple gifts and a food package for the journey home which included a good quality refillable water bottle. The CiM drivers took their passengers home. Others of us stayed behind to help with the clearing up.

We were blessed to meet and interact with persons of all kinds and especially with the diffabled. For CiM and FCJ, the opportunity to work together meant we got to know each other in a whole new way and we grew together as a group. We were grateful to Meita for inviting us and for her hard work and care in planning and running the event. It was a great day for all of us.

