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»»» NEWSLETTER «««

# SOCIETY OF THE SACRED HEART

## PROVINCE OF INDIA



## NEWS FROM THE INDIANS IN THE ASIANZ NOVITIATE

### »»» MY JOURNEY IN AN ACCOMPANIMENT PROGRAM IN THE PHILIPPINES

“We Drink From Our Well” is the theme of the accompaniment program that I am currently taking. It is conducted by the Institute of Formation and Religious Studies. This program is for five months, i.e. from September 8, 2023 to February 17, 2024. This program is done mainly online, but there will be one month in-person classes too. I thank our congregation and the provincial team for providing a wonderful opportunity for me.

I would like to share my three months' experiences with you regarding the accompaniment program. This program is designed to facilitate the formators' faith life journey and to recognize God's movements in their lives, whereby formators enable themselves to accompany others with confidence in their journey towards wholeness and fullness of life. This program is also designed to enable each participant to develop a formation program appropriate for a particular level of initial formation for their respective congregations.



The program includes classes on emotional maturity, values, moral formation, vocational motivation, vocation discernment, gender sensitivity, and personal leadership style. Skills in contemplative listening, counseling, psycho-spiritual and human formation, and integration are emphasized during the training through spiritual accompaniment and guidance.

The accompaniment program gave me a chance to have encounters with poor families as part of my immersion program on the Vow of Poverty. The following are some of my insights and reflections after visiting these poor families.

1. Encountering these poor families made me appreciate the privileges and opportunities that I enjoy every day.
2. It reminded me to be grateful to God for providing me with my basic necessary needs like food, shelter, and education.
3. I was inspired by the simplicity of their lives in those simple huts. I never heard any complaints about their living. Even though they had many problems and difficulties, they were always smiling and joyous.
4. I also experienced a lot of joy in their hearts even though they had less to eat and less space to sleep in.
5. The people were poor yet they were generous in sharing their basic needs with neighbors.
6. They give importance to education. They said that education empowers human dignity and improves society systems.
7. This encounter served as a powerful reminder that poverty is not just an abstract concept, but a lived experience that demands my response and action.



*Dolly (Kiran) Kumrawat SCJ*

Overall, this encounter with poor families was a transformative experience that challenged my religious life and calls me to live a simple and humble life and to be an agent of change to fight against poverty.

## ➤➤➤ MY NEW JOURNEY IN 2023

I am very happy to share with you about my new journey in 2023. On 4<sup>th</sup> of August 2023, Sr. Vimala, Victoria and I departed from Mumbai for the Philippines. I travelled by plane for the first time in my life. It was a wonderful experience. I really enjoyed flying in the plane through the beautiful sky and clouds. It was raining. I am very grateful to God for this opportunity. I experienced a warm welcome from Sr. Kathy, Sr. Kiran, Dina and Odis at the Manila airport. I was really happy to meet them.



My new community welcomed us with love. I took almost a week to adjust in the new community with new members, new language, new culture and different accents; but by the end of the week I felt at home, comfortable and free. In the community it is not easy to learn something new in a new country. I found it difficult to cook food, but my community was so generous, kind and very helpful. We tried our best to understand and adjust, and adopt something new from each other. We share our happiness and joy during our community meal every day or some times during community meetings. I really feel that we are “gathered together in community in the name of Jesus Christ, we are sent to proclaim by our lives and activities the Good News of the Kingdom. From His Heart we draw the love which enables us to live in communion among ourselves and with others”. We had community outings and I



could feel that community was my family. It was fun and I enjoyed our outings.

Each day our life together was strengthened by community prayer; it was really good to hear songs in Indonesian, Hindi and English during our prayer. I am also learning different ideas of how to prepare community prayer.

### **Our Cenacle Classes** Formation: A Process of Assisted Growth to Life

We started our classes with this topic: “Beginning the journey within for self-knowledge and growth.” It was challenging for me, but it was also very helpful for me to know about myself and God. I became more aware of myself. The classes were conducted via Zoom and I also learned by sharing and listening in the ‘breakout groups’.

Then every week we had our sharing among us including Sr. Kathy, so we came to know each other better and we shared what we experienced of God’s love and joy, and the aches and pains in our lives.

### **My English Class** Assumption Language College (ALC)

Assumption Language College is an international language college. There are learners from 23 countries. At ALC there are many religious fathers, brothers and sisters; also there are many lay people. All are of different ages, different languages and accents, also different cultures. On the first day of my English class, I was very nervous. It was very challenging for me. I really took time to adjust in the class with other learners. It was difficult to communicate with others because of the different accents. The teachers are very friendly and helpful and very patient. Slowly I overcame my nervousness and shyness. Now I feel more confident and free. I realized that the learners are very kind and understanding, very friendly and supportive and have a good relationship with each other. In ALC we didn’t study only English, but we learnt many things – sometimes sharing our personal experiences very deeply and also our vocation stories and spirituality. After some time I felt like a family. I learned how to respect others and their cultures. We had many activities and games. Each learner gets a chance to participate in these activities. We had a Manila tour and we had to write about our experience and make a magazine for ALC during our language festival. Also, we celebrated International Day – on this day we had to prepare our national food and present our culture. It was a wonderful day. I was so happy that I cannot express it. It was wonderful to see the richness of the culture of each country. It was a fun day and I really enjoyed ALC.

I was also privileged to meet our provincials and sisters when they came to visit us at our pre-novitiate house (Sophia House) on 11th November. I was so happy to meet them.



I entered the novitiate on 18<sup>th</sup> of November on the feast of St. Philippine Duchesne. We celebrated our entrance into the novitiate, the feast day of St. Philippine Duchesne and the birthday of the Society together with the Manalo community. I experienced God saying “go to a land, I will show you”. I was very happy to see our

sisters praying with us on Zoom. My hope during this novitiate time is to grow in my interior life. I am very grateful to God and the Society.

***Kumudini Tirkey NSCJ***

## **➤➤➤ MY EXPERIENCES DURING MY FIRST FOUR MONTHS IN THE PHILIPPINES**

The day we arrived in the Philippines we were welcomed by Sr. Kathy, Sr. Kiran and two of our companions, Dina and Maria Odis. We were very excited to travel by plane because it was the first time for us.

In the beginning it was difficult for me to understand the language because of different accents and we did not yet know much about each other. Sometimes even though we did not understand each other we just said 'yes, it's ok'.

The most difficult thing for me was cooking. Sr. Stella would cook for all of us. She really gave us motherly care and love. Later on in the community meeting we all decided each person would take turn to cook food, especially for supper because breakfast was free for everybody and we had lunch at the Assumption Language College where we used to go for English class. Here in the Philippines we use different kinds of spices for cooking and different ways of cooking. However, whenever my cooking turn came I just tried putting in whatever spices were there. If the taste was good I would use it again; if it did not taste good I did not use the spice again. During the time of cooking the main person would be there, but everybody else would be in the kitchen to help the person; that's how we helped each other in the community.

In the Philippines, in new place and in new community it did not take me much time to adjust. After a couple of weeks I felt at home in Sophia House and with the community members. Also, whenever we went out – to the market or for class – and when we came back Sr. Kathy would always come out with a welcome gesture and with love. Both Sr. Kathy and Sr. Stella were very loving and kind and they cared for us physically and spiritually in different ways. As a community activity and to know some of places in the Philippines one day we had a community outing. We went to one of historical places called "Intramuros", which means "within the walls". We visited the Cathedral and the oldest Augustinian Church in Manila. We all enjoyed the outing and had fun.

Almost every Saturday we had recreation in the community. We would play games like scrabble and bingo just to relax and get together. Also, every week we had an integration day on Friday afternoon after the Assumption Language class. After this, on Saturday evening we had group sharing; each Saturday two persons would share about some of their experiences – whatever they want to share in the group. After the sharing each person would give her feedback or ask questions what will help her in the future or help the moment whatever happened so that she can improve; this was done not in a bad way but in a good way. During the group sharing those present included Sr. Kathy, the four of us pre-novices and one second year novice because during the weekend she was at home while on others day she went for her ministry experience. This sharing helped us (me) a lot to know each other, to understand, to respect the person and culture and to value her as she is. We all are very different from each other – we have different characters, personalities and come from different backgrounds. We built close relationship among the four of us and in the community by helping each other, joking, laughing, keeping trust and living with flexibility, forgiving and encouraging each other.

Also the pre-novitiate was a very blessed time for me to discover many things in my life. Many things I was able to discover about myself through the Cenacle classes, accompaniment by Sr. Kathy, and by our 8 days retreat which was also guided by Sr. Kathy, as well as through other classes. During the retreat I had such a precious and wonderful time with God. I was able to experience God's love and it helped me to accept myself as I am. All this community environment or atmosphere helped me to deepen my prayer life, my relationship with God, and to believe in myself and to become stronger physically and spiritually.

ALC – "Assumption Language College"

In ALC we had our English class. In ALC they have different levels such as (i) Logo – in this level learners will learn from the beginning; (ii) Biya; (iii) Veritas; (iv) Virtus; (v) Bitá and essay. In the ALC there were 89

learners from 21 countries. We had two periods of class each day – first reading and writing and the second listening and speaking. I found it hard to listen and speak. Also I struggled with finding the main ideas and supporting details in the article given to me to read. Whenever we finish the unit in the end we have to write an essay; for example we read an article about Antarctica where tourists are not allowed in order to protect the environment. After that we had to write an essay of 200 to 250 words. Also we had to write about a place in our own country where tourists or people are not allowed for some reason. It was a challenge for me.

In the ALC one thing that touched me is that I never felt that I am only going for English classes. During the class, I came to know many things about my own country and became aware of many things. It made me interested to know more about my own country because in the future if I don't know about my own country how am I going to do ministry? Some time we had a spiritual sharing about our own vocation which made us think and reflect and made me feel at home.

### **Entranceceremony:**

On 18th November 2023, on the feast of St. Philippine, the four of us (Kumudini, Maria Odis, Dina and I)



became novices. The ceremony of entrance into the novitiate was beautiful and meaningful. It was held in the chapel of the ASIANZ NOVITIATE in Montalban. After the ceremony, we had a feast day mass at 10.30 am. All the sisters came from the Manalo community and from Duchesne community were present. After mass we had lunch together. I had a joyful day; as many of you my sisters from India participated online that made my joy more for I experienced your love. I would like to thank all of you for your prayers and blessings and ask you to continue to pray for us; we are praying for you.

Also my joy was on taking another step with the hope that I will deepen my relationship with God, whom I live with and meet in my life's journey.

***Victoria Hapadgara NSCJ***