

## **TESTIMONIES OF CEBU MISSION TRIPPERS (16 – 23 March 2009)**

Going to Cebu was a last minute decision. I was not sure if there was a place for me. Pastor managed to get a seat for me but I had to pay more for the airfare.

As I was not prepared for this trip, I went there not knowing what to expect. Therefore, you can say that I went by "faith".

Arriving Cebu was very challenging because I was feeling sick throughout the journey. Upon arrival at Teen Challenge, Cebu, I headed for the bed without washing up. I felt much better after a few hours of sleep and was able to follow the program.

We were given a taste of the locals by taking the various forms of public transport and ended up at the "HDB"- a cemetery where blocks of concrete were built to house the coffins. It was an eye opener to many of us and we were not used to such treatments in Singapore. There were also scavengers living in the cemetery. The rich had a large plot and even hired someone to look after the tomb, equipped with sofas, etc. The whole incident was very disturbing.

I discovered in the evening that I was passing out blood in my stools. I thought it was probably because of the heatiness that was within me. The next morning, when I passed out blood again, I told myself that perhaps, I need to go straight to hospital for a medical checkup when I return home. That morning, Pastor preached in the chapel and after the sermon, we were praying for the children, I laid hands on myself and asked God to heal me. In the afternoon, I went to the toilet and discovered that there was no more sign of blood in my stools. I thanked the Lord for His healing.

The rest of the day was spent feeding the street kids, performing at church services and we were touched by their sincerity and love for God. We also shared a meal with the kids and it was perhaps one of the most miserable meals I ever had in my life. One lump of rice with 2 small fishes measuring 3 inches by 0.5 inch and a scope of "mongo", a green vegetable soup. If I may say, it tasted awful but we did not showed it on our face. We even ate with our hands. The next day, I was assigned to help out at the kitchen and learned how to prepare "mongo" soup. It was mashed green beans and papaya. I was much relieved after knowing what I had eaten.

It was a sad parting for many of us. After spending a week with the children and the staff, we grew attached to them. Many of the kids were so adorable and I wished I could adopt them and bring them home. Particularly, Janica who was picked up from the Cemetery. She was 5 years old and was able to read and write. Pastor Jacob said that there were at least 100 people who wanted to adopt her; which makes me number 101.

Although, physically we were tired, our spirits were charged up seeing the hands of God in Cebu. Our mission was fulfilled for this trip. Glory to God, Amen.

**~ Sebastian Chee ~**

This trip was an awesome experience for me as a first timer. Words really cannot describe all that I have seen and experienced. One must be there to experience it first hand.

The cultural differences, different levels of daily living and the exposure to the actual conditions, really open one's eyes to the highest level of endurance. The different worship and prayer styles of different churches were also obvious.

Thank God that He has raised Teen Challenge for a purpose - to serve as His instrument in saving and discipling the street kids into boys and girls trained in God's word.

Hope the experience gained in Cebu will enable the team members to further their love and walk to a higher level with God and to encourage others also to experience it.

~ Goh Hian Ko ~



A Picture of Esther and the Girls

It's been a long time since I last went for a mission trip. I was not able to go for any mission trip for the past three years as I was doing my course in nursing. I have been to other countries before but this year's Cebu mission trip was really different from the others. God really opened my eyes to the lost out there. These kids have nothing, not even their own identity, yet they are so carefree and happy.

During our stay at Philippines teen challenge, we got to spend a lot of time with the children. I realized how fortunate I am to be born in Singapore, I felt really ashamed of myself because for these children, all they have is God and they possess such great faith in God. During praise and worship, these kids would just sing aloud. They do not care if they are singing in tune or whether there's any musical instrument. I could see that they are singing from their heart thanking God for a 2<sup>nd</sup> chance. Though they came from different past and have many differences, they love and care for each other genuinely.

We were always caught off guard whenever we were asked to do our special item. We did not know what song to sing and were worried whether the song would minister to the people. It is at the moment of loss and desperation that God comes to the rescue.

Pastor Jacob reminded us that mission is a win-win situation. The children got blessed, the staff got blessed and we ourselves got blessed in the process of serving God's lost ones

~ Esther Lim ~

Despite this being my second time on a mission trip to Cebu, I still felt the thrill and excitement of the mission trip just like the first time. Being my second time, I was expecting more from this mission trip. Either way, to bless people or be blessed by the people. At first, I was rather disappointed to hear that we are no longer heading to the north mountains because I really wanted to experience something different. However, I realized that mission trips are not what I should gain from, but what people should gain from me.

Even though it was my second time doing the same things all over again, it felt as though I have already become a part of them because I sort of "knew" some of them already.



A picture of Janica and me

Seeing some familiar faces really made me glad. What struck me most during the mission trip was the testimony of this little girl, Janica, who is just 5 years old. She was found by Teen Challenge along the road after being abused by tourists. Teen Challenge brought her back. She was traumatized by the abuse and was always quiet and anti social. However this time when I came back, she became a totally different person. She was so happy and hyper active that she kept calling out to me "kuya ken" which up till now still rings in my head. It is really amazing to see how God works through little lives like Janica's and astonishing to see the way the kids worship. It always reminds me of how blessed we are in Singapore, but yet don't worship God wholeheartedly. Even though we come from different culture, different needs and different lifestyle, we still worship the same God. I'm definitely blessed by this mission trip and would not hesitate to go for the third time.

~ Ken Chew ~

I give thanks to the Lord for the opportunity given to me to be at Cebu to do His work. This journey of faith allowed me to see this world through the eyes and heart of the Lord.

We reached Cebu Airport at 4 am and were greeted by Pastor Jacob of Teen Challenger Philippines. It marked the beginning of the 7days journey that has changed my perspective on how I see the world, doing things that I never thought I would and trusting Christ and believing that He will do wonders!

We were given the opportunity to go into the community of the people of Cebu. We took their modes of public transport and were allowed to interact with them. Most of them are commoners who only managed to earn sufficient to meet their daily needs.

Visiting the 'HBD' cemetery is also another eye opener. Each of the tomb is built like our HDB flats, one on top of another. There are people who stay in the cemetery, earning a living by taking care and maintaining the tombs. There are "cemetery kids" who roam within the cemetery compound. To these kids, the cemetery is their playground.

One of my deepest impressions over this trip was the night feeding of the street kids. For the 1<sup>st</sup> time, I did a dance performance in front of a crowd of 60 on the street which I don't think I will be able to do so right here in Singapore. These kids were hungry and yet they are so full of drive. They were able to dance with us song after song. When the feeding time starts, the kids will come round after round for the food which consists of corn rice, a small fried fish and green bean soup. Some kids even took a few rounds until they vomit out the food that they have eaten. To them, they don't know when will be the next available meal for them.

We stayed at Teen cChallenge centre which is up on a hill top. It holds a beautiful view over Cebu city. The helpful Teen Challenge staff took good care of our lodging and food. Over the 7 days, we developed friendship with the staff and the kids at the centre. Each of them comes with a bitter past, some of them are almost same age as my daughter, Jann, who is 5. By the grace of God, they have found a home in the centre.

For this trip, I have taken home some lessons that I won't be able to learn in Singapore. I also believe that I have left some things there, especially for the kids as they will surely remember me. Most important, I have learned that as Christians, other than to be blessed, we need to learn to be a blessing to the others.

~ **Mario Tan** ~