

MIGRANT FOCUS



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THE MISSION FOR FILIPINO MIGRANT WORKERS (HK) Society is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year. Established in 1981, the Mission as it is fondly called by migrants has always believed in the principle of “paying attention to the well-being of the migrants”.

To give tribute to the migrants in HK, the Mission staged “Balentayms sa Central- Handog sa Migrante” on 12 February in Chater Garden in Central. This event is just one of the series of events for this year to commemorate the silver anniversary of the Mission.

The event started with a mass officiated by Fr. Emil Lim from the Catholic Church with the assistance of the Diocesan Pastoral Center for Filipinos.

Ms. Cynthia CA Tellez, the Director of the Mission in her welcome address said that love is the driving force in the formation of the Mission, its program and services and the

continuous ministry to the migrants. Love for those who are abused and exploited!

The Very Reverend Andrew Chan, the Dean of St John’s Cathedral, praised the Mission and its important role to the migrants’ community, and his wish is for the Mission to continue serving those who are disempowered.

Thousands of migrants from different organizations, alliances and churches turned out to watch the celebration.

The Abra Tinggian Ilocano Society, Philippine Independent Church Choir, Cordillera Alliance, Alay Kapwa Catholic Group, Sir Ellis Kadoorie School, Mission Volunteers, LIKHA Filipino Migrant Cultural Group and St. Mary’s Church rendered cultural presentations to the delight of the audience. The Consolidated Filipino Community Brigade and League of Overseas Filipino Midwives provided their services through free blood pressure taking and reflexology.

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Unity Amidst Tragedy

Helping the Victims of the Leyte Mudslide Tragedy



A whole barangay (small community) in Guinsaugon, Leyte was covered with mudflow after the uneventful landslide last February 2006.

IT HAS BEEN THREE WEEKS since the town of Saint Bernard, Southern Leyte was hit by a massive landslide. The Guinsaugon City was the most affected, where a whole barangay was covered by mudflow. Up to 3,000 people are missing while 1,400 are feared killed including some 200 schoolchildren trapped under the mud.

The survivors are still recuperating, and the families of the victims were still hoping to recover their loved ones.

The rescue operation lasted for almost two weeks despite heavy rains. Later it was declared that the chance of recovering lives is impossible.

The survivors and the families of more than 900 people trapped under the mud were grieving and they said "it will take time for them to recover from the loss of their families."

The tragedy believed to be made not only by nature but more so by the abuse of environment through massive illegal logging. Illegal loggers are to be blamed as well as certain policies of government. The denuded mountain could not prevent the floods nor the landslides.

In this time, we Filipinos shall not be silence on these matters, we shall take actions to raise to the government the great implication of their policies that impact on many people.

To help the victims, the Mission for Filipino Migrant Workers, together with the United Filipinos in Hong Kong, Abra Tinguian Ilocano Society, Cordillera Alliance, Filipino Migrant Workers Union and United Pangasinan Hong Kong launched the "Operation Tulong

for Leyte". More Filipino organizations and local families here in Hong Kong have responded to the call and they gave donations in cash and kind.

The project will be coursed through to Migrante International in coordination with the Citizens Disaster and

Rehabilitation Center and other churches in Leyte.

For those who want to extend help, please contact the Mission by calling these numbers: 25228264, 25228261.

Tulong is Filipino for help.

Message to the Mission from the Church of Sweden

*Uppsala, Sweden
March 2nd 2006*

Dear friends,

On the occasion of your silver anniversary I would like to congratulate the Mission to Filipino Migrant Workers and celebrate your many years of steadfast service to migrants in Hong Kong.

You are the outcome of individuals and churches that have bravely discerned the sign of the times in order to serve and empower people in new ways and in new situations. From the first humble steps to establish a mission in Hong Kong to the present strong and vibrant organisation you have been guided by a desire to witness to God who became human in order to serve humanity.

As a church we have had the privilege to accompany you on your journey over the years and we look forward to continue our journey together in the years to come.

With sincere and joyous greetings!

Dr. Johan Hasselgren, Secretary for East Asia, Church of Sweden

Social Workers working hand in hand

A member managing the Al-Istiqomah shelter receives a plaque from Cynthia, the Mission's director.

Message from the heart

The Reverend Dean Andrew Chan rendered an inspirational speech during the said event.



Celebrating “Balentayms” with the Migrant Workers

Photo Highlights of the Celebration of the Mission's 25th Year Anniversary in Chater Garden, Central last February 12, 2006



Enjoying a moment of rest with the migrants
Edwina of the Bethune House Migrant Women's Refuge joined the crowd in enjoying the presentations.



Sheltering the Migrants. Heads of various migrant-serving institutions and shelters joined Cynthia in celebrating the Mission's 25th anniversary

Solidarity in Arms. Elizabeth Tang of the Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions attended the Sunday program.





2006 Anniversary Celebration

The Mission for Filipino Migrant Workers

25 Years of Untiring Service

"We remember so that we may persevere".

SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES

MISA NG PASASALAMAT (*Thanksgiving Mass*)

Place: St. John's Cathedral

March 5, 2006, 2:00 – 3:30 p.m.

Thanksgiving Service at St. John's Cathedral on a Sunday closest to the Mission anniversary, which is on March 3.

ANNIVERSARY COCKTAILS

Date to be determined

A cocktail celebration for the Mission's Support Constituency

NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF SERVICE PROVIDERS

Date to be determined

A Conference of representatives of different migrant-serving institutions or service providers to identify their problems and obstacles in implementing genuine support activities

ASIAN FOOD FESTIVAL

May 7, 2006

A festival of different Asian cuisine that will be sold at small portions throughout the day, depending on the food requirement at specific times of the day, e.g. breakfast, snacks, lunch, snacks, dinner.

**Message from
Melville
Boase:**

**A Recognized Solicitor
The Mission's Friend
The Migrants'
Defender**

Dear Cynthia,

Many congratulations on the 25th Anniversary.

Having been associated with the Mission from the time that it started, I know that it has played a very important role in providing comfort and relief to many domestic helpers over the whole period.

Many of its 'clients' are in most distressed situations. Truly, strangers in a strange land. However much people here might like to try to help, there is nothing better than having people from their own country in times of great stress.

I know also that the members of the Mission, and especially you, have made great sacrifices in keeping the Mission serving the community, and creating the resources of the Mission, including Bethune House.

'A friend in time of need is a friend indeed': the Mission has proved its worth to those in need many, many times over the years.

I send my very best wishes,

Yours truly,

Melville Boase

Learning from the Women of the Bible

MOST SOCIETIES ASSUME that the roles played by men and women are “obvious” or that the ways in which males and females operate in society are established in nature rather than in culture. These conventional arrangements are the product of a society’s worldview. The Bible, revered by many as the written Word of God, does reflect the prevailing cultural norms, conventions and beliefs of the times with regard to women; hence, the Bible was (mis)used to oppress women.



Mary Magdala, or Magdalene to many, was one of those women who accompanied Jesus. She was said to have devoted her life to the faith and the one who allegedly washed Jesus’ feet with her hair. She saw him on the cross and in the tomb and the first to witness his resurrection.

In ancient patriarchal societies, the status of the male comes from the assumption that his “seed” was what created the child. Wisdom 7:1-2 reflects this: *I also am mortal, like all men, a descendant of the first-formed child of earth; and in the womb of a mother I was molded into flesh, within the period of ten months, compacted with blood, from the seed of a man and the pleasure of marriage.*

Women are also often thought to be sinful or the cause of sin, and this has crept in the Scriptures. Sirach 42:12-14, *“Do not look upon any one for beauty, and do not sit in the midst of women; for from garments comes the moth, and from a woman comes woman’s*

wickedness. Better is the wickedness of a man than a woman who does good; and it is a woman who brings shame and disgrace.”

When St. Paul writes, *“... man was not made from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man.”* (1Cor. 11:7-9) or one must surely ask how much of this is culture and how much of this theology. Some philosophers even taught that man and woman have two different types of souls.

But the Bible does speak of women who were instruments of God’s will, of God’s liberation. These women are heroines in their own rights. We have Shiprah and Puah. The Hebrew midwives, who defied the Pharaoh’s infanticidal order to kill males born to the Hebrew slaves.

We have Deborah, one of world’s first female judges; Jael who killed Sisera, the general of Jabin King of Hazor; (Judges 4:21). We have Esther,

who saved the Jewish people from destruction at the time of King Ahasuerus (Xerxes I).

Of course we have Elizabeth the mother of John the Baptizer, Mary the mother of Jesus; the women who remained loyal to Jesus even at his crucifixion and Mary of Magdala, the first to receive the Lord’s commission to proclaim his resurrection (Jn 20:17)!

The list is long. Unfortunately most remember only what was forbidden of them — not of divine origin but culture-bound.

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The highlight of the event was the different Filipino bands that played music from the ’50s up to the present and the surprise number of Dennis Trillo, a well-known singer-actor and Pretty Triszia, a stand up comedian in the Philippines.

Awards were presented to the Mission partners-welfare committees of organizations and alliances, different shelters and various migrant organizations and alliances who have worked with the Mission these past twenty five (25) years.

The whole day event was in cooperation with Globe Kababayan-Shinetown Telecom, Cebu Pacific, The Sun, GenEx cargo, BPI, Jollibee, Banco de Oro, PNB, Skin Essentialz and other individual donors.

It was a whole day activity of fun and camaraderie that ended with community dancing. 🎶

**“Handog sa Migrante”, translated into English, means ‘present to the migrants.’*

Knowing Winda



herstory
Putting A Face To The Case

by Becky Hue-Hay Ip
A Bethune House volunteer
from Toronto, Canada

“How to Become a Modern Day Slave”

ENI WINDAYANTI left Indonesia for Hong Kong on March 29, 2004. The economic conditions in Indonesia that resulted in a shortage of jobs had left Windayanti (or Winda, as she is known at Bethune House) with few options to support her family. She applied through an agency to become a domestic helper, with the intention of sending money back home to her parents, who were farmers, and to help pay the expensive tuition fees to continue sending her younger brother to school.

While Winda waited for her visa application to be processed, she spent the next 5 months undergoing intensive training through her agency. For 15 hours a day, everyday, she was trained on childcare, geriatric care, cooking, cleaning, and spoken Cantonese.

When Winda arrived in Hong Kong, her agency immediately referred her to another agency. There, she spent her first night sleeping on the office floor while she waited for her employer to pick her up. When she arrived at her new residence and workplace, a large 7-floor home within a walled property in the New Territories, her employer informed her that she would not have any holidays. Her duties involved caring for her employer's family of five, cleaning their home, their three cars, as well as an additional home that they also owned. At the time, she was unaware that her lack of rest days and her duties at the second residence were illegal.


Throughout her 22-month stay with the family, Winda was granted three rest days, a significantly low amount in comparison to the one full day per week, statutory holidays and 7 days of annual leave that she was legally entitled to. While rest days are supposed to be taken at a full 24 hours, her employer would suddenly tell her the morning of that it was her holiday, and that she needed to return in the evening.

During this time, Winda was also unaware that she was being underpaid. Her agency in Indonesia had informed her that her salary would be \$2,000 HK, \$1,270 below the minimum wage; however, for the first 7 months, her employer paid her through her agency in Hong Kong, whose deductions left her with \$270 a month. By the 8th month, Windayanti started to receive \$2000 directly from her employer, which was later increased to \$2400 for two months and then \$2500 for one month.

Aside from her three rest days, Winda never left her employer's residences. To send money to her family, she would pass her envelopes over the property wall and have the neighbour's domestic helpers mail them for her. When she did take

her rest days, her employer told her not to talk to other Indonesians. As she hadn't spent much time outside of her employer's properties, she didn't know her way around her neighbourhood. During her last rest day, she ran into some domestic helpers at the nearby garden, and asked them to direct her to the market. At the market, she met other domestic helpers, who upon learning of her working conditions, informed her that they were illegal, and gave her the contact information for Bethune House. The next day she ran away from her employers, constructively terminating her contract, and went directly to Bethune House.

With the help provided by BH, Winda filed for claims that amounted to \$59,063.16. She settled her claims with her former employer at the Labour Department, and was granted \$30,000. At BH, Winda was finally able to find a social network of supportive women who were willing to provide help. "I'm happy here," she said, "because, wow, there's so many Indonesians here." She emphasized her appreciation for receiving help with her case, and getting accompaniment to the Labour Department and Immigration Office. "People here are friendly," she added.

Now in Indonesia, Winda plans to stay with her family for a few months before looking for work again. As she states that she never wants to return to Hong Kong, she has her sights set on going through a different employment agency in order to find factory work in Taiwan, which she expects will be a better experience. Hopefully, her expectations will be met and exceeded. 

“Winda cleaned a 7-floor home, three cars and an additional home. She received HK2,000 a month and only got three rest days for 22 months.”

Migrant Focus is a monthly publication of The Mission for Filipino Migrant Workers (Hong Kong) Society (MFMW)

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