

Spotlight on CHARIS Affiliate Epiphany

Established since 2002



“When you have a mission station in Indonesia, you hold on to it tight.”

So says Celestine Snodgrass who, with Nicholas Lim, is one of the driving forces behind the missionary group Epiphany. Based in the parish of Immaculate Heart of Mary (IMH), Epiphany was started in 2002 and began its overseas mission two years later. Celestine and Nicholas head a group of about 30 IMH parishioners in their evangelisation efforts in Singapore and the Riau Islands.

Epiphany’s ministry in Indonesia is that of evangelisation through humanitarian work. Its presence in the Riau Islands is not just to keep the mission stations within the ambit of the Catholic Church, but really to make a difference in the life of the islanders. The main focus is on the teaching of English to schoolchildren in Rempang and Tanjung Pinang through its TeachNLearn programme. Every year, 120 primary schoolchildren in Rempang benefit from the programme while in Tanjung Pinang, 60 secondary students do so. All the children are residents of the hostels run by the JMJ Sisters.

The TeachNLearn programme comprises 12 sessions of English Language lessons spread over 6 months of the year. Each lesson lasts 3 hours on alternate Sundays during the first half of the year. At the end of the 12 sessions, the students sit for an exam and are awarded certificates by Epiphany. The standard is obviously much lower compared to children of the same age in Singapore, but it helps the children learn to speak English, something they would never have been exposed to without the work of Epiphany volunteers. So successful is the programme that the Saint Ignatius Primary School in Rempang has been upgraded from a ‘C’ to a ‘B’ level rating by the Indonesian educational authorities primarily on the strength of the English Language programme. This is good news for the local school as there will be the possibility of more resources from the authorities.

Volunteers for TeachNLearn are drawn from all parishes in Singapore, with some non-Catholics as well. Altogether, Epiphany needs to recruit at least 80 teachers per year, 50 for Rempang and 30 for Tanjung Pinang. Each session in Rempang requires 15 teachers. Thus volunteers have to commit to at least 3 trips per year, taking the ferry in the morning and coming back in the late afternoon on a Sunday. All volunteers receive some rudimentary lessons on Bahasa Indonesia and are also trained to use the TeachNLearn programme.

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As Epiphany receives no funding from the Catholic authorities in Singapore and Indonesia, volunteers have to pay their own ferry tickets and meals. The mission group is also not in the position to offer financial help to needy children in the schools where they teach. What the members can do is to introduce Singaporean sponsors to those children who need help. To garner more community involvement and also to help defray costs, Epiphany's volunteers reach out to those Singaporean companies they know of, to adopt some of its activities, for example the prize-giving party in Rempang.

The main challenges for Epiphany, as Celestine and Nicholas see it, are the recruitment of more members to volunteer for the TeachNLearn programme and also to find committed individuals to take over the helm of the mission.

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Did You Know...

In Indonesia, any group that wants to build a church in a neighbourhood has to ask for permission from the local residents. More often than not, permission is denied.



It is cheaper to house students in hostels than to bus them to school every day because the price of diesel to run the bus is very high.



Students pay the equivalent of S\$450 per year for their hostel fees and the equivalent of S\$150 for school fees. The school fees are subsidised by the Catholic Church in Indonesia. Most of the children in Rempang are able to afford these fees as their families earn enough as farmers.



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2012 Key Activities...

- TeachNLearn at Tanjung Pinang
 - 22 July 2012
 - 5 August 2012
 - 2 September 2012
 - 16 September 2012
 - 7 October 2012
 - 21 October 2012
 - 3 March 2013
 - 17 March 2013
 - 7 April 2013
 - 21 April 2013
 - 5 May 2013
 - 19 May 2013
- TeachNLearn at Rempang (Semester 1)
 - 29 July 2012
 - 12 August 2012
 - 2 September 2012
 - 16 September 2012
 - 30 September 2012
 - 14 October 2012
 - 28 October 2012
 - 11 November 2012
 - 25 November 2012