

Continuing the Walk of Jesus: Central to any humanitarian work

By Carolyn Oei

On 14 July, CHARIS staff and Board members met with some 30 representatives of its affiliates. Held at LaSalle Centre, the Affiliate-Board Connect was organised for CHARIS and its affiliates to come together, to gain deeper mutual understanding of their respective spheres of humanitarian and mission work.

The half-day event comprised presentations about CHARIS, an uplifting speech on the 'Spirituality of Overseas Humanitarian Service' by Fr Colin Tan, SJ, followed by small group discussions on humanitarian work. There was candid sharing about the challenges faced in missions, and younger affiliate organisations learnt from the more established ones. The group sharing sessions also threw up some good ideas and suggestions towards greater collaboration and support. Mgrs Eugene Vaz opened and closed the session with spirit enriching prayers.

Both CHARIS board members, Mgrs Vaz and Fr Colin each shared their insights and perspectives of CHARIS' function and purpose in various ways throughout the morning. They elucidated on a concept that must surely be the heart of Christianity, which is to continue the walk of Jesus.

In addition to many insights, Fr Colin left the participants a simple acronym to remember in their service: GLC – short for "God is Good; God is Love and God is Compassionate".

Understanding why humanitarian work is necessary and how it ought to be carried out are fundamental to any mission. Central to this understanding is recognition and acknowledgment of the place of love and compassion, Jesus' key tenets of his own ministry. Flowing from the foundation of love and compassion are respect for human dignity and religious and cultural beliefs, a desire to empower not enslave, and the importance of neutrality. Mgrs Vaz reiterated that, "CHARIS is born of that spirit of Jesus, ready to be life giving."

The event was attended by representatives from such affiliate organisations as ACTS, Catholic Medical Guild, Catholic Nurses Guild, Canossian Sisters, Epiphany, Clare's Missionary, Father Damien Society, Focolare, M3 and SMU Fides.

