

1,000 learn about mission work

Participants grapple with aspects of mission work at the Humanitarian Forum and Fair



Archbishop William Goh delivers the opening address.

Catholic charity goes beyond the humanistic motives behind social work. "It goes beyond ideology because we change the world through love," said Archbishop William Goh at the Humanitarian Forum and Fair on June 22.

In his opening address at the event organised by CHARIS (Caritas Humanitarian Aid and Relief Initiatives, Singapore), Archbishop Goh highlighted the importance of motivation and prayer which must necessarily reside at the heart of any form of social or humanitarian work.

Elaborating on the event's theme, Faith in Action, he told the participants at the Singapore Polytechnic Convention Centre that the only motivation for charitable work should be the desire to be sharers in the life and light of God.

More than 1,000 people attended the biennial event which aimed to give full-time mission workers, experienced volunteers and those thinking about getting involved in mission work the opportunity to reflect on the core meaning of



Mr Alistair Dutton, humanitarian director for Caritas Internationalis.

humanitarian work in the Catholic context. Those present also had the opportunity to discover and learn more about the work currently being done by CHARIS' affiliate and partner organisations.

Mr Alistair Dutton, humanitarian director of Caritas Internationalis, the global confederation of Catholic charities, described



Panelists speaking at a group discussion.

From Page 2

increasingly face challenges such as balancing the scale and speed of humanitarian assistance with local and contextual needs, as well as funding.

A plenary session followed, which allowed participants to hear from four aid volunteers and workers their experiences in conducting humanitarian work.

Four group discussions were then held which delved into different aspects of humanitarian work such as the concerns of new volunteers about mission work, expanding one's missionary experience and how to bring one's missionary work to a higher level.

You must go prepared to engage with and respond to what is really needed.

—Mr Tim Walsh, regional coordinator of Caritas Oceania

In the first group, called Beginning the Journey, panelists shared that it is important to trust God's guidance in mission work.

Ms Gloria Gurning from CHII St Nicholas Girls' School shared her experience of bringing students on mission trips.

Ms Zenn Tan, a Singaporean, and project coordinator with the Apostolic Prefecture of Battambang, Cambodia, spoke about how

her fine arts background served her well in her mission work in Battambang.

Ms Tracy Ying shared her experiences of mission trips to Thailand and India when she was a teenager.

She said she was amazed at the emotional and mental strength God gave her in her trips during which she served orphans some of whom were just a few years younger than her.

In the second group, called Broadening the Experience (Regional Opportunities), panelists



Cambodian dancers performing for participants.

discussed the issue of mission trips in different countries.

Mr Tim Walsh, regional coordinator of Caritas Oceania, shared that a missionary journey is one "with unexpected outcomes.... you must go prepared to engage with and respond to what is really needed".

In the third group, called Deepening the Experience (Skills-based Missions), participants discussed how one encounters God through service to others.

Mr Yong Teck Meng, director of Habitat for Humanity, said it is because he sees the face of Christ in the poor and disadvantaged that he builds houses for them.

Mr Nicholas Lim said he teaches in the Riau Islands as he wants to show Indonesian children the face of Christ.

the parable of the Good Samaritan as the foundation of all humanitarian work.

He also elaborated on trends that have emerged in the field of humanitarian work, such as a consensus that such work is imperative. He noted that aid workers

Continued on Page 3

In the fourth group, called Scaling the Mission (Strategy & Resources), Mr Patrick Thong of Couples for Christ shared how his group deals with domestic violence in Timor Leste by holding classes on the sanctity of marriage.

For Carrossian Sr Angela, the language barrier in Myanmar posed a big challenge when fellow nuns started a teaching programme for educators there.

Mr Chan Yew Wing of International Volunteer Association stressed the importance of good project and volunteer management.

During the event, participants also visited 29 booths showcasing mission work and opportunities.

The day culminated with a concert titled Dancing Rice. It featured performances from the Battambang-Arrupe Taken dance troupe, some of whom are landmine victims, and Singapore's School of Dance.

The Cambodian dancers portrayed various aspects of traditional Cambodian life.

Catholic singer-songwriter Corinne May also performed and thrilled the crowd with songs from her albums.

One participant, Ms Charmaine Oei, said she was inspired by what she had experienced during the forum. She had wanted to learn more about what mission work entails as she has not done such work before, she said. □

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