



MERCY
GLOBAL
PRESENCE

RSM Philippines

MERCY GLOBAL PRESENCE

Incarnate God in the Cosmos and Person of Jesus

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God Incarnate . . . Our faith in the Mystery of the Incarnation brings us to contemplation of the God of Mercy amongst His people in deep social change. As missionary disciples in the Church, our faith and science urge us to explore the meanings of the new cosmology and integral ecology (Elizabeth Davis, RSM). Pope Francis' The Joy of the Gospel mentions the Church's expression of genuine catholicity in showing forth the "beauty of her varied face" in our ministries to answer the cry of Earth and the cry of the Poor. Our experience at the grassroots of these particular concerns seems to point out that Earth our home is truly degraded with "throw aways" that are piled as trash, and that the Poor have become "victim instruments" of the trash in their midst being scavengers for a "living".

The *"throw-away culture"* which Pope Francis brings to our awareness as an attitude that needs to be checked, being destructive and detrimental to environment, has crept into our system as an easy or convenient way of acquiring what we want and discarding what we don't want without consideration of its consequences to the environment and the people around us. *"We must never allow the throwaway culture to enter our heart, because we are brothers and sisters. No one is disposable!"* (Pope Francis)



Unfortunately, environment and the people around us, especially the powerless poor, become victims. The powerless poor with whom our Incarnate God in environmental cosmos becomes the area of what we throw away.



My own experience with grassroots among the poorest of the poor in Tacloban City is indeed, a brush with those whose dwellings are side by side with the trash in the city, the surroundings pungent with smells. This could be the reason why these street children prefer to sleep in sheltered corners by the side of the street. However, some would go “home” to where the family members are, especially if they have parents who look for them before resting for the night.

When I happen to be out at night for some reasons, I see these kids roaming around begging for food so after giving them something to eat, I urge them to go home. *Our Mother of Hope Children Center looks after them to support and care for these street children in Tacloban City to assist them in their needs. The Center began in the aftermath of the Super-typhoon Haiyan which hit the Philippines on November 8, 2013. It was the strongest recorded typhoon in history, and Tacloban City – ground zero – bore its full wrath. Thousands of people drowned and thousands more were made homeless, displaced, and hungry, even as they grieved for loved ones who perished. It serves 64 street children from 35 families residing in 16 villages within Tacloban City.*



Aside from those living in the cities, many of the poor in other areas live in shanties or make-shift homes due to displacement when their homes happen to be caught by crossfire in times of war/fiery dispute between tribes in political/ethnic enmities. Some are also displaced due to natural calamities. Oppressive poverty deprives these poor people from securing a decent home for themselves.

Eastern Visayas PHILIPPINES

MOTHER OF HOPE CHILDREN CENTER

PROJECT BRIEFER
P.410-005/2016









Finding Hope in the STREETS

The partnership between Caritas Germany and the Congregation of the Religious Sisters of Mercy started after Typhoon Yolanda (Haiyan) struck the Philippines particularly Tacloban City and other parts of Eastern Visayas. The typhoon brought devastation to the buildings and facilities of the Holy Infant College. Caritas Germany provided support in the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the school and other facilities owned and managed by the RSM sisters. The strong partnership paved way to the birth of another project, this time focusing on the children in street situations hence **Mother of Hope Children Center** was conceptualized.

Eventually **MOTHER OF HOPE CHILDREN CENTER** became an extension service of the **Holy Infant College** with the program **SUPPORT AND CARE FOR STREET CHILDREN IN TACLOBAN CITY**. It is run and managed by the Congregation of the Religious Sisters of Mercy (RSM), and initially funded by Caritas Germany since 2017. It operates as a "Community Based Agency" as defined by law through Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) Office, and takes cognizance of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and Child Protection. Thus, it strongly advocates the protection of children's rights.

Know our GOALS

The **MOTHER OF HOPE CHILDREN CENTER** has four primary goals, namely:

- 1.) To promote the well-being of the children in street situations;
- 2.) To capacitate parents/guardians of these children in street situations through spiritual formation and capacity building programs for responsible parenthood;
- 3.) To foster community awareness on the plight of the children in street situations; and
- 4.) To promote advocacy on Protecting the Rights of the Child.



TACLOBAN CITY
• 138 Barangays

As of August 2019, a total of 64 Street Children ages 6-15 years old from 35 families in 16 Barangays / Villages are being supported by Mother of Hope Children Center.

- 64 Children in street situations are all in school (Phase 3)
- 21 families were supported with Livelihood Starter kits in 2018 (Phase 2)
- 18 Barangays/ Villages were oriented on the programs and services of the Center and offered partnership on strengthening Barangay Council for the Protection of Children (Phase 3)

Thoughtful sharing for the least of our brethren, especially the sick and the old, the unprotected women and children is a virtue that needs to be imbibed by those who have more in life rather than to be unscrupulously wasteful with what they have. We do need to be scrupulous about the “throw away” mentality/culture in our concern for Mother Earth our common home as part of the cosmos where God Incarnate in the person of Jesus dwells and especially among the least of our brethren. Actually, we can’t afford to throw away if we have just enough for ourselves. Enough is just what we need. Many of our people don’t even have enough, so we have to be thoughtful of them.

STORIES OF HOPE



Nestor Guiwan, 54 years old with 7 children and 2 of them are beneficiaries of MHCC Program, expressed his gratitude for the great help that is given to his children. He believes that as a result of the services extended to his children they will have a bright future. As part of his testimony, he said: “Through the years, scavenging became the means of living of the entire family. Due to poverty, I cannot afford to supply the needs of my children. And so I am grateful to the Caritas Germany and the RSM Sisters for their support and act of mercy to the poor. Now I am happy that my children are showing interest in their studies because they can eat regularly and there is a big change in their behavior. I hope and pray that as a parent I will be more responsible and I wish that MHCC will continue to serve more children and their families.



Lara Alain, a 6th grade pupil and a beneficiary of MHCC Program who has been scavenging for years in Tacloban City, realized that: “It is painful and shameful to do such work like picking up trash of others that can still be sold and those that can still be of use for children like me. I want to help my family, we need food in order to survive. Now, that I am part of the program, I can eat nutritious food that my school supplies and my other needs are being provided. I can regularly attend class in school. I am happy that my self-confidence is being developed. I hope and pray that there will be more people to support me and all other children in need of care in our place. I dream of becoming a teacher so I can find a good job and be able to help my family and other poor children.”

“Whatsoever you do to the least of my brethren, you do unto me.” (Matthew 25: 31-46). Jesus’ identification with humankind in the complexity of the system in the universe needs to be given due attention especially with the enlightenment Pope Francis has given in his encyclical *“Laudato Si which catechizes us to care for our common home, Mother Earth.”*

In response to the call of Pope Francis, the children and parents, together with the MHCC Staff, in coordination with the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) conducted TREE PLANTING (mangroves) within Tacloban City. The children value the importance of ecology and would like to express their right to live in a clean and green environment.



Mercy Global Presence is, indeed, a timely relevant response to God's call to address the degradation of the Earth and displacement of Persons. Watching global concerns manifested in local settings points out indications of cosmic cry of the Earth which is very much identified with the cry of the poor. When calamities and disasters hit Tacloban City and Eastern Visayas, both rich and poor, adults and children have become victims with loss of lives and hard-earned possessions. The rich, however, due to savings and spared properties were able to quickly recover. The poor have suffered so much especially those who have lost their only means of livelihood. Calamities have really made them wallow in great difficulty. Due to being landless and powerless, the poor are easily pushed to the periphery and brushed aside from the mainstream of decent housing locations when lands wanted by the rich and powerful are used for mining, deforestation and land developments. Thus, Mercy Global Presence truly needs to be felt in situations of degradation of the Earth and displacement of people.

Conclusion

Care for our common home, as urged by Pope Francis in *Laudato Si'*, is a concern Mercy Global Presence through our Sisters and partners in ministry need to address, especially among those involved with the grassroots whose lives are closely connected with nature. Therefore, care needs to be expressed with actions and movements preserving life, enhancing growth and preventing degradation of habitation. Man's giving in to self-gratification pushes him to get what he wants, and throw away what doesn't satisfy him without consideration of the consequences, even resulting in unscrupulous brushing aside (and away) fellow human beings in the cosmos with whom the Incarnate God in the person of Jesus identifies himself.

Information about the In-charge of Grassroots Ministry

Margaret Mary Alamban, RSM is the Deputy Director and Finance Manager of Mother of Hope Children Center (MHCC).