



The Order

CONTENTS

PAGE 1
THANK YOU DINNER

PAGE 2
CNY HOSPICE VISIT

OUTREACH TO CANCER
SURVIVOR

BRAINSTORM SESSION WITH
ZOOM

BEIRUT DONATION

PAGE 3
900TH ANNIVERSARY
MEMORIAL MASS

SPIRITUAL FORMATION

NIGHT MISSION

PAGE 4
NIGHT MISSION FOR
HOMELESS & MEAL
VOUCHERS FOR ROUGH
SLEEPERS

PAGE 5
MEET & GREET FOR NEW
COMPANIONS

PAGE 6
VIRTUAL CONFERENCE WITH
SMOM GOVERNING COUNCIL

WORLD DAY OF THE POOR

CHRISTMAS OUTREACH

Page 7
1592 MALTA PANDEMIC

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

What a year this has been! In the first half of the year, Singapore began a lock down (euphemistically called a Circuit Breaker) from the Covid-19 pandemic. The economy shut down hard and all church masses were cancelled. It took a while, but we had to get used to attending masses online and partake in spiritual communions. Many of our SMOM activities had to be cancelled though we were lucky to manage do to a few before the actual lockdown. Still, where we can, we managed to provide help whether in kind or financially for a couple of worthy causes. Such as buying furniture online for a needy family, or gathering donations from members and friends to send to SMOM Lebanon in aid to Beirut after the devastating Explosion. We are currently in Phase 3 of the reopening of the country and thanks be to God, all the churches have reopened albeit with very limited places allowed, due to safe distancing, for mass attendance. Still, we are thankful that Singapore had very low mortality with only 29 people succumbing to the Virus. One of the lowest in the world although we had around 60,000 cases of infection.

5th January 2020

SMOM Lourdes Experience Thank You Dinner at Agape Village

Volunteers who helped in organising the 4th Lourdes Experience in Singapore held on 6th December 2019 were invited to an appreciation dinner on 5th January 2020 (Sunday) at the multipurpose hall of Agape Village.

The dinner was attended by 35 members, associates, companions and friends. President Rose Lu in her opening speech thanked all for their contributions and hard work during the event. Good-spirited fellowship was a sure sign of the group's camaraderie during the dinner. Fr Edward ended the event with an exhortation for the group to do more good works and a closing prayer.



23rd January 2020

Annual CNY Assisi Hospice visit

On 23rd January 2020, members and friends paid their annual visit to the Assisi Hospice. Fourteen members, companions and friends assembled at the lobby at 6.30 pm. We were greeted by the Assisi Hospice representatives - Ms Lilian Lee (Manager, Community Development) and Ms Sue Ann. After a group photograph, we were divided into two teams and then guided by the staff to offer lunar new year greetings, goodie bags containing biscuits and drinks, good luck Mandarin oranges and ang pows to the residents. Those who took part in this annual outreach event went home feeling good bringing some cheers to the sick and their families.

17th June 2020

Outreach to Needy Youth Cancer Survivor & His Family A Collaboration with VIVA Foundation for Children

John (not his real name) is a youth cancer survivor who lives with one parent and 2 teenage siblings in a small one-room government rental apartment. Their sole source of income is the ComCare Finance Assistance. According to the parent, after paying all essential bills, they are left with approximately \$100 for general expenses. John's parent who was an ad hoc worker became unemployed since the start of Circuit Breaker. Besides the heavy burden of meeting basic daily needs, John's health is a constant concern. Clothing and books kept on makeshift shelves and belongings left on the floor were constantly dusty. John's parent believed that the dust collected on the exposed clothes, books and belongings was causing John to fall ill frequently. The parent was anxious about John's frequent bouts of illness and convinced that a wardrobe and chest of drawers would be a great help in resolving the health risk caused by the dust. The Singapore Association of the Order of Malta donated a wardrobe and a chest of drawers to address the health risks posed to John and promote a sense of well-being for the family. The family was deeply grateful for the charitable gesture and touched by the care and concern extended to them.

25th July 2020

Brainstorm Session via Zoom

This session was initiated to engage members to seek their views on the organisational direction taken by the Order, as well as to exchange ideas on how to strengthen the members' vocation. The thirteen members who participated in this online meeting provided a number of good ideas and initiatives. Some of these included creating greater awareness of the Order and its charism in Catholic institutions of learning, recruiting potential Companions of the Order, attending to the well-being of migrant construction workers as a project especially during these difficult times, and the welfare of elderly people working in coffee shops and hawker centres. The Executive Council will work with the respective members to follow up on these proposals.

4th August 2020

Beirut Catastrophic Explosion Relief Assistance

On 4 August 2020, a large amount of ammonium nitrate stored at the port of the city of Beirut, the capital of Lebanon, exploded causing over 200 deaths, more than 5,000 injured and an estimated 300,000 homeless. The Dean of the National Associations of the Order appealed to all to help provide financial aid to the Lebanon Association for them to carry out their massive relief work. They have put in several days of hard work serving victims of the explosion by being deployed at the healthcare facilities and medical units providing accommodation, food and counselling services without charge. More than 300 youth volunteers from the Order worked alongside members on the field daily. Their life-saving mission was truly commendable.

We are happy to report that upon appeal to members, associates, companions and friends, SGD\$42,000 was raised for this cause. The President of the Lebanese Association thanked us for our donation. We are grateful to everyone who responded to this humanitarian crisis.

3rd September 2020

900th Death Anniversary of the Order's founder Blessed Gerard @ Sts. Peter & Paul Church

Members, associates, companions, spouses and friends of the Singapore Association numbering forty-two altogether gathered in Church of Saints Peter and Paul on 3rd September 2020 to commemorate the 900th Death Anniversary of Blessed Gerard, the Order's founder. In his homily, Fr Edward Lim drew attention to "hospitality", a quality that characterises the work and life of blessed Gerard. He further reminded that charity must be expressed in deeds and not just in words. As members of the Order, we are to emulate Blessed Gerard and to give of ourselves, in imitation of the Eucharistic Lord, one soul and one heart in God.



17th & 24th September

Spiritual Formation: Talks by Ian de Vaz

Ian D Vaz gave a 2-part talk on the Holy Mass. The first session was entitled "Going to Mass- from Duty to Desire" and the second, "A Walk through Mass." Both sessions were held via online portal Zoom. Almost a 100 people tuned in, including members of the Order and many others from the various parishes. Feedback was positive and enthusiastic with many looking forward to more such talks.

25 September 2020

NIGHT MISSION @ Ang Mo Kio

With growing awareness of the plight of the homeless who sleep in the open, our Order has embarked on a project in collaboration with Catholic Welfare Services.

The Order started its journey with the Homeless several months ago with joining the Catholic Welfare Services on their visit to the homeless in the Bras Basah vicinity. It certainly was an eye opener for some of our members who went for the rounds.

The first batch to the Ang Mo Kio area, comprising Fr Edward, Ian, Rose and Terentius, participated in the Night Mission event on 25 Sept, going with the CWS group, led by Brian Monteiro (CWS) and Kenneth (Team leader). Despite the rain, they ventured on. The group found many of the "regular" rough sleepers near their usual sleeping spot. Some were already asleep but those who were still awake were happy to talk to them. The experience of going out to the streets despite the rain provided them with a soul-lifting experience.

Following this event, the Order has offered to help in the programme by offering to help on two Fridays per month, with each of the two teams volunteering for one Friday night. A schedule has been worked out for the months of October, November and December. More members, associates and companions are encouraged to join in this fulfilling programme as the pandemic comes to an end. Meantime however, due to the restriction on total number of persons per group, only 6 from the Order were able to participate in the Night Mission, despite splitting the group.

The meeting place and time will be at 10.30pm at the URA carpark behind Christ the King Church (outside the Church's gate).

Night Mission for the Homeless with Meal vouchers for Rough Sleepers

A Journey from Hell to Heaven

“Welcome to my heaven”, Jonas (not his real name) exclaimed joyfully as he opened the door of his one-bedroom government rental apartment to me and a volunteer. His face was radiant with a smile that stretched from ear to ear.

Jonas is 64 years old and was homeless from 2012 till 2019. Before that, he was happily married and lived with his wife and three children in a comfortable Housing Development Board (HDB) apartment which he and his wife jointly owned.

In 2012, his unfaithfulness tore his marriage apart and it led to a bitter divorce. He had to sell his apartment and gave the entire proceeds to his wife as settlement. He was left with nothing and made homeless.

He found a job as a security guard and he asked the company to allow him to sleep at the workplace. For four years, he slept at a makeshift space at work. During this period, he managed to meet his basic needs although he had no permanent shelter over his head and no support from his family. Life was difficult and lonely but he got by with the meagre salary and superficial social interaction with colleagues.

In 2016, life dealt him another blow – he was diagnosed with arthritis. The excruciating pain at his knees and ankle affected his walking and he had to stop work completely. With his work went his temporary sleeping space. He was literally thrown onto the street to fend for himself. He felt lost and desperate but he had no one to turn to. Bearing with the pain in his knees and ankles, he walked the streets looking for a place to sleep.

Left with some savings from his salary, he spent frugally on his food but the money only lasted one year. When his money ran out, he had to scavenge for food.

He would go to the dumps behind supermarkets after the workers have thrown out overripe fruits and edible vegetables, to pick up the discarded produce for his meals. Leftover food from diners at coffee shops and hawker centers was also his regular source of food. He would wait around coffee shops or hawker centers and observe if there were leftovers to be salvaged to fill his stomach. Eating off discarded packets of leftovers from someone's lunch or dinner was part and parcel of survival for Jonas.

At that juncture, a couple of rough sleepers taught him where to get help and he managed to get monthly financial assistance from a government agency. He was grateful for the financial assistance but it was barely enough to stave hunger off. Although Jonas spent the money prudently, the last week of each month posed a challenge. By then, he had already learnt the ropes of sleeping in the rough and survived. Unfortunately, he was hit by yet another blow – he fell ill and was told by the doctor that he was diabetic.

With the weight of all the burdens on his shoulders, Jonas broke down when the government agency suddenly stopped giving him the monthly financial assistance. He recalled sobbing in desperation when the officer broke the bad news to him. The officer advised him to seek financial help from a charitable foundation and Churches which he did. He was relieved that the foundation, Methodist and Catholic churches went to his rescue. He managed to receive the same amount of financial assistance from these benefactors.

One year later, he had abdominal pain and urinary tract complications arising from his failing bladder function. A urinary catheter had to be inserted and he has to live with it. Living in the rough has robbed him of his health. He had to manage with the catheter – continued loitering near public places with communal facilities in the day and slept on the floor in the night.

Being homeless was a harrowing experience. In the day, Jonas loitered near public places with toilet and showering facilities and “free” food. In the night, he slept along corridors of public housing estates, parks and open public spaces. To be inconspicuous and not be a bother to people, he would only set up his “bed” at the chosen spot after 10pm each night. A cardboard was his mattress and a thin bedsheet was his blanket.

Besides coping with the weather, cockroaches and mosquitoes, he had to constantly be on his guard against petty thieves and trouble makers.

His life on the streets was a living a hell.

The nights were long and dreary. Often, he would reflect on his situation and how he messed up his life, and brought the misery upon himself. He regrets his past and hopes to turn the clock back but it is impossible.

In mid 2020, life turned for the better for Jonas when he was “spotted” by a volunteer from a Methodist Church and was referred the Catholic Welfare Services. Soon, he moved into a Catholic Shelter.

He shared that when he moved into the Shelter, it felt like heaven. He was able to have a safe and peaceful sleep each night in a sheltered room although it was only from 10pm till 7am. He was also deeply appreciative of the supper and breakfast provided.

While he was at the Shelter, he was encouraged to apply for a one-bedroom government rental apartment and, after overcoming some obstacles with the help of the government agency and Catholic Welfare Services, his application was approved. He was overjoyed and moved into his “heaven” in August 2020.

Jonas paid tribute to the Night Mission outreach and all volunteers. He is eternally grateful for the tremendous help rendered to him.

While sleeping in the rough, he observed that most of the homeless are elderly persons. He appreciates the efforts of the Night Mission in helping the homeless who are usually at the last stage of their life by giving them comfort and hope. He stressed that it is so important for the homeless to find comfort and be given the opportunity to have a “pleasant passage to our end”. With tears welling up in his eyes, Jonas shared that his biggest worry while sleeping in the rough was that he would die alone and no one will even notice his dead body. The best scenario is that someone will pick up his body, burn it and throw the ashes away randomly. Now, he is comforted by the fact that when he dies, he will not be alone and he will get a proper Catholic burial.

His sights are set on a new leaf of life and when it is time for him to return to God, he hopes to be blessed with eternal happiness in heaven.

23rd October 2020

Meeting & Greeting New Companions via Zoom

The Singapore Order organized a Meet & Greet Session via Zoom for new Companions on 30th October, 2020 at 8 p.m to replace the earlier planned meeting in person after it was disrupted by the SARS-COV virus pandemic. The purpose of the meeting was to welcome our new Companions and introduce them to the other members of the Order, as well as answer any questions they may have in relation to our works.

We had the pleasure of welcoming on board nine new Companions of the Order. They are:

Dr Ian Matthews
Ms Wendy Low
Ms Nicole Tuie
Mr Alex Yam
Mr David Cheong & Ms Gillian Ong
Ms Elizabeth Lim
Mr Michael Tan
Mr Marcus Wong

This session which was helmed by several members of the Singapore Association began with an opening prayer by Confrere Andrew Kwok. President Rose introduced the members with each in turn speaking more about their individual work and role in the Association. The new Companions were then asked to introduce themselves. President Rose Lu provided background information on our past and current projects, including those current projects like the Night Mission, and befriending of the residents at Mt Alvernia Hospice. Hospitaller Joseph Chew also shared about the completed project for St Theresa’s Home for the Aged and the upcoming project with CWS, distributing food and gifts to 80 families in the Ang Mo Kio community. This meeting provided an opportunity for all to get to know each other better. The meeting ended with a prayer by Confrere James Boss.

30th October 2020

Virtual Conference with SMOM Government Council Representative Lisa Simpson on Reforms in the Order

A virtual meeting was arranged for the Exco members for a briefing on SMOM Communications by Lisa Simpson, a SMOM Government Council Representative. It was held on 30th October 2020 at 11 am. The focus of the meeting was on the current status of reforms within the Order, and the upcoming election of the Lieutenant of the Grand Master or Grand Master. The last major reform was in 1961. Ms Simpson outlined the reform process which began in 2017. A major emphasis of the reform was on the renewal of the 1st Class members. She also mentioned possible changes to the role of the Grandmaster. Another possible major change will also be the removal of the word 'Military' in the Order's name. She opined that the Council hoped to complete the reforms by end of 2021. Several questions posted were answered by Ms Simpson. The meeting ended after an hour with a vote of thanks to Ms Simpson.

15th November 2020

SMOM Outreach Event - 4th World Day of the Poor

November 15th has been set aside by His Holiness Pope Francis as the World Day of the Poor. His message started with the exhortation, to "stretch forth your hand to the poor". Our Grand Hospitaller mentioned that the participation of the SMOM in World Day of the Poor has not only become a tradition, it is also an outward sign of our daily commitment as members, volunteers and staff of the Order. He encouraged all Associations to organize a charitable activity for the poor in commemoration of the World Day of the Poor.

The Singapore Association organized a bento set food distribution outreach programme to the SVDP beneficiaries located at the Ang Mo Kio area with the collaboration of the Crossings Cafe and Catholic Welfare Services. The recipients were the lonely elderly who stayed in single room flats. This was successfully carried out with the participation of 18 members, associates, companions and friends of the Order partnering several other volunteers from the Catholic Welfare Services. We were graced by the presence of our Apostolic Nuncio, His Excellency, Archbishop Marek Zalewski, who had fellowship with us and said a prayer of blessing for the group.

The 10 teams fanned out in unison to distribute the food and completed their tasks by 1.30 pm, happy that the lonely elderly they served would not go hungry on that day.

13th December 2020

SMOM/CWS Christmas Outreach Program

18 members, companions, spouses and friends assembled at the Catholic Welfare Service premise on Sunday, 13th December 2020 at 12.30pm. Our mission is to bring Christmas cheer to some 80 poor and lonely residents in the Ang Mo Kio area. On arrival at CWS, we were brought up to the 6th floor where we help gift pack many useful items into hampers. The items include bedsheets with pillow cases, nail clippers, shampoo and bath gel, Vicks vapour rub, bath towels and Tiger Balm plasters. We were divided into teams, each accompanied by a volunteer from SVDP who knows the beneficiaries in the area. These volunteers are from the St Vincent de Paul Society. They provide free food at lunch time once a week to these residents at the Church of Christ the King. After packing the hampers, we proceeded to the 2nd floor to meet our SVDP volunteers. After a prayer led by CWS officer, Brian Monteiro, we went our separate ways in our cars to visit, befriend and distribute the hampers to the assigned beneficiaries who reside mainly in rented and one-room units. The whole mission ended around 4.30 pm. with some of us feeling rather tired after carrying the heavy hampers, but happy to have the opportunity to participate in this hands-on event.



Editorial team (L to R): Andrew, Edward, Ernest, Gregory, Donald

The 1592 - 1593 Malta plague epidemic

The 1592–1593 Malta plague epidemic was a major outbreak of plague (a bacteria) on the island of Malta, which was then ruled by the Order. It occurred in three waves between June 1592 and September 1593, and it resulted in 3000 deaths, about 11% of the population. The disease carried by rodents was imported to Malta by Tuscan galleys that had captured vessels from Alexandria. The Order, true to its Hospitaller roots, instituted several infection control measures that were ahead of its time. These included an establishing an isolation hospital for those infected by the plague; contact tracing with isolation of close contacts upon detection of an index case; institution of laws punishing those contacts who flouted their isolation orders; vector control by culling dogs but not cats, as cats were useful in controlling the population of rodents which carry the disease; separate burial grounds for the victims of the plague; and lastly a period of quarantine for visitors to Malta. The epidemic was effectively over in Malta within 15 short months. Considering the lack of antibiotics and vaccines then, it was a truly remarkable achievement. These novel and strict infection control measures also helped limit the mortality rates in the subsequent 2 outbreaks in Malta in 1623 and 1655 to 40 and 20 deaths only respectively. The knowledge of how plague was transmitted then was non-existent. The success of the epidemic containment may truly be attributed to wisdom of the Knights of the Order being inspired by the Divine.

2021 Upcoming Events:

Every Friday

Night Mission

Venue: Church of Christ the King

Time: 10:30 pm - 12:30 pm

Thursday, 28th January

Mass-Opening Mass & Fellowship dinner

Venue: Church of Sts. Peter & Paul

Time: 6:00 pm

Thursday, 28th January

Assisi Outreach

Venue: Assisi Home & Hospice

Time: 6:00 pm

Thursday, 18th February

EXCO Meeting

Venue: Assisi Hospice Lvl 5

Time: 6:00 pm

Sunday, 21st February

Chinese New Year Outreach to the Elderly

Venue: CWS & Ang Mo Kio

Thursday, 25th March

SMOM Annual General Meeting

Venue: Assisi Hospice level 5, Room 2

Time: 6:00 pm

Sunday, 11th April

Easter Outreach to the Elderly Lonely

Venue: CWS & Ang Mo Kio

Time: TBA

Friday, 30th April to 3rd May

62nd SMOM Annual International Lourdes

Pilgrimage

Venue: Lourdes, France

Time: Full Duration

Thursday, 24th June

Mass Birth of St John the Baptist & fellowship

Venue: Mt Alvernia Hospital Chapel

Time: 6 pm