

**"IN MATTER OF STYLE, SWIM WITH THE CURRENT;  
IN MATTER OF PRINCIPLE, STAND LIKE A ROCK."**

**—THOMAS JEFFERSON**

*The international experience with the Good Shepherd Sisters in the province of Philippine from 20th May to 19<sup>th</sup> September 2016 gave me a taste of missionary call and inspiration to risk for the mission especially for the welfare of women and girls who are at risk either in their families or at the work place. At the end of my experience I see a kind of transformation in myself especially in terms of the congregational internationality, missionary zeal, a deeper understanding of the modern slavery migration and the human trafficking.*



## **The formation experience and activities I underwent during my international experience**

### **➤ Community experience with Temporary Professed Sisters, International Community**



I had my community experience with the Temporary Professed Sisters at Quezon City and Good Shepherd Sisters in Cebu who are there for theological studies and international experience.

Our internationality brought us together! I cherished their company, friendship, laughter, co-learning and exchange of the life experiences as a Good Shepherd Sister. Being housed in the same building where the Good Shepherd community is, provided me more opportunities to interact with the Sisters and in turn I came to know them



much better. Villa Maria community in Cebu was my second community where I witnessed the parable of the Good Shepherd who goes after the lost sheep in the gospel, as the Sisters went out of the convent in search of people in need especially women and girls who were at risk. The weekly community day was a space to share each one's experiences and challenges in their personal life and in the ministry. I was inspired by the way; the Sisters uphold and support each other in times of need. The unity of the Sisters towards the common goal, the sacred space to respect each other's ideas was an inspiration to me.

➤ **Solidarity exposure  
visit to the Overseas  
Filipino Workers  
(OFWs)**

Living with them for three days enabled me to have a glimpse of their life situation, their difficulties and struggles as OFW. Each one had a bitter story behind the veil of their smiling face. Though we were together physically for three days, in reality we lived in two different worlds. My reality was that after my exposure, I went back to my cozy and comfortable room in the convent enjoying a soft bed and good food. But these migrant women had a life of constant uncertainty, instability and risk. This experience of solidarity with the migrant workers broadened my thinking and enabled me to embrace internationality with its success and failures.



➤ **Ministry experience  
with elderly Sisters  
in Good Shepherd  
Community, Queon  
City. z**





**My experience with the Sisters in Maria Droste Infirmary in the first two weeks was a memorable one. The Sisters who had laboured in the Shepherd's vineyard were now resting and praying for the Sisters and the various missionary endeavors of the province and the congregation. Their smiling faces in spite of their physical illness and pain and their never-ending stories of the adventurous active and contemplative life gave me a better understanding of today's reality.**

### **➤ Community and ministry experience in Cebu**



**The programs of prevention of the human trafficking, 'Welcome House' the drop in center for the women who are engaged in bars and prostitution, 'Recovery Center' a shelter home for the healing and education for the victims of the human trafficking and an**

**'After Care Center' a home for the rehabilitation and job placement provide a lot of opportunities for women and girls to regain their dignity, to become confident in themselves and thus to restart their life with better orientation.**

**My experience in these five centers and the outreach program to different bars in the Cebu City enriched me with a better understanding of the women and girls who are trafficked. Sometimes I tended to judge them but I came to understand that there were many circumstances which forced them to lead this kind of life like:- poverty, family problems,**





unemployment and physical and sexual abuse in the early childhood.

On the other side, I was happy to see some of the survivors of the human trafficking who were helped by the Good Shepherd programme, taking courses on Social Work and aspiring to dedicate their lives in helping girls and women at risk. I carry them in my heart and I am united with them in their journey towards healing, regaining their self-respect, and reclaiming their dignity as persons who are “of more value than the whole world.”

The Sisters, the lay mission partners and the people whom I encountered were people with vision. The scripture passage that always inspired me was John: 15; 8 “Remain in me”. They were words of encouragement whenever I faced uncertainties in life. Indeed He has been journeying with me.

I express my deep sentiments of gratitude to God Almighty for this wonderful opportunity, the protection and care I experienced during this time of journey, also to the Congregational leadership team, the Province leadership team and Sr. Mariam Kulangara, the directress who gave me adequate preparation, prior to my departure for my international experience in Philippines.

I am grateful to the Good Shepherd Sisters in Philippines for giving me this four month period of time which was an opportunity to have a meaningful and challenging international experience. It strengthened my vocation and certainly it was an invitation to discern my missionary call. This experience allowed me to be immersed in the realities of Good Shepherd life and mission in another country. It also enabled me to experience dialogue of cultures and challenges in diversity.

*Sr. Hemalatha Boddu*

