



OUR SOCIAL MISSION

BY CARITAS SINGAPORE COMMUNITY COUNCIL

“I always tell my son, you don’t have to be lawyer, doctor or whatever - be honest, that’s all I ask you. Whether you are a storeman or just a sweeper, I don’t care. It’s still respectable. It’s something, an honest living, you know.”

— ONE MOTHER’S HOPE.

“Sometimes I feel like committing suicide but I can’t do it because my children are important to me. If anything happens to me, they won’t have a father or mother. I can’t let this happen to them.”

— A DIVORCED MOTHER, WORKING AS A CLEANER TO MAKE ENDS MEET.



Mothers' hopes and children's dreams

All of us can cope with despair today only because we believe there is hope for our future. More than most people, mothers from poor and marginalised families live in hope. But what are their hopes? What are their children's dreams? How often do we ask and how well do we listen when they tell us? We may be surprised.

One mother says: “My daughter is in the Express Stream and she is reasonably okay. I can only think of educating her and letting her become a nurse as that’s her dream, to serve the sick.”

More often than not, mothers see beyond conventional notions of success and hope for solid values for their children.

Another mother says: “I always tell my elder son, I don’t push you all in your studies. You don’t have to be lawyer, doctor or whatever - be honest, that’s all I ask you. Whether you are a storeman or just a sweeper, I don’t care. It’s still respectable. It’s something, an honest living, you know. But if ever my son does well, of course I will be happy. Hopefully he won’t be the kind to forget his mother.”

Even in the face of an uncertain future, mothers value independence for vulnerable children. The mother of a son living with a mental illness says: “I only hope my two children grow up

well and will be able to make their own living.”

Sometimes, mothers learn that their children have their own ways to realise their parents’ hopes. A mother recalls: “My daughter was telling me, ‘Mummy,

I want to be a psychologist’. I said, ‘I don’t want you to be a psychologist, I want you to be a business woman so that when you are successful, you can help many people. There’s a children’s home where the children are very poor. They don’t have a father or mother, you can help them. Go and help them when you earn. There are so many things you can do, as long as you do good.’ My daughter said, ‘Mummy, you are wrong, it’s not only a business woman who can help people. Psychologists can help people too. You know, in daily life, many people are very stressed and I will be able to talk to them, so they can live a normal life’.”

These mothers shared their hopes and their children’s dreams about two years ago (Caritas Singapore, Catholic Welfare Services & Society of St Vincent de Paul, *Study of the Poor*). They were not alone. Many other mothers also shared; some

Pope Francis told a group of students in June: “Poverty calls us to sow hope. Poverty today is a cry. We all have to think if we can become a little poorer, all of us have to do this. How can I become a little poorer in order to be more like Jesus, who was the poor Teacher?” The mothers in our midst may have some of the answers.

simple and direct while others were quite eloquent. It was clear that often, it is the children and the children’s tomorrow that keeps distressed mothers going.

Devastated by her divorce and struggling with asthma and diabetes, one mother worked as a cleaner for \$600 a month to send three younger children to school.

“I don’t feel bored but I do feel lonely at times. But what to do? It’s my fate. Sometimes, I feel like committing

suicide but I can’t do it because my children are important to me. If anything happens to me, they won’t have a father or mother. I can’t let this happen to them,” she said.

A stay-at-home mother whose

husband worked as a security guard for \$1,200 said:

“Sometimes, I feel that day in and out, I do the same things. There’s nothing really to motivate me. I need the energy to keep up with my youngest son. For my life to be different, I would like to work and bring in some income but I don’t think it’s possible because I still have to raise an eight-year-old boy.”

Will these mothers’ hopes be realised? How close are their children’s dreams to being fulfilled? Even when their hopes are not realised or their children’s dreams turn into ashes, mothers don’t give up easily on their children.

A mother whose eldest son was in prison for the third time said: “Given our medical condition, we are not sure what will happen to us. The eldest is in prison... I hope my eldest son will stay out of trouble. He is a good son. When he sees my condition, he will do something to help. He will go and work in a coffee shop at night, or wash cars, earn some money and give it to me.”

If we can feel with her and with all mothers, as individuals, families and organisations, we too will never give up. We will water the seeds of hope they have sown so that we can share their joy when their gardens bloom. Only then can we say that we have sown hope after listening to the cry of poverty.