The Social Mission Conference 2016
Witness to Mercy, Bearer of Compassion

Held on 13 August 2016 at the Performing Arts Centre, Catholic Junior College, the conference drew 540 participants, speakers and invited guests.

Highlights of the Day

Welcome
Ms Janet Ang, Chairman of Caritas Singapore welcomed all to the conference and helped set the context and focus for the conference. She also shared on her experiences in the pre-conference programmes where she and other participants had the opportunity to spend time with the beneficiaries of our member organisations.
Address by Archbishop William Goh
His Grace elaborated on Christian Charity and the need for spiritual formation and the experience of mercy for our social workers and those involved in social mission work. We need to have a heart of the poor, to live among them and to understand them.

‘Realities of Poverty’ Segment
Mr Zainal Bin Sapari talked about the challenges of low-wage workers and how they are vulnerable to unfair contract terms and out-sourcing as a business strategy in Singapore. The income gap is widening and there is a real need for more initiatives directed to help
low-wage workers. Both service-providers and service consumers can make a difference to low-wage workers in our decisions and actions.

Associate Professor Teo You Yen talked about the Care-Gaps experienced by lower income families and single-parent families. These families struggle with work-life balance and in ensuring the care and well-being of their school-going children. There is a real need to relook and rethink the childcare provision for them, the requirements needed to qualify for subsidies and how we as a community could help to reduce the care-gaps experienced by these families.
Mr Jonathan Chang, Executive Director of Lien Centre for Social Innovation highlighted the challenges and realities faced by the elderly and people with physical disabilities. He shared some statistics and the stories of those who are elderly and living alone as well as the people with physical disabilities and the care-support needs. More innovative services and products are needed to address their needs.

Dr Christopher Cheok, Vice-chairman of the Medical Board of the Institute of Mental Health highlighted the problems of mental illness in Singapore. He provided statistics from the mental health studies done in Singapore and gave all a better understanding of the different types of mental issues. There is a need for greater awareness of the challenges faced by these persons struggling with mental health illness and to remove the stigma associated with these. As a society, we can support these persons by encouraging them to go seek for help and to provide community help for them.
Panel Conversation moderated by Mr Laurence Lien
Cardinal Tagle shared on the theme of the conference ‘Witness to Mercy, Bearer of Compassion’. He said what makes us witnesses is because we have seen, heard and touched the mercy of God. Have we seen this also in the poor, whose lives and survival is a witness to the mercy of God? The Mercy of God is the meeting point of 2 streams – Compassion and Fidelity, and it is at this point that we find mercy. Compassion is not a fleeting emotion but a real and committed connectedness to one another. Can we in Singapore have a culture of compassion? People should not have to earn to be loved.
Breakout Track Segments

The 6 breakout tracks – Care-givers, Elderly, Low-Wage Workers, People with Physical Disabilities, People with mental Health issues and Single-parent families – provided the opportunities for Member Organisations involved in the work of mercy to share their experiences of journeying with those in need and for participants to share their experiences and suggestions for follow-up actions. Each track provided 2 main follow up actions. Those interested to work on these actions signed up with the conference organisers for the post-conference discussion meetings.
ELDERLY

Sharing & Discussion Focus:
1. What are the needs and challenges of the Elderly?
2. Share what you have done to help them?
3. Share your faith experience in journeying with the poor (for education, vocation, etc.)
4. What actions can be taken to meet the needs and challenges of the Elderly?

SNIC 2019 - "Witness to Ministry among the Elderly"
SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES

To be a Bearer of Compassion
Personal Reflection and Commitment:
What would I like to do to respond to the needs, issues and suggested actions raised in our discussion?
Am I interested to attend a follow-up session to join other like-minded persons to explore the possible initiatives to help those in need?

LOW WAGE WORKERS

1. What are the needs and challenges of the low-wage workers?
2. What can I do to help support them?
3. How can I be more sensitive to the needs and concerns of low-wage workers?

MAC 2016 "Letters to Mercy, Bearer of Compassion"
Wrap Up and Closing

Ms Janet Ang helped to give a summary of the follow up actions suggested by the different tracks. She also shared the programmes and initiatives of Caritas Singapore and updated all on the happenings, services and programmes made available in Agape Village to help those in need.

Final Blessings and Hymn
Exhibition
And a big heartfelt ‘Thank You’ to our Volunteers!

And our ever-energetic Emcee, Ms Helen Choo!