

VINTAGE WINES IN THE LORD'S VINEYARD

The Franciscan Missionaries of Mary glorify the Lord for the 60 years of service of Sr. Agatha Ferng, and 50 years subsequently for Srs. Theresa Lee and Bernadette Yap.



Sr. Agatha Ferng Meow Fong, aged 85, joined the FMM's in September 1957, four years after the Province was established in Singapore. She remembers affectionately her peer group of Srs. Jane Koh, Assunta Therese and Theresa Tan [Sr. Eileen of the Cross].

Agatha's parents were Catholics, though their children were baptised after an incident during the Japanese war in which Agatha's father was saved. After Middle III in Perak Girls' Chinese school, Agatha attended a Convent School to learn English in order to get a job. A French priest put her in touch with the then new congregation, the FMM's in Petaling Jaya, who could speak Chinese. She was met at the Railway station in Kuala Lumpur by Mother Chrysanthe. Agatha stayed on without returning home, which prompted her father to visit. He was satisfied to know she was happy living with the Sisters.

Agatha is a woman of many 'firsts'. She was in the first group of novices who moved from Petaling Jaya to help prepare the novitiate building in Singapore. She was also among the first to help prepare the foundation of the FMM mission in Kota Bharu in 1962, in an almost Muslim environment, a mission closest to her heart. It was here that she made her Final Profession.

Agatha's forte is in Accounting. She holds an LCCC certificate. For years, she would travel around the FMM communities to serve with great patience. Now at 85, she faithfully serves at the door and the phone. Keeping close to God is most important, letting Him lead her 'home'.



NO STRANGERS IN MY LIFE"

This sums up the ethos of Sr. Theresa Lee. Everywhere she feels at home with people. It gives with her love for the internationality in the Institute of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, where sisters of different countries, races and nationalities live together: diverse yet one.

Theresa joined the FMM's on the 14th of March 1967. She was inspired by the missionary zeal of Srs. Leonora Pau and Malia Kiang at the mobile clinic at Mandai, to do good for others. She was attracted to the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament through her elder sister, Sr. Maria Lee.

At 74, Theresa still lives her life joyfully in acceptance of the ministries she is sent to do. In charge of the Aetelier, where church vestments are designed and sewn, her apostolate extends from ecumenical links with priests, pastors, bishops, and those who come to order vestments, to giving a listening ear and heart to the broken-hearted who come unexpectedly.

Her most significant mission was among the aborigines in the bush at Mt. Isa, Australia. She loved her ministry of providing for their basic human needs. Sometimes, she experienced "angels on my road": persons who protected her during unexpected dangers.

Uppermost for her now, as she celebrates 50 years of giving, is enjoying God's faithfulness and love, with good health as long as God provides. Each new day is a bonus from the Lord.



JOINING THE FMM CONGREGATION WAS LIKE WEARING SHOES THAT FIT.... is how Sr. Bernadette Yap Poh Hin described her first contact with the Sisters. What drew her were their daily Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, the kindness and simplicity of the Sisters, and their attractive religious dress.

Bernadette was baptised in 1961, and joined the Sisters 6 years later. Before that, she did clerical work in an advertising department run by her uncle. She studied commerce at Hai Sing Dewasa. Her most memorable apostolates at this time were visiting the poor in Bukit Ho Swee, caring for the needs of poor girls there, and teaching Sunday School at St. Bernadette's church to non-Catholic students. She was also involved with the Young Christian Workers and Young Christian Students.

As an FMM, she visited the sick while continuing to teach Catechism. It was sad to see patients with cancer. But it was a joy at the end to see their acceptance and letting go.

Now at 76, she cannot thank God enough for these 50 years of her journey with Him and for His blessings, especially during her stay in Toa Payoh among the elderly with whom she experienced mutual help. She was happy when "God gave me back my life" after serious illness, to continue to do what the Lord wants of her. Her desire to reach her Golden Jubilee has been granted! She has no regrets in having responded to her calling. The Eucharist sustains and strengthens her in her apostolates.