

Hong Kong Catholic Works of Mercy

Second in a Series

“The Least of My Little Ones”

By Richard Core

Twelve-year old, cherub-faced Chan Yuk-king who was dressed in a simple green dress, stood smiling in the doorway, listening to the music coming from a radio across the street. She did not even notice the priest who was slowly ascending the outside stone staircase leading to the house.

Her feet seemed restless, as though they wanted to dance.

“You look so happy. Yuk-king?”

“I am, Father. I just got out of jail today.”

“And now?”

“Now I am waiting for Sister to ask if she will take me back to the Club.”

The child had reference to the Poor Girls' Club in the Kin Doo section of Hong Kong, which is run by Sister Mary Famula, a Maryknoll Sister.

Every day of the week, including Sundays, the Club meets and Sister Mary Famula is assisted by an older Catholic girl who belongs to the Cathedral's Legion of Mary.

On account of lack of personnel and limited funds, the Club can take care of about 40 youngsters. Most of the Legion of Mary girls either hold jobs in town or attend college and middle school, and hence their time is scarce.

Some of the 40 children in the Club are orphans, the fathers and mothers of a few are humble day labourers who work on contract jobs; others are amahs, hawkers, barbers, and a couple who used to work for the trams in town are now without employment.

Magdalene Poon is a 19-year-old member of the Legion of Mary who spends every afternoon with the children. Magdalene teaches the girls simple ABC's, a bit of English now and again, better to prepare them for jobs later on; then there are periods which Magdalene devotes to the fundamentals of Catholic doctrine, sewing, weaving, drawing and games.

Some part of each day Magdalene and two other Legion of Mary members go to visit the girls' homes. Each child, Magdalene finds, has different problems, different home background.

Chan Yuk-king, for example, at times runs into trouble with the Police. Yuk-king's mother has seven mouths to feed. She had a license for peddling eggs only, but one day after Christmas Yuk-king stepped up the family sales by selling a few vegetables on the side. Her unlicensed enterprise, however, ended by seven days in jail, for hawking without a license.

Another child in Sister Mary Famula's Poor Girls Club is Lei Shuk-ching. She came around the other day with tear filled eyes.

Would Sister make arrangements to see her into some nice family as a servant girl? Or, maybe a younger brother then?

The other six children in the Lei family?

“They have been sold, Sister. My parents are too poor to feed so many,” said Shuk-ching.

Magdalene Poon says that she finds great consolation in going home with the children to visit. Little Tse Lan-fong took Magdalene's hand last Monday as they walked down the steep incline to “Hogan's Alley” where Lan-fong lives with her sister-in-law and an old Grannie.

“Grannie is totally blind,” Magdalene reports. “But since we've been coming to visit her, her spirits have picked up. A short while ago she was thinking of killing herself.”

“She looks forward to our coming now and seems so happy to have a friend come to visit her. I tried to teach her something about Catholic doctrine each week. But on the following week she would feel so ashamed because her aged mind could remember nothing that I had mentioned.”

“Last week when I went to see her again with Lan-fong, old Grannie was bubbling with joy. She happily announced to me that that at last she could bless herself!”

The 220 odd students at Holy Spirit School on Caine Road where the Club has its headquarters, are not Catholic children for the most part. Their generosity towards their less fortunate sisters is really exemplary.

They have regularly supplied the money for the Club's evening lunch, provided costumes for plays, paid and assisted in several midweek bus trips for the Club to a beach house beyond West Point. At a recent Christmas party given for the Club, they not only paid for it but served the food graciously as they would have to Our Lord Himself.

Do You Know Characters?

