

A musical on St. Mary Euphrasia I heard!

Sounds interesting. A Malaysia production. Boleh!

Needless to say, the initial dates and plans by individual groups to watch this musical didn't pan out. There was a desire in us and we held onto hope. Then with prayers and hope, another possibility opened up. One Yes, two Yes, three Yeses... and suddenly, a motley group of musical pilgrims was formed.

After I said my Yes, I sat down to reflect that night and thought, "What did I just get myself into?" Group travel has its own scary dynamics... Traveling with real nuns for the first time... Hmm... the itinerary for this three-day musical outing looks like a retreat. Ok... I'll roll with it.

Deep down, I was hoping to get a glimpse into the Good Shepherd outreaches in Kuala Lumpur (KL). All the way there, would be nice to see some real action. Unfortunately, there are restrictions and all sisters in the KL community will be engaged to help with the musical. So it was tough...

No worries, stay open and let the spirit lead. I have faith that the spirit will surprise us. Meanwhile, prayers aplenty. Behind the scenes, Sr. Fiona and Dionne didn't give up and kept knocking on doors...

The days past... and suddenly, Sr. Fiona came back with proposals to visit the kindergarten and shelter. Woah! I was stoked! What an opportunity! Due to time constraints, we had to drop the kindergarten but the shelter visit is a must! See, the spirit did not disappoint.

D-day came. Met the gals that evening and like all retreats, we came as we are and were all in a different space as we embark on our journey together.

The next day over brunch, I realised indeed what a motley group we were; Religious Sisters, novice, lay collaborators, lay and secular missionaries and a fellow Muslim sister. All of us came together in fellowship, to break bread, as we share the common love for God, one another and good food. That meal was lovely for the appetites, laughter, stories shared and bonds formed.

Evening came and we hopped into a Grab, blessed with a resourceful driver who was very determined to bring us to the venue. While settling into the performance hall, there was anticipation and excitement in the air.



I knew little about St. Mary Euphrasia's early life before the musical and left the hall with new appreciation and respect for her parents. The family reunion at the closing scene moved and remained with me after it was all over. I pondered:

- Would St. Mary Euphrasia be the person she turned out to be had it not been for the nurturing ways of her parents who led by example, and even encouraged her vocation?

- Would her parents have guessed their little angel of a daughter would be a Saint one day, who bravely challenged the church authorities of her time, founded a new order, touched the lives of many and shaped the way convents are run till this day?
- Would I have the courage to do as St. Mary Euphrasia did, when faced with the many challenges of life?

Lots in life are easier said than done. Swimming against the tide, being counter culture in our world, requires lots of courage and faith. There is consolation in the knowledge that we are never alone in our pilgrimage of life with many potholes and entrapments. But how often can that consolation be felt in the depths of immense desolation?

On the morning of our departure, we finally got to visit the convent and the shelter. Following the frenzy of a musical weekend, it's back to business for the rest of the community at the convent and the shelter. After St. Mary Euphrasia's ministry was brought up and viewed in the lime light of a dazzling stage for a weekend, the real back breaking work continues.



The residents in the shelter have come a long hard way to end up at where they are today. I am sure none of them had planned for a stay in this accommodation, for it is certainly not meant as a holiday camp. At that point in time, our motley group of musical pilgrims are 9 hours away from the comforts of our own home, bed and loved ones. In retrospect, the residents are months or even years away from the freedom of home.

St Mary Euphrasia had her parents as role models who nurtured her with love and dignity during her childhood. The adult residents and children in the shelter would probably lacked that comforting role model growing up. As they attempt to repair the pieces of their lives together, I am reminded of the many times I have to repair my own pieces too. Let me not forget to look upon Jesus, our Good Shepherd, as He calls home His flock, who recognises His voice.

In the past, I had secretly hope to be that one lost sheep, because the sole attention by Jesus seems gratifying. Well, I have learnt to never hope for it now, as it is not fun being lost.

The abuse and trafficking in our real world has never stopped from Euphrasia's time. World sounds too big a word... Malaysia suddenly seems too far away... Try look into my very own backyard, Singapore, and the same exists.

Closing an eye and ignoring the elephant in the room does not mean the abuse and human trafficking will go away. Often, I hear stories and news of maids and individuals being abused, fellow

human being exploited. Without looking too far, have I done anything individually, as part of a first world society to stop the injustice, or even to reach out to the needy? Have I been courageous enough to speak up?

The family module is an important role model for our next generation. If the adults in the family are genuinely loving and life giving, our next generation will observe and generally follow that role model. However, if the adults in the family are abusive and a bad role model, that is what our next generation will probably emulate too.

The ball is in my, and our court.

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