



Newsletter – March 2020

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INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 8 MARCH 2020

Background

The earliest Women Day observance, called “National Women’s Day” was held on 28 February 1909, in New York, organized by the Socialist Party of America at the suggestion of activist Theresa Malkiel. In August 1910, delegates (100 women from 17 countries) at an International Socialist Women’s Conference agreed to establish an annual Women’s Day to promote equal rights including suffrage for women. The following year on 19 March 1911, the International Women’s Day (IWD) was marked for the first time by over a million people in Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland. The United Nations began celebrating International Women’s Day in the International Women’s Year, 1975. In 1977, the United Nations General Assembly invited member states to proclaim 8 March as the UN Day for women’s rights and world peace. The theme for 2020 is “I am Generation Equality. Realizing Women’s Rights.”

Message from Pope Francis in 2020

On 1 January 2020, Pope Francis spoke about violence against women during his homily at St Peter’s Square. He said “The rebirth of humanity began from a woman. Women are sources of life. Yet they are continually insulted, beaten, raped, forced to prostitute themselves and to suppress the life they bear in the womb. Every form of violence inflicted upon a woman is a blasphemy against God, who was born of a woman. Humanity’s salvation came forth from the body of a woman: we can understand our degree of humanity by how we treat a woman’s body. How often are women’s bodies sacrificed on the profane altars of advertising, of profiteering, of pornography, exploited like a canvas to be used. Yet women’s bodies must be freed from consumerism; they must be respected and honoured. Theirs is the most noble flesh in the world, for it conceived and brought to light the love that has saved us! In our day, too, motherhood is demeaned, because the only growth that interests us is economic growth. There are mothers who risk difficult journeys desperately seeking to give a better future to the fruit of their womb, yet are deemed redundant by people with full stomachs but hearts empty of love.”

Message from WMCW in 2020

On the occasion of the International Women’s Day (8 March), World Movement for Christian Workers (WMCW) declared that WMCW are ready to face to any attempt to excuse, cover up or justify the violence against women and girls in different forms. They said they will make every effort to promote the dignity of women (Message written by the National Coordination, MCW, Mali, Africa).

Situation in Singapore

Here in Singapore, there are a number of legislation to deal with any breach of the women’s rights. Some of them are the Women’s Charter, Children and Young Persons Act, Penal Code and Protection from Harassment Act. The authorities are able to reduce considerably the offences committed against women.

Statistics from Ministry of Social And Family Development website:

Years	2012	2014	2016	2018
Offences				
Rape	138	166	151	-
Outrage of modesty	1417	1365	1267	-
PPO/EO/DEO	2334	2194	2130	1875

Abbreviations: PPO – Personal Protection Order; EO – Expedited Order; DEO – Domestic Exclusion Order

From the INTERNATIONAL VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN SURVEY (Report on Singapore) 2013, it was estimated that, across the adult lifetime, 90.8 per cent of women did not experience any violence, and:

- 5 per cent experienced physical violence only;
- 2.3 per cent experienced sexual violence only; and
- 1.9 per cent experienced both physical and sexual violence, in the same or separate incidents.

nearly one in ten of the 2,006 women (9.2%) reported having experienced at least one incident of violence by a man in their adult lifetime (i.e. since age 16 years).

The Uniqueness of Women

The Church teaches that all human beings, man or woman are created in the image of the one God and equally endowed with rational souls, all have the same nature and the same origin. Redeemed by the sacrifice of Christ, all are called to participate in the same divine beatitude: all therefore enjoy an equal dignity. However equal

dignity does not mean sameness – that would not be respecting the uniqueness of womanhood if society or even the women themselves expect women to do the same thing as men for each gender have a different calling to complement each other. In respecting that difference, the physiologically stronger gender must treat the weaker gender with care and love that is due to a creature that shares in the image and likeness of God. It is therefore wrong for any form of violence or unjust treatment of women.

See

1. How bad is the abuse of the women in Singapore?
2. Have you personally witnessed any such incidents?
3. What are the causes?
4. What are the consequences?

Judge

1. What is/are Christ's view/s on the abuse of women's rights?
2. What does the traditions and teachings of the Catholic Church especially the encyclicals say about the status of women and the abuse of the women's rights?

Act

What can I/We as

- a CFSM movement
- an individual CFSM member
- a Christian

do to prevent the abuse of the women and uplift and protect their rights?

A Birthday Celebration

On 15 February 2020, the CFSM celebrated the 90th birthday of its "Emeritus" Spiritual Director, Fr Andre Christophe, the priest who was instrumental in "rebuilding" the movement after the turbulence of 1987. The event itself was worthy of mention but what added to the drama is that Singapore is going through DORSCON ('Disease Outbreak Response System Condition') Orange, the second highest level of health alert due to the outbreak of COVID-19. Just the day before, Archbishop of Singapore made the unusual measure to suspend all public masses.. Here we have a group of people looking forward to the birthday celebration, preceded aptly by, mass. The risk is very real, but Fr Christophe and the organisers decided to go ahead after taking additional measures such as a self-declaration, temperature taking and the avoidance of physical contact. Though the organisers assured all members it is understandable not to turn up, some 90 well-wishers turned up at the event.

Born on 19 Feb 1930, Andre Christophe left his beloved country to bring the light of Christ to Singapore as an MEP (Société des Missions étrangères de Paris) priest; he

braved the long journey, turmoil of a young country and assimilation into foreign culture(s) to bring the Faith to us. Members paid tribute to this French priest who worked tirelessly and unabashedly to bring the movement to the people. Old and young alike wished him happy birthday, thanked him for his shepherding and paid tribute to him for his labour. The old included members of the YCW who “progressed” to CFSM and the young include children of CFSM members (2nd –generation members of CFSM) some of whom have gone into social work fulfilling the very social element of the movement. The “birthday boy” himself was happy, because it is an event to give thanks to the Almighty God for all His blessings.

Dear Father Christophe

CFSM Singapore wishes you good health and God’s peace and joy every day on your 90th birthday. Take care, Father. We love you.

Note: CFSM Exco wishes to express its thanks and gratitude to all attendees and to all persons who helped in one way or another to make this occasion a success.



Upcoming Events

Feast of St Joseph, The Worker

Date: Friday, 1 May 2020 (Public Holiday)

Time: 10am to 1pm

Venue: St Francis Xavier Major Seminary, Upper Bukit Timah Road