



Newsletter – June 2020

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Homelessness

SEE

A study in Singapore stated that as at 8 November 2019, there were about 1,000 people living on the streets of Singapore. Highest levels of homelessness were found in areas such as Bedok, Kallang and in the City. Most of these people are male and about half of the total were estimated to be in their 50s or older. Approximately a third were either separated, divorced, or widowed. Many of the homeless people were also single. What is surprising is that a news report dated 31 December 2019 stated that Singapore boasts one of the highest rates of home ownership in the world. The news report stated that in 2018, the rate stood at 91%. Another surprising feature of this segment of the population is that many are employed and working but homeless. However, they earn low wages and the jobs are irregular and most of the time daily – rated. The median wage of an employed homeless worker is about S\$1,400. These jobs are usually found in the Cleaning, Security and Retail industries. These workers have lower skills and educational levels. During a pandemic such as the present Covid-19 situation or during an economic recession they can easily lose their jobs and thus they lose the low wages that they are earning. Some of these homeless people are young people and some are young families with children.

It is heartening to note that there are some organizations actively assisting the homeless population in Singapore such as the Crisis Shelters funded by the Ministry of Social and Family Development, Transitional Shelters and PEERS Network. (PEERS is Partners Engaging and Empowering Rough Sleepers).

Singapore government has instituted a Circuit Breaker from 7 April 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic here. Everyone is ordered to stay at home except the essential industries and there are severe limits on movement of people within the country. Those who breach the orders will be punished. In this situation, more organizations such as churches and mosques have come forward to assist the homeless population who are in a dilemma as they encounter the Covid-19 precautionary measures. They need to stay at home but they do not have a home. The temporary shelters are filling up fast to full capacity and there is a continuing need to look for more shelters.

Causes and Consequences

The above picture has shown us some of the reasons why there are these homeless people. With the low income, those who have houses could not afford to pay the rent or mortgage instalments for their houses. When they lose their causal jobs due to recessions or pandemics like Covid-19, the situation turns dire and they end up without any homes. Studies have shown that some of these people are homeless for many years. Some refuse to stay in a shelter with others who are strangers to them. Some quarrel with their co-tenants and leave the shelter for parks, beaches or the roads for the night. Moreover, with our aging population, it is not easy to manage our senior citizens as their have their own peculiar character traits.

Every individual or family needs a home. This is a basic need as we respect their human dignity.

JUDGE

1. How can a Christian assist in such a situation? To friend? To stranger?
2. Do the gospels and the teaching of the Catholic Church reflect on these issues?
3. To what extent must we help our neighbour?

ACT

How can we assist a homeless person, whether a friend or a stranger in the following roles:

- a. As a CFMS member?
- b. As a Movement?

Sources:

- (1) "The Big Read: Digitally estranged, seniors struggle with a sense of displacement in pandemic-hit offline world" – CNA – 4 May 2020
- (2) "About 1,000 homeless people live on Singapore's streets: Study"- CNA – 8 November 2019
- (3) "Hidden in plain sight: Tackling homelessness in "crazy rich" Singapore" – ASEAN Today – 31 December 2019

Gentle Reminder

Members who have not paid their subscription to our Movement for Year 2020 are advised hand in their subscriptions to our Treasurer together with the duly completed subscription forms. You can also make donations with the subscriptions. The Movement wishes to thank once again all its members for the support and care that it receives from all members every year.