

Journeying with Youth: Reflection on the MAGIS Program in Taunggyi, Myanmar

(Elizabeth Ja Seng Hkawn and Sisca FCJ)

At the recent World Youth Day in Panama, Pope Francis emphasized the culture of encounter as a call inviting us to be courageous and to keep alive a shared dream that has a place for everyone. In response to this call, students and staff of MLI attended the MAGIS program in Taunggyi from 11-18 April 2019, where we discussed our shared dreams in the context of Myanmar. It was a joy to walk alongside youth, listen to their stories and glimpse the future with them. Our understanding and experience of Ignatian spirituality, companionship and service were deepened.

Elizabeth Ja Seng Hkawn, MLI student, wrote this reflection after attending the program:

“During the MAGIS program, I had a pilgrimage, walking for about 95 kilometers from Loi Lem to Taunggyi. I felt nervous and worried because I was not supposed to bring any money or a mobile phone except for emergencies, but I survived. For me, the pilgrimage made me realize that what I do and my entire being are for God alone. When our group encountered challenges and struggles during the pilgrimage, especially when we had to beg for food, water and shelter, I learnt the values of trust, teamwork and communication. The people we met during the tiring walk were generous, they gave us what we needed which made us strong enough to reach our destinations. We experienced walking with the Lord during the pilgrimage and built companionship in the group. It was an experience of God’s providence and companionship. Every single day and moment of my life is a special gift from God which I receive with gratitude. I am reminded not to be discouraged by the challenges we face along our journey. I can rely on God’s providence and companionship through the people around me.”

Youth is a time for making significant decisions as well as the beginning of fulfilling dreams. However, today's challenges can easily weaken the spirit of the young: uncertainty of relationships in the era of multimedia, lack of opportunities for work, increasing instances of political violence, drug abuse and lack of care for the environment. While these challenges make it difficult to map where youth can build supportive relationships, it is imperative to share our time, energy, companionship and relevant resources to help them achieve their shared dreams.

With the recent Apostolic Preferences citing particularly the need to walk with youth, we are encouraged in our service to young people to equip them with resources, develop their ability to adapt and give them opportunities to learn and support their faith formation. These efforts require of us a strong commitment and fidelity to support young people in building a future filled with hope.



Elizabeth Ja Seng Hkawn(wearingglasses and red hat) with friends during the pilgrimage.

