

# Buckets for Jesus brings souls to Christ



Clockwise from above: Sinulog Festival to honour the Black Nazarene (Baby Jesus) went on for 12 hours on 17 January in Cebu; Ruby Soh hands 'buckets' containing Bibles, toiletries and some snacks to inmates at Lapulapu Jail in Cebu, which has 800 male inmates and 100 female inmates; street kids living in slums look forward weekly to being feed in mind, body and spirit, the girl holding the infant looks after boy; Mick Soh joined the cause to evangelise while Sinulog festival in Cebu (above) went on; street children were taught the Word of God, learn to pray and know Jesus. BfJ consisted of kids' Bibles and slippers (thongs) as they were barefooted.

PHOTOS: RUBY SOH

By ANTHONY BARICH  
National Reporter

WHILE praying once, an image popped into Ruby Soh's head of a sea of buckets, each containing a Bible and basic necessities. At first confused as to what this meant, she felt God was calling her to take them to the poor in the Philippines, her country of birth.

Campaigning for buckets, Ruby – a member of the Disciples of Jesus Covenant Community based at Osborne Park – and her family raised 5000 buckets plus hundreds of Bibles, Rosaries and donations and visited three prisons in Manila and Cebu from 11-25 January.

The Bibles were in the local Talalog and Cebuano dialects, while the 'buckets' also contained some basic toiletries, according to their requests based on their needs, and some snacks, while the street children in the slums received footwear like thongs, or slippers as they're called locally.

Since the Sohs and their companions left, Ruby has heard that attendance of street children at the local Disciples of Jesus events has doubled and continues to grow.

"It's encouraging to know that people want to know more about God's Word and want to have their Bibles at home. It appears Buckets for Jesus will have to keep going," Ruby told The Record.

She said donations have continued to flood in since their return to Perth.

The adults in the slums requested food and basic necessities like rice, canned food and other basic requirements. Up to 70 per cent of the local population lives in slum-like conditions.

They found 1800 inmates (the local term used for people not yet convicted of what they've been charged with) aged 18 to over 60, crowded into cells no larger than 20 square metres that house up to 70 inmates each.

With no room to lie down and sleep, inmates took turns sleeping on the floor. Some had been there for up to 10 years – without trial.

Yet when Ruby, her husband Michael, son Mick, 20 and daughter Kamila, 18, visited the prisons, led by prison chaplain Fr Jose Aguas, they got the distinct sense that the inmates felt loved when previously they did not. The chaplain and the 20 others from around the world who ended up joining them on the prison mission led charismatic praise and worship, which proved so powerful it moved Ruby's family to tears.

"The inmates felt so loved when we visited them, they told us that they saw God's face in us and treasured their buckets with Bibles and basic necessities so much that they started reading them immediately and wore the Rosaries we gave them around their necks," said Ruby, who was born in Dabao City in the Philippines.

"The praise and worship that followed from the inmates was so powerful, it brought us to tears ... they sounded so spirit-filled that the praise and worship in our own church back in Perth would be put to shame.

"It's amazing how people in such miserable conditions can still praise the Lord mightily."

Utilising their local contacts with the Philippines-based Disciples of Jesus community and the Missionaries of God's Love Religious fraternity, they also gave the 'Buckets for Jesus' to the poorest of the poor living in the slums, to street children, orphanages, aged care centres and to hospitals.

Lucille Ebrado, the nanny of Ruby's children while her family lived in Singapore where their children were born, is now the Manila director for global outreach organisation Youth With a Mission, who helped set them up to minister to the prisons.

There also appeared to be something distinctly providential in the way their mission panned out.

The officer who approved their request for excess baggage allowance resigned from the job with Malaysian Airlines once they arrived, yet all 10 pieces of their luggage worth 148kg went through free of charge. Despite her rusty

ability to speak local dialects of Tagalog and Cebuano, Ruby was able to give testimony to evangelise in the spoken dialects and the prisoners understood what she said.

"At first we were scared, but when we allowed the Lord to take over, He used our faith to move the hearts of the inmates and miracles

started to happen. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit led to the most powerful praise and worship we have ever experienced," Ruby said.

"A leader in one village told us that they had been praying for Bibles and were amazed how God answered their prayers through us."