

SOMETHING IN ME

Eana leprosy camp in Ban Ma Thuot: in the morning of the first day of my dedicated life, I lived very closely to leprosy disease which separates people from society. I still remember, the first day I walked in the camp with surprise when I was sent to this special environment. Then, with each passing day, I was able to interact, work, and live with patients. My heart has changed a lot.

From fearful and shy look of the day I put my first step into the leprosy camp, I gradually felt their pains and disadvantages when their lives were “made friends” with Hansen’s disease. Mycobacterium leprae bacteria wormed into their bodies, took away parts of their limbs. Their walking is more difficult when they have to depend on crutches, wheelchairs or prosthetic feet. I feel very sorry for them, when I see their feet without toes and not completed toes with bloody bumps. Their hands are no longer able to hold spoon to scoop rice, it seems that they are no longer able to serve themselves in basic activities of life, their faces are rough and disfigured.

Their bodies are in pain because powerful activity of Mycobacterium leprae bacteria destroying their lives day by day. Their physical pain from this disease is scary, but most of all, they are also under mental pressure from prejudiced gaze and discrimination of people in society everywhere and at all times. They are no longer free to go to wherever they want, don’t have same rights as ordinary people. I remember one time when they were sick, and it was so hard to find a hospital or clinic to accept them. Every time they go out, they are very shy because other people are afraid of and rejected them.

The past year I lived with them ended quickly. The love I have for them is less than what I get from them, they teach me the lesson of endurance, resilience, how to accept myself and be satisfied with life, they helped me how to erase the word "distance". They are always optimistic and love life with bright smiles on their faces, they feel close love of others because they are infected with leprosy but their hearts are extremely passionate and warm. I cherish all joys and memories from Christ's suffering people. They are still in need, they need helpful hands from mine and yours, their images and words are imprinted in my heart and prayers. I still owe them when I realize they have taken the disease for me. When I gave bath for the elderly, they uttered simple and touching words: "*Thank you, Sr, since I was a child, my biological mother has never bathed me like this*", "*Thank you.*" Sr, *when this old woman dies I will remember you*". I silently thanked God for this blessed time. Thank you to the patients who have given me joy and meaning in my dedicated life. I believe that the gift they give me will be my equipment so that I can recognize Jesus’s image in the poor and sick. The love that I receive here will be strength to make my footsteps stronger on ways ahead. Thank you all because forever God is full of love.

Eana Leprosy Camp, Ban Ma Thuot