

Newsletter 4 - IJc de Keijzer

Manilla, March 2005

Dear family, friends and congregation,

It's not freezing cold, but 32 degrees Celsius this time! The summer has begun and much has happened since my previous newsletter. High time for me to update you on my latest adventures.

Mission service January 30

Surely I'm looking back at a wonderful service. Great that you all could come out to Wageningen from all parts of the country. When I was walking into the church and saw so many familiar faces, I swallowed for a moment and thought: "Did they really all come for me?" Thank you so much for this wonderful moment. To me it felt like a starting point in a time of saying good bye to all my loved ones.

March 14 trip to Singapore

From out of the snow in Switzerland, where my family and me spend a weekly holiday, to the other side of the world where temperatures are much higher. Saying goodbye was a hard thing to do, but thanks to all friends, family and OMF people whom where there, that made it somewhat easier. Luckily we went with 8 people to Singapore so I didn't have to travel all by myself.

Orientation course

Because of a rebuilding at the OMF center, we had to sleep at the YMCA hostel, however classes were still given at the OMF center. As you can see, staging is made quite differently here. Our group consists of 13 adults, 6 Dutchmen and 4 children. Besides getting to know one another, we had lots of things to do. We got taught a new language. For example, in many Asian languages one word ends in 4 or 5 different consonants. That's why many Asian people swallow the last letters of many English words. Because of all kinds of examples and explanations, it was no longer a burden to learn the language, we got more and more curious about it.

Conflict solutions in an Asian culture

While I'm waiting in line at a store, someone else enters nods at the officer and goes in front of me. If I'd say something I'd be disturbing a relationship. Relationships are more important than whether or not it was I walking in first. Another example;

I was waiting in line at the pharmacy, none of the assistants seem to be really busy, but no one came and offered me help. Another person walked in, called an assistant by her name and got helped right away. I figured: "Let's try and make eye-contact and within 2 minutes I was being helped.

Things are really going differently around here, but once you



Our classroom

get the hang of it, it's actually quite funny: 'it's not strange, just different.' After a busy month, it was time to say good bye again. Everybody went their own way in all parts of Asia.

Manilla: A first impression

Manilla is a very busy city. The mission house and OMF office, where I'm staying now, is situated at a two lane road. Manilla a city of huge contradictions. A nice set of houses and then a slum area. The contrast between poverty and wealth is enormous. Children of the street are trying to make a living out of selling lemonade. However it is not safe to drink. It'll sure take some time to adjust myself to the situation and to find my way in it.

A not so good start

Unfortunately, soon after I arrived I got dystrophy in my hand. So everything went a bit slower then expected. Consequently, hospitals were frequently visited and therefore the ideal places for me to practice my language skills. Also culture wise a perfect place.

Accommodation

Luckily, I found a two-room apartment in a quiet neighborhood in Manilla. The place has been half decorated and furnished, whenever that's done I hope to move in. I'll show you a couple of pictures in my next newsletter. Decorating cost a lot more time than in Holland, but at the same time I get to know more about the Philippines.

Language study

However that'll go I cannot tell you exactly. I've learned my first words already. I definitely need words to get around when traveling by public transport. Philippines drive jeepneys. Jeepneys don't have regular stops, whenever you want to get off you just have to say 'para', which means stop. If the driver doesn't hear you, fellow passengers will make sure that he will or knocking on the roof is another possibility. Surprisingly a lot of people get squeezed in one jeepney, even pigs if necessary. Fellow passengers pass on traveling money until it reaches the driver. It works well.



Jeepney

Iljo de Keijzer



The market - a good place to learn the language