

Newsletter 5 - Ijco de Keijzer

Singapore/Manila September 2005

Dear family, friends and congregation,

Looking back

Starting off in Manila didn't exactly go as planned as I wrote to you in my previous letter. Unfortunately, the pain got worse and medicines couldn't be found to cure or at least lower the pain. The neurologist in Manila sent me to Singapore for further treatment. As you'd all understand that was a huge disappointment for me, even though I knew I couldn't go on like this. In Singapore the efficiency of the doctors really impressed me. I got in the hospital and 2 hours later a brain scan was made. Doctors even work on Saturdays and there are no waiting lists!

I had been in Singapore for 3 months and have been back in Manila for just a few weeks yet. However, I'm enjoying it a lot.

The medication they gave me is sufficient enough. I also have to do some practical exercises, which are meant to help me and lower the pain. I wasn't allowed to move back to my old apartment, I had to find one on the ground floor and I actually did! In case the pain would come back I wouldn't have to climb all those stairs. I'm going to share an apartment with Naomi from England and Janet from the Philippines. It's a three-bedroom bungalow with air-conditioning! We probably won't be using that a lot, because of the high costs. Our house is near by the school, market and supermarket. In short, a nice place to stay. We are all the same age. Janet's Tagalong will be better of course. The more reason for us to practice our language skills. The moving happened recently so pictures have to wait till next time.

Singapore

The transition to Singapore was proving to be big, the complete chaos of Manila opposite structured life in Singapore. I was looking everywhere for a water filter while in Singapore I could drink out of the tap. Despite all this I found a nice Philippine congregation, where I was taken in as the only white person. Going to services regularly, hanging out after church and going to Bible study I was given a culture and language lesson. After a while members became teachers who wanted to teach me something.

Study of language

Fortunately, I was able to continue my language study in between hospital visits. I had a grammar book and tapes with pronunciation on them. In the last month I got a language tutor, who visited me once a week. I'm having exams now and thereby finish off my first term. Things are going pretty well! Of course I make mistakes. One time I was telling about a fish eating a boy instead of the boy eating the fish! The only difference between those 2 sentences is the stress on the verb. That's how important stresses are in the Philippine language!

July 29th

My first birthday on the other side of the world. Spoiled telephone calls from Holland, gifts and birthday cards. I've been out for dinner with friends and even some Dutch people came to visit me. They had even made a birthday cake for me!



Manila, rain

The raining season has begun. The sewerage system isn't working properly and when it rains, it rains! Therefore true rivers will arise and cars get stuck on the side of the road. Children even try to swim. I was walking in such downpour and besides my umbrella I was still soaking wet.

Politics

Politically wise it's a very unstable situation and protests against the ruling president are getting worse.

Car remainder

Manila found a very creative solution to the problem with cars. The last number on the license plate tells you what day you are not allowed to drive your car during rush hour. There are still traffic jams though, but I guess it will help somewhat.

Culture

First birthdays are very important in the Philippines. People rent a big hall to celebrate with family and friends. Maybe 1st birthdays are so highly celebrated because of the high rate of infant mortality.

Christmas

Christmas seems still so far away, but people here have already started their preparations for Christmas. I've seen the first commercial on TV already. Even in supermarkets employees walk around with Christmas hats on. Christmas and 30 degrees Celsius is very unusual for me and I have to get used to that.

Ice cream

It's funny to see the different kind of ice-cream flavors they have here. Like cheese, corn and potato. They also give children ice cream in a sandwich to prevent leaking.



Future plans

I've become more careful about my future plans. I will continue my study of language and especially put what I learn into practice. Hopefully soon, I have to travel to Mindoro to explore my future working area and get acquainted with people there.

Greetings from a very hot and wet Manila,

Iljo de Keijzer

