



First Marist Community in The  
Philippines  
25-08-1998



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## *The First Community in the Philippines (1998)*

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On July 23, 1998, there was an orientation and retreat in Tutu, Taveuni, Fiji for Veronica Lum and Torika Catherine Wong as they prepare for their new mission in the Philippines. Jane Frances O Carroll facilitated this orientation. On August 15 the Feast of the Assumption was the missioning Eucharist for Veronica and Torika.



Their Mission Statement: *As disciples of Jesus and 'chosen' by Mary We Marist Religious women are sent to the Philippines On a mission for Jesus' Kingdom. This mission is doing the 'work of Mary' By enabling Church to be born or re-born, to emerge and or re-emerge; By being present as instruments of God's mercy and compassion, by bringing to those who struggle to believe or belong, to those 'hurting' in any way, the maternal face of God. We recognize that in this corporate mission, we are united with our Sisters who are supporting us and journeying with us. Following the footsteps of Jeanne Marie Chavoin and in solidarity with the Marist Family, with whom we share a common call and tradition, we work in a 'hidden and unknown' manner, collaborating with those who seek to transform society.*

Torika and Veronica arrived in the Philippines on Tuesday, August 25, 1998.

The second arrival was Teresia Raione on August 13, 2000. With Teresia's arrival, they now became a community of three sisters. From being a reference person Torika now becomes the Community Leader, Veronica continued as the Community Bursar, and Teresia is the Vocation Promoter.



On February 2, 2002, Sheila arrives and was the first Filipino aspirant. A special mass in our house, officiated by Fr Larry Sabud, sm was celebrated on February 2, 2022, to mark this historic occasion, followed by a special meal.

Our rented home was located in the heart of Davao City. Just a few meters away from the main road of Davao, we enjoy the peaceful and quiet ambiance of the place. There are about five old and almost dilapidated houses in our row and another five on the other side and we are in the second to the last house. The Marist Fathers rented those houses for ten years and moved out of the place before the Marist Sisters moved in.

We are fascinated with the simplicity of the lifestyle shared in this house. There are three bedrooms and a toilet and bathroom. Torika and Teresia shared one room, Vero has one room and her office Sheila has her own room too. We converted our living area into a chapel during prayer by placing a divider.

In the beginning, we were contented with one house but later we decided to rent the house beside us and transferred our chapel. Sheila and Torika moved to the second house. The houses are all the same style and the structure roof is made of corrugated galvanized iron and the walls are made of wood. Behind all the five houses is a pathway going to poorer houses (squatter's area). People going up and down passing by you can hear loud and clear conversations as if they are inside the house talking, often times there are also fighting and chasing snatchers and heavy running.

At the corner of that pathway there is a small 'sari-sari store' owned by Ate Bing it is right in front of the window of Sheila and Torika's room. You can hear the splash of water from their sink, the voice of ate Bing scolding her children and her drunkard husband. The whole family became the Marist Sisters' friends. Her three girls would come to the house to chat and the sisters would learn their bisaya (the local language) from them. They would be giggling and loud laughter because they also learn English from the sisters. Oftentimes, Ate Bing would come to the sisters to tell her problems and her struggles with her husband. There are times she would also borrow money from the sisters, the sisters would try to give her either a small amount of money or something in kind from their cupboard. Gratitude is one of the most visible characteristics of the poor. We are always surrounded by words of thanks.



Torika was assigned to accompany Sheila, our first Pre-Candidate.

Vero is the community bursar and representative for JPIC. Besides their roles in the community Torika and Vero work in Balay Pasilungan.

A dropping center for street boys. Sheila does outreach with the Alexian Brothers participating in their mobile clinic which caters to the health and medical needs of the poor in several places.

Teresia works at Tambayan Center for girls.

One remarkable memory of this community is the spirit of celebration and the joy. There were many occasions of visits, of a meal, a reunion, simple meetings, there are songs or dances, something to eat and drink, water or 'cava'.

