

Celebrating Unity in Diversity

Manila, Philippines

Wednesday, 18-Sep-19



The nine of us FCJ sisters living in Manila hail from five different countries – England, Indonesia, Myanmar, the Philippines, and Singapore – making our community probably one of the most culturally diverse in the FCJ Society at present. In previous years, one of the ways we recognized this diversity was to celebrate the Independence Days or national holidays of each one of our countries as they came up in the annual calendar. This year, however, we decided rather spontaneously to have a *United Nations Day* in which we celebrated all of our cultures on one special day. Each country's representative(s) would prepare a special dish as well as a presentation (song, dance or game).

On 21st August, then, we gathered first for a very meaningful prayer prepared by Sr Afra, which set the tone for our celebration. We prayed:

*Lord, God of all peoples,
We mark this day
To declare not our independence, but our interdependence.
We are all created by the same God
And share the same eternal destiny.
We are called to live together in harmony and peace,
As one family in the Lord.
May we learn to love,
To accept and to forgive,
To heal and to nurture,
And to celebrate all the beauty in diversity
Of the earth we call home.
We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.*



Some of the FCJ sisters of the Manila community.

The prayer reminded us of our common heritage as children of the Earth, and of the wonderful privilege and challenge we experience daily in our life together as one community, to live out and share our differences in a concrete and loving way.

The prayer was followed by a delicious lunch in which we sampled local dishes from each of our cultures. A rather festive time of song, dance and games followed in which we were all proud to show our friends a little part of the culture that formed and still influences us today. We ended the day thankful for the spirit and energy this gave us to continue striving for unity in diversity, not only amongst ourselves but also in the world.



Sr Maria with a dish from her native Myanmar.

*God of compassion,
Walk alongside all of your global stewards
Who work to create a more just and peaceful world.
Equip us with a sense of urgency and humility
That lets your will be done.
Each day you give bread enough for all,
Grant us also the wisdom to ensure that everyone has enough.
Teach the world's leaders to forgive,
To extend welcome across borders.
Show the world a new path beyond greed, oppression, and division.
We pray from a world united.
We pray for the power to save succeeding generations from war.
We pray for a glory that reaffirms the dignity and worth of every person.
We pray that your grace might ensure life in larger freedom forever,
For all of your children. Amen.*

(Prayers adapted from the [United Nations Association Northern Ireland](#).)

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“ Jesus is our hope. Nothing—not even evil or death—is able to separate us from the saving power of his love. ”

Pope Francis

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