

## Niña Maria Learning Center in Nazareth

It has been almost two months since classes in Niña Maria Learning Center started in the new building and location, now at the compound of the ODN community in Nazareth, Cagayan de Oro City. There were around 70 children all in all, for Kinder 1 and Kinder 2. On the first day, classes did not formally start yet. There was a simple program integrating prayer, action song, checking of attendance, puppet show, introduction of the teachers, administrator, teacher-assistants and maintenance staff; tour of the children in different classrooms, and an initial blessing of the new building. It has three classrooms including a Montessori room; a faculty room, office for the administrator, and a second floor of which construction is still ongoing.

The children were taught on the first day how to remove their shoes by themselves thus teaching them independence. Some of them had the difficulty but with perseverance, they made it. They were also taught how to obey by giving them simple instructions like “hands up/ hands down/ fold your arms/ prayer position/ form your line”. There were some children in Kinder 1 who cried because they did not want to be separated from their parents. As I asked several children how they felt on their first day of class, several answered that they were excited.

There was a mixture of emotions and different behaviors. When they entered the classroom, I was filled with amazement at how each child behaved. Few were extremely naughty that would really test your patience. Some were shy who would not even answer when asked about their names while others behaved well that did not greatly need attention. As it was my first time to assist preschool kids I honestly felt tired at the end of the day. I did not have any idea how to handle children their age and I felt uneasy thinking that maybe I just had to look at them until they would stop.

Presently, I assist in the Kinder 1 morning class. On the first two to three days, I felt like I was losing my energy right after the classes because the kids are hyperactive. However, the children also teach me to be patient, enduring, understanding, loving with limitation, and caring. There is still so much time to wait and see what this experience will bring me. Thus far, I have done my best to assist them in ways possible.

In a meeting with parents and the teachers, Sr. Lilian presented and explained thoroughly the mission and vision of the school. The parents were delighted to know how the Company of Mary aims to educate their children. I was also grateful how they entrusted the education of their children to us. As the school year progresses, we are not only hopeful that the children will learn academically but that, in their capacity and in their level, they may also learn the Gospel values and love for God. (Dominica Quijano)

- See more at: <http://odnphilippines.org/archives/2166#sthash.dmgOuhQi.dpuf>

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