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To create a more harmonious society, helping the poor and marginalized communities in China achieve their sustainable social and economic well being and self-sufficiency, empowering them individually and as a community to become masters of their own destinies and as such become a contributive force in the nation's integral development

Christmas & Fr. Ruiz' 4 lessons

Dear Friends,

One year ago I asked a group of Casa Ricci's collaborators: "What will happen if Fr. Ruiz passes away?, Who would continue the mission he has started in China? Who will be his successors?". After a very deep silence, one of our most senior collaborators spoke. Looking at the rest of the group she said: "We will continue his mission. People will find him working through us and among us". Special persons influence not only individuals but also communities and institutions as well. Fr. Ruiz is one of these persons. But, how has he influenced us? What has Fr. Ruiz taught to Casa Ricci as a community or institution? I believe that he has taught us four fundamental lessons.

The first lesson Fr. Ruiz has taught us is that ***solidarity means personal friendship with those who suffer***. Fr. Ruiz never understood discrimination and marginalization as abstract problems, but through their concrete effects in people's lives. For him discrimination and marginalization were against people's dignity and right to live as beloved sons and daughters of God because they destroy people's health, people's joy and hope, people's education and future, people's socio-economic possibilities, and people's cultures. In order to understand their suffering, Fr. Ruiz wanted to see, to hear and to touch the leprosy patients, the HIV-AIDS patients, the orphans and the abandoned. For him, the only "solution" to the suffering he saw in their faces and bodies was personal friendship and solidarity. This kind of friendship requires a lot of courage,

personal commitment and self-sacrifice. It requires the grace to make a personal option for those who suffer. The grace to feel their suffering as your own suffering, their problems as your own problems.

The second lesson Fr. Ruiz has taught us is that ***real friendship with the poor and marginalized means to live with them and build communities with them***. The best strategy to defeat the selfishness and egoism that has created discrimination and marginalization is to build communion. We should work as a community which has the mission to build other communities. In these communities people will learn together how to defeat all kinds of discrimination by practicing solidarity. In these communities, physical, psychological and social wounds will be healed, human dignity will be affirmed, and communion restored and recreated. Fr. Thomas Peyton MM described our mission to build communities as the work of a "movement". During the last fifteen years of his life, Fr. Ruiz invited more than one hundred religious Sisters to

leave the safety of their places and religious communities to go to live together with the leprosy or HIV-AIDS infected and affected patients, not only to care for them, but also to learn from them.

The third lesson Fr. Ruiz taught us is to ***neither trust too much your own strengths, nor be discouraged by your own limits. His secret was to rely only on God's powerful love and to not be afraid to follow His inspirations to start new and challenging works***. Without denying the complexity of our mission, problems, hardships, challenges or our own miseries, Fr. Ruiz



*Nothing happier than to
make people happy!
- Fr. Luis Ruiz*

taught us to smile and put our eyes, our confidence and our hope only in the Lord.

Finally, the fourth lesson he taught us is that ***we should firmly believe in every person's capacity to love***. Fr. Ruiz used to describe his work in Macau and China through writing short personal appealing letters to his friends and benefactors. He was continuously inviting new companions to join him in the mission. He wanted them to be personally involved in his service to the poor and marginalized people in Macau and Mainland China. Fr. Ruiz firmly believed that God has given to every person the capacity to love and to give. It doesn't matter how much you give, provided you give from the bottom of your heart. Everybody, even the poorest of the poor, can give and show solidarity to those who are in need.



**Fr. Ruiz was ordained in 1945 in Hebei,
China**

Friendship and solidarity with those who suffer, build community with them, put all your confidence and hope only in God, trust in people's capacity to love.

These are the four lessons that Fr. Ruiz has taught to us in Casa Ricci. These are the lessons that the Lord has taught to Fr. Ruiz. Finally, these are the lessons that the Lord has shown to us when he decided to be born in the poverty of the manger in Bethlehem. These four lessons that can be simply summarized in one word: **“Love”**, the big Chinese character painted by the HIV-AIDS patients of our center in Hongjiang, (Hunan) on the calendar they have made for you for 2012.

In this issue of Encounter you will find stories of how Fr. Ruiz has influenced all kinds of peoples. I am sure you will like them. In the name of Casa Ricci and all the people we serve, I wish all of you a Merry Christmas and a year 2012 full of joy and hope!

In Christ,

Fr. Fernando
Macau, November 2011 ☺