

Chi-ming To

I really want to give thanks to God for leading me to this STM trip. This was the first time I went on such a trip and I encountered many things that I would not have otherwise. I was also greatly inspired spiritually.

The weather was very nice the first day we arrived in Brazil. However, the environment was worse than what I expected—very disorderly and very poor air quality. I felt that it's not much different than in China.

We arrived at a place named Mogi das Cruzes on the second day to invite the local Cantonese-speaking Chinese to attend a gathering at the church and share the gospel with them at the same time. Frankly, this was quite difficult for me as I am not used to talk to strangers. I saw many of my inadequacies while handing out the gospel tracts, especially in the area of interpersonal sharing and communication. However, God arranged for me to get over my weakness. Afterwards when I thought about it, even though I was quite fearful at the time, my heart was filled with joy because I was going out in God's name.

During the few days afterwards, we were very busy with running the VBS program. But it was a lot of fun playing with the little children, so much so that I got so tired that I was starting to get sick. They were all so pure and innocent. My heart was filled with thanksgiving when I saw that they were able to know Jesus from such an early age and that they got along so well with the other kids.

On the ninth day, we arrived in Rio de Janeiro to mainly have activities at a Chinese church. The people there greeted us warmly, which I did not expect. Ester and I had to prepare two sets of worship songs and so we didn't participate in too many outside ministries. However, we had the opportunity to talk to the brothers among them. Many of them came from Wenzhou, earning their living in small businesses. Because the tax rate in Brazil is very high, many locals were engaging themselves in tax evasion and money laundering. After these Chinese came to the church and got to know Jesus, they had many spiritual struggles but were willing to give up their original way of life. Thinking back when I was in America or in Hong Kong, I lived a pretty good life and had it much easier than these people in following God's way. They exchanged their livelihood with their belief—that compelled me to learn from their faith.

Afterwards we went on to Curitiba, our last stop during this trip. We met a deacon's daughter and she left me with a deep impression. She was only twenty-one years old and still a student. We asked her what she was studying. She said she's studying design and believed she can use it to serve God. I thought her answer was strange because most people who studied design was so that they could easily find a job after graduating. After further probing, I found out that she had already committed herself to be a missionary after school. I was very moved by her and admired her because she already had such a conviction at that young age.

This year's STM allowed me to see many people who were following and serving the Lord fervently and it gave me many inspirations. I really thank God for giving me this opportunity!