

## Venerable Jue Chengs

### **The Beginning of “Filhos de Buda” project—Buddha’s children.**

Good morning, everyone. I'm so happy to share with you my experience in Brazil--my journey of helping the children and families in Brazil through a significant education project.

1. In 1992, I went to Brazil with Ven Master Hsing Yun, the founder of FGS and BLIA. He is also the founder of this project.

2. Now, let us watch this video together, without traveling to Brazil.

3. Ven Master Hsing Yun visited Brazil in 1992 and subsequently built a Buddhist temple in Sao Paulo in 2003. The temple, Zulai Temple, which means “the origin of Buddha”, is the biggest temple in South America.

4. When I was in Brazil initially, I needed to understand the culture of Brazil and also get to know my neighbors too.

So I travelled to Raposo Tavares, about 28.5km from the temple, to know the surrounding area and the neighbors.

Brazil is special and a very interesting country. Some of the people go to their office by private helicopters or by being driven in a big car.

However, some of them are squatters. They live near the river or in areas that are considered slums.

5. When I visited my neighbours, I asked myself: How can I help them? With volunteers, we urged the children to stay away from drugs and violence. More importantly, we encourage parents to let their children attend school. Also, volunteers and I would visit them to find out the difficulties that the families are facing.

The most serious problem was that the parents did not have jobs, and often they were single parent households. The children had free time and no structure after coming back from school. They were living in an environment that offered easy access to drugs and a life of crime. I began to have a dream: How can we help the family, the parents, and the children?

In 2003, Master Hsing Yun visited a Catholic priest who was based near the Amazon River. While flying to Manaus, Master Hsing Yun asked me: “Would you like to serve the poor? I can see that you like to help children.”

“Yes, Master.” That was my reply.

“Then, you can plan to teach them languages, arts, music, football, handicrafts-- but also, respect their religion,” said Master Hsing Yun. “This education project will be named Filhos de Buddha, or the Buddha’s Children.”

Even today, many years later, I have never forgotten Master Hsing Yun’s words

Starting in 2003, Zulai Temple became an educational paradise for children.

Our plan, at the start, was to enroll and teach 60 children.

More than 250 children turned up to register on the first day. We did not reject them. We started to source for more teachers. At the program, the children learned football, music, capoeira, drums, drawing, English and other subjects.

Now, I would like to share a few heartwarming stories about our students.

One day, we provided them soccer shirts and shoes that were donated. Some of them were a large size, and the items were too big. But they did not want to return the large shirts or shoes. Why not? They told me, “I’ll grow up one day. I’ll need to wear this at Filhos de Buda.” Their grandmothers told me that the boys hugged the shoes to sleep. They were afraid that someone would take these away. But more importantly, they had a dream for their futures.

Another story is about bread.

I had bought 240 pieces of bread for 120 children. Each of them would receive two pieces of bread. But later, the staff told me there was not enough. I was surprised and asked, “Where’s all the bread?” The children said, “The bread’s already in our stomach.” Someone told me that he ate 10 pieces because he wanted to store lunch in his stomach.

I could not help but cry. I knew they were hungry. I decided not to let the children starve anymore. That was how Monk’s Bakery started.

I left Brazil in 2007 and returned to serve in Malaysia. Ven Miao Yu, the Sangha team and the BLIA team continued to handle the project until now. I returned to Brazil 10 years later. By then, the children have grown up. They wanted to visit me and share their lives with me. I could not recognize some of them, who are now young adults.

Tamiris, Darlei, Antonio, Renata and Eduarda are now in their early 20s. I am proud of them.

Over the years, we abide by Ven Master Hsing Yun’s teaching:

1. Propagate Dharma through Culture

2. Foster Talents through Education
3. Benefit Society through Philanthropy
4. Purify Human Minds through Spiritual Cultivation

Based on Master Hsing Yun's idea, the project started some 18 years ago. More than 3,500 families were assisted and have benefitted from the project as of today.

I would like to express my gratitude to all the volunteers and sponsors who have supported Filhos de Buda since 2003.

Ven Master Hsing Yun, the Sangha team, and the volunteers continue to be the beacon of light in South America.

Thank you.