

Mary Queen of Heaven Missionaries 30-Year Anniversary Rescuing Trafficked Children in Philippines

Thirty years ago, a Filipino businesswoman driving through Manila's Red-Light District could no longer ignore what she saw: children—some as young as eight—being sold for sex. She began a mission to rescue and educate thousands over the past 30 years



Los Angeles, California Apr 1, 2026 ([IssueWire.com](https://www.IssueWire.com)) - A Calling Born on the Streets of Manila

In 1996, Corazon J. Salazar, a businesswoman from Bulacan, Philippines, owned a successful ready-to-wear clothing store in Baclaran, Parañaque. Each morning on her way to work, she traveled along Mabini Avenue in Manila—an area long known as part of the city's Red-Light District.

There she saw scenes that haunted her.

Foreign nationals and locals openly sought out Filipino girls, many of them shockingly young. Day after day Salazar witnessed the same tragic reality: children and women trapped in prostitution and trafficking. Some girls were as young as eight years old. Many were confined, abused, and exposed to disease, drugs, and violence. Some died before they ever reached adulthood. Salazar felt a growing conviction that something had to be done. She shared her concern with six close friends. As they discussed the suffering they had seen, each of them felt the same call—to do whatever they could to rescue girls trapped in the brutal cycle of exploitation and give them a chance at a dignified life.

Seven Women, One Mission

The seven women made a radical decision. They left behind their homes, careers, and personal plans to form a small religious community dedicated to helping victims of trafficking. They had no money, no infrastructure, and no clear roadmap—only faith.

Salazar sold her business and gave the proceeds to help support the new community. Together, they chose the name **Mary Queen of Heaven Missionaries** and began studying and training to become a new Catholic religious institute dedicated to rescuing women and children from sex trafficking in the Philippines. The early years were difficult. The women endured rigorous religious formation while living simply and spending countless hours walking the streets, meeting victims, and searching for ways to help them escape exploitation. Their mission was driven by a simple belief: every child deserves dignity, safety, and hope.

Official Recognition

After years of work and dedication, the mission received formal recognition from the Catholic Church. On August 22, 2003, His Eminence Ricardo J. Cardinal Vidal, Archbishop of Cebu, canonically elevated the **Mary Queen of Heaven Missionaries** to a **Public Association of the Faithful in the Archdiocese of Cebu**, recognizing Sr. Ma. Corazon J. Salazar as the foundress. With this recognition, the missionaries expanded their work and conducted a comprehensive national study to better understand the scope of prostitution and trafficking in the Philippines. Their findings revealed a devastating pattern.

Traffickers frequently target the poorest rural villages. Recruiters promise parents that their daughters will receive “good jobs in the city” and send money home. In reality, many of these girls are delivered into prostitution networks. The families often live as tenant farmers in fragile huts with little food and almost no access to education. When survival itself is uncertain, schooling becomes an unaffordable luxury, leaving children vulnerable to exploitation.

But the missionaries soon realized that rescue alone would not be enough. Prevention was essential. So they developed a **two-phase strategy** to both rescue victims and prevent future trafficking.

Phase I: Rescue and Rehabilitation — The Home of Love

The first phase of their mission focused on immediate rescue and rehabilitation. In 2005, the missionaries established the

Home of Love Rehabilitation and Livelihood Skills Training Center in Bagasawe, Tuburan, Cebu.

At night, dressed in ordinary street clothes, the sisters quietly walk through dark alleys and areas known for prostitution. They approach the young girls waiting for customers—many traumatized, fearful, and distrustful of strangers. The sisters begin simply by talking. They listen to the girls’ stories, build trust, and offer friendship. Over time, some of the victims secretly agree to escape their situation and come to the **Home of Love** to begin a new life.

During its first year, twenty residents—minors and young mothers with children—entered the center with nothing but hope and courage. **The Home of Love** provides a structured environment focused on healing, education, and personal growth. Its guiding motto is “**Love with Discipline.**”

Programs include:

- Safe shelter and protection
 - Food, nutrition, and health care
 - Maternity and medical assistance
 - Psychological counseling and therapy
 - Recreational activities
 - Spiritual formation
 - Educational assistance
 - Livelihood and skills training such as baking, sewing, cooking, catering, and candle making
 - Childcare for young mothers

The goal is to help residents regain dignity, rebuild their confidence, and acquire the skills needed to support themselves and their families. Hundreds have been rescued. Today the **Home of Love** has a capacity of 50 residents and has achieved an extraordinary **93 percent success rate** in helping women rebuild their lives.

But the missionaries knew that long-term success required addressing the root cause of trafficking: poverty and lack of education.

Phase II: Education as Prevention

To prevent children from ever falling into the hands of traffickers, the missionaries launched a second initiative focused on education. On April 8, 2007—Easter Sunday—the **Regina Coeli Education Assistance Program** was formally established. Working with local volunteer teachers and lay supporters known as Mission Partners, the missionaries began reaching out to families in rural villages. They encouraged parents to send their children to school and emphasized the life-changing power of education.

The program provides:

- School supplies and backpacks
 - Educational guidance, coordination, and mentoring
 - High school scholarships for promising students
 - Counseling and spiritual formation programs for families

The Missionaries also visit families in their homes, helping them understand that education offers a path out of poverty and exploitation. What began with **550 families** quickly expanded. Today the **Regina Coeli Education Assistance Program** operates in **27 provinces and 284 municipalities in the Philippines**, reaching **approximately 18,000 children each year**. Since its founding, more than **60,000 children** have benefited from the program. Many graduates have gone on to higher education and stable careers, breaking the cycle of poverty that once placed them at risk.

A Mission of Hope

Thirty years after Corazon Salazar first walked past the suffering she saw on Mabini Avenue, the mission she began continues to grow. The **Mary Queen of Heaven Missionaries** remain dedicated to protecting the most vulnerable members of society—children who deserve safety, dignity, and the opportunity to build meaningful lives.

Their work stands as a powerful reminder that even the most entrenched social problems can be challenged when compassion is paired with courage and perseverance. What began with seven women

and a leap of faith has become a movement transforming thousands of lives. And for the children they rescue and educate, it means something priceless: a future.

The organization is solely funded by charitable donations. Donations can be made at MQHM.org.

About Mary Queen of Heaven Missionaries

The **Mary Queen of Heaven Missionaries (MQHM)** is a Catholic religious institute founded in the Philippines in 1996 by Sr. Ma. Corazon J. Salazar is a registered 501(c)3 nonprofit in the United States under the name of Mary Queen of Heaven Inc. The organization is dedicated to rescuing victims of prostitution and human trafficking and preventing exploitation through education and family outreach programs. MQHM operates rehabilitation programs for survivors and educational assistance initiatives serving thousands of children across the Philippines each year.

Individual stories about the many who have been rescued can be found on the website at MQHM.org and below.

:Link to a comprehensive overview of the trafficking crisis in the Philippines and how MQHM works with local government.

[In Darkness There is Always Light: Missionaries Who Make A Difference](#)

:Links to success stories of victims listed below. **Photos contained in the stories are released for publication in press coverage of the MQHM 30th Anniversary.**

[Rescued!](#)

[A New Life for Renya](#)

[Sibling Rescue and Survival](#)



Media Contact

Kanet Productions Inc. / Rhonda Kanet Chambless

*****@kanetproductions.com

5136043442

909 W. St. Thira Ct., West Covina, California 91790

<http://MQHM.org>

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