

AQUA THAILAND



November 2011

Greetings

Before all else. Team AQUA Thailand asks pardon for being late in sending the November issue of AQUA because of the floods which caused difficulty in communication.

Though we are late, we do wish to Share our Thai Ursuline concern with you.

What we are particularly grateful for is the possibility of the Asian Ursulines to prepare the Asian Ursuline Meeting despite the floods in Bangkok and surrounding areas. We were helped by many organizations and prayer groups giving information about the water levels in many areas, which encouraged us to continue preparations.

Thanks to all for this help. The Meeting was rich in information given and union of hearts and wills, which helped us to succeed to and continue our efforts to help our people to overcome trafficking and live in true love and peace.

Team AQUA Thailand

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111th Anniversary of Roman Union

1st Anniversary of the Cambodia Community



When I look back at the Ursuline Mission in Thailand as described in “A Far Country,” it gives me a picture of the Roman Union’s collaboration long ago, with the Bishop of Bangkok.

In 1924, Bishop Rene Perros invited the Ursulines to take charge of a parish school and orphanage, where the teaching was done in both Chinese and Thai languages.

He wrote to the Mother General of Ursulines of the Roman Union, asking her to send sisters to work in Mission of Bangkok, Thailand. He suggested four sisters would be adequate to begin the work. He said he would provide a house and would pay all their expenses. The Bishop concluded the letter with these words, “you have every advantage with no risk at all”. The Mother General responded by sending four sisters from three different countries; one each from Belgium and France, and two from Yugoslavia.

In 2010, the Ursulines of the Roman Union began a new mission in Cambodia by personnel from the four Asian Pacific Provinces. Cambodia was chosen in response to the call of General Chapter “Go beyond our borders”. Bishop Kike, S.J., welcome us to come and see what mission possibilities we thought suitable to commit to, in terms of personnel and resources.

Goals we chose for the first year are as follows:

- to build an inter-provincial Ursuline community
- to get a better knowledge of the country, the people, the local Church,
- to learn the Khmer language
- to explore possible apostolate for future Ursulines in Cambodia

Bishop Kite said he would be happy with us, just being a presence in the Church, ‘working as a team’ with other Congregations. He was not in favor of our building our own institute during these first few years.

The first year has passed for we three pioneer missionaries. We have celebrated our one year old community quietly with Mass by an Indonesian priest on September 29, 2011. I feel we are following our Ursuline ancestors,

when they first came to Thailand. They also set up of an inter-provincial community, worked in a parish setting and had to learn the Thai language. Four years had passed before they founded Mater Dei School, in Bangkok. Since August 2011, Sr. Huaying finished her term of mission. We, Paulina from Indonesia and Jantana from Thailand, are waiting for another member to be sent to replace her. We know that it is not easy to provide a sister to this new mission

because we have fewer vocations. Therefore, providing personnel is the main issue of this new mission in Cambodia. Each Province would like to spread it's mission activities 'beyond our borders', while simultaneously maintaining the existing ones.

It seems, the Advent of the Ursulines in Cambodia, will be not only 4 weeks. It can be 4 months or 24 months, only God knows. Whether it will be a long wait or not, the spirit of Christmas "peace on earth and goodwill for humanity" will be with us always.



Merry

Christmas

Jantana Wongsankakorn,osu

Divine Mercy Catholic Center, Nativity of Our Lady Parish, Omkoi, Chiang Mai

By Narumon Charoenkul, OSU

There are several tribes in Omkoi District, but Pwo Karen are the biggest group and Sgaw Karen and second largest. Both are our targets of evangelization because they are the most interested in catechism. However, we lack personnel. The geographical area is wide and there is only one priest. There are not enough catechists and no religious congregation has established their apostolate here. Most children and youths finish their elementary education in their own villages and continue their education in the city. Catholic institutions in the City of Chiangmai are limited and cannot host all the youths from villages each year. So, when they come to study, many have to stay in dormitories that are not very safe. Several do not graduate. Some embrace immoral lifestyles. Some parents have to borrow from others to finance their children education, creating much debt.



The pastor realized that this was an urgent situation. To help these families, the Diocese in response, opened the Divine Mercy Catholic Center.

The objectives for this Center are as follows:

For disadvantaged children, orphans, and others who want to study and train in different aspects-physical, intellectual, emotional, social, etc.—so that they can support themselves and others.

For these children and youths to study religious education, pray, learn the liturgy, sing religious hymns, and especially to worship God in their own languages, so that eventually they can become missionaries to their own villages. They can assist the pastor when he visits their villages. This is in accordance with the Second Vatican Council which encouraged the use of local languages so that the faithful would gain better understanding of their faith.

For preservation of their cultures, including language, clothing, diet and lifestyle.

I had a year of immersion in Omkoi. I lived in the village with the children at the Center.

I taught religious education, planted sustainable vegetables garden with the children and



cooked, worked, and played with them.

In order that they did not have to move to big cities, we tried to make the Center their 'home'. Divine Mercy Center is situated within the metropolitan district, only 3 kilometers from downtown. We arranged transportation for high school students (Mattayom 4-6) to the city every day. Younger students from Grade 1 to Grade 3 also ride a bus to their village school, which is about 3 kilometers away as well. My role at the Center this year was to advise and counsel them. I encouraged them and trained them in leadership skills so that they could help themselves and others too.



I also learned much from them.

I noticed that when the pastor visited my village, the Catholic teenagers that I had trained at the Center, lead prayers and songs, prepared the altar, and did the readings in their own language so that villages would understand. On special occasions such as Christmas, I visited several villages with these youth, even though roads were not in good condition. Some trips took 4-6 hours but the young people seemed happy to make them. The pastor is responsible for more than 40 villages besides the children at the Center.

At the annual Feast of the Patron Saint of the Parish; at Easter; and at the Catechism Camps, the youth worked well together preparing the liturgy for Mass and prayers during the day. I only had to assist them when they asked. I taught them additional catechism as much as would be asked. Some of the children at the Center who are not Catholic, became interested in becoming Catholic. They study catechism for 1-2 years before Baptism. While they are still with us at the Center, they received the Sacraments. For many of them, their parents followed the example of their children by studying catechism and becoming Catholic. The youth became missionaries to their parents, often teaching their parents because the children had more opportunity to learn, in school, about the religion.

In those villages, nature is still green and beautiful, the air still fresh, and the people very sincere. I thank God and my Ursuline Superiors for this opportunity to experience missionary life at the Parish of the Nativity of Our Lady, and Divine Mercy Center, Omkoi.

My Immersion year at Omkoi – My Evaluation:

Prayer life:

- I was responsible for my personal prayer, meditation, and the morning and evening office.
- I prayed morning, evening, and night prayer with the children, the catechists, and the pastor.
- We celebrated Mass and prayed the Rosary together every day.
- The rosary of Our Lady was prayed in the morning, and the Chaplet of Devine Mercy at 15:00 in the afternoon on Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays. On Monday through Friday, we prayed them together in the evening at 18:00.
- On Sundays, I joined the celebration of Mass with the parishioners and the children from Holy Family Catholic Center.
- I catechized the children at the Center and visited parishioners' homes and also some of their neighbors homes.
- Some weeks I accompany the pastor and the children to visit remote villages.
- I confessed monthly.
 - I visited my community at Regina every month on my day of recollection.

Community life with the Ursulines : .

- On special occasions, I went to Regina to meet with my community.
- Sister Ratchanee visited me almost every week for the whole year, and we prayed together and shared our experience. We prepared OSU reports together on some

occasions and also attended the general meeting at the appointed Community life at Divine Mercy Center.

Evangelization:

- I shared my whole life with people at the Center.
- I learned their cultural practices, including differences in liturgy of the Eucharist, and prayer.
- At the same time, I helped the children learn and practice some aspects of the economics of sustainability, basic dietetics, and ways of relaxation.

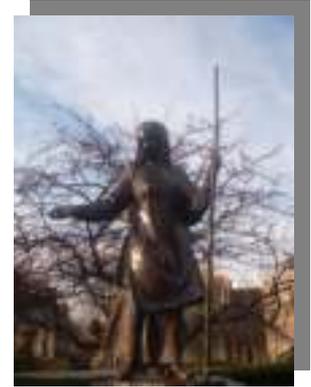


- I helped students in the non-formal education section with Thai language skills, homework assignments, and local languages.
- Every Sunday, I taught children catechism.
- After mass, I greeted and met with parishioners.
- Some weeks I accompany the pastor and the children to remote villages.
- I visited some sick people.
- I joined some Villages at their Christmas celebration.
- When villagers asked me for catechism lessons, I taught them as much as time permitted.
- I helped with the catechism camps in the summer.
- In October I prayed the rosary at some parishioners' homes.

My Trip to Wilmington, Delaware

by Songsaeng Thinwan, OSU

In this trip, God gave me the mission of love among the Ursuline Sisters of the Eastern Province of the USA according to the Ursulines campaign on internationality. I received blessings, love, diversity, and unity of the Roman Union. Even though we differ in culture, language, and way of life, these aspects have turned out to be the wealth of the Congregation that Saint Angela Merici founded 475 years ago. The Roman Union Exchange Program allows Ursuline members from a country or a continent to get to know others in a different location. We become more aware of our international character.



I left Bangkok on the night of September 11, 2010 by Korean Air. The transfer in Seoul took 5 hours. Then with the same airline, I left Incheon International Airport at 11:00 for John F Kennedy International Airport, New York. Upon arrival, I prayed that peace be with this land and that Jesus and his Mother bless the beginning of my mission. I thanked God for the smooth travel. When I submitted my passport at Immigration Control, the American officer showed his surprise after he read and examined my documents, he told me that he was a Catholic and he was proud that his mother had been educated in an Ursuline school. He asked for God's blessing on me. My first impression was from meeting the three Ursuline Sisters who had been waiting about an hour for me. I had not know how they looked, but their Ursuline manner and character identified them. Delaware was the first state in the U.S. to ratify the U.S. constitutions; therefore, its official nickname is "the First State." It borders Pennsylvania and New Jersey to the north and Maryland to the west and south with some coastline to east. Washington, D.C., the Capital of the U.S. is not too far away to the west.



The largest city in Delaware, though not its capital, is Wilmington. Delaware is among the Southern States and also the second smallest of the fifty States.

I was most impressed and surprised by the celebration of the 475th anniversary of our foundation. It took place near a beautiful beach. A painting of St. Angela and a globe were set up as background. Approximately 475 Sisters, alumnae, and esteemed guests attended it. I was a little excited to meet Sister Sheila Murphy. She had been in Thailand for a year, teaching English to the young Thai Sisters. We had the Liturgy of the Word, followed by brunch, at which Sister Mary Sullivan, the



provincial of Eastern U.S., gave her reflection. She said, “Angela is among us! We are traversing our boundaries by consolidating the 4 provinces of the U.S. into one.” Sr. Mary Sullivan informed us of our beginning in Cambodia, which was a joyful occasion in the Far East. She continued, “Since it was the year of the RU Exchange Program, one Ursuline had traveled here to work at Serviam School and to study English. “Sister Songsaeng, please stand.” I was shocked. I remember standing up and greeting in the Thai manner amidst everyone’s applause. Oh, my God!

On November 20th, there was a solemn Eucharistic celebration at the chapel of the College of New Rochelle. Many people attended it, and I participated by carrying the globe, which is the symbol of the international mission of the Ursulines.

The procession was a memorable image. The globe I carried was followed by the image of St. Angela; Provincial councilors, concelebrating priests, and the presiding Bishop.

Afterwards, there was a small reception for the Ursulines and their friends. I was at the same table as Sister Alice, who was in Thailand as a missionary for almost 25 years. Her brother, who had come for a visit was at the same table. We were full of joy even though it was cold.



By the beginning of my third month there, I was much better adapted. Sister Marion was my mentor. I thank God for giving me good health and enabling me to serve the needs of my Sisters in Wilmington. I prayed to God every day for this blessing.. Most of the Sisters there were elderly. There were 11 Ursulines and two from other Orders. One Ursuline

was still teaching at the school but other stayed in the convent. Their main mission is to pray and to make others happy. They care for one another and serve one another. Some served as chaplains to Ursuline volunteers, who came and prayed together. They held meetings every third Wednesday of the month. Some were spiritual directors. Some volunteered at Serviam Girls Academy. Some ministered to the homeless for the last 20 years. Everyone was filled with peace and hope. Everything seems to be changing but they never forsake their contemplation. They read, watch news on TV and prayed for people all over the world. They are resting from grueling work they had done earlier. They live every day in God’s care.

My mission for the exchange program is to practice spoken English. I went to study English reading and conversation with fifth graders in the morning from 8:30 to 12:00 at the Serviam School. I still remember rushing to catch a ride to Serviam with Sister Mildred every morning. She inspired many African and Hispanic girls to be well educated at the middle school level. She had raised fund to educate 36 girls. Within three years, she had educated the girls so well as to graduate the first class



of eight. There, at Serviam, I experienced the generosity of those who devoted time taking turns visiting the school. They offered materials, labor and prayers for the students. One day an anonymous donor left a Smart Board in front of the School. God always has ways to surprise us. Although I looked different, as an Asian, from any fellow teachers, staff, the fifth graders, and other students were friendly to me. I participated in every class activity and the morning prayer because there were few in each class, which is in accordance with the purpose of the school, that teachers to spend time with individual students. I appreciate their effort to train students to listen with discipline, to express their opinions, to use reasoning, and to develop much reading skill, especially from children's literature. This way, they can think analytically, connect their personal experience, write systematically, and build networks of assistance to support the school when they become successfully employed.

Some unique features of this school are :

- An all-scholarship middle school
- Service to girl to girls from low-income families
- A member of the nationally successful Nativity Miguel network of schools.



Through the seasons of life I had one more ministry in the winter. Beside studying English. I had to remove snow from cars and from sidewalks. It was fun. The Prioress took a picture of the "Snow Angel" to show the Ursulines in Thailand

– and angel bound by a chain and not able to come back to Thailand. Some Sisters teased me that I should stay to be a missionary there gracefully because I was the only young Sister among eleven who were elderly. It also got me to think how I too can age. These Sister are beautiful in their diversity. All, who were able, did their own laundry, cleaned

their own room, did little errands, read, and prayed. They spent most of their time resting with the Lord. Those who were more mobile shopped for food, and other things community members needed. The day before the celebration, we bought some shrimps to cook. When Sister asked the shopkeeper to recommend a kind of shrimps, she got a good brand from Thailand!!! That evening we got to eat shrimps from Thailand. The main menu included shrimp, Tom Yum.Pad Thai, Laab, Namtok, and Panang. I found everything delicious.

There is something even more interesting. In the evening of Friday January Sister Mildred and I got to meet the U>S> president unexpectedly. We were very excited, but then we



realized that it was only his paper mannequin. It was funny. But even more funny was that when the picture was sent to Thailand and a friend of Sister Mildred's in Rome knew about it, she sent an e-mail to ask for details to include it in the OSU website.

The celebration that evening took place in an old former convent, which now is the residence for volunteer teachers at Serviam. It is huge, with three floors. The chapel had been converted to a store room. What a waste because the stained glass windows are beautiful!! The dining room is decorated by a large painting of

the Last Supper.

Everything was fascinating. This convent had to close because there were no more Sisters. It is so sad too that many Catholic schools there had closed down.

The Ursuline Sisters in Wilmington joyfully celebrated Christmas and New Year, filled with grace, love, and happiness, even amidst the winter storm on Christmas Eve. It was a serene night and a White Christmas! I got into the atmosphere of waiting for the Savior with all the seasonal decoration. I had been contemplating the seasons starting from the fall/autumn and then the winter. The whole city provided me with the context of the Advent of Jesus' incarnation. Wherever I traveled, I saw decorations. Wreaths were hung on front doors of houses, buildings, and other important places. Our convent featured the nativity scene and a Christmas tree in the Ursuline chapel. Where others came to celebrate Mass with us every Sunday. We can see the cornerstone above the entrance to the chapel, 1923. I experienced this waiting amid cold weather down to 19 degrees Fahrenheit.

We had a two weeks Christmas break. When there was much snow fall, classes were also canceled for the safety of our students. There were several snow storms and it was very cold. Beauty came in different forms each season, including winter. Snowfall was very, very pretty. But if it was too heavy, such as when there was a storm, traveling would be too dangerous. The school administration would cancel classes. Weather forecast was accurate and very important to people's livelihood. I was among those who followed the

forecast on the radio very day before leaving for Serviam, so much so I had a nickname “Forecaster of the House.” The long winter continued through Christmas and New Year. When I missed home much, I tried to console myself that I had to survive this winter to go back to Thailand. Every time I traveled from Wilmington to New Rochelle, I observed barren trees on both sides. Perhaps they were waiting for something I felt the same way. If even trees can adapt, What about me? When they sense winter coming. They go through the fall, then it seems like they hibernate i.e. fall asleep. They helped me appreciate Advent. I joyfully celebrated the Christmas season with the Ursuline Sisters in Wilmington amid the news that an elderly Sister passed away at St. Theresa.

Then on February 8, 2011, we celebrated a funeral for Sister Philip Touhey in Wilmington. She was 88. After her missionary work in Venezuela, she was librarian at Ursuline Academy, St. Anthony of Padua, and William C. Lewis schools in Wilmington. Her sudden departure that afternoon surprised everyone. She was gentle, sweet, prayerful, and kind. We all had a fond memory of her. She passed away peacefully in her room, while reading her Bible.

Ursulines in Wilmington had to face the challenge of change. “Changes” meant a lot to me during my time there. There were ups and downs. Everything changes, including the weather. There were powerful tornados that year, the shock over the tsunami in Japan, the death of Bin Laden, etc. The community in Wilmington itself was going to close in the summer of 2012, and the Ursuline Provincialate is moving to St. Louis, MO. I was happy to witness the perpetual vows of three Chinese sisters and to meet several Ursulines who traveled to the chapter to elect a new Provincial leader. I met Cecilia Wang, the Prioress General, and the new Taiwanese leader there, Theresa Ku. Before I came back, Sister Marion took me sight-seeing to important places, for example, Washington DC and New York. I spent my final week with the Sister who taught me English at North Avenue. I was very happy and grateful to God. I had an opportunity to offer love and happiness to those who I encountered. I also thank God for giving me strength, courage, and good physical and mental health when I was there. “You are my hope; You are my song; You are my strength. When in my brokenness I fall, when I must carry on; You are always there to lift and hold me through it all.”





Three Ursuline schools in Thailand were able to send representatives to join the Asia-Pacific Ursuline Conference 2011 at Baan Phu Waan, Sampran District, Nakorn Pathom Province, Thailand from the 18th to the 22nd October 2011. We found the content of the conference very inspiring for our mission at school.

The Education Commission of the Ursulines in Thailand calls for an annual seminar in January every year in the past ten years. At our last seminar, from the 6th to the 8th of January 2011, we looked at our identity as Ursuline schools. We used four Church documents as foundation for our reflection together. We looked at the Writings of Saint Angela as our guideline for our formation process.

The four Church documents that we studied were: Declaration on Christian Education (1965), the Catholic School (1977), the Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School (1988) and The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium (1997). We went through the process of individual study to sharing of thoughts and ideas and came up with a "placemat" of our Ursuline school's identity.

We decided that an Ursuline school would be a place where students are formed in all dimensions with the spirit of love and freedom in the midst of changes in society that come with technology and diverse cultures. The school should be a place where the Good News of Love and Freedom is spread. Teachers and students should be witnesses to this Good News.



As for students, we would like our students to develop SERVIAM spirit and cultivate the virtue of honesty. They should nurture a right conscience and live life profoundly. Growth in mindfulness and prayerfulness will be encouraged as basic life skills.

The Education Commission is now preparing the 10th annual seminar for the 5th to the 7th of January, 2012. For this seminar, we will share the messages from the Asia-Pacific Ursuline Conference 2011.

We will deepen our understanding of human dignity. We will examine our criteria of a 'good Ursuline school' to evaluate if we have truth, justice, freedom and love as both process and goal that we work towards.

Together, we hope to make a difference in the world through our better understanding of the values of the Kingdom of God. We eagerly take up this challenge to do all with humility and enthusiasm, convinced we are walking the right path.



Mater Dei School

This year's annual themes at Mater Dei School were Reconciliation and Water. We have tried to create an awareness and a deeper understanding of both themes among students, teachers, parents and alumnae through various activities carried out by each group. At first, the themes were introduced and approached separately. After a short while, however, it dawned on us that the two themes were related. For example, in most religions and cultures, water is an essential part of ceremonies and rituals of reconciliation.



At the teachers' 5 day meeting, which began the school year, both Christian and Buddhist teachers used the two themes in daily prayers. The school also invited our alumna, Dr. Somrudee Meeprasert Jitprapai, from the Faculty of Science, Chulalongkorn University, to share her knowledge and experience about the water situation, focussing on megacities. It was a proud and gratifying day for our teachers to learn so much from one of their former students.



From that point on, many teachers conducted research to develop a deeper understanding and the knowledge to create active and hands-on lessons for students. Teachers in the eight subject groups- mathematics, science, social studies, home economics and technology, arts, Thai language, physical education and foreign languages- have inserted or linked content concerning the themes into their lesson plans. It was agreed that we would start our campaign on Academic Day, June 29, 2011.



When the parents' network and volunteer mother learned of the school's themes, they also became involved and asked to join with the teachers. Teachers and parents worked jointly to provide various presentations, interactive activities, and games for students on Academic Day.



In their evaluation forms, students commented that not only had they gained greater knowledge, but had also become more aware of the importance of water, which led them to reflect on their daily habits and on their own use of water. Many made pledges to reduce the amount of water they use. Since then, the students have been preparing for Exhibition Day, February 26, 2012, which will give them an opportunity to present their expanded comprehension of the themes.

Although the two themes have been treated together for the most part, we have given somewhat more emphasis to Reconciliation at our retreats for all teachers and for students of all faiths. Reconciliation has also had a central place at all of our camps and in our sports activities. We have witnessed many touching and memorable scenes at the end of the retreats and competitions.

The Thai people are crying out for reconciliation in many areas, apart from having too much or, in other years, too little water. We believe that this year's themes have profoundly broadened and deepened the

understanding of all members of the Mater Dei School family. The catastrophic flooding, this year, has shown us all that the need for genuine reconciliation, no matter how difficult to achieve, is essential for our future.

Regina Coeli School



In Chiangmai, Regina Coeli School did a similar Campaign on **Reconciliation and Water** but we translated reconciliation slightly differently: “Apologize, ask forgiveness, begin anew by coming together” was our slogan. We tried to permeate the whole school atmosphere with this concept. This year, 2554, (2011), we tried to integrate it into all our studies and our activities.

The following was our Plan :

1. to develop the concept of “Apologies, ask forgiveness, begin anew by coming together” among teachers, students, parents. We designed a big banner and displayed it on the lawn in front of the school. Others, of smaller sizes, created by the students, were placed in spots such as canteen, playground, book store, classrooms, teachers offices, and the school website, as means of public relations. A song, words and music, on the same theme, was composed, by one of our teachers.

2. To develop the concept for the students it was integrated into all subjects, eg. Thai language studies. the students were given assignments to write poems, compositions, letters to their parents on the topic “Apologies; ask forgiveness; begin anew by coming together”. In Art Class, the students drew pictures of various water sources; made stickers depicting warnings of the waste of water and the need to conserve water. Religion and Life class found plenty of scope to engage the students on the theme of “Apologize; ask forgiveness; begin anew by coming together”

3. an Action Plan was developed to integrate the themes into the various school activities:

a. “Apologize ; ask forgiveness; begin anew by coming together”

- i. the annual Camp of Mathayom 4
- ii. Mothers’ Day celebration
- iii. teachers annual retreat preached by Fr. Nipon

Sarachit

iv. Sports Day Parade, led by a banner depicting our slogan, “Apologize; ask forgiveness; begin anew by coming together”

b. “The Importance of Water”

i. the celebration of the annual water festival “Loy Kathong” whereby the Thai people pay respect to water, asking pardon for the desecration of water and floating flowers on lily pads in reparation. This activity took place at the school’s pond followed by



students and teachers going down to river Ping to repeat the performance.

ii. the Student Council participated, by taking turns at the general assembly, to explain the need to conserve water. They led a group of students to take part in the construction of a village Spillway.

iii. the Parade on Sports Day was led by students holding a large banner with the words, “Water for Life”.

Vasudevi Campaign on “Reconciliation” and “Water”

Vasudevi School also took part in the “Campaign for Water and Reconciliation.” The teachers encouraged their students to express their feelings about these two words in various art media; posters, cards, stickers. This they did in the following areas: Pastoral, Academic, Students Activity.

Pastoral Section: The students’ inspiring art works were displayed around the campus, as a reminder to everyone of the benefits derived from *Reconciliation* and *Water*.

Academic Section: “Journey Along with Water”, was the topic of the yearly Science Exhibition, linking the eight different subjects of the curriculum around the overall theme of “Water and Reconciliation”.

Activity Section: On Sports Day, the students organized a very creative and imaginative opening parade, with “Water and Reconciliation” as theme.

The Student Council participated in the Campaign by the use of artistic posters, which focused on “A Well-Organized Way to Use Water at School”.

Vasudevi School’s project, “Good Heart - Good Hand - Good Water”, won First Prize in the “Colorful Environment Project”, sponsored by GUSCO Company and Bangkok Municipality’s Dept. of Water Quality Control.



Asia-Pacific Ursuline Confernce

By Siphim Xavier, osu.

Thailand was the host country for Asia-Pacific Ursuline Conference on “Integrity of the Human Person vis-à-vis Human Trafficking”



The Province of Thailand held the conference at the Bangkok Diocesan Pastoral Center, inviting Sisters and their collaborators from Australia, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, was Japan, China and the Philippines.

The topic was agreed upon at the regional meeting of Provincials of the Roman Union of Asia Pacific as a response to the 2007 Chapter message mandate for JPIC to focus on this issue. The purpose of this conference was to provide a forum for the Ursulines, working in Asia-Pacific region and their collaborators, to study together this issue.

Objectives:

1. To bring all participants to a deeper awareness of the pressing issue of the Integrity of the human person especially with regard to human trafficking in Asia Pacific region.
2. To share experiences and learn together how to respond as Church to the needs of society.
3. To bring together the Ursuline family in Asia and Australia in order to reinforce networking.



Day One - Tuesday October 18, 2011

The Asia Pacific Ursuline Conference began with the Eucharistic celebration.
The celebrant was His Excellency



Archbishop Kriengsak Kovitvanit,
Archbishop of the Bangkok Archdiocese.



After dinner, Sr. Chintana Chatrasubhang, Provincial of the Province of Thailand, welcomed the participants of APUC.

Then Sr. Somchitr cut the ribbon to mark the opening of APUC.



There were two General Councilors from the Roman Union, Sr. Somchitr Krongboonsri and Sr. Maria Angela Mayer and a General Councilor of the Canadian Union, Sr. Lise Munro.

There were 110 participants, two presenters, one facilitator.

Then Brother John D'Cruz led session "Getting to Know You" with an activity to allow all participants to know one another.

At the end, the participants formed 10 groups with 10 to 11 participants in each group.

Day Two - Wednesday October 19, 2011

Message from Mother Cecilia, Prioress General



Sr. Somchitr Krongboonsri, osu, General Councillor introduced the conference with a message in the name of the Prioress General.

We were reminded that this third education meeting of the Asia-Pacific Ursuline schools was a time to plan and share together in the spirit of Angela; “with deep prayer, personal love of Jesus Christ, realistic knowledge of ourselves and devotedness and service towards those we serve. United, we can be stronger in promoting human dignity of all but most especially for those who are caught in the web of human trafficking.”

Keynote Address:

Global Trends ‘The Integrity of the Human Persons’

Sr . Michelle Lopez, RGS

Sr. Michelle’s depth of experience and research framed the discussions of the day. She explained the insidious influence of the media and



advertising and the alarming growth and acceptance of pornography - effects that have ‘normalized the abnormal’, and dehumanized the body. When factored in with altered migration patterns, sex tourism and prostitution, human trafficking has become an issue of global proportions – and of global responsibility. Many were challenged by new insights. Sr. Michelle recommended that we focus on public awareness – education of youth on the harmful realities of prostitution, gender equality, all forms of sexual exploitation, human trafficking and the destructive power of the media in portraying dehumanizing criminal activities as normal.

She highlighted four key areas to consider for prevention, protection, liberation and care:

- a. *Develop a ‘perpetrator focused’ rather than ‘victim focused’ approach.*
- b. *Being in solidarity with globalization from below.*
- c. *Enhancing our public presentation.*
- d. *The Power of personal Witness.*

Presentations: *The Cries of Asia*

Mater Dei students presented a powerful skit on trafficking.

Each country expressed its perspectives and experiences on Human Trafficking, through a variety of formats: a role playing; awareness raising campaigns; prayer and reflection. These presentations gave voice to the people and the stories behind the trends.

New Awareness:

- Our countries were interrelated as either the source, destination or transit points.
- Migrant, domestic and sex workers had become the ‘new poor’.
- That whilst most countries had laws and regulations against trafficking, these did not guarantee protection in many countries.
- As many people moved from pain of debts to recruitment agencies, the cyclic nature continues.
- The complexity of the issues was ‘borderless’.

Cries of Asia gave the human face to the problem. We heard the stories of real people and were moved by them. Many of our sisters and educators are responding directly to the victims in their own countries, others are working at government and policy level, or in awareness building in schools and the community.

The day left us challenged and for many there was hope in the solidarity we felt for the victims and with each other.

Day Three - Thursday October 20, 2011

Spirit of Prophecy We were called to be prophets and we asked God for the power and courage to accomplish our task.

Brother Anthony Rogers, FSC, presented the Church’s position under the heading of ‘Migration, trafficking and new slaveries’. He spoke about the need for a new paradigm.



The need to look at life with eyes which see values and respects the Human person not from a material perspective. It is a paradigm which moves one from the outside to the inside, a paradigm that “stirs the heart”.

Brother Anthony reminded us that we are all made in the image of God and that we have a responsibility to nurture all human beings. In listening to the voiceless we must open our ears to really hear; open eyes to really see and use our hands and feet to begin to move.

We are seeing new forms of slavery and a loss of respect for the human person. He introduced us to a new pattern of speech that we can offer the world as believers – word, world, worship and witness. He challenged to see ourselves as people of action, with a ‘multi-faith’ approach to seeing the truth and reflecting the truth. We are called to see each person as our neighbor.

He suggested that there was a link between the way we look at human persons and the way we look at God. When we experience God in our lives, we begin to make God’s love known. He believes through the universal scriptures and the values and respect for the dignity of life that they teach us, we can reignite our relationship with God and see things from God’s point of view. Then we can allow each person to discover who they are and to live a life of fullness.

We reflected on the parable of the Good Samaritan, telling us that love is integral to life and that the love of God and the love of neighbor can not be separated from the love of self. It speaks to us of crossing boundaries. It calls us to a compassionate response.

Liturgy

The Way of the Cross ⇨ Human Trafficking

The Australian Ursulines prepared the liturgy started at the lakeside, with the symbolism of water and light reconnecting us to our baptism.

As we processed inside the community was led through the Penitential Rite using images by SiegerKoder, scripture passages and the writings of Angela.

We reaffirmed our commitment to see the face of God in the victims of human trafficking and the people we meet in everyday life.

Giving life to Angela’s counsel to live in harmony together, we sang the words of St Therese, acknowledging that Christ lives through the work of our eyes, ears, hands and feet, all essential elements of living Serviam in our world today.

“Songs of Hope” was the theme for our cultural evening.

Every country shared their national song, traditional costume and dance with great joy and enthusiasm. Opportunity was offered to greet each other in 11 different languages, expressing that diversity within the Ursulines in the Asia-Pacific regions.

DAY Four -Friday October 21, 2011

The Church Response

Brother John recapped the movement of the conference. We have spent our days looking at the situation of human trafficking through activities and stories.

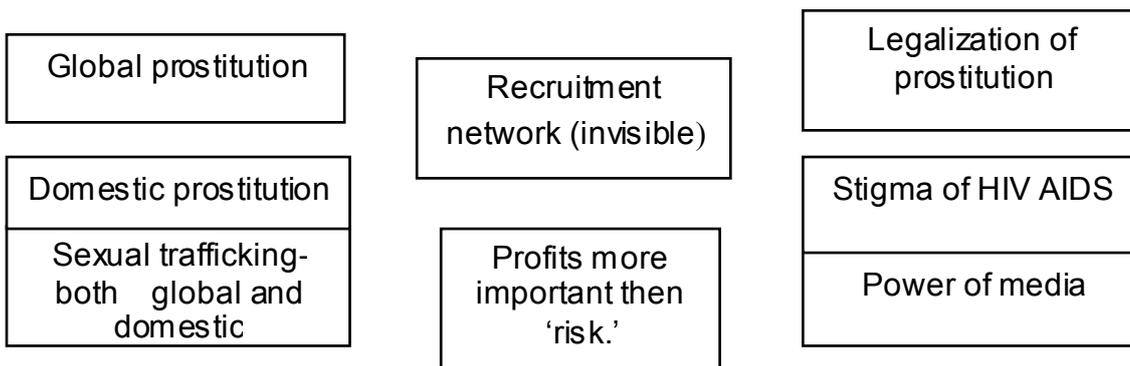
This enabled a deeper understanding of the current situation of ‘Human Trafficking and the Integrity of the Human Person’.



Our challenge now is for time to reflect, pray and contemplate rather than to enter into action. This will deepen within ourselves and help us to grasp the reality of human trafficking and our Christian duty to work for its eradication.

Sr. Michelle Lopez presented

8 global trends



.....and at the root of these global activities are the uncontrolled global values of

- Individualism
- Money-ism
- Consumerism
- Competition
- Egoism

All getting stronger

We ask ourselves, “What ethical dimension do we find when we look into our own hearts?” We are being confronted by a ‘new poor,’ and there is a seeming lack of our solidarity with them.

Spending more time understanding God’s Vision will sharpen our personal faith values about a global spirituality. We **worship** as family and **witness wholeness**. Christians reflect the power of the Church, they have a common direction and witness a radical commitment to Christ

Brother Anthony directed his input towards what to do about this and then how to do it.

He espoused a Global Civilizational Crisis in which a new paradigm is needed to understand life, relationships and activities from a new perspective. The ‘abnormal’ has become ‘normal’.

Action Plan for our Regional Level

Preamble

In response to the Asia Pacific Ursuline Conference on the “Integrity of the Human Person vis-à-vis Human Trafficking”, we commit to working in solidarity towards developing a critical awareness of these issues within our regions by keeping our eyes and hearts open to those in need. We seek to actively respond within a framework of truth, justice, love, and freedom in order to promote the integrity, dignity and rights of each person.

We agree to support the following two (2) initiatives:

1. To foster and maintain communication between all countries by:
 - a) Utilizing Ursuline Province websites to share stories, documents, worthwhile practices and educational materials that raise awareness of those marginalized in our society, with a particular focus on victims and perpetrators of human trafficking
 - b) the development of a regional network

2. To collaborate and promote the development of common projects against human trafficking which are either perpetrator or victim focused via:
 - a) one Asia Pacific project; and/or
 - b) projects between various countries across the Asia Pacific region.

It was agreed that the JPIC regional representative and province contact sisters of the Roman Union will ensure the ongoing development of these regional proposals over a period of two (2) years.

Four key elements of TRUTH, JUSTICE, LOVE AND FREEDOM are foundational in the move towards a new paradigm. A God of love and forgiveness is central in a new holistic vision of ecology, environment and our view of life.

A PATH of SPIRITUALITY and TRANSFORMATION

was presented. Based on the parable of the Good Samaritan,

we were offered a process to enter a path of God's Compassionate Love. It enriches us both personally and communally in transformative actions.

Our own Asia Pacific life transforms the Ursuline prophetic life into the 21st century.

Our regional and national directions were defined.

Fanning the flame

Sr. Lise Munro, OSU (Canadian Union), Sr Greta Bara, OSU (Tildonk) and Sr. Ruth Durick OSU (JPIC) sparked the life within ourselves and shared their gratitude for the work of all. The light of the region was lighted and the invitation to fan the flame was ignited. The rest is up to us.



Words of gratitude were expressed to Sr. Chintana, the sisters of the Thai Province and the welcoming group, for their gracious welcome and continued hospitality.

A warm "Thank you" was giving to the participants of the Conference for their active participation.



Loy Krathong Festival

The concluding day was the feast of Saint Ursula. The Loy Krathong festival symbolized reconciliation with life and nature by seeking forgiveness from the water for our lack of respect. Lighted balloons were released into the night air as the conclusion to our Conference.

Day Five - Saturday October 22, 2011

Sightseeing and Day of Departure

After breakfast, we said ‘goodbye’ to each other. Some participants went sightseeing. Places visited were: the Grand Palace, Parliament, Floating Market. and other points of interest.

In the evening everybody was ready to take their plane home with hearts burning with fire to work toward eradicating ‘Human Trafficking’ in each ones national and cultural situation.

Evaluation of the conference

The topic was well received by everyone. The liturgy was creative, expressed cultural experiences and was helpful to all. Interaction among people was very positive. Some people needed more time for personal integration. Some learned how to organize an international conference. English was not fully understood by everyone but the participants helped each other to understand.

The next Asia Pacific Ursuline Conference will be held in Japan.

For more information and photos, please visit Thailand’s

website: www.ursulinesth-ur.org