Sr. Marie Xaveria Pirc, OSU
(1894-1987)
Greetings!

The Province of Thailand is truly grateful for the successful production of HANDING ON THE TORCH. Our deep thanks go to all involved for their gracious contributions. We have already planned to use this for resource materials at our annual seminar of Ursuline school administrators in January 2013. The annual seminar will be called ‘Being and Becoming Ursuline Educators’. We plan to re-enter our individual roots and the common roots of Ursuline educators. The participation of people of other faiths in our mission creates richness in the model of Angela in our schools.

The enthusiastic preparation for AEC (ASEAN Economic Community) in the year 2015 helps us to promote ‘Angela’s way’ of being a community. We are stressing respect and acceptance of people of other cultures, faiths, languages and traditions. Sharing and learning from one another are what we aim for.

We thank our brothers and sisters for having gone beyond borders to create more opportunities for living and learning together.

(Sister Chintana Chatrasubhang OSU)
PARTICIPATION IN PRIEST RELIGIOUS MISSIONARY PROGRAM

By Sr. Prapat Srimon Srivorakul, OSU.

On May 21, 2012, the Priests Religious Missionary Program (PRMP) No. 4 for the Year 2012 was formally opened with the Eucharistic Celebration by Bishop Panya Kritcharoen, President of the Commission for Evangelization of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Thailand. This 4th PRMP 2012 had 21 participants including 11 priests and 10 religious women. The program was conducted in 7 sessions between the months of May and November. Each month we used one week for the program, alternating between theory and practice by immersion missionary life in the villages. Experts were invited to give courses which focused on spiritual renewal of missionary life through studying the Bible, theology and Church documents focusing on evangelization, missionary history, inter-religious dialogue, social work development with evangelization, witnessing, life sharing and encouragement for prayer life.

Father Adriano Pelosin, Superior of Thailand Missionary Society (TMS), Director of PRMP, led participants to immerse into missionary life in various villages. The participants were divided into 8 groups, 3-4 persons per village. We stayed with the villagers from Monday to Thursday. I was elected to be leader of one group.

For the first immersion, we went to Akha, Lahu, and Yao villages in Mae Chan, Chiang Rai Province, in June. Most of the villagers were poor and did not have their own land so they had to hire themselves out. Children were mostly educated with some staying at Catholic Centers. Many teenagers went to work in the city. Adults and the elderly stayed in the villages. Some had stayed in Thailand for a long time and had a Thai ID card which made it convenient for them to travel and receive medical service. But many still had only a permission document to stay in Thailand. They had to strive to make a living. However, no matter how rich or poor, Catholic villagers in this area had a source of hope and encouragement in their religion. The dwelling of God in their hearts was reflected by beautiful shrines in their homes. At Mae Chan, we taught villagers to sing. We visited the sick. We prayed together with them and blessed the homes. We worked and celebrated Mass.
with them. We fulfilled what they needed, e.g. liturgy, prayer and counseling. I was impressed by their warm hospitality, simple life, hard work, generosity and harmonious living although based on different beliefs. This made me more eager in seeking God.

For the second immersion, Fr. Adriano led us to Laos in August. We were divided into small groups as before. My group included Sr.Jeeranan Gimlek (SIHM) and Fr.Seksan Somsri, Ubon-Ratchathani Diocese priest. We stayed at Don-Prao village. I experienced strong belief under the strict control of the Laotian Government. We had to wear secular clothes and enter as tourists. Our activities there were the same as in Mae Chan except that we did not have Mass because it was not permitted. I was thankful that I could communicate with Laotians with the northeastern Thai dialect. Again we received warm hospitality. The people there were peasants—poor and hard working. They lived simple lives in harmony with nature and had a great zeal for God.

Our last immersion was in October. We went to some slums in Bangkok, an elderly home, and the Juvenile Observation and Protection Centre. These three places gave me meaningful experiences and made me aware of how important it is to have time to listen to others with understanding and to give them good advice. I thought of Matthew 25:40 "In truth I tell you, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me." In order to plant one must prepare the soil, to eat one must prepare the ingredients, to help a person to develop one must start from within. And, we need to develop ourselves first. Jesus is the source of strength. The one who trusts in Him will have no shame. There is no question for the one who believes. There is no answer for the one who does not believe. Jesus gave us the mission to proclaim and bring the good news to all. If we do his work, we will find happiness and peace. May the grace of God pour upon all his workers for all will know and love him more through us who live a missionary life.

At the end of the program we received the Cross, that told us to be

“ready to go to the mission land”
Vasudevi – Campaign on “Hope” and the issues of Poverty – Malnutrition

Pastoral Aspect

- Monthly small group discussions with teachers and workers facilitated by Sr. Wantana osu. The focus is on living experiences of “Hope”.
- Weekly small group discussions with students by class – teachers.
- The theme of Hope is central to special prayers on various special occasions, e.g. National Mother’s Day, Sports Day, etc.

Academic Aspect

- Enhance students’ creativities in using the theme as the main idea in different activities, such as class exhibition boards, posters and T-shirts for Sports Day, computer graphics, etc.

Students’ Activities Aspect

- The theme is used in the Girl Guide Camps’ activities in accordance with ability and maturity level of students in each year group.
"Hope is the driving force behind life" is the topic for the campaign of the Ursuline schools in Thailand in 2012. The campaign has helped to create an atmosphere in Regina Coeli School that is filled with hope and inspiration. Campaign signs are displayed in the school, including the school entrance, Piazza courtyard and the display boards in the classroom. The song, "Hope is the driving force behind life", was composed by our teachers and is sung by our students. Every Friday, after the national anthem, teachers and students sing the song together to help create an atmosphere of hope. Our morning prayer and meditation are also based on this theme.

In addition to creating an atmosphere for the development of teaching and studying in school, we have also intensively integrated the campaign with the school's identity. "Integrity, Conscience, Serviam, Prayer and Academic Excellence" are all integrated into our approach to learning together with activities in support of subject areas including Religion, and school activities.

In order to encourage students, from kindergarten to high school to develop and reach their full potential in learning, various camp activities, retreats for Catholic students, anti-drug campaigns, re-forestation projects, construction of weirs, the planting of rice on Father’s and Mother’s day, and donations to help others, etc. are also
encouraged. These activities are not only for the students who participate in the campaign and learn about the school’s identity, but also for the teachers who have to be trained to understand the meaning of the campaign and the school’s identity as well. There are retreats provided especially for the Catholic teachers to renew their Catholic values of faith and hope, Short renewals are planned monthly throughout the school year, of 2012.

In addition to the campaign promoting ‘Hope is the driving force behind life’ and the school’s identity, the school has also this year prepared students academically and initiated a staff development programme for entry into the ASEAN Community. With the teaching of English undertaken by the British Council, more emphasis is being placed on speaking skills from kindergarten year 3, Grade 1, Grade 4, Grade 7 and Grade 10 and thereafter, extending to every grade by 2014. Grade 1 - Grade 6 have already been studying English in Mathematics and Science
alongside the normal curriculum. Grade 3 – Grade 9 students have also been undertaking and learning language activities of their own choice, including Chinese, Japanese, French and Korean, assisted by native speakers. Furthermore, the school has made preparations to develop the teachers’ and staffs’ potential for English speaking skills. This together with a third language is in preparation for the integration of ASEAN into teaching/learning within the eight school departments of Regina Coeli.
Mater Dei

On the road to becoming a Professional Learning Community

The Ministry of Education of Thailand has recently redefined the size of schools. Mater Dei used to be considered a ‘medium’ sized school when schools of 3,000 students and up were called ‘large’ schools. We have kept our enrollment at ‘less than 2,000’ (1,985 this school year); but, we are now considered a large sized school.

In the past twenty years, Mater Dei has struggled with the question of ‘size’. We do not want big class sizes, yet applications have continued to increase. We do not want to be ‘expensive’, so we need to maintain larger class sizes than we would be happy with. What we are trying to do at the moment is to divide the classes of 36 students in half when we teach English and to continue to work on more individualized attention for students as much as we can. Thus, the school is always trying new projects and new ways of thinking to meet the need of a well rounded education.

Another challenge for us in being a ‘large sized’ school, is the number of teachers we require. This year we have 155 full time Thai teachers, 20 full time native speakers of English, Chinese and French, 30 part time teachers and about 80 mothers of students who volunteer. How are we to create a ‘professional learning community’ among our staff? More important still, how are we to foster and maintain a spirituality of communion?

Let me share some of our attempts:

1. For our full time staff and any part timers who wish to join, we offer 6-8 weekend retreats for teachers per year. Retreat masters/mistresses are priests, Sisters and a devout Buddhist medical doctor who is an alumna. We offer a choice of either a Catholic or a Buddhist way of retreat for our teachers. All the retreat masters/mistresses have kindly followed the theme of the school in offering their retreats. This year the theme is HOPE. Our yearly theme is always based on the Chapter Message of the Ursuline Order.

2. We have sessions called ‘professional development’ when 10 groups of 12-18 Thai speaking teachers meet once a month to share ideas on different given topics. At the professional development sessions in the month of July, teachers read the Message of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI for the

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World Communications Day. It was a beautiful and profound piece on the theme of **Silence and Word: Path of Evangelization**. The teachers found the message very meaningful for their life. They shared their experiences on the need for silence in daily life.

3. We have tried to engage our younger staff members to play leadership roles in our meetings and conferences. On the 17\textsuperscript{th} of July, 2012 when we had an In-service Training Day, about 45 young members of our staff presented in teams their syntheses of research and reflections on the Identity of Mater Dei-Ursuline School and the changes needed in order to make the kind of education the world requires for the 21\textsuperscript{st} century. The older generation of teachers were impressed with their professionalism, their use of IT, and their presentation skills.

4. Our teachers who are native speakers of English offered to teach English to Thai teachers. This is such a wonderful gesture of wanting to be a contributing part of our community. Our Thai teachers eagerly accepted the offer. Not only has language been learnt, but friendship has also been developed. We are also offering Chinese lessons to our Thai and English speaking teachers. And, the non-Thai staff have asked for Thai lessons, which we will soon offer.

5. With the kindness of Sister Moekti of the Indonesia Province, we had two Indonesian teachers with us for seven weeks from June 12 to July 30, 2012. They taught the Indonesian language, songs, dances and Batik to both students and teachers. They also introduced Indonesia as an important country within the ASEAN Community in Social Studies classes. Most importantly, they offered themselves so joyfully and tirelessly every single day. They were model Ursuline teachers for us.

In our attempt to continue to be one with the Ursuline Sisters in offering Ursuline education and in our yearly effort to bring the Chapter Message of the Ursulines to life, we have found that teachers play a very important role. And, we put in a great deal of effort in empowering our teachers.
Ursuline Student Leaders Camp

“INTEGRITY and SERVIAM”

Mater Dei School, Bangkok and

Baan Phet Samran, Hua Hin, Pra Chuab Khiri Khan Province, Thailand

Saturday 30th June to Saturday 7th July 2012

The Ursuline Sisters have called for networking and exchanges among Ursuline schools. The Ursuline Commission on Education, Thailand therefore invited Ursuline students from Ursuline schools in Australia and Indonesia to join students from Regina Coeli and Mater Dei in Thailand in participating in the experience of living, learning, recognizing and respecting human integrity. One purpose of the project was to explore the possibility of services beyond self through the process of SEE-JUDGE-ACT. The aim was to develop leadership skills in promoting the integrity and value of human life.

Sixty students of age 15-17 participated in the camp. From overseas we had 10 from the Ursuline school in Sydney, 10 from Toowoomba, 5 from Regina Pacis in Solo, 5 from Cor Jesu in Malang, 5 from Santa Ursula in Jakarta, and 5 from Santa Ursula (BSD). In Thailand there were 10 students from Regina Coeli School, Chiang Mai and 10 from Mater Dei School, Bangkok. Two teachers from Indonesia accompanied the students and four from Australia plus Mrs. Anne Anderson, Principal of Ursuline School, Sydney. From Regina Coeli, Chiang Mai, we had 2 teachers. And 6 teachers from Mater Dei School assisted Brother John D’Cruz from Malaysia who facilitated the camp learning experiences.

Twenty two families of Mater Dei students, with the help of Mrs. Orapen Wongsuwan, mother of the school’s captain and an active member of Inter-Ursuline Community of Thailand, hosted the Australian and Indonesian students and teachers in their homes. The visitors arrived in Bangkok on Saturday, June 30th and stayed until Tuesday, when the students went off to Mater Dei’s Camp House in Hua Hin. On Monday, the 2nd of July, the students went in groups to 5 different centers where Mater Dei girls normally do their service program, namely, two orphanages, one day care center for slum children, a government school for the deaf, and a home for neglected aged people.
At Hua Hin, students were led by Brother John to recognize their power and skills to learn on the first day and then on the second day they used those skills in the nearby communities. The students learned to work together as a team even though they were from three different countries. One father of Mater Dei students, who was among the host ‘fathers’ said that these kids, even from different countries, were products of the same brand: SERVIAM!

At the closing ceremony, Lucy, a participant from Toowoomba, summarized the program when she said: “My name is Lucy and I am from St. Ursula’s College, Toowoomba in Queensland, Australia. I have been asked to share with you some of my experiences here in Thailand. I wish to start by acknowledging all the home-stay families. For their kindness, warmth and incredible generous hospitality, I say thank you.

To the staff and students of Mater Dei for opening up their school to us and showing us our extended ‘Angela’ family, I say thank you.

To all the staff at Hua Hin – teachers, cooks, gardeners – who served our every need, I say thank you.

To Brother John, we need you to know that you have given us something very special. You have guided us through a model of leadership (with a little ‘l’) which is based on service. You did not waste time talking the talk – but rather you gave us the opportunity to walk the walk.

Our experience at the beach, markets, fishing village and train station taught us to look through different eyes and to see deeper to find the truth...to look and see where need is – not where we think there is a need. It also allowed us to reflect and see our own weaknesses as well as incorrect judgments that we made from our frame of reference.
You guided us to realize that when we lead, we must do so with respect, encouragement and comfort for others. You gently showed us effective life skills to deal with many situations. You showed us the life skills of listening, observing, focusing on true need, reflecting and only then moving to action in a respectful and encouraging way. These are the very same skills that Angela teaches.

Brother John, you have been a gift all of us and for this we say thank you.”

From other girls we had comments such as:

“It’s a very cool camp , and I’ve never done something like this before. I can meet people from other countries and try to speak English. It’s the first time I practiced my English language. So, it’s very cool! And I learnt to speak Thai also. It’s so nice.”

“I appreciate this camp very much. It is more than awesome. Thank you so much.”

“The camp is so very wonderful  and great! This camp gives me many things that are so very good. And I hope this camp can take place next year again so that many more Ursuline students can improve themselves. Thank you.”

“I would like to say thanks to the facilitator and the teachers. They were very organized and prepared the material very well so that this camp was interesting and meaningful.”

“I think that this experience is precious.”
“I want to say "thank you" to Brother John because he taught me a lot. For example, ‘we should look deep in their mind before judging them’.

“The facilitator was very good (excellent) at explaining things.”

“It was amazing, especially Brother John who made me realize what really matters.”

“My friend in the home stay was friendly. She was kind. She helped me, and offered me something when I needed help.”

“I really loved this immersion experience.”

“I really love this camp. I hope to come back. Thank you, every one.”