Greetings!

This issue of AQUA comes at the end of a very turbulent year in Thailand. Many difficult political situations occurred. There were political uprisings in May and June which caused the death of many people. But in spite of the turbulence, the government of Thailand tried to create an atmosphere of reconciliation and had many plans to create and preserve a spirit of unity amidst a variety of ideas and factions.

In spite of such problems as the Preah Vihear Temple controversy and border instability Thailand still strives to foster a good relationship with Cambodia.

There were natural disasters, such as floods and mud slides, but the government endeavoured to continue supporting each group regardless of its relationship with it. The government is presently striving to reestablish peace, unity and hope. Please continue to keep our country in your prayer.

This issue of AQUA which so clearly portrays our spirit of internationality and interconnectedness.
We hope you enjoy reading it.

With Angela,
AQUA team, Thailand

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May you continue journeying with God with joy and expectation. Even though we have many borders to cross, we still have hope of continuing to be messenger of courage and hope.

May we wish you a very happy holy new year.

Sr. Chintana Chatrasubhang, OSU
A New Found Freedom - A New Life Begins

Mary Walter Santer, OSU

In General:
December 16, 1991 was a day of great rejoicing for the Kazakhstan! A country of approximately 15 and a half million people. The land, formerly a Soviet Republic of Khazakhstan. Its peoples are composed of Kazakhr, who make up 53.7% of the population while Russians constitute 30% of the new nation’s people. Migrants from the Ukrain and Uzbekistan together make up another 6% while Germans represent 2.5% of the total population. The remainder represents small groups of mostly tribals. The “State” language is Kazakh, used by 64% of the people. Russian is still an “official” language used in business and everyday affairs.

Flag

Emblem

The country is blessed with an abundance of natural resources which were well put to use during the time when the land was under the control of Russia. Today, the factories built during the Stalin era are deserted and all who worked in them have either returned to Russia or are jobless Kazakhaks. Unemployment is a major social problem. In a society with a high level of hopelessness, alcohol has a “soothing” effect. Thus, a second social problem which follows unemployment is alcoholism. It “eases the pain” of severe poverty, But also increases it!
One near tragedy, part of which I saw with my own eyes was the case of a 3 year-old little girl who lived in one of the small cement block one storey homes. One evening little Toshka’s mother and father were quite inebriated having over indulged in vodka, the people’s chief “beverage of choice” The father toppled over, the victim of a fatal heart attack, and landed on top of little Toshka covering her completely. Totally traumatized both mother and six year old brother Vladimir were unable to call for help for more than two days. When finally discovered by some neighbors, Toshka was rushed to the hospital in critical condition suffering from dehydration and severe frostbite. Miraculously she survived and after 2 weeks was sent with Vladimir to be taken care of by an aunt who fortunately enrolled them in a free, small children’s center for those below school age.

I met these 2 children when I visited this center run by a very new international religious missionary congregation whose members include sisters, brothers and priests. Toshka and Vladimir were sitting bolt upright with spoons in hand ready to “attack” the “borscht” (thick vegetable soup) and big chunk of very healthy bread. Seeing the great eagerness in the eyes of the 2 who were sitting among about 20 other little ones, I tried to alert the server to the fact that Toshka might have difficulty getting the food to her mouth, but was informed that she certainly WOULD NOT! This was absolutely correct!! And she hobbled off to the kitchen, bowl in hand, for a second helping! That day was the very day Vladimir and his little sister actually made eye-contact with people and smiled. From the time of the accident until that day the children had neither made eye-contact with others nor smiled!!

The Church:
Of its fifteen and a half million citizens 47% are Moslems,44% Russian Orthodox, 2% Protestants, and 7% a variety of other religions including a few Roman Catholics, with some of the latter being members of the Greek
Rite and others of the Latin Rite.

The Catholic Church has recently become a member of the FABC since they now have the required number of bishops to form a Conference. Archbishop Tomash Peta is the current President of the Bishops’ Conference. He is now a citizen of Kazakhstan having immigrated from Poland.

Among the Catholic Religious who are still very few, are many originally from Poland and Russia with only a sprinkling of Kazakhs. A few other nationalities are also to be found there.

As for the Religious men and diocesan priests, almost all are ex-patriots coming also mostly from Poland and Russia. The ministry of all the priests and religious usually revolves around the parish and its needs.

Despite the fact that the Catholics are so few and quite scattered, I found the level of real Christian spirituality quite high. During the meeting of all the women religious from the various congregations, I noticed how slowly and devoutly the Divine Office was prayed with the Archbishop as the “officiant” and other priests of the diocese. One gets the impression that they are truly trying to live a life following in the footsteps of Jesus. However, since they had been repressed for so long, they are in need of updating which I believe they are trying to do.

As for the laity, I found a wonderful spirit among them. Old ladies wearing “babushkas” big old “clod-hoppers” shoes for working in the fields, bit old woolen overcoats, etc., came around to greet me with big toothless smiles and very powerful handshakes. One much younger woman approached me and invited me to the birthday dinner party she was having for her beautiful 18 years old daughter the following day. She invited the whole community with whom I was staying which included 4 sisters, 2 brothers and a priest. There were 7 children ranging in age from 11 months to 18 years old. The home was very small for such a large family. The furniture was the “well used” variety. But it was a VERY happy family. The mother and 2 of her older girls had stayed up very late the previous night to make some special Kazakh food for the party and so I could taste their food! The father for his
part became the humble waiter, seeing to everyone’s needs and later presented a small gift from the family to his “birthday girl”. After dinner the parents and guests joined they younger children who were jumping rope. Asked by the children to join them, they very obligingly fell to the ground, to the great glee of the children!

I asked this happy mother how old she was. She stopped to think a moment and then responded. “Oh, 36 or 37 I don’t quite remember”. She had no time to dwell on herself, no time for the little things which center on one’s self!

The Christian youth were another admirable group which I met at breakfast with the Archbishop. They, too, were a lively group who had just completed their hours of all night adoration of the Blessed sacrament. At this Cathedral parish there is perpetual adoration and all the Christians take turns in assuring that there are always some parishioners at adoration. They are truly a praying community.
During my brief stay in Kazakhstan, I learned many things which are helpful for my own life, e.g., the value of team work, Christian community life, a deeper and clearer understanding of what really matters in life if we choose to follow Jesus!

Photos: Wikipedia and Kazakhstan country website
Our new Mission in Cambodia

Siphim Xavier, OSU

“If it is God's will, it will come true”. I always hear many sisters saying this sentence. The dream came true on September 29, 2010 when Ursuline Sisters from 4 provinces joined together to praise God for the new mission in Battambang, Cambodia.

On that morning, some sisters went to visit a historical place in Cambodia called “the Killing Field” and some sisters stayed home to prepare the house to welcome our friends who will participate in the opening ceremony for our new mission that evening.

Around 5.20 p.m., we began our simple celebration together. 23 people joined in our house opening which consisted of three parts: Welcoming ceremony, Eucharistic celebration and House Blessing for our new international (Inter-provincial) community.

Ursuline International Community
With
Australia, Indonesia, China and Thailand
Joining Hands
Our Program

Part I - Welcoming
- Sr. Chintana Chatrsubhang, provincial of Thailand welcomed all who came to celebrate with us.
- Sr. Huaying informed us about the purpose of this International community.
- Sr. Chintana read the Act 360/10 from M. Cecilia.
- Srs. Paulina Gani (Indonesia), Huaying (China) and Jantana (Thailand) introduced themselves.
- Fr. Phongphans Phokthavee, S.J. spoke on behalf of Bishop Kike, of Battambang to welcome the Ursulines to his diocese. Bishop Kike was in Rome and went to visit M. Cecilia and her counsellors on 26th of September.
- Fr. Phongphans introduced people in Battambang to the Ursulines.
Part II - Eucharistic Celebration
- After the Communion prayer Sr. Siphim read a greeting card from M. Cecilia and her council to this new community.
- Fr. Phongphand gave a bouquet of papal roses to Srs. Paulina, Huaying and Jantana.
- Sr. Lee from Australia thanked Fr. Phongphand, Sr. Lakana and others for their help and support for the foundation of the Ursulines in Battambang.
- Sr. Chintana presented a gift to Fr. Phongphand and Sr. Paulina presented one to Sr. Lakana.
- Fr. Phongphand invited Sr. Lakana to speak to the gathering. She said that she was so pleased to welcome us to Battambang since there are so many things to do for people here especially for the children. She helped us just as we did her congregation at the beginning of the foundation of the Salesian sisters.

Part III - A House Blessing
A House Blessing by Fr. Phongphand, was followed by Dinner.

Purpose of new foundation: In response to the call of the General Chapter 2007, “Go Beyond Borders,” and the wish of the EGC 2009 for closer inter-provincial collaboration, the Province wishes to establish this foundation with the other Asian-Pacific Provinces in view of preparing future Ursuline missionaries to serve the less privileged people.

Apostolic Mission
An Agreement has been reached among the four Provinces, and contact has been made with the Bishop of Battambang, Cambodia, who warmly welcomed the Ursulines into his diocese.

For the initial period, it was suggested that the Sisters try first to learn about the country, the people, the needs of the local Church, etc. by participating in apostolic works of the diocese. After that, the Sisters from the three provinces will try to build up an inter-provincial community while exploring possible future apostolates suitable for the Ursulines. They will also begin to learn the language. With the help of a Thai Jesuit, a small house near the church has been rented for them.
Members of this Inter-provincial community:
Sr. Paulina Gani, Indonesia
Sr. Alphonsa Huaying, Taiwan
Sr. Jantana Wongsankakorn, Thailand

Priority

The bishop told us that more than half of the population are youth and people lacking good education, health care and adult formation. Any type of ministry is a priority for them.

Prayer for the new mission

We believe in living deeply, laughing often and loving always. We believe we were brought together to support and care for each other in our apostolate.

We believe in celebrating together; our faith, our heritage, our traditions.

We believe that everyone's feelings count and that the uniqueness of each strengthens all of us.

Lord, bless our new international Mission
in Cambodia

7
Moral courage

A Mother of Vasudevi’s student

Many interesting topics in the speech aim to instill ethical values in the students, but they are useful to me also.

Last week, I was impressed by the speech of one sister during the celebration ceremony of St Ursula, one of the school's patron saints. She gave a brief history of the legend of St Ursula, who was scarified with an arrow for protecting her beliefs.

The sister said St Ursula is a good example for every girl to keep their moral courage.

She encouraged the students to choose a moral philosophy for themselves and try to protect it, citing many examples to show there are a number of situations in our daily life that need moral courage.

"Some may promise to themselves to be honest as much as they can. They need to be very brave to keep their word," she said, adding "Even when they are in the exam room and find that the test is very difficult, they will never cheat. You should ask yourself, what is the most important moral philosophy in your life? Everyone should select at least one moral philosophy and try to stick to it for as long as possible. Of course it will be a difficult thing to achieve, and many challenging tasks will come your way. But every girl can become a good person with high moral standards."

It seems like a small issue, but it really touched my heart. For small kids, it may be difficult for them to know about the importance of moral courage in their life.

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1 Published by Bangkok Post on November 18, 2010.

Share your thoughts - More From Bangkokpost.com
But for adults, we know there are many times we will have to stand at the crossroads and be tempted by satan's offers. The recent scandal of video clips that show the cheating in the recruitment of constitutional court officials is a good example. In order to get a good job, even well educated adults appear to be foregoing their honesty.

Last week, one of my friends asked me to help her explain to her daughter why she should not vote for the friend who gave her a box of cookies to be the class leader.

I found it was not easy to explain to kids to decide what is right or wrong. But when we grow up it won't be easier because life is more complicated.

There are some moments in life when I find it difficult to adhere to my moral philosophy. I sometimes hear the devil whispering in my ear with a good and tempting offer which is an easier and faster way.

Hundreds of reasons were raised to convince me to drop my principles. I have to thank my parents for being my role models and helping me get through the tough times.

When I look back on my life and my career path, I'm so glad that I kept my principles along the way.

I hope my daughter will think of me when she meets with difficulty. As a Buddhist I believe in the basic theory of karma. If you have a good intention in any action you should get a good result from it. But sometimes you have to wait for the good result, however it is still important to keep doing good.

There is a saying _ standing for what is right when it is unpopular is the true test of moral character _ which I agree with 100%.

I want to thank the sister at Vasudevi School for helping me to hold on tight to the most valuable human characteristic during the big tests in my life.
The celebration of the 475th anniversary of the Ursuline Order throughout the world²

Siphim Xavier, OSU

Beginnings in Brescia
On November 25, 1535 Angela founded a Company of Women in Brescia. The 475th anniversary seems such a long time ago. It makes me think of the times when Ayudhaya was the capital of the Kingdom of Siam. In the year 1535 before the Reign of Phra Narai the Great³ Angela Merici founded the company of St. Ursula in the north of Italy. On this day she gathered a group of women together. This was in the time of King Chairachathirat (1534 – 1546) during the Reign of the Suphanburi Dynasty. The company of women gathered together as a group of lay people but they were still a group of women who had been invited to offer their lives to God as unmarried women in the midst of the world. They were not cloistered religious living in a convent but something very new.

² This article was published in Udomsam, a monthly catholic magazine in Bangkok, December, 2010

³ Somdet Phra Narai (1633 - 11 July 1688) or Somdet Phra Ramathibodi III was the king of Ayutthaya from 1656 to 1688 and allegedly the most famous Ayutthayan king. His reign was the most prosperous during the Ayutthaya period and saw the great commercial and diplomatic activities with foreign nations including the Persians and the West. Source: Wikipedia

King Narai had since the early 1670’s attempted to establish relations with France, partly as a counterweight to English and Dutch influence in and around Siam, partly as a means to facilitate his control over the burgeoning coastal trade. In 1680, the first Siamese Embassy to Versailles was shipwrecked, and a second envoy left in 1684, reaching France safely. In late 1685 the Siamese envoys returned to Ayuthia, accompanied by a well appointed French Mission led by Chevalier Alexandre de Chaumont and counting among its members the Jesuit Guy Tachard, "the boudoir Abbé" de Choisy and Father Vachet of the French Overseas Mission Society. While King Narai was interested in expanding political and commercial relations, de Chaumont single-mindedly pursued the conversion of the King to the Catholic faith, ignoring advice from Abbé de Choisy to show discretion and restraint. The mission was, not unexpectedly, a failure. Three members of the mission published their version of the events: Chaumont, Choisy and Tachard. Source: Voyage to Siam by Guy Tachard, S.J.
for that period of time. Angela passed her time in prayer and helping people as much as she could. She also willingly offered advice to whoever sought it of her.

I will not, here, recount the details of Angela’s life and the History of the Roman Union which are already well known.

Beginning of the Ursuline in Thailand
Travelling by ship to the Kingdom of Siam
389 years later, there occurred the important event of the first arrival of 4 Ursuline missionaries in Siam. The fleet arrived on the 25th of November 1924 which, strange but true, was the anniversary of the founding of a Company of Women by Saint Angela, 1535. These four missionaries were:

• Mother Therese Mary Mertens, Belgian
• Mother Marie Xaveria Pirc, Yugoslavia
• Mother Marie Raphael Vurnik, Yugoslavia
• Mother Agnes Delatattre, French

They were of 3 different nationalities: Yugoslavia (at present it is Slovenia), France and Belgian, a truly international community from the beginning. They began working in the Kingdom of Siam at the invitation of Bishop Rêne Perros, MEP, the designated bishop of the Kingdom of Siam at that time.

Educating young girls
These four sisters began their apostolate in the school of the Regina Rosary attached to Calvary Church. The sisters saw to the care of the orphans and of the students of this diocesan school. After that they acquired a piece of land on Ploenchitir Road where they opened the Mater Dei School in the year 1928. Four years later, they extended
their apostolate to the north of Thailand where they were called by the Bishop. The Ursulines started the School of Regina Coeli in the year 1932. Later in 1957, they opened another school in Bangkok, the Vasudevi School. In 2002 the Order founded the Piyamart School in the Province of Payao. This was later totally supported by the government and the alumnae.

**Soli, for the glory of God**
Over and above this work of teaching in Schools, the Ursulines in Thailand were offered social work related to peace, justice, charitable work, and formation of the native youth. Working in union with the local church and the international community, they began a centre for women religious and a catechetical center. One more reason for rejoicing was the opening of a new mission in Batambang, Cambodia on the 29th of September, 2010 at the invitation of Bishop Enrique Figaredo Alvargonzalez, Bishop of Batambang. This was the result of a collaboration between Australia, China, Indonesia and Thailand.

**On the 475th anniversary of witnessing to the Greater Glory of God**
The 25th of November, 2010 is important for Ursulines all over the world as they are united in thanking God for the different works that were begun by the daughters of St. Angela. Those different works were not completed by us but by God who gave them to us to accomplish according to the motto: “Glory be given to God alone”.

Many missionaries crossed the ocean to come and work in Thailand to help form youth for many generations even before Thailand changed from a royal monarchy to a monarchical democracy. Many of these missionaries were affected by this change. They had to flee the danger of war and tried to evacuate the Mater Dei School from Bangkok to Hua Hin because Japan took over the use of our school to teach electronics to the Japanese soldiers. In the northern part of Thailand, the sisters who lived there were interned within the locality by Japanese soldiers.

**Formation of the whole person and high morality**
One American sister, Sr. Theophane Westerman, OSU passed away in the year 2007 at the age of 100 years at Regina Coeli in Chiangmai. She often
related to the younger sisters how she taught the Thai students. Over and above teaching English Sister taught the students how to share and be merciful to those in need. She taught the children to help the poor, and when they went shopping to be very honest and not cheat the merchants. If a merchant unconsciously gave more change than required, the students were to return it. They should be honest to themselves even if others did not know about it. Sr. Theophane related that she told the students, “I didn’t come to teach you the English language or to change your Religion but I wanted to teach you how to be good, honest persons, knowing how to serve society.

It’s a beginning but that’s not enough
St. Angela said a good beginning is not enough. You must also persevere. On the occasion of the 475th anniversary of the founding of the Company of St. Ursula, she asked each one of her followers or anyone within the Ursuline circle was asked to be a person of value, ready to serve others and society. We can all be certain that Angela will be with us at all times because she promised us, “I will be with you at all times to help you in your prayer, so have a strong heart”.
Catechetical camp – Christian life at Omgoy

by

Sr. Narumon Charoenkun, OSU and Sr.Songsaeng Thinwan, OSU

On the morning of March 25th, 2010, a truck with such donated gifts as milk, cookies and stationary, left Regina Coeli School at 8.45 a.m. There were 7 passengers: Sr. Ratchanee Disudchit was the leader, Sr. Songsaeng, Sr. Narumon and three student volunteers from Mater Dei School. These three volunteers, all nice young girls were in Grade 11. They wanted to help care for hill tribe children. A catechetical camp was established at the learning centre for students. It is not really on the mountain but just above the foot of the mountain, not far from the city. A hospital is about 5 kilometers away from this learning centre. Fr. Suthee Charoenkun welcomed us and we had our lunch together. After that Sr. Ratchanee hurried to take charge of other catechetical Camps in Chiangkham and Phang. The team there consisted of Sr. Prapai Kittawee and all our novices.

At the beginning of our catechetical camp many children accompanyied by their catechetical teachers arrived from the mountains. 161 registered for this 2-week program. Among the arrivals were two tribes of Karen people: S’gaw Karen and Pwo Karen. After the Easter celebration many children followed their parents back home. The house looked so empty.
Our volunteers were very helpful and ready to do all kinds of works. They did not complain at the lack of facilities: the accommodation was not sufficient for all, cooking materials were lacking and there was no dining hall for the children. All our volunteers were very understanding of the situation. There were only the two dormitories, one for boys and one for girls. There was a multi purpose hall which we used for our camp. We thanked God for helping us to work in peace and had fun together at the catechetical camp.

We celebrated our Easter mass there. Among many well wishers were: teachers, seminarians volunteers and children. Because we had no cooks the children had to do the cooking themselves but they enjoyed it. The senior children helped with serving of the food, cleaning the venue and nursing the young one when they were sick. Sr. Narumon, in charge of the young children would send any sick child to the hospital. When Sr. Songsaeng was not too busy she listened to the news from Bangkok by radio, internet and newspaper. The red shirt people¹ had captured Rajprasong intersection, very near to her community of Mater Dei.

¹Red shirt people - 2009–2010 protests and crackdowns - On May 3, the Thai Prime Minister announced he was willing to hold elections on November 14 should the opposition red shirts accept
Our volunteers share their reflections as follows:

Jantharat khunworawait  
Mater Dei student Grade 10
I am very pleased to meet people whom I have never met in my life. I lived there without my parents taking care of my every need. It was a memorable experience which I will not forget. I was impressed with everything: the peaceful atmosphere and beautiful nature. When I was there I did not receive any news. My mind was clear and happy, forgetting that there was big demonstration in Bangkok. I was impressed by my friends, teachers, seminarians and all the children who came to join us. They were all nice and took good care of me. sometimes I felt homesick but it was like seeing things with new glasses. I saw how difficult it was for the villagers to travel. It took them a long time to go from one place to another – some children taking a full day some a half day to come here from their homes which were not far from our camp. The bad roads made the distance seem longer.

the offer. The following day red shirt leaders accepted the proposal to leave the occupied parts of Bangkok in return for election on the scheduled date.

However, one week later, May 10, protesters had yet to disband despite accepting the 'road map' proposed by the prime minister for early 2010 November elections. They placed new demands upon the Prime minister that Deputy Prime Minster Suthep Thauguban, who was in charge of security operations on the clash of April 10, must first turn himself in for prosecution before they willingly disperse.

May 11 Suthep presented himself to the Department of Special Investigation. The red-shirt protesters however were not satisfied and demanded Suthep be formally charged instead by police. The red shirts failure to disperse was taken as a decline of the conciliatory 'road map' and Prime minister Abhisit's proposal of early parliamentary elections were withdrawn. This was followed by a warning issued from the Prime minister that protesters must disperse or face imminent military action. Furthermore the 'red shirts' led another protest on the 19th May. Over 90 protesters people were killed and thousands injured in the subsequent military crackdown.

Trunks of trees became cutting boards for cooking. There were no trash cans so the garbage was thrown on the ground. These reminded me that we still lacked many things. In the future I must remember this and be ready to help Father Suthee and Sr. Narumon whenever they are in need. If I can’t find any other way, to help at least I can pray.

The holidays of that school year were the most precious and useful holidays in my life. Although I will sit for the entrance exam this year I don’t feel that I wasted my time living with people there because I received an awareness of love, truth and good friendship from all.

Pornwadee Kiatprakarn and Haemawan Suthinond, Mater Dei student Grade 10
We were delighted and happy for the opportunity of attending the catechetical camp at Omgoi this year. While we were there we found that we were meeting another kind of people who related to one another in spirit rather than through material things. We never imagined that we could live without money but when we were there we found that money is not so important as faith. Fr. Suthee has a profound faith in God. During those past 3 weeks we learnt more about faith. And our faith is getting stronger and stronger.

We realized that life is precious when we learn to help others. Serving in the camp was a rare opportunity for us. We compared ourselves with other friends who spent their time doing something else.

Our going there has brought us closer to a nature which is rarely seen in the city. If we have a chance we will choose to go there again in the future.
Women of 4 seasons
Siphim Xavier, OSU

We began our tertianship in Autumn on November 15, 2009. When we arrived there were falling leaves everywhere in Rome. In the beginning there were 18 tertians but one sister from Australia was not well and had to go home. We had to leave many things behind and get rid of ourselves in order to relearn old things and learn new things.

Then we celebrated a Winter Christmas. There were many celebrations. We were excited on seeing snow at Ariccia where we had our 30-day retreat. It was heaven on earth - the most beautiful retreat centre that I had ever seen. It was right on Lake Albano. We retrieved our source of life again by journeying with the One who is the centre of our lives.

We saw first flower of Spring on Feb 13. 2010. It was amazing to see a symbol of new life again. After that we continued our journey of life after a long winter. We celebrated our Easter Sunday at the Vatican. We found the fountain of life...... Then we walked in the footsteps of Mother Angela in Dezensano, Brescia, Venice and Milan. What a blessing!
It was mid Summer when we said goodbye to each other and to the people in Rome. We were planning to go back to our Galilee again. There were many things to think about. We will never forget our celebrations, our cooking, singing, learning, washing, journeying, doing art work, retreating and praying together.

Life is a journey; we travel together, walking hand in hand beyond our borders in order to bring love, peace, reconciliation and hope to people we meet. ....... Thank God, our order and to Sr. Mel Williams, our tertian directress for this chance to nurture together our love of God and our spirit of internationality.

Tertians 2009 – 2010: Our Tertian Directress Mel, Metka, Agatha Linda, Dominika, Ann-Marie, Veronique, Maria Hersin, Anka, Mariam, Ksenija, Dorota, Milogros, Maria Vitoria, Franciszka, Rose Pushpa, Kumudini, Jill, Nurhayati and Siphim
Formosa Journey

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: ............ a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted.....(Ecclesiastes 3:1-2)

by Sr. Jantana Wongsankakorn, OSU

During almost a year on this beautiful island, “Formosa” now Taiwan, my mission is to study Chinese. I study in the Chinese Language Center of Wenzao Ursuline College of Languages (Wenzao) in Kaohsiung, Taiwan. This is a blessed time for me, not only to learn Chinese but also culture and community life. I would like to share these experiences on three levels.

As an individual…. Chinese characters teach me philosophy of life. Chinese characters have their roots. The roots - people, tree, water, organs of the body- help us understand how to live our life. For example the word “listen” in Chinese has its root from an ear, ten eyes and a heart. The hidden meanings of these Chinese characters inspire me to love and learn more. Moreover the art of writing Chinese characters is balance. In my opinion balance is one of the core values of the Eastern way of living.

As a religious community…. In Kaohsiung community, I stay with eight Ursuline sisters. Six of them are so called “retired Sisters”. I think that is only a name because, in reality, they are excellent. They work and teach as much as they would like to do. Their lives remind me of the psalm in Morning Prayer… Our years are over like a sigh, the years of our life are seventy, or eighty (or ninety) for those who are strong..(especially the Ursulines). They are strong in body mind and spirit. I can see the beauty of the word “Unity in Diversity” from this community. Sometimes I experience a few difficulties because we are different, which is normal in a family and a community. There are some good values that I have learned
from their sharing; for instance: “do not be complicated in your thoughts; see beyond the person only God’s will; self control is not easy when we are getting old”. I do not know how long I shall live but how to live and love others until the last moment of life is more important.

As Angela’s daughter ..... This academic year seems to be the Ursuline year of Wenzao. I met many Ursuline Sisters and administrators from several countries. We started with sharing about Ursuline education in England and France from Sr. Alice and Sr. Brigitte (General Counselors). Many Ursuline Sisters, teachers and students from Germany, England, Indonesia and Thailand came to visit Wenzao. Wenzao also invited the management team of the Ursuline institutes in Toowoomba, Australia and Cleveland, United States, to talk about St. Angela’s spirit. The 500 years of St. Angela’s spirit is marvelous. It has been conveyed like a stream from generation to generation. Although we are not the same union or congregation, we are one in St. Angela’s spirit- love and service of others – Serviam. When I think of this spirit, I wonder how this could come about from a little woman named Angela. I am very happy to be her daughter. In addition, I feel this spirit flows among the teachers and co-workers in Wenzao. Several alumnae work and serve Wenzao as if in their second home. Wenzao also has a good record in Taiwan in terms of being the first catholic college which is totally run by lay people.

I thank God for this great opportunity and also extend my gratitude to each one of you, dear Sisters, for sending me for this course in Taiwan. My gratitude also extends to all the Sisters and teachers in Taiwan who have taken care of me throughout the year of my stay. I keep whispering my prayers for all of you with love and gratitude.

Activities and events in Ursuline Schools in Thailand

Ursuline Global Conference 2010

Dr. Francis So, President of Wenzao Ursuline College, Taiwan and myself were the only two from Asia Pacific Region who attended the Ursuline Global Conference 2010. The Conference was organized by the headmistresses of Ursuline schools in England from 1st to 6th July 2010 at the Friars, Aylesford, Kent, England. Other countries represented at the conference were Austria, Barbados, Czech Republic, France, Greece, Peru, Poland, Slovakia, USA. It was a delightful, warm and informal gathering with the purpose to create an “Ursuline network” as we ‘journey together and embrace the future’. Participants had the privilege of visiting one Ursuline school of their choice in and around London as well as a choice of a guided visit to London or Canterbury and Dover Castle.

Mother Cecilia Wang graced the gathering with words of appreciation for the Province of England with their strong lay “partners” in Ursuline education who put their heart and efforts in preparing for this conference two years ahead of time. She also emphasized the word INSIEME and the importance of an international network to educate for peace and to make an impact on our world. Sister Alice Montegomery, OSU, the keynote speaker, helped to identify some key elements that we must not lose sight of as Ursuline educators which are the words of Saint Angela. Sister Alice put “respect; know your students and love
them; harshness and strong rebukes don’t work—gentleness and kindness do,” as central elements. She also identified what it is that bonds us together as Ursuline educators with a passion for our young people which are, a good relationship and a two-way communication with an active listening skill. Sister Alice left us with challenges that we face in preparing our young people to be responsible citizens for the 21st century. There were also meaningful lectures from two other invited speakers, one—an extremely knowledgeable lay woman and the other, the provincial of the Jesuits in England.

Thanks to Sister Maureen, Sister Ann and their beautiful lay partners, we were enriched by the program and the link will continue.

(Reported by Miss Sumitra Phongsathorn)

**Ursuline Student Leadership Camp**

Unfortunately, the Indonesia-Thailand Ursuline student leadership camp which Sister Moekti and Sumitra dreamed of, had to be only a camp for Thai students due to the political unrest in Thailand. Brother John D’Cruz, La Salle from Malaysia, facilitated the Ursuline student leadership camp for 54 Thai students on August 22-27, 2010. The students were from grades 8-12 of Mater Dei, Regina Coeli and Vasudevi schools. The camp was conducted in English with Thai allowed when they played and discussed among themselves. While running the camp, Brother John also helped to train teachers of the three schools how to facilitate a camp, stressing the process of formation for the young people.

Students were gradually led from the awareness of the ‘power of one’ to the experience of the power of a team/group in changing the world. Words of Angela were appropriately chosen to put on banners to create an atmosphere of journeying together as Ursuline students. Students responded very well to the activities and the invitation to look deep into themselves as well as to open themselves to new friends and new challenges.

We are now more ready to invite schools in the region to quality Ursuline student Leadership Camps in the future. The See-Judge-Act Cycle and the God
given life skills within each one of us were the key elements that Brother John kept at the core of the camp. Thanks to Brother John D’Cruz, the students enjoyed the camp and appreciated the opportunity given. Teachers also learned a great deal!

**Vasudevi School**

**Think Globally, Act Locally**

Vasudevi School has launched activities focusing on the theme “Think Globally, Act Locally”.

- Every morning during their discussions on morals, the students share their experiences or their ideas, opinions, reflections, on the topic of human rights.

- The elementary students study religion every morning. The teachers explain God’s creation of man and all created things, in the heavens and on earth. The students then take a walk around the garden and ponder how the tree and flowers were created by God. They also think about how created things got their names. Then they draw a picture of a tree or flower and write their own short prayer praising God.

- In computer class, the students from Grades 1-4 and up to Grade 9, draw pictures based on their understanding of how God created human beings. In this way they express their belief that each human being should live with dignity and responsibility, respecting every other creature’s rights.
Extra –curricular Activities

On Sports Day, in their team colors, students parade displaying symbolically, in words or art, the theme Think Globally, Act Locally. It is an occasion to share their ideas on how to save and protect our planet earth for future generations.

A special bulletin board was designated as an “Awareness Point” where parents and student can up-date themselves on our theme, “Think Globally, Act Locally”.
**Regina Coeli School**

According to the annual movement of school in term of “Think Globally Act Locally”, Regina Coeli College has arranged a wide variety campaigns in order to gather the co-operation among the staffs. The campaigns which approach to the theme include setting pleasant atmosphere around the school and manipulation a small group rehabilitation in order to aware of nature. Moreover, not only the teachers arrange the classroom activities and the other school activities based on the them but also the students attend to the outside activities like afforestation and dam construction. They also response to the campaign by using the natural resources valuable and carrying the project work based on the theme “Think Globally Act Locally ” in order to realize on the topic given and be friend with the environment.

**Dam construction with the community**

**Afforestation with the community**

**Miss Newspaper Contest ; The co-operation between library and Science department (primary)**
Activity Day to learn conservation and choices of career which help conservation.

Staff’s seminar on the topic “Think Globally Act Locally” in order to create a satisfied atmosphere in a workplace.

The workers’ show in order to save school environment.

Outside school activities
Mater Dei School

With the aim of assisting students to realize that each individual can help bring change on global issues, the school has adopted “Think Globally, Act Locally” as its annual theme, both for classes and for external learning activities. In the classroom, teachers of the eight subject groups (mathematics, science, social studies, home economics & technology, arts, Thai language, physical education, and foreign languages) have inserted or linked content concerning the theme into their lesson plans. The more colorful and hands-on external learning activities are carried out through school excursions and camps. All are intended to enhance the students’ awareness as to how their daily activities can contribute to the betterment of society and the world. The following paragraphs give some examples of how Mater Dei has carried out the “Think Globally, Act Locally” theme through the school’s external excursions and camps.

The Mathayom 4 (10th grade) camp was designed to introduce students to His Majesty the King’s Royal Project on “Low-cost Technology to Solve Environmental Problems” at Laem Phak Bia, on the coast of Petchburi Province in southern Thailand. The students analyzed the various ways in which solid waste and wastewater from the town are treated and then used for fish farming, for growing cattle feed, and for regeneration of badly deteriorated mangrove swamps. Students then worked together on group projects to present ideas as to how the methods might be improved, along with which methods are the most cost effective and environmentally friendly.
Mathayom 3 (9th grade) students started their “Eco-Camp” by visiting the King Rama VI Camp at Cha-Am in Petchburi province where they focused their studies on Recycling and Energy Preservation to help prevent global warming. After returning to the school campsite, the students worked in groups to share the information collected and to reflect upon their experiences before producing a presentation on what they had learned and how they themselves can help prevent global climate change.

Mathayom 1 (grade 7) students this year have taken a new and imaginative approach to their program of excursions (one which, incidentally, shows the best kind of “student-centered” learning). They decided to explore different ideas about happiness. Through research, along with sharing of ideas and experiences, students and school counselors came up with the idea of “Museums: Collecting Happiness”. They studied small museums around the world to see how individuals find happiness through patiently collecting various items, thus bringing happiness to the collectors themselves as well as to those who view the collections. Students then formed small groups and have visited some of the dozens of small museums in the Greater Bangkok area which are of interest to them.

The concept of “Think Globally, Act Locally” is even more relevant today than when it first appeared over thirty years ago. We hope that our activities in and out of the classroom this year will bring this message home to our students and will continue to guide them throughout their lives.