



# អ្នកនាំពាក្យ

## The Messenger

### Editorial

The UNITED NATIONS define the "Culture of Peace" as a "set of values, attitudes, modes of behavior and ways of life that reject violence and prevent conflicts by tackling their root causes to solve problems through dialogue and negotiation among individual, groups and nations". Since the signing of the Peace Agreement in 1991 of the different political forces, Cambodia has worked hard in the building of a "culture of peace" with the help of the international community. The many efforts of groups and individuals have been combined during the past two decades. Whilst there is still much to be done, we praise the results that have been attained so far. These results show the country with a new face, one which reflects a young population full of hope and preparing itself to confront the future.

Government and Non-government organizations have undertaken many efforts, among which we can list: -Efforts to improve the educational system of the country which had been devastated. - Growth of the economy as a sign of the good rhythm of development within the country (although the economic and social inequalities, eradication of poverty and social justice are still tasks waiting to be fulfilled). - Increasing participation of women in decision-making and important social positions. - Free flow of information and knowledge.

Fr. Omer Giraldo, MXY



- Better participation of the population in democratic political decisions. All these positive aspects have allowed many Cambodians who fled the country three decades ago as refugees, to return to their native land and culture. This is a very encouraging action that is, certainly, helping the Cambodian society.

This confidence coming both from within and outside the country is becoming an important factor in the process of building a "culture of peace". This process involves providing children and adults with an understanding of the principles of, and respect for: freedom, justice, democracy, human rights, tolerance, equality and solidarity. It implies a collective rejection of violence and at the same time the will to be part of the development of society.

For these reasons the return of many Cambodians to their homeland is already playing an important role in the making of a "culture of peace" and of a new Cambodian society, since it is a dynamic that is coming from within the society itself, not an imposition from outside.

The Catholic Church in Cambodia joins these efforts in the creation of a society where human rights are respected, justice is applied and democratic values are highly appreciated by all.

### Catechists Look for new Learning

By Somphorse and Sovanna

The Cambodian Catholic Cultural Center (CCCC), led by French missionary, Fr. Francois Ponchaud, organized the second seminar for catechists of the three Church Jurisdictions of Cambodia, on the subject: "**Geography, history and development of the Church**". This seminar took place in Chomkar Teang parish, Takeo Province, of the Apostolic Vicariate of Phnom Penh, on April 5-8 with the participation of 70 catechists. In the opening ceremony, Fr. Olivier Schmitthaeusler, Vicar delegate of the Apostolic Vicar of Phnom Penh, told the participants about the great importance of catechesis in the life of the Church as a way to help those who are searching for Christ in their lives and for those who are already on the way to follow Him. "We, as catechists, are witnesses of the life of Jesus to them", affirmed father Olivier, a French missionary. Father François Ponchaud, who directed this seminar for catechists, said to CSC reporter that the main purpose of the workshop was to help the catechists **(Continues on Page2...)**



Photo: Caritas Cambodia

**Several Fires Made thousands Homeless : Nearly 1,000 houses have been recently destroyed by several fires in the city of Phnom Penh, leaving hundreds of families in absolute poverty. On April 11, in Trapeang Chhouk village, Tuek Thla, Reussey Keo district, , 450 houses were totally consumed by fire. On April 16, in Psar Daem Tkov commune other 44 houses. CARITAS CAMBODIA and SAMARITAN'S PURSE NGOs are coordinating a solidarity work among several Christian NGOs in order to alleviate the suffering of these families.**





Photo: Dina

## Feature

# Former Cambodian Refugees Return to their homeland

By Ros Dina

Civil war in Cambodia was gradually extinguished after the signing of the Paris Peace Agreements in October, 1991. During the previous decades thousands of Cambodians were forced to leave their homeland and were received as immigrants in foreign countries. From the last decade of the 20th century and beginning of this 21st century, many of the former refugees started to come back with confidence, knowledge and a strong desire to be a support in the reconstruction of their country.

### In the field of politics:

Mr. Sun Chhai, now a representative of S R Political Party, who had escaped to Australia 1979, in dialogue with a CSC reporter said that he came back to Cambodia in 1991 under the Australia's international education program. "I was a professor and pedagogical trainer of English language for two years". In 1993 Mr.Chhai changed his direction and became a politician. He was elected member of the National Assembly and, since then on, continues serving his country in this post.

### Academic world and development:

Dr. Rous Chantrabut, a Cambodian who used to live in France, nowadays is vice-president of The Royal Academic of Cambodia (RAC). Given his acquired knowledge and experience in France Mr. Chantrabut became very much interested in human development. Dr. Chantrabut said to CSC reporter that "all those who come to work with us shall think first about

how to train and educate cambodians, given the fact that in Cambodia we have few people involved in research and investigation in all fields. We do not have any ambition of doing politics, to become Ministers or to be Representatives of the people. We let others do politics. We prefer to work in making technicians, composers, historians and educators of the soul of Cambodia."

Dr. Chantrabut explained that since the year 2,000 the R.A.C has trained, educated and given Master Degrees to 200 students, among whom, 50 students have been granted a PHD degree. Professor Chantrabut added that "all this human resource is an important element in the process of building the Cambodian society and is an answer to the people's needs the government is facing.

### Civil Society and education:

Mr. Sampun Kandara, 33, a young Cam-

**The wave of Cambodian refugees started in the year 1970 after the coup d'état. In that time many rich Cambodians used to send their children and wives to foreign countries in order to avoid the political turmoil. In 1975 many refugees went to Franch. Many army members of the Gral. Lon Nol Government went to the U.S.A. From 1980-1991 large waves of refugees went to the Thai -Cambodia border.**

According to Dr.Rous Chantrabut there are three different groups who have returned:

- 1- Cambodians with a strong Political commitment (1979- 1991) who joined movements of liberation of the country.
- 2- Politiciens and NGOs staff( 1991-1997)
- 3- Cambodian intellectuals and business people (1997 till the present).

bodian and French citizen, came back to Cambodia in the year 2005. He is a System Engineer and is now the General Manager of CIST (Center for Information Systems Training), an organization that brings free education to poor young people living in far away rural areas. Mr. Kandara explained to a CSC reporter that: "We always go to remote rural areas in order to select poor young students who really like to study and show capacities, so that in a period of 2 years they become technicians in informatics".

### Living in the country

Mr. Phan Hum, 65, a former worker of CITROENE automobile company in France, decided to come back to his old village and is now making his living as a seller of fertilizers to farmers. He expressed that since the year 1997 he has been living peacefully in Kbal Dormry village, Kirivong district, Ta Keo province. Besides his job, and feels very happy to join his neighbors in rebuilding the local pagoda.

### Some questionings

Among the many former refugees who have returned to Cambodia, there are some who still do not feel at ease in their native country. It is the case of Mr. Kandara who still has difficulties adjusting himself to the health system. "It is quite different from France, since over there we find good health centers everywhere and it is free", said Kandara .

Mr. Phan Hum shared his uneasy feelings because of the lack of the rule of law and the ramping corruption among high rank leaders of the country.

On the other hand, Dr. Rous Chantrabut feels that the present government of Cambodia has a high concern about the value of the intellectual and academic activities in the country. "I try my best to share my knowledge and honesty to serve my country, so that in the near future Cambodia has a generation of new leaders and many other Khmer intellectuals who live abroad come back to their homeland to help in the reconstruction of our country", added Dr. Chantrabut



Photo : L.sovanna

## Huge Gathering Of Parishioners of The A. Vicariate of Phnom Penh

By Ly Sovanna

Following the theme of the Asia Mission Congress held in Cheang Mai, Thailand, in October, 2006 the Apostolic Vicariate of Phnom Penh has adopted as the main topic for the pastoral reflections: "Telling the Story of Jesus in our lives". Every month there was a plan of Gospel reflections on related issues that concluded with a large gathering of the faithful of the 37 local communities of the Vicariate, on March 30, 2008. Nearly 4,500 Catholics came together at Don Bosco Vocational Training School, in Phnom Penh Thmai. The main purpose of this big encounter was to have a full day for a common reflection and evaluation of the pastoral activities of the Vicariate.

Father Olivier Schmitthaeusler, Vicar

delegate of the Apostolic Vicariate of Phnom Penh told CSC reporter that this is the first time that the Apostolic Vicariate celebrates an event of this kind, inviting all the faithful of the different parishes and local communities to join together. He added that this event "was a powerful sign of solidarity as a family of love."

The participants had the opportunity to share prayer, to enjoy the different drama performances, the songs led by different groups, the traditional dances and the exhibition of posters about the activities of each local community.

Msgr. Emile Destombes, MEP, the A. Vicar of P. Penh stressed the importance of this gathering as a means to receive encouragement from each other. It is specially important for the newly Baptized to realize that they are not alone. Mr. Leap

The Holy See created the Apostolic Vicariate of Phnom Penh in the year 1850. On September 23, 1968 the Holy See divided the Apostolic Vicariate of Phnom Penh into three Ecclesiastical Jurisdictions: The Apostolic Vicariate of P. Penh and the Apostolic Prefectures of Battambang and Kompong Cham.

The Apostolic Vicariate of P.Penh, with 37 Communities and with a population of 13,085 Catholics, covers: Phnom Penh, Sihanoukville, Kep, Kandal, Takeo, Kampot, Kompong Speu and Koh Kong.

Chhai Yain, a participant from Sihanoukville Parish, who received the sacrament of Baptism on past Easter, said to CSC reporter that it was a very good occasion for him to meet new friends and to meet some of his former friends here and to realize that they share with him the same faith in Jesus Christ as Catholics. "This was, really, a joyful experience for me", expressed Chhai Yain. He explained that for him to have become a Christian Catholic has not been very easy because some neighbors still look very bad at him and sometimes yield insults to him, such as "You! who feel so proud to be an intellectual! Why did you change of religion! You, fool!". Chhai Yain said that usually he does not answer to these insults, because they do not matter to him. "I am not afraid, because I know that Jesus is my refuge".

Bishop Emile Destombes, during his homily, encouraged the crowd to continue their journey as witnesses of God's love in the Cambodian society.



Catholic Social Communications

# 25 street 242, Boeung Prolet,  
7 Makara, Phnom Penh  
Tel/Fax:(855) 23 22 41 20  
Mail: cscCambodia@gmail.com  
Web: www.catholiccambodia.org  
Commission for The MESSENGER  
Msgr. Emile Destombes, MEP  
Fr. Omer Giraldo, MXY

គ្រូបង្ការសម្រាប់ការប្រកួតប្រជែងព័ត៌មានលេខ ១៨៣  
ព្រះប្រឹក្សា ចុងផ្ទៃទី ២៥ នា ផ្លូវ ២០០៧

### Monthly Planning

Every Sunday, in Neak Loueng Parish: A group of 40 children, 8 to 12-year old, receive catechesis preparation for the sacraments of the Eucharist and Confirmation under the guidance of catechist of the Catholic Student Center of Phnom Penh.

April 27: Bishop Emile Destome, MEP, celebrated the sacrament of confirmation to 20 new Christians who had been Baptized at Chum Kiri Parish, ( Kompot) on past Easter Sunday.

April 28: At the headquarters of the Catholic Church in Kompong Cham a workshop on "Techniques to feed chicken" will be given. Open to everybody interested.

May 13-15: Third workshop for Catechists of the three Church Jurisdictions of Cambodia, to take place in the main Catholic parish of Kompong Cham.