



The Messenger

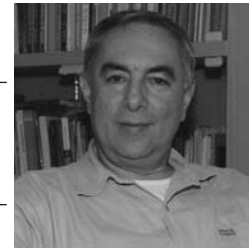
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Editorial

A new beginning

Fr. Omer Giraldo, MXY



In words of late Pope John Paul II, any culture "is an effort to ponder the mystery of the world and in particular of the human person: it is a way of giving expression to the transcendent dimension of the human life. The heart of every culture is its approach of the greatest mystery: the mystery of God."1 The Catholic Church in Cambodia praises the efforts done by many Cambodians in order to rescue and preserve the Cambodian cultural heritage which was seriously damaged due to the several decades of internal conflict, especially during the Pol Pot regime.

The Catholic Church in Cambodia is committed to join efforts with the Cambodian society in this direction of rescuing,

preserving and animating the most genuine expressions of the Cambodian culture. In Cambodia, the Catholic Church is being present since the middle of the 17th century. Let us continue together making the present and the future of our children by strengthening our cultural heritage.

Note: In the name of THE MESSENGER I extend our thanks to many of you who have sent us messages of encouragement concerning the new format of our Catholic newspaper. It is our goal to continue growing in quality in the edition of the monthly issue of this newspaper for a better service to the Cambodian society.

Telling the story of Jesus

On March 30, 2008 parishioners of the 36 Catholic communities of the Apostolic Vicariate of Phnom Penh will come together for a day of reflection and evaluation of the pastoral activities of the Vicariate, fulfilled since the Lent season, 2007. This past pastoral year's main topic has followed the theme of Asia Mission Congress held in Cheang Mai, Thailand, in October 2006 : " **Telling the story of Jesus in our own Lives**".

Bishop Emile Destombes invited the leaders of the different communities to share about their pastoral and spiritual experiences while fulfilling the mission of witnessing Jesus among our Cambodian brothers and sisters. Bishop Destombes reminds us the words of the Holy Father during his Ad Limina visit last year : " When you return to Cambodia please give the affectionate greetings of the successor of Peter to the priests, the Consecrated religious, the catechists and the members of your local communities ".

There will be a special welcome to the newly Baptized during this meeting.



Photo : L. Samphors

Group of catechumens of the Apostolic Vicariate of Phnom Penh during their second stage in their process of becoming Christians, held at St. Joseph Parish, located in Phsar Touch, Phnom Penh, on February 9 , 2008.

Catechumens in Cambodia go through a three - year process of Faith formation.

On Easter night this year a group of 123 adult Cambodians will celebrate their Baptism :

- Apostolic Vicariate of Phnom Penh : 22
- Apostolic Prefecture of Battambang : 84
- Apostolic Prefecture of Kompong Cham : 17

Visiting Destroyed Old Churches in Kompong Cham

Author: Mr. CHOU DAMO

Kompong Cham: A group of leaders of the Apostolic Prefecture of Kompong Cham, led by bishop Antonysamy Susairaj, visited two former headquarters of the Catholic Church of the Prefecture last January 23rd, 2008. One is located in a rubber plantation of Soung commune, Dbuong district, Kompong Cham Province. The group discovered the remains of an old Catholic temple which was abandoned when the civil war started in the early 70's. The inhabitants of the village No. 18 call it "the Youn Church", since it was mainly of Vietnamese people. Sister Marie Alain Long Sopheap Member of the Congregation of the Providence Sisters of Portieux told The Messenger reporter that she spent part of her childhood in this community. "The name of the parish was "The Holy Cross". The temple was destroyed during a bomb attack of the US army. The parish was closed and the community dispersed", added Sister Marie Alain.

The other site is located at Chub village where nowadays there is a Buddhist pagoda. The old temple of completely destroyed and only remains the Shrine of Mary, our Lady that is used today to pay respect to the Buddha.

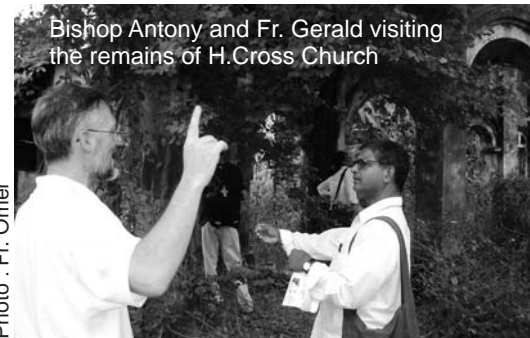


Photo : Fr. Omer

Caritas Cambodia join efforts with the local Church social committees

Author: Ms. HOU SOKTHEARY

PURSAT- On January 10th, 2008, Caritas Cambodia and the Social and Charity Committee of the Prefecture of Battambang met and discussed the problem of poverty in Cambodia with the purpose to find together ways of cooperating as a contribution of the Catholic Church in reducing the extreme poverty that affects thousands of Cambodian families.

Msgr. KIKE FIGAREDO president of Caritas Cambodia told CSC reporter that "in other nations, Caritas comes from the local church. In the case of Cambodia, Caritas was established by Bishop EMILE DESTOMBES in the year 1990 as "Caritas International", given the little possibilities for the local Church to start the organization, due to the war. Bishop Emile started Caritas Cambodia in order to help the victims of the war and also as a way to start to gather the Catholic community which was dispersed during the years of the war". Msgr. Kike continued: "Since now I am the president of Caritas Cambodia, I want to urge the two groups, Caritas and the Social Committee of the local Church, to meet and to create common programs as a mutual cooperation in order to help the poor in Cambodia more effectively".

Pictures of the month



Photos: L. Sovanna



BLOOD DONATION: The Catholic Church Health Committee of the Apostolic Vicariate of Phnom Penh has scheduled a program of Blood donation from parishioners every 4 months at the two Parishes of Phnom Penh. In the photos, blood donation at the Child Jesus Parish, B.T.Pun, Feb 17.



Photo: Akeup

There is an increasing awareness among young people in Cambodia to research in public libraries and cultural centers about their own history and culture.

Feature

Cambodian Youth in research of their own Culture

Author: Ms. AKEUP

It is well known how during the recent civil war in Cambodia there was a great deal of destruction, not only of the Cambodian identity, but of its glorious cultural heritage and historical documents. In our days there is a growing awareness among young people in Cambodia about the need to recover those lost cultural and historical treasures. One way in this direction is the eagerness of many young students to do research in public libraries and cultural centers about their own history and culture. THE MESSENGER visited a cultural center where we met some young students doing research.

It is the first time for Ms. Srey Kuch, 19, to come to visit the Bophana Audiovisual Resource Center, a center focusing in investigation about the Khmer history and cultural heritage. "This center is very different from other centers I have visited, such as the Toul Sleng museum, that are mainly for tourists to know about what happened in our country. In those centers we can mostly see pictures and

signs of torture of the victims of Pol Pot regime", says Srey Kuch. "However, in this Bophana center we have access to thousands of documents, old and new. I consider this is of great importance because now many Cambodians can make good research about our own history and culture", emphasized Srey Kuch.

Sitting down close by Srey Kuch, is Mr. Tem Ton, a young man who often likes to visit this cultural center after he finishes his work in welding. He likes to investigate from Khmer historical documents he often has heard about, but never had the occasion to read before. He said that his grandparents used to tell

Film-maker Rithy Panh and founder of Bophana Center directed the Cambodian Movie "Bophana: A Cambodian tragedy", in 1996, telling the story of Bophana and her husband, Ly Sitha, an ex- monk turned Khmer-rouge soldier, who fall in love, marry, and were killed at S21 in 1976.

him about the atrocities during the Pol Pot regime and now he wants to know by himself more clearly about what really happened and about the Cambodian history in general.

Srey Kuch intervened saying that the main interest she has is about the style of life at the refugee camps. "I always have very bad feeling in my heart when I think about the people who had to live in camps surrounded by mines".

In an audiovisual room closed by, the young boy Meas Van, 14, is watching the Cambodian movie "The Fears of Kem and Net" (in Khmer language). He is very excited about it since the movie tells a story of a young couple who suffered a lot during the Pol Pot regime times. "I think a center like this gives a great favor to our country. I am learning a lot every time I come here, whether watching documentary films or reading stories", said Van.

The "Audiovisual Resource Center Bophana", is a Cambodian institution with the objective of recovering lost documents, tapes, films and all kinds of historical evidences about the Cambodian culture. This is an attempt to transmit the Khmer history and culture to the next generations. "Bophana" is the name of a female prisoner, 25, who was mistreated in S21, the primary school of Toul Sleng converted as a prison by Pol Pot. Bophana's dignity, strength and courage in the middle of extreme sufferings have become a powerful example and symbol for the new generations of Cambodians in their efforts of rebuilding their country.



Young Muslim students practice at Don Bosco Center in Kep City

Photo : L.sovanna

Feature

Young Muslim Women Learn To Sew At Catholic Center

Author: Mr. L. SOVANNA

The sound of sewing machines mixes with the soft chatter of women at a Salesian-run school in southern Cambodia. The sewing school opened in 2002 in Kep, a seaside municipality 170 kilometers south west of Phnom Penh. It is now part of an expanded Salesian apostolate based at Don Bosco Center Kep, which includes a youth camp, retreat house and other facilities. Besides learning to sew, students at the

school also spend about an hour each day on basic literacy lessons and topics related to human development, especially interpersonal relations and morality. Four groups have completed the 10-month course. Some of those students have come from Muslim villages near the school, but the current fifth group is special in this regard, because 15 of the 17 students are young Muslim women. Morn Vanny, the school's 25-year-old coordinator, is a Buddhist as are more

The Don Bosco Center in Kep city hires some who do not find work elsewhere to make clothes for the Children's Fund Program that Don Bosco Cambodia runs. They each earn 10,000-15,000 riel (US \$2.50-3.75) a day doing this. The center currently employs eight former students to make clothes for the program .

than 90 percent of Cambodia's 13 million people, most of them also ethnic Khmers. "I am really excited and happy to work with Muslim students here," she told The Messenger News. "They are very nice, they try and work hard. We respect each other."

Even though we have different religions, we are close to each other," Vanny said. Seum Lep Khol Siyas, a 17-year-old Muslim student, told The Messenger News she is very happy she is learning to sew at the Don Bosco school, because she will be able to support herself in the future with this skill. "In this place, other religions are always welcome," she said. "For me, all religions are good, but I would not change my religion. We respect each other.



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Monthly Planning

- During Lent season every Friday at 4 PM, spiritual exercise of the VIACRUSIS at St. Joseph Parish, Phsar Touch, Phnom Penh.
- February : Visit of a group of Catholics from Angl.... Diocese, east England to Seam Reap parish.
- March, 2-7 : Retreat at St. Francis and St. Clara 's Retreat house of The Apostolic Prefecture of Kompong Cham, located in Kork Roka Parish.
- March, 8-10: Workshop for Catechists of the three Dioceses of Cambodia in Kompong Cham Parish.
- March, 12 : Ecumenical encounter of Christian Churches in Kompong Cham
- March, 30 : Encounter of Church leaders of the A.Vicariate of Phnom Penh at Don Bosco School, Phnom Penh Thmey.