

"Joseph son of David, do not be afraid
Mary will give birth to a son and
you must name him Jesus,
because he is the one who is to save
his people from their sins"
(Mt. 1,20-21)



HOLY FAMILY CATHOLIC CENTRE
107 M.7, T. Pong Ngam, Maesai
CHIANG RAI 57130 - THAILAND

Communion of Saints



Pope Francis, at the general audience in St. Peter's Square for Saturday, November 1, on the feast of All Saints, explained what the communion of saints is: "this is one of the most consoling truths of our faith – he said - since it reminds us that we are not alone but that there is a communion of life among all those who belong to Christ. It is a communion that is born of faith; indeed, the term "saints" refers to those who believe in the Lord Jesus and are incorporated by him into the Church through Baptism. That is why the first Christians were also called "saints" (cf. Acts 9:13,32,41; Rm 8:27; 1 Cor 6:1).

And we come to another aspect: the communion of saints goes *beyond earthly life, beyond death and endures for ever*. This union among us goes beyond and continues in the next life; it is a spiritual communion born in Baptism and not broken by death, but, thanks to the Risen Christ, is destined to find its fullness in eternal life. There is a deep and indissoluble bond between those who are still pilgrims in this world — us — and those who have crossed the threshold of death and entered eternity. All baptized persons here on earth, the souls in Purgatory and all the blessed who are already in Paradise make one great Family. This communion between earth and heaven is realized especially in intercessory prayer.

Dear friends, we have this beauty! This is our reality, all of ours, that makes us brothers and sisters, that accompanies us on the journey of life and lets us find another face above in heaven. Let us go forward on this journey with trust, with joy. A Christian must be joyful, with the joy of having so many baptized brothers and sisters to journey with him; sustained by the help of brothers and sisters who are taking the same path toward heaven; and also by the help of brothers and sisters who are in heaven and are praying to Jesus for us.



Go forward on this path with joy!

On time*People, lighting candles, are praying on their relatives' graves*

During November, in all the villages, after prayers, even when there is no Mass, people go to their cemetery. The tombs are tidied, renewed, decorated with many flowers and candles. More recently, the tombs have been built of concrete and this shows greater availability of money: it is important that this practice is transmitted to the next generation.

During the month we usually go to every village and celebrate Mass at the cemetery. When I was at the Centre alone I could only visit four or at most five villages, but this year, with three priests, we managed to reach all the villages. On one of these visits I had a surprise. In fact, the people told me the time for the Mass at the cemetery: Holy Mass at 10 am.!

I wondered why this was because usually they gather early in the morning. At 9.30 I reached the village and saw all busy preparing the noon meal. At 10 people came for confession and at 11 there was Mass. After Mass, in a twinkling of an eye, everything was ready. The people gathered in small groups for a meal, everyone close to the graves of deceased family members. This is not general of course, treat this as a curiosity.

Imagine the time when they followed their own tradition of ancestor-worship, once the corpse was buried somewhere in the forest, in a place indicated by the shaman, the family no longer went over there for fear of spirits. Today it is ... a party.

What a change !!!

*A sharing moment*

A well-deserved gift

The girls who run Holy Family Catholic Centre

Puchifa.

Puchifa is a mountain located in Chiang Rai province near the border with Laos.

With spectacular views of the surrounding mountains, is one of the famous tourist attractions in the highlands near the Thai city of Chiang Rai.

Visitors spend the night in the many guest houses in the area to watch the sunrise from the "sea of fog" below. We are as high as 1600 meters above sea level. It is a spectacular sight.

To operate a facility that accommodates 150 people we need people open and ready to sacrifice themselves with patience and dedication. Here we have a group of 12 girls aged 18 to 26 age; they have finished their apprenticeship here, some are attending college (university) on Saturday and Sunday. In their meetings they share the various tasks of accompanying children of elementary school and trainees.

These girls never pull back, they go along with the children to school on foot, teach and train the girls to become tailors, assist the children in the evening for homework, support the catechists of the villages, who are not familiar with the Thai language, at their meetings.

The trip to Pu Chi Fa wanted to be a travel award well deserved. In the afternoon we climbed a first time to the summit, about twenty minutes, to glance over Laos. We had dinner prepared by ourselves and then we retired to the small houses in the resort. At 4.30 the second climb, this time at night, to find a place and enjoy the birth of a new day. Time has favourable to us in everything: clear vision on Laos in the afternoon and in the early morning the spectacular show of the mists.

After breakfast we gathered for Mass in the meadow of the resort, then we still spent a couple of hours together in joyful company before returning home (180 km of roads with many bends, resulting in sickness for some girls), tired but happy.



Spiritual and fun time for the girls



The incredible sunrise from Puchifa

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Congrégation du Sacré-Cœur de Jésus de Bétharram

A seed sown ... a dream come true

In 2011 I wrote:

"Churches become unnecessary when the faithful are no longer faithful and neglect them. They turn into museums or restaurants or theatres or concert halls.

But where the people require a decent place for worshipping, churches become a necessity".

For some years I have had a dream: a church dedicated to St. Ambrose.



The Saint Ambrogio church



The first mass in the new church

Just a year ago, however, I wrote: *"Several years ago, five kilometres away from the church of the Sacred Heart, I bought a piece of land that could be used to build a chapel when it was needed."*

At the beginning of 2013, Christians thought it was time to build a chapel on that land to enable older people to take part in the Mass from time to time.

The first planning was to build something not very big; people took action and the yard was open: people offered the tiles for the roof, some bricks, other tiles for the floor and it became a building larger than the original idea. So I decided to choose this new church to be dedicated to St. Ambrose.

The news of the "construction of a church dedicated to St. Ambrose" has spread among friends and acquaintances, hence ensuring that the necessary sum for the construction could be reached.

The church has thus begun to take shape. Here we are, after a year and a half since the construction site to the long-awaited day: August 31, 2014, blessing of the new church. Almost all the boys and girls of the Centre went to the village, about twenty miles from here, to join the celebration.

At 9:30, the Bishop of Chiang Mai, Msgr. Francis Xavier Vira Arpondratana arrived at the entrance of the village. The people were standing on both sides of the road, everyone wanting to shake his hand in the Akha tradition.

Arrived in front of the church there was a short religious representation: the prodigal son. Meanwhile, the bishop asked me why I decided to dedicate the church to St. Ambrose: I said that after 40 years of presence in this part of Thailand, it seemed to me appropriate to make a mark, thinking about my church, the church of St. Ambrose of Lierna in Italy, where I was baptized, confirmed, where I received the Eucharist for the first time and where I celebrated my first Mass: the idea found support, a committee has been formed that led to the realization of the project.

The ceremony began with the blessing of the Grotto of Our Lady, and the ribbon cutting and blessing of the church, followed by the Mass, which has been celebrated in Thai, with the readings in Akha. No frills, no incense, but all in great simplicity. The "choir" was formed by all the people, everybody was singing with joy.

The church was packed. There being no desks or chairs all were standing next to each other in religious concentration. Many others were outside in tents. There were many people, they calculated about 2000 people. After Mass lunch for everybody.

Even the sky has been good to us: after the rain of the previous two days and during the night until the morning, the sun has been brilliant throughout the day and helped the arrival of the faithful who have come

from other villages and their return home.

Let us THANK all who have helped with their contribution to the realization of the "dream". Greetings and good wishes.

Blessing of the Church of Merciful Jesus

Corollary to the blessing of the church of St. Ambrose is the blessing of the church dedicated to the Merciful Jesus. A thought to the Gruppo Alpini who always supported my work in the mission. Regarding this church I recall a fact that is extraordinary.

From the diary:

20 April 2014, Good Friday. This year has had a special significance at least for one village, Banjong, where we built a new church dedicated to the Merciful Jesus. A Buddhist sculptor living nearby, Mr. Vimon Rinnairat, wanted to participate and he did it shaping a crucifix as a gift for the new church. A very large sculpture for the church, but that shows the greatness of the gift made by a Buddhist. "Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven". (Matthew, 7, 21).



The new crucifix

God looks at the heart!

On December 20, we will bless the church.

A "wave" of home

This year more than ever the centre, in addition to running his daily life, welcomed during these months for short and long term, friends, young people and members of my family, who have come here to



Camilla working with girls

experience a different kind of life.

Camilla, young girl from Albavilla in Italy, for some time wanted to experience life in the mission. In July she came alone to our centre. Shortly after her aunt joined her.

It was a must to "submit" her to a small tour de force, in fact, she arrived in the morning, in the afternoon we set off to Chiang Mai (250 km south). The following morning we had to get up early to drive the other 150 km to attend the first Mass of Fr. Albert Sa-at in his Karen village.

Back at the centre, Camilla tried to communicate with the girls using the phone to translate words, playing with them, and learned to embroider. She also accompanied the children to school when the weather permitted.

In an article in which she recounted her experience, Camilla wrote: "From the day after my arrival I had become part of the great family that is the centre, in which even the smallest had to get busy ... Everything works perfectly: no one complains, no one is ever angry, everything seems dominated by the serenity and tranquillity. Serenity they managed to convey to me in my short stay ... Certainly every single smile that I could make them to do, for me was the full

realization of my experience. Now it is the time to come back, the time to "roll up my sleeves" to not leave all this without a follow up. "

In mid-August came Elena, Chiara and Lucia who are part of the Missionary Youth Group of the parish of the Friars in Lecco (Italy), every year they live a period in mission and this year they arrived, through acquaintances, here at the centre: "We shared these days with the boys of the centre - they said - visiting villages with Father Alberto and his staff. How can we describe our encounter with the people we met in the villages?: "The meeting with the simple, where everything which is small becomes large, what is simple, significant, what apparently little becomes much, because it is shared ".

The girls felt at their ease at the centre with boys and girls, playing with them and making fun with balloons.

On August 17 my brother Lino, with Virginia, my niece, Sara and Fabio arrived in Chiang Mai joining Elena, Chiara and Lucia. Together they took part in the celebrations to mark the 25th anniversary of the death of Mons. Lacoste, the first bishop of the diocese.

When the three girls left, my brother and his family came to the centre. They had the chance to visit some villages, one day they went to visit the "famous" Golden Triangle. Then they were present at the inauguration of the church dedicated to St. Ambrose.



Elena Lucia and Chiara

Another friend of ours came at the beginning of November, Mrs Françoise Picot. She has been working in health care department and in her life she lived in many countries all over the world, in China, in Tibet and in Thailand too, teaching in Chiang Mai University. Now she is retired and she comes every year, this year for three months. She occupies herself and she feels at home. We are happy to have her here. Thank you Françoise.

The year is coming at end. We still expect some visitors: John, who works for the missionary centre of Albavilla (Italy), with Chiara, then Gabrielle whom I met as a young girl at Buc (France) many years ago, doing little jobs to collect some money for underprivileged children. Welcome, John, Chiara and Gabrielle. We will spend Christmas together.



Françoise Picot with Buma

Finally



"It is Christmas every time you smile at your brother and offer him your hand.

It is Christmas every time you let God love others through you".

(Mother Teresa)

**MERRY CHRISTMAS and
a HAPPY NEW YEAR**

Fr. Alberto Pensa, Fr. Paolo Subancha, Fr. Albert Sa-at
and all of us at Holy Family Catholic Centre

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