

## MY EXPERIENCE IN THAILAND "THE LAND OF SMILES"



"International experience aims in giving new impulse to our Missionary zeal, to intensify our universality and our willingness to inculturate the Gospel, the vows and our Charism beyond the borders."(Province Administration Manual 2012) It is in this light that our Province leader, Sr. Sabina Pathrose and the Sister in charge of the Temporary Professed Sisters, Sr. Mariam Kulangara, gave me adequate preparation, prior to my departure to Thailand for my 3 months International Experience.

As a member of an International Congregation, I am indeed grateful to God for having taken me to our Sisters in the East Asia Province. Having travelled by air for the first time, I looked forward to step into the Suvarnabhumi airport in Bangkok. On landing, I was welcomed with love and care and placed in the Nongkhai Community of the Northeastern region. Due to extreme weather condition causing both floods and droughts, this region is historically the poorest region in Thailand. Nongkhai Community consists of 5 sisters. I was privileged and happy to be a part of the Sisters, who are dedicated and do selfless service.

**Garden of Friendship**-which was begun in December 2008 is a "Home" to HIV/AIDS patients in need of intensive care. Facing discrimination in their village communities, children and adults affected by these illnesses find support and unconditional acceptance at our Care Center. Presently we have 22 patients. Among them some are paralyzed, bedridden and Mentally and Physically challenged. Most of my days were spent with these patients, I joined the outreach programme with the staff in visiting the patients in the villages. Giving them hygienic care, conducting games, accompanying them to Buddhist temples, markets, banks etc. Once a week they are visited regularly and provided medical care and support. Children are given with milk powder. Average of 250 patients participates in this Outreach programme annually. Being with the patients helped me to be more humane and to care deeply.



# Hands of Hope

handmade products crafted by  
villagers living with HIV/AIDS



**Dignity through Hands of Hope:** Anti-retroviral medicine is necessary for prolonging life. But without dignified employment and continuous social support, people with HIV/AIDS cannot live a purposeful life. “Hands of Hope” gives those living with HIV/AIDS, love, dignity and opportunities for success in life. This community is made up of 27 daily workers and seven people who come once a week. The workers make beautiful handmade paper products while their children attend schools. They use Thailand’s famous ‘saa paper’ as the main medium, which is made out of the bark of mulberry trees. Once a week I had the opportunity to work with the Producers. I admired the potentialities in them for their artistic, creative, innovative and fine products. I did learn some hand - work.

**Regina Women’s Self Help Centre:** It began in 1984. It is a great support to the Poor Women and the Girls. Many have been trained and subsequently employed in Sewing Centre over the years. Presently there are more than 70 producers working in two different Centres. I was with them for a week in the area of Quality Control. The products are designed and prepared with much care and fine quality.



# MOTHERS' DAY CELEBRATION



August sees the Thai Nation celebrating the Queen's Birthday on the 12th, thus expressing appreciation for all Mothers. The families of HIV/AIDS patients came together for the Mother's Day celebration. It was a day of mixed emotions as it was a gathering of Children who have lost their mothers to AIDS; mothers who have lost children prematurely; mothers separated from children due to illness; and some women and men who have faced rejection by their mothers. The celebration included offering of flowers to Mother Mary, who is the Mother of all and asking blessing for their Queen. I was happy to witness this unique event in my life and I am grateful to God for having blessed me with a good mother and I prayed for all the Mothers.



**“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world” – Nelson Mandela. Sponsorship Programme**

It began in the year 2002, with the aim of giving education. It caters to more than 575 poor and deserving Children. Though there is provision for Compulsory Education in the country till the age of 12, there are School drop outs due to financial crisis in the families. This project has enabled many Children benefit from, of their higher studies and job placements. A week's experience in this project gave me chance to interact with Children, visit their Families, Schools and helped me to learn new ways of documentation, which will also be useful for Chalice work.

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# **RARE AND GREAT OPPORTUNITY**

I had the chance of meeting Sr. Ellen Kelly our Congregational Leader in Bangkok. Her simple and approachable nature made me realize that we indeed have a great leader, who will lead us with Vision and Mission of Jesus the Good Shepherd. I was very privileged and happy to meet our dear Congregational Leader.



## **SR. MARY**

97 years old missionary from Ireland is with us in the Community. Her great and inspiring missionary zeal is to be honored and imbibed. She supports the Community through her prayers and guidance. Her very presence makes the Community more active and enthusiastic. I was happy to spend some time with her, praying, sharing about my

spiritual life and listening to her rich and vast experiences of life. She encouraged me a lot to be a dedicated Good Shepherd Sister.



Each Sister at Nongkhai Community plays an integral part in giving witness to the Charism of Jesus the Good Shepherd. Their availability, love and respect for the people in need are to be admired. Miss. Antonia our lay mission partner from Australia stays with our Sisters and she is a great support to them. I thank all the Sisters for their contribution towards my enriching experience. Sisters at the Bangkok Community were very hospitable during my short stay. I thank Sr.Regina Htoo Htoo, the Province Leader of East Asia Province for so kindly receiving me as one of them.

My deep and heartfelt gratitude to dear Sr.Sabina, Sr.Mariam, the Council Members and all the Sisters for having given me this opportunity to experience the internationality of our Congregation. Thanking you for your prayerful support and encouragement. I am challenged to be conscious of our global connectedness and diverse realities. I appreciate this unique programme in our initial formation, which gives us multi-cultural experiences and guidelines. I am blessed to be a part of the Good Shepherd Family.

**“I belong to all nations where there are souls to be saved”**  
**St. Mary Euphrasia**

Zeal, which is a precious part of our Eudist heritage, has been given a universal thrust by our Mother Foundress. I pray God that I may have deep interest and concern towards our Sisters all over the world and our Mission as I live my Vows, specially the Vow of Zeal. May Jesus the Good Shepherd and Mary our Mother continue to give me grace to be a Committed Good Shepherd Sister.

*Thank You!*

