



First Vows in Thailand and Myanmar

July 29 and 30 was a special weekend for the District. On Saturday morning, Br. John Worawut took first vows in Bangkok. On Sunday evening, Brs. Augustine, Justine, and Lucas professed vows for the first time in Myanmar. Both events were attended by the Brothers and their families.

The vows in Myanmar was meaningful because the families of the three Brothers were able to attend; for many years previous the Myanmar Brothers took their vows together with their Filipino confreres in Manila. Thank you to Brothers of Thailand and Myanmar for the preparations. Congratulations to our newly professed Brothers!

I am publishing my shared reflection during the Mass in Myanmar. (Continued)

First Vows • Lucas, Justine and Augustine Provincialate, Myanmar 30 July 2017

Pain and Empathy



We all grew up with the idea that Lepers were pariahs, people to be avoided. Shunned as early as biblical times, most societies were so afraid of lepers they were isolated and put in colonies to co-exist only among themselves. Partly because they were so disfigured and difficult to look at but mostly because we thought the disease was highly contagious. In some societies, the disease was called "the separating sickness". Most Leper Colonies have closed but surprisingly today there still exists in countries like India, China and in some parts of Africa.

Hansen's Disease or Leprosy, in fact, is the most incommunicable of

communicable diseases. Syphilis and tuberculosis are more contagious. It is a bacterial infection to which most of us are immune and for the small percentage who are not have a hard time catching it. It's method of contagion is a bit of a mystery as when you catch the bacteria it may lie dormant for as long as 20 years before symptoms appear.

The common understanding of Leprosy is that it eats up our flesh and causes body parts to drop off. The truth is the disease does not do that. All the bacteria does is deaden the nerves. And what you cannot feel you do not take care of. So you begin scratching, abrading and wearing out your hands and fingers, feet and toes. It is the person with the disease, the one who does not feel anything, that does more damage than the disease itself. A leper might hold a match or a cigarette and he wouldn't know it is burning his fingers. Or begin rubbing his eyes until the cornea is damaged resulting in blindness which is common among lepers.

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We often think of pain as something to avoid, something to get rid of. But in truth pain serves a purpose. It defines us. You are what you feel. Physical pain unifies you. Numbed parts of the body do not feel a part of you, they feel disembodied. Next time you go to a dentist for a tooth extraction, try feeling the part of your face that's numb after it's been anesthetized --- it doesn't feel that it's there. It's a very strange feeling. Paul Brand, a Doctor working with Lepers writes, "pain, together with its cousin touch, is distributed universally on the body, providing a sort of boundary of self". I have a back pain and a little knee problem from running, It's painful but at least I know it's there and I take care of it.

And so if physical pain defines our self, what then enlarges the self, what makes us go beyond ourselves? Our ability to feel for others, to feel the suffering of others, to feel the pain of others is what enlarges our identity. In a word, it is empathy. It is the ability to feel what you do not literally feel. Physical pain defines our boundaries, empathy and love enlarges. At its utmost, love and empathy dissolves all your boundaries. Think Mother Teresa who, when she was alive, just seemed to be the embodiment of love and empathy. She symbolized humanity's ability to embrace the suffering of others thus giving hope to many of those who were hopeless."



Her ability to love and feel the pain of others, to feel beyond herself, gives her a much larger sense of self, what one author would say "a map of affections and alliances". Our ultimate example of Love and Empathy is, of course, Jesus. A Love so pure it washes away our sins and empathy so strong it brings Hope to us.

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And so, Augustine, Justine, Lucas: as you profess first vows today remember that both pain and empathy will play an important part in shaping your identity as persons and as Brothers. If you acknowledge the pain in your life, if you embrace it, it will give you a sense of your boundaries, you will be able to recognize your limits. But it will be empathy that will teach you to reach out to others, it will be empathy that will push you to go beyond the limits of your own body; it is empathy that will teach you to feel the pain of others and to identify with others.

My prayer for the three of you is that you will be like Solomon in today's first reading. When the Lord asked Solomon what gift he wanted, he replied: "O Lord, my God, I am but a mere youth, not knowing at all how to act. I serve you in the midst of the people whom you have chosen . . . give your servant therefore an understanding heart. . ."

As you grow with the Brothers, may you gain an "understanding heart", and build your own "map of affections and alliances". May you learn to go beyond your pain and to embrace the pain of others. To understand and make your own the struggles of the students you accompany, the teachers you will work with, and closer to home, the Brothers you will live with.

St. Joseph's Institution (SJI) Singapore 165th Anniversary Gala Dinner

Lasallians in Singapore this year are celebrating our 165th Anniversary since 1852. St. Joseph's Institution (SJI) took this occasion to celebrate it with a 165th Anniversary Gala Dinner on 22nd July. The theme, "It all started with a gift." This 165th dinner allows the Lasallian family to celebrate our 165 years of presence in Singapore in addition to helping raise funds for the school. T

he Principal of SJI, Fr. (Dr.) Adrian Danker, S.J. noted, "All this would not have been possible however if the De La Salle Brothers had not founded SJI in 1852. Our school is indeed a founding gift of the Brothers to all those students, as well as every Josephian." The Gala Dinner is organised by a group of alumni led by Mr Edmund Tie and the Guest-of-Honour for the night is an old boy, Mr Teo Chee Hean, Deputy Prime Minister and Coordinating Minister for National Security who in many ways have pass on the gift SJI has shared him to Singapore. **(Br. Kelvin Tan FSC)**



Diamond Jubilee of Sister Affiliate, Philippines



Sr. Antoine Marie Villanueva SPC, AFSC celebrated her Diamond Jubilee, as SPC (Sisters of St. Paul of Chartres) on July 22, 2017 at the Mere Monique Home St. Paul's Monastery Retreat Center in Ticud, Lapaz Iloilo City, Philippines.

Sr. Antoine was granted letters of affiliation in January 2000. She worked with the Brothers at the De La Salle Health Sciences Institute (Dasmariñas) since 1987 as College of Nursing Dean (1987-1999) and De La Salle University Medical Center Nursing Service Director, Hospital Administrator, Director, Hospital Administration. She served for twenty years and retired in the Institution as the Vice President for Administration in 2007. (Ms. Maria Cecilia Tiongson Tirona)

	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5
Visitor	LEAD PRV Economic Council	LEAD PRV Philippines, Country Assembly 1st Vows, Acceptance to the Postulancy, Habit-Taking	LEAD PRV	Thailand, PARC 43	Philippines, Canonical Visit, Mindanao MCAD BOA
AVMA	Singapore and Hong Kong	Singapore, SJI	Singapore and Malaysia	Thailand, PARC 43	Singapore, SJI Philippines
AVVF	Thailand, OAV	Philippines, Country Assembly 1st Vows, Acceptance to the Postulancy, Habit-Taking	Thailand, OAV	Thailand, PARC 43	Thailand, Sangklaburi
AVSP	Philippines, SBBC Recollection	Philippines, Country Assembly 1st Vows, Acceptance to the Postulancy, Habit-Taking	Philippines, LEAD Mission Orientation Philippines, BEC Principals' Forum Br. Joaquin Martinez FSC's Installation as President of USLS	Thailand, PARC 43 Philippines, Asrama Butitin Staff Visit	Philippines, Asrama Butitin Staff Visit

Happy Birthday August Celebrants!

Brother Ambrose Loke FSC	August 08, 1944
Brother Matthew Thawatchai Chumkhamta FSC	August 08, 1991
Brother Justin Mobilik FSC	August 10, 1944
Brother Dindo Maralit FSC	August 13, 1964
Brother Chuck Magno FSC	August 14, 1988
Brother Emong Viroomal FSC	August 17, 1982
Brother Cliff Sy FSC	August 20, 1985
Brother Joe Scheiter FSC	August 25, 1935
Brother Marty Sellner FSC	August 29, 1937
Brother Francisco Teerayut Chadang FSC	August 30, 1984

Arts and Culture

The Shwedagon Pagoda (Burmese: ရွှေတိဂုံဘုရား, IPA: [ʃwèdægòɴ pʰəjáj]), officially named Shwedagon Zedi Daw (Burmese: ရွှေတိဂုံစေတီတော်, [ʃwèdægòɴ zèdìdò]) and also known as the Great Dagon Pagoda and the Golden Pagoda, is a gilded stupa located in Yangon, Myanmar. The 99-metre-tall (325 ft) pagoda is situated on Singuttara Hill, to the west of Kandawgyi Lake, and dominates the Yangon skyline.

Shwedagon Pagoda is the most sacred Buddhist pagoda in Myanmar, as it is believed to contain relics of the four previous Buddhas of the present kalpa. These relics include the staff of Kakusandha, the water filter of Koṅāgamana, a piece of the robe of Kassapa, and eight strands of hair from the head of Gautama.

Rudyard Kipling described his 1889 visit to Shwedagon Pagoda ten years later in *From Sea to Sea and Other Sketches*, *Letters of Travel*:

Then, a golden mystery upheaved itself on the horizon, a beautiful winking wonder that blazed in the sun, of a shape that was neither Muslim dome nor Hindu temple-spire. It stood upon a green knoll, and below it were lines of warehouses, sheds, and mills. Under what new god, thought I, are we irrepressible English sitting now?

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shwedagon_Pagoda

Photos: Br Sockie de la Rosa (L: Br. Joe Klong AVVF rings a bell and says a prayer for those in formation; R: The gold plated/gold leafed dome and spires of the pagoda)



Fraternally,

Edmundo Fernandez FSC