

January 05, 2017



**CONSECRATED LIFE** - The Salesian Sisters in Cambodia have just started a year-long preparation and celebration of the 25th Anniversary of FMA presence in Cambodia. Starting with the Mass last December 8, the Sisters, together with teachers and staff, representative students and past pupils, volunteers and co-workers gathered together at the Eucharistic Celebration presided by Fr. Roel Soto, SDB at the Sisters' vocational training center in Tuol Kork, (Phnom Penh) where they started in 1992.

"Twenty-five years ago, this piece of land we are standing on was just a dirty, uncared-for lot where vendors and people frequenting the opposite Moan Ang Market would throw their wastes," the Mass commentator said in the introduction, "but God had other plans for this place.

So He brought in four courageous Salesian Sisters from four countries to start a beautiful mission here. They were to be the educators, mothers and sisters of poor girls and young women who, because of years of war, were deprived of education, work skills and moral formation." The rest of this beautiful mission story is history, as shown in a few video clips presented before the Mass.

Since it was also the solemnity of Mary's Immaculate Conception, Fr. Roel spoke animatedly of the virtue of purity which he compared to a delicate crystal glass which must be handled with much care. The girls paid much attention as Fr. Roel used an interesting story-telling style which made the listeners imagine they were holding delicate pitchers and glasses (going virtual in his homily!) At the end of the Mass, a group of girls dressed as angels, came out from the rear and approached the altar to honor Our Blessed Mother with their beautiful choreographed dance, "Ave Maria".

The four pioneer FMAs sent to Cambodia in 1992 were: Sr. Mary Aayila from India, Sr. Maria Elena Estacio from the Philippines, Sr. Teresita Garcia from Colombia and Sr. Maria Lakana Yawasang from Thailand. They started with a daily festive oratory, then sewing and typing classes, a kindergarten and eventually a vocational training center for future secretaries and office workers.

Through the years, two more skills-training centers ( Industrial Sewing and Dressmaking/ Food Technology and Hotel Services) were opened in Teuk Thla, a suburban village, and in the province of Battambang near the Thai border. Aside from the three skills training centers which also provide board and lodging to poor girls coming from remote towns and villages, the Sisters in Cambodia have also opened four kindergartens, two elementary schools and a high school

for boys and girls.

Many of the past pupils who were beneficiaries of the initial years of the Sisters' mission, which was formally inaugurated on December 8, 1992 were present at the Mass and in the evening program which they had prepared for the Sisters as an act of gratitude. The colorful numbers of the program were put up mostly by the graduates of Tuol Kork, Teuk Thla, Battambang and Phum Chreh. The past pupils also prepared a simple dinner for all and donated rice and food items for the interns. They also collected cash as donation for the "a bigger celebration of the real event" next year.

Source: [cgfmanet.org](http://cgfmanet.org)