

Sarnelli House

NEWSLETTER



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Merry Christmas!

These words might have a hollow ring to them this year. The virus has dampened any chance at a normal celebration of any sort. Thailand was the first country to diagnose Covid patients outside of China. Within a week or so, the entire country went into lockdown, since we had extensive experience with viruses like SARS, swine flu, etc., in the past. The army and border police were out enforcing curfew. Restaurants and other venues, save for supermarkets and stores were closed. But everyone had to wear masks in public; people had their temperatures taken in every public place, and hands sprayed before entrance to a store. Schools closed. The doctor caring for the kids with HIV AIDS in Khon Kaen phoned the staff at Sarnelli to put the old guy (me) in quarantine for the duration. Then, because young people were still congregating and had drinking parties, the mullahs in the government forbade the sale of beer, wine, and whiskey through June. The ban took place during the hottest part of the hot season. I am proud to report that I did not have the D.T.'s! In the meantime, all our volunteers returned home. Then nurse Kate went home for a medical

condition, and Brian had to go to Ireland because his brother died. Now, no one is allowed back in, so I guess no turkey this year, since I will be alone. Most of our kids have been orphaned and alone since birth. So we will have a nice Christmas party with the kids, and thank the Infant that Thailand has less than 60 deaths, and less than 4,000 cases. Covid so far has not reached the folks on the Mekong River, so we are extremely thankful for that.





Our rice harvest was a tad grim. Early planting all burned off because of lack of rain. Later, we cast (scattered) seed rice and that had better yield. But we will still have to buy rice. We hope the price will stay relatively cheap. But our vegetable gardens are doing a fantastic job in sending produce to all 7 houses. Our fruit trees are also producing and we have plenty of fish in our ponds.

This year, we took in more babies than ever before. Girls abandoned their babies at hospitals, especially when they learned they had AIDS, and others left their babies with poor grandmas and fled. Also, kids who had left us were laid off work down south in the Bangkok area, and came straggling back to Sarnelli, hungry and penniless. One girl got out of prison, after a four year stint, for selling drugs. We sent most of them to further schooling. Others found hard scrabble jobs in town. We support them all, with the help of the Friends of Sarnelli Foundation.

We have a promise of newly ordained Redemptorists coming to help at a period of six months each. That means 6 months x five priests. This will help, but we sorely miss Fr. Ole who was an invaluable member of the team. We hope and pray Thailand opens up soon for volunteers to return. We pray that nations will be able to operate normally.

Mostly we pray for all of you, who have helped us so much with the children. May we all have a New Year full of promise and healing of body and soul. And even though our Christmas may lack the company of friends and even family, may the Holy Family bless you all with peace and love. May the Holy Family bless us all, and help us through these dark days!

Father Mike, Brother Keng and the children and staff of Sarnelli!

