

Merry Christmas 2012!



There is an old Chinese saying that "May you have an interesting life" or, more succinctly, "May you have an interesting year". It sounds like a pallid blessing, but it is really a curse in disguise. Whether or not there is really global climate change, one has to admit that the weather patterns are grim. While the East Coast of the U.S. weathered terrible storms and awful damage to the people of the New England area, or drought and shifting patterns in the Midwest and Southwest, it was a bad year. Here in Thailand, we never really had a monsoon season. We had seven good rains in less than three months, and monsoons should last nearly five months. Down in the plains and Bangkok area, they were flooded with unwanted rains. Ultimately, our rice crop sucked big time! I also opted to plant big kernelled glutinous rice, and the result was a poor harvest with small under developed kernels. Chalk this failure up to God and Mike Shea.

Other than that, we received a real blessing from a very generous donor from Wisconsin who does not want to be named. Thanks to him we have built the Joseph and Mary Hall; a big beautiful building that has a huge kitchen, a big storeroom, a lovely stage and plenty of room for the kids on the floor. We also received money to build another house for teenage girls with AIDS on the property of Nazareth House. However, since we have not received a child

or baby with AIDS for nearly 10 months, we had to put this plan on hold. We need to meet with the medical and welfare people to decide what to do. We have enough room right now, since some kids are graduating, and no one is coming in. This is really great news if the rate of infection with the HIV/AIDS virus is slowing down that dramatically! Throughout the years, we also have been taking in children who were being exploited or abused or rape victims. Some feel this is not why we founded Sarnelli House, but those of us who are Redemptorists and connected with Sarnelli, know that our primary mission is always to the poor and most abandoned. There is no one more abandoned than a child being sold or abused by vicious adults. Most of these kids wind up being ours. Few move out. We are always worried about rapists still waiting for trial who might come looking for the girls to silence them one way or the other. We have no co-operation from the police at all in trying to protect these kids.

Thanks to generous donors from Australia and America, we have 11 head of Brahmin cattle, 14 pigs, 120 chickens, about 100 ducks and 67,000 fish in our ponds. Up until now, we have few eggs because we got the chickens and ducks when they were small. Now, they are beginning to crank out eggs, albeit little fellers. We hope to get money to dig one more fish pond, since it is the water from the ponds that relatively saved most of our rice crop. We also are building a fertilizer factory (thanks to the Dutch from Maastricht)





that will make fertilizer pellets for our fields and gardens, and we can sell what we have left. We are also doing some experimental stuff as well. We have added more rice paddy land, and put up barbed wire fencing around the 70 rai (35 acres) of paddy; dug two new fish ponds and built housing for two families, thanks to the Thai Children's Trust, from England.

I was gone on home leave for nearly 6 months, and I returned with Fr. Chuck Beierwaites, our main man for hunting down sponsors, etc. Fr. Dave Polek, the other tandem of the fundraising, did not come this year. We came upcountry on September 22 with Fr Harry Grile, provincial of the Denver province in tow. We had the unofficial opening of the Joseph and Mary Hall the next morning (Sunday). It was unbelievable as to how many of our kids sprouted so fast in six months! Tall and robust, and even the wee ones were sturdy looking (and hungry). We had grilled chicken, rice, papaya salad and ice cream, and they ate like wolves

Our kids attending college are doing really well. They all have part time jobs, and are able to purchase items needed for school, and their boarding rooms. I buy each kid a laptop computer and they are maturing fast. Miss Ying, who is really smart and although she has AIDS, is doing really well in Nursing College, as is our Da(rling). A few other girls are taking special courses in pre-nursing so as to pass the exam. Some of the older boys are taking Agriculture, hoping to return to work on the farm. Others are into computer

stuff. All are much smarter than the Old Pro here.

Old priests, like the song about old soldiers, tend to fade away. I have brother Keng and Fr. Joe Ole with me. Both are young and full of ideas, and really responsible. Fr. Jettana returns to work as often as he can, and the whole staff; priests, brother, lay people and even volunteers and guests, are in awe of our Aussie nurse, Kate. The kids absolutely adore her, and adults with AIDS who come to the clinic learn to depend on her practical knowledge; good common sense, and kindness and compassion. The sick have never experienced any kindness, generosity and personal interest in their lives and trauma than they receive from Kate. Kate also has a wonderful mother, Bernadette, who is a great fund raiser for us, and Kate's greatest fan. God has been good to Sarnelli House. We are blessed with our staff.

In conclusion, especially at this Yuletide, we pray for you all, and all of our friends and family who have passed on to the Lord during this past year. We pray for those who are ill or sick, asking the Lord to give them health and happiness. We pray for us all, that the Holy Spirit give us guidance and wisdom in caring for the children. We pray that our Lord and savior continue to bless us all. May Mary, the Mother of Perpetual Help, protect and love us all.

HAPPY NEW YEAR!!

Fr Michael Shea C.S.s.R