

MANGO NEWS November 2013

The newsletter of the parish of the Sacred Heart, East Anglia, twinned with the parish of St Francis Xavier, Svay Sisophon, Cambodia.

Also available on the parish website:

http://sacredheartnorthwalsham.com/?page_id=11

SUPPORT CAMBODIA promotes mutual friendship, spiritual support and practical assistance for the people of Svay Sisophon, Cambodia

Pchum Ben Celebrations ... in our two parishes!

In Svay Sisophon [from Brother Amalan] : Om Cheng beautifully planned and organised the Eucharist and the occasion. She read a small introduction explaining the need to remember the dead in our families. Everyone wrote the names of the dead in their families on a small **Cross-shaped paper** and offered them. Each family brought delicious food prepared in their home and offered them to the Lord in the Eucharist which was shared among all the Catholics at the end of the Eucharist.

In North Walsham

In a beautiful Cambodian-style Mass on Friday 18th October at Sacred Heart Hall, North Walsham we united in spirit with Sisophon to celebrate the Feast of the Ancestors. Fifty-four people, including Fr John



Warrington and friends from St. Mary's Ipswich and Yarmouth, remembered our

faithful departed by putting their names on **paper crosses**. There was music from Cambodia and Taizé, candles, incense, and gifts.

The contribution of our **seven young people**, Jess, Niamh, Charlotte, Henry, Pip and Sarah [+ Al on the bells!] made it extra special and reminded us of our link to the youth of Cambodia. All of them did so well,

remembering what to do and doing it with grace and reverence. In his homily, Father David reminded us how much we all owe to those who have gone before us and how closely we remain united with them in the Communion of Saints. Following the Cambodian custom, almost everyone present offered incense to the memory of the departed and then shared food in celebration.



News from Svay ... 1

Fr Rajat writes:

"Thank you for the **photos of your beautiful Mass**. They are really wonderful. Many of your friends are looking forward to meeting all of you when you visit us from January 23 to 27th.

Now the **flood situation** is getting better except the damaged roads. We hope they will do repair before you come to Cambodia. The paddy fields have been also

affected by the flood. **The land in Deilo** [*where there is a new plot of farmland partly paid for by our parish*] is getting developed little by little. We made a small piggery there, and a small house for our worker and his family. We are planning to plant watermelon as soon as the land is dry, and summer rice as soon as the water level goes down in our rice field. Our duck and chicken farm is also flooded. We hope that the water level will go down soon and we can plant some vegetables for the students.



All the sponsored students are well. Khan Yao was with us during his summer holiday to help us to teach the students. He, Polin and SreyYeum will be finishing their studies this year. Srey Ry and Vigialeak now start the 3rd year as medical students. [*Vigialeak has had her first experience of clinical work in hospital... and found it rather scary!!*] In the end once again I give you our loving greetings and thank you for everything."

Brother Amalan writes:

In the Summer we held an entrance exam for all the students wanting to benefit from the facilities of the De Nobili Student Centre here in Svay Sisophon. After the exam was over, Fr Rajat and Teacher Saory made visits to all the students homes in order to assess the students' desire to study, and the families' commitment to supporting their child's study. They also get to know the family background and financial circumstances. After the visits, they sat down and chose 17 students, both boys and girls. Schools, along with our Centre, reopened in October. In total, we have some 37 students with us this year. Please pray for them!

News from Svay ... 2

Visiting the local prison is part of the weekly outreach work of the church in Svay Sisophon—taking food parcels, working with the women and children ... The serious flooding in October affected everyone, including the prisoners. The usual distribution of food parcels was cancelled, but *Brother Amalan* was there, and wrote as follows:



"Transportation in Banteay Meanchey was terribly affected by the floods. Though the rain was not too heavy in Cambodia, water came into the country from Thailand, and the water level rose and rose. In the prison, the flood waters rose to chest level.



The prisoners were evacuated to Siem Reap and Battambang. They were all safe and sound."



Katie Maidment explains the background to the work of Support Cambodia.

Cambodia, often known as "the forgotten country", is only now emerging from its tragic recent past. During the 1970s & 80s, 2 million people were murdered by the fanatical Khmer Rouge regime for having an education or even for wearing spectacles. Families, wealth and status were abolished. As a result, 75% of today's population are under the age of 30 and the 'grandparent' generation is missing entirely. 70% of homes have no electricity or clean water: school attendance is optional: substance abuse is widespread. Every family has a story to tell.

It is against this background that many Non-Government Organisations [NGO's] including the Catholic Church, work to promote peace and reconciliation and improve the lives of ordinary Cambodians, the majority of whom are Buddhist. They don't want charity - just a helping hand so they can help themselves.

Education is key. Rural areas have primary schools but to continue their education, students must travel to the towns. Practicalities often make this impossible so suitable students from the villages are selected to live in purpose-built hostels under the care of the Church so they can attend school and thus move on to university/training. In this way, Cambodia can begin to have the doctors, teachers, engineers, accountants and other skilled people it needs to rebuild itself as a country. In return for this much sought-after opportunity, students must do community work [e.g. literacy classes for village children, rice soup distribution] alongside their study. It costs £60 to set up a hostel student.

Sustainable farming is another major focus. Land is expensive with many restrictions on ownership. As one of the biggest NGO's, the Catholic Church buys good land which is farmed by local farmers, giving them both employment and a small income. This sustainable system provides nourishing food for the student hostels with any surplus sold to local people at an affordable price. Land costs nearly £1.50 per square metre: the average daily wage is less than 60p.

Support Cambodia, a charity of our local Catholic Parish, has been helping this work since 2006 with a special focus on Svay Sisophon in north-west Cambodia.

January 2014 will be our eighth [self-funded] visit to Sisophon, taking with us both financial donations and reading glasses, toothbrushes, soap and surplus medical supplies so generously given by local people through our GMD scheme.

Donations to Support Cambodia can be made at *Digby's Bon Bon* and *CAS Travel [Aylsham]* for whose support we are especially grateful.

- ❖ **Multi-vitamin tablets needed:** for women & children in Cambodia. If you would like to help with this please contact Bob Maidment on **01263 577784**.
- ❖ **Sending Greetings to Cambodia:** Our Cambodian friends love to receive a Christmas greeting from East Anglia! the final posting date for airmail is December 4th and will cost about £1.88 for up to 30g weight [idea: share with a friend?] Address slips are available at the back of all churches in Sacred Heart Parish. Find the address at: http://sacredheartnorthwalsham.com/?page_id=11
- ❖ **Donations:** from December 1st until Christmas, there will be an opportunity to make financial donations to Support Cambodia. Gift Cards [similar to CAFOD World Gifts] are also available at £5, £10 & £15. A reminder that Gift Aiding your donation brings an extra 25% at no extra cost. Support Cambodia makes no administration charge so every penny donated goes directly to Cambodia. Cheques should be made out to '*Sacred Heart Parish [Support Cambodia]*' or sent to *Support Cambodia c/o Bob Maidment, 22/23 Regent Street, Wickmere, Norwich, NR11 7ND*.
- ❖ '**Okoon charen**' [thanks very much] to everyone who has donated items for Cambodia through AylshamWorldWide's 'Gifts Make a Difference' scheme. The party of 6 going out on 13th January will take as much as they can with them.
- ❖ '**Cambodia Craft**' wooden sculptures hand-crafted by disabled artisans in Cambodia make wonderfully unusual Christmas presents and are available for sale along with a small selection of other Cambodian crafts. Interested? **Call Katie on 01263 577784**.

For contact details, the latest news and pictures from Cambodia, or more information on any of the above, go to:
http://sacredheartnorthwalsham.com/?page_id=11
or see the Support Cambodia boards in our 3 churches and on Facebook [Katie Maidment].