

2017 Interprovincial Experience of Charism and Mission Report

Sister Edie Strong



The Interprovincial Experience of Charism and Mission began at Doran Hall last week. 2017 participants are:

Sisters Sandy Howe, SC, from Cincinnati; Brenda Fritz, DC, from St. Louis; Lee Myoung Suk, Park Jong Nyee, Jyoung Mi, Kim Min Suk, Ko Jeng Ja, Kim Kyoung Ae, and Edie Strong, all from our congregation.

Sister Carole Blazina is leading our little band of missionaries. Sister Ahn Min Ah is acting as Korean-English interpreter.



Min Ah quickly went to work translating between Korean and English for the four days we spent in focusing on the charism that grounds our action for mission. Sister Carole, Sister Kim Sung Hae, and Father Edward

Udovic, CM, guided our reflection on the values that undergirded the missionary zeal of Vincent de Paul, Louise de Marillac, and Elizabeth Ann Seton. These same values guide our mission at INESEM school in Pedro Carbo, Ecuador. The sisters at Caritas Christi blessed our endeavors at Mass offered with Father Udovic.



The travel to Pedro Carbo, Ecuador took most of Saturday, July 22. Sunday was spent acclimating ourselves to our new surroundings before meeting the children, faculty and staff at INESEM, the real reason for our participation in IECM. INESEM, or Nuestra Senora de las Mercedes Foundation, is a school for students with auditory and intellectual disabilities.



(To see the activities happening at INESEM this week, please visit the school's Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/inesem.pedrocarbo.ecuador/>.)



We arrived in Pedro Carbo very on the morning of July 23 after a long delay in Miami airport. God bless Hans, a longtime friend of the sisters and two other men who came to the airport late at night with the sisters to drive us the 1.5 hours from Guayaquil to Pedro Carbo.

After a few hours of sleep during which a rooster relentlessly told us of the day to come, we jumped into our Sunday schedule which included Mass in Nobol at the National Shrine of Santa Narcisa de Jesus, an Ecuadoran lay woman canonized in 2008. She had dedicated her life to prayer, teaching children and atonement for the sins of the people. Mass was one of eight offered that day, and had standing room only. It was wonderful to experience so many families with

children of all ages lovingly cared for. At the special blessing held after Mass, people crowded near the sanctuary holding up babies, animals, religious objects and gallon jugs of water, a scarce commodity here, to be blessed. Faith of the people is strong and simple. Life is harsh, with adequate food and water hard to come by. Homes are basic small concrete-block structures from another era. Family ties are highly valued.

We wended our way through the open market to and from the church, with people selling fruit, rice, corn, flour, cooked food, children's toys, jewelry – whatever, in their creativity, they could find to provide a livelihood for themselves and their families. The favorite activity was to drink coconut milk through a straw inserted straight into the coconut itself. The market was as packed as the church!

The afternoon was spent in creating small gift bags from various items collected by Sister Jane Ann and hauled with us in large suitcases. Gifts were prepared for the children of INESEM, the faculty and staff, the staff of the clinic, and the families we will visit in the villages later this week.



The sisters here on mission welcomed us with the best of Korean dishes for meals and a taste of local fruit, including guanava and genadia, both of which are delicious and refreshing. Bananas are oh so fresh and hang on their original branch attached to the dining room ceiling by a rope. The dining room is what we would call a porch, but spacious. The air in the evening is refreshingly mild, a welcome relief from the heat of the day.

We prepared to jump in with both feet to provide different learning experiences for the INESEM children. We pray that God will bless our time with the dear people who call Pedro Carbo and surrounding area their home. May God use this time to touch their lives and ours in new ways.

