



HLI MISSION REPORT

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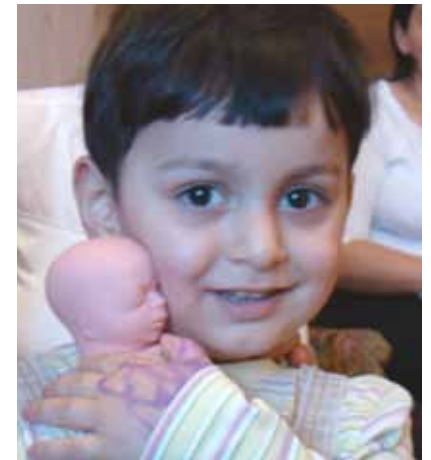
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By Dr. Ligaya A. Acosta
and Dr. Brian Clowes



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Dear HLI friends and supporters,

In this month's issue of *Mission Report*, we bring you first to Cambodia and then to Azerbaijan. In each of these reports, you can see what it takes to be an HLI missionary for life. It is not only facing the difficulties of travel, as seen in Ligaya's report, but more importantly facing the startling degree of ignorance on the evils and effects of abortion. We are grateful to Ligaya and Brian for their heroic missionary work!

MISSIONARY TRIP TO CAMBODIA—Reported by Dr. Ligaya A. Acosta, June 2011.

I travelled to Cambodia by bus from Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam, to where I had flown from my home country, the Philippines, since there was no direct flight to Phnom Penh, the capital city of Cambodia. What would have taken 45 minutes by plane took six hours by bus. It was good that while I was in Vietnam for another mission trip in April, I saw the bus going to Phnom Penh daily, which prompted me to ask about it. Being a pro-life missionary has prepared me for the many discomforts that come with a life-saving mission, thus, the six-hour road trip and the two hours waiting time at the bus terminal,



was bearable. As usual, it became an occasion for me to pray many rosaries and catch up on much needed sleep, which had been elusive to me due to an overly hectic schedule.

Upon arrival in Phnom Penh, I discovered to my surprise that everything is charged in U.S. dollars, including the *tuktuk*, an open motorized carriage, which is the main mode of transport in Cambodia. Thankfully, I discovered that one can haggle and/or negotiate for the fare, which they tend to raise for foreigners.



The Kingdom of Cambodia is located on mainland of Southeast Asia between Thailand to the west and north, and Vietnam to the east and southeast, sharing a land border with Laos in the northeast. It has an area of 181,040 sq km. (69,900 sq.mi.), (about the size of Missouri) and has a population of only 13.4 million (2008 census). **Despite a glaringly small population however, Cambodia is into heavy population control, worsened by a high infant mortality rate; high prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS; and the legalization of abortion in 1997.** The law made abortion available on demand up to 12 weeks of pregnancy, but according to the same law, abortion can be done at more than 12 weeks on the grounds of abnormality and health of the mother, rape, and approval of the medical team in conjunction with the woman. Thus, practically, abortion can be done anytime.

DEATH PEDDLERS ON THE PROWL

Like in other countries, death peddlers are having their heyday in Cambodia, with IPPF's affiliate – the Reproductive Health Association Cambodia (RHAC) operating in all areas through 400 community-based workers. These include: IPPF, USAID, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM), UNFPA, the European Commission, the Japan Trust Fund (JTF), the Ministry of Health, the Japanese Organization for International Cooperation in Family Planning (JOICFP), the Australian Family Planning Association, and the World AIDS Foundation. **These and others are actively working in the country, pouring in a lot of money for the purpose.**



While in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, Ligaya would daily ride the Tuktuk to her destinations.

THE CHURCH IN CAMBODIA

In the morning of my first day, I went for a courtesy call at the office residence of French Missionary Bishop Olivier Schmitt Haeusler of the Apostolic Vicariate of Phnom Penh, but I was unable to see him due to his hectic schedule. However, his secretary referred me to the Vicar General, Italian priest Rev. Fr. Mario Ghezzi, who readily welcomed me. She also gave me addresses and phone numbers of other possible contacts.

From the Bishop's House, I took another *tuktuk* to see Fr. Mario. Unfortunately, the devious driver brought me to another location and demanded more money to bring me my intended address. I thus decided to find another driver and proceed to St. Joseph Church instead, to further beg the Lord for guidance and blessing. There I met a very kind priest in the person of Rev. Fr. Trirong Multres, who certainly was God-sent. He not only gave me a tour of the church compound, but also gave me the number

of the seminary rector. He also brought me to the office of the French parish priest, Rev. Fr. Bruno Cosme, who kindly gave me an appointment. Fr. Bruno's parish is the largest in Phnom Penh where, he informed me, one third of the Catholics go. One contact led to another and another, and soon enough my days were filled. **Like the Apostles, I journeyed from one place to another to introduce HLI and its mission – giving one-on-one presentations to key people:** the vicar general, the parish priest, the rector of the seminary, the head of nun congregations—specifically the Missionary Sisters of Mother Teresa, and the Salesian Sisters. Through the nuns, I was also introduced to heads of religious organizations like the Couples for Christ.

By God's amazing grace, everyone who heard the message was touched and told me this was much needed in Cambodia. They also greatly appreciated the HLI DVD Library. With the vicar general, I was able to get the commitment for a return trip of HLI to conduct a pro-life training for clergy and religious, as well as talks with parishioners. Fr. Mario expressed the need for me to speak to the youth of Cambodia, as promiscuity is rampant and results in many abortions. **He also confirmed the massive campaign on condoms, which has lured many people to destruction.** He thought it important that their people hear the many side effects of contraception and abortion, which are common in the country. With the blessings of the bishops, he also said, he would want HLI to also visit the other dioceses in the country, who also need to hear HLI's message.

Rev. Fr. Bob Piche, the Canadian priest rector of the St. Jean Marie Vianney Major Seminary—the only seminary in the country—also expressed the need for formation of the seminarians on life and family issues, and thus was happy to have HLI. Currently, there are six seminarians studying there, who all came from public schools as there is no minor seminary in Cambodia. Also, I was told that future nuns also come for their formation. Thus, he said, he would want to have a day of talks with HLI for their future priests and nuns.

Rev. Fr. Bruno Cosme invited me to speak at the monthly teaching day of his parish, which fortunately fell on the Sunday I was there. There were 160 people in attendance, comprised of two priests, nuns, church leaders, parishioners, and the youth. Once per month, they gather after Mass at the big function room of the parish and are given free lunch to encourage them to attend the entire session, which ends at 4:00 p.m. It was a blessing for me to spend the day with them, especially since it was Corpus Christi Sunday. **My short talk with the parishioners elicited a lot of interest, and a number of women stayed after to tell me how touched they were. They also said my talk made them feel guilty because they aborted their own babies in the past.** They told me they looked forward to my return and to hearing more from me. Everyone also wanted to get the rosaries I brought but which was not enough for all.



Students of Don Bosco School for Girls take the Vow of Chastity.



At the former Catholic Seminary now home of St. Joseph Parish, with Parish Priest Rev. Fr. Bruno Cosme.

THE YOUTH OF CAMBODIA

My talk in the parish also earned for me an invitation to speak at Don Bosco School for Girls. The Salesian Sister who attended promised to speak to the other nuns that evening, saying that *my talk was exactly what they needed for their students, who at a young age are already having abortions*. The next day, I got an email from the principal of the school, Indian Sister Leeza John, who asked me to come and speak to their students, which I was happy to accept. It was attended by 80 students together with their teachers who listened intently to my talk and watched with so much interest, albeit with pain on their faces, the abortion video I showed. The responses from the students were very touching. **They said it was a big realization for them, especially the horrors of abortion and the deception of condoms, which they have been brainwashed into believing is okay.** Everyone excitedly took the vow of chastity at the end of my session. Sister Leeza asked for a copy of my presentation and was overjoyed to receive the HLI DVD Library. She asked if she could invite me again to a bigger forum she will organize that will include the parents of their students and others. She also told me the need to speak at the Don Bosco School for Boys, but it was time for me to leave, and thus, it will have to wait until my return.



Ligaya gives a talk to parishioners of St. Joseph parish in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, with the parish priest as Interpreter.

In all, I was able to reach around 260 people in Cambodia. More importantly, however, I was able to establish a base for HLI through a partnership with the Catholic Church there, which will hopefully lead to a pro-life program in the country. Before I left, the plans were set for future pro-life training for clergy, religious, seminarians, and church leaders, as well as various audiences around the country. God is good and God is great!

As I boarded the bus for another six-hour trip back to Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam enroute to my home in the Philippines, I thanked God profusely for showing His hand again, as He always does. If only HLI could reach all the countries, there would be so much hope in changing the world, which is now profusely besieged by the culture of death.

I truly thank God—always and forever—for the privilege of being a part of HLI’s mission, and most of all for all of HLI’s generous benefactors, without whom missions like this would be impossible.

MISSIONARY TRIP TO AZERBAIJAN—Reported by Dr. Brian Clowes, May 2011.

Azerbaijan is a land of almost overwhelming contrasts. Its capital of Baku is spotlessly clean, but 20 miles north is the most ecologically devastated region on earth, capable of killing you if you linger in the wrong place for too long. Despite being 94 percent Muslim, the country gave a collective shrug upon hearing about the death of Osama Bin Laden. The 600-foot-high ultramodern “Flame Towers” overshadow a beautiful and ancient mosque. And the Baku-based *biznizmen* and *mafija* park their customized



Mercedes next to battered Soviet-era Ladas (“why do Ladas have heated bumpers? So it’s more comfortable when you push them in the winter!”).

The Republic of Azerbaijan regained its independence after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and is currently riding the wave of its second oil boom in two decades. It is almost impossible to drive anywhere in the capital city of Baku, because construction equipment is in operation everywhere. Unemployment is less than one percent, new buildings are popping up like mushrooms after a spring rain, and the adult HIV-AIDS infection rate is only about one in 2,500, one-tenth that of the USA.

As always, the best part of a nation is its people, and Azeris are unusually friendly and helpful. Tourists are returning to this beautiful land in great numbers, and for good reason.

ABORTION IN AZERBAIJAN

But of all of Azerbaijan’s contradictions and contrasts, the most startling is that Azeris adore babies and stare with incomprehension at anyone who says that they do not want children — **yet three-fourths of all of their pregnancies end in abortion.** This nation also suffers from one of the highest sex imbalance among newborns in the world due to sex-selection abortions — 112 boys to 100 girls. Abortion is simply a way of life here. There is no controversy over it, and questioning it is met with the same reaction as if you ask why people eat or sleep.

This is the result of decades of living under the most anti-life regime in history — evil is at first resisted, then tolerated, then accepted and finally becomes banal, just part of everyday life.

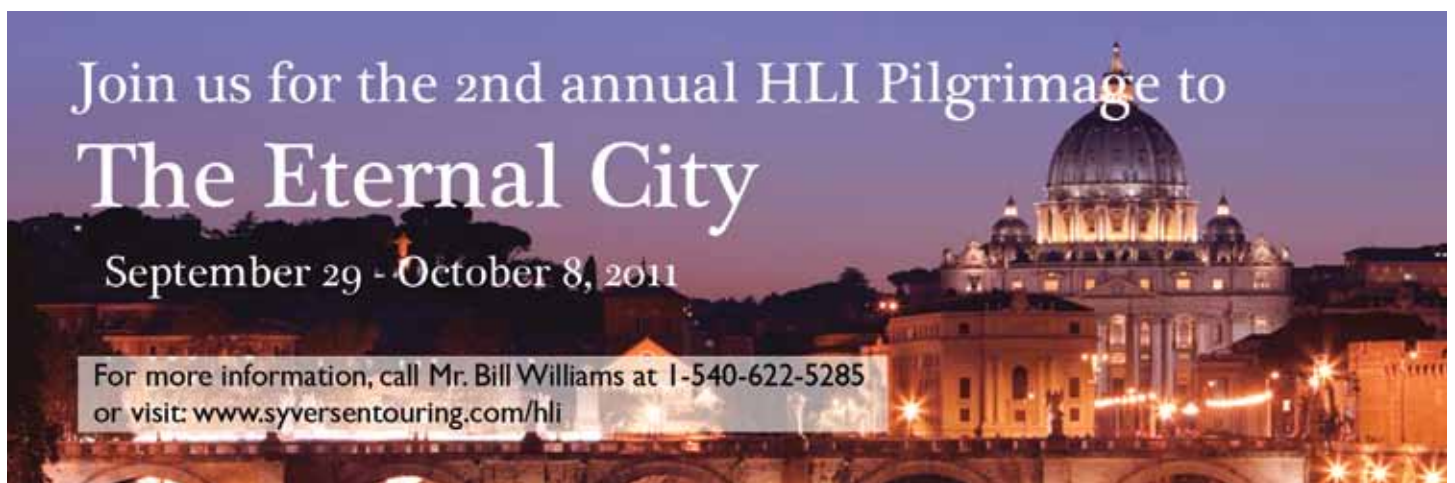


Brian with Fr. Joseph of the Salesians of Don Bosco and four of Mother Teresa’s Sisters of Charity.

This means that the nascent pro-life movement in Azerbaijan has a daunting task ahead of it.

THE SUICIDE OF AZERBAIJAN

Although the government would like to reduce the numbers of abortions, it is going about it the wrong way, by flooding the country with contraceptives, which only makes things worse. The USA has been saturated



with “family planning” for more than four decades now, but has also had more than 53 million abortions. However, such appeals to reason fall on deaf ears in Baku, because the most rabidly anti-life organizations in the world are pumping tens of millions of dollars into the country every year.

These groups include EngenderHealth, the Adventist Development and Relief Association (ADRA), *Medicins Sans Frontieres* (MSF), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and, of course, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

Nobody in power can explain why all of this population control is necessary. In 1965, Azeri women averaged 5.6 children per family; now it is below replacement at 1.9 children per family and is projected to soon plunge to only 1.3, **a level from which no country has ever recovered**. In effect, these population control groups are assisting in the suicide of the nation of Azerbaijan. **As always, the reason that population control is so pervasive is that there is a lot of money in it.**

There is plenty of hope, despite the dismal numbers, although there are only about 300 Catholics and 50,000 other Christians in the entire country. Six Don Bosco priests and three brothers from Slovakia, along with four of Mother Teresa’s Sisters of Charity, work from the only Catholic parish in the country, Immaculate Conception in Baku. The Catholics are very fervent, and it shows. They have wonderful artists, who often depict St. Don Bosco, Blessed John Paul, St. Dominic Savio, and one of Azerbaijan’s favorites, St. Laura Vikunya (Vicuña). Add to this a couple of small (but very pro-life) Baptist churches, a strong Couples for Christ group, and a handful of enthusiastic lay people, and you have the foundation of a national movement to protect human life.

HLI MISSION TO AZERBAIJAN

My mission to Azerbaijan in early May was to assess the situation and help a pro-life group get organized. It was a very busy trip, with over a dozen events, mostly speaking to various groups about organizing, fetal development, debate and chastity.

After 13 hours in the air, my flight arrived in Baku at the ghastly hour of 4:15 AM. Vilavyet, who would drive me around all week, met me there, and we drove to the Old City of Baku to a place called the Noah’s Ark Hotel. After a couple of hours sleep, it was up and out to see a bit of Baku. I was very favorably impressed by its modernity and cleanliness. At five in the morning, little old ladies wearing babushkas are out sweeping the streets, even the four-lane highways. I saw only a handful of pieces of trash in the city the entire time I was there.

I had a couple of talks at the Immaculate Conception Church in Baku on organizing and fetal development. This is the only parish in all of Azerbaijan; a sheik kindly



Above: Father Joseph celebrating Mass in the only Catholic church in Azerbaijan, Immaculate Conception in Baku. Below, some of the attendees after one of Brian’s talks.



donated the land which it was built upon, replacing the beautiful and ornate church that was destroyed by the murderous thug Stalin.


The corruption in Azerbaijan is pervasive; the entire city is under construction, causing terrible traffic jams. The friends and relatives of the President and the ministers own most of the construction companies, so they get all the contracts. People complain when the street is torn up and repaved — because it was just torn up and paved two months ago! The traffic crawls at all hours because of the construction, which causes constant bottle-necks. Late one evening, it took us an hour and a half to drive barely a mile.

The questions from the people in Azerbaijan can sometimes be startling. One young Catholic lady thought that she was guilty of a serious sin because she had had a miscarriage, and had been feeling terrible shame for years. I carefully and repeatedly emphasized very strongly that this was God's unknowable will and not her fault, and she seemed to be greatly relieved. **If reassuring this young wife was the only thing I had done on this trip, it would have been worth all the trouble of getting here.**

Some other people actually thought that the Catholic Church teaches that it is only permissible to have sex when you are trying to have a baby! Inexplicably, it took a long time to sort that one out.

As we were driving around, my driver Vilavyet told me his conversion story and how he went through law school and became a government prosecutor. But the corruption was so pervasive that he quit in disgust after only 18 months. No matter how horrible the crime, if you have enough money for bribes, or know the right people, you can get away with murder — *literally!* In fact, some people do not even mind being prosecuted, because you can make many contacts and friends in the court system.

THE PRO-LIFE WISDOM of
FR. PAUL MARX
THE APOSTLE OF LIFE



Fr. Paul Marx

When Mainland China finally opened up, IPPF was ready to move in, fully chartered. It has repeatedly approved the Chinese one child family policy. It has nothing to say about the dying rooms in Chinese hospitals or about the abuse of women, for whom elsewhere it feigns solicitude. —*Faithful for Life*, page 235.



The organizational team for what will hopefully become HLI-Azerbaijan.

ESTABLISHING A PRO-LIFE PRESENCE

Upon traveling back to Baku, we held an organizational meeting with pro-life leaders at the Immaculate Conception Church, and charted the way forward. We agreed to start slowly, with intensive pro-life training first, followed by **demonstrating to the government that teaching natural family planning (NFP) is healthiest — for women, for marriages, and for the nation.** Human Life International will be with these gallant people all the way, because although the challenges are great, so will be the rewards of their labors.

Once a nation's people get addicted to abortion, it is almost impossible for them to turn away from it and embrace life. But we have confidence that Azerbaijan, with a strong pro-life presence and the urging of the Holy Spirit, will soon see how disastrous the culture of death can be, and will fully embrace life.

Dear Friends, you can see that our missionaries are ready and willing to face all obstacles to bring the Gospel of Life to the nations. On their behalf, and on the behalf of everyone here at HLI, we thank you for your continued support, which helps us continue in our mission.

God bless you always!



Msgr. Ignacio Barreiro-Carámbula
Interim President

P.S.—This month, to thank you for your contribution of \$49 or more to HLI's life-saving mission this month, ***I would like to send you an audio CD by Barbara McGuigan entitled, Raising Pro-Life Children in a Culture of Death.***

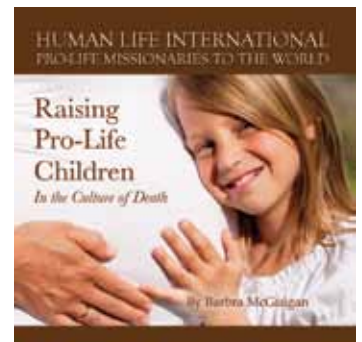
In this talk, Barbara McGuigan talks about how we can raise our kids to be pro-life even when our culture pushes opposite values upon them. She gives practical insight about how to teach young people to respect life and understand the true gift of sexuality.

This talk tells what basic knowledge youth need to understand the importance of being pro-life, seeking guidance from the Holy Spirit to teach youth the truth and relying on spiritual weapons such as the rosary for the strength to proclaim the truth.

Barbara gives hope to all parents that it is possible to raise young people to respect life. She presents four basic principles for youth to understand why God is pro-life but also for them to know that they are very much loved by God. These principles state: life is a gift from God, life is sacred, every human is created in the image and likeness of God and everyone is created for a purpose. Barbara also gives reasons for why there should be hope even in cultures that have accepted abortion.

This talk will empower all adults to proclaim the truth to young people about the importance of loving life from the moment of conception until natural death.

Please send HLI your gift of \$49 or more this month, and let me send you this inspiring talk!



“Raising Pro-Life Children in a Culture of Death” is our gift to you this month in appreciation for your financial support of \$49 or more!