



# Mission Report

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*Left: Dr. Ligaya Acosta, HLI Regional Director for Asia and Oceania, at 21st Asia-Pacific Congress on Faith, Life & Family (ASPAC) in Bangkok, Thailand.*

Dear Pro-Life Friend in Christ,

As our faithful readers know, from November 24th-26th, 2017 HLI hosted its 21st Asia-Pacific Congress on Faith, Life & Family (ASPAC) in Bangkok, Thailand. In this post-ASPAC review, we bring you an overview of the events transpired, as well as a background look behind the scenes at what went into preparing for ASPAC.

**Mission Report** wishes particularly to thank you, without whom we would be simply unable to host the largest pro-Life, pro-Family, pro-Faith congress in Asia 21 times over. Your support and generosity make it all possible and we thank you! We have announced that the 22nd ASPAC will take place in Kerala, India in 2019. Please keep this intention in prayer.

We have much to be thankful for in 2017. We successfully hosted over 60 international conferences, sponsored dozens of marches for life and marriage, and because of your care and kindness, our global apostolate has saved numerous lives from the violence of contraception and abortion. In the new year, let us look forward with hope, asking Our Lady and St. Joseph's intercession before the throne of God, to bless and guide us in our unceasing work in the service of Life, Marriage and Family.

Yours in Christ and Our Lady,

Fr. Shenan J. Boquet  
President, Human Life International



Fr. Shenan J. Boquet  
President

## A GREAT HLI TRADITION, THE ASIA-PACIFIC CONGRESS

by Dr. Joseph Meaney, HLI Director of International Outreach and Expansion

Do you miss HLI's World Conferences Fr. Paul Marx created and organized throughout the 1980s and 90s? *HLI Asia-Oceania has maintained Fr. Marx's tradition with Asia-Pacific Congresses (ASPAC) on Faith, Life and Family for 21 years*, just concluding another HLI ASPAC from November 24-26th in Bangkok, Thailand. This year's theme was "Put out into the Deep: Defending the Family, Hope of the Dying World." Just as in the classic HLI conferences, very high-level speakers - a Vatican official, archbishops and bishops, and top pro-life experts, covered a wide range of topics. Breakout sessions during two days allowed delegates from 21 countries to personalize their conference experience. We began each day in the beautiful Baan Phu Waan Pastoral Training Center with a pro-life meditated rosary, Holy Mass, and concluded evenings with exposition and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

The main credit for the success of this major HLI event goes to Dr. Ligaya Acosta. As Regional Director she has led HLI Asia-Oceania for ten years now. Based in the Philippines, before and during the Thailand congress, Dr. Acosta spent many sleepless nights resolving the myriad of details that arise with a complicated international gathering. She has ex-



panded HLI's presence to numerous Pacific islands and made exploratory trips to challenging countries like Bangladesh and Myanmar. (I mention these two in particular because Pope Francis made an apostolic journey to these countries just after the HLI ASPAC concluded.)

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*The presentations were really inspiring. Now I feel I need to do more, especially in promoting life. — Sr. Mary Kathleen*

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350 participants at the 21st Asia-Pacific Congress on Faith, Life and Family at the Baan Phu Waan Pastoral Center, Bangkok, Thailand.

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*ASPAC helped me to know the issues and how to deal with them. — Fr. Peter Nguyen Van Hien*

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*Fr. Shenan J. Boquet welcomed the 350 delegates as HLI's president with a rousing call to respond to Pope Saint John Paul II's universal call for a "great campaign for life."* He reminded us that the Church "must stand in the breach" to defend faithful and innocent victims from those Fr. Marx called "death peddlers." Fr. Boquet stressed the Church bears a message of hope and joy to a world in desperate need. He added that she cannot call bad what is good or good what is bad. "She knows that by upholding the moral law she is contributing to an authentic human civilization - a Civilization of Life and Love."

Something unique about this HLI ASPAC was the local host committee. Caritas Thailand and the Camillian Fathers helped to organize this event. Catholics are a very small minority in Thailand, but they have developed some impressive institutions including hospitals, schools and very large churches. Bishop Philip Banchong Chaiyara C.S.S.R., president of the Episcopal Commission for Social Ministries for the Thai Bishops, and a proud Redemptorist, welcomed us. He said that the pro-life and pro-family apostolate of the Catholic Church in Thailand is integrated into their work with the poor and offering health care services. Fr. Rocco Pairat Sriprasert, Secretary General of Caritas Thailand, was our main local host. He is a Camillian priest and the current Provincial of the Camillian Community in Thailand. This order focuses their apostolate on Catholic health care around the world.

The speakers and homilists took us on a broad tour of Asia. Bishop Rolando Santos of Papua New Guinea told the audience about a meeting he arranged with a minister in the government. Bishop Santos protested against the population control measures being implemented and pointed out to this very same minister, who testified at a large gathering of Asian nations, one factor



**Dr. Joseph Meaney, HLI Director of International Outreach and Expansion, at the 21st Asia-Pacific Congress.**

holding back Papua New Guinea from faster economic development is their small population (only 7 million people). Bishop Santos said to all of us, we need to have to have the courage to challenge such false state-

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***I had a deep realization that my husband and I would have to work hard in order to protect our family and to develop an attitude of reaching out (urgently) to others. — Norlyn S. Buenviaje***

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ments. ***HLI made a concerted effort to bring a large contingent of our regional leaders to speak.*** These included Mario Rojas from Latin America, Fr. Francesco Giordano from the HLI Rome Office, and Dr. Brian Clowes and his wife Kathy from Front Royal, Virginia. I flew out from Paris, France, and most of us gave two talks. Fr. Boquet and Dr. Acosta rounded out the HLI speakers as well as Milagres Pereira from HLI Goa in India. There was a strong theme of resisting attempts to subvert the Church's teachings on Life, Marriage and Family. Fr. Giordano addressed the broader cultural revolution as it threatens family and society. Dr. Acosta took up the warning of Pope Benedict XVI to fight the "Dictatorship of Relativism" and Pope Francis' denunciation of "Ideological Colonization." Dr. Clowes reported on his in-depth research into dissenting groups and their extreme agenda. He showed off some of the

incredible resources available in the HLI pro-life CD Library.

Archbishops Garcera and Peta from the Philippines and Kazakhstan shared their thoughts in helping families and marriages. Archbishop Gilbert Garcera is chairman of the Family and Life Commission for the Filipino bishop's conference. He stressed a passage from Pope Francis' *Amoris Laetitia*: "Large families are a joy for the Church!" Archbishop Tomash Peta of Astana, Kazakhstan spoke how his nation is the 9th largest in size but only has 18 million people. This former Soviet Republic is 25% Christian and relations with the Muslims are actually good. He reminded us of the simple, beautiful message of Christ and His Church on marriage, as an indissoluble sacramental bond that cannot be changed. He shared the good work of "Pure Hearts" and other groups supporting chastity and aiding marriages in trouble.

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If you have questions or would like more information, please contact Stan Kuta at 540-622-5272 or email Stan at [skuta@hli.org](mailto:skuta@hli.org).

Fr. Andrea Ciucci, Coordinating Secretary for the Pontifical Academy for Life, spoke on behalf of Archbishop Vincenzo Pagila, the President of the Academy. Fr. Ciucci read a message of encouragement for HLI's great work in Asia from the Vatican. He also gave a talk on "Transforming Humanity" pointing out threats from so-called "Human Enhancement," including genetic and robotic manipulation of human beings. Later Fr. Ciucci mentioned HLI's input on these and other bio-ethical issues is highly valued by the Academy for Life.

*It was lovely to see hundreds of delegates from almost two dozen nations harmoniously share a common pro-life vision.* It was hard to keep to schedule as leaders had so many questions and enjoyed talking and



350 delegates gather for the 21st Asia-Pacific Congress.

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*I teach in Bangkok, Siriraj – Jahidol University Hospital in Neurosurgery. I am convinced that I shall be active in Family apostolate after the 21<sup>st</sup> ASPAC meeting. —Dr. Voravut Chanyavanicu, MD*

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HLI President Fr. Shenan J. Boquet, speaking at ASPAC.

making new friends during the coffee breaks and meals. HLI's PR Director, Deborah Piroch, had her hands full interviewing and filming different leaders. Filipinos have a reputation for their joy-filled enthusiasm, and their large delegation did not disappoint. There was also, however, a larger than usual Japanese presence and the Indians came in large numbers with entire families. They could not contain their excitement that their sub-continent with over a billion people and four HLI affiliates will host the next ASPAC. The HLI group from Goa, India shared pro-life songs and had extra meetings at night when most of the other participants were collapsing into bed.

Why not consider attending an inspiring HLI conference with the rare added opportunity of a Catholic cultural experience in Asia? One American who attended the last two keeps coming back for more. Dr. Ligaya Acosta jokes once you have been to ASPAC, you're hooked! HLI's next Asian regional congress will be in Kerala, India in 2019. Here the greatest number of Indian Catholics and Christians live and is known as "God's Country." Mark your calendars - you are welcome to join us!

## BEHIND THE SCENES OF THE 21<sup>ST</sup> ASPAC

By Dr . Ligaya Acosta, Director of Asia-Oceania

“My Grace is sufficient for you,  
For my power is made perfect in weakness.”  
I will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses,  
That the power of Christ may rest upon me.  
For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses,  
Insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities, for  
when I am weak, then I am strong.”  
(2 Corinthians 12:9-10)

This Biblical passage became my stronghold, as preparations for HLI’s 21st ASPAC reached its peak. I wished for 48-hour-days, as I arranged all the details of the world's largest pro-life congress in Asia and Oceania! ***I always say preparing for an ASPAC is a huge opportunity to become a saint! With so many challenges, I always need to attend daily Mass and spend more time kneeling before the Blessed Sacrament.*** In the words of many veteran attendees to the ASPAC, “This was the best ASPAC so far!”

Thus, in the midst of all the sleepless nights and overflowing days of work pre-ASPAC, I wanted to be in my home office in Tacloban City, Philippines, to focus. However, I had committed to fly to Manila twice during the month, to fulfill the engagements in which I was the featured lone speaker. All in all, I gave 4 talks in different locations, before over 700 persons. Topics ranged from “The Threat of Ideological Colonization” to “Contraception: Why Not?” I was informed right before the last one that many in the audience are young couples practicing contraception, and told



HLI 21st ASPAC participants from India

I had to switch the talk. Again with God's amazing grace, people listened intently and told me this was something everyone needed to hear. Throughout all talks, I received the grace to relax and forget for a moment the many concerns of ASPAC.

On the 18th of November, I left with my husband for Bangkok, Thailand, five days early for the ASPAC, as requested by the head of the Local Organizing Committee. Just for the record, though, I always make it a point to arrive days ahead of ASPAC to oversee preparations and make sure everything is ready in advance of participants.

Since I arrived on a Sunday, we decided with Father Pairat to have our working meeting the next day. Even at the 11th hour there are still a number of last-minute registrants, and at the same time, a few “casualties.” You see this year, four registrants withdrew; one got sick, one was hospitalized, one met with an accident, and one had an emergency meeting. ***Thus before each ASPAC, I always make it a point to request prayers from friend intercessors all over the world.*** This year’s ASPAC was even made more special, as all the members of my own Prayer Group in my home city of Tacloban were able to come.

From October 19 – 21, I practically held office at Bangkok's CARITAS Thailand building of the Catholic Bishops Conference. Even as we busily ironed out final details, Father Pairat shuttled from one important meeting to another. Now I understood why he couldn't always communicate with me on time, plus the fact that like me, he



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*Working in the hospital, I needed the updates and other experiences shared by the team of speakers and participants. I was also inspired by new insights to work harder for pro-life. Thanks to all of you and praise be to God – the Creator! — Sr. Theresa Somsri Sumet*

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also constantly travels. However, he used his influence to mobilize as many people as possible, even involving various organizations under the Bishops' Conference. And since he is also current Provincial of the Camillian Community, he mobilized all the Camillian priests and seminarians as well, assigning them to many tasks. Everyone served with a lot of joy in their hearts.

The priest Director of Bangkok's Camillian Hospital, former Provincial, Father Paul, was assigned to be head of the transportation committee. And while he had all 14 major seminarians at his disposal, plus other priests, he always made it a point to be at the airport to welcome every arrival with a big smile on his face – even if the arrivals were during ungodly hours. *It was such a joy and a privilege to work with everyone – all sincere, humble, selfless, able, and willing to give of themselves.*

Their humility also touched me deeply - they were not very much experienced in putting up a huge international event - so they consulted with me

on everything. Even if "in charge" (God is in charge), I needed to be hands on: reviewing flight details; assigning rooms, and meeting with management at the ASPAC venue of Baan Phu Waan, the Archdiocese of Bangkok's huge and impressive Pastoral Training Center. We checked each function room and the whole of Baan Phu Waan was abuzz with all the preparations.

In the evening of the same day, we braved three hours of travel amidst heavy traffic to meet HLI President Father Shenan J. Boquet and the staff from Front Royal, Virginia – also all smiling despite the long travel. We got to our rooms at 3am and fell asleep, after a brief stop at McDonald's. I still had to meet with key staff before falling to sleep.

### **SENTIMENTAL RETURN TO BAAN PHU WAAN**

*Unknown to others, this was a sentimental journey back to Baan Phu Waan. Exactly here 10 years ago, I accepted the offer to lead HLI-ASIA. This ASPAC marked my 10th year anniversary at Human Life International. Tears of overwhelming gratitude filled my heart and soul. How good is the Lord for calling a sinner like me to this mission!*



Bishop Philip Banchong Chaiyara C.S.S.R., President of the Episcopal Commission for Social Ministries for the Thai Bishops, speaking at ASPAC.

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***ASPAC has impacted me personally. I have learned many lessons from these pro-life leaders who are very brave in their activities. I will pray for them all. — Sr. Magdalena Supaporn Daodee***

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#### **THE 21ST ASPAC**

***The 21st ASPAC encompassed 350 participants from 21 countries, 157 of them foreign delegates from the many countries where HLI maintains a presence.*** There would have been many more but for the Apostolic Visit of His Holiness Pope Francis to Myanmar and Bangladesh, which overlapped with the ASPAC. I personally greeted every arrival, including those late at night or early morning.

A new bar was set as ASPAC included many more speakers. This increases HLI's hosting costs, but please recall we remember our generous donors in our prayers! As I write, I am ***still*** receiving heart-warming thank-you emails from around the world. A lot of participants came said to me: "This was the best ASPAC so far!" Indeed with 20 other ASPACs behind us, we learn more each time and leave no stone unturned to make each ASPAC special for every participant. ***ASPAC signals God's amazing glory. To organize such a huge international event, with the invaluable assistance of so many, with minimal financial resources, is to me a sign God is truly alive.*** Thus every ASPAC gains spiritual, intellectual, social, and even emotional nourishment. Committed and dedicated mission leaders and partners are molded, enhanced and strengthened, and furthermore inspired to also give their all to the mission.

I'm grateful to HLI for its deep commitment to ASPAC. As organizer of the 22nd ASPAC, I hope to see you in Kerala, India in 2019!

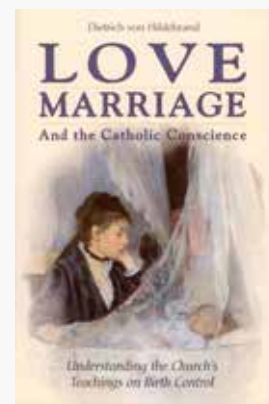
## **DONATE \$53 OR MORE TO HLI THIS MONTH AND GET OUR LATEST PRO-LIFE RESOURCE!**

This month, when you donate \$53 or more to support HLI's life-saving mission, you'll receive the book, ***Love, Marriage, and the Catholic Conscience - Understanding the Church's Teachings on Birth Control*** by Dietrich von Hildebrand.

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