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# COURIER-JOURNAL

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## A Letter from Thailand

Following are excerpts from a letter received last week from Sister Nancy Vendura, the Daughter of Charity on leave from her post at St. Mary's Hospital, to work among the refugees in Camp Khao-I-Dang, Thailand.

Dear Everyone,

Yesterday we arrived in the village of Aranyaprathet where we will live. Each day we will travel to Camp Khao-I-Dang by truck. It takes about half an hour to get there. We came here by van, it was even air-conditioned, albeit crowded.

I really can't say I enjoy traveling in Thailand. I thought Boston beat everywhere else for aggressive driving, but the Thais drive like they've trained in New York City and Boston combined. They travel fast, weave even against on-coming traffic, lay on the horns all the time, stop short. I don't like it — neither does anyone else here including those who have been here for months and even years! Anyhow, we got here safe and sound.

The house is a lovely little place, and it gives one a feeling of closeness and comfort. There are two floors. The first has two rooms which provide us with a sitting area and a small table on which to eat. We don't have a stove or a refrigerator. What we do have is a hot plate and an ice box. Then there is the bathroom — it's on the open porch on the first floor. It consists of a porcelain bowl built into the concrete floor.

There's a thin pipe in the corner of this room from

which flows all the water used in our house. Under it is a bucket filled with water. To flush the toilet there's a rice bowl nearby which we dip into the bucket and then empty into the toilet. This procedure is working well so far. To take a bath one just dunks the rice bowl into the bucket of water and then onto oneself. The toilet now acts as a drain. How do you like that for ingenuity?

On all the walls of the house are shutter-like wooden windows. When these are open it's almost like being outside: that is, all the noise and the mosquitoes come in. Hence mosquito netting is essential. As for the noise, it's equivalent to living in a New York City apartment in the summertime, with your next-door neighbor having a party for a teenager. They play American rock and roll — it seems all night long. Mixed with this one can hear packs of dogs howling, turkeys, roosters and the geckos on the walls of our very own house!

On the way to Aranyaprathet (Aran) I observed people in huts along the countryside — very poor. I saw chicken, duck and pig farms and I can honestly say the animals looked better housed and better cared for than the people did. Oxen were being pulled by families, and all oxen I saw looked emaciated, although they were walking where they were led. I also noticed herds of water buffalo for the first time, and I found out they come either grey, white, or brown. All of these appeared healthy — at least you couldn't see their ribs.

Aran is very much like Bangkok, only a smaller version.

'The people struck me as beautiful. They were quick to smile and told the saddest stories one could ever hear.'

—Sister Nancy Vendura.

dirty and dingy. Somehow there seem to be more flies here though — thousands of them all over the people and the food they are either selling or cooking.

Today we went to the camp for orientation. Khao-I-Dang is the largest refugee camp in the world, harboring over 187,000 people. This is where our present assignment will be! I will be working in pediatrics.

The problem of mass starvation is pretty much under control at present unless there is another influx of refugees into the camp. So when we found the site today, while I did see emaciated and starving people, they were not quantitatively significant. The leading problems now seem to be malaria, TB, polio and rehab.

The people live in bamboo and grass huts, side by side — no space, no privacy. The huts are low and I could not stand up in any. It was obvious the adults as well as the children were overjoyed to see us. When we were riding through they would wave their hands from the wrist, smiling and shouting "OK," "Hello," and "Bye-Bye!" — the only English words most of them know.

As we walked through the hospital tents . . . it was a

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## Sacramental Guideline Meetings Begin Today

A series of meetings has been scheduled throughout the diocese as part of the first phase of the diocesan Study of Sacramental Guidelines called for by Bishop Matthew H. Clark.

The meetings, on a regional basis, plus one at the Spanish Apostolate, will begin today, at St. Mary's in Bath, and continue until May 1, according to Father Robert J.

Kennedy, diocesan Office of Liturgy director, who was named by Bishop Clark to head up the study.

"The first phase of this study will address the five areas in which we presently have sacramental guidelines: First Communion, First Penance, Confirmation, Marriage Preparation and the Rite of Penance," Father Kennedy said in a letter to

parishes.

"A second phase, to be conducted in late Summer, will address areas of our liturgical and sacramental life in which we need guidelines but do not have them already," he said.

In his letter inaugurating the study, Bishop Clark asked for the two-part campaign and wrote, "I hope the former will

be brought to completion by May 31, 1980, and the latter by Fall 1980."

Questionnaires have already been sent to involved personnel in the parishes and the regional hearings, according to Father Kennedy, will be "to allow opportunities for additional input from parish ministerial staffs, religion teachers, parish liturgy and education com-

mittees and parents. The primary content of these hearings will be the evaluation of present sacramental guidelines."

On each scheduled day of hearings, parish staffs will meet in the afternoon and the others in the evening.

At the afternoon sessions, each parish will be allowed three minutes to make a presentation . . . raising their concerns, experiences and comments. The committee also will accept the presentations in written form, according to a format issued by Father Kennedy.

The afternoon sessions also will include an open forum on

sacramental and liturgical areas for which guidelines do not exist but where they might be needed.

The format for the evening meetings will allow "anyone who wishes to speak . . . no more than a 2-minute presentation, a copy of which is requested by the committee. Upon arrival at the meeting those wishing to make a presentation will be asked to sign in and as many as we have time for will be heard."

An open forum also will take place evenings for "discussion evaluating each of the five areas in which we presently have guidelines."

## Regional Hearings

All parish staff meetings will be from 2 to 4 p.m. and all general meetings from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m., except: the Hispanic Community parish staff meeting will be from 1 to 3:30 p.m., the Seneca-Cayuga parish staff meeting from 3 to 5 p.m., the Tompkins-Tioga general meeting from 8 to 10 p.m. and the Northwest parish staff meeting from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m.

Steuben	Wed., April 9	St. Mary's, Bath
Livingston	Mon., April 14	St. Thomas, Leicester
Northeast	Tues., April 15	St. Joseph's, Penfield
Hispanic Community	Wed., April 16	Spanish Apostolate Field Office
Seneca-Cayuga	Mon., April 21	Holy Family, Auburn
Chemung-Schuyler	Mon., April 21	St. Patrick's, Elmira
North	Wed., April 23	Annunciation
Southwest	Wed., April 23	St. Mary's, Scottsville
Yates-Ontario-Wayne	Mon., April 28	St. Mary's, Canandaigua
Southeast	Tues., April 29	St. Boniface Gym
Tompkins-Tioga	Wed., April 30	Immaculate Conception, Ithaca
Northwest	Thurs., May 1	Our Lady of Mercy

## The Religious: A Life of Love

There is in the Church a unique life-style that is practiced by a relative few. Not everyone can measure up to the challenges it offers; but for those who are called to it, that life-style provides greater fulfillment than most of us will ever know. It is the religious life, a vocation to live in a community marked by poverty, celibacy, obedience — and love.

What is the religious vocation? Who are the people it draws? What do they contribute to the Church and civil society?

Next week, the Courier-Journal will begin a special two-part series on religious-community life to answer those questions.

With an eye toward the diocesan Day of Prayer for Vocations, on April 27, the series will also explore such questions as "How does a vocation begin?" and "Where does one go for more information?" The series will offer an over-all view of the variety between and the similarities among the many religious communities and orders serving the people of God in the diocese.

