

## **Mother of Mercy – Our Mother of the Inclusive Love**

Dear friends and confreres!

Every time I visit the Battambang, Apostolic Prefecture in Cambodia, I'm deeply touched by one of the most meaningful and beautiful carvings of Mary – Mother of Mercy. It's not by accident, that this statue did emerge in the country of the Killing fields. The original name is '*Our Mother of the Inclusive Love*'. Simple contemplation of this welcoming, embracing and smiling statue of Mary might help us on the journey during the Year of Mercy, AD 2016.

A simple catechesis by the Prefect Apostolic of Battambang, Fr. Enrique Figaredo, SJ helps us at the beginning of this Year of Mercy:

*'Mary is holding Jesus, who is with open arms welcoming all who wish to draw near. Both of them with a disarming smile under the warm cloak of loving kindness.*

*In the middle of the figure, there are two children: one of them holds a book symbolizing wisdom that helps to discern between right and wrong. The other one is playing the flute putting together art, music and tradition for praising God. One of them is on a wheelchair holding a dove, symbol of peace and the other uses crutch, and is holding a bunch of flowers, the sign of love, God's greatest commandment: 'Love one another as I have loved you!' The crutch and the wheelchair are like a sacrament, that gives them back their dignity and make communion between disable and non-disabled.*

*The cloak of our Lady is an image of the family we all belong to: the Church. We are all included under this cloak.*

*In the bottom there are lotus flowers. The lotus flower is the most emblematic flower in Cambodia, a symbol of glory, purity and holiness.'*

In the Apostolic Prefecture of are only 10 priests in 31 parishes and mission stations, ministering to 4000 Catholics living immersed among 5 millions of majority Buddhist population. This statue of Our Lady is present in all the parishes of the Prefecture and is carved by disabled Cambodian artists. This also shows that we can help each other in bringing the love of God that Jesus brings to our lives, no matter our condition.

May this beauty of the young Cambodia Church help us to start this year with a renewed heart, full of mercy!

Wish you a truly Happy New Year!

In Don Bosco,  
Fr. Václav Klement, SDB  
Regional Councilor EAO 2014-2020



**Our Lady of Mercy (*Our Mother of the Inclusive Love*)**