



Heart's Home USA
Spread compassion

Volunteers' Letters

Erika – Bangkok, Thailand



Erika's Sponsors Letter # 1 – March 2011

Dear Friends,

From the bottom of my heart, THANK YOU to all of you who have joined this mission! Your prayers and financial support continuing over the next 18 months are crucial in a very tangible way to my being in Thailand. As I have mentioned to many of you, this has been a desire on my heart for many years. You are part of my “family of support”, along with me for the ride as well (God’s driving, not me! Some of you may be glad to hear that...). I look forward to sharing concrete, personal experiences with you in my letters throughout the next 18 months. I want to keep this first one short but to share these reflections which have been on my heart as I leave.

During training in February, I experienced New York City by visiting the nursing home and projects in Brooklyn, and visiting Queens. I made a new friend, in the truest sense of the word, accompanying D, a friend from the neighborhood. My first Wednesday in Brooklyn, I went out with Natalia and D, a friend from the neighborhood. Walking down the street with a friend, and riding the subway with her gave me humility and joy! I preferred to be with her in Queens than sightseeing to Ellis Island or the Empire State Building. As I was walking, I actually chuckled with delight at my “tour” of New York City. It was something a bit unfamiliar, sure, but I was right where I wanted to be. I loved every minute of it. I wouldn’t have traded it for ten trips to the Met. I enjoyed being with our friend in that moment! Our friend on this Wednesday needed a presence, someone to hold her hand, to accompany her—how I love this word! To ‘accompany’ means to go along or in company with; to join in action. It contains warmth, presence, and movement when I hear it. This experience forced me to learn about her, to listen with a total sense of poverty, meaning having no idea what to do—except to give in to my heart’s mind: to love her---to listen, to look in her eyes, to speak with her, to be present without taking over her freedom.

Our founder, Fr. Thierry, writes on this presence of accompaniment as he defines compassion, the virtue which drives our life of mission.

"...Compassion is the presence of another to my own passion: Passion for another's life. Mercy offered to those who are alone, who have to battle with themselves and those around them to promote good. It is not pity; it is not condescension. It is the attitude of the heart. It is a presence, closeness, love for other, attention to the rights of every person. It is not a word used only for spiritual and religious matters, but it is a word linked to all human realities. It has to do with politics, economics, education and art because politics, economics, education and art are made for human beings and especially for children. These things are not meant to satisfy a need for authority or power or to reap great material wealth. They are not meant as a way to release one's internal angst or realize their wildest imagination, but rather they are meant to develop all aspects of human life and to establish a profoundly human society."

(From “A World in Search of Compassion” by Fr. Thierry de Roucy)

I had the opportunity to meet Fr. Thierry during my final days in Brooklyn. In the short time shared with him, I couldn't help but consider this profound correspondence between Fr. Thierry's response to an inspiration he received to found 'Point Coeur' (French for Heart's Home) and my response to an inspiration I received to be a missionary. I would not be where I am today if not for Fr. Thierry's 'yes'. I see how Fr. Thierry's positive answer has intersected my own. This forces me to consider what happens when we ignore a call from the Source of all that is, and moreover, to consider the 'yes' of Mary, 2000 years ago.

How has Mary's 'yes' intersected with my life today? Over 1,300 individuals have been missionaries with Heart's Home in the past 20 years. All of us, our friends, our sponsors, and all who have been touched by Heart's Home would lack this encounter in our lives had Fr. Thierry's answer been 'no'. This is ever important in the mission, as in life. I am present not just to observe the life of our friends, in a detached way. My 'yes' to go was only the first. I cannot, upon arrival, say, "I've done enough. I'm here, aren't I?" This life requires an investment of my heart, my emotion, my intellect and my entire will. Every day I must ask myself, "What will it be today: yes or no?"

Time for prayer each day allowed me the chance to reflect, glean new insight and understanding from the environment of the community and these experiences. This is all simmering in me to re-direct the attitude of my heart. I am learning a new way to live my faith each day, in friendships, in community, and privately with my Lord. The short two weeks has strengthened the peace in my heart that I am saying another 'yes' with each step of preparation for my arrival in Thailand!

You have been in my prayers and on my mind—each of you individually. I do not know the exact reason you were provoked to give to me, to Heart's Home, so directly. I know that God has called each of you to give as concretely as He has called me to go—for I cannot—really, am *unable* to go, to answer this call, unless He also provides the means, i.e., calls you and others...to give.

Please feel free to write via email, snail mail, or facebook. I also keep a blog, which may be more spontaneous and frequent. The addresses are below. I will have limited access to internet and I don't promise I'll return every letter written--there are over 60 of you, and one of me! But, it would certainly be a welcome surprise and encouragement to hear from you! Also, for any kids who write--they have priority in my response. I think as a kid it'd be sooo cool to receive a letter from a missionary in Asia!

Blessings to you all, and keep me in mind--I arrive in Thailand on March 31, at 10:45 pm--Central Time. It will be April 1, 10:45 am, Thailand time! I am hoping my body adjusts well to the time zone and diet.. I know from experience what it's like to be sick for a few days from different elements of travel overseas!

In Him,

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