



THE JPIC INTERNATIONAL MEETING IN THE PHILIPPINES

The eleven-day JPIC International meeting in the Philippines was an unforgettable once in a lifetime experience for me. Sophie and I left for the Philippines, via Bangkok by Thai Airlines on 12th Nov. 2018. It was my first experience to fly in a huge 400 passenger **double-decker** plane. It looked like a big building and I enjoyed the flight. At Bangkok, we met Bernie Potter and travelled to Manila by the same flight. The *Fusion Works Team*, an Event Management Company met us at the airport, and took us to a hotel to rest. Here I bumped into Keum Sook Cho my fellow Probanist from Korea. We fell into each other's arms and exchanged notes non-stop of the past 25 years! This was an incredible joy for me. Soon others were picked up from the other airports (Manila has three airports) and brought to our hotel. Together we all proceeded to Tagaytay city situated on a hill. The Philippines looked very much like India, except that it is very clean, has a lot of beautiful trees and is less crowded. Perhaps Tagaytay is the best city in the Philippines.



The Carmelite Missionaries Spirituality Centre run by the CM sisters is the same congregation that runs *Pritikunj* in Bandra, Mumbai. They also have three CM sisters in Malavni, not far from our RSCJ house there. The Centre was aesthetically very beautiful. The landscaping interspersed with water fountains, decorative canals with exotic ferns and water plants and big orange and black fish swimming, fancy niches for Our Lady and other saints, artistic benches, flowers and trees of every kind, shape, size and colour! It looked heavenly.

We were greeted by the RSCJ Welcome Team and a full-sized Flat Pope Francis at the entrance, in true RSCJ style, with hugs and kisses, and oohs and ahhs! We were all housed in the same four-storey building. The Octagon shaped chapel with stained glass windows all around on an adjacent hillock was peaceful and well decorated. It reminded me of my visit to Mount Carmel at Haifa Bay in the Holy Land. The Conference Hall was in another building with good acoustics, tastefully decorated with hexagon wooden tables and plastic chairs. Only the chairs were very uncomfortable, especially for those with bad backs like me. Small group meetings were held in little Fairytale-like kiosks in the garden. A fifteen minute prayer service in the morning and half an hour meditation at night before the Blessed



Sacrament were conducted in yet another hall behind the chapel where a huge flex of Philippine was decorated with a peacock feather designed tapestry. There are no peacocks in the Philippines but I danced like a peacock seeing our national bird take centre stage in a foreign land. The Conference Hall too had Philippine with the same décor! The whole Centre was booked exclusively for the *Madams of the Sacred Heart!*

The refectory was in the basement and meals were at fixed times. The food was good but of course Filipino style-bland fish and sticky rice for all meals including breakfast! Tiny salt fish in honey was a delicacy for breakfast and other meals! Tea, coffee and hot water were available 24x7 and that was great! The rooms were simple and Spartan, but typical of India. The first day my geyser was not working. The next day the tube-light conked off. Nuts and bolts looked precarious and about to fall off at any moment and some participants changed their rooms more than once as toilets

clogged, bathrooms overflowed with water and hand showers leaked. The internet functioned rarely, mostly when we were all in the conference hall in the next building. It was hilarious to see participants running around with their laptops and smart phones late at night to get connectivity. The most commonly used phrase was, *Is the net working? What is the password?* Every corner had a different password. It was real fun. The kiosks in the garden had special internet routers fixed for us but that too worked only erratically. **I was delighted that the JPIC International Meeting was held in a third world country like India.** First world participants will now understand our situation better.



The first two days were days of Meditation, Retreat and Silence using the **Seven Principles of Generative Listening (GL) and Generative Speaking (GS)** to be attentive to the heartbeat of God in the world, in our self, in others and in the beauty of



nature around. We shared our experiences in our groups. There were seven groups. I was in the **Fire Group**. We then gave a name and a symbol to our Collective Experience. Barbara Dawson, Anne Corry, Meg Causey, Keum Sook Cho, Digna Dacanay, Viola and I gave the name, ***The Silence of Fire***.

The next day we shared our own experiences of injustice and vulnerability using the **Parable of the Good Samaritan**. **Dr Thomas Gass** then helped us to see with the eyes of hope through his presentation, ***A World Desperately in need of Peace and Hope***. We then met in our regional groups **ASIANZ** and looked at Regional Province Projects i.e. the JPIC Reflection Process from each of the 8 Provinces. The Indian Province got a pat on the back for the tremendous work done. Congrats to each of you dear sisters. **Mr Juan Luis Hernandez** then focused on transformation and hope by guiding us to a **Reading of the 21st Century** and concluding with **Five Feels of Hope-Epistemology of Hope, Praxis of Hope, Ethics of Hope, Spirituality of Hope and Geopolitics of Hope**.

The Feast of St Philippine Duchesne was celebrated with the bicentennial Mass, a call to worship, a homily by **Diane Roche**, a big breakfast, a sumptuous lunch with two big whole baked piglings, ice-cream, chocolate and spirits flowing. After lunch, began the field-trips by choice. Sophie and I visited the **Orlina Glass Sculpture Museum**, overlooking the **Taal Volcano Lake**, and the **Luntiang Republika Ecofarm**. The camaraderie and gaiety in the vans, losing our way to the Ecofarm and the subsequent merry-go-round trip was side-splitting.



On day six Anne Corry and Sheila Smith shared their reports on JPIC and UN-NGO respectively. Yolanda, a lay person, told us how the JPIC database worked. Bernie Potter too shared briefly on investing finances in just companies. The next four days were very hectic. We worked in our community groups using GL and GS to understand each other and together searching for emerging trends that surfaced. The process

followed was excellent. We worked with the **Model of a Spiral** i.e. gathering emerging trends from all the seven groups and narrowing it down each time. Using the **Four Position Model**, the consensus was: **JPIC is a Style of Life, of Relationship, of Caring**. Zeroing in on six main trends, each one could then choose the topic closest to her heart and work in that group. I chose, **Care of our Common Home**. Finally we met in our regional groups and chalked out how we could begin sharing and implementing in small ways with each other and in our own Provinces, all that we have learned at the meeting. The meeting came to a close with our dear **Daphne Sequeira, the JPIC link to the Central Team, delivering the Closing Message**. She spoke very well and I experienced great pride in being an Indian and her religious sister. Sophie and I returned on 25th Nov. midnight, invigorated and ready to put into practice, first in our own lives, all that we have learned.



JPIC International Meeting
JPIC Rencontre Internationale
JPIC Encuentro Internacional



Menona Mudita Sodder rscj

2nd Dec. 218