



บทที่ 402

When the Pope Meets an Unknown Convert from Thailand

ข้าแต่พระเป็นเจ้า ลูกขอเขียนบทสวดบทนี้เป็นภาษาอังกฤษถวายแด่พระองค์ พระเจ้าข้า

It has always been my dream that if and when I can have a chance to meet Pope Francis, I'll wear pink. On Wednesday, November 20, 2019, my little Big dream becomes true!

My daughter and I are invited among a very small group to attend a private Holy Mass presided by Pope Francis on the 1st day of His official visit to Thailand. Of course with joy and extreme excitement my Thai dress in pink is made.

Upon arriving at the gate of the Nunciature (The Vatican Embassy in Thailand), the Father Attache' says to me, "Mary. I have something to tell you." "Yes, Father." "I want you to do the reading at the Mass." "Will it be in English, Spanish, or Italian?" I ask half-jokingly while trying to contend my excitement. "In Thai."

There is a ten-minute interval between our arrival and the commencement of the Mass. That is the amount of time I have to prepare myself to do the reading of the Bible in front of the Pope. My daughter squeezes my hands to give me moral support. I tell myself I have to compose my mind. I then set my mind to the mode before a major speech; that is, to disregard the audience completely and to concentrate solely on the text of my speech.

The reading of the Bible on that day is from **2 Maccabees 7:1, 20:31**, and is quite long. With a loud and clear voice I deliver the Scriptures in front of the Holy Father who is sitting just a stone throw away from me and facing me. My daughter tells me afterwards that the Pope watches me throughout my reading!

After the Holy Mass there is a reception line where the Pope will greet the invited guests. It was pre-arranged that I would be the last one at the end of the line. H.E. the Nuncio kindly introduces me to the Pontiff. As I officially hold no position at all in the Catholic Church of Thailand by choice, we agree beforehand that I'd be introduced as a convert who evangelizes. Then I'd be on my own to introduce myself to the Pope.

And I do just that. I humbly inform the Holy Father that I am a convert who evangelizes here in Thailand and around the world using my life story as a bridge to bring people to know God. The Pope is very attentive and nods in kindness. Then I present Him with a letter suggested by my spiritual Bishop outlining the Zero Food Waste (ZFW) project that I am initiating with a group of friends. It is the subject close to the Pope's heart. He spends a few minutes talking about this topic while giving me moral support. I then present Him with my book, 'Moving the Mountain', in English duly signed, informing Him humbly that the book is about my life story of how I come to know God. The Pope is very interested, and receives my book with a big kind smile.



I then present Him with a painting of mine, oil on canvas, 50 x 70 cm., titled 'Our Lady of Lourdes'. The painting shows the surrounding of the holy Cave in Lourdes with strokes of paints by knives only in natural setting while the apparition itself is painted as if it were a myth. I tell the Pope when I decide to choose this painting which I painted myself 7 years ago to present to Him, I have to make it special. I paste gold leaves on the painting to make the apparition as well as the candle lights on the stand and the Cross together with two more candles on the marble altar glow. Since gold leaves cannot be touched by fingers or any other subject, I have to use special tools in extracting each piece, one tiny bit at a time, to put on the painting. The Pope is very interested in my report on the painting. He smiles and says, "It's beautiful. I like it."

The Pope must have spent more than 5 minutes talking to me. By the time we finish our conversation, both the Pope and I, the humble unknown convert from Thailand, are smiling with kindness from His heart and extreme happiness from mine. During those seemingly eternal minutes I am oblivious to the whole world around me. Only the Pope and I exist. Every time the Holy Father praises what I present to Him, I'd kneel down and kiss His hand and wouldn't let go of it. Only when He gives me a rosary as a souvenir when I suddenly wonder where my daughter is.

The Pope is now back in Vatican. However, my experience as the only Thai Catholic who reads in the private Holy Mass presided by Him, and my presentation to Him my life story, my book, my painting, and my project will live on longer than my life. Just as I think that is the highest blessing any Catholic could have received in one's life, another unexpected blessing tops it all.

The Pope writes me a personal letter imploring God's abundant blessings upon me and my team on our ZFW project and thanking me on my beautiful painting !!!

Pope Francis brings love, peace, and joy to all the Thais, catholic or non-Catholic alike, during His 3-day visit to Thailand during November 20-23, 2019. Beyond my wildest dream and expectation through His unfathomable love shown to me during my private audience with Him, He sends me a message.

God acknowledges my total and complete devotion to serve Him with my whole life.

This is how the impossible has become possible—The Pope meets the unknown convert from Thailand.

And yes, my Lord. I promise I'll serve You to my extreme very best till the last day of my life.

Amen

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