

Generation Peace Academy Overseas: Bangkok, Exploring the Thai Experience

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Sunday February 18, was another day where we had the privilege of attending Sunday Service. Reverend Sutin gave a lovely sermon about loving those around you, never giving up and continually investing in your relationships. As witnesses on a mission, it was a very timely and relatable talk that we can apply into our witnessing in Thailand. He also included one letter from Marie Zivna, a member mentioned in Father's autobiography, who lost her life at a young age while doing underground missionary work in a communist country. She wrote, "I may not be on this Earth tomorrow. Yet I have no resentment towards the path I have taken. I have no sort of ill feelings toward you, Father. So please do not worry about me. If there is one thing I may wish for in this world, it would have been that I could meet you while on Earth." Of course I read about her during the memoir and the autobiography, but hearing these last words of this courageous woman moved me to tears. This is the true heart of a missionary, to have an absolute devotion and love for Heavenly Parent and True Parents in the most difficult circumstances. It may be difficult, but trying to emulate her heart is very important.



After Sunday Service, we were allowed time to go out shopping. Going to a very large tourist market with over 700 vendors, everybody was bustling with excitement trying to figure out what to buy. Many people bought food, trying out the Thai cultural food. Some also simply enjoyed the atmosphere of the bustling market, content to simply just watch and observe their surroundings. Some people also opted to buy souvenirs for their family, deciding that this was the best chance to go shopping. The Thai leadership graciously allowed us time to have fun and hang out with the other Thai members, simply enjoying our time in Thailand. It was a nice time where we could decompress after a week of witnessing.



Later on in the evening, we had a program in which we played games with the Thai members and had an internal activity. It was very much fun to interact with the Thai community, just laughing and having fun. It was also a nice change of pace, playing something other than Uno and Jenga for once. We played a game similar to Friendship Tag. Everyone stood in groups of three and one person didn't have a group to stand with. So the person who is it would try to tag that one person, and they join a group. The extra person gets kicked out of the group, and they have to find another group to join. Rinse and repeat. It was just a joyful time, everyone laughing and having fun. We had a more internal activity afterwards, where we got to sit down and answer 6 different questions with a partner. It was a great way to reflect on certain topics such as gratitude, our relationship with our parents, and what we've accomplished in life so far. Afterwards we celebrated birthdays in this month, and danced, generally just having a joyful time. It was a great night to get to know the Thai members better and explore deeper topics with them.



Monday was a long awaited outing day. There had been plans to go to the beach, but we were unsure whether we could go due to budgeting reasons. It was announced that we were able to go to the beach, and everyone headed out with bright smiles on their face. Upon our arrival to the beach, we rode a ferry to another small island nearby. Enjoying the sea breeze and the gentle rock of the waves, the we took pictures to commemorate this special occasion.



When we arrived at the beach, everyone made an audible noise. The scenery was breathtaking. The ocean was clear as crystal, and as blue as the sky. It's waves catching reflections of sun rays, it was shining brilliantly in a wonderfully sunny afternoon day. It was just as beautiful as the seas I saw in Okinawa, and it was just amazing. Playing in the water was a great time, doing Unity Ball in the water with a giant inflatable ball. Everyone was smiling and laughing, exuding a bright energy. We also got to ride on a banana boat, which almost feels like a gigantic inflatable hot dog with handles to hold onto as well as ledges to rest your legs. A jet ski pulls the Banana Boat along at a pretty high speed, allowing us to enjoy the rocky seas of an ocean. It was a great deal of fun zooming across the water like that, and a very unique experience.

Tuesday was when we went back to the normal witnessing day. As usual, we split into two colleges: Ramkhamhaeng University and Chulalongkorn University. The Ram group had the special opportunity to attend the student council elections, which was unlike anything we had ever seen before. Students dressed in bright orange jerseys for the college were scattered about, and many were holding balloons and signs in their hands. As the event started, students lined up in an orderly fashion and followed a truck, where students were yelling some indecipherable Thai.



From behind, we could hear the enthusiastic yelling of a, most likely, candidate for the election or their supporters. To be quite honest, the Ram group didn't exactly know what was going on. We did receive information that we were attending an election, and we heard vague information that a z Thai member is running for election but no one explicitly told us what we were doing. As we walked around the campus following the truck, we slowly got closer and closer to the truck and the neatly formed lines turned into disarray. But it was certainly a good experience, something very new that I had never seen before. The passion that the students had shown reminded me of Father's words about how students have passion and zeal which is why we witness to them. Truly, the energy of young people are impressive.



Afterwards, we took the guests that came for the election to play sports with us. It felt like the culmination of all of our efforts, as guests that we invited on several different days all came together to spend time with us. It was great to see the guests coming back to see us, as it indicated that they enjoy their time with us. Nasaan Benson, a first year GPA member, mentioned how nice it add that the Thailand way of witnessing really tried to build a heartistic relationship with the guests. Inviting them to events, having them come over to the center, playing with them... He talked about how in America it's very much DP based, and so having this heartistic relationship with guests was a very refreshing and nice way to witness for him.

Overall, this has been a blessed time in which we deeply felt the Thai members love for us. Taking us everywhere, accompanying us in our shopping trips, allowing us to experience all of these different and new things. I'm sure every single one of us in the Bangkok Center has felt deep gratitude for the Thai members, and are ready to give back through hard work in witnessing! This has been all for the Bangkok Center, hope to see you all in the next blog!

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