



THE BKC TIMES

NOVEMBER 3, 2011

THE MARYKNOLL SISTERS, CELEBRATING 100 YEARS IN JANUARY OF 2012

A story told by Marie Anne Diamond, Alumni of Maryknoll College High School Class of 1981, and co-Founder of Bahay Kubo Center for Philippine Culture & Arts, based in the San Fernando Valley.

This story is my tribute to our beloved school and the dedicated Maryknoll nuns who served at Maryknoll College in Quezon City (Now named MIRIAM COLLEGE). When I attended their grade school and high school it was known as Maryknoll College. So, I prefer to continue to refer to my school as Maryknoll. I would also like to pay homage in Honor of the **Founder** of the **Maryknoll Sisters** of St. Dominic, Mother Mary Joseph Rogers (1882-1955) and all the Maryknoll Sisters and missionaries all over the world. The Maryknoll Sisters will be celebrating their centennial year starting January 6, 2012.

On the 24rd of August, 2011, we attended our 30th year High School class reunion for Maryknoll College High School Class of 1981. But before the reunion, we spent one day on a very important trip to pay homage to our roots, by visiting the Maryknoll College Sisters at their Motherhouse in the Village of Ossining, NY.

This story starts with a journey of old time friends--four Filipino-American girls in their 40's who had not seen each other in five years, but prior to that, for over 25 years. That day, we were bound together for this special trip to the village of Ossining, New York. You might not know much about Ossining. But I have to tell ya, I think it is one of the prettiest towns in Upstate New York, in Westchester County. Before we arrived, we only knew three things about Ossining. First, that we had to take a train from Grand Central Station which would take about 45 minutes to Ossining. By the way, we missed our first train by a split second as it pulled away from our sight. We had to wait another 45 minutes for the next one. Secondly, that we had to be careful when we got there. Because that is where the infamous Sing Sing Prison is located, which, today, still houses over 2,000 high security inmates. What we didn't expect, and what a wonderful surprise it was, was that the train ride would show us the beautiful countryside of upstate New York along the Hudson River on a foggy, misty morning. It was a beautiful sight for all of us who came from California, D.C. and Florida. Thirdly, aside from knowing that Maryknoll was located there, we all wondered what it would look like.

Next stop, Ossining station. We eagerly got off the train and made our way down a winding road from the train stop to look for a taxi. It was so serene and quiet, and not one person around. I was busy taking pictures, camera in one hand and the camcorder in the other. I didn't realize my friends had already reached the bottom of the hill when they yelled, "Hurry up! We we've got a ride!" When I got in the cab, there was a stranger, a young lady already in the cab. I was confused. Apparently, she said she can share the cab ride with us, which was a nice gesture. She said, "There aren't many taxi cabs in this town." So, off we went. The driver

drove like a New York City cab driver, a little crazy, as we admired the lush surroundings and fun winding streets. Almost ten minutes later, we arrived in Sing Sing, within a fenced area, where the young lady got off. As soon as she walked a few steps away, I asked the driver, "Where is the prison?" He smiled, replied and pointed... "Right there". We held our breaths. As he drove around the curve we saw a tall wall with the guard's station high up in the tower. We immediately left the area to our relief.

The driver asked us again about our final destination. He wanted to make sure he was dropping us off at the right place. He asked if we wanted the Maryknoll Sisters Motherhouse or the Maryknoll Brothers Center. We all hollered in excitement, "the Maryknoll Sister's, please!" And then there we were, in Ossining, to find our roots at this institution called Maryknoll.

Maryknoll College was established in Loyola Heights, Quezon City in 1952 by the Maryknoll Sisters who were missionaries from upstate New York. It became a Filipino Catholic Educational Institution for girls and young women from pre-elementary to adult education levels. We called it our private all girl's Catholic school. We all started there in kindergarten and graduated high school in 1981.

When we arrived, the fresh scent of the wet grass and humid air filled our senses. The view of the Hudson River was breathtaking when we looked down from the hill where Maryknoll stood. There must've been acres and acres of land there. It was beautiful. We didn't know what to expect. As we approached the entrance to the main building, I thought to myself, "I can't believe we were finally at the Maryknoll Sisters Center."

Then we entered. But, we ended up in the Health care facility first, where all retired Maryknoll nuns lived. Even before we had opened the doors I observed the smells change from the fresh, summer outdoor country air, to a stench of soiled clothes or of medicines for the sick. Then I knew that must've been their hospital. We were greeted by a wonderful lady (I apologize for not remembering her name, we met so many nuns that day), whom we realized was a nun after she introduced herself. She was not wearing her habit! She walked us to the main building, and we passed through hallways with lots of antique paintings and sculptures of Mary, and artifacts from what looked like China and the Far East. What a beautiful sight? This is the Maryknoll Motherhouse. It reminded me of San Augustine Church in Intramuros. It was like a museum!

My friends, Marian, Elena, Madeleine, and I were fulfilling our dream of finding our roots. We owed this visit to our Founders and missionaries who provided us with a good 12 years of Catholic education growing up. They are the reason we continue to uphold the values of Catholic teachings in our everyday lives. We were taught to become strong young ladies. We've etched in our memories the names and faces of the nuns whom we grew up with in Quezon City, as early as 1969. We knew they were buried there and we wanted to pay homage to all of them--Sister Clotilde, Sister Miriam Jose and Sister Miriam Thomas, to name a few.

That misty Friday morning we met Sister Miedel Stone who was kind enough to entertain us for a couple of hours. She took us on a short tour of the main building, even though she was not scheduled to be our tour guide. We were invited to eat lunch with her in their cafeteria. We'd been told that all guests are to eat with the sisters and what is left over from that day, will be their food for the evening. True to their vow of poverty, nothing goes to waste. Lunch was simple, healthy and plentiful. They served a simple buffet of sliced grilled cheese sandwiches (it

was delicious), with steamed vegetables next to it, and to its right, to my surprise...rice. I wondered why two of my friends, who were in line ahead of me, filled their plates with rice. I thought to myself...gee, they love rice, like typical Filipinos. The other buffet table had fruits, tuna chunks, Jell-O, more vegetables, cottage cheese, home-made soup and a variety of drinks. Marian later admitted she had hoped to see some fried chicken at the end of the line. But we found out that the cafeteria does not serve meat. Understandably, as meat is an expensive commodity and not much of a healthy choice.

We sat together at a round table savoring our meal as Sister Miedel explained to us that there would be another sister who would be taking us around for a more extensive tour of the grounds. We explained to her that we graduated from one of their missionary schools established in the Philippines called Maryknoll College, and that we could not believe our dream to visit the nuns had come true. She was very proud to meet us. She started to explain some of the history of Maryknoll. She told us that the very first mission of the Maryknoll Brothers was in China, and that the first Maryknoll sisters arrived in the Philippines in 1925. Today, there are hundreds of schools and missions, and continue to be established worldwide. Another lady walked in and sat next to our table. Her name was Sister Ann. As we were all being introduced to each other, the camera continued to roll. We found out that Sister Ann's mission was to establish a Maryknoll in Baguio which began many years ago, and is now called the Maryknoll Ecological Sanctuary. The devastation brought by the July 1990 earthquake in Baguio City became a major force which inspired a new educational role by the sisters' mission. In light of the growing awareness of the earth's fragility, the sisters were compelled to make a radical decision to dedicate their resources in Baguio to alternative environmental education. I asked if they took part in the preservation of the world famous Rice Terraces, and she said, "yes". After much reminiscing with her, we had to say our good-byes. It was very emotional as Sister Ann gave us her heartfelt hugs. She said that she misses the Philippines very much.

Next, we met with Sister Teresita Perez. She is an amazing woman and nun. She is Filipino and has been a nun all her life. She took us on an exclusive tour indoors where we learned about all the hand-carved statues, and of Mary and child Jesus, which was prominently displayed. It was a life-size sculpture in the middle of the foyer, surrounded by antique paintings and other religious artifacts. We remembered a similar statue at our school in Quezon City. Then we entered this beautiful, small room--their museum. We signed the guest book, and we continued to peruse through all the memorabilia of pictures and artifacts showing different villages and peoples of the world from China, to Hong Kong, to Nicaragua, where Maryknoll missions and missionaries were established. Antiques displayed behind glass cases were given to the missionaries as gifts from the local people everywhere. They were beautiful, one of a kind, and a wonder to see! It was amazing!!! Next, Sister Teresita warned that our walks outdoors would be very wet as it had been raining. Our first stop was the replica of Our Lady of Lourdes within the grounds, where we stopped and prayed for a moment for the continued success and health of all missionaries, and for our blessed and safe journeys together. We strolled for hours while Sister told her story about the importance of the Maryknoll Health Care and retirement facility. She had lung cancer two years ago, and is now in remission. She said that with the care and help of all the nurses and her fellow Sisters and Brothers who gave their time in prayer for her recovery, she is able to attribute her good health now. We asked her what we can do for them. She suggested we should tell our friends and classmates, to help them by giving our time for daily prayers. To pray for each missionary and to pray for Maryknoll missions

everywhere. She also explained that the Sisters who retire or become ill all live at the Maryknoll facility, and they need specific financial assistance to get good health care. And we all agreed that this is something we can definitely give back to in our own way. We promised her we would help campaign for financial assistance from our class of 1981. We also promised her we would visit more often and hopefully be able to volunteer some time to work, and to do whatever it takes to help around the Motherhouse. Sister Teresita walked with us for two hours, and we stopped by the graves of the nuns we knew who served at our school. She also showed us their library which was established many, many years ago, and reminded us of our own library which looked exactly like it, even the furniture. The cafeteria at our school in Quezon City also looked just like theirs. We had the same statues and the same expansive grounds. We just then realized that when they established Maryknoll in Quezon City, it was like a franchise. They took the time to find the perfect location in the Philippines that would look exactly like the original Maryknoll in Ossining. That gave us goose bumps and we became even more emotional over our visit.

As we approached the end of our tour it was close to 4:00pm, so we had to start heading back to the city. We were afraid to miss the last train back to Manhattan. We bid Sister Teresita good-bye. We promised her we would be back next year to celebrate their centennial with them. We also promised we would continue to help them spread the Lord's word and maybe convince younger generations of girls to enter Religious nunhood and give their vow to serve God forever. Each year, only about three graduates of Maryknoll College (now named Miriam College, in Quezon City) join the Maryknoll Sisters Center and give their vows to Our Lord. We hope and pray for continued blessings to all the Maryknoll nuns and missionaries all over the world. We would also like to congratulate them on their centennial year in 2012! God Bless all of you! Thank you for all you have done for us! I am proud to say, I am a Maryknoller, from Maryknoll College High School Class of 1981!

Maryknoll College Song

The Blue and Gold of Maryknoll
Will keep our spirits flying high
Wherever we are, wherever we'll be
Faithful we'll always be to thee
Alma Mater, we'll be true
To your spirits through and through.

We'll sing thy praises, Maryknoll
Thy joy, thy wisdom, and love
Lean onward, heavenward, Maryknoll
God's blessings be yours from above.

Oh, Maryknoll, so fair and true
We pledge our loyalty to you
Witness of Christ throughout the Land
Children of Mary hand in hand
Alma Mater, you will be

Ever fair and dear to me.

We'll sing thy praises, Maryknoll
Thy joy, thy wisdom, and love
Lean onward, heavenward, Maryknoll
God's blessings be yours from above.

****.** **Maryknoll** is a name shared by three organizations that are part of the [Roman Catholic Church](#) and whose joint focus is on the overseas mission activity of the Catholic Church in the United States. These organizations consist of two [religious orders](#) and one [lay](#) group: **The Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers** (The Catholic Foreign Mission Society of America);^[1] **The Maryknoll Sisters** (The [Maryknoll Sisters of St. Dominic](#)); and the [Maryknoll Lay Missioners](#). While sharing a name and similar origins, the organizations are independent entities that work closely together in many of their missionary endeavors. Throughout its 100-year history Maryknoll has emphasized ministry and missionary work particularly in East Asia, China, Japan, Korea, Latin America and Africa.

The story of Maryknoll College dates back to 1926, when the Archbishop of Manila requested the Sisters of The Maryknoll Congregation of New York to initiate a teacher-training program for women in the Philippines. IN an old restored Augustinian convent in Malabon, Rizal, the Malabon Normal School was established. The school transferred sites several times until finally in 1952, its name officially changed to Maryknoll College, it laid down its permanent roots in Loyola Heights, Quezon City, now known as Diliman. The Maryknoll Sisters turned over the whole school to Lay people and since Now, Maryknoll College is now known as Miriam College.

Maryknoll's headquarters are in the [Village of Ossining](#), Westchester County, New York.

References:

Wikipedia, www.mc.edu.ph.