

OPENING REMARKS
LAUNCH OF PEACE EDUCATION PROGRAM AND MODULES
September 13, 2013

By Sr. Mary Thomas Prado, OSB

It is a joy to welcome you all to this launch of the Peace Education Program and Modules of St. Scholastica's College, Manila.

A month ago we were deciding on the right date for the launch of this Peace Program. We chose this day. This is the right time. This is the moment.

This is the moment to launch the Peace program and modules not because we are in a state of peace, serenity, calm and prosperity BUT because we are in a state of un-peace. There is the pork barrel scam and large-scale stealing of people's money, the breakdown of the peace talks in Mindanao especially in Zamboanga, the Syrian crisis, various other conflicts and differences, and the problems of increasing poverty, the crisis of good governance and environmental destruction. This is the right time because our world, our country, our community is in dire need of peace.

This is the moment to launch our Peace program because 107 years ago today, our first five German Missionary Benedictine Sisters arrived on Philippine shores and started the mission to educate for peace.

This is the moment to launch our Peace program because we are celebrating the feast of the Triumph of the Cross, the symbol of Christ's victory over destruction and death.

This is the moment to launch our Peace program for the simple reason that all of us who have come here this morning have a longing, in varied intensities, for peace in our hearts.

Such is the Benedictine Peace these modules contain. It is not a possession – rather it is a quest. It is not a finished product – rather it is and will forever be a work-in-progress. And as an unknown author had said: it does not mean to be in a place where there is no noise, trouble or hard work – it means to be in the midst of those things and still be calm in your heart.

The project to come up with a Peace Education Program, written in modules for all our students from Kindergarten to College, was conceptualized 2 years ago when we began our collaboration with the Hiroshima Peace Culture Foundation and the Mayors for Peace founded by former Mayor of Hiroshima, Mayor Akhiba. Back then we were saying that there is a rich tradition of education for peace in SSC that needed to be formalized, to be put together, to be safeguarded and to be passed on from one generation to the next. The PAX Benedictina heritage is written all over us if only we take time to notice signs and cues. As we enter the campus, the PAX insignia is carved in the control booth of the security guards – a Benedictine greeting that says “Peace to all who enter here”. PAX is written all over our buildings. PAX is the name of the garden in the Grade School. PAX is our logo. PAX is the highest honor we give to an alumna. In St. Scholastica’s College then PAX/PEACE is a greeting, a place, a recognition of a life well lived, an identity.

Such is our peace tradition that put together becomes a guide and rich resource in shaping the lives of young people entrusted to us and our community as well.

This Peace Education project took us more than two years to finish. The goal was broad, the terrain was wide open, the direction was sketchy. But our team of writers rose up to the challenge. I thank Ms. Florina “Lala” Castillo, a foremother of the Education for Peace here in SSC, and the first person I shared this project with. I am indebted to Prof. Virginia Fornias for continuing the work and seeing it through to the finish. I am grateful to the module writers – Dr. Angelina Gutierrez from the College Unit, Ms. Ma. Lourdes Cura from the High School, and Mr. Juanito Dona from the Grade School who have graciously accepted the task in the name of peace.

The quest for peace will always be with us for as long as there is human interaction, transactions between nations, human need or as long this world keeps on turning. The ambitious goal of our Peace Education Program is to form the next generation of Peace leaders.

It is my hope that all of us this morning will keep believing that the seeds we plant today will be tomorrow's peace. Thank you.