

SCHOLASTICANS FORGE BONDS OF PEACE IN NEW FRONTIER

On Oct. 11-31, 2014, nineteen (19) senior students accompanied by Sister Rosalina Fajardo, OSB and Mrs. Anita Antoni travelled to Bavaria, Germany to participate in a 3-week Student Exchange program. This milestone international school partnership with Rhabanus Maurus Gymnasium (RMG) was conceived during the BENET Conference 2013 which was hosted by St. Scholastica's College in Manila last Oct. 23-26, 2013. Inspired by their personal experience of Benedictine – Filipino hospitality, Brother Josef Gotz, OSB, cellarer of the Archabbey of St. Otilien and Mrs. Renate Dietzel, coordinator of Student Exchange Program at RMG invited SSC-M former president, Sr. Mary Thomas Prado, OSB to join the exchange program which St. Otilien has since the past 30 years. Thus, SSC-M's Benedictine Ambassadors of Peace Program (BAPP) came to being, a dream come true of the BENET Conference 1999 held at Ampleforth Abbey, England.

The HS Unit without hesitation embarked on this exchange program as a novelty. Preparation then commenced with recruitment and screening of applicants from incoming Year IV students and the creation of the program in mid-February 2014. At the outset, the exchange program aims to provide venue for intercultural interaction, studies and collaboration between and among students and families and, at the same time, engage them in global dialogues to become globally friendly and be ambassadors of peace and harmony wherever they are and whatever they do.

During the exchange visit, ample opportunities were given for more in-depth understanding of other races, cultures and tradition, as well as the different aspects of school practices. The first two weeks of the visit were structured activities with combination of lessons in Grades 10-11 classes and educational tours around Germany and Austria. The students' learning space expands when they had a guided tour of St. Otilien

Archabbey bio energy processing plant, Science observatory for star-gazing, the farm, etc. Similar enriching learning experiences were the visits to the Benedictine Monastery and boarding school at Ettal, an hour hike to Holy Hills of Andechs, St. Peter Cathedral and St. Michael Church in Munchen City, Linderhof Castle and Nymphenburg Palace of Bavarian King Ludwig II, BMW World, Dachau concentration camp, Universitat Mozarteum in Salzburg, among others. In between trips, the students and teachers attended classes which included among others, Physical Education, Mathematics, Science, Art, Music and Dance. The students also attended the different grammar classes like German, English, French, Latin and Italian.

The host families welcomed our students to their homes with joy, kindness and generosity within the duration of the exchange visit. The day-to-day life with the foster families forged friendship and created strong bonds of camaraderie that made everything possible to make their guests experience a home-away-from-home. One student shared about her foster mother's parting word: "remember you have a home here in Germany." Some families organized special holiday treat and entertained the guests in tourist places in Northern Bavaria, Berlin, Switzerland, and Italy, among others.

The Scholasticans being resilient to change were able to adapt to new ways of doing things, and to open to others' experiences and practices, such as being punctual in all scheduled activities. Highlights of the visit proved beneficial to all the participants since lessons learned from all the encounters and interactions expanded their perspective and horizon. Lessons from such a program can be life-time investment without counting the cost. This maiden collaboration with an international school cannot be made possible without the generous support and cooperation of parents. Likewise, we are grateful to all the administrators and faculty who extended their assistance in making this program fruitful and

meaningful.

The Philippine BAPP participants eagerly await the completion of part 2 of the journey of the exchange program.

On July 28-Aug. 15, 2015, eighteen (18) German students and four (4) representatives from St. Ottilien will in turn visit St. Scholastica's College and the monks of the St. Benedict Missionary Benedictine Monastery in Digos, Davao. With outstretched arms and hands, we welcome the German contingent in July 2015. It is our turn to manifest our Filipino-style of Benedictine hospitality.

By: Sr. Rosalina Fajardo, OSB



Praying at the burial place of Fr. Andreas Amrhein , OSB with Bro. Josef Gotz, OSB at the cemetery of St. Ottilien



Visit at Linderhof castle of King Ludwig II



The Exchange Program participants from SSC-Manila