

## **13th Laotian Catholic National Conference St. George Catholic Church – Fort Worth, Texas July 4-6, 2019**

The Laotian Catholic National Pastoral Center (LCNPC) organized its 13<sup>th</sup> National Conference on July 4<sup>th</sup> to July 6<sup>th</sup>, 2019, a three-day event held in Fort Worth, Texas. There were over 200 Lao Catholic members from different parts of the United States, Canada, France, and Laos who participated, covering the topic “I am the Good Shepherd.” Local groups also attended and joined the Eucharistic celebration during the Saturday evening mass. The celebrants were Father Andrew Souksavath Nouan Asa, who is Administrator of Vicariate of Pakse, Laos; Father Pinkeo Pradaxay, O.M.I., a missionary priest from France; and Father Ronaldo Mercado, Pastor of St. George Catholic Church. The Mass was followed by a cultural show and performance of a local Lao band in Texas. More than 300 Laotians attended this function at St. George Catholic Church.

The Conference was full of enjoyment, ideas, and plans to preserve Lao cultural values, and involved the participation of first generation Laotian Catholics to guide and direct the younger generation to be active in church and parish life. The Conference also helped strengthen the network among Lao multi-ethnic communities.

The meeting became more engaged after two of the special guests (Rev. Andrew and Rev. Pinkeo) shared insights into qualities of good leadership as well as characteristics of good leaders. Various speakers presented ideas and reported on issues and progress which could potentially bridge the gap between the older and younger generations. At the same time, feedback and suggestions were presented to evaluate and determine proactive steps toward the Conference objective.

After the discussions and sharing of ideas for two days, it was made a decisive priority to unify the Laotian Catholic members, those who are transplanted from the homeland as well as the younger generations, by streamlining the LCNPC operations and transitioning of leadership from the director of LCNPC to electing a president for the Laotian National Catholics in the United States. The outcome of this meeting was that Mr. Harry Viraphonh Sopraseuth, the newly elected president, introduced a preliminary plan for conducting the operations. Immediately after, two vice presidents, two treasurers, and a public relations officer were also appointed. Before the conference closed, the attendees unanimously selected a site for the next gathering in 2022, which will be at Fort Smith, Arkansas.

Many thanks to Sr. Alice Thepouthay and Mr. Khamseuk Dethoudom, local President of the Lao Catholic Association in Fort Worth, TX, along with his members who organized and assisted in making the conference a success. Also, special thanks to the members of the Lao Association of Fort Worth for their generosity and contributions to support the 2019 National Lao Catholic Conference.