

7th IYCS South East Asian Session 2009

Final Statement

Introduction

The 7th International Young Christian Students (IYCS) South East Asian (SEA) Session was held from August 10-17, 2009 at the St. Louis Mary Juniorate, Sriracha, Chonburi, Thailand with the theme "Students Uniting in Faith to Fight Against AIDS." Forty-five participants from six countries namely Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam participated together with one invited country, China.

The 7th IYCS SEA Session aimed to build a higher awareness among the students on HIV-AIDS issue, the reality of this pandemic in different parts of the world especially in South East Asia , and the responsibility of the students in the fight against AIDS.

See

Going to different exposure areas in Thailand, one of the countries strongly affected by HIV/AIDS in South East Asia, was a great opportunity that opened our eyes to see and experience the reality of the people living with or affected by HIV/AIDS. We were able to see the pain and suffering of children left in the orphanage because of AIDS, poverty or disability; abused women, sex workers and drug addicts. However, we also saw hope and acceptance in them. At the same time, we experienced and learned the importance of values such as love, care, support, and sacrifice for people living with HIV/AIDS and those who care for them.

Through the exhibition, country reports, sharing, discussion and input sessions by the speakers, we became aware of the current situation of this issue in the world, in Asia and in Southeast Asia. We shared similarities regarding the causes of HIV/AIDS, its impacts, and the relationship between HIV/AIDS and the different aspects of poverty mainly material, intellectual, spiritual, and emotional and the situation of HIV/AIDS education in each country. We were moved and inspired by several testimonies and volunteers taking care of people living with HIV/AIDS.

Judge

We were guided to reflect on what we have seen and tried to see with the eyes of Jesus. We learned to have faith in God like how the woman who suffered severe bleeding (Luke 9:18-26), to hope in Jesus like Martha when her brother Lazarus died (John 11: 17-27) and especially to love as how Jesus has loved the woman caught in adultery (John 8: 1-11), regardless of who she was and her past actions.

We were moved to take up the role of leadership to fight against the virus, yet still love the infected and affected. We also learned from the social teachings of the church that respecting the dignity of individuals is the best way to prevent HIV/AIDS. Through prayers, meditation, and reflection, we realized the important roles of each individual, the church, government, civil society, and youth groups in the fight against AIDS. Despite of the challenges, we were inspired to respond to the call of reflecting and judging the way Jesus did.

Act

In solidarity with the people living with HIV/AIDS and to put out faith in action, we therefore commit ourselves to:

- Develop positive behaviors towards life and to abstain from sex outside marriage and drug abuse
- Write a letter to our respective country's health ministry pressuring to improve access to pediatric HIV testing and treatment and to send it through Caritas Internationalis.
- Fight against the prejudice and discrimination towards people living with HIV/AIDS and treat them with love, respect and dignity.
- Involve in the global campaign of UNAIDS "Stop AIDS, Keep the Promise" and IYCS Asian campaign "Am I Able to Dialogue on HIV-AIDS?"
- Focus on the theme of HIV/AIDS in annual camps, leadership trainings, seminars, and school activities
- Organize campaigns and awareness talks on HIV/AIDS to students and youth in the community and church.
- Maximize the use of Information Technology for public awareness on HIV/AIDS.
- Volunteer work at orphanages.
- Translate the IYCS Asia HIV/AIDS brochures into local dialects.

Conclusion

Uniting together in faith, we believe that we can fight against AIDS. We have made a promise to combat this global pandemic to build better a generation.