

March 3, 2026

Dear Confreres,

In November 2025, I was invited to attend a symposium on migration and mission in Bangkok, Thailand, alongside one hundred priests and religious men and women. Although all participants were Vietnamese—either serving at home or across Asia and beyond—their migration and mission stories resonated with people far beyond any borders. I was asked to present on the Vietnamese Catholic presence and contribution to the U.S. Church, but I went primarily as a student. I still have much to learn about the intersection of migration and mission.



*Sr. Susana Susmiyarti, FCh  
serving in Mississippi*

As I listened to the presentations and reflections, I was reminded that immigrants are invariably a valued part of our Church community, contributing unique gifts and perspectives. Their presence oftentimes breathes new life into how we encounter God and one another. Our liturgies are enriched by cultural elements of the Vietnamese *Tết*, the Filipino *Simbang Gabi*, and the Mexican *Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe*, among others. This

richness heartens us to open our hearts and respond to the needs of newly arrived immigrants through English-language instruction, legal assistance, and human rights advocacy amid the controversial processes of immigration enforcement.

Sometimes I think immigrants are the lifeblood of a faith or religious community. In our own U.S. Province, for example, most

of our members in active ministry were born outside the United States. I often wonder: What would our mission be without them? Clearly, our pastoral care in Mississippi and our presence in South Dakota, as well as our staffing at Our Lady of Guadalupe in Houston and at St. Martin of Tours in Franklin, would be different. Some missions might not even be on our map.

Last month, I visited South Dakota twice and witnessed our brothers and sisters carrying out their mission in its most humble and sacred form. I observed them working tirelessly—shoveling snow, cleaning the sanctuary, preparing a potluck lunch for some of our parishes, and forming choirs. I was pleased to see Filipino sisters inviting other Filipinos across reservations to sing at Mass. They often travel weekly between churches and St. Joe's, sharing their gift of music. Children joined in singing, bringing a smile to my face. The Filipino community's presence in South Dakota has grown so strong that I jokingly remarked that while some Native Americans leave the reservation, the Filipinos are moving in. Most Filipinos are here as teachers.



*The South Dakota Pastoral Team, Fr. Greg Schill, and the Filipino community*

These experiences remind us that the Church is at her best when she is a welcoming home for all, especially for immigrants and those searching for safety and belonging. Our charism calls us to walk alongside them with open hearts, offering support and hope. As we look to the future of our province, may we continue to be that kind of welcoming home.

Fraternally,