

Brunswick parishioner begins ministry in Cambodia

Barbara Smith of St. Mary's Parish in Brunswick departed for Phnom Penh, Cambodia, Sept. 3 to begin teaching in one of the Salesian Sisters' boarding high schools and live in community with the sisters for a year. She will have the option of extending for a second year.

The outreach is all part of her new role as a lay missionary. Smith was among 11 women and men commissioned as lay missionaries by the Salesians of Don Bosco Aug. 15.

Smith is a graduate of Georgetown University, having majored in sociology. She was most recently employed by the U.S. Department Veterans Affairs as a technical writer and contractor.

She hopes through her missionary service to evangelize and help poor young girls.

After a period of initial discernment, the new Salesian Lay Missioners came together on July 25 at the Salesian Missions office in New Rochelle, N.Y., for three weeks of orientation, featuring self-reflection, prayer, and the experience of forming and living in community. The diverse group includes recent college graduates, nurses, teachers, and administrators. All share a common call to serve the "least of their brothers and sisters" as overseas missionaries for the coming year.

The first week of orientation in New Rochelle featured an introduction to St. John Bosco, the Salesians, the Salesian charism, and missionary life and inculturation and called upon the missionaries to clarify their intentions.

In the second week the SLMs moved to the Salesian parish of St. John Bosco in Port Chester, N.Y., for an experience of service to those in need through the parish's outreach to the poor (food and clothing pantries, soup kitchen) and by helping to get the parish school ready for the new academic year.

The final week of preparation for mission ministry was a retreat alongside some 40

Salesian priests and brothers at the Don Bosco Retreat Center in Haverstraw, N.Y., during which the SLMs reflected more deeply on their own call from God to live out their missionary vocation and prepared for the public commitment to missionary service that they made on August 15.

Eight of the new missionaries will serve in Bolivia, Cambodia, Sierra Leone, and Sudan. The Lay Missioners office is still working on sites for three others.