

## Sr. Denise Coghlan rsm and Tun “Reth” Channareth visit Rome for the World Meeting on Human Fraternity

### Overview

The World Meeting on Human Fraternity, known as "Not Alone" (#NotAlone), occurred on June 10th, 2023, in Saint Peter's Square in Rome.

The objective of the World Meeting on Human Fraternity was to unite individuals from diverse backgrounds in promoting a culture of fraternity, peace, and social inclusion. Inspired by Pope Francis' Encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, the event aimed to transcend divisions of ethnicity and blood relations, embracing a vision of social friendship that encompassed everyone, especially those marginalized in society. The goal was to restore human dignity as the core of our culture.



The symbol of this communion was a symbolic embrace (as seen left) in the Colonnade of Saint Peter's Square, where young people from around the world congregated.

In his address, Cardinal Gambetti stressed the importance of overcoming selfishness to construct a more just and equitable society where no one is left behind or excluded. He emphasized the need for collective commitment in fostering a culture of human fraternity, where people recognize their interconnectedness and walk together toward a better future.

Over 30 Nobel laureates and distinguished figures from various fields, including Sr. Denise Coghlan, R.S.M., and Tun "Reth" Channareth, convened to develop a document advocating for a global commitment to human fraternity.



Sr. Denise Coghlan RSM (*Seen on far left in black dress and pink jacket*)

### **Sr. Denise Coghlan RSM**

Sr. Denise Coghlan, a Sister of Mercy from the Brisbane congregation in Australia, played a pivotal role in establishing Jesuit Service Cambodia and currently leads Jesuit Refugee Service Cambodia. Since 1990, she has dedicated her efforts to promoting reconciliation, peace, justice, and the human development of individuals affected by war, oppression, and exile in Cambodia.

Initially, Sr. Denise, along with a team consisting of Sr. Ath Long, Br. Noel Oliver SJ, and Fr. Jub Phokthavi SJ, focused on reconciliation efforts. They initiated an integrated rural development project and established a vocational training school called Banteay Prieb. The school aimed to provide skills training and create a healing community for individuals physically and psychologically wounded by war. With support from the Australian Jesuit Mission, initiatives like Banteay Prieb expanded to towns such as Siem Reap, Sisophon, Battambang, and areas surrounding Phnom Penh. JRS, with the assistance of Jesuit Mission, played a vital role in constructing over 40 schools, supporting infrastructure projects, agriculture initiatives, and income-generation programs in various communities.

A significant milestone occurred in 1997 when Tun "Reth" Channareth, a member of Sr. Denise's team who had lost his legs to a landmine in 1982, accepted the Nobel Peace Prize on behalf of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines. Reth's powerful advocacy for landmine survivors and dedication to banning

landmines continue to inspire visitors to the Jesuit ministry's Metta Karuna Reflection Centre in Siem Reap. The centre provides a space for visitors to engage with refugees, displaced individuals, and participate in construction and income-generation projects in remote villages.

### **Tun (Reth) Channareth**

Tun Channareth, also known as Reth, has played a crucial role in advocating for a ban on landmines.

Born in Phnom Penh, he and his family were forced to leave during the Khmer Rouge regime in 1975. In 1982, while serving as a resistance soldier near the Thai-Cambodian border, Reth stepped on a landmine, resulting in the amputation of both his legs. After receiving vocational training at a Thai refugee camp, he returned to Cambodia in 1993 and started producing wheelchairs to assist landmine survivors and support his family.

Reth became actively involved in the mine ban movement, collecting over 1,000,000 signatures from Cambodian supporters to advocate for a ban on landmines. He has addressed prominent figures such as Cambodian King Norodom Sihamoni, the Pope, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, and diplomats worldwide, urging governments to join the treaty and eliminate landmines. Reth has been an ambassador for the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, continuing to travel globally, raise awareness, and promote the cause. Reth's tireless efforts in his fight to eliminate landmines make him an enduring source of inspiration to landmine survivors. His remarkable journey is a reminder of the importance of creating a safer world for all.