

The Maryknoll Ecological Sanctuary

CAMPO SIOCO, BAGUIO CITY, 1997

In 1991 no one believed Sister Ann Braudis would be able to rebuild her congregation's dreams out of the rubble of the July 1990 earthquake that ravaged North Luzon. The quake unleashed its destructive force across the 3.5-hectare site of the Maryknoll Sisters at Campo Sioco in Baguio City. In just a few seconds, the convent, built way back in the 1930's lay in ruins. Decades of Maryknoll mementos and achievements were lost.

Out of the destruction emerged the burning ideas of Sister Ann. Having experienced how Mother Earth and her children were devastated in the 1980's, this Maryknoller's previously dormant thoughts about sustaining nature suddenly welled out with hope and optimism even as the rumbling ground continued to shake.

Planning Resources and Operations Systems, Inc. (PROS), a long-time volunteer to Baguio's urban development program met Sister Ann Braudis in a round about way. It was in 1992. G. V. Manahan, managing partner of PROS A/E, was just fresh from his year-long stint in conceptualization workshops for ten huge nature sites that are to be declared national integrated protected areas, a project sponsored by the World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF). It was through the WWF that PROS met Sister Ann.

A couple of years after the North Luzon Earthquake, PROS received a call from Dick Edwards of the WWF saying that someone from Baguio wanted to meet the Principals. The meeting was to be about how to physically translate a nebulous idea of a center for the integrity of creation. Dick Edwards excitedly said that it was only PROS who would be able to interpret his visitor's ideas, which he himself could not understand. But with the enthusiasm expressed by his visitor he knew, off-hand, that the proponent's project will be a success. He added that his visitor was persistent and insisted on going to PROS immediately. The WWF visitor was Sister Ann Braudis.

That same morning, Sister Ann went to the offices of PROS at Ortigas Avenue saying that she would have to travel back to Baguio in the afternoon. She explained her ideas about the center and her thoughts on the integrity of creation. As she was expounding on her concepts she brought out a book by Swimme and Berry entitled "The Universe Story." In that same moment, Dr. Manahan felt a sudden flush of heightened awareness, for coincidentally he had

been reading a review of the very same book early that day. The encounter immediately struck a common note of understanding about ecology, creation and humanity between Dr. Manahan and Sister Ann. That was the beginning of the fruitful relationship that built the Maryknoll Ecological Sanctuary.

The Sanctuary promotes sustainable development in harmony with Mother Earth's fundamental processes. It aims to create a change in the way people view their relationships with their environment. Four value formation features are used in fostering the objective of the Sanctuary:

- A holistic approach to education using contemporary scientific understandings;
- Religious insights for reverence of nature, just relationships and environmental responsibility;
- Improvement of lifestyles through sustainable income generating activities;
- Establishment of ecological refuge for the conservation and offer protection of old growth pine trees and other endemic botanical materials in the site.

The Sanctuary shall function as:

- An educational Center on Ecology: It is the venue for instructions and a repository of information using the workshop as the principal teaching method.
- An Exposition Area: The grounds, using touristic expressions, offers experiences on the historic development of the environment, its ecology, basic systems and advances available to humanity. This is called the Cosmic Journey.
- A source of income generating projects: The Sanctuary shall provide technology to the neighborhood in becoming a model for human development.

Sister Ann now lives in the Sanctuary, ready to receive guests who wish to see the place, which is becoming very popular to the environment-conscious. PROS was instrumental in bringing her dreams to reality, to create a haven for nature that she is truly proud of.



The major activities placed on the site are categorized as people-movement areas and non-movement spaces. The first permits dynamic activities, while the other allows for relaxation, meditation and rest. As the exterior space necessitated a series of directions, powerfully energized objects and termini were introduced. Out of these precepts and concepts, the following features characterize the Maryknoll Ecological Sanctuary:

- **PARKS AND NURSERY AREAS**
These are designed like botanic niches complete with identifying tags and plant descriptors.
- **CIRCULATION NETWORK AND OPEN SPACES**
These are the linking features where other design elements are made to relate to the whole. All areas along the system are placed based on their keen perception of time and order of events.
- **PICNIC AND LOOKOUT AREAS**
These are provided with facilities for the anticipated activities. Masses of flowery shrubs, and groundcover as well as a large grouping of bold textured ornamental plants are used to designate socketted areas.
- **HANDICRAFT PRODUCTION AREA**
Basket weaving, woodcarving and silver craft are central to the activities of the

area. Visitors' areas to view and appreciate the production processes are added for educational interests.

- **MEDITATION AREAS**
In several places opportunities to meditate are provided. These exude contemplative ambience. Fragrant plants and the sound of water, cool breezes and chirping birds complete the sense of suspended time.
- **COSMIC JOURNEY**
This area is composed of a series of stations. Each station marks a significant milestone in the ecological evolution of the earth as well as the emergence of the human being.
- **BIOSHELTER**
This dwelling serves as a model for habitat development. The efficient use of energy and a deep awareness of the local climate characterize the habitat. The bioshelter is the home of the Maryknoll resident nuns in Baguio.
- **RUINS AND THE OBSERVATION DECK**
At the core of the Cosmic Journey shall be located the ruins of the original convent that was left after the earthquake of 1990. Over the reminders of the frailties of built structures, an Observation Deck shall serve as a contemplative place, open to the starry sky.

