



SVD BROTHERS

NEWSLETTER

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svd_brothersphil@yahoo.com, bromyabulad@yahoo.com, newlanyi@hotmail.com



HAPPY EASTER,
Dear Confreres!

**MAY EASTER FILL YOU
WITH JOY AND WONDER!
MAY THE RESURRECTED
JESUS CONTINUE
TO LIVE ON IN
YOUR HEART AND IN THE
HEARTS OF ALL PEOPLE!**

The vibrant and versatile community of the Filipino Brothers greets all SVD confreres, in particular the Brothers. We invite you to this network, which is our first experiment in the use of the Generalate's *Brothers' Network*, thanks to *Br. Alfonso Berger*. We hope hereby to strengthen in a personal way the contacts among the Brothers.

We thank you again for your interest and response. Surely, a mind that is open and a feeling of community will help us overcome existing difficulties, such as the (seemingly) decreasing number of Brother Vocations. The love for our vocation and the whole Society will hereby grow, if and when we get to know more about each other.

We call this newsletter "**SVD Brothers**," according to the wish of the majority of our Brothers all over the world. We have to listen to you, for this newsletter belongs to all of us and **will contain contributions from you.**

We expect your contributions to reach us through E-Mail, written in your own favorite language, to the following address of the Network: svd_brothersphil@yahoo.com

If it also contains a personal message, please send it to any of our personal E-Mail addresses: newlanyi@hotmail.com (Br. Bela Lanyi) or bromyabulad@yahoo.com (Br. Romualdo Abulad). In this case, your message will be published only with your consent.

Your SVD Brothers in Cebu, Philippines

FROM THE GENERALATE

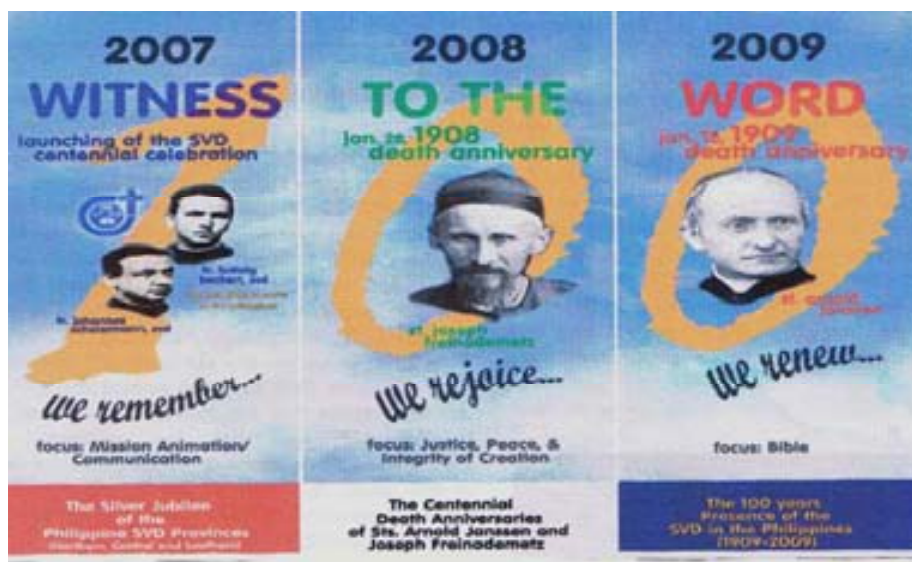
The newsletter “*Networking Among Brothers*” (eng) and its equivalent, “*Interconexión entre Hermanos*” (spa) is a worthwhile initiative; therefore, I am in favour of its continuity, at least until we can issue the bulletin that is foreseen to go “beyond” us... In this sense, I still remember that in 2007 the majority of the consulted Brothers have chosen the name of ‘*SVD BROTHERS*’ for that newsletter.

In other words, I am confirming herewith that I personally appreciate your initiative in order to render our “Networking” much more efficient and attractive. On the other hand, I see some limitations of it, namely, its *name* (Networking Among Brothers), which could give the impression that it is a matter only for us, the Brothers. Therefore, I suggest you keep in mind a possible change of its name in the future for the one of ‘*SVD Brothers*’, which could be sent by e-mail to other confreres, formation houses, friends, potential candidates for Brotherhood, etc.

I would like to inform you also that I have contacted **Br. Javier Kinderknecht (ARE)** to make the needed corrections of the Spanish version of the current newsletter (Networking Among Brothers). He is ready to do the proof reading and eventual corrections, but he cannot translate it from English into Spanish. Hence, you are kindly requested to ask the concerned translators you had before to do the translation task, and then send the translated text to Br. Javier whose e-mail is the following: jakinderk@yahoo.com

The Generalate is carrying out some consultations regarding the possible holding of the *General Assembly on the Brother Vocation*, in response to the last General Chapter’s recommendation. In this connection, the provincial/regional superiors will soon receive an ‘official’ letter from the Superior General. More details I cannot give you now...

Br. Alfonso Berger, SVD



FROM EUROPE

I thank you for this newsletter. You ask about a program of the Brother Formation – and I do not know how I should answer that.

In the German speaking provinces there are two Brothers who are in temporary vows: Br. Konstantinus from Indonesia and I myself from Germany. Since two and a half years I have been here in Austria. I attended a theological course – which was not a great pleasure for me, to tell the truth. Our SVD topics did not come up. The dimension of “mission” was completely missing, and even for the topic on the science of religion we spent only 6 evenings. I think that these are areas which are very important for an SVD missionary.

At the moment there is no clear program for the Brother Formation here. I live together with the Frates, which is for me very fine, but I am the only one Brother candidate at the moment. Sometimes I find my situation here a little bit challenging. In my work I am teacher in a Nursing School, but in the community I am student who is under formation. Now, I am preparing for an OTP (Australian Province: Thailand). I asked about the program for the preparation for OTP, but there is nothing. It is even better for our Lay Missionaries (Missionäre auf Zeit) because they have a good orientation program that would really prepare the young people before they leave for their respective assigned countries.

There was, however, no program for me, and so it had to be produced. I am convinced that this is more important than simply securing my ticket. The situation is somehow an advantage for me, because I took part in its formulation and it somehow corresponds to my own needs. Actually, the Province is very much interested in our formation. Even the Provincial is personally engaged in it. But at the moment, the province is still trying to come up with a systematized formation program. Still, there are questions about the future of formation.

Br. Bernd Ruffing (Austria)

I really thank you for the answer, particularly for the information about the possibility of OTP even for Brothers. It is my dream to work with children. I would be even ready for an OTP in

this work. Maybe, it can be a small problem that I have no high-school certificate, although I want to get it. My profession is that of a pastry cook. However, I have still to talk with Fr. Provincial about this – and he will decide. Once I was a scout leader and I was organizing different activities for children and youth, so I have a bit of an experience with children.

Br. Krzysztof Charchuta (Poland)

I apologize that I could not answer earlier. But I hope you will nevertheless get the needed information. Our young Brothers use Internet and they share their experiences with pleasure.

For the long time that I have been in Poland, I have always been in the same place – so that I do not have too much connection with the young Brothers. I do not really know how they feel and what are their expectations. I hope that there are some good signs that speak to them. We have every year a meeting of Brothers, but the last meeting was already a long time ago.

One thing sure is that the Brothers here are slowly disappearing. It is not long time ago that the two oldest Brothers died and we, middle-aged Brothers, are only a few. There is a relatively small number of young Brothers and, as we know, some of them will leave the Society on the way of their formation

Br. Włodzimierz Fijalkowski (Poland)

You have done a big job with the summary of the answers. The statements are for sure an encouragement for some of us. This is already a result. But it would hardly end in far-reaching perceptions and developments.

We should make use of clever minds. We must think in perspectives. We have to learn from people, who come true in everyday life, who fulfill their tasks with high competency. We have to understand that today more complex requirements challenge us.

"In other words: today, the fact that we are Brothers in an Order does not mean anymore that we obviously work in an efficient way, because many of us, while leading their private lives within the Order, are trying to find their luck in secondary jobs." In order to meet the developments in an adequate way, professional counseling and permanent critical reflection of our life are necessary. This is valid for both Fathers and Brothers. The reality is not yet so. We are many times like a joyful "lay music group," without sufficient qualifications. And sometimes we even do not have to bear the consequences of our defective, petty-minded or purposeless work. We should continue to think and work in this direction.

Br. Bruno Rehm (Germany)

I was working before in the Philippines, in 1968 and 1969, but I had to return after 11 months. I had an allergy to plants which had bad effects on my whole body. Concerning the Brother vocation, I had developed very unique concepts during my years in the vocational pastoral ministry. Since that time, I have believed that the SVD has led the Brother vocation in too traditional ways. This happens in some provinces even today. I pleaded always that we should do away with the old image of a "cloistered Brother," in order to create a totally new type of Brother. Concretely: after the novitiate, the Brothers have to get their professional training outside of the community. But they still dwell in the community. Professional training should be such that we choose the professions which we, as Brothers, will later (after the final vows) continue to exercise.

These professions include construction, banking, marketing, teaching, social work, care-giving ... All this should happen near the community, so that three or four Brothers live together, with some priests. In this lifestyle, religiosity must receive the highest value.

I am very happy and thankful that I could still manage, beyond my everyday work, to study to become a teacher of religious education. This corresponds to my ideas about the Brother vocation. Unfortunately, I was in the last 30 years only one of the few Brothers who were recommended to study. And when I received my diploma, the Provincial at that time even attempted

to convince me that I should be ordained a priest or at least be a deacon. These are my ideas about the Brother vocation. Since 1981, I have not worked any more in the pastoral ministry. I took over other responsibilities. I was also for some years the secretary of General Barlage in Rome. Then, from 1997 to 2006, I worked as secretary of the Southern German Province, which does not exist any more. There is only one German Province now and its headquarters are in St. Augustine.

Br. Meinolf Stohl (Germany)

The "newsletter" is really well done. I am very happy with it. I would like to get it even in the future!

At present, we are five Brothers in the Hungarian Province. I see and feel that our Province is not yet ready to form Brothers.

I had my first vows as a cleric seminarian. Only after two years in vows did I ask for a change of "status". Plenty of people did not want to understand and accept this. They tried to talk me out of this idea. But now, I have grown stronger in my Brother vocation.

It was very encouraging, what you wrote in the previous edition. Right now, I am still in temporary vows, studying theology as a junior Brother. I am very much interested in information technology (computer science) and the communication media connected with it. I would like to find the fitting work for me, so that I could get the knowledge that can serve our Society in the best possible way.

Some young confreres write that they have learned information technology. I would be interested to know what particular fields in it they are studying. And how do they use their knowledge in their respective communities?

Br. Krisztian Brinkacs (Hungarian Province)

SVD Brothers in Hungary: The bridge of hope towards a Christian future

Like in all the provinces, ours too in the time before the Council, during the life of the so-called “Brother Servants” (= religious Brothers), was similar to that of all the other Christians. After the foundation of the province, those who were in charge of the construction and maintenance of the houses together with all their installations left. The majority stayed in the province and a few were sent to foreign mission.

Before Vatican Council II (1962-1965), some changes in the life of the Brothers had already emerged at the end of the World War (1945). The change in the political regime affected all the religious communities. Like any inhabitant of the country, priests and Brothers fell alike into illegality: those who intended to survive secretly in the darkness of communism had to assume a remunerated work in order to be able to maintain themselves and their small communities.

In reality, they were “heroes,” those who entrusted their lives in the hands of God; they resisted in silence until the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Many of them did not experience again religious freedom. Nevertheless, without their sacrifice and fidelity to their vocation, the re-foundation of the Hungarian province (HUN) would not have been possible.

Today (2007), without counting the priests, only one old Brother is with us, young ones. He is the oldest of all the confreres in the province. Due to his advanced age, he lives in a house founded for old priests and Brothers. However, his eyes do not stop shining and reflecting the hope and divine happiness as well as the maturity and satisfaction of a man.

Among the youth are three Hungarian Brothers: one works as director of the new Saint Arnold Retreat House, another is the communication coordinator of the province, and the third is still in his temporary vows, taking theological courses together with the seminarians in an inter-congregational university. Recently, a Polish Brother arrived in Hungary.

Our missionary activity takes place according to an annual plan. The principal idea is to develop a **Christian missionary consciousness.** During Lent, a **missionary retreat** is organized for men from 15 to 35 years old. At this retreat, three “Christian vocations” are presented: matrimony, priesthood, and Brotherhood.

The **mission camps** are the biggest events in the **youth ministry.** In 2002, a camp was organized with 40 participants. Last summer, around 550 children and youth were with us in three turns. Thank God, we were able to rely on more or less 120 lay collaborators, those displaced ones who were able to integrate themselves into the mission.

We have in Hungary four novices, all with Hungarian mother tongue. Of these, three learned about the Congregation (SVD) and the missionary life through the missionary retreats and summer camps. For vocation animation, the **World Mission Day** was important, because more than a thousand Christians from all over the country met in Budapest in order to listen to conferences and acquire information from SVD missionaries and volunteers. There were also concerts by foreign co-brothers and youth from the orphanages with whom we had a continuous relation.

We should not forget to mention **the prayer groups of lay people** for the mission. They are committed to pray for the work of the SVD throughout the world. Most of these groups have been founded during the parochial missions which take place every semester in different communities. Most of our benefactors also come from these groups.

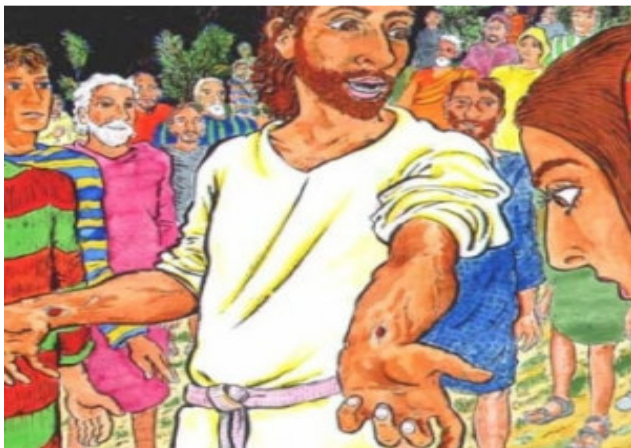
As previously mentioned, the collaboration among priests, brothers and seminarians is, thank God, harmonious. In all the programs the vocation of the missionary Brother is presented together with the priest.

At the same time, we have to confess that difficulties also exist. On the community level, due to the communist dictatorship of forty years, community life and internationality have become a challenge. We have to learn to integrate the foreign mentality in the province. Our best teachers are

precisely those confreres who have just arrived and are not anymore familiar with the church structures – they are the target and challenge for this apostolate in the last years. Since we religious sometimes feel insecure beyond the usual “ecclesiastical structures,” we organized a Mission Week for the capital city of Budapest during the month of September, 2007. This had a good result for many inhabitants of the capital city, particularly the youth.

Our hope of renewal as a community and nation could be summed up in a Hungarian saying: **there is no rose without a thorn**. Learning from the perseverance of our ancestors and trusting in the Divine Providence, we will be able to follow the way of Christ because “His mission is our mission.”

Br. Roberto Zabos (Hungary)



Although now I am a member of the Philippine Southern Province, I had spent some years in the Hungarian Province, so I have an idea what great changes have taken place there in the approach to the Brotherhood. The present understanding is clearly depicted in the message of the two young Brothers above. Previously, things were different. When I arrived in that Province in 2001, several old priest confreres tried to convince me to the priesthood. And even the argument did not help; it was for me a divine will to be a Brother.

When Fr. Ladislav Nemet started his term as Provincial, in 2003, we had only two Brothers in the Province. After his triennium, we could already count five Brothers – three Hungarian clerical seminarians shifted to the Brotherhood. In my opinion, the change is due to the recent efforts of the Hungarian Province to create a “*public image of the Brotherhood*.” This means, the Brothers have been involved in several public activities, as already mentioned by Brother Roberto: missionary camps, parochial missions, retreats for young people. A “public image” of the Brotherhood also means a good connection with the diocesan clergy, so that the religiosity of the Brothers is not any more a closed, “private” religiosity – it becomes rather a missionary charisma. Many faithful see in the Brothers a manifestation of a new consciousness about the Church. We can follow Jesus not only in the way of sacramental ministry, but in all areas of human life, without any hierarchical considerations.

Br. Bela Lanyi
(Philippines, but this contribution is about Europe)



FROM AFRICA

I myself was 12 years in the Philippines, and I liked it very much. I have a Master's degree in wood works and design. Maybe you have heard of the Arnoldus Carpentry in Christ the King. Since 1985, I have been here in Kenya, but mostly in development and construction work. I have already built 3 mission stations. I attach my Christmas letter here, where you can see what I am presently doing. Maybe one of the Filipino Brothers you have trained can one day take over my place here in Kenya.

After long preparations and waiting, we were finally able to start in June with the construction of our High School. We had to hire a Company to drill for us a deep well, because the geological survey proposed a depth of 250 meters in order to get enough water. After 80 meters we already reached the first water level, but we decided to drill up to 220 meters in order to have enough reserve. By 180 meters we reached an underground basin. We did a 24-hour test pumping with a 2-inch pipe, and the water level sank by one meter only. We were lucky to have much water, which we were able to share with another rehabilitation centre for boys in the neighbourhood. We built a big underground water tank, which could hold 54000 litres of rainwater. All roof water could be channelled into this tank for use in the toilets and to water trees and flowers. On top of this tank we built a high tank, in which the well water could be stored, this time for the kitchen and boarding houses.

We did not hire a big company to construct all these buildings, school and boarding houses, which could have been much easier on my side. Instead, we hired workers from the slums of Soweto. For a change, they had regular work for a long time, to support their families and educate their children. The workers are very proud that they were able to build their own school for their children. With diligence and hard work, the building is progressing on very well, and we are already putting the second concrete slab.

To enable the teachers on the same school compound to closely supervise the students, we have started to build a structure with 7 private rooms for teachers and an apartment for the school director including two guest rooms. The priest who will be in charge of our schools is still in the Philippines studying education. (*A part of Br. Karl's circular letter*)

Br. Karl Scharschmitt (Kenya)

I am sorry it has taken me quite a long time to respond to your mail. I hope it will not happen like this again. Actually I have no internet service at the place where I work. I have to travel about some 18 kilometers, and with all the work I am doing there is always a problem getting there on time.

I am happy to know that you are interested in raising the image of the brotherhood vocation in the SVD. I am living in the largest Brother community in Africa, in the province of Ghana. I have not regretted being a Brother. I am more at peace now with myself and my apostolate. As of now I teach Auto-Mechanics in the best Technical School in the country. I am also a social worker and I deal with the Social Impact of HIV/AIDS on the youth. So I can assure you that I am always at work.

We have a simple programme for brothers - a two-year postulancy with an introduction to philosophy, followed by three years of studies where the candidate deepens his professional career. There is also a period for the candidate to do some theological reflection on the life he intends to live, which is the Brotherhood in the church and in the society, and this can be done either here in Ghana or in Kenya Nairobi.

However, personally, I feel that one challenge of the SVD Brother is - what happens after the final vows? I think there should be a time for Brothers to take courses in Human Resource Development, to bring them to the challenges of life in society. I wish to stop here for the moment and to listen to your viewpoint, and then we can share more.

I wish you all the best and I am ready to share with you more about the brotherhood vocation in Ghana and in Africa. Should there be a need to talk to our young brothers over there, I will be willing to do so. Thanks and may God bless you.

Br. Bangfo Oswald (Kenya)

The need for the reform of the Brotherhood formation in Ghana .

In Ghana education has been reformed for the past few years, and so all who want to become Brothers now rather want to become Fathers. The secondary schools and the Technical schools are all equally qualified to go to the University after their final years of studies.

The Brother vocation in Ghana can only grow in number and have a brighter future if the Brothers will be allowed to upgrade their skills and competence. Sadly, the Brothers are not allowed to go for further studies. It is very difficult for Brothers in Ghana to get the chance to further their studies. People still have the old mentality that Brothers should only work in the gardens and farms. Time is changing and we are in a modern world. It is time we reform the brotherhood vocation programmes. It is my dream that the authorities in charge of the Brothers will allow them to professionalize.

Vocations to the brotherhood are not coming as we would like them to be. And this is because we do not do much to promote it anyway. It is a vocation one can not complain about.

Some years ago we were getting about 15 brother candidates a year. Then the Brother vocation director was very sociable and outgoing with the youth. So I hope you understand the situation. Thanks once more and hope we keep on sharing about the Brother vocation.

Br. Stephen Bonsu (Ghana)

Thank you very much for your interest in me. I would like also to share with you what I am doing. I cannot remember if I have told you about it already. I am working with the blind. We bring them to our center and we give them formal education. Those who can no longer go to school are called to learn a job of their choice. But all of them have to know at least how to write and read. The center is named after Saint Augustine, simply because the promotor of this apostolate is also a blind person from Italy whose patron happens to be Saint Augustine. But the challenge we face is that, before being able to bring a blind child to school, you have to convince his parents and the child himself. For parents do not see the need for educating a blind child. It is for them like wasting time and money. They hide their blind children in the house, because they think that it is a curse to have someone blind in the family. Sometimes parents just abandon the child to us without any support. These are the difficulties in our work.

To get the blind children, we go to the rural areas in search of them, because if we wait for them to come on their own will they will never come. We do that preliminary job when school is on vacation. Briefly, that is what I am doing as my social work in Togo.

It is not all that easy to work with marginalized people because one can also be a hindrance to their own development.

Br. Theodore Kakanou (Togo)



Social work with the marginalized.



Blind children

FROM PANAM

I work in the formation of the juniors of BRC (Sao Paulo) Province. Until last year I was working in the BRS Province, at the Mission Secretariate and with the administration of the propedeutical seminary. This year, we have 25 young students here, living in 3 communities. There is a Brother in every formators' team. We have 36 junior students in temporary vows: 2 are studying in Europe and 9 are in OTP. Out of the 36 juniors we have 8 Brothers. One of them, Bro. Sebastiao Tenorio is doing his OTP in your Province. Two confreres are going to profess their final vows in 2008: on January 20 and on March 1.

*Br. Moacir Rudnick (Brasil)
(Translation from Portuguese)*

Your newsletter initiative deserves a reply. Thank you for the newsletter with replies from Brothers from various countries.

Next May 1st, I will celebrate 50 years as a Divine Word Missionary Brother. After years of teaching music in the high school and college seminary levels, I was assigned to our Retreat Center in Massachusetts as a Music Minister. I have been here since 1991. Three years ago I was appointed Director of the Center and Superior of our Religious community of nine priests.

Next February I will attend the 3rd Age program at Nemi; I am looking forward to the program.

It is good to read of so many vocations to the Brotherhood in the Philippines; unfortunately, the situation is not the same here in the States.

God continue to grant you blessing on the newsletter.

Br. Don Champagne (USA)

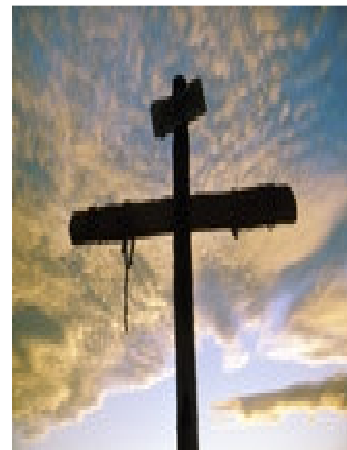
I thank God and I am thrilled to share through the Brothers' network.

I am Bro. Julio Jimenez Carrillo (Ecuadorian). I am doing my Theology studies in the province of Colombia and God willing I am hoping to finish my Biblical Studies afterwards.

The Situation of the Vocation of Brotherhood in the Sub-Zone of the Andres to where I belong is in the process of approval of a formation program for Brothers. In the Post Novitiate House located in Bogota', we are 3 Brothers at the moment, Bro. John from Ghana, Bro. Miller Hernandez who in March will leave for United States and I. We are also hoping with joy the arrival of Edmundo Condori, a future brother from Bolivia.

I am happy of my experience here in Columbia and I hope to be able to speak more of the work that is realized in the stages of formation and of our intentions to give more knowledge of the Brotherhood Vocation later.

*Br. Julio Jimenez Carrillo (Columbia)
(Translation from Spanish)*



Easter Cross

FROM ASPAC

“Our HOPE - THE DEDICATED SERVICE OF BROTHERS!”

An Interview with Fr. Bill Burt, our Zonal Coordinator

Fr. Bill Burt attended the General Assembly of our PHS Province. Before this meeting, he had visited our Brothers' Formation House. With his radiating enthusiasm, he encouraged the candidates to become both Brothers and Missionaries. *“The start of our mission in the U.S.A was not a work of priests. Saint Arnold sent there two Brothers. This has also happened recently, when two SVD Brothers started our new mission in Thailand. Now, two young priests are joining the Brothers there.”* We asked Fr. Bill about the situation of Brothers in the Zone.

“When did you get your first experiences with Brothers?”

When I had my novitiate in Marburg (AUS), there were some Brothers. All were foreigners. I was impressed by their attitude to work. They were very much dedicated to their jobs. Their prayer life also appeared very good. This combination of work and prayer impressed me. However, I also realized the negative side: they were slaves of the priests. They were just working in the farm, but they were not in charge of it even when they were the best experts in farming. There was a priest who was instructing them, even if he did not know anything about that profession.

Today, there is no more difference in status. We do not find unusual any more if we meet a Brother in a position of authority. This is a positive change, a good direction.

The Present Situation...

The Brothers' vocation is in a difficult situation. We have in the Society very few new Brothers! Indonesia is the only country where Brothers come

through in significant numbers up to the final vows. Therefore, the future is not bright for Brothers.

Earlier in Vietnam, almost all confreres were Brothers, because a Brother congregation joined us. This country gives us one of the most vital Provinces of SVD, but among the 40 confreres in temporary vows, we have only 2-3 Brothers! The situation has totally reversed.

Maybe, in many places the status problem is still relevant. The Brothers' vocation does not mean a status there, like Brothers are “not bright enough” compared with the priestly vocation. I also perceive that in many SVD Provinces, the Brothers are practically ignored. For instance, the Provincial would greet only the Fathers and the sisters, but not the Brothers.

We have only 3 Brothers' Formation Houses in the Zone: Indonesia, India, and the Philippines. In our observation, if priest and Brother candidates are together, the Brother candidates eventually shift to priesthood. Nevertheless, the Brothers' Formation Houses should not become places of isolation.

The Future?

Even if the future is not bright, when we look at the numbers, we should not worry about the future because we have very good, dedicated Brothers. Even if the number remains small and even if it is getting smaller, the dedication and the quality of work of the Brothers, as well as their prayer life, will be a significant contribution to the SVD mission even in the future.

The Internationality?

I realize the problem, that some Provinces want to keep back their native confreres. I do not like this attitude, because this is against the Internationality of our Society. Every Province should have the attitude of willingness to share, inclusive of our personal resources.

Internationality happens not only among countries. For example, India is a big subcontinent – they can share their personnel. When a confrere goes from one Province to another, the cultural diversity effects a similar sharing.

Thanks! (Noted down by Br. Bela Lanyi)

I am now in Melbourne for a year studying orthopaedic, as we have so many orthopaedic patients but our skills are insufficient to provide quality care for them. I am also trying to build a network of people of good will who can assist supply for the needs of our insufficiently founded health system. In this way our patients could be helped properly and avoid further disability.

Br. George Kuzma (Papua New-Guinea)

I am sorry for this late reply to your previous emails. In the place I was in it was very difficult to get access to the internet.

Since I left West Africa in March last year, I have been living in Flores, Indonesia. I am still waiting for a new visa to re-enter Australia. My Australian working visa has expired while I was serving in West Africa. Let's hope that soon the Australian government will grant me a new visa. There is a positive sign that I might get it soon. Let's hope.

While waiting for the visa, I spent most of my time in our seminary in Flores. I tried to help out in the seminary doing many different things. When I was there I was able to attend the ASPAC Formators' meeting. I met Bro. Romy there. We had a nice chat during the meeting.

Thanks for the information about the Brothers. I think now I can easily get access to the internet. Temporarily I am living in our SVD community in Surabaya, East Java where I can get access to the internet.

Br. Jay Toonay (Indonesia)

I am keeping well and doing my best, and I hope you the same. I am not any more in the formation house. I am now working in Snehalay, a centre for Inter-religious Dialogue and Spirituality. We are three confreres, two priests and myself. This place is meant for lay people, for their spiritual growth, as we conduct for them recollections and retreats especially during Lent and Advent. But some people and sisters come throughout the year for retreat. Sometimes other religious, especially Hindus, are also coming for reflection and discussion. Last Sunday about twenty people came in a day; they were all Hindus and the three of us joined them.

Br. Benjamin Kerketta (India)

Greetings from India East. Thanks for sharing your beautiful thoughts and the good work that you have initiated. Here everything is fine.

I am happy to share with you that we have made a Power Point presentation focusing on the Vocation to the Brotherhood. It is an hour programme, which highlights the life of St. Arnold, his mission and vision. The Brothers' activities in India have been beautifully highlighted, along with the general information about our educational programme. We have already displayed it in few parishes and hostels. It has been very much appreciated. Congrates to Br. Blasius Kindo, SVD. whose hard work has brought a new beginning to the Brothers in India East. We are confident of spreading SVD Brotherhood in a wider perspective and getting eligible candidates. Our 16 new students in the formation house are doing well.

We would like to give an international touch to this programme, so I am requesting you to send a few snaps of the students of your place, common photos of Brothers if possible, or any other photos of Brothers. This will strengthen our programme. Kindly send some photos. I will be very grateful to you. To promote Brother vocation is always a pleasant task. I enjoy doing it together with you.

Br. Muktlal Ekka (India)

From the editors: Hereby we apologize for the misprint in the last edition. Of course, Br. Muktal Ekka belongs to the INE Province and not to Indonesia. We are very sorry!!!

Congratulations to everybody involved. The newsletter makes for good reading.

For future issues it would be good to get more into the actual work that the SVD Brothers are doing around the globe and also into what motivates them to do what they are doing, i.e., their spirituality, their unique way(s) of witnessing to God's presence in our world.

Fr. Heinz Kulueke, Provincial of the Philippines Southern Province

I have some ideas on my mind about the "SVD BROTHERS." We may also ask for the YM (yahoo messenger) addresses of the Brothers, because not all of them are writers. Maybe they feel more comfortable to share through chatting because then they can be more open.

Even if this is not a formal assignment yet, I just want to tell you that I am willing to take charge of the Indonesian confreres. I just would like to ask you if you already have their email addresses and please forward them to me. Some of our senior Indonesian brothers can be asked to share their experiences with us, the young ones.

I will make myself available to translate if I am asked. May God bless us and our unique vocation!

Br. Gabby Kabelen (Cebu City, Philippines)

IN FOCUS: OUR POSTULANCY!



*SVD Postulants in the Philippines.
SAKSI means witness.*

”Trust, not status...”

(An Interview with Br. Eugenio Orog, our Assistant Postulancy Master, counselling psychologist)

How did you choose the missionary Brother vocation?

My auntie encouraged me. Actually, I received my faith education at home and I was highly interested in the questions of Catechism. I easily memorized prayers. I was also living in the parish house as a so-called “convent boy”. We served the parish – and the parish priest was taking care not

only of our board and lodging, but also of our study tuition fees. When I applied to the SVD, I was 17 years old, like most of our candidates today. I was one of the first young SVD Brothers who were allowed and encouraged to take up college education in a “secular” university. I studied education at the SVD-owned University of San Carlos.

During my temporary vows, I was assigned to Agusan (Island of Mindanao, Southern Philippines). It was in 1980 when I professed my final vows. . From the Generalate I got “formation ministry” as my first assignment, where I have been working up to now. From 1982 to 1983 I had the opportunity to study in USA, at the Institute for Religious Formation of St. Louis University. After which, I became novice master for our Brother novices, and then the National Director of Brothers. I used to be a member of the Provincial Council of the Southern Province for two terms.

OUR PRESENCE

Who is a Brother? What is our identity?

There are always Brothers in the different religious orders, but our role is indirect and hidden, like the work in the kitchen and laundry. Today we have Brothers as teachers, professors, educators. The situation changed when my generation entered due to Vatican II. We are really partners of the priests. We are religious missionaries with all our talents and giftedness. Mission is not just saying Mass or administering sacraments.

Are we, Brothers, appreciated?

I think we are. We have the trust of the people, even the trust of the Bishops and the Clergy, whenever our work connects us with them. They also say that laymen outside the religious orders would think more of salary and their family, while the Religious Brother is full-time for God and His Church – he has commitment.

We do not have a “status.” *No status in the Church, no status in the secular society.* Frequently, the people do not know our vocation. They ask, when are we getting ordained, or so... A priest has a “status” – acknowledged even by those who are not Catholic. On the other hand, the people really trust the SVD missionary Brother because we are one with them. This is a great value.

Sometimes we have a status because we are well-known professors, professionals – but not because of our vocation. However, the trust of the people is often coming directly from our vocation, because they know that we follow a true ideal. We are not “ordinary professionals” – we are missionaries, religious and professionals; we have vows and we live in community.

OUR FUTURE

Is the fluctuation big in our formation communities? Probably yes. In the weeding-out process quite a number drop along the way. As to my batch, when I entered we were 7, and now I am the only one still staying behind.

But those who had their final vows are really committed. Bro. Miloy, for instance, is going to leave for Japan in March. This is his first assignment from Fr. General.

I think our formation needs strategic planning. I appreciate that we recruit high school graduates. A diocese in Mindanao (Southern Philippines) did away with its college seminary but they suffered from having no candidates; hence, they are bringing back their college seminary once again. The same is true for Brother Vocation. We can not be discouraged by the idea that plenty of college candidates might drop out along the way because at least they become good Christians - we hope because of their religious formation.

How can we gain more vocations? For me, *our witnessing to the Brotherhood* is important. If we Brothers are happy and productive, then we will attract young people to our way.

I said, we have no "status." However, I think we have to strive for a better understanding of this vocation in the society. We should be more proud of our identity.

It is good, when we are recognized and appreciated because of our achievements in our profession. But the profession is only a means for the Church. We, Brothers, exercise our profession not just for ourselves but for others and for the Kingdom of God. We have to animate others. We have to serve others, we have to be available for others.

OUR INTERNATIONALITY

Who are we, missionaries? Freinademetz went "*ad extra*", but Janssen "*ad intra*" – both are typical SVD vocations, from the very beginning. We have the right to volunteer for a foreign mission, but also the "local" SVD has its needs. From case to case, I would also consider the need of the Brother himself. Maybe it needs more generosity to go "*ad intra*". We should be proud that we can share from our poverty.

I like the SVD because it is very open - open to our wishes, open to changes. It will also manage the way of the Brothers into the Future. *I believe that the number of Filipino Brothers will grow in the next years as we are faithful to our commitment!*

(Noted by Br. Bela Lanyi, SVD)

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS...

Some confreres asked us about the exact process of the Brother Formation in the Philippines. We noticed your interest with great joy and we are eager to give you an answer to this important question. May our successes (and also our shortcomings) inspire you!

THE FORMATION PROCESS IN THE PHILIPPINES

(A contribution of Br. Romualdo Abulad SVD, National Director of Brothers' Formation)



SVD-Brothers Community with Fr. Provincial, Fr. Heinz Kulúke, SVD

Briefly, this is how our Brothers are formed in the Philippines. Our Vocation Director attracts two sorts of candidates, the ones who just finished their high school (about 17 years of age) and those who have already finished college and are starting to work, the young professionals whom we call “associates.” To qualify, they are given the usual entrance exams and interviewed by a team of experienced confreres. When accepted, they will join the rest of the Brother candidates in Cebu City, where our formation house is located.

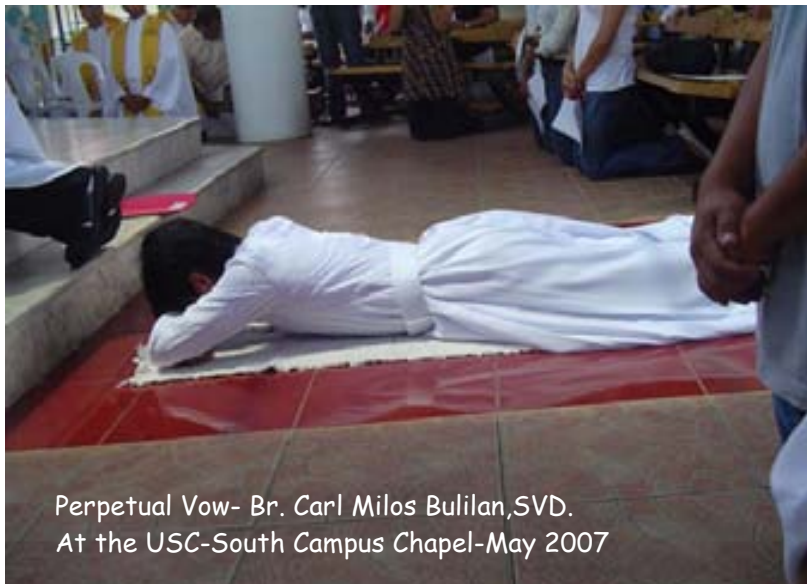
Cebu is a good place to start our formation because this is where we have our university, the University of San Carlos, which offers the usual professional courses and degrees our candidates would like to pursue. At the moment, for instance, we have our nineteen candidates enrolled in Accountancy, Psychology, Architecture, Anthropology, Philosophy, Religious Education, Computer Science, Advertising Arts, and Information Technology. Our “associates” have to experience initial formation with these young candidates in order to understand formation at its very roots, but at the same time they are either sent to formal education in theology or asked to continue higher education in their respective fields, or both.

After college, our formand goes to Tagaytay for the one-year postulancy, with its focus on psycho-emotional growth and discernment, where he mixes with the other SVD seminarians. This, as well as the following one-year novitiate in Mindoro, is the stage of formation where we have a common formation for both Brothers and clerics. As everyone knows, the novitiate ends with our candidate finally taking his first vows, after which the clerics go to Tagaytay and the Brother candidates to Cebu City, both for theology.



Renewal of Vows
with Vice-Provincial, Fr. Eduardo Rocha, SVD-President

A Brother's theological studies do not have to stretch to the usual four years in school, as in the case of a cleric, and may in fact be taken with the lay for pastoral reasons. At the same time, the Junior Brother may already start his exposure in the



Perpetual Vow- Br. Carl Milos Bulilan, SVD.
At the USC-South Campus Chapel-May 2007

profession in which he has been trained, and this becomes his initial taste of apostolate or mission. Thus, this period of the Juniorate has at least three objectives: (1) to reconnect with the Brotherhood in Cebu after two years of mixed formation with the clerics, (2) to acquire theological training as expected of a religious, and (3) to get exposure in one's professional apostolate in order to prepare oneself for one's future permanent mission. This is a period of discernment, too, before one makes a choice of assignment, here or abroad, at the final profession of vows.

That, in brief, is our formation process for the Brothers. We are trying to be as flexible as possible within the established context and tradition of our Society, considering the varieties of gifts and persons who are coming to us.



**SVD Brothers Philippines
National Brothers Convention 2007
Daus, Bohol**

And of course, we are very much interested in your comments and experiences. Let us continue the dialogue of our Network! For that, we expect your contributions to the e-mail addresses, which we shared on the first page. Please write in the language of your choice: English, Spanish, Portuguese, German, Indonesian, Polish, Slovakian, Hungarian, others. We thank you for that,

Your Brothers in Cebu.

Editors: Br. Romualdo Abulad, SVD/ Br. Niel Brex Argoncillo, SVD/ Br. Bela Lanyi, SVD
Translators: Br. Gabriel Kabelen, SVD (*Indonesian*), Mrs. Aida Jumao-as (*Spanish*)
Corrector: Br. Javier Kinderknecht (*Spanish*)
Technical Editor: Ms. Joeriza A. Lim