



# SVD BROTHERS

NEWSLETTER

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**Dear Confreres!**

**Dear Confreres!**

Happy Easter! Truly the feast of the Resurrection of Jesus, Easter draws near. We also look forward to a great event this year, the *General Assembly on Brother Vocations* in Cebu. Do we hope for a “resurrection” of the SVD Brother vocation, too?

**As the SVD BROTHERS’ service for the Assembly, we asked you 3 questions that came from the Generalate regarding the participation of our confreres in the preparation process for the *General Assembly on the Brother Vocation* in the provincial/regional level. These were the questions:**

1. How do you assess the preparation process for this assembly in your province/region or mission?
2. Could you share with us some joys and difficulties (if any) you have experienced while participating in that preparation process in your province/region or mission?
3. Were you satisfied with the outcome of your meetings/discussions or survey of that preparation?

In this issue, you will read the answers of several confreres. But prior to that, please read the welcoming words of Br. Romualdo Abulad, SVD, the hosting country's National Director of Brothers.

We continue to 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](mailto: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](mailto:newlanyi@hotmail.com) (Br. Bela Lanyi) or [bromyabulad@yahoo.com](mailto:bromyabulad@yahoo.com) (Br. Romualdo Abulad). I am happy to inform you *that we have now a translator for the Indonesian language, Br. Hubertus Guru in Manila, Philippines.*

**Your SVD Brothers in Cebu, Philippines**



Magellan's Cross in Cebu, Philippines

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## WELCOME TO CEBU!

*(Br Romualdo E Abulad from the hosting Province, PHS, Cebu)*



When, early this year, the SVD BROTHERS first sent me a request for a contribution to the newsletter, asking for information regarding developments on the preparation for the General Assembly on Brother Vocation, we in PHS had just cancelled the meeting that I was supposed to be calling precisely for that purpose. The reason for the cancellation was Br. Alfonso's correct reminder that such a meeting would be presumptuous if done ahead of the meeting in Rome.

Now, however, as of this writing, the Generalate had already met and given us the express permission to call for a meeting of a core group that shall do the initial preparation. Four teams have been formed, with Br. Bela Lanyi taking the leadership in the Secretariat, Br. Edgardo Faz manning the Welcome and Accommodations Committee, Br. Gregory Filipczyk in charge of the Exposures and Trips Committee, and Br. Rolando Pontevedra managing the Liturgy. Our priest confreres are taking an important part in the planning and conceptualization of our work and will certainly be actively involved in the entire process.

Meanwhile, the Province had already identified and reserved the venue and tested the facilities for simultaneous translation. At our meeting in Davao, all Brothers were informed of the General Assembly in Cebu and discussed the questions sent by the Generalate regarding the Brother issues. Presently being seriously considered is the holding in Cebu of the annual national gathering of SVD Brothers to coincide with the General Assembly. I should also mention that upon invitation I will be going to Rome just before the Holy Week to attend the ad hoc committee's meeting, which is expected to tackle the content and procedures of the Assembly.

So far, I think we are on track of our timetable. We're doing things consciously without being pushy or burdensome. Soon, however, our dirty work in Cebu will be more aggressive and visible. Father Provincial is on top of the situation; he knows what's happening and what's not happening, and I trust he will initiate moves when needed. Since I have been given the overall charge of the preparation here, however, I can take some initiatives myself. For all the cooperation and support I am getting from the Province and from all the SVD Brothers nationwide, I can only say: "Thank you. God bless our common mission."

To all the Brothers from the four zones of the Society of Divine Word, allow me to say on behalf of us in the Philippines: "You're most welcome to Cebu. Please do pray for the success of our General Assembly, and may the will of God reign in our hearts as we accomplish His work through us."

## JOY AMONG SVD BROTHERS

*Br. Stephen Bonsu, (GHA)*



In Ghana the Brothers heard of the Brothers' assembly. At that time, though, I was still taking a course in Kumasi so I was not able to attend that assembly. When I returned from my studies, I was told that copies of the report would be available for all the Brothers. But as at this time of writing, I have not seen a copy of that report. I was also told that the report was saved in the computer. The computer, however, has just been formatted so the report was lost.

The brothers who attended the assembly were satisfied with the outcome of the meeting. There was joy among them. All the brothers in the Ghana province turned up with their numbers for the assembly. At the moment there is a working group set up by the Ghana province to prepare for the general assembly that will take place in the Philippines this year. I would like to propose that the following issues should be discussed during the general assembly: vocation promotion, brother formation, novitiate, post-novitiate, working experience, final vows, first assignment, and further studies. The decreasing number of Brothers in the society should also be discussed.

## STILL NEW HERE...

*Br. Carl Milos Bulilan, (JPN)*



Honestly, it is unfortunate that here, there has been no preparation for the General Assembly of the Brothers in the Philippines. Being new here myself, and not yet knowing the language, I could not initiate for such a preparation. There are four of us here: a Japanese who is a retired school administrator in his seventies; a Vietnamese who is in charge of the seminary physical management; Bro. Justin, OTP director; and yours truly.

Bro. Justin mentioned about the preparation but there hasn't been any schedule set so far. According to him, everybody seems so busy that there is barely enough time for such activity. I feel sad about this, knowing how important the assembly is, and how you are doing your best for the success of this coming gathering.



## I AM VERY HAPPY!

*Br. Maros Butala, (SLO)*



Once I was called by the Provincial to his office whereby I was informed of the General Assembly on Brother Vocation in Cebu. He asked me if I would like to participate. After much prayer and consideration, I said yes, as long as the General Council would choose me. After sometime, the Provincial called me again and told me that the Generalate consented to send me to the assembly. I was very happy. I went to the chapel in order to thank God for this opportunity.

The Provincial Council appointed a small preparatory team: Fr. Peter Kubik, Br Maros Butala, Br Jozef Marko. Fr Provincial and the House Council support us in our preparation. We have been talking about the Brother Vocation, especially on why there are so few Brothers in Slovakia and in Europe? Everybody is helping me. The difficulties are not small, but I look forward to meeting members of the Brother Community from all

over the world, and to be acquainted with the difficulties and the joys of this vocation.

## WE ALL ARE CONCERNED...

*Br. Michael Decker, ( USC)*



1) My experience in the Chicago Province was good. First, it gave me the opportunity to review what has taken place since the "Brother's Assembly" in Rome in 1994. Next, I have learned a lot from my reading to understand more fully what the issues are and to focus on them. The province formed a good team to look at what was needed to be done in the preparation. Everyone has been involved in Formation Ministry, thus the interest in the Brother Vocation.

2) The joy was in working with the team in the preparation. We ALL are concerned with this issue of the Brother Vocation. When asking for feedback from other Brother's in the Province, the response was minimal, which was disappointing for me. But I was able to do some Communal Reflection by getting feedback from our common house of formation in Chicago for both Brothers and Priests. Also, I received feedback from the Novitiate as well as from students who are

Cont. Br. Decker

in initial formation. Some of the responses were: 1) promote the Brother Vocation DVD's that show that the Brothers' life is exciting and enriching; 2) promote religious life that shows what is common for ALL SVD's; 3) appoint a Brother on the Vocation Team; 4) develop a small Brother's community with different ministries

3) Presently, I am happy with what has been done so far in the preparation. I am looking forward to bringing ideas and experiences in Cebu so we can come together and take steps that will make a difference for the future of the SVD Brotherhood.

### I AM THE ONLY BROTHER HERE...

Br. Roberto Duarte, (ECU)



I am writing to you with much pleasure. I hope that you are fine in your life and in your missionary work.

I am sufficiently fine in Ecuador. Now I'm studying Naturopathy or Natural Medicine and coordinating the dimension of JUPIC to the Panam Zone level. Some days ago we finished our zonal meeting in the Amazonian Region of Brazil. It was truly a rich and encouraging experience. With regard to the preparation for the assembly of

Brothers in June, we have not really propelled anything here in Ecuador until now. We will have our provincial assembly after Easter. There I will try to put something as theme or topic of the program. As of now I am the only SVD Brother in the Ecuadorian province. I was conversing with Brothers from the Amazonian Region in Brazil and they said that they have not started any significant preparation too.

I think that we must give more focus to the preparation for our assembly. I will make more effort on that regard. Perhaps some provinces are not very animated.

### NEW HOPES PRODUCED

Br. Josimar Ferreira, (BOL)



Warm greetings to all SVD Brothers in the Philippines. I am sharing with you that in Bolivia, brothers and priests have had the opportunity of carefully reflecting on each question from the document since this is a timely moment that one can point out the weaknesses and strengths of the brother vocation in the present context.

I think that the preparation for the Assembly of the Brothers produced new hopes in relation to the frenzy of the brothers in the SVD and in the Church. I believe that we have to be protagonists or leaders of history with

humanitarian and Christian deeds, which include prophetic dialogue and the dimensions of the SVD in the world, since we are spending moments where our presence as Brothers must be more than just a sign of transformation. We must commit ourselves with the motivation to change some paradigms that limited us in the past to a transformer role, a present challenger with the knowledge proportionate of the past. We have to leap for the future with a more solid formation based in a spirituality that would help us confront personal difficulties as well as the challenges of the present Church.

### WE KNOW NOTHING ABOUT THE NEED TO PREPARE...

Br. Andre Hotchkiss, (USW)



Our present provincial administration knows nothing about the need to prepare for the Brother's Assembly. There are only five of us Brothers in the Province. Two are fully retired (in their eighties) and another two are semi-retired (71 and 72 years old). Then there's Brother Vinh who is fully active with technical details of the retirement house and the retreat center.

Clearly, I cannot answer the questions you have raised, since nobody has been aware of the assembly.

## **FAR FROM REASSURING...**

*Fr. Frantisek Juhos, (HUN)*



In our Hungarian Province just now the situation of the Brothers is far from reassuring. We had six Brothers in the province, four in perpetual vows and two in temporal vows. From these six Brothers, three (two in perpetual vows, and one just before perpetual vows) have left our province (or the Society) rather suddenly.

Of the remaining three, one is studying theology and would like to be ordained as a priest in due time. Another, the oldest member of our Province, is in a retirement House for priests in Székesfehérvár.

There remains one Brother. He is young and has just made his first vows last September 8. He is now undergoing a training-course in gardening with a professional gardener while pursuing catechetical studies at the same time. Next school-year, if all goes according to plan,

he will begin a formal course in agronomy.

Under these circumstances, we do not have big plans in our Province as to the formation of the brothers. But of course we do not intend to give up. The vocational director is paying special attention to the fostering of Brother vocations while the master of novices is guiding our two novices who will soon have to opt to become priests or Brothers in our Society.

## **OUR NEW DAWNING**

*Br. Darwin Loro, ARS*



I am elated with the latest development regarding the upcoming general assembly and I am looking forward to an ongoing positive collaboration and meaningful future endeavors. Like many of our fellow SVD Brothers, I am excited about this gathering in Cebu, with great hopes for a successful outcome.

We dream and believe. We plan and achieve. We celebrate a new dawning! This is how I would exactly describe the

forthcoming "General Assembly on Brother Vocation."

I arrived in Argentina last September. I have been trying to learn the Spanish language through occasional visits to some of the SVD communities. I am getting to know this lovely country and its interesting history, making everything a more thrilling experience for me. The long years of SVD presence in this country and the contributions of our confreres, including a significant number of Brothers in the various fields of apostolate, make me feel happy and encourage me to actively participate and make a difference in one way or another.

Late last year, the forthcoming General Assembly on Brother Vocation was discussed during our district meeting with Brothers and Fathers working within the areas of Santa Fe and Entre Rios. We were formed into smaller groups with a set of questions for individual members to share their views, opinions, and experiences. All of the responses were then collated.

Although I was present, it was unfortunate that I could not join in responding to the topic and in sharing my own perspective as a Brother since I was very new and could not speak Spanish. However, based from my observations at that particular gathering, the district superior did well in facilitating the discussion and almost all members actively participated.

## THE QUESTION OF PROMOTION

*Br. Martinus M. Mamaq, IDE*



1. How do you assess the preparation process for this assembly in your province/region or mission?

Answer: The preparation process in Ende province for the upcoming general assembly in Cebu was successful and smooth. An ad hoc committee of four priests and four Brothers was formed to prepare for this assembly. Their job was to disseminate questionnaires sent by Br. Alfonso Berger (Generalate) and discuss it with the community members, either priests or Brothers. The community members actively and consciously partook in the discussion. The result of their discussion was forwarded to the committee to be thoroughly analyzed and examined. The final copy was sent to Fr. Bill Burt, Generalate Zone Coordinator, and Br. Rajesh, Zone Coordinator for the Brothers.

2. Could you share with us some joys and difficulties (if any) you have experienced while participating in the preparation process in your province/region or mission?

Answer: Generally there was no hindrance in the preparation process in SVD Ende province. One thing interesting was that all the Brothers and priests were aware that the promotion of brothers is still far from expected. That's why it is not surprising that

the Brothers' vocation is decreasing yearly. The profession of the

Brothers was also discussed in the preparation process, either in the community level or Ad Hoc level.

3. Were you satisfied with the outcome of your meetings /discussions or survey of that preparation?

Answer: Certainly, I am very happy with the result of the discussions from each community and from the members of the Ad Hoc in the Province. The final copy was sent to respective coordinators at the Zone level.

## SOME OF CERTAIN AGE ARE NOT SO WORRIED

*Br. Raul Mayulu, PAR*



I am inspired today to give you my impressions on the questions regarding the assembly of Brothers. It seems that many of us, SVD's, (I don't know if it is true for everybody) don't like reunions.

Here in Paraguay, we had an assembly after the general visitation and from there we were able to form a commission to tackle the theme or topic in the districts. Personally, I don't see enthusiasm even among the Brothers themselves. Most of the members of the formed

commission were Brothers, but there was no enthusiasm to attend the meeting in order to analyze the theme.

I would say, therefore, that the preparation was a little superficial in spite of the consciousness or awareness that the theme must be analyzed in depth. I understand this by looking at the situation of many of the Brothers. Some are not so worried for not feeling convinced of his vocation as brother or for not having the capacity to defend his vocation as a Brother.

This is my small contribution and I hope that in the approaching assembly, the situation will be analyzed well. I hope that we meet one another in June and that the securing of papers for travel will go well.

## THINGS WERE DONE HURRIEDLY

*Br. Guy Mazola, CNG*



First of all, I wholeheartedly welcome this significant event and congratulate Fr. Superior General and his Council for implementing this Assembly. We, SVD Brothers, should take this opportunity to really make our vocation "a visible and prophetic witness" in the world today.

Cont. Br. Mazola

As requested by the Generalate, the CNG Province has formed an Ad Hoc Committee consisting of five confreres (4 Brothers and 1 Priest). Three of them were assigned to lead the reflections in the districts of the Province.

In order to get better participation of the confreres, an Assembly on Brother Vocation based on the preparatory document proposed by the Generalate was organized in each district. I myself led a meeting with our seminarians on the issue. The result of each Assembly was sent to the Ad Hoc Committee.

As an Ad Hoc Committee, we were supposed to meet in order to collate and sum up the results of the districts' reflections, and write the final report. Unfortunately, this did not happen as planned.

In general, confreres in the province did their best to participate in the different meetings organized at the district level on Brother Vocation. But my impression is that they were not prepared materially for the event. I deplore the lack of a good organization at the provincial level. It seems to me that things were done hurriedly without any proper guidance. As a result, the final report was written by one Brother from the reflections he got from the districts. There was a kind of

carelessness in approaching the issue.

As I have said, this coming Assembly is an opportunity for us SVD Brothers to re-discover the essential elements of our religious consecration, to reconfirm our essential identity as religious brothers whose main task is to be Christ's witness in a rapidly changing world.

Let us be ready to venture into new forms of relationships that should prove fruitful for the Church and for our Society in the coming years.

## **BROTHERS: OIL IN A MACHINE**

*Fr. Brian O Reilly, IBP*



In terms of the history of the SVD Brothers and the Irish-British Province, it can be said without a shadow of a doubt that many of the solid foundations that were laid down at the beginning of the Province were done by the Brothers. Probably the best known member of the SVD in Ireland for example is Bro. Paul Hurley, SVD. Bro Paul was editor of the WORD Magazine for almost 50 years.

Brother Pat Hegarty, SVD, single-handedly created the network of promoters of the

WORD Magazine in Ireland and Britain that at its height distributed 170,000 copies a month, making it, among other things, a major source of income for the Province. More significantly, it was through the WORD Magazine that most Irish and British confreres came to know and to join the SVD. It was the public face of the SVD in Ireland.

It was another Brother, Bro. Oliver Moynihan, SVD, who was responsible for placing the Irish Province on a sound financial footing. Other Brothers were responsible for the farm, for looking after the catering and the smooth running of the community.

In England they helped care for St. Richard's College at Hadzor in England. Above all, it was the Brothers who were the backbone of the Religious life in our houses and who, by their integrated way of life, provided an inspiration for the rest, in particular our novices and seminarians.

An image that often comes to mind when speaking of the Brothers is like that of oil in a machine. It is the oil that helps the machine run smoothly and efficiently. It is the Brothers who help the Province run smoothly. But they were primarily a powerhouse of prayer. In their quiet, prayerful way, they have helped maintain the Province and the communities through their dedication and prayer life, and have enabled us to become who we are today.

In the late 70's in Dublin, a house was bought and set up specifically for Brotherhood formation. Over the years a number of students passed through the house, but none stayed. There have been

*Cont. Br. Reilly*

no vocations either to priesthood or Religious life in the IBP for a number of years.

Recently a vocations director has been appointed, and he is seeking ways to work with young people in the country. Due to death and retirement, the number of Brothers has fallen in the Province. At present there are three Irish Brothers, the youngest of whom is in his 70's. We have one young Brother, Fr. Michael Ancheta, SVD, from the Philippines who is also a member of the Provincial Council. He works with the refugees and migrants here in Dublin with the JRS (Jesuit Refugee Services).

In August of this year, we received a letter from the Generalate on the *'General Assembly on the Brothers Vocation.'* In that letter there was a request that a committee would be set up to carry forward an outlined programme of activities in preparation for the General Assembly on the Brothers Vocation which is to be held at Cebu City in the Philippines in 2009.

Unfortunately, for a number of reasons, we in the Province were not able to carry forward this task. The time given for completing the task was too short. While we responded to the letter from the Zonal Coordinator to submit name(s) of delegates to the General Assembly on the Brothers Vocation in February, the letter sent by the Generalate in August 2008 could only be studied by the Council when it met in late September after the summer recess. There was a Generalate Visitation scheduled

for the Province for October - November of 2008 and most of the energy of the Province went into preparing for that. And finally our one and only young Brother who might have been able to assist in organizing something in the Province was planning on taking his three month leave in October and is only expected to return in mid-January.

In addition, it should be admitted that the general situation regarding vocations in the Irish Church and also in Britain is rather precarious. The reasons are too complex to be discussed here. But the result of our present situation is that few Religious congregations are attracting vocations and hardly any for the Missionary Congregations. The SVD has not been unaffected by this general trend.

I hope the above will be of some assistance to you in your preparations for the Assembly in Cebu.

## THE PUBLICITY IS TREMENDOUS

*Br. Eugenio A. Orog, PHC*



According to Cervantes, "to be prepared is half of the victory." I am keenly aware that much preparation for this Assembly has already been done, that is, from logistics and venue, from information dissemination to process questions in which each delegate has to study beforehand.

Many eyes and ears are keen on the Assembly's success. After all this is a very special one as other Assemblies of the Society have been cancelled this year due to global economic crisis. In a sense it is a "gift" to us Brothers from the Society, and we need to work together to be worthy of such a gift.

I am grateful that the Society is gifting us by holding this Brothers Assembly. I pray that something good can come out from it. For we Brothers are part of the core of the identity of the SVDs. Constitution 104 reminds us that **"the charisma of our Society is characterized as we accomplish our missionary service in a fraternal community laymen and clerics."** Ergo Brothers are not just another missionary issue (item) to be resolved but really a part of who we are—the being. And the doing is, of course, its opposite.

Unless the *being* part resonates to the consciousness of every confrere, the Brother's vocation will always be marginalized. For instance, in the recently concluded Provincial Assembly of the Central Province last January 20-21 here in Tagaytay, the forthcoming General Assembly on the Brother Vocation was not mentioned. In a way, I was expecting it since the Postulancy and the Novitiate are here. Besides, there were five of us Brothers participating in that Assembly. To this effect some reasons can be accounted for this forgetfulness.

First, the host of the Assembly is the Southern Province. Secondly, each Province has its own competence in handling particular issue. And by principle of subsidiarity, each one has to mind his own affairs and be respectful of each other's boundaries. But I am

*Cont. Br. Orog*

sure the Provincial himself of the Central Province and his Council are very much aware of this forthcoming Assembly. They look forward to it.

The Brothers in the Philippines tackled this matter in the meeting in Davao City last October 2008. I failed to participate due to conflicting demands of missionary apostolate. But I can say that the publicity is tremendous. In one community which I visited, the list of participants and the questions that they need to study are posted at the community bulletin board. Thanks to computer technology which makes information readily available at the fingertips. The SVD Brother Newsletter is very instrumental in linking us together. Thanks to Br. Bela Lanyi for spearheading this project.

I am optimistic that the Assembly will promote further understanding and appreciation of Brother's vocation in the Society. Moreover, I believe that it will also promote better communion between Brothers and Priests. As the saying goes, "Communion is the heart of mission; and mission is the fruit of communion."  
**GOD BLESS US IN THIS VERY IMPORTANT ENDEAVOR!**

## **GIVE MORE PRIORITY FOR GOOD TRAINING!**

*Br. Ruben Funan, IDJ*



Actually I have thought to share what we should do on this modern technology specifically for the brother.

What I experienced, felt, and observed is definitely my own experience. I hope we can discuss this important issue for the benefit of our mission. What I am airing out is purely in relation with the brother's vocation and it should be done for the brothers in the modern technology specifically for the Junior Brothers.

When I arrived in Jogjakarta to take further studies, I was sure that I would face a lot of challenges. One of the challenges I had in mind was that one day I would feel interested with the outside world. I am saying this because I am directly involved with the college students, so called lay students. I am sometimes dragged by their influence to follow their lifestyle. If I avoid being with them, am I not making the wrong decision? If I am directly involved with them, to what extent then?

My community and prayer life is still my first choice. But I also feel happy being with the college students and sharing the Good News of God to them in my own simple way: my example.

I am worried, and so I ask myself: Will I keep my holy vocation? This question does not only bother me when I am in crisis but also in almost any situation of my life as a young brother. There are many trials I experience daily in different forms. Thank God that until this moment, I am still strong and still love my vocation as a brother.

Then next questions in my mind are: What makes me strong in this fast-changing world? Why should I still live in the "conservative" world? Good and strong formation is very much important. It is like building a house on the rock. Strong foundation in formation could determine one's life as religious in the future. Prayer life, constant reflection, reading the bible daily and contemplation are the tools to experience the presence of God in the community.

Therefore, my suggestion is to give more priority for the basic formation of the brothers and good training for their mission. It is very important for a brother to determine his vocation as a religious-missionary in the SVD.



## **SPEAK WITH INTEGRITY!**

*Br. Bernard Spitzley, USC*



I applaud the Generalate's efforts in gathering the wisdom of as many members of the Society as possible in preparation for the Assembly.

However, in the Chicago province, the response to the survey came from three Brothers and a Priest, the ad hoc committee appointed by the Provincial council to prepare the report. I'm sure there were others who agreed with the work of the committee but did not take the time to respond. Thus, their voice, their input is not incorporated, heard. With the Brother's vocation near a crisis, one would think that more would have responded to the request for their contribution.

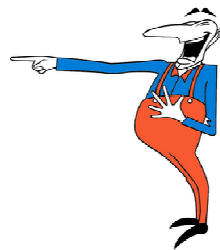
In working with the committee that did answer the survey, I was invigorated and it helped renew my commitment and the importance of having Brothers. For I believe that any community without a Brother is an improvised community.

My hope is that those who will gather in Cebu speak with integrity and with authority in addressing the signs of the times; that the characteristic

dimension be emphasized, and the importance of Prophetic Dialogue for all SVD's be renewed; that they develop measurable, strategic steps that can be implemented and evaluated so that this rich gift of Brotherhood will grow and be a vital part of our Society, and so that significant and far-reaching steps to ensure the vitality and long life of the Brother's vocation will be ensured.

## **BACK TO THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE "FOUNDING GENERATION"**

*Br. Swaminathan Valiyavilayil, INM*



Thank you very much for your mail asking me about the preparative meeting in INM Province. As far as I know, such a meeting did not take place in our province. Our society is a priest-dominated congregation and I firmly believe that unless the priest confreres work wholeheartedly for Brother vocation, we are not going to make a desired improvement in this matter. Brotherhood in our society is conveniently ignored or forgotten by our own confreres in many parts of the world. We are becoming fewer in number, growing older and sickly, making some "noise" that is not very much heard.

This is only my opinion. I wish you success in the forthcoming Zonal Assembly.

We SVD Brothers need to get back to the spirituality of the "founding generation" to bear witness to the Religious Vocation as Brothers. We need to avoid the tendency of comparison. Our identity as Religious Brothers does not depend on white collar jobs. First and foremost we must be the men of prayer, dedicated to whole-hearted service. Our missionary availability as Brothers comes to its forefront when we are ready to go wherever we are sent, and to do whatever jobs are entrusted to us.

Furthermore, we need to continually grow in the firm conviction that our vocation to Brotherhood is a call from God and thus it is Divine. Our response to this call is human and thus we need to be creative and relevant to the signs of the time. This kind of approach will certainly bring a better breakthrough for Brother Vocation in our Society. It is not a secret that what SVD is today is mainly due to the yeomen service rendered by our Brothers of yesteryears. Hence let us be proud of our roots and carry on the legacy handed down to us by our Founder Saint Arnold and the founding generation.



## CELEBRATE RATHER THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE VOWS...

*Br. Gabby Wangak, IDE*



You requested me to write about the prepararion process for the upcoming General Assembly for the Brothers Vocation in Cebu, Philippines this coming June 2009. To answer your request I have asked Br. Wilfrid to write it. I will write some information in relation to my previous writing entitled *“Common Vocation as a Brother and Father in our Congregation.”*

In this preparation, the Ad Hoc committee formed by the Provincial was sent to four communities such as Ledalero community, St. Conrad Brother Formation, St. Josef Ende Community and St. Arnold Janssen Lantuka community. The reaction of the community members to the question “Why does the brother vocation decrease?” is varied. One interesting experience when I met the Brothers and Priests in St. Conrad Brother Formation House was when they said that the question is classic, yet it has been asked in different times by different persons.

Why does Brother Vocation decrease compared with the

clerical candidates? There was a time that I threw this question to our senior in Ledalero community. I was surprised with his answer. He said there are many reasons. One of them is the pride of the priest. I asked him again what he meant by his statement. He further shared his experience.

When Fr. Josef Konigsman (a missionary from Germany) taught canon law in Ledalero, he asked his novices, “Why do you join the SVD?” The fraters enthusiastically replied, “To be a priest.” Fr. Josef continued, “You entered the wrong seminary. Better you transfer to Ritapiret (a seminary for the diocesan).”

If we ask the same question to experienced missionaries (German, Dutch), they will surely answer, “To be a missionary.” If we ask the same question to our fraters or our young priests, they will simply answer “To be a priest.”

According to him, we have lost our identity. It is not according to the vision of the Founder anymore: to become religious-missionary without distinguishing our identity. Be a missionary beyond our limits, beyond our culture, beyond, our religion, beyond the social status. According to him “we who are ordained to be a priest have a vocation inside the vocation,” meaning, we are called to be a religious before becoming a priest. If a confrere looks at priesthood as his main vocation, then SVD is only his stepping stone and the brother is always second class in this congregation.

In Indonesia, East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) specifically, some people still view the brother vocation as second class. My observation is that this view may not fade away for the following reasons:

1. Culture. NTT is known with the culture-relation determined by who you are, who is above you and who is under you. If I am not mistaken, in one of our general chapters there was an agreement or resolution to call our confrere by name without embellishment: Father or Brother. It is quite difficult with the Indonesian’s culture, especially in NTT. There are confreres who terribly get angry if he is not called Father or Brother. The people still look at the priest as higher than the brother. This may be one of the causes why the brother’s vocation decreases.
2. Clerical church. Every important thing is done by the ordained people. To be a provincial, one should be an ordained person.
3. SVD Identity. I haven’t read in the SVD Provincial news or Arnoldus Nota anything about our confrere priests celebrating the vows in the society. I have never seen SVD confreres from Indonesia celebrating the 25th, 40th, or 50th anniversary of their vows (sorry if I am wrong). They always remember their ordination anniversary and the celebration is not that simple.

*Cont. Br. Wangak*

In relation to this, there are two things that Brothers should remember so as not to feel second class in the SVD.

1. Our constitution says we are called to become SVD, meaning, to be religious-missionary. Suggestion: Is it possible for Superior General and Council members to make a general policy for those in the perpetual vows to compulsorily celebrate the anniversary of the vows and not the ordination? Obviously, this suggestion is based on our constitution.
2. We should look at the Brother Vocation as a special call from God that we should be proud of and thankful for. We should be happy with our call as a Brother in the SVD. Anyway, either priest or brother is called by God to serve in our own way.

## **CALL FOR A COMPETENT VOCATION PASTORAL**

*Fr. Hans Weibel, SWI*



1. How do you assess the preparation process for this assembly in your province/region or mission?

In Switzerland the team of Br. Franz Schurtenberger, Fr. Stephan Dähler, Br Markus Jöhl and Br Vinzenz von Holzen met in January. Br Franz is going to summarize and forward the results.

2. Could you share with us some joys and difficulties (if any) you have experienced while participating in that preparation process in your province/region or mission?

We believe that a good vocation pastoral is able to present the Brother vocation in a competent way when there is a Brother in the team.

3. Were you satisfied with the outcome of your meetings /discussions or survey of that preparation?

The discussions in the communities and in the team were interesting and inspiring. It is important to react to the current situation and to discuss the necessary steps for the future.

## **COMMUNITY AND SPIRITUAL LIFE**

*Br. Fanz Schurteberger, SWI*



The vocation pastoral is still very much clerical by character, particularly here

where the bishops want to fill the pastoral shortages by hook or by crook. Maybe we should look at the Brother vocation in connection with development and cooperation of independent institutions. We should emphasize the community and spiritual life in the order.

## **A BLESSED TIME OF DISCOURSE**

*Br Piotr Szewczuk, POL*



After receiving information about the General Assembly on Brother Vocation in the Philippines, the Provincial Council of the Polish Province established a preparatory commission. This commission is composed of three Brothers and one Father. As I was elected to represent the Polish Province in the Philippines, I felt obliged to organize a meeting of Brothers in the Polish Province. First, I collected all documents on the theme of Brother vocation and I sent them in e-mails to every Brother as a personal phase of preparatory studies.

The gathering took place from 5th to 7th December, 2008 in the St Joseph Freinademetz Mission House in Krinica Morska. This is a retreat house located on the beautiful beach

*Cont. Br. Szewczuk*

of the Baltic Sea. This was also a symbolic event because we celebrated the 25th jubilee of the Brothers' Gathering in the Polish Province.

Fifteen Brothers in final vows and seven in temporary vows participated in the gathering. Fr. Provincial Andrzej Danilewicz and Fr. Kazimierz Gergont, the spiritual director of our seminary and a member of the commission, were also there. We also invited Br. Jerzy Kuzma, PNG, a missionary on home leave, and Br. Jan Potyka, BOT, who was waiting for his visa to Botswana.

The gathering of the Brothers was dedicated to the theme of Brother Vocation according to the "Guidance to the common reflection." We all worked together because we wanted to hear the views of everybody. The secretaries scrupulously took notes of the discussion. Their notes became the material for the elaboration of Report or Synthesis of Reflections and Proposals. The Report was elaborated by the Commission on January 3, 2009, in the Mission House at Michalowice. The translation into the English language was done there as well. On January 23, it was sent to Fr. Anton Fencz, Zonal Coordinator for Europe.

In the Polish tradition, there is a gathering of Religious Brothers from all religious orders in Poland. This gathering takes place at the National Sanctuary of the Blessed Mother in Czestochowa every first week of Lent. Every year, some 1000

religious Brothers attend this gathering.

The recently closed "Year of St. Arnold and Joseph" was marked with many events both on the local and the provincial levels. It was a blessed time of discourse on our Brother vocation. The Provincial Chapter, which is preceded by Local Chapters, will also take place this year. We hope that these events will be good occasions to discuss topics on priestly vocation and Brother vocation for our Society.

### WHAT WE EXPECT IS NOT ONLY BEAUTIFUL WRITING

*Br Gabriel Gomez (ARS)*



We propose:

- to set up and innovate the existing structures in order to articulate theory and practice of the Religious Missionary Life, particularly that of the brothers.
- that the assembly produce not only beautiful and literary writings but also represent the social reality of each context where the SVD runs Brother formation.
- to arrive at the conclusion that life in perpetual vows

is not the only way to serve the Lord.

- to make the temporary religious life possible.
- to make this paradigm for a determined region possible.
- that professional studies be done according to the needs of the Congregation, and once finished, be carried out in accordance with the Congregation.
- to promote what is ministerial-professional: Could the Brother not be a permanent brother deacon? Why not do it?

There were eight priest confreres and only one brother in our meeting. It was agreed upon that it is important for the proposals to come from the Brothers themselves.

The resolution, however, should not just come from the Brothers but, more importantly, from everyone, since a change from both parties is necessary. For what would happen to a Brother, formed in the line of our proposals, who joins a community of clerical community, formed in another perspective?



## **A LAST WORD, FROM THE EDITORS**

***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, etc. We thank you for that.***

*Your Brothers in Cebu.*

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