



BROTHERS FIC

CALLED TO BE GOOD AND TO DO GOOD



BROTHERS FIC / Vol.2 / No:7 / 2022



*“CARE FOR OUR
COMMON HOME...”*



Bro. Ag. Giwal Santoso taking care of plants in his school compound (Muntilan, Indonesia 2021).

Laudato Si and Our Apostolate”

“
I see all the apostolic works
I did as a way to serve
my homeland, the Church,
and the FIC as best as I can.”

Bro. Heribertus Sumarjo

“
The adage “where there is
a will, there is a way” is in
fact a reality.”

Bro. Fabian Bezel

“
I am particularly grateful to
God for His guidance and
inspiration for the past 25 years
of religious life.”

Bro. Lawrence Sitima



FIC Constitutions



Art.15

Transfer of Faith

Living according to the spirit of our Founders also implies, that in our apostolic activity a well-considered contemporary and culturally integrated transfer of faith should be the subject of great concern.



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Colophon

Brothers FIC, called to be good and to do good, (Masters from Maastricht) is a six-monthly congregational magazine, published in June and December each year. This magazine is free of charge.

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Printing & distribution :

Percetakan Pangudi Luhur Muntilan
(PPLM)

From The Editor

Pope Francis launched “Laudato Si” in 2015. Since the time of launching, people around the world have tried to promote the ideals of the document, and also implement the action plan suggested. As Christians willing to spread the Pope's message, the FIC brothers are motivated to propose “Laudato Si and Our Apostolate,” as the theme of the June 2022 issue of our magazine, Brothers FIC. The aim of this issue is to encourage not only the FIC brothers, but our students, workers and collaborators, to first of all, spread the message of the document in our communities and places of apostolate; and secondly to take concrete actions on its implementation. We therefore would like to share with our cherished readers the attempts being made to put into practice the principles of “Laudato Si” in our daily lives and apostolate.

Pope Francis' encyclical Laudato Si (“Praise be to you”) is a worldwide wake up call to help humankind understand the damage that man is inflicting on the environment and all creatures that live in it. Laudato Si has seven goals, grounded in a concept of integral ecology, and they include: response to the cry of the Earth; response to the cry of the poor; ecological economics; adoption of simple lifestyles; ecological education; ecological spirituality; and emphasis on community involvement and participatory action. We know that as FIC brothers we have an important task regarding the implementation of the encyclical's values in our daily lives, and especially our apostolic places where we interact with a host of others. The task is a difficult one, and needs collaboration and team work to accomplish.

Beloved reader, you will be reading about some ideas and opinions of our fellow brothers regarding the theme. Bro. Augustine, our General Superior, shares his inspiration on “Our Role in Laudato Si.” Bro. Godwin Kuu-ireme from Ghana, takes us further into “Promoting the message of “Laudato Si” in our schools. Bro. Mike Mbato from Malawi gives his personal feeling on the encyclical in our daily lives in communities.” Bro. Johan Muijtjens shares his reflection on the topic “The spiritual and apostolic meaning of our vows in the light of Laudato Si.” Bro. Raphael Besigrinee comes in again with his usual reflection on the theme.

Dear reader, this time three brothers will provide their profiles: Bros. Heribertus Sumardjo Bakti Kristana from Indonesia, Lawrence Sitima from Malawi and Fabian Bezel from Ghana. It is our hope that through their life stories our young readers would be inspired by the life of the FIC brothers and aspire to serve God through religious life. For the rest, we offer news from our provinces and Religious House Netherlands, news in pictures, an article from the Vatican and a short piece about Mary written by Bro. Gerard Langelaan, from Religious House of The Netherlands.

In the spirit of “Laudato Si”, let us continue to promote and more importantly, find ways to implement the message and the seven goals of Laudato Si in our daily lives. Let us accept as part of our responsibility, the task of caring for the environment. Thank you for your attention and support to the FIC Congregation. “Concern for the environment thus needs to be joined to a sincere love for our fellow human beings and an unwavering commitment to resolving the problems of society”. Let us adhere to this appeal from Pope Francis.

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Our Role in Laudato Si

Bro. Augustine Kubdaar



The message of our Holy Father Pope Francis during the recent Laudato Si' week celebration (22-29 May 2022) is indeed spirit re-awakening. In a short address, he invites us to reflect on the following questions: "What kind of world do we want to leave to those who will come after us, to the children who are growing up? What do we want? Climate Justice? When do we want it?" Motivated by these questions our Holy Father renewed his urgent call on us to listen and to respond to "the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor". He exhorts us all to care for creation and the most vulnerable people in our worldwide human family.

According to Einstein, the universe and its current emerging crisis seem to be telling us one overarching truth: the truth of infinite interdependence. We need a transformation of the human heart; we need to see the problems with the heart so that we can have the right motivation to want to contribute to the solution. We need a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all.

To quote Margaret Mead: "Never doubt that a small group of committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." Therefore we (especially FIC Brothers) are challenged to make a positive change in our lives to support biodiversity and promote climate justice. As we are connected on this shared planet, it is imperative that we work together. All of us need to look at ways to be part of the solutions, not the problem. Our role is to remain keenly aware, patiently expectant, and open to all possibilities of addressing the myriad ecological problems and the cry of the poor.

To be able to provide a sustainable contribution towards saving Mother Earth, I think we need first and foremost, a spirit of willingness to better understand the problem: "Ecological crisis - the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor." Thus, we need to take seriously the groaning of our ecology and humanity. We can achieve this through reflection and study, as well as participation in workshops on the subject.

In conclusion, we are called to be men "who see with wider eyes, hear with well-tuned ears, and act/speak with a more knowing tongue". Our individual and collective contributions, best understanding, and willingness to address the issues are important. The future is always possible only for those who are willing to recreate it. I agree with Mother Teresa that "In this life, we cannot always do great things. But we can do small things with great love". Let us dare to dream of a better world for the next generation and set all out to live our dreams.



Laudato Si and Our Apostolate

Bro. Raphael Besigrinee

Introduction

Some dictionaries define "apostolate" as the office, authority or mission of an apostle. Many writers consider an apostle as someone who is sent, an envoy, someone who is sent forth or commissioned to carry out the will and purposes of the sender. As Christians, we are therefore apostles of Christ. The work of an apostle, not only of the first followers of Christ but of all the faithful who carry on the original mission of Jesus Christ to the twelve, is to bring people to the knowledge and love of Christ. In other words, our apostolate is to make the work and life of Jesus visible in the world. As FIC brothers "we know ourselves to be called together and thus sent out to continue the work of Jesus" (const. art. 15). The work or mission of Jesus is spelt out in the following: *"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free the oppressed"* (Luke 4:18).

It is not surprising that the evangelization efforts of the Catholic Church in many parts of the world, usually goes along with the provision of education and healthcare. The mission of the church and our apostolate in particular is about preservation of life, with all its diversity and beauty. This comes in various forms: formation of the youth, care of orphans, widows, or the handicap, provision of health care or education, skills training, special needs education, etc.

Another scriptural text that reminds me of the care and preservation of life is found in the gospel of Matthew: *"I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me,*



naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me ... " (Matt. 25: 31 - 46). The efforts of the Church are clearly focused on the needs of the poor, the weak and the vulnerable. Preservation, care and respect for the natural environment are undeniably linked to human life, just as Pope John Paul II wrote: "Respect for life, and above all for the dignity of the human person extends also to the rest of creation". This is where the teaching of *Laudato Si* comes in.

The Call of Laudato Si

Pope Francis' Encyclical *Laudato Si* is a worldwide reminder to humanity on the destruction that we are causing to the environment, and what we can do to improve on it. "When we speak of the environment, what we really mean is a relationship existing between nature and the society which lives in it. Nature cannot be regarded as something separate from ourselves or as a mere setting in which we live. We are part of nature, included in it and thus in constant interaction with it." (LS#139)

Laudato Si outlines the dangers human behaviour poses to the environment, and proceeds to offer solutions. The Pope appeals to us to respect all created things because we are all inter related. In God's creation, fullness of life comes about when human beings live responsibly with the rest of God's creation. I presume during the time of Jesus, environmental matters were not burning issues, thus Jesus focussed his teachings on the most essential needs at the time: curing of mental and physical illnesses, preaching the word of God, reinterpreting the law of love, etc.. Thus the focus was on the well being of people. After two thousand years, the situation has obviously changed and the world has to wake up to the signs of the times. Through science and technology, we are now fully aware that human life is inextricably related to the rest of nature: animals, plants, land, etc. Our common home is a web of life, with each entity depending on the others for life. If the primary six children in our schools are not already aware of the interdependence between plants and animals, then we should better revise the curricula of our schools, otherwise we are setting a legacy for their future destruction.

Caring for the environment our original apostolate

The LORD God put the man in the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and to take care of it (Gen 2:15). What apostolate is more urgent than safeguarding the very earth that sustains us? Even if we were not conscious of this, we have been instructed by God to "cultivate and care for the earth" as a divine duty. *Laudato Si* says more about this divine apostolate: *'Tilling' refers to cultivating, ploughing or working, while 'keeping' means caring, protecting, overseeing and preserving. This implies a relationship of mutual responsibility between human beings and nature. Each community can take from the bounty of the earth whatever it needs for subsistence, but it*

also has the duty to protect the earth and to ensure its fruitfulness for coming generations" (LS#67).

The Bible reminds us that the earth is a gift to all creatures that are on earth (Gn 9:16-17). However, this endowment goes with responsibility: to safeguard the gift through our work and even to improve it. This requires us to live responsibly within it, rather than manage creation through exploitation. God calls us to be His stewards by caring for the garden He created. In 1991, the US bishops issued a statement entitled *"Renewing the Earth"* urging people around the world to care for God's creation: "Stewardship implies that we must both care for God's creation according to standards that are not of our own making, and at the same time be resourceful in finding ways to make the earth flourish." This places a huge responsibility on our shoulders. The statement explained further: "As stewards of God's creation, humans have a dual role and responsibility for the rest of creation, namely protecting and caring for the earth and using our God-given intelligence and creativity to improve upon it." (U.S. Catholic Bishops Conference, 2000). There is no greater apostolic activity on earth than this, as it is the most fundamental to our very existence.

Respect for God's sacred creation

As religious, we need to respect nature for theological and spiritual reasons. Destruction to the natural environment also destroys the beauty of God's creation because through the gifts of nature (e.g. forests, rivers, lakes, etc.), we encounter God the Creator as said in Romans 1:20: Creation reveals the nature of God. Pope John Paul II also called on Christians to respect and protect the environment, so that through nature people can *"contemplate the mystery of the greatness and love of God."* The wonderful

variety of the natural world is, therefore, part of the divine plan and, as such, invites our utmost respect. Accordingly, “it is appropriate that we treat other creatures and the natural world not just as means to human fulfilment but also as God's creatures, possessing an independent value, worthy of our respect and care” (*Catholic Apostolic Centre, 1991*). If “Creation and all created things are inherently good because they are of the Lord (1 Cor 10:26),” we certainly have an apostolic responsibility of preserving it for God. I believe Pope Francis' call is a reminder of the OT story of the Garden of Eden. Humans seem prone to disobeying God, and if we disobey this call once again like Adam and Eve, we should get ready for the consequences: self destruction.

In the Spirit of our Founders

I believe whatever poses a threat to human life or reduces the quality of human life should be our concern. Our constitution says that to live in the spirit of our founders means “we try to follow their example, in our time and our circumstances, and that we protect their heritage.” *Laudato Si* gave us a warning on the threats of global warming that “we are presently witnessing a disturbing warming of the climatic system ... and calls on humanity to recognize the need for changes of lifestyle, production and consumption, in order to combat this warming...” (LS#23). If we are truly attentive to the signs of the times, we should not wait till we are warned by somebody else. The challenges posed by climate today are not new, and if FIC brothers are actually to act according to the spirit of our founders, we should have started already doing something to improve the situation of the environment. Have we? Yes, we have started doing something in response to the Spirit of our Founders, namely “we, again and again, show a special concern for the poor and needy” (const. art 10). In a resolution adopted during our General



Bro. Frans Wils in his nature garden, Den Haag.

Chapter 2018, we are encouraging the brothers to use the educational programs available to them to foster an awareness of, and the need to care for the environment, in the spirit of the encyclical *Laudato Si*. The encyclical tells us that there is a strong connection between (the lacks of) care of our environment and poverty and that “Taking care of our own environment and helping others to do the same is a real and structural contribution to the well being of the underprivileged. It is a 'modern' way of opting for the poor.”

To make it more convincing that taking care of the environment is a modern way of attending to the poor, the Pope says “In fact, the deterioration of the environment and of society affects the most vulnerable people on the planet: 'Both everyday experience and scientific research show that the gravest effects of all attacks on the environment are suffered by the poorest'” (LS#48). If we realistically wish to attend to the needs of the poor, we should do that in combination with caring for the environment. In doing so, we have a special responsibility towards the poor and vulnerable, who are mostly affected by environmental damage. This is an apostolate we cannot fail to see because the Church's mission is focused on the needs of

the poor, the weak and the vulnerable, and if our response to climatic issues is inadequate; this may put a greater burden on the poor, particularly those in poor nations.

The Pope's appeal

Pope Francis calls for action to curb climate change, which he says is caused by human activities. The Pope asks for a nonviolent attitude towards God's creation; he asks for a path of conversion, for deep personal and societal transformation from the old way of domination and exploitation toward a "civilization of love" (LS#211). He also appealed for a new dialogue on how we are shaping the future of our planet. We need a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all, he said.

The Pope calls for environmental education which he believes will directly and significantly affect the world around us, namely "avoiding the use of plastic and paper, reducing water consumption, separating refuse, cooking only what can reasonably be consumed, showing care for other living beings, using public transport or car-pooling, planting trees, turning off unnecessary lights, ...reusing things instead of immediately discarding them". (LS#211).

Conclusion

In conclusion, I like to share with you what the US Bishops Conference said, "The environmental crisis of our own day constitutes an exceptional call to conversion. As individuals, as institutions, as a people, we need a change of heart to save the planet for our children and generations yet unborn. So vast are the problems, so intertwined with our economy and way of life that nothing but a wholehearted and ever more profound turning to God, the Maker of Heaven and Earth, will allow us to carry out our



Bro. Zeca Menezes in his maize garden,
Becora, Timor Leste.

responsibilities as faithful stewards of God's creation. Only when believers look to values of the Scriptures, honestly admit their limitations and failings, and commit themselves to common action on behalf of the land and the wretchedness of the earth will we be ready to participate fully in resolving this crisis."(*Renewing the Earth, United States Catholic Bishops Conference, 2000*).

This is a passionate invitation, and calls for all hands on deck and a renewed change of attitudes, and should include individuals, institutions, congregations, youth groups, etc. Every one of us must get involved with our talents and expertise in order to repair the damage caused by human abuse of God's creation. All of us can cooperate as instruments of God for the care of creation, each according to our own culture, experience, involvements and situation. Let us "live in simplicity and in wonderful harmony with God, with others, and with nature, since there is an inseparable bond between us and concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society, and interior peace." (LS #10). For me the time of awareness creation is over. Let us begin to put the ideas of *Laudato Si* into practice. Our students through their lessons should have known by now the use/value of trees, for instance. From here, they will be motivated enough when asked to plant or water a tree.

Laudato Si “Enlarge” Our Vows !

Bro.Johan Muijtjens

Becoming a Brother is an expression of a strong desire: You want to follow Jesus Christ with all your heart. This desire you express by professing / promising that you want to live with a free and open heart, that you want to be free from attachment to material goods and that you want be free in great availability to service. It is like Jesus, who was so loving for everybody, who was not attached to material goods and who was completely available for the task His Father had entrusted to Him. We call these serious promises 'vows': three ways to express one and the same deep longing: consecrated celibacy, evangelical poverty and evangelical obedience.

What, looking at our vows, has *Laudato Si* to say to us ?

Pope Francis has invited all people of good will to an 'ecological conversion'.

We as religious brothers may understand that call in a special way. That appeal to 'ecological conversion' can help us to understand our religious vows in an even broader and deeper way. Let me try to explain this a bit.

Laudato Si makes it very clear that we as human beings are very deeply related to the whole earth, not only to other humans, but to all the living nature (animals, plants) and even to what we think is not living: the physical world, all the material goods that the earth offers us. And because we are so deeply related, we have to cherish and also protect all of this.



Bro. Noud Fonken planting a tree to mark 100 years of de Schark, Maastricht (2021).

And you, religious, the pope says, you have in all this a *prophetic* task ! You must strongly raise awareness of God's love for all creation ! In that sense all creation is sacred. That's why you must denounce clearly all the misuse, not only of human beings, but also of animals, plants and all the resources God has given for the well being of ALL, not only for a small minority of rich and powerful people.

And here, the pope says, your promises, your vows, can be very helpful. Every dimension of your being, dear brothers and sisters, your motivation, your spirituality, should become *ecological*, that is: with a great heart embracing the whole of our 'common home'. That gives your vows an extra significance and fruitfulness.



General Council visit to the Religious House Netherlands, 2022.
(L-R: Bros. Frans Wils, Gerard Langelaan, and Augustine Kubdaar).

Your promise consecrated celibacy ? This means above all living with a loving and open heart. Yes, and now God longs more than ever that you embrace ALL God has created ! You, religious, need to be *examples* of great respect and loving care, not only for your fellow human beings, but for ALL that surrounds you. Yes, try to LOVE what surrounds you, not as a duty, but with great joy and gratitude !

And your evangelical poverty: your longing to live unattached to material goods ? In fact God would like you to CARE for all God has created. Real care is respectful, not spoiling, not indifferent, not grabbing, not throwing-away, but using it the way God has given it to us for the life and happiness of all human beings *together*. You may call your vow now '*ecological poverty*' to show that you understand God's deep desire !

And your 'evangelical obedience' ? Perhaps that is the most difficult for you. Obedience is 'deep listening', listening in great availability, listening to God's Dream

with the WHOLE of creation, not only global (our earth), but even cosmic (our whole universe). This kind of listening needs conviction and courage and necessarily leads to action: The effort to study and understand what is really going on, to have the courage to give correct information, to denounce lies ('fake news') and the misleading of people. You need to cooperate with and encourage others who fight for the victims, especially the many poor, who suffer from the misuse of what God has given so generously to all of us. Would you like to call this '*ecological obedience*' ? Go ahead !

That is how I hear pope Francis speak to us as religious brothers.

Our vows should be seen in a wider context and become even *more relevant* in our present situation. *Laudato Si* touches our love and deep longing and challenges us to understand our vows - and, yes, of our religious vocation as such, in a larger, renewed and even more beautiful way !

MALAWI

St. Patricks Secondary School Awarded

Bro. Andrew Makocho

Archbishop J. Theunissen invited the FIC brothers to help him in the Evangelisation of the peoples of Nyasa Vicariate.

In a letter of 12 May, 1959, the brothers were asked to raise Mzedi Junior secondary school hitherto run by the Xaverian brothers to a senior secondary school, build a Catholic teacher training college for the vicariate of Blantyre and Zomba, set up a boarding school for coloured (half-blood) boys with primary schooling and vocational education and a future primary and secondary school for Europeans, where Indians and Euro-Africans and even Africans of certain social status could be accepted. The FIC brothers took over Mzedi Secondary School, and also built Montfort Catholic Teacher Training College.

The General Administration of the FIC brothers in the Netherlands at the time, identified brothers for the Malawi mission. They asked Bros. Agnus Jansen, Aloysio Van den Broek, Bosco Hendrix, Lambertus Berkel, Theodatus Bosman, Wilhemo Koning to go to Wimbledon in the United Kingdom to study for an English proficiency certificate. The studies lasted from August 1959 to June, 1960.

Meanwhile, the office of the Archbishop had written the Director of Education of Nyasaland if a Dutch qualification could be viable in Nyasaland. Good news emerged that a few months of English proficiency, a years' course in English and a Headmasters Certificate from Holland, could be validated as Diploma.

Four FIC brothers arrived in Nyasaland on 11th. July, 1960. The annals indicate problems of communication between the FIC brothers and the Irish Xaverian brothers. The brothers arrived amidst a strike at Mzedi Junior Secondary. The Xaverian brothers were no longer interested to teach unruly youth. Moreover, the brothers did not



have adequate personnel. The youth took up arms against any white face as a potential British colonial. The country was agitating for Independence from the British.

The Xaverian brothers left in November, 1960 with minimal handovers. The Montfort Fathers who had set up the education system for Catholic boys in the vicariate were helpful. Father Eyssen S.M.M. is cited to have moduled a few courses. It is recorded the FIC brothers mixed Dutch and English in practical teaching since the brothers had little English expressive language and were bankrupt of the local language.

Mzedi Junior Secondary School had mixed fortunes in examination. The results of 1961 indicate that out of 60 students, 15 passed. In 1962, 60 students took the examination and 11 passed. The headship of Bro. Lambertus Van Berkel and Jovinus Milttenburg were short-lived as they could not stand the strikes. The brothers threatened to return if the situation did not improve.

The FIC brothers opted for Bro. Aloysio Van den Broek with a background as boarding master at Finchly school in the United Kingdom as a last resort. Mzedi Junior Secondary School crossed the threshold to St. Patricks Senior Secondary School in 1969. The school was named St. Patricks in honour of the Xaverian Irish brothers. The saint for Ireland is St. Patricks.

Malawi has four (4) years of secondary education. The secondary school is split into junior and senior secondary schools. Junior secondary school students write Junior Certificate Examinations after two years. The senior secondary students write Malawi School Certificate of Education Examination. Every year, the latter is competed for at National, Division and District level. St. Patricks excelled and sent more students to university.

The Ministry of education has offices at District level, Division level and National level. The district office is run by the District Education Officer. The Division Manager is in charge at the Divisional level while the National office is run by Principal Secretary. Secondary schools are run at Division and National levels.

Secondary schools are of levels. The first level is that of boarding school like St. Patricks which admits performing students from three or four districts. The second group comprises district secondary schools that get students from a particular district. Then there are what are called Open secondary schools whose students attend classes in the afternoons only. The last group is the community day secondary schools which get their students from the immediate community.

The grading system at Malawi School Certificate of Education, an equivalent of "0" level is that one (1) and Two (2) are distinctions. Those with 3, 4, 5, and 6 points obtain credits. The ones with 7 and 8 have passed. A 9 is a failure. It would seem that only distinctions matter in the competition of secondary schools.



Bro. Lawrence Sitima and his students of St. Patricks Secondary School, Malawi.

Subject teachers, individual students and an overall school performance are awarded every year. A ceremony is sited by the Education Division office to which every secondary school is invited. Such awards take the form of cash and trophies and certificates of merit. St. Patricks was the best performing school in the Shire Education Division and was at position two the whole of Malawi in 2021. It is at St. Patricks that two students scored an initial score of seven (7) points. No student scored overall six (6) points in 2021 countrywide.

The Mathematics and Physical Science teacher of St. Patricks became a sensation at the same time and was endorsed as examiner of Malawi School Certificate of Education. Meanwhile, the ministry of Education sent Japanese Scientists to St. Patricks on a special Science teaching project to record lessons which were reviewed in Japan and have since been distributed across Malawi.

The sheer dedication of the teaching staff propelled St. Patricks to great heights. The school had for some time retrospectively been categorized a hot-bed for strikes. Due to the ever presence of the teaching staff in the classroom

and around the school, students did well in national examinations. The headmaster encouraged the teaching staff to always be present for lessons. The Ministry of education were astounded at this rebellious school doing well in examinations. The ministry of education sneaked into the school and held private interviews with the students to learn the trick.

Reports show that the major cause of agitation among the students were rather outside than inside the classroom. They wanted more “nsima” and more “ndiwo” in the dining room. These were more dining room strikes than classroom or academic strikes. It was necessary now and again to remind the students that the school fees that they paid could not buy stocked rooms of food.

One other aspect worth mentioning is the fact that students entered secondary school when they were already young adults. Places at secondary school were limited. Selection to secondary school was for the privileged. Pupils repeated standard eight, the last class of the primary school, as many times as possible as long as they could afford the school fees. School drop-out rate was massive. It is no gainsaying that some pupils repeated class eight for a record ten times. Moreover, selected students to secondary school had to cope with the rapid acceleration of education at the secondary school.

The ministry of education inspectorate then turned to the examination of co-curricular arrangement within the school. The Inspectors Report of 11th. October, 1964, might have revealed controversial issues. It alleged the time table of the school was too academic and had little recreational subjects. There were no syllabuses from the Ministry of education in the school and that teachers taught from the book and did not prepare schemes and records of work. Text books for most of the subjects were in short supply. However, academic progress

reports were well maintained and regularly administered.

The report further condemned the old buildings of the school referred to as “Zimbabwe Ruins” by the students. The buildings were said to be dark and the walls in need of painting. The hostels leaked and the latrines smelled. It might have been commendable to introduce flush toilets once water was available. At this time, Bro. Harry Muselaers (the baker) abandoned his kitchen and began to work on the dormitories and classrooms with help from Beit Trust through their Zimbabwean office and the General Administration of the FIC brothers.

Amidst all this, the headmaster of St. Patricks Secondary School, Bro. Aloysio Van Den Broek, was in 1972 honoured to meet the first President of Malawi, Hastings Kamuzu Banda courtesy of the best student from the school at an English debating competition. From then on, many students who passed English at the school, were immediately enrolled at the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation. The school have been a trophy winner of English drama competitions organized by the Association for the Teaching of English in Malawi for a considerable number of years. It is currently the English Drama Competition Champion of the country. For the past two years, St. Patricks has produced the best essay in the English writing competition on “Climate change” in the southern Africa schools comprising South Africa, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Namibia, Botswana and Malawi. They retained the French Drama trophy for three successive years.

Since 1978, St. Patricks has embraced an inclusive system of education for Special Needs students. The first disability group to be admitted at the school were those with blindness. The best aggregate from those with blindness has been ten (10) points. The school also has been accepting those with albinism and low vision from 2001. The school is yet to accept the Deaf. The Deaf and those with other disabilities attend



Students planting trees, Malawi.

regular secondary schools. Many such students struggle.

St. Patricks had its low moments as well. The middle 1980s and early 2000s were years of inconsistent examination results. The Ministry of Education had collected enough data which revealed there were many pupils who passed standard eight but did not get admitted into secondary school. However, the ministry of Education had introduced a policy that primary schools should not allow pupils to repeat a class. Such a policy had been dubbed Acceleration of Education and was enshrined in the rights of the Malawian child. Enrolment of students in the secondary schools increased and quality was compromised. Two forms of secondary education were thus introduced, the Community Day Secondary education and the Open Secondary School system.

Adversely, there were fewer secondary school teachers than were students. The available secondary school infrastructure was scanty. The ministry therefore resolved, the available teachers and buildings could be utilized. Teachers would be allowed to teach private students in the same buildings at different times. The parties would organize payment for such services. Money obtained from this misnamed

private initiative was income for the teacher. Teachers went in pursuit of students, scrambling to maximize income. Teachers at St. Patricks joined the fray late. It was common for teachers to abscond the paid government job in order to maximise personal income. The headmaster was the busiest bee with the moral duty to track teachers. Meanwhile, such private schools have been registered with the Ministry of education so that such students could sit for prescribed government examinations.

It took a number of scheduled meetings and visits to the school to convince teachers. A series of persuasions might have helped. Teachers were looking for more money and St. Patricks was not lucrative enough to generate personal income as was the case with other secondary schools. Amicably, teachers were allowed to organize private lessons though outside the school. The teachers relocated to a nearby primary school. This has for once saved crumbling desks under the weight of overcrowded classrooms.

Performing teachers were given monetary gifts and offered a relaxing trip to the lake. Currently, the Parent Teacher Association reward those teachers with high subject distinctions. The brothers take all workers to the lake for a sumptuous lunch at a reputable restaurant replete with water recreation facilities.

St. Patricks continues to be morally charged to mock any national examination. In the recent Junior Certificate Examination, only two students failed. The failed students had a background they entered St. Patricks from transfer. The proximity of St. Patricks continues to exert pressure on St. Louis Community Day Secondary to strive higher and so is the burning of night candles.

THE NETHERLANDS

New Associated Member, The Netherlands

Bro. Frans School

On 25 March, Claudia Theinert officially joined the FIC congregation as an associated member. This happened in a beautiful celebration at 5.30 pm in the prayer room of the Prins Bisschopsingel 22 in Maastricht. Claudia had prepared this celebration herself in terms of lyrics and songs. Songs of Oosterhuis, the Gospel reading from Luke of the Annunciation, passages from the FIC Constitutions, and the Magnificat to the tune of 'Amazing Grace'.

Bro. Wim Swüste gave a movingly beautiful reflection and the bidding prayers that were performed by Bro. Johan Muijtjens were always concluded with "God, you are love, source of life".

Central in this celebration was Claudia's story of her personal path, which she depicted with paper footsteps on which dates, texts and photos told how 'her story has gone on and still continues'. The front page of the prayer booklet shows an illustration of a woman on her way, with whom Claudia could fully identify herself and who is depicted in the song 'Señora del camino', the Lady of the Road who accompanies us - through all the vicissitudes of life - to the Father and the Son.

After that, the official agreement was signed by Claudia as associated member and Bro. Wim Luiten, Superior of the RHN, on behalf of the Congregation FIC. At the end of the celebration, Claudia was presented with the framed poster "Elkaar nabij blijven" (Keeping Close to Each Other) and a beautiful bouquet of flowers.



*Claudia
New Associated Member*

Claudia expressed her bond with the FIC in a circle of fellow brothers: Lo Koeleman, Kees Gordijn, Johan Muijtjens (PBS); Wim Luiten, Jos Bom, Wim Swüste, Gerard Langelaan (Capucijnengang); Augustine Kubdaar and Frans School (Emmaus).

After the celebration, the group gathered in the large conference room for an aperitif and a four-course menu, which was enjoyed in peace and contributed to a pleasant get-together.



Meeting of two GC members, Bros. Augustine Kubdaar and Valentinus Daru, with Provincial Council of Indonesia, Pangudi Luhur School Foundation Board, and Budi Mulya Semarang Social Foundation Board.
(L-R: Bros. Heribertus Iriyanto, Simon Andrus, Gregorius Suhadi, Valentinus Daru Setiaji, Augustine Kubdaar, Martinus Tukir Handoko, Albertus Suwanto, Michael Sidarta Susila, and Fransiskus Asisi Dwiyatno).



A group of FIC Aspirants during their "Contact Days" in St. Louis Community Wa, Ghana.
It was organized by Bro. Aaron Nee-eru, with the theme "Social Media and the Youth of Today".



FIC Brothers and friends in Malawi during Easter gathering in Bethel Community (2022).



Bros. Augustine Kubdaar and Fransiskus A. Dwiyatno cutting the ribbons to mark the inauguration of FIC cemetery in Muntilan, Indonesia (May 2022).



FIC Chile Province during Christmas celebration in Talca (December 2021)



A farewell dinner in honour of Mrs. Leny Last-Ubach, GC secretary who officially retired in April 2022.

50 Years of life as a Brother: many men/people, the Church, and FIC

Bro. Heribertus Sumarjo

I am Heribertus Sumarjo. I was born in Bantul-Jogyakarta on April 13, 1951, the seventh child of 11 in the family. I started formation in the FIC Congregation in 1970, made my first vows in 1972, and my final profession in 1979. Thus, in 2022, I will celebrate 50 years of consecrated life in the FIC Congregation. As an active member of the congregation, I have done a number of apostolic works within the Pangudi Luhur Foundation (YPL) from 1972 to 2002, with 8 years as Principal of an Elementary School, 8 years as Head of a Teacher Training College, 3 years as Head of a High School, and 7 years as Head of YPL Head Office. From 2002 to 2011 I served as a missionary outside the FIC Congregation, as Executive Secretary of the Education Commission of the Indonesian Bishops' Conference (KWI) and from 2011 until 2021 I worked for the Archdiocese of Jakarta as Chairman of the Education Commission of the Archdiocese of Jakarta, Manager of the Atma Jaya Foundation, Supervisor of Strada Association and Bina Teknik Strada Foundation. These apostolic works are seen as ways of serving my homeland, the Church, and FIC in particular.

Basic Inspiration

What gives me inspiration, courage and motivation for my apostolate include:

1. The belief that my first duty as religious is to demonstrate God's works through my apostolate;
2. The belief that I can serve my country best with a democratic, inclusive, pluralistic attitude, and uphold human rights;
3. The belief I can serve the Church by proclaiming the Kingdom of God...which is truth, peace, and joy;
4. The belief that I can serve the Congregation best by internalizing the spirituality and charism of FIC, and promote same among others, in my community and our educational institutions;



5. The belief in the good things I have inside me, those given to me by my family and those I acquired through education, making me a hard worker, disciplined, positive, forgiving, independent, active, and responsible.

With these inspirations, I have made myself a messenger for spreading our ideals and a person who is actively involved in social life in my country, for the glory of God. This awareness gives me the willingness to take risks, to be faithful in my responsibilities, to have the courage to speak and defend the truth, and to fight for justice.

Jubilees are one of the best moments for reflection

In December 2022, my classmates, Martinus Tukir Handoko, Romualdus Suyono,

Christophorus Sukarman, Thomas Sumaryadi, and Petrus Heru Nugroho and I will celebrate 50 years of consecrated life. This momentous event holds so many messages from our long journey through those years. In 1972, sixteen of us (16) made our first vows. We were steadfast in our intentions and actions to carry out the apostolic work of Christian education and formation for Indonesian youth. Eventually, 14 of us took perpetual vows. I am grateful that after so many years of work, only three (3) brothers have resigned because they were no longer happy with the life, and five (5) have been called to eternity.

We, the class of 1972, hope that the next generation of Brothers will be determined and responsible in keeping the aspirations of the apostolic work of Christian education and development for Indonesian youth relevant, strong and meaningful.

Preserving, Caring for and Developing the Legacy of the Founders

Bro. Bernardus Hoecken determined that the priority of FIC's apostolate was Christian education and formation. He urged the brothers never to neglect the poor. The founders of the FIC congregation were people who were steadfast in their intentions and actions, fascinated by Jesus, and evangelists of the good news. They were believing people, loving, wise, passionate, and steadfast; following a simple lifestyle, gentle, pious, careful, and exemplary (the 10 virtues of Bro. Bernardus Hoecken).

Even though times are constantly changing, the successors, including myself, must be responsible for keeping the legacy of the founders relevant, strong, and meaningful. That is one of the main points of reflection at this moment of celebrating my 50 years of consecrated life, translating the spirit of the founders into this day and age without losing their essence.

In order to maintain and develop the legacy of our founders, I and every member of the YPL community were asked to reflect on the work of Christian education and coaching, with the

questions: First, to what extent are we (members of the YPL community) committed to educating the nation, contributing to overcome backwardness in education, and giving our care to the Indonesian people?; Secondly, as an educational institution based on Catholic tradition, to what extent have we understood, lived and applied the Church's Social Teachings, including the values of love, justice, respect for human dignity, shared welfare, democracy, solidarity, and peace?; and Thirdly, to what extent are we committed to the care of the poor according to the founder's original mission, which is to help solve the problem of poverty, especially where it concerns access to education?.

Thus, I and the next generation of brothers and sisters are asked to continuously consolidate and root ourselves in faith, hope, and love so that the ideals of the apostolic work of Christian education and formation remain relevant, strong and meaningful, and are attractive to the people.



Grateful to be sent to work outside the FIC Congregation

From 2002 to 2011, I worked at Bishops' Conference of Indonesia (KWI) as Executive Secretary of the Education Commission, with additional duties as Director of KWI, Secretary OBOR Spiritual Publisher (Penerbit Rohani OBOR), and member of the National Accreditation Board for Madrasah schools. After my work at KWI, from 2011 till 2021, I assumed the duty as Chairman of the Jakarta Archdiocesan Education Commission with additional duties as Manager of Atma Jaya Foundation, Supervisor of Strada Association, and Supervisor of Bina Teknik Strada Foundation.

In August 2021, I retired with gratitude from all that I was able to do. However, I was still asked to become a Supervisor in several foundations, such as: Charitas, Shepherd of the Good, Fatima, Strada, and Bina Teknik Strada, as well as act as coach at the Sandjojo, Unika Soegijapranata foundation.

Now that I am about to celebrate 50 years of consecrated life, I would like to express my gratitude and thanks to God through the Indonesia Provincial Council and all the Brothers for the trust and support given to me in letting me work outside the FIC congregation for the last twenty years. I constantly work to earn that trust by using my responsibilities and freedom suitably, and being actively involved in the life of our people, our country and the church wherever I am sent or assigned.

I have always striven to show a mentality of integrity, professionalism, and vision; firmness in my intentions and actions, someone who is "responsive, tough, skilled, and modern" in facing life's challenges and tasks. I have kept to my principles in carrying out missionary work, willing to learn continuously, service-oriented, positive, trusting, balanced, mission-oriented, synergistic, and always keep myself fit in all physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual dimensions.



Bros. Heribertus Sumarjo and F.A. Dwiyoatno.

With that mentality and working experience at YPL for 30 years as the asset, I am grateful and thank God for being His instrument to animate and inspire the education sector of the 37 dioceses for 9 years; serving as Penerbit Rohani OBOR management; fostering the Accreditation Board of the Provinces of Papua, East Nusa Tenggara (NTT), Central Sulawesi, Lampung, and the Special Province of Yogyakarta; and animating and inspiring education in KAJ's (Jakarta Archdiocese), 66 parishes as well as serving the management of several foundations that I have mentioned above.

Jakarta, 3 May 2022



My Life Journey as FIC Brother

Bro. Fabian Bezel

Family Life

I was brought forth in Pina, a suburb of Lambussie on 10th March, 1965 by Germano Bezel and Balbina Kuukobe, both of blessed memory. I am the sixth born of a family of six, comprising four boys and two girls. My parents were committed and practicing Catholics and groomed me to embrace the same faith. I was initiated into the Catholic faith a month after I was born. My mother in particular was very prayerful and never relented in teaching us the Catholic prayers in our local language (Dagaare). In terms of discipline, my parents were very stern but at the same time very loving and caring. They never spared us whenever we erred. My father was a hoe farmer and wished that I being the last born should take after him and stop schooling. This agenda by my father to truncate my academic destiny could not see the light of day as I braved all odds to construct my own academic carrier and choice of vocation.

My Education

I had a highly interrupted educational life. I began my elementary education in 1971 at the age of six and progressed steadily until I reached upper primary where I had to combine farming, tethering of animals and schooling. At a point, I became a regular absentee in the school; two of my cousins and I were compelled to take turns weekly to shepherd my father's flock of sheep. Thus, for every three weeks, I was always one week absent from school. This situation prevailed till I got to middle form three in 1979 where I was completely denied the opportunity to write common entrance examination to enable me go to *secondary* school. My class teacher tried to intervene but my father sternly told him that I was too young to stay away from home.



Consequently, I completed Middle School in 1980.

The adage “where there is a will, there is a way” is in fact a reality. I never gave up after my initial disappointment; after completing Middle school, I helped my father on the farm for four years and got enrolled into St. Basilide's Technical Institute in 1984 against his will. I later quitted school at the end of the academic year due to strong opposition from my father. Again, I farmed for another four years and got enrolled into St. John's Technical Institute in 1988. This time I defied all oppositions and went through the training in Block laying and concreting craft. I successfully completed school in 1993.

My Vocation Story

My interaction with some of the FIC Brothers in St. Basilide's Technical Institute and St. John's Technical Institute respectively boosted my interest in religious life. I was touched by the way they conducted themselves as teachers and Administrators; they were not only friendly and

committed to their apostolate but were also very impartial in dealing with students. My desire to become a Brother deepened year by year as I progressed in my training in St. John's Technical Institute; however, I kept it to myself. It was in 1993 when I was in the final year of my training that I mustered courage and applied to be enlisted as an aspirant, and in 1994, I attended FIC "Contact days" for the first time. I was utterly surprised when at the end of the meeting I was advised to consider applying for admission into the Pre-novitiate programme that very year. I was by then working as a subcontractor in the construction industry in Upper West Region, Ghana; thus, leaving my job behind and starting an "unpredictable life journey" was a challenge to me. My fears and hesitation were more or less justified when I learned that two Novices and two Pre-novices were asked to discontinue their initial formation that very year.

Nevertheless, after a solemn reflection and consultation with significant others, I made up my mind and applied for admission into the initial formation programme. My application was considered and so I was initiated into the Pre-novitiate programme on 15th October, 1994 with two others. It was not easy for me at that time; thoughts of quitting formation lingered in my mind day in and day out; but with constant prayers, spiritual reading and direction, I persevered till I made my first profession of religious vows in 1997; and in 2006, I committed myself perpetually to the evangelical counsels. The Scripture text that motivated me to stay in formation is: Jesus said, **"No one who sets a hand to the plough and looks back to what was left behind is fit for the Kingdom of God"** (Lk 9: 62).

My Apostolic Experience

I lived and served in the following communities since my first profession: Tumu, Kaleo and Mt. Zion, Nandom; and currently, I am in Kaleo Community for the second time. As Principal of St. Basilide's Technical Institute I am conscious of



Graduands in Solar PV Technology



Graduands in Fashion and Design Technology

the fact that our Founders were committed people filled with the spirit of Jesus (**Ref. Art. 9 of our Const.**). They had special concern for the poor and needy and they did whatever was necessary to make life meaningful for the underprivileged in society. Inspired by these core values, I entreat all staff and students to cultivate them. I encourage them to be loving, caring and generous and I am happy they are trying to do so.



There is good sense of solidarity in the Institute; students assist one another when they are sick or in need; currently, we have a “crippled student” who is assisted daily by fellow students to carry out his academic work comfortably. We have extended our charity works beyond the confines of our campus. Three years ago, I mooted that the Staff and students should do voluntary contribution during Lent to support any needy organization. I was glad they supported the idea and contributed cash which we donated to Jirapa Orphanage to support the upkeep of the Orphans. This year, we have raised funds again to replicate such gesture in spite of the economic hardships we are facing in recent times. Similarly, the spiritual wellbeing of the students is my major concern; we organize Eucharistic celebration for students twice every week; we provide guidance and counselling services, vocation direction and also prepare students for the sacrament of Christian initiation.

Conclusion

“How can I repay the Lord for all the good done for me”? (Ps 116: 12). I am highly indebted to God for the gift of my vocation as FIC Brother. I see myself as the Biblical Jonah who tried to avoid sending God's prophetic message to the people of Nineveh. Just like Jonah, I quitted St. Basilide's Technical Institute and was swallowed up by farm work for many years only to come back to the same school to serve as Principal; to God be glory and praise.

For the past twenty-five (25) years I have enjoyed living with and serving my fellow brothers. I have experienced deep sense of communion, solidarity and acceptance; I am happy and proud to be a member of the FIC Congregation. I pray that God who called me into this religious family will constantly give me the grace to be good and do good in spite of the numerous challenges in life.

Bro. Fabian Bezel is currently the principal of St. Basilide's Technical Institute, Ghana

25 Years as FIC Brother

Bro. Lawrence Sitima



Introduction

I am the second born of a family of four: three boys and a girl, from a small farming village in the Southern part of Malawi, Thyolo district. Having lost my father at an early age, I grew up with my mother. My father worked as a clerk at Amalika Forest Reserve while my mother was a subsistence farmer. Although she had never been to school herself, my mother was a very firm believer in education. At an early age, she sent me to school and always followed up to ensure that I was in school. Absenting oneself from school without a good cause was not accepted in my family. She was very strict on this.

With her little financial means, she sent me and my other sibling to school and unfortunately, my younger brother dropped out and married. This did not deter her from insisting that I continue attending school.

Family Background

My parents were committed Roman Catholic members and they inculcated this in their

siblings. From an early age, going to church on Sundays and feast Days was not an option, and one must have a good reason not to go. I must say the whole village was made up of Catholics adherents until recently when some families joined other churches. When I lost my father, my poor mother was the only bread winner of the family. This was a difficult time in her life since she had to shoulder all the responsibilities of the family. I remember the challenges she faced to finance both my primary and secondary education from the sale of the meager farm produce. Despite the untold challenges she endured, my mum could pay for my tuition for more than twelve years and still took care of my other school needs and those of the family as well.

During those years, my mother never showed any sign of giving up the challenging responsibility she had. I thank God, that despite those challenges, she remained resilient and focused, Zikomo mum!

My Vocation

I came to know the different vocations that exist in the Catholic Church through the Holy Ghost (Spiritans) Fathers at Thunga, my home parish, where I used to go for mass on Sundays and other feasts Days of the Catholic Church. From the Fathers at the parish, I learnt about religious life through the many sessions they held with us, and those that other Orders/ religious congregations held at the parish and other places. In one of those gatherings, I had an opportunity to meet some FIC brothers. First it was the late John Hetem and later, Bro. Francis Turkenburg. It was after my encounter with the latter that my desire to become an FIC brother grew, for I had now more contacts with the FIC brothers at the formation house in Mzedi.

My Formal Education

I did my primary education in two schools. First, in a village primary school called Nkaombe for seven years and then at Naming'omba, both in



Bro. Lawrence (Middle) with his friends after his thesis defence in United State of America.

Thyolo district. In 1985, I was selected to go to Phalombe Secondary School. While in my first year, we had vocation directors from various religious congregations who came to speak to students on Religious Life. Among them, were the Marist Brothers, Comboni's and the FIC brothers. From 1985 to 1989, while at school, my desire to become a religious brother grew and I kept constant contacts with them through letters, attending sessions at the Formation House, professions of the FIC brothers and sometimes I was invited by the formation master, Bro. Francis Turkenburg, just to spend a weekend at the Formation House in Mzedi and get to know the brothers more.

Briefly after my secondary school education, I joined Montfort Teacher Training College to do a four-year teacher training program. This was one of the educational institutions of the FIC brothers in Malawi. So, I was closer to the brothers FIC living in Maryview community. Eventually I decided to join the brothers, but first, I had to make this known to my mother. I had to prepare myself on how to break the news to her, as she had different plans for me from what I was about to inform her. As many would expect, my late mother wanted me to marry as the other siblings had done. It took her sometime to finally accept the choice of life

I wanted to make and finally she supported me in many ways through her advice. Until her death in 2015, February 26, she was very supportive in my religious life. Always when I visited home, and she observed that it was getting late, she would say, 'please you have a long way to travel back, its better you leave now, I do not want that you travel in the night, it's not safe and I do not like it' I am what I am today, because of the first education I received

from her, otherwise, I wouldn't have been an FIC brother. My mother was hardworking and committed to our family and village traditions/customs. She was a promoter of togetherness among our family relations especially when some other relations went their own way, abandoning the family and community gatherings.

Looking back at the past 25 years of my life as an FIC brother, I feel grateful that the values of togetherness, care for one another and community living that my mother inculcated in me in the past have found a place in my religious community, which is my home today. The spirit of commitment to life issues that I learnt in the past are what I strive to uphold as religious, and intend to do so in the coming years. I am ever grateful to God, the author of life, my supportive and helpful fellow brothers, good friends, and family members who have walked with me along this path of life for the past 25 years.

I have been privileged to work and live with brothers who became my mentors and who have enabled me learn the virtues of commitment to community life and dedication to apostolate. In fact, I try to be committed to whatever task that is placed before me, be it service to community or in the area of external apostolate. I have learnt

through all these years the joys of this life that gives me motivation to continue on this path of life; I have also, on some occasions nonetheless, experienced, with pain, the lack of support in community life, either through the fault of others or due to my own weaknesses. Though I regret this, I know that all these have shaped my life, and I strive to be a better brother as I continue walking on this road of life.

EVER GRATEFUL TO THE CONGREGATION

The FIC congregation has tremendously contributed to what I am today, as I celebrate 25 years of my religious life. Over the past years, I have had the opportunity to be in several communities where I had the chance to experience, live and work with several fellow brothers. Through that, I have been exposed to the joys and challenges of religious life; I have interacted with brothers and people of various personalities from whom I have learned a lot and I will remain ever grateful to them.

The congregation gave me the opportunity to go for further studies twice and with this, I can better serve the needs of our congregation. Again, I remain ever grateful to the leadership of the province that took such decisions. Many friends and relatives through their little but significant ways and in their own little or big ways, have made the person of Lawrence we have today.

Malawi is a small province in terms of personnel, but with many apostolic activities. I look to the future with hope, that together with others, we will continue to improve on the quality and management of our many institutions and communities. I hope to see further growth of the province in terms of numbers and quality of life of the brothers who are willing to commit themselves to the ideals of the congregation. These together with an increase in our local income generation, will help the brothers to carry out the apostolic works in the best way possible. It has been a blessing to be there for the past 25 years.

I think it is important at this critical time to seriously consider areas of local investment that will constantly generate income for the province



Bro. Lawrence (middle) on the day Bros. Daniel Kanyada (left), Moses Mgunda (second from left), Mike Mbato (second from right) and Chancy Mfune (first from right) renewed their Religious vows.

to support the upkeep of its members and the apostolic activities of the province. I look forward to offering my services in this area. Already we see the glaring signs of decline of the congregational income to support provinces. Formation is also another important apostolate that needs to be constantly reviewed and we need to pay particular attention to it as a province. I look forward to offering my expertise in this area when I am done with my current responsibilities as a leader. I remain ever grateful to the FIC congregation, fellow brothers, my late parents, relations, and friends who have journeyed with me in this life. I am particularly grateful God for His guidance and inspiration for the past 25 years of religious life. May Mother Mary support me with her prayers that I may live my commitment to the end.

Bro. Lawrence Sitima is the current Provincial Superior of Malawi

Promoting The Message of “Laudato Si” in Our Schools

Bro. Kuu-Ireme S. Godwin



“**W**hen the last tree dies, the last man dies.” This saying is one of the commonest expressions in the Ghanaian society. However, its meaning is rarely taken into consideration. Trees and human beings have an interdependent relationship among which Science explains the mutual exchange of carbon dioxide and oxygen. Trees do not only provide food for man and animals, but also serve as medicine to treat all kinds of diseases. Trees also serve as windbreaks, stabilize the soil and offer shelter to wildlife. Without trees it is doubtful if man will be able to survive even for a second on the environment which is constantly under threat by human activities. The problems of environmental pollution and degradation as well as climate change and their negative impact on lives has been acknowledged worldwide. Pope Francis in his encyclical, “Laudato Si’,” (“Praise be to you”) discusses the impact of human activities on our common home (environment). In the said document, the Pope entered into a dialogue with all people on how we are shaping the future of our planet through our activities. It is a worldwide urgent wake-up call to every person to adopt best practices that will address the current environmental crisis. Laudato Si invites its readers to understand the destruction that human beings are rendering the environment and

by extension, to fellow humans. The document's scope is broader in that, it looks not only at the impact of human activities on the environment, but also the many philosophical, theological, and cultural causes that threaten the relationships of man to nature and man to man in various circumstances.

Schools are centers for knowledge acquisition and skills development. The FIC charism of teaching, education and formation of the youth is largely accomplished through our schools in the various Provinces. Character formation; behavioral change and respect for human dignity are end results that the curricula of our schools help the students to achieve with the support of the teachers. In this light, if the solution to the problem of environmental destruction highlighted in Laudato Si is anything to go by, then it starts in the classrooms where the teachers can shape the knowledge; skills; attitudes and mindset of the learners to modify their behaviour that lead them to cause harm to our common home. The FIC Provincial Council of Ghana places premium on awareness creation and education of the youth to fight environmental pollution. In pursuant to this, a workshop was organised for our workers at ISTC in Wa, where the facilitator among others stressed the importance of the environment, some harmful human behaviour/activities that endanger the environment and some ways to combat the current crisis of our common home.

One important strategy adopted by the PC in Ghana is a proposal put together for funding to organize workshops for our second cycle schools. Care for the environment is one of the topics on the agenda. The objective is to deepen awareness creation on environmental pollution, degradation and climate change, and it is hoped that the participants after acquiring the knowledge will intend be ambassadors of change in their homes and communities. The heads of



Model garden, St. Louis Educational Complex, Wa, Ghana



Separating rubbish plastic, paper or tissue, wet rubbish, and green leaves

schools can contribute to the change in behaviour among their students by sending them to visit places of worse environmental pollution and to explain the negative impact of what they have witnessed. The PC has also planned to support heads of our schools to lead the crusade in tree planting in their environments. In this way, the students gradually get to know and understand the negative impact of environmental pollution by human beings and eventually

become vehicles of climate change and ambassadors of environmental transformation. To further promote the message of Laudato Si among the students (future leaders) in our schools, teachers must creatively talk about climate change and the need to care for the environment in their lesson presentation to the students.

The interdependence of human beings and nature obliges us to think of our world as one with a common plan that will help us fight our common enemy - environmental pollution. More often than not, we human beings lack an awareness of our common origin, of our mutual belonging, and of a future to be shared with everyone. This basic awareness would enable the development of new convictions, attitudes and forms of life. We need a conversation that includes everyone, since the environmental challenges affect us all. The supposed human ingenuity which many think has brought about enormous modern and technological advancement of the human society has so far proved incapable of finding effective ways of dealing with grave environmental and social problems worldwide. A global consensus in my opinion is essential and required for confronting the deeper problems which cannot be resolved by unilateral actions on the part of individual nations.

Bro. Kuu-Ireme S. Godwin is the Principal of St. John's Technical Institute, Nandom, Ghana



'Laudato Si' and Our Daily Life in Communities

Bro. Mike Mbato



Laudato Si is an encyclical of Pope Francis which focuses on care for the natural environment and all people. The document is a worldwide wake up call to help humanity understand the destruction that man is rendering to the environment and his fellow man. We are responsible for taking care of the world we live in and for sharing all the wonders and resources the earth gives us. The Environment surrounding us should make our life comfortable and give us better home for our sustainability. However, the available resources need to be taken care of and must be properly managed. How do we manage the available resources? The resources in the environment can be managed through avoiding the misuse of air, water, land, forests and minerals. Failure to manage these well will negatively affect the earth and results in problems like climatic change, for instance, global warming and scarcity of food, which goes a long way to affect the wellbeing of people as well as animals. The Pope's message in 'Laudato si' is very significant in our lives as people who live within the environment. In the encyclical, the pope relates the cry of the earth to the cry of the poor.

This cry simply means the feeling of pain and suffering, the experience of sadness and loss calling out for relief and sympathy. When the earth cries because of mismanagement of the resources, the harm directly affects people especially the poor within that environment, since they depend on resources within the environment.

The issues concerning our common home must be taken seriously by every brother in our communities, our institutions as well as places of apostolate. To do something concrete in our efforts to care for the environment, Malawi Province bought some tree seedlings and distributed them to every community. In my community we gave some seedlings to the parish, primary school as well as the Technical school for planting. As a community we planted some trees as well. As a way of implementing the principles of *Laudato Si* at my place of apostolate, I encouraged teachers and students not to throw plastic papers anyhow since these contribute to filth and pollution of the environment. People within the surrounding communities were mobilized to have rubbish pits so that they may throw the rubbish into them.

To be honest the task to improve on the environment is not simple because of the challenges faced during the process of implementation. Firstly, environmental education among our people is very difficult. The destruction caused to the environment finds its origin in the human heart that turns in upon itself. People fail to listen to the cry of the earth; instead they continue to use and destroy the available resources in the environment indiscriminately. Another challenge is poor understanding of the appeals by 'Laudato Si' among people in our localities. They often take the environment for granted and don't understand why they should take responsibility towards it.

Therefore, if the environment is not well taken care of, it will certainly affect the wellbeing of



Nature around FIC Community, Malawi.

people and other life forms since we ourselves are a part of nature. Pollution has made people's homes look more like immense pile of filth. Such pollution leads to health problems and puts the lives of people and other life forms at risk. As brother FIC, taking care of the poor is in line with the Spirit of our Founders. It is therefore also our responsibility to work for the wellbeing of the environment as part of the care for our common home. Working for a healthy environment is an indirect way of working towards the well being of people. The pope's message also reminds us that those people who work with us in our community as well as our institutions are part of the environment that we must take care of. Humanity still has the ability to work together in beautifying our common home so that we live in a safe world free from diseases.



Care for maize field.

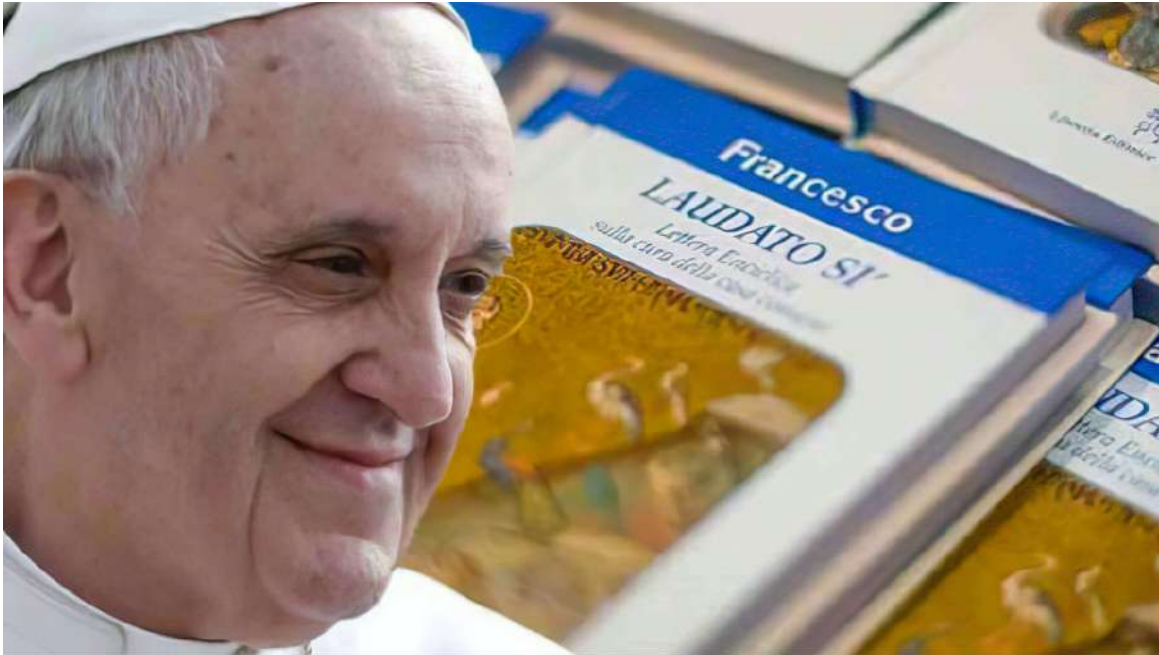
In conclusion, the call of the Pope to do ecological conversion, is for people all over the world because all who live in the world are part of Our Common Home. As religious, we all see this call as our responsibility to care for our world and not 'steal' resources meant for our future generations. We are also expected to give respect to all creatures, not only human beings, and find concrete ways of protecting all created things as part of the common good. We are all asked to embrace a change in our lifestyles for our own good and the good of the rest of God's creation.

Bro. Mike Mbato is one of temporary professed brothers in Malawi. He studies at the Catholic University of Malawi.



Laudato Si' Summary

Christopher Rice | Mei 5, 2022



What is Laudato Si'?

Laudato Si' is an encyclical of Pope Francis published in May 2015. It focuses on care for the natural environment and all people, as well as broader questions of the relationship between God, humans, and the Earth. The encyclical's subtitle, "Care for Our Common Home," reinforces these key themes.

An encyclical is a public letter from the Pope developing Catholic teaching on a topic often in light of current events. Laudato Si is addressed to "every living person on this planet" (LS 3). Hence, it is offered as part of an ongoing dialogue within the Catholic Church and between Catholics and the wider world.

What does Laudato Si' mean?

The first words of Laudato Si are Italian and translate as "praise be to you." They are part of a quotation from St. Francis of Assisi's "Canticum of the Creatures" that opens the encyclical in which the saint praises God by meditating on the goodness of sun, wind, Earth, water, and other natural forces.

What are the main sections of Laudato Si'?

Laudato Si is divided into six chapters, each of which can be read in a sitting of 20 to 30 minutes.

"Chapter One: What is Happening to Our Common Home" summarizes the scope of current problems related to the environment. Issues discussed include pollution, climate change, water scarcity, loss of biodiversity, and global inequality.

"Chapter Two: The Gospel of Creation" draws on the Bible as a source of insight. The Genesis creation stories are interpreted as enjoining responsible cultivation and protection of nature. Past attempts to justify the absolute human domination of other species are "not a correct interpretation of the Bible" (LS 67). The natural world is further portrayed as a gift, a message, and a common inheritance of all people.

"Chapter Three: The Human Roots of the Ecological Crisis" explores social trends and ideologies that have caused environmental problems. These include the unreflective use of technology, an impulse to manipulate and control nature, a view of humans as separate from the environment, narrowly-focused economic theories, and moral relativism.

"Chapter Four: Integral Ecology" presents the encyclical's main solution to ongoing social and environmental problems. Integral ecology affirms that humans are part of a broader world and calls for "comprehensive solutions which consider the

interactions within natural systems themselves and with social systems” (LS 139). While the study of ecosystems has become well-known in the science of ecology, integral ecology expands this paradigm to consider the ethical and spiritual dimensions of how humans are meant to relate to each other and the natural world – drawing on culture, family, community, virtue, religion, and respect for the common good.

“Chapter Five: Lines of Approach and Action” applies the concept of integral ecology to political life. It calls for international agreements to protect the environment and assist low-income countries, new national and local policies, inclusive and transparent decision-making, and an economy ordered to the good of all.

Lastly, **“Chapter Six: Ecological Education and Spirituality”** concludes the encyclical with applications to personal life. It recommends a lifestyle focused less on consumerism and more on timeless, enduring values. It calls for environmental education, joy in one's surroundings, civic love, reception of the sacraments, and an “ecological conversion” in which an encounter with Jesus leads to deeper communion with God, other people, and the world of nature.

How does Laudato Si relate to past Catholic teaching?

Pope Francis is not the first pope to address environmental issues. Pope St. John Paul II taught on numerous occasions about a duty of stewardship toward nature. For example, in his 1991 encyclical *Centesimus Annus*, John Paul II wrote about nature as a gift from God and the need for humans to cooperate with God in promoting the rightly ordered flourishing of the environment (CA 37). Further, *Centesimus Annus* outlined a connection between natural ecology and “human ecology” (CA 38), anticipating the concept of integral ecology in Laudato Si. Pope Benedict echoed these same teachings during his papacy, for example, in his 2009 encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* (see CV 48-52).

As outlined in Laudato Si, its vision of an integrated approach to concern for all people and the environment has roots in Scripture and the history of Catholic thought, in particular in the tradition of Catholic Social Teaching, tracing back to the late 19th century. Further, Catholic scholars and activists have been outspoken on the connection between social and environmental issues for many years. What is unique about Laudato Si is how Pope Francis develops and expands on these themes at length in a highly prominent way, devoting an entire encyclical to the topic at a time when the wider world is also becoming

actively engaged in the pursuit of environmental sustainability.

What does Laudato Si say about climate change?

Climate change is one of the most prominent topics associated with Laudato Si', both because the encyclical speaks in detail about the moral imperative to address it and because the threat of the climate crisis has grown only more severe since the encyclical's publication. Laudato Si affirms the “very solid scientific consensus” that climate change is occurring as well as the evidence that human activity is the primary driver of this warming (LS 23). Climate change is “one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day” (LS 25). Further, the encyclical stresses that existing efforts to reduce climate change have been deeply inadequate. This is because “many of those who possess more resources and economic or political power seem mostly to be concerned with masking the problems or concealing their symptoms” (LS 26).

In turn, several ways to address the climate emergency and biodiversity crisis are outlined. These include a drastic reduction in carbon emissions and those of other greenhouse gases, the development of renewable energy sources and related storage capacity, and a transition to energy efficient methods of production and transportation (LS 26). For example, a switch from coal and oil to solar and wind power would embody these recommendations. The increased protection of tropical forests is also discussed (LS 38-39).

What does Laudato Si say about the poor?

One key theme of Laudato Si is that efforts to reduce climate change and help people in poverty should not be pitted against each other, but instead pursued as a unified project. It would be wrong to cut emissions in a way that harms the marginalized in society or places an unmanageable burden on very poor countries. As the encyclical states, “We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature” (LS 139).

Low-income countries are expected to suffer the worst effects of climate change and need financial assistance in making the transition to sustainable practices (LS 25). Accordingly, there is a duty for rich countries to take the lead in reducing their own emissions and in providing funds to developing countries seeking to do the same (LS 170-173).

Laudato Si' also notes how climate change will cause a rise in the number of migrants leaving homes destroyed by environmental degradation and calls on people to welcome and support these environmental refugees (LS 25).

What is Laudato Si asking people to do?

Chapter six of Laudato Si outlines steps a person can take in the process of ecological conversion. These include prayer and contemplation, learning more about nature, observance of the Sabbath day of rest, and reduced participation in materialistic forms of consumer culture. A step as simple as giving thanks at mealtime (LS 227) can be a reminder of integral ecology and an individual's relation to God, nature, and other people. Most Catholics have positive memories and experiences of nature but may not have connected these with their faith, so the advice in this section can be helpful in linking spirituality with environmental awareness.

In addition, Laudato Si is clear that many environmental problems extend beyond individuals to broader economic and political systems. This is a fact that can be challenging to think about.

Even if every reader of the encyclical became environmentally engaged in their personal mindset and lifestyle, this would not be enough to stop problems like the climate crisis and pollution. That is because the main decisions impacting the availability of renewable energy and sustainable practices are not made by individuals, but by governments and large corporations.

Accordingly, it is important for people of faith to get involved in politics and work strategically for positive change. Some of this can happen at the local level through the formation of renewable energy cooperatives and similar initiatives (LS 179). Other work can be done through non-governmental advocacy groups, such as the 'Laudato Si Movement'. In addition, the encyclical calls on Catholics to enter the arena of national and international politics, pushing back against the incentive for leaders to prioritize short-term gains and instead advocating for policies that support the disadvantaged and advance the long-term common good (LS 178).

What does Laudato Si predict for the future?

Laudato Si describes a wide spectrum of possibilities for the coming century. It is bracing in its discussion of the threats facing humans and the environment. Many of the problems surveyed would have been much easier to address 30 or 40 years ago and are now already causing widespread harm. However, the

encyclical also offers hope – both in specific policies it recommends and in its promise of integral ecology a new, more fulfilling outlook on politics, the economy, and everyday life.

As the encyclical states, “All is not lost. Human beings, while capable of the worst, are also capable of rising above themselves, choosing again what is good, and making a new start, despite their mental and social conditioning” (LS 205). For this reason, “although the post-industrial period [of the last few decades] may well be remembered as one of the most irresponsible in history, nonetheless there is reason to hope that humanity at the dawn of the twenty-first century will be remembered for having generously shouldered its grave responsibilities” (LS 165). We can also consider that ecological conversion is not a purely human process, but an encounter with God leading to a grace-filled change of heart and mind. It is this kind of experience which Laudato Si recommends as a way for people of faith to begin moving toward a better and more caring world.



Maria, Lourdes and My Family

Personal sharing of Bro. Gerard Langelaan
on his experience with Mother Mary

My sick father when he was 10 years old

My father Koos Langelaan was born in 1918. At the age of 10, he became unexpectedly ill. The doctor diagnosed a very serious kidney disease. My father was very tired, could not go to school that year and had to stay in bed. The "diet" was just milk and porridge. After three quarters of a year of no progress in his recovery, my grandmother asked the doctor if she could travel to Lourdes with him. The family was deeply religious and had great faith in Mother Mary's intercession. The intention was to ask and pray for my father's healing. The doctor replied that this trip would be completely irresponsible. My father – as a small boy – might not survive the long train journey of more than 16 hours to the south of France, so the doctor advised strongly against it.

To Lourdes anyway

Nevertheless, my grandmother decided - against the advice of the doctor - to go on an organized pilgrimage to Lourdes with my father. As my father's personal nurse, my grandmother was able to make this tiring journey. I think the journey at that time was not very comfortable compared to now but still manageable. What I know about my father was that there was a lot of prayer in the (sleeper) train. There was no shortage of spiritual and nursing supervisors. In Lourdes, my father and grandmother stayed at *the Accueil*: A chapel converted for (bedbound) patients close to the cave. (Many years later my father showed me this building when we returned to Lourdes on one of our trips). During the stay, my grandmother and father participated in as many religious activities as possible. Attending the daily Holy Mass, the still impressive (international) light procession with the famous Marian songs, such as "At Lourdes in the mountains Ave, ave, ave Maria", participation in the Praise, visiting the cave in silence, lighting many candles, and not to forget bathing in the water of the Lourdes source.



Back home the miracle!

I imagine the way home was made in gratitude and trust, with a few bottles filled with Lourdes water in their luggage. After returning home for some time/weeks, step by step improvement was visible and my father recovered from his illness. The doctor was very surprised by his recovery and advised my father to always wear warm clothes. My father lived till he was 86 years old and never suffered from any kidney disease

again. He attributed this to his visit to Lourdes and his belief in Mary's intercession. Both he and my mother have always been great Marian devotees in their lives. Years later, I returned to Lourdes with them (and sometimes with my sisters). These were grateful travels of which I have very nice memories.

What makes a deep impression?

Of course, you should not be guided by the commercial souvenir shops that are everywhere. What makes a deep impression is the large number of religious, international groups of people - coming from so many different countries - whether or not severely handicapped, praying and singing together from one and the same faith, and happily propagating "the" Catholic faith, whereby Mother Mary occupies such a great place among them. In addition to the sacred atmosphere on the sanctuary grounds, there is a pleasant exuberant mood of cheerful people in the streets and terraces outside the sanctuary. That was the picture, in spite of the perceptible great misery and possibly imperceptible pain of human suffering or grief. Be happy in spirit. Be good, do good. This certainly also applies to all

those volunteers who, from their profession, guide and support the many sick people with great love, dedication and cheerfulness. This in itself is a miracle, not to mention the many suspended crutches and other attributes that you see, whether or not accompanied by a statement that healing has taken place in an inexplicable way.

The power of prayer

Would the power of the congregational prayer and intercession of our Mother Mary and the good intentions of all these people not be heard by God? Miracles do happen. As a "reminder" of my father's first trip with my grandmother to Lourdes, I have a bronze table lamp at home with small lamps showing the image of Mary in the cave. It is now 94 years old: precious memory of my father and grandmother's trip to Lourdes.

Bro. Gerard Langelaan is a council member of the RHN





BECOMING AN FIC BROTHER

We are a community of lay-religious men, who dedicate our lives to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He continues to teach us to be children of God and brothers to all people. Since the foundation of our congregation in 1840 we have had a special interest in the education and formation of young people, especially in poor areas.

We experience this life choice to be both demanding and gratifying. Because of this deep experience we continue to attract young men to our community.

Every candidate brings in his own experiences, gifts and talents. However, it takes some time for a young man to determine if his choice for the Brothers FIC really is his life choice. Likewise, it takes some time for the congregation to determine if a candidate can be accepted as a brother. For it is in the interest of the candidate and the congregation that every individual brother can live a happy and fruitful life.

That is why every candidate must go through a period of formation.

Content of the formation

Every candidate and young brother receives a theoretical and a practical introduction to our life and spirituality. The formation program clarifies how we can grow as human beings, as Christians and as brothers. The program is particularly aimed at the following:

- enriching the development of the candidate as a person;
- reflecting on essential questions concerning their future and their vocation;
- introducing them to the ideals and spirit of the founders of our congregation;
- creating an opportunity to both the congregation and the candidate to make a well-considered decision.

Stages of the formation

1. Postulancy - Whoever feels a vocation to share the life of the brothers FIC can apply for the postulancy by contacting the formation-master or the provincial superior in his area. You find all the addresses at the side of this page. After a number of assessments you go through a preparatory period, called the postulancy. This period normally lasts about one year and gives both the candidate and the congregation the opportunity to get to know each other.
2. Noviciate - After this period, provided the candidate is admitted, the noviciate begins. This marks the start of the life in the congregation and normally takes two years.
3. Temporary profession - After the noviciate the candidate can bind himself by his temporary vows. He does so with the intention of binding himself for life in the future. However, it is a good thing to bind oneself only temporarily in the beginning.

In this period, which normally lasts six years, the young brother can develop his vocation and grow into the daily life of the congregation and its apostolate. The formation continues by integrating the three main dimensions of the life as a brother: to pray, work and live in a community. This period is officially concluded with the final profession.



Interested?

If you are interested in the details of our formation programs, you can contact the following persons:

1. Ghana
Bro. Aaron Nee-eru
Address: Brothers FIC, P. O. Box 229, Wa (UWR) Ghana
Phone: +233-0209354386 / +233-0540806498
E-mail: vocationpromotionficghana@gmail.com
2. Indonesia
Bro. Ag. Marsanto, Ant. Teguh Nugraha, and Albert Pratama
Address: Jln. Kartini2, Muntilan 56411 - Indonesia
Phone: *62 (0) 293 587361, +62 821 345 679 14
E-mail: agemars@yahoo.com, teguhnugrahafic82@gmail.com
3. The Netherlands
Bro. Wim Luiten
Address: Prins Bisschopsingel 22, 6211 JX Maastricht, The Netherlands
Phone: *31 (0) 43 3508373
E-mail: wpluiten@brothers-fic.org
4. Malawi
Bro. Moses Mgunda
Address: Brothers Maryview, P.O. Box 51075, Maryview-Malawi
Phone: *265 (0) 991397026
E-mail: pcmhouse2019@gmail.com
5. Chile
Bro. Patricio Guentelican Perez
Address: Casilla 647, Talca-Chile (Postal)
Residence: 11 ½ Sur - 23 Oriente No. 3711, Villa San Antonio - Talca
Phone: +56 997747108
E-mail: pepg40@gmail.com



Bros. Augustine and Valentinus Daru on a visit to the parents of Bro. Theodorus in Semen nearby Muntilan. (Indonesia)



Bros. Augustine, Valentinus Daru, Albert Pratama, Theo, Mr. Anton and Mrs Rosalia Emmy during their visit to Kanisius Publisher.



Bro. Yusuf Kuncoro Bowo Susilo and his students in Ainaro, Timor Leste.



Bro. Mike Mbato and young men during Vocation Day in Lilongwe, Malawi.



Bro. Zeca Menezes and Teachers after prayers devoted to Mother Mary in his school in Becora, Dilli, Timor Leste.



Bros. Diego, Ge van Vugh, Lucio Torres, Eko Wijayanto, and a teacher of Saint Antonio school in Talca, Chile.