



# BROTHERS FIC

CALLED TO BE GOOD AND TO DO GOOD



BROTHERS FIC / Vol.2 / No:9 / 2023

## Authority and Governance



Bros. Augustine Kubdaar and Theo Riyanto visit Semarang's Pangudi Luhur Kasih Credit Union.  
Bro. Theo was the initiator of this Credit Union for the Teachers, Co-Workers, Brothers, core families of the teachers and co-workers, and others.



*“I embrace wholeheartedly the ups and downs, good and bad, redeeming and unredeeming experiences and praise God for bringing me this far.”*

*Bro. Methodius Kuusoru*

# FIC CONSTITUTION



## Art. 49 FRATERNAL LEADERSHIP

In our community, we also need brothers to give guidance. They should do this in the Spirit of Jesus, who said of himself that he had not come "to be served, but to serve." <sup>12)</sup>

## Art.50 THE TASK OF THOSE IN AUTHORITY

Brothers in authority are expected to inspire and stimulate, to further mutual unity and co-operation, and to give direction to our community by means of effective organization and regulation. They are expected to listen to what is alive among the brothers, to show understanding for difficulties and human distress, to point out mistakes, errors, and weaknesses, and to act firmly and with authority whenever this is required.



**BROTHERS FIC**  
CALLED TO BE GOOD AND TO DO GOOD



## Colophon

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### Address :

General Council of Brothers FIC, Prins Bisschopsingel 22, 66211 JX Maastricht - The Netherlands.

### Phone :

\*31(0)43 3508373

### E-mail :

[gencouncil@brothers-fic.org](mailto:gencouncil@brothers-fic.org)

### Website :

[www.brothers-fic.org](http://www.brothers-fic.org)

### Editor and co-editor :

Bro. Augustine Kubdaar and  
Bro. Theodorus Suwariyanto

### Language editor :

Bro. Raphael Besigrinee

### Editorial office :

Bro. Raphael Besigrinee,  
Bro. Valentinus Daru Setiaji,  
Bro. Michael Sidharta, and  
Mr. Willy Bastiaens

### Design and layouter :

Bro. Antonius Teguh Nugraha and  
Bro. Theodorus Suwariyanto

### Contact person :

Bro. Theodorus Suwariyanto;  
e-mail : [t.suwaryanto@brothers-fic.org](mailto:t.suwaryanto@brothers-fic.org)  
Mr. Willy Bastiaens;  
e-mail: [gencouncil@brothers-fic.org](mailto:gencouncil@brothers-fic.org)

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CV. Pangudi Luhur Maju  
Indonesia



# From The Editor

The theme of this June 2023 issue of our magazine is "Authority and Governance". It is not easy to find one common definition for the term "authority". The term has been defined in various ways depending on the subject in question. Collins dictionary defines authority as "the right to command and control other people." Webster's dictionary defines the term as "The power or right to give commands, enforce obedience, take action, or make final decisions." In the eyes of the world, authority is often seen as somebody having ultimate power over another or a group of people. This means that the person in authority has absolute control over his subjects: what they do and how things are done. However, in this magazine, emphasis is given to the model of authority exercised by Jesus Christ during his earthly life. Authority and governance or simply leadership is seen by many in the religious perspective as someone called to serve, and one who exudes attributes such as affirming, encouraging, influencing and inspiring others.

In this publication (volume 2, number 9) of the Brothers FIC magazine, we intend to reflect as well as share our understanding of the subject of authority and governance in religious life. Many of you – religious, non-religious, the youth – have ever been in charge of a group of people before. How did you handle it? For us Brothers FIC, some of us have ever been a superior of a community, a province, or other levels in the congregation, and have therefore had the opportunity to serve our fellow brothers or practiced some form of authority and governance. Did you see yourself as servant? In this publication, we wish to present the opinions and experiences of FIC Brothers who have ever been in leadership before, past and present. Some of these are in the form of a reflection, and our beloved readers have the privilege this time to read such reflections from our present Superior General Bro. Augustine Kubdaar, who tells us that God is the Source of all authority and governance, and the immediate past Superior General, Bro. Martin Handoko, who is convinced that "Religious Leadership is not a Personal Choice, but a Call". From their rich experiences, they both believe that religious leaders ought to develop a deep relationship with God, and the people they serve.

Dear readers, our brothers are always willing to share their life and vocation stories with you, and here we provide you with an extensive one from Bro. Methodius Kuusoru, a former provincial superior of Ghana and a former general councillor. Indeed this magazine is about the experiences of FIC superiors. We hope that readers will not only enjoy reading it, but will be inspired as well by the faith-sharing given here. Bro. Raphael Besigrinee comes your way with his usual reflection captioned, "In Fraternal Leadership, to Lead is to Serve". He emphasizes that authority is evangelically always service. As a servant, a fraternal leader considers himself strictly as a servant first, and then second as a leader.

Dear readers, the magazine has never denied you news from our provinces, and especially those in the form of photos. This time you will see photos of our present (and some past) superiors. Some photos were also recently taken during the canonical visitation of Bros. Augustine and Theodorus in Indonesia. Enjoy!

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# A Call to Authority and Governance

Bro. Augustine Kubdaar, General Superior



Depending on who, where, when, and for what, authority and governance (leadership) can be conceptualized in a variety of ways. Leadership is one of the most studied and least understood phenomena on earth (Burns, 2003). God bestows authority and the power to govern on religious leaders as a gift and call to serve. The call comes through the discernment and decision of individuals who placed leaders in a position of service. It is to carry out specific apostolic tasks and guide people toward achieving common objectives. Religious leaders must foster the growth and loyalty of fellow Religious to the congregation's charism so that it remains appealing to future generations. According to our Holy Father, a vocation to authority and governance is a call to lead others to conversion and to be mediators for others in their encounter with Christ (15/10/2015).

God is the Source of all authority and governance. Therefore, leaders' deep relationship with God is not a choice. Using authority and power effectively should be desired at all times and circumstances. When you disconnect something from its source, it either breaks down or dies. Similarly, when a leader distances himself or herself from God, he or she naturally malfunctions and loses the gift of

authority and governance. When a leader substitutes the source of his authority and power, he becomes a burden to himself and those he leads.

Our Saviour Jesus Christ turned governance/leadership upside down. He taught the disciples that in the Kingdom, they were **not** to lead people as those in the world; they were to be radically different. As such, the governance module Jesus adopted was neither about command and control nor status and power. He did not teach techniques but developed the character - a character centred on a Christ-like servant heart. He modelled leadership on servanthood and challenged his disciples to follow that example to be like him. From the Kingdom perspective, this leadership model of Jesus, centering on his indwelling character, is superior to all secular leadership styles.

Christ's governance module was characterized by compassion, love, and servanthood. Jesus was a servant-leader and a good shepherd, ready to die for his people (Nyabwari, 2013). Are we ready to die for our followers as leaders? The idea of leading others begins in the heart, which leads to pleasing the heart of God. Jesus, in his leadership, exhibited some inspiring characteristics by showing grace and forgiveness, empathy and wisdom. Obedience, truth, and humility were the character traits of Jesus at all times.

Jesus was a listening leader because he loved others perfectly and listened without condescending. A great leader listens not only to others but also to his conscience and the promptings of God. Jesus was a patient, pleading and loving leader. He led out of his character and heart for the world. As leaders, we are to be reflections of our Lord, who had a clear vision. Jesus' leadership was evident in John (17:20) when he said, "I pray not only for these but also for those who believe in me through their message." Jesus was living beyond the moment.



It is also true that every human being is born with an innate proclivity towards leadership. We are born with the instinct to govern our lives and situations, to make our own decisions, and to exert domination over our co-creatures (Gen. 1: 26-28). When we are not in charge, we want to be in charge. We are fundamentally given authority to control and govern our own and in some circumstances, the lives of others. This is true regardless of age, experience, wealth, gender, race, education, or lack thereof. Only by learning, cultivating, and practicing who you were born to be can you completely realize your inherent leadership potential. Realizing your intrinsic leadership potential is essential for leadership in any form. A title, position, power, race, age, education, or family name cannot create a true leader.

Self-glorification undermines human authority. The extremely powerful God of the universe sets an example by lovingly caring for his creation (Matt. 20:28). By surrendering his appropriate position of leadership, Jesus "made himself nothing" (Phil. 2:7). When he was a man, he was rejected by his people at the time and even now (Is. 53:3; John 1:11), and he subsequently died as the substitute offering for sinful humanity. As a result, humility is an important characteristic of authority and governance.

Adding value to others is also fundamental to leadership. In other words, leaders give people something valuable, and motivate them to engage in and contribute to the congregation's common goal and mission. How do we add value to our fellow brothers' lives as religious leaders? We must do this through our gestures that we are there for them. As religious leaders, we need to give them real-time help and our full attention. We should constantly show that we are listening, ready to offer help and care deeply for them. True leadership gives people a reason to live, a feeling of purpose, and a reason to be thankful. Effective use of authority and governance over persons helps individuals find meaning in life and feel desired and significant in their membership of a group, society or organization. Therefore, strong intrapersonal ties between leaders and those they lead is necessary. How a leader values and



treats others reflects how the leader values and treats himself or herself. Leaders must first have a deep, and healthy love for themselves to lead others effectively.

In conclusion, it is obvious that if a plant is removed from the ground, you do not need further action to destroy it. It will wilt on its own. If you remove a fish from the water, you do not have to kill it. It will perish from suffocation (Munroe, 2005). Similarly, when a leader drifts away from God, he or she forfeits the gift of authority and control according to the will of God. Authority and governance are gifts from God, and given for the sake of humanity. Finally, a word of caution for religious: Here is what God says in Romans 13:1-2, "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore, whoever resists authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment" (Munson, 2013).

# In Fraternal Leadership, to Lead is to Serve

Bro. Raphael Besigrinee, General Council

I intend to discuss fraternal leadership as one practiced in a religious community of consecrated persons whose task is to seek the will of God for their community living and mission. The authority of a fraternal leader is one of spiritual authority, and he has as his main task building the unity and fraternity of the members put in his charge, and also ensure that the love of God and neighbour become paramount. Fraternal leadership share a lot of characteristics with servant leadership. Just like fraternal leadership, servant leadership is service oriented and supports a group accustomed approach to decision making (Spears, 1995) and cited by Nyukorong,(2021).

However, fraternal leadership falls in line with the aspect of servant leadership practiced by our Lord Jesus Christ who demonstrated a certain level of humility by washing the feet of his disciples and asking them to do likewise (John 13: 1 – 15). Jesus enlightens us on one principle of his servant leadership: "... whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10: 43 – 45)". This is the style of leadership obliged by the fraternal leader in an honest community of faith and love, who have a shared mission towards the poor and needy. Nyukorong (2021, p 14) stated that the Catholic religious leader, for whom the proclamation of the gospel values and virtues forms an essential and critical part his/her leadership, needs to practice leadership in imitation of Jesus the servant-leader.

Authority is, evangelically, always service (*Fraternal Life in community*, 1994). As a servant, a fraternal leader considers himself strictly as a "servant" first, and then second as "leader". He focuses on the needs of others, especially his



community members, before he considers his own. This is often not the case with leaders in the "traditional" sense or those who wield control over their subjects. A leader in a fraternal community tries to acknowledge his brothers' contributions to the growth of their common mission, involve them in decision making, gives them the opportunity to exercise their potentials as best as possible, and more importantly ensure that, together with his brothers, they seek the will of God through discernment and prayer.

There is a direct relation between a fraternal leader and a fraternal community like that of the Brothers FIC. The former is the Superior of the community. It is not surprising that the FIC Constitution (art 49) has made reference to fraternal leadership: In our community we also need brothers to give guidance. They should do this in the Spirit of Jesus, who said of himself that he had come "not to be served, but to serve." Therefore the task of a fraternal leader is tied to a religious community, where they are expected to "build a community of brothers or sisters in Christ, in which God is sought and loved before all things. Therefore, they are to nourish the members regularly with the word of God ... They are to be an example to them in cultivating virtues

and in the observance of the laws and traditions of their own institute; they are to meet the personal needs of the members, care for and visit the sick, correct the restless, console the faint of heart, and be patient toward all (Canon 619)."

How does the fraternal leader exercise his authority in a religious community? According to *Service of Authority and Obedience*, there are three main tasks of the fraternal leader. His first duty is to build, with the help of the brothers, "a fraternal community where the members seek God above all else". The second is to serve the community, inspired by the attitude of Jesus Christ who "washed the feet of his disciples in order that the community in its turn be at the service of the Reign of God". Thirdly, fraternal leaders are to be obedient to Christ and the Rule: they need to be the first to seek the will of God. In consecrated life, authority is above all an unworldly authority to be lived by discerning the Will of God through prayer. All these tasks are done by way of service. As St. Augustine says, "*The first thing superiors must realize is that they are servants; they should not consider it beneath their dignity to be servants of many.*" So whatever fraternal leaders do should be in the name of service. Exercising authority in the community of one's brothers or sisters means serving them, after the example of Jesus Christ.

"According to the instruction *The Service of Authority and Obedience*, Authority is Service: exercising authority in a religious community means serving the brothers there, washing their feet. Jesus confirms this by saying that he himself did not come "to be served, but to serve. Superiors are at the service of the community and the community on the other hand is at the service of the reign of God. (Jn 13: 1 – 17)" An apparent contradiction exists between the concept of authority found in the Gospels and the one that rules in our times. God has positioned authority on the level of service. Our Constitution (art. 50) best describes the task of our community leaders: "Brothers in authority are expected to inspire and stimulate, to further mutual unity and co-operation, to give direction to our community by



means of effective organisation and regulation. They are expected to listen to what is alive among the brothers, to show understanding for difficulties and human distress, to point out mistakes, errors and weaknesses, to act firmly and with authority whenever this is required."

However, leadership in a fraternal community described in this way does not give the other members of the community the freedom to stay aloof. All are obliged to support the leader to accomplish the common task of seeking the will of God for the community and their mission. Again, article 51 of our Constitution cautions us: "it would be incorrect to shift our personal responsibility away to those in authority. Every brother should be concerned with the happiness of his fellow-brothers. The better we live up to this apostolate at home, the better we shall together be able to spread happiness to the outside world." In fact, the Constitution further explains that "*our vow of obedience does not ask us to renounce our own conscience or responsibility*", and it calls on us to continuously "*feel co-responsible*" (art. 84). This implies that the role of the community members in building a real fraternal community is highly required.

Servant leadership style is a requirement for fraternal leaders. "Servant leadership is leading like Jesus. Thus, Jesus gave his disciples examples on how they should serve and love



others. Jesus washing the feet of the disciples is the classic Christian model of how a leader must be a servant. Servant leaders place themselves at the service of the people, and the mission of the church. To assist leaders of a fraternal community perform their role as servants, *The Service of Authority and Obedience* proposed that “persons in authority promote the growth of fraternal life through the service of listening and dialogue, the creation of a favourable atmosphere for sharing and co-responsibility, the participation of everyone in the concerns of each one, discernment and the promotion of fraternal obedience.”

Indeed, the service of listening is a necessary ingredient in religious communities because it indicates acceptance, understanding and appreciation of the other, and shows that the other counts. The art of listening, which also include *listening to what the Spirit is saying to the community* (cf. Rev 2:7) serves many purposes. Thus, Nyukorong (2021) indicates that listening also encompasses getting in touch with one's own call to service and spirituality. Listening, coupled with periods of reflection and contemplation, are essential to the spiritual growth and well-being of the FIC servant-leader.

In *Rules of conduct for superiors*, Bro. Bernardus Hoecken said Superiors are chosen “to serve as the deputy of Jesus Christ”, and must therefore possess a number of qualities which are similar to those of Jesus the servant leader. They include good example, love for the brothers, prudence, gentleness, steadfastness, wisdom and knowledge, zeal and courage, trust, humility and honesty. Certainly, these form part of being a fraternal leader in our FIC communities.

One of Jesus' qualities as a servant leader is His obedience to the father. Obedience expresses itself in *my desire to unite myself with the other's will*. To obey is Jesus basic attitude: “My food,” Jesus said to them, “is to obey the will of the one who sent me” (John 4:34). It is also the fundamental attitude of the Virgin Mary: “I am the Lord's servant,” said Mary; “may it happen to me as you have said” (Luke 1:38). Obedience, a key



attitude of Jesus and Mary, is also the key attitude for all Christian leaders. Our obedience as superiors consists in nothing other than an extension of Jesus' obedience to the Father.

In conclusion, fraternal leadership constitutes a set of principles and rules that guide and protect a community of consecrated people or genuine community of faith and love that has a common mission of building the kingdom of God. Even though this style assumes the path of servant leadership, the aspect practiced by Jesus Christ is the preferred model for fraternal communities. Here, the leader, with the support of the community, seeks the interest of the community through discernment of the will of God. All members of the community practice obedience to the superior as a practical way of obedience to God in order to fulfil God's will on earth.



# Joint Meetings with Sisters CB and Brothers CMM

Bro. Raphael Besigrinee, General Council

**D**uring the months of February and March 2023, the General Council held meetings with two of our befriended congregations, namely Brothers CMM and Sisters CB (Charles Borromeus). The last time we met with the leaders of these congregations was in 2020 for the Brothers CMM and 2019 for the Sisters CB.

In two separate meetings with the two teams, we shared some experiences of the past years under the stressful situation caused by COVID-19. Recalling the past, COVID-19 was like a “storm” that passed through the whole of humankind, affecting every aspect of people's lives, and religious congregations were not left out. In terms of conferences which are a feature of the life of religious congregations, no congregation was able to hold a general or provincial chapter, and no conference was possible either. Some congregations managed to hold some conferences online while the rest had to wait till 2021. The Brothers CMM for instance, who planned their General Chapter for 2020, eventually held it in 2021. However, visits to our mission areas were possible with their associated restrictions and strict protocols during the journeys. All three congregations were able to pay canonical and working visits to their respective provinces and regions.

In spite of the difficulties posed by the pandemic, it was not a complete loss after all. We therefore looked back at what engaged us during the period. The Sisters CB briefed the meeting on some of the activities they were able to complete, apart from the visits, namely a pilgrimage program in 2022 and an inter-cultural and leadership program for their sisters. The Brothers CMM on their part gave a summary of what transpired during their General Chapter of 2021, and reported on the New CMM mission in Zambia. The new mission started in January 2023 with four brothers forming one community. They are currently managing a technical school. Many of their candidates come from this new mission area and they hope to get more in the



coming years. FIC also gave a brief account of the Congregational Conference and Formators' Meeting that took place in Ghana in September 2022. This Formators' Meeting was organised for the formators of Ghana and Malawi provinces only. The other provinces will be taken care of later.

Most congregations in Europe are experiencing the “end times” and ours are not different. Obviously, we had to look into the future of our congregations. The most glaring and critical issues that confront us have to do with changing the status of our provinces and regions, and how to effectively manage our religious houses in The Netherlands and Europe in general. Also, as congregations fold up in Europe, what do we do with congregational archives? We need to find the best ways to preserve or dispose of big collections of historical artifacts and icons connected with our congregations and founders. Recently, our attention has also been on our relationship with our Associated members, who only exist in the Netherlands. Since associate membership is not explained in our Constitution, it is often not clear what their rights and status are in relation to our congregations.

Looking ahead, the Sisters CB are due to hold their General Chapter in Indonesia. They highlighted the issues to be discussed during the General Chapter scheduled to start on 4 July 2023. The General Board (GB) has put a



committee in place to help them plan the chapter which has the theme *"Called to be a Life giving Water on the Synodal Journey"*. The Brothers CMM have also planned a number of activities for the year 2023, among them the preparation of some youth for the World Youth Days (WYD). About 80 young people from seven countries where Brothers CMM are active were selected by local parish churches and being prepared to attend the WYD scheduled to take place from 1 - 6 August 2023 in Portugal. The goal of this youth movement, called "Ambassadors of World Wide Brotherhood", is faith development and spiritual formation of Catholic youth around the world. The project is being financed with contributions from the participants, the General Board CMM, and several sponsors.

Apart from the yearly congregational conference, the Brothers FIC have prepared a meeting for the Formators of Indonesia province. Both meetings will take place in Indonesia in the months of June and July 2023. We also shared with our collaborators our plan to have the Spiritual Journey program which will take place at the Sisters CB facility "Onder de Bogen" in Maastricht from 1 - 21 October 2023. It is an international program of continuing formation for our brothers, and has the theme *"Called together and sent out to be the bearers of Good News in a Joyful Life"*.

As faithful friends and collaborators, the leadership of the Brothers FIC have had very good working relations with the board members of the Brothers CMM and Sisters CB since our first encounter. Through these meetings, the FIC General Council has enjoyed very good working relations with the two congregations. One feature of these encounters has always been the relaxing and friendly atmosphere during our sharing. For the current FIC General Council, this may be the last formal meeting with the General Council members of these congregations, since our term of office will soon come to an end. We all expressed the hope that this bond of friendship would continue into the future in spite of the continuous changes in the leadership of our congregations.



## GENERAL COUNCIL

# Reflection from the Document “Consecrated Persons and Their Mission in Schools” part 1

Bro. Valent Daru, General Council



## Introduction

On Friday, 10<sup>th</sup> February 2023, the FIC General Council had a day of recollection around the theme "Consecrated Persons and their Mission in Schools". The inspiration came from the papal prayer intention in which Pope Francis dedicated the whole month of January 2023 to praying for educators, encouraging them to become credible witnesses of teaching fraternity rather than competition, and helping the youngest and most vulnerable.

The United Nations also coincidentally celebrates an "International Day of Education" in January. This event, dedicated to empowering people in the light of education, peace, and prosperity, is celebrated every year on the 24<sup>th</sup> of January. The UN expressed this celebration's significance in making education accessible to everyone, irrespective of religion, caste, and creed. Education is a fundamental human right.

This day significantly promotes legislation that offers equal and affordable education to all social segments.

By this theme, we intended to join that movement and celebration simply by reflecting on our educational ministry and praying for all those actively involved. FIC has a long tradition as a "teaching Congregation". We have accumulated extensive experience and knowledge regarding Christian education. Thousands of Brothers have dedicated themselves to spreading the Good News and uplifting poor children and youths through our Catholic Schools.

However, today's situation differs from the time our Congregation was one of the brothers' Congregations in The Netherlands that developed into specialized teaching organizations with schools and institutions nationwide and eventually recognized as

professional educators. A lot has changed. “The rise of the post-war *Welfare State* and the consumer society undermined the coherence and militancy of the Catholic movement... in schools and institutions, brothers became a dwindling minority among the laity. The position of the Congregation was increasingly criticized, not only by lay teachers, but also by the clergy, the bishops, and eventually by the members themselves” (Joos van Vugt, 1996). Since then, the involvement of the brothers in our schools dropped drastically. As for now, hundreds of our fellow Brothers still continue to serve our deprived brothers and sisters in society through our schools or public schools in Chile, Ghana, Malawi, and Indonesia. They are fruits of the missionary movement started by the Dutch brothers in the early nineteenth century. We are grateful to them for their outstanding dedication and tremendous contribution to this field.

### **(Christian) Education in the Constitution**

As a teaching congregation, education has always been emphasized in the Constitution we have had over the years. Let's take a look at the 1848 Dutch Constitution Article 1.

*The purpose of the community of the Brothers of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, is the sanctification of its members, through the exercise of Christian perfection according to the Holy Gospel; and to give help and assistance, to the sick and needy of the body of Jesus Christ, through the exercise of works of love, according to obedience, but primarily to educate and teach the youth, in Christian and secular knowledge, according to the precepts of our Sacred Religion.*

We notice that in our first Constitution, education and teaching had received a special place in the heart of our apostolate since the beginning of the Congregation. Interestingly, our first Constitution also emphasized the content of education we would like to give to our students in our school. It was in both Christian and secular knowledge. In our modern language, we may say that we strive to apply a holistic style of education in our school apostolate.

This emphasis was restated when the Congregation revised the Constitution in 1936. Article 3 of the Constitution 1936 says in Dutch:

*The special purpose of the Brothers is: to perform works of charity under the guidance of obedience, especially the education of the youth according to the precepts of the Catholic religion and to give instruction in the Christian and profane sciences, also in the Missions.*

In 1936, the Congregation had already become an international Congregation since the brothers had been working in Dutch East Indonesia for several years, and some natives had joined the Congregation as brothers. Our school apostolate was growing steadily since we established the first Community in Jogjakarta in 1920. To secure the growth and to keep the mission on track, the Constitution had to perform its task to keep the unity of the Congregation by stressing uniformity, including in the area of school apostolate.

Following the Constitution of 1936, our educational endeavors, either close to the center of the government, of the Congregation or far in the mission land had the same guideline that characterized our identity. Besides taking the holistic approach, our schools also should be in accordance with the precepts of the Catholic religion. It was given more emphasis taking into account that some of our school apostolates were present in “non-Catholic” areas. We all know that Catholic schools have always played an important role in realizing the Church's essential task to “teach and make disciples of all nations” (Matt 28:19).

From those articles taken from the two previous Constitution, we follow the development of the Congregation and how we tried to keep our Founder's heritage alive by nurturing our community's original mission. We believe the same spirit remained when we got the new Constitution approved by the Holy See in 1991.

Following the directives from the dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of

Apostolic Life (ICLSAL), the new Constitution gives special attention to the heritage of our Founders and how we should keep it as a source that characterizes our life and determines our mission. Article 10 of our Constitution results from a long and profound reflection upon this matter. Two important points connect closely with the theme of the recollection. *First*, we feel an intense concern for spiritual and religious needs, a great concern for the contemporary and culturally integrated transfer of faith, and *second*, we see as our principal apostolic tradition: education, formation, and teaching.

When he began dedicating himself to Maastricht's poor children, Msgr. Louis Rutten started a small catechism school in the central parish of St. Servatius in 1837. He instructed the boys in catechism, and since illiteracy became a barrier to understanding religious instruction later on, he also taught them reading, writing, and even arithmetic. In this sense, his efforts to establish charity schools was first of all stirred by a religious motivation to spread the values of the Gospel to save the innocent souls of the children and youth. This spirit is repeated in the first point from art. 10, but without the word "Christian".

In this article, we see education, formation, and teaching as our principal apostolic tradition. This statement is also seen in the spirit of our Founders. However, we will discover a slight difference if we carefully read articles 7 and 8. These articles express clearly the underlying movement concerning Christian Education at that very time. The second sentence in art. 7 states: "This young priest felt a call to place his whole life and all his means in the service of the Christian Education and formation of the youth." The last paragraph of art. 8 also states: "Just as Father Rutten, he (Bro. Bernardus) felt an apostolic preference for Christian education and formation. He strongly urged the brothers never to lose sight of the poor."

As noticed, the word "Christian," an essential element in the previous Constitution, is no longer there in art. 10. Could it be that the emphasis of our education ministry is somehow shifting from "Christian education" to merely "general education?" Perhaps it is just a matter of

**Our principal  
apostolic tradition:  
education,  
formation, and  
teaching**

emphasis. Perhaps our schools, according to the signs of the times, should gradually become educational institutions and not only means of transferring our Christian faith. This is precisely because most schools exist in a pluralistic society. We know that not all students in our schools are members of the Catholic faith; not all are Christians. The religious freedom and the personal conscience of individual students and their families must be respected and this freedom is explicitly recognized by the Church. By omitting the word "Christian" in art. 10, we would like to underline that our schools, first and foremost, should be educational institutions that pursue cultural goals and the natural development of the youth to the same degree as any other schools (see *Gravissimum Educationis* 8). However, we should never neglect the transfer of our Christian faith.

The removal of the word "Christian" in article 10 may not be a problem since, in the actual circumstances, our Brothers who lead and work in our schools, inspired by the spirit of discipleship, continue to spread Christian values in those who work with us and those entrusted to us. Moreover, the first part of article 10 refers to 'spiritual and religious needs' as one of our concerns. We are grateful to God for this heritage, and hope to be able to encourage our brothers to continue their good work for the cause of our Christian faith in the light of the Document *"Consecrated Persons and their Mission in Schools"*.



## NETHERLANDS

# FIC Encounter Day, the Netherlands

Bro. Frans School

On March 23, 2023, the brothers and associates of the Religious House the Netherlands FIC gathered at De Beyart in Maastricht for a meeting day. Naturally, members of the FIC team were also present, as well as some members of the General Council. We began with coffee/tea and cake, and informal interactions. Then the afternoon opened with a brief prayerful celebration dedicated to our founder Msgr. Louis Rutten. We gathered this time to immerse ourselves in the life and aspirations of the founder of our dear congregation, **Msgr. Louis Rutten**. Things were often not easy for him and Brother Bernardus. Yet they both remained in simplicity and trust in the Eternal. Through all their efforts, their attention for the weak in society resounded.

*Louis Rutten: his time, his person, his 'project,' his 'will'*

Using a PowerPoint, Bro. Johan Muijtjens gave an introduction to Louis Rutten (1809-1891), his time, his person, his "project" and his "will".

*His time:* Bro. Johan dwelt a little longer on the time in which Louis Rutten lived. The time was characterized by the Napoleonic Wars (1799-1815) with many devastations, the new division of Western Europe (Maastricht became part of France), the poor social and economic situation in Maastricht: 1/3 of the population was dependent on charity; poor hygienic conditions; an emerging industrialization with poor working conditions and child labour. The prevailing thinking about poverty was that the existence of the different classes (the very rich, the middle class and the poor) was the will of God. The answer to the prevailing poverty was: just do good, be charitable to the poor, help them with food, clothing, housing, some education - but there is no way to change the basic structure of society. Probably, Louis Rutten, coming from a well-to-do family, also thought along these lines.



However, this does not diminish his great dedication and commitment to the poor.

*His person:* As a teenager, Louis Rutten was completely focused on worldly affairs. He really went through a conversion process, which after an inner struggle made him decide no longer to choose an easy life, but to do something with his growing awareness of injustice. He finally dared to change the direction of his life by responding to the felt vocation to become a priest and later to focus on the valuable work of Christian education of the poor. From there, he developed many new ideas and initiatives. Rutten also encountered many resistances from civil, political and ecclesiastical leaders. But he was "touched" by his mission and felt called by God. He trusted in God's Providence and the intercession of Mary the Immaculate.

*His project:* After a brief pause, Bro. Johan then dwelt on Louis Rutten's plan/projet in 1839: a "Plan ('projet') to found an association of unmarried persons, as yet unnamed, but which in time shall be called Brothers of Charity, Poor Brothers, or the like." All present had Rutten's "Plan" on paper. Br. Johan followed the text and commented on each passage.

*His testament:* Finally, Bro. Johan said something about Rutten's business and spiritual legacy. The latter arouses great admiration in anyone who surveys the life of Louis Rutten. After leading the FIC congregation for so many years, Louis Rutten became sick. He was finally admitted to a home for the mentally ill with the Alexian Brothers in Thienen, Belgium, in 1871. He had to bear a heavy cross for the last 20 years of his life. The brothers have about 70 letters (mostly written to the superior general) during the first 15 years, but almost nothing during the last 5 years. Rutten was now "leading" the congregation by his interest, his love, his prayers, his suffering for the good of the Brothers, of the (military) orphans and of many other persons he had come to know in his active life. On December 16, 1891, Louis Rutten gave his life back to our loving God, who had abundantly blessed him with a life not easy but very fruitful.

### *Our former teacher training college*

To conclude the informative part, Bro. Wim Luiten showed another series of slides of the rebuilding and renovation of the former training school / vocational school of the brothers FIC at Tongerseweg 135 Maastricht into a spacious accommodation for students. Nothing has changed on the outside of the imposing buildings except that the facades have been cleaned and the infrastructure adapted. Inside, an entire transformation has taken place while retaining the original structures. All in all, a handsome piece of work.

The meeting day ended successfully at Kras with soup and sandwiches, and coffee and tea. Thanks to the good care of the FIC team and the solid input of Bro. Johan Muijtjens.

## MALAWI

# Deepening our Community Life, Apostolate and Prayer

Bro. Gasper Kalisto

**W**hy am I a brother in the Congregation of Brothers of the Immaculate Conception? What do I like most about my brotherhood? What do I like or dislike about my community, apostolate and prayer life? These are questions that formed part of the reflection during our provincial recollection at Bethel Community on 26<sup>th</sup> March 2023. Fr. Jean Pierre Ngemanyi, a discalced Carmelite Priest of Nyungwe Retreat Centre, was the facilitator.

Apostolate, community and prayer are the three pillars of religious life. Living in community is Biblical, which makes it more divine in nature. A community is a gift. Those living in it are expected to remain faithful to one another, to the teachings of its model (the Holy Trinity), and to prayer life (Acts 2:42). We have to live together as human beings, and have esteem for each other. That is



*Fr. Jean Pierre Ngemanyi, OCD*



*Brothers FIC, the postulants and Fr. Jean Pierre after the recollection.*

exactly what we are told in our constitution : to be brothers of one heart and soul (art. 35). In brotherly love we let our feelings of deep affection for one another come to expression and regard others as more important than ourselves (Romans 12:10). We should be able to see God in our communal living. Religious life, on its own, is a quest for God in community. It becomes fruitful when it is fully embraced and when we make it our very own.

As human beings, we never choose to be born in a certain family. Neither do we choose who our parents or siblings should be. Religious life is similar. We enter religious life freely and consciously, moved by our motivations. This free choice calls for our responsibility. We are not part-time members in religious life. Our life has to be nourished by these three pillars in order to give it vitality. In so doing, we will be able to appreciate that we are indeed gifts to each other in the community.

Forming a community alone is not enough for a religious. Our availability matters as well. It calls for us to share our talents with other members of the community, and contribute to its growth. We ought to be prepared to give our "all" in any desired place and in the most expedient way, after the example of Jesus (Const. art 22 and 80). We should be known as religious brothers by our attitudes, not our logo or habit. That is why our apostolates are meant not just to be mere works. They should reflect the face of Christ in the people we serve. Our apostolates are works of service and self-sacrifice, and also ways to live out the gospel message. Our first and foremost apostolate is to become witnesses to Christ by our lives. How can we be witnesses to Christ if we are not in union with Him? That is where 'prayer' comes in. Our prayer life is meant to unite us with

Christ and remain in union with Him in our apostolates and communal living.

As Brothers FIC, we need to cultivate mutual respect, build effective communities that support each other and focus on our common mission. It is not the work we do that matters, but rather who we are. We need to ask ourselves how we respond to the concerns of fellow brothers. Can we confirm that there is mutual trust among us as brothers living in the province? How is our commitment to apostolate and prayer? Do we sometimes feel we lack 'genuine' commitment to community life and prayer? We have to remember that the fundamental reason for our being religious is our God-experience. This is the deepest bond of our being brother to one another and also of our being brother to many other people.

We have to bear in mind that our prayer life nourishes and complements our community life. A family that prays together, stays together. Prayer helps strengthen the bonds of our communities and fosters a sense of shared purpose and mission. The bonds created through prayer are unbreakable as this brings peace among members of the community because we fully embrace the gift of each other. This helps us respond more positively to our apostolate and makes us different from non-religious. We will be defined by the quality of service we render to others. This will surely show that our apostolate is not just for individuals, but the community.

After two sessions of reflection with Fr. Jean Pierre, we had time also for personal reflections and confessions, and concluded with Holy Mass.





Bro. Augustine Kubdaar (Superior General) and Bro. Theo Riyanto (Vice Superior General) with the domestic workers in Roncalli Retreat House in Salatiga, Indonesia (2023).



Bro. Theo Riyanto, when he arrived in Timor Leste to visit our fellow brothers in (Becora and Ainara).  
L-R: Bros. Jose, Theo, Cancio, Romito our aspirant, and Bro. Zeca.  
Bro. Theo received a traditional shawl of Timor Leste.



Bro. Ge van Vugt (2<sup>nd</sup> from left) when he started his Spiritual Journey exercise with some of our teachers in Chile. Bro. Patricio is their spiritual journey animator in the province.



FIC Brothers of Malawi distribute about 200 bags of maize flour and 50 plastic sheets to those greatly affected by Cyclone Freddy last March 2023 in Maryview and Mzedy with assistance from CADECOM representatives.



A practical lesson at an Auto-Mechanic workshop in St. John's Technical Institute, Nandom – in the Upper West Region of Ghana.



Bro. Thomas interacting with kids in Pangudi Luhur Kartini Kindergarten in Semarang during Christmas celebration.

# A Profile of my Vocation to Brothers FIC

Bro. Methodius Kuusoru



*Bro. Methodius in a handshake with Bro. Augustine (Gen. Superior)*

## 1. A beginning of the beginning

**M**emories of 15<sup>th</sup> September 1982 are still fresh in my mind. In my mind's eye I still see myself sandwiched between my parents and escorted through the aisle of St. Louis Formation Centre Chapel, Wa to be presented to the main celebrant of the Eucharistic celebration during which I made my 1<sup>st</sup> profession of Religious vows. The presiding celebrant was Archbishop Gregory E. Kpiebaya (of blessed memory), then Bishop of Wa. That day we were two candidates who made our first vows: the late Gregory Baalaboore and my humble self. A third person was Michael Gyaboro whose profession was deferred for some reasons. These days whenever I see young Brothers make their first vows my mind carries me back to my own first profession.

## 2. How the official ceremony kick-started the journey

As mentioned above, I still remember the day of

my first profession. I remember the scripture texts Gregory Baalaboore and I had selected for the occasion. The first reading was from Paul's Letter to the Philippians 3: 7-14 in which Paul tells the community of believers at Philippi how his experience of Christ on the road to Damascus was so overwhelming that nothing mattered to him anymore than the benefits of knowing Jesus Christ, the risen Lord. At that time I felt that I could identify myself with these words of St. Paul. Having found my vocation in the Religious Life in the FIC Brotherhood, I dared say that nothing else mattered to me. The second reading of that day was from the Gospel of Matthew 13:44-46. In that short Gospel text, Jesus used two parables to illustrate a point about the Kingdom of heaven: **The Parable of the Hidden Treasure** and **The Parable of the Pearl**. First, He said the kingdom is like a treasure that is hidden in a field. A man accidentally comes across it, goes and sells everything he owns and buys the field. Similarly the second parable says a man goes looking for



fine pearls and comes across a pearl that is unusually fine. He decides to sell everything he owns to buy that pearl. As far as I was concerned I saw myself in the light of the two men who had chanced the hidden treasure or the fine Pearl in the field. Deep inside me I was convinced that I have found the hidden treasure or the fine pearl of my life; that is to become a Religious Brother. Making my first vows was therefore not just a temporal commitment but a commitment for the rest of my life, "Isha Allah"!

### 3. The very beginning

The very beginning of my journey to the Consecrated Life goes like this: one hot Sunday afternoon in November 1979, I was in my own family house at Chebogo, the place of my birth and childhood. I was in the company two friends. Both of these friends had attended Nandom Secondary School. I, for my part, was a past student of Lawra Secondary School. Our conversation was about experiences during our secondary school days. In the course of the conversation my friends shared with me the life of the FIC Brothers who run the boys' school at Nandom. They mentioned how the Brothers live together even sharing their property. I immediately felt something burning inside me which prompted me to say "I want to be one of these people, what do I do?" My two friends advised me to go to Nandom Secondary School and ask for the Brothers House popularly known as "Mount Zion". They also told me that there was one of the Brothers who is Ghanaian. He was called Nicholas Zumanaa (of blessed memory) who himself was a product of Nandom Sec. I had known Nicholas Zumanaa during the days of my initial teacher training at St. John Bosco's Teachers' Training College, Navrongo. That was in the 1970's. In fact we were friends then, but lost contact after completing college.

A few days after that conversation, I made a trip to Nandom by bicycle. When I got to Nandom, lo and behold, Brother Nicholas was the first person I met. After catching up on each other I told him I had heard about the Brothers and I was coming to visit them. He was very excited and that was the beginning of my contacts with the Brothers as an aspirant. Incidentally, a Contact-Days program

for aspirants was coming up in a couple of weeks in December at Wa. Bro. Nicholas invited me to the Contact- Days. I went to Wa for the contact days, rather secretly because my father did not agree to my plan and desire to become a Religious Brother.

The next Contact-Days for aspirants was scheduled in April 1980. I was again invited. At that contact days I was offered the chance to apply to begin pre-novitiate in October that same year. It was then I told the Brothers that my father opposed the idea of my going to Religious Life. So a delegation was asked to come along with me to see my father on the matter. The delegation comprised of Bros. Maarten Bouw, (then Regional Superior), Alexis Bele-ire and Nicholas Zumanaa. There was a long discussion with my father concerning my vocation. In the end my father gave a half-hearted consent to my desire and plan of life.

A week to my leaving home, my paternal uncle came home. He had lived his whole life in the South of Ghana, and he was senior to my father. In our Dagara tradition he has authority in the family over and above my father. One evening after supper I called the family together and presented the case of my vocation. My uncle listened patiently to my side of the matter as well as to that of my father. My mother, on her part, had no objections whatsoever to my plan of life and she had voiced it on several occasions. When everyone had expressed their opinions my uncle said, *"Our family has become Christian because some people somewhere sacrificed and let their children go in order that we will receive the message of the gospel. If today God is asking us to do the same and sacrifice our son so that he may bring the word of God to other people, who are we to object or say no?"* At this point, my father "hanged his gloves" and the matter was resolved there and then. Those words of my uncle have remained with me ever since. They are a point of reference and a source of inspiration in my life even at this time and age.

### 4. Initial Formation (October 1980 –September 1982)

I went through the initial formation from October



1980 to September 1982. There were three of us who did so: Gregory Baalaboore, Michael Gyaboro and my humble myself. Our Pre-novitiate Director was Bro. Guido Sukarman. Bro Guido accompanied us into the canonical year of novitiate for the first six months and then handed over to Bro Denis Dery. During the canonical novitiate we had some challenges. At that time the apostolic year of novitiate was in the process of being introduced into initial formation. We didn't like the idea of an additional year in initial formation. The three of us vehemently vowed to leave the novitiate should we be asked to do the apostolic year of novitiate. But thank God it didn't happen. We were exempted from the apostolic year of novitiate but our entrenched position on the matter calls to mind what Chinua Achebe, the renowned African writer, would describe as "primitive solidarity," albeit over a very simple matter.

#### **5. From first vows to perpetual Vows (September 1982–June 1991)**

My life as a Religious Brother between 1982 and

1991 was marked by years of apostolate at some point and years of studies at another. Right after the first profession I was assigned to Tumu. I taught at Tumu Middle Day School. I did so from 1982 to 1984. It was during those years that the current Provincial Superior, Bro. Seregeous Dery, became my student. Then from 1984 to 1987 I studied at the School of Ghana Languages, Ajumako. I graduated from there with a Diploma in Ghanaian Languages. In 1987, there was a comprehensive reform of the educational system in Ghana. The old system of 4 years Middle School after six years of Primary School was abolished. The government introduced the 3-year Junior Secondary School (JSS) as well the 3-year Senior Secondary School (SSS) programs. With a diploma certificate I was qualified to head one of the newly established junior secondary schools. I was assigned to Tumu again as the headmaster of the combined St. Gabriel's Primary and Junior Secondary Schools. I succeeded Bro. Nicholas Yangtibr who started and ran the St. Gabriel's Primary School for the previous 7 years. Coming



*Bro. Methodius is now a member of the Formation community in Tamale (Ghana)*

fresh from college and armed with a Diploma Certificate I was more than enthusiastic to implement the New Educational Reforms at St Gabriel's Schools. I insisted that the students must learn by doing especially in the practical subjects like block-laying and Carpentry. So the students of St. Gabriel's JSS built the Technical Workshop themselves – thus implementing the government directive that all junior secondary schools must have a workshop. I dare say that those years of my mission at St. Gabriel's schools were golden years of my apostolic life and ministry. But in 1990 I had to leave for further studies at the University of Cape Coast. At that time I was still a Temporary Professed Brother (TPB).

#### **6. Perpetual Profession of Religious Vows**

In June 1991 I was granted permission to make final vows even as a full time student who lived outside the community. By then the canonical years of my temporary profession of vows had run out. The ceremony of final profession took place at Fielmon, my home parish. The celebration was more significant and memorable for my parents than for me. My parents said it was like their wedding anniversary. For them, the ceremony was far more spiritually uplifting than the day they wedded. For the first time in their lives they received communion under both species. Not even at their wedding ceremony many decades earlier were they given such an opportunity. During communion they were invited unto the sanctuary where they stood side by side with me and the celebrant and con-celebrants. One could sense how nervous they were. It was during that ceremony I hugged my father and mother for the first and last time. In the meantime they have both passed on: my father in March 2006 and my mother in November the same year.

#### **7. University of Cape Coast (UCC) and after...**

I graduated from the University of Cape Coast (UCC) in August 1994 and was posted to Nandom Secondary School where I taught English. This happened for a very short period of time. In December 1994, the Ghana Province FIC held the third and last session of its Provincial Chapter. It was then I got a shock of my life: I was elected the Provincial Superior! Canonically

speaking, I was not qualified. Canon Law stipulates that a person must be a minimum of five years finally professed to qualify as a Provincial Superior. But this was no excuse for me to back down on the decision of the Brothers. The Chapter asked the General Council to petition Rome to consent to the Chapter decision. Interestingly and more coincidentally, the General Superior was the late Bro. Albert Ketelaars who doubled as the out-going Provincial Superior of Ghana. Rome did not object to the decision that I be made the Provincial Superior with only three and half years of final profession to my credit. So what reason could I advance to object to such a situation?

#### **8. Provincial Superior FIC Ghana Province (January 1995–January 2001)**

I was inducted into office as the Provincial Superior of the Brothers FIC, Ghana, in January 1995 together with four Brothers as Councilors. They were Bros. John Kleinpenning (of blessed memory), Michael Lugnaah, Gracious Sang-ber Der and Oscar Gem (of blessed memory). Bro John was elected vice – Provincial Superior. Initially things went well but before long I sensed tension and subtle insubordination even from some members of the Provincial Council. I need to mention that I was the first indigenous Brother to hold the office of Provincial Superior.

I consider the time of my leadership as Provincial Superior of Ghana one of the most challenging and crisis-dominated periods of my life.

#### **9. Leadership role at the General Council FIC (March 2007 – September 2012)**

One thing I know about myself is that I shun being a leader or being in a leadership team. During my days at the teacher training college in the 1970's I resigned as a house prefect a few weeks after assuming the post. It was for similar reasons that I resisted taking up the leadership of the Ghana Province FIC. Nevertheless, the mantle of leadership kept following me and caught up with me again in 2006, like a bad omen.

In July / August 2006, the Congregation held its 33rd General Chapter in the Netherlands. I attended as a delegate from Ghana. Well ahead

of the elections there were speculations about the next leadership team of the Congregation. My name was mentioned but I took it as a joke. But true to speculation the General Chapter elected me one of the members of the leadership team of the Congregation for the period 2006-2012. The chapter went on to appoint me as the vicar. The new group of the Congregational leadership was officially inducted into office in Ghana in November 2006. However, it was only in March 2007 that I could move to the Netherlands to start my duties at the highest level of governance of the FIC Congregation. Adjusting to the new environment and working life was not so much an issue. I made up my mind to do the best I could for the benefit and growth of the Congregation. I did not think of myself as a representative of the Brothers of my home country, Ghana. As time went on I began to see some “cracks on the wall” of the team. Initially it looked like personality differences. But as time went on it went beyond that. I spoke out and vehemently too. Then I was singled out and made a target of intimidation and ridicule. Life became for me hell on earth! Now on hindsight, I can attest to the fact that the spirit of God was behind it all. Or else I could neither explain from where I got the energy to strive on nor tell the source of the indomitable spirit that took hold of me and brought me to the end of our term of office. All I have to say is: **GOD, YOU ARE GREAT!** I survived another psychologically tormenting, spirit- breaking “storm” in leadership.

#### 10. Mission to South Sudan: how it came about

My term of office in the General Council FIC ended in August 2012. The General Chapter of that year brought our term of office to an end. The Chapter did not consider me for another term of office. Inwardly I knew that, that would happen so I had started thinking of my future ahead of time... My dream to go to South Sudan began while I was at the General Council in The Netherlands. During that time I was the link person between our Congregation and the USG/UISG Joint Conferences in Rome. Correspondences between the Congregation and the Joint Conferences of the Superior Generals passed through my desk. At one point the USG/UISG Joint Conferences advertised for missionaries to participate in the Solidarity with South Sudan project. The General Council charged me to take this request to the Provinces; and I did. It turned out that FIC could not find any Brothers for the project. Then I began to tell myself that if there is no one from FIC to go to South Sudan, I will volunteer. And from that time onwards the idea to go to South Sudan was like a seed that was nursed inside me. It started growing there silently until it materialized and became a reality

#### 11. South Sudan: mission within mission (May 2013–May 2021)

I arrived at Yambio, South Sudan on the 28<sup>th</sup> of May 2013 after staying a couple days in Nairobi to







process a visa. I immediately fell in love with the environment and later with the people. Yambio is an Equatorial rain forest zone. No wonder that part of the country is called Equatorial Region. It has two rainy seasons which start in February/March and end in November/December with a short break in June/July.

The first person I met at the airstrip in Yambio was Sr. Margaret Scott (RNDM), the Principal of the Teacher Training College where I would teach. When I entered my room that very first day I sat down on the chair and said this prayer: *"Lord, thank you for journeying with me from Ghana all the way to this place. It is you alone who know how long I will stay here. Whatever it is, I leave my life in your hands"*. I arrived in Yambio in the middle of the week and by Monday the following

week I was in class to deliver my first lesson in Christian Religious Education (CRE). Most of the students were much darker in skin color than me; they were also slim and very tall, even the ladies. They looked tired and weary, a sign of having gone through traumatic circumstances. It didn't take long before I began to hear of the horrible situations of their backgrounds. Right from the word go students would come around to familiarize with me, ask about my country, talk about their experiences and ask more questions about my lessons... We met in a thatch-roof summer hut located in middle of the campus. The hut is called 'Tukul' in Pazande, the local language. So I code-named the gatherings 'Tukul conference'. With time I realized that my meeting with students outside the formal classroom encounters was a ministry of its own. I could



sense how God was using those encounters to speak to them through me. I felt privileged to enter into their lives and empathize with them. In this and many other ways I experienced South Sudan as a mission within a mission.

### 12. Return to Ghana

I came back home from South Sudan on 27<sup>th</sup> May 2021. The PC had made it clear to me that my continuous stay in South Sudan was putting a strain on my health... I have no regrets coming back home though I would have preferred being in South Sudan. I have since adjusted myself in the life of Ghana and FIC. For eight years I was cut off from both. I was sent to Kaleo community where I rested and got adjusted. Now I am back to St. Vincent de Paul Novitiate, Tamale; the very place from where I departed to go to South Sudan. I am helping out in the novitiate / pre-novitiate programs, teaching English Language and Human Development. I also tend the livestock and poultry of the community. I feel adequately engaged doing this. It adds to the joy and fulfillment that have characterized my life, all the odds notwithstanding.

**Now I am back  
to St. Vincent de  
Paul Novitiate,  
Tamale; the very  
place from where  
I departed to go to  
South Sudan.**

### 13. Conclusion

The vocation / life story of every person is unique. It is like no other. I have tried to portray the uniqueness of my vocation story in this short profile. I embrace wholeheartedly the ups and downs, good and bad, redeeming and unredeeming experiences and praise God for bringing me this far. I entrust the rest of my life into His hands knowing very well that I am at the evening time of it. May God bless all who have touched my life whether in the positive or negative way, for I could not have been who I am without them.

ALL TO JESUS I SURRENDER!!!





## Religious Leadership is not a Personal Choice, but a Call

Bro. Martin Handoko, FIC  
Superior General (2012 – 2018)



*Former General Superior, Bro. Martin Handoko*

In our daily lives, whenever we are talking about leadership, in most cases our minds are spontaneously focused on the following associations: leadership is an authority, power, position, status, etc. Generally speaking, to be a leader means to have high position. Once a person is elected or appointed a leader, he/she will have a certain position and power to lead people whom he/she is supposed to lead. Likewise when a person is promoted to a higher managerial position, this surely carries with it a certain amount of authority and power. These are exactly the reasons why many people like to be leaders. Leadership gives people a status, position, authority, power, and in many cases also financial benefit. Many people want to be leaders due to the many kinds of benefits that go with the position. Even in politics many people advertise themselves to be elected leaders in order to get a position of power. This kind of leadership is not in conformity with life in the religious community.

Religious leadership is quite different from what I call “secular leadership” or “political leadership”. In the religious community we believe that being a leader is not a choice, but a call from God Himself who is working through the voice of the community or the official authority. We are called to be leaders like the leadership of Jesus Himself, who came to serve and not to be served. Jesus’ leadership style is diametrically opposed to that of the secular leadership. He declared that in the Kingdom, greatness belongs to the servant and that distinction grows from child-like humility (Matthew 18:4). He taught us that leaders are expected to serve others.

To give an illustration concerning my conviction that religious leadership is a call, herewith I would like to share what I heard from some priests and bishops in Indonesia. Whenever there was a need to get a new bishop in a certain diocese because of the death or retirement of the previous bishop, then there was a team of people assigned to find and nominate candidates for the new bishop. One of the criteria is that the candidates in question should never have the expectation to be appointed bishop. Any candidate who ever displays an ambition or expectation to be appointed bishop, will be disqualified. This kind of criteria is in fact also applied in many forms of elections in religious leadership. In most cases those elected or appointed religious leaders are people without ambition to be leaders.

My personal experience gives me more understanding concerning the role of religious leadership. When I was elected General Superior of the FIC Congregation in 2006 I was a bit surprise since I had never functioned as a religious leader before. I did not have any experience on religious leadership. I was never an assistant to any General Superior; I had never





*Bro. Martin Handoko (first left), his councillors, secretaries and General Treasurer (2012 – 2018)*

been a Provincial Superior or the assistant, not even a local superior of a religious community. The members of the General Chapter however unanimously elected me the General Superior of the Congregation. To be honest I never intended to be leader of a religious community, and never expected to be a leader of the congregation. It was not my choice nor was it my aspiration. So, I consider the whole process of election as the way God called me to be leader of the Congregation. Based on this experience I convince myself that religious leadership is not a choice, but a real call.

The following question might then arise: "If religious leadership is a call, what is the consequence of it?" To this question I would like to refer to the words of our Constitution saying that "As brothers we know ourselves to be called together and thus sent out to continue the work of Jesus. He went around doing good, he was a

witness to the truth, he came to serve, he came to redeem, and he brought the liberating message of love. He invites us to place ourselves completely in the service of this Kingdom (Const. art. 15). These are the real function and responsibility of the religious leadership.

To sum up, I can say that religious leadership is a real call, and not a personal choice or personal ambition. If leadership is not a true call, I am sure it will be a very heavy responsibility to carry. However, if the leaders believe that their leadership function is a call from God Himself, they will try their best, despite all problems and burdensome responsibility, since they believe that they are supported by Him.

# Personal Reflection on Authority and Governance

Bro. Seregeous Dery, (Provincial Superior, Ghana)



**A**uthority on one hand, is legitimate power vested and ratified by followers and other parties, which permits a person or group of persons to issue commands by way of assigning roles/responsibilities, allocating resources as well as demand compliance and accountability. Vested authority invariably comes with responsibility and accountability for one's decisions, actions and inactions.

Governance on the other hand, is the structure that outlines how an organization is managed. Such an outlined structure without ambiguity, specifies the different levels of management within the organization or chain of command, assigned roles, responsibilities, communication channels, accountability procedures, expected practices, performance and behaviour. The ultimate goal of governance in an organization is to ensure that, right decisions are made and enforced in the best interest of the organisation, eliminate hiccups, whip up performance and productivity, minimise risk, gain stability and growth.

The terms authority and governance are inseparably linked - they are inter dependent. One cannot govern without authority that is endorsed by followers. Similarly, the success of

an authority in realizing set goals/targets, not only hinges on ability to command wilful followership and compliance, but also depends on appreciation and deployment of good governance principles. A balanced blend and exercise of the two variables (authority and governance) leads to good outcomes in human organisations.

Authority and governance structure in our Brothers FIC is clear. The General Superior and his Councillors, elected by a General Chapter for a definite period of time, exercise overall management and supervisory control over the affairs of the Congregation. They implement General Chapter Resolutions, take decisions, allocate resources, assign responsibilities, seek for good welfare of all Provinces and demand accountability from Provincial Councils.

Same form of authority and governance is replicated in Provinces but with their scope of power, and responsibilities defined and limited (Congregational Statute, Article 48 ff.). At this level however, Provincial Councils deal with more complex systems; thus necessitating distributed authority to lower positions for purposes of enhanced management, control, efficiency and accountability among others. Some of these positions inter-alia includes but not limited to: Provincial Treasurer, Secretary, Procurator, Local Superiors, Board of Directors, Project Managers and Heads of institutions. Aside these, delegating and deployment of standing and ad-hoc committees for specific functions, as and when need be, are all means by which all hands are purposely kept on deck to ease workload burdens and accomplishment of set goals. Routine meetings of Provincial Councils with these lower level authorities are necessary for purposes of updating, informing, demanding

accountability and transparency as well as enforcing system alignment to minimise variance and waste.

My experience of authority and governance does not depart from what has been expressed earlier. Together with my Counsellors, we set the tone for the Province, implement chapter resolutions, take decisions in the best interest of the Province, assign responsibilities and allocate resources. The others are: issuing directives, demanding accountability and feedback, monitoring and evaluating, as well as enacting corrective measures to check variances.

This has not always come without challenges, especially in an environment of growing apostolic demands from within and without, limited and ageing human resource and tight budgetary allocation. The task of satisfying individual needs and group needs of the Province offer joyful

experiences and fulfilments. However, there are also occasional frustrating experiences to content with, ponder on and pray over.

In leading, one has to be resolute and focused amidst turbulence, hurdles and distractions. On a positive note, these moments do not pass by without gaining new insights that inform and guide the future. For me, the years of authority and governance has been an experience of groping to find a way out in a long tunnel and a period of unending schooling. There were moments when I contemplated throwing in the towel. If I have survived travelling this far in this apostolic assignment, it is by the grace of God, the support of the various Provincial and General Councils encountered, support and encouragement of the Brothers and not discounting the support of friends and relations.

**A balanced blend and exercise of the two variables (authority and governance) leads to good outcomes in human organisations.**



# Authority and Governance

Bro. Lawrence Sitima (Provincial Superior of Malawi)

In this write up, I want to share with readers my knowledge on the topic **Authority and Governance**, and how I experience them as a Religious brother. Authority and governance in Religious life and that of the cooperate world are neither well understood nor practised the same way. The focus of this article will be on the way authority and governance are understood and practised, how I try to exercise them as provincial superior, and finally, my efforts in emulating the model of authority adopted by Jesus Christ, the servant leader.

Authority can be described as a delegated right to rule or lead. Leaders have authority, but it is an entrusted authority and behind it, there is God. It is a summon to be of service to others. It is a vocation, not a position of power or an opportunity for self-enhancement, (Nyukorong, 2022, p.145).

It is important to realize that governance is done within the limits of the authority given by God or anyone above us. It is about the stewardship God has entrusted to our care. As superiors /leaders, our main role is to declare what God's word says: whether pleasing to us or not. The authority especially of a religious leader in the governance of a religious community is above all a spiritual authority, which is expected to be lived in prayer and a humble search for the will of the Holy Spirit in a community's life and mission. This is what I intend to promote in our fellow brothers and the congregation. Citing a religious community as an example, "Persons in authority promote the growth of fraternal life through the service of listening and dialogue, the creation of a favourable atmosphere for sharing and co-responsibility, the participation of everyone in the concerns of each one, service balanced between the individual and the community, discernment and the promotion of fraternal obedience" (*Service of Authority and Obedience*, no. 20).

It is therefore very important to make it clear to others through our words and actions, that rules or regulations are there to bring safeguards that enhance our capacity as a community or



congregation for blessings, for order and that each member should feel recognized, accepted and that he or she has a responsibility towards the goodness of each other in that set-up where one belongs. Authority is therefore meant to help one keep a balance in the governance of oneself, of our brothers and sisters in the vineyard or in any set-up.

An important element in authority in the style of governance of Jesus Christ is to realize that all our brothers and sisters in any Christian community are called in diverse ways and roles to be signs of unity. The governance module Jesus adopted was neither about commanding nor controlling others. This type of authority is to provide service and guidance, hence a leader is expected to walk with others, paying attention especially to the weaker ones, while realising his own vulnerability and helping others walk towards Jesus, the Master of all authority.

What should be my focus as I use this delegated authority to govern? As much as possible, I

should strive to identify the good things in every person and perfect them. This is what God expects of every authority that governs His people. Furthermore, Jesus makes it clear in the Gospel of Mark the kind of authority the world needs: "You know that those who are considered rulers of the heathen have power over them, and the leaders have complete authority. This, however, is not the way it is among you. If one of you wants to be great, you must be the servant of the rest; and if one of you wants to be first, you must be the slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served; he came to serve and to give his life to redeem many people" (Mark 10:42–45).

Clearly, in the civil world, the exercise of authority is completely the other way round. James and John wanted the kind where authority "Lords it over others" and "make their authority felt". Jesus makes it clear to his disciples that this way of exercising authority is not decent. Pope Francis makes a similar distinction: *'In religious life, authority is not promotion, and one conceives of authority as an advancement, that the one above commands others, because he has succeeded in climbing that authority is not Christianity, that is pure paganism and may pose serious issues in the governance approaches ... In authority and governance, listening, humbling oneself, being at the service of others etc, are key.* (Pope Francis, General Audience, 15/03/2023).

As I exercise my authority in whatever situation, in the governance of others, I must always bear in mind that I am equal to the others despite the position I hold. I should as much as possible desist from the temptation to believe that I am more important than the others.

Authority is just a service, and leaders in the church are expected to exercise it according to the model of Jesus Christ, those who have received the sacrament of holy orders, the consecrated religious, and the lay faithful.

In conclusion, I quote from Pope Benedict at the beginning of his papacy "My real program of governance is not to do my own will, not to pursue my own ideas, but to listen, together with the whole Church, to the word and the will of the Lord, to be guided by Him, so that He himself will lead the Church at this hour of our history (April 2005)". All authority comes from God. Therefore, leaders need to develop a deep relationship with God in order to function appropriately. As a leader, when I distance myself from God, I will definitely miss the right path and lose the gift of authority and governance.

**If one of you wants to be great, you must be the servant of the rest; and if one of you wants to be first, you must be the slave of all.**

# Authority and Service

Bro. Lucio Torres Martin, (Provincial Superior, Chile)

In the eyes of the world, serving others does not seem like leadership at all. To put off my own needs and prioritize those of others does not square with the world's way of doing things. But that is what Jesus did in his time here on earth. He loved us so much that he laid down his own life for us. Indeed, when we serve others, when we help them get their needs, and when we bend down to serve them, what we are actually doing is loving them. Loving is serving! Jesus turns upside-down the worldly system of leadership.

In fact, Jesus holds up the worldly model of leadership and tells us not to practice leadership in that way. He calls us to be different. The most important value is love: "Love is patient and kind; love is not envious, conceited or proud; love is not ill-mannered or selfish or irritable; love does not keep a record of wrongs; love is not happy with evil, but is happy with the truth. Love never gives up; and its faith, hope, and patience never fail". (1 Corinthians, 13, 4-7)

I was born in Spain, in 1953, and I lived my childhood and youthful life in a context of dictatorship (the dictator Franco was in power from 1939 until he died in 1975). In this context having the authority meant absolute power over decisions and this implied the obedience of subordinates. This was the situation at all levels: family, school, church and society. The possibility of dialogue was not very common and Jesus' message about authority as service was not believed by anybody. One had to obey and if you strayed from what the authority at home, in school or in the parish said, you would be punished, even physically.

At the age of 12, I entered the seminary of the congregation in Miranda de Ebro (1965) and changes were significant because we were never beaten by our teachers and we were treated respectfully.

At the end of the seminary studies, beginning of the 70s many things changed. Fresh air came in after the Second Vatican Council and now our opinions and desires were asked for and



considered in decision-making. I experienced more of this still in the postulancy, novitiate and the first years of profession.

In Spain, democracy was recovered from 1976 onwards, and many things changed, also in politics and civil life, changes that affected education and family life. In church life changes were not noticed because in general the Spanish Church was traditional and conservative and the idea of authority as a service did not yet exist.

When I arrived in Chile in 1984, I found myself in another system of dictatorship and with a culture where authority was also understood as power and dominance. A phrase that expresses this mentality very well is "*Authority that does not abuse loses prestige.*"

Having lived in a culture where authority was understood as power and not as service affected me and it has not been easy for me to experience authority as service. It was hard for me and it is still difficult to cope with the processes involved in listening, dialoguing, reaching consensus, etc.

Deep down, it is hard for me to give myself time to listen, to put myself in the other's place, in order to be able to accompany the processes in the appropriate way.

Thank God, during the 48 years that I have been a brother I have had many possibilities and



opportunities to reflect on this theme of authority and service, through reading, days of reflection, retreats, and so on, which have helped me understand the life of authority as service.

In Chile, in recent years, there have been significant changes in our relationship with our collaborators in our projects, that is, integrating them into the management teams. They also have the possibility of experiencing authority as service.

Deepening this idea has served all of us, both brothers and lay collaborators. Together we agreed on a program of reflection and practice "The Pedagogy of Jesus": 10 characteristics of our being FIC educators.

In conclusion, it is not easy to be a leader especially as a consecrated person living in community. This is due to the many human

weaknesses and failings that sometimes block our minds and hearts from seeing things the way Jesus saw them, and doing things the way Jesus did them. However, the FIC Constitution is there to remind us we have to do things according to the spirit of Jesus.

"Brothers in authority are expected to inspire and stimulate, to further mutual unity and co-operation, to give direction to our community by means of effective organisation and regulation. They are expected to listen to what is alive among the brothers, to show understanding for difficulties and human distress, to point out mistakes, errors and weaknesses, to act firmly and with authority whenever this is required. (article 50)"

## Governance and authority in the Netherlands

Bro. Wim Luiten, (Superior Religious House Netherlands)



**T**he term "authority" is defined in many ways depending on the subject. The *Merriam-Webster* defines authority as the "power to influence or command thought, opinion, or behaviour." In the eyes of the world, authority may refer to the ultimate power someone has over somebody else or a group of people. This means that the person in authority can control what his subjects do, say, or behave like.

In the realm of religious life such as FIC, Jesus Christ, who is the source of all religious authority, turns the world-view of authority and governance structure completely upside-down. Jesus makes a distinction between the two thus: "You know that among the gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you; instead, whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many. (Mark 10:42 – 45)"

Before March 2017, the Netherlands functioned just like any other FIC province, adhering to the Constitution especially regarding the task of authority. "Brothers in authority are expected to inspire and stimulate, to further mutual unity and

co-operation, to give direction to our community by means of effective organisation and regulation. They are expected to listen to what is alive among the brothers, to show understanding for difficulties and human distress, to point out mistakes, errors and weaknesses, to act firmly and with authority whenever this is required. (art. 50)”

The brothers in the Netherlands, now only 27 in number, are all far beyond the retirement age of 67 years. We are all beyond 70 and the majority of us are over 80 and 90 years. Although we are spread over several locations in the Netherlands, we form one community with one Council and Superior. It is not possible again to form separate communities, each one with a local council and superior.

The Council of the Religious House, The Netherlands, as it is called now, has as their main task, taking care of, and paying special attention to the brothers, that they may grow old gracefully.

So, governance and authority in our situation in The Netherlands is completely different from those in the provinces where the membership is still growing. In Indonesia, Ghana and Malawi, young people are still offering themselves to be members of the FIC congregation, with a growing number of brothers still actively involved in apostolate.

There is now a new article in our Constitution entitled '*Our Elderly Brothers*', and it states in part: “Old brothers may look back with gratitude on their lives in which they tried to consecrate themselves to Christ in Gods Kingdom of justice, peace and joy. The community surrounds its elderly and infirm members with care and affection. In their turn they can continue to be happy and meaningful in many ways: by their presence, their openness and their sympathy; by their contemplative and intercessory prayer; by letting go their health, mobility and achievements

with gratitude and joy. In all these ways their life stays to be apostolically fruitful and contributes to the FIC mission.”

This article makes clearer the situation and relevance of our elderly brothers not only in the Netherlands, but the whole congregation. They remain our fellow brothers even in their situation of infirmity. They still look after one another, and they try in various ways to care for one another in love.

Those brothers who have been elected and appointed to be in governance and authority are in our situation the youngest members. Authority in this situation is more on the responsibility to be obedient to the call of their fellow brothers to support them, care and show nearness to them. Of course, all brothers are called to be near to their fellow brothers, but those in authority in the Religious House have taken over this task specifically.

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# Religious Leadership

Bro. Frans Dwiyatno, (Provincial Superior, Indonesia)

The task of leadership that we receive from the congregation is part of our pilgrimage of life as religious, and for that matter, as FIC brothers. In the light of article 1 of the FIC Constitution, *Becoming Human*, the task of leadership is part of my process of becoming human. The leadership task that I have received from the congregation is also to help my fellow brothers to continue in the process of becoming human. In this article, I want to share with readers my experience on religious leadership. For me, leadership is the process of becoming human as stated in our Constitution, "*Being truly human.*" In this statement, it is unfortunately not clear what the Constitution means by being human.

Constitution article 4 (Growing towards Jesus), however, gives a clue to what is meant by the statement *becoming human*. The article states, "...to be a good person, to become a better person, means to us: to grow towards Jesus, to draw life from His life; to make the Good News of the coming of the Kingdom of God our own message." Therefore, the task of leadership is experienced in the process of developing and growing towards Jesus. This task should also be a stimulus for the brothers to experience the process of developing towards Jesus.

What are some examples of the virtues of religious life that can be signs of an FIC brother developing towards Jesus? One of the virtues of the Christian faith that the congregation nurtures is revealed in our Constitution article 2 - In God: "*We believe that our whole life unfolds within the infinite space of a personal God who embraces us and all men and all that is, and who is Love.*" Our tasks as leaders of the congregation should give us the understanding that our whole life is sustained by God because the source of our leadership is from God. Similarly, our tasks as leaders should have a strong influence on the brothers and give them the feeling that the process of their growth toward full life is sustained by God.



The ideal situation described above is increasingly becoming a challenge today in the life of the congregation. The awareness of the reality of life in our congregation, the province, the community, the apostolate, and the consciousness of our being saturated with problems and our own limitations make it difficult for us to grasp the knowledge that our whole life as a congregation and as individuals is heavily depended on the grace of God.

As leaders, our limitations and those of the congregation as well as the challenges of life sometimes make us work so hard that we fail to recognize the Lord of our work. Sometimes we even convince ourselves that only by working hard will the problems of life be solved. Even though we try to pray, our prayers are not always an opportunity to dialogue with God about our life struggles. Our prayers simply become a schedule of rituals. As Religious we should be aware that if we are too preoccupied with apostolate to the neglect of prayer or liturgy, or if we are too busy to make room for reflection and explicit encounter with Christ and the Father, we are missing an essential element of our life. We should ask ourselves whether or not Christ is the center of their lives.



Living and working just as human beings without reflecting on why we work creates a problem for the individual religious and the leadership. In the spirit of discernment, perhaps this is a manifestation of the devil's trickery in religious life today. It may also be a trick of the evil spirit in our leadership duties. But if Christ is our inspiration, then, however busy we are, we should know that prayer is a vital part of our life. Prayer will serve to put us on guard against self-deception; it will purify our love of each other and of God Himself who is the source of our work.

I admit that it is not easy to surrender and give our lives to God when we are overwhelmed by problems and limitations, whether they are our own as leaders, or those of the congregation. The situation of being caught up in the wilds of the evil spirit has the potential to make it difficult for us to accomplish the task of leadership in the light of our Constitution especially articles 1, 2, and 4. We don't grow towards Jesus. We find it

difficult, if not impossible, to experience God's presence and involvement in our lives. We may end up practically living our entire life and playing our leadership roles without God. Living in this emptiness will certainly affect the lives of the brothers we lead.

The problems we encounter in life, the weaknesses and limitations of others and those of the congregation have the potential to draw us to a situation of crisis. Crisis may be inevitable, but hopefully we can experience it as part of the process of becoming human, and this will lead us to Jesus Christ. Professional leadership is necessary and good. But we need to go beyond that, to recognize the power that strengthens our religiosity as FIC brothers.

**to be a good person,  
to become a better person,  
means to us: to grow towards Jesus.**

# Authority is not in commanding but in consistent witness

(Pope Francis)



**D**uring one of his homilies, Pope Francis explained the difference between “having authority”, or the “inner authority” like Jesus and the authority of the scribes. As he commented on the day's Gospel passage from Mark in which Jesus preaches in the synagogue, he said that the authority of the Lord is one of “lordship”, with which he taught, healed and heard the people. This lordship that came from within reveals the consistency in his teaching and his actions which, the Pope said, gives authority. Hence authority in constancy and witness.

The scribes, however, were not consistent, which is why Jesus admonished the people “to do what they say but not what they do”. With their attitude, the Pope said, they had fallen into a “pastoral schizophrenia” which Jesus described as hypocrisy. Hypocrisy, the Pope continued, “is the way of acting of those who have responsibility over the people,

hence pastoral responsibility, but are not consistent”.

The People of God, who are very tolerant can recognize the power of grace, the Pope said, as shown in the first reading from the book of Samuel in which the elderly priest, Eli had lost all authority except for the grace of anointing with which he blessed and performed the miracle for Hannah who wished to be a mother. The People of God, the Pope said, can distinguish well between a person's authority and the grace of anointing, and can make out a confessor after the heart of Christ. “This is the wisdom of our people, who many times tolerate many inconsistent pastors like the scribes”. Pope Francis concluded with prayers for the authority that “does not consist in commanding and making oneself heard, but in being consistent, being a witness and for this reason, being companions on the way of the Lord”.

# Mary, full of Grace

Fr. B.M. Mardiatmaja SJ



**T**he theme that I would like to write on is the dogma (1854: “Ineffabilis Deus” of Pius IX) about the teaching that the Virgin Mary is without the original sin from the beginning of her existence. It was mentioned in different words by Gabriel “You are full of grace”. The five words that formed the most joyful expression, have helped me to explain what a Brother FIC is: “honoring the immaculate Lady of Nasareth, the Mother of Jesus”. Because, her being ‘full of grace has enabled her to be the mother of Jesus’ and it has made her ‘to be immaculate, since the beginning of her existence’.

It was the year 1949, when I entered the Primary School of the Brothers FIC. I was very much touched by their friendship, even to the little children. And I was even more ‘impressed’ by their love for Mary, since my mother was baptized under the name of Mary, the Immaculate Lady. Singing the “Holy Mary” and in front of her picture has given me so much joy, that I sing them very often. When I was 14 years old, I was glad when the Brothers said to me “You may join us”. What a great joy. But then I entered the seminary, to enable me to teach more children, like the FIC Brothers. But afterwards, I entered the Society of Jesus. In the Society of Jesus, we also honour the

Immaculate Mary since Saint Ignatius Loyola honours her deeply.

Throughout my formation years, we had many instances to celebrate the Immaculate Mary. My joy has not ended, since I was ordained priest on 8 December 1973; I still celebrate the Immaculate Mary. Afterwards, I have written books on different theological themes, also about Mary. I have always a kind of joyful affection, when writing and teaching and singing about Mary. Why? Because that is the finest and deepest way to unite with Jesus, who has said to me “You are my friend” (John 15:15) and I become also the son of Mary, the immaculate Mary, to be saved from all sins. And together with Saint Ignatius Loyola, that is the deepest way to be a Jesuit priest. At the same time, I was glad that for some years I was assigned to work and live with the Congregation of Mary, a group devoted to the Immaculate Mary. It has helped me to accompany so many people, to honour Mary as well as to spread the love of Mary in various groups, especially the younger generations. And that is one of the very important points in the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius Loyola: to be united with Christ and, thus, to be close to Mary.

There is another point to be considered meaningful in our devotion to Mary, and that is when we remember that under the Cross, Jesus has instructed His Disciples to take care of His Mother. The word ‘care’ here means a lot for me; and make my joy even greater, in the devotion to Mary. It is much deeper to ‘care’ for somebody than to understand him. That’s why this way of loving Mary has very much to do with the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. That way, I have tried to unite the Devotion to the Heart of Jesus and to the Heart of Mary. It helps me to enrich my vocation: especially after I have finished my studies in theology and since I have to teach theology. It helps the lectures not to be too intellectual but more affective. And that has helped very much the priests that I have taught, and who have to work very hard in the pastoral activities. Otherwise, their life would be full of





managerial works and various human contacts, that could give them hard life. Whereas 'spiritual care' from the Lord and from Mother Mary can give them more joy in their life, their work and even in their hard work. Well, it is very enriching, since, everything comes from the merciful Father, through the loving Christ, in the caring Spirit: accompanied by Mary.

In all that, we should ask ourselves, why is it possible that Mary helps us. Because she has accompanied the Son since the beginning of His being sent by the Father to redeem us (Phil 2:1-11). At the conversation between Mary and the Angel, it was clear that everything happens because "She is full of Grace." And that is also the only possibility that she answers "Yes" and to be fully united with the Son. And that is also the only

possible cause, that Mary is the Immaculate woman. We have to be more joyful, since the Second Vatican Council has invited so many important persons from different Churches, and has decided, to include the Immaculate Mary in the most important dogmatic Constitution "Lumen Gentium", in the 8<sup>th</sup> Part.

Afterwards, I was more joyful, since receiving the Letter 'Redemptoris Mater' from the Pope. It means, that the most responsible authority in Churches were of the same heart, in loving and honoring our Lady. And now back to the beginning of this paper: "That is the most important expression, that has given me the explanation: what a Brother FIC is: "honoring the immaculate Lady of Nasareth, the Mother of Jesus". Let us be joyful and God bless us!



# 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-ru**

Address:

Brothers FIC,  
P.O.Box 229, Wa (UWR) Ghana

Phone:

+233-0209354386  
+233-0540806498

Email:

vocationpromotionficghana@gmail.com

### 2. Indonesia

**Bros. Ag. Marsanto, Ant. Teguh, and Albert Pratama**

Address:

Jl. Kartini 2 Muntian 56411  
Indonesia

Phone:

+62 (0) 293 587361  
+62 821 2345 6962

Email:

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

Email:

wpluiten@brothers-fic.org

### 4. Malawi

**Bro. Moses Mgunda**

Address:

Brothers Maryview,  
P.O.Box 51075, Maryview-Malawi

Phone:

\*265 (0) 991397026

Email:

pcmhouse2019@gmail.com

### 5. Chile

**Bro. Patricio Guentelican Perez**

Address:

Casilla 647, Talca-Chile (Postal)

Residence:

11½ Sur - 23 Oriente No. 3711,  
Villa San Antonio - Talca

Phone:

+56 997747108

Email:

pegp40@gmail.com



**C**anonical Visit to Indonesia Province by Bros. Augustine Kubdaar (Superior General) and Theo Riyanto (Vice Superior General), 23 March to 29 May 2023. The theme was “Closeness as a culture of encounter with God and people.” In our personal talks, we focused on the feelings and experiences (joys and worries) as brothers FIC, as members of a community, in the apostolate, and members of Indonesia Province.



The visitor, Bro. Theo having supper with the parish priest in the FIC community in Ainaro.

L-R: Bros. Blasius, Theo, Amo Eggy, Jose and candidates. We were discussing the happiness of being priests and religious in our service of people, and also having some fun.



Bro. Augustine Kubdaar (far right) (Superior General), accompanied by Bro. Anton Karyadi met the archbishop of Palembang archdiocese, Msgr. Harun and his Secretary.



Bros. Augustine Kubdaar and Theo Riyanto, and teachers in Pangudi Luhur Kartini (Saint. Pius X) Kindergarten, Semarang.



A visit to Giriwoyo FIC Community.  
L-R: Bros. Theo Riyanto, Ludgerus, Augustine, Leo, and Yohanes Sinu.



