



VOL.3|NO:1|2025

BROTHERS FIC

CALLED TO BE GOOD AND TO DO GOOD

PILGRIMS OF HOPE



Bro. Lucio Torres Martin, FIC

We also rely on many lay people who contribute to our mission in our apostolate and communities

This pilgrimage, although characterised by challenges, is ultimately one forged in hope



Bro. Lawrence Benedicto Nkonde, FIC

FIC CONSTITUTION



Art. 54

Faith

Faith is the awesome wonder which surrounds the deepest mystery of our life. Faith is the daring to live with that mystery.

Faith is not the result of our own achievements and can never be imposed. Faith is borne by God's grace. Believing in God means, in its deepest sense, that we dare to surrender unconditionally to him. This surrender is based on unlimited trust and is driven by love, because he loved us first.

"God is Love". His love sustains us and the whole of creation. His love is the deepest foundation, the deepest mystery of everything that exists. deepest mystery of everything that exists.

BROTHERS FIC

CALLED TO BE GOOD AND TO DO GOOD

COLOPHON

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

Address :

General Council of Brothers FIC, Prins Bisschopsingel 22,
6211 JX Maastricht - Netherlands.

APhone :

*31(0)43 3508373

E-mail :

gencouncil@brothers-fic.org

Website :

www.brothers-fic.org

Editor and co-editor :

Bro. Augustine Kubdaar and
Bro. Michael Sidharta

Editorial office :

Bro. Raphael Besigrinee,
Bro. Agustinus Marjito, and
Bro. Michael Sidharta

Design and layouter :

Bro. Antonius Teguh Nugraha, and
Bro. Michael Sidharta

Contact person :

Bro. Michael Sidharta
e-mail : dartosusilofic@gmail.com
Bro. Paul Sabogu
e-mail : gencouncil@brothers-fic.org

Printing & distribution :

CV. Pangudi Luhur Maju
Indonesia

From The Editor

Dear Reader,

Welcome to the first edition of Volume Three of our congregational magazine, *Brothers FIC*. The year 2024 marks the beginning of a new chapter in the life of the FIC Congregation. The next six years will be influenced by the recent event that took place in Wa, in the Upper West Region of Ghana, where the FIC Brothers concluded deliberations of their General Chapter held from August 4 to 24, 2024.

The General Chapter — the highest decision-making body of our congregation — offered us the opportunity to evaluate our journey, reflect deeply on our calling, and chart a renewed path forward. Centred on the theme “*Renewal of Our Consecrated Life and Mission in the Spirit of Synodality*,” the General Chapter culminated in a bold and hopeful agenda for the future. It identified, among others, three key focus areas:

The renewal of our consecrated life, the revitalisation of our mission to the youth, and the promotion of solidarity and collaboration with fellow human beings and the natural world.

As is customary, the Chapter concluded with the election of new congregational leadership and the adoption of resolutions to be implemented across all FIC provinces. As religious brothers, our life of consecration is a sacred pilgrimage—a journey of hope toward more profound union with God. In light of this, we have chosen “*Pilgrims of Hope*” as the theme of this edition of the Magazine, believing that it will inspire hope as our leaders embark on implementing the chapter resolutions. Counting on the theme of the jubilee year, we intend to inspire hope, not only in our fellow brothers, but also in our collaborators and humanity at large, being aware that embarking on such a journey is not without difficulties and challenges.

We are therefore enthused to share with you the experiences, hopes, and aspirations of both the Provincial Superiors and their deputies as they embark on this journey of service to their fellow brothers and humanity. As usual, the General Superior Bro. Augustine Kubdaar gives a prelude to the theme of the Magazine, followed by Bro. Raphael's reflection on how we can become pilgrims of hope in the jubilee year, and Bro. Johan Muijtjens writes on the challenge of hope. Mother Mary, being our inspiration, has consistently garnered our attention. The remaining stories are about FIC's collaboration with other religious bodies and inspirations from the Vatican.

We invite you to journey with us through these pages as we explore, celebrate, and commit ourselves anew to our mission and calling. We thank you for your prayers and support.

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Maria Nurtures Our Hope

Pilgrimage of Hope: Renewal of our Consecrated Life and Mission

Bro. Augustine Kubdaar



Our journey of consecrated life is, at its core, a pilgrimage, a sacred movement toward God in faith, trust, and love. In the wake of our recent General and Provincial Chapters, we are invited anew to embark on this pilgrimage of hope, not only as individuals but as a congregation that journeys together with others towards a better church and a better world. This time of grace calls us to renew our consecrated life and mission through a deepened commitment to God, humanity and God's creation.

At every level of leadership: General, Provincial, and the community, this pilgrimage of hope must begin with us. It is not simply about strategic planning or structural reform; it is a spiritual undertaking, rooted in the Gospel and should be lived through our daily rhythm of community life, prayer, discernment, and service. In the Spirit of synodality, leadership today means walking together as brothers and sisters with equal dignity (as fellow disciples), listening attentively to the Spirit and one another. I believe a humble leader

seeks communion over control, discernment over directives, and accompaniment over administration.

Our pilgrim path is illuminated by love and charity: the foundational principles of Christian life. Our call to be signs and instruments of God's compassionate love, especially among ourselves and to the poor and the young, is ever more needed. As pilgrimage of hope, we must therefore extend beyond our internal renewal and flow outward into our mission. We are called to inspire and accompany one another. We are called to witness unity in diversity, and build bridges of understanding and reconciliation in our communities, the Church and society.

This pilgrimage is not without challenges. We walk amidst uncertainties, wars in and around us, cultural shifts, loss of hope, and diminishing vocations in the church. Yet, precisely in this context, our witness becomes more vital. We are called to move forward not with fear, but with bold hope, rekindling the founding Spirit that animated our congregation. Through listening, dialogue, and shared discernment, we can surely renew our commitment to the charism entrusted to us, translating it afresh for our times.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, *"Let us go forward in hope!" (Pope St. John Paul II)*. Let us, be pilgrims of hope; let us be open to the surprises of the Spirit; let us be attentive to the signs of the times. May our being and mission "today and tomorrow" reflect evermore the face of Christ the "Good Shepherd". Let us be closer to people. May our communities become places of hope and renewal. And may our collective journey bear fruit in a deeper communion with the Church and the values of the Gospel.



Becoming Pilgrims of Hope in the Jubilee Year 2025

Bro. Raphael Besigrinee

A pilgrim in the Catholic Church is someone who embarks on a spiritual journey, often to a sacred place, seeking to deepen their faith, pray, and reflect on their relationship with God. Many pilgrims in the Catholic world often travel to shrines, churches, or other holy sites, such as the Sanctuary in Lourdes (France), the Shrine of Fatima in Portugal, or other Marian shrines, not just for entertainment, but to deepen their faith and experience a profound connection with God. They may also participate in devotions, such as praying the Rosary, attending Mass, or venerating relics of holy people. A person who engages in such an exercise is called a pilgrim.

A pilgrimage is not an ordinary spiritual exercise. Pope Francis outlines three conditions for embarking on a pilgrimage: The pilgrim must be willing to take risks, trusting in God's plan and guidance, even when faced with uncertainty. Secondly, the journey requires effort, involving physical challenges and detachment from worldly comforts, but is rewarded with spiritual growth and a deeper connection with God. Thirdly, actual Christian pilgrimages involve cultivating silence, prayer, and charity, allowing pilgrims to listen to God and reflect on their faith. In 2016, during the Jubilee of Mercy, Pope Francis distinguished a pilgrimage from a mere vacation in the following words:

"A Pilgrimage is not the same as a Vacation... Making a Pilgrimage to shrines is one of the most eloquent expressions of the faith of God's people... It would be a mistake to think that those who go on a pilgrimage live a spirituality that is not personal but rather of the masses. The reality is that the pilgrim carries within him his own history and faith and the lights and shadows of his own



life. Each person carries within his or her heart a special wish and a particular prayer. Those who enter the shrine immediately feel they are at home, welcomed, understood, and supported."

Pope Francis chose the theme of the Jubilee year 2025 as "Pilgrims of Hope" to inspire hope in humanity during these challenging times. The logo shows four simple human figures, representing different parts of the world. They are holding each other to show unity and friendship among all people. The person in front is holding a cross. This cross stands for faith and hope—something we all need, especially in hard times.



Under the figures, there are rough waves, showing that life is not always easy or calm. Because of this, we need even more hope. The bottom part of the cross is shaped like an anchor, going into the waves. The anchor is a well-known sign of hope, especially in sea travel, where it helps ships stay steady in storms. The image shows that life's journey is not just for one person alone. It is something we do together. The movement in the picture leads us toward the cross. The cross leans down toward people, showing that we are not alone and that hope is always near.

The Jubilee Year 2025, with the theme "Pilgrims of Hope," began on December 24, 2024, with Pope Francis opening the Holy Door of St. Peter's Basilica. This yearlong celebration concludes on January 6, 2026. What does Pope Francis want us to do in the Jubilee year? Among others, the following are ways of celebrating the jubilee year:

- a. **Embark on a Pilgrimage:** Pope Francis invites the faithful to undertake a physical and spiritual journey, especially to sacred sites like Rome, the traditional destination during this Holy year. This pilgrimage symbolizes the path of conversion, renewal, and the seeking of God's mercy. Even local pilgrimages to diocesan cathedrals or shrines are encouraged, serving as visible signs of faith and commitment to spiritual growth.
- b. **Seek Forgiveness and Reconciliation:** The Jubilee year is deeply rooted in the concept of mercy. Pope Francis emphasizes the importance of the **Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession)**, urging Catholics to examine their conscience, confess their sins sincerely, and embrace God's forgiveness. Reconciliation also extends to healing broken relationships in families, communities, and society at large, encouraging peace and unity.
- c. **Renew our Faith:** This Holy Year is a call on us to **renew our relationship with God**. Catholics are encouraged to engage more deeply with Scripture, attend Mass regularly, and dedicate time to personal and communal

prayer. Exercises such as spiritual retreats are ways to grow in understanding of our faith. The Pope encourages a renewal that is both personal and communal, inspiring more profound commitment to the Gospel.

- d. **Pray and Fast:** Pope Francis highlights the role of **prayer, fasting, and spiritual discipline** as means to foster interior conversion and hope. Special prayer initiatives, Eucharistic Adoration, and Marian devotions are encouraged. Fasting, beyond abstaining from food, includes sacrificing selfish habits and opening the heart to God and others. These practices deepen the sense of solidarity with those who are suffering.
- e. **Perform Works of Mercy:** The Jubilee is a time to live out the **Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy** in tangible ways. Pope Francis urges the faithful to care for the poor, feed the hungry, visit the sick and imprisoned, and comfort the sorrowful (Matt 25:31-46). These acts are not only expressions of love but also concrete ways to embody the hope the Church is called to offer the world. The Pope calls on Catholics to be "signs of hope" through compassionate action and service.

Millions of Catholics are travelling this year to Rome to experience the Jubilee, but is it necessary for all pilgrims to go to Rome? I do not think so! Can we participate in this jubilee without travelling to Rome? Certainly yes! How do we do that? Bishop Carlassare has the answer for you: We can be pilgrims of hope wherever we are," says Bishop Carlassare in an interview with ACI Africa (2024). The Bishop shared four key ways to fully engage in the Jubilee from anywhere: engaging in prayer and contemplation, protecting the dignity of life (including plants and animals), mending broken relationships, caring for your community and the environment, and engaging in any charitable work, among others. We can be pilgrims in our own homes, deepening our connection with the Lord by reflecting on the events of our lives and listening to His Word in our rooms, without travelling to any place.



Let us all pray for God's grace to be pilgrims of hope wherever we are. Even if we are unable to travel to a specific physical location, we can still be pilgrims of hope in our daily routines, at work, and in our relationships. We can be pilgrims of hope in our communities, serving others and spreading joy, peace, and brotherhood. We can cultivate hope and trust in God's plan, even in uncertainty or difficulty. Opening the jubilee year at St Peter's Basilica on Dec. 24, 2024, the Holy Father said: "The Jubilee calls us to spiritual renewal and commits us to transforming our world so that this year may truly become a time of jubilation." So dear brothers, collaborators, and friends, let us all adhere to Pope Francis's call in our simple daily lives, aiming to instil hope in those who have lost it because of war, hunger, oppression, poverty or marginalization.

**We can be
pilgrims of hope
in our
communities,
serving others
and spreading
joy, peace, and
brotherhood.**



Joint Meeting FIC- CMM, Netherlands

Bro. Paul Sabogu, FIC
GC Secretariat



{L-R: Bros. Paul Damen, Raphael Besigrinee, Benyamin Robiwala, Agustinus Marjito, Lawrence Obiko (SG-CMM), Augustine Kubdaar (SG-FIC), Rikardus Rumangun, Michael Sidharta, Paul Sabogu (Secretary) and Damasus Dobaf}

In an era characterised by division and solitude, the collaboration between the FIC General Council and the General Board of the CMM Brothers exemplifies a profound importance of unity, brotherhood, and a common mission. This collaborative effort, which unites two religious congregations dedicated to service and community, signifies more than mere organisational alignment. It embodies a shared commitment to journeying together in faith, addressing contemporary challenges, and fostering a more profound sense of spiritual solidarity. Both the Brothers of the Immaculate Conception (FIC) and the Congregation of the Brothers of Our Lady, Mother of Mercy (CMM) share a rich heritage rooted in the Netherlands, with a longstanding dedication to education, support for the marginalised, and spiritual growth. Inspired by their founders and grounded in Christ's teachings, these congregations have developed robust legacies across the globe—from Africa and Asia to South America

and Europe. The collaboration between the two leadership teams is in the form of joint meetings characterised by discernment and dialogue.

On April 29, 2025, the two councils met at the FIC General Office at Pins Bisschopsingel 22 in Maastricht to discuss their previous year's experiences and outline their plans. The General Council (FIC) provided an update on a working visit to Malawi in February 2025, the results of the General Chapter 2024, and their strategies for implementing specific resolutions from the chapter.

The purpose of the working visit to Malawi from February 14 to 28, 2025, was for the Superior General to gain direct insights into the joys and challenges faced by the Provincial Council, assess the implementation of the resolutions from the Provincial and General Chapters, and ensure a better understanding in the collaboration between the Provincial Council and



the Diocese of Dedza. According to the GC, the FIC General Chapter took place in Ghana from August 4 to 24, 2024, at the In-Service Training Centre in Wa, focused on the theme "Renewal of Our Consecrated Life and Mission in the Spirit of Synodality." Thirty delegates representing Ghana, Indonesia, Chile, Malawi, and the Religious House of the Netherlands took part. Key discussions included the importance of rejuvenating our consecration and mission, enhancing our outreach to the youth, demonstrating solidarity with the underprivileged and the environment, ensuring accountability in resource management, deepening our insights into our spirituality and the charism of our founders, and revising our constitutions. The chapter produced twenty-one resolutions, a recommendation, and a new leadership structure. The General Council has developed a roadmap to facilitate the implementation of these resolutions, with assistance from the Provincial Councils and committees at both the congregational and provincial levels.

The GC has formed a five-man committee comprising a chairperson and a representative from each of the four provinces to assist in implementing a resolution on "Promotion of Community Living, Prayer, Apostolate and the Vows". They have also planned a workshop for the Core Leadership Staff of the Provinces/RHN from October 12 to 24, 2025, to respond to one of the resolutions regarding "Promotion of Communication in the Congregation". Indonesia and Ghana Provinces are planning to have an exchange program for some brothers for three to six months as a way of "Promoting the Spirit of Our Internationality and Brotherly Solidarity".

The CMM General Board updated the group on various subjects, including a working visit to Brazil and Timor-Leste, the International Formation for finally professed brothers from 2019 to 2024, a youth program in Rome, CMM heritage team, and vocations.

The Superior General of the CMM Brothers, Bro. Lawrence Obiko also briefed the house on his recent journey to Brazil and Timor-Leste to assess the progress of their Regional Boards. They are also preparing a youth group for the Jubilee celebration in Rome. This month-long preparation is from July 8 to August 8, 2025. These young people are from various countries where the CMM Brothers are active. This youth initiative, known as "Ambassadors of World-Wide Brotherhood" (WWB), aims to promote faith and spiritual development among Catholic youth worldwide.

Finally, the CMM General Board is planning an International Formation Program at their Generalate in Tilburg from June to July 2025. It is an ongoing formation program for some of their finally professed brothers. The common challenges faced by the two congregations included a lack of reading culture among younger members, declining numbers of vocations, insufficient formation programs, and challenges in organising international meetings and workshops in the Netherlands.

The meeting took place in a friendly and relaxed environment. At the end of the discussions, both parties felt supported in their shared mission.



On April 8, 2025, the FIC General Council and Religious House of the Netherlands met at De Beyart to discuss the process of moving to a new location at Olympiaweg. This meeting was intended to share hopes and discuss the practical needs and the dynamics of the new community. Technical matters about the new house that will be occupied were also discussed.



On Wednesday, March 12, 2025, Nick van Wouwen was officially admitted as an associate member of the FIC Congregation. The official admission to associate membership was held at the Jozefkapel of the Monastery in the Hague. Bro Frans School, vicar of the Religious House of the Netherlands, performed the ceremony formally accepting Nick as an associate member on behalf of the Congregation.



On May 14 and 15, 2025, the Religious House of the Netherlands (RHN) convened a formal conference at the CB Sisters' house complex *Onder de Bogen* in Maastricht. The gathering brought together several brothers and associate members to engage in a forward-looking reflection on the future direction of the RHN community. Key discussions centered on identifying a sustainable and meaningful path for the coming years, determining the appropriate form of leadership to support this trajectory, and exploring ways to remain a vital and dynamic part of the broader congregation. The conference concluded with the election of new leadership within RHN. The following individuals were appointed to office: **Bro. Lo Koeleman**, Superior, **Frans School**, Vicar, and **Gerard Langelaan**, Secretary.



In April and May 2025, the two new members of the General Council, Bro. Agustinus Marjito and Bro. Michael Sidharta Susila conducted a familiarisation visit to the Brothers of the RHN and associate members. This visit was designed to enable the new General Council members to get to know each other better. We hope that a spirit of brotherhood will begin to develop through this encounter.



On Vocations Sunday in 2025, the brothers in various provinces carried out Vocation Promotion activities. The brothers in the Provinces of Malawi and Indonesia held meetings with young people in schools and organised some activities in some parish churches.

These efforts aimed to enhance our encounter with the youth, drawing them closer to God and inspiring them to consider vocations to the religious life, particularly within the FIC family.

Reunion of Brotherhood: FIC General Superior Meets Ex-FIC Brothers in Malawi

Alufeyo Patrick Liyaya



On February 26, 2025, a heartwarming reunion unfolded at Bethel FIC Provincial House in Blantyre, Malawi. Bro. Augustine Kubdaar, Superior General of the FIC, and Bro. Lawrence Sitima, the Malawi Provincial Superior, met with five ex-FIC brothers: George Matambo, Clement Kabu, Ishmail Likoto, Alufeyo Patrick Liyaya, and Emmanuel Rice (guest of Kabu).

The atmosphere was rich with warmth, laughter, and a deep sense of camaraderie as the former brothers reconnected with their spiritual roots. Bro. Sitima extended a warm welcome, offering refreshments that set a relaxed and fraternal tone. The gathering later moved to Cassa Mia Leisure Centre, where stories, memories, and words of gratitude flowed freely.

We (ex-FIC brothers) reflected on the lasting impact of our time in the congregation. Ishmail Likoto shared how his commitment to community life had led him to care for his relatives as his own children. Clement Kabu, now a successful school administrator and entrepreneur, credited the FIC values of humility, solidarity, simplicity, and hard work for shaping his journey of life.

Bro. Sitima commended the ex-brothers for maintaining a good connection with the FIC community, recognising our ongoing support as a testament to the enduring spirit of brotherhood.

Listening attentively to our stories, the Superior General encouraged us to remain steadfast in our values and continue spreading the Gospel values through our daily lives. He reaffirmed that we remained part of the FIC family. He applauded us for our resilience, solidarity, charity, and service to humanity. "One does not need to be an FIC brother to be a good person or attain heavenly blessing. What matters is being a good Christian."

Bro. Augustine wished he had met the remaining ex-brothers: Mike Duwa, Mtegha, Alstalico Chilanga, Mathais Satheka, Joe Banda, and Peter Thulula, who could not attend this gathering. He assured us that our bond with the FIC family remained appreciated.

As a token of appreciation, the ex-FIC brothers presented to Bro. Augustine, with a small gift, symbolising our gratitude for the visit and presence.

More than just a reunion, this gathering was a celebration of enduring values, cherished memories, and an unbreakable spirit of brotherhood. As George Matambo aptly described, it was truly "a great bond of brotherhood."

Alufeyo Patrick Liyaya

(Ex-FIC brother and a journalist)



Introducing the Provincial Superiors of Our FIC Congregation

Dear readers, the 2024 General Chapter and Provincial Chapter events have been completed. The General Chapter is the highest decision-making body of the FIC Congregation; the Provincial Chapter, on the other hand, is the highest decision-making body in the province. Resolutions and recommendations have been formulated and will be implemented in our provinces. One outcome of the Provincial Chapter is the election of Provincial Superiors and their councillors, who will assist in implementing the resolutions.

In this first edition of the FIC Magazine, we wish to present to our readers the Provincial Superiors of our four FIC provinces. They include Bro. (Dr.) Agustinus Giwal Santoso, Indonesia; Bro. (Prof.) Clement Naapire, Ghana; Bro. Lawrence Sitima, Malawi, and Bro. Lucio Tores Martin, Chile.

CALLED TO BE FAITHFUL

Bro. (Dr.) Agustinus Giwal Santoso, FIC
Provincial Superior of Indonesia



My name is Bro. Agustinus Giwal Santoso, FIC. I was born on August 11, 1970, in Promasan, Menoreh Mountains. My baptismal name, Augustine, was chosen to correspond with the month of my birth. I came from a simple and industrious family. While studying at Van Lith Teacher Training School, one of prestigious schools in Indonesia, I became

acquainted with the FIC Brothers. I developed an interest in becoming a Brother myself, beginning to embrace their spirit and endeavouring to integrate myself into it.

Before being elected as Provincial Superior of the Indonesian Province for 2024-2030, I served as Rector and Principal of PL Van Lith Senior High School, and at the same time, served as Chairman of the YPL Representative in Muntilan. Following six years in Muntilan, I was permitted to pursue a Doctorate in Educational Management, which I completed in November 2024.

During the 2024 Provincial Chapter of Indonesia, I was unexpectedly elected as the Provincial Superior. At that moment, I felt profoundly unprepared, overwhelmed by the weight of the responsibility entrusted to me. I questioned my worthiness to accept such a distinguished role, but realising that this appointment was not merely a human decision but part of a greater Divine plan I accepted it. Despite my doubts, I embraced this responsibility with unwavering obedience as a testament to my vow of fidelity to the FIC Congregation.



I wholeheartedly surrender myself to God's will, dedicating my service entirely to His divine providence. In the spirit of synodality, I firmly trust that God will grant me the necessary grace for the continuous growth of the FIC Congregation. As I embark on this journey, I strive to approach it with humility, openness, and a constant willingness to learn and adapt.

To maintain my spiritual and emotional well-being in this role, I strive for inner peace by deepening my relationship with God through prayer and reflection. I understand that leadership is not a position of power but a call to serve. Thus, I rely on the strength of the Holy Spirit to sustain me with wisdom and perseverance as I fulfil this sacred duty.

The vision and mission I aim to uphold in leading the Indonesian Province over the next six years are rooted in fostering a flourishing congregation through fraternity, unity, and service. I hope that every member of the congregation will experience God's presence in all aspects of life and carry out their mission with profound faith and love, united in heart and purpose.

As Provincial Superior, I aspire to uphold unwavering hope, steadfast faith, and selfless sacrifice for the greater good. I am committed to strengthening the spirit of service, anchored in love and sincerity, ensuring that every step I take illuminates the path of hope for the community and the congregation. May God continue to guide and bless this journey, granting me the strength to remain faithful in fulfilling my responsibilities.

A call to lead with wisdom, courage, and compassion

My Identity, Profile, Vision, and Principles as FIC Provincial Superior

Br. Prof. Clement Naapire, FIC
Provincial Superior of Ghana



My identity as a person and a Catholic is rooted partly in my upbringing in my family; my formation, my learned and practised trade of "Shoe making, carpentry and farming experiences. Growing up in a very poor family, I cherished working hard and listening attentively to my mother, my siblings, elders in the village, and significant others, as well as their life experiences. As a religious, I take solace in Jer 1:5, which states "...before I formed you in the womb I knew you. Before you came to birth, I consecrated you, I appointed you as prophet to the nations..." This passage in the Bible inspires me greatly as a religious brother. My identity as Brother FIC is deeply rooted in the Charism of the Congregation, which is undoubtedly shaping my leadership. My past experiences within the Congregation, in various apostolates and roles, have equipped me with a unique understanding of the strengths, challenges, and aspirations of



the FIC Brothers in Ghana. These experiences have forged within me a deep love for the Congregation and a strong desire to serve.

Personally, I have never dreamt of leading FIC as the Provincial Superior since I joined FIC and professed as a young brother in 2002. My goal was to serve my fellow brothers and humanity in the background, focusing on acquiring experiences and relevant knowledge to enhance my service to them. A mere mention of my possible election as Provincial Superior was filled with a complex mix of emotions. I was frightened to the core and began to look for tangible reasons to abscond, but to no avail. I even contemplated causing a stir as a strategy to respond to certain statements during the Chapter, but was prevailed upon to desist from it. An experienced brother (May his soul rest in peace) was very instrumental in preparing me to accept this leadership challenge. He said, *"Cle, in 2018 your name came up as a possible Provincial Superior but you did not support it... this time around, if the brothers decide that you should lead them, please don't disappoint the brothers..."* I kept on reflecting on this frightening statement and wishing it away until the brothers made me helpless by voting for me!!! At this point, I had no choice but to accept the will of God through my fellow brothers with profound humility and a total reliance on God. **This moment marked a significant turning point in my life, a call to lead with wisdom, courage, and compassion. A call to let my fellow brothers feel dignified, respected and trusted beyond measure.**

My vision for the next six years is to seize this God given opportunity to build upon the existing foundations and guide the Ghana Province towards a vibrant future. This includes: **strengthening the spiritual life of the Brothers, fostering deeper fraternal bonds within the communities, enhancing community life and the Congregation's mission. I also intend to focus on forming new members, continuous formation for all brothers, and ensuring a strong and**

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My principles include a deep respect for the dignity of each Brother, deep trust in the brothers' capabilities, a commitment to justice and peace in our apostolate, and a dedication to the charism and traditions of the Brothers FIC.

dedicated future for the Brothers in Ghana. I aim to promote collaboration with lay partners, deepen engagement with the local Church, and foster innovative approaches in our apostolates.

I am committed to leading with transparency and open communication, fostering collaboration and shared responsibility among the Brothers. My principles include a deep respect for the dignity of each Brother, deep trust in the brothers' capabilities, a commitment to justice and peace in our apostolate, and a dedication to the charism and traditions of the Brothers FIC. I intend also to prioritise servant leadership, putting the needs of the Brothers and the mission above my own. Having humbly accepted to serve my fellow brothers to the best of my abilities, I wish to lead them with deep humility and complete trust in God.

Carry forward the mission rooted in simplicity, faith, and fraternity

Bro. Lawrence Sitima, FIC
Provincial Superior of Malawi



I am Bro. Lawrence Sitima, FIC, currently serving as the Provincial Superior of Malawi FIC province for the second consecutive term, 2024-2030. My re-election signified a moment of humble acceptance, trust in God's guidance, and a renewed dedication to serving my brothers. This journey began on November 1, 2018, when I was first elected to this role. Before officially taking office, I was given an excellent opportunity to spend two and a half months in spiritual preparation at Kinnoull Monastery, a Redemptorist Spiritual Centre in Scotland.

That period strengthened my prayer life, helped me reconnect with the core of my vocation, and shaped the contemplative aspect of my leadership. Guided by the Chapter theme, "Transforming and Growing the Province in the Spirit of the founders," I now carry forward a mission rooted in simplicity, faith, and fraternity. One of my key priorities remains strengthening formation, both initial and ongoing. Formation must be transformative, consistent, and relevant to our times and cultures as an international congregation like FIC.

As a leader, I advocate for investing in formators, fostering spiritual and professional growth opportunities, and preparing future leaders who are grounded in the FIC identity. Local resource generation is another urgent focus. For our apostolate and community life to thrive, we must become self-sustaining. If the means are available, we shall develop projects in agriculture in Mzedi and Mountainview for maize and beans production, education, and small-scale business to support the upkeep of our brothers and our mission activities. These initiatives are vital for the long-term stability and growth of the province.

Transparency remains a guiding principle. However, in addition to transparency, accountability and responsibility, particularly regarding the use of time and resources, will receive focused attention. As stewards of God, we are committed to ensuring that our efforts and resources serve the mission effectively and justly. A reporting, monitoring, and evaluation system will be improved to promote a culture of trust, efficiency, and shared responsibility.

Above all, I envision a province where every brother experiences a genuine sense of belonging, unity, and purpose. We must walk together as FIC Brothers, embracing change, fostering growth, and remaining true to our identity as Brothers of the Immaculate Conception.

With faith in Christ and trust in one another, I look forward to the continued transformation and growth of our beloved province.

Tiyeni tipita patsogolo ndi chiyembekezo, chifukwa sogolo lathu lili mmanja mwa Ambuye.



Working Collaboratively with Brothers and Lay

Bro. Lucio Torres Martín, FIC
Provincial Superior of Chile



I was born approximately 72 years ago into a simple peasant family in Cerezo de Río Tirón, a small village in the province of Burgos, northern Spain. I am the oldest of four brothers. My first contact with the FIC Brothers was in 1965, when the FIC vocational promoter visited the school in my village and asked who among us wanted to go to the seminary to become a brother and embark on a missionary journey to Chile.

The seminary and the brothers formation programs were excellent. Apart from the good infrastructure, the brothers and their lay collaborators were very welcoming, respectful, and dedicated, giving young people very good formation and teaching.

Only two Spanish brothers emerged from this experience: I, who professed in 1975, and Diego, who professed in 1978. Realising that the vocational situation would not improve, the school was sold in 1984, and the five brothers who remained in Miranda (three Dutch and two Spanish) came to Chile, where the brothers welcomed us with open arms.

This year, I am celebrating my golden anniversary in the congregation. I am grateful for the help and closeness of God, my family, and the brothers and people who have helped me grow and who are part of my life.

I arrived in Chile in 1984 with enthusiasm and joy, and now, 41 years later, I am still very happy. I have received help, affection, and trust from the brothers and many people I have shared and worked with.

I am also pleased with my contributions to the FIC mission in Chile. I have applied my values to support our mission and have been available for whatever requests the brothers have made over the years. My apostolate is focused on formation, pastoral care, and management work. I can confidently say that I have felt useful and very comfortable working collaboratively with both brothers and lay people.

Sharing a bit of my experience as a provincial, I begin by stating that teamwork is where I feel most at ease and where I can best develop my skills and knowledge. I believe that guiding, encouraging, and motivating others on a project or task is not my strongest gift. That is why accepting leadership roles at all levels has not been easy, particularly as a superior or provincial. I am convinced that I possess better qualities to support processes led by others than to lead them myself. When I was required to guide and animate processes, I did not feel happy due to my insecurity, which prevents me from being relaxed and at peace, and this, in one way or another, impacts the mission.

At last year's provincial chapter, the brothers re-elected me for the next three years, alongside



brothers Javier Solís and Eko. We make a good team and can work together to support and motivate the brothers in our mission here in Chile. I think we will complement each other well and effectively carry out the various tasks entrusted to us.

In Chile, we are eight brothers, and we all understand that we must do our utmost so that our presence and mission remain meaningful. This offers a significant advantage for the Provincial Council when it comes to forming teams, requesting assistance, and so on. We also rely on many lay people who contribute to our mission in our apostolate and communities, and whose presence and talents facilitate the ongoing maintenance and development of the FIC mission.

Among the many tasks we face over these three years are to continue training lay people so they can assume leadership roles in our apostolic areas, to determine the most suitable structure to facilitate the development of the schools, to deepen our lives as brothers to achieve the renowned balance between the pillars of religious life, and especially to support one another so that the tasks at hand do not overwhelm us and lead to ill health.

When we share our lives and apostolates, including recreation, prayer, and reflection, it is meaningful and brings us great happiness. We often succeed, and that is a blessing.

**We also rely on many
lay people who
contribute to our mission
in our apostolate and
communities**





Introducing The Vicars of the FIC Congregation

In the pages preceding this, we presented to you the new leadership of the FIC congregation, namely our provincial Superiors. We are happy to introduce to you their vicars (deputies). They are Bro. Hans Gendut Suwardi, Indonesia; Bro. Lawrence Nkonde, Malawi; Bro. Eustacius Eko Wijayanto, Chile and Bro. Fabian Bezel, Ghana.

Pilgrimage of Hope at The Beginning of Service

Bro. Martinus Hans Gendut Suwardi, FIC
Vicar of the Provincial Superior of Indonesia



When I commenced my duties as the Provincial Vicar, I felt like stepping onto a new, vibrant path. There were hopes, but also challenges. This role is distinct from my previous service on the Provincial Council. In the past, I could manage my time more flexibly. I reside in the Provincial House and must be directly involved in various daily affairs. I am responsible for correspondence, coordinating with the community, and addressing urgent matters that arise frequently. This new role often drains my energy.

A simple longing often arises amid all this business: "If only we could sit together without a formal agenda, just to hear each other." Yet, whenever fatigue sets in, I return to my life's guidance: "I can do all things through Him who gives me strength" (Phil. 4:13).

I learned that hope is not born from easy situations. Hope grows precisely when we dare to face reality with faith. There are many adjustments I must navigate, including dealing with a complex administrative structure, high expectations, and communication dynamics that are not always straightforward. Sometimes I feel weary, even when I perceive that what I have done is not appreciated, because the results of my efforts are not immediately visible. Yet, when my heart is restless, I return to the motto of my calling: "I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your will."

To me, this service embodies a form of loyalty training. My service involves not only completing tasks but also following a path of love that continually purifies my intentions, cultivates humility, and teaches me how to depend on God's grace.

One of the biggest challenges I faced is communication. We are all men, and often, our patterns of expressing feelings seem rigid, stingy



in giving appreciation or praise, or even indifferent towards one another. The desire to be appreciated and recognised easily arises in such an atmosphere. Thus, I realise that human strength alone is not enough. I must return to the source of true strength: prayer, the Bible, and sincere brotherhood.

The 2024 Provincial Chapter in Indonesia brings a new spirit. Many significant recommendations have been made. These recommendations challenge us all to realise them in our daily lives. Of course, it is not easy. However, I believe that with the spirit of strengthening one another and bearing together, all can be embraced with joy.

I recall a story from one of our communities: "Every morning, we started the day with prayer and celebration of the Eucharist. After that, everyone rushed to have breakfast and got carried away by their busy lives. We soon realised that togetherness is not just about schedules but about the intention to be present to each other. So we started trying to enjoy a cup of coffee, have small talk, and pray for each other."

From that story, I learned that a community is not merely a place to live or a set of routines. A community is a space of love where we can listen to and support one another in Christ. True brotherhood does not arise from perfection but from the courage to embrace differences, confront wounds, and forgive. At times, we may feel weary, forget to say hello, or feel misunderstood. However, that is when we learn to be humble, acknowledge our weaknesses, and help others return to the source of hope.

Finally, like Mary, who said, "I am the handmaid of the Lord," I, too, wish to surrender this process to His providence. I believe that God is at work in every step we take. Let us therefore continue walking together on this pilgrimage of hope, living love in community and proclaiming to the world that the identity of FIC is true brotherhood, strengthening friendship, and undying hope.

I realised that human strength alone is not enough. I must return to the source of true strength: prayer, the Bible, and sincere brotherhood.



Embracing Leadership Responsibility with Hope and Trust in God

Bro. Lawrence Benedicto Nkonde, FIC
Vicar of the Provincial Superior of Malawi



The air remains fresh with the spirit of renewal following our recent General Chapter 2024 in Ghana and the Provincial Chapters. As the Vicar of the Provincial Superior for the Malawi Province (2024-2030), I embark on this new journey with a heart brimming with hope, a virtue that guides us on this shared pilgrimage of life. The theme of this inaugural edition of our Congregation Magazine, "Pilgrimage of Hope," resonates deeply with the realities and aspirations that now shape our path forward.

Our Malawi Provincial Chapter embraced the powerful theme of "Transformation and growth of our province in the spirit of our founders." This aspiration resonates harmoniously with the General Chapter's call

for the "renewal of our consecrated life and mission in the spirit of synodality." These guiding principles illuminate our path as the newly established Provincial Council begins to develop its activity agenda, remaining mindful of the challenges, difficulties, and opportunities that lie ahead.

Stepping into this role, I am immediately heartened by the strong sense of unity and collaboration within our province. The support I receive from our young and elderly brothers is a testament to the enduring bonds that connect us. This intergenerational exchange is invaluable, fostering a dynamic environment where the wisdom of experience intertwines with the fresh perspectives of youth. Furthermore, the strong sense of teamwork among our provincial committees provides a solid foundation for collective action and shared responsibility.

The transfer of knowledge and experience from the previous Provincial Council has been seamless and is deeply appreciated. Their dedication to sharing insights into leadership, growth in religious life, and human maturity is crucial for our continued journey. The smooth handover, culminating in a well-organised commissioning and induction, has been immensely helpful, enabling us to assume our responsibilities with clarity and purpose.

For me, serving as Vicar presents a significant opportunity for growth. It is a chance to embrace the realities of leadership, to learn, and to serve with both joy and unwavering hope. I firmly believe that



leadership is fundamentally an act of service – service to our fellow brothers, to all those we minister to, and ultimately to God. The biblical example of Moses, who, despite his initial feelings of inadequacy, was chosen and empowered by God, reminds me that divine grace accompanies those called to lead.

Our efforts are firmly focused on fulfilling our provincial strategic plan, a roadmap developed through the collaborative input of various committees within the province. This internal collaboration is further strengthened by the guidance provided by the General Chapter resolutions and decisions, which connect us to the wider Congregation. Simultaneously, we are actively implementing the Provincial Chapter resolutions and decisions, ensuring our local priorities are diligently addressed.

However, our pilgrimage is not without obstacles. We face challenges such as issues related to modern technology, the increasing severity of adverse weather

conditions, financial resource limitations, the relatively small number of brothers in our province, misunderstandings concerning land and property ownership in some dioceses, and a recent reduction in financial allocation. Yet, amidst these palpable difficulties, I remain steadfastly hopeful and place my unwavering trust in God's providential care.

Our key priority is to form and nurture a strong, cohesive Provincial Council and other leadership teams. We recognise that our collective strength lies in our unity and shared commitment to our mission. Ultimately, there is vibrant hope for transformation and renewal in Malawi Province, guided by the spirit of synodality that calls us to walk together, listen to one another, and journey forward in faith.

This pilgrimage, although characterised by challenges, is ultimately one forged in hope—a hope that anchors us in God's unwavering love and guides us towards a brighter future.

**This pilgrimage,
although
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ultimately one forged
in hope**



Pilgrims of Hope: Where Grace Blossoms in Fragility

Bro. Eustachius Robert Eko Wijayanto, FIC

Note: Bro. Javier Solis Urbano is the Vicar of Provincial Council of Chile.
However, Bro. Eustasius Robert Eko Wijayanto, a councillor,
shares his experience instead.



a. A Path Welcomed Graciously

'Not all paths are chosen; some are received as a gift of the Spirit.' - St. Oscar Romero.

Some paths are not chosen but welcomed with gratitude. This is the second time I have been called to serve as Provincial Councillor, and now also as Secretary of the Provincial Council of the FIC Province of Chile. This is not a personal honour but a mission born of the Gospel and lived in community. Accepting this role means responding with humility and trust to the Lord's call in a tangible history, with its light, shadows, wounds, and hopes.

b. HOPE: Virtue of Those Who Believe in the Impossible

'Hope is the humble flower that grows at the edge of every wound.' - Pope Francis.

Hope is not ingenious optimism. It is neither a denial of difficulty nor a fabrication of reality. Hope is the Christian virtue that enables us to look to the future with God's perspective, knowing He walks alongside us. As St Paul says, 'in hope we have been saved' (Rom 8:24). And it is in that hope that our Provincial Council finds the strength to embark on this three-year pilgrimage, trusting not so much in our abilities, but in the fidelity of God who never fails.

c. A Small Province, an Immense Mission

'God does not choose those who are able, but he enables those whom he chooses'. - St. Augustine

Today, we are eight brothers in the FIC Province of Chile: one Dutch, two Spaniards, three Chileans, and two Indonesians. The youngest among us is 52, while the oldest is 85. Three brothers are retired, and we belong to two communities that continue to support a deeply meaningful educational and pastoral mission.

Our schools - one primary school, two vocational schools, and a school for students with special needs - are beacons of inclusion, justice, and dignity. We also have a training



centre for youth and adults, as well as a youth orchestra that transforms lives through the beauty of art. In all these spaces, our brothers, alongside committed lay people, sow the Gospel in fertile yet challenging soil.

d. The Provincial Council: Service based on Fragility

'Mission is not born of strength, but of fidelity'. - St. John Paul II

As a Council, we understand that we cannot resolve everything. However, we can accompany, listen, discern, and encourage. Our role is not merely administrative; it is profoundly pastoral. It involves walking alongside our brothers to support one another and remembering that we are bearers of a promise. In our fragility, God works. In our limitations, the Spirit is at work. And in our everyday decisions, the Kingdom is present.

We assume our responsibilities with gratitude, but also with realism. We cannot ignore that the generational handover is uncertain and that receiving support from other provinces is difficult due to cultural, linguistic, and professional reasons. However, we do not close the door to Providence. We continue to pray that new confreres will be encouraged to walk with us. We trust that the Spirit continues to raise up vocations where we least expect it.

e. FIC Laity: Allies in the Mission

"The laity are not 'collaborators' of the clergy. They are co-responsible for the being and action of the Church." - Benedict XVI

The formation of committed lay leaders dedicated to the FIC charism stands as one of our greatest treasures. These individuals—educators and animators—not only collaborate on our initiatives, but they also share in the mission. They represent both the present and future face of our presence in Chile. Their commitment and dedication inspire and renew us. With them, the mission

not only continues but flourishes with creativity and courage.

f. Serve Joyfully, Look Faithfully

'Deep joy is the echo of God's presence in the soul'. - St. Teresa of Calcutta

To serve on the Provincial Council is not to carry a burden, but to share a joy: that of knowing that we are instruments of God's love amidst a world that needs it so much. We understand that the journey will be demanding, but we are not alone. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, sustains us. We are united by his Word, nourished by the Eucharist, and strengthened by the witness of so many brothers and lay people who have given - and continue to give - their lives for the Gospel.

That is why we do not give up. Even if we cannot foresee the future, we continue to walk with our eyes fixed on the One who called us. We maintain our belief that as long as there is a living community, a burning heart, and a child with a thirst for knowledge, our mission remains valid, beautiful, and urgent.

g. Conclusion: Pilgrims of Hope

'Consecrated life is a parable of the Kingdom.' - Vita Consecrata, 1

We are few, yes. But we are not alone. We are fragile, yes, but we are not defeated. We are a community on the move, small in number but immense in spirit. As a Provincial Council, we commit ourselves to living this triennium as a pilgrimage of faith, sustained by hope, guided by the Gospel, and always united in Jesus Christ.

In every step, in every decision, in every brother, we want to recognize the face of the Risen Christ, who tells us once again:
"Do not be afraid. I am with you always, even to the end of the age". (Mt 28,20)



Experiences Thus Far of the Provincial Council of the Brothers FIC – Ghana Province (2024–2030)

Bro. Fabian Bezel, FIC



Ken Blanchard once observed that *"the key to successful leadership is influence, not authority."* This insight aptly captures the focus of the current Ghana Provincial Council (2024 -2030).

The incumbent Council officially assumed office on **21st November 2024**. We are fully aware of the weight and demands of our mandate. However, recognizing our dependence on God's grace, we began our journey with a two-day recollection at Mt. Zion Community, Nandom. This time of prayer and reflection, framed by carefully prepared opening and closing prayer services, focused on the 2024 General and Provincial Chapter Resolutions, and the two "Chapter messages." Guided by the Holy Spirit, we developed a strategic plan and shared responsibilities for implementing the Chapters' Resolutions among ourselves. We did this according to the abilities, giftedness, experiences, and strengths of the members of the Provincial Council.

As a growing leadership team, we desire to be pilgrims of hope. We endeared ourselves to a

path of fraternal growth and service, first to our fellow Brothers and all we have been given this mandate to serve. Therefore, we have resolved to:

- Foster deeper communal living,
- Enrich our spiritual and prayer lives,
- Provide quality care for our elderly and infirm brothers.
- Engage meaningfully and creatively with the youth, and
- Empower women and vulnerable groups, particularly orphans.

We recognize that this mission is not ours alone. To ensure collective ownership and cooperation, the Provincial Council organized workshops with Local Councils, project managers, and all our brothers, appealing for their active support and collaboration. We hope this synodal approach to leadership will move all of us (Brothers and all God's people) forward on our pilgrim journey.

In response to the Chapter Resolutions, we have established a **Development Office**, tasked with creating a sustainable and supportive environment that nurtures our brothers' spiritual, educational, and social development. Its primary mission is to be closer to the youth, mobilize resources, and build partnerships that will offer better opportunities for the growth and development of the province.

Despite our enthusiasm and dedication, we are not without challenges. The most pressing is a **shortage of human resources**. Upon taking office, we found that our services are in demand in other dioceses. However, we lack the personnel to respond effectively. Within our own Province, some communities and institutions are critically understaffed, and efforts to strengthen them have proven difficult.

Secondly, we face **financial limitations**. Many of the Chapter Resolutions we are eager to implement are capital-intensive and exceed the

capacity of our annual budget. We will therefore continue to depend on God's providence while, through our human efforts, we seek external support to bring these aspirations to fruition. Closely tied to this is our desire to improve the care of our elderly and ailing brothers. Ensuring good care, comfort, and dignified living for the growing number of our elderly and infirm brothers and coworkers also requires significant financial investment.

Another longstanding challenge is the **protracted land dispute** involving the St. Louis Community land. This case, which has lingered for nearly twenty years, remains unresolved; how and when it will come to an end, we do not know.

Nonetheless, as **pilgrims of hope**, we remain steadfast in our faith in divine providence and the power of collaboration. In the same spirit of synodality, we continue to engage Local Councils, project managers, collaborators, and all our brothers in open dialogue. We strive to generate ideas and initiatives that will strengthen our spiritual, fraternal, financial, and social networks, as well as our leadership.

“
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BOOK REVIEW

The Challenge of Hope

Bro. Johan Muijtjens, FIC
Maastricht, May 2025



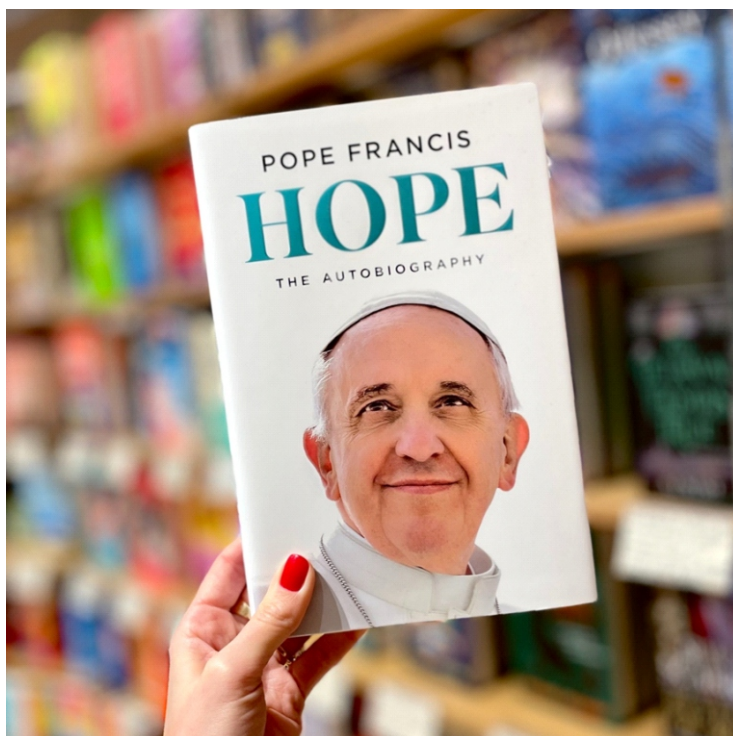
The late Pope Francis has written an autobiography that has raised much interest. It is both encouraging and thought-provoking, a great gift to all who, in a listening way, read his story.

Let me first mention some challenging encouragements:

- * From the beginning one feels that Francis wants to be very personal and honest, which may invite the reader to look at his or her own life: he shows clearly how the experiences of his youth and his growth as a young adult have had great influence on the way he later - also as a pope - looked at reality. His immigrant background and the mostly poor

situation in which he lived made him extra *sensitive to the fate of refugees and immigrants, victims of violence and wars, people mainly made poor through social injustice or living in unworthy, abusive situations.* In particular, his often-repeated condemnation of war and other violence, as well as his numerous efforts to foster peace and justice, is a recurring theme throughout the book.

- * His contacts during his young years with a great variety of people: socially, religiously, sexually orientated, economically and politically very different, artists, lawyers, religious leaders, etc., have made him very inclusive in his thinking and outward-looking. It made him very open to what is going on in society and engaged him deeply with contemporary issues.
- * The title of the book is HOPE, and this is understandable, one of the recurring themes. Hope is no optimism, it is not a light way of living: "everything will be o.k.". Hope is much more: it is, first of all, a way of acting, making choices, and committing yourself. It is a power and a conviction, a deep awareness that there is always a future and way forward, through all the troubles in our lives. Francis begins by noting that the natural sciences demonstrate how much this kind of hope, confidence, and commitment is a natural healing power. The Christian-inspired hope looks even much deeper and can be even more fruitful: we may be sure that fundamentally we are already safe and well, even in struggle, disappointments, illness and in death. It may free us from all fear. Christian hope never disappoints, Francis stresses,



because *God* never disappoints and because our hope is *still fulfilled*, our future is already secured.

- * Francis is also convinced that God's good Spirit lives and works in all of creation and in particular in us human beings. Real and patient listening to the inspiration in each person is the greatest source of inspiration in life. That's why *synodality*, literally '*walking together*', is so essential for our whole living together as human beings and particularly for those who can see deeper what human life is about, those who are sensitive to the *spiritual* dimension of our existence. Francis' commitment in this field will probably be his main testimony.

So far, four precious lessons and encouragements have characterized his papacy. That may be reason enough to read this book!

Many people, however, do read such a book, an autobiography, to get more clarity about the

background of the *decisions* made by the author.

I just mentioned the tremendous effort of Francis to promote both the spirit and the practice of synodality.

What is disappointing, however, is that difficult and contentious issues like clergy sexual abuse, the evil of clericalism, different sexual orientations and leadership issues, certainly being mentioned, do get less attention than many readers would like. On the other hand, items such as artificial intelligence, democracy and populism —the scourge of present-day capitalist economies, the care for our environment, the connected fate of the poor, the misuse of social media, and the exploitation of resources, all receive explicit attention as burning issues in Francis' heart.

Full of committed hope, inspired by the joy of the gospel, Francis leaves the reader deeply grateful for such a leader, not only of our Catholic church but also, with great moral authority, of the worldwide humanity.



Let us imitate Simeon and Anna, Pilgrims of Hope by Pope Francis



In the General Audience scheduled for February 26, Pope Francis reflects on the Presentation in the Temple and invites us to imitate Simeon and Anna as model “pilgrims of faith”. Pope Francis continued to teach from his hospital room, with the Vatican releasing the prepared text of the Pope's catechesis.

Continuing the catechetical cycle on “Jesus Christ, our hope”, the Holy Father reflects on the mystery of the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple forty days after His birth. The Presentation demonstrates Mary and Joseph's obedience to Jewish Law, and

shows them not only “integrating” Jesus into a family, a people, and a covenant, but also caring for His growth as they themselves grow “in their comprehension of a vocation that far surpasses them”. Pope Francis then turns his attention to the two other figures present in the Temple: the elderly Simeon and Anna.

A witness of faith, hope, and love

Simeon, longing for the fulfilment of God's promises to Israel, is inspired to take the Child Jesus in his arms and is consoled at seeing the Saviour of Israel. He expresses his feelings “in a canticle full of heartfelt

gratitude, which in the Church has become the prayer at the end of the day": the *Nunc dimittis*, which begins, "Now, O Lord, you let your servant go in peace, according to your word..." Simeon is "a witness of faith received as a gift and communicated to others; ... a witness of the hope that does not disappoint; ... a witness of God's love, which fills the human heart with joy and peace".

Hope rekindled in our hearts

Alongside Simeon, Anna, a widow entirely dedicated to service and prayer, also sees salvation in the Child Jesus. At the sight of the Child, the Pope explained, "Anna celebrates the God of Israel, who has redeemed His people in that very Child, and tells others about Him, generously spreading the prophetic word". Pope Francis continued, "The song of redemption of two elders thus emits the proclamation of the Jubilee for all the people and the world. Hope is rekindled in

hearts in the Temple of Jerusalem because Christ, our hope, has entered it".

Pilgrims of hope

Pope Francis concluded his reflection by inviting the faithful to imitate Simeon and Anna, "these pilgrims of hope", who can see beyond appearances, who know how to welcome God's visit with joy and rekindle hope in the hearts of brothers and sisters.

(From: <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2025-02/pope-francis-let-us-imitate-simeon-and-anna-pilgrims-of-hope.html>)





The Holy See

Jesus Christ, our Hope; The Parable of the Sower



Dear brothers and sisters, I am pleased to welcome you to this, my first general Audience. Today, I will resume the cycle of Jubilee catechesis, on the theme “Jesus Christ Our Hope”, initiated by Pope Francis.

Let us continue today to meditate on the parables of Jesus, which help us to regain hope, because they show us how God works in history. Today, I would like to dwell on a parable which is somewhat peculiar, because it is a sort of introduction to all the parables. I refer to that of the Sower (cf. *Mt* 13:1-17). In a certain sense, in this account we can recognize Jesus' way of communicating, which has a great deal to teach us for proclaiming the Gospel today.

Every parable tells a story that is taken from everyday life, yet wants to tell us something more, referring us to a deeper meaning. The parable raises questions in us; it invites us not to stop at appearances. Before the story that is told or the

image that is presented to me, I can ask myself: where am I in this story? What does this image say to my life? In fact, the term “parable” comes from the Greek verb *paraballein*, which means *to throw in front of*. The parable throws before me a word that provokes me and prompts me to question myself.

The parable of the Sower talks precisely about the dynamic of the word of God and the effects it produces. Indeed, every word of the Gospel is like a seed that is thrown on the ground of our life. Jesus uses the image of the seed many times, with different meanings. In chapter 13 of the Gospel of Matthew, the parable of the Sower introduces a series of other short parables, some of which talk precisely about what is happening on the terrain: the wheat and the weeds, the mustard seed, the treasure hidden in the field. What, then, is this soil? It is our heart, but it is also the world, the community, the Church. The word of God, in fact, makes fruitful and provokes every reality.

At the beginning, we see Jesus who leaves the house and gathers a great crowd around him (cf. Mt 13:1). His word fascinates and intrigues. Among the people there are obviously many different situations. The word of Jesus is for everyone, but it works in each person in a different way. This context allows us to understand better the meaning of the parable.

A rather unusual sower goes out to sow, but does not care where the seed falls. He throws the seeds even where it is unlikely they will bear fruit: on the path, on the rocks, among the thorns. This attitude surprises the listener and induces him to ask: How come?

We are used to calculating things – and at times it is necessary – but this does not apply in love! The way in which this “wasteful” sower throws the seed is an image of the way God loves us. Indeed, it is true that the destiny of the seed depends also on the way in which the earth welcomes it and the situation in which it finds itself, but first and foremost in this parable Jesus tells us that God throws the seed of his Word on all kinds of soil, that is, in any situation of ours: at times we are more superficial and distracted, at times we let ourselves get carried away by enthusiasm, sometimes we are burdened by life's worries, but there are also times when we are willing and welcoming. God is confident and hopes that sooner or later the seed will blossom. This is how he loves us: he does not wait for us to become the best soil, but he always generously gives us his word. Perhaps by seeing that he trusts us, the desire to be better soil will be kindled in us. This is hope, founded on the rock of God's generosity and mercy.

In telling how the seed bears fruit, Jesus is also talking about his life. Jesus is the Word; he is the Seed. And the seed, to bear fruit, must die. Thus, this parable tells us that God is ready to “waste away” for us and that Jesus is willing to die in order to transform our life.

I have in mind that beautiful painting by Van Gogh, *The sower at sunset*. That image of the sower in the blazing sun also speaks to me of the farmer's toil. And it strikes me that, behind the



sower, Van Gogh depicted the grain already ripe. It seems to me an image of hope: one way or another, the seed has borne fruit. We are not sure how, but it has. At the centre of the scene, however, is not the sower, who stands to the side; instead, the whole painting is dominated by the image of the sun, perhaps to remind us that it is God who moves history, even if he sometimes seems absent or distant. It is the sun that warms the clods of earth and makes the seed ripen.

Dear brothers and sisters, in what situation of life today is the Word of God reaching us? Let us ask the Lord for the grace always to welcome this seed that is His Word. And if we realize we are not a fruitful soil, let us not be discouraged, but let us ask him to work on us more to make us become a better terrain.



Maria Nurtures Our Hope

Mary, the mother of Jesus, is a source of deep inspiration for the FIC brothers. Her life, as told in the Gospels, especially through the Magnificat in Luke's Gospel, reveals her steadfast faith and hope in God. One of Mary's most profound virtues is her ability to nurture hope—a virtue the FIC brothers are called to emulate.

Mary's journey begins with her encounter with the angel of the Lord. In her response to the Magnificat (Luke 1:46–55), Mary expresses unwavering faith in God's plan of salvation. Her words reflect trust in a God who is ever present, active in history, and faithful to His promises. Through this hymn of praise, Mary affirms her belief in God's mercy, His justice, and His enduring commitment to the people of Israel, from Abraham to all future generations.

Mary's Magnificat reads:

"My heart praises the Lord; my soul is glad because of God my Saviour, for he has remembered me, his lowly servant! From now on, all people will call me happy because of the great things the Mighty God has done for me. His name is holy; he shows mercy to those who honour him from one generation to another. He has stretched out his mighty arm and scattered the proud with all their plans. He has brought down mighty kings from their thrones and lifted the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away with empty hands. He has kept his promise to our ancestors and has come to the help of his servant Israel. He has remembered to show mercy to Abraham and all his descendants forever!"

This powerful prayer reveals the framework of Mary's faith—a deep awareness of God's faithfulness throughout history. She places her life within the context of her ancestors' relationship with God, recognizing His consistent mercy and power. This historical awareness strengthens her hope and shapes her response to life's challenges.



From Mary's example, we learn that nurturing hope requires more than passive trust; it demands active faith rooted in history and lived experience. Mary's Magnificat shows us that those who fear and honour God receive His grace, while the proud are humbled. Thus, hope flourishes in humility, reverence, and commitment to God's will.



The FIC Life Context

Like Mary, the FIC brothers are called to live out their faith within a historical and spiritual framework. The life stories of Louis Rutten and Brother Bernardus Hoecken—Founders of the FIC Congregation—mirror this dynamic of faith and divine providence.

Louis Rutten's early life was marked by personal struggles and imperfections. Mysteriously, he experienced a profound transformation, dedicating his life to God and to serving others as a priest. This conversion reflects the power of God at work—an experience that parallels Mary's faithful response.

When Rutten began his charitable works in Maastricht, he did so amid great poverty. Brother Bernardus later testified during a jubilee celebration that the Congregation was born from apparent impossibility. It was only through God's power that the FIC Congregation could come into

being and flourish. His testimony echoes the faith-filled words of the Magnificat and can serve as a source of strength for FIC brothers today.

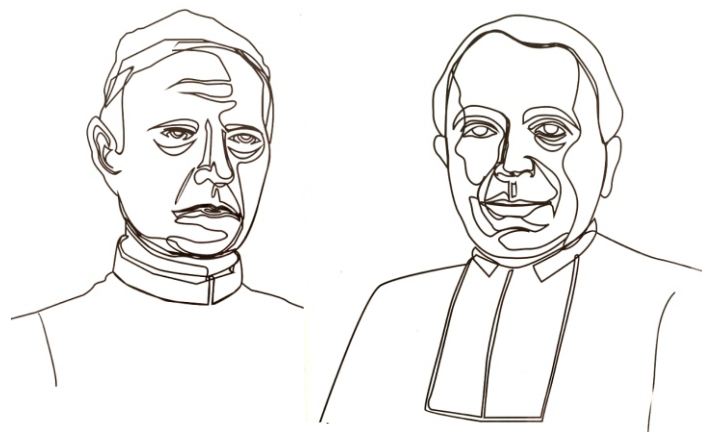
Living the Legacy Today

Drawing inspiration from Mary, Msgr. Louis Rutten, and Bro. Bernardus Hoecken, the FIC brothers today are invited to root their hope in a deep commitment to God, even amidst challenges. From their example, two key life principles emerge:

- 1. Purifying Intentions:** Like Mary, Louis Rutten, and Bernardus Hoecken, we must continually purify our intentions, striving to live wholly for God and others. This calls for regular spiritual reflection and a deepening of our inner life.
- 2. Relying on God's Power:** Rutten and Bernardus pursued their mission with limited resources. Their poverty became a blessing, prompting greater dependence on God. In this spiritual poverty, their trust in divine providence grew stronger.

Today, we must ask ourselves: Do we still see the need to rely on God's help, as our founders once did? Or have more comfortable conditions challenged our dependence on divine grace? If so, how do we return to that blessed reliance?

Ultimately, nurturing hope, as Mary did, means living with a spirit of humility, trust, and purposeful action—anchored in the memory of God's enduring faithfulness.





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 view this life choice as both demanding and gratifying. Due to this extensive experience, we continue to attract young men to our community.

Every candidate brings their own experiences, gifts, and talents. However, it takes time for a young man to determine if his choice for the Brothers FIC is really his life's 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 receive a comprehensive introduction to our life and spirituality, both theoretical and practical. 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 Aspirancy Coordinator or the Provincial Superior in his area. You will find all the addresses at the side of this page. After completing several assessments, you undergo a preparatory period known as the postulancy. This period typically lasts about one year, providing both the candidate and the congregation with the opportunity to get to know each other.
2. Noviciate - After this period, provided the candidate is admitted, the noviciate begins. This marks the beginning of life in the congregation and typically lasts two years.
3. Temporary profession - After the noviciate, the candidate can bind himself by his temporary vows. He does so intending to bind himself for life in the future. However, it is a good thing to bind oneself only temporarily in the beginning.

During this period, which usually lasts six years, the young brother can develop his vocation and integrate into the daily life of the congregation and its apostolate. The formation process continues by integrating the three main dimensions of a brother's life: prayer, apostolic work, and community life. This period officially concludes with the final profession.



Interested?

If you interested into 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. Laurentius, Eko Susanto, and Thomas Nova

Address:

Jl. Sultan Agung 133 Semarang 50234
Indonesia

Phone:

+62(0)24 8312547
+62 813 1696 2614

Email:

ficindo1920@gmail.com

3. The Netherlands

Bro. Lo Koeleman

Address:

Prins Bisschopsingel
22, 6211 JX Maastricht, The Netherlands

Phone:

*31 (0) 43 3508373

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



Constitution art. 19. Outside One's Own Country: "A valuable tradition in the Congregation is the willingness to help build a more human world outside one's own native country. Many brothers leave their own people and their own culture to spread the Good News in word and deed in other countries, and to give form to the Kingdom of God." Bro. Robertus Kuncoro (left) share his life with the youth of Malawi



As Father Louis Rutten, our founder, did, we are called to dedicate our whole lives to Christian education and the formation of the young. Bro. Irenius Nimbare shares his life and joy with the youth at Louis Rutten Senior High School in Ghana Province.



Young people are also our teachers. They help the FIC brothers grow and develop into whole human beings. The young people in Chile are like teachers for Bro. Eustachius Ekowijayanto. Young people shower the light of hope.



Encountering young people brings joy and hope.

