



BROTHERS FIC

CALLED TO BE GOOD AND TO DO GOOD



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Continuing Spiritual Formation



“I thank God for the privilege of becoming a religious and, in a special way, an FIC Brother. I equally thank God for the lives of my fellow brothers, who are there for me and challenge me to grow in my religious life.”

Bro. Paul Sabogu FIC

FIC CONSTITUTION



Art. 67 Longer periods

It is desirable to incorporate longer periods of prayer and reflection in our lives. These are of vital importance for a better understanding of ourselves and of our lives as religious; for a more intensive personal contact with God; for openness to God's Spirit; and for deepening our apostolic concern. In every province arrangements are made concerning annual retreats and other opportunities for reflection of longer duration.



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Colophon

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From The Editor

This is the ninth publication of volume II of the congregational magazine "Brothers FIC" reaching you. The theme is "*Continuing Spiritual Formation*." Here, we intend to share with our cherished readers how important it is for us religious (FIC Brothers) to keep forming ourselves until "our life reflects the very mind of Christ." This is an arduous task, but as mature Christians, we know it is a pre-requisite to our life of consecration as said in Vita Consecrata (69): "Continuing formation is an intrinsic requirement of religious consecration."

Continuing Spiritual Formation helps us maintain our relationship with God, whose will we desire to follow. It is training in eternal living, determined discipleship to Jesus Christ, and the way we discover the renewable source of spiritual energy we have been looking for (2 Cor 4:16). We intend to be people of prayer and to interlace our whole lives more and more with moments of prayer (FIC Constitutions art. 59). To be "Bearers of the Good News", we must first have in-depth knowledge, experience and deep faith in the one God who calls and sends us (Bro. Augustine Kubdaar, opening address, OASIS 2023).

Beloved reader, you will be reading about the experiences and thoughts of our fellow brothers regarding the theme stated above. Bro. Augustine, our General Superior, reflects on "*Continuous Formation in Consecrated Life*." He strongly believes that our approach to religious formation should be characterised by joy, mercy, and a profound commitment to the transformative mission of the Church in the world. To facilitate the understanding of the concept, Bro. Raphael, in his reflection on "*The Importance of Ongoing Formation*," invites readers to reflect on the primary reason for choosing this theme: "Due to human limitations, the consecrated person can never claim to have completely brought to life the 'new creature' who in every circumstance of life reflects the very mind of Christ". Two of our young brothers, Elijah Abugri (Ghana) and Mike Mbato (Malawi) who participated in the FIC Journey to Spiritual Enrichment 2023, share their experiences with us. Bro. Didas Toogumo (Animator, Ghana) also gave us his impressions on the exercise.

Dear reader, this time, we provide the profile of Bro. Paul Sabogu from Ghana, our new General Council Secretary, who began his task two months ago. We believe his sharing will inspire our young readers and help them discover the meaning of our life and work. The rest of the news come from our provinces and Religious House Netherlands, news in pictures, an article from the Vatican and a short piece about Mary, written by Bro. Yohanes Krismanto, a missionary in Chile.

In the spirit of "Continuing Spiritual Formation", Bro. Michael Sidharta shares a reflection titled "*Ongoing Formation in an Anxious Space*", and Bro. Petrus Anjar, director of Roncalli Retreat House, enlightens us on the spiritual program of this retreat house.

I wish you all "A Happy and Blessed Christmas!" May the King of Peace bring true peace in the world, and may He inflame our hearts to enable us discover Christ in one another. Thank you for your attention and support to the FIC Congregation.

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Continuous Formation in Consecrated Life

Bro. Augustine Kubdaar FIC General Superior



Bro. Augustine Kubdaar in Saint Paul Basilica, Rome

Following Article 115 of the Brothers FIC Constitution, which emphasizes the importance of continuous personal and communal development throughout our lives, the Catholic Church places great significance on religious formation, particularly within the context of consecrated life and ministry. Religious formation encompasses various dimensions, including spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral aspects. It aims to gradually transform individuals by deepening their understanding of the Catholic faith, fostering a rich prayer life, and equipping them with the necessary skills for effective ministry in accordance with their calling. The ultimate goal of religious formation is to shape individuals into disciples who can authentically live out the

teachings of the Gospel and make meaningful contributions to both the Church and society.

Within the Catholic Church, religious formation holds particular relevance for those in consecrated life who have taken vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. There are several reasons why religious formation is crucial in this context. Firstly, it helps individuals develop a profound sense of spiritual identity, which is essential for consecrated persons who are called to live a life of radical discipleship, following the example of Christ. Secondly, religious formation equips individuals with the understanding and commitment needed to live out the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, which are central to consecrated life. Lastly, religious formation prepares individuals for the various ministries they may be engaged in as consecrated individuals, such as education, healthcare, social justice, and pastoral care. It provides them with theological, pastoral, and practical training, enabling them to effectively serve both the Church and the wider community.

Pope Francis, renowned for his emphasis on mercy, inclusivity, and the joy of the Gospel, has placed great importance on religious formation. He acknowledges it as a vital element in the life of the Church and stresses the necessity of ongoing formation to address the challenges of the modern world. In his apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis declares:

"I urge all Christians, without exception, to have a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least to be open to letting him encounter them; I ask each and every one of you to do this unfailingly every day. No



Bro. Augustine Kubdaar attended the USG meeting in Rome in 2023.

one should believe that this invitation is not intended for them, as 'no one is excluded from the joy brought by the Lord.'" (Evangelii Gaudium, 3)

This call for a renewed encounter with Christ highlights the fundamental significance of religious formation, aligning with the Pope's vision of a vibrant, missionary and synodal Church.

To conclude, I reemphasize that religious formation is a crucial foundation in

developing a strong and dynamic consecrated life within the Catholic Church. It equips individuals with the spiritual depth, dedication, and abilities necessary to authentically live out their consecrated vocations. As we heed Pope Francis' words and embrace a continual encounter with Christ, may our approach to religious formation be characterized by joy, mercy, and a profound commitment to the transformative mission of the Church in the world.



The importance of Ongoing Formation

Bro. Raphael Besigrinee

In Religious Life, “formation” is considered a conscious process that leads to the transformation of an individual and which experience affects his whole life. It is important not to confuse formation with “education”, “training” or “learning”. The term “formation” goes beyond these three concepts and is much more involving on the part of the formator, as well as the one in formation. Formation to religious life is the development of the individual to the point where he achieves a sense of freedom in his responsibilities. There is initial formation and ongoing formation. In the FIC Congregation, initial formation ends with first profession of vows, and it is understood that this time marks the beginning of ongoing formation, which lasts the rest of our life.

Formation in the pre-novitiate period usually prepares the candidate for the novitiate, and the novitiate program in turn prepares the novice for first religious profession. From this period, the individual religious is expected to be mature, and possess “a deep motivation and capacity to renew and perfect himself” for the rest of his life. With the pronouncement of vows, the brother completes initial formation and is ready for fulltime ministry. Like a fully grown tree, ready to bear fruit, the individual religious has reached maturity, and is now required to exercise great autonomy, as well as take initiatives and responsibility for his life. I think this is the time to begin to live real Religious Life.

De Souza defined “ongoing formation” of religious as “the constant personalization or interiorization of Christ’s life. Consequently it is a learning process, which involves change, growth and the transformation of the person.” De Souza added that the entire action of formation is a process where the individual becomes more and more a disciple of Christ. In this way formation becomes a continuous process of conversion and of transformation. Ongoing formation thus becomes the facilitation of the continuing growth



Bro. Raphael Besigrinee during his visit to Chile, 2023

of the whole person so as to promote a deeper and fuller commitment to the person and mission of Christ. The goal of ongoing formation is to support the individual religious in his religious journey from the time of commitment to the end of his life. Even though, in practice, formation is broken up in different stages such as pre-novitiate, canonical novitiate, and in some cases post-novitiate, each with specific objectives, formation itself is considered ongoing or continuous in the life of the religious.

What is the significance for ongoing formation? De Souza listed three main reasons for religious formation throughout life, namely “the challenges of contemporary culture and society”, the constantly changing times, and what I understand as new experiences in life. It is true that we are living in times of fundamental and rapid cultural changes which require a continuously renewed approaches of confronting the demands of these changes. This calls for a

conscious effort of discerning and interpreting the signs of the time. As one goes through life, the changes that occur in society call for new approaches in dealing with current issues. Changes in society may impact on the direction of the vision and mission of the community. All these call for ongoing formation.

Moreover *vita Consecrata* expresses a strong requirement for ongoing formation in art. 69 as follows:

Continuing formation, whether in Institutes of apostolic or contemplative life, is an intrinsic requirement of religious consecration. The formation process is not limited to the initial phase. Due to human limitations, the consecrated person can never claim to have completely brought to life the "new creature" who in every circumstance of life reflects the very mind of Christ. Initial formation, then, should be closely connected with continuing formation, thereby creating a readiness on everyone's part to let themselves be formed every day of their lives. Ongoing formation therefore is indispensable not only because of the need to renew oneself but also because the very nature of consecrated life "requires us to go on training ourselves for our task, to keep abreast of developments in the church and society, to have a ready eye to the signs of the times; and to continue developing our spiritual growth."

Due to the nature of ongoing formation, some theologians say Formation has to be permanent. That is to say it never ends. It is a task that should be upheld throughout life because nobody can say he has reached the last objective of formation: *to be completely conformed with Christ*. The one whose life is completely conformed with that of Christ has become a 'new creature', or one whose life reflects the very mind of Christ. Our Constitution goes on to say that continuing formation is not limited to a particular period of time: *Not only during our formative years, but throughout our lives we should be*



Bro. Raphael Besigrinee during the closing eucharistic celebration of the OASIS 2023 program, Maastricht 2023

open to development, formation, and deepening the meaning of our lives. As persons and as community we should seek this in various ways (Art 115). These ways could include the ordinary things in life which are intrinsically formative: programs of formal education, advanced studies and/or post-graduate studies, life with fellow brothers in community, apostolic experiences, relationship with God, the Word of God, sabbaticals, retreats, and workshops dealing with personal growth issues, and so on. In the words of Saint Bernard: "not to advance is equal to going backward". Life either progresses towards maturity or undertakes the way back towards self-destruction. Thus, we always have to be ready "to begin anew".

For this kind of formation to perdure, the individual religious must explore well and engage some agents who act as support. I will mention only five. The chief human agent of ongoing formation is *the brother himself*. It is his responsibility, as a mature person, to make use of all the experiences around him. Apart from himself, the *community leader* is an agent who provides guidance and direction; he is also expected to inspire and stimulate the brother in



A small group sharing during the OASIS program (English speaking)

living his consecration. The *apostolic community* is also an agent that offers support, fosters and guides the ongoing formation and growth of each member. The *Spiritual Director* is an important agent in guiding the spiritual development of the brother. The brother himself seeks spiritual accompaniment through a person of his choice as his Spiritual Director. This person can be a fellow religious, or an intimate, honest, and trusted friend with whom he can share freely.

Last but not least, the person particularly appointed to guide the ongoing formation program. The one in charge has the task of helping the brothers come to a better understanding and appreciation of the daily experiences in their community, social life, and their apostolic activities. These experiences are to be seen as encounters with God and opportunities to let the Kingdom of God continuously grow in themselves, in the community, and in the places of their apostolate.

In conclusion, ongoing formation is very important for every Institute and therefore every religious, whether he is in temporary or final vows. The formation programme should not only target those in initial formation, but incorporate those who are in temporary or perpetual vows. Those in charge of the ongoing formation program should make a conscious plan of activities every year for the continuing formation all brothers. The chief purpose of this plan is to provide all consecrated persons with a program which encompasses their whole life. None are exempt from the obligation to be formed every day of their lives. It is therefore binding on every mature religious to give careful attention to ongoing formation "until Christ is formed in us" (Gal 4:19).



Impressions of the OASIS 2023

My Impression on the FIC Spiritual Journey- OASIS 2023

Bro. Mike Mbato, Malawi

The “FIC Journey to Spiritual Enrichment” is an ongoing formation program prepared by the General Council for our professed brothers. The program usually goes through a number of stages which begins in the FIC provinces, guided by animators and culminates in an international encounter of all the participants from our provinces. This international encounter, commonly called “The Oasis” usually takes place in Maastricht, The Netherlands, which is the cradle of our Congregation.

The 2023 FIC journey program or “Oasis” was very exciting and generated a number of unforgettable moments. The spiritual journey was guided by the theme *“Called Together and Sent out to be Bearers of Good News in a joyful life.”* I was privileged to be chosen by the Provincial Council of Malawi to be part of the program. The preparations such as reading of the documents sent by the organizers of the journey, the direction given by the animator and the support received from the provincial council, provided a huge encouragement to prepare me for the Oasis session in the Netherlands.

We arrived in the Netherlands on 25th September, 2023, and were hosted by the FIC General Council community for a few days before going to the actual place of the conference. On the evening of 1st October 2023, we started the conference with a Eucharistic celebration. In attendance were brothers from the Religious House Netherlands, members of the General council, associate members, CB sisters and the Oasis participants of 2023.

The very first session on the schedule was interesting in a sense that we had time to share on **“who am I”** as a religious brother and as Christian. This was very lively and inspiring. As an individual I learnt a lot from this particular



Bro. Mike Mbato holding a lighted candle and his symbol of life

exercise. It was a moment that I felt fascinated with my vocation in a sense that brothers who have been in the congregation for long expressed a lot of motivating experiences. During the first week's sessions I was very much touched. I was also excited about the pilgrimage we were to embark on the following week.

The second week was more interesting since we were exposed to a lot of history of the FIC Congregation during the pilgrimage. It was like verifying what I have been reading in literature during formation years. I was glad to see the place where our founder was born, the place where he started his lessons with the poor children, the mother house and finally the resting place of our brothers (FIC cemetery). Upon arriving at the cemetery, I was filled with emotions because of the deep commitment of our



Bro. Mike Mbato pronounced his new name before the statue of Mother Mary

Founders, Msgr. Louis Rutten and Bro. Bernardus Hoecken, as well as other deceased FIC brothers. Their love for the congregation was overwhelming! The facilitator made us understand that we were there to visit a silent community of our brothers who had gone before us and we should keep in mind that they too were like us.

In conclusion, the FIC Spiritual Journey 2023 was a remarkable period of spiritual upliftment, during which I had the opportunity for a renewal through spiritual readings, spiritual talks and interaction with fellow brothers from other provinces. I thank God for making this spiritual journey fruitful and meaningful to my life. Gratitude to the General Council for organizing this exercise for our renewal. I ask the good Lord to support me that I may remain faithful to my commitments as I promised during the day of covenant.

My Impression on the Oasis 2023 Gathering in Connection with Ongoing Formation as Brothers FIC

Bro. Elijah Abugri, Provincial House, Wa

The Oasis" is a Spiritual Enrichment program which took place in Maastricht from 1 to 21 October 2023, and forms part of a series of spiritual exercises organised by the General Council for our professed brothers in all FIC provinces from time to time. Guided by an animator, a selected brothers are taken through these exercises which result in an international encounter in The Netherlands, the foundation place of the FIC Congregation. At the heart of the ongoing formation as Brothers FIC, lies a transformative and enlightening journey known as "The OASIS". This three-week spiritual program serves as a profound expedition, guiding participants to explore the very roots of the FIC Congregation.

The OASIS program is more than just a collection of days; it is for me, a sacred space where individuals are invited to delve deep into the essence of our congregation's heritage. Through a carefully designed schedule of inputs, prayer,



Bro. Elijah Abugri holding a lighted candle and his symbol of life



Bro. Elijah Abugri reading his "covenant" before Bro. Augustine Kubdaar (Superior General) during the OASIS program 2023, Maastricht

reflection, and communal activities, participants embarked on a journey that fosters spiritual growth and deepens their understanding of what it truly means to be a Brother FIC.

At its core, The OASIS is about self-discovery. It provides participants with an opportunity to rekindle their connection with the fundamental principles that underpin the FIC way of life. Through shared moments of prayer and reflection, participants gain insights into the rich history, values, and mission of the congregation, breathing new life into their own commitment as Brothers FIC.

One of the most powerful aspects of The OASIS is its communal nature. Brothers from diverse backgrounds and experiences come together to share their faith, wisdom, and aspirations. This unity in diversity not only strengthens the bonds among participants but also reaffirms the global brotherhood that defines the FIC Congregation. Participants at the end of the program profess their own covenant in the presence of the

General Superior and the Councilors as an indication of their commitment to live fully the core values of the congregation. They are armed with the knowledge and experiences that allow them to continue their journey as Brothers FIC, with a deeper connection to the roots of our congregation.

The OASIS is more than a program; it is an invaluable experience that nurtures the spiritual growth of every participant. It serves as a reminder of our shared heritage and the collective mission to carry the FIC legacy forward. Through The OASIS, we rekindle the flame of our brotherhood and renew our commitment to the service of God and humanity.

In conclusion, The OASIS is not merely a three-week program but a pivotal milestone in the ongoing formation of Brothers FIC. It's a journey of self-discovery, spiritual growth, and unity in diversity, a profound connection to the roots of our congregation, and a recommitment to our shared mission.



My Impression on the FIC Journey to Spiritual Enrichment (Oasis 2023)

Bro. Didas Toogumo, Mt. Zion Community, Nandom

Dear Brothers, I am honoured to be invited to share my reflections on the recently concluded FIC Journey to Spiritual Enrichment (Oasis 2023), a program designed for the continuing formation of brothers, aim to foster spiritual development and deepen our identity as religious.

Our constitution, as outlined in Article 115, emphasizes the importance of remaining open to development and formation throughout our lives. This ongoing commitment to growth, both individually and as a community, is integral to the fidelity of our vocation. The FIC Journey to Spiritual Enrichment program is a testament to this commitment, and I am privileged to offer my insights as a graduate and Animator of the program.

The theme of the 2023 Spiritual Journey, *"Called Together and Sent out to be the Bearers of Good News in a joyful life,"* resonates deeply with the core of our calling. It challenges us to reflect on our daily lives, individually and as a congregation, questioning whether we authentically embody

our role as bearers of the Good News or inadvertently convey the opposite.

Furthermore, the emphasis on deepening our identity and mission as Brothers FIC, as articulated in Article 10 of our constitution, underscores the importance of protecting our heritage. This involves a profound concern for spiritual and religious needs, a commitment to fraternal community life, and a special reverence towards Mary.

The discussions during the 2023 Oasis centred on these critical aspects of our religious life, addressing the gap that often exists in our commitment to spiritual development, community life, and veneration of Mary. In my opinion, the program's success lies in the participants' sincere dedication to viewing it as a spiritual exercise aimed at enhancing our spirituality as religious.

The program has profoundly impacted my relationship with God, influencing my prayer life, community interactions, and apostolate, and it



Bros. Prosper Ganye and Didas Toogumo



Bro. Didas giving a presentation during the OASIS Program in October 2023, Maastricht.

has given me a deeper understanding of our congregation. I ardently wish that every brother in our congregation could experience the transformative effects of this journey.

Drawing inspiration from the Gospel of Luke 24:13-35, the story of walking to Emmaus, the Oasis 2023 mirrors the experience of Jesus joining with his disciples. The facilitators, like Jesus, enlightened us on our identity as Brothers FIC and our role in the Church. The pilgrimage to historical places further deepened our understanding of the original Spirit and connection to the roots of our congregation.

Just as the disciples, who after recognizing Jesus fearlessly proclaimed the Good News, participants of the FIC Spiritual Journey should

act as ambassadors, conveying the significance of the program to those who are yet to experience it. Living out the identity of Brothers FIC, as pledged in the covenant at the program's conclusion, becomes our responsibility.

In conclusion, I implore each reader to take their spiritual development seriously. Our prayer life, community interactions, and commitment to our apostolate define the uniqueness of our religious vocation. Let us remember that the success of our apostolate and communal life hinges on the sincerity of our prayer life. May God bless and protect us on our ongoing journey as religious.

Bro. Didas Toogumo is the Animator of the Oasis participants in Ghana



Report FIC Journey to Spiritual Enrichment 2023

Bro. Raphael Besigrinee



Participants of OASIS 2023, together with Bro. Johan Muijtens
in front of the former formation house, Maastricht

The official opening of the *FIC Journey to Spiritual Enrichment 2023* began with a Eucharistic celebration in the evening of 1 October at the CB Sisters' house complex called "Onder de Bogen". The Eucharist was led by Msgr. Everard De Jong. He expressed admiration for the work of the Brothers in general and the FIC Congregation in particular for their mission in the church. The three-week program, also called "Oasis gathering" had the theme **"Called Together and Sent to be the Bearers of Good News in a Joyful Life"**. Some guests from the Religious House Netherlands (RHN), were invited for the opening. These include fellow brothers, associated members and co-workers.

In the official opening address, the Superior General, Bro. Augustine Kubdaar, outlined the programme for the next three weeks as follows: "In the first week, you (the Brothers) will be

guided to understand more profoundly 'our identity as human, Christian and as FIC Brothers'. In the second and third weeks, you will reflect on 'The Spirituality of our Founders and our core mission.' You will have the opportunity to visit some historical sites of our Founders and fellow Brothers who have gone before us. The three-week long program will be summed up in a composition of a personal covenant with God, and I pray you do so with hope, conviction, and trust."

This congregational exercise is made up of three phases, each involving a number of spiritual exercises. The preparation for this "Oasis gathering" started last July in our provinces where the program was launched. The "Oasis gathering" that took place here in Maastricht, is the second stage. The third consists of a follow-up exercises when they return to their provinces. The most significant

experience is the physical presence of participants in the cradle of the congregation as it brings them in close contact with the spirit of our Founders.

In terms of content, the first week focussed on our identity, and this includes sharing of personal stories and symbols, vocation stories, discussions on who I am as a human being, Christian and Religious. Hence topics like *Identity and Mission of the Religious Brother in the church*, *Dealing with stress as religious and Growing towards Psychological and Spiritual maturity* were highly required. The second week was dedicated to the Pilgrimage program which includes visits to some of the historical places of the Congregation. These comprise the birthplace of Msgr. Louis Rutten, Saint Matthias Church, where our Founder said his first Mass after his priestly ordination, and Saint Servatius Basilica, where he first gave catechism lessons to the poor children of Maastricht.

The rest are a visit to the “Red Lion”, where the congregation began, De Beyart and finally the final resting place of our Founders at Anjoulaan. These visits were carefully blended with some input on the Spirituality of our Founders, Msgr. Louis Rutten and Bro. Bernardus Hoecken. At each of these historical places, we spent quality time to reflect and pray for our Founders, and for their selfless dedication to the needs of the youth at their time.

Our visit to De Beyart, our Mother house, was very special. After we were conducted around the facility, both outside and inside, we spent some time with our elderly Brothers in the recreation hall of Bernardus community. The whole afternoon of the day was devoted to Mary, our Patroness. We began with a reflective prayer on Mary at the meeting center before moving back to De Beyart. This time, we had a special Marian devotion with the elderly brothers in De Beyart chapel.



Oasis Participants, facilitators, and animators in front of the tomb of Bro. Bernard Hoecken, Maastricht

The Oasis participants expressed their devotion to Mary in their different cultures as found in Indonesia, Ghana, Malawi, Netherlands and Chile. So, that afternoon the OASIS participants and the brothers at De Beyart celebrated the richness of our culture in praising Mary, our Patroness. De Beyart was originally built as a motherhouse for the FIC brothers. Currently, De Beyart has been transferred to a different owner, and now mostly functions as a residence for the elderly. The current residents of De Beyart consist of FIC Brothers, religious Sisters, and lay people. Today, De Beyart is no longer owned by the FIC Congregation. It has become the property of a Foundation that organizes care for elderly people.

Having gone through a very hectic week of pilgrimage to historical places associated with the lives and works of our Founders, observing a day out was more than welcome news. This certainly would offer an opportunity to recreate, relax and prepare for the coming days. The outing was a boat trip on River Maas from St. Servatius bridge through a number of canals. Just before the Belgian border, the boat turned back towards the centre of Maastricht, and finally stopped at the St. Servatius Bridge, the oldest



2023 Oasis participants with fellow brothers of The Netherlands

bridge in the Netherlands, named after St. Servatius, the first Bishop of Maastricht, who died in 384.

Our concentration in the final week was on FIC mission as radiated by our Founders. So the following topics were scheduled, among others *the identity of FIC according to our Founders, The development of FIC charism, The style of leadership of our Founders, Apostolic mission, prayer and community life,* and finally, a reflection on *Mary's Immaculate Conception*. We drew the resource persons from the General Council members, the Animators, and Bro. Johan Muijtjens.

Participants had a positive impression on the gathering. Even though language was a challenge in this Oasis, this did not deter the brothers from the pleasant expression of our Brotherhood expressed through the daily Eucharistic celebrations, prayer services, meals, recreation and other informal interactions. The gathering led to an increase in participants' sense of purpose, new insights into our charism and a better understanding of the Spirituality of our Founders. As said by one participant, "the experiences gained through the visit to historical places of our Founders will help us live the struggles of our present time."

During the Eucharistic celebration that brought the gathering to a close, the Superior General Bro. Augustine Kubdaar advised participants to "consistently put your rich experiences into practice and at the service of your fellow brothers and all the people you will meet in life." He assured them they "would find a great source of energy and motivation to continue with your spiritual journey if you can integrate your experience from this program properly." After this he declared the Oasis gathering officially closed.

R H N

Foundation Day 21 November 2023 – Proclamation

Bro. Wim Swüste FIC, The Netherlands

We know ourselves to be called to unity and fraternal communion so as to proclaim Christ to each other and to all people. We are focused on the happiness of fellow human beings; first and foremost on the happiness of those with whom we form a community. We call one another 'brother' and try to live up to this word in the life of our community" (Const. articles 35 and 36). Our Constitution beautifully describes how we should treat each other, as well as the people we meet on our life path.

Our founders, Mgr. Louis Rutten and Brother Bernardus Hoecken, saw this as a great task for all brothers who, in their wake, dedicated themselves to others and to the brothers among them. They themselves gave an example in a moving way. Rutten wanted our apostolate to be widely developed. Brother Bernardus thought we should work on this, but that the quality of religious life should not suffer as a result.

This sometimes caused disagreement. But deep in their hearts, and also in their personal actions, they tried to set a good example. Bernard set such an example when Mgr. Rutten was admitted to a clinic in Belgium. He visited him faithfully every fortnight. An example to his fellow brothers of fraternal affection.

An international gathering recently took place in Maastricht. Brothers from Indonesia, Ghana, Malawi and Chile came together for three weeks to deepen their personal journey of spiritual enrichment and to be inspired by each other and by the programme offered, thus growing as brother-religious. A group of men, coming from different cultures with very different lifestyles, customs and traditions. You got to know them at the meeting of Contemplation at Home around Mary on Thursday 12 October, here in the chapel.

The brotherly affection just splashed off. Sincere warmth for our group of ageing fellow brothers. Greeting them warmly. Shaking hands with them in appreciation, with broad smiles: out of respect for their great commitment in their long fraternal lives. A very disarming meeting that showed: we belong together, we live in the same Spirit, we respect you, we are brothers of each other in the deepest sense.

When we are together today, we remember that 183 years ago we began our work as brothers of our Congregation. By trial and error, we have become what we wanted to radiate: a warm group of people, who have an eye for the world around us. But who above all want to hold each other by the hand in brotherly love.

Living together, living with each other every day, can be a big task - even in family situations. Deep in your heart you often have a judgment about the actions of those who are close to you. The task is: still accepting each other when you notice that getting older yourself and accepting others can be a cross. Tolerating that people close to you are sometimes difficult to understand, in their difficult experience of old age. We should endure that in great compassion. To continue to appreciate each other, when you consider that people around you have shown an outstanding

commitment in their long lives. To share suffering with each other brotherly, learning to tolerate and respect each other wholeheartedly.

As brothers, we are also only weak human beings. That is why it is of great value that we continue to seriously consider ourselves: am I a good neighbour for my fellow brother who thinks and feels differently? Who is plagued by physical and mental weakness? As fellow brothers, under the protection of Mother Mary, our patroness, we want to continue to form a close community together. Our founders preceded us in this. May this be a support to us all.

A poet from Ivory Coast, Veronique Tadjou, formulates this beautifully:

*Bring me light,
then give it to me
in the bowl of your hands
and touch me.
Carry your light away,
then hold it close
where it gives its warmth
to another.*

May we continue to make this possible for each other!



CHILE

FIC Missionary Work in Chile

Mrs. Blanca Vidal Muñoz - teacher, FIC Brothers' School, Chile



FIC Brothers in Chile Province.

L-R: Bros. Marcello, Patricio, Javier, Lucio, Ge, Krismanto, Diego, and Eko.

It is not easy to be brief when writing about the celebration of 70 years of FIC life in Chile, 70 years of dedication, 70 years of love, of doing good, of vocation, of commitment, of service, of building lives, of formation of people and sowing hope in so many people. To sum up the excellent work of the FIC brothers in Chile, I want to give my own appreciation of these 70 years.

I would like to start by thanking the Almighty God and the FIC brothers for listening to the call of Monsignor Manuel Larrain, from this corner of the world, who already in the 1950s recognized the need to ask for help. At that time, the sensitivity of our bishop was to lead him to search in the old world for people with a kind soul who would like to collaborate with this country, unknown to them and with a different language and customs. Well, even so, they did not hesitate to respond to the call with the hope and trust that this region would be a good land for their sowing and that they would only have to wait for the fruits.

They arrived in Chile in January 1953, and settled in our beloved Talca, where they were welcomed by people eager to know them, to receive them, and to share their joys and sorrows with them.

Thus the brothers began to build ties and friendships. They taught people how to work the land, they helped in the community kitchens, they taught catechism and organized pastoral activities with the priests, and they got to know the peasant farmers and our provincial people. They were beginning to feel part of them, and learning their language. We thank them for that.

We thank them for dignifying the lives of those who formed the *Flor de Chile* community, the San Antonio community and others, for teaching community work, for valuing the contribution of each one, for promoting collaborative work, for considering our families like seeds of a good tree. How many mothers, fathers and grandparents today are infinitely grateful! How many of them, if

not all, would have no other housing option, except, with faith in Jesus and the Blessed Virgin Mary, they helped to build a roof forever!

We thank them because evangelization was not the only reason for which they came here. The missionaries also saw in each dispossessed person their potentials, their qualities as thinking beings, eager to believe, to reach out a supportive hand in order to help them stay afloat.

We thank the FIC brothers for their willingness to educate, to give the most needy the opportunity to access academic careers and for teaching them values, always keeping in mind that Jesus was the first to teach values. We must imitate Him.

To the missionaries, we say “thank you”. You never got tired of doing good; of transmitting to each of us what our duty is as human beings, that is, to help those who are in need.

“Thank you” because personally you changed my vision on education, for making me a better person every day, for re-enchancing me with education, for renewing day by day my outlook on adolescents with eyes full of love, that see in them a need for opportunities which depend on

us teachers. I learned to see the human being with welcoming eyes, with empathy, with my heart. Thank you because you taught me the pedagogy of Jesus, because you immersed me in the life of the ones who are my priority today. Because you, brothers, changed my outlook on life. What would have happened to so many children and young people who have passed through these classrooms, and to those other schools, where you taught according to the signs of the time?

Have you (the FIC brothers) ever reflected on the kind of legacy Louis Rutten and Brother Bernardus brought to the people here? What has been your role and the role of your predecessors? My answer is that there is no doubt that the founders have protected their work so that it does not stray from their own constitutions, foundations and FIC ideology and does not deviate from the right path. I am convinced that through you (FIC brothers), the founders live among us all. We have learned to live the pedagogy of Jesus; I have no doubt.

Thank you for everything we can do for our students, for our lives, and for transmitting hope to those who see a good option in us.



Bros. Augustine Kubdaar, Raphael Besigrinee, Lo Koeleman, brothers and teachers were present in Chile during the 70th-anniversary celebration of FIC.

MALAWI

First Profession of Religious Vows, Malawi

Bro. Moses Mgunda



Brothers who took their first vows (from left: Amos Kamwendo, Charles Doviko and Emmanuel Tambala)

On 21st November every year, the Brothers FIC commemorate the foundation of the Congregation. The day also marks the feast of the presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. In Malawi Province, this is the day most of the professions or jubilees are also celebrated.

This year on 18 November 2023, the province witnessed the first profession of vows of three novices, namely Amos Kamwendo, Emmanuel Tambala and Charles Doviko. The celebration, which took place in Mzedi started with a Eucharistic celebration at 9:30 AM presided over by the Bishop of Chikwawa Diocese, Most Rev. Fr Peter Musikuwa. In attendance was the Vicar General of Blantyre Archdiocese, Fr. Boniface Tamani, some priests, religious brothers and sisters, families and friends of the novices, and a good number of parishioners. Mzedi joint Choir spiced up the event with soul-uplifting songs in jubilation and honour of the newly professed brothers.

Emphasizing on the Gospel text from Matthew 1:18-24, which tells the story of the birth of Jesus, the Messiah, through the Blessed Virgin Mary, the main celebrant underlined the need for FIC Brothers to emulate the example of Mary, since she is part and parcel of our spirituality. For our newly professed brothers, the main celebrant advised them to look at Jesus Christ as their motivation and Mary their model.

The effort in seeing Christ as the centre of our motivation was emphasized by the Bishop, the Vicar General and the Provincial Superior during their speeches. All speakers made reference to the challenges people face in the different vocations in the church: priesthood, religious life, married life, among others. However, if one relies on prayer and have faith in God, surely many good things will come his/her way. In summary, the Bishop said "faith in God does not prevent problems from coming our way but provides

strength to endure them". The Provincial Superior, Bro Lawrence Sitima encouraged all the brothers to support the newly professed brothers on their life journey.

After the Eucharistic celebration, the Bishop, all priests, religious brothers and sisters, parents of newly professed brothers and invited guests were welcomed at the formation house for lunch. The rest were served in the hall of St Patrick's Secondary School.

Malawi Province is grateful to God for this positive development. This first profession is a sign of growth of the province. We implore Mary, patroness of our Congregation, to continue guiding the brothers to remain faithful to their call, to be witnesses of God's love for people, especially the vulnerable. We equally continue to be inspired by the same words of our founder found in 1 Cor 3:10: "According to the commission of God given to me I laid the foundation. Let each man take care how he builds upon it".



Bishop Peter Musikuwa presiding over mass.

GHANA

First Professions in Ghana

Bro. Prosper Ganye, St. Louis Community, Wa

Professions and ceremonies of transition hold great significance in the lives of the FIC Brothers. On the evening of September 6th, 2023, the FIC Brothers witnessed various ceremonies of transition for candidates in initial formation and renewal of vows for temporarily professed brothers. This Eucharistic celebration marked the conclusion of the annual common retreat for the Brothers in Ghana.

On September 7th, 2023, we witnessed the first profession of religious vows for three of our brothers: Bros. Kyiileyang Frederick, Aabeyir John Vianney, and Prince Kob. The In-Service Training Centre (ISTC) Chapel in Wa served as the venue for the Eucharistic celebration. Its theme was "Call to Serve". In the presence of many brothers from the province, Bro. Seregeous Dery, the Provincial Superior, accepted the vows of the newly professed brothers on behalf of the General Superior.



Bro. Seregeous Dery, receiving the first vows of Bros. Kyiileyang Frederick, Aabeyir John Vianney and Prince Kob, on behalf of the Superior General, Ghana 2023

Very Rev. Fr. Pamphilio Tengan, the Dean of Wa, presided over the Eucharistic celebration. The three candidates' family members, relatives, and friends, as well as a significant number of priests, religious, and laypeople, attended the occasion. During his homily, Very Rev. Fr. Pamphilio urged the three brothers to fully embrace their Religious Life with utmost seriousness, emphasizing the importance of prayer and community life. He encouraged them to radiate the joy of the Gospel to all those they will encounter in their apostolic duties.

The three newly professed brothers have already been assigned to their respective communities. Bro. John Aabeyir is missioned to Sunyani community, where he will reside and pursue a course in Electrical Engineering at the Sunyani Technical University. Bro. Prince has been posted to the Bernardus Community in Tumu. He will serve as a part-time teacher in the Electrical Engineering Department at St. Clare's Technical Institute. Bro. Frederick has joined the Mt. Zion community in Nandom, where he will assist the teaching staff at the FIC Jubilee School.

Brothers FIC Family Feast 2023, Wa

Bro. Prosper Ganye, St. Louis Community, Wa



A cross-section of Brothers during the prayer service.

On the 21st of November 2023, the Brothers FIC in Ghana celebrated their annual family feast, coinciding with the feast of the presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. This year's celebration theme was "Deepening Our Religious Identity as Brothers FIC in the 21st Century." The day was filled with various activities culminating in an evening Eucharistic Celebration.

During this special day, the Brothers commemorated the 183 years of our Congregation's existence, the 58th anniversary of FIC presence in Ghana, and the Silver Jubilee of Bro. Felicio Timyang Gyeyir's religious profession. Before the family feast, the Provincial Council organized a workshop on "Corporate Governance and Ethical Investment" for all the Brothers.



Bro. Jerome making a presentation to Bro. Felicio on the occasion of his Silver Jubilee.



FIC workshop

Apart from the formal discussions held during the workshop, the day also allowed the Brothers to come together as one family, celebrating their collective and individual achievements. The morning began with a serene and composed atmosphere as the Brothers gathered in the ISTC Chapel for a prayer service led by the liturgy committee.

Following the prayer service, the Brothers convened in one of the ISTC conference halls for the family meeting. The Provincial Superior, Bro. Seregeous Dery warmly welcomed the Brothers to the feast and encouraged them to take this occasion as a chance to rejuvenate themselves and strengthen their brotherly solidarity. Important topics relevant to our life were thoroughly discussed. The Provincial Council also took the opportunity to update the Brothers on general happenings in the province.

After extensive discussions among the brothers, we decided to take a break for lunch and a short rest before engaging in games and sports. The Sports Committee organized a volleyball competition between the Southern and the Northern Zones. This proved to be an exhilarating event. Later in the evening, we concluded the day with a Eucharistic Celebration, expressing our

gratitude to God for the blessings and favours bestowed upon us throughout the year. We also sought His unwavering mercy for the upcoming year. The Eucharistic Celebration was led by Very Rev. Fr. Cletus Kulah, the Parish Priest of St. Cecilia's Parish.

The Brothers moved to the forecourts of ISTC to continue the festivities. Bro. Felicio was honoured with gifts in recognition of the significant milestone in his religious profession. Additionally, a Bawa group treated us to a captivating performance of local music and dance. The local dance troupe's enthralling performance had everyone on their feet.

A notable moment of the day was when Bro. Jerome presented to Bro. Felicio a gift on behalf of the Provincial Council to commemorate his Silver Jubilee. Overall, the day was well-celebrated.



L-R: Bros. Wim Brands (The Netherlands), Elijah Abugri (Ghana), Bonaventura Kasiya (Malawi), Ge van Vugt (Chile), and Blasius Supriyantor (Indonesia-Timor Leste), holding Bouquets of flowers for Mother Mary source of Joy, Trust, and Courage.



General Council FIC and the General Board CB Sisters, after a simple farewell party for Srs. Rosaria and Dwina, Maastricht (October 2023)



Bro. Amos pronouncing his first vows before the Provincial Superior and Bishop of Blantyre.



Bros. Augustine Kubdaar and Raphael Besigrinee on their canonical visitation to Chile Province.
L-R: Bros. Diego, Marcello, Patricio, Javier, Lucio, Augustine, Ge, Raphael, Eko, and Krismanto.



Come and see in Indonesia Province. The vocation promotion team and students during the gathering at Salam retreat house.



The newly professed brothers of Ghana Province, 2023.
Bros. Kyiileyang Frederick, Aabeyir John Vianney and Prince Kob

Personal Profile of Bro. Paul Sabogu FIC

(General Secretary to the General Council)



Bro. Paul Sabogu works in his office.

Family Background and Involvement in the Local Church

I come from Nadowli-Kalsegra, located in the Upper Region of Ghana. My parents, Mr. Joseph Baraazie Sabogu (late) and Mrs. Simona Sabogu are my proud lineage. Unfortunately, we lost two of my siblings, leaving a total of nine of us still alive - five females and four males. Within this family structure, I hold the position of the second-born child, but I am the first male.

My father worked as an errand boy for the Missionaries of Africa priests in Daffiama in the early years. However, his role shifted when the FIC Brothers arrived in Kaleo. From 1965 to 1990, he dedicated himself to being their cook. During this time, I primarily grew up in Kaleo, which I now consider my second home. Presently, my mother resides in Kalsegra alongside one of my younger brothers. The

remaining siblings are involved in various apostolates in Wa, the regional capital.

Growing up, I was raised in a devout Catholic family. My parents played a significant role in instilling the teachings of the Catholic faith within us. Despite their limited formal education, they emphasized providing us with a proper education. We were fortunate enough to attend school without facing any financial constraints.

Educational Background

At the age of seven, I commenced my formal education at Egala Primary School in Tumu, followed by St. Louis Primary School in Kaleo. From 1977 to 1981, I attended St. Dominic Middle Day School in Kaleo and successfully obtained the Middle School Leaving Certificate (MSLC). In September 1981, I enrolled at Kanton Secondary School in Tumu, but later transferred to Nandom

Secondary School in June 1984. At Nandom Secondary School, I obtained my Ordinary Level Certificate (O' Level) in June 1987 and an advanced-level certificate in June 1989. Following this, I dedicated two years to national service before enrolling in Nustra Jahan Ahmadiyya (NJA) Teacher Training College, where I completed the program in May 1995. I later pursued undergraduate and postgraduate programs at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA) from August 2003 to August 2008. Throughout this period, I received valuable support from the Brothers FIC.

My Vocation Story

At the age of nine, I experienced a solid inclination to join the FIC Brotherhood while assisting my father in the kitchen. The guidance and influence of Brothers Maarten Bouw, Alfred Fest, Wim Luiten, and ex-brother Jocelyne Debpuur played a pivotal role in nurturing and shaping my aspirations. Although my interest momentarily shifted towards priesthood when I encountered a Missionary of Africa priest at Nandom Secondary School, fate later redirected me towards my original desire to become an FIC Brother. Eventually, I began my initial formation in this congregation in October 1997 and took my first vows in September 2000.

Community Life

Pope Francis emphasizes living for others as a fundamental aspect of human nature. Similar to how natural elements such as rivers, trees, the sun, and flowers exist for the well-being of others, it is our duty to live in a way that brings help and happiness to those around us. This understanding of community life profoundly resonates with me. Throughout the past twenty-three years, I have been fortunate enough to reside in seven different communities, where I have shared the joys and challenges with my fellow brothers. Each transition from one community to another transforms a part of me, as no two communities are identical. These experiences have taught me the significance of resilience when confronted with adversity, as every obstacle catalyzes personal growth. Sometimes, we must endure the lowest of lows to



Bro. Paul and his students
at Louis Rutten Senior High School in Sombo, Wa.

reach unimaginable heights. I am now a member of the Emmaus Community in the Netherlands.

Apostolate

I worked at CAS (Catholic Action for Street Children) during my Apostolic Year of Noviciate. In addition, I had the opportunity to teach at St. Paul's R/C Primary School and Nandom Senior High School in Nandom. I also taught at St. Cecilia's RC Primary School, St. Francis Xavier Minor Seminary, Bishops RC Junior High School, and Louis Rutten Senior High School in Wa. From February 2013 to December 2015, I served as a Secretary to the Provincial Council of Ghana. Furthermore, I became a local bursar in the Provincial House, Mt. Sion, and Avellinus Janssens communities. Meanwhile at Nandom Senior High School, I actively participated in the work of Guidance and Counselling.



Bro. Paul Sabogu in his new office,
with Mr. Willy Bastiaens and Mrs. Joke, Netherlands

In January 2023, I received an email from the General Superior appointing me as the General Secretary to the General Council. This appointment officially commenced on 1 June 2023. The immigration process delayed my assumption of this duty until October 2023.

Life in the Netherlands

On 23 October 2023, I arrived at Schiphol Airport in the Netherlands. Br. Wim Luiten warmly welcomed me at the Schiphol airport. We arrived at the Emmaus Community in Maastricht, where I received a heartfelt reception from the brothers. Similarly, I was warmly welcomed to PBS, my primary apostolate location. This experience has been truly remarkable.

Despite the amiable nature of the individuals (fellow Brothers, coworkers and neighbours), the weather condition is unfriendly towards me. Unlike my home country, Maastricht has greeted me with chilly and freezing temperatures. The heating system in my room has not been

beneficial either since it is automatically turned off at the time I need it most. Consequently, I have resorted to using as many as three blankets to keep me warm at night. I also do not understand the Dutch language. These and others are the challenges before me. However, I am steadily, yet surely adjusting to my present reality with each passing day. I am confident in getting maximum blessings from God and the support of my fellow brothers and coworkers.

Conclusion

I prayed to God, asking for everything to enjoy life, and God responded, "I have given you life to enjoy everything." I am immensely grateful to God for the privilege of embracing a religious vocation and becoming an FIC Brother in a unique way. Equally, I express my gratitude to God for the lives of my fellow brothers, who provide unwavering support and inspire me to grow in my spiritual journey.

Roncalli Formation Program

Br. Petrus Anjar Trihartono FIC



Bro. Petrus Anjar with the staff of Roncalli Retreat House in Salatiga

Background

Roncalli's retreat house was established as a concrete response to the encouragement of consecrated life renewal mandated by the Second Vatican Council. Responsive to that renewal, the 1967 FIC Special General Chapter recommended the importance of formation, deepening of life and prayer. As a manifestation, Indonesia Province established a centre for forming and deepening monastic life: "Centrum voor Vorming en Verdieping". This centre of formation and deepening was originally planned for the internal benefit of the congregation.

Hearing the news, the Vicar General of Semarang Archdiocese, C. Carri, S.J., proposed that the centre be not only for the FIC brothers but also to serve other orders. Bros. Carlo Hillenaar and Joachim van der Linden, FIC, with the support of the Bishop of Semarang Archdiocese and chairman of Bishops' Conference of Indonesia – the Supreme Council of Indonesian Bishops – Cardinal Justin Darmojuwono, pioneered the centre for the formation and deepening of monastic life, located in the complex "Djoen Eng Palace", Salatiga, Central Java.

The name "Roncalli" comes from Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, later known as Pope John XXIII (1958-1963). Roncalli was chosen as the name because it was from him that the idea of the renewal of the Church originated: "aggiornamento". Open the doors and prepare a pilgrimage for people to discover. Drawing spiritual wealth from Roncalli, the pioneers of the Roncalli retreat house hope to find something valuable for our monastic life to remain in accordance with its era.

Combination of mercies

The exciting thing about the architectural side of the "Djoen Eng" palace building, from the exterior to the interior, is the openness and ornamentation of the womb. Djoen Eng Palace is open. This open architectural semiotics is in harmony with the language of John XXIII, opening the windows where popes convened. Regarding the womb, from its etymology, the term womb is borrowed from the Arabic "al-Rahman" and "al-Raheem", two of the 99 names of Allah. Both terms come from the same root: "raa haa meem". It means uterus or "raham" in Arabic. It is from this Arabic term that we know the womb.

"Al-Rahman" is predicated only to Almighty Allah. "Rahman" means merciful. "Al-Rahman" means Allah whose mercy to His creation is infinite. His love goes out to all of His creation. Even a wild animal will take care of its young. Let alone God. That's why Allah is also called "Al-Raheem", His mercy reaches all His creation. "Al-Rahman" refers to the infinity of God's Love, and "al-Rahim" refers to the creation to which His Love is addressed.

These forces of mercy are animated and are expected to be experienced by those who come to this "Khalwat" House. This merciful power also combines the natural spirit of "Djoen Eng's" palace with the spirit of Angelo Roncalli. It is hoped that through the experience of being wombed by God's own mercy through nature and the means provided by "Khalwat" Roncalli's House, they are born again to continue their pilgrimage in this world.

Formation and deepening program.

The ongoing formation is important for every religious person. "Vita Conserata" article 69 affirms, among other things, that ongoing formation in both apostolic and contemplative orders is an intrinsic requirement of religious reform. So early formation must be closely related to ongoing formation and create a willingness in anyone to allow themselves to be fostered every day of their lives. Recognising this, Roncalli provides itself a place for the religious to refresh and renew themselves by offering various courses, deepening, and opportunities for personal guidance retreats for 6/7 days and 30 days grand retreats.

From the beginning until now, Roncalli has specialised in religious formation and for its organisation, the Congregation of the Brothers FIC collaborates with various congregations and orders, both sisters and priests, as guidance and teaching staff. The programs held since the establishment of Roncalli on May 12, 1968, include the Final Professional Preparatory Course, which is intended for sisters, brothers and sisters who will practice professions for life; the Medior courses for sisters, brothers and



Bro. Petrus Anjar and participants
of the "Medior" course in 2023.

priests who have worked and need refreshment of spiritual life; Senior Preparation Courses for those preparing for retirement; and the Senior Course for those who are retired and to prepare for old age with joy. In addition, every three years, Roncalli organises a Spiritual Formation Course. This course lasts 6 months and offers provision for trustees in congregations/orders/dioceses. Roncalli organises community leaders' meetings, housekeeper meetings, and life processing meetings for non-routine activities.

Through various formation courses, jointly and individually, it is hoped that religious people will be able to respond to the challenges of the times. Continuous formation is a concrete manifestation of caring for vocations and maintaining faithfulness as religious (cf. Vita Consecrata art. 70). Without continuous formation, religious people will become more self-reliant and increasingly set aside God's power or grace in their life and apostolate.

On behalf of Roncalli staff – Br. Petrus Anjar
Trihartono, FIC

Ongoing Formation in an Anxious Space

Bro. Michael Sidharta Susila FIC



L-R: Bros. Edy Wahyudi, Titus Totok T., Darmadi, Leo Paryoto, Suwanto, Purwanto, and Sinu.

Life as a brother is often intertwined with complexities of anxiety. The continual growth of our apostolate and the increasing demand for the FIC's presence in various Church initiatives and places present ongoing challenges. Despite the limitations imposed by the declining number of brothers and the discouraging low rate of new membership, requests for our apostolic presence in many parts of the church persist. The rise in the number of retired brothers also raises concerns. This, in no small way, also affects leadership succession in the Congregation.

In response to the looming challenges and undue anxieties, many brothers find themselves shouldering multiple leadership roles, and some feel compelled to persist in their work, extending beyond anticipated durations of working time and age limits. Consequently, the ceaseless nature of a brothers' responsibilities can lead to a loss of focus on the initial motivation of the choice to be a Brother.

The essence of ongoing formation therefore becomes evident when the brothers continue to embody the core values of their religious life. Drawing inspiration from St. Paul's teachings to the Philippians (3:20-21), we are reminded that, as citizens of heaven, our ultimate anticipation is for the transformative power of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Embedded in the tradition of our Congregation is the pursuit of the salvation of souls. It is a supernatural value that stands in contrast to worldly aspirations. The parable of the wedding banquet in Matthew 22:1-14 underscores the importance of ongoing formation in continuously aligning ourselves with the expectations of the king's feast.

The dynamic nature of appropriateness in joining the king's party necessitates ongoing adjustments, mirroring the constant changes in living conditions and psychological and physical transformations. However, a significant oversight has occurred in recognizing the need for ongoing formation among medior brothers, with many facing challenges and some departing from the Congregation. The truth is echoed in Matthew 22:14: "Many are invited, but few are chosen." This biblical text reinforces the necessity of ongoing formation. People who give up on maintaining their formation run the risk of being left out of the celebration of their brotherhood in the future. This process is vital for ensuring the certainty of our potential for obtaining for ourselves and others the salvation of souls.

Paul's words to the Philippians (3:7-11) highlight the transformative power of ongoing formation. The desire to unite our lives with the knowledge of Christ, allows us to shed worldly concerns and

attain righteousness through faith. Ongoing formation becomes the catalyst for a profound transformation, enabling us to align our lives with the sufferings and resurrection of Christ. Responding to St. Paul's invitation in Philippians 3:13-14, we are urged to forget the past, strive toward the future, and run toward the goal of God's call through Christ Jesus.

In conclusion, ongoing formation is not merely a religious duty but a manifestation of our deepest longings as FIC brothers. It serves as our pathway to liberate ourselves from the anxieties that threaten to obscure the true purpose of our lives and our noble vocation.

Bro. Michael Sidharta Susila
(Vice Provincial Superior, Indonesia)



Indonesian brothers who celebrated their anniversaries and those who took their first vows, with Bro. Augustine Kubdaar in front of the statue of Fr. Gregorius van Lith in Muntilan.



Ongoing Formation as Transformation

(by Cyril de Souza, S.D.B.)
Bro. Theodorus Suwaryanto, General Council



Emmaus Community members.

The ongoing formation of religious is often understood as a “consolidating” action by which the initial response of the individual to the vocational call, through different phases of formation, is further clarified, strengthened and made constantly mature. As the individual begins to respond to the religious call, he/she begins to be aware and to understand step by step and stage by stage, the deeper implications of that call and of the corresponding response. Thus, there is a gradual deepening and a continual growth of that initial response towards the fullness of the imitation of Christ and a slow and steady growth in becoming perfect just as the heavenly Father is perfect. All this comprises the consolidating dimension of ongoing religious formation. However, there is another aspect of ongoing formation, which should not be lost sight of, and that concerns “transformation.” Besides consolidating the response through a continuing ongoing formation, the individual in his/her

growth in vocation realizes the need for a constant transformation in the process of the imitation of Christ and in becoming perfect as the Heavenly Father is perfect. What really is this transformation? What are the implications of transformation?

Discovering the etymology of the word transformation gives us a better understanding of what it implies. The word transformation is made up of two Latin words, “trans” and “forma”, where trans could mean “across, over, on the other side.” In combination with “forma” it would literally mean “a change of form” and, according to its use, it could refer to any type of change, as for instance, a change of character, or of clothing style, or even more importantly of consciousness. It is this kind of transformation that we will look into now; however, at the very outset, it should be pointed out that it is a complex process involving thoughts and feelings. Transformational learning

has far-reaching consequences on personality, more than any other kind of learning. It is a learning experience that shapes the learner and produces a significant impact to the point of affecting the learner's subsequent experiences.

In a transformational learning process one's "meaning perspective" changes; "meaning perspective" refers to one's overall world view, which comprises specific knowledge, values and beliefs. Usually one's meaning perspective is passively formed right through one's life experiences in childhood, during the youthful years and in young adult hood. These elements serve as a filter in perceiving the present reality and in determining how to organize and interpret one's current experiences. Through the process of ongoing formation the religious should acquire self-knowledge and, by rational discourse and critical reflection, explore the depth and meaning of the elements that make up one's worldview in order to produce a more inclusive world view. The success of the outcome is rated by the development of greater autonomy as a person,

which in a way also defines the condition of adulthood.

Transformational learning can be attained only to the extent that one uses the tools of critical reflection and rational discourse in order to arrive at a self-knowledge that is total, deep and long-lasting (psychological effects). In the same strain it should be added that this transformational learning reorganizes one's perspective and will seriously affect the intimacy of relationship and vision that one has of God and other spiritual realities (spiritual effects). "The full development of religious values and Christian sanctity in a soul is inconceivable if a man does not start out with a healthy mind, well balanced in its activities." This affirmation seems to imply that any deficiency in mental health would be an obstacle to full spiritual development. It further assumes that psychological growth and spiritual growth are interrelated. The greater the psychological maturity acquired, the greater the possibilities for spiritual development.



Mary, my Mother and Protector

Bro. Yohanes Krismanto



Mary's Shrine in Sendangsono, Kulon Progo, Jogjakarta, Indonesia.

In my cherished recollections, Mary, my mother and protector, remains well-remembered. Every year in the months of May and October, a rosary ritual unfolded within our community, where the prayer circulated among households. The joy was palpable as we took turns leading the Hail Mary prayer, each holding a lighted candle. This experience left an indelible mark on me.

As time advanced and especially when I entered the fourth grade, my involvement with the Legion of Mary deepened my understanding of Mary. Saint Louis Maria de Montfort's teachings on Mary's role in our lives resonated within the group. The belief that Mary continues to intercede for us, as expressed by Christ on the cross, became my firm conviction.

My journey with Mary extended beyond communal prayers; it became a personal connection. Engaging in Hail Mary prayers with my family, participating in the Marian legion, and delving into the FIC brothers' community enriched my spiritual understanding. Mary emerged as a pivotal figure, especially during a crucial juncture at St. Paul's Seminary in Palembang.

Facing a crossroads in choosing between the priesthood and brotherhood, and having received guidance from friends pointed me towards the FIC brothers. Discovering the FIC Congregation's dedication to the perfect Intercession of Mary solidified my decision. This

choice was not impulsive; it was a conscious one, leading me to undertake the prospective brothers' test in Muntilan.

The journey to Muntilan was marked by mixed emotions, compounded by the realization that I had arrived late for the entrance test. Despite the shortened testing period, I embraced the outcome. In a moment of uncertainty, I decided to embark on a pilgrimage to the Marian shrine in Sendangsono.

Arriving at the shrine, I fervently prayed to Mary, seeking her intercession for my acceptance into the FIC Postulancy. Returning to the postulancy, I was greeted with the news of my acceptance by Bro. Anton Karyadi. Overwhelmed with joy, gratitude flowed as I thanked Mary for her guidance and prayers.

This transformative experience led me to express my gratitude to Mary, acknowledging her influence in shaping my vocation as an FIC brother. I sought her guidance to emulate her qualities of sensitivity, care, loyalty, and unwavering faith. With Mary as my guide, I embarked on the journey of FIC brotherhood, confident that she would help me navigate life's challenges.

Bro. Yohanes Krismanto
(Indonesian Missionary in Chile)



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

66. GROWTH

Like everything that lives, prayer life is subject to growth and development. Maturing prayer life will need fewer and fewer words. More and more it will become just being in the presence of God through faith, hope and love. Increasingly, we will experience God as being present in our common daily life, in everybody, in everything. Prayer life and daily life gradually merge. Growing prayer life entails a painful purification just like any other growth. We have to detach ourselves in order to gain union with God and with our fellow-beings. Growth in prayer life is impossible without growing in love in ordinary life.



A small group sharing the participants of the OASIS 2023



The participants of the OASIS 2017 prayed together in the prayer room of the RED LION, the first house of the FIC Congregation



Eucharistic celebration on the installation of Religious House of The Netherlands council in 2018.



Eucharistic celebration during our Formator's Meeting in Indonesia, 2023