

From The Editor

This is the first issue of Volume II of the Congregational magazine "Brothers FIC" reaching you. The last issue of Volume I was published last December by the past General Council 2012-2018. Beginning with this issue, the General Council for the period 2018-2024 will publish the magazine till the end of their term of office in 2024. It is our intention to keep spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ through the work of the FIC Brothers by means of this bi-annual Congregational publication.

"Forming a community means: to be near one another in joy and sorrow; to be willing to understand one another; to appreciate, encourage, and inspire one another; to be ready to forgive one another again and again; "seek to do good to one another and to all." This article from the FIC Constitutions is very relevant to the theme chosen for this first issue of the magazine, namely: **"Forming A Community to witness God's Love"**. Beloved reader, we would be sharing with you some experiences of our fellow Brothers regarding the way we try to give form and shape to our community life. We know we are still far from the ideal but in various ways we strive daily to reach this ideal as religious. Bro. Augustine, our General Superior 2018-2024 shares a reflection of his experiences in connection with authority and service in a Trinitarian community. Bro. Raphael invites us to reflect on the topic: *"Our Witnessing through Community Living"* and Bro. Valentinus Daru shares his opinion and reflection on *"Personal Growth as part of our main task as religious"*.

Dear readers, as usual we present reflections, experiences and opinions of our brothers around the globe on the above theme. Two Brothers will provide their profiles: Lambert Dorsana Batogbee from Ghana Province, who celebrates his 25th anniversary as Brother FIC this year and Albertus Suwarto from Indonesia Province who is currently at the Head Office of Pangudi Luhur School Foundation in Semarang. We believe that from their sharing, our young readers will be inspired and find meaning in our life and work. Bro. Lawrence Sitima adds his opinion on "Community building, Unity in Diversity", followed by some important quotations on community life compiled by Bro. Maarten Bouw. The rest are news from our Provinces and Religious House Netherlands, news in pictures, an article from the Vatican, and a short piece about Mary written by Bro. Theodorus.

In the spirit of being good and doing good, and for the sake of living together peacefully and fruitfully, we FIC Brothers continue to reflect deeply on our community life as an important means to witness to the love of God. We do not wish to be tired of doing good and being good. Among others, we also want *"to be ready to forgive one another again and again"* as stated by our Constitutions. Thank you for your attention and support to the Congregation, and may God bless you all.

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"Forming a community to witness God's love"

Bro. Augustine Kubdaar, FIC

It has taken nearly half a year (September 2018 to the middle of March) for the 2018-2024 General Council (GC) members to come together in Maastricht to begin working as a team and a community. Until then, Bro. Theodorus Suwaryanto, the Vicar, in collaboration with the Secretariat kept the fort. We are most grateful to all of them. Bro. Raphael Besigrinee first went on an official visit to Malawi province and afterwards had a three-month sabbatical program in Rome. On the other hand, Bro. Valentinus Daru Setiaji and my humble self were in our respective home-countries while waiting for the immigration officials to give us permission to come into The Netherlands. Thus, on the 16th of March, 2019, Bro. Valentinus and I arrived together in Maastricht and Bro. Raphael came on the 24th of March 2019 from his sabbatical.

I find myself now in a different country, different community and society, and being called to a new apostolate. It is, therefore, a normal experience that I still regularly dream about my kindred family and friends, the Ghanaian society and culture and my beloved apostolate at St. Theresa's Hospital, Nandom (in Ghana). However, I perceive that my willingness to let go of my comfort zone and to step into the unknown comes from my faith. It is also a demonstration of my love for Christ and obedience to his divine will. The good Lord has once again surprised and humbled me by the call to be his servant and the servant of his people in and outside the Brothers FIC Congregation in the position as a Superior General. I believe it is a call to first of all experience his deeper and unconditional love for me and the love of those whom I am called to serve. I do not boast of having a fuller knowledge of what the Lord is calling me for in the coming six years but one thing is certain: I trust that He who knows my capacity and limitations and yet called me, will use me as a "tool" to accomplish His will. I feel grateful always to Him and to all the persons whom God has used to bless and to support me over the years.

Religious authority for me is a divine call to participate in

the service-oriented authority of Jesus. Jesus knew perfectly well that He could not accomplish the will of His Father without being a good member of a Trinitarian community (God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit). No doubt, the communitarian relationship with His Father and the Holy Spirit was a great source of his strength in his ministry. In the same vein, left to ourselves as individuals, each one of us is insignificant. However, together with fellow supportive brothers in the community (and also as a council), our call to witness God's love amongst us and to others will always be credible. I believe strongly that if we want to be true disciples of Jesus and do what He did, then we need to understand who Jesus was, how He lived, how He acted, and what He said. In the celebration of the feast of the Holy Trinity we come to understand the inner life and relationship of each member of the Holy Trinity. From that perfect community life Jesus, who emulated the Father who is love, was able to share that love with all of us completely (even to death on a cross).

I hope and pray that we brothers will come to understand more clearly and deeply how important it is for each one of us in our everyday life, to spend quality time sitting at the feet of Jesus our master in prayer and in this way be touched and filled by his Spirit. It is only in this way that a religious will be able to witness God's mercy and love to the people in our apostolate. I remember that some years ago, after an annual retreat, there was a popular adage among the brothers in Ghana that "A brother who does not pray should advertise himself. So that when people meet him they will know what kind of brother he is and what to expect from him." Praying together and praying for one another has a wonderful effect. Second to this, we need to keep increasing our capacity to nurture and sustain good interpersonal relationships among us in the communities that we live. If there is no depth in our relationship with God, our relationship with one another too is bound to be superficial. In other words, if our brotherhood and faith is skin deep, our hope and charity also will be skin deep. A genuine, deep relationship with God ensures a deep relationship with our fellow human beings. Since this was the way Christ lived his life, we who are called to be his brothers cannot live our lives otherwise and still claim to be his brothers.

Bro. Augustine Kubdaar is the current General Superior of the FIC Congregation

FIC Witnessing through Community Living

Bro. Raphael Besigrinee, FIC



Outing of the General Council (2018) - From L-R: Bro. Martin, Mr. Willy, Bro. Guido, Mrs. Leny, Bro. Remy, Bro. Frans, and Bro. Raphael

A witness in a courtroom tells what he or she knows about a given situation. The Christian witness goes beyond telling others what he or she knows about Jesus Christ to include doing something concrete in life in imitation of Jesus Christ. In other words, our witness to the Gospel of Christ should not only be by word, but visibly also, by deed. So how do we FIC Brothers demonstrate by our community living, that we are witnesses to the love of God that is clearly illustrated in the Gospel? The main task of FIC, as with every Christian, is to be a witness of God's love, and we do this in various ways especially through prayer, apostolate and community living, among others. In this article I will focus on how the FIC Brothers strive to be witnesses of God's love through community living.

First of all our commitment to common life, which is considered a distinctive witness of consecrated persons, is a constitutional provision of religious men and women. By common life, I mean a life of mutual sharing of vision and mission. Common life is one that enhances communion as emphasized by Pope Frances: *Common life is prescribed not simply for reasons of convenience and economy, nor even for mutual support in ministry, but because it manifests our communion in Christ. By our consecration, we share the same traditions, spirituality, apostolic purpose, resources, and constitutions.* Our brotherly communion announces that persons who love God are able to love and sustain each other, accept one another's gifts and limitations, share joys and sorrows - despite differences in age, race, language, nationality, culture, and ministerial competence.

So our brotherhood, which is expressed in our common life, is a sign that contributes to the proclamation of the Good News, because a truly fraternal community is one that welcomes all and settles differences lovingly and patiently. Christ himself is the example *par excellence* of our lived fraternity, for He said 'By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another' (Jn. 13:35). In other words, fraternal life is an integral part of our commitment in building the Kingdom of God.

The life-giving love and worship we try to give to God within our communities can have a positive influence on the other members of the Church. Our community life, expressed in the spirit of brotherhood, reveals the communal dimension of the call to be a Christian. Provided this is lived well, it becomes a sign of God's presence in the world. Experience has shown that our communal lifestyle is the most effective invitation to others to embrace religious life.

Common life is seen by many as a life of prayer and sharing of the same spirit, being united in one heart and soul, and carrying one another's burdens. This way of living is not reserved for very special people but ordinary Christians like you and me. The first Christian community in Jerusalem exemplified this spirit when they gave testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus by their communal way of life (Acts 4:32 -37). By this demonstration, they have provided a concrete proof that it is possible for any group of human beings to live this way.

Furthermore, living community life is a way of witnessing to the love of God as pointed out by John Paul II: "The consecrated life can certainly be credited with having effectively helped to keep alive in the Church the obligation of fraternity as a form of witness to the Trinity. By constantly promoting fraternal love, also in the form of common life, the consecrated life has shown that *sharing in the Trinitarian communion can change human relationships* and create a new type of solidarity. In this way it speaks to people both of the beauty of fraternal communion and of the ways which actually lead to it. Consecrated persons live 'for' God and 'from' God, and precisely for this reason they are able to bear witness to the reconciling power of grace, which overcomes the divisive tendencies present in the human heart and in society." (Vita Consecrata 41)

Evidently, the evangelical witness which many find most

appealing is that of concern for people and their needs, or solidarity with the poor, the weak and those who suffer (*Alan, Faith and Development, 2008*). This is what FIC Brothers have been doing through education and youth formation. This is the concrete witnessing of God's love for humanity. Our faith impels us to act on behalf of the neediest and to recognize in them brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ. Just as Christ is the human face of the Father, FIC Brothers wish to be the human face of Christ among people. Our religious life signifies the presence of the Risen Christ in so far as we are able to live as brothers, that is to say, united by the bond of charity.

The Eucharist makes the followers of Christ brothers by incorporating them into the Body of Christ. The Eucharistic celebration is not an individual act of devotion, but rather entry into the mystery of the Body. The Eucharist is the act of worship that makes brotherhood sacramentally visible. We need to understand that it is in the Eucharist that we find the strength we need to live as one in the way that the Lord asks of us. The Eucharist reminds us that we need one another in our journey to the Kingdom of God. It is the Eucharist that unites members of one community as expressed in the Psalms: "How good and how pleasant it is for brothers to live together in unity!" (Psalm 133:1)

Three things are important in witnessing the love of God for people. First of all, our personal lives must be exemplary. As a witness for Christ, our life as FIC Brothers is key. The way our faith shows itself in our conduct is the greatest testimony we can give to the people around (Matthew 5:16). This means our habits and lifestyles should reflect the life of Jesus Christ. It does not mean that we must be perfect before being able to witness. We strive to do it in the strength of the Holy Spirit.

Secondly, we need the power of the Holy Spirit. As humans, we need a power beyond ourselves in order to be true witnesses. Jesus promises that the Holy Spirit will give us power to tell others about Him (Acts 1:8). If our lifestyle is clean and we walk under the command of the Holy Spirit, He is able to witness through us.

Thirdly, we need to be equipped with the power of God's word. The Gospel is a critical ingredient to effective witness of God's love. In the Acts of the Apostles (8:26-40), God put the appropriate Scripture in the hands of the Ethiopian before He sent Philip to share with him. When the seed of God's Word is planted in a prepared heart, it produces fruit.

In conclusion, let me mention in brief how we FIC are currently witnessing to the love of God through our charism (education, teaching and formation). FIC is significantly answering the needs of the poor, needy



Bros. Martin and Theo during working visit to ISTC in WA, Ghana (2017)

and the handicapped in various ways. In Malawi and Ghana, the brothers are running basic and secondary education in selected poor communities where the children have difficulties accessing education. In Malawi and Indonesia, the brothers are running schools for the deaf and blind who are the most vulnerable in society. In all our provinces including Chile, special attention is paid to the less endowed children to access formal education and skills or vocational training. As FIC we are more motivated to continue this mission because we are aware of the huge impact formal education has on physical poverty reduction in our society today. If FIC is to remain a concrete witness of God's love for people, then the outflow of our spirit of communion should show forth in concrete apostolic works among the people of God.

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Personal Growth is Part of Our Main Task As Religious

Bro. Valentinus Daru Setiaji, FIC

The Story of the Yard Behind the House

When I arrived in The Netherlands in March 16, 2019 to assume duties as a member of the General Council, I saw a late winter scene that I had never seen before at the Emmaus community. I saw a barren yard without the green grass and flowers that I used to see blooming. The trees also appeared naked, with branches and twigs without leaves or with dry leaves. They were like dead trees. About a week later, the scene began to change. Bright colors began to replace gray and dull colors. Empty spaces on tree branches began to fill up again with leaves. Even though the weather hasn't really changed, the cold air still clings, but nothing can hold back life from rising from its sleep.

Change, that's what I'm facing right now. Plants and trees in our backyard are showing me a change. Changes occur because they adjust to the changing seasons. Although the stages and times of change are not the same between plants, the same energy is moving within them, namely the energy of growth. Yes, at the beginning of this spring, almost all plants show changes. Change is evident in the growth that is happening.

Gail Sheehy, a writer and journalist, stated: "If we don't change, we don't grow. If we don't grow, we don't really live". The statement precisely summarizes the dynamics currently occurring in the plants in our backyard, namely the inseparable connection between life, growth, and change. However, growth is the key word in these three things. Life increasingly shows its essence because of developments, and every growth must produce change. Growth and change indicate the existence of life.

Personal growth is the task of our lives

Article 66 of our Constitutions states: Everything that lives is subject to growth and development. The statement can be understood from two sides. First, the existence of life enables growth and development. Life is energy that moves. However, life will not really live without growth and development. From this point we can get a second understanding, namely that



Bro. Theo giving a talk to the brothers in Chile during his working visit (2014)

growth and development are needed to sustain life. Life that is not accompanied by growth and development slowly moves towards death. In short, life and growth/development need each other.

"Everything that lives is subject to growth and development". The statement also reminds us of one of the main tasks of our lives, namely to grow. As long as we have the gift of life, we accept the task to grow. Moreover, when we choose life as religious, the task to grow becomes strongly attached to us. Vita Consecrata no. 69 emphasizes: None are exempt from the obligation to grow humanly and as religious".

As religious, we join the FIC brothers who are expected to have great availability and unselfishness (see. Constitutions, art. 22). This demands of us courage, self-denial, prudence, and appreciation of potential. But that is not enough. Article 25 of our Constitutions also states that "total availability demands of each of us the willingness to develop ourselves as well and harmonious a way as possible. Therefore, personal growth inevitably is one of the main tasks of our lives as brothers. Developing ourselves as well as possible, in the sense that it is as optimal and sustainable as possible, not only during our formation years, but continuously throughout our

lives (cf. Constitutions, art. 115). In harmonious way in the sense that every aspect including physical and personal, psychological and spiritual, in behavior and intentions, need to be developed in a balanced manner (cf. Vita Consecrata - VC 65).

Personal growth is needed of course so that as human beings our lives become truly human (cf. Constitutions, art. 1). That is our ideal. By striving for self-development we make the gift of life as a human being more meaningful; we make life more alive. But as brothers, we have another goal of our personal growth. According to our Constitutions, our personal growth includes at least two main objectives, namely, to be as useful as possible (see art. 25; cf. art. 44) and secondly, to achieve the deepest and most perfect happiness (cf. art. 1).

Based on these objectives, we know that personal growth as a brother has two goals at once, namely intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsically, when we are able to develop ourselves optimally, we are also increasingly able to achieve self-fulfillment. According to A.H. Maslow (1908-1970), self-fulfillment contributes greatly to happiness in our lives as humans. Extrinsically, when our ability develops, the opportunity to benefit from the good of others will be greater. And if we realize, the more our lives are meaningful to others, the more our happiness will multiply. Our growth ultimately benefits ourselves even though it is not the first goal we pursue.

In addition to achieving certain goals, the process of personal growth as a brother is also directed toward one person, namely Jesus. We recognize Jesus as a human being, equal to us in everything (see Constitutions art. 56), but he can fulfill God's mission to the fullest (see Constitutions art. 57). Therefore, Jesus is the main model of our growth. For us brothers, to be a good person, to become a better person means to grow towards Jesus and become like him (cf. Constitutions art. 4).

According to Jesus, personal growth is a process that must be chosen if we want to make life more meaningful. To explain this, Jesus used the process of growing seeds as an example. He said: "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains only a single grain; but if it dies, it yields a rich harvest" (John 12:24). Jesus' words are true. Every growth starts from small seeds that undergo a

“ Yes, death and change, sacrifice and struggle, are inevitable parts of growth. ”

process of change. The seeds must experience death so that the life potentials that already exist in them can develop and undergo growth at every stage.

Yes, death and change, sacrifice and struggle, are inevitable parts of growth. The FIC Constitutions also made us aware that personal growth is a process that requires struggle and sacrifice, but also love and loyalty. Clearly, this is explained in article 99 of our Constitutions. The following is an excerpt of it: "In taking our vows, we express that, as free people, we undividedly make ourselves available. This does not mean, of course, that we are undivided straight away. Our assignment is to grow towards it, through all difficulties and disappointments. It is an ideal for which we aspire. Strenuously, step by step, by trial and error, we attempt to achieve this. Thus, we try to grow in love, faithfully, and hopefully."

In another part of our Constitutions, namely article 115, there are also at least four more things that we must consider as practical steps to persevere in our personal growth process. The four things are first of all, personal growth, which for us is a lifelong task that should be sought in various ways. This means that we are asked to be creative and innovative. Secondly, keep learning and training ourselves. It is stated in article 115 that "our vocation (as brothers, especially those who are teachers) requires that we continue to learn and train ourselves for our work". Thirdly, to be open to the signs of the times. We are aware that our self-development is also influenced by developments outside ourselves. Our world continues to grow and experience updates as a result of amazingly human creative power. Openness is needed so that we can embrace change constructively and respond positively when it happens.

Regarding the importance of learning/training and

openness, number 15 of the document "Starting Fresh from Christ" says: Thus it will be important that all consecrated persons be formed in the freedom to learn throughout life, in every age and season, in every human ambiance and context, from every person and every culture open to be taught by any fragment of truth and beauty found around them. But above all they must learn to be formed by everyday life, by their own community, by their brothers and sisters, by everyday things, ordinary and extraordinary, by prayer and by apostolic fatigue, in joy and in suffering, until the moment of death.

The fourth practical thing which we need to pay attention to in the process of developing ourselves is to continually develop our spiritual growth. We desire to develop ourselves as human beings who want to achieve personal wholeness. We have also been free, as stated in article 99 of the Constitutions, to embrace life as a brother. Therefore, our personal growth cannot be separated from the context of our lives as religious. The document "Starting Afresh From Christ", number 25 says: Every vocation to consecrated life is born in contemplation, from moments of intense communion and from a deep relationship of friendship with Christ, from the beauty and light which was seen shining on his face. From there the desire to always be with the Lord-and to follow him-matures: "how good it is for us to be here" (Mt 17:4).

Therefore, this document also suggests that spiritual life should be given priority in our lives so that we can grow towards Jesus and increasingly, be like Him. For this reason, we need to build a spiritual culture as the foundation of our entire process of personal growth. That also demands from us a struggle that might be more difficult in the midst of the current era which strongly emphasizes human autonomy. Article 66 of our Constitutions states, among other things, that growing prayer life, just like any other growth, entails a painful purification. We have to detach ourselves in order to achieve union with God and with our fellow beings. That union with God is the ultimate goal of our growth. Article 2 of our Constitutions states that God is the foundation of our being. Therefore, the process of personal growth includes the task of seeking God and finding Him. "The more profound our lives are and the more intense our quest for the God of love, the more so everything in our life will



come to harmony and unity" (see Constitutions art. 34). At this point, we will experience the deepest and most perfect happiness we desire.

At the beginning of May, the backyard of our community was completely green. A wide variety of colorful flowers bloomed to create a vibrant scenery. After about two weeks of showing their beauty, the flowers that had previously blushed withered. Just as the Book of Wisdom says, everything has a time. So I'm sure, that is not the end of the story of the flowers. The life energy that is in them will keep them alive. Next year, they will grow again to reveal their beauty. The task of personal growth therefore is a continuous process in life. What is asked of us first of all is our faithfulness to pursue it. May we continue to grow and reveal the beauty of ourselves to others or give fruits that make them happy.

Celebrating Saint Patrick's Day In Malawi

Bro. Peter Nthulula, FIC

Each year there is a celebration at St. Patrick's Secondary School in honour of St. Patrick who was bishop of Ireland. This year's celebration was marked on 17 March 2019 on the school's football ground with a Eucharistic celebration led by the Archbishop of Blantyre, Most Reverend Thomas Luke Msusa. This was his first visit to the school since he became archbishop of Blantyre and also the first time that Mzedi Parish and the surrounding villages came together to mark the day.

At the end of the Mass, there were speeches delivered by different people. The head master of the school Mr. Tungama, was the first. He talked extensively about the good performance the school is known for in public examinations. St. Patrick's students have on several occasions represented the Shire Highlands Education Division at regional, national and international levels in competitions like essay writing in the Southern Africa Development Countries (SADC) region. Students who have visual impairment have also been doing well over the years and some have made it to the university.

The chairperson of the Parents Teachers Association (PTA) Mrs. Njilima pointed out some of the developmental activities they have carried out, namely getting a water pump for the school to improve water supply, drilling a borehole and purchasing solar panels to provide lights in form three and providing four classrooms to enable students do evening studies. She advised the students to follow school rules and regulations which are very clear and straight forward if they are to succeed in their studies. She urged parents to cooperate with teachers in shaping the students and not to be on the side of their wards whenever they misbehave.

The Provincial Superior of the Brothers of the Immaculate Conception (FIC), Bro. Lawrence Sitima thanked the Archbishop for making time to visit St. Patrick's Secondary School in spite of his busy schedule. He was also grateful to the Parish Priest of Mzedi, Fr. Lazarus Zulani for



organizing a beautiful and prayerful function. He asked the students to embrace the values of perseverance, integrity and prayer as did St. Patrick, the school's patron, and earnestly advised them to embrace the values the FIC Brothers promote. Bro. Sitima acknowledged the presence of two 'old boys' as our Brothers in Ghana would call them, for attending the function and for their financial and material donations.

The Archbishop, Most Reverend Thomas Luke Msusa said he came both as a visitor and an inspector to the school. He assured the government officials of the church's commitment in helping the government in the education sector and asked the students to study hard and take good care of the structures that have been provided them.

Solo Caritas Vivamos (Just Because of Love We Live)

Bro. Petrus Paijan, FIC



Bro. Petrus Paijan receiving the top of mountain rice cut by an invited VIP guest during the 80th anniversary celebration in Boro.

The 80th anniversary of the establishment of Boro Santa Maria Orphanage was marked with a grand Eucharistic celebration, to offer thanksgiving to the almighty God and acknowledge the contributions of people who have taken part in the life and development of the institution from August 1938 till date (August 2018). Eighty years is long enough to be aware that God has been guiding and providing the needs of the orphanage. The celebration which had the theme "Just Because of Love We Live" offered the FIC brothers and Boro Catholic community the opportunity to reflect on the gift of the founder J.B. Prentall, who was also the founder of Boro Parish.

Together with Father van Lith from Muntilan, he baptized hundreds of Javanese tribes under the Sana tree with the fountain water in the small lake. Fr. Prentall also built churches, hospitals, schools for boys and girls and houses for the FIC brothers and nuns. Apart from the weaving factory, he brought numerous other developments in the community. By the year 1970, Boro was like a big city with very good public transportation system.

The Eucharistic celebration of the 80 th anniversary

of St. Maria Orphanage was presided over by Fr. Yohanes Krismanto in the name of the Archbishop of Semarang and moderator of Catholic Social Organizations, and Fr. FX. Sri Waluya SSCC, alumnus of Pangudi Luhur Boro and now a Japan missionary.

More than six hundred people, including religious, priests and even Muslims, came to congratulate the FIC brothers, and also enjoy the "Jathilan" (horses dance), meals and beverages. Jathilan is one of the traditional dances in Indonesia (Central Java). The dancers often dance to the extent of being possessed. It means that the souls of any beast: pig, snake, monkey, quadruped, etc can turn the dancer into a beast also. At night, all the artists of the melodrama staged "Ketoprak", another Javanese performance. Male and female Muslims and people of other religious denominations supported the artists of Jogjakarta in the performance. They all acted a legendary story entitled "Putri Serang". The story tells about the struggle for independence.

(Bro. Petrus Paijan FIC, the director of Boro Santa Maria Orphanage)



Bro. Petrus Paijan and inmates of Sancta Maria orphanage (Boro).

"Rejoice and be glad"/"Wees blij en juich"



FIC Brothers, associated members and some sisters at a joint recollection in the chapel of de Beyart (2019)



Bros. Wim Swuste, Frans School and Kees Gordijn were the facilitators of the recollection

On Tuesday 9th April in Den Haag and Thursday 11th April 2019 in Maastricht, the working group Reflection at Home of the Religious House, The Netherlands, organised a reflective celebration for the brothers, associated members and friends of FIC (KGM-members). The reflection focused on the document written by Pope Francis: "Gaudete et Exsultate" - "Wees blij en juich" - "Rejoice and be glad", on the Call to Holiness in Today's World. This document was given by Pope Francis in Rome, on 19 March 2018, the Solemnity of Saint Joseph.

At the beginning of the prayer service we lighted seven candles at the altar to offer our gratefulness to God for seven people who inspired and touched us on our way of life as FIC brothers, namely: Louis Rutten, Bernardus Hoecken, Vincent de Paul, Mary, our own father and mother, and our fellow brothers. Then we continued to reflect on some short passages taken from the document, for instance: a) 11. "Each in his or her own way" the Council says. We should not grow discouraged before examples of holiness that appear unattainable. There are some testimonies that may prove helpful and inspiring, but that we are not meant to copy, for that could even lead us astray from the one specific path that the Lord has in mind for us. The important thing is that each believer discern his or her own path, that they bring out the very best of themselves, the most personal gifts that God has placed in their hearts,

rather than hopelessly trying to imitate something not meant for them. We are all called to be witnesses, but there many actual ways of bearing witness. b) 16: This holiness to which the Lord calls you will grow through small gestures. Here is an example: a woman goes shopping, she meets a neighbour and they begin to speak, and the gossip starts. But she says in her heart: "No, I will not speak badly of anyone". This is a step forward in holiness. Later, at home, one of her children wants to talk to her about his hopes and dreams, and even though she is tired, she sits down and listens with patience and love. That is another sacrifice that brings holiness. Later she experiences some anxiety, but recalling the love of the Virgin Mary, she takes her rosary and prays with faith. Yet another path of holiness. Later still, she goes out onto the street, encounters a poor person and stops to say a kind word to him. One more step.

Both in Den Haag and in Maastricht we were very happy to feel the close contact and togetherness of our fellow brothers, associated members and the members of KGM.

(Taken and translated into English from "MEDEDELINGEN" News of Religious Huis Nederland FIC, April 2019)



Provincial day of Indonesia Province at St.Petrus Canisius Community in Muntilan, Central Java. Bros. Anton Karyadi and Y.B. Purwanto leading the opening prayer.



Bro. Hector and a Master of Ceremony during Easter celebration of the students, teachers and co-workers at the square of St. Louis Rutten School in Talca, Chile.



Christmas celebration of the FIC Brothers, Staff, co-workers, associated members, and friends at de Beyart, Maastricht (2018).



Bro. Clement giving a word during a farewell celebration for Bro. Augustine who leaves Ghana Province for The Netherlands (2019).



General Council members of Carolus Borromeus Sisters and FIC Brothers after their joint meeting at Carolus Borromeus convent in Maastricht (April 2019).



Students praying during the burial service of late bro. Stanslao Finye (FIC) at the cemetery of the FIC Brothers in Mzedi, Malawi (2019).



Personal Profile

Bro. Lambert Dorsana Batogbee, FIC

“ I was fully initiated into this religion until the year 1972 when I enrolled for catechism lessons and eventually got baptized and confirmed in 1984, but not without very stiff resistance from my family especially my father. ”

Family Background

I was born on 11 May 1964 to Madam Anne Nuomah and Mr. Batogbee Dongyaga both of blessed memory. I grew up in my home village, Issa, in the Daffiamah- Busie- Issa District in the Upper West Region of Ghana. I am the fourth of seven siblings, three of whom are surviving and I am the eldest of the three: two boys and one girl. My father was a polygamist. He married seven women and had 42 children of which 15 of us are surviving (8 girls and 7 boys).

My Journey into Christian Life

I attended primary and middle schools in my village, Issa from 1969-1977. My father was a strict disciplinarian and a typical traditional believer. He was fully committed to his traditional religious practices. He made sure all his children followed the tradition. I was fully initiated into this religion until the year 1972 when I enrolled for catechism lessons and eventually got baptized and confirmed in 1984, but not without very stiff resistance from my family especially my father.

Becoming an FIC Brother

After my middle school education I stayed in the house and helped my father in the farm to feed the large family. From 1980 - 1984, I attended Bechem Business Technical College where I studied Basic Automobile Mechanics. I completed with National Vocational Training Institute (NVTI) grades one and two. The year 1984 was a turning point for me. I met Rev. Fr. David Dogee Bangsiibu at Daffiamah Parish who was by then a Deacon. He was our catechism instructor. We became friends. I became very much attracted to his way of life. He inspired me a lot through the singing of church liturgical songs. One time during our interactions, he asked me: "Lambert, what would you like to become in the future?" I quickly said I would like to be a Priest like

him. We both laughed about it. Then he asked me, "What about joining the Brothers", since I was a technical man. By then I had no idea who a brother was in the Church. He then introduced me to the Brothers FIC at Wa and gave me their contact address.

In 1985, I pursued further studies at Sunyani Technical Institute where I obtained City and Guilds Intermediate in Auto-mechanics. I got employed in September the same year at the Ashanti Goldfield Mining Company at Obuasi. Life in Obuasi at that time was very vibrant. I was exposed to the test of the outside world. I almost forgot of the discussion I had with my catechism instructor earlier. However, the idea of becoming a religious brother kept haunting me. Meanwhile, I was also very active at St. Philips Catholic Church as an executive member of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, Dagaare choir master and assistant Catechist. On the other hand, I am proud to mention that I rejected three ladies my father had pressurized me to marry.

At a point in time, I gathered courage to discuss the issue of my choice of vocation with my Parish Priest, Rev. Fr. Francis Kusi-Ababio. He offered useful suggestions and encouraged me to pursue my dream. Thus in 1987, I applied to the Brothers FIC expressing interest to join them. After one of the contact days, I decided to proceed home to inform my father of my intention. He vehemently disagreed. Sadly, I went back to continue my work at the Mines while keeping contact with the FIC brothers.

In 1990, I attended another contact session in Wa. I brought the challenge I was facing with my father concerning my choice of vocation to the knowledge of the formators, Brothers Aloysius Porekuu and Gregory Tang who took me home to seek my

father's opinion. After a serious discussion, my father gave me the green light. So I applied for admission to start formation but my admission letter delayed in reaching me. I therefore, missed the chance of starting formation in 1990. I got discouraged and almost gave up the idea. I was however encouraged by Rev. Fr. Kusi- Ababio my Parish Priest and Bro. Albert Ketelaars of blessed memory, who was then Provincial Superior of Ghana, to continue with the aspirancy for another year.

Life in the Formation House

In 1991, I was given the chance to start formation, so I terminated my job with the mining company. This was the most difficult and hardest decision I had to take in my life - to break ties with the known to pursue the unknown. But I chose to fulfill my heart's desire. I moved to St. Louis formation house Wa in October 1991, together with Bros. Isidore Aabiesie, Seregeous Dery, Paul Attiah and Andrews Luferi. With these faithful travelling companions, I found a true home with the FIC Brothers. While in the formation house, my father once in a while paid me a surprise visit to check on me. I was very much afraid that he would pull me back home. However, after a few checks, he allowed me to continue with my formation.

My Life Journey in the FIC Congregation

My father lived to witness my first profession on 15th September, 1994, which made him very happy. I was posted to St. Louis Community, Wa and took up an appointment at the Wa Diocesan Garage as workshop assistant to Bro. Suzu (M. Africa). I did this job from 1994-1995. This apostolate gave me some satisfaction and the opportunity to familiarize myself with Upper West Region.

I later studied at St. Paul's Technical School, Kukurantumi in the Eastern Region and obtained Technician Part 1 and 2 as an Auto-Mechanic. I was appointed to teach at Nandom Vocational School now St. John Technical Institute, Nandom and a member of Mt. Zion Community. I took my final vows on 7th December 2001. While in Mt. Zion Community, I functioned as the Local Bursar and Community Aspirants Leader. While in Nandom, I studied privately for the Technician part 3 in Auto-



mechanics in 2001. Also in 2002, I pursued a sandwich program at the University College of Education, Winneba for a certificate in Education to enhance my teaching profession. Apart from the regular instructional delivery in the classroom, I also assisted in the financial administration of Nandom Vocational School from 2004 - 2006.

In 2003, I was appointed Aspirancy Coordinator. I experienced great support from the brothers especially, the local Community Aspirants leaders. Now, I look back with joy and fulfillment because my efforts have borne a lot of fruits. I later accepted a transfer to Accra in 2006. While in Accra, I studied in Accra Polytechnic and obtained a Higher National diploma (HND) in Automotive Engineering in 2009.

I was appointed the assistant Provincial Treasurer and the Community local Bursar in 2009 while teaching at the National Vocational Training Institute (NVTI), Burma Camp, Accra. I was also enrolled at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), Kumasi, Ghana, where I obtained a degree in BSc. Mechanical Engineering in 2014.

In 2016, I was appointed the Provincial Procurator for Ghana Province. Thus I made myself available to run some errands and offer services to the Brothers and some visiting guests to the Province. Currently, I am pursuing a Masters Degree program in MSc.

PROFILE

Water Resources Engineering and Environmental Sanitation at KNUST, Kumasi, Ghana.

Current Apostolic Involvement

Currently, I am teaching in one of the most deprived schools in the heart of Accra. In this particular situation, one can experience the lack of basic infrastructure (Classrooms, workshops, library, tables and chairs etc). Most of the students (trainees) are from less privileged homes: single parent, broken or separated, and they try to fend for themselves and struggle to pay their school fees. Apart from teaching, I offer basic counseling services, touching the lives of the less privileged in society. I am motivated in the Spirit of our founders to offer hope for such persons for their future. This is done by offering the trainees of TEVET (Technical Vocational and Educational Training) skills, which would equip them with some basic employable skills for their future.



My Jubilee Year

On 15th September, 2019, I would be celebrating my silver jubilee as an FIC Brother. 25 years in humble and dedicated service to humanity for the sake of the kingdom. It is a reflective year, a time of thanksgiving and the expression of profound gratitude for the Lord's goodness to me. My heart is filled with joy and gratitude for the gift of my vocation as an FIC Brother. Great is the FIC family where I found true happiness and a true home.



Bro. Lambert in his workshop in Accra during the visit of the General Superior, Bro. Martin Handoko (2017)

PROFILE



God Calls Me to Be Happy

Bro. Albertus Suwanto, FIC

“ I started in the government-owned elementary school, and later continued at Pangudi Luhur Kaliduren Junior High School, Yogyakarta. There I encountered Brothers Martin Dariyo, Julian, and Arnold, and they made a deep impression on me. ”

About 49 years ago, on November 19, 1969 I was born by a married couple: Matthew Sukati Danuwiyono and Chatarina Kasirah Danuwiyono. I am the youngest of six children from a farmer's family; three brothers and three sisters. They all became elementary school teachers. My father was among the first four Catholics in my village to be baptized as adults, probably around the 1930s. My mother was baptized at the same time with me in 1983.

I lived in a village located on a river bank. Life around me generally created a good religious awareness. Both Muslims and Catholics lived together harmoniously. The majority of the population was Catholic. The participation of adults in the life of the church influenced the young adolescents who also played active roles in the church. This situation fostered a strong religious atmosphere in the environment and people's lives, including mine. I spent a lot of time and energy participating in church-related activities and matters related to my faith.

Apart from having a good awareness of religion, people also had a good academic awareness. There were almost no teenagers who didn't go to school, both rich and poor alike. We attended school while diligently helping our parents at home with work. Some poor families were willing to borrow large amounts of money with land collateral to fulfill the educational needs of their children. Some even ran out of property just to have their children educated. In terms of schools, the choices were limited. There was only one government-owned elementary school, while the junior and senior high schools were either Catholic or Muslim. However, Catholic schools were more prominent and well-known in terms of quality. Most young people

preferred to attend Catholic schools owned by the FIC brothers or the Jesuit priests. Even Muslim children showed interest in Catholic education because this inspired a lot of young people.

I started in the government-owned elementary school, and later continued at Pangudi Luhur Kaliduren Junior High School, Yogyakarta. There I encountered Brothers Martin Dariyo, Julian, and Arnold, and they made a deep impression on me. Unlike the other teachers, the brothers were very friendly, related well with children and were always looking happy. That impressed me a lot about the life of a brother. I kept all these things in my heart but this positive impression matured and greatly influenced my development.

After graduating from junior high school, I continued to SPG Pangudi Luhur, a school owned by the FIC brothers near Yogyakarta, about 15 km from the village. Most children went to school by bicycle. The religious atmosphere I experienced in the village grew stronger in the junior high school, and continued at Pangudi Luhur SPG. At the Pangudi Luhur teachers' training school I met more FIC brothers, especially Br. Albertus Sutarno the Principal and Br. Yohanes Budi Suyanto. They instilled a positive character in me as a teacher. They were very disciplined in educating the prospective teachers. One of the extracurricular activities that I became interested in is the deepening of faith. This activity was facilitated by Bros. Paulus Kentungan and Heribertus Irianto, both FIC. In this deepening of my faith through extracurricular activity, I found calmness and peace of mind. The religious spirit in me grew stronger. Among my friends, I was increasingly known as a polite, hard-working and calm person. Some began to say that I was a candidate for the FIC brothers,

and the question that aroused me was, "Am I called to be a brother?"

To answer this question, I kept the issue in my heart, and later took part in the recollection organized for prospective FIC brothers. After the recollection everything became meaningless and flat. I was now torn between becoming a brother or just pursuing a career as a teacher. Those two choices alternatively colored the contents of my heart and mind. Nothing changed even after my third grade of the SPG. I decided to attend the recollection of the prospective brothers again. My goal was to find an answer to my divided mind. Still in doubt, I enrolled in the selection process for the candidates in May 1989. Until the time of selection, I had found a job in Jakarta as a teacher, another way of testing my feeling. If I get salary as a teacher, will I still feel the calling to be a brother?

For one whole year as a teacher at Strada Society, I could not find the life I was looking for. With my salary, the pride as a teacher, higher level of self-esteem, I still did not find an answer to my anxiety. Finally, after one year of work, I decided to resign as a teacher. In July 1990 I started formation as an FIC brother. Over time it became more and more convincing that this was the place and form of life that I had been looking for, namely BECOMING A BROTHER. The form of devotional life of a brother became the right answer to my question.

As a brother, I remained a teacher just as before. What are the differences? The distinguishing things are the spirit, atmosphere, and motivation that accompany me as a brother-teacher. I believe this is the right place and atmosphere for me to answer my life calling. This is the way of sanctity. It's not always easy as I often get up and fall. I sometimes feel small, weak or powerless as a brother. So I just surrender myself to the power of God: Here I am, send me!

After my first profession in 1993, my initial duty was to take care of an abandoned child at Sancta Maria Boro Orphanage, Yogyakarta. I did this simultaneously with my duty as an elementary school teacher as well as student. I did this duty for seven years. Presently (2019), I am 26 years as an FIC brother. I believe that living as an FIC brother is God's call for me to live happily. I feel much loved by God and others, and I am very grateful for the experience of being close to God and others. I thank the brothers for the experience.

Now I am serving as a manager of Pangudi Luhur Foundation and the Provincial Council assistant in the educational apostolate. Hopefully with the help of the Virgin Mary, and with the assistance of fellow brothers I will be able to carry out this apostolate well, and become a channel of blessing for the people entrusted to our care.



Bros. Albertus Suwanto, Martin Handoko, and Simon Andrus (Pangudi Luhur Foundation Council) during Provincial day at St. Petrus Canisius Community in Muntilan.



Bro. Albertus Suwanto and his family and relatives during his 25th anniversary celebration as an FIC Brother.

Community building, Unity in Diversity

Bro. Lawrence Sitima, FIC

The following reflection on community building, Unity in Diversity, has some elements of what has been my experience over the years and still do in living out community life as a Brother FIC. I want to quote Vanier's (1980) definition of the term community as 'the inter-personal relationships, a sense of belonging and an orientation of life to a common goal and a common witness.' From an early age in the village where I was brought up, family ideals of wanting to live together happily, sharing food, how little that might be, of taking care of other siblings in a family, adhering to the norms of immediate or extended family, were virtues that were in existence way back before, though not in a formalized set-up as is the case today in religious communities. Each family or community member was expected to follow these community dictates and those who behaved in the contrary, were cautioned and advised on the dangers and consequences of such behavior in that society.



As I look back at such experiences, I realize that these were good practices aimed at bringing family and village members together to live in peace and to solidify their identity as a people within that set up. However, very little attention was paid to the diversity or uniqueness of the individual members in the family or village. In other words, the diversities of the individual members became the cause of strife and misunderstandings within family set up, and this caused pain and division between and among the members.

In my FIC religious community, my understanding of community building, unity in diversity is based on my childhood experiences of my family/village life and other social interactions within my immediate surroundings then. Community as described in Vanier's Community and Growth (1980), is a home where an individual, like myself, and the others feel at home, where I feel or the others feel they belong. That when I am not at home for example, for a few days, due to a mission that I should carry out on behalf of my community, I should feel that something is lacking, that the feeling of being at home is not fully realized. I do realize that to achieve this, is an enormous task. It

may seem impossible, but it can be achieved. In this line, I want to quote what Bro. Martinus Dariyo wrote as a reflective comment on A community of Brothers, chapter 3 of the FIC Constitutions; on Self -acceptance as opposed to self -rejection. "Each one comes to realize that to be accepted by the group, he has to accept the group as well. That is, the individual learns to accept himself in the same way that he accepts others". For me this entails accepting one another and recognizing the diversities that exist between us as Brothers FIC. It also means willingly and freely giving and receiving constructive advice in our quest to building an ideal FIC community as emphasized in our Constitutions.

That together, we strive to understand one another, considering the strengths and weaknesses of each unique community member. My experience regarding community building, unity in diversity in the communities I have lived as a postulant in both Ghana and Malawi and the other years as a professed brother in Malawi, I feel challenged in many aspects. The most important



Group discussion: From L-R: Bros. Fabian Kuupile, Alpitio Kog, Joachim Naah, Aloysius Porekuu, and Augustine Kubdaar (2018)

experience for me over the years has been the efforts my fellow FIC brothers and I make through our common life, apostolate, prayers, celebrations etcetera, in realizing a community where each member feels part or a sense of belonging. So a feeling of belonging is what I strive to nurture in myself and once a noticeable shoot is seen, that might encourage others to build a sense of unity in their diversity.

Articles 35,36,37 & 38 express what I want to call virtues of a community of brothers- that we are of one heart and soul, that we are brothers of one another and that we form a community with the realization that we are imperfect beings.

How many times in a day for instance, do I realize that I am called to live the virtues of a community of brothers FIC? I vividly realize that I do not think of that on daily basis. I strongly believe that once we realize or recognize what the four articles stress on, and constantly remind ourselves that we are FIC brothers, this will help build community and promote unity in our diversity. In community, I have sometimes failed to understand the other brother. Community building in terms of our unity in diversity means giving room to the other person to be what God wants him to be. This entails giving him space and time to be different while recognizing the little glimpses of light and goodness in him. Over the

years, I have learnt not to try to make the other brother another Lawrence Sitima because that will breed misunderstanding. Acceptance of individual differences and the realization that each brother has some good intentions for the wellbeing of the community is a way to build community, and maintain unity in our diversity.



Bro. Thomas Chikoti and three new novices in Malawi (2018)

Pope celebrates Mass on World Day of Consecrated Life

Pope Francis celebrated Mass to mark the 23rd World Day of Consecrated Life, and invited consecrated religious to turn their encounter with Jesus into prophetic vision for the Church.

Religious men and women are called to a two-fold obedience, Pope Francis said in his homily. The two aspects are obedience to the law, "in the sense of what gives order to our lives", and to the Spirit, "who does new things in our lives". "The Spirit reveals the Lord, but to welcome him we need to persevere every day," he said.

The Mass in St. Peter's Basilica also marked the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord. So Pope Francis reflected on the day's Gospel (Lk 2:22-40), in which Jesus is presented in the Temple 40 days after his birth.

The Holy Father said the Liturgy shows "Jesus who goes out to meet his people", calling it the feast day of encounter. "The newness of the Child encounters the tradition of the Temple; the promise finds fulfillment; young Mary and Joseph encounter the elderly Simeon and Anna."

Religious encounter Jesus

Consecrated women and men, said Pope Francis, are called to encounter Jesus, "every day of our lives... it is a daily choice." "What happened in the Temple also happens to us: around him everything meets, and life becomes harmonious." He said religious find in Jesus the courage to carry on, because "the encounter with the Lord is the source."

Pope Francis said that, by returning to the source and renewing their first love, consecrated men and women make religious life "a time of encounter", rather than "a time that passes by". The original meeting with the Lord, "did not arise as something private between us and God. No, it blossomed in the context of a believing people, alongside many brothers and sisters, at precise times and places," he said. The Pope said encounter with Jesus takes place within the people of God and within



religious communities. "God calls us to encounter him through faithfulness to concrete things: daily prayer, Holy Mass, Confession, real charity, the daily word of God."

Prophetic vision

Pope Francis said the consecrated person's encounter with Jesus "culminates in vision". Simeon "sees the Child and he sees salvation." "Simeon sees God's simplicity and welcomes His presence." This vision of simplicity is the vision of consecrated life, he said. "God is enough, the rest passes away," he said, "It is praise that gushes forth in spite of everything."

Joyful praise

Finally, Pope Francis summed up religious life as not being about survival but about new life, calling it "a living encounter with the Lord." "This then is the consecrated life: praise which gives joy to God's people, prophetic vision that reveals what counts."

The Rosary, as a "Heirloom" for me

Bro. Theodorus Suwaryanto, FIC



With the Rosary, we let ourselves be guided by Mary, the model of faith, in contemplating the mysteries of Christ, and day by day we are assisted to digest the Gospel, so that the Gospel shapes all our lives." (Pope Benedict XVI)

My love for the rosary prayer, and even the practice of taking it with me wherever I go stem from childhood. At that time, I used to invite my parents especially my mother to join the rosary prayer held at the village Catholic community. I was even trained to lead the rosary prayers, and from that time onwards, I became comfortable carrying my rosary wherever I went. I feel protected when I am carrying it and I do pray it even during my trips.

The words of Pope Benedict at the beginning of this article are very touching, and correspond to my conviction. In praying the rosary, I submit myself to be led by Mother Mary in order to understand Jesus Christ more deeply through the mysteries of His life and mission. I am continually invited to get to know Jesus Christ deeply and to love him more. The more frequently I pray the Rosary, reflecting on the mysteries of the life and work of Jesus Christ, the more I am increasingly driven to digest the Gospel and let myself be shaped by it.

In reality, this is not always easy as our faith is marked by consolation and desolation and through the faithfulness of our Lady who always intercedes for me, I am empowered by Jesus

Christ to go through difficult times in my life. I strongly believe that through the rosary prayers I obtain mercy, and by getting closer to Jesus Christ, I have a better and deeper understanding of the mystery of his life and work, and thus I have a better understanding of the mystery of my being.

Increasingly, I experience that the rosary is becoming "Heirlooms" to me. Heirloom here does not refer to "Black magic or White magic", but something of a great worth to me, something that is very valuable and makes me feel comfortable if the Rosary is with me. I feel there is something with me, protecting me. I also feel that the Virgin Mary is accompanying me, as she accompanied Jesus Christ in his childhood. Every time I pray the Rosary, I feel very close to Mother Mary and Jesus Christ.

Living together with fellow brothers in community during the past six 6 years, I discovered the meaningfulness of having the rosary prayers together. Apart from the communal experience of our closeness with the Lord Jesus Christ through the Blessed Virgin Mary, I can also personally confirm that I am becoming closer to God through this experience. At least once a week, I visit Mary, Star of the Sea in Maastricht city, just to sit quietly with Mary or have a dialogue with her on the meaning of my life and apostolate.

We should all be encouraged to pray the rosary diligently, not only during the months of the Rosary (October and May), but as often as possible. The more often we pray the Rosary in earnest, the more we understand the mystery of the Gospel and increasingly, the more we are shaped by the Good News and the joy of the Gospel.

We are becoming truly Christian who are happy and grateful for the redemption that we received. We are grateful because we have Mary our Mother who faithfully intercedes for us and leads us towards our Father in heaven through Christ and in the guidance of the Holy Spirit.