

CONTENTS

From The Editor

We are living in uncertain times because of the Covid 19 pandemic that has affected all areas of our life. So many people have suffered; some have died because of the corona virus. The situation has affected every aspect of society including the Church, religious communities, and even the way we worship. We are getting worried, scared and afraid; we have mixed feelings and very uncertain about the future. We have learned how weak and fragile human beings are. This is the time to recognize how vital it is to depend on the power of God. This time offers us the opportunity to live our lives in true love and sincerity, by loving God and fellow men and women. The situation encourages us to find God deep within ourselves, and to discover what is more essential in life.

We are also becoming increasingly aware of the importance and value of solidarity and empathy. Apart from leaders trying to make difficult decisions on how to manage the crisis, many people in the forefront like medical doctors, nurses, and health care workers are working hard to save infected people, at the risk of their own lives. Many have found creative ways to be useful to their communities, to offer social and religious tools against isolation, to volunteer support to the weak and vulnerable people.

This is also the time to reflect on what we have done to nature, the environment and God's creation. We are being called upon to give more respect and assume a positive attitude towards nature. We need to be more aware of the connection between humans and the environment, and also with the Divine (God). When we are in balance, there will be healthy relationship between human beings and the rest of creation. In connection with the destruction of our environment, Bro. Johan provides us with an article on "Our Web of Life" and a reflection on "What Have We Done?"

"The Religious Brother and Sister, by participating in the saving mystery of Christ and the Church, are permanent reminders for all Christian people of the importance of the total gift of self to God and a reminder that the mission of the Church, respecting the various vocations and ministries within it, is one and is shared by all." This is the core description of our identity and mission as religious brothers. Our vocation and mission are within and for the Church. In this issue of our magazine we share with our readers some reflections on the mission of the FIC Brothers within the local church. Bro. Raphael invites us to reflect on "Thinking with the Church", Bros. Martin Sarya Giri and Martinus Dariyo give their testimonies on the Brothers' contributions to the growth of the local church within their areas of apostolate and Bro. Theodorus his impressions on the Vincentian Family meeting in Rome.

As usual we also present the profiles of two of our brothers: Stephen Bangnabayi from the Ghana, who celebrates 25 years of religious life, and Mike Mbato from Malawi, a teacher in Nguludi Primary School. We hope from this, you will appreciate the life and work of the FIC Brothers. Through these reflections, we hope you will support our mission in serving people especially the poor and the needy according to the will of God. Thank you for your attention and support to the Congregation, and may God bless you all.

2 | **GENERAL SUPERIOR**
Community, Mission and the Church

4 | **REFLECTION**
Thinking with the Church

7 | **GENERAL COUNCIL**
My Impressions on International
Vincentian Family Conference, Rome 2020

Impressions of The Meeting of JPIC 2019
Joint Meeting FIC-CMM
March 4, 2020

What Have We Done?

13 | **PROVINCIAL EVENT**
Diocesan Jubilee Celebrations,
Wa Ghana

The Joy of Brotherhood
FIC Friends' Gathering in Indonesia

16 | **PICTURE NEWS**

17 | **PROFILE**
My Journey to Becoming an FIC Brother
Bro. Stephen Bangnabayi (Ghana)

Personal Profile Bro. Mike Mbato
"Here I am Lord I Have Come to do Your Will"
(Psalm 40: 7, 8)

23 | **SPECIAL COLUMN**
Making the Church More Colorful

Community Mission
and Local Church of Mzedi

28 | **NEWS FROM THE VATICAN**
24 World Day for Consecrated Life
Homily of His Holiness Pope Francis
Vatican Basilica, Saturday, 1 February 2020

31 | **MARY**
Mary in My Journey of Life as An FIC Brother

Community, Mission and the Church

Bro. Augustine Kubdaar



To all our beloved brothers and sisters in Christ and particularly the readers of this magazine I send you fraternal regards. We are living in a time of grace and challenge; a time of hope and confusion; a time to trust God more and a time to continue with the global fight against the effects of the "global enemy" mightily known as COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to my daily prayers for each one of us, I add my voice that let us remain resilient to the lethal effects of COVID-19.

The theme of the magazine has three very important key terms: Church, Mission, and Community. As a lay-religious congregation, we believe we are "called out of" the universal church (CCC, 751) to form a fraternal and apostolic community for the building of the kingdom of God. A remarkable gift of the vocation of Religious Brothers is witnessing to the power of fraternal relationships. In the spirit of the vows: celibacy, poverty and obedience, we endeavour to relate to one

another in the community as brothers; we share our material resources in common and exercise a mutual co-responsibility in communion with others in and outside the church for the salvation of souls. We do all of these in fulfillment of the specific mission of our congregation which forms part of the mission of the church. In the spirit of our founders: Msgr. Louis Rutten and Bro. Bernard Hoecken we have our apostolic task in the field of education, Christian formation, and teaching.

As we have always done in history, through both General and Provincial chapters, we keep on evaluating our being religious. We listen to the voice of the Spirit and signs of our time and allow our experience and knowledge to influence our policies and discernment towards a continual renewal of our call and our desire to fulfill God's will. During the recent past chapters, we discerned new ways of deepening the quality of our prayer, community, and apostolic life. We were motivated to make new policies that will help us focus more on responding to the needs of the most vulnerable, poor and needy in society. We are also engaged in a process of re-discerning our community missions; building stronger associations and collaboration with other groups and organizations; and promoting healthy responsibility towards Mother Earth. Neglect of ecological issues bring upon humanity dire consequences such as the current experience of our fragility and vulnerability to the COVID-19. The consequences also affect our mission and spirituality.

In this issue of our magazine "Brothers FIC", we once again wish to share with our

cherished readers how the FIC Brothers are continuing the work of Jesus Christ. We do this through the provision of various services to humanity especially through our charism of education and formation of the youth. In various apostolic endeavours, we try to answer the needs of the poor, needy and other vulnerable people. In our provinces of Chile, Ghana, Malawi and Indonesia, the FIC Brothers are engaged in school and non-school education. Also through a number of charitable activities the Brothers try to relieve needy people of their varied social and medical needs. These are some of the ways through which the FIC Brothers contribute to the building of the church. What about you? In which way(s) do you wish to build the church?

My dear Brothers and friends, I end my reflection with a message of encouragement and hope to all of us on the COVID-19 pandemic. Even though we may feel discouraged, fearful or depressed, let us dare to believe that the glorious resurrected Jesus walks along with us daily in this difficult time just as he did with the two disillusioned disciples on their journey to Emmaus (Lk24: 13 - 35). Like the fight between David and Goliath in scripture (1Sam: 7), let us dare to believe that we shall win the fight against this "common enemy." May the power of the resurrected Lord reinvigorate us. May He restore our hope and joy. And may God receive the departed souls of all our loved ones, especially those who met their untimely death through the coronavirus.



Thinking with the Church

Bro. Raphael Besigrinee

“ I saw that as a human being I needed to accept Christ's authority. I desired to unify my mind, behaviour, and heart with a way of life that would lead me to happiness. ”

(Sr. Theresa Aletheia)



What is the church?

The Catechism of Catholic Church defines the church as the People of God. It is also referred to as the Body of Christ or Temple of the Holy Spirit. Who are we as people of God? We Catholics are a body of people, a community, a family with a story, a history and purpose. We are people who believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. In other words, one becomes a member of this group of people, not by physical birth, but by professing his faith in Jesus Christ and through Baptism. Therefore we have Jesus Christ as the head of the church. Thus, the Lord Jesus tells us, "Love one another as I have loved you", because from the quality of your love "they will know that you are my disciples" (Jn 13:34-35). As part of our mission Christians are "to be salt of the earth and light of the world" (Matt. 5:13-16). As people of God, we are expected to, in obedience to the above, live in unity and work for the salvation of the whole human race. The ultimate aim is to bring about the Kingdom of God. The people of God therefore share a common vision for life; they seek to live in a spirit of love, amidst its joys and sorrows.

John Wright gives us another perspective of the Church "It is not just a gathering of like-minded men, of people who happen to share the same views on religion and morality. God calls it (the Church) into being as a communion of those who respond to Him in faith, and acknowledge the Lordship of Jesus Christ through the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Church is the first fruit of the Kingdom of God in the world, and it bears within itself the most important force for the spread and development of that Kingdom".

The church is also often referred to as the body of Christ. The Body of Christ is a common term used to describe the Christian faithful. Some people may begin to think we are talking about the physical body of Christ, as in His human form on earth. But the term "Body of Christ" actually refers to the members of His church. Who or what is the body of Christ? Our physical body is composed of many members: hands, feet, arms, legs, ears, eyes, etc. It is the uniqueness of each member that enables the body to function properly. Likewise, the body of Christ (the Church), is made up of all those who have accepted Jesus Christ in baptism. In our case,

each Catholic, then, is part of the body of Christ whether a bishop, Rev. Brother, Priest, Rev. Sister or a lay (married) person. All are called to serve others in the interest of the church.

2. Thinking with the church

What does it really mean to "think with the Church"? In explaining the term, some church documents also use the phrase "sense of the church" or "feeling with the church". In explaining the term Pope Francis himself said, "For one thing, thinking with the Church means giving a unique respect to our bishops and to the Pope". Church leaders are under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in matters of faith and morals and so as the people of God, Christians rely on the direction of those in authority, as St. Thomas Bellarmine has clearly stated, "The Pope and bishops are real heads, the teachers and preachers are real eyes and tongues of the Body of Christ, even when they have fallen from the grace of God".

Some Christian leaders even admit that they find peace and harmony in submitting to the legitimate authority of the Church as testified by St. Augustine when he wrote, "I would not believe in the Gospel if the authority of the Catholic Church did not move me to do so" and by Sr. Theresa Aletheia in the following: "Life under my own direction had left my heart in tatters. I saw that as a human being I needed to accept Christ's authority. I desired to unify my mind, behaviour, and heart with a way of life that would lead me to happiness. But we reject Jesus in his Church when we do not respect and accept the legitimate authority he has set in place".

In an interview with Antonio Spadaro, Pope Francis explained thinking with the church, the holy and faithful people of God, thus: "The people themselves are the subject. And the church is the people of God on the journey through history with joys and sorrows. To think and to feel with the church, therefore, is my way of being a part of this people." I understand Pope Francis' explanation to mean the people's expression of their faith and their efforts to work

together, all their efforts, struggles, achievements, successes and even failures as part of thinking with the Church. His idea of thinking with the church involves a dialogue among the people and their leaders including the Pope. For him, "this church with which we should be thinking and feeling is the home of all, not a small chapel that can only hold a small group of select people."

Since the church is made up of human beings, it is natural to judge that it is not perfect. There are certainly incidence of weaknesses and strengths, joys and worries, so to feel with the church is to feel its pain as well as its joys, thus the Pope describes it in terms of ordinary human activity. "I see the holiness in the patience of the people of God: a woman who is raising children, a man who works to bring home the bread, the elderly priests who have so many wounds but have a smile on their faces because they served the Lord, the sisters who work hard and live a hidden sanctity". Thinking with the church therefore includes our contribution, our services and our daily struggles in building the church wherever we are, according to our talents and charisms. We all display our believe in the church through a sense of the faith of all the people of God walking together. So this thinking with the church does not concern theologians or ecclesiastical officers only.

3. How do "we" Religious think with the church

Religious by our vows have promised to follow Christ and serve the church He started, so our contributions to the building of God's kingdom form part of our thinking with the church. Our life is a concrete expression of our love for Christ and His church, thus Pope Paul VI in his Evangelii Nuntiandi (n. 60), said "it is an absurd dichotomy to think of living with Christ without the Church, of following Jesus outside his Church, of loving Jesus without loving the Church". In other words, belonging to the church is part of our life as religious. In fact, it is one of the constitutive dimensions of consecrated life. It is a dimension that must be constantly renewed and deepened in life. Our vocation (as religious) "is a

fundamental charism for the journey of the Church, and it is impossible for a consecrated man or woman not to think with the Church. Thinking with the Church led to our Baptism; thinking with the Church finds its expressions in faithfulness to the Magisterium, in communion with the Pastors and the Successor of Peter, the Bishop of Rome, a visible sign of unity".

As FIC brothers, we feel Jesus Christ is the highest authority of the church and He should be considered as such. It is therefore our task to give form to our consecration within the church by exercising our roles without hindrance. In the 2018 GC report, FIC brothers were encouraged to work with all people of good will, and these include ecclesiastical leaders. The work of evangelization cannot be done only by a section of the church; it is a mission whose success is only achieved through collaboration. As Paul VI recalled very well in *Evangelii nuntiandi*, "For every Christian the proclamation of the Gospel and witness to the Gospel are never isolated acts of an individual or a group. No evangelizer acts in virtue of a personal inspiration, but in union with the mission of the Church and in her name". The task of following the Lord is not to be as a solitary sailor; therefore, FIC is part of a spirituality of communion, that is, an effective and affective relation with the Clergy (Bishops and the Pope).

4. Challenges for religious

The Brother's vocation is complete in itself and needs nothing more to be lived fully as a prophetic sign in the world and a witness to God's love, but from some pronouncements even by church leaders (about vocations), the Brothers' vocation is sometimes not understood, appreciated or promoted sufficiently by the hierarchical Church. This issue was discussed in some FIC Congregational Conferences in the past. We wondered whether we are not visible enough in the world!

We have witnessed instances of such 'misunderstanding'. I attended Sunday mass at

one of the parishes in Ghana after which I approached the priest for a chat. There were a couple of people around as we chatted with the priest. A young woman made a comment about what she knew about a religious Brother thus "I heard that religious Brothers are those men who failed to become priests". Everybody in the group became very quiet as if to confirm their embarrassment. Intuitively the priest walked away without a word, followed by the rest. The woman was obviously embarrassed, just like the rest, but I was not because of what I believe about such comments. Later on during the day, I made an intentional visit to the woman's house and gave her a briefing on who a Brother really is. I knew her ignorance was genuine, so I concluded my talk by telling her to educate others on the topic.

As FIC brothers we are mostly involved in school as well as non-school apostolate in our five provinces. We have some influence in health care services, social and parish work. Through our apostolate, we encounter a great variety people in different fields of work, yet the uncertainty of "who we are" remains in the minds of many, including some church leaders. This is not a challenge of FIC brothers alone. We share this with many other lay congregations around the world. People have very little knowledge about our real function within the church. But this should not prevent us from our continuous witness of the love of God in the church through our charism of education and formation.

5. Conclusion

Through our apostolate, the FIC brothers are ever more motivated to continue this mission which we believe God has given to us. FIC brothers will continue to think with the church wherever we are in the world. We believe this is what we are called to do as our contribution to the body of Christ, which is the church. We are encouraging young people all over the world, our friends and collaborators to join hands with our efforts in fulfilling the mission of the church, which is to continue the work of Jesus in building God's kingdom of love on earth.

My Impressions on International Vincentian Family Conference, Rome 2020

Bro. Theodorus Suwariyanto



The International Vincentian Family Conference was held from 8 to 12 January 2020, at Augustinianum Patristic Institute in Rome. Participants came from 97 out of the 157 branches all over the world. We were about 200 persons, including Religious Priests, Brothers, Sisters and Lay people. This Conference was of historic importance for the Vincentian Family and addressed the following issues: The Vincentian Family Mission; Communication in the Vincentian Family; the potential of the Internet and the Challenge it presents in the future; the impact of the 2018 Vincentian Family Festival; the Vincentian Family Alliance in Favour of the Homeless; The Culture of Vocations; and the Transmission of the Charism through the Family Branches.

The Conference opened on January 8, 2020, in the morning with an audience with the Pope, in a large auditorium within the Vatican where a crowd of thousands waited. The Pope gave a message based on the Gospel of the day, namely Jesus walking on the water, followed by a warm welcome to each of the visiting groups. The group then had the opportunity to have a picture with the Pope, who also had the opportunity to greet us.

Some inspirations during the Conference include the following:

- From the history and overview of the Vincentian Family, Fr. Robert Maloney, CM reminded us that Vincent "dared to do what others tried but failed to do." Vincent changed the whole systemic experience of religious life by instituting different apostolic approaches, such as the Sisters coming out from their cloisters into the streets in order to serve the poor. Vincent said we must have a "deep wisdom and daring prudence." He practised this wisdom and prudence through collaboration with others and we are invited to follow. We have to "Be receptive to the newness of the Spirit."
- "A lack of access to information can be a new source of poverty." Each Congregation has to be vigilant in the use of new technology. Today is the time of cooperation, a time to establish channels of permanent dialogue and active collaboration. Three basic principles to establish good communication are participation, collaboration and coordination. We have to use social media both skillfully and critically, and at the same time become aware that human contact is very important, that is, heart to heart communication.
- Homelessness is a burning issue suffered by the poor today. We are called to welcome the stranger in our midst today, both in terms of immigration and those who suffer homelessness.
- On vocation promotion we are encouraged to live out the following: do not be afraid to tell your story (faith sharing); do not be afraid to risk; be joyful and authentic in dealing with others in order to witness our charism; being an example is the most important; share the experience of God and to be with God and others, to live out the spirit of "Active

Contemplative Attitude". Bring about a shift in our thinking: from "mission = message" TO "Mission = Relationship". Place the emphasis on BEING; not always on DOING.

- e) About generation Y and Z, we must create opportunities which allow them to explore their hunger and questions and affirm their relationship with God: provide stimulating theological reflection on service and social justice issues; teach and encourage the art of meditation and prayer; help them to have a spirituality that connects them to our loving and creator God; we have to establish the best "bridge" to reach them. Secularization is real. How can we really clarify the mission, vision and values of our Congregation to lay people (to the youth of generation Y and Z?).
- f) On "Transmission of the Vincentian Charism", we are all invited to be on a journey of seeking and sharing the charism (with lay people). Refounding requires being willing to go through the darkness of loss but to maintain the charism.
- g) If we want a different future, we have to take the responsibility and be accountable for what we are doing in the present. The future is NOW, it has already begun.

The meeting shed more light on how other Congregations, institutions, religious and lay people are involved with the poor. I have also learned the importance of collaboration with people including the local church and the world at large, and how to express our charism in our mission and in the spirit of solidarity and unity. Together with others, we are capable of providing greater services to the poor and needy.

I admire the so many religious and lay people who are concretely involved in work for the poor, sometimes at the risk of their lives. This reminds me of our own "option for the poor"; art. 17 of our Constitutions "Our Principal Concern" (special concern for the poor and destitute, the under



privileged and disabled, for those who experience little love); on promoting our solidarity with those in need, and General Chapter 2018 Resolution no. 16 B: Focussing our Apostolic Work on the most Poor and Needy, etc. I received a lot of support during the encounter, especially issues about our work for the poor.

We face the same challenges as FIC, namely how to promote vocations among the Generation Y and Z, how to establish or build a bridge to reach them, how to establish good and effective communication and relationship with them, both internally and externally, how to transmit our Charism/Values to our co-workers and lay people, and how to develop and understand social media and online resources to help us move into the future.

In conclusion, I am very grateful for the opportunity to attend this conference and encouraged by the stories, input and personal encounters in such an international setting. At the same time I am challenged to find ways of forwarding the message to our brothers and other people outside our inner circle. The Vincentian Family Conference in Rome was truly a historic moment and a blessing for all. As a whole, participants grew in relationship and deeper understanding of the breadth and depth of the Vincentian Charism and Family all over the world.

The conference closed with a Eucharistic celebration. Greetings of peace and farewell were shared by all in diverse languages. I am grateful for this opportunity to represent the FIC Congregation in this conference.

The Web of Life

Impressions of The Meeting of JPIC 2019

Bro. Johan Muijtjens



Have you ever carefully watched a spiders' web ? Touched it ? Put your finger in it ? It looks very thin - which it is. But it is also very flexible and very strong. You cannot put your finger through the web ! Only with violence you can destroy it !

That's a good image of the Web of Life, the web of all that is alive on our earth: not only the human beings, but also the animals and the plants, the corals and the tiny mosses. Yes, all of these, very small and very big: they all belong to the web of life!

Some months ago I attended a long meeting in Rome of brothers and sisters, all very concerned about the web of life in which we live. In this web of life there are big holes and weak spots. In fact many people fall through the holes in that web of life. So many people are treated as something you can buy and sell, or like things you throw away when you do not need them anymore.

We heard heart-rending stories about "child-soldiers" : girls and boys who have to carry weapons for the adult soldiers, have to do very 'dirty' work, poisoning others, put houses on fire, sometimes are forced to kill other people, even relatives. We looked at pictures of young ladies who like sex-slaves were sold to be used in prostitution and pornography or had to work without any right or protection and in very bad

health conditions. Others are used like objects, for organ-removing or for forced begging. And then the poor boys and girls who, for a trifle, had to work in very dirty and dusty open air mines to collect little grains of gold, silver or poisonous metals (needed for the battery of our mobile phones !). These are big holes or wounds in the web of our human life.

And it was not only about human beings. We also saw how poachers mercilessly killed elephants just to rip them from their big long tusks. Or killing the few unicorns that still live in the woods, just for their corn. And many more of these murdering practices. Yes, and the woods themselves are victims: in many places these are completely destroyed: not only the precious big trees are cut down but all the life of animals and plants is killed. In the meantime we have discovered that this is one of the main causes of the virus outbreaks, like the present corona virus disease 2019 (the covid-19). This robbing of our earth of its precious woods also causes serious dangers for our climate. The big woods with their trees and many different plants and animals form an ecology that is absolutely necessary to keep our climate in a good condition. Many scientists have proved that we absolutely need much more "green" on our earth, otherwise our climate will become too hot and there will be more and more tsunami-floods, storms and hurricanes, coastal inundations and other nature-disasters. The list is still much longer, but let me stop here. It was necessary and good that we got all this information. But - that was not the MAIN AIM of our meeting !

The main aim was to show us ways to mend, to repair the human web again:

What can we do to prevent the worldwide human trafficking ? What against the misuse of children in wars and in mines? What in favour of the teenage girls and boys and especially young women in sexual exploitation and in other forms

of slavery ? And what against the misuse of our woods and environments ?

We heard many encouraging examples of people who try to heal these deep wounds, these holes in the web of our life. Thousands of young people, adults and older ones join hands in order to help the children who are so misused, to save the people who are sold for the benefit of others, to provide health care for poor children who have to work in the mines - and many more wonderful examples.

There are good people who protest against the robbing of our woods, who write articles in papers and magazines to make people aware of what is going on.

We heard about and saw how members of different churches and religions all worked together to save people from their desperate situations. There are numerous organizations who try to influence the policy makers by providing reliable information about what is really happening. Scientists who, despite all resistance against their conclusions, continue to inform the public.

The United Nations organization with its divisions are worldwide involved in educational, healthcare, social, ecological, environmental and informational programs.

Yes, there happens so much good ! We know that good education, health care, assistance for disabled and old people do exists already for centuries. But now we become more aware of new, 'modern' forms of misuse and violence.

During this meeting we shared many experiences both difficult and hopeful, both creative and courageous. We got deeper insights in the causes and the backgrounds. We also enriched each other with new information. We have improved our networking in order to help and encourage each other, to indicate new information and helpful methods, to find money and specialized help, and also to warn each other about special dangers and how to avoid them. The meeting was very sobering, but it gave us also a strong push to continue with all the good things that are already going on - and to be even more on the alert about relatively new



forms of slavery, of violence and of destruction of our earth.

The general council of our Congregation has asked me to attend that meeting. What was presented in Rome confirmed strongly some recent decisions taken at our general chapter in 2018: the resolution about finding new ways to help the poor and needy close to us and the resolution on care for our environment.

I see as my task giving new information to support the work of our brothers, writing articles, encouraging brothers during meetings - and so trying to help all of us to stay open to what is really going on and not to lose courage despite the enormous size of the problems.

The Founders of our Congregation, Louis Rutten and Bernard Hoecken, saw the great needs in Maastricht. They could not cure the whole world, but could do something important in the place where they lived and worked. They gave themselves with great love and zeal, trusting that God would help them when they did their utmost. The history of our Congregation proves that they were right and that they did not give their lives in vain. After nearly two centuries we as Brothers may still contribute to the WEB of GOOD LIFE for many!

So, let's not be discouraged. We may be sure of God's help when we give ourselves with great love for the well being of others. Let us never be tired of doing good - that was a word of our co-founder, our dear Brother Bernard !

Joint Meeting FIC-CMM March 4, 2020

The collaboration between FIC General Council and the leadership of the Brothers of Our Lady Mother of Mercy (CMM) through joint fraternal encounters continues. This year, the meeting of the two councils, which took place at the CMM Generalate in Tilburg, was a concluding encounter as the current CMM General Council will wrap up their term of office in June this year. Sharing of experiences and inspirations have always been the main purpose of our encounter and collaboration, thus the Brothers CMM gave a brief retrospective sharing on the celebration of the 175th anniversary of their foundation which happened in 2019. Significant activities during the Jubilee year included the exposition and sale of paintings, lectures on the Brothers CMM heritage, video conference and a grand reception for the general public. It was described as an uplifting experience. The CMM General Council also shared some information on preparations for their approaching General Chapter scheduled from 18 May till 5 June 2020 in the Generalate of the Brothers CMM in Tilburg.

On their part, FIC gave a report on the Leadership Workshop/Congregational Conference which took place in the Netherlands from 2 - 16 October 2019. Having achieved positive results, the workshop was judged to be very fruitful. Plans for the next congregational gathering in Indonesia are also far advanced. This yearly meeting between the General Council and the Provincial Superiors, will focus on the three pillars of religious life: community living, prayer, and apostolate, and is scheduled from 2 - 16 September 2020. Both councils shared on the enrichment from the Vincentian Family International Leaders' meeting which took place in Rome from 8-12 January, 2020, and was attended by representatives from both



sides. Both sides acknowledged the content of the meeting as very inspiring and having a close link with the Spiritualities of our congregations.

As a conclusion to the meeting, we tried to explore additional ways of strengthening our bonds of relationship. In future we could extend this relationship to include having a day of recollection together as a way of gaining spiritual enrichment. FIC wished the Brothers CMM a fruitful General Chapter. We concluded our fraternal encounter with an extended and recreational dinner.

What Have We Done?

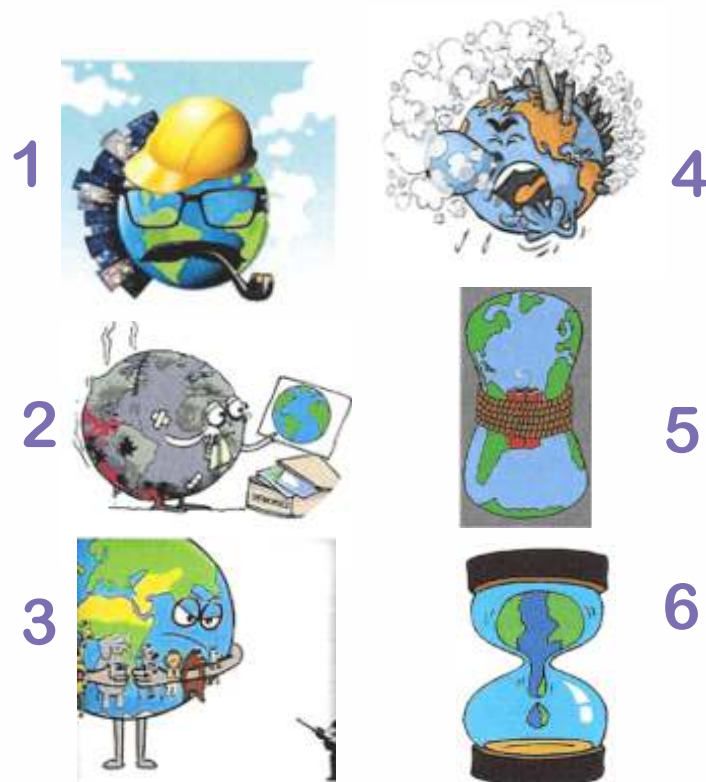
In the beginning
was the earth.
And it was beautiful.
And human beings lived upon the earth.
And they said:
"Let us build skyscrapers and expressways".
And they covered the earth with steel and
concrete.
And they said: "It is good."

On the second day,
humanity looked upon the clear blue waters
of the earth.
And said:
"Let us dump our sewage and wastes into
the waters."
And so they did.
The waters became dark and murky.
And they said: "It is good."

On the third day,
humanity gazed at the forests of the earth.
They were tall and green.
And the human beings said:
"Let us cut the trees and build things for
ourselves."
And they did. And the forests grew thin.
And they said: "It is good."

On the fourth day,
humanity saw the animals grazing in the
fields
and playing in the sun. And they said:
"Let us trap the animals for money
and shoot them for sport."
And they did.
And the animals became scarce.
And they said: "It is good."

On the fifth day
humanity felt the cool breeze in their
nostrils.
And they said: "Let us burn our refuse
and let the wind blow away the smoke and
debris."



And they did.
And the air became dense with smoke and
carbon.
And they said: "It is good."

On the sixth day
humanity saw the many kinds of peoples on
the earth -
different races, colors and creed.
And the feared and said:
"Let us make all kinds of lethal weapons
and missiles in case misunderstandings
arise."
And they did. And missile sites
and bomb factories chequered the
landscape.
And they said: "It is good."

On the seventh day
humanity rested.
And the earth was quiet and deathly still.
For humanity was no more.
And it was good!

Diocesan Jubilee Celebrations, Wa Ghana

GHANA

On Thursday, November 30, 2019, the feast of St. Andrew the Apostle, the Wa Catholic Diocesan family came together to celebrate the event. The celebration of this day has come to be closely associated with the celebration of jubilees of Priests, Religious and Married Couples for attaining significant heights in their respective vocations.

As usual, the celebration took place in the context of a Eucharistic Celebration, presided over by Most Rev. Richard Kuuia Baawobr, Bishop of Wa. The ceremony was also graced by two former Bishops of the Diocese, Paul Bemile, Bishop Emeritus of Wa and Gregory Ebo Kpiebeyaa, Arch Bishop Emeritus of Tamale.

In his welcome address, the Cathedral Administrator, Very Rev. Fr. Patrick Segkpeb, stated that the celebration was also meant to commemorate the 90th anniversary of the first mass by the first missionaries to the area led by Rev. Fr. Remigious McCoy, M. Afr.

He further indicated that the Diocese was honouring 40 jubilarians across the three main vocations. He gave the breakdown as follows: twenty-one couples, eight diocesan priests, one religious priest, three male religious and seven female religious.

In his homily, Bishop Richard acknowledged and thanked his predecessors for nurturing the seed of faith originally sown by the first missionaries. He also mentioned that by virtue of our baptism, every Catholic is a missionary, therefore it is incumbent on all the faithful to take the proclamation of the word of God seriously. He added that the call to holiness was not exclusively reserved for priests and religious but that our common baptism enjoins all of us to live holy lives in whatever sphere of life or vocation we find ourselves, and to radiate the joy of the Gospel.



Touching briefly on the life of St. Andrew, the Bishop admonished the faithful to emulate the worthy examples of the Saint, notably that we should strive to have a personal encounter with Christ, we should be attentive to the needs of other people and last but not least, we should aid others to respond to the call of Christ by fostering and facilitating the conversion of their hearts and minds.

The Bishop could not have ended his homily without throwing a challenge to the whole diocese. He exhorted everyone to make projections into the foreseeable future and answer this question for ourselves: "where do we want to see ourselves as a people in ten years' time when the diocese will be marking its 100th anniversary?"

After the homily, all the "jubilarians" were invited to come forward and renew their marital, religious and priestly commitments after which the Bishop blessed them, congratulated all of them and wished them well in the pursuit of fulfilment in their respective vocations.

The occasion brought together scores of people including priests and religious from within and outside the diocese, catechists, married couples, families, friends and well-wishers of the "jubilarians" and other people of goodwill. The celebration ended with light refreshment.

The Joy of Brotherhood

MALAWI

We (Bros. Mike, Moses and Chancy) the newly professed brothers of Malawi province would like to share the life experiences during our three years of formation as FIC Brothers. We are happy and privileged for this opportunity to share our story with brothers in different provinces, and more importantly to let them know what has shaped us during these years of formation. Honestly speaking we have lots of experiences but we will be brief so as not to make the story boring.

"A Journey of one thousand miles begins with a step". This was our motivational quote when we started our journey to brotherhood in the formation house in 2015 as residential aspirants. We started as a group of five young men namely Francis Limbulo, Cornelius Finye, Chancy Mfuné, Mike Mbato and Moses Mgunda, from different dioceses in Malawi. As a group we had different experiences both interesting and challenging. We had time to share our life experiences such as those connected with our vocation, family stories as well as experiences on our educational background. The sharing opened our minds to realize the joy of being together as brothers.

The whole group of five was accepted to start the canonical year of novitiate which marks the beginning of religious life. Living in a community helped us to know each other better through criticisms and recommendations from others. As a group, each had his own likes and dislikes but we have grown to respect each other and our differences, and this helped us to strengthen our vocation and our personal growth. There were moments of disappointment during our formative years, especially when we took turns as leader of the group. The leader was a link between the director and the group. He could assign us manual work, and we took

turns to represent the group when there was anything to communicate to the director. This helped us to develop leadership skills and also practice the vow of obedience among ourselves. This was the time we realized that togetherness is very important. To be honest novitiate is a period where most of the times we felt dry, and only prayer with the support of one another made us to move on. We agree to the saying that "the more you want to be closer to God, the more the devil wants to pull you down". Our life was tested through this phrase as we experienced moments of hopelessness, anxiety and uncertainty about the future.

At the end of the canonical year, the provincial council and the Formation team accepted only three of us, namely Mike Mbato, Chancy Mfuné and Moses Mgunda in the apostolic year novitiate. Two of our friends were asked to withdraw.

Life is like riding a bicycle, to keep your balance you must keep moving. During the apostolic year of novitiate, there were different experiences especially after losing our friends with whom we had grown in relationship and also shared a lot as brothers. However as time passed we accepted the situation and moved on. During the apostolic year the three of us were separated for community experiences. This brought about another type of experience because each one of us had to face the real community life alone. However we were strengthened by the phrase which says that "if you do not know where you are going any road will take you there".

After the apostolic year the Provincial Council accepted the requests of the three of us to take the first vows on 21st November 2018. As newly professed brothers the council assigned us to different communities to engage in different kinds of apostolate. Bro. Mike Mbato was sent to Mary View community to teach at Nguludi Girls Primary School, Bro.

Moses Mgunda to Mzedi community, where he took up a teaching assignment at St. Louis Community Day Secondary School, and at the same time assisted in the bursary, and lastly, Bro. Chancy was sent to Bethel community and assigned to teach at St. Patricks Secondary School and also act as assistant boarding master. As young professed brothers the Provincial Council assigned us to different committees such as communication and vocation promotion teams. We are doing our best to promote vocations among young men in secondary schools, colleges and universities across Malawi.

"Life is understood backwards but must be lived forward". We are so grateful to God for our past experiences; they have shaped us to be who we are today. We are enjoying the present life and we hope for a better future in our congregation.

*Written by the newly professed brothers Mike, Moses and Chancy
(Date of profession of first vows: 21 November 2018)*



FIC Friends' Gathering in Indonesia

FIC Friends' Gathering in Indonesia

Pope Francis, in his message of 2019 world day of vocations, emphasized the importance of an encounter in promoting every form of vocation whether to the religious life, priesthood or marriage life. For this reason, in order to offer religious life as a life choice that offers a path to happiness, the FIC brothers need to continually develop a culture of encounter. In order to build a culture of encounter, the Vocation Promotion Team of young brothers in Indonesia organized an annual gathering for the young people called "FIC Friends' Gathering". The objective of this gathering was to introduce the life of FIC to the youth. This year, the gathering took place at the Syalom Retreat House from 15-16 February 2020. Around 60 youngsters, mostly from FIC schools, attended the event. Those who already expressed their desire to become FIC brothers (in Indonesia we call them "simpatisan") were also invited.

The program of the gathering was very well prepared by the committee. There were both indoor and outdoor activities. One of the reflective activities done in the hall was facilitated by Bro. Hans Gendut, a Provincial Councilor. He gave an input on "Faith Militancy" a theme that generated great interest in the participants as observed during the question and answer session.

On the whole, the brothers and participants were satisfied with the encounter. Hopefully the fruits of this event, like seeds that fall into fertile land, can grow and bear fruits in the young people to dedicate themselves for the growth of God's Kingdom.

INDONESIA



General Board of Fraters CMM and General Council of FIC Brothers after their joint meeting at the office of the Fraters CMM in Tilburg, March 4, 2020



Bro. Andri Pratomo and two candidates, together with Sunday School children at Salam Youth Centre in Salam, Magelang, Central Java (Indonesia).



Bro. Lawrence Sitima (Provincial Superior) giving opening remarks during their Provincial Day at the Provincial House in Blantyre, Malawi (March 8, 2020)



Bros. Eustachius Eko Wijayanto and Yohanes Krismanto at Schiphol Airport on the way back to Chile after their home leave in Indonesia (March 2020)



Bro. Isidore Aabiesie FIC, Religious Sisters and married couples cutting a jubilee cake during the diocesan jubilee celebration in Wa, Ghana (November 30, 2019)



Bros. Kristoforus Sangsung, Agustinus Subaryana, and Yusup Kuncoro, with two FIC aspirants, in front of the FIC house in Ainaro, Timor Leste

My Journey to Becoming an FIC Brother

Bro. Stephen Bangnabayi (Ghana)

“We consider their heritage as a precious asset, which can only be kept alive by paying respectful attention to our tradition and by keeping an open eye to the signs of our times.”

Introduction

As brothers we know ourselves to be called together and thus sent out to continue the work of Jesus. He went around doing good, he was a witness to the truth, he came to serve, he came to redeem, and he brought the liberating message of the Kingdom of God as a message of love. He invites us to place ourselves completely in the service of this Kingdom (Const. art. 15). I am grateful to the General Council for the opportunity to share my story with fellow brothers, friends of FIC and the so many cherished readers of the magazine. I love reading the magazine myself, but I never knew a day would come when I would be required to contribute to it.

Brief family background

I was born in 1966 to Mr. Aloysius Bangnabayi (of blessed memory) and Mrs. Helena Laziema. My father was a peasant farmer and my mother a house wife. The two of them complemented their efforts in a very appreciable way to make sure that they meet the family needs in terms of food and shelter. But since both of them were not earning salary, it was very difficult for them to execute the task of paying school fees or medical bills. Thank God we had a very robust and supportive extended family system at the time. Most of my school fees were paid by my stepfather Mr. Joseph Tizaazor (of blessed memory). He was very keen at my education and could do everything possible to make sure I stay in school and don't become a drop out. The family from the onset has been a Christian family. As a family of seven (7) siblings all of us



were brought up in the Christian way. My only sister, the second born got married long before I could reason. So I grew up in the midst of only my brothers. So you can imagine what that means. Most of the house chores like sweeping, grinding of flour and fetching of water were done by my younger brother and I. I am the sixth (6) born and the only one sent to school. This was a great privilege on my part. It was much, much later that my younger brother who was following cattle, which were later all stolen, strove very hard to get himself educated.

My Vocation Story

As a young boy growing up in the village of Charikpong in the Upper West Region of Ghana in the late 1960s/1970s, I had the desire to

PROFILE

dedicate my life to serve God. But in which form I didn't know. My exposure was only limited to the village. I didn't have any contact with religious; only priests, who came to say mass at the village on Sundays. Occasionally, a seminarian or a Rev. Sister accompanied them. It took me time before I encountered Bro. Jerome Konbual (FIC), an uncle of mine who was then in Tumu community. By God's intervention, whenever he visited home, he made a stopover in Charikpong to greet my mother. Often times I shared a meal with him, in order to learn table manners, and also learn to speak the English language. It was only after primary school that I had a clearer idea about the different vocations in the church, especially religious life and priesthood.

One Sunday we, the youth had an interesting interaction with one Fr. Justin Bongne, who came to celebrate mass in the village. As we crowded round him after mass, he asked us, like a joke, what each of us was dreaming to become in future. We gave varied responses but I still remember I told Father that I would like to become a brother. After listening to all of us, Father assured us that nothing was impossible for anyone to accomplish in life, if only we worked hard for it. He encouraged us to put everything into prayers assuring us of his own prayerful support. This was very encouraging and uplifting. I am glad to say here that from that group of young people who had the encounter with Fr. Justin, two brothers (including me) and one diocesan priest emerged from it.

Educational Background

I started primary education in Charikpong in 1974, continued with the Middle School education and completed in 1984. In 1985, I went to St. Basilide Vocational School in Kaleo, to pursue cabinet making. That time was the summit of my decision making. While learning the trade, I was keen at observing the



lives of the FIC Brothers who were teaching us. I admired more especially their community life, commitment and dedication to work. Bro. Jos Van Dinther who was principal of the school inspired me greatly. At a point in time, the number of students was so discouraging that some of the teachers were no more interested in coming to class but Bro. Jos was always with us to honour his lessons. It was at this time that I developed the interest in becoming a brother, so that I could help others like the way he was concerned about us. In 1990, I went to Sunyani Technical School to do city and guilds intermediate, for I was told it was the minimum entry requirement to begin religious formation. After this I returned to the region and did my national service in 1991.

Community Life

As indicated above, in pursuing my studies in Kaleo I discovered that the community life of the brothers was very fascinating. That was the first time of seeing people from different nationalities, cultures and backgrounds living together under the same roof. This was so inspiring and captivating that the desire to be a brother got reinforced. Till date, community life has challenged me to grow day by day. My life is daily shaped towards my creator as a result

of community living. According to St. John XXIII, "human beings are born to live together and to work for the good of one another" (Pacem in Terris, no. 16).

Apostolate

We desire to do this in the spirit of our Founders. We feel akin to them. Their love and their concern we embrace as our own. We consider their heritage as a precious asset, which can only be kept alive by paying respectful attention to our tradition and by keeping an open eye to the signs of our times. In the spirit of our Founders we, as a Congregation, find our apostolic task in particular to be in the field of education, formation and teaching (const. art. 16). In line with this, I take my apostolic task seriously. It has always been my desire to serve others through the teaching profession. For the past twenty-five (25) years, this has found expression in the communities I lived and worked. My current community,

Damongo, is my sixth community since my first profession. I must say that I have gained tremendous experience and growth over the years under review. Though challenging, community life has afforded me the grace to grow spiritually and psychologically; thus making me a better person.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I am grateful to God for how far he has brought me in religious life. Celebrating these twenty-five (25) years in religious vows is just by his grace. He has shown me his immense love which I am so grateful for. He called me into the family of the FIC Brothers and sustained me till date. With his mighty hand he enabled me to weather the storms till this time, so I ask for His continuous guidance and protection in the years ahead.

Bro. Stephen Bangnabayi
[Headmaster of St. Anne's Junior High School, Damongo]



Personal Profile**"Here I am Lord I Have Come to do Your Will"
(Psalm 40: 7, 8)**

Bro. Mike Mbato



“ I came to know the FIC Brothers much later from the FIC calendar of 2014. This calendar displayed photographs of Brothers at their places of apostolate. ”

living. After elementary school, I was selected for secondary school in 2009 and completed in the year 2012. Thereafter I proceeded to do the teacher training course at Blantyre Teachers Training College (BTTC) in the year 2013 where I graduated in the year 2015 with T2 certificate. I started my initial formation program at Mzedi Formation House in October 2015. I took my first vows on 21 November 2018. Then the Provincial Council appointed me to teach at Nguludi Girls Primary School. Currently I am studying Special Needs Education (diploma level) at the Catholic University of Malawi.

My vocation story

The genesis of my vocation journey is my friend Harry Matuta, then a candidate to the Comboni missionaries (now a deacon), who used to share with me some very interesting stories about their formation. It was through this friend of mine that I developed great interest, first for the priesthood, for I had no idea about the FIC Brothers or religious life in general. In general, most of us thought that religious life was a stage to the priesthood. It

Family background

I was born on 15th March 1993. As the last-born son in a family of two boys, I was brought up by mother's elder sister because I lost my mother when I was 5 years old. A few years later, I also lost my father. I am from Kadikira village, Blantyre district, in southern Malawi. My aunt's husband whom I grew up with, is humble, friendly, easygoing, active and loving. He supported my education and wellbeing without complaints. As dedicated Catholics my parents encouraged us to attend church activities and remain faithful to our church responsibilities. My brother and I were mass servers and my mother a choir member.

My education

I started my primary education in the year 2000 at Chikuli Primary School and later continued at Lirangwe where my aunt was

was only after attending the "Come and See Sessions" of the Comboni Missionaries, that it became clear to me that religious life is a completely different vocation from that of priesthood.

During my encounter with the Comboni Missionaries, I had the opportunity to visit their technical schools where most their brothers were working. Through my interaction with one of them I became more aware of the different vocations in the Church, and especially the vocation to religious life. From this time I began exploring more about brotherhood rather than priesthood. This time one of the Comboni priests (Fr. Jean Marie) explained to me how different brotherhood is from priesthood. He later introduced to me the different congregations of Brothers, although he did not mention FIC Brothers. He encouraged me to attend the "Come and See Session" of St. John of God Brothers so as to gain in-depth knowledge of the various congregations in the church and especially lay religious congregations.

I came to know the FIC Brothers much later from the FIC calendar of 2014. This calendar displayed photographs of Brothers at their places of apostolate. I was very much touched by their work and spontaneously became interested in their way of life. I got the contacts from the calendar and later communicated with the then Bro. Peter Nthulula. In December 2014, I was called to attend my first "Come and See Session" of the FIC Brothers. It was an interesting moment to be given the opportunity to have this encounter because I was looking forward to it.

My formation period

My formation journey started in October 2015 at Mzedi Formation House. I did not expect to be called at that particular time because my colleague-postulants had already started the program two months earlier. Five of us started

the journey this year and tried to be brothers of each other despite our differences.

Time went quickly, and on 8th September 2016 the discernment process entered another stage. I was accepted to start my canonical novitiate which is a year of deep reflection on the way of life I had opted for. Towards the end of the canonical novitiate in 2017, government released the names of student teachers who had completed their teacher training in the year 2015, and the results indicated that I was appointed to teach at Lirangwe Primary School. This meant I had to report to my station to start teaching, but the fact that I was still doing my novitiate program was an indication of a conflict. This was a time of confusion as I became unstable in my mind.

After long discussion with my novice master he agreed that I first report to the Education Managers' office in order to secure my teaching job. Later the Provincial Council allowed me to report at Lirangwe Primary School and teach for some time before I could request for a transfer to Demonstration Primary School which is closer to the formation community.

After the canonical year I was required to have a practical community experience, while maintaining my job as a teacher. Arrangements were made with a parish priest to stay in his parish and teach at Lirangwe. On 18th September 2017, I left Mitengo community for Lirangwe. I was staying with two priests namely Fr. James Kasitomu and Fr. Oscar. My stay there was very motivating because I was already familiar with people and the environment there.

My Apostolate

In November 2017, I went on transfer to Maryview community. For my teaching job, I also had to process a transfer to Nguludi Girls Primary School.



Doing apostolate at Nguludi Girls is a wonderful experience, since I enjoy my work there partly due to the cordial relationship that is existing between the administration and members of staff. Learners at this school are also very active in terms of school work. If I assign them work they do it to their best of knowledge. At first it was something hard for me to teach only girls, but I soon got used to them, and now I enjoy teaching. What does it mean to be a Brother FIC in this school? It is important that I become a true brother to everybody: teachers, learners and other staff members. At the same time I have to demonstrate that I am sent there "to continue the work of Jesus, who went round doing good, who was a witness to the truth, who came to serve, and who brought the liberating message of the Kingdom of God as a message of love" (Const. article 15). I have to allow myself to be challenged every day, to remain always on the path of service. It is not really easy doing this amidst the daily human limitations. In realizing this, I see the need to rely on a power that is greater than me. I have to rely on the power of God through prayer, and more to the point, our beloved Mother Mary, patroness of our congregation, to continuously intercede for me in my daily struggles that I may remain committed to the ideals of the congregation.

Conclusion

My gratitude goes to the Provincial Council for giving me the opportunity to study at the Catholic University of Malawi. This has opened me up to new experiences, for instance improvement in my reasoning capacity. However, it is quite challenging to be a full time teacher, a student and a community member at the same time. Despite all these challenging responsibilities I hope to be able to balance my life around these three vital areas as this will, I believe, shape me adequately for a solid life of an FIC Brother. I do hope that with God's help I will find fulfillment in spite of the challenges.

Bro. Mike Mbato - Malawi province



Making the Church More Colorful

Bro. Martinus Sariya Giri



Introduction

Observing the history of our congregation, Mgr. Rutten, has brought us to a clear understanding of the position of the congregation in the Church. Mgr. Rutten who was a diocesan Priest initiated the establishment of this religious congregation that was both strange and amazing at the time. Who has encouraged Mgr Rutten to do all this? Yes, of course we already know the answer. It was Jesus who inspired Rutten to do all that. Rutten's social heart was touched by the situation, and this prompted him to do something. This was also the experience of Jesus when He went around doing good (const. art. 15).

Likewise, when we reflect on the presence of FIC in Indonesia, this is also because the Brothers were driven by the situation of the Church at the time. Father Van Lith, with his Teacher Training College Muntilan, required the presence of Brother-teachers from the Netherlands. He proceeded to ask the FIC Brothers to come to the Indies to

help. There are two amazing facts: FIC was founded by a diocesan priest, and FIC is growing and increasingly impacting positively on society.

The above are 2 practical realities of how the Church relates to the presence of FIC Brothers. The FIC Congregation can never be separated from the Local Church. There is a similar situation between the beginning of the congregation and the beginning of the presence of FIC in Indonesia, namely the urgency of the situation that the local Church cannot do it alone. The Church needs people with different gifts, the Church needs catechetical and pastoral ministry partners from the non-priestly staff. Such facts had flourished long before the second Vatican Council in 1965 gave birth to its official documents.

This article does not intend to make a scientific review of the role of the FIC Congregation in the local Church, but rather to give practical experiences and reflections that confirm the presence of the FIC Congregation,

which also enriches the work of the local Church. How relevant is the work of the FIC Congregation to the local Church? What kind of presence is possible for the FIC Congregation in the local Church? And what the Brothers must do to make the presence of FIC truly felt by the Church and fellow human beings.

Congregation of FIC and the Local Church

We understand the meaning of local Church as the Church at the diocesan level. The closest environment to the FIC community is the parish. The presence of FIC is always due to ecclesiastical reasons. There is no work of the Congregation which was established first for profit making. Our presence is always closely related to the local Church. The presence of FIC Indonesian Province includes Semarang Archdiocese (KAS), Jakarta Archdiocese (KAJ), Palembang diocese, Ketapang diocese and Purwokerto diocese. Our presence is also felt in Timor Leste. The context is always the Church. Almost all the works of the FIC Congregation are engaged in education and youth formation. The Congregation's involvement in the work of the Church and the manifestation of the Gravissimum Educationis (GE) is real. Moreover, all schools owned by the Brothers FIC are well accepted and considered qualified in the community.

Although the presence of FIC is an inseparable part of the Church, our work has a different character and also maintains a different level of relationship with the local church. Characteristics of relationships are sometimes influenced by the personality of each priest or brother. But in general relations with the parish are really good. The attention of the parish priest to the work of the Brothers is also quite good. Some bishops and parish priests are the product of the formation of the FIC Brothers who will naturally create a good relationship between the two.

The presence of FIC makes the Church more colorful

I am currently working at Pangudi Luhur Domenico Savio Semarang. The number of students is more than 1000. Next to this is the school of Br. Agustinus Marjito, Pangudi Luhur Bernardus Elementary School with more than 1000 students. Noticing the home addresses of the students, they are scattered in various parishes. In most of these parishes, some teachers and students of Pangudi Luhur are church activists. Some of these teachers are lay-leaders, pro-deacons, and administrators of the parish council, while the students are quite active as lectors, acolytes and choir members of the church.

Why do they get involved? This certainly cannot be separated from the school education model of the Brothers FIC. Pangudi Luhur schools are institutions that never leave Catholicism, both in the atmosphere of the educational environment and the educational approach provided. The Catholic educational atmosphere appears in the human relationships within. The educational impact is felt in religious activities. Pangudi Luhur schools educate and form Catholic Smart Characters (CSC). The fruits of such education encourage teachers and children to get involved in the local church, and thus the presence of the Brothers' schools really makes the Church more colorful compared to places that have no Brothers' schools.

The presence of the Brothers in the parish also makes the church more colorful. Brothers usually get involved in sharing communion, choir groups, community recollections, deepening of the environment and religious studies for new baptisms, charismatics and visits of the sick.

In Indonesia, through the Budi Mulia Foundation Semarang (YBMS), the FIC

congregation is significantly involved in the social work of the church. This made the FIC congregation give color to the local church. Through YBMS, the Congregation helps many children with scholarships, hundreds of disaster victims, hundreds of sick people with inexpensive treatment, and give some families economic empowerment.

The most important thing is not "how many people we help", but how we do it all. Yes, we must do all with a happy heart. That is the mark of our religious life as Brothers. What we do is our logical consequence as followers of Jesus, who "went around doing

good, bore witness to the truth, came to serve, and carried the message of love. By doing all that, we have become a sign of surrender and service to the Kingdom of God." (Const art 15).

One more thing, absolutely we must not forget our concern for the small, the weak, the poor, the marginalized and disabled people as well as those who experience no love. This is the legacy (message) of Br. Bernard that we have to keep alive. *)

With Great Love



Community Mission and Local Church of Mzedi

Bro. Martinus Dariyo



Community Mission

The primary meaning of "mission" is "sending". We are called together and thus sent out to continue the work of Jesus (Const. no. 15). The understanding of mission involves: (1) the sense of participation in the movement of "being sent", (2) a sense of the content of mission, consisting of three elements namely proclamation, service and fellowship. (Encyclopedia of Theology). Thus a "Community with a Mission", requires that every member of the community should live with a certain vision and mission.

Element of Community Mission: Service

We FIC Brothers are invited to place ourselves completely in the service of His kingdom. The word service has two meanings: to work and to serve. Because our work is a means to serve, our work is called apostolic work. As such our work is deeper and richer. (Const. no. 20).

"When you perform that which has been given you to do with attitude of work, you are actually in servitude to that work. If however, you saw your work as 'service', then your attitude would change. For many, the burden associated with work would disappear and instead they would approach what they are doing with a different attitude. Recognizing that in life everything we do is in service to God, to our country and to our community, we change the way we approach work" (Chisowa Bandawe, Practical Umunthu Psychology, An indigenous approach to harmonious living, Montfort Media, Balaka, Malawi, 2010, p. 57)

The Service of Mzedi Community to the local Church of Mzedi Parish

Mzedi is a rural community in the sense that

Mzedi is a small village outside Limbe/Bangwe, near Blantyre city in Malawi. It is situated along the slope of Mzedi mountain. On 11th July 1960 four Dutch FIC Brothers came to Mzedi on the invitation of the Archbishop of Blantyre, Mgr. J. Theunessen SMM (Montfortan). The aim was to take over St. Patrick Junior Secondary School and upgrade it to a senior secondary school. St. Patrick Junior Secondary School was run by Xaverian Brothers. Due to lack of personnel, the Xaverian Brothers planned to leave Mzedi, for their home country at the end of October 1960. The FIC Brothers were invited to take part in the work of evangelization through education. Soon after their arrival, the Brothers extended the structures of St. Patrick Junior Secondary School by doing extended repair works, and also putting up a house to accommodate the FIC Brothers.

the people come from the villages around, majority of whom are Catholics. As such we worship together on Sundays and the ordinary days of the week. Some members of this community get involved in local church activities. Our cordial relations with the Parish Priest cements our bond through a number of parish activities. We have evening community Mass every Tuesday and Thursday. After Mass we have Supper together. This is the time to share our experiences and ideas including challenges. This is the time to talk freely on any topic from education to politics, and issues from the village to international level. Our parish communion can be felt especially during the funeral of a Brother. On such occasions so many people come and share actively in the funeral service. As part of our social service for the needy, Mzedi community allocates a sum of money from their budget to help needy people. Most of the help is in the area of transport to hospital and medical expenses. When we celebrated 175th anniversary of the Congregation, the Provincial Council decided to choose Mzedi Parish as the venue for the feast. It was the parish priest and Parish Council that mobilized the people of Mzedi community to take active part in the celebration. For them it was an honour to host the celebration there, and for the FIC Brothers it was a choice based on the historical background of the FIC mission in Malawi.

Service in the area of education

In 2006, the Brothers FIC in Malawi planned to privatize St. Patrick's Secondary School with the aim of instilling Catholic faith and promoting Catholic values among the youth of Mzedi village and beyond. However, we realized that privatizing the school would not benefit rural people of the villages around Mzedi. The result would impact negatively on the people because the mission of FIC in opting for the poor would be defeated. As such we agreed that before the privatization, we



first establish a "grade aided Community Day Secondary School" to accommodate students from the villages around Mzedi.

The construction of the school started in 2009 and the structures were completed in 2018 with the official name: "Saint Louis Community Day Secondary School Mzedi" (St. Louis CDSS Mzedi). This school currently accommodates 400 students from the villages around Mzedi. We try to maintain a gender balance of 50 percent for each.

Soon the school attracted many students from different areas. As a result the school started "evening classes" in order to increase contact hours and improve performance. Up to 300 students are benefitting from the evening classes so far. People in Mzedi community are very happy with this new school and regard it as a precious gift.

Mzedi, 15 March 2020



24th World Day for Consecrated Life
Homily of His Holiness Pope Francis
 Vatican Basilica, Saturday, 1 February 2020



My eyes have seen your salvation" (Lk 2:30). These are the words of Simeon, whom the Gospel presents as a simple man: "righteous and devout". But among all at the temple that day, he alone saw Jesus as the Saviour. What did he see? A child: a small, vulnerable, simple child. But in him he saw salvation, for the Holy Spirit allowed him to recognize in that tender newborn "the Lord's Christ" (v. 26). Taking him in his arms, he sensed by faith that in him God was bringing his promises to fulfilment. And that he, Simeon, could now go in peace: he had seen the grace that was worth more than life, and there was nothing further to wait for.

You too, dear consecrated brothers and sisters, you are simple men and women who caught sight of the treasure worth more than any

worldly good. And so you left behind precious things, such as possessions, such as making a family for yourselves. Why did you do this? Because you fell in love with Jesus, you saw everything in him, and enraptured by his gaze, you left the rest behind. Religious life is this vision. It means seeing what really matters in life. It means welcoming the Lord's gift with open arms, as Simeon did. This is what the eyes of consecrated men and women behold: the grace of God poured into their hands. The consecrated person is one who every day looks at himself or herself and says: "Everything is gift, all is grace". Dear brothers and sisters, we did not deserve religious life; it is a gift of love that we have received.

My eyes have seen your salvation. These are the words we repeat each evening at Night

Prayer. With them, we bring our day to an end, saying: "Lord, my salvation comes from you, my hands are not empty, but are full of your grace". Knowing how to see grace is the starting point. Looking back, rereading one's own history and seeing there God's faithful gift: not only in life's grand moments, but also in our fragility and weakness, in our insignificance. The tempter, the devil focuses on our "poverty", our empty hands: "In all these years you haven't got any better, you haven't achieved what you could have, they haven't let you do what you were meant to do, you haven't always been faithful, you are not capable..." and so on. Each of us knows this story and these words very well. We see this is true in part, and so we go back to thoughts and feelings that disorient us. Thus we risk losing our bearings, the gratuitous love of God. For God loves us always, and gives himself to us, even in our poverty. Saint Jerome offered much to the Lord and the Lord asked for more. He said to the Lord: "But Lord, I have given you everything, everything, what else is lacking?" "Your sins, your poverty, offer me your poverty". When we keep our gaze fixed on him, we open ourselves to his forgiveness that renews us, and we are reassured by his faithfulness. We can ask ourselves today: "To whom do I turn my gaze: to the Lord, or to myself?" Whoever experiences God's grace above all else can discover the antidote to distrust and to look at things in a worldly way.

There is a temptation that looms over religious life: seeing things in a worldly way. This entails no longer seeing God's grace as the driving force in life, then going off in search of something to substitute for it: a bit of fame, a consoling affection, finally getting to do what I want. But when a consecrated life no longer revolves around God's grace, it turns in upon itself. It loses its passion, it grows slack, becomes stagnant. And we know what happens then: we start to demand our own space, our own rights, we let ourselves get

dragged into gossip and slander, we take offence at every small thing that does not go our way, and we pour forth litanies of lamentation - lamentation, "Father Lamentation", "Sister Lamentation" - about our brothers, our sisters, our communities, the Church, society. We no longer see the Lord in everything, but only the dynamics of the world, and our hearts grow numb. Then we become creatures of habit, pragmatic, while inside us sadness and distrust grow, that turn into resignation. This is what a worldly gaze leads to. The Great Saint Teresa once said to the sisters: "woe to the sister who repeats these words, 'they have treated me unjustly', woe to her!"

To have the right kind of view on life, we ask to be able to perceive God's grace for us, like Simeon. The Gospel says three times that he was intimately familiar with the Holy Spirit, who was upon him, inspired him, roused him. He was intimately familiar with the Holy Spirit, with the love of God. If consecrated life remains steadfast in love for the Lord, it perceives beauty. It sees that poverty is not some colossal effort, but rather a higher freedom that God gives to us and others as real wealth. It sees that chastity is not austere sterility, but the way to love without possessing. It sees that obedience is not a discipline, but is victory over our own chaos, in the way of Jesus. In one of the regions affected by earthquake in Italy - speaking of poverty and community life - there was a Benedictine monastery that was destroyed and another monastery that invited the Sisters to come and stay with them. But they were only there for a short while: they were not happy, they were thinking about their monastery, about the people there. In the end, they decided to go back to their monastery, which is now two caravans. Instead of staying in this big, comfortable monastery; they were like flies there, all of them together, but happy in their poverty. This happened just last year. It is a beautiful thing!

My eyes have seen your salvation. Simeon sees Jesus as small, humble, the one who has come to serve, not to be served, and defines himself as servant. Indeed he says: "Lord, now let your servant depart in peace" (v. 29). Those who see things as Jesus does, learn how to live in order to serve. They do not wait for others to take the initiative, but themselves go out in search of their neighbour, as did Simeon who sought out Jesus in the temple. Where is one's neighbour to be found in the consecrated life? This is the question: Where is one's neighbour to be found? First of all in one's own community. The grace must be sought to know how to seek out Jesus in the brothers and sisters we have been given. And that is precisely where we can begin to put charity into practice: in the place where you live, by welcoming brothers and sisters in their poverty, as Simeon welcomed Jesus meek and poor. Today, so many see in other people only hindrances and complications. We need to have a gaze that seeks out our neighbour, that brings those who are far-off closer. Men and women religious, who live to imitate Jesus, are called to bring their own gaze into the world, a gaze of compassion, a gaze that goes in search of those far-off; a gaze that does not condemn, but encourages, frees, consoles; a gaze of compassion. That repeated phrase in the Gospel, which, speaking about Jesus, says: "He had compassion". This is the stooping down of Jesus towards each one of us.

My eyes have seen your salvation. The eyes of Simeon saw salvation because they were expecting it. They were eyes that were waiting, full of hope. They were looking for the light and then saw the light of the nations. They were aged eyes, but burning with hope. The gaze of consecrated men and women can only be one of hope. Knowing how to hope. Looking around, it is easy to lose hope: things that don't work, the decline in vocations... There is always the temptation to have a

worldly gaze, one devoid of hope. But let us look to the Gospel and see Simeon and Anna: they were elderly, alone, yet they had not lost hope, because they remained in communion with the Lord. Anna "did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day". Here is the secret: never to alienate oneself from the Lord, who is the source of hope. We become blind if we do not look to the Lord every day, if we do not adore him. To adore the Lord.

Dear brothers and sisters, let us thank God for the gift of the consecrated life and ask of him a new way of looking, that knows how to see grace, how to look for one's neighbour, how to hope. Then our eyes too will see salvation.

© Copyright - LibreriaEditriceVaticana



Mary in My Journey of Life as An FIC Brother

Bro. Antonius Sumardi

“ I was at a "cross-roads", wondering whether to go to the teacher training college first or just apply to be a religious brother. In that situation, I went to Mary's shrine at Sendangsono to pray the "novena". ”

My reflection on Mary is based on my true experience in life. My experience of Mother Mary has a lot of influence on my life before and after I became a member of the FIC Congregation. I have come to believe in her power of intercession and protection, especially of my life, and more to the point, my journey as an FIC Brother. After I finished my studies at Van Lith Teacher Training College in Muntilan, I experienced some "confusion". I was at a "cross-roads", wondering whether to go to the teacher training college first or just apply to be a religious brother. In that situation, I went to Mary's shrine at Sendangsono to pray the "novena". Through this encounter with Mary I had a clear direction on my vocational journey. After the prayer I obtained some inspiration regarding where God was leading me. Then with confidence I went to Muntilan myself to present my application. It was accepted! I went through my initial formation program, postulancy in Muntilan, canonical noviciate in Surakarta and second year novitiate in Randusari, Semarang. In the same way, when I experienced some challenges during my formation I relied on Mother Mary through prayers until I finished my initial formation in 1973. I took my first vows on the 8th of December 1973.

As a brother in temporal vows, I learnt to make Mary my refuge, especially at a time when I wanted to leave the Congregation.

During this difficult time, I felt the accompaniment, protection, and help of God through Mother Mary. Sometimes, this was experienced as amazing and wonderful. There have been times when I lacked energy in the midst of certain difficulties. One of these moments was when I was a staff at Roncalli Retreat House in Salatiga. As a spiritual director I had to guide and accompany religious sisters, priests and brothers during periods of deepening or individual retreat. In situations when I felt very weak and fragile, I found strength by turning towards Mary, under whom all FIC Brothers are expected to place our special attention (const. art 75). Still at Roncalli Retreat House, we lacked staff in 1991. Due to inadequate staff members, we had some difficulties any time we had a lot of guests in the facility, religious and priests who came to access spiritual renewal or spiritual direction. The few staff members were stretched to their limit, and I wondered where to turn for help. When we finally got Fr. FerdiHamma, SJ to support the staff at the Retreat house as member of spiritual directors' team, it was as if a miracle had happened. Even before I finished preparing the documents for his residence permit, his books had already arrived at Roncalli, Salatiga. Thanks for the powerful intercession of our Mother Mary.

In all these experiences, I do not want to consider praying to Mary as an automatic

MARY



their trust in Mary, I too wish to dedicate myself completely to Mary's protection and guidance, and I believe through this I will get closer to her son Jesus Christ. Jesus Himself loved and honoured Mary His mother, so we too should love and honour her. I believe, just as many others, that her prayers are powerful - now that she is in heaven.

What I can learn from my experience with Mother Mary is that in life, we will face difficulties and challenges, but with humble hearts, if we approach God in a spirit of faithfulness, and pray through Mary asking for help, I am very sure that God will listen to our prayers. The protection and the guidance of our Mother Mary are always there waiting for us to ask. Together with our beloved founders I can say: "Only by God's providence and the help of Mother Mary, can our Congregation grow and develop."

exchange in which I got whatever I wanted whenever I prayed through her or asked for her intercession. For me the conviction is from the faith I have in Mary. Mary herself demonstrated this faithfulness when she agreed with God to carry out God's plan of salvation. We can achieve this faithfulness by "contemplating her life and addressing her in our personal and communal prayers" (const. 75). Many people, both religious and lay in the past and present, have considered Mary to be a sure path to a deep relationship with God. Seeing how many people have put