

RECOLETOS

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update

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Priestly and Religious Life:
INCARNATED LOVE IN HUMBLE SERVICE

The RECOLETOS UPDATE is the official publication of the Recoletos Formation Center, Order of Augustinian Recollects, Province of St. Ezekiel Moreno, Quezon City, Philippines, that is published once a year to share the reflections, reports and updates of the formands and formators. Opinions published are of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the ideas of the editor.



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ORDER OF AUGUSTINIAN RECOLLECTS
Province of St. Ezekiel Moreno
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“Whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant...just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve” (NRSV, Matt. 20:26, 28). These words of our Lord Jesus Christ resolved the dispute on His disciples’ desire for greatness. For Jesus, the mark of true greatness among His followers is something contrary to the world’s standard which includes “lording over others.” The greatness he presents entails service.


This year’s theme, “Priestly and Religious Life: Incarnated Love in Humble Service,” invites us to join in revisiting the call of these ordained and consecrated men who form part in the life of the Church. By virtue of their Baptism, they are one with the faithful in the Mystical Body of Christ with the corresponding privileges and duties therein although they are distinguished in their service for the members of that same Body out of love for Christ, the Head. God, who is Love Himself, calls each of them. They, on their part, responds to Him through love, a response that should be embodied in their life, manifested by their actions, and proclaimed with their words.

Embracing one’s God-given vocation, whether it be married life, single blessed life, or priestly and religious life, is not easy. Yet, each of them possesses a distinct beauty which one finds in bearing with it and enjoying it as the three become unified in a universal call to holiness—becoming holy as the Caller is. These ordained men and consecrated persons especially make their response to this call through love, and is sustained by it as “the love of Christ urges [them] on.” (NAB, 2 Cor. 5:14).

Priestly and religious life plays a vital role in the Church. God called them; they responded with love. Such response is not a one-time yes, rather, it is a lifetime response of living out that love by means of their intimate union with the Divine Caller which they, on their part, express through their concrete, humble and selfless service to the People of God, to those who have gone astray, those who have not yet known Him, and those whom He chose to associate Himself with: the poor, the marginalized, the unwanted, the unloved and the “nobody” in the society.

As you go through the insights featured in this publication, we implore you to continue praying for all of us who embraced priestly and religious life that we may truly conform to the beauty of the Giver of our vocation and joyfully live up to the demands accorded us as Christ would have us do.




 Fray Julius James T. Tinapao, OAR
 Editor-in-Chief

**ORDER OF AUGUSTINIAN RECOLLECTS
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“Priestly and Consecrated Life: Incarnated Love in Humble Service” is a timely theme. The topic reminds me of the reflection of Pope Francis on Mk.10: 35-45, the Gospel reading for the 29th Sunday in the Ordinary Time (B), wherein the Holy Father underscored how apostolic zeal can be polluted by the spirit of the world. This “spirit” refers to what we already heard of before, the “careerism” that affects many members of the clergy and the religious life. But of more significance to us at present and in connection to the theme you have chosen, is, perhaps, the “antidote” that the Pope points to.

Precisely because to love means to leave aside selfishness, self-reference, to serve others... the path of service always involves some loss. This “love and loss” is antidote to said “careerism”, the “spirit of the world”... and made possible only by the Cross. “The message of the Master is clear: while the great of the earth build themselves ‘thrones’ for their own power, God chooses an awkward throne, the cross, from which he reigns giving life.”

In relation to this I am reminded too of what our Father Augustine asks of us: “A ligno Christi non resilire.” One mind and heart, let us then help one another embrace the Cross and be embraced by the living crucified Redeemer... so as not to succumb to the “spirit of the world” but instead serve the poor and the needy starting always from Christ on the Cross.

FRAY LAURO V. LARLAR, OAR
Prior



OF AUGUSTINIAN RECOLLECTS ce of St. Ezekiel Moreno etos Formation Center

By virtue of baptism all Christians are part of the common priesthood of the faithful. Each of us is anointed to share in the priestly, prophetic and kingly mission of Christ. All baptized Christians are called by Him to offer a worthy sacrifice of our lives to fulfil the mandate of proclaiming the Gospel and building the Kingdom of God. However, bishops and priests, by their sacred ordination, are given a special role in carrying out this mission.

Bearing witness to the Lord Jesus by proclaiming the gift of faith is especially so for us consecrated persons. The missionary dimension which is intrinsically part of all forms of consecrated life is expected from us and cannot be neglected. Consecrated life is a “radiant sign for the Kingdom of heaven” for the Church and for the world. It is directed to serve others, especially to renew and build up the Body of Christ. In our religious life, “*carisma y misión son la misma cosa*”, that, upon submitting ourselves to the religious consecration we incorporate ourselves to the same mission that God has entrusted in the Church.

The priority of this year’s celebration is being given to the clergy and consecrated persons (ordained or non-ordained) which is at the same time an invitation to see deeply and to reflect that we are called to holiness. As Augustinian Recollects, let us be reminded by the words of Pope Francis as he invites us “to hold fast to the dream of St. Augustine to live as brothers with one soul and heart, with a renewed spirit that reflects the ideal of the first Christians and becomes a prophetic sign of communion in our world so that we may rid ourselves of divisions, conflicts and exclusions, and allow harmony and dialogue to reign.”



FRAY KENNETH JOSEPH L. ONDA, OAR
Master of the Professed

Adelante Towards God

Fray Jovy Gallego, OAR

“Forward radiant children, forward joyful youth, forward men and women, forward let us move.” This verse begins the school hymn of the University of San Jose - Recoletos(USJ-R) in Cebu City from where its slogan “*Adelante*,” which means “forward” is derived. *Adelante* is a powerful word for it resembles an action to continue moving towards change, progress and success. It is an attraction to mystery, openness to transformation, desire to develop, reason to continue and an invitation to persevere.

very reason, object and goal of their journey.

This is what I experienced in my community exposure program in USJ-R. In this program, I was asked to live with the brothers in the community and participate in all communal acts with special emphasis on prayer. My main apostolate in the university was giving inputs during the recollections of our students. I was also assigned to assist the staff of the Campus Ministry Office. It was indeed an enriching experience.

“For every prayer that I recite with my brothers, my vocation is deepened, for every blessing that I received, I learn gratitude...”

For us religious, it is a command to keep moving because those who keep on looking back is not worthy of following the Lord. It is an imperative of going away from the seashore of our comfort zones so as to go out into the deep where the great catch awaits us. It is a call to journey towards the heavenly Jerusalem for the destination can only be reached by moving forward. It is only in moving forward that we learn the lessons of life, encounter changes, see new horizons, and meet new possibilities. Our life is always a movement of going forward; those who stop moving are those who are tired, weak, sick, and paralyzed. However, even physical limitations cannot hinder one from moving forward. *Adelante* is not limited to man’s bodily movements for a heart can reach heaven in the blink of an eye even without moving a single step and a prayer can move and penetrate the very heart of God even without stretching one’s muscle. All pilgrims move forward towards holiness until they arrive to God – the

Through it my vocation is shaken yet strengthened, tested yet purified, questioned yet affirmed. There I realized how little my help is in contrast to the great needs of the Church. However, I also learned that no matter how little our works are as long as they are done with love, they make us holy.

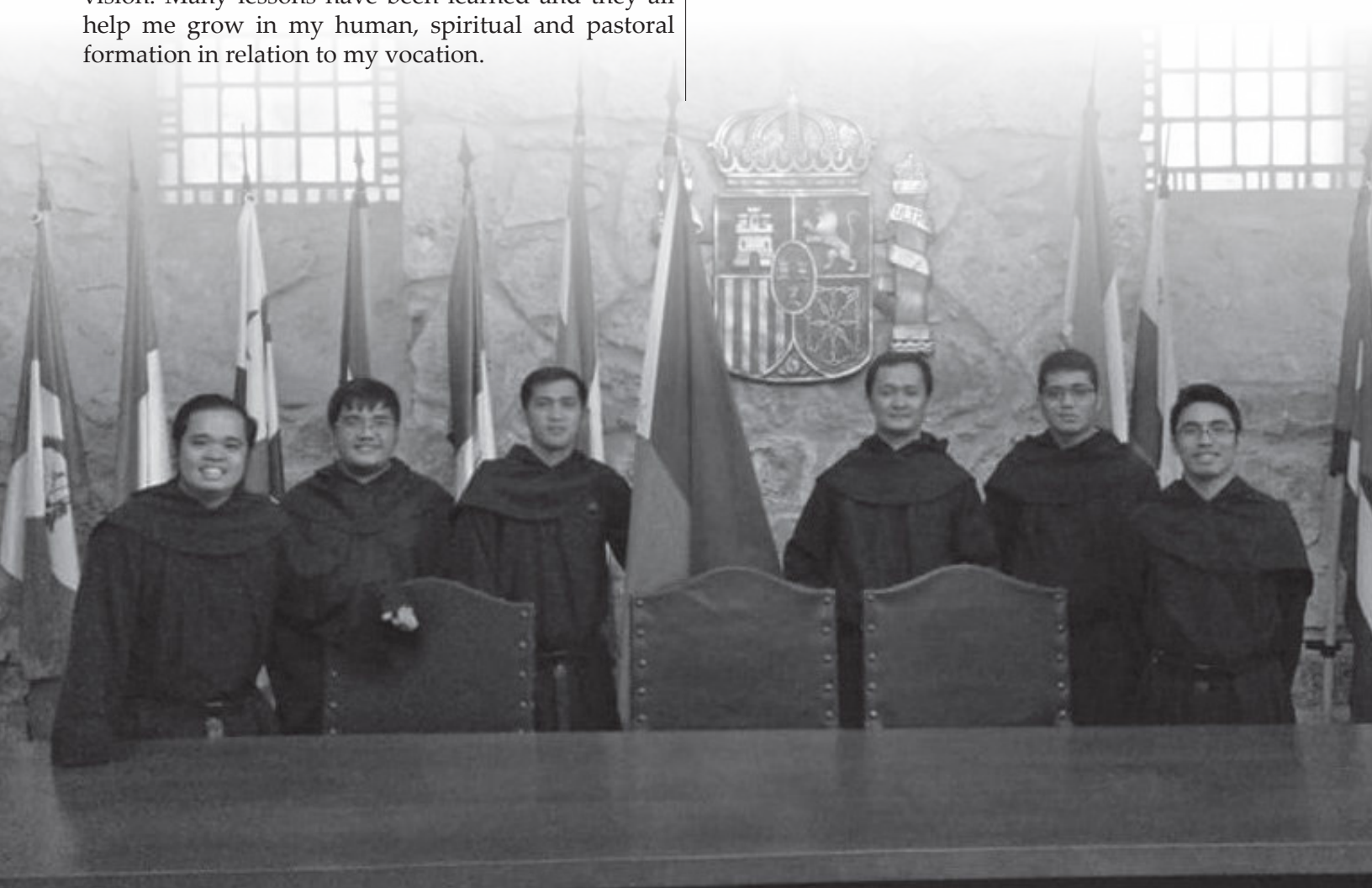
Most often, the works are tiresome and I see my little self as if I was in the middle of an ocean of tremendous works. When apostolates consume my time and energy during the whole day, it was in the community that I drew out strength. I was like a battery that considers my community as a recharging station which I ran to whenever I feel like I’m already running out of energy. At the end of a tiring day, I recover my strength in the community which helps me get ready for the next day’s work. Our common prayer, the presence of brothers, the stories told over laughter and meals, the patience in problems, the dedication to work, the joy

in apostolates, the brother's availability when needed, the simplicity of life, the provisions for our needs, – all these are now part of my vocation story and they all invite me towards one direction – *Adelante!*

As a Catholic institution, the school administrators have great responsibilities of taking care not merely of the academic needs of the students but most importantly, the spiritual formation of the students, faculty and non-teaching staff. There I realized that many students are wounded and in need of healing and that more than the academic formation, they need somebody who will help them appreciate the beauty of problems, the purpose of life and the love and mercy of God. I recognized also that the personnel and teaching staff cannot be reduced to being simply employees, but rather, they are to be seen as collaborators and companions in the educational apostolate of the Church. Their assistance is indispensable in the various programs of the school and the religious community is doing its best to supplant their great needs. They long for God's presence, looking for witnesses of Jesus in words and in action, and are hungry for God's Word and teachings. They respect the Church, love the religious, and value the institution's mission and vision. Many lessons have been learned and they all help me grow in my human, spiritual and pastoral formation in relation to my vocation.

It was only an eight-month exposure program but the lessons I learned will last for a lifetime. For every prayer that I recite with my brothers, my vocation is deepened, for every blessing that I received, I learn gratitude, for every good deed done to me – appreciation, for every laughter – happiness, for every conflict that my brothers and I solved together – unity, for every accomplishment that we achieved – harmony, for every struggle in my apostolate – perseverance. When needed, I learned to become available and when my body gets sick and becomes weak, I learn to get some rest but I don't stop.

This is the *adelante* spirit. The followers of the Lord are always moving forward. The Jews in the desert, the prophets of old, the disciples of Jesus, the preachers of God's word, the missionaries of the Lord, and all the members of the mystical Body of Christ. As a follower of Christ who chooses to live a consecrated life – I will continue moving forward until my mind and my heart become one with God. *Adelante* forever and ever!



Reflection on St. Augustine's On Seeing God

Fray Ricky John A. Austria, OAR

"Blessed are the pure of heart, for they will see God."
(Mt. 5:8)

This verse from the Gospel reminds us of a part of the nature of a clergy and consecrated person. That is, to be the primary believer and witness of God's presence and love.

Looking back at my younger days, I would usually look at priests with admiration and honor because for me they are the very first ones who are firm in their belief that God is real and that He will never abandon His people. In the same way I looked at the apostles too. There were times that I looked at them with envy

if there is no clear view of what the future will be. But, how come the apostles were able to see Him as God?

The same thing applies to this present moment. The doubts and unbelief are dominant especially if there is no assurance of truth in the future. But St. Augustine left us with a beautiful work that can help us to address our doubts and unbelief. It is to show us how God is present yesterday, today and tomorrow. It is in his book-length letter entitled "De Videndo Deo" (On Seeing God) that he assures us that God is real and that He can be seen. He is present before, during and after time.

**"Blessed are the pure of heart,
for they will see God." (Mt. 5:8)**

because they had a physical and one on one encounter with Jesus. I thought of the possibility of how easy it was for them to believe and have faith in Him because of their actual experience with Jesus. They were so fortunate and blessed to have met Christ face to face.

I wondered if I were given a chance to live as an ordinary citizen during those times, could it be possible that I would look at Jesus in the same way as the apostles did? I cannot assure myself of that. I would probably look at God in concomitance to His dual nature with doubt. It is because, unlike the apostles, I neither saw nor touched Jesus in person. I haven't been with Him since the start of His ministry 24/7. Thus, the difficult part of believing and having faith comes into play. It is not easy to believe and have faith especially

The said letter is addressed to Paulina, an African laywoman who raised him a question of whether God can be seen by the eyes of flesh. Augustine used the same verse from the Gospel of Matthew as his foundation to answer Paulina's question. First, to understand his foundation, he made a distinction between seeing and believing. Seeing, as it was explained in the letter, is perceived through bodily eyes. It is to the "present." Present, refers in the letter an object of our bodily eyes. It is what is physical and corporeal. Believing, on the other hand, comes through the mind. It is something in you, something that is inside you. As seeing is to present, believing is simply to those things not present or simply absent physically.¹

¹Roland Teske, S.J., *The Work of Saint Augustine; A translation for the 21st Century VOI 2*, New City Press, Hyde

In terms of the vision of God, Augustine emphasized that God cannot be seen at any time or at any location by bodily eyes. But for those who claimed that they saw God especially from the Scriptures, the thing is that they only saw God according to what God wanted Him to be seen. It is really not the true nature of God. For him, as being influenced by St. Ambrose, though we do not have the power to see God in this world, still there is the grace of benefiting that we may come to see Him in the next. It is just a matter of faith through the authority of the Holy Scriptures. He emphasized here the authority of the Scriptures as worthy of belief where truth and Holiness of God remains intact.²

In this world, Augustine claimed that both the worthy and unworthy will rise again but with a difference. Those who are worthy will be resurrected to the kingdom prepared for them, but those who are unworthy, will go through an eternal judgment. But Augustine continues that the final judgment to be given to us as to whether we will see God rests on our capacity to love. God is not sought by eyes but by desire, nor is He found except through love.³

The entire letter is a statement of Augustine's great reliance on faith. It is through faith, as he puts it, working through love and hope that cleanses the heart so that it will see God.

Now, the reason why the apostles came to see Jesus as God is because they have nourished the gift of faith, hope and love in them.

It is also the same thing that we must be reminded of regarding our religious and priestly life. At times, we do fail to see Him in this kind of life but that does not mean that He is not around. He is always there. It is just that we might be blinded by so many worries, fear, anxieties and, most of all, by sinfulness. He will always be an aid for those who need it. He will always be the strength to those who are weak. He will always be the hope for those who are losing it. He is just asking us to come to Him with a clean heart and pure mind.

Apple of the Eye

Fray Ivan Rhey G. Mislang, OAR

A white garment mesmerized in the eyes
of people

A long tunic mesmerized them as well
Full of wisdom behind it;
How blessed is it to see this kind of garb.

The Lord is my shepherd as they said,
Struggles in life is part of a dream
Amore't servire as their motto
Wisdom of love and service they rendered.

Humility, humility, humility
Like the birds soaring in the blue sky,
Consecrated person journeying in the
service of the Lord.
Humility, humility, humility.

Incarnated love in humble service
A love to last in the eyes of God
A love to serve in the eyes of humanity
This is what we call "Consecrated and
Priestly life."

Park, New York, 2003, Chp. 3 p 320

²The Work of Saint Augustine; A translation for the 21st Century Vol 2... Chp. 25 p 332

³The Work of Saint Augustine; A translation for the 21st Century Vol 2... Chp. 34-35 p 336-337



The Call Today

Fray James Erolid P. Gatinao, OAR

Stranger. I experienced being a stranger a lot of times. I feel like a stranger upon exposing myself to a new environment, entering a new school, having new classmates, living in a new house, being in a new neighborhood, acquiring new experiences, and gaining new beliefs. I often feel strange being a stranger, and no matter how often I become one, it seems like I will never get used to it. Change is hard to embrace, thus being a stranger under some circumstances in life is difficult.

Life in general is transitory, there is always change. There is evolution of the universe, evolution of man, rise and fall of civilizations, advancement of scientific discoveries, fast development of technologies and cultural progress. There are a plethora of new norms, abolishing the alleged obsolete practices and beliefs. The world had experienced a lot, but did it learn anything? Is the world getting better or becoming worse?

The Church is no stranger to all of these, and she should not be one. She is not of this world, but she is in the world. Although the Church is always a sign of contradiction in the secularity of man, she remains its gate to Christ. The Church ought to speak of man's language like a shepherd with the same scent of his sheep. This is a prerequisite in order to undertake and partake in the mission of God through our human action.

For us who lived and were formed in a religious community, it is a challenge to share the Christian values to the world of today, to use our God-given gifts such as talents, skills, and treasures to give

flesh to Christian values, and to allow these values to be contagious and irresistible not to imitate. This challenge should not be far from our present context, which is composed of who we are, what we can do, and where we are in this world.

We cannot deny the facts of change in today's society tinted with migration, urbanization and mediatization. These changes are already embedded in every human activity, culture and mentality. It is now interwoven in the fabric of the world. This present global phenomenon is a challenge in itself. The constant growth of human activity, culture and mentality brought by the aforementioned societal changes likewise demands from us constant adaptation. Try lagging behind and you will be tagged as outdated, old-fashioned and jurassic. Now, try applying our good old Christian values with that context in mind. The mediatization and the rise of technology seem to make our Christian tradition "not cool" or baduy. Urbanization makes the consecrated life unattractive, leading to the radical loss of vocations. Thus, inculturation now does not apply exclusively to ethnicity due to mega-migration and language due to social media. Inculturation can now be applied in being witnesses of Christ in our contemporary society preoccupied with technology, information, communication, urbanization and modernization.

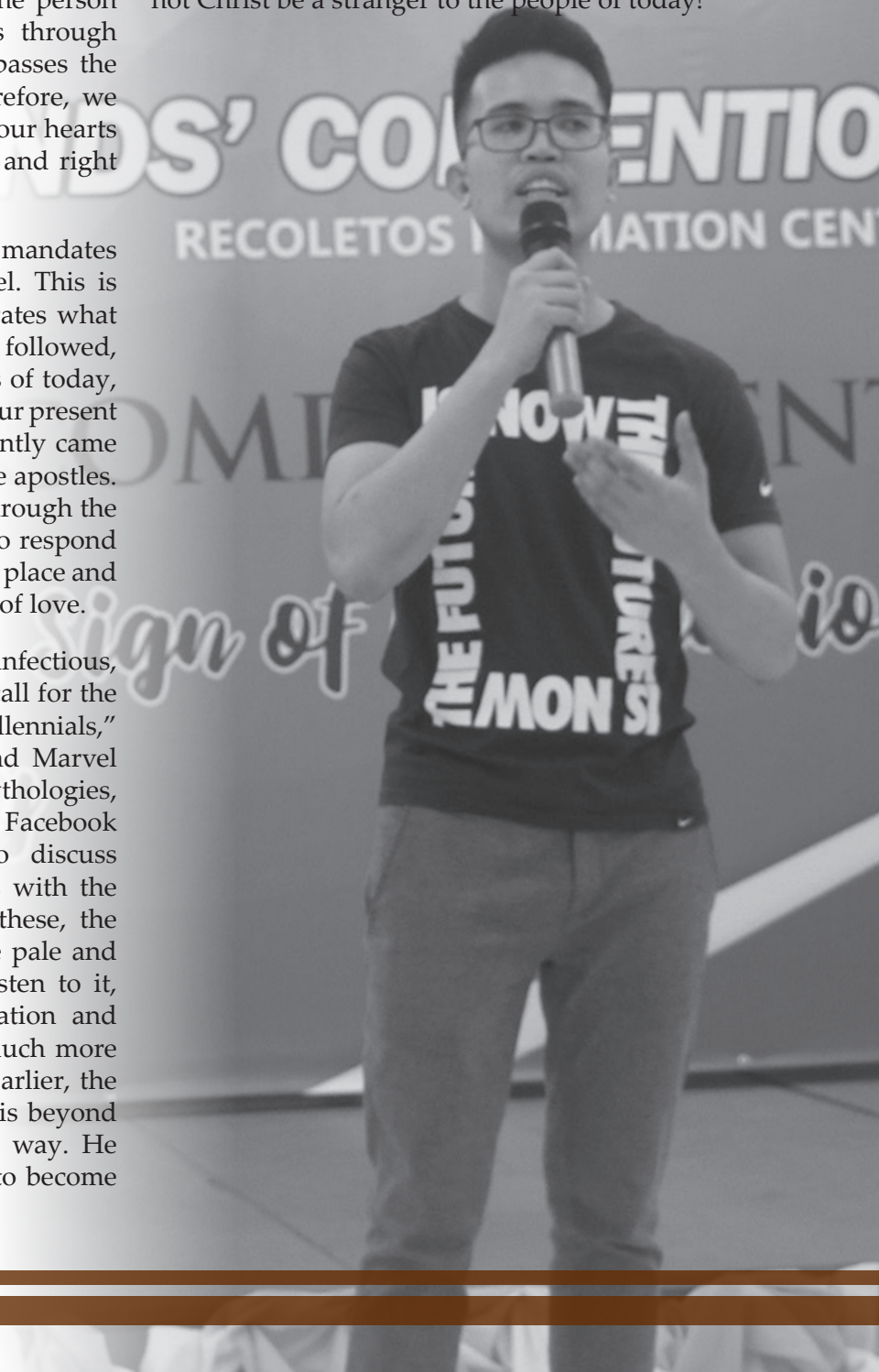
Now the first challenge: to share the Christian values to the world of today. The Lord commanded, "Go into the world and proclaim the good news!" (Mk. 16:15). People of almost every age now speak the language of Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube,

Pinterest, WhatsApp, Messenger, Viber and Skype just to name a few. Words such as “like,” “love,” “friend,” “follow,” “chat,” “message,” “ha-ha,” “post,” “wall,” and “share” now have meanings different from before. These same words have a different usage now but amazingly, the present generation seems to know well when, where and how to use them accordingly. We like or react to “posts,” write on the “wall” our thoughts and sentiments and share our interests to other “friends.” Then we ask ourselves: how can the Gospel speak to the world of today? Can the Good News be appealing to the new generation of today? Is it possible to share the Christian values and morality that we have learned? The answer always varies from one person to another. Nonetheless, the Lord speaks through the heart of people and His language surpasses the ever-changing language of humanity. Therefore, we share our learned Christian values through our hearts that are made visible through the concrete and right manner of our response to the Lord.

Acting upon the values that our faith mandates us to profess is to give flesh to the Gospel. This is our second challenge. It virtually demonstrates what should be done, how the Gospel should be followed, and why we bother to follow. As Christians of today, we ought to incarnate our faith and live it in our present context. We should not act like we just recently came from the past, especially from the time of the apostles. The heart of the message does not change through the course of time. And the Church continues to respond to the mission of the Lord, as bound by time, place and context through Christ’s unfading language of love.

Lastly, making the message of salvation infectious, contagious and irresistible is truly a tough call for the mission. The present youth of today, the “millennials,” would rather watch Korean telenovelas and Marvel movies, read Roman, Greek, and Norse mythologies, attend K-pop concerts, and be engrossed in Facebook or in Instagram. They would prefer to discuss basketball and football, update themselves with the new trends, or stalk celebrities. In all of these, the matters of faith and God gradually become pale and uninviting. Even if there are some who listen to it, the distractions caused by this modernization and mediatization are overwhelming and are much more appealing. However, as I have mentioned earlier, the Lord speaks to the hearts of people which is beyond our human language. God always finds a way. He touches the hearts of different individuals to become modern prophets of His Word.

Although the Church is lagging behind the changes of society, she never stops moving forward even just by taking small steps. These challenges are not new and they not only apply to a few but it is a universal call. It is our duty. We who are educated in the Christian and Catholic way, are called to “Go and make disciples of all nations” (Mt. 28:19). Let us join the walk of the Church however small the steps maybe. Let us use the distractions caused by modernization, urbanization and mediatization as our tool and channel for bridging the generations of today to the Gospel values that we strive to live. Let not the Gospel be a stranger to the people of today. Let not Christ be a stranger to the people of today!





The Intrinsic Beauty of Celibacy

Fray Charlamagne Marin, OAR

During the first four centuries of the Latin Church, majority of the clergy were married. As years went by, this practice was regulated and eventually became forbidden. The council of Elvira (306) forbade, under pain of deposition, bishops, presbyters, and deacons (once ordained) from having relations with their wives and from fathering children. However, in today's contemporary world, priestly and consecrated celibacy does not enjoy the esteem of modern society. According to one opinion, celibacy interferes to some degree for example with the priest's mission to the poor and downtrodden. Celibacy is difficult for those who feel their autonomy is restricted or their rights are being ignored. This plethora of insight about celibacy is a vital aspect in understanding priestly and consecrated life.

Joseph A. Komonchak argues that legislation on clerical celibacy brought major disagreements among scholars. Komonchak gave different motives why celibacy was stressed in the Church. These motives are: the growing exaltation of virginity, disparagement of sexuality and marriage, sacralization of the ministry, growing practice of celebrating the Eucharist daily, availability, spiritual paternity, and economic considerations. "Celibacy is esteemed by the Church as a feature of priestly life for it simultaneously signifies and incites pastoral charity as well as being in a special way a source of spiritual fruitfulness in the world."¹ This practice of the Church is not demanded of the priesthood by its nature; however it makes the clergy available and dedicated to their ministry. Celibacy is always viewed in imitation of Christ who Himself is

chaste and celibate.² Celibacy is imitating Christ who is chaste, giving weight to His invitation: If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. (Mt 16:24-25)

In the Old Testament, the Israelites were ambivalent about celibacy because the unmarried and the childless were the object of shame, while bearing many children was a sign of divine blessing (Gen. 22; 17, Ps. 127:3-4). However, we can find that even Jeremiah practiced celibacy which symbolized the withdrawal of the covenantal blessing of God. Temporary continence was practiced by the Levites and priests which required them to practice ritual continence during temple services (1 Sam 21:4-5) and men were admonished to avoid sexual intercourse before communal worship (Ex 19:15). In Judaism, unmarried state was highly regarded as in the case of Judith (Jud. 16:22) and Anna (Lk. 2:37). Within the New Covenant, being a disciple involved 'losing one's life' (Mk. 8:35); 'leaving the dead to bury their dead' (Mt. 8:22); 'taking up the cross' (Mk. 8:34). For Jesus and His disciples, the task of proclamation had to be enacted 'sacramentally' in their lives 'for the sake of the kingdom of heaven' (Mt. 19:12). Peter was married since Jesus cured his mother-in-law. (Mk 1: 29-31) In the text of the Gospel of Luke, Jesus makes the foregoing of wife explicit in His answer to Peter's question: "Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who will not get back very much more in this age, and in the age to come eternal life." (Lk. 18:28-30) In Matthew 19:17 and Mark 10:29-30, leaving one's wife is merely implied in the context of leaving everything in order

¹John E. Lynch, "The Obligations and Rights of Clerics," In *The Code of Canon Law: A Text and Commentary*, ed. James A. Coriden, Thomas J. Green, and Donald E. Heintschel (New York, Paulist Press, 1985), 209.

²Lynch, "The Obligations and Rights of Clerics," 209.

to follow Jesus. The apostles left their homes because of their commitment to the Lord and to the preaching of the Gospel. Even St. Paul categorically shows his clear preference for celibacy: "I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to please the Lord; but the married man is anxious about the affairs of the world, how to please his wife, and his interests are divided. (1 Cor 7:32-33).

The Second Vatican Council has brought light to the discussion on priestly celibacy and its usefulness in the contemporary Church. The Council clearly pointed out and highlighted that in the Decree on the Ministry and Life of Presbyters that celibacy "is not demanded by the very nature of the priesthood." Moreover, the Council made this comprehensive statements, "Through virginity or celibacy for the sake of the kingdom of heaven, presbyters are consecrated to Christ in a new and special way; they more easily hold fast to him with an undivided heart; they more freely devote themselves in and through him to the service of God and men: they more readily serve his Reign and the work of heavenly regeneration; and thus, they became more apt to exercise a paternity in Christ and do so to a greater extent."³ The underlying theology of clerical celibacy-continenace can be drawn from *Presbyterorum Ordinis*¹⁶:

Clerics are obliged to observe perfect and perpetual continence for the sake of the kingdom of heaven and therefore are bound to celibacy, which is a special gift of God by which sacred ministers can more easily adhere to Christ with an undivided heart and can dedicate themselves more freely to the service of God and man.⁴

In the encyclical *Sacerdotalis Caelibatus* of St. John Paul II, he explained that the reason for celibacy was that Jesus inspired it Himself: "The essential, proper, and adequate reason (for celibacy) in fact, is contained in the truth that Christ declared when he spoke about a renunciation of marriage for the sake of the kingdom of heaven and which St. Paul proclaimed when he wrote that each person in the church has his or her own gifts. Celibacy is precisely a 'gift of the Spirit.'⁵ Throughout his pontificate he was always conscious of how celibacy was both an eschatological sign as well as being of great social importance for ministry to the people of God. Another encyclical of St. John Paul II *Redemptoris Hominis* says that "Priests must be distinguished for a similar fidelity to their vocation

³ *Presbyterorum Ordinis* 16. 7 December, 1965. At The Holy See, www.vatican.va

⁴ Code of Canon Law Annotated: Latin-English Edition, (Montreal: Wilson & Lafleur Limitée; 1993).

⁵ John Paul II, Epistle, Celibacy and Priestly Life, *Novo Incipiente*, (1979) at <http://www.clerus.org/clerus/dati/2000-10/10-999999/179.html>.

(same fidelity as married people have to their vocation of marriage) in view of the indelible character that the sacrament of orders stamps on their souls. In receiving this sacrament, we in the Latin Church knowingly and freely commit ourselves to live in celibacy, and each one of us must therefore do all he can, with God's grace, to be thankful for this gift and faithful to the bond that he has accepted forever.⁶ In the apostolic exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, the Pope upheld the importance of celibacy: "Virginity or celibacy, by liberating the human heart in a unique way, 'so as to make it buy with greater love for God and all humanity,' bears witness that the Kingdom of God and His justice is that pearl of great price which is to be preferred to every other value no matter how great, and hence must be sought as the only definitive value.⁷ According to Vatican II, celibacy frees a man from any exclusive relationships. It helps him go beyond the limits of one spouse and one family in order to marry a whole parish. Thereby the priest becomes the father of many families.

Celibacy does not abhor marriage but only through a complete understanding of the marriage will celibacy find its truest expression. Priestly celibacy is in no way a condemnation of marriage nor a suggestion that only by being a celibate can a priest live a sublime Christian life. Jesus Christ did not explicitly exhort his followers to be celibate; celibacy is a choice in favor of God's kingdom. Celibacy frees the clergy to discharge their ministries with ease when circumstances call them especially in dispensing sacramental duties.

Celibacy helps the ministers to be free from burden of the world, nonetheless it helps the ministers to give themselves totally to the service of God, Church and His people.

Celibacy is not in enmity with married life nor is it meant to curtail our human power of producing offspring. Celibacy is always directed and chosen for the kingdom of heaven, as can be seen in the lives of many saints and faithful who dedicate themselves in a celibate life. One who chooses virginity in virtue of his determination to give himself exclusively in the priesthood of Christ is obliged to grow in love of God and his neighbor. The celibate person is a clear witness to the reality of the kingdom of God. Christian celibacy is not a selfish bachelorhood. It is the free renunciation of an expression of human life most dear to man. For the priest and consecrated person this renunciation is essentially apostolic done in imitation of Christ who poured Himself out in sacrifice for the brethren.

⁶ John Paul II, Encyclical, *Redemptoris hominis*. March 4, 1979 at The Holy See, www.vatican.va

⁷ John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris consortio*, November 22, 1981 at The Holy See, www.vatican.va



Driving Force

Rev. Kenneth Pahamutang, OAR

There is this famous Television commercial of a coffee that says: “Para kanino ka bumabangon? Para sa anak. Para sa kaibigan. Para sa ‘di mo kakilala. Para sa bata. Sa isip-bata. Para sa marami. Para sa sarili... Para hindi ka lang basta gumigising. Bumabangon ka nang may dahilan. Dahil pag tinulungan mong bumabangon ang isang tao, parang buong bayan na rin ang bumabangon...” A lot of people could relate to these words because a lot of us are searching for meaning in life, an inspiration to go on with our lives. Some find meaning and inspiration from their families and some from

inspires you to get up in the morning and do the things you do? I would have answered, “I don’t know. Maybe because it is the kind of life expected of us as a religious and as a cleric.” I just knew I had to work like most of the religious and clerics in our congregation. But time came when I felt lazy to perform the ministry entrusted to me. I felt lazy because it was monotonous: lead the perpetual novena in honor of Our Mother of Mount Carmel every Tuesday morning, perform the benediction after the novena to Our Mother of Perpetual Help every Wednesday afternoon, serve

“Para kanino ka bumabangon? Para sa anak. Para sa kaibigan. Para sa ‘di mo kakilala. Para sa bata. Sa isip-bata. Para sa marami. Para sa sarili... Para hindi ka lang basta gumigising. Bumabangon ka nang may dahilan. Dahil pag tinulungan mong bumabangon ang isang tao, parang buong bayan na rin ang bumabangon...”

ourselves. There will come a time when we will ask this question to ourselves especially when life gets rough, monotonous, and boring. I also asked this question to myself in my ministry as a deacon.

I was among the six deacons who were ordained last September and assigned in a parish administered by the Augustinian Recollects. If you had asked me back then “Para kanino ka bumabangon? What motivates you in life? What

the Mass every afternoon and five Masses every Sunday and perform the Sacrament of Baptism and cater to the needs of some organizations in the parish. It was the weekly routine in the ministry. I felt bored and meaningless. I just did all those works for the sake of doing it.

But things changed when I had a chance to talk to somebody, a parishioner. I was amazed with this parishioner because from Monday to

Friday he works to earn his livelihood and on Saturday and Sunday he is active in the parish. I was curious and asked him why he dedicates Saturday and Sunday here in the parish instead of relaxing because of the hectic and tiresome week of work. His answer was that he enjoys serving the Lord and finds inspiration from the priests to be dedicated to the Lord. He recalled when he was in his province that he rarely sees their priest and does not have time and support for the people who are serving in the parish. Most of them left the parish organizations. He continued his devotion here in San Sebastian where there are so many priests and he felt the support of the priests in the activities of their organization. There I realized that these people need our support and presence because they get inspiration from us to continue serving the Lord. I remembered our class in Sacramentology wherein our professor told us that the ordained priesthood and the common priesthood cannot function on their own and that they need one another. Putting that idea to the situation, I realized that the lay faithful need the presence and support of the priests because they draw inspiration from us. Likewise, the priests and religious must be inspired by the dedication and hunger for the Word of God of the faithful. The ordained priesthood and the common priesthood must draw inspiration from each other to continue serving the Lord.

Going back to the question: "Para kanino ka bumabangon? What motivates you in life? What inspires you to get up in the morning and do the things you do?" I think I have a new inspiration in fulfilling and living the vocation. I need to wake up each day because I am inspired by God and the people who draw inspiration from us. The people need our support and presence because they draw inspiration from us. Likewise, we need the support and presence of the lay faithful because we draw inspiration from them to continue serving the Lord and His people. We reciprocate each other in service and inspiration for us to build the Body of Christ, the Church.

Nagsimula sa Buto

Fray Joshua F. Olaivar, OAR

Nagsimula sa maliit na buto
 Itinanim sa isip at puso ng tao
 Nang kalaunan ay unti-unting tumubo ito
 At namangha ang sinumang makakita
 nito

Maliit pa lang ang katatagan ay
 sinubukan
 Bagyo, baha, lindol, at iba't ibang
 kapinsalaan.
 Lahat ng ito ay natikman at naranasan.
 Buti na lang ginabayan ng isang
 makapangyarihan.

Oras, araw, at panahon ay lumipas na
 Ang buto noong una ngayon ay lumaki
 na
 Mgasanga at dahon ay napakinabangan
 na
 Huwag magtaka na ang puno ay hindi
 pa.

Ngayon handa na at kailangan na ng
 mamamayan
 Minahal, inalagaan, at ito ay binasbasan
 Nag-aalab na paglilingkod at pusong
 mapagmahal ay tinuonan
 Upang ang kabuohan ay maibigay sa
 pangkalahatan.



A Deacon's Missionary Tale

Rev. Kenneth Caligdong, OAR

Every after the diaconal ordination comes the diaconal exposure. This is not an on-the-job training but it is an opportunity for a religious to have a foretaste of community life and an avenue for growth to maturity in his spiritual, religious, and pastoral life.

I was given an opportunity to experience the beauty and the simplicity of life when I was assigned to and lived with the brothers in the communities of St. Paul's Parish in Kamalo (October 13, 2017 to March 13, 2018) and of Our Lady of Sierra Leone Parish in Kamabai (March 13, 2018 to August 22, 2018), Bombali District, Sierra Leone, West Africa. To go to Africa for mission was one of my goals, thanks to the cover photo of the booklet of the Holy Hour for OAR Vocation which inspired me. Every time we have holy hour for OAR Vocation in Casiciaco Seminary I always looked at the cover. Years later, God sent me there for exposure to

giver of our holy vocation. Thus, we should build first a strong relationship with Him. Afterwards the fruits of our love for God should be extended to the people whom we are serving. It is good to reflect on the experience of the disciples of Jesus. They were not sent into the mission instantly. Instead, they underwent the process of formation first by gathering around Jesus, listening to His teachings and accompanying Jesus in His ministry. When their relationship with Jesus Christ became mature He sent them into mission.

Just like the disciples, we have to undergo the process of formation for us to become well equipped in view of our future ministry. As ordained ministers, Jesus Christ chose us and gave us the task to proclaim the Good News of Salvation and to share His love to all men. We are given the responsibility to continue the work of Christ and not to replace Christ in the work of

God sent me there for exposure to see how firm my motivation was.

see how firm my motivation was.

One of the primary goals of our exposure is to help and assist the brothers in the work of evangelization. The community gave me responsibilities and tasks to perform both in the house and in the school. There I was introduced to the field of procurement and school administration. With all the meaningful experiences and fruitful exposure, I come up with the following:

To be an effective missionary, first and foremost, our life must be rooted in God. We should always put into our hearts and minds that God is the source and

evangelization. We are called to make Christ present in every aspect of our life. We are all called to serve in *Persona Christi*. All these will only manifest if our life is rooted in God.

An effective missionary must be a man of prayer. In the seminary, formators would always say "give primary importance to your prayer life for it is the fuel of your vocation." However, human as we are, we are prone to commit mistakes and we have the tendency to depend on our capacities and abilities in doing our ministry. This human tendency will result in "spiritual dryness" and it will make us unproductive in our

chosen vocation. As ordained ministers our life must be in constant communion with God through prayer. In our ministries, we share in the threefold functions of Christ as Prophet, King, and Priest and we serve the people in *Persona Christi* by sharing to them the fruits of our prayers, but if we have lost the desire to pray, how can we share Christ to them?

My exposure in Sierra Leone, West Africa led me to practice and appreciate more the beauty of prayer. I pray not because it is the schedule of the house. Instead, I pray because I need the grace of God in order to have more strength, and perseverance in doing my task and responsibilities. Our life as Augustinian Recollects is both contemplative and active. Prayer sustains us in all our endeavors particularly in our apostolates in the remote villages. I met a simple and humble missionary in one of the clergy meetings and this missionary has stayed and still continue doing his missionary works for more than 50 years in Sierra Leone. What keeps him doing his missionary work is his prayer life. Indeed, our constant communication with God will sustain us in everything that we do.

Furthermore, my exposure helped me to appreciate all the more the beauty of religious life in the company and presence of the brothers in the community. In reality there is no perfect human community. Though the community is not perfect, still, we strive to be a community of brothers who live in unity. In the community we may have different personalities and capacities, but we continue our journey as a community towards holiness. Everyday we find time to gather as a community to pray the liturgy of the hours, the holy rosary, lectio divina, holy hour, and celebrate the Eucharist together.

If there is one thing that I will treasure most from my exposure, it is my personal development that my experience has given me. In the field of exposure, no formators will keep watch over the performance of the seminarian. It is in this stage of formation when the formand is left on his own maturity and apply the principles he learned from the seminary.



Recoletos Formation Center Chronicle of Events

July 2017

Community Orientation (July 30)

The RFC community welcomed eleven newly professed Friars who are now to venture into their formation in theology. To help them get acquainted with the life of their new community, the incoming third year Friars gave them an orientation. They spent half of the afternoon discussing the daily schedules, the rules and regulations, and the particular observances of RFC.



August 2017

Formands' Annual Five-day Retreat (July 31-August 04)

The Friars have just returned to the formation house after their almost month-long home visitation. To prepare themselves for the new academic year and to venture into another formation, all the formands of RFC, except the newly professed Friars, underwent a five-day retreat at the Bahay Pari in Makati. Rev. Fr. Emmanuel Bolilia, OAR accompanied them during this momentous period of their spiritual journey.



Religious Night at SEMONORE (August 08)

The members of the community joined the other Recollect priests and religious from various Recollect communities in Luzon for the religious night at St. Ezekiel Moreno Novitiate – Recoletos, Antipolo City. This gathering is an advanced celebration of the solemnity of the Patron Saint of this host community and of the Province, St. Ezekiel Moreno. After the sumptuous dinner, the Friars rendered a song number to those present which include the SARF and the Recollect Augustinian Youth members of Antipolo City.



Solemnity of St. Ezekiel Moreno (August 19)

It's Saint Ezekiel's day! In celebration of the solemnity of the Patron Saint of the province, in the morning, the members of the community joined the brothers at the Novitiate house in Antipolo. The celebration started with a procession which was followed by a dance number by the seminarians and youth members of the said community. The Eucharistic Celebration followed, after which was the holy anointing for those who are infirm. In the afternoon, the members of RFC proceeded to the provincial curia for the Mass which was held at San Nicolas de Tolentino Parish, Quezon City.

Letting go (August 24)

The six brother candidates for the Solemn Profession of Vows had their Rite of Renunciation in the evening at the seminary Chapel of St. Thomas of Villanova. This was done in preparation for and in compliance with the canonical requirement which calls for the said candidates to free themselves from any obligations which may be contrary to the lifetime commitment they are to take. Rev. Fr. Lauro V. Larlar, OAR, the House Prior presided over the rite together with the witnesses, Rev. Fr. Kenneth L. Joseph Onda, OAR, the Master of the Professed, and Rev. Fr. Leander V. Barrot, OAR, the Vice-Prior.



August Boys' Natal Day (August 26)

The whole community joined the brothers who celebrated their birthday in the month of August. The event was held at the community refectory during dinner time.

Our Father's Day (August 28)

This day is the Solemnity of our father St. Augustine. Together with this joyful celebration is the special event in the life of our six brothers-their Solemn Profession of the Vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience. This marks their full and lifetime membership to the Augustinian Recollect family. The Eucharistic Celebration and the Rite started at nine o'clock in the morning presided by Fr. Dionisio Q. Selma, OAR, the Prior Provincial of the Province of Saint Ezekiel Moreno. Present during the occasion were the candidates' loved ones, the Recollect priests and religious Brothers and Sisters from various communities, and special guests. The new solemn professed Friars are: Fray Paul Demillones, OAR, Fray Elpedio Sarita, Jr., OAR, Fray Robin Ross Plata, OAR, Fray Kenneth Caligdong, OAR, Fray Niel Ryan Jarumay, OAR, and Fray Kenneth Pahamutang, OAR.

In the afternoon, the community joined the brothers from the Order of Saint Augustine in the celebration of the solemnity of our spiritual father held at Saint Augustine Center of Studies. His Excellency Bishop Camilo Gregorio, Bishop Emeritus of Batanes, was the main celebrant during the Holy Mass.

September 2017

OLCP cleanliness drive and Unveils its Formation Manual (September 01)

The RFC Friars joined the parishioners of our Lady of Consolation in the cleanliness drive aimed at preparing the parish vicinity for the upcoming patronal fiesta. They helped clean the surroundings of the parish by brushing the stairways, sweeping the fallen leaves and twigs around the yard, and preparing the newly finished third floor of the parish pastoral center. The activity lasted throughout the morning. In the evening, Fr. Kenneth Joseph Onda, OAR, the Master of the Professed, held an orientation on the recently published RFC Formation Manual at the Aula Magna. This manual contains the set statutes and guidelines for the formands' journey throughout their stay at this institution.

A Song for our Lady (September 02)

The parish organized a Marian serenade as part of the fiesta activity. All the choirs of the various area chapels and of the parish were present. The Friars, on their part, were also requested to render one song. The parish church was the venue of the event with the parishioners as the audience.

Happy Fiesta, OLCP! (September 03)

Being part of the Our Lady of Consolation Parish, the community of RFC took part in celebrating the occasion. In the morning, they joined the Eucharistic Sacrifice presided by the bishop of the diocese, Bishop Antonio Tobias. They also took part in the procession of the various images of the Saints, the Lord, and the Blessed Virgin Mary held in the afternoon after the five o'clock Mass.

Happy Natal Day, Fr. Emil! (September 11)

The community celebrated the birthday of one of the members of the formation team and the Dean of Studies, Fr. Emilio Edgardo Quilatan, OAR. The occasion was graced by the various Religious and Priests of the different OAR communities, the SARF members, the RFC personnel, and several parishioners of OLCP. A sumptuous dinner was served at the Bulwagang Recoletos.





Chapel Repair (September 18)

Rainwater inside the chapel. This has been a common sight inside the RFC chapel whenever the torrential downpour happens every rainy season. The chapel was constructed for less than thirty years already. After such lengthy time, the iron roofing corroded, the gutters leaked, and the rainwater dripped freely inside the chapel. Thus, the month-long repair was finally commenced this day. Meanwhile, the Eucharistic Celebration was held at the Our Lady of Consolation parish and the community prayers at the Pope (Saint) John Paul II chapel of the seminary.

Alter Christus at 50 (September 23)

The entire community joined the thanksgiving celebration of Fr. Emeterio Buñao, OAR at San Sebastian – Recoletos, Manila for the golden anniversary of his Sacerdotal Ordination. He celebrated it with Fr. Hubert Dunstan Decena, OAR who, like him, marks also his fiftieth year in priesthood. A Eucharistic Celebration was held at the San Sebastian Basilica and a program followed.

Professio Fidei of the Candidates for Ordination (September 25)

The community witnessed this evening the Profession of Faith and Oath of Fidelity by the candidates for ordination to the Presbyterate. The rite took place after the vespers at the Pope (St.) John Paul II chapel of the seminary. Those who stood as witnesses were Fr. Lauro V. Larlar, OAR, the House Prior, Fr. Kenneth Joseph L. Onda, OAR, the Master of the Professed, and Fr. Hubert Dunstan M. Decena, OAR, the Spiritual Director.

Diaconal and Presbyteral Ordinations (September 30)

This day marked another milestone in the lives of our ten friars. During the Eucharistic Celebration held at the parish of Our Lady of Consolation which commenced at eight o'clock in the morning, six of them were ordained to the Diaconate and four were ordained to the Presbyterate. Most Rev. Ryan Jimenez, DD, a Filipino who was the recently ordained bishop of the diocese of Chalan Kanoa, Saipan, presided over the celebration. The newly ordained deacons are: Fray Paul Demillones, OAR, Fray Robin Ross Plata, OAR, Fray Elpedio Sarita, Jr., OAR, Fray Niel Ryan Jarumay, OAR, Fray Kenneth Caligdong, OAR, and Fray Kenneth Pahamutang, OAR. The newly ordained priests are: Fr. Invenzor Melgazo, OAR, Fr. Mark Saludes, OAR, Fr. Sir Michael Dineros, OAR and Fr. Jayferson Baldeovar, OAR.

October 2017



Priesthood at 50

This day is something special to the community as one of its members, Rev. Fr. Hubert Dunstan Decena, OAR offered his thanksgiving to God for the gift of priesthood which he celebrates for the fiftieth year. He presided the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass at the parish of Our Lady of Consolation in the morning. Concelebrating with him were his Recollect confreres, including Rev. Fr. Emeterio Buñao, OAR who, like Fr. Decena, is also celebrating his fiftieth anniversary in the priesthood. Fr. Dionisio Q. Selma, OAR, the Prior Provincial, delivered the homily. A program dedicated to the two beloved "Fr. Lolos" was then held at the Bulwagang Recoletos Atrium. Present during the celebration were his siblings, relatives, friends, SARF members, Recollect Augustinian Youth, A.R. Sisters, and the Recollect priests, religious, and seminarians.

Fr. Mark Saludes' thanksgiving Mass at Baste (October 09)

The community joined the newly ordained Fr. Mark Saludes, OAR when he offered his thanksgiving Mass at San Sebastian Basilica, the church where he first got to know the Recollect family. The Mass started at six in the evening.

It's RFC Day! (October 10)

This day is the feast of the St. Thomas of Villanova, the patron Saint of the seminary. The community celebrated it during lunch time. Something special added color to the celebration as the RFC had its send-off for Fray Elpedio Sarita, Jr. and Fray Kenneth Caligdong who would be travelling to serve at the Recollect mission in Sierra Leon, Africa.

RFC Community sets foot at Bicol (October 14)

The members of the community traveled for hours to Fr. Mark Saludes' birthplace in Bicol to join him in offering thanksgiving to God for the gift of priestly vocation.

One with our Friar's Gratitude (October 15)

A day after Fr. Mark's thanksgiving Mass, the Friars travelled to Camarines Sur for the thanksgiving Mass of Fr. Aldo Potencio, OSA, the younger brother of Fr. Ben Potencio, OAR. The Friars served during the Eucharistic Celebration.

Health is wealth (October 17)

At 8 pm, the Friars gathered at the Aula Magna for a talk on fitness and health. It was delivered by LeBran Dance and Fitness Business Development Consultant, Dra. Val Guico. The talk was centered on how to live a healthy lifestyle.

It's Fr. Arnel's Day! (October 18)

The community celebrated the birthday of one of its members and the parish priest of OLCP, Rev. Fr. Arnel Diaz, OAR. The event was held at the Bulwagang Recoletos Hall. Those who graced the occasion were the Recollects priests and religious, his family members, and the parishioners of OLCP.

A Day of Services (October 21)

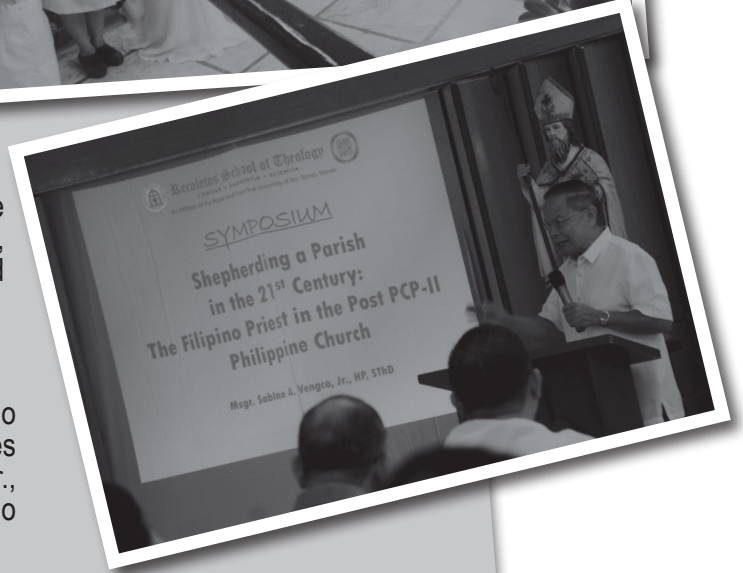
The Friars travelled to the St. Ezekiel Moreno Novitiate – Recoletos this morning to serve as choir during the Holy Mass for the SARF convention held there. In the afternoon, they acted as altar servers during the Eucharistic Celebration at the parish of Our Lady of Consolation in thanksgiving for the opening of the Marian Exhibit held at the Museo Recoleta in Bulwagang Recoletos.

Augustinian Family Friendship game (October 26)

The Friars joined their brothers from the Order of Saint Augustine at their formation house, Saint Augustine Center of Studies, Quezon City for a friendship game. They played basketball and volleyball games in the afternoon of the said day.

A Talk on Mother Mary (October 28)

A Marian Symposium was held at the St. Ezekiel Moreno Audio Visual Room of the Bulwagang Recoleta. The theme revolves around Nuestra Señora de la Salud. Msgr. Sabino A. Vengco, Jr., HP, SThD, gave the first talk. Fr. Romel Rubia, OAR and Fr. Emilio Edgardo Quilatan, OAR delivered the other two.

**November 2017****Remembering our departed confreres @ Himlayan (November 02)**

The community joined the other brothers from various OAR communities together with the SARF members and several personnel members at the Himlayan Recoleta to commemorate the departed Recollects religious and priests. Fr. Dionisio Q. Selma, OAR presided the Eucharistic Celebration.

Traslacion of Our Lady of Health (November 04)

This day marks the transfer of the original image of Nuestra Señora de la Salud from the Bulwagang Recoleta Museum to San Nicolas de Tolentino parish. The convoy left the museum at four thirty in the afternoon and ended in front of SM Cherry supermarket where the faithful waited. From there the procession towards the parish commenced. Joyous applause filled the church as Our Lady received her welcome. Then the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass followed presided by Fr. Dionisio Q. Selma, OAR.

November 2017

RFC joined OLCP for the closing Mass for the Year of Holiness (November 12)

All the Fathers of the community, headed by Rev. Fr. Lauro V. Larlar, OAR, celebrated the Holy Sacrifice at the parish this evening as a sign of the conclusion of the parish and the communities' activities for the province's celebration of the Year of Holiness. The Friars served as choir during the celebration.

RFC hosted the closing of the Province's Year of Holiness (November 13)

The previous day, the community and the parish concluded the activities for the Year of Holiness. However, the Province's conclusion of the said year is celebrated on this day which marks the birthday of our father St. Augustine. Fr. Dionisio Q. Selma, OAR presided the Mass at OLCP which was attended by Recollect priests and religious, AR Sisters, SARF members, Recollect Augustinian Youth members, and the Recollect seminarians.

Our Lady's First Feast (November 17)

This day marks the first feast of Nuestra Señora de la Salud at San Nicolás de Tolentino Parish, Quezon City. The Holy Mass at 5:30 in the afternoon presided by Fr. Manny Bolilia, OAR, the head of the Province's Secretariat of Spirituality, commenced the celebration. Then a procession through the streets of the subdivisions surrounding the parish followed. After the procession, Our Lady's image was brought back to the church for veneration.



December 2018

Grand Marian Procession at Intramuros (December 02)

The community joined the Grand Marian Procession held at Intramuros, Manila in the afternoon of the said date but which lasted until evening. They accompanied the original image of Nuestra Señora de la Salud. More than a hundred Marian images were also part of the said event.

Day of the Order (December 03)

The whole Augustinian Recollect Order celebrates this day its foundation anniversary. The community joined the rest of the brothers of the Province at the Provincial Curia for the said event. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass was celebrated at San Nicolas de Tolentino Parish which Rev. Fr. Dionisio Selma, OAR presided. Prior to the Eucharistic Celebration, a Holy Hour at the parish was first held.

Recollects and Augustinians Formands united (December 05)

The friars caroled the A.R. Sisters at the Colegio de Sta. Rosa in Makati together with the AR formands, OAR formands, and OSA formands. We then visited the Christmas display at Rockwell Center.

AR and OAR Formands convention at RFC (December 11)

The OAR seminarians from the Pre-Novitiate, Novitiate, and Theology together with the AR Sisters' formands, namely, the Aspirants, Postulants, Novices, and the Juniors, gathered at the Bulwagang Recoletos Atrium for their annual Formands' Convention. The program for the said convention included the Eucharistic Celebration, a talk, parlor games, and the singing of Christmas carols.

Community Christmas Party (December 20)

The community held its Christmas party this day. It started at ten o'clock in the morning when Fr. Lauro V. Larlar, OAR gave a talk about ARCORES. Lunch then followed. Present during the celebration were the SARF members, the seminary personnel with their families, and the Recollect Augustinian Youth.

AR and OAR united in Christ's day (December 25)

In this special day marking the birthday of our Lord, it is a joy to see the Augustinian Recollect Family gathered at the Mother House of the Augustinian Recollect Sisters in College. The whole RFC community was part of that gathering. The program started after lunch which included parlor games played by the Sisters, Fathers, and the Friars who were distributed into five groups. Each of the communities of the Fathers and the Sisters rendered a Christmas song.

Sharing the Spirit of Christmas (December 27)

RFC sponsored a Christmas Party for the less fortunate brethren this morning. It was held at the covered walk of the seminary. The Friars prepared a program for them which included a catechism about Christmas, parlor games, and gift giving. Towards the end of the program the Friars serenaded them with Christmas songs. The program ended after lunch.



An array of Christmas Carols (December 28)

The community was serenaded this day by the area choirs and other youth groups. The program started at two o'clock in the afternoon at the façade of the seminary.

Sharing the spirit of Christmas to the AR Sisters (December 29)

The friars travelled to Tagaytay to visit and render Christmas songs to the A.R. Sisters living at Tahanang Sta. Monica, Tagaytay. The so called "Lolas" of the Recollect family were so delighted by the visit.

January 2018

Happy New Year! (January 01)

The Friars together with Fr. Leander and Fr. Emil met the civil New Year in a special way at the top of the water reservoir of the seminary. They shared a good time with each other over some food. They also had Videoke singing and a bingo game. When twelve midnight struck, firecrackers from the neighbors lit the night sky. Fr. Emil led the prayer invoking God's guidance and blessing as another year starts.

Bidding adieu to a beloved Professor (January 05)

The entire community travelled to Loyola Memorial Chapels and Crematorium (Quezon City) this evening to pay their last respect to the longtime professor of the seminary, Dr. Caroline de Leon. Fr. Lauro V. Larlar, OAR presided over the Eucharistic Celebration offered for the soul of Dr. Caroline.

Celebrating Christ's coming (January 06)

All the members of RFC community joined the rest of the brothers of the Province this evening at the Provincial Curia for the Christmas celebration. The event started with the evening prayers followed by dinner and then by a program which included the rendition of Christmas songs. The friars sang two songs. Towards the end of the program, each of the friars received a gift from the Province.



February 2018

World Day for Consecrated Persons (February 02)

The four third year Friars went to the Manila Cathedral this morning. They served as representatives of the community and as servers during the Eucharistic Celebration which marks the World Day for Consecrated Persons. Arch. Gabriele Giordano Caccia, the Papal Nuncio to the Philippines, presided over the Eucharistic Celebration.

One with SNTD Parish (February 10)

Eleven of the Friars joined the other Recollect Fathers this evening at San Nicholas de Tolentino Parish, Quezon City for a Concert for a Cause project of the parish. The Friars sang "Just the Way You Are."

Provincial Chapter Begins

(February 11)

Six members of the RFC Formation team, namely, Fr. Lauro, Fr. Leander, Fr. Kenneth, Fr. Ian, Fr. Arnel, and Fr. Francisco were appointed to serve as delegates to the sixth Provincial Chapter held at the Talavera House of Prayer, Cebu. They were to stay until the closing of the said chapter.



It's Fr. Lolo Bert's Day (February 19)

RFC celebrated the seventy seventh birthday of the community's beloved Fr. "Lolo" Hubert Decena, OAR. The event was held at the seminary refectory in the evening. Present during the occasion were the OAR Religious and Priests, Novices, and Pre-Novices.



Inspiring Vocations (February 25)

The brothers went to San Sebastian College-Recoletos, Manila this morning to conduct a vocation campaign among the students there. Fray Ivan Cuison, OAR shared his vocation story at the school's auditorium packed with more than a hundred students.

Feb Babies (February 24)

The brothers joined the birthday celebrants for the month of February in a simple celebration this evening. A short program was held after dinner where in they were given a cake and gifts by the community.

Blessing the Kitchen (February 28)

The newly renovated seminary kitchen was blessed this morning. Fr. Lauro V. Larlar, OAR presided over the blessing. Present during the blessing were Fr. Leander, Fr. Kenneth, the Friars, and the kitchen personnel. The kitchen's normal function however would resume only in the evening.

March 2018

Rector's Day (March 15)

Fr. Lauro V. Larlar, OAR celebrated his birth this day. In the afternoon, the RFC Friars, several Recollect Fathers, and the Pre-Novices played a basketball tournament at the seminary covered court. The celebration was held in the evening of the said day at the Bulwagang Recoletos Hall. The program started at around six o'clock when Fr. Lauro delivered a talk about the recent Provincial Chapter.

Welcome home, Brothers! (March 16)

The brothers who had gone for their exposure at the Recollect communities with schools returned to the seminary this day. They would be staying in the community in preparation for their Mes de Preparación.

CICM plays with the Recollects (March 19)

Several CICM formands from the Maryhill School of Theology, Quezon City visited the community this afternoon. They are part of Fr. Leander Barrot's class in the said school. They played a friendship basketball game with the brothers of the community which started at three o'clock and ended at five.



United with the Diocese (March 29)

The community joined the Priests, Religious, and the faithful gathered at the Good Shepherd Cathedral for the Christ Mass that started at seven o'clock in the morning. Since this day is a special day for the all ordained priests, the Fathers joined their fellow priests in renewing their priestly commitment. Bishop Antonio Tobias, DD, the bishop of the diocese of Novaliches presided over the Rite and the Eucharistic Celebration.

April 2018

Community Bonding (April 08-09)

The friars of the community together with Fr. Kenneth Joseph Onda, OAR travelled to Villa San Ezekiel in Pansol, Laguna for an overnight group dynamics. They left the community at around two o'clock in the afternoon. The activities were done in the evening. It started with the dinner which includes the celebration of the birthday of the brothers born in March and those of April. After the meals, the Friars were grouped into three with the given task of completing the eight game-stations. They returned to RFC the next day at eleven in the morning.



Renewal of Vows (April 19)

Fourteen Friars renewed their vows after the evening prayer at the St. Thomas of Villanova Chapel of the seminary. Fr. Ian Anthony Espartero, OAR, the Vicar Provincial, received in behalf of the Prior Provincial the renewal of the brothers.



Rest in God's peace, Nanay Glo (April 20)

The community offered the Holy Sacrifice for Mrs. Gloria Blaza at her wake held at St. Ezekiel Diaz Moreno Chapel, Brgy. Pingkian. She has served tirelessly the parish as catechist since its foundation and her area chapel as well as its coordinator.

New Instituted Lectors and Acolytes (April 29)

This is a special day in the lives of the fourteen RFC brothers. During the Eucharistic Celebration presided by Rev. Fr. Dionisio Q. Selma, OAR, the Prior Provincial, eleven of them were instituted as Lectors and the other three were instituted as Acolytes. The rite took place at the parish of Our Lady of Consolation within the 6 AM mass. After that, the community had breakfast at the seminary refectory together with the SARF (Mira-Nila chapter) members.



May 2018

Celebrating Our Lady's Arrival (May 04)

The whole community joined the brothers of the Province in celebrating the four hundredth year marking the arrival of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel de San Sebastian in the Philippines. The event started with a fluvial parade at the Manila Bay which served as a re-enactment of the arrival of Our Lady from Mexico to Manila. Then the rest of the activities were held at the Quirino Grandstand including the Eucharistic Celebration which the President of the CBCP, Archbishop Romulo Valles, presided. Present during the celebration are bishops, Recollect and non-Recollect priests, Religious, SARF members, and the Lay faithful—mostly coming from various Recollect parishes. After the Mass followed the traslacion from the grandstand to San Sebastian Basilica. The traslacion passed through Quiapo church for the traditional “dungaw” with the Black Nazarene. The event concluded with the Holy Mass in the evening presided by Rev. Fr. Dionisio Q. Selma, OAR at the San Sebastian Basilica Menore, Quaipo.



June 2018

Graduation Day (June 01)

Four of the Friars graduated from their theology studies this day. The event started at 7:30 AM with the Baccalaureate Mass presided by Rev. Fr. Dionisio Q. Selma, OAR at Our Lady of Consolation Parish. The graduation rite followed. Two of them received their Master's degree in theology and the other two got their Bachelor's degree in theology.

Community Excursion (June 06-08)

After a year-long of strenuous activities in the seminary, the community members had their opportunity to have some time to unwind and to deepen their brotherhood. They had their excursion this year at the Sabangan Beach Resort, Batangas.

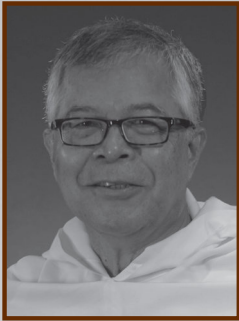
Journey to Spain (June 06)

Five of the Friars who are candidates for the Solemn Profession travelled to Spain together with Fr. Kenneth Joseph Onda, OAR for the Mes de Preparacion. They would be staying there for three months, first to enhance their Spanish communication skills and then to undergo the month-long activities intended for the Mes de Preparacion.

Friars Renewed their Vows (June 15)

Eleven Friars renewed their Vows during Vespers time at the St. Thomas of Villanueva chapel of the seminary. Fr. Ian Anthony Espartero, OAR, the Vicar Provincial, received the renewal of the brothers in behalf of the Prior Provincial, Rev. Fr. Dionisio Q. Selma, OAR.

FORMATORS



Rev. Fr. Lauro V. Larlar, OAR
Prior



Rev. Fr. Dunstan Huberto Decena, OAR
Spiritual Director



Rev. Fr. Leander Barrot, OAR
Vice-Prior



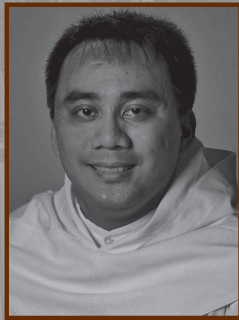
Rev. Fr. Kenneth Joseph Onda, OAR
Master of the Professed



Rev. Fr. Arnel Diaz, OAR
Parish Priest/Formator



Rev. Fr. Jonathan Caballero, OAR
Procurator



Rev. Fr. Ian Anthony Espartero, OAR
Formator



Rev. Fr. Emilio Edgardo Quilatan, OAR
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