

# RECOLETOS

The official publication of Recoletos Formation Cent

*update*

Formation Year 2015-2016



Heeding the pope's bidding  
**The Call to be Merciful**

The deacon and his confession  
**Fulfillment  
in the midst of Struggle**

A brand new exposé  
**Year of Community  
and Pastoral  
Integration before  
Solemn Profession**

Meet the reinforcement  
**New Formator  
in the House**

Learn the victor's fight  
**Winning Half  
the Battle**

Expression with no hesitation  
**The Priest:  
Servant-Leader  
of God's People**



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## EDITORIAL STAFF

### Moderator:

Rev. Fr. Allan Rubett Cabatian, OAR

### Editor-in-Chief:

Fray Paul S. Demillones, OAR

### Associate Editor:

Fray Julius James T. Tinapao OAR

### Layout Designer:

Fray Jessriel L. Marcha, OAR

### Circulation Manager:

Fray Jovy A. Gallego, OAR

### Contributors:

Rev. Mark R. Saludes, OAR

Fray Kenneth S. Caligdong, OAR

Fray Niel Ryan E. Jarumay, OAR

Fray Keneth B. Pahamutang, OAR

Fray Robin Ross S. Plata, OAR

Fray Elpedio N. Sarita Jr., OAR

Fray Ifeanyichukwu Maximillian Omem, OAR

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## As the Chief sees it

The very thing that makes priests, religious and other church-based organizations different from that of social workers is that in all their endeavors, the Word of God takes its predominant role. In other words, contemplation of God is that which brings them to share Him in their apostolate. This is the primary principle that formation of future religious is geared to.

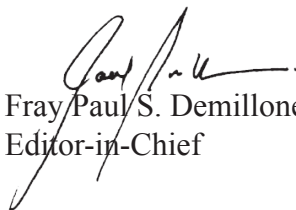
The theme of this year's issue is taken from Psalm 119:105 "Your word is a lamp for my feet." All Christian is always on a journey towards his ultimate goal, that is, to be with God. However, along this journey there are challenges that may weaken him and make him lose his track. For this reason, in his journey, he needs a light that will serve as a guide. This guide is no less than the Word of God. Moreover, the lamp in the verse is an abbreviation of Life and Mission Project. It is a concrete manifestation of the response of the religious to restructuring and revitalization of the Order without setting aside the Word of God. In all these actions, the Word is the center.

In this issue, we feature the initial steps that the whole community took to fulfill the said goal. These are our first few steps of how we, as a community of brothers, journey towards God.

Formation is a shared task between the formands and the formators. To respond more fruitfully to the needs of the time, it is necessary that updating of the formation program has to be done. We are glad to say that this year's set of formands and formators have already implemented the new program. This is just the beginning. It will be evaluated and improved in the future.

This issue is the fruit of our contemplation of God concretized in our way of life. It is our hope that as you read each article on the events that took place in the formation year, you may see the necessity and the centrality of the Word of God in our life.

Have a fruitful reading.

  
Fray Paul S. Demillones, OAR  
Editor-in-Chief





## From the Master's wisdom



Formation is a process that embraces the whole life of a religious (Const., 118) and during the process of formation, God intervenes with new gifts and helps the religious to develop his fundamental aptitudes (Const., 119) in view of transforming the candidate/formand to become a perfect man in Christ.

As I see it, the Life and Mission project (LAMP) of the Order and of the Province are the concrete new gifts and interventions which God has bestowed on us as we face the Order's desire to update herself by opening to new structures that would intensify our charism and mission to evangelize.

With this, it is my great joy that the Recoletos Formation Center team of formators had responded generously to the Order's call for internal mission of restructuring and revitalization. Through the effort of the new set of formators being inspired by the Holy Spirit, a comprehensive Augustinian Recollect formation program was carefully crafted for a holistic and integrated formation of formands. It is also our desire to create an environment that promotes deeper reflection on the OAR charismatic identity and spirituality.

This revised formation program, concretely inscribed in the life and mission project of RFC (RFC-LAMP), is also an adaptation and application of the Augustinian Recollect Formative Itinerary (ARFI).

We are just starting, there will be further processing, evaluation and updating in the future, but with trust in God, the author of vocation, I believe that every endeavor in bringing forth a renewed and innovated approach to OAR formation will be accomplished.

May the merciful Lord our Master bless us always.



Rev. Fr. Allan Rubett Cabatian, OAR  
Master of the Professed






## From the Prior's vantage point

Thank you for asking me write something about the Word of God for the Recoletos Update. You did mention in your letter that the theme, Your Word is the LAMP for my feet (Ps. 119: 105) “reveals the centrality and the efficacious role of the Word of God in the Life and Mission Project of the whole Order.” For this I am doubly grateful.

And precisely because we, who undergo revitalization and with our organization restructured in service of new evangelization, have much more need today of the Word as lamp for our path and light for our feet that I, instead of writing about the theme, would rather invite the readers to pray with and for us in the manner that our Father St. Augustine did in his Confessions (XI. 2, 3):

Let Your Scriptures be my chaste delights. Neither let me be deceived in them, nor deceive out of them. Lord, hear and pity, O Lord my God, light of the blind, and strength of the strong, hearken unto my soul, and hear it crying “out of the depths.” Grant thereof space for meditations amongst the hidden things of Your law, nor close it against us who knock. For not in vain have You willed that the obscure secret of so many pages should be written. Perfect me, O Lord, and reveal them unto me. Behold, Your voice is my joy, Your voice surpasses the abundance of pleasures. Give that which I love, for I do love; and this have you given. Abandon not Your own gifts, nor despise Your grass that thirsts. Let me confess unto You whatsoever I shall have found in Your books, and let me hear the voice of praise, and let me imbibe You, and reflect on the wonderful things of Your law; even from the beginning, wherein You made the heaven and the earth, unto the everlasting kingdom of Your holy city that is with You.

Yours truly . . . at the service of formation,

  
Rev. Fr. Lauro V. Larlar, OAR  
Prior



# THE CALL TO BE MERCIFUL

Fray Paul S. Demillones, OAR

**W**e often hear the word mercy most especially in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. After the greeting, we immediately implore the mercy of the Lord in a series of petitions in order that we become worthy participants of the sacred banquet. It is in some way making oneself humble and little before the Lord and through this act, God may look with mercy on the individual and pardon his sins. However, in its continued practice in the Mass, for some almost daily, asking for forgiveness or even the word mercy itself becomes ordinary. The penitential rite becomes mechanical and almost becoming a lip service. People seldom value the meaning of the act and mercy itself.

Although, one may immediately perceive the act of asking for mercy as routinary, there are still a lot of people who recognize the mercy of God in their lives. When I was still in my Pre-novitiate year, part of our program was immersion for a couple of days in a community where one could see the real face of poverty. I met a lot of people in the community and every day when I met them, I always asked *magandang umaga, kumusta po?* Immediately their reply is *sa awa ng Diyos nakakaraos din*. Their story is a real life story of people who live through the mercy

of God, people who acknowledges the love of God in their lives, and a people who are grateful always to God.

### The Requisites

The Year of Mercy is a very rare occasion when every Christian from all walks of life, age, color and culture is given an opportunity to experience the loving mercy of the Father. More often than not, the hardest thing to do is to ask forgiveness from someone we have wronged. It is indeed a very humiliating act. When someone asks for forgiveness, he is owning the fault and thus he deserves the prize of humiliation. For some who cannot directly say “I am sorry,” they resort to doing acts of kindness to the injured party or give some sort of peace offering as a way of apologizing. The feeling of humiliation is also true when someone wants to approach the confessional box. One has to muster enough courage and at the same time a good doze of humility to admit that he has committed something wrong before the eyes of God. Perhaps some of the reasons why some people find it hard to confess his sins are, first he is going to disclose himself before a stranger (priest). The hardest is that he is going to disclose his sins. Disclosing oneself is something that not everyone does to any people. Normally, this disclosure is done only to a few and chosen circle of friends. Now to reveal something “dark” about himself to a total stranger is something unthinkable. For someone to tell a series of his sins needs a lot of openness and trust on the part of the person to whom he is revealing his sins. However, we are given an assurance that whatever is revealed in the confessional box remains in the confessional box and that the sins that one tells go to the grave with the priest. After all it is a great offense on the part of the priest to reveal any of the sins confessed to him or else he will have to face a great consequence of this violation.

Second reason is that people do not want any purging experience. In a world marked by consumerism, people buy products and services that make life comfortable. Most people do not want discomfort more so pain. To meet this demand of the consumers, companies provide them with the latest gadgets and products that take away all forms of discomfort. Sacrifice is rarely seen. A culture of easy life style is pervading nowadays. This new culture goes against the values of the Church. The Church teaches all people a sense of sacrifice for the greater value-sanctification. Comfort is the call of the flesh while the call for sanctification is sacrifice. Sacrifice should be seen from a new perspective. Sacrifice strengthens and renews a person. It can be observed in someone who grew up in an uncomfortable environment and all throughout his days sacrifice was a part of his life. So when trials come his way he is stronger and ready enough to face them compared to a

child who grew up with easy life. One needs to realize that sacrifice is part and parcel of one’s life. The same principle goes with the Sacrament of Reconciliation. If one needs to amend his life, he has to make a lot of sacrifices on his own. These sacrifices purge him in some way so that he will be renewed and strengthened as a person. Part of this sacrifice is leaving the old self and putting on a new self.

Lastly, going to confession means a demeaning of his manhood. As an individual, there is something that a person normally takes care of and protects from all forms of intrusion, his ego. It is normal for a man to have this tendency and assume this responsibility. However too much of it is not healthy. This ego slowly turns into pride. He now thinks of himself as someone who is at par from the rest of the people. But in the Sacrament of reconciliation he has to swallow that pride. To swallow once pride is easier said than done. Yes, it is difficult. Thus, it takes a real man to be courageous enough to swallow that pride. In the confessional humility is a must. It is a wrong notion to think that one’s manliness is diminished once he let go of that ego. In fact, he becomes more of a human designed by God himself.

### Special Message

This year of mercy is just a manifestation of the preeminence of the grace which God has given to men. Pope Francis in his message on the inauguration of the year of mercy encourages the faithful to once again revisit and reflect on the message of the archangel Gabriel to a humble maiden “Hail full of grace” (Lk 1: 28). This grace that was conferred to a virgin made her accept with great joy and faith all that has been revealed to her by the messenger of God that changed the course of history for mankind. If on our part we accept the same grace which is freely given to us it can also change our life, our dealings with others and





our relationship with God.

It is not by chance that the opening of the year of mercy happened on the celebration of the feast of the Immaculate Conception. There is a deep and striking message that this special occasion gives us. In a world where men are tempted always by the insidious snares of the devil due to man's vulnerability, there is a shining hope that man can overcome this. The love of God pervades even when men are in their weakest hour; that men can triumph over sin. This love of God is concretely translated by the mercy that he continuously shows to his creatures. And our Mother stands as the example of the triumph that God has promised.

In this Extraordinary Year of Mercy we are again asked to discover and take advantage of the great love and mercy that God has for us. We are once again made to discover the unquenchable mercy of God. Our loving Father is likened to that of the father of the prodigal son who waits for the return of his son; where upon seeing him, he rushed to meet him and restored his life back. Our Father waits and welcomes everyone who returns home. We have to admit that as we journey in this life, we meet a lot of crossroads. Often instead of going straight to him we choose other routes which he had given us. This Year of Mercy is an opportune time for us to rediscover the path that leads back to him with the conviction that God still waits for us at the gate ready to embrace us and restore back our identity as his sons.

### **The Icon that Encapsulates**


The logo for this year's celebration of the Jubilee Year of Mercy was designed by a Jesuit Father Marko I. Rupnik. The logo, by its nature, summarizes the essence of the celebration. By just looking at it one would see Jesus, as the good shepherd, carrying at back a man. Perhaps it took its inspiration from the icon of Jesus as the good shepherd who carried the lost sheep on his shoulders. Here, one can see the immense love that God has for every soul that he would not want any one of them to be lost. What is striking about the image is that it shows Jesus in a human and wounded form. It shows that Jesus touches the humanity of an individual in order to change him from within, a holistic approach to saving mankind. Moreover, both the eyes of Jesus and that of a man meet. It is a stark invitation for all of us to contemplate on the love and mercy of God. Moreover, the images in the logo forms a mandorla. It is in the shape of almond shape which is significant in the medieval iconography, for it gives the message of the two natures of Christ, human and divine. The changing color

of the background from a dark hue to a light one gives us the message that Jesus, in his mercy, carries us out of the darkness of sin to light.

Upon looking at the logo I am brought back to two of the parables of Jesus, the lost sheep and prodigal son. The parables show the love and mercy of God that is not ready to judge but forgives, and this great care moves the shepherd to look for any lost sheep. Upon seeing the lost sheep or the lost son, he rejoices greatly for there is much rejoicing over one repentant soul than a hundred righteous souls who need no repentance. This forgiveness of Christ does not only cleanse the person but, like the lost son, restores the dignity and honor that is rightfully his, a son who is an heir of eternal life.

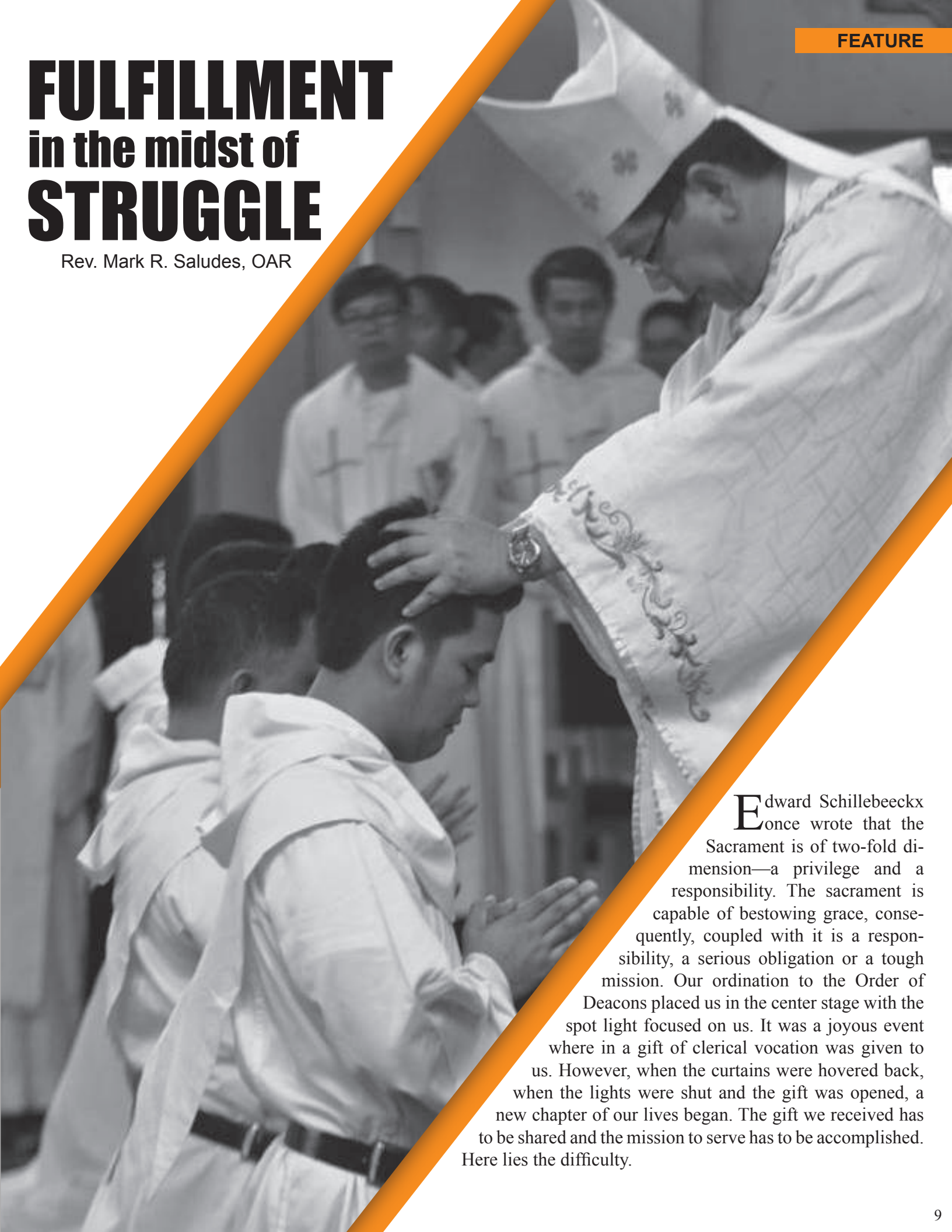
### **The Challenge**

The Year of Mercy presses a message that the showering of grace upon mankind is an initiative of God. Man, though undeserving of such gift benefits greatly from it. The Sacrament of Reconciliation has been for a long time one of the sacraments being highlighted by the Church for the faithful to avail. But now, this same sacrament is given emphasis. Perhaps the reason is that the Church wants to make known to men her instrumentality of the love and mercy that God has for his children. The Church wants to make known to all men that she is more than a mother. She would never forget a single soul who is lost even if a biological mother would forget.

Often than not, when we wrong someone our initial tendency is to get away, hide and never come back most especially if what we have done is considered by us as unforgivable. But in this Year of Mercy, we are made to realize that our God is not what we think he is. Our God cannot be put in a box nor can we put limits to his love and mercy. The Holy See has provided all the means to make us return to God and be reconciled with him. Missionaries of Mercy were sent to all parts of the world so that all may avail of the special pardon that is only reserved and granted by the Pope himself. The Church is likened to a mother who looks for her children. And like the father of the prodigal son, she rejoices greatly at the sight of his son. More so, he throws a banquet and asks his neighborhood to rejoice with him because once his son was lost but now is found. Lastly, as what Pope Francis said, this year is a year of grace. This year is a gratuitous gift that God has given us. It is an encounter with God that is anew. We encounter Him not as a judge but as a father. The message is simple and comprehensible. Our God is a God who forgives not condemns. 

# FULFILLMENT in the midst of STRUGGLE

Rev. Mark R. Saludes, OAR



Edward Schillebeeckx once wrote that the Sacrament is of two-fold dimension—a privilege and a responsibility. The sacrament is capable of bestowing grace, consequently, coupled with it is a responsibility, a serious obligation or a tough mission. Our ordination to the Order of Deacons placed us in the center stage with the spot light focused on us. It was a joyous event where in a gift of clerical vocation was given to us. However, when the curtains were hovered back, when the lights were shut and the gift was opened, a new chapter of our lives began. The gift we received has to be shared and the mission to serve has to be accomplished. Here lies the difficulty.

## The Imposition of Hands: The Bestowal of Responsibility

Being the youngest in the religious profession I was the last one to receive the imposition of hands by the ordaining prelate. While waiting for my turn my head kept saying “I am ready for this.” However, when the bishop’s hands were imposed on my head everything was still and my mind and heart were brought to silence. The touch of the bishop’s hands was not gentle. The force of the imposition was too strong. It was pushing me backwards and I was having trouble keeping my balance. This, perhaps, was the bishop’s way of saying that the vocation to the diaconate is never easy. As he gave me the grace he likewise positioned the cross that I would struggle to carry as I go along with my diaconal journey.

In a very special way, the deacon has the responsibility to proclaim the Good News. The obligation is not only to read but also to teach and to preach. As we are elevated to the rank of the clergy, people expect more from us. Formulating homilies is never an easy task. It is like summarizing theology and associate it to the lives of the people. Yes, the Spirit is there to be of help but there are times that our body is not eager to welcome its promptings—times that we are tired, dried up, busy, in crisis or empty of inspiration. But perseverance lies on falling in love with the Word of God. By putting into habit the reflection of the Word and seeing how it moves from the rising of the sun to its setting, makes it easy to express it in homilies. However not all are appreciative with the reflections we share. Many had approached me to give corrections and criticisms that were sometimes disappointing and discouraging. Truly, it is with maturity that made me continue no matter how tough it is. It is maturity that made me continue to improve myself and to never cease learning. It is maturity that made me trust the Spirit and persisted with my duty to speak on

His behalf.

The reason why the deacon’s stole is worn over his left shoulder is to allow his right arm to serve freely in liturgical activities. It is his right hand that does most of the gestures, flips the sacred books, lifts the chalice, extends communion and gives the blessing. However, there were times that I was not willing to offer this right hand—times that I worked on other things that I deemed as more important than serving in the mass, times that my right hand sought enjoyment on other stuffs that were not sacred, and times that this right hand gave curse rather than blessing. Our eagerness to serve the altar is indefinite. Sometimes the desire is at its peak but sometimes the desire descends. There I realized another important function of the deacon’s right hand; that is to bless himself by making the sign of the cross and pray. When my enthusiasm was at its lowest my right hand led me to prayer. This right hand pushed me to recite and to pray by heart the prayer before the Mass. Surprisingly, during the Mass miracles happened. It restored my enthusiasm, provided me with an experience of joy and peace, consolation and perseverance in this holy vocation.

Ordination to the diaconate made us instant celebrities—public figures that stand beside the priest or the bishop in the midst of the people of God. The diaconate gave us a feeling of prestige and pride of being positioned in the pulpit of authority. The people look at us with respect and they are drawn to listen to us. The danger surfaces when pride starts to sneak in, when the diaconate is seen as a privilege rather than a responsibility. I saw this in me. I started to make demands for myself, I longed for people to give me extra attention, I sought for things that I am entitled to have and I sought not to be deprived of my comfort zones.



*The author celebrating a paraliturgy in Ayungon, Negros Occidental.*



Things changed abruptly when this prestige was taken out from me. That was during my pastoral exposure when I realized in flesh the true spirit of the diaconate—that is to serve and not to be served.

### **The Sending-Off**

From the beginning of my diaconal ministry I am convinced of my effectivity as a preacher. I gave extra effort to make my homilies appealing, moving and substantial. Since I have a strong grasp of the English and Filipino languages, and since I have been speaking in public for a good number of years, delivery is not really a problem. However, when I learned about my assignment in Negros Oriental for my pastoral exposure I could not prevent myself from worrying. My effectivity as a preacher was endangered primarily because of the language constraint—

to follow me should deny himself, take up his cross and follow me.” I admit it, our vocation is difficult. It was provoking when I was a step away from ordination and I thought of quitting. It was confusing when I sensed a desire for married life in moments of meditation. It was hard when we were trained to work under pressure. It was tough when daily we needed to compose and to deliver homilies. It was worrisome when I spoke in the pulpit and I could not recall what I prepared. It was discouraging that despite the preparation I did the people were not satisfied. It was stressful when demands in the community and demands of our ministry were in conflict. It was disheartening when my brothers failed to appreciate my efforts rather saw my flaws. It was painful when my comfort zones were taken off and I was sent for a mission. It was depressing when crisis came and I started missing my family. It was frustrating

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*“I admit it, our vocation is difficult.  
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and I thought of quitting.”*

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I cannot express myself in their own native tongue. But to my surprise, my exposure turned out to be a learning experience. It reshaped my limited perspective of apostolate. It made me realize that apostolate is not only introducing Christ through words it is also making Jesus experienced by the people through our presence. The apostolate of presence is to relate, to walk and to live with the people. Our presence should make them feel the friendship, the fellowship, the care and the love of Christ. By sharing our lives as ministers, we journey with the people heading to Christ our Lord. I am convinced that action speaks louder than words. My experience taught me so. The people listen more to a preacher who lives Christ than to the one who speaks Christ.

### **The Experience of Fulfillment**

Christ means it when He says, “anyone who wishes

when I had a hard time learning a new dialect to make my preaching be appreciated by the locals. It was tiresome to climb the mountains very often to minister to the people. It was miserable that when I was sick, I got no choice but to continue working. It was hurting that in spite of my being a deacon I was not respected. It was heartbreaking when I thought of leaving a place of assignment and its people that I fell in love with. However, there is joy when we see ourselves victors despite all these struggles. There is pride when we are able to say to ourselves that “I have fought a good fight, I have finished the race, and I have kept the faith.” There is fulfillment when in the midst of the struggles and we can’t afford to put a smile on our faces but we know inside of us our hearts glow with unexplainable joy. In this kind of life, fulfillment is achieved when we persevere against all odds because we believe that we follow the will of God and what we are doing is for His greater glory. 🙏

**Editor’s Note:** The author hails from Las Piñas, Manila. He is a solemnly professed religious of the Order of Augustinian Recollects. He studied in the Recoletos School of Theology where he finished with a cum laude award. Together with four other brothers, he was ordained to the sacred order of deacons on November 28, 2015 by Most Rev. Julito B. Cortes, D.D., bishop of Dumaguete in Our Lady of Consolation Parish, Mira-Nila Homes, Quezon City. He is currently assigned in Our Lady of Lourdes Chaplaincy in Brgy. Tambo, Ayungon, Negros Occidental.

# THE YEAR OF community & pastoral integration BEFORE SOLEMN PROFESSION: an overview

Fray Paul S. Demillones, OAR



The novelty program of the Commission on Vocation is the formulation and introduction of the year of community and pastoral integration before solemn profession for the formands of the Province of St. Ezekiel Moreno. This program is in view of the ordinance 12, 2 of the 54<sup>th</sup> General Chapter in 2010. It determines “that Priors Provincial and their Councils are to establish in their respective provinces a year of community and pastoral integration before solemn profession. The Secretariat of Formation will evaluate this experience at the end of the sexennium in order to give or not the program a definitive structure in the formative process.”

For the Province of St. Ezekiel Moreno the year of community and pastoral integration before solemn profession is now part of the process of initial formation for the formands of Recoletos Formation Center. The rationale of the said program is to give the formand the opportunity to know the actual life he is to embrace in the future and to orient himself to the apostolates and ministries of the Order of Augustinian Recollects. The said program seeks to (1) stress the importance of religious life as a vocation shared in the apostolic community of the OAR apart from the roles and duties endowed upon the ordained ministers, (2) promote self-knowledge in the formand, (3) understand the community life and apostolates of the Order in its varied expressions and to actively involve oneself into the daily cycle of the OAR religious life, (4) know the formand in an environment aside from the formation house, and (5) assume greater involvement and responsibility in his personal and religious formation.

In order that this program will be carried over and that its objectives will be fulfilled only the formand who has completed his theology studies in Recoletos School of Theology can be started in the program. The reason for this is to avoid any possible interruptions that may occur due to his academic responsibilities and requirements and that he may be able to focus his full attention to the program. Furthermore, the formand has to be endorsed by the chapter of formation of Recoletos Formation Center. Lastly, the

chapter of formation chooses the appropriate community where he will be assigned in consideration of the personal circumstances of the formand in order that he may grow fully as a religious and benefit from the program.

To assure that the objectives of the said integration will be fulfilled, the Prior Provincial chooses the community that will at least give the minimum standard of community life. The community should be able to give the formand the integration of both the ideal and real aspects of OAR religious life. Here, the community cooperates in the formation process of the formand. He is incorporated as a “regular” member of the community and takes on the pastoral responsibilities of the community. Thus, the community can allow the formand to be involved in its assignments and activities that contribute to the greater good of the community and the province in order that the formand will have a sense of belongingness. He may participate in the local chapter, however, with respect to the conditions of the OAR Constitutions 443 and Additional Code 453 that has to be respected and observed. Also, in each community where a formand will be assigned a mentor or coach will be assigned to him.

At the end of the year, the prior of the receiving community gives to the chapter of formation of Recoletos Formation Center a written evaluation and over-all assessment of the performance of the formand. However, this evaluation only forms a part of the entirety of evaluation of the formand. He is to be evaluated in his observance of the vows, the living of the OAR charism as well as his human capacity to live as an Augustinian Recollect religious.

The new formation program may seem to be an added year in the formation of a formand. But looking at it from a new perspective, it is an avenue for the formand to fully grow in his vocation, his attitude towards responsibilities, his sense of community and fraternity, and above all his relationship with God. All that he needs to do is to cooperate and submit himself to all possibilities. ✠



# Learning for ~~Myself~~ Others

Fray Julius James T. Tinapao, OAR

“Study for life, not just for the exams...” These are the words which I often hear from my mentors since the early years of my elementary education. These words reverberated in my mind that made me dream high. However, when I became a professed religious a sudden turn of views emerged after one of our formators during his conference stressed out, “Study well for the service of others.” At first glance, I thought that these are just simple words. But, queries surfaced on my mind, “Is it really significant?” “How would it make any difference?” So I delved into it.

## Aiming High

As often as I hear the statement, “Study for life...” a vigorous enterprise to strive to be a learned person bestirs in me. For sure there are so many surprises and challenges that wait ahead as I venture into this earthly life. The thought of them adds more to my desire to fulfil the quest of learning so that I could at least have some means to face them.

I studied to achieve success with flying colors. Yet, beyond such academic pursuit lies my dream to become a “somebody” in this world. So, I dreamt high and pushed myself towards something greater. All these were limited within the boundaries of myself, with very little concern or thought about serving others.

## An epitome of the Dead Sea

The world-renowned Dead Sea in Israel is a valuable tourist destination. It is well-known for its saltiness and high density that anyone can lie down on the surface of the water and stay afloat while reading the newspaper even for hours. But, this renowned tourist spot in Israel is in danger. The Jordan River is its only water source. It has a water inlet but it has no outlet. Yet, its water level keeps on

receding every year. The volume of its water supply is not sufficient to equate the quantity of water lost through rapid evaporation.

A common experience of gaining more knowledge intended only for one’s own good can be associated with this Dead Sea phenomenon. It is good to learn many things so as to build one’s treasury of knowledge especially when its purpose is to improve and arm one’s self to face the surprises and challenges that life brings. But one cannot just limit himself/herself to accumulate more knowledge for the self alone. One has to employ such knowledge for the service of others. It has to flow out to others too. The Dead Sea could have stored a great volume of water since it has an inlet but has no outlet. Yet what happens is the opposite. It gradually loses what it has accumulated even in the absence of a visible outlet. So, I could say that a self-restrained and self-centered learning, as applied to the context of Religious life, is but likened to the Dead Sea wherein one gains much but loses more.

## A new outlook

Studying for oneself is self-fulfilling. After the painstaking struggles to achieve it, one can really savor the happiness in beholding the fruits of the efforts made and the sacrifices done. One could even say, “It is worth doing it all.” But looking at the perspective of doing self-sacrifice in view of serving others, taking into consideration even those persons we do not know, is something different. At times it is difficult to accept. What reward can one get anyway after serving these persons? Often a little; at times a “Thank you.” And most of the time, none.

So where can we find the difference? It is in

continued on page 16



# WOUNDED COMMUNITY OF CHRIST

Fray Jovy A. Gallego, OAR


We are in the theatre of war and the battle is fierce. Some are deeply wounded while others are capable enough to take care of themselves. Some are well provided with armours enough to fight the enemy while some are capable of simply defending themselves and the platoon but there is one thing certain – no one is alone in this combat. We are a group of wounded yet brave religious; sinners but not corrupt, hardly pressed on every side but not crushed, perplexed but not in despair. The battle continues and nobody knows when will this be over. We have one common goal – to overcome the world.

Yes, we are a group of men who, by the grace of God consecrated ourselves to God for the greater good. We live together not simply to pray with each other nor to take pleasure in one's company during mealtime and recreation moments. We do not simply laugh at humour and cry in pain. We go beyond the superficiality of being together. Community living is to see the presence of Jesus in every member of the community and to realize that whatever good done to a brother is done to the Lord. It is an opportunity where one can exercise God's call to forgive for him to be forgiven, not to judge for him not to be judged and to love so that Love will be with him. It is where one is not invited but commanded to be holy like the Father. A community where divine providence is our sustenance and eternal happiness is our driving force.

Religious community is a place where one learns to accept the shortcomings of his brother and understands the temperament of his companion. It is an understanding and learning that community life is not an encounter with saints but sinners, not with blameless persons but with sick and wounded brothers to share in their pain and struggles.

It is where love surpasses reason and what is worldly is overtaken by what is heavenly. It is where everybody shares everything in common for when everything is held in common there is plenty and when brothers share each other's gifts, there is abundance. It is a unity and harmony among differences, love and understanding among conflicts, a manifestation of heaven on earth.

We do not contradict what the world teaches but we go beyond its own standard instead. We do it not to shame the secular society but to awaken those hearts that have become drowned with power, possessed with temporal riches and obsessed with carnal pleasure. We are called to spread joy in the world full of hatred and vengeance and to scatter faithfulness in a world suffocated with broken relationships and lack of commitments. Ours is a radical imitation of the poor, chaste, and obedient Christ as proposed in the Gospel for the observance of his disciples. Ours is a constant search for the truth and always at the service of the Church seeking out perfect charity inspired by our Father Saint Augustine.

We continue the fight. There is no reason to retreat and to surrender for the life lived out for Christ is a life worth living and dying for. We wrestle with our enemy who seems to be stronger than we. We go into the field assured of the words of Jesus "take courage, I have overcome the world." So long as He is with us, no fires of hell, no fear of death nor scheme of men can defeat us. We are wounded and tested, injured, and misunderstood. But we continue the journey and fight together. Until we die to ourselves and only Christ lives in us and we become one heart and one soul directed towards God. 

*"We do it not to shame the secular society but to awaken those hearts that have become drowned with power, possessed with temporal riches and obsessed with carnal pleasure."*



# MERCY *as* Encounter

Fray Ifeanyichukwu Maximillian Omem, OAR

**H**oly Mother Church has been on a pilgrimage of Mercy since the beginning of extraordinary Jubilee year of Mercy on the 8<sup>th</sup> of December, 2015, (the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception. The year will last until November 20, 2016, Solemnity of Christ the King). In the course of this year, rather than expand what mercy is, she is leading her children on a pilgrimage of a deeper encounter with the mercy of the Father who is mercy himself. From her encounter with the Father of Mercy, she is sharing this experience of mercy with her children. It is therefore, not surprising that she does not hesitate to tell the world that we all need mercy; that she herself is in need of the mercy of God.

Following the path Mother Church has shown us, I too am making my journey of mercy. Some months back I tried to encapsulate mercy in an “idea”. This venture always left me partially “insane” with a nagging headache and a feeling of frustration and helplessness until one day I had the grace of watching a documentary on the statues in St. Peter’s Basilica. The Pieta, one of the master pieces of Michael Angelo was the one that struck me most. Following the analysis given in the documentary and looking at the image as presented in the documentary and in a picture of it which I have, I realized what I was trying to answer for so long. I understood it but alas, I got back into my rationalizing and lost that graced moment and returned to temporal insanity. Only recently did I realize that there are things better experienced than talked about or described. Mercy falls in this category. The more it is described or reasoned out the more it eludes. Only the one who has had an encounter of mercy truly understands what mercy truly is even if he may not be able to speak eloquently about it.

Mercy as a reality best understood by experience calls to mind the lady in the gospel who wiped Jesus’ feet with her hair (Lk 7:36-8:3). For me, she is a person who really knows what mercy truly is; perhaps better than all the Rabbis in Israel during her time, even if she may not be able to explain lucidly what mercy is. She knew mercy from a personal encounter, an encounter which transformed her into one who loved much. This is the beautiful thing about encounter of love. Every encounter that happens on the altar of love necessarily transforms and spurs to action. No one encounters another in love and remains the same.

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*“Until our society begins to see mercy as an invitation to newness of life, to an encounter with life, it will continue to be a society that upholds death.”*

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Thinking now of the image of the pieta and the story of the woman who wiped the feet of Jesus with her hair, I realized that what we both have in common is love. The pieta is a masterpiece of art that speaks of love; a love that sacrifices; a love that even death cannot break, an intense love that it is almost as if the dead body of Christ lying on the lap of the Madonna is brought back to life by the loving gaze of the Madonna and yet this does not eclipse the intense sorrow that fills her heart which is reflected in her face owing to the death of her son. In that sculpture, we can witness the admission of helplessness and submission to the finitude of human limitedness yet a confidence that this will not be the end of the affair. Same too is the case of the woman who wiped the feet of Jesus with her hair. I assume at some point in her life she may have submitted herself to the limitedness of her sinful condition and perhaps seen herself as unlovable and beyond redemption but her encounter with mercy made her realize that there was more to her story than her being unredeemable or unlovable.

In our society today, we hear people make remarks like “he does not deserve mercy” “she is beyond redemption, a totally hopeless case.” I dare ask, who on earth deserve mercy? Who on earth deserves the extravagant grace of the infinite love and mercy of God? If not for God’s mercy, where would we be? This simply shows our society’s poor understanding of mercy since we are closed to an encounter with it. Mercy is not about waving the just punishment that another rightly deserves. It is an invitation to new life. It is


an encounter with life for one who out of justice does not deserve it. Mercy does not set aside justice, it only perfects it as it is what makes justice truly redemptive. If justice is all about meting out punishment and compensating one who is injured, it can never be redemptive or liberating, either for the one who is wronged or the one who has wronged another.

Until our society begins to see mercy as an invitation to newness of life, to an encounter with life, it will continue to be a society that upholds death. As long as our society sees mercy not as an act of love it will continue to advocate laws that do not bring about human fruition. As long as our society like me, continues to encapsulate mercy in concepts, ideas and law; to define and pontificate about mercy; when and how it should be shown and when it is not to be shown, when it is to be given and when it is to be denied, who deserves it and who does not, it will remain an inhuman society. Perhaps we may go on and on discussing what mercy is and how it is to be given or when it should be given but if we do not open our hearts to encounter mercy it will remain a reality that will continue to elude us. If we want a change in our society or at least in our lives, let us open our hearts to an encounter with mercy, let us become bearers of mercy, for only he who has encountered mercy can truly love much. If you want to be “one who loves much” then let us become more aware of God’s mercy in your lives. 

Learning for ~~Myself~~ Others (from page 13)

sacrificing what one has for love of God in the person of others can we find such difference. Such sacrifice of learning to serve others is inequitable to any material value but the joy it unveils to those who advance into it surpasses that happiness one feels in achieving only one’s personal goal. This made me look beyond what I used to limit unto myself – studying so as to render service to others.

### **The significance**

The desire to traverse this earthly life as a well-read person remains in me. Yet, at this time, such desire is no longer set towards the fulfilment of my self-interests and the upholding of my self-preservation. Rather, the means to achieve such aim is now geared towards service for the well-being of others, the rich and poor alike. So, I study for life, for a lifetime of service to others, to our Mother Church, just as our Lord Jesus Christ came to serve and chose to become a Man for others. I strongly believe that the gauge of the depth of the one’s learning is not on how much knowledge one accumulates for one’s self, but on how well he/she puts such knowledge into the service of others. There is so much joy in learning many things in view of serving others well. 



# My Dream Life

Fray Niel Ryan E. Jarumay, OAR

Being a priest is never an easy enterprise. There is more than what natural understanding can offer. There is a transcendent reality that lies within the surface of the man in the habit. When a candidate to the priesthood is received to the order of presbyterate through the imposition of the hand by the bishop, there is an ontological change that happens in a man. Meaning, he no longer lives his own. He now puts on Christ. Thus, he becomes an *alter Christus* and in his ministerial services he acts in *persona Christi*.

So much can be said about a priest. But more can be said in his pastoral ministries. In fact, his responsibilities toward his flock are very demanding. Every day he is to face challenges that may call for his judgment, or he may be caught in a situation that may call for an immediate solution. Yes, he might have learned the basics and the theories of pastoral management but in the “field” he has to be practical and pastoral at the same time.

Given in a situation where the administration of the sacraments and sacramental are often times preceded with cultic practices which are not recognized by the Church, the priest cannot immediately succumb to his immediate spur of emotion and not proceed with the celebration. This will create a trauma among the faithful and create a negative impression about the priest. In situations like this, the priest can teach the faithful of the Catholic values and exhort them to leave the values that contradicts. The best avenue for this, where the priest has the authority to speak using the mind of the Church and the people listen, is the homily. For this reason, it is necessary that a priest should always pray and invoke the Holy Spirit that he may

be guided when he preaches so that he may lead the people to the truth. Moreover, his battle ahead is fierce. For this reason, he has to constantly pray. He must pray, the prayer which the Church obliges him to say and that he must also encourage to the faithful to pray, the Liturgy of the Hours. When he, and or together with his flock pray this, the day is sanctified the moment the sun rises until it sets. Also, the task of evangelization should not be his own only. This has to be shared. By virtue of baptism which the faithful received, they are to partake and participate in the prophetic, kingly and priestly office. The people are to be enlivened and educated about the truths of the faith in order that they themselves may become evangelizers. In other words, the lay has to be empowered in order that they may do their part as members of the body of Christ. It must be realized in them that they have a role to play for the Kingdom. Above all, in all the ministerial activities of the parish priest he has to be united to the hierarchy by being obedient to their directives and be united also to his flock. As a follower of Christ, unity or oneness must be in utmost priority. Unity must be seen in his life for God himself created order and the world and all its creatures live in unity.

The priest does not live his own. His is a lot of dying to the self. Every day when he wakes up he has to think for the Church, with the Church and in the Church. The surrender of the self and the will is not easy. For this, the grace of God makes the priest ready for this kind of life. On the part of the priest. His response to the call of Christ is a fruit of his intimacy with Christ. To keep that intimacy alive and warm, constant dialogue and union with God is necessary and should be part of his life. ✠





# Winning *half the* BATTLE

Fray Elpedio N. Sarita Jr., OAR

On the level of externalities, others would say that a priest is the most dressed, cleanest, modest and well-disciplined person. Others would even brand him as harmless. Being a man of God, one would eventually have a sense of security and easiness if he is with a priest. While others see a priest like this, some see priesthood as something that is a privilege which not everyone may have. In a community where a priest is assigned to, people place him in a pedestal. He automatically gains the respect and wins the esteem of men. He is listened to most of the time; and when he speaks, it is with authority, thus, must be adhered to.



Perhaps there is an element of truth in it. Priests dress themselves properly as a symbolism of their priestly office. But more than this, to remind him that in all his doing especially in his ministerial apostolate, he no longer bears himself but the person of Christ. He represents Christ in the present generation. It is clearly stated in the document *The Priest, Pastor and Leader of the Parish Community* that the priest is so ordained that he may represent Christ to the people. Thus, what he does is done in the person of Christ. There is however a danger in this. Often priests have this tendency to replace Christ. One cannot really say what will happen in the near future. But for me, the good thing is that I already have the idea of the dangers that may happen. It may be ideal to say that I want to be a good and holy priest but I guess it is better than having no vision at all. It is better that as early as now, a formand has already a clear vision of what he wanted to become and what he does not want to become. This vision, of course, needs to have some concrete action that should be made as early as now.

In relation to the Word of God, it is good that a formand has to train himself in the art of reflecting and studying. This studying includes not only the reading of some theological books and commentaries on the Word of God but also keeping himself updated with what is going on around him. The Word cannot be preached theologically in its entirety. It has to be concretized and applied in the present situation. That is why aside from having the Bible on one hand, he has to have the newspaper on the other hand.

A formand, moreover has to train himself how to collaborate with others. In the task of governing the flock entrusted to him, one has to learn the art of involving others especially in arresting certain issues in the locality. For this,

it is good that as early as now, a formand has to be exposed on how to handle responsibilities like this. For us Recollect formands, we have in our program of formation this year a pastoral exposure. In this program, a formand is assigned to a certain community and is given a responsibility given to a solemnly professed religious. With the responsibility given to him, it is an opportune time for him to learn how to delegate work with the other members of the team. It is a matter of empowering the people surrounding him with the same task so that they too may have a share of governing the people. A priest does not have the monopoly of power. This power can be given to others so that at the end of the day, he can say that he has involved everyone in the task of looking after the sheep.

Right now, I see the wisdom why the use of our cellular phones and laptops are regulated. It serves as a training on how to use them properly. There is a great danger if we have them all the time. Abuses may arise. We are taught of how to be detached from them. Learning to be detached from them so that one cannot be lured over to them. The gadgets now become a servant to all his work not him becoming a subject to the material things. Above all, the habit of being detached from all these things safeguards one's vocation and the danger of exposing himself too much from the social media. Moreover, with him controlling the use of these things, he can use them to spread and promote the teachings of the Church.

One can say that these things are easier said than done. But the mere fact that one already knows the danger that lies ahead (what he may become) it is already winning half the battle. The battle is fierce. But with the right discipline and tools to use, I am sure that victory already awaits. ✠

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*“Right now, I see the wisdom why the use of our cellular phones and laptops are regulated. It serves as a training on how to use them properly.”*

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**REPLETOS FORMATION**  
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**5-2016**



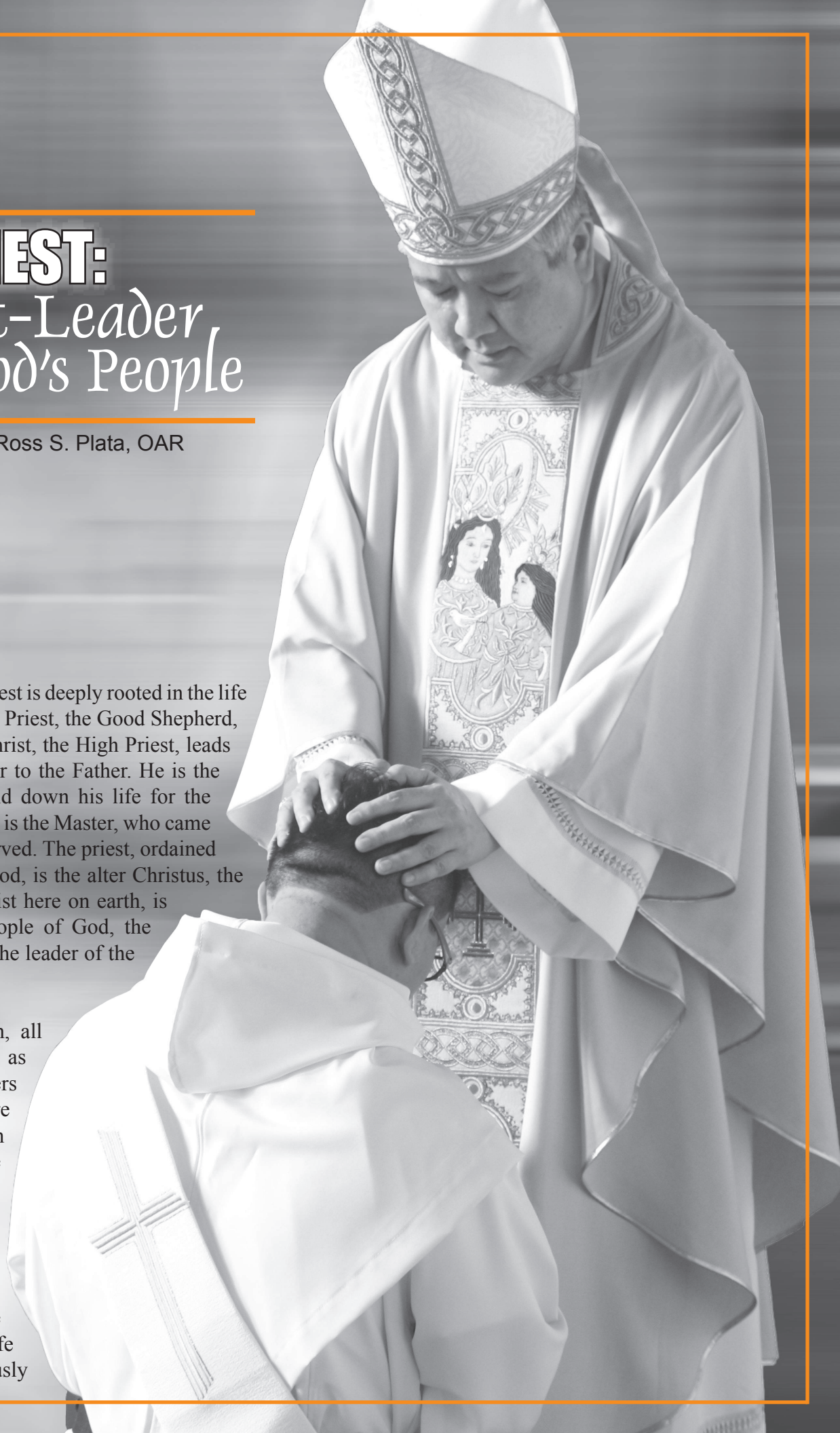
# THE PRIEST: *Servant-Leader of God's People*

Fray Robin Ross S. Plata, OAR

## Introduction

The life of the priest is deeply rooted in the life of Jesus Christ, the High Priest, the Good Shepherd, and the Master. Jesus Christ, the High Priest, leads the People of God closer to the Father. He is the Good Shepherd who laid down his life for the salvation of his flock. He is the Master, who came to serve and not to be served. The priest, ordained to serve the people of God, is the alter Christus, the one who represents Christ here on earth, is the sanctifier of the people of God, the pastor of the flock, and the leader of the community.

Through baptism, all become one in Christ as adopted sons and daughters of the Father and are united in the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The life of the priest as an ordained minister of God, is rooted in this baptismal union with the Holy Trinity. He is consecrated to the Father, rooted in the life of Christ, and continuously





strengthened by the Holy Spirit.

### **The Life of the Priest: The Life of Christ**

The life of the priest is rooted in the life of Christ. The priest is the alter Christus, in the sense that the priest participates on the priesthood of Christ. It is through the priest's participation in the priesthood of Christ that he manifests the triple functions of Christ in the parish, i.e. the preaching (prophet), guiding (king), and sanctifying (priest) offices of Christ.

The ministerial priesthood is not over and above the common priesthood. All baptized Christians share in the tria munera of Christ. As sharers in these functions of Christ, we are all priests, prophets, and kings. Although they are not different in essence and in degree, they are interrelated to one another. Lumen Gentium 10 says that the ordained priesthood "teaches and rules the priestly people; acting in the person of Christ, he makes present the Eucharistic sacrifice, and offers it to God in the name of all the people.

ministries as function, a job to be done, that after doing such job, they are dispensed from other pastoral works. Others prefer to take as many assignments and ministries as they can, of course with a good amount of stipend, and neglect the sacredness of each ministry. Such attitude leads the flock into dismay, others into outburst of emotion, while some choose to join another religion where they feel that they are more Christian than in the Catholic Church.

### **Solution**

Priests need to put into their minds the essential elements of priesthood, and that is, priesthood is the life of Christ himself, and it is rooted in the love of the Holy Trinity. The priest, like Christ who became one of us, is not "out of this world" but he is "in this world, but not of the world." The priest, especially those who are in the parish, should know the needs of his flock. Just as the shepherd knows his sheep, he must feel the sentiments, needs, and situations of his people.

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*"Once ordained in the priesthood, some of the clergy feel that they are 'enthroned' into power and they possess the infallible right over and above their flock."*

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But the faithful, in virtue of their royal priesthood, join in the offering of the Eucharist." The faithful also participate in the offering of prayer, sacrifice, and do the will of God through charity.

### **The Problem**

There are threats and challenges to the life of the priest. The prevailing decay of values of Christianity, such as secularism, clericalism, functionalism, the proliferation of sects and non-Christian religions, and the growing number of nominal Catholics, lead to several problems and put the life and ministry of the priest into modern day persecution. But these challenges should not make the people of God and the priest go astray. The priest, as the leader and guide of the community, is guided by the grace of God through the life of Christ, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. That is why, the priest's deep relationship with God is his weapon to fight against these prevailing threats.

One problem that lurks into the priesthood is the "entitlement" mentality of some of the priests. Once ordained to the priesthood, some of the clergy feel that they are "enthroned" into power and they possess the infallible right over and above their flock. Some of them take their

The Holy Spirit marked the ordained minister with the sacramental character that binds him to the service of Christ and the Church forever. Strengthened by the sacramental grace of ordination, the Holy Spirit guides the priest through grace. Without the grace of the Holy Spirit, the priest will not be able to do his work well, and may appropriate it as his own personal work, and not that of the Father.

In his life as minister of the Word, it is necessary for the priest to ask the inspiration of the Holy Spirit before he can proclaim well the Word of God with authority. In every action of the priest, especially in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, the Holy Spirit is invoked to make possible the transubstantiation of the bread and wine into the precious Body and Blood of Christ. Without the power of the Holy Spirit, the priest cannot do such a thing by his own human efforts.

Evangelization does not depend on mere human efforts of the priest. Evangelization is first and foremost the mission of Christ. He entrusted this mission to his Church.

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# An Encounter with the Word for the Filipinos

Fray Kenneth B. Pahamutang, OAR

In 1521 the Spaniards came to the Philippines who brought with them the image of the Sto. Niño. This was the first face of Christ that the Filipinos met. From that time different images of Christ were introduced to the Filipinos. For almost five hundred years of Christianization of the Philippines one should ask the question: who do Filipinos say Christ is? In order to discover the Filipino Face of Christ one must consider the recipients' language and symbols which would answer the restlessness of the human heart and have impact in their lives. This restlessness should be answered in the Filipino context in order for it to be proclaimed in a right manner and be a transforming power for the Filipinos. In articulating who Christ is for the Filipinos, "Christology in the Philippines should be deeply rooted in the history of Jesus and the tradition of the Church."

Philippines is a predominantly Christian country. But before its Christianization in the year 1521, the natives practiced an animistic religion. The "anitos", big rocks and trees etc. were replaced by the images of the saints, the Blessed Virgin Mary and Christ. Today, there is still a remnant of these animistic beliefs as practiced by the Filipino believers which



were combined with the Catholic Christian faith. This is called Folk Catholicism. “Folk Catholicism is the popular experience of religious feeling which shapes and maintains a sense of identity. It might have vestiges of animism and superstition but it gives a sense of direction and shapes and maintains personal and communal identity”.

Filipino theologians observed and conducted a study to answer the question: who do Filipinos say Christ is? The succeeding paragraphs will discuss the favorite images of Christ to understand the Jesus of folk Catholicism through the Christology of images.

### **Santo Niño**

An image of the Santo Niño was given by Magellan in 1521 as a gift to Queen Juana of Cebu at her baptism. The devotion to the Child Christ is held every third Sunday of January in different parts of the country. In Cebu City devotees perform the “Sinulog” with their petitions for healing and for other divine favors. In Kalibo Aklan, an image of the Santo Niño is placed on the devotee’s head (Patapak) or rubbed on the afflicted parts of the body.

The Santo Niño is an image of humility i.e. a child is vulnerable and dependent on his or her parents. Majority of the Filipinos identified themselves with this humble Christ since majority of the Filipino population is poor and oppressed. Filipinos could feel that Christ is one of them. Majority of the prayers of the Filipinos are more on supplication, an act of dependence, than praise.

The theme of Christ’s universal kingship, Jesus’ omnipotence, is associated with the devotion to the Santo Niño which explains why Filipinos confidently turn to the image for assistance. The Child Christ’s statue is venerated by the faithful in all needs—from bad weather, calamities, asking rain during the drought season to personal needs—people wipe the image with handkerchiefs with the belief that the healing power of Jesus would be transmitted to the

cloth.

### **Hesus Nazareno, Santo Entierro, and Crucified Christ**

It is commonly known as the Black Nazarene. It was brought by the Augustinian Recollects to the Philippines between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. It is shrined in Quiapo Church and famous as the most miraculous of all images of the Nazarene. The Friday novena in honor of the Nazarene attracts seas of devotees to the Church. Their devotion usually rooted from an experience of the power of the Nazarene: miraculous escapes, wondrous cures, and favors granted through the intervention of the Hesus Nazareno. Every 9<sup>th</sup> of January, the image is borne in a procession through the city streets around the church accompanied by the millions of male and female devotees who have their “panata” (vow): barefooted, white towel to be wiped to the image and dressed in red T-shirt with the agonized face of Christ. “The devotees relate to Christ, the Black Nazarene, as savior, as father, as provider, and as helper in spiritual and material needs.”

The Santo Entierro or the “Entombed” Christ is a representation of Christ-Sufferer. “The devotees see in Christ a surrogate father from whom they can seek guidance in their doubts, refuge from the complexities of life, and presence in the midst of their solitude.”

“The Crucified Christ, head bowed, mouth open in excruciating agony, is a popular image of Christ that provides consolation” Filipino Catholics who are often accustomed to life’s hardships: poverty, deprivation, oppression due to natural calamities, greed and unequal distribution of goods became close to the image of the suffering and crucified Christ. “For some the sight of their crucified God increases the resolve to survive. The Cross is an essential part of Christian faith. The image of the Crucified provides a clear and unified image of how God responds to our most tangible reality – our being sinners. In the sight of the Cross, Christians live in acceptance and trust in the suffering God who remains faithful in his love for sinful human beings.” As Pope Francis said in his homily to the victims of the typhoon Yolanda in Tacloban





City, “He experienced all calamities that we experienced. Jesus is Lord and the Lord on the cross is there for you. Therefore, He is capable of understanding us.”

The Padre Hesus Nazareno and Santo Entierro are the images of Jesus, the Suffering Servant. “Through these images, Jesus appears as one of ‘the least of our brethren’: the hungry and thirsty, the naked, the sick, the lonely stranger and the prisoner. Jesus, the Suffering Servant, can thus reach out to us Filipinos as a healing and forgiving Savior who understands our weaknesses, our failures, our feelings of depression, fear and loneliness. He has been through it all himself!”

### **Sacred Heart and Lamb of God**

Images of the Sacred Heart, holy picture or calendar, are usually enthroned in the homes of Filipinos. They are also in scapulars worn by mass goers especially on Fridays. “This image has traditionally been understood as a symbol of God’s love for humanity in the Christ, and also to symbolize the heart of Jesus as wounded by sin.” In adoring the Sacred Heart of Jesus, we proclaim a God that is burning with Love, taking humankind’s condition and saving it from its difficulty.

Beltran, in the interviews performed for his 1987 survey, found that the Lamb of God is one of the most preferred symbols of Jesus. “This symbol is often mentioned during the celebration of the Eucharist but it is also closely connected with the strong emphasis on the Passion of Christ in Filipino spirituality.” It is mentioned in connection with the holocaust of Christ: “Itong korderong inihaw hindi iba’t kalarawan ng mahal niyang katawan, totoong pinahirapan...” (This Lamb as a burnt offering is none other than the image of his holy body truly tormented...).

“Filipinos think of Christ not only as a spiritual redeemer but as the total redeemer.” If Christ then is the total redeemer, the Filipino idea of salvation is close to the

biblical notion. Salvation means deliverance from things political, economic, religious, and social (Exodus 5 and Deut. 20). Salvation is associated with blessing and peace (Numbers 6: 22-27). Peace includes health, well-being, and the presence of God. Salvation is linked with life, spiritual welfare and total well-being of his people e.g., Jesus relate Isaiah 61:1-2 to himself (Lk. 4: 16-22). Lastly, salvation and blessing is attached with the cross (Phil. 4: 10-20).

In the discussions above, we have seen the special love of the Filipinos to Jesus Christ. “Filipino Catholics, because we have met Christ the Suffering Servant in his Passion, we can pray about sin and forgiveness, about justice and reconciliation, about the suffering and Passion of our own Filipino people today. We have the strength to offer ourselves as ‘bread broken for the world,’ together with Jesus, because we believe with unshakeable hope that the Crucified One is Risen from the dead, victorious over sin, death and the world.” The Christ of the Filipinos is evidently a suffering Christ, beaten, scourged, humiliated and has died but rose from the dead, victorious over death and reigns with God the Father in heaven.

Elwood and Magdamo observed that the Filipino preference for the Child Jesus, which often works to the detriment of contemplating the Adult Christ, with his demanding teachings. Likewise, they note the strong devotion to the Suffering Jesus, at the cost of a lesser appreciation of the Resurrection and Ascension, better show Christ’s lordship over life. The resulting Christology is thus a Christmas and Good Friday oriented one, with its inherent deficiencies.

Filipinos are so focused on the birth (happiness) and passion and death of Jesus (suffering). Filipinos forget the public ministry of Jesus which is essential on how to live our lives as true followers of Christ. No wonder the Philippines is one of the corrupt nations in the world, high

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# THE ESSENTIALS OF FORMATION

Fray Kenneth S. Caligdong, OAR

There is a famous adage that says, “You cannot give what you do not have.” The same thing with us who aspire to become a future ministers in the vineyard of our Lord Jesus Christ. The purpose of studying theology makes the person equipped with the tools needed in the future. In this aspect of formation, the intellectual ability is being sharpened and laden with learnings that will be of help in the different ministries. This is the reason why the future ministers are formed first before experiencing the reality of life. We must not forget that Jesus’ apostles experienced also this kind of formation before they were sent to proclaim the Good News wherein they were fed with Jesus’ values and teachings.


The Constitution of the Order of Augustinian Recollect clearly put into writing somehow the theological and the pastoral side of the formation of the candidates for priesthood but in a different manner. The term that was used here may be different but it gives an idea that indeed it is likened to the theological and pastoral side of it. Contemplation and Apostolate were the terms that the Constitution used. When we speak of contemplation it simply means a search for God or knowing God. Also, apostolate is understood as the fruit or result of the pastoral theology. It is indeed, through the love and grace of God that we can share Christ to other people. Moreover, we

cannot share Christ to others, if we do not have an encounter with God in our own lives. The Constitution is saying that, “No one should be too engrossed to contemplation that he neglects work and that no one should be too possessed with work that he forgets to pray.” We can see here as crystal clear what the statement is saying, a balance between the two must be sought always so that the formation will be fruitful. As future ministers in the vineyard of the Lord, we must always remember that our prayer and the love of God will serve as the fuel as we do our own apostolate.

As a conclusion to this reflection, we must take this two as one for each of them is very much valuable in our ministry in the future. Though we cannot deny the fact that we heard even in the gospel that we cannot serve two masters, either you love the other and despise the other; however, in this case the two must be taken, for they supplement each other. And both of them are essential in the formation of the seminarians who aspire to become worthy disciples of Christ in the modern world and bearers of the Good News. Lastly, all the information and learning that we acquire through class discussion must not remain only in the mind. They should be a supplement to the pastoral aspect of our formation. 

## An Encounter with the Word... (from page 26)

crime rate, poverty, prostitution, human and drug trafficking, etc. The whole of the public life of Jesus is a light that reveals the shortcomings as well as the virtues of Philippine society.... Jesus in his public life has shown us the way to live our own lives in society. He has shown us the true highway to greatness. The way is not the way of self-centeredness but of self-denial, not the way of grabbing but of giving, not the way of domination but of service, not the way of selfishness but of love... All following of Jesus in his public life will lead those who follow him faithfully to the way of the cross which culminates in the resurrection.

It is a challenge to the Local Church authority and Filipino Theologians to inform the people and present to them the public life of Jesus. In this way the Filipino is not only limited in relating to Jesus’ birth, passion and death but also to Jesus’ mission and teaching. If this would be implemented the Filipinos would transfigure their lives and hearts to Jesus’ life and heart. Thus, the Filipinos would become true followers of Christ and would transform our country into a better place to live in, a place where the love of God reigns. 

# TIME... like an ever-rolling STREAM



**August 18, 2015**



The basketball team of Recoletos Formation Center went to St. Ezekiel Moreno Novitiate-Recoletos, Antipolo City to play with the home team of the said house and some of the Recollect religious priests who formed another team to compete. The basketball team of RFC was declared champion. In the evening the community gathered again the covered court for the Religious Night.





**August 3-7, 2015**



The simple professed friars, after finishing their community and parish exposures and vacation reported back to the seminary to start their formation year.

**August 19, 2015**

The community went to St. Ezekiel Moreno Novitiate-Recoletos, Antipolo City to celebrate the feast of St. Ezekiel Moreno. In the afternoon everyone went to the Provincial House to join the rest of the religious of the Province in the celebration of the feast of the patron saint of the Province.



**August 22, 2015**

Fr. Leander Barrot, OAR, Vice-Prior of the community, celebrated his 50<sup>th</sup> birthday.

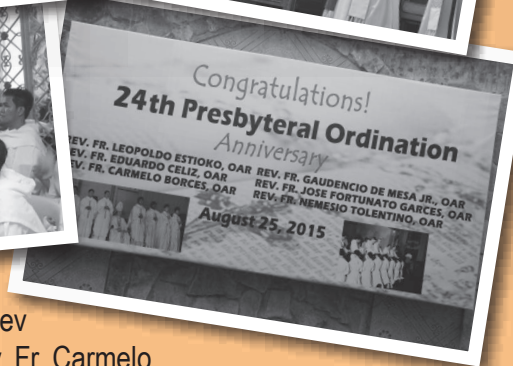


**August 28, 2015**



After a solemn celebration, a procession around the church was held. The community joined the feast of St. Augustine.

**August 25, 2015**



Rev. Fr. Eduardo S. Celiz, OAR, Rev. Fr. Leopoldo V. Estioko, OAR, Rev. Fr. Carmelo V. Borces, OAR, Rev. Fr. Gaudencio G.L. De Mesa, OAR, Rev. Fr. Jose Fortunato J. Garces, OAR, and Rev. Fr. Nemesio D. Tolentin, OAR celebrated their 24<sup>th</sup> sacerdotal anniversary at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Parish, Project 6, Quezon City. The friars of Recoletos Formation Center served as the choir at Mass.

**August**







ation of the Holy Eucharist in Our lady of Consolation Parish, the whole community together with the faithful had the parish that ended at the main entrance of the Bulwagang Recoletos. To continue the celebration, the brothers went to the house to enjoy the company of each other with a bountiful food while having fun in the pool. In the evening, the brothers of the Order of Saint Augustine in San Agustin Center of Studies to celebrate the feast of Great Father St.

29, 2015

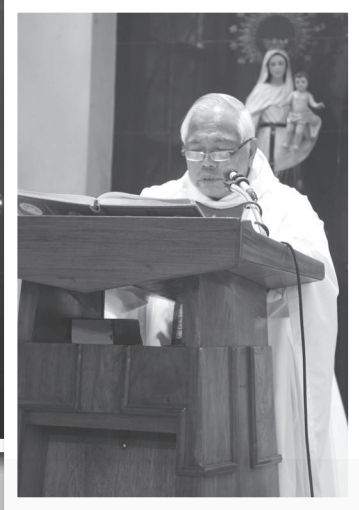


The community formally welcomed six new simple professed members of the community in a party held at the seminary refectory. In a "Your Face Sounds Familiar" theme, the neophytes introduced themselves and showed their talent in singing, lip synch, and wit



**September 4, 2015**

The community celebrated the feast of Our Lady of Consolation in solemn celebration of the Holy Eucharist in the seminary chapel.



**September 12, 2015**

Fray Sir Michael Roweno Hamo Saludes, OAR profession of vows in perpetuity. Rev. Fr. Selma, OAR, Prior Provincial, received the brothers.

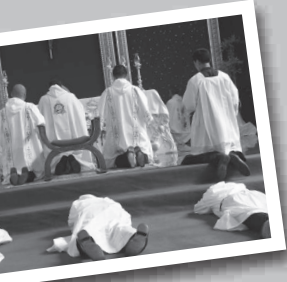


**September 11, 2015**

Rev. Fr. Emilio Edgardo Quilatan, OAR, dean of Recoletos School of Theology celebrated his natal day. In the lunch time, all the students of RST with some of the professors of the school celebrated with him with a simple program and presentations prepared by the Recoletos Formands Forum. In the evening, a sumptuous dinner and a simple program was prepared by the seminarians. Also, five candidates for solemn profession had their rite of renunciation.



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### September 25, 2015



The socio-cultural committee in cooperation of the chairman for Sports organized the annual sports festival of the community. The community was divided into three teams: black team, yellow team, and red team. In the opening ceremony, the candidates for Mr. Intrams 2015 from the different teams were introduced in a creative salvo. Fray Ralph Anthony Espiritu, OAR from the red team won the title Mr. Intrams 2015 and Best in Talent.



### October 18, 2015

Rev. Fr. Arnel F. Diaz, OAR, parish priest of Our Lady of Consolation Parish, celebrated his birthday at Bulwagang Recoletos.





**October 31, 2015**



In advance, the community celebrated the All Saints' day in a costume party held at the seminary refectory. Instead of wearing halloween costumes, the seminarians of Recoletos Formation Center wore costumes of the saint of their choice.



**November 2, 2015**

The whole community went to Himlayang Pilipino to remember the beloved of the order in a celebration of the Holy Eucharist.



**November 28, 2015**

Fray Roweno Eugenio Hamo, OAR, Fray Sir Michael Dineros, OAR, Fray Mark Saludes, OAR, Fray John Tanquis, OAR, and Fray Jayferson Baldelovar, OAR

received to the order of Deacons in a celebration of the Holy Eucharist at Our La Consolation Parish with Most Rev. Julito Cortes, D.D. as the presiding minister and ordaining prelate.



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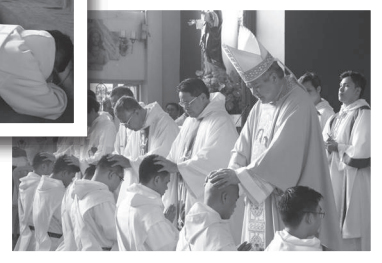
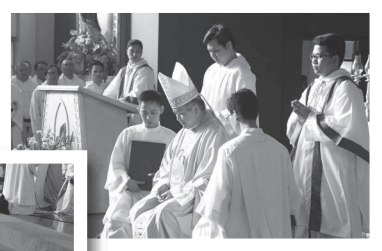


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While the whole Church celebrates the feast of the Immaculate Conception, ten deacons were ordained to the priesthood in a solemn celebration of the Holy Eucharist at the Our Lady of Consolation Parish. Most Rev. Socrates Villegas, D.D. was the ordaining prelate.

**December 8, 2015**



**December 21, 2015**

The whole community of Recoletos Formation Center gathered at the Bulwagang Recoletos to celebrate

the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ in a lunch party prepared by the seminarians.



**December 23, 2015**

At last after how many years the annual gathering of OAR and AR formands has reawakened from sleep. This year's gathering was hosted by the formands of the Recoletos Formation Center.



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## January 24-31, 2016

In a joyful celebration of the 51<sup>st</sup> International Eucharistic Congress held at Cebu, four members from the Recoletos Formation

Center Fr. Leander Barrot, OAR, Fray Robin Ross Plata, OAR, Fray Jessriel Marcha, OAR, and Fray Kenneth Caligdong, OAR were sent to the said event together with Fr. Reynaldo Jaranilla, OAR and Fr. Ferdinand Hernando, MB as the official delegates of the Recoletos Communications Office. During the duration of the congress, the team covered different events, prepared short ads that were aired via television, and made a recap of the events that took place the previous day.



## February 13, 2016

The Recoletos Formation Center together with RCO hosted the echo of the 51<sup>st</sup> International Eucharistic

Congress and launching of the book Eucharist from the Heart.



## February 19, 2016

The "lolo" of the community, Fr. Dubstan Huberto Decena, OAR, celebrated his 75<sup>th</sup> birthday in a children's party motif held at the seminary refectory.



**March 19, 2016**

Six new acolytes and six new lectors were instituted to the said ministry in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist presided by the Prior Lauro V. Larlar, OAR at the Our Lady of Consolation Parish. Fr. Selma, after the homily, instituted the candidates to the ministry of Lector and Acolyte.



**March 15, 2016**

The Prior of the house Rev. Fr. Lauro V. Larlar, OAR celebrated his natal day. Before the dinner, he gave a talk on the role of the laity on evangelization to the members of the community and the parish.



**April 25, 2016**

The simple professed friars of Recoletos Formation Center renewed their vows in a simple rite held at St. Thomas of Villanova chapel. Fr. Immanuel Bolilia, OAR, Provincial Councilor received the renewal of vows while Fr. Allan Rubett Cabatian, OAR and Fr. Emilio Edgardo Quilatan, OAR served as witnesses.





**May 28, 2016**



After fulfilling all the academic requirements, seven members of the Recoletos Formation Center graduated from the Recoletos School of Theology. They earned the degrees Bachelor of Sacred Theology and Master of Arts in Theology at a ceremony held at the Our Lady of Consolation Parish.



**June 1-3, 2016**

The whole community went to Bakasyunan Resort and Conference Center, Iba, Zambales to unwind and spend some quality time with the brothers.



**June 6-7, 2016**

As the application of the Life and Mission Project of the Order, the whole community made a five-year development plan. The novelty in here is that everyone was involved in the planning. The community was divided into different clusters and centers with the formators as the directors and the formands as the chairmen and members of the said center that will plan and make some proposals for the years ahead.



# NEW FORMATOR IN THE HOUSE



The community of Recoletos Formation House has a new formator to complete the circle of ten (team of formators). He hails from Brooke's Point, Palawan. He made his simple profession of vows on April 30, 2005 at Our Lady of Consolation Parish, Mira-Nila Homes, Quezon City. He was ordained to the priesthood on June 19, 2010 at the same parish. In the community, he is assigned as the procurator. Aside from his usual task in the seminary, he also administers the sacraments around the jurisdiction of the parish. However, before his term as the procurator ends, he was asked to be the new Master of the Professed for the next formation year because the present Master will be sent to Saipan as a missionary. The community is grateful for the new formator who will journey with the formands of the said institute in their religious life, Rev. Fr. Kenneth Joseph L. Onda, OAR. ✠

The Priest: Servant-Leader of God's People (from page 23)

Now, the priest stands on behalf of Christ to continue the mission of preaching the Good News of salvation. It is through the grace of the Holy Spirit that the human instrumentation of actualizing this mission is strengthened and continued.

The priest is in communion with the Holy Trinity, the Church, the Hierarchy, with other ministers, with the whole presbyterate, the community, the lay faithful, with the religious, and with the political and social entities. The priest is not separated from the whole Body of Christ. Together with the pope, the bishops, and the rest of the clergy, the presbyterate is within the whole Body of Christ. Gone are the days when the hierarchy is considered as an "elite" group within the Church. The present schema of the Church is like that of a circle wherein the hierarchy, together with the people of God, is found within the circle. This is in contrary with the pyramidal model of the Church wherein the pope is on top, followed by the bishops, the clergy, and the faithful are found at the base of the pyramid.

The ministry of the priest is also rooted in his deep relationship with Christ. In his ministry of celebrating the sacraments, the priest acts in persona Christi and does not deviate himself in the action of Christ. As the presider of the Holy Eucharist, the priest represents Christ in this holy sacrifice and offers it not only for himself, but for all the people of God. The sacrament of penance should also be enlivened by the priest. He should celebrate it with whole hearted will and also receive it from his co-priests. The liturgy of the hours, the prayer of the whole Church, should be one of the priest's most important source of strength. Most of all, his relationship with the Mother of God, Mary, should lead him and his flock closer to Jesus Christ.

## Conclusion

The priest is consecrated for the service of the people of God. His life and ministry is the visible sign of Christ's presence. As Jesus Christ is the visible revelation of God; the sacraments are the visible signs of the invisible realities of the grace of God; the Church as the visible sign of the reign of God; therefore, the priest is the visible reality of the presence of Christ. ✠



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