

RUE NEUVE

LE JOURNAL OFFICIEL DU NOVICIAT DE LA SALLE PARC 2020
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ZOOM! FAST TRACKING NEW NORMAL TECHNOLOGIES FOR THE NOVITATE FORMATION | 13

Highlights

Sowing the Seeds | 3

Transitions | 9

Day of Reception | 11

11 Rules We Impose Upon Ourselves | 19



La Rue Neuve est de Retour!

It's good to be back! After a hiatus year, the PARC Novitiate has finally re-opened its doors to a new roster of Novice Brothers. Thus, our traditional Rue Neuve newsletter has returned to serve as the window to give the Institute a glimpse of the cloistered walls' life.

Yet, not everything is back to normal. We are living in a so-called 'new normal' kind of lifestyle now. The on-going pandemic has changed our perspective and our methodology, especially on teaching. Our formation program has not been exempted from that fact. Remote learning, online sessions, and webinars are the hot keywords that are being used right now.

Thus, our theme for this batch's maiden issue is all about transitions. This issue is filled with transitions and adjustments, not only in terms of our new environment coming from the Postulancy, but also large changes on our apostolate, our classes, and our program. The new normal has challenged the way we view our Novitiate Formation, and these thoughts are expressed as you read on in this edition of the Rue Neuve.

For now, the question is clear: how do we find a sense of normalcy, especially in our formation, despite the new normal way of things? We hope that as we go on our journey as Novices, we get to discover, deepen, and discern, in light of what is going on worldwide.

On behalf of the community, I welcome and thank you to our Rue Neuve. Furthermore, we invite you to interact with us through the QR codes spread around the newsletter.

Scan it, and it will bring you to an online form where you can share your thoughts with us.

Happy reading! Live Jesus in our hearts, forever.


Br. Mark Francis Basan II nFSC

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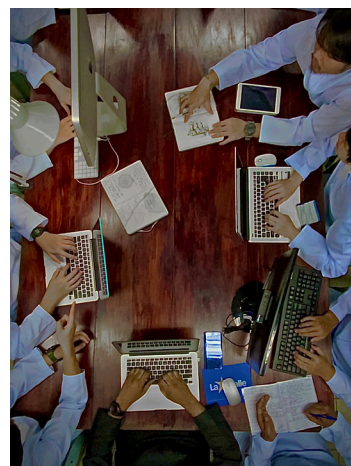
Photo Editor

Br. Rey Mejias FSC

What is Rue Neuve?

Rue Neuve was a street in Rheims, France where the first house of the Brothers of the Christian Schools was located. The humble and modest abode which the Brothers occupied on June 24, 1682, was where all the transformation happened; teachers became Brothers, seculars turned into consecrated men, human work became the work of God. As Blain put it, the house on Rue Neuve is considered as the cradle of the Institute.

About the Cover



The new normal calls us to be creative and innovative with the technologies available for use in our formation program. This is our reality now.

Feedback?

You'll be seeing this QR code spread across the issue. Scan it (or go to bit.do/RueNeuveLSN) to bring you to our online form to share your thoughts, opinions, and questions!





SOWING THE SEEDS

by Br. Julius Christian Calingasan nFSC, Br. Milton Christopher Merto nFSC,
Br. JB Bui Van Duc nFSC and Br. Joshua Aaron Miranda nFSC

The Residential Novices in Brother's black polo pose for a community group photo.

After a hiatus year, the Novitiate has finally re-opened, not anymore to guests, retreatants, facilitators, but to a new set of Novice Brothers and Brother Formators. They will be journeying together for a year searching for more in-depth discernment and a more genuine response to the call of being a disciple of Christ and a De La Salle Brother.

The novices from the Vietnam District, Brothers John the Baptist Bui Van Duc, Joseph Pham Van Anh, and Anthony Nguyen Ngoc Thuyen, arrived on August 4, 2020. After four days, the LEAD Novices, Brothers Joshua Miranda (Malaysia), Julius Calingasan (Philippines), Mark Basan II (PH), Matthew La San Aung (Myanmar), Milton Merto (PH), along with Assistant Director Br. Sebastien Matundu FSC (Congo) arrived.



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Director of Novices
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BR. SEBI MATUNDU FSC
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PARC NOVIATE 2020-2021



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Pakistan



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Lipa Community
Malaysia



BR. MATTHEW AUNG nFSC
Lipa Community
Myanmar

This is our name. This is our story. Read on to discover our Oui.



BR. MYRON DUQUE nFSC
Lipa Community
Philippines



BR. ANTHONY THUYEN nFSC
Lipa Community
Vietnam



BR. JB DUC nFSC
Lipa Community
Vietnam



BR. JULIUS CALINGASAN nFSC
Lipa Community
Philippines



BR. MILTON MERTO nFSC
Lipa Community
Philippines



Br. Joseph ploughs the field during the Novices' weekly gardening session.

The Harvest

The arrival of the new batch of Novices, despite the hiatus, is a much-welcomed sign that there is still much to be harvested. The Novitiate Board chair and PARC General Councillor, Br. Ricky Laguda FSC, together with the concerned visitors of PARC, had decided not to start a new batch of novices in 2019.

Planting and Nurturing

An opening prayer service with the theme “The Seed of Formation” marked the PARC La Salle Novitiate’s official opening on August 9, 2020. Br. Rey Mejias FSC, the Director of Novices, emphasized the significance of not only planting the seeds of vocations but also nurturing it throughout the year. He added that the end goal is to integrate identities aligned with Jesus Christ and St. John Baptist De La Salle.

The new Novices then shared their reflections with the whole community, signifying the initial planting of their seeds of formation, hoping to help one another in letting each plant grow towards God’s plan.

Breaking the Ice

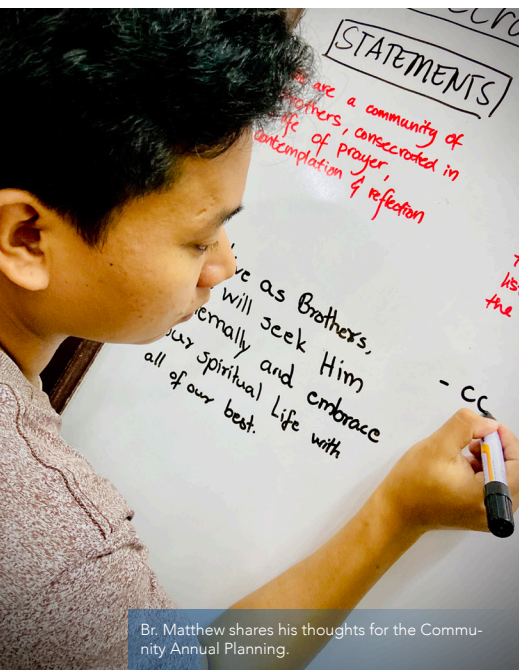
After the prayer service, Br. Rey also spearheaded a community fellowship through a Quiz Night at the Novitiate’s Small Parlor. Snacks were served, cheers were heard, the competitive spirit was in the air - it was a blissful and relaxing night (despite the difficult questions about chemistry, religion, La Salle, and the Novitiate) that broke the thin ice among the newly re-united community members. Indeed, the day itself was an excellent start for the journey that awaits.

One More Puzzle Piece

It took about a month for the roster of Novices to be complete with the arrival of Br. John Myron Duque nFSC on August 30, 2020. Like with the initial group, his official arrival featured an opening prayer service with the theme “Building the Household of Faith.” A symbolic puzzle of the Novitiate’s facade served as the ritual, with each community member receiving a puzzle piece, signifying the role of each in building the household of faith.

The arrival of Br. Myron marks the near completion of the Residential Community in Lipa. Now, the Brothers patiently anticipate the arrival of Br. Peter The Anh, sub-director, who is still in Vietnam.

“...the significance of not only planting the seed of vocations but also nurturing it throughout the year.”



Br. Matthew shares his thoughts for the Community Annual Planning.

COMMUNITY ANNUAL PLANNING

Due to the quarantine restrictions, the Community and Personal Annual Planning (CAP/PAP) of the PARC La Salle Novitiate were held inside the property's premises on August 20, 2020. The CAP gave the community the avenue to discuss and create its Vision-Mission Statement, which would serve as the community's foundation.



Br. Sebi gives his input to Novice Brothers Mark and Anthony during the CAP.

DAY OF REFLECTION

As part of welcoming the Novices to their new home, the community had their first Day of Reflection, focusing on Prayer and their Spiritual Reading books as reflection help, on August 11, 2020.

COMMUNITY BUILDING

The community commenced and celebrated their CAP with a community-building activity on August 21, 2020. The day-long event began with the traditional Visita Iglesia (following safety protocols), visiting the Redemptorist Church, St. Sebastian Cathedral, the Lady Mediatrix Church, the Capilla de San Juan Bautista de La Salle, and finally, the Novitiate's own House Chapel.

In the evening, the community celebrated its Brotherhood through an extended community gathering filled with singing, dancing, and merriment. It symbolized the on-going community building of their household of faith, with the guidance of St. John Baptist de La Salle.

The community building was done at such an opportune time as it would be the Novices' Reception of the Holy Habit the next day.



The community poses in front of the Capilla de San Juan Bautista de La Salle.



The community relishing their Visita Iglesia at the San Sebastian Cathedral.

THREE-DAY SILENT RETREAT

To prepare the Novices for their upcoming Reception of the Holy Habit, the Brothers-in-formation went through a three-day silent retreat on August 17 to 19, 2020. The retreat focused on the Memoirs of the Habit, and the Ten Rules I Impose Upon Myself by the founder, himself. Moreover, the event also served as the community's personal annual planning where they were tasked to create their own version of the 'Ten Rules.' Finally, the community was given an opportunity to have confession with Fr. Philip Ibasco, Novitiate Chaplain, to close the retreat.



Br. Milton in deep reflection during the silent retreat.

LEAD 10TH ANNIVERSARY OPENING

The community participated in the the first Lasallian East Asia District Online Community (LOC) virtual meet-up on August 14, 2020. The first LOC, "envisioned to be a quarterly gathering of Lasallians to create opportunities for meet-up, prayer, and formation (LEAD Story 342), placed emphasis on the need for the Lasallian Community to pray and share their experiences.



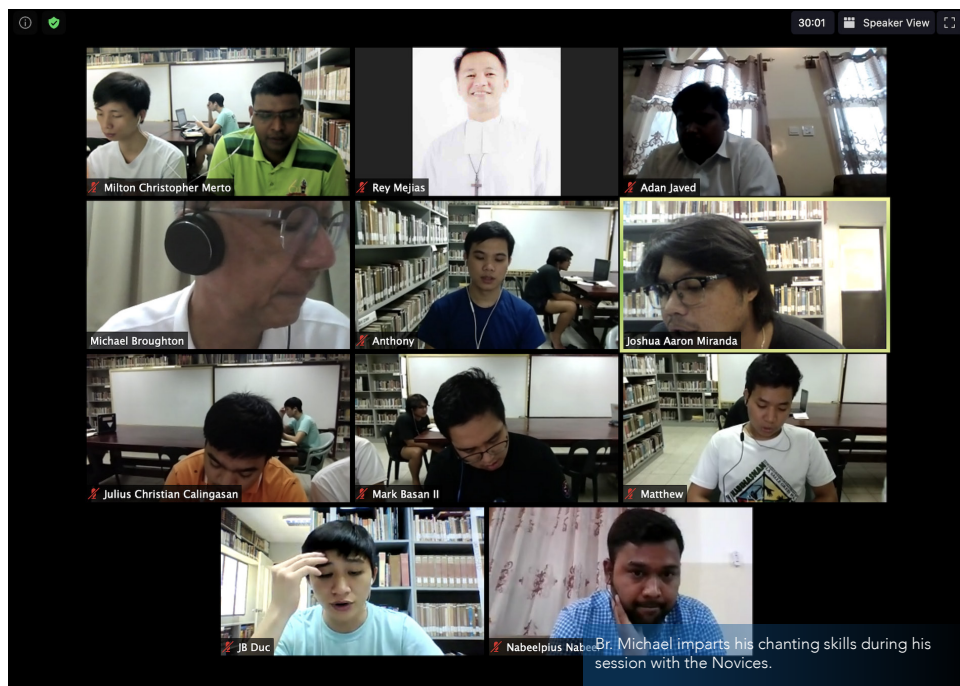
Brothers enjoying each other's company during their community gathering.



The usual set-up of the Novices during online interactions and engagements.

MALAYSIA DAY

In solidarity with Malaysia, the hometown of Br. Joshua, and the Malaysian Brothers, the community commemorated the 63rd Independence Day of Malaysia on August 31, 2020. It was a double header event as the community also celebrated the arrival of Br. John Myron. The evening was highlighted with a prayer service with the theme "Malaysia Prihatin (Concerned Malaysia), and followed with a presentation by Br. Joshua about Malaysian culture and cuisine.



Br. Michael imparts his chanting skills during his session with the Novices.

OUI? YES!

Communication is vital in the life of a Brother and teacher. Thus, it is imperative that as early as now, the Novices get to practice and improve their skills. The Novitiate Program offers two courses related to language – English and French.

The Brothers-in-formation have their French classes every Friday and Saturday with Br. Sebastien Matundu FSC. For almost one month, the Novices are learning basic conversations like comment ça va. This is a good avenue to broaden their means of communication using different parlance.

On the other hand, the Novices attend English classes with Br. Edmon Viroomal FSC every Thursday. So far, the focus of their classes is more on giving clear directions and instructions, a skill that is necessary for the future teachers.

OFFICE AND CHANTS

The Brothers-in-Formation from the Residential and Gujranwala communities went through a series of sessions on the chants for the Liturgy of the Hours from Br. Michael Broughton FSC on August 24 to 26, 2020, through online conferencing. The sessions provided the Novices with knowledge on how to chant the hymns from the breviary and create a good prayer environment. Thank you, Br. Michael!

How does this story make you feel? Let us know of your thoughts through our online form. Scan this QR code!



We, PARC La Salle Novitiate 2020-2021 community, believe in reaching the common good by promoting the values of stability, order, and discipline through silence, prayer, and work. Through being a faithful, apostolic, and fraternal community, we seek to imitate Jesus Christ, promulgate the Lasallian charism of education, and adhere to the Rule of the Institute.

A COMMUNITY OF FAITH

PARC La Salle Novitiate is a community of faith. We are a Christ-centered community that embraces a life of spirituality through praying, contemplating, reflecting, and relying on Divine Providence for our holistic needs.

As a community of faith, we commit ourselves to:

- 1.) pray the Holy Rosary;
- 2.) contemplate on the Holy Scriptures and the movements of the Spirit; and
- 3.) trust God in everything we do.

A FRATERNAL COMMUNITY

PARC La Salle Novitiate is a fraternal community. A diverse and welcoming community that joyfully shares each others' strengths and weaknesses for the betterment of the members, through generosity and collaboration.

As a fraternal community, we commit ourselves to:

- 1.) share our skills and talents;
- 2.) exert effort in building an accountable community; and
- 3.) practice "indulgence to others".

AN APOSTOLIC COMMUNITY

PARC La Salle Novitiate is an apostolic community. We continue to love and care for our ministry and our environment by valuing the dignity of human life in collaboration with the lay as a response to the signs of times.

As an apostolic community, we commit ourselves to:

- 1.) express zeal in adapting to the new normal;
- 2.) show compassion for the poor and young through evangelizing the gospel and promoting justice;
- 3.) live simply; and
- 4.) be witnesses of the examples of our founder, St. John Baptist de La Salle.

LIPA COMMUNITY

We are PARC La Salle Novitiate 2020-2021, and are a part of the community with diverse group of novices from four other countries - Philippines, Myanmar, Vietnam, and Malaysia on a virtual context, and in reality living with an apostolic community of four Brothers in Gujranwala, Pakistan. Through being a faithful, apostolic, and fraternal community, we seek for a personal encounter with Christ as disciples, in the footsteps of our founder St. John Baptist de La Salle.

A COMMUNITY OF FAITH

As a community of faith, we commit ourselves to:

1. Devoting a considerable time in the community schedule for Personal Prayer, Community Prayers, Meditation, Spiritual Reading, Faith Sharing and attending Eucharistic Celebration daily;
2. Drawing strength and inspiration by studying the Holy Scripture, life of the founder; and
3. Following Lasallian Devotions and invocations to Our Lady, St. Joseph, and to Our Holy Founder in our daily prayers.

A FRATERNAL COMMUNITY

PARC La Salle Novitiate is a fraternal community. We live together as Brothers, respecting and accepting the cultural differences, and building a common Lasallian culture, in our daily lives, where God's love is experienced profoundly.

As a fraternal community, we commit ourselves to:

1. Sharing our joys and difficulties with each other;
2. Dealing with our challenges through the directives of the novitiate staff and fraternal correction by the confreres.
3. Attending community and common Sector gatherings, Religious Profession ceremonies, and special events organized by the Parish/School.

AN APOSTOLIC COMMUNITY

PARC La Salle Novitiate is an apostolic community. By living with the active apostolic community, we witness to the gospel values among our students (who are predominantly of Islamic faith), lay partners, and especially our Brothers, in preparation for the future mission as ambassadors of Jesus Christ, following the inspiration of our holy founder.

As an apostolic community, we commit ourselves to:

1. Becoming the recipient and agent of formation through discernment of the Novices, help one another to grow humanly and spiritually in the virtual and active community context.
2. Being open and welcoming, and put into practice, in a fraternal and apostolic way, the words of the Gospel "Come and See."
3. Sharing and working together in association with our lay partners, our educational mission to the youth and especially the poor.

GUJRANWALA COMMUNITY

VISION - MISSION STATEMENTS

T R A N S I T I O N S

by Br. Joshua Aaron Miranda nFSC

Order of the house, community assignments, Exodus, and the new-normal apostolate. These were just some of the topics tackled during the month-long orientation of the Novices of the day-to-day operations of the formation program. These were done to ensure the Novices' smooth transition to their new home for the year.

The orientations were done to experience a smooth transition of the Novices to their new home for the year.



Novice Brothers Joshua, Milton, and JB seriously discussing their output for the CAP.

The first set of orientation sessions on August 12 to 14 focused on the community's statutes, guidelines, and assignments. Each Novice was invited to prepare and propose new policies for their respective assignments as part of the customization process.

The second set of orientation on August 27 to 29 introduced the Novices to their Apostolate activities through remote learning programs and applications. These programs are then used for the Novices' online classes with the Brothers, Exodus, their new apostolate, and other pertinent matters.



The Novice Brothers go in breakout groups.



The community poses for a group picture during their community gathering.

The Reception of the Holy Habit marks a significant moment as the Novices cross the threshold and officially begin their journey in the PARC Novitiate. It is during this occasion that the budding Brothers receive the Holy Habit, the Rule of the Institute, and the six-decade Rosary – sacramentals that would prove to be essential in the year-long journey in the Novitiate.

The uniqueness of this year's Novitiate batch brought to light three different, yet equal in solemnity, Habit Taking ceremonies all the way from Gujranwala, Pakistan, to La Salle Green Hills, and to the PARC Novitiate's own Parmenie Cloister Chapel, with 11 newly-robed Novices from Myanmar, Malaysia, Pakistan, The Philippines, and Vietnam.



Fr. Louie Punzalan SVD blessing the Holy Habit, the Rule, Rosary, and the Holy Bible.



The Novices patiently waiting for the reception of their Holy Habit.

"I'm now a part of the Lasallian Family and the Church."

Br. Nabeel Pius Dogra nFSC reflects on his experience of finally receiving the Holy Habit. "I am a chosen instrument of God to preach the good news through education," he added. Novice Brothers Nabeel nFSC and Adan Javed Malik nFSC of the Gujranwala community received their Holy Habit in the La Salle Faisalabad community on June 7, 2020. The simple ceremony was attended by the Brothers from their respective communities and some family members. "It was a great moment in my life," Br. Nabeel further exclaimed.



Our new novice Brothers! The novices face the congregation with a round of applause.

The Day

by Br. Nabeel Pius Dogra nFSC, Br. Joshua Aaron Miranda nFSC and Br. Mark Francis Basan II nFSC

"Remain steadfast in God's love."

These were the words of Br. Ricardo "Ricky" Angel Laguda FSC, PARC General Councillor, during an interview after the Habit Taking of the 2020-2021 PARC Residential Novices on August 22, 2020 at the Chapel of the Divine Child, La Salle Green Hills.

The solemn event marked the reception of the Holy Habit of Novice Brothers Anthony, JB, and Joseph of Vietnam, Matthew of Myanmar, Joshua of Malaysia, and Julius, Mark, and Milton of the Philippines.

Reminiscing his own Habit Taking in 1993, Br. Ricky also advised the new Novices on the importance of gratitude in order for the genuine internalization of the values picked up during the formation year.

Quarantine restrictions may have prevented the attendance of family and friends, yet the presence of the Brothers from the Saint Benilde Brothers Community, the Lasallian Formation Center, and the PARC Novitiate made the event serene and intimate.

What do you think of the story? Talk to us through our online form.



“The Novices have taken upon ‘Oui,’ the French word for yes, as the name that encapsulates their identity as a batch - a constant yes to God’s invitation.”

The Completion of Oui

The Novices have taken upon ‘Oui,’ the French word for yes, as the name that encapsulates their identity as a batch – a constant yes to God’s invitation. The Habit Taking of Br. John Myron Duque nFSC of the Philippines on September 9, 2020 at the Parmenie Cloister Chapel of the PARC Novitiate completed the positive response of the batch to God’s call.



Br. Rey assists newly-robed Novice Myron in donning his habit.

of Reception



Br. Myron happily accepts his new habit.

Described as a truly solemn gathering of Brothers, the ceremony was graced by the presence of Br. Ricky, Br. Armin Luistro FSC, LEAD Visitor, and the Brothers from the Lipa Community. Happiness was in the air during the entire event, especially on the part of the PARC Novitiate Community, knowing that their batch is finally complete. Everyone has given their yes and their oui.

Three separate ceremonies, yet all equal in solemnity and significance. The threshold has been crossed. They knocked on the Brothers’ door to accept them to be part of the Institute. Now these Novices are on their road exploring and embracing the womb experience. The Parable of the Sower imparted that the varying soils are the womb and they themselves are the seeds. The exploration is not about staying underneath the soil and waiting for growth, rather, it is through nurturing their values and genuine intentions as they continue walking beyond the threshold further. Let the journey begin.



Post-reception group photo with the attendees of the solemn gathering.

NVFI

Apostolate for the New Normal

by Br. John the Baptist Bui Van Duc nFSC and Br. Julius Christian Calingasan nFSC

The pandemic may have halted the Novices from having a face-to-face apostolate, but it has opened up for a new kind of program appropriate to the new normal. This year's apostolate is called the Novitiate Virtual Formation Initiatives (NVFI). It is a formation outreach program of the PARC Novices aimed to "cater the needs of Lasallians— young men and women, students, and professionals – who wish to find answers to questions about their calling in life. The program brings in the experience of God through prayer and discernment from the cloistered Novitiate compound through virtual or remote learning means.

In order to prepare the Novices for this new kind of set-up, they underwent a series of remote learning sessions and orientations with Br. Rey Mejias, Novitiate Director, starting last August 29, 2020. Every Saturday, the Brothers are tasked to present their programs to the community for critiquing and commenting, to ensure that the webinars provided to the target audience are well prepared and are of great quality.



The Novices are seriously listening during their first Exodus orientation.

The program will cover modules that will deal with the Experience of God in the context of Christian Spirituality, Transformation, Self-Awareness, Discernment, Surrendering and Letting Go, Presence of God, and Motivation, and finally, acquaintance with the womb and tomb experience of the Brother's life.

“The program brings in the experience of God through prayer and discernment from the cloistered Novitiate compound through virtual or remote learning means.”

On the other hand, the NVFI is expected to enable the young Brothers-in-formation to be exposed to the Lasallian Family, albeit virtually; trained in facilitating sessions through remote learning; developed as good public speakers; and lastly, able to articulate and share the Lasallian Spirituality.

It is a challenging project for everyone, yet with constant accompaniment and guidance, it is hoped that the program will cater the needs of the Lasallian community, despite the community quarantine set in place.



by Br. Mark Francis Basan II nFSC

Fast Tracking New Normal Technologies For The Novitiate Formation

"Brother, you are on mute." "What's the Meeting ID?" "I can't see your face."

I'm calling it right now. Oxford's word of the year will be 'new normal' or a term similar to it. New normal, work-from-home, social distancing, flatten the curve - these are just some of the new terms that we have accustomed to.

Nobody expected it, yet here we are. Living (and discerning) in the New Normal. Instead of seeing the Brothers in person for our in-house classes, we are in front of a computer, having to click a button on the screen just to be able to speak. The usual apostolate that we are accustomed to has been revamped to a form of service that is more oriented to the new normal. The photo above, a-la Zoom Meeting, is how our usual meetings and sessions look like (albeit, wearing more casual clothes).

This is our reality now. The re-adjustment has been a challenge for almost all of us, especially those who are more comfortable with the traditional. The quarantine and lockdown restrictions have already made this cloistered life more secluded, due to minimal contact and interaction from people outside our community.

It's so easy to complain. Yet, I remember the words of the priest who celebrated one of our Saturday anticipated masses. Speaking in staccato, the priest said "count your blessings, not what you lack." It's an age old adage, we've heard of it countless times before, yet now, it seems to be very appropriate. Again, it's our reality now. Our new normal demands us not only to adjust, but also to fully adapt. It is imperative that we adapt wholeheartedly so that we can channel our creative energies more efficiently using the new normal technologies, especially with our NVFI apostolate.

Just this month alone, we have been introduced (or re-introduced, for some) to Zoom, FlipGrid, Google Classroom, and Canvas for our remote learning and apostolate. It was a humbling experience of orienting ourselves to these new methodologies as it meant there is always more to learn. Our Saturday sessions with the Director, where we focus on discussing our NVFI outputs, are very enriching as we get to be challenged in terms of our creativity. Our work is constructively critiqued, and we are always dared to think outside the box, to go beyond the traditional.

Of course, adjusting to this new reality will also have its growing pains. First, the distraction - as we are able to access the Internet. It's a legitimate concern and to be frank, I've had my bouts with it also. The structured lifestyle in the Novitiate does not allow much room for distractions, if you want to get your work done. Another concern, again, is the learning curve in adapting ourselves with the new styles of learning and teaching. We have to learn how to run webinars, how to present ourselves in front of a camera, and how to keep our audience engaged virtually.

This is where our formation, and it's full integration, comes into the fore as we fast track ourselves to the new normal. Instead of allowing the Internet to distract me, I should utilize it to improve myself and to read more techniques on how to become a better virtual teacher. In terms of the learning curve, letting go of the 'old wineskin' is important here. The values of discipline and zeal, and its full integration, truly, are of the essence.

Our formation, despite the new normal, is still very much grounded on the solid foundations of its values and virtues that are instilled in us. We may be living in a new, virtual world, but our formation, with all its growing pains, is still very much real.

"It is imperative that we adapt wholeheartedly so that we can channel our creative energies more efficiently using the new normal technologies."



Share your thoughts with the editor and we'll answer them in the next issue. Scan the QR code!

T-MINUS ONE

by Br. John the Baptist Bui Van Duc nFSC

Preparing and Adjusting to the New Environment



Every day is a brand-new challenge, and yet at the same time, it excites me. From our in-house classes with our Brother Directors to the manual labor around the house, our daily sports, which never fail to be competitive, community meals, and the prayers – they’re both old and new to me, but every day, new things surprise me. In the simplicity of the cloistered life, it is effortless to be excited and enthusiastic even with the most routine things.

That’s how life has been so far in the Novitiate. Days are fast, yet you could feel that every hour spent here is of the essence. Yes, I would say that my new home’s preparation and adjustment were arduous, but I have to always keep in mind one of the virtues imparted to us here in the program – Flexibility. The flexibility to change, to adapt, and to thrive.

Unlike the countdown that happened while preparing for the Novitiate, this time around, there’s no need to count the days until the end. Truly, every day is a lived experience.

Five. Four. Three. Two. One.

I can still vividly recall counting the days until Day Zero – our entry to the PARC Novitiate. Excitement, happiness, and a little bit of worry were some of the emotions that were churning up inside me. My feelings were all over the place. As I stepped at the doors of my soon-to-be home for a year, I felt a joyful sensation. Even though I was so worried because of my head’s countless thoughts, I continued walking, following my calling. I knew that this part of our formation journey would be extremely different from what I went through. It will be a brand-new adventure.

Weeks have passed, and I have gradually acquainted myself with the community schedule, assignments, and the house’s general orders, or should I say my home, in the Novitiate. However, the adjustment was not easy. Great silence was a new concept. During my meditations, I could hear even the faintest sound of the crickets chirping. What an abrupt change!

“In the simplicity of the cloistered life, it is effortless to be excited and enthusiastic even with the most routine things.”

THE VIRTUAL REALITY

by Br. Nabeel Pius Dogra nFSC and Br. Adan Malik Javed nFSC

We began our Novitiate Program on August 10. We are staying in the Gujranwala community in Pakistan, but we are part of the PARC La Salle Novitiate in Lipa. It is first for us to go through a Virtual Formation Program. It is a new experience, and although it is a little bit challenging, it is still a beneficial program to learn and is an excellent opportunity to develop new skills.

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, it is impossible to have face to face classes, and we cannot travel, but with the help of technology, we have our online courses. There are so many new things to learn about technology. Today, the world is getting more advanced, and as educators, we need to know how to use the latest technologies. The Virtual Formation Program is a new way of learning, and it may be difficult, but I believe that it is still very possible to carry out our formation goals.

THE STORY OF *Oui!*

by Br. Julius Christian Calingasan nFSC and
Br. Anthony Nguyen Ngoc Thuyen nFSC

Our batch name is quite simple and easy to read, right? A simple Google Search will bring you to a Google Translate page result that suggests that “Oui” is a French Word, and “Yes” is its English counterpart. Yes! Our name is as straightforward as that. Yet its story is quite impressive. This is the story of Oui.

Two weeks after our Novitiate entrance, we gathered in the study hall for a program orientation. My initial thought was that it would be another program orientation session, but it was different. Br. Rey instructed us to brainstorm and propose three batch names in 15 minutes. Yes, not an hour nor a day, but 15 minutes. It was a challenging experience as we had to wrap our minds to develop a creative and meaningful name.

Fortunately, after seeing us looking lost for words, Br. Rey allowed us to go to the library and browse Lasallian literature to find inspiration. After 15 minutes, we gathered again, and confidently presented our output. The batch names that emerged were Genesis, Casa Providencia, and Oui. At the end of it all, Oui stood out and won the voting.

The story of Oui is our batch story. It means saying yes to God’s call in every facet of our lives. When we entered the womb of the Institute, we knew that we needed to gratify ourselves only to Divine Providence. The underlying value with our batch name is generosity. In our call as a disciple of Jesus, our response is a strong and resounding Oui!

This is the story of Oui, and our story of saying yes has just begun.



Novice Brothers performing during the Community Gathering.

OUR WEDNESDAY AND SATURDAY NIGHTS

by Br. John the Baptist Bui Van Duc nFSC

It’s 8 PM. It’s a Wednesday or Saturday. There is a sense of excitement around the community. We all know why. It’s time for Community Gathering!

Two simple words, yet the emotions it exudes from the Brothers are of pure happiness and joy. Community Gathering builds the spirit of Brotherhood and brings merriment amidst the simplicity of lifestyle. Our gatherings, either of the one-hour (Wednesday) or three-hours long (Saturday) type, are more than just playing interactive games, singing with the karaoke, or cross-cultural dancing. They are informative, purpose-filled, and meaningful – with their own formative value and sense. Our bi-weekly community gatherings play an essential role in our formation, which is why I feel excited about it every time.

3-DAY SILENT RETREAT

by Br. Julius Christian Calingasan nFSC
and Br. Anthony Nguyen Ngoc Thuyen nFSC

Interiority. Contemplation. Steadfastness. As we finally started our lives as Novices, we underwent a three-day silent retreat. In this retreat, we experienced the transition from our exterior’s turbulence to the peace of the interior life and contemplation. Our three-day silent retreat helped prepare us for our Habit Taking on August 22, 2020.

In the retreat, we began by reflecting on the “Ten Characteristics of God-Honoring Generosity” and the “Memoirs of the Habit.”

“How do I live generously with my fellow Novices?” This was the first question and reflection point that I asked myself. The answer I got was to live generously with all of my heart, live to share, and help. It was truly the virtue of generosity, which gave St. La Salle the will to dedicate his life to the poor.

My second point of reflection came from the “Ten Rules Imposed Upon Myself” from the founder himself. As part of our commitment to this one-year journey, we were tasked to write our personal ten rules. The experience of writing my own rules was unique and heartfelt for me.

Finally, on the retreat’s culmination day, we were given a chance to have the sacrament of confession with our chaplain, Fr. Philip. I found this experience to be the most beautiful as it allowed me to confess with God, surrender my old self, and to prepare my heart to receive the Holy Habit for my next journey. These are the beautiful things that I experienced during my three-day silent retreat.

Silence & Interior Life

by Br. Julius Christian Calingasan nFSC

A simple Google search of the word 'silence' brings us to the definition of 'complete absence of sound.' During Grand Silence, you could probably hear a pin drop. No one's talking, and as much as possible, noise is minimized. Yet, silence is not just silence.

Silence and Interior Life was our first in-house class as Novices. Br. Sebastian Matundu FSC, our sub-director, prepared and scrupulously discussed the course for more than a week. In his lectures, I learned that there is such a thing as exterior and interior silence. Silence is more than just being quiet. It should be paired with a good sense of interiority – one that has a good foundation of solid spirituality within.

Interiority is essential for me as I begin my journey in the womb of the Institute. I am sure it will be a crucial weapon for me to understand my discernment process. One line I can never forget from our class is that silence and interior is "a way of thinking, planning actions and leads me towards desired choice." Truly, it is a life of building spiritual gifts and using it to mold the foundations of internal well-being.

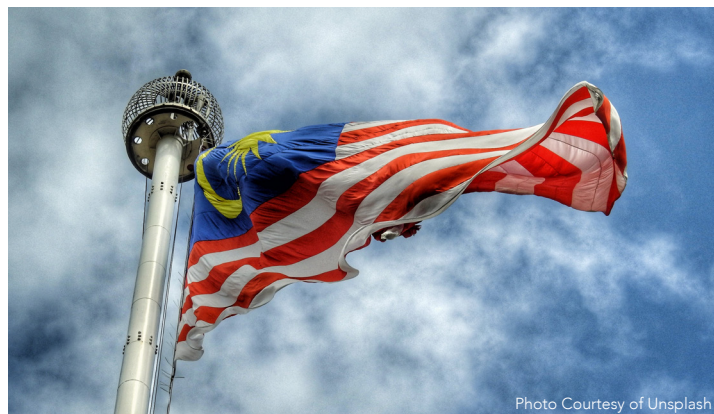


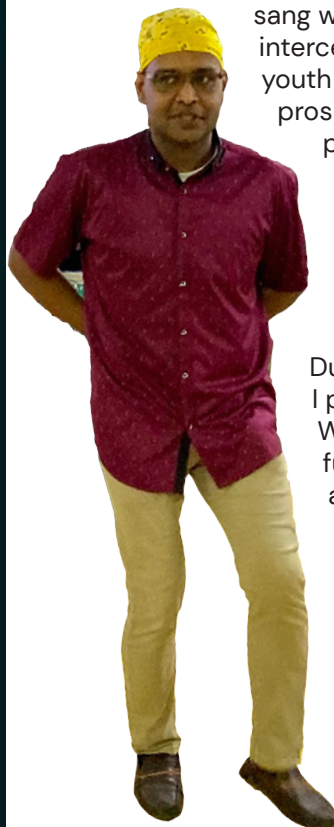
Photo Courtesy of Unsplash

MALAYSIA PRIHATIN!

by Br. Joshua Aaron Miranda nFSC

I felt a chill in the morning of my Country's National Day on August 31, 2020. I also felt excited, yet a bit overwhelmed as I will represent my country today. First things first, I made sure the food was prepared, and with the assistance of Ate Grace and Ate Anne, we were able to prepare beef cheeseburger and salad for lunch. On my part, I prepared my country's famous cuisine for lunch, which is the chapatti (flatbread) and beef curry. It took me great joy and effort to prepare for my fellow Novice brothers.

In the evening, the spiritual life committee prepared a beautiful prayer service to pray for my country. When my country's national anthem was played as the opening song, I proudly stood up and sang with the brothers. The intercessions made were for the youth and the nation to grow and prosper. Furthermore, we also prayed for more vocations to the Brothers in Malaysia. Lastly, I had goosebumps for the final song when the song "Standing in the Eyes of the World" was featured.



During our community gathering, I presented my country's culture. We had a very interactive and fun-filled community gathering as I shared the brief history of Malaysia's formation. They also witnessed firsthand the cultural dances as we performed them together. Even if I am not in my country right now, I feel thrilled to celebrate our national day with my Brothers.

Br. Joshua showcases to the community a traditional dance of Malaysia during the celebration of Malaysia Day.

THE SHACK

by Br. Joseph Pham Van Anh nFSC



Photo Courtesy of Unsplash

The Shack was more than a movie. It was an experience.

From an early age, we are taught that the Almighty God knows everything in advance, and since He loves all of us, we have this expectation that we receive only good from Him. That's why when bad things come to us; we feel we are being abandoned – we wonder why He didn't stop crime or why He caused good people to suffer or die. In those moments, the most convenient thing to do is just to stop believing.

This is the initial message that the movie conveyed to me. The Shack may have some content that deviated from Christianity's traditional beliefs in general and Catholicism in particular. However, for my part, I appreciate the film's significance in giving viewers a new perspective on God and in its response to the concerns between man and God.

The film begins with pain and loss but ends in happiness. Genuine happiness is seen as a beautiful result of forgiveness in *The Shack*. Life will always be full of sufferings and pains. What matters is how we deal with that pain. Do we allow it to drown us, or do we know how to take 'control' of it and find love again?

The movie reminded me of the importance of forgiveness – learning to forgive myself and others. Just like when Mack was on a boat in the middle of a lake, we are reminded not to look down at the sinking boat, but rather, look at Jesus – the image of love, for it is with His guidance that we can walk on water and leave the tangle.

Whether you believe in God or not, you will overcome all your extreme difficulties if there is hope for goodness in you. From a relational perspective, pain helps us understand the meaning of happiness, and it helps us understand the importance of love.

Prayer: Does it make any difference?

by Br. Matthew La San Aung nFSC

An hour of spiritual reading is part of our daily schedule in the Novitiate. An hour seems exceptionally long, but it goes by fast when you are engrossed in an activity. In this article, I would like to share with everyone an excerpt of my reflections on the book entitled "Prayer: Does It Make Any Difference" by Philip Yancey, assigned for my Spiritual Reading for August.

The book is fit for me as it helped me to learn more about how prayer works. The main point of reflection from the book is the question, "how do we pray to God?" People like to pray only for what they want to ask from God. We fail to listen to God most of the time. This leads to selfishness, since we only think about what we want, and not what God wants to tell us. This is why when we ask God for graces, and we also need to listen to him. I have learned that prayer should be like a conversation with a friend.

A line that struck me was, "Christian discipleship is not a question of our doing. It is a matter of making room for God so that he can live in us (p. 52). Honestly, it is my first time to hear that line. Looking back at my daily prayer experiences, I have never thought about it either. We begin our prayers by saying, "God come to our assistance," yet I am not aware that I am inviting God to my heart, and I am making room for Him. I need to allow Jesus to live in me at the start of the day and remain aware that He is with me. Through that mindset, I can honestly say that my day will become more fun, beautiful, meaningful, and fruitful. Through that awareness, I will also become more mindful of the things and people around me, like my co-novices, who I see every day. This is how genuine appreciation of God's beautiful creations begin.



Br. Matthew reflects on his book during the 1st Day of Reflection.

SILENT THOUGHTS ON GRAND SILENCE

The Novices anonymously share their silent reflections and realizations during the Grand Silence period.

“Your mind is more powerful than your emotions. The mind constructs what will be your next emotions. Scientifically, this is a real fact that I have understood so far. In my silence, there’s a clash of thoughts that I try to balance - mind and heart. Now, I understand that the mind surpasses the heart.”

“The silence is the time when I can be most attuned to the presence of God. During this time, my senses are sharpened and my spiritual life becomes active. I feel God as my spiritual companion, who walks with me and guides me. Silence is the strength of a good interior life.”

“First is the refocusing and aligning of oneself at the present moment. Second is the constant practice of self-awareness. Third is discerning one’s inner movements to the various tasks under the different situations. These are only the points of reflection that I have through the initial experience of Grand Silence.”

“Grand Silence is a time for self-reflection which helps me to develop my personal relationship with my own God. Further, it helps me make my prayer and spiritual life firm. It is a grace from God that I am able to contemplate and count all the blessings which I have received throughout the day.”

“Grand Silence is a good time for me. During Grand Silence, I can think about what I have done during the day. Besides that, I can for the next day. Moreover, this is the time where I think and try to listen to God’s voice.”



“Here’s a realization during Grand Silence: Your ability to help other people depends on their willingness to be helped. You can give your best shot at trying to “change” one person but if that person is not willing to be helped, your effort is close to nothing.”

“Grand silence is a spiritual practice for me in my religious life. It helps me to achieve a state of spiritual purity. This practice helps me to contemplate the grace of God in my life and to discern in my vocation as well.”

“Grand silence is a time for self-encounter where we can see our real selves in the bottom of our hearts. It helps us to be aware of our thoughts. It is also a great time to plan what we want to change. Lastly, it is a time to give thanks-giving and to remain in God.”

“It is good that I can experience Grand Silence as it gives me a time to relax and reflect on my relationship with God. Silence makes me aware of God’s providence. It also creates the atmosphere of recollection and openness towards God and others. Silence is very effective for me to experience God’s Providence in my life. Personally, it helps me out to grow spiritually.”

“Grand Silence is an essential part of our novitiate program. As a novice, it is essential for me to have silence in my life. After spending a few weeks in my Novitiate program, I feel it’s very helpful to keep silent. When we are in silence, we know about ourselves, we can talk with God, and we can observe more. Finally, When we are in silence, we can discover and seek the will of God.”

“Grand Silence is more than just not talking or speaking. It is interiority that is vital here. It is becoming aware of the ruminations and rumblings of the heart and soul. Grand Silence is the opportune time to discern, deepen, and discover.”

11

RULES

WE IMPOSE

UPON OURSELVES

To express my emotions and articulate them well during recitations.

Br. Joshua



To keep and reflect on the Word of God during my day, and to read the Gospel before going to bed.

Br. JB



Dedicate at least 30 minutes every day of personal prayer and devotion to the Rosary and reflection of the Gospel.

Br. Anthony



Pray three decades of the Rosary before sleeping and to show appreciation to God's creation every morning.

Br. Matthew



I will read my spiritual reading books inside a sacred place where I can feel Jesus' presence strongly.

Br. Julius



To keep in my prayers the intentions of the Lasallian family, partners, and the Institute's growth.

Br. Joseph



Refrain from saying vulgar words.

Br. Milton



Slowly be active and immerse myself in engagements, schedules, tasks, and activities within the community.

Br. Myron



When my Brothers come to me for advice, I will ask Lord himself to give it to them. If the matter is serious, I will take a moment to pray about it. At least I will try to keep myself recollected during the interview while lifting my heart to God.

Br. Adan



Live a better and healthier lifestyle through my food intake and daily exercise.

Br. Mark



It is a good rule to worry less about knowing what ought to be done than about doing perfectly what is already known.

Br. Nabeel



NOVITIATE IN NUMBERS

15

Community Members,
comprised of four
Formators and eleven
Novice Brothers

6

Countries represented in the
PARC Novitiate. They are Congo,
Malaysia, Myanmar, Pakistan, the
Philippines, and Vietnam

56

Weeks of total
engagement for this year's
Novitiate Program.

10

Inter-congregational
Modular Topics with
Exodus (to be featured
in our next issue)

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Residential Program and Virtual Program?

"We are a 'new normal' community since we have a 'Residential' and 'Virtual' Program. Novices who are currently living at the PARC Novitiate in Lipa are under the 'Residential' Program while our novices living at the Gujranwala Community in Pakistan are under the 'Virtual' Program. Nevertheless, both programs, in essence, have the same schedules, activities, and quality of formation. Both communities connect through synchronous and asynchronous activities."



Got any questions about us and our formation program? We'll be happy to hear from you!
Send in your questions at [bit.do/RueNeuveLSN](https://bit.ly/3uXNLSN)



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