

RUE NEUVE

LE JOURNAL OFFICIEL DU NOVICIAT DE LA SALLE PARC 2020
volume 1 no. 2 october-december 2020

MODERN DAY HEROICS

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“The most powerful person in the world is the storyteller”
– Steve Jobs

We are all called to be storytellers. Storytelling has been a part of our entire human history. We can imagine our hunter ancestors gathering around the campfire telling stories about their pursuits for the day. We recall influential figures like Martin Luther King Jr, who inspired an entire movement by sharing his dream. We remember by heart the parables and sermons of Jesus Christ, whom I consider one of the greatest storytellers of all time. Facts and data can convey essential information, but it is the story that can stimulate the mind and arouse the emotion. **And the best thing about this is that we all have a story to tell.**

The accounts in the second issue of our Rue Neuve aim to do precisely that – to tell a story. The articles went through a series of revamps and revisions to achieve our goal of making the reader be able to understand and situate themselves in the events featured in this journal. The mindset is simple that Brothers Adan and Nabeel, who are in Pakistan, would imagine that they are physically here with us in the Philippines, and vice versa. If our stories would not evoke the imagination in them, then we cannot expect the same with our Brothers who have been years removed from the Novitiate Experience. Our community hopes that you would be able to journey with us, albeit vicariously. Thus, allow us to share, and also join us, our stories.

Term One has finally come to its fruitful close, and our story for this month’s issue is all about foundations, following up on our previous theme of transitions. The past four months have allowed us to familiarize and accustom ourselves to the Novitiate formation program’s ebb and flow. Term one has allowed us to experience the zenith and euphoria of happiness and the lassitude and languor of the ascetic lifestyle afforded to us. Yet, the commonality between the two states is that we see, or at least we are learning to see, all the situations in front of us with the eyes of faith.

Thus, with the theme, this issue highlights four foundational stories in our Novitiate journey so far – *faith (Fides Quarens Intellectum)*, *service (launching of our online apostolate)*, *communion (learning about the Rule)*, and *our vocation (Discernment: A Follow up, and Vocational Discernment)*. Furthermore, it features various stories written by the Novices on perspective, thankfulness, and various activities, thus far, and a Postulant’s story who had a ‘pit stop’ here in the Novitiate. Moreover, we also spotlight the lives of three Brothers – Novice Brothers Milton and Anthony, and our Assistant Director, Br. Sebi. Finally, our term-ender article completes the term one story as we share our experiences during our three-day silent retreat, which focused on the most remarkable story of all – the Nativity Scene.

We pray that you, dear reader, enjoy our stories! As we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, our chief storyteller, we wish all of you and your community a story-filled and loving Christmas! Vive Jesus dans nos cœur, a jamais!


Br. Mark Francis
Basan II nFSC



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ABOUT THE COVER

Our modern-day interpretation of the classic Heroic Vow imagery, now featuring face masks made from traditional malong whose designs and colors are derived from the Sarimanok, a symbol of the Meranaw culture. These masks, crafted by the Angoyao Mothers Association for Livelihoods, is a symbol of hope and courage amidst the uncertainty.

ABOUT 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.

FEEDBACK



Erratum:

Br. Nabeel and Br. Adan’s names were mistakenly switched in the Community Profile section of the first issue of our Rue Neuve. We apologize for the confusion!

CENTERING PRAYER

by Brothers Joshua and Adan

Centering prayer is a method of prayer that moves beyond conversation with Christ to commune with him. It is a form of resting in God beyond thoughts, words, and emotions and cultivating a deeper relationship with Christ.

Indeed, the community is very privileged to be introduced to centering prayer through a three-day virtual session with Br. Peter Foo FSC on September 28 to 30. In the online gathering, Br. Peter shared with us his proficiency on the topic and its importance, as it is a more in-depth way to commune with God, ultimately affecting our way of life.

Centering prayer helps a person be attuned with his or her body, mind, and spirit. According to one Novice Brother, the method of prayer allows him to “focus better and become more composed in a whole rounded way. Before practicing centering prayer, my thoughts would be all over the place but during and after, there is an immediate sense of relief and deep peace that I feel, like after having a meaningful conversation with my best friend.”

Furthermore, centering prayer is a process of becoming attentive to God and detaching from the thoughts and distractions of daily living. It is like, as mentioned before, a simple and plain conversation with God. ^{BN}



Courtesy of Unsplash

THE EXODUS EXPERIENCE

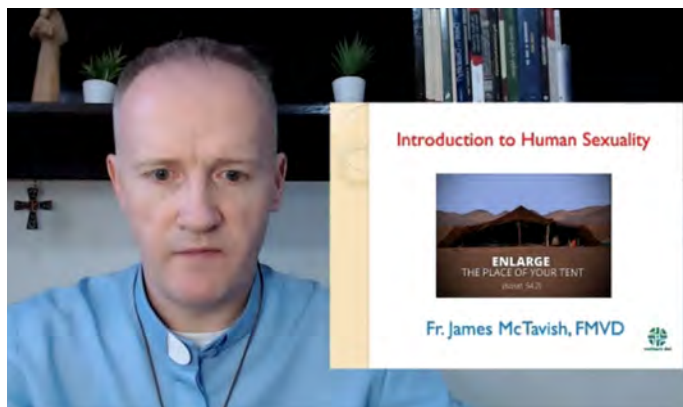
by Br. Joseph

Our Exodus experience finally took off with modular classes all spread out from September to November, 2020. We interviewed some of our virtual classmates to give their thoughts on the topics discussed.

Sharing her sentiments on the Enneagram (Sr. Fidelis Estrada RA), Sr. Ivylyn Porras of the Religious Sisters of Mercy reflected that the topic is an *"eye, mind, and soul-opener; and it is such an awe-inspiring experience to be able to observe myself."*

In the one-week class on Human Sexuality, *"Father James McTavish FMVD has given many useful pieces of information about sexuality and the realities of the world today. Our task, then, is to help people find their authentic selves,"* Sr. Nhi of the Congregation of the Theresian Carmelite Missionaries comments.

"Challenging yet filled with opportunities" were the succinct yet precise words of Sr. Thuy, from the Daughters of Sacred Heart, as she described her key realizations after the three-day session on Inculturation (Fr. Victorino Cueto CSSR).



Fr. James during the Human Sexuality Modular Class

A disturbing yet thought-provoking session on Ecology (Fr. Richie Gomez MSC) inspired Sr. Ivy May Carpio of the Medical Mission Sisters to say that *"it is a wake-up call"* and a *"continuation of our mission."* On the other hand, Br. Alvin Francis Lozano from the Order of the Carmelites expressed his gratitude as it *"aided the Novices to be more attentive and docile to the cry of the Earth and the whole of creation that is groaning for redemption, and as religious, we are called to take part in this process of renewal."*

Our Exodus modular classes allow us to expand our knowledge on the aforementioned topics and give us newer insights by hearing the opinions of our classmates from other congregations. We are continuously invited to take each session to heart, knowing fully well that these will be able to guide us as we grow in our formation journey. ^{RN}

Eye, mind, and soul-opener ... to be able to observe myself



The Novices, with Br. Mario Dacanay FSC, proudly pose with their Chinese Bamboo Painting masterpieces.

Another form of talent was added to our growing arsenal of skills through the session on Chinese Bamboo Painting with Br. Mario Dacanay FSC on November 4 at the PARC Novitiate. The three-hour class honed our fine-motor skills in painting and promoted the values of patience, mindfulness, and firmness in decision-making. Moreover, what makes the topic interesting is the sense of balance with the rigid rules in its strokes (i.e., you cannot go back and 're-paint') and yet at the same time, the feeling of freedom, calmness, and awareness that we experience in every move that we make. Indeed, we are genuinely thankful to Br. Mario for sharing once again with us his skills and expertise on the craft. ^{RN}

CHINESE BAMBOO PAINTING

by Br. Matthew



Br. JB, hard at work, carefully and conscientiously continues with his Chinese Bamboo Painting.

Second LEAD Online Community

The community joined in the second LEAD Online Community (LOC) which placed a much-needed spotlight on mental health issues amidst the pandemic with Ms. Maria Gilda Miciano, RPM, and RGC as the guest speaker, on November 13, 2020.

Safety is King!

Hoping to implement a culture of safety in the house, the community invited Mr. Ariel Bejasa Jr of De La Salle Lipa's Institutional Safety, Security and Emergency Services Office (ISSESO) to give a talk on Disaster Risk Reduction and Management on November 18, 2020.

Tech Upgrade!

The community is thankful to the College of Saint Benilde and the Lasallian Formation Center, through Br. Dodo Fernandez FSC and Br. Ranier Guillergan FSC, for generously donating desktop and laptop units to accommodate the requirements for the virtual formation program.

A Day of Reflection

Makarai (Greek word for Blessed), and Dayenu (Hebrew word for "It would have been enough") were the themes of the community's Day of Reflection on September 26, and October 31, 2020, respectively.

The Day of Memorial

This year's Brothers Memorial Day was held intimately on October 4 at the Pamenie Chapel of the PARC Novitiate. The solemn ceremony remembered the Brothers and Lasallian Partners who have passed away during the past year.

A Healthier Community

Nurse Julio of the Health Institutional Office of De La Salle Lipa gave a session on the proper extraction of blood to monitor sugar level and the correct way of getting the blood pressure on October 21 to give the novices a wider perspective and knowledge of basic medical procedures. ^{RN}



Br. Vic shares his thoughts and experiences on the topic of Consecration with the Novices

A Consecrated Life

by Brothers Nabeel and Milton

“Consecration involves total trust in God”

These are the metaphoric words of former Novice Master and General Councillor, Br. Vic Franco FSC, in his one-day synchronous (the term for a face-to-face and virtual class done simultaneously) Consecration session on November 16. Still, unbeknownst to what God wills for us, words like trust and leap of faith truly strike us Novices.

Religious Consecration is a gift to the people of God. The consecration of the Brothers gives meaning to the specific activities, which inspires and gives unity to all the moments of our lives. The question is, why and to whom do we make our consecration? In the session, we understood that when we make our vows and say these words, “Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit I consecrate myself to you,” it is a tell-tale sign of our consecration to God.

We are still a long shot away from making our very first vows but taking in consecration this early made us think, “Do I have that much trust in the Lord to consecrate my whole life to Him?” The Novitiate is already a continuous test of faith, and consecration takes us to a whole new level of what this leap of faith entails as it takes us to the rising action of our stories.

How will it unfold? Nothing is certain, but one thing is for sure, trust in God is the key ingredient to it. ^{RN}

DEEPENING WITH DE LA SALLE

by Br. Matthew

“Control your dog!” “Be mindful of your present time!” “Where my eyes are, my mind is...”

These are just some of the most memorable quotes of Br. Mario Dacanay FSC during his Art of Wellbeing (AWB) sessions on September 16–18, 21, and 25, 2020 at the PARC Novitiate. The series of sessions began with an introduction to Yoga Meditation and its benefits.

The next day, we explored and deepened our self-understanding by knowing how to control one’s body, mind, and spirit to focus on the present. In the beginning, we were challenged in terms of focus and mindfulness. Still, through constant practice of the various Yoga positions introduced, we were able to zone ourselves in not only by successfully performing the moves but also by feeling the emotions that were going on inside of us.

Besides Yoga Meditation, Br. Mario also promoted more physical activities related to wellbeing like brisk walking. As Brothers, we realize that it is essential, especially for our mission as teachers, to have a healthy physical and mental self. A healthy body and focused mind are essential prerequisites as we go on in our vocation.

With our AWB classes, we have learned a lot about our bodies, the importance of controlling our “dogs,” and how to live a healthier and more mindful lifestyle. It brings to mind Rule number 39, which emphasizes the importance of our physical and psychological health with regards to chastity. ^{RN}

by Br. Anthony

“You are the ambassador and minister of Jesus Christ in the work that you do...”

This was the point that touched me the most as we began our series of discussions on the Meditations of the Founder in the Time of Retreat with our Assistant Director, Br. Sebi Matundu, on November 20, and 25 to 27, 2020. The four-day session allowed us to focus and delve deeper into the ruminations and contemplative thoughts of the Founder. As we prepare ourselves for the ministry, the sixteen meditations and the forty-eight points serve as helpful reminders and guides in dealing with the youth entrusted to our care. ^{RN}



“Breathe!” Br. Mario reminds Br. Anthony while assisting him for the sitting-down meditation

In this issue of Rue Neuve, we feature our Brother who hails from the Congo-Kinshasa district, with a penchant for dance and sports, and is currently acting as the Assistant Director. Meet Br. Seby!

Br Sebastien Matundu FSC is a Graduate from De La Salle University - Dasmarinas with a Masters' Degree in Clinical Psychology. He has been studying here in the Philippines since 2017. Let's get to know the newest "bro on the block!"

BR. SEBASTIEN matundu FSC

What is your inspiration to join Brother's vocation?

"Ah heh heh heh (he chuckles) As a student of the De La Salle Brothers, it prompted the desire within me to become one of them. To add, my father was also an alumni of the Brothers. I can find happiness in the teaching and learning process which the brothers have created. A further inspiration was from the charisma of the brothers and the love that they have for the students. The good habits and the lifestyle created a permanent change in me".

How has your expectation of becoming a Brother changed over the years?

For me, I have exceeded my expectations of the Brother's life. As I've mentioned, the good habits and lifestyle created a permanent change in me. I am happy to live and work as a De La Salle Brother. The brothers live a simple yet fulfilling lifestyle which enables me to live my life as a Brother to my fullest potential.

What is your advice to young aspirants and novices who are in formation?

I believe that the novices should not practice hypocrisy. It is important to be genuine in your formation. The future brothers must learn about the Brothers' life with prayerful discernment and to integrate the values into their lives. As I've mentioned before to all of you, do your Novitiate and don't just pass by.

Thank you, Br. Sebi, for allowing us to get to know you better! Here's to an exciting and fruitful formation year! RN

ANTHONY thuyen nFSC



Name: Anthony Nguyen Ngoc Thuyen
Date of Birth: July 27, 1996
Place of Birth: Quynh Thanh-Quynh Luu-Nghe An Province, Vietnam

Tertiary School Education: Indochina College
Degree: Education
Favorite color: Gray

Describe yourself in 3 words: Cheerful. Hardworking. Funny.
Motto: "No matter what other people say, I just believe in myself"

How did you meet the Brothers?

I met the De La Salle Brothers through a casual yet incredibly special conversation with my sibling, who is a Lasallian Sister. After hearing about the Brothers' mission, I decided to come, see, and live with them in Vietnam.

What are your dream community assignments?

Sports coordinator - This was my assignment during the first term, and I enjoyed it because I'm a person who likes to play sports. Furthermore, I can play any sport, and I want to share

that passion with my co-novices. Gardener - I'm happy to be assigned as a gardener in the second term. I believe that gardening has a key role in our formation. Through gardening, I get to spend more time with nature - something that makes me happier and healthier.

What kind of Brother do you see yourself in the future?

I am a quiet person so I can see myself as a Brother who is more of action rather than words. I can see myself as someone enthusiastic and zealous with my

assignments. Finally, I am a person of curiosity, I like to travel, and I want to learn new things, so I think in the future I can truly become a Brother without borders.

Any advice for people who are looking to live a religious life?

If you intend or are pursuing a vocation in religious life, it is important to figure out your motivations. Pray, find out, and ask for the grace of enlightenment. Don't be afraid, let go and tell God," I'm here" God will guide you.

MILTON merto nFSC



Name: Milton Christopher Baylon Merto
Date of Birth: June 23, 1996
Place of Birth: Iigan City, Lanao del Norte
Basic Education: La Salle Academy

Tertiary School Education: De La Salle University
Degree: BS Management in Financial Institutions

Favorite color: Yellow
Describe yourself in 3 words: Never Give Up
Motto: Ancora Imparo

How did you meet the Brothers?

I met Br. Alex by accident when I was in second year high school, and everything just fell into place. He became my Christian Living teacher the next year and then became my recruiter when I began higher education in De La Salle University. That time, he invited me to the Brothers' Live-In Program and I pursued my Aspirancy in Taft, and as they all say, the rest is history.

What are the different duties and responsibilities that you have/had as a Novice?

So far, I've been assigned as the Econome and Secretary. As an Econome, I've learned

how to properly manage my time with the tasks that are demanded by the assignment. A huge bulk of it is handling money. It is not easy to balance liquidating and making menus for the community! On top of that, you have to learn to work with our two ladies (Ate Grace and Ate Anne) in the house.

On the other hand, the Secretarial work has also been a challenge because it pushes you to be creative, but that is not the hardest part yet. The most challenging part is listening properly to what is being said by the community during our bi-monthly Community Points!

What is it like to be a part of this community?

It has been very humbling and challenging. Being an only child, it's my first time to live with other people, so handling the community problems and issues are challenging. Community life is one of my weakest links, but it's one where I can grow more!

To you, what is an ideal Brother?

A Brother should be a listener. This, to me, is the only characteristic needed to be an ideal brother. It encompasses everything! When you listen, you are with another person in all aspects. When you truly listen, you love with all your heart. (Assuming you really listened!) RN

Note: Milton has opted to end his Novitiate Formation Program last December 31, 2020. He is now with his family in Cebu City.

FOUNDATIONS



The Brothers, socially distanced, during the Habit-Taking of Br. Myron

“Neque enim quaero intelligere ut credam, sed credo ut intelligam”^{by Brothers JB, Julius, and Mark}

(“I do not seek to understand in order that I may believe, but rather, I believe in order that I may understand”).

St. Anselm of Canterbury’s words holds so much truth in our journey of discovering more about our Catholic faith. In delving deeper into the beliefs that have led us to where we are today, it is vital that we go beyond the ‘box’ that has been initially set – a deconstruction and reconstruction, per se. In doing so, it is essential that we remind ourselves of the aforementioned words of St. Anselm – that I have faith so that I am able to understand, and not the other way around. Thus, fides quaerens intellectum.

In order to satiate our yearning for understanding, the community was fortunate enough to learn and understand more about the faith through a series of discussions on the Foundations of Catholic Theology (November 2–13) and Christology (November 23–24, but to continue in December), with Br. Mawel Pajarillo FSC.

Audible gasps were heard, some were shouting in silence upon hearing new, groundbreaking knowledge, and questions were inquired and shared. Nevertheless, the two-week discourse with Br. Mawel gave us the venue to raise questions without the feeling of alienating ourselves from our faith. Furthermore, we achieved a more grounded understanding of our foundations through experience, revelation, tradition, and Scripture. Additionally, it has given us a greater sense of appreciation of the Jesus story, especially His resurrection. Finally, it has introduced us to the study of the Humanum, which talks about our collective experiences, the desire for transcendence, and along all of these, a sense of the Other.

On the other hand, we have realized that the task of theologizing is not an easy undertaking. Theology is more than about finding answers – it is also about asking the right questions. It is a never-ending cycle, for in those questions, there are answers, and in those answers come new and much more difficult questions. The task of theology begs the question, “what did they mean by what they said?” due to the understanding that the Gospel story is not literally a historical account but rather more of a collective reflection of the communities touched and inspired by the life of Jesus.

It’s very tempting to immediately debunk our faith with the statement alone, but at the end of the day, faith also reminds us, “does it really matter?” At the end of the day, would it really matter if the historical event did not take place if it has inspired us to live a better life for others? A mature and faith-filled answer is no; it does not matter, and that kind of mindset is the best outlook to have to genuinely theologize.

St. Paul said, “I know whom I have believed.” (2 Tim 1:12) It is truly of great essence to know who we believe in, as it would serve as a strong and solid foundation. The sessions with Br. Mawel are a great opportunity for us to go deeper, allowing our faith to meet with logic, love, and trust. It is a chance for us to “cast our nets deeper for a catch” (Luke 5:4).^{RN}

DAYENU!

by Br. Milton

This is an original work that Br. Milton shared for October’s Day of Reflection with the theme Dayenu, a Hebrew word that means “it would have been enough.” (just imagine Br. Milton rapping during the group sharing!)

VERSE 1

As I rock this chair, sat in prayer
Yeah it’s glaringly clearer
Your graces all over, oh Lord they flow over
Thoughts in my head, all emotions are sober
The good and the bad, all the things I remember
Didn’t need to do these for me
Constantly provided for thee
Absolutely treated me with energy I can’t agree.
Rain, it’s raining.
I’m guessing it’s your way in saying,
“My grace’ll remain I’m never leaving you
Behind here, Milton.”
I’m just caught in awe
I don’t know just what you saw in me
That you kept showering me graces here abundantly.
Don’t know what to say but thank you
A multitude of these prilly wouldn’t be enough
To show you what I really feel
So I’ll just put this in a song,
I’m hoping that you’ll like it coz
At first I thought it was wrong.
All I can do now is to bow
My own head in a prayer
Then I lift my hands up to the heavens and say

HOOK

God you so great,
Your love is amazing
Hope this ain’t late
Gotta show you my affection
God you so great,
Your grace is overflowing,
It’s Dayenu
It would’ve been enough for us n’ (2x)

VERSE 2

You’ve given me roses and boxes of flowers
Two beautiful royals I call my parentals
These things I received were enough for me, Lord
But you went out the box and you added some mo
You’ve brought me to places, your grace is amazin’
Experiences I never thought would take place
All the plays & the craziness all in my brain
All the dreams & the faces I thought would remain -
As a dream, as a wish, as a hope in my mind
But divine intervention had something in line
How can I, small as I, be as worthy as this,
I will try with my might, Lord I promise you this:
With the grace of my sight, I will see eye to eye
Everyone that I meet and then see Jesus Christ.
I put this in a song and still hope that you might
Hear this prayer of my thanks with a chorus that sounds like:

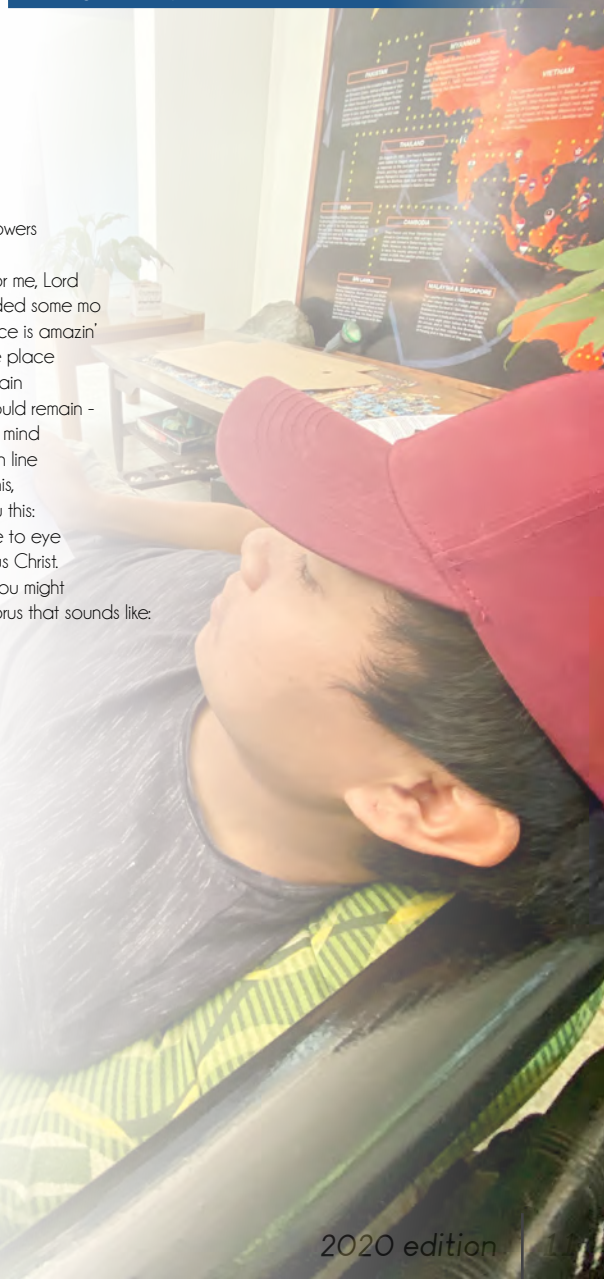
HOOK

God you so great,
Your love is amazing
Hope this ain’t late
Gotta show you my affection
God you so great,
Your grace is overflowing,
It’s Dayenu

^{RN}

“I know
whom I have
believed.”

Br. Matthew in deep reflection during the Day of Reflection



Octo Bers

October was a month filled with festivities as the community celebrated the birthday of five Novice Brothers.

17

Br. JB

Camp Rock

17

Br. Myron

Camp Rock

29

Br. Matthew

Halloween

7

Br. Joseph

Olympiad

3

Br. Joshua

Man of Wonder

MODERN DAY HEROICS

by Brothers Mark and JB

An article from the University of California, Berkeley postulates three aspects to call an act heroic. First, it is done to serve others in need or in "defense of certain ideals." Second, it is a voluntary act that goes beyond what is expected. Third, it is done with "recognition of possible risks and costs," including one's reputation. Finally, the actor does not expect any form of external gain due to the heroic act.

On November 21, 1691, three men did exactly just that. An act so heroic not only to continue in their mission of serving the poor, but also to defend the ideal that their mission is necessary for the Church. An act so courageous that their commitment went beyond what was expected of them by the larger society. An act so valiant that they would remain together even if they had to "beg and live on bread alone." An act so selfless that the leader of the three would continue to credit all to God.

Surely, we're all familiar with the story of Fr. John Baptist De La Salle, Br. Nicholas Vuyart, and Br. Gabriel Drolin on the fateful feast day of the Presentation of Our Lady that we lovingly remember as the day of "The Heroic Vow." Three men, united in cause and on their knees, "decided to commit themselves by a consecration to God sealed by vow, made only by themselves personally before offering it to the whole society (Calcutt, 1994)." They professed to remain together even if they would have to beg and live on bread alone, in front of the foreboding challenges associated with a novel Society and marred with questions and controversy about the radical educational innovation they're implementing. Regardless of these, the goal was clear – to bring salvation to the marginalized through education.

Calcutt concisely explains it, "this commitment by two Brothers that M. de La Salle regarded as the columns of his wavering institute was the sole resource on which he founded his hopes at the time." The Heroic Vows, indeed, is a hallmark and foundation of our Institute. It is an event so aptly named that, until today, it continues to inspire those who become aware of the story.

Three hundred twenty-nine years after it was pronounced for the first time, the commitment it entails is more necessary and appropriate than ever.

In a troubling year that has not only complicated our lifestyles but also severely limited it, we are faced with a somehow similar situation with the circumstances

of St. La Salle – the practices that we have been used to being put to question, and the way we carry out our mission is being tested. Today, we, the entire Lasallian community, are invited to declare our modern-day heroic vows to adapt to the new normal and perform our ministry with much zeal, love, and affection. This time, we are all called to be the modern-day heroes in our ways.

"This would be their proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ to the poor beyond mere words," and beyond what we were used to. What keeps all of us together? It's the same two words mentioned for the first time in the momentous event of 1691: association and union.

1691 and 2020. Two different eras. Two various societal problems. Yet, still, one united commitment. According to Calcutt, the vow of 1691 "bears the mark of La Salle: commitment and abandonment to God, clear grasp of the aim of the society and a calm determination to work towards it through all obstacles." Our modern-day heroic vows challenge us to mirror the same standard.

We close our piece with an inspiring video produced by the De La Salle Brothers of the Philippines' Vocation Ministry Office to commemorate the Heroic Vows' anniversary last November 21, 2020. Its title is nothing but suitable and felicitous – The Heroic Vow in the time of COVID-19 (bit.do/HeroicVows2020). ^{RN}

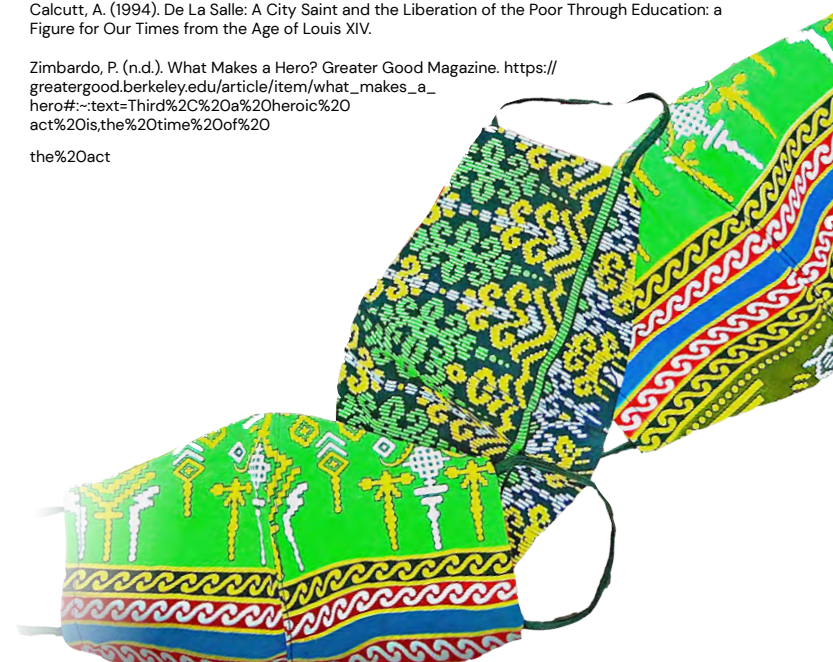
Live Jesus in our hearts, forever.

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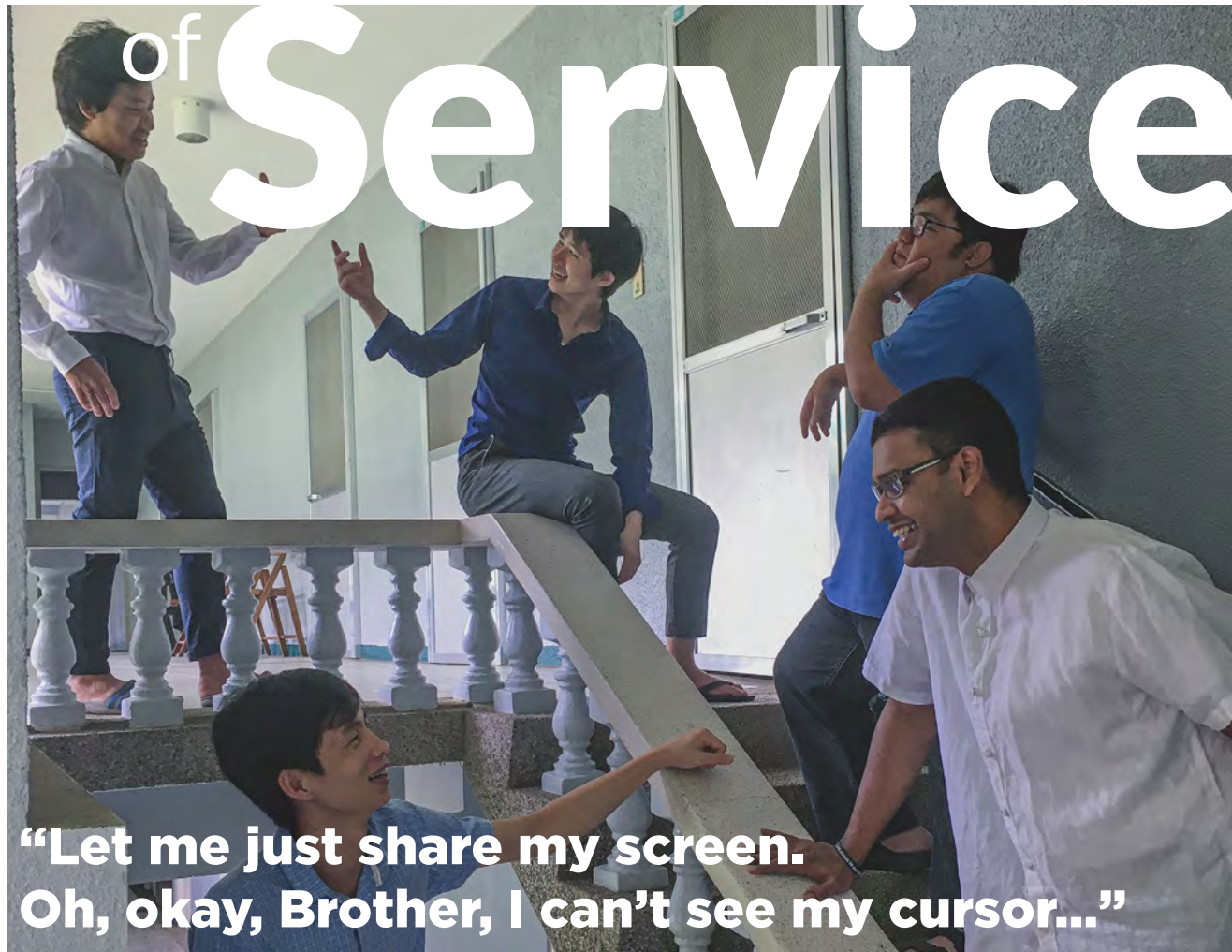
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the%20act



FOUNDATIONS

of Service



by Brothers Joseph, Joshua, and Myron

Two or three Novice Brothers are in their “booths,” feeling anxious and nervous, as they perform a trial run of their webinar program, which will begin in a few weeks.

“Okay, proceed.”

Yet, these two simple words of affirmation quickly became our two favorite words during our weekly Remote Teaching/Learning (RTL) sessions with Br. Rey every Saturday. Two straightforward words, yet when you hear them, it’s a good sign that the specific section of the webinar being presented is acceptable as approved.

In Rue Neuve’s previous issue, we introduced the Novitiate Virtual Formation Initiatives (NVFI) to our readers, a new form of apostolate appropriate for the new normal. It’s a 3-hour webinar featuring topics like motivation, discernment, and spirituality, aimed to cater to the needs of Lasallian students and employees across the country. Think of it as some sort of a formation/recollection program, albeit done online. Yet, it’s not as easy as flashing your presentation and talking in front of a crowd. Suffice to say, the entire process is, truly, meticulous and conscientious – but for a good reason.

The preparation begins with the all-too well-known research process, module creating, and Powerpoint/Keynote presentation producing – and then the familiarity stops there. This is now where it begins to feel like this is really a different kind of apostolate.

The process continues with creating a learning matrix that contains the usual objectives and key points and the e-learning applications to be used. Afterward, we are tasked to create a poster to promote our webinar to our target audience since participation is not enforced. Besides from the presentations mentioned above produced, we are also challenged to be creative in using other forms of visual and learning aid – videos, songs, games, and whatever innovative idea comes to mind. After preparing these things, we are encouraged to create a program script to serve as our guide.

Think of it like running a television show – content is king, but its delivery is the queen who rules the kingdom.

“I remember when I had our first trial run with the community. Our group was a mess, but at least we were a mess together. We were worried, nervous, and anxious, but it was a good experience for us to improve,” one Novice Brother anonymously shares.

The learning curve is steep, and the growing pains are evident. After all the preparation, it’s time for the first trial run. Thankfully, the initial runs were first done in-house during the Saturday sessions. Many reruns and repeats ensued, comments were shared, and despite the initial emotions felt by the group who were initially unsuccessful, it is clear that the learning experience really helped all members of the community grow in their webinar-facilitating skills. Indeed, practice makes perfect, but the perfection we are aiming for is not for our own glory but for our participants’ benefit. That’s the kind of mindset that we continue to instill regardless of the difficulties and demands of this new kind of service.

Remember, remember, the 14th of November...

This would mark our first of the firsts. Br. Milton and Br. Joseph performed in ‘public’, with 31 of the sharpest law students from De La Salle Lipa, their webinar on motivation entitled “My Yes Journey.” “What if they ask a question we won’t be able to answer?; I’m not too sure of my English, and I’m sure they’ll notice that!; What if we face a technical difficulty?” were some of the concerns raised by our Brothers, but the show had to go on.

And what a show it was, indeed, for it was a success! Our fellow Lasallians participated with much vigor and enthusiasm. The support of the community was evident. All 11 Novices and our Brother Directors joined, with habits on. We were able to motivate them through the breakout sessions by sharing our vocation stories and listening to them about their motivations in pursuing a law degree. It was a delightful experience to encounter the law students. It was a fruitful occasion as we witnessed firsthand the transition from a classroom lecture to a virtual experience.

We celebrated our initial success, we congratulated Brothers Milton and Joseph for their run, but we knew that there was still more work to be done. The other groups, inspired to see the Brothers’ success, were challenged to finalize their webinars. On the other hand, for our two triumphant Brothers, a more significant task was at hand – an invitation to run the same webinar on an international scale with the Catholic University of Manado, Indonesia, on November 21, 2020, a memorable day for the Institute. Symbolic, isn’t it? That regardless of the situation, as far as it may take us, we will do it as long as we are able.



POWER OF PERSPECTIVE

by Br. Adan nFSC

Perspective is compelling. It determines how you react to every situation in your life. You alone hold the power. Have you noticed how the newspapers, television, and the Internet are full of drama, bad news, and negativity? I would take a rough guess that more than 70% of the content offered on these channels have a negative spin attached to it. For example, stories based on anger, homicide, and terrorism are never far from our fingerprints and eyes. While bad news certainly sells (it never fails to capture the interest of readers and viewers), if you want to be happy, healthy, and successful in life, you need to make sure that your mind is primarily focused on positivity. How? Here are some tips that I have learned from our Novitiate experience thus far.

1. Practicing Mindfulness

If you have never come across mindfulness before, then think of it simply as consciously deciding to be present in each moment. The idea is that when you place all your attention and energy on the here and now, negative thoughts and worries have no space to take over your mind and emotions. Let me tell you about the SNACK technique. When stressed, have a SNACK!



If you go around, you will find so many ways to bring positivity and energy into life. Staying positive can be challenging. The state of positivity can start to wane when you are bombarded with a succession of failures, disappointment, and heartbreak. Every challenge you

face withdraws from your energy, resilience, and a little bit of your faith. Once your positive energy depletes, pessimism slowly begins to creep in and take hold.

"The happiness of your life depends upon the quality of your thoughts." Marcus Aurelius

2. Seize the Day

The world will continue to turn regardless of the problems that you are currently facing. This is the reality. With that in mind, good advice is just to seize the day and take the opportunities provided by life! We must become aware of the varying points of view that exist within every aspect of life. Where there is an opportunity, do not pass it by, and surely, there is an opportunity every day, somewhere. Do your best to look for the good in every situation.

"What is behind your eyes holds more power than what is in front of them?" Gary Zukav

3. Concrete Advice to Revive Positive Energy:

Enjoy nature.

Perform random acts of kindness

Develop an attitude of gratitude.

Take a mental break.

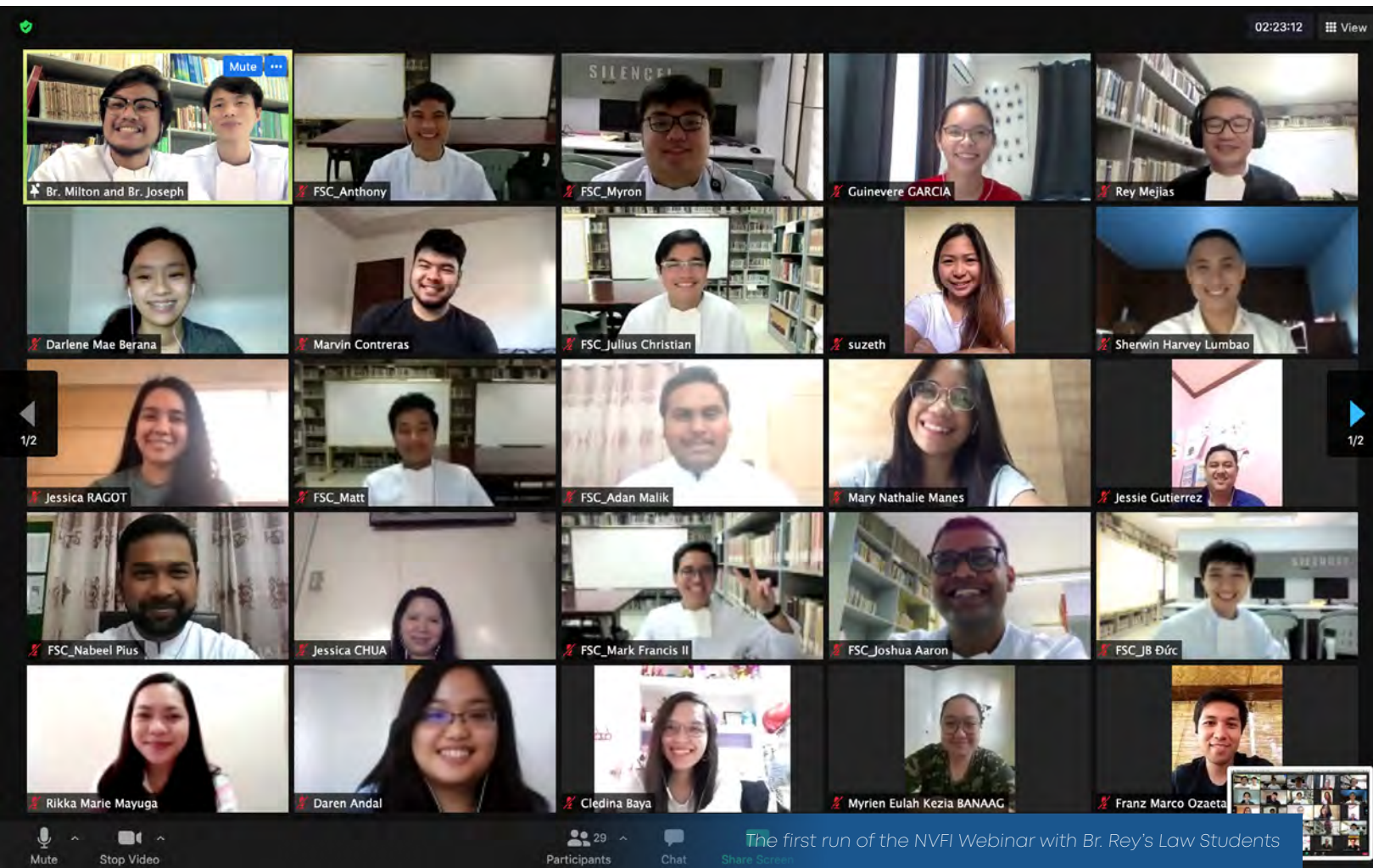
Laugh.

Engage in positive self-talk.

Celebrate small wins.

We live in a tough and challenging situation right now. Yes, I understand that the things I mentioned may not necessarily solve the problems the world is experiencing but knowing how just to take a break and breathe can go such a long way in our quest to make our world a better place. It all starts with the power of perspective! ^{RN}

"The happiness of your life depends upon the quality of your thoughts."



"Selamat sore. terima kasih kerana menyertai sesi webinar pada hari ini. sila buka video anda supaya kami dapat berinteraksi dengan kalian. Sama-sama!"

A gentle greeting, a show of appreciation for joining the webinar, and a reminder to turn on the participants' video cameras, if our translation was correct, were the first few words of Br. Rey as our Indonesian Lasallians slowly entered the session room. This was a brand new challenge for all of us. Now, it's the platform that is unfamiliar and even our audience! Yet, it didn't hinder us from giving our best. The students were overwhelmed with joy, we listened to their stories and struggles with their studies and personal life, especially during this pandemic, and we shared our experiences that lead us to where we are today. The webinar with the Lasallians from Universitas Katolik De La Salle was a resounding success.

Now, we go back to the preparation room. The other groups will begin their 'public' run in a few weeks. Next year, we will be launching our programs to our students and employees from the Philippines. But for now, we prepare and practice.

The entire NVFI journey made us reminisce about the experiences of the early Institute as they tried to introduce and set new trends for the world of education. Indeed, it was not an easy task for our dear Founder and his Brothers, but their sense of mission toppled all kinds of fear, challenge, and doubts. We continue to take inspiration from the stories of the Brothers 300 years ago, and we are just continuing the legacy that was passed on, now in a completely different setting and mode. Indeed, their story and heritage are the Foundation of our Service. ^{RN}

PITSTOP

by Postulant Aris Guteza

Semestral break is something that I look forward to every year. It's the moment where I can spend time to rest and enjoy the beauty of the different provinces here in our country. Unsurprisingly, this year has been quite different. It's a given - I'm under a formation program and the coronavirus pandemic has been restricting, but what made it truly unique is the opportunity to spend my semester break with the Brothers of the PARC Novitiate Community in Lipa, Batangas. A kind of pit stop, per se.

It has been months since I began my postulancy formation and the graces that I have been receiving are indeed evident. My stay in the Novitiate was a complete surprise for me. To be completely honest, I was not that ready to spend my term break in Lipa since I was told to stay for a couple of days, but because I felt that I needed to see a new environment and new people, this motivated me to say "yes" and experience a once in a lifetime journey with the Novitiate community. Yes,

I have personally met these Brothers already but to experience their day-to-day routine and life excited me the most. I didn't leave disappointed. In my five days of living with them, I felt that the presence of community life was indeed evident. The journey of the Novices is not a walk in the park. However, the spirit of the community is vital in uplifting their spirits to move forward and persevere. Honestly speaking, I was indeed delighted to see how each one works and relates to one another.

THROUGH THE EYES OF A YOGIST

by Brothers Milton and Joseph

"How can he bend like that?"

There's a certain sense of peace that I feel everytime we do our Yoga Meditation session on Saturday afternoons. One of the benefits that I like the most is that it helps the heart remain healthy (preventing heart attacks) and relaxed so that I can focus my mind. As you read along, follow the simple instructions, and imagine that you're with us every Saturday for our Yoga sessions.

Breathe in, and breathe out. Be mindful of all the muscles in your body. Be mindful of the air enveloping you. Be mindful of the leaves dancing with the wind. Be mindful of the droplets of rain on the roof. Be mindful of the sound of nature. Don't forget to breathe. Set two. Feel the stretch on your muscles. Don't stop it,

The tasks are all equally divided and to see them as a large group, having fun despite the responsibilities at hand is admirable. Furthermore, the balance between a prayer life and community life is indeed something that I hope to emulate.

I thank the Lord for the opportunity to see how my dear Brothers live as a community. I may not have the same dynamics as them, but there is one in common: we are all discerning. We all have different personas, and we all have this special purpose in life. We may not know what lies ahead, but we continue to move forward. Our communities' composition may be different, but we are all in the same boat of being God's work in progress. I will never forget the special experience of living with the Novitiate community. To be with them was an opportunity for me to feel and see how God is working. I still have a long way to travel, but this pit stop was a gentle reminder that I also must refuel. Indeed, the Novitiate is more than just a place to recharge and connect with God. It is indeed a house of God, a sanctuary where I am invited to slow down and live in the present moment. ^{RN}



Postulant Aris shares with the community his experiences during the Day of Reflection

and let it flow. Now breathe. Relax your muscles. Feel the tension growing. Feel your joints opening up. Feel your blood flowing.

Set three. Breathe in, breathe out. Take your energy and let it go around your body. Take your positivity and let it surround you. Take your negativity and let go of it. Take in your whole life. Live through the good memories and learn from the bad.

Don't forget to breathe. Inhale. Exhale. Live Jesus in our hearts, Forever. ^{RN}



FOUNDATIONS

of Communion



A community reflection by all the Novice Brothers

“That which is of the utmost importance, and to which the greatest attention should be given in an Institute is that all who compose it possess the spirit peculiar to it; that the novices apply themselves to acquire it...”

These words, and the entire “The Spirit of the Institute” statement, are the reminders that would always stare at us every time we have meals at the community refectory. It’s so hard to avoid staring back at it, especially when we have meals in silence. At the beginning of our Formation Year, we were invited to be familiar with it by heart. Yet, we’re not sure if any of us (except for our Brother Directors, of course) have committed these to memory, if not only a few keywords. Little did we know that in October, we would get to finally acquaint ourselves with this fateful expression of the Institute’s Spirit.

Ten Chapters. One Institute Rule. One Month.

The community dubbed the month of October as the “Month of the Rule” as it was the period for us to be introduced to such an instrumental document, which we consider as the foundation of our community and Institute, for the life of a Brother. Read along and join us as we look back at our month-long journey of introducing ourselves to the Rule of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

Dearest Rule, it’s nice to meet you.

The spirit of this Institute is a spirit of faith... (Chapters 1 and 2)

... which leads the Brothers “to look upon everything with the eyes of faith, to do everything in view of God, and attribute all to God.” (R6)

The community invoked the grace of the spirit of faith to begin the month-long dialogue on the Rule of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. The conversation on the important Institute document started with a discussion on Chapters 1 and 2 with Br. Peter Abraham FSC, our Assistant Director. In the introductory session, we learned about the purpose and the spirit of the Institute, and were able to connect it with its early inspirations and references like the Holy Scripture, Church, and Institute documents. Hence, the present Rule that we have takes its roots from the Scripture, which is actually the Brothers’ principal Rule. Today these rules help and remind us that the Brothers’ life is a response and commitment to God’s call.

In response to the Holy Spirit’s personal call, the Brothers consecrate themselves entirely to the Most Holy Trinity... (Chapters 3 and 4)

Carrying forward the conversation, Br. Sebastian Matundu FSC, Assistant Director, facilitated the sessions on Chapters 3 and 4 of the Rule. Our key realization is that as Brothers, we commit ourselves in the religious life, in the establishment of a community, and to the vow of association for the educational service of the poor. Institute law shows that “the purpose of the Congregation is to bring a human and Christian education to young people, especially the poor.” As Brothers, we aspire to bring to the fore the dignity of a person as a human and a child of God. In education, we seek to connect our human dignity with the proclamation of the Good News.

The Christian education of the poor is the work of God and must be carried out by men led by the Holy Spirit... (Chapters 5 and 6)

“Our life of faith is the key to our meaning and purpose of our vocation as De La Salle Brothers. Our relationship with the Triune God and our devotion to Mother Mary carries the weight of our daily burdens and challenges. The faith and formation of the Brothers is a life long dialogue to create a life-giving mission in school. We not only are personally transformed by this conversation but we also share this task with others whom we teach and work with.”

The words of Br. Kenneth Martinez FSC holds true in our conversation about Chapters 5 and 6. The set-up for the series of sessions was different. This time, the virtual classroom was studded with Brothers from other communities to give their own inputs, and the Novices were assigned with specific sections to report about. These two chapters prove to be very important as they focus on the Spiritual life and the Brothers’ formation.

As Brother Kenneth tells us, “personal prayer time is the most important thing in the formation house.” It is indispensable in our vocation journey because it is where we can ask for the necessary graces needed to persevere. Personal prayer time is when we face God with whatever we have and whatever we plan to do. It is also a time to help us understand God and ourselves and help grow in terms of our relationship with God.

In imitation of Jesus Christ who serves his brothers, and following the example of their Founder... (Chapters 7, 8, and 9)

“The Rule reminds us, ‘...Following the example of John Baptist de La Salle, who from the beginning of the Institute involved the “principal Brothers” in a process of consultation, discernment, and decision-making, the Brothers exercise authority in a spirit of co-responsibility and subsidiarity. A ministry of a servant leader. (R 110).”



The Novices, assigned as the choir, prepare their vocal chords for the Day of Memorial Mass

When asked about his reflection on Chapters 7, 8, and 9, this was the section that Br. Antonio Cubillas, our speaker for the said chapters on the Rule. It was a sight to catch our LEAD Auxiliary Visitor for Formation, despite his busy schedule running programs for the district, in a session regarding the governmental structure of our Institute. Br. Antonio stressed the importance of community life, especially when it came to the governance of the Institute. It is with great value to always look at what's best for the community of Brothers that continue our Founder's mission.

Among all the rules that we've discussed, this is probably the most technical, but it doesn't mean that the value in it is already lost. We ended our session on a light note – leaving a thought-provoking discussion regarding the upcoming district chapter. What could be in store for our ever-evolving Institute?

Today, with their Partners, the Brothers wish to respond in a creative way to young people's educational and spiritual needs, especially of those who are the most vulnerable... (Chapter 10)

We culminated the discussion of the Rule on such an important note through the guidance of Br. Edgar Esparagoza FSC. The closing chapter of the Rule, aptly called "Brothers Today" highlights the Brothers today's current situation and state. It was an edifying experience to hear a young Brother's story and his perceived role in the Institute today.

Br. Edgar shares, "it (chapter 10) reminds us of the importance of being a living witness to the Gospel values inspired by the examples of St. John Baptist De La Salle. Together with the Lasallian Partners, the Brothers are invited to respond to the educational and spiritual needs of young people."

It was a plenary that was informational, through sharing of statistics and data, and inspirational, as we also got to listen to interviews from Brothers all around the world. In sum, the statements encouraged us to believe that the work must, indeed, continue as it is still a necessary one in the Church. Finally, as a closing activity, we were asked to creatively envision and share an image of our future selves as Brothers, a ritual that we found to be delightful as it allowed us to envisage and encapsulate who we want to become in the future.

The Brothers today are continuously challenged to be the front liners in innovative education, and even as early as now, the ball is in our court. Such is the reason why we involve ourselves with a virtual apostolate rather than stick with the usual and traditional. The Brothers today are ceaselessly invited to respond to the sign of the times through a spirit of faith, and an ardent zeal for service; and just like that, we have come full circle with our Rule.

"Imbued with the spirit he bequeathed to us, and with the Partners who share our mission, we remain faithful to the living tradition of the Institute. In communion with all those who preceded us, we continue to respond with burning zeal to the calls of the Lord, of the Church, and of the world, to give glory to God." (R.160)

Truly, our Rule is a living document that continues to be relevant and evolves as a response to the calls of God and man. It's not a simple task, to be frank, and the expectations remain high that we will be able to carry on the mission that will be entrusted to us after our initial formation. But in the meantime, we prepare ourselves one day, and one Rule article/stipulation at a time.

We would like to thank all the Brothers, especially the invited speakers, who served as our bridge to know more about our Rule.

My dear Rule, it's genuinely lovely to meet you.

“respond in a creative way to young people's educational and spiritual needs, especially of those who are the most vulnerable.”

The Rule, I would say, is a very well thought-out and carefully planned material of the Brothers. Abiding by the Rule will provide us with much clarity and foundation in our mission, thus enabling us to be Brothers inspired by St. La Salle emulators of Jesus Christ.

Br. Joshua

The Rule is the foundation of the Brothers' life which also serves as a reminder for each one of us to become a good disciple of God and our Founder.

Br. Joseph

The Rule, which only the Gospel should take precedence in terms of importance, serves as our guide to fully live out our vocation as Brothers. It gives us clear examples of what is expected of us, as we grow deeper in the vocation of a Brother and a religious person's lifestyle.

Br. Mark

The Rule leads us to inform ourselves to become a brother, understand ourselves, and guide us in helping us bring others to salvation.

Br. JB

The Rule is essential in the Brother's life as it takes its core inspiration from the living Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Br. Matthew

Any organization or congregation needs rules. Our Rules guide us to genuinely live out our mission and look upon God in following Jesus Christ and St. La Salle.

Br. Anthony

It is our obligation as Novices to learn and apply the Rule of the Brothers as it is the core of our formation.

Br. Julius



As Novices, we are tasked to grow in faith in both the teachings of Jesus Christ and our Founder St. John Baptist De La Salle's charisma. The Rule helps us to have a solid foundation as we continue to discover the life of becoming a religious Brother.

Br. Myron

The Spirit of Faith will guide you through anything. It is then ardent Zeal that will animate you to live through everything.

Br. Milton

The Rule helps and guides us to live our lives in a more perfect way acceptable to God. Today these rules remind us that the Brothers' life is a response and a lifelong commitment to God's call.

Br. Nabeel

The Rule allows me to have a sense of belonging to something powerful, beautiful, spiritual, and overall satisfying. It gives oneself a sense of belonging.

Br. Adan

Reflections on the Rule

THOUGHTS AND MUSINGS

by Brothers Adan and Anthony

One of the things we often wonder is “what is it like in Pakistan (for those in the Lipa Novitiate) or in the Philippines (for those in the Gujranwala community)?” We usually just let those kinds of thoughts subside, but for this time, allow us to indulge ourselves. Thus, we asked Novices Adan of the Gujranwala Community, and Anthony of the Lipa Novitiate, two Brothers who have never met each other in person, to write about their thoughts and musings about their counterpart’s current residence, a place that neither of them has visited.

Br. Adan on the Lipa Novitiate.

“I am happy to write about a simple and special place for my fellow Novice Brothers. Yes, I am talking about the PARC La Salle Novitiate in Lipa City, Batangas, Philippines. The Lipa Community is a community of a diverse group of Novices and Brothers from five different countries living under the same roof. They are away from the noise and pollution of the city and surrounded by fruit trees and greenery, yet at times, the silence and solitude of the Novices is often shattered by typhoons and cyclones. Indeed, it is truly a unique set-up with the holy Novices moving around like angels in paradise.”

Thanks, Br. Adan! What a correct take on the Lipa community! It’s like you’ve been here before! Why don’t we hear from Br. Anthony?

Br. Anthony on the Gujranwala Community

“Welcome to the Gujranwala Community! You know, everything here is quite different from the Philippines. There are two Novices, Adan and Nabeel in the community now, with the Assistant Director Br. Peter

Abraham FSC. Their number might cause a bit of a challenge with the activities like sports, gatherings, and other tasks, and the same can be said with the time difference for our synchronous classes, but I think they are managing it well!

Just like us here, on Sundays, Adan and Nabeel must cook their meals. Also, after breakfast, the Novices go, on foot, to the nearby supermarket to buy their food supplies. I think they usually cook traditional foods – spicy and delicious, so I want to try their cooking someday.

For daily activities, everything is somehow the same as the Lipa community. It begins with a morning prayer and Mass at 6:00 AM and is then followed by the online classes. In the afternoon, they have manual labor, community sports, spiritual reading, and evening prayer. It’s currently winter season there, so I think their dinner time is a bit earlier at 6:00 PM, and after that, they have their study/personal time until night prayers at 9:00 PM.

Overall, their schedule follows the Lipa community, so sometimes they have class at 8 AM (Philippine time), which is around 5 AM in their place, so they need to wake up early to prepare for class. The cold winter season makes it very difficult for them to wake up early, but I believe they are thrilled, especially when they meet us through our online sessions. Hopefully, one day, we all get to meet each other in person.”

Thank you for sharing your exciting thoughts, Brothers Adan and Anthony. In the next issue of our Rue Neuve, we’ll see if what they shared are indeed our respective communities’ realities. Stay tuned! ^{RN}



Courtesy of Getty Images

QUEEN OF KATWE

by Br. Joshua

Phiona’s life changes after she meets Robert Katende, who teaches her to play chess. Under Katende’s guidance, Phiona becomes a top player and sees an opportunity to escape from a life of poverty. This movie portrays the resiliency and strength of character of this young woman who, despite the hardship and difficulties of her current state of living with a single mum and several siblings, overcomes the odds and obstacles in her situation, learn to play chess and represents her country Uganda at the national level to become a chess champion. She brought glory to her family’s name and won the admiration of her country and her fellow chess players. She is indeed a young prodigy in the game of chess and quickly learns to be a master at it. Her life improved at the end and her family came out of poverty and she continued her education and uplifted her status in society.

Reflecting on it, I would say that consistency and persistence will pay off. The lack of proper education, family property or single parenthood is no roadblock to sound education and success. I believe that where there is a will, there is a way. Phiona’s life taught me to never give up and to keep looking ahead. This will spur me to positive thinking and help me to achieve new heights. After deeper reflection, I can compare her situation to mine in that she represented her country Uganda in the game of chess. As for me I represent Malaysia to become a De La Salle Brother. She has indeed inspired and touched the hearts of many of her fellow countrymen. I aspire to do the same in my vocation journey and I urge my fellow Lasallians out there to do the same. ^{RN}

FRENCH JEUDI

by Br. Mark

“Parlez vous Francais?,” a Brother asks another Brother who is seated at the same table. “Oui...,” the Brother responds, but is followed by silence.

Such is just a tiny glimpse of the conversations that happen during meal times every Thursday. As part of putting the things we learn during our French class with Br. Sebi to action, the community began to implement the so-called French Day, wherein the only words that we are allowed to utter (or lack, thereof) during meals is the language of our dear Founder.

It’s an inspiring scene, really, to see my co-Novices, and myself included, attempting to converse in a somewhat comprehensible, yet ostensibly broken, French. Yet, also, most of the time, it is funny to find myself just lost for words, literally, and sometimes, the best I can do is just a hodge-podge of the French that I know. “Qu’est-ce que c’est en Français,” is a popular line that I find myself asking all the time.

It may all sound so funny, but French day (or let’s say, French Jeudi) has given me a deeper appreciation on the process of learning a new language. It’s challenging, yet very exciting, knowing that, maybe, someday in the future, I’d get to use it in my interactions with other people.

Every Thursday and Friday, our day to learn French, is always an exciting day for me. Why? First, as Brothers without borders, it is essential to improve our knowledge bank in terms of language, as it enables us to communicate more efficiently with people coming from other countries. Furthermore, it is also a very humbling experience to learn something from scratch, as it gives me a better perspective in understanding the experiences of my co-novices who are also beginners in the English language. Truly, it has helped me to become more patient with my co-novices, knowing fully well the struggles that communication barriers entail. Finally, learning the language of the Founder somehow makes me imagine the time when our Founder was still alive, conversing and making plans with his Brothers, of course, in the French language. In a way, it makes me feel closer with the founder.

Right now, I may not be able to speak French in a straight manner, but I believe that through constant practice, I will be able to do so.

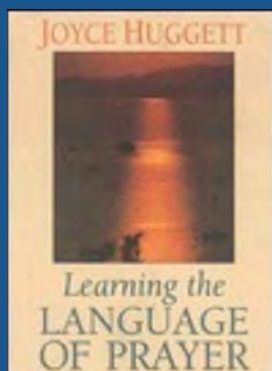
But for now, vive Jesus dans nos couer, a jamais! ^{RN}

LANGUAGE OF PRAYER

by Br. Julius

Acquiring a new language is a tedious process that requires ‘wholistic’ self-absorption. It is a long-term process of familiarizing, altering, and applying its essentials to its learners’ actual lives. This reality is identical to understanding the language of prayer. Prayer is the broad sense of searching for meanings that seem ambiguous for some, yet its underlying significance is relevant. In this reflection, I will share with you that prayer has its language, and it’s not just a humming act in front of the altar. Closing our eyes and imagining God are some ideas to show that our prayer has a deeper connection from our souls to God.

Upon reading the book, I realized that we have diverse ways to learn the language of prayer. First, our authenticity in prayer refers to our genuineness to commune with God. Second, finding a Sacred Place is not about the place but our willingness to pray. Third, it is essential to cooperate with the Teachers, the Holy Trinity, so that you will be open to what they teach you during your prayer. Finally, it is important to learn the basic vocabulary such as meditation, intercession, and other relevant words in our prayer life. ^{RN}





It's an early Saturday morning, and instead of lounging around, the Novices are already gardening. Instead of buying vegetables from the market, we grow them instead! Here's an update of what we've produced so far.

THE WORK OF OUR HANDS

 Br. Matthew MUSTARD P240	 Br. JB RADISH P100	 Br. Joshua LADYFINGER P90	 Br. Mark BEANS P70	 Br. Joseph CABBAGE P60
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FOUNDATIONS

of **Oui!**

By Brothers Matthew, Milton and Anthony



"The calling to religious life does not come with an absolute certainty of having a genuine vocation."

Indeed, the Novitiate experience is the best time to chew the cud and reflect more about the decisions we have made and continue to make. Some of our classes make us think, while some put us in a more contemplative state. Some evoke certain feelings within us, while some just outright make us question our resolve.

Our sessions entitled "Discernment - A Follow Up" (September 14 and 15) and "Vocational Discernment" (November 09 to 11) had all the aforementioned notions. Serving as a follow-up and recap on what we've learned during our Postulancy Program, the two sessions, through Br. Rey, helped us to clarify and disturb the status quo of our discernment process.

**Maturity in Christ
and growth in our
Lasallian Values**

The sessions emphasized that these are the two main goals in our formation program. Both sound so straightforward, yet we've realized that they are arduous to achieve. It would take us an entire year, or maybe our whole lives, to truly attain both goals. Most of the Brothers we meet, regardless of age, can attest that the quote "formation never stops" still holds much bearing and relevance.

What is being fed to us now are the discernment tools that we can use better to understand our call as a De La Salle Brother.

“Discernment: A Follow Up” focused on the call of all Christians, focusing on God’s presence. The two main questions presented were: (1) *Where is God in my life?*; and (2) *what does God want me to do at this very moment of my life?* Furthermore, there are two necessary conditions to have a solid discernment, which is rooted in knowing oneself and deepening the awareness of God’s presence. As Novices, we must keep ourselves in a state of curiosity about our own lives. Every day is an invitation to a profound understanding of oneself, all rooted in discovering where God is present in our lives.

With everything that has been presented, a more profound question begs to be asked – *“how do I respond to God’s will?”*

On the other hand, “Vocational Discernment” deeply tackled a Religious life, a fitting topic after our previous discourse on discernment.

“Vocation cannot be reduced to an initial call of to the moment when a decision is made after mature deliberation. It is rather a series of deliberate choices made over the course of a lifetime.”

This quote is on point in summarizing the whole meaning of vocation. It was emphasized that our life as Novices wasn’t just the fruit of an overnight retreat but rather was the cumulative result formed from the seemingly unnoticeable decisions to attend prayers, Mass, classes, manual labor, community sports, dyads, and so much more.

The Guide for Formation (No. 13) says, “formation is a process of growth in faith, which leads to and results in Christian and Lasallian maturity.” Did our small choices lead us to grow in the life of Christ and maturity in the Lasallian Values? In the scope of the Brothers’ Life, religious life should lead us to more sincere adherence to the footsteps of both St. La Salle and Jesus Christ. The Novitiate should serve as our initial steps into living that life – it is, after all, the womb of our Institute.

The entire process is not as easy as it seems. There’s one drawback that we’ve come to realize. As holy as our Rule dubs us to be, we are human. We have our own needs and values that we have to attend to. We also have our rational and emotional wants. Don’t even get us started on the topic of motivation – that would entail an utterly separate write-up. Yet, it is in the awareness and acceptance of this ‘humanness’ that we go “out of ourselves” and check whether the personal and present

lives we have and the ideal selves that we would like to achieve are in line with each other. This is where genuine discernment comes in.

Maturity in Christ and growth in our Lasallian Values. These are the two main goals in our formation. Simple? Yes. Easy to do? No. Yet, it is in this situation that the quote **“nothing worth having (or in our case, living) comes easy.”^{RN}**



LIVE LIKE A BROTHER

To live like a Brother to one another is to embrace the flaws and imperfections of my fellow Brothers, loving them without prejudice and recalling the words of Jesus to “love one another, as you love yourself

To live as a Brother to one another is to prepare myself to become a disciple of God and live with the La Salle mission by understanding myself, nurturing sensitivity with the needs of others, and be willing to convert myself to follow God and St. La Salle

To live like a Brother to one another is to help and support one another in times of trouble, sharing our own experiences in the community

To live like a Brother to one another has been a life of joy and adventure as I deepen my relationship with God, others, and myself

To live as a Brother to one another is to accompany my brother in good and bad, to understand him, and to cross the difficulties together

To live like a Brother to one another entails that my personal relationship with God is growing at the same time. I learn plenty not about my brothers but also about myself

To live like a Brother to one another is the greatest gift God has given to us. We are different but we are called to come and journey together as one

To live like a Brother to one another is to discover first your own personal goals so that afterwards, you are able to go outward and give service

To live like a Brother to one another is a unique experience as this opportunity comes to just a few, and I’m indeed privileged to live in a community setting, to do the apostolic mission, and live a spiritual life

To live like a Brother to one another is to give and receive each other positively through our daily activities

To live like Brother to one another is to continue living with each other through love and generosity

MEETING PLACE

with **GOD**

by Brothers Adan and Mark

I begin with sweeping the floor to shake off the dirt and dust. I move to wiping the furniture, unused for quite some time. I prepare two chairs, placed beside each other, and a table on the side for writing. I am readying the area as if I'm meeting someone very special after such a long time, maybe because of the pandemic. It's a tedious process, taking up an hour of my time as the place is such a disarray, yet it's the right thing to do, for my guest is indeed special – *I have to prepare my meeting place with my God.*

All this preparation was part of our three-day silent Retreat with the theme "New Beginnings: Relationship with God" on November 28 to 30, 2020. Aptly themed also as a Pre-Advent Retreat, preparation, indeed, was an appropriate ritual as we begin to proactively wait for the birth of Jesus Christ.

The unique retreat featured three concepts.

First, we gave focus on the characters and virtues of John the Baptist, Joseph, Mary, and the Wise Men – important figures in the Nativity Story. Second, and this, I believe, is what made the retreat stand out, was the method of content delivery – audio podcasts. Sitting in the chapel and listening to the calm voice in the audio allowed me to dive deeper in the stories of the mentioned characters. Pairing it with the

equally important supplemental readings, it was really a match made in heaven.

Finally, we were reminded of the value of finding a sacred space. Albeit a non-novel prompt, it was in this retreat that made me appreciate the concept in a deeper sense. In my meeting place with God, a simple open space near our community, I found myself communing and interacting with my God, with the mutual desire to grow in our relationship with each other. Yet, the meeting place is just the physical aspect of it. At the end of the day, it's just a place like any other. What made it different this time around was the grand silence required of all of us.

I suspect many of us do not realize exactly how noisy our lives are. The experience of spending a few days in complete silence can at times be overwhelming, but it is highly beneficial. After doing such a retreat, I always come back to 'real life' much more focused, and with a renewed and positive attitude. The term-ender retreat was a great experience, but what I am more keen on is the post-retreat. I pray to incorporate more elements of my reflection and meditation in my daily life. In the 'hustle and bustle' of the Novitiate experience, the retreat was a powerful acquaintance with conversion, renewal and preparation for the Advent.

Truly, the retreat enabled our first term to end with a (silent) bang.^{RN}

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MISSSED
OUR

FIRST

ISSUE?



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