His Holiness, Pope Francis, has just appointed our confrere FR FÉLICIEN NTAMBUE (CICM General Councilor) as Bishop of the Diocese of Kabinda, Democratic Republic of Congo.

Let us thank the Lord for this appointment and pray for our confrere as he starts his new ministry in the Diocese of Kabinda.
The Infected, the Affected and I

The Covid-19

By Fr. Luke Moortgat, CICM
Provincial Councillor

PRELIMINARY NOTES:
Privacy. To protect privacy I use fictitious names for people, sickness, etc. I also interchange gender related words like he, she, etc. I kept references for most important sources and I can give them to people who need them.

Rounded Figures. While I love concrete numbers, I will often round off figures as long numbers are more difficult to remember. You also realize that data that are rounded off are not only easier to remember but in many cases also help practical understanding. As this article is not used as basis for more detailed studies but as a starting point for greater personal involvement, it is more than sufficient to have rounded figures. For many it is also easier to grasp and to use in a practical way a text stating that “worldwide one person out of 500 is infected” than “16,690,319 people out of a world population 8,099,141,505 are infected.”

Honest Reflection. When I ask “why” questions or others, it is often to help us to reflect. I do not worry that a reader forgets all the facts if he can just spend some time in solidly based honest reflection.

1. FACES BEHIND THE NUMBERS

As the figures are so huge it is good to look at some clear examples of those large groups of people. It may help us to have a more realistic insight in the suffering, to see the faces behind the numbers.
a. Lydia works as a guard and according to the actual rules of the company it will be one month before she can see her 10-year daughter again.
b. Annabelle and Victor prepared well their wedding. The place for the celebration was ready. The guests were invited. As the wedding place was AB City they had purchased their plane tickets on time. Then, because of the Covid-19 the flight was cancelled.
c. The parents of Greg and Ann are a bit better off. They have a laptop computer. This comes in handy for online classes. But Greg and Ann are in different year levels with of course different classes. How to share this one computer so that both can study at basically the same hours? How to keep attention when their little sibling Renato runs around their small house?
d. Anita is a very helpful child but she is a bit special. In other words, she has a low I.Q. She has no problems wearing a mask these days, but she does not understand why she cannot play with her friends even when the weather is fine. She is difficult at home. The longer it lasts, the worse it becomes and the more it works on the nerves of the parents.
e. Mary cared for her elderly mother. She continued to care even when her mother became infected with the Covid-19. She became infected also and then passed it on to her husband. Later they all died.
f.- Martin referred to me a picture that had disturbed him. It showed an old man in a wheel-chair dying alone.
g. In LX country the rules to protect the people are so that it was not allowed to visit sick Covid-19 patients in the hospital ABC. Marc wanted to hold his dying wife in his arms. It was not allowed.
h. Trying to play safe and not to wait until his medical problems would become worse, Albert called before going to visit his doctor in the hospital. When talking at the phone, the doctor told him that with so many Covid-19 cases in the hospital it was not advisable for Albert to visit him there. They could talk though over their cell phones. Was the explanation given by the patient not clear enough or did he not understand well the advice of the doctor? Anyway, less than 10 hours later Albert was dead.
i. Margareta has a long lasting sickness. Luckily she does not have to be hospitalized and it is sufficient to have regular
consultations in the out-patient department of the hospital. However, the hospitals in her area closed their out-patient departments.

k. Martina has four (4) little children. After being stranded, transferred to a temporary relocation area, etc., with the confusions that accompanied these transfers, she got separated from her children. Only after three (3) weeks of deep worrying about their whereabouts was Martina reunited with her children.

You may know other and clearer stories. The ones I just listed may be enough for now to give us some practical background so that when we talk about data, we will see the faces behind the numbers.

We will realize that besides the many infected, a huge crowd, virtually everybody on earth is directly or indirectly affected by this Covid-19.

2. CONTAMINATION ISSUES THROUGHOUT HISTORY

Throughout the years, there have been huge contamination issues. E.g.

a. The Black Death of 1347-1350. (For our Church historians who like to put it in perspective: 1347 is the year St. Catherine of Siena was born. She was influential in bringing Pope Gregory XI from Avignon, France to Rome. This plague killed about half the population of Europe. As usual, some places were hit more than other. The city of Florence (Italy) was said to have a population of about 120,000. About 100,000 of them (or 5 out of 6) died in four (4) months.

b. The Spanish Flu of 1918-1920. Globally, the pandemic (a) infected a third of the world’s population and (b) killed an estimated 50 million people. This is more deadly than the four years of World War I which killed about 40 million people.

c. Today’s Covid-19. By the end of July it is expected that one person out of 500 will be infected and one out of 12,000 will die because the Covid-19.
Horrible as it is, this about one dead out of 12,000 people is extremely small in comparison with the just mentioned Spanish Flu which killed 50 million people around 1918. It infected 1/3 of the world population. In proportion to the much smaller world population of those days while considering that the medical treatment was so much lower than today and preventive measure were not so well known, this means that about one out of 35 people died of the Spanish Flu.

Sure, our numbers still keep on rising every day, but I surely do not think that the number of deaths will grow anywhere close to a proportion that is more than 300 times as big.

3. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

Some data may surprise you. When you see these big differences some may doubt about the exactness of some data. Among the many reasons we have:

a. In past centuries, people had no good understanding of hygiene.

b. In comparison with today, the medical knowledge was very limited. Of those who were infected a much larger proportion died than now. Not knowing much about transmission, more people passed on the virus to others. Now we know that three (3) simple aspects that have practically no proportionate cost are very protective: washing hands, keep two meter distance and use mouth masks.

c. On the other hand, today people travel more and farther. You can be infected in China on one day and bring it to Northern Italy the next day.

d. Governments react at different speeds: some have fast strict rules, others not. Some buy fast protective equipment, others not.

e. People react differently: in some countries people apply protective rules before they become a law; in other countries they keep on finding excuses even if there is already a law; in other places they go to court to sue a government that requires the wearing of simple mouth masks in public places, etc.

f. Perspective: Unknown problems appear bigger than known ones. They are also much more difficult to handle. We have, e.g., the chronic Hepatitis B. The science world knows it very well and there are not daily news items about it on TV or in the newspapers about this “old
stuff”. Yet, unlike after contraction the covid-19, people remain infected for life. Worldwide one out of 30 is affected with hepatitis B (vs. one out of 500 so far for Covid-19) and yearly almost one out of 9,000 dies yearly (vs one out of 12,000 for the virus so far.) However, note that on one hand the virus is only about half a year with us but, on the other hand, it is not expected to last for years and years.)

**g. New aspects:** Domestic Violence. Unexpected for many, there is a huge surge in domestic violence. “Governments worldwide have imposed lockdowns to contain the coronavirus, but those same restrictions have increased the risks associated with domestic violence.” Among the factors they mention: growing unemployment, increased anxiety, financial stress, victims being isolated in violent homes without the regular friends of family networks.

**h. People with disabilities.** People with disability are more likely to be poorer, not working and more socially isolated. This makes them more vulnerable to poor health outcomes during the pandemic.

**i. Counting Problems.** It may surprise some, but the issue of how to count is not as easy as many thought. You may remember that some countries suddenly increased their data about the infected by the virus and those who died from it when they realized that a person could die from two (2) causes. It is at the same time a little lesson for all those who do research to make sure they use correct definitions and implementations for their data. I just quote:

*If an elderly with pneumonia dies at home do you count him among those who died from pneumonia or among those who died from the coronavirus? Some did what they were used to do before there was a coronavirus: count him among those who die from pneumonia. Several countries realized that if you want to know the effect of the virus, you should count him among (or least also among) those who died from the virus. This explains why several countries adjusted their figures some time during this virus period. (nota: printing a sentence in bold was done by this author.)* (If interested you can find more about this in: https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-04-coronavirus-dead-difficult.html news/2020
4. REACTIONS OF THE CHURCH: BEFORE AND NOW

a. Around the years 250-260, Saint Cyprian of Carthage (Northern Africa) asked the Christians to take care of the sick even at the risk of their own health and lives.

He explained that we are not on this earth to enjoy a life of comfort. *When you see suffering around you, including that of those who persecute you, you should help.*

b. The Catholic Church was by far the first to really take the care of sick seriously. The “followers of Christ” wanted to imitate the compassion of Jesus in the situation of their times. They started the first hospitals.

c. It is good to realize that their care for the sick resulted not only in having places and caregivers for them, etc., but it also changed the attitudes of the people.

We can think here at the effect of the life of Father Damien who dedicated his life for the lepers on the island of Molokai, Hawaii (then the Kingdom of Hawaii and now the State of Hawaii in the U.S.A.) The treatment and also the protection method of those days was quarantine where people were separated from their spouses, children and parents. This separation was not for a limited time but for life and even on a separate island: Molokai. People who wanted to help could do so with the “simple” condition: “you stay there until you are a leper and you leave in a coffin.” Besides praying for and with the lepers, he lived with them, built houses, arranged for running water, taught them farming skills, as well as giving them hope, etc., until he himself would be a leper and after 16 years of caring he would die there in 1889. His life is a most remarkable example of silent witnessing till the end, bringing the love of Jesus to the people who suffer so deeply. He helped not only the lepers of that time and place but indirectly he motivated numerous people around the world to care for the lepers. Our Church arranged to have sisters and chaplains in the leper camps (including all the leper camps in the Philippines), etc. It also encouraged the medical world to search for a cure. Many of them did their medical work even in really very difficult circumstances. (The cure was found around 1995. In less than 25 years the number of
cases worldwide went down from more than 5 million to less than 200,000.

For those who like a more objective descriptive I copy a text the **Britannica Online Encyclopedia** about Father Damien.

"Damien, known for his compassion, provided spiritual, physical, and emotional comfort to those suffering from the debilitating and incurable disease. He served as both pastor and physician to the [leper] colony and undertook many projects to better the conditions there. He improved water and food supplies and housing and founded two orphanages, receiving help from other priests for only 6 of his 16 years on Molokai." Even after Father Damien learned that he had contracted leprosy, he continued his charitable work. He died in 1889.

(or Google: “Britannica Online Encyclopedia: Damien known for his compassion”)

d. We even have congregations of religious **who dedicated their lives for the people with contagious diseases.** I.e., they would not get married, not have children in order to care for the people with fatal contagious diseases until they would be contaminated by them and die of the same diseases. One of these congregations is of the Alexan Brothers which we still have in Davao City.

e. We see also have the **different kinds of reactions** in areas with a Christian spirit and others. In one place people look at the doctors who care for the Covid-19 patients as potential careers who will bring the sickness to their neighborhood. They threw stones at them. In more Christian areas they were greeted and serenaded as courageous “front liners” who risked to become contaminated in order to take care of the patients.

f. **CICM Superiors.** Of course different because of kind of sickness and world situation, but in the same direction of caring, we received **letters from our Superior General and our Provincial Superior.** After reading them let us think about what to do, let us plan with the confreres in our parishes, schools or works how we will bring the **love of Jesus to the people who suffer.**

g. **CICM RP confreres** were and are involved in a whole series of programs. We even had a special Nova et Vetera edition for a series of them. Thanks to God. Great work, confreres.
5. WHAT WILL I DO?

We have our faith with general principles, we have the letters of our superiors, we see on TV examples of how people “impact” our world. I do not have to repeat them here. I just would like to draw the attention to some aspects.

a. **Look at opportunities.** Before I mention some other general principles, I would like to propose a very general idea. Look at opportunities. Let us be realistic. This means that we look not only at the problems and limitations but mainly that we look at the old and new opportunities we have now. “Think outside the box.” A same building can be used for a variety of purpose. We can learn from the flexibility and commitment of others. E.g.

- In March, the automobile company Ford made already 200,000 **face shields** a day.
- The same Ford company will team up with GE to produce 50,000 ventilators for the patients in the 100 days.
- A “high tech” electronics company is making very “low tech” but extremely effective and low cost items: face masks. It made the huge quantity of **one million masks a day.**

b. Contamination is not like cancer, diabetes, etc.:  
- I can be infected, I can infect others.
- The more people are infected, the more and the faster the sickness spreads, the more and more people are affected.
- **Prevention** is not just an option to protect myself; it is a duty to protect myself so that I do not become a burden for others and mainly to prevent me from infecting others.

c. In times of calamities, etc., the weakest and the poorest suffer the most.

The weakest often have the lowest immune systems. The poorest have the most difficulties to buy medicines or have a consultation with a doctor. They normally wait too long to ask for advice and by the time they do, they are more sick. I can pay special attention to the weakest and the poorest sick and also ask government institutions (Departments of Health and of Social Welfare, city and barangay administrators) to care more for the poorest of the poor.

The above mentioned “People with Disabilities” (see 3.h) are part of this more vulnerable group. They tend to receive even less attention during more diffi-
cult times. Part of the reason might be that they often need specialized care (Sign Language for Deaf, Braille materials for the Blind, wheelchairs, etc.). Yet, this does not mean that their needs are less or that we should do less for them. On the contrary: I must do much more for them: **The greater the need, the greater the care.**

**In our schools, parishes, etc.,** I can explain more about caring for the weakest, the people with disabilities, the poorest in our society and organize activities with them.

**d. Learning from Current Church involvements**

**d1. CICM-RP.** You surely have read the reports on the support for the Covid-19 victims by our confreres which were compiled in a special issue of Nova et Vetera. It lists beneficiaries and amounts given by our RP Province. Great. Thanks be to God. Can I support them also?

**d2. Archdiocese of Manila.** Among others, it has two (2) long-running assistance programs for people who sleep on the streets run by 2 priests (of two congregations). These efforts seem to have created a strong effect in the mind of several people in the Archdiocese which resulted in this great (unexpected) support. More than 600 street people were accommodated and fed during more than three (3) months in compounds of various Catholic schools. Can I spread this news in other dioceses where we work?

**d3. De La Salle University.** We can mention here that they also cared for at least 150 street people. Is the school where I work involved in activities for the covid-19 victims and/or is it making plans for eventual new calamities?

**d4. So many other activities have been going on.** Readers can reflect on them, evaluate them and find out if they can be improved, enhanced, etc.

If you can send me a **simple copy of the descriptions** of your activities, I would deeply appreciate it and try to “give credit where credit is due.”

**e. Some random ideas.**

**e1. The extremes.** Our Pope Francis asks us to go to the extremes. Not just the poor but the poorest of the poor, etc. Our Founder went to the extremes of his time: not-Christianized,
poor, feet made disabled by the family, etc. Can I/our school/our CICM Province go more to the extremes? Including some not really extreme ones, today we have, e.g.

e1.1 People with **multiple disabilities**. Some of them are at the same time abandoned by their parents.

e1.2. People with **mental illnesses**. They are still the most ridiculed in our society. Christ had a special attention for them. A group of poor mental health patients were supposed to receive medicines at reduced prices in a government entity. They were just told that because of the Covid-19 there was no more money. Now they will suffer so much not only until the Covid is finished but until they can replenish the cash.

Can I promote their respect as well as their medical care? There are some catholic groups. There is an NGO “Alliance of Filipino Families for Mental Health, Inc.” etc. Can we let them use a room or comparable space for their support groups and/or arrange other services?

e1.3 People who are **bullied, abused, rejected** because of a lower I.Q., stuttering, physical deformation, etc.

**e2. Alternative methods.** It is not always necessary to have our own organization, own buildings, etc. Maybe we can work together with others, use existing facilities, ask the government to provide at least the minimum care, etc. E.g.,

e2.1 In the 1990’s, the teaching of special education on college and graduate level was new. Instead of starting new institutions, constructing new buildings, etc., existing colleges and universities were asked to start offering these courses. Seven universities (7), including 2 CICM, agreed.

e2.2 An alumna of our universities could arrange for new buildings and services for the psychiatry program in government hospital. (This was also a case of good usage of taxpayers’ money.)

e2.3 Members of a congregation visited patients in a psychiatric hospital. They realized they could accommodate a whole group of them in one of their properties and so give them a much better treatment. (Maybe we can also have one of our places for the
mentally ill. We can at least pray for insight.)

6. CONCLUSION

We have a world problem. If we are not infected, we are affected. Even with the progress in medicine, so many people suffer, so many are dying. The vaccine we are waiting for will not be an easy panacea. Just like there are different opinions about mouth masks, etc., there will be different ideas about the new vaccine.

However, we can express our deep concern in various preventive and curative actions. We have encouraging examples of great care and even heroic dedication. We saw our weakness, our lack of preparation but also our “getting into action”.

We have our faith with general principles and the concrete the letters of our superiors. We see on TV examples of how people “impact” our world. We have the examples of many confreres.

Let us now work hard with special preference for those who suffer also from other problems like poverty, disabilities, ailments, as well as ridicule and rejection because of mental illnesses.

Let us thank God and ask his blessings for our “beautiful mission.”

Please be informed that the NEW landline number of Maryhurst Seminary is (074) 444-9952.

The old number (074) 442-2654 has been disconnected!
A ‘CORONATED’ MOMENT WITH THE SUPERIOR GENERAL

By Bro. Jonardo Jonel Dalimag, CICM

MANILA DISTRICT VISITS

Mandated by our Constitutions and General Directory to visit all Provinces and Autonomous Districts (Gen. Dir. 100.2), Rev. Fr. Charles Phukuta, CICM, the Superior General, scheduled his canonical visit to the CICM-Philippines in 2020. He arrived at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport in Manila on the 21st of February 2020. However, due to the heavy traffic situation in Manila, Fr. General was able to reach the Provincial House in Quezon City only at 1:00 AM of Feb. 22. He was caught in the dreaded Manila traffic on his way to the Provincial House from the airport in between huge trucks plying the roads of Manila. This did not dampen his spirit though as he commenced his canonical visit on the same day with a light talk with the Provincial Superior. He hit the road in the evening of the same day to jumpstarts his canonical visits to the confreres of the CICM-Manila District. He did not only talk with and listen to confreres in the District. He also conferred with two bishops of the dioceses where CICM missionaries are working: Most Rev. Roberto O. Gaa, DD of the Diocese of Novaliches, and Most Rev. Francisco M. De Leon, DD of the Diocese of Antipolo. The Superior General also conducted sessions with confreres in initial formation: Novitiate and AIFC. The Superior General concluded his visit to the District with a session with confreres gathered at the Provincial House on the evening of March 2, 2020. In that session, he presented

the recommendations and declaration of the 15th General Chapter of the Institute and what has been implemented so far. For instance, he mentioned the availability of a fund (CICM Green Fund) for eco-friendly renovations (Acts of the 15th General Chapter, p.39) - like changing old bulbs into led bulbs, of houses particularly retirement houses and formation houses. This is in line with the Declaration on the Protection of the Environment of the 15th General Chapter, which was inspired by Pope Francis’ encyclical Laudato Si. Of particular importance, the Superior General emphasized the importance of a well-planned and supervised handover of official documents, financial reports, bank statements, and other essential materials when there is a change of leadership at the various levels of our administrations (3rd recommendation of the Chapter). Documents are the backbone of CICM administration and leadership. Our documents are the product of long years of reflection and experience. Our Constitutions and General Directory, for example, took 20 years
and counting in the making: "In response to the appeal of the Second Vatican Council, the General Chapter of 1967 started a demanding and diligent work of revision and aggiornamento of the Constitutions of the Institute, which were completed during the General Chapter of 1987." Recent General Chapters of the Institute have added or modified few General Directories and coming Chapters will surely add or amend a few more. In this regard, the Superior General emphasized the need to discern together and respect the logic and common sense in our documents.

The Superior General exhorts confreres in the District to read and reflect on our documents. In particular, he mentioned Art. 49 and 50 of our Constitutions and General Directory which talk about fraternal communion. In a sense, Articles 49 and 50 outlines how we should live our missionary lives in communion with the people we serve and with confreres. Art. 49 provides specifically that our fraternal communion is not something to be lived in Ivory towers but something to be lived and witnessed in the daily realities of the people: "we live our fraternal communion in the midst of the people to whom we are sent. Their concrete reality is the reference point which determines how we live out our communion." Art. 50, on the other hand, describes the One Heart, One Soul spirit, that is, the communal and spiritual bond we have as confreres: "Fraternal communion demands that we support one another, and we show a real interest in the person and the
work of each confrere. We pray for one another and for our Institute.” After this exhortation, the Superior General concluded his talk with the following: “The best way to criticize the bad is the practice of the better.”

**VISAYAS-MINDANAO DISTRICT**

On March 3, 2020, after completing his visits to the District of Manila, Fr. Charles flew to Butuan in Mindanao to see for himself the mission outposts in the south. He took his time listening to confreres and the faithful in the mission. He also paid a visit to Most Rev. Cosme Almedilla, DD, bishop of the Diocese of Butuan. Then he proceeded to Bacolod. It seems that the Barangay Captain of the area where the new mission venture is located in the Diocese of San Carlos in Negros Occidental was informed that a general would visit the area. The Barangay Captain mobilized the military, and when Charles arrived at the area, he was immediately provided with heavily armed escorts and was also provided with a Hummer (owned by one of the local politicians) to reach the mission station. It would have been impossible for him to reach the mission station if he was not provided a Hummer. The unpaved road was very muddy as it was raining. An ordinary car could easily get stuck in the middle of thick mud. This renders the area inaccessible during rainy days. It also has to be recalled that Negros Occidental, where the Diocese of San Carlos is located, is infested with the New People’s Army (NPA), the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines-National Democratic Front (CPP-NDF). This explains the presence of military personnel in the area. Fr. Charles survived anyway, and he continued his canonical visits to the

**NORTH-EASTERN LUZON DISTRICT**

On March 10, 2020, the Superior General took an afternoon flight from Manila to Tuguegarao City in the northern region of the archipelago. He was welcomed by Fr. Neil Sta. Ana, CICM, together with some faculty and administrative staff of the university. The Superior General was then invited to bless a new building of the university which houses the university's IT laboratories. On March 11, he proceeded to another city in the north: Tabuk City. He saw the ongoing construction of the Church in Dagupan. The old church caught fire on Christmas night of 2017. The Dagupan Parish was scheduled to be turned over to the Vicariate on July 1, 2020. It was one of the talking points between the Superior General and our bishop-confere Most Rev. Prudencio ‘Jun’ Andaya, CICM, DD, the Apostolic Vicar of the Vicariate of Tabuk. From the plains of Tabuk, the Superior General finally landed at a place he had been hearing about in Rome: Pinupuk. First to Junction, Pinupuk then to the mountain of Allaguia. In Allaguia, he was given a sack of red upland rice, which he brought to Isabela. After visiting a confere in Ilagan, Isabela, the Superior General went to visit Most Rev. David William V. Antonio, DD, the bishop of the Diocese of Ilagan. The bishop invited the Superior General and Fr. John Couvreur to join him for dinner, and Fr. General brought with him a special gift to the bishop: a sack of red upland rice. The Superior General spent the night at the Bishop’s residence. The Diocese of Ilagan is celebrating its 50th year as a diocese this year. It has to be recalled that
many confreres worked in Isabela since 1916. The Province, in coordination with the Diocese of Ilagan, organized a caravan in 2016 to celebrate the 100th anniversary of CICM missionary presence in the diocese. The caravan highlighted the contribution of CICM to the development of the place.

**Luzon Lockdown**

By the time the Superior General was in Isabela, the President of the Philippines was preparing to put the island of Luzon under Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) on March 15, 2020, which is a total lockdown effectively restricting travel and movements of people. The Presidential declaration was handed down on March 16, 2020, which greatly affected the scheduled itinerary of the canonical visit of the Superior General. Sensing that the Superior General would be stranded in Isabela because of the declaration of lockdown, arrangements were made by friends of Fr. John Couvreur, CICM that the Superior General is to be airlifted, via a helicopter, from Isabela to either Baguio or Bayombong. However, travel pass and police clearance were secured from the Local Government Unit (LGU) of Isabela to bring the Superior General via land transportation to Bayombong, Nueva Vizcaya, at the CICM House in Saint Mary’s University. The Superior General was able to reach the Provincial House in Quezon City on March 18, 2020, at 12:31 noontime, as recorded in the Provincial House Journal. For almost three months, that is, from March 18 to June 16, the Superior General settled at the Provincial House in Quezon City, working from his room and sharing his reflections to the Provincial House community.

On March 17, 2020, the Superior General issued a Message to Confreres entitled: *Lent Lived under the Shadow of Corona Virus.* This message to confreres reminds us that we do have a mechanism in place on how to live under the shadow of a pandemic like coronavirus: our fraternal communion. The Message from the General Superior encourages us that despite the restrictions on our movements, it is an opportunity for us to live in community and spend more time with our Maker: "As restrictions of our movement oblige us to travel less and to stay at home more, let us rediscover once again the joy of fraternal living in community. Let us spend more time listening to God’s word and in prayer. In our times of silence and meditation, let us pray for the sick and the medical workers and doctors toiling to save lives. Let us pray for ourselves that we be faithful missionaries." The message somehow spells the elements of fraternal communion. The situation is an
opportunity to put into practice the spirit of fraternal communion as outlined in our Constitutions and spelled out in the Lenten Message of the Superior General.

'CORUNATED' COMMUNITY

When travel restrictions were imposed, few confreres found themselves locked up at the Provincial House, including the Superior General. Together with other stranded missionaries, they joined the activities of the Provincial House community. Guided by the spirit of community life that they have been trained for, they organized themselves to do the tasks of the house. The strict implementation of the community quarantine did not allow the Provincial House employees to report for work. This situation presented an opportunity for the locked-up confreres to put into practice the demands of our fraternal communion. It also became a platform for confreres to share their reflections, talents, and experiences. The Superior General seized the opportunity to preach about the processes and lifestyles proper to CICM. It was like a retreat with the Superior General as the speaker. However, it was a different type of retreat because laughter and small conversations at the table also filled the day. The day always starts with the Holy Eucharist and ends with much laughter. It was also like a crash course on CICM governance as CICM systems and processes were explained. It gave us an inside idea of how the General Government (GG) works. The Superior
General, in his explanations, always emphasized established CICM policies. It was, however, the Eucharist and the prayers that capture the narrative of the time. More than ever, we realized that we need someone greater than our experience: God. The Superior General clearly expressed this in his Lenten message: "This health crisis awakens us abruptly to the fact that despite all the technological and medical advances made, we humans are weak and fragile. We are vulnerable to a tiny invisible virus. We are not omnipotent, and we still need God." The mood of the time may have been ‘coronated’ by the virus, but the community spirit was ‘corunated’ (Cor-Una-ted) by the new experience. The level of hope that everybody will go back to their respective mission post the soonest possible was high.

THE NEW NORMAL

In his Lenten message, the General Superior warned us: "We do not know how long the coronavirus will be with us. One thing we do know is that the coronavirus will not leave things as before." This is the new normal. The tiny virus has changed the way we do and see things. The roman period is being done through video conferencing (Zooming). Meetings were also becoming virtual. Masses were made live streamed. However, this new normal exposed the flaws in our methodologies. More than a change in lifestyle, the new normal forces us to change first our mentality and heart. When masses were prohibited, the demand for sacraments, particularly the Eucharist, was overwhelming. The live-streamed Eucharistic celebrations did not satisfy many, including our people in our parishes and schools. This puts to question our methodologies in our mission. It might be that we have made our mission too sacramental that when sacraments were not allowed to be celebrated, our people do not know what to do anymore. We might have made their faith too much centered on the priest that we are and not on the missionary that we should be. This is clericalism. The Superior General warned us of this virus of clericalism during his talk with the members of the Manila District when he mentioned about priests talking about the brothers in the absence of the brothers. Our missions should not be so much about priestly and administrative functions. More than requiring us to respond through administrative circulars and memos, the Covid-19 pandemic is knocking at our hearts. The pandemic strikes at the very heart of our formation. CICM formation is not so much about intellectual training but more about conversion of the heart: "Formation is a lifelong process of integral growth and conversion, of putting on the mind and heart of the Lord Jesus Christ in our missionary
commitment." (Art. 56). Are we not also told by our documents that the realities of the people we are sent to serve is the reference point of how we should live our mission? The new normal should make us reboot our missionary strategies to straighten the curb of clericalism with the thrusts of pastoral, social, and spiritual approaches. That will make us faithful missionaries.

WE ARE FRONT-LINERS TOO!

The 12th Chapter of the Institute in 1999 took the theme of Missionary Presence in Frontier Situations. The Chapter document defined ‘frontier situation’ as “situations calling for the prophetic presence and action of Christ’s followers.” (Acts of the 12th Chapter, p. 8). The narrative of this medical pandemic belongs to the medical front-liners. Their heroism and sacrifices should always be recognized and appreciated. We should be forever grateful to them. Opening our hearts to them and the victims of this pandemic is our prophetic response to the situation. We should not remain in our ivory towers acting as if nothing is happening outside our walls. Are we not reminded by our Constitutions that when we choose to become missionaries, we are also risk-takers? Art. 7 of our Constitutions tell us that: "Wherever we work and whatever our specific tasks, we try to respond to situations of misery, injustice, and oppression and to understand their causes." Covid-19 has exposed the inequalities, the discriminations, and the injustices experienced by the poor. It calls for our prophetic presence and action as CICM missionaries.

Art. 14 of our Constitution is even harsher in warning us that we could face death when we choose to be a missionary: "We meet all kinds of hardships and sufferings that are part of missionary life. We are affected by situations of injustice and misery. We may even be threatened with imprisonment, exile, or violent death." The examples of our martyr-confreres like Bishop Ferdinand Hamer, who was burned alive on the 24th of July, 1900, and Fr. Conrado de la Cruz, who disappeared on Labor Day, May 1, 1980, in Guatemala, should embolden us to do more. Even the example of our founder who braved the difficult missions and harsh weather in Inner Mongolia and died of typhus on Feb. 23, 1868, away from his confreres, should inspire us to be brave and in frontier situations. Are we worthy of being called missionaries if we cannot take any risk? Imitating the example of our martyr-confreres by engaging in social and pastoral actions is the best tribute and remembrance we can give them. Covid-19 has challenged us to do just that, that is, to get out of our ivory towers and comfort zones and be with the marginalized, the
needy, and the hungry. This is called communion.

**CONCLUSION: SPEAK UP! TAKE ACTION!**

On the evening of June 15, 2020, the night before he left for Rome, the Superior General delivered an impromptu speech in which he exhorts young confreres who were present at dinner to speak up, take action and do something to rebuild the Province. The Superior General started his impromptu speech with an African proverb which states that: "When a bird takes wing from a branch or a flower, it leaves a feather. When a human being leaves, he/she leaves a word." Hence, as he was leaving for Rome, the Superior General wrapped up his ‘coronated’ visits with words that kindle the fire of missionary spirit within us. For instance, he said: "It is our lack of spirituality, rooted in God and lived out daily through Divine Office, Contemplation, religious vows, prayer and the Eucharist that causes most of the problems we have today as religious missionaries." He adds: "It takes a true spiritual conversion and religious convictions on our part as missionaries to face the challenges of our time." He laments and expresses his frustrations about confreres who have no religious convictions and are wasting their adult lives. Indeed, our lack of conviction prevents us from getting involved, speaking up and taking action against injustices, discriminations, hypocrisy, arrogance, and even corruption. Even when we see these things happening around us, and we prefer to keep silent, often because of our misdirected need to belong and be accepted. "Our silence on such hurtful attitudes is hurting people," says the Superior General. However, he reminds us to be always humble: "We have to own our mistakes with humility. Never lose sight of our faults. We are experts in diagnosing and discovering the problems, faults, and failures of others while we seldom notice our own.” We may have been wounded along the way, but our woundedness should not stop us from working together for healing and reconciliation. During his homily on Holy Thursday, Father Charles Phukuta reminded us that when we are tempted to think of our dignity, our prestige, our desire for justice or our rights, open your Bible, read chapter 13 of John's gospel, and take a close look at Jesus: clothed like a slave, kneeling, washing dirt off the feet of sinful 12 guys who are utterly indifferent to His impending death. He kneels on the ground, washes the feet of twelve undeserving sinners; what an indescribable humility! Unmistakably, the Superior General encourages us in saying that: "No one has the monopoly of woundedness. All of us have been wounded to some extent.” He cited the example of our Mother Mary in dealing with wounded-
ness and pain. In his homily on the morning of June 16, 2020, the day he flew to Rome, the Superior General reflects: "Mary is our mother who went through overwhelming pain and an unspeakable ordeal to keep alive her YES to God. Yet she stood in faith, enveloped in her love for God and her child. She knew for sure; it was not her son who should grow towards her but she who had to grow deeper towards him to understand all that she treasured in her heart. In every step that Jesus took in his life towards the fulfillment of His Father’s will for us, Mary accompanied him even to the cross participating in his self-sacrificing offering."

The Superior General left the Provincial House at 4:05 PM on June 16, 2020, to the airport for his night flight to Rome, Italy, via Doha, Qatar. This time, he was not caught in between huge trucks as travels and movements are still restricted, rendering the roads to the airport traffic-less. He will be back once the pandemic will be over to conclude his canonical visits to the confreres in Bayombong, Nueva Vizcaya; San Fernando, La Union, and Baguio City. We look forward to seeing you again Fr. General!
A Call for Hope, Healing, and Renewal

Dear Confreres,

Last March I sent you a letter about living *Lent under the shadow of the coronavirus*. At that time, I did not expect that the journey would extend beyond Lent.

We are still living under the shadow of the coronavirus. It has altered our life as we know it, and we are learning new norms: keeping six feet away from others, staying safe by staying home, wearing a mask and gloves to protect ourselves and frequently washing our hands to stop the spread of the virus. We are not allowed to visit the sick and our loved ones who are elderly. These rules and restrictions have contributed to heightening our fears and anxieties, leading some to depression as our world has changed these past few months in ways we never expected.

**A REMARKABLE TIDAL SWELL OF CONCERN FOR ONE ANOTHER**

The end seems to be still out of sight. Yet, we are encouraged by the inspiring ways individuals and communities are responding to this crisis. It is encouraging to see how many confreres in our entities are pulling together to find new ways to work together to alleviate the suffering of those affected either by the pandemic itself or by the preventive measures imposed by governments.
Since I was “locked-down” in Manila for more than two months I witnessed for myself how our confreres at Maryhill School of Theology opened their doors to accommodate healthcare workers.

I want to salute all healthcare personnel, especially those who are temporarily accommodated at Maryhill School of Theology in the Philippines. How ready and willing they are to be separated from their families to work around the clock to fight this pandemic! I remember a few heart-breaking conversations with some of them. Many of them have difficulty sleeping and dealing with the stress of what they are going through day after day. Others have not even seen their children and spouses for weeks because of the fear of infecting them. We thank them for their sacrifices and heroism.

**COVID-19 compels us to remain attentive**

Like most of you, I am uncomfortably unsettled by the vast complexities of this health crisis, but as a person of faith, I keep asking myself how our spirituality and charism can help us at this time. How can we be a beacon of light for what we are experiencing in this time of darkness? How can we dream of a different tomorrow based on our spirituality and charism? These probing questions are worth pondering as individuals as well as communities.

Moments of instability and the loss of control of our plans are a constant reminder of our human frailty, which should bend us toward humility and oblige us to recognize that some other power is in-charge before any of the events in our lives make sense. The ongoing challenge posed by COVID-19 compels us to be attentive to silence and prayer. It asks us to reimagine our community life based on mutual support and to be more aware of God’s presence and the intimate bond we have with Him.

This time of lockdown, confinement, and quarantine has afforded us quality moments to be together physically with those around us and to be spiritually united with those who are far from us. We do not know how much longer we will be asked to keep a certain distance from our fellow human beings. What is more important is to embrace the solitude and silence of this moment in a spiritually attentive way.
It could take another year or more before the crisis subsides, which demands agonizing decisions. So, it is right to look forward and encourage one another to persevere and hold the course as this ordeal continues to unfold, which may result in more suffering and death.

One way to look forward is to ask ourselves: what does all this mean for us now while the disease continues to ravage families and communities? Do we allow the anguish to touch our hearts and move us to compassion? Or will we instead choose further isolation excluding ourselves in fear behind our masks and closed doors of indifference? In many places, the haven of the physically gathered community for the Eucharist is no longer guaranteed at this time. As missionaries, how do we reflect God’s light in this darkness?

There is an opportunity at the heart of this crisis. For too long some of our religious spaces have threatened to become arenas of routines far too easily closed off and spiritually secluded. This crisis has, in a genuine spiritual sense, flung open our doors. It calls for courage. It calls for creativity. It calls for us not to waver from the unconventional acts this strange, unique time requires—not merely to light a lamp and wait for other to gather, but to take up the torches and bring them in from the dark of night.

The pandemic has led to an economic crisis and many people have lost their jobs. The challenges emerging from this crisis offer us opportunities to be Church where it matters, that is, to be attentive to the needs of others and to act with due compassion and solidarity.

As people of faith, let us bear witness to the God of life, who breathes life into dry bones and causes them to live (Ez 37). Let us be Church where it matters. Let us be relentless in reaching out to others with the means we have, especially toward those who are most secluded or vulnerable. Let us be courageously generous to those who are most affected.

Many parishes have developed ways to celebrate and communicate with the faithful through internet platforms such as Zoom, YouTube,
and Facebook Live. I have seen and read about confreres who have been providing relief goods and supplies to vulnerable people in urban and rural areas since the beginning of the pandemic. It will never be enough but this is a way to show people that we care.

I love this quote by Dietrich Bonhoeffer: “The Church is the Church only when it exists for others... not dominating but helping and serving. It must tell people of every calling what it means to live for Christ to exist for others.”\(^1\)

**But how can we exist for others?**

One of the things I love about Jesus is that he was always aware of the needs of people, and I think that this coronavirus has brought out of us a new sensitivity towards the needs of people needs that they had even before this virus hit us. We can mobilize resources in supporting relief and humanitarian efforts. We can help those in the “front lines”, such as those who are providing accommodation, food, and transportation during the lockdown and quarantine. This also means providing psycho-spiritual care or counseling for the bereaved and front-line workers who may be suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Undoubtedly, the poor are the most vulnerable especially under lockdown and beyond. Our parishes and schools should respond to their material and spiritual needs. One of the most immediate needs is providing food assistance and encouragement. Digital communication technology and social media should be used for identifying those in need, soliciting contributions, and inviting volunteers to help in distribution centers and delivery network.

**Conclusion**

God is love. So, we all have the responsibility to love, share, and care for one another and for all of God’s creation.

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I thank the confreres who are assisting others the best way they can. Jesus said that whatever you do to the least of these my brothers and sisters, you do it unto him. May we continue to serve the suffering, showing Christ’s love with our material and spiritual assistance.

May the Immaculate Heart of Mary inspire and guide us towards that “Yes,” which opens new horizons of hope in our lives and makes us instruments of opening new horizons of hope in the dynamic communal journey of humanity. May we be obedient to the Spirit as our trusted guide in this time of confusion and despair as well as conversion and renewal. This is a global disaster that we can ill afford to waste time in fearful living as each of us has been divinely commissioned to serve as beacons of light in a world of shadows and darkness, but also in which a world of new impulses of solidarity are reborn.

Rome, July 23, 2020

(Sgd.) Charles Phukuta Khonde, cicm
Superior General

We are not given a good life or a bad life. We are given a life. It’s up to us to make it good or bad.

—Devika Fernando
### SEPTEMBER

<table>
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<tr>
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<tbody>
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<td>03 Ramon Caluza</td>
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<td>07 Anthony Pizarro</td>
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<td>12 Philip Borla (MG)</td>
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<td>15 Sammy Migduyan (Th1)</td>
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<td>23 Fransiskus Gella</td>
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<td>25 Mechelle Reginio (HK)</td>
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<td>30 Alberto Tamisen</td>
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<tr>
<td>31 Derikson Alverius Turnip (IND)</td>
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### Anniversaries of Ordinations to the Priesthood

Congratulations to those who celebrate their Ordination anniversary in:

#### September

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<tr>
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<td>1990.09.08</td>
<td>Yu Chang Romeo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009.09.08</td>
<td>Audrey Muñez</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996.09.07</td>
<td>Tabalanza Celso</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016.09.10</td>
<td>Atonducan Adrian Louie</td>
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#### October

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<td>2001.10.05</td>
<td>Turnip Derikson A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003.10.05</td>
<td>Pumihic Joseph</td>
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<tr>
<td>2006.10.22</td>
<td>Dundu Ananias</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009.10.17</td>
<td>Abao Marlee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010.10.02</td>
<td>Espina Noel</td>
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<tr>
<td>2012.10.20</td>
<td>Batilong Arnel</td>
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<tr>
<td>2012.10.25</td>
<td>Buyayo Charlie Magne</td>
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<tr>
<td>2018.10.12</td>
<td>Ebonda Jean Pascal</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N’Kiewu Isidore</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pranatal Eman Enjang</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Honoring you for being a dedicated and loving shepherd of God’s flock.

God bless you on this milestone of devotion and service.
Anniversaries of Religious Vows

In September, a considerable number of confreres will celebrate the anniversary of their religious vows. Listing all of them would fill a whole page, so we actually mention here the “five-folds” only. Congrats to all of you and may the Lord continue to shower his blessings on you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>September</th>
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<th>September</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- 80 yrs 1940.09.08 - Lefebvre Jean</td>
<td>- 40 yrs 1980.09.08 - Malu-Malu Valentin</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Wostyn Lode</td>
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<td>- 10 yrs 2010.09.08 - Mwako Emery</td>
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<td>- 55 yrs 1965.09.08 - Couvreur John</td>
<td>- 05 yrs 2015.09.08 - Clerveau Sylvain</td>
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<td>- Lapauw Jozef</td>
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<td>- N’Kiewu Isidore</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Bambile Benoît</td>
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Congratulations to those who celebrate the anniversary of their vows in:

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- 34 yrs 1986.10.19 - Gacutan Edgar</td>
<td>- 24 yrs 1996.10.07 - Lugbu Jean</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- N'landu Jean Oscar</td>
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<td>- 31 yrs 1989.10.07 - N’sapo François</td>
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<td>- 28 yrs 1992.10.07 - Kanyinda Jean</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Mubibi Jean-Baptiste</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Your fidelity to the vowed life is a sacrament of God’s love.

May God bless you with many more years of faithful service.
June 16: **Fr. General Charles Phukuta**, back to Rome

July 12: **Gerry Bouckaert**, to Belgium for his retirement
*Gaudencio Amaral, Rikardus Jaya Gabut, Fransiskus Xaverius Sole* and **Albertus Padang** back to Indonesia

23: **Louland Escabusa**, back to his mission in Hongkong

24: **Freddie Lucena**, back to his mission in Haiti
*Jean Poulard Espady* to Haiti on his way to his mission for Internship

26: **Antonius Hestasusilo**, back to Jakarta, Indonesia

August 2: **Joseph Bantiyan**, back to his Zambia mission

16: **Oliver Nsenda** and **Yannick Mpolengeli Ikapo** to Congo for a short vacation on their way to their respective missions for Internship
*Benoit Bambile*, to Congo for a short vacation before his Internship in RP

September 06: **Jerry Junior Senapai-Tang Yine**, to Central for a short vacation on his way to BNL for his Internship

August 08: **Philip Borla**, from his studies in Europe
### SEPTEMBER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>Fr. Rafael Verbois</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>Rekem, Belgium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02</td>
<td>Fr. Eligius de Wit</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>Dongen, The Netherlands</td>
</tr>
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<td>02</td>
<td>Fr. Jef Tyskens</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>Lop Buri, Thailand</td>
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<tr>
<td>05</td>
<td>Fr. Jozef De Brauwer</td>
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<td>San Fernando, La Union, RP</td>
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<td>08</td>
<td>Fr. Rap. Van Nieuwenhove</td>
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<td>Lepanto, Benguet, RP</td>
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<td>09</td>
<td>Fr. Emile Macé</td>
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<td>Bruxelles, Belgium</td>
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<td>Fr. Honoré David</td>
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<td>Fr. Ivo Lauwaert</td>
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<td>Antwerpen, Belgium</td>
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<td>Fr. Piet Kelkermans</td>
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<td>Fr. Lieven Ampe</td>
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<td>Calmbach, Germany</td>
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<td>Mr. Rodolfo Ramos</td>
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<td>Fr. Henri Verbeeck</td>
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<td>Aritao, Nueva Vizcaya, RP</td>
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<td>Fr. Jan Pelssers</td>
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<td>Fr. Oscar Deltour</td>
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<td>Ulaan Baatar, Mongolia</td>
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<td>27</td>
<td>Fr. Leonard Moerman</td>
<td>76</td>
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</table>

*We all die. The goal isn’t to live forever, the goal is to create something that will.*

- Chuck Palahniuk -
### OCTOBER

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<thead>
<tr>
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<td>Fr. Antoon Colen</td>
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<td>31</td>
<td>Fr. Omer Dewilde</td>
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</table>
Let us pray for the repose of the soul of:

LAURENT MPONGO MPOTO (CICM-KIN), died in Kinshasa (DR Congo) on May 6, 2020, at the age of 88. He was a missionary in Cameroon and DR Congo.

DANIEL LODRIOOR (CICM-NL), died in Sint-Pieters-Leeuw (Belgium) on May 21, 2020, at the age of 85. He was a missionary in DR Congo (Inongo), and Belgium.

HERMAN DE VRIENDT (CICM-ACO), died in Dakar (Senegal) on July 3, 2020, at the age of 78. He was a missionary in DR Congo (Kinshasa), Belgium and Senegal.

FR. KRIS VEREECKE (CICM-BNL), died in Torhout (Belgium) on July 10, 2020 at the age of 84. He had been a missionary in DR Congo and Belgium.

MR. RUFINUS LUPPI, father of Indonesian student-confre Valentinus Rian Sirupang, died in Toraja (Indonesia) on 13 August 2020.


“Be the reason someone smiles.
Be the reason someone feels loved and believes in the goodness in people.”

— Roy T. Bennett, The Light in the Heart
Coronavirus awakens the human in us

By Leonardo Boff
Eco-Theologian-Philosopher, of the Earth
Charter Commission
April 19, 2020

The coronavirus pandemic forces us all to think: what really counts, life or material goods? The individualism of each on his own, without concern for the other, or the solidarity of one with the other? Can we continue exploiting, thoughtlessly, the natural goods and services, in order to live more comfortably, or can we take care of nature, the vitality of Mother Earth and good living, namely, harmony among and with all of nature’s beings? Has it ever been worthwhile for the war loving countries to accumulate ever more weapons of mass destruction, now that they are brought to their knees before an invisible virus, revealing the inefficacy of all that deadly apparatus? Can we continue with our consumerist lifestyle, accumulating unlimited wealth in only a few hands, at the expense of millions of poor and miserable human beings? Is it still meaningful that each country affirms its sovereignty, in opposition to that of other countries, when we need a global government to solve global problems? Why have we still not discovered the unique Common Home, Mother Earth, and
our duty to care for her, so that we all, nature included, may fit within her?

These are questions that can not be avoided. No one has the answers. However, one saying, attributed to Einstein, is true: “the world vision that created the crisis cannot be the same as the one that leads us out of the crisis”. We must drastically change. The worst thing would be if everything ended up as before, with the same consumerist and speculative logic, perhaps with greater fury now. Then, maybe because we learned nothing, the Earth would send us another virus that perhaps could put an end to the disastrous human project.

But we can look at the war the coronavirus is producing all over the planet, from another, positive, angle. The virus forces us to discover our deepest and most authentic human nature. Our nature is ambiguous, good and bad. Let’s look at the good dimension.

In the first place, we are beings of relationships. We are, as I have repeated numerous times, a knot of total relationships in all directions. Consequently, no one is an island. We tend to build bridges in all directions.

In the second place, as a result, we all depend on one another. The African expression, “Ubuntu”, says it well: “I am myself through you”. Consequently, all individualism, the soul of capitalist culture, is false and anti-human. The coronavirus proves it. The health of one depends on the health of the other. This mutual dependency, consciously assumed, is called solidarity. In another time, solidarity enabled us to leave the anthropoid world and allowed us to become human, living together and helping each other. These weeks we have seen moving gestures of true solidarity, giving not just our leftovers, but sharing what we have.

In the third place, we are essentially caring beings. Without caring, from our conception and throughout life, no one could subsist. We must care for everything: for ourselves, otherwise we could get sick and die; we must care for the others, those who could save me or I could save them; I must take care of nature: otherwise, she will come at us with a dreadful virus, devastating droughts and floods, extreme weather events; caring for Mother Earth so that she continues giving us all that we need to live, and so that she still wants us on her soil, even though for centuries we have wounded her pitilessly. Especially now, under attack by the coronavirus, we all must be caring, caring for the most vulnerable, staying home, maintaining
social distance, and take care of the sanitation infrastructure, without which we could witness a humanitarian catastrophe of Biblical proportions.

In the fourth place, we discover that we all must be co-responsible, this is, to be conscious of the beneficial or malefic consequences of our acts. Life and death are in our hands, human lives, social, economic and cultural lives. That the State or a few people show responsibility is not enough; it must be everyone’s responsibility, because we are all affected and each of us can affect the others. We must all accept confinement.

Finally, we are spiritual beings. We discover the strength of the spiritual world that constitutes our Profound, where great dreams are created, where the ultimate questions about the meaning of our lives are born, and where we feel that a loving and powerful Energy that impregnates everything must exist; Energy that sustains the starry heavens and our own lives, over which we do not have full control. We can open up to that Energy, welcome her as in a wager, trust that this Energy holds us in the palm of her hand and, in spite of all the contradictions, that she guarantees a good end for all the universe, for our history, both wise and demented, and for each and everyone of us. Cultivating this spiritual world we feel stronger, more caring, loving, and in the end, more human.

With these values we are given the ability to dream and to build a different type of world, bio-centered, in which the economy, with a different rationality, sustains a globally integrated society, strengthened more by affective alliances that by legal pacts. It will be the society of caring, gentleness and the joy of living. ❑

Free translation from the Spanish sent by Melina Alfaro, alfaro_melina@yahoo.com.ar
Done at REFUGIO DEL RIO GRANDE, Texas, EE.UU.
Learning a language is never easy. Right? Very well. It has many components: from basic to complex, and rules: the proper and exceptions, which one has to know, understand, and practice. One has to start from the foundation, the basics that compose the wider system of a particular language. With this in mind, it is important then to note what Lydia Machova said, “We have no shortcut to learning languages.” Gradually we assimilate, and bit by bit, we accommodate. The confusing sophisticated structures, which are part of achieving proficiency, require starting from the basic elements. Polyglots, people who achieved adeptness in different languages arrived at their summit in this manner.

Admit it or not, this is a long intensive process that requires a proactive attitude. While it is normal to encounter difficulties and confusion, a determined soul must drive us to our goal. Impatience – manifested through anger, discouragement, and complaints – will surely be a building block to our development. Likewise, prejudice and resistance, or the unwillingness to assimilate and accommodate, will be a hindrance to our progress. As grown-up individuals, we tend to be confident in what we know and express disbelief to what is against it or unfit. Our

1 Lydia Machova. TED. January 4, 2019. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o_XVt5rdpFY
resistance to change or to accept new knowledge makes it easy for us to deny or to shrug off improvement. As learners in this global village, wherein exchanges and developments in ideas and views create a deeper and solid understanding of the world, our openness to these kinds of expansion must challenge us to be receptive and engaged. In the level of learning and mastering language, our unreserved disposition may help us break any verbal communication barrier and advance knowledge acquisition. Meanwhile, in the context of our formation, the Guidelines for Multicultural Living concludes that “Having more information helps us understand others and to move past our first impressions.” Moreover, Language plays an important role in our “intercultural communication” and in “adjusting our cultural lenses.” Since it is a part of communication, or vice versa, and “culture and communication are closely interwoven,” this aspect of learning English can help us realize the differences in our ways of communicating, and establish good, if not better, community relations. Having said that, Language serves as a bridge.

However, we cannot learn the all-about of a language in two or three months. It does not happen in a one-seating arrangement. Rather, it occurs in a dynamic process of integrated learning – a two-way exchange of ideas and inquiries, and a creative manner that boosts the learner’s way of adaptation and equilibration, through time. It is rigorous and demanding, but it is what makes learning more enjoyable and interesting. With the given period, albeit less than a year, it is possible to develop. Again, the stress of learning is development!

In a further look, Machova, and Wyner, both polyglots, have lauded different ways of learning a language.

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3 Ibid
Nevertheless, what is a common denominator from their shared experiences is the act of transforming a boring text-based instructional material into an agreeable activity of learning carried out through creativity. As a language learner in the 21st century, to inculcate the lessons of the workbooks is finding a pleasant way of incorporating it into one’s daily life. It is what Wyner said, ‘giving life to language’ – the act of associating words into the mainstream of our daily activities.⁴

Meanwhile, Bamford and Mizokowa’s research claims that “learning a language improves not only your ability to solve problems and to think more logically. (But) It can also increase (one’s) creativity.”⁵ It explains how far can learning a language aid an individual in discovering and developing himself. In light of the just-concluded Learning Course of the 22 CICM student confereres, their journey and their performances can set an example to it.

Our intensive course on the English Language Study truly gave us a sense of fulfillment. It motivated us to continue learning and to enjoy the process of it by being creative and responsive. Conversely, it has warned us of certain behaviors that may eradicate potentials. As a learner who wants to achieve a level of proficiency, these are a must get rid attitude. To a wider extent, this will help us in becoming a full-grown, active, and dynamic human being, as future CICM missionaries.

⁴ Gabriel Wyner. TED. December 19, 2017. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iBMfg4WkKL8
We are called for a mission and that is to seek for a meaning in life. Each one of us has personal encounter with God that made us realized the deepest values and meaning of life. We take the life and teaching of Jesus as our fundamental starting point. We as the disciples of Jesus need to adopt a way of life that can enrich our spiritual being and enable us to join in the work of building the kingdom of God. Hence we are the community believers who are chosen to embrace a life of discipleship, to go beyond the normal life, and to open ourselves for changes and transformation.

Asia International Formation Community helps us to actualize our seeking of life through complete system of training. Our Constitution states that “Formation is a lifelong process of integral growth and conversion, of putting on the mind and heart of the Lord Jesus Christ in our missionary commitment”.

Our formation leads us to integral part of our daily lives. It demands a deepening of our spiritual life through enhancing our self-discipline. Inculcating self-discipline in us will guide our formation through the years. We can’t be immediately transform for just a moment, our day to day encounter with the Lord and to others will help us to attain this spiritual growth. Developing our self discipline in our task, building smooth interpersonal relationship to our brother, and deepening our faith will allow us to hear the voice of the Spirit
within us. It is the Holy Spirit that wants to form Jesus in us if we take the formation seriously. Our community will live harmoniously if the Spirit of God lives in each one of us. The Spirit will therefore empower, guide and inspire the journey of this community towards an ultimate union with God.

This year orientation is a moment of grace to discern on our life specifically on our vocation, to evaluate on our community life, and to look forward working together as member of Christ. God therefore invites us to live a new life in Jesus; a life of total surrendering of one’s life and able to open for any changes that can lead to a mystical growth. Moreover this orientation teaches us that our discipline in the seminary life will determine our personal conviction in life, our commitment in our mission and our capability of being productive and active leaders of the church.

Our vocation is not just simply matter of responding to Jesus’ proclamation of the Kingdom of God by sharing His way of life, but it is also a question of actively sharing in His work. To find the true meaning in our daily lives means to allow the Spirit to work in us and to be able also serve Him and others in the unique way He has gifted and shaped you. Our active participation in the community, our persistent in developing of ourselves, and our daily encounter with God will guide us to seek for our true vocation. 
Some confreres, including Jonel Dalimag, wrote already about this topic and I had articles about it in Nova et Vetera editions of 2017 and 2018. In fact it is very important to have good data if we want to make good plans for our future works.

While the information can be used for more than one purpose (e.g., the number of confreres above a certain age, etc.) I limit myself here to our work force, or the number of people who can do the work. It seems that, if we want to expand our works with a stable basis of confreres, we may need half more new confreres after formation or 24 per year (and practically about half more new candidates per year) resulting in 22% more in 25 years.

The really many, long calculations are based on the latest elenchus (2020, i.e. data as of December 31, 2019).

I still use the same criteria: (1) start counting at age 26 (after most finished their formation), (2) end at age 70 (what you do later compensates for the time the younger ones spend on sabbaticals, sickness, etc.) (3) yearly an estimated 2.5% die or leave the congregation (i.e. .975 survival rate). This way we have now a workforce of 500. We can recalculate fast with other criteria. Questions, ideas, etc., are most welcome.

MAIN FINDINGS about the FUTURE WORK FORCE in the CONGREGATION

Basis: 2020 Elenchus (data of end 2019) with 793 living members

With the given criteria (26 to 70 years, .975 yearly survival), our workforce is now 500.
Scenario 1: If we *continue with same* new members at age 26 (or 16 per year) then: after 25 years, the work force will be *9% less* (456 confreres)

Scenario 2: If we *increase by one third* the new members at age 26 (or 21 per year) then: after 25 years, the work force will be *10% higher* (552 confreres)

Scenario 3: If we *increase by one half* the new members at age 26 (or 24 per year) then: after 25 years, the work force will be *22% more* (610 confreres)

Note: For the *Philippine Province*: respective numbers of new members are (rounded): 2 (resulting in a 25% decrease), 3 (to maintain the same) and 4 (for a 25% increase)

*(If interested in more details:)* SUMMARY TABLE about the FUTURE WORK FORCE

Basis: 2020 Elenchus (data of end 2019) with 793 living members
Working force range: 26 to 70 years after 10 and 25 years

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<th>INITIAL FORMATION</th>
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<td>1—If we <em>continue with the same</em> average of yearly 16 new at age 26:</td>
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<td>Ratio: cf. 2019</td>
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<td>2—To maintain the actual work force: we need yearly 18.4 at age 26 or 15% more than now</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ratio: cf. 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>3—To increase the work force by 25% we need yearly 24.8 at age 26 or 55% more than now</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Ratio: cf. 2019</td>
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With grateful hearts to God for the students and their parents who continue to put trust in Saint Louis University (SLU) – Baguio City, and for the opportunity to provide work to people when times are hard, SLU has officially started the academic year 2020-2021 on 17 August 2020, with around 25,000 students (including those in basic education). In the service of our students and pupils are more than 1,000 faculty and teachers, together...
with another 400 administration and non-teaching personnel, with a renewed enthusiasm to fulfill their responsibilities.

For safety and health reasons, today’s quarantine situation temporarily disallows the holding of face-to-face classes. That is why schools have shifted to distance education. SLU remains committed to ensuring the continuity of learning of our students and pupils. That is why SLU will continue to implement flexible learning. Students have an option to choose which mode of learning delivery to follow. One is the online-based learning (OBL), and the other is the correspondence-based learning (CBL). SLU has adopted to implement these flexible learning modalities, in consideration of the students’ and pupils’ current situations. Hence –

Through (OBL) -

- The courses will be facilitated through the Google Classroom Course Sites prepared by the faculty-in-charge; hence, a strong internet connection is needed.
- Monitoring and feedbacks will be done through the SLU student portal and Google Classroom participation supported by short message services (SMS) or mobile calls (as needed).
- No synchronous (happening at the same time) online meeting between the teachers and students. All activities will be done asynchronously (at the convenience of the student) following the study schedule that will be posted in the course site.
- The course sites will be given to the students through their SLU emails after enrolling the course.
- The courses have pre-designed and prepared course learning modules with course guides and assessment guides that will be accessed through the Google Classroom Course Sites on the first day of the class.
- Students can consult the faculty online for clarification at certain appointed consultation hours.
- Students and faculty can work in their own respective houses.
All activities will be done asynchronously (in accordance with the actual situation of the student) following the study schedule that will be posted on the course site.

- The course sites will be given to the students through their SLU emails after enrolling in the course.
- The courses have pre-designed and prepared course learning modules with course guides and assessment guides that will be accessed through the Google Classroom Course Sites on the first day of the class.

Through (CBL) or offline mode -
- The courses will be facilitated through distance learning packets. These learning packets contain distance learning module with video recordings saved in a memory stick (if applicable) and other printed learning materials.

- The learning packets have course guides, study schedule, and assessment guides that will help the students manage their course requirements.
- The course learning packets will be delivered via mail services (e.g., express post or letter post) to the home address of the student upon enrollment.
- The accomplished learning modules will be returned back to the faculty-in-charge as scheduled in the study schedule.
- Feedbacks and monitoring will be managed through mobile calls or short message services (SMS) at least once a week.
- This type is recommended for those who have limited or no internet connectivity.
So, we thank and commend the University Instruction and Development Committee (UIDC) under the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs for its effort. The UIDC’s innovation is an invaluable service to help prepare faculty and teachers embrace the new pedagogical challenges and opportunities in the interest of their students and pupils.

In particular, the UIDC is mandated to:

1. initiate programs and practices to promote and support high quality and innovative teaching and learning environments;

2. organize workshops or trainings geared towards enhancing the desired teaching-learning outcomes designed to improve the delivery of learning and teaching styles;
3. review instructional materials for students’ use; and,
4. develop studies and make recommendations to the university administration on enhancing the practice and status of teaching.

Earlier on, the UIDC worked on:

- identifying the appropriate and responsive instructional design for the development of the course learning materials for flexible learning;
- recommending for approval the learning modalities to be offered by SLU cognizant of the profile of the students, the community contexts, and the intended learning outcomes of the various courses;
- training of all the SLU department heads, faculty, and teachers for the planning and development of the course learning materials for distance learning;
- recommending for approval various guidelines to smoothly and successfully deliver and facilitate the distance learning modalities;
- assisting the SLU Department Heads in reconfiguring their manual of operating procedures and guidelines (MOPGs) for internships and field activities to comply with the COVID-19 Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) for the Management of Emerging Infectious Disease and the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) respective advisories;
- supporting the CHED and Department of Education (DepEd) to help higher and basic education institutions to prepare for the requirements of flexible learning modalities;
• conducting survey research with the University Research and Innovation Center (UNRIC) for the improvement of the delivery of the chosen learning modalities of the University; and,
• developing manual for distance education for SLU.

Moreover, we also acknowledge the SLU Junior High School Department for its timely community extension, in order to provide assistance to other schools. The SLU Junior High School Department has also been conducting series of webinar trainings on Distance Learning Education with several member schools of the Catholic Education Association of the Philippines in the Cordillera Administrative Region (CEAP-CAR) and with other schools like those in the provinces of Isabela, Ilocos Sur, Pangasinan, Bataan, and Negros Occidental.

We welcome our students and employees to a fresh start this academic year 2020-2021, with hopes for a brighter future amid the current COVID-19 global crisis. But it is precisely in times of living in an age of uncertainty that we need education more than ever. Education inspires us to dream and work together for a better world. It also strengthens our spirit with learning and values. That is the essence of the SLU motto “Wisdom builds.”

Welcome, Louisians, to Academic Year 2020-2021!

Wishing everyone a new SLU journey filled with good will, cooperation, and joy of learning.
Fr. John Mallare, CICM, will have his upcoming doctoral defense in his school, the Pontifical Institute for Islam and Arabic Studies (PISAI) on Wednesday, 16 September 2020 at 4 pm. Below is the invitation (in Italian). Please include him in your prayers as he looks forward to this most-awaited day. Let us pray for one another and stay safe.

**PONTIFICIO ISTITUTO DI STUDI ARABI E D’ISLAMISTICA**

المعهد البابوي للدراسات العربية والإسلامية

Per il conseguimento del dottorato in studi arabi e islamistica

**R.P. JOHN P. MALLARE**

**CONGREGAZIONE DEL CUORE IMMACOLATO DI MARIA**

difende pubblicamente la dissertazione

**THE BEGINNINGS OF CLASSICAL QUR’ÁNIC COMMENTARY:**

**A STUDY OF TAFSÍR YÁ’ÍYÁ B. SALLÁM BASED ON SÚRAS 16-18**

(Moderatorc: Prof. Adnane MOKRANI)

Mercoledì 16 settembre 2020, ore 16:00 – Biblioteca Maurice Bormans

Viale di Trastevere 89 00153 Roma +39 0658392611 www.pisai.it

A causa dell’emergenza sanitaria, si prega di prenotare la presenza alla discussione (all’indirizzo info@pisai.it) e di attendere la conferma.
I am Nolito Sami Mosqueda, a Filipino from Davao City (Southern part of the Philippines) doing my pastoral internship in the District of Guatemala. After nearly nine months in Guatemala, I would like to share some impressions of my experience in this country.

Since I could not acquire the visa to enter Guatemala from the Philippines, the LAC Province had to fly me to Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais, Brazil to apply for that visa from there. I left the Philippines on September 8, 2019 just to arrive in Belo Horizonte on September 10, 2019 and stayed nearly a month at the Belo Horizonte formation House as I was awaiting my Guatemalan visa to be issued. I am very thankful to the formation community that hosted me, especially for Fr. Ronaldo Benueza and the students Igor, Sergio, Manuel and Edwin; for Padre Matalanga, the pastor of N. S. de Aparecida in Belo Horizonte for his welcoming spirit; for Padre Daniel, Padre Dominic and Hermano Carlos of the San Antonio Parish in Itabira for letting me visit them; and for the friends of CICM for showing me that CICM is having a real impact in Brazil. Soon after I received the visa, I left for Guatemala, my mission country to arrive on October 14, 2019.

Guatemala is a country in central America, bordered by Mexico to the north and west, Belize and the Caribbean to the northeast, Honduras to the east, El Salvador to the southeast and the Pacific Ocean to the south.
of Guatemala is 17.8 million and its total land area is of 108,889 sq. km. Its capital Guatemala City is where the majority of the business establishments are found. Guatemala is known as the center of the Mayan civilization in Latin America. It is a unique nation that gathers people of different ethnic groups: Mayans, Ladinos and Garifunas living together. Guatemalans are friendly, kind and respectful people. The main source of income for the people is agriculture and tourism.

The country’s official language is Spanish that is used by most people in business as well as in education. There are other languages of the Mayan origin that are spoken in remote areas or in other municipalities. The largest religion of the country is Christianity with its many different denominations: Catholics, Protestants, Evangelical, etc. Between 1960 and 1996, Guatemala was involved in a bloody civil war. Many people lost their lives and hundreds of thousands disappeared and have never been accounted for. Nearly twenty-five years later, people are still fighting to know who was behind the disappearance of their loved ones and where their remains are buried? They would like to give them a proper burial. The country has many problems of corruption, illegal drugs, health issues, education issues and of migration. Non-governmental organizations from US, Canada and Europe together with the local government are helping to alleviate some of the problems the country is facing.

My experience with the Confreres:
Since the Mission of Guatemala was erected in 1954, hundreds of CICM missionaries from different provinces of origin have been assigned here to assist the local churches and to promote Justice Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC). Currently, there are 13 confreres in the district of Guatemala who work in 5 different mission stations including the provincial house participating in the mission to spread the good news of Jesus Christ.

The different CICM communities of confreres in Guatemala are open, willing and ready to accept new confreres in this mission. Most confreres are approachable, kindhearted to younger confreres like me. They treat me as a younger brother and therefore a full-fledged member of the family. Several of them are helping me to develop and to become more mature and ready to participate in this mission entrusted to the congregation.

I am proud and very happy to belong to this province where most
confreres help me, and inspire me, and encourage me by the way they carry out Christ’s mission. These guys are indeed animators par excellence to younger confreres! Their positive attitude about missionary life makes them be admired by all the people they encounter and serve in God’s vineyard in Guatemala.

**My Personal Experiences:** My internship program began with the learning of the Spanish language. Soon after my arrival in Guatemala, I enrolled into La Union Spanish language School of Antigua, Guatemala for four months of Spanish studies. I was placed into a foster family of Doña Rosa Maria Vásquez in Ciudad Vieja, fifteen minute-commute by bus called Camioneta. Learning the Spanish language for me has been a challenge because it takes patience to understand and dedication to communicate with other people. Also, learning another language for me is like learning it as if I was still in kinder garden where one needs basic things such as pronunciation, kind of speech and formulation of a sentence.

My Spanish classes were scheduled for five hours a day for five days a week with some activities during the weekends intended to help me to practice what I had learned in the classroom. I liked the methodology the school and the professors employed (One-on-One method of teaching) for us students to assimilate the topics or lessons every day. The classes were very dynamic, lively, full of laughter and jokes. This methodology fostered a very productive environment that was conducive to learning well the language.

It was here that I met students of other nationalities: Miguel from the US (born in Davao, Philippines), Bethany from the US (Filipino American), Mariska from Holland, Canoit from France, and Akihiro from Japan, etc. Together we would practice our Spanish by sharing each other stories. In the process of studying the Spanish language, I was able to learn about the culture and the history of Guatemala. Together with my professor, I visited some of the historical sites of Guatemala such as the ruins of Antigua, museums, etc. I went to a nearby town to experience the life of people in their farms by joining them in the harvest of sweet potatoes. I attended the cultural dramatization of a Mayan wedding. Also, I had the chance to visit some historical sites of the congregation such as the place where Fr. Conrado de La Cruz, CICM and Brother Sergio Berten, CICM were last seen when they were kidnapped.

The afternoons after classes were my time to practice what I learned
the first five hours of the day by speaking and communicating with the people on the streets: vendors, drivers, conductors of the camionetas, and the people at the park. I did all this prior to going back home to my foster family. At home, I made time to converse with the members of my foster family. Indeed, they helped me to enhance my capacity to understand and comprehend the Spanish language and other colloquial words of Guatemala. They also taught me some cultural traditions of a Guatemalan family of the town of Ciudad Vieja.

After the four months of language studies were completed, I embarked on a two-week visit and experience of each of the 4 mission parishes where the congregation is present in Guatemala. I was able to visit only one parish: Santa Maria de la Asuncion in Santa Maria Cauqué, Sacatepéquez before the coronavirus epidemic broke out. I am very thankful to Padre Juan de Dios Bukasa, pastor of Santa Maria de la Asuncion for helping me and guiding me to experience the different activities that take place in that parish.

When the president of Guatemala, Mr. Giammattei placed the country on lockdown, I was obliged to stay at the Provincial House together with four other confreres waiting for the crisis to subside and resume my internship program. At the provincial house, we kept ourselves busy and productive doing different things such as gardening and helping around the house for whatever job that came up. Thanks for the help and creativity of my confreres for helping me to enjoy life and to have more experiences in the mission amidst the pandemic crisis.

Challenges: Nearly nine months into my internship here in Guatemala, I must admit that I have bumped into a few challenges that are helping me to strengthen my resolve and my missionary spirit, and to love more the CICM mission.

The language of the people: Although the Spanish language seems familiar to me because of the similarity of some words with my native Bisaya (Cebuano), my problem resides in the construction of sentences and the use of words according to the speaker. At this point of my learning, I easily understand what the people say, but I find it difficult to answer to my interlocutor. When I had my two-week-experience at Santa Maria Cauqué, I would join in with their Bible sharing. It was very difficult for me to express my personal reflection in Spanish even though I badly wanted to talk. Above and
beyond the difficulty of formulating my personal thought, I still find it difficult to understand people who speak too fast. There are other languages spoken in the parishes where CICM works in Guatemala: a K’iche’, Q’eqchi’, Cakchiquel. Sooner or later I may have to study one of those.

The culture of the people: I believe that every country has its own culture or cultures that the people are accustomed to. Guatemala is a country where the Mayans have lived for more than a thousand years. When Spain conquered Guatemala, it shared its culture with the Mayan people. The Guatemala culture is very similar to that of the Philippines because Spain conquered the Philippines for more than 333 years. The culture of family and religion are very much the same. Most people here are Catholics and very religious as I observed in many activities and events. My challenge is the food and other Mayan cultures. The people here are accustomed to eating beans, bread and tortillas. It is a challenge for a man like me who is used to eating rice. There are few cultural and traditional expressions that I have never seen before such as a lot of Mayan cultures and traditions are new and unique for me that only here you will experience it such as the Mayan wedding, festive of bountiful harvest and celebration of life of the Mayan people.

I am an introverted person. It is not always easy for an introverted person to adapt himself in a new and an unfamiliar place. Learning a new language and accommodating oneself in a new culture of the mission area will always be challenging for an introverted person like me. Before the Covid19 crisis exploded, I used to visit some family friends to sharpen my language skills and to get more acquainted with the Guatemalan culture. My problem was always limited talk and limited sharing. I am a quiet person who waits for another person to start the conversation before I react. I always think whether what I am going to say is grammatically correct and the words right before I open my mouth.

Personal reflection: As I conclude this article, I would like to share three things that have had a positive impact on me over the past few months: 1) To maintain a positive attitude in the midst of the coronavirus; 2) the importance of community; 3) creativity to animate ourselves and other confreres.

Having a positive attitude in my internship program in the midst of this pandemic crisis helps me to value more the basic things we
have to do. Sharing good thoughts and positive experiences via social media such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube make us more calm, hopeful and strengthen our relationship with families, friends and confreres. Also, having a positive attitude in times of difficulty will help us to think wisely and avoid sickness. The 15th General Chapter says, “in order to experience how good and beautiful the mission that we have in CICM we need to have a positive attitude to look at the positive side of the things that are happening to us right now. And with this we will become the witness of God’s unconditional love and mission to others.”

The importance of community as mission. Based on my personal experience, living in community is very important. I have had both positive and negative experiences living in community with other confreres. Community is family. Most missionaries leave their families of origin for the mission and there we find new families in the community where we are assigned. In community we pray together, we eat together, we celebrate life together and we help each other like we would do in a family. In spite of our differences, we can unite as one and live in a community with harmony and love as long as each member of the community contributes his part. When we say mission, it starts in the community where we belong.

We are called to be creative! When the pandemic crisis affects our daily works and activities, we need to stay at home to be safe and to prevent the spread of the virus. When we are quarantined in our respective communities for so many months, we get tired and bored because we cannot go out for our pastoral activities. But somehow some confreres get creative on how to animate the confreres and others in their respective communities. Some have online masses, sharing thoughts and personal reflection through social media. Others use their talents and skills in gardening, woodworking, cooking, animal husbandry, etc. Creativity is one thing that we need to develop in the mission to keep more alive in
Fr. Vidal Ludan, the rector of the CICM Central House in Brazil is happy with his new garden. Indeed, the greenness pleases the eyes and provides an eco-friendly atmosphere. Congratulation Vidal!!

Despite the Covid-19 Pandemic, the central house in Brazil is a vibrant community. The pictures sent by Fr. Vidal show it!
Zoom has become the go-to platform and handles the influx of users, and it made possible the first historical CICM Internship Final Evaluation. In respect to the Federal Regulations on Social Distancing during this pandemic of Coronavirus, the local ordinary released its guidelines for distancing to limit only for ten people. As the final internship evaluation was about to an end, the Director of Internship & Pastoral Year Programs of the Oblate School of Theology, officially communicated by email on April 17, 2020, that Final Evaluation would be done in a Zoom meeting.

Considering the health crisis, Frederic Mabe Mizengo, CICM, my supervisor, and mentor guided the Intern Committee members on how to get familiar with Zoom. Series of virtual meetings with the committee were scheduled to facilitate the use of Zoom on their telephone. As a result, the last day of April 2020, at 7 p.m. CICM Formal Internship for me, Roger Montecalvo, made history as the first time that Final Evaluation happened through online distancing. Zoom’s virtual meeting eased the hassles of the physical encounter. It was attended by 12 Internship Committee Members, Oblates School of Theology Faculty Representative, CICM Intern Director / Mt. Tabor Community Rector Bill Quigley, CICM, Frederic Mabe Mizengo, CICM, supervisor and mentor as I said, but also the Pastor of Sacred Heart Church and Dean of the Northwest Urban Deanery of the Archdiocese. Thanks to the generosity of the Mt. Tabor Community, who sponsored the unlimited Zoom meeting.

In a glimmering light of thought, the Coronavirus pandemic helps confreres to approach the mission in more subtle and different directions. Innovations are evident when confreres in their mission stations in Arlington, North Carolina, and
San Antonio Texas respond to the invitations of the present situation in doing mission. Like at Sacred Heart Parish in San Antonio, my formal internship with Oblates School of Theology Programs has been processed through the dynamic force of the most engaged parishioners coming from excellent and diverse families. The Pastor took time in prayer in consultation with the pastoral team in forming the committee to help to accompany me in parish ministry. Meetings every month were held to give feedback and to accompany me personally. This meeting also was reinforced and intensified through the weekly mentorship of the supervisor and processing of Theological Reflection with me.

In fact, the Evaluation Process was done twice in the parish, namely: mid-year and final evaluation. Consistent with the feedbacks that the internship committee highlighted, improvement was evident in performance and the areas of formation: pastoral, community, intellectual, and spiritual. The supervisor was very attentive to each area of formation that he made sure that I received the right accompaniment in doing mission in the United States. It turned out that during the summative feedback of the committee and the Pastor that I was successful.

Towards the end of the evaluation, words of gratitude from the Pastor to the internship committee for their time and dedication, were expressed for their representation of Sacred Heart Catholic Parish in my journey. The faculty representative of the Oblates School of Theology took the opportunity to say thank you to Frederic Mabe Mizengo, CICM, and Sacred Heart parish, where I learned a lot as a minister of Christ.

Overall, Ana Soto, Intern Committee Chairman, expressed her heartfelt gratitude for working as a team and for the time of journeying together in Christ’s mission through my accompaniment. She reminded the committee to wait for the next get-together to celebrate the gratitude when things are back to normal.

“Our mission will succeed well, but it will take time and it needs men who forget themselves and think only of the interest of Him to whom they offered themselves in joining this holy apostolic work. I know that these are your dispositions. I thank God for it and exhort you to test yourselves to avoid regrets and disappointments.”

– Theophile Verbist, 1/24/1868 Letter addressed to Students in Rome
These words or phrase was well-said by our own confrere, Rev. Fr. Gerard Bouckaert, CICM, known as Fr. Gerry, during his simple despedida celebration at the Provincial House dining room on July 2, 2020. Actually, the original words of ‘Save the Future’ was quoted and acknowledged by Fr. Gerry from Britain’s Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, in his speech as a response to the spread of the coronavirus in the UK. However, “Save the Future” for Fr. Gerry was just like the summary of all his messages, memories and stories during the past 50 years of his missionary life in the Philippines.

For me, his present-and-future dreams and hopes for the CICM RP were so clear yet also a big challenge. He encouraged us to take care, to protect, and to save our CICM RP-Province in order to become a better dwelling place for our missionary adventures. However, as I heard, there are still some questions and
sentiments from some confreres regarding these hopes: *Does the CICM RP Province still have future? Then, how to save the future?*” And how do one save the future. Well, this short reflection is not about yes or no answers. This is also not a guideline on how to save the future. These are just my hopes, dreams, wishes, and prayers to my beloved CICM RP. Hopefully, it will become a better home to stay, to work, and to serve. Furthermore, I still wish it as a productive home to create more beautiful and memorable experiences.

**FACING THE CHALLENGE**

Believe it or not, agree or disagree, some if not all the members of the CICM RP Province are somehow journeying and walking under the storm of frustration, confusion, woundedness, and disharmonies. Some are still having feelings of pain, hurts, being unwelcomed, unrecognized, and unheard. Some confreres are arguing and complaining about many things that happened in the province such as about the leadership in the past and the present, some decisions, assignments, lifestyles, and behaviors. Others are still saying that injustices and the double-standard-attitude are well-served and decorated in our Home: CICM RP-Province.

Like or dislike, we have and need to acknowledge these things. These feelings are just like the waves of the COVID-19 pandemic or even more than what has scared and affected some of us here in the province. I am not blaming names or those who have been creating these uncomfortable situations. Only God knows! What I am just trying to say is that let us all (as a province) acknowledge and recognize that these situations and circumstances are really existing and we are all facing it right here and now.

**ENOUGH IS ENOUGH**

How to save the future when we are not united and still living under the broken and wounded hearts, bodies, and minds? How can we expand and explore a new territory of doing mission in the farthest location while we cannot settle and heal yet the pains, hurts, and wounds here in our CICM RP Province? Are we brave enough to say together (as a province); “STOP IT NOW! THAT’S ENOUGH ALREADY! ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!” Saying “stop or enough” does not mean that I am against the dreams of exploring, expanding, and opening a new frontier mission. Of course not! What I am hoping and praying is that all of us, the members of the CICM Province (no exception), come and sit together, reflect and pray together in the spirit of our universal brotherhood, One Heart-One Soul, to find and propose a real solution for the healing and
reconciliation process. Enough is enough for unnecessary, crazy, and unhealthy matters that are hurting, humiliating, disrespecting, and discriminating each of us. Enough is enough spending our positive energy and our missionary zeal merely by listening to the gossips and dirty messages, and negative stories.

PRACTICE A NEW NORMAL TO SAVE THE FUTURE

Indeed, some of us would ask: “Is there such kind of a new normal in our CICM RP, for instance; the policies, the protocols, and decisions to save our present-and-future province?” I think everybody could have his own perspective of looking at this idea. It goes back to our own willingness and creativity. It depends on our missionary will. If our willingness, creativity, and missionary will are not strong enough to create good and positive chances, and if we are over creative to harm and to hurt other confreres, let us forget the future. But if our willingness and readiness in unifying, caring, listening, loving, forgiving, and converting one another is strong enough, pretty sure, we will not only save and see the future but also we can bring and celebrate the future to the present time, in our midst. What we urgently need now in the province is healing, becoming joyful missionaries, and unity as one CICM family.

There is a saying that goes: “the best time to love is now!” Let me paraphrase it by saying that the best time to save the future of our CICM RP is now. By saying this, I would like to invite all members of the province to look back and learn from our past. Let us detach and forget all the bad memories, stories, feelings, and leaderships in the past. Let us just keep and take good wisdom from it. This can help us to move towards a new paradigm of relating, treating, curing, helping, supporting, and loving one another as a confrere. If we are so talented and creative in harming and hurting other confreres, why don’t we use also our talents, skills, wisdom, and creativity to create peace and harmony in our relationship, to make a bridge of restoring our broken relationship?

So, how to save the future of this beloved province as Fr. Gerry was telling and hoping for? For me, the quality of the support-system might be very helpful for this. It means that we, the members of CICM RP needs to invest more in accompanying and helping one another especially the younger confreres without judgment. Continue to appreciate, recognize, and support the young confreres. So, in return, they, for sure, will take care of the old confreres. Trusting and sharing responsibilities to the young confreres. Never underestimate them. Avoid using the words, “...ahhh the
young confreres are still stubborn, or they don’t have any or many experiences yet.”

The next quality will be dialogue. I propose two ways in doing it; be humble and open to dialogue. Try to listen to the basic needs and sentiments of the young confreres. You might add some more qualities that we strongly really need now in the province. These probably sound simple and ordinary things, but I do believe it matters most and in fact, we somehow are lacking in these qualities. If we can articulate well and practice these simple things, it will be a great legacy that we would leave and share with the next generations. We will not need too much on other things such as good or beautiful houses, buildings, constructions, luxury cars, or positions that some of us might have today in this province.

What matters most for the next young missionaries after us, is listening to our good stories and memories. They will, for sure, see our example and the missionary lifestyle that we are showing today. How we relate and treat one another as confreres, friends, and family in CICM, not by hatred but BY and WITH, the tenderly love and care in the spirit of ONE HEART-ONE SOUL! 🙏

REGARDS FROM JESUS!

“Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar, and there recall that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift there at the altar, go first and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift,” (Mt 5:23-24).
The Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (CICM MISSION-ARIES) — Philippines is in communion with the Church in the Philippines in celebrating the 500 years of Christianity. CICM-RP Vocation Animation T-shirts and 2021 Calendar are customized so that the spirit of the celebration be felt in various CICM missionary commitments in education pastoral sectoral and special ministries.

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We live in an unprecedented and unpredictable time. Little did we know that the pandemic crisis will bring us to an extended and seemingly endless time of waiting. As frontliners battle to save lives and scientists work for a vaccine, the whole world is being reshaped. We are brought in a gap that redefines us as people and as a church.

For us Filipinos, to be at the gap together is to be a ka-puwang. Ka-puwang is the root word of kapwa, a core Filipino value. Though it loosely translates as the other, kapwa means a shared identity with the other. Being at the gap conveys this shared self powerfully. At the puwang, we become.

**Puwang and Liminality**

Puwang is a liminal space, a threshold characterized by ambiguity and uncertainty, where each one is “betwixt and in between.” To be in a liminal space
can be likened to an experience of death or of being in the womb since it is a time of waiting.

Life takes us all at the puwang. Individuals go through liminality when they pass from one status to another. From being an adolescent to becoming an adult. When one joins a new company or transfer to a new place. During important moments of transition like marriage and retirement, status, role, and responsibilities seem unclear as one is both on two sides and in the in-between.

Societies undergo such liminality in pivotal moments in history. The long years of colonization take people between what was life was before and what can still be. The Israelites’ long journey to the Promised Land, their experience in the wilderness, and the many years of exile were crucial in defining them as a people and helping them understand who God is for them.

Disaster and trauma theories speak about the puwang as a space for passive and active resistance. During the first weeks of the pandemic, the heroism of frontliners and the sense of community kept people’s hopes high. It united us to work together and ‘heal as one.’ But as the numbers continued to soar and as needs became more complex, disillusionment and abandonment begin to creep in. We reach a stage where we realize that the situation is far more complex than we have imagined.

In the liminal phase, identities are suspended and recreated. What was considered normal ways of reacting or responding to situations may not be applicable and thus, there is a need to withdraw from regular habits and practices and even a time of complete letting go. Old structures are reassessed and reshaped to respond to the needs while new structures and perspectives emerge. As it is a stage of uncertainty, the puwang is also a space for creativity. While many setbacks point to the experience of death and nothingness, there is a new spirit that is borne at the gap.

**Church and the New Normal**

In a series of Bukal ng Tipan online exchanges entitled Ka-Puwang: Dwelling at the Gap, church workers, priests, and laypeople, were given the space to share their experience of a church at the gap and discern on the questions that remain amid the crisis. Their experiences highlighted the death and life experience of individuals and communities at the “in-between.” Below are the summary reflections after the four Bukal online exchanges (please visit Bukal Ka-Puwang FB page for the actual four
sessions https://www.facebook.com/groups/2519618424964692/).

**DECONSTRUCTING IDENTITIES AND ROLES**

At the puwang, the clergy are challenged to redefine their roles. Some priests feel disoriented and disillusioned, as the “cultic priesthood” is deconstructed because of online masses, and as “liturgical fixation” gave way to “liturgical innovation and creative inculturation” to adapt to the changing needs. Amid the pastoral challenges that called for an immediate response, those who are compromised because of their age and medical condition are forced to withdraw while the younger ones are called to take over tasks they were not trained to handle.

The gap led people back to the essential connection of family and community. Family as the domestic church became more manifest as it became the only space for worship and prayer. In some communities that have liturgical guides for their chapel gatherings, fathers and mothers took the initiative to do the same gathering in their homes.

Similarly, the call for the interconnectedness of church and government to respond to essentials became more evident. Amid the fight for survival and the threats to life, the poor who are most vulnerable became agents-subjects for their development. Volunteering to guard their communities during the lockdown, distributing food packs, as well as taking care of their elderly neighbor’s needs, they discover that they can rely on each other. They initiate collaborative endeavors with government agencies and non-government organizations to respond to the basic needs of families and the entire community.

**LIFE AS THE CONTEXT (AND CONTENT) OF FORMATION**

As the cyberspace became the main platform for providing faith formation, it has its pros and cons that warrant church discernment. While it offers a borderless space of endless possibilities in content and reach, people at the end of the day see the big lack of physical connection and interaction that is so essential in nurturing and sharing the faith. On the other hand, people with similar interests and needs can create community and develop new online strategies to minister to one another and build community.

Seminary formation had to redesign their programs to allow seminarians to have their classes and even their apostolates online. As physical distancing is the norm to be followed even within the community, the setting of the home is rediscovered as an essential place of formation for them.
As the fight for survival and limit questions take a forefront in the pandemic crisis, faith formation ought to be “essential, engaging, and dynamic.” Life is not just the starting point but is the very context and content of formation. Like the story of the Emmaus, to be at the puwang is to find Jesus in one another, by sharing one’s frustrations and questions, by an openness to be enlightened by Jesus through his life and example, and by being together every step of the way.

**NEEDS SHAPING NEW MINISTRIES**

The puwang has brought out countless needs from the economic to the psycho-spiritual concerns of families and communities. Innovative strategies like urban farming and home-based enterprises developed. Some neighborhoods enjoyed a sense of community on social media through group chats and other online platforms that do not only serve as a space to inform them of covid updates but also to respond to the need for transport, food, and other services. The lockdown in homes exposed the abuses to children and youth within their families and in the virtual world that online strategies to listen to their stories and organize rescue are employed by some agencies.

These experiences highlight popular ministry; one that challenges a church on “maintenance mode,” and pushes for one that takes the “smell of the sheep.” At the puwang, needs cannot be addressed without people’s participation. Dialogue is crucial at every step, engaging people through “reciprocal communication and collaboration through an attitude of respect.” At the puwang, ministry becomes a space to “discover new charisms,” to embody “damayan from the heart,” to journey together towards fullness of life.

**TOWARDS A KAPWA CHURCH**

A church at the puwang conveys Pope Francis’ church metaphor of a field hospital—which are small mobile units or ambulances established near the battlefield to respond to the needs of soldiers since the large mobile hospitals could not attend to the surgical needs and immediate care of those on the front line. The field hospital conveys dreadful and horrific images of the war. Soldiers heavily wounded, bodies hit by multiple bullets, limbs that are torn; such graphic suffering in this place may be enough for witnesses to give in or give up. Yet doctors, surgeons, and nurses in field hospitals would fearlessly face their task of saving lives. Such a metaphor speaks powerfully about the church’s role to minister to the sick and the infirmed. Memoirs of field hospitals reveal practices that may not be according to medical standards but are done so to
respond to the greater need to preserve life. Ordinary doctors or medical students were given the rank of a surgeon in field hospitals. Assistant surgeons are brought side by side with comrades to apply first aid right on the battlefront. Supplies were transported through the trains and as wounded bodies had to be transported through ships, ships were also organized into wards.

Like a field hospital, a church amid the pandemic crisis is a church in the battlefield. It suggests a community up in arms for those wounded; even if they are hurt and in pain. It implies the courage to face the woundedness of one another and the patience to witness to the suffering that remains until healing and transformation are possible. A church at the puwang calls for a kapwa church sharing identity with the other, creating a new story and vision together.

**KAPWA TAGAPAKINIG: CHURCH AS LISTENING**

A kapwa church listens more than hears the needs and cries of people. To listen is to take people’s stories and life experiences as new and unique as if it is happening for the very first time. As all our stories are interconnected, a church that listens to people’s stories understands that every story speaks to the church’s role in the suffering and trauma.

A kapwa church listens to the silence, extending the virtue of pakikiramdam (shared inner perception) to stories that are not voiced out which brings one to the heart of suffering. A kapwa church does not take over the story by taking what one does in the process of listening as more essential than the story itself.

Being a listener in the “in-between” calls us for a listening that does not blame or judge. It is feeling with the “pain of loss as well as the strength of survival.” It is challenging us to go beyond ourselves to let the voice of suffering be heard. It is in this way that ecclesia docens (a teaching church) can transform into ecclesia discerns (a learning church).

**KASAMA SA PUWANG: CHURCH AS MARGIN-DWELLING**

A kapwa church embraces ambiguity where “human logic is suspended.” Perhaps this inadequacy of logic can also be expressed when doctrines or prescribed practices are temporarily held for the greater purpose of saving lives. In normal circumstances, it is easy to reconstruct Christian life from within. New liturgies can be developed following set rubrics or faith formation can employ different strategies to
effectively engage people. But to be margin-dwelling is to take the courage to be questioned and to take a step back to be taught.

To be margin-dwelling is to both at the site of the "in-between." To embrace both faith and doubt, belonging and non-belonging, fear and hope. It is in this space of sensing and groping that the church can reinvent itself.

SAKSI SA DILIM: CHURCH AS WITNESS TO THE DEPTHS

A kapwa church witnesses to the depths as it sees the puwang as a re-creative state.

The Spirit as breath translated in Hebrew as ruach is feminine. This evokes the “imagery of childbirth,” of a God who “pants with creation to bring about something new.” On the other hand, pneuma, which is the Spirit translated in Greek is masculine. It takes flesh in the person of Jesus who lived the Spirit by preaching about the kingdom, healing the sick, and even after his death, by gifting the Spirit to his disciples so that they can continue his mission.

Recreating is both feminine and masculine. A church that recreates itself is open to collaborative pursuits. It is through a spirit of interdependence and relationality that new meanings take place and new beginnings happen not only for the individual but for all. It provides a birthing not only of new ideas but new ways of doing and being.

In the Filipino culture, the Spirit is communal energy that is harnessed in the most trying times. The theology of remaining manifested in embracing survivors with all their wounds remaining enables the Spirit to recreate them anew; the image of the ruach and the pneuma together, which is the oneness and unity of lakas (power) and ganda (goodness, beauty).

A kapwa church facilitates stories of suffering to enable communities to acquire “cultural energy,” that equips them with a “collective agency” and a “collective capacity” at the puwang. It is in such a collective process of witnessing to the depths that the church participates in the healing and transformation and as in the discerning how the experience at the puwang is redefining our way of being a church in the world.

CONCLUSION

The church in the pandemic crisis is a church in the battlefield; between death and life, fear and courage, doubt and faith. In the gap, we become a church of prophetic participation. It is a kapwachurch that is one with the “others,” that witnesses to the depths of their pain and suffering and that is open to be taught and renewed. □
Stories for the Missionary Disposition should be about CICM confreres, should be true, and should not require Parental Guidance.

There was a report that a male sophomore student of a CICM parish high school in Cordon, Isabela was nabbed by the police for some misdemeanor, and left languishing in jail among adult prisoners in the same cell already for a day or two. The police were waiting for the family to pay for his release which the latter had no means to do so. **Bert Saplala** went to the municipal building. Through some persuasive interchange with the chief of police, without monetary transaction, the teen student was released back to his school and family.

[Bert Saplala]

A CICM confrere, Archbishop Emeritus **Roger Pirenne** of Bertua, in Cameroun was a true lover of animals. He had pets of almost all domesticated species in his vast archbishop estate, and he immensely enjoyed their company and spent long blissful hours in their midst. **Nazario Caparanga** once asked the Archbishop why the passion and preference for animals. The archbishop replied in a rather somber tone: “Animals are more obedient than my priests!”

[Anthony Pizarro; narrated by Nazario Caparanga]
Godfried Aldenhuyzen’s gruff voice and seemingly brusque manner belied his keen sense of humor. One day during his daily rounds in Paco, Godofredo noticed the begrimed walls of the old church. Calling one of the cleaners, he ordered him to buy a brush and a cake of soap to clean the walls of the church. The man failing to find the right kind of brush came back with a horse brush, thinking it might do for that purpose. “Oho,” said padre Godo, “Ngayon kulang na lang and kabayo para hindi masayang and brocha!” (Now only the horse is lacking so the brush would not be wasted!)

[Albert Depré, Anecdotes]

All confreres of any Provinces are invited to contribute some anecdotes about themselves or about deceased confreres. Give your stories to Rex Salvilla. You will be remembered in his masses. E-mail: rexcelsal@hotmail.com

Anecdotes, personal stories, reminiscences, like biblical parables, are the medium through which faith is restored. Stories are a form of poetry, and give us a saving image to personally relate to.

Peter Block
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