



Chronicles from Manila n°8

September - October 2008

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Summary

The start of school dominated by the local Chapters of both communities and the first Meeting of the Philippine religious, an occasion to take stock of the priorities and commitments. And the press review.

This start of the school year was dominated by the local Chapters and the first Meeting of the Philippine religious now living in two communities: Adveniat House at Quezon City and the Emmanuel d'Alzon Novitiate at Antipolo. A time of assessment. An occasion to take stock on their mission and their commitments as well as to prepare the yearly budgets.

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1. First Meeting of the Philippine religious

On August 18-19, the religious of both Assumptionist communities of the Philippines met at the novitiate, in the presence of Father Miguel Diaz (Regional of Mexico, Councilor of the Provincial, and Formator of the North American Province). He animated this first Meeting of the Philippine religious. The religious were able to reflect together on the new aspect taken by the Assumptionist mission of this country... and on their need for conversion!

■ A new situation

The Philippines foundation finds itself, in fact, faced with a new situation: it goes from two communities living in three houses: Adveniat House in Quezon City, Pavel House, and the novitiate at Antipolo, with the challenge of integrating new members, notably two Mexican postulants who are to arrive in January 2009. Therefore projects and activities of both communities must be articulated and a religious must be named who will see to the oneness of view and heart of the foundation and represent the Congregation before the religious and civic authorities.

Several projects were discussed: the animation of the whole foundation, the promotion of our charism and spirituality, a harmonization of the finances and seeking a financial autonomy, the involvement to develop Bayard, an alliance with the laity starting by our contacts and friends, the setting up of common archives, as well as reflecting on sexual abuses in the Church and the means to take in order to avoid such offenses.

■ Three more significant projects

- Three projects garnered more particularly the reflection of both communities:
 - the founding of a third community in the South (probably at Cebu) in another culture, with another language (the cebuano), closer to our candidates and their families. This community could receive postulants and candidates from the South interested in the Assumption, without having them come immediately to Manila.
 - the reception of Asian vocations and also Chinese priests and seminarians and start with a center for teaching languages (see www.assumptionists.ph)
 - the development of our Office of Development to fund our formation programs, our apostolate, and our solidarity with the poor of the country.
- These files were transmitted to our Provincial of North America to study, discern, and decide. Undoubtedly the present world crisis that affects in a special way Asia will not facilitate the starting up of these projects. But if God wants them... and if everyone works at them!

■ **Three priorities for the Philippine foundation**

Most of the religious renewed their consensus on the priorities of their mission that they want to share with their lay friends: vocations, formation, and solidarity with the poorest.

2. Vocations

To help young people discern their vocation, we offer a variety of activities for our “contacts” such as vocation gatherings once every two months, vocation retreats, occasional dialogues and visits, family visits, outreach activities, and important congregational celebrations and events. We maintain contact with them through our website, e-mail and text messages.

The community has 20-25 young people in contact with us. This work demands patience, prudence, persistence, and above all compassion for the complicated and difficult situations that young people in the Philippines find themselves in during these days.

Gilles Blouin and Ricky Montañez are responsible for this work.



It is linked with this effort for vocations that the community has accepted to take part in the spiritual animation of the Far Eastern University (FEU) campus, a non-confessional university of 25,000 students whose President encourages spiritual animation, “an integral part of student formation”, according to her. Brothers Alex Castro and Ed Molina will take up this challenge.

Gilles and Ricky giving a formation with some contacts (summer camp in Legaspi - Albay, April 2008)

This vocational pastoral ministry doesn't only concern the Philippines. It wants to be open to the whole of Asia and especially to China, a missionary priority of the Church in the Philippines and the universal Church. Thus the community received two Chinese priests to permit bit by bit a contact with the important Chinese community residing in Manila.

3. Formation

The youth that the community meets, after several personal meetings with the formators and several retreats, a visit to their families, several psychological tests, and a period of discovery in our community - usually a stay of eight days -, go through several stages in better self-knowledge and discovery of what the Assumptionist religious life entails, its joys and demands. This is a time of discernment and important choice.

■ **1st stage: an experience of community life with the religious**

The youth are at Pavel House for a community experience. In a rented house of the sector, five minutes from Adveniat House, they start or pursue their philosophy or theology studies or continue working. Today, Peter (40 years) continues his theology; Chris (27 years) starts them; Eugen (24 years) finishes his philosophy; Ellis (28 years) after teaching several years, is a militant in associations for peace (see his witness in the “Chronicles of Manila 6”). You can also read their profile at www.assumptionists.ph

They are experiencing community life, being in charge of the house, prayer, the kitchen, and the budget. Regular monthly retreats and spiritual direction, personal accompaniment, and psychological tests help them in their discernment and also help the formators. They also become familiar with the apostolate, especially with the poorest of society.



The person responsible for this stage is Father Jean-Marie Chuvi with the help of Brother Ed Molina.



"I was admitted in the residency program at Pavel Formation House last May 2008. My experience in Pavel taught me many things about the local community and the Congregation itself; it also allowed me to know more about myself - my capabilities and limitations; and most importantly, my residency program provided opportunities for me to deepen my relationship with God. What I like most in Pavel are the rhythm of our daily schedule and the close fraternal ties among us, the residents and our formator, which helped in my growth as a person in my formation process as an "apostle for the coming of the Kingdom." - Ellis Luciano.

Fellows of Pavel house. From left to right: Peter, Ellis, Eugene, Chuvi, Ed, Chris.

■ 2nd stage: postulancy

After six months to a year of community experience, the candidate may ask to be admitted to the postulancy. He then joins the community at Adveniat House where he continues his community experience. He takes part in an inter-postulancy called "Sojourn" (progress together), where he finds himself with some 80 postulants from 17 religious Congregations.

The person responsible for this stage of formation is Father Bernard Holzer, assisted by Brother Alex Castro who is thus being initiated in this accompaniment style.

"Sojourn" Program (1st semester 2008)

June 18-20: Theater Arts

June 24-27: Self Esteem

July 2-4: Creative Journal Writing

July 15-19: Life Review

July 28-31: Embodied Self

August 11-13: Gender Sensitivity

August 25-26: Care for the Earth

August 1-3: Basic Liturgy

September 10-12: Community Dynamics

September 15-17: Praying with the Scriptures

September 22: Sports Festival



Sports Festival on September, 22.

"Sojourn for me is an interaction of young - and the not so young - individuals who desire to respond to God's call. It is the venue of increasing one's knowledge about the self, while meeting other "journeyers" from other Congregations. Sojourn is a challenging experience for me, because aside from dealing with myself I also need to deal with other "journeyers", the formators, and especially those who are giving the modules. As I ended the experience of Sojourn, there is one thing for sure I would miss from the experience, and that is the bond of friendship that we had with other formants. Our journey may be of different charisms, founders, and rules of life but at the end we all desired to serve the one God that we all believe in and his people through the Church." - Rowell Casiño



3rd stage: novitiate

The arrival of Father Richard Brunelle, Master of novices, permitted the opening of the first Assumptionist novitiate in the Philippines with two novices Blair Nyuda and Joseph Macalanggan.



The novices have their own formation program and take part in the “Exodus” program of the inter-novitiate, with some 70 novices from some fifteen Congregations.

The novitiate is at Antipolo, in the hills that surround Manila, on the campus of Assumption College staffed by our sisters, the Religious of the Assumption. It was their former novitiate.

From left to right: Joseph Macalanggan, Blair Nuyda, Father Richard Brunelle (Master of novices) and Br. Ricky Montañez.

4th stage: preparation for definitive vows and ordination

After the novitiate, the young religious continue their formation at Adveniat House. Presently, Brothers Ricky, Alex and Ed pursue their 3rd year of theology. They are being formed in the animation of youth, the animation of retreats as well as human and spiritual accompaniment. Each one is living a stage of the formation.

5th stage: inculturation, permanent formation and learning languages

Actually, Father Roddy Ratsimiolaka is pursuing English studies at the Ateneo Language Learning Center.

The Adveniat community has received two Chinese diocesan priests who are leaning English before starting the cycle of formation on spirituality. They are studying at the Language Tutorial Services where our missionaries studied Tagalog.

Father Jean-Marie Chuvi is continuing a Licentiate in Religious Sciences at the University of the Augustinian Sisters at Malolos (in the North of Manila). On Fridays and Saturdays, he follows a session of formation of formators sponsored by the Association of Major Superiors of the Philippines.

Fathers Bernard and Gilles take part in seminars, meetings with formators or vocational promoters, and diverse sessions. The “Sojourn” program is a totally new formation for Father Bernard.

During the inter-semester vacations of a month (13 October - 9 November), the formation continues. Alex Castro participates in a formation session of accompaniment in human development; Ed Molina is being initiated in Asian oriental prayer. Gilles Blouin is following a session for treasurers of the Province in Worcester (near Boston), while Bernard Holzer participates in an evaluation of the “Sojourn” formators at Palawan and at the 10th Convention of the Asia-Pacific Augustinian Conference (APAC) at Tagaytay. At the start of November, the religious, novices, and postulants will be at the novitiate for two study days on the writings of their Founder, Father Emmanuel d’Alzon.

The Formation Commission

In order to coordinate all these formation activities and a follow-up on the persons involved, and also to update the various programs so that they meet the needs of the persons involved, the formation Commission is not idle. Its permanent members are Fathers Bernard (responsible for formation), Gilles, Chuvi, and Richard (master of novices). Brothers Ricky, Alex, and Ed meet with them for the files for which they are in charge. The Commission meets at least twice a month.



4. Closeness to the poor

1. Our presence in a neighboring squatter segment: candidates and postulants animate the catechesis every Saturday and Sunday, They also regularly meet some sixty children and gradually their parents. Brother Alex Castro is responsible for the preparation of first communion. Three Sundays each month, Father Jean-Marie Chuvi celebrates mass, while the pastor of our parish reserves the other Sunday for himself in order to stay in contact with the faithful. In the framework of his studies at Malolos, Father Chuvi will undertake a practical exercise: how to build a local church starting from the people in the Daan Tubo squatter. He will articulate this work through a survey concerning the religious motivations of its inhabitants.

Thomas Lop Vip, the French volunteer taking part in our community project, is a regular presence in the squatter segment. A medical and dental mission is foreseen through a Rotary Club.

2. Our presence in the youth prison of Molave. The candidates accompanied by Brother Ed Molina spend Sunday mornings at the youth prison. Their animation program is diverse: sharing, games, movies, formation (recently they have started a segment on formation to peace), prayer, with a monthly mass celebrated by Father Jean-Marie Chuvi and recently by Father Rioddy Ratsimiolaka.

3. The novices collaborate regularly with the Sisters of Mother Teresa.

4. The mobilization of our friends permitted us to help the victims of the typhoons. It will also permit us to start a preventative program (see www.assumptionists.ph). It is basically the job of the Bureau for Development, one of the priorities of the foundation of the Philippines with the effective help of Thomas Lop Vip. The Rotarians seem to be interested in this...

5. Other commitments

Bayard Assumption Media Foundation

The development of Bayard in the Philippines involves both Philippine communities. On Sundays, the postulant staff stands at the entry of churches to offer subscriptions to the Bayard magazines distributed in the Philippines: "Living with Christ", "Catholic Digest", "God's Word Today" and six magazines for youth and children. The postulants also present these magazines in the schools. It is difficult work, especially since one must learn about it and adapt oneself to the public.



Booth of Bayard in the 29th National Book Fair of Manila.

From 12 to 16 September, all the members of the two communities took part in the International Book Fair in Manila. For the first time, Bayard had a booth there. The religious and novices wore their habits, the postulants and candidates wore a T-shirt with a logo from Bayard and manned the stand under the guidance of Brother Didier Remiot (Delegated Director from Bayard for the International) and Renee Bernardo, the local manager of Bayard. A rough first trial... but all are ready to renew. This is a way to make known Bayard and the Assumption!



■ **French parish in Manila**

Some forty persons participate in the monthly Eucharist celebrated every second Sunday of the month in the chapel of the Religious of the Assumption at San Lorenzo College. This year, a mother accepted to prepare the children for their first communion.

■ **Reception and diverse animations**

Receiving friends and groups, animation of sessions (notably on Saint Augustine) and retreats, diverse celebrations, preaching, confessions, participation at anniversary celebrations, as well as perpetual professions and ordinations to the diaconate and priesthood complete the agenda of our two communities. Besides the visit of a journalist from the “Pèlerin”, Marie-Christine Vidal, and a photographer, to interview our community and that of Msgr. Eugene Nugent from the mission of studies of the Holy See from Hong Kong.

■ **Discovery of the country**

Concerning Father Roddy Ratsimiolaka from Madagascar, he continues discovering the country and especially the Catholic Church.

In the Chronicles of Manila 7, I promised to speak of the Church in the Philippines, more precisely of the Filipino Catholics. What struck me is the great difference between the little chapels of the “squatters” and the large parish churches. The former are frequented by the poor, the latter are rich, frequented by the rich. But, in both cases, what struck me is the place of women. Women can speak here! This is new for me, a Malagasy. The men distribute communion while accompanying the priest. You know that in Madagascar, the word is the symbol of power. Reading the Word of God, animating the liturgy, playing the harmonium or even the guitar during mass, all of this belongs to the women here. This is quite new for me and I am surprised by this. The Filipinos are very affectionate and at the same time very decent! The native priests, pastors of parishes, show forth these two characteristics of the Filipinos. In fact, even if the celebrations are in English, for example, they do not hesitate to speak Tagalog, inviting the faithful to greet one another after the sign of the cross at the beginning of the mass. All this is done with much affection creating a warm atmosphere. During the kiss of peace of Christ, the members of the same family kiss one another. The children receive a lot of attention on the part of the family. Even if they don't share the same bench as their parents, they run from bench to bench to embrace the family members present!

They are very decent. The clothing is very important. They have the sense of being “well-dressed”. I think that it is not only a question of the “look”, but above all a question of decency. But the poor people of the squatters take their baths with their clothes on! Oh, yes, I am quite far from the “natural” of the Malgasy (especially the South of Madagascar). I wonder what the reaction of the Filipinos would be if they saw the Malgasy taking their shower in the nude in nature... Here, even in the pool, the Filipinos don't remove their clothes! Last Sunday, I celebrated mass for the young prisoners of Molave: they were well-dressed and they were neat. Excuse me, but I couldn't smell any prison smells. They all took their shower before the mass. (That is also another very interesting subject: the Filipinos have a very sharp sense of smell to which one must pay attention!)”

- Roddy Ratsimiolaka

And another surprise for Father Roddy: since mid-September, Christmas decorations and carols have invaded the stores, streets, and metros... It is the longest Christmas in the world that starts (from September to February)!



If you want to support these initiatives and our programs of formation, send your contribution to our Development Office (see our website www.assumptionists.ph under “Help us to help”)

For Europe

In euros: Assumption, 79 Avenue Denfert-Rochereau 75014 PARIS France

For North America

In Canadian dollars: Montmartre Canadien - 1679, Chemin Saint-Louis - QUEBEC G1S 1G5 - Canada.

In American dollars: Assumption Guild - 330 Market Street - BRIGHTON, MA 02135 - USA

Please send your gift with the order “Procure Missionnaire de l’Assomption – Philippines” (Paris), “Montmartre Canadien – Philippines” (Quebec) or “Assumption Guild – Philippines” (Brighton, USA). You can ask for a tax exemption/deductible receipt for your gift.

For the Philippines

In Pesos, Augustinians of the Assumption 686-100-197-9 Bank of the Philippine Islands - Katipunan Branch - Loyola Heights - QUEZON CITY - Philippines

6. Press Review



Chinese character « Crisis ». It includes the characters « Danger » and « Opportunity ».

Top court voids accord on Mindanao autonomy

On October 14, the Philippine Supreme Court threw out a proposed accord to grant minority Muslims expanded autonomy after Christian protests and renewed fighting persuaded the government to abandon the deal.



Opponents again seek impeachment of Arroyo

Mid October, opponents of President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo have prepared a new impeachment complaint against her - despite three unsuccessful attempts in recent years - over alleged corruption, vote-rigging and human rights violations. The new complaint consolidates previous and new allegations of corruption and constitutional violations against President Arroyo.

Philippines Daily Inquirer. September 16, 2008.

Remittances rose 10.4% to \$1.3 billion

Money sent home by Overseas Filipinos through banks grew 10.4 percent year-on-year in August, the slowest pace in four months, as the world stood on the brink of a major economic downturn.

In the actual financial crisis, we fear for the jobs of the Filipino emigrants, who work notably in the sectors of construction, hospitals and hotels. The government declared it had elaborated a plan for receiving these eventual unemployed.

We have no quota for Filipinos. Even one million are welcome. Madam President, your people are welcome to work in Kuwait” said the Prime Minister of Kuwait in a visit to the Philippines on 15 August.

Some numbers

-on the population of the Philippines

92 million: Projected Philippine population estimate for 2009.

140 million: Projected Philippine population by 2040.

-on the family of the Philippines

5: Number of members in an average Filipino family.

17.4 million: Estimated number of families in the Philippines in 2006.

173,000 Pesos: Average annual family income in the Philippines

311,000 Pesos: Average annual family income in Metro Manila

-on the economy

12.5% and 12.7%: inflation in August and September 2008.

42-45 billion Pesos: Projected government deficit in 2009

5 million: Target tourist arrivals in 2010 (estimated).

100,000: Estimated number of new jobs that will be available for call center agents over the period 2007-2010, or an average of 25,000 job openings a year.

75,000: Estimated number of new jobs projected for medical transcriptions over the period 2007-2010.

10 million US\$: Projected estimated sales of minerals by 2011, with copper accounting for the bulk.

10: Estimated percentage increase in Filipino overseas remittances for the full year 2008 (more than 16 billion us\$)

-on the teaching salaries

P18,859: Average monthly wage rate for college, university and higher education teaching professionals, according to the latest Occupational Wages Survey

P13,800: Average monthly wage rate for general elementary education teaching professionals.

P12,039: Average monthly wage rate for general secondary education teaching professionals.

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Manila – Philippines

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