

PRESENZA AGOSTINIANA



digital edition
2023 - no. 5
September-October



YOUNG PEOPLE AND OUR CHARISM

SHARED EXPERIENCES



TEENAGERS
AJA Group
in Brazil

YOUNG
Augustinian youth
in Italy

TESTIMONY
Our confrere
at World Youth Day

SUMMARY

DIGITAL EDITION



Presenza Agostiniana

Bimonthly magazine - Discalced Augustinians

Year L (50) - no. 4 (vol. 265) digital edition

July - August 2023

Editor-in-chief

Calogero Ferlisi (Fr. Gabriele, oad)

Editorial and Administrative office

General Curia of the Order of the Discalced Augustinians

Piazza Ottavilla, 1 - 00152 - Rome

e-mail: curiagen@oadnet.org

Phone: +39 06 589 6345

WhatsApp: +39 324 089 3400

oadnet.org/presenza-agostiniana/

Authorization

Court of Rome no. 4/2004,

January 14, 2004

Cover, layout and publication

Fr. Diones Rafael Paganotto, oad

Cover

Teenagers and young people in a moment of prayer in the Santa Maria Chapel in Ourinhos (SP) - Brazil



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EDITORIAL PAGE

THE YOUTHFUL ENERGY THAT FUELS THE CHURCH



Dear readers,

in this issue of *Presenza Agostiniana*, we focus on the youth and their deep connection with our charism.

Young people represent the future, they are the lifeblood that nourishes the body of the Church, bringing with them freshness, innovative ideas, and contagious passion.

Our religious communities, spread across the world, share extraordinary experiences with teenagers and young people who are actively involved in spreading and witnessing to the Augustinian spirituality.

The recent World Youth Day in Lisbon demonstrated how the Church can be a beacon of hope and support in a rapidly changing world.

Through reflections and testimonies, this issue of the magazine gives voice to young people who are discerning their vocation and living their faith in the various contexts they are engaged in.

In this way, we, the Discalced Augustinians, wish to express our deep gratitude to the Lord for the various youth realities that revolve around our communities. We hope that more and more teenagers and young people can share our charism, looking with hope and confidence towards the future.

Enjoy the reading.



AUGUSTINIAN TEENAGERS

AJA GROUP IN BRAZIL



Fr. César Gonçalves, oad
@cesarsaroba

It is a great joy to share the story and activities of **AJA** (*Adolescentes Juntos a Santo Agostinho - Teenagers Together with St. Augustine*).

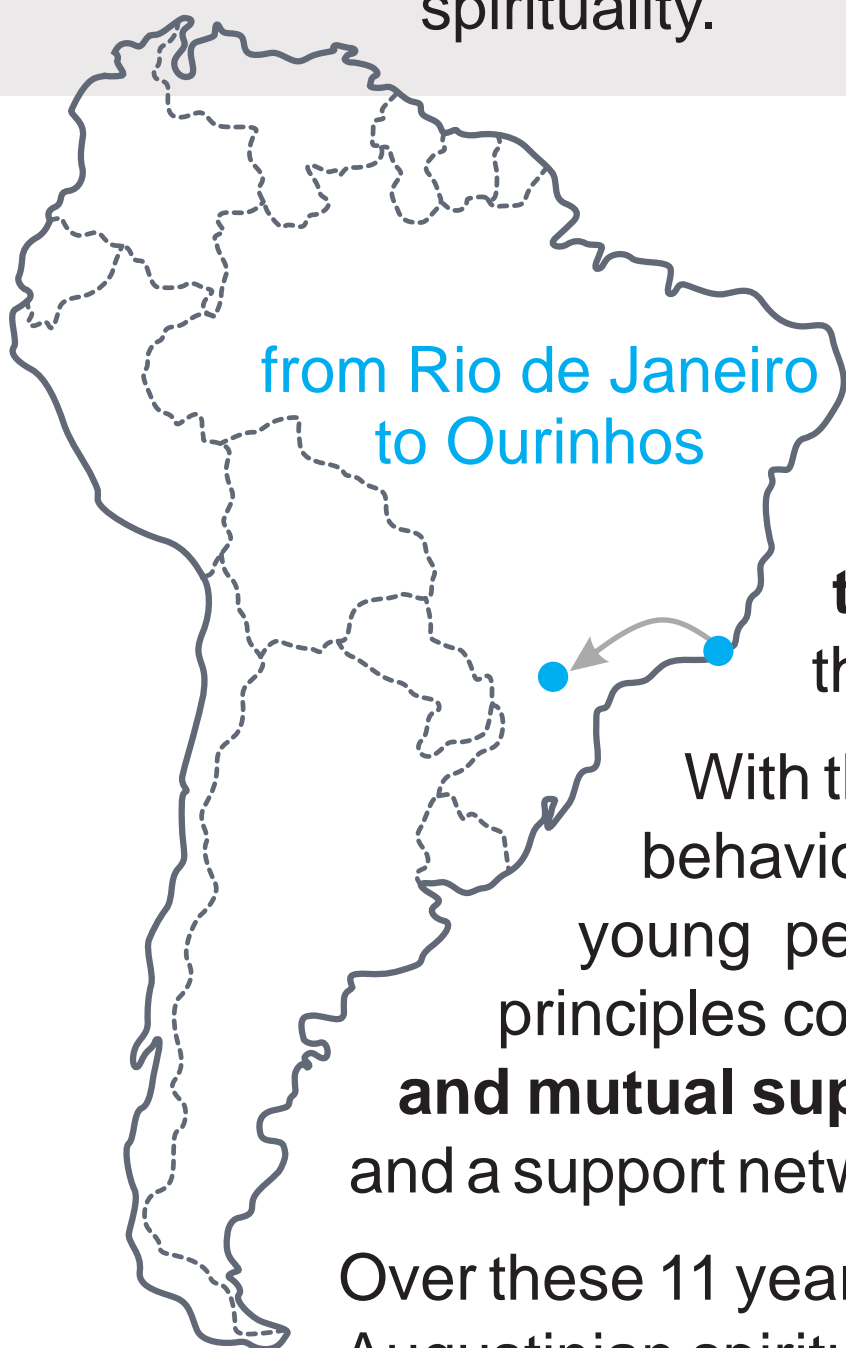
AJA is a group of teenagers and young people inspired by Augustinian values, founded on solid foundations and lasting for over 10 years in the Santo Antonio Parish in Ourinhos (SP), Brazil.



The Beginning

The group was born in **Rio de Janeiro**, and in 2012, following an invitation from the promoter of the movement, Fr. Denildo da Silva, the group began its journey with teenagers in **Ourinhos**.

With the support and guidance of the Discalced Augustinians, the group holds weekly meetings with moments of spirituality, fraternal life, and mission. Since then, dozens of young people have been encouraged and evangelized to continue their journey of faith through Augustinian spirituality.



Concern with teenagers

The teenagers are placed in a period that requires a lot of attention, especially because it's a phase where the **personality of the teenager** is forming and is shaped by the environment they are in.

With the increasing use of psychoactive substances and risky behaviors among teenagers in this generation, a group of young people who share a spirituality based on Augustinian principles contributes to building a stronger community. **Friendship and mutual support** within the group help create a sense of belonging and a support network during difficult times.

Over these 11 years, hundreds of teenagers have been able to experience Augustinian spirituality through AJA and are now bearing much fruit in the realities they live in. We pray to God for their perseverance, so they may continue to seek Christ with courage and fervor, inspired by the example of St. Augustine, and carry on their **mission and witness**.



AJA in Parish activities



Teenagers living our charism

Since 2012, the teenagers of AJA in Ourinhos have learned and incorporated the importance of interiority, apostolate, and community life, following the example of St. Augustine.

Our **Augustinian charism**, when integrated into one's way of being and doing, is also reflected in actions, in the light of the Word made flesh.

AJA members have always been encouraged to embody their faith and devotion. Putting into practice the skills, values, and knowledge through service to the community is one of the group's greatest assets.

In addition to the commitment and vitality of the teenagers who have participated and dedicated themselves over the years, AJA relies on the **support of the Parish community**, the assistance of adults who provide training and organize group activities, and the indispensable presence of families who are always there.

There have been countless moments of sharing, inspired by the texts and testimonies of St. Augustine, spiritual gatherings, participation in liturgical celebrations, and Parish activities that certainly reflect the beauty of living youth in Christ.



Social activity



Concrete Actions

The teenagers, along with the coordinators, have carried out missionary actions such as visits to nursing homes, games to collect goods for needy institutions, and even humanitarian missions to support group members over the years.

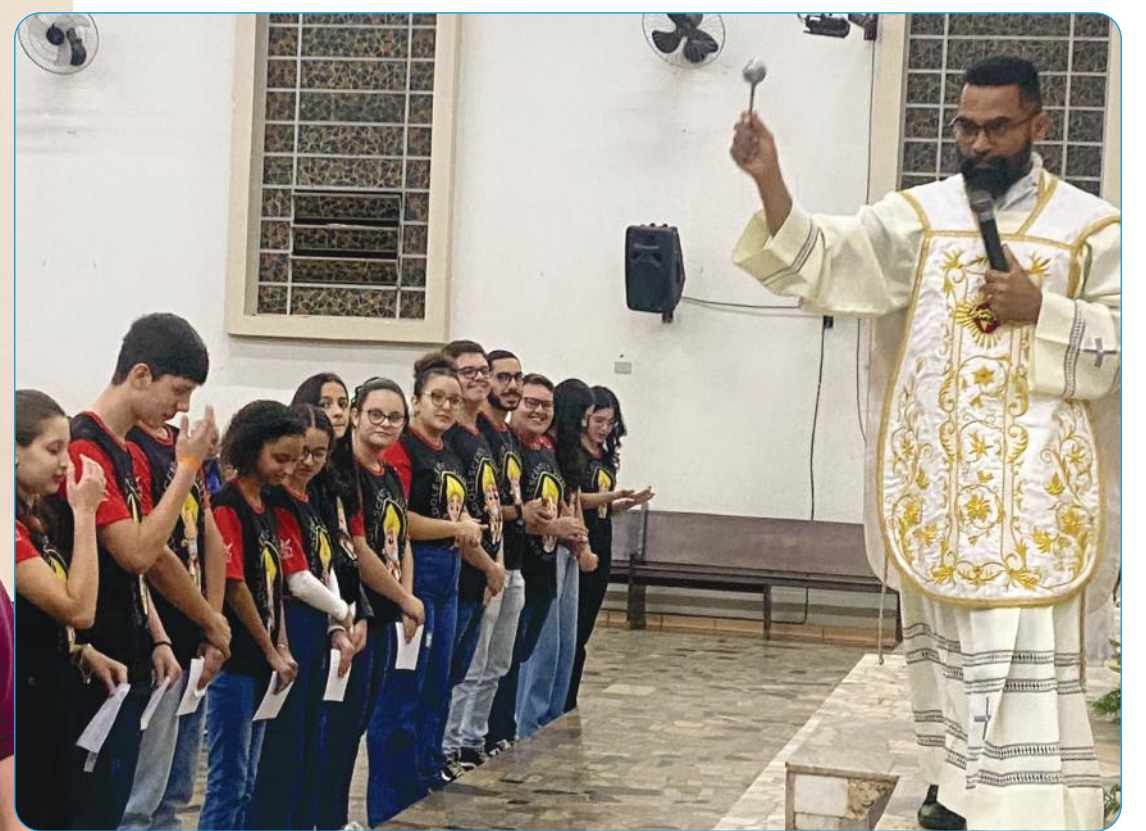
To have a complete experience of sharing and joyful moments in the community, each member has sought to develop their **youth vocation**, being encouraged to participate and take care of Parish life through music ministry, liturgy, and other periodic events in the Parish.



Within the weekly meetings, as the Parish Priest, I have tried to develop themes such as prudence, faith and science, friendship, vocation, and identity, in order to promote moments of spirituality, study, and sharing.

In addition to the weekly meetings, the group gathers at least once a month for moments of adoration of the Blessed Sacrament to grow communion with God.

at least once a month for moments of adoration of the Blessed Sacrament to grow communion with God.



Participation in the liturgy



Perspectives

In summary, AJA and the entire Augustinian spirituality gain relevance within the Church as they emphasize faith, community, reflection, service, charity, and personal growth.

In this way, the group provides young people with the necessary tools to face the challenges of the modern world while

preserving a valuable tradition that enriches the spiritual life of all who participate.

Therefore, I believe that promoting such groups is a significant **investment** in the present and future of Catholic youth and the Church as a whole. Young people are and always will be the future!



Fr. César and the members of the AJA

Directory no. 69 - Educational institutions and the like.

§1. Establishing in the Houses centers of education, hospitality, spirituality and the like, and fixing its status, is up to the Prior Provincial with the consent of the Council and the Local Chapter concerned. The appointment of the Responsible is up to the Prior Provincial with the consent of the Council.

§2. In the Institutions, in addition to the intellectual training, adequate human, personal and communitarian formation should also be provided. The students are to be helped to discover and truly experience Christianity. They should have the facility of receiving the sacraments, spiritual direction, of finding a catechetical instruction and an education to the problems of life, suitable for time and age.

AUGUSTINIAN YOUTH

OUR CHARISM IN ITALY



Fr. Leandro Xavier Rodrigues, oad
@leandro_xr

As the name suggests, the **Augustinian Youth** is a group inspired by Augustine's teachings, born out of the need to care for and share the spirituality of St. Augustine with young people.

Youth need guidance, acceptance, and understanding; they are a part of the Church that often feels overlooked, and as a result, many young people drift away. Even St. Augustine, like every young person, felt the restlessness in his heart that drove him to seek the truth. The young have a thirst for truth and authenticity.



1. Young Religious Among the Youth

To talk about the Agostiniana Youth, we need to go back to 2016 when a new mode of collaboration between the Augustinian Provinces of Italy and Brazil was born. In February of that year, Fr. Nei, Fr. Gelson, and myself (Fr. Leandro) arrived in Valverde, a small town in southern Italy, to put our priestly ministry at the service of the Parish community.

We met a beautiful, lively, and engaged community bound by devotion to Our Lady of Valverde. As newcomers, we wanted to contribute to the life of this special Parish community.

It's undeniable that in everything we do, we leave our mark. When we put our heart into fulfilling a mission, we leave a part of ourselves in what we do. In this sense, I can say that I left a mark of our Augustinian identity in pastoral work, especially in working with young people.

2. A new start with the Youth

The Parish-Sanctuary of Santa Maria di Valverde had a very active youth community in the past, especially in **the '80s** through Catholic Action. The old members of the community remember numerous initiatives from that time when the "Catholic Action hall" became a meeting place for the young people in the town. However, over the years, this vibrant reality had faded..

Upon our arrival, we felt the urgency to pay special attention to revitalizing the youth of the parish. The proposal for a **youth gathering** received an immediate and substantial response, and from there, we began a journey that yielded fruits.

With the group, we have done various activities, including spiritual retreats, trips to different places in Italy, theatrical performances, activities for children, and regular meetings.



Trip to Naples

3. A name: Augustinian Youth

The idea of establishing a path for youth based on Augustinian spirituality did not originate in Valverde but was already present in Brazil in some of our Parishes with an initial project aimed at teenagers called AJA (*as indicated in the previous article of this issue - p. 4-7*)

Our project sought to share with the young people the experience of St. Augustine, who, as a young man, was never satisfied with easy answers because of the restlessness he felt. In this passionate and sincere search, he eventually found in Jesus the answers to his questions and peace for his restlessness:

You have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You

(St. Augustie, Conf. I,1,1).

I am convinced that the sense of dissatisfaction in young people, their refusal to settle for easy answers, their desire to explore new things and have various experiences,



Activity for children

are signs of the **natural longing for God** that all human beings carry within themselves.

For this reason, we have chosen to introduce the figure of St. Augustine to the young people and to set them on a path following in the footsteps of this man of God who, with a sincere love for the truth, lived

through many experiences, sometimes like a shipwrecked soul without a clear direction, but who ultimately found the North Star to rely on and the desired harbor.

For us, the Discalced Augustinians, it is a pleasure to be able to share this **spiritual and experiential heritage** of St. Augustine.

It is a heritage of the entire Church, but we are proud to promote it. With the Augustinian Youth, we walk together, inspired by the teachings and life experiences of the Bishop of Hippo.



Giulia Galasso

When I was asked to speak about the Agostiniana Youth, I immediately thought of one word: **joy**.

It may sound simplistic, but joy is perhaps the word that best encapsulates this Life Experience that we call the Augustinian Youth in the Parish. The joy of being together, the joy of learning, the joy of sharing, and the joy of seeing oneself and others grow united by the same values.

I could list many moments of reflection and fun shared with the group over these seven years; from winter Sundays, which, even if a bit sparse and cold, always warmed our hearts with reflection, prayer, or simple conversation, to summer activities carried out with sweat, enjoyment, and a strong desire to learn and get involved.

Collaborating with others might seem easy at times, but it certainly isn't always that way. I'm sure that another significant life lesson that the Augustinian Youth has taught us is learning to accept others as the Lord has placed them in our path, with all their vulnerabilities, difficulties, strengths, and weaknesses.

This is a great help for others, but above all, it's a way to get to know and accept oneself. Being together in the Augustinian Youth has been and will always be a beautiful moment of joy to experience others in the spirit of brotherhood.



For me, the opportunity to be part of the Augustinian Youth has been a great gift from God right from the start.

By participating, I have **grown spiritually** and personally, nurturing a life of prayer and engaging in social relationships.

Thanks to the Augustinian Youth, I have met my fraternal friends with whom I have had the joy of sharing various moments of our Christian journey, and I have been able to deepen my vocational discernment, which sees me on the verge of entering the seminary..

Even though the path sometimes appeared more challenging than expected, I have received much more than I have given. Although in my small way, I can say that with the Augustinian Youth, Jesus' promise in my life has been fulfilled: *"everyone who has given up houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands for the sake of my name will receive a hundred times more, and will inherit eternal life"* (Mat. 19:29).



Dario Distefano



Responsible for activities for children



Participation in Mass



Reflection theme



A CONFREERE AT WYD

A WORLD MEETING IN PORTUGAL

Fr. Gelson dos Santos Lazarin, oad
@fragelsonlazarin

The **World Youth Day (WYD)** is an event that brings together young people from all over the world and is convened every two or three years. In 2023, the WYD took place in Portugal, in Lisbon, during the first week of August, precisely from the 1st to the 6th.

1. Departure for a meeting

My name is Father Gelson dos Santos Lazarin, and currently, I am carrying out my pastoral mission in Brazil as the Master of the Aspirants in our seminary in Ampère. I would like to briefly share some of my experiences as an Augustinian friar during WYD 2023.

It was my **first experience** at such a large event, an extraordinary experience full of emotions and, above all, spirituality. I participated along with my sister Tatiane dos Santos Lazarin and 11 other young people from the Diocese of Palmas and Francisco Beltrão, from Brazil.

I arrived in Lisbon on August 2, and right from the start, at the airport, my heart started beating faster as I saw so many young people gathering for WYD. I stayed at the house of some Brazilians living in Portugal.

The welcoming and encounters with many people during the journey by bus, train, subway, and walking the streets of Lisbon were opportunities to engage in various discussions, but most importantly, discussions about **our faith in Jesus Christ**.

One of the experiences that will remain in my heart is the joy of concelebrating the Mass for my tenth anniversary of priestly ordination at the Church of Santo Antonio in Lisbon on August 3. I was able to thank the Lord for the gift of priesthood during a global event like WYD and in the church of a saint to whom I am deeply connected and I have a deep devotion!



Fr. Gelson in the Field of Grace



Vocational Fair

2. Meeting Points

LWYD offers various meeting points for young people, allowing them to share experiences, participate in moments of prayer and cultural and spiritual enrichment, such as concerts and catechesis. Among the events that particularly struck me, there was the **Festival of Catholic Influencers**, with the motto "*the Church Listens to You*."

It was a significant moment where many Catholic influencers from around the world had the opportunity to get to know each other and share the different ways they use to spread the Gospel among the young people who follow them.

Another important space was the **City of Joy**, where the Park of Forgiveness was located, a place dedicated to reconciliation through the sacrament of confession. There was also the Vocational Fair, featuring booths from congregations, religious orders, associations,

movements, and social projects. During the visit, I was able to exchange ideas that will be useful in my activities at the seminary..

3. Meetings with Pope Francis

The most anticipated moments were, of course, the encounters with Pope Francis. Before departing, I had heard various comments about WYD:

- *negative comments: some believed that many young people participated for touristic purposes, given the large crowd, which could make prayer difficult;*
- *positive comments: others saw WYD as an extraordinary experience of prayer, faith, culture, and dialogue, and the joy of the encounters and the thirst for God were palpable.*

The first meeting with the Pope took place at Eduardo VII Park, known as the **Hill of Encounter**, in line with the theme of WYD: **Mary arose and went with haste** (Lk. 1:39), which speaks of the encounter between Mary and Elizabeth.

The second meeting with the Pope was an emotional experience of faith in Jesus Christ. The young people prayed and meditated on the *Stations of the Cross* together with the Pope.

I cannot forget the moment when almost a million young people knelt in prayer!!

Two other fundamental moments were the Prayer Vigil and the Closing Mass, which were held at Tejo Park, known as the **Field of Grace** during those days, and which welcomed around one and a half million young people.

A novelty of WYD in Lisbon was the **Rise Up** encounters, which challenged young people to reflect on significant themes proposed by Pope Francis's pontificate, such as **integral ecology, social friendship, and mercy.**

It's interesting to note that there were no complaints, but the joy of being with Jesus and the welcoming of God's free love were common to all.

Finally, the closing Mass of WYD was called the **Sending Mass** because Pope Francis urged young people to carry the joy they received and experienced as true missionaries in the world, just as Mary did in her encounter with Elizabeth: "Mary arose and went with haste" (Lk. 1:39).



4. Conclusion

After spending unforgettable days in Lisbon, I had the opportunity to share the joy of WYD with fellow friars, friends, and especially with young people and families of the Augustinian Youth, first in Marsala and then in Valverde, Italy.

Now, back in Brazil, I carry with me many memories of Lisbon, spiritually rich moments that will continue to live in the hearts of all the participants, including myself, wherever we may be. WYD doesn't conclude with the Sending Mass, but its impact endures in every reality in which we live!

JMJ
LISBOA
2023





Hino JMJ Lisboa 2023



Official Theme Song WYD Lisbon 2023



Inno GMG Lisbona 2023



Fray Don Mauro Gomez, oads
@don_mavrsv

YOUNG OAD LAY

OUR SPIRITUALITY IN THE PHILIPPINES

The youthful hues weave together the Catholic Church's past, present, and future as a vital thread in the tapestry of our church community. Words are not enough to emphasize the **significance of youth** in our community because they are not only the keepers of tradition but also the designers of the Church's evolving legacy.

Specifically, youth participation and support are essential to the Church's mission because they help to create and foster a lively, inclusive, and dynamic community that can successfully meet the demands of the present and the future.

The challenge, therefore, is how to best support our youth to be the best versions of themselves God intended them to be.



In his homily and addressing the youth of the world during the Holy Mass for World Youth Day in Lisbon, Pope Francis emphasized the very words of Saint Peter on Mount Tabor during the moment of the Lord's Transfiguration: "Lord, **it is good for us to be here!**" (Mat. 17:4)

However, Pope Francis posted this question for reflection: "What will we take back with us as we resume our daily lives?" He provided some useful insight, which also offers ways to answer the above question. He provided three verbs from the Gospel passage: "to shine, to listen, and to be unafraid."

As for its part, the OAD Lay does everything it can **to inspire and capacitate** our youth members for them to shine, to listen, and to be unafraid in continuing to discern the call of vocation that God's wants and will for them to heed.

The OAD Lay continues to create and explore avenues such as formation, education,

and faith-enriching activities, which are all aimed at providing them with a strong foundation in Catholic teachings, theology, and moral values, as well as providing spiritual guidance, mentorship, and a supportive community that helps our youth members navigate the challenges of life while staying true to their beliefs..

The youth actively contribute to the expansion and vitality of the Church; they are not only beneficiaries of spiritual learning. Their new viewpoints and creative methods give ancient rituals and practices new vitality, encouraging an inclusiveness that blends in with the various fabrics of contemporary society.

The youth are entrusted with the duty of keeping the **flame of faith** and making sure that it stays bright for future generations as stewards of the Church. The OAD Lay is fully committed to praying, supporting, and walking alongside our youth members for them to realize this unique blend of carrying on and fulfilling the vocation entrusted to them.

To concretely provide a bird's eye view of what it is to be an OAD Lay youth member, two of our youth members provided some useful insights on how they are heeding the call of being able to shine, to listen, and to be unafraid. It is a great joy to share with our readers in the next pages what young people think and experience:

- **Sor Adelaide Demecillo** (26 years old, sales marketing specialist);
- **Fray Rency Viray** (19 years old, student).

➤ Why did you decide to be part of the Lay OAD?



Sor Adelaide Demecillo

I decided to join the OAD Lay to help in my spiritual growth and to meet people who share the same passion, commitment, and dedication to serving our Lord Jesus Christ.

I believe the OAD Lay has tools that are valuable for my faith as a Catholic Christian and as a devotee of St. Augustine. I feel blessed with my family in the Augustinian Martyrs of Japan, as they made me realize that distance is no hindrance to making our chapter feel like home (most of them are from the North, while I am from the South).

OAD Lay gives me the chance to share my love for Christ with others without judgement through group discussions, and we also get to share and celebrate others' answered prayers as we grow further in faith. I am honoured to be part of this family, God's family.

Fray Rency Viray: I made the decision to become a member of the OAD Lay when, in 2018, a friend of mine invited me to be part of it. During that time, I was only 15 years old, but it became clear to me that my decision to join this secular fraternity was indeed a good one.

➤ How is your participation in Church?

Sor Adelaide Demecillo: I serve in ministries besides OAD Lay, such as Singles for Christ. OAD Lay helps me live like St. Augustine and the Augustinian Saints. One of the teachings that struck me when dealing with other people in the ministry is humility. In the words of St. Augustine, humility is the first step towards a life of holiness.

Fray Rency Viray: In addition to my role as a member of the OAD Lay, I actively serve as an altar server, a catechist, and a youth member in our parish. Through our annual formation sessions, I have had the opportunity to put the OAD Lay teachings into practice, and I have even inspired some of my close friends to consider joining with us.



Young members present in Parish activities

➤ What are the main challenges today?

Sor Adelaide Demecillo: OAD Lay helps me to be more focused on God and be aware of the spiritual warfare (battle in heart, mind, and soul) happening today, despite the challenges and attacks from the evil one.

Being a member of the OAD Lay is a source of great honour for me, as it has brought me closer to a profound understanding of the doctrinal teachings of the Holy Father Augustine, guided me through my youth, and shaped my sense of purpose.

I will forever cherish the day when we were welcomed into this secular fraternity. I believe that engaging in church communities is beneficial for young individuals, as it assists them in discovering the significance of actively participating in the calling of the church.



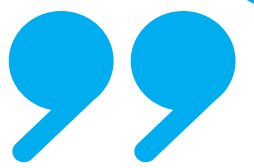
Fray Rency Viray



Young OAD Lay on mission

➤ A message for young people...

Sor Adelaide Demecillo: To my fellow youth, you are the future of the Church. Let's continue to spread love and be salt and light to the world. It's never too late to begin your journey with Christ; you still have the time to walk with Him.



Joining OAD Lay won't make all your problems disappear, but you will be better equipped to handle them. You will find the true meaning of love and value sacrifice amidst the chaos in this world. May we continue to deepen our love for God and His church, so we are not easily defeated by worldly lures. Be armed and ready for Jesus!

Fray Rency Viray: If someone from the church is inviting you to be part of their growing community, grab it. It will give you the chance to appreciate the beauty of Catholicism and its doctrines.



Collaborating in catechesis



Helping an orphanage

TREATISE ON THE THREE VOWS

VEN. FR. GIOVANNI NICOLUCCI AND THE CHASTITY



Fr. Gabriele Ferlisi, oad

In the short *Treatise on the three religious vows*, the Venerable Fr. Giovanni Nicolucci (photo), presents chastity immediately after obedience.

1. Chastity, the integral value of the person

Chastity is a theme that can only be properly addressed with a broad, 360° perspective. Saint Augustine tells us that it is an **integral value of the person**, a matter of the heart before the body, an inner good before an external one, and it pertains to a chaste gaze before touch. Chastity concerns the demeanor of the whole person, ensuring that in all circumstances, even in relationships with people of the opposite sex, one's conduct is consistent with the state of consecration (cf. *Rule* 19-29). The sixth beatitude embodies this fullness of purity: "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God" (Mat. 5:8).



Church documents also present chastity as a remarkable gift of grace (*Perfectae Caritatis* 12; *Lumen Gentium* 42), an eschatological sign of the Kingdom of Heaven (can. 599), and an important element of conforming to Christ.

"By responding to the vocation to chastity in religious life, they realize the fullness of love, which Christ lived and handed down to his Church; and testify to the Christian people that God is the only origin and purpose of all love and brotherhood» (Const. 25; cf. *Perfectae Caritatis* 12).



In his post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Vita Consecrata*, Saint John Paul II wrote that chastity reflects the infinite love that binds the three divine Persons in the mysterious depths of the Trinitarian life (cf. VC 21).

This is the broad perspective within which both the Church's magisterium and Saint Augustine speak when addressing consecrated chastity.

2. Venerable Fr. Giovanni Nicolucci's meditations

Venerable Fr. Giovanni Nicolucci's meditations do not deviate from this broad perspective either. In fact, he begins his reflections by considering the interplay between the union of hearts from which obedience is born and the union of souls from which chastity arises.

By union of hearts, he means the union of wills, and by union of the soul, the conformity of life. "Chastity, which is the second vow of Religion, is expected to achieve this union and uniformity of life. It separates man from the flesh and **connects the soul with God**. As the Holy Father Augustine says in the book *De Vita Beata*, the truly chaste person is one whose soul is focused on God and approaches Him. Hence, chaste souls that are united with God are bound together so strongly by divine love that they have almost one soul with God. In contrast, incontinence submerges the whole person in the flesh and separates the soul from God, even from itself. Therefore, the bodies of incontinent individuals unite through carnal love."

3. Recommendations for safeguarding chastity

However, the Venerable suggests that "the more excellent this virtue, the more it is abhorred by the wicked, more despised by the worldly, and more persecuted by demons." Therefore, it needs to be well guarded.

“the more excellent this virtue, the more it is abhorred by the wicked, more despised by the worldly, and more persecuted by demons

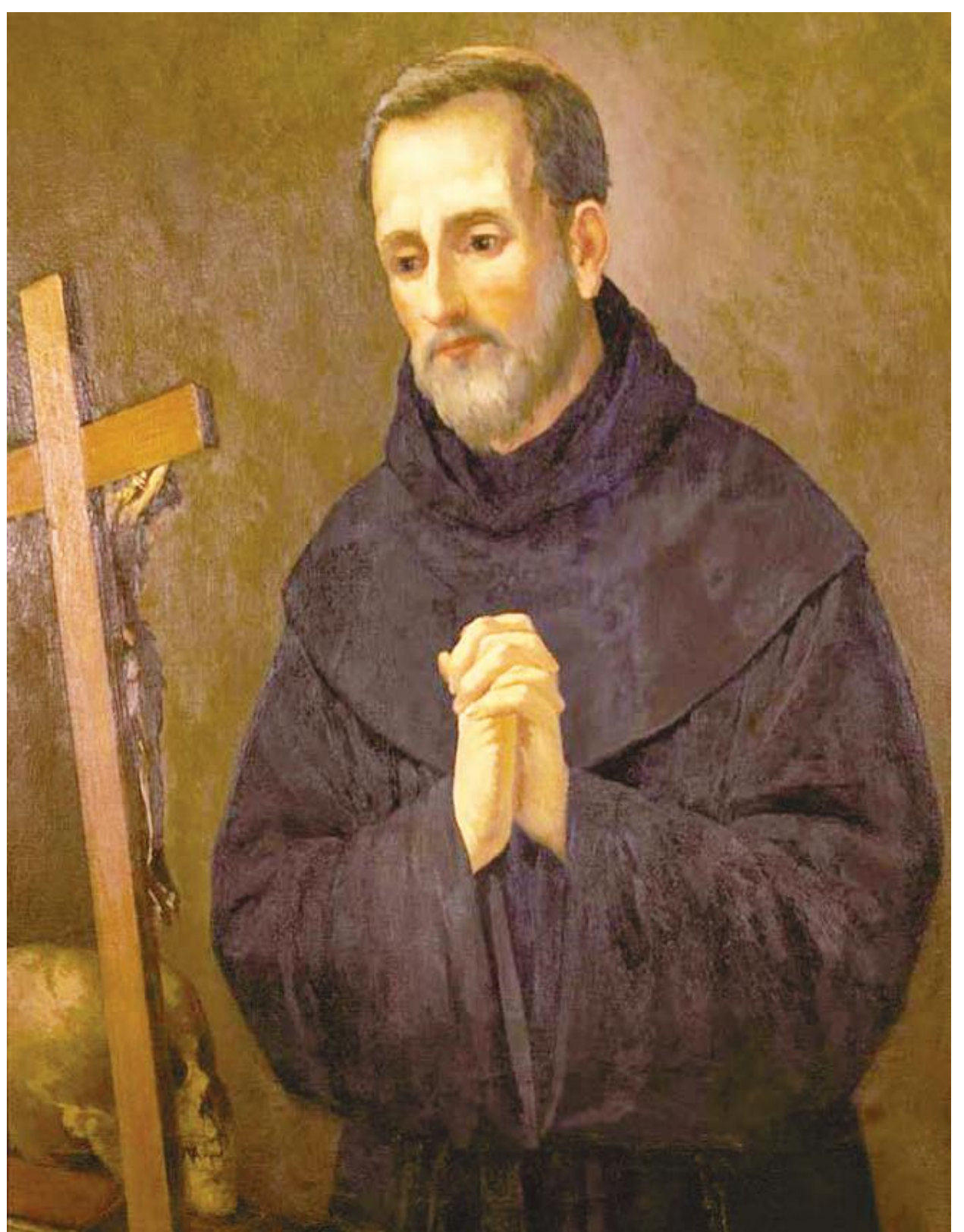
He offers **sixteen "precautions"** for protection, ranging from the moderate use of sight to the commitment to avoiding excessive familiarity with people of the opposite sex, practicing penance through fasting, abstinence, mortification, discipline, avoiding idleness and situations (people, places, times) that one knows are

dangerous, seeking employment, spiritual direction, and, of course, prayer. Chastity, like any virtue, is a gift from God and not the result of one's own skill.

In this context, Saint Augustine's prayer to God is very touching: "O love, who ever burnest, and art never quenched! O charity, my God, kindle me! You command continency; give what You command, and command what You will" (Conf. X,29,40).

It's also beautiful what the text of our *Constitutions* say about it: "To persevere and progress in chastity, the religious, aware of human frailty, develop their love for the Eucharistic Christ and the Blessed Virgin, corroborate the will with the grace of the sacraments and spiritual direction; guard the heart and senses with mortification; they do not neglect natural means, apt to develop one's own psychological and emotional maturity; above all, know how to practice true **brotherly love** between them" (Const. 26; cf. *Perfectae Caritatis* 12).

The evangelical counsel of consecrated chastity is not an outdated virtue; it is a very relevant value. It is a gift from God and a choice of a greater love.





Fr. Angelo Grande, oad

WAITING WITH HOPE

MEDITATIONS IN VIEW OF ADVENT

Waiting is a state of mind that generates, depending on the circumstances, preparations for defense or festive welcoming: it can be filled with fear and anxiety or with joy and hope. Waiting has its **own calendar**, even if it is not always respected, as seen, for example, in the changing of seasons. It can happen that the earth yields the expected harvest with varying degrees of abundance, that beach and ski seasons are extended or cut short, or that regular activities are altered with economic consequences.

In cases of more impactful and widespread anomalies, people seek reasons and potential responsibilities, sometimes even attributing them to human negligence and wrongdoing.



1. The liturgical seasons of the Church calendar

The interior life of Christians also follows a rhythmic journey, nurtured by the liturgical seasons enriched by the celebration of the events in the life of Jesus. These seasons are a source of new and better times, particularly those of salvation and abundance.

At the center of it all, of course, is **Easter**, a miracle of death and resurrection, commemorated by the nascent Christian community, still led by the apostles, especially in the Eucharist on Sundays, the day of the week dedicated to the Lord's memorial.

Around Easter, other "memories" emerged to draw strength from the remembrance of the heroic witnesses' martyrdom, ordinary Sundays, and, finally, **Christmas**, the born of the Son of God, who fully engages in the human experience to restore it and bring humanity back to its original dignity and splendor.

The significance attributed to this event has resulted in the birth of Jesus being recognized to this day as the event that divides universal history between before and after Christ in the vast majority of countries.

2. Coming, leaving, returning

"And He came to dwell among us" (John 1:14). A coming that goes beyond a simple visit; a subsequent departure that promises a return; a return for discernment and assessment, to reward or reject. These are the inspirations with which the liturgy - God's and the Church's preferred means of communication - urges us during the



Advent season. This season is defined in no. 39 of the *General Norms for the Liturgical Year and the Calendar* as "as a season to prepare for Christmas when Christ's first coming to us is remembered; as a season when that remembrance directs the mind and heart to await Christ's Second Coming at the end of time. Advent is thus a period for devout and joyful expectation."

This year, Advent runs **from December 3rd to the 24th**, as always, it encourages attentive and stimulating listening to the Word of God proclaimed in the Eucharistic celebration, which, alongside the Word, guarantees effectiveness.

Every waiting and the consequent encounter generate dialogue; every dialogue enriches and, at the same time, demands the abandonment of what causes division, distance, and conflict. Hence, the austere and penitential character of Advent symbolized by the liturgical vestments' violet color.

3. Advent in the prayer of the Church and in the Fathers

In the Liturgy of the Hours, which accompanies various moments of the day with the prayers of individuals and communities, there is a constant **request** in the Advent prayers: *Make [Lord] that our commitment in the world does not hinder us on the path to your Son [...]; [make] us prepare ourselves with fervent and active anticipation to celebrate with true faith the great mystery of the incarnation of your only Son [...]; may the coming of Christ free us from the ancient evil within us and comfort us with His presence.*

Those called Fathers of the Church are those who, in the first millennium of the Christian era, faithfully received, interpreted, and preserved in the community the treasure of the faith and preaching of the apostles.

Among the Fathers, an eminent place is recognized for **St. Augustine**. He, commenting on Psalm 109, writes: "*God has promised us eternal salvation, blessed and endless life with the Angels, incorruptible inheritance, everlasting glory, the joy of seeing His face, His holy dwelling in heaven [...]. His final promise, where all our efforts are already directed, and where, when we reach it, we will have nothing more to seek or demand. [...] God sent His Son, the mediator of His faithfulness [...], [who] would fulfill among the nations what He had promised; after fulfilling these promises, He would also fulfill the promise of His return, to claim what He had given, to separate the vessels of wrath from the vessels of mercy, to render the threatened punishment to the wicked and the promised reward to the just.*"

4. Already, Not Yet

Advent, in conclusion, wants to reassure us that Jesus is always among us, sometimes hidden around the corner!

Let's read in the *Gospel according to Matthew*: "*Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom [...] I was hungry and you gave me food, I was [...] a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me. Then the righteous will answer him and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry [...] thirsty [...] naked [...] ill or in prison?' And the king will say to them in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.'*" (Mat. 25:31-46). And: "*I am with you always, until the end of the age*" (Mat. 28:20).

Already even if not definitively yet!





SOME PICTURES

SHARING A LITTLE OF OUR LIFE

September 4-8, 2023

Acquaviva Picena - Italy

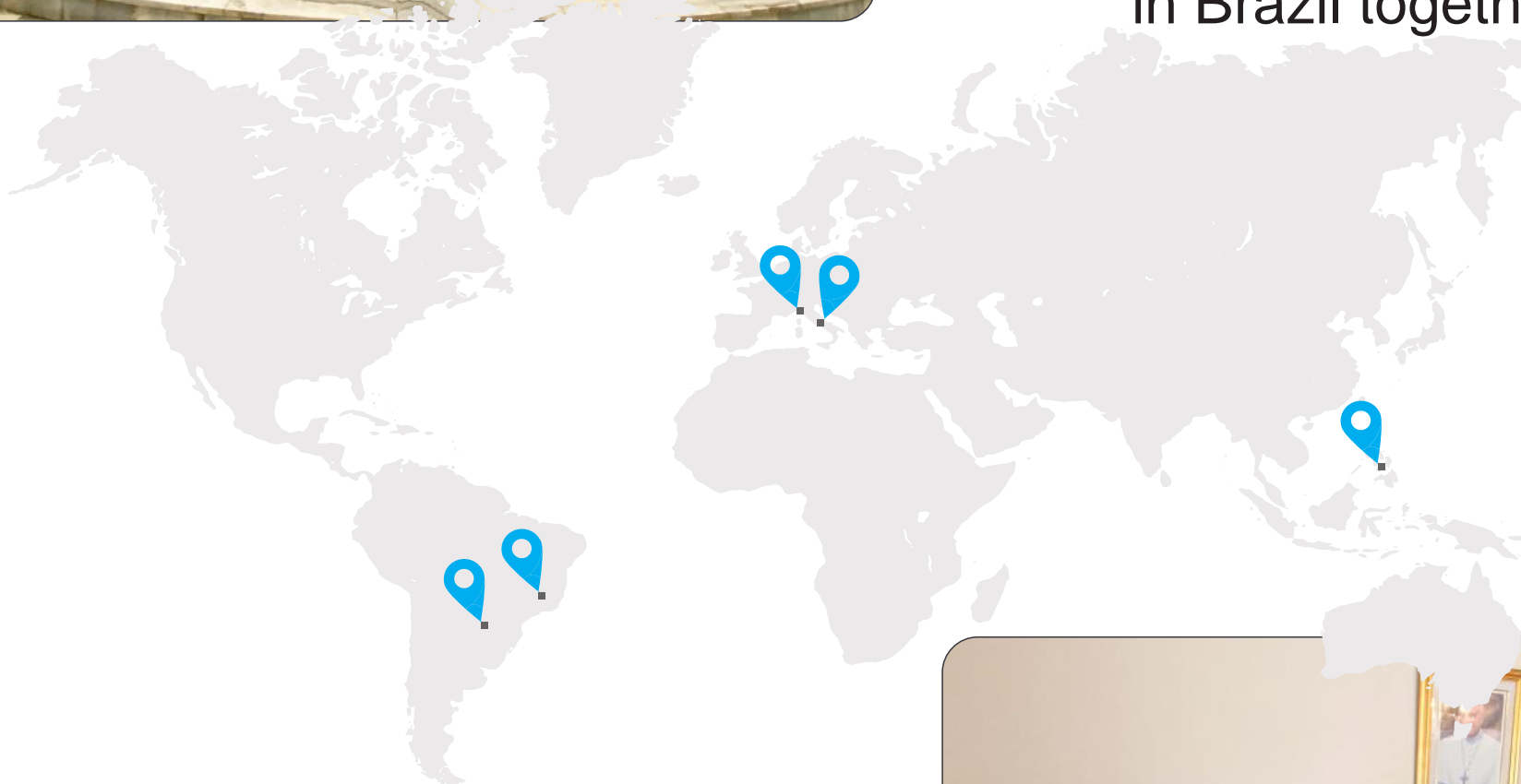
The Professed of the International College did the week of annual retreat at our religious Community, guided by Fr. Carlo Moro



September 7, 2023

Nova Londrina - Brazil

The Augustinian Sisters Servants of Jesus and Mary celebrated the 50th anniversary of their presence in Brazil together with the Bishop and our confreres



September 11-14, 2023

Rome - Italy

The first Ordinary General Definitory met to examine the state of the Order after the General Chapter and start various activities



September 13, 2023

Vatican City

Cardinal João Bráz de Aviz, Prefect of the responsible Dicastery for the religious, received a visit from the members of the new General Curia for a moment of prayer, dialogue and friendly presentation

September 11-15, 2023

Toledo - Brazil

The second group of confreres from the Province of Brazil participated in the week of annual retreat, guided by Msgr. Murilo Krieger, who reflected on the theme: "he summoned those whom he wanted " (Mk 3:13)



September 16, 2023

Cebu City - Philippines

Fra Mark Gleen Gadiane, Fra Anthony Booc, Fra Peter Paul Arellano and Fra John Mark Intales received the Diaconal Ordination from the hands of the Archbishop of Cebu, Msgr. José Palma, in the San Isidro Labrador Parish

September 17, 2023

Valverde - Italy

Senator Vittorio Sgarbi visited the Sanctuary of Valverde, where he was able to meet the Parish Community and some members of the public administration



September 25, 2023

Ampère - Brazil

The members of the CRB (Conferência dos Religiosos do Brasil) have chosen Fr. José Valnir da Silva as the new coordinator of the religious present in the Diocese of Palmas and Francisco Beltrão

September 30, 2023

Vatican City

The Prior General, Fr. Nei Márcio Simon, participated together with OSA and OAR Priors General in the Consistory during which the Augustinian bishop Msgr. Robert Francis Prevost received the biretta and became part of the College of Cardinals



October 3-5, 2023**Yguazú - Paraguay**

Fr. Getulio Freire Pereira, Prior Provincial, guided the reflections during the meeting of the Formators of the Province, having as its theme the application of the *Programmatic Document* of the 80th General Chapter of the Order

**October 17-19, 2023****Ampère/Salgado Filho - Brazil**

The confreres who are parish priests in the Province of Brazil shared various moments of prayer, reflection, meals and pilgrimage during three days, in light of what was requested regarding the Parishes in the last General Chapter

**October 17-20, 2023****Cebu City - Philippines**

Fr. José Conson Jr. he participated in the 2023 National Convention of CEAP (Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines) representing the Tabor Hill College OAD and collaborating as a member of the Organization

October 20, 2023**Rome - Italy**

Fr. Harold Toledano, the new Prior of the Community Gesù e Maria, seat of the International College, made his Profession of Faith and the Oath of Fidelity in front of the Prior General, starting his service at the aforementioned religious Community

**October 21, 2023****Cebu City - Philippines**

The Apostolic Nuncio to the Philippines, Msgr. Charles John Brown, visited our community of Middle Tabor to meet the Prior Provincial and confreres and discuss common projects to be done between the Nunciature and the Order

PRIOR GENERAL'S MESSAGE

WHAT MATTERS IS THE RESTLESSNESS



Fr. Nei Márcio Simon, oad
@freineisimon

Dear confreres, lays, and friends,

We live in a time overloaded with information, where speed is often valued more than authenticity. Young people naturally tend to be swift, but they can also be profoundly authentic. They have an immense desire to do new things and make the world better. At the same time, there are "older youth" who haven't stopped dreaming about this, even if they may no longer have the strength to realize it.

In truth, chronological age doesn't matter. What matters is having the restlessness that Saint Augustine speaks of, leading us to an ever deeper and more intense search for the infinite: "*You have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You*" (Conf. I,1,1).

We thank God for the young people who frequent our communities and for the precious contribution they give us by offering the freshness of a Church that extends a hand to those who move more slowly, sitting together to listen to Jesus and then joyfully continue the journey.

Rome, October 31, 2023.



