

PRESENZA AGOSTINIANA



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November-December



IN COMMUNION WITH THE CHURCH

OAD AND CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

OAD IN CAMEROON
Communion in the
mission in Africa

OAD IN INDONESIA
Experiencing communion
in Asia

THIRD ORDER OAD
The first-ever
National Convention

SUMMARY

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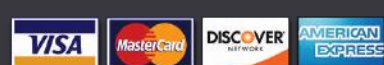
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The Prior General, Fr. Nei Márcio Simon, visiting Cardinal João Braz de Aviz, Prefect of the Dicastery responsible for religious



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EDITORIAL PAGE

COMMUNION: A BOND THAT TRANSCENDS DIFFERENCES



Dear readers,

Communion in the Church is a central and fundamental theme of our faith. In a world often marked by divisions and conflicts, the Church seeks to offer a model of unity that transcends differences and recognizes the value of diversity.

Communion is the fraternal and spiritual union of the baptized as members of a large spiritual family; it is the bond that unites those called to walk together in faith.

In this issue of *Presenza Agostiniana*, we focus on how the Augustinian Recollects embody the communion of faith in some of the realities where they are called to live their charism: throughout the Church, in Cameroon, and in Indonesia.

Communion goes far beyond mere participation in rituals and liturgies; it extends to everyday life, relationships with others, and society. Indeed, one of the great riches of our spirituality lies in the diversity of the origin and activities of our brothers.

Our charism is enriched even more when in contact with various cultural traditions and different spiritual expressions. It is precisely this diversity that enriches our communion, giving us a broader vision of the mystery of God and His love for humanity.

Being in communion with the Church is the starting point for living our religious consecration authentically and dynamically. We are called to be witnesses of a communion that surpasses barriers, heals wounds, and reflects the beauty of Christ's love.

Enjoy the reading.



IN COMMUNION WITH THE CHURCH

OAD AND CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY



Fr. Nei Márcio Simon, oad
@freineisimon

“Many people today are puzzled and ask: What is the point of the consecrated life? Why embrace this kind of life, when there are so many urgent needs in the areas of charity and of evangelization itself, to which one can respond even without assuming the particular commitments of the consecrated life? Is the consecrated life not a kind of "waste" of human energies which might be used more efficiently for a greater good, for the benefit of humanity and the Church?” (*Vita Consecrata* 104).



Card. Aviz with the members of the General Curia

This question, posed by many people, was addressed by John Paul II, then Pope and now a saint, and continues to be a question of our time.

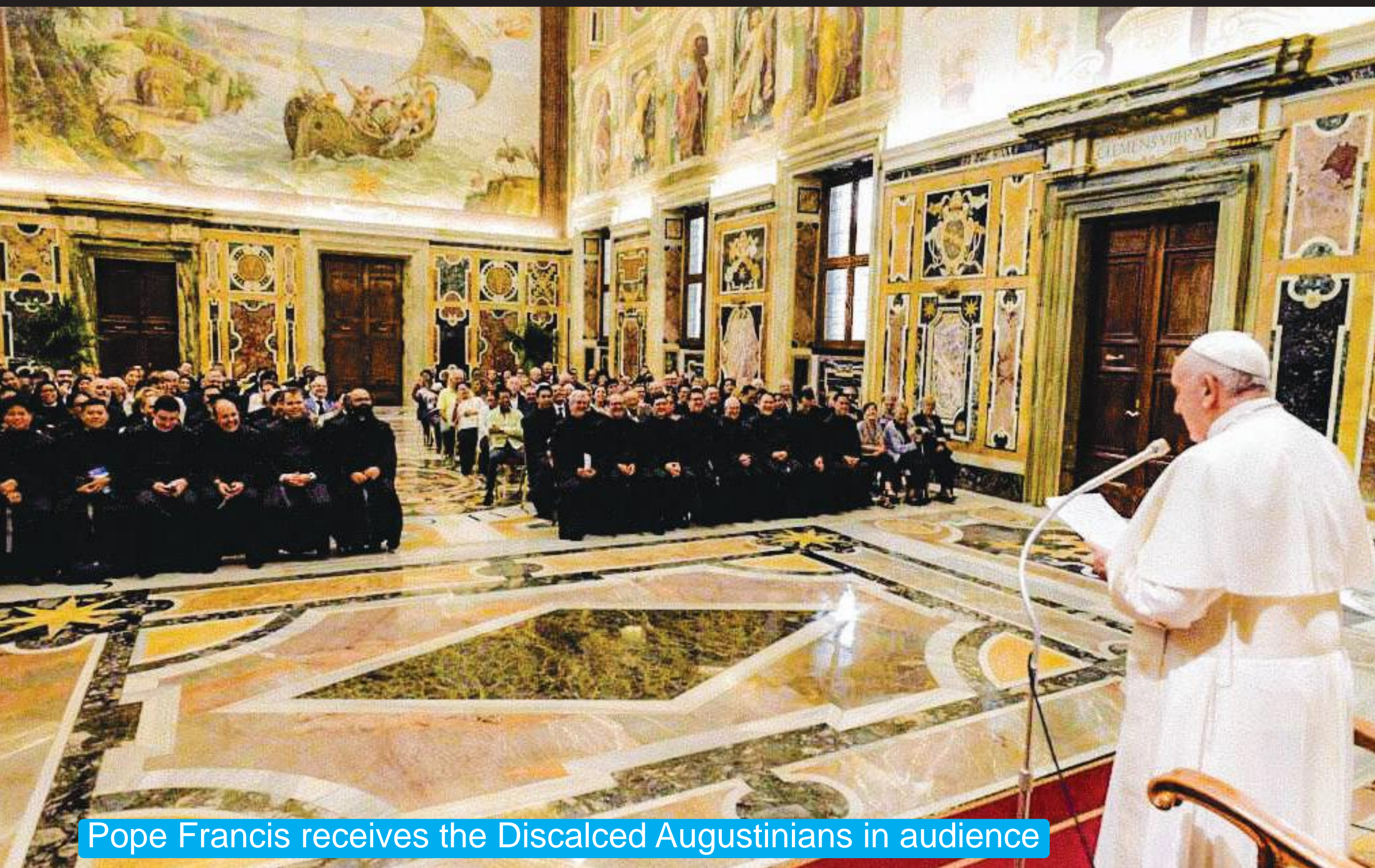
I would like to highlight the response given by Jesus to a similar inquiry, as reported in the post-synodal document on consecrated life and **its mission in the Church and in the world**: “such questions have always existed, as is eloquently demonstrated by the Gospel episode of the anointing at Bethany: "Mary took a pound of costly ointment of pure nard and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the ointment" (Jn 12:3). When Judas, using the needs of the poor as an excuse, complained about such waste, Jesus replied: "Let her alone!" (Jn 12:7)” (*Vita Consecrata* 104).

Consecrated life is a precious fragrance in the Church, representing the abundance of gratuitousness offered to God. More than ever, it is an invitation to all the baptized to offer their gifts and talents for the good of the people of God.



The essence of religious life is **the consecration to God in communion**, constituting a great sign of unity. It embraces different individuals who, feeling the call, decide to share the journey of faith by living a specific charism. They do not choose their "travel companions," and this is very significant. Sometimes, the temperaments of the members of a community are very different and not always easy to live with. However, when lived with a joy towards the Most High in spirit of humility, they tend to enrich immensely those with a welcoming heart

And we, the Discalced Augustinians, how do we live our specific mission as consecrated individuals? According to the *Pontifical Yearbook*, the official document expressing how the Church sees us and what is expected from us, we read: "Contemplative and active life; prayer and study; all works of the sacred ministry for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, according to the needs of the Church and the times."



In these concise words, we have one of the clearest and most comprehensive definitions that I could find, and now I propose them to all the brothers, as well as to the laypeople and friends who are close to us or who simply sense the "good fragrance" emanating from the attitude of our members, to memorize them and never cease to apply them.

The Church expects from us the same actions as **our Holy Father Augustine**, who, after his conversion, decided, together with friends, to live in communion, sharing experiences of God, work, and study without closing themselves off from the needs of the Church.

The risk of getting involved in activism is always present, but we have the means to be reminded of the essential and get back on track. Our Constitutions, in number 57, say: "The first field of apostolate for the Discalced Augustinians must be considered the **Community**."

It may seem strange, but it is precisely so. The Church that goes out, so desired by Pope Francis, for us begins at home, in the community, returning to the origins, living

Moments of communion during the 80th General Chapter



fraternal charity. Only when we are recognized by the integrity of our love can we truly consider ourselves a Church going out. "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (Jn 13:35).

Recently, when I gathered in Rome with the newly elected members of the new Curia, we had a fraternal audience with His Eminence Cardinal João Braz de Aviz, Prefect of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. Among the beautiful things he told us, he reinforced **the importance of the person over the institution**. He invited us to live in communion and to care for one another..

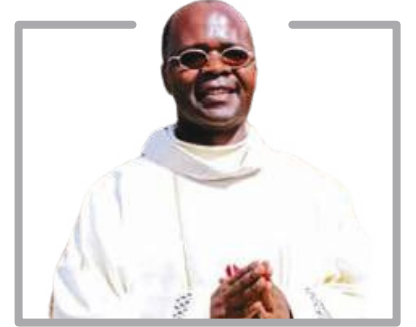
The guidance that the Cardinal gave us reminded me of what I learned from Chiara Lubich, and it resonates with my vocation in the Order of the Augustinian Recollects, which is: it is better to be less perfect in unity with everyone than to be the most perfect alone.

We are apparently few and immersed in the midst of the great diversity that is the Church, with temptations to follow parallel paths and heed thoughts that want to confuse and divide us. However, the Lord does not abandon us and invites us to continue walking in unity, paying attention to others, to the people that God places beside us simply because it is His will: "And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother" (1Jn 4:21).

As the Prior General, I am obliged to live all this by following the particular call of our *Constitutions*, which emphatically state: "Promotes the religious and apostolic life, communion and solidarity between Provinces, Commissariats, Delegations and among the religious" (no. 189). I invite you to join me in living the Word of God seriously, in harmony with the needs of the Church and the times, according to the indications of our statutes. **Let's move forward with joy, together!**

OAD IN CAMEROON

COMMUNION IN THE MISSION IN AFRICA



Deac. Michael Womela Tukov, oad
@tukovmichaelwomela

The evangelists Matthew and Mark indicate that the Gospel must be preached to the **ends of the earth**, using the words of Jesus in the imperative.

The experience of our missionaries, and the insertion of our charism, “Joyfully serving the Most High in the Spirit of Humility” in the Cameroonian soil can best be expressed in the words St. Paul uses to describe his missionary attitude: “To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some” (1Cor 9:22).



Fr. Etienne and some lays



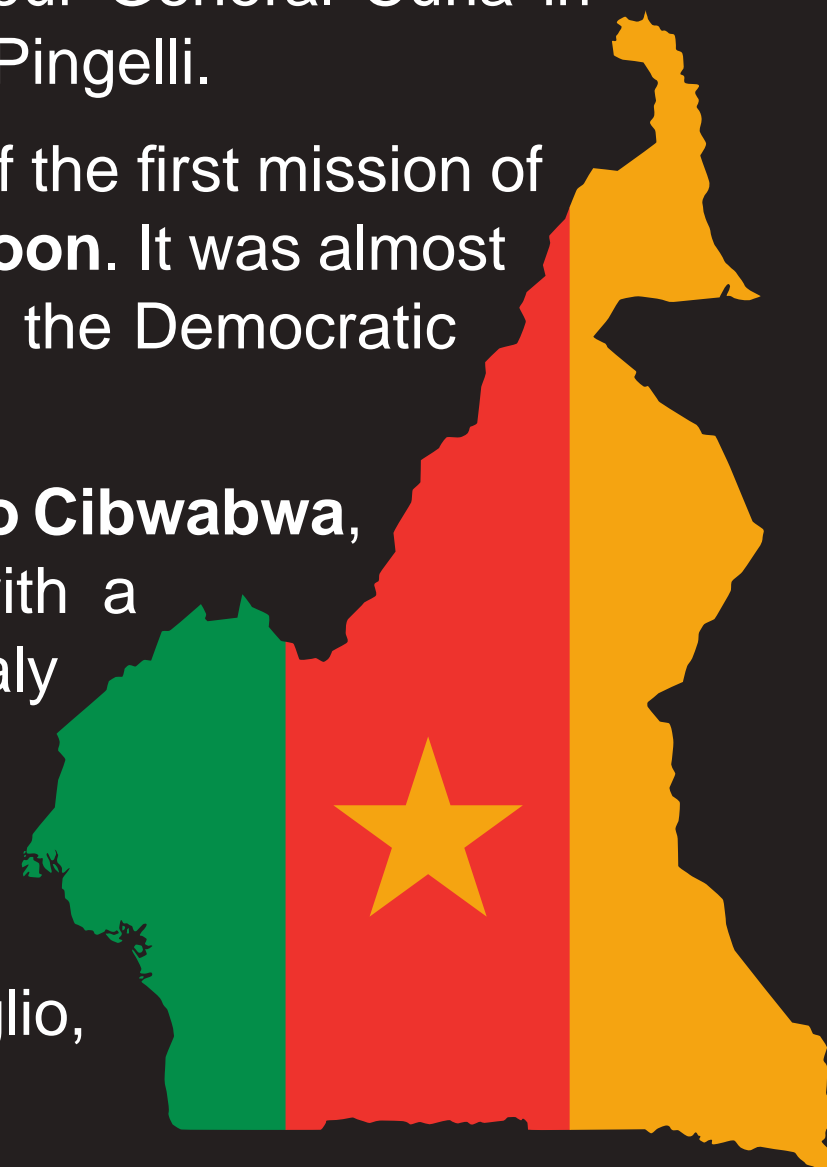
Arrival of the Discalced Augustinians in Cameroon

In **2007**, the Archbishop of Bamenda, Monsignor Cornelius Fontem Esua, celebrated Holy Thursday at the Church of our General Curia in Rome, meeting with the Prior General at that time, Fr. Luigi Pingelli.

The Archbishop made a proposal that became the seed of the first mission of our Order in Africa, specifically in the **Republic of Cameroon**. It was almost twenty years after the failed attempt to open a mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The invitation was immediately accepted, and **Fr. Gregorio Cibwabwa**, after visiting the Archdiocese of Bamenda, returned with a positive report. Together with **Fr. Renato Jess**, they left Italy for Cameroon.

After three months of experience in the Archdiocese, the Presbyteral Council accepted our presence on January 23, 2008, and the Provincial Prior, Father Vincenzo Consiglio, gave approval for the mission on August 28, 2008.





Missionary Activities

In 16th August 2008 **St. Joseph Parish** Bafut was officially handed to us.

The parish consists of **14 mission stations** with very poor or bad seasonal roads. Priests have to trek for hours and days to celebrate the Eucharist and other sacraments to the people of God.

Tirelessly our first missionaries joyfully served this Christian community for two years until the third priest, Fr. Jose Erwin Hindang, arrived 2010.

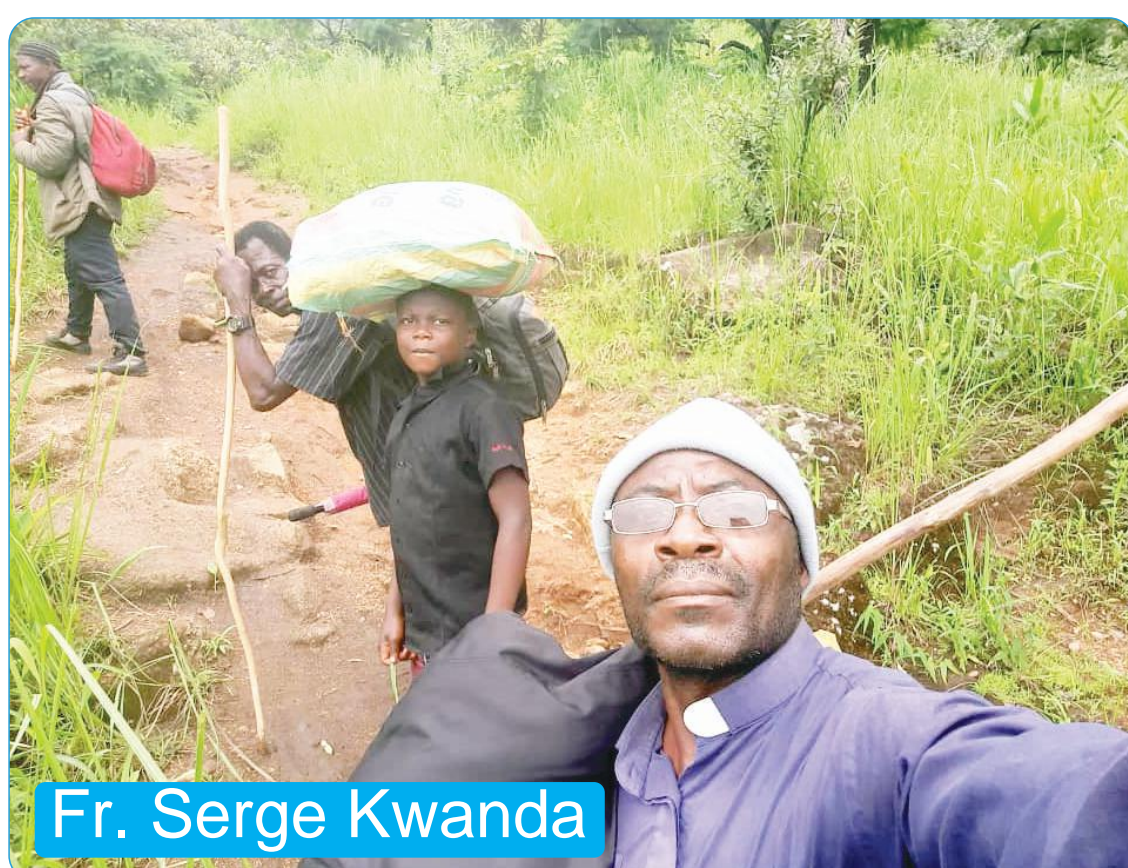
Fr. Serge Kwanda and Fr. James Kenfack has continued with the same zeal and commitment supported by Fr. Etienne Ndifongyen, Fr. Gael

Nkwenti, Fr. Richard Nyawgui, and Fr. Joel Manoel.

Being a missionary in Africa demand a particular attention, that attitude Jesus had: “when he saw the crowd he had compassion for them”.

This has been the experience which has characterized the life of missionaries from different religious congregations in Africa and our first missionaries continued in the same spirit.

They did not just provide the material and the intellectual needs of the poor but also brought the needed **peace and unity** that had eluded the parish because of inter-village conflicts.



Fr. Serge Kwanda



Fra Michael and Fr. Etienne

The Bafut community is principally a **formative community**. Our activity in this area can be described in the words of Fr. Dorianio in his book *Gli Agostiniani Scalzi*: “The mission in the Archdiocese of Bamenda (Cameroon) at Bafut has become a beautiful reality that needs to be encouraged and sustained...both for the promising vocational and social assistance that Christian charity requires”.

The parish territory since 2017 is one of the worst affected areas by the **socio-political crisis** that has caused a lot of sufferings to the people.

Our missionaries at this difficult time and life of the parish have not abandoned the sheep entrusted to them by the diocese, they have consoled the affected and prayed with them, they have buried the dead and fed the hungry.



Fr. Joel Manoel



Challenges of the Mission

Considering that, communication is the bedrock of communion, **language** as a tool of communication has a lot to offer in the communion amongst pastors and their Christians. Apart from two national languages (French and English) which are not spoken by every Cameroonian, there are more than 250 languages in Cameroon. Even if the missionary speaks English, he will still be frustrated as he won't be able to communicate well with the people especially the old.



Another challenge for missionary activity in the Archdiocese of Bamenda which does not affect only our Order is the legacy of the first evangelizers of the ecclesiastical province of Bamenda. They came with a spirit of universal donor and without any self-interest they preach the gospel, build roads, schools, Churches, pay hospital bills and fed the people. It was a beautiful missionary example. However, they did this without involving the locals as their families and friends in their home countries sponsored everything. This created a wrong impression on locals about the mission. A missionary or a religious is now seen by the laity, diocesan priest and to some extent bishops as self-sufficient person and developer who should be able to build structures and schools in parish territories for the Archdiocese.

The Parish where we serve has **two villages** that are always in tension with each other. Every missionary must therefore consider his words carefully else he sparks a conflict. The situation is such that every missionary or religious working in this part of Cameroon (Ecclesiastical province of Bamenda) is to go about his duty with maximum caution.



CAMEROON

Official languages: French and English

Currency: CFA Franc

Population: 26,550,000 inhabitants

Catholicism: 28%, with five Archdioceses and twenty-one Dioceses

Typical gastronomy: Fufu, Njama njama, Sangah, Mbanga and kwacoco soup, Ndolé.





Project for the future

We look to the future with great hope considering the number of young people expressing their desire for **religious and priestly life** in our Order. Mission demands well-formed and well trained missionaries; it requires finances to train men who are fit for the missions.

While trusting in the providence of God, and considering the number of priests, religious and lay people who are expressing the desire to have us preach retreats and recollection to them, we are looking forward to building a **retreat house**, where we can serve better the

people of God in this diocese and also support ourselves financially.

Our missionary presence in the four continents of world can only create a song of joy and gratitude to God for the courage of our missionaries.

Cultural differences, language difficulties, human and natural catastrophes have not stop them from sharing the joy of **our charism in strange lands**. We can only encourage ourselves and guard against the spirit of nationalism with this missionary prayer: “Lord, where you want me, this is my home...”



Fr. Serge and some lays

Constitutions no. 62 - Apostolic Life.

The visible Church is concretized in local communities, among which the parish has a prominent place.

In fact, it offers a shining example of a communitarian apostolate; a cell of the Diocese, it joins forces with diocesan initiatives; sensitive to the needs of the people of God on earth, it contributes to the good of the missionary Church in the world.



OAD IN INDONESIA

EXPERIENCING COMMUNION IN ASIA



Fr. Elpydus Suria, oad

The mission in Indonesia as a part of mission of Asia. The mission in Indonesia began in **2004**, when the first missionaries came to Indonesia to find out about the situation and conditions of Indonesian life and culture so that it would be easy to start the mission. The first missionary, namely Fr. Harold Toledano began looking for several places in several regions in Indonesia as suitable places to start the mission. After visiting many places, it was decided to start the mission in the **Bandung** city area.

After some meetings about the mission with the Bishop of Bandung, on August 14, 2004, Msgr. Alexander Djajasiswaja, accepted our Order and inaugurated the OAD to open a mission in Indonesia as one of the Congregations serving in the Bandung Diocese. The main challenge that must be faced is to find a suitable and appropriate place to start a mission and build a monastery suitable for the development and education of future religious.

In **2010**, the religious community began the construction of a House in a place outside the city of Bandung, in the village of Cisarua.



Religious community of Indonesia

1. Reflection on 20 years of mission

In 2024 the mission in Indonesia will reach 20 years of age. Of course this is not a long journey but it is not a short journey either. There have been many events and experiences, both happy and sad, Challenges and hopes become a history of the current and future mission of our Order. Several prospective priests who are struggling in pursuing education and studying at their college and formation house, but we will ask, how and what will we do in the future to develop the mission.

On the other hand, the Order tries to build a relationship character and image of the Order in forming a religious force that influences social life with brothers and sisters around the monastery or in places of pastoral care. Of course challenges and problems sometimes arise in interactions with other people, this could be due to cultural differences, language differences, ethnic differences, differences in ideas or differences in basic things in life. Even in community life, we often face problems, but we must be able to respond to each problem maturely without hurting other people's feelings and finding the best solution for community life.

2. Great challenges in the mission

➤ Cultural and linguistic challenges

Some Confreres who were sent on missions in Indonesia still lacked knowledge of Indonesian culture and language, especially in the Diocese of Bandung.

They lack of preparation, especially language. Because the daily language used for communication is Indonesian, especially since we live in an area quite far from the city.

We need to underline this that, Learning culture and language is very important, its help us in communion with other people and in our communication, as so as to avoid any misunderstandings.

The missionary person needs to undergo study of language and culture before enter into the Formation House.



Indonesian religious



Visit of the confreres

➤ Charism and Identity

In Indonesia, one of the characteristics to know about the Order, is the habit, the special visible identity of our Order. Even though, the identity as a religious person is also done by wearing special clothes with collars.

Why wearing the habit is important because its really helping us when we promote the vocation and as an attraction of young people to enter and join a monastery.

The problem is that in OAD, during the aspirant period, they only wear ordinary clothes and during the promotion of the Order, there is no special attraction to young people .



Welcoming of lays

In Indonesia, we need a special formation for the Aspirancy, that before the seminarian enter into philosophy, they are prepared for the noviciate period and after that, they will continue study philosophy and theology in Indonesia.

➤ Number of candidates

The number of candidates is less due to the lack of attraction due to using of habits that attract young people and help in ministry and apostolate.

Indonesia is a large country, requiring a lot of money, time and energy in promoting congregations and vocations. Of course, this is also a challenge for us, because there is also a lack of people who help in promoting the vocation. A vocation promoter may not serve as part of the house formation but is someone who has special time and is able to promote the life of the Order.

We need the vocation promoter is free person from any offices in the Formation House, as to give him much time for the campaign or introduce the order to some places and people.



Apostolate between Catholic and Protestant friends

➤ Relationship with the Diocese of Bandung

All'inizio della presenza degli Agostiniani Scalzi in Indonesia e della collaborazione con la diocesi, abbiamo stipulato un accordo con il Vescovo che la presenza dell'Ordine è solo come casa di formazione. Pertanto, il ruolo e il coinvolgimento dell'Ordine nella Diocesi sono molto limitati.

2. Relationship with the local Church

The Church's mission is to bring God closer to God, to spread the word of love and build God's kingdom in the world.

From this mission, the presence of our order is very helpful in **pastoral ministry** with the local church even though limited service for the people. Of course, we have a very good relationship, because the bishop and the priests receive the presence of our order with love and kindness.

In carrying out pastoral ministry activities, we are often trusted to help people in the Parish **in administering the sacraments**. We also received a positive response from God's people for our ministry in the parish or ministry within the religious house community. Besides serving the sacraments, we also serve in church categorical groups, **services at universities or Catholic schools**, retreats and recollections.

3. Relationship with non-Christian society

Indonesia is the largest **Islamic country** in the world, with a very large Muslim population as the majority group.

Our house is in the middle of a Muslim residential area. Plurality and diversity in differences do not separate us, but we live in harmonious and peaceful unity, respecting and respecting each other as one national family. We continue to maintain and maintain this **good relationship**, keeping in touch with each other and visiting each other during religious holidays. Every year during the Idul Fitri celebration, the order never forgets to provide basic necessities to Muslim neighbours.



Many experiences of faith in religious life and in relationships with people who are not Catholic. But from this experience of difference, we learn to become mature, learn to respond to problems and the ability to overcome every problem about life that comes to us.

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

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





Fr. Myzon Camay, oad

THIRD ORDER OAD

THE FIRST-EVER NATIONAL CONVENTION

It is always essential to share **good news**, especially when it closely relates to our Discalced Augustinian spirituality and involves a significant number of people who share our charism.

Since we arrived in the Philippines almost thirty years ago, **many lays** have become indispensable figures in carrying out various projects initiated by our confreres. Without their help, it would have been impossible to produce so many spiritual fruits that we can daily reap with the grace of God.

The **Third Order** represents a vast community of faithful individuals who, immersed and active in society, embrace the spirituality of our Order. They dedicate themselves to embodying the Gospel teachings and the Augustinian Recollect spirituality, under the guidance of the friars belonging to the "first" Order..



Constitutions no. 127-128.

The tertiaries, institutions, parents and relatives, benefactors and all those who, in some way, are aggregated or allied to the Order, enjoy the spiritual benefits granted to it and participate in the charism of the Order.

The Secular Third Order, the Confraternity of the Belt and other Augustinian Confraternities, are erected by the Prior General.

The Prior General with the consent of his Definitory can aggregate to the Order Religious and Secular Institutes and secular and associations of the faithful.



Fr. Marlon and lays of the Third Order

An important moment of communion was a first-ever National Convention among the **OAD Third Order Philippine Province Members**, successfully concluded on December 8-9, 2023, at Mamre Formation and Retreat House in Lamanoc Merida, Philippines. The theme was OAD Third Order - one in heart, one in mind. Among the Chapters which participated were from Butuan, Cebu, and Leyte.

A crucial stage of the Conference was the **election of the new General Council** that will lead the activities of the various Chapters constituting the Third Order in the coming years. With gratitude to God, the newly elected members of the General Council are:

General Prioress - Sister Lelita Balo; General Vice-Prioress - Sister Bernadette Tabon; General Secretary - Sister Edna Tasan; General Treasurer - Sister Nancy Montero; Mistress of Formation - Sister Editha Borces.



New General Council



Sharing moment



Convention participants

Fr. Myzon shares with our readers a summary of the reflection made with the participants at the National Convention.

Introduction

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* paragraph 524 states that “When the Church celebrates the liturgy of Advent each year, she makes present this ancient expectancy of the Messiah, for by sharing in the long preparation for the Savior's first coming, the faithful renew their ardent desire for his second coming.”

From the citation above the following phrases ought to be given much further emphasis respectively as they have implications in our Christian life.

Fulfillment in Jesus Christ

The significance of the Incarnation of Jesus fulfills prophecies and marks the realization of Jesus' mission in the history of salvation. After his death on the cross, resurrection, and ascension, Jesus commissioned his followers to spread his teachings globally.

The Church is described as a sacrament, signifying communion with God and unity among people. The text highlights the importance of active involvement in Jesus' mission through three services: drawing people to God, commemorating his life, and serving selflessly, as exemplified by Jesus' own life and sacrifice.



The emphasis is on perpetuating Jesus' earthly works through one's actions to fulfill his mission in the world.

Meaning and Significance of Advent

The word "Advent" is derived from the Latin verb "advenio," meaning 'to come to,' and in the Catholic Church, it signifies the first coming of Christ. The Greek equivalent, "parousia," translates to 'presence' or 'arrival' in the context of Matthew 24:42.

Advent preparation involves commemorating the first coming of Christ and anticipating his second coming (Parousia). It suggests a self-examination of how individuals have lived out their baptism, seen as an anointing for service.

Drawing parallels to Jesus' messianic anointing, the text highlights the other-oriented nature of Advent preparation, focusing on helping and serving others.

It advocates a paradigm shift in understanding Advent, emphasizing the Church's counsel to prepare for the Second Coming of Jesus.

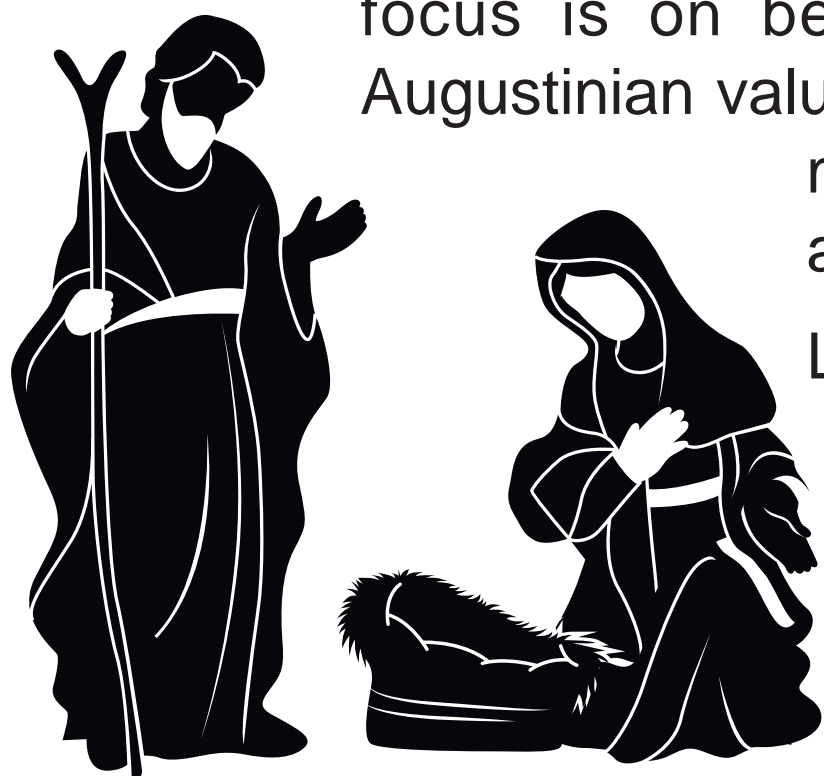




Implications to Christian Life, our Augustinian Identity

There are three dimensions of Christian service: [Service of Communion](#), which involves bridging and reaching out to others as members of the trinitarian life; [Service of Presence](#), which requires genuine and wholehearted giving of oneself for the benefit of others; and [Service of Leadership](#), which is defined by humble living, exemplifying the servant leadership modeled by Jesus.

It challenges Christians to live out their baptismal call as sons and daughters of the Father, members of the Body of Christ, and temples of the Holy Spirit. The focus is on being a living structure of unity, manifesting Augustinian values of living together in one heart and mind, not merely in words but through active and genuine actions.



Leadership is redefined as a Christian lifestyle that prioritizes service, humility, and leading oneself toward the Way, Life, and Truth, ultimately participating in Christ's redemptive works in the world.

Conclusion

Individuals will be judged based on their actions towards others, particularly through the corporal and spiritual works of mercy (Mat 25:31-46).

The defining moments of the verdict revolve around how people relate to one another, reflecting the manner in which Jesus Christ encouraged true neighborliness. The duty and responsibility of Augustinian Discalced and Christians, in general, are framed around the principles of serving others with communion, presence, and leadership.

This involves leading oneself to be present with others, becoming an agent of unity, and fostering a sense of oneness with the ultimate goal of bringing people closer to God and bringing God closer to people.



TREATISE ON THE THREE VOWS

VEN. FR. GIOVANNI NICOLUCCI AND THE POVERTY



Fr. Gabriele Ferlisi, oad

In the short *Treatise on the three religious vows*, the Venerable Fr. Giovanni Nicolucci (photo), concludes the presentation with the vow of poverty.

1. Poverty, closely connected with the other two votes

The Venerable places the vow of poverty in the third position after those of obedience and chastity, and he ties it so closely to them that he makes it depend on them: "Just as obedience is the first and principal vow, depending on the union of hearts, and chastity on the union of the soul. So, from both arises the third vow of voluntary poverty, which consists of **the full and real renunciation of property.**"

To closely follow the Venerable in the development of his reflections, it is necessary to keep in mind some important distinctions he makes between "voluntary" poverty and "necessitated" poverty; between poverty as the expropriation of goods and poverty as their communal sharing; between the value of poverty in its reference to Christ and its reference to great figures in history; between moral seriousness regarding the vow of poverty and against other virtues.

2. "Voluntary" poverty and "necessary" poverty

A crucial distinction lies between **poverty chosen freely and voluntarily** as a value and poverty endured unwillingly due to external circumstances. Only the former constitutes a value and is the subject of the vow.



Only this kind of poverty can be considered an imitation of the poverty of Christ, who, "rich above all riches and almighty, deigned to bear it and sanctify it in His own person"; only this can be qualified as a **beatitude** and a precious Gospel pearl.

On the contrary, poverty that the Venerable calls "**necessary**" is the cause of many evils. Indeed, "those who are poor out of necessity (says St. Augustine) grumble, damage their reputation, envy those who have, seize, steal, and if they do not do it with deeds, at least they lack the will."

Clearly, such individuals are not "called blessed by the Savior, because they are not considered poor but miserable."



3. Poverty, expropriation and community of goods



**Poverty chosen
freely and voluntarily
constitutes a value
and is the object
of the vote**

Another crucial distinction on which the Venerable insists is the one between poverty understood as the **renunciation of goods** and poverty understood as their **sharing in common**. Both meanings are good because they are evangelical and Augustinian.

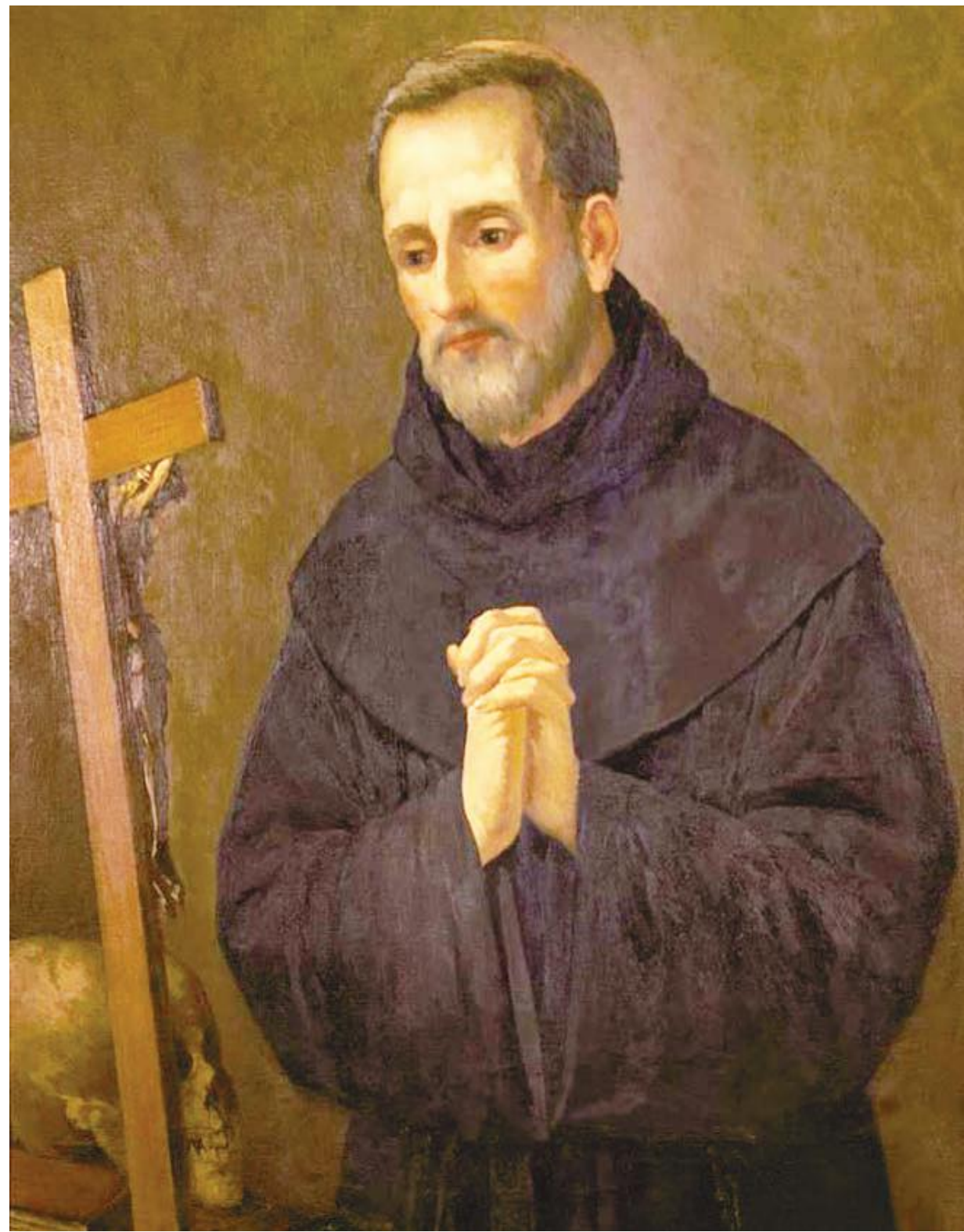
Jesus Himself recommended, or perhaps it is better to say, commanded

through the example of His life and His words, the renunciation of earthly goods: "everyone of you who does not renounce all his possessions cannot be my disciple" (Lk 14:33); "If you wish to be perfect,* go, sell what you have and give to [the] poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me" (Mat 19:21). St. Augustine, in the *Rule*, also says, "Call nothing your own" (*Rule* 4).

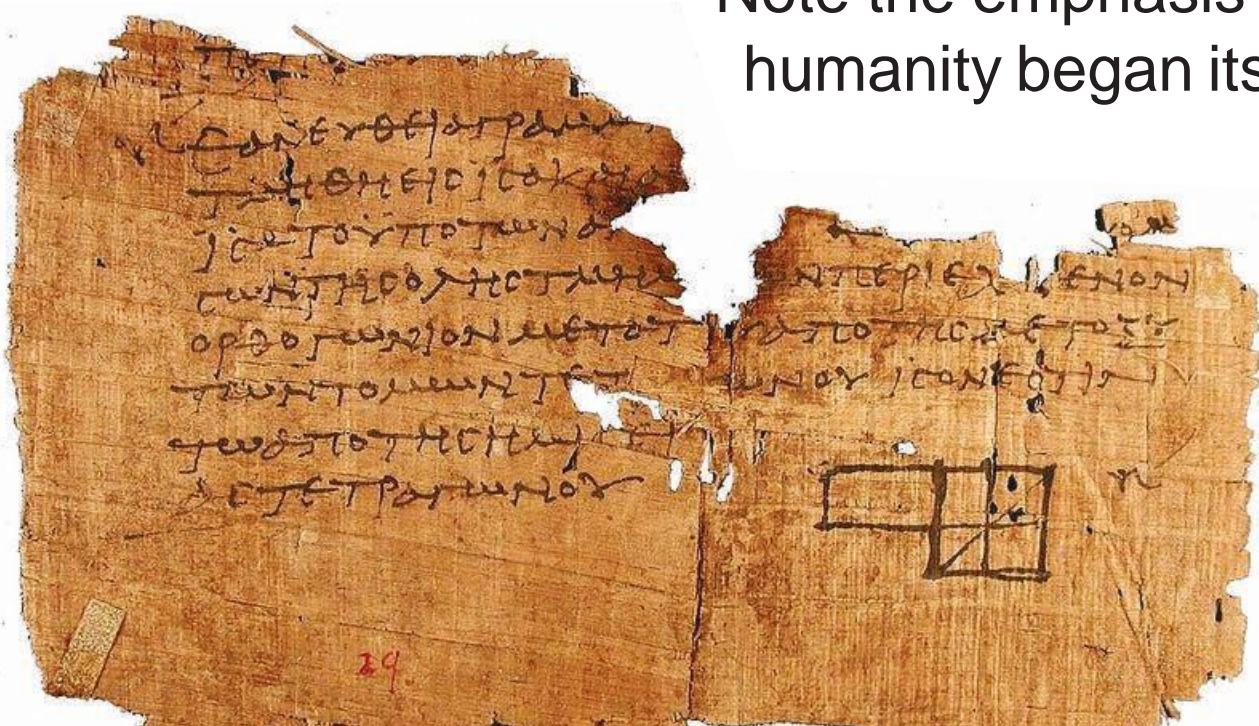
In turn, Luke, describing the lifestyle of the **early Christian community**, writes in the Acts of the Apostles that the believers had everything in common: "The community of believers was of one heart and mind, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they had everything in common" (Acts 4:32). Saint Augustine also prescribed in the *Rule*: "Call nothing your own, but let everything be yours in common" (Reg. 4).

"Therefore," says the Venerable, "this holy poverty, which consists in the communion of temporal goods, is praised for many reasons. It was planted in us by the law of nature, figured in the old law, foretold by the prophets, investigated by philosophers, favored by gentile princes, consecrated by our Lord and Savior in Himself, recommended to us,

observed and preached by His apostles and disciples, confirmed in the Scriptures by the Evangelists, accepted and revered by the Christian faithful of the primitive Church, and finally restored by the holy founders of the four principal religious orders: namely, St. Basil, St. Augustine, St. Benedict, and St. Francis with their rules."



Note the emphasis made by the Venerable on the fact that humanity began its journey with having goods in common:



"This holy poverty was planted in us by the law of nature because when man began, all things were common to all by natural and divine law. But by human law, property was introduced, whereby one says, 'This is mine, that is yours.'"

4. Poverty, as a communion of goods in ancient Greco-Roman culture



Another interesting point highlighted by the Venerable is the excursion he makes into ancient Greco-Roman culture, which, even for non-highly religious reasons, supported the **communion of goods**.

"The philosophers investigated this virtue [of poverty] because that city can be most justly called well-ordered according to Plato, where citizens have no personal possessions. Therefore, he imagines a republic in which everything is public and common. Hence, Cicero says, 'The common possession of things is most

delightful.' Socrates the philosopher desired the same, as did Crates, Diogenes, and many other philosophers who despised wealth. Moreover, it was favored by gentile princes, as we read about Fabricius, who rejected gold, silver, and other precious gifts sent to him by the Samnites, and Pyrrhus, king of the Epirotes."

5. Praise and fruitfulness of poverty

So poverty is a valued virtue even outside of Christianity, but infinitely more so within Christianity, where Jesus chose it for Himself, lived it, and proposed it as a beatitude and a fruitful means of apostolate.

Regarding this, the Venerable wrote: "It is certain, my religious brother, that by embracing this sovereign virtue of poverty, being truly poor in possessions and in will, you will be worthy to marry both Leah and Rachel, that is, to possess the active and contemplative life and the spiritual riches of grace. Like Moses, you will become a guide for other souls to lead them to heaven. Your soul will be the spouse of Jesus Christ, a spouse more worthy and noble than that of Ruth. You will be anointed King of eternal blessedness, obtain the zeal and spirit of Elijah, be a true priest and successor of Saint Peter, and a preacher of the gospel like Saint Paul."

Path of Fr. Giovanni Nicolucci



6. Severity of the infringement against poverty

Precisely because poverty is so important and praiseworthy, the Venerable highlights the gravity of its violation, which casts more shame on consecrated life than any other failings of the religious might. "If you consider, my brother, the state of the religious and the vow and promise made to God, which is to live and die poor in the religious life, and to imitate the footsteps of Jesus Christ in poverty and nakedness, you will easily understand how much more serious is the sin of ownership in religious than all other sins, even those scandalous in the eyes of the world, such as leaving the enclosure, abandoning the habit, and similar things. While these offenses are very serious and entail severe penalties in religious communities, they do not ultimately go against the essence of religious life, as do the three vows. According to the Council of Trent, if any of the three vows is lacking, the entire religious life will undoubtedly suffer a great fall. Because

the three vows maintain such a close friendship and are so tightly bound together that if one is lacking, the other two are in great peril. The religious who owns property can indeed be called disobedient, and it can be said that there is also a danger of dishonesty. He scandalizes the monastery, the entire Catholic Church, and the religious community is defamed by the mouths of the seculars who know the profession and the vow of poverty made by the religious."

7. In conclusion

In his exposition, the Venerable offers further reflections, concluding with a warm exhortation to love and live poverty like Jesus, both affectionately and effectively: "May the Lord be the one to give us so much grace and knowledge that we distance ourselves completely not only from every effect but also from every action of ownership, so that as poor and naked, we may follow the poor and naked Jesus Christ, to whom be glory and honor forever and ever. Amen."



Burial of Fr. Giovanni Nicolucci

SOME PICTURES

SHARING A LITTLE OF OUR LIFE



November 9-11, 2023

Vatican City

Fr. Leandro Xavier Rodrigues, Parish Priest and Rector of the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Valverde, participated with some laics in the II International Meeting for Rectors and Operators of Sanctuaries, organized by the Dicastery for the Evangelization



November 11-12, 2023

Toledo - Brazil

The participants in the Monica Mothers Movement from Toledo, Ouro Verde d'Oeste, and Yguazú gathered for a two-day retreat at our religious community



November 12, 2023

Pavia - Italy

The Prior General, Fr. Nei Márcio Simon, participated in a series of celebrations and events, along with the Prior General OSA and the Vicar General OAR, of the 1300th anniversary of the translation of the remains of Saint Augustine to the Basilica of San Pietro in Ciel d'Oro



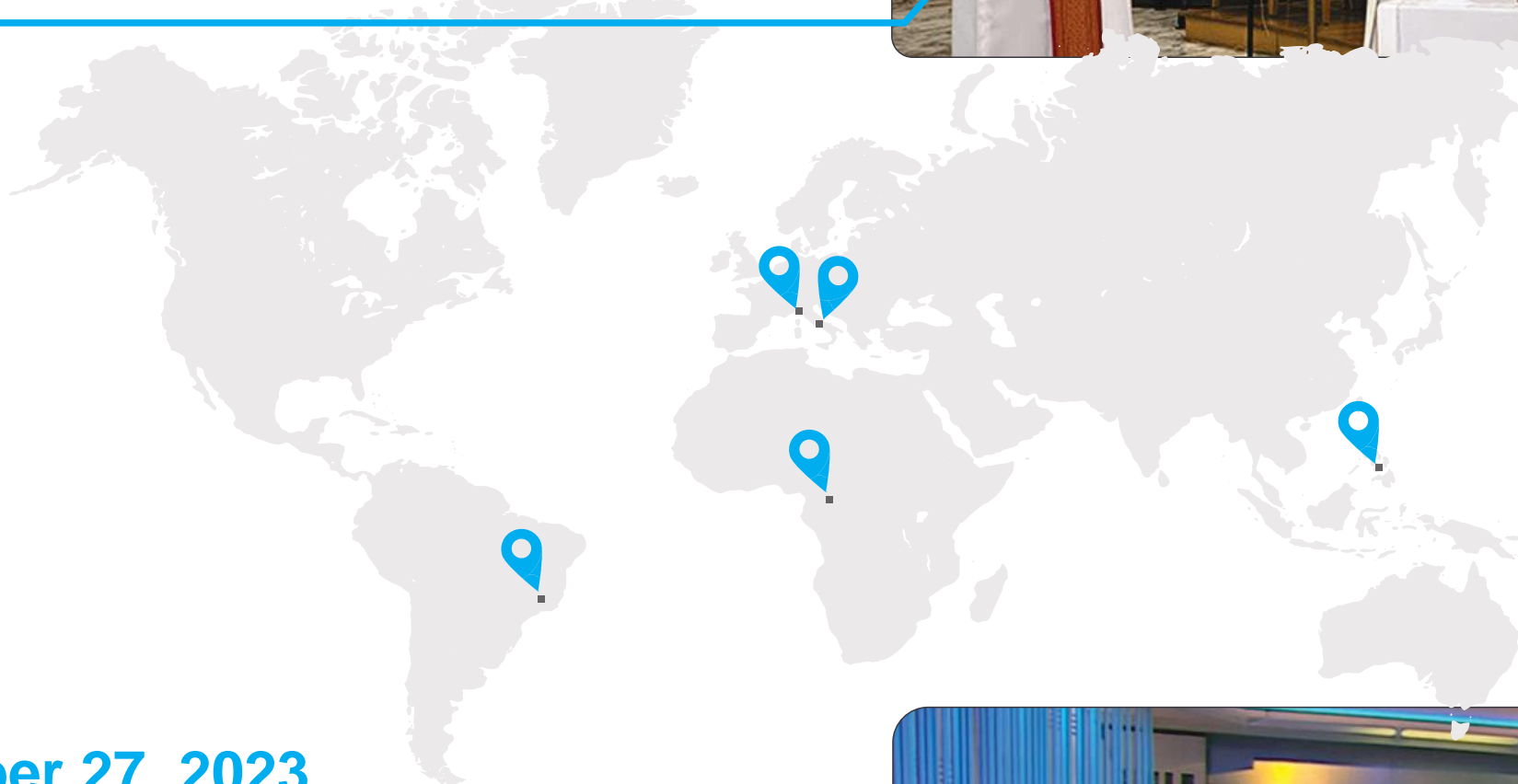
November 13-16, 2023

Vatican City

P. Fr. Dennis Ruiz and Fr. Calogero Carrubba participated in the Conference on the Community Dimension of Holiness, promoted by the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints, at the Augustinian Patristic Institute; after days of reflection, training, and sharing experiences, the participants were received in a private audience by Pope Francis, who expressed his support and words of esteem for the work carried out by the members of the Dicastery and the Postulators General

November 22-24, 2023**Sacrofano - Italy**

The Prior General, Fr. Nei Márcio Simon, participated in the 100th Assembly of the General Superiors; among moments of sharing, prayer, and reflection on the theme "Synodality: a renewed appeal to the prophecy of hope," there was also a meeting with Pope Francis

**November 27, 2023****Rome - Italy**

The Prior General participated in the television program *In Cammino* on TV2000, discussing the theme "Religious men and women, witnesses of the prophecy of hope"

**November 27, 2023****Rome - Italy**

The members of the Board of Directors of the International College Fra Luigi Chmel met for their annual meeting, aiming to continue the formative activities for the professed religious who are part of the community

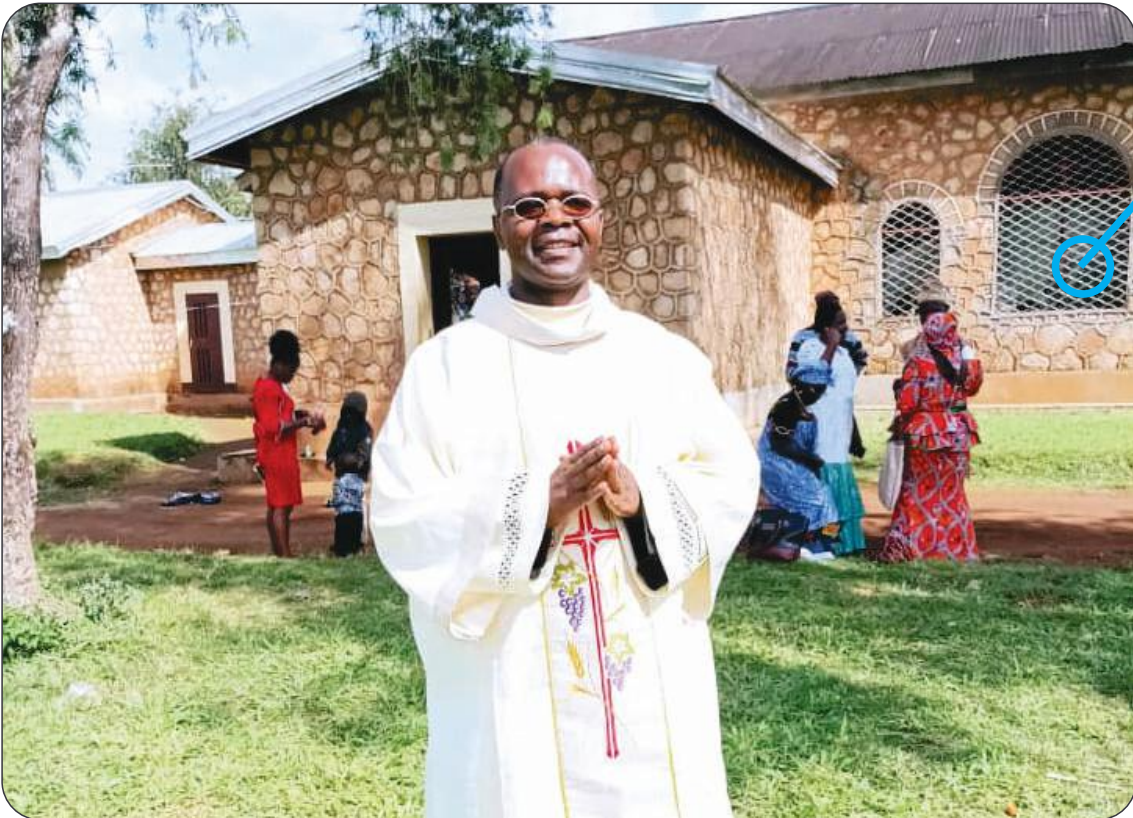
**November 28, 2023****Rome - Italy**

Following the determinations of the General Chapter and the General Definitory, Fr. Nei Márcio Simon (Prior General) met with the three Priors Provincial: Fr. Ferdinand Puig, Fr. Getulio Freire Pereira, and Fr. Crisologo Suan for a meeting that will now take place annually



November 29-30, 2023**Naples - Italy**

Taking advantage of the presence of the Prior Provincial, Fr. Crisologo Suan, and the Secretary Provincial, Fr. Randy Lozano, the confreres from Asia collaborating with the Italian Communities met for a retreat and a time of fraternity

**December 2, 2023****Bamenda - Cameroon**

Fra Michael Tukov received the Diaconal Ordination from Bishop Angelo Pagano at the Convent of the Capuchins; now, he will carry out his diaconal ministry in the Parish of St. Joseph, collaborating with our confreres

**December 5, 2023****Ourinhos - Brazil**

As the academic year approaches its conclusion, the students and teachers of Colégio Santo Agostinho organized the Christmas Illuminated show, with the presence of parents and collaborators

December 9, 2023**Bom Jardim - Brazil**

Fra Milciades Gauto Armoa professed solemn vows; the Prior General presided over the Mass in the main Church of the Imaculda Conceição Parish, attended by the local community, fellow brothers, friends, and family members

**December 8-9, 2023****Merida - Philippines**

Part of the members of the Third Order present in the Filipino territory gathered at the Mamre Formation and Retreat House for the Conference, which provided for elections and offered moments of reflection, prayer, and fraternity

December 9, 2023

Cebu City - Philippines

The Provincial Vicar, Fr Luigi Kerschbamer, presided over the Mass at the Chapel of the Sacred Relics, during which

7 new lectores were instituted:

Fra Natalis Rurume; Fra Alowysius Kelen; Fra Markus Sogen; Fra Peter Nguyen Van Sang; Fra Mande Miro; Fra Joseph Pham Huu Hung; and Fra Rodulfo Monares, Jr.;

in the same celebration **9 new acolytes** were also instituted: Fra Anthony Dang Khac Khan; Fra Joseph Nguyen Van Ngoc; Fra Joseph Dam Kim Hoan; Fra Nguyen Manh Hung; Fra Martin Nguyen Minh Thien; Fra Francis Xavier Nguyen Van Thang; Fra Paul Vu Van Linh; Fra Peter Vo Phan Thinh; and Fra Vincent Nguyen Van Phung; the confreres are theology students at SMIRS and come from the Philippines, Indonesia, and Vietnam. After taking this significant step in their consecration journey, they will continue their formation at the International Community of Middle Tabor



December 11, 2023

Marsala - Italy

The confreres from the three communities in southern Italy gathered for a retreat at the beginning of Advent; the meeting was also an opportune moment to extend Christmas greetings and plan for upcoming meetings

December 12, 2023

Merida - Philippines

Fra Francis Xavier Duong Pham Tient Dat has made the simple profession of vows. Provincial Councilor Fr. Ronilo John Biton presided over the Mass at the Santa Rita Novitiate Community, where the confrere completed the novitiate



December 13, 2023

San Gregorio da Sassola - Italy

The confreres from various communities in central Italy, along with some members of the General Curia and the International College, gathered for a morning of reflection and sharing in preparation for Christmas; during the meeting, they reflected on religious identity in light of the synodal journey



Fr. Nei Márcio Simon, oad
@freineisimon

PRIOR GENERAL'S MESSAGE

LET'S GROW TOGETHER

Dear confreres, lays, and friends,

with the celebration of the Christmas of Jesus, we should commemorate the most significant event in history, but unfortunately, few people honor the celebrated.

"He who lay in the manger became weak but did not lose his power: he assumed what he was not but remained what he was. Here we have the Christ child before us: let us grow together with Him" (St. Augustine, *Sermo* 196,3).

We should not only worry about things to do, but our commitment should be oriented towards essentiality and the simplicity of details. The wonder of Christmas lies in recognizing ourselves as inappropriate, unworthy manglers, inattentive humanity, but that despite everything, still has this opportunity to welcome the Lord.

What amazes me is thinking that the Almighty wanted to depend on us, being born humble, a helpless child who needs everything to grow and needs us to live!

It is wonderful to think that once we have welcomed the Child, we can no longer let Him go! A newborn baby is in our arms and asks for our care and attention!

Look around us, and we will see Jesus who, in this and every Christmas, invites us to recognize Him. We will find Jesus in the brother who shares our roof; Jesus in the sister we meet on the way; Jesus in the Eucharist... Let's grow together with Him!

These are my Christmas wishes to all the members of the Order, the associates, and the friends and readers of *Presenza Agostiniana*.



