

Jesus Caritas` Fraternity of Priests
Asian Month of Nazareth
Mount Peace, Baguio City
July 9-26, 2018

LETTER FROM BAGUIO

Theme of the Month of Nazareth in Baguio:

- *“Following Jesus of Nazareth in the foot steps of Charles de Foucauld”*

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- The Filipino Fraternity played host to the 6th Asian Jesus Caritas Month of Nazareth at Mt. Peace Retreat Center, Baguio City. Priests/Brothers from 6 countries responded. While most of them arrived on time safe and sound, a few joined in between. Two members from India had a gruelling 12 hrs taxi ride from Manila to Baguio and had a tough time finding the exact location. Another Brother was so busy emailing at the airport lounge that he missed the scheduled plane and had to take another flight to Manila. But thanks be to the providence of Almighty, all those who were expected did arrive.

The Month of Nazareth began on the afternoon of the 9th of July with an introductory session by Bro. Eric, the National Responsible of Philippines. He highlighted the four main objectives of this coming together.

1. To live in the Spirit of Jesus of Nazareth.
2. A contemplative reflection of our life stories - seen in the spirit of Bro. Charles.
3. Living our fraternity by sharing and doing our given tasks in the refectory, chapel and in the garden.
4. To continue to reflect on the original intuition of Jesus Caritas and our responses to the actual reality around us.

MOUNT PEACE:

At the zenith of the Month of Nazareth, there were 25 brother priests participating in the Retreat. 10 from Philippines, 9 from Pakistan, 2 each from India, Myanmar and Bangladesh and 1 from South Korea, who came just in time for the retreat and had to leave at the end of it. A majority of the Filipino Priests also left in between because they had to compulsorily attend a meeting called by Cardinal Tagle.

EXPOSURE:

To live as Jesus did in Nazareth - simple and humble - being part of the life stories of the ordinary people. 12 Brothers were sent two by two to different baranggais of St. Vincent Ferrer Parish where Eucharist is offered once in a month or two months. They visited houses, ate what they offered, prayed and shared with them, slept in uneasy quarters, celebrated Sunday Mass with them, etc . Ultimately it was sheer joy to share in the abundance and poverty of the people, drinking deep of their hospitality and being inspired and edified by their lively faith. A tremendous experience indeed.

RETREAT:

The retreat is usually the “heart”, the core programme , of the Month of Nazareth. So was it in Baguio. Our retreat “preachers” were half/half Little Brother Bernard and Fr. Tony Llanes. Little Brother Bernard, 87 years old (or young?) lived 10 years at war time in Vietnam, then in France and from 1977 onwards in the Philippines. Fr. Tony, born in 1961, animator of BEC (Basic Ecclesial Communities) lives and work in remote parishes on the conflict drawn Island of Mindanao. First Bernard, then

Tony spoke to us with ever serene faces and inner smile with words which seemed to flow straight from the sources of the Spirit. It was heart touching and peace giving to listen to our old and half young brother.

Bernard spoke on *SILENCE*, nothing more and nothing less: just Silence. Deeply pondering with us on the mystery of silence.

Tony had chosen another, to Bernard's topic related theme: *NOISE. SILENCE. COMMUNITY.*

OPEN HANDS will tell you more about the content of the retreat animation by Bernard and Tony.

DESERT DAY:

It was raining cats and dogs, throughout the day, but that was not a deterrent to many who ventured out with umbrella in hand, finding their pathways up and down the hilly terrain, discovering their own niche in their desert. Some had interesting stories of their walk in the rain. One enjoyed a peaceful slumber in a bus shelter, a few just soaked in the beauty of nature, another found his way to a Contemplative, Perpetual Adoration Chapel of the Pink Sisters....and many more stories.

DISCOVER BAGUIO:

Fr. Klaus will summarize our exciting and inspiring experiences later and separately

PERSONAL LIFE SHARING:

It was the 23rd of May, 2017. While staying at the Bishop's House at Marawi, in southern Philippines, Fr. Teresito Soganob, "Chito" had offered Mass at 6 pm. He said, "We prayed the rosary at 5.30 pm. Together with 5 other inmates, we went upstairs for dinner. We saw the Marawi City Police Station and the City Jail burning. Then we heard a terse command over the megaphone, "Priests and Nuns come out or be shot to death". That was the beginning of a night mare for him and 12 other captives. Death played a hide and seek game with them truly for the next 117 days. Uncertain of the future and traumatised by the threat of death at any time, thanks to God, Fr. Chito was rescued by the army on the 17th of Sept, 2017. To deal with and overcome the trauma, he has now been advised by the doctors to take rest.

COMMITTMENT:

Fr. Mintu noted in his diary: *The Asian Month of Nazareth at Baguio City held on July 9-26, 2018 was a*

great and blessed one. The rhythm of the Month of Nazareth reached its climax with a sublime and edifying program on the very last and concluding day with the rite of commitment to the Fraternity. The commitment ceremony started at 8:00 in the morning with 12 brother priests. It was indeed highly ritualized and beautiful. A prayerful atmosphere was created in the room. All brother priests sat in a circle surrounding the Holy Bible and the candle. The ceremony started with a prayer. Then a meaningful reflection was given by Fr. Eric which helped all to prepare themselves spiritually to get into it. It was arranged with the following rite:

The individual priest recited his commitment, then the priest before him washed his feet and when the washing of the feet got finished then he knelt down and then the next priest after him prayed in silence for him. This ritual was done for everyone and by everyone and was a very touchy and memorable.

Each brother priest has recited his written personal commitment happily and sincerely. Their commitments were the conscious result of prayerful discernment which enlightened them in the rhythm of the month of

Nazareth. The core sentences of the commitments of the brother priests were very inspiring which helped each other to be renewed in his vocation by being spiritually edified.

LAY FRATERNITY:

It was a great gift by the upcoming dynamic Filipina Lay Fraternity to help us during the whole Month of Nazareth in all practical needs including preparing our rooms, shopping, cooking, serving food etc. We were indeed blessed. Fr. Celsi Pasqual, Manila, *bahai* for priests, is their spiritual Advisor. A special grace was to listen to one Sister of the LF when she was giving witness of their attachment to Bro. Charles and how there are living their commitments amid of their worldly duties. She was the one who was about to leave to join the International Assembly of the Lay Fraternity in Beyrouth, Lebanon. The theme of the Assembly was

“Walking together in hope, struggling together for justice.”

CONCLUSION AND PLANNING:

The last session of this Month was the evaluation and planning session. The Asian Responsible, Fr. Arthur from Pakistan, chaired the meeting. He requested the brothers to acknowledge incoming emails and to respond to them ASAP. Communication among Asian brothers seem often to be a orphan in the daily routine of parish priests, retreat preachers or retired priests. Not replying to emails is a hindrance to the Fraternity as a whole to grow in Asia and it is lacking responsibility to a brother's call from near or far. He requested us to be proactive in writing articles for OPEN HANDS.

JC Dates and Programmes 2019/20 Asian Fraternity

1. General Assembly – Cebu, January 2019
Participants: National Responsible + One Member
Finance - 40% Re-imbusement
2. Asian Assembly - South Korea in October 2019
3. Asian Week of Spirituality 2020 (place to be finalized later)
4. Next Asian Assembly - 2022 (")
5. Next Month of Nazareth - Once in three years; next in July/August 2021 (for 21 days for Asian Countries)

6. Contributions of the National Fraternity to the Asian / Inter-National Fraternity

The Month of Nazareth concluded, as already reported, with a very beautiful and meaningful ceremony. We all stood in a circle, then each member present, read their commitment and as a sign of their sincerity, then washed the feet of the brother standing next to him. Then the brother whose foot was washed, prayed over him assuring him of his constant prayers and fraternal support. This was a wonderful inspiration for the followed final Eucharist. After a quick lunch, we trooped out with our luggages. We were ferried by the local jeepnies to the bus stand to Manila. That was the final Hooray!!!

Fr. Shevan Fr. Mintu Palma

Fr. Klaus Beurle

Jesus Caritas Brothers who joint Month of Nazareth:

Frs. Arthur Charles, *Pak*, Eric Lozada, *Phil*, Tony Llanes, *Phil*, Mintu Lawrence Palma, *Bdesh*, Maria Selvon, *Ind*, Sagayanathan, *Ind*, Klaus Beurle, *Ger*, Fabian Paul, *Pak*, Anthony Pigven, *Phil*, Mushtaq Piara, *Pak*, Mathew Roy, *Ind*, Anthan Ilyas, *Pak*, Eugene, *Myan*, Joey Escoto, *Phil*, Abid Masim, *Pak*, James Chaman, *Pak*, Joseph Shahzad, *Pak*, Joyanto Gomes, *Bdesh*, Shafir Bashir, *Pak*, Jose F. Tubiamosa, *Phil*, Fabian Paul, *Pak*, Larry Famarin, *Phil*, Matthew Mookpaw, *Myan*.

Retreat: Oh Chang Ho, *Korea* -

Short time visitors: Edo Coroza, *Phil*, Sanny De Claro, *Phil*, Dado Castillo, *Phil*.