

JESUS CARITAS NATIONAL ASSEMBLY PAKISTAN

November 12-16, 2018

Faisalabad

Theme

Blessed Charles de Foucauld and Eucharist

The National Get together of the Pakistan Fraternity of Jesus Caritas met in Pastoral Centre, Chak 7, Faisalabad from November 12 to 16, 2018. 15 members were present from Karachi, Lahore, Rawalpindi/Islamabad and Faisalabad Fraternities. There were a few more members who wanted to come but were unable to be present. The theme was Blessed Charles de Foucauld the Eucharist. The printed prayers in English and Urdu and the banner (flex) with the theme and the Eucharist in the setting of the Faisalabad Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul, with the Clock Tower of Faisalabad and the Minar-E-Pakistan of Lahore at the sides clearly displayed that the Faisalabad Fraternity had prepared well for the National event. Fr. Saleh Diego National Responsible welcomed all on November 12, 2018, after dinner.

Speaking in Faisalabad on November 13, 2018, Fr Emmanuel Asi the International Councilor explained the various dimensions of the Spirituality of Jesus Caritas. What are the important elements of Jesus Caritas. What type of atmosphere is needed, and how to create that atmosphere and live.

Explaining the Review of Life methodology he said that in this process each one present should get an opportunity to speak. It should be participatory and nobody should be judged in this process. The atmosphere should be joyful and spiritual. The meeting begins with a prayer and there must be enough silence and all reflections must be from the perspective of the Gospels. All this is possible with an atmosphere of faith and prayer.

There were two groups that tried this process one was the Lahore Fraternity with the addition of a member from Karachi and the other the Faisalabad Fraternity with the addition of a member from Rawalpindi/Islamabad Fraternity.

The time spent before the Holy Eucharist was the highlight of the National Week of Prayer. It was a time of silence and reflection.

Fr Bonnie Mendes speaking on November 14, 2018, on Blessed Charles de Foucauld and the Eucharist recalled the two visits of Pere Rene Voillaum Little Brothers of Jesus Councilor to St Pius X Seminary, Quetta in the 1950s. He said he encouraged the seminarians at that time to visit the Little Brothers in their mud house behind the Central Jail in a poor area. The Seminarians spent time there in solitude and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. That experiential knowledge of a friend of Blessed Charles de Foucauld gave great help to know how he spent time in solitude in Algeria and in contemplative prayer. Fr Bonnie recalled that he offered Mass in the Byzantine rite in Quetta for the seminarians to experience their liturgy.

Each Fraternity present shared the activities of their Fraternity and the problems they were facing in getting new members and retaining the interest of the old members. Every Fraternity seemed to have its ups and downs with a struggle to meet regularly and keep the Fraternity alive. The Pakistani participation in the Asian Assemblies was discussed especially how to make it more effective and to prepare people better before going for such Assemblies. It seemed in general Pakistan was weak in preparing its members going abroad for International events.

The desert experience or time in solitary prayer was experienced by each on November 14, 2018, afternoon.

Fr. Emmanuel Asi explained that the Month of Nazareth could be shortened depending on various circumstances, though the name remains Month of Nazareth.

Mrs Alishba Javed and Ms Nargis Hira from the Sadhuke (Lahore Lay Fraternity) and Multan Lay Fraternity respectively came to share their experiences not only of the International Assembly in Lebanon meeting but also how their groups are doing in Multan and Lahore. Karachi Lay Fraternity had gone slow after being active for many years. The members at the Assembly were happy to see two young lay people from Pakistan. Most of the others were senior citizens.

All priests expressed their desire and determination to strengthen the Lay Fraternity in their areas. The new book, "Strength of the Laity" (Mominen KI Akhuwat) in Urdu was launched at the Assembly, by Fr. Saleh Diego and Fr Bonnie Mendes. It was priced at Rs 230/- 65 copies got sale immediately.

Fr. Saleh Diego dwelt on the life of Blessed Charles Eugene de Foucauld, he said the details of his life given by Fr. Asi is a great help. Fr. Saleh gave the quote loving people we love God. Charles said, "I want all the people here, be they Christian, Muslim, Jew or whatever, to see me as their brother, a universal brother. They have started calling my house the 'fraternity' and that gives me pleasure." To give another quote, "I want to be so good that people will say 'If this is what the servant is like, what the Master must be like?'" Fr. Saleh said, He was a true Christian, he reflects Jesus in his life.

All were informed that October 2019 there will be the Asian Fraternity in South Korea. Next year in different Fraternities Pakistani members will reflect on the life of Blessed Charles de Foucauld. Themes from the life of Blessed Charles will be given to each Fraternity in the country.

Fr. Inayat gave a quotation from the late Cardinal Cordeiro, prepare for Mass as if this is your first Mass, offer it as if it is your last Mass, reflect on it as if it is your only Mass. Besides preparation, he stressed celebration, proclamation and giving witness.

Fr. Bonnie preaching at the final Mass on Friday, November 16, 2019, emphasized love as stressed by The letters of St John. He asked the priests to be patient with the young priests and guide. He requested the senior priests to remember that times have changed and with it values. Try to sympathize and empathize with others.

The help given by Fr. Shafique Hidayat to Jesus Caritas was greatly appreciated.

Next November 4 to 7, 2019, the National Assembly will be in the Pastoral Centre, Rawalpindi. That Fraternity will play host. The theme will be decided later.

Fr. Bonnie Mendes

November 16, 2018.