

PRIESTLY FRATERNITY JESUS CARITAS
LETTER OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF CEBU
JANUARY 2019

From January 15 to 29, 2019, we received a beautiful gift from the Lord: the General Assembly of the Jesus Caritas Fraternity of Priests in the Philippines. At the Talavera House of Prayer in Cebu, we had a beautiful experience of universal brotherhood in the light of this theme: *“Missionary diocesan priests inspired by the witness of Brother Charles de Foucauld”*.



We are very grateful to the Jesus Caritas Priest Fraternities of the Philippines as well as to the Diocesan Church of Cebu, represented by its Pastor, Msgr. José PALMA, who have generously welcomed us. We were 42 brothers from Africa, America, Asia and Europe, each one with his language, culture, history, experiences, testimonies ... it has been a precious manifestation of the Spirit of Pentecost!

We had the joy of meeting the people of God in Cebu through participation in festive Sunday Eucharistic celebrations. In the celebrations of “Señor Santo Niño” in Cebu, and “San Sebastián” in Borbon we have discovered an enthusiastic people of God who celebrate their faith with a contagious happiness.

Two events made us happy and saddened us during the assembly: the release of our brother Denis SEKAMANA in Rwanda after a long imprisonment and the attack on January 27th at the Jolo Cathedral which killed about twenty people and injured more than 80. We continue to pray for all the victims and for the progress of peace.

CONTEMPLATION OF REALITY

The international team has effectively coordinated the activities of the Assembly through a three-step methodology: to contemplate reality, discern and commit. We began by listening to the realities our fraternities are living in their respective countries:

In society:

- Wealth is more and more unjustly distributed. The rich are getting richer while the poor are stuck in misery.
- The poor struggle to defend their rights; they are the first victims of the violence and trafficking of all kinds that arise from poverty.
- People’s contempt for their environment and the abusive exploitation of the planet’s resources have provoked a serious ecological crisis of which the poor are the first victims.
- Migrations caused by violence and insecurity are growing while rich countries are closing their borders.
- In some countries, the ability of rulers to solve society’s problems is questioned and political power is being seized by nationalist and xenophobic parties.
- In other countries, extremist groups have divided the communities and spread fear



and mistrust in the heart of the population.

- Islam is crossed by contradictory currents and fundamentalism and terrorism are developing. Both Christians and Muslims suffer from this situation.
- A growing creativity exists nevertheless in NGOs to answer the great challenges of the defence of human rights, immigration, ecology, solidarity with the poor and living together in the diversity of the cultures.

In the Church:

- In some countries the number of Christians is decreasing and indifference towards religion and the Church is developing. The secularization and the scandal of sexual abuse of minors by priests and bishops have further worsened this situation
- But many signs of hope appeared with the exhortation of Pope Francis, "***Evangelii Gaudium***".
- This exhortation leads the Church on a new missionary journey that is more consistent with people's expectations and more faithful to the Gospel.
- We are called to live in simplicity and proximity with the poor and to go out to "the peripheries".
- We see the emergence of lay people who are more committed to their faith and who become evangelizers.
- We become more open to dialogue with the laity, and also with believers of other confessions or other religions.
- We feel the need to develop pastoral initiatives to form small grassroots communities that will let the seed of the Gospel grow amidst the challenges that people face.



In fraternities

- In some Fraternities members are diminishing and growing old.
- In many fraternities, the Review of Life and the Desert Day are not practiced. It's a challenge we have to face!
- There is good communication between the fraternities of North and South.
- Fraternities are growing in the countries of the South.

- Fraternal life is developed thanks to our monthly meetings
- Eucharistic adoration is variously practiced by the fraternities.
- The desire of proximity with the poor is a priority in our commitments.

THE CRITERIA OF DISCERNMENT

Daily meditations, lectures and sharing of experiences have helped us to deepen the discernment of all these contemplated realities.

Emmanuel ASI and Honoré SAVADOGO helped us reflect daily on the gospel of the day and thoughts of Brother Charles. The first invited us to accept Christ's call to open our hearts to our marginalized brothers and sisters, and the second to walk closely in the footsteps of Brother Charles.



The conferences of Maurício da SILVA, Jean François BERJONNEAU and Manolo POZO OILLER led us to rediscover the foundations of mission and the missionary spirituality of Brother Charles and Pope

Francis. It was also an urgent call to hold firmly to their missionary convictions in order to become a "Church in Mission" which announces the Good News to those who are at the geographical and existential peripheries of life. They brought to our attention some of the current challenges to mission: the degradation of our "common home", emigration and dialogue with Muslims.

In terms of testimonies, we were strongly motivated by Mariano PUGA sharing on his pastoral

experience with the poor and the oppressed. Also Fernando TAPIA presented us with a document for the Month of Nazareth elaborated by Jean-Michel BORTHEIRIE, Manolo POZO OLLER and himself. We are motivated to find the time for this important exercise of our spirituality which this precious guide facilitates.



The Calls We Heard:

Facing this situation and according to the criteria of discernment stated above, here are the calls for our fraternity.

In the heart of our societies we wish to:

- Implement in our countries this "universal brotherhood" to which Brother Charles calls us, placing ourselves near the poorest.
- Respect with them this planet entrusted to us by our Creator.
- Fight with them for more justice.
- Respect and promote the dignity of each person and that everyone can have his share of bread and work.

At the service of our churches we have heard the call to:

- Participate fully in this "missionary transformation" to which Pope Francis calls us in "***Evanglii Gaudium***".
- Consolidate basic Christian communities around the Word of God.
- Develop collaboration between laity and priests in order to engage together in mission and fight against clericalism.
- Help our communities to "go out to the geographical and existential peripheries".
- Make of our communities' poverty a way of solidarity with the poor.
- Learn to dialogue with those who believe or think otherwise.
- Contribute to the living together of all the groups that make up society.
- Develop the collaboration between laity and priests in order to engage in mission together.
- Invite our churches to welcome migrants as their brothers and sisters and Christ himself.



In our fraternities

We feel called to a conversion in putting in practice the means of fraternity:

- Make an authentic Review of Life as a springboard for mission.
- Respect Eucharistic Adoration and the days in the desert as indispensable to follow Christ on the path toward others.
- Make the Month of Nazareth an important step to renew one's ministry and to adjust it to the way of Brother Charles.
 - Develop the relationship between fraternities of different continents thanks to the website <iesuscaritas.org>.
 - Make known the spirituality of Brother Charles to younger generations.



THE ELECTION OF A NEW GENERAL RESPONSIBLE

We thank Aurelio and his team for the valuable work they have done over six years. We elected Eric LOZADA from the Philippines as General Responsible. He is the first brother of Asia to assume this responsibility. We implored upon him the breath of the Holy Spirit so that his mission would be fruitful. He has set up his work team with Fernando TAPIA, Honoré SAVADOGO, Matthias KEIL and Tony LLANES. We are counting on our brothers in this new team to help us "cry out the Gospel with all our lives" and to give a new spiritual and missionary impulse to our fraternities, because as Pope Francis reminds us:

"Christ Risen and Glorious is the profound source of our hope, and his help will not fail us in the fulfilment of the mission he entrusts to us "***Evangelii Gaudium***" N ° 275.



Brother responsables and delegates in the General Assembly in Cebu, Philippines, January 2019.