

FRATERNITIES IN MISSION

« As they prayed, the house where they were assembled rocked. From this they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to proclaim the Word of God fearlessly. The whole group of believers was united, heart and soul » (Act 4, 31-32).

Dearly beloved brothers,

In solidarity with the bishops gathered for the Synod of the Amazon, we, your brothers of the international team, regretfully without Tony because he could not get the visa, are brought to this beautiful and quiet place called Sacred Heart of Mary of Mirinae Retreat House. Situated on a valley, surrounded by hills teeming with trees in colorful autumn, we are gathered together with 14 brothers from 4 countries of Asia in their continental Assembly from October 11-18. The beauty of the place speaks to us deeply of our longing for peace and rest to refresh our tired bodies laden with the noise and burdens in ministry. Our daily adoration, Eucharistic celebration, gospel sharing and desert day have become warm encounters with Jesus and with each other. During our stay we enjoyed the Korean food and the hospitality of the young vibrant community of the Sacred Heart of Mary sisters.



The Assembly of Cebu has entrusted our fraternities with some calls and challenges. These calls were felt in three areas of our life: our societies, churches and fraternities. Taking into account these calls and the results of our contemplating and discerning the realities of our fraternities, we would like to invite you to be makers of fraternity. We feel that building up fraternity and living it as a gift of God will lead us to live a mission of fraternity with our brother priests, in our churches and societies.

Gratitude and care for our aging brothers

« Planted in the house of Yahweh, they will flourish in the courts of our God. In old age they still bear fruit, will remain fresh and green » Ps 92, 13-14.

As we were contemplating the reality of our fraternities in Cebu, we found that members of the western fraternities are diminishing or getting old. To get old is a process of growth, a gift of God. Our elder brothers are therefore precious gifts for our fraternities. They have aged in fraternity with faithfulness, they are veterans of fraternity. We would like to express to them our heartfelt and deep gratitude for their presence among us. You are the canals through whom Jesus has brought each one of us to the beautiful fraternities of Jesus Caritas.

As many of you were going around the world to proclaim the Good News of Jesus on the footsteps of Brother Charles and as *fidei donum* priests, you brought Jesus Caritas fraternities to America, Asia and Africa. In spite of the burden of your age, many of you are still making extraordinary efforts to attend fraternity meetings as much as you can. Your faithfulness is an example for us to emulate.

Dear elder brothers, we wish to assure you that we appreciate highly your presence among us. We desire to listen to you and learn from your wisdom and experience of fraternity. We also rely on your faithful prayers that we may be able to live fraternity. As your energies are diminishing, we join you in the prayer of abandonment of Brother Charles, asking for you the grace of a total surrender to God's love.



We invite all of us, to pay more attention to our elder brothers: visiting them, keeping them informed about the life of fraternities, celebrating their birthdays and anniversaries of priestly ordination, sharing their joys and pains, etc. Many of us are already doing well in this regard and we encourage them to continue this caring service.

Enriched with the enthusiasm and vitality of young brothers

« Let no one disregard you because you are young, but be an example to all the believers in the way you speak and behave, and in your love, your faith and your purity » 1 Tm 4, 12.

In some many countries, mainly in Asia and Africa, our fraternities are receiving new members. Young priests are joining us to walk on the footsteps of Brother Charles. Their arrival fills our hearts with happiness and gratitude to God as our fraternities are renewed with their youthful vitality and enthusiasm. It is a clear sign that the spiritual experience of Brother Charles is still very relevant and fascinating.

This gift of new and young members is a great grace but also a challenge. First of all, we need to welcome them sincerely and open our hearts to their profound aspirations. We are also invited to let our fraternities become places where they can experience the brotherly support of elder brothers. We have the delicate duty to take care of them and help them to live the often difficult transition between the protected life of the Major Seminary and the great challenges of their starting priestly life. They need to find some gentle and kind mentors among us.



The coming of new members in our fraternities is a gift of God but our witness of life and desire to get new brothers matters. In Brazil, our brothers have organised many activities in order to let the major seminarians discover the beauty and relevance of Brother Charles' spiritual experience. Such initiatives of sharing what we live and of inviting new members are to be promoted in our fraternities.

We believe that our fraternities are precious gifts from God that we cannot keep for ourselves. Our conviction that Jesus Caritas Fraternity can help us to become good diocesan priests is to be shared. In the Churches where priests are coming from different parts of the world to offer a pastoral care or to study, our fraternities are invited to show them a special hospitality. Among them, priests belonging to Jesus Caritas fraternities need to be integrated in our fraternities. Let us not miss this opportunity of living universal brotherhood with our brother priests. We invite you, brothers, to be the first to reach out to them and offer them our fraternal love.

“Jamais arrière”, never backwards but faithfulness and perseverance

“I know your activities, your love, your faith, your service and perseverance, and I know how you are still making progress” Rev 2, 19.

The Cebu Assembly has revealed that in many of our fraternities, we lack faithfulness to the principal means of our spiritual growth. We cannot highlight enough the importance and necessity of daily Eucharistic adoration, monthly desert day, review of life, monthly meetings and Gospel sharing for our spiritual growth. We would like to thank and congratulate all the brothers and fraternities who are very faithful to these important means of spiritual growth. Dear brothers, we encourage you to keep going with such a faithfulness that is a blessing for all of us.

As for you, brothers, who are struggling to be faithful to these means, we urge you to never abandon the little you are doing. The motto of Brother Charles' family was “Jamais arrière”, “never backwards”. He said that when we go out for something, we must never come back without doing it. With his spirit and his example of determination, we can one day come to full faithfulness. Therefore, let no one abandon what he is already doing!

Because of big distances, isolation and lack of financial means, many brothers cannot attend to fraternity meetings regularly. As it is difficult to use the means of spiritual growth without this regular attendance to fraternity meetings, we urge you, dear brothers, to be more creative about this situation. In areas where meeting priests is not possible, building fraternity with the other members of Brother Charles' spiritual family is not only a fruitful alternative but a precious opportunity.



Fraternity urges us into mission

“The Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them out ahead of him in pairs, to all the towns and places he himself would be visiting” (Lk 10,1).

As diocesan missionary priests on the footsteps of Charles de Foucauld, a specificity of our mission is building up fraternity, being experts in fraternal love, becoming universal brothers. Using the spiritual means available in our Jesus Caritas fraternities to foster our spiritual growth is also

characteristic of our being missionaries. To take care of our spiritual life and grow in holiness is therefore necessary for the fruitfulness of our missionary endeavours.

As we have reflected widely and deeply about mission during the Cebu Assembly, we now wish to encourage you in your respective missionary commitments. We invite you, during your meetings and assemblies, to identify the many missionary activities in which you are already involved. Sharing and reflecting about your missionary practices, listening to your mission experiences and learning from each other's stories, will certainly enrich you and enkindle anew your missionary enthusiasm.

Gratitude

Our gratitude goes to Philip and the Korean brothers for their warm hospitality, to Arthur Charles for his gift of service to the Asian brothers during the past six years and to the community of sisters for their contagious joy in taking care of our needs. We are also grateful to the little brothers and sisters and members of the lay fraternity for their visit and the gifts they have prepared for us.

Gongju Sacred Heart of Mary Merinae Retreat House, Friday, October 18th, 2019.

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Your brothers in the International Team