

Philippines, May 15, 2023

LETTER TO THE BROTHERS AROUND THE WORLD

Eric LOZADA, international responsible

(In celebration of the first anniversary of the canonization of Brother Charles de Foucauld)

“He (Brother Charles) understood that God wanted him to be satisfied with clearing a path so that others could plant better. But he was thinking only in terms of announcing the Gospel to the people of the Sahara. He had no idea God was working through him to prepare a gift for the entire Church.” (Archbishop of Marseilles, France, preaching about Brother Charles leading to his canonization)



Dear Brothers,
Warm fraternal greetings to you all!!!



How is everything with you at the moment? What are significant experiences of joy, growth, transformation in your personal life, your friendships with brother-priests in your diocese, in your ministry to those in the peripheries? What are spaces of discouragement, stagnation and struggle? How are you coping? To whom do you go for support? Where are you being led by the Spirit in your resolve to be a joyful missionary of the Risen Christ? How are you growing in the discipline of daily adoration, review of life, desert day, gospel meditation, attending monthly meeting? How do these spiritual practices strengthen your commitment to a call within a call to be a universal brother, gentle presence, contemplative companion, prophetic preacher, missionary disciple of Jesus of Nazareth in the footsteps of Brother Charles?

I humbly pose these questions with you. Questions are like compass for the soul seeking the True and the Good amidst the complex, diverse, confusing paths of our world. I honestly struggle with you these questions. Precisely, in this tension, the grace of God works unconditionally to mellow our hearts. The key is to hold the question long enough until it strips us naked of all that is not true and not good in us. AA people have this to tell us - keep coming back to the practice. We are not “super” human beings who always live

from our ideal. No, we are wounded, weak pastors who, very often live from our frailties and inadequacies yet we are so dearly loved and are called to love like the Master. Brothers, I have the occasion to write to you as we celebrate the first anniversary of the canonization of Brother Charles. I was a witness to the joy and jubilation last year at St Peter's Square in Rome. It was a Kairos moment not only for us but more so, for the universal church. When his name was announced at the beginning of the Eucharist, joyful cheers and loud claps of affirmation and gratitude to God were heard from the people. Now, the same euphoric joy is lived out in the chronos of concrete, little yet decisive acts of prophetic witness in the peripheries, inspired by the contemporary message of Brother Charles. The call of the synod on synodality invites us to participate in a universal journey as fellow pilgrims (not tourists), brothers and sisters all, walking side by side each other, collaborating, discerning and listening to one another where the Spirit is leading our world today.

In the course of our preparation last year, we from the International Team have asked with you – how has the canonization made an impact on you? Now, one year after, we ask with you something more specific – now that Brother Charles has been recognized as a gift to the church, what is ours to do to share this gift to others who are lost, lukewarm, curious, sympathizers but wanting to deepen their spirituality. Like the mandate of the apostles after the Resurrection to spread the news that He is alive, we have been called from being too inward-looking to be more out-going, to tread on unfamiliar territories, starting from simple personal encounter in the tomb of our losses, on the disappointing road of our Emmaus or in the breaking of bread with the poor and the marginalized. It was the Spirit of the Risen Christ that fired them up to be courageous, tireless, and

joy-filled missionaries.

How about us? What is our story? How have we been fired up in our mission to pass on the gift? How could we

initiate personal encounters with brother priests of our diocese to brothers beyond our diocese or country? How do we do mission with the other branches of the Spiritual Family in the spirit of fraternal collaboration and co-responsibility for the gift?

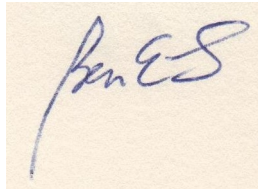


In the Philippines, we have organized ourselves with the other members of the Spiritual Family and are committed to be fellow pilgrims, recognizing our unique gifts yet called to witness unity, social friendships, fraternal sharing, co-responsibility in the life-long journey of missionary discipleship and fidelity to the charism of Brother Charles.

How about you and your local fraternity, the national and continental fraternities? Where are you being led by the Spirit? What is yours to do? We could not just sit down and operate behind our little world without a concern for the bigger reality of God's Kingdom here and now.

May the coming of the Spirit like tongues of fire set our hearts aflame as we take on the task of doing mission like our very own, Brother Charles. Though things were not always clear to him where to go and what to do, he never stopped in ambivalence and half-heartedness. Rather, his passion to imitate the love of God in Jesus of Nazareth so consumed him that he tirelessly wrestled with every human condition that separates us from God, from the poor and from one another. St Charles de Foucauld, pray for us!!

With much love and fire,

A handwritten signature in blue ink on a light-colored, textured background. The signature appears to be 'Ben ES'.