



NETWORKING AMONG

NEWSLETTER

svd_brothersphil@yahoo.com

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**Our Home:
Brothers' Formation House
Cebu City, Philippines**

Dear Brother Confreres,

We are all well informed and updated about the BROTHERS' NETWORK, which is an initiative of Br. Alfonso Berger (Generalate). This idea was discussed even at the General Chapter and considered as an important issue. The Brothers in Cebu are also members of the Network, but not too many messages reach us through it. So we have decided to take a new step with this experimental newsletter in order to mobilize the existing Network. It is the aim of this initiative to gather more responses and reactions of any kind from all the SVD Brothers in the four zones of our Society. This is a collective effort of all of us to start this medium of communication whereby we can share our thoughts and experiences frankly and fearlessly with one another. With the Divine Word on our side, let us help each other and make this work fruitful for ourselves and our mission. Thank you to everyone! May we hear from you soon!

AN INITIATIVE

We take advantage of a providential occasion to contact all the confreres included in the Network. Our Brothers' Formation Center has recently received a "new missionary in the Philippines," in the person of Bro. Bela Lanyi, SVD, who wants to share his joy with the other Brothers all over the world. We believe that our lack of personal acquaintances should not prevent us from sharing ourselves with each other, for we all belong to the same Arnoldus Family. In fact, plenty of Brothers have replied to our initiative.

This first message also contains an opening statement for a possible discussion. Bro. Bela is of the opinion that *our*

European provinces could prove authentic to our local youth only if our European missionaries are allowed to continue working in other continents. Meaning, not all European missionaries should be called back to their native countries. Understandably, then, Br. Bela appreciates very much that he is able to work in the Philippines. But, of course, not everybody would agree with the above-mentioned statement. We are therefore curious about what other Brothers think on this issue.

We wonder, too, if the other members of the Network have thoughts and experiences they would like to share with the rest of us. How about the situation of the Brother vocation in their respective places?



What are their present concerns? Is there anything of the past that has to do with their present? And what about their future? Is there anything that we can do globally together?

We are really very grateful for the answers we have received and will still receive from the Brothers, wherever they may be coming from. We are most pleased for whatever they write in a very open and honest way.

Br. Bela's initiative has already borne some fruit, which he readily shared with **Bro. Romualdo Abulad**, the National Director of Brothers in the Philippines. After reading the varied replies, Br. Romy suggested that we continue this sharing in a special form, the result of which is this **experimental newsletter!** We are hereby presenting to

our readers in a rather random way the messages Br. Bela has received internationally. Hopefully, we will soon get responses from our Brothers, as well any thoughts and messages they would like to share with the rest of us, so that this newsletter will develop and progress into a regular medium of communication among ourselves. The sooner we do this, the better for us. May God bless our work and mission! ■

I am very glad to read your letter and your various experiences. I am now studying in Jogjakarta, taking up computer science. I am trying to master this subject so that I can serve in accordance with the needs of our Society. Presently, there are 11 brothers who are studying in Jogjakarta, including 3 brothers who do agriculture, 1 computer science, 1 communication, 2 Indonesian language and literature, 1 secretarial, and 1 electronics.

Translation from Indonesian!

Br. Petrus Sii (Indonesia)

In Germany, the plight of the Brother vocations corresponds to the general spiritual situation of the country. Fortunately, most confreres have for a long time already been open to the title "Father" or "Brother." There is no problem with this. While lay people and faithful still tend to overestimate the priestly vocation, the young people are different now; they are now more open in this regard.

Translation from German!

Br. Bruno Rehm (Germany)

I am Br. Ric Atencio, presently assigned in the Philippines Central Province. In particular, I am working with the Holy Spirit Sisters as Dean of the College of Nursing. I was also once in St. Gabriel Austria for more than a year, as a nurse in our retirement house there.

Br. Ric Atencio (Philippines)

I'm Br. Florencio Jacela, SVD. You can call me Br. Jong. I'm glad you have chosen our country as your



mission area. I'm sure you'll enjoy your stay here. Have you adjusted to our food? Have you tried eating *balut*? Looking forward to meeting you in person...probably this summer. Enjoy your stay.

Br. Florencio Jacela (Philippines)

I have been an SVD brother for more than 27 years now, working in the SVD formation house in Tamale for 7 years before moving to become the manager of the Catholic book center in Accra for another 7 years. I was also a brother formation director for 4 years and as of now I am the producer of the

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Catholic Digest TV program. I am working for the Ghana Catholic

Bishops Conference and staying in the SVD Brothers' Formation House. It is good that we can share with one another and also support one another. We have now two brothers in formation, and since I am doing Bible Apostolate they do go with me for the Bible program and at the same time study for their exams in their respective professions.

Br. Stephen Domelevo (Ghana)

Actually, I am packing for the Australian province to spend there a year on orthopaedic training. It will be a challenging experience to learn new tricks, but I hope the Holy Spirit will renew my strength. We are trying to invigorate the formation program for brothers. Right now we have just a few candidates in formation, one of whom is studying at DWU.

Br. Jerzy Marek Kuzma (Papua New Guinea)

I am so happy because you are now in the Brothers'. Formation House. I'm sure you will also have a grand experience there. I was once there myself.

Br. Sebastião Tenorio da Silva (Brazilian OTP in PHS)

I have been teaching for the past three years at St. Paul Technical School Kukurantumi. I would like to continue my studies in your province at the University of San Carlos to do a Bachelor's Degree in Educational Management. I want to find out if it will be possible to get the chance. Incidentally, I have acquired a Certificate in Education at the University of Education Winneba-Kumasi, Ghana.

Br. Stephen Kofi Bonsu (Ghana)

Concerning the situation of Brothers in the Polish Province, we have at the moment 21 Brothers in

final vows and 8 Brothers in temporary vows. This year, Br. Jan Potyka, my classmate who used to be the prefect of the Junior Brothers and also the director of the agricultural farm in Pieniezno, wrote a mission petition after 25 years in religious vows. He thus went to Ireland for the English language course before going to the Province of Botswana, Africa. In this situation, we have to elect a new Director of Brother Formation and a new Prefect for the Brothers.

I have again been elected as Provincial Councillor for the next triennium and again appointed as Superior Delegatus. Br. Zbigniew Sulej came back to Pieniezno and became the Director of the Agricultural Farm.

Last week, Br. Gregory Filipczyk visited me. He belongs to the Taiwan Province and studied for a couple of years in the United States. He told me that he would go to the Philippines in October, in order to teach chemistry there.

Translation from Polish!

Br. Piotr Szewczuk (Poland)

I am the Area Coordinator for Formation in AFRAM. The brother situation here is quite good. We are working hard for that. Now, we have 6 brothers in formation, and one has just made his final vows last Sept. 8.

Br. Guy Mazola (Congo)

I am a Brother in temporary vows, in the second year at the Institute for Brothers. The Institute, which lasts for two years, consists in an internal study of philosophy and theology. In addition to this, we also do our work. We can work in the farm, in the joiner's workshop or in the library. Since I work in the library, I have a good access to the Internet, and so we can correspond easily. At present, the Polish Province has only a few Brother vocations. We have only nine Brothers in temporary vows and there is no Brother candidate in the novitiate.

Translation from Polish!

Br. Krzysztof Charchuta (Poland)

Right now I am the coordinator for Peace and Justice for the Chicago Province. I really love my work. You ask about Brother formation in the US. Right now we only have a few candidates in Brother formation, compared to several men for the priesthood.

Br. Brian McLaughlin (USA)

I am Theodore, I am the superior delegatus of Togo and Benin Region. I am also working in the social field. I will tell you more next time.

Br. Theodore Kakanou (Togo, Benin)

My name is Br. Ruben Painneon, SVD. I'm 27 years old and came from Timor. Now I've just arrived in Jogjakarta and am studying communication. I am very happy here. I hope you are happy, too. Next time, I will share my experience about my study in Jogjakarta. Meanwhile, I'll be waiting for your sharing.

Br. Ruben Painneon (Indonesia)

As regards to the brothers vocation here in Kenya, there are already two Kenyan SVD Brothers in perpetual vows. Unfortunately, after them nobody is now in formation, either as a seminarian or in temporary vows.

Br. Manuel Omay (Kenya)

We have in Slovakia two young Brothers. The other one got a mission assignment to the neighboring Czech Republic, so that I remain alone here. I have been working for three years as a nurse for our old confreres.

Translation from Slovakian!

Br. Maros Butala (Slovakia)

I am a Brother in temporary vows. I am going to profess my final vows in 2008. We do not have a separate house, and we live together with the clerical seminarians. At the moment, we have four Brothers in OTP and four here in Brasil. I study informatics and when I graduate, I would like to go to Madagascar, where I had already my OTP-experience. The formators in Brasil require a good professional formation after two years of theological studies.

Translation from Portuguese!

Br. Simao Pedro Rego (Brasil)

I am glad to read your mail. Here everything is okay. I am from Ghana but working in Togo as a Missionary. I worked for several years with the youth, teaching them carpentry and joinery, but we have already given the parish to the diocese. Now I am doing computer studies. I will send you more details as time goes on. We are three brothers in the province. One is managing the center for the blind and the other is yet to be assigned.

Br. Anthony Darko-Mensah (Togo)

To begin with, I am in the Brother formation house where I have been in charge of the students for nine years. I am also going to finish my second term as a councillor in the provincial's team. At present we have 16 new candidates. We keep them for a year for the language course, and then they go to INH for junior college studies.

I am able to send you this message from our provincial office. In my place, I face lots of trouble in getting the internet connection. I would love to share many more things. I know Br. Romy well, so please give my greetings to him. Definitely we will continue to share further. Thanks for your beautiful gesture.

Br. Muktlal Ekka (Indonesia)

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As you know I am in Jamaica and loving every minute of it. Doing hands-on ministry, and not to get caught up in the administrative work, is WHY I joined the Society. In America we have a few Brothers in temporary vows. I hope they will stay with us and become lifelong members of the Society

Br. Bernard Spitzley (Jamaica)

In addition to my other obligations (as treasurer, etc.), I have been busy developing an Internet portal for the Russian Catholics. On the occasion of the ordination of the new archbishop of Moscow, we have put on the existing portal a new module for watching video-clips. A new international group of developers has been created for this project. Everybody in the group speaks Russian.

Translation from Polish!

Br. Christoph Miszczyk (Region Ural)

I am from Argentina. As a Brother in temporary vows, I live at the Formation House. I am studying to be a social worker. I also participate in biblical and informatical courses. Moreover, I help in the pastoral work for farmers and indigenous people in Cordoba. The objectives of this are: struggle for their rights, for their farming properties and for jobs appropriate to their human dignity. I also participate in the Argentinian movement "Campesino."

We have in this house four confreres in temporary vows. They pursue the following studies: social work, social communication, theater-sociology and theology.

In Latin-America and in particular in Argentina, the Theology of Liberation is very important. In the light of this, we strive to fit into the reality of the Argentinian society, where we have to live and work. This gets us beyond the limits of the usual parish work. We, Brothers in temporary vows, have the misión to help the people in their life, and in this way we evangelize.

I think it is interesting to keep connection with each other.

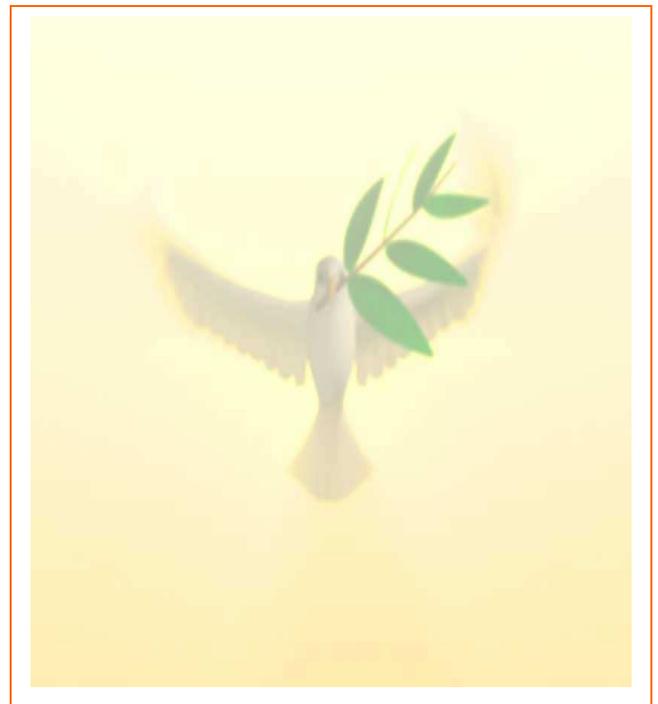
Translation from Spanish!

Br. Jorge Gabriel Gomez (Argentina)

I live in Columbia. At present, I am graduating from theology. I am now writing my thesis about the communities of the Afrocolombians.

Translation from Spanish!

Br. Miller Hernandez Diaz (Colombia)



ABOUT OUR FUTURE

We are all happy with what we are pursuing at the moment. We hope that what our Society is longing for will come to completion. We ask for your prayer and support, especially for our studies and for our community here.

Translation from Indonesian!

Br. Petrus Sii (Indonesia)

I am a Brazilian. At this moment, I am in the formation as a student. I am doing my OTP/PFT experience in Chile, in the southern region of the country. We live in a parish, with two priest confreres: one of them is from Africa, the other is from Indonesia. In December, my OTP will end, and then I am going to return to Sao Paulo, Brasil in order to finish my theology. During my two-year work in Chile, I got acquainted with the missionary work among the Mapuche people, who live in the southern part of Chile.

It has been a wonderful experience. I have learnt a lot from the local people, despite the big difficulties I had in the religious communities. I experienced those difficulties, particularly as a Brother and as a student, because the Church and the Province of Chile have a very clerical attitude.

We do not have here Brother vocations. In the whole Province, there are only two Brothers: an Argentinean and a German.

Translation from Spanish!



I can say that we are hoping to get more Brothers, but the vocations to the brotherhood are not coming as we would like them to be. Some years ago we were getting about 10 brother candidates a year, but now we have only one or two. So I hope you understand the situation. I thank God that you have more brothers there. Thanks once more and hope we keep on sharing about the brother vocation.

Br. Stephen Domelevo (Ghana)

I would say that the issue of Brothers in Poland is rather difficult. Some Brothers had to return from Russia and Byelorussia, because of the political situation there. We have in the Polish Province new superiors, everything is still in the beginning of the way. We experience a lot of changes. We will try to do our best.

Translation from Polish!

Br. Stanislaw Pascha (Poland)

I personally think that the biggest challenge we face in the US (and I think this is a world-wide concern too) is clericalism. For me clericalism is the most damaging disease in the Catholic Church. The role of Brothers and the role of the laity are completely tarnished by the falsehoods of clericalism. It amounts to a complete misunderstanding of the priesthood and the role of the laity (and the Brotherhood, too) in the Church. Neither the liturgy nor the sacraments is an exclusive right of the clergy. The liturgy and the sacraments belong to us. I hope we can continue dialoging about these issues. Please let me know about Brother formation in the Philippines.

Br. Brian McLaughlin (USA)

I wish you luck in your work in formation. I used to work there in Cebu also, in our formation house. I feel and I still believe that the brothers' formation there in the Philippines is not going anywhere (this is only my opinion). Granting that we have someone who will take the perpetual vows, is there anything that the Society can offer to them as jobs? It's true we came to join the Society so we can offer something to the Society, but it should be reciprocal. Anyway, just do what you can, and God will do the rest.

Br. Manuel Omay (Kenya)

It is difficult to get Brother vocation because we do not do much to promote it anyway. It is a vocation, so one can not complain.

Br. Anthony Darko-Mensah (Togo)

I consider taking a specialization in Anthropology, but for the time being I will go to Chicago only to learn English. So far, I am content and I hope that I can realize my future plan, which would also help me to deepen my vocation.

Translation from Spanish!

Br. Miller Hernandez Diaz (Colombia)

We do not have here Brother vocations. There are only two Brothers in the whole Province: one Argentinean and one German. We try to make connections with young people. Hopefully, we will find young people for the SVD lay religious vocation. I believe that our witness is worthy in this regard. The Network is a great initiative. I wish you a fruitful and blessed missionary work.

Translation from Spanish!

Br. Renato Parmagnani (Chile)



ABOUT OUR INTERNATIONALITY

The exchange of confreres among different continents is important, otherwise our missionary character would be destroyed. Our missionary task entails that we approach other peoples, nations and cultures, so that the Word of God “runs.” Or we would not be SVD anymore. But a country can not easily live without the native people. It is unimaginable, for example, that there would be in Hungary only Filipinos! The confreres there should again work to win the local people. This is actually a problem in the West, where there are only very few vocations. But egoism destroys; it withdraws our reason for existence.

Translation from German!

Br. Bruno Rehm (Germany)

The network is a good idea, for sure. But if I rely on my experience, it would hardly work because we are not used to discussing in an open way. Many of us are unpractised in it. And of course, there is the problem of the languages. All of us live in a different context and the confreres can not understand the situation of the others. Or perhaps they do not even want to do so? We are proud of our internationality. But how often have I experienced that we are actually very narrow even in our own circles, especially if things are getting more and more concrete.

We have a wonderful vocation, but we even experience so much mediocrity. We have to allow young people to challenge us. I may be very thankful that I am a Divine Word Missionary and work in many-sided tasks, but we should remain humans and we should try our best.

Translation from German!

Br. Bruno Rehm (Germany)

I really appreciate that you join us. Nice idea that you manage to reply to Br. Berger's request to send any information about our vocation and apostolate. Thanks for supporting Br. Berger's dream about the Brothers' Vocation in the Society.

Br. Edgardo Faz (Philippines)

I can tell you that our young Brothers who left for the mission to Ghana, New Guinea, and Taiwan are very content with their assignments. Nobody would like to return to Poland – thanks be to God!

Translation from Polish!

Br. Stanislaw Paska (Poland)

Between 1989 and 1992 I was in the Philippine Southern Province. I lived in the Brothers' Formation House and I recall that part of my life with great pleasure.

Translation from Polish!

Br. Piotr Szewczuk (Poland)

Yes, I am so glad to know that you are now appointed in the Philippines. I myself worked for 7 years in Manila and Mindoro.

Br. Guy Mazola (Congo)

I think that even Brothers could do a kind of cultural exchange program.

Translation from Polish!

Br. Krzysztof Charchuta (Poland)

I am so happy that we are in the net. I appreciate your move.

Br. Muktlal Ekka (Indonesia)

It is a good idea to start this correspondence and the fraternal dialogue of the SVD Brothers.

Translation from Spanish!

Br. Miller Hernandez Diaz (Colombia)

Fraternal greetings from Rome and sincere thanks for your e-mail!

Br. Alfonso Berger (Rome)

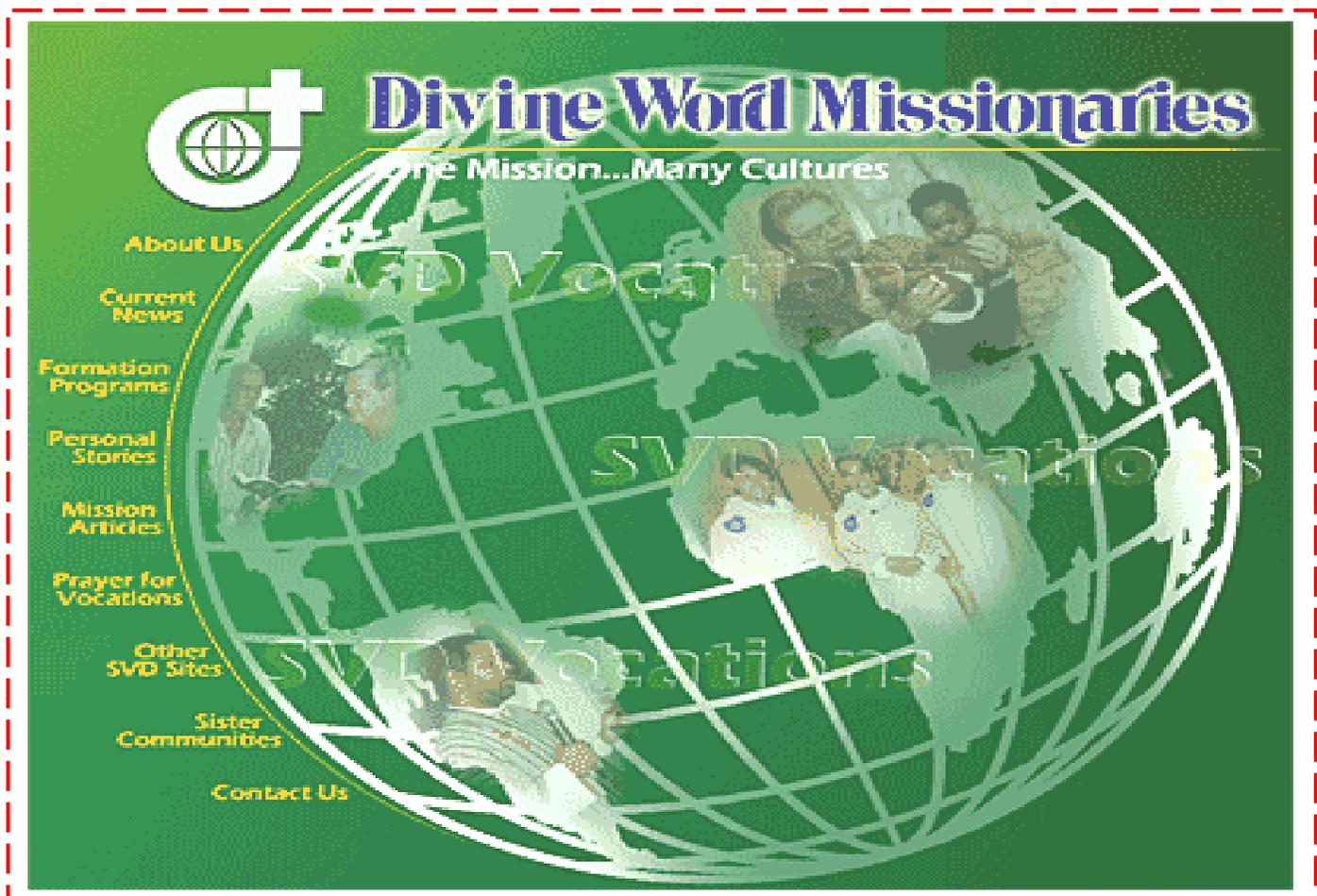
Thank you for your message. I am happy that I got such a message. It is very important for me that the information works among us. In particular, we should share about those things which make us anxious from day to day.

Translation from Spanish!

Br. Renato Parmagnani (Chile)

Thanks for all you do...

Br. Rogers Hannan (USC-WV)





OUR VISION ON THE BROTHERHOOD

From here there's still a long way to go. But what matters for now is that we have made a start, and hopefully a good one. No, we are not alone. The whole Church is with us. The world whom God loves will not abandon us. For there is no more doubt that we are needed – we, the Religious Brothers.

The ball is in our court. Our priest confreres have made it clear that they do not stand on the way, and that they do not feel that our times still call for a purely clerical Church. Our Generalate in Rome is fully supportive of initiatives coming from the Brothers and will be happy to see a renewed, restrengthened Brotherhood. Yes, ours is the next move.

It is good to remember the past, the past when we were most needed by the earliest founders of our Society, when the Brothers were useful and indispensable while the clergy was still being prepared for their future tasks. It is good to remember the past when, having accomplished that first mission, we felt almost in a quandary, wondering whether there was still any use for the Brother. Almost, the Brotherhood breathed its last.

But the future has come, and it is good to move the present to the future which is our destiny. Now, again, the Church knows that more than ever we need the Brothers – in all areas of our life, both holy and secular. Without demeaning the stature of the priesthood, we now know that the glow of this sacramental vocation will shine even brighter if Brothers will be aplenty and at work everywhere. Our founder, St. Arnold Janssen, knew almost from the start that he would need not only workers, but workers who were religious at the same time – and these were the Brothers. The same are needed today, and the Church says so. Our Society says so.

The Brothers today need to grow in number and competence. If they are to become again useful for the Church's mission, there should be many of us. But number is not enough; we have to be competent and skillful in every field we engage in. A mediocre worker does not make a holy religious. Nothing but the best is the work that we must set before us. And, with God's help, we will be able to do it in complete abandonment of self, in the spirit of prophetic dialogue, and all for the work of Christ. . I'm certainly optimistic about the future of the Brothers not only in the

Philippines but also in the whole Church. Perhaps we have no choice but to look forward to the future, or else the future will be bleak.

Anyway, our formation house in Cebu seems to have crossed the crisis of 2003 when only 4 remained of our candidates out of a high of 34 just four years earlier. Today we are 20 brother candidates, 2 brothers in temporary vows, and 3 brothers in perpetual vows living together in the seminary. Add to that 2 brother postulants in Tagaytay and 2 brother novices in Mindoro, making a total of 24 brother candidates in the Philippines. All together, there are 27 professed SVD brothers all over the country, but if the present trend continues that number should double in five to ten years.

It is important that we grow in number if we want our identity to become strong and our presence really felt in our ministries. If we remain few, we will not be very helpful. But, also, we have to upgrade our skills and competence, and that's why we are trying to professionalize all our brothers, never mind if their interests are technical, administrative or academic. That's our advantage in Cebu, that we have the SVDs running the University of San Carlos, as well as the Holy Name University in nearby Bohol. Both are major institutions of higher learning in these parts, which is precisely the reason why years ago the Brothers left Manila for the Visayas.

Thank you for reading this first initiative of the St. Joseph Freinademetz Brothers' Formation House. We will appreciate your comments or contributions.

With greetings from Cebu City,

Br. Bela Lanyi, SVD
Asst. Prefect, Brothers' Formation House

Br. Romualdo Abulad SVD
National Director of the Brothers, Philippines