



SVD BROTHERS

NEWSLETTER

Vol. 1 No. 3 July 2008

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BROTHER
FORMATION?

BROTHER
FORMATION!

Dear Confreres,

Hearty greetings from the Brothers' Formation Center in Cebu City, Philippines!

The vibrant and versatile community of the Filipino Brothers greets all SVD confreres, in particular the Brothers. We invite you to this network, which is our experiment in the use of the Generalate's *Brothers' Network*, thanks to *Br. Alfonso Berger*. We hope hereby to strengthen in a personal way the contacts among the Brothers.

We thank you again for your interest and response. Surely, a mind that is open and a feeling of community will help us overcome existing difficulties, such as the (seemingly) decreasing number of Brother Vocations. The love for our vocation and the whole Society will hereby grow, if and when we get to know more about each other.

We call this newsletter "**SVD Brothers**," according to the wish of the majority of our Brothers all over the world. We have to listen to you, for this newsletter belongs to all of us and **will contain contributions from you**.

We expect your contributions to reach us through E-Mail, written in your own favorite language, to the following address of the Network: svd_brothersphil@yahoo.com

If it also contains a personal message, please send it to any of our personal E-Mail addresses: newlanyi@hotmail.com (Br. Bela Lanyi) or bromyabulad@yahoo.com (Br. Romualdo Abulad).

Your SVD Brothers in Cebu, Philippines

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THE QUESTIONS



The present issue of SVD BROTHERS is about formation. I am sure that all members of our Forum (SVD BROTHERS) have received our message, in that we asked for your sharing about Brother Formation in SVD. First, we repeat here the essential part of that message. Then, we are going to present the contributions. We gave a short title to each of them in order to make the orientation easier for you. Despite of the good number of the contributions, we still encourage all members of this network to send us more contributions, especially reactions to the presented opinions.

Facing a decreasing number of Brothers in our Society, we all ask the question: why is it so? Why this different trend while the number of our clerics continues to grow? We love our vocation as Brothers and would like to do something for a change. Many candidates start the formation, but only a few reach the final vows: where do the others "disappear" during the years? Is our formation good enough? Meanwhile, our superiors and treasurers ask the other question: what are the expenses of the rather long programs of Brother formation? Are we sure that our well-formed young Brothers will not leave the Society after they have received their degree? Do we need only "academic Brothers"?

Here, in Cebu, we have the Formation House totally full with GOOD candidates. But what will the future bring? How should we work as formators in a really effective way, and how could we more faithfully follow the recommendations of our Society?

The Cebu formators, (Bro. Romy Abulad, Bro Ejay Fay and myself) were really happy when, in the beginning of this month, we received the reflections of Br. Alfonso Berger from the Generalate, which he gave as an "input" session to SVD formators, who were attending the Nemi formation workshop.



Brother Alfonso shared with us three "basic programs" of SVD Brother formation, which I attach to this message in a summarized form. Brother Alfonso commented on the programs as follows:

In brief, I am somehow worried that in many provinces/regions the Brother formation is too long (and expensive). Furthermore, there seems to be an "overload" of pastoral and philosophical/theological subjects, which leads many Brothers to lose "sight" of their professional training. Hence, I tried to come up with some alternative suggestions, which I send to you as well.

A basic formation in Philosophy/Theology (2-3 years in all) may be more appropriate. Then, during the Post-novitiate, Brothers should focus on their professional training.

Another difficulty I see is the pressure towards clericalism on potential Brother candidates. Their family, friends and peers usually do not understand correctly their call to religious-missionary life as a Brother. Related to this, the Brother concerned has to "discern" his particular contribution to the SVD mission through a profession/service, other than priesthood. This aspect demands much more reflection and accompaniment by the formators (cf. Setting up a personal project for the Brother candidate, "You Are All Brothers", pp. 18-19). Also, in many cases, Brothers have a different schedule for studies and related activities than those of the rest of the SVD students. (On that same booklet, on page 20, you will find some orientations about this situation). To get further information, take a look at the pps of that booklet, (cf. folder Bros.-Formation Programs).

Another challenge to train young Brothers today is the fact that they usually are not numerous. (Exception made for the Indonesian provinces). This calls for a necessary cooperation at the inter-provincial level (or sub-zonal level) to set up adequate programs for them. Recently, I got a draft paper of the sub-zona "Andina" (BOL, ECU and COL) in which the formators, together with some Brothers in perpetual and temporal vows, proposed a formation program for Brothers. I do not share it with you since that program still needs the approval of the provincial superiors of that sub-zone. However, what is interesting for me is the fact that there was an effort to come up with a suitable program in places where for many years there has been no program for SVD Brotherhood.



Some proposals: While preparing this input, I thought it would be useful to share with you some proposals on SVD Brother Formation. For this purpose, see again the folder Bros_Workshop_Formators (cf. ppt Bros_Plan "A"). Of course, there is also a Plan "B"

and even a Plan "C". (cf. the same folder again). I made these plans/proposals to facilitate our reflection on some particular points of the SVD Brother Formation. (From:Some reflections on the SVD Brother Formation, by Br. Alfonso J. Berger-Nemi, 5/21/ 2008)

Brother Alfonso made his comments and reflections with a sincere concern to raise awareness about the Brother vocation and to improve the formation program in the Society. According to his message, **"the bulletin SVD BROTHERS ... can constitute a suitable means of communication in sharing, (in a more informal way) what our Brothers think about this matter."** I think, that the QUESTIONS given by Brother Alfonso might be a good basis for your sharing.

1. What were the most important insights you got from this input on SVD Brother Formation? What were the values and what were the difficulties in your own formation? Would you recommend that model?
2. What are the main challenges you face to set up or to run a formation program for our Brothers?
3. Have you any proposals to share regarding SVD Brother Formation?

With this message, we also provide basic information for those who want to see more programs on Brother formation:

Regarding the current **formation programs** for Brotherhood that we have in the Society, we can also look at the enclosed files... (cf. folder **Bros.-Formation Programs**). Here, you will find some of the current formation programs in use in different provinces, classified by Zones: AFRAM, ASPAC, EUROPE and PANAM. In total, there are 15 programs available at present on our Website: <http://www.svdcuria.org> (To access these programs, you click on the top left icon, **Site Map**. Then, at your left side of the screen you will see a column with many titles: About..., Breaking news, SVD Generalate... Go down until **Formation**. Then, you will see two links (**SVD Brother Formation and CTP/OTP**).

After accessing the **SVD Brother Formation** link, you will see a "Welcoming word" and at the right side of the screen some information about its content: **Documents/Articles + four (4) boxes**: AFRAM, ASPAC, EUROPE and PANAM. In each of these boxes you will find the Brother Formation programs that were **updated** a few years ago and are now available in electronic format. Among the **documents and articles**, you will find some reflections on the Brother Vocation, documents of the last General Assembly on the Brother Vocation (Analecta SVD 70/1, in English), the booklet with the orientations for the SVD Brother Formation (**You Are All Brothers**, Generalate 2005) and the **report** on the survey that was done last year about the possible organization of a new Assembly on the Brother Vocation, implementing **Recommendation 3.5** of the XVI General Chapter (2006).

(From: Some reflections on the SVD Brother Formation, by Br. Alfonso J. Berger-Nemi, 5/21/ 2008)

We also attach to the message an overview of the formation in SVD, which is made by Bro Bela Lanyi, based on the letter of Br. Alfonso Berger, our General Councilor.

Plan / Stage	<u>A</u> (Latino-American) (11-12 year)	<u>B</u> (Indian) (11-12 years)	<u>C</u> (Indonesian) (10-11 years)
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PRE-NOVI TIATE	1 year: <i>Propedeutic</i> 2 years: <i>Philosophy/Theology or Religious Studies</i>	1 year: <i>Propedeutic</i> 1 year: <i>Junior College</i> 1 year: <i>SIS</i> ("Spirituality, Integration and Studies") 3 years: Graduation/College	2 years: Propedeutic (Postulancy) Basic formation in bible, theology, religious life.
NOVI TIATE	1 year, canonical	1 year, canonical	1 year, canonical
POST-NOVI TIATE	1 year: <i>preparation to enter university or to other suitable institute</i> Seminars on Bible, .theology, etc.	1 year: <i>preparation to work in professional field</i>	1 year: <i>preparation for enter university or to other suitable institute</i> Seminars on Bible, .theology, etc
PROFESSIONAL TRAINING	3-5 years	2-3 years, as "working experience"	2 or more years <i>in a suitable institute</i> , during which they live in an SVD community
PRACTICAL STAGE	2 years (substitutes OPT)	<i>s. above</i>	1-2 years working experience and seminars
FINAL VOWS	6 months <i>of preparation</i>	6 months <i>of preparation</i>	6 months <i>of preparation</i>

This introduction is prepared by: Br. Bela Lanyi (Cebu City, Philippines)

THE ANSWERS

“Demanding high qualification to become a brother candidate for me is killing the brotherhood... Focus on profession and service!”

Br. Stephen Domelevo, GHA



Greetings and thanks for your letter and for asking for my experience on Brother Formation.

I am an SVD Brother who is the Producer and Manager of the Catholic Digest TV program for the Catholic Ghana Bishops' Conference. When I look back one thing which is clear is that the brother vocation is going down and down and I sometimes ask myself whether we are going to have brothers in the years to come.

When one looks at the brother formation program you will all agree that it is overloaded with lot of things which is good but not needed to be done during Formation years. I did my Dei Verbum in Nemi after final vows and it was so helpful. We need to cut down the years of formation. The professional training must also be looked into. One can have the basic and after final vows go for studies like a priest who wants to do special work. My basic training in communication in Kenya - Gaba has helped me to now work as Producer of Catholic Digest for the church in Ghana. In Ghana we also have the problem of demanding high qualification to become a brother candidate and for me this is killing the brotherhood; at the end the candidate will prefer to go for priesthood. Jesus called all kinds of people but at the end the mission was accomplished. So we do not need only degreed or academic brothers but people with basic academic certificate so that we can train them later. Our training should help us focus on profession and service; this will help the youth to see the work of the brothers and come to join us. With God all things are possible, so

let us pray for the best. I will share more with you later.

“Our focus as Brothers should be “who we are”, and less on what we do...”

Br. James Zabransky, USC



I had two years of SVD Brother formation at the formation house in Cebu, 1979-81. For me the most effective part was the dedication of our

formator, Bro. Gary "Bruno" Burr. He was a true man of prayer, dedicated to our vows and our SVD spirituality. He taught by example, the most effective means. If we want an effective plan for Brother formation, we need to begin here; that is, dedicated formators with training in spirituality, psychology, etc. Also, our focus as Brothers should be on "who we are", and less on what we do. Who are we? First and foremost, we are disciples of Jesus Christ. This should always be the main focus of any Brother formation program. Without this solid foundation, Brother candidates will eventually leave the SVD. I like to recall what the spiritual writer and Trappist monk Thomas Merton once told a group of priests on retreat. He told them: Stay close to God, be at peace with yourself, and everything else will be taken care of. I believe the same message applies to any Brother in the SVD.

“I came to expect the unexpected, and not to become surprised by surprise...”

Br. Bernie Spitzley, USC



I remember my role as a Formation Director for Brotherhood Candidates.

I was asked to serve in two roles as a Formation Director. I was in the Divine Word College at Epworth Iowa for nine years, six of which as the Dean of students. Nine years at Brother Wendelin House of Formation for Brothers and brotherhood candidates in Washington D.C. Both were rich experiences, and both were very different. At Divine Word College I was able to work with a staff of approximately ten people, composed of SVD and dedicated lay who assisted in the Formation Program, while at Wendelin House I was alone.

Overall I have to say that it was and always will be a privilege to walk with another as he discerns God's call. Yes, we as formation directors are truly on holy ground when we meet with the Brotherhood candidates and journey with them. Living in a community of aspirants and men

(Cont. Br. Spitzley)

who have professed temporary vows makes for a community of creative tension. It calls me to live with persons of different backgrounds, tastes, and life experiences, and I honor those experiences. I learn early who is a night person, who prefer that you did not speak to them until after coffee, whose menus are more creative than others etc. Yet that is what it means to be SVD—living authentically in multi-cultural communities.

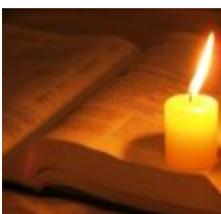
Such diversity can make community life difficult at times, but also it can bring a joyful dimension to our lives. As a Formation Director I came to expect the unexpected, and not to become surprised by surprise.

Knowing that a person makes a good decision is a most satisfying experience. Being a lay man, a religious, a diocesan priest and, yes, a fellow Divine Word Missionary is an affirming and humbling experience, because a person has trust in me and, through sharing his life, receives clarity in God's call for him.

As for the future of Brother training, it is imperative that we have Brothers who can respond to the signs of the times, Brothers who are able to promote the characteristic dimensions of our Society (Mission animation, Biblical apostolic, Communication, and JPIC). We need Brothers who can walk into new frontiers of mission, like our inner cities which are filled with drug abuse, hopelessness, and AIDS. We need men who are able to respond to ever changing ministries, equipped with a basic Liberal arts education, including missiological formation. We need men equipped with professional training, technical training. We need men with a strong spiritual formation to include the maturing of the Brothers into being a fully integrated member of the SVD community. This way future brothers will serve in accordance with the Society's priorities and promote human development, genuine spirituality and an appreciation of one's own culture and that of others.

"A real good professional training and a basic knowledge in Theology and Bible is needed!"

Br. Vinzenz von Holzen, SWI



Why decrease in the number of Brothers?

The number of Brothers in the SVD goes down, in actual figures and even more proportional to the vocations to the priesthood. One of the reasons I see for this is the shift of the areas where we find vocations, from the northern hemisphere to the southern. I believe, years ago we had many vocations in the north, in the conventional trades. There these trades were highly esteemed, the professional training was very good, and the need for them in the missions was great. Today the vocations come mostly from the southern country, where the esteem for conventional trades is low; the professional training is not well developed; and the needs of the missions have partly changed. There is need not so much for construction work anymore, but for such areas as education, social work and health care.

Another reason I see is the same as what Bro. Alfonso also mentioned: the clericalism in the south is high. In the local-church community, the families, etc., the priestly vocation is much more highly esteemed than the brother vocation, which is in many circles not well known.



What should be done?

The above is a background. It should lead us to direct our steps toward changing this situation. Some concrete thoughts:

- The equal value of all the various vocations coming from the Lord is to be underlined in all phases of formation. All SVDs have a religious missionary vocation; in some aspects all are equal, in other aspects they

differ. This has to be made clear and understandable on all levels of formation. I found the situation in the Philippines good, where only at the end of the novitiate is the decision made towards priesthood or brotherhood. Some parts of the formation should really be in common.

- The Brothers are closer to and more with the people through their professions than those in priestly pastoral and sacramental care. A real good consideration of which profession I am talented in and which gives me real joy is important for all candidates for the Brother vocation. Maybe some early contacts are possible. A really good professional training for the future job is of great importance. The young brother has to find joy in his professional work. The professional training may be done in different steps, with work experience in between.

(Cont. Br. Von Holzen)

- An important task for the formators is, on the one side, to assist the candidates in the search for their own talents and interests and, on the other side, to give them a picture of the needs of the missions.
- A basic knowledge in Theology and the Bible is needed, but it has not to be a full studium in philosophy and theology.
- Today, in the overall task of the church, many different services are needed. Education, social work, mass communication and administration are only some of the fields where the Church is

active in building up the reign of God and where Brothers can and should play an important role.

- Some developments in the general society have changed the way of the religious vocation in the brotherhood. In Europe, in the last years, nearly only professionally trained adults have started to consider a religious vocation. Maybe in some parts of the world vocation promotion has to be more present with the young adults.
- In the end the task depends on the formator. In spite of some existing difficulties, he himself has to radiate his joy and self-confidence in his unique vocation to the Brotherhood to show that there is an important role for lay-religious in the church. The picture may change but not the importance of the vocation as such.

"I am the only brother working in the India Mumbai Province..."

Br. Swaminathan Sathiyanesan, INM



Thank you very much for your mail asking me to send my experiences in Brother

Formation. I am very sorry to say that I have never worked in a Brother Formation House in the past. I have only worked in the Formation Houses for the priesthood and the Novitiate. Therefore, I am rather helpless to contribute anything to your request. At present I am working in a Minor seminary for priesthood candidates in the southern part of India belonging to India Mumbai Province. From now on I will try to get some candidates for

Brotherhood also. At present, however, there is no Brother formation program in India Mumbai Province. I am the only brother working in this province. Kindly pray so that God may send some vocations from this area during the coming years. That is all for the time being. God bless you.

"Important is the joy and happiness of discovering who I am before the Lord..."

Fr. Dennis C. Callan, Korea



Thank you for your e-mail message ... and sorry that it has taken me a little while to respond. As I read your letter, a question

"popped up" in my head. What inspires young men to become Brothers today? What inspired you? ... or Bro. Romy? That could also be a good topic for reflection and sharing in a future edition of *SVD Brothers*.

As a young boy I had a great-uncle who was a Christian Brother. He put it to me this way ... if you want to enter religious life, why become a priest? As a result, I've always asked vocation candidates or prospects a similar question ... If you want to work in a parish (saying Masses and hearing confessions, etc.), why enter the religious life? In our formation programs, I get the feeling that most religious priests (including SVDs) don't know or understand the basics of religious life. It pains me whenever I hear (especially SVDs) talk about vocation as if the only vocation is priesthood! It pains me when I hear religious women talk about vocations as if there are only two vocations ... sisterhood and priesthood. ... And when religious women talk like that then we know Religious Life itself is in trouble!

In this modern day, too much value is placed on work and working

effectively. We see people as just another cog in the wheel.

What I do is not as important as the joy and happiness of discovering who I am before the Lord. This happens as I walk with Him on my life's journey. This is, simply stated, the heart of religious life for Brothers or priests. This is what has always inspired the faithful. This is what drew me to religious life and eventually the SVD.

I realize that this is not an article material. This summer, when I have some spare time (since I'll be going on home leave), I will put more of my reflections down on paper for you.

In the meantime, I pray that God continues to bless you with love and peace!



"The road to heaven is narrow. If fifty are recruited, one may reach the goal..."

Br. Francis Sammanasu, INH



I received the SVD Brothers Newsletter and, with heart and mind fixed and glued together, I read through its content. It is very interesting and

has given me a lot of information. I do appreciate the initiative taken and wish that it will bear the desired fruit.

I have been assigned as the Executive Secretary of NARBI

(National Assembly of Religious Brothers, India). I was busy with the preparation for the forthcoming 11th National convention of NARBI, from 15-18 May 2008.

You have asked about my experience on Brother Formation. We have very good Formation programmes. But somewhere something is missing. We get vocations for the Brotherhood, but the road and the gate become narrow like the road to heaven is narrow. If fifty are recruited, one may reach the goal. Let us praise and thank the Lord for that ONE precious pearl. I think we have a long way to go, and much more hard work to do. The Lord of the harvest takes care of collecting the fruits.



"What is surely dying out is one or the other lifestyle of living this vocation..."

Br. Ray Albers, USC



I am Br. Ray Albers SVD, who in 2005, at age 76, came out of retirement to answer my Provincial's call to be the Director of Brother Formation for the USA Provinces. Now 79 years of age I have been asked to

return to retirement. Br. Mike Decker SVD has graduated from the Institute of Religious Formation in May 2008, and will be the new director of Brother Formation. Thank you for inviting us to share in your newsletter, "SVD BROTHERS." My experience in Brother Formation is not etched in stone; rather, being a director is an Emmaus journey: in dialoguing about our experience, strength, and hope Christ is revealed.

I would like to respond to your opening paragraph; **"Facing a decreasing number of Brothers in our Society, we all ask the question: why is it so?"** My sixty years of being a Divine Word Brother started in small numbers. I was the only novice to enter the Novitiate in 1947, and since then anything more than 'one' was, and still is, encouraging. However, in the past decades the USA Provinces saw a real drought in vocations, questioning, **"Are lay brothers dying out?"**

The same question was put to Father Henry Heekeren SVD when he was Superior General. He wrote a lengthy history on Brother Ministry in his March 1979, *Witnessing to the Word*. Two classic statements stand out in Henry's letter, **"A glance back into history should warn us not to answer such a question too hastily. What is surely dying out is one or the other lifestyle of living this vocation."** For example, my lifestyle as a community tailor came to an end when SVD members no longer wore the religious habit. During my transition from being a tradesman and pursuing an academia

lifestyle I felt left alone, wondering if it was worthwhile for 'one' to change? Today I take comfort in Henry's words, **"The Brother's chance of survival does not depend on imposing numbers, but on a clear responsible acceptance of their vocation as a lay religious."** Responsible acceptance of my vocation was finding a balance in my academic pursuit, and walking with Christ in applying my new skills in doing ministry. I am sure my superior and treasurer also raised the question, "Are the expenses for my on-going education and formation worth it?" "Are we sure Bro Ray Albers will not leave the Society when he receives his degree?"

The question was asked, "Do we need *only* 'academic Brothers'?" Yes, we need **academic formation** for Brothers as well as a balanced **spiritual formation** during temporary vows. Academics in any field of study gives us the tools to work with, but spirituality gives us insight and creativity on how our

(Cont. Br. Albers)

skills are to be applied in doing ministry. Ministry is the process, and in ministry we learn to bridge academics with the spiritual in building a level of consciousness; to walk with Christ in serving people, especially the poor. We may think the process of becoming a Brother is too long, but a good ministry program includes **Cross-cultural Training Program** (Const 521.3) to experience the reality of the mission situation.

When I accepted the job as Director of Brother Formation, Constitution 522.3 gave me a specific job description, which I felt had to be worked in collaboration with a formation staff to assure those Constitutions in Const. 521 to 523 were applied to brothers in temporary vows. Therefore, it was not necessary to invent the wheel, because the academic, spiritual, and ministry program as stated in the Constitutions was up and running in the mainstream (clerical) formation program. All that needed be done was to become a 'cog', or a gear tooth, in the formation wheel so as to do for the Brothers that which is laid out in the Constitutions. In addition to being a member of the mainstream formation staff, I was also a member of the Tri-Province Formation Commission which prepared formation issues for the House and Provincial Council's consideration and approval. The Provincial Directors of Education and Formation making up the membership of our Tri-Province Formation Commission ensured that Constitutions 521 to 523 were equally implemented for all members. In the past three years two important issues in Brother Formation came about:

- The Provincial Council approved the transfer of the Brother Formation Program from an isolated location in the Mid-West District to the Main Stream Formation Program at the Divine Word Theologate in Chicago Illinois.

- The Tri-Province Formation Commission was laborious in the critiquing and editing of the Brother Formation Handbook regarding our amalgamation with the Main Stream Clerical Formation Program. The handbook was granted approval by the Theologate House and Provincial Council.

What was indistinct as a goal in the beginning became clearer in our ongoing dialogue as we progressed through the transition process. The present emerging lifestyle of brothers in temporary vows is living in the setting of inclusivity with clerical formation toward a growing awareness of our vocation. **The larger numbers of clerical confreres offers companionship for the brother/s in temporary vows.** Our merger with the main stream formation gives us a feeling that we belong, and it comes to fuller bloom through interdependence rather than independence. In rubbing elbows we learn to accept the paradox of polarities between our two vocations; finding ourselves part of a whole, in sharing the commonality of our three Vows. Together we grow in 'responsible acceptance' of our identity as a brother, which enhances our relationship with our clerical confreres in the various ministries we do for the Church of Christ as missionaries.



"Brother Formation versus Clerical Exclusion..."

Br. Stephen Pardy, USW

Thank you for your e-mail re the ongoing discussion on Brothers and the Formation Program.

Let me introduce myself first. This year marks my Golden Jubilee of life as a Brother in the SVD. Most of my life was spent in Papua New Guinea as Finance Administrator of a Diocese and also Provincial Treasurer; probably the first (if not one of the first Brothers in the SVD) to hold such a position. Prior to my appointment to PNG I served in the Generalate for four years. Following my time in the South Pacific I was Provincial Treasurer in the USW Province prior to taking up the same position in the UK as well as Australia. My background is Finance with an Accounting Degree. I have thus been Provincial Treasurer in four different countries, have experienced positions of trust, and feel that I have served the Society well. Having said that, I would like to comment on some of A. Berger's

(Cont. Br. Pardy)

points and then I will add some of my own.

In brief, I am somehow worried that in many provinces/regions the Brother formation is too long (and expensive.)

Why? I don't see this concern raised for the SVD Clerics. Their formation is far longer and then, once ordained, many decide that they now want to do work that Brothers can, could and should be doing; e.g. get another degree; maybe in finance, computer science, hospital chaplaincy, work at the UN, study music or dance and go on tour as a musician, etc., etc.

Furthermore, there seems to be an "overload" of pastoral and

philosophical/theological subjects.

Again, why the juxtaposition? Once ordained to administer the sacraments, need the Clerics now be "overloaded" with secular academic studies as well? Why is it okay for the Clerics to take on these studies but Brothers should not be trained for catechetical, theological and pastoral studies if that is their inclination?

Pressure towards clericalism.

I certainly believe this is true and have experienced it all my life. However, the problem is hardly discouraged by the SVD in actual fact and practice. For example, we all take final vows as an SVD. The Clerics, however, once ordained, celebrate that occasion in an elaborate and expensive fashion. Which is more important to us as fellow members of the Society? In other words, the Society builds and emphasizes the difference and the laity takes the clue from there. "You Are All Brothers," the SVD says; some are just more important than others. You need only attend an ordination or first Mass and the division is stark, indeed. If the Society doesn't take an effort to solve the problem, why should the parents?

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Certainly it is important to address the Formation of this body of SVD and I commend the Generalate's efforts to do so. Equally as important, however, has to be the INCLUSION of Brothers into meaningful and important positions. Brothers have to be welcomed to the table as far as governance and inputs are concerned. We need only start at the Generalate itself. There is ONE Brother (never more than one) in the General Council. And there are NONE in the lower secretarial levels and probably never has been. All positions are held by Clerics who are ordained to

administer the Sacraments and not serve as secretaries.

This is a frustrating situation and Brothers are not blind to the fact. Brothers work hard to get their degrees and to serve the Society. If the Society ignores them for one reason or another there is no way out except to leave and serve elsewhere. This has happened from the beginning of the order and continues today. The formation is not the entire problem. It is SO important to have Brothers in positions where THEIR unique viewpoint (one not really understood or appreciated by the Clerics despite their good will) is heard, felt and implemented and seen by those in Formation as a sign of hope and inclusion. In saying that I want to acknowledge that strides have been made. It is not ALL bad; Brothers have been utilized in constructive and important positions. Yet, more need to be done.

Admittedly the pickings of such people for such positions are scarce, but so what? This does not seem to hamper the selection of Clerics who are admittedly more numerous and yet, in some ways, similarly flawed and not the brightest apples on the tree. But they are included in responsible positions nonetheless due to the fact that they are ordained and the Brother not. God sends whom He wills to do His work. If those He sends are ignored due in part to a Clerical bias we all suffer as a result. Abraham Lincoln and Harry Truman were barely educated or politically trained compared to their peers and yet they are two of America's greatest Presidents.

This problem calls for honesty and perhaps a painful study of this problem is facing the Society. Clericalism is wrong; it is destructive and hurts us all. We all know the damages and injustice of racism or sexism, which the Church has, wittingly or not, practiced through the ages.

Much is said in the SVD (and positions created) to address ***Justice and Peace!*** Interestingly, most of THOSE positions are held by Clerics who may not see what is happening in their own backyards. Where there is no Justice there is no Peace. Maybe that is the real problem underlying the SVD and the Brother confreres. Solve THAT issue and formation may well prove to be a minor problem.

This is an important time in the life of the Society as attempts are made to address the decreasing number of Brothers as expressed in your e-mails by the Generalate and Brother Berger. Hopefully these comments will be accepted as part of the ongoing discussion. It is not meant to be mean nor to point fingers but it IS written from one who has witnessed much and personally experienced much in a life lived for the Church in the SVD. Much has been accomplished; much more COULD HAVE BEEN accomplished save for man-made restrictions on apostolic calls.

A Formation Experience

Br. Carl Milos Bulilan, JPN



I entered the SVD seminary as a candidate for the priesthood. During the postulancy (that is, after four years in philosophy), I was discerning to answer the call to the Brotherhood. The discernment process was deepened even more during my novitiate year. It was only after my second year in theology that my request to transfer to the Brotherhood formation was granted.

The next year, I moved to Cebu City where the Brother Formation House is located. The Brother Director welcomed me, not only to the formation house, but also to the Brotherhood Formation Program. He handed me a copy of what he called "An Orientation to the Brotherhood," a formation program for transferees from the clerical formation. Here, he identified the objectives and goals for the year, means of achieving the objectives, expectations and points of evaluation. The written program also included specific guidelines on the areas of formation, including academics, personal and community schedules.

We followed the program thoroughly throughout the year. For example, my director and I met one-on-one weekly to share my experiences in the apostolate and discuss on other formation matters. This gave us an opportunity to know each other more deeply. During that year, I also started my Graduate Studies at the university. The program was very demanding, yet it gave me a sense of guidance and direction.

Formators, as they say, have their unique styles of doing things. The next year, a new Brother Director was appointed. He has his own idea about formation. This time I did not receive any written program, nor discuss with him formally about the objectives and expectations for that year. We did not meet regularly for processing of experiences. Some of the plans and decisions made with my former director were not carried over. The style could be described as a kind of "personal responsibility" model of formation, wherein formators seem to presuppose that seminarians are mature and responsible enough to look after themselves. With my personal weaknesses, I found it very difficult to process my experiences alone without a guidance of a formator, especially during that time; I was the only Brother in temporary vows in the house. It was a very challenging year in the sense that I felt I was alone, and lost.

During the second year in the Brotherhood Formation, I applied for regency or a mission exposure. After many years of academic life in the seminary, I felt the need to have, at least, a foretaste of the mission life in the field. I had disagreements with my director on this matter, but later on, because of my persistence, he allowed me to go. After a year of mission exposure in a mountain parish, I went back to the formation house to continue my Graduate Studies, and at the same time prepared for my perpetual vows. That year was not very easy because of some personal struggles I faced and the disagreements I had with my director. Since there was no formal program, I just went with the flow. Many things were taken for granted, for example the period of six month preparation for perpetual vows, the application process for first mission assignment, and others.

After five years in temporary vows (three years in the Brotherhood formation), I took my final profession last year. In the same year, I also finished my Graduate Studies. Now, I am in Japan, my first mission assignment.

Seminary formation, they say, is a dynamic process. It goes with time. I can only speak for myself and, maybe, for my generation. I am blessed to experience both the clerical and the Brotherhood formation programs in the Philippine SVD. Both have their weaknesses and strengths. The clerical program is more structured and fixed, while the Brotherhood is more flexible. The important thing is that there should be a formal program presented to the seminarians, fitted to the local context and with consideration to individual needs. Formal program helps to settle personal differences between the formators and the seminarians – formation process should go on, as it written, in spite of personal disagreements. It is like a map that would lead us to where we should go.

Well, God has his own way. Looking back, all I can say is "thank you Lord" for the brotherly care and for the

people who became instruments of the transforming Spirit. In a special way, I thank the Lord for the wisdom in drafting a formation program that helps the Brotherhood vocation grow in me.

"After the novitiate, the candidates should work in their profession!"

Br. Meinolf Stohl, GER



Vocation Pastoral and Brother Formation

When I started my postulancy in Steyl, at the age of nineteen, there was no Brother formation in the present-day understanding of the word. But the novitiate laid stress on the spiritual formation and on getting acquainted with the Society of the Divine Word. And in exceptional cases, even a professional training was possible.

However, we were together in the novitiate with the apprentices, who completed a vocational training with *(Cont. Br. Stohl)*

journeyman's certificate* at the age of 17 or 18 years. The spiritual formation during the time of the vocational training consisted in regular prayer times, like in other school-dormitories, too. There were also Eucharistic celebrations several times a week, and a weekly lecture on a religious topic. This kind of formation cannot be taken as a time for Brother formation in the proper sense of the word, although it had been declared as such by the SVD-structure of that time.

Then, in the 70s, a great change came from the US. At that time, I was working in the Committee for Brother Issues in Nemi, representing the Northern German Province. The results of this work were very much influenced by the American Education System. Unfortunately, we moved too far from the "European" Brothers' image. The "new, reformed"

Brother Formation, which laid too much stress on the study programs, included basic theological formation. The ongoing formation in the profession was extensively pushed back. For example, most Brothers had obtained the 'missio canonica', but it does not entitle them to occupy a job as a teacher of religious education in a state-owned school, since there has been a deeper theological study required. As far as I know, there are only two Brothers, besides me, who obtained the qualification to teach in state-owned schools.

To a certain extent, the Brothers are spiritually formed, but they have become neither experts in an academic sense, nor professionals in the proper sense of the word. And this is exactly the reason, in my view, why we can in Germany hardly inspire young men to become Brothers. Let me give just one example. A candidate, 26 years old, is coming to us. After high school he did a vocational training, then a university study with the objective to become a teacher in a technical institution. And what is this well-formed young man going to get from us? A spiritual formation. He will get acquainted with the SVD in the novitiate, which is ok. But then: basic formation in theology with "mission canonica", including an internship here and an internship there **, etc., and then followed by an OTP. Where is then the ongoing formation in his profession? If a teacher today is for some years not engaged in his profession, his return to it will be very difficult.

My recommendation for Germany and Europe: it is good to accept only young men with a complete professional training. But then, after the novitiate, these candidates should work in their profession, with the possibility of an ongoing formation, which is probably possible only outside of our communities. They should not be tied for many years to some kind of spiritual formation which, in the long run, brings only little fruit.

We think, it s important to explain some concepts, which come from the German School System, in order to better understand this contribution. (The Editors)

**Journeyman's certificate in the German system: a Certificate awarded at the end of vocational training in the [duales System](#) to*

trainees who pass the [Ausbildungsabschlussprüfung](#) in a craft before the authorities responsible for vocational qualification (chambers). A certificate is always awarded together with the [Abschlusszeugnis der Berufsschule](#). It qualifies the holder for a vocational qualification and constitutes a prerequisite for further qualification as a master craftsman (Handwerksmeister)

*(** The original word: "Praktikum" - the meaning is similar to "Internship" or "apprenticeship", a temporary position with an emphasis on on-the-job training rather than merely employment.)*



Br. Bela Lanyi, PHS
What counts, is the VISION... "

One of my former classmates is successful in the Internet business. I asked him for the secret of his success. What counts is the VISION, he said. The clients have a clear vision about Internet and also about the contribution of our company to it.

When you ask me, what could "produce" more Brother vocations, I would say, a CLEAR VISION ABOUT OUR ROLE as SVD Brothers. If we see the vision, we will find the fitting formation programs easily.

Even Jesus was VISION-MINDED: "Strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." (Mt 6:33)

"Who can study, would not get his hands dirty..."

Br. Franz Schurtenberger, SWI



What struck me in South-America is connected with the ideas about "order of rank", the social hierarchy: who can study, would not get his hands dirty – physical work must be done only by those who can not progress. In this way Brothers, who wanted or could study with us, had their studies enjoyed with us and then, after having finished it, they said goodbye to us. Outside, they could at least earn something. As long as this is the basic idea of work, we can invent formation programs, so many and so good as we want, and yet this will not change the number of the Brothers.

(Cont. Br. Schurtenberger)

I interpret my experiences in Paraguay like this: physical work is not appreciated, because there is nothing to earn and it does not count in the social hierarchy. It is similar in business and black market, except that they bring money - and who has money, is already somebody. Social progress is through college studies. In Paraguay, some Brothers who studied sociology, agronomy, economy, etc. are now for sure good professionals and nice people, but they earn their money and prestige outside the SVD.

I did my novitiate in Paraguay, together with three Paraguayans. To be a Brother after having finished theological studies was equivalent to giving up one's social status and career. This is done only by somebody who has something to hide or is ill developed. I heard this several times from the people, even from SVD

confreres. On the other hand, other people supported my way very much as an interesting option.

"I agree, that it (the long formation) takes a lot of money and efforts of the formators..."

Br. Piotr Szewczuk, POL



The following considerations are coming from my personal view. I would like to share with you my observations concerning the long formation as they are presented in the attachment. I agree that it takes a lot of money and effort from the formators.

1. The special (professional) formation can (and should) be continued after the final vows as part of the permanent ongoing formation. With progressing age, our interest undergoes changes several times. Moreover, the needs of the time and the reality surrounding us offer new opportunities to discern the will of God.

Here are the different formation programs in terms of length:

A (Latino-American) (11-12 year)

B (Indian) (11-12 years)

C (Indonesian) (10-11 years)

D (Polish) (7 years)

2. In the Polish Province, the time aspect of formation looks as follows:

Postulancy – 6 weeks

Novitiate – 1 calendar year

Philosophical-theological Institute (of the Brothers) – 2 academic years

Technical-professional formation (according to the special conditions and interest of the Junior Brother) – up to 3 years.

"Eternal novitiate" (= preparation for the final vows): 6 months.

So the full formation in Poland totals 7 years.

3. This briefly presented program has not been changed in the last 25 years. In our general feeling, we (Brothers in formation, formators, professors and the leaders of the Polish Province) consider this program as proper.

4. Concerning "postulancy". There is a general trend to extend it to one academic year. I want to remark that in Poland, "postulancy" and novitiate" are together for Brothers and clerics. In both postulancy and in novitiate, the same confreres are the formators. The decision of becoming a priest or a Brother must be made before the end of the novitiate. The candidate writes a request, in which he expresses his desire to profess his first vows, declaring that he would like to become a Brother or a priest.

5. After the novitiate and the first religious vows, the candidate becomes a junior Brother and in that time he studies in the Philosophico-Theological Institute of the Brothers for two years. The place for the study is the same for the clerics: Pieniezno. But the lectures in philosophy and theology are separate, because the philosophical and theological topics are shortened for the Brothers.

6. We do not see any threat in a change of decision about the vocation. In the history of our formation, there were shifts from Brother to cleric and vice versa. We do not make any difficulties; we leave the decision to the conscience of the confrere and to the opinion of the formators and superiors, who in

this case express their view and make the decision.

The vocation animators in Poland make big efforts to show the Polish youth our vocation in an attractive way, as a lifestyle for God and the people. The programs are evaluated in the annual Meeting of Formators and in the separate Meeting of Professors. The remarks are discussed in the Provincial Council. The formation programs are not seen as threats; we can adjust them easily to the talents and abilities of each candidate. There are wide educational opportunities in Poland, both spiritual and professional.

As it is well-known, the journey with Christ in the way of the Evangelical counsels is not easy in the European reality. The material and virtual world very much attacks the human heart and soul. This reduces to silence even the noblest layers of the human personality. Christ, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life,

(Cont. Br. Szewczuk)

must be proclaimed no less in these times – really and not only virtually, spiritually and not only materially. We have to teach how these spiritual layers can be recognized and lived through, because they express our real humanity.

"Expenses for a long term program of Brother Formation is worth it!"

Br. Stephen Bonsu, GHA

Greetings from Ghana and thank you for your letter. I am so sorry for the delay in giving you the feedback. This is because in our community we do not have internet facility to enable me to browse my mails. Sometimes it takes me one month before I can check my mails at our provincial house where there is internet.

I would like to share with you by quoting from the Bible: 'Many are called but few are chosen.' 'Many of Jesus' apostles left because they

could not continue since the work was too difficult for them.'

We should all worry because we are facing a decreasing number of Brothers in our Society. Many of our Brother candidates do not have enough information about the Brother Vocation before joining the brotherhood. And so when they begin the formation, they feel at some stage that this is not their vocation and so they have to leave. There is a serious need to worry because the trend is that while the number of Brother candidates decreases the number of our clerics grows. It has been so from the beginning of the establishment of the church.

In Ghana the early missionaries who brought the church into the country were called Reverend Fathers. The Christians did not know who a Brother was. As of now, in many villages in the country, some Christians still do not know the difference between a Brother and a priest. They call both the priest and the Brother as fathers. No matter how you explain to them they still do not see the difference between a Brother and a priest. We love our vocation as Brothers and would like to do something for a change. Many candidates start the formation, but only a few reach the final vows.

Yes, even in the school where I am teaching, in the first year class, the students are many, but by the time they end their final year only few students are left. This is because some of the students are withdrawn because of poor performance and others for non-payment of school fees. Some of the Brothers "disappear" during the years of formation because of injustices they face during their formation. Some of our priests do not respect the Brothers because they feel they are more educated than the Brothers. If you are a Brother working in the same parish with a confrere who is a priest, he will treat you, the Brother, like a catechist just because you can not celebrate the Eucharist.

Our formation is good enough and there is no need for any changes. Our superiors and treasurers should stop asking too many questions. They are at times the cause of the decreasing numbers of Brothers because of the intimidation they inflict on the Brothers. Yes, expenses for a long term program of Brother Formation is worth it. I am saying this because we are sure that our well-formed young Brothers will not leave the Society when they obtain their degree. If the brothers are given the same treatment as the priests, they will stay. Our priests should also change their negative attitudes towards the Brothers. We do need both 'Academic Brothers' and Brothers who are committed, dedicated and willing to do the will of God as SVD Brothers.



It was great attending the formators course in Nemi!

Br. Mike Gichuki, KEN



Lots of greetings. Thanks so much for your E-mail which was sent some couple of weeks ago. I am so sorry that I was unable to reply to you as soon as I got it. I was and I am still away from the formation house for some months. I have been attending the formators' course in Steyl-Nemi which only came to an end last weekend. From the course I will be spending some weeks in Europe before I am back to my community.

In this case let me say I will not be able to share something as per your request but may be in the next issue of the bulletin. It was great attending the formators' course but it was so unfortunate that only two brothers were among the 26 participants. Yes, the sharing of Br Alfonso and his reflections were so rich. I was happy and he expounded the various problems our young brothers face as they undergo their formation. I somehow agree with him in so many areas and slowly I feel we get to really analyse most of our formation programs and change them to suit the current trends in our time. As soon as I am back to my formation community I will write and share more with you. Once again thanks so much for your email and the great concern you have for our formation community. God bless!

We (in the Philippines) certainly prefer quality than quantity!

Br. Irol Torres, PHS



Being a brother in first vows and being a shiftee from clerical to brotherhood, I may not be able to share something of

significance about the questions being raised in this issue. I'm sure though that I do not share with the anxieties concerning the length of formation, the expense in studies and the overload of subjects among our candidates. So far as the Philippine setting is concerned, and as far as I'm concerned, I do not see those observations "in many provinces/ regions" as true here. I see the length and the expense of formation here, as well as the subject loads, as necessary for us "brothers in the making", to be able to share more of ourselves and our faith with others in the future. We certainly prefer quality to quantity, and so the long years of formation, high yet necessary expenses, and even the load of theological studies should not, for me, be taken as excuses for our dwindling population.

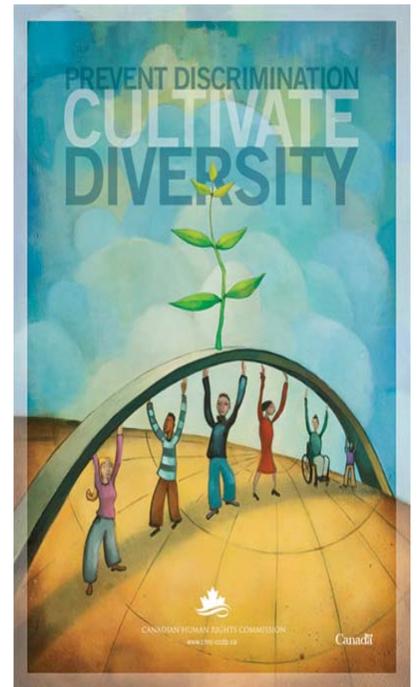
I see the problem or the challenge more on the reason of lack of awareness on brotherhood vocation, not only among our aspirants but also among other people, even our very own confreres. Pressure of clericalism is still very strong here in the Philippines. I should know better as I'm a twice a shiftee because of such pressure. I applied for the SVD brotherhood during my senior year in high school but I was advised, nay persuaded, to try the priesthood, and so I entered as a clerical candidate. And after six years I took a leave as I was not really seeing myself as a priest in the future! I then reapplied and reentered the seminary (after six years outside) this time as a more determined brotherhood

candidate, but not without much pressure towards clericalism, even as I'm already old to decide for myself and already a lawyer by profession.

Not only from other people, but even from among our confreres, did I encounter pressure in my decision to shift to the brotherhood. Were they just testing my sincerity or my commitment towards the choice I was then making? Perhaps, but it could also be that they simply reflected the Philippines' lack of awareness of the equally relevant or important vocation to the brotherhood. "What is brotherhood?" and "Why did you choose brotherhood?" are still the "FAQs" (frequently asked questions) even as I'm already in vows. St. Paul puts it correctly, "There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit gives them. There are different ways of serving but the same Lord is served." (1Cor 12, 4-5) But others simply cannot see the difference.

Thus, I will limit my proposal, based on my limited experience and observation of our brotherhood vocation and formation here in the Philippines, to an intensive mass awareness campaign (e.g. by publishing an official website about brotherhood and SVD brotherhood; and a centralized regular newsletter in hard copies on brotherhood matters and activities to be distributed to all SVD provinces). This campaign for brotherhood vocation and awareness should reach even to our own confreres, priests and brothers alike. Brotherhood vocation

awareness among our priest confreres is meant to foster more concrete equality despite the fact that in our Constitution we are a "clerical" congregation. Among us brothers, it will make us more committed to our very unique yet divine vocation, and consequently we will become an inspiration or role model to our aspirants. And everyone will hopefully know that in serving God, there is actually no real hierarchy, as the true basis of significance is the love we have for God and for our neighbors,



not the external ministry nor the address attached before our names.

The prophetic dimension of our calling is the essence of the religious missionary life..."

Br. Eugene Orog, PHC



**SOME REFLECTIONS OF MY
FORMATION IN THE SVD AND
NOW AS A FORMATOR**

INTRODUCTION

I have been 39 years in the Society, and 28 years of it are spent in formation ministry. At present, I am a counseling psychologist of our Postulancy Formation Program in the Philippines. My reflections are mainly experiential and highly personal in nature. They are divided as follows: (1) formation is ongoing; (2) diminishing in number; (3) formation program; (4) solely Brothers' formation house; (5) perseverance rate; (6) non-academically inclined candidates; (7) the person of a formator.

FORMATION IS ONGOING

In our SVD constitutions about the vows, it is pointed out that: "...we are always on the way, this love (living out of the vows) can never cease to be active" (cons 220). Ergo, formation is a lifetime process - from womb to tomb. I am now 55 years old, and I still consider myself in formation. As I am receiving formation for myself, I am also giving this to others. I can only thank the Holy Triune God for this privilege.

A confrere once remarked to me: when one is in his 20's he learns; at 40's he thinks; at 50's he shares; at 60's he becomes stupid. Why sudden negativism? His point was: whatever is not integrated will surely come during this time. The true self will become poignantly real at this age level. For example, the vow of obedience: if a religious has not learned to obey at the early

stage of religious life it will surely come out at the sunset of his life. No one can tell him anything anymore. At times formators are surprised how a candidate who used to be as meek as a lamb has now become a hardheaded person. Why? Psychology has clearly demonstrated that there are developmental needs and tasks which have to be resolved at various stages of life. In this way, there can be no drifting or dropping out along the way of the journey.

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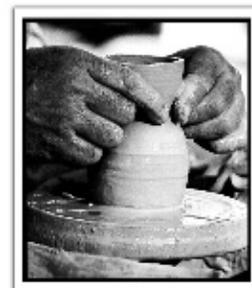
Personally we Brothers should ask these questions: am I assertive? how am I motivating others to follow our vocation? how is our bonding? do we support and affirm each other?

On the other hand, let us look at this issue from a structural level. Honestly, what is the emphasis of the hierarchical church of today? Is it not the priesthood? Common sense will tell us that input equals output. On the attitudinal level some of our confreres believe that what the Brothers are doing the priests also can, but not the other way around. Many clerics are very good treasurers and department heads. This is compounded with the fact that lay people outside are as competent and committed in their professions as a

religious Brother. How will this lead to the uniqueness and dignity of Brothers' vocation? Is it not that we Brothers are also doing the secular jobs of the lay people outside? To make ourselves attractive, we have to make a difference. In other words, we have to be different. The dimension of our religious life is the presence of God in the world. Or, am I different from the outside? If I am different, what

difference does it make from a clerical formator? This touches on a very fundamental issue of personhood - a person's identity. For this will bring about a personal clarity in running a formation program.

FORMATION PROGRAM



Canon law stipulates 3 - 6 years in temporary vows; 1 year novitiate; indefinite years of aspirancy and postulancy. It appears to be long and expensive. But a lifetime commitment has to be well thought out. I spent 5 years of professional training in Cebu, 2 years novitiate, and 3 years of apostolic assignment before taking leave from the Society for 1 and half years. The latter occurred before I made my perpetual vows. Those years were not wasted. They clarified my personhood, what I really wanted to do in life, and where God was calling me. Now I have no regrets that I am a Brother - a statement which I uttered during my silver jubilee celebration 10 years ago.

(Cont. Br. Orog)

I started studying education major in theology in our University of San Carlos. But I did not appreciate it much until I went for an active pastoral ministry in our mission in Agusan. Then I became a formator which demanded a theological knowledge. There I appreciated what I got. It seems to me now that the study of theology and missiology make more sense when one has already some experiences in life. Doing it earlier can just make it appear somewhat abstract and irrelevant. Nonetheless I value much my professional training prior to my first vows. It became my guiding my guiding



star and inspiration when I was a novice. I remember telling myself that someday I would be working in schools, which indeed happened. A professional academic training normally lasts 4 to 6 years in the Philippine setting. Will the post novitiate formation have to wait in order for one to be professionally trained?

PREVIOUSLY...

Our training at that time was solely done at the Brothers' formation community in Cebu except for the canonical novitiate which was in Tagaytay. We were by ourselves, managing our own affairs. Of course our Director at that time was a cleric, the late Father Walter Joyce. Although he was a priest, he had a heart of a Brother. He sent us to school, fed us, and listened to our problems. Truly he was fatherly director, which are necessary qualities of a formator even today. One good thing with having a house we can call our own is that we have learned to be independent and responsible. Plus the fact that our identity is clear because we are by ourselves and therefore not relying on the clerics. A mark of a mature person is that he is able to stand on his own and be accountable to others. Therefore he can relate with equality, uniqueness and in freedom. When I went for my first mission assignment in Agusan, I always reminded myself to relate with equality with confreres. At the same time, I was convinced that I had something unique to share with the people, something which I alone could give. The priest confreres focused on the pastoral needs of the people, while I devoted myself to school apostolate. We had a nice teamwork, and people appreciated out witnessing together. If not for that experience in Agusan, I wouldn't be persevering as a Brother now.

PERSEVERANCE RATE

But why do so few persevere in that kind of formation? Our constitution 503 is clear that our formation is total and integral: it seeks to bring about human maturity, professional competence and committed faith. During my time committed faith seemed to be the burning issue. When I became a Director in 1983 - 1990 the Visitor General strongly recommended that Brothers study formal theology and missiology to ease out the problem of defection. But is this really the answer, because even up to now there is still a number of defections, and even among perpetualists? Do we really need to study and analyze God? In the first place, we have to love Him and obey His commandments. Pure and simple. However, I also believe that we need to articulate our faith life, hence theological and missiological studies are important. Furthermore, we need to have levelling for a fraternal community. Otherwise it can be difficult to dialogue. As to when this will happen, whether in the pre or post novitiate, there are advantages and disadvantages which I already pointed out earlier. Human maturity is also another issue during my time and even up to now. By maturity I mean that a person should be truthful of his motive and willing to give himself for others. As I mentor our young Postulants today, I always keep these two questions in mind: Is he free? I am not referring here to the defects or shortcomings which all of us have. But can he be happy and have peace in the community? Does he want to give himself in loving and humble service? So, issues on self knowledge and self giving must be clear to a candidate if he has to live a meaningful and productive life in the Society. SVD is fast becoming multicultural and international, so integration is much expected. Now how about the non-academically inclined candidates, do they have a place?

NON-ACADEMICALLY INCLINED CANDIDATES

Should we accept them? Well, it depends on their capacity to integrate. The icons for integrated Brothers during the time of the Founder were: Br. Clemens Lanze who suggested the travelling Brothers to Arnold; Br. Wendelin Meyer, who was sent to USA to sell magazines to German immigrants and at the same time explore the possibility of establishing the Society there; and Br. Rudolf Potter, who worked as health inspector of the mandarin in mainland China. I am wondering what their academic qualifications were that they earned the trust and confidence of our Founder and confreres. In similar vein, the late Pope John Paul II pointed out implicitly, when he touched on the issue of inculturation, which is the heart of the mission. For him it is an intimate transformation of an authentic cultural value through integration into Christianity and the insertion of Christianity into the various cultures. Because of this clear mandate education is a must if we are to be a relevant religious missionary today.

There are 3 pillars of SVD formation, namely: committed faith, human maturity and professional competence. These have to be present for a balance and vibrant formation program. How important it is therefore to have a proper screening of candidates right from the start. Properly screened candidates are already 50% formed. I am inclined to believe that 90% of formation is the responsibility of

(Cont. Br. Orog)

the candidate and only 10% of the formator. After all, the one who will internalize and appropriate values is the candidate himself. Of course, I say this without negating the importance of the formator.

THE PERSON AS A FORMATOR

As a formator what is my attitude regarding the directives and guidelines from the Generalate and the Province? How do I identify with them? As a model

of formation and as the only viable way of doing formation nowadays, it no longer works to choose between the control and the permissive types as in the yesteryears. Therefore, a formator has to look at the individual candidate and his community to see how he is integrating the values of the Society as enunciated in our constitutions and Chapter documents. Its emphasis must be on authentic lifestyle. Certainly there is a need for clear daily order, studies and apostolate, as well as time for relaxation meetings. Schedules should begin on time and end on time, while allowing for learning and just letting people to be themselves. As formators we need to let the human develop. However, we do stand for something beyond the formative community, namely, the wider community of the Society. That is why I am strong on communication and personal accountability as the touchstone for being a good formator today. I have to do more than tacking Provincial and Roman notices on the bulletin board. Needless to say, I have also to be cognizant of the history and tradition of the formation community where I find myself.

Finally Superior General Pernia once pointed out in his letter that, if religious life has a future, it must have the passion of Christ the Divine Word and the passion for humanity. I feel all our dreams, hopes and efforts have to be geared towards this direction.

"Proper education has to be given to Brothers..."

Br. Pascal Raj, INM



I am Br. A. Pascalraj, SVD. I finished my regency at provincial house in Mumbai province. I finished B.A. English literature and one more year I am repeating regency. I have just taken my first vows. I am helping out in the social work center in UCDC. I meet lots of very poor people, I mean, below poverty line. I do go for pastoral work. It gives me good impression to work for the people as well as God.

I like brotherhood but proper education has to be given to Brothers. They should be sent to a nice college just like a priesthood candidate. Brothers are already on decline due to incapability to do things. Brothers are not respected in the society. The Minor seminary itself is given proper English course.

Brothers in Bolivia

Br. Josimar Ferreira, BOL

I am Brother Josimar Ferreira of the Region of Bolivia. It is a joy to be able to communicate with the co-brothers about the situation of the brotherhood vocation here. Well, in the previous years several vocations for brotherhood have surged. As of now, we have 2 brothers in temporal vow and an aspirant.

At the moment, I see the question of the brotherhood vocation with certain worry since we have canddates but we lack a methodology of formation for these aspirants. Some time after the first vows they desist to be brothers and leave the congregation or decide for sacerdotal ministry. I see with worry that this situation occurs not only in Bolivia but also in Latin America and Europe.

I think as a congregation we have to analyze this problem. In the 21st to 25th of April, we have a reunion of the subzone of Bogota, Coubia, where we are going to discuss and analyze the brotherhood vocation and lay out a proposal for the brotherhood formation of the SVD.

Next time in English!

Br. Ruben Funan, IDJ



Sorry because I'm late in replying to your email. May God protect you always in your activity every day. And I hope, you can have success. Sorry, in the last time, I'm very busy.

Today I read our website, but now I can't share my experience about me and my study. Next time I will share my experience in our website. I think I will share in English, because I want to learn English.

Thanks for your attention. Sorry because my English is not good.

(From the editors: you can always write in Indonesian, too.)



"I feel accepted and cared for!" (My OTP...)

Br. Sebastião Tenorio Da Silva, PHS



I arrived on January 29, 2007, in Cebu City - Philippines. It was a grace from heaven to arrive to the St. Joseph Freinademetz Brothers Formation House on the feast day of Joseph, since he was my inspiration to enter in SVD.

So far I had a good time in the Philippines; only that I need to keep on adjusting myself to the weather. Knowing that the primary objective of the OTP-PHS program is within the scope of the "formation program" that introduces and exposes the OTP to the new reality, I can say at this stage that the program helped me to see, observe and appreciate better the religious-missionary dimension of our congregation's charisma. More important, it is the community life, where one lives out and share one's uniqueness, that has a great impact on me, specifically in terms of getting along with the local culture and also the climate. Whatever motivation, commitment and spirituality I might have, I believe I can grow depending on how healthy or strong relationships are in the community.

My agreement terms and involvement has been defined to help me GROW and indeed I can say, that in the almost one year of OTP, I have improved in different aspects, my languages studies (six months of English studies while staying at the Brothers Formation House and four months of Cebuano while living at the Divine Word Formation Center in Davao and also with a family), and at the same time in my religious-missionary life.

As a member of the SVD Communities:

Arriving at and living in a community where everybody looked a stranger to me was quite a challenge for me. The first test was to express myself without knowing the languages. I

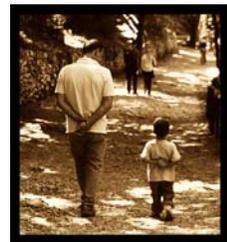
didn't know them personally, and at times I have difficulty in establishing a relationship, with the exception of a few members I knew before. In the community life I had to struggle between the language school requirements at home and my participation in the different community activities. However, I tried my best to feel my way with them and slowly observing and integrating myself in the different community schedules, for example, in the common prayers and meals, community meetings and social gatherings. I found out that my inhibitions gradually disappeared as I gradually began to open up myself spontaneously. Looking back now, I have come to realize that I was comfortable with them because, primarily, they are down to earth, humble people whose welcoming spirit and hospitality negates, humanly speaking, whatever intimidating character is attached to their positions. The SVD communities has a strong sense of community and is composed of people who value and nurture healthy relationships. This revelation does not mean it is a perfect community. In fact it is far from perfect. Yet for all its imperfections, it is one which strives to become good communities that I can call homely.

I think so, my experience in living with them has educated me the value of community life as a support system to help the candidate. The casual and informal conversation during mealtime and free time were important reinforcements to my growth. Confreres showed their interest on my language study and my specific area of apostolate in the society. I believe, it is challenging to live in a community such as this, in the sense that relating with them means a constant leveling off of understanding through discussion on different topics. This were times of learning a lot about the PHS, work relationships, difficult top-level management decisions to make, affectivity and efficiency, responsibili-ties,

commitments, spiritual implications, community and social life, that helped me realize the many aspects I should take into consideration. I am not focused in the past or in the present, but it has become clearer now, as they somehow emphasize all the more the variety, complexity, and richness of living in a community and the need to be flexible so as to allow everybody be motivated through their commitment and dedication in their activities.

I am so happy that I have maintained a good relationship with the brothers and priest-confreres, employees and functionaries, and also the people outside. We pray together, go out together, though not all time. I was given fair treatment. I was given enough space to work and be responsible. My assignments are defined in a contract that is mutually agreed. I am open to them and allowed to express myself. Thus, I can genuinely be myself with them. I would attribute that there is a good and open line of communication. I feel accepted and cared for.

"Soon some Proposals" **Br. Fortunat Atitungu, KEN**



I am happy to share with you my experience on formation. I bring to you soon some proposals, from Congo.



A LAST WORD, FROM THE EDITORS

And of course, we are very much interested in your comments and experiences. Let us continue the dialogue of our Network! These will be a second issue on Brother Formation, too - so you are not late with reactions to the present newsletter. For that, we expect your contributions to the e-mail addresses, which we shared on the first page. Please write in the language of your choice: English, Spanish, Portuguese, German, Indonesian, Polish, Slovakian, Hungarian, others. We thank you for that,

Your Brothers in Cebu.

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