



# SVD BROTHERS

*NEWSLETTER*

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BROTHER  
FORMATION?

BROTHER  
FORMATION!

*Hearty greetings from the Philippines, the Brother Formation Center in Cebu City!*

*This is already the second issue of this Newsletter on the topic of Formation. We were happy that there are enough responses to fill another issue. In particular, we were inspired by the FIFTH SVD ASPAC BROTHERS' ASSEMBLY, held in Taipei (Republic of China), from August 17 to 27.*

The Assembly discussed the following common concerns:

1. **Brother identity.** Many people, both within and outside SVD, seemingly do not understand Brotherhood and its lifetime commitment.
2. **Small number of candidates.** Among other factors, this is related to the lack of a clear image and vision of Brotherhood and religious life.
3. **Change of status from Brotherhood to priesthood.** There is a certain number of candidates and confreres who change their status from Brotherhood to priesthood because of strong clerical settings in some countries.

4. **Formation.** The formation for our Brothers in some provinces is too long, which may affect the motivation of the candidates. In some cases the contents and quality of formation are also questioned.

Then, the Assembly issued the following recommendations.

1. SVD members, especially Brothers and vocation promoters, should continue to clarify the vision of Brotherhood to candidates and others.
2. We should share vocation promotion materials and other resources in our zone in order to communicate a clear image of Brotherhood.
3. We make an appeal to formators and provincial superiors not to encourage candidates and confreres to change their status from Brotherhood to priesthood, particularly after the final vows.
4. We recommend to the formators to review the length of formation programs for Brothers.
5. We support the idea of Brothers working in institutions outside SVD structures.
6. We recommend to the ASPAC Zonal Coordinator for Formation to consider the possibility of short-term exchange of formators in order to share their experiences and expertise.

*We can be inspired by this statement.*

Concerning our newsletter: as you can see, it is written from the contributions of the readers. So, we thank you again for your interest and response. We also 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](mailto: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](mailto:newlanyi@hotmail.com)(Br. Bela Lanyi) or [bromyabulad@yahoo.com](mailto:bromyabulad@yahoo.com)(Br. Romualdo Abulad).

*Your SVD Brothers in Cebu, Philippines*

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**A LAST WORD, FROM THE EDITORS**

# REFLECTIONS

" MUCH CHERISHED  
SVD BROTHER  
FORMATION"

*Br. Bipin Kishore Surin  
INE*



It was 7:30 in the morning. I walked down to a point where to catch a bus. Unfortunately there was no bus at that point for an hour. During the hour of waiting an old student of mine reached there with his friends. We had lots of exchange of views and ideas till I boarded in the bus.

I received a call after a week. It was the same guy with whom I had a long chat a week ago. He appreciated many things and cherished his school days. To quote a few things about what he

shared to me: "I am indebted to you for my having studied in your school. The strict discipline and teaching in the school have helped me to be what I am today. Your approach and encouragement in the boarding school is memorable." I responded to him, "Great! It was my responsibility."

Certainly, that was a contribution of SVD Brother Formation. It was like a drop in the ocean among many who responded to the tireless contribution of mine.

"A growing atmosphere  
of openness in the  
Society"

*Br. Bai Yohannes Tukan  
IDJ*

I am happy to work as formator for Brothers in temporary vows and the seminarians (priest candidates) in Malang Indonesia.

My main jobs are to be the Prefect for Brothers and fraters, teaching our postulants, teaching in the Pastoral Institution, Economic Institution

and in Informative Institution in Malang.

What makes me very happy is the growing atmosphere of openness among us in the Society (priest and brothers). We are SVD.

"I am the very first  
Indonesian Brother who  
had the privilege to study  
in the University..."

*Br. Wilfred Kromen (IDE)*

We were 15 persons when we started our novitiate (1964), but there were only 10 persons left when we had our first vows (1962). We did our final vows on September 8, 1972. But until one day before September 8, we had not yet obtained the approval from Rome, whether we were accepted or not. So on the day of final vows, we (3 persons) pronounced our final vows as follows: "Father in heaven, if I am accepted by the Generalate, then I, Bro. Wilfrid Kromen...etc." The following

day, we got the communication from Rome that one of us was not accepted.

Until the 1970's, Brothers were trained in the office or workshops; nobody was sent to the University. I was the very first person who had the privilege to study in the University. I realized very much that I was sent to the University as an experiment, and the future of the Indonesian Brothers was very much dependent on my commitment to the Society. For this purpose, I have kept the vow of Obedience strongly (and the other two vows are very much dependent on the vow of Obedience). I am very much helped by the motto of my life: "Thy will be done".



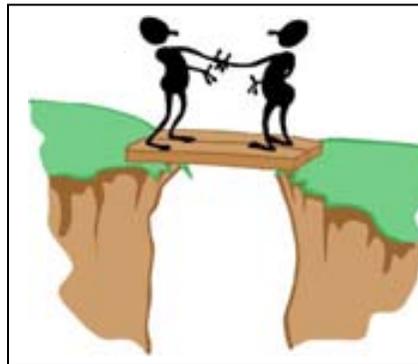
"The SVD Brother is an integrated person"

*Br. Rajesh Soreng, INH*

An SVD Brother is one who lives a consecrated life by taking the vows of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience. He is a person integrated within

himself and with the mission of Christ. He proclaims good news with his religious life and work. A religious Brother establishes the connection between the secular world and the Church.

My love and concern for the people give me satisfaction. Sometimes, if I fail in my mission/work, my failure gives me even more challenge to go ahead in my work. In line of forming the young candidates I commit myself. I realize the greatness of my work when the gratefulness comes to me from the people. Until now I have done little...I am yet to do more.



"Deep love and respect for the formandi"

*Br. Mukl Lal Ekka (INE)*



I had an opportunity to work in the formation for 11 years. At present, I am appointed in our own school. When I look back, I'm very much satisfied with my contribution in the formation, especially to our brother candidates. To motivate the young ones is a tough job. One will need to have a lot of openness and deep love and respect for the formandi. Every student should feel and realize that he is understood and cared for by the superiors. To a certain extent I was able to create a good atmosphere in the formation house; through the cooperation of the other staff members. There were moments too where I really struggled to do justice to the students, in terms of providing a conducive atmosphere for their quality formation. I am very much grateful to the staff of the Brother Formation House in Alwal INH, for accepting our students for Junior College studies. We appreciate their openness and willingness to accept our students.

I thank my superiors for giving me this opportunity to work in formation. This offered me good opportunities to meet many members outside the country. Every meeting was an enriching moment for me, and I have grown as an SVD. I am proud of being an SVD Brother.

"Every Brother must be aware of himself and of the calling of God"

*Br. Albert Naikofi,, IDR*



Now I am working in Ruteng Province, Indonesia (IDR).

I am happy to be a religious missionary. I am not disappointed with my decision. Even though my family doesn't understand why I decided to be an SVD Brother, I am enjoying and at home with my commitment/decision.

I just have one purpose in my life, which is to serve God with whole life and with my profession. I am aware that God calls me. God needs me to serve other people, especially those people who want to know God. And I believe that God never leaves me. He always gives me the strength to proclaim the Good News. God is good to all of us. For me, it is important that every Brother must be aware of himself and the calling of God. Through his job, everyone can serve God.

### "Being faithful to the call....."

*Br. Raju Soosai, INC*



When the vocation promoter delivered a speech on the SVD Mission and Vision of the Congregation, I opted for Brotherhood even though I was studying in a school managed by the De la Salle Brothers. I was invited to the seminary and the Brother in-charge also met me. After receiving the result of the 10<sup>th</sup> examination, I went to the seminary which is for clerical students. I was alone so I was together with the clerical candidates to study.

After finishing my junior college, I came to join for 1 course. It was an eye opener for me to meet different kinds of people. I was promoted to Vedyadaya which was purely for Brothers. I did my college studies there. Meanwhile, I was sent for work experience everyday for 4 hours to the press in Indore. It was helpful to choose my future apostolate. After finishing college cum philosophy studies at Vedyadaya, I went to the novitiate with two other companions. During the novitiate my companions switched over to priesthood. I remained alone as a Brother candidate. After taking first vows, I was assigned to the printing press community for my regency. During my regency time, I got

even more interested in learning things. Thus I proposed for studies in Biading. The request was granted.

It was a great learning process because of my staying outside the SVD community. I did well in the printing course. I was again assigned to the printing press community for practical experience. This time, I had learned more about practical things than book knowledge. After two years of learning and practical experience, I went for theological studies. During my first year, I opted to prepare for the final vows. At the end of the first year of theology, I pronounced my Final Vows. Then I continued one more year of theological studies.

During my formation, I was challenged by the formators, encouraging me not to be an SVD Brother. I took it seriously; this gave me the chance even to be more determined to become an SVD Brother. I have gone through a very nice formation program. I am happy and content that I had gone for my professional training for my future apostolate. I continue to be content, sincere, and responsible in my present apostolate.

"I AM AN SVD BROTHER MISSIONARY".

*Br. Justin Mau, JPN*



- Being an SVD Brother is a great gift of God.
- Being an SVD Brother in the mission field is a blessing of God
- Being an SVD Brother is a joy to serve God and others.
- Being an SVD Missionary is a lifetime journey.
- Being an SVD Brother is also to carry a suffering identity.

Being an SVD Brother Missionary in the world of secularism and materialism is really a challenge for me to keep my vows.

But I believe that God really calls me, and I am following him until now.

"Decline of the number of Candidates"

*Br. Gabriel Kesape, IDE*



Looking back on the number of Brothers in our society in the past, we all agreed that it was a great number. Nowadays, it is a big challenge because this number is going down.

And during the ASPAC Brothers Assembly 2008 in Taiwan, a question that always flew on the was "How about the number of SVD Brothers in the future? "

To respond to this question, nobody can know exactly or predict it precisely. We always state that the Holy Spirit will lead and guide our work and hopefully bear fruits. At the same time, we also wonder that the number of clerics or seculars is numerous. Why? There are several ways of answering this question, such as:

- cultural background
- using the word brothers for the Brothers

But one thing I'm quite sure of is that a main reason is because of the *LACK OF EMPHASIS ON THE COMMON GOAL IN OUR SOCIETY - OUR COMMON VOCATION. WE SHOULD BECOME SVD FIRST RATHER*

*THAN BECOME A PRIEST OR BROTHER..*

"Our candidates and young confreres may get lost..."

*Br. Paulus Boli, PNG*



The challenge in the formation program is that we don't have a Brother Formation House. Our Brother candidates on study or training don't live in the formation community; instead, they live with non-religious students. There is no special program and formation for them; there is no place to stay and no guidance for them. They get lost among other students. Based on my observation, some candidates leave the seminary after having done their studies and field training.

I am not so familiar with the formation in PNG because I am working in another field, which is a pastoral centre for the formation of lay people in the diocese. But I can talk from my observation.

In PNG, the stages of formation for Brothers vary from time to time. A few years ago, they made a program for the formation of Brother candidates and made clear

that we try it as an experiment. In other words, the Brother's formation program can be adjusted or be changed, according to what is good for the province considering the system of education and culture.

At the moment, a Brother candidate with the approval of the Vocation Director can start the formation program in the Postulancy. He has finished grade 12 or grade 10 with some technical or vocational studies as an equivalent to grade 11 or 12. After the postulancy program the Brother candidate can spend some years for religious studies together with the clerical students, so that they all have a background in catechetical and religious education.

Then the experimental program challenges them, whether they will go for the expertise learning in other institution or continue their religious studies until they enter the novitiate program. Some of those who join the society have already practical knowledge, therefore they do a pastoral year or upgrade their vocational training. After the novitiate, the brother candidate can participate in the pastoral work and help others in their field. Some of them do further studies, during which they will live in an SVD community or just by themselves in the institution where they are working. The

*Cont. Br. Boli*

SVD Society sponsors their specialized studies. And then they can take the final vows.

At the moment we are searching the right solution about what to do in the formation program of the Junior Brothers (those in temporary vows). We don't have an experience in this regard, because we have only one young Brother in Final Vows. Looking at the present situation, at the problem we are facing in PNG, we have to renew the formation program. This is what I will recommend to the formation board and the Provincial. We will send the candidates for studies or field training earlier, before the Novitiate. So after the Postulancy, they will join the clerical students for catechetical and religious education studies. After that, they will go for pastoral experience for one year and for the Novitiate program. After Novitiate the Brother candidates may explore their jobs of interest. After one year, the candidate should make his fixed decision about which job he would like to do later as a brother. At present, some candidates might see religious life as a stepping stone for a better status or a better job. That's why so many candidates leave the society after studies and field training.

["My Personal Comments on Brother Formation in SVD"](#)

*Br. Martin Mamaq, IDE*



First, I would like to thank Br. Bela Lanyi, SVD who has asked me to write about my experience in formation, especially in St. Conrad Brother Formation House in Ende-Flores-Indonesia (IDE)

Talking about Brother Formation in our society is very interesting and unique. In my province (Ende Province) we have a Brother Formation House, one of the biggest Formation Houses for Brotherhood in our society. We have good vocation for the Brotherhood. Almost every year there are many young men who come and join the SVD and want to be trained as a Brother. So, I could say that at the present there are a good number of candidates who are ready to dedicate their life and themselves to be trained as an SVD Brother.

Now, these days there are so many comments that the Brotherhood formation program takes a long time and is costly. I do agree with all the comments, but we should know and remember that the Formation of Brotherhood is totally different from the Clerics. Although the Brother Formation is very costly and it takes a long time in professional training, it is our duty and concern that by their professional training the Brothers will be doing their service to the people and to the Society.

Along this line, I could say that a well educated Brother is able to

be closer to the people while doing his service as an expert in his work. A good professional training for his future job is very important for the young Brothers. They have to find joy and happiness in their professional work. Thanks and God bless you all....



I want to thank the Society for providing a very good theological formation for me. In my present work in the University as a teacher of the classical languages and classical literature and as a translator of theological books, I rely on the solid academic training I received in St. Gabriel (Austria). My work as academic theologian may be special for a brother, but I think it might be enriching if more Brothers do their service as teachers in seminaries, as retreat masters, lecturers etc, or in other people-oriented academic professions. In my special situation in a mainly non-Christian country my theological and academic qualifications are the basic requirements which enable me to reach out to university students and to satisfy their intellectual and spiritual needs. I hope all Brothers take their own theological education very seriously, since it might help them to save others better.

As Jesus said: *Duc in Altum!*  
(Row the boat to the deep water).

I am working in PNG from 1973.

Most of the time I spent in PNG as a Principal of the Vocational-Technical school.

My reflection during my formation live in the seminary:

1. Spirituality

- Personal prayer
- Love for sacrament
- Love for the word of God
- Forgive
- Honesty

2. Community

- Sacrifice
- Hard working

3. Academic

- Good professional education and qualification provides identity and meaningful need within Church and Society.

God is with you!

*Fr. Bill Burt, AUS  
ASPAC Zonal Coordinator*



**This is what the Almighty says:**  
"Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'In those days ten men from all the nations will grasp the garment of a Jew, saying, "Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you." (Zech. 8:23)

Brothers, faithful to our missionary calling, let us work and pray that the words of Zechariah may be realized in our time!



Duc in Altum! (=Row the boat to the deep water!)

*Br. Leo Leeb, SIN*

"Demanding high qualification to become a Brother discourages our youth..."

*Br. Stanislaw Koszuta, PNG*

*Cont. Br. Koszuta*

Note: Demanding high qualification to become a Brother Candidate and for me this is

discouraged our young youth. Do brotherhood vocational. I think we do not need only degrees or academic certificate so that we can train them better.

Our focus as Brothers should be:

Stay close to God, be at peace with yourself and everything else will be taken care of.



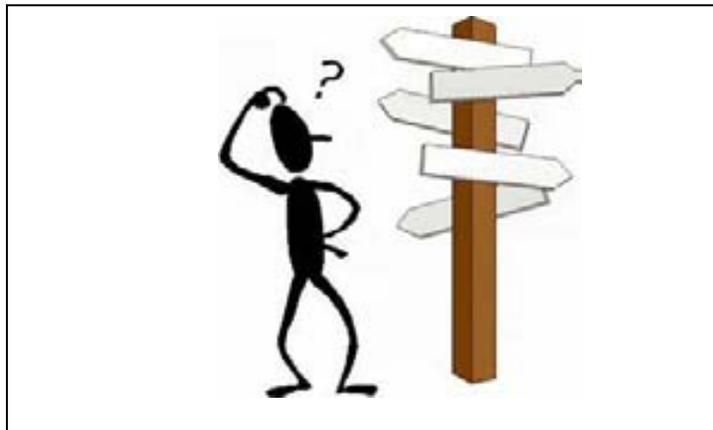
## SVD BROTHER FORMATION

*My Own Experience:*

*Br. Darwin Loro, AUS-ARS*

In my experience there were many similarities and many interesting differences between the SVD Brother formation in the Philippines and Australia. On the one hand, the common SVD missionary orientation and vision, as well as the distinct 'SVD' way of celebrations and practices, were very similar in both countries. On the other hand, along with the obvious difference of geographical distance, the other differences were the location of our college, the group make-up, a common spoken language, the unique history of the formation communities and, perhaps, the standard of living.

The differences made me realize how my Brotherhood training had positively influenced me in my attitude and that no particular program



should be made as a standard anywhere.

An added enrichment of my formation experience included an Overseas Training Program (OTP) in East Timor - a foretaste of being an SVD in action minus my usual academic studies. Although it was a short stint the experience provided a lot of early learning opportunities for an aspiring, young religious missionary like me. The impact was so great that the journey prepared me for the years ahead, especially as a preparation for my first mission

assignment. I am confident that, with God's grace, I will be able to overcome any future hurdles and be strengthened in my desire to continually respond to an ongoing invitation to live life as a religious missionary Brother.

### Background

Looking back on my journey, I started to get to know the SVDs when I enrolled in high school at the now defunct Divine Word University (DWU) in Tacloban. After my secondary education I was enrolled at another SVD institution where I began my pre-novitiate formation in Cebu, joining the Brotherhood program. I also commenced my undergraduate studies at the University of San Carlos (USC) taking up BS in Psychology.

There were seven of us in our original batch of SVD brother

candidates, taking up various courses such as Political Science, Business Administration, Computer Science, Sociology, Psychology and Education. Over a period of time, all left the Brother formation except me. I entered the novitiate in Mindoro with another Brother candidate who was not in my original group. We became good friends, and we supported each other in the Brotherhood program for a number of years.

During my novitiate there were three other Filipinos in our class and one Papua New Guinean who decided to profess vows and join the Brotherhood program. All of the four temporary professed Brothers left the SVD one after the other. The remaining two of us who were sent to Australia completed our formation program. In Australia we studied Theology and later took our post-graduate program of studies. My confrere did his master's degree in Business Administration while I took up Social Science (International Development).

My confrere eventually decided to shift to the priesthood and became an SVD priest. I was sent to East Timor to practice what I had studied. I taught in school, as well as volunteered at an orphanage and at World Vision - an aid organization whose program was to run an

Office Skills Training for young East Timorese who were unable to proceed to university studies. After East Timor, I came back to Australia to do some studies in counselling and prepared for my final vows. After my final vows I was assigned to work in Argentina for my first mission.

### **Discerning one's vocation**

There came a time when I was no longer paying much attention to the statistics of who came in and who left the SVD Brotherhood program. The fact that each one of us had a particular calling in life made me more resolute in my own formation process. Being the only Brother candidate in recent years without someone or a group that I could call my classmates made me think (probably more than I should have) about this, for me, an act of discernment. Recently, I heard one confrere commenting that I was the only one in the Brother pre-novitiate program who stayed until the end and professed final vows. I was again brought back to recall memories that I had with those whom I journeyed with from the beginning. To hear such a comment was alarming, even surprising; to remember that I was the only one who remained of all the Brothers who took our first vows in 1999; it gave a strange feeling. With this recollection I still feel a mixture of emotions, one of thankfulness for the gift of vocation as a Brother, and yet also of sadness that I am the only one now left behind. Where have all the Brothers gone? What can we do now to

address and promote the Brother vocation?

During my post-novitiate formation in Australia, I became more aware of the scarcity of temporary professed Brothers sent from other provinces when we were not increasing in number. Deep within me I yearned for many more candidates to the Brotherhood program. I was truly affected and wanting to support my fellow professed Brothers with words of encouragement to keep them going, to speak their minds about issues that they felt were important in the formation community and to seek out help when in need. My undergraduate psychology background would surely have influenced my thinking and feeling in dealing with others. Despite my being in an almost endangered group, however, meeting other young Brothers made me feel happy, convinced that I was in the right place.

What kept me going was the positive effect of encouragement by my family and the healthy social network of a generally supportive SVD community, their trust, prayer and willingness to listen. Indeed, these and the pursuit of Christian service for others continued to nourish my vocation.

Lastly, the Philippine SVD formation experiences awakened my senses and aided me in my personal growth; the test of faith led me to an ongoing appreciation of life. The initial 'YES' to God and a

*Cont. Br. Loro*

deep-seated longing to bear fruit in the service of humanity had been magnified and clarified when I continued my formation journey in the SVD Australia province. Hence, when the Lord calls, a special gift of grace brings one to live in a religious life.

**After reading Br. Berger's input and reflecting on it I have come up with short responses in the light of my personal journey and formation experience:**

***What makes a better formation for our Brothers in the Society?***

Internationality of formation community (the different countries that comprise the SVD formation community that I was in was such a great experience for me)

OTP/CCTP that is specifically designed for the professed Brother's use of his training / educational background. Regular update and evaluation of the Brother formation program

Every professed Brother should be carefully guided from the very beginning since they do not have the same program of studies. Unlike seminarians taking up Theology, Brothers do not have common academic subjects and the time schedule varies. Misguidance can also lead to unnecessary protracted formation which becomes more costly for the Society.

Spiritual Direction / Ratio on Formation / ministry supervision / counselling / reflection papers / retreats / academic studies / Brothers' gathering

***Why is there an alarming decline in the vocations to the religious Brotherhood in our Society today?***

Religious Brothers are less appreciated in certain countries (our vocation has to be explained before being understood and appreciated).

Pressure and lack of support from parents and significant others contribute to the decline of the Brother's vocation.

There is a general lack of understanding or even awareness of the vocation of a religious Brother. Many people are familiar with the religious sister, oftentimes called a "nun". Yet when it comes to their male counterpart, namely, a religious Brother, many are somewhat confused. The roles and identity of religious Brothers are unknown to many, even among priests and religious sisters. How can we expect other people to appreciate and know that Brothers exist? A concrete example is during the Mass. When a priest talks about vocation to the religious life, he normally mentions priests and sisters and forgets that there are religious Brothers too. Does it take a lot to explain what a Brother is? As a result, we continue to make people unaware of the existence of the religious Brothers. Thus, people

become less supportive and encouraging of Brothers whom they think to be pursuing priesthood. If this is the case, how can we expect people to understand better and be more supportive of the Brotherhood vocation? How will the Brother vocation increase?

Upon learning that a religious Brother also lives a celibate state, other people may say, "Why not go all the way and become a priest?" Still, some imagine the Brother's vocation as halfway house to priesthood while others think that it occupies a lesser rank in the hierarchy of the church. And then, if one chooses to become a Brother, he may be considered to be lacking in intelligence. Such negative assumptions of many people as well as the wrong motivations of some in not opting to become a Brother are a result of miseducation. The role of the religious Brother's vocation is unheard of and not esteemed in today's society. History tells that the "clericalization" of many Orders where ordained members became dominant in number, authority and influence has made the Brothers numerically few.



Often, when a few Brother candidates are present in a combined formation house, the formation program for religious life is geared towards priesthood. This can happen in mixed congregations of priests and Brothers.

There is a lack of Brother formators in formation houses; their presence is essential if we want to promote the Brotherhood vocation.

***What further concerns must the upcoming General Assembly on the Brother Vocation address or consider?***



Since there are not many temporary professed Brothers undergoing formation in the SVD, except in Indonesia, I would like to propose a common program in one country. The General Council will have to examine and determine the most appropriate place for an international common post-novitiate Brother Formation with formandi coming from the four SVD zonal areas and supported by the different provincials and their councils (This could be seen as a real and concrete support on the part of the SVD and its leaders to promote the

*Cont. Br. Loro*

vocation of the Religious Brother).

When collaboration happens, a positive growth is achieved and a renewed strength is experienced. The different SVD provinces can contribute by sending an ongoing number of temporary professed Brothers every year for the continuity and existence of the said Brother formation program. Also, a dedicated and creative team of Brother formators coming from different SVD provinces should be the norm in order for this program to gain a wide acceptance and legitimacy. I believe this kind of attempt to address a decreasing number of Brothers in our Society is indispensable and viable. I believe this approach will give a much needed boost to a dwindling SVD Brother vocation. An established program like this will help clarify the specific identity and mission of a consecrated religious Brotherhood.

To support my stand, I remember talking to two SVD priests in different instances, whom I have met and who told me that years ago they were initially interested in becoming Brothers. However, since their SVD provinces did not have a Brother formation program in their own countries, they just kept going until they eventually ended up being ordained to the priesthood. The point is, do we normally practice the use of referral in countries that have no existing Brother formation program, while a formandus has

expressed an interest in becoming a Brother? What do we do with them?

The Brothers are vital in our Society and therefore they need to remember that there is nothing impossible and bad about sharing and embarking on what could be an effective collaborative strategy. Instead of losing hope in this religious vocation, by focusing on a more united stand among Brother confreres together with their peers, an increased awareness of the Brotherhood vocation is likely to happen in the SVD. My personal encounter of an international formation community was such a great experience that it helped me to understand and appreciate more its significance, thereby making me embrace the Brotherhood vocation. The Ben Seng House of Brother Formation in Melbourne, Australia may not have produced many SVD brothers, but the fact that I remained (and I am grateful of the whole process) manifests that there is hope in this kind of formation set-up which could be improved and could be established in one of the countries where the SVDs are. I hope you will take this proposal into consideration. I am convinced that a well-examined program of the Brother formation that is collaborative, evolving and constantly being reviewed is an encouraging sign for the future of the Brotherhood vocation.

We cannot choose and dictate how many will become Brothers, because this is all up to God who leads people to the

path of religious vocation. Let the Spirit use us to become instruments in making that a reality.

***What can or should be done to promote anew vocations to the SVD Brotherhood?***

Local / international formators' meetings that include updated status of Brotherhood vocation (to promote an awareness of and the calling of Brothers)

Find ways to let people understand this special vocation and recognize the immense contribution the Brothers have made over the years.

Presence of teaching Brothers at schools which promote the identity and vocation of Brothers, by which students will have better information about religious life.

Brothers popularizing something that is uniquely their own in the SVD.



### We are too much clericalized...

*Br. Wojciech Gadek, OES*



Speaking about the Brother vocation, we have to realize several aspects. There are different reasons, why confreres leave the society or why do we experience a shortage of vocations. Sometimes even the formators do not have experience about this. Sometimes they do not know the reasons, sometimes they easily accept some suggestions, but we have to be careful in this topic.

The Brother Formation in its initial phase is getting acquainted with the vocation. Later, the spiritual and the intellectual formation follows. But it is not the same as that of the priests – we are too much clericalized: it is the same in Poland as in Brazil. I am not criticizing but it is just the fact. The young Brothers need a care on the way that they have chosen – but who is really responsible for them and how does this care look in the everyday aspect? The programs might be super, but if there are no people, no vocations, then they are of no use. These are my thoughts - if there are questions, please ask me!

### It is counter productive, if we channel the brother candidates through the study of philosophy!

*Br. Karl Scharschmitt, KEN*



I have the feeling, that our formators are not interested in Brothers vocation. There is not even a program, and when here are some who like to become a Brother, then they tell him to go first for philosophical studies and then we will see. I find that totally wrong and counter productive for the brothers vocations. We have now a new provincial and council, and I hope there will be more understanding and effort about the brothers vocation. This is why I wrote the following document.

#### *Recruitment and formation of SVD Brothers*

The numbers of Brothers in our society is getting less every year. We in our province should make more effort to get more brothers vocation.

I have the impression that, we in our parishes are a little too clerical, and the Brother vocation is hardly mentioned in addressing the people and in sermons. The addressing is mostly done: dear Fathers, dear Sisters and dear people. How will the people get to know, that there are dedicated religious lay men in the church.

It would be necessary to have a Brother in the vocation recruitment team and to make more representation in the collages and technical training institutes about the Brother vocation. In our information material, posters and leaflets, the Brother vocation should be incorporated very clearly.

Since a few years, we do not have a formation program for Brothers. How can we promote Brother vocation, when we can not explain to them the formation process.

I for my understanding, it is counter productive, if we channel the Brother candidates through the study of philosophy. By so doing, we put them automatically in the pipeline to become a priest and should not be surprised, if a Brother candidate is changing his vocation.

I would however favour, to have the common formation together in the same community with the candidates for priest, but their studies could be going a different way.

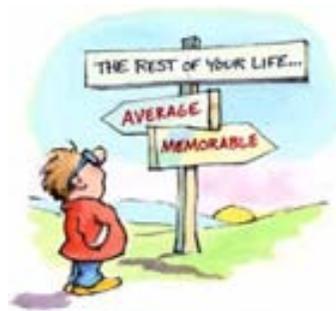
I would propose the following: When young men join us, the candidates should be together to discern their vocation, as it is now done already in the Soweto Formation house. If the discernment is done, the candidates for brotherhood should also go to Otiende, but should do a course in basic religious studies, followed by the noviciate. After noviciate, they should do the course in social studies, or a professional study for their future involvement, and live together with the theologians in Langata.

*Cont. Br. Scharschmitt*

I feel, that this is an urgent concern and should be addressed and implemented as soon as possible.

Talents in the SVD –  
and the the chance to  
be found or  
developed...

*Br. Stephen Pardy, USW*



God sends who 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.

Who knows how many creative geniuses have been forgotten or never even developed because they were illiterate or born into the wrong social group?

In *Ratatouille*, the 2008 Oscar winning movie for animation, one of the main characters repeatedly says: "Anyone can cook!" That doesn't

mean that everybody can be a great cook; only that a great cook can come from anywhere. I guess that's the great risk any Society runs if it decides not to educate certain groups of people. Who knows what talent or genius is overlooked because it's never given the chance to be found or developed.

The Brothers' professional training must be appreciated!

*Br. Wolfgang Seuring, GER*



If the philosophical and theological subjects are in overweight, this can make the impression for a young Brother, that his professional training is considered as less necessary. In my opinion, the basic formation in philosophy and theology should take 1 or 1.5 years. This estimation is based on my own experience in the formation. For lack of experience, I can not state, how long the basic pastoral formation should last. Concerning the daily schedule, if it is supportive for the Brother, so it makes sense. As the schedule of the clerical students adjusted to the school order, the schedule of the Brothers should make a good professional training and the

collection of professional experiences, too.

I find it a VALUE in my formation, that the philosophical and theological basic formation with their subjects have widened my previously rather narrow horizon in this field. I experienced this as an inner liberation. On the other hand, I realized it as a DIFFICULTY, that through the long formation (together with Postulancy and Noviciate) my professional practice suffered and my capability of working fell. It has been difficult for me to find again my connection to the professional field.

The model (program) of my own formation was applied according to my needs. Therefore, it is important in my opinion, that models and programs should not be rigid, but that they can be adjusted to the talents and the needs of the young Brother in a flexible way.

Professional experiences should be obtained in different institutions and companies. (In the German Province, priests also have to work in different parishes, in order to widen their pastoral experiences.) For each institution and company has its own culture, its own mission statement and its own working process.

The competition: every confrere wants to become the boss...

*Br. Gerhard Osthues, GER*



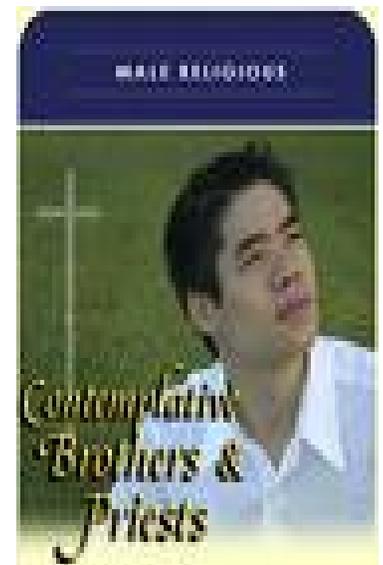
Concerning my experiences during my Brother-Formation I would like to give some impressions. My Philosophy/Theology program last 2 years. Part of my formation was an OTP-Program in Ghana for nearly 2 years. When I entered the SVD, I was already trained as a businessman, so there was no further education needed. An experienced Brother took care of me during my formation in Steyl after my Novitiate. Many confreres in Steyl never had an experience outside of St. Michael. Therefore many are quite old-fashioned. It was not easy for me, because I came as a late vocation.

There is still an old image of the priest and the Brother in the SVD. Many Brothers in the German Province especially stick to their kind of formation and values. Brothers can be clerical too. Unfortunately there can be also some kind of competition thinking between Brothers. Every confrere wants to become the boss to have more

power than the other confrere. But than we must not be surprised when a confrere doesn't want to do a crappy job.

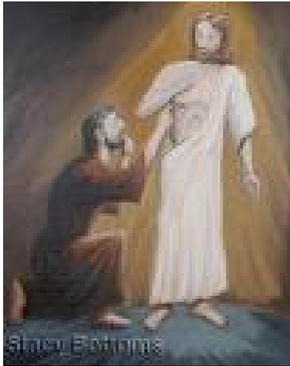
The formation program of the German province is still good and was always adapted to the talents of a confrere. My suggestion is to really try to adapt the formation programs to the talents, possibilities and wishes of a confrere. And that is a real challenge.

The second challenge is to try to strengthen the commitment to the vocation as a religious (during formation), whether a confrere wants to become a Brother or a priest, making clear that it is all about service and not power.



## Are we convinced of our Vocation?

Br. Guy Mazola, PNG



I am so sorry for not sending my contribution as promised before the deadline. I was rushed to the hospital due to a complication of the intestines. I am still convalescent, keeping my bed. Since I promised to send you my contribution, I am taking this opportunity to write a few words on Brother Formation which is our topic.

As you know, the final document of the 1994 Assembly on the Brother Vocation says that: « *The vocation of brothers must become a visible and prophetic witness in a world suffering from poverty, ignorance*

*and oppression... Today SVD brothers must read the signs of our time and take on new work and ministries so as to continue more effectively the mission entrusted to the SVD. » Analecta SVD 70/1, p. 87.*

I think that our Brothers should be formed in this perspective. Our formation should be, above all, a human formation, taking into account the realities of the world today. We have to incul-

*Cont. Br. Mazola*

cate in our candidates a great love for people. Most of the difficulties that we encounter in our religious/missionary life are due to a lack of human maturity. Of course, the encouragement of the candidate: family, teachers, friends... have already in a way shaped their character before joining us. That is why the selection of candidates is very, very important.

In my little experience in formation here in Congo, vocation promotion is of crucial importance. Here, the presence of

a Brother in the team is necessary. During this stage, candidates should be told clearly on Brother vocation, preferably by a Brother. This is to help the candidate to make a (good) decision of becoming Brother or Priest. For me, this decision has to be made at the very first stage of formation.

One way to attract vocation for the Brotherhood is, as Fr. General mentioned in the foreword of « You are all Brothers », to live our vocation as Brothers convincingly. Are we convinced of our vocation?

As regard to the formation program, the Society has a very good tool - « You are all Brothers » - that we can use to improve our respective programs.

I end my contribution with a quote from a confrere: « The quality of the religious life of a community depends on the quality of formation that takes place in that community. »



# 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! 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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