



MARIST INTERNATIONAL NOVITIATE

EDEN, DAVAO CITY, PHILIPPINES

BULLETIN 2: SEPTEMBER 2020



2020-21 NOVITIATE COMMUNITY

Editor's Note



The original plan was to have eight novices for this year; four from the district of Africa and four from the province of Oceania. Yet the novitiate started with four novices from the province of Oceania; three from Fiji and one from Vanuatu. Four novices from the same formation house is very different from having

eight novices coming from two units. We have to undergo adjustments with the dynamics of the community, relationship and classes.

This time, we only have two novices since the other two left the novitiate community before the two weeks retreat and moved to the district house while waiting for the opening of their country boarder.

We are aware that the novitiate community is in for lots of adjustments since we are now in small numbers: two novices and two formators. With few people in the community, adjustment has to be part of it.

One of the biggest adjustments is the responsibilities of the novices. There are more than ten responsibilities in the novitiate. The consequence is that the two novices will have plenty responsibilities to carry which in a way is good. The community will also ask some help from our neighbors to

help in cleaning the property because there is no way that the two novices will be able to keep the place clean. Another adjustment is the community life meeting and sports. They will still have to do them but in creative ways and different dynamics. Faith and Scripture sharing will also be adjusted with new times because fewer people means a shorter time period for sharing. And even the seating arrangement of the chapel will have to be adjusted too. The three weeks Bugey mission experience will have to be revised as well.

The number of formators present in the community has to be taken into account also. We don't want to have three full time formators with two novices because it is not very helpful. The question is how would the two novices feel with 6 eyes on them? Another is the team meeting which will now be held every two weeks.

We acknowledge that the novitiate formation has to do a lot of adjustments in the next five months but we also need to keep the content of the program the same. Adjustments does not speak about instability. It entails flexibility in responding to the new situation. Hopefully this will become a new normal until the end of the Novitiate year.

Fr Fernando Ingente sm

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Constitution 228

Number 228 of our 1985 constitutions speaks about the fidelity to the spirit of the Society of Mary and it is copied from the Constitution 1872 number 49 and 50.

The first part of the Constitution 228 is mainly focused on Mary and her influence in our life and vocation as Marists. Mary is personally and directly involved in our vocation and mission because we breathe, in and out, her spirit. We need to constantly strive to imitate Mary in everything: To think as Mary, judge as Mary and feel and act as Mary.

The second part of the Constitution 228 is the practical and specific expressions of the spirit of the Society from the very experience of Fr. Colin. We can only understand this through our recognition of Fr. Colin as our founder with his experiences during the early foundation of the Society of Mary. These practical expressions are actually based on Fr. Colin's personal and intimate relationship with Mary.

The last part calls us to hold on to this spirit of the society because this is the pivot and the foundation of our Society.

Looking at the spirit of the society as a whole, calls us to reflect and live Mary's sensitivity to the Holy Spirit and to keep the personal covenant relationship with Mary in our daily life. The very foundation of the spirit of the Society of Mary is to put Mary as the principle of every Marists' life. When our founder told Marist priests that "simply bearing the name of Mary was not enough", he was actually calling us to realize how deep the intimacy was between Mary and those who carry her name, and how great the responsibility is for Marists who have been given her name. Like the words of St. Ambrose we can say: May the soul of Mary be in each one of us to glorify the Lord! May the spirit of Mary be in each one of us to rejoice in God.

Rereading the spirit of the Society every now and then and meditating upon its words will not only be helpful in reminding us how important our faithfulness to the Spirit of the Society based on the understanding of Fr. Colin is but also enable us to live it in our daily lives. Without living out this spirit, the whole body won't move. We are all reminded that fidelity to the Spirit of the Society entails also, fidelity to the Spirit of Mary and to the Holy Spirit.

Fr Fernando Ingente sm



Holy week at 'Cerdon'



The Covid-19 has obliged to review and change many traditions taken for granted until now. We have experienced this several times at "Cerdon", our International Marist Novitiate. The novitiate program con-

tained several of these traditions: Free days, Pastoral ministries on Sunday, Pastoral experience in Marist communities, Holy Week celebrations and activities in the Chapel of the village of Eden or in the main parish... None of these have been possible this year of quarantine and lock down. And most probably it will continue to be so until the end of the year.

But we were very lucky because we could celebrate the Holy Week as a community in our chapel, having present in our prayers and intentions all those millions of Catholics who had no other chance than to be at home and follow the on-line celebrations.

We started with Palm Sunday celebrated in a very low key. The novices were still in silence going through the First Week of the Spiritual Exercises. We had our procession and Eucharist at an unusual time, 6am, with very contained fervour. The group of only 7 people looked very small compared with the crowds accompanying Jesus in Jerusalem, but we felt proud representing the many other crowds who were confined in their homes and who would sing much louder than we did.

On Holy Thursday (sometimes on Wednesday) we used to go to the Cathedral early in the morning for the Chrism celebration of the diocese with the Bishop, priests and other people. This year there was no Chrism celebration. But in the after-

noon we had our of the Lord's Supper celebration presided by Fr. Fernando, our superior and master of novices. The Washing of the Feet was a moving moment trying to enter into the spirit of Jesus giving to his apostles an example and command of service and love to each other in the new community.

Holy Friday used to be a busy day, starting with the Way of the Cross with the Christian community of the village of Eden, starting at 5 am in a chapel 5 kms away from the village's chapel. This year we had our own Way of the Cross in the property at 6am. In the afternoon, at 3pm, we had the traditional celebration of the Passion of the Lord presided by Fr Jacob, and in the evening I was tasked to lead us through a reflexion and contemplation in front of the Cross.

The Holy Saturday was a day of silence and it concluded with a festive celebration of Christ's Resurrection in the evening, with a big fire in the garden (thank God there was neither wind nor rain!), a small candle as Paschal candle (no possibility of buying anything better!) and myself singing part of the Easter Proclamation in the chapel.

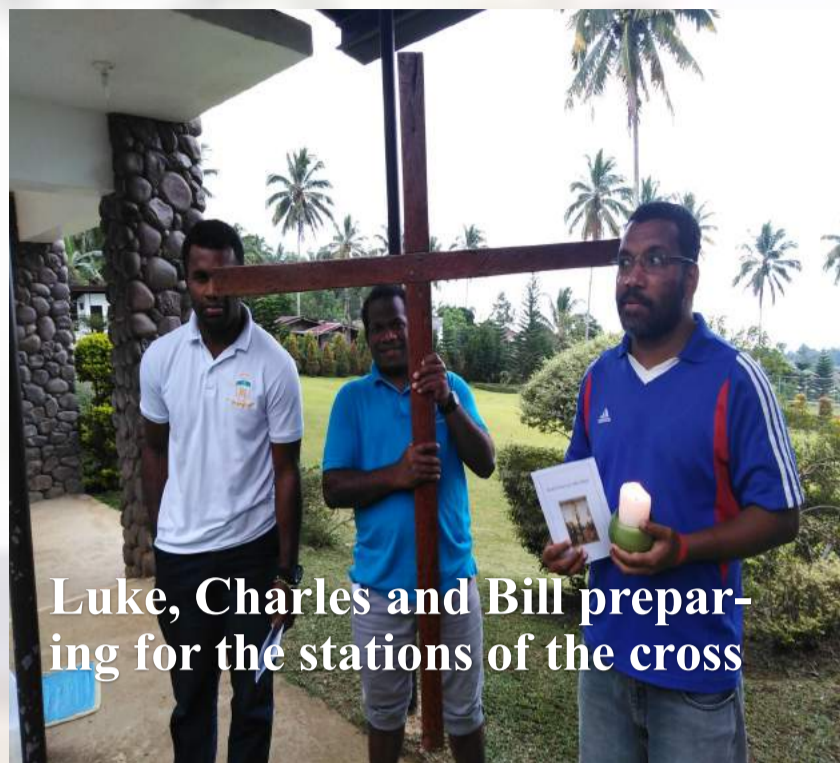
In all it was a special week, centred more in the community and in the personal and interior contemplation of the mysteries of Christ's Passion than in the solemn celebrations we are accustomed to participate with in the parishes full of enthusiastic crowds. We also learnt that we are not well prepared to do these celebrations by ourselves. There were moments of confusion, easy to deal with in a small group, but showing that we need better liturgical preparation to make our celebrations meaningful and beautiful. This is also part of the process of formation.

Fr Joaquin Fernandez sm

Holy week photos



“Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant”



Luke, Charles and Bill preparing for the stations of the cross



Our Lenten-look decorated chapel



At the place of repose



“And there was light”

Samsung Dual Camera
Shot with my Galaxy A30



Resurrection decoration

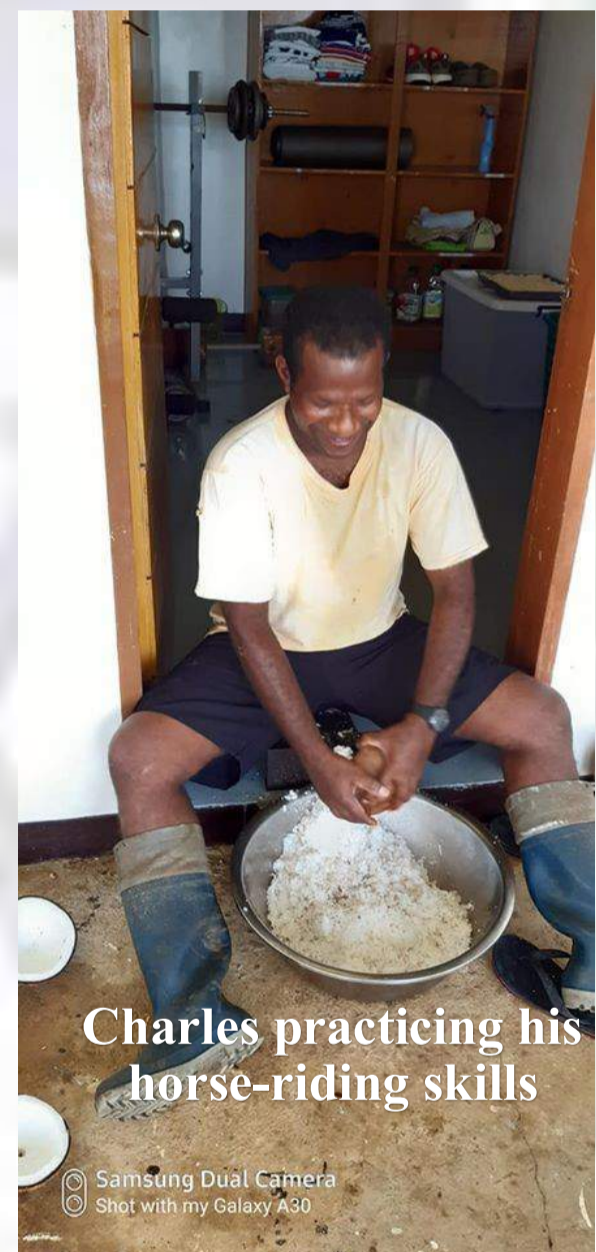
Samsung Dual Camera
Shot with my Galaxy A30

Saint Peter Chanel

The Feast of Saint Peter Chanel was prepared by a Novena for Vocations integrated in our community prayer. The same day of the celebration was started with the Eucharist and a reflection on the life of Peter Chanel.

The morning saw the novices still having one hour of class dedicated to underline some facts of Peter's life. We had learnt that the Oceanian novices knew very little about their patron Saint, Peter Chanel! Fr Joaquin showed them photos of Futuna and of the return of Peter Chanel's head to the place where he was killed.

The rest of the day was used to prepare the festive meal at midday and the special prayer in the evening when we listened to testimonies of people who knew Peter and wrote about him. It was a way to discover the depth of his Marist life and apostolate under the banner of the "hidden and unknown".



"Merci beaucoup Pierre Chanel"

Community Life



Thankful for the invitation to comment on this very important subject.

As religious, sometimes we are so focused on our mission that we tend to forget community life.

Community living is a call. It is a vocation. It is God's gift, given to individuals he chooses. God chooses them to live together not necessarily under one roof but something beyond. They are to know one another, love and to mourn one another when they die. There should be an unconditional love established between the members of the community. One which renders the readiness to serve others generously, willingness to welcome them as they are and the ability to forgive *seventy times seven*. As religious we are called to share everything in common: material goods, spiritual experiences, inspirations, talents, apostolic ideals and charitable services.

We know that community life calls for presence, prayer and participation. Being present does not mean only physically presence but also mentally. We participate in the joys and sorrows, needs and problems, fears, anxieties, successes and failures of one another and a willing and joyful sharing in the burdens and responsibilities within the community. The power of prayer helps us to achieve this by sharing the Word and celebrating the Eucharist.

The core of this living together has three fundamental things: 1) following Christ, 2) fraternal communion, and 3) service unto salvation. Religious communities see these as their life day in day out and as religious it is our way of life. However, in reality, sometimes we miss the point

here, always on the mission, following Christ and service unto salvation. We love to go out serving others, which is perfectly ok but forget our own. We forget fraternal communion. We have no time for our brothers in the community, to listen and appreciate their stories. This is one of the killing machines in religious community living. We treat our mission as much more important than our very own brothers, which leads me to ask a question; which is more important than the other, the mission out there or a brother in my community? I pose this question because there have been complaints about members of the religious communities. It is sad to hear that because we are supposed to live Christ and the charism of our founders in our communities as religious.

I have read and heard during this Covid19 pandemic that the situation have brought religious community members together. It is very good to see community coming together but my fear is what happens after the pandemic. It seems that we only value each other when situation forces us to do so. Community life is a life we as religious live and share the love of God with each other day in, day out. We do not have to wait for situations like this pandemic to make us come together.

Fr Jacob Aba sm



Human Formation on Enneagram



The Enneagram module was presented by Fr Jacob. We were delighted to study this module and we also looked at it from the spiritual point of view. It broadened our understanding of our personalities.

What is Enneagram, then?

The translation says that: *“Enneagram comes from two Greek words: Ennea means nine and gramma means something that’s drawn or written.”* According to the Enneagram, each of the nine personality types is defined by a particular core belief about how we behave. This core belief shapes our person's worldview and the perspective through which we see ourselves and the people around us. Our core beliefs are not necessarily incorrect, but they are limiting. Understanding our Enneagram type and how it colors our perceptions can help us to broaden our perspective and approach

situations more effectively. It shows opportunities for our personal development and provides a foundation for the understanding of ourselves and others. Enneagram is mostly used for personal self-knowledge and personality development, offering a powerful tool for self-mastery, conflict resolution, team dynamics, leadership and emotional intelligence. Because it identifies opportunities for development for each individual type, it has become widely used in areas such as counseling, psychotherapy, business development, parenting education and in our case, formation. But not only that. We also need to integrate the gift of the Enneagram into our spiritual life. Therefore, Fr Richard Rohr emphasized very clearly. In his work on the Enneagram, he contributes, *“The gift that the Enneagram gives is self-knowledge or self-awareness. With self-knowledge, the individual can move into pursuing inner-work, which is often painful.*

It provides a window into one’s own self so that one may peer within their motivations for life. With this critical self-understanding one then can orient daily practices and regular

rhythms with the possibility of transformation into Christ-likeness.” When we know our personality type and how we play with our wings, only then will we be able to understand our behavior and that of others. We will be able to help each other discover our own strengths and overcome our weaknesses.

Charles Sangul



Cultural Diversity



Our 'Cultural Diversity' module was facilitated by Ate Leah. There were many important aspects of our formation discussed as part of this week-long

class. We dealt with self-image where we were asked to look at our ideal self and our real view of self. It is important that an individual have a genuine sense of the real view of self rather than being trapped in the ideal self, which may or may not be fully realized. There is also a danger of dreaming away in the ideal self and one can become unrealistic about his expectations of himself and that of others. It is quite crucial that a person has a firmly grounded identity because without it his life as a novice and as a human being can be chaotic. The understanding of self can affect your relationship with others. In addition, one has to differentiate between what others see of himself and what he sees of himself. One would be able to discover more about oneself based on your own reflections and things based on what others have to say about you. If a person is standing on the solid ground of his identity, he would most certainly know how to handle sceptics and critics.

Another important feature of this class is one's ability to evaluate himself. We were reminded that while outsiders can help, having the intrinsic ability to evaluate one's own self is even better. Having a good self-knowledge can lead to good self-evaluation. There are things about yourself that only you know, there are things you think you know but others can see them better than yourself. The challenge is for one to be able to integrate the two so that he can better improve his understanding of self.

We also discussed about the need to understand one an-

other. This requires each individual to be open and trust the others. One has to have the courage to accept his own vulnerability and uncomplabilities, and have the same respect for others when they discuss issues and challenges in their life. The invitation is for individual to overcome personal fear and not to overthink that people might or might not judge him harshly.

We were invited to look at how we perceive our community and community life. One has to be realistic that there are inevitable challenges we face as a community, and as individual members of that same community. Once the challenges and their causes are identified, we were challenged to come up with appropriate solutions that can work in the short term and long term as well. We were invited to look at whether we are contributing to the harmony of the community or are we the cause of chaos and conflicts. Disagreements and struggles are part and parcel of any community so we have to know how to handle them professionally and with sensitivity as adults, even if we have to compromise certain preferences.

We were introduced to accompanying and mirroring one another after their sharing. It was not an easy task and it requires a lot of patience, clear mindedness, objectivity and good listening skills. We have to listen without any sign of prejudice or preconceived idea. We have to look at the person's situation or story as what it really is so that we can provide good feedback to him. The one providing accompanying and mirroring should be strong emotionally. If his emotions get the better of him, it is possible that he might give wrong advice to the person who is seeking to be accompanied. This activity in particular gives us a new insight into how difficult formator's work could be.

Viliame Cama

Experience So Far



Almost 9 months have passed since we began this journey and it's amazing to look back and see how fast time has flown despite the Covid-19's attempt to steal away a couple of months (and still counting) from our novitiate year. The unity and quick thinking of the formation team has allowed our program to continue on with the only obstacle coming from the cancelling of our pastoral outreach on Sundays. But it did not stop us from reaching out to the flowers, the vegetable garden and the lawn which needed us almost every two weeks.

A lot has been done for us novices and we can never thank the society enough and all those who have contributed to our growth, for all that we have gained thus far; some knowledge of ourselves, aspects of formation and how we can build on them, bits of knowledge on scripture, some foreign languages and more importantly, the gain on our relationship as brothers.

As expected, we realized how challenging this journey can be but at the same time we saw the good it has done for us which gives us the desire to continue on this journey. We were able to share joys, sad moments, jokes, laughter and secrets that only family or close friends would share.

Unfortunately for us, the month of July saw the departure of two of our brothers and we could only pray and wish for the best for what the future holds for them. The month also saw the departure of Fr Joaquin for his deserved break and

as I write this, our community here is composed of only four members; two formators and two novices.

The second and third week of Ignatian Retreat approach us as well and we're hoping to reap the fruits of it. While only the future can tell what's in store for us, our present is giving us hope and belief to approach it with confidence and we are forever grateful to those responsible. The journey has been an eye-opener and we hope and pray for the best, not only for us but also for our fellow aspiring Marist sisters and brothers undergoing formation and the Marist family at large.

Peter Carde Matarawa



Charles enjoying ice-cream on his birthday



Can't have enough of lovo

Covid-19 Lockdown

Davao regions first case of the corona virus was confirmed on the 15th of March and an order was issued straightaway by the city mayor for the safety of its people. Throughout the passing months, the nature of the lockdown varied as the local government tried to adapt it to the needs of the people. As of now, anyone would agree that the local authorities are doing great in controlling the outbreak of this deadly virus considering the population of the region.

The region (as I write this) has recorded approximately 300 cases of corona since March, which is about 0.34% of the nations recorded number of about 88,000. This may explain the **little** comfort we have regarding this pandemic but for how long remains to be an unanswered question. Slowly the numbers are soaring and one can imagine its impact if the situation gets out of control in this densely populated region.

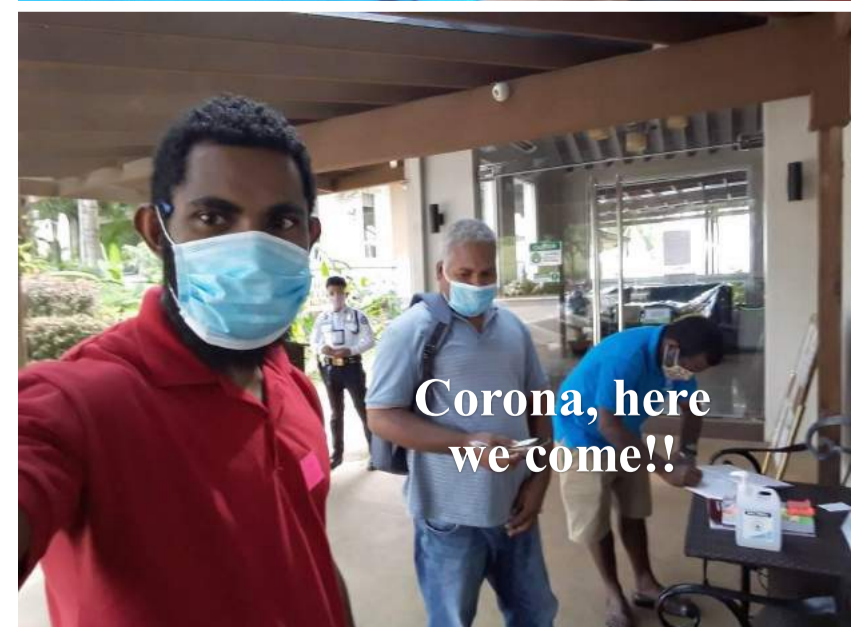
Its impact on our program was published in an earlier bulletin with pastoral formation being the most affected. This forced us into an extra class on Sundays where formators shared their pastoral experiences as well as the kind of ministerial works they do and have experienced in their own regions. Also, it allowed us to venture into other areas of learning like foreign languages and liturgy and the longer the corona stays, the better my French will become (j'espere). On top of that is that it allowed us ample time to experience what a contemplative religious community would be like and also to have "lovo" for a good number of times in a span of only 4 months.

The situation is challenging forcing us to reshuffle plans and even tested our ability to adapt to what some call the '*new normal*' way of life. But

it allowed us to think in new ways and could possibly have provided for us the push that each of us, the Society, Church, countries and even the entire human race needed as we strive for unity and world peace.

The lockdown has eased down a bit now, enabling us to have a look around the city after 4 months and we've come to the realization that we've got to face situation, like it or not.

Peter Carde Matarawa



Pastoral Experience



I could say that pastoral experience was one of the vital element that built my confidence and love towards others. We underwent the pastoral experience for three

months i.e. January to March. When the lockdown started towards the end of March, we stopped going for pastoral experience. During this period, we had extra classes on Sundays led by our three formators. They rotated each Sunday on a range of subjects. The three months pastoral experience was a really enjoyable encounter with the people at the pastoral placement. We had two pastoral placements; Balay Pasilungan and the Sisters of Charity. Balay Pasilungan is a home shelter for street boys and looked after by our Marist Confreres. They are kids who have nowhere to go and whom our Marist Confreres had gathered from around the city to look after. The center has become their home, where they could feel the love, care and support of our Marist Confreres and the good people around them. While reflecting, I could see that, yes, our Heavenly Father is showing his love to everyone equally, even these street children through our confreres. The other, the Sisters of Charity is the place where the elderly people are looked after. For our pastoral, we washed the clothes of the elderly with some of our brother seminarians from the Redemptorist congregation. After the washing we spend some time conversing with them. It was a very good experience for me to be in contact with the el-

derly. I felt the joy but also the pain that they experienced. Yet in this painful experience, I saw the beauty of their openness and smiling faces. They made me realize that pain and joy are part of our human existence. That there are moments when we enjoy life but there are also times when we experience pain. The pastoral experience taught me that life is a gift to appreciate and that we need to keep trusting God in times of joys or pains. Jesus Christ himself gave us the example to appreciate life in these kinds of situations.

Charles Sangul



The elderly at the Charity Sister's home care facility

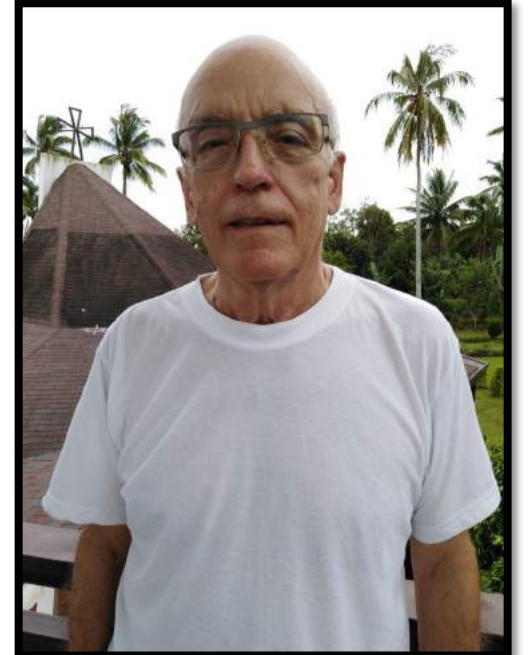
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