



E-BULLETIN #21

24-Jun-12

"Let the holiness of God shine forth" (cf. Mt 5,16)

ITEM 46

PASTORAL EMPHASES IN BACOLOD

Vocation Camp – St Helena Chaplaincy:

For April 13 this year we organized a Pallottine Vocation Camp at Helena Chaplaincy, 50 kms from Bacolod City. When I shared with the priest in charge of St Helena Chaplaincy, Fr Rayman Asoy, the concept of a vocation camp for Pallottines in his parish, he readily agreed. He himself made a great effort to bring many youth from his parish. In fact the priests in this diocese are very hospitable and ready to help us in whatever way possible.

It was the first vocation camp organized exclusively to get vocations for Pallottines. It was not as if we had not made an effort to get vocations from here. We participated in the vocation camps of the diocese, and also travelled to some of the parishes and spoken about the Pallottines. But this was something special. Fr Sanjeeb Pani sac spoke on vocation in general, and I spoke on Pallottine life, spirituality, our activities and formation. The participation at the camp was encouraging, however only one student expressed his desire to join our congregation. Unfortunately I felt he was not yet ready to enter the seminary.

There are a good number of vocations in this diocese for both the diocese itself and religious congregations. This was the first time students were learning about our congregation and so they were hesitant to join immediately. But I believe regular visits to different parishes will bring good vocations for us. The diocesan Seminary Rector and the Vocation Promoter have also allowed us to participate in, and to speak about our Society and select candidates from, their "Vocation Selection Camp" at the end of this year. Many selected boys from the diocese of Bacolod come for the Vocation Selection Camp. I sincerely thank the Rector of the Seminary for his kind support.

Educational support for the school children of our Parish:

Some of those in our village jokingly say: "Our village is a factory for producing a large number of children." And it is true. We have many children in our village! But there is also another reality – poverty – financial, moral and spiritual. Recently I read in the Asia Catholic News that the Philippines has the world's most devoted Christians. This was from a global survey done of 30 countries by National Opinion Research (NORC) at the University of Chicago. And it is true that many Christians in the Philippines are very devoted Christians.

But there is also another reality – a great many Christians struggle to live a Christian life due to various reasons. Here in our parish it is the same people who regularly come to Church every Sunday and on feast days. They are generally very good people, their children are well-mannered and of good character. However we also have a good number of broken families. And we have the problem of drugs,

although not very common. I believe that behind these issues is a lack of proper education. Due to poverty many children stop studying. Many children and youths just roam around for the whole day in their village. When asked why they don't go to school then their answer is "we don't have money to go to school."

I personally believe that good education will help to eradicate poverty and the evils that exist in our society. My desire is to help as many needy and deserving children as possible in their education.

With the help of Very Rev Fr Jacob I have come in contact with the Slovakian Pallottine organization "Adoption of Heart." They have already sponsored 30 children for a year, and now they are ready to sponsor another 100 children in their education. I, together with our parishioners, sincerely thank the Pallottine organization "Adoption of Heart" and all those who are associated with it. I am sure that because of their generosity we will be able to bring about change in our parish, spiritually and morally, in the near future.

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ITEM 45

my experience in Uruguay

Being sent as a missionary to Uruguay, I would like to share my experience with you. I am working in one of the Pallottine parishes in Uruguay, South America. It is known as "PARROQUIA NUESTRA SENORA DEL CARMEN", Durazno. It is about 185 kms from the capital Montevideo.

At present we are three Pallottine priests – Fr Fabian Silveira, the parish priest, Fr Jose Carlos [both from Uruguay], and myself. The local priests look after me in the community as their own brother. There is brotherly concern for each other among us. As we live in the community, we respect each others differences and work together.

In addition to the main church we have seven other substations and one convent. Five substations are in the city itself and other two substations are 40 to 50 kms away. In the main church and in the convent we celebrate Mass everyday. In other substations we have Mass once a week.

The main ministry here is to celebrate the Sacraments. This parish is very active, and there are lot of activities throughout the year – like social work, distribution of food for poor children, collecting money for social work by selling clothes donated by the people, catechism classes for children, visiting the sick etc. There are also different groups like ministers of the Eucharist, Charismatic prayer group, *Crucisista*, catechists, group for social work, group of the married people etc. The meetings and special programme for the groups are arranged regularly by lay people themselves. Preparation for baptism is done by lay people. Catechism classes for the children are voluntarily taken by lay people throughout the year. Other thing what I see here is that many of the parishioners voluntarily offer their time and energy for the parish activities. We have a convent within our parish belonging to the congregation of "*HERMANAS FRANCISCANAS DE LOS SAGRADOS CORAZONES DE JESUS Y DE MARIA*". Four sisters are each responsible for a substation. Though they are busy in their school they find time and organise all activities of the substations by themselves.

During Advent and Lent special prayer meetings are organised in the substations or in different communities. These programmes are broadcast on radio or television. Poor participation of youth in Holy Eucharist and church activities is disappointing.

Something else I appreciate among the Pallottine priests here is that all the priests of the Region come together every month in one place to share their experiences and discuss different matters of their living and society. Sometimes documents from the General Assembly or about our Constitutions are studied and discussed. Before we start our get-together we spend time in prayer and reflection which I feel is a very precious and beautiful thing about the Pallottine priests.

A personal problem I face is language. Very few people speak English. But with my little language I am already celebrating Mass, hearing confessions and visiting the sick. The people in this parish are active and enthusiastic. Compared to India there are lots of differences in culture and ways of living, both among the priests and also the people, but I am adjusting to those differences. The people of this parish are very good and sociable. They always talk to me and co-operate with me and help me in different work and make me feel at home here. I definitely feel that these experiences, and working together with priests, religious and lay people, will help me in my priestly ministry in future.

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