



Posted By [The Catholic Free Press](#) June 12, 2015

By Tanya Connor

Assumption College students will face a little dilemma with a deep meaning behind it upon their return to campus next fall. They have to decide what to call the campus minister they knew as “Bro Ro.”

“Bro Ro” was their nickname for Brother Ronald Sibugan. But that’s not who he is anymore. Shortly before summer break – May 2 to be exact – Bishop McManus ordained him a priest.

He’s still an Augustinian of the Assumption, but now he’s a religious priest instead of a religious brother. The two vocations – religious life and priesthood – which have now converged, help him do his ministry.

He’s an Assumptionist first. Some brothers go on to priesthood, if they and their community discern that’s God’s call. Father Ronald, 36, says he thinks the Assumptionists need a young priest here.

A religious priest is different than a diocesan priest in that he is supported by his community and is to live out the congregation’s charisms, Father Ronald says.

“The friendship with Jesus – to be with him and to be sent out are inseparable,” he says. “We ... live in apostolic community. ... The community is part of our apostolic work. ... The community life is a sign of God’s presence and action in the world. ...

“Our charism is to bring the Kingdom of God in us and around us and one way of doing it is being a campus minister. ... I represent not only campus ministry, but a religious person in the Church.” That helps him correct students’ misconceptions about religious (like “They pray all day”) and the Church (like “It’s only focus is on what you should not do”).

“It’s about the relationship,” Father Ronald says of how he counters those misconceptions. “It’s about helping the students to integrate the academic, emotional, psychological and spiritual components. ...

“I don’t usually start out, ‘How is your relationship with God?’ ... I encourage them to have a deep conversation by inviting them to lunch, and that allows me to get to know them. Having a meal is very eucharistic. I’m always reminded of Jesus having a conversation,” such as at the Last Supper.

Father Ronald says this works well. Students invite him into their journeys and he gets them thinking about faith.

“They don’t usually come to the priest anymore,” he says. So the priests have to go to where they are.

As chaplain for sports teams, he prays with players and watches home games. He helps run campus ministry programs, including a men’s vocational discernment group, and is also vocations director for the Assumptionists’ U.S. territory.

“One thing I like about it is to witness to the joy of being a religious, manifested through what I do here at Assumption College,” he says.

Speaking of the ministry’s fruits, he says many students attended his ordination, and were inspired to see him give himself totally to God. The Cuzzupe family paid for his mother to come from the Philippines, and the Assumptionists, Filipinos and others paid his father’s ticket, he says.

Christopher Cuzzupe, who enters his junior year at Assumption this fall, recalls attending morning prayer with his roommate during freshman orientation, when the college provided no breakfast. Then-Brother Ronald invited them to eat at the Assumptionists' house.

"We need a young person like him to ... minister to us," Christopher says. He says it helps students, who are trying to discover their own vocations, to hear from someone who's gone from one vocation to another.

In his native Philippines, and in Taiwan, Father Ronald worked in his field, computer engineering, did various ministries and looked into priesthood and religious life. In the Philippines he attended an Assumptionist discernment weekend, where he met an Assumptionist from the Worcester Diocese. He also got to know them through the Religious of the Assumption, their sister congregation which has women in the Philippines and others at Assumption College.

Christopher expresses gratitude that the college has two groups of religious; they help people grow spiritually. He says Father Ronald is great for consecrated life because he can share his faith story and minister to students. Students don't often get to see someone go from a brother to a deacon to a priest, he says.

Father Ronald made his final vows as an Assumptionist April 20, 2013 and was ordained a transitional deacon with deacons of the diocese May 31, 2014.

Christopher says that when he heard Father Ronald was going to become a priest, he and his family worked on getting him a papal blessing. Because of a communication glitch, they got two! The family's not big on talking about paying Father Ronald's mother's passage to his ordination. They focus instead on the blessing he's been to them.

Christopher tells of when his friend committed suicide. "I wasn't coping well; my faith was really at a low point," he says. He says then-Brother Ronald was also struggling, as he considered priesthood, and they grew together.

"He became more than a simple brother on campus; he became one of my best friends," he says.

Christopher's mother, Mary Jane Cuzzupe, recalls when Father Ronald came to Christopher's friend's wake, then to their house afterwards. He's been there several times since, and his parents came before returning to the Philippines for his first Mass there.

"He touched our hearts; he became part of our family," she says.

Speaking of ministering when there's death or sickness, Father Ronald says being invited into the sad part of the journey of students and their families "allows me to appreciate my vocation – that I'm here to serve the people of God."

Having received the sacrament of Holy Orders, he thinks he has more responsibility for people, because a priest can anoint them, hear their confessions, and celebrate Mass.

"I think the level of the relationship is different now," he says. "Before, I'm like the brother. But now I'm their spiritual father."

Of students, he says, "They're trying to figure out what they're going to be calling me." Some have decided on Padre.

Padre Ron. He likes that.