



The last Sunday “Conversations...” for the semester took place on the Second Sunday of Advent at the Assumptionist Center in Brighton. The topic was, “We Are All Missionary Disciples: A Conversation on Mission to the Poor.”

The community, residents and guests were most fortunate to have two presenters who have had most significant and blessed first hand experiences ministering among God’s poor.

Bro. Sagar Gundigna, A.A., a native of India, is presently pursuing his M. Div. at St. John’s Seminary in Brighton. He shared with us his ministry of this past summer working among many culturally diverse migrants who are homeless and seeking refuge as ‘boat people’ on the Seine in Paris, with a community of Assumptionists. Coming from a poor village in India, Bro. Sagar eagerly reached out to these families worked alongside them in the kitchen, prepared food, did laundry with them and at times slept on the streets with them, always listening with his heart as they gradually opened up to him for comfort and God’s love. As Bro. Sagar said, “Only through Church can I help and work with the poor with love!”

Our second presenter, Fr. John Cervini, a priest of 48 years with the Diocese of Rockville Centre, L.I., NY, is currently a resident at the Assumptionist Center doing sabbatical studies at BC. Having received a D. Min. from Princeton Theological Seminary, Fr. John was the former director of pastoral formation at the major seminary for Brooklyn and Rockville Centre and spent 17 years ministering in the Dominican Republic. He shared with us his experiences of organizing Christian communities there as a reflection of liberation theology and practice.

As pastor of two parishes, Fr. John lived and worked in solidarity with poor and experienced the incarnated Jesus among them. As a people having historically endured being victims of slave trade and later genocide at the hands of a brutal dictator, Fr. John experienced them as being humble, innocent and hungrily open to the gospel message of freedom and love of God. With

the help of outside agencies and the development of parish leadership and teams, great progress has been made in the areas of health, agriculture and education, whereby the goal is to see through the eyes of Jesus, learn how to change and then to act on these learnings.

Certainly, the central focus of both missionaries was the necessity of recognizing and entering into the pain and suffering of the poor, being one among them and in that way, journeying with them in hope for the possibilities of a better future!

These personal, insightful and profound presentations were followed by a time of shared reflections, learnings and comments by several members of the group.