Adveniat House - Manila

February 2007

A New Year, new steps

Activities of the community resume

After a very short holiday, the activities of the community resume full beat. The weather is excellent and is an invitation for good days work: between 28 and 35 degrees in the sunshine, but the nights are cool at 24 degrees and allow a healthy recuperation.

On January 8, those among us who study were back in school. The workers renovating our house get busy and are more numerous now: the target date to finish the job is mid-March. In the middle of January, Frs. Chuvi, Gilles and Bernard concelebrated the closing Mass of the Provincial Chapter of the Religious of the Assumption. They start a new apostolate, the chaplaincy of the French speaking Catholic community in Manila. There will be a Mass in French every second Sunday of the month in the chapel of the sisters at Assumption - San Lorenzo. For the first gathering, on Sunday January 14, some 40 adults and 20 blond children (so rare here!) showed up.

The local Chapter focuses on the mission of the communityWe chose the week end of January 20-21 to hold our local chapter in the presence of Fr. Marcel Poirier, our Provincial Superior. It is a time to evaluate our first year as a community in the Philippines.

The community has grown rapidly. The first tensions appeared. There was a need to pass from dreams to reality, to confront our life in the long run. After euphoric beginnings when everything was new and beautiful, we needed to be more precise on our goals and find back our enthusiasm from of old. The mission statement of the community was reaffirmed: to build and international and inter-Asian community centered on Christ and to share our charism with

the Filipino people, attentive to its needs and particularly those of the poor people. As well as our priorities: formation, vocation ministry and our solidarity with the poor.

Formation plan and time table

After a year of experience, the formators and the brothers in formation put in writing a formation plan for each stage of the process of formation: the welcoming and accompaniment of candidates from a first contact to candidacy program, postulancy, and formation of the young brothers and of the formators.

Our recent experience has taught us that it is not advisable that candidates, postulants and young religious live in the same house. The different steps of formation have to be clearly separated, each having its own dynamic. Thus is the wisdom of most Congregations in the Philippines. The idea of opening a “foyer” (like in Saigon) where candidates would live together (without necessarily a religious with them) seems unknown in the Philippines. Maybe we should then rent a second house in Manila, not too distant from our present one, in order to spare our few staff members.

Since we are thinking that candidates will be requesting postulancy by next June, we need to think of starting a novitiate by May/June 2008 (beginning of the school year here) and get concrete about a location and a formation team: it’s all of a challenge! Indeed, the need for more formators to accompany the young people is becoming more and more pressing.

Vocation ministry

The Manila community inherits the fruits of a tremendous work accomplished by our American brothers who were steady in visiting the country, year after year, and organizing retreats for possible candidates, visiting their families, all that in links with the Religious of the Assumption.

Today, these efforts are continued in many directions: participation to the monthly activities and seminar of the diocesan Vocation Promoters Office, presence to the numerous activities proposed by the Archdiocese of Manila and the Diocese of Cubao (Vocation campaign, Vocation Café, Jamboree, visit to schools, parishes), national gatherings of youth (in Davao, Antique, Iloilo, Bohol…). We only have a community in Manila; we favour the other provinces where the Religious of the Assumption are present thus benefiting from their being widely known and their help in accompanying our candidates and the planning of our search-in retreats.

In the up-coming months, we are planning to work together with the Religious of the Assumption, the Little Sisters of the Assumption and the AMA, a lay association of volunteers founded by the Sisters: retreats, camps, pilgrimages, social insertions (with the AMA program), campus ministry at the nearby University of the Philippines (UP) or in public schools…

Presence to the poor

As you might recall, we made contacts with the seven squatter areas around our parish. The community is thinking having an apostolate among some of them, in link with our parish pastoral team. During our community chapter, many possibilities surfaced. In the near future, we will come up with concrete decisions, favouring a community apostolate. We also want to create a Solidarity Fund for emergencies due to typhoons or other natural disasters.

Finally, we discussed our yearly budget and the necessity to increase our resources, particularly in finding benefactors to support three main projects: the formation of the candidates, the construction of a retreat house and the creation of a Solidarity Fund in order to bring emergency help to victims of natural calamities.

The Commission on Asia focuses on the presence of the Assumption in AsiaThe Commission on Asia, created by our last General Chapter, was convened in Manila for the first time, on January 28-30. All the members of the Commission were present: Benoît Grière (Provincial of France), Marcel Poirier (Provincial of North America), André Brombart (Assistant to the General in charge of Asia), and the Superiors of our communities in Asia: Frans Desmet (Gwangju), Pierre Khué (Saigon) and Bernard Holzer (Manila).

After a first round of information on the situation in these three countries about the socio-political evolution, the Church and the presence of the Assumption, with a special mention about China, it was time to set priorities to submit to the General Council: to reinforce our present communities, especially that of South Korea, to plan the next steps in the formation of the young Asian brothers, to exercise leadership in our communities and to make the whole Congregation aware and sensitive to what is at stake in this continent, to remain open to vocations in other Asian countries - China for example - , to eventually propose an inter-Asian foundation and to foresee the financing of the present foundations in the years to come.

The Commission met with the members of the Provincial Council of the Religious of the Assumption for a work session. The main topic was our common development in Asia and the various aspects of formation in the Philippines and in Asia.

During all that time, our community was happy to welcome the brothers from so many countries and experience the universal brotherhood of the Assumption family; we could get fresh news from brothers scattered all around the world. The members of the Commission were also delighted to know more about what is happening here in Manila and together we celebrated the 60th birthday of Frans Desmet, a true pioneer of the Assumption in Asia since he arrived in Korea sixteen years ago. After a solemn Eucharist, all were invited to an international diner: traditional lechon (a full roasted pig), a dish of pancit (a traditional Asian rice noodles, a symbol of long life), rice (of course!), sauces, a variety of French cheese and California wine… plus surprise gifts!

Frs. Frans Desmet and André Brombart stayed a few more days in Manila and discovered a little more the life of the Assumption family in the Philippines and to take some contacts with the possibilities of higher studies in the universities and inter-Asian formation centers.

A visit to the new Assumptionist community in VietnamWith the exception of Fr.Marcel Poirier who needed to rush back to America in order to accompany Fr. General in his canonical visitation, the rest of the members of the Commission visited our brothers in Vietnam for one week. They met with the three new Vietnamese brothers who just arrived in Saigon last October, and the three candidates who share their community life. They were exposed to a fast growing economy and to a country where the cultural and social changes are tremendous. In a few days, passing from Manila to Saigon, the members of the Commission could appreciate the diversity of the Asian continent. They had the chance to meet with the

Cardinal of Saigon for more than three hours who had been invited to bless the house of the community, and also the Secretary of the Bishops Conference. Another surprise was to meet the newly elected Superior General of the Religious of the Assumption, Sister Diana Wauters, who was visiting their two communities established in Vietnam in the last six years.

Soon moving out; last news before closing

We had planned to move to our new house by the end of February. But the work did not go as scheduled. A new tentative date for moving is mid-March. Not necessarily a bad news for Bernard who, after a visit of one week in Vietnam, had to leave for the USA as a member of the Council of the Province for an extraordinary meeting during the canonical visitation of Father General. He did not have to set his personal move before leaving.

The moving into the new house will be featured in the next Chronicles. After 10 issues of the present format telling the story of our first months in the Philippines as a community, this modest on-line bulletin will have another name: for here after, you will receive the Chronicles from Manila.

Last bits of newsThe Provincial Superior with the consent of his ordinary Council has appointed Fr. Bernard Holzer as Superior of the Adveniat House Community in Manila: his term begins February 15, 2007; has named Father Gilles Blouin, local Treasurer of the Adveniat House Community in Manila: his term begins February 15, 2007; has named Brother Eduardo Molina, Assistant Treasurer: his term is of one year renewable; has confirmed the election of Father Gilles Blouin as first Councillor and Brother Alex Castro as second Councillor of the Adveniat House Community, and has appointed the Acts of the local Chapter of the Adveniat House community.

HAPPY NEW YEAR OF THE PIG!

Once more, we all wish you a Happy New Year since February 18 marks the beginning of a New Year in the Asian calendar: the year of the golden pig…

A twofold appeal(1) An appeal to Solidarity.

Our mission in the Philippines has only started. Some friends have asked us how they can help and participate in our mission. Besides writing and prayer, here are a few ideas in three different areas:

In order to receive young men

Our biggest problem at the present is to move to our new house and be able to receive young men. The Congregation and its benefactors were very generous in purchasing for us the land and a large house to move to: they also sustain us for our daily needs and the formation. But we need to equip this house in such a way that we will be able to receive more young men and ensure their formation.

A few ideas of costs:

- living quarters for a student (we have 14 rooms to furnish): 500 Euros

- a 50 kg bag of rice (this permits us to feed ten persons during five to ten weeks – this is our daily bread): 18 Euros

- a semester of studies: 450 Euros

- the purchase of a computer for studies: 160 Euros

We are also thinking of equipping a library (books) and the furnishings for our chapel.

For a solidarity fund

Two other projects hold a special place in our hearts. As you know, nature is rough on the Filipino people: volcanic eruptions, typhoons, torrential rains and mudslides are regular phenomena here. The emergency calls but also for reconstruction and prevention are numerous and urgent. To be able to answer them with experienced partners, we are in the process of establishing a solidarity fund. Our means are still very modest since we are all either in formation or involved in formation (and this brings in no funds), but your help would encourage our own efforts.

For a hospitality center

We have dreams of building, on our property, a modest center that would be functional to hold spiritual retreats and host formation sessions in various spheres. This house could contribute in the future as part of the auto-financing of our activities. The cost for the center with 12 rooms (24 beds), a kitchen, a dining hall and a multi-usage meeting room would come to 25,000 Euros. This center could also serve to receive Chinese seminarians that come to pursue their theology studies in Manila.

Where to send your contribution for our activities

For Europe, in Euros: Procure Missionnaire de l'Assomption – 79, Avenue Denfert Rochereau – 75014 PARIS – France.

For North America, in American or Canadian dollars: Montmartre Canadien – 1679, Chemin Saint-Louis – QUEBEC , QC G1S 1G5 – Canada

If you wish to receive a tax receipt that permits you to deduct this gift for your tax returns, please send your gift to Procure Missionnaire de l'Assomption (Paris) or Montmartre Canadien (Quebec), and indicate clearly on your check "For the foundation in the Philippines".(2) An appeal for a lay volunteer: To participate in the foundation of an international community in the Philippines.

The Assumptionist community in Manila is in full growth. At this point, it needs the help of a volunteer in three specific areas:

(1) To create and operate a development office which would provide financing for its various missions: formation of young religious and candidates support to solidarity projects. The work consists in creating a list of donors (an international group of supporters mainly from French speaking countries, then English speaking countries and eventually Asian countries) with the help of a performing software and to feed the list of people with information on specific actions.

(2) To create a website of the foundation in French, English, Spanish and Tagalog and to actualize it regularly, with the help of the brothers in the community.

(3) To support the activities of the Catholic French Speaking Community of Manila which is at a new start, particularly helping in the catechesis and the youth ministry.

Life conditions and service to the Filipino people

The volunteer will be the guest of the international Assumptionist community made up at the present of three priests from Québec (60), France (58) and Congo (40), then four Filipino brothers (31-46) and some candidates to religious life (21-26).

The volunteer will be integrated to the life of the community according to his own wish, after discussion with the person in charge of the community which will also be his immediate superior for his work and life in Manila. The common language in the community is English.

The members of the community will help the volunteer in his integration into the country, the Filipino Church and society; they will invite the volunteer in their own apostolate among the people of the squatter areas.

The volunteer who would wish so will participate in the social involvement of the programs of the Religious of the Assumption or the Little Sisters of the Assumption present in the poor neighbourhoods of Manila.

Profile of the volunteer

The community is looking for a volunteer who could spend two years in Manila, starting in September 2007. After 18 months into his work and after evaluation, the volunteer will start the initiation of a Filipino collaborator to continue the work as a paid job.

- Desire to live an international experience in a community setting

- Capacity to adapt to a new culture

- Capacity of initiatives

- Mastery in French and in English

- Computer literacy, ability to use software for lists management and to create and manage a website

- From a Business and/or Communication background is a advantage

- Experience with young people

The community will pay for the air faire (Europe - Philippines), will guarantee the visa and will give a monthly allowance of 150 euros. Free room and board. Accompaniment during the duration of the stay.

Last minuteWe received news from the Religious of the Assumption about the up-coming canonization of their founder, Mother Marie-Eugénie, in Rome, on June 3. Many people rejoice here since the recognition of the miracle of a young Filipina, that happened eleven years ago, was the last step before Blessed Marie-Eugénie was proclaimed a saint. We do have a saint in the family after all!

February 18, 2007

Pictures: if you want to view some pictures of the community, consult the following:

www.assomption.org

www.assumptio.org

www.assumptio.us

Address:

Adveniat House

17, C. Salvador Street

Loyola Heights

1108 QUEZON CITY

PHILIPPINES