

By: Bro. Rex Navarro

January 16-25, 2012, the 3 novices were assigned different poor sectors. Fr. Joseph Zhang was assigned to the indigenous people of Pampanga, Bro. Rex Navarro was with the farmers also in Pampanga and Bro. John Ray was with the Street Children in Cavite.

Fr. Joseph Zhang who is a Chinese Priest relates his story to us of his unforgettable experience with the indigenous people. He lived with a chieftain of the tribe but they were really poor like the other members. They had comfort rooms but do not have any source of water so he needed to fetch water from the river. His foster parents did not know that he was a priest, at first they told him to go with them in the mountain to plant “gabi” root crafts and cut some of the grass.

The second day, they were able to get some of the “gabi” so they cleaned and washed it in the river before they sold it to the market where he was the seller. They did not have electricity so at night they just used oil lamps or they create a bon fire to give warmth in the coldest night. Every day they walk for an hour to cross the river and climb the mountain. Sometimes his foster family did not have food to feed him so he experienced discomfort not only with the place but also with food and drink. In their last day of stay they have what we call the “Solidarity Night” wherein they will have mass, dinner and a farewell party together with all other exposurists and their foster families. Only that time that his foster mother knows that he is a priest when he wear his habit for the mass as he is the celebrant. The family were very surprised and some of them cried when they saw him. They were very ashamed and surprised to think that they gave him some responsibilities like fetching the water and looking after their child.

He learned a lot from the exposure to think that there are many people who struggle to live below poverty line, while inside the seminary we always complain with the little discomfort that we experience.