



The First Quarter of Our Novitiate Formation in Manila, Philippines

“I am in labour again with the children of God until Jesus my Son is formed in them to the fullness of his age” (TD 33)

This year, the Montfort International Novitiate Community in Manila, Philippines is blessed to have 3 novices from different parts of world. They are: Br. Christopher Mejia from San Mateo, Rizal-Philippines; Br. Amosi Hope Makina from Zomba-Malawi and Br. Alex Muhwezi from Kabale-Uganda. Indeed, the Almighty God has done great things for us, with Fr. Paul Arnel Lucero, SMM as our Novice master and Fr. Ariel Aquino, SMM as Exodus Coordinator.

Our novitiate program for the 2018-2019 batch officially started with the entrance rite held at the Delegation Chapel on 31st of July, 2018 presided by Fr. Richard Magararu, SMM, Delegation Superior of the Montfort Missionaries in the Philippines. Since then, a number of modular classes have been discussed, tackling different dimensions on human formation. This

approach is patterned from the SMM Handbook for Montfortian formation, *Walking together in the footsteps of the poor apostles* that states: “from the beginning and throughout life, the religious must acquire and nurture an authentic maturity, which will make one a profoundly human being, a balanced person capable really engaging himself in the mission, capable of loving with disinterest and of doing good for his neighbour” no.49.

In order to move towards this noble objective, below is a brief overview of some of the modules that have been so far covered at both community and Exodus¹ levels, up to this point of our Novitiate process.

At the Novitiate Community

1. *Bonding and Abiding in Love*: This module enabled us to appreciate the fact that we are all loved by God and as such we too should love one another. We also had to be in touch with our past experiences and woundedness and gradually experience the healing hand of God.
2. *Managing Emotions*: This lesson enabled us to realize that emotions form a fundamental part of the human person. We were given ways and tools that enable us to process our emotions. This has enhanced our mutual understanding and community living.
3. *Empowerment*: In this session, we tackled different issues in the area of emotions, relationships, sexuality, body, money, work and spirituality. With the help of the empowerment model authored by Fr. Mario Belotti, SMM, we were helped to process different issues in the areas mentioned above.
4. *Letters of Fr. De Montfort*: In this important session, we realized the value of the letters of Fr. De Montfort and their relevance to our lives. We appreciated Montfort’s love for Incarnate Wisdom and Mary, his simplicity and humility, his authentic dependence on divine providence and genuine love for the poor, etc.

At Exodus level

1. *Orientation*: In the orientation, novices were introduced to the major goals of formation in reference to the *Vita consecrata* no. 65. We were reminded that formation has to prepare novices to offer themselves completely to Jesus through consecrated life.

¹ The exodus program is an initiative that was started by different religious congregations in the Philippines with the major objective of having a unified effort and an integral approach to formation that would cater for the demands of the present situation in the church and the entire society. Thus different congregations come together and interact with highly qualified personnel which enhances the moral, spiritual and intellectual formation of the novices.

2. *Theatre Arts*: In this module, we discovered communication and acting skills. These also enhanced our ability to appreciate our talents.

3. *Enneagram*: In relation to genuine self-discovery, the enneagram lessons helped us realize our enneagram types and consequently move towards redemption. In fact by understanding enneagram types of fellow novices, it enabled us also to harmoniously progress together in formation as one community despite our differences.

4. *Human Sexuality*: In this module, we realized that we must always transcend the primary and genital dimensions of sexuality and rather embrace the affective dimension, where we express our love in a tender, merciful and compassionate way. Thus, this should bring to a genuine love for God and his people, mindful always that our interior yearning can only be fulfilled when the perfect love of God reigns in our hearts.

The above-mentioned sessions are the ones that have been so far covered in a rather detailed manner. However, many more aspects have been of value to us, like the weekly integrations and time for affirmations, the monthly recollections and confessions, etc.

We pray that the Lord through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Louis of Montfort may continue to accompany us as we move forward in this vocation journey, so that we may be able to respond to the call of God wholeheartedly and freely.

By:

Br. Alex Muhwezi

SMM Novice