



“Una Sorpresa”: Thanksgiving Mass for the New Superior General of the Company of Mary

ROME - On 15th October 2023, a thanksgiving celebration was held for the newly elected Superior General of the Company of Mary, Fr. Yoseph Putra Dwi Darma WATUN, SMM. It was held at the Montfort Missionaries Generalate Grotto in collaboration with the Filipino Community and the Indonesian Group in Rome.

The Filipino community is a group of migrants from the Philippines who live and work in Rome. They use the grotto and the garden for various weekly activities such as prayer, gathering and the Sunday Eucharist. This group started almost 8 years ago, way back in 2015, under the guidance and leadership of Fr. Reynaldo BULLAS Jr., SMM, who is in the Philippines for a new mission. Currently, Fr. Jailos MPINA, SMM (Malawi) and Fr. Benjie NOTARTE, SMM (Philippines) are in charge of them. Likewise, the Indonesian community is a group of the clergy and religious who are members of a special group called IRRIKA (*Ikatan Rohaniwan-Rohaniwati Indonesia di Kota Abadi*). These two groups secretly and creatively carried out a special “surprise” for the elected Superior General, Fr. Dwi WATUN, SMM. The surprise was the holding of a joint thanksgiving celebration for his election as the new leader of the congregation (2023-2029). He was elected as the 23rd Superior General of the Company of Mary, the first Superior from Asia-Oceania.

Before the thanksgiving Mass began, a simple welcome ceremony was held for the Superior General and the Ambassador to the Holy See, Mr. Michael Trias Kunchahyono, around the place where the Mass was celebrated. Moreover, Fr. Beni, MI as the former chairman of IRRIKA who also coordinated this event, welcomed Fr. Dwi and the Indonesian Ambassador with one

or two special greetings. Both were welcomed with dances performed by the Indonesian sisters and a group of Filipino lay people. It was very simple but lively.

After the welcome ceremony, the Holy Mass began and it was presided by the new Superior General, Fr. Dwi WATUN, SMM. It was also concelebrated by other Montfortian priests together with an Indonesian priest who is the new chairman of IRRIKA, RD. Seno. As they marched to the altar, the choir with a combined members of Indonesian clergy and monks sang a melodious opening song. Fr. Anar, SMM, who was the choir conductor, together with Fr. Hiro, SMM and musicians from the Philippines, enlivened the day's celebration with very beautiful and harmonious songs.

In his introductory remarks and homily, the new Superior General said that it was a day "full of surprises" for him because he had never imagined that there would be a solemn Mass of Thanksgiving for him. With immense joy, he expressed his gratitude for what happened to him when he was elected and entrusted by his confreres as the new leader of the congregation in May 2023. He further highlighted that everyone who attended the celebration was not primarily because of his election as the new Superior General of the Company of Mary, but their meaningful presence at that time in Monte Mario was more interpreted as a call from God. Everybody is called by Him to come together. He who called them to come to this place, "*Monte Mario*", in which "*Monte*" in Italian means hill, high peak. On this high and beautiful place, everyone was really invited to enjoy and be grateful for God's work that occurs in human life, especially in the person of the Superior General and the Congregation entrusted to his hands.

The Sunday Mass was attended by many people such as the Filipinos, clergy, and monks from Indonesia who are working, studying, and living in Rome. The occasion apparently became a lovely celebration, not only for Fr. Dwi himself, but also a celebration full of gratitude for the new Indonesian Ambassador to the Holy See, Mr. Michael Trias Kuncahyono who was just appointed by the President of the Republic of Indonesia.

Hence, the thanksgiving celebration gave two reasons to be thankful to God: the election of the new Superior General of the Company of Mary and the nomination of the Indonesian Ambassador to the Holy See. The idea to combine these two events was not just a coincidence but became a moment of gratitude for the overflowing blessings and graces for these two new leaders. It was also a great blessing to the Indonesian clergy and monks in Rome, the SMM General Curia and the Filipino community.

Furthermore, the weather that day was beautiful with the morning sunshine giving warmth to all who were present. Everyone looked cheerful and happy because it was indeed a special day. There were perhaps visitors who came to the General house for the first time and knew nothing about the Montfortians. Indeed, it was a great opportunity and privilege for them to meet and know the presence of the Montfortians in Rome and around the world during this memorable occasion.

Towards the end of the Mass before the final blessing, Fr. Jailos, SMM, who is the Director of the Office of Communications, invited all those present at the Holy Eucharist to get to know more closely who the Montfortians are. It was put together briefly and creatively as he introduced them to the invited guests one by one, starting from the concelebrants, namely Fr. Marco PASINATO, SMM as Vicar General, Fr. Arnold SUHARDI, SMM, former assistant general and others. On that occasion, the Superior General and the Indonesian Ambassador

were given time to deliver their inspiring and thanksgiving messages, together with the former Chairman of IRRIKA, Fr. Beni, MI. Gratitude and thanks were the right words to come from their mouths.

The new Indonesian Ambassador could not contain his joy and delight because he was invited to attend this celebration and was treated special. As a matter of fact, on that day, he had another invitation to meet the Minister of Education and Culture of Indonesia, Mr. Nadim Karim in Rome, but the Ambassador cancelled it because he preferred to attend the thanksgiving celebration with the Superior General. He felt truly happy because for the first time, he was able to get to know the Montfortians and the Congregation founded by St. Louis-Marie de Montfort. In his speech, he also invited the clergy, monks, and the Indonesian community to work together and support each other.

After the Eucharistic celebration, the thanksgiving event continued with several special dance presentations. The Filipino community showed off their culture by presenting a symbolic *Bulaklakan* dance with matching colorful costumes. After the presentation, the participants of this momentous occasion were invited and gathered for a scrumptious lunch which was prepared by the Filipino and Indonesian community. The lunch menu on that day was truly special. In addition, the celebration was incomplete for Indonesians, especially for those who come from the East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) region if it was not enlivened with dance and music typical to that area. After lunch, the Superior General, his confreres, priests, sisters, brothers, and lay people sang and danced together. The vicinity of the General curia is usually a quiet and serene place. However, it suddenly turned into a festive mood because of the music, dances, and the joyful atmosphere.

Indeed, the day was full of joy and happiness for such an experience of fellowship. Everyone felt welcomed and part of a big international family of Montfortians. The event was truly a way of thanking God for having the first Superior General from Asia. The joy that was experienced in this event must now be shared by everyone as they returned home.

Fr. Fidel WOTAN, SMM