

An Interview with Fr. Fidelis Wotan, SMM

ROME, Italy- Rev. Fr. Fidelis Bolo Wotan, SMM has finalised his studies on Mariology at the Pontifical Faculty of Theology of Marianum in Rome with *summa cum laude*. Fr. Jailos Augustine Mpina, SMM interviewed him on 5th July 2018, a day before his departure to Indonesia. Excerpt:

May you briefly tell us your background?

My full name is Fidelis Bolo Wotan. My short name Fidel. I was born in Pamakayo (East Flores - East Indonesia), on 24th April 1981. I come from a small and simple family. We are two brothers and I'm the first born. My parents were teachers in the Junior and high schools. My father was actively involved in the Church ministry as the chairperson of the Liturgical Department in the parish for a long period and my mother also dedicated her life in works of charity.

I was interested to the religious life since I was in the elementary school and one day I decided to enter the Minor Seminary in our diocese, Larantuka, East Flores. I went to San Dominggo Hokeng Seminary when I was 14 years old. I finished my studies there in 2001 and I chose to join the Montfort Missionaries as a new beginning for my life. I chose it because it has a profound devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

After the Postulancy Programme, I did my novitiate in Ruteng, Flores and on 28th April 2003, I made the first religious profession. Having finished my Philosophical studies in 2008, I pursued Theological studies from 2009 to 2011 in Malang. I was ordained as deacon in the same year. On 6th July 2012, I was ordained as Priest at Holy Spirit Church, Labuan Bajo in Flores.

I received my first obedience to be a formator at our novitiate, where I spent 4 years before my Provincial sent me to Rome.

What was the purpose of your coming to Rome?

The purpose of my coming to Rome was to study Mariology. As we know that our Father Founder, Saint Louis-Marie de Montfort, is known as Master in Marian Spirituality and the congregation that he established has a Marian charism. Thus, with the study of Mariology that I did in these two years in Rome – in a certain way – is in-line with our spirituality.



What are your experiences in Rome?

I've been in Rome for last two years. As you know, I've experienced many things in this city. I have found the new culture, I have met many friends and new confreres. It was really a great experience. I lived in two communities with our Montfortian Fathers here in Rome and with the scholastics. I have been at Monte Mario- General House for three months before we were transferred to the new house at Via Romagna, the Scholastic International community. I have stayed there for two years together with my confreres. It was something very interesting that we lived together in the same community with diversity in culture, language, way of thinking, etc. But I can testify that all these differences were not seen as big challenges for me.

I was really aware that we were living in the community as a Montfortian community that made us united in every moment of our lives. By all these, I knew that I was not alone in my life in Rome because I lived together with them in the same way, in the same spirit as brothers: we prayed, we went to school, we worked and in short, we did everything together in all that we have to do.

What were the challenges you experienced?

The big challenge for me that I faced or experienced in Rome was the language. I know that my Italian is not good (I've studied Italian for only two months) and in October 2016, I started my studies. At the beginning of my studies, I faced some difficulties because of the language problem. I didn't know how to do and how to study well. But step by step, I tried to overcome this difficulty. I resolved it by searching the new methods to improve my language and I did well later. Thanks to the Lord, finally my studies went on well and I finished it very well (*summa cum laude*).

What is your thesis all about?

My thesis is about the devotion to Mary in my city, Larantuka. It is entitled: «*SEMANA SANTA*» AND DEVOTION TO «*TUAN MA*» (*MARY, MATER DOLOROSA*): *An Inheritance of Faith in the Work of Evangelization of Dominican Missionaries in Larantuka, Flores-Indonesia*. I find it highly important to understand the rich Christian and local traditions and culture upon which this particular devotion rests. The devotion to the «*Tuan Ma*» (*Mary, Mater Dolorosa*) which is manifested within the «*Semana Santa*» in Larantuka is a unique and special celebration. This tradition started 500 years ago through the Portuguese Dominican missionaries.

Regarding this study, I am grateful to the Lord Jesus and to His Most Beloved Mother, the Virgin Mary who have enlightened me throughout the writing of the thesis. I humbly believe that their grace and love have helped me ponder and savour the richness of our Faith. And as this has enriched me, I am confident that my research may also help others discover the immense treasures that await to be discovered.

I personally would like to express my gratitude to all who have helped me in the realization of my thesis. My particular thanks for the support and the prayers of all my confreres. My particular thanks also to my Superior General and to our General Council, to my Fr. Provincial and his Council in Indonesia and to all my confreres who are always with me in the same spirit and prayer, so by their presence, prayers and support, I am able to conduct and conclude my studies at the highly respected School of Theology, the Pontifical Faculty of Theology of Marianum.

How will your entity benefit from your studies? Where are you going to serve immediately from here?

I'm going to our Scholasticate in Malang, Indonesia to be a formator. I hope that I can do well this new mission after finishing my studies here in Rome. I'm interested in accompanying young confreres. I hope that, with this new mission, I can share all that I have received during my life in this congregation and of course during my study here in Rome. Hopefully, I can do something good for the congregation that gave me the opportunity to improve my personality and my life as a Montfortian.

How do you advise the Montfortians who will be coming to Rome for studies?

I want to say that everything is possible for anyone who wants to study in Rome. If someone is sent to study here in Rome, he has to prepare himself well especially "studying the English well as the basic and international language" and also searching the possibility to take more time for studying the Italian language (not only two or three months but for one year). One year is dedicated only for the language and the second year he can start his studies in the university.

-Fr. Jailos Augustine Mpina, SMM

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