



## Vows Renewal and Welcoming of the new Candidates

**PORT MORESBY, Papua New Guinea** - As it is being reflected in the introduction of the Holy Eucharist that, *“The renewal of vows is not about what we signed on the paper but is a call to live out our consecration,”* reminds us of our first moment of consecration to Jesus through Mary. It is a call to reflect on both our knowledge of knowing God and of living out our consecration in practical ways.

The Celebration was beautiful and solemn. The choir was led by Bro. Henry and the five new candidates for the “Come and See” program. Fr. Laurensius was the main celebrant and assisted by Fr. Mateus, who gave an inspiring homily. Fr. Robert, our Rector and Delegation Superior, received our vows on behalf of the Superior General. Fr. Anthony, a missionary to Lae Diocese, witnessed our renewal as well.

Our preparation for the renewal of vows began with three days of retreat, prayer, and fasting. The retreat was facilitated by Fr. Robert. It was a very touching moment of silence and encountering the Lord in prayer and sharing reflections.

Bro. Godwin reflected and shared on one of the themes of our retreat, “Here I am Lord; send me.” As Fr. Robert had pointed out, “Mission is entrusted not to the perfect but to the faithful,” it moved me towards a point of conviction for I understood well that my vocation journey is always not perfect and smooth. A reality that I come to understand is that I am more aware of myself when I encounter challenges, struggles, temptations and doubts. For it is what St. Paul would say, “For I am weak, then I am strong,” (2 Cor.

12:10). Despite having these situations, I continue to persevere and willing to follow the Lord in this way of life. For Jesus had promised that he would not leave us alone but will be with us till the end. As it is affirmed by our retreat Master, “Jesus sends us with His authority, sustains us with His presence, empowers us with His Holy Spirit and guarantee fruits that lasts.” The act of renewal of vows is an act of consecration and participation to the invitation Christ who is the Source of all in my life. As mentioned in the TD 120, “Mary is the most conformed of all creatures to Jesus Christ,” therefore a perfect renewal of the vows and promises of the holy baptism is perceived through a perfect and complete consecration of oneself to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

By reflecting on the three vows, as an act of total surrender, Bro. Anslem pointed out that the three evangelical vows of poverty, obedience and chastity, reflects the entire mission of the Trinity in Jesus Christ. “Christ Jesus, though he was in the form of God did not regard equality with God, as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, and being found in human form, he humbled himself and become obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross,” (Philippians 2:6-8).

Poverty- it is not about a forced situation or under privileged but an act of surrendering the oneself. Jesus in his Divinity chose to be a vulnerable human. Obedience- Jesus was the perfect obedience of the Father, from incarnation to crucifixion which is the total surrendering of ones will. Chastity- As the relationship is being ruled by love, commitment and faithfulness is an act of sacrificial love. Reflecting upon the prayer for missionaries of St Louis Marie de Montfort of Liberos Man, chastity is an act of being liberated from (self) in order to be free for (mission).

In his reflection, Bro. Larouche acknowledged that living out the evangelical vows is not something simple but beyond human knowledge. It is something of divine origin and therefore should be understood in the words of Jesus Himself, “*Whoever wants to be my disciple, must deny themselves and take up cross and follow me,*” (Mathew 16:24). The cost of discipleship requires one to set aside self-interest and ambitions than to endure hardships by submitting Jesus. The act of renewing my promise is the way of giving myself totally to Jesus through Mary and living out my consecration effectively.

On the last day of the retreat, we went for confession and spiritual direction with Fr. Micheal of the SVD Missionaries.

The Mass concluded with an official welcoming of the five new candidates for the “Come and See” by Fr. Robert, our rector in the Formation House. In addition, Fr. Robert acknowledged Bro. Godwin for successfully completing his theological studies and farewell him for his pastoral ministry in the Montfort parish of Daru-Kiunga Diocese, Western province. “*We continue to pray for you that God may journey with you on your pastoral ministry.*”

To conclude, as it is being mentioned during the retreat that Montfortian mission means; going to the poor, being sent and not choosing, acting through Mary, embracing the Cross, burning with apostolic zeal, and living with total availability, we are hoping and praying for this apostolic fire in each of us. Possessing these qualities is like having wheels that keep the vehicle moving on the bumpy road. Even though the wheels bump into potholes, they continue to move steadily so that the vehicle continues to run and reach its destination. We continue to thank God for journeying with us in the formation and our Formatters as well. It is through God's providence that we continue to live each day in the Formation and to discover our call to religious life. As we begin with the celebration of the renewal of vows, welcoming of the new candidates, and successful completion of the council meeting of the SMM Delegation, we continue to ask the prayers of the Blessed Virgin Mary that we may faithfully follow Christ with ardent desire and zeal for knowledge and mission.

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