



## A New Doctor in Mariology

**ROME, Italy** - On March 19, 2024, Fr. Fidelis Bolo WOTAN, SMM presented his doctoral dissertation at the “*Pontifica Facoltà Teologica Marianum*” in Rome. This confrere, usually known as Father Fidel, became one of the Doctors of Dogmatic Theology specializing in Mariology, the first Doctor of Theology specializing in Mariology from and in Indonesia.

Studying for his doctorate took a duration of not more than three years (October 2021 - March 2024). When I asked about his feelings, Father Fidel said: “*Everything is like a dream. After finishing the writing in December 2023, the only one I looked forward to was the date of the doctoral defense. I feel happy, and everything is really like a dream*”.

The defense coincided with the Feast of Saint Joseph, as one of the realizations of St. Joseph's dreams. From the womb of the *Pontifica Facoltà Teologica Marianum-Rome*, a new Mariologist was born for the Church. He wrote a dissertation with the title, “*SEMANA SANTA AND DEVOTION TO “TUAN MA” (MARY, MATER DOLOROSA): An Inheritance of Faith in the Work of Evangelization of Dominicans Missionaries in Larantuka, Flores-Indonesia (Theological, Interreligious, and Cultural Dimension)*.” The dissertation has 543 pages, speaking specifics and details regarding *Semana Santa* and Devotion to Mary, “*Tuan Ma*”, which have existed for five centuries in East Flores. In fact, Father Fidel presented his research very well before the examiners and participants.

We will wait for the contributions of this new Mariologist's reflections in the context of the theology of Mary in Indonesia. We hope that he will promote Marial devotions that live in Indonesia and introduce them to the world. The biggest problem such Mariologist from Solor-East Flores faced during his research was the need for more sources and references. He said, “*I have faced the biggest problem during this study, especially the written texts that speak about “Semana Santa” and Devotion to “Tuan Ma”. Theological writings, especially Mariological writings that study this theme, are also*

*minimal. Several writers talk about “Semana Santa” in Larantuka, but they explain it from another perspective.”*

Furthermore, Father Fidel stated, *“There are several sources that I found in French and Dutch, but they are incomplete, especially the description of the devotion to Church documents. Apart from that, I also had to go into original Portuguese language sources, specifically about the early periods of the Evangelization Mission in Solor-Larantuka”.*

In his doctoral defense, Father Fidel, SMM became the pinnacle because he had completed the entire series of lecture pilgrimages in Mariology. On the other hand, it is also the beginning because he will begin his pilgrimage as a Mariologist with the duties and responsibilities he will receive in the Church and the Company of Mary (SMM). His reflective contributions in Mariology are highly anticipated to help many to walk and grow in true devotion to Our Lady. He emphasized, *“Through this article, I hope that all Catholics in Indonesia, specifically in Solor-Larantuka and East Flores and even NTT, can gain the wealth of faith from the Marial devotions they live daily. At the same time, I want to invite them to know that the love of Virgin Mary is only a means God uses for our salvation. She is indeed in the middle of the people's lives, but she is not the center. Jesus remains the sole center of the life of faith. Mary is present in Christians' lives precisely to help them get closer and unite life itself with Christ, her Son more perfectly as emphasized by Saint Louis-Marie de Montfort”.*

This new Mariologist explains the importance of Mary's sons and daughters' participation in the liturgical and sacramental life of the Church. This participation is the fruit of their devotion to the Mother of Jesus. *“One of the most important things to remember and understand is that the Devotion to Our Lady should lead them to participate in Liturgical life and the Celebration of the Ecclesiastical Sacraments. Catholics should realize that liturgical celebrations and ecclesiastical sacraments are the culmination of their life of faith which leads them to a mature life of faith, namely, the attainment of Christlikeness. The balance between liturgy and religious piety (Marial devotion) as confirmed and recommended by Church documents remains the main priority in living our Christian life as Catholics,”* added Father Fidel.

*Fr. Hiro EDISON, SMM*