

THE RECOLETOS OBSERVER

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**A missionary's voice:
We're back in Africa!**

**Reflection:
Resurrection as God's love letter**

**Fr. Victor Lluch, OAR
Journeys back home**

Recoletos 400 opens

THE RECOLETOS OBSERVER

EDITORIAL

3

NEWS

Recoletos RP-Asia commence Quadricentennial Celebrations

4

USJ-R spearheads Basic Education Curriculum Training for OAR and non-OAR Academic Institutions

5

Summer Retreat in Baguio City

5

2nd Inter-Recollect Altar Servers Summer Encounter

6

Recoletos de Cavite hosts 9th ReCaMSi

6

Simple Profession

7

Enrolment: A.Y. 2004-05

7

Recollects honor St. Ezekiel Moreno

8

Official 4th Centenary logo and prayer launched

9

The Symbols of the Logo for Recoletos 400

9

8th National Migration Sunday

10

CICCT and COE Building

10

10 Seniors Profess Solemn Vows

11

Soon to rise: SSC-R in Canlubang, Laguna

11

Alternative program for Minor Seminary systematized

12

AN AUGUSTINIAN JUBILEE

13

UPDATE

A Missionary Voice: We're back in Africa!

14

OAR TRIENNIUM GUIDE

18

HOMILY

(on the occasion of the opening of RECOLETOS 400)

21

MOVIE REVIEW

The Unique Characteristics of "The Passion of the Christ"

22

HISTORY

Correction Please!

25

REFLECTION

Resurrection as God's love letter

26

HIGHLIGHTS

29

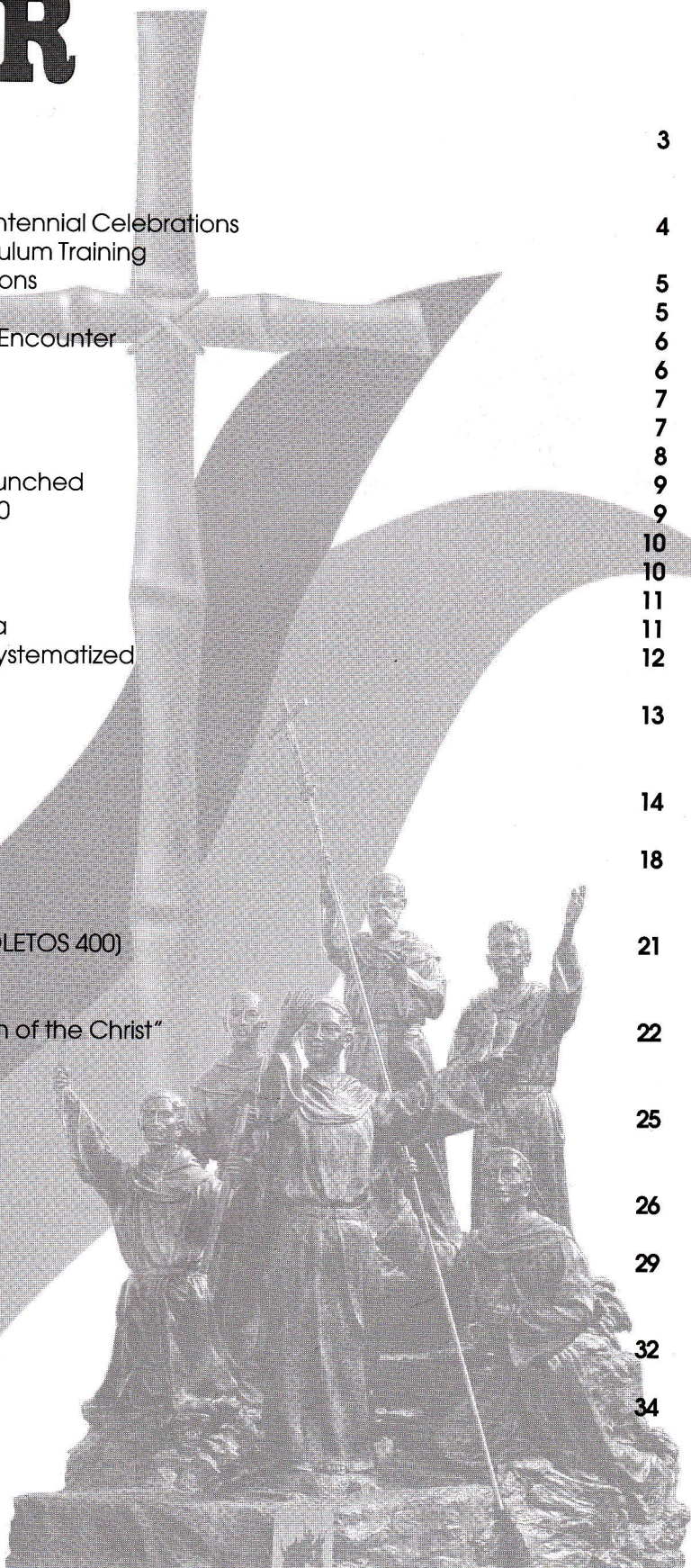
OBITUARY

Fr. Victor Lluch, OAR journeys back home

32

Pointless Points to Ponder Not

34



Interiority begets history

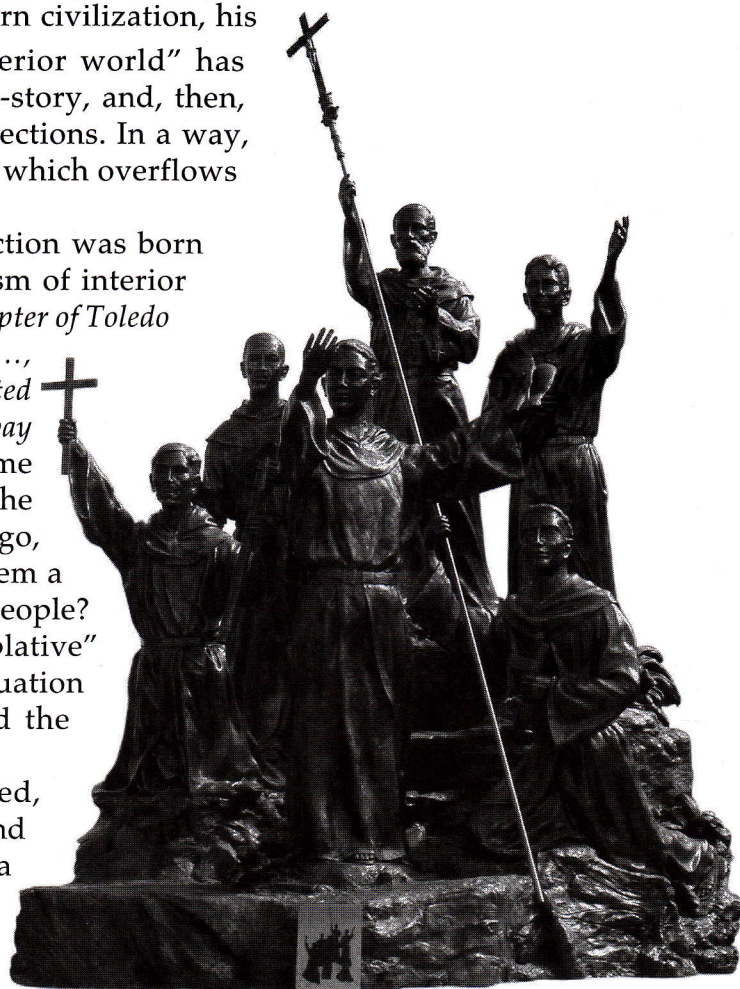
Opportunely scheduled at the heart of the triennium 2003-06, the official visit of the Prior Provincial, Lauro Larlar, OAR, to all communities within the province echoed with a specific 'ring tone': renewal. A striking portion of his message goes: "As we envision a future, as we re-root ourselves in Christ and His Church in the OAR identity and mission, may we be one in the labor of weaning the young St. Ezekiel Moreno [Province]. Let Christ be formed anew in the brothers. May the vocation and mission of 'being and remaining a community' be reclaimed by every Recoleta!"

Yes, there is a need to *re-root, reform and reclaim*. This threefold necessity is attuned to the language and spirit of "Starting afresh from Christ"! By "starting afresh", we are urged not only to go back to but also to put out into the deep of the basics i.e., the "root" and "form" of our being Augustinian Recolets, which Fr. Larlar pointed out as "Christ and His Church in the OAR identity and mission".

However, there is one effective way by which we can re-root, reform and reclaim this so-called "primordial mission"—the way of interiority. Among the greatest of Augustine's legacies to Western civilization, his discovery of and journey into this "interior world" has changed, above all, the course of his life-story, and, then, that of philosophical and theological reflections. In a way, this is also imitative of God's interior life which overflows with time and is made manifest in time...

Is it not that the Augustinian Recollection was born out of, and is nourished by, the dynamism of interior life, so that: "*The capitular fathers of the Chapter of Toledo (1588), aware of this divine inspiration..., decided that some houses should be designated or established for the observance of this new way of life...(Const. 4)*"? Is it not that that same dynamism brought the Recolets here in the Philippines and Asia almost 400 years ago, and is today the motor that propels in them a renewed fervor in the service of God and people? Just as Einstein had to undergo "contemplative" moments before he could arrive at the equation $E=mc^2$, and consequently revolutionized the history of physics?

Interiority of Augustinian type is tried, tested and proven. Re-rooting, reforming and reclaiming demand of it. And that, too, is a way to keep the OAR fire burning! †



Recoletos RP-Asia commence Quadricentennial Celebrations

MANILA, Philippines — On May 4, 2004 at San Sebastian College-Manila, the Augustinian Recollects marked the beginning of a three-year celebration of the Recoletos' quadricentennial presence in the Philippines and Asia. With a historical review of its early beginnings in the Philippines, a mass with the Archbishop of Manila, and a dinner-for-a-cause for the province's missions.

Dubbed as "Recoletos 400," the opening celebration was highlighted by series of activities.

Fr. Lauro Larlar, OAR, Prior Provincial, addressing the Recoletos family, said that the opening of the triennial preparation for the celebration of the 400th year of the Recollects continuing presence in the Philippines and Asia focuses on three movements, namely, (a) "the official opening of Recoletos 400 as the beginning also of our journey to renewal," (b) "the grand opening falls on the feast of St. Monica" and (c) "our renewal is towards a mission especially in reliving the mission entrusted to us by the Mother Church."

At 3:00 pm, Prof. Lino Dizon, a Filipino historian, gave a talk on the Augustinian Recollect missions in the East of Pinatubo. He reconstructed the historical fragments, thus giving the present generation a glimpse of the missionary spirit and pastoral life of the early Recollect missionaries. Dizon has written a book entitled, "East of Pinatubo, Former Recollect Missions in Tarlac and Pampanga."

At six o' clock in the evening, His Excellency Gaudencio Rosales, D.D., Archbishop of Manila, officiated the thanksgiving mass at San Sebastian Basilica co-celebrated by about a hundred priests from the Order of Augustinian Recollects and other invited priests, both diocesan and religious. Some 2000 faithfuls including the AR Sisters, Secular Augustinian Recollects, religious from various congregations, seminarians,



THREE YEARS OF PREPARATION for a renewed fervor to serve God and people in the Recollect Way.

parishioners, friends and benefactors of the Augustinian Recollects filled the all-steel basilica of San Sebastian.

In his homily, Archbishop Rosales exhorted the assembly "to take courage and have faith in God in the midst of fear just as St. Monica and the first Augustinian Recollect missionaries to the Philippines faced their fears in order to fulfill their God-given mission here on earth." He requested everyone "to thank God for giving us this wondrous opportunity to celebrate the opening of the Quadricentennial celebration within the mass and for giving us inspiration through the examples of the first Augustinian Recollect missionaries and the saints of the Order."

A "Dinner-for-a-Cause" followed after the mass at the SSC-R quadrangle. During the meal, all present were entertained with a socio-cultural show *cum* video presentation rendered by the Recollect seminarians, religious and Sisters and the Basilica choir of San Sebastian Parish. They highlighted the original musical composition of the Augustinian Recollects and bits and pieces of the Augustinian Recollect history in the Philippines and Asia.

Meanwhile, this day was also the launching of the Logo Competition and the Opening of the Exhibit featuring the Augustinian Recollect history and contributions to the Philippines and Asia. †

USJ-R spearheads Basic Education Curriculum training for OAR and non-OAR Academic Institutions

BASAK, CEBU CITY – Basic Education Curriculum (BEC) or known as *The Millennium Curriculum Training* was held at the University of San Jose–Recoletos, Basak Campus, Cebu City last May 24–28, 2004, and was participated in by representatives from the secondary department of all Recollect schools and other non-Recollect institutions within Metro Cebu. The five-day BEC training was an answer of the Recoletos to catch up with the pressing demands and new trends of modern education.

Ms. Sonia Paglinawan, the USJ-R High School Principal, accepted the challenge of Fr. Constantino B. Real, OAR, SEAP President, to spearhead the training for the Recollect educators.

The BEC Training started with a Eucharistic Celebration presided by Fr. Sixto M. Bitangjol, OAR, Vice - President for Academics. In his homily, he challenged educators to uphold “Caritas et Scientia” and to embody the spirit of the Augustinian Recollects so as to transmit effectively the Recoletos values to the students. Fr. Real, the University President, in his welcome address, emphasized the delicate roles of teachers, “The teachers should be equipped with knowledge because we cannot simply give what we do not have,” he said; and “the teachers could (either) mold or destroy (his students)” he continued. Finally, he appreciated the realization of

the training program.

Also invited for the said training were government educators who, during workshops, spoke, facilitated and guided the participants in their areas of expertise or specialization.

The Basic Education Curriculum (BEC), for almost half a decade from its creation for the elementary and secondary levels of education, remained optional for private institutions. With the BEC’s implementation in different public schools this recent year, the SEAP decided to convene representations from different OAR Schools for a head-start of the same program.

The training was a glimpse on how the Recoletos Schools are to adapt Basic Education Curriculum this year and years ahead.

Adelante Recoletos! †

Summer Retreat in Baguio City

BISHOP PATRICK BUZON, SDB, DD. local ordinary of Kabankalan, Negros Oriental guided the second group of Recollect religious in their week-long summer “spiritual recharging” held, as usual, at Casiciaco Recoletos Seminary in Baguio City last 12-16 April 2004. Topics revolved around the framework of “Starting afresh from Christ” and “Novo millennio ineunte”. †



2nd Inter-Recollect Altar Servers Summer Encounter

SAN CARLOS CITY, NEGROS OCCIDENTAL – Fifty-two (52) participants from five Recollect parishes in the Visayas joined in the biennial Inter-Recollect Altar Servers Summer Encounter (IRASSE) held last May 17-21, 2004 at Sto. Tomas de Villanueva Formation House in San Carlos City, Negros Occidental.

Fifteen (15) altar servers came from the Parish of Our Lady of the Abandoned, Valencia accompanied by Fr. Rouel Sia, OAR; twelve (12) from St., Nicholas of Tolentine Parish, Talisay City, Negros Occ., accompanied by Mr. Miller Lim; nine (9) from Our Lady of Consolation Parish, Laray, Cebu chaperoned by Rev. Mark Balagtas, OAR; and eight (8) each representing the delegations from St. Nicholas of Tolentine Oratory, Bacolod City and Our Lady of Handumanan Parish, Bacolod City with Frs. Jay Parilla, OAR and Julius Marcos, OAR as chaperons, respectively.

The gathering served “to promote Recollect priestly and religious vocations among altar servers by introducing them to the Recollect seminary lifestyle and by allowing them to experience the Recollect communitarian spirit” as well as “to improve the formation program of the Recollect altar servers for better liturgical services.”



The participants of the 2nd IRASSE.

The group also evaluated the suggestions and recommendations made during the 1st IRASSE in 2002. †

Recoletos de Cavite hosts 9th ReCaMSi

CAVITE CITY – San Sebastian College-Recoletos de Cavite, Inc. hosted the 9th Recoletos Campus Ministry Summer Institute (ReCaMSi) held at the Good Shepherd Spiritual Center in Antipolo City last April 13-16, 2004, with the theme: “Towards One Mission... that they may all be one... (Jn. 17:21)”. Twenty-six delegates from five Recollect schools attended the annual affair aimed at providing an on-going formation for personnel involved in campus ministry work in the different OAR schools in the Philippine Province.

Resource speakers included Bishop Luis Antonio Tagle of the Diocese of Imus who focused his talk on unity; Fr. Julius Marcos, OAR who talked about “One Mind, One Heart”; David ‘Dodoy’ Daulo from Emmaus Center Foundation, Inc., who discussed about building a community; and Msgr. Sabino A. Vengco, Jr., who spoke about the importance of the Eucharist.

Surely, the event gave the delegates an opportunity to review their goals and roles in their respective academic institutions. †

Simple Profession

[April 24, 2004 at St. Ezekiel Moreno Novitiate - Recoletos chapel, Antipolo City]

FRAY JOEL BUAYA AMPASIN, OAR
(Carmen, Bohol)

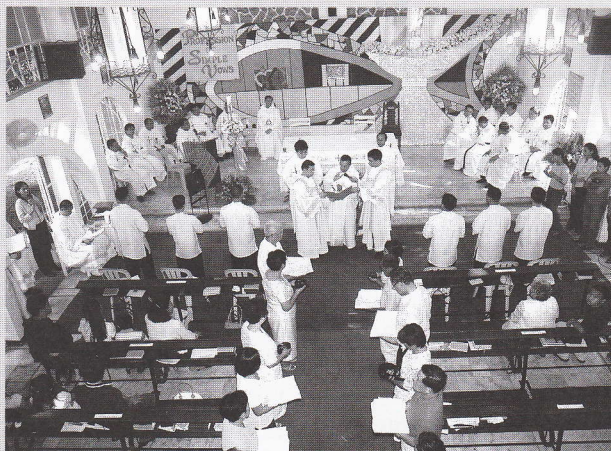
FRAY RENIER AMBO ALVIOLA, OAR
(Valencia, Negros Oriental)

FRAY BOB TITO CABANAG, OAR
(Sambag II, Cebu City)

FRAY CHRISTOPHER VINCOY GASPAR, OAR
(Valencia, Negros Oriental)

FRAY ARIAN JOSEF MAGARZO OCHEDA, OAR
(Pandan, Antique)

FRAY GONDELINO GALAGALA TENIO, JR., OAR
(Jagna, Bohol)



Fr. Provincial presided the Mass and the Rite of Simple Profession.

NEW MISSIONARY:

FR. LOUIE F. GABINETE, OAR

joins the new and young community of Filipino Recollects in Kamabai, Sierra Leone, West Africa



ENROLLMENT

ACADEMIC YEAR 2004-2005, FIRST SEMESTER

OAR SCHOOLS	GRADE SCHOOL	HIGH SCHOOL	COLLEGE	GRAD. SCH., ETC.	TOTAL
USJ-R, Cebu City	799	1,667	9,722	538	12,726
UNO-R, Bacolod City	1,015	757	5,709	398	7,879
SSC-R, Manila	716	1,068	3,433	701	5,918
SSC-R, Cavite City	-	882	2,715	34	3,631
CST-R, San Carlos City	-	648	-	-	648*
UNO-R, Talisay City	-	512	-	-	512
SPA, Valencia	-	415	-	-	415
SPA-R, Caidiocan	-	220	-	-	220

GRAND TOTAL 31,949

SEMINARIES:

Sto. Tomas de Villanueva Formation House, San Carlos City
Casiciaco Recoletos Seminary, Baguio City
St. Ezekiel Moreno Novitiate-Recoletos, Antipolo City
Recoletos Formation Center, Quezon City

: 21
: 71 (69 seminarians from 1st-4th yrs + 2 in 5th yr)
: 16 (4 novices, 12 prenovices)
: 64 (27 OAR, 22 OSA, 5 ESHT, 4 CFIC, 3 FDP, 2 DS, 1 SC)

TOTAL :172 *including the 21 seminarians

** the 2 are no longer connected with the seminary but still undergo an alternative program (5th year) to finish their A.B. Philo

Recollects Honor St. Ezekiel Moreno

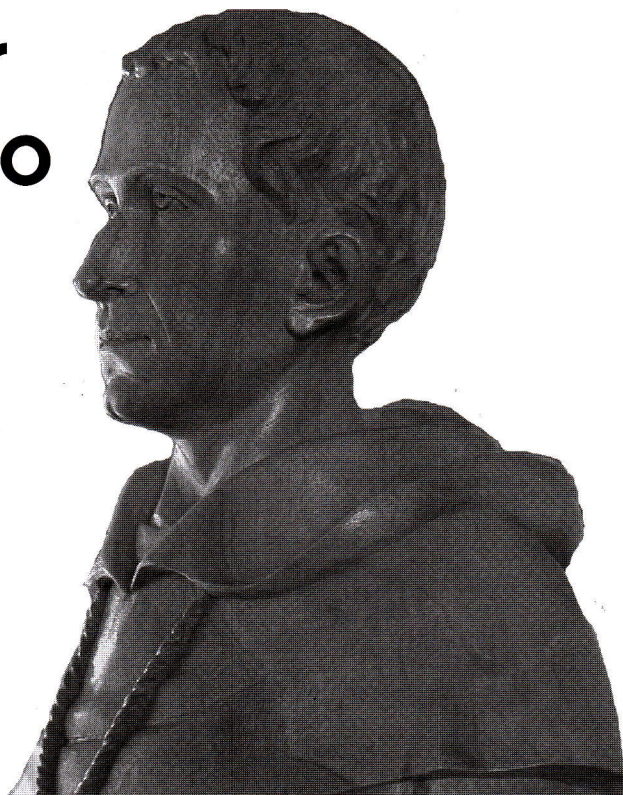
Last 19 August 2004, the Augustinian Recollect priests, brothers, deacons, professed theology students and novices com-memorated the feast of Saint Ezekiel Moreno (1848-1906), a holy and indefatigable Spanish missionary who spent the early years of his priestly ministry in our country from 1870 to 1885 and was later appointed bishop of Colombia.

At the Recollect novitiate house in Antipolo City, the Saint Ezekiel Moreno Healing Ministry was formally launched at 9:00am. "Healing," said Prior Provincial Fr. Lauro V. Larlar OAR who presided over the Eucharistic celebration "is a prelude to interior life." "Interior Life" is this year's theme of the three-year celebration (2004-2006) of the Fourth Centennial of Recollect Presence in Asia and the Philippines. Fr. Ferdinand Hernando OAR heads the healing ministry.

A concelebrated Thanksgiving Mass scheduled for 6:00pm in San Nicholas de Tolentino parish church in Quezon City was presided by Bishop Deogracias Iñiguez, Jr., D.D. of Caloocan. Confreres from other Recollect communities joined the Eucharistic celebration. Augustinian Recollect Sisters, Secular Augustinian Recollects, priests of other religious orders, seminarians from various OAR Formation Houses, students and parishioners graced the festive occasion. After the mass, a short video documentary "Biyaheng Recoletos" was premiered.

In line with this fourth centenary celebrations, Vicar Provincial Fr. Regino Z. Bangcaya, OAR, has announced the holding of the History Congress on December 3 and 4 this year with the theme "Recoletos 400: History, Culture and Legacy (1606-2006)." Historians like Ambeth Ocampo, Regalado Trota Jose, Angel Martínez Cuesta OAR, José Arcilla SJ, Bambi Harper, Emilio Edgardo Quilatan OAR, Dr. Luciano Santiago and Emmanuel Luis Romanillos will deliver papers on the Recollect legacy to the Filipino soul. Teachers of Religious Education and Theology subjects have been invited to the two-day National Conference which shall be held at San Sebastian College, Manila.

It was May 1606 when the pioneering twelve Spanish Recollects headed by Fray Juan de San Jerónimo arrived in Cebu. Thence they proceeded to Manila and set up their first convent at Bagumbayan, just outside



the old city walls. A big and sturdy stone church dedicated to Saint Nicholas of Tolentino was soon after erected in Intramuros. The Recollect missionaries were assigned to missions and parishes in Zambales, Bataan, Palawan, Cebu, Mindoro, Mindanao, Romblon, Batangas, Cavite, Bohol, Manila, Tarlac and Negros.

Over two thousand Recollect friars have worked in the Philippines since then. The friars of yore erected towns, barrios and hermitages. They constructed ports, bridges, watchtowers, roads, schools, kumbentos, churches and cathedrals. They authored devotionaries, history, grammar and medical books as well as Visayan, Tagalog, Cuyunin and Zambal dictionaries. Most of all, they ceaselessly administered the sacraments of the Church and spread the Good News of Jesus in our country.

Seven Blesseds and martyrs, including Blessed Vicente Soler (1867-1936), erstwhile parish priest in Mamburao, Mindoro, joined the evangelization effort. Saint Ezekiel, after whom the new Recollect province of the Philippines, Sierra Lone and Taiwan was named in 1998, was assigned to Imus Sta. Cruz (Manila), Calapan (Mindoro), Las Piñas and Santo Tomas (Batangas). A victim of cancer, the holy friar passed away in Monteagudo, Spain on 19 August 1906. In 1992, Pope John Paul II canonized Saint Ezekiel who is now invoked as patron of cancer victims. †

Official 4th Centenary logo and prayer launched

A mid-afternoon Eucharistic celebration on the solemnity of St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, on August 28, 2004, was presided by Fr. Lauro V. Larlar together with some Recollect priests. Held at the parish church of Our Lady of Consolation, Mira-Nila, the festivity also occasioned the launching of the official prayer and logo for the Fourth Centennial celebration of OAR presence in the Philippines and Asia.

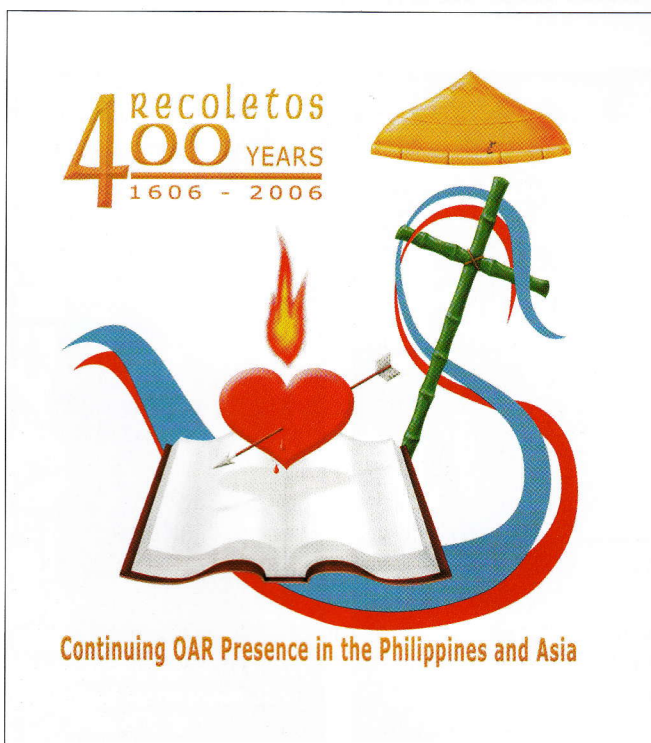
After the mass, the launching of the 4th Centenary logo ensued. A tableau was performed by the Recoletos de Mira-Nila Theater Arts on the meaning and significance of the official 4th centenary emblem.

Away from media coverage, the simple yet intimate celebration was participated in by representatives of those closely connected to the Recollection movement in the Philippines.



Unity of the Recoletos family

The Symbols of the Logo for Recoletos 400



The **SALAKOT** (native hat) represents the Augustinian Recollects community in the Philippines and Asia-- priests, brothers and religious, contemplative and active sisters, and lay members united together under the common roof and guidance of the Order.

The **GREEN BAMBOO CROSS** symbolizes Christ's power present in their endeavors as they continue their ever renewing mission of evangelization in this part of the world. The bamboo flourishes in Asian and Philippine soil.

The **SEAL** of the Order of Augustinian Recollects: the open book is wisdom shared and the flaming heart is the ardent charity that creates community in the Augustinian tradition of prayer, communion and service.

The **BLUE and RED RIBBONS** represent the Philippine archipelago as the colorful stage of the Recollect missionary zeal for 400 years gracefully and firmly moving onward continuing the OAR presence and commitment to the Filipino and Asian people. The two ribbons aptly portray the twin character of contemplation and action of the Recoletos.

8th Nat'l Migration Sunday

Kaohsiung, TAIWAN – "Migration: with a view to peace!" was the central theme of the 8th National Migration Sunday here in Kaohsiung, Taiwan on September 26, 2004. Over a thousand of foreigners, majority of whom were Filipinos, came to Kaohsiung Municipal Girls' Senior High School auditorium to join the celebration.

The Scalabrinian Fathers headed by Fr. Bruno, together with the Salvatorian Sisters Tess and Carol organized the event. It started with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass at 10:30 in the morning. Fr. Peter Hung, a Columban Missionary came all the way from Taoyuan County to be the main celebrant of the Mass. Concelebrating with him were Frs. Loi, CS; Boy, CS, and another Vietnamese priest assigned in Taipei. The Recollect Fathers Joel Dequilla and Jerome Virtudazo accompanied the Recoletos Family Choir in singing, with the former conducting and the latter playing the keyboard.

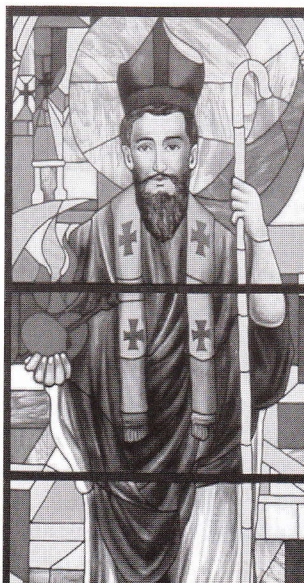
During his homily, Fr. Peter captured the listeners' attention when he revealed his difficult personal experiences as a migrant fleeing from the communist government of Vietnam. He struck a cord in people's hearts as he bared the struggles and injustices he has gone through as a refugee.



Intermission numbers rendered by the participants

CICCT and COE Building to rise in Basak Campus

CEBU CITY- A new 5-story building will soon rise at the Basak campus of the University of San Jose-Recoletos. The new building, which will house the College of Information, Computer and Communication Technology and the College of Education, is one of the many projects that the University School Board has designed for the academic year 2004-2005. The expansion project was unanimously approved by the USJ-R's Board of Trustees after seeing the need to decongest the main campus, to expand the University's physical structure, and to create an environment conducive for learning, equipped with the state-of-the art facilities and technologies.



1650th Anniversary of the Birth of Our Father St. Augustine
(13 November 354-2004)



370th Anniversary of the Martyrdom of St. Magdalene of Nagasaki
(20 October 1634-2004)

10 Seniors Profess Solemn Vows

QUEZON CITY- Ten fourth year simple professed religious of the Augustinian Recollects vowed to uphold for life the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience last July 10, 2004 at the Lady of Consolation Parish, Miranila Homes, Quezon City. Rev. Fr. Lauro V. Larlar, OAR, Prior Provincial of St. Ezekiel Moreno Province received as full-fledged members of the Order of Augustinian Recollects: Fray Henry Santiago, OAR; Fray Anthony Irineo, OAR; Fray Feliciano Campomanes, OAR; Fray Abraham Latoza, OAR; Fray Jonathan Jamero, OAR; Fray Virgilio Paredes, OAR; Fray Gideon Antolin Lagrimas, OAR; Fray Russell Lapidez, OAR; Fray Roland Cepe, OAR and Fray Rey Tripulca, OAR, all residents of Recoletos Formation Center (RFC), the theological formation house of the OAR in the Philippines.



FOR LIFE: As Fr. Larlar interrogated the 10 brave men whether they are willing to live a chaste, poor and obedient life in the Augustinian Recollect way, they all replied: "Yes, I am".

Soon to rise: SSC-R in Canlubang, Laguna

MANILA, Philippines- A ten-hectare San Sebastian College-Recoletos campus will soon be rising in Canlubang, Laguna.

San-Sebastian College-Recoletos, Manila has finally signed with Carmelray Industrial Corporation to signify its effort of extending Quality Catholic Christian Education. The site is located within the Industrial Park and the school is intended to serve potential college students primarily coming from Canlubang and Calamba and secondarily from Sta. Rosa and Cabuyao. It also intends to cater to potential enrollees from other parts of Laguna and Batangas.

Fr. Hernan B. Omecillo, OAR, president of SSC-R Manila, envisions this project to be a continuing commitment to provide responsive and quality Catholic Christian education. The extension school had a ground-breaking ceremony last July 16 and is set to start construction by October of this year. It is expected to open on the first semester of S.Y. 2006-2007.

Alternative program for Minor Seminary systematized

CEBU CITY – The Secretariat of Formation, spearheaded by its President, Rev. Fr. Bernard C. Amparado, OAR, organized a two-day workshop on design and systematization of the alternative program for the minor seminary (high school seminary). Dr. Victoria D. Gabison, resource person and facilitator of the workshop, guided the participants in the mechanics of the workshop; creation of the program title, description and objectives; designing the program components and modules; setting up the mechanics and logistics of the program; and determining the search-in centers and human resources.

This new program, the “Live-out Plan of Formation (LOPF)- OAR Aspirants,” is basically designed for high school students who are considering the call to be Recollect Priests and Brothers and are aspiring to enter the OAR College Seminary for postulancy. Generally, its objective is to provide a channel for vocational discernment, away from the seminary, but within the

context of the designated local communities of the Augustinian Recollect family.

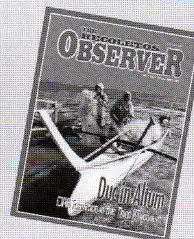
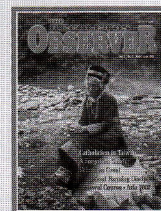
Together with Fr. Provincial, Fr. Lauro V. Larlar, OAR, who attended the workshop held at the University of San Jose-Recoletos, Cebu City last July 19-20, 2004, were members of the Secretariat of Vocation Ministry and local vocation promoters. †

Suggestions? Comments?

Contributions (Written articles, news, photos or reflections)?

Send these to the Editor

recoletosobserver@recoletos.ph



The Prior Provincial of St. Nicholas of Tolentine, Fr. Rafael Mediavilla, OAR (center) with some of the Antipolo novices and pre-novices during his first visit last August 19, 2004.

An Augustinian Jubilee

Excerpt from "the letter drafted by all Augustinian Priors and Superiors General inviting the various Augustinian communities worldwide to freely express their creativity in celebrating the Jubilee Year, in such a way that they could celebrate it in a way corresponding with their own realities and possibilities, through initiatives on different levels: community, liturgical, academic, artistic, pastoral, cultural, etc."

"IN ORDER TO LIVE OUR FAITH in a way that is dynamic, and to renew the way in which we live our Augustinian charism, we are proposing that the celebration of the [Augustinian] Jubilee be centered on a series of topics, which we hope will be further developed by you:

YEAR	MOTTO	THEME	PRIORITIES	SUGGESTIONS
2004	In our interior dwells the truth (On true Rel. 39,72	St. Augustine Community Interiority	Studies Ongoing Formation	Publications Seminars, Symposia, in schools and universities
2005	We are servants of the Church (On the work of monks, 29,37)	St. Nicholas of Tolentine Pastoral activity; evangelization and human development	Pastoral activity Social apostolate Option for the poor	Campaigns for Africa; Missions; Justice & peace in parishes
2006	One heart and one soul, united on the way to God (Rule, I,3)	The AUGUSTINIAN FAMILY - Religious life - Laity	Spirituality Fraternal dialogue Contemplation in action	Retreat days; Federations; Secular fraternities

As we remember, celebrate and believe, it is our hope that the celebration of the AUGUSTINIAN JUBILEE 2004- 2006 will inspire in all of us authentic conversion, and that we will be strengthened in our journey as Church, pilgrim "amidst the persecutions of this world and the consolation of God" in the style of St. Augustine. This is what we ask of the Lord, and we invite all of you to join us daily in praying with the **Prayer of the Augustinian Jubilee**:

O God our loving Creator,
You have accompanied us throughout the ages
in many and mysterious ways.
You have given us your servant Augustine as a
guide and model.
Your goodness and beauty inspire us to seek
you even more.
The grace of your son Jesus Christ has given
the Church numerous servants.
Your Spirit has worked marvels of holiness
among us.
For all this, the members of the Augustinian
Family wish to express our gratitude to you.

And we ask you to fill us with trust in your
abiding protection.
When we stray, draw us back to you and help
us to remain always faithful.
May you be our strength and our light
So that we might live in faith and holiness,
With hope and joy, in unity and love.
Guide our restless hearts towards your peace,
The peace of the city of God, where we will
find rest as we contemplate your face.
We will see you and love you, love you and
praise you eternally.
Amen."



A Missionary Voice: **WE'RE BACK IN AFRICA!**

by FR. DON H. BESANA, OAR
Kamabai Mission House, Sierra Leone
May 2004

A TABOR EXPERIENCE

Our enthusiasm was so great that we came to the Sierra Leone missions earlier than planned. The two months of stay in Spain was a Tabor experience; going back to the womb of the mother Province and getting back to the roots of the Order were such a heavenly experience. Living in the different communities, studying the culture and language of our predecessors were such a liberating experience for us. However, the call of Bishop Biguzzi from Sierra Leone asking for our whereabouts seemed to be urgent and we decided to anticipate our going there. With the blessings of the Prior Provincial, Fr. Larlar, and Fr. Raul Buhay, in-charge of the Commission on Missions, Fr. René Paglinawan volunteered to accompany us to our dreamt mission.

"hungry children come begging for bread, but when we have nothing to share, they are content with a cup of water and the sound of the guitar."

WE'RE BACK IN AFRICA!

OUR ARRIVAL AT SIERRA LEONE

We were greatly empowered by God's grace and the prayers and moral support of everyone we met that we flew to Sierra Leone on March 29, 2004 together with Bishop Giorgio Biguzzi, the Bishop of Makeni, who joined us from Brussels airport.

We arrived in the African soil at 4:30 p.m. Our passage through Lungi airport was facilitated by the Bishop, who is well loved, well known and well respected by the people for his work, not the least of which was his peace initiative in mediating between the Sierra Leonean government and the rebels.

The Lungi airport, by the way, falls under the jurisdiction of the Diocese of Makeni.

MEETING OUR NEW FAMILY IN THE MISSIONS

We stayed at the Xaverian House in Lungi for our first night in Africa. The next day, we traveled to Makeni, the seat of the diocese, some three hours away. Along the way, we dropped by some houses of other missionary congregations, like the Salesians, Josephites, Brothers of Saint John of God, the Saint Joseph of Cluny Sisters, as well as the parish rectories of the local diocesan clergy, where the bishop introduced us to our new family of church workers. Everyone warmly welcomed us. We saw in their faces serenity and contentment in spite of the many difficulties that they must have encountered in their work. We saw



the beauty of their simple lives. We were especially inspired by two Xaverians who, even in their eighties, are still active in the ministry of evangelization, visiting families, leading the procession on Palm Sunday.

SHARING A HOME WITH THE BISHOP

In Makeni, we stayed for almost two weeks, in one of the two cottages that served as temporary home for the bishop. His permanent residence was greatly damaged during the war and is still under repair; incidentally, it was only after the reconstruction or repair jobs were done in other buildings of the diocese that the bishop gave the order to have his house refurbished.

Reconstructions are symbols of hope and return to normalcy. Generally, there is peace in Sierra Leone now. The UN Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) was supposed to pull out of the country at the end of the current year 2004, but it was decided that the troops stay for another year. The local police and the military would then fully take over the security and peace and order in the country next year. This is a very good development.

Living with Bishop Biguzzi for two weeks was a period of acquaintance with the head of the diocese. Those days allowed us to relate closely with him. We found him to be very fatherly, a good pastor, a great man with a clear and optimistic vision for the diocese and for the country, and, most of all, a man with a very good sense of humor. Living with him and interacting with him, we learned much about the situation of the diocese and of the country.

FINALLY, OUR HOME

Before finally residing in the mission house in Kamabai, we visited it three times, with the company of Fr. Anthony Guiotto, the regional superior of the Xaverian missionaries in Sierra Leone and the one who prepared the residence for us, with his team of carpenters. More importantly, Fr. Tony also took care of the parish in Kamabai during the absence of the Augustinian Recollect missionaries.

The house is well-repaired and newly-repainted. Some of the vinyl tiles were replaced by ceramic ones. The windows were furnished with jalousies and mosquito screens. All the furniture is new. The bishop bought a top-of-the-line generator for the house. Two water pumps were installed, one to bring water from

Our Recollect missionaries (from left to right):
Fr. Edgar, Don, Louie and a lay collaborator.

WE'RE BACK IN AFRICA!

the well, about 50 meters distant, into the underground deposit near the house, and the other to bring it to the overhead tank. We have a big refrigerator, a gas range, and kitchen utensils. The rest of the necessary things to start the new community we purchased in Freetown.

The bishop gave us a pick-up car for temporary use; transactions are going on with a car dealer in Freetown for a new 4-wheel drive double cab pick-up which would allow us to reach by road – if roads they can be called at all – the remotest outstations of the parish.

BLESSING OF OUR NEW HOME

Last April 24, 2004, on the occasion of the feast of the Conversion of our Father Saint Augustine, we had a house warming-cum-blessing. The Bishop came to bless the house. Also gracing the affair were Xaverian missionaries, Cluny sisters and lay diocesan employees.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION

The community has at present two paid personnel, namely, the cook, and the laundry and maintenance person. We will also need to have a night watchman, to secure our premises and properties.

We enjoy the simplicity and the silence of our new home. There are surrounding trees and bushes; yonder are the beautiful hills and rock formations. We feel we are embraced by Mother Nature.

A HOLY VIGIL WITH THE RESIDENTS

We set up residence at the Kamabai mission house on Holy Thursday, April 8, 2004; thus, we were able to administer – and successfully too – the Holy Week services in the parish shrine and some nearby outstations.

We celebrated the Easter week as Augustinian Recollect Week, days of rest, reflection and prayer. Fr. René was very helpful in sharing points about the Augustinian Recollect life and spirituality. As the newest community of the Order, we need to start on good footing, to set our community on solid foundations. We have to start everything right if we are to end right.



"...it is so fulfilling to share, most especially to smiling faces..."

*"We enjoy the simplicity
and the silence of our new home.
There are surrounding trees
and bushes; yonder are the beautiful
hills and rock formations. We feel
we are embraced by Mother Nature".*

PARISH ORGANIZATION

The parish titular patroness is Our Lady of Sierra Leone, and the parish church was made by the bishop the diocesan shrine of Our Lady of Sierra Leone. Presently, the parish has 57 outstations or communities, each with their community leader and prayer leader. The parish has retained the PPC officers during the period of our absence. It has one official catechist. There are more than a dozen Catholic schools within the parish jurisdiction; in time, one of the members of the Augustinian Recollect community will have to act as manager of these schools.

MISSIONS WITHOUT BOUNDARIES

There are no dull moments: in the evening, when the generator is on, the children come to play and sing

WE'RE BACK IN AFRICA!

and dance. We accompany their singing with the guitar, to their great delight. The older children and the youth also take advantage of the lights to study their lessons at the back of the convent.

The parishioners that we have come into contact with are very good people. At our arrival, Catholics as well as Wesleyans, even Muslims, welcomed us. They are very glad to see the Augustinian Recollects back in their town. Everyone, regardless of religion, treats us in a nice, friendly and respectful way.

LEARNING THE AFRICAN LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

Our language classes in Krio and Limba have started. Little by little, we have learned to communicate with the people in their native tongue. We have also been given an overview of the culture in Africa and Sierra Leone in general, and of the Biriwa Limba chiefdom, with which the parish jurisdiction coincides, in particular.

We have had meetings as a religious community in order to decide on urgent matters: schedules for weekdays and Sundays, hiring of employees and agreeing on their job descriptions and salaries, etc.

LOOKING FORWARD TO WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

So far, after a month, we have settled down quite well. Thanks be to God, everyone enjoys good health. The house is ready for the arrival of Frs. Raul Buhay and Louie Gabinete, whom we expect before the end of the month of May. Fr. René Paglinawan will leave for Rome on May 17. He came here to accompany us; the bishop also asked him to give a recollection to the

clergy of the diocese in preparation for the Chrism Mass, as well as to preach the retreat to the ordinandi (4 for priesthood and 2 for diaconate), who received the sacrament of Orders on May 8.

A SENSE OF GRATITUDE AND AN APPEAL

Communication with the outside world is not very difficult; some 400 meters from the house, along the road that ascends to the eastern villages, we get mobile phone signals. Calls, though, are more expensive from than to Sierra Leone. We are grateful to the brothers in Tondo, San Carlos and Talisay who phoned [us] for their support and Easter greetings. We would be happy to hear from other communities soon. (Our mobile phone number is 00232 76744374.)

There is much work to do in the parish: pastoral ministry, education, and health care. We need financial assistance from our brothers in the Philippines. Not really for ourselves for, even if our lives are simple, we have everything; it is the people who are in dire need. They normally eat only one full meal a day; we see so much suffering, and they, even the children, have to work hard at the farm, using rudimentary tools; hungry children come begging for bread, but when we have nothing to share, they are content with a cup of water and the sound of the guitar.

The people are very thankful for our return to the mission. They tell us that with our presence, they find again competent spiritual leaders to guide them; they are also honest to admit that our presence will bring in material development and advancement as well. †



Fr. Louie, Fr. Don, Fr. Raul and Fr. Egay being introduced to the tribal heads and community members.

OAR Triennium Guide

Triennium 2003-2006

recoletos
400 YEARS
1606 - 2006



Continuing OAR Presence in the Philippines and Asia

Vision

We the Augustinian Recollects desire to be a Community of Love that continuously renews itself, happily living our ideals and by generously serving God and his people.

Mission

Called to a contemplative, communitarian, and apostolic life we are here as Christ's witnesses in order to evangelize, serve and renew the Church in Asia and the Philippines.

Values

- Interior Life
- Community Life
- Freedom to do good
- Humility
- Marian Devotion
- Christian Love in Relationship
- Justice
- Silent Hard Work
- Ascetic-like Discipline

2003 - 2004

(March 2003)

Direction: Triennium Vision-Mission

Plans of Action guided by:

- a) "Desire to grow and work"
- b) "Move towards financial autonomy" for formation and mission

Theme: **"Set the OAR heart on fire"**

(September-October 2003)

Mid-term Evaluation

(October 2003-.....)

Main Concerns defined:

- a) Return to Sierra Leone
- b) The 400th Anniversary
- c) Life-style Evaluation and Work-style Revision

2004-2005

(2003 – February 2004)

On-going Implementation of Three Main Concerns. Follow-up

(March 2004)

Year-end Evaluation

Prepare for Fraternal Visit

Post-Visit Direction

Theme: **"Keep the OAR fire burning"**

Challenges:

- Promote Vocation
 - Cultivate the OAR Heritage Habitat
 - Safeguard the OAR Collective Memory
- Follow-up

Instrumentalities

1. Growth in Care of Common Goods
2. Growth in Compliance of OAR Obligations and Rights (Humility)

2005 – 2006

3. God-centered, Church-directed Service (Honor God in each other)

Apostolates

Theme: "Spread the OAR fire"

Mid-triennium Evaluation

(March 2005)

Preparing the Brothers

(and the 3rd Provincial Chapter)

New Horizons, Frontier Missions:

"Happier, Younger-in-heart OAR for the Church"

Adelante Recoletos 400!

(Onwards Augustinian Recollects)

Winners of Logo Making Contest

First Prize:

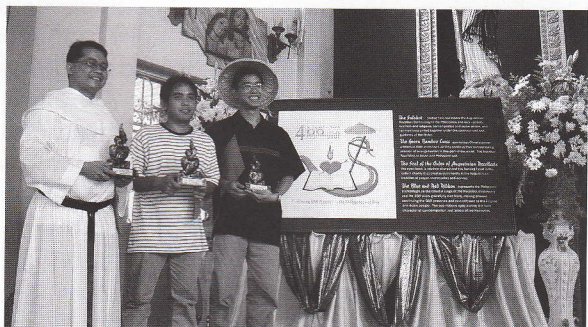
Mark S. Castillo

Second Prize:

Squeegee D. Jakosalem

Third Prize:

Fr. Nicolas G. Salamanca, OAR



VISION and MISSION

(Triennium 2003-2006)

Rationale

The points of reference are (a) the 4th Centennial Celebration (2006), and (b) the implementation (2003-2006) of Chapter Ordinance prior to the anniversary. How can we "create shared meaning" in our endeavors? How do we "generate commitment and meaning" in this three-year work and still be stimulated to improve religious life? What should guide our decision-making in the implementation of the ordinance?

Answers to these questions brought about a confirmation of our *purpose of being*, being here in this church. *What are we here for?* Are we not here as Christ's witnesses to serve and help renew the Church, his Body? And how do we witness if not by becoming and remaining a church where we are? The Rule provides we are to be one heart and one soul on the way to God? The Constitutions state that our being contemplative (*life in God and for God, life of God*) is in the common life. It is in the community that we first serve God in each brother, from and by the community

*Values are but indicators
of what we are called to be unless
we re-appropriate, treasure
and live them.*

that we are sent to serve the people of God. Three years (2003-2006) are short, but can be hard times to live and become a "community-witness," a "church-witness."

Sharing of concerns brought about a vision, a picture of where and how we want to be at the end of triennium 2003 – 2006. Where do the 2nd Provincial Chapter ordinances lead us? The destination or future direction portrayed is time-bound yet it involves *a time yet unrealized – with its dreams, hopes, and aspirations*. It does not change the vision (and the mission) entrusted to us by the Mother Church. Call it a *goal* or a *strategic intent*, but let it serve as a challenge (short-lived as it is) to elicit from every *Recoleta* commitment and courage. In this triennium, will it not be our joy to **relive** within the renewed and ever renewing Augustinian Recollect community

of love, and **learn** to be happy again in living the Gospel, serving God and His people? At the end of 2006, or even before, we may visualize anew.

What beliefs guide our behavior meantime? There are values, principles and norms claimed proper to our way of life. There are others to be identified. The few values listed serve to challenge every brother to re-discover the Recollect in him. May these point to the religious the ideal of conduct, life and work style of an Augustinian Recollect.

For these to be *our values*, we must be informed of them repeatedly as we re-think our being *Recoleta* more deeply. As indexes they are to be visited and advocated continually. At the end of the triennium can we confidently reveal the Augustinian Recollect in these treasured and relived values? [...] †

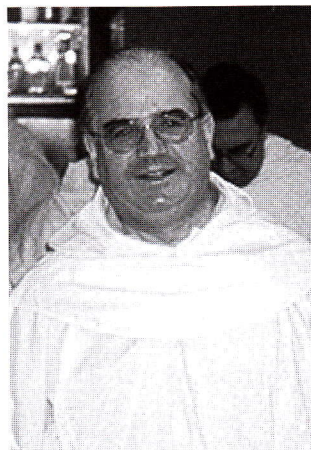
FLASH...

New Recollect Bishop among the capitulars



Fr. Mario Molina, OAR
*Bishop of Quiché,
Guatemala*

Re-elected Prior General of the Order



**Fr. Javier Guerra
Ayala, OAR**
*Prior General
(2004-2009)*

Excerpts from the homily delivered by ARCHBISHOP GAUDENCIO B. ROSALES, D.D. on the occasion of the Opening of Recoletos 400 last May 4, 2004 at San Sebastian Basilica, Manila

two celebrations

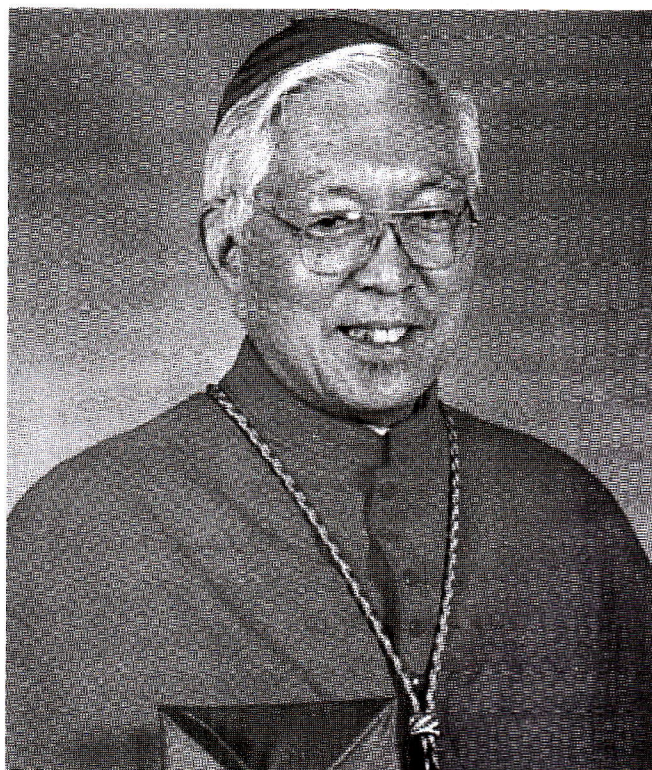
"This evening we celebrate actually the feast of St. Monica, the mother of Augustine. And we use this [celebration] also as the beginning of the three-year preparation for the Fourth Centennial of the Recollect Fathers' arrival as missionaries in the Philippines. Let us put the two celebrations together starting with the life and the beauty of a mother for the Church, for the mission and the tremendous grace of mission."

"do not be afraid"

"The widowed woman was such representing perhaps many women, many mothers in sorrow including Monica, and thousands and hundreds of thousand Monicas after that—women in sorrow; women who have lost a loved one, a precious one, whatever; women who lost. But a beautiful greeting of the Lord is such it could have surprised that woman. And may be probably too Monica in her many prayers. 'Do not weep. Do not cry. Do not be sorrowful'. The exact contradiction of what she was asked to confront on the way to the burial. 'Do not weep'. How many times the words were said to innocent women in sorrow...and men also? 'Do not weep'. Or its equivalent: 'Do not be afraid. Don't be disturbed. It's I'."

the missionaries' fate and faith

"When you suffer, your faith is the best measure. And transferring this 400 years ago when fourteen men together with their sailors lifted anchor at Acapulco and it took them months and months to reach what now they call the Philippines. When they finally reached the shores within three or five months as the case may be, will there be a storm? It takes a lot of faith and hope for those fourteen men to make the crossing between Acapulco and the Philippines. The dangers were there—lack of food, lack of vitamins. If you read the accounts of the first crossing of Magellan and the account of Pigaffeta, the chronicler, [they said] when they ran out of food, they ate rats, (even leather soaked in water will make good soup), dust, dirt, worms. It is just the same, like a woman in pain. The perspectives are different, but the same kind. Will there be hope? Sometimes we say, alright, suffering is for the woman. Suffering is for the widow. How about those missionaries? Did it not cross their minds dozen of nights, in the open sky, in the galleons: 'will we reach [the place]?' And then through hurricanes and storms: 'will we be safe?'"



THE HOMILIST:

Most. Rev. Gaudencio Rosales, D.D., the 31st Archbishop of Manila

history

"But I should say all of that now is history. Yes, all of that is history. But precisely the future of mission and the future of any nation is based on what has gone before. It is in the heroism, the dedication and holiness of those first Recollect missionaries that San Sebastian, your schools and educational institutions all over the Philippines are founded."

lesson and prayer

"We, this evening, begin that trek in memory. And so we thank God that he has given us this day the grace to begin this quadricentennial celebration with the Eucharist bringing us back to the anxieties starting from Monica who played a big role in the life of your patron, Augustine, and, in the same frame, in different perspective applied to your first missionaries. They give us a lesson. Brothers and sisters, they give us inspiration. Thank God for them. We continue with this Eucharist begging the Lord: let this be the beginning of more grace..." †



The unique characteristics of “The Passion of the Christ”

by FR. LEANDER BARROT, OAR

The film “The Passion of the Christ” by Mel Gibson is one of its kind. Although there have been films about Jesus, yet this one, I believe, offers perspectives significantly unique. The director, in his usual always-battered image even as main actor of his films, ventured into the unimaginably numerous blows and flagellations, the unthinkable degree of pain and sufferings, and the unbelievable humiliations and insults the innocent Jesus must have undergone so as to save humanity. In a way, it could be said that the director did not spare even the “Son of Man” from being brutalized.

How much Passion was there in “The Passion of the Christ”?

Not too many films about Jesus dared to depict so humanly the “suffering servant”-image of Jesus. Sometimes, we might think the brutality was excessive; however, it could equally be true that *kulang pa nga iyon* [it’s still wanting]. Those who saw the film actually shriveled at the seemingly never-ending buffets and blows; we were pained at the insistent hurling of insults and mockeries against Jesus starting from his arrest at the Garden of Gethsemane, the flagellations at the pillar, the via crucis, until his arrival at Calvary, the place of crucifixion. We were shocked to think how the director

could have wildly imagined so gory a scene for the Lord.

On second thought, it is equally possible that the pains, the sufferings, and the humiliations might have even been more brutal, more morbid, and more deeply inhuman than as presented. For after all, Jesus was to pay a great price for having decided to obey his Father’s will. A price so costly, as the devil said at the beginning of the film.

In this sense, the film breaks the usual “religious piety” in favor of the divine by portraying creatively and imaginatively the possible brutality, unimaginable pain, and too many lacerations Jesus had to suffer in order to save humanity.

These tragic imageries were to make us realize how

grave it was for Christ to save sinful humanity. In effect, the film invites us to realize our indebtedness (*utang na loob*) to the Lord.

***The Passion and Death of Christ,
a proclamation of His whole Life and Preaching***

Another uniqueness of the film is its seeming insistence that the last twelve hours of Jesus' pain and suffering were not distinct and different nor separated and truncated from the three years of Jesus' life and ministry. The film, faithful to its title, "The Passion of the Christ," has largely dealt with the last twelve hours of Jesus and finally his crucifixion. However, the same film proclaims a truth not often appreciated by all. This truth is the unity of the life of Jesus — what He taught and lived for, He died for.

By means of flashbacks, the film truthfully proclaims

such scene mentioned in the gospel. However, this imaginative scene occasioned the recall of Jesus' teachings about love for the sinner and hatred for the sin. The flashback was the laying down of stones intended to be hurled against the woman caught in adultery (Jn 8:1-11).

Just before He reached Calvary, the place of crucifixion, the flashback scene was Jesus' teaching about love of enemies. We hear Jesus telling his disciples: "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Mt 5:44; Lk 6:27). If you only love those who love you what merit is there in that.

When Jesus, being helped by Simon of Cyrene, finally arrived at the hill of crucifixion, another flashback scene was presented. This time the parable of the Good Shepherd: "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (Jn 10:11). "No one takes it from

*"By means
of flashbacks,
the film truthfully
proclaims that the last
twelve hours
of passion, ending
with his death,
was indeed
the summary
and affirmation
of what Jesus preached
and believed
in his lifetime."*



that the last twelve hours of passion, ending with his death, was indeed the summary and affirmation of what Jesus preached and believed in his lifetime.

Allow me to recall some of the scenes and their flashbacks. As Jesus was being brutally whipped by the Roman soldiers, the flashback was the washing of the feet of his disciples. In the flashback, Jesus spoke to his disciples saying, "Remember that no servant is greater than his Master; if they persecuted me they will persecute you" (Jn 15:20). A solemn reminder for his apostles!

After the flagellation, Mary the mother of Jesus together with probably "the woman-caught-in-adultery-turned-disciple" were wiping out the blood. There is no

me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father" (Jn 10:18). A clear proclamation that Jesus was not a mere political victim. He lays his life freely for us.

There are still other flashbacks interspersed within the passion story. These flashbacks were intended to be seen and interpreted within the whole story. Most of these were the teachings of Jesus during his public ministry.

Throughout the crucifixion scene the flashbacks were about the Last Supper and consequently the institution of the greatest of all sacraments, the Holy Eucharist. Towards the last part of the movie, then,

was an intended theological crescendo. Graphically, the movie portrays the unity, the one-ness, and the continuity of the Last Supper, the Holy Eucharist and the Crucifixion. The Last Supper, as flashback, points towards the Crucifixion, and the Crucifixion actualizes the promises of the Last Supper. And all these, today, we commemorate in the Holy Eucharist.

Final Words

Surely the director and his crew did a lot of filling-in of the gaps, for indeed, the gospel narratives did not intend a detailed narrative of what had happened within those twelve hours. In their pious attempt to fill-in the gaps they have imaginatively taught us the truths about the life of Jesus: "The Passion of the Christ" was the fulfillment of his whole ministry; "The Passion of the Christ" was a proclamation of the truthfulness of his teaching and preaching; "The Passion of the Christ" was the affirmation of what Jesus believed in. Indeed, a life that is totally given up for humanity and offered back to God. †



COME FOLLOW ME!

in the Recollect way of life!

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CORRECTION PLEASE!

A Church historian, PROF. EMMANUEL LUIS ROMANILLOS (earomanillos@up.edu.ph) rectifies Ms. BAMBI HARPER's conjecture in her *Philippine Daily Inquirer* column of 3 April 2004 that may have resulted in an erroneous impression on the Augustinian Recollect priests. Prof. Romanillos says:

The following is just one of the countless proofs that the Augustinian Recollects have never forgotten the generosity and philanthropy of their benefactor Don Bernardino del Castillo. His name is never left unmentioned in Recollect history when the origins of San Nicholas church and San Sebastian Basilica are narrated. See for example, my book ***The Augustinian Recollects in the Philippines. Hagiography and History*** (2001) pages 170, 178.

This is the gold-plated plaque at the left of the entrance of San Sebastian Convent, Plaza del Carmen, Quiapo, Manila:

IN MEMORIAM

La Orden de Recoletos de San Agustin dedica este convento-colegio a la memoria de D. Bernardino del Castillo y de su esposa Dña Maria Enriquez, los cuales costearon la construccion del convento e Iglesia de San Nicolas en Intramuros de Manila en 1608, y la donaron ese solar de Calumpang, en que se erigio el primer convento a dedicado a San Sebastian en 16 de febrero de 1621.

Manila, 1949-1952

Translation:

The Order of the Recollects of Saint Augustine dedicates this convent-college to the memory of Don Bernardino del Castillo and his wife Doña Maria Enriquez who defrayed the expenses of the construction of the convent and church of San Nicholas in Intramuros, Manila in 1608, and donated this lot in Calumpang where the first convent dedicated to San Sebastian was erected on 16 February 1621.

Manila, 1949-1952

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Resurrection as God's love letter

by FR. MARK RENACIA, OAR
(Easter Vigil 2004, Baguio City)

Tonight is the night of all nights; this vigil we are celebrating is the Vigil of all vigils, because here we are commemorating the most important event in the History of our Salvation, i.e. the resurrection of the Lord; His rising to new life; His Passover from death to life!

As I was reflecting on today's Gospel, it seemed to me that the narration of the event of the resurrection of the Lord was, in fact, God's love letter for all of us. Even the characters--Mary Magdalene, Mary, the mother of James, and Salome--were caught in surprise... the Lord has risen! Too good to be true! And I could not hold but to recall the immortal line that flows from the love story of Florante and Laura which I memorized in high school...

*'O pag-ibig na makapangyarihan,
Pag-ikaw ang pumasok sa puso ninuman
Hahamakin ang lahat masunod ka lamang...'*

When a person is in love, what does he usually do? When a young man falls in love with a woman, he sometimes does what seems to be unreasonable, even the most 'foolish thing', just to win the heart of the beloved... And we call this person 'victim of love'. Blaise Pascal, a philosopher, upon observing the inconsistencies and the seeming foolishness of lovers could only comment in this way: *'Love has reason that reason cannot understand'*. But who could ever be the first victim of love? Could it not be the One who is the author of love itself? For indeed God's all-out involvement in saving us seems to be an utter foolishness in the sight of men, as the Psalmist aptly says: *'Lord what is man that you care for him, mortal man who is only a breath?'*

When I continued my reflection on God's love for us, three things came into my mind; first was a Thorn bird. This is a kind of bird that could sing very beautifully as the legendary *'Ibong Adarna'*. But she sings only once in her life-time, and that is when she is about to die. When she feels that her days come to a close, she will look for her favorite branch and on this branch she'll sing her favorite song, her masterpiece up to her last breath. She may die, but her memory will continue to live in the hearts of those who hear the melody of her song. The second thing that came into my mind was the priest, my fellow priests! These people are not only



good looking, but they are also bright and talented. They are professionals with master's degree. If they are employed perhaps they can earn millions. But they were in love with God, and for the sake of this love they set aside all personal and worldly ambitions just to stay close with the Master. They have become fools of Christ and for Christ! And the third thing that came into my mind was no less than Christ Himself. Jesus Christ was like the Thorn bird with only one song to sing- the song of His love; the song of His life which He generously offered for the salvation of the whole world!

In the person of our Lord, we can say that God was indeed the first victim of love. He left behind the grandeur of His Kingdom, the glory of Heaven, just to accompany us in our sufferings and pains, and finally offered His

own life on the cross...the cross which according to St. Paul, is God's madness... *'The cross is God's Madness! It is God's foolishness... but His foolishness is wiser than any human wisdom'.*

While hanging on the cross, God seems to tell us that love is not love at all until it is given with so much sacrifice; love is not love at all until it is tested with so much pain and suffering; love is not love at all, until the one who loves dies for the beloved. And yet the beauty of loving lies on the fact that in the end, love prevails; love wins; love conquers all; love generates life in our Lord Jesus Christ! And this is the true meaning of Easter! Christ is alive and in Him we hope to live forever!

We often hear from homilies that we are saved because Christ died for us. I tell you that is only half of the whole truth. The other half is the fact that He had risen from the dead. Because if death on the cross was the end of everything, then how could Jesus Christ save you and me? Could a dead man five feet below the ground save us from death? This is what St. Paul meant when he told the people of Corinth: *'If Christ had not risen from the dead, then your faith is in vain! Your faith is empty and your suffering for the sake of His name is utterly useless. Then, you are still in your sins and those who have fallen asleep in Christ are the deadest of the dead!'* Then he continued: *'But Christ*

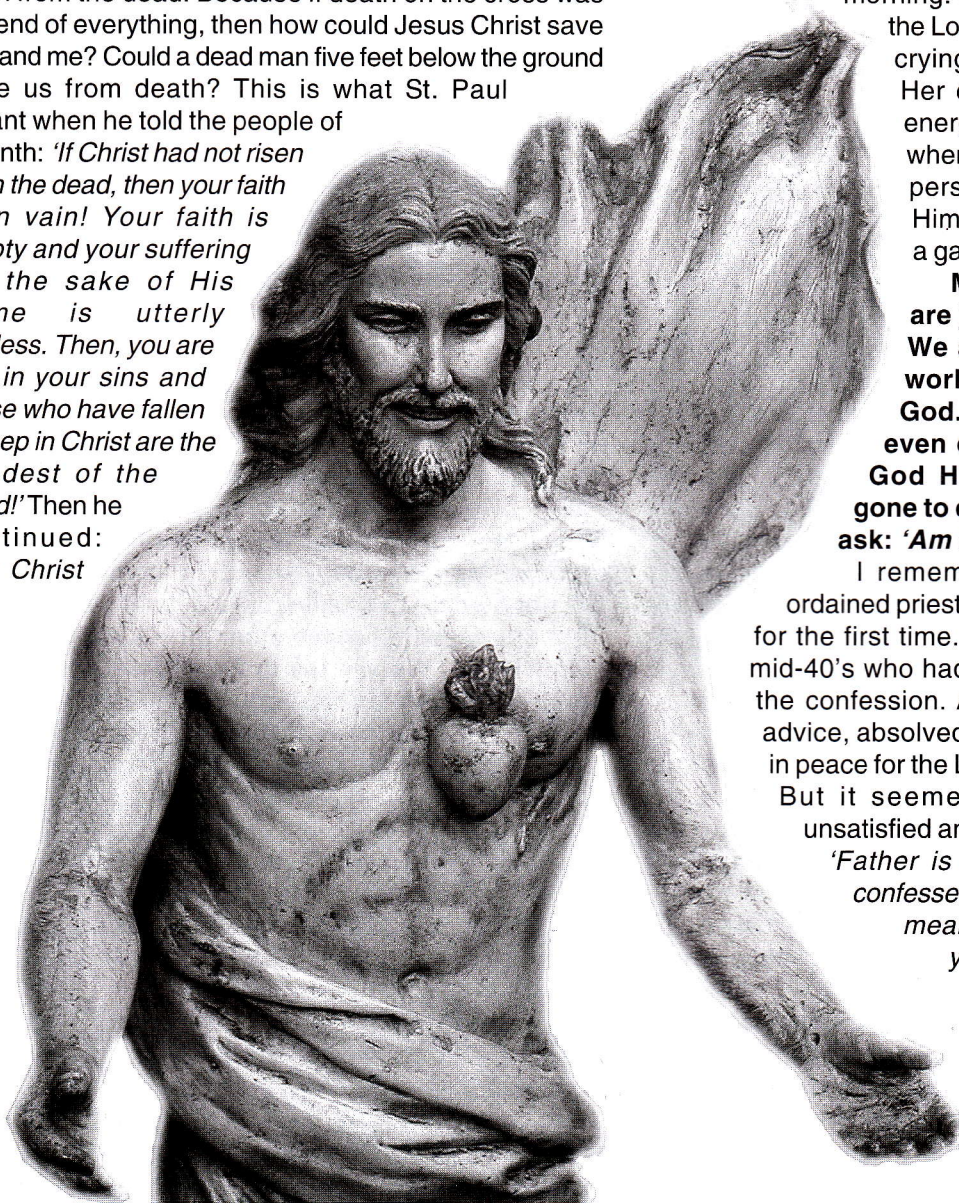
has risen and we are His witnesses. Death was the last enemy to be destroyed! And Jesus our savior destroyed death once and for all by dying on the cross and rising to new life.'

This is the Good news of Easter...because Christ has risen, death has no more power over us; because Christ has risen, death is not anymore a return to nothingness; because Christ has risen, our life here on earth is now like a seed that is buried in the ground and die, so that it would grow and become a new grown plant. Christ died and rose from the dead so that we too after our own death may live with him forever. This is the meaning of Easter; this is the joy that Easter brings.

But there are things in our life that hinder us from fully savoring the true spirit of Easter. In the Gospel, Mary Magdalene encountered the Lord very early in the morning. But she failed to recognize the Lord. All the while she had been crying over the death of the Lord. Her eyes were bulging and her energy was spent in weeping. So when the Lord appeared to her in person, she failed to recognize Him. She has mistaken Him for a gardener.

Many times in our life, we are just like Mary Magdalene. We allow the troubles of this world to darken our vision of God. There are times when we even doubted the goodness of God Himself. Many of us had gone to confession and yet we still ask: *'Am I really forgiven?'*

I remember when I was a newly ordained priest and I sat in the confessional for the first time. There was this man in his mid-40's who had been so emotional during the confession. Anyway, I gave him a little advice, absolved his sins, and told him to go in peace for the Lord has forgiven all his sins. But it seemed that the man was so unsatisfied and restless. Then he told me: *'Father is that all? After I sinned, I confessed, and now I'm forgiven? You mean it was that easy? Father you're so young! Are you sure I am forgiven by God?'* I was a bit surprise by his reaction but with firm conviction I told him: *'Yes, God has forgiven you and it is that easy. Not because you worked hard for it, not because you*



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shed so much tears over it, but because Christ our Savior died for it! God forgave your sins not because you deserve it, but because He loves you great enough that it costs the life of His only Son. He paid your debts. Now it is your turn to forgive your own self.'

Many times God has already forgiven us, but it is we who find it difficult to forgive our own selves because we allow sin to cloud our vision; we fail to see the grace of God flowing in superabundance. As St. Paul says: 'Where sin abounds, grace abounds all the more!'

The second thing that hinders us from enjoying the peace of Easter is that at times we look for the Lord in an empty tomb. Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome, failed to see the resurrected Christ because they fixed their gaze at the empty tomb. The angel of the Lord had to reprimand them: 'Why should you look the living from among the dead; He's not here, He has been raised!'

At times in our life we fail to encounter the risen Christ because we look for Him in the tombs of our past rather than to discover Him in the events of our present life. We tend to focus our gaze on the trauma of the past, on the abuses we've made, on our sins and failures, and this is what hinders us from growing gracefully as

Christians.

We need to rise from our fixation on the tomb of our past. The Lord was buried there but now He is risen. If we keep on looking back at the tomb of our sinfulness, at our failures, at the sins of our past, then like Mary Magdalene and her companions, we will not be able to see the Lord even if He stands in front of us, even if at the moment He walks side by side with us. We will fail to fully live our life in the grace-filled events of the present moment.

The Lord is not in the past...the Lord is alive and He is with us at this very moment. As we celebrate this Easter vigil feel this reality, savor the sweetness of this truth! The risen Lord is just beside you, in front of you, behind you, on top of you, under you and inside you. He said in the Gospel: 'Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in midst of them!' We have a God who can not lie. He is alive and He is in the midst of us! Dear friends, encounter the risen Lord at this very moment in your life!

St. Augustine once exclaimed: 'We are an Easter people and alleluia is our song!' And if God were to have a voice and if He were to sing today, *Alleluia* will also be His song! For as St. Irenaeus would say: 'The glory of God is man fully alive!'

God bless and happy Easter! †

Highlights



24 Recollects joined the **First National Congress of the Clergy** convened last July 5-9, 2004 at the World Trade Center in Pasay City, Metro Manila. "A Renewed Clergy, A Renewed Church, A Renewed Country" served as the theme of the congress.

Mo. Vega María López de Davalillo, OAR (center), Mother Federal of the OAR nuns came over in mid-September 2004 and paid a visit to the Provincialate community. She also visited the Recollect nuns in their monastery in Tangub, Bacolod City.



Nagbi-biyaheng Recoletos: **EZMBOYS in Palawan**

El Nido, PALAWAN –From September 12 to 17, 2004, twelve young religious of the Province of St. Ezekiel Moreno, who call themselves the "EZMBOYS", gathered here for "renewal and re-visit." Among the objectives of the weeklong "journey" were: to foment *renewal* among young religious; to rekindle our missionary spirit; to re-establish a 'Support Group'; and to solicit ideas/ concerns for the *Recoletos* 400 celebrations.

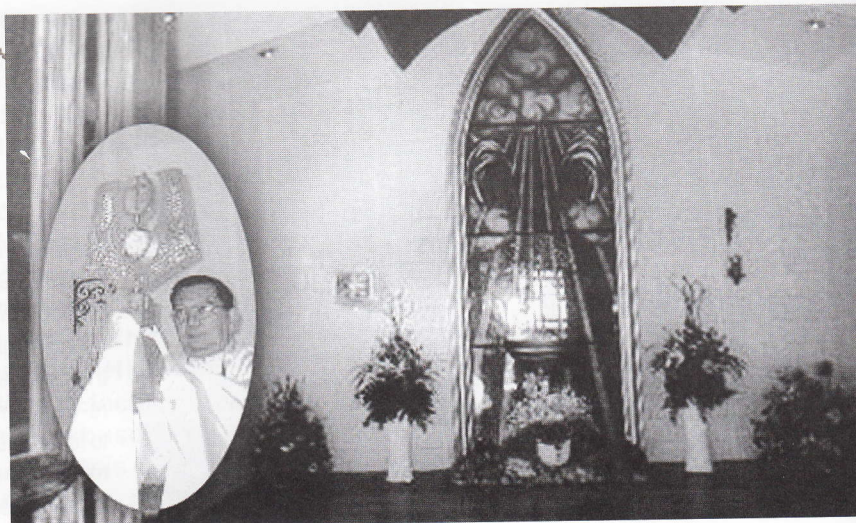
Highlights

The 53rd General Chapter of the OAR kicked off last 18 October 2004. It was held at Nostra Signora Madre della Misericordia Retreat House in Rome, Italy. Four Filipinos were among the forty capitular delegates Order-wide: Fr. René Paglinawan, a general councilor, and 3 delegates from the Province of St. Ezekiel Moreno: Frs. Lauro Larlar, Regino Bangcaya, and Constantino Real.



Semestral Retreat (Oct. 18-23, 2004) held at Talavera House of Prayer in Cebu City. Most. Rev. Rolando J. Tria-Tirona, OCD, D.D., Bishop of Infanta (Quezon) was the retreat master. More than forty religious "came, saw and *were* conquered"...

Blessing of the new Adoration chapel of Our Lady of Consolation Parish (Mira-Nila, Quezon City) on 24 October 2004 by Most Rev. Jesse Mercado, D.D., Bishop of Parañaque (inset).





5th Formands' Convention. Held at Casiciaco Recoletos Seminary, Baguio City last October 25 to 29, 2004. Around 120 seminarians from four seminaries of the province participated in the said biennial gathering. The guiding theme was: "Adequacy of Recollect formation for missionary apostolate".

Recoletos 400:
History, Legacy and Culture
A National Historical Conference

December 3-4, 2004
San Sebastian College - Recoletos Auditorium
Manila, Philippines

Continuing OAR Presence in the Philippines and Asia

P R O G R A M

December 3, 2004 (Friday)

"Augustinian Recollect History and Evangelization of the Philippines"

Morning

1 Topic: The Augustinian Recollect Missions: Arrival in the Philippines and Spread of its Missionary Activities

Speaker: Rev. Fr. Angel Martínez Cuesta, OAR
Reactor: Mr. Ambeth Ocampo

2 Topic: The Augustinian Recollects in Mindanao

Speaker: Rev. Fr. Joesilo Amalla
Reactor: Mr. Rene Salvania

Open Forum

Afternoon

3 Topic: The First Indio Recollects and Recollect Beatas

Speaker: Dr. Luciano P.R. Santiago
Reactor: Rev. Fr. Rolando de la Rosa, OP

4 Topic: Jurisdictional Conflicts between the Recollects and Jesuits (in Mindanao)

Speaker: Rev. Fr. José Arcilla, SJ
Reactor: Prof. Emmanuel Luis A. Romanillos

Open Forum

December 4, 2004 (Saturday)

"Legacy and Contribution to the Filipino Nation"

Morning

5 Topic: The Augustinian Recollects from a Layperson's View Point

Speaker: Mrs. Bambi Harper
Reactor: Dra. Carmen Eturna, Ph.D.

6 Topic: Augustinian Recollects' Contribution to Arts and Culture

Speaker: Prof. Emmanuel Luis A. Romanillos
Reactor: Mrs. Alexandra Inigo Chua

Open Forum

Afternoon

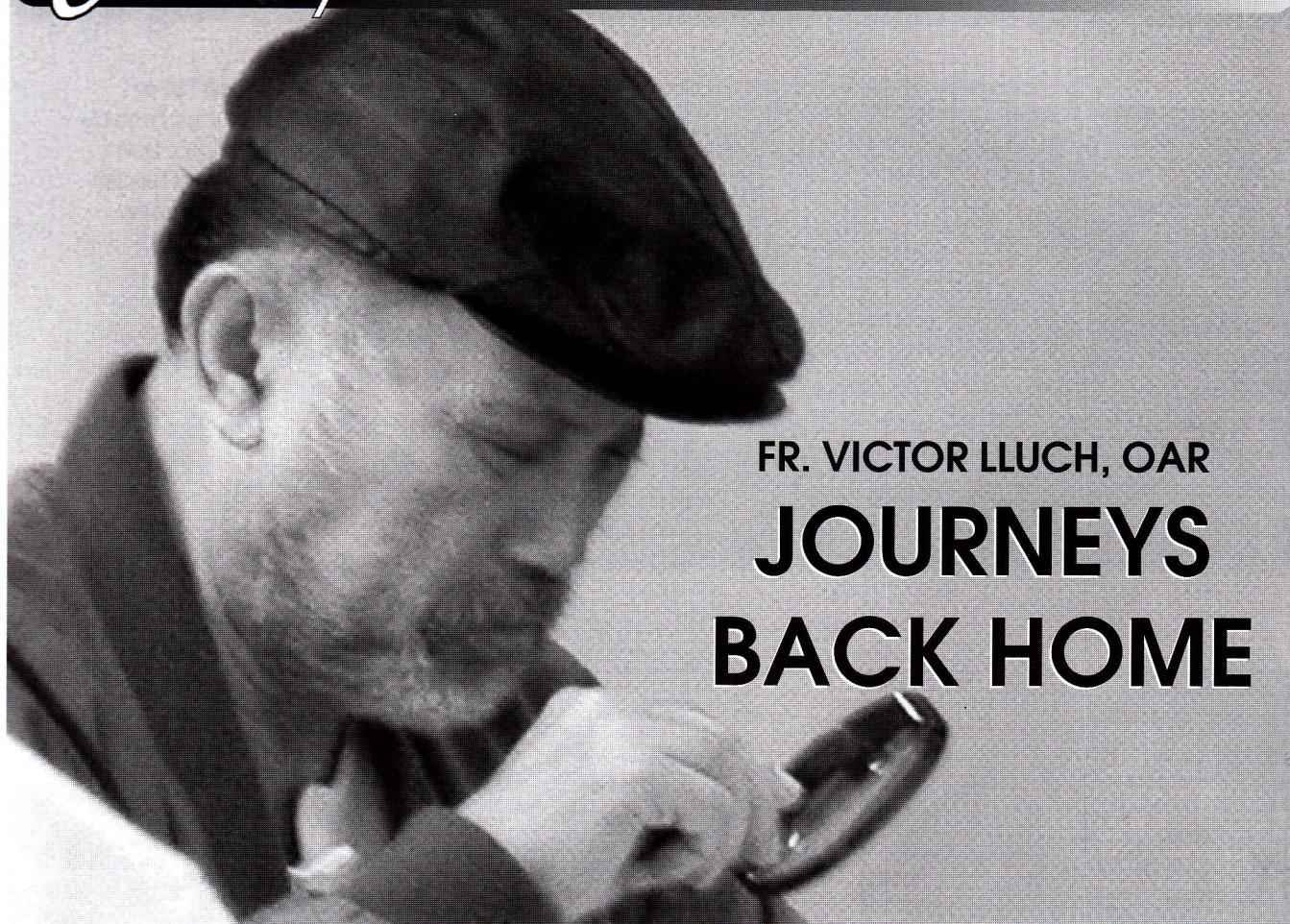
7 Topic: The Augustinian Recollect Sisters: The Spirituality of the Beaterio de San Sebastian

Speaker: Rev. Fr. Emilio Edgardo Quilatan, OAR
Reactor: An Augustinian Recollect Sister

8 Topic: Augustinian Recollects' Contribution to Engineering and Architecture

Speaker: Prof. Regalado Trota José
Reactor: Rev. Fr. Pedro Galende, OSA

Open Forum



FR. VICTOR LLUCH, OAR
**JOURNEYS
 BACK HOME**

We are very sad to announce the death of **FR. VICTOR JOSE LEONAR LLUCH, OAR**, on June 18, 2004 at St. Luke's Hospital, Quezon City. He was 69 years old. The immediate cause of his death was cardiopulmonary arrest secondary to multi-organ failure. He has been suffering from diabetes for some time now. He received the last sacraments.

While he was convalescing in the hospital he expressed his appreciation to everyone who visited him and for the prayers said in his behalf. His siblings and close relatives together with his brothers in the religious life were with him in his last moments. For the last two months he has been in the hospital. Prayers and masses were offered for his sake that his suffering might not be too much for him to bear. He bore his sufferings in God's Spirit.

Fr. Victor was born in Iligan City to Victor Taborra Lluich and Teodora Nadora, on May 1, 1935. He finished elementary education at St. Michael's Academy in 1950, Iligan City. He entered the High School Seminary in San Carlos City (Colegio De Santo Tomas – Recoletos) and graduated in 1956. From there he went to the college seminary of San Jose in Quezon City and was popular among his classmates (most of whom are bishops now)

for his intelligence and wit. He finished philosophy in 1960. He made his simple profession on July 5, 1961 in Monteagudo, Spain and proceeded to theology in Marcilla, Navarra, Spain finishing in 1965. While in theology, he made his solemn profession of vows on July 5, 1964. He was ordained to the priesthood on July 18, 1965.

Upon his return to the Philippines he was assigned to the University of San Jose – Recoletos (then Colegio de San Jose – Recoletos) as Dean of Student Affairs and Dean of Religious Education. In 1967 he became the Vice President of the same school until 1969. In 1970 he was appointed as the first Filipino president of the University. While he made a great impact on the students as well as the friars of the Cebu community, he was also known as the "Father of the Dramatics Guild" in the university which he founded in 1965. He

successfully directed numerous theatrical plays in the school. When his term ended in 1973 he was transferred to Casiciaco Recoletos Seminary (formerly Seminario Mayor – Recoletos) in Baguio as a formator and professor. He was remembered for forming the , a cultural group, thus making the seminary well-known throughout Baguio for its quality and dynamic music and shows. From 1974-1979 he was sent to New York as a student and assistant parish priest in St. Roch's Parish.

He became the Prior and President of San Sebastian College – Recoletos, Cavite City from 1979-1982. From then on his heart belonged to Cavite. Even when he was assigned somewhere else, he always “looked with love” on San Sebastian College, Cavite. He became President of San Sebastian College, Manila from 1982-1988. While attending to his chores in the school, he also served as a vicarial councilor (1979-1988) for many years. He became the first Filipino Vicar Provincial in 1988. He was elected for a second term (1991-1994). Many even say he would have continued as Vicar if not for the provision in our Constitutions that prohibits the same person to be elected for a third consecutive term.

Then in 1994-1997 he went back to the “apple of his eye”, the community of San Sebastian, Cavite, as prior and President. He was a vicarial councilor during the same period. In 1997, he was elected as the Vicar Provincial once more and was a delegate to the General



Chapter in 1998. This was the historic General Chapter (1998) that created the new Province of St. Ezekiel Moreno of which Fr. Lluch was elevated as its First Prior Provincial. He was the actual Prior Provincial when the first Provincial Chapter in November 1999 was held. It was unfortunate that he was not able to attend this very significant event because he had to undergo a heart bypass operation.

His health started to deteriorate after this operation but he was still very active in communitarian activities, and visible in celebrations. He was assigned as Prior of Cavite from 1999-2003. He attended the Second Provincial Chapter held in November 2003, after which he was assigned in Cavite. But due to his faltering health he was not given much responsibilities.

Fr. Lluch was known to be a great and energetic fighter. He is probably the most “colorful” religious that the Philippine Recollects have ever produced. He was a father to all and used to pamper those who assist him. Even while on the hospital bed he was following up the progress of the projects in Cavite. He was always where the action was and showed a very competitive spirit. Fr. Lluch will surely be remembered for his influence on what the Filipino Recollects are now at present.

May St. Ezekiel, our patron saint, show Fr. Victor the way to the Father. And may the Mother of Consolation keep him in her protection as he meets the Creator.†

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pointless points to ponder not

by Fr. Onz, OAR

Here's how to handle a situation where you seem to be in constant conflict with a brother religious in your community:

1. At all times remain humble and patient.
2. Never give in to anger and resentment or violent reaction.
3. Constantly pray for your brother—that he gets transferred and thus stays out of your sight.
4. Always remember that the Lord listens to the constant prayer of the humble and the patient.

Heard of a religious who was never happy in all the twenty chain of religious houses where he was assigned because he was relentlessly trapped into believing that anywhere else is better than where he is?

Be cautious but not overly suspicious of an overly active and busy religious. Coming face to face with self can be so distressing that one avoids self-confrontation in a flurry of activities.

Fill the convent with more entertainment stuff and you distract the inner stillness of the members. A cluttered, stuff-filled convent is hardly a place to practice an awareness that few things in life are important.

Be kind to unkind religious for they need it most.

Initiate change simply by irate commands and you turn religious into passive and angry observers.

It is said that noble religious talk about ideas; mean religious talk about events and nil religious talk about brother religious.





1606 – 2006

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P R A Y E R

for the 400th Anniversary of Recollect Presence in the Philippines and Asia

LORD, OUR GOD,
You inspired the Augustinian Recollects
to spread your Word in these islands
of the Philippines and Asia.

We thank you for the courage and generosity
of our first missionaries who labored,
fought and died for the uplift of Filipinos
as a people of God and as a nation,
building thus a truly Catholic culture
in our country.

We rejoice that in these 400 years
You have continually protected us
in times of difficulties, strengthened us
in moments of crises, and enlightened us
in our uncertainties.

We trust that your abiding love will constantly
make us witnesses of communitarian ideals,
guide us to faithfully serve Mother Church
in this part of the world, and lead us to
transform
our society through interiority and
committed presence.

Lord, hear our prayers,
and inspire us once again
to strive at continuing OAR presence
in the Philippines and Asia,
through the loving intercessions of
Our Lady of Consolation,
our mother and model,
St. Augustine, our Father,
St. Nicholas of Tolentine, our protector, and
St. Ezekiel Moreno, our patron.

We ask this through your Jesus Christ,
Your Son, our Lord, in union with the
Holy Spirit, now and forever.
AMEN.

