



'Live Jesus in our hearts forever'

Christian Brothers

St Francis Xavier Province
(Queensland and Northern Territory)

Province Leadership Team

26 September 2005

Dear Brothers

Philippines

The Inter-province Leadership Committee (ILC) has announced the new community to go to the Philippines next year. The members are: Neil Langan, Peter Hardiman, John Moodie and Rod Ellyard (CL). The site of this foundation will be in the Diocese of Kabankalan on Negros Island, Central Philippines. It is the hope of the ILC that a second community will open in the Diocese of Maasin soon afterwards, perhaps by 2008.

In June 2004, Philip Pinto wrote to Province Leaders as follows:

"The challenge for us today is to focus our energies in new and greater areas of need. The need that saw us setting up our schools in many of our current ministry sites is now being adequately met by others, in many instances by the State itself.

"The work being done by the National Schools Governance Committee is preparing our lay colleagues to carry the mantle hitherto worn by our Brothers. This is preparing for the future and allowing it to be born even now. This preparation frees our Brothers for new ministries that must be undertaken at this time in our history.

"For this reason I now invite you, with the other Province and Region Leaders in Oceania to consider opening a new mission site in Asia.

"I believe that this new focus for our mission in Oceania will facilitate that change of heart that lies at the centre of restructuring. I pray that it will give us new energy because it will force us to move away from tried and tested roads and onto new paths. It will force us to turn more to God as the mover and shaper of hearts. It will enable us to interact with poor people in another culture, an interaction that will allow us to see a new face of God. I strongly believe that we ourselves will be evangelized in the process. It will also allow young Australians, New Zealanders and Papua New Guineans to find an avenue for their generosity and consider joining us on the journey."

For the reasons Philip has stressed, John, Peter, Neil and Rod go to this new project as representatives of our Provinces, indeed, of Oceania. This is certainly not their work alone. If their going does not touch all of us, we will have missed the most important element of Philip's challenge. This project is as much about our change of hearts and minds as it is about theirs. How might this happen? We are all on a journey towards understanding our new direction and how we will achieve it. The Brothers going to the Philippines ask for your support in prayer and in practical ways, ways that will become clearer with time. Those selected for this task will need the partnership of the Edmund Rice Network. How that partnership will unfold is also not yet totally clear, nor are the details of their ministry. It is anticipated these will emerge through 2006.

Philip's initial call was that it should include the norms for Edmund Rice Mission, namely: that it be to the poor, that it have an educational thrust, that it be culturally sensitive, have evangelical potential, both for the Brothers and for the people ministered to, involve collaboration with others to the extent possible, provide potential for self-sufficiency and include simple living accommodation for the Brothers.

Some thoughts that may help us discern how our minds and hearts could be affected might include:

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- Strengthening our understanding of what it means to be in contact with the poor at our doorsteps.
- Prayerful reflection on how to bring about a change of heart in our current circumstances.
- Brothers, other Religious and volunteers prepared to carry on the work begun by Dan Courtney in East Timor.
- The many brothers who over the years have worked and continue to work in Papua New Guinea, Africa, China, Ireland and with our own Indigenous brothers and sisters.
- Brothers and others in ministry with us willing to undertake immersion courses and other renewal programs such as Passover, Karibu, Flare up like Flame and God in the Now.
- Brothers prepared to forego leadership roles in our schools as we hand over management to others.
- Brothers prepared to involve themselves in the challenging and demanding programs for young people at risk eg Centre Education Program and the imminent prospect of opening similar flexi-learning centres.

The new Philippines Community members will gather in Brisbane for a three day community building exercise led by Sr. Marlene Hixon FMM on 16-18 November. Marlene is experienced in leading reflection on entering new cultures and what it means to be involved in cross-cultural ministry. This gathering will give the community an opportunity to share with each other their hopes and dreams and fears, what they have to offer, and what may be factors limiting their ability to be of service. There will be an opportunity too to reflect on formation possibilities within the Philippines, how the Brothers may operate in ministry, possible date of departure, where they will live initially, what practical matters need to be attended to before going, length of commitment, when breaks may be taken and no doubt a host of other considerations.

Steve McLaughlin and Rod Ellyard will make a second visit to The Philippines for a fortnight from 19th November. They will go to both Kabangkalan and Maasin Dioceses and visit a potential site where language and culture programs may be undertaken. This visit was planned for October but the Bishop of Kabangkalan would have been out of the country at that time. Steve and Rod will no doubt carry many questions and instructions from the rest of the community.

Following the Leaders' Meeting with the CLT in Manila from 15-25 January, six Oceania Leaders and Michael Godfrey will also visit the two sites identified by Steve and Rod, Kabangkalan and Maasin. This will enable them to have a sense of what is involved and how to support the Brothers working in this new area of mission for the Congregation.

Live Jesus in our hearts



Br Luke W Quinn cfc
Province Leader
Chair ILC