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PHILIPPINES: Updates from the International Novitiate

Last 1st August 2013 we witnessed the entrance of another batch of Novices at the International Novitiate of Bulacan, Philippines. The Novices are eight in number, four Malawians and four Filipinos. The Malawians are: Alexander Masache, Timothy Banda, Petro Chillumpha, Fortune Gondwe. The Filipinos are: Emil Marlin, Von Ryan Martinez, Jose Rocabo, Eugene Escario. The formation team is composed of Fr. Mario Belotti (Novice Director), Fr. Ernest Akhonya (Socius) and Fr. Sherwin Nunez (Bursar and Administrator). Fr. Mario Belotti is an Italian and a founding Father of the Filipino Delegation (1984-1992). Since then he spent several years studying and doing research in Spirituality and Psychology in the USA and, for 14 years, has been missioning and teaching in Africa. Fr. Ernest Akhonya is the first Kenyan Montfort Father. After his ordination, he specialized in Christian Anthropology in Rome and was, for three years, the superior of the International Scholasticate of Nairobi. Fr. Sherwin Nunez is the only Filipino in the team. He was ordained last April 9, 2013. We feel blessed by the presence of his gifted person and by his skillful services. The team is also enriched by the collaboration of Fr. Franciscus Borgias Trihandoko, an Indonesian confrere who is attending a self-renewal program in the Philippines. The formation program is in progress and seems to register active participation from all the concerned persons. A sincere vote of thanks goes to Fr. Wim Peeters for the commendable work done, under his directorship, since 2010. May the Lord continue to bless him abundantly in his person and in his apostolate.

Bro. Fortune Gondwe, one of the novices, shared: “We are glad to be members of the International Novitiate of Bulacan, Philippines, which started on 1st August this year. We are pleased to have Fr. Mario Belotti as our Novice Master, Fr. Ernest Akhonya as his socius and Fr. Sherwin Nunez as the bursar and administrator of our house. They are offering us wonderful services. We are also happy to have Fr. Franciscus Borgias Trihandoko, who is assisting us in our formation process. We are not only at home with the way we have started, but we also feel quite sure that we are going to benefit a lot from the process. This is also due to a number of factors. Some of them are: a favorable environment for prayer, good relationship among community members, active participation and proper organization. Through community activities we are able to realise our potentials and grow in interior freedom, thereby uniting

ourselves more deeply with God and friends. We are also learning to grow in the Spirit of Montfort, by understanding through his life and writings, the meaning of the Incarnate Wisdom. Furthermore, we are happy with the approach of the program, in the sense that it is helping us to grow physically, spiritually, intellectually and socially. We grow together by affirming the various gifts we see in each other and, through our apostolate, we share our wisdom with the youth of our neighborhood. In short, we are happy that God is leading us through our novitiate process, and we hope this is going to be a wonderful year not only for us but also for the whole Montfort Congregation.”

Fr. Mario Belotti, SMM
Bro. Fortune Gondwe – Novice