



### **Life in the Montfortian International Novitiate, Philippines**

NEW MANILA, Quezon City, Philippines- Nearly three months have elapsed since, on 31 July 2014, we embarked on our journey of initiation to Montfortian Religious Life (Novitiate). This first term has been incarnated with a significant knowledge of our divine vocation in the context of the Company of Mary. With enthusiasm, scrupulousness and thankfulness we have taken on board what we have realized thus far. We are all happy because we have begun reaping the fruits of the activities we have undertaken; this is flamboyantly evident in our lives. Indeed, we feel that our love for God is evermore increasing. Through the Blessed Virgin Mary, we thank God for being with us.

During this period, we have done many things that are helping us to grow both physically and spiritually in relation to our life in the Company of Mary. More specifically we have attended modules offered by the Novice Master (Fr. Mario) and his assistant (Fr. Sherwin), as well as by the “Exodus” program. Some significant modules are: *“Bonding and abiding in love”*, *“Arts and theater”*, *“Liturgy”*, *“Enneagram”*, *“Processing emotions”*, *“Body prayer”*, *“Prayer and temperament”*, *“Empowerment”*, *“Centering prayer”*, *“Living the beatitudes with Mary”*, *“Mission, enculturation and ecology”*. These sessions have opened our hearts and minds. Indeed, with Peter, during the transfiguration (Mt 17:4), we feel like saying: “Lord, it is good for us to be here”.

St. Louis-Marie de Montfort, in TD 228, writes, “They will turn to our Blessed Lady and beg her to obtain for them that great grace which is the foundation of all others, the grace of self-knowledge.” With God’s grace through Mary, the seat of Wisdom, everything we are attending to is helping us to know ourselves better and further know and love God. Prayers, sessions, reading of Montfort’s writings, community life, apostolate, recollections, sports and many other activities are fostering our interior freedom and expanding our growth in the spirit of religious life.

We are four novices, all happy to witness together the love of God manifested in each one of us. Here is a glimpse of our individual feelings. Armel Collantes (from Cebu, Philippines): “I have started enjoying and loving my novitiate process. I am thankful to the Lord, through Mary, for the strength and graces I’ve received to stay focused in formation. I have nothing to be afraid of because the Lord is with me.” Damiano Abraham (from Zomba, Malawi): “Wow! Life is so wonderful here. Each day is bringing along great opportunities for my growth in relationship with God. Generally, life is good and I am progressing well. What a beautiful opportunity for me! Indeed, it is nice to be here.” Bernard Maganga (from Ntcheu, Malawi): “So far, my stay has been ensouled with growth in the love of God. Life is great and I am moving ahead fantastically. Through the Blessed Virgin Mary I thank God for this golden opportunity as well as all who are tirelessly and patiently helping me in this process.” Innocent Mwanoka (from Mangochi,

Malawi): “Well, life feels good thus far, as every moment seems to spring up with fresh life sustaining energy. Through Mary, our beloved Mother, I thank God and all the people through whom this goodness is actualized.”

We are aware that many things await us as we stay in this journey. Therefore, we ask for prayers that our diligence in following the program and our burning desire for holiness – through the initiation to vowed life in the footsteps of St. Louis Marie of Montfort – may continue to grow in us and fully permeate our hearts.

- *Bro. Bernard Maganga, nSMM*