



Central Secretariat for Formation - OCSO -

Monastery of Nuestra Señora de los Ángeles,

December 2020.

Newsletter 27:

*To the Superiors, the Regional Secretaries of the OCSO
and to the brothers and sisters interested in formation.*

RE :

S. Paula, nun of Armenteira and member of formation secretariat

PREM

After the suspension of the PREM (Regional Monastic Studies Program) that we had at Easter because of the confinement, now, within these terrible circumstances that plague the entire world, the students have been able to “meet” again in a virtual way from **October 2 to 27**. This time they did not travel, they each stayed in their monastery, the Covid-19 pandemic that we currently suffer from has disrupted everything, and the PREM was not going to be less. So, as good monks of the 21st century, we have embraced new technologies and thanks to the Zoom platform we have been able to continue developing the curriculum.

The number of students has increased notably, this time we have been 32. The following subjects were taught: **Christology I** (Sr. Rosa Ana Izquierdo, from Saint Bernard of Burgos); **Eucharist** (Fr. Roberto de la Iglesia, from Cardaña); **Psychology I** (Fr. Carlos Gutiérrez, from Sobrado); **Greek Fathers** (Fr. Juan M^a de la Torre, from Oseira) and **Pauline Letters II** (Fr. Ignacio Rojas, from the Faculty of Theology of Granada).

The students appreciated the novelty of taking the course through the Zoom platform. The vast majority of students saw positively using this medium for classes, given the circumstances that surround us. In other words, the vast majority continue to prefer face-to-face courses as they had been done until now. However, the usefulness and ease of use of this platform also made some students propose to use it for some specific content in the middle of the months that elapse between each of the PREM courses.



The mystics of Helfta: the heart of God

In the same week that we celebrate the mystics Saint Gertrude and Saint Mechtild of Helfta, we, the Cistercian communities of Spain, have been able to enjoy some **online classes**, taught by **Father Miguel María Vila** from the monastery of San Isidro de Dueñas. 25 houses were connected, to which the spirituality of Mechtild of Hackeborn has reached us, in a passionate way and with great clarity, as characterizes our brother Miguel María. These explanations help us to commemorate the Helfta nuns in the liturgy and in reality, in a more vivid way and, they impel us to feel part of that feminine flow of the Spirit that incarnated Jesus on a daily basis.

As Father Miguel María has insisted, the experience of the faith of these women was deeply Trinitarian and that is seen very well in the spiritual movement that goes through the journey of this community, since the nuns live immersed in the liturgy, *lectio*, singing, study, transcription of manuscripts, attention to those who call the monastery..., so that, in his time as in ours, the daily monastic evolution is fragmented in a schedule that distributes time of work, prayer, of spiritual reading, of Divine Office, etc..., this organization is the surface of the water, since the sea in the background is continuous prayer. Within that epidermal hourly discontinuity, we immerse ourselves in continuous prayer, in the uninterrupted presence of God, in the intra-Trinitarian movement.

For all these 13th century holy women who embodied the mysteries of Jesus Christ in Helfta -not just the three most prominent, but the entire community- for them, the heart of God occupied a privileged theological place. We are not talking about the heart of Jesus, that devotion will come later and, of course, they were forerunners, but here, you have read correctly, it is the heart of God that is the Source and bellows of the goodness of the Creator; it is book; breath and food; it is rest and above all, to that Heart, I can turn in my poverty, that is to say, in the heart of God I find the *substitute (supply)* for everything that I lack, the heart of God supplies my poverty and mediocrity. "Heart" means the original totality and unity, a word that tries to say, babbling an ineffable mystery and "heart of God" invokes that totality that comes out of itself and spills into our own heart, that love of God that suffocates us, if we live open and not timidly or fearful; if we remain attentive and not scattered or fickle; and finally, if we are awake and not sleepy.

May the intense charism of these Benedictine-Cistercian nuns of the Middle Ages today be the oil that fills our lamp!

To view and / or download the videos of the workshop on Mechtild of Hackeborn: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1mYJ0SBIFGjM2n9KnOVHxFinKSJDA86Vp?usp=sharing>

RAFMA :

Sr. Elisabeth

On going formation in Victoria and Butende

Our sisters and brothers in formation did the **Myers Briggs** given by Sr. **Coltilda Naluggwa** Daughters of Mary Bwanda at the beginning of the year in preparation to go deeper into themselves. She explained this concept of Myers Briggs to those in formation for four days. She gave the historic background how Hippocrates a doctor, discovered the different reactions of people given the same drug and how this intensified his research which led him to conclude that what makes people react differently to same drug, it is because of the four fluids that are in our bodies. These are blood, yellow bile, black bile and slimy fluids from the lungs. She explained, the doctor observed that when there is too much of those fluids or imbalance brings the different reactions of personalities. In brief this was a personal journey of knowing oneself and they still work and continue to discover more hidden aspects that help them live their monastic vocation in a more open and joyful way.

This was followed by the **Enneagram** for five days by the same tutor and she explained to them how a person is like a circle, in other words whole, full and complete. This was to help them discover more about their person and others. She explained the three centers Head, Heart and Gut and the associated emotions fear, love and anger. We have seen some fruits from their discoveries and growth and we appreciate the time given them for this program.

Sister Coltilda gave them a two days' **workshop** to back up the two above **on Team building**. This was at the beginning of September 2020. She gave an introduction using this maxim, "you are because I am. I am because you are." The Maxim points out that the individual can only survive, achieve complementarity process in life; physically and mentally solve problems worthwhile by interacting with others but not being alone.

In the dynamics of team building there is what she called group interactions. These interactions may appear simple, but they are not. They are complex social processes and they affect actions and out comes, she explained. She continued to explain individuals have an impact on groups just as groups on individuals. Therefore keeping track of communication pattern is a demanding job. The nature of this communication is crucial to comprehend what is happening in the group. She gave two examples and I mention one for our clarification: A member putting on a sweater when it is so hot. This can be handled she explained, if the group feels comfortable with the individual, but if the group is not free to talk about it, it will show signs of this kind: restlessness, resistance, silent aggression, open hostility and lack of participation etc. In this there is what she called testing of the sincerity of members and the integrity of each member is a stepping stone in the process of the group.

Dynamics two is a question. What can I do in the group to get the best of it? This is a call to get to know oneself in other words self-discovery. In the third dynamics there are stages of team building; group structures, forming, conflicting or storming, cohesion, interdependency and adjourning. In the fourth category is what she called skills for team / community living. Here members start to feel a sense of belonging, transparency, flexible, encouraging and supportive etc.

Last but not least an **E-P-I-C**. E- Stands for **E**xperiential, P- **P**articipatory, I- **I**mage-driven C- **C**onected. Which means it is not just meeting people but having an experience of being with people, participating in whatever is going on, not just words but actually doing it and then from individual to individual in community.

She made this conclusion; people hunger for connectedness, for communities of choice, people go to clubs, associations, and institutes in order to meet other people not blood or nation, but a community of choice.



September has been rather a busy and fruitful month for our brothers and sisters in formation; they also had an intensive three days' **workshop** with **Fr. Kyeyune Joseph** of the congregation of the Apostles of Jesus, together with their formators. He explained and summarized the document of ***New Wine in New Wine Skins***. This document focuses on the journey consecrated life has made in the post-conciliar period and its challenges, it Includes reflections developed during the year of consecrated life, calls us to go forth from our comfort zones in order to reach all the "peripheries" and gives guidelines that are also meant to assess the New wineskins fit to contain the New wine which the Spirit continues to give to the church.

It was noted that these days too were beneficial to the whole community as he made a link between the given texts of the liturgy and the workshop appetizing the day and our thirst for the Word of God which is ever new, creative and full of authority even now. Father also explained the meaning of the word Charisma (see extract attached)



Group photo of the formators and those in formation with Fr. Joseph Kyeyune AJ

As noted earlier in this report there have been several workshops for those of our brothers and sisters in formation in our two monasteries. They also had a six days **seminar on the Prophets** from the 7th to the 12th of September by **Fr. Doctor Hilary Munyaneza** (from St. Mbaaga Major Seminary), and were joined by several members in solemn vows. It was yet another interesting journey made in that week. The focus was more on the prophets in general. It was more detailed and he gave a presentation of all the prophets, their call, ministry and purpose. He made this conclusion, "Prophecy was and is still key in the religious life of the people. Malachi was considered the last of the prophets, along with Haggai and Zechariah. Upon their death, the spirit of prophecy departed from Israel."

We believe and trust that these moments and experiences have and are still helping our brothers and sisters in their search to live out a more joyful monastic life in the community and with the community strengthening their faith and trust in the one who call us on a life journey. We thank God and those who have given us their support to make this happen. All the workshops were held at ***Our Lady of Praise Butende***.

Session at the Monastery O. L. of Mokoto from 15 to 21 October 2020.

Theme: *Crisis, the hour of God*

Fr. Justin

(I offer here a summary of the notes that you can find in the attached file.)

The speaker was Father George (Pallottine). He began the session by specifying the *terms* before developing the theme in two models: **crisis** as a *grace of God* and **conflicts** as an *expression of difference*.

I. Crisis means decision, which invites us to discern about our own existence. It is an opportunity for growth. Discernment on this issue was developed around three realities: the problem, the heart of the crisis, and the combat. Each conference on them was followed by group works.

1. There are various types of **problems**: pathological or psychological, around wounds from the past, lack of availability, between the real self and the ideal self, tension between good and evil.

2. At the **heart of the crisis** we find four elements that allow us to confront the source of it:

- suffering (desire for perfectionism?)
- consciousness of evil (where does it come from?, unrealistic expectations?)
- conversion decision that leads to purifying motivations
- renewed identity, an Easter experience if the crisis is well lived.

The difference between a crisis and a conflict is that the latter is inter-personal, while the former is personal. There is no community life without conflicts, opposition of views.

Wrong attitudes to crises: denying them, freezing them, that they turn fatal, useless or permanent.

3. The crisis is well lived if it trains the person for **combat**. Lack of will can lead to *give up* fighting (settle in mediocrity, automatism). The combat can be *psychological*, internal, of one part of oneself against another. Or, it can be a *spiritual* combat, which God carries in us for us, so that we accept his love. Here the fight is won, by losing. If we allow the Word to put us in crisis, we become obedient.

A fourth conference consisted of seeking to respond to how to go through the crisis. The different *sensitivities* drive us to act, to react in different ways. The means to go through the crisis are sincerity, moral and critical sensitivity, going from sincerity to truth, from the human to the spiritual, and to make a decision.

Some focal points (places) of crisis are vocational discernment, incoherence, impotence, loneliness, fraternal disappointment, false images of oneself and of God.

II. The other three conferences were about **conflicts, in-depth communication** at the service of the community, and a **good communication**.

1. The **conflict** is Natural, Normal, Neutral. It is an expression of a difference. Some conflicts are linked to personal history (generational), the desire for power, personal and community interests, and unity.

To resolve these conflicts, it can be useful to regroup them in some main axes: values, realization of values, fraternal love, relationship with the outside, adaptation of wrong strategies (formation of groups, suppression of feelings, open confrontation, resignation, generalization, double messages, seek the intervention of a greater personality, loss of confidence).

Possible attitudes towards resolution: avoidance, domination, sacrifice, compromise solution, collaboration (ideal). Some propose the 6 "D" rule: Decide to deal with the problem together, Define the situation, Develop solutions flexibly, Discover the best solution without attacking, Design an implementation plan, Discern after a while if it was satisfactory.

2. **True communication** is an exchange of gifts. This is not easy because of childhood experiences, especially those related to fear. Our fears are the fruit of the past projected to the present, and to the future. So you protect yourself with masks ("conciliator", "critic", "comedian", "organizer").

Some laws of communication:

everything is communication, even silence. It can be verbal or non-verbal, conscious or unconscious.

all communication involves *content* and a *relationship* in which the other has to be perceived (in reality, not in imagination) and accepted unconditionally (which is different from approving what he says or does).

all communication is an interaction in which there is: a content and an affective perception; the affective state of the people is revealed and in each statement there is a desire.

Orders, threats, judgments about the other and generalization must be avoided.

3. **Good communication** does not seek a perfect agreement, but aims to respect the difference. It is necessary to want to communicate, open up to the other, have confidence and collaborate. We need to learn to listen, being attentive to the feelings of the other, reformulating what he says. And we have to learn to speak, taking responsibility to the extent that one expresses oneself (in "I" or "us").

The session concluded with a reflection on the identity of monastic belonging. The participants were satisfied, and they want this to happen every year.

CNE, in connection with Récif and REI :

s. Béatrice

We are organizing a **Cistercian Spirituality session** in Aiguebelle, from July 19 to 24, 2021 on the theme: «Thibirine's brothers».

ORIENS :

Fr. Samuel Chua (Tarrawarra) Fr. David Lavich (Spencer/Nasu)

Having consulted the co-presidents of the Oriens Region, Mother Giovanna and Dom Raphael, it was decided that the scheduled **Oriens Formators Meeting** in May, 2021 in Rawaseneng would be cancelled. As everybody knows, there are travel restrictions in various countries due to the COVID-19 virus. Mother Maureen, the scheduled speaker, has also informed that she regrets that for the same reason she will not be available this time.

The secretaries thank Dom Gonzaga and the Rawaseneng community for making their guest house available to the formators and regret having to cancel. It has been suggested considering a meeting in 2022. It is difficult at this time to see how the situation will develop, but the secretaries will look for a reasonable opportunity.