

PRESENZA AGOSTINIANA



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July / October



30 YEARS IN THE PHILIPPINES

Jubilee of our return to Asia

30 YEARS

The Return of the Discalced
Augustinians to Asia

HISTORY OF A JOURNEY

From the first Community
to the Province

30 YEARS OF SERVICE

Our Activities in the
Philippines

Editorial

The anniversary of a presence



Dear Readers,

our Order made its return to Asia in 1994, when the first confreres arrived in Cebu City, Philippines. With the support of the General Curia, the first missionaries embarked on this journey with dedication and spirit of service, laying the foundation for a stable presence of the Order in the region. This return marked a rebirth of the Augustinian mission in Asia, where the Order had already been present centuries ago, bringing with it the charism and spirituality that distinguish Augustinian Discalced life.

Since then, the Order's expansion has reached other Asian lands, extending beyond the Philippines to countries such as Indonesia, Vietnam and India. The Order's expansion in Asia is the result of a strong missionary vocation, which continues to attract young people eager to live Augustinian spirituality in the service of others.

Looking to the future, there are many projects and initiatives in the pipeline. The Order intends to strengthen existing communities, improve formation structures, and respond to new pastoral challenges emerging in each context. The presence in Asia is in full development, and with God's grace, Discalced Augustinians will continue to work to spread the Gospel, promoting peace and hope wherever they are called to serve.

Happy reading.

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Santo Niño and Our Lady of Consolation
Religious House in Cebu City, also known as
Middle Tabor

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30 Years of Presence

The Return to Asia

Fr. Renan Ilustrisimo, oad - @renanilustrisimo



The Discalced Augustinians were present in Vietnam and China more than 300 years ago. On August 2, 1994, our confrere Fr. Luigi Kerschbamer arrived in the Philippines to restart our presence in Asia, finding a home in Banilad, Cebu City, near Tabor Hill, a small hill where the Order has been established is present to this day.

1. Early Years in the Philippines

19
95

Tabor Hill was near San Carlos University of the SVD from which the first candidates for religious and priestly life in our Order arrived.

On July 13, 1995, a dozen candidates were admitted to the **novitiate** at Tabor Hill, where huts had been built to house the Community along with the group of new aspirants, entrusted to the leadership of Fr. Jandir Bergozza who had recently arrived from Brazil, along with Fr. Gilmar Morandim.



1995: Group of first Filipino aspirants

The novitiate year is an important time of discernment for those embracing consecrated life in the Order.

The first group experienced this intense period, dedicated to deepening Augustinian spirituality, charism and common life according to

the spirit of St. Augustine, cultivating prayer, meditation and humility in the light of Filipino culture.

At the end of the novitiate year, the first group of Professed left for Italy to continue **formation and study Theology**.

Current Religious House in Sunny Hills



19
97

The first house where the mission had its beginning was left for another, located on nearby **Sunny Hills**, where the third group of novices began their novitiate year.

In 1997, the **first Discalced Augustinian priests from the Philippines** were ordained: Fr. Libby Daños and Fr. Crisologo Suan who had done their formation in Italy and were returning to the Philippines to collaborate with our presence in Cebu City.

The priestly ordination of the first Filipino brothers was an event of great significance for our presence in Asia. This milestone represented the first fruits of years of dedication to spiritual and cultural formation, a sign that the Discalced Augustinian charism had been received with depth and enthusiasm in the Philippines.



Antipolo City Parish



Pasig City Parish

2. Expansion to other islands in the Philippines

In 1998, a piece of land was donated in **Butuan City**, Mindanao Island, and a community was started that would become a center where aspirants could study and complete the Philosophy course before starting the novitiate. The expansion of our presence to other islands in the Philippines was another step of strategic and pastoral importance of the Order in Asia.

19
98

The expansion was made possible by new Filipino vocations and the support of many benefactors, promoting the rootedness and closeness of our charism to the specific cultural and social realities of other islands. This spreading effort was from the beginning a sign of hope and trust in divine Providence.

The expansion also passed through the physical construction of the Central House of the **new Religious Communities**:

- On August 8, 1998, a contract was signed for the construction of the Religious House on Middle Tabor Hill in Cebu City, a large facility intended to house the community and various faithful.
- In 2002, in **Puertobello**, Merida, a new piece of land was donated to our Order, on a small hill with a beautiful view of Ormoc City Bay, where the Novitiate House dedicated to St. Rita would be built.

With God's grace, our Order continued to grow and efforts were subsequently made to find a center in **Manila**, the country's capital. Two Parishes were entrusted to our confreres: San Agustin Parish in Pasig City and Our Lady of Fatima Parish in Antipolo City.

3. Expansion to other countries

20
04

In August 14, 2004, a mission began in Bandung, **Indonesia**, where the Order built a House of Formation and Hospitality on a hill dedicated to St. Joseph. Catholicism and religious life in Indonesia faces many challenges, in a context where Catholics are a minority in a predominantly Muslim country. Despite the difficulties, the Indonesian confreres maintain a strong sense of faith and community, developing initiatives for interreligious dialogue and contributing through works of charity and service to the local community. Their witness represents a significant resource of hope and openness in a multicultural and multireligious environment.

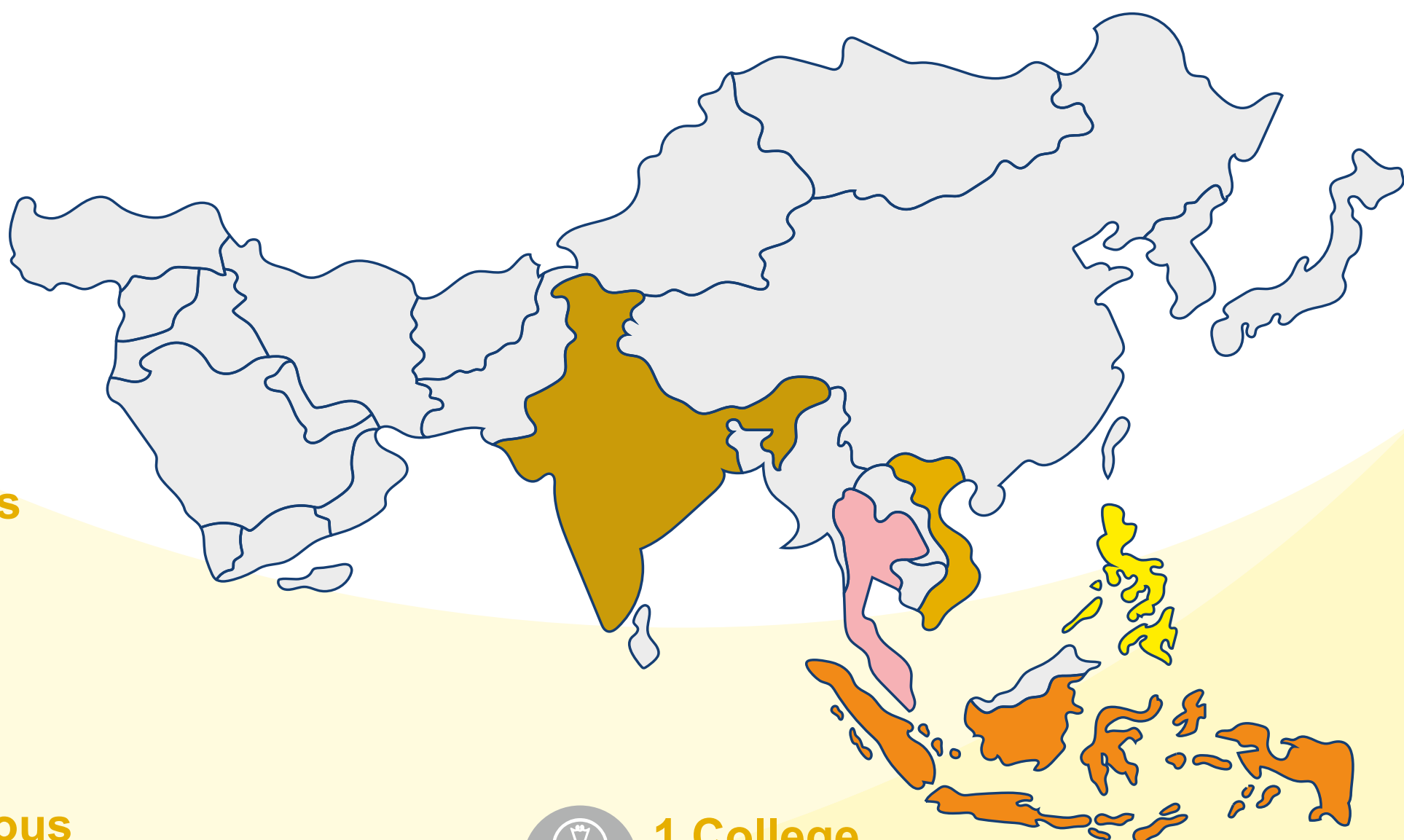
The outcome of the mission in Indonesia enabled a new missionary step: toward **Vietnam**, where the Order had been present three centuries before! May 4, 2008 marked the arrival of the first Discalced Augustinians in Da Nang City, where our Vietnamese confreres to this day give a beautiful witness in a Church that continues to grow, sustained by a resilient faith and a strong dedication to community life.

20
08

20
18

On December 15, 2018, the confreres of Indian origin were welcomed into the Diocese of Nalgonda in **India**, where the Community is responsible for St. Gemma Parish, also starting a House of Formation to welcome aspirants and postulants.





Philippines
Indonesia
Vietnam
India
Thailand

131 Religious
7 nationalities

12 Houses
3 Parishes
2 Spirituality Centers

1 College
1 Institute of Theology

Third Order OAD
Lays OAD
Priestly Fraternity OAD

4. Fruits of a mission

20
24

From 1994 to 2024, 30 years have passed and currently our Order has 12 Houses with 85 priests, 2 religious brothers, 7 solemnly professed, 37 simply professed, 15 novices, 18 postulants and about 50 aspirants. A **multi-ethnic reality** with members of Italian, Filipino, Vietnamese, Indonesian, Indian, Nigerian and Burmese origin.

The numbers help to understand how the spirituality of the Discalced Augustinians has found fertile ground in Asia, offering local communities a faith journey rooted in contemplation, humility and service. This spirituality, centered on soul-searching and a personal and communal relationship with God, responds deeply to the Asian cultural sensibility, which is often oriented toward reflection and the interior life. Through silent prayer, apostolic work and fraternal life, the confreres have formed a **rich cultural and spiritual mosaic in Asia**.

Divine steps have been taken and many more are yet to come to live out our charism, **“Joyfully serving the Most High in spirit of humility.”**



Confreres at Tabor Hill

30 Years of Service

Our Activities in the Philippines

Fr. Jose Conson Jr., oad



The year 2024 marks a significant milestone for the Order of Discalced Augustinians as it celebrates 30 years of service to the people of the Philippines and other countries in Asia. Since its arrival in the Philippines, our Order has been steadfast in its mission to “**bring God closer to the people and bring the people closer to God.**” Guided by our charism, which emphasizes the joy of serving the Most High in a spirit of humility, we have grown in various apostolates, extending God's love and compassion to those we serve.



1994: Mass in a family in Cebu City

1. The Parishes

Our presence in the Philippines began humbly but with a clear vision of service.

Over the past three decades, the Order has expanded its presence and contribution to the community through our

engagement in parish work. We have been entrusted with **a number of Parishes**, including San Agustin Parish in Pasig City, Our Lady of Fatima Parish in San Jose, Antipolo City, and Mission Station Saint Rita in Puertobello, Merida. These Parishes have become vital centers for spiritual growth and community building, fostering a deeper connection between people and their faith.

2. The Schools

Carrying with it the Augustinian identity, education has been a key area of our mission.

Tabor Hill College, initially established as a seminary, has grown to offer basic K-12 education and undergraduate programs such as Music,

Philosophy and Religious Studies. This expansion has allowed us to train not only future religious leaders, but also lay people seeking a quality education rooted in Augustinian values.



Mission Station Saint Rita, Puertobello/Merida

We also run **SMIT (Saint Monica Institute of Theology)** which offers advanced theological training to both religious and lay people. The Institute is in the final stages of its affiliation with the Pontifical University of Santo Tomas, which will acutely enhance its quality and recognition of theological studies in Cebu City, Philippines.



In addition to formal education, our apostolate extends to **university ministry**. We serve as chaplains at the University of Cebu (UC) Banilad and the Lapu-Lapu and Mandaue campuses, as well as many other schools, where we offer spiritual guidance and pastoral care to students, faculty and staff. Our efforts to bring the Church closer to young people in academic settings is in line with our mission to foster a deeper relationship with God in all areas of life.

3. The Chaplaincies

Responding to the needs of the local church where we are located, the Order has become a beacon of hope and compassion through **hospital chaplaincy**. We serve as chaplains at Cebu North General Hospital and Chong Hua Hospital in Cebu, as well as Manuel Santos Hospital, Butuan Doctors Hospital and ACE Hospital in Butuan. Through this ministry, we offer comfort and spiritual care to the sick, their families and healthcare professionals, bringing a healing presence based on faith and humility.

The various chaplaincies play a vital role in the service of Discalced Augustinians, providing spaces for those in search of faith and support to meet and receive spiritual assistance. Through chaplaincies, our confreres can accompany the faithful with confessions, visits and catechesis, embodying our vocation of service and pastoral care, fostering a sense of community and listening, and strengthening the link between religious life and the lay world.



History of a Journey

From the first Community to the Province

Fr. Crisologo Suan, oad



This year (2024) the Order of Discalced Augustinians celebrates its 30 years of presence in the Philippines, a long journey that began with a small religious Community in Cebu City to a Province present in various countries.

1. The First Community

As a religious family we have to thank the Lord that, over time, He has taken us to different places where our presence has spread.

It all began in 1994 when Fr. Luigi Kerschbamer together with the Prior General at the time, Fr. Eugenio Cavallari, arrived in Cebu City to start our mission in Asia, welcomed by the Archbishop and founding a small Religious Community. In the early years the confreres were under the direction of the **General Curia**.

This pioneer community represented an essential starting point for the Order's mission in the region, building the foundation for a progressive growth and spread of our charism.

From the beginning, our presence attracted young vocations and the cooperation of many benefactors and friends, a sign of divine Providence that has always assisted and led us.



2. The Delegation of the Philippines

Our presence expanded to other cities and islands in the Philippines, this led to the establishment of other Religious Communities in Cebu City and Butuan City. Following our *Constitutions*, the **Delegation of the Philippines** was created: “**The Delegation is a group of religious and Houses, outside the scope of the Provinces, governed by a Delegate**” (Const. 116, §3).

The Delegation remained under the direct responsibility of the General Curia, but had certain independence in the administration and ordinary conduct of activities. According to our *Directory*, “**In order to erect a Delegation, it is necessary to have at least two Houses and ten solemnly professed religious, enabling it to function properly. The Office of Delegate lasts for three years**” (Dir. 118).

3. The Province commissarial

As the formandi reached Solemn Profession and Priesthood, two more houses were established in Cebu City and new Communities in the Manila metropolitan region: one in Antipolo City and another in Pasig City.

In 2005, the 76th General Chapter extinguished the Delegation of the Philippines and created the **Province of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino**, a further step in the Order's history in the Philippines.

In 2012 the transition was concluded with the celebration of the First Provincial Chapter of the Province dedicated to Saint Nicholas of Tolentino.

The *Constitutions* indicate regarding the Commissariat, “it is a part of the Order which has a congruent number of religious and Houses, but is unable to ensure the normal ordinary regime of government. It is governed by a Commissary assisted by the Commissary Council” (Const. 116, §2).

Meanwhile, vocations came not only from the Philippines but also from Indonesia, so the Bandung Community dedicated to Fra Luigi Chmel was founded as a Formation House.



4. «Pleno iure» Province

The latest stage in the growth of the Order of Discalced Augustinians in Asia was the transition to province a “pleno iure,” which gave the brethren greater legal and administrative independence.

This significant milestone enabled the consolidation of existing communities and the development of a more robust organizational structure, facilitating the establishment of new missions and the creation of links with other nations in Asia.

The transition to “pleno iure” Province represented not only a recognition of the Order's maturity and vitality in Asia, but also an impetus to continue the work of

evangelization and service in different contexts, thus responding to the growing spiritual needs of local communities.

As a Province **other Communities** have been founded: Ho Chi Minh (Vietnam), Naples (Italy), Da Nang (Vietnam) and Jammapuram (India). Currently, the Province cooperates with the Mother of Good Counsel Province, with religious serving in Italy. We are truly grateful to the Lord for what we are now and hopeful for whatever mission awaits us in the future.



5. Looking towards the future

Looking ahead with optimism, the Dedicated Province of St. Nicholas of Tolentino aims to strengthen our presence in existing communities and explore new opportunities to expand our reach.

Our mission in Chiang Rai, **Thailand**, led by Fr. Edgar Aristotle Batoto and Fr. Zakomo Khun, is making progress despite challenges related to learning the language and adapting to the culture.

We are also exploring the possibility of establishing our presence in different areas of the **Philippines**, thanks to generous benefactors who have donated land for future missionary activities.

Our communities in **Vietnam and Indonesia** also need to expand to provide more missionary work opportunities for those who will complete their formation years. The ongoing construction of the formation house in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, will be a significant milestone for the Order, as it will finally have its own house for aspirants and postulants studying Philosophy.

The purchase of land in Kannur, **India**, for the construction of a future Religious House is another opportunity to establish a stable presence in India and expand our mission.

30 Years and the Lay Affiliates

A Story of Collaboration

Fr. Dennis Ruiz, oad - @dennisdueneruiz



Pope Francis has frequently spoken about the role and importance of **Lay movements in the Church**, emphasizing their vital contribution to evangelization, community building and commitment to others, especially in the context of promoting a Synodal Church open to the contemporary world.

The Province Saint Nicholas of Tolentino has been blessed by the support of affiliated laity during its 30 years of presence in Asia. The two main secular fraternities in the region are the **OAD Tertiaries** and the **OAD Lay**, both of which were canonically erected by the then Prior General, Fr. Dorian Ceteroni, on November 13, 2018, as a sign of the importance of the laity in our religious family.

1. Third Order

The various Third Order groups have maintained a constant presence in the religious communities in which they have their base.

The **National Council of the Philippines** was recently established, with its President, Lelita Balo, and Council members committed to promoting unified efforts among the different communities. One of its main responsibilities is to facilitate

the implementation of the Formation Modules that have been prepared for them.

The different Third Order Communities are actively involved in **ordinary and extraordinary apostolates**. Their activities take place in various contexts, including supporting First Order communities, working with SRO chaplains in hospitals, caring for kindergarten children (as in Butuan), visiting prisons, providing school supplies, and assisting priests in visiting the sick and elderly. In Cebu City, they have organized a food distribution program for the elderly and a medical mission for religious members and the less fortunate.

The Tertiaries are also devoted to their **prayer life**, regularly attending liturgical and devotional services, remaining faithful to their monthly meeting.

In addition, some members are actively engaged in various ministries within their local churches, contributing to the life of the larger church community.



Members of the Third Order

2. OAD Lay

The OAD Lay celebrated their biennial **General Assembly** in Ormoc City, with the participation of 90 representatives from the different Local Communities, having elected their new Brother General, Mark James Evangelist, along with his Council. They renewed their commitment to live out their consecration and drafted a *Programmatic Document* that will serve as a guideline for the next two years. The new leadership also directed the evaluation of members and the founding of new Communities, reorganizing the different Offices.



OAD Lay

As outlined in their *Statutes*, most Local Communities are linked to Parishes, with local parish priests serving as spiritual directors. In addition to their spiritual and community activities (formation, local Chapter Assemblies and devotional practices) they actively live out their **Discalced Augustinian spirituality and charism** by participating in various parish ministries, including serving as extraordinary ministers, catechists, lectors and choir members.

The members also participate in **charitable works**, visiting the sick in hospitals, prisons, home for the aged, orphanages and families in need. They regularly organize medical missions and provide food assistance to indigenous communities in the mountains and impoverished areas. One of their unique apostolates entrusted to them in an Archdiocese is to assist retired priests.

Communities near the Religious House of the First Order are diligent in providing **spiritual and financial support**. This includes making religious habit, becoming spiritual parents for novices, providing liturgical and casual vestments for priests and brothers, and contributing to the monthly food budget for Aspirants in Cebu. They also cooperate in religious and social activities, especially during Holy Week and other important religious/liturgical holidays.

Currently, the OAD Tertiaries have 3 Communities (Cebu, Ormoc and Butuan) with about 200 members, while the OAD Lays have 27 Communities (in the Philippines and abroad) with about 800 members. One of the directives of the *Programmatic Document of the 80th General Chapter* is to encourage provincial directors to recognize the various groups that embody our charism.

3. Main goals for the future

- Encourage members of our Secular Fraternities to study and rediscover the beauty of Augustinian spirituality, particularly the charism of the Discalced Augustinians as outlined in their respective *Statutes*.
- Motivate Provincial Directors to focus more on the spiritual needs of the laity who share our way of life.
- Strengthen the implementation of the approved Modules of Formation for their respective groups, ensuring adherence without resorting to improvisation.
- Ensure the final approval of the Priestly Fraternity with the publication of the proper *Statutes*.
- Prepare for the International Assembly of Secular Fraternities of the Order to be held in Cebu from May 1 to 4, 2025.



The **General Direction for Secular Fraternities** ensures that members are well formed in their faith and deeply rooted in prayer, essential for personal and spiritual growth. In line with the Church's preferential option for the poor, members are called to actively engage in the promotion of social justice, caring for the vulnerable, marginalized and excluded, with special attention to the defense of human dignity and the promotion of peace and reconciliation. The Direction also encourages secular fraternities to remain in close communion with their local churches.

Mission in Thailand

Our Presence in Chiang Rai

Fr. Edgar Aristotle Batoto, oad



1. The Diocese of Chiang Rai

The mission of the Discalced Augustinians in Thailand began in 2022. The Bishop of the Diocese of Chiang Rai, Bishop Joseph Vuthilert Haelomin, in the north of the country, welcomed us with fervor.

Chiang Rai is a suffragan diocese of the Archdiocese of Bangkok, covering an area of 37,839 sq. km. and includes four provinces, Chiang Rai, Nan, Phayao, Phrae and Ngao District in Lampang Province. The Diocese was established in April 2018 after being separated from the Diocese of Chiang Mai.

The Diocese is divided into 16 Parishes and represents a promising growth of the Catholic population in Thailand due to the presence of many ethnic tribal minorities, particularly the Aka tribes.

2. Our presence in Thailand

To become effective missionaries in Thailand, it is necessary to study Thai and the languages of other ethnic minorities in order to promote vocations. For this reason, the Diocese of Chiang Rai represents an important gateway for vocations to the priesthood.

Currently, our Order collaborates with the Diocese by taking care of the **International Catholic**

Community of Chiang Rai, regularly celebrating Mass in English every Sunday at 11:00 a.m.

Our Order is still taking its first steps in Thailand, and among the future plans, there is the opening of a religious community that will spread Augustinian spirituality in the Diocese, making this the first Augustinian mission in Thailand.



“Go invite everyone to the banquet reflecting the inclusive and urgent call to bring God's love to everyone. Join us in the universal mission to spread the Gospel and invite all to experience the joy of our Lord Jesus Christ message.

Pope Francis

Some Pictures

Sharing a Bit of our Life



July 8, 2024

Fermo - Italy

The reopening of the Sanctuary of Mercy, closed since the 2016 earthquake, was celebrated with the Mass presided over by Msgr. Rocco Pennacchio, with the presence of the Prior General and confreres



July 15-23, 2024

San Gregorio da Sassola - Italy

The Province Madre del Buon Consiglio met to celebrate the 8th Provincial Chapter, a propitious moment to evaluate, plan and elect the new Prior Provincial and his Council



July 23, 2024

San Gregorio da Sassola - Italy

The new Prior Provincial, Fr. Jan Derek Sayson, and his Council: Fr. Carlo Moro (Vicar Provincial), Fr. Gregorio Cibwabwa (2nd Councilor), Fr. Alejandro Remolino (3rd Councilor), Fr. Leandro Rodrigues (4th Councilor)



July 27-28, 2024

Toledo - Brazil

The meeting of the Monica Mothers was held in the Santa Monica Community, organized by the Director for Lay Movements, Fr. César Gonçalves, with the presence of about thirty local coordinators



August 2, 2024

Puertobello - Philippines

The Prior Provincial, Fr. Crisologo Suan, presided over the Mass in which Friars Dinh Tien Thang, Kalaparthi Karn Kumar, Kulandaiyesu Anthonysamy and Nagelli Ravi made their Simple Profession, together with the investiture of 12 Novices



August 6, 2024

Cebu City - Philippines

Msgr. Jose Palma ordained as **Priests:** Fr. John Navarro, Fr. Nguyen Van Cat, Fr. Mark Gadiane, Fr. John Mark Intales, Fr. Peter Paul Arellano, Fr. Anthony Booc, Fr. Pham Huu Ky and Fr. Nguyen Huu Duc; and **Deacons:** Fra Than Kin Hung, Fra Tran Van Nam, Fra Richard Thaung, Fra Pham Van An and Fra Hoang Minh Tuat



August 17, 2024

Ampère - Brazil

The Prior Provincial, Fr. Getulio Freire Pereira, and the Provincial Economo, Fr. Darci Pryzvara, celebrated the Mass of thanksgiving for their 25th anniversary of priesthood, together with their family, friends and confreres, a moment of much joy and fraternity



August 22, 2024

Roma - Italy

The Postulator General, Fr. Dennis Duenne Ruiz, has rendered a valuable service to the Augustinian Oblate Sisters of Our Lady of Trust as moderator of their General Chapter



September 14, 2024 Genova/Sestri - Italy

With the solemn celebration presided over by the Prior General, Fr. Nei Márcio Simon, and concelebrated by the Prior Provincial, Fr. Jan Derek Sayson, the Cameroonian confreres, Friars Wilfred Shiyghan Dubila and John Yuhtoh Nuh, made their Solemn Profession



September 9-13, 2024 Toledo - Brazil

The Province Santa Rita de Cássia has organized the Second Annual Retreat for the Friars; during the week, led by Msgr. Anuar Battisti, the confreres meditated and studied the question asked by Jesus to the disciples: "What are you looking for?"



September 24, 2024 Rome - Italy

As indicated by the agreement between the Provinces of the Order, the Board of Directors of the International College Fra Luigi Chmel House met in the Convent Gesù e Maria to examine and plan the next year of activities



September 25, 2024 Rome - Italy

The three Priors Provincial met at the General Curia with the members of the General Definitory under the guidance of the Prior General to share, verify and plan the activities of the Order in the various countries and situations in which our confreres are present



Prior General's Message

Thanksgiving to Providence

Fr. Nei Márcio Simon, oad - @freineisimon



Dear confreres, lays and friends,

the three-decade anniversary of our Order's return to Asia invites us to reflect on how much Divine Providence has blessed us.

When Fr. Louis Kerschbamer left for the Philippines I was a postulant. I was not fully aware of the importance of the new missionary opening, but I equally rejoiced with the news. I sensed that an extraordinary event was taking place. And the letters filled with enthusiasm, which came from the mission, encouraged me to persevere in my journey.

The initial Delegation, a few years later became a Province “pleno iure” and is currently the one that most nurtures the conviction that our charism is needed in the Church. In addition to the confreres who have responded to the divine call and thus share the charism, there are thousands of people, including lay, consecrated and priests who gravitate to the same spirituality.

Last year, I finally traveled to the Philippines. I had the joy of personally getting to know that wonderful territory, a granary of vocations and, at the same time, I participated in the 80th General Chapter, in which I received the task of Prior General.

I would like to thank all the missionaries who with great courage left their homelands to share the joy of the Gospel, starting with Fr. Luigi and the young Brazilian confreres who accompanied him in the early days, and again all those who joined, arriving from the Philippines and other nations and agreeing to leave for missionary fronts, including beloved Italy, where the Order sprouted more than four centuries ago and today needs care to grow new grafts.

Let us join in thanking God for his abundant generosity and ask for the grace to be authentic pilgrims of hope.



