

Promotion of priestly vocation

Speaker: Rev. Fr. Bonifacio Garcia Solis, OP

Rev. Fr. Solis was born in 1940 and graduated in Philosophy in 1967 and Theology in 1971 in Spain and was ordained into the priesthood in 1971, at the age of 31. Rev. Fr. Solis spoke about his experience in the "Promotion of priestly vocations."

(A) Past history of the Dominicans

The Order of Preachers (OP) (Dominican Fathers) was founded in 1216 in Toulouse, France and came to Hong Kong in 1861.

In 1971, Fr. Solis was assigned to the Philippines and there were 45 priests and 170 seminaries. At that time, the Province of Our Lady of Rosary (the local Dominican Order) was not allowed to accept local recruits. In 1997, the then Master of the Order Timothy Radcliffe lifted this prohibition and the Dominican Order to their world-wide character going back 400 years of universal membership.

(B) Recent history

The Province of Our Lady of Rosary now extends from Japan to Venezuela, including Korea, Hong Kong, China, the Philippines, Myanmar and Vietnam. There is a "community of reference" in each vicariate Japan, The Philippines, Hong Kong, etc. The mission in Myanmar has 9 recruits recently with 7 being ordained as Dominican priests and one as a Diocesan priest. The Order was spread into Venezuela in 2005.

Fr. Solis has been the Prior Provincial for four terms and had served on the Council while he was not the Prior Provincial. He always believes that "If the Lord has called these brothers to the Province, we have the responsibility of transforming them according to His plans." The postulants are assigned to learn English in Hong Kong and study Philosophy and Theology in Macao, Manila, Rome, Hong Kong and Venezuela, etc. The novitiate is in Hong Kong, but there are missions in Korea, East Timor, Myanmar, Korea, Japan, etc. In 2017, there were 16 novices and in 2018, there will be 18 novices.

Since 1997 the Province of Our Lady of Rosary has 71 priests, 30 seminarians studying Philosophy and Theology. In addition, there are 16 novices, 19 postulants and 15 aspirants. This rapid expansion of the province with so many new vocations is attributed to the merits of the 250 martyrs of the Dominican brothers, of whom 35 are canonized saints. The Dominican brothers say daily prayers for priestly vocations in all their vicariates. Promoting priestly and religious vocations is the responsibility of all those who believe in the cause (including all Serrans). It is God who pushes this and we are but the agents.

Each Dominican priest undergoes 7 years of training. During this time, the Mission must feed, clothe and educate them. As the Prior Provincial, Fr. Solis must be agile and always pushes forward go the right, go to the left, go forward; if this is not possible, then back track and push forward again. He has only two mottoes:-

- (i) Go, preach and be baptized
- (ii) You have not chosen me, I have chosen you.