



## Final Message

### Vice-Provincial Chapter of Asia-Oceania

Asia-Oceania is “the least but not the last” of the provinces of the Congregation of Saint John. “The least”: our province is the only one to be preceded by the prefix “vice”, a word which signifies a particular status due to our small number. “Not the last”: our region was the first of the provinces of the Congregation to begin its chapter, meeting from January 7 to 13, 2023. All the perpetually professed brothers of the priories of Christchurch, Cebu-Taboan, Cebu-Banawa, Tainan, and Taipei came to Cebu either as ex officio, elected, or invited members. Some brothers joined us through Zoom. The chapter was preceded by our first vice-provincial assembly in which the brothers in formation were also able to participate and express their joys and trials. The assembly allowed the brothers of all generations to listen to each other and elaborate some concrete suggestions for the future of the region which were then transmitted to the chapter.

A day of “island hopping” between the assembly and the chapter was a great opportunity for the brothers to relax by taking a small boat to venture out into the ocean and visit a few small islands near Cebu City. The beauty of the islands, the corals and multicolored fish were all ingredients to make a beautiful day during which we savored the joy of “losing time” together! Symbolically, we felt that we were from now on “in the same boat”, especially when the brothers had to get in the water to push the boat out of a sandbar...

The beginning of the chapter was marked by the reports of Brother Justin (administrator) and Brother Jean-Gabriel (lector). Brother Justin expressed that our region, despite the small number of brothers, is full of promise and hope if we courageously accept the challenges that lie ahead. He also shared an overview of the evolution of the priories in Asia-Oceania since the last chapter. We saw that it’s important to continue the dialogue between the different brothers who have been involved in the priory of Pondicherry (India) until the end of its closing process. We pray for each of them, for the children and the sisters, and for all the lay people who have committed themselves to serving the mission of this priory. We also keep the Diocese of Pondicherry and its Archbishop in our prayers. After having spoken about our human resources in the Vice-Province and the importance of listening to young brothers from Asia, Brother Justin launched a reflection on the orientations

of the government of our Vice-Province and on the pastoral care of vocations. Brother Jean-Gabriel spoke of the training sessions he organized online during the Covid pandemic and of the personal accompaniment of the brothers. He spoke also of the importance for each of the brothers to take their own ongoing formation into their hands according to the six dimensions of formation in the *Ratio Formationis*. Brother Jean du Cénacle, prior of the formation house in Cebu-Banawa, presented the initial formation in our region.

Over the course of the following days the brothers worked mainly on developing a vision for the future of our Vice-province. The reflections benefited greatly from the contributions and suggestions of the young brothers who had joined us for the vice-provincial assembly. Given the importance of these topics, we would like to present the fruits of our chapter's work through two main themes: leadership and vocations.

## Leadership

Our Vice-Province currently is centered primarily on 3 countries where we have 5 priories which are in charge of parishes, student chaplaincies, different forms of teaching and, of course, the formation of brothers. 18 perpetually professed brothers and 6 temporary professed brothers (5 of whom are from Asia) live in these priories. When compared to this small number of brothers, we see that maintaining our numerous apostolates, forming our brothers, and taking the government of the Vice-Province into our own hands requires the commitment and cooperation of all. It's important for everyone to put their talents at the service of their brothers and to be responsible for our future. This awareness was confirmed by the intervention of Brother François-Xavier who is delighted that our community has acquired a better understanding of collaborative work. On the other hand, making our priories places where we can be happy is very important and we have to help each other not to fall into activism or let ourselves become exhausted by "urgent" things to the point of forgetting to spend free time with our brothers. It is only by creating priories where the brothers can be happy and holy that our vision and mission will be true and fruitful.

In connection with this theme of leadership, we give thanks for the brothers who courageously accepted positions of responsibility in the Vice-Province. Brother Justin was elected Vice-Provincial on the feast of the Lord's Baptism for a term of three years. We celebrated his election with a pilgrimage to the Basilica of Santo Niño to participate in one of the festive novena masses for the feast of Sinulog. May the Child Jesus inspire him in the service of authority! Brother Jean du Cénacle was appointed vice-provincial head of formation. Brother Michael-Thérèse was elected councilor and appointed Vice-Provincial Vicar. Brother Justin also appointed Brother Jean-Damien as the third council member of his council.

For the government of the Vice-Province, here is the list of orientations taken according to the votes of the capitulants:

1. Start a working group for the transition of management of temporal matters to the vice-provincial level: resources, self-financing, support for houses of formation...
2. Regarding abuse prevention in Asia-Oceania:
  - Take steps to ensure that potential victims in Asia-Oceania can file a complaint and be listened to.
  - Communicate in an adequate way about abuses committed by the founder and by brothers.
  - Continue the formation of brothers in Asia-Oceania in these matters and develop procedures to be applied in each priory.
3. Create a listening group on the closures of our priories in India and Korea in order to write a report about what happened in a way in which everyone can relate.
4. In each priory, develop a sustainable apostolic program integrating the personal charisms of each brother and the expectations of the diocese.
5. Erect Christchurch House as a priory within the next three years.
6. Establish quarterly one-day online meetings for formation and reflection on the projects related to government of the Vice-Province.
7. Participate in the work requested by the CORELI for liturgical reforms.
8. Start the process for English to become the official language of the Vice-Province.

The Oblates also participate in the reform of the Family of Saint John and are called to exercise their own responsibility. The brothers of the chapter as well as Sr Mila-Maria (prioress of the apostolic sisters of Cebu) were able to speak with the Oblates of the Philippines, Taiwan, Korea and New Zealand during an online assembly. We were able to listen to their experiences, their reflections and their questions about the future. The brothers thank them for their commitment to the process of reform in connection with the work carried out by the international commission of the Oblates. The Oblates expressed their joy at being able to strengthen bonds between them despite the differences of nationality and language.

## Vocations

The growth of our Vice-province passes through the participation of everyone in the government of the Vice-province but also through the increase of its members. This is why the subject of vocations ministry took a central place in the chapter. The brothers give thanks for the vocations that the Lord is currently sending them. In order to welcome these brothers well we led a reflection based on the new *Ratio Formationis* and by the experiments already carried out for initial formation. The brothers of the chapter voted to appoint a vocations

officer who will support the efforts of each priory to present our charism, propose a clear formation path, and organize regular activities for vocation promotion. In Asia-Oceania vocation ministry must be done both online and face-to-face. We also expressed our desire to be renewed in prayer for vocations.

Concern for vocations naturally carries over to attention to the formation of brothers from Asia-Oceania. The brothers spoke of the houses of formation in the Vice-Province: the priory of Cebu-Banawa for the novitiate and the cycle of philosophy, and the house of study of theology in Chinese in Taipei. They voted to maintain these two places of formation according to their current organization until June 2029. They also reflected on how the Vice-province can be involved in the foundation of the English-speaking Theological College in conjunction with the Angelicum in Rome.

The need for formation and renewal also applies to the brothers involved in the mission in Asia-Oceania. During an online intervention Brother Jean-Polycarpe, our new General Head of Formation, presented some tools available to brothers for their ongoing formation, in particular the new *Ratio Formationis*. Community formation initiatives at the Vice-Provincial level should also be planned.

## Conclusion

The brothers of the chapter give thanks for this time of fraternal communion, intense work and encounter between brothers, our apostolic sisters and our oblates. The pandemic prevented us from meeting face-to-face since September 2018! We were also very happy to experience a fraternal colloquium halfway through the chapter with the apostolic sisters of Banawa. We thank them for this time of simple and joyful time together.

We express heartfelt thanks to all those who prayed for the success of this meeting. We continue praying for our brothers who were unable to leave their country to be with us for the chapter.

Finally, we give thanks for the exchanges we had and time spent with the brothers in formation of the Vice-Province. A big thanks to them for working so hard to welcome a dozen more brothers in their priory!

For the general chapter of 2025, the brothers elected brothers Jean-Damien and Jean du Cénacle as delegates. A third delegate will be elected by all the perpetually professed brothers of the Vice-Province. The substitute brothers are Michael-Thérèse, Jean-Savio, Jean-Gabriel and Samuel-Mary. The next chapter of the Asia-Oceania Vice-Province is scheduled to be held in April 2026.

