



# The Alexians

*The Love of Christ Compels Us*

*Immaculate Conception  
Province of the Congregation  
of Alexian Brothers*

### **Mission Statement**

*Strengthened by community, prayer, commitment to the poor and the legacy of our founders, and in partnership with others, we Alexian Brothers witness the Healing Christ by a holistic approach to promoting health and caring for the sick, dying, aged and unwanted of all socioeconomic levels.*

### **Values**

*Compassion  
Dignity of the Person  
Care of the Poor  
Holism  
Partnership*

## Brothers complete ‘rewarding, productive’ Provincial Assembly

**T**he Alexian Brothers of the Immaculate Conception Province gathered recently for their annual Provincial Assembly, focusing on a wide range of topics, including the meaning of their lives as Brothers, vocations, new ministries and the future of the province.

Twenty-one Brothers from across the province attended the Assembly, hosted by the Alexian Brothers Community in Signal Mountain, Tennessee, between Sept. 8 and Sept. 12.

“It was a very rewarding, productive event,” said Provincial Brother Dan McCormick, C.F.A. “I left the Assembly feeling the most positive I have felt in the seven years I have been provincial.”

Brother Richard Lowe, C.F.A., director of the Alexian Brothers Community in Signal Mountain, “did a stellar job” organizing the Assembly and accommodating visiting Brothers, Brother Dan said. He also praised Brother John Howard, C.F.A., director of the Alexian Brothers Community in Milwaukee,



The Alexian Brothers of the Immaculate Conception Province pray during a Mass at their Provincial Assembly in Signal Mountain, Tennessee.

and his team of Brothers for their work in planning liturgies for the Assembly. The entire event occurred at the Brothers’ residence in Signal Mountain, which provided a warm, family-like

*(continued on page 6)*

## U.S. Brothers host General Council, providing vocations, ministry insights

The Alexian Brothers Community in Elk Grove Village, Illinois, recently hosted a meeting of the General Council, the governing body of the worldwide Congregation of Alexian Brothers, providing not only hospitality, but also insights on matters related to vocations and perpetuating the Brothers' 800-year-old healing ministry.

Although the Council met privately for most of the Sept. 23-27 meeting, the Council separately invited the U.S. vocations leaders of

International. The Council asked Brother Zeke, who has spearheaded the Immaculate Conception Province's online strategies, to develop plans for the website and to present them at the annual Extended General Council Meeting in Aachen, Germany, in April 2020. (The meeting, which includes the General Council and provincial/regional leaders, is the only time each year that the Congregation's major superiors get together for discussions.)

Brother Dan McCormick, C.F.A., provincial of the Immaculate Conception Province, updated the Council on the province's plans for extending the Brothers' healing mission to East Timor, a poor nation in southeast Asia. The plans are part of the province's effort to explore opportunities to expand the Brothers' influence "far beyond the walls of our hospitals and nursing homes," Brother Dan said. "Pope Francis has said it's time for the shepherds to start smelling like sheep, and we are seeking to return to our roots of being the tip of the spear in delivering relief to the people most in need, the people no one else wants to care for."

The Alexian Brothers of the Philippines, whose mission is part of the Immaculate Conception Province, have been exploring the possibility of developing an East Timor mission and have undertaken a yearlong period of discernment to determine how best to address the needs of the people there. Brother Dan has written to the bishop of East Timor, and he has invited the Brothers to establish a mission. "We don't know how quickly this will move, but once the decision is made by the Brothers in the Philippines and then by the Provincial Council and General Council, we should be able to act quickly to establish the mission," Brother Dan said.

The General Council, which has accepted a recommendation from the province to take an advisory role in the development of the mission, met privately to discuss the plans in detail after Brother Dan's presentation.



The General Council, including Superior General Brother Lawrence Krueger, C.F.A., (left), of the Immaculate Conception Province (U.S., Hungary, Philippines), Vicar General Brother Dermot O'Leary, C.F.A., (second from left), of the Sacred Heart Region (Ireland/England), Brother John of God Oblina, C.F.A., (second from right), of the Immaculate Conception Province, and Brother Nikolaus Hahn, C.F.A., (right), of St. Alexius Province (Germany), meet with Provincial Brother Dan McCormick, C.F.A., (center), of the Immaculate Conception Province, during the Council's recent meeting in Elk Grove Village, Illinois.

the Immaculate Conception Province to share their online strategies for attracting men with religious vocations. (The Immaculate Conception Province includes Alexian Brothers ministries in the U.S., the Philippines and Hungary.)

Brother Zeke Mapa, C.F.A., U.S. director of vocations, and Brother Patrick McCabe, C.F.A., U.S. assistant director of vocations, delivered a presentation about how they have used an attractive website and a strong social media presence to increase interest in the Brothers among men with religious vocations. The strategy is generating about six vocations leads every week, helping the province enjoy greater vocations success than many other religious orders.

The presentation led the Council to discuss – and ultimately to green-light – the idea of developing a worldwide Alexian Brothers website to be known as Alexian Brothers

# Provincial's Letter

## Dear Alexian Friends:

While hosting the General Council of the Congregation of Alexian Brothers in September, the Alexian Brothers of Elk Grove Village, Illinois, were reminded of the elemental bond that unites all Alexian Brothers, regardless of their homeland or ethnicity: We are a congregation of men called by God to live a consecrated life of poverty, chastity and obedience to the Lord's mission to serve the poor.

The General Council includes four Brothers from different nations (Ireland, Germany, the Philippines and the United States), but their different nationalities and the diverse backgrounds of the Brothers of Elk Grove Village were hardly noticeable as we lived, prayed and talked with each other from Sept. 23 to Sept. 27.

The meeting occurred at the Brothers' residence instead of in a corporate or institutional setting, which allowed all of us to gather like a large family when the General Council was not in session. The Brothers of Elk Grove Village took turns cooking for our guests, and we had long discussions about the Brothers who have gone before us and the healing mission that inspires and unites all of us. We also joined together for morning and evening prayers, and individual Brothers walked, prayed and meditated by themselves in the gardens outside the residence.

Much like our Provincial Assembly, which occurred earlier in September at the Alexian Brothers residence in Signal Mountain, Tennessee, hosting the General Council provided an expanded opportunity for the Brothers to be a community. Both gatherings were wonderful, prayerful experiences.

During the General Council meeting, the Council discussed and approved the idea of developing a worldwide Alexian Brothers website to be known as Alexian Brothers International. The decision is an important step in our ongoing efforts to internationalize our Congregation and

to move beyond the silo thinking that can occur sometimes because the Congregation is divided into two provinces (U.S. and Germany) and one region (Ireland/England).

For our internationalization efforts to succeed, thinking as "we" – as one international order of religious men, and not as individual groups of Brothers – will be essential. Thinking as one will foster partnerships and the sharing of ideas and strategies among Brothers around the world, enhancing our collective ability to perpetuate our 800-year-old healing mission. Alexian Brothers International will enable us to present ourselves to the world in a unified manner, speaking with one voice as we describe our mission and the many forms it takes. A worldwide website also will boost our collective efforts to attract men with religious vocations.

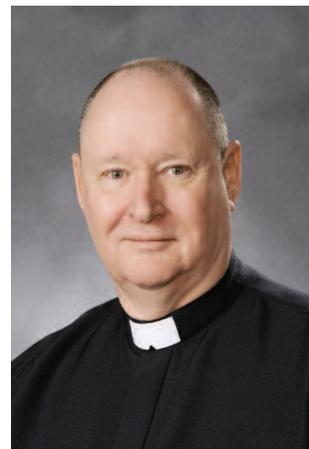
While taking steps as a Congregation toward thinking as "we," each of us individually must work toward identifying ourselves, first and foremost, as Alexian Brothers, rather than as American, Irish, English, German, Hungarian or Filipino. We all have been called by God to serve the poor as part of a congregation of religious men, and our individual identities as religious men must transcend any identities related to nationality, ethnicity or politics.

Adopting this mindset is critical not only to the internationalization of the Alexian Brothers, but also to our survival as a religious order amid a long-term decline in religious vocations. We must let go of the definitions that have limited us for generations, and no matter where we are from, we must embrace our identity as Alexian Brothers – just as we did during the General Council meeting this fall.

May God Bless You and Yours,



Brother Daniel McCormick, C.F.A.  
Provincial  
Immaculate Conception Province of the Alexian Brothers



# Novices learn lessons about prayer, humility, brotherhood in Philippines

In July 2018, the Immaculate Conception Province of the Congregation of Alexian Brothers for the first time sent U.S. novices to the province's mission in the Philippines for a year of instruction and formation as part of the two-year Novitiate program.

The idea was to provide a unique opportunity for novices to develop their prayer life by living in community with the Brothers of the Philippines, who pray and meditate several times each day. The novices also participate in ministries that recall the work of the earliest Alexian Brothers, who cared for the poor and sick in the Middle Ages.

The novices returned to the U.S. this past July, just as a new novice headed to the Philippines. They all agree that their Philippine experience has had a powerful effect on them as people and as Brothers.

"The year in the Philippines was the greatest year of my life," said Novice Brother Robert Podjarsky. "Our sole purpose was to become closer to our Lord – and I truly did." Added Novice Brother Joe Pense: "The year has been a year of growth for me, one that I have learned from and that I will never forget."

The compassion and prayerfulness of the Brothers in the Philippines affected the two novices deeply. "I have learned so much from them; they are all good men," Brother Joe said. "They taught me truly what it means to be a Brother." Brother Robert said the Brothers in the Philippines "have a deep love and reverence for our Lord Jesus Christ. Many of the Brothers

come from impoverished families, and their desire to serve our Lord was shown to me by their tireless work ethic, charitable deeds and humble ways."

Brother Joe and Brother Robert also were moved – and forever changed — by their exposure to extreme poverty in the Philippines, including two weeks living with an indigenous tribe in a remote village. "They are very poor but were so giving to us outsiders," Brother Joe said. He and Brother Robert also ministered to the needy at a shelter for prostituted women and children and at homes for the dying and for sick and malnourished children. "Living in the Philippines has brought me great humility, and I give God thanks every day for all the small things that I used to take for granted," Brother Robert said.

Novice Brother Carl Sisolak, who arrived in the Philippines in July, said the Brothers there already have taught him to be more flexible and to focus on listening better to others. "I also am realizing what it means to rely on each other for the things that help the community flourish," he said. "I have been witnessing how the spirituality rooted in Jesus Christ binds the Brothers to one another."

Brother Carl also cited the Filipino people and their rich culture as major influences. He noted the joy and happiness he sees in children's faces, as well as Filipinos' less rushed approach to life compared with Americans. "They allow less to rile them up," he said.

That approach imparts a valuable lesson to novices as they cope with challenges such as heat, humidity, language barriers, unfamiliar food and cold showers. Brother Robert said Filipinos have the ability to smile under any circumstances, and that's something he's trying to replicate in his life. "The Philippine people refuse to let the worldly issues of their life stop them from smiling, because they realize life is a gift from God," he said.



Living in the Philippines has had a powerful effect on Novice Brothers Robert Podjarsky and Joe Pense (above, left to right) and Novice Brother Carl Sisolak (below, right, with instructor, Redemptorist Brother Karl Gaspar.)



# Collaborative effort brightens Christmas outlook for Philippine poor

Thousands of Alexian Brothers branded items will brighten Christmas for the poor in the Philippines this year, thanks to a collaborative effort between AMITA Health St. Alexius Medical Center Hoffman Estates and the Alexian Brothers.

The surplus marketing and promotional items, including shirts, jackets, robes, blankets, dolls, thermal-lined bags and other goods, had been designated for removal from an AMITA Health warehouse in Elk Grove Village, Illinois, where they had been stored for years.

When Michelle Johnston, R.N., a nursing manager at AMITA Health St. Alexius, heard about the items earlier this year, she requested and received approval from Len Wilk, then the medical center's chief executive officer, to explore options for donating them to organizations serving the poor.

"There are too many people in our world who have nothing, and these items are high-quality things," said Johnston, who has worked at the medical center for more than 40 years. "I was going to work until I could find a solution."

After learning that the items could not be donated and distributed locally because they were branded, Johnston remembered that the late Brother Valentino Bianco, C.F.A., used to arrange charitable shipments to the Alexian Brothers mission in Davao City in the Philippines. "I loved working with the Alexian Brothers," Johnston said. "I love their ministry and their heart for serving the poor. ... I thought, 'What better place for these things to go than someplace that is Alexian Brothers?'"

She suggested the idea to Brother Torch Acosta, C.F.A., who leads the Brothers' "presence ministry" at AMITA Health St. Alexius. He liked the suggestion and proposed it to Brother Dan McCormick, C.F.A., provincial of the Immaculate Conception Province of the Congregation of Alexian Brothers. Brother Dan approved the plan and arranged for the Brothers to

cover shipping costs.

Jheric Baltero, an AMITA Health warehouse associate, arranged for a reduced shipping rate through a company that specializes in shipments to the Philippines. He also arranged for delivery directly to the Alexian Brothers mission in Davao City. Joanne Kristoffersen, secretary to the provincial, collaborated with Johnston on payment logistics.

In July, Johnston, Brother Torch, Novice Brother Robert Podjarsky and Baltero spent a day at the warehouse, packing the branded items into 60 large boxes later shipped to the Philippines. The boxes arrived in Davao City in October.

The team effort reflected the Brothers' core value of partnership, said Brother Torch, who also has collaborated with Johnston to donate surplus medical and school supplies to the Mission of Our Lady of the Angels, which serves the poor on Chicago's West Side. "When somebody discards something, it's important to have an awareness that there are needy people who can make use of whatever is being discarded," Brother Torch said.

In separate emails to Johnston and Brother Dan, Brother John of God Oblina, C.F.A., director of the Alexian Brothers Matina Community in Davao City, expressed deep gratitude for the efforts and generosity of everyone involved with the shipment. The donated items, he wrote, will be a welcome delight for poor families and individuals who otherwise could not celebrate Christmas. "Maraming, maraming Salamat sa inyong lahat! (Many, many thanks to you all!)," he wrote.



Novice Brother Robert Podjarsky breaks down boxes while preparing a shipment of Alexian Brothers branded items to the Alexian Brothers mission in the Philippines.

## Brothers complete 'rewarding, productive' Provincial Assembly

### New entry dates for postulants, novices

The Immaculate Conception Province of the Congregation of Alexian Brothers has shifted its entry dates for postulants and novices to ensure U.S. novices can participate in the Intercommunity Novitiate Program in the Philippines.

Postulants traditionally have joined the Alexian Brothers in January and have moved on to the Novitiate six months later. In 2018, postulants for the first time were assigned to spend the first year of the two-year Novitiate program at the Alexian Brothers mission in the Philippines before completing their training as novices in the U.S.

The Brothers decided at their recent Provincial Assembly to shift the entry date for postulants to early September so they can be ready to travel to the Philippines as novices for the start of the Intercommunity Novitiate Program in March. The program brings together novices from different religious congregations for theological education and formation.

*(continued from page 1)*

environment conducive to meaningful discussions, Brother Dan said.

During the Assembly, Lowe challenged his fellow Brothers to describe what the Brothers' motto – Caritas Christi Urget Nos, or the Love of Christ Compels Us – means to them and their communities and how they put it into action every day. "We went around the room, and every Brother spoke," Brother Dan said. "Brothers who historically have been reluctant to share their feelings were open about them this time. There was a lot of sharing, and there were some misty eyes as we talked about our previous lives and the conversion experiences that got us into religious life. We talked about the issues that call us together. Why did we become Brothers? What in our community life enhances that? And what are the challenges we face?"

The principal challenge facing the Brothers

**"We are not afraid of the future; we are intrigued by the challenges it holds..."**

continues to be determining their individual roles and establishing new ministries now that the Brothers' role has been reduced at Alexian Brothers Health System, which Ascension acquired in 2012. "After Alexian Brothers Health System became part of Ascension, a number of Brothers felt lost because their duties at our institutions defined who they were," Brother Dan said.

The Brothers discussed this ongoing challenge extensively at the Assembly, reaffirming their commitment to a mindset that Brother Dan has emphasized in recent years: "First and foremost, I am a Brother because God wants me to be a Brother," he said. "I might happen to have

a clinical skill or educational qualifications that enable me to do something in particular, but that should not define me." Brother Dan added, "It's not about what you do. It's about who you become. It's about becoming the best person God wants you to be."

In tackling this challenge, the Brothers "are not redefining ourselves," Brother Dan said. "We are returning to how we've been defined for eight centuries. Without day-to-day responsibilities at our health-care institutions, we can engage again with who we truly are: vowed religious men with a passion for God and the poorest of his children."

Returning to the Brothers' roots has produced several new ministries, such as an outreach ministry serving isolated and vulnerable older adults in Chattanooga, Tennessee, and a "presence ministry" through which the Brothers provide comfort, support and guidance to clients, patients, residents and family members at their namesake facilities in Chicago's northwest suburbs and Milwaukee.

The Brothers also spent considerable time talking about vocations, with Brother Zeke Mapa, C.F.A., U.S. director of vocations, presenting an encouraging report about the Brothers' efforts to increase awareness of their Congregation and to attract men who have religious vocations. Aided by a strong social media presence and an engaging website that has drawn praise from the leaders of other Catholic men's religious orders, the Brothers have enjoyed greater vocations success than many orders in recent years, often attracting men who have discovered a religious vocation later in life. "Ninety-five percent of our vocations leads come from social media connections," Brother Dan said.

Other discussions at the Assembly focused



on the potential for a new Alexian Brothers mission in East Timor, a poor nation in southeast Asia, as well as the construction of an Alexian Brothers center for the homeless in Davao City in the Philippines.

The Alexian Brothers of the Philippines, whose mission is part of the Immaculate Conception Province, are in the midst of a yearlong period of discernment focused on how best to address the needs of the people of East Timor. Brother Dan has written to the bishop of East Timor, and he has invited the Brothers to establish a mission there. “It’s very much a live project for us,” Brother Dan said.

Construction of the center for the homeless is expected to be completed by the end of 2019. It will function as a drop-in facility where the homeless can shower, wash their clothes, eat meals, receive medical care, and access social services. The Brothers for a while considered offering overnight accommodations at the center but opted instead to design the center so it could be expanded at minimal cost to accom-

modate overnight guests in the future.

Brother Alexius Siska, C.F.A., director of the Alexian Brothers Community in Győrújbarát, Hungary, which also is part of the Immaculate Conception Province, provided an update at the Assembly about the planned expansion of St. Elizabeth of Hungary Home for the Elderly. At the time of the Assembly, the Brothers were awaiting government approval of one final permit before the expansion project could begin, Brother Alexius said. The project will involve converting the Brothers’ residence in Győrújbarát into an extension of the adjacent home for the elderly and building a separate residence for the Brothers at a nearby site.

Through their discussions at the Assembly, the Brothers arrived at four important conclusions about their future, Brother Dan said. “We are not afraid of the future; we are intrigued by the challenges it holds; our duty is to God, the Church and our congregation; and we are to be Brothers to one another before we do anything else,” he said.

The Alexian Brothers gather for a photo during their Provincial Assembly in Signal Mountain, Tennessee.

## Assistant novice director appointed in Philippines

Brother Vincent Timbang, C.F.A., director of vocations for the Alexian Brothers in the Philippines, has taken on additional responsibilities as assistant novice master.

In this new role, he will assist Brother Raphael Fallado, C.F.A., director of novices. Brother Raphael also serves as director of the Alexian Brothers Bajada Community in Davao City.

# In This Issue

Volume 45, Number 3  
Fall 2019



## Cover

Brothers complete 'rewarding, productive' Provincial Assembly



## Page 2

Brothers host General Council in Elk Grove Village



## Page 4

U.S. novices learn valuable lessons in Philippines



## Page 5

Team effort brightens holiday outlook for poor



### Return Service Requested

We work very hard to maintain an accurate mailing list; if you wish not to receive future mailings, please email Provincial Brother Daniel McCormick, C.F.A., at [daniel.mccormick@alexian.net](mailto:daniel.mccormick@alexian.net).

### Alexian Brothers Communities and Ministries

600 Alexian Way  
Elk Grove Village, IL 60007

**Brother Lawrence Krueger, C.F.A.**  
Superior General, Congregation of Alexian Brothers

**Brother Dermot O'Leary, C.F.A.**  
Vicar General, Congregation of Alexian Brothers

**Brother Daniel McCormick, C.F.A.**  
Provincial, Immaculate Conception Province of the Alexian Brothers, Director of the Alexian Brothers Community, Elk Grove Village, Illinois

**Brother John Howard, C.F.A.**  
Director of the Alexian Brothers Community, Milwaukee

**Brother Richard Lowe, C.F.A.**  
Director of the Alexian Brothers Community, Signal Mountain, Tennessee

**Brother Steve Fogt, C.F.A.,**  
Director of the Alexian Brothers Community, St. Louis

**Brother Alexius Siska, C.F.A.**  
Director of the Alexian Brothers Community, Győrújbarát, Hungary

**Brother Raphael Fallado, C.F.A.**  
Director of the Alexian Brothers Bajada Community, Davao City, Philippines

**Brother John of God Oblina, C.F.A.**  
Director of the Alexian Brothers Matina Community, Davao City, Philippines

# The Alexians

*The Love of Christ Compels Us*

Non-Profit  
Organization  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Permit # 307  
Carol Stream, IL

## Brother Dan McCormick, C.F.A., marks 25th anniversary as Alexian Brother

**B**rother Dan McCormick, C.F.A., provincial of the Immaculate Conception Province of the Congregation of Alexian Brothers, celebrated his 25th anniversary as a Brother during a Mass at Ascension Living Alexian Village in Signal Mountain, Tennessee.

Father Alex Agbata, an Alexian Village chaplain, officiated at the Mass, which took place Sept. 8 at the beginning of the Brothers' annual Provincial Assembly. Brothers from across the province, including its missions in Hungary and the Philippines, joined Brother Dan at the Mass.

The Brothers later continued the celebration at their residence in Signal Mountain, where they toasted Brother Dan and presented him with an anniversary cake and cards. The Brothers also surprised him with a video chronicling his years as a Brother.

"It was absolutely fantastic," Brother Dan said of the video produced by Brother Patrick McCabe, C.F.A. "Some of the things in the video



Brother Raphael Fallado, C.F.A., director of the Alexian Brothers Bajada Community in Davao City in the Philippines, (left), congratulates Provincial Brother Dan McCormick, C.F.A., during his 25th anniversary celebration.

could have been on 'America's Funniest Home Videos.'"

The entire celebration "was very touching," Brother Dan said. "It was all done with good faith and affection, and all the Brothers joined in. It was an absolute delight."