



**SACRED HEARTS
OF JESUS AND MARY
UNITED STATES PROVINCE**



Under a *P*andanus

Issue 2

SSCC Fiji Formation House

December 2020



"I have fought

I have

I have

**the good fight,
finished the race,
KEPT THE FAITH."**

.2 Timothy 4:7



Hindsight is 2020

2020 has no doubt been a challenging and even horrific year for the world. In our little corner, Fiji - the tranquil, cool breezed South Pacific paradise, has not been without its share of struggles. At PRS we faced, like many others, the new mode of teaching and learning – online. With the initial lockdown, Zooming became the catch phrase. We zoomed classes, gatherings and even mass from our respective rooms (no more than a handful could gather). The technical requirements for online teaching and became a steep learning curve. Frustration at our own lack of technical know-how had to be replaced with patience. I marveled at the tenacity of the seminarians through the challenges and they became a source of strength for formators, lecturers and administrators at PRS. Our Picpus brothers with their technical savvy, rallied and assisted PRS in this transition.

On Easter Saturday, the PRS dean, Fr. Falani Terry SM passed away unexpectedly. A few months later a third year seminarian passed away unexpectedly. It is something very moving to see grown men cry – and their were plenty of tears. Again, the seminarians pulled together and with resilience grounded in a deep faith – God's grace became our comfort and indeed our stay.

The Picpus brothers who graduated (Bill, Patrick, Eric and Sepulona) did so with distinction, with Bill taking the highest distinction for the 2020 graduating class. Some 400+ gathered for the graduation ceremony.

As we look back on 2020, with all the trials and tribulations, the moments of successes and failures, we have once again found ourselves appreciating so much more, the Love of God, a deep gratitude for His small mercies and solace in the fraternal bond that binds us as an SSCC family. We say good bye to brothers who have completed their time in Fiji and move on to assignments in the US. We say best wishes to our brothers going to the novitiate (Gabby, Tavite and Sepulona).

Having looked at the past year (2020), we now turn our gaze to 2021. We hope to welcome back our brothers having completed their pastoral assignments. With courage and again with faith in God's providence, we cry that age old anthem and prayer, 'He will raise us up'!

Merry CHRISTMAS and a HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Rev. Johnathan Hurrell, ss.cc.

Director, Fiji House of Formation



Visitation to the Home of Compassion



Labors of *Love*

by Bro. Lomano Tonga Fifita

Being an MML(Master of Manual Labor) was a challenging task for me, but it was a helpful and relieving experience. During the period when CoViD-19 hit hard on Fiji with about 20 cases, this task became very handy. This challenging time brought lots of worry, confusion, fear, and stress to the brothers. The chore arrangements had to be carefully assigned and executed otherwise it would worsen the brothers' stress.

We had three working days a week which were Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. On Mondays and Thursdays, work started in the afternoon cleaning both inside and outside the house. On Saturdays, we spent the morning hours working on the farm. We cleared the bushes, and planted taro and cassava. Working outside the house and on the farm gave the brothers a sense of working together, helping one another, and strengthening the bond of brotherhood. Not only that, but it also allowed the brothers to relax from

studies and escape from the noises of the city and experience the quietness of the countryside.

Despite the physical sides of work, we enjoyed it very much because we shared jokes, funny stories, and laughter. Doing farming also helped us out in our food by providing root crops, taro leaves (rourou) and vegetables. Doing physical works provided balance on our journey in formation in terms of physical, mental, and spiritual life.





Living Brotherhood

by Br. Daniel Estrada

One of the greatest gifts our religious vocation offers us is brotherhood. Often, I may take this gift for granted, but if ever I enter into reflection and ask myself what is it that brings me life while I am here in Fiji, I would easily say: it is my brothers and the brotherhood we share. The diversity of personalities, cultures, and different forms of expressing our faith and love for one

another is by far one of the greatest life experiences this vocation has given me. Did you know that Fijian people have very sensitive ears and that any kind of loud balloon popping sound or sounds of that sort will cause a shrill of “delightful” words to be tossed in the air? Pop a balloon next time you’re in Fiji, you won’t regret the experience. Also did you know that you must never challenge a particular Samoan to a drink, or a particular Tongan brother to a kava session or either to acts of service? You will surely lose and they will out do you each time and do it with joy in their hearts. These are just a few cultures I’ve grown to love through my brothers. I cannot even come to express how grateful I am to have met each one of them as all have added joy and blessings to my life.





As I reflected deeper on my experience with the brothers, I realized that yes, they bring life through their cultures and gifts but the main source of their life - bringing comes from their faith. They truly have Christ with them. The love that they have for their family and friends when in need, the service and help of any kind they are always willing to jump up and do, the hospitality and detailed hard work they put in to pleasing guests or the community, all these acts of service are

nothing short of being Christ-like. It is faith in action; it is love and it is every day. I see it through my brothers here in Fiji. My brothers and the cultures of the Pacific have hearts of service and hearts that give. You can hear the giving of their hearts when they sing at Mass or at the social nights especially during karaoke night too. The brotherhood

teaches daily to give back and to value contribution in the ways fit to our gifts and person. It also reminds us to keep Christ in the center of our lives for when Christ is the source of our giving, we will inevitably give life to others and on this Christian journey, that's what it's all about.



From Classroom to Zoom

by Br. Bill Gural

In March of this year, we at the Sacred Hearts House of Formation and our classmates, and teachers and staff at the Pacific Regional Seminary followed the news of the CoVid-19 pandemic rapidly spreading throughout the world. Our rector at Pacific Regional Seminary, Fr. Simon Mani, MSC, contacted Br. Eric Cruz, SS.CC., who had been already done Information Technology work for PRS like developing the website, and said “We should get ready for this”.

The biggest part of this preparation was setting up a transition to on-line classes should the seminary be closed. Fr. Simon suggested Zoom as the software media for classes via the Internet because he was familiar with this program. Br. Eric had to quickly learn how to use Zoom so that he could tutor teachers and students who mostly were not that tech savvy. Fr. Don Maldari, SJ, and Br. Eric gave a tutorial on Zoom for the PRS teachers to ready them for on-line instruction.



Students in the classroom Zooming with a lecturer in Australia.



Year 7 's having their Zoom class with Fr. Johnathan.

Late in March, the CoViD virus did arrive in Fiji. Within a few days the number of people with the virus was quickly accelerating. Soon thereafter, the government of Fiji ordered that schools not have students in the classroom. We had PRS had a few days off from school; we students were wondering if our seminary year would be ending or significantly postponed.

Behind the scenes, Br. Eric was scrambling complete technical details to allow on-line classes, including helping set up modems and computers in the seminary library, and final tutoring of instructors in how to use Zoom. Our seminary shut down classes on Friday, but by the next Wednesday we were back in class on Zoom. Despite the challenges of adjusting to this new media, we students were soon Zooming adroitly - signing in, posting Powerpoint for class presentations, and even discovering the wonders of eating and sometimes sleeping during class (at least until live stream of students was required instead of the still shot that

sometimes cropped up in place of the live shot). A sign of hope was the seminarians naming a puppy Zoom while the previous puppy had been given the name Corona.

Br. Eric for the next three weeks experienced an intense time of trouble-shooting various technical glitches and challenges. While still being a seminarian with course work responsibilities, Br. Eric realized his priority was to help with the Information Technology so the seminary could stay open.

In the previous few years Br. Eric had been developing an interest in technology, often fixing the computers and smart phones that people sent to him. Reflecting on this, he thought of a phrase which people would often say in his home country, the Philippines, when he was growing up: “God will provide”. Br. Eric feels that God was preparing him to be able to assist the seminary when these technical skills were most needed.

Co-founder of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, Fr. Pierre Coudrin came out of hiding during the French Reign of Terror and placed himself in God’s hands, trusting in God’s providence. Br. Eric is following in this rich and deep aspect of the SSCC charism and patrimony.

Br. Eric has just graduated from Pacific Regional Seminary and will be serving at The Holy Name of Mary Parish in San Dimas, California for his pastoral year of ministry and learning. Br. Eric believes his seminary education and the unanticipated service he gave as “IT” expert has made him a more effective minister of God’s love and has given him more self-confidence. His talents and trust in the Lord will surely be a huge help to the good people of The Holy Name of Mary. May God continue to help him as he continues to reveal God’s love.



How much are those kittens in the window? - Br. Bill hanging out with Sisi and Didi

A Visit to the Hills of

Navala

by Br. Sepulona Lutelu

When new experiences hit my way, I feel inspired and willing to explore more into that way of life. During the 2nd term school break, Fr Marisi Palepale, Br. Bill, and my other fellow pre-novices Br. Rafa, Br. Tavite, and Br. Gabrieli were blessed to visit Navala Village.

Navala village is located at the western part of Fiji in the Province of Ba. This village is situated in the heart of the jungle 30 kms. from Ba Town. The village is well known because of its traditional culture.

I have been in some villages of Fiji but this was my first experience living in a Fijian *bure* (traditional house) and enjoying a lifestyle which is far from the busy city life. Every family has their own *bure*, which is made up of bamboo and grass with coconut leaves. I felt the warmth of family bonding when I entered these beautiful traditional houses. It reminded me of my humble beginnings and how I was raised in the simplicity, comfort, and love of my parents and family.

The attractive surroundings of the village, green and rocky mountains with the crystal river flowing in



front of the houses, conveyed the beautiful existences of God's creation. The greetings of the people every morning and the dazzling smiles of kids made me feel at home every day. The people were amazing; the stunning smells of traditional cooking by mothers formed my appetite to put a mountain on my plate.



I was blessed to meet and sit down with elders of the village and have a bowl of kava. I experienced a father's love from them and their very solemn respect for seminarians and the work of God. I was filled with delight to connect with the children and enjoyed playing with them.

Their childish pure smiles created healthy cheerful relationships.

Thank you, Navala Village for the wonderful visit. I experienced the presence of God amongst people, the environment, and especially the Fijian Culture. My love and prayers will always be with you. MOCE VINA'A – I will see you soon.



Flooding and devastations in Kadavu after the Cyclone Harold.

Sending Loloma (Love) to Kadavu

By Br. Paulo Luis Frank Raitekiteki

As the sun rose on the 10th of August 2020, a new ray of sunshine and hope glowed into my heart as I stepped foot for the very first time in Kadavu, the land of my ancestors. Kadavu is the land where I am known and registered. I arrived, and what welcomed me was heartbreaking. There was nothing much to look at; this beautiful island was still recovering from the aftermath of cyclone Harold. It left many residents homeless and with scarcely anything to feed on. But even with the struggles and the pains the affected families had to go through, life, though difficult but still punctuated with smiles and laughter, had to go on.

Everyone was family. Despite their living condition, they never complained. They still managed to put food on the table through the help of other villagers. With the very little they had, they shared among each other. This practice is in the heart of the Fijian culture: Giving and never expecting in return. Everyday, young men tirelessly plough the land and regrow the crops that Harold devastated. They were not dissuaded, but it only made them stronger.

Hearing their stories on how they fought for their lives during the devastating cyclone almost sounded implausible. Some took relief under the



Brothers Tavite, Gabby, and Rafa went with Br. Frank Lui to Suva port to bring the packages for shipping to Kadavu.

floors of their flimsy wooden houses while they were being blown away. Realizing their horrific experience, I thought that maybe I could extend some help although I knew that it would not be much. I may not be able to help all the families that were affected but at least I can help a family or two.

I came back to the formation house and related the stories to my brothers about the life and experiences of my people and kin. I feel blessed that my Sacred Hearts family had offered to help me purchase and ship in food items, pots, and crockery to the families.

Currently, Fiji just approached its cyclone season. No matter what happens, I believe that the Fijians' faith will never waiver. This has challenged me, as Sacred Hearts brother, to keep on moving on with a smile despite the pains and struggles that would come my way. When these come, I will always remember the lessons I have learned and

the smiles of the people of Kadavu island when they faced with humility and hope their unfortunate experience.



Bula Vinaka ,

My name is Rafaele Sekiwaqa, and I hail from the island of Ovalau in the province of Lomaiviti, Fiji Island. I would like to talk about my journey and experience as a pre-novice in the congregation. I was working as a mechanic at a garage here in Suva and also helped out in the examination of all the vehicles that normally come into the garage to be tested for fitness for public highway use.

My time here has been so wonderful and very exciting for the past 3 years I lived in the community. I came to know the community from one of the brothers, Rev. Fr Esitio, that normally visited my sector in the parish. I came to know and meet with the other brothers that normally accompanied him on his visits to our sector.

My first time being with the community was very challenging for me, but with the help from the brothers around me, I was able to put my focus on my studies and to the community life especially with the life of prayer and devotion. Four of us started the pre-novice programme last year 2019. Having the experience of pre-novice here was challenging at most of the time for me because I had to try to adjust myself to the other pre-novice brothers maybe because of the age differences. However, I saw that the age differences should not weaken my hopes and dream to be an SSCC brother.

It was good that I was trusted to participate in the community with some of the officers in the house like taking the role to look after the kitchen and making sure that our meals are well prepared and sufficient. I was also helping shop for the community for four terms and now I am the team leader for shopping and the kitchen man. Taking this role has been challenging at times but I make sure that I do my best to provide what is best for everyone in the community. Even though I face some disagreement with some of the brothers, I make sure that I don't satisfy only one brother but all including the formators. I feel like I'm at my parents' house with the way the brothers treat me. They help me with my role and the way I should be doing my duty and also assist me with my studies.

Without all the help and prayers of my brother of the Sacred hearts of Jesus and Mary here in Fiji and the ones out there in the US, I would not have made it this far. I am looking forward for novitiate this year 2020.

Your servant in Christ,
Rafaele Sekiwaqa



Fruits of the Garden

by Br. Gabrieli Saunivalu

Bula Vinaka, As the vegetable man I was given the task of looking after the garden. Br. Patrick Tukidia got the garden started, carefully tending planting seeds and tending to the tiny plants. So far I have managed to plant some tomatoes and Chinese cabbage, and we have harvested tomatoes and cabbage over the last three weeks. I am so glad that the community has given this responsibility. We have managed to provide the community with vegetables and also encourage healthy living by planting vegetables for the community.



The Pre-Novice and Vehicle Man

by Br. Tavite Uluilakeba

Encountering life as a pre-novice is a wonderful and yet challenging experience for me - wonderful and challenging in a way that is filled with excitement and sacrifice and dedication. I began my pre-novitiate program in 2019 and I am still a pre-novice for the second year simply because our visa was late and then the Corona virus attack. However, this lateness did not deter my spirit neither my vocation nor discernment to become a Sacred Hearts brother.

In our Community life we try to see the best in each other and at the same time to encourage one another, making sure that he is okay under any circumstances. I love the fraternal equality which



Br. Tavite (right, in yellow sulu) in Navala with one of the villagers.

we share among the brothers and I also admire the amount of honesty we have in each other. I must admit that there are times when community life can be very

intriguing and the sailing is not always smooth, but it is through these hard times that we manage to find the best in each other.

At the beginning of last year, I was assigned to look after our community vehicles, their maintenance and their fitness and most of all to keep



Car wash attendants: Fr. Johnathan and Fr. Marisi

them well serviced and ready to take us to school, the farm and for our shopping. Taking care of our vehicles includes servicing of the engines, changing oil and filters and doing those small repairs like changing the fan, the water pump and steering pump belts. I have had some experience in automotive mechanics, so it was easy for me to keep track with all the servicing that we need for our vehicles.

Lastly being a seminarian and a pre-novice at the same time can be very easy going and difficult too at the same time, especially if we do not manage our time well, coping with studies and keeping up with the pre-novitiate program. However, so far so good- I have made it to my second year now and I am praying that by the grace of God I will be given the opportunity to join the Novitiate program and be a member of our SSCC community.

An Angel Flies to Heaven

By Br. Soane Suia

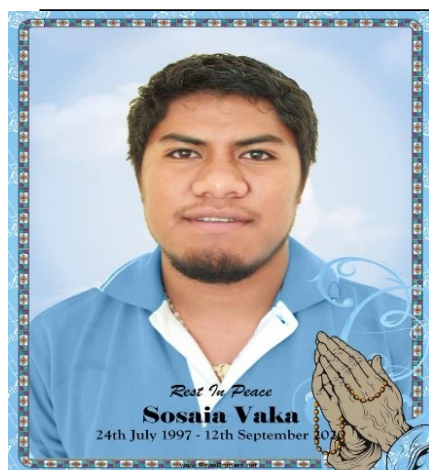
Sosaia Vaka - a brother who brought the whole Pacific Regional Seminary Community, Families and Friends together.

Back in 2018, Sosaia Vaka entered the seminary under the formation of the Marist Community, but originally he is from the Kingdom of Tonga. He started his discerning to priesthood when he was in high school at 'Apifo'ou College. After high school, he later joined the seminary.

Sosaia was a humble and an easy person to know. He greeted everyone who visited the seminary no matter who he was or where he was from. He looked at each person as a real brothers and sisters of his. He was known for smiling at everything even in times of trouble and loneliness. The Blessed Mother was his hope and a person whom he turned to when he needs an encouragement. He called himself the son of Mary

because he belonged to the Society of Mary. Whenever he went out to visit some friends and relatives, he called his visitation as Mary is coming and visit them.

Everyone who visited the seminary and had been greeted by Sosaia they will always remember his attitude and how nice he was.



Tongan seminarians visited

Sosaia before his admission to the hospital. On August 31st, the last trimester of year 2020 began. All the seminarians and faculty came back from their mini-holiday break. It was a shock for us seminarians and some faculty to find out that Sosaia had been diagnosed with cancer. Everyone started to go up to the Marist Formation house to show their support and sympathy for Sosaia. Later that evening, the Tongan seminarians came

together and paid a visit including Fr. Marisi Palepale, ssc. Sosaia was happy and relieved that his Tongan brothers were visiting him and giving him encouragement. Sosaia felt how strong the brotherly love and support was. We started to make jokes and share some laughter with him so that he would not think of what he is going through. It was sad for us Tongan seminarians to see another brother in this condition. Sosaia was admitted to the hospital a few days after our last visit. While lying in the hospital, Sosaia was taken care of by some of the seminarians and priests.



Tongan Seminarians visit Sosaia before his admission to the hospital.

Feast day of the Holy Name of Mary.

It was a day of sorrow for us seminarians and Sosaia's families and friends. God called back Sosaia to come back to him. On the other hand of our sorrow, we were happy that Sosaia was called on the feast day of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Later that evening, we started the prayer service for the soul of Sosaia Vaka which was led by the Marist Community and later continued by the Tongan community and seminarians until the Vigil Mass.

During these time of mourning for the loss of Sosaia, the seminarians were totally different. We felt like a storm had come and damaged the feelings and mood of the seminarians. Our mood of going to class was lost because we felt how strong and hard it was to lose a brother. Brotherly bonding is strong here in the Pacific Regional Seminary.

Sosaia's casket inside Marist College Chapel on the day of his

funeral. The funeral was held at the Seminary. There were hundreds of families and friends that came together to pay their last goodbye to Sosaia. Everyone shed tears remembering the attitude and the behavior of Sosaia. It was so sad as well because Sosaia's close families were not able to be there for his laying to rest. [Write a few sentences about how you and Daniel set up the live-streaming which allowed the family to feel more present and to be more connected Sosaia's funeral.] The Vigil Mass was attended by many people followed by viewing of his body plus a prayer service, and it was all night until the Requiem Mass the next day.

Sosaia Vaka was laid to rest on September 18th, 2020



Sosaia's casket inside Marist College Chapel

here in Suva, Fiji at Suva Extension Cemetery.



The Pacific Regional Seminary misses the soul of Sosaia Vaka so deeply. The Tongans and the whole Seminary feel the loss of a brother as a huge thing. Sosaia's memory will always on our mind at all time.

Toka a Sosaia Vaka 'i he nonga moe fiemalie 'a e 'Eiki. (RIP Sosaia Vaka).

- Soane Siua





Br. Patrick studying hard in the classroom.

Music and My Year 7 Experience

Greetings from SSCC Fiji Formation House and Bula Vinaka to you all. My name is brother Patrick Tukidia SSCC from Fiji. I just completed my final year of studies here in the seminary and I will be assigned for pastoral experience in Massachusetts.

At the moment, I feel so excited to go out there and minister and to serve the people of God. At the same time, feelings of doubts and fear sometimes come but I continue to remind myself that this calling is not mine but God's. God through love has invited me to partake in God's work and so I believe that I am in good hands.

Moreover, throughout the year I was in charge of our music in our liturgy. Our community has been known in the seminary because of our music

and the new hymns we introduce to the seminary. With the help of Brothers Eric, Daniel and Tavite and the whole community I have found this work worthwhile and fun. Our community always respond well to the hymn practices and this commitment has helped us to sing well during liturgy.

I wish you all the best for the Holidays and I pray that our Lord may protect your families through out this festive season. Peace to all.



Br. Patrick during PRS graduation day



MAKING CHRIST'S LOVE KNOWN

By Br. Bill Gural

Fr. Marisi has led our four pre-novices in formation for the last two plus years. His quiet example of prayer and service has given our community strength and a strong witness.

Fr. Marisi Palepale led an excursion to the traditional Fijian village Navala. There he celebrated his first mass in Fijian, having spent many hours preparing. Fr. Marisi was especially impressed that young boy and girl boarders at the school got up every morning at 6 a.m. to pray the Rosary.

Fr. Marisi is well known and loved for his many

visitations to people in need of love and encouragement, such as the good residents of the Home of Compassion. He often brings food, like buns and chocolates. He also celebrates mass at the prisons in Suva. He gives rides to people, like for the Tongan doctor who volunteers at St. Christopher's Home, an orphanage run by Tongan Anglican sisters. Fr. Marisi was invited there to a birthday party for orphans and Sr. Calo, who leads the home.

Her kind invitation was extended to two seminarians. Fr. Marisi surely makes good on the Sacred Hearts' goal to make the love of God known to the world.





After Mass Dinner



Christmas Day Feeding the Homeless

