

M 28 : 19



Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them
in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE SALESIAN MISSIONARY ANIMATION OFFICE (FIN)

ISSUE NO. # 5 – VOLUME 2

MAY 2009



Fr Felix Glowicki - (He said that his name is correctly pronounced as Gwah-vitz-ki. But he does not mind if we read it phonetically. The following article is shared to us by Mr. Davey Domingo)

Requiescant in pacem!

Zeal for Vocation - Salesians are asked to recruit for their eventual successors because no one stays on forever but the congregation must stay on for the sake of the young. No one denies that Fr Felix worked hard to recruit and attract so many young people into the Salesian family.

FAC - Can anyone forget the many times Fr Felix received with warmth the members of the Future Aspirants Club from various DB schools (Canlubang, Makati, Mandaluyong, Tondo, and Tarlac)? He himself organized his own group to come over to the Juniorate for a weekend or for a 2 week camp at Mindoro – a short forestate if they can enjoy the surrounding, the activities, and if they can “stand the heat of kitchen”? All these he skillfully organized not only to attract potential young aspirants but also to wear-out the unfits. Incidentally, he confided to me in the mid-80s that he had to change the club’s name to JAC (Junior Aspirants Club) because some of big boys were putting a bad connotation in pronouncing “FAC”.

KNIGHTS OF THE ALTAR – I’ve seen this in DBA/DBJ, and have seen this in DB Makati too.

Fr. Felix Glowicki, SDB

(May 18, 1931 – May 11, 2009)

A man of deep spirituality, a model religious and priest, hard worker, a friend to many Salesian family members, Bosconians and Alumni.

But when I again had the chance to be with him again in 1987, lo and behold, the Knights of Fr Felix! Ubi Felix, Ibi Altar Boys! Yes, there was always the Knights of the Altar wherever Fr Felix was. I later learned that even as a young cleric in Tarlac in the late 50s, he already organized one. This was one of his hallmarks because of his desire not only to add a sense of solemnity to every mass but more importantly - to give young boys a chance to feel what it is to be at the altar, nearer to the Divine Liturgy; In a way to awaken their interest - to be one day be at the altar themselves. At one time I had to argue with Fr. Felix that the altar was already overflowing with too many altar boys who had to sit a few benches back. But he insisted because he simply wants to give everyone the chance to be there at the altar. Wow! I argued no more! Before the end of each school year, he almost always did bring some of these boys to the Juniorate for a trial stay!

Family – Fr Felix insisted on the family and gave time to highlight the family. I’ve seen how he organized family days and gratitude days. **“Write to your parents”**, He often insisted to us aspirants **“...at least once a month!”** Of course, he likewise balanced family bonding with detachment from one’s family. On one rare occasion, there were 2 Tarlaqueño Bosconians whose father was unjustly incarcerated. After so many months of negotiations, he and Fr Miguel finally succeeded to obtain this man’s freedom through legal means. Finally, the man was reunited with his sons.

Happy Hour! - No, Fr Felix didn’t go to pubs although he enjoys a cold bottle of beer at table during feast days. But he was a genuine promoter of cheerfulness, the infectious joy that

he wish those under his care to be their *modus vivendi* or lifestyle. This he expressed in fun activities like hiking, swimming, and even group singing. He always would remind us aspirants: *“No long faces please! If you are not happy here, go home!”* At that time, young as I was at 12, and struggling with the little English I can understand and speak, I knew what a *long nose* was but hardly had the faintest idea what the English idiom *“to wear a long face”* meant. Well Fr Felix would rather have us teased him with his long nose rather than see us wearing a long face. Just this week, I got a text message from an alumnus of DB Makati (about the interment of Fr Felix on May 16): *“Punta ako sa Cebu, di ko yata kayang hindi magpa-alam kay Fr Long - Nose.”* Obviously the monicker was no disrespect but a term of deep affection!

Group Singing and the Outdoors – Although not a musician by nature, there is any argument that Fr Felix loved to teach and sing recreational songs (cowboy and country songs) e.g. *Scotland the Brave, Father Abraham, Old McDonald, Father Abraham, Valderri-Valderra*, etc... Of course, he will accompany everyone with his blaring harmonica amplified by his ubiquitous megaphone. Valdera-ha-ha-ha! I think more than the music, is the infectious but clean fun he would like to spread.

Whether it was in Baguio or Mindoro, no summer heat was stopping Fr. Felix from organizing long hikes and dips. With his sombrero and harmonica, he will lead the boys. Fr Felix was the first to go to deep portions of the sea and lie on the water, floating like a dolphin with his shining head and visible nose bridge. He really loved the outdoors.

Green Thumb – Long before the Green Earth movement came to be, there was already this priest filling the school with plants. Who could forget this priest who would dare wear his *sombrero* regardless if it was a hot day or a rainy one? Never mind if the mud gets on his bunion toe and into his *tsinelas*. The care and attention with which he trimmed the garden and arranged them neatly was a reflection of the care and attention he gave to the community as its head. It was no wonder DB Pampanga was like a huge garden in the 70s when he was the rector. I recall him literary unearthing the roots of 3 huge narra trees and transplanting them to another area. I thought they would not survive. But all the trees that he relocated surprisingly produced leaves within the next 3 weeks. When he left for DB Makati, I expected DB Makati would soon have much foliage with Fr. Felix there. I was not mistaken. Indeed, the lush foliage in the Juniorate during his time was just an external testament to the dedication of this man. Only God can see the bloom he enabled among those under his care.

His love for the animals was simply fantastic, from the fishpond, to the turtles, the monkeys, the birds in the aviary, and even the aquarium. He related that when he visited his brother and his sister-in-law in London, the couple bought a monkey pet with a Roman collar. He asked why the monkey was sporting a Roman collar. His brother naughtily retorted that from henceforth, they were christening the monkey “Fr Felix”. Surely Fr Felix recounted to the couple his garden and even his pet monkeys way back in the Philippines whom he fondly called Tata & Toto. (By the way, he proudly said that his brother was the 1953 Mr Universe [Jim Glowicki]).

Amorevolezza - I recall that many of the mails we got from him it often ended with “*Affectionately – Fr Felix*”. But more than this written expression, Fr Felix personified in many ways the loving kindness that Don Bosco wanted his followers to radiate. Indeed Fr Felix was a beacon in this area with his ever cheerful aura, yet *without compromising his firmness when it was called for*.

Beard-Scraping Jokes - No one could forget either when he grabbed our bare arms and scraped them with his 2 mm grown beard. Yes, we -as small boys- were running away, albeit with fun. Moreover, Fr Felix had the canny way of pulling anyone’s leg with his ever funny banter. But one thing I’ve observed: he ensured that he never created a grey-area

between clean fun and uncharitable banter. At the same time, he encourages many of us: “*Do not be pikon!*” When I was with him in the community of Tarlac, Fr Miguel and the rest of us would eat *balot* together. He wouldn’t dare to do so. So we took the chance to pull his leg. I challenged him to take a shot of lambanog. (Someone gave a bottle as a gift to the community but no one wanted to touch it!) He gamely took a glass, thinking it was like drinking beer! Lo and behold! After a big sip, there was no after taste since lambanog was smooth to the throat. But minutes later his calvo turned red like a rising thermometer as the unexpected inebriation took effect! The following Sunday, I again jokingly offered the concoction, he simply brush aside my offer with a hearty laughter: “Oh no, go to hell with that!!!”

Going Pinoy! - It was December 1975 when we got the great news that Fr Felix became a Filipino citizen. He proudly stated that the local language he learned, as part of the requirements, was Capampangan! Indeed he attempted to be deeply rooted into his field of work, being one among us despite his different cultural background, color, and tastes.

Care for Confreres - I have seen this since my days in DBJ. Years before the ravaging lahar buried the school, when he had to say goodbye as a rector in 1977 (for his next obedience to DB Makati), he ensured that the love and respect for the Rector of the house would not go away with him. He asked the aspirants one last favor: “*Give the same love and respect you gave me to your new rector, Fr Zuffetti*”. In Tarlac, I personally felt his fatherly care as a rector when he reminded me on several occasion to go to bed since it was almost midnight. He doesn’t want anyone to be overworked.

Love for the Liturgy - When I saw him for the first time in 1975, at the time when the *Novo Ordo Missae* was barely 6 years old, I immediately sense that this priest have retained some of the postures and habits he may have gotten used to with the Tridentine Rite. His sense of solemnity and his attention to the details in the liturgy was admirable. There was something different in him with the way he recited the anamnesis and the way he held the Eucharist and the sacred vessels.

Laudate Dominum! - Liturgical Music did not escape Fr Felix’s attention. He was the first to wake the boys from their drowsiness during the mass. It is within this context that he asked my

help to encourage the boys to sing well! I recall him beaming with pride after a lively celebration of the Mass with the new bishop of Tarlac in 1985. After the bishop gave his apostolic blessing, Fr Felix was like a proud father with his chin-up because he was able to welcome the bishop into the school *in a lively but well-participated liturgy*. Indeed, the splendor of the liturgy was something very valuable for him.

Hard Work – If we have seen Fr Felix’s dedication, I believe it was a silent invitation and encouragement that boosted his perennial reminder to us boys: “*Be strong! DBJ is not a place for soft boys or mama’s boys*”. Later, I came to learn, that he as a boy, had to work hard in his house chores and recounted how he had to shovel the snow at home. He came to the Salesian House at Shrigley where he struggled learning English in the beginning. When he came to the Philippines, I am sure Bro. Felix was one of the first occupants of the poor convent of DB Tarlac in the late 50s along with Don Emilio Baggio and Don George Schwarz. Many of the older Bosconians recalled this triumvirate and the fond memories of Bro. Felix. He indeed grew up in the school of hardship and hard work! I was glad he too brought us up in these area of growing tough!

After all those years of service to the young Pinoys and so many wonderful lessons, I can only say: “*Thank you Lord for the gift of Fr Felix!*”

I recall that in February 1981, in Canlubang, we were all glued to black & white TV, watching the arrival of Pope John Paul II. As the Polish Pope arrived, he started to greet Pres. Marcos, Cardinal Sin, and other church and government dignitaries neatly lined-up on the tarmac. It was all handshakes and exchange of pleasantries until all of a sudden, His Holiness pulled the arm of a man in clerical garb and gave him a pretty tight embrace. It was Fr Glowicki meeting his *cabalen!* In 2005, during the requiem mass of Pope John Paul II, then cardinal Ratzinger said some beautiful lines in his homily: “*Possiamo essere sicuri che il nostro amato Papa sta adesso alla finestra della casa del Padre, ci vede e ci benedice. Sì, ci benedica*”. In a similar way, I dare say: *Fr Felix is now with the Father, beautifying the Salesian Garden in heaven; he sees us through the window of his cheerful heart and continues to bless us!*

Bless us, dear Fr Felix! Thank you very much Fr.Felix! Walk with God! Till we meet again!

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