

BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

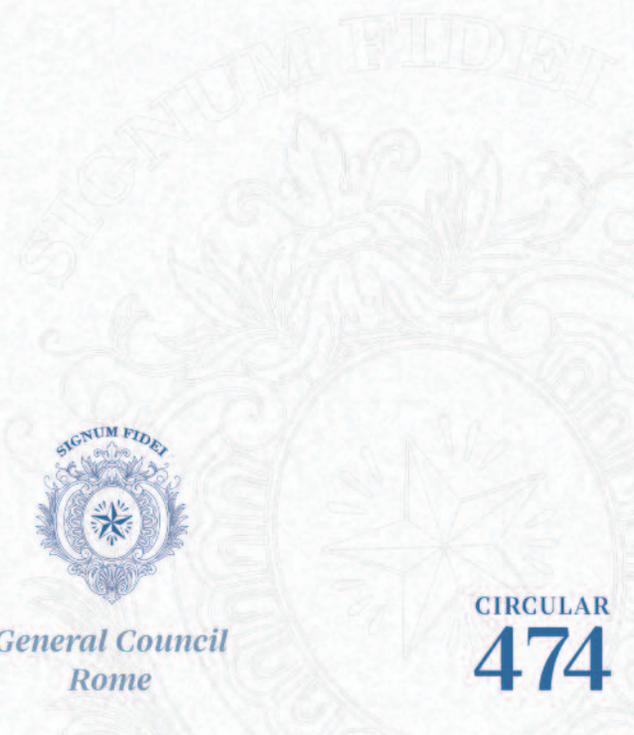
IN MEMORIAM

Br. Benildo Feliciano, FSC



*General Council
Rome*

CIRCULAR
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Brother Benildo Feliciano, F.S.C.



*"...May we always draw our life from you,
and be filled with the sap of your grace and goodness..."*

1937 – 2019

BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

General Council

Rome, Italy



FRATRES SCHOLARVM CHRISTIANARVM

THE GENERALATE

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Introduction

*The wise are more powerful than the strong,
and the learned, than the mighty.*
(Proverbs 24:5)

Brother Benildo was only 33 when he was appointed as the first Filipino Visitor of the District of the Philippines and just 39 when he was elected to the General Council in 1976. The gift of wisdom is normally associated with our elders but although still young Benildo showed signs of possessing the gift in performing duties traditionally reserved for more mature people. From those early years of responsibility, he was affectionately referred to by the young Filipino Brothers as “the Commander” for his stern persona and reputation for making swift and final decisions. However, beneath his tough exterior there was a very discerning and caring person. He exemplified De La Salle’s caution to the Brothers before their students that, “If you have for them the firmness of a father... you must also have for them the tenderness of a mother....” (Med. 101.3)

His years of experience in religious life and serving the District and Institute in various capacities made him more attuned to how the Spirit continued to be a moving force in his daily actions. He was not just any commander. He was a commander with wisdom and compassion. He was a commander with a sense of justice. He made decisions with care and concern because he believed it was right and just for the other, for the District and for the Institute.

Despite the epitaph, Benildo was a simple and humble brother. The Brothers trusted him. In him, they saw a superior who had the right to command them only because he spoke in the name of Jesus and as a representative of his person (Med. 72.2)

Yes, a commander, but he would be the first to exercise his vow of obedience to his superiors. Being a leader and superior for most of his religious life he knew what it meant to honour this vow and to model it for his Brothers. He listened, with mind and heart to God in prayer, discerning God's will for him as leader. He knew like the Founder, by "practicing this virtue, you will become one of the truly chosen by God in your community".

As a young Brother working in the Philippines, I had the privilege of serving under his command. To observe him as leader and witness his interactions with Brothers, maintenance staff, the women in the Provincialate office and all whom he was called to serve was a time of grace for me as it was for so many others. "Well done, good and faithful servant".

Fraternally,

Brother Robert Schieler, FSC
Brother Superior
and members of the General Council

The Years of Probation (1937-1970)

The story begins on April 1, 1937, at Singian Clinic next to the San Miguel Pro-Cathedral on the banks of the Pasig River in Manila, when a second child was born to Lamberto and Florencia Feliciano. Lamberto Feliciano started studying Architecture but had to stop when the family encountered hard economic times; later on, he was an agriculturist by avocation. Florencia Feliciano-Feliciano was a homemaker most of her life, although when her children were growing up, she worked at tending her own *sari-sari* [variety] store, later a grocery store. They happened to have the same surname, for they were distant relatives.

The baby would be named Lamberto, his father's Junior, though he was never called Junior or Jun, but Tito and later on, Brother, even by family members, as a sign of respect. Tito was preceded by Benedicto (Benny, now deceased), and was followed by nine siblings: Filomena (Lumen Ortiz), Vicente (Vic, now deceased), Florencia (Sr. Mary Vincent), Luis (Sito), Juan (Dary), Eugenia (Bong Salazar), Jose (Boi), Socorro (Suki), and Rosario (Chary Jose); this last sibling was born when Br. Benildo was already in his first year as a novice.

After the war, in 1946, the boys transferred to De La Salle College, their father's alma mater, while the girls transferred to St. Scholastica's College, their mother's alma mater. In 1950, the family moved to the Ermita district, selling the house on Moret to buy a gasoline station and a small *sari-sari* store on Padre Faura. The move meant getting closer to the

children's schools and also avoiding the floods of Sampaloc. The house was always full of guests, with both relatives and friends feeling at home there. Their parents said that it was better for the children to bring friends over than for the children to visit their friends' houses.

Br. Benildo finished grade school in 1951 and continued on to high school in La Salle. While in high school, he helped out in the gas station, pumping gas and even washing cars. Initially their father drove them to school but very early on he taught the boys how to drive and they took turns doing driving duty.

De La Salle College at that time was a small school and the teachers were mainly Brothers; the few lay people handled subjects on the national language, social studies, physical education, typing, and the like. Br. Benildo recalled that typically, five of their seven teachers for each year in high school were Brothers. The students had exposure to religion classes, confession and Mass once a month, prayer every half hour during class days. They also had vocation talks, especially in fourth year—lawyers, doctors, teachers, priests, and religious went to their classes and explained the different vocations, religious and secular, and the different professions.

During his senior year, Br. Benildo was interviewed by Br. H. Gabriel Connon (the Vice-Provincial and Director of the Scholasticate and also President of De La Salle College), who asked him if he would be interested in entering the Brothers' formation program in Baguio City and he said yes.

Br. Benildo graduated from high school on April 1, 1955 (the day of his eighteenth birthday) and ten days later, he entered the Brothers' Novitiate in Baguio. That was the beginning of his life as a La Salle Brother and his introduction to the religious life.

On November 20, 1955, he solemnly received the habit. His parents and siblings attended the occasion, all dressed in formal clothes, with Benny in his PMA uniform and Br. Benildo in his brand new habit. The eleventh and youngest child Chary, although not in the picture, was also there, in her mother's womb.



Br. Benildo with his family.

The new novices had an additional twelve months of intensive prayer, liturgy, conferences, fasting, and disciplined manual labour, all in the beautiful city that was Baguio at that time—peaceful, quiet, conducive to study and recollection, and heavily populated only during the summer months. Br. Benildo said it was very difficult waking up at dawn in Baguio. The day

consisted of morning prayer, nine hours of the Liturgy of the Hours, Mass, meditation for thirty minutes; silence at meals (readings from the Saints in the background), thirty minutes of spiritual reading in the evening and daily accusation of one's faults, and, every Friday, public acknowledgment of these faults.

The routine would be broken during the occasional long weekend or a feast celebrated by the La Salle community with families who were close to the Brothers.

After a total of eighteen months of the combined postulancy and novitiate, Br. Benildo and his companions professed their First Vows on November 21, 1956. In December they flew to the United States for their scholasticate, all of them taking their first trip out of the country. A trip abroad was a big event then, and a whole busload of relatives and friends saw Br. Benildo off that rainy day. One aunt had rented a bus to accommodate all the clan members who wanted to say goodbye.

Br. Benildo recalled that they were in a propeller-driven plane, which seemed, to him, to have landed on every Pacific island to refuel. Initially, their destination was San Francisco, but the house of formation there was full. They stayed there a week, and were introduced to the American Brothers and meeting the Filipino Brothers who were already there before them.

They proceeded onto St. Mary's College in Winona, Minnesota where they joined a group of 120 Brothers pursuing college degrees and undergoing formation. Once a week, the scholastics saw the Director and at least once a year, the Visitor General visited all the houses of formation and interviewed each of them. How did he know he had a vocation? Br. Benildo's answer was simple: "Well, you have an inclination. Just as when you are graduating from high school, you think you want to be a lawyer or a doctor, so it is the same with us who went to a seminary for the religious life. You think you have an inclination and you ask people and they might say, 'Yes I think you should go ahead and try' So when you ask the Brothers, they might say, 'Based on what we know of you in class, your behaviour, attitude, aptitude towards studies, and

so forth, we think you should try, we think you have a vocation.' It is only much later that you can confirm that. Once you enter, the formation programs are aimed at helping you discern and decide. As you go along, this is confirmed: when you follow rules, when you live in community, when you do what is supposed to be done, when you study, and when you read and so forth. If you get to like it and people say, 'Well, I think this is the life for you,' you're being affirmed and that's when you continue and keep going and discern and discern. Some people will take ten years, fifteen years, and continue, and then find out they have no vocation. Some will take a shorter time to decide. So it's very difficult to ask a person directly, 'How do you know you have a vocation?' He might say, 'I have a feeling, I think I have a vocation, that's why I'm here.'"

Of the Winona years, Br. Benildo had this to say, "Living with a hundred and twenty Brothers was something I had never experienced before. We prayed together, worked together, studied and ate together, woke up early together, literally crowded in the chapel, in the dining room, in the study hall. The College was located on a beautiful campus. And up to this day, when I visit, I have fond recollections and memories of my stay there."

He finished his degree in 1960 and returned to the Philippines. When he returned after four years in the U.S., he seemed to have lost his Tagalog and Capampangan. His siblings teased him about speaking only American English, but much later, they discovered that he still understood Capampangan, and of course, he could still speak Tagalog.

Br. Benildo joined his first community at De La Salle College - Manila and began to teach in the high school. In December of that year, Br. Benildo was asked to go to La Salle Academy in Iligan, in northern Mindanao, to replace a Brother who was

leaving. His 1961–1964 stay in Iligan constituted his first experience in Mindanao. La Salle - Iligan was opened in 1958 when the La Salle Brothers took over the Columban School for boys. In his words, “In Iligan, we were pioneering in every way. The classrooms (roof and walls) were made of nipa, the floors were dirt, the chairs and desks were made of plywood, literally nailed into the ground. In those four years, I taught everything from typing to religion to physics and even a little of physical education, plus all kinds of math classes, trigonometry, algebra, and so forth.”

After those initial four years of teaching in which he mastered classroom management techniques, he was asked to go to Bacolod City to become the Principal of the grade school, the first Filipino Principal of La Salle College - Bacolod (1964–1967). That was a different experience altogether since the students of La Salle - Bacolod were different from the students of La Salle - Iligan. According to him, “There I met a different environment. The children were mostly children of *hacenderos*; they were well-to-do. Needless to say, the school was well furnished and the teachers were well paid. But La Salle - Bacolod grade school had one mission besides being an academic institution—we had a free school in what is now St. Joseph School - La Salle, also in Bacolod City. And every fund-raising activity in our grade school was geared towards raising money to support the free school. It was good training for the students. Years later they would say they learned to do charitable work and to share with others because of their grade school and high school training in La Salle.”

In 1967 he was asked to go back to La Salle - Iligan to be the Director and Principal of that school, the first Filipino in that position, a position that he held until the end of 1969. Looking back, Br. Benildo said: “My recollection of those three

years was that the Muslim students fit in well. Although they were a minority, they did not seem to be treated differently from the other students.” With his characteristic wry humour, he noted, “One small problem happened on Friday afternoons when some of our Muslim students would be absent and they would claim they were at the mosque praying. I do hope they were in the mosque on Friday afternoons when they did not attend my class.”

While in Iligan, he also had a pioneering period taking care of young Brothers. There were three Brothers who had just finished training in the Scholasticate in Manila, and it was their first few years of teaching. He was happy to be able to be an example and set the pace for these young Brothers. Moreover, around this time, his sister Chary was pleasantly surprised to find her brother’s name listed as co-author of their biology textbook. In the sixties, Br. Benildo had helped with the new edition of a book originally written by Br. H. Alfred Shields.



Visit of Sister Mary Vincent, OSB,
to La Salle Academy, Iligan, 1960s.

In January 1970, before his third year as Director of Iligan was to end, Br. Benildo was asked to assume the Directorship of the Scholasticate in Manila, and take the place of the Director who was leaving the congregation. The Director was leaving by February and so in January Br. Benildo left Iligan to assume the Directorship of the house of formation consisting of junior scholastics and senior scholastics—those in the pre- and post-novitiate programs of the Brothers. There were thirty-five in William Hall at that time, quite a big community. He later learned that besides the Director who was leaving the Institute, the sub-Director and staff were also leaving. So, in a sense when he came in, he was alone and he had to choose his staff.

The challenges in those years, 1960 to 1970, according to Br. Benildo, had to do with his early experience as an administrator, but more crucially, as the Director of a community. For him, it was a learning process, guiding young Brothers coming out of formation and introducing them not only to school life, but also to community life, counselling people in formation, trying to discern those who had a vocation, and figuring out how to give advice to those who he thought should leave the Institute. Those were difficult times for him, but he was glad he was there when needed.

At around this time, the Brothers were beginning to feel the effects of the Second Vatican Council, which took place in 1962 to 1965, regarded by many as the most significant religious event of the twentieth century. In convening the Council, Pope John XXIII said that it was time to open the windows of the Church to let in some fresh air—but for many congregations, the fresh air was not a gentle breeze rather a violent whirlwind. The call for renewal in religious communities and in Catholic schools brought about cultural

upheavals and the Brothers, like many other religious congregations, began to lose many members, and they were going to lose more.

A confluence of events in the Church and in Philippine society had repercussions on the Institute, and in the year 1970, the Philippine District of the La Salle Brothers was established. And that epochal year marks the beginning of Br. Benildo's years of command.

The Years of Command (1970-2005)

Spinning off the Philippine District in 1970 was not meant to be a sudden development but was intended to be part of a carefully planned process. In Br. Benildo's account, "When you open a mission in an area, you are following a preset story line. In our case, the Order was 300 years old, so there is the story of previous establishments. You open a mission in an area, you establish a school until it's running, you recruit vocations, you start a formation program, you open other schools and recruit more vocations. Eventually, your goal is to have your own autonomous district and the Philippines was no different. What was holding us back was we couldn't get enough recruits who persevered. In the fifties, you needed a hundred to be a province and the projection of a hundred fifty Brothers by a certain date. We were working towards that goal and we were preparing for it. But what speeded up the process was the chain of events happening outside—the call for nationalization and the demoralization of the American Brothers. We were being called a colony by the nationalists, and the American Brothers got discouraged when they saw the anti-American propaganda outside and even in *The La Sallian* [the student paper of De La Salle College]."

Before the repercussions of Vatican II spread to the Philippines, and before student and worker mass actions rocked several countries in the late sixties, the De La Salle Brothers in the Philippines were moving confidently with measured steps towards autonomy. The years preceding those troubled years were full of optimism and promise. Br. Benildo

stated, “At that time the Philippine province was expanding. We were attracting missionaries from abroad and vocations in the Philippines. Several Brothers were coming from different Districts, and the Baltimore District coordinated the aid effort from the American Brothers. In the Order, there was a division of labor, a geographical distribution of responsibility—Irish missionaries to Malaysia, the French to former French colonies in Africa, the Americans to the Philippines. We had many vocations. Everything could be seen in a positive light. The schools were flourishing, the Brothers’ reputation was excellent.”

In his article in the booklet *Silver Jubilee Lectures (De La Salle Brothers Philippines, 1970-1995)*, Br. Benildo described the guiding principle for the new District in the policy statement drafted and approved by the first assembly of elected Brother delegates in the Philippines (Philippine District Chapter, June 1969): “Through his commitment to quality education for all people, regardless of class or social status, the De La Salle Brother aids the development of the country through trained manpower on all levels of education, business and industry” (Feliciano, 1997, p. 12).

The first Visitor of the newly established Philippine District was Br. Justin Lucian, but he resigned after only two months in the post (February 2 – July 4, 1970) because he had come to the conclusion that Filipinos should take over the direction of the District. On July 5, 1970, this press release was issued to local newspapers:

La Salle Brothers Appoint First Filipino Provincial

Brother Benildo Feliciano, FSC, has been appointed Provincial Superior of the La Salle Brothers in the Philippines. After the La Salle Brothers expressed their

consensus through an official poll, Brother Benildo received his appointment as the highest-ranking superior among the Brothers in the Philippines.

He is the first Filipino to hold this office. ... After studying in the De La Salle College grade school and high school, he finished his college work at St. Mary's College, Winona, Minnesota, U.S.A.

A member of his congregation for fifteen years, he formerly held important positions as Grade School Principal of La Salle - Bacolod City, Director and Principal of La Salle Academy - Iligan City, and Director of the Brothers' House of Studies.

As Provincial he would supervise the work of the La Salle Brothers in Manila, Baguio, Mandaluyong, Lipa, Bacolod, and Iligan City; he will also represent his congregation in all administrative matters with Church and State officials; he will represent the Brothers in the Philippines in official business with the Brothers' Superior General and his council in Rome.

Not mentioned in the press release was his age upon assuming office. Br. Benildo was thirty-three - the youngest Visitor in the world among the La Salle Brothers and also the youngest Provincial among the Orders in the Philippines.

What was the experience like, being Visitor during the turbulent seventies? Br. Benildo's answer in 2008 was: "It's as if you're in a movie. Things are just going on, you might know what to do but you can't do anything. You're just participating in an event that's unfolding before your eyes. You're part of the scenery in a movie. You see problems, you see people questioning. 'Why are we doing this?' 'What is obedience now?' 'Why can't we do this as laymen?' They started to leave during

my time and after I stepped down, they were still leaving in numbers. The Brothers were no different from the students with their questioning. There's the questioning of authority, of structure, of rules. 'Why this structure?' 'Explain things.' 'Why are we doing this?' If you can't explain anything, they just leave. I don't think we should blame Vatican II, but I think part of it is when you remove structure, people are lost, they're disoriented. And if there are no answers, then there's no use staying. As a result, there's a general disorientation; when you take away what holds people together, they just fall apart."

Remembering those times, Br. Benildo said that the saddest part of his tenure as Visitor was experiencing the large number of Brothers asking for dispensations, seeing the numbers of the Province dwindling. The American Brothers were going home because they felt disappointed and unwelcome; besides, it was not clear what the future would bring with the advent of Martial Law. At the same time, new missions were being opened in Latin America and Africa, and they felt they were more needed and wanted there. On the part of the Filipino Brothers, they were caught up in the spirit of questioning, and in their case the crux of the self-examination was, "Why should I be doing this as a Brother when I can do it as a lay person?"

He was only thirty-three when he assumed office, and his youthfulness might have been both a strength and a weakness. It was a strength in the sense that he had no past history to burden him and he could look forward resolutely. Being young, he accepted challenges as a normal part of life. Those were challenging times because of the social and political situation, but there was support from his peers, the other religious superiors. The annual convention of Provincials was a period of community building, a time of

giving encouragement to one another, and there was close cooperation among religious orders in undertaking different projects. There was a time when he was the only Filipino in the meeting of Provincials, but every year thereafter, another Filipino was being added to the roster of Provincials.

At the time, he realized that his youthfulness was likewise a weakness. His lack of experience was painfully obvious to him while counselling people with problems. Some communities had Brothers who couldn't get along with each other and he had to help them solve problems with community life. Sometimes he had difficulty understanding the older Brothers, and it was especially trying when Brothers would get sick or die.

This youthfulness and lack of experience expectedly also characterized the other Filipino Brothers. Young inexperienced Brothers were being given the responsibility of taking over the administration of schools from the American Brothers who were leaving or retiring. Br. Benildo allowed the school heads freedom to develop their schools as they saw fit; by giving them autonomy, he tried to change the existing system. This worked well if the people were competent because they were free to make their own decisions. Br. Benildo cited as an example how Bacolod expanded under Br. Rolando Dizon. But, if the Brothers heading the schools were not competent, the autonomy gave them freedom to make mistakes. And the mistakes could be serious because, here Br. Benildo repeated the observation of Br. Andrew Gonzalez, at that time, many Boards of Trustees of the schools were not functioning as they should and served as a rubber-stamp of the Brothers.

Finding qualified Brothers to run the schools was not the only problem; there was also a need to train the Filipino Brothers

to head the District's various formation programs. They needed to prepare Brothers to run the Novitiate and Scholasticate. Thus, the young Br. Visitor had to grapple with personnel problems and financial problems. But he didn't carry the heavy burden by himself. He had a Council with six to eight members who were elected to advise the Visitor. It met every two or three months or whenever he called them. Br. Benildo noted dryly that in the seventies, there was no La Salle Philippines, nor Synod or Assembly, nor Lasallian Family Movement; it was simply the Visitor and his Council and the Directors of the communities.

Looking back, Br. Benildo said that since they had survived, they tended to gloss over all those problems. The Brothers didn't remember how difficult it was in those days. According to him, Br. Gabriel Connon used to lift up his spirits with the statement, "We had bigger problems before in the forties, or even in the fifties."

Br. Benildo's second term as Visitor was a period of consolidating the gains of the previous years. The schools were expanding their enrolment, and the La Salle education apostolate was widely appreciated, especially by the alumni. It was in the setting of the educational mission that Br. Benildo situated what he considered the most significant achievement of his term. He said, "When I saw how academically qualified we had to be if we wanted to have recognized administrators, I encouraged the Brothers to study. When I became Visitor, Andrew [Gonzalez] was already abroad. I asked Roly [Dizon] to try to get a scholarship for a doctoral program in California, I asked Rafe [Donato] to go and he picked Harvard—so we had one in Berkeley, one in Stanford, and one in Harvard—the three best schools in the U.S. The other Provincials were so impressed. But in addition, some Brothers, the Directors, went

for renewal programs in Sangre de Cristo in New Mexico and the International Lasallian Center in Rome. We arranged for continuing formation programs for the Brothers on a more established basis.”

In his oral memoirs, he provided a summing up: “My biggest challenge in those years as a Provincial was how to put the District into a stable situation, how to recruit so that there would be enough people replacing those who were retiring or returning to the States, and also how to put the Province in a stable viable financial position.”

From the point of view of his confreres, what did they see as the legacy of Br. Benildo’s stint as the first Filipino Visitor of the District? This is what Br. Edmundo Fernandez, former Visitor, said in his homily for the Golden Anniversary of Br. Benildo’s and Br. Andrew’s Reception of the Habit: “His stint was marked by decisiveness in an era characterized by great turbulence. He also steered the District reeling from the effects of post Vatican II including a painful exodus of Brothers. He did such a good job that he was elected General Councillor from 1976 to 1986 and served under Pablo Basterrechea. To this day, he is fondly and lovingly remembered by Brothers all over the world.” In the video for the same celebration, Br. Edmundo teased Br. Benildo, thus: “He was Pablo’s hatchet man—when Pablo wanted to deal with a Brother harshly, he’d call Benildo, ‘can you deal with him?’”

Br. Roly Dizon provided a capsule assessment in his article in the *Silver Jubilee Lectures (De La Salle Brothers Philippines, 1970–1995)*:

Brother Benildo Feliciano was chosen as the first Filipino Provincial. The tone he set was for a District to be run by Filipinos for Filipinos, without alienating the

foreign missionaries who wanted to continue helping us, albeit in subsidiary roles. This tone was to be continued by the succeeding Provincials—Brothers Rolando Dizon, Victor Franco, Rafael Donato, Raymundo Suplido. (Dizon, 1997, p. 48)

Br. Vic Franco summed up that legacy thus: “One, the stability that he tried to bring to the District and the communities that made up the District during those very difficult years after Vatican II. Br. Benildo was always sensible; not that he would violate the rule but he would know how to bend it to make life more tolerable, more acceptable. Two, his concern for the Brothers in the communities. We all saw him as a strong person, somebody that we could rely on. He would be there when we needed him...we all look proudly on Br. Benildo and Br. Andrew as the first who persevered, the pioneers. There were many others who were very talented, but unfortunately did not continue.”

And, Br. Vic articulated an important part of Br. Benildo’s legacy: “In the beginning, in the early days, there was always that comparison between the Filipino Brothers and the American Brothers. And the colonial mentality was still strong, manifesting itself in terms of the thinking that the Filipino Brothers were not as good as the American Brothers. He was one of the first to prove them wrong. He proved that we could take care of ourselves, we could make decisions on our own, we could take initiatives on our own.”

Br. Vic explained the unintended consequences of Vatican II, the backdrop against which Br. Benildo served his two terms as Visitor: “In terms of religious life...it is only those who have come to our schools who can understand what a Brother is. If you talk about it in a parish that has no knowledge of what a Brother is, it will take a lot of explaining for people to

understand what that is. In a sense the pool of young people from whom we would draw is more limited than that for those who are priests or laypersons. For the Brothers it is still a gray area, less clear, all over the world, not only here. There's still that lack of understanding and because of the lack of understanding, there is a lack of appreciation of what this vocation is all about."

While Br. Benildo was Visitor, he was elected to attend the General Chapter in Rome, and while he was there, he was elected General Councillor, the first Filipino General Councillor and the youngest of the six Councillors. Of this new achievement, he said deprecatingly, "That's normal. Visitors get elected as delegates, and delegates get elected as Councillors." Br. Vic had a different view of the election: "With Br. Benildo having been selected to go to Rome, to represent this part of the world, not as the first Asian because there was one ahead of him from Malaysia, but from the Philippines, that was a very significant boost to our confidence, to our pride, in what we could accomplish here in the Philippine District. We all shared in that sense of 'we can do it.'"

At age thirty-nine, five to ten years younger than the other Councillors, he went to Rome for an assignment that lasted ten years, from 1976 to 1986. That was a transition period for the members of the Council of the Superior General; before his time, there were twelve Councillors or Assistants and each of them was responsible for one area. During this transition, only six Councillors were elected, and they were sent in twos or threes to visit Districts.

The Councillors helped out with retreats, assemblies, meetings, chapters, being provided with translators as needed. When asked to give a retreat or to attend an assembly, they went alone. When the Superior General travelled, he usually

brought along one of the Councillors. In this way, Br. Benildo visited France, Spain, England, Ireland, parts of Italy, most of Africa, all of Asia, Australia, the whole U.S., Canada (French and English-speaking), Mexico with two big provinces, Colombia, Ecuador, Central America.

At the same time, the Councillors had separate responsibilities. Br. Benildo was the liaison with the mission office in Rome. He was responsible for anything related to funding for Africa and Asia, evaluation of projects, coordination of aid coming in so that there was no duplication, and most importantly, he was responsible for ensuring accountability. At the end of the year or when the project was done, he had to make sure that there was an accurate accounting of the funds. That took up a lot of time especially when it came to those countries that needed aid most.

To him the job was eye-opening. The visits of the Councillors to different areas gave them an opportunity to hear a lot of things, which could be adopted or adapted in another area. They also listened to a whole range of concerns. For example, in Nicaragua, when the Socialists took over, the Institute could not do anything even though the Brothers loved their schools. There was political tension. Some Brothers sympathized with the Sandinistas, and in another part of the world, some Basque Brothers sympathized with ETA, and all that the Councillors could do was listen and try to give advice, at the same time feeling that the advice wasn't really being listened to. In Burma, the Councillors would be lucky to get in for a week and stay a few days with the Brothers. During a previous visit, a Councillor had to stay in a hotel as a tourist because he knew he was being followed by the police and he knew the Brothers could be questioned. So, there were circumstances beyond their control and sometimes they felt they weren't much of a help.

Remembering his days as a Councillor, he said: “The key was to see everyone as much as possible, so we would gather them in one place and we would travel two days just to visit this isolated town in Africa. Once, we took a small plane in Africa and flew into a sandstorm—the priest who was flying it flew over a new town and we landed on the main street. One time, we travelled one whole day to get to the school but all the student boarders had been dismissed because there was no water—there was a drought. They gave us each one bottle for drinking and washing.”

He added: “You need to take breaks to do your laundry; the least bothersome thing is living out of a suitcase. The more troublesome thing is you’re always under medication, malaria pills, anti-diarrhoea pills. That’s why people never sign up for it, it’s a difficult job. My one term was for ten years; by the time Br. Ray Suplido and Br. Vic Franco took the job, it was seven years. Physically, it was exhausting. In Rome, you’re working; you’re getting requests and writing letters—there’s a lot of bureaucratic work. As for the traveling, it depends on the area you’re visiting—out for two weeks, and back for one week. In Australia and South Asia (India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka), one month and then you go back and then you visit the rest of Asia, another month and a half—not because of the number of Brothers, but because of the distances, the difficulty in getting connecting flights. So a low point is you really have no base, no home, you belong to the world. You’re always a visitor. You never get a chance to settle down. Living out of a suitcase is not easy even though the Brothers are very helpful to you. You do get homesick.”

The position of General Councillor offered several psychic rewards, according to Br. Benildo. The Councillors were amazed at how much help they could give with regard even to

things they took for granted. They gave lectures and retreats, they presided at meetings and school functions—they were viewed as symbols from Rome. And the Brothers were very grateful for the kind of advice that the Councillors could give. However, the position also served up disappointments. The biggest disappointment was that after working very hard at resolving a problem and coming up with recommendations that everyone agreed with, the Councillors would go back for a subsequent visit and realize that nothing had been done, that everything was back to zero.

Summing up, this is what he considered as the biggest achievement of that time: “I think we succeeded in building community. We succeeded in bringing the Brothers together—we were able to get ideas, we could bring our experiences from one region to another region. And we would bring Brothers together and they had a better sense, a better understanding of the organization they belonged to in a wider context. So we improved structures and we improved the organization.” In his oral memoirs, he sounded more pensive about that period: “In those ten years our observation was that the Institute, like many religious orders, was aging, as those entering were not sufficient in numbers to be able to replace the Brothers who had died or who had left the Institute. So it was a time of change for many of us and a time of diminution of numbers in our communities and provinces. So in many meetings during those ten years the Brothers would discuss and bravely face the future and decide how to go about resolving problems and difficulties.”

Personally, he considered his ten years as Councillor as among the happiest and most fulfilling years of his life as a Brother. He explained why in his taped memoirs: “I learned a lot of things, I saw a lot of places and met many people of different

persuasions, different ages, different cultures. Traveling was not very easy—we visited not big cities but very inconvenient and out-of-the-way places to see the Brothers and the students and the schools. On the other hand, every trip was a surprise, something new, something unexpected. The ten years meant being away from problems that you would normally encounter in a school, in a local administrative set-up. What was fulfilling was, you met Church people, you have an understanding of how the Vatican functions, you met many Popes and were inspired by them, you met many Brothers who had the same spirit as St. La Salle as our Brothers in the Philippines, and you met Brothers who appreciated and admired what the Philippine Brothers were doing in our own Province.”

An outsider’s view of Br. Benildo’s stint as Visitor and Councillor has come from Br. Mark Murphy of the Myanmar District and also Director of Lasallian Services, Singapore. During a visit to Manila in March 2009, he set down some reflections on Br. Benildo’s stints as Visitor and General Councillor. An excerpt from what he wrote:

I first met Br. Benildo in the 1980s when he served as General Councillor for Br. Jose Pablo Basterrechea, Superior General. I was at the Casa Generalizia for a number of meetings and served on international committees of which Benildo was a member. He also accompanied Br. Pablo on a visit to the District of San Francisco when I was the Auxiliary Visitor with Br. Norman Cook as Visitor.

It was clear from the first time I met Benildo that he would be a special personality, not one easily forgotten. He was strong in his opinions, had a great sense of humour that ran from witty to raucous, and was quite passionate about the Institute, our mission and his

personal vocation. His enthusiasm was infectious; you wanted to join with him in the commitment to the work we do—and the work we should be doing, as direct service to the poor was an emerging theme.



Audience with the Pope, with Vicar General
Br. John Johnston FSC in the background 1970s

After six years as Visitor and ten years as Councillor, Br. Benildo was certainly entitled to a sabbatical. He took a year off from administrative work and spent it in St. Mary's College, Moraga, California. He took courses in Educational Administration and finished the eighteen-month program in nine months, but he skipped writing the thesis and thus did not get the Master's degree. He was there, after all, for a holiday-study combination, and so during weekends he took trips to San Francisco, Los Angeles, and other parts of California.

Refreshed in mind and body, Br. Benildo returned to De La Salle University to take on the responsibility of University

Registrar, and concurrently, of Director of the Brothers' Community. As Registrar, he worked on streamlining processes and procedures and ensuring the integrity of student records. He improved service to the students by making the computer system more efficient in handling student enrolment and clearances and by assigning more personnel. He cultivated a sense of professionalism among the personnel at the same time he instilled discipline among the students.

In 1991, Br. Andrew stepped down from the presidency after four terms in office (1979–1991). A new President was installed, Br. Rafael Donato, and he restructured the offices and brought in a new team of administrators. Br. Benildo was appointed Senior Vice-President for Internal Operations, with the Vice-President for Academics and the Deans being under him.

Br. Benildo did not serve the full three years as Senior Vice-President for Internal Operations because in 1993, he was elected Visitor once again, for a three-year term. As he recounted in his taped memoirs, "What happened was the Provincial was suddenly elected in Rome and there was a void, and the Brothers thought they could fill this void by electing me temporarily until they could get a better sense of whom they wanted. And I think that was what happened."

However, although he had served as Visitor for two terms (from 1970 to 1976), it turned out he was not going back to a position he knew. He quoted Br. Andrew's observation that the second time around, there was a generation gap—he didn't know the young Brothers because he was out for ten years, and they didn't know him. He didn't realize how much the District had changed during that time. He continued thus in his memoirs: "The second time around, there was a difference because things had changed without my realizing how much things had

changed. When I was Provincial the first time, I thought that the idea of autonomous and self-sufficient schools should be a District trademark, that schools should be encouraged to be left alone and develop on their own. When I came back, there seemed to be a sense of competition; there was a De La Salle System, which seemed to be set apart from the other schools, and it looked like the other schools were on the fringe of this system. So when I took over the second time there was a clamour, a movement, to get the schools back together and maybe what was called for was less autonomy and more centralization.”

It was during this time that his father passed away in his sleep, from a heart attack, on July 11, 1996, in the family home in Magalang, Pampanga. The family all pulled together for moral support, especially because it had happened so suddenly and they had not been prepared. Br. Benildo took the lead among the siblings, acting as the eldest (since older brother Benny had passed away in 1990) and relieved their mother of the burden of decision-making during that difficult time.

He finished his term as Visitor in 1996 and his next assignment was to help out in Immaculate Conception College [now La Salle University], a school that the La Salle Brothers had acquired in Ozamiz City, Misamis Occidental, Mindanao. He assumed the presidency of ICC - La Salle in 1997 and then spent the next six years building up the school and leading the community of three Brothers. In his words in his oral memoirs: “When we took over, it was a flourishing Catholic school with a modest population. My goal was to bring the Lasallian spirit into the school and to see to it that the teachers had the same sense of professionalism that we demanded of all teachers in La Salle schools, and the students were what we would call Lasallian, socially aware and

dedicated to academic pursuits...My legacy from my years there would be organizing the school to be what a Lasallian school should be, with a functioning Board of Trustees, several committees in school, effective decision-making levels among faculty and staff. To summarize, my years there were leading up to what came next, which was expansion, offering more courses, and building more infrastructure.”

This stint in Mindanao gave him a perspective on how the Church did its missionary work. Because the religious orders were small in number and the need was so great, the priests and religious met often and they coordinated their work. In some ways, the Catholic Church in Mindanao reminded him of what he saw in Africa during his days visiting communities as a Councillor. He saw how strong the diocesan organization was, with priests, religious, and involved laity working in parishes and schools, and doing social work in a concerted effort. He was pleasantly surprised that the Church in Mindanao could be much more advanced than in other parts of the country. He marvelled at how progressive the Church in Mindanao was liturgically and how open it was to changes. His six years in Ozamiz convinced him that renewal was going on and there was participation by people in many parish activities from mass to other forms of liturgy to fiestas to projects in the parish and in the diocese.

While he was in Ozamiz, he began to experience the first symptoms of a neuro-muscular disease that would take its toll not too long after. He started noticing that there were feelings of numbness in his hands that gradually moved up his limbs. It seemed his muscle coordination was becoming defective and he sometimes would just fall; he was losing muscular control. Br. Vic narrated one revealing incident: As General Councillor, Br. Vic was accompanying the Superior General to Ozamiz in

2003, and Br. Benildo, as ICC - La Salle President, was bringing them around the campus. They were having a meeting with the faculty when Br. Benildo suddenly fell. They saw him simply fall.

After his six-year stint in ICC - La Salle, he returned to DLSU - Manila to serve as Purchasing Officer. During the transition between his assignments in ICC - La Salle and DLSU - Manila, his mother passed away, on May 5, 2003. The months preceding her death, as she slowly lost her strength, were difficult for the family, especially for Br. Benildo, who was very close to his mother since he had acted—according to his sisters—as the eldest child after his brother Benny’s death in 1990, serving as her adviser when she had problems. It was well known in the family that he disliked visiting sick relatives or friends because he could not bear to see them suffer. Sr. Mary Vincent recalled that when their mother was sick at home, whenever he visited, he stayed with her in her room. However, as her condition progressively grew worse and became terminal, he could not bear to sit on the sofa beside her bed, and he simply kept her in his gaze from the anteroom.

His stint as Purchasing Officer was cut short in March 2005 when he entered the hospital for surgery. Thus would begin a time of quiet—in terms of relinquishing external power and control, and also in the sense of growing in trust, humility, and inner strength in silence.

The Years of Quiet (2005-2019)

This section is called “The Years of Quiet” only from the perspective that Br. Benildo had stepped down from prominent positions in the administration of Lasallian schools. They were far from being years of quiet in terms of Br. Benildo’s personal deepening as a Brother.

He was admitted to Makati Medical Center on March 6, 2005 for surgery of the spine. The MRI of his brain and spinal cord had provided the diagnosis of cervical spondylotic myelopathy. The orthopaedic surgeon whom Br. Benildo had chosen to perform the surgery explained the options to his family. Without the operation, the paralysis would progress, and because the compression was high up in the spine, the paralysis would affect not only the extremities, but possibly all the bodily functions, including digestion and respiration. On the other hand, the patient could die on the operating table, or he could end up partially or totally paralyzed. The spinal cord was already very badly damaged from compression for many years and releasing the pressure could cause some more damage.

The operation lasted twelve hours, with the surgical team first operating from the front and, after a lunch break, operating from the back. They addressed the compression of the vertebrae by separating the bones to put spaces in between, and then they fused the bones with titanium pins and wires. To immobilize his head, they screwed a halo vest to his skull—consisting of a rigid halo firmly attached to the skull and a

torso-enveloping vest. He wore the halo vest for six weeks, when it was replaced with a neck brace.

Ninety-nine days from the day he was admitted, on June 15, 2005, Br. Benildo finally left the hospital. In that space of time, he had suffered several medical crises necessitating trips to the ICU. He had two bouts of pneumonia and, most concerning of all, was discovered to have a bedsore (also called a pressure ulcer), stage IV, the most serious stage, potentially fatal. This, in spite of his receiving the best nursing care and round-the clock caregiving by his sisters and “the boys”—caregivers trained to look after him.

By the time he was discharged, the medical bills could no longer be kept in a folder; in fact, they occupied a whole drawer in the Collection Office. The unstinting support of the Brothers went beyond financial help. Every day, Br. Visitor visited him at the hospital and the other Brothers also visited him regularly. Every Brother visiting Manila from the provinces or abroad paid him a visit.

After he left the hospital and went home to the Brothers' Community on Taft Avenue, the treatment of the bed sore continued. He also started physical therapy and occupational therapy sessions in earnest. At the same time, Br. Benildo began preparing for what could be considered the most important anniversary in a Brother's life, the Golden Jubilee celebration of the reception of the habit—this was to be a joint celebration with Br. Andrew Gonzalez, scheduled for November 20, 2005 at the Chapel of the Most Blessed Sacrament in De La Salle University - Manila.

It was an extraordinary celebration, and for his family and friends who had been with him every step of the way during the difficult months of pain and life-threatening crises leading

up to the jubilee, it was even sweeter and more extraordinary. He attended the celebration in a wheelchair, but his presence at mass and the reception afterwards was victory enough. It was not the same with Br. Andrew, who missed the celebration because he had been rushed to the hospital a week before, the first in a series of hospitalizations that ended with his passing away on January 29, 2006.

On that occasion, Br. Visitor Edmundo Fernandez delivered the homily and gave a tribute to the two honourees, part of which is excerpted here:

...Half a century ago, to the day, two young men, Lamberto Feliciano and Macario Arnedo Gonzalez, 18 and 15 years old respectively, turned their backs on a life of privilege and comfort and took the habit of the De La Salle Brothers. They were not the first Filipinos for there were thirteen other young men before them, but they have been the most faithful.

If today, as a District, we stand tall, it is only because we stand on their shoulders. If we see far and wide, it is because of their eyes. It is but fitting that we honor these two men today for we would not be where we are now if not for them and several other Brothers whose jubilees we will celebrate in the coming years...

As young Brothers, we greatly feared Benildo...he had become a legend to us long before he was fifty and we gave him the name, more a term of endearment, The Commander.

It is easy to mistake his sharp wit and dry humor for sarcasm but we have grown to slowly see his love and compassion shine through. With Benildo, I have learned what it is to take care of Brothers. [...]

The response of Br. Benildo was short, quintessentially Benildo in its wry humour, dry wit, and specificity of detail:

My thanks to Br. Andrew's and my family, relatives, friends, and others. My association with the Lasallian Family began fifty-nine years ago when, in Grade 2, I entered De La Salle College. It was a neighborhood school; it was small; it was within walking distance. You could go home for lunch and come back to school for the afternoon session and still have time to copy homework from somebody. In those days we cheated but we never got caught...

Fifty years is a long time and for those who are wondering what happens—the Provincial gives you a hospital bed, Sr. Antoine gives you a new wheelchair, they throw a big party, and then they put you in the Archives to retire...

Our documents say that our life is a series of challenges and opportunities. I would say fifty years for me is full of surprises. You wake up in the morning wondering what will happen and you know you have to face up to the challenge...

To conclude the fifty years: I would like to thank the Lasallian Family for making me part of your apostolate in realizing your educational mission and in the pursuit of excellence.

After the celebration, for Br. Benildo, it was back to the gruelling task of treating of the bedsore and undergoing therapy sessions. Curing the bedsore required nine months of watchful care.



Golden Jubilee of Reception of the Habit with the Brothers,
Most Blessed Sacrament Chapel, November 20, 2005

At first, there was hope that the intensive sessions of physical therapy and occupational therapy would bring back most of his motor skills. Up into the second year of therapy, he entertained the hope that one day he would be able to walk. But the realization eventually set in that the therapy sessions could do only so much and that the initial damage and subsequent trauma were so severe that therapy could bring him only to a certain point, the point where he had regained his gross motor skills and could hold his torso up while on a chair and could gesticulate.

And so, life went on, regular in its rhythms. This quiet life was disturbed late June 2007 when he was diagnosed with prostate cancer. Fortunately, the type of cancer detected was not aggressive, and the tumour was confined to the prostate. He underwent radiotherapy sessions at Medical City and the treatment was successful.

In an interview, Br. Vic Franco tied up Br. Benildo's special charism as a De La Salle Brother with the fortitude he showed in sickness: "Certainly that fidelity, that steadfastness, the quiet confidence that he exudes is part of his charism. Beneath that exterior is a person who's rather strong in his faith, his commitment to his vocation. ... For me what has really proven that is his illness, the way he has accepted it, the way he continues to be very alive in many ways, very interested in what is going on, still very involved in the District, the Institute. ... That steadfastness, that fidelity, that determination, I see it in this situation where he is not able to move freely...—...that's the greatest gift he's giving us, the example of how to face an obstacle in your life with equanimity, determination, without any self-pity at all."

In September 2013, he started living at Residencia de La Salle, a residential health care facility for the La Salle Brothers, located on the campus of the De La Salle Medical and Health Sciences Institute in Dasmariñas City, Cavite. It was a gift of love from San Miguel Corporation and Eduardo M. Cojuangco, Jr. in gratitude for the service of the De La Salle Brothers to Philippine education. Br. Gus Boquer, the director of the community during its construction, had sought Br. Benildo's advice on how its design and facilities could best serve the needs of sick and retired Brothers. The fresh air, the flowering plants, the natural setting away from city streets, and--an added bonus--its nearness to the De La Salle Medical Center made it ideal for Br. Benildo. The only downside was the difficulty for his friends from Manila to visit him. But, as he had done every Wednesday while he was living at the Brothers Community on Taft Avenue, he made a trip to his sister Bong Salazar's house in Green Hills to have lunch with his family.

From time to time, he had medical issues that were easily treated, but on June 19, 2019, he was rushed to the hospital for pneumonia. Two weeks later, on July 3, food having gone down the trachea instead of the esophagus, he suffered a heart attack, was rushed to the ICU, and shortly after, and suffered a second heart attack. He received the last rites of the church, and his body seemed to be shutting down. However, on the next day, he woke up, and continued struggling for life for an additional four days until his heart finally failed. He expired on July 8 at 7:22 in the morning, surrounded by family members.

The wake was held at the St. La Salle Chapel, La Salle Green Hills from July 9 until July 11, with an evening Mass on each day.

Upon his death, his fellow Councillor from 1976 to 1986, Br. Vincent Rabemahafaly, of Madagascar, the only one of the six Councillors still alive, shared this reminiscence:

Br. Benildo was a man of action and initiative, and during the first months when the new Council was planning the new way of organizing and leading the Institute, he found the days long and endless, but finally he adapted to the system.

We had to visit a good number of Districts and there were always language problems. But realizing the international reality of the Institute, he showed no reservations or hesitation in visiting non-English-language districts. He simply asked for a translator when he wanted to say something important. He visited the Brothers of Madagascar in the islands of Reunion and Mauritius with me, and he asked me to translate his thoughts. I could see then that Br. Benildo was a man of vision.

In community; he was sober in speech; he did not speak much, but he listened closely to those who spoke. He was always ready to do something, without delay and without waiting. Brother Benildo appeared to me as a man of action and immediate commitment; he was not a man to let problems go by but he had to solve them as soon as possible.

During the ten years we lived together, I found Brother Benildo to be a man of prayer, he was always present at community prayers.

His remains were brought to Lipa City, Batangas on July 12 for the Mass of the Resurrection at Capilla de San Juan Bautista de La Salle at 10 am. From there, he was laid to rest in the Brothers' Memorial Cloister.

Here is part of the shared reflection (in place of a homily) that Br. Edmundo Fernandez, former Br. Visitor, said at the Mass:

We often see in posts that Benildo was “the first Filipino Brother”. ...We couldn't have asked for a better set of pioneer Brothers. While Andrew built and strengthened the reputation of De La Salle University, Benildo solidly held the fort of the Brothers. He shepherded the District in its infancy through the tumultuous '70s, a time when religious life was in flux and many left the Institute. Given his resoluteness I believe that there is no one who could have done that shepherding better than him...

When the definitive history of the Brothers in the Philippines is written, Benildo will not be a footnote, that I am sure of...

After the Mass, Sr. Mary Vincent read a poem of thanks and good-bye on behalf of the Feliciano family.

From the first family
Benildo was born into,
To the family he chose
To spend his purpose-driven life with,
The Lasallian Family:

Many thanks
For welcoming him into your fold,
For providing the inspiration that molded him
Into becoming the eminent commander he was.

And special thanks for this respectful and loving farewell.
We all love him and will miss him --

A contradiction
Of shock and awe
Of intimidation and stark fear of him
That melts into genuine loving and respect

Of numbing surprise and sympathy for his physical condition
That turns to admiration and inspiration
As physical limitation transforms
Into a shining example of divine surrender
And surrender to the Divine.

Before he left this world
He showed us how limiting the human body can be
As if he knew we would need comforting when he departs.

Servant that he was,
Whatever God gave him to live out here on earth
He embraced as part of his mission
To demonstrate his faith,
His love for God.

Today we mourn his passing
For ourselves
For we will miss him
Yet we celebrate with joy his passing
For we are confident he has left us
To be in our Father's house.

Again, sincere thank you to the La Salle Brothers
Whose apostolate became his expression of faith,
And brought out the best in him. [...]

May all of us touched by Br. Benildo's life
Touch others in the same spirit.

And may he have everlasting peace
In Jesus' name.
Amen.

The second eulogy was delivered by Br. Martin Sellner, a friend from the days of their formation and who had been with him the last week of his life.

As I reflect on Br. Benildo's life, the comparison to our Founder, St. John Baptist de La Salle, is so evident. Our Founder saw a need and he took it on as his mission. He was challenged by many, civil authorities, ecclesiastical authorities, his own Brothers, and he accepted the challenges and resolved them. In the process he developed something new, something which grew and grew way beyond anything he could ever have dreamed. In the end, he accepted everything that our Lord sent his way. So it was with our Br. Benildo. After his formation, and once he was in community with his Brothers, his colleagues, his students, he saw a need, a need among his Brothers, among the students, among

the schools, a need for community, a need for independent thinking, a need for solidarity, a need for Filipino leadership, and he took it on as his mission. Like our Founder, this thing took on a life of its own, growing way beyond anything he could have imagined back in 1955. In the end, last weekend, if only all of us could have seen his acceptance of what was happening. ...

Our Founder had this to say in one of his meditations: “It is God who has called you, who has destined you for this work, and who has sent you to work in his vineyard. Do this, then, with all the affection of your heart, working entirely for him.” This is Benildo, called, destined, sent, who worked with affection for all throughout his life. [...]

After the Mass, family members, the De La Salle Brothers, relatives and friends wended their way to the Brothers’ Memorial Cloister where he was laid to rest.

Conclusion

In the annals of the De La Salle Brothers in the Philippines, Br. Benildo Feliciano stands out as a towering figure—the first Filipino Brother, the first Filipino Brother Visitor, the first Filipino General Councillor in Rome. He is inevitably referred to as the Master Builder of the Institute in the Philippines. He is also lovingly referred to as The Commander. But he was, first and foremost, a La Salle Brother.

This sense of collaborating with God in building truly human communities shone through in Br. Benildo’s reply to the question that was asked to him in 2009, “What do you consider as the biggest trial in this time of your life?” His straightforward answer: “The biggest trial is not being able to help as many people as I would want to. I meet people who ask me for help and it’s very frustrating when I do not have the resources I want to give them.”

In fact, even in his illness, he extended help to those in need. To cite just two instances, for many years, he collected books and school materials to send to La Salle Ozamiz, where he was once President. After every Wednesday lunch with his family, he and his caregivers brought food to a family of five in the Baseco compound near Port Area.

This desire to be of help is eloquently expressed in the following line from the prayer composed by Br. Mike Valenzuela and given as a bookmark on the occasion of Br. Benildo’s Golden Jubilee: “may all who need us find shelter in our care”.

A fitting way to conclude this biography is to reproduce the whole prayer, because it subtly traces the arc of Br. Benildo's life from his years of probation to his years of command to his years of quiet. And it is also, appropriately enough, the prayer reproduced in the memorial card given at his funeral.

Heavenly Father,
Root us in your love
Like trees
beside flowing rivers.

May the years
leave us tall and strong,
Unbowed by the weight
of duty or disappointment.

May we always
draw our life from you,
And be filled with the sap
of your grace and goodness.

May we bear
lasting fruit in our age,
And may all who need us
find shelter in our care.

May we bask
in the sunshine
of your healing presence,
And praise you
when the nighttime comes.

Fill our hearts
with joy and peace
That we might testify to your mercy
at work in our lives.

Amen.

The story ends here. But the memories will remain.

RELIGIOUS CONSECRATION

Postulancy	10 April - 20 Nov 1955, Baguio
Habit-Taking	20 Nov 1955, Baguio
Novitiate	20 Nov 1955 – 21 Nov 1956, Baguio
First Vows	21 Nov 1956, Baguio
Scholasticate	22 Nov 1956 - March 1960, Winona, Minnesota, USA
Perpetual Vows	30 May 1962, Green Hills

TOUR OF DUTY

DATE	ASSIGNMENT	POSITION HELD
1960-1961	De La Salle College, Manila	GS & HS Teacher
1961-1964	La Salle Academy, Iligan	High School Teacher
1964-1967	La Salle College, Bacolod	Grade School Principal
1967-1970	La Salle Academy, Iligan	Director & Principal
1970-1971	Scholasticate, Manila	Scholasticate Director
1971-1976	Provincialate, Philippine District	Provincial
1976-1986	Generalate, Rome	General Councillor
1986-1987	St. Mary's College, Moraga, California	Graduate Studies
1987-1991	De La Salle University, Manila	University Registrar
1991-1993	De La Salle University, Manila	Senior VP for Internal Operations
1993-1997	Provincialate, Philippine District	Provincial
1997-2003	ICC-La Salle, Ozamiz	President
2003-2005	De La Salle University, Manila	Community Director, Purchasing Officer
2005-2012	De La Salle University, Manila	Community Director
2012-2019	Residencia, Dasmariñas, Cavite	



La  Salle

The text "La Salle" is displayed in a bold, sans-serif font. The word "La" is on the left, followed by a large, stylized five-pointed star with a thick outline. The word "Salle" is on the right, positioned to the right of the star. A vertical line is positioned to the left of the star, separating it from the word "La".



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