

SCJ NEWS

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The first group of SCJ missionaries for the Philippines pictured with Pope John Paul II in 1988.

SCJ presence grows in the Philippines

This seems to be the Year of the Philippines. During the past year we have featured stories in the SCJ News and on our province website about SCJs teaching in the Philippines, international students studying in the Philippines, and now, the elevation of the district to regional status.

As noted in the cover article, the U.S. Province has strong links to the SCJ presence in the Philippines. The first group of SCJs who went to the Philippines prepared for their mission at Sacred Heart Monastery in Hales Corners. The U.S. Province continues to assist the region with short-term personnel assignments, as well as technical and financial assistance.

In just the first few months of this year several SCJs from the U.S. Province have traveled to the Philip-



Philippine Region inaugurated on anniversary of founder's birth

In 1989 a group of eight SCJs began preparations for the first SCJ mission in the Philippines. Ranging in age from 28 to 52, they included men from Argentina, Italy, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, Indonesia and Great Britain.

For most, the first step in the process was becoming fluent in English. One of the two official languages of the Philippines, English would be the common tongue of the missionaries. In 1988 seven of the eight came to the U.S. Province to study in Sacred Heart School of Theology's ESL program. The eighth, who already spoke English, joined them later.

The SCJs came to the U.S. Province learn a common language, but more importantly, they came together to develop a sense of community and shared goals for the new mission.

After months of preparation, the group arrived in the Philippines on May 17, 1989.

"Since the beginning we chose as our home one of the poorest and least developed islands, the island of Mindanao," said a member of that first group. "Following the example set by our founder, Fr. Leo Dehon, the SCJs from the start have been involved in different social projects favoring the poor, the sick and the oppressed."

In 1994 the SCJs established a for-

mation program. The first Philippine novitiate class professed vows in 1999 and soon after, the Philippine mission became the Philippine District. Now in 2012, that district becomes a region. A ceremony marking the occasion will be held on March 14, the commemoration of the founder's birth.

Among those to be installed in the new regional council? Fr. John Karl Cabaluna, SCJ, a member of that first Filipino profession class.

Rapid growth

Eight SCJs came to Mindanao less than 25 years ago. Now as the district becomes a region, that initial eight has grown to include 55 professed SCJs. Seven of its 23 priests are Filipinos.

What was just a fledgling formation program in 1994 has evolved into a hub for SCJ studies in Asia. Joining Filipinos in the novitiate are novices from Vietnam and India. Last year, two Vietnamese SCJs who did their formation in the Philippines were ordained.

"Manila has become kind of a 'Rome' in Asia for theological studies," said Fr. Francis Pupkowski, SCJ. A member of that first group of eight missionaries, Fr. Francis will serve as the new region's first major superior.

Home to several internationally well-respected universities, Manila is

