

## CLERICS REGULAR MINOR

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# The Project of God

### **Very Reverend Teodoro Kalaw, CRM**

*Superior General of the Adorno Fathers*

## DEAR FATHERS & BROTHERS,

Greetings of peace and Happy Feast of the Foundation of the Order! It is our honor and joy that our Order is 433 years old and by the grace of God, we continue to thrive in a world that is fleeting and transient.

In line with our founding anniversary, I again, have gone over Fr. Nicholas Capetola's book "Augustine Adorno, Life, Selected Writings and Comments." This book has been vital to my novitiate journey when Father Michael Marotta was my Novice Master. Before I delve deeper into the book, I want to give my deepest appreciation to Fr. Nicholas, one of our living historians, by writing the humble beginnings of our religious family.



I can never forget Chapter Three “The Project of God” because its content has resonated with me all through these years. It happened 433 years ago, but the message and the experiences of Augustine Adorno, was something that is still relatable and it can traverse through many generations. I am sure that in this lifetime, we often associated the word project with school work. When we think of project it is something that is contemplated and meticulously planned by an individual or a collaboration of a group of people to achieve a particular aim.



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Imagine, what it must have been like to be Augustine Adorno as he collaborated with God, someone infallible and all-knowing, as he goes through a hole in the needle in founding the Order. The first step that Augustine did was to make sure that this project was God’s inspiration. How can someone really be sure that it was God’s inspiration? He went through an arduous process of discernment, prayer, and study.

Our Founders lived at a time when the Church was different, following the Council of Trent. The path of holiness that God had laid out took a backseat as the majority of the clerics indulged in power, politics, treasure, and prestige. Members of the Church, including priests and the religious easily gravitated towards the pull of luxury and what money can buy. They forgot about simplicity. They forgot about love, mercy, and compassion for the People of God. In time, the priesthood became a privilege and not a vocation of holiness that God had intended it to be.

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I am certain that Augustine Adorno experienced this as well. The spiritual impoverishment that afflicted so many moved his heart to make Christ first in his life. The Holy Spirit inspired Augustine Adorno, and our other Founders, to form Clerics after the heart of reform, after the heart of Christ. In the case of Adorno, he truly desired to experience how many holy clerics and religious were living their lives. He sought help and guidance from many spiritual experts, preachers and theologians. He was moved by the spirituality of the Theatine Fathers, namely Giustino Barnaba and Don Basilio Pignateli who was his spiritual father and who guided him in his discernment. Other religious, Franciscans, Dominicans and the Hermits of Camaldoli also guided him so that the project of God would achieve its intended aim, to bring back simplicity, compassion, and mercy in His Church.

To be God's anointed spearhead in His project in undertaking a daunting task of reverting the Church towards the more complicated road of compassion and mercy, Adorno felt God's love through the many challenges and backlash that he encountered. Adorno, though He acted on God's plan, was never exempted from the normal feelings of doubts, discouragements, and what St. John of the Cross called in spiritual theology, the Dark Night of the Soul. Though there were challenges, one notable quality of Augustine Adorno was his availability to listen. When he listened, it paved the way for him to think of solutions and possibilities.

Maybe some of you may wonder, if this was God's project, why would He allow so many challenges? Adorno after all was a faithful servant. Yes, God can make all things fine in a snap, but remember the things that can easily be gotten, can easily be forgotten.



While in the church of Saint Mary Major in Naples, Adorno experienced the loving presence of our Blessed Mother. She helped him to get through so many challenges, moments of psychological stress, spiritual dryness and doubts. In one incident from his life, it is said that when Adorno knelt before the Blessed Mother's image, he heard a soft voice assuring him not to worry because the Order, which you will found will be under my Maternal protection. This becomes a re-assurance of once again enlivening the faith of our Augustine Adorno.

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Let us concentrate on this experience of Augustine Adorno. He surrendered himself and allowed God to make the project of founding a religious Order a reality. He was not spared from many difficulties and like Jesus, embraced the cross. He underwent his own personal conversion by freely opening his heart and pouring everything out to the Lord through prayers, fasting and selfless obedience. He was driven to pursue and do the will of God.

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What do we learn from this? One thing is that we need to be influenced by the holy men of our time. We need to be inspired by the holy ways of life that our Founders lived. This implies developing and working at growing in holiness, especially through the daily events of our lives. This means that we must develop a profoundly spiritual attitude that is open to the workings of the Spirit.

Our Founders were overjoyed that the new Order they founded was approved on July 1, 1588 with the Papal Bull, *Sacrae Religionis*. Pope Sixtus V quoted verbatim from what Adorno and our co-founders wrote in their petition for approval: “These men, by divine inspiration, already lived together as a congregation of the Clerics Regular for the glory of God and for the salvation of souls.”

Let us celebrate this July 1, the day that our religious family was founded. We must take pride that our Order is a project that has been spearheaded by God to glorify Him and for our Salvation and the Church. We celebrate this because we see our community as a precious gift to us. May we, the Clerics Regular Minor, see this celebration of our foundation as a profound thanksgiving to God. My hope is that we will live what we affirmed at our profession.

I thank you for your time in reading this letter. I again greet you with the same inspiration and joy that our founders had 433 years ago. May this joy be ever present and alive in our hearts. Continue to pray for me always. Like Augustine Adorno, I too at times face many discouragements and challenges. Through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, my hope is for the spirit of the founders to inspire me to continuously walk and serve you in the best way God desires.

*Theo Kalaw*

