



BR. NICOLAS AGUILA, SDB

10 September 1954 – 21 November 2020

Brother Nicolas Gonzales Aguila, a loving Salesian Brother, played a crucial role in the education of young and took his duty to heart as in-charge of Don Bosco Youth Center.

On November 21, 2020, he did not witness the sunrise. It was a Saturday, a day of significance for the Blessed Virgin Mary, particularly the memorial of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary—a day he held in great esteem. Despite his pain and suffering, Mary seemed to lift him from his bed, leading him to witness the rising of her Son, Jesus Christ.

Leaving behind the place that had been his home for the past two decades proved to be a challenging endeavor. The thought of parting ways with both the young boys and girls he cared deeply for and the dear confreres he cherished was even more difficult than bidding farewell to the place itself. He had been willing to endure more suffering if it could alleviate the pain of those underprivileged youth. He had been prepared to endure even more suffering if it meant guiding more young souls toward Christ and inspiring others to assist them. However, the time had come for him to go. He was finally free from his earthly suffering, called to his ultimate vocation—to be with God and enjoy the promise of Don Bosco.

Brother Nick departed with immense joy in his heart, reassured by his confreres that they would continue to care for the boys and girls he had left behind. In the days leading up to his departure, he had the opportunity to spend time with his family, reuniting with his brothers, nephews, and nieces. Many of his beloved students also came to greet him, leaving him with nothing but good and happy memories. His fellow Salesians paid him visits, relishing his silly jokes and playful antics. Some even managed to coax him into dancing, momentarily easing his pain. Friends and colleagues extended their warm greetings, hugs, and kisses, helping alleviate the agony caused by his illness. Nurses and volunteer DBYC alumni provided round-the-clock care, leading to his contentment and happiness.

In his final days, Brother Nick had the chance to witness the legacy he left on Earth. Messages and gifts poured in from around the country and abroad, primarily from the boys he had taught in various locations, including Cebu, Bacolor, Mandaluyong, and Tarlac. Some of them had been part of the volleyball teams he coached, while most were just fondly referred to as 'pongklongs' and 'mokongs.' He cherished them all deeply, as they were members of the DBYC.

Teaching had been his life's passion. After receiving the diagnosis of cancer in the summer of 2019, he had asked the doctor if he could continue teaching. The doctor said yes, bringing him immense joy. However, as the months passed, his illness eroded his ability to teach in the traditional sense.

The treatments and check-ups caused him to miss the classes he should have been conducting. Nonetheless, his condition led him to adopt a different form of teaching—not in a classroom but through his day-to-day interactions. This teaching was more about valuing life's essentials and embracing suffering, giving his life new meaning.

Throughout his life, Brother Nick was no stranger to trials and difficulties. One such trial shook him out of religious life, leading to a period of discernment. Another trial had sown a seed of anger in his heart. Most of these trials, however, deepened his appreciation for the vocation God had bestowed upon him. They brought him to his knees, drawing him closer to God and the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Initially, Brother Nick had not been a lay brother. When he made his first profession on April 1, 1976, in Canlubang, he took the vows as a cleric. He spent his postnovice years until he departed for Practical Training in 1979. The first four years of his Practical Training were in Cebu, followed by two years in Bacolor, Pampanga. A period of discernment between April 1985 and January 1988 led him to teach at Assumption University in San Fernando, Pampanga. As a result of this discernment, he requested readmittance, and on June 15, 1988, in Bacolor, he took the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience as a Salesian Brother. Finally, on March 19, 1993, he made his solemn vows, committing to a perpetual profession as a Salesian Brother at the Mary Help of Christians Chapel in Don Bosco Tarlac.

The majority of Brother Nick's Salesian life was spent in Don Bosco Tarlac, totaling 23 years. He first arrived there in 1991–1994, later spending six years in Don Bosco Mandaluyong before returning to Tarlac in 2000. During these years, he served as the in-charge of the Youth Center, a role that brought him immense joy. He felt a special connection to, San Nicolas de Tolentino, to whom he was named after by his parents Antonio Aguilon Aguila and Ely Buenconsejo Gonzales in 1954. Just as San Nicolas dedicated his life to distributing food to the poor, Brother Nick had numerous opportunities to care for the young. Some of them sought shelter and food near the school's main gate, initially staying close to the guardhouse. He made sure they received a good meal and a comfortable place to sleep until he could find suitable lodging for them. He found immense joy in seeing these young individuals complete their education and succeed in life.

Brother Nick felt profoundly honored to be entrusted with the responsibility of overseeing the community's apostolate for the poorest. He was not alone in this endeavor; his community provided steadfast support. Many generous benefactors made their work for the youth possible, often choosing to remain anonymous. They warmly welcomed the carols and presentations of DBYC scholars each year. While Brother Nick was naturally reserved when it came to asking for help, these benefactors often arrived at his office door, ready to write checks for the DBYC or hand over envelopes. He assured them of his prayers and offered a significant portion of his pain for their intentions.

In his final days, three constants remained in Brother Nick's life: pain, prayer, and presence. The pain he endured in his gut was excruciating, even overpowering the most potent painkillers. He believed that this pain was a manifestation of the anger he had carried within him from days past. This experience taught him the importance of not harboring anger and the value of forgiveness.

Prayer became his solace when he could no longer teach classes and his medications left him feeling weak. He turned to God in prayer, finding solace in spending time in the chapel or his room. His pain itself became a form of prayer, a sacrifice offered as his participation in the suffering of Christ.

Despite the pain, Brother Nick never wanted to inconvenience anyone. He bore the pain stoically, taking bathroom breaks and performing daily tasks independently to avoid bothering others. Initially, he was hesitant to return to Tarlac, fearing that his presence would cause his community to suffer. However, their presence proved to be a great source of comfort. They conveyed their care for him every day, with his confrere—priest, who had been his former grade 5 student, bringing him the Eucharistic Bread—the only sustenance he could consume. DBYC alumni, who felt like his own sons, took turns accompanying him and assisting his nurse in his care. His confreres seized every opportunity when he was awake to make him laugh, sing to him, and reminisce about beautiful memories. Every night, as he lay in his bed, they joined him in reciting the rosary and compline. When the time finally came for him to embark on his journey to the Father's house, they surrounded his bed, bidding him farewell with reassuring words, gentle embraces, kisses, prayers, and songs. The last song he heard as he took his step into eternity was "O cor Jesu sacratissimum..."

On November 28, 2020, a Saturday, Brother Nick was laid to rest in Don Bosco Canlubang, the place where he had also embarked on his journey as a Salesian of Don Bosco. This marked the end of his 66-year earthly journey, which had been marked by its hardships but also its joys. Each day, he had strived to lead a holy life, despite his own weaknesses and failings. When asked what message he wished to leave with his confreres, he simply said, "be faithful to your love."

**Fr. Jerry Santos, SDB**  
Rector, Don Bosco Tarlac

8 December 2020

*Let's continue the legacy of Bro Nick.*

Support the DBYC-Tarlac Scholars.

For more information, visit the website:

<https://bronick.dbtarlac.edu.ph/>

