

# Marist NOVITIATE



MARIST  
INTERNATIONAL  
NOVITIATE  
102/5 AGARADAGURU  
MAWATHA TUDELLA

May  
June



**Editorial:** Welcome everyone! It's been a while since our previous Newsletter, and many things have occurred here in Tudella and beyond. We hope you enjoy reading about our experiences!

The photo, above, is from our celebration of "Religious Brothers Day" on May 1. Some of the Brothers seem to enjoy eating fried chicken feet!

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## “Progressive Dinner”

### – a celebration of ‘Being Brother’ (by Br. Rod Thomson)

To celebrate “Religious Brothers Day” and “St Joseph the Worker” on Friday 1<sup>st</sup> May, we decided to have a ‘progressive dinner’. As our planning continued, we felt that we just didn’t want to celebrate our Brotherhood, but we wanted to witness to this, and “be” brother to our neighbours in the local area, particularly as these were caught at home with the curfew, many of whom would have lost their jobs and had little money to buy food. Some of these were local workers, laid off from the Marist Chicken Farm next door to us, plus local elderly people, etc. We got permission from local authorities to be involved in distributing dried food to these people, and so bought and bundled up various goods, then contacted those we knew were living in the most desperate circumstances, for them to meet with us on different days to receive some food. Each distribution day was a great success with smiles all round.



Thus, our evening celebration on May 1 was heightened in its meaning for us all, by “being” brother in our local area. The evening consisted in an opening prayer and grace (led by Rod), pre-dinner drinks and Entrees in our Conference room (cooked by Mateus and Phuc), with a presentation by Nghi and Hai on the meaning of “being a Brother” for Vietnamese Catholics.

Main course followed in the Dining Room, cooked by Chinthana, Duc and Gioan, with a presentation by Réal on the developing story and journey of the Canadian Brothers and Lay Marists together. Dessert followed back in the Conference room (prepared by Duy), with a presentation by Long and Isac using videos that highlighted ‘being brother’ here in the Novitiate. Then followed a reflection on the Brothers’ present and future witness in Timor Leste, by Gaspar and Ade. As the reader can see, all community members were involved in every aspect of the evening, celebrating and living ‘being brother’ together.

*Duy’s home-made peanut icecream was a hit!*



## Novitiate & Post-Novitiate life, in the time of the pandemic (by Br. Nghi)

The coronavirus has steadily spread here in Sri Lanka, and so is now across all the country with 1840 people infected. So far the government has been locking down the country, trying to control the spread of the virus, but last week they lifted the curfew to let people come back to their normal lives, except some areas like schools, churches, and public organizations continue to be locked down. For our community here in Tudella, we haven't been impacted greatly. The only changes are that we have stopped activities with outside groups, like our apostolic work. We young brothers, professed in April, continue to stay here, and have commenced a pre-MAPAC study program,



until we have flights to go home. The novices were supposed to go on ACEP, but now their program has been postponed. They continue to remain here in community to study an extension of their program. All of these changes make us feel a bit frustrated, but they do not really make us upset, because we feel happy with everything around us at the moment, such as: we have different classes with brothers most days, we have big gardens which involve us taking care and planting vegetables when we have free time, we have different times for us to pray, reflect and develop our talents, and the most important times that always make us feel happy and relaxed are our volleyball game at 5pm and recreation time at 8pm! All of this keeps us always feeling busy, happy and in



some way helps us to adjust to the feeling of worry and concern for everyone's health in this uncertain time. We young brothers have been particularly blessed as Br Rod and Br Chinthana took us on a holiday, to get out of the Novitiate routine. We went down South, past Galle, to a place near the beach. We had a **surfing lesson** and went to a local **Safari Park**, and enjoyed some delicious home-cooked Vietnamese meals! We feel luckier than some others in places of the world, but deep in our hearts we always keep our prayers and compassion for the crisis, and ask God to control this pandemic and bring peace for His people.



## Champagnat Celebration, *Br Hai*

Together with all Marists on June 6, we had our celebration on the feast of our founder St. Marcellin Champagnat, a man following Christ as Mary did. From the Salve Regina to Sub Tuum, our celebration was shared with the spirit of other Marists of Cham-



pagnat with the opening of the celebration by the **Eucharist** celebrated in the community with the presence of local lay Marists. It was a social distancing Mass with the guests and community's members in sides and served by our wonderful choir made up of novices, young brothers and mp3 player for a French song. Capturing our night was a "**Quiz Night**", which was on the life of our founder, the first brothers, scripture and our daily life. Our teams were for three groups: novices, young brothers and not so young brothers (if you are interested in the score, please contact us to know the details!) As for me, it



was one of the most beautiful celebrations I have participated in. I felt the joy and happiness of a small Champagnat in each one of us as we journey together in a simple, humble and modest way.

## Food during the Pandemic, by *Br. Sales*

Sri Lanka was locked down due to the Corona Virus, at mid-March and an island-wide curfew was declared, and curfew rules were very strictly imposed. People of the country were limited to their houses. All the government offices and the private sector stopped functioning; shops, supermarkets and other market places closed. Our Brothers and Novices in our international community also faced the same problem. Curfew lifted four hours every day, except the weekend to buy only food items for the people. During that limited time, people crowded at grocery shops and market places, but they had to follow the curfew rules, for example wearing face masks, keeping social distance



etc. The majority of the people followed the rules, so that there were long queues near the shops. Food items of our kitchen store room nearly becoming empty. I ran up to the shop where I regularly buy groceries for us, but that shop was also closed down, but the shop owner promised to supply necessary food items to our community. They themselves transported items to our house for nearly two and half months, whatever we needed. The person who supplies our meat (chicken, beef and pork) also did the same, and whatever we bought from the supermarket, they also managed to get the items to us, whatever we needed. Bro. Chinthana and our driver Mr. Justin, supported and helped us to keep our brothers and novices comfortable with day-to-day meals. I am sure we did not feel a lack of food during the curfew period.

## Living with the « Master » of Novices by *Br. Real*

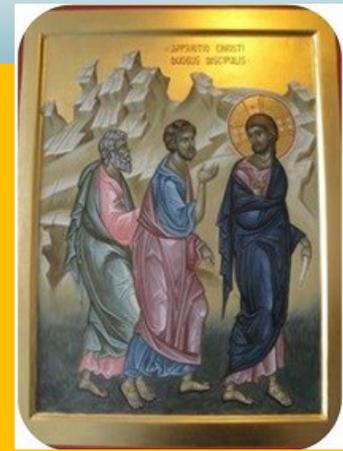
As for many of us, the occurrence of the Corona Virus brings us to live many situations and quasi-permanent adaptations that can be make us feel sad and sometimes even discouraged. On the other hand, as with any crisis, it is an opportunity to develop more creativity and flexibility in listening better to the Holy Spirit speaking inside of us and in the community.

I have experienced it with the absence of the new Master of Novices, Br Francisco Garcia Ruiz. As many know, Br Francisco assumed the position of Master of Novices at the beginning of April. Until now, he remains blocked in Davao in the Philippines due to the situation. In the meantime, I was asked to assume locally this responsibility until he could arrive.

At this moment, one sentence of the Gospel comes to mind: “But you are not to be called rabbi (master), for you have one teacher, and you are all students” (Mt 23,8). A little bit stressed at the beginning, I have to say that this Word of God brought me great peace. I was thinking: the formation in our days is

complex. I feel my poverty and weaknesses, especially having to work in English. Here we need really the Formator in our midst. He promised to be with us: “Where two or three are gathered in my name...”

So I went ahead in this faith, confident of the support of a wonderful team (Br Francisco at a distance, Br Rod, Br Chinthana, Br Remy and Br Sales), of the joyful and fruitful commitment of the young brothers and the good will of all the novices. Yes, we faced some challenges since the beginning of April but also how many moments of light, of peace, of joy. Living with the “Master in our midst,” always renewing the gift of our life for one another (here is the challenge), we find new ways, new creative solutions. In experiencing this, more and more I am convinced that He is the Way for a real NEW BEGINNING of the charism.



## The news from our “hero’s journey” workshop, by *Gioan*.

I learned a lot in our workshop a few weeks ago, on the “hero’s journey” by Brother Rod. I was impressed with it, as it helped me to discover the values inside myself and somehow it made me think positively that I could also be a hero. It showed me the journey of life and how I can achieve my goal when I have to encounter difficulties and challenges, before I can reach my goal. I thank that Br Rod’s ways of teaching were very interesting, by using video clips taken from some parts of movies. I realized that the movies had similar meanings and express also the same way to be a hero or heroine. Many movies follow the hero’s journey and I thought that the life of us here in novitiate also follow this journey, so I also call it the hero’s journey to prepare myself to follow my dream and of course I also face with difficulties and challenges like study and how to grow to be a hero. It is still a long journey but I can pass over those difficulties and I will be happy because I can make my dream become a reality. Finally, through this workshop, I believe that each one of us has value to make our dream become a reality, so it helps me to believe in myself. I can do it, I can be a hero. So let’s continue our journey and we all can become heroes together.

**Celebrating Pentecost!**





## Trip to Rome by Br. Long

Six of us newly professed Brothers were supposed to go home for holidays, but very unfortunately, we were not able to make it because of the pandemic. We remain in the Novitiate to continue our lives here with the 'new normal'. However, our second year novices and the formators took the initiative to take us on an imaginative trip to Rome! (breaking all the restrictions and bans ... *Ha Ha Ha*). The trip was very well organized and the program went smoothly, with all the necessary steps, such as; checking in, boarding, taking off, service on board, etc. It was interesting to experience all these. Then when we had arrived in 'Rome', the Brothers and the Novices took us on a tour around the Vatican and then to all the amazing sights in Rome, just through their presentations. Finally, we ended our tour with a beautiful Italian meal. Congratulations and thank you for all the hard work, the creativity and the initiative that were shown to us through this wonderful program. Thank you specially for our wonderful first trip to Rome. We are all looking forward to the real trip one day! *Ciao!!!*



## Community Work, by Isac

We have community work three times a week: Monday, Wednesday and Friday afternoon, at 3:45pm, organised by the Dean. The Dean announces the information for community work and which places we will work in, whether inside the house or in the garden. We Novices and Brothers often work together in these tasks. According to me, this common work is very important. It is to take care of our environment and to keep our place tidy. We work inside the house fixing things, like fans, repainting, electricity, etc. These works are generally done by the maintenance group, but if there are too many things they will invite the community to work together. Working in the garden includes cleaning the grass around the bananas, vegetables, and papayas, and grass on our road as well. We are happy to enjoy our common work together as a Marist family. And as well, by working together, we are also doing some small exercise to make our body become strong and more fit.

# Community Mission Statement

As a Marist international and intercultural novitiate community, we feel called to further discern our vocation – growing in our closeness to the Lord.

Hence it is important that we spend time in prayer and our Review of the Day, learning how to discern God's will.

We believe that the Lord reveals himself to us through our ordinary, daily experiences. These experiences include our ability to understand our individual differences – for example, in our personalities, our cultures, and our ways of learning. We are called to accept and appreciate these differences as gifts from our brothers.

We strongly emphasize the value of being united, through our mutual support, authentic sharing and attentive listening. This gives us happiness, love, intimacy, and a sense of belonging.

This helps us to realise that we journey together, called to live in solidarity with one another, living the Marist charism for our time.

We are not perfect, we have a lot of weaknesses and struggles, and need to accept ourselves and forgive one another, to build up a loving community. We are called to forgive at any time and to learn to ask for forgiveness from those we consciously or unconsciously hurt or upset.

Through all our novitiate experiences, we feel called to connect with God and each other, to grow in our vocational journey.



Young Brothers filling out their Visa forms.



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**Marist Brothers**

**Marist International Novitiate Tudella, Ja-Ela**