

Lessons from COVID-19

Lots have been said and written about Covid19 however, as we continue to battle with the Pandemic, we can only stop the discussion of this topic when we have attained success. We are all aware of pandemic's various negative and positive effects in our lives as individuals and groups. To mention a few of them; thousands of deaths have occurred, its effects on the families, the collapsed of the world and respective nation's economies, changes in social life, new guidelines of public gathering, social distancing, difficulties in travelling, curfew, lockdowns and closure of schools and churches.

On the other hand, we have also witnessed good practices like hand washing, regular use of sanitizers, fumigation and improvement of hygiene in public places. Other benefits noticed include replenishing of nature and rivers are becoming cleaner. At the closing of the recent MDA Council meeting with the link General Councilors, Br. Soteris invited members of the Council to reflect collectively as well as individually on various experiences gained during the Covid19 Pandemic. I guess our experiences will vary extensively from place to place and at personal level. However, let me share some few experiences:

At a personal level, in spite of the fear and apprehension of the consequence of the pandemic, it has enabled me to venture in many things I was previously reluctant to do or found it difficult to attempt, a typical example is the courage gathered to take up an online course. Besides this, I am able to allot more time to my spiritual life and community activities. Other brothers in Pailin Community shared this view as well.

A fellow Religious shared with me that seeing the vulnerability and fragility of humans during this period of the pandemic has deepened his concern and care for his family and those around him especially in the community. It is amazing to see how some of our students have taken the role of teachers at home, teaching their younger siblings. Coming home to some of the lessons learnt in MDA, covid19 outbreak has provided us a big lesson of agility, thus in this difficult and challenging times, we have managed to get many things done, including the completion of Pailin hostel 2, the beginning of land acquisition process in India, houses in Vietnam and the Philippines. The ability to keep the various formation programs going in respective MDA Countries is also a big plus. The situation made has made us realize how important it is to be comfortable with change and the willingness to shift the gears when necessary.

Among other things, the Pandemic has helped us to appreciate more the importance of technology as we have relied more on virtual means of communication for meetings and other important gatherings. Covid19

situation has enabled us to learn a new way of working and has also unveiled the need for social interaction of the Marists of Champagnat in other parts of the District and beyond.

Conclusion:

The recent discovery and emergence of various vaccines created some sort of hope for the future. Conversely, several questions regarding the efficacy of the vaccine have been raised, coupled with the mutations of the virus and resurgence of new infections in various parts of the world has painted a blurred and scary future. We are not sure when we will be delivered from the shackles of this pandemic. While waiting in hope for the end and eradication of the pandemic, lets us not relent in keeping the good practices of the pandemic and observe all protocols to lower its impact.



Max's newly built pizza oven



Pierre sharpening plants



Julie teaching her siblings



Takwan enjoying reading

Bro. Francis A. Attah



News from The Postulancy House – Davao

Lay Marist Collaboration. During the month of December from the 14th to 17th. We had the opportunity to listen to some talks about the Lay Marist in collaboration. **Mam Agnes Reyes** was the speaker. She is a very well-prepared speaker in this subject and the experience she has for having been a member of MDA gives to the talks a familiar test. Thank you for all the inputs you gave to us.



Setting up the Christmas Orib in our community.



After reflecting in the Apostolic letter of Pope Francis "*Admirable Signum*" on the meaning and importance of the Nativity Scene, we divide the community in three groups to prepare the Nativity scene near the entrance door of the community and in the Chapel. The birth of a child awakens joy and wonder in us and makes us think once again of this unique event that divides the history into either before or after the birth of Christ.



December events:



Every month on the last Saturday we celebrate the Birthdays of the month. On December we celebrated two postulants **Mr. Mai** from Vietnam and **Mr. Dami** from East Timor. First, we had a liturgy to give thanks for their life then we share the joy to be together with our meal.



Gift Given at Christmas time: It doesn't have to be an expensive gift is the recognition of how we know and understand each other and how overjoyed we feel when we have the perfect gift and see the delight in the faces of our brothers.



To celebrate Christmas, we had a Championship of volley- ball and football, the winner is in the picture with Bro. Walter the couch of this team.



January 2021

Foundation day: On Foundation day we share about a letter we had receive the day before, it was a letter sent to each one of us (postulants) and it invite us to renew the hope that a new world is possible and that we want to begin it here and now, in union and in tune with the Marist Family of the five continents. We listen to the words of **Br. Emili** said *"The Marist Institute was not born once and for all, but it continues to be born today"*. In the evening we went to have supper in a nearby restaurant.



Child Protection:

We had a module of three days on line about Child Protection: **Br. Jeff Rhey Antiquisa** from the Province of East Asia, gave us the talks. We thank him for helping us to see the world through "the eyes of a child" and to be aware of the red flags that can help us, our communities, and families of our students to prevent any abuse. He also advises us about the importance of education for us and for the parents and staff.



Farewell ceremony for Br. Tri :

On Saturday 9th, we had a Ceremony to thank **Br. Tri** for his presence among us during these years. **Br. Hoan** expressed our thanks with some words of gratitude..." You were the guide and the companion always ready to go to the hospital or to accompany some of us to the dentist...Your mission of helping postulants to discern their vocation has been crucial for the life of the Marist community... Thank you very much Tri ...we are going to miss you but go where the Lord calls

you to be; He will be your help and Mary your protection” Bro. Tri departs from our community on 13th January.



Bro. Hoan, fms

Being present while in exile's land

Greetings from MAPAC,

Brother Paco and I have been present here in MAPAC since September, 2020 until the present time. We are both waiting for our chance to go to the Novitiate in Tudella, Sri Lanka. I am working with the Vietnamese Embassy to find a flight to go back to Viet Nam first to join with others two Novices and to process my papers for the Novitiate. As for me, it is my great privilege to be here among the community of the Brothers, both staff and student Brothers, to join daily activities and works and share life with the fraternal spirit. There are 4 main functional Fraternities, two of us are in Francois Fraternity. We, unlike the rest of the community, just adhere to the Novitiate work mainly through online classes and sharing.

There are many occasions for us to gather together to share our lives joyfully, meaningfully and fruitfully. We had a Christmas celebration in a silent atmosphere. Then, we celebrated the new year of 2021 with fireworks the whole night around the village, and we gathered together for the foundation day of our Institute with prayerful and joyful festivity.





Ly. pre-Novice

Christmas celebration at the Tudella Novitiate, Sri Lanka

- Bro. Nghi

Dear brothers and sisters!

In this Christmas season, due to the impact of the pandemic, we could not celebrate Christmas like other years before, we could not go out to sing carols in the church or different places around the community. But within the community we had a good and meaningful Christmas celebration; we decorated around the community, made the crib, we bought the food and gifts to distribute for the poor neighbors, we sent our Christmas cards and made live stream videos of our Christmas carols for our families and friends. We also celebrated the Mass and prayers to pray for our community and for the world. Especially this Christmas we had a wonderful moment of sharing our Kris Kringle gifts for one another in community, to share our fraternity with our brothers.



So dear brothers and sisters, I thank God for this meaningful Christmas. I ask Him to continue to bless us on our Journey, and moreover to help us to overcome these struggling times with the pandemic. May the Lord bless you and keep you safe.

News from Talit, West Bengal, India.



The Diocese of Asansol completed the renovation work of the hostel. Our hostel looks very new.

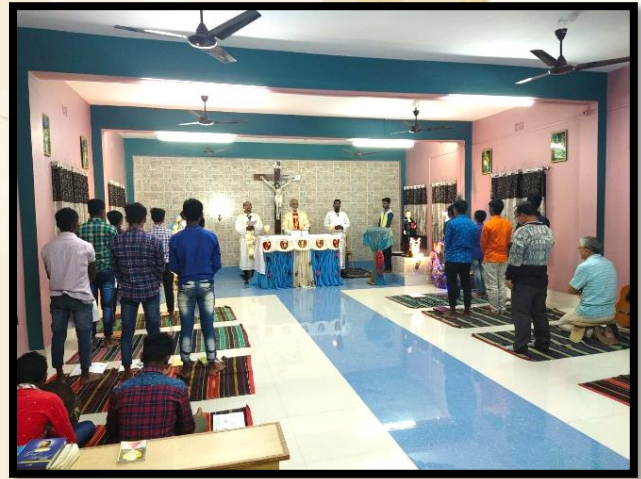
My experience with the young people in Talit. We have a youth group from Talit Bro. Jose has organized a day outing with them to Kolkata. We had a great day to experience the young people with us.





The year of 2020 teachers meeting was held on 12th of December before closing the hotel. During the meeting we have evaluated the students and teachers. At the end we had a meal together with our teachers.

We celebrated the light festival. With our hostel students. On the special day Brothers prepared the food for all the students of the hostel. As a Marist family we have celebrated the light festival with our neighboring religious on the day too.



Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ we have celebrated Christmas day with the Holy Eucharist and with all the CHETANA community. The 2020 school year we have completed last December 14th. 2021 school year we have started 17th of January with hope and courage.

Bro. Jiji Dassan, fms

New; from Giasnagor Community, Bangladesh.



In our Marist School “St Marceline”, we had a two days seminar from the 12th to the 13th of January 2021 on “Orientation of new teachers” and to help us prepare to start the new academic year 2021. The main topics were The Life of St. Marceline Champagnat (Br Eugenio), Child Protection Policy (Br Eugenio), Marist Pedagogy (Br. Vigilio), Practical Matters (Br. Marti) and Covid—19 (Br Eugenio). Br Cesar helped us start the seminar with his

wonderful and exciting ball game. All the teachers, all the Brothers and a sister were present. The seminar was a success. Below is the article on Marist Pedagogy that Brother Vigilio presented during the seminar.

MARIST PEDAGOGY

Orientations for new teachers of St Marcelline School Bangladesh

Br. Vigilio BWALYA (January 2021)

Abstract

Definitions of “pedagogy” abound, but here it is restricted to its etymological understanding and its implications to Marist Pedagogy. Given that the Greek etymological root of “pedagogue” and later in Latin “paedagogus” refers to a slave who cared for and accompanied children to and from school and generally supervised them, it follows then that the phrase “Marist Pedagogy implies an inter-personal relationship between the child and the Marist educator based on the latter’s concern for the child. It is a kind of love that is unconditionally concerned with and seeks the good of the accompanied child. In our Marist Pedagogy (style of educating the young) therefore, the educator’s concern for the child is mirrored in our Marist fundamental educational principle which states that “to bring up children properly, we must first of all love them, and love them all equally.” In a way, our Marist Pedagogy is based on an educational vision that is truly holistic, and consciously seeks to communicate values such as presence, simplicity, family spirit and love of work. It is simply a pedagogy of presence, a pedagogy of simplicity, a pedagogy of family spirit and a pedagogy of the love of work.

In reference to the Pedagogy of **PRESENCE**, a story is told of a child who wept bitterly after the visit of Queen Elizabeth. Asked why she cried uncontrollably after seeing the Queen, she replied, “I saw the Queen but she didn’t see me nor did she talk to me.” Our Marist Pedagogy of presence, like a slave who accompanied and supervised children to and from school, demands and encourages us to be present among young people. It also impels us to immerse ourselves in the lives of the young: a kind of presence that is neither obsessively vigilant nor negligently *laissez-faire*, but rather the one that makes them feel important, accepted, protected and loved. Accordingly, our Marist Pedagogy that demands our being present to children is a norm rather than an option. We give up our time, so that they can have time with us, we give up our passions of life so that we can passionately have quality time with them, for example.

With regard to the Pedagogy of **SIMPLICITY**, the example of a slave who accompanied and supervised children to and from school is itself the definition of simplicity. In more than one instance, a slave is a symbol of innocence, without complexities and being free from pretense. The pedagogy of simplicity challenges and encourages us to have relationships and contacts with young people that are genuine and straightforward, undertaken without pretence or duplicity: we say what we mean and mean what we say without any ulterior motive or intention. It is all about being honest with ourselves, the children and our Creator. The pedagogy of simplicity also requires that we use teaching methods and vocabularies that are simple and easily understood by the young. Additionally, pedagogical simplicity challenges us to admit our limitations, and in a truly and honest way to say “sorry” to the accompanied young when necessary. The pedagogy of simplicity

is simply a reminder that we are all educators and learners at the same time and that there is joy in realizing and accepting our limitations.

In reference to the Pedagogy of **FAMILY SPIRIT**, the new Marist Brothers' constitution (2020) speaks of our congregation as a "Global family" characterized by our internationality with multiple cultures (Article 8). Our St Marcelline School here in Giasnogor can be spoken of as a global family as well as it comprises people of different nationalities and multiple cultures. The core values or rather virtues that enhance and nurture this family spirit are love and forgiveness, support and help, forgetfulness of self, and openness to others (Constitutions 2011, article 6). They foster the concept of the "we" and limits the "we-they" attitudes that are likely to manifest if care is not taken. For instance, in yesterday's presentation (12-01-2021), a comment was made from the audience to the effect that we avoid using terms like "outsiders and insiders" when referring to day scholars and hostel boys and girls as the said terms only promote classes and divisions, and therefore in direct opposition to the values fostered in the pedagogy of family spirit. The pedagogy of family spirit encourages us to embrace the "we" thinking as it not only fosters the viewing of our cultural diversity and differences as opportunities for overcoming the "we-they" attitudes but also fosters the appreciation and celebration of our cultural diversities and differences. What the pedagogy of family spirit reminds us of is that in this inter-cultural school community, we are one, that every child, every teacher and every worker is uniquely special and important, and that each one's culture must be appreciated and celebrated.

As for the pedagogy of the **LOVE OF WORK**, it is simply all about joyfully accepting the different works/jobs done by us and those done by others. As a result, it challenges us to respect and appreciate the different jobs different people do: a reminder that every job done for the good of others is very important. And as it impels us to do even the works, we detest so much, it arouses in us the spirit of working hard as opposed to lazing about doing everything but work. In this regard, Marcellin Champagnat a man of work and a sworn enemy of laziness stands out as a good example. In a school setting, the pedagogy of the love of work is manifested through careful preparation of our classes and educational activities, thorough correction of students' assignments and projects, planning and evaluation of our programs, and additional accompaniment of those who are experiencing any sort of difficulties. With the pedagogical love of work as our guiding principle when accompanying the young, every work or job placed before us is done happily and joyfully.

In conclusion, Marist Pedagogy acts as a guide on how to accompany and educate the young. Through the lenses of presence, we are able to **see** and **be** with the needy children, through the lenses of simplicity, we are able to **talk** to them and **accept** them as they are, through the lenses of family spirit we are able to **love** them as our own family members, and through the lenses of love of work, we are more than ready to **serve** them.

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St.
Marcellin
School
Staff 2021

Bro. Vigilio, fms

MDA young brothers gathering

On January 3, 2021 the young brothers from MDA had the opportunity to gather virtually, pray and share about their lives, especially in times of pandemic. They also listened to the message of the district leader and the mentor of the young brothers.

It was a joyful moment of fraternity, a time to know more about each other and strengthen mutual support. Their dreams and concerns are making them feel part of one family and to work together to respond to the needs of our present time. The young brothers are a blessing for MDA and bring much hope for the Marist Institute. We pray for each of them to continue responding to God's call with generosity.



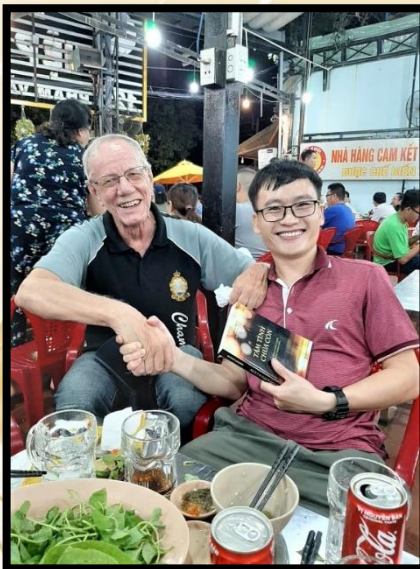
Bro. Canisio J.W.

News from Saigon community - Vietnam

BLESSING THE STUDENT HOUSE: Mass celebrated in the chapel of the Brothers by two Redemptorist Fathers. A neighborhood family also participates



BRO THUAN BIRTHDAY: In Marist simplicity, with the Brothers and friends. AD MULTOS ANNOS, dear Brother Thuan. With the wish to add LIFE to your years, and not just years to your life.



SOLIDARITY for the flooded areas: Central North Vietnam plagued by extraordinary floods. The modest contribution from the Community of Saigon and generous donors. Brothers and friends are dedicated to collecting and sending educational materials for children who have lost everything.



STUDENT BROTHERS APOSTOLATE: Br. Bao at Tay Ninh with children. Br. Hung at the orphanage house in Saigon. Br. Thuan with children.



MERRY CHRISTMAS: Brothers, relatives, friends



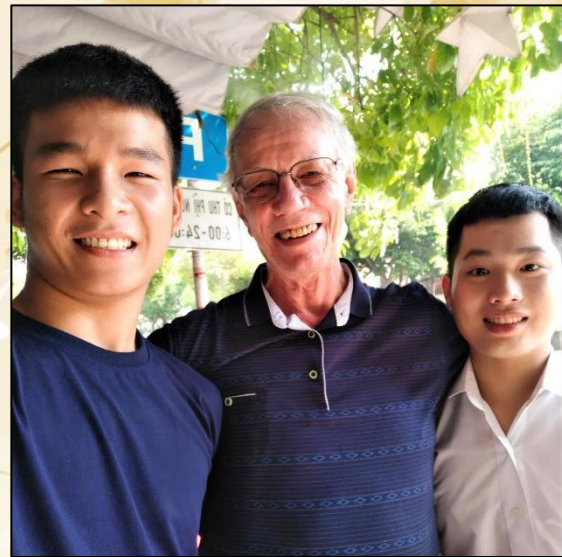
INSTITUTE DAY with Fr ROCCO, Comboni Congregation: "Happy Foundation day to all The Marists of Champagnat all over the world! Wishing you a meaningful celebration. May Saint Marcellin Champagnat be our inspiration always! God bless you all!" *(From Thuan's account in Facebook)*



CHARITY among HOMELESS. The gift of a substantial stock of blankets prompted the decision of Brothers, Novices and two volunteers from the Tay Ninh Community to meet numerous homeless in District 8. Friendly word exchange and a simple offer to cover up during the rather cool nights.



MINISTRY VOCATION in SAIGON GO MAY: Bro Pietro in a Parish during the Catechism time.



MINISTRY VOCATION in SAIGON – CONTACTS. Students and young workers from distant provinces seek meaning for their life and friendship in a large city like Saigon. Some also think of a vocation of special consecration to God

PIETRO MINISTRY VOCATION in VIETNAM 2019-2020

"The harvest is plentiful, and the workers are few. Pray therefore ..."

"Follow me, I will make you fishers of men". "We need Brothers"



News from Mymensingh formation house – Bangladesh



Christmas preparation with the Candidate & Incoming Aspirants.

Our chapel with Christmas lights and decoration.



Pre-Christmas prayer & Celebration



Christmas meal out





Sr. Josephine Rosario, SMMI
Psychologist graduated in Manila
helped our young men to know
something about themselves.



Formators Bro. Alex, fms and Sr. Josephina
& their Aspirants with **Sr. Josephine SMMI,**
at the end of the seminar.

Bro. Alex, fms

Three days Self-awareness special
seminar for the Marist Aspirants
Shovo Chiran and Shohel Costa.



Also, the Aspirant of Daughters of
Sisters of Charity – St. Vincent De
Paul's congregation **Antora Mondol**
join together with our young men for
this seminar who is preparing for her
Postulancy in Philippines.





Year of St. Joseph

Marking the 150th anniversary of St. Joseph being declared patron of the Universal Church, Pope Francis Proclaimed a yearlong celebration dedicated to the foster father of Jesus.

‘St. Joseph reminds us that those who appear hidden or in the shadows can play an incomparable role in the history of salvation. A word of recognition and of gratitude is due to them all,’ he said. As Mary’s husband and guardian of the son of God, St. Joseph turned “his human vocation to domestic love into a superhuman oblation of himself, his heart and all his abilities, a love placed at the service of the Messiah who was growing to maturity in his home.”

Birthdays

February 2021

12th Le Danh Hai

17th Canisio J Willrich

22nd George Valle

26th Alexander Arokiasamy

March 2021

12th Jose Grande

15th Pietro Codato

30th Tapan Mondol 1yr. Nov

**Good wishes and
Prayers Brothers**

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