



# News Bits

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## OPENING OF THE YEAR OF MARIST VOCATIONS

The Year of Marist Vocations kicked off on May 20 with three Zoom meetings held at 6:00 AM, 2:00 PM and 10:00 PM, Rome time. Hosted by the Secretariat of Brothers Today with the collaboration of the Department of Communications, the program was also steamed-direct on YouTube.

The live parts were those of Brothers Ángel Medina and Lindley Sionosa, directors of the Secretariat of Brothers Today, which were the welcoming- introduction at the beginning, the closing-concluding at the end, and the brief interventions in-between segments. All the other parts were delivered as pre-recorded videos, even though in one, if not all, of the of the video conferences, the speakers were virtually present as participants.

Br. Ernesto Sanchez, Superior General, was the first to give his message. He said that the Year of Marist Vocations is a time in which we wish to celebrate and give thanks for the gift that we have received as Marists of Champagnat. He added that it is also an occasion to take up again with strength and enthusiasm the theme of Marist vocations, from the perspective of a renewed vocational culture.

After Br. Ernesto's message was the music video "Cántalo a Una Voz" (Sing it in One Voice). This song was composed by Br. Angelito Gonzalez from Venezuela.

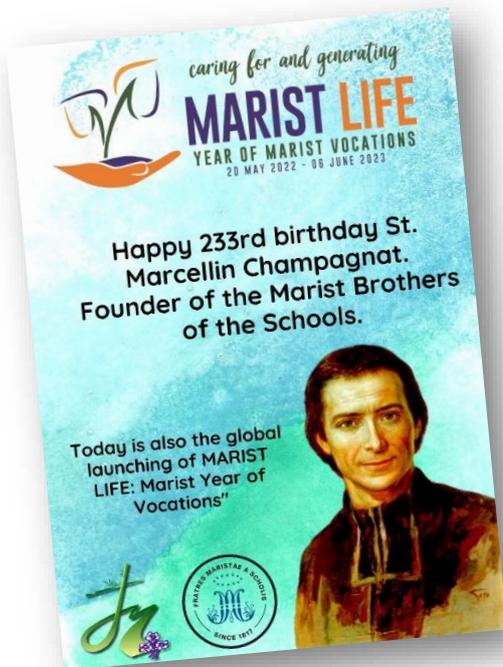
What followed were the messages of the Link Councilors of the Marist Life Area, Br. Óscar Martín, Br. Sylvain Ramandimbarisoa and Br. João Carlos do Prado. Afterwards, another song was rendered, this time from a group in the Philippines, entitled, "I am. You are. We are".

Next to speak were Raul Amaya, the Director of the Secretariat of the Laity, and the co-Directors, Agnes Reyes, and Manu Gomez. This was succeeded by the Prayer for the Year of Marist Vocations, using a video participated in by Marists from Lebanon, Rwanda, Spain, Philippines, Colombia, Portugal, Australia and Bolivia.

After the prayer, another video was shown that featured Marists from different parts of the world proclaiming in different languages, "There is great value in being Marist today!" along with several one-minute sharing on "Why am I Marist?".

Towards the end, Brothers Angel and Lindley made some announcements, gave the acknowledgments, and brought the program to a close.

# UPDATES:



## LA VALLA CMMF COMMUNITY CELEBRATES MARCELLIN'S DAY

(Notre Dame of Dadiangas University)

Around Fifteen (15) Champagnat Marists gathered during the May 20 Feastday of St. Marcellin. The gathering was called for by Br. Manny de Leon, FMS, the University president. It has long been a time before the group met face-to-face. There was such an energy of warmth and excitement.

The gathering allowed the participants to bond together, pray, and share about the journey of Marist life that is best with imitations due to the pandemic.

Significant in this gathering of the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family is the group's decision to take the name "La Valla" community for the CMMF-NDDU group. The event concluded with a dinner shared by all. The brother's community in Lagao joined us.



Signing of the Memorandum of Understanding for research undertaking on flora and fauna in SOCSKSARGEN ecosystems in partnership with Central Mindanao University, Dept of Entomology Natural Museum in Prague, Czech Republic and NDMU.



Blessing and Inauguration of the College of Engineering, Architecture and Technology Building located at Glamang, Polomolok, South Cotabato, Philippines

Ex Marist Provincials attending the blessing of the NDDU College of Engineering, Architecture and Technology Building.





Engr. Jhan Jkem Fontanilla, representing CHED Regional Director Nelia Alibin.

Engr. Fontanilla expressed CHED's support to ensure quality education at NDDU.



## Marist School Marikina celebrated Marists of Champagnat Day

Coinciding with the 233<sup>rd</sup> Birth Anniversary of our founder, St Marcellin Champagnat on May 20, the Marist School celebrated Marists of Champagnat Day. The personnel who dedicated themselves with the Brothers in the Marist mission were honored. This Marist tradition for service awardees and retirees is an expression of affirming and thanking the services and the gift of being lay Marists.

Fr. Marc Anthony Ramos, alumnus of batch 1999 presided the Holy Mass. He inspired the personnel as Beacons of Hope in his homily. The Provincial of Marist East Asia Province and Marist School Marikina, President, Br Allan J. de Castro, FMS in his message particularly thanked the retirees and encouraged them as they continue to face boundless and endless possibilities. Mrs. Luzviminda A. Jaban led the response on behalf of the 15 retirees. As Marist of Champagnat, this tradition was indeed a great opportunity to celebrate the gift of Marist Vocation.



## Bro. Ted's 75<sup>th</sup> Birthday Celebration

Br. Ted Fernandez, FMS celebrated his 75<sup>th</sup> birthday on May 25 at Marian Beach resort in Glan, Sarangani Province. It was attended by a good number of the Brothers from Lagao Community, Fourviere Formation Center Community, Dadiangas Community, and the Marist Province, Sagip Ka and BRCFI Personnel. Br. Ted's immediate family organized the special event. We thank God for the gift of life of Br. Ted.



## Bro. Afaese's 51<sup>st</sup> Birthday Celebration and the Filipino Community in Samoa

By: Bro. Melchor Nowelle P. Solinap Jr., fms

Mother's Day was celebrated by the staff of St. Joseph's College. Despite the state of emergency protocols, the staff together with Bro. Afaese held a thanksgiving celebration at noon of May 5. This was followed by lunch party till afternoon. Following the state of emergency protocols teachers are still allowed to go to school from 8 AM to 2 PM to make modules for their students who do not have access to the internet. It was also a celebration of the 51<sup>st</sup> birthday of Br. Afaese Afaese. The next day, the brothers of both communities celebrated the birthday of Br. Afaese in Alafua community.



Manila and Apia have a distance of 8,046.41 km or 4,099.80 mi. Even with that distance, the Filipino community is still able to connect themselves to their homeland. Friendships and families are formed among the 260 estimated Filipino workers including myself here in Samoa. Most of the Filipinos actively engage their democratic rights to vote for the 2022 national and local elections. Ballots were sent from the Philippine embassy in Wellington to Apia particularly to the leader of the Pilipino International Samoa Organization (also known as PISO). To date, most of the Filipinos here are still waiting for the official ballots for their votes to be cast in. In my spare time, usually Sunday, I have the chance to be with my Filipino friends at lunch time and listen to their stories, struggles, and successes in overseas Filipino life.



Bro. Afaese with the whole staff of St. Joseph's College celebrating his birthday and Mother's Day.



Close Filipino friends in Samoa. On the far left is Mr. Eli Labaco from Calamba, Laguna who is currently the President of the PISO (Pilipino International Samoa Organization).



(From L-R) Bro's. Siaose, Iulio, Melchor Nowelle, Afaese, Sefo, Robert (Postulant), Anitelea. Not in the picture Chris Maney who is taking the photo. Bro. Afaese's 51<sup>st</sup> Birthday celebration in Alafua community

# THE ARCHIVIST'S CORNER

## # 82

Br. Romulo L. Porras, FMS



The following article is a reprint from <https://champagnat.org/en/korea-land-of-martyrs/>

2014-08-12 SOUTH KOREA

## KOREA, LAND OF MARTYRS

In coincidence with Pope Francis' visit to South Korea to attend the 6th Asian Youth Day (August 14-18), we offer you a brief interview with brothers Jacobo Song and Alfredo Herrera, who are now in Manziana, Italy, participating in the formators course.

Br Jacobo Song has been co-ordinator of the Sector of Korea for the first 6 years of the Province of East Asia. Before that, he was director of the Chungju Centre for mentally handicapped boys.

Br Alfredo Herrera, native of Mexico, came to Korea as a missionary in August 1975 and has since been involved in various activities, including formation in Korea itself and at the formation centre of MAPAC in Manila, the Philippines.

***We know that Christianity arrived in Korea in a very special way. Could you briefly remind us how Christian faith was implanted among the Korean people?***

**Jacobo Song:** This happened at the end of the 18th century – a few years before Marcellin Champagnat's birth, if you want a chronological point of reference – when several Korean scholars and officials ran into some Catholic books during their visits to China. These books were obviously written in Chinese characters, which were already used in Korea and widely known by academics and officials in our country.

**Alfredo Herrera:** When they came back to Korea, some of these scholars organized a study circle to examine and study the books, which strongly called their attention, and started practicing what they read. The group was in search for new ideas and forms, since Korean society at the time was full of stagnation and corruption.

**Jacobo Song:** So, in one of these visits to Beijing, Yi Seung-hun was baptized, in October 1784, and received the name of Peter. His return to the country marks the establishment of the Church in Korea. Therefore, our



Korean Church has the pride of having been established by laymen from our own land, not by foreign missionaries.

***There are 103 canonized Korean martyrs, which probably means there was some kind of religious persecution. What happened?***

**Jacobo Song:** Religious persecution did not take place only once, but in different occasions, from 1791 to the second half of the 19th century. There were around 100 years of intermittent persecution. Research on these facts tells us that ten thousand believers died for their faith in Jesus.

**Alfredo Herrera:** Yes, there are already 103 canonized martyrs, which include 10 French missionaries. Pope Francis will beatify another group of 124 martyrs during his visit, among which some of the first Christians.

***What is the present situation of the Roman Catholic Church in the country?***

**Jacobo Song:** It was until 1895 that Catholicism started enjoying “official” freedom in Korea, although its activity was strongly restricted during the Japanese occupation. The Church had more freedom only after the liberation of 1945, even though the country still underwent the disastrous war between North and South from 1950 to 1953.

**Alfredo Herrera:** However, from that moment on the Church has strongly developed. When I arrived in Korea in 1975, Catholics were only 3% of the population. Today they are more than 9%, around 4 and a half million.

***Thanks for this interesting information. We would also like to know something about the Marist presence in Korea: how it began, your present ministries, the number of brothers, its future projection, etc.***

**Alfredo Herrera:** Marist presence in Korea began on September 13, 1971. The Province of Central Mexico, answering the call from the Superior General, Brother Basilio Rueda, promised to send 8 brothers to Korea, with the primary purpose of implanting Marist life locally as soon as possible. God blessed the brothers’ generosity, and very soon a group of boys became interested in Marist life.

**Jacobo Song:** Specifically, the first three Korean Marists made their religious profession on February 2, 1976, after living with the brothers for a long time.

**Alfredo Herrera:** Professions took place practically every year for two decades. However, during the last twenty years, vocations have not been as numerous, although God is still blessing us with some new members.

**Jacobo Song:** There are currently 20 Korean brothers. One is working in Cambodia, Marist District of Asia; another in the Philippines, and one will join the community of Kobe, Japan. The two of us are now in Manizana participating in the Formators Course, and the rest of the brothers are in the five communities or Korea.

**Alfredo Herrera:** Since late 2007, Korea is no longer a District depending on Central Mexico, and is now part of the new Province of East Asia. Japan and Korea form a Sector of the new Province. **Jacobo Song:** Three of the communities are in Seoul, and the other two are in the northern Province of Chungcheong. **Alfredo Herrera:** One of the communities in Seoul lives in what we could call the “Sector Central House”. The brothers in this community carry out different activities. In the other communities, the brothers are working at what we call “Marist Educational Center”. The brothers are currently remodeling this Center, and they will concentrate there when it is ready, together with the formation house, which is now in a small, rented house next to our property.

Regarding the two communities in the northern part of the country, one is in the outskirts of the city of Chungju, and the other is in the mountains, between the cities of Chungju and Jecheon.

**Jacobo Song:** The brothers living in *Seoul Central House* work at a center for children called *Jiok adong Center*, and carry out different activities inside and outside of house: teenager counseling, maintenance of the property, administration and secretariat for the Sector, etc.

At the *Marist Educational Center*, the brothers organize training programs, retreat sessions, courses for the people in general, and they welcome different groups who use the Center to carry out their own programs regarding education, spirituality, culture, etc. There is a variety of activities. It is the oldest center of this kind in the country. The building, once refurbished, will also accommodate the Marist aspirants and postulants and their formators.



**Could you say something more about the brothers' activities in Korea?**

**Alfredo Herrera:** In my opinion, what the brothers are carrying out is very much in tune with Marcellin's heart. As you know, Korean children and young people live in an atmosphere of strong academic competition. Students from well-off families go to private academies after attending school to study the subjects further, learn piano, taekwondo, karate, or participate in cultural activities. Children from low-income families have no alternative but to "fall behind and lose competitiveness", since their classmates are always better prepared for the academic assessments that provide access to educational opportunities.

Various social groups and organizations are sensitive to this inequality and have organized these after-school study centers for underprivileged children. Our Center is one of them. When approved by the local government, which allocated an ongoing subsidy, it was officially named *Marist Childhood-Center for Local Children*. The beautiful thing is that the Center operates thanks to a few volunteers, who instruct the children in different subjects and organize activities for them. Thanks to the brothers' creativity and enthusiasm, many companies and groups are providing the children and young people from our Center with the opportunity to participate in interesting activities they organize. But above all, the love, interest and attention of the brothers and volunteers for each of the children and young people who come to the Center make them feel as real "people" and not just a number... This center really cares for the children and young people who are in academic, financial, emotional, and social disadvantage.



**Jacobo Song:** The community in the outskirts of the city of Chungju is a welfare institution attending children and young people with different kinds of mental retardation. Those who are able, attend the local

school. They all learn a skill that will eventually allow them to live independently, according to their possibilities. It is a work of patience and careful love, carried out by five brothers and a large group of teachers, social workers, and older sisters, who are always attentive to the children's needs within the boarding school. As a welfare institution, the government of the

city of Seoul, which administratively owns the Center, financially

supports the work, while the help of many friends, who contribute with money or personal services, allows the brothers to offer a more complete and careful attention to our children's needs.

**Alfredo Herrera:** And finally, the community on the mountains between the cities of Chungju and Jechon offers a Spirituality Centre to the Korean Church and society, in contact and harmony with nature. Founded several years ago, this "ecological center", as we could call it, offers a new experience of contact with nature – since most people come from the city – to the entire population, but especially to children and young people from parishes, schools, groups and families. The Center offers different training programs, retreat sessions and seminars, tailored to the needs of the groups involved. Children come into contact with the stream, and the animals, plants, vegetables and legumes that thrive in this piece of mountain land. They learn to "feel" nature, listen to it, and discover its secrets and calls.

We are also carrying out a mixed community experience in this place. A diocesan priest, and two women who help prepare the meals for the groups coming to the Center, are part of the community. A brother from the Philippines will soon join in. He is already in Seoul studying the Korean language.

### ***Finally, what are the expectations regarding the Pope's visit in August?***

**Jacobo Song:** The Pope generates great expectations in Korea. His presence during the 6th Asian Youth Day certainly awakens everybody's hope that many young people will be strongly stimulated to participate in the life of the Church more actively. In the last few years, young people have been – and I think will remain so – the first concern of the Korean Church's pastoral activity.

Another great expectation in Korea regarding the Pope is that his visit will somehow help us move more decisively towards a reconciliation between the two parts of the country divided 60 years ago.

My personal expectation is that the Pope's presence and example may be a stimulus for both the Church hierarchy and all of us pastoral agents, so that we can learn to live in a more compassionate, simple, and humble way, being closer to people, leaving aside our tendency to be a "separate social class". We are here to serve and not to be served. Pope Francis is clearly an example in this sense.



**Alfredo Herrera:** The beatification of the 124 martyrs brings again to our attention the testimony of so many lay people who gave their life for Jesus. May we all learn to live as true followers of Jesus every day. Korea is a land of martyrs! We have the duty and the task of following in the footsteps of our ancestors. # # #

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*The Korean Sector of the East Asia Province has five communities, namely, the Marist Education Center Community in Seoul, ChungJu Community, Je-Cheon Eco-Spiritual Center Community, Ansan Formation House community, and the Kobe Community in Japan. Br. Jacobo Song had just recently been elected as the Sector Coordinator. Presently there are 19 Brothers in the Sector including one Mexican, two Japanese Brothers and one Filipino Brother.*

## *Birthday Greetings to:*



Br. Cyril M. Sumugat - May 26



Br. Ted A. Fernandez - May 25



## *Death Anniversaries:*

- April 25, 2020 – Mr. Marcelino Bang Shi Young (affiliated member).
- April 25, 1964 – Br. Abel died in St. Genis-Laval.
- April 26, 1926 – Br. Louis Theophane died in Tianjin, China.
- April 27, 1966 – Br. Denis Coleman Buckley died in USA.
- April 29, 1999 – Br. Edmund Conrad Paradis died in USA.
- April 30, 1916 – Br. Charles died in China.
- May 1, 1916 – Br. Paul Leon died in Beijing.



*Let us pray...*

- For the universal Church that she remains faithful in carrying out God's mission.
- For all of us Champagnat Marists that we will be protected as we stay under the mantle of Mary's protection and guidance in these times of crisis.
- For a fruitful celebration of the Year of Marists Vocations
- For all who are suffering that they will find comfort in God's embrace.
- For the protection of the people of Ukraine.
- For peace in the world.
- For birthday celebrants.