



Marist Province of South Asia

Newsletter

January 2023

*Let there be peace
on earth*

From the Editor's Desk!

Silence.....

Visiting cribs with different themes in different places in my parish was an exciting experience. Children out of enthusiasm had put some innovative thoughts into practice by giving a different outlook to the birth of Jesus. While visiting and observing the nativity displays I began to reflect on how Joseph and Mary maintained deep silence before God and left room for the Will of God. Mary who bravely proclaimed “*I am the handmaid of the Lord*” remained silent reflecting on them in her heart’ - **Luke 2:19**.

Giving birth to the Son of God and Man, Mary could have been snobbish. She had enough to be proud of herself. Visitation of the Magi is a fine instance where she could have been in the seventh heaven and lost the grip of God but she left everything in the hands of the Lord and remained calm. Joseph, a just man, surrendered and let God decide. For them, the silence was a great joy in the Lord. Finally, silence bore fruit.

Their deep silence spoke thousand words. It is quite true that silence speaks louder than words. Let us maintain silence and invite Our Lord the way Joseph and Mary did to reform and transform us. Silence is a way of surrender. Silence is golden in certain instances of life where we can get rid of unnecessary conflicts. Yet as true followers of Jesus, we also should break silence before injustice. Let us find some time every day in silence to seek God and the Will of God!

Bro. Chamara Hettiarachchi FMS



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Dear Marists of Champagnat,

We have already stepped into the year 2023. "A NEW YEAR": An invitation to a new beginning!

One of the important characteristics of sound spirituality is the ability to recognize and respond to what is new all the time. God is never passive. He is ever active and creative.

- When one fails to recognize the newness of the present moment and fails to respond to it,
- When one succumbs to negative forces and thinks that the end has come and there is no future for oneself.
How lifeless and dead one can become!

Prophet Isaiah in 43: 18 – 21 expresses very clearly the nature of **God of newness, God who is ever creative.**

18"Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. ¹⁹See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland. ²⁰The wild animals honor me; the jackals and the owls, because I provide water in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland, to give drink to my people, my chosen. ²¹ the people I formed for myself that they may proclaim my praise.

One of the mistakes (sin - sin of not paying attention to God of newness) that I can commit is to remain imprisoned in the nostalgic past where I have been comfortable. Nevertheless, my faithfulness to God depends on coming out of this 'prison' and moving out to new spaces God is creating for me.

At times we could be concerned, frightened and feel helpless when we have to face many difficulties. The difficulties could be due to lack of resources: financial, personnel or any other. Can't those difficulties perhaps be strong 'boulders' that help us build solid buildings of faith?

We have just celebrated the great feast of Christmas: Jesus taking flesh among us. He is Emmanuel, God with us. When God is with us, do we have reasons to be panicked? If God is calling us somewhere hasn't he prepared the resources we need for that place? They may not be visible. Our task is to creatively search for them.

How do we see Fr. Champagnat and the thousands of our early Brothers who have gone before us? Hasn't our Institute been built on a solid foundation that they had laid in an unwavering faith and confidence in God?, faith and Confidence in omnipresent God even in the face of seemingly unsurmountable problems and difficulties?

How is this ever-creative God inviting you to be a partner with him in his continuous creative work of year 2023? I suggest that you take some time to sit with the Lord and listen to his invitations.



MAY ALL OF US BE PRODUCTIVE PARTNERS WITH GOD IN HIS CONTINUOUS CREATIVE WORK!

Let me also take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the Province Media Commission: Bros. Chamara, Saul, Zubair, Mr. Sudarshana and link councilor Bro. Rajkumar. Let us give our fullest cooperation to the members of this Commission so that they will be able to come up with many innovations in communicating news to all of us.

Bro. Nicholas Fernando, Provincial

Pongal celebration

Sunday, December 8, 2023 Pongal celebration is one of the popular festivals celebrated grandly by people in Tamil Nadu. It is generally known as the festival of thanksgiving by farmers who thank Sun God, mother Earth and cattle who play major role in farming and harvesting. It is also a celebration of prosperity which comes with good harvest. It is celebrated for four days. People cook Pongal - sweet rice and offer it to Sun God and cattle.

Marcellin Trust - Operation Rainbow Project celebrated the Pongal at the Marist Brothers, Uyyakondan Thirumalai, Trichy last Sunday. About 70 families, nearly 180 people participated in the celebration.

Parents and children enthusiastically took part in various games and the winners were awarded. Some families enjoyed cooking Pongal. Many participated in the Kolam, a drawing competition and draw beautiful and colourful Kolams.

Special guests of the event were Fr. Arul Oli from Sj, Sr. Josephine, Sr. Pommi from Conference of Religious India, Trichy, Sr. Viji from Fathima Health Care Center, Fathima Nagar, Marist Brothers Jeyaraj, Savarimuthu, Johnson, Antonysamy, Saul, Suresh, and Jiji Dhasan, Mrs. Pragasamary & her family, Mr. Nagasundaram & his family, Mrs. Shabeen, Mr. Isaac & family, Mrs. Ramakoti & his family, Mrs. Amalia and Mr. Kannan from South Indian Bank.

Rainbow children and students of Bishop Heber College, Trichy enthused the crowd through their dances and activities. Families received new clothes, coconut saplings, rations, sugarcane and healthcare products. Lunch was served to all at the end. Overall it was a day filled with so much fun, happiness and joy!

Thanks to Brothers, Rainbow staff, Marcellin Club Members, Mrs. Reeta, Miss. Dharshalini from Holy Cross College and Mr. Stephen from Bishop Heber College, Trichy for making it a successful and colourful day!

Bro. Rajakumar



Joy of being a Marist

I proudly call myself a Marist. I let my voice ring boldly about the unique formation I was gifted with in my school to face life's trials bravely. I was nurtured by the able hands of the stalwarts of the Congregation to be noble and gentle in all that I do and to be faithful and true to God and man.



St. Marceline Campagnet, taught his disciples to love and respect children, and to pay special attention to the poor, and the most neglected, especially the orphans. Following in the footsteps of the Founder, the Reverend Brothers namely Gregory Aloysius and Clinton Perera paved the way for me to enjoy free education in the hallowed institute, Maris Stella College, Negombo, Sri Lanka. My gratitude and respect to the Brothers and the teachers who showed me the way know no leaps and bounds. Rev. Bro. Joseph Fonseka, who made me an ardent lover of Our Lady and the Holy Rosary, was also a source of inspiration for me in school to go in search of the needs of the poor and to provide them with the support of the affluent. What was inculcated in me long ago is still being put into practice. Rev. Bro. Clinton Perera, an icon of school administration and character formation, has placed an indelible memory in all his students. I as an English Education Consultant understand how effective and fruitful his administrative strategies are. Therefore I speak highly of his way of school administration in my teacher professional development sessions. Brothers of such calibre are exceptional role models for many of us.

"Have you been in a seminary?" "No, I was at Maris Stella College, Negombo." Seminary in this context is synonymous with character formation and English education. Isn't it a great joy of being inquired and be answered proudly that I am a Marist?

As a mark of respect, I never forget to quote 'Be noble and gentle in all that you do, to God and to neighbour be faithful and true' from my school anthem in my publications and in all my enrichment programs, staff development programs or in my public speeches. I also shoulder the great responsibility of the Brothers "To make Jesus Christ known and loved" in my mission. I have the Marist spirit in my blood and I act upon the Marist way of life till the end. So isn't it a great joy for me?

Ajith Perera

Marist Lay and Marist Brothers

Marist Lay and Marist Brothers, all gathered at MSC Thimbirigaskatuwa on the 10th of December, 2022 to prepare ourselves in welcoming Jesus into our hearts.

It was a wonderful evening where many members of Marist Lay group in Negombo and Marist Brothers around Negombo had a grace-filled



encounter that rekindled the ties that had kept us together for so long as a family.

The event was graced with prayers and Christmas hymns and followed by the fellowship. The prayer service inspired us to think deeply about the original concept of Jesus entering this earth, in a context where everyone in Sri Lanka is going through social, political, and economic upheaval that has been brought on us by the avarice of our blindly elected rulers. The hymns that were played during the occasion, which had been carefully chosen, invited us to celebrate the Christmas meaningfully and open our hearts and eyes to reality.



After the prayer service, our intended charity project came into discussion led by Mr. Chalana. In order to encourage impoverished students in remote schools to continue their education, the Marist Lay group will collect school materials and financial support with the help of the Marist Brothers and the Youth group. Everyone shared their valuable ideas and suggestions and that encouraged us to go ahead with the project.

The event ended with a fellowship that was filled with chit-chats and laughter rejuvenating love, care and bonds among the members. Especial thanks goes to Rev. Bro. Shanthi Liyanage and Mr. Mike Kurukulasooriya for facilitating our memorable encounter at MSC Thimbirigaskatuwa.

Madura Bulathsinghala

Lay Marists on the Season of Advent



A meaningful reflection organized by the Lay Marists on the Season of Advent for Brothers and Lay Marists was held in the main hall of Maris Stella College, Thimbirigaskatuwa on December 18th.

The reflection included the following points:

- that Christmas is a festival of Hope.
- that it's a time not to lose hope in building up our country when it is in an unfortunate situation.
- that the invitation of the season is to present ourselves to 'a better tomorrow' even though the conditions of life are extremely difficult.



The discussion that followed the reflection reminded us that losing hope leads to 'death' and hence the importance of our Collective efforts to achieve our life goals as Marists.

The participants involved themselves to consider seriously the question: What is this season of advent this year challenging ourselves to? A festive dinner followed.

Jude Preeman



Christmas Celebrations – Our Schools and Communities, India



Children's Day and Teacher's Day Celebrated in our Schools





Bro. Suresh's Birthday Celebration



Haldanduwana – Crib

A large crib was assembled at the entrance to the Property of Marist Sevana, in Haldanduwana to celebrate the meaning of Christmas. This was organized by the young Christian Society (Youvn Samithiya) of the Parish guided by the Brothers' Community. It was the first time that a crib of this nature was presented to the passers-by on Negombo/Kulipitiya main road. . It was heartening to see many people making a stop to admire the nativity scene. Our thanks to the young people who contributed to this activity, our neighbours and the donor of the Crib.



Heshan Tharusha, President, Young Christian Society

The First Marist Brother who died in Sri Lanka **Brother Jules Lawrence (France)** **From March 1911 to August 1913, Batticaloa Mission**

Bro. Jules Lawrence was of a delicate temperament his piety had nothing ostentatious , but it was very sincere.

In Kalmunai, where he died, Bro. Antony said that he shared with him the same room. The last book he read was, "Les quinze etapes ou pas spirituels dans la



voie des exercices de saint Ignace.” Copies of this book had been presented by its author, P.Emile Becker SJ to Rev. Fr. H. d’Arras who presented a copy to the brother.

He was of an optimistic disposition and was very courageous. On one occasion during a walk brother came across a small poisonous snake, he succeeded in catching it, and put into a match box and in his pocket, brought it home.

In the large hall of St. Michael’s College, classes had no partition between them. Bro. Jules’ class was adjoining to Br. Antony’s class; Bro. Jules had what then called the special class first year that is children who came directly from Tamil schools where they had passed at least the third standard but knew no English... His pupils were a lively set. There was a good deal of noise but plenty of work. He wrote a number of some seven or eight digits on the blackboard, wiped it out and asked the boys to repeat the numbers, it was surprising how his pupils could remember big numbers which they had seen for just second or two and repeat it.

During one of our excursions after re-crossing the lagoon which was at that point very broad, he insisted on getting along into a small rowing boat with an out –rigger and to venture out by himself on the water, the lagoon was rather rough and the brother inexperienced rowed in a direction parallel to the waves. The fishermen on the shore and brothers too were getting alarmed, the fishermen shouted to him in what direction he should row, he followed their instructions and manage to row back safely.

In drawing he was good, with the help of Rev.Fr. Rector he mastered perspective and geometrical drawing. His enthusiasm for these subjects was such that it became communicative and Bro. Antony also got a taste for them, so much so that in Negombo Brother Antony said: he could coach up the Cambridge junior students in the last of these two subjects for their examinations.

Before brother Jules got sick in Kalmunai, Brothers had begun a novena to St. Luke the patron of Painters for him in the approaching drawing examination, but the brother was called to his reward before the exam begun.

Bro. Antony said that the last service he had to render the good brother was to close his sightless eyes after his soul had taken it flight for a better world. Bro. Jules died on 8th August 1913. Rev. Fr. H. Burry SJ the parish priest of Kalmunai told Brothers , that on several occasions he had prayed to Bro. Jules to obtain favours from heaven and the good brother helped him.

Bro. Sales Fernando FMS

St. Mary’s Youth, Haldanduwana

I have encountered Marist Brothers since my childhood. I had an opportunity to attend free English tuition classes with my school friends and my village friends. Now I understand what a great service it is and how the Brothers were working for the good of our village. I have been lucky to associate closely with a few Brothers.

I remember Br. Linus, my English teacher, was very conscious of us. He ensured our safety and kept an eye on his students until they left the premises.



In fact, for us Marist Sevana was everything. Our classroom, our playground, a park, a botanical garden, our place of worship, a shelter, and a place to rest. It is rich with many kinds of fruits and we have enjoyed it very much. Brothers were shouting at us as we climbed trees to pluck fruits, it is not because we pluck all the fruits but because of our safety.

When I reflect now, being a university student I am grateful to the Brothers for the great service rendered to Haldanduwana. Their service to the community is beyond my expression. I had an opportunity to work with the Marist Brothers in our St. Mary's Youth Club. The Brothers animate the youth with compassion and love in order to produce responsible citizens. The formation we received under the Brothers was exceptional. We learn to love nature and grow with nature. They guided us to be nature friendly. I admire all the Brothers who guided us to love Jesus and Mary. Thank you, Brothers.

Hashan Priyankara, St. Mary's youth Association, Haldanduwana, President 2019- 2020

From Davao Postulancy

The past month has been a very busy month here in Davao Postulancy house. There were several visitors visited the house, Bros' from the office of General Econome in Rome, and Bro's Angel Media and Linley from the Brothers today.

Also We were busy with many other activates cleaning the house for Christmas, and the most important was the professional psychological assessment as an preparation for the BMSI (Body, Mind and Soul Integration Programme)



We Celebrated Christmas day with a another group of visiting Brothers to the community, Bros' Ray & John Seddeduwa (Star of the Sea Province) who are going to work as the formation staff at MAPAC.

We attended Christmas mass at the St. Pablo Parish after the holy mass community hosted a fellowship dinner. Rest of the days we spend our Christmas holidays at the Marist Spirituality center in Lake Sebu.

Upul Prathap, Postulancy.

Christmas was celebrated at Marcellin Trust-Operation Rainbow Project

“Joy to the world, the Lord is come...” Yes, it’s Christmas time! Christmas is always a time of joy and grace to all people because Jesus came for all.

Christmas was celebrated at Marcellin Trust—Operation Rainbow Project, UKT Malai, Trihcy on Sunday December 18, 2022. Fr. Paulraj, Fr. Arockia Sahayaraj, and Fr. Selvaraj from the Congregation of Holy Cross, Somarasampettai and Mrs. Pragasa Mary from Government Primary Health Centre, UKT Malai and Sisters of St. Anne’s Convent, UKT Malai, Trihcy were the special guests at the Christmas celebration.

The celebration began with a procession in which the baby Jesus was carried and was accompanied by Rainbow children to the Crib. Fr. Paulraj blessed the crib. After lighting the lamp Br. Rajakumar, Director of Operation Rainbow Project welcomed everyone and honoured the special guests with shawl. Children from Rainbow and La Valla Study Centre entertained the crowd with their beautiful dances for Christmas songs. Br. Suresh and students from Department of Social Work, Bishop Heber College, Trichy sang Christmas carols. Fr. Paulraj and Sr. Roselin Mary explained the meaning of Christmas and invited everyone to love like Jesus.

Santa Claus came singing and dancing with children and cheering up the crowd. Brothers, guests and children together cut the Christmas cake while everyone joined the choir singing Merry Christmas. Marcellin Club members organized various games for children and the winners were awarded with special prize.

Miss. Irin Melody facilitated the program as the Master of Ceremony along with Marcellin Club Members and Rainbow staff. At the end lunch, rations, medical and nutrition supplements and Christmas cake were served to all the people. Thanks to the Brothers, Rainbow staff, Mrs. Reeta and Marcellin club members for their hard work and selfless service! It was indeed a joyous and memorable occasion to welcome Jesus Christ in our midst and share His joy and peace with friends and families.

A sincere and heartfelt thanks to Australian Marist Solidarity for their support and all the Marists around the world who help us in one way or the other to live the spirit of Champagnat following Jesus in the way of Mary.

On behalf of Rainbow Project, I wish you all a merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year 2023!



Bro. Rajakumar FMS

Interview had for year of Vocations

Here I am sending the script of my sharing.

Say your name, where you from? Where you work? Your function- mainly your Marist Connection.



Ayubowan, Greetings from Sri Lanka. I am brother Chamara and I belong to the Marist Province of South Asia.

After a decade of school ministry as a teacher, currently I work as a counseling officer at the State ministry of Justice, Prison management and Prisoners Rehabilitation affairs in Sri Lanka.

There I work with the youth who are addicted for dangerous drugs and with a result of taking drugs, they have done various harmful things to them, and to their families and to the society as well. I reflect this call for me based on the Bible in the book of Isaiah the Lord has anointed me to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners....

Tell your Marist experience highlighting a special moment that makes you feel deeply the Marist vocation.

I am proud to say that I am from St.Mary's College, Negombo, a school managed by the Marist Brothers at that time. The presence of the Marist Brothers was very much touching and striking for me. There were four things touched me most.

1. I found that the brothers were very simple, friendly with students and teachers, easy to be with them and it was easy to approach them at any time.
2. I saw brothers were teaching in classroom, they were in playground, They were praying with students, in choir and were doing church activities
3. Third whatever we did in the school The presence of Mother Mary was present. I am a devotee of our good mother from my childhood and Brothers and Mary were not two things but I felt they bound as one. I loved that.
4. The remarkable thing I notice was when the first student arrives to the school brothers were there welcoming and they remained in the school until the last child went back home. This showed how responsible and how much they care of the students with compassion and love. The presence of the Brothers gave vitality to all in the school.

These four things struck and inspired very much in me and there I discerned to be one like them. I decided I wanted to Be a Marist Brother.

Why is it important to be Marist to-day? Based on your experience.

Marist way of life is still life giving and relevant. Why? I believe our time has no difference of the time of Champagnat. My experience of working with two youth groups in Sri Lanka and the work in Prison rehabilitation centers where the drug addicts are always found that they are

Neglected and abandon by the society
no one is there to listen to them

The society has labeled them and treats like they are not a part of the society

They are lacking in opportunities and there were no a platform for them to perform
And they were lacking in proper guidance and unable to identify themselves as who they are

Our way of engaging with them we accept them as they are not considering their gender, color, race, religion or social states what the people have set up categorizing the people in society. It is our duty to generate a new life in them and guide them to a green pastures. As a counselor I listen to them with empathy without judging and that is the first moment they begin to open and change their life remembering their past with tears. For one year we work with them with various therapies, counseling and guidance, and through vocational training we try to create a new life in them. We see their smiling faces when they finish and leave home after one year of Rehabilitation and after most of them are leading a good and a happy life.

What is the relevance of being Marist Today? Based on my experience

Actually Champagnat's dream was to have Brothers in all the dioceses in the world so we still need brothers and laity who can work together. Together we can reach to the underprivileged with compassion. Based on my work I see young people are the vulnerable group in our society and we need to remind them that They are the most powerful beings at present.

How about you? What is your Montagnat Today?

What I experience we do not have to go far or beyond where we are. Montagnat's are everywhere. They are...

Waiting for you and me, they need love and acceptance, there are montagnats who loves to be listened

Who feels lonely and poor, who lacks with proper guidance and who are unable to identify themselves, who are not aware of their capacity. My montagnats are the youth who are in Prison and I influence them to create their future and making their dark past as a privilege to make the future more clourful and fruitful. Let me share one of my experience I faced recently when I was going to work I saw a young boy was walking along the road and that walk was not normal. He was walking closing his eyes and his head was up while he was moving. I felt it was not normal and when I got close to him he started wormitting. I managed to take him to a bus stop where he could sit. When talked to him he started shiuting and at the same time he was crying. In fact unbelievable

he was 18 years old and he is married and his wife left after two months of marriage. He was a good student from a very good school and he couldn't continue his studies because of this marriage. He had no job and his parents also lost all hopes had in him. There was no way for living and parents also gave him up. So his wife too left him alone his friends avoided him. The only solution he found to relax was taking drugs. He began with cigarette, alcohol, marijuana, cocaine, heroin and when I met him he had used ice the most dangerous drug at present. So after talking I led him for the rehabilitation and I could contact his parents. So this is a true example I believe our Montagnats are everywhere. When I open my eyes, hands and minds we see vulnerable youth in our own surrounding. May our good mother walk with me as a sister in my faith journey and I am inspired by Champagnat our model and founder and I strongly believe Providence that's make me moving and giving life and courage.
May God Bless you.

Bro. Chamara Hettiarachchi FMS

Kalpitiya Mission

On the occasion of Christmas, under the leadership of Br Lal Fonseka, distribution of school textbooks and breakfast to poor children took place in the middle of December. Here we share the happiness with them.



Prizes were awarded for all Sunday School children at Kalpitiya Church. Here, Father gave school books and gifts to the poor children in the middle of helping each other. Maris Stella Negombo and Thimbirigaskatuwa schools helped this occasion.



The celebration of World Children's Day and Sasmika's birthday was planned in the month of October. The special thing was to share our love and kindness by cooking lunch with the participation of children.



Bro. Sasmika Fernando, FMS

My life journey in MDA

Seasonal greetings to you my brothers and sisters of Marists. When I was asked to send an article for the Newsletter, I was so happy to do... first time someone asked me... it's a great gift and thanks Br. Chamara.



I am Br. Alex, at present, a member of the MDA (Mission Ad Gentes). South Asia Province sent me happily to the Ad Gentes Program in 2007. After the preparation from 2008 to 2016 I was able to find a new mission with the Santal tribal children in West Bengal (Talit community and Hostel) along with other brothers. It was a good experience to begin a new mission for the poor and needy children. Later, I was asked by the General administration to move to the Bangladesh School Community. While I was waiting for the Missionary visa to Bangladesh, a short period of doing a mission with the migrants' students and Thailand for 4 months, and the formation ministry in

Davao Postulancy for 4 months. Once the Visa was ready I moved to Bangladesh 2017 April to the school community for two years. Then I was asked to take the leadership of Candidates and Aspirancy house Mymensingh, the present one. I am very thankful to God for his blessings and guidance though I went through so many obstacles to reach something good in the mission. I learned more in this missionary life than what I expected.



At present in the Community we are three brothers, *Br. Cesar from Mexico, Br. Robert from Local diocese of Mymensingh – Bangladesh who is doing his degree in B.A. English in Dhaka city and staying with Holy Cross Fathers and I.* Also, we have 2 Aspirants at this moment and both of them from the same diocese. Maybe in a few weeks we are expecting some more candidates and incoming Aspirants... (hopefully) who are waiting for their academic results. Actually, we have been living in a small rented house for the last 10 years. This year we have a plan to buy a new piece of land for our own and build a good formation house and community building soon if God allows us. Sometimes we have a good number of boys in the house... this picture shows a big group which I experienced last three years in this house. Among them two of them are postulants in Davao, four become aspirants, but due to their personal problems, they



left the formation, one candidate who is doing his second-year college. (class 12). Many young boys came and left for a few reasons. Many of them came for the purpose of their studies. Some find the place is not enough, being in the rented house, and not much space

for them to play or work, so they feel something very indifferent to compare with the other formation houses. So, the finding of the new place may help the boys to feel something helpful to continue their formation with future hope.

This small community had a simple celebration of Christmas and our Foundation day with a meaningful prayer service and fraternal meal. Our Aspirants back to the formation program. We began our work with them after a week break. We have a plan to collaborate with the other local religious congregation and our Aspirants also will join with other formees for their classes. next month they will have their community experience with the school community which is far from here and travel at least 6 hours by bus.



Last week of November 2022, Br. Virgilio (Community leader of Giasnogor school community) and I celebrated our 25 years Religious Profession anniversary in a simple way here in Mymensingh. It was a very meaningful and simple celebration along with the local religious people and our Bishop who is a simple and humble person.



I am happy to share something about ourselves. May God bless all of us and lead us as he planned this New year 2023.

Bro. A. H. Alex, fms

“All the Dioceses of the World”

Lavalla200 International communities are comprised Brothers, lay men and women, single and married. I have been part of this project since 2018, having lived three years in Tabatinga in Brazil, and one and half years in the Lavalla200 International community in Cape Town, South Africa.

Last year in March, I marked 25 years as a Marist Brother. I had lived in various Marist Communities for twenty years which were comprised of Brothers only. These years lived with Brothers have been what I had experienced as a young boy living in a hostel run by the Marist Brothers. I had aspired to live in a community of Brothers—living, working, praying and eating together. This is something that gives me life in a community.



Joining the mixed communities of Brothers and lay was something I had not aspired to, had not dreamed of, and is not part of my culture, especially to live with women (other than your biological family) under the same roof and, worse, to share a toilet with her.

I found the Lavalla200 communities full of challenges, variants in cultures, languages, manners, behaviours and mentality. The locations where the communities were situated had their own challenges and peculiarities. The community in Tabatinga had many things contrary to how I had been brought up culturally and socially. There was a constant invitation to be out of my comfort zone.

In brief, Tabatinga and Atlantis were constant invitations of shedding and pruning of self, of adapting to new realities, customs, people, food and mission. I wasn't used to the mode of travel by boat in the Amazon River, or how stay safe among the gangsters of Atlantis.

The people of Tabatinga and Atlantis were tremendously loving, caring and beautiful souls, that have changed my life. The members I lived with in the two communities—Br. Isidoro, Veronica Rube, Juliana Kittel, Mario, Martha Martinez and Br. Luke, and most recently Br. Tony Clark, Liz Igo, Denies Hernandez and Mariana—have taught me many things, opened my eyes and given me a much wider perspective on Marist life and Mission.

My being part of Lavalla200 communities have helped me to be out of my cultural isolation by freeing myself from self-imposed boundaries and seeing my life through a much clearer glass into the future for Marist life and Mission.

I look forward to the new challenges and learnings that being part of the new Lavalla200 community in Lilongwe, Malawi, will bring. I wish to encourage and challenge Brothers and Lay Marists from South Asia to take the challenge of living new experiences, of bringing smiles to the faces of children other than in your own country or culture. I assure you that you will be blessed much more than just being a blessing to the people you will be sent to. The community, the children and the people will move your hearts towards yourself, others and our Marist Mission which is to "all the dioceses of the world".



Br. Tony, Denies, Liz & Paul in Cape Town
Bro. Paul Bhatti FMS

News from Tudella International Novitiate

During our Christmas time we have had our simple but meaningful celebrations in our novitiate community in Tudella. We had the opportunity to traveled to Anuradhapura and Jaffna as pilgrimage visiting different Buddhist and Hindu temples and be exposure on a different way of living, environment, etc., we stayed at the Salvatorian formation house. After came back Jaffna, we spent time for Christmas



decoration of our community with the lights and the Crib. Also we support the choir of Ekala parish for singing on Christmas eve Mass, the 24 night and 31 night.



Some of novices went to celebrated Christmas party with children at Franciscan fathers place and Charity Brothers Center. So it was really joyful time for novices and brothers to connect with people outside specially children.

Also not only have those activities but we did some special manual work in our property. Our house now looks much better.

On the 2 of January our foundation day. We had big celebration in our community. We invited brothers, sisters, fathers and lay people. It was very good experience for novices' because we get to know more our brothers and other people that came to our celebration. We enjoyed a lot on that night. We had prepper a good foods and drinks, and people were enjoy with dance and karaoke music.



Sujith Alwis, Novice

Christmas carols

If you've ever wondered when Christmas carols first came about, the answer lies in the 14th century – although their evolution dates back even further. Even before Christianity, it is thought that midwinter songs existed to keep up people's spirits, along with dances, plays and feasts.

MSC Thimbirigaskatuwa

Maris Stella College, Thimbirigaskatuwa Christmas Day celebrations were held virtually on 13 December 2022. The Festive Spirit was witnessed among the College staff and the students. A combination of songs, a Christmas dance, and a lovely Carol program were also performed.

Numerous events were planned including the creation of Christmas cards, cribs, hand-crafted gifts, and Christmas trees. Rev. Fr. Amila, Assistant Parish Priest of Katuwapitiya





Parish delivered the Christmas message to the students and wished everyone a very happy Christmas.

Lakmal silva

The singing of carols reminds us that God, in his love for us, sent his son to be one of us. Just as that first Christmas was marked by singing, so Christians

through the centuries have celebrated and borne witness through song to the coming of the Messiah.

MSC Negombo

On 7th of December we held our youth Christmas get together at the Thudella Our ladies hermitage under the theme of the meaning of life. We had a nice program with numbers of 40 young once. Rev. Brothers Chamara and Michel gave a nice speech and did some meaningful activities with them and also other brother cooperate with various kind of activities. Almost after the three hours we finished the program successfully.



Bro. Pradeep Anthony FMS

The service usually consists of hymns about Christmas and readings from the gospels telling the Christmas story. Many candles are lit around the church and sometimes the congregation holds candles to be seen by.

St. Joseph's Vaz College carols

Brothers at Marist Sevana attended the Christmas carols "Aruna Disna" at St. Joseph's Vaz College , Wennappuwa. Rev.Fr. Priyanjeewa addressed the gathering and once again reminded with grateful heart about Marist Brothers who founded the College.

The singing of carols reminds us that God, in his love for us, sent his son to be one of us. Just as that first Christmas was marked by singing, so Christians through the centuries have celebrated and borne witness through song to the coming of the Messiah.



St. Mary's youth carols, Haldanduwna

On 25th of December evening our youth group went to the houses singing carols joyfully. People were very happy, welcoming and shared the joy of Christmas with the youth. Our Santa gifted a plant for each house we visited. All were surprised with this new gift and it was our Christmas message for people to care our common home.



SCHS CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION-2022

Christmas celebration at Sargodha Catholic High School (SCHS) was organized on 21st December, 2022. On the day, one could easily notice the excitement of Christmas in the students' eyes. They were eagerly waiting for the programs. All the students were assembled in front of the primary section.



The program started at 10:00 am with an opening prayer. There were a variety of performances, the Carol singing and nativity play by the students and teachers of middle section. By the end of the program, Christmas message was given by Bro. Farancis (Principal), and the students enjoyed their class parties with class teachers afterwards. The principal along with the coordinators visited all the classrooms and wished everyone a very happy Christmas.

In the evening, the SCHS staff had its Christmas celebration that included carol signing, games, nativity scene and a festive dinner. The Brothers from the local Marist community were also invited to be part of the Christmas celebrations.



Bro. Farancis FMS

Youth Christmas get together

On 7th of December we held our youth Christmas get together at the Tudella Our lady's hermitage under the theme of the meaning of life. We had a nice program with numbers of 40 young once. Rev. Brothers Chamara and Michel gave a nice speech and did some meaningful activities with them. And also other Brother cooperates with various kinds of activities. Almost after the three hours we finished the program successfully.



Bro. Sheron Ranaweera FMS

“Laughter opens your heart and soothes your soul”. (Robin S. Sharma)

Month of December is the time of rest, laughter and celebration. In this month we celebrate the life of Christ with hope, joy and inner peace. No one can escape this happiness as it is contagious.

"There is nothing in the world so irresistibly contagious as laughter and good humour" says Charles Dickens in a Christmas Carol

The Marist community in Sargodha celebrated not only the life of Christ but also the life of Br. Farancis and Br. Anthony with great joy and happiness. It was good opportunity to sit together, to share one another's experiences and create new memories. We were able to sooth our souls by setting a side our personal commitments and laughed together as a community, which I believe was irresistible and contagious.



ANNUAL SPORTS GALA- 2022

On 30th November, 2022, Sargodha Catholic High School organised its annual sports opening day. The event took place in the spacious playground of the school. Mr. Nadeem and Mr. Waseem (the past students and basketball players) were the chief guests of the event. The chief guests, along with Bro. Hadayat and Bro. Farancis (Principal) inaugurated sports gala through hosting flags and releasing a flock of pigeons into the sky. Torch bearing ceremony was led by all the four house captains and Mrs. Martha (the primary coordinator). The opening day culminated with a basketball match.



The sports activities continued for two and a half weeks. The closing ceremony took place on 17th of December. Rev. Fr. Leonard Steger was the chief guest of the ceremony. Among other guests were the Marist Brothers from local Marist community. The principal and the chief guest gave away the prizes to the participants. The events of the day came to an end with the chief guest Rev. Fr. Leonard Steger declaring the installation of solar power system in the school. In the end, the principal thanked everyone for their presence and support and congratulated the students for their exceptional performances.



Bro. Farancis FMS

Picture of the Month.



This picture reminds me of Jesus's words as he said that "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these (Matthew 19:14)

Through this phrase we can clearly see how Jesus loved and cares for the little ones. They are innocent and pure souls. They worry nothing shares happiness with one another. They live the present never think of past or future. Living in the present matters the most.

We religious Brothers must learn from the little ones. Especially these pictures are good example to be good teachers. As you see the Brother teaches the little ones who listen to him very attentively. We try our best to be happy in the community and in the places of our mission and share our joy and peace with one another.

Laugh off your troubles

Brothers Lawrence and Hubert as young Brothers were in Bandarawela community.

Once both of them attended a Bandarawela church function. When they were returning it was late in the evening and was pitch dark. When they came to the College the gate was closed. Bro. Lawrence, who is a jolly good fellow, thought of a practical joke and told Bro. Hubert "Hai Hubert the gate is locked and there's no other option than jumping over the gate." So he asked Bro. Hubert to take the initiative. Then Bro. Hubert, who was small made, looked around, found no one around and somehow managed to jump over the gate. Bro. Hubert who struggled to accomplish the task was waiting for Bro. Lawrence to follow him. Bro. Lawrence just opened the gate and walked in while chuckling. The gate was just closed but not locked. Poor Bro. Hubert gave chase Bro. Lawrence up to the community.



Birthdays Month of February

01 Ranjith Perera (94) 718582475
02 Clinton Perera (94) 776199525
10 Sooriya (94) 772195071
16 Arockiasamy (91) 9003585575
24 Devasiri Fernando (devasiri@yahoo.com)
26 Alex Arochiasami (880) 1767780389

Happy Birthday