

April.2023



MARIST DISTRICT OF ASIA
NEWSLETTER





A NEW CHAPTER in the life of MDA



"Here I am Lord, I come to do your will."

On March 25th 2023, was the first profession of religious vows in Tamontaka - Cotabato, Philippines; among them there are 4 newly professed from MDA: Brothers Augustin, Cuong, Mai and Manoj).

At the same day other 4 novices made their first vows in Tudella - Sri Lanka.

This marks a milestone in the 17 years of history of the Marist District of Asia, reaching the number of 51 Brothers. For the first time the number of the Brothers who professed in the District is higher than those Brothers coming as missionaries from other Administrative Units: Local Brothers = 26, and Brothers on loan = 25.

We praise the Lord, our Good Mother and Saint Marcellin for the gift of vocations and for the generous response of those young Brothers. Our gratitude to their families, formators and friends who prayed and support them.

Let this "new chapter" in the life of MDA be a visible sign of what we dreamed together in our last District Chapter, to be **Marist faces of Hope!**

Dear newly professed Brothers, welcome to the Marist Family!

Br.Canísio, District Leader

Ecological Sustainability



After the long Lunar New Year holidays in February, the first activity of our community was to spend time sharing the purpose, objectives, and guidelines of the sustainability during the sustainability team visit on March 1-2.

Realistically speaking, our community can't do self-sustaining activities where we pay for everything by ourselves right now. But the healthy stimulus of their visit and presentation made us keep our sense of sustainability in the forefront of our minds, and gave us the opportunity to start doing something small.

Of course, we have been doing small economic activities that take into account production and conservation, but the team's visit made us think more deeply and consider the main points of the team's presentation within our community life.

Recently, I started paid part-time teaching English lessons at a nearby language school in order to contribute to the community's economy, even if it is only a small amount. But for now, instead of describing my own activities, I would like to focus on the following activities of my brothers in Cu Chi.

Our community has a vegetable garden and a chicken coop. There, we harvest a variety of vegetables, and the hens provide us with fresh eggs almost every day. This doesn't mean we don't have to buy vegetables and eggs, but it means a lot to be able to produce some of our own food.

In doing so, we give thanks to the earth and the sky, which play a large role in helping us grow and harvest our vegetables, perhaps even greater than our own efforts. We also give thanks to the hens that willingly offer us their eggs.

Currently, br. Duy have spearheaded to start making pots. First, the molds are assembled, then oiled on the inside, and cement dough mixed with water is carefully and evenly applied.

After drying in the sun for a couple of days, the molds are removed to reveal the majesty of the pots, which are then painted to complete the look. The flowerpots eventually become the foundation for the beautiful plants to settle in and show their gorgeousness.



Vegetables, Eggs, and Flowerpots.... Perhaps the concept of sustainability has a deep and clear connection to ecology. I believe that we pursue ecological self-sustainability not 100% alone, but together with nature.



In addition, as I am writing this article now, Br. Cong, along with several parishioners, is distributing necessities to the poor to make Holy Saturday worthwhile more. That, too, can be called a sacred activity associated with ecological sustainability. Obviously, Jesus did not die and rise for himself alone. Before his passion and resurrection, he shared bread and wine at the Last Supper. Perhaps resurrection should begin with sharing.

Ecological sustainability is about moving away from the lifestyle of a single-cell organism that eats and lives only for itself or its community, and toward an ecological sustainable community that lives well together.

I am so proud of my brothers (Br. Cong, Br. Duy, Mr. Chinh, and Mr. Trung), who exemplify the spirit of the ecological sustainable community in action.

Br. Kim

People have been talking a lot about the campaign "fighting climate change, decreasing global warming" for many years, but perhaps it is more true that we need to take greater steps to reconcile and heal nature, because we are carrying "environmental debts" from human-centered over-consumption in the long run. Pope Francis has always urged each one of us to do a real "global environmental transformation": in his encyclical he stresses that if *"we need only take a frank look at the facts to see that our common home is falling into serious disrepair. Hope would have us recognize that there is always a way out, that we can always redirect our steps, that we can always do something to solve our problems...."* There are regions now at high risk and, aside from all doomsday predictions, the present world system is certainly unsustainable from a number of points of view, for we have stopped thinking about the goals of human activity (Laudatosi 61).

Unfortunately, on our side of the planet, over ten storms and floods occur each year, making people's lives miserable. Those in challenging conditions, the poorest of the poor, and the physically weak will be far more vulnerable to natural disasters, whether hot temperatures, storms, or floods, as their communities are not equipped to cope with those calamities.



Climate change is causing utterly devastating changes, and the poorest in society are frequently the ones who suffer the most. *(The image depicts children attempting to tidy their living environment by collecting plastic bags after the lake's water level has dropped, in Ta Do project, Viet Nam.)*

As a result, pay attention to nature's cries, which are also the sorrowful screams of the desperately poor. We are encouraged, in the words of Saint John Paul II, to sincerely work for an "environmental revolution". Their reaction to the painful cries of climate change must be good news and solidarity with the poorest of the poor, the abandoned and exploited planet. How can we help with this "environmental transformation"?

Br. Bao

New mission at the homeland

There is a great joy for me after so many years journeyed in different countries for the mission and now, I have a chance to do it in my own country. Therefore, at the current time, I'm staying in Go Vap, Saigon community with



brother Pietro one candidate and other brothers who have the same purpose for studying like me. We are enrolling in different studies and commitments. And with myself, I'm taking parts of learning IELTS English, computer and music. Beside that, I also teaching catechist in the nearby church and an English class for everyone, mostly for the youth.

So dear brothers! Wish you have a best Easter season and full of grace of risen Lord.

Br. Nghi



Tan Chau Community

At the moment, Tan Chau community consists of four long-term community Brothers and three short-term ones, includes a lay volunteer, a discerning candidate and a novice who is having his community experience before entering his Novitiate program in Sri Lanka.



SOME ACTIVITIES OVER THE MONTHS

The visit of 3 Brothers for Sustainability Program



Renewal of Vows Retreat Brothers on their way to the Retreat Center



Catechism at the local parish



Being an apostolic community, we try our best to get involved in different ministries at the nearby places:

- All the young Brothers are supporting a local Parish with weekly youth activities and catechism every Sunday.
- Br Michael is teaching English at a nearby Center regularly.
- Though having involved in different ministries, we still give our priority to the mission at Ta Do project.

At the beginning of March, we were happy to welcome 3 Brothers from Sustainability Program. Thanks to the Sustainable committee for the sharing and open discussion.

To prepare ourselves for the evaluation and application of Vows Renewal, Bros. Binh, Long, Phuc went to a three-day retreat at the Cistercian retreat center in Vung tau. Br Michael came with us on the second day to give us some meaningful inputs for our personal reflection. Thanks to Br Michael and to the retreat center staff.

Tan Chau Community



Ta Do Project

Our regular informal classes for the children at Ta Do have been quite positive since we were able to gather students in together and to divide them into different levels. Some local families offered us a place at their houses to run our classes. With this improvement of classroom placement and environment, we are able to manage the student better and the students are able to learn better, too. Thanks to the generosity of those local families. We also have game activities aside from class time, too.



Aside from our classes, we also try to teach the student how to keep their surrounding clean by accompanying them to collect rubbish around the area.

The students were given milk and cakes after their great work.

It turned out to be a joyful and positive experience for us and for the students here. Hopefully it was able to give a meaningful message to the people living here, too.





Food program before Lunar New Year



Marist professional Barber



Launching of the House Repair Project



Br. Long

hallelujah

Economic Immersion in East Asia Province

"Marist Bursars from Africa and Thailand gain Insights from Economic Immersion in East Asia Province"

At the request of the General Econome, the Provincial Marist bursars from West Africa, Southern Africa, a delegate from Central Africa and the MDA Bursar completed a one-week immersion program in General Santos City, Philippines from March 5-11, 2023. The program aimed to provide the bursars with valuable insights and knowledge on various aspects of financial management in the East Asia Province and the Marist institutions.



During the immersion, they met with key officials of the Marist Province, universities and schools in Dadiangas, Koronadal, and Kidapawan. They engaged in discussions on topics related to asset management, such as schools, social and solidarity works, and income-generating activities for Marist life and ministries. They also learned about financial practices, human resources and investment policies.

The four bursars, who are also Marist brothers, also covered discussions on the main difficulties and challenges in the area of governance. The participants shared their experiences and insights, which were helpful in identifying common issues and potential solutions. In their free time, the brothers were able to experience the community life of the Marist brothers.



The immersion was hosted by East Asia Province Bursar, Br. Danilo M. Sevilla. During the evaluation meeting, the participants shared that they gained valuable insights and knowledge on various aspects and appreciated the sense of empowerment, commitment, and dedication of the lay and mission partners of the Province.

Br. Jose Grande

The Paradox of Christian Life and Faith

Many have said that the gospel of John on the Fifth Sunday of Lent is one of the most dramatic narratives before the final preparation for the Holy week. The Raising of Lazarus, contextually speaking, is the final episode of the book of signs, where Jesus performed different signs for everyone to see



& believe then the book of glory that begins with the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus. These are the two major parts of the book of the Evangelist. Scholars and Theologians had considered that this is also the point where the religious authorities were so afraid of because many people came to see and believe. Jesus had been continuously a threat to the circles of people in authority. Consequently, at end of the story, they were all the more determined to kill Jesus including Lazarus.

As the most dramatic narrative, so to speak, presents several key points about the paradox of our Christian life and faith. The first one is the encounter of Jesus and Martha. In this encounter, she depicted a clear picture of how one struggles in the face of difficult circumstances like the passing away of a loved one and the longing for the divine intervention.

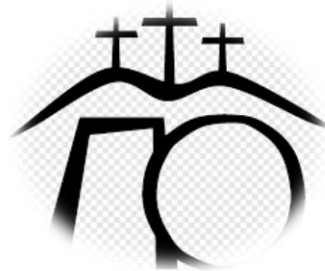


She demonstrated concretely the so-called human struggle, "Lord, if you have been here... (11:21) but eventually she professes her faith to the Lord, "Yes Lord I have come to believe... (11:27) Going through all sorts of human situations in life and at the same time hoping and believing in God's mercy and promise is precisely the core of all our struggles that conveys the message of our Christian paradox in life and faith.

The second point is about a conversation that leads to the truth. The gospel says that Martha entered into a deep and sincere conversation with Jesus. And where did this conversation lead her to? It led her to re-affirm and re-enforce her faith from believing in the resurrection on last day to believing in Jesus who is the resurrection and the life. Her genuine dialogue with the Lord led her to the truth of her own faith and her faith in the Risen Lord who went through human struggles too like her.

So, as believers, this is and only way how we are converse with the Lord in prayer and be conscious to carry it out into our day to day endeavors in life. Never allow our very own human struggles to cloud and distort our faith that leads to nothing but an opportunity to converse with him and reveal to us the deeper truth that He is indeed the resurrection and the life.

The third and last point is the fullness of the person of Christ. In the narrative, Jesus became perturbed and deeply troubled when saw Martha and the Jews weeping (11:33). Seeing the struggles of his friends and people around affected him so deeply, like any other person caught in such situation, later on wept too.



There is no greater love that one can give or offer to loved ones or friends than sharing in the pains and sorrows that they are feeling and going through. Jesus' expression of solidarity with them and the raising of Lazarus to life, in the other hand, undoubtedly, revealed the human and divine sides of him, the fullness of his person. The episodes present to us the whole picture of who the Lord is which conveys the message of the paradox of our Christian faith and life and ultimately the paradox of the Cross and the resurrection of Jesus.

Advance Happy Easter to Everyone!





The first three months of Giasnogor Community mission project was riddled with series of arrivals and departures like the last quarter of the previous year. Each of these waves of arrivals and departures, left pleasant memories as well unpleasant ones that needed ample of time

to unfold its genuine appearance or effect to people and situations connected to the mission project endeavor. This had indeed been the experiences of the brothers, Smsm Sisters, students, faculty and personnel as well as parents and friends of St. Marcellin School. It seems looking at it more closely, Karen Joy Fowler, a famous American Author & writer, may be right to say that life is really all about arrivals and departures. Whether she is right or not, let the highlights of the first quarter of the community spill the bean.



A day prior to the opening of the school year, all the 76 hostel boys and 96 girls were expected to arrive accompanied by their parents or guardians. The usual sights and sounds of their presence again filled the air and school premises. As the parents and guardians were departing, loud crying, yelling & wailing could be heard from both hostels. This reminded the older ones, from class 7 to 10, of their first day in the campus. Many just stood by watching & reminiscing their own memories but some got out of their way and consoled the little ones.

The following day January 9 at 8:30 am, a pre-assembly meeting with the teachers, non-teaching personnel and Bros Vigilio, Topu and George took place. In the absence of Marti who got stuck in Spain due to Bangladesh visa, Vigilio took over and presided meeting and reviewed the agreed number of activities that need to be done that day and succeeding days of the week. He added the gov't's deworming campaign in all schools in the country.



So, students must take their breakfast before coming to school the next day. The meeting was followed by the students' assembly, orientation and distribution of books.



Alas! After more than a month of processing the required documents, Topu got his new passport and visa. The long awaited departure had finally come to an end as he

and everyone thought. He left the community excited and reached Dhaka safe and sound. Instead of going to the Sism Sisters' place for a few hours of sleep, he decided to stay at his friend's place before proceeding to the airport.

Everything went well not until he reached the check-in counter and was asked for his one pass health certificate which he knew nothing about and hadn't applied online. Though he was getting butterflies in his belly, this didn't bother him. He hurried up and got the certificate somewhere inside the airport but was not quick enough to catch up with the checking in because the counter was already closed when he got there. It took couple of days before he was able to fly out of Dhaka on the 7th of February before mid-night.

Sr. Janet Ninipua, smsm, from Solomon Islands, next to George in the picture, flew in from Australia where she got her got her 6-month Bangladesh visa. Her case is worse because she needs to secure an Australian visa before getting the one she needed as there is no Embassy in her country. Finally, she is here, accompanied by Sr. Juliana Toluomo, in order to take the place of Sr. Sha Arjun, who is still on home leave and coming back in April.



In the middle of March, one of the two postulants named Shuvo Chiran from the mission parish of Pargacha of Mymensingh diocese, arrived for his



community exposure up to the 9th of April before proceeding for his 2-year novitiate formation together with Shohel Costa. Bros. Vigilio and Marti took turns orienting him of the place, people and daily routines of the community and school. The following day, he got engaged right away in the singing practice of Class 7 boys and girls hostel. To get more acquainted with young people over here, he took advantage of having meals with them every other day.

It so sad to say that Shohel will indeed miss the chance of meeting and seeing the three-membered community in action, when he arrive on the 9th of April. He will be left alone with Bro. Marti. The visitation of FMSI staff Andrea Rossi and Marcello Romagnoli from the 21st to the 24th, delayed the home leave schedule of Bro. Vigilio. He decided to start on the 28th of March and come back on the first week of June. While George will try to catch up with his long-delayed visitation to the prospects for the Aspirancy and Candidacy program. Vocation works and council related trips may take him away from his community for almost the whole month of April.



This is all for now guys. Until the next issue hopefully and Take care! Ciao!

Br. George

Celebrating life:

On 26th February, we celebrated Br. Alex's Birthday in a simple way in the community. Bro. Robert came from the university and Postulant Shovo was able to join us. He just arrived from Davao for a break before going to the Novitiate.



March 16, **Br. Virgilio** our Country Leader and the Councilor **Br. George** came to Mymensingh for an important meeting. **Br. Alex** joined them as a community leader. We met the Bishop of Mymensingh **Bp. Ponon Paul Kubi**, and his three Senate members **Fr. Bailon**, **Fr. Bijon Kubi**, and **Fr. Ashes** to finalize the



price of the land which we are trying to buy for our future formation house. It will be helpful for us to make a proper budget and propose to the council.

March 21st, we had a simple Birthday celebration of our Aspirant Timash Howee. It was a great day for him to celebrate his day with us and we were too happy to share our brotherly love.



April 1st, the Postulant Shohel, Aspirant Timash, and the Candidate Lyon were given surprise by remembering Br. Alex's 33rd anniversary of Marist Life. It was a good surprise, a simple way of sharing their wishes with a piece of cake. very much appreciated their spirit of community and family.



During the Holy week, we had our Holy Triduum retreat as a community for three days. In silence with a simple reflection on each day focused on Christ and his suffering we spent those days very meaningfully. In the evening we went to the Cathedral Church of the Mass and all the liturgy services. We joined with the parishioners to celebrate the Holy Triduum. It began on Holy Thursday morning and ended on Saturday evening. Bro. Roberts was able to come to the Community from his university studies and participated in the retreat. Also, Postulant Shohel was with us for three weeks for short community experience. He has finished his time here from Monday 10th onwards will be in the Giasnogor community while Postulant Shovo will come and be with us these days. Sunday, we had a simple celebration of Easter as a community after the Easter Mass in the parish.



May the Risen Christ be with us all and help us to share our life with others as Brothers.

Br. Alex



Talit Community

On the 9th of January 2023 we open the new academic year in our hostel. This year we have 68 boys in our hostel.



On the 4th of February we had a teachers meeting with our brothers. During the meeting we planned for all the activities of the year and discussed the child protection policy and signed by all the teachers and brothers.



On the 12th February we had our first parents meeting with our brothers and teachers. During the meeting we were discussing the education of the boys and we encouraged the parents to support the children's education. During the meeting all the teachers were able to give their feedback to the students' parents. It was a wonderful family gathering to get to know each other better.



On the 25th February we had a sports meet with our hostel boys. It was a wonderful experience for the boys to experience the sports meet in the hotel because it's the first time we organised the sports meet in our hostel. Thanks to all the teachers and brothers.



On the 11th March we had a one-day hostel outing with our boys. It was a wonderful moment for the boys to experience the journey and place to see.



On the 24th March we received the FMSI vector to our community to see our mission places and check the program of the community college activities. We thank you so much for the visit and your experience.



On the 30th Two young brothers arrived after the first vows from the Philippines. On the day of evening we had a welcoming celebration with our 2 young brothers. That same day we celebrated the birthday of Bro. Malangmei. It was a wonderful celebration with Thanksgiving mass.



On the 9th evening we celebrated Easter with our boys at the hostel. At the end of the celebration we had dinner with our boys. Dinner Prepared and cooked by the brothers.



Our new building work is going on at the moment our house building stage we can see in the photos below.





First of all, I would like to thank the Talit community for welcoming us into their home.

After arriving Talit Community, I was wondering when I will go home, to visit my family and at the end the time had arrived and I arrive home, but now I feel like the time is flying faster than I can imagine.

Since my arrival home my mom has been so busy cooking and doing other things. I was able to visit my father and other siblings, while visiting friends and relatives I was able to visit some parishes in our local area. And also recently this week I have visited Hazarduari. So far I am Taking advantage of my vacation to enjoy and celebrate my life with my family. Happy Easter to All the Brothers.

Already the first week has passed spending time with my family and friends. Enjoying and sharing the Joy of Easter with those around me. Amused to see the development of my locality and meeting with other people especially in our local Parish. Exchanging thoughts and making some plans to visit houses. I am enjoying my one-month vacation and eating all kinds of food which I missed during my 4 years of formation.



Br. Jiji

Tamontaka Community

It was a wonderful day for us to play a friendly game with the J-OMI-students of Notre Dame University of Cotabato city. The sky was clear, and it was hot in the afternoon but all of us were excited to greet each other and get the ball rolling. There was so much fun and after all, a worthwhile Sunday.



Br. Mai

With great joy and gratitude, we celebrated on Saturday March 25, the first profession of our brothers:

Br **Elijah** Watehou fms (Solomon Islands)

Br **Ronaldo** Da Costa fms (Timor Leste)

Br **Ruas** Ferreira fms (Timor Leste)

Br **Sujith** Alwis fms (Sri Lanka)

For this important moment in their life, they have been inspired by the words of Mary, at the Annunciation: **“Let it done to me according to your word”** (Lk 1:38). Believing in God’s love, they have made their commitment, confident in the great future that will be given to them.

The celebration was presided by Most Rev. Dr. Raymond Kingsley Wickramasinghe, Bishop of Diocese of Galle, Brother Nicholas Fernando, Provincial of the South Asia Province, received the vows in the name of Br. Ernesto Sánchez, Superior General. Mgr. Raymond invited the newly professed to be humanly faithful to the promises they have done in that day.

Also present were Br Paul Kane, Secretary of the Star of Sea Province, Br Juan Castro, counselor of Marist District of Asia, and many brothers, lay Marists and friends.

With the help of technology, our livestream transmission on Facebook united us with thousands of people from around the world. We want to thank all those who have sent messages and assured us of their unity and prayer.

At the end, the four newly professed expressed a cordial thanks to everyone who accompanied them and helped them in their journey, starting from their parents as their “first formators”.





Br. Réal

Trip to Bandarawela 28th to 31st of March

March 28th to 31st, our community we have started our trip to Bandarawela of Sri Lanka. We began our trip with a question from Father Michael, OSB, during Mass: Have you ever seen the Lord? Father told this story. One day, there was a little boy who said to his mother: Mommy! Today I want to go out to see God.

The boy prepared bread and a bottle of water in his bag and he began his journey to see God. Half a day gone, he started to feel hungry and thirsty. He stopped by the side of the road under a tree and brought out what he had prepared and started Lunch. Not far away, a woman was approaching. He called the woman and shared what he had. Both of them ate the bread with joy and chatted happily together. After that, he came home and told his mother that he has seen God in a woman. That woman also shared with friends that she has seen God in a boy...etc. Let us carry with us the desire to see God in this present life. Carrying that hope we started our trip to the Waterfall, Garden Tea, and some other places which are called the Paradise of Sri Lanka to see God in the beautiful creation...



Holy Week

Holy Week is the highest week of the whole liturgical year. Novices and Lay Marist of the Novitiate of Tudella celebrated together. With the support and help of each other in the community, we have completed Holy Week with great enthusiasm. I would like to share 3 points that impressed me the most during this Holy Week. The first point is Holy Thursday: during Holy Thursday there is a rite of washing the feet. This ritual allowed me to feel the love, forgiveness, service, humility of the brothers in the community, through the act of washing each other's feet. That second point is on Holy Saturday. Together we felt the suffering of Jesus on the cross by sharing some personal suffering met in our story. Although it is very simple to say, this sharing has taken away many tears of brothers in the community.

The third point is on the day of the Resurrection. We joined the joy of the Universal Church. Our community celebrated and shared this joy through playing games together. With a lot of fun and jubilant music, we celebrated the God Resurrection.



Br. Cuong (Novice)

Taize

Taize prayer is a meditative form for me to recognize the presence of God, and calling me to dwell deeply on Christ's presence within me. It is really a prayerful silence, but inside I am dancing with God. A few weeks ago, we had Taize prayer in our community, with the presence of Br. Patrick from Taize and some local religious to join as one voice to worship and recognize his presence around and within us. Personally, I am very happy with this experience with a prayerful silence and opportunity to feel his presence within me.



Br. Pich (Novice)

NDDU UNIVERSITY WEEK- 2023

The event was held from March 29 to April 2, 2023 at the NDDU, General Santos City, Philippines. The Brothers of the University community, whole heartedly and actively participated in that sports events especially by joining the fun run, playing soccer, and joining the socio-cultural events and programs along with the NDDU students and teachers in order to support the NDDU students to develop their leadership and skills in academic, sports and socio-cultural activities. The theme of the program was 'Ani', which means 'Produce' in Filipino.

The main idea of the University Week (U-Week) was to produce new talents and athletes among the NDDU students.

Students showed their different talents and skills by participating in different activities and events that are their 'harvest' of hard work. It was a successful event for the students and teachers of the NDDU, especially to come together face to face after the two years of pandemic.



ANNUAL RETREAT

The one-week retreat of the East Asia Province Brothers was held in Lake Sebu, South Cotabato, Philippines, from April 3 to 8, 2023. Brothers from different communities joined the retreat, where Brother Joseph Soterias conducted the retreat. There were around fifty Brothers present during the retreat. The last day of the retreat on the 8th of April, 2023 the temporary professed Brothers from the East Asia Province, Start of the Sea Province, and the MDA Brothers made their renewal of vows and that night was the Easter Vigil Mass. Bro. Alan J. de Castro FMS, the provincial of the East Asia Province, received the vows in the name of the Superior General of the Institute.



Br. Rubel

MDA VISION–MISSION STATEMENT **2022 - 2025**

We, the Brothers and Lay Marist of Champagnat,
Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Mary and Marcellin Champagnat
Become faces of hope that look beyond
And promotes a Global intercultural family
In places where we have taken roots.

In our quest to live our vocation as Marists
And responding to the emerging needs of
our respective mission places,
We strive to build homes of light where everyone feels welcome
And strengthen our human resources through formation
And training to ensure vitality and sustainability
in our various ministries.

