

Star MESSENGER

Dear Brothers

Israel-Hamas War

I've tried to imagine what it's like living in a war zone. Maybe some of you have experienced this first-hand. The constant anxiety, wondering whether unfamiliar noises are advancing troops, rockets, or aerial attacks. The incessant thoughts that your loved ones – parents, children, friends, relatives – could die or may be dead. The destruction of what you have spent your life developing, in fact your life purpose: belongings, home, family, way of life. How do you survive being surrounded by a barrage of noise, unceasing violence, death, scenes of carnage and chaos, the deaths of innocent children, children....I can't imagine it. I can still sleep at night.

Feelings of powerlessness, despair, rage must mingle together and create a toxic condition. Who knows how this will impact the futures of individuals and communities.

Onlookers and outsiders may feel some of these emotions. We are horrified by hostage taking, violent conflict, massive destruction, loss of life and the deaths of children in their thousands. As Christians what do you do in such circumstances?

A word from Catholic social teaching reminds us of one response we have: solidarity – are called upon “to stand with people in their just causes”. Once again, the question is how? Four actions come to mind:

1. **Stay informed** - even though it can be personally challenging viewing the images of the aftermath of violence and death presented in news reports, we need to be aware of and informed about the latest War. This includes the roots, history, and causes of the conflict. This also entails intense listening and discernment of the voices heard.
2. **Pray** individually or as communities and families.
3. **Give Financial Support** to humanitarian agencies that are supporting the victims of the conflict. Urgent practical support for Palestinian communities in Gaza can be directed to Caritas or other reputable International Aid Agencies. Funds raised will be used to provide immediate and longer-term humanitarian and development assistance.
4. **Speak up.** Contact the Embassies of the State of Israel and the Palestinian Authority, or the other nations that are enablers of such long lasting and large-scale conflict, to express your opinion and hopes.

Br Ernesto Sanchez and the General Council on the Israeli-Hamas War

Br Ernesto and his administration has sent a declaration and Prayer to all Marists of Champagnat. It accompanies this message. I invite you to take this up as individuals and communities, to reflect on and pray about it.

Visit of Brothers Ben Consigli and Josep Maria Soteras

Ben and Josep Maria are the Link General Councillors for our Province. They visited last year and are with us again this year, as they will be again in 2024. They arrived from Manila on Monday and will be based in Brisbane. The main features of their itinerary:

8 Nov	Visit to Marist Centre Ashgrove and to Australian Marist Solidarity
9 Nov	Visit to Marist College Ashgrove and to Rosalie
10–14 Nov	Visit to Samoa
19–22 Nov	Visit to the Solomon Islands
29 Nov–5 Dec	Visit to Kiribati

In-between these major travels, they will also visit Ashgrove, Rosalie, Lismore, Sunshine Beach, including communities, schools and ministries.

They will leave the Province on 6 December to return to Rome.

Welcome to Ben and Josep! I hope they have an enjoyable, instructive, and beneficial visit.

HOLY SOULS

November is the month in which we remember our deceased.

Last week we remembered our Brothers who have died in the last 12 months.

Below is a list of our parents and relatives who have died this year and been mentioned in *The Star*. You might care to pray in community for some each day.

Rex Creevey, father of Br Paul Creevey
Bill Thompson, brother of Br Pat Thompson
Paul Kelly, brother of Br Geoff Kelly
Pat, sister of Br Michael Taylor
Brian Burke, brother of Br Roger Burke
Clarence Conolly, father of Br Peter Conolly
Francois Benigaud, brother of Br Georges Benigaud
Fabian Benora, Brother of Simon Serero
Gerard Clarke, brother of Br Matthew Clarke
Janet Une, niece of Br Sefo Une
John Howard, brother of Br Charles Howard RIP
Steve Crowe, nephew of Br Jeff Crowe
Philip Vallance, brother of Br Roger Vallance
Uncle of Br Epalle Taega
Philip Garrett, brother of Br Fergus Garrett
Carmel Artomonow, sister of Br Gerry Rush
Brian Howes, brother of Br Peter Howes

Kevin McInerney, brother of Br Pat McInerney
Gerry Sexton, father of Br Michael Sexton
Bob Hart, brother of Br Norm Hart RIP
Denise Aitken, mother of Br Robert Aitken
Clem O'Brien, brother of Br John K O'Brien
Kathleen Williams, sister of Br Neil Emmett
John Rush, brother of Br Gerry Rush
Amoni Malaeulu, cousin of Br Steve Vaea
Adrian Boccalatte, brother-in-law of Br Lawrie McCane
Mick Meehan, brother of Br Linus Meehan
Helen Hebden, sister of Br Ernest Houston
Naibuka Seduadua, father of Br Jone Seduadua
Susana Filiane, aunt of Br Steve Vaea
Richard Maney, brother of Br Chris Maney
Paulina Filiane, aunt of Br Steve Vaea
Catherine Stanaway, sister-in-law of Br Bryan Stanaway



Visit to MAPAC

On Monday, I returned from a week at MAPAC in Manila. I'm very pleased to report that Ray, Jone and our 15 Temporarily Professed Brothers are in good health and fine spirits. They are enjoying and valuing the experiences provided them. The timing of the visit was to coincide with the annual MAPAC Board Meeting. According to the Statutes, the Board, comprised of the Leaders of the Administrative Units that use and fund MAPAC, is the governing authority. Current members are Brothers Allan De Castro (Province of East Asia and the Chair), Nicholas Fernando (Province of South Asia), Canisio Willrich (Marist District of Asia), myself (Star of the Sea) and Dominador (Ador) Santiago who is the Current Director. Also present for the Board meeting were General Councillors, Ben Consigli and Josep Maria Soteras. The Board reviewed the operations, programme, staffing and finances and were most satisfied with all aspect of the centre. We are most grateful to the staff: Ador, Joe Walton, Devasiri, Jone Seduadua and Ray Arthur for their work with, support and encouragement of the Brothers.



MAPAC STUDENTS, STAFF, BOARD AND VISITING COUNCILLORS GENERAL



JONE WITH THE MEMBERS OF HIS FRATERNITY



PRESENTING THE SOTS ICON TO ADOR, MAPAC DIRECTOR



JOSEP MARIA SOTERAS' SELFIE WITH THE BOARD



BROTHERS LEADING THE CONGREGATION AT WEEKDAY PARISH MASS



RAY ARTHUR IN FRONT OF ONE OF THE LOCAL MARIKINA CHURCHES



ELIJAH LEADING JONE AND HIS FRATERNITY IN A TRADITIONAL SOLOMON ISLANDS' DANCE

Scripture Reading: Luke 16:1-8

Then Jesus said to the disciples, “There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was squandering his property. ²So he summoned him and said to him, ‘What is this that I hear about you? Give me an accounting of your management because you cannot be my manager any longer.’ ³Then the manager said to himself, ‘What will I do now that my master is taking the position away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. ⁴I have decided what to do so that, when I am dismissed as manager, people may welcome me into their homes.’ ⁵So, summoning his master’s debtors one by one, he asked the first, ‘How much do you owe my master?’ ⁶He answered, ‘A hundred jugs of olive oil.’ He said to him, ‘Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it fifty.’ ⁷Then he asked another, ‘And how much do you owe?’ He replied, ‘A hundred containers of wheat.’ He said to him, ‘Take your bill and make it eighty.’ ⁸And his master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly; for the children of this age are shrewder in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light.

Reflection:

After the three wonderful parables about God’s mercy and longing for the reconciliation of the sinner – the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin and The Prodigal Son - Luke swings back again in Chapter 16 with two parables and related teaching about our use of material possessions and puts some of the responsibility for our salvation back on ourselves. This first parable is a story about a rather dishonest steward or manager. His responsibilities were to handle all the business affairs of his employer. However, it appears he had been mishandling his employer’s funds and was about to be fired. One thinks of the Prodigal Son who utterly wasted the inheritance his loving father had given him.

Immediately the steward begins to think of his future. He does not have the strength to do manual labour and to go begging would be a terrible loss of face. So, he thinks of a strategy by which he calls in all his employer’s debtors and reduces the amounts they owe. The debts incurred here are considerable in Jesus’ time. For example, one hundred measures of olive oil are equivalent to about 800 gallons or the yield of 450 olive trees, while 100 measures of wheat was equal to about 1,000 bushels or the yield of 100 acres. Very few farmers would have had anything like that kind of land in Jesus’ time. By doing this favour, the steward hopes to be able to find alternative employment with one of them. Surprisingly, his employer, far from being angry, praises the farsightedness of this steward. Some commentators question whether the steward was acting dishonestly. Was he denying his employer money, which he was really owed or was he rather writing off the ‘commission’ which was being usuriously charged, thus inflating the proper

amount owed? The Mosaic law forbade taking interest on loans from fellow Jews (cf. Ex 22:24-26), so one way of getting around this was to overcharge debtors by adding a commission. In reducing the debts to the proper level, the steward was correcting an injustice and, at the same time, making these debtors favourably disposed towards him. It is also noted that his employer was also possibly not losing out in the transaction. Whatever the interpretation, the point Jesus is making is the same: the steward acted with shrewdness and intelligence to guarantee his future.

Jesus concludes by pointing out that the worldly are far more astute in providing for their earthly future than are those who are regarded as spiritual, the ‘children of light’. What is required is a balance between the earthly and the spiritual. Jesus is in no way condoning the steward’s dishonest behaviour. What he does praise is his clear-sighted preparation of his future.

The lesson for us is clear. If we can set aside preparation for our earthly career, what about our future in the life to come? If we want to guarantee our future life with God then we, too, need to take the necessary steps. Those steps are clearly laid out in the Gospel and, in general, they involve a life which is built on truth and integrity, and on love, compassion and justice regarding the people around us. Our task is to work with God in making his will our own and in building up the Kingdom of God into the future.

32nd Sunday of Ordinary Time | 12 November 2023

Scripture passage: Matt 25:1-13

The lamp is the symbol of faith that illuminates our life, while the oil is the symbol of charity that nourishes and makes the light of faith fruitful and credible. The condition to be ready for the encounter with the Lord is not only faith, but a Christian life rich in love and charity towards one's neighbour.

May the Virgin Mary help us make our faith more and more effective through charity; so that our lamp can shine now here, on the earthly path and then forever, at the wedding feast in paradise.

Pope Francis

WAITING FOR JESUS WITH LAMPS LIT

Among the first Christians there were undoubtedly 'good' disciples and 'bad' disciples. However when writing his Gospel, Matthew is concerned above all about remembering that, inside the Christian community, there are «sensible» disciples who are acting responsibly and «foolish» disciples who are acting frivolously and carelessly. What is this trying to say?

Matthew remembers two of Jesus' parables. The first one is very clear. There are some who listen to Jesus' words and put them into practice. They take the Gospel seriously and show it in their life. They are like the «sensible man» who builds his house on rock. This is the more responsible part: those who go about building their life and that of the Church on the truth of Jesus.

But there also are those who listen to Jesus' words and don't put them into practice. They are as foolish as the person who builds one's house on sand. Their life is a mistake. If it depended only on them, Christianity would be just a façade, without real foundation in Jesus.

This parable helps us to grasp the fundamental message of another story in which a group of young people go out, full

of joy, to await the bridegroom in order to accompany him to the wedding feast. From the beginning we're advised that some are sensible and others foolish.

The «sensible» ones bring oil along to maintain their lamps lit; the «foolish» ones don't think about this at all. The bridegroom is delayed, but arrives at midnight. The «sensible» ones go out with their lamps to illuminate the path, accompany the bridegroom and «enter with him» into the feast. The «foolish» ones, on their part, don't know how to resolve their problem: «their lamps are going out». Thus they can't accompany the bridegroom. When they get there it's late. The door is closed.

The message is clear and urgent. It's foolishness to keep listening to the Gospel without making a greater effort to convert it into life; this is building a Christianity on sand. And it's foolish to confess Jesus Christ with a burnt-out life, empty of spirit and truth: this is waiting for Jesus with «lamps going out». Jesus can be late, but we can't delay any more our conversion.



DECLARATION FOR PEACE AND THE CESSATION OF VIOLENCE

1. Invitation from Br. Ernesto

To all Marists of Champagnat, brothers, lay people, children and young people.

We are all aware of the situations of war and violence that our world is experiencing in many places. For this reason, I invite you to take a moment for reflection and prayer on this topic. A moment that can be repeated every week or whenever you deem appropriate, in your families, educational works and communities.

As people, as Christians, as Marists, it is important to be close to the reality that surrounds us, and to be in solidarity particularly with those who suffer most.

Br. Ernesto Sánchez, Superior General



2. Declaration:

The Marists of Champagnat, joining Pope Francis in his consideration that “war is never a necessity, nor is it inevitable. It is always a defeat for humanity”, want to make an urgent appeal:

1. For the immediate cessation of all forms of violence that are taking place in Palestine, Israel, Ukraine, Syria, Haiti... (add other places or situations) and so many other places in the world.

2. For the open communication and collaboration among all affected by these instances of violence, including both the individuals and groups directly involved, as well as governmental and international entities.
3. For the free and unfettered flow of humanitarian aid.
4. To hold accountable those who have committed and are committing crimes of any kind, respecting international law.
5. To join with those who promote peace and justice even beyond our Marist borders.
6. To remember and pray for victims of the conflicts that ravage our world.

3. Minute of silence

4. Prayer for Peace

Mary, Queen of Peace, we greet you, our Good Mother.

You are the mother of those who suffer the horror of war, give us the gift of peace.

Virgin, full of grace, give us a compassionate heart.

Our intercessor, soften the hearts of those who promote violence.

Daughter of the Father, help us to discover that we are all children of the same God.

Mother of the Son, our brother, bring us closer each day to our shared humanity.

Faithful to the Spirit, teach us to entrust to Him the life of those who suffer.

We pray for the boys who live through war.

We pray for the girls who endure violence.

We pray for the adolescents and young people without the hope of future horizons.

We pray for the men and women who want peace.

we pray also for those who are unaware of the meaning of war,

give them a compassionate and merciful heart.

We ask this of you, Queen of Peace.

