



EAST ASIA

MARIST LIFE

Newsletter

December 31, 2023 Volume 02, Issue No. 24

Provincial's Message



Blessed New Year 2024, fellow Marists of Champagnat in the Province of East Asia!

In so many situations that we face in today's world, we are invited to embrace this gift of peace and encourage everyone to be artisans of peace in our communities, families, and ministries. May peace live in our hearts as we welcome the new year 2024!

On January 2, we celebrate our 207th year of foundation as a congregation. This day is a fitting occasion to be reminded once again of how our founder kept the fire in his heart burning for mission when he started our institute in 1817. Saint Marcellin founded the Institute of the Marist Brothers by welcoming the first disciples to the small house in La Valla, France.

Brother Seán Sammon, former Superior General, in his book "A Heart that knew no bounds," gave us a glimpse of the four important episodes in the narrative of our foundation. They are as follows:

- 1st: "Jean-Baptiste Audras, later Brother Louis, was only fourteen and a half when he asked to join the De La Salle Brothers at Saint Chamond. Judging him to be too young, they advised him to continue discussing his vocation with his confessor. As luck would have it, that person was the young priest from La Valla. The boy told Marcellin that he had resolved to consecrate his life to God. After talking with Jean-Baptiste and his parents and reflecting prayerfully on the situation, the priest invited young Audras to join Granjon.
- 2nd: Two months later, the house repairs were completed. The first two recruits took up occupancy on January 2nd, 1817. Henceforth, the Bonner house would be referred to, at least in the Marist world, as the "cradle" of the Institute, and January 2nd, 1817, as the foundation date of the Little Brothers of Mary. Its members were to embrace a spirituality that included mindfulness of God's presence, confidence in Mary and her protection, and the practice of the "little" virtues of simplicity and humility.
- 3rd: Throughout the remaining winter months, Granjon and Audras lived together in the house. Marcellin taught his charges to read and gave them the tools they would need to teach children. He also showed them how to pray and to make nails to be sold to provide an income for the community.
- 4th: Both Granjon and Audras assisted the young priest with many of his pastoral duties. They visited and helped the aged and infirm in the hamlets, gathered wood for the needy, and brought them food regularly."

Fellow Marists of Champagnat, the needs of others and their suffering often shape and transform us. **"How did both affect Marcellin's character, outlook on life, and spirituality? How did they work together to make him the person that he became?"** These are the questions that we may together reflect on as we mark the 207th year of our Marist foundation.

On the Feast of the Foundation of the Marist Brothers, let us ask ourselves and reflect deeply on these questions:

- **“How have the needs and sufferings of others shaped and transformed us or made us the persons that we are today?”**
- **How have they moved us to take action for the gospel’s sake?”**

I pray for God's blessings upon each one of you at the turn of this New Year. May God give us the light, guidance, and commitment to plan and carry out our Marist Life and Mission. May Mary, our Good Mother, and Saint Marcellin Champagnat, our founder, accompany us. May we never let the fire in our hearts go out!

In the silence of our hearts, we pray the Prayer for the La Valla Year during our 2017 bicentenary Foundation Anniversary:

“God of new beginnings, you inspired Marcellin Champagnat to labour for your kingdom and to make Jesus Christ known and loved in the circumstances of the people of his time, especially young people on the margins. Through Mary’s guidance, Marcellin gathered a community around the table at La Valla. From our simple foundation in La Valla, we come to the threshold of our third century to create a new beginning. At this time, you call us forth in faith, hope, and love to be attentive to the signs of your Spirit in our world. Give us the same audacity and faith as we journey in faith to the future, which beckons us today and always. Amen.”


BR. ALLAN J. DE CASTRO, FMS
Provincial

Last December 27, 2023, around 25 personnel of the Catholic Kindergarten School, Singapore, joined the session on Marist Life, Spirituality and Mission which was facilitated by Ms. Agnes Reyes, Coordinator of the Laity Desk. Br Elmer Jandic and Br. Tom Chin were present for their inspiring support in the growth of Marist life among the personnel. The said formation session was aimed at giving the personnel a deeper knowledge and formation on the key elements of a Marist life and culture and how these are lived in their context as pre-school teachers.



Last November 15: Br. Allan the Provincial Superior visited our community. We had our individual conferences with him. We also had our recreation in Tanduh beach, Parang Sulu. We were thankful for his presence in our community.



December 9: Family Day

Last December 9, we had our Family Day. It was a joyous day in which students and their families spent time together and participated in different events. The event was so successful because of the teaching and non-teaching personnel, administrators, and the unceasing support of the parents especially the PATA board.



Friendly game of NDJSH-K Personnel and the Grade 8 parents who are Champion



December 15: Grant-In Aid Thanksgiving Party

Last December 15, we had our Thanksgiving party with our grant-in-aid scholars. They enjoyed the simple celebration of Thanksgiving. This Thanksgiving party is not just about giving and accepting gifts but about giving thanks to God and being thankful for one another. We were thankful to our PATA board, who donated rice for the families of our scholars. I am thankful to my team, Ms. Lily and Ms. Susan, and those who helped us for the successful thanksgiving party. (In this photo are the honor students)



December 26-28: Recollection and Recreation

Last December 26-27, we had our community recollection at Haven's dew mountain resort, we stayed their overnight. December 27-28, we had our community recreation in Davao, and we had our dinner together in Vikings. This recollection and recreation help re-energized us as we continue our ministry and to give thanks to our loving God for this year and for the upcoming year

Province of East Asia Korea and Japan Sector Brothers' Assembly

Participated by 16 brothers, the Province of East Asia-Korea and Japan Sector had their assembly from December 31, 2023 to January 2, 2024, at Marist Brothers' Sector House, Seoul, Korea. Br. Jacobo Song, the Sector Coordinator, led the assembly with the presence of Br. Allan J. de Castro, the Provincial Superior.

The annual assembly is a meeting open to all Brothers in the Sector in order to bring them into closer contact and to arouse the interest of all by reflecting on some important questions and realities concerning the Sector in particular and the Province in general.

The first day was intended as an arrival day since the brothers came from different parts of Korea. After the evening prayer, Br. Jacobo formally opened the assembly by welcoming each participant and by giving the orientation. Br. Allan also delivered his opening remarks by emphasizing the relevance of the gathering in the life and mission of the Province.

On the morning of the second day, the Community Leaders, Ministry Heads, and Committee Chairs shared the achievements and challenges during the year. The afternoon sessions led the participants into a meaningful reflection on the life and mission in the sector in the midst of the present realities, namely the aging brothers, the lack of vocation, the scarcity of resources, the succession plans in the ministries, and many others. Fraternal celebration took place in the evening to begin the New Year 2024.

The last day was indeed significant since it was the 207th foundation anniversary of the institute, where the thanksgiving Holy Eucharist was celebrated. The brothers ended the assembly with enthusiasm to live the calls of the 6th Provincial Chapter, namely to be contemplative of the Sacred, compassionate healers, bridge-builders, and carers of the Common Home.

Photos during Sector's Assembly



Christmas Celebrations



Merry Christmas



December 17: Marist Province Center



December 16 CMMF Marikina Christmas party at the Marist Brothers Convent



St. Joseph & Our Lady of Fourviere Communities



Kidapawan Community



Tamontaka Community



Notre Dame of Marbel University Christmas Party December 20, 2023; NDMU Gym

An Opening Remarks

Our dear Marist Brothers, our Brother-visitors, the Superior of Marist East Asia Province, Bro. Allan de Castro, FMS; our university President, Bro. Paterno S. Corpus, FMS; our Administrative Vice President, Dr. Andres O. Magallanes, Jr.; our Academic Vice President, Dr. Joan P. Palma; our IBED Director, Bro. Noel Fernandez, FMS; fellow administrators, faculty and staff, our dear retirees, honored guests and friends, ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon.

Welcome to our NDMU Christmas Party 2023!

This afternoon, we are transported to Barbie World, a fantasy realm that features vibrant, pastel-colored landscapes and glamorous fashion of pink and blue, a sweet, luxurious universe where fantasies are fulfilled, and dreams always come true - in glitter, perfumed confetti, and strawberry flavor. It is a place to celebrate creativity in endless possibilities where the limit of life is the limit of your imagination.

Those of us who watched the film saw that Barbie leaves Barbieland and visits another world, and those from the real world visit the other...very much like the Christmas story, one in which heaven overlaps with the earth with the human birth of the divine God.

We bear this in mind this afternoon as we remember in joyful fellowship the countless NDMU victories of this year, 2023, and how much allowed us to genuinely uplift one another in the process.

And just like Barbie, who eventually learns that she is enough not because “she can be anything” but simply because “she is”, may we likewise be reminded, especially this Christmas, of who we are or our “enoughness” as a Marist family – we who are “called to be beacons of hope in this turbulent world, to be the face and hands of God’s tender mercy, to inspire creativity to be bridge-builders, to journey with the young on the margins of life, and to respond boldly to emerging needs.” To answer these calls and to live a life of service, especially to the last, the least, the lost, and the lonely; or even to the frail, the famished, and the forgotten; and to be holy in the eyes of God – these are the things that truly matter. It is my wish that we will do these soon if we haven’t done them yet.

When God gave us his Son, the Emmanuel, God told us that He would not be far from us anymore. He has come. From where he was, he has arrived in order to stay with us, to live with us, to be present with us. Together then, we send to the heavens our great thanksgiving, knowing that not only is this enough, but it is also beautiful.

And what better way to celebrate Christmas than in a colorful gathering of beauty, friendship, and prayer? And don’t forget the presents! And the powerful performances, for sure! And the amazing prizes to boot!

So, welcome to Barbie World, everyone! Who knows? Tonight may just be the night for your wish to come true, like finding your Ken or Barbie or taking home one of these major prizes.

Good afternoon once again, and MERRY CHRISTMAS!

*Dr. Magdalena F. Cobrador,
Dean, College of Education*



Inspiring Tales Down Under

Join Kimberly A. Camiring for an Exclusive Sharing Session on Her Marist Volunteer Journey in Mt. Druitt, Sydney, Australia!



Introducing Kimberly A. Camiring, an esteemed and dedicated faculty member hailing from Notre Dame of Marbel University – IBED. Kimberly's commitment to education is matched only by her passion for service. Having devoted herself to the transformative Marist Volunteer program in Lavalla>200 Mt. Druitt Community, Sydney, Australia, Kimberly is taking a well-deserved one-month vacation. During this period, she is eager to share her remarkable journey and the invaluable experiences gained from a year of heartfelt commitment. Join us for an exclusive sharing session with Kimberly as she unveils the tales of her inspiring Marist Volunteer adventure, offering insights into cultural exchange, community collaboration, and the profound impact of overcoming challenges. This session promises to be a unique opportunity to learn, connect, and be inspired by the compassionate journey of an educator dedicated to making a positive difference in the world.

Unveiling the Heartfelt Stories of a Dedicated Filipina Marist Volunteer

Key Highlights:

- **Journey of a Filipina Lavalla>200 Marist Volunteer:** Walk through Kimberly's incredible journey as she recounts her experiences, challenges, and moments of triumph.
- **About Lavalla>200 Marist Volunteer Program:** Gain insights into the transformative Lavalla>200 program, its mission, and the values that drive impactful global service.
- **Introduction to Mt. Druitt, Sydney, Australia:** Immerse yourself in the cultural tapestry of Mt. Druitt, experiencing the unique dynamics of this vibrant community through Kimberly's eyes.
- **Motivation to Volunteer:** Discover the personal motivations that led Kimberly to embark on this meaningful journey and the deep connection to Notre Dame of Marbel University – IBED's mission.
- **Cultural Exchange and Challenges:** Hear stories of cultural exchange, learnings from challenges faced, and the powerful impact of overcoming cultural barriers.
- **Collaborating with the Local Community:** Explore Kimberly's collaborations with local organizations such as Marist Learning Zone, Story Factory, and Baabayn Aboriginal Corporation, enriching lives within the community.
- **Impact on Students and Colleagues:** Witness the positive impact Kimberly has made on students and colleagues in Mt. Druitt, as she shares heartwarming success stories.
- **Lessons Learned:** Delve into the valuable lessons Kimberly has learned during her volunteer experience, both personally and professionally.
- **Overcoming Cultural Barriers:** Learn about the strategies employed to overcome cultural barriers and the importance of open communication and cultural sensitivity.
- **Future Opportunities and Recommendations:** Explore future collaboration prospects and recommendations for aspiring volunteers, gaining insights from Kimberly's perspective.
- **Q&A Session:** Engage in an interactive Q&A session, where Kimberly invites your questions and reflections, fostering a dynamic exchange of ideas.

"In the tapestry of volunteering, every thread of impact, every stitch of growth, and every connection woven echoes the mission of service. Sometimes, the most profound moments are found in the unprepared spaces of our journey."



MARIST VOLUNTEERS
Cultural Pilgrims of Hope

Transforming Lives, Empowering Communities

Be a part of this unique opportunity to learn, connect, and be inspired by Kimberly's incredible journey! Secure your spot now for an enlightening session with Kimberly! Don't miss this chance to be inspired and learn from a truly transformative journey of service and cultural exchange.

Available for Sharing: between February 1 – 15, 2024 Contact Information: Bro. Edgar R. Ceriales, F.M.S. (0999 308 5532)

Photo News



December 16:
Meeting of the Core Group of the Association of Mindanao-Sulu Religious Brothers in Davao City.



December 16: Meeting of the Leaders of Marist Branches in the Philippines for the February 10 Marist Family Assembly in Davao City.



December 21-22: Online and Face-to-face meeting of Temporary Professed Brothers in Active Ministry (TPBIAM).



December 29:
The Community welcomes Br. Jonnel "Noynoy" Sisneros to his new community in Singapore.



December 29:
Relatives of General Paulino Santos visited the museum where his memorabilia are on display at NDDU.



December 27:
St. Joseph Community outing at SG Farm, Tupi, South Cotabato.

Photo News

December 24:
Br John Chong participated in the Christmas Lunch with "the elderly, the poor and the neglected" on Christmas Day in Hongkong.



January 2:
Celebrating the 207th Foundation Day in Hong Kong with our school lay partners through Marist talks, prayers and table fellowships.



January 2:
Br. Allan met Bishop Simon Kim Ju-young at the Retreat House in the Diocese of Chuncheon (South Korea). The Marists Brothers were greeted by the Bishop on the occasion of the 207th Foundation Day.



Celebrating Milestones

January 2 marked the 207th Foundation Anniversary of the Marist Brothers Institute. The Marist Brothers in the Province hold a Marist Mission Parters' Day celebration.

Fr. Count Rosebelt Rozario celebrated a Thanksgiving Mass in the Chapel, attended by a good number of the Brothers, CMMF members from different schools, Province Center Staff, and awardees. After the Mass, a short program followed at the Marist Province Center. Plaques of appreciation and recognition were given to the awardees for their unwavering services. The following personnel were the awardees:

1. Mary Jane Aragoncillo - 5 years in service
2. Gilda Bandibad - 10 years in service
3. Frederick Manansala - 10 years in service
4. Ronnie Esmo-an - 15 years in services
5. Josephine Balleque - 15 years in service
6. Gelyn Niño-franco - 25 years in service

A sumptuous lunch was served after the program. Congratulations to the awardees. May your tribes increase.



Tribute to Mrs. Gelyn Simtim Niñofranco

(25 Years In Service Awardee)

In January 1999, the Provincial Council recommended that the Provincial Office hire someone with a business degree and an acumen for secretarial work.

A petite and pretty young woman named Miss Gelyn Apenton Simtim, fresh from college, applied and was readily accepted. She was made assistant to Mrs. Beverly Bacalando, who was secretary and bookkeeper at that time. The petite young lady learned so fast that she almost did the task at the Provincial office.

When Brother Romy Porras ended his term as Provincial econome, the former Br. John Tan assumed this position and was also the president of Notre Dame of Kidapawan. This leaves Mrs. Bacalando single-handedly assuming control of the office. And she relied heavily on Gelyn for financial matters and secretarial work.

When Beverly left, Gelyn single-handedly assumed the position of Provincial Secretary and assistant to Br. John as Province Econome. She worked with five (5) Brother Provincials: Br. Ted Fernandez for 2 years, Br. Manuel de Leon for 12 years, Br. Robert Teoh for 6 years, Br. Dominador Santiago for 3 years and Br. Allan de Castro for 2 years.

Her prowess led her to be adept at what she did, and she relied so much on financial transactions and reports and was faithful in handling the Provincial's itinerary and newsletter together with the demands of preparing various reports and other documents for General Administration in Rome.

A persistent suitor named Joselito Niñofranco married her, and they both have 3 good-looking children. The eldest, Francis, is also named "JG" (a name that stands for Joselito and Gelyn). A second is a young man named Florence, nicknamed "Evan". The third and youngest is a pretty young woman named Mary Gail, who's commonly called "Baby Girl".

While on the job, Gelyn had to work hard to support a growing family along with her husband Loloy. They ventured into water supplies and later into restaurant and catering services.

In 2003, The Sagip Ka office was established at the province office, and it was Gelyn who managed it for four (4) years until Mr. Victor Malinao was hired as Sagip Ka staff after four (4) years. However, Gelyn still held a strong influence at the office until, eventually, a new Sagip Ka office was built independently from the Province Business office.

Mrs. Gelyn and her husband Loloy became avid members of Team Matutum Running Community and General Santos Triathlon (Tri-generals) – a sport that involves swimming, biking, and running. With her avid interest in that sport, Ms. Gelyn attained his goal of completing the "Full Ironman Triathlon Race by finishing 3.8 km in swimming, 180 km of biking, and 42 km running within a cut-off time in sixteen hours in Subic, an inaugural Full Ironman Triathlon in the Philippines in 2018. She even went to Singapore, where she accomplished a marathon in running. Locally, she has finished various Triathlons and Running races in long and short distances since 2014.

Not only was she excelling in sports activities, but she was also a Zumba enthusiast (dancer) by joining a Zumba group at Robinsons for her daily morning exercises.

Since 2012, she has been the organizer at the same time race director of "Kasadya Marathons," a prestigious marathon in the Socksargen area, and on February 18, 2024, she will be the race director of the first edition of the KCC GENSAN Marathon in General Santos City.

Not only does Ms. Gelyn show her athletic and artistic prowess, but she readily caters to the Brothers' needs and other requests like by purchasing national and international travel tickets and visa applications and arranging their itineraries, especially for those traveling for the first time abroad. She attended several international meetings and gatherings, especially in Rome and Sydney, Australia, representing the East Asia Province.

Someone once said, "The Brothers come and go in Lagao, but Mrs. Gelyn establishes the stability of work and personal dedication," worthy of being called **'an outstanding Lay Marist.'**

For 25 years, Mrs. Gelyn Simtim Niñofranco has brought her family and the Marists to greater heights... we now consider her an indispensable personality at the Province office.

Gelyn, not only are you dedicated and loving to Loloy and your children, but you also took the responsibility of taking care of your paralyzed PWD brother and his family. We salute you for your great act of charity.

To you, Gelyn, we honor and recognize your dedicated services to the Marist East Asia Province. And we honor you through this plaque of appreciation. God bless you and your family.

By: Br. Ted A. Fernandez, FMS



News from Rome

Br. Allan de Castro received this message from Br. Nino Pizarro who is in Rome.

“Br. James McKnight had an accident while playing table tennis. He fell and hit his head on the floor, resulting in him being in a state coma at the moment with a ventilator in his mouth. The brothers from the US are asking for our prayers.”

Please pray for the healing and fast recovery of Br. James.



Birthday Celebration



Br. Tom Chin celebrated his birthday in Singapore Community on December 20.

Glimpses of the Past

MARIST ASIA PACIFIC CENTER (MAPAC) COMMUNITY DURING THE FIRST SEMESTER OF THE SCHOOL YEAR 2007-2008

This article is culled from the article of the same title published in the AMIHAN, the Marist Brothers Philippine Province newsletter, Vol. 29, Number 2, May-August 2007, pages 41-44.

Our present Rector, Br. Jeffrey Crowe is leaving MAPAC on August 25, 2007, to assume his responsibility as the new Provincial Superior of Sydney Province. Br. John Hazelman, the present Vice Rector, will assume the post until the new Rector arrives. Br. John will move residence from Chanel Fraternity, where he is the animator, to the La Valla Fraternity. Br. Roshan, the present live-out animator of Alfano Fraternity, will be moving into the Chanel Fraternity to take Br. John's place. Br. Ralph will take over Roshan's place at Alfano Fraternity.

Br. Desmond Howard is our new MAPAC Rector. This was officially announced to the community one morning after Mass. Br. Des has just concluded his class on Sexuality with the second-year student Brothers. He is now preparing to leave for Manziana, Rome, to finish his work there and to be able to assume his new assignment as the new MAPAC Rector in February 2008.

Our congratulations to Br. John Hazelman successfully finished his studies at De La Salle University in May 2008. He earned a Master of Arts in Education degree, majoring in Religious and Values Education with a specialization in Formative Counseling and Spiritual Direction. His thesis is entitled *Significant Factors of Vocational Accompaniment that Influenced Discernment and Growth as Perceived by Graduates and Accompagnateurs of Marist Asia Pacific Center.*

We also extend our congratulations to another De La Salle graduate, Br. Roshan Silva completed this month (August) his degree in Master of Arts major in Counselling Psychology. As part of his Master's studies, he did some research and practicum on *Assertiveness Training for High School Students at Marist School, Marikina.* Both Brothers John and Roshan were specially cited with high distinction for their outstanding academic performance in their studies.

Our chaplain is Fr. Roy Mariepaul, OFM Cap of Bangalore, India. He is a member of the Holy Trinity Province, one of the ten provinces of the Capuchins in India. He has been a priest for 14 years. He is in the country as a student of East Asia Pastoral Institute at the Ateneo de Manila University campus, where he hopes to finish his Masters' degree in Pastoral Ministry in April 2008.

Filipino Scholastics:

First Year

1. Br. Joseph Adrian Cagampan
2. Br. Joey Ponteras
3. Br. Mark Xyryx Sionosa

Second Year

1. Br. Albert Bolibol
2. Br. Leo Siva

Third Year

1. Br. Mitchel Abajar
2. Br. Vincent Celeste

Filipino Staff Brothers

1. Br. Manuel Uluan
2. Br. Romulo Porras

MAPAC BROTHERS: JUNE TO OCTOBER 2007

Country of Origin	1 st Year	2 nd Year	3 rd Year	Total	Staff
1. Fiji			1	1	
2. India	3	2	1	6	
3. Kiribati		1		1	
4. South Korea	1		1	2	
5. Pakistan		2		2	
6. Papua New Guinea		3	3	6	
7. Philippines	3	2	2	7	2
8. Solomon Islands	3	1		4	
9. Sri Lanka		1		1	1
10. Samoa					1
11. Australia					4
Total:	10	12	8	30	8*

*Plus Br. Des Howard who is with us from June to August 15 only and our chaplain who is a Capuchin priest from India.

Provincial's Schedule



HAPPY BIRTHDAY



December 28, 2023 - February 5, 2024

December 28-January 7, 2024:
Korea-Japan Sector Assembly in Seoul, Korea

January 8-9:
Cagayan de Oro for meeting of Association of Mindanao-Sulu Religious Brothers

January 10:
Online Province Assembly at 9:00 AM

January 12-14:
Provincial/Vow Council Meeting in Hong Kong Community

January 27-February 5, 2024:
Meeting with Vicar General and Assistant Econome General at China Sector

January 2:
Br. Abraham Kang

January 5:
Br. Manuel V. de Leon

January 12:
Br. Joseph Ahn (Su-hun)

January 15:
Br. Anthony Choi

Prayer Intentions:

- 2024 is the Year of Prayer. May we all commit to nurturing our prayer life in ways that will nourish our faith and loving relationship with God.
- May our religious leaders be filled with renewed inspiration in carrying out their task of shepherding the people of God.
- May our government leaders continue to exercise their leadership at the service of the people.
- May religious vocations increase, drawing more young people to be attracted to the life of the Marist.
- May we all find reasons to celebrate in thanksgiving the graces received in 2023, and may all of us and our families be blessed abundantly in this year 2024.

