



Marist Province of South Asia

Newsletter

December 2023



Even though the Marist Brothers never stop talking about Our Good Mother, our patron saint is actually not Mary, it's Joseph. When you think about it, that's pretty appropriate. Joseph was a man whose vocation was to care for, protect, nurture, and educate a child that wasn't biologically his, but whom God had entrusted to him. What better model is there for what a Marist Brother is supposed to be?

From the Editor's Desk!

As we say goodbye to November the dawn of December reminds the season of Christmas with love laughter and joy. Christmas is a holiday filled with good cheer, joy, decorations, and time with family and friends. Whether you are celebrating a secular or religious Christmas, it is a day for fun, love, and happiness. To celebrate Christmas, decorate your home and do things to get yourself in the spirit. Enjoy Christmas traditions with your family and take time to give back to others.

When we are out of Christmas, how beautiful Christmas trees we will see. How many beautiful cribs we will see? How many beautiful decorations we will see? How many bright light bulbs will we see? How many beautiful Christmas songs do we hear...what is the message of all these?

When we see beautiful Christmas trees, let's look deep into the cross tree in the soul. When we see a beautiful Crib let's look deep into the Crib in the soul. When we see exquisite adornment, let's look deep into the adornment with which the soul is adorned. When we see light bulbs, let's look deep into the light within the soul. As we listen to the beautiful Christmas carols, let's look deep into the rhythm of the music in the soul. When we see and kiss the infant Jesus let us remember our actions to love and care for our neighbour.

Christmas holds deep personal significance, resonating with profound joy, cherished traditions, and a spirit of giving that unites loved ones in warmth and celebration. Christmas, beyond its festive allure, embodies a mosaic of nostalgia, twinkling lights, and the symphony of laughter season where goodwill and the magic of togetherness paint the canvas of our hearts.

It is a time when the twinkle of lights mirrors the sparkle of shared moments, and the melody of carols becomes a symphony of shared memories, wrapping us in a comforting embrace of festive magic. Christmas ushers in a symphony of renewal, infusing every heart with the melody of joy and the promise of a fresh beginning, casting a radiant glow that uplifts spirits and bathes the world in the warmth of newfound gladness.



Marist Brothers, Provincial Office,
No. 10, Marcellin Nivasa,
Mirigama Road, Negombo, 11500,
Sri Lanka.

Tel: / Fax: (94) 31 2238130
(94) 31 2237011

Email: nickf_fms@yahoo.com
lankafms@gmail.com

Province Communication Commission

Bro. Rajakumar, FMS
(Link Councilor, Commission for
Communication)
maristindiafms@gmail.com

Bro. Chamara Hettiarachchi, FMS
(Editor)
chamafms@yahoo.com

Bro. Zubair Yaqub, FMS
smartzion@hotmail.com

Bro. Saul Placious, FMS
placiousfms@gmail.com

Mr. Sudarshana Mohotti
lankafms@gmail.com



Christmas transcends mere celebration, embodying a profound essence that extends beyond festivity. It is a sublime convergence of tradition, compassion, and spiritual resonance, weaving a timeless tapestry that enriches the human experience with meaning and connection. Without making Christmas just a Christmas without Jesus, Experiencing Christmas with Jesus, Let us enjoy Christmas with the whole soul. Merry Christmas to all of you.

Bro. Chamara Hettiarachchi

LOCUS OF BIRTH OF JESUS

Dear Marists of Champagnat,

Wise men from the East came to Jerusalem expecting to find the child born to be the king of the Jews. (Mt 2:1-2). The normal expectation was that the Messiah would be born in a holy city and a big city like Jerusalem. On the contrary, Jesus was born in an unknown small village called Bethlehem.

With that kind of background, we might also try to find baby Jesus in so-called holy places, prominent places and have the same experience as the three wise men from the East.

Where would I find the LOCUS of the birth of baby Jesus?

- ✓ in renowned shrines?
- ✓ Carol services? or
- ✓ in some religious services done with pomp and glory?



The fact is that I am already the LOCUS of the birth of baby Jesus. If I can experience that within me how blessed would I be opening myself to the mystery of the birth of Jesus happening all the time and everywhere.

If that happens then I will be able to see all my sisters and brothers around me as the LOCUS of the birth of Jesus. When I see that reality in them then the quality of my relationship will change. I would perceive them as worthy of my love, respect, veneration and etc.

The season of Christmas is a great opportunity for us to be deepened in the realization of Jesus's Birth (presence) in me and others. With that realization there will be many blessings we will be able to experience because of the presence of Jesus within us. These blessings will undoubtedly enable us to overcome unnecessary stresses, and disappointments in our lives.

Remember the invitation of Jesus: *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."* (Mt 11: 28)

Shouldn't I find rest and peace by connecting with Jesus within me to experience the birth of Christ?

Let us heed the voice of Jesus by going to him to experience the rest that he is promising us.

May you be the locus of Birth of Jesus this Christmas Season!

Bro. Nicholas Fernando, Provincial



Food for Thought

National Security does not mean armory and weaponry and battleships but it is mutual understanding, unity, and sincerity. Therefore, the leader of the country should not be a person who boasts of the conquest of war achievements but a person who inspires national harmony, solidarity, and brotherhood.

Galkanda Dammanada Thero

Sharing The Joy Of Christmas With Those Who Are In Need.

Celebrating the birth of the prince Jesus Christ, it is our duty, as Christians, to share the joy of Christmas with everyone. A programme was organized by OMI, to share the joy of Christmas with the patients of several hospitals. In order to do this, a donation campaign was held with the participation of the school children. The national hospital, eye hospital, the cardiology unit of the national hospital, the national institute of the mental health 'Angoda' and 'Mulleriyawa', The lady Ridgway Borella are the target hospitals to distribute the donations.

The members of Marist Champagnat Association of Marist Stella College Negombo also took part in this programme and they worked with dedication to collect the donation of soaps, tooth paste, etc. within a short period of time. A pack of medicines were given by the parents of a child to donate to the 'Apeksha'



hospital Maharagama. These donations were handed over to Rev. Father Francis Lloyd Fernando (OMI), on behalf of the Hospital Chaplains, Archdiocese of Colombo by the principal of Marist Stella College, Rev. Brother Sunanda Alvis, the teachers in charge of Marist Champagnat Association, Mr. Nimesh Perera and Mr. Dimash Perera and the members of association at the school premises



Master Charith Dilina Abeysekera
10 - D MSC Negombo and Champagnat Association

The Championship of the Tournament

Maris Stella Old Boys Youth team won the championship of the tournament played at St. Benedict's ground. We Participated @ under 35 & over-35 age groups. The over 35 team lost at quarter finals. The Past Pupils' Association of Good Shepherd Convent, Kotahena organised its inaugural foray into cricket through its much-anticipated Past Pupils' League Softball Cricket Tournament.



This event aims to unite and bring together the past pupils of girls' and boys' schools in Colombo and the suburbs for a day of fun and camaraderie whilst raising funds for essential infrastructure development at their alma mater.

The tournament briefing and draw took place at the historic Old Bens Sports Club with the participation of representatives from invited schools. The event promises to become a tradition for years to come.



MSC Thimbirigaskatuwa Prize Giving

On the evening of the 26th Saturday of November the auditorium of Maris Stella College Negombo came in to life with the Annual Prize Giving Ceremony of Maris Stella College Thimbirigaskatuwa 2023.



With the critical Situation that prevailed in the country during the past few years the college was not able to appreciate the young Maristonians. Therefore, this prize giving was a significant event which showcased the pride of our college, while appreciating the academic achievements of our fellow Maristonians. Through this-we recognized, appreciated, and encouraged the academic achievements, of our blooming buds at Maris Stella College Thimibirigaskatuwa.

To grace this occasion, we were so humbled to have Dr. Thilak Siyambalapitiya, the energy consultant and managing director of RMS pvt Ltd who was a proud old boy of Maris Stella College during the years 1966 - 1977

The event started welcoming the chief guest with a deliriously colorful traditional dance giving a nod to the culture that's often ignored when it comes to the generation Z. Over 400 students were awarded that day including special achievements, all-island achievements, those who excelled in their ordinary levels, advanced levels and the grade 5 scholarships examination. Through this we hope to inculcate enthusiasm and inspiration in the other students to excel in what they are doing and to do it in the right way. The event was coordinated nicely from the beginning to end and it was further coloured by the junior choir, the college dancing troupe and the orchestra giving the event a touch of aesthetics.



The prize giving 2023, of Maris Stella College Thimbirigaskatuwa concluded with great appreciations from the chief guest himself as well as the parents and old boys. The event was a success thanks to the media unit, the prefect's association, the teachers and all members of the non academic staff.

As Maristonians, we share the intuition that St. Marcellin and the first Marists had "to bring up children properly, we must love them, and love them all equally." From this principle flow the characteristics or pillars of the Marist style of educating: presence, simplicity, family spirit, love of work, and following in the way of Mary. Through our personal witnessing of these pillars, Marist educators, not only help to develop the Marist marks within our students but they also seek to adopt these attitudes and values as our way of enculturating the Gospel. The Marist grounds are home to numerous personalities and we hope to give rise to many more of them. And that day was a big step on this long journey.



Master Thatsara Fernando

The Maris Dinner Dance

Executive Summary:

The Maris Dinner Dance, an annual tradition since its debut in 1992, continues to be a resounding success. This year, the event took on a new dimension with the captivating theme of a Masquerade Ball, bringing together 320 individuals for a night of glamour, music, and celebration. Hosted at the Jetwing Blue Negombo on the 29th of November 2023, the event unfolded from 8:00 PM to 5:00 AM, leaving attendees with memories to cherish.



Event Highlights:

Theme and Venue:

The Masquerade Ball theme added an air of mystery and elegance to the evening, captivating the imagination of all attendees. The Jetwing Blue Negombo provided the perfect backdrop for this enchanting affair.



Entertainment:

Two exceptional bands, Redeemers and Grace, set the stage ablaze with their mesmerizing performances, ensuring that the dance floor remained alive with energy throughout the night.

Additional Attractions:

To enhance the overall experience, the event featured a photo station with a specially designed photo frame given to each participant, a 360-video experience, and a cocktail station, creating an immersive atmosphere for all.

Activities:

The evening was filled with exciting activities, including the recognition of the 1st 10 couples on the dance floor, Couples Baila competition winners, Table Draws, and awards for the Best Mask and outfit for both male and female attendees.

Comperre:

Faizal Bongso skillfully guided the audience through the night, adding a touch of humor and charisma to the proceedings.

Financial Outcome:

The primary objective of the event was to provide a glamorous experience for attendees while achieving financial viability. In this regard, the Maris Dinner Dance not only broke even but exceeded expectations by generating a profit exceeding Rs. 1,000,000.



Acknowledgments:

The success of the event owes much to the dedication and hard work of the sub-committee members. Special recognition goes to Dempsey Fernando (Chairman), Shivantha Fernando (Co-Chairman), Dilan Fernando (Advisor), Dinisuru Fernando (Sponsorship Chairman), Shimantha Perera (Coordinator), Ayeshan Guruge (E-banner in-charge), Prathap Fernando (Ticket in-charge), Isuru Fernando (Gift in-charge), Himanshu Fernando, Nalaka Perera (Media in-charge), Lalith Bulathsinhala (Treasurer), Nishendra Ekanayake, and Teddy Mutaliph.

Conclusion:

The Maris Dinner Dance 2023 not only met but surpassed expectations, leaving attendees with memories of a truly enchanting night. The meticulous planning, combined with the enthusiasm of the organizing committee, resulted in an event that not only delighted participants but also contributed significantly to the financial goals of the association. As we reflect on the success of this Masquerade Ball, we look forward to future events that continue to uphold the spirit and tradition of Maris Stella.



Dempsey Fernando
OBA MSC Negombo

Annual Christmas Celebration of Champagnat Vidupiyasa - Maris Stella College Negombo 2023



Students of Champagnat Vidupiyasa celebrated the Annual Christmas Celebration on 9th December 2023 under the guidance of the principal of MSC Rev. Bro. Sunanda Alwis, Rev. Bro. Pradeep and Deputy Principal Ms. Thushari Suraweera. It was organized by the Head Mistress of Champagnat Vidupiyasa Mrs. Dilisha



Fernando and her team Mrs. Ayesha, Ms. Vajira and Ms. Saumya with the support of all other teachers who currently working as teachers in Champagnat Vidupiyasa.



Students practiced and worked hard to make this day a beautiful, memorable day. They performed many dance items and songs which represented their talents and skills. We distributed books for all the students as Christmas gifts. The speciality was we organized few competitions such as best Christmas card, best book mark, the best reader and The best attendance. We held those competitions because we wanted to give our students a chance to win and also to show their skills.



In this year we held two courses for our students. English course for O/L and A/L leavers and Computer course for Grade 9 students. Our primary aim was to provide basic knowledge of English and Computer Literacy for free. We distributed certificates who successfully completed those two courses as well. Our Annual Christmas Celebration was another successful programme held by our Champagnat Vidupiyasa teachers.



Dilisha Fernando
Teacher, MSC Negombo

Champagnat Vidupiyasa Christmas and Merit Appreciation Ceremony 2023

It is a Pleasure to be able to Embark on a Long Journey by Imparting Wisdom to the Children for a Period of 20years and doing a great service to the Learning Activities of the low – income Children.

It is a Noble Sacrifice that the Learning Activities of the School this Afternoon took place under the full supervision and Resource Contributions of the Honorable Brothers of Maris Stella College. It is God's Privilege to be able to Contribute to this Great Care.



My parents did not have enough money to send me to those classes when the children of my school were going to classes to Master Different Subjects.so I saw the needs of parents very well.my father is a Fisherman, so I strongly felt my father's Hard Work.



I got the Invitation to Teach at this Champagnat Vidupiyasa in 2016 on the Advice of Mr.Preman of Maristella College, Thimbirigaskattuwa. In the full Support of the Rev. Bro. Roshan Silva Principal.it was possible to serve for 7 years from the year 2016 with the Blessing of the Honorable Maris Brothers.

In my life, I had hoped to do a great service to the children of the low-income lobby in the future, but there was no alternative. through this school, I was able to succeed in those Activities.



During the 2023 Children's Talent Evaluation Ceremony, the Hidden Talents of these Children Could be seen on Stage. I Gained a lot of Experience from the Children when I was Teaching at the Champagnat Vidu Piyasa. Heartbroken Children come to us. Some Children come Hungry. Even Children who Have Lost Love and Affection come to us. So I Realized that a child expects not only Learning, but joining this champagnat vidu piyasa. In this place I Have many Experiences and life Advice.

Finally, the First Christmas Miracle that Jesus Experienced in Poverty was able to be Experienced Today in this Champagnat School's Various Concert.

I Wish all the Teachers and Honorable Brothers the Privileges Necessary to Build the Educational Needs and Lives of the Children in the Future.

"WE ARE NECESSARY BUT NOT ESSENTIAL PERSONS FOR GOD'S WORK,I SEE THIS AS GOD'S WORK."

Dilshan Sampath Fernando
Teacher at Champagnat Vidupiyasa



Maris Stella College Negombo Took the Spotlight in the All Island School Drama Competition, Impressing Judges and Securing Notable Awards.

Key Achievements:

4th Place Overall:

Maris Stella College Negombo claimed a commendable 4th place among 17 participating schools, showcasing their dedication to the dramatic arts.

Best Music - Hemantha Liyapathirana:

Hemantha Liyapathirana's musical talents earned the team the Best Music award, adding a captivating touch to their performance.

Outstanding Acting Skills - Sadev Devamitta, Leon Andrews, Savio Nanayakkara:

The trio of Sadev Devamitta, Leon Andrews, and Savio Nanayakkara impressed with their acting skills, receiving well-deserved recognition.



Best Director - Muditha Jayasuriya:

Muditha Jayasuriya's exceptional direction earned him the Best Director award, showcasing his leadership in shaping the team's success.



Best Acting - Muditha Jayasuriya:

Muditha Jayasuriya's acting talent was acknowledged with the Best Acting award, adding authenticity to the overall performance.

Maris Stella College Negombo's achievements in the competition highlight their commitment to excellence in drama. The awards celebrate the team's collective talent and the school's dedication to nurturing the arts. Congratulations to Maris Stella College Negombo for a stellar performance!

Master Don Shamika Dinal Jayamanne

Did You Know?

1. In countries with large populations of Orthodox Christians, such as Russia, Ukraine, and Romania, Christmas Day falls on 7 January. Some Greek Orthodox Christians celebrate Christmas on 7 January, too.
2. The name 'Christmas' comes from the old English phrase Cristes maesse, which means 'Christ's mass'. But what about 'Xmas'? Lots of people think this is just a modern-day abbreviation – but it dates back to the 16th century! The 'X' is said to represent the Greek letter 'Chi' – the first letter in the Greek word for Christ, Χριστός (pronounced 'Christos'). It is believed that after the day of the gathering of Christ's followers became famous and respected worldwide, Atheists and Antichrists decided to change it by removing the name Christ for an X to mean that there is no Christ.
3. Christmas trees also became popular in Victorian Britain. But these were first seen in 16th Century Germany where, at Christmas time, people decorated fir trees with fruit and nuts – and later sweets, paper shapes and candles. Amazingly, historians think the origins of this festive tradition may date back to the Romans and Ancient Egyptians, who used evergreen plants and garlands as symbols of everlasting life.
4. We can't talk about Christmas without a mention to the big bearded, rosy-cheeked jolly man... Father Christmas! But have you wondered how he got the name Santa Claus? It's from Sinterklaas, which means Saint Nicholas in Dutch, the language of the Netherlands. St. Nicholas was a Christian bishop who lived in the 4th century – known for being kind and generous, he later became the patron saint of children.
5. We all love to sing along to Jingle Bells, but have you ever noticed that the song doesn't have the word Christmas in it? Or Jesus or Santa Claus? That's because it wasn't originally a Christmas song! The jolly anthem was written in 1850, entitled One Horse Open Sleigh, for the American holiday, Thanksgiving!

6. Now, imagine if there was no Christmas. Does it feel quite strange? Sad, perhaps? Well, believe it or not, in 1644 Christmas celebrations were made illegal in England, and soon after, in the English Colonies in America, too! At that time, members of the government felt that the religious meaning of Christmas had been forgotten, so banned the holiday festivities. Some people still celebrated in secret, however, until Christmas was once again legal... almost 20 years later!



Janith Jayamaha

The Nation Builders Par Excellence!

(This column 'The Nation Builders Par Excellence!' is a tribute to the veteran teachers who have immensely contributed to the growth, progress, and success of Maris Stella College Negombo. Their incomparable contribution to the nation's development, the propagation of the Catholic Church, and the advancement of the World at large should be admired.)

It was her first appointment at a school. She was undoubtedly a novice to the career. She was coy and delicate since she was in her prime youth in 1979. Controlling and teaching the boys of ten years in grade 4; active bundles, was a challenge but she managed to overcome the challenge. I admire her approach to delivering the lessons. She used English to teach English. She did not punish us when we went wrong so we loved her. As a teacher educator, I can admire the teaching methods of my grade 4 and grade 5 English teachers; Ms. Maurin Fernanduz and Ms. Laticia Fernando.



The heroine who embellishes this month's Newsletter is my grade 4 English language teacher Ms. Maurin Fernanduz, a proud product of Ave Maria Convent Negombo, who rendered a great service to the overall development of Maris Stella College, Negombo for 31 years until her retirement.

I still treasure my grade 4 English language double rule book which she has marked and Bro. Joseph Fonseka, the Primary Principal has signed on it several times to indicate the continuous checking of notebooks.

She was not limited to the classroom activities alone. She was once the teacher in charge of badminton. Elocution, poetry, and drama were additional subjects she taught for second language development. Her contribution to adding colour to the concerts and prize-giving was undeniable. "I am always grateful to all the Brothers, particularly the Principals, all the members of the staff and students for making my career and life at Maris Stella College memorable."

In organizing staff tours she played a prominent role. She seems to have the talent of making the tours memorable. Her colleagues, who have enjoyed her company, are grateful to her for all the unforgettable experiences.

Let us wish her and her family God's choicest blessings, God's grace, and good health. Let us also remember her and her family in our prayers.

Ajith Perera

University Lecturer - *Ph.D. in Linguistics at European Continental University USA*

Poverty and Humility; a Mere Slogan in Christmas!

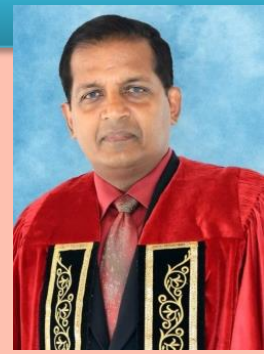
There is nothing but poverty and humility in the entire course of the personification of Christmas. God, who was all-powerful, being born of an ordinary woman and seeing the light of the world in a manger is the personification of poverty and humility. Maria and Joseph, whom God selected for the mystery of incarnation, are symbols of abject poverty and abundant humility. Shepherds, the first visitors of baby Jesus, are yet another symbol of poverty and humility. So, can we think of Christmas without poverty and humility? God could have selected the qualified with the riches and treasures and the social nobility but He qualified the selected who were the replica of poverty and ample humility. He selected the poorest of the poor to proclaim the Good News of His birth to mankind.

When God shunned all pomp and pageantry why are people more favorable for glamorous festivities and commercials in the Christmas celebrations? Don't they know or have they lost the true spirit of Christmas and given a different complexion to Christmas the way they prefer? Is 'poverty and humility' a mere slogan in this synthetic extravaganza? Is it for their benefit? Amid all these commercialized business ventures of present-day Christmas celebrations is the traditional stable the only symbol of poverty and humility? Have they imprisoned poverty and humility in the symbolic stables or nativity plays they make in public places and at homes where Jesus is missing? Then where has Jesus gone?

Many are sadly mistaken because they are under the impression that the true spirit of Christmas is found in the dinner dances held in luxury hotels and musical extravaganzas full of renowned celebrities in which the tickets, are purchased at exorbitant prices to show off their financial stability in public. Jesus is very far from such illusions but bitterly suffering in the midst of the marginalized and the poor who have been devoured by the prevailing merciless economic crisis and whose stoves are not lit up at least once a day. He is sighing with the children who are dying of hunger and weeping with the parents whose children are suffering from malnutrition and who are deprived of proper education.

Although God did not specifically create or destine certain people to be rich or poor, He has allowed these conditions to exist. If the rich do not develop humility and simplicity and do not utilize their wealth to eliminate the abject poverty of the deserving, they will suffer at rejection at the gates of heaven. "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than

for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God" (Luke 18:25). It is evident that God wishes the poor and the marginalized to be the gates for the rich to enter heaven. "Go to the poor, you will find God." The words of St. Vincent de Paul are quite true as Jesus Himself approved of it by saying, "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me." (Matthew 2: 35-37)



When there is a practical way of winning the eternal crown why shouldn't we oblige to what Jesus said?

Ajith Perera

University Lecturer - Ph.D. in Linguistics at European Continental University USA

Christmas Celebration at the Formation House, Negombo

Holiday season is round the corner, We Christians and Catholics and also others look forward to a happy time and celebrations during this season and the business man is encouraging and seducing us to decorate our houses and our gourmet tastes, new brands of dresses and all kinds of commodities, are displayed.



We at the formation house in Negombo arranged a celebration with the closing of schools on 18th December to have a simple Christmas get together with the boys and the community. Our young men worked hard to decorate the house with colorful illuminations and tinsels and the central attraction was focused on the crib which was artistically constructed using natural material, a long-tailed star appeared above

the crib to remind us about the star from the East that showed the way to three wisemen. We sang carol hymns with String music played by Br. Nicholas and drum beats rhythmmed by Br. Sasmika. Prayer session was initiated by Mark and a reflection on Scripture reading completed the session.

Our happy party concluded with exchange of gifts and a sumptuous meal.

Bro. Noel Fonseka

MSC 1992 Batch Celebrated the 50th Birthday Anniversary of Their Batch Mates

The Maris Stella College Batch of 1992 always keep a benchmark and give an example to other batches to follow their innovative ideas. In this year 2023 they organized a grand occasion to commemorate their 50th birthday celebration year of all the batch mates. MSC 1992 batch mates born in year 1973 completed their 50th birthdays in year 2023. Theme of the event was “MSC 92 Golden Jubilee Celebrations”



The key purpose of this celebration was to host a once in a lifetime, memorable get together for all the batch mates and their immediate family members. Not only that, but also they coupled it with a launch of an Emergency Medical Fund for the batch mates.

The Event Committee took a bold decision to make this an invitation only event. Which means, this was free to all who studied together in the same batch, irrespective of that they completed the exams or not. This is for the first time in the history of batch get togethers, set an example to all other batches to follow the MSC 92 batch to host an event without any charges to their batch mates.

With the intent of maximizing participation and considering the prevailing economic circumstances, this decision was supported by well wishes in the batch. A budget of Rupees 2.5 million was planned to meet this goal. Budget covered the function expenses, as well as a medical fund allocation of approximately 25% of the overall budget.

The organizing committee launched a focused fund-raising campaign amongst the batch mates both in Sri Lanka and overseas. Not only did the committee manage to raise the required capital, but also surpass the target for the medical fund as well.

The function was held at the Royal Ramesses Hotel, Seeduwa with the participation of over 210 guests, which included 94 members and their immediate families. The event was a resounding success.

This was an opportunity for our colleagues to connect and reminisce about the good old days, and have a joyful time with everyone. Event was accompanied by scrumptious food and rich beverages, entertained by the reputed “Lunu Dehi” band.

There were several activities like raffle draws, a baila dance competition and skits to keep the audience enthusiastically engaged. Indeed, it was a once in a lifetime experience for all the participants and everyone enjoyed themselves till the last minute.



Mark Dayan Fernando
OBA MSC Negombo

SHINING STARS 2023

Maris Stella College Negombo's Primary Concert was a mesmerizing showcase, bringing together the talents of our little Maristonians from grades 1 to 5. The stage was alive with the energy of these young performers, each act a testament to the vibrant spirit of our school community. From the innocence of grade 1 to the confidence of grade 5, the diversity of talents painted a colorful picture of growth and potential.



In this celebration of education, we witnessed not just a concert but a glimpse into the limitless possibilities within each child. As we applaud our shining stars, we embrace the collective brilliance that defines Maris Stella, nurturing young minds and fostering a love for learning that will continue to shine brightly in the years to come.

MSC Negombo - EMU

Christmas Celebrations at Operation Rainbow: A Blend of Joy, Charity, and Unity

TRICHY, December 17, 2023 – Christmas, the birth of Jesus Christ, a momentous event was celebrated with great fervour at Marcellin Trust – Operation Rainbow at St. Marcellin Community Hall, UKT Malai, Trichy. The celebration saw the participation of Brothers, Teachers, well-wishers, beneficiaries of the Rainbow Project, and students and staff of Bishop Heber College and Holy Cross College, Trichy.

The Christmas event, one of the most anticipated of the year, was organized by the Rainbow Project in collaboration with the PG Department of Food and Dietetics, Bishop Heber College, Trichy. The celebration was graced by special guests including Mrs. Roselin Marthal,



Head of the Department of Food and Nutrition, BHC, Rev. Sisters Jaqueline and Roselin from St. Anne's of Trichy, UKT Malai, and Br. Edwin from the Franciscan Brothers and Br. Johnson Gnanasekar, FMS.



Sr. Roselin delivered the Christmas message, highlighting the importance of Christmas and the virtues of Jesus Christ. She encouraged everyone to embody the spirit of Jesus in their lives by loving and caring for others.

The event was made lively and entertaining by students from Bishop Heber College, Holy Cross College, and the Rainbow Project who performed Christmas carols, dances, dramas, and skits. The birth of Jesus Christ was beautifully dramatized

by the students of Bishop Heber College.

In the spirit of giving that characterizes Christmas, free clothes were distributed to children. The cutting of the Christmas cake was a joyous affair, with all the guests and children participating, followed by a dance with Santa Claus. The event was filled with joy, fun, and laughter.

A delicious lunch was prepared by Rainbow Staff, Mrs. Reeta, and Marcellin Club Members, and served to all. A beautiful Christmas Crib was prepared by Br. Saul and Rainbow staff, adding to the festive atmosphere.

The event concluded with a vote of thanks to all who contributed to the wonderful Christmas celebration.



Wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year 2024!

Bro. SA. Rajakumar, FMS
Director, Operation Rainbow Project

Called to Serve

A Sunday School Teacher is responsible for teaching and instructing children in Christian principles and values. They prepare lesson plans and use a variety of teaching methods such as storytelling, crafts, and games to engage the children and help them understand and apply the teachings.



"Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts".

The Holy Spirit gives the spiritual gift of teaching to teach God's Word. Gene Wilkes explains, "Teaching is instructing members in the truths and doctrines of God's Word to build up, unify, and mature the body."



I am so thankful to Br. Sasmika for teaching at St. Mary's Sunday School in my absence for three months. Even though he was busy teaching them shows his passion and proved our commitment to our call to make Jesus known and loved. Since 1985 Marist Brothers actively work at St. Mary's Sunday School and the parish community very much appreciates our presence. The annual concert held on 10th December 2023 was colourful with the items that Br. Sasmika trained the students. When I returned, I was happy to hear all the newness he had brought to the lives of the students. I see it as a God's gift to be a catechism teacher.

Bro. Chamara Hettiarachchi

Feast of Hope

As we were preparing the world rather welcome Christmas, it was a time to reflect, time to look back, time to rethink, and in a crisis, social, economic, and political environment, the needy are being put in a more and more hopeless and in darkness at Christmas. Is Christmas merely a celebration? But I see this it is a time of love and that love we share with the other as God shares his love with humanity for giving his only son, the incarceration we celebrate as Christmas

Christmas is the feast of hope, "People who walked in darkness with tears, sighs, oppressed, saw a great light" For waking up to the responsibility and duty of our time to renew that hope. Once again are we people of hope to receive the light and give that light to the others who are in need?

Reverend Fr. Marcelin Jayakody writes: My Christmas is the day poor eat rice. My Christmas is the day of poor clothes. My Christmas comfort your sorrows. My Christmas is the day sin goes to the church. Isn't it an invitation for us to welcome Christmas? What is the true liberation Jesus brings us?

We Marist Brothers and lay members had a great opportunity to listen to the liberation meaning at the birth of Jesus! "Contemplating the Song" with steering, social activist, and Parish Priest of Doloswala Catholic church at Rathnapura diocese Rev: Father Jeevantha Peiris. He shared the true meaning of Christmas and the present issues of our Country. Through this awareness, we were able to see Christmas from a different perspective beyond decorations or external preparations. Christmas is a time to love, time to share, time to reach out, time to appreciate time to renew, and time to thank and praise God for his love.



Jude Preman
Teacher, MSC Negombo

All-Island Inter-Schools Hockey Tournament

Maris Stella College, Neg. hockey team clinched the 3rd place in the All-Island Inter-Schools Hockey Tournament held at Wennappuwa Albert F Peiris Ground from 28th to 31st December. St. Thomas College Matale and St. Joseph's College Wennappuwa emerged as joint champions.



Our journey included three wins in the group stage, securing a spot in the Quarterfinals. Advancing through the Semifinals after defeating Benedict College, we played an exhilarating match against St. Joseph Vaz, concluding in a 2-2 tie. Despite our best efforts in the penalty strokes, we fell short.

In the battle for the third place, the match ended in a draw, and we were honored with the title of 3rd place (Plate Joint Champs). Kudos to our resilient hockey team!

National Youth Chess Championship 2023/24

Eight players from Maris Stella College, Negombo participated in the National Youth Chess Championship 2023/24 – Finals by fulfilling the criteria either by selecting from the District Level Selections or having an International Rating. This 4hrs games standard event which was organized by the Chess Federation of Sri Lanka was held on 27th to 30th December 2023 at Dharmapala College, Pannipiltiya.

Adrian Savidya Perera, Under 9 Open Section became the equal 6th (14th after tiebreak) among 687 participants, beating the last year 2023 Sri Lanka representative of this age category who achieved 4th place in the highly competitive World Cadet Chess Championship – 2023. Adrian lost only to this year Champion and the 2nd Runner-up of this event. He got the opportunity to join the national pool 2024 practices this time with his remarkable achievement- 8 points out of 10 rounds.



Sasmitha Perera of Under 17 Open Section became equal 13th (25th after tiebreak) among 88 participants of the Youth Finals Under 17 Open Section. From this achievement he is in the additional players list to enter the pool practices. Even with a tough start 1 out of 4 games, he showed his sportsmanship by fighting for the rest of the games and completing as 5 points out of 8 rounds.

We value the effort put in by Mr. Marlon Fernando, Ms. Roshell Askey, Mrs. Ranga Dilhani & Mrs. Roshall Melani Rosairo, very much.

We are called to make Jesus known and loved

MSC Negombo, Media Unit

Healing Services

Healing ministry is a vital component of a healthy church. It seeks to bring people to wholeness in Christ out of a place of brokenness and despair. Healing ministry can be expressed through: the faithful work of elders praying for the sick, leading others to ask for forgiveness and restoration in Christ.



Many find not only prayer but also adoration, laying on of hands, reflecting the word of God to be healing. Laying on of hands, and the less formal gesture of holding someone's hand all show the power of touch, which plays a central role in the healings recorded in the New Testament.



Young Bro. Sujith Alwis from Kalpitiya with so much passion conducts prayer and healing services in many parishes. Last month he conducted three services nearby churches at Kalpitiya. We Brothers are called to make Jesus known and loved. As I see the service Br. Sujith was doing yet another way of sharing God's love and responding to God's love with families. We experienced and seen many families broken, with single parents, or suffer from financial situations or relationship issues. In all

these calamities how do Catholic families live witnessing to God or as a Catholic family? Br. Sujith is inviting all the families to live in the faith of God and lead a good Christian life in Christ. We wish Br. Sujith to deepen his faith and continue sharing that faith with others.

Bro. Sujith Alwis

MARIS STELLA COLLEGE OBA -COLOMBO BRANCH AGM 2023

The AGM of the MSC OBA Colombo Branch was held on the 4th of December at the Galadhari Hotel.

A new committee was appointed with Mr. Ramesh Dasanayake as the President. IPP: Mr. Shirley Jayakody. Secretary : Mr. Mithra Weerakone, Treasurer: Mr. Telley Fernando, Assistant Secretary: Mr. Lalantha Kurukulasuriya, Assistant Treasurer: Mr. Ashan Fernando. VP1: Dr. Ranga Rodrigo and VP2: Mr. Kansihka Weeramunde. Editor: Mr. Sarath Rajapakshe, International Affairs: Dr. Desmond Warnakulasuriya and SSP Rohan Perera as the Membership Secretary. Notable members in the committee are Mr. Merrick Gunaratne, Dr. Ian, The Labrooy Brothers, Dr. Stravinsky Perera, and 10 others Old Boys of Maris Stella College. The committee also comprise of the Past Presidents Dr. Stanley De Silva, Mr. Vijitha Seneviratne, Mr. Roshan Ranasinghe, and Mr. Christy Perera. The Spouses too joined in the group photograph with the MSC Negombo OBA President Mr. Pradeep Peiris and Principals of Negombo MSC and Thimbitrigaskatuwa MSC Bro. Sunanda Alwis and Bro. Mervyn Perera respectively.



Elmo Fernando, OBA MSC Negombo

"Tech Pioneers: Maris Stella's Winning Plant Monitoring System"

Maris Stella College Negombo clinched victory at Innovate X with their groundbreaking project, Leaf Link – a highly advanced plant monitoring system. Led by team leader Muhammad Hamzah Faleel, the dynamic duo of Imesh Perera and Meth Dombawela co-presented the innovative solution. In a showdown at BMICH, amidst the presence of chief guest Shan Weerasekara and distinguished guests, the team emerged triumphant in a Shark Tank-like competition.



The panel of judges, consisting of six seasoned professionals and university lecturers, recognized the ingenuity of Leaf Link. Mr. Madura Amarajeewa, the project's master in charge, played a pivotal role in guiding the team to success. The coveted first prize includes 100,000 Rs in seed funding and essential business and technical guidance, solidifying Maris Stella's commitment to fostering innovation in technology and entrepreneurship.

Master Hamzah Faleel

A Rythmic Spiritual Journey Through 'Pax In Terra' A Carol Service of Peace



The Annual Carol Service organized by St. Marcellin's Choir of Maris Stella College Negombo for the year 2023 was held on 20th of December from 6.30 p.m. onwards at the College Indoor Stadium. This spiritually enriching event was named as "Pax in Terra" where the meaning stands "Peace on Earth". Through enchanting melodies and

heartfelt performances, the choir endeavors to convey the timeless message of peace, invoking a sense of unity and goodwill among attendees. This Carol Service became a spiritual journey, intertwining the beauty of music with the universal aspiration for harmony, making it a memorable celebration of the season.

In a harmonious convergence, Choristers of Speranza & St. Euphrasian Choir joined us for an enchanting carol service. This collaborative celebration resonated with the spirit of unity, as voices from different musical ensembles blended seamlessly, creating a truly magical and memorable experience for all involved. The shared commitment to the joyous occasion infused the carol service with a rich tapestry of melodies, emphasizing the universal message of peace and goodwill during the festive season.



"Pax In Terra" can also be termed as a simple effort by the choristers of St. Marcellin's Choir of Maris Stella College, Negombo to express the essence of peace globally.

Master Stefan Raveen



A Symphony of Young Maris Talent: Recap of the Primary Concert 2023

In a resounding celebration of junior artistry, the teachers and students of the primary section at our college orchestrated a memorable Primary Concert which was held on 16th of December 2023. The event, brimming with musical enchantment and thrilling moments, left an indelible mark on the hearts of all who attended.



The stage came alive with the harmonious melodies and spirited performances presented by our budding youngsters. From enchanting renditions of classic tunes to original compositions, the concert showcased the depth of talent within the primary section. The audience was treated to a musical journey that not only entertained but also highlighted the creativity blossoming in our youngest performers.

The Primary Concert stands as a testament to the collaborative efforts of teachers and students, fostering an environment where young talents can shine. As we reflect on this musical spectacle, we are reminded of the importance of nurturing creativity and



providing platforms for our primary students to express their artistic brilliance. The Primary Concert was not just an event; it was a celebration of the vibrant spirit and promising future of our young Maris performers.

Master Stefan Raveen

Maris Ignite 2023



The debate union of Maris Stelle College Thimbirigaskattuwa was established in 2021 with the blessing and guidance of Rev. Br. Shanthy Liyanage, Rev. Bro. Dulaj Fernando, and Mr. Francis Fernando. It was started by grade 9 students who are talented and dedicated. Now there are about 40 members in the debate union. We participated in school-friendly debate competitions and "Sirasa" the debater with AAT. We selected the last 50 schools. It was the biggest achievement of our journey. Our debate union organized a "Maris Ignite" friendly debate competition for Negombo and Minuwangoda education zone schools and we were the champion in that competition.

We hope to go on a new journey in 2024 with the blessing of Rev. Bro. Principal's blessing.

Master Sanjula Fernando

Joy of Christmas

On Christmas, we reflect that it was a time of God showing His great love for us. It can be a time of healing and renewal of strength. People enjoy the season but they should remember to rejoice as well! After all, the true meaning of Christmas is the celebration of God's ultimate gift: the birth of Jesus, the Christ child. Jesus shared his life with humanity and invited us to do so.



We the Brothers received the Christmas lunch from a donor and we shared our lunch with the patients at Aniyakanda Government Hospital on 20th December 2023. We offered a small prayer, had a reflection, and continued with singing carols. It reminded

us that Jesus during his earthly life how He shared his love, time and attention, kindness with the people who are in need. I felt so blessed to share God's love with the sick. This was an unforgettable Christmas for me.



Bro. Godfrey Perera

Hand in hand- Building a Pagoda

I was reflecting on the event where Pope Francis invited Catholics and Buddhists to work together for peace and nonviolence, during a Vatican meeting with Buddhist leaders from Mongolia. Pope emphasized that "Peace is the ardent yearning of humanity today. He again and again mentioned that let us work together to cultivate compassion and hospitality.

The moral life is emphasized in all branches of Buddhism. Buddhists emphasize virtues such as non-violence and compassion and Buddhism counsels us not to do anything to others we would not like done to ourselves. Despite the diversity in the different strands of Buddhism, there is much common ground. Isn't it similar to what Jesus taught us? Love one another and Matthew 15:32 "Then Jesus called his disciples to him and said, 'I have compassion on the crowd because they have been with me now three days and have nothing to eat. And I am unwilling to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way.



We Sri Lankans are nurtured by these great religions and cultures of different faiths. Kalpitiya is a place where multi-cultural and multi-religious society exists. Marist Brothers have been present there for over 20 years educating all the children and youth who belong to different faiths and cultures. Recently I had a great opportunity to join the Buddhist temple along with our Parish priest and his assistance to be a part of the beginning of building a Buddhist Pagoda. We all work together like it is our work. I felt more brotherhood, unity, and vitality as we all work together for a common good. I think and pray that we Sri Lankans and South Asians rather than the world need such acts of unity and Brotherhood.

Bro. Sujith Alwis

Annual Prize Distribution Ceremony- 2023

"The person that works the hardest wins". Will Smith.

Prize-giving day is a day when students are awarded for hard work both in academic and co-curricular activities. The last prize-giving ceremony of our school was held on the 10th of November 2023.

The General Secretary of the Diocesan Board of Education (DBE) Mr. Snawar graced the occasion with his presence as chief guest of the function. He was received by the Brothers in the principal's office. The chief guest and the Brothers were welcomed by the coordinators with flower petals and Punjabi traditional turbans in the school.

The function began with the recitation from the Holy Bible and the Holy Quran. After prayer Miss. Kinat and Sahar called the names of the prize-winners and the chief guest along with other teachers and Brothers gave away the prizes. The distribution of prizes came to an end in an hour.

After the distribution of the prizes, the chief guest delivered an important and instructive speech to the students. It was a spontaneous speech. He said he believes in wholistic education. He was impressed with class 6th student Master Waiz Nadeem, who was an example of his thoughts. Waiz won a couple of trophies, presented a mystical dance, and performed the sole song. He asked other students to take Waiz as an example and shine in different things rather than being bookworms. Later he invited Waiz on stage and



gave a prize from his pocket. Lastly, he advised all the students to build up their character to become good citizens of the country.

Finally, the Br. Farancis Rehmat the principal of the school gave a vote of thanks to all who kindly attended the function and to others who worked hard for the success of the function. The function came to an end with a picture taking. The day ended with a festive meal.

Bro. Zubair Yaqub



Religious Get-together 2023 in the Diocese of Chilaw

Religion serves several functions for society. These include giving meaning and purpose to life, reinforcing social unity and stability, serving as an agent of social control of behavior, promoting physical and psychological well-being, educating the poor, young and vocational training, looking after the orphanages, elder care, sick, dying and motivating people to work for positive social change.



Every year there is a religious get-together in the Diocese of Chilaw and the Marist Brothers working in Kalpitiya and Haldanduwana join the occasion. This year Brothers Chamara, Sasmika, and Sujith participated and their presence was joyful. The Bishop of Chilaw Rt. Rev. Dr. Dewsritha Valance Mendis thanked all the religious for their contribution to the diocese. It was a good opportunity to meet other members of the religious orders who serve and share the joy of Christmas while thanking and praising God.



Bro. Sasmika Fernando

Photo of the Month

"Bow of Devotion: Unveiling the Perpetual Profession"

In the mystical moment of perpetual profession, Religious embark on a profound journey, bowing and lying face down before Jesus, a tangible expression of their surrender to divine will. This sacred commitment involves sacrificing personal desires, embracing vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, pledging to serve Christ for a lifetime.

For loved ones, it's a journey of shared sacrifice—a testament to prioritizing a higher calling. It means standing beside them as they navigate a path of selfless devotion to Jesus. These priests serve by being living vessels of His love, spreading His teachings with every breath.

As a community, our support is crucial. Let's uplift them through prayers, encouragement, and understanding. A beautiful quote by St. Augustine reminds us, "To fall in love with God is the greatest romance; to seek Him the greatest adventure; to find Him, the greatest human achievement." Together, let's cast our nets of support, embracing the profound commitment of perpetual profession.

Ashela De Silva



Probing into the Treasure of God

You embark on a journey, that's new
Totally unknown, with horizons in view
Discovering treasures, deep within you
A call that's meant only for a few.

With a heart, that is bold
A life long commitment, stands unfold
Selfless service, a key to hold
A gift to God, a story untold.

With grace and faith endowed
Make Jesus known and loved
A purpose to fulfill, you once vowed
Manifold blessings onto you be showered.

Through true love that's real and deep
Springs witnessing life, a promise to keep
Amidst valleys low and mountains steep
A rich harvest, yet to reap

Every day welcomes new learning
God's presence, a heartfelt yearning
Stay strong and brightly burning
Your fiat, forever discerning.

Don't let trials, diminish your flame
Stand firm, never grow tame
Through life's intricate, unpredictable game
Come what may, remain the same.

Bro. Chamara Hettiarachchi



**The Institute of the Marist Brothers of the Schools (FMS)
50 Years of Marist Mission in India**

Jubilee Prayer:

Dear Loving God,

We rejoice in Your presence and grace,
Celebrating fifty golden years of faith, service, and love,
United as brothers and lay in the Marist family.
We thank You for the blessings
You have lovingly bestowed on us.

As we look back on our journey in India,
We see Your hand guiding us faithfully,
Your love sustaining us graciously.
In every challenge we faced,
In every success we celebrated –
You were our strength, our refuge, our hope.

As we continue our journey in faith and Spirit,
Inspired by St. Marcellin and our fellow Marists,
May we always walk with the heart of Mary,
Empowering youth and enriching society,
To make Jesus and Mary known and loved by all.

We make this prayer through Jesus Christ, our Lord - Amen.

