



EAST ASIA

MARIST LIFE Newsletter

February 15, 2024, Volume 02, Issue No. 27

MARBEL COMMUNITY

NDMU Compound, Alunan Avenue, Koronadal City, Pilippines

2024 started for us with a renewed sense of hope and mission. Our Community Life Plan challenges us to be bearers of hope to one another and our partners in our mission. This is our commitment as we continuously “taste and see the goodness of the Lord” (Psalm 34) which is also the theme of the Golden Jubilee celebration of Br. Rene last year.

January 2 was the Institute’s Foundation Day and Br. Pat attended the celebration in Lagao. This was also the day the Bros. returned from their Christmas break, fully recharged and renewed. The opening of the Hinugyaw Festival last January 10 was declared a holiday. It was filled with colors, noise, and activities since it was the 84th founding anniversary of the city.

The school’s College of Law held its testimonial dinner with Brs. Pat and Roy are in attendance. Nine (9) NDMU lawyers successfully passed the 2023 Bar Examinations. This historic event will surely boost the enrolment of the college as these new NDMU lawyers will be of service to the community at large.



For this month, we had our share of visitors which included Br. Mar Zuyco, OMI, Fr. George, SVD, Br. George Valle and Petero’s guests from the Pacific. Br. Rene, on the other hand, went to Surallah to attend the birthday celebration of his brother. Br. Rene is equally proud and mighty in proclaiming that the Surallah Cultural Landmark was chosen as the most visited tourist spot in this part of the universe. However Br. Roy countered that it is the most visited spot since you will pass by this colorful and educational landmark in going to Lake Sebu and beyond. It means you will pass by twice and that mathematically explains why it is the most visited. Br. Pat stayed in Iloilo for six days, bringing with him delicacies to the delight of the Bros. Thank you, Bro. Pat for your thoughtfulness.

On Feb 1-3, the NDEA High School South Cotabato-Upper Valley Area held its selection meet in sports, academics, and socio-cultural events. This event was participated in by the following Notre Dame schools in the area: Notre Dame of Banga, Notre Dame of Lamba, NDMU-IBED, Santa Cruz Mission School Incorporated, Notre Dame Siena School of Marbel, and Notre Dame of Surallah. Except in a few events, NDMU-IBED emerged as the champion. The winners will represent the area in the NDEA Inter-Area to be held at NDDU-IBED sometime in April. The university celebrated its Mission Partners’ Day last February 8. This yearly gathering started with a Mass followed by the yelling competition and parlor games. This half-day activity ended in a lunch at the main campus. During the said celebration, Ms. Kimberly Camiring, IBED teacher, shared her reflective journey as a LaValla 200 volunteer. Kimberly returned to Koronadal for her 30-day vacation with her family and friends. She is assigned in Mt. Druitt, Australia with a Marist Brother and a couple. Her sharing dwells on her works, insights, challenges, and learnings in the community.

Br. Petero went hiking at Mt. Matutum during the long holiday weekend. Last Feb. 13, the university conducted its Lenten Recollection and Sacred Time. Rev. Fr. Fidel Talabon, OMI was our recollection facilitator. The following day was Ash Wednesday to mark the beginning of the season of Lent.

Our community superior, Br. Roy is busy with his work as the university CMRE Director. Br. Pat as the university president juggles his time with his different appointments, meetings, and transactions. Br. Noel is assigned to the Basic Education Department of the university. Br. Petero is a full-time student at the university with Social Work as his bachelor’s degree specialization. Br. Roland is in his thesis-writing stage as a graduate school student at NDMU majoring in Educational Management. Br. Rene spends his quality and quiet time in the community. His presence is regular during our community prayers and meals.

MARIST FAMILY, PILGRIMS OF THE HEART

4th Gathering of the Marist Branches in Mindanao, Philippines

Last February 10, around 200 Marists from the Four branches gathered at Almacén, Davao City to meaningfully connect and re-connect, know each other better, and deepen the Marial bond that unites all Marists. This gathering is conducted every two years which began in 2017 with the Marist Brothers as host in General Santos City. In 2019, the Marist Fathers hosted the event in Davao City and in 2022, the Marist Missionary Sisters had the event in Koronadal City. For this year 2024, the Marist Sisters led in the organization and facilitation of this significant Marist event.

The gathering began with the celebration of the Eucharist officiated by the Provincial of the Marist Fathers, Fr. Christopher, Thadeos Ganzon, SM. His homily cited significant points of inspiration drawn from the Gospel of Luke 2:41-52, the narrative of Jesus at the Temple. Among others, the inspiring salient points were:

- Jesus, Mary, and Joseph were on a pilgrimage journey for the Festival of the Passover, a compliance of loyalty to the religious traditions of their time. As Marists, we are called to be loyal to our calling as members of the Marist Family. The journey may be difficult in this experience of a pilgrimage but for the Marist, God and Mary will always be there with us. We journey in faith to be together in this Marist Family.
- Jesus as a young boy at the Temple, progressed with a profound knowledge, wisdom and understanding. As Marists, we are called to be tireless seekers of Wisdom.
- Jesus' response that alerted Joseph and Mary indicated his profound awareness of his unique calling in life: "Did you know that I am in my Father's house?" As Marists, we are called to be humble to God's invitation for us to accept with love the manifestation of his Divine Providence even when we do not understand.
- In the likeness of Mary, we are called to be contemplatives, always "pondering things at heart". We are called to contemplate God's work in our lives and to grow in the awareness of God in us and around us. It is in our contemplative silence that the greatness of God's love unfolds.

After the celebration of the Eucharist, Sr. Shiela Manalo, SM, delivered a welcome message. She stated that the Marist Family Gathering whose theme is MARIST PILGRIMS OF THE HEART, a seamless garment given to us by Christ, woven by Mary, and worn by generations of Marists" captured the way and the values every Marist is called to live:

"Let Marists always bear in mind that they belong by a gracious choice to the family of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God. In her name, they are called Marists and they have chosen her as their model, and as their first perpetual superior from the very beginning."

The said gathering was an opportunity to reflect together, and share lived experiences on how Marists can continue the spirit of their respective founders in our time, in our apostolate, in our work, and in the day-to-day living by further exploring the richness and complementarity of each branch. Sr. Shiela concluded her message by stressing a salient point that "our lives are different and are interwoven, creating a beautiful weaving of love in our world."

The Marist Gathering 2024 was graced by the presence of the Marist Sisters' Regional Leader for Asia-Pacific, Sr. Jane Frances O'Carroll, SM and the Superior General, Sr. Sr Sylvette Mane, SM. The sessions in the program were facilitated by both of them, with Sr. Sylvette providing enriching input on the theme and Sr. Jane facilitating the weaving activities engaged in small groupings.



The input of Sr. Sylvette concluded with a meaningful reflection on the Marian Church by François Marc, SM:

In Mary's Way

I would like to plead for a Marian Church...

Which lives the Gospel after the name of Mary.

- *on the watch for what is coming to birth, for possibilities, for the life which beats in things.*
- *in wonder at the beauty there is on the earth and in the human heart, as she sees what God is doing there.*
- *A safe harbor, who is always open, the refuge of sinners, "mater misericordiae", mother of mercy.*
- *knows doubt and unease, night, and loneliness. That is the price of trust. She takes her part in the conversation but makes no claim to know everything. She accepts that she must search.*

The Marian Church lets in the wind of Pentecost,

the wind which impels one to go out, which unties tongues.

Yet every evening at the end of Vespers the Church sings the Magnificat...

For the Church knows where her joy is to be found.

It is there that He met us.

And there, on the Cross, we have seen the "mercy", the open heart of God.

Indeed, the Marist Gathering 2024 deepened our appreciation of the profound reality of the gift of being Marists called to be pilgrims of hope and love, pilgrims of the heart. We are called to bring forth the message of Mary's healing presence with "burning hearts for our wounded world, burning hearts for our wounded earth, and burning hearts for our wounded Church!"



Photo News



February 6:
SM Sisters visit the Marist Province Center in Lagao.



February 12:
Br. Danny Sevilla welcomes to the Province Center the principals and child protection officers coming from the 9 Diocesan Schools in the Diocese of Marbel.

A Chinese New Year Greetings from St. Joseph International School, Malaysia.



February 10:
The Brothers in Singapore Community celebrates the Lunar New Year.



February 1:
Br. Engel Java's 28th birthday celebration.



Our aspirants: (L) Joshua Karl Villareal from Norala, South Cotabato. He is taking a BSED Major in English. (R) John Angelo Gerona from Katangawan, General Santos City. He is taking BSED Major in Science

CHILD AND YOUTH PROTECTION DESK TAKES PART IN DESIGNING MODULES FOR YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

Last February 2-3, Br. Crispin P. Betita, FMS, member of the Board of Trustees of the CyberguardiansPH, joined a meeting of the core team tasked to design a module for the Training of Formators for Youth Empowerment. Said modules will be cascaded to target beneficiaries to empower and upscale the youth as change agents in co-creating cyber safe homes and cybersafe schools. Br. Crispin was joined by Agnes Reyes, who shared the overarching theme of Safeguarding. Safeguarding is a crucial theme in protecting children against online threats because the digital world presents unique risks and challenges that impact the well-being and safety of vulnerable children.

The Formators Training of Trainers Training Design and Planning Workshop for the protection of vulnerable children at risk in cyberspace was held at the University Hotel, UP Diliman, Quezon City.

The lead organization CyberguardiansPH is a coalition of organizations and individuals in the Philippines who are driven and committed to co-create a safer cyberspace for the protection of children and the youth against online sexual abuse & and exploitation, cyberbullying, and other forms of cyber threats. Marist East Asia Province sits on the Board through the representation of Br. Crispin.



DIOCESAN SCHOOLS MEET FOR OSAEC PROGRAM REVIEW



Last February 12, around 21 attendees composing principals, child protection officers, and some school staff from the 9 Diocesan Schools of the Diocese of Marbel participated in a meeting to review the 1st year of implementation of the Advocacy against Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children (OSAEC). Part of the meeting's agenda was also to prepare for the implementation of the OSAEC advocacy to the parents and students of their respective schools to achieve the program's intention of establishing and sustaining a cybercafe schools.

With the support of the Diocesan Schools Superintendent, Fr. Joel Aliligay, and the Notre Dame Educational Association (NDEA) through Dr. Evelyn Dollete, Executive Director, the Chair of the Child and Youth Protection Desk Br. Crispin P. Betita, FMS, expressed his hope for a continuing year of strengthened collaboration of initiatives for the protection of vulnerable children and youth at risks. One participant expressed: "This advocacy against Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children is very helpful in raising awareness, educating communities and providing resources for prevention and intervention."

LAITY DESK CONVENES LAY ANIMATORS OF KOREA-JAPAN AND CHINA SECTORS

It is the goal of the Laity Desk to promote the vocation of the Champagnat Lay Marists, strengthen the relationship between brothers and laity, and to animate further the participation of laity mission.

Last February 10, a zoom meeting was conducted with the intention of consulting the brothers involved in the animation of laity in Korea-Japan and China sectors. Respective of their contexts, there is a challenge in discerning the approaches on how the seed of Marist life can grow and be nurtured.



Br. Allen Timola from Japan articulated his intention of coordinating with the school staff for a Marist life orientation and also the organization of youth groups to prepare them for their participation in globally initiated youth gatherings.

In Singapore, Br. Elmer Jandic, mentioned his initiatives of facilitating on-going formation of the Kinder School personnel and staff and also his continuing efforts to prepare the formation of the Marist Stella personnel.

Br. Jacobo Song, the link point person of the laity in the Council, was invited by the Laity Desk to join in the Philippine Sector Laity Gathering on March 15-17, 2024. Said event was organized for a Lenten Reflection following the 3rd MIMA reflection points.

A continuing collaboration is underway among the three sectors in order to move forward the agenda of Marist laity animation.

Worth Pondering: Words From Br. Basilio Rueda...

“There are some Brothers who left because they felt stifled by the institution and wished to do something better with their lives. The vast majority, having done so, saw the collapse of their best intentions under pressure from the daily reality of struggling without the support of a community and the help of an institution.

(1) Institution can be defined as the milieu in the midst of which a vocation develops. This development, however, can end in failure or rejection. It is a risk to be taken but taken in all truth and honesty - no playing double roles.

So, if we have enjoyed the benefit of an institution for studies, leisure, money, travel and qualifications and then see it as our duty to withdraw, let us not be so deplorably unprincipled as to level bitter criticism at all that seemed negative in that institution, and this, at a time when, strangely, others are lavish in its praise.

If that institution merits our contempt, abandon it! But have the courage to do so before extracting everything possible from it and not afterwards...”

p. 43 FIDELITY Vol XXVIII Circular of 8 September, 1984

-Br Basilio Rueda,fms

Glimpses of the Past

The following article is an excerpt from the AMIHAN, the Philippine Province newsletter, June-July 1990 issue, pages 2 & and 4.



Our Bawing Beach rest house is all ready for accommodation. The two floors are 36 square meters each. It has its own kitchen and comfort room. There is a water pump inside the house. All the Brothers are invited to spend their holidays or spiritual rejuvenation there. Reservations are done through our office in Lagao. We might as well enjoy our Bawing place before the former owner gets it back. At present the Muslim family from whom we bought the four-hectare land in 1987 is filing a case to repurchase the property. The pre-trial is set for September 7, 1990.

- *Update: The pre-trial did take place. Our lawyer, the late Atty Cornelo Falgui, advised us to settle the matter out of court. Bawing property was eventually sold to some fishing magnets of the city. The proceeds we derived from the sale went to the construction of the Marist Asia Spirituality and Mission Center in Lake Sebu.*

Lagao House which became the Provincial House last October 1, 1990, has not changed a bit. The former room of Br. Reginald Theodore is now in our finance office and computer room. Br. Renato, as the Provincial, works either in the sala upstairs or in his room. He entertains his visitors in the receiving room which is also the community's TV room. Br. Ted, our MAP director and Vocation Director, holds office also in his bedroom.

- *Update: The first provincial office was at the novitiate in Tamontaka for many years. Then the office was moved to the Dadiangas house in General Santos City. Unfortunately, the house was razed by fire on December 8, 1988. At present, the Province Center Offices are in one-storey building in Lagao. The Lagao house is now our pre-novitiate house. The Provincial lives with the St. Joseph Community (the partially renovated former pre-novitiate house) in the same compound.*

It has been recommended and talked about that we will employ a layperson to do some secretarial work in the office. But the problem is office space. If we get one, he or she has to do office in our dining room, the center of traffic in the house.

Aside from the idea of having a new provincial office building, we have also another similar concern, the permanent building for the Marist Asian Center (MAC) in Marikina. Although the project is under the General Administration, yet we are expected to make some first moves like scouting for the right location and presenting options for building designs. For the first two years, MAC has to contend with temporary dwellings. This first year, MAC squats at Marikina community house. Next year, with additional scholastics coming in, it has to move somewhere else to look for a bigger place. Two options are being floated around at the moment. First to build a building within the Marikina property, just below the swimming pool facing the Rancho Estate subdivision. The second one is to take over the old Marikina house and build a smaller one for the school community.

- *Update: The MAC buildings (later renamed as Marist Asia Pacific Center or MAPAC), were eventually built not far from the Marikina residence of the Brothers but in a lower elevation, extending towards La Milagrosa Village.*

Provincial's Schedule



February 16 - March 12, 2024

January 27 - February 5:
Meeting with Vicar General and Assistant Economic General at China Sector

February 6-7:
Visit of the Superior General of the Marist Sisters

February 10:
Marist Family Gathering in Davao

February 11-16:
Personal Time with the Family

February 25-29:
Provincial Council Meeting No. 14 in Jolo, Sulu

March 2:
Marist School & Sagip Ka BOT Meeting in Marikina

March 3-12:
Meeting of the Provincials in France - ND Hermitage

February 15:
Br. Timothy Song (Hyo-seob)

February 17:
Mrs. Romula Oyao
(Affiliate Member)

Prayer Intentions:

- That the Church may continue to spread the message of love, compassion, and justice, and be a source of inspiration for people around the world.
- That political leaders may be guided by wisdom and compassion as they work towards peace, justice, and the well-being of all people.
- For our brothers and lay Marists who are sick, that they may find strength and healing. Let us also remember and pray for their caregivers.
- For families facing challenges, that they may find strength, unity, and the grace to overcome difficulties.
- That peace may prevail in regions of conflict, and that the hearts of those who promote violence and hatred may be transformed towards reconciliation and understanding.
- For the young people of our community, that they may be guided in making positive choices, finding purpose, and contributing to the well-being of society.
- For a meaningful discernment of the religious life of our candidates: Joshua Carl Villareal and John Angelo Gerona.