



Marist Province of South Asia

# Newsletter

February 2024



He added that the Lenten journey involves a struggle. It is a time for action, the Pope said, but also a time “to pause” – to pause in prayer and to pause “in the presence of a wounded brother or sister.” Feb 1, 2024





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## **From the Editor's Desk!**

*Are you always in the same place in your life? Are you ready to go on a journey in the wilderness? You wake up early on Wednesday and go home. But you haven't emptied yourself by keeping sin away from your life, have you? Lent has already come. Is it another time to pass with so many rituals or an invitation to personal growth with a change?*

*On Palm Sunday faithful go home with Gok Kola (Palm leaves). But your life is not ready to take up the cross and go with Jesus, is it?*

*On Maundy Thursday you go home with bread. But if we are humble persons, we keep the leadership on our heads and trample on the little people, we think that we should live alone without respecting others, we don't want to bow down to someone else, we haven't realized our sin, have we?*

*Good Friday takes the thread and goes home, doesn't it? But do we take Jesus into our lives? Are we ready to take our journey with Jesus? Keep sin away from our life and accept Jesus. Have we obeyed the voice of Jesus who sacrificed his life on the cross for our sins?*

*Alleluia, Holy water goes home with bread and salt on Saturday, right? But even though we have become a new person, even though Jesus sacrificed his life for us, why can't we still talk to Jesus, get rid of our sins, and go to Jesus, we still haven't listened to Jesus' voice, right?*

*On Easter Sunday, we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus and go home happy, don't we? But we don't go home happily, we go home, we go home looking for someone else's less lost, we go home and have a party, aren't we happy? Is this the Easter that Jesus said?*

*Why is it still stagnant? Why are we still in the same place? This is the 40-day journey that Jesus expects.*

*No son, these 40 days are the days that will change your life. Fight with sin and go to Jesus. Why can't you change? Just like throwing a party, we can be happier by giving something to someone who can't have it.*

*If possible, fast in word and deed then we will feel the true meaning of Easter. Love the one who hates us, pray to the one who laughs at you and me, pity the one who tramples us, and show the way forward in life to the one who does evil to you and me.*

*This will be the Easter that changes our life, the way Jesus wants it So are we ready? Be truly repentant of our sins and thirst for the love of Jesus to change our lives. Then the time has come to turn our hearts and come to Jesus. So that it wouldn't be just a lent season we passed.*

**Bro. Chamara Hettiarachchi FMS**

## Growing into the awareness of God's Presence...

Dear sister and brother,

Last month I began the series of reflections - my thoughts and convictions - on Prayer with the title "**Live in Prayerfulness Constantly**" in this newsletter. There, I made an invitation to **GROW INTO THE AWARENESS OF BEING A GOD-BEARER** with the implication of relating with our sisters and brothers in a way A GOD-BEARER WOULD DO.

While continuing to grow in that consciousness of being a GOD-BEARER let us move into another experience of AWARENESS that springs from the same source.

As I am created in the "image and likeness of God" (Gen 1:26) all my sisters and brothers are also created in the "image and likeness of God." This is **the immutable or indestructible reality** in each one of us.



Our society has created its own standards and measurements to pass judgments on our fellow human beings. All elements that we measure such as one's physical appearance, behavior patterns, skills, virtues, or vices etc. are liable to change. Only the **immutable or indestructible reality of being a God-bearer** is what does not change.

How ignorant and insensitive can we be at times to see our fellow human beings as an idiot, a rascal, a liar, or a fool?

When I am Enlightened by the experience, "that I am a God-bearer," that can lead me to the take the following steps.

- ✓ **To keep my inner eyes open to see the beauty and mystery in each of my sisters and brothers and recognize God in them.**
- ✓ **To love them and offer due respect deserved by a God-Bearer.**

This is the kind of awareness or "prayerful consciousness" that I would like to propose to you for your reflection. Prayerful consciousness **is to be awakened to the fact of the**

presence of God in each of the sisters and brothers of our human family with the implication of loving and respecting them always.



A difficulty that I may experience when I notice the negative traits in my sister or brother is to be a victim of my impulsive reactions and to condemn them according to the “worldly standards”. Therefore, it is very important to keep alive in me **the immutable or indestructible reality of the Presence of God in every person**

**and give them the due respect and love they deserve.**

May you have the openness and the clarity of inner vision to enjoy this beautiful and mysterious presence of God in your sister and brother always and everywhere, going beyond all boundaries.

**Bro. Nicholas Fernando, Provincial**

## The Formation Colloquium



The Formation Colloquium held at the Marist Asia Pacific Center in the Philippines from January 22 to 25, 2023, brought together Marist formators from Asia and Oceania. With a theme of "Caring for and Generating Marist Life," the event aimed to deepen understanding of Marist life and foster connections among those engaged in formation. Emphasizing collaboration and support in Marist Formation.



The meeting had 20 participants from the 2 Marist Regions (6 Brothers from the Province Star of the Sea, 5 Brothers from East Asia, 7 Brothers from the Marist District of Asia, 2 Brothers from South Asia) and Brother Ángel Medina, Director of the Secretariat of Brothers Today, from the General Administration.

The objectives outline key aspects of caring for and generating Marist life. In the section on caring for Marist life, there is an emphasis on networking to establish connections among brothers engaged

in formation, a focus on the value of formation in the Institute and the Church, and a call to develop a global perspective, particularly in the context of Formation.

On the other hand, in the section on generating Marist life, the importance of collective wisdom by learning from formators' experiences is highlighted, along with the sharing of formation programs among administrative units. Additionally, there is an exploration of developing a vision for initial formation in the Asia-Oceania region by the Formation Commission.



Bro. Devasiri Fernando

## Formation-Recruiting and Admission to Postulancy and Aspirancy

As a result of the ground work of the recruiting team, we were able to gather a number of candidates for the postulancy and aspirancy for the province, We appreciate the hard work put in the effort by the teeth the parents and the am, and others who worked to increase our future Marists.



At the beginning of this month a number of new recruits were brought to Negombo formation house to get more information and to see their intent and will in joining our congregation immediately within the school term. We could talk to the young boys who are going to be in Grade 11 and 10 in the year 2024. Brothers Nicholas „Noel. Sasmika,



Ranjith and Dulaj as two teams interviewed both the parents and boys separately to get their views and willingness to join the aspirancy. We checked their educational standards and attitudes and family backgrounds so as to ascertain true motives for their aspirations. At the interviews we found that some of the boys have aspired to join their diocesan seminary for the priesthood, but they have not been successful at the selection test and stood no chance.

We have finally selected 3 Grade-10 boys and 2 Grade -11 boys as aspirants. We also recruited a student. who appeared A/L exam recently held, to our postulancy.

We have already initiated the postulancy program with two candidates-Kasun who followed an intensive course in English in October last year and the other candidate Chamath, who was a student from MSC, Thimbirigaskatuwa.

The three aspirants we have selected for the new School term will start at the end of the month with Sasmika and Ranjith as their masters. We wish them all the best.

Our postulancy program got afoot in a ceremonious prayer service with the community members and Nicholas and Dulaj on invitation for the occasion. The provincial donned them with a cross as a symbolic reception to the postulancy along with a holy Rosary to inspire them to the devotion of the Blessed Mother.



We wish Kasun and Chamath a happy start for their chosen life with God's blessings and Mary's love and care.

**Br. Noel Fonseka**

## Ash Wednesday Holy Mass

Ash Wednesday 2024 at Maris Stella College Thimbirigaskatuwa was celebrated on Wednesday, February 14th. This was an annual event that was always held 40 days before the beginning of Easter.

Observing Ash Wednesday 2024 typically involves several different activities and rituals. The most common observances are going to church and receiving an ash cross on your

forehead. Other observances include fasting, abstinence, and prayer. As this day marks the beginning of Lent it is not a day of feasting or excess. Rather, the opposite is true and it is a day to reflect on our consumption and decide what luxury we can let go of for 40 days. This is an important element of the day and one that is taken seriously by those who practice it.



Maris Stella College Thimbirigaskatuwa is always ready to offer faith formation to the students. We thank Rev. Fr. Krishantha Fernando TOR and Rev Father Milroy OP for celebrating holy mass at Ash Wednesday.

**Bro. Dulaj Fernando**

## Dash before Ash

I asked my friend what dash was meant to him. He said; "It's the dash in volleyball." I asked him if any other dash was known and he said "No". I then showed him the dash on the keyboard of his mobile. He goggled his eyes because he was reminded of the punctuation mark that resembles a hyphen but is longer. Since the sun was setting, I wanted to dash home but I strolled in a reflective mood while brainstorming if Dash had any other denotations or connotations. I passed the cemetery and saw several epitaphs, tombstones, and crosses on which Dashes are inscribed between two years (year of birth and year of death). I became enthralled since it was ink to think. The simple Dash represents all the time they spent alive on Earth. Only those who loved them know what that small Dash means to them and how worth it is. What mattered was not who they were but how they lived. I am sure there will be a Dash for me and I cannot challenge or prevent this universal truth. So, I should thank God for all of the blessings I receive daily and for His guidance and protection. I should trust in His unfailing love and faithfulness. I should implore God to grant me wisdom to understand how others feel about me, show more appreciation, gratitude, and love, and do my best for others expecting nothing in return. I should never count life by my possessions but measure it by the hearts I have touched, the smiles I have created, and the love I have shared. If I treat others with respect and more often wear a genuine smile remembering my Dash when my eulogy full of beautiful memories is unfolded my soul shall be healed. My loved ones will be proud of the things people truly speak about how I spent my Dash before Ash!



**Ajith Perera**

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

## DID YOU KNOW?

- 1) No other Pope in Catholic history has had the name Francis, and he is also the first Jesuit to be elected as Pope.
- 2) The world knows him as Francis, but his real name is Jorge Mario Bergoglio.
- 3) In his days before priesthood, Pope Francis used to enjoy dancing the tango with his then-girlfriend.
- 4) While some may think he studied Theology, Pope Francis studied for a Master's Degree in Chemistry and used to teach the subject in high schools.
- 5) Back in Buenos Aires, he worked as a bouncer in a bar – a far cry from the Vatican!
- 6) At the time of his election, medical professionals were worried about his health. The missing lung that caused their concern was removed way back when he was a teen, but he is in very good health now.
- 7) His Holiness isn't one to sit back and get waited on hand and foot, choosing rather to cook his meals. He's a big fan of cooking, and rumor has it that one of his specialty dishes is paella.
- 8) Pope Francis certainly isn't new to the papal world. When Pope Benedict XVI won the election in 2005, Pope Francis was a runner-up.
- 9) Pope Francis likes to keep up with the modern world, and tweets to over 7 million Twitter followers regularly. For the Francis fans out there, you can follow him @Pontifex and receive his words of wisdom on your Twitter homepage.
- 10) He speaks fluent Spanish, Italian, and Latin, and doesn't struggle too much with English, German, Ukrainian, French, and Portuguese.
- 11) Pope Francis is quite a fan of football. He still supports the San Lorenzo football team from his hometown in Argentina. He has also been gifted many football shirts and now has rather a large collection.
- 12) He is currently a citizen of three different countries; Argentina, Italy, and the Vatican.
- 13) Rather than bask in his newfound fame as the leader of the Catholic Church, Pope Francis decided to live in a small guest house in the Vatican, rather than the traditional apartments in which previous leaders resided.
- 14) Pope Francis has been given many extravagant gifts over the years, and one of them was a Harley-Davidson motorcycle. However, rather than keeping it for his pleasure and adventures, he sold it off and used the money to benefit homeless people. What a saint!



**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.)



When students of primary grades follow their teachers when walking out of the classroom and engage in any activity on the ground we are reminded of the concept of 'The chick and the hen.' Students in blue and white follow the teacher; a little above their height, in a row while placing their pointer fingers on their lips (but some talk while placing their fingers on the lips) is a pretty sight. Small in stature but she had a large heart full of affection and compassion for her students. She is Miss Malani (Perera) Ranasinghe, one of the lovable teachers in the primary school.

She joined the academic staff of Maris Stella College, Negombo in 1977. She was the teacher in charge of grades 2, 3, and 4 throughout her service. She was not a traditional teacher who was limited to the classroom. She believed in holistic education. She knew the significance of a balanced personality for the students and made an extra effort to introduce meditation at the morning assembly. She was also an active member of the Cub Scouts at the College. While walking down memory lane she enkindled her nostalgic memory at school with the Brothers, fellow members of the staff, and her beloved students. "We were united. The College was our second home. Everyone contributed immensely to the well-being of the College. I respectfully remember all the Brothers and staff members."

She had the strength and courage to continue her service but her unavoidable family commitments urged her to apply for an early retirement in 1993. Until she left the College, she contributed her best to the College. She is still an active member of the Past Teachers Association. Meeting our past teachers and bringing them to the limelight is a pleasure. 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

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## Welcoming New Admissions for Grade One

Attending school is one of the most cherished memories of our lives, and the eventful first day of school is something that stays with us for a lifetime. Maris Stella College Thimbirigaskatuwa welcomed grade one students in a glamorous ceremony.

Rev. Fr. Krishantha Fernando our member of the staff blessed the new students raising our voices to the heavenly father. We give you praise, O God, for everything new and beautiful, for everything which holds promise and brings us joy. Bless these kids as they

start a new step with their friends and teachers Help them to make the most of every chance they have to start afresh.



Students of grade 2 welcomed their new friends with songs and dances. As the programme was going on I was in my first day of school in mind. I loved my first day at school too and still cherish the memories. I wish all the new kids a bright future.



**Jayangika Miranda**

## Walk Down Memory Lane

Rev. Sr Indramali was a Holy Family nun who was a teacher and has worked with the brothers for the last two decades and she retired a few months ago. Let her voice out her experience with the Brothers in Schools. She is from Mahawava Thoduwava, a village called Kudamaduwalla. She is from a fishery community. Her father was a fisherman called Thobith Fernando. Her mother was Gurti Bernadeth and Sister was the eldest in the family and she has two younger sisters and two younger brothers. It is her 42 year as a religious nun. She lives in the Kongadamulla convent after her retirement. According to her she said that she was happy.



According to her she said that she was happy.

### **When was the beginning of Marist Association?**

It was 1997 at St. Mary's College, Negombo. The principal was Rev. Br. Kumarasinghe. I was there working as a teacher till 2003. In 2008 I joined Maris Stella College and till 2023 until I retire I was working with the Brothers in both schools.

### **How do you look back on your experience with Brothers?**

I consider and experienced br. Kumarasinghe as a loving and caring person at times he was like my father at times he was like a brother and he was indeed a friend. He always had an answer in all the matters in school and for me even in my problems at home.

He was close to me as a member of my family. He was sensitive to the others especially when people are in troubles. I was invited for many ceremonies that took place in Marist institute and I benefitted a lot attending and being a part of those events. In happy and sad times of my journey Brothers were there with me so friendly and close. I always appreciated and cherished it. The trips that I joined were unforgettable memories added into my life. Those opportunities made life joyful and the most important thing I learned was the Presence among Children and that presence made all the differences. I started loving and reflecting St. Marcellin Champagnat from the day I came to know his love for children the most neglected, his love for God and Mary especially the presence among children was nourished my life as a nun and as a teacher and person as well.



My own Brother was a kidney patient and suffered a lot. I recall my painful memory but Br. Kumarasinghe was so helpful consoling me, looking for the good doctors, contacting them and help for the medications too. I realized that Brothers recognized my talents therefore I worked happily. At St. Mary's College even though I received a small salary more than that I was accepted and appreciated. I was happy for the powerful experienced I had to my life.

### **What are the extracurricular activities you engaged while teaching in the school?**

I worked as the sectional head for the Arts stream while teaching Christianity for the students. I was in charge of the liturgy committee and organized mass. I was very happy to be a part of Champagnat afternoon school for the poor of the locality.

### **How do you recall your experience with the Marists?**

Frankly, I am very happy. I was like a Brother there was no separation in that bond. It was a joyful experience working together with the Brothers. I always cherished and valued the smile we shared with each other. That genuine smile made the work easy and the presence of the Brothers their love for children and school care for the co-workers are amazing. We truly needs such working environment where all are welcomed accepted and respected. I am proud to be a part of it and joyfully share about my unforgettable times at Maris Stella and St. Mary's with the Marist Brothers.

### **How did you grow in Marist Charism as a teacher?**

I was aware and reflected the five Marist pillars. Presence, love of work, simplicity, family spirit and Mary's way changed my life too. These noble virtues which come from Champagnat's spirituality helped me to be a good teacher and a good person. Even though I am a nun I used to pray to St. Marcellin when I found the times of difficulties and facing students matters. I can't imagine there were miracles I experienced as the results of my praying. So, St. Marcellin is so close saints in my life. I am influenced and blended with Holy Family Spirituality and Marist Spirituality.

### Who are the Brothers you had time to work with?

I was lucky to associate all the Brothers and work with them. I was happy to mentioned the Brothers Ranjith, Sooriya, Chamara, Pradeep, Sandalal Noel, Sasmika, Nicholas, Joseph and as the principals I worked with Brothers Sunanda, Mervyn, Chinthana and Michael. I must remember late Br. Joseph Fonseka also who was very good with me.

### What are the unforgettable (most significant) memories you have at the moment?

The day I came for an interview Br. Mervyn asked me to join the school following day. I was surprised with that welcoming. The trips I joined were amazing and when it was ending brothers always check my going back to convent. I see how caring they were. Most significant event in my life as a teacher removing the cane (වේවැල) by Br. Michael the principal at that time changed myself and that was the highest point in my life that I felt I have enough potentials to be a good teacher than controlling with a stick. I still cherish when the Brothers come after short trips from abroad they give little gifts like rosary ,medals etc. I see how they were generous and caring. I learned a lot being with Brothers and feel very grateful.



Bro. Sandalal Alwis

## My Reminiscences of the Indian Mission that is completing 50 years

Brother Sunanda Perera was appointed as the Community animator. The three brothers and the two Students started their college studies. We all went to college by push bikes carrying the tiffin prepared by the cook in the morning. By 3.00p.m we used to return from College. We followed a light schedule limiting our prayers to morning and evening and we used to attend mass held at St. Joseph's Chapel.



Soon we got friendly with our neighbours. WE must mention the name of Mr. Punyakotti, our closest neighbor who was an executive officer of Shell Company. He went out of his way to see that we are safe. The following incident took place and Mr. Punayakootti came to our rescue.

The drains around our house and the neighbouring houses were regularly cleaned by a person from the area. We noticed that the drains get blocked no sooner the man completed his task. Within every other week he used to clean the drains. When we carefully examined the reason for the blockage, we noticed that the man secretly blocks the drain in a certain corner. We made him aware of this and advised him not to do so. He became very much annoyed and started shouting at us in filthy words. Further that

evening he came fully drunk and once again started shouting at us hitting the closed doors and windows with a stick. Some of us were nearly planning to manhandle the fellow. At this point Mr. Punyakotti phoned us and made us aware that he has already called police and they would soon be at our house. In the meantime, the fellow removed all our clothes that were put in the linen line outside to dry. Police came and went with us to the man's house. All our linen were heaped in front of his house on a chair. We were asked to take them with us. The man was arrested and taken to the police station. Next day he was brought to our place and the inspector started beating his knees with an iron rod. We pleaded not to do so and to warn him not to appear there again. The man went on knees asking pardon from us and from all the neighbours. We never saw him after that incident.. Another very interesting fact we witnessed after this incident. was that the neighbours who flocked to our house to thank us, we had to introduce them to each other as they had had no relations among themselves though lived so close to one another.

By month of May the four aspirants were brought to Trichy community by Mr. Lewis Joseph. They were Dewadass Chinnappan, Isaack Chinnappan, Kulendisamy and Sebastian Lazar. A warm welcome was given to them.

The time table was drawn for them. In the morning they attended mass at Puthur Church. They were to polish their English Language. One Mr. A.M. Alfred B.A, B.Ed , a retired English teacher taught English Language to the aspirants. Apart from that they were taught Founder's Life by the brothers.

I had to leave Trichy community as I did not do well with the subjects I had chosen for my Pre-University Exam.

Came back to Sri Lanka and Joined Maris Stella College After completing my Teacher Training Programme I was once again asked to go to Indian mission.

That was 1978 December. Brother Gerard Peiris was the Provincial then. Br. Raphael Nevilod was in charge of aspirants and the postulants. The two postulants who had completed their postulancy course were to start their Novitiate. Another house was opened in Aruwankadu ,in the Nilgiris . I was appointed the master of juniors and the Juniorate was in Puthur. Brother Raphael and the would be novices left for Nilgiris among the hills about 300k.m from Trichy.



(To be continued)

**Bro. Joseph Peiris**

## Preparation for Confirmation

Confirmation is a sacrament of initiation which completes Baptism through sealing in the Holy Spirit. Preparation for Confirmation is a year-long process that involves service to the church and the community, attendance of Sunday Mass and Holy Days of Obligation, and religious education classes.

The Sacrament of Confirmation is celebrated at Our Lady of Good Voyage Parish Kalpitiya Church annually.

Sacramental Preparation for Confirmation is open to all incoming 9th through 12th grade students who are baptized into the Catholic Church and have received First Eucharist. Br. Sujith Alwis was invited by the Parish Priest of Kalpitiya to conduct the programme for the students who are getting ready for confirmation.

Bro. Sujith Alwis reminds us that Confirmation is the Sacrament that completes one's initiation into the Catholic Church and strengthens you through the power of the Holy Spirit. This strength will help individuals to be disciples in the world and to become more active members of the Church. Our parish takes seriously the task of preparing candidates to receive the Sacraments. To get the most out of the program, we have certain requirements and encouraging suggestions.

In preparing for Confirmation, we are ready to achieve and approach the Confirmation journey with an open mind and heart. We encourage you to attend and fully participate in all Confirmation classes and activities and to attend Mass every Sunday and Holy Days of Obligation. We guide students to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation before receiving the sacrament of Confirmation, and accept more responsibility in my family, parish, and community. It is the personal responsibility to commit to daily prayer, especially for growth in faith, hope, and love.

At last, our church needs devoted energetic young Christians who are very responsible and who can pass on the faith to other generations.

**Bro. Sujith Alwis**



## Greetings from Manziana – Rome

I arrived here on 29th Jan and stayed in the General house then 31st after breakfast we all moved to Manziana. From February 1st onwards our program began but 4th Feb, our brothers from the General house came including Br. Ernesto and a couple councillors, Br. Daniel with the Brothers Today Team for the official opening ceremony of our program. We are totally 20 participants including a Marist father who is attending the same course as well as a Chaplain. We found the place cool enough, sometimes it goes 3 – 16 degrees until now. Here are some pictures I am sharing with you; from next time I will share something from my reflections.

## In General House:



*With all the brothers in the General house*



*Participants with Br. Ernesto and Councilors*



*Asian Brothers with Br. Gilbert*



*Asia Pacific brothers' supper out*



Br. Michael Sexton from Melbourne, Australia. I was surprised to see him... but he was waiting to meet me in the General House. Some of the Indian Brothers know him well. He was one of the formators in the beginning of my postulancy 30 years back and also decided that I was not good for this life (he told himself to me 3 weeks before). But now he is happy to see me as a Brother and also happy to hear that I have completed 25 years of Marist as a professed brother. I met him after 30 years, which is God's plan. So glad to meet him and recall the past experiences of our time in Trichy.

## In Manziana:

We had our opening ceremony with the blessing of Br. Ernesto and two other councilors. After the Mass we were welcomed and accepted for the program by giving us the logo of "New Builders of the Hermitage" some photos...

On 2nd Feb, we went to join with our Pope to celebrate the Consecration day. First time I was able to participate in the Holy Eucharist inside the Basilica. Many times, I participated mass there outside of the Basilica in past years. It was a wonderful moment to join with the thousands of the religious and share our joyful moment. Also, on 9th Sunday I had a

chance to attend the Canonization Mass in the Basilica. First time being there for Canonization. Sr. Maria Antonia from Argentina was Canonized by our pope.



Now we are busy with our regular classes in Manziana. Speakers are coming from different parts of the Marist world also, the translators. We have 12 brothers who are English speakers and 8 are non-English speakers, so every class uses English or Spanish languages and the translators help us to go through. Things are going well; we are already in the season of spring. Once the cold disappears, the weather will be different.

I will share my reflections from next time onwards. Remember in your prayers as I do every day here.

May God bless us all and help us to do his mission whatever we are committed to.



**Bro. A.H. Alex, fms**

## World Day of Consecrated Life, 2nd February

The Novitiate, on the Feast day of the Presentation of our Lord in the Temple, celebrated the World Day of Consecrated Life on the 2nd of February, along with other religious communities living nearby.



Among the Religious families attending were the OMI Fathers, TOR Franciscans, Franciscan Minim Sisters, Holy Family Sisters, Charity Brothers, and Franciscan Missionary Brothers, plus our own Brothers from the Hermitage, as well as Bro. Nicholas. During the short prayer service, we gave thanks to God for the gift of Consecrated life and we prayed for more vocations. At the end of the prayer service each congregation presented a brief presentation introducing their charism, spirituality, founder, mission and their global presence. Hence all of us gained a deeper understanding about other religious families with whom we share our lives and participate in different ministries.



At the end of the celebration there was a shared dinner, with various kinds of delicious dishes contributed by each religious community. It was a great moment to sharing joy and fraternity with others and created lasting friendships in the vineyard of the Lord.

**Prathap Ranasinghe**  
1st Year Novice

## Formation as a Marist Brother



I am Paskuwal Mesthrige Don Chamath Sadeesha. I am twenty year's old. I live in the Parish of Waikkala in Diocese of Chilaw in Sri Lanka. My family members are my parents, a sister and a brother elder to me. My father's name is Don Mervyn Anthony Joseph. He is welder. My mother's name is Warnakulasooriya Thushari Fernando. She is a house wife. My education at Maris Stella College Negambo - Thimbirigaskatuwa. I followed Physical Science stream in my Advanced Level class.

I hope to grow in my spiritual life and in my formation as a Marist Brother. My ambition is to be a teacher in a school where I can teach

young children and help them to develop their character and knowledge. So that they become useful citizens of my country. I want to teach the young people about Jesus and help them to love Him and Mary our blessed Mother. For this reason, I want to be a religious brother in the congregation of Marist Brother. I pray God to help me to achieve my desire and ambition.

**Don Chamath Sadeesha**

## EDURA 2024



What does that mean? *Education for a new era.*

First the first time, Maris Stella College Negombo hosted an education fair, a job fair, a book fair and a food festival, all in one, in the College premises over 2-6 February 2024.

Presenting opportunities for higher education, specialized courses and vocational education, the education fair featured the new opportunities and answers to many a student's question: what am I to study after O/Ls; what would I do after A/Ls?

Ranging from the BCI Campus in Negombo offering degree courses recognised by the University Grants Commission to the Don Bosco Technical Centre offering technical education and vocational training, EDURA2024 show-cased numerous avenues open to the student of the new era. Opportunity to move around and discuss with specialists in education, hitherto available only in Colombo and Kandy, now became available in Negombo, too.

Over three days, thousands of students, parents, and teachers from all over Negombo and its periphery, poured into the College premises, to witness the new experience in learning. Students came in groups. Young children came with their parents. Parents brought their children, and were seen moving around the education exhibition, throughout the three-day, 10 am – 8 pm event.

That was not all. Job interviews were held in one section. All the leading banks were there to assist with advice on loans for education.



A special feature was the series of workshop hosted by the College and at the OBA centre.

Dr Sunil Jayantha Navaratne, the Chief Guest declared open the event on 2<sup>nd</sup> February. Later in the day, he delivered a lecture to a packed audience of students, teachers and guests, in the College Hall, on the theme: *Education for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and the 4<sup>th</sup> industrial revolution.*



The college band accompanied the chief guest, principals of Maris Colleges and hundreds of guests to a colourful inauguration ceremony, held outside the special exhibition hall built across the primary school playground. Speaking at the inauguration, Mr. Pradeep Peiris, President of the OBA said “this first ever event will open new avenues to children of all ages, and be a wonderful experience”.

*The Chief Guest and Brother Sunanda Alwis register, marking the opening of EDURA2024.*

*They came in their hundreds; visitors at the Education Fair.*



After listening to Ms. Rumal Fernando, Head of Customer Service & Logistics Unilever Sri Lanka Ltd, about openings in the logistics and supply chain management, dozens of students from various institutions discuss their career paths with her, at the OBA centre.

Young inventors ! Boys and girls displayed their technical skills to visitors, featuring among others: a vibration sensor to operate rail gates and an automated clothesline that folds back in rain.



The book exhibition featured national and Negombo-based publishers and book sellers, ranging from the legendary M D Gunasena to the local publisher “අකුර”. Located in the multi-purpose hall, the gymnasium packed to full capacity with books and stationery,

some visitors opted to visit the book exhibition first. Essential reading, books and stationery were available at discounted prices.



Evenings were always enjoyable, with families enjoying home-made ice cream to full meals, in the food stalls, spending their time away, late into the evening for hours after the exhibitions closed at 10pm.

*Lakshan Perera*, an old boy of the College entertained the visitors to the food stalls.

EDURA2024 was organized by the Old Boys Association of Maris Stella College, and hosted by Rev Brother Sunanda Alwis, Principal, with the support of all brothers, teachers, students and workers of the College. The organizing team was headed by Mr. Pradeep Peiris, President OBA. The Project Chairman was Ayeshan Guruge of the OBA.

Thilak Siyambalapitiya

## Rainbow News

Br. S. Rajakumar, FMS A Step Towards Sustainable Living Trichy, February 11, 2024 - Marcellin Trust Operation Rainbow, in collaboration with Bishop Heber College and Holy Cross College, Trichy, organized an enlightening awareness program on natural farming, healthy diets, and waste recycling. The event, held at UKT Malai, Trichy, had the theme 'Nurturing Growth in Small Scale Farming' and aimed at the beneficiaries of the Rainbow project. The resource person for the event was Mr. A. Gregory M.A., D.S.L., Project Director of Voice Trust and Environment Awareness Coordinator, Lalgudi. He was joined by special guests Mr. Balasubramanian, a Professor at Bharathidasan University, Trichy, and Mrs. Anusiya and Mrs. Chithra. The program saw a good number of participants about 45 families who were eager to learn about cultivating vegetables and small-scale farming to support their livelihood.



The awareness program was facilitated by Mr. Nikhil and Mr. Chrislin, students of the Social Work Department, as part of their community organization activities. The participants not only gained valuable knowledge but also received their monthly rations and other benefits. A delicious lunch was served at the end of the event, adding to the communal spirit of the gathering. The event was a success, thanks to the voluntary support and coordination of the activities by the Marcellin Club members.



The initiative is a significant step towards promoting sustainable living and fostering a sense of community among the beneficiaries of the Rainbow project.

Rainbow News

## 'Pinnacle Rise'

The wait is over! Today is THE day! 'Pinnacle Rise' is finally happening, and we're transforming Kadolkale Grounds into the ultimate party haven! Get ready for electrifying beats from Daddy, Hot Chocolate, Bhathiya & Santhush, Jaya Sri, Dinesh Gamage, Kaizer Kaiz, Falan Andrea, and DJ Ishan. The stage is set for an unforgettable night of music, dance, and pure magic!

Join us in celebrating the magic of 'Pinnacle Rise'! Unforgettable moments and non-stop fun await as we come together for an epic party experience. Plus, tickets will also be available at the gate, so there's no excuse to miss out! Let the celebration begin!



## Maristonians Shine Bright in All Island Art Competitions



In a momentous victory for artistic talent and dedication, students from Maris Stella College, Negombo have emerged triumphant in the prestigious All Island Art Competition organized by the Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka for the year 2023. The halls of the college are brimming with pride as the artistic prowess of its students shines on a national stage.

The winning artworks, crafted with passion and creativity, have captured the attention of judges and art enthusiasts alike. Congratulations to Mas. Dihen Senesh Silva, Mas. Vihas

Sethika Lambert, Mas. Hiruna Shaminda Cooray and Mas. Kavisha Pramod Silva on their outstanding performances. Their achievements are as follows,

- Mas. Dihen Senesh Silva | Class 8C (2023)  
Grade 8/9 section - 1st place
- Mas. Vihes Sethika Lambert | Class 10D (2023)  
•Mas. Hiruna Shaminda Cooray | Class 11C (2023)  
Grade 10/11 section - 1st place
- Mas. Kavisha Pramod Silva | 12 Sci E (2023)  
Grade 12/13 section - 2nd place

Behind every masterpiece lies the exceptional support and guidance of dedicated teachers who have nurtured and inspired the next generation of artists. Their commitment to excellence and their belief in the potential of every student have been instrumental in shaping this remarkable achievement.

To Mr. Chamara Edirisuriya, Mr. Sunil Perera, Mr. Stanley Fernando, Mr. Muditha Jayasuriya and all the teachers at our college, we express our deepest appreciation for your support and dedication. Your passion for teaching and your commitment to fostering artistic talent have left an indelible mark on the lives of your students.

This victory not only honors the individual artists but also reflects the collective spirit and resilience of the entire college. It serves as a testament to the power of collaboration, creativity, and perseverance in overcoming challenges and achieving greatness.

**Stefan Raveen De Rose**

## Together we can be more together we can do more

Brothers are called to inclusive, shoulder-to-shoulder relationships in the pilgrimage of everyday life. Whether in school teaching, community leadership, healthcare ministries, administrative work, or missionary we strive to be sacraments of “Jesus the Brother.” We are humbled to bring to remembrance the Nazarene who companioned people and listened to them as they searched for glimmers of “salvation” through the cracks of their lives. As the moon reflected on water, we hope that in some modest way, we can be reflections of Jesus the Brother to one another. Our trip to Bandarawela was not a mere trip but it was another encounter and a blessing as we once again renewed, united, and revitalized our Brotherhood.



The fraternal love I felt from my fellow brothers in the group and the peace that bonded us together sustained me in my vocation. Being a religious brother means primarily living a life of prayer. That is at the heart of it all. It is necessary to maintain a daily connection

to God. Our times of prayer during our trip once again reminded us unless we come together, and work together we fall therefore it was an opportunity to listen to God and reunite ourselves to be a true Brother to all. Living a life of service is the result of that prayer life. God has called us to go out to others and help them to love what is right, to do what is good, and to walk humbly in the light of eternity. Thanks to the Brothers who animated meaningful prayers.



We realized that we had the strength and hope to promote vocation as a team. We support one another in all that we do and thus have the freedom to do the will of God in all things. It was a time to plan and share the responsibilities of vocation promotion.

I am called to accompany the people of God as they experience their joys and sufferings in daily life. I help them in their struggle to attain their salvation through my actions and prayers. The most important aspect is just being available to listen without being judgmental. The fraternal correction was the significant learning I experienced during our time in Bandarawela. That is why I say it is beyond a trip. It was a time of renewal.

**Bro. Sasmika Fernando**

## St. Viniphrida's Sunday School, Kahatawila

Br. Chamara and the Sunday school teachers organized a friendly Elle match among the students on 11th February on the feast of our Lady of Lourdes at the Church grounds Kahatawila.



One of the motives behind this match was Getting youth involved in church at a young age is the best way to help them form a relationship with God that lasts forever and become active students in Sunday school. It was an enjoyable event as the teachers and some parents joined the match. As we organize such active events the teaching and learning process also will affect effectively. More than all we experienced the family spirit we need most to go further as a parish community. Thanks to all those who participated.



Sameera Aravinda

## Sunday School

The new year for catechism began with the making of Sunday school catechism teachers during holy mass at St. Viniphrida's Shrine, Kahatawila. After welcoming students, they had new classrooms with new teachers. The first day ended early to have a meeting for the teachers.

Br. Chamara facilitated the meeting for the teachers and in his speech mentioned the role of a catechist is one who is called to nurture a



living, conscious, and active faith in the youth and children he/she teaches. A Catechist witnesses to the faith by sharing his/her faith commitment through word, experience, prayer, and liturgy. Brother thanked all for responding to this call. Later we discuss how to be an effective teacher and where we begin. We worked in groups and came up with the below ideas to be efficient and effective in our role as teachers.



So where do you begin? With basics. Teaching faith formation is not rocket science; however, it is an art, and if you are going to succeed, you will need to focus on some basics. Here are seven basics that I encourage you to focus on as you inch closer to beginning as a catechist.



**Commit to your faith formation.** You may very well be asking yourself, “Am I smarter than a fifth grader?” when it comes to knowledge of your faith. This is a good time to revisit the basics of your Catholic faith.

**Plan and prepare.** Planning and preparation make up 70% of a successful lesson! Set aside at least a couple of hours each week to plan and prepare your lesson.

**Include a variety of activities.** Don’t just settle for read-discuss-read-discuss. Include some engaging activities that will keep attention and enthusiasm from waning.

**Prepare your learning environment.** Get to know the space you’ll be teaching in and, most importantly, plan for how you will create a climate of prayer by setting up a prayer table that will be the center of attention and that proclaims, “This space is sacred.”

**Be prepared to handle discipline.** As excited as you are to proclaim God’s Word, many of those you will be teaching will have slightly less enthusiasm. This is especially true of children, so be prepared to handle discipline situations without disrupting the flow of your lesson. Make prayer an integral part of the experience.



You are not the teacher of a subject but the facilitator of an encounter. This means that prayer must be more than a perfunctory beginning and ending to your session. It should be an integral part of each session so that participants can prayerfully reflect on God’s Word and speak to Jesus in their hearts.

**Polish your technique.** As a catechist, you are now a public speaker! This means that you



have to pay attention to your voice (pace, tone, volume), posture, facial expression, body language, eye contact, movement, and so on so that your presence and delivery exude confidence, joy, and enthusiasm.

If you concentrate on the above seven basics, you will be off to a great start as a catechist. To help, be sure to check out the following resources.

Overall, the role of a teacher in the church is to help others grow in their faith, develop a deeper understanding of the Bible and Christian principles, and live out the teachings of Jesus Christ in their daily lives. Br. Chamara thanked all for their participation and after making the year plan we ended by reciting the Lord's Prayer.

**Bro. Chamara Hettiarachchi**

## Pilgrimage to National Basilica

A day in a shrine is a time set aside to go deeper into our relationship with God. It is a time to withdraw from the noise of the world, and busy classroom setting to spend some quality time with Him.

Time with God in silence, as understood concerning the



spiritual life, means attention to the presence of God in the soul. It includes the withdrawal of the mind from external and earthly affairs to attend to God and Divine things. It is the same as interior solitude in which the soul is alone with God.

Br. Chinthana along with his students from De Mazenod College found the best place the National Basilica of Our Lady of Lanka for their day to honour and thank the school for all the blessings they have

received as a school family. All very faithfully participated in the serene nature that calls and feels God's presence and love. It was a time of renewal and preparation for the coming lent too. As a teacher Br. Chinthana is not a mere teacher but also one who develops faith in each individual. I see that as a call within a call.



**Bro. Chamara Hettiarachchi**

## Lighting Candles

On February 11<sup>th</sup> 2024 we had our Annual books and shoes distribution organized by Champagnat Vidupiyasa of Maris Stella College Negombo, contributed by Kalmat Foundation. We provided school stationery items and shoes for 150 students who are unable to buy these necessary things for the new year term. I would like to thank specially Mr. John Mathew for providing these.



## A Seminar on Family Well-being and Parental Guidance



Today, on the 10th of March, 2024, Operation Rainbow successfully conducted a one-day seminar focused on Family Well-being. Sr. Jeyaseeli Priya, an esteemed family counselor from SOC SEAD, Trichy's Integrated Rehabilitation and Family Counseling Centre, was the keynote speaker. Her insightful presentation centered on nurturing the parent-child bond, leading by example as parents, and guiding children who are prone to adopting addictive behaviors influenced by

their parents and peers.

The seminar was well-received, with approximately 47 families engaging in a dynamic exchange of ideas and experiences, particularly regarding the challenges of parenting. In addition, the gathering honored International Women's Day with a cake-cutting ceremony, celebrating the contributions of women for family and the society at large.



The day's activities were expertly coordinated by Mr. Nikhil, a social work student from Holy Cross College, Trichy, and Miss Irin Melody of the Marcellin Club. The Rainbow staff, in collaboration with Marcellin Club members, ensured a seamless flow of events. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all those who participated and contributed to the success of the event today.

**Bro. Raj Kumar**

## The season of Grace

The season of grace - A call Divine,  
Renew the heart and self confine.  
A time to reflect, a time to pause,  
In quietude, recognize our flaws.



The season of grace - A gentle reminder  
To express love and be more kinder.  
Let our every word, every deed  
Aim at healing, every soul's need.



The season of grace - A choice to make  
Choose life in every move you take.  
Let not sin bind you,  
Find freedom in being true.

The season of grace -A time for forgiveness,  
Heal past wounds, heal the brokenness,  
Forgive and let go,  
Radiate compassion and peace grow.



The season of grace -A renewed Hope,  
Offer possibilities, with zest you cope,  
And with a repentant heart,  
Begin a fresh start.

The season of grace - An experience of God's embrace,  
His providential care, in every trial you face.  
Rest secure into his arms,  
Find solace like a healing balm.

Br.Chamara Hettiarachchi





## Photo of the Month

### Guiding Hearts in Prayer

"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." - Proverbs 22:6

In this month's edition of our "Photo of the Month," we are touched by a powerful image capturing a Reverend Brother, an esteemed teacher, leading a group of school students in prayer. With eyes focused, joined hands and hearts open, they unite in a sacred moment, forging a bond with the divine.

Reverend Brother exemplifies true leadership by demonstrating the essence of faith amidst daily chores. Through his actions, he not only teaches the importance of prayer but also imparts the profound experience of communing with

God amidst usual work, duties and responsibilities.

As he guides these young minds towards the path of spiritual enlightenment, Reverend Brother leaves an indelible mark on their hearts. In his steadfast commitment to nurturing their faith, he imparts invaluable lessons, teaching not just with words but through the power of example.

Join us in celebrating Reverend Brother's inspirational dedication to leading our students to the Lord, one prayer at a time, a prayer even amidst thousands of work.

Ashela De Silva

## Birthdays Month of March

08 Linus Fernando (94) 771475584  
09 Zubair Yaqub (92) 3327534947  
11 John Peter (91) 9789559351  
26 Sandalal Alwis (94) 763396913

Happy Birthdays