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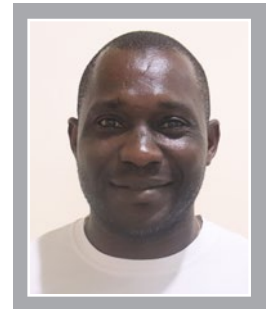
## My apostolic experience in Angola

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“A priority must be a long-term path of personal growth  
to help us discover the keys to our existence”

(Marist Voices, chap.17 - Br. Juan Carlos Fuentes)

Br. José Ebo Joao Francisco “RICHA”  
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**E**ver since I began life in the Marist Institute in 1995 as a Junior at the Ndalatando Juniorate, I have admired the life of the Brothers, especially their work in schools and small Christian communities. This was naturally a source of inspiration for what I wanted to do and be.

As a baptised young man, I started working in catechetical ministry with very young children and teaching my friends who had difficulty understanding some of the content of lessons.

As I moved through other stages of training, I matured in the things I liked doing most. I enjoyed being in class, teaching and sharing experiences with others.

After my years of formation in the scholasticate, I was sent back to my Province and my own country, where I worked as a teacher in a primary and secondary school, as well as helping the young people and children of the parish, teaching them catechism and leading apostolic groups and movements.

As a Director in Luanda and community leader, it has been a challenge for me to exercise my leadership skills. Leading people is not easy, and I must confess that, every day, new challenges arise that require to be overcome by new approaches.

As Pope Francis said, being a good leader means being able to “love and serve”. In fact it means giving yourself to others, emptying yourself for the good of others.

In my apostolic work as a leader, one of my difficulties is helping people who are not willing to identify with the institution's objectives. These are people who are good, and we would not want to lose them, but who, due to some inner pressure, family or even personal problems, tend to resist the values of the institution. Of course, we all have a tendency to resist change, but at the same time we have to remain faithful to the institution's vision and objectives. And whenever there is a threat, that is, a departure from the essence of values with which the institution identifies, it is the leader who has to recall those values and reaffirm adherence to them. So it becomes difficult because, as leader, we want to keep everyone in the institution and we, more or less, try to do our best to make this possible.

The institution in which I work has more than a thousand students and around a hundred teachers and staff. It is an integrated institution, bringing together primary and secondary education in the same building. A Marist community of Brothers is linked to the school institution, with five Brothers involved in various school departments. In addition to school work, the community is involved in parish work, teaching catechism and leading different parish groups and movements. There is always a challenge in reconciling community responsibilities and apostolic activities.

As a leader, I am conscious of a responsibility to help all our mission co-workers (Brothers and laypeople) to stay focused and lead and encourage them to be witnesses to others with courage and audacity. As a human being who strives to constantly discern God's will, I must always be willing to be helped and to receive fraternal correction. In fact, a prophetic leader must be open to giving and receiving advice, fraternal correction and encouragement.

On the other hand, there are times when I need to make decisions that affect people's lives. Of course, most of the time, there are decisions made out of love that don't please everyone and





therefore the people affected may consider them harsh, unfair, unrealistic or even exaggerated. This, however, gives me the opportunity to understand people and, at the same time, to understand my role as a leader.

Deciding on something that has an impact on my position or on the future and people's lives is an opportunity to take risks. However, I believe that whatever decision a leader has to make, if it is made in the light of God under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and is in line with the vision of the institution, must be made. Therefore, being a prophetic leader is a way of being a loving presence through service. It's about being loved for your generous witness to the people you serve.



The opinions expressed in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Marist Institute.

If you would like to share your ideas, reflections, or experiences about servant and prophetic leadership with the Commission as a result of these reflections, write to [fms.cimm@fms.it](mailto:fms.cimm@fms.it)