



# HERE WE ARE AGAIN

**Be alert  
even without  
seeing...**



**Canonical  
visitation of  
Fr. Juan  
Carlos**

**Celebration  
of the Holy  
Name of  
Mary**

**The  
Responsibility  
of Bearing  
Mary's Name**

**This Newsletter will give you an  
insight for how the Novitiate  
here in Eden is being lived.**

**Doing the  
common  
things...**

**Soccer Is a  
Religious  
Game**

**The  
Spiritual  
Exercises...  
again!**



**The Climb**

**Welcome to this International Novitiate Newsletter Volume III.  
Thank you very much for your prayers.**



## *Be alert even without seeing...*

A couple of weeks ago, when we were descending from Mt. Apo, one of the guides made a comment after we made the observation that the path we had descended seemed not to correspond with the one we had used to climb to the top: “If people climb by watching, it is more difficult” (we went up at dawn and came down mid-morning). That comment has been floating around in my meditation for a while.

From the point of view of novitiate life, this says a lot. It has been almost 9 months since we started this journey. All the novices are preparing for their second evaluation and, before them, there is much of what they have experienced that only now (and even only later!) makes and will make sense. Each of the topics that we share in this newsletter reflects every day (and not so every day) situations that the community has experienced. Each one, no matter how routine it may be, has had an important weight in everyone's growth. But we have not always been aware of this. It takes patience and perseverance to see the walk. It is necessary to be attentive, with an open heart to what is different and the same, to what is pleasant and to what is not. Many times, we are surprised by what we have experienced and, even in the face of it, we need to continue, because the path continues.

Awareness is perhaps the key to reading God's signs in our lives. Awareness even in moments where we apparently cannot see where we are going. This is what the novices are learning to do, because “tasting God” is more than trying, it is living with Him always. And in these small texts I think that something of this is observed

David Sánchez, sm





## Celebration of the Holy Name of Mary

The feast of the Holy Name of Mary is the celebration which gathers all the Marists around the Marist world. Here in the Philippines especially in Davao, we celebrated it on the evening of the 12<sup>th</sup> of September 2023 in the District House. Marist Fathers, Marist Brothers, Marist Sisters, lay Marist and Marist friends came together to celebrate Mary. The novitiate community took part in that celebration to share the joy with all those who are happy to bear the name of Mary. The celebration started with Mass followed by a lovely meal offered by the district and shared by everyone.



The celebration was beautiful in color with various presentations participated in by everybody with fun and creativity of songs, dances and games performed by the Saint Peter Chanel community, the boys of *Balay Kalabouan* House and our community. The *Cerdon International Novitiate*, was given the opportunity to present the final production (one song in Māori: “*Mo Maria*” and one song from Cameroon “*Ana Maria*” danced with “*agbadja*”) to give the farewell to everyone.

It was an amazing moment shared together especially in this period of the Synod on synodality, with the church talking about walking together, seeing all sorts of Marists gathered to express their joy of belonging to the family of the blessed Virgin Mary. Which reminds us once again that Mary’s way is the way of joy.

**Marc-Fidele Tay**



## *The Spiritual Exercises... again!*

The day after the celebration of the Feast of the “Holy Name of Mary”, we have had from 13- 25 September the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> weeks of our Spiritual Exercises in Cerdon -International Novitiate- community. Indeed, these 2 weeks of retreat have been a sacred time to taste in a deeper way God’s love in my own life through my Human birth, Christian birth and Marist vocation journey. The insights of my sharing of feelings with my companions’ novices after the exercises could be summarized as a moment of grace and thanksgiving to God. Let us say that, it has been for all of us novices the longest retreat experienced since the previous step of our formation. However, the common experience was the ability to be able to use our imagination to find God within us and make alive the Scriptures for ourselves as Saint Ignatius of Loyola suggested. In fact, all the experiences and the graces received from God were inspiring and we were able to reach the last day called “Alleluia” with great joy because of the availability of our formators who have facilitated the framework of the retreat for us through: Mass, Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, reflections, and spiritual accompaniment. In general, the Spiritual Exercises have been a joyful and lovely moment to deepen our relationship with God and experience God’s love in solitude and silence. It has been for me personally a time of growth in my relationship with Jesus and a moment to discern deeper my call in the Society of Mary.

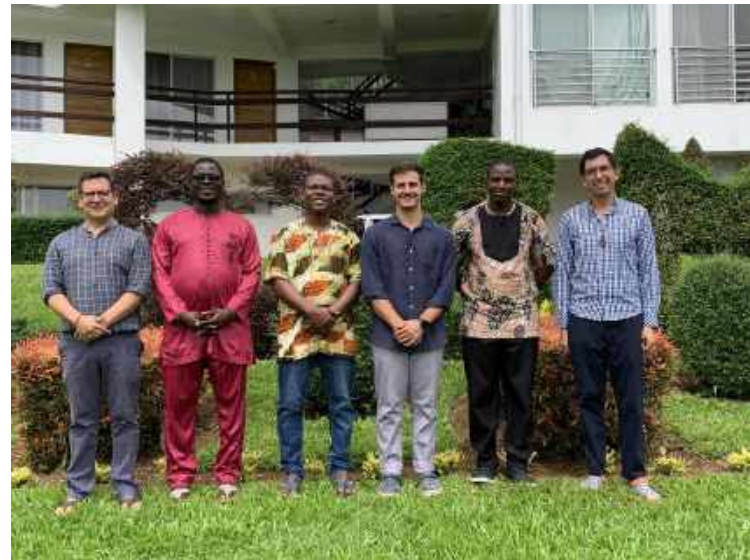
**HINNOUMABOU ALBAN EMMANUEL**



## *Canonical visitation of Fr. Juan Carlos*

On the 25<sup>th</sup> of September we were very honored by the presence of Fr. Juan Carlos Piña, SM in our Novitiate House. The reason he came here was for the canonical visit on behalf of the Superior General and his Council. Juan Carlos spent a full week with us. During this time, he had a great moment conducting interviews with every member of the community. He started individually with the novices and ended up with the Novice Master. We later on had a community meeting in which we were updated about the current life of the Society of Mary, its growth, challenges and new undertakings. During the following week-end, there was enough time for socialization with him inside and outside of the community. The visit of Juan Carlos was great because it was a pleasure to have him around. It was for me a time of blessing as I gratefully came to know each other better, becoming aware of the work of the Society of Mary in general and its challenges. Also, I asked him some questions regarding the formation training that struck me before.

**Pascal Ndikumana**



## The Climb

As we looked up from the village of Tumpis we were greeted by the pilgrimage and challenge that stood before us. Mt. Apo. The tallest mountain in the Philippines. And as we strolled through vegetable fields, crawled up forest ridges, jumped from boulder to boulder, and trudged through swamps we fell over countless times. Yet - every time, no matter where we were – one of our brothers was there to help us back up. When we rose at 1:30 a.m. to make the climb to the summit, the waxing moon and the twinkling stars were replaced by an emblazing sun that sored free from the grasp of the horizon.

And when I stood at the highest point of the country, I did not feel a sense of power, or even *conquering* of the Philippines. No – I felt incredibly humbled. Humbled by the beauty that unfolded all around me. And as I made my way down the Mountain – I could not help but feel that after ten of the most challenging and yet gratifying months of my life here in Davao, Toril and Digos – the very places I was looking over – was finally starting to feel a little bit like home. And what a home it is!

**Lachie Bartlett**





## *SOCCKER IS A RELIGIOUS GAME*

While the secular world is caught up with the Rugby World Cup these days, the Cerdon Novitiate community maintains their focus on the community soccer game every Tuesday and Thursday. Our community soccer game is a *friendly* game – and as we all know – there is no such thing as a *friendly* game!

It is so competitive that often a draw gets re-litigated during dinner with Fr. Pat (who exercises his impartiality) takes on the role as the TMO. We have the highest paid strikers (for people living the vow of poverty, *of course*) Lachie Bartlett from the NZ and Alban Hinnoumabou from Benin. Marc Fidele-TAY is the best defender with Pascal Ndikumana being the best goal keeper this community has ever seen. Fr. David has gradually moved from being a referee to being an eager participant, while Fr. Sione performs admirably in his role as the water-boy.

A game of soccer can teach us so much about life, spirituality and the Novitiate. The soccer field represents this world. The period of the game is nothing but our span of life. The rules of soccer are the limitations that we must contend with in our journey. Our team-mates are the people who can help us reach our goals.

The opponents are the obstacles that we have to overcome to reach our goal. The referee represents our conscience. The ball is our soul and its motion our fickle nature. The better we can control it, the easier it is to reach the goal. The goalposts represent the Lord Almighty with whom our soul, the ball, craves to connect. And the goal that we score is nothing but the salvation of our soul. In all its truth **“I’ve never scored a goal in my life without getting a pass from someone else”**, and that is why soccer is a religious game.

Sione Hamala, sm





### *Doing the common things...*

Because our grocery store and other shops are 12 km from the novitiate we usually do our purchasing on a Wednesday. At the beginning of the year, two novices accompanied me for this task. When the grocery check-out woman saw Lachie from New Zealand she asked me if he was my son. I tried to explain our reality but with the noise and confusion in the shop she could not understand. So, I simply said ‘yes’. Then she saw Alban from Benin and I told her he was also my son. I could see her puzzled face as she tried to imagine my marital status! Once the number of novices became only four, we all shop together as a team. This makes it much faster as each takes a separate list and there is now greater familiarity with the location of merchandise and the cheaper brands. The quicker shopping gives us some extra free time to enjoy the outing from the novitiate. In this way, Wednesdays become not only a community task and a marketing education but also a pleasant time which contributes to the joy of the novitiate.

Pat Devlin, sm





## *The Responsibility of Bearing Mary's Name*

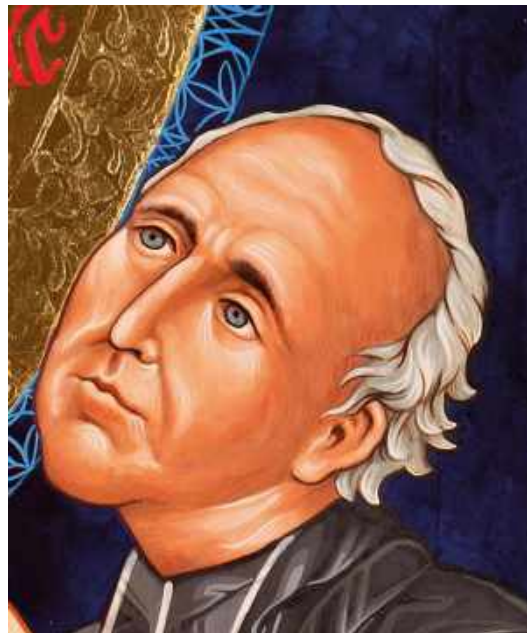
Jean-Claude Courville, one of the founding figures of the Society of Mary was a sexual abuser. That left the little Society of Mary with a disturbing question: How could the original message be genuinely from Mary, if the recipient of that message and founder and leader of the group turned out to be so unworthy?<sup>1</sup>

As Marists, we must allow ourselves to be confronted by our history, the great and the atrocious. Humbled by this knowledge, we must do all we can to repair the irreparable, and protect those we are called to serve, especially the vulnerable children and adults. And that is what Sione took us through last week. Confronting us with the harsh reality of the abuse that members of the Church and our Society have perpetrated towards the vulnerable in our communities. A discussion that is incredibly difficult to have – but one we must have and continue to have. If we are to bear Mary's name, we are responsible to her and for her name. In everything we do we must emulate her – by protecting, empowering and loving those who are vulnerable. We are not called to cut off all ties with these people – but to be conscious of the privileged position that we are called to be in, and to ensure that everyone around us feels heard, respected and loved regardless of the experiences they have lived.

*Lachie Bartlett*







ONCE THEY ARE UNITED TO GOD, EVERYTHING WILL COME BY ITSELF.

