



Newsletter

Vol I

Maayong pag-abot sa tanan!

This newsletter tells about our orientation program in the “Cerdon” International Noviciate. From our arrival last January 2024, we had many activities which were a kind of foundation for our noviciate. It was a good opportunity for us to share our diverse cultures and to have a special look on the filipino culture, learning a bit of Bisaya language and having encounters with local people. We really understood that our diversity is our richness & strength!



May God transform us into spiritual diamonds so that the paschal light may dwell in us and help us to shine everywhere.

None can taste God and remains the same

What does really matter in my life?



Editorial

Fr. David Sánchez, sm , from MEXICO, Master of Novices



In Marist Cerdon Novitiate community we are ready to begin the novitiate. After 8 weeks of introduction into the culture of the Philippines and also creating ways in order to journey together as a community, 11 different nationalities and 16 people are meant to live together this special year, that, in an inspiring way, will start at the beginning of Holy Week. All of us come with expectations, dreams, good aspirations... but also certain anxieties that we are called to left behind.

I believe that beginning the novitiate with the Holy Week is not a coincidence. It is rather an invitation for us to journey with the Lord during our novitiate, dying to ourselves and resurrecting with the Lord as new men, men for the Church and especially men for Christ in our own vocations.

The texts that come next are just a glimpses of what happened during our orientation program. Now the time has come to taste God. Please, pray for all of us so we may have the hearts and minds to discern according to the will of God.



Welcome party to the District of Asia Maciu Jimi Banicakau from FIJI



Saint Paul emphasizes the importance of unity in the Church, stating that all believers are part of a body and should work together harmoniously. He stresses that each member is essential and should care for one another.

During our Welcoming party to the District of Asia, I experienced on firsthand what Paul meant. Despite our differences, we became one through Christ. The warm welcome made me feel like I belong to this family, fostering a sense of pride and belonging.

The hospitality of the Marist Seminarians and the delicious food were added to the welcoming atmosphere. The burning incense symbolized the connection between people and the Divine, which I found intriguing. The artwork of Mary and the crucifix on bamboo were stunning. At every Marist house I visited, I felt the same nurturing atmosphere, akin to a mother's love for her children. This care for others reflects the loving and welcoming nature of Mary and Jesus.

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Cultural diversity

Mikaele Inia Vakaloloma from FIJI

Cultural diversity helps us to create a community where people care for one another. It encircles the range of beliefs, languages, traditions and practices that exist among people from different backgrounds. Embracing cultural diversity is important as it enriches societies. It encourages each one of us to learn from one another. It plays a vital role in promoting social togetherness, oneness and building inclusive communities whereby everyone feels respected and welcomed. It is not about building an exclusive community but an intercultural community. Being in an international community we need to embrace cultural diversity which can create a tolerant and harmonious environment.

Cultural diversity helps us to live in a community bond with ONE HEART and ONE

MIND. A community that recognizes the sacredness and unique contributions of each individual. To live in a community that promotes unity and not differences. Cultural diversity is a source of strength that enriches the human experience.



Life in the Orientation Program

Teguebou Patrice from VANUATU



The orientation program helped the novices to let the talks, sharing and programs acclimatize themselves to a new path on their journey and to a sense of belonging. It meant a lot for us as the programs allowed participants to share their struggles, strengths, weaknesses, laughter and experiences that allow them to build a brotherly bond between each other.

The support of each presenter in the orientation week led us into this period of transition. Programs were helpful in the sense that it marked the beginning of a transformative journey and helped

each novice sail the challenges of living in an intercultural community. The community here in Eden consists of many cultures. "I do believe that we are not born with our cultures but we are born and raised into a culture". Therefore, respect of oneself and others is required in the community.



Expression of the Philippines

TELLA NEMBOT Alex Junior from CAMEROON



The Philippines is renowned for its stunning natural beauty with picturesque landscapes. As you know, the Philippines is on the continent of Asia, and the warmth plus the hospitality of Filipino people contributes to the overall charm of this archipelago. It is almost two months now since we arrived here, precisely in Eden, Davao on Mindanao Island. We can say, Filipino people are very kind and simple. With their assistance, we are adjusting ourselves to be able to follow this chic culture.

So, awareness, openness and respect were our companions during our orientation program in the Marist Novitiate House. Through the hands of our Novice Master and his team, we have learned so many things about Filipino culture. Therefore, we want to say thank you to the Society of Mary for this opportunity that they presented us to see, to taste

and to experience Filipino culture.

Salamat kaayo Society of Mary



First profession ceremony of SM Raul Angelo C. Bautista from PHILIPPINES

Pertaining grace from the Presentation of the Lord in the Temple reminds us that God himself took on human form through the image and likeness of Jesus, obtaining human salvation. We want to express our words of gratitude to our four brothers who lend themselves to the Society of Mary (Marist).

What a magnificent moment having the presence of the Five branches of Marists Family. It symbolizes more color in witnessing a memorable moment, that of someone's day starting with having their temporary religious vows.

Our Novitiate program has not yet started, but a moment like this brings a beautiful spirit of God's providence to sprout deeply in our vocation, a sprout of motivation that can keep us from

temptation and expectations regarding the dilemma of vocation. Hence, saying "Yes" is a stepping stone. Above all, bearing faith to God would serve that one day, this could be a key to acquire the same celebration.



Experience of transition

Iovane Edwin Smith from FIJI



My first three steps away from home were the longest miles ever to take, where the sense of belonging, the values, customs, language and the beliefs that formed my character were about to be challenged. Another journey had begun. Personally, it is the journey to accept the unexpected, but this comes with the awareness of being open, in mind and heart, to whatever comes on the way, to accept but not to suppress my own self.

In my experience, leaving home and arriving in the Philippines was a challenging moment. Detaching

and attaching comes with courage where I have to open doors and be ready to appreciate and embrace what is there, but also to recognize and respect, in a sense, having the honor, stepping into other shoes. So, recognizing and respecting help me to be genuinely open to change, come out from my nutshell, appreciating the new environment and embracing what is there.



Summer

Autumn

Humility

Winter

Spring

The four seasons of our transition



Building community

Jean AMANI CHONGERA from D.R. CONGO



Our culturally diverse Cerdon community boasts of eleven different nationalities. While this diversity enriches us, it equally presents challenges. So, how can we cultivate a truly inclusive and flourishing community?

In fact, we are called to embrace genuine love, mutual acceptance, and openness. In doing so, we transform our self-centeredness into charity and make our differences a source of strength. Here, introspection is the key to acknowledging our imperfections and striving for self-improvement. This ethos, rooted in empathy and the golden rule (Mt. 7:12), promotes a non-judgmental environment where fraternal love transcends trivialities. As

St. Therese of the Child Jesus advocated, we are called to embody love in order to become true instruments of joy, peace, unity, mercy and gratitude. True happiness arises from such unconditional love.

Furthermore, nurturing genuine love, fraternal correction and understanding leads to lasting happiness and harmony in our community. Let us always be united and serve one another in love.



I'm happy because I can see Christ present in my fellow brother!

Immigration process

Vincent Brzozowski from New Zealand



The immigration officer looks over the counter with furrowed brow and scrutinizing eye. The foreigner squirms and tries to look pleasant. ONE MONTH GRANTED. At first, being treated with suspicion is an uncomfortable experience. It also seems needless. 'Why can't they just stamp the *adjective* thing?'

Stepping back, suspicion seems to be everywhere. A good amount of cautious distrust prevents the bus from running you over by urging you to check a second time before crossing the street. Too much suspicion prevents folks from leaving the house, and not enough suspicion allows them to believe in horoscopes.

On reflection, I see that I was treated with the good kind of suspicion, the kind that checks to make sure that every person entering the country is accounted for and can present themselves as a trustworthy and honorable resident, at least on paper.

I am glad to have been granted another month's stay here in Davao.



Health is wealth

Adriano Vakaotabua from FIJI



“Health is wealth”: it is a very important say to live with. In an international novitate, “health is wealth” somehow emphasizes the importance of physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. We must maintain good health in order to fulfill the life dedicated within the community. Each individual within the community must prioritize their health and take serious exercise, as it allows individual members of the community to fully engage in their religious practices to serve one another with open heart and open mind.

The concept of health encompasses the well-being of the community, to value the sacred spirituality and communal support of one another. Therefore, the physical well-being of each one of us can lay a foundation strategy to compliment the effectiveness of our lives in the body, mind, and heart. Physical exercise is needed to serve others effectively and to live a life that is worth living, to embrace the spiritual journey



“Take Care of your body as if you were going to live forever; and take care of your soul as if you were going to die tomorrow” St. Augustine

Prayer life

Paterno JR. Bernadio from PHILIPPINES



It is obvious that, as religious, our lives are bound with prayer. It is the hallmark of our religious journey. But what makes the prayer life unique in now?

Knowing the truth that we are all different in ways of praying, we are challenged to ground ourselves in the knowledge that prayer is an awareness of the presence of the Lord. It is not only the source of our strength and confidence, but our primary appointment with the Lord as we start our day. For this reason, we decided

on the pattern of our liturgy, and made it simple.

Prayer is best manifested when one offers his conscious mind and open heart. Having this, surely our prayer is directed to God. Thus, prayer united us in our internationality. It unites us not to speak or pray in one way, but unites us to the language of the church that we need to pray constantly.



My foster family

Macarty Koffi Augustin DORNYOH from TOGO

The Lord has blessed me with many blessings, and my foster family is one of them. I was with the Brinan family, along with Zubair. We formed a good team. We stayed with a busy, yet open family. Their welcoming spirit made us feel one of them. This allowed us to share our lives, ideas, and responsibilities.

The family runs different businesses, yet the decoration business is at the top of the list. It is a hectic job, yet it provided us with a good opportunity to learn to beautify things. Meanwhile, we practiced our Bisaya and experienced the local culture. Even though life was busy, we managed to grab some time to go for an

outing (G-Mall, beach and hill stations). It was a pleasant stay!

Lastly, we thank our formators and the Marist Community in Digos for organizing this program. A big thanks to all the families who accepted us with open hearts.



Reunion of Marist Family Zubair Yaqub from PAKISTAN



Every two years, in the Philippines, we Marists hold a family reunion. We come together to share our joys and sorrows, successes and failures, and even discuss our future plans with one another. This year's gathering fell on February 10, 2024, and was hosted by the Marist Sisters (SM). It provided a good opportunity to know ourselves as Marists and gave us a sense of belonging.

This gathering gently reminded us that we, the Marists, are the Marian face of the church. We may differ in our styles, apostolates, units, and administrations, yet as Marists, we all hold Mary under our skins because we are all called by her. "*You*

are not here by chance, but rather called by her" (Fr. Christopher Thadeos Ganzon). I say the same; indeed, we are not here by chance but rather are called by her in that specific event and in the society.



“He is Risen” Alleluia



Daghang salamat sa inyong