



CEMFRAT –CENTRO MARISTA “FRATELLI TUTTI”

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Easter2024

Dear Friends,

As we sit down on this Easter Tuesday here at what is our Marist Community "*Refugio Yanacachi*" to compose this our Easter Letter 2024, one can look back to reflect upon what has transpired in our ongoing missionary journey since we last shared with you in our previous letter of February 2nd. Lent and Holy Week are behind us and now we can enjoy a few days of respite in this beautiful rural setting surrounded on all sides by the Andean mountains.

Given that we as the Marist Team resigned at the end of 2022 from our pastoral activities and responsibilities in the Diocese of Tarija where we had served continuously for some 23 years, we have entered into what we have designated as our "*Nuevo Rumbo –New Horizon*". It has taken us time, reflection and much discernment over the past year to define this and to set our path for the years that remain to us in our journey together. Juan after some 47 years here at the service of the Latin American Church has entered into a process of retiring from official full-active ministry. Gilberto and Javier for their part have some 34 years of full-time missionary endeavours and have past the ripe age of 55. In one sense, we are now much freer in living out in the years ahead our missionary vocation and commitment to the people.

Our Holy Week commenced with our traditional 3-day Lenten Retreat that this year had as its theme "*We Are Mission –Yesterday, Today and Always: God Working In and Through Us*". At its commencement, we became aware that this was our 100th Marist Community Retreat together. Since our foundation of November 22nd 1990, it has been our custom to make together a 3-day retreat that we would together prepare and conduct ourselves at the beginning of each new term of 4 months. Thus this was our 100th! Holy Wednesday and Holy Thursday saw us putting the finishing touches to our document "*Nuestro Nuevo Rumbo*". Endeavouring to be faithful to our Marist Charism, we have articulated what we see as our life and mission from here on. In Spanish we have expressed it as follows: "*Acoger, Escuchar, Acompañar y Celebrar –Welcome, Listen, Accompany and Celebrate*".

Our celebrations with the communities this year had a different flavor given that we no longer do public celebrations or meet in the parish facilities. The Base Church Community [CEBs] of the periphery barrio of San Jorge had decided to meet together in the home of one of the members on Holy Thursday and invited us Marists to accompany them. Well, what a memorable celebration of the Paschal Supper and Washing of the Feet it was. The community was over-joyed by our presence and the way the evening transpired. We too were over-joyed. It so happened that the community of La Mamora [our previous mission some 100 kms from Tarija City], because of the over-commitment of their pastor on Good Friday was going to be without their traditional Good Friday Ceremony, that the parish priest contacted Gilberto to see if we Marists could accompany them. The result being that we were able to respond. The Way of the Cross with full participation of the whole village started at 4pm and the whole Good Friday Celebration finished at 7pm after a procession of some 3 kms long. Again the people were over-joyed by our presence and participation. A truly faith-filled occasion. The Easter Vigil of Holy Saturday was celebrated at our Tarija Marist Residence of "*Casa Colin*" among ourselves of the community.

On Easter Sunday we received the news from Australia of the passing of one of our dear loyal friends and supporters, that of Tom Treston. Tom and his family have been connected with Juan from his school days at Marist College, Ashgrove. During Juan's time in Mexico in the 70's-80's, one of Tom's son, Greg, who was finishing doing medicine in Tasmania needed somewhere to do his practical experience and so it transpired that Greg ended up doing part of it at our El Porvenir Mission in Oaxaca. Since then and to this day the Treston Family has been a very special part of our missionary journey. Over the years we have been truly blessed by such good friends in solidarity with us and animate us along the way.

As part of our "Nuevo Rumbo" orientation, we have started making a round of visits to the homes of the CEBs animators. To date, this has proved a wonderful encounter. Some have been with us since our undertaking of the La Mamora Mission in 2000, while others have taken up this service to their communities. Their commitment and perseverance are truly remarkable, having been well-formed and accompanied by us. This always encourages us along the way. Unfortunately, in spite of Pope Francis' insistence, there are still plenty of church officials who do not value the place and service of our lay ministers and mistreat them. The clericalism here is notable.

Our Marist Community/Family is in good spirit. The mums and dads – as does Abuelo Juan -miss the boys away at university finishing their studies. Our Little John will turn 2 on April 28th and is a delight. He came home here to Tarija with his mum and dad [Chiqui & Paola] for Easter. Juan José is back at university in Cordoba, Argentina in last year of mechanical engineering. Lupo is busy doing his thesis in biology at the Pontifical University in Sucre, while his brother Paco who graduated last December as a police superintendent has been posted to the Amazonian border city of Cobija. Our Marian now to turn 10 in September is top of her class and busy otherwise with folk ballet and swimming. Meanwhile Arminda and Nair hard at work. Abuelo Juan is enjoying having time to turn our *Refugio Yanacachi* into a productive farm and a good place to rest and contemplate. We have harvested our first crop of potatoes, zucchinis, onions, pumpkins, tomatoes, carrots, parsley, coriander, cabbage, etc. The grounds have been transformed and picturesque. It keeps us fit and we enjoy the company of our neighbours. Juan has an excellent relationship with the young men of our village soccer team. When he is present, he gets them going and they have finally won recently.

In closing, we would like to share with you an Easter Reflection that is different and is in the spirit of our spirituality and theology of liberation.

RESURRECTION AS INSURRECTION

There is a question of the social existence of the human being that torments the spirit and for which the resurrection of the Crucified brings a ray of light: what sense does the violent death of those who commit themselves to the cause of justice have? What future do those proletarians, peasants, Indians and anonymous people have who were historically crucified for demanding their rights?

Generally the story is told by those who have succeeded and in a perspective that is in accordance with their interests. And who will pay for the suffering of the defeated?

The resurrection of Jesus offers us an answer. Well, the one who rose from the dead was one of those defeated and crucified, Jesus, made a suffering servant and condemned to crucifixion.

The one who rose from the dead was not a Caesar at the height of his glory, nor a general at the height of his military power, nor a wise man at the height of his fame. The one who resurrected was a Crucified and expelled from the earth. He inherited the first fruits of new life.

The resurrection of Jesus showed that God took sides with the defeated. The executioner does not triumph over his victim. God resurrected the victim and, with that, did not disappoint our thirst for a finally just and fraternal world. Only by resurrecting the defeated do we give them justice and give them back their stolen life, a life now transfigured.

The insurrection against injustice gives the true meaning of the resurrection.

There is much more that we could share with you here concerning our analyses of the present social, political and religious reality of Bolivia and the world, but as the saying goes, "Enough is enough". Meanwhile we all continue with our mission of being witnesses to the Resurrection and constructors of that new society that is the Kingdom among us.

With all our love:

Gilberto-Arminda-Juan José-Chiqui-Paola-Little John-Marian/Javier-Nair-Lupo-Paco/Juanito



Good Friday Way of the Cross in La Mamora Village – accompanied by Marist Team



Juan so pleased with the first harvest of their family vegetable garden of *Refugio Yanacachi*