

November 22nd 2015
Silver Jubilee

Dear Friends,

This day (November 22nd) is of grand significance for us as *"Misioneros Maristas, Bolivia"* and cause for celebration and giving thanks. On this day 25 years ago, as we have come to believe, the Spirit inspired us to commit ourselves to the founding in the Bolivian Church of a new missionary community with the Marist Charism and Spirit whose service would consist in the promotion, formation and accompaniment of base church communities (known throughout Latin America as Comunidades Eclesiales de Base –CEBs). Throughout those 25 years we have shared with you our friends in different parts of the world our origins and on-going missionary journey: a real journey in faith. When the three of us formulated our foundational document and signed our name to it, little did we know how and where the Lord would lead us and very little did we possess materially to begin such an adventure. But here we are today 25 years later: a beautiful and blest mixed Marist community of 10, ranging in age from 70 to 1. You our friends have shared in our missionary journey through your prayers, encouragement and solidarity. It is our hope that wherever you are today we are united together in spirit and celebrate this jubilee.

Actually our jubilee celebrations bring to a close our pastoral activities for the current pastoral year. With the 1st Sunday of Advent we begin that of 2016, following our evaluation and planning sessions after the 22nd. You may recall as we began our Jubilee Year last November each of us in our Circular Letter shared with you different aspects of our Marist life and mission over these 25 years.

One is aware that 2015 is quickly coming to an end. Our last correspondence with you was on the occasion of Juan's 70th. So now to bring you up to date.

In July Bolivia was overwhelmed with the pastoral visit of Pope Francis. As a Marist Team while we did not participate on the ground in the different activities during his visit, we were kept glued to the television that in-live recorded his entire visit. The Jesuit Radio Network here kept us busy with interviews and analysis throughout. Then for the next 6 weeks we dedicated our weekly Sunday programme of "Tejiendo Redes" to reflections on his discourses in Bolivia, Ecuador and Paraguay.

In August here in Tarija there is a lot of religious celebrations, peregrinations, processions and cultural events. Traditionally we have a CEBs Encounter in our communities of our former La Mamora Mission in honour of the Virgin of Chaguaya –the diocesan Marian feast. This year's Encounter was the best of the 16 years since we inaugurated it, and for us Marists it was a display of the maturity of the process of evangelization and formation we endeavoured to cultivate in the region. It is now some 6 years since we officially handed over to the diocese the mission as a new quasi-parish. During the month we also realized 2 pastoral visits to the CEBs of the rural parishes of Entre Rios and Santa Ana within the Tarija Diocese.

September saw us principally at our base in Tarija City where we dedicated our time to the preparation of 3 new up-coming courses. In mid-October we had the 2nd formation course for the year for the youth who are members of the CEBs throughout the

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Tarija Diocese. As a Marist Team we are encouraged by the enthusiasm and commitment of these young Bolivians who have entered this process of leadership and protagonism with us.

The last week of October saw the 3 members of the Marist Team set off in our Ford ranger 4X4 on a marathon 3 week mission from the far south of Bolivia (Tarija) to the far north (the Amazonia Boliviana) and to the central east (the Chaco) – a round-trip journey of some 4,600 kms, more than half of which was on dirt roads and on the return with torrential rain that tested our skills developed over the past 25 years. Our first formation course of this journey was to the animators of the CEBs of the Pando Vicariate where we had our 2nd mission, that of Palma Flor. This we conducted in Riberalta-the see of the vicariate. From there we returned south to the central east to conduct the 2nd course in the parish of Muyupampa of the Sucre Archdiocese. Last year we conducted the 1st formation course there with lay pastoral agents so as to be able to initiate in the region the process of CEBs.

After our annual evaluation and planning sessions at the end of the month we will give a final course for 2015 to the CEBs animators of the Tarija Diocese before going into our annual recess period.

Before signing off some community news:

In August Gilberto`s 2nd son (Gilbertito), having been approached by one of the national soccer clubs (Bolivar), went off to train and study in La Paz. The club has an intern system for prospective star players. So he now trains there in the morning and goes off to college in the evening and is accommodated there along with other young prospects. He is doing well and in good spirit. We were able to have some time with him as we stopped in La Paz going north. His brother Juan Jose is finishing his 1st year at Uni in Cordoba, Argentina where he is studying Mechanical Engineering: a career not offered here in Tarija. We are looking forward to his coming home for Christmas vacation.

As our 4 boys are sporting stars, one is liable to injuries in the course of events. And such happened to Lupito (Javier`s eldest) who is now 17 and represents one of the best Basketball teams in Bolivia-(La Salle). He suffered a serious fall while training, which required arthroscopic surgery to the knee to fix the ruptured ligament. This could not be successfully done in Tarija and so was performed by the specialist in La Paz. Thanks be to God all went well and after 10 days there returned to Tarija where he gets about on crutches and has daily physiotherapy. His brother Paquito continues staring here as goal-keeper for his soccer team. Marian, our newest member of the Marist community and 1st daughter of Gilbert celebrated her 1st birthday on September 14th –a great fiesta was had at home to mark the occasion. She is truly gorgeous and a great joy. Presently she is taking her first steps. Meanwhile we oldies take into account the years but still fit and young at heart!

We know that in our faith journey we do not walk alone and for this we are ever grateful to you our dear friends who we remember daily in our community prayer.

With this sharing we convey to you our warmest regards. GRACIAS! May our mother, Mary of Nazareth continue to accompany us day by day.

With all our love,

Gilberto/Arminda/Juan Jose/Gilbertito/Marian –Javier/Nair/Lupito/Paquito -Juan

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