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M A R I S T I N T E R N A T I O N A L N O V I T I A T E

Newsletter



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ABOUT THE FRONTPAGE:

Our Lady of Barangay

The Front page reflect Mary Our Lady of the Barangay in its Filipino tradition. She is believed to be the lady who moves from one Barangay (Village) to another seeking the poor and attending to their needs. The Lady who walks with us, present among us. This year, we are so fortunate to have a bit of a change from the modern statue to a statue that is truly rooted in the belief of the Philippines. Another highlights of this statue was that it was blessed on the 10th of April—the day that ended our First Retreat.

“MAAYONG PAG-ABOT” MARIST INTERNATIONAL NOVIATE; 2017.



By Carlos Olivares Flores & Iosefo Amuri.

Every batch of Novices is different in their own unique way. This year’s lot is also different in the way that we were considered the smallest number ever to be received in the Novitiate since the Marist International Novitiate came back in Davao in 213. We are the 5th group and we came from different Marist Units like Mexico, Africa, and Oceania. However being only 5 in the group, it never disheartened us from moving forward in trying

to pursue a good Marist spirit and understanding for the Future.

The Year is almost coming to the end of the first half and we had gone through some ups and downs which we took as a learning point.

However, the Bulletin committee is so glad to present to you a glimpse of how things are going so far. It is our honour and pleasure to present to you from near and far some happenings in our daily lives since our arrival here in Davao, Philippines. We hope you can find at least a little of how we live the Marist spirituality in the International Novitiate.

We thank all the people whom we have mentioned in this newsletter, their contribution towards our articles is highly appreciated. In the same way we acknowledge the experiences we gained from our time of living together.

Happy Reading!!!

FOUNDER'S THOUGHTS

Instruments of Divine Mercy.

The love of God for us in Christ is at the very center of the Christian message. When Marists are asked to become

“instruments of divine mercy” they are being asked to portray this feature of God and they are to help build a Church which is perceived, not in terms of

power, planning, control, administration and competitiveness, but rather in terms of community, compassion, simplicity, mercy and fellowship. For this rea-

son Marists are to embrace and be welcoming to all, to the exclusion of no one, and to have an open heart to all.

Cf. A Founder Speaks, Doc. 121



A FILIPINO GOD (ANOTHER COUNTRY'S EXPERIENCE)

By Jaime Perez Martinez,
from Mexico



"It's a bit like everything changed from night to a new morning."

"I had travelled once in a plane for two hours from Guadalajara, my home city, to Monterrey. I enjoyed the beaches of Acapulco for few hours, on maybe a weekend or a holiday season. It is also true that I wore shorts every day just for the soccer game with my friends after school and that I have always worn sandals when I shower. At home from time to

time my Mother cooks my favourite dish: buttered fish with white rice, beans and sliced avocado..."

But now, at only 24 years, everything has changed, and everything seems crazy, something of a dream world that I just cannot understand. Or is it a great adventure to cross a country called Mexico to another called the Philippines, travelling by plane for more than 20 hours? No doubt it is much easier to change school, institution, cell phone, clock, even changing some pesos for dollars. But the change from one country to another and all that entails is quite

strange. It's a bit like everything changed from night to a new morning. Everything to live an experience called: *Noviciado*.

My name is Jaime Perez Martinez. Yes, now I'm thinking of all the impressions that I have been gathering in my head and heart since I stepped out on this blessed land. Because so far, after five months, every morning I see spectacular sunrises on a calm sea. The lands of Mexico are full of *Maizales* (Corn fields) but here they are transformed into immense rice fields. Yes, the Philippines is a fertile land because everything that is sown gives good har-

vest and on the table I enjoy a plate of white rice and fish, three times a day. This is never missing in a Filipino family. I also confess that now I wear shorts and sandals every day and I am so comfortable in them. I could imagine my mother rolling her eyes if I was to tell her. The most unusual thing for me is that when we enter a house and especially places of worship or chapel, one has to take off his sandals to enter barefoot to be in the presence of the Lord. Sports are also different. I love soccer, and everyone here loves bas-



Rice fields

ketball, and they play it very well. Previously, I ate pears, peaches, strawberries; today, heaps of banana, mango, coconut and papaya.

I know, it's not about finding the differences. All this moves me and amazes me at the same time because I also see some other things, such as the strange idea I have that many of the local people look very similar to me with the same smile. I feel strange at times. But the local people have quite often confused me for being a Filipino. They always speak to me in *Visaya*, their mother tongue and I shock them by answering in English. We are silent, and we laugh. My English is poor but I try my best as they do speak English and enjoy it.

And I am trying to learn

Would you like to buy some vegetables?



their language, some of their words have Spanish roots, since both our countries had Spanish occupation.

Still more, what stands out is the company of a God in the heart of each Filipino that one finds here. A living and suffering God, one who smiles and

cries. Because God is not only seen in the cross of the Cathedral of St. Peter or in the *GKK* (Basic Ecclesial Communities) of the parishes, but also in the markets of Toril and Bankerohan. He is in the people who sell vegetables for a few pesos; in many families living under bridges; in abandoned

children and old people in the streets. And also, a God who loves to travel in Jeepney, tricycle and motorcycle. *Jeepney* is the best. It is the main means of public transportation.

“Is by Jesus and Mary that I am here to the other side of the globe, looking to say “Yes” to their missionary invitation.”

A jeepney is a large old car with a very cheerful driver that can carry up to 20 people, all crowded in, like in a can of sardines. But there is always space for one more in a jeepney. God walks around here, dressed like one of them, with a simple shirt, shorts and sandals.

No, I have not left my homeland for better study or a better chance of work, much

less for exile, flight or persecution, but for something much stranger, perhaps profound for me. The answer, which seeks to be generous: to a vocation. Jesus calls. Only he is known daring to leave everything and to reach another lands, like this one of the Philippines. It is by Jesus and Mary that I am here to the other side of the globe, looking to say “Yes” to their missionary invitation where the good thing is that a Filipino will never leave me alone but he will be calling in her mother tongue “Amigo!!” (friend) all the time.

Here in the Philippines, I also find myself at home, as in a family, among the children of a loving Father and a Filipino Mother, within a body that I want to serve, my Mother Church. Father Fernando, is my older brother, or also known as the Master of Novices. And, I am part of a tradition from which day by day I find reasons to dare to give myself to the Society of Mary.

ORIENTATION PROGRAM EXPERIENCE

By Timothy Hare,
from Solomon Island



shines through all the dark corners of my human cultures enabling me to see my weaknesses and strengths with regards to cultural, spiritual, physical, psychological and other aspects of life. The orientation enabled me to expose assumptions, prejudices or stereotypes views in preparation for my novitiate.

The second picture is that of a mother hen searching for a comfortable and secure place to lay its eggs. When it finds a place, it lays its eggs hoping and trusting that that particular place will help it safeguard the eggs until the hatching time. The day of hatching would be a joyful and gracious day for the mother hen to celebrate with her new born chicks. This scene somehow helps me recognise the attitudes of the mother hen within myself in the two months orientation. I was searching into my life in terms of my spiritual, cultural beliefs and I look for a neutral ground to reorganise myself in preparation for my novitiate. After two months I

Drawing on the experiences and reflections from the two months orientation, I pictured two scenes. Firstly, I would say that it was like the rays of the sun that shines or enlightens my unknown truth about the journey of the Novitiate that began in January 23rd 2017. It

was able to find where I am by giving up my strengths, weaknesses, goals or visions to the spirit of Mary in my Novitiate transition. I entrust all my hopes to Mary in whom I can find comfort, perseverance, hope, joy, peace, guidance and support.

Precisely, it is a great privilege for me to have the orientation because it somehow introduced me to what the novitiate is like in advance. Through the Orientation programs I was able to begin the Novitiate without unnecessary confusions: To be at peace with myself, my confreres, with different people, with the new environment and culture, even though I was a stranger. Having this orientation also helps me to sort out my culture shock by exposing myself to different peoples and their cultures, it helps me to partly know myself and my fellow brothers. The orientation also enables me to have a hopeful, joyful and peaceful transition to the novitiate.

“It shines through all the dark corners of my human cultures enabling me to see my weaknesses and strengths with regards to cultural, spiritual, physical, psychological and others aspects of life.”



“Peoples Park.” From left to right. Jaime (Mexico), Timothy (Solomon Island), Iosefo (Fiji), Carlos (Mexico), Christian (Cameroon), Lay Marist Mauro (Philippines)

EXPERIENCE IN MY HOST FAMILY AT DIGOS

By Christian Ngoura,
from Cameroon

The family is universal! Wherever you go, you will find a family that will perhaps be willing to welcome you as a son into their midst. They will love you, show you affection and make you feel at home. In the process of orientation and immersion in the culture of the Philippines, we were assigned to different families in Digos. The objective of this exercise is to immerse ourselves in the lifestyle of these families, to enter into the culture and practice the Cebuano that we have learned. We were not only involved with the host family but with the people of the area as well. We note here that it is a great challenge for them and for us, because many of them do not speak English, which causes a certain blockage in the conversation. Many of them speak Tagalog which is another Filipino language which is a further complication. Timothy and I were welcomed to the AYOP family. They have a very modest home, very isolated on a

farm with a poultry and cattle. The family has a small family business CLA Glass & Aluminium. Usually they speak Tagalog but our presence made them to adjust to speaking in English with us so that we could understand each other. We all made an effort trying to understand each other in mixed English, Tagalog, Cebuano and even non-verbal communication. We integrated pretty quickly into their routine despite the language barrier and quickly we were treated like adopted sons. We built trust and friendship bonds very quickly. We had many family activities such as:

The CLA GLASS PARTY in Santa Cruz. As it is the end of the year, the AYOP family put on a celebration to thank employees for their hard work during the year. It was an opportunity for relaxation and a break over

family business. Another family activity was SABROS CAMP where we had a thrilling zip line experience. It was a moment of pure pleasure in the family because everyone was very amused despite the rain, and everyone was happy with the day spent with the family.

We had moments of prayer in the family and joined the parish celebrations and GKK (Gagmay'ng Kristohanang Katilingban) means in English Basic Ecclesial Communities BECs. The celebrations of the 24th December and 31st December were of unique Taste, because we experienced different ways of celebrating from our own cultures. This experience of Living in a Filipino family opened up new opportunities. It was a moment of joy, sharing, relaxation and above all a moment of learning the local language and a better integration into the Philippine culture.

I retain this phrase from **Sheina Can** a member of the AYOP family: **"We are happy to have you among us, we are not rich, we live modestly with the little we have, and you accept us as we are. Let us live in peace and joy with you, know that you are at home here because the Filipinos are simple and welcoming people."**

"The family is universal! Wherever you go, you will find a family."



From left to right. Tatay Constancio, Self, Jona, Jessa, Jea, Jhon, Timothy, Nanay Lea.

the festivities. This has touched me a lot because they took the time to show their closeness to their employees who assist them to run the small

MARIST COMMUNITY EXPERIENCE IN MINTAL

By Christian Ngoura,
from Cameroon

I had the opportunity to live in the community of the Marist Sisters of Mintal. The community was thus constituted of Sr. Terube, Sr. April and Sr. Lilibeth; who were involved in different ministry. They bring a Marist presence to the Sick, bringing them peace and consolation in suffering; the pastoral care of prisoners and teaching in Holy Cross College. During the one week I spent with them, I went through all their apostolates.

With Sister Terube, we went to Agdao for the session with Agdao mothers. The Marists Lay of Sydney joined us to entertain the Ladies and the Children. A good time together with these children who only want a smile to feel loved. On our way home, we stopped at the hospital to visit our brother Jaime who has been admitted for few days. In the evening we went to Matina for a session with Bo Dumas expert in a Pelvic floor physiotherapist. She takes time to pass some knowledge to the sisters on how to take care of it in order to prevent or cure problems with incontinence and prolapsed which is so common in women. With Sr Terube we went to the hospital for the visit of the sick. We prayed with three patients. At 11 O'clock, we have the mass with the residents.

On Wednesday it was a cooking day . It was a great challenge for me. It was the first time to cook for the sisters of different countries. Despite the lack of some condiments I cooked a good tomato sauce, fried chicken and rice. The next day, I went with Sister Monica to the Badjao, Centre Refugee Pre-School. Later we joined Sr. April in City Jail Annex. She has a computer class. I spent a good time with the guys. I take time to listening to each. Many told me why they were detained. They were curious about Africa. I learn a lot more about the Filipino culture.

On Friday in the evening we went to the Marist center for street children (Balay Pasilungan). This fiesta was organized, to say goodbye to the Lay Marists Australia who were at the end of their visit in Davao. An opportunity to express myself as well. I loved it because it is beautiful to see the brothers and sisters



“Interacting with people from here and elsewhere creates an understanding .”

of the same family together for the same cause.

On Saturday I went with Sr Lilibeth to the Holy Cross College. She teaches the course on the Sacrament to the Catechist. I was invited to share how we celebrate the sacraments in Africa. The lesson after this sharing was: "For preparation of the sacraments, it always depends on where we are located and whether the Occidental tradition or Oriental we must adopt to the preparation to the sacraments."

The Sunday was a rest day and I want to Mass at the parish. After the mass, I took time around the church to talk to people.

On Monday Return to Eden. After breakfast, Srs Lilibeth and April accompanied me to Toril. It was for me a great joy to go to the Novitiate after time of orientation. I made a new friend this

day, who is a tricycle driver.

This community experience enabled me to be very active and involved in the Marist Sisters apostolates. Indeed, to go to the various places of apostolate I was able to touch the reality of the lives of the population of Davao. To see how the sisters give themselves to their heart's content by giving only a smile to the children, a chance to be educated. I thought in Father Colin's pedagogical project, which is the education of children to ensure they have a future. The education of a child is very important for you are investing in a soul that will change the world tomorrow. I was not indifferent to the suffering of the sick, but I

was aware that to each presence can restores hope to us both, for they feel my love and I can see the manifestation of the love of God in their suffering. Which teach me of who God is. This time with my sisters from the same family has been very beneficial in the sense that I have been able to open myself to the local culture. Interacting with people from here and elsewhere create an understanding that there is always a difference in our habits, but only the love of God unites us. It allows one to live in the universal Christian culture. I had a good time of community sharing and community prayer with the sisters. I thank them for the hospitality and their concern for me. They were happy to have introduced me to their community and ministries. I would have to return there again sometimes.

THE FIRST FOUR MONTHS IN THE NOVITIATE

By Carlos Olivares Flores,
from Mexico

I remember the first day we arrived at the Marist International Novitiate. It was a day before the profession of the previous novices. I can say that the event left a mark on me; two main things are still in my mind: The words of the entrance hymn and the examination of novices which says: *“My dear brothers, by water and the Holy Spirit you have already been consecrated to God’s service: are you resolved to unite yourselves more closely to Him by the new bond of religious profession? I am.”*

Today is the fourth

month in the novitiate, in other words; the first quarter of the preparation to be able to say: *“Tuus sum ego”*

To me, the novitiate has been “a big opportunity, an invitation to die to oneself.” *“Stay in your cell”* said Abba Moses a desert Father, *“acknowledge*

yourself and fight your demons” said Antony of the desert. These sayings mean: purify your life in order to unite yourself to God; become “whiter than snow” and be born anew in the Spirit. But overall it has been a

time to talk with Mary and Jesus from heart to heart while we walk to-

*“I will come to you in the silence
I will lift you from all your fear
you will hear my voice
I claim you as My choice
Be still, and know I am here...
Do not be afraid, I am with you
I have called you each by name
Come and follow Me
I will bring you home*

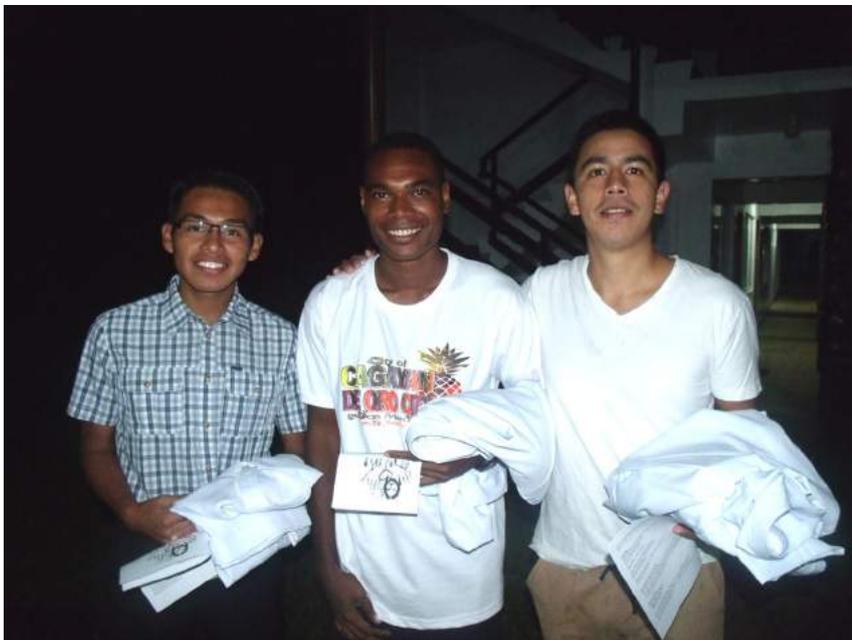
gether. It sounds very attractive to have such an opportunity. Who would dare to say no to this opportunity? The truth is that nobody said it was easy; there are some challenges like the daily living in an intercultural

and understanding. However we have the guidance of the formation team which helps us and challenges us to grow both spiritually and psychologically, but overall, in community life.

In my experience, everything will go well, if we are sincere and open with the process of owning up to our struggles, especially those things within ourselves: thoughts, feelings, our prayer life, our faith jour-

ney, even our sins. The personal time, for instance, is one of the moments which I have had to deal with. One can be too scrupulous and fixated with an organized agenda, filled with activities, while overlooking the time for inner reflection on personal life which is crucial to the whole process of the novitiate journey.

When we set well-organized periods of prayer or books that we must read in order to reach God’s presence, that is only us wanting to control everything. Often too we can fall in the laxity of following the community timetable, counting days towards profession and becoming indifferent to everything that



Jaime, Timothy, Carlos with their soutanes, minutes before the Novitiate program starts.

surrounds us. Here the ever useful words “First of all you are your own formator” remind me my responsibility I have and the commitment I made since the day I knocked on the door of the Novitiate chapel asking for be received in this Mary’s family.

Of course not everything looks difficult here. In fact as time unfolds itself I have seen some transformation in me and I have had a chance to ponder even more on the meaning of life. This experience of the Novitiate so far has been more than self analysis. Here I have made new friends and there has been a lot of time for joy, sharing, jokes, feasts, nice conversations. I remember years ago I wanted to live in a boarding house or an apartment with friends thinking that in that way we will be knit together and would never be separated from each other. I realize now that this is even better than that, because the new friends I have met and lived with are on the same journey with me. They become my brothers, a new family.



Yes, I have said there are challenges as well but we have the guarantee that Jesus is walking with us and forms us individually so that we can live together as brothers in the same community that he has called us to.

One of the treasures I have discovered in the Novitiate is the contemplation of God in his creation. I find Him in the beautiful sky filled with stars at night or the sunrises and the sunsets, the singing and flying of the birds at dawn or at sunset.

I also begin to enjoy the time I spend with myself, with who I am and to accept me even in my weaknesses. I learn to be more tolerant with others and to

leave things in God’s hands.

He will care for all our necessities, He is always merciful, full of patience. E.g.: There have been days when our water tank was empty and suddenly there is a downpour that fills the tank and we can wash our clothes and dishes and have a shower.

All my expectations of the novitiate seem to have changed. It has turned out not as I planned, because He had already a better plan. And what is better is that He, in his infinite kindness, asks me every time he wants to renew me with his Love: Can I prune this or that? Can

I love SM (Society of Mary)

I mold this area? Can I take out all these things from your heart? In all these questions there is an implicit one: Do you trust your whole being to Me? Let my Love work on you.

With hope in God’s will, this great experience of walking beside Mother Mary and talking heart to heart, will increase the “Yes” I made to her merciful choice. To be brought home and merge my “Yes” with her “YES”. To be part of the body of Christ in the body of Mary.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PASTORAL IN THE LIFE OF A MARIST NOVICE

By Iosefo Amuri,
from Fiji

The Novitiate is a stage of initiation that marks the entry into religious life. It allows the novice, through dialogue with the Novice Master, to discern whether his aptitudes for the life of the religious family and his underlying motivations will enable him to find happiness in responding to God's call.

Marist International Novitiate offers a challenging and thorough pastoral Formation Program which is carefully integrated with the human, spiritual and intellectual spheres of formation. In this area, novices are being posted to different Pastoral venues namely Balay Pasilungan, working with the Charity Sis-

ters, Davao City Jail and Eden Christian Community. The following areas of ministries are, by no means, to be considered an exhaustive list of the limits of this ministry. These experiences of outreach enable us to immerse ourselves not only as people of faith but as fellow human. We should let these people touch ourselves spiritually in their constant search for God.

A Pastoral Integration/processing is held after every four weeks of Pastoral time and this enables each Novice to bring a report of what they have learned and what they have done in their most recent placement. This integration is a help not only to build up their

self-confidence but to help them to improve the way they do pastoral ministry in the future. Personally, this very important aspect of Formation really helps in broadening my service as a future Religious. It builds confidence in terms of getting down to the level of people especially in terms of the Poor and less fortunate, the Aged and the lonely, the neglected and the abandoned. It helps me to realize how they feel, their emotions, their loneliness and most of all, to feel how they feel and make mine their struggles and difficulties. In this case, it contributed a lot in how I build relationship with one another especially staying in a foreign land whereby language and culture are the barriers. This never came out obviously since I believe that "if there is a will there is a way."

However, I came to realize that the key aspect in pastoral Formation is openness. It is



not I the person doing pastoral who is important but it is what the people get from me. The most powerful aspect here is that despite their age and condition, these people always teach new insight about the true meaning of life. Often they evangelize us more than we think. Though I am a religious Novice, I can never put myself above these people, because their lives reflect God's Love and goodness and I am only called to contemplate God in them.



The visit by PM sisters with the orphans.

REFLECTION EXPERIENCE

By Timothy Hare,
from Solomon Island



On the first day of my preaching, I was really nervous, so that I could feel my body shaking a little. However, I managed to deliver the message of God to my brothers. The second time around I felt a bit of change. I

started to find ways to control my nervousness. I gained more confidence this time as I could evaluate my performance better than the previous time. So I can say that though panic, nervousness, and fear are seen as negatives attitudes to life they have driven me to the land of confidence and courage. Reflecting on this, there are four things that I experienced: *my good approach, truth, audience and characters*. They are like the four legs of Table that needs to be

“So I can say that though panic, nervousness, and fear are seen as negatives attitudes to life they have driven me to the land of confidence and courage.”

balanced. In other words, they are like the four legs of the Table of Christ’s banquet that invited me to receive His body and blood.

My “GOOD APPROACH” somehow might help people understand the message I want to communicate. My approach must be precise and easy to comprehend and before approaching the crowd I should first convince myself. This is so difficult for me when trying to find the best approach that fit in our community of six different cultural beliefs but what really helps me to deliver the message of God regardless of these different beliefs is the Marist culture in which we all encouraged to live by.

“TRUTH”, I need to preach about the Truth which is God. I have to believe that my inspiration and knowledge are inspired by God; therefore the objective of preaching is to feed the people with the Truth. However the temptation for me is sometimes I want to preach just to get the attention of others about myself or just to make myself known to the people rather than to make known

who God is to them. In this case I am not preaching about the Truth but just about myself. Therefore, the insights of the homily should be all drawn out from the Truth.

“AUDIENCE”. I should know those whom I am preaching to, their situation, struggles etc, so that what I preach might target their situation in the hope of bringing them closer to God. On the other hand if I don’t know their situations, it’s like I am just preaching to myself. And it happens that sometimes in my preaching I feel like I was just preaching to myself responding to my own strength and weaknesses I failed to relate to my brothers in order to know their situations.

“CHARACTER”. My preaching somehow should matched up with the life that I am living. Sometimes what I preach is only sound in words but soundless in my actions. In other words, what I preach is opposite from the life that I am living. It was like a man enclosed himself in a cave without experiencing the reality outside.

Therefore, I can conclude that the above legs are what I experienced that I might need to nurture them for my future preaching. I would say that it is not easy but it is not my work, it is God’s work that He has entrusted to me in the hope of bringing His people closer to Him. What is required of me is to continue to practice by reading the scriptures, meditation on the readings, and trying to understand the events or situations that might be going on in the people I am living with especially with my brothers in the novitiate so that I can relate God’s word to them. “Reflection” helps me a lot in terms of confidence, courage, new ideas and styles and above all my faith journey in the Novitiate.



iosefo preached at our community Eucharist.

ADORATION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

By Christian Ngoura,
from Cameroon



The spiritual formation that we receive here at the novitiate helps us to come closer to God and to holiness on a daily basis. We receive a spiritual program that brings us to the encounter with God, a time to enter into intimacy with Him. In this program we have adoration to the Blessed Sacrament every Thursday, during the recollection period and also during the retreats. We may ask ourselves this question: Why Eucharistic adoration?

Eucharistic adoration is a prayer, an intimate dialogue with Jesus truly present under the appearance of the consecrated bread (the Blessed Sacrament). It is an encounter face to face with Christ. **"I look at him, and he looks at me"**, replied simply a parishioner of the holy Cure of

Ars, who questioned him about his numerous and long periods of adoration. And I would say, as an addition to this parishioner, **"I listen to him and he listens to me; I talk with him and he interacts with me."**

The time of worship that I have in the presence of the Lord is a wonderful time to listen, to dialogue with Jesus in the silence of prayer. I discuss with him as my friend in whom I trust and who know my strength and weaknesses. That is why I do not need too many big words to talk to him rather I just marvel at him, because he already knows everything about me. I must thus converse with him in silence and calmness and listen to him.

What I need to know is that there is no prescribed technique for adoring the Lord present in the Blessed Sacrament. Each time I enter into adoration:

1. I try to become aware of Jesus real presence in the Eucharist. I renew my Faith in him.
2. I thank him for his great humility to assume my sinful condition.

3. I see this time as a spiritual conversation with Christ, a moment when I feel renewed in his presence.

4. I remain in His presence for as long as I like, in an attitude of prayer and silent adoration.

5. It is for my advantage that I am in the Presence of Christ to ask Him to mold me in his likeness.

In the silence of my prayer God speaks to me. In the silence of my worship, God acts in me. In the silence of my adoration, God fulfils His will in me. Yes Lord, that your will be done, I open my heart to thy love.



Thursday adoration

***"I look at him,
and he looks at
me"***

***"I listen to him
and he listens to
me; I talk with
him and he
interacts with
me."***



Tabernacle during Good Friday

MY LENTEN REFLECTION AT THE NOVITIATE

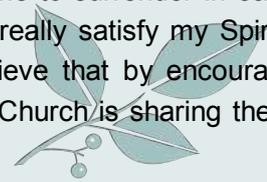
By Iosefo Amuri,
from Fiji



Ashes are applied to our forehead in the sign of the cross as the words, "Remember, you are dust and to dust you shall return" are spoken to us. The other formula which is used, "Turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel" emphasizes our call to continual conversion and holiness of life. This act symbolizes our mortality

as well as our need for ongoing repentance. It is a reminder that this life is short and merely a foreshadowing of what we shall become through the redemption of Jesus Christ on the cross. The work of our redemption will not be complete until we are raised from the dead, in resurrected bodies like his own and called to the eternal communion of heaven. For many Catholics, the first thought that Lent brings to mind is giving something up. We have spoken a lot about LOVE and giving up during Lent is all about Love. As a Catholic, I believe this is one of the most significant acts of our faith. It is not only about the spoken Love but actually putting it in to practice. I would rather ask the question "How many would give generously to a starving old man if he knocks at the door for Food?" I believe this is a great challenge. This is a time I truly believe that God appears to us

in different ways, in different people, using different images and many more ways. It is time of knowing if we really Love him in heart or is it just in words? I believe that if I am really thinking of following the life of Jesus in fasting for 40 days and 40 nights than it is a time to see if I can surrender myself to the material things of this earth. By saying this I mean that Lent is a time where by I have to be more affirmed of serving God alone because no one can serve two masters, God and wealth. However if I really confessing that Jesus is Lord, than it is the time to surrender in earthly things and adopt what really satisfy my Spiritual hunger. And also I believe that by encouraging almsgiving in Lent, the Church is sharing the secret to happiness.



Just to conclude Lent is about conversion, turning our lives more completely over to Christ and his way of life. That always involves giving up sin in some form. The goal is not just to abstain from sin for the duration of Lent but to root sin out of our lives forever. Conversion means leaving behind an old way of living and acting in a new way, embracing the new life in Christ.



Our spiritual set up during the Faith Sharing: Our experience in Jesus' way of the Cross

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE BORDER



By Jaime Perez Martinez,
from Mexico

For what I was looking for, I did not feel comfortable. I was disinterested to everything. It was not me anymore. I had everything I wanted, and I was very ambitious. A deeply miserable life already dominated my being. I was bittering within me. I already only fell and relapsed into conformity, not expecting anything at all. Already the mediocrity had crept in and dangerous root and was destroying my heart by leaps and bounds. Already the heart was at the lowest and there was the remorse and those bad experiences that chase me anywhere. Everything reproached me. I lived a deep poverty, nothing satisfied me. I did not have hope

anymore...

However, at this point in my life I was motivated to something more, because I still enjoyed some freedom: someone told me to "cross the border," to "go to the other side" ... Madness? Maybe. But there was something attractive in the trip: the "Friend" - that's how we usually call all strangers from whom we want to get something we need - that would do with me this journey.

And I, in truth had taken this as my last chance to change something of me; something that made my existence less miserable and pessimistic.

Of the friend, oh yes. The friend talked to me about the way, the best moments to get out, to rest and hide

from the dangers that he very well knew; strange "beings" that would look for the way to take me back and not to let me cross. He had many scars all over his body. It seemed that he knew of suffering, but I did not know whether I trust in his resolution for guiding me because he enjoyed a kind of joy that inspired the passage of each day. While I knew his life - a very

hard indeed - I showed some parts of my life, perhaps the most revealing ... little by little I told the most disgusting...

I run out my reservations, start worrying. But he was prepared. Obviously, he was the "Pollero" with ample experience. *Pollero*, in my country, is the title given to the one who can "help or betray" when someone wants to cross a frontier. I was sure he knew how to find "a better quality of life", "a worthy life" - as we call it. Even though so we face obstacles, strange nights, ideas of defeat; and enjoyed some very pleasant days with sunrises and sunsets, I never regretted for I have never experienced these before.

At some point I lost everything that had "a lot of value" for me, in a ravine. I fell, I got hurt... I cried. The truth was that I had so much without fall, or cry. It embarrasses me. I've always been told about the "*polleros*" who kill and abuse those who are better of. But I was really lucky. I was in good hands. And I was dreaming more, of crossing to the other

side.

One day, when we no longer have food, I was weak and hurt. With a burning sun and a dusty desert, after so many falls, I could not but fall on the ground. I confessed to the "friend" everything that I wanted to hide for fear that he might abandon me. Because I had lost my assets, I still felt heavy. Already my only hoped was to die; if he decided to leave me after hearing everything I did, I would have understood him. Thirsty, with difficult breathing or opening my eyes, still more tears from all that I was carrying in, and from what I had done. It was as if all the time I had been lying, using him.

"Hey, calm down, calm down," he said. But have not you been calling me "friend" since we started this trip? Come, we're not only friends, but brothers, of the same race. Do not give up!"

At such a point I could see myself weak, that the following still made me cry more: he carried me on his shoulders. I did not expect it. Little by little in the rest of the trip and even on his shoulders, I was perceiving how I felt much lighter.

The emotion was felt in our faces when we saw

*But something
attractive there
was in the trip: the
'Friend'*

that border, the great river that separates two very different conditions. However, I was coward again. It was impossible for me to cross to that new land by myself. It was the most dramatic night. In short, we submerged in the water and there were still dangers. That friend always gave me courage and we swam together for several hours. Then I did not know anything...

After a while I woke up, still soaked and frightened because I felt that I was alone, perhaps dead. No, neither. The friend stepped forward. And, best of all, was...we had crossed the border!! Amazing!! Yes, and new tears - perhaps for all the water I had drunk- ran like a waterfall through my muddy face but filled with deep joy. I kept crying. I felt like a champion who reaches the goal. And now, the less I could do is to stop looking at the "friend," to whom now I wanted also as a true brother. Without his company, I surely would have died. While we were crying about everything we lived, tender rays of sun appeared in front of us welcome us, giving new warmth to the heart. The darkness was behind.

Then came the moment I feared; the farewell, not before paying him, because one usually gives one part to the *Pollero* at the beginning and the rest at the end. This is how "loyalty" is assured. But he already knew that I had nothing. And the saddest thing was this, to bid him farewell. For there was a new insecurity: not knowing how or where to go in this new land. I told him all this with sorrow and sadness. And he just added, "Jaime, I forgive you. Live! You do not have to pay me

anything!" And without more, the tears never ceased to fall, falling at his feet with all gratitude. How could there be such a capacity for forgiveness? At the end, in his sincere desire to help me, he said: "Look, do not worry, if you want I can guide you in this new land, because it is not easy, I know" ...

And a new peace returned to the heart, believing without a doubt that at his side I would not be lost. And I accepted that he directed my steps. And now, we are walking. Because that friend I've been talking to you about is Jesus. The Risen, the Walker.

CROSSING THE BORDER is not easy. With Him everything changes. It is question to let Jesus help us to cross to the land of love and forgiveness, of freedom and of new life. Jesus, the Friend, the Brother, the "*Pollero*", the Companion of salvation, always believed in me and even in the betrayal. He only showed me a pardon that I had not known before. Everything is lost, but what we can earn is much better: His friendship, his salvation. To cross the frontier of my sin to the life of grace to which I am called, is something obtained only by Him, with his mercy and tenderness.

It is the experience I have had -in silence- during these days in my Novitiate to have lived the first week of the Spiritual Exercises in the Ignatian way or - "crossing

the border" as I call it- from the 3 to the 10 of April of 2017, next to my brothers Christian, Sefo, Carlos and Timothy, and under the guidance of John, Fernando and Denis. A week full of surprises and struggles for everyone, in completely different ways. This I lived and now for me everything seems new.

With Jesus on the way I also find myself in need of being awake in the new land. He calls to show us the way. I carry this in my heart now. I am aware that I was a sinner, that I am a sinner, and that I will continue to be a sinner, but I also believe that I am a redeemed sinner. And that if I can help Him in his mission, I will do it with all my heart. Because the Kingdom is true, it is already among us. His tenderness has no end, that there is reason to continue believing in the lost brother; because I was one of them.

Because there are reasons to cross the border: the certainty of a God with a heart of a Mother and Father, dead and risen, who walks with me, with us, with each one, among us: to enlighten those who live in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide our steps by the way of peace.



The land of freedom

NOVITIATE PHOTO SECTION



Farewelling the old Novices and welcoming of the new ones.



Opening Eucharist for the Opening of the Novitiate for 2017.



A visit to the community by Ate Malu and John.

Christian ready to start the class.



Nice smile after the Retreat A scene taken from the top of our house.



The two main guitarists ready for singing practice.



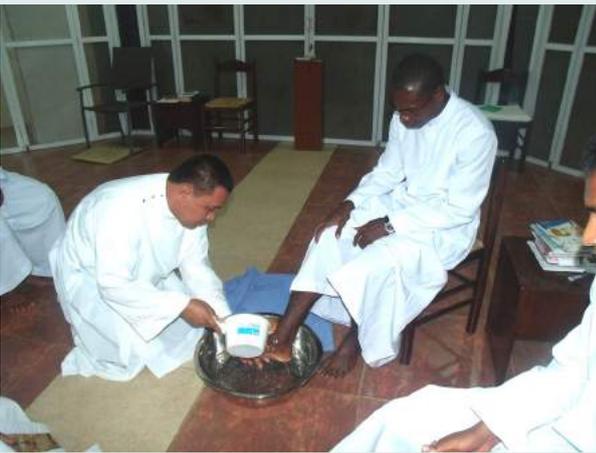
The Marist Laity after Mass Recollection



Jaime stood among the thousand of people before the Chrism Mass.



Taking a break after the 2017 Chrism Mass at St Pedro Cathedral.



Lead by Examples.... Novice Master washed the feet of the Community.



Farewell of Sharmaine, Marist Lay, to go to Thailand.



Novices with the statue of St Francis at Eden Park.



Together we can A pose by the Novices and Kuya Mauro. This was after their first Retreat.

The two great menCarlos and Duterte (President of the Philippines)



Once in a life time.... Novices pulling a Karabaw.



Sky is the Limit Jaime , Sefo and Christian enjoyed the sky cycling.



Jaime and Carlos greeting the Blessed Mother at Eden Park.



The view of Davao City from the Novitiate.



A visiting confrere Fr Lewis Henry was flanked by the two Novitiate Team during our community Eucharist.



Fr. Lafaele Lie a Diocesan Priest from Futuna talking to the Novices about St Peter Chanel.



Mexican Taste for Sunday dinner.



While rehearsing to be filmed.



A visit by Sr Sela & Kateia (from GenSan) and Terube (from Mintal, Davao) during the Good Shepherd Sunday.



Few months ago the Marist International Novitiate welcomed a new addition to its property. The little cottage is build purpose-ly for the work of personal accompaniment. Grateful thanks to the General Administra-tion for the funding and to Pedro and his workers for the work done. To one and all a **BIG THANK YOU—DAGHAN SALAMAT KAAYO!**

To be continued...

ABOUT THE SOCIETY OF MARY



MARIST
INTERNATIONAL
NOVITIATE

SOCIETY OF MARY
(FATHERS & BROTHERS)

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“Think as Mary, judge as Mary, feel and act as Mary in all things”.

In order to be effective evangelizers, Mar-ists take Mary as their model in their way of living. They gradually think, judge, feel and act in a new way – the way of Mary. It is an approach to life. The emphasis is not on particular devotions to Mary or to give great honor to her in very public ways but rather living like Mary with the faith and attitudes, which were hers.