

ORIENTATION TO DAVAO CITY

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After a few days of trying to cope with jetlag and recover from long travels, we went to visit significant and well-known landmarks around Davao City to have a feel of the place, see the city's landmarks and its richness, and at the same time, to discover the culture of the Dabawenyos, to marvel and benefit from several things the city could offer.

The best thing we did as we kicked-off and start our city tour, was riding the jeepney from Toril going to the city proper. We dropped by San Pedro Street and walked along it until we reached the San Pedro Cathedral, which is the city's earliest established church. We spent a little time there and offered our personal prayers. From the cathedral, we walked to the Museo Dabawenyo, which was roughly a hundred meters away. Our time there had been so educational as it featured the city's history, handicrafts, instruments and information regarding the different tribes here. After a lengthy morning of trying to feed our minds with interesting facts about the city, we too needed to feed our stomachs. So, from the museum, we headed to Victoria Plaza – the oldest shopping mall in the city, had our lunch there and went to visit the Bureau of



Immigration, which is located just across the mall. When all were ready, we went to see the parish the Redemptorists are running, and from there, went straight to SM Lanang Shopping Center, where Fr. Fernando picked us up.

Our second day was a bit more relaxing and also fun. The whole morning was intended for us to take a rest and the afternoon for shopping. After lunch, we went to the public market and fetched some of our community needs.



The last day of our orientation to Davao City has us well fed and our eyes satisfied with many wonderful things and attractive views. First place we went to was the Holy Infant Jesus Shrine. Their two open-air chapels – the statues of Our Lady of Fatima and the Crucified Christ – provided us a reflective atmosphere. After hours we spent there, we went to Jack's Ridge Resto. Its view overlooking the city was indeed refreshing. Thereafter, we headed to Crocodile Park. Surprisingly, it was not only the crocodiles we met, but also other animals like tigers, lions, snakes, monkeys, ostriches and others. When all felt satisfied, we went to another park which is owned by the city government which they call, "People's Park". The park was very simple yet the trees around, fun sculptures of Davao, fresh air and comforting setup provided us time to unwind. When it was getting dark, we thought that we needed to fill our empty tummies so we walked through the Roxas Night Market for our supper. It was such a lovely place that we thought we had become one with Davao. The large crowds of people and the number of stalls there just shook every one of us. The smiles on people's faces, the noise and loud voices, smoke from the roast, congested pathways, bizarre food – like balut and durian – satisfied, clinched and made our day and the whole of our tour.

Our time together has really been fun! The tour was just perfect as we begin our time in this precious city.

VISIT TO THE DIFFERENT MARIST FAMILIES IN DAVAO CITY

KUBE CLINTON ASUNKWAIN



Coming from different parts of the world and conscious of the five branches that makes up the Society of Mary, it was a great joy for us to meet some members of the large Marist Family for the first time. Within the very tight program of our orientations to the novitiate, we

were still able to find time to make our presence felt by visiting our brothers and sisters of the other Marist Families. Some of these visits were repeated for different reasons but our interest is on our very first visits to these communities.



Our first visit in the Marist Fathers of Asia District house. Our visit to the district house was quite a joyous one and an opportunity to meet the District Superior Fr. Christopher Genzon, sm and other members of

the District for the first time. This site which house two communities, the MICS program and the District house is made up of Four resident priests, four students and the seat of the District superior. The MICS program is for young men completing their last years of college before preparing for their postulancy and then Novitiate in the Society of Mary. After taking time to know each other through self-introduction, the Students offered us our first knowledge of the Filipino history and culture. Some neckless were offered to the novices as our very first souvenirs in the Philippines. Next we had our dinner together which marked the end of our visit for the day. We were asked to come again...

Our next visit was in the Community of the Marist Brothers International Postulancy at Matina in Davao City. It was indeed a moment of great joy and socialization among brothers from the same family. We were warmly welcomed by the Superior of the Community Br. Paco (Spain), Br. Mark (Solomon Island) and Br Larry (USA). The community is quite a big one with a total of 21 postulants from different parts of the world and a much larger majority from Asia. The warm welcomed we received from the Marist Fathers District of Asia was exactly the same we had with the Marist Teaching Brothers. After discussion and sharing of stories, we then moved into the chapel for evening prayers.

Just to remark that praying with the Marist Brothers was the first time for most of us to pray with a non-clerical institute of Consecrated life. Sure, we were curious with the structure of their chapel like no Altar for Eucharistic celebration... After prayers, we had enough time to prepare ourselves for dinner which was prepared by the brothers themselves. It was indeed a wonderful moment shared in fraternity.

Marist Sisters! The Marist Sisters from their name shows they too belong to the Marist family. In their Community at Mintal – Davao City, there are four Sisters all from the Philippines and one aspirant from Vietnam. Visiting them was a wonderful experience and without any special knowledge one could easily identify the uniqueness in the Society of Mary. From the welcome at the gate till our departure, it was just a moment of laughing and teasing each other. The long moment of laughing was intercepted by our evening praying and then we continued sharing and getting acquainted to each other a bit more. Dinner was served and we all had enough to eat and drink. Leaving them was a bit painful but since we assured them, we will come again, we were happy to part company for the day.



We also visited Balay Pasilungan! This refers to the home that welcomes and cares for children with difficulties or better still, the street children in and out of Davao City by the Marist Fathers assisted by the SM Sisters and other volunteers. Here, we were able to live for a moment, the call for Mission to those in need, especially of our atten-



tion and love. It was a beautiful experience playing, celebrating the Eucharist, talking, dancing and eating together. Yes, we were touched by their love and support for each other and most especially their talents and eagerness to know more. Just within a short while, most of them were able to call each one of us by our names even without the name tag on our shirts.



The Marist Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary are also actively present in the Philippines but as a group, we could not have visited them because of the distance apart. Notwithstanding, some of us were chosen to live with them for a week during our 'Marist Culture' experience living with the different Marist Families. Six of us living

in pairs were lucky to live this beautiful experience with the SMSM Sisters of the Society of Mary. And without doubt, we can say the Society of Mary is indeed one; whether Brothers, Fathers, SM Sisters, SMSM Sisters, Lay Marists, we share the same joy living like Mary in the Spirit of our Founders and most especially Venerable Jean Claude Colin.

The Lay Marists were not left out during our orientation program. They indeed had the greatest share of our time. It was a happy moment, for, our first Christmas celebration in the Philippines was offered by the Lay Marists. We all (Marist Sisters,



Marist Fathers, Marist Brothers and Lay Marists) gathered again at the Marist Brothers Postulancy to celebrate the joy of Christmas as one family. The day started as usual with getting to know the new faces and then the celebration of the Liturgy of Christmas with Christmas carols and Scripture Reflections. After this faith rich exercise, we had dances, games and dinner. All these aspects and different people within the same family communicated something within each one of us.

Though we are different somehow in apostolate or the ministries we offer, we all live for the same purpose and that is living in the Spirit of Mary and our Pioneers.



The International English Novitiate Community.
Maayong Pag-Abot (Welcome).



Visit to the Marist Sisters (SM) Community.



Fr Jacob with his two bodyguards (cake eaters)
celebrating his priestly anniversary.



Taking measurements for our cassocks.



Visiting the Marist District house of Asia



SMSM Sisters of Maitum welcoming Paul and Clinton.



Celebrating Emzee's birthday.