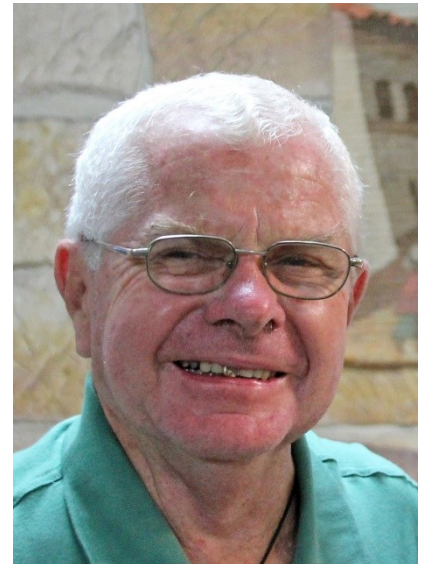


## MISIONEROS MARISTAS, BOLIVIA

"CEMPAC": Calle 11 de FEBRERO s/n  
Casilla 345, Tarija - Bolivia

### Fr Hoppy's Easter letter...



Dear Friends,

As is our custom as Misioneros Maristas at the close of each of the three terms of our pastoral year, we give ourselves to doing a three-day contemplative retreat. Our recent Lenten Retreat prior to Holy Week had as its central theme: *Let Us Walk Together in the Footsteps of Jesus of the People*. The 1<sup>st</sup> day was focused on *The Courage to Risk*, the 2<sup>nd</sup> on *Discipleship Today* and the 3<sup>rd</sup> on *Paschal Spirituality*. We wish to begin our Easter Letter with something of what God spoke to us during those three days.

*"Paschal spirituality is nothing less than a complete attachment to the person of Jesus, a sharing in the rhythm of his death and resurrection, a participation in his life of sorrow, rejection, loneliness, and suffering".*

*"Each time we let go of the past to embrace the future we relive the paschal journey of Jesus in our flesh. Each time we allow our fears or selfishness to die, we break through to new life. Each time we open ourselves to the Spirit so that he can break down the walls of suspicion and bitterness, we come home to ourselves, the community and the Lord. "I die daily," Paul wrote. He might have added, "And daily I am raised up to new life".*

*"One of the dimensions of paschal spirituality is that it is joyful and optimistic. It is anchored in hope. Either we dismiss the Good News as too good to be true, or we permit ourselves to be overwhelmingly joyful persons because of it. A Christian is called to believe in a God who loves and in his Christ who is risen. We believe, and we believe strongly; we believe, and we believe joyously".*

*"Paschal spirituality says that if our Christian journey does not produce Christ in us, if the passing years do not form Jesus in us in such a way that we really resemble him, our spirituality is bankrupt".*

As we joyously celebrate this Easter Season may the affirmation of St. Paul be ours too:

*"It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me." As Pope Francis recently explained, "This exodus from oneself means placing oneself on a journey of adoration and service. An exodus which takes us on a journey of adoration of the Lord and service to the Lord in our brothers and sisters. To adore and to serve: two attitudes which cannot be separated but which must always go together. Adore the Lord and serve others, without keeping anything for ourselves".*

Hopefully our sharing something of the fruits of our retreat reflections will find an accord in each of you. Now under the pen of Javier we wish to share something of our walking together here in Bolivia as this community of Misioneros Maristas.

Many people whom we have the opportunity to meet ask us who the Marist Missionaries are. It is certainly not easy to answer accurately in a short time and in a few words.

The Marist Missionaries are an *EXPERIENCE*, a magnificent experience, I would say. Probably

through this text I will not be able to express what I have lived uninterruptedly throughout 29 years of Marist Life and Mission. But it is an opportunity to tell something about who we are and it makes me happy to do so. When we have to answer the usual question, the first thing we say is that we are a **COMMUNITY** of Life and that it assumes a dynamic of Team in the Mission. This way of living is certainly not common at this point in this era. For many it may seem obsolete and outdated, but for us it is the way to witness an alternative of life in a world increasingly indifferent and flooded with dramatic contrasts.

How do we stay together for so long? It's the other question they ask us. Our **MARIST PROJECT** is the document that illuminates our lives. In this journey we have had two significant moments to update our motivation and discern our commitment, to keep our flame alive. In June 2013 we elaborated our **MARIST MANIFESTO** focused on the virtues of **HOSPITALITY, COEXISTENCE-RESPECT-TOLERANCE and COMMENSALITY [table companionship]**. In May of 2018 we prepared another document that we have baptized with the name of "**LADY JEAN'S LEGACY PACT**" in gratitude to Juan's mother. This document is focused on reviving our daily dynamics to help us assume our daily life with enthusiasm and creativity.

This journey for us is **GOOD NEWS** lived with simplicity and joy and commitment and certainly full of challenges. This way of living, we nourish it with our **MISSION**, with direct contact with our brothers and sisters from the different communities who give us strength with their friendship to continue cultivating this way of **LIVING**. In this Easter 2019 through these words we express our gratitude for their friendship and we embrace them in the risen Lord Jesus.

And now we wish to share something of our recent pastoral activities as Equipo Marista [Marist Team] around the dioceses, especially those of Holy Week. We leave it to Gilberto to do so.

In visiting the different Base Church Communities of our Diocese of Tarija we find great joy in all our brothers and sisters as we meet anew. We feel that in the mission there is a lot of joy. In this Holy Week, we visited the communities of San Francisco Chico, La Merced, Cachimayo, La Mamora. In San Francisco Chico, a community of simple and humble families, away from the main road and with our 4x4 pick-up we could get across 2 rivers; La Merced, a community of about 80 families, located on the main road and with 4 good animators (Paola Pérez and Andrés Tejerina-couple, Dora Espinoza, Erasmo Torres). In both communities we were there for Palm Sunday; Cachimayo, a simple and hard-working community, we were with them on Good Friday symbolically accompanying Jesus in his Way of the Cross; La Mamora, the initial core community of the CEBs of the entire diocese, we were with them in the celebration of the Easter Vigil. In all communities, good participation, smiles, hugs, kisses and great joy of being together. A lot of walking and climbing for us over the past week!

In all of that, a deep friendship, full of confidence. We share in that way because we discover in the small, concrete gestures of each one of them the integral love of God. God made, flesh and palpable, a God manifested in the person of Modesto Espinoza, Bartolomé Aguay, Paola Pérez, for example. In San Francisco Chico the community cooked an exquisite spicy Creole chicken with the ingredients each in the community had brought. A simple picnic followed the Procession and Eucharist.

During the day on Holy Saturday the CEBs of La Mamora gathered to celebrate with Anselmo Segovia his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday. The Segovia family live up in the mountains on the other side of the river. So we left our pick-up by the edge of the river, crossed it and other four streams and hiked it. It took us some 50 minutes in midday heat....a steep climb...and there in our path Javier fortunately spotted a deadly sneak before treading on it and successfully took care of it. It was a great day with all the Segovia family. Before evening we trekked back and returned to La Mamora for the Paschal Vigil.

It is true to say that in life, we believe that we learn a lot in simplicity, in joy and above all in the good friendship of brothers and sisters who are outside the capitals, that is where we feel the Good News of Jesus alive. To put ourselves on mission, then, is to go where our brother/sister is, celebrate life and embrace each other, to make friends with them, laugh with them, tell jokes, listen to their pains, but also their dreams.

In one way we could say that our pastoral mission is unique; we being the only team that is dedicated full-time to the accompaniment of the process in the Latin American Church that we know as

***Comunidades Eclesiales de Base [Base Church Communities].*** In recent years to exercise our mission we have received a small funding from the U.S. Bishop's Commission for the Latin American Church. The original project was for three years, but unfortunately we have now been advised that after one year the funding is terminated. As a result, we find that we will now lack sufficient funds to complete our pastoral plan with the CEBs for the current year. These funds enable us to give the formation courses in the dioceses and elsewhere, to get around in our Ford Ranger 4x4 including maintenance, combustible, taxes, etc., to maintain our office where we prepare and produce materials for our communities, and to maintain a fluid system of communications with our animators and to articulate the CEBs at the different levels. Today it is so hard to find aid agencies that will support such missionary activities. One has to present a detailed project and fulfill very specific requirements and give on-going reports. Hopefully the Spirit will be active in finding other sources for us to move ahead.

Finally, a few words concerning the members of our community. Healthwise it has been a testing first term for us, unlike other years. The years are telling! Both Arminda and Nair have had a series of analysis and subsequently undergoing treatment. Gilberto has had a battery of tests and treatment for an intestine condition. Both Juan Jose and Paco have been sidelined recently for footie injuries. The good news is that all seems now to be under control. Our community emergency fund for 2019 has been reduced considerably as a consequence.

Lupo has recently topped his class in 2<sup>nd</sup> Year Biology at university in Sucre. Marian is enjoying kinder at the Franciscan School in Tarija. Gilbertito [Chiqui] is taking his studies in physiotherapy in Sucre seriously and at the same time playing A-Grade soccer. Javier keeps the community and mission together as our coordinator; we celebrated his 50<sup>th</sup> in February. Abuelo Juan enjoys his day off at our Marist Retreat in Pantipampa where the locals put on a big bang for his return from his mini-sabbatical in Australia. We are truly part of the local community; they propose that Juan become the next Secretary-General of the Campesinos (Farmer's) Union!

Well, dear friends, before Easter Week runs its due course, it is time for us to sign off and get this letter to you. Know that daily we pray for you and hold you in our thoughts. Take care!

With all our love,

***GILBERTO/ARMINDA/JUAN JOSÉ/CHIQUI/MARIAN-JAVIER/NAIR/LUPO/PACO-JUAN***

***“Todo a Jesús por María, todo a María para Jesús”***

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