



# CONCH

Quarterly

Messages of synodality, hope and positivity

## The Brothers' Vocation in the Society of Mary

Fr Milikiade Rayalu SM

**O**n November 30th the Marist College community, friends and family gather to celebrate the renewal of profession of Br. Leone Baleiwaiyevo. This is something unusual these days around here as such celebration only happens in the novitiate in the Philippines or in the theologate in Rome. My reflection centres on the call to the Brother-vocation in the Society of Mary these days. I want to share on this topic as I seek a deeper understanding to this call and its place in the Society. To be very clear our constitution from No.1 and others made it clear the equality of who we are as brothers. The only clear distinction is the roles we play wherever we serve. **The fact of our calling is equally the same in that we are Marists.**

At times I think just because a priest's role in performing the sacraments makes them look more important because of the very essence of the sacrament, should that put them on higher rating? I can go on to describe how a brother can do a better presentation in the pastoral field than a priest and some other comparisons, because it comes down to the same conclusion, we are simply equal and carry out different roles for the Kingdom. But this is not an easy understanding to accept these days as there will always be a temptation for brothers to fully accept who they are in their roles and the priests to do likewise.

In the recent General Chapter in Rome the decision to allow the brothers to be superiors (207) and even to be elected as provincials (207) or superior general (181) is a clear and wise step taken after all these years of our existence.

However, it remains to be mentioned that this is still awaiting the Vatican's final approval before it is considered binding.

I know as I share my reflection there are those who have already close themselves off if there is any need for the brothers today. I know I am repeating what has often been debated in past provincial chapters and the conclusion has always



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been the same but the outcome speaks loudly on what could be the perception of many in that the brother's role is inferior. But it is on this regard where our hiddenness is challenged. And because of that I some times wonder to what extent does it affect the brothers in the communities. Is it of any wonder that some brothers are unconsciously thinking of studying for priesthood. I for one knows that a brother's role is irreplaceable and needed.

I must admit that some work will appear to be like this for example working in the farm or carpentry work or even expect to cook meals. This is only because the priests are tied up with some pastoral work or office, but that does not mean that priests cannot also go out to do the same work when they are free. This is where the brotherhood really must shine out. This is why the constitution on common life (126 ff) reminds us all about this.

When I think of Br. Elia, Br. Makario, Br. Colin and Andrew and their impact in community living they speak volumes of the kind of presence Marists are invited to be in our time. If one goes to the parish of Hohola and see what Br. Adrea is doing there and the impact he has in the school where he is teaching religion and morals. Br. Leonard who is quietly managing the finances of the Vanuatu sector is another of the unknowns and yet exemplary in their services.

The hidden life of Mary stands out through our unified contribution when it is reflected in the roles we each play out.



## SAHAGUN—Community for Pilgrims

Fr Paul Molbwet SM

### Men in search



*'Behold, magi from the East arrived in Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the king of the Jews who has just been born? We saw his star in the East*

*and have come to worship him"' (cf. Mt 2:1-2).*

Like the Magi from the East who sought the infant King, those who make the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela do so for a reason. They are mainly people who are searching for something. They are those who are taking a break from work and seeking a life balanced by silence and contemplation; they are those who have left their jobs and want to know what life has in store for them; they are young people who have finished their university studies and are preparing to enter fully into working life; they are those who, after losing a loved one, are trying to find the compass of their world that has 'collapsed'; they are retired people who are looking for a new meaning in their lives; they are people who are discerning whether the path to follow is marriage or consecrated life; they are those who are sick and

seeking healing; or quite simply, they are those who are seeking God, his presence and his forgiveness.

*"Herod gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people, to ask them where Christ was to be born. They replied, 'In Bethlehem of Judea.'" (Mt 2:4-5)*

Like Herod, the chief priests and scribes who assisted the Magi from the East in their search for the child King, the Marist Community of Sahagún has this primary mission: to assist, help and support those who are searching. To this end, activities are offered to pilgrims to help them find or rediscover what they are looking for: the pilgrim's café allows them to find themselves by being in touch with their inner selves; the Eucharist and the pilgrim's blessing allow



pilgrims to find God and realize the un-



conditional love that God has for each of them; and finally, the shared meal allows pilgrims to find themselves and their place among others in a spirit of communion and fraternity. Yes, on the Camino, everyone is searching. But it is only with the help of others that each person can (re)find what they are (re)searching for.

The Marist Community of Sahagún closed the pilgrims' hostel on 15 November 2025. It will reopen on 15 March 2026. In the meantime, Fathers Antonio and Valentin are in Sahagún supervising maintenance work on the hostel before joining their respective families for the Christmas holidays. Father Matthew is in New Zealand with his family. Father Paul is in Rome for a short period. All will be back in Sahagún on 1 March 2026 for a new season of welcoming pilgrims.

Happy Epiphany!

Paul Molbwet, SM

#### Des hommes en recherche

*« Voici que des mages venus d'Orient arrivèrent à Jerusalem et demandèrent : 'où est le roi des juifs qui vient de naître ? Nous avons vu son étoile à l'Orient et nous sommes venus nous prosterner devant lui' » (cf. Mt 2 : 1-2).*

Comme les mages de l'Orient qui sont en recherche de l'enfant Roi, ceux qui font le pèlerinage à Saint Jacques de Compostelle ne le font pas sans raison. Ce sont principalement des gens en recherche. Ce sont ceux qui font un break de leur travail et qui sont en recherche d'une vie équilibrée par le silence et la contemplation ; ce sont ceux qui ont quitté leur boulot et qui veulent savoir ce que la vie leur réserve ; ce sont les jeunes qui ont fini leurs études universitaires et qui se préparent à entrer pleinement dans la vie active ; ce sont ceux qui, après avoir perdu un être cher, essaient de retrouver la boussole de leur monde qui « s'est effondré » ; ce sont ceux qui sont à la retraite et qui recherchent un nouveau sens à leur vie ; ce sont des gens qui discernent si la voie à suivre est le mariage ou la vie consacrée ; ce sont ceux qui sont malades et qui recherchent la guérison ; ou tout simplement ce sont ceux qui sont à la recherche de Dieu, de sa présence et de son pardon.

*« Hérode réunit tous les grands prêtres et les scribes du peuple, pour leur demander où devait naître le Christ. Ils lui répondirent : 'À Bethléem en Judée.' » (Mt 2, 4-5)*

Comme Hérode, les grands prêtres et les scribes qui assistent les mages de l'Orient dans leur recherche de l'enfant Roi, la Communauté Mariste de Sahagún a principalement cette mission : assister, aider et soutenir ceux qui sont en recherche. Pour ce faire, des activités sont proposées aux pèlerins pour les aider trouver ou à retrouver ce qu'ils cherchent : le café du pèlerin permet de se retrouver soi-même en étant en contact avec son intériorité, l'eucharistie et la bénédiction du pèlerin permet au pèlerin de retrouver Dieu et de réaliser l'amour inconditionnel que Dieu a pour chacun d'eux, et enfin le repas partagé permet au pèlerin de se retrouver et de se situer avec les autres dans un esprit de communion et de fraternité. Oui, sur le Camino, chacun est en recherche. Mais c'est seulement avec l'aide des autres que chacun peut (re)trouver ce qu'il (re)cherche.

La Communauté Mariste de Sahagún a fermé l'auberge des pèlerins le 15 novembre 2025. Elle réouvrera ses portes le 15 mars 2026. Pendant ce temps, les pères Antonio et Valentin sont à Sahagún en train de superviser des travaux de maintenance dans l'auberge avant de rejoindre leurs familles respectives pour les fêtes de Noël. Le père Matthew est en Nouvelle Zélande avec sa famille. Le père Paul est à Rome pour une courte période. Tous seront de retour à Sahagún le 1<sup>er</sup> Mars 2026 pour une nouvelle saison d'accueil de pèlerins.

Bonne fête de l'épiphanie !

Paul Molbwet sm





As I reflect on my time at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, where I studied Ignatian Spirituality in the year 2024 through to mid-2025, I am deeply grateful for the profound impact this formation has had on both my personal spiritual journey and my vocational calling as a Marist priest in Oceania. Engaging with Ignatian spirituality has opened new dimensions of critical thinking on how we, as individuals and as a Church, respond to the rapidly changing world around us. St. Ignatius of Loyola's teachings compel us to look beyond external circumstances and to focus on the internal formation of the human person—our spiritual, emotional, and moral growth. This focus on human formation is particularly relevant in today's world, which is filled with constant change, challenges, and uncertainties.

Through the lens of Ignatian spirituality, I have learned to engage more deeply with the spiritual needs of the people around me, especially in the context of Oceania, where I serve. The lessons from St. Ignatius, particularly his emphasis on discernment, finding God in all things, and making decisions that are grounded in God's will, resonate deeply with the reality of life in the Pacific. At the heart of Ignatian spirituality is the formation of a person who is free to respond to God's call in the midst of life's complexities. This is a call that I see mirrored in the Marist charism, which emphasizes humility, simplicity, and service to the most vulnerable.

As a Marist priest working at the Tutu Rural Training Center, I have realized how important it is for me to deepen my own understanding of both Marist and Ignatian spirituality. The values that underpin both traditions complement each other in powerful ways. Ignatian spirituality's emphasis on discernment and finding God in everyday life aligns beautifully with the Marist ideal of "bringing the love of Jesus to life through simplicity and service." Together, they offer a holistic approach to spirituality that not only helps me grow but also empowers me to guide others in their spiritual journeys.

The study has been especially beneficial in my ministry at the Tutu Rural Training Center, where we offer spiritual formation and retreats for the local community, as well as formation programs for the staff and participants. The Ignatian practices of examen, discernment, and the Spiritual Exercises have become integral to the way I approach formation at Tutu. These tools enable me to help others see the presence of God in their daily lives, and to discern how to live more faithfully in the midst of challenges. It is through this deeper formation that I am able to help the local community and staff members navigate the complexities of the modern world with a more grounded, spiritual perspective.



Tutu Rural Training Centre

In addition to enhancing my own vocation, my study of Ignatian spirituality has strengthened my commitment to helping the "helpless" in a rapidly changing world. The world is becoming increasingly complex, and many people, especially in rural and marginalized communities, find themselves lost in the face of social, economic, and cultural shifts. Ignatian spirituality teaches that we are called to be companions to those who are struggling, to walk with them through their challenges, and to help them discern the presence of God even in the most difficult circumstances. This holistic approach to spirituality, rooted in the formation of the human person, is exactly what I need to better serve the people of Oceania.

In conclusion, the deepening of my faith and my understanding of both Marist and Ignatian spirituality has been transformative. The integration of Ignatian principles into my Marist ministry has not only enriched my own spiritual life but has empowered me to provide more meaningful formation to the staff and participants of Tutu Rural Training Center. I am more committed than ever to helping those in need, and this study has undoubtedly enhanced my vocation to serve in a world that is in desperate need of spiritual guidance and care.

Fraternally in Christ and Mary  
Fr. Isaia Wairoga. SM





Throughout the history of Oceania, Marists have consistently felt a profound call for spiritual renewal ministries. This commitment is exemplified by the establishment of the Nazareth Prayer Centre and the transformative 30-day retreat programs in Fiji. In Tonga, Fr. Ánaua Finau is taking bold steps to further these impactful initiatives.

This comprehensive plan is designed to revitalize and deepen faith within the Diocese of Tonga and Niue, addressing contemporary pastoral needs with a multifaceted approach. It emphasizes collaboration among clergy, pastoral councils, and specialized teams, creating a powerful alliance to implement spiritual, theological, psychological, and family-oriented programs.

Our renewal efforts span across intellectual, psychological, physical, sociological, spiritual, emotional, and theological disciplines, empowering us to meet the modern pastoral challenges head-on. Through dynamic consultation and teamwork, we are committed to enhancing spiritual and theological development. Our programs include in-depth studies of papal documents, enriching spiritual retreats inspired by Ignatian Spirituality, diverse prayer practices, and impactful spiritual seminars for priests and parishes, all led by experienced clergy and expert facilitators.

Furthermore, we are dedicated to providing comprehensive family, psychological, and emotional support. Our initiatives strengthen marriage preparation, offer pasto-



Renewal Center's Chapel

ral care for couples, and support aging members, widows, and single parents. We also incorporate psychological assessments, such as Myers-Briggs and Enneagram evaluations, in coordination with youth and family ministries.



Cardinal and Clergy after retreat at the Center

Recognizing the importance of addressing social challenges, our plan explores drug rehabilitation programs and establishes contracts for sustained collaboration, ensuring continuous evaluation and adaptation. Together, we can forge a transformative path toward spiritual renewal and lasting community impact.