



CONCH

Quarterly

Messages of synodality, hope and positivity

“Do not forget your mother’s sorrow” A Marist Mission in Samsun, Turkey



On December 14th, 2023, I arrived in Samsun, a city on the northern coast of Turkey. The date carried quiet significance—it was exactly one year to the day since the death of the priest of **Mater Dolorosa Parish**, which had been without a resident shepherd ever since.

I arrived not knowing anyone and unable to speak Turkish. Yet, in true Marist fashion, I found the hand of Providence waiting. At the airport, I was met by Heinrich, an Italian layman married to a Turkish woman. As the parish liaison and representative of the bishop, he became my first point of contact—and, by grace, we could communicate in Italian.

When I entered the presbytery, renovations were still underway. Everything felt provisional and a little chaotic—yet it was fitting for what truly is a *new mission*. Despite the outer disorder, I was filled with a quiet conviction that Mary’s hand was gently guiding each detail. Her presence is tangible here: behind the altar stands a striking statue of **Our Lady of Sorrows**, and above the sanctuary, the ceiling bears a powerful Latin inscription: “**Gemitus Matris Tuae ne Obliviscaris**” — “**Do not forget your Mother’s sorrow.**” As a Marist, these

words moved me deeply. They echoed our call to share in Mary’s compassionate gaze—to see the pain of our world and respond with tender, courageous presence.

A Shared Marist Mission—This mission in Samsun is a joint effort of two Marist religious communities, serving under the **Vicariate of Anatolia**—a vast territory covering Eastern Turkey, from the Black Sea in the north to the Mediterranean in the south, bordered by Syria, Iraq, Iran, Armenia, and Georgia.

Our community includes:

- Fr. Arnaldo, SM (Brazil)
- Fr. [Your Name], SM (Fiji)
- Sr. Juliana, SMSM (Samoa)
- Sr. Irene, SMSM (Rwanda)

Together, we live a shared life of prayer, hospitality, and mission.

Mater Dolorosa: A Living Church - **Mater Dolorosa Church** is the only Catholic church in Samsun. Its roots date back to 1846, when it was established by French Capuchin friars. Completed in 1885, it has long stood as a spiritual home in a complex and changing region. Today, the parish serves a small but vibrant and international community:

- Iraqi and Iranian refugee families awaiting resettlement
- African university students

Local Christians and catechumens preparing for baptism

This beautiful diversity has transformed Mater Dolorosa into a living mosaic of faith and culture—one that echoes Mary’s universal motherhood. Reflecting this richness, our **Sunday Eucharist** is celebrated in Turkish, with the homily translated into



This issue:

A Marist mission in Turkey

Fr Donato Kivi SM

The Council of the Province

Fr Milikiade Rayalu SM

The EAPI Renewal

Fr Iosefo Vili SM

English, Turkish, and Arabic, allowing all to be nourished by the Word and feel truly at home in the liturgy.

Our Pastoral Service - Our Marist presence in Samsun is both spiritual and practical. In the spirit of Mary, we seek to be a quiet, prayerful presence, offering support and accompaniment through:

- **Spiritual and sacramental care** in Samsun and the wider region
 - **Catechesis and biblical formation** for young people and catechumens
 - **Daily hospitality**, welcoming all who visit the church
 - **Language and music education**
 - **Art and computer classes**, led by a Chaldean sub-deacon
- Care and upkeep of the church and facilities**, ensuring

a space that invites prayer and peace

We are still in the early days of this mission, but already the seeds of hope are taking root. In the faces of those who enter Mater Dolorosa, in the silent prayers whispered before Our Lady of Sorrows, in the quiet work of daily ministry—we see Mary walking ahead of us, as she always does, calling us to follow her in simplicity, fidelity, and love.

May we never forget her sorrow. May we never fail to meet it in others.



The Council of the Province 2025— Fr Milikiade Rayalu SM

The week long gathering of meetings, of listening and of sharing ideas gives me a lot of reflection, and brought some concerns but mixed with hopeful dreams, energetic discussions and a courageous desire to move on in spite of the uncertainty on what lies ahead. There were nine Sector delegates, the Provincial and two council members (including Jacob who is also a council member).

When you look around the circle of men hail from the different background with so much in their minds and a desire to give their best. I admire their courage, their openness to share their experiences and thoughts, their difficulties and how much they wished to carry out to the people under their care. I am reminded of a story written by Anthony de Mello (I think).



When Jesus was ascending up to heaven one of the accompanying angels asked him, "Are you going to rely on them to complete the mission you were called to carry out in the world? Jesus did not respond. "The angel continued, look at them so uneducated and so unknown, so fearful and perhaps too simple". The Lord looked at the angel and said,

"They are all I have".

And yet look at what became of the Church you and I belonged to today. While not all the disciples were known in what they did in their work of evangelization the Church has however acknowledged that they may have all been martyred somehow. St. Paul was very conscious of his unworthiness, his brokenness and yet was able to write, "My power works best in weakness" (2Cor. 12:9). I know I am not trying to play down the qualities of our men, but the fact that they are open to be leaders gives me a lot of confidence, as I myself know that I am not any better than them.

Colin often invoked the image of Gideon's 300 chosen men (Judges 7), emphasizing the idea that God does not need large numbers or worldly strength to achieve His purposes. He used this to inspire confidence among the first Marists, despite their limited resources and numbers. He said something to the effect of:

"Let us be like Gideon's three hundred: few in number, but chosen by God."

One of the repeated expressions during the meetings is our need to be men of prayer. Too often we can be carried away by our work and other engagements neglecting what is the heart beat of our mission. The late Pontiff echoed a similar sentiment:

In his book, “*Evangelii Gaudium*” Pope Francis wrote, “The Lord does not disappoint those who not take this risk; whenever we take a step towards Jesus, we come to realize that he is already there, waiting for us with open arms. Now is the time to say to Jesus: Lord, I have let myself be deceived; in a thousand ways I have shunned your love, yet here I am once more, to renew my covenant with you. I need you...”

The consciousness of the difficulties and challenges out there can be de-energizing and yet there is the unknown energy that kept the spirit to face this uphill battle, that is so encouraging. I felt this when I was able to sit individually with the leaders from the Sectors. Some wanted some helping hand when we felt that there just seemed to be no one else. It is no wonder that Jesus said, “Pray to Lord of the harvest to send in more laborers...” (Mt. 9:38). Some said, that the difficulties at times comes from within. All I can say at this stage lets continue to play the game, counting on the graces to come our way as we plunge ahead the rough seas. I agree with the quote of the Fiji sevens team, “I can do all things through God who gives me strength (Ph. 4:13).

EAPI Renewal, Manila— Fr Iosefo Vili SM



I would like to begin with these powerful words that struck me from the “Spiritual Exercise” of St Ignatius of Loyola, which says, “non multa, sed, multum”, not many but much. These words speak high volumes in my voyage as a Marist. This reminding me that it is not the question of how many? Rather, how much? After discovering this, I realized that often times I fall into this deception, of wanting to accomplish many thing, to do this and that, initiate things, but not knowing that It’s burned me out. That leads me to my first encounter in EAPI which is, “To slow down, in my ministry”. I need to take much time to relook, reflect and to rediscover all the loopholes, the ups and downs, in my journey and find solution to them. I found out that, only by decelerating myself in the ministry, helps me to attain an “inner transformation” and “inner peace”.

In one of the modules, I encounter this phrase that always a bell ringing in my ears each day, It’s about an “Enspirited Leadership”. What does it mean? It means that a leader who thoroughly depending and listening attentively to the Holy Spirit for guidance and empowerment. A leader who place the needs of others first than his or hers, a leader who totally surrender to the will of God the author of our lives. As a Marist, I need to pay much attention to the Spirit of the Lord who molds and enspirited me in my vocation and my calling as a missionary of Mary to wherever I may have needed. After rediscovering these approaches, I do believe that I am all ready and well equipped to continue the mission of Christ to the world in the manner of Mary our Mother.

