

# SOCIETY OF MARY

## INTERNATIONAL ENGLISH NOVITIATE

### “CERDON”



### ORIENTATION PROGRAM



Italy, 2021



## PRESENTATION

Two months ago, eleven young men eager to deepen their experience of faith and to live in the style of Mary within the Society of Mary as professed members, arrived in Rome, Italy, to begin their path of orientation prior to entering the Novitiate. They came from different units within the SM: Oceania (Bougainville, Fiji, Solomon Islands), New Zealand, Mexico. All of them with different backgrounds, but all with a deep desire to better discern their path. For this reason, during these months, the novitiate team has sought to offer them a program that allows them to “land” body and soul in a different environment, in a possibly different (Western) culture, where they can not only see the cultural differences they have with others, but also the great opportunities that an international community offers them.



For several it has been the first time to leave their culture. For others, the experience of sharing life in this way has been challenging. But today as we begin this Novitiate journey, these lines that we share with you are just a glimpse of everything we have lived, with the hope that the experiences that begin today are only to grow in holiness and live in the style of Mary.

Thank you all for your support during these months of orientation. Now, more than ever, we entrust ourselves to your prayers, since with them we will all be able to discern the path that the Lord wants for each of these young men. May this Marist Vocation Year be a year for everyone to renew the way of “thinking like Mary, judging like Mary, and like Mary, feeling and acting” (Const. 228).

**Fr. David Raymundo, Sánchez Garduño, SM**

**Master of Novices**

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## TRAVELLING FROM HOME

On the 11<sup>th</sup> of November 2021 a journey to a new beginning that I will always remember started. That new embarkment took a lot of preparations for myself and formators at Marist College. Lot of paperwork and documents to be prepared before the flight. So, process of preparation took us about 3 months. As the day was drawing near the spirit of excitement and nervousness was always inside me. There were a lot of farewells going on from my family, the parish where I belong and the youths. All of this built a strong spirit of connection with them. It is the first time for myself to travel out from my country, Fiji, and it would be a long flight!

So, to begin my journey on Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> November at around midday I say goodbye to Marist College where I spend the last 3 and half years of my formation. Relatives and family members came out in numbers to bid their last goodbye. It was a very sad and emotional moment for me, especially to leave behind loved ones and those whom I have known in my whole life. We travelled from Suva to Nadi where the International Airport is located so then to flew out from there. It took us 3hrs to reach Nadi Town where we rested a little bit at Mt St Mary Parish (a parish that is looked after by our Marist confreres) before our flight to Hong Kong at 11pm. There we had a little bit of 'kava' and more farewells from relatives who are staying at the Western side of Fiji.

At about 8pm we left for the airport for the checking in. Everything was normal with customs authorities until the time our last brother was checking in with the authorities. We had been stopped by the customs authorities before we moved on to the departing area. They have discovered that we had no visa in order for us to transit through Finland. Only one of us managed to travelled with that flight. It was very disappointing and the spirit of losing hope and sadness came into my myself. We cancelled our flight and go back to the parish to rearrange the bookings again.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> of November we did again all the requirements that were needed for us in order to fly. This time we've changed our route from Nadi to Hong Kong – Hong Kong to Doha, and then from Doha to Rome. This time, we need to make sure that everything was OK. At 11pm on Thursday evening (11/11/21) we had managed to flew out from Fiji and to start a new journey. It was a long and very tiring flight for me but nevertheless a great opportunity. We managed to reach Fiumicino Airport in Rome at midday November 13<sup>th</sup>.

**Manuele Botabua**



## CONFIDENCE AND PATIENCE



Stranger is simply a person in a new or in an unfamiliar place. A stranger is someone who is new to a place. I might say that you are a visitor because everything is new. The place, culture, food and weather. For instance, you might have to identify yourself firstly to that country or to that place in order to have any idea about the place and its rules.

We the novices needed to show up to the post office in order to hand in our documents to the Italian government as we are migrants from different countries. It's not an easy thing! When we arrive, we

need to change our entry Visa for our permit staying. Quite a hard time for us because it is not us only who apply but many who were there in that very morning to hand in their documents. The language is very difficult. We needed to speak Italian, but we are grateful and thankful to Monica Sebastiani, who is working in the General House in the Finance office, for her patience and for availing herself to make this process easier for us. It took us more that 2 hours with patience and humility to line up in this early morning. For several reasons we need to make it fast: the year nearly comes to an end and we want to finish most of the process before the program begins in Tuscany.

There we learn more things about being in a different country that has its own rules and regulations. Lots of experiences we come across and especially is the use of the time. I as a Fijian have a saying: "Fiji time", meaning "time will wait for you", whether you come early or late still you will be served, but coming to Italy it is totally different, where time is time. To conclude: "time is money" and "time waits for no one".

**Milio Vakasirovoka**



## GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER



Knowing my brothers was been a pleasure for me; at the same time it involves courage, openness, honesty and willingness to share our stories with each other. The more we share our stories, our talents, our gifts together, the closer we become and grow into understanding of each other, by doing so we create a relationship among ourselves and others. Gratitude and appreciation are important in community life and in community building because they bring us into positive and direct relationship with ourselves and others. Feeling gratitude and expressing appreciation opens our hearts

and minds to the common goal before us and that is to follow Christ through the Spirit of Mary.

Getting to know my brothers from different nationalities, helps me to appreciate who they are, their backgrounds and their cultures. With open-minded, I can see clearly that we all are unique in many different ways, in talents and gifts; however, with those different gifts and talents, we put together to build up relationship and community as a whole into a peaceful and healthy atmosphere that we lived in. It is amazing living in such multi-cultural community. With gratitude of heart and appreciation for others and for who they are as a gift into my life, I am so blessed to be part of this new multi-cultural community.

**Zulu Serop**

## GETTING TO KNOW ROME.



The first thing one would do upon arrival in a new country or place is to try and understand the cultural, social, political and economical situation of the country or the place. Upon our arrival here in Rome, Italy on the 13<sup>th</sup> of November 2021, we had to go into 5 days quarantine at the Marist Fathers Theologate at Casa di Maria.

After we finished our 5 days quarantine, we had to move to our Novitiate Orientation House at Montecuccio where we began our orientation program.

The first week of our orientation program was first of all introducing ourselves to one another in the community because we were new to each other especially since we were coming from different countries and cultures. The second week, we went around Rome visiting the significant places in the history of Rome. Then we had a week-long of introduction to the Marist Family in which we learned a lot from the representatives of the Marist Fathers, Marist Sisters, Marist Brothers, and Marist Missionary Sisters.



After all those programs we had, I would say that we had two very important weeks. The first week with Fr. Andrea Volonino SM, an Italian confrere who gave up his time to introduce us into the Italian history in a very practical way by taking us on a week long pilgrimage visiting the Basilica's, significant places and meeting people who also shared bits of what they know about the Italian history and the histories of all the Basilica's.

Adding to this pilgrimage, in the following week, we had four lay staff who work at the Marist Fathers General House helping us to look at the Italian Cultural, Social, Political and Economical situation from the perspective of the Italian Family and it was indeed a great experience to gain some understanding of the country's situation in the cultural, social, political and economical perspective.

All these sessions had really helped me to understand Rome.

**Jamie C. Nasia**



## CULTURAL DIFFERENCES.

This novitiate is conformed for 7 different cultures and between these there are many cultural differences; these can produce big challenges.

### *The way to say “Thanks”*

In some cultures is different the way to say thanks: some cultures don't use the word “thank” but they say thanks with a gift, it can be with food or one important object.



### *The shoes*

In some places is common not to use shoes, in others places the people only use slippers.

### *The head*

The meaning of the head is different. In some places the head is sacred; in others the head is the wisdom, and for this reason the head cannot be touched. In others places we can touch the head and there is no problem.

### *Using our hands*

We have to be careful how we wave our hands, because the manner will be able to mean a bad word or in others cultures only a greeting.

**Bani Roldán**

## MARIST FAMILY

The week from November 29<sup>th</sup> to December 3<sup>rd</sup> we had the opportunity to share with members of each branch of the Marist family. Fr. John Harhager, S.M; sr. Vivienne Goldstein, S.M. and Br. Teofilo Minga, F.M.S. came to our house to speak about their congregations.



Fr. John encouraged us to look with hope to the future despite the decrease of vocations. Sr. Vivienne spoke about Jeanne Marie Chavoin and her hard work for Jesus and Mary. We could reflect about the patience and the hidden holiness. Br. Teofilo talked about the spirituality of Marcellin Champagnat and he encouraged us to have compassion for others and passion for God.

At mid-week we had a pilgrimage. We followed some steps that Fr. Colin did when he was in Rome. We visited places like: The Twelve Apostles Basilica, Church of the Gesù, the Roman Forum, etc. In those days we could see how Fr. Colin prayed with patience and perseverance.



At the end of the week, we visited the general house of the SMSM sisters. They prepared a presentation about their history. We could see the patient way of Sr. Francoise Perroton and we learned that the mission isn't our mission rather is the God's mission.

Thanks to these experiences we could reflect and learn that we are members of a big tree with different branches. Also, we looked how a breadth vision help us to discover the richness in the differences. We learned that we need to keep moving forward to meet with needy. So just like founders we need to be patient and pray a lot to discover and do the God's will.

**David Vences**



## ITALIAN CULTURE AND THE CHURCH

It is a dream for many to come to the Eternal City. For some it's their Christian heritage that attracts them, for others it's the history of civilization. Due to Covid-19 reasons, the Marist International Novitiate was moved to Italy this year and that turned a dream into a reality for most of us Marist novices. We were privileged to have our orientation in Rome and for a week we were going around to Christian sites

mostly Churches and other places of history such as the Colosseum, which was the center of ancient Rome back in the day.



We could not get a better tour guide other than a son of Rome, Fr. Andrea Volonino, SM who introduced us to such history. One can only marvel at in looking at the ruins and the monuments! It was interesting to note that from the beginning, Rome was seeing as the center of the world and was always attracting visitors and pilgrims.

With the places we visited, we were honored to hear a lot of history and beholding the beauty before us and behind the stories on how those sites, buildings, basilicas and churches were built. Italians are very proud of their history, culture and what it means to them. The buildings, sites, basilicas and churches are what I think defines the people of Italy... but I still need to learn more! It is through their determination, perseverance in conserving and restoring that they have become such a proud people with their country and their cultural history. Grazie Roma!

**Mosese Fifita**



## CELEBRATING CHRISTMAS

Buon Natale, Ma'u ha Kilisimasi Fiefia, Vakanuinui vinaka na Siga ni Sucu ni Turaga, Feliz Navidad, Meri Kirihimete, Meri krismas and Merry Christmas.

Christmas 2021 for most of the Brothers was the first away from their countries and families. The celebrations started on the 24th with the vigil Christmas Mass. After Mass a social drink was shared before a festive meal. Mexico provided the primo, Marist College the secondo, and New Zealand the dessert.



On the 25th the Novitiate community joined Casa di Maria for Mass and a large festive meal. After the meal all participated in song and dance, mainly provided by the African confrères. It was a wonderful celebration of Christmas, culture and community. In the evening the Novitiate community returned to Monte Cucco to enjoy a festive community evening. Christmas Kringle was play followed by karaoke.

**Tom Manihera**





## FORMING A COMMUNITY

Community is an essential aspect in Marist Life. A community can be supportive, accountable, life-giving, etc. However, community can also be challenging, alienating, confronting, etc. So, how can a group of individuals from different cultural backgrounds come together, eat the same food or pray the same psalms? Perhaps, Love is the only language commonly understood.

Frs. Ben Mckenna, Tony Kennedy and some students from Casa di Maria, facilitated a couple of workshops to help us to reflect in our community life. It will be by spending time



together, reflecting and sharing experiences, and asking and answering each other's questions, that we will be able to build a positive community.

Overall, we are starting to realize that we are not competitors but rather companions, journeying together towards a common goal. I'm sure that we are all really looking forward to live in this new community and see how we will build each other up to be better men for the mission.

**Joseph Ortiz**

## ITALIAN FAMILY

Does the Italian family live in the same way than other families in the world? This question may sound strange because Italy is a country of the first world, but thank to different talks we understood that the Italian family lives in the globalization era, secularism and many situations that the world is facing now.



Italy is a country with a lot of culture. For example, it is divided in two principal areas; north and south; the north is the industrial area and their traditions are simple; the south is not an industrial place and the people love the traditions and they are friendly people.

The world today is different, sometimes the young people live in the “selfish way”, but this way now is part of the world, and for me being selfish is not the problem: the problem is that the young people search the fullness of life in the immediate things and relationships, and this kind of fullness is only for a little time.

The challenges are many and they don't exist in order to make the family a better one, but Italy and all the countries in the world have a similar challenge: communication inside the family, because sometimes we are looking into the future, into the opportunities, into money... but the most important thing is to live in the present, the relationships and the communication that happen face to face.

All the material things are going to pass, but the relationships are very important to keep in our hearts so we can help each other and share with others. In that way we can give hope. Now is the moment to look for the change. The reason is that if the people are complete, it is possible to build the kingdom of God.

**Eduardo Limón**





## STRUGGLE WITH THE DIFFERENT

Moving to a new place which is thousands of miles far from your comfortable zones always comes with many challenges and struggles in the starting. So, for me to move from my country which is so warm or hot all through the year, to Italy, a place where is so cold (and even it can reach negative Celsius degrees!) is one of the many struggles for me to face every day for the duration of my staying. Not only the weather, but also language. Language here has a totally different structure from English. Language is needed daily for communication and interaction; so, since I don't know the local language, Italian, it is a really struggle for me to communicate with the people here.

Another struggle is the food, which is so different as the one I have grown up with. So, I am being struggling with the different kinds of foods and ways how people eat here. The final major struggle for me is the cultural struggle. For me, it has happened looking many areas of the lives of people: the way they greet people, the way they act towards different types of people, for example. It is a new culture for me which I need to be familiarized with in order for me to be related and communicate with people easily without making any offence or being rude towards them.

So, these are the main struggles that I have gone through for the past few weeks. However, for some of them I've been able to adapt

myself slowly like the food and culture, but others like the weather and the language is still a struggle. Apart from these main struggles there are others smaller struggles within the international community of multicultural group that I need to face.

**Hansford Mane**

