



MARIST INTERNATIONAL NOVITIATE

EDEN, DAVAO CITY, PHILIPPINES



Bulletin #1

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2020-21 NOVITIATE COMMUNITY

THE TWO HALVES



The 8 incoming novices, 4 from the district of Africa and 4 from the province of Oceania were supposed to arrive on the 17th of November 2019 in Davao City, Philippines. The four

novices to-be from Oceania arrived safely while the four incoming novices from Africa were held in Manila and eventually sent back to Cameroon.

The Cultural Orientation started with two halves; one group (Oceanians) in Davao and the other group (Africans) was back in Cameroon waiting for their return to the Philippines. In the minds and hearts of the Novitiate Team and the Oceanian incoming novices, there was something lacking and missing- the presence and richness of the other half, the African group. I am pretty sure too that at the hearts and minds of our African confrères, they hoped and wanted to join the Orientation program as soon as possible. In a way there were two halves of this novitiate.

The Novitiate started on the 18 of January without the African confrères. There was great

hope they will be able to join the Novitiate formation with the Oceanians. Unfortunately, in spite of the help of the Asian District and the Novitiate team, the requests to return to the Philippines were denied. This means that the two halves will remain separated and this has caused sadness and pain to both the halves.

Reflecting on the experience of the two halves, it would be good to ask ourselves: *Where is Mary, our first and perpetual superior leading us in this situation? What message is Mary trying to convey to us?* We can look at this situation from different angles. Firstly, we can see it as problem. However, trying to solve it by looking for a new place and new formators is not easy. On a positive note, we can look at the two halves as presenting to us two opportunities. Does this call us to be more professional with our work? Does this invite us to read the signs of times, especially the immigration policy? Whatever it is to us, one thing is sure: Mary is present in the two halves. Mary's hands are leading us to a better future and better opportunities.

Fr. Fernando INGENTE, SM

INSIDE THIS EDITION

THE TWO HALVES

2020 PROFESSION

WELCOME NEW NOVICES

ORIENTATION TO DAVAO CITY

ORIENTATION TO EACH OTHER

ORIENTATION TO MARIST CULTURE

EXPERIENCE AWAY FROM HOME

ORIENTATION TO NOVITIATE

PHOTO PAGE



In different ways the Constitutions of the Society of Mary speak of the religious profession made in the Society. Here some of the expressions used in the Constitutions.

When he makes profession:

- A baptised Christian becomes a member of the Society of Mary (30).
- He professes chastity, obedience and poverty to form a Society to carry out the mission to which he has been called by Mary (91).
- He takes responsibility for the whole enterprise since Fourvière (52).
- He lives the spirit of Mary, is guided by the action of the Holy Spirit and remains united with God through the means of spiritual life (53).
- He puts the interests of those in need above his own interests (54).
- He undertakes to live the Constitutions in the spirit of Mary and uses them as a source of strength for himself and his ministry (230).

It was a real joy to see the five newly professed at Cerdon, here in Davao, to engage themselves in this Marist identity they discovered and matured during the novitiate year and accepted, not as a burden but as a way of life towards their personal fulfilment. They have made not only a good choice; they have made the best choice to which God has called them.

It was on January 8 2020 that Hemi, Clinton, Nik, Lesley and Leonard made their profession in the chapel of the novitiate in front of 10 Marist religious who shared the different tasks of the celebration. The ceremony was presided by Fr John Guo Wang, originally from China and member of the District of Asia. The Homily was given by Fr Pat Muckian; the presentation of the novices was done by the Master of novices, Fr Fernando In-

gente; the vows were received in the name of the Superior General by Fr Chris Ganzon, District Superior of Asia, accompanied by Fr Joaquín Fernández and Sister Kateia Kaikai SMSM as witnesses.

Around 130 people came to witness the commitment. They represented mainly the Marist Family: Sisters, Brothers and Lay Marists and the four new novices still in their orientation program. But there were also other religious with whom the novices were in contact in their human and pastoral formation. Special mention deserve the families from Digos who had received the novices for 10 days during the orientation program to the novitiate. Finally we counted a good number of friends from the neighbourhood and from Eden, the village to which the house belong.

All made a happy and joyous community, a kind of family surrounding and supporting the new Marists with their friendship and prayer. They showed it with their voices singing loudly everything they could sing. A pity, they complained, that some hymns were unknown to them and they could not sing!

At the beginning of the meal which followed the liturgical celebration the newly professed joined their hands to cut the big cake prepared for the occasion and to toast with a cup of wine. You can imagine the meal which followed, blessed by Fr Lauro Arcede. It was abundant in varied and excellent food, which made the joy of all the participants.

But do not forget: it was a Religious Profession of 5 Marist confreres!!! Keep them, please, in your prayers. They have to continue their journey for the rest of their lives...

FR. Joaquín FERNÁNDEZ, SM

WELCOME NEW NOVICES



It is always a joyful moment to see and experience the arrival of new members of the community. In November

last year, 2019, we welcomed the new novices to be. As they were settling in, they began their orientation from November 2019 to the first week of January 2020.

A happy and joyful moment indeed for the Society of Mary as far as vocation is concerned, whereby young people continue to show their interest in the spirit of the SM. One can feel in them the vibrant of eagerness and enthusiasm to taste and experience the spirit of the SM. When I saw them, I thought of the number 49 of the constitutions of the Society of Mary which says and I quote: “In accepting new members the Society renews itself in two ways. It transmits and reformulates its tradition and gives a new generation the opportunity to enrich Marist tradition by expressing it anew.” Yes, they are yet to be professed but one can feel these lines have some effect.

As we joyfully welcomed our four brothers from Oceania, we are also sad to see that our African brothers did not make it. They were deported from Manila. This affects our orientation in the sense that something is missing from the group. It was hard for the novices to be and the team to begin a new novitiate year without our African brothers. However, we are still hopeful and are looking forward to their coming back here into the Philippines.

Despite the sadness surrounding this situation, we continue with the novitiate program proper. On 18th January 2020 in the early morning at 5:30am, a welcoming ceremony for the novices was held at Eden. It was a moving moment seeing the four novices officially entering the novitiate program proper. With this, the formators welcomed our four brother novices. We warmly welcomed them and so let the journey with Mother Mary begin. God calls, Mary chooses.

FR. Jacob ABA, SM

ORIENTATION TO DAVAO CITY



The orientation to Davao City is a new learning experience for me and my three brothers. Since I come

from a very small country with less than a million people, the Davao experience was new. We visited few well-known places and landmarks such as the SM malls, St. Pedro Cathedral, the People's Park, the Shrine of the Infant Jesus, the Crocodile Park and the Art Museum, just to name a few.

We also tasted the famous durian and balot. They were delicious and we enjoyed eating them. However, at first, we do not know what to expect but we were so adventurous that we tried them at least twice. We were not sure if there would be side effects of eating them and we are glad there weren't any.

We experienced travelling by tricycle and jeepney. This was a challenge and we had to somehow make ourselves comfortable with the seats we were given.

A highlight of our orientation to the city is our trip to the Crocodile Park. The park has tigers, lions, monkeys and different types of snakes. It was a breathtaking sight to see the feeding of the tiger. I believe that we will remember this event for a long time

since none of us have seen a tiger, or lion in person, as there are no tigers in our countries.

People often smile at us, are loyal and dedicated to their faith. I am hopeful that this experience will help us adapt and blend in with Davao and Filipino culture in general. They are always ready to aid someone who needs transport or taxi.

Everywhere we went we saw people praying and meditating in churches. Most of the churches in the city are open to let people in and spend time with the Lord. People are very committed in their private and personal prayer.

I am hopeful that we would be able to remember how to get around this big city so that we may find our way back to Eden.

Charles SANGUL



ORIENTATION TO EACH OTHER



At first, I thought that this was going to be an easy process since we all come

We were also able to see the strengths and weaknesses of the other and appreciate him for who he is, without judgmental and/or superiority attitude. At the same time, there was a general consensus on the confidentiality of our discussions. The details of the things we shared will remain with us because we are people of integrity.

from Oceania, and three of us are Fijians. To my surprise it wasn't. We know each other on some level but not as required by our first few classes. The sharings were a bit deeper and reflective than the ones we used to do in Fiji.

Topics of discussion include family, early childhood, some aspects of our faith, knowledge of the Society of Mary and its spirituality, just to name a few.

It was not easy to open up certain aspects of our lives that were considered our comfort zones or those that were never questioned before. We tried to move away from reasoning everything towards how we feel about some areas of our lives. Some time was given for questioning since there was perhaps a need for each of us to clarify some explanations done.

In addition, we were also introduced to what we should be expecting of each other in the novitiate. Also stressed was the idea of having to work together as part of a community and to help each other.

There were some discoveries of differences in personalities, gifts and talents, background and history. These are all crucial parts of knowing one another so that we may be able to adapt to the novitiate environment together as a group of novices and as part of the novitiate community at large.

Viliame CAMA

ORIENTATION TO MARIST CULTURE



It's quite a task to pick out which part of the orientation program was the best. So, like all others, the Marist experience was also one to remember. It allowed us to have a fair idea of what the society's mission is here in the Philippines and of course to meet our brothers and sisters who have dedicated their lives to the service of the Church and more importantly to the Society to which we feel we want to belong to.

Together as a group, we were first introduced to the Marist Sisters in Mintal who looks after young girls in Balay Banaag. The welcome we received was overwhelming that it felt like having big sisters around us in the context of a family. Learning about the work they do brings about a sense of joy and hope because here we are in a different part of the world meeting people who share the same sentiments as we do. That is, trying their best in their own little (but rather unique and effective) way to make the world a safer place in which to live.

During the formal Marist experience week, I had the privilege of spending 2 days in the district house which housed confreres who look after Balay Pasilungan, vocation promotion and young men who like me, are discerning for their future as aspiring Marists. Then I was transferred to Digos; a neighboring diocese where the Society is looking after a parish which they have just established. To be able to see the fire which these group of men have put into their work is inspirational and the welcome I received is warmer than I had expected. They made me feel just like a younger brother.

As I look back now, I feel honored to have met these men and women who have given up themselves to the service of the Church and their neighbors. As an aspiring Marist, this experience has allowed me to have access to the glimpse of light and hope which I believe many have lost and the push I need to pursue this vocation with anticipation.

Peter Matarawa CARDE

AWAY FROM HOME EXPERIENCE



Travelling abroad is the single most effective way of changing the way we view the world. At first many questions came to mind when I was told that I will join the novitiate this year. November 16, 2019 was the first time in my life to experience flying by plane from one country to another and it was the first time also to go out of my country.

We flew by Qantas from Nadi to Sydney. As it was my first time, I thought it would be scary but it was not that bad and it was a good feeling to reach Sydney safely. Then our next flight took 9 hours from Sydney to Hong Kong and it was really tiring. From Hong Kong we flew right to Manila by Cathay Pacific and we really enjoyed the different friendly services inside each plane. We reached Manila on Sunday morning and we were lucky that everything went smoothly with the immigration personnel so we were able to reach our next terminal on time. We left Manila for Davao by Philippines Airlines and reached Davao City around 5pm. From the airport we went straight to the PM sisters.

Coming from the interior part of my country, to different planes and cities, which are much bigger than the cities of my country has taught me a huge lesson to appreciate these kinds of opportunities. I am

also reminded of the task which lies ahead of me and my aspiring brothers.

Learning a new language is also another new experience. At first it was difficult but it was really interesting to learn a new language and we started with the main words first like *kumusta*, *Maayong buntag*, *Maayong hapoon* and *Maayong gabii*. We also learn how to introduce ourselves and other important words such as the common ones used in daily conversations. To learn a language is to have one more window from which to look at the world. Learning Cebuano was one of the classes in this novitiate journey.

Our Cebuano was tested when we were sent out to spend our Christmas and new year with our chosen Filipino family. It was one of the greatest experiences which I enjoyed. The first day, our nanay was really emotional when she saw the two of us since she had hosted novices in the past. Despite having the language as a barrier, we were not discouraged from speaking Cebuano, even if it is “broken”. Sometimes we mixed Cebuano and Tagalo in our sentences. I enjoyed staying with this family because the community were really friendly and they treated us well and respected us too. To be accepted as one of their own is a humbling experience that will linger in my mind for a very long time.

Luke WAIKABAKABA

ORIENTATION TO NOVITIATE



Our orientation to novitiate began while staying at the PM Sisters' residence. We were given a general overview of what to expect in this journey. After looking at the general program and the work we will be doing during the novitiate, we realize how gigantic and mammoth this journey will be.

Despite this inevitable challenge, we realize that the novitiate as part of our formation, is important as it introduces us and further enhance our vocation to religious life by making us aware of specific characters of the Society of Mary within the Church.

We are looking forward to being assisted and guided to realize our unity of life in Christ through the Spirit, and the intercession of our Blessed Mother, Mary. There will be harmonious fusion of spiritual, apostolic, doctrinal, and practical elements of the Church, through the spirit of the Society which we have chosen to be a part of. This will be a time to test and verify the existence of the call of

the Lord, being chosen by Mary, our maturity and freedom for a definitive option for the Lord in the Society.

The other part of our orientation was the official entrance ceremony. It was a small ceremony, held at our chapel in Eden, where the Novice Master officially received the four of us to Cerdon, marking the beginning of a new novitiate journey of a group of new novices.

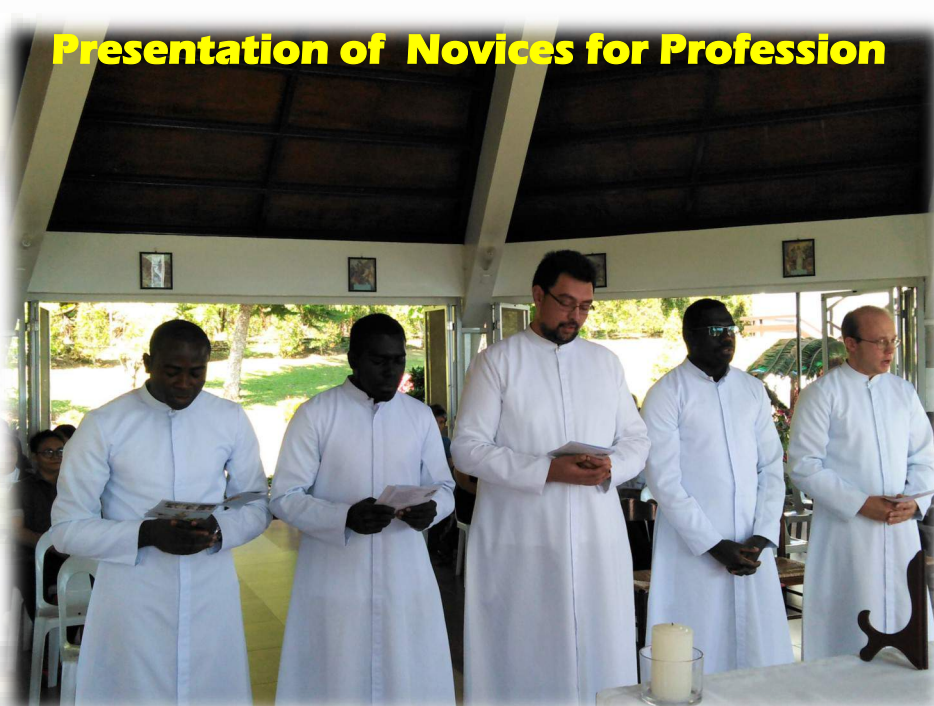
We felt welcomed into an experience that only God knows how it will go. It marks an end of a journey of our previous formation, i.e. from where we came from, to the International Novitiate. Our “yes” to the invitation requires dedication, perseverance, honesty, openness and hard work. This is a once in a life time opportunity that we believe the Spirit has brought us to. It is with this understating of our need of guidance of the Spirit and formators that we began our 2020 novitiate.

Viliame CAMA

PHOTOS



SM Priests at the First Profession Mass



Presentation of Novices for Profession



SM Sisters and Laity



Newly Professed with SM priests



2020 Profession... Cheers!



Cake Cutting



With formators and Marist Sisters

Novices to be: Orientation



Mall Orientation