



MARIST FATHERS INTERNATIONAL NOVITIATE JUNE 2022



Novitiate Community BBQ with Mrs. Federica Soppelsa (cook), and Rossano her Husband



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Please Continue to Pray for Us



Fr Sione Hamala SM



Fr David Raymundo Sanchez SM



Fr Paddy O'Hare SM



Manuele Botabua



Zulu Serop



Joseph Mijares



Jaime Nasia



Eduardo Limon Gutierrez



Hansford Mane



David Emmanuel
Romero Vences



Thomas Manihera

WONDER & HUMILITY— Fr David SM

Our novitiate in Montauto is situated on the top of a small hill overlooking the Anghiari valley. Surrounded by a dense forest, the members of our community have had the opportunity to see the seasonal change and rejoice in it. However, I must say that the change is not easy. It requires the patience of the plants, the water that feeds them, the land that welcomes them, the heat of the Sun, the very youth of the plant.

Our novitiate to a certain extent resembles that same forest. We have been on the road for five months now, where all of us, from different angles, have experienced the changes and challenges that God makes in us. Sometimes that movement has not been so pleasant; sometimes the heart has resisted seeing the spring that the Lord offers us. But always, change occurs thanks to the patience of God in us.



As can be seen in the texts that the novices have written, this walk of seasons has been reflected above all in the strong moments that the community has experienced, such as Holy Week or the Spiritual Exercises. But all the shared moments, in different ways, reflect the way each novice is adjusting his heart to the call of the Lord, in the style of Mary. To realize the change in the forest requires the astonishment of the observer. To discern the response to God's call, one needs the humility to allow oneself to be molded in the manner of Christ. Our novices are, with wonder and humility, on the path of discernment. I hope that the words shared in this newsletter will be a reason for all of us to pray for them, so that their vocation may be hope for everyone in the family of Mary.

CASTIGLION FIORENTINO BBQ - Eduardo Limon Gutierrez

Receiving visitors in the novitiate house always provoke in us emotion, sharing with Frs. Piero, Antonio, Sergio, Emananuele, Franco and Viko was a privilege, because each one shared with us something different from their life and above all from their Marist life.

Getting together for the feast of Saint Peter Chanel was a great opportunity since we were able to commemorate that we are all called to live a full life and Mission, where one of our objectives is to **"Love Mary and make her Love"**, in order to reach the loving heart of Jesus.

The climate and the experience that we shared with the community of *Castiglion Fiorentino* on the afternoon of March 27th was very nice. We were able to share and practice some of the words that we have learned in Italian and at the same time we had the opportunity to recognize that in our beloved Society of Mary the language is not a limit, because we develop in

a different language: Fraternity.

This is how our patience, love and appreciation are greater than the language and it is because each of us put something to build a community to enjoy every moment.

We want to say thank you to the community of Castiglion Fiorentino for their patience and brotherhood with us.



A TIME FOR MAKING FIRE — Fr Sione SM

“Years ago, a woman desired to share a specific art of making fire. She took her tools and visited a specific people in the north, where the climate was bitterly cold. The woman taught those people her desire and her specific ways of how to make fire. She showed them many uses of fire: they could cook, keep themselves warm, and keep predators away, as well as the joy of dancing in the firelight. So those people were completely overwhelmed and when they built the fire, they were very grateful. But before they could express their gratitude, the woman disappeared, because she wasn't concerned with recognition or worldly gratitude. She was concerned only with the well-being of the people. However, in the woman's honor, the leaders, together with the people, made a statue of the fire-making woman, and displayed it on the street, in every corner of the town, every house and even the main altar of the temple. The instruments for making fire were also placed in front of the statue, and the people were taught to revere the statue and to pay reverence to the instruments for making fire. The veneration and the reverence went on for centuries, but there is very little fire, because the people had forgotten the desire together with the woman's unique way of making fire”.

Marist vocation is a specific desire of Mary, shared and offered to a chosen group of people and with a specific unique way of making fire (Mary's spirit). To Fr. Colin, The Society of Mary (work of Mary) is freely willed by Mary with a distinguished and unique way of making fire. “Bearing her Name” is the basic conviction shared as the core inspiration idea of the Society. The “GRACIOUS



CHOICE” is the specific desire of Mary who calls us to Marist life.

So the novitiate as I experienced it in the last 5 months, has been a learning at the feet of Mary (a woman with a special desire), listening to Mary's gentle voice, teaching each soul her own unique way of making fire. Whether in prayer, in community, in the class-room, in sport or even washing the dishes. The whole novitiate daily living revolves around the “Person of Mary” and thus each soul learns to breath her spirit of humility, obedience, self-denial, mutual charity, and love of God...and the most ardent love of neighbor but in a spirit of remaining “unknown and hidden” in the world (Cons 228). As a matter of fact, there can be no formation truly Marist without this personal and loving reference to Mary, a personal relationship with Mary, who will put in the heart of each novice her pre-occupation for the salvation of all.

Sounds easy and smooth, doesn't it? But like Mary's “yes”; it did not take away the reality of the daily struggle in Nazareth nor it take away the daily choices Mary had to face up to. Likewise with the souls in Cerdon novitiate at Montauto, the reality is true, as everyone slowly comes to an awareness of the family they belong to, and so desire to share Mary's pre-occupations, configuring to Christ with Mary unique way of making fire.

HOLY WEEK — Hansford Mane

This Holy week, lived different in the Novitiate, was a moment filled with the Holy Spirit for all of us. All of us somehow, had a similar experience because before we all experienced the Holy Week in such a big number of people or congregation who came together and participated for this very important celebration, and this year was totally different in a sense that we are very small community celebrating the Resurrection of the Lord. In my previous experiences, I used to rely in others to take part on the celebrations and I was just there as a spectator or just joined the crowds. But for this year it was totally different. I have no one to rely on to do those parts that I usually given to others to do, this time I had to do it myself. For me, this was a great privilege to be involved in the whole Holy Week program and liturgies. So, we have to helped one another and everyone had parts to play in every liturgy.

For this reason, it was a moment filled with the Spirit for me. We are also a small community with diversity of cultures (seven). With our uniqueness, we applied it into our liturgies, bringing richness to the liturgy.



IGNATIAN SPIRITUAL EXERCISE — Joseph Mijares

He said to them “Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.” Mark 6:31

The novitiate is already a time to disconnect from a very connected world. None of us thought it was possible to disconnect even more until we encountered our first week of the Spiritual Exercises. Some of us never experienced a whole week of absolute silence (apart from Holy Mass and the Office) and not speaking to anyone other than God. It was interesting how even though the silence surrounded us, our awareness of the surrounding world became so much clearer. As St Ignatius said, we must “Find God in All Things.” The daily input was given by the three formators. Not only did we look outside but more importantly inside where we were confronted with our true selves. We began to realise our contribution to Structural/Social sin and wounds of personal sin. God surprised us by revealing areas in our life that we need to get rid of in order to grow in virtue and friendship with Him. Through the sacrament of reconciliation, we had the reassurance that God never ceased to love us and continues to love us intensely and personally. We left this retreat with a heightened desire to praise, reverence and serve God with all our heart, all our mind and all our will. We will continue with week two and three in August and the final fourth week later in the year.



EASTER TRIDUUM — Zulu Serop

Easter is regarded as the feast of the feasts in the Roman Catholic Church because the work of redemption has been accomplished by the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. Growing up in a strong Catholic family background, this was always an exciting moment for me. Easter Triduum brings families and people together even those who does not attend the mass every Sunday. This is the time where you hardly find any remaining spaces inside the church, all spaces are occupied by someone, even outside of the church! Even more, for those who not attend mass every Sunday, Easter is always different. Therefore, you can tell how the Easter Triduum is important to each an everyone of us.

This year was different in many ways. This Easter brought me a new experience, with new people, new place in a small community (comparing to my parish) but this does not take away the richness and joy of each of the celebrations. We all have different experiences of what Easter Triduum is and what it means to us personally. For some, it may be the time to renew

their baptism commitment and to walk into newness of life with Christ; for some others, it may be a time to celebrate the resurrection of our savior Jesus Christ who out of love came into this world to delivered us from the bondage of sin.



Before entering Holy Week and Easter Triduum, we had a one-week retreat on the Spiritual Exercises which for me were the preparation to enter into this special moment. This was the opportunity to look back on my journey, to see those times where I was not faithful to God and distance myself from the love of God and once again trying to rebuild that relationship with God and my neighbor. For me, Easter brings joy into my life, and it expresses itself in my active participation in the Easter Triduum celebrations.

COMMUNITY OUTTING TO FLORENCE —

David Emmanuel Romero Vences

Our trip to Florence was a great experience, because we had the opportunity to know ourselves as a community in a different environment. Also, we could share in fraternity and brotherhood.

We arrived at 10:00 am. At the very beginning we tried to visit the *Duomo*, but the queue was very long, so we decided to go to another church: “Santa Maria Novella”, where we could see beautiful stain glasses and we did a little bit of sightseeing in the different cloisters. After that, we walk around the city, which is amazing. We could see and walk around “Ponte Vecchio” which is awesome. We could enjoy a delicious lunch in an Italian restaurant. That moment was very pleasant because we could rest, and recharge energy to continue our day. After that, we visited beautiful gardens which used to be the house of the Medici’s family. After that, we went to the *Duomo*, it has an incredible front! We finished our visit in Florence with a delicious ice cream. When we were returning, we made a stop in Arezzo to have a coffee and a rest.

We realized the incredible capacity of amazement that we have to discover new places, to know each other, and above all, to improve our community life.



LIFE WITH AUNTY FEDERICA — Manuele Botabua

On the 3rd of January at 1:30pm was the time when the community would have our first meal at the *Cenacolo di Montauto*. It was a meal that I personally won't forget because of the way it was presented and cooked. It was pasta and nice ribs that were cooked in the oven. From that nicely prepared *pranzo* (lunch) I was inquiring who was the famous and professional chef that prepared the meal. Later I came to know that it was Mrs. Federica Soppelsa, a native of Florence who had been working in the house for about 8 years now.

It is a great privilege for our community to know and to live close with Federica, as we normally called her. She has been married to Mr. Rosano and both lived together here with us in their different quarters. This is the sixth month that we have been living here in Montauto without and being away from our loved ones but we have regarded Mrs. Federica as our mother. She has been always present around the community and the community really felt the presence of a motherly fig when she is around.



Mrs. Federica knows a little bit of English so in a way it is always been helpful to us having a conversation with her because she knows the place very well.

Also, we have come to know that she loves cats so much and she is fond of flowers. From her love shown to cats we too have been inspired in a specific way also

to love them and by the way most of us knows the different cats by their name and can distinguish their differences. With the beauty of our surroundings, she has planted roses and other types of flowers that really bloom out during the spring season. It is just an amazing scene waking up in the morning refreshed by the shining flowers smiling at us. It really makes a difference in our everyday life.

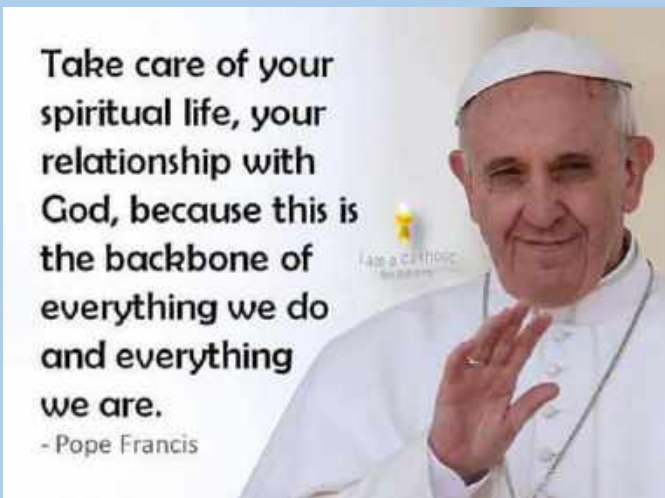
Just to conclude, our small community here at the *Cenacolo di Montauto* is so blessed to have such a loving, caring and gentle women who happens to be here as a mother and also, she is here for our community when we need her help.

SPRITUALITY WORKSHOP WITH FR LARRY DUFFY SM —

Jaime Canisius Nasia

Spirituality is one of the five very important aspects in Priestly or Religious vocation and above all it is very important in the life of any Christian person.

From the 9th to 12th of May, we here at the Novitiate had the great privilege of having Fr. Larry Duffy SM who facilitated the workshop on Spiritual Life which was indeed a great moment for us the Novices to re-look at our own spiritual journey with the new insights that Fr. Larry Duffy SM gave us during the workshop.



The two very important things Fr. Larry Duffy SM gave us were: first, the three stages of Spiritual Life journey, which are Beginners, *Proficients* or Progressives, and Perfects. These are important stages that help one see his or her own spiritual journey and which stage they are in. The second one was Fr. Larry's diagram on the unity of the soul and body. That describes very well our desires for relationship with God and others. The diagram classified our hearts, wills, and intellects as spiritual world and our memories, imaginations, emotions, senses, and bodies as human world. Having these two worlds in our human nature is for me something very special because it allows us to experience something transcendental in immanent nature.

We were reminded during the workshop that Spiritual Life is the journey we take with faith, hope, and love because we cannot see the whole journey or the final destination but only a part of it, that's why we journey in faith, hope, and love. We journey with these theological virtues because they lead us to God and in fact, love leads us to others with moral virtues which are lived with purity of heart and again, both the theological and moral virtues are lived with the seven gifts of the Spirit.

Personally, the workshop helped me a lot in a sense that it somehow instills in me the desire to keep growing in my personal spiritual journey and if I am to give an analogy on how I view the spiritual life journey and my own spiritual journey so far, I would make a contrast

with the two significant seasons of the year which are winter and spring. As we have observed and experienced here in Italy, during winter season, the trees look like they have no life because all the leaves are gone but in fact, they are grounded in the soil and they still have life. When the spring comes, the trees begin to bloom with leaves and beautiful flowers. Spirituality is part of us and it is grounded deep in our hearts where God dwells but we need to go deep and experience it and respond to God's love.

My life begun in my mother's womb and my spiritual life journey begun at the baptism or maybe, I would say that it begun in my mother's womb because God loved me before I was born. Did I realize that before entering the seminary? My answer would be "not really". Why? Because, when I was out there, I never really place my focus on my spiritual life. I was occupied with many things that are temporary. During all these times, my spiritual life was like the trees during winter, grounded in God but stagnant because I was not conscious of God's love. When I enter the seminary, I begun to grow in consciousness of God's love for me and since then, my spiritual life has been blooming slowly like the trees during spring.

In our daily lives, most of the time we tend to forget that the very foundation of the spiritual journey is "Love". "To always remember that we are loved by God in our own brokenness. To be always conscious of that love which God have for us, a love that invites us to enter freely into relationship with God through Christ in the Spirit and the Church and through Christ to God, and out to the others in love and service."



RELUCTANT FOUNDER: A DISCUSSION WITH THE AUTHOR —

Thomas Manihera

During the first months of the novitiate, the novices had the honour of reading “A Reluctant Founder”, the biography of our venerable founder. The novices divided the chapters amongst themselves, as well as into pairs. Each one wrote a synthesis on the given chapters, as well as presenting PowerPoint presentations to the community. In a special way each novice learnt more of the background and life of Father Colin and his works, in order to establish our Society. In a unique way, each was able to take this shared history and make it his own.

On Monday the 21st of March, the community was privileged to have a Zoom discussion with the biography’s author, Father Justin Taylor SM, living in New Zealand. It was a profound opportunity to listen first hand (via zoom) to Fr Justin, and to hear the process and works behind bringing this beloved biography to life. Fr Justin also explored in depth some of the key points taken from the biography. Members of the community had the opportunity to ask questions, make remarks, or comments, and Fr Justin in return gave insightful responses. This Zoom discussion left the community deeply satisfied. Those of the novitiate community who had not yet meet, or spoken with Fr Justin, were inspired by his deep and profound knowledge and love of Father Colin, and that of the Society. All are aware of the many talents of Fr Justin, and the treasure he has given to the Society.



Community Snapshots



Community Selfie in Florence



Fresh cherries anybody??



Warmer weather calls for outdoor dining



Novices Jaime and Joseph enjoy the free day



Novices Manu, David, and Tom at the Good Friday 3pm Liturgy



Cenacolo di Montauto 2022 Easter Vigil Band