



Marist Brothers

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Christmas handicraft made by the children of Palau.

The Wisdom of Hope!

Every 17th of December, our Good Mother the Church offers the genealogy of Jesus for our reflection and contemplation. Bible comments seem to compete to find striking personalities in it: first born sons being supplanted by younger ones in receiving the inheritance of their progenitors, mothers who are adulteress and apparently not worth to appear in the generations leading to Jesus, kings that are missing without much of an explanation and so forth.

What I have found particularly striking this year as I listened to Jesus' genealogy being read in Thai during the morning mass of this 17th December where names like Abraham, David, the sons of Jacob. Besides the joy of being able to recognized some words in Thai in the reading, the names struck me as names that have to do with God's promises. Abraham was promised a descent that will fill the earth and bring about the unity of all peoples. Jacob's sons were promised a descent that will lead all the people of the world. David was promised a descent that will reign forever.

Christmas day, 25th December, reminds us that all those apparently impossible promises, they actually began to be fulfilled two thousand or one thousand years after the promises were made. And this implies that our Good Father God remains always faithful waiting for the right time to bring about what is so wonderfully good and beautiful. This is telling me that, actually, goodness and honesty and love of the poor will finally take over the course of human history. It is a matter of time, even if this means, thousands of years.

With this perspective in mind, personal history and group history become a drop in the ocean of time and in the history of the universe. To be successful today does not imply to be successful in history. That's the way I understand Mother Theresa's saying: "God does not ask us to be successful. He only asks us to be faithful!"

The experience of launching this challenging project of AMAG Sector needs to be sustained with this unshakable hope: that God will bring about his plans, his promises in His own time. The time of God is necessarily touched with eternity: a thousand years is like a day gone by!

As I wish you all A 2011 BLESSED AND HOLY CHRISTMAS SEASON, I also pray that we may grow into the wisdom of the time of God, the WISDOM OF HOPE!



May every child's song ring out the "wisdom of hope" of a better future.

Photo: Children of migrant workers in Samut Sakhon.



PAVING THE WAY TO CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS (Palau)

A trek to the forest with excitement and joy in their laughters, the children of Palau gathered materials of twigs, dried leaves, and tree barks they need to make decorations for Christmas. Assisted by Bro. Gilber and Pa Lita, the responsible lady in the village, children were taught how to make handicrafts of artistic decorations with the motif of Christmas. Their classrooms and homes have now been prepared for the festive event of the birth of Jesus.

As part of the Community Life Plan, Bro. Max was invited to the community last November 24-28. He facilitated and journeyed with them in reflecting about the “little virtues” of Mary.



SECTOR COUNCIL MEETS IN BANGKOK, THAILAND



As practiced, the Sector Council meets in Bangkok for a face-to-face meeting, twice a year, in June and November. Prior to this, the Sector Council holds monthly meetings in Skype to an average of two and a half hour session. The skype meetings begin at 6 a.m., Bangkok time. For Alex, in West Bengal, this implies that the meeting begins at 4.30 a.m. Said arrangement of time was preferred because the internet traffic is reduced to a minimum. This choice has allowed skype conversations going for one to two hours without interruption.

For the recent AMAG Sector face-to-face Council meeting, the venue was in Bangkok and was held last November 22-24, 2011. During this meeting, the personnel of the Sector Office were given time to report on respective responsibilities: Secretariat, Project Coordination, Child Rights, Youth Ministry, Basic Human Communities, Enhancing the teaching of English as a second language, Finance report, and lay animation. Bro. Francis (Pailin) and Bro. Geoff (VN) were present for the discussion of their respective projects.

The functioning of the AMAG Council and Commissions were evaluated. Brother Joe McKee was present to also give his own feedback from his recent visit to the AMAG Communities.

The draft document on Child Rights: “Keep Children Safe” was also studied and given feedback in addition to information already provided by the appointed study group (Neiva, Antonio, Diego and Gilber). Ordinary Council followed hereon.

It was suggested that on the next face-to-face meeting, time should be no less than four or five days, both for the work of the Council and for some quiet reflections.

ONE CAUSE

FOR THE BEST INTEREST OF CHILDREN IN INDIA

India celebrates November 14 as Children's Day, remembering the late Jawaharlal Nehru, its first Prime Minister. He declared that the celebration of his birthday be a time of looking after the welfare of children in India.

Following the tradition, the city of Burdwan through the Diocesan Social Service Centre (ABSK) gathered about 700 children and engaged them to festivities. It began with a colourful parade from Burdwan Railway station and marching on through the city with banners and slogans based on Children's rights and their world. This was followed by cultural program at the Parish Hall. The day ended with rich reflections on children participating



without religious, caste or class distinctions.

The event was a realization that all can work towards a common cause, united in the celebration of a vision that awaits a better future for today's children of India.



REAPING A GOOD HARVEST!

DEVELOPING VALUES IN MANUAL WORK

During the month of November at least 10 days have been designated by our brothers and their students to work in the rice field for harvesting. The agricultural field belongs to the Diocese of Asansol. The land was charged to our brothers to cultivate and make it productive.

Part of educating the children to find value in their work, is to actually engage them in the day-to-day tasks common to their respective community. The joy of seeing brothers and the young village people share common responsibility, having fun while at work, and delighted of reaping the fruits of their labor are, among others, rewarding experiences to reckon.

Manual work, done with the values of Fr. Champagnat in mind, gives meaning to the work of our brothers in misión.

PAILIN HOSTS INTERNATIONAL GUESTS

STUDENTS FROM MARIST COLLEGE ASHGROVE, AUSTRALIA



The Marist community in Pailin is playing host to a group of students and staff from Marist College Ashgrove, Brisbane Australia.

The group has been in Cambodia for more than a week already and have spent time at the La Valla school in Takmao. The group is led by Brother Mark Fordyce who is no stranger to Cambodia having led many groups on immersion to Cambodia. Other staff with the group are Father Pius Jones SM and Alison Barlow. On their first day with us the boys have played games with the local children and youth. They are also assisting with some work landscaping the property and with accompanying the children as they learn English.

The local Marist Community is happy to host such groups and feels energised by the presence of these young people. It is a chance for our local children and youth to realise that they are a part of a much larger world.

A TRIBUTE TO BRO. DARRYL SLATER (1948 – 2011)

I remember in a youth group once we read a story called "A Sea of Flames" (the world as Galeano saw it), and I remember very well that I did not understand. It could be because I was just 16 years old. Or perhaps it wasn't explained to me well. Perhaps I wasn't paying much attention to life. Regardless, the point is that this story has come back to me many times in subsequent years, as it has been read to me, as I've held this story in my hands, as I've seen this story embodied ...

"... Other blaze with life so fiercely..." is the phrase that has been with me these days, ever since I learned of the departure of our brother Darryl; a man with a passion for life. A man with a passion to see children playing, learning and enjoying the little La Valla school in Takhmau, Cambodia (a center for children with disabilities as the result of polio.)

Darryl, along with his brothers in the community and a beautiful team have managed to create a home where these girls and boys can be born again. In this work and its daily struggles, in the excitement of living among these little angels our brother was happy to devote his heart in its entirety. "I want to take the heart of bongpros Darryl and put it in me," said one of these little ones while crying, not understanding why this radiant brother was no longer present in the way he used to be.

But strangely, or perhaps in all of its logic, the strongest feeling that remains is gratefulness. Gratefulness for the life this wonderful man gave to a community of children who had suffered greatly. Gratefulness for having known Darryl, who dared to be a brother from his own humanity, simplicity, great joy, and incredible spirit of hard work. And thanks to those who helped to form the heart we've come to see as a gift of life.

Hopefully we can all reach the end of our lives with joy and leaving a little something good in others' hearts ...

"Each person shines among the rest. No two fires alike. Some burn with life so fiercely that you can't look at them without blinking and if you approach, you are set ablaze."

Bro. Pedro Chimeno from Kompong Cham



VOICES OF SUPPORT

MESSAGES FROM OCEANIA



Mission Ad Gentes was shared by Agnes during the Oceania Joint Formation in Mittagong, Australia, Nov 22-26, 2011. Her participation is part of her role in the Extended Secretariate of Laity.

*We, as brothers, have been asked to see our mission as being International – **Without boundaries.** We have also been challenged to be alongside those on the margins and to **Venture to New lands.** Ad Gentes have responded to these calls with unbounded generosity.*

Thank you for your willingness to take this courageous step and for being that “lighted candle” before us which is real challenge to us brothers.

**(Br. Martin Pattison, FMS
New Zealand)**

As Christmas 2011 approaches I wish to take this opportunity to wish you all a very Happy and Holy time. It is with admiration that I came to know of your deep dedication to your mission and with that in mind I keep you in my prayers.

Thank you all for being the flame for mission, the pioneers of a new world and the catalysts creating better lives for so many. May Mary and Marcellin walk closely with you always and Jesus Christ light your way.

(Alan Parker, Director Champagnat Partnership, NZ)

To hear about the threats that someone who is working in Ad Gentes might come under, and the sacrifices they make in their personal lives to commit to this way of living Marist life is nothing short of inspiring. I am personally challenged to ask myself, ‘how can I play a small part in this Mission Ad Gentes in Asia?. In the first place, I can offer my prayers for all of the Brothers and lay Marists involved. But further, I want to take the story and message of Ad Gentes in Asia to the lay Marists across Australia and see how the Spirit stirs in them to respond.

All of you involved are an inspiration! Through your personal witness to your faith and your passion for bringing to life the Marist Charism, we Marists, from all other parts of the world say thank you...

(Joe McCarthy, Director Lay Leadership and Formation)

The presentation on Ad Gentes was powerful. The story and the images shared with us brought tears to my eyes. I found myself thinking that there must be a way and that in time, we stand together and make support for mission a reality. I wish it was within my power to do more....

(Sandy Francois, Lay Marist, Melbourne)

I feel a lot of affinity with the Ad Gentes program after my experience in Oceania and my friendship with Mark Poro and Brian Kinsella. Mother Teresa once said that the problem with the modern world is that ‘we have forgotten how to love one another’. Ad Gentes defy that description.

I offer you all the support of my prayers and my warm encouragement. I admire your daring and courage in the service of children.

**(Bro. Steve Bugg, FMS, Former Principal,
Marcellin College, Victoria, Australia)**

Ad Gentes is for me a prophetic move of the Brother’s Institute...

**(Fr. Bob Barber, Vice- Provincial,
Marist Fathers, Australia)**

Bro. Marcos Serena, Ad Gentes brother assigned in Samut Sakhon, Thailand, professed his Final Vows last December 20, 2011, at Florianopolis, Santa Catarina, Brazil.

Congratulations, Bro. Marcos!

STEPS FORWARD

POSTULANTS PREPARE FOR NOVITIATE

Last November 13-17, postulants Quy, Sytha and Bro. Pepito visited the Novitiate community in Cotabato City. The visit allowed them to observe classes and interact with the students of Notre Dame of Cotabato. What was significant for them was their experience of observing how muslims pray and understand better the rites of their religion. Quy and Sytha were passionate in sharing their experience as formands of Ad Gentes with the high school students who were members of the St. Marcellin Club.

With the purpose of deepening their apostolic zeal, Quy and Sytha help the Missionaries of Charity sisters in attending to the needs of the poor children at their center on a regular Friday schedule. Last November 25, The postulancy community cooked food and offered lunch to the children. It was an activity to culminate the meaningful apostolic experience



Quy, Sytha and Bro. Lyndley Sionosa, Novice Master at Tamontaka, Cotabato City



Merry Christmas!

Greetings from:
THE SECTOR TEAM
(Alice, Bro. Jose., Neiva, Bro. Luis & Agnes)



*May Christmas be a time of renewing hearts and
a deepening of commitment...
... as the passion of God's great Love for us
is manifested in the manger of our day to day lives!*

