



The Migrant Center in Samut Sakhon – P. 4

Sharing Experiences – P. 6

News in brief – P. 13

Birthday greetings – P. 14

**COVER | P. 2**

**Let's Follow Saint  
Paul's footsteps**

## Let's Follow in Saint Paul's footsteps

Many years ago, Pope John Paul II urged the Church to initiate a NEW EVANGELIZATION. This effort was directed principally to former members of the Church. Some of them, because of a negative experience or a deficient initiation, abandoned their faith or converted to other religious groups.

My concern is not about this NEW EVANGELIZATION but about how to evangelize for the first time as is the case for nearly all of us in the MDA. There are some indications in the documents of the Asian Bishops Conference on how to proceed, such as engaging in inter-religious dialogue, enculturation and the approach to take: to whisper the Gospel to Asia. But when the Church starts to initiate someone into the Catholic faith she usually does it by introducing him or her to the history of Israel, western philosophy and, morality and the Roman liturgy.



I think we have to go back to the Acts of the Apostles, when Paul arrived in Athens and spoke to the Greeks assembled in the Areopagus. He didn't

mention the First Testament. Nothing at all about Abraham, the Law, Moses, Jewish history, or Yahweh, but instead, he mentioned an altar dedicated to the Unknown God which he discovered when he walked around. He mentioned their poets and then told them about this Unknown God and his Christ in their midst.



This event shows us how to initiate evangelization: our starting point has to be the local culture and its beliefs. That's where we have to look for a connection to make the first announcement possible. We accept the local religion(s) and culture as the Ancient Testament, because that is the way that God was present in their history. This is God's way of acting. He gave us an example with the History of the Jewish people. The challenge is not to repeat or copy, letter by letter, the model but to do the same with every culture.

This method has big consequences on how we act as missionaries:

1 - We have to accept that God was already in the culture before us, acting among this people in some way.

2 - We have to know the new culture and religion very well before we start to evangelize, for example: Where can we find the finger of God in their history? Their symbols, ethic values...

3 – We have to discover and recognize the values and positive aspects of their belief and culture.

4 – We have to discern the changes the Gospel will provoke in the life of this people: to evangelize people means to announce the Good News to them, and this Good News will transform their human reality.

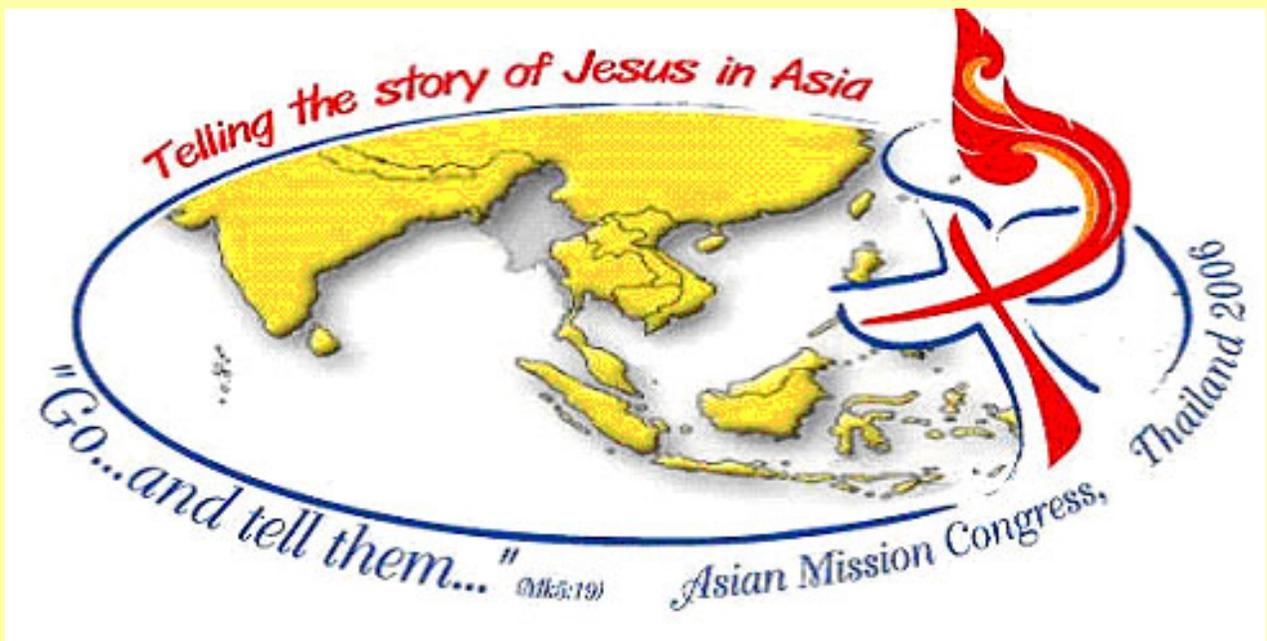
5 – The culture and religion to be evangelized still has to be present in some way in the liturgy and prayers, as happens with the First Testament in our life.

When the day comes that we fully recognize the footprints of God's

revelation in local cultures and religions we will be able to evangelize them, but only if our respect and inter-religious dialogue is fair and transparent and not a hidden instrument for proselytism. We have to know that the Spirit of God is blowing where s/he wants, when s/he wants and through whom s/he wants, and that we are not called to sow but to harvest where God has already done the ground work. We have to find out where the wheat is.

With this attitude, we will create a positive and friendly environment. People from other religions no longer need to view us as a risk for their culture and identity. There should be the confidence that with Christians it is always possible to share values and spirituality and build a better world for all human beings

Brother Max Meier



# The Migrants Center of Samut Sakon

Brother Juan Castro

“Lack of education is as serious as lack of food; the illiterate is a starved spirit. When someone learns how to read and write, he is equipped to do a job and to shoulder a profession, to develop self-confidence and realize that he can progress along with others. ..Literacy is the "first and most basic tool for personal enrichment and social integration; and it is society's most valuable tool for furthering development and economic progress." P.P. #35

I came to visit this Center once again. It is a special place to be. At the Center you find happiness, joy and life. This is a learning Center for nearly a hundred boys and girls from migrant families coming from Myanmar. The place is near the sea, the reason being that most of the parents of these children work in the fishing industry.

Lately the International community has been refusing to buy fish from these industries because the workers are realizing more and more that their rights have been violated for a long time. Some of the companies greatly profit from child labor.

The Center has to teach not only the students but also the parents about the benefits families receive from enrolling their children in school. Some families find living conditions so difficult that they are strongly tempted to get money by subjecting their children to child labor.

Our Marist Center is part of a Catholic Church Project. It collaborates with the parish and two other Centers, one directed by Dominican Sisters, the other by a committed Lay group.



Our Center is for Myanmar children, most of them from a Buddhist background. It serves as an international school in which teachers from different nationalities learn to live and work together.

They come from Thailand, Myanmar, Malaysia and Spain, and now there is a young Brazilian woman and a young Vietnamese aspirant to the Marist life joining this international group.

They have been growing in understanding the real meaning of interculturality, accepting differences as a richness and wonderful opportunity to benefit the children with a better education.

There are different programs during the year. One of these involves opening the Center's doors to high school students from other countries wanting to learn more about this culture and enjoy an enrichment experience. Other programs bring volunteers to share their skills and knowledge with the students, while at the same time learning about the labor conditions endured by the impoverished migrants working in the fishery industry in the city of Samut Sakon.

I see the brothers and their activities here, their daily efforts and loving presence, as very inspiring, enabling these children to discover new possibilities and enjoy uplifting dreams for their future. The formation that the Center provides is not only academic. Above all it aims to introduce Christian values, human values to the children who attend.

The boys and girls learn good habits for personal hygiene: learning to brush their teeth, wear clean clothes, respect and care for the environment and keep their classrooms and playground neat and clean. They recycle plastic bags and containers. They respect and help each other as a family, where the big kids take care of the little ones. They learn to be responsible for cleaning the dining room, washing dishes, keeping things in order and even taking care of the rabbits that are growing in number day by day...

The brothers live in a building belonging to the Diocese, where other Catholic groups stay. There are rooms for the Dominican sisters, the Xaverian Fathers and a priest from Myanmar. Thanks to the convenience of living in the same building, the various communities can attend daily Mass together.

Our Center's activities are not limited to the school alone. The teachers and brothers go out twice a week to visit the "homes" of the students. I said "homes" but in reality they consist of just a single room where the family sleeps, watches TV, prepares meals, studies and rests. In a corner of the rooms you can see a place where family members take a shower or use the toilet.

This is home for the families we serve – in stark contrast to the ones the children see in pictures and read about in their textbooks for learning English. In those books they find pictures of a nice kitchen or a bed room, dining room and so on. The children discover that there is another world "out there," another culture, another way to see life and ...

I reflect on this gap that is growing by the day. Once again this situation convinces me of the value of education. Education as the basis for development, as a factor that can help us provide our students with opportunities to change and transform their lives in their lives. Teachers, don't give up; your mission is essential!



## Sharing experiences:

### “To Listen to New Music in a New Land”

Brother Doroteo Roman



Most of us in MDA are experiencing constant changes in our life. This “newness” challenges us to adopt an attitude of contemplation of God’s call and action in our life. I have sensed God’s revelation speaking to me in different manners. Sometimes I can understand clearly, other times I have found it challenging to grasp the message.

When the latter happens, I feel the need to allow myself to transcend, to go beyond simple human reasoning and try to listen to God’s voice.

Someone has said, “God writes straight with crooked lines.” Si I always need to be attuned to God’s will, to be able to respond to His call.

Knowing the “*staves* of God’s music” allows me to enjoy a meaningful life in mission. In this way I have started singing the divine song.

I lived in Thailand for six years, went through many trials and was unable to listen to “God’s music” clearly. This

music was inviting me to sing and even to dance, but “...how to sing a song in a foreign land...?” Perhaps other inward noises were closing my ears.

Recently I have started a new ministry in Talit, India: a country with a multicultural and multi-religious background. Here as in many Asian countries people have a deep sense of spirituality. I have noticed this since the day I arrived.

I try to keep my ears and heart open, in order not to miss any kind of “divine music.” This attitude has allowed me to enjoy the goodness of the Lord, especially a few weeks ago when I was involved in a bicycle accident and people showed me the merciful face of God.

Since that experience, my way of understanding life has changed. Now I enjoy the simple, easy going lifestyle of people here. Although I can’t speak their language I am able to communicate with them in a plain way. In the community we are also challenged to use an uncomplicated way of communication among ourselves.



Often I have heard some Brothers saying, “Here, there are no bad things; everything’s good.” I completely agree. The way we see things either allows or does not allow us to perceive reality as it is.

When I gently open my mind and heart to this “newness of the divine music,” I can easily realize that everything is positive. Then I can affirm that here different kinds of music sung by God coexist.

Nevertheless I should also state that life is a mystery which I can’t fully comprehend. But the more I know and accept it as it is, the more beautiful it appears to me.

I always feel invited to follow Mary’s example. Although she could not grasp the meaning of certain events in her life, she accepted God’s will wholeheartedly.

I’ve felt at home since my arrival in Talit and gradually I am getting more involved in the rhythm of life of the Brothers and boys at the hostel.

Teaching English to the boys, rather than sharing knowledge of a language, is an opportunity to create an atmosphere conducive to their growing in human and Christian values, making their life more meaningful.

After these three months in Talit, I am looking forward to exercising my ministry in the same way, giving witness to God’s love and mercy to those to whom I am sent, especially my brothers in community.

My present state of mind brings back happy memories of the past and elicits feelings of joy and gratitude. Like Mary I keep them in my heart as priceless gifts from God.

### **My Experience as a Missionary in CN - (extracts)**

Brother P. N. YOBB

My experience of mission in CN can be aptly described as a school of faith where I nurtured the virtues of faith and trust in our truly loving and faithful God. But for His grace the challenges I faced were hydra-headed and indeed, overwhelming. In the first place, acquiring a visa for an African in China is a nightmare... The security personnel know every movement and action of every person, so mine was a very delicate presence since I was very conspicuous.

My unique situation obviously demanded that I tread cautiously, be very circumspect, prudent and strong. At some point I had to set up a company and disguised myself as a business man in order to secure a visa to stay there. Although this company helped in securing a visa status for me it hardly resolved my visa nightmare.

The challenge of learning the difficult Chinese language at an advanced age of 54 was another albatross. Other

challenges included my lack of Church/Religious vocabulary in Chinese, even after learning Mandarin, my challenging duty as vocations director, and finally, having to cope with the health hazard of environmental pollution. However, during this mission no challenge or difficulty was insurmountable, “For His grace is sufficient for me” (2 Corinth 12: 9).

I had the delicate and complex job of promoting vocations, and as vocation director my task in CN mainly revolved around **prayer** and a **networking approach**, since I could hardly operate openly. I made friends with other foreign people who helped put me in contact with local priests, and when I had built enough trust in a local priest I disclosed my identity and we cautiously did **business** together. In my role as vocation promoter I could not stand aloof from evangelisation so I didn't just go looking for young boys but had to participate in all sorts of activities depending on what my friends offered me, including teaching English, attending youth programmes as opportunities arose, sharing/presenting on particular topics when permitted, giving homilies in churches, taking students on excursions and visiting and praying with Catholic students in the various universities in the city where I lived.

There were a plethora of exceptionally frightening and exciting moments in the last 5 years of my stay in CN but these moments always turned out to be times for deeper growth in my faith, trust and knowledge or experience of God. In 2010 I suffered a heart attack culminating in a serious heart condition called Cardiomyopathy. The doctor said I had only 3 more years to live but thank God I survived it – clearly a miracle as I was doing the Mission. In 2014 I was again diagnosed with a serious illness called hyperthyroidism, which I am told will be with me for the rest of my life. But this illness is now completely under control. Those brothers who are familiar with my CN story can attest that my being in the mission for approximately eight (8) years, especially the last five years after my student status, is enough evidence of God's divine providence, protection and guidance in my life. As a man of faith I firmly believe that God had a purpose for me there. And now that I am back in my home district I feel quite fulfilled because the mission I was given has been accomplished – with, in, though and for the Master who sent me. Although I am no more physically present in Asia I will continue to be spiritually present there through my fervent and ceaseless prayer for the coming of God's kingdom to the Continent of Asia.



## A Marist Volunteer: Cultivating Dreams

“Painted stars on the wall and bringing the sky within reach of their hands”

(Helena Kolody)

Without a doubt this phrase symbolizes my experience as a Marist volunteer in MDA concerning what it means to dare to dream. Before long I was here in Asian lands – Thailand, the Community at Samut Sakhon and the Pailin community in Cambodia – I believe it was "necessary to have a sense of wonder, feel determined and be captivated by the idea that it is possible to change reality." (Nise da Silveira).



Dancing Class at the Marist Centre - Pailin

"To change reality" refers to fostering opportunities to learn new skills and languages and to empower children and adolescents with the resources necessary for them to dare to dream, through a comprehensive education based on Marist values and consistent with the local reality.

Through art, dance, English classes, psychomotor activities, assistance in health care, projects providing opportunities to exercise the values of individual productivity and collective self-esteem, and many other beneficial programs, we want the young people here to be blessed with uplifting hopes, plans and dreams for their future.

Understanding the culture, becoming immersed in it, cultivating a sense of wonder and determination was necessary to take up the challenge of working in the

Marist *Ad Gentes* mission. My start in this endeavor was marked by silence and reflection, which were essential in order to focus and consider what I could contribute, thus experiencing the meaning of daring to dream.



Painting Class at the Marist Centre for Migrants, Samut Sakhon

Together, we lay people and brothers, living the dream of Marcellin Champagnat, precisely in this year when we are celebrating the promise of Fourvière, are being encouraged to become increasingly involved in the Marist mission. With simplicity, humility and modesty, we are eager to embrace the challenges of living in international communities and broaden our understanding and lines of communication in overcoming barriers. Regardless of our Marist perspective and experience of spirituality, community life and mission, we are always longing to advance the dream of Champagnat.

I realize that my volunteer experience is a brief one, so, living here every day has been very intense, painting, drawing, writing, studying, trying to express myself, living among children and youth, helping them have opportunities to bring the "sky within reach of their hands."

Flávia Meirelles Israel

Brazilian volunteer from Marist Centro-Sul Province

## My Life Experience in Ho Chi Minh

Brother Salvador Salinas

Ho Chi Minh is an interesting and fairly large city with countless bridges and rivers. The most common means of transportation is the motorcycle. People are very nice, helpful and close. I am currently a member of the Aspirancy community, with Br. Michael Potter as leader and eight aspirants. Not far is also found the Candidacy community with Br. Pietro as leader and three candidates. For me it is very interesting and promising that so many young people want to discover their vocational call. Brothers Michael and Pietro's ministry requires a strong dose of patience, time and understanding. I am thankful to them for their availability and generosity.

Right now my collaboration is to accompany two candidates in their discernment process; to provide for the

English club three times a week and to impart a course about Champagnat and other related issues to the candidates and aspirants once a week.

So, what are the feelings that arise in my heart? Listening, search and abandonment to discover what the Lord wants from me here; wonder and opening to the Lord's daily surprises; gratitude for living in this town; openness of mind to learn about, understand and love this country, its people and culture; concerted action in promoting vocations in hopes that the Marist charism will take root in this country.

Right now I am confident I can learn Vietnamese and improve my English. With appreciation for the presence and generosity of all the MDA members.



## The Community Experience

**Thuong Le Danh**

Novice – Sri Lanka

Funny, worried, surprised, excited. These were all feelings that I had during my community experience. Throughout this time, it seems, I had become happier. I had become free and much less shy. I felt that I had become a better person even though at the beginning I was not at all sure about what I was doing there.

I was expected to be a member of the Hanoi community, in Quoc Oai. There were two other members in the community; Br. Antonio and Br. Geoffrey. They were teaching in an English center in Quoc Oai, which is called the New Horizons Centre, and in the Blind Centre, which is in Ha Noi. I was given the opportunity to serve the community, doing things like cooking, preparing the Prayers and helping with some small tasks in the English center. These tasks taught me and are still teaching me valuable lessons. Community service can provide a feeling of accomplishment that brings out the best in me.



Suddenly, Geoff had a serious accident with his motorbike. I found myself without notice having to take over

his responsibilities. I knew that it would be hard for me but there was no other choice. I tried my best to do it.... It was fun. I was enjoying it. However, I was so busy. Almost every day, I had classes in the English center, and on Monday and Tuesday, I had classes in the Blind center. In addition to all this, I was preparing all the documents and information to go to Sri-Lanka for my Novitiate programme. I was a little tired with all this. I was also worried for Geoff with his ten fractured ribs and broken toe. Sometimes I felt the comfort and a sense of belonging that comes from helping others. Once a wise man told me that “Those who help the unfortunate are really helping themselves.” I frequently thought about this quote throughout my community experience. My thought was that by helping others overcome their English, difficulties and personal worries I was also creating skills in me to be a good community member, someone that others can look up to. For that I need to put others before myself.

This week is the last week I am here with the Brothers. I hope Brother Geoff will be blessed with a full recovery and be able to quickly return to his normal life. I also hope I can get the visa from the Sri-Lankan embassy.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you, Brothers and the people who have been helping me in many different ways. Now, I am going to the Novitiate. In this big step, I need your help and your prayers more. I believe that with your help and my own

personal efforts, I can persevere and be stronger in my vocation.

Above all, I give thanks to our Lord Jesus Christ, our good mother Mary and St. Marcellin for their love, protection and guidance during this time. May Mary our good mother, her son Jesus and St. Marcellin be with you and the community always. And of course, you are always remembered in my prayer. **God bless us all!**



## Giving Thanks!

Bảo Nguyễn & Thuan Pham  
MAPAC



Dear Brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus!

We are privileged to offer these thankful words to you all.

First of all we would like to thank the good Lord for the blessings and graces he has poured upon all of us from the time of our birth until this grace-filled moment,

especially his calling us to follow him in this way of life.

For our Parents, some present here and some absent because of distance, we would like to express our gratitude and our heartfelt thanks for the initial work that you have done in our lives.

We would like to acknowledge and give thanks to Br Emili Turú, Superior General of the Marist Brothers and his Council for accepting us, Brother Shanthi Provincial of the South Asia Marist Province and Brother Juan Castro, District Leader of the Marist District of Asia for your guidance, all your support, as well as your prayers and presents. We are deeply grateful.

We would also like to take this opportunity to give thanks to all the Brothers who have accompanied us throughout the stages of formation from the beginning of this journey until now, especially our Novice Master, Brother Nicholas, Assistant Master, Brother

Canisio, and Brothers Peter and Sales for your constant, tireless help and support. What we are today is the result of your efforts.

To all the Marist Brothers, Marist communities, and lay Marist partners in the Philippines, Viet Nam, Thailand, Cambodia, Pakistan and Sri Lanka: thank you very much for your hospitality, support and prayer.

To all our companions who have walked with us for a time, some still working with us, some who have left, especially for our first year novice brothers: thanks for your presence, your support and constant prayers.

Thank you very much brothers and sisters, we are very grateful and happy for what you have shown and done for us. Let us continue to walk together on this journey. I am sure you are and will always be there with us in prayer.

May God bless each and every one of us!

Your brothers

Bảo Nguyễn & Thuan Pham



## NEWS IN BRIEF

- **Brother Canisio** has returned to Vietnam. After a long time in the Philippines and Sri Lanka helping in the formation of our Asian Brothers, Canisio is back in Vietnam. At the moment he is in the Candidate House with Brother Pietro. We wish him blessings in his vocation ministry. Welcome Home!
- **Brothers Eugenio, Geoff Kelly and José Grande** took part in the Sustainability-for-Mission Seminar organized by the General Administration in Sri Lanka from June 6<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup>. The Seminar was a very professional one offering a scientific approach to the pastoral and economic situation of the AU. Brothers from Sri Lanka, Pakistan, the Philippines and South Korea also took part in the seminar.

- **Ms. Flavia** has completed 2 months of volunteer work in Pailin. Brother Francis Attah has written: “The Pailin Marist Community is deeply grateful to Flavia and the Brothers of her Province that sent her to this mission. During her time with us she generously shared her gifts and talents with all those who came to her classes. The dance and art classes were excellent. The pupils in turn came to love her.” Congratulations Flavia! Now life goes on in Samut Sakhon.
- **The community in CN** – On May 18<sup>th</sup> the Police and Religious Bureau arrived at the “Marcellin

Youth Center” and found 5 volunteers and 18 students there. The Religious Bureau ordered them to close the Center since they were acting without the Government’s permission. The Center closed its doors definitively last month and the team is preparing itself for new adventures.

- **Project Pailin** – New donations and the continued support of some NGOs have made possible the start of some construction on the land already prepared for building of a Hostel. We hope that with the Lord’s help work can be finished this year. Thanks for your support.

## Birthday Greetings

### July

1<sup>st</sup> Brother Marti Enrich  
21<sup>st</sup> Brother Javier Bometon  
25<sup>th</sup> Brother Vigilio Bwalya  
26<sup>th</sup> Brother Ismael Valls  
29<sup>th</sup> Brother Ignatius In

### August

4<sup>th</sup> Brother Malangmei Bartholomew  
8<sup>th</sup> Brother George Palandre  
13<sup>th</sup> Brother Bernhard Tremmel

17<sup>th</sup> Brother Andrés Barrera  
23<sup>rd</sup> Brother Juan Castro  
25<sup>th</sup> Brother Luis Garcia Sobrado

### September

1<sup>st</sup> Brother Eugenio Sanz  
5<sup>th</sup> Brother Pepito Mahong  
7<sup>th</sup> Brother Jose Maria Sierra  
9<sup>th</sup> Thuong Le Danh  
1<sup>st</sup> year Novice  
12<sup>th</sup> Brother Hilario Schwab  
23<sup>rd</sup> Brother Cesar Henriquez

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