

Easter 2015

“Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” More than 3,000 years later, it still seems as if the Passion of Christ has yet to end. He is still posing the same question as His church continues to face hostility from various quarters. I had found it difficult to live the liturgy of these days without relating the Passion of Christ to the suffering and death of the innocent.

**...TO BE UNAFRAID OF REALITY,
TO NOT TO RETREAT INTO OURSELVES, TO NOT
FLEE FROM WHAT WE FAIL TO UNDERSTAND,
TO NOT CLOSE OUR EYES TO PROBLEMS,
TO NOT DISMISS OUR QUESTIONS...**

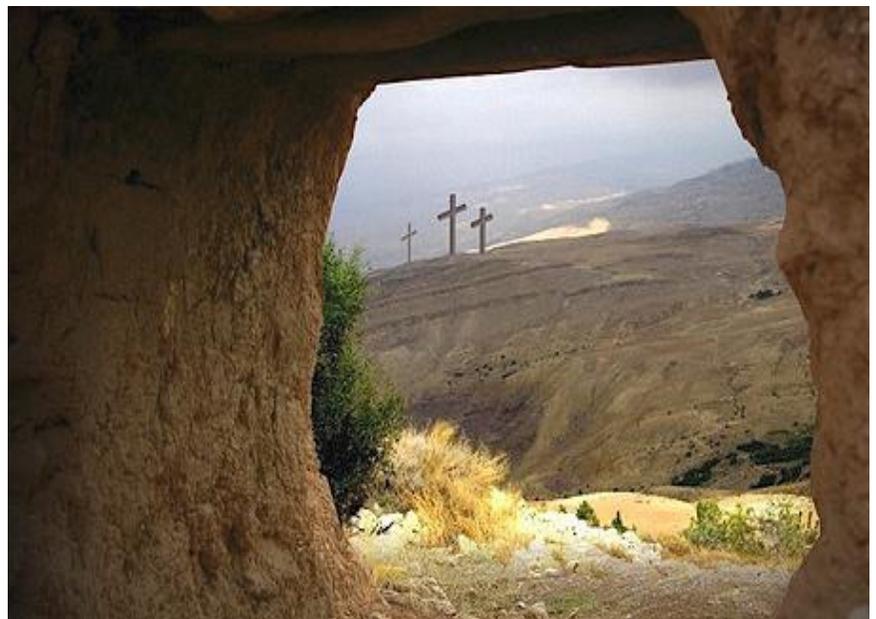
In the terrible massacre in Kenya at Garissa University College on Holy Thursday, nearly 150 Christian students were murdered by gunmen from the Islamist militant group, al-Shabab. One of the students said, “They killed my friends but I know they are all in heaven now because they died worshipping God.” The students were in a lecture hall for a morning prayer session when the gunmen attacked.

The Pope and many world leaders spoke out against this crime. Pope Francis condemned the indifference and “complicit silence” to Jihadist attacks on Christians in Kenya. After the traditional Via Crucis on Friday, he said, “Today, we see our brothers persecuted, decapitated, crucified for their faith in you, under our eyes and often with our complicit silence.”

I thought of the families that had lost a son or daughter, the Christian communities that had lost community members. How do we explain the Paschal Mystery to these people? How do we tell them, in their moment of grieve and pain - Alleluia, Christ is risen! He has defeated death! And for the Kenyan students who were killed, where is the resurrection, the eternal life? It was difficult to believe that the resurrection is more than a word that gives hope to the hopeless. But then I started to see signs of

In this Issue

<i>Pope visits Sri Lanka</i>	2
<i>The Fate of the Young in Vietnam</i>	3
<i>The Blessing of Our Community College</i>	4
<i>Parents’ Day</i>	5
<i>Br Malangmei’s Renewal of Vows</i>	6
<i>Our Candidates</i>	7
<i>Our Work with the Blind Students in Ha Noi</i>	8
<i>Come and See -Pastoral Youth Ministry in Ha Noi</i>	9
<i>Summer Activities in the Countryside with the Candidates</i>	10
<i>Contribution to the Year of Religious Consecration</i>	
<i>My Volunteer Experience</i>	



resurrection.

In the same week, I read about a prison inmate from Alabama, Anthony Ray Hinton, who walked out of prison a free man after 30 years on death row. In one of his interviews, he said, "I came out the door just like Lazarus did". In the following days, there was news on more than 300 migrant fishermen from countries such as Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos who were lured by the promise of a good job in Thailand but were instead enslaved on an isolated Indonesian island and forced to catch seafood for Western restaurants for years. Fortunately, they were recently rescued by the Indonesian Fisheries Ministry and sent back to their countries, reunited with their loved ones.

During Easter Sunday Mass, I

received new insights on the power of the resurrection when the priest spoke about in the daily challenges of couples who struggle to keep their marriage alive; the power of the Spirit moving in the Filipinos who despite having lost loved ones in their fight for democracy, did not give up but became more determined than ever.

The resurrection makes the impossible, possible. Coming back to life is not a dream but a reality, and this is what the Lord and the disciples preached. We can start over again, and we are called as a Christians to commit ourselves to let others to pass from death to life. Yes, Jesus is alive and the people who have emerge from the tomb, are those who had been part of the mystery. It demands us, as Pope Francis said, to be unafraid of reality, to not to retreat into

ourselves, to not flee from what we fail to understand, to not close our eyes to problems, to not dismiss our questions...

Let's be the disciples who overcame their fears, and come out of our hiding places to proclaim that He has destroyed the power of death, He is alive and He will be with us until the end of time.

Fraternally,

Juan.



Pope Francis Visits Sri Lanka by *Canisio Wilrich*

During Pope Francis' visit to Sri Lanka from 13 to 15 January 2015, some of the community members of the Tudella Novitiate had the opportunity to catch a glimpse of him as he made his way from the airport to Colombo. Some of the Novices and Brothers also attended the mass and canonisation of Blessed Joseph Vaz who is the first Sri Lankan saint. Born in 1651 in Goa, India, he worked as a missionary priest in Sri Lanka. Pope Francis took the opportunity to deliver a message of reconciliation, healing and peace as the country had civil war for many years.

The Fate of the Young in Vietnam

by Phero Bao Nguyen

Recently, I had a discussion with a Brother concerning the difficulties the young people face in reconciling their religious obligations with the pressures of surviving in the real world. I remember clearly, some of the conversations I had with them.

“When was the last time you went for confession?”

“Brother! I am a busy worker, and it has been some time ago, I don’t remember. I haven’t had communion for some time either.”

“Please understand, Brother! Workers like us are often busy and have little time to worry about those kind of things anymore. We are tied up with work and earning from early in the morning till late at night all the time - including weekends.”

“We are from Ha Tinh province (Viet Nam). There are eight in our family, four are here working in factories. We all live in a rented room which is only 13m². Most of us work eight hours a days and are paid about 3.2 million Dong (\$150) per month. It is hard to live here with that amount of money, so everyone tries to work extra hours to earn a little more and work even on weekends.”

They are bound by their jobs for various reasons – to help their families, to pay bills, to buy coffee, etc. Life is hard and it is hard to live in Ho Chi Minh City where everything is unbelievably expensive.

That is why if one is young and strong enough, he or she tries to earn as much as possible, hoping that the future will be bright, and there will be some savings for old age. Unfortunately for some, if they catch a disease or get into an accident, the money they have earned and saved will have to be spent on hospital bills. Sometimes they are forced to borrow.

I asked: *“Aren’t you afraid of falling sick?”*

“There is no time to worry about that. When we are still strong we need to work and earn as much as we can. Our children and parents at home keep us going.”

“How is it possible to attend Mass if you have to work even on Sundays?”

“Brother, on Sundays we try to go to Mass at 5 am, but honestly there have been many times when I could not make it because of the nights I spent working. I

am just too tired sometimes. Not long ago I talked to a priest about our situation, he encouraged us and advised us to say a prayer if we cannot go to church.”

Their simplicity and the life they live touched me. How many young people are in the same situation?

Many of them, including some from my hometown, are forced to work in factories simply because they are unable to further their studies.

My friend Hue once told me, *“I stopped studying for the university exams and decided to work because I knew that my family didn’t have enough money to support my studies”*. She explained that her mother has been having health problems for the past ten years and her father who had retired from the army, is not strong enough to work on the farm, so her brother does most of the farming. The family has 1.2 mau (around 4,000 m²), which is not



Thousands of young workers returning from the factories

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a very large area of land. They grow rice twice a year and do not have any other sources of income. Still, she hopes to continue her studies when she has enough savings.

The desire to support their families is one of their main reasons for moving to the city, many send money to their families. Many young people have a strong sense of duty towards their families who influence their life choices. One of the girls I know, who is studying and working to support her studies at the same time, has classes from morning to afternoon and goes to work from 4 pm till late at night. She earns \$100 a month but it is not enough to cover her fees and personal expenses. Sometimes, she has to eat instant noodles for meals and or go hungry when she does not have money.

The young people in Viet Nam lack the necessary knowledge and information vital for a good start in life. After finishing high school, most of them lack guidance and do not know which path to take. They end up spending most of their life working in a factory, hoping that one day they will find another way to live. If they manage to save enough money, they will continue their studies. Otherwise, they will continue to work in the factories.

Many are motivated by their families, their children and above all their future. A young mother shared, *“I’d like to earn enough to pay for my children’s education. I want to give them a better future. They shouldn’t have to work in the textile industry, or drive a rickshaw like my husband. So, I need to find a job, otherwise my sons will have to work and they won’t be able to go to school, which means they’ll never find good jobs. That’s my greatest worry. I want my children to have fewer worries than my husband and I do. We’re not educated. I only went to school for a very short time – far too short! I want to protect my sons from the same fate. I hope they will find jobs in the government departments”.*

Many workers, in general, and young people in Viet Nam are living in poverty. They are not only poor in material possessions, but also intellectually and spiritually. The fact that they are neglected and not given many opportunities to improve their lives drives us to think and reflect about how we, as Marists, can contribute. We all hope and pray that one day the situation will change for the better. Let us remember them in our prayers.

Have a happy and blessed Easter. May God be blessed.

The Blessing of Our Community College

by Alex Arockiasamy

On 2 February, on the day of “The Presentation of the Lord”, the Brothers, Candidates and hostel children along with Fr Sarto, IP, Vicar General of the Diocese, Fr Dominic Bishu, SSAM, CCC and DSA Sisters gathered in front of the hostel with our Bishop, Cyprian Monis. Each one of us carried a lighted candle to commemorate the day.

The Bishop and Fr Sarto began by explaining the significance of the day to the children. After that, we made a short procession into the hostel after the Bishop blessed the candles. He said a



ASANSOL COMMUNITY COLLEGE

DIOCESE OF ASANSOL - RUN BY THE MARIST BROTHERS

prayer for the Community College as well as the Brothers, children, and the future students and teachers of the college. He proceeded to bless and open the Computer and Tailoring blocks, and the new kitchen, while Fr Sarto opened the English block.

Br Alex thanked the Bishop, Vicar General and all the local religious members for their presence and prayers. The Bishop and Fr Sarto in turn, thanked and commended the Brothers for their good work in the hostel and in the diocese. After the blessing, all were served with tea and sweets. The registration of new student followed and the classes began the very next day. Currently, computer, spoken English and tailoring courses are available for the Santali youths in our diocese.



Parents' Day

by Alex Arockiasamy

On 22 February, the Brothers and children were busy celebrating Parents' Day at the hostel. The hostel was full of people as all the hostel children's parents were present. We had Santali cultural dances and songs to welcome them. The children went around and did the "Dobo" which was the Santali people's way of welcoming guests. It was followed by a procession to the hall. The leader of the hostel, Antony Baskey, welcomed everyone, while Sanjoy Hansda (Master of the Ceremony) briefed the parents on the programme in Santali.

Br Alex introduced the community members, including Br Pepito who joined recently. Some enquired about Br Paco as

they noticed his absence. Br Alex then presented the annual report to the parents through a PowerPoint presentation. The presentation showed how the children as well as the hostel and its surroundings have improved. Many of the parents were happy to see and hear about their children's studies and activities, as well as the Brother's commitment.

Br Alex also spoke about the Marist history, charism, mission and congregation. At the end of the presentation, all the parents and children were served biscuits and tea by the Brothers and Candidates.





After the tea break, we came for the second session which was very important for us. The one hour session, an open forum for the parents to ask questions, share their thoughts and interact with us. They



shared their concern for their children's health, studies and personal values. They appreciated our presence here and what we are doing for them and their children. The children were also given to opportunity to share with their parents their wishes, desires and expectations. Some shared their feelings, others thanked their parents for the sacrifices they have been making, which showed that they are able to empathise with their parents. It



was great to witness that our children are growing and I earning some good things here in the hostel.

At the end of the session, we went to the chapel for the Eucharistic celebration. Though many are non-Catholic, all of them willingly participated. During the homily, Fr Dolphy from Burdwan, pointed out that this is the only hostel which has a special day set aside for parents. It shows how the Brothers, parents and children are working together for the future of the children. He expressed his appreciation for our work here. After mass, we



served lunch to the 86 parents and 66 children present. After lunch, the parents and their child had a separate meeting with Br Alex where he shared on their progress. The parents were more than pleased to receive his feedback. It was a good day, with active interaction between the Brothers, parents and children. We thank God and our Good Mother for guiding us.

Br Malangmei's Renewal of Vows

by Alex Arockiasamy



On 26 February, the community prepared well for the evening mass and vows renewal of our young Br Malangmei. About five priests and a few religious sisters joined us and the children at our hostel for the Eucharistic celebration.

Fr Varghese, MSFS, was the main celebrant. After the Gospel reading, Br Malangmei renewed his vows and Br Alex received it on the behalf of the Superior General in the presence of other Brothers in the community. Later, some other priests from the local diocese joined us for dinner.

Since, it was also the birthday of Br Alex, the Candidates and the children prepared a few cultural items that made the day a wonderful celebration. We felt the grace of the Lord, through the celebration of the Brothers as a community.



Our Candidates by Alex Arockiasamy

Bapi Murmu and Prem Hansda have been sent to the South to experience life with another Marist community. Although they will only be there for a short time, it is a good opportunity for these two young men to go to a new place with a different atmosphere, language, culture, food, among others. We hope that this experience will give them an even better understanding of the Marist Brothers.

Bapi Murmu and Prem Hansda are the first fruits from the Santali Tribe. Both of them come from different districts and tribes, and know four languages: Santali their mother tongue, Bengali and Hindi which they learned in school, and now they are learning English with the Brothers. Their language skills will definitely improve as they adapt to life with the South Tamil Brothers as well as the people there.

Bapi comes from a poor family while Prem comes from a well settled family, but both of them coming from very good catholic families. Both parents are coming to visit them now and then

and we Brothers have a good communication with their families. Both are showing their interest in the Marist life and it seems they are ready to move to the Aspirant house in Bangladesh. We are currently working on getting them their passports. We are grateful to the Brothers in South India – Tamil Nadu for their openness, warm welcome and readiness to take care of these young men. May God bless them and lead them to the right path.



Br Alex, Br Pepito, Prem Hansda, Bapi Murmu, Br Jose Maria and Br Malangmei

Our Work with the Blind Students in Ha Noi by Geoff Kelly

The Association for the Blind in Vietnam has warmly welcomed our offer to teach English to their students and hope that we will extend our involvement. From our Community at Quoc Oai, both myself and Br Quy travel two days a week to teach at the centre in Ha Noi. One class is made up of students from various provinces throughout Vietnam, while the other comprises the teachers of the blind centre.

The project is sponsored by FMSI and also Marist Solidarity Australia, which finance not only the lessons, but also the purchase of braille material and equipment, and provide support for the board and lodging of



Br Geoff at the signing of the agreement with the Director of the Association for the Blind.



Br Quy, our first Vietnamese Brother, with the students during the Christmas celebration

the students. We hope that by developing their English language skills, they would have a better chance of securing employment in the future.

Teaching blind people, of course, has presented us with many challenges. When standing in front of the class for the first time, I realised with some alarm that my usual recourse to the “blackboard” or visual aids was not to be. Even describing visual images is of limited value because many of the student are blind from birth and have no experience of what I was talking about. Even though they are very attentive, learning English, or any other subjects for that matter, is much more difficult.

...THEIR FRIENDLINESS AND WARMTH REMIND ME OF A WHOLE SET OF VALUES QUITE APART FROM SUCCESS, ACHIEVEMENT AND PURSUING “THE GOOD LIFE”.

There are very limited resources for blind people in Vietnam, and they are clearly facing many deprivations and disadvantages. I continue to be inspired by their serene acceptance of their disability as well as their openness and patient attentiveness to learning in the face of enormous difficulties. Nonetheless, their friendliness and warmth remind me of a whole set of values quite apart from success, achievement and pursuing “the good life”. I feel I have a lot to learn from them and really enjoy being with them.



Br Quy and Br Geoff with students and a teacher.

Come and See - Pastoral Youth Ministry in Ha Noi by Mitsuaki Hatanaka

The freshness of youth is said to be like the coolness of an autumn sunrise. In 2014, our community welcomed eight candidates and some university students. They came with a simple backpack, and a lot of misconceptions.

The Candidates lived in two rented rooms close to the Brothers’ house, while the others lived in our house. When the year ended, the Brothers recommended five young men to the District Leader for the Aspirancy in Saigon. In September, another batch of young men took part in the “Come and See”, to prepare for their Candidacy in November.



Visiting families in Can Loc

In the midst of the noisy and traffic congested city of Ha Noi, our community offers a space for these young men to discover their vocation by listening to the Word of God, common prayer, living as a community, attending Mass daily, going for monthly confession, learning about the Marist Brothers' – the congregation's spirituality and mission, attending personal interviews and English courses. A Vietnamese English teacher gives the Candidates two hours of English language lessons, three times a week, and the Brothers help them with their studies and other aspects of their life.

During my first year in Vietnam, I learned about the vocational work initiated in the countryside, communities and parishes by the first batch of Brothers. The youth seemed to appreciate our community and prayer life, our cause, simplicity, modesty and the sharing of our missionary experience.

I find that the families appreciate our visits. To them they are like a special fragrance of God's presence. I discover the ideals, joys, optimism and hope among the youths. They possess deep faith, capacity for prayer, openness, simplicity, generosity, gratitude, strong personal and family values, and are devoted to Mary and dream of living in fullness. I could see the deep faith of the families and their love for work.

Summer Activities in the Countryside with the Candidates *by Pietro Codato*

In the summer of 2014, we organised a number of interesting activities in the parishes of Ha Tinh and Nghe An provinces where our young men originate from.

There were two to three weeks of English lessons for children, led by our Candidates, Aspirants and some University students who are living with the Brothers in Hanoi. The lessons were conducted in the parishes of the Ha Tinh province: Trang Luu, Hoa Thang, Ke



Meeting about 1000 youths belonging to the Teresa Group from the Son La Parish (Do Luong, Ha Tinh) was a very exciting experience!



Dong, An Nhen, Chan Thanh and Can Loc. I also provided English lessons in Thai Binh, a province closer to Hanoi and organised Vocational promotion and other youth activities with the Brothers in An Nhen and Son La.

These little initiatives are like tiny seeds which, on one hand have excited the young people in formation, on the other hand have allowed others to appreciate the beauty of a life spent in serving others. A good way of promoting vocations, they have started to bear fruits.



Candidate Chien and Aspirant Tuy teaching in Huong Boc Chapel (Ha Tinh)



The Postulant Tri founded a new English Club and spent part of his holidays with the children of An Nhien Parish (Ha Tinh)

Contribution to Year of Religious Consecration by Joseph Tri



As their Project for the Year of Consecrated Religious, Fr Tien translated and the Aspirants published the "Religious Life Through the Centuries" booklet. Our appreciation goes to Fr Tien OC and our Postulant, Tri, for producing this booklet. In the following paragraphs, Tri shares his experience.

The idea of translating and publishing the "Religious Life through the Centuries" booklet came from a Cistercian priest and I was assigned as the designer. It took longer than I expected, as we faced many ups and downs in the process. In the beginning, when I was sent copies of the booklet in

English and Vietnamese, I did not have any idea on how to go about it. So, I decided to consult the Brothers and browse through the books in our bookshelf.

When I completed the trial printing, I was disappointed because it did not turn out as I wished. I decided to start all over again, which took me a while to finish, so I was very excited when it was finally done and printed in colour. The production of the booklet will begin soon and copies will be sent to local formation houses as well as to other congregations and local churches. I hope the booklet will help to promote our vocation awareness programme.

My Volunteer Experience by Janina Lotterer

I was in Cambodia for 5 months. During this time, I had the opportunity to learn about the country, its people and its culture. The experience also helped me to understand myself and life better. It opened a new world for me and has expanded my vision. I was able to learn something about unity, love and togetherness.

Country borders shouldn't be our borders. We should



look beyond borders before we make decisions and judgements. As Alexander von Humboldt (German naturalist) once said, the most dangerous of all philosophies is the philosophy of the people who have not seen the world.

I realise now that there is so much more to see and to learn. And the greatest thing is to be a missionary in a foreign country like the Marist Brothers. I worked with Dr Estela from Mexico, three times a week and also taught English to young kids in a kindergarten. I had the chance to get to know many young people, especially young kids. We played a lot together and they were very open. Therefore, it was not difficult to get close to them and finally to become friends. At the end, they became a part of my life and it was very sad and hard for me to leave them.

It was also a new experience to work together with the Marist Brothers and live in a Marist community. Although I had to adapt to a different kind of life, at the end it was the biggest joy. I loved our life together, to pray together and to have a good time together. We had a very international community. Two Brothers (Brs Francis and Gilbert) are from Ghana, one Brother (Br Tim) is from New Zealand and the last brother (Br Iggie) is from South Korea. Most of the time we communicated in English. We learned a lot about each other and enjoyed sharing stories about our home country. I especially miss the community prayer as it was great to come together in the presence of God.

After a wonderful time in Cambodia I want to take as much as I can back into my life in Germany. I would like to share my experience, especially with future volunteers. Everyone, who is interested in being an ambassador of their country, wants to do social work and is interested in the Marist way of life, should do it! It is a great opportunity. Sadly many young people don't know enough about Marcellin Champagnat and the good things he did. But we, the ex-volunteers and the German CMI-Team, can change that together.

Finally, I want to say thank you so much to the Marist Brothers and my host family in Cambodia for the wonderful and unforgettable experience. I also thank the CMI-Team members who supported me.

THANK YOU SO MUCH! OKUN CHERAN! (In Khmer)



Br Gilbert, Br Tim and Br Francis



Estela, Lucia, Rodrigo and Josue

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