

## The Dance of Obedience

*Help us live our lives, not like some chess match where all is calculated, nor like a game where all is difficult, nor a theory that gives us a headache, but like an endless feast where the encounter with you is renewed, like a ball, like a dance enfolded in the arms of your Grace, in the universal music of love. – Madeleine Delbr el, The Dance of Obedience*

Time flies! It is now the final quarter of 2015. Soon, it will be the end of the year of Montagne and the year of Consecrated Life, the beginning of the year of Fourviere, and in between countless meetings and workshops. Sometimes, I find myself caught in a powerful stream of events that threatens to throw me off track. So many needs, so many challenges!

At the district level, the Formation houses have consolidated, the first group of local Brothers are studying at MAPAC, nine years of MoUs have come to an end, the workshop for vocation promoters and community leaders have concluded, the meeting of the Lay Marists and Brothers is just around the corner...

For the past few months, I have been going from one country to another, from one



*Formators' meeting, Davao, the Philippines*

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meeting to another. New experiences yes, but I wonder how much I have been reflecting in the experience itself, since it is not the experience that make us wiser or sensitive to needs but rather the reflection of the experience.

Recently, I attended the Perpetual Profession of Br Malangmei who is a member of our District. I can still recall the celebration vividly – the beauty of the place, the songs of the students, the offerings of the families, the Bishop, the relatives of Br Malangmei and the perspiring faces of the other Brothers. The preparation for the ceremony had definitely drawn the community closer.



*Tudella community's outing to the tea plantation in Bandarawela, Sri Lanka*

A few days after that, I visited the International Novitiate in Tudella, Sri Lanka. Six first year novices, five second year novices and Brothers from nine countries – Brazil, Australia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Solomon Island, Vanuatu, China and Mexico. What a great example of internationality and interculturality. They are learning to live together, to discover the richness of being different and to accept and learn from diversity. I was amazed at the physical transformation that is taking place, it has become their home and they have spent many hours beautifying it.

Reflecting on these visits, I asked myself, “What kind of future are we building now?” I got the answer the following day when I dropped by at the office of a local Bishop. In the silence of the waiting room, I read the words of Madeleine Delbr el, “To be a good dancer, we do not need to know where the dance will lead. We need simply to be an extension of You, agile and alive, feeling through ourselves the rhythm of the orchestra...”

Lord, help us allow ourselves to be led by You like Mary. That we may obey, unhesitatingly your word, knowing that we are just workers not master builders. Amen.

Fraternally,

Juan.

## My visit to Australia

by Francis Attah

From 4 to 16 June, I was in Australia as a guest of honour for Champagnat day celebration at two Marist schools namely, Marist Ashgrove in Queensland and Marist College Bulleen in Victoria.

Highlights of this visit were my participation in the two Eucharistic celebrations, during which I had the chance to address the two schools in their respective campuses.

In Ashgrove, the feast of St Marcellin Champagnat was celebrated on the 5 June in a very lively and colourful liturgy with about 1700 people made up of students, staff, parents and Brothers. The main celebrant was Fr Jim Hargrave SM who was assisted by four other priests.

During the liturgy, I was among the four people representing the spectrum of the Marist family who placed parts of a carved heart together, symbolising the

*Retired Brothers receiving awards*



attribute to Champagnat “the heart that knows no bounds”.

Besides my admiration for the liturgy and the atmosphere of the venue, I was also touched by the preamble of Fr Jim’s

homily for Champagnat Day. He began with this question, “175 years after your death, how many of you will have thousands of people remembering you, being grateful for your life’s work? How many of you will have thousands of people trying to continue your work,

*The heart that knows no bounds*



trying to put your dream into action? How many of you will officially be honoured as a saint of the Church because of your dream and the way you lived it? These questions are still vivid and lingering in my memory.

Another highlight of the day was the recognition of the dedication of life, service and commitment of some Brothers in the Ashgrove Marist Community to the Institute. Br Raph Arnell has been a Brother for 50 years; Brs Roger Burkey, Thomas Hickey and Len Smith have been Brothers for 60 years; and Br Patrick Hoeley and John Venard Smith celebrated 70 years as Marist Brothers.

As the special guest, I had the chance to speak to the assembly about our mission in Pailin. I also expressed gratitude for the various support received from Marist College, Ashgrove, and entreated the college to continue to support us in our mission in the District



*With the Principal of Marist College Ashgrove*

and in Pailin particularly. Mr Peter McLoughlin, the Head Master of the college in his speech expressed his appreciation for the relationship that exist between Ashgrove and Pailin and pledged to ensure that it continues.

On 6 June, in the good company of Ms Mena Mclean, I visited the office of Marist Solidarity Australia to meet Brs Allen Shelly and Brian Kinsella to brief them about the Pailin Hostel Project and also to thank them for the support given to our various projects. At the same time, I also met with some of the boys from Ashgrove who had visited Pailin

*Procession before Mass*



before. During the evening of the same day, Mr James Cooper took me around the boarding house to see how it operates and to meet the boys.

9 June 2015 was slated for Champagnat Day celebration in

Marcellin College, Bulleen in Victoria. The Mass was held in the college assembly hall that was packed with students and staff. The celebrant was Mons. Tony Ireland. Prior to the mass, I was invited to join an elegant procession together with the Mr Mark Murphy, The Principal of Marcellin College and Mons. Ireland. The mass was lively and prayerful.

After the mass, a short video of immersion experience of students and staff who were in Cambodia in 2014 was played, after which I was formally introduced and invited to speak by Mr Matthew Hamlim, the Liturgy Captain of the college.



*Group of Ashgrove boys coming to Pailin this year*

Just like in Ashgrove, the main essence of my speech was the expression of appreciation for the assistance received from both schools and a call to strengthen the relationship that exists between us. I also added that the presence of the immersion groups and work that they do add credibility to our presence and identity in mission. I underlined the fact that in Pailin, the young people do not see any difference between the Brothers and the students who come from Australia, and hence often ask me, “Br Francis, when are the young Brothers from Australia are coming again?”

In his address, Mr Mark Murthy, the Head Master of Marcellin College praised the works of the Brothers in Pailin and promised the college's readiness to work with the Brothers.

Besides the Mass, other activities were organised to mark the day and I was privileged to be one of the judges of the gift show.

The climax of the visit was a dinner organised in my honour. It was attended by almost all the boys from Marcellin who have been to Pailin and their parents. Also present was the staff who accompanied the boys to Pailin. Another group that was present, were the boys



*With the Principal of Marcellin College*

who will be coming to Pailin this year, their parents and the staff who will accompany them. Various speeches were given by the representatives of students who have been to Pailin, staff, parents and and finally myself. Among other things, the occasion was used to raise funds for the works of the Brothers in Pailin.

One thing that stood out during this visit was the love and the generosity of the Brothers and the staff in both schools. I really felt so much at home in

*With teachers from Marcellin College*



all the communities that I stayed and visited.

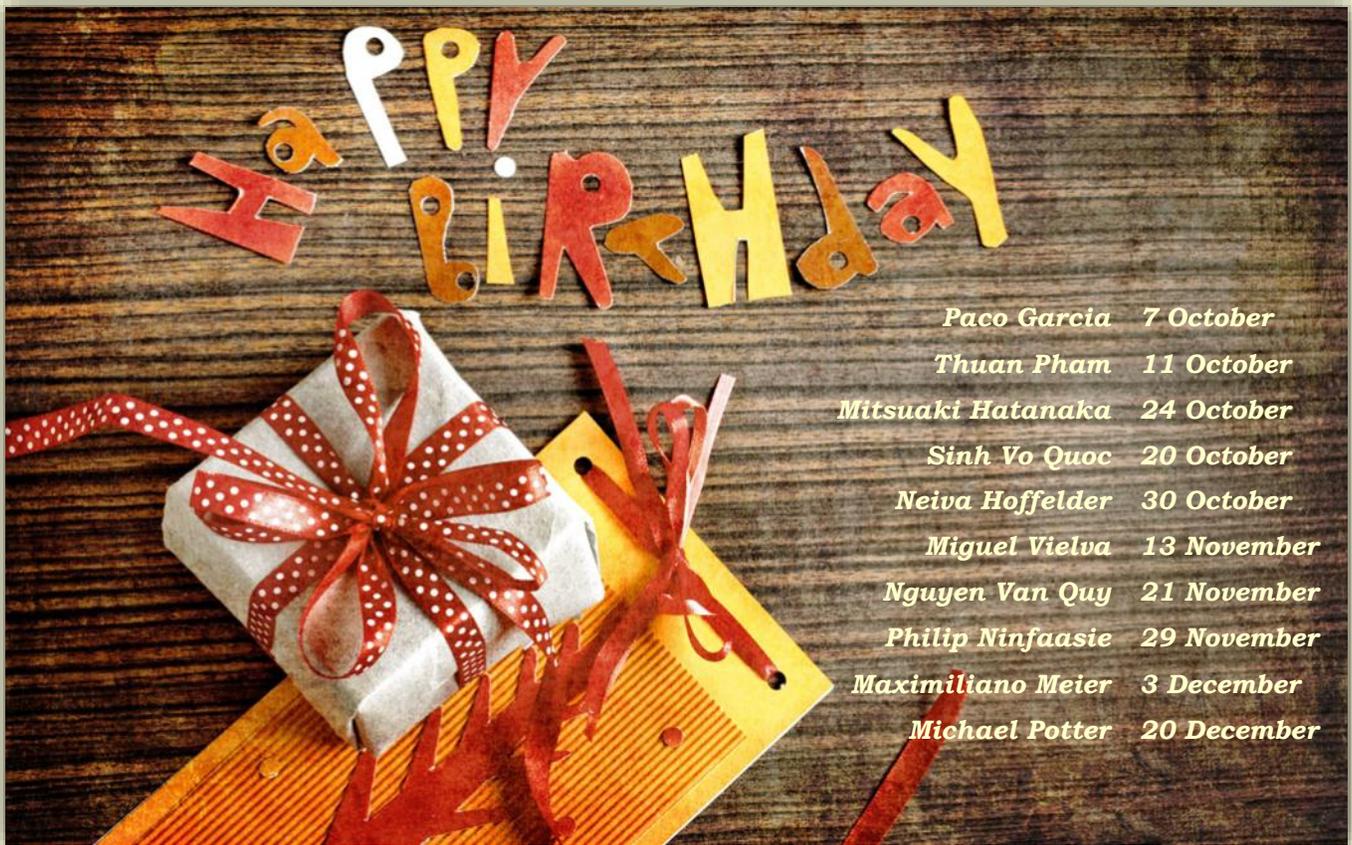
While in Australia, I also had the chance to attend a seminar on Mystics and Prophets organised for teachers in Marist schools with Brs Michael Green and David Hall as the main speakers. I also visited my two nephews and their families in Albany, Perth, Western Australia. It was a good family reunion.

In conclusion, I wish to thank Br Mark Fordyce who was very instrumental in the organisation of this trip, Br Jeff Crow the Provincial of the Province of Australia and all those who helped me in various ways.

May God bless all of you!



*With family members*



## **The Talit Community Celebrates!**

On 7 September, we welcomed the family members of Br Malangmei along with our Candidates' parents. We planned well for that day for two reasons – to welcome all our Brothers and relatives, and to celebrate Br Pepito (5 Sep) and Br Jose Maria's (7 Sep) birthdays. In the evening, Br Alex, prepared a short prayer service which was followed by a simple gathering. The children of our hostel came forward to wish our two Brothers "Happy Birthday" and welcomed all the other Brothers and visitors with a beautiful song. Br Alex presented gifts and good wishes with the Brothers who celebrated their birthdays, Brs. Shanthi and Juan, as well as the Brothers from the South with small gifts before sharing a lovely meal together.

8 September was a big day for us and our hostel children as it was the birthday of our Beloved Mother Mary and the day Br Malangmei made his final vows in his journey as a Marist brother. After 20 days of preparing the place, invitations and decorations; sending invitations to a good number of local laity and religious around us; making other arrangements, the we and our hostel children waited enthusiastically to



*Our Superiors, Brothers and the Talit community with the Bishop from the South*



*Top left: Br Malangmei makes his final vows; top right: Br Malangmei with his parents; bottom left: Brothers with Br Malangmei's family members; bottom right: Br Juan inviting all the Brothers to welcome Br Malangmei as a full member of the congregation*

welcome all for the celebration. From 9am onwards, guests started to arrive at our house. Our bishop, Cyprian Monis, was the main celebrant along with good number of priests who work in our diocese. Our main guests were Br Shanthi, fms Provincial of South Asia, Br Juan Castro, fms MDA Superior, six Brothers from South India, Br Javier from Bangladesh, eight members of Br Malangmei's family including his parents from Manipur and Fr Mark, his vocation promoter. Other guests include Catholics living in Talit village, and some of our hostel children's parents.

At 10 am, the Bishop along with our superiors and Malangmei's family members were welcomed by the local people in the Santali way of washing their feet. Br Alex and our Candidate Prem welcomed all with a great smile and helped them to understand the Mass and the ceremony of the perpetual profession in both English and Santali languages through their commentary. Br Shanthi, the delegate of Br Superior General, received Br Malangmei's the vows in the presence of Br Juan. Almost 300 people including priests and religious witnessed this ceremony. The mass was in the Santali language, most of the hymns were also in Santali with some of them in English.

After the Mass, we had a short cultural programme where the children from our hostel and CCC (Sisters' convent) performed dances. Br Alex welcomed and thanked our Bishop, our Brother superiors, Malangmei's parents and Fr Mark by presenting shawls (garlanding). Br Malangmei's parents also expressed their gratitude. After that, lunch was served.

God is with us, with the blessing of our Lord and the intercession our Good mother, together with the children of our hostel, we were able to make the day a meaningful one and were happy to share our joy with a house full of people.

### **God's blessings** *by Br Guangzhao Pedro*

Every day is a gift and blessing from God. We praise Him with a heart filled with thanksgiving. We started and finished this month with the Desert day. It helped us to reflect our life and our relationship with ourselves, with God and with others.

On 7 July, we celebrated the feast of Blessed Peter To Rot and the independence day of Solomon Islands. Br Epalle prepared a traditional meal and we watched some videos of the Solomon Islands and the St Joseph Catholic High School in Tenaru. He introduced his culture and performed three traditional dances for us.



*Br Epalle in his traditional costume*



*Br Epalle preparing traditional food from Solomon Islands*



*Br Fereole in his traditional costume*

On 30 July, we celebrated the 30<sup>th</sup> national day of Vanuatu. Br Fereole prepared a prayer for Vanuatu and cooked a traditional meal for the community. Before the meal, he performed traditional Vanuatuan dances and talked about Vanuatu with the help of videos and photos.

It was a very good opportunity to share about our countries and cultures with the



*Renovation of the kitchen*

community. It has helped us to understand and love each other more.

Every one of us has different talents and interests, so each one tries his best to develop skills like learning foreign languages, play



*Enjoying a game of volleyball*

musical instruments, singing, repairing, caring for the fish in the aquariums, cultivating flowers, plants and crops, etc. Each day we do our best to make this place a place of beauty, and this community a community of joy.



*Trimming trees and taking care of the garden*

Since the kitchen was renovated, its functionality and cleanliness has improved. And with the increase of members in our community, many of whom love sports, we decided to build a new volleyball court and a mini-football field within our property.

### **MDA News**

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