



Revolutionary in Many Ways

As I begin reflecting on the meaning of this XXII General Chapter, the first thing that comes to mind is “A new beginning” and I ask myself, “New?”

How is this Chapter revealing newness to all of us?

First of all, through the General Council’s decision to hold it – not in Rome, the Eternal City – but in a small town in a Latin American country, one that has been embroiled in political and religious strife for the last thirty years. More specifically, in **Colombia**; in a place called **Rio**

Negro, near **Medellin**, where the Theology of Liberation has been at the forefront of efforts to address ‘*the cries of the poor*’ and help them overcome the powerful forces of injustice that they face.

At this exceptional assembly men and women, religious and lay imbued with the charism of St. Marcellin, are working side by side, in a global convocation recalling the words of *St. Paul to the Galatians*: “*There is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female, for you are all one body in Christ Jesus.*” (3: 28)

Living together these days in the presence of Jesus and Mary, united in prayer and communion, we have been opening our minds and hearts to visualize the future of our Congregation in new ways, asking the Spirit to guide us in letting go of unwarranted fears and narrow-minded points of view.



We've had an invigorating encounter with a group of young people and this has infused the Chapter with a sense of refreshment, enabling us to look at the world from their very uplifting perspective, strengthening our desire to go beyond our comfort zones and deepening our commitment to accompany them in their vibrant faith-filled lives.

As we continue celebrating the Bicentennial of the Institute, we are gaining a deepening appreciation of the Spirit's presence and work in the lives of Marist laymen and women here at the Chapter and throughout the world. How inspiring their passion for leading prayerful fraternal lives, using their gifts and talents to educate children and youth throughout the world, making our shared Marist charism shine with a new brilliance.

The decision to have a lay Facilitator, Mr. Mathew from France, has also been a first at this Chapter. He has introduced us to a method new for many of us, the U process. It consists of three steps: imagining, making present our collective intention and turning it into reality. To accomplish this, we have needed to let go of many long-held ideas and allow new ones to emerge.



Pope Francis, during his meeting with Religious in Medellin at the time of the Chapter, gave us a stirring exhortation that resounded in our hearts. He urged us to leave our self-centeredness behind and go to the peripheries. *"In prayer we grow in freedom; in prayer we learn to be free. Prayer draws us out of our self-centeredness, draws us away from being reclusive, from feeling satisfied to live a religious life devoid of substance. Prayer leads us to place ourselves, with docility, in the hands of God in order to fulfil his will and turn his plan of salvation into reality."*

We have visited various places in Rio Negro where people are caring for vulnerable children and youth, and this has deepened our awareness of a strong call from the Spirit to be present at the peripheries.

We are also experiencing the sense of a new beginning in the way the Chapter's Liturgy Commission has been inviting us to pray together. We start every morning with a personal time of contemplation, the members of the Chapter meeting in the Chapel to focus on the presence of *Jesus as the centre of our lives*. All the liturgies are dynamic and inspire us to discover and practice new ways to be aware of God's presence in our lives.

Marcellin is alive in our hearts and his great love for our Good Mother and her work throughout the world is continuing to attract and bless youthful souls steeped in our Marist charism. In a wonderful

way the growing number of prayerful young Brothers Lay Marists is confirming our faith in our risen Brother and his Divine Providence for us. Now is the time to go back to our communities and reflect on how we can make these calls a reality in our personal lives and those of the communities to which we belong. Magnificat!

Bro. Juan Castro, fms.

THE MERCIFUL FATHER

Reflection from Br. Thuan Pham - MAPAC

Today, we live in a world of rapid changes. Almost everything has changed and more keeps on changing. But something has remained constant and unchanging: Love and Forgiveness. The Evangelist Luke has shown the image of a loving and merciful God in his gospel the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32). Some would prefer to call it the Prodigal Father, meaning to say - a father who is lavish and outpouring in love, mercy and forgiveness.

In our world characterized by indifference, cold treatment of one another, war and violence, love and forgiveness would heal wounds of separation and division. If there is love there is forgiveness, because forgiveness is the most concrete manifestation of love. The world is in chaos due to the absence of love and forgiveness and this is exactly what is happening in places in the world where there is not love and forgiveness. That is why each one of us must learn how to love and forgive one another. Luke has pictured to us the image of God as a merciful Father in his Gospel chapter 15: 11-32, a Merciful Father who is always ready to welcome back his wandering children without any condition.



The story of the merciful father begins with a man who has two sons. The younger son asked his father for his share of the father's wealth as an early inheritance. Once received, the son quickly sets off on a long journey to a distant country and spent all his money in a wasteful extravagant way. When the money was all spent, a severe famine hit the country the son finds himself in a destitute situation.

He took a job feeding pigs. Finally, he grew tired and came to his senses, he finally decided to return to home. Feeling remorseful he recognized his foolishness and decided to return to his father and ask for forgiveness and mercy. The father, who has been waiting, received his son back with open arms, and embraced him with great compassion. He was overjoyed by the return of his lost son. Immediately the father turned to his servants and asked them to prepare an enormous feast in celebration of his son's return. Meanwhile, the older son got furious and angry when he came in from work and discovered a party was going on with music and dancing to celebrate his younger brother's return.

The father tried to dissuade the older brother to come in and join the celebration. The Older brother was filled with jealousy and rage that he failed to understand what his father was telling him: "You are always with me, and everything I have is yours."

The message of Luke 15: 11-32 is about God's unconditional love for us his children. He is a merciful father who is always there waiting for us, to restore us back and puts his loving embrace as His children again and again. God is a father who forgives us even before we repent and ask for his forgiveness, no matter how sinful we are to him. Luke 15:11-32 really talks about my life. It talks about my wandering life far away from God, a life that is wasted without sense and meaning.

I have lived a life without God for quite so long and I never knew how much God the Father loves me. But through this parable, I came to know of His love and compassion for me. I recognized that his love is without end. I just need to return to Him in haste and with great humility. I often heard about people talk about God's love for His people but I could not really comprehend it until I understood the parable of the Merciful Father. This passage is so important to me because it taught me about God's unconditional love and compassion. Because of this knowledge of the tremendous love of God for me, I want to offer him my whole life spreading His love and forgiveness to others. This parable from Luke is much related to the situation in the world today too. Many people in the world today live their lives far away from God and his teachings. There are many people who have turned their back to God and lived a sinful life and even though they feel bad and want to come back to the Lord and starts fresh but they think God will not accept and forgive them.



The only thing needed is to ask forgiveness. And God forgives. "No ifs no buts". God is not like a judge who is always ready to make a judgment on our actions. He is a compassionate Father who is always kind and forgiving to his children. So, we must not be afraid to come back to him to receive his love and forgiveness. It is important that we know how much God loves and share our concern so that we can freely come back to him whenever we make mistakes. God is always and forever loving and merciful to us his children. It is His desire to forgive and love us as his daughters and sons. He is always there watching and waiting for us to come back to His home, our home.

I am a lost sinner like you and everyone else seeking salvation and of the Father's love. We should not remain standing afraid and ashamed, for ours is a loving, merciful and forgiving God. We only need to be courageous and humble enough for God has forgiven us as His sons and daughters.



MARIST BROTHERS VOCATION FIESTA - Talit

In the month of September from 22nd to 25th, “**Marist vocation Fiesta**” was conducted for the youth of Manipur (North East India) at St. Paul’s Retreat House Mantripukhri, Imphal Diocese. I joined with **Fr. Mark Thangkhan Ai** animated the “**Fiesta**”. It was a good beginning and we the Marist brothers of **Talit – West Bengal** community committed to keep contact with those young men from Manipur to get some of them for our future Candidacy.

Interestingly there were 21 young men from different part of Imphal Diocese. Those young men are students from Classes XI to Degree level. Fr. Mark was the priest who is helping us to make this program successful. The young men were delighted to participated in this program and happy to know Marist Brothers for the first time and like to know more about us in the future. The program was short and sweet. We were helping them to aware of their call to be ‘**Religious Brother**’ through different materials particularly the call of some Prophets from the Old testament and Disciples in the New Testament.

Also, I shared something specially about call of Mother Mary and our Founder Champagnat. Sharing with the young men about my vocation story was helpful to know something about someone from their own soil’s vocation which encouraged them to think on their own vocation in the future. On the last day after we went to a park, part of a small outing and having good time with the young men. We brothers are very grateful to Fr. Mark and his friendly support to have this special Vocation camp in my own diocese.

Bro. Malangmei Thaingamlung.



VN Country Retreat and Meeting



From 20 - 24 of August 2017 the brothers had their annual retreat in Vung Tau. It was based on the pre-chapter process and the letter of Br. Emili Turú - *LaValla, Lighthouse*. Each community and the young brothers shared their experience on the pre-chapter process, as well introduced one chapter of Br. Emili's letter for reflection and prayer throughout the day.

On 24th morning, the last day, we had a short country meeting and in the evening, we celebrated the Golden Jubilee of Br. Pietro, the Silver Jubilee of Br. Canisio and 10 years FMS presence in VN.



Aspirancy – Saigon



The new Aspirancy formation program of 2017-2018, under the direction of Br. Canisio, started on September 08. Mr. Thanh is our aspirant. We had an official welcome celebration and the next day had a pilgrimage to our Lady's and Christ the King shrines in Vung Tau. We wish Mr. Thanh a happy and blessed Aspirancy year.



Br. Canisio J Willrich

FROM SAMUT SAKHON ...

“Marist Brothers! You are doing well! You can be happy and proud with the way the Marist Centre in Samut Sakhon is working with those poor Myanmar kids! So... don't worry too much, keep calm, just continue doing so!”



Maybe someone around or our visitors could sincerely think like this. Maybe temptation sounds like this. Maybe... but definitively it's not what is going to happen. We cannot stop!

After a few years, it's true that most of the initial goals of our centre have been reached: a lot of kids have received an education and have enjoyed their childhood, the structures and the everyday operation has been quite consolidated, the children's health keeps improving, their attendance is better and better, and we even have several students up to fifteen and sixteen years old! Which was just a dream only two or three years ago. So...? Keep calm?

No way: every step we take shows us a farther goal, another target we should reach, another need of our children that we should fight to cover! We feel urged to go in haste, here in the periphery!

And we have just arrived to a milestone in our journey: how can we help these older kids of ours? What are their real needs and dreams, and what can we do for them? At their age, all their friends, cousins and neighbours are working and bringing home some money to help the family, and starting to repeat the cycle of life of most Myanmar families. Even it must be a bit embarrassing for them: “Yes, I am 15, taller than my father, and I am still studying”. But they know, they are now convinced of their right to education, and the better chances in life if they keep studying. Of course, they will be able to help their families much better in the future... Oh, my goodness! If their parents and relatives just could understand or really believe this!



And here we are: in two weeks we are going to start, with a small group of nine elder students, a sort of Secondary English Program. It still doesn't have a name or an explanatory document... it's just an idea, a kind of rehearsal to see if we can handle it, given our resources scarcity and non-existent budget. But we thought that

it was the moment, and we have repeatedly verified that the Providence is always taking care of this Project of God! They are going to receive almost every subject in English, we have prepared a classroom and some educative tools, we have assigned the teachers and the timetable, we are working hard in preparing our own adapted syllabus... and we'll enjoy the invaluable presence and helping hand of Rosa, coming from Spain for six months. So... let's start! In five or six months, when the Second Term of this school-year will finish, we'll know if this is the best and possible way we have to answer their needs, and the way God wants us to go on.

Br. Andres Barrera.

Self-Discovery - News from Sri Lanka



Recently our Tudella Novitiate community had a three-day retreat at Tewaththa Retreat House, at the National Basilica. The retreat was conducted by Br. Nicholas and Br. Rod. The retreat has been wonderful, peaceful, and meaningful, as we reflected and worked on ourselves through meditation and some activities. The main Resource person for the retreat was Fr. Julian Patrick, a psychologist, - a diocesan priest, who spoke on *"Self-Discovery"*.

During the retreat we asked ourselves, *"Who am I?"* and *"What is my true-self and false-self?"* Fr. Patrick told us that we have to be brutally honest with ourselves in daily life. He told us that becoming conscious of our unconscious, discovering our true-self, is the way to truly living our spirituality. That means that we are called to be aware and mindful of all our actions and experiences in our daily life, like talking, behaving, playing, thinking, and getting angry with others. In addition, *"many religious people are not spiritual and many people are spiritual but not religious"*. Fr. Patrick also pointed out the danger of living unconsciously. He said, *"when we are unconscious, we are living our life like an alcoholic, who knows about the danger of taking alcohol but cannot stop taking it"*. Furthermore, living unconsciously means that we don't look at ourselves in depth, and we start looking at other's faults, then we can criticize them, spread rumours, and get angry with others. Sometimes it becomes one of the biggest issues in living community well, when we do not get along with each other.





Finally, he invited all of us to know our true self and to discover ourselves more. On the final evening, our prayer was a ritual ceremony saying to each other “*sorry*” and “*thank you*” as we sometimes find it difficult to say those words to our brothers. We returned to the novitiate pondering and reflecting, as we asked ourselves the question “*what is God whispering to me in this time?*”

Rubel (2nd year Novice)



A Big Thanks to you Br. Emili and the Council for your great mission as our Leaders for last eight years. You did your best for the Institute, particularly for your special concern on our District of Asia.

A warm welcome to you Br. Ernesto and the Council for accepting the leadership for coming years. Behalf of all the members of Marist District of Asia, we wish you all good with our prayers as your brothers and Sisters.

Special prayers requested:

Bro. Pepito is going for Angiogram (and probably Angioplasty) procedure these days

BIRTHDAYS

October 2017

- 5th Geoffrey Kelly
- 7th Francisco Garcia (Paco)
- 11th Thuan Pham
- 20th Sinh Vo Quoc

November 2017

- 21st Nguyen Van Quy

December 2017

- 3rd Maximillano Meier
- 20th Michael Potter
- 28th Lawrence Lavalley

**Good wishes and Prayers
Brothers**



How is this Chapter revealing newness to all of us?

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