Marist Brothers of the Schools *(fms)*

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OFFICE OF THE PROVINCIAL SUPERIOR



30th November, 2024

Dear Marvelous Companions,

THE 2024 ADVENT MESSAGE TO THE BROTHERS OF THE PROVINCE OF WEST AFRICA

Receive fraternal greetings from the Provincial House, Accra!

As we step into the season of Advent in readiness for the joyous celebration of Christmas, we find ourselves at the beginning of a new liturgical year. Advent we all know is a time of waiting, of hope and of anticipation as we prepare our hearts and minds for the coming of our saviour, Jesus Christ. Advent is a season that invites us to reflect on new beginnings. However, we also know that new beginnings are not always easy because they invite change – something that can be scary or frightening. Change processes often require us to leave behind what is familiar and to embrace what is unknown. And the more we are open to embrace the new, the more it becomes familiar, and finally develops into a habit or culture.

Beginnings can be daunting, but are typically worth the perseverance. I am writing this circular to remind us all of the significance of beginnings. Advent is a beginning of the Liturgical Year of the Church; in which time we prepare and anticipate for the arrival of the 'Emmanuel'. It is a time of great expectation and uncertainty. However, this period also invites us to reflect on the beauty and challenges of change, renewal and starting anew.

As Province, we have embarked on a significant beginning: the centralization of funds. It is a bold step we have taken, one that promises to bring about positive change towards financial autonomy of our Province. Like the anticipation of the new born king, this our new experience brings with it feelings anxiety and resistance. Change in deed can be difficult as the road ahead sometimes seem unclear. Even so, just as the birth of Christ was a transformative moment in salvation history, the centralization of funds in our Province can also be a turning point. To be effective, however, it needs the support and commitment of each and every one of us. Hence, I encourage all Brothers, including all our school heads, to put in more energy to ensure that the policy succeeds. The few challenges, notwithstanding, we must not allow such obstacles to disrupt or interrupt our path to progress. Rather, we should invite Jesus into the boat to calm any storms and safely lead us ashore (Mark 4: 35 - 41).

As we do so, I would like us to draw inspiration from the words of J.P. Morgan: *"The first step towards getting somewhere is to decide you are not going to stay where you are"*. Thus, by taking this bold and decisive step, we are shaping the financial future of our Province. As Alan Cohen also reminds us, we do not *"… wait until the conditions are perfect to begin; beginning makes the conditions perfect".* Therefore, let no obstacles prevent us from accomplishing this significant milestone that we have embarked on. To grow we must let go of the past, embrace

the change and start anew with courage and hope. The process may not be smooth and there will certainly be moments of struggle and anxiety but it is important that we continue to move forward together, with determination and unity.

The theme of rebirth resonates well with our faith. Jesus, in his humility, emptied himself and became human (Philippians 2:7), bringing freshness, newness and salvation to all of humanity. His incarnation, which we await to celebrate at Christmas, is a radical act of love, that invites us to embrace change, transformation and renewal in our own lives. It might not have been easy for Jesus, but He dared the invitation and triumphed.

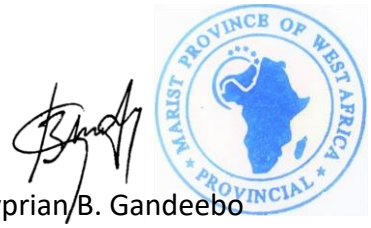
New beginnings can come in many forms – be it a new appointment, change of community, or after a significant event. Each one symbolizes hope, growth, and the opportunity to start afresh. However, embarking on a new journey usually requires determination and trust in the process. Thankfully, we are blessed with an active and vibrant Province Finance Commission and Audit team who are ready and enthusiastic to guide us through the centralization process. Their dedication provides us with direction and encouragement we need to move forward. Our responsibility in this journey is to support one another, reminding ourselves daily that *"every day is a chance to begin again".*

As we prepare to celebrate the coming of Christ, let us not dwell on past difficulties or failures. Instead, let us embrace the present with positive thoughts and hopes, trusting that every step we take brings us closer to our collective vision of ensuring that we become financially viable by 2027. Let us allow Advent to guide us, through prayer, reflections and a deep sense of hope that the challenges we encounter today will lead to a more financially sustainable and vibrant Province tomorrow. Just as the light of Christ shines brightly in our world, so too can we let the light of our collective effort shine through the obstacles or challenges we may encounter ahead. May this season of advent inspire us to take each step with courage, knowing that we not alone, and that God's grace will sustain us through all the uncertainties. Let us thus move forward together with confidence in the knowledge that each step we take takes us closer to the realization of our collective vision.

May this Advent season fill us with the courage to embrace our new beginnings, the hope to persevere in implementing our policy on centralization of funds, and the joy of knowing that Jesus and Mary, walk with us every step of the way in our diminutive efforts towards financial sustainability. I trust that, together, we can make this transition a meaningful new beginning for ourselves and our growing Province.

I wish you all a fruitful Advent Season and Merry Christmas in advance!

Yours in JMJ&Ch,



Br Cyprian B. Gandeebo
Provincial Superior