Marist Brothers of the Schools *(fms)*

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OFFICE OF THE PROVINCIAL SUPERIOR

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Dear Marvellous Companions,

Looking Beyond Advent and Christmas

Every year Mother Church sets apart a time for us to reflect and pray in preparation to receive 'the Emmanuel' in our Hearts. Advent is the time we look forward to or await the coming of the God who comes to dwell among His people. The period of Advent usually precedes Christmas and is a time set aside for spiritual preparation as we await the arrival of the messiah. Advent often gives Christians the opportunity for conversion and renewal. Looking beyond, like Mary and M. Champagnat, we anticipate with hope and look forward to a time in the future when we will become new creatures in Christ (2 Cor 5:17).

Nevertheless, this looking forward is not a narrow-minded waiting but a mental longing for the renewal and transformation of our hearts. In the General conference in Rome, we reflected on the theme: "looking beyond". In this looking beyond, we are called to be prophetic and people of vision. During this of period Advent I invite each and every one of us to frankly assess ourselves on how we are as prophetic and visionary people.

Therefore, during this advent, let us reflect on the theme of 'looking beyond' in relation to our Marist Life and Mission. God 'looks beyond' our humanness and comes to dwell among us. God sends His only begotten Son to evangelize and lead us back to Himself (Jn 20:21). Jesus obeyed his Father's command, lived among us and taught us the way of salvation (Mk 16: 6). Then Jesus also instructs us "to go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations" (Mt 28:19). The purpose of this command is to invite people to share in the communion that exists between the Father and the Son (Redemptoris missio, #23). St Paul understood this instruction clearly and moved hurriedly into action by preaching salvation to the ends of the earth (Acts 13:47).

In our own time, some Brothers, touched by this great command, positively responded to the invitation of the Superior General to go on mission to other parts of our Global Marist Family. Among Brothers from our Province who hearkened and responded to the Superior General's request to go to a 'new land', are Brothers Peter Francis Amoako-Atta (RIP), Philip Ninfaasie Yob, Gilbert Asong Dakora, Washington Harbodeh Tekay, John Nyuydine Lavnge, Joseph Kwame Mammah and now, Br Aristide Ghislain Yao.

In the same spirit, we are also receiving Br John Arrieta Lopez into our Province. He is from the Norandina Province and a native of Venezuela.

Quite recently, the International Commission for Volunteering (Cmi) is inviting Brothers to move to another 'new land' in Africa. This new land is our newly created Lavalla200 community in Malawi. It is in this light that I invite you, to look beyond into the future of Marist Africa and if touched by the spirit of Ad Gentes, to volunteer for this project. Those touched by the global availability initiative can apply to the Provincial, Province of West Africa, as soon as possible.

While looking forward to the coming of Christ at Christmas, I wish you God's blessings and a fruitful advent season.

Yours sincerely in JMJ & Ch.

MARIST PROVINCE OF WEST AFRICA * PROVINCIAL *

Br Cyprian Gandeebo, *fms*
Provincial Superior