Marist Brothers of the Schools *(fms)*

Province of West Africa
P. O. Box AN 11874
52 Abelenkpe Ave.
Accra – Ghana

Email: provincialmpwa@gmail.com
cypriangandy@gmail.com
secretaryfmswestafrica@gmail.com
Phone: +233 559 570 964
+233 548 661 630

OFFICE OF THE PROVINCIAL SUPERIOR

02nd December, 2023

Dear Marvelous Companions,

RE: MARY'S LISTENING ATTITUDE: A KEY ELEMENT IN OUR SYNODAL JOURNEY

In the tranquil anticipation of Advent, the solemn contemplation of Mary's profound listening attitude echoes through the corridors of the Pope's invitation to be a synodal Church. For how can we live a synodal process without listening to each other?

Today, as we prepare to enter "Advent 2023" I invite us to delve into Mary's narrative and be drawn into the heart of the Christmas message. In this season of advent, I invite you to reflect upon Mary's listening attitude in our synodal journey. In the rich tapestry of our Province, the art of listening weaves the threads that binds us tighter, fostering understanding, harmony, and progress. In the synodal path, Mary's listening attitude becomes a guiding beacon of hope, illuminating our path towards understating, unity, and spiritual growth. As we embark on this synodal path, as proposed by Pope Francis, let us be guided by the profound significance of Mary's active and empathetic listening in shaping our collective future as a Province.

Listening is not merely the act of hearing words; rather it is the foundation upon which understanding is built. In this synodal journey, the art of listening becomes the catalyst for change and transformation. It unlocks our paths to diverse perspectives, allowing us to appreciate the richness of ideas and experiences within our Province, and in our communities. Mary exemplifies the art of profound listening as her receptive heart and attentive ear symbolizes the patience and openness necessary for fostering genuine dialogue and connection among us. Her listening attitude becomes a central element in guiding our pursuit of harmony and communion.

Listening, as earlier mentioned, is not merely the hearing words; rather, it is the art of comprehending the emotions, fears and hopes underlying the words. Mary's listening attitude teaches us to embrace empathy, to truly hear the voices of our brothers and to acknowledge the richness of diversity of perspectives within our Province. In our discussions, her listening attitude must challenge us to set aside presumptions, biases and prejudices, creating a space where everyone's voice can be heard and respected. In this way we create safe spaces for every voice, opinion, and concern, and indeed all suggestions become essential building blocks in our pursuit of a better, more inclusive Province. In the synodal path, listening becomes a bridge that connects the different viewpoints, fostering dialogue and cooperation among us.

Mary's listening attitude nurtures and encourages us to listen not only with our ears but more so with our hearts. Mary's listening attitude invites us to be present to, to be fully engaged in the moment, and to be receptive to the movement of the Spirit among us. When we truly listen, we step into the shoes of the other, understanding his joys, sorrows, and aspirations (Gaudium et spes,1). This empathetic understanding forms the bedrock of genuine solidarity, enabling us to journey together towards achieving common goals and addressing challenges that confront us. By nurturing this receptive spirit, we open ourselves to the transformative power of dialogue, allowing our shared journey to be shaped by the collective wisdom and insights of the entire Province.

As we navigate the complexities of our synodal journey, let us commit ourselves to the art of listening within our hearts, fostering an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect. In doing so and being mindful of the diversity of voices in our Province, let us embrace the richness of our diversity and experiences. Through open ears and open hearts, we can build a true synodal Province where each brother is acknowledged, respected, and empowered.

In conclusion, I invite each one of us to commit himself to embodying Mary's listening attitude in our discussions and deliberations. By so doing we will strengthen the bonds of our communion, deepen our spiritual understanding, and pave the way for a more harmonious and united Province. Active listening is the cornerstone of building a firm Province upon which we can construct a future that resonates within harmony, understanding and progress. Therefore, I would like us to embark on this journey with ears attuned, ready to listen and learn from one another, and together we shall create the Province that we all want – a Province that thrives on genuine, compassionate and inclusive listening.

Wishing you all a grace-filled season of Advent and a joyous Christmas!

Br Cyprian Gandeebo, *fms*
Provincial Superior