



## MISIONEROS MARISTAS, BOLIVIA

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“Todo a Jesús por María, todo a María para Jesús”

September 12, 2018 -Solemnity of the Most Holy Name of Mary

Dear Friends,

As is our custom, at this time of the year as we celebrate our Marist Patronal Feast, we try to share with you sketches from our life and missionary journey. Our last sharing was back in June when Juan had set off on a mini-Sabbatical that is intended to last through to the end of January 2019, by which time he will have entered his 30<sup>th</sup> years at the service of the Bolivian Church. While we may find ourselves separated by distance, we are always united in spirit and vision and in contact thanks to modern communications such as Email and WhatsApp.

Juan seems to be on top now back in his native Australia where his passions for the ocean with its surfing and incredible beaches and along with the seafood are delightfully satisfied. Since the middle of August, he has settled into the North-West Coast of Tasmania and in residence of the beachfront at Hellyer, some 45 minutes from the town of Burnie. Juan temporarily helped out in the Parish of Burnie for 6 months in 1980-81 when he was back on home-leave in Australia and then waiting for authorization to return to Mexico in those days. Burnie was then a Marist Parish. However, the present parish priest is a good friend and has welcomed Juan's being in the area until around Christmas. So Juan is collaborating on the weekends in the three churches along the coast. After some 38 years, he is still dearly remembered by the faithful and renewing friendships and making new ones. Although he is alone in residence in a bungalow on the beachfront that a parishioner friend has made available for his use, he is well -occupied, yet relaxed. There is the occasional invitation for a meal. During the weekdays he spends his time reading, writing and on the beach. He is dedicating his writing-time to putting together a production in Spanish that we wish to make available to the CEBs throughout Latin America. It consists of four modules, consisting of 24 reflections that could be used in CEBs meeting or in formation. They are based on a series of 24 radio programmes that we produced last year and now hope to present the content in a popular written form. The project is something that we as a team have hoped to realize back in Bolivia in recent years, but our pastoral commitments have absorbed our time. So here hoping that Juan continues to be inspired as he sits there looking at the ocean with his Cuba Libre [Rum & Coke] in hand! His drafts he is periodically emailing to Gilberto and Javier in Bolivia for their polishing and final redaction.

While Juan has been away suffering there in his native Australia, Gilberto and Javier have assiduously kept the Marist Project afloat in Bolivia and been on the move with our various commitments for the current pastoral year. We now leave it to Javier to share with you some of the recent news from our Bolivian Mission.

In our service of accompanying the CEBs of our dioceses, we of the Marist Team have animated those present in their meetings to recount the “Good News” in our lives. In life there are some bad things, but more so there are so many good things - “Good News”. It is a daily task to learn to tell the good news that occurs in the daily course of events. In that spirit and with motive of celebrating the presence of Mary our Mother and Companion of the way, whose patronal feast we celebrate in these days, we share with great joy by means of these lines our journeying. As the Community of Misioneros Maristas, we unite ourselves to this event, grateful for feeling ourselves embraced in the maternal mantel of our *Señora*.

Coincidentally our Diocese of Tarija has Mary as its patroness in the avocation of “*the Virgin Mary of Chaguaya*” [in the popular religiosity she is known as “The Little Mother of Chaguaya”], venerated during a whole month [Aug 15 - Sept 15] by means of pilgrimages and other practices as an expression of profound faith and popular devotion for her protection.

Our practice of presenting the “*Good News*” is something that we learnt in a workshop that was given to us by a young Argentinian theologian, Francisco Bosch. Today with that joy that flows from the interior to the exterior of our being, we will attempt to share these *Buenas Noticias [Good News]* that for us are a vigorous injection of energy that fuels our service, gives meaning to our mission and strengthens our hope.

We believe that the CEBs leads the Church to where God wishes it to be. In recent months, we have had the opportunity to get to know the other side of our city. That face that the authorities still do not assimilate; not knowing this reality and certainly are unaware of, or ignore. In coordination with Padre Miguel Maygua of the Parish of the Holy Cross, we made contact with new neighborhoods, whose residents are families came from rural communities and from other states. As we approach and converse with them, several told us that the Church has finally remembered them. These words are an opportunity to form the community. We have the hope of being able to accompany them precisely where for them life is a continual struggle to survive.

Precisely one of those neighborhoods that takes the name of “*Unity and Strength*” celebrated its 12<sup>th</sup> anniversary of foundation this Saturday, September 8, and we participated in their programme of celebrations with a Eucharist and a fellowship. It was a good time to continue planting the seed.

Another of the events in the present context radiates a lot of light, for all that it signifies and means for those who drink of his legacy. At the invitation of the Foundation of the Indian People -“*Mons. Leonidas Proaño of Ecuador*”, we participated in an international meeting on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the death and resurrection (*Pascua*) of *the bishop of the poor*. It was an opportunity to continue building articulation at different levels with those who have taken a same common cause, a vision of the church of the poor and a fraternal relationship and in harmony with Mother Nature.

The most beautiful part, and certainly the most powerful, was what we experienced in the visit that we made to Guayaquil. Padre Luis Enríquez, an Ecuadorian and Padre Antonio Martinez, a Spaniard, both live in community and lead a parish in one of the poorest suburbs of this city. The service they do is like an oasis in the desert, because very few times do we find that manner of forming Church. We have seen a relationship of sincere friendship and fraternity, above all, of deep affection with the people whom they accompany. There are very few like them.

In this journey through our sister country of Ecuador, we visited Riobamba located in the province of Chimborazo. In this place, Mons. Leónidas Proaño started one of the experiences closest to the Gospel of Jesus of the People. It so happened that in those days of our visit there were gathered missionaries and people from the communities, who came from different parts of Ecuador. They annually go there for a month to deepen their service. They are guided by Padre Carlos Vera, a former teammate of the “*bishop of the poor*”, and who today continues his legacy and promotes the cause of Proaño. Those moments of sharing, of dialogue, of listening to them, it was a Pentecost. It was a new baptism. We need more spaces like these. Thank you, brothers and sisters of the CEBs of Ecuador to keep alive that memory and to teach us and bring us closer to the sources.

One of the moments that struck a chord, was listening to the story of the memoir autobiography of Taita Proaño (word that expresses affection and trust) told by an indigenous Quichuan refers to the following. Once appointed Bishop of Riobamba, Taita Leonidas Proaño was traveling to take possession of the Diocese. The elite of the city expected to receive him with all the honors, and that way to consider him an ally. However, something happened during the trip. In contrast to the welcome that awaited him in the city, an indian came to meet him half way and he ran to meet and to embrace him, saying to him these prophetic words: “*Por fin has llegado taita mito*”, which is to say “*At last the one sent sent from God has arrived!*” There is no doubt that it was a moment of prophecy, coming forth from an oppressed people waiting for the passage of God who is their liberator. What a great *Good News* for the poor!

Some 19 years ago, we started our missionary service in the Diocese of Tarija, assuming an area that we have baptized with the name Quasi-parish of the Most Holy Name of Mary that is home to 10 rural communities.

In this area were born the first CEBs in the Diocese. For the past 19 years, these communities annually celebrate their zonal Encounter. It is an event that allows them to strengthen friendships, to join in a fraternal embrace, of acceptance, of sharing food, the gifts and talents and abilities, but it is also an opportunity for reflection and to develop a simple message from the theme reflected. Through these Encounters, the CEBs express their devotion and affection to our Mother and Companion on the Journey. Our 19<sup>th</sup> Encounter we held on Sunday, September 2, with some 85 delegates in the Community of La Capilla, which this year welcomed us with much joy. This truly is a Church that is People and a People that is Church. This is the Church that the Apostles left us. These CEBs are new branches of the tree of the community of Jesus whose roots are well deep. There we are. We are part of these small and almost hidden branches of a great tree.

We are on the eve of the great feast of the Marists. Our CEBs of the Quasi-parish have received the inheritance of this Marist charism. They identify themselves and celebrate this event. Back in September, in the year 2000, a group of young people, assessed by the Marist Team, gave start to a Festival that carries the name of "*FESTIPRIM*" - *Spring Festival of the Most Holy Name of Mary*, precisely to commemorate this solemnity. This year is the 19th Version. Several of the members of the committee that organized this year's festival are young families who years ago were the children who were part of the group of Christian Initiation (catechism). The Seed is sown; the special affection of this village to Mary is great and sincere. I feel privileged to be Marist. Thanks Morenita of Nazareth for this gift.

Well, these are some of the moments of grace that we wished to share with you at this time. Meanwhile life continues in our small and beautiful Marist Community in Tarija. Apart from our Marist Feast on the 12<sup>th</sup>, we have two other important celebrations this week. Marian turns 4 on the 14<sup>th</sup> and Paco 18 on the 17<sup>th</sup>, thus becoming officially an adult according to law. Soccer has been a focus of attention in our community in recent weeks. Both Gilbertito (Chiqui) and Paco have been in the news as their A-grade teams have won the competition. Paco was signaled out as the star of the final match in his position of goalkeeper. It is said they take after their *abuelo!*

With this sharing once again goes our expression of sincere thanks and warm affection. You are sharers in our journey and co-missionaries. It is you who give us the hope that our mission will continue in spite of the material insecurity and difficulties we experience along the way.

May Mary of Nazareth accompany us all in our journey as we now celebrate her feast.

With all our love,

**Gilberto/Arminda/Juan José/Gilbertito/Marian -Javier/Nair/Lupo/Paco -Juan**

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