

**2014**  
**SEASON OF ADVENT**  
**Daily Reflections for Advent**



**Children's Right to Participation**





## Children's Right to Participation

There is a strong campaign to engage children and young people to participate in various activities. The campaign is basically to recognize them as active participants with views and voices that are worth recognizing. Letting children's views be recognized might not be easily universally understood due to cultural, traditional or political differences. However, there is one force, accepted by 193 States that is regarded as credible and plays a unifying role. This is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Adults have always played a leading role in deciding the needs of children and young people. Why have they done so? Is it because children and young people have not reached the age of maturity to make serious decisions for their own lives? Is it the question of tradition? Or is it that it will be regarded as lack of respect for elders if they are to lead in decision making? In most cases decisions have been made; in families, schools and communities without even seeking their views or children have not been given a chance to express what is in their mind before decisions that affect them are made. This is not ruling out exceptional and somehow emergence scenarios where decisions are made considering their best interest. Save the Children Organisation encourages the policy that views of children should be respected when making decisions that affect them, *"Seek children's perspective, recognizing them as people with dignity and evolving capacities; that they are empowered and assisted to speak out, have their views heard and become an integral part of process of change"*<sup>1</sup> Obviously if the right environment is created for them to exercise their right to participation the result will be marvellous.

Children's participation is a right and as such it needs to be treated with great respect because it is an entitlement. Children's participation is to be understood as providing the opportunity for children to express their views, influencing decision-making and achieving change.<sup>2</sup> It is therefore imperative to recognize the role children and young people can play in their own development and that of others.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child strongly supports and encourages children to participate in articles 7, 9.2, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 23.1, 29.1b, 29.1d, 30, 31 and 40. States have the obligation to make sure that it is implemented. *"States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of*

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<sup>1</sup> Getting it Right for Children, Save the Children, 2007

<sup>2</sup> International Save the Children Alliance, 2005

*forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.”<sup>3</sup>*

As children are encouraged to have their views heard through participation, they need guidance and support in order to make choices that are really best for their development. *“Respecting children’s views means that such views should not be ignored; it does not mean that children’s opinions should be automatically endorsed. Expressing an opinion is not the same as taking a decision, but it implies the ability to influence decisions. A process of dialogue and exchange needs to be encouraged in which children assume increasing responsibilities and become active, tolerant and democratic.”<sup>4</sup>*

So during this advent season let us pray in a special way for all children and young people that, like Jesus in the temple in front of the doctors of the law, their views be recognized.

FMSI Staff

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<sup>3</sup> UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, article 12

<sup>4</sup> Right to Participation, UNICEF

## Advent

Advent is the beginning of the Church Year for most churches in the Western tradition. It begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas Day, which is the Sunday nearest November 30, and ends on Christmas Eve (Dec 24). If Christmas Eve is a Sunday, it is counted as the fourth Sunday of Advent, with Christmas Eve proper beginning at sundown.

**The Meaning of "Advent".** The word **Advent** means "coming" or "arrival." The focus of the entire season is the celebration of the birth of Jesus the Christ in his First Advent, and the anticipation of the return of Christ the King in his Second Advent. Thus, Advent is far more than simply marking a 2,000 year old event in history. It is celebrating a truth about God, the revelation of God in Christ whereby all of creation might be reconciled to God. That is a process in which we now participate, and the consummation of which we anticipate. Scripture reading for Advent will reflect this emphasis on the Second Advent, including themes of accountability for faithfulness at His coming, judgment on sin, and the hope of eternal life.

In this double focus on past and future, Advent also symbolizes the spiritual journey of individuals and a congregation, as they affirm that Christ has come, that He is present in the world today, and that He will come again in power. That acknowledgment provides a basis for Kingdom ethics, for holy living arising from a profound sense that we live "between the times" and are called to be faithful stewards of what is entrusted to us as God's people. So, as the church celebrates God's in breaking into history in the Incarnation, and anticipates a future consummation to that history for which "all creation is groaning awaiting its redemption," it also confesses its own responsibility as a people commissioned to "love the Lord your God with all your heart" and to "love your neighbour as yourself."<sup>5</sup>

Dennis Bratcher<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Source: <http://www.cresourcei.org/cyadvent.html>

<sup>6</sup> A retired professor of Old Testament; he has earned the PhD in Biblical studies from Union Theological Seminary in Virginia, and has served as a educator in the church for more than 25 years. He is an ordained minister in the Church of the Nazarene, and has recently served on staff at a United Methodist church (Source: <http://www.criveice.org>).

## Acknowledgement

FMSI wishes to thank all the children and young people who have contributed to 2014's Advent booklet. It has not been an easy exercise for some of our contributors to write articles on the given theme "Child Participation" probably simply because not many are knowledgeable about the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In spite of this lacuna, children and young people have written to express their experiences of their participation in society. Thanks for the effort. FMSI thanks the whole Marist fraternity for their support in helping these children and young people to express their views through this booklet. This is one way of acknowledging this right to participate, which the Convention promotes.

We also thank parents and guardians of these children and young people for the support they gave to them and more importantly for granting the permission that their stories and pictures appear in this booklet.

FMSI recognizes in a special way the contact persons who have played a vital role to encourage these children and young people to submit these articles particularly from the following countries:

- Bolivia
- Brazil
- Chile
- Colombia
- India
- Kenya
- Madagascar
- Peru

For all those who have not been able to send children's articles because of one reason or the other, we also thank you for sharing the Advent theme of this year with children and all those involved in working with children. Our door is still open to receive more children's articles on this theme and we will be happy to publish them on our website.

On the other hand, our collaborators have sent quite a few testimonies and since the stories outnumbered the days of Advent, we decided to make a selection. We regret being unable to use for this booklet all the contributions that we received, but we will surely use all the testimonies on other occasions to make the voice of the children heard.

It is our hope that through these articles we shall raise awareness among all of us on the theme of children's participation which is not strongly felt in most of our daily life. We hope that as you read this Advent prayer booklet you will become familiar with some of the obligations of the Convention, you will develop a feeling for children and young people and act to improve their life.

# November 30

## First Sunday of Advent

Saint Andrew, apostle

### Today's Readings:

IS 63: 16b-19b, 64: 2-7. *Prayer for the return of God's favour.*

1 Cor 1: 3-9. *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

MK 13: 33-37. *Need for Watchfulness.*



**Igor da Silva Romão**  
Brazil

As a young person, I am very critical towards the world, whether in political, social or educational aspects. I value the right to participation of young people, either at school, in the community or even at home.

As I feel and experience this participation, however, I also see that society still treats young people as if they lacked the necessary maturity to express an idea or opinion, and to decide what would be best for themselves. Although society is still trapped in a "common sense" which does not believe in young people's potential for participation, we, as Marists, whether brothers or laity, must struggle for this right, and need to be on the front line of this battle.

### Reflection on the right to participation

Young people's participation cannot be discussed without considering power relations and the struggle for equal rights. It is important that all young people have the opportunity to learn to participate in programmes which directly affect their lives. This is equally so for disadvantaged children for through participation with others such children learn that to struggle against discrimination and repression, and to fight for their equal rights in solidarity with others is itself a fundamental democratic right.

Source: [www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/childrens\\_participation.pdf](http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/childrens_participation.pdf)

## **Responsorial Psalm 80**

*R/ Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall be saved.*

O shepherd of Israel, hearken,  
from your throne upon the cherubim, shine forth.  
Rouse your power,  
and come to save us. *R/*

Once again, O LORD of hosts,  
look down from heaven, and see;  
take care of this vine,  
and protect what your right hand has planted  
the son of man whom you yourself made strong. *R/*

May your help be with the man of your right hand,  
with the son of man whom you yourself made strong.  
Then we will no more withdraw from you;  
give us new life, and we will call upon your name. *R/*

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### **Prayer of Igor da Silva**

Oh God who renovates, frees and heals in such an amazing way, transform young people so that they can become active and questioning fighters. Grant them to have a voice and a turn, and the ability to change the world for the better.

Amen!

# December 1

## Monday of the First Week of Advent

### Today's Readings:

IS 2: 1-5. *The Lord gathers all the nations into the eternal peace of Kingdom of God.*

MT 8: 5-11. *Many will come from the east and the west to the Kingdom of Heaven.*

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**Valentina Torres**

**Johan Alexander Solano**  
*Colombia*

**Nicolás Duarte**

We are Valentina Torres, Johan Alexander Solano and Nicolás Duarte, and we are part of the preparation program for primary school validation of the Champagnat Community Centre in the district of "La Paz" (south of Bogotá).

We like the Centre and we are grateful for having been given the opportunity to study, as we were not allowed to enrol in any school because we were too old and knew little for our age. Probably, next year, we will be able to enrol in a school and continue our studies all the way to high school.

The Centre has helped us to believe in ourselves and that we can go back to school and also motivated us to talk to the other children to gather ideas and make proposals to run for "*Spokesperson 2014.*" Only the students could vote. Nicolas was elected as spokesperson, but the three of us form the Student Council 2014. We feel at the same level as teachers and parents, as we take part in meetings and decision-making. We managed to be acknowledged and recognized because of the great responsibility and also because we want to achieve goals and meet challenges, such as learning more about what can be done, overcoming the fear of failure, knowing how to win and to lose, being prepared to defend what we want for our well-being and mainly make good use of our rights and duties as children in order to help our peers.

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## **Reflection on the right to participation**

In local communities, children need spaces within local communities to organise and to have their voices heard – for example, through child-led organisations and initiatives such as youth parliaments and municipal children’s councils. They should also be invited to get involved in community development plans, including the design and development of schools parks, playgrounds, health facilities etc.

Source: [www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/insight6.pdf](http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/insight6.pdf)

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## **Responsorial Psalm 122**

*R/ Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord.*

I rejoiced because they said to me,  
“We will go up to the house of the LORD.”  
And now we have set foot  
within your gates, O Jerusalem. *R/*

Jerusalem, built as a city  
with compact unity.  
To it the tribes go up,  
the tribes of the LORD. *R/*

According to the decree for Israel,  
to give thanks to the name of the LORD.  
In it are set up judgment seats,  
seats for the house of David. *R/*

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem!  
May those who love you prosper!  
May peace be within your walls,  
prosperity in your buildings. *R/*

Because of my relatives and friends  
I will say, “Peace be within you!”  
Because of the house of the LORD, our God,  
I will pray for your good. *R/*

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## **Prayer of Valentina Torres, Johan Alexander Solano, Nicolás Duarte**

Oh Lord Jesus, we thank you for being able to study in the Champagnat Community Centre, for giving us patient teachers and the opportunity to be our peers' representatives. May no child in the world be excluded from education. Bless our parents, teachers, the principal and our friends. Amen!

# December 2

## Tuesday of the First Week of Advent

**Marist Anniversary:** 1915 - First foundation in Morocco.

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### Today's Readings:

IS 11: 1-10. *The spirit of the Lord will rest on him.*

LK 10: 21-24. *Jesus was filled with the joy of the Holy Spirit.*

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**Lorraine Fernandes Lopes**  
*Brazil*

My first participation takes place at home, helping with the chores and decisions.

It also happens at school, where I also actively participate, providing ideas and being critical in order to improve the quality of education and the relational climate within the school.

I believe children and young people are of the utmost importance for society for the simple fact that they are also its citizens. But our voice is not properly acknowledged. We also want changes in order to reach a better society, so that we can feel proud and satisfied of living in it.

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### Reflection on the right to participation

In all educational environments, including educational programmes in the early years, the active role of children in a participatory learning environment should be promoted. Teaching and learning must take into account life conditions and prospects of the children. For this reason, education authorities have to include children's and their parents' views in the planning of curricula and school programmes.

Source: CRC/C/GC/12 pag. 21 nr. 107

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## **Responsorial Psalm 72**

*R/ Justice shall flourish in his time and fullness of peace forever.*

O God, with your judgment endow the king,  
and with your justice, the king's son;  
He shall govern your people with justice  
and your afflicted ones with judgment. *R/*

Justice shall flower in his days,  
and profound peace, till the moon be no more.  
May he rule from sea to sea,  
and from the River to the ends of the earth. *R/*

He shall rescue the poor when he cries out,  
and the afflicted when he has no one to help him.  
He shall have pity for the lowly and the poor;  
the lives of the poor he shall save. *R/*

May his name be blessed forever;  
as long as the sun his name shall remain.  
In him shall all the tribes of the earth be blessed;  
all the nations shall proclaim his happiness. *R/*

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### **Prayer of Lorraine Fernandes Lopes**

Oh Lord, my God, forgive us our sins, our offenses, because we are sinners.  
Give us strength and wisdom so that we can follow our own path and make the  
right decisions. Have mercy on us, and protect us from every evil.  
Amen!

# December 3

## Wednesday of the First Week of Advent

Saint Francis Xavier, priest  
International Day of Persons with Disabilities

**Marist Anniversary:** 1956 - Departure of the first Brothers for Bolivia.

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### Today's Readings:

IS 25: 6-10a. *The Lord invites to his feast and wipes away the tears of all.*

MT 15: 29-37. *The Lord has compassion on the crowd and multiplies the loaves.*

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**Vahiako Samirah Richarde**  
*Madagascar*

My name is Vahiako Samirah Richarde and I am 14 years old.

I was born in Antananarivo, Madagascar. I live with my parents and my younger brother. I am the first born of the family.

We live in the suburb of the capital. I am doing my 4<sup>th</sup> year in a Marist School at Saint Champagnat College.

My ambition is to become an Air Hostess when I finish my studies. I very much appreciate the talents that God gave me; I like to dance and to sing. At school I try my best to succeed. What I like most at Saint Champagnat College is the school discipline.

I am happy and proud of being one of Marist students. Though I do not participate in the country's politics, I do participate at school especially in ways to improve the education at our school. Chances are always given to give our opinions and this is taken very seriously. I am always happy when I am listened to when I give my opinions. At home, since I am the first born of the family, I participate a lot and most of the times decisions are made from my suggestions. But during a heated discussion among my parents I felt compelled to calm them down. But my father strongly told me never to interfere. That shocked me and from that time I do not feel the freedom to give my opinions at home.

### **Reflection on the right to participation chosen by Vahiako Samirah Richarde**

Children have the right to express their views on all matters that concern them. This means that their voices should be heard at all levels of society.

In the family: children should be encouraged to learn to contribute to the day-to-day decisions that affect their lives – including choices about what they eat, who and what they play with, what they wear, where they live if their parents separate, and the level and nature of contact with the non-resident parent.

Source:

[wearelunos.org/sites/default/files/research/SpeakingOutBeingHeardlores.pdf](http://wearelunos.org/sites/default/files/research/SpeakingOutBeingHeardlores.pdf)

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### **Responsorial Psalm 23**

*R/ I shall live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life*

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

In verdant pastures he gives me repose;

Beside restful waters he leads me;

he refreshes my soul. *R/*

He guides me in right paths

for his name's sake.

Even though I walk in the dark valley

I fear no evil; for you are at my side

With your rod and your staff

that give me courage. *R/*

Only goodness and kindness follow me

all the days of my life;

And I shall dwell in the house of the LORD

for years to come. *R/*

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### **Prayer of Vahiako Samirah Richarde**

O Lord my God, I thank you for giving me time to live among people around me. I ask for pardon for the wrong I have done. Please Lord, take my heart, my soul, my intelligence and show me the right way for me to succeed to follow you up to the end of my life. Take care of my family, Lord, my friends and all those close to me, you who live forever and ever. Amen!

# December 4

## Thursday of the First Week of Advent

Saint John Damascene, priest and doctor

**Marist Anniversary:** 1889 - Opening of the first Marist school in Colombia.

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### Today's Readings:

IS 26: 1-6. *Let the upright nation who are faithful enter in.*

MT 7: 21, 24-27. *The one who carries out the will of the Father will enter the Kingdom of Heaven.*

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**Antônio Ediney**  
Brazil

My name is Antonio Ediney and I am a full-hearted Marist student.

Today our society focuses on a topic that brings about much discussion, that is, profit. The basic concept of society implies a group of people living together in an organized community.

I also participate in this organized community, this much-discussed society, and do everything within my reach to help my neighbor, in order to have a better world.

The Marist setting has been essential in my decision to do this, because small acts are always the first step. Here, at the Marist School, we have some groups that focus precisely on this, striving so that we may become good citizens, such as the Youth Ministry groups.

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### Reflection on the right to participation

The views of the child must be “given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child”. This clause refers to the capacity of the child, which has to be assessed in order to give due weight to her or his views, or to communicate to the child the way in which those views have influenced the outcome of the process.

Article 12 stipulates that simply listening to the child is insufficient; the views of the child have to be seriously considered when the child is capable of forming her or his own views.

Source: CRC/C/GC/12 pag.8, nr.28

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### **Responsorial Psalm 118**

*R/ Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.*

or:

*R/ Alleluia.*

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good,  
for his mercy endures forever.

It is better to take refuge in the LORD  
than to trust in man.

It is better to take refuge in the LORD  
than to trust in princes. *R/*

Open to me the gates of justice;  
I will enter them and give thanks to the LORD.

This gate is the LORD's;  
the just shall enter it.

I will give thanks to you, for you have answered me  
and have been my Saviour. *R/*

O LORD, grant salvation!

O LORD, grant prosperity!

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD;  
we bless you from the house of the LORD.

The LORD is God, and he has given us light. *R/*

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### **Prayer of Antônio Ediney**

“Love your neighbor as yourself”, just as the Ten Commandments of God’s law indicate, we must put this commitment into practice. If we love our neighbor, we will definitely make a better world.

For this reason, Lord God, I ask you to light the way of the young people who are lost in the world of drugs in the middle of society; and then, give your Holy Spirit to all the people who doubt you, my God, as Thomas did.

Amen!

# December 5

## Friday of the First Week of Advent

### International Day of Volunteers

#### Today's Readings:

IS 29: 17-24. *On that day, the blind will see.*

MT 9: 27-31. *Jesus cures two blind men who believe in him.*

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**Carla Andrea**  
*Bolivia*

My name is Carla Andrea, I'm 17 years old and I live in Bolivia. I studied at the Marist College, where I graduated several months ago.

When I was at high school, I was elected president of the education centre for two years by the representatives of each course. It was a big responsibility for me, but I decided to take it seriously.

The first year, I encouraged my collaborators to organize fund-raising activities and realize a work of solidarity.

We were all very excited about the initiative and organized a dancing event and raised quite a lot of money.

As it happens, there was a very urgent situation with a student with health problems and who was in need of some financial support, so we met and decided to use the money for that good cause.

When the school year ended, I made an evaluation of my work as president and realized I could do many more things for my school; I was not satisfied. That is the reason why the following year, inspired by the Youth Ministry activities, I worked much harder and we started a project the school could benefit from: it was about raising funds to purchase new computers for our IT room, since the ones we had were very old.

We carried out various activities, like movie screenings, dancing events and meals. While gradually collecting some money, I had to deal with the bad looks of some people and the irresponsibility of many others who would not carry the activities through. However, driven by something inside of me, I would encourage them again and again. I also got the help of many people including

teachers, Marist brothers and directors, who did all they could to buy 5 computers several months after. In the meantime, I graduated, happy and proud for what little I could do for my school, which gave me and taught me so much.

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### **Reflection on the right to participation**

In school, children are entitled to be active participants in their own learning in and outside the classroom through debate, discovery and engagement. Children can also be involved, for example in setting school rules, running school councils, designing and creating play spaces, introducing policies to address bullying and discrimination and in providing feedback on teaching methods, peer counselling and school management boards.

Source: [www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/insight6.pdf](http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/insight6.pdf)

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### **Responsorial Psalm 27**

*R/ The Lord is my light and my salvation.*

The LORD is my light and my salvation;  
whom should I fear?

The LORD is my life's refuge;  
of whom should I be afraid? *R/*

One thing I ask of the LORD  
this I seek:  
To dwell in the house of the LORD  
all the days of my life,  
That I may gaze on the loveliness of the LORD  
and contemplate his temple. *R/*

I believe that I shall see the bounty of the LORD  
in the land of the living.  
Wait for the LORD with courage;  
be stout-hearted, and wait for the LORD. *R/*

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### **Prayer of Carla Andrea**

Oh Lord! Guide us youth: let us see reality with clarity so that our hearts are moved and we can live by your laws; so we may change our reality and that of our world. Help us not to disappoint our future generations, for their future depends on what we can do for them today. Amen!

# December 6

## Saturday of the First Week of Advent

### Saint Nicholas, bishop

#### Today's Readings:

IS 30: 19-21, 23-26. *The Lord will be gracious to you when you cry out.*

MT 9: 35; 10: 1, 5a, 6-8. *At the sight of the crowds, his heart was moved with pity for them.*

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**Joseph Tudu**  
*West Bengal - India*

My name is Joseph Tudu, 15 years old and studying class 10. I was born in a small Santali tribal village in West Bengal. I have father, mother and a younger sister of 12 years old. My house is very small which is built of mud and rice straw.

In front of my house, there is a small garden to make use of growing vegetables for our daily needs and we have some animals. My father and my mother work every day in the rice field as labourers. Sometimes, they are sick because of their hard and long time work to earn money for us. Last four years I stayed in the Chetana Tribal Boys' Hostel in Talit.

We are 80 boys living in the hostel and the Marist Brothers taking care of us. I am very happy to be here. Every day I go to a Government School near our Hostel. In our Hostel we are divided in six groups, I am the leader of one group of thirteen boys and I help them in many activities. Also I am responsible for handling the generator and the motor for the water. Sometimes I help some small boys to learn Bengali during holidays. I am also involved in singing, dancing, and acting. I participate in preparing others for some special events in the Hostel. I know how to read in Santali, so sometimes I participate in reading the Bible in the Mass and the Morning Prayer and the rosary in the evening. In the Hostel I try to be a responsible person and try to grow as a good Christian and to help others. In my school too, I participate in different events and it make me to be more enthusiastic, more sociable and I learn many skills.

When I am at home, I help my parents particularly in the garden, taking care of the animals, and also during the harvesting time. My support to my parents makes them happy as they express it through their intense love to me. Also I

help my sister particularly in her studies. To be sensitive to the needs of others gives more meaning to my life and helps me to grow in responsibilities.

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### **Reflection on the right to participation chosen by Joseph Tudu**

The drive to participate is innate in every human being. Promoting meaningful and quality participation of children and adolescents is essential to ensuring their growth and development. Children have proved that when they are involved, they can make a difference in the world around them. They have ideas, experience and insights that enrich adult understanding and make a positive contribution to adult actions.

Source: [www.unicef.org/sowc03/contents/childparticipation.html](http://www.unicef.org/sowc03/contents/childparticipation.html)

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### **Responsorial Psalm 147**

*R/ Blessed are all who wait for the Lord.*

Praise the LORD, for he is good;  
sing praise to our God, for he is gracious;  
it is fitting to praise him.

The LORD rebuilds Jerusalem;  
the dispersed of Israel he gathers. *R/*

He heals the broken hearted  
and binds up their wounds.  
He tells the number of the stars;  
he calls each by name. *R/*

Great is our LORD and mighty in power:  
to his wisdom there is no limit.  
The LORD sustains the lowly;  
the wicked he casts to the ground. *R/*

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### **Prayer of Joseph Tudu**

O Lord, I thank you, because you created this world for me and you take care of me through many people. I am sorry for not being a good boy for sometimes particularly on my time of quietness. Forgive me the times I failed to do as I was required. Lord, bless me, help me to be a good child of my parents, good brother of my sister, and a good boy for all others in my society. Give me knowledge that I can improve my studies and find good future. Amen!

# December 7

## Second Sunday of Advent

Saint Ambrose, bishop and martyr

### Today's Readings:

IS 40: 1-11. *Comfort, give comfort to my people, says your God.*

2 Peter 3: 8-15a. *Denial of the Parousia.*

MK 1: 1-8. *The Preaching of John the Baptist.*



**Leticia Maia Claudio**  
*Brazil*

I came here today to express my opinion about the participation of children and adolescents in society nowadays.

I think that children and teenagers are in disadvantage because adults think the only voice that is right is their own voice, simply because they have lived more and have more knowledge. Well I guess people listen to me most of the time because I reflect about where we are going.

Thinking about politics, people almost never participate. I think the rules determining the minimum age to vote should be changed. But at school and at home, I believe people listen to me most of the times. I don't participate in the community with a lot of conversations, but I give a hand by not polluting the streets, and using less water, etc.

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### Reflection on the right to participation

Children are entitled to express their views freely – in other words, space and time must be created for them to be heard. This poses a profound challenge to the traditional attitudes towards children, which tend to deny them any meaningful opportunities to be heard – for example, in the courts, in school, in the family, or in public policy-making. In many societies, it is particularly difficult for girls to express their views. It is necessary to create safe spaces for

both girls and boys where they are afforded the time, encouragement and support to enable them to develop and express their views.

Source: [savethechildren.org.uk](http://savethechildren.org.uk)

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### **Responsorial Psalm 85**

*R/ Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation.*

I will hear what God proclaims;  
the LORD—for he proclaims peace to his people.  
Near indeed is his salvation to those who fear him,  
glory dwelling in our land. *R/*

Kindness and truth shall meet;  
justice and peace shall kiss.  
Truth shall spring out of the earth,  
and justice shall look down from heaven. *R/*

The LORD himself will give his benefits;  
our land shall yield its increase.  
Justice shall walk before him,  
and prepare the way of his steps. *R/*

---

### **Prayer of Leticia Maia Claudio**

Dear God, thank you, first of all, for the life you have given me. Secondly, thanks for giving me a family that is so good and sweet to me. Thirdly, thanks for giving me a good school with good friends, competent professionals, and good-quality materials. Oh God, I want to ask you to keep me in good health, so that I can overcome all obstacles in life. I also want to ask you for strength, so that I never lose hope.

Amen!

# December 8

## Monday of the Second Week of Advent

### Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary

**Marist Anniversary:** 1942 - Consecration of the Institute to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

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#### Today's Readings:

GEN 3: 9-15, 20. *I will put enmity between you and the woman.*

EPH 1: 3-6, 11-12. *He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world.*

LK 1: 26-38. *Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you.*

---

The first time I was aware of participation was when I was in the fourth year of elementary and we elected a class council and I, perhaps with an innocent ambition for power, wanted to be part of it. During various years, I took part in solidarity activities in a sporadic way within the school ambit, without really building up in myself a proper and concrete idea of solidarity. In my second year of secondary, something changed in me, because I began to be interested in what was happening to the people around me and I felt that because of



**Javiera Contreras**  
Chile

the fact of having been blessed with a perfectly sound family environment and abilities I ought to repay this in some way, and this way was translated into something as simple as friendliness, although at times this is difficult for me. For this then, I had already begun to take time to become interested in the bigger affairs around me, such as politics, economy, literature and how these aspects influenced for good or evil the life of persons. The same year, I ventured to accept the proposal to form part of the students' centre of my college and for me each participation outside college became converted into one more brick for the construction of my ideas. I also came to know pleasant persons whom I would never have known in any other way and this made the experience much more enriching. In the summer of this year, I took part in the summer works of "TECHO", an NGO which builds progressive houses for

families living in camps or in very rudimentary dwellings in an adverse environment. This experience is what has had the best effect on me, since I put my own comforts aside to provide for someone completely unknown something as elemental as a roof to take protection under and what a whole family would call a home. Moreover, in reflecting on the explanations of the instructors I became aware of many things and I met people with solid ideals and admirable commitment. There were long hours of work, but each time I saw the progress the satisfaction consoled me. It was only then for the first time I felt that my participation had really been useful, my construction was solid and that I could participate with the endorsement of having my eyes opened before the reality. Solidarity was no longer only a word, but now had a name and a surname.

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### **Reflection on the right to participation**

Children traditionally have been denied both the knowledge that they are entitled to protection from violence, and the mechanisms through which to challenge this situation. The consequent silencing of children and the abuse they experience has had the effect of protecting abusers rather than children. However, if they are encouraged to voice what is happening to them, and provided with the necessary mechanisms through which they can raise concerns, it is much easier for violations of rights to be exposed.

Source:

[www.unicef.org/french/adolescence/files/EveryChildsRighttobeHeard.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/french/adolescence/files/EveryChildsRighttobeHeard.pdf)

---

### **Responsorial Psalm 98**

*R/ Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvellous deeds.*

Sing to the LORD a new song,  
for he has done wondrous deeds;  
His right hand has won victory for him,  
his holy arm. *R/*

The LORD has made his salvation known:  
in the sight of the nations he has revealed his justice.  
He has remembered his kindness and his faithfulness  
toward the house of Israel. *R/*

All the ends of the earth have seen  
the salvation by our God.  
Sing joyfully to the LORD, all you lands;  
break into song; sing praise. *R/*

### **Prayer of Javiera Contreras**

Lord Jesus, Help me not to weaken at times when the situation of others seems so distant, when I feel that my contribution is not important, help me to make others aware of the many people who suffer in anonymous ways, accepting in silence a life they do not deserve, and the fortunate ones like us, who have it all, often without asking for it. Instruct me by your example, oh Jesus, able to make yourself the master of all when you wished, accepted with such dedication the mission given you by your Father, going against a society unjust and full of hierarchies. And so also the life of so many saints, and lay persons, including non-believers, who give their lives to the service of others, making the happiness of the dispossessed the goal of their lives and who are today the inspiration of those of us who dream of a better world.  
Amen!

## **December 9 Tuesday of the Second Week of Advent**

**Marist Anniversary:** 1879 - Death of Br Louis Marie, second Superior General of the Institute.

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### **Today's Readings:**

IS 40: 1-11. *Comfort, give comfort to my people, says your God.*

MT 18: 12-14. *God does not wish even one of these little ones to be lost.*

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***Francis Muthama, Kenya***

We, children play a major role in our communities alongside our own physical, mental and spiritual growth. We take part in home, community, school and country affairs in spite of our ages. Children act as a helping hand to their parents and have a duty to make them have a sense of belonging. Unity starts from a community and togetherness ends outside the global world. We are that we are given the opportunity to take part in the building of our country.

We feel loved cherished. Even though we have all this, we are criticized and despised because of our inabilities or disabilities.

---

### **Reflection on the right to participation**

One of the challenges in supporting children's right to participate is the need to ensure that opportunities are consistent with children's evolving capacities. Too often, adults underestimate children's capacities or fail to appreciate the value of their perspective, because they are not expressed in ways that adults would use. Obviously, for many children, physical immaturity, relative inexperience and lack of knowledge render them vulnerable and mean they require specific protections. However, this places an obligation on adults to explore ways of enabling children to participate more effectively and safely, and not to deny them the opportunity to exercise their rights.

Source: [www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/insight6.pdf](http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/insight6.pdf)

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### **Responsorial Psalm 96**

*R/ The Lord our God comes with power.*

Sing to the LORD a new song;  
sing to the LORD, all you lands.  
Sing to the LORD; bless his name,  
announce his salvation, day after day. *R/*

Tell his glory among the nations;  
among all peoples, his wondrous deeds.  
Say among the nations: The LORD is king;  
He governs the peoples with equity. *R/*

They shall exult before the LORD, for he comes;  
for he comes to rule the earth.  
He shall rule the world with justice  
and the peoples with his constancy. *R/*

---

### **Prayer of Francis Muthama**

Dear God, we thank you for our being and for the gift of our parents and country. We pray that we may grow up knowing and serving you, never to succumb to temptations. Help us to grow towards heaven and lead others towards your kingdom. Amen!

# December 10

## Wednesday of the Second Week of Advent

### International Day of Human Rights (UNO)

#### Today's Readings:

IS 40: 25-31. *The Lord almighty gives strength to the weary.*

MT 11: 28-30. *Come to me all you who are weary.*

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**Gabriel Alcântara Barreto**  
Brazil

His name is Gabriel Alcântara Barreto but his friends at the *Happy Home Marist Social Centre* simply call him "Alcântara".

He lives with his mother, his two brothers, and his stepfather. in the neighbourhood of Catiapoã, São Vicente around 4 km away from *Happy Home MSC*.

He comes to *Happy Home MSC* every day on a motorcycle with his stepfather. "I've been wearing my helmet and I'm not afraid to ride a motorcycle", says Gabriel.

Cheerful, smart, very liked by all, and full of energy, he is always telling new jokes to his friends. He gives a hand to the educators when they organize the spaces, and choose materials for the activities with his class.

Through an informal conversation circle, he tells us a little about his experience at the *Happy Home MSC*:

*"I always choose what I want to do, if I want to play out in the yard or draw. At lunchtime, I also prepare my dish alone. I'm happy and feel good here because I can choose the activities I want. During the conversation circles, sometimes I respect my friends, because I want everyone to listen to me, and feel good when that happens".*

At home, Gabriel, participate by keeping his toys in order and giving his mom a hand.

### **Reflection on the right to participation chosen by Alcântara's teachers**

When we observe, we must do it from a double point of view, standing as an adult and as a child, because the child is not only playing: he or she is living, and does so very seriously, getting completely involved, including all his or her functions and emotions in every act from birth onwards.

Source: JUDIT FALK – “*Educar nos três primeiros anos*”

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### **Responsorial Psalm 103**

*R/ O bless the Lord, my soul!*

Bless the LORD, O my soul;  
and all my being, bless his holy name.  
Bless the LORD, O my soul,  
and forget not all his benefits. *R/*

He pardons all your iniquities,  
he heals all your ills.  
He redeems your life from destruction,  
he crowns you with kindness and compassion. *R/*

Merciful and gracious is the LORD,  
slow to anger and abounding in kindness.  
Not according to our sins does he deal with us,  
nor does he requite us according to our crimes. *R/*

---

### **Little prayer of Alcântara and his friends**

You have to make the sign of the cross first! Like this: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Thank you, Father in Heaven!  
For the food that is never missing on our table.  
For the playground, the courtyard, for the little ones, for the children, for animals, for our clothing, for Jesus, and for our house.  
Thank you, Jesus, and God too, for our land. Thank you for our life!  
Father in Heaven, thank you for our family! For everything!  
We have to say Amen!

# December 11

## Thursday of the Second Week of Advent

### Today's Readings:

IS 41: 13-20. *I am your redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.*

MT 11: 11-15. *There is no one born greater than John the Baptist.*

---

Do I know when I am “hungry”? Many rights are constantly denied, especially to children and adolescents.

When the Marist institution asks me to participate in discussion groups, in a *Faith and Politics Group*, or simply in a conversation with the coordination team, friends, all this generates a social questioning that makes me realize I am part of a society that tends to oppress people. Schools should do more than train competent professionals, because the world needs citizens who are hungry, not a simple hunger for food or material things, but rather for faith and hope.

After all, God’s face is also young.

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**Amanda de Sousa Braga**  
*Brazil*

### Reflection on the right to participation

In general, children are widely denied opportunities for decision-making in accordance with their evolving capacities. In most countries, neither legal frameworks nor policy and practice give sufficient consideration to the importance of recognising and respecting children’s actual capacities. Initiatives often fail because adults do not recognise or promote children’s potential contribution and consequently, fail to create spaces for children to take greater responsibility for decision-making in their own lives.

It is not enough to work with children to bring about the step change that is needed. A great deal more work needs to be done with adults if children’s participation is to be a truly attainable goal.

Source: [www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/insight6.pdf](http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/insight6.pdf)

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## **Responsorial Psalm 145**

*R/ The Lord is gracious and merciful; slow to anger, and of great kindness.*

I will extol you, O my God and King,  
and I will bless your name forever and ever.  
The LORD is good to all  
and compassionate toward all his works. *R/*

Let all your works give you thanks, O LORD,  
and let your faithful ones bless you.  
Let them discourse of the glory of your Kingdom  
and speak of your might. *R/*

Let them make known to men your might  
and the glorious splendor of your Kingdom.  
Your Kingdom is a Kingdom for all ages,  
and your dominion endures through all generations. *R/*

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### **Prayer of Amanda de Sousa Braga**

My God, I hope my hunger for justice and faith never ends, and that all my questions will find an answer one day. Thanks for placing me on the Marist path, which brings about all these questions.  
Amen!

# December 12

## Friday of the Second Week of Advent

### Our Lady of Guadalupe

#### Today's Readings:

ZEC 2: 14-17. *Sing and rejoice, daughter Zion!*

or REV 11: 19a; 12: 1-6a, 10ab. *The Two Witnesses.*

LK 1: 26-38. *You will conceive and give birth to a son.*

or LK 1: 39-47. *And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me?*



**Ferney Eduardo Torres Varela**  
Colombia

*What is your experience of the right to participate in your environment?*

I think I have not been allowed to participate in school activities because when they organize an event I don't seem to fit in any group, because I am tiresome. They always tell me to be good and I will participate next time.

At home, the one who decides what to or not to do is my mother. She decides what to eat, when I shall take a shower, etc. When I don't listen they scold me, hit me or punish me: no pc or TV for a week.

When my mother switches it on and I ask her to let me watch it, she says no, so I get bored and go to sleep.

With my friends it is different, I feel like I do participate in my environment. I enjoy playing soccer with them, or play in the Community Centre IT room.

However, sometimes when I fight with my mates they send me home and that makes me feel sad.

### **Reflection on the right to participation**

The realisation of the right to be heard and to have views given due weight promotes the capacities of children. There is a growing body of evidence that routinely taking children's views and experiences into account – within the family, at school and in other settings – helps develop children's self-esteem, cognitive abilities, social skills and respect for others. Through participation, children acquire skills, build competence, extend aspirations and gain confidence. A virtuous circle is created. The more children participate, the more effective their contributions and the greater the impact on their development.

Source:

[www.unicef.org/french/adolescence/files/Every Childs Right to be Heard.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/french/adolescence/files/Every_Childs_Right_to_be_Heard.pdf)

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### **Responsorial Psalm JDT 13**

*R/ You are the highest honour of our race.*

Blessed are you, daughter, by the Most High God,  
above all the women on earth;  
and blessed be the LORD God,  
the creator of heaven and earth. *R/*

Your deed of hope will never be forgotten  
by those who tell of the might of God. *R/*

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### **Prayer of Ferney Eduardo Torres Varela**

Oh Lord, thank you for letting me participate in the INDER sports program and attend the Community Centre where I can play, have fun and learn. Please, protect my family, may they never be victims of the shootings.  
Amen!

# December 13

## Saturday of the Second Week of Advent

Saint Lucy, virgin and martyr

### Today's Readings:

SIR 48: 1-4, 9-11. *Until like fire a prophet appeared.*

MT 17: 9a, 10-13. *Elias has already come and they did not recognize him.*

---

In the midst of an individualistic society, the right to participate becomes competitive, and society excludes the underprivileged and marginalized, many of whom do not enjoy this right. School many times gives us the opportunity become aware of these situations.

During the civic events, when we sing the national anthem, we remember that we are citizens and have our rights. The meetings with young people organized by the pastoral team are important to me. We discuss current issues, the topics regarding us as young people, and each of us expresses him or herself freely. My teachers use different methods to help us participate and interact, such as work groups and field trips, so that everyone can participate, not as an obligation but with total freedom.

This right is well accepted in my family, because we know each other and the limitations we have. In Church, we are always invited to participate and become a part of some group, pastoral activity or movement, an invitation we accept with freedom and confidence, because we are a community and we should try to help each other grow.

In many cases, participation becomes difficult, and young people often do not want to get involved because they believe only adults should participate in civil society, exercising their duties and claiming their rights.



**Matheus Ayrison Melo Gomes**  
*Brazil*

## **Reflection on the right to participation**

Participation can support children emotionally and socially by building their knowledge, personal and social skills and a positive attitude to citizenship and decision-making. It can promote achievement because of the positive impact it has on teaching and learning.

Source: *Promoting children and young people's participation through the National Healthy School Standard, 1999.*

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## **Responsorial Psalm 80**

*R/ Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall be saved.*

O shepherd of Israel, hearken,  
From your throne upon the cherubim, shine forth.  
Rouse your power. *R/*

Once again, O LORD of hosts,  
look down from heaven, and see;  
Take care of this vine,  
and protect what your right hand has planted  
the son of man whom you yourself made strong. *R/*

May your help be with the man of your right hand,  
with the son of man whom you yourself made strong.  
Then we will no more withdraw from you;  
give us new life, and we will call upon your name. *R/*

---

## **Prayer of Matheus Ayrison Melo Gomes**

O God, in the midst of so many injustices of this world, grant us to know how to use our right to participate without excluding anyone. Help us live in unity and peace, and help the Marist Education Network live according to your will, following in the footsteps of Marcellin.

Amen!

# December 14

## Third Sunday of Advent

Saint John of the Cross, priest and doctor

### Today's Readings:

IS 61: 1-2a, 10-11. *The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me.*

1 THES 5: 16-24. *Church Order and Concluding Prayer.*

JN 1: 6-8, 19-28. *A man named John was sent from God.*



**Robin Hansda**  
*West Bengal, India*

My name is Robin Hansda. I am 12 years old doing class 7. I stayed already two years in this I stayed in the Chetana Tribal Boys' Hostel in Talit.

My mother died two years ago and my father is now in prison. I have two sisters of 16 and 7 years old and my uncle is taking care of us. When I was three years old, my father started to teach me how to read and write in Bengali; and my uncle taught me how to pray. In my school I like to study well and my dream to become a good doctor in the future. I am good in my studies and I help my classmates to understand lessons.

I participate in some celebrations in the school more actively by preparing poems, songs, dances and dramas.

Every year I participate in the Sport's day. In the hostel, I participate in different celebrations of singing, dancing and giving a speech. When I participate in a celebration, I feel always happy and it is an opportunity for me to enter in relation with others and to be known better by them. When I stay at home, I help my uncle in the house work. Also I like to join the church choir to sing, sometimes I play drums and read the Bible.

I give thanks to all the people: my parents, teachers, Marist Brothers etc and I pray for all of them. Therefore, I feel very glad in all kinds of participation in the hostel, school, village, my home and parish.

### **Reflection on the right to participation**

According to the Convention, children have a right to adequate information appropriate to their age. Just like other citizens, they have the right to be informed about their situations, options and the consequences of their actions. Media – together with parents and schools – play an essential role in this respect. Programmes to improve children’s access to relevant information should be designed and adjusted for different age groups. In spite of their obligations in this area, few governments have taken public media services for children seriously. Few, if any, have made an effort to involve children in the planning or production of media programmes.

Source: *The Political Influence of Children*, Alfild Petren and Thomas Hammarberg.

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### **Responsorial Psalm Lk 1**

*R/ My soul rejoices in my God.*

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord;  
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,  
for he has looked upon his lowly servant.  
From this day all generations will call me blessed: *R/*

The Almighty has done great things for me,  
and holy is his Name.  
He has mercy on those who fear him  
in every generation. *R/*

He has filled the hungry with good things,  
and the rich he has sent away empty.  
He has come to the help of his servant Israel  
for he has remembered his promise of mercy. *R/*

---

### **Prayer of Robin Hansda**

O Lord, listen to my prayer. Help me in my life and give light and strength to be a good doctor in the future. Help my family and heal their sicknesses. Help the teachers of my school to teach and be committed more to their students. Help the Marist Brothers, to help more for the growth of the Santali Tribal boys of my hostel and we become good persons and good Christians. Amen!

# December 15

## Monday of the Third Week of Advent

**Marist Anniversary:** 1949 - Departure of the first Brothers for Nigeria.

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### Today's Readings:

NM 24: 2-7, 15-17a. *A star shall advance from Jacob.*

MT 21: 23-27. *Where was John's baptism from?*

---

I learn new things every day, and I share all this with my family. We often misunderstand the messages of our Lord, but now, thanks to the Youth Ministry, we really understand the importance of the Word of God.

I feel the need to do more, so I dedicate my time to teaching children Christian values.

I feel there is no greater gift than the sincere smile of a child and, as Marcellin Champagnat said, I can't see a child without feeling the need to tell them how much God loves them. Since what I do in my school is not enough, I'm willing to leave my family and friends, to go preach the Word to other communities far away from mine, because I feel I can do something, and I want to share what I know with other people.

I am a missionary and I participate in the Church as such.

My country, like every other country, is governed in a political way; laws are implemented that allow us to build a better society. However, it was unfortunate when they nearly implemented a law that would have allowed the killing of unborn children. Before this, along with other young pro-life activists, we decided to play an active part in encouraging the whole community to support us in a massive march to prevent the legalization of abortion in Bolivia. I'd like to leave you with a quote from Paulo Coelho's book *The Fifth Mountain*:  
*"If someone asks a favor of me, it is because I still have some use on this earth."*

---



**Janelly**  
*Bolivia*

### **Reflection on the right to participation**

The child's right to express an opinion is therefore contingent on his or her capability of forming views and of articulating them. Of course, all human beings have views and can express them from birth. Even infants and toddlers are "experts" on their own feelings, likes and dislikes, and can make these known. In this case, the problem becomes whether parents, teachers, nurses and other adults are capable of listening, understanding and transmitting these views. Art. 12 places an obligation on governments to ensure that children's views are sought and considered on all matters that affect their lives.

Source: *The Political influence of Children, Alfild Petren and Thomas Hammarberg*

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### **Responsorial Psalm 25**

*R/ Teach me your ways, O Lord*

Your ways, O LORD, make known to me;  
teach me your paths,  
Guide me in your truth and teach me,  
for you are God my savior. *R/*

Your ways, O LORD, make known to me;  
teach me your paths,  
Guide me in your truth and teach me,  
for you are God my Savior. *R/*

Remember that your compassion, O LORD,  
and your kindness are from of old.  
In your kindness remember me,  
because of your goodness, O LORD. *R/*

Good and upright is the LORD;  
thus he shows sinners the way.  
He guides the humble to justice,  
he teaches the humble his way. *R/*

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### **Prayer of Janely**

Lord, thank you for all the opportunities you give me, so that I can keep following you. Thank you for my family, my friends, and everyone around me, the best gift and the best support you could have given to me. I thank the Virgin Mary, for always holding me in the warmth and protection of her arms; and her son Jesus, for enlightening the way, so that I'm never lost. Amen!

# December 16

## Tuesday of the Third Week of Advent

**Marist Anniversary:** 1845 - Bishop Epalle dies on the island of San Cristobal in Oceania.

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### Today's Readings:

ZEP 3: 1-2, 9-13. *Jerusalem reproached and the nations punished and Jerusalem restored.*

MT 21: 28-32. *The Parable of the Two Sons.*

---

I don't take part in politics, because I think it's only for adults; I don't need to worry now about things I can't decide upon. I never litter, it is something I never do; I was taught this way, and I know littering is the most harmful thing for all. I always remind my friends not to throw trash on the floor.

In the classroom, I help my classmates with the activities the teachers propose; I return the containers to the cafeteria to facilitate the employees' work, helping them and the entire school to save money. In the community, generally speaking, it seems to me that I don't have much participation.

The challenges are many; I'm afraid people won't listen to me when I speak, that I will be misunderstood, or feel embarrassed if my opinions are perceived as childish, for example: "What you said is so cute", etc. Adults' opinions most often prevail, and I think that society offers little opportunity for children and young people to participate. When I participate, I have the feeling that I exist, that I have a voice, and it is very nice to know you are helping to build something.



***Caique Ferreira Lino de Souza***  
*Brazil*

### **Reflection on the right to participation**

States Parties should make the presumption that a child has a view to communicate, rather than requiring the child to prove their capacity to do so. They also have an obligation to ensure that children with disabilities are equipped with, and supported to use whatever mode of communication is necessary to facilitate the expression of their views. Efforts must also be made to recognise the expression of views of minority languages.

Source: [www.unicef.org/adolescence/files/SAFresourceschildrenadvocates.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/adolescence/files/SAFresourceschildrenadvocates.pdf)

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### **Responsorial Psalm 34**

*R/ The Lord hears the cry of the poor.*

I will bless the LORD at all times;  
his praise shall be ever in my mouth.  
Let my soul glory in the LORD;  
the lowly will hear me and be glad. *R/*

Look to him that you may be radiant with joy,  
and your faces may not blush with shame.  
When the poor one called out, the LORD heard,  
and from all his distress he saved him. *R/*

The LORD confronts the evildoers,  
to destroy remembrance of them from the earth.  
When the just cry out, the LORD hears them,  
and from all their distress he rescues them. *R/*

The LORD is close to the broken hearted;  
and those who are crushed in spirit he saves.  
The LORD redeems the lives of his servants;  
no one incurs guilt who takes refuge in him. *R/*

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### **Prayer of Caique Ferreira Lino de Souza**

Oh Lord, stop the selfishness and vanity of the world from silencing the voice of the little ones. Grant us that the voice of freedom, love, equality and peace echoes within each heart. Teach us to express ourselves wisely, so that we can truly be heard.

Amen!

# December 17

## Wednesday of the Third Week of Advent

### Today's Readings:

GEN 49: 2, 8-10. *The sceptre shall not depart from Judah.*

MT 1: 1-17. *Genealogy of Jesus Christ, Son of David.*

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***Kamilla Kaysa de Araújo Sena***  
*Brazil*

It is inevitable that your bare perception always open to new experiences at every moment of your life goes unnoticed. In a way, this is how I see myself; in a way, this is how I am.

My mother gives me not only maternal affection but also her friendship, admiration, and unconditional love, and thanks to this I can be there for many people who need someone, for all those who need help.

When I found the opportunity to participate and include myself in the society where I live, I realized I am not alone, I do not live alone, I had the opportunity to teach and learn more and more

In the Marist setting, I found a reason to open up to others and share my ideas, mainly in the Marist Youth Ministry meetings and the pastoral ministry activities, where we are invited to discuss current affairs and the situations in which our rights are not respected, in a quite serious, dynamics and participatory way, without forgetting the values of family and Church.

Saint Marcellin taught me to love my neighbour, and not to remain passive in the face of the problems affecting our youth. We must involve everyone so that nobody feels excluded from the rights and duties we all share.

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### **Reflection on the right to participation**

In child protection proceedings when children have suffered physical violence, sexual abuse or other violent crimes, they must have their views taken into account in any proceedings instituted to protect them. They should be enabled

to provide testimony in non-threatening and age-appropriate court environments that take account of the child's level of understanding and capacity to express views.

Source: [www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/insight6.pdf](http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/insight6.pdf)

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### **Responsorial Psalm 72**

*R/ Justice shall flourish in his time, and fullness of peace for ever.*

O God, with your judgment endow the king,  
and with your justice, the king's son;  
He shall govern your people with justice  
and your afflicted ones with judgment. *R/*

The mountains shall yield peace for the people,  
and the hills justice.  
He shall defend the afflicted among the people,  
save the children of the poor. *R/*

Justice shall flower in his days,  
and profound peace, till the moon be no more.  
May he rule from sea to sea,  
and from the River to the ends of the earth. *R/*

May his name be blessed forever;  
as long as the sun his name shall remain.  
In him shall all the tribes of the earth be blessed;  
all the nations shall proclaim his happiness. *R/*

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### **Prayer of Kamilla Kaysa de Araújo Sena**

Oh Lord, look after and protect those who look after and protect their brothers and sisters here on Earth. Show us what we can do so that injustice may be forgotten and left behind.

Thank you for the opportunity of being in the Marist School each day of my life, and of benefiting from all the opportunities it offers.

Amen!

# December 18

## Thursday of the Third Week of Advent

### International Day of the Migrant

#### Today's Readings:

JER 23: 5-8. *To raise up for David a legitimate offspring.*

MT 1: 18-25. *Jesus will be born of Mary, espoused to Joseph, son of David.*

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I am Margaret Kwamboka; I am 16 years old a Kenyan by nationality. I am a student at Oloolua Secondary School. I participate in various activities, both in school and in the community.

I am in the school handball team, I enjoy being in the school team because, I get to visit different places, meet many people whom I socialize with and most of the times we become friends. I face some challenges like missing classes. I am also a school councilor. I am in charge of clubs and entertainment.

I enjoy being a councilor because the clubs that have been introduced in our school have helped many students to nurture their talents. In my community I belong to youth group as well as in the church, which together we visit the children's home and the sick in hospital.

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***Margaret Kwamboka, Kenya***

#### Reflection on the right to participation

Children's participation is indispensable for the creation of a social climate in the classroom, which stimulates cooperation and mutual support needed for child-centred interactive learning. Giving children's views weight is particularly important in the elimination of discrimination, prevention of bullying and disciplinary measures.

Source: CRC/C/GC/12 pag.22, nr.109

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## **Responsorial Psalm 72**

*R/ Justice shall flourish in his time, and fullness of peace for ever.*

O God, with your judgment endow the king,  
and with your justice, the king's son;  
He shall govern your people with justice  
and your afflicted ones with judgment. *R/*

For he shall rescue the poor when he cries out,  
and the afflicted when he has no one to help him.  
He shall have pity for the lowly and the poor;  
the lives of the poor he shall save. *R/*

Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel,  
who alone does wondrous deeds.  
And blessed forever be his glorious name;  
may the whole earth be filled with his glory. *R/*

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### **Prayer of Margaret Kwamboka**

Immaculate Heart of Mary I offer my burden, for love of your Divine Son and in reparation, to your most grieved heart may it convert sinners and bring peace to all hearts.

Amen!

# December 19

## Friday of the Third Week of Advent

**Marist Anniversary:** 1886 - Arrival of the first Brothers in Spain.

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**Today's Readings:**

JGS 13: 2-7, 24-25a. *The angel announces the birth of Samson.*

LK 1: 5-25. *The angel Gabriel announces the birth of John the Baptist.*

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I come from Malda Town – North India. We are five in my family; my father, mother, my elder sister, my elder brother and I. When I was a small boy I lived in my village and I was told that I am a bad boy. I didn't help my family in any work, but I helped sometimes other families. I hated my family and I liked to stay with other children of my age. My mother used to rebuke me and then I used to run away to other persons' house. Then, I expressed my desire to go to hostel to my family and they agreed. After a first bad experience in a Hostel that I didn't like, I came to the Chetana Tribal Boys' Hostel in Talit which is run by the Marist Brothers.

Now I am in class 8, doing my studies in a Government school close to the hostel.

At the beginning I didn't like to study and was very much careless in the school and in the hostel. But now I am a good student and I like to stay here. Three years hostel experiences changed me a lot and I feel that I am one of the good boys here. During the celebrations times in the hostel, I am one of the persons to help to organize programs particularly dance and singing also I am one of the leaders with some responsibilities which gives me more strength to improve in many areas with the guidance of the brothers and the support of my friends in the hostel. In my school also I like to participate in sports.

I give thanks to the Lord for the gift of this life, my parents, brothers and my friends in the hostel. I pray for the boys who don't have father and mother.



**Patras Baskey**  
*West Bengala, India*

### **Reflection on the right to participation chosen by Patras Baskey**

Children's interests are frequently disregarded in the public policy sphere in favour of more powerful interest groups. It is not necessarily the case that children's welfare is deliberately disregarded, but rather that children's voices, and the impact of public policy on their lives, are not visible in decision making forums and accordingly, never reach the top of the political agenda.

Source: [www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/insight6.pdf](http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/insight6.pdf)

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### **Responsorial Psalm 71**

*R/ My mouth shall be filled with your praise, and I will sing your glory!*

Be my rock of refuge,  
a stronghold to give me safety,  
for you are my rock and my fortress.  
O my God, rescue me from the hand of the wicked. *R/*

For you are my hope, O LORD;  
my trust, O God, from my youth.  
On you I depend from birth;  
from my mother's womb you are my strength. *R/*

I will treat of the mighty works of the LORD;  
O God, I will tell of your singular justice.  
O God, you have taught me from my youth,  
and till the present I proclaim your wondrous deeds. *R/*

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### **Prayer of Patras Baskey**

O Lord our loving Father, you are the only God whom I trust. Today, I come to you and pray that you will stay with me and all the people of the world particularly who do not have their parents, brothers and sisters, the opportunity of studying and experiencing their happiness as they are. Bless all of us Lord and be with us.

Amen!

# December 20

## Saturday of the Third Week of Advent

### Today's Readings:

IS 7: 10-14. *Behold, the virgin is with child.*

LK 1: 26-38. *You will conceive and give birth to a son.*

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***Cristian Cano Espinosa***

*Colombia*

I love being in my house, because when they go to the farm my parents take me with them. I help with housekeeping and that makes me feel good because I help my mom.

At Paul VI school, last year they let me participate in arts events and I danced with a girl named Paipa. It was very funny. Another day, it started to rain during recess and some friends and I got wet while playing, and when we returned to class the principal scolded us and gave us a bad mark. He did not give us the chance to explain how the game started and that it was just a game.

*"Sometimes adults do not listen to us and decide for us"*

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### **Reflection on the right to participation**

Children require play, recreation, physical and cultural activities for their development and socialization. These should be designed taking into account children's preferences and capacities. Children who are able to express their views should be consulted regarding the accessibility and appropriateness of play and recreation facilities. Very young children and some children with disabilities, who are unable to participate in formal consultative processes, should be provided with particular opportunities to express their wishes.

Source: CRC/C/GC/12 pag.22 nr.115

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## **Responsorial Psalm 24**

*R/ Let the Lord enter; he is the king of glory.*

The LORD's are the earth and its fullness;  
the world and those who dwell in it.  
For he founded it upon the seas  
and established it upon the rivers. *R/*

Who can ascend the mountain of the LORD?  
or who may stand in his holy place?  
He whose hands are sinless, whose heart is clean,  
who desires not what is vain. *R/*

He shall receive a blessing from the LORD,  
a reward from God his savior.  
Such is the race that seeks for him,  
that seeks the face of the God of Jacob. *R/*

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### **Prayer of Cristian Cano Espinosa**

Lord, please help my brother so that he stops fighting with our cousin.  
Lord, please help my family, because we are going through many problems and  
they do not listen to me when I say "don't fight,.  
I just want them to learn to live as brothers.  
Amen!

# December 21

## Fourth Sunday of Advent

### Today's Readings:

2 SM 7: 1-5, 8b-12, 14, 16. *The Kingdom of David will last forever in the presence of the Lord.*

ROM 16: 25-27. *Doxology.*

LK 1: 26-38. *You will conceive and give birth to a son.*

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My opinion on the participation of children and young people is as follows: my most important contribution (in the case of politics) would be voting for the election of President, legislators, that kind of thing, but we cannot vote because there is an age range.

I think children and young people starting from age 11 should vote too. At school, we are always offering our opinion, we have the same power as adults there, because we can choose many things; the students' opinion is taken into account. Here at home, I also participate in everything; whenever my family does something, they always ask for my opinion.

I also participate by keeping the house clean, saving on everything, etc.

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**Lorryne Cristina Machado Xavier**  
*Brazil*

### Reflection on the right to participation

Children should be supported and encouraged to form their own child-led organizations and initiatives, which will create space for meaningful participation and representation. In addition, children can contribute their perspectives, for example, on the design of schools, playgrounds, parks, leisure and cultural facilities, public libraries, health facilities and local transport systems in order to ensure more appropriate services. In community development plans that call for public consultation, children's views should be explicitly included.

(Source: CRC/C/GC/12 pag.25, nr.128)

## **Responsorial Psalm 89**

*R/ For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.*

The promises of the LORD I will sing forever;  
through all generations my mouth shall proclaim your faithfulness.  
For you have said, "My kindness is established forever";  
in heaven you have confirmed your faithfulness. *R/*

"I have made a covenant with my chosen one,  
I have sworn to David my servant:  
Forever will I confirm your posterity  
and establish your throne for all generations." *R/*

"He shall say of me, 'You are my father,  
my God, the Rock, my savior.'  
Forever I will maintain my kindness toward him,  
and my covenant with him stands firm." *R/*

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### **Prayer of Lorraine Cristina Machado Xavier**

Oh Lord, thank you for giving me such a good opportunity to represent my school. I pray that the Lord blesses Maria Lucia and Valdeci for choosing me, and to bless the people of the Marist Foundation (FMSI).  
Amen!

# December 22

## Monday of the Fourth Week of Advent

### Today's Readings:

1 SM 1: 24-28. *Hannah Presents Samuel to the Lord.*

LK 1: 46-56. *The Canticle of Mary.*

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**Tomás González - Chile**

My name is Tomás González, I am 17, I live in Chile, in the city of Rancagua, I have Chilean nationality and I am a student in the Instituto O'Higgins. I am constantly participating in favor of causes that are deserving according to my criteria, depending on how much I see myself committed to them and how much they call me to be part of them. This year, in the fourth year of secondary school, I could not leave aside the struggle against inequality in our country, so I decided to take part in a project of the Organization of Students in Solidarity (OES), which exists to provide, on Saturday mornings, a free pre-university, with

classes organized and directed by the students themselves, for those students who, like me, have reached their last year of secondary school and have to take the same tests for which many are preparing with paid pre-university courses, but cannot enter these because of their financial situation, so that they have to put aside the possibility of continuing to study to obtain a professional qualification. The principal challenge we face as a project is not being able to overcome the great gap of educational inequality there is between those of us who give the pre-university classes and those who need them, seeing that the latter belong to a deficient educational system and cannot count on the knowledge necessary to take the test, on whose results depend their futures and, in some cases, their families. With good test results, they can enter a university or institute which prepares the individual to be a professional in the future. The efforts of each one of us who form the organization is living proof that the right to participate is present and can be exercised, that the only thing lacking in my situation and that of my friends is the initiative to be part of a change, to want to be part of something bigger than the world inside our bubble.

The right to take part is already present, all that's lacking is your initiative.

### **Reflection on the right to participation**

States parties must assure that the child is able to express her or his views « in all matters affecting » her or him. This represents a second qualification of this right: the child must be heard if the matter under discussion affects the child.

Source: CRC/C/GC/12 pag.8, nr.26

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### **Responsorial Psalm 1 Sm**

*R/ My heart exults in the Lord, my Savior.*

“My heart exults in the LORD,  
my horn is exalted in my God.  
I have swallowed up my enemies;  
I rejoice in my victory.” *R/*

“The bows of the mighty are broken,  
while the tottering gird on strength.  
The well-fed hire themselves out for bread,  
while the hungry batten on spoil.  
The barren wife bears seven sons,  
while the mother of many languishes.” *R/*

“The LORD puts to death and gives life;  
he casts down to the nether world;  
he raises up again.  
The LORD makes poor and makes rich,  
he humbles, he also exalts.” *R/*

“He raises the needy from the dust;  
from the dung heap he lifts up the poor,  
To seat them with nobles  
and make a glorious throne their heritage.” *R/*

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### **Prayer of Tomás González**

My Lord, I do not stop thanking you for the freedoms you have granted me, the opportunities since thanks to them I have been able to act, to help and observe what is necessary for the surroundings in which I live. I beg you, please, never take this right away from me, this freedom to choose what I want and help me to share this reality, to create awareness, action, and help. Many thanks for all the persons I have known and all the persons whose witness have left a mark on me. Thanks to you, I feel progress-taking place in me. Amen!

## December 23

### Tuesday of the Fourth Week of Advent

#### Today's Readings:

MAL 3: 1-4, 23-24. *I will send you Elijah, the prophet, before the day of the Lord comes.*

LK 1: 57-66. *The Birth of John.*

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My names are Raphael Blessing Kamwaria. I am in class three; my school is called Advent Hill Primary School. I am eight years old.

When I am free at home, I enjoy playing with my friends and my little sister. I like riding my bicycles with my friends. At school, I like playing football and basketball. I also enjoy swimming and reading storybooks. When I do this I feel good.

My favourite food is potato chips chicken, pizza, spaghetti, strawberry and grapes. I am a Kenyan and I live in Ongata Rongai. I like my country and I want it to be beautiful. Therefore, I plant trees, flowers and fruit trees. Trees are important because they provide shade, they bring us rain, and they hold soil erosion.



**Raphael Blessing Kamwaria**  
Kenya

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#### Reflection on the right to participation

There is no fixed age at which children become competent to participate. Indeed, a growing body of recent research suggests the need for extreme caution in drawing conclusions on age-related competencies, arguing instead that a wide range of other factors influence how children function. Cross-cultural studies, for example, provide powerful evidence of the significant differences in children's capacities according to a number of factors, including the expectations placed on them; opportunities for participation; social, cultural and economic factors; and levels of support and information available

to them. This creates a virtuous circle; the greater the opportunities for participation, the more confident a child becomes, and the greater their capacity to participate.

Source: [www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/insight6.pdf](http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/insight6.pdf)

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### **Responsorial Psalm 25**

*R/ Lift up your heads and see; your redemption is near at hand.*

Your ways, O LORD, make known to me;  
teach me your paths,  
Guide me in your truth and teach me,  
for you are God my Savior. *R/*

Good and upright is the LORD;  
thus he shows sinners the way.  
He guides the humble to justice,  
he teaches the humble his way. *R/*

All the paths of the LORD are kindness and constancy  
toward those who keep his covenant and his decrees.  
The friendship of the LORD is with those who fear him,  
and his covenant, for their instruction. *R/*

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### **Prayer of Raphael Blessing Kamwaria**

Oh God I pray to you because you have powers and you have done so many miracles. I want my parents to get money and me with my sister to grow well. I want me to perform well in exams and God I want that we do not get sick in my family. God bless my family to grow up well.  
Amen!

# December 24

## Wednesday of the Fourth Week of Advent

**Marist Anniversary:** 1817 - Brother Lawrence, the third member of the Institute, joins the community at La Valla.

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### Today's Readings:

2 SAM 7: 1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16. *The Kingdom of David will last forever.*

LK 1: 67-79. *The daybreak from on high will visit us.*

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My name is Lucio Málaga and I am a student in the Colegio Manuel Ramírez Barinaga in the district of San Juan de Miraflores. At present, I am the president of the student council of my college.

In my opinion, I consider that a boy does not feel he has the capability to realize great changes with regard to his social or college community or in the place where he is. This is because at the time when a minor wants to give his opinion, he is usually ignored or his comments are taken as those of someone who is not mature enough to be able to express himself, or that they have no value or weight because of his age. Adults are accustomed to think that children a/o adolescents are too small to give their opinion on a topic.

I consider – as the adolescent I am – that this is bad since a comment should not be judged by who says it but by the value and maturity, it has. For this reason, I keep thinking that a lot of discrimination exists towards us in our society. In our college, I consider that I have a certain advance on this subject as president of the students' council. I can state that certain times are given us for being able to express ourselves and make known our concerns and opinions. At times, I feel that we are listened to and at times I have the sensation that certain opinions are not accepted.



**Lucio Sabino Málaga Salazar**  
*Peru*

I would like to finish by saying that if a boy knows he is listened to, it is more than evident that he will feel satisfied at knowing that he is supporting and helping some objective.

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### **Reflection on the right to participation**

The Committee urges States parties to avoid tokenistic approaches, which limit children's expression of views, or which allow children to be heard, but fail to give their views due weight. It emphasizes that adult manipulation of children, placing children in situations where they are told what they can say, or exposing children to risk of harm through participation are not ethical practices and cannot be understood as implementing article 12.

Source: CRC/C/GC/12 pag.26, nr.132.

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### **Responsorial Psalm 89**

*R/ For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.*

The favours of the LORD I will sing forever;  
through all generations my mouth shall proclaim your faithfulness.  
For you have said, "My kindness is established forever";  
in heaven you have confirmed your faithfulness. *R/*

"I have made a covenant with my chosen one,  
I have sworn to David my servant:  
Forever will I confirm your posterity  
and establish your throne for all generations." *R/*

"He shall say of me, 'You are my father,  
my God, the rock, my savior.'  
Forever I will maintain my kindness toward him,  
and my covenant with him stands firm." *R/*

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### **Prayer of Lucio Sabino Málaga Salazar**

Prayer: I ask you, Lord, through the intercession of our good Mother, now that we are beginning the month of May, that you intercede with Jesus for each of us minors in age so that we can continue looking for creative ways for our opinions and points of view to be taken into consideration by adults. I pray you for our fathers, so that they may be the first to listen to and accept our opinions. Amen!

# December 25

## The Nativity of the Lord

### Today's Readings:

IS 52: 7-10. *All the ends of the earth can see the salvation of our God.*

HEB 1: 1-6. *He has spoken to us through the Son.*

JN 1: 1-18. *And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.*

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**Gustavo Góis**  
*Brazil*

The right to participation is important for the society. Participation is very good for everyone, even for us young people, who naturally have a great willpower to change and make a difference in society by participating. It is important that society gives us opportunities to participate, and that we seize them. When the right to participation is given to me, I develop my ideas and my power of reasoning, because as soon as I start discussing and defending my ideas, I start contributing, and I have already done at home, school, the Social Centre, the Church or in state agencies.

When I participate and I realize this is good for me and for others, I want other people to become part of it, that my friends and classmates experience the pleasure of participating, of feeling included, and of really being part of society. In our present-day society, many young people live in difficult situations of crime and poverty because they cannot participate in the construction of what is rightfully theirs, since we have the right to participate.

I believe it is important both for me and for my friends, who are young and are in a decision making stage to find our place within society, to choose what we want to do with our life and what career to choose, so that we can make the right choices, and be participative citizens. Let's stop complaining and stop saying "this has nothing to do with me". Yes, it has everything to do with me, with you and with all of us. I conclude that when I have the right to participate, and I use it, I stop being "just one more", and treasure this in my life as learning and experience, and I know that by participating I make a difference in society.

## **Reflection on the right to participation**

Participation takes children and young people beyond just receiving what is offered to them through the taught curriculum. It challenges and supports them to become active agents in shaping, influencing and providing the whole range of opportunities in school and its wider community. As such, they need support to develop emotionally and socially so that they can participate fully in their lives now and prepare to do so as adults.

Source: *Promoting children and young people's participation through the National Healthy School Standard, 1999*

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## **Responsorial Psalm 98**

*R/ (3c) All the ends of the earth have seen the saving power of God.*

Sing to the LORD a new song,  
for he has done wondrous deeds;  
his right hand has won victory for him,  
his holy arm. *R/*

The LORD has made his salvation known:  
in the sight of the nations he has revealed his justice.  
He has remembered his kindness and his faithfulness  
toward the house of Israel. *R/*

All the ends of the earth have seen the saving power of God.  
All the ends of the earth have seen  
the salvation by our God.  
Sing joyfully to the LORD, all you lands;  
break into song; sing praise. *R/*

All the ends of the earth have seen the saving power of God.  
Sing praise to the LORD with the harp,  
with the harp and melodious song.  
With trumpets and the sound of the horn  
sing joyfully before the King, the LORD. *R/*

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## **Prayer of Gustavo Góis**

I pray to God for all those young people who somehow live in difficult situations, and who cannot participate. I thank God for the opportunity of participating given to me and to so many people my age, and of extending this right to all. Amen!





[www.fmsi-onlus.org](http://www.fmsi-onlus.org)