

Reflection from JP Nguyen

Reflection on my time at the Marist Community of Welcome in Austin, TX:

In my sophomore year of college I had a database management professor who was a big story teller. He was the professor who wanted to associate everything with a personal story. Unfortunately for his students, he had only one story to tell: the story of him building his house. Everything in our database course was tied together with his experience of building a home. By the end of the course, one had to wonder if he had learned more about building a SQL database or installing a plumbing system into a new home. Though his story was incessant, one could not deny the passion our professor had towards building his home. Everything he did and thought of was seen through the lens of a home-builder.

The Marist Brothers and their passion for building a community where one can encounter faith, hope, and love, have reminded me very much of this professor. I have learned through the Marist community the way that St. Marcellin Champagnat and his companions built the mission of the Marist Brothers. As I have learned, I have also had the opportunity to contribute in building the Marist Community of Welcome.

Throughout the time of my stay at the Marist Community of Welcome, I began to cultivate a real awareness of devotion the brothers have to living out the Marist charism. Through their lives, I began to have a natural sense for the 5 Pillars of Marist Identity. As I continued to learn these Pillars, I was able to put words what I was already experience at home. I began to recognize Br. Peter's conversations with me and his help around the home as a display of presence. The attention to detail and dedication that it took to maintain our garden and yard by Br. Rob was a sure sign of simplicity. My roommates and I began to recognize these pillars and started to live it out with the brothers. The backyard barbecues, baseball-throwing evenings, and singing began to be our way towards deeper family spirit. My roommates Luke and Andres committed themselves each Sunday to serving at youth communities at local parishes to remind me of the Pillar of Love of Work. Finally, the Way of Mary was shone brightly as each brother displayed a discipleship with our Lord that was simple, humble, and constant.



If there is one thing that I have learned in college it is how to build a home. I learned more than enough on how to build a physical home with my database professor, but I learned the most vital part of building a home from my Marist Brothers. They have taught me what it means to be present to others despite busy-ness and distraction. They have taught me how to grow in vulnerability and honesty. Most importantly, they have taught me how to be present to the love that God has for me and others. I am forever grateful for the experience I have had at the Marist Community of Welcome. Let's continue to build this house for those after us!