



RI PRESIDENT-NOMINEE'S REMARKS

Mário César Martins de Camargo

29 May 2024

This is an acceptance speech. But this is a “we accept” speech rather than “I accept.” I have brought my partner, Denise, up with me because this is not a “me” speech. It is a “we” speech.

My Rotary journey has always included Denise. She was a little jealous when I joined Rotary six months before getting married to her. She joked that she was second behind Rotary.

[Denise] But then his club asked if I wanted to join. But I wanted do Rotary my way, and then I helped form a satellite club.

We accept for our son, André, who endured our busy lives as Rotarians. So we are happy to accept Mário’s nomination as a family!

[Mário] Thank you, Denise.

Rotary is in the business of “we,” not “I.” Isolation induces a feeling of superiority, the reason for many difficulties. We accept to recognize my parents, Mário and Maria José de Camargo, for introducing me to Rotary at an early age.

We accept to recognize my sponsor, Octavio Vallejo, who dared to suggest my name for membership when I was 23 years old.

We accept to recognize my club, which went from 55 members when I joined to more than 150 today, thanks to the openness to follow innovation and changes in our community.

We accept to recognize the gift of the Youth Exchange program that changed my vision of life in 1974-75 after spending a year in White Bear Lake, Minnesota — a region of the United States with a freezing winter and warm-hearted people. That experience paved the way for me to become the first RI president coming from the ranks of the Youth Exchange program. By the way, I survived the winter!

We accept to recognize the work of my predecessors in Latin America — including the last Rotary International president from Brazil, Paulo Costa in 90-91; Luis Giay from Argentina in 96-97; Frank Devlyn from Mexico in 2000-2001 — and the first RI

president to mention continuity, Carlo Ravizza from Italy in 1999-2000, when I was a district governor.

We accept the need for innovation, new club formats, new forms of association, and new ways of accomplishing the work of Rotary. We must change to continue to be the same — to be in sync with modern times in an ever-dynamic world and stay relevant.

We accept the need for continuity, realizing the president must lead by example and emphasize we are in a relay race, not a solitary sprint. The long-term goal is what matters most, not our individual egos. We will continue what Gordon and Stephanie started, and we will move forward with continuity.

We accept the successful lessons from polio to help change our partnership mindset. Rotary can do wonders working alone, but we need partners to change the world. There is an African proverb that states: If you want to go quickly, walk alone. If you want to go far, walk together.

We accept the need to connect with professional and business associations for membership and revenue growth — with doctors, traders, industrialists, lawyers, salespeople. (I'm a salesperson and a lawyer. Nobody is perfect.)

We accept that we must rejuvenate our image and procedures, appeal to the younger generation to guarantee our succession plan for Rotary. That means including them in our decision process, not using them as cheap labor to move furniture.

We accept that we must connect and imagine a better world, open opportunities, look beyond ourselves, bridge the continents, help and inspire others, be a gift, brighten our world, be the magic — but above all, we must exemplify the idea of Service Above Self. All of that is to pave the road to our membership goals — our biggest priority, asset, and challenge — after more than 25 years of stagnant growth.

We will win the battle for more members. We know we will prevail because we are a force for good that will defeat polio around the planet after 40 years of battle.

We have the best history of a nongovernmental organization and the brightest horizon ahead of us with our members and partners. Leading Rotary will be the most rewarding mission somebody can perform. That is why we accept — to work with this extraordinary pool of talent and do good in the world.

There are three types of people: those who make it happen, those who wait for it to happen, and those who are surprised by what happened. Which are we?

We are people of action, and we will get our job done. We will make it happen.