



**II Marist International
Mission Assembly**
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EDITORIAL



Nairobi: Capital of the Marist World

Br Antonio Ramalho, *general councilor*

The city of Mendes, which is near Rio de Janeiro in Brazil, hosted the First Marist International Mission Assembly in 2007. The event was a milestone in Marist history. It involved large numbers of “Marists of Chamagnat” before, during, and after the Assembly, and in time had a major influence on the focus of the 21st General Chapter in 2009. One of the conclusions of this General Chapter was the need to “hold another Marist International Mission Assembly, along the lines of Mendes”. In other words, the Chapter understood the importance of such meetings in achieving a more inclusive reflection and decision-making process for defining the present and future of Marist life and mission in the world.

To put this action-proposal from the Chapter into practice, the Superior General and his Council launched the preparation process for the Second Marist International Mission Assembly (II MIMA). Nairobi in Africa hosted the last stage of the process involving representatives from all over the Marist world. The choice of Africa was an expression of internationality. It enabled us to tune into and come to terms with an environment we still know little about or poorly understand. We encountered a thriving African continent full of energy, a wealth of culture, young people, Marist stamina, and faith. For many participants, it was a voyage of discovery; for some, it confirmed what they already knew.

Beyond our many differences, the fraternal experience and intense sharing of those days in Nairobi awakened deep feelings and made us realize that we were all African, we were all Marist!

The atmosphere in the Assembly – which became a community full of trust, responsibility and commitment – greatly favored the quality of our reflection and prayer, and the extent of the horizons we set out for. The following pages bear witness to all of that.

Throughout the experience, we perceived hopeful signs of a new beginning, of a new dawn already breaking.

The participants in the II MIMA are now its witnesses, most influential in spreading the good news. This magazine, aims, in this record of an important time in our history, to share a glimpse of what happened in Nairobi and throughout the preparation process in all continents.





The Good News Drum



Br. Emili Turú,
superior general

As I look back and remember what we experienced in Nairobi, I hear the echo of the African drums that accompanied us throughout the Assembly. I feel that these drums are bringing good news to all the Marists

worldwide. They forcefully repeat, over and over again, that the Marist charism has great vitality, and that Marists today are willing to engage with the important challenges they feel called to address.

The echo of drums brings to mind the things I learned during the Assembly, which I believe were signs on the path taking us to a *new beginning*.

Our mission is highly relevant today

Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed (UNESCO Constitution). This is precisely why our mission is still highly relevant in today's global context, which is so much in need of minds and hearts full of peace.

On the contrary, throughout the different stag-



es of the process of preparation for the Assembly, we recognized, with a Marcellin-like compassionate heart, that too many children and young people continue to be excluded from the most basic human rights, for instance the right to education. Today's new Montagnes remind us that in the present circumstances we urgently need people who are ready to help children and young people as they grow and mature, people who can offer them the warmth and light of the Gospel. This continues to be as important today as it was for Father Champagnat and our first Brothers.



We joyfully realize that our mission is relevant and significant today, and furthermore, we rejoice with the thousands of Marists who are seriously and deeply committed to the exciting mission entrusted to us.

We need a burning sense of commitment

In addition to drums, fire was one of the principal themes of our Assembly in Nairobi. Around a common fire, we listened to each other's experiences and asked ourselves about the foundation and source of our commitment.

Echoing the words of Pope Francis, the participants in the Assembly expressed their desire to become *Spirit-filled evangelizers, transfigured by God's presence*. As the Pope reminds us, whenever we say that something is "spirit-ed", it usually refers to some interior impulse, which encourages, motivates, nourishes and gives meaning to our activity. Otherwise, our life is just a set of tasks we experience as a

burdensome duty, barely tolerated and endured, since we feel it goes against our own inclinations and desires. Certainly, *no words of encouragement will be enough unless the fire of the Holy Spirit burns in our hearts* (Evangelii Gaudium, 261).

That is why the final message of the Assembly invites us to *set aside quality time and space to deepen our sense of who we are, so as to give meaning to what we do, and involve ourselves in processes that foster inner life, spirituality and prayer*.

We must listen to young people

A group of 11 young people, representatives of the different Marist regions, participated in the Nairobi Assembly, an innovation over the first Assembly at Mendes. Their presence brought not only joy and spontaneity to the group, but also creativity, boldness and realism. With great openness, they shared with us their love and passion for the Marist





Assembly also stressed the importance of overcoming our fears and attachment to comfort:

Our dream is that people will recognize that we Marists of Champagnat are PROPHETS because:

- *we have moved out of our comfort zones, and are ready to go to the peripheries of our world, impelled to proclaim and build the Kingdom of God;*
- *we are purposefully reaching out to the Montagnes of our day, to be a significant presence among and with them.*

charism. Many participants in the Assembly believe that the participation of young people brought a particular richness: without them an important element would have been missing.

Therefore, it seems extremely important to me to create spaces to welcome and listen to young people at the different levels of our Marist organization. If we close our doors to them, we might be closing a door to the Spirit, who wishes to speak through their voice as well.

I well remember the first time I read 'Who Moved My Cheese?' many years ago, and how impressed I was by the question: *what would you do if you had no fear?* It has come back to me a number of times, particularly now, whenever I think about how fear influences my decision-making.

Most likely, many of us have had the experience of overcoming our fears and making bold decisions in the face of an uncertain

Overcome our fears and get going

Fear did not stop you from coming to Africa. On the contrary, courage and determination to move forward as Marists is what brought you here. These were the words of Brother Francis Lukong addressing the participants at the Marist International Mission Assembly on behalf of the Marists of Africa.

The final message of the





future, decisions which eventually brought about new personal skills, enriching our life in ways we never imagined.

Africa: from the periphery to the center

Africa is a large continent of 55 countries and more than one billion inhabitants. The continent is extraordinarily rich in natural and human resources, but despite this, it is not a *decision-making center* for global economic or geopolitical issues; it is rather on the *periphery* of the world, often suffering the consequences of other people's decisions.

Pope Francis often repeats – citing the Argentine philosopher Amelia Podetti – that we *understand reality better when we look at it not from the center but from periphery*, and this is precisely what we experienced during the Assembly in Nairobi, where we were challenged by many existentially and geographically *marginal* places. Unquestionably, margins are not very comfortable places, but they are the only viewpoint allowing us to really understand the

world, and adequately discern the calls from the Spirit.

Although we may consider Africa as one of the margins of the world, this continent, became, in contradiction, *the center* for Marists worldwide, at least during the ten days of the Assembly. I personally experienced this *geographical displacement* as an invitation to adopt, on a permanent basis, a multicentered and *intercultural* perspective, both in our way



of thinking and of organizing and operating.





I – From Mendes to Nairobi

An International Assembly is a privileged moment in the life of the Institute, an opportunity for Marist brothers and laity to build together a focal point for Marist life and mission that would be faithful to Marcellin Champagnat's charism. It is the result of an important process with several stages, which we will summarize in the following pages.

1. Mendes 2007: "One Heart, One Mission"

The first Marist International Mission Assembly (MIMA) took place in Mendes, Brazil, from September 3rd to 12th, 2007. It was the point of arrival of a journey that involved all the Administrative Units. It marked a new milestone in the life of the Marist Institute, and offered the opportunity for brothers and laity to reflect together, on equal terms, on the Institute's mission and identity. The slogan chosen for the meeting of 2007 was "One Heart, One Mission". The then Superior General, Brother Seán Sammon, wrote about this topic:

In our Marist mission, the common heart that we share with Marcellin Champagnat must be as visible today as was the union he had with our early brothers almost two centuries ago. In word and by deed we must make this belief a living reality for our time and place.

Marcellin held close the following three values: belief in God's presence, reliance on Mary and her protection, and the virtue of simplicity. Today, they must also be found at the heart of our educational mission. As an Institute we are in the process of completing a year long program to promote vocations. At the heart of that effort was the belief that we must live Marcellin's dream today. Our mission of education and evangelization has always been the preferred place to do just that: in the midst of the young, with simplicity and a love of work, and in Mary's way.



The participants in the Mendes Assembly summarized their journey with the following conclusion:

With Jesus at the centre of our dream and with the image of Champagnat holding Jean Baptiste Montagne, we imagine a future in which the following five elements will play their part:

- 1. Revolution of the heart – open to the breath of the spirit*
- 2. Champagnat Marists in partnership*
- 3. Marist presence in evangelisation*
- 4. Marist education: new challenges*
- 5. Advocacy for the rights of children and young people: empowering the voiceless*



2. XXI General Chapter



The General Chapter of 2009 studied the recommendations from Mendes, which – among the proposals for specific action with regard to the new relationship between brothers and laity at the service of a greater vitality for the Institute –included an invitation to “organize another Marist International Mission Assembly, according to the spirit of Mendes”.

The Superior General and his Council took on this mandate from the Chapter and appointed a Preparatory Commission to organize and conduct the II MIMA.

3. Preparatory Commission

The Preparatory Commission, appointed by the General Council in May 2012, was formed by laity and brothers from the five continents representing different contexts within the Marist Institute: Bro. Albert Nzabonaliba (Rwanda), Alice Miesnik (United States), Bro. César Augusto Rojas Carvajal (Colombia), Frank Malloy (Australia), Javier Espinosa (Guatemala), Bro. João Carlos do Prado (Brazil), Manuel Jesús Gómez Cid (Spain), Bro. Mark Omede (Nigeria), Bro. Miguel Ángel Espinosa Barrera (Mexico), Mónica Linares (Argentina), and Bro. Paul Bhatti (Pakistan). The Secretary of the Commission was Bro. Miguel Ángel,





and the Coordinator was Bro. João Carlos do Prado, Deputy Director and Director of the Secretariat of Mission respectively. They were assisted by María Pilar Benavente Serrano, who acted as facilitator for the group.

The Commission held its first meeting in June 2012. Several meetings followed in which always dialogue and openness to the Spirit and the signs of the times were very much evident. The members of the Commission paid a great deal of attention to the different Marist environments, and listened to the stories of the children and young people who are at the heart of our communities, Provinces and Regions.

Motivated by the personal and group reflection on Marist mission in daily life, the Commission proposed issues and processes which were inspired by lines in the letter sent to the Institute by members of the 21st General Chapter :

“We feel driven by the Spirit of God to go into a New Land, to facilitate the birth of a new epoch of Marist charism”.

4. Motto: “New Marists in Mission”



Living and acting according to the spirit of Mendes implied moving forward, discovering new horizons for the future, and dreaming about “New Marists in Mission”, which became the motto for the II MIMA. All the work of the 21st General Chapter was aimed at generating something new, and therefore it made this proposal to the Institute: *With Mary, go in haste to a new land!* Unsurprisingly, this process has led to a new situation emerging which is developing powerfully in many parts of the Institute. The II MIMA process was intended to explore this new situation, challenging all Marists to renew their consecrated life and generate a new way of being brothers, living in a new relationship of communion between brothers and laity, and bringing about a significant gospel presence in the midst of children and young people, especially the poorest.

Through its proposals, the Preparatory Commission tried to promote an understanding of how we can leave the safety and tranquility of our *comfort zone* to reach the *magical zone* of the New Land, where we can recreate Champagnat’s charism, while glimpsing the third Marist centenary.

The slogan “New Marists in Mission” is an invitation to personal and institutional conversion, focusing our attention on the voice of poor children and young people, Champagnat’s favorite



target-group. It conveys an experience of internationality and fraternity which helps us avoid navel-gazing attitudes and agree to be challenged by our Brothers and by God.





5. Process: sharing around the fire

In many nations of the world – especially some African cultures like those welcoming the II MIMA – people gather around the fire for discussions and to celebrate life. When it came to forming groups as part of the preparatory journey towards the Assembly, the Preparatory Commission suggested this symbol for a particular style of community and family. This method was aimed at developing relationships during the preparatory process and the Assembly itself, and to provide opportunities for listening to each other, in order to create an atmosphere of respect for diversity and internationality.

This approach to the process was completed with the inclusion of prayer, deep listening, and reflection, an openness to the Gospel, Marist documents, personal and community experiences, and the voices of poor children and young people.

This dynamic exchange around the fire was inspired by the wise words of the writer Eduardo Galeano:

Each person shines with his or her own light. No two flames are alike. There are big flames and little flames, flames of every color. Some people's flames are so still they don't even flicker in the wind, while others have wild flames that fill the air with sparks. Some foolish flames neither burn nor shed light, but others blaze with life so fiercely that you can't look at them without blinking and if you approach, you shine in fire.



6. The logo

The Preparatory Commission received 36 proposals for the logo of the Assembly, and chose the one sent by the Province of Rio Grande do Sul, which combines several meaningful symbols.

6.1. Fire

Fire is the most salient element in the logo. It is the symbol of the Holy Spirit in our Christian tradition. It is also, by its very nature, a symbol of warmth and light. Associated with the Holy Spirit, it indicates missionary and apostolic strength. Therefore, fire brings us to the heart of our mission, to the





strength of the Spirit of God. Our mission must really communicate the warmth and light of God to the world. In many cultures, fire also symbolizes the meeting place where the passing on of history and tradition takes place, where people celebrate the present moment, and envision the future. It symbolizes the great Assembly gathered around life and mission.

6.2. A Tree

The tree is another element of the logo. The shade and the fruits it offers symbolize life and a welcoming attitude. Marist internationality and diversity are welcome under this tree on African soil. Marists from all continents are a family under this African tree, which makes them feel at home under its branches.

The tree represents a source of African culture and spirituality.

Children grow, family

bonds are established, and the spirits of the ancestors take refuge under the trees. They are a place for meditation, a natural temple of impressive grandeur.

Trees are full of silence, and of the voices of creation: earth, water, minerals, and animals. They hold the voices of children, youth, elderly people, and families who come together under their branches, where they meet, celebrate, experience spirituality, rest, play, work, and craft their art. Trees are vital elements in the culture of ancient ethnic groups from all continents.

Jesus compared the Kingdom of God with a large tree that grows from a tiny grain of mustard, the lushest tree in the garden, whose branches extend widely, and welcome all birds with the energy of their singing. The tree and the Kingdom are places where people come to develop their own vitality.



6.3. A Horizontal Line

Within the logo, the flame and the tree meet on a horizontal line. It is a glimpse of the horizon motivating and guiding our mission. It symbolizes the inspiration of the Marist origins, and introduces the new perspective on the third Centennial, *a new beginning* full of creative fidelity.

6.4. The Blue Flames

There are two small blue flames around a central and larger flame. The color is associated with the sky, and also with Mary. They remind us that the Assembly is a privileged opportunity to heed the General Chapter's call: *With Mary, we go in haste to a new land!*





7. Stages of the Assembly

The Preparatory Commission considered the Assembly as a process. The Nairobi meeting was only one of the stages. We defined four stages: local, provincial, international (Nairobi) and regional.

The goal was to involve the greatest possible number of Marists brothers and laity, young adults, schools, fraternities, movements, and Marist works around the world, to reflect on and share about the experience of Marist life. Listening to all these voices was extremely important. Their thoughts and ideas became the basis for new discussions at the provincial stage, and finally fueled the work of the Assembly in Nairobi.

The II MIMA Preparatory Commission offered some guidelines for reflection to accompany the journey, which all those who share the Marist life and mission followed.

7.1. Local stage

The local stage went from April 2013 to April 2014. It consisted of an in-depth study of the proposed topics at personal and community levels.



The method included the formation of small groups of brothers, laity, people from the Marist works, young people, communities and movements (Champagnat Movement, Youth Ministry, solidarity, etc.), among others.





The Commission suggested 12 meetings:

1. Opening and organization of the life of the group
2. The heart of the mission that leads us to a new land
3. Journeying to conversion (A spirituality that leads to the conversion of people and structures)
4. The Spirit resounds in the heart of each one of us (A spirituality rooted in the God of Jesus, incarnated in the reality of our world, nourished in the mission and lived in the manner of Mary)
5. God's life emerges in the mire of what it is to be human (A spirituality open to interreligious dialogue, to those who are searching for meaning and connected to the issues for young people today.)
6. Are you a Marist too? (A new way of being Marist: the beginning of a new era for the Marist charism)
7. God presented us with a Marist heart (Heirs of the Marist charism: the Marist vocation as a recalling of the charism. A gift to welcome and develop)
8. Capture the beauty of the mystery of God like Mary (Prophets of communion: promoters of the Marian face of the Church)

9. God reveals himself to us through others (Being a Marist with others: experience paths of Marist life as a community)
10. Sisters and brothers for the young, to see Christ in the other. (Essence of the Marist mission)
11. Called to be light of the world and salt of the earth (Together on mission with a new heart in a new world)
12. Contemplating the path we travelled as a local group

To conclude this first stage of the process, each local group held a meeting to draw conclusions, evaluate the work, and write a report for the person in charge within the Administrative Unit. The conclusions described: the process followed by the groups, their gratitude for the Marist history and life they have inherited, the new fruits of Marist life that have emerged in recent times, and the paths to be explored in order to reach the New Land that the 21st General Chapter envisioned.

The local stage of the preparation process involved 21 Administrative Units, and 1,146 groups with 25,268 members. Teachers and educators formed 361 groups with 7,751 participants. There were 140 fraternities of the Champagnat Movement of the Marist family, with 1,617 members participating in the process. Parents





formed 38 groups, involving 569 people. The communities of brothers participating were 191, with 1,627 brothers involved. Young people formed 111 groups with 9,650 participants.

There were also other groups participating in the preparation stage. Among them, spirituality groups, volunteers, support groups, educators, former students, provincial teams, and people engaged in social works. They were 305 groups with 4,054 participants.

7.2. Provincial stage

In order to pull together a summary of the local-stage reflection and celebrate the experience, the Preparatory Commission suggested a general meeting in each Administrative Unit with representatives from the local-stage groups. Most Provinces and Districts organized this meeting between May and July of 2014. There were 3,026 laity and 682 brothers participating in the meetings held by 18 Administrative Units, each of which summarized the ideas from the groups, produced a document, and handed it to the Preparatory Commission as input for the organizing of the Assembly.

The representatives who went to Nairobi **were elected in these general meetings.**

It was an important opportunity for an in-depth reflection on the fundamental aspects of Marist life and mission in each Province or District.

7.3. Regional stage

This stage of the process was scheduled to be held after the Nairobi meeting. The Commission thought this stage could be one of the most effective means of conveying the experience of the Assembly. It will be a privileged moment for communicating the proposals and ideas that came up during the preparation process and then became concrete in Nairobi.

These meetings will be organized by the Regions, and will take place in the presence of the II MIMA participants, as well as the other brothers and laity who participated in the local and provincial stages. The event will contribute enormously to the revitalizing of Marist Mission in the Region, resulting in concrete expressions of the Marist Institute's international dimension.

These meetings, organized by the Regional Conferences, will take place in 2015.





II – Nairobi: Africa Welcomes Marists

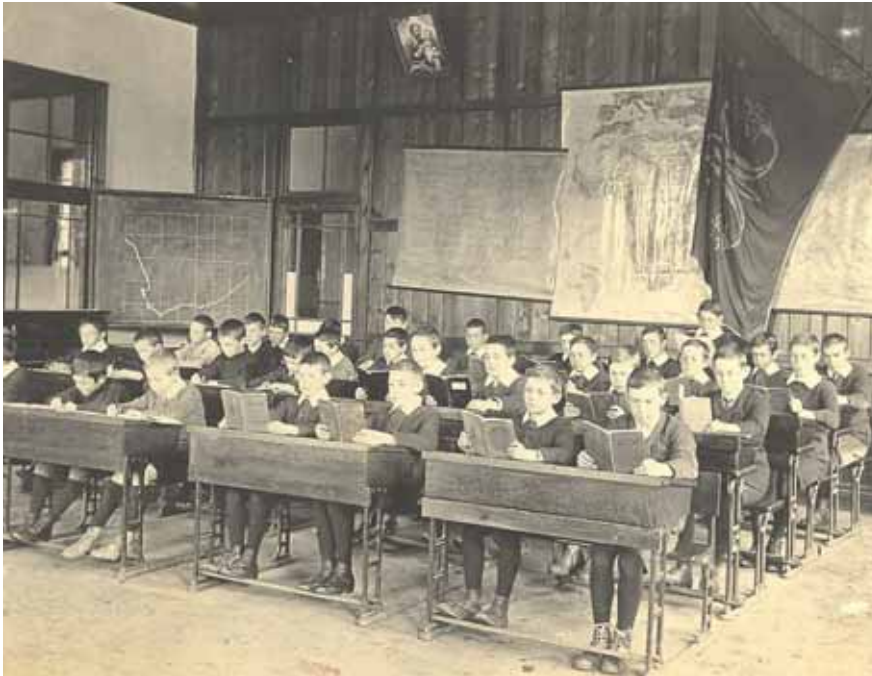
On the one hand, Africa is the second largest and most populous continent in the world, and on the other, it is, in many ways, a young continent. The current population of Africa, for example, is the youngest in the world and, according to statistics, 50% of Africans are under 18 years of age.

From September 16 to 28, 2014, the eyes of the Institute focused on the African continent, specifically on Nairobi, Kenya, which hosted the participants of MIMA II's third stage.





1. Marists in Africa



Cape Town, South Africa, Saint Joseph, 1909

Cape Town, South Africa, was the first Marist Mission territory in Africa. On 18th April 1867, five Brothers left Toulon in France for South Africa. At that time, the Suez Canal in Egypt was not yet completed so this first community served as a stopping-off point for a good number of Marist missionaries going to Asia and the Pacific. Those who remained in South Africa started Christian schools and ministries of evangelization. We can imagine Father Peter Chanel,

a Marist Father and Patron of Oceania nicknamed “the man with a big heart” who was killed in Futuna Island in 1841, blessing Africa on his way to witness to Christ and suffer martyrdom.

Many blessings indeed fell on us as Africa welcomed numerous Marist Missionaries to a number of different countries: South Africa (1867); Ghana (1983); Algeria (1891); DRC (1911); Madagascar (1911); Spanish Morocco (1915); Zimbabwe (1937); Malawi (1946); Mozambique (1948); Nigeria (1949); Rwanda (1952); Zambia (1954); Angola (1954); Centre Africa Republic (1958); Cameroun (1965); Côte d’Ivoire (1969); Kenya (1984); Liberia (1986); Equatorial Guinea (1988); Tanzania (1991); Chad (1993) and South Sudan (2013). Administratively, Marist Africa is today organized into four Provinces and one District, operating in around 21 countries: the Provinces of Africa Centre-East (PACE), Madagascar, Nigeria, and Southern Africa, and the District of West Africa. At the



Betafo, Madagascar, 1925



present time, the Marist presence and mission on the continent are experiencing a great expansion in 69 of our school establishments which, among others, take in more than 57,593 children and young people and which benefit from the organization and leadership of more than 5,000 lay collaborators and 450 Marist Brothers.

Marist Africa and Madagascar are today blessed with a large number of young Brothers (i.e. at MIC, the Center of post-novitiate formation, there are at present around 100 Brothers) who provide tremendous youthful energy. Likewise, an abundance of children and young people in all societies of this continent presents challenges and opportunities for the Marist mission and for Africa's vocation ministry.

In view of these considerations, Africa seemed to be the ideal place to welcome the reflection on Marist mission, and to glimpse *a new beginning*.

The Nairobi Assembly took place at *Dimesse Spirituality House* belonging to the Dimesse Sisters. The participants also stayed at *Roussel House* and the *Spirituality Center* of the Daughters of Saint Joseph.

2. Participants in the Nairobi Assembly

The Preparatory Commission envisaged two participants from each Administrative Unit, a brother and a lay person. There were two lay adults and two young people as delegates from each Region. The General Council also invited a number of guests. In this way, representation of the Marist world's diversity was guaranteed.

The criteria for the election of delegates advised the appointment of brothers and laity who had actively participated in the local and provincial stages, people with a significant experience of solidarity with poor children and young people, who might have the skills to spread the message after the Nairobi Assembly, and whose names would be suggested by the General Assemblies in each Administrative Unit.

Summing up, the Assembly in Nairobi welcomed 117 people from 45 countries: 44 laity, 70 brothers, and 3 religious from other Congregations.





Br Emili Turú
Superior General
L'Hermitage (Spain)*



Br Joe Mc Kee
Vicar General
West Central Europe
(Scotland)



Br Antonio Ramalho
General Councillor
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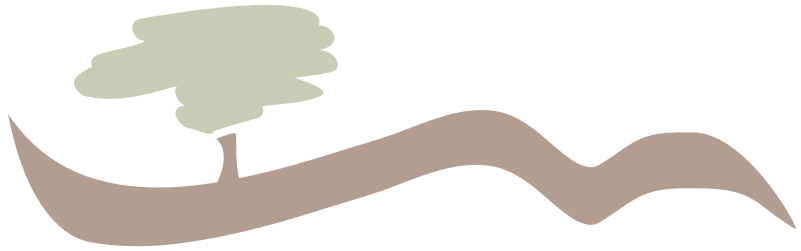
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General Councillor
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Br Michael De Waas
General Councillor
South Asia (Sri Lanka)



Br Víctor Preciado
General Councillor
Western Mexico
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Br Leonard Brito
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Maurice Mushitu
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Southern Cross
Argentina



Cecilia Medina
Southern Cross
Argentina

GENERAL COUNCIL - ROME

PROVINCIAL DELEGATES





PROVINCIAL DELEGATES



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East Asia - Philippines



Br Wilfredo Lubrico
East Asia - Philippines



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Iberian - Spain



Nikos Noulas
L'Hermitage - Greece



Br Pau Tristany
L'Hermitage - Hungary
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Br Herinalia Randriarivony
Njakatiana
Madagascar



Marie Elia Rakotondranaivo
Haingotiana
Madagascar



Charo Morales de Coca
Mediterranean
Spain



Br Javier Gragera
Fernández Salguero
Mediterranean
Spain



Alfonso Ruiz de Chávez
Estrada
Central Mexico - Mexico



Br José Sánchez Bravo
Central Mexico - Mexico



Br Agustín Acevedo
Sánchez
Western Mexico
Mexico



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Komiyama Martínez
Western Mexico
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Br Jude Anani
Nigeria



Rufus Ozoh
Nigeria



Claudia Aida Rojas
Carvajal
Norandina - Colombia



Br Francisco Javier Pérez
París
Norandina - Venezuela
(Spain)



Mirian A García de
Gómez
Dist. Paraguay
Paraguay



Br Rubén Velázquez
Coronel
Dist. Paraguay
Paraguay



Br Álvaro Danilo
Sepúlveda Romero
Santa María de
los Andes - Chile



Luis Eleno Juárez Reto
Santa María de
los Andes - Peru



Br Alwis Sunanda
South Asia - Sri Lanka



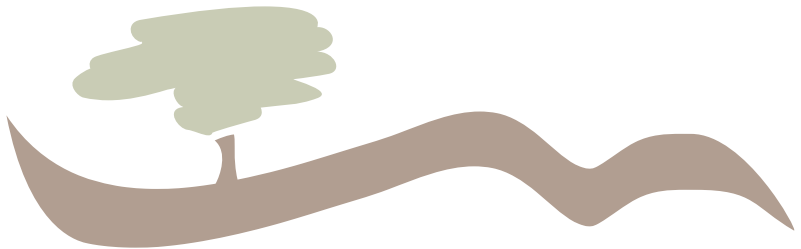
Matloob Hayat
South Asia - Pakistan



Maureen Hagan
United States



Br Steve Milan
United States





Michael Greeff Lay – Africa Southern Africa South Africa	Emmanuel Manzikala Alanzima Youth - Africa East Central Africa R. D. Congo	Grâce Usabyimana Lay - Africa East Central Africa Rwanda	Ana Isabel Saborio Jenkins Lay - Arco Norte Central America Costa Rica	Anthony Anil Youth – Asia South Asia - Pakistan	Glenn Nidarshan Jeewaraj Youth - Asia South Asia - Sri Lanka

Jack Stammers Youth - Oceania Australia	Juan Andrés Achard Navarro Lay - Cono Sur Cruz del Sur - Uruguay	María Luciana Citterio Youth - Cono Sur Cruz del Sur -Argentina	Wolfgang Hacker Lay – Europe West Central Europe Germany	Raquel Espuelas Ruiz Youth - Europe Iberian - Spain	Angel Domingo Youth - Europe L'Hermitage - Spain

Andry Niaina Ramboatiana Youth - Africa Madagascar	Edouard JaBre Lay - Europe Mediterranean Lebanon	Alejandra Bolio Rojas Youth - Arco Norte Western Mexico Mexico	Yessica Mariuxi Romero Rivera Youth - Arco Norte Norandina - Ecuador	Mario del Carmen Araya Olguín Youth - Cono Sur Santa María de los Andes Chile	Sylvia Pérez Lay – Cono Sur Santa María de los Andes Bolivia (Ecuador)

Br Francis Lukong Yufenyuy Conference of Africa Dist. West Africa - Ghana (Cameroon)	Br Jeffrey Crowe Conference of Oceania Australia	Br Oscar Martín Vicario Conference of Europe Compostela - Spain	Br Libardo Garzón Conference of America Norandina - Colombia



Br Valentin Djawu Provincial East Central Africa Kenya (R. D. Congo)	Br Jean Bosco Uwizeyimana MIC East Central Africa Kenya (Rwanda)	Br Lawrence Ndawala MIC's Superior Southern Africa - Kenya (Malawi)	Daisy Beatriz Contreras Pocasangre Sister of Champagnat Guatemala (El Salvador)	Martha Eugenia Martínez Mendoza Community N.D. de l'Hermitage Western Mexico – France (Mexico)	Makelita Meni Marist Missionary Sister (SMSM) –Tanzania (Samoa)

REGIONAL DELEGATES

INVITED





PREPARATORY COMMISSION



Br Albert Nzabonliba
East Central Africa
Kenya (Rwanda)



Alice Miesnik
United States



Br César Augusto Rojas
Carvajal Norandina
General House
(Colombia)



Frank Malloy
Australia



Br Javier Espinosa
Central America - General
House (Spain)



Br João Carlos do Prado
South Central Brazil
General House (Brazil)



Manuel Jesús Gomez
Cid
Mediterranean - Spain



Maria Pilar Benavente
Serrano
Facilitator - Spain



Br Mark Omede
Nigeria



Br Miguel Ángel Espinosa
Barrera
Central Mexico - General
House (Mexico)



Br Paul Bhatti
South Asia - Pakistan



SUPPORT TEAM



Br Chris Wills
Coordinator of the Saint
Joseph House Australia -
General House (Australia)



Br Mario Meuti
Coordinator of the
Dimesse House
Mediterranean - Italy



Br Manel Mendoza
Coordinator of the
Roussel House
L'Hermitage
Switzerland (Spain)



Br Tony Leon
Celebrations and art
Australia - General
House



Br Antonio Martínez
Estañ
Communication
L'Hermitage - Brazil
(Spain)



Br Cyprian Gandebo
Logistics
Dist. West Africa - Kenya
(Cameroon)



Carmine Iodice
Logistics
Mediterranean - Italy



Br Erick Silali
Secretary
East Central Africa
Kenya



Br Mario Colussi
Secretary
Southern Africa
South Africa



Br Christian Gisamonyo
Translator
East Central Africa
Kenya (R. D. Congo)



Br Etienne Balma
Translator
Dist. West Africa - Kenya
(Ivory Coast)



Guiyermo Rodriguez
Translator
Western Mexico - Mexico



Br José Luis Grande
Galindo
Translator
Compostela - Thailand
(Spain)



Br Teodoro Grageda
Translator
East Central Africa
Tanzania (Mexico)



Br Teófilo Minga
Translator
Compostela - Portugal





					
Br Camille Sandratana (Madagascar)	Br Désiré Shamabale East Central Africa (R. D. Congo)	Br Eugene Ezugwu (Nigeria)	Br Francis Veye Dist. West Africa (Cameroon)	Br Geraldo Medida Southern Africa (Mozambique)	Br Gilbert Zenda Southern Africa (Zimbabwe)
					
Br Jerome N'Sanda East Central Africa (R. D. Congo)	Br John Bwanali Southern Africa (Malawi)	Br Maurice Juvence Heriniaina (Madagascar)	Br Phocas Ndagijimana East Central Africa (Rwanda)	Br Raymond Razafimahatratra (Madagascar)	

LOCAL TEAM - MIC, KENYA

*When the country of origin is different from the country of residence, we have placed the person's country of origin in parentheses.



St. Joseph



Russel House



Dimesse





III – To the sound of drums

Br. Antonio Martínez Estaún, from the Province of L'Hermitage, the Institute's former director of communications, now living in Curitiba, Brazil, was invited by the Superior General to be present at the Assembly in Nairobi and report on it to the Marist world.

His reports, which appeared in the Marist Institute's web page, were adapted for insertion into FMS Message.

Together with these articles, we have included some testimonies and speeches by participants in the Assembly.

1. Sunday, 14th September: A Large International Mixed Community of Marists

The Assembly was an opportunity for brothers and laypeople to participate as equals, sharing their lives and the challenges they face as they listen to the calls of God today in the light of our charism and mission as Marists. The Mission Assembly, following on the first one in Mendes seven years previously, was a further exploration of the directions to be taken in the future.

The II MIMA included 117 people from 45 different countries: official delegates from Administrative Units, people from all the Regions of the Marist world, members of the General Council, invited guests, Preparatory Commission and the support team.

ANGELA UNДАР *PHILIPPINES, EAST ASIA*

My experience at II MIMA was very enriching and inspiring. It widened my perspective of being a Lay Marist because of its inter-nationality and rich activities (inputs, processes, prayer sessions, celebrations and camaraderie among participants). It challenged me as Lay Marist to be a "Voice of Fire" of being mystic and prophet to the Montagnes of today. I'm so grateful to the Provincial Council of East Asia for choosing me to be one of the participants of this memorable international gathering of the Institute. I thank God through the intercession of Our Good Mother and St. Marcellin Champagnat for making my way to II MIMA. To the preparatory commission, KUDOS for the job well done!



Three of the official languages of the Institute were to be used: English, Spanish and French. It was estimated that more than 25 mother tongues would be represented. The common language in this great family of Mary, would be, as desired by Champagnat, love.

Welcoming

Participants were lodged in three different religious houses near the Marist International Centre (MIC). A brother was appointed as coordinator in each of them.



The centre of activity was the Dimesse House of Spirituality, run by a group of religious women called “Dimesse Sisters” or “Daughters of Mary Immaculate”. The house coordinator was Br Mario Meuti. Roussel House, the second centre (coordinator Br Manel Mendoza), is run by the Missionary Workers of the Immaculate of “Donum Dei” Missionary Family. The third house, the St. Joseph Spiritual Centre, is run by the Little Sisters of St. Joseph (Br Chris Wills as house coordinator).



FRANCISCO JAVIER PÉREZ PARÍS VENEZUELA, NORANDINA

Taking part in MIMA II has been a “kairos”, a God-given suitable and opportune moment, for which I give thanks to God. Sharing this event of the Institute with Brothers and Laity from all over the world has opened up horizons for me and committed me to working with renewed spirit for the birth of a new era for our charism. Mystics, prophets, communion, periphery, “inter”, rights... are key words which resonated with much force in our Assembly and have left an intense echo in my heart. Brothers and laity, we danced to the same drumbeat with the same fire burning within us. The new dawn that is breaking is going to allow us to catch a glimpse of the multicoloured variety of our “charismatic family”, enriched by a sense of unity and recreating itself in the mission incarnate on the margins of our world.



2. Monday, 15th September: Arrival of the participants in Nairobi

At the door of each room, the host team arranged a personalized greeting in Kiswahili: “Karibu” – “Welcome”. They bent over backwards to make this wish a reality for those arriving. Well into the night, team members at the reception desk in Dimesse waited to provide refreshments and room keys for travelers.

Just as busy as the host committee, the coordinating commission spent the day dotting the i’s and crossing the t’s. One person with a unique role was Piluca, a Spanish member of the Missionary Sisters



of Our Lady of Africa who has worked for many years in Africa. She had met Marist Brother Henri Vergès in Algeria before he was martyred. Piluca's task was to help the coordinators remain focused on their objectives. As an "outsider" she had the ability to capture details that might escape the attention of the members of the commission. Her task as an analyst of the group's functioning helped things go well. Day by day, a family-spirit grew in the run-up to the Assembly: linking up again with old friends or forming new bonds with others. foi uma riqueza a ser descoberta e partilhada durante os dias de encontro.

**SISTER DAISY BEATRIZ
CONTRERAS POCASANGRE
EL SALVADOR, CENTRAL AMERICA**



Firstly, I wish to give thanks for the invitation given to the community of the Marist Sisters of Champagnat to take part in the II MIMA. For me, it was a sharing very much as a family, united and drawing the sense of all that urges us to evangelize from Mary's availability, from simplicity, humility, love of work, and our presence among children and young people. That is to say, from the Marist Charism. This Assembly also enables me to confirm that the charism inherited from Fr. Champagnat is a gift for the Universal Church and that it finds a welcome in different vocations: Brothers, Lay persons, and now Sisters. In my personal experience, and on the path traversed in community, I have felt the call to the consecrated feminine life in the style lived by Saint Marcellin. Participation in this Assembly has reaffirmed me in my vocation as Sister. Finally, in taking part in the Assembly, I welcome the commitment to continue being alive to the challenges which we face as Marists: Promoting and accompanying the Marist vocation, which makes me reflect on myself, defending the rights of children and young people, promoting the internationality of the Institute.



3. Tuesday, 16th September: A preview of the overall program

Each participant received a backpack and an ID badge. On the front of the badge was the logo and slogan of the II MIMA; on the back, were the logos of Brazil's FTD and the Spanish Edelvives Group. Both of these Marist publishers produce millions of textbooks annually. Inside the backpack there were two notebooks, a water bottle, a T-shirt, and three tools needed for the work of the Assembly, namely books entitled "Guidelines", "Songs and Prayers" and "Marist Logbook".

A welcome was given in "Guidelines" to each participant: "Your presence at this Assembly is a wonderful gift. You bring in your heart and mind the experiences of the local and provincial meetings and the reflections and intuitions shared in your Province, District or Region".

The "Marist Logbook" was meant to be "a tool to help the participants discover the footsteps of God" during the celebration of MIMA II. It consisted of blank pages to be filled in day by day with personal experiences.



A proposal for group-cohesion

The main dynamics of the Assembly were centred around the formation of twelve small communities of eight people each. These communities, composed of both lay people and brothers, were invited to talk about life, their experiences, and reflections during the event. The dynamic of MIMA II was essentially that of a community of communities.

The aims proposed to the groups were "sharing the personal experience of the road to the Assembly and discussing the life and challenges of each province or district". Reflection on the experiences and proposals emerging from the workshops would also play a part in building the future of Marist mission.

BR. ERICK SILALI LUSENAKA KENYA, EAST CENTRAL AFRICA

It was a call for me to embrace and share with the whole world Marcellin's Spirituality, **The voices of fire!** Marist International Mission Assembly was an impetus for me to come out from my familiar shores and **GO OUT** to the periphery and make relevant the presence of the Marist spirituality with other God fearing people. This was a new dawn for Kenya to sensitize Marist communities to welcome all willing collaborators to actively participate in the New Marist in Mission. The African drums are inviting us all to gather around the fire in order to share the warmth that will revitalize our NEW MISSION as Marists.





Karibu feast

For the Brothers and lay Marists of the II MIMA, greeting and sharing a few hours with the Brothers of the Marist International Centre (MIC) was a must. MIC constitutes the largest and youngest community of the Institute. The property is not far from the three houses in which the participants re-



sided. The MIC Community was made up of 97 brothers, 17 of whom were formators. 17 different nationalities were represented in the Centre. The student brothers study at the Marist International University College (MIUC) on the same campus: they came from all five administrative units of the Marist Brothers in Africa. The 17 formators came from 10 different nations. The MIC community is a realisation of Marcellin's dream of being present in every diocese in the world.

JUAN ACHARD URUGUAY, CRUZ DEL SUR

I can feel only gratitude, mostly to God who keeps "spoiling" me and letting me see His project for our Marist mission from a privileged viewpoint.

As I approached each participant, I tried to identify what aspect of this rich experience had been more interesting for him or her: being white in Africa (becoming a minority can be very uncomfortable); representing Uruguay or Latin America; getting to know the city of Nairobi; the healthy envy of seeing people who pray with their entire body as they dance; answering the call of the drums, and putting Africa at the center of our world map; the certainty of seeing the heart of our mission more clearly from a marginal standpoint; coming together from every continent and speaking 23 different languages; feeling united by a foundational experience – Champagnat and Montagne – which makes us look in the same direction and agree on the priorities lying ahead; the international dimension of the Institute allowing us to live and communicate with people from so many countries and languages; the work of the Assembly itself, with its timing, resolutions, conclusions, and agreement on a common purpose; the place of women and young people in the Congregation; moving out to the margins; becoming aware that it is time to reach the public forums and proclaim the rights of children and adolescents; the strength we find in the journey and history of our works and schools; the fraternal conviviality with my community of Cruz del Sur, with the Spanish speaking group at the meeting, with the brothers of the General Council, with the Little Brothers of Africa.

Every word that I write is a living memory, and makes me revisit in my heart all the things I experienced. I am glad that History brought us together, and that we will go a long way because we are walking with each other!





The visit to MIC was not merely social or out of interest. It also provided an opportunity for the Coordinating Commission to officially thank the Brothers of this community for their essential support role in organizing MIMA II in Nairobi.

Late in the afternoon, the participants were taken to MIC in two buses where, divided into small groups, they were given a guided tour of the facilities on the campus. The young Brothers at MIC were divided into several fraternities of about 16 each accompanied by two formators. These Brothers attended classes in MIUC, which is administered by the Marist Brothers.

Then they were led with laughter, dancing and drumming to the assembly hall where the meeting began with a hymn invoking the Holy Spirit to enlighten the minds and hearts of the gathering. After the prayer, a young brother welcomed the Assembly with traditional "Dance of the Fire" used to welcome the king on his visits to the villages "because you are our kings and queens and we want to welcome you to our home."

Brother Lawrence Ndawala, Superior of the MIC community welcomed II MIMA on behalf of all of the Brothers of Africa and Madagascar. He expressed his joy at hosting the second MIMA on African soil and his gratitude for the Marist world's sharing "the dreams and mission that Marcellin left for us". He concluded by urging the Assembly to "share the experience of the second MIMA with the young brothers of MIC".

Brother João Carlos do Prado voiced words of appreciation for the cooperation of MIC in the preparation and running of the II MIMA on African soil. He stressed the significance of this Assembly for the future of the Marist charism and mission. Brother Christian Gisamonyo concluded with a brief presentation of the presence of the Marist Brothers in Africa, a region with five administrative units and 442 Brothers.

The session concluded with a repertoire of African dances presented by the young Brothers and other students of MIUC.

The family gathering ended with a festive dinner in the Centre's dining hall.

4. Wednesday, 17th September: Opening Celebration of the II MIMA



The impressive opening celebration of MIMA II started with the summoning of all the Assembly's participants by the sound of African drums. The whole body was involved in the journey to the celebration, beginning with feet that couldn't help starting to dance. The entire community walked to the beat of the drums to meet in the place where the celebration was due to begin.



Earth and Fire

The pathway led to a bonfire around which a narrator told of two great episodes in our spiritual history which give meaning to our lives. An African girl recited the Biblical account of creation in terms of the culture of this Continent. This poem includes the creation of Mount Kilimanjaro. The land on which we live is a great gift of the Creator, the Maker of all. This is the reason that, at the end of the story, five containers of soil were brought, one for each of the regions of the Marist world thus also highlighting the earth, one of the elements of MIMA II's logo.

The second important story was that of Pentecost. The disciples were together as a community when fire from the Holy Spirit descended upon them and inflamed them all with His love. As this story ended the paschal candle was lit along with five other torches, to represent how the Spirit spreads throughout the five Continents. In addition to the torches, one of the participants took into his hands the symbol representing the flame, another part of the logo, joining the procession in which the containers with the soil were carried.

The entire group then moved to a second stage, still accompanied by



EURICO SANTOS PORTUGAL, COMPOSTELA



Around the fire, mythical place of African culture, protected by the cool shade of the trees, we were invited to reflect, with the eyes of the heart, on the Marist mission.

And what do those eyes see?

They see the construction of a community around the fire, a community of around 120 persons, in which what is common does not erase the differences of language, color, gesture, smiles which keep on giving warmth to relationships ever more enriched by the sharing and Marist life each day provides.

They see a mission, which aspires to be up to date and on the move, fruit of the understanding of the charism and the personal response which each makes to this gift offered by God. Those eyes were challenged to view the world through the eyes of children and young people. In this respect, they were struck in a special way by the short immersion experience among the children orphaned and affected by AIDS.

They see the necessity of being expressing itself in doing or, in other words, of doing expressing being! The person who lets himself be inspired by the God of Jesus of Nazareth emanates in his doing, in his acting, a humanity stamped by the Gospel.

They experience this Gospel giving rise to the concern/necessity of being present on the peripheries, whether interior or exterior; whether economic or social.

They see the necessity of capitalizing on the enormous energy young people have, and we are there among them in order to re-enforce education for an awareness of the defence and promotion of human dignity at all levels, in particular, giving priority to the most disadvantaged.

May we be up to taking on these challenges and spreading the fire to the eyes of other hearts!

the beating of the drums, in which the fire transferred all its energy to the earth through the extinguishing of the torches upon the contact with the soil. This gesture was an allusion to the efficacy of the Spirit that dominates the face of the earth. In this space of reflection and celebration were proclaimed a few sections of the Message of the XXI General Chapter.

The third element put on display three books whose words give life and nourishment to the spirit of today's Marist: **The Life of the Founder**, whose zeal is noted when he says: "To educate



children you must love them and love them all equally. I cannot see children without wanting to tell them how much God loves them." And the extract of his Testament: "That among you there be just one heart and one mind. That it be always said of the Marists what was said of the early Christians: See how they love each other!" The second important book was entitled **The Marist Book**. In this book were contained some of the virtues characteristic of the Marist brothers: simplicity, family spirit, love of work and the manner of Mary. The third vol-

ume contains only the title, as it is yet to be written: **The Book of Mission**. To fill this new book one has to take into consideration how much has been written on this subject over the last 200 years of the Institute. To compose a new chapter for this book we will have to discover the novelty that "new Marists in mission" brings, the slogan for summoning MIMA II.

The formal welcome

Back in the Assembly meeting-room the simple protocol of the formal welcome began. A group of scouts entered the room smartly and sang the national anthem of Kenya. Then Brother Valentine Djawu, Provincial of the Province of Central and East Africa spoke a few simple words welcoming everyone to Africa. Brother Emili Turu, Superior General also welcomed everyone on behalf of the Institute. "Thank you for accepting the challenge of participating in this Assembly on behalf of many other Marists worldwide. During these two weeks the entire Institute is here." Then he raised two questions: What can we



BR. VALENTIN DJAWU LUNGUMBU WAMBO PROVINCIAL SUPERIOR OF THE PROVINCE OF EAST CENTRAL AFRICA

Dear brothers and lay people, Marists of Champagnat, welcome to Africa, welcome to the Marist Province of Central East Africa (PACE), welcome to Nairobi, Kenya.

I would be pleased, in a few words, to share my limited experience of communion between brothers and lay Marists. I discovered the Marist laity thanks to the preparation for the first International Marist Mission Assembly. For the first time, I heard laity saying "Our founder" when speaking of Marcellin Champagnat. Since then, this devouring fire of communion has never left me. The conclusion of Mendes underlined 5 very important elements.

Reading the contributions of the XXI General Chapter, I have noticed how the Spirit who guided the participants of the first MIMA continued to inspire the capitulants of the XXI General Champagnat, because all are bearers and heirs of the Marist charism bequeathed to us by Father Champagnat and the various generations of brothers and lay people.

I am convinced that the same Spirit will guide us during the second MIMA and the conclusions of our work emphasize the Mission of the Institute, which consists in bringing to the children and young people of our time the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ, as Champagnat did in his time.





Dear Marist brothers and laity of Champagnat, we all know that, owing to the global context of violence and epidemic, this Assembly might not have been held. I will not repeat the details, but I am pleased to thank and congratulate Brother Emili Turú, Superior General, and his Council for the decision to keep Nairobi as the seat of the Assembly. The opinion of each of us present here and of some not present here contributed to the holding of the meeting here, in Nairobi. Thanks to all who defied the fear and threats. Considering this Assembly as a family celebration, we place it under the maternal protection of Mary, our Good Mother. May she accompany us and be our inspiration in the search for the will of God during this Assembly, as she was at Cana. In the name of the Conference of Superiors of the African Continent (CSCA), I welcome you all to Africa and wish you a fruitful Assembly.

expect from this assembly? And, why was Africa chosen to hold this Assembly? To his first question he replied that “a profound experience of fraternity” could be expected, one that makes us “more sensitive to our internationality and more open to the richness of our differences”. We could also expect “future directions for the global Marist mission”.



Responding to his second question, he pointed out that the II MIMA was held in Africa because the Institute needs a “change of perspective. Africa, despite all its natural and human resources, is not a centre where decisions about the economy or geopolitical issues are taken... it is on the periphery of the world”; he continued in the words of Pope Francis, “reality is better looked at not from the centre but from the periphery”. “I’m sure”, he said, “that this change of perspective will help us to be open to the novelty and creativity of the Spirit.”

Brother Emili ended his speech with these words: “I have been told that I had to do the official opening of the Assembly, but I think it is more important that each of us is

open to the Assembly, to the Spirit, along with Mary, who pondered everything in her heart”. All the participants then entered into a deep silence for a short time. This marked the beginning of the journey of this second MIMA.

The Cardinal Archbishop of Nairobi, John Njue spoke next. He acknowledged that his vocation was produced by missionaries. “We are the fruit of the obedience of the missionaries,” he said. He encouraged the Assembly to surrender to the “essence of their vocation” which is “to invite people to surrender themselves to the Lord.” He concluded by wishing MIMA II a successful conference.

The celebration concluded with a folk dance starring two young people from the Maasai tribe.

Building Community

After a short break, proposed process for the integration of the participants was announced. The Assembly would work each day as a community of communities. The participants were divided into 12 small groups and they were invited to go and meet other groups to welcome and celebrate being together. They attempted to form communities in order to relate their own stories and pass on something of the life and passion of their own community, their Province or district.

Each community was inspired by one symbol from a set of which would inspire the reflections over the following days:

- 1) We have heard the beat of the **drums** that bring us together.
- 2) The **Dance** invites us to move to the same melody, harmonizing our various steps.
- 3) Nairobi receives us as a **home**, an open house.
- 4) We meet and shake hands, a sign of brotherhood.
- 5) We bring the experience of our **land**, of our province or district.
- 6) We are in awe of life, we share the fruits and embrace the shade that welcomes us under



this Marist **tree** on African soil. 7) We open our eyes to this challenging international environment. 8) We share at this **table** our personal and institutional wealth. 9) The **fire** helps us to see clearly the essence of this life that unites us. 10) We scan together, with hope, the horizon of the Marist charism. 11. We will be burning **coals**. 12) To live like New Marists in Mission (**logo**).

After the meeting of the 12 small communities each participant was invited to write their thoughts and impressions in their Marist logbook during a silent personal time. Every afternoon a half hour would be devoted to filling the pages of this book.

The day ended with the celebration of the Eucharist, animated by a chorus of brothers from MIC, praising the Lord for allowing us to experience such a beautiful day.





5. Thursday, 18th September: Walking the Road Together

The morning prayer entitled “Voices of the Fire” marked the beginning of each day for the participants. The reflection of this morning began with the narration of “The Bright Mountain” from which the name of Kenya comes. This story says that “if you climb the mountain with a clean heart it will then grant you whatever you ask from it. Waku, a very pretty girl, spent a long time talking to the mountain. The more it heard the words of Waku the brighter it became”. The animator of the day told us that “the mountain of our life, of our assembly, the mountain of our mission will shine more and more with our prayer.”

On the lawn a number of stones outlined the map of Africa. Within this map, each participant placed a stone brought from their country of origin. This map represented the diversity of lands which is the global village. With this gesture, the participants welcomed the diversity of backgrounds in the unity of the one loving plan of God for humanity. The Marist charism grows in the diversity of nations.

The first meeting of the small communities was dedicated to sharing “the experience of the journey made to reach the II MIMA”. Each person telling their story had to include an example of solidarity, the pur-



pose of this being to allow delegate to become aware of the energy flowing from our communities and Provinces and now present in the Assembly in each of the delegates.

After the break the small communities gathered to witness the contribution of the regions in the preparation prior to the assembly. The work was to focus on detecting shoots of life and dreams of the administrative unit they belong to. All this content had to be presented in the plenary in pictorial format.

An initial overview

The work of the evening began with a Marian prayer. The Assembly accompanied Mary in the key moments of her life from the Annunciation to Pentecost, and they prayed the Ave Maria in different languages.

The experiences of the small communities that were shared in morning were presented in the afternoon to all the Marists from the same region. This was an initial approach to the contributions the Marist world had sent to the Assembly. This contribution was shared in the plenary with all the participants through in pictorial format. These five in turn summarise the feedback from the continents.



ANA SABORÍO COSTA RICA, CENTRAL AMERICA



I feel privileged to be Marist. All my life I have felt the invitation from the Lord to follow him, and from Saint Marcellin Champagnat I have received the charism for my life, taking on the commitment to live a Christian life with Marist colours. With Mary as model, Marists live in an attitude of service and availability, and so I took part with a grateful heart in the first International Marist Mission Assembly in Mendes and, more recently, in the second Assembly in Nairobi.

During the first Assembly, we concentrated on listening to the cries of children and young people to let them themselves tell us what their most urgent needs were. We felt the call to go out to meet them where they were, following the model of Mary of the Magnificat. In this encounter and in opening ourselves to the breath of the Spirit, we recognized that living alongside the children and young people was a place of encounter with God. We Marists were converted to defenders of the rights of children through an integrated and integrating education. Brothers and lay people, we discovered the need for sharing life and mission in co-responsibility.

Seven years later and with the mandate of the XXI General Chapter, we come to the lands of Africa to listen to the voices from the fire burning with strength and passion and inviting us to share and visualize paths to the future. Conscious of the rapid changes in our society, we sit around the fire to discover the most pressing challenges for the Marist mission. It was prophetic to recognize the need for a change of paradigm, a mentality which accepts the Marist charism as a gift of the Spirit for the Church: Brothers and Laity. Because we all recognize ourselves as Marists at the time we take on the commitment of an authentic road of communion, on which as Marists, we share responsibilities, life and mission within the reality of all being Church.

In the process, many questions emerge which spur the exploration. We discover the commitment we Marists must all assume to form ourselves without neglecting the cultivation of the dimension of contemplation and interiority which make mission possible, a human mission grounded in the depth of our being giving meaning to our endeavour. This force which is born and grows in our interior will drive us to go out to the margins, not only the geographic, but also the existential, to have significant encounters with the most needy. By means of these links, we Marists feel deeply committed to going a step further; we feel called to publicly defend the rights of children and young people to take part in the construction of societies which are more just, human and in solidarity.

I give thanks to God for allowing me to be a witness of our Marist way, for the joy of observing once again that, like our Founder Marcellin Champagnat, we are always ready to change, to refocus, to reorientate, so as to give a vital response to the needs of the children and young people of today.

Thus, a journey that started with a reflection on the personal, provincial and then regional itinerary concluded.

After the presentation, there was space for a round of spontaneous reactions to what was said in the assembly. Little by little, the participants' recognition of the most important topics began to take shape. However, there was still a long way to go.

Next, the participants were given a significant amount of time to listen to the voice of the Spirit. This space is devoted each evening to filling the pages of the journal. It was suggested to the participants that each day they gather their thoughts prompted by the Spirit.

The work of the day ended with a prayer, thanking the Lord for mother earth. The event started with walking part of the way in silence, in contact with nature. Those who wish to go barefoot



could do so. We walked to where the stones brought from our home countries were placed. Stones packed with stories, dreams, gifts and talents. Along the way two acts were performed. The first, taken from the Andean culture, is to build community in what the native people call "apacheta". In significant parts of the road each one deposits a stone to remember something important, a direction, an event, a memory. This construction has the added value of being a community undertaking. This gesture starts with the reading of the text in which Jacob woke early in the morning, took the stone on which his head had rested while he was asleep and set it as a sign of the vision he had seen, pouring oil over it. In this way, the participants are invited to "mark, to leave a sign in this blessed land of the II MIMA".

The second act was to dig a hole in the ground and "with permission from Mother Earth" offer grass, cereal and drink to the "Pachamama" with gratitude, to give back much of what she has given us. Each offering expressed the "desire to multiply the divine gifts we have received." Making this gesture in community expressed our "commitment to justice, made of abundant tenderness to the poorest." The day concluded with a festival of folk, food, craft and cultural displays of the peoples of America where Marists are present.

6. Friday, 19th September: Catching Fire

Morning dawned brightly and the community gathered around a bonfire which symbolised the interior fire we feel, that love of God uniting us all. "This fire is God's loving dream for each of us, for the Institute, for humanity. This fire gives meaning to our existence, feeds our convictions, and inspires our actions and our mission", according to the directions received that morning by everyone for the prayer around the fire.

An analysis of the situation

Brother Josep Maria Soteras focus its reflection by stating that the meeting

was

not devoted simply to studying mission, but mission, Marist spirituality and the new relationship between brothers and laity. These three areas "mutually strengthen or weaken one another". His reflection was directed "towards presenting an overall view of the three, but from the perspective of the Spirit," starting from the calls of Mendes and the 21st General Chapter.

From the list of calls, he emphasized those which highlight the words "novelty" or "new," such as when the Chapter asks us for a "new mode of being", because the "newness which makes us brothers" or "the new element of our relationship" come above all from being and not from what we do. And he concluded by saying that "doing is a magnificent manifestation of being".

An analysis of the relationship between laity and brothers highlighted





the fact that the newness must be born from a “mature relationship” which accomplishes “communion”. And communion is accomplished at the level of being. When maturity of identity has been achieved, true relationship begins. The other neither weakens nor attacks me, but helps me be myself. Here begins a “spiritual journey” of maturity which lasts a lifetime. And in this case, “the relationship of communion” becomes a “vocation”. For this reason, life needs to be planned as “vocation”.

With the conclusion of the presentation of Br Josep Maria the Assembly listened to **three testimonies** from participants. The first was from Marie Elia (Madagascar) who spoke about her spiritual experience of contact with the Marist charism. Then Br Leonard Brito (Southern Africa) forcefully spoke of his living of his faith in relationship with Christ and Mary. Finally, Matloob Hayat (South Asia), from Pakistan, described his relationship with difficult students and his care for the most needy in the field of education.

During the first part of the afternoon, **six workshops** were held: Interiority (Br Oscar Martín, Compostela), Inter-religious experience (Br Michael De Waas, General Councillor), Experience of God in daily life (Maureen Hagan,

MIKE GREEFF SOUTH AFRICA, SOUTHERN AFRICA



We planned and dreamt, II MIMA came and we lived it with an intensity unexpected, it has passed and we have all returned to every corner of our Marist world. II MIMA has passed but has its spirit, its dream? I think not. Each of us has come away having been touched by the Spirit and still feeling the drumbeat of Africa. The sheer number, depth and diversity of all of the II MIMA experiences touched us all; some more, some less, some gently, some intensely. All different but all burning with a renewed passion for our Marist heritage; Brothers and Lay Marists alike.

To look around during our time in Nairobi and be living the wonderful diversity that is ours was a blessing and a privilege I will long cherish. Our diversity is our strength but it is also apparent that our sameness is the glue that holds us together. As new Marists in Mission we each have a responsibility to kindle and spread the flame that was lit in Nairobi. My prayer is that when III MIMA comes around the then stewards of all that is Marist can look back and say that the class of 2014 gave them strength to move forward.



United States), Silence and contemplation (Br Emili Turú, Superior General), Gathered around the Word (Br Michael Green, Australia), Praying with music (Manu Gómez, Mediterranean). While the workshops were running, the group of 12 young people taking part in the Assembly had a meeting to discuss the contribution they wished to make.

The day concluded at the feet of Our Lady of Guadalupe with a Marial celebration organised by the delegates from Mexico.



7. Saturday, 20th September: A new spirit of unity among brothers and laity

This day was devoted to studying the second call of the 21st General Chapter asking for a new relationship between brothers and laity. The proposal for the day's work was an invitation to welcome and walk alongside the other, together helping this gift of God to grow.

New relationship between brothers and laity

Brother Joe McKee helped the Assembly reflect on what a "new" relationship of brothers and laity based on communion might mean. In his reflection, he presented a brief historical summary of how this relationship had been understood and experienced by the Institute, beginning with the laity rendering services

to the brothers and going on to the time the Institute discovered that it was a shared mission which invited each to feel they were gathered

around the same table.

"The communion among brothers and laity is the ideal we long for" he emphasized. The essential thing is that we find ourselves reunited under the same tree of the charism and that we feel called by God to respond according to our particular vocation. The Marist vocation, consecrated or lay, requires a new way of following Jesus Christ. There are some lay men and women who wish to be formally recognized as Marists. Br Joe asked "How do we recognize lay Marist vocations?" The response to this question is one of the tasks entrusted to the Assembly.

A second reflection from the Brother Vicar outlined the change of paradigm necessary in order to understand the relationship as communion. For a long time, the thinking was that the Institute was at the centre and everything revolved around it: its dynamism, its perpetuity, etc. The change of paradigm requires us to contemplate "the charism as the centre". The sons of Marcellin, the

BR. JOÃO BATISTA PEREIRA SOUTH CENTRAL BRAZIL

From the first moment I knew that I was going to Nairobi, my heart started to prepare resulting in a greater spirit of openness and acceptance. My prayers became more intense and my mind more joyful and accepting.

Being able to take part in the second MIMA was one of the most important events in my 27 years of religious life and a great gift from God. It was and is the motive for much energy in my apostolate. To transmit to all Marists of the Province those magical moments experienced in Nairobi is my responsibility. I feel moved to proclaim all the wonders the Lord worked in me during the days of the Assembly.

To be able to know and live with brothers and laity from different parts of the world during the II MIMA was for me a great learning experience. Much more than the input received during the Assembly, I give evidence here of the richness of our sharing and living together. I was very happy to note that our young people were not forgotten at MIMA II. My hope is renewed in observing that youth have a key role in the living-out of the new relationship between brothers and laity. It was very clear that the laity is the future potential of our Institute.

Our mission did not end with the closing of the Assembly in Nairobi. On the contrary, it is now that we are going to begin.





brothers, are the primary expression of this charism. But there are many other ways to express it. And he concluded by stating that “today ways are needed which also recognize the presence of the charism in the laity”. The celebration of 200 years of the foundation of the Institute is an opportunity for a new beginning, perhaps with different forms, but a common Marist future.

Testimonies

The Assembly heard via a video testimony from the Sanchez Rodriguez family from Mexico (Rodrigo, Estela and their children, Josué and Lucía) who had committed themselves for a period of three years to the Marist District of Asia. At present, this Mexican family forms part of a Marist community in Cambodia and serves in the fields of health (Estela) and education (Rodrigo).

Ana Saborío (Costa Rica) talked about her connection with the brothers through her participation in the works of the Province of Central America and the deep, heart-felt link with the Marist charism.

Br Arturo Buet (Cruz del Sur) presented a quick overview of the presence of the Marist community in Fraile Pintado (Jujuy), Argentina, set-up in response to the call of the 20th General Chapter to “widen the tent, share life as brothers and laity, and journey in solidarity together”.

These testimonies presented to the Assembly “the lived reality and the challenges of brothers and laity facing up to the future of the Marist charism”.

Exercise of the 5 corners

The afternoon’s meeting began with Marian prayer prepared by the representatives of Asia.

The plenary session, conducted by Br Antonio Ramalho, General Councillor, began with a Powerpoint presentation which invited the participants to sharpen their awareness of where we can see God. With his artistic skill, Brother Tony Leon helped the Assembly do this by means of an exercise of “paraidolia”, that is to say, finding meaning in images. The activity proposed to them was to “look for the signs of God in the link between brothers and laity”. The process of discovering where God is speaking to the Institute today began with this proposal. Five concrete themes were suggested: spirituality, fraternity, mission, vocation and association-organization.



GRÂCE USABYIMANA RWANDA, CENTRAL EAST AFRICA

Because of the experience in Nairobi I have well understood what Marist mission consists in. We are called to solidarity and brotherly concern in the defence of children’s rights, especially in places where activity is most necessary because they are most vulnerable. During the Assembly I was able to think about my school situated in rural surroundings where most of the children are poor. With the charism shared, the brothers and I, as a laywoman, are going to welcome the diversity of our origins into the unity of the unique loving project of God for humanity and also the most loving project for our school children. God bless you.





Each participant wrote his or her contribution on paper after dialoguing about it with another person, and placed it on a panel specially prepared for each of the themes. Two people were chosen to summarise the contributions and share the result with the Assembly. Some references were repeated in the summary, especially those strongly emphasizing the need for joint formation, and the setting up of communities of faith, which were meaningful, welcoming and prophetic, to serve as reference points to undertake the formation of brothers and laity. This also presumed vocation as gift and response, the drawing up of a life project for young people, and the creation of associations for laity which show clear signs of belonging.

Then came time for sharing with the Assembly feedback on what had been heard. Emphasis was put on the call of God for us to defend the rights of children with appropriate structures, the need to provide a structure for Marist associates which recognizes their belonging. This lengthy and interesting reflection concluded with some personal time to write up the Diary.

Celebration of the communion

The celebration of the communion between brothers and laity was organized by the delegates of the province of L'Hermitage. They helped the Assembly pray with some Byzantine hymns dedicated to Mary and the reading of the Word in Greek. In the explanation for this celebration it was stated that "to be followers of Christ today in the style of Champagnat means to be committed to the three fundamental Christian and Marist dimensions: mission, shared life and spirituality".

After supper, there was a time of intercultural celebration organised by the band of MIC, with African songs and dances. Thus finished a day full of new experiences and a great wealth of topics.

ÉDOUARD JABRE LEBANON, MEDITERRANEAN

When I was chosen by my Province to take part in the II MIMA, I felt I was going to encounter a special experience. And this intuition was not mistaken. It was not an Assembly of intellectuals. It was a meeting of persons who are experiencing a common journey of spirituality and mission. Through these persons, and this journey, at once singular and plural, it was a meeting with the God of Jesus Christ, the God of Life and Movement, the God who ceaselessly calls us to conversion and risk, the God who provokes... who provokes us. At Nairobi, this God spoke to our hearts and invited us to dare newness. He provoked in us, in me, the crackling of a burning fire, the resonance of a beating drum... Would I dare, in my turn, to provoke newness?



8. Sunday, 21st September: Visit to MIC and to the Bomas of Kenya

Sunday was a day of rest for the Assembly. The morning was spent at MIC, and a visit to Bomas of Kenya was arranged for the afternoon.

The outdoor Sunday Eucharist at MIC was scheduled for ten o'clock. Before the Mass, we were able to admire the colourful clothes typical of the African countries of origin of the young Brothers. White soustanes were also prominent, contrasting sharply with the colorful costumes of each country. A number of local residents including religious Sisters and Brothers were also present.



Hymns led by the MIC band and choir were sung in a variety of African languages. The sunshine made the day even more special. At the conclusion of the Mass Brother Francis Veye, staff member at MIUC, welcomed all the visitors especially members of the Assembly to whom he wished success in their work. He also thanked them for coming to gather around the same table. Looking at the brothers and lay people who made up the Assembly he affirmed that brothers plus laity is not equal to two, but three, because through our union, a new force is born in the church. The General Council was introduced along with the Central Commission, which is carrying responsibility for

the running of the Assembly.

Then the participants moved in procession to a garden dedicated as a memorial to Brother Charles Howard who was responsible for initiating this formation centre for Africa. In his memory, the participants of the II MIMA planted ten more trees in the garden. A picnic lunch in the gardens of MIC was enjoyed in a beautiful atmosphere of togetherness. In the afternoon the Assembly participants moved to the Bomas cultural center where they were able to visit an open space in a natural setting with examples of the various types of housing used by the diverse groups of original peoples of Kenya.



9. Monday, 22nd September: New Marists in Mission

NIKOS NOULAS
GREECE, L'HERMITAGE

There are times in life when we feel particularly fortunate and happy because of various unique, exceptional experiences we have or have had. At the same time, we are aware that these experiences are burdened with responsibility, for they must not be limited to ourselves alone, but have to be transmitted as holy light (Sacred Fire) into the souls of other people. This is the fruit of my first thoughts after my active participation over a fortnight in the second Marist International Mission Assembly. We do not experience an important even in our lives just once, but every time we bring it to mind in an attempt to evaluate and draw comparisons and conclusions from it. This Assembly was for me like a seed planted in fertile soil. And now the moment has come to take care of that seed: it is necessary to water it so that it develops shoots, grows and bears fruit. Everything, in its time, needs to ripen. Now is the time when the reflections, the experiences, the words, the images are at work in the minds of all the participants.

Someone might ask why I consider this experience to be unique. The response is simple and obvious: the second International Assembly was an event in which a great number of people from the four corners of the world took part, with each of them bringing in his or her luggage an individual mentality, way of life, culture, family-history. But they examined everything through the Marist prism, being aware of this sensation of forming part of the same ecumenical Christian community, the sensation of Marists having common visions and objectives.





The work of the day, entrusted to the group as “seekers and explorers”, was about climbing the mountain and scanning new horizons. Marist life is now compelled to begin a journey of exodus and displacement, leading brothers and laity to abandon the answers of the past and trace the path to the Promised Land across the desert. Searching and exploring should lead the participants to experiment and to create new patterns for Marist life and mission.

The participants also scanned the Institute’s horizon through looking inward during morning prayer, and expressed their thoughts by using four colored sheets. Each person conveyed his or her feelings about the future awaiting the Marist Institute through a variety of colors, among which the blue of energy and the green of hope prevailed.

The work began by setting the objectives for the day. Brother Miguel Ángel Espinosa (known as “Maeb”) put the work in context and reminded the Assembly that the most important tasks were “listening to”, “observing” and “connecting with” the Holy Spirit’s inspiration for the Institute today.

Each participant in the Assembly was invited to act as a voice for the Institute. Many people worldwide were in tune with the Assembly through the media that day. 35597 people had accessed the Nairobi page through Facebook.

New Marists in Mission

Brother Emili Turú, Superior General, began his talk by recalling the contributions of Brothers Josep Maria Soteras and Joe McKee in previous days, and he then spoke about the missionary dimension of the Institute. He paralleled the General Conference – held a year earlier in the Hermitage – with the II MIMA. The General Conference, he explained, brings together the leaders of the Institute four years after the General Chapter to take the Institute’s pulse and plan for the future. It is a consultative meeting, like MIMA II, but they share an international perspective and look towards the future of the Institute.



He added that we had been talking about a new day for the entire Institute, keeping two aims in mind: being mystics and being prophets. The fact of celebrating the Conference at the Hermitage emphasized

this perspective, just as Nairobi will influence MIMA II. At the General Conference, we asked ourselves how we wanted the Institute to look in 2020 and, in the context of the second centenary of the Foundation, we thought about “a new beginning”.

He then mentioned the five major topics that had emerged at the General Conference: children and young people in situations of vulnerability, global availability, interculturality, meaningful life, and spirituality. Following Pope Francis in *Evangelii gaud-*

BR. JUDE ANANI NIGERIA

The II MIMA was a great experience for me. I am proud to have assisted in the local preparation here in the Province and also for being selected to be part of the Nairobi MIMA in September. In summary the experience was a whole turning point for the great Marist project that is emerging tomorrow.





ium, he advocated a “pastoral and missionary conversion” which does “not leave things as they are”, but moves to the “margins”.

Then he highlighted the requirement of *Evangelii gaudium* about letting “our lives be transformed by God”, “cultivating an inner space”, and having “prolonged moments of adoration, of prayerful encounter with the Lord”.

Workshops

There was time for personal reflection after Brother Emili’s message. Then, after the morning break, six small workshops were held around the following topics: 1) Internationality (Br Ernesto Sánchez, General Councillor - Mexico); 2) Looking with the eyes of a poor child (Br Álvaro Sepúlveda, Santa María de los Andes - Chile); 3) Being Church (Alfonso Ruiz de Chávez, Central Mexico); 4) Evangelizers among youth (Jack Stammers, Australia); 5) Speaking of God today (Br Ismael and Lucy, District of Asia); 6) Children’s rights (Br Manel Mendoza, L’Hermitage, FMSI Geneva).

Dialogue around the fire

The daily space called “dialogue around the fire” was a moment to share the “call to Marist Mission in a new world”. To this end, the group recalled previous reflections. Two words focused people’s attention: “call” and “new”. It comes down to detecting the new world that is awaiting the Marist mission today. The work consisted of highlighting three calls per group.

In the plenary session, the small communities shared these three calls and wrote them down on sheets of paper for everyone to see, so that people could check through the contributions of each group. A number of key words resounded: spirituality, prophecy, get moving, going to new places,

shared formation, community, rethinking the principles of Marist educational mission, mysticism, new apostolic presences, rights of children, etc. The adjectives attached to some of these concepts were probably the most innovative element: bold, public, geographical, existential, etc.

A couple of phrases echoed each other in this session indicating the participants’ attitude during the Assembly: “whatever comes out from this Assembly should be bold”; “the presence of young people is an invitation to take risks and move towards new horizons”. To process all this material, the participants spent a long time on their own working on their Marist logbook.



Young people animating the celebration

The 12 young participants in the Assembly guided the celebration that closed the day. Their skills as group leaders became evident in the way they organized the activity. They invited the participants to recall their childhood, and share their happy memories with the Assembly. Then they gave a balloon to each participant and managed to create a playful atmosphere in which people shared their childhood experienc-



es. At the end they turned the balloons used during the celebration into ornaments, and placed them next to the statue of the Good Mother.

The day was crowned with a display from Oceania and Asia, during which the group shared cultural, artistic, gastronomic, and Marist elements from these regions.

10. Tuesday, 23rd September: Looking at the world through the eyes of young people and children



This day was about “seeing” - how to see the world through the eyes of a child. Morning prayer focused on the text of Matthew in which Jesus took a child and put him in the midst of the disciples. Following this example, the assembly placed children and youth at the center of their attention. The song “If I could see the world through the eyes of a child” was very appropriate for our theme. And to give more depth, those present were invited to “see the world through the eyes of Marcellin” and respond with “a heart like his.”

Panel Discussion with the young

The young participants gave a presentation on the topic “Young people and the Marist charism”. All the young participants but one are from Marist schools or environments. With great creativity each one presented a symbol that for them identifies the qualities of the Marist charism - symbols that spoke of presence, service, being a light to the world, joy, justice, community, going back to our basics, the way of Mary, illuminating the darkness, etc. Then they named individuals who reflected those values. Among them were a number of world leaders (e.g. Mandela) and Marist Brothers with whom they had shared part of their lives.

They were asked how they see the Marist of the future and where they will be personally in 2020. Their answers included: in mixed communities, traveling to countries where they can experience the international aspect of the Institute, living the Marist mission in places on the margins, participating in structures of joint training, etc. One of them stated, “I met the Brothers in college when I was doing some volunteering.” Another said that she met the

ANIL KENATH PAKISTAN, SOUTH ASIA

I am Anil Kenath from Pakistan. Having grown up in a predominantly Muslim society, I had the opportunity of attending MIMA II. It was a spiritual and a life giving experience. It was a different face of world for me to what I had seen in Sargodha. The interaction with Marists from different corners of the world, led me to realize that though we came from different backgrounds yet we had one thing common; that is Marist Charism. I realized how the Spirit of God changes our lives and shows us the right path to follow. Being a young Marist finding great inspiration, I returned home full of enthusiasm to continue to live Marcellin’s dream.





Marist charism “living in community” with the Brothers.

In a Q&A session they were asked what Marist life gives them. They responded by saying that there is a thirst to know what it means to be a Marist Brother. We know it is not an academic qualification, but one of service. It is not easy as a permanent option though they would welcome temporary commitments. “We like mobility,” said one of them. Another recalled the great contribution youth ministry has given to his life. Another suggested how rich it would be to give



a new interpretation of the Fourvière promise for young people. “It is tough for young people to make decisions. So it is important to lift the cover of the tent so that young people see what other young people are doing,” said another panelist.

How do young people see Marist life in the future? A simulation was performed of their participating in MIMA III. By that time, at the beginning of the third Marist centenary, the world will be “a global village”. There will be a solid community of brothers and lay people “mutually supportive”, available to meet any need, working for the poor and other institutions similar to their own, with a public profile, with a say in the defense of the rights of children and the young ... these were some of the ideas expressed. “If the mission depended upon the brothers, many of us would be willing to become brothers, but the mission is not exclusive to the brothers. “Vocation has to come from within,” pointed out one of the young participants in the panel. The process concluded with the statement of one of the young participants: “We have just experienced a hypothetical situation, but nothing contradictory to what we feel.”

Experience and evidence of organization and membership

In the second part of the morning four current Marist initiatives showing how brothers and laypersons are organised and share the Marist charism in different parts of the world. Sylvia Pérez introduced the Province of Santa María de los Andes. In this Province, membership is achieved through a process of Marist education, launched with an invitation to participate. It is then followed by an initiation process lasting a few years before some form of commitment is made. At present there are 14 communities and 142 people of the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family (ChMMF) participating in this movement.

Brother Michael Green, of the Province of Australia discussed the characteristics of a future Marist Association of Marcellin Champagnat of Australia that would eventually be recognised both in civil and canon law. “The word Institute does not include all Marists” but only Brothers. “The Marist family is broader than the brothers.”

Brother Réal Sauvageau, of the Province of Canada, briefly explained the history of the creation of the Marist Association of Laypersons and some characteristics of this structure created to “share the inheritance of Champagnat” and to get the laypeople “be co-responsible for Marist life.”

Brother Iñigo García Blanco, from the Province of Ibérica, discussed the process of forming a body that would commit the lay person not necessarily to the Institute but to the charism. As part of the initiative a “School of Marist Spirituality” has been created, organized by a mixed community, to facilitate the processes.

During the Q&A time, one of the participants asked about structures for former brothers. Brother Javier



RAQUEL ESPUELAS RUIZ
SPAIN, IBERICA

The II MIMA was a great experience for me. Those days were full of emotion and the sharing of experiences, which I absorbed like a sponge. The 118 delegates really became a community of brothers and sisters.

I think that celebrating it in Africa was a great success. It helped us all to change perspective and look through different eyes, to connect with the Earth and place ourselves on the margins.

I am very grateful for the opportunity the Institute gave to young people and women. I realized that the voice of young people really matters, and that we have much to contribute. They tell us that the future is ours, but when does it start? I think the Assembly sent the clear message that the future starts tomorrow, and that we should work for "a new beginning".

I encourage everyone to continue building the Kingdom of God! It is worth it!



Espinosa, Director of the Office of the Laity responded, saying that there are several very simple structures in the provinces of Cruz del Sur, Central America and Mexico, among others. Leadership, ownership and governance were also mentioned as realities that must be addressed. Brother Emili reported on a meeting in Rome last March about "connection and belonging" and the process initiated at Institute level to find "new models for animation, management and governance of the Institute" which will still take several months to complete.

Immersion Experience

The afternoon was devoted to short experiences of "immersion". Accompanied by student Brothers from MIC, small groups went to visit: 1- Don Bosco Center for rehabilitation of boys. 2- Mother Teresa House – a centre caring for orphans. 3- Kazuri association for women. 4-Ennomatasiani Girls secondary school. 5- Joram G. Boys secondary school. 6- Nyumabani-watotowa Mungu, an orphanage for AIDS victims.



Celebration of solidarity

After dinner a celebration of solidarity took place. In it the participants shared the experience of the day. A moment of meditation then concluded the day using the text of John 9: 1-12 and answering these questions: What had I not seen before? Who or what helped me to see more clearly? May the Spirit lead the Assembly in its final days.



11. Wednesday, 24th September: A new era for the Marist charism

The Assembly was moving towards the development of its conclusions. The work proposed for that day was to review what had been experienced over the past days. For this purpose, most of the day was spent in an atmosphere of retreat and silence. A contemplative look helps to “see” beyond the surface and perceive life in its strength, courage, kindness and beauty.



LUIS ELENO JUAREZ RETO PERU, SANTA MARÍA DE LOS ANDES

Being able to take part in this Assembly has meant a great deal for my life and work as a Marist. It gives me an idea of the immensity of the Institute, of Marist work in the world, makes me feel like a grain of sand on a mountain, but a very important one for the work in hand.



It has also given me complete security and has helped me understand that this Marist charism is a gift for the Church, a gift for everyone. God is present in this family and asks us to be willing to go out to the edges of the world, to be mystics and prophets in a world which so much needs to feel the presence of God in the other, accompanied on this pilgrimage by the one who has done everything for us, the Good Mother, Mary.

Introduction to the Retreat

Brother Eugène Kabambuka, General Councillor, invited the participants to listen to their hearts as they contemplate the gift of the Marist charism. Champagnat was sensitive to the needs of the ignorant and to a spirituality that made him passionate for Christ. He also found that gift in our “brotherhood.” Africa states this in the word “ubuntu,” which means “I am because we are.” Brother Eugène also recalled the acrobats at the Bomas, where each performer depended on the others. He cited an African proverb: “If you cross the river along with a multitude, the crocodile will not bite.”

For the personal work time, each participant was given guiding questions:
 How do you feel about the future?
 What engages you?
 What is it that nourishes your answers?
 How do you envision expressions of the Marist charism in 2030?





Their task was to define three elements or features of these expressions.

The **Evening Prayer** was centred on Mary's visitation to her cousin Elizabeth making use of a variety of artistic representations of the gospel account.

Marist Charism

Participants met in their fixed groups to share their reflections and report back to the plenary. They were to envisage various expressions of the Marist charism in 2030. The reporting back was done in a plenary session.

A first thought was to see the expressions of the Marist charism as a "large charismatic family in the Church", consisting of "a network of groups or cells" with "diverse forms of meaningful and multicultural Marist communities, which share spirituality, life and mission and where the lay dimension is evident." These Marist communities would be composed of "prophets" and "mystics" witnessing to brotherhood and communion, "caring for and nurturing the Marist vocation".

Another aspect is more focused on the creation of new structures: «creating a larger tent,» a «new tent» with «structures that include all Marist vocations» and in which «those who identify themselves as Marist are recognized and respected».

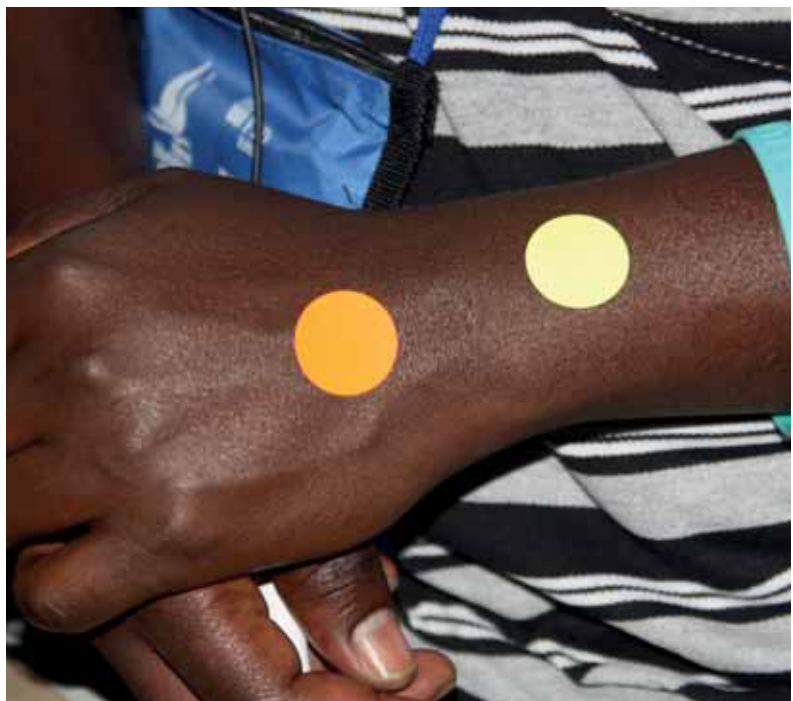
A final aspect of the Marist charism deals with issues such as: "strengthening the culture of solidarity and voluntary networks"; "to promote mobile, international and mixed communities in each region with phrases such as "global availability" "missionary internationalism"; "a presence embodied in the national and international margins". And it also strongly emphasises advocacy for youth: "Brothers and lay people committed to solidarity and justice"; "defending the rights of children and adolescents"; "involvement in social and political institutions."

Selecting priorities

In the plenary we heard a summary of the contributions of the groups. From these a number of key themes emerged: internationality, mystical spirituality, youth, educational mission, vocation, periphery, communion, and children's rights. Each participant was given two stickers, one red (first priority) and one coloured yellow (second priority). Preferences were shown by placing one's stickers next to the key ideas emerging from the group work. The process helped the Synthesis Group in their work of producing a final document of the Assembly.

Evening

The Assembly gathered for a Eucharist and, after supper, the Marist regions of Europe and Africa presented aspects of their various cultures - culinary, artistic, musical, and terpsichorean, the last-named involving participation of all with much fun and laughter. Brother Francis Lukong, president of the Conference of Provincials of Africa, took the opportunity to warmly thank the organizers for choosing this continent to celebrate the Assembly.





12. Thursday, 25th September: Challenges and Opportunities for the Marist Charism

The new era of the Marist charism has implications for many things: a true renewal of the Institute; a new way of being Brother; a new relationship between laity and brothers; new and creative styles of education, evangelization, and defense of the rights of poor children and young people; new frontiers

BR. FRANCIS LUKONG

SUPERIOR OF DISTRICT OF WEST AFRICA AND PRESIDENT OF THE CONFERENCE OF SUPERIORS OF THE AFRICAN CONTINENT



Dear brother and sisters,

I have just one thing to say on behalf of the African continent; and the one thing is THANK YOU.

Thank you for coming to Africa for this assembly. Coming to Africa means a lot for those of you who are doing it for the first time. Fear did not prevent you from coming to Africa. Rather, courage and determination to forge ahead as Marists is what has brought us here. In Africa, we have our own share of trouble but we also have our own share of goodness. You must have noticed that Africa is lively, welcoming and smiling in spite of everything. You must have noticed that Africa is teeming with Marist Vocation. This is Africa's contribution at this stage for our common Marist Vocation and Future. There is an African proverb, which says: ***if you want to go fast, go alone, but if you want to go far go together***. The limit of Champagnat's dream is the sky. Nothing good comes easy. Let us go together and we will realize Champagnat's dream.

Thank you for coming to Africa. Enjoy yourselves and enjoy each other's company.

THANK YOU, THANK YOU and THANK YOU!

for our mission; and the revitalization of our joint vocations ministry. In this new era, we will dance to the same Marist Symphony in so many corners of the world.

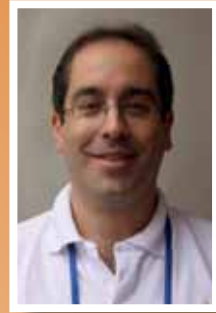
The day's work began with a contemplative moment before a map placed on the wall of the meeting room. Through this artistic exercise, Brother Tony Leon offered new insights on the pathways for the Marist charism. It was a key journey for the work of the Assembly. The dance uniting the Assembly began by letting each participant bring its rhythm to his or her own heart. The insights that people shared showed this inner dance moving the precisely at that point.

The group worked on the challenges in the morning and on the opportunities in the afternoon, following the same methodology in both cases. To give an Institute-level approach to the Assem-





BR. ISMAEL VALLS
DISTRICT OF ASIA



Nairobi became for us Marists, lay people and brothers, a new opportunity to share, to walk together as a family, and keep challenging each other, taking the risk that God places in our hands. It's time to be creative and move towards the action... Jump!

This period in our history engages us, involves us in this dimension of being New Marists in Mission. Time to really value and share the gift of the vocation, feel the love of God and share it with everyone. Feel the co-responsibility in building communion among us. Helping each other to grow in our faith and commitment and be ready to move out from our comfort zone in order to reach the "margins". Mary will be the one who will teach us how to build our fraternal community, how to enrich each other with our vocation, faith and life; and she will be the one who will give us the strength and courage to have a significant presence on the "margins", among children and youth, becoming Mystics and Prophets, builders of communion.

Are you ready for that? Let's do it together... Jump!

bly's discussion, the work began by answering a question and reaching consensus on it: *What are the challenges and opportunities the Institute is facing nowadays that will enable us to live the Marist charism in 2030?* The answer was not to exceed three challenges and three opportunities.

The reflection on challenges and opportunities gradually condensed around three central terms defining the core of the matter. These guided the discussion and facilitated the convergence of the Assembly's thinking: communion, mysticism, and prophecy. People worked initially in small groups, which sent their contribution to a drafting commission in charge of summarizing the reflection and bringing a text with everybody's insights to the Assembly. A plenary session followed, in which the group commented on the text and became aware of everybody's reflection. Finally, the group proceeded to define the Assembly's priorities.

The session concluded by asking each participant to express his or her priorities regarding the issues that were discussed, using a red label to indicate the first option and a yellow label for the second.

Four members of the Assembly – from the Americas, Africa, Oceania and Europe – plus a member of the Central Commission, developed a summary of the inputs that emerged during the day in order to include them in the final document.

The day concluded with the celebration of our Marist world's cultural diversity.



*13. Friday, 26th September:
Igniting Lives*

This poem set the tone for the day:

*Igniting lives, dreaming together of a better world for children and young people.
Igniting lives with a vision full of hope.*





Igniting lives with Champagnat's same boldness and creativity.

Igniting lives as part of God's loving plan for our world.

Igniting lives with respect for creation.

Igniting lives as part of a project of solidarity with all human beings, especially the marginalized.

The plenary session began by studying a summary and opportunities drafted by the group in charge, which had made a tremendous effort, putting in many hours of work. The final text was gradually emerging.

The Assembly was already looking forward to the following day. Working in regional groups, people discussed how to communicate the II MIMA experience to the Regions and Administrative Units, and what to suggest in the Regional Assemblies.

The Province of Southern Africa led Marial prayer to start the afternoon using African faces of Mary and texts from the Marist documents.



ry of the challenges

BR. RÉAL SAUVAGEAU CANADA

The II MIMA has been for me an extraordinary experience of Marist fraternity among the brothers and laity of the five continents. I feel that we will very soon form a single body animated by the same family spirit, the same passion for the young "Montagnes" of today. No barrier exists between us. I felt myself welcomed by the African colour our meeting had: songs, dances, tales abounding in wisdom, the hospitality, the dynamism and the creativity of our young African Marists. What vitality here in the present, and I hope in the future! I was also fascinated by the testimony of some African lay people who are discovering their place and role within the Marist charism.



The final document

The text prepared by the drafting commission was handed to the Assembly for final analysis by Mary Luciana Citterio, a young Argentinian who spoke in a way that recalled Pope Francis, her fellow citizen. During the reading, the atmosphere was full of a growing excitement that exploded in a final round of applause, sealing the participants' endorsement.

The text, shown at the end of this review, was structured as follows: introduction; presentation of the three dreams; challenges and substantive questions; a long statement about the opportunities for a greater vitality of the Marist charism and mission; and a few closing lines.

Evaluation and celebration

Another important point during this day was the written evaluation of the Assembly. Thanks to an evaluation grid, the participants expressed their opinion about the organization of the Assembly and the different group dynamics that were part of the method of working.



The representatives of Santa María de los Andes organised an intense celebration of the feeling of togetherness uniting the participants throughout the Assembly. It started with a dance that created an atmosphere of contemplation and interiority. Then the 12 small communities in which the participants shared their experiences and reflections during the Assembly gathered again. Each small community received a piece of bread and a glass of water. They broke the bread and shared it. Then the person who coordinated the work in each small community took the water and marked his or her companions with the sign of the cross on the forehead. These gestures of communion and blessing concluded with an embrace while praying the Our Father.

With their hearts full of joy, all participants moved to an open space for a cold buffet. During the “Asante Kwaheri” party (“thanks and see you soon!”), full of African rhythm, the group listened to the MIC band, and to a group of young participants who had composed a song for the occasion

During the party, the organizers thanked the Sisters from the three houses accommodating the participants for the care and services they kindly provided. They also expressed their gratitude to the Central Commission, the work teams, MIC, the Province of Central-East Africa, and a number of guests, for contributing to the success of the Assembly.

Thus ended a historic day, a day in which the II MIMA handed to the “charismatic family” of the “Marists of Champagnat” a new contribution for the enlivening of their charism and mission.



14. Saturday, 27th September: Bringing the Dawn to Birth

The time has arrived to spread throughout the world the wisdom found in this second MIMA, the riches of the hidden treasure which has been discovered in everyone. Guided by the wisdom of the Gospel, it is necessary to die in order to give life, to be broken in order to reach everyone. If the grain of wheat, once sown, does not die, it remains without fruit, but if it dies, it produces much fruit. The participants in MIMA II return to the world’s highways and together they will face up to the future of the Marist charism as a challenge to help the dawning of new Marist life, strengthening what exists with more creativity, fidelity and energy. Our time is a time of creativity.





MIRIAN GARCÍA PARAGUAY



The seed sown... is bearing fruit!
When hearts beat as one, territorial frontiers do not exist.

The days shared in Nairobi were testimonies to the presence of a great family.

Yes, a true family, Mary's family.

The fraternal gestures, the timely glances, the personal experiences shared... made this interior fire burn more brightly.

There remains the memory and the challenge to keep on listening to the calls of God!

Thank you, Africa, for such great blessings!

Thank you, Marists of Champagnat, for the gift of life!

Brother Emili Turú, Superior General, began his closing speech for the II MIMA by recalling the happy intuition of Brother Basilio Rueda in the post-conciliar period, when he proposed to the Institute the task of "awaking the dawn and bringing it to birth". This Assembly is "one step more towards the dawn of a new beginning for the Institute", he affirmed, adding: "This Assembly, will make a significant contribution to this dawn of a new day for the Institute, especially through the commitment of the people who are here".

And with his gaze fixed on the horizon, he offered those leaving Nairobi that day the "image or parable of the swamp" to express where we are going. The space in which we are called to carry out our mission is similar to

a swamp or marsh, which is found between land and ocean, in a remote area, where no one would normally go to live. If someone is there, it is because he has been marginalized. He goes there to find others who are sunk in the mire, with no possibility of a future. A place of danger, disease, where you do not know what is beneath your feet. There are no tracks, but you have to move forward. It is hard to walk in the middle of the mud; it requires a particular strength not to give up, not to turn back. At the same time, it is a place full of the diversity of life. A mysterious place calling to mind the creation of the world, with the Spirit moving over the chaos, offering the possibility of a new creation, a new beginning.

Using the word "swamp", he made an acrostic which reminding us of 5 elements important for our journey: "S" for "spirituality" (because

as Marists we can see ourselves as "evangelizers with the Spirit"); "W" for "we" (expressing the link between all Marists) "A" for "at risk" (with reference to our mission among children and young people at risk, as well as the invitation to personally take risks for the Kingdom); "M" for "Mary" (seeing that we have the privilege of bearing her name and because "she inspires our way of being brothers and sisters in the Church"); "P" for "pledge" (promise, in connection with the promise of Fourvière, which shows the firm and full commitment of each one).

He concluded by quoting the words of Brother Francis Lukong who, in the name of the Marists of the African continent, had said some days earlier: "Thank you for coming to Africa. Fear did not make you stay home". "I too" – said Br Emili - "am happy to repeat in the name of the Institute: thank you for accepting the invitation and taking risks. We sensed that coming to Africa was going to make a





difference. We know today it was the correct decision”.

Closing the Assembly

This was followed by votes of thanks to the Central Commission for the hard work carried out, the General Council for the impulse it had given to the II MIMA, and the participants themselves for their enthusiasm and commitment. As a visual record, selection of photos was displayed recording the major events of the past few days. Brother Tony Leon explained the symbolism of the map which adorned one of the walls of the room. He concluded his presentation by inviting the participants to place their names on the lower part of the map, indicating that all were authors of the work.

The final gesture of this closing ceremony consisted in collecting the signatures of the participants on a card which each one would take away as a souvenir.

The morning finished with a Eucharist of missioning. The first reading was the story of the promise of Fourvière.

In the offertory procession there were twenty-nine posters, one for each province, district or sector, announcing the three-year period beginning, with the Montagne Year (2014-2015) which will take the Institute to the celebration of its bicentenary.

After communion, Br Emili proceeded to send the participants out to carry the good news of the Assembly to the whole Institute. The gesture began with the reading of the story in which Champagnat

WOLFGANG HACKER GERMANY, WEST CENTRAL EUROPE

Yes, I can still hear the calls from Nairobi to the Marist mission in a new world.

In a period of decreasing numbers of brothers in our province it is the task for us lay Marists to strengthen the community of the new Marist family.

We have to meet the children and young people who need us most, in our school and our neighbourhood.

I will inform my staff at school about my experiences in Nairobi and try to live a meaningful presence in order to give a Marist witness to my pupils and colleagues.

In my province, we will try to establish a network between our schools in Germany and Ireland and other institutions in Belgium, the Netherlands and Scotland.

I am convinced that if we act as an international body, our mix of cultures will be a richness for many of us.

Therefore I will support the work of the CMI-Project (Collaboration for Mission International) in Mindelheim and try to be globally available for the new Marist family.



presented Br Jean Pièrre Martinol with blessed bread to take with him on his journey. Br Jean Pièrre kept it in his bag in order to share it with the brothers. This blessed bread is the message of MIMA II which all the participants will take away in their suitcases to share with the communities. Together with the bread to share, they each received a decorated ceramic plate, hand-crafted by African women.

Thus ended days of intense sharing and living together, experiences which will be continued in all parts of the Marist world.



IV – *The Assembly as seen by the Preparatory Commission*



1. A Forceful Experience of Communion and Commitment



Br. Miguel Ángel
Espinosa Barrera (Maeb)



Br. João Carlos
do Prado

Mission Secretariat

The second Marist International Mission Assembly, held in Nairobi (II MIMA), is another sign of God's moving through the history of the Marist Institute. The fire started burning when the Superior General and his Council, following the mandate from the 21st General Chapter, appointed the Preparatory Commission comprising brothers and laity to start thinking about the second MIMA as an expression of the life and mission of the Marist world.

The first meeting of the Commission was convened in June 2012 immediately after the appointment of its members. The construction of what we might call a mixed community of life and mission was beginning,



a community in which each member shared the best of him or herself with openness, freedom and availability. The Spirit was leading us to formulate a proposal that would help prepare the way for the entire Institute. Throughout the two years working together, a strong spirit of communion and commitment emerged among the members of the Commission, allowing us to envision the second MIMA's contribution to the vitality of the Marist charism through its focus on "New Marists in Mission" on the threshold of the Marist Institute's bicentenary. It was a time of grace, dedication and passion.

The spirit of communion became evident in this "new community of brothers and laity". The Commission exceeded the purely operational dimension of its work. It became a space in which members could share life-stories, experiences, dreams, challenges, joys, laughter, difficulties, hopes, and desires. It was a living community at the service of Marist charism and the preparation of the Assembly. The diversity of the members in the Commission enabled us to keep in mind the diversity of the Marist Institute itself. At the same time, it meant a richness of gifts and talents shared with much generosity and affection, facilitating a business-like approach to all stages in the organizing of the Assembly.

The detail in the preparation of the Assembly shows the liveliness and passion that each member of the Commission devoted to the participants and to the future of the charism. It was not only about materials, papers, dynamics, process and creativity. It also meant time, effort, and life itself at everybody's service. This level of commitment was the result of a deep spirit of communion, and of our desire to achieve the best for the charism. The same spirit of communion and commitment was also evident in the people who participated in the preparatory-phase in Nairobi.



Many people generously devoted their time to serving the participants in various ways during the Assembly itself: translation, decoration, liturgy, animation, logistics, infrastructure, hospitality, programing, materials, and secretarial work, among others. To all these people, *a word of profound gratitude*, because we know that the Assembly would not have been the same without your support.

And what would the Assembly have done without the support of the MIC (Marist International Center) and the PACE (Province

Afrique Centre-Est)? It is difficult to imagine, because thanks to them, MIMA II took on the flavor of Marist Africa, welcoming us with arms wide-open. They dedicated people, energy and resources to the full service of the Assembly. Above all, the major importance of their support with regard to logistics and infrastructure was in addition to the beautiful sharing of their cultures, colours, music, drums, dance, joy, and vitality. The contribution and presence of the brothers, laity, and young people from Africa was very special for the Assembly, and created a hitherto unknown sense of identity. Thank you,





Africa, for your openness, acceptance, and welcoming attitude when you became the center of the Marist Institute for a few weeks, and displayed all your vitality and richness to the Marist world. Preparing an event such as the II MIMA was quite challenging. The uncertainties we faced several weeks before the Assembly were even more of a challenge for all the people involved in its preparation. The Spirit gave us the courage to move forward in organizing the Assembly with even more stamina. The value of so many people who were supporting and accompanying the Assembly by various means became evident, not to mention the commitment of the participants, who represented the life and mission of the Institute. It was Africa's hour, and it could not have been other. In the end, everything turned out beautifully.

Now it is time to go a step further, to spread what we experienced and learned in Nairobi throughout the Provinces, Districts and Regions. The Regional Assemblies that will take place in 2015 will be an opportunity to share and try to bring about a "viable novelty" in each situation. We must rely on the power of the Spirit, and the generous open-heartedness of all the brothers and laity. The Preparatory Commission will not lead this phase, but will be there to help in whatever way it can across the different areas of the Institute.

We are sure that the experience of the different teams and participants involved in the preparation and celebration of the Nairobi Assembly is an excellent process on the way to the new Marist centenary. May we now become the "prophets and mystics living in communion" that we want for our world today!

2. From Commission to Assembly



Alice J. Miesnik,
United States

It was the winter of the 2011-2012 school year. Br Ben Consigli, Provincial of the United States, asked me to stop by his office for a chat. He was careful to assure me that I could say "no" to what he was about to ask me: The General Council in Rome was creating a Commission to prepare the II MIMA. Would I be interested in saying "yes"?

I am an English teacher and school administrator by training; I had just taken on the position of Principal. I was not sure what skills I would have to offer the Commission, but I did know this: That my saying "yes" had invariably opened a door to exciting and rewarding experiences. If the Holy Spirit thought I could be of use as a member of the Commission, who was I to argue? As principal, I would certainly be more able to leave the building for a week or two at a time than I had been previously as Assistant Principal for Academics. I said "yes", trusting that I would be up for the task.

My first meeting in Rome was challenging to say the least. I had never worked internationally. I was at first 'wowed' by the translation equipment, then frustrated by the slow pace of translation and the inability to have free and easy dialogue. My second challenge was the tasks I was assigned. We were being asked to use Scripture and Marist Documents to compile thematic reflections for the Local Phase of MIMA II. I knew next to nothing about the existing Marist Documents at that time. In the critique sessions, I would be asked why hadn't I included "this passage" or "that letter". "How could I include what I didn't know existed?" I wondered. I felt inferior to the task of the Preparatory Commission. Between my inability to converse in Spanish and my unfamiliarity with all things Marist, I was worried that I was taking up a spot on the commission that someone much more capable could fill.

Nonetheless, I chose to persevere. I was quite sure that the Holy Spirit knew what he was doing, even if I did not. By the end of the second planning meeting in the fall of 2012 I had bonded with the other members. They became my friends: four brothers stationed in Rome, four lay Marists, plus two



brothers from other parts of the world; 8 men and two women, a representative from every Region of the Marist world. This motley group had formed a community through work, through prayer, and through friendship. I was confident that this small Marist family that we had formed would see us through. Whatever I lacked, others would supply.

Back in the United States, I was thrilled to share the work of the Preparatory Commission with the leaders of our schools and then with the local liaisons who would



adapt the local phase for use in their contexts. I shared my experiences with the students and teachers in my own school and had really stimulating reflections with groups of retired Marist Brothers. The local phase was invigorating, stimulating curiosity and expectations of what would occur at the actual assembly. Once the Commission decided that the II MIMA would take place in Nairobi, I was totally hooked. I am a born traveler and looked forward to this new adventure. While the threats of terrorism and Ebola were real, my desire for the Assembly to proceed as planned was undaunted. I had confidence that the authorities, both the Kenyan government and the Marist Institute, would do all within their power to ensure our safety. And that Mary, Our Good Mother, would do the rest.

MIMA II went off without a hitch. The synergy of the Central Commission was indomitable. Even with Monica being unable to come and with Joao taken ill during our stay there, all went as planned and then some. Joao's leadership, Piluca's accompaniment, Maeb's organizational skills... I could go on and on. This commission was greater than the sum of its parts. True synergy evolved that only the Holy Spirit could have mustered.

Beyond my involvement with the Commission, I remain in awe of the hard work of the delegates. Their reflections, prayer, thoughtfulness and vision have helped propel the Marist Institute toward a new horizon. Witnessing this sacred moment is a memory I will cherish in my heart and that I am sure will transform my soul.

3. A New Pentecost

The event of Pentecost recorded in Acts 2 reminds me of the gathering together of believers for a shared life and vision. We gathered from all corners of the world in Nairobi to celebrate the II MIMA, which from my own experience is a renewed Pentecost in the Marist world.

At first, an assembly of this magnitude taking place on the African soil generated a lot of fear in me but just like the disciples were empowered by the Holy Spirit, I refused to give up.

As a member of the Preparatory Commission, it was an opportunity to give back to the Marist world the values I received from the Institute and to learn from the experiences of others. In fact, the II MIMA started with the good experience of the unique community life of the Preparatory Commission.

The community life and family spirit animated us as a commission and indeed the same spirit guided the assembly.



Br. Mark Okolo Omede,
Nigeria



It is one thing to have an experience but another is the challenge of living through the experience or just retaining the experience. For me, MIMA II is just the beginning, like the disciples on Pentecost Day; we have been empowered, energized and given the fire of this renewed Pentecost. The song “MIMA, MIMA Africa” with this Pentecost will now be sung as “MIMA, MIMA, the Whole World”. Let the echoes of Nairobi be heard throughout the world. New Marists in Mission, let us all join in the song and wherever we come from, we are Marists of Champagnat taking the good news of the greater “Communion” to the margins and across the “Swamp”.



Piluca Benavente
Serrano - Missionary
Sister of Our Lady
of Africa - Facilitator

4. “MIMA, MIMA, Africa”

Thanks for the opportunity of sharing through this magazine my experience of the second Marist International Mission Assembly from my position as facilitator. In my case, I was certainly not involved in the same way as a participant, but my experience was no less rewarding and stimulating.

In May of 2013, Brother João Carlos do Prado, Director of the Mission Secretariat, wrote to me saying that the Preparatory Commission saw the need for an external facilitator to help them organize and carry out the Assembly. He asked me to work directly with the Commission before and during the Assembly, starting with the fourth preparatory meeting to be held in Nairobi shortly after.

Although I did not specifically know what kind of service they needed, I did not hesitate to get on this train that was already underway. I had met Brother



Emili Turú in a leadership-training program held in Rome some years earlier, when we were both on the General Councils of our respective congregations. Before that, I had also met Brother Henri Vergès in Algeria, and worked with Brother Jesús Marcos in the Pastoral Ministry of Christian University Students from Sub-Saharan Africa in Algiers. These three links with the Marist family were more than enough to convince me that the adventure would be worthwhile.

From my point of view, the first contacts with the Commission were pleasant and easy. I think it was a reciprocal feeling. We started weaving a relationship of trust and mutual appreciation around the purpose of the Assembly and the service entrusted to each of us according to his or her own role. I tasted and appreciated the richness of that small group of laity and brothers, women and men marked by different cultures and life experiences, moved by the same spirituality, and committed to a common mission.



The members of the Committee will recall the image of broccoli that I proposed to them the first day we met as a way to start exploring together the meaning of their role in MIMA II. In a small piece of broccoli, we find the same shape and characteristics as in the entire broccoli head: the whole is in the fragments, and each fragment is in the whole. It was a way of becoming aware that the entire Assembly was already there in the Preparatory Commission! Therefore, the tasks of taking care of the Commission's relational dynamics, deepening their sense of purpose, nam-



ing the inevitable challenges and working through them, using the resources of each person and of the entire group, and focusing and refocusing on its mission, were as important as the organization, logistics, contents, and animation of the entire Assembly.

The place where the Assembly took place was not randomly selected. The Marist family chose Africa so as to be consistent with their desire to look at the world, and understand the mission from a different perspective. During the Assembly, the large *upside-down* world map



decorating the great hall at Dimesse House continuously reminded us that we perceive life, people, and events according to the standpoint from which we experience them. It is a fact that physical or geographical displacement can bring about internal displacement and increase our capacity to tune in and empathize with each other.

In reality, everybody was displaced by the Assembly: those of us who arrived from the different corners of the world, and also those who welcomed us with the characteristic African warmth and generosity. We came close, discovered, and received each other. We also welcomed together the challenge of understanding Marist belonging in a different way. That was, in fact, the purpose of the Assembly: walking together towards an updated understanding of what it means to be part of a faith community, which shares the same charisma, spirituality and mission in different lifestyles and settings, and as a consequence, giving an initial structural and organizational form to this way of belonging, which was not a small challenge!

I enjoyed many moments of the Assembly, which to me were a prophetic metaphor for the future of the Church, of consecrated life, and even the world, without ignoring the challenges that emerged on the way, which became evident in certain dynamics and debates during the Assembly. Without a doubt, a massive challenge is the wide variety of contexts implying different approaches and processes, which certainly cannot exclude each other, but also need articulation around common criteria. There is still, then, a long way to go, but the energy and motivation I saw in the group can only lead me to imagine the future of the Marist family with hope.

The decision of holding the second Assembly in Africa entailed some difficulties that I wish to recall, not from an organizational point of view but because they teach me so much. As you can understand, the fear of terrorism and, later on, of the Ebola epidemic, brought about moments of uncertainty and doubt throughout the preparation process, which required discernment, consultation, decision-making and risk management. In retrospect, I now realize that the people of Africa had a perspective of inclusion/isolation regarding these situations. How many times during the Assembly our African brothers and sisters expressed their gratitude for having decided to come to their "home"! Africa held out her hand to draw us into the dance of inclusion, so that the rhythm of an open and compassionate heart could dissolve the barriers of isolation.

Thanks to the Marist family for giving me the opportunity of enriching myself with their richness. In particular, thanks to the members of the Commission, whom I remember with sincere friendship.



5. The Dawn of a New Beginning is Already Breaking



Br. César Rojas,
Brothers Today
Secretariat

Throughout our personal history, there are moments in which we feel and become aware of the loving presence of God and his Spirit. These experiences leave a lasting impression at a personal and collective level, and transcend the self.

The *Second Marist International Mission Assembly* was one of those moments in which magic and reality intermingle. Those of us who had the opportunity to participate, and certainly those who followed it through the various media, could experience true fraternal love (agape). It was a charismatic experience, in which the Lord of Life came to greet us, inviting us to follow Him and walk at his side.

For us Brothers it was also a good opportunity to evaluate our identity as consecrated religious, and to have an experience of bonding with a wonderful group of Marist laity. Together we dreamed about new paths of renewal and creative fidelity for our Institute. When the Preparatory Commission started working, the Brothers Today Secretariat became involved with them because we realized the Assembly would be a breath of fresh

air for our lives and our work of evangelization.

The final message of the Nairobi Assembly is a clear invitation to recognize and appreciate ourselves as Marists of Champagnat, men and women that have felt a special call from the Lord to incarnate the charism, to acknowledge the value of a common mission carried out thanks to our diversity, and to cultivate our respective identities.

In the context of the *Year of Consecrated Life* that Pope Francis has convened, the Brothers are called to feel and experience the renewed breeze of Mysticism and Prophecy. We will then be fruitful seeds in our different mission fields, where our fraternal and Marian presence becomes an invitation to follow the Lord. Through our generous dedication to children and young people, we will recall the memory of all those who gave their life, like us, for the service of others.

The Assembly also leaves us a great challenge. We envision our Marist future as a communion of brothers and laity in the charism of Champagnat, and we will go on imagining it this way. It is important to open our minds and hearts to this call of the Spirit and, in a common effort, to welcome its richness, which helps us strengthen of our vocation. Let us continue working together to consolidate our respective vocations, and sowing seeds that can grow into new religious brothers and laity.



The XXI General Chapter invited us to promote a new way of being Brothers in today's world. We have probably asked ourselves many times how to face up to this challenge. Well, I think we have collectively taken a step forward with this Assembly. Let the Spirit act through those beautiful words of the final message, and let us undertake the conversion processes we urgently need in our own lives. Only then we will be able to fulfill the dawn of a new beginning that is already breaking.



6. Feed the fire

Having a Spiritual Experience at the II MIMA

African families gather around the fire. Around the fire they celebrate, dance, call to mind their ancestors, relive their history and their traditions. Around the fire, we Marists from all the corners of the earth gathered in Nairobi. Around the fire of Jesus, the fire of Champagnat, the fire of life, of communion, of the Gospel, of the charism.

Among the stories which illuminate the beginnings of the day in Nairobi, one tells us about *a place in the bush*, around the fire, a place very pleasing to God. Recalling the beautiful experience of the Assembly, I feel that, in many ways, we were feeding this fire which brings us into harmony with the God of life. He was in the fire. We were ourselves in the fire. In the fire we were He and us. There were so many expressions of encounter, life, spirituality. All these, I feel, shape our spiritual journey as Marists.

“My ground and God’s are the same”, said Meister Eckhard. Because the dance, the song, the fire, the earth, the balloons, the stones, the African stories, the vases and the perfumes, the seeds, the colours... the whole variety of forms perceived by our senses send us to God. In each symbol, in each gesture, God was there. In each beat of the drum we perceived the echo of his voice. In each colour, the twinkle of his eye. In each movement, the power of his Spirit. The sacramental language facilitated our encounter with things, with people, with God.

The rhythm of the Assembly allowed us to have times for meditation and silence. We perceived that to open up to God is to open up to the dimension of depth, to open up to one’s roots. “God waits where the roots are”, says one author. These spaces remind us of Mary “who kept all these things in her heart”. They helped us to have a contemplative gaze, capable of reading and interpreting reality with the eyes of God. They helped us experience the Assembly *from within*. From within, where the person feels inhabited by God and has the opportunity for a silent dialogue, in which the heart-beat of God could be heard in the daily experiences. The *course notebook* helped us with this.

From our family spirit surges a spirituality which is *intensely relational and affective*, as Water from the Rock 31 reminds us. In Nairobi, God became an embrace, a smile, an affectionate glance, a warm handshake, cultural integration, communion in diversity... The experience of the Assembly reaffirmed this dimension of our Marist spirituality, in which God reveals himself to us through others, through every gesture

of brotherhood and communion. So many friendships arising, so much dialogue, so many meetings, so much dancing, so many details, brothers and laity, shared searching, made us feel that He was with us in the human experiences of each day. We were able to say, *I am because we are. Ubuntu*. And our spirituality is communitarian.

The story of our spirituality is made up of passion and compassion: passion for God and compassion for others (WfR 6). In the Assembly others made themselves present in the gaz-



Br. Javier Espinosa,
Secretariat of the
Laity





es and faces of poor children. The meeting with children affected by AIDS proved to be a meeting with the suffering God who abases himself and embraces the margins. The witness given by those committed to justice and solidarity with the poor proved to be an experience of God. We reaffirmed at that time that the compassionate response we give to the needs of the world, the missionary generosity of lay people and brothers, the efforts to defend the rights of children can only spring from the depth of our spirituality, from our style of life in God.

Our liturgies and times of prayer during the Assembly expressed a spirituality *simple and realistic*, as our documents affirm. Prayer carried out with simple things, mundane things, things close to us, like seeds, balloons, mandarin oranges, candles, earth... We became aware that God is everywhere and that prayer is possible in any place where there is a human being, in any joy or any monotony, in everything which is creating the framework of our daily life. The engagement with God is in living. He comes looking for us down the highways and byways (Gen 3: 9). *In all the places that I am, you are. You always are.* Champagnat tells us to see God in everything. In another way, the experience of God in daily life is a passionate coming closer to the world of God in the things which pass us by every day: relations, friends, events... And so the celebration of the Assembly turned into a beautiful epiphany of God.

Looking back over the experience of Nairobi it is easy for me to point out the conducting wire of our experience.

A strong, consolidating wire as it had to unite mysticism and commitment, *mysticism and prophecy*. This challenge of consolidation demands of us that we be persons capable of touching the mystery there is in every life, with an attitude of confident openness and abandonment. It asks us to know how to go beyond appearances and surface meanings and enter into the innermost recesses of each situation, as Water from the Rock 73 requires of us. The challenge of combining mysticism and prophecy urges us to make of our life a message, a testimony, referent a pointer to the Gospel. And, of course, to live the unity of the God-human being without dualism or separate spaces.

Mary also made herself present in the Assembly. Our spirituality reminds us of those feet covered with dust. The one who welcomes the God of compassionate eyes

and the merciful heart. The spirituality of the pilgrim, of one looking for and carving out paths. The spirituality of broad horizons, of the heart without frontiers, of the missionary spirit, which crouches down to the little one, of the feet on the ground. Mary reminds us of the apostolic passion of our spirituality. In her footsteps our journey is one of hope. Mary makes possible for us a *new beginning*. The spirit of Nairobi leads us to continue affirming that *Mary does everything among us*. With her we seek to be, at the end of the Assembly, "fires which burn life with such force that you cannot look at them without blinking, and if anyone goes near, they burn", in the words of Eduardo Galeano.





V – MIC and the Assembly



1. Bring II MIMA home!



Br. Lawrence Ndawala,
Superior of MIC

‘Our role in this event is like that of the *hospitaleros* who welcome the pilgrims at the inn to refresh and rest before they continue with their journey. We are here to facilitate your *journey of sharing in faith* the mission of Champanat. If you need anything that we can do to make your experience meaningful do not hesitate to contact us’. This was my welcome speech at MIC.

I was full of apprehension. First of all I was not sure what was going to happen. The news of terrorist attacks and the outbreak of Ebola were still fresh in the minds of the participants. My fear was that most probably the participants would not feel at home here. How could we take away that fear? We had to start with a bang, the African rhythm. Thanks be to God we did just that. The Karibu Party put all my fears away and definitely those of the participants. I felt relieved.

The event was inaugurated and sessions, prayers and sharing interspaced





with other activities followed. I could feel that something was happening. I could not name it. There was an expectation of something new coming every day. Then came the closure of the event on the 27th September then the participants started leaving. The Sunday that followed the closure of II MIMA the Preparatory Commission and collaborators with the local organizing group had an evaluation. The echo from the participants was the feeling of gratitude for each other because the event finished well without any event and especially acknowledging that the Spirit was present in the whole process. There were no words to express this experience. It was an emotional moment and it was evident on the faces of the group. Majority of us could not hold tears

from our eyes. No one asked why. It was a conclusion of an intense and touching experience. It was like, *"Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the scriptures?"* Luke 24:32. Thanks to you all Marists. My prayer was answered. *'We were fired up'*. Even as facilitators of the event we got the spirit of MIMA II.

Done with the event, now it is the time for the fruits of the spirit of MIMA II to spread through the networks to each individual Marist wherever he or she is found. The Spirit impels us to do just that.





2. We sensed that coming to Africa was going to make the difference



Br Cyprian Gandebo,
Chairperson of the Local
Organizing Committee

Bro. Emili Turu intimated, “We sensed that coming to Africa was going to make the difference. We know today it was the correct decision”. What was most inspiring at the Nairobi Assembly? Apart from the internationality and interculturalism we shared at MIMA II I was particularly touched in a special way by two statements made by different lay Marists at different moments of the Assembly. I introduced myself as coming from Ghana and the lay Marist from the Mediterranean Province exclaimed “we are from the same Province”. This statement made me to feel that Brothers and lay Marists work together and share in the same charism of St Joseph Benedict Marcellin Champagnat. The second statement echo the point of the first lay Marist: ‘as we go back home, my superior expects me to give a report on MIMA II to the Council’. This statement means that the provincial or District Superior is not just a superior of the Brothers but of the lay Marists as well. What newness!

Thank you Brothers and lay Marists for daring the risks of Ebola and terrorism. Thank you for bringing newness and vitality to us, in Africa, especially in relation to the vital role of Brothers and lay Marists working together to evangelize young people. Thanks also for appreciating us and particularly for choosing to come to Africa with this ‘good news’.





3. My Experience of MIMA

My involvement was in the Liturgy Sub-committee. The main task was to prepare and animate four Masses during the Assembly. Aware of this immense responsibility in organising an assembly of such magnitude, a lot of effort was involved, e.g. ensuring that the MIC Choir (Brothers) performed to their best. And this we achieved.

I was privileged to participate in the opening and closing ceremonies of the Assembly. Another moving experience was to sit around the same Eucharistic table with people from all five continents of the world. The spiritual connec-



Br. Geraldo Medida,
Formator at MIC



tion to all the “*New Marists*” at the Assembly was an overwhelming experience. This connection with all the participants sparked in me a greater consciousness of collective responsibility of the Brothers and Laity - the “*New Marists*”- towards our mission. For me, this is an invitation to respond to the call of the 21st General Chapter: “*With Mary, go in haste to a new land*”,

whose signs we have to read with lenses of faith, hope and love. Therefore, MIMA II will serve as a stepping stone in continuing vigorously the mission for which St Marcellin founded the Congregation of the Little Brothers of Mary.

4. It was indeed, a new Pentecost



Br. Anthony Okoye,
in Initial Formation

MIMA has come and gone, but in my opinion, the experience will remain a strong propelling force for us here in Africa, as well as for the participants from other continents, in reaching out to the ‘Montagne’ in the world, in a bid to go in haste with Mary to the ‘New Land’.

Like the disciples of Christ on their way to Emmaus, I would say that my heart and indeed the hearts of all participants were ‘burning’ within us during the course of the Assembly, to effect concretely the call of the Assembly. It was like, what exactly are the Brothers and Laity, coming from all the world’s continents, to do here in Africa? I could not fathom what I saw; the calibre of people, from different cultures and also speaking different languages.

The enthusiasm, passion, joy and eagerness I witnessed of the participants, in their response to that indescribable and irresistible “voice” within them, towards the need of our time, was truly contagious. Like the outpouring of the Holy Spirit during Pentecost, I found myself taken up by the same spirit



that was at work in the Assembly and in all the participants. At a personal level, I could feel that there is something extra-ordinary happening in the Assembly, for the participants were all united like the early Christians, in one heart and one mind in a lively atmosphere, with the only word that makes sense to all: 'Mission'. It was really difficult to tell a Brother from a Lay person. It was something that

I have never witnessed before, disregarding the fact that they are from different cultures.

The creativity in terms of organization and the different activities that were interspersed throughout the Assembly was awesome and unimaginable. They were truly involving and made the Assembly an experience all will want to have again. I was also thrilled by the participation of the African Brothers, even though their experience of Brothers and Lay people working together is something that is still growing. They helped to spiced up the Assembly, bring home the message, which made sense to me that, it is possible, and that the partnership and collaboration of Brothers and Laity in Mission, will only strengthen the Marist presence in the world, in reaching out to the 'Montagnes' wherever he or she is to be found.





VI – MIMA World MAP

An Artist's Reflexion



Br. Tony Leon,
Brothers Today Secretariat

When planning the decoration for the Conference Room at Il MIMA, I thought it would be a good idea to have a global map on the large wall to the right of the stage to give interest to this large blank space and to add an international flavour to the room. Some of the preparation team jokingly suggested that I should have the world map upside down. It was a brilliant idea and despite the resistance of some people who thought the joke had gone too far, I thought that it was playfully provocative and it was maybe just what this Assembly needed. After the initial outlines were drawn, there were two types of responses from the viewers: **“That’s wrong!”** and **“That’s different.”**

In retrospect, I realized that this reaction may be applied to more than just the map. The two types of reaction may also apply to any form of new ideas that may occur in this Assembly. The first response, “That’s wrong” implies that the person knows what is right and the latter response suggests the person’s is intrigued and willing to entertain other possible ways and alternative meanings. The irony is that the compass on the map still has the cardinal points in the same orientation as if the map was the ‘other’ way up. True north remains the same but how we see this reality has changed. Our principles remain the same but our practice can change.

The idea of working on brown paper with a limited earthy palette was to create the appearance of an ancient treasure map, which may offer clues and directions where our ‘treasure’ is buried.





The map evolved during the week as it followed the themes of each day. As the days progressed, these themes were written in the four languages across the map as if it was following the trail of an international traveller.

The themes of each day were as follow:

Day One: “Sharing Our Journeys”

The participants came into the Conference Hall confronted with a huge map that has been turned upside down. It was an invitation to approach this coming ten days with a change of perspective. The first small group activity asked each participant to draw on a smaller world map and share with others, the route they had taken from their place of origin to Nairobi. These maps allowed me to transfer the many itineraries of each person onto the larger map, creating lines, which converged into Nairobi.

Day Two: “The Fire that Lights Our Flames”

A solitary flame is drawn on the World Map – in the southern part of France. A horizontal line, a vertical line and two diagonal lines is drawn to the edges of the map from this point, suggesting the Spirit of Champagnat took its spark in the southern mountainous regions of France and in 198 years, this spark has stretched to the ends of the earth, with every dioceses of the world in mind. These straight lines added to the coloured itinerary lines from the previous day.

Day Three: “Brothers and Laity”

On the left side of the map is a chain of links with an inscription engraved on each link. These represents the various groups represented amongst those who identify themselves as Marists: From the very top link, the names are in the following order: Women, Men, Sisters, Brothers, Priests, Non Christians...There are two links without names. These two links are for those people in our world who are not readily accepted by the hierarchical Church but many of them whom we know personally, identify themselves and are accepted as Marists.

At the base of this chain is the Marist cross without the inscription “Petits Frères de Marie”. This plain Marist cross is inclusive of both brothers and lay. There are many groups within the Marist world who are strong in their connection with one another. We need one another to carry the Marist Cross.

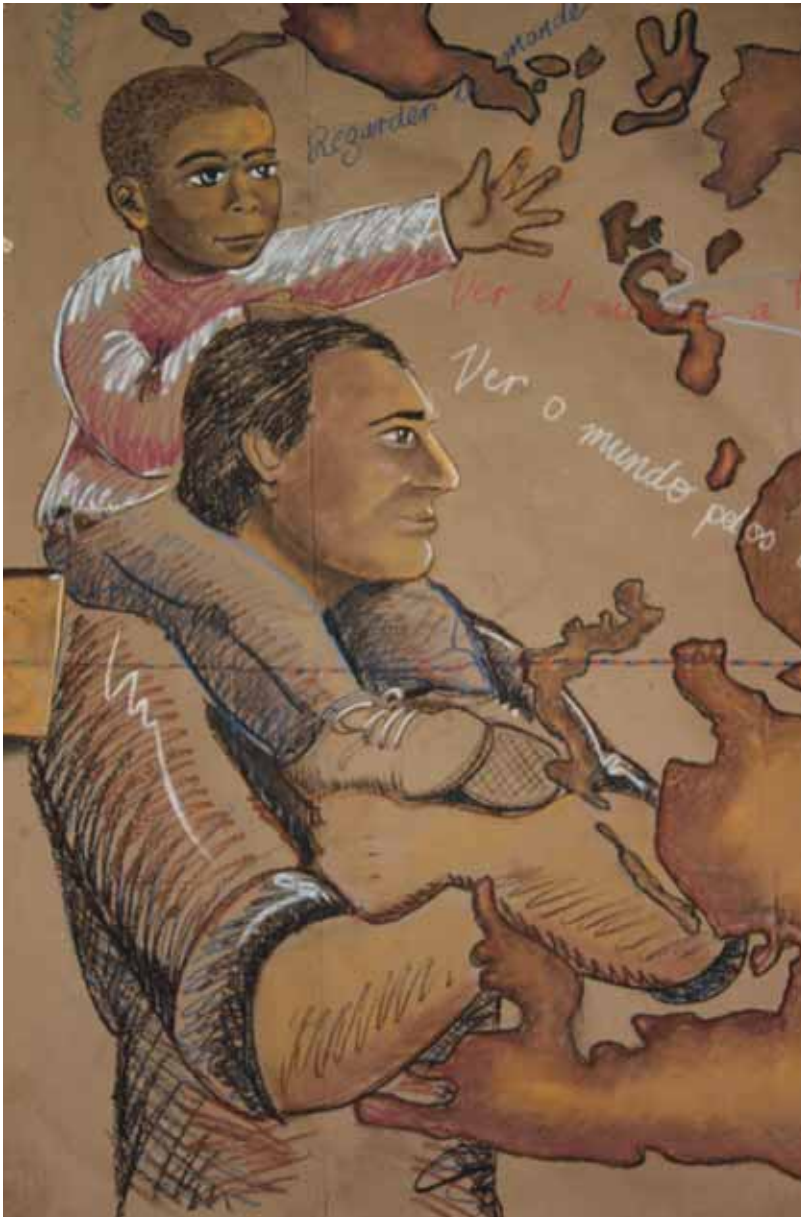
Day Four: Outing

No addition was done on this day.

Day Five: “New Marists in Mission”

This is Mary’s Day. It is the mirror reflection of Mary looking at the world from the top right corner. She carries the child Jesus, however, the treatment of the child Jesus is not complete. One can only see a faint profile of the infant Jesus. This is to assist the viewer to complete the image of the defenseless child with the identities of those infants, children and youths whom they know and who like Jesus, are likely to suffer great injustice and suffering.





Day Six: “Looking at the World through the Eyes of Children & Youths”

On this day, the figure of Mary is balanced with the figure of Marcellin on the bottom left hand corner. Reminiscent of the Deredia sculpture at St Peter’s basilica in Rome, this figure of Marcellin carries a young African boy on his shoulder, raising him to have a better view of the world. The child reaches out to what he can now see.

What was poignant about this addition was the response from one participant who went to the local orphanage as part of the Solidarity Immersion experience. This participant described how his heart was so deeply disturbed by the sight of so many infants left in their playpen, stretching out their little hands for some attention. The participant was compelled to lift the child from his place – an experience reflected in this image of Marcellin.

Both Mary and Marcellin are placed at the peripheries of the global map, seeing with a broader perspective of where the world is at.

Day Seven: “Birth of A New Era for Marist Charism #1”

On this day, nothing was added to the world map. However, under the large screen at the front of the room were 33 little red crosses taped to the base. No explanation was given. Only the shapes of 33 images of what looked like tomb stones.

Day Eight: “Birth of A New Era for Marist Charism #2”

Just as mysteriously as the red crosses appeared at the base of the screen in front of the conference room, they mysteriously disappeared. 29 of these crosses were transferred onto the global map. These 29 red crosses represent the provinces and districts of our Institute (at the moment). These red crosses however, were placed diagonally rather than the usual vertical/horizontal manner. These diagonal crosses now represents the red ‘X’ one can see on a treasure map, marking the place where the treasure lies. The treasure of our Institute is where Marists are with their communities and ministries; the treasure is the people who live and work in such places. The remaining 4 red crosses left at



the base of the screen informs us that the future may not be limited to the number of places we have today. There is still the 'New Lands' to where we are called.

Day Nine: "Lighting Up Our Lives"

Echoing one of the symbols of the Assembly, the fire, a smaller version of the MIMA flame is placed on each of the diagonal crosses which now suggests that the red 'Xs' are now wood for the fire where we gather around as communities of Marists, sharing our stories and prayers. It also hints at the presence of the Holy Spirit at these locations allowing Marists to speak in new tongues/languages.

Day Ten: "Bringing the Dawn to Life"

On this final day of the Assembly, I had the opportunity to share the meanings of the various symbols of the MIMA World Map. I related to the Assembly that I had not signed the work; as I wanted to echo the words of Br Emili Turú at the opening ceremony at MIC. Br Emili informed the Assembly that it was not his place to start this Assembly but it was the privilege & responsibility of participants who bravely came to Nairobi. I suggested that it was not just my place to sign this work as it was not just my creation but the creation of all those assembled. The participants were invited to sign their names on the map and thus taking ownership of what was shared and that we truly travel together to new lands as new Marists in mission.

The MIMA World Map was donated to MIC in appreciation for their outstanding contribution to the Assembly.





VII – *Around the Fire*



1. Be a Marist in Mission!



Jack Stammers,
Australia - Young
delegate from Oceania

Nine months ago I was asked by Brother Jeff Crowe, the Provincial of Australia, to attend the second Marist International Mission Assembly, to be held in Nairobi. I was excited, thankful, honoured but also nervous, apprehensive and challenged. Words cannot accurately describe how I felt at this time. Even though in my heart, I had made my decision, there were some challenging questions resonating in my mind.

What will my family and friends think? Will this experience affect my studies? Is Africa a safe place to travel to? Do I know enough about Marist life and documentation?

Brother Emili Turú and the General Council gave all invited participants time to reflect upon making their decision. This was my process:

I firstly looked to the theme; 'New Marists in Mission'. For me, these words deepened my understanding behind the aims of the assembly. As new Marists in mission, we are all called to be brave, to take risks and journey

with our fellow Marist sisters and brothers. Being Marist is not supposed to be a 'walk in the park'. We are always on call to be in communion with the poor and disadvantaged whilst meeting the needs of the youth through education, social work and ministries in our own places. This assembly is calling Marists together from across our world to experience this. Secondly, I reflected on Marcellin's life and mis-





sion. He was a man who had an immense amount of trust in God and the people around him. I prayed as much as I could leading up to the assembly. This gave me strength and clarity, all of which I lacked prior to being still and present to God's voice. The conversations I had with Marists across Australia also filled me with joy and confidence, that their prayers and thoughts would be with us during the entire assembly.

So, after experiencing all of this, there was no stopping me. We were all off to Africa, the heart-beat of our Marist family. The second Marist International Mission Assembly was waiting for us and ready to welcome over 120 Marists from our International family.

All representatives were welcomed in true Marist-African style; with the beat of the drum, prayer, music and celebration all in communion together. The hospitality from our African Marists was fantastic, as they continually embraced us into their variety of cultures. The Brothers from the Marist International Center (MIC) had a strong presence throughout the Assembly, as they were our musical entertainment, tour guides and volunteers whilst also allowing us an insight into their ministries. I would like to take this time to thank all of our African Marist brothers and sisters for their unconditional presence throughout the entirety of our time spent in Nairobi. So, what did I take away from this assembly?

No matter where we are situated, we are Marist. No matter the colour of our skin, gender or occupation, we are called to be Marist. Every day we are living the mission and vision of Marcellin Champagnat, a man whose heart knew no bounds. If we continue to keep this in mind, there is no stopping us in taking brave risks, to go out to the peripheries, listen and attend to the youth because all of our actions are in communion together.

Being a part of this remarkable event has given me a breath of fresh air and my heart is on fire. I have been truly blessed to hear many stories, a variety of visions and words of encouragement from the participants of the second mission assembly. I now leave you with a collaboration of these quotes that I recorded whilst over in Nairobi:

'Take the risk. Limit the distractions around you. Do good! Make a positive Marist community in your place. Be brave in this world! As cliché' as it sounds, the world needs you! The world needs you to work and journey with the modern day *Montagnes*. Our Marist Charism is a spiritual gift from God. Where is Marcellin calling you to be? Where are you now? Trust yourself, you're a mystic, prophetic and a builder of communion! Do not forget to pray for one another. Allow Mary your good Mother and her Son to guide you with their gentle heart and strong minds. So, say 'yes'. What are you waiting for? Be a Marist in Mission'.



Be brave in this world! As cliché' as it sounds, the world needs you! The world needs you to work and journey with the modern day *Montagnes*. Our Marist Charism is a spiritual gift from God. Where is Marcellin calling you to be? Where are you now? Trust yourself, you're a mystic, prophetic and a builder of communion! Do not forget to pray for one another. Allow Mary your good Mother and her Son to guide you with their gentle heart and strong minds. So, say 'yes'. What are you waiting for? Be a Marist in Mission'.



Br. Victor Preciado,
Mexico - Councillor and
Econome General

2. The Marist World seen from Nairobi

The experience of the International Marist Mission Assembly in Nairobi has left a very eloquent message for those taking part and for those from their provinces who followed the development of its activities, discussions and celebrations.

The first expressions of insecurity and questioning about the choice of location for the Assembly in Nairobi, following security concerns about possible acts of terrorism and the Ebola epidemic of the month before, prompted the Superior General to consult all the participants as to whether the Assembly should continue to be held.

The result today is history and I personally perceive that it has left us various messages:

The recognition and gratitude of the Brothers in Africa for having taken on the challenges and risks of being among them: an international Marist presence

in Africa is possible.

The map which accompanied all the work of the Assembly invited us to re-locate and, specifically, in Africa. Thank you, Br Tony Leon, for presenting us with the challenge of contemplating the

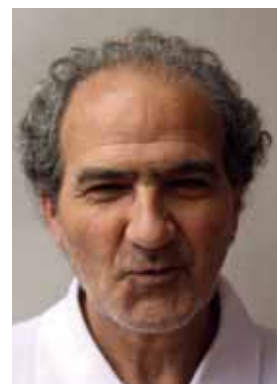


world with other eyes, of moving out of our comfort zones in order to approach a world where insecurity, lack of means to care for the health of the inhabitants and the great need of awareness of children and young people form part of everyday life.

The holding of MIMA II in Nairobi gave us the opportunity of expressing one of our dreams, “that we Marists of Champagnat recognize ourselves as PROPHETS because: We have abandoned our comfort zones and are in a permanent attitude of going out to the edges of our world, driven to proclaim and build the Kingdom of God. We go out resolutely to the encounter of the new Montagnes and are a significant presence among them and with them”.

3. Challenges and Hopes

It was not my first time in Africa, although I cannot say that Africa featured very much in my life. However, the first thing I have to say is that I rediscovered Africa. I had never considered its actual dimensions, seldom pondered its customs, and hardly ever reflected on the specifics of its people. I had heard, and continue to hear frequently, that Africa needs the solidarity of the Northern-hemisphere countries, which we call more developed, because large multinationals and corrupt governments are plundering African people. When you are involved with NGOs, you know that many of them carry out solidarity projects or other works in that continent. If you watch television or read newspapers, either printed or online, you become aware of the atrocities that take place in some African nations.



Br. Manel Mendoza, FMSI
Geneva



When you are in the heart of Africa, dealing with the people who live there, seeing how they struggle to make a living, and becoming aware of the needs they have, you open your eyes to see a reality you do not perceive from the outside or perhaps you were not ready to see. This happens to us very often, because we see so many things, but actually look at very few! In addition, we were surrounded by people who did not come from Africa, but from all over the Marist world, people who shared the same feelings, the same hope in the new Marist projects that are leading the Institute to a New Land, one which perhaps has not been discovered yet; projects challenging us to become more authentic, and move to the “peripheries”, leaving our comfort zone in order to become more aware of the specific needs of people in the world surrounding us; projects that question our own “tranquil” situation and bring about greater solidarity with those whose basic needs are not met or whose rights are violated.

More specifically, from our standpoint we ask the following questions: what should FMSI make of the conclusions of the Second Marist International Mission Assembly? What are the challenges it must deal with? What are the most urgent projects in the light of the II MIMA? What fears should we overcome?

There are undoubtedly some challenges involving an appropriate and – why not? – daring response from FMSI. Others involve more people than those directly working under the aegis of FMSI on



this new path set by the Institute just a few years ago. I believe that FMSI has to give an initial response to all these new tasks the world is demanding from us, and the Spirit is pointing to, so that we can really be prophets. On the other hand, in addition to this initial answer, our obligation is twofold: involving in our work other people who are already sensitized in this regard; and then looking at people who need to be sensitized so

that they can realize how important their involvement and participation is. I believe that, above all, we need to get rid of the old way of thinking which forces us to keep doing what we have done up to now, just because we are sure we do it right, without taking into account that no one is a good judge in his own cause. We need to overcome the fear of leaving the place where we are in order to move to the margins without knowing what we can expect.

The work ahead of us will bring many challenges, not only for FMSI but also for anyone who is in sympathy with Marist sensitivity. We also have many advantages. One of these is knowing that we are in communion with many people who recognize themselves as Marists, for whom Marcellin is a leader, a model of life and faith.



Br. Mario Meuti,
FMSI-Rome

4. I attended both Assemblies: Mendes and Nairobi

Many of the participants had to make the often brave decision to go to Africa for the Marist Mission Assembly. All the talk on television and in the press was: Ebola, contagion, risk of attacks... for me, this was of no importance. I had travelled to various African countries and been a number of times in Nairobi. Africa has been a discovery worth

the trouble of exploring, because it always surprises you, makes you think, fascinates you.

I had experienced the first Assembly, in Brazil in 2007. From the moment Nairobi was chosen as the location of this second Assembly, I simply hoped that Africa would display its own characteristics. And it did! Who would not feel captivated by the sound of the drum, substituting for the bell and calling us to the various activities? Who could remain indifferent to the African music and rhythms? How lovely those songs with their incomprehensible words: *lendembele, Injili oh... Mfanyenishangwe-duniayote...!* As soon as the MIC band struck up its first notes, everyone, I repeat everyone, began to move their feet, their hands, their bodies in a sort of simple, winding dance... and those words, so alien to our Western languages, became familiar. To hear the voices of the fire: African stories, simple and full of wisdom, was to begin the day with something fresh, new, fascinating.

A discovery for all: Africa is alive, interesting, full of life! And so is Marist Africa. In Nairobi the “super



community”: 80 young Marists in formation and 17 formators, the largest and youngest community in the Institute. What a witness for these young men and for all the delegates of this Continent to be able to see the marvelous variety of Marist life existing throughout the world! It was clear proof that the Marist charism, born on the mountains of Pilat, at a difficult time in the history of France, was alive and capable of attracting persons from all the corners of the earth, of every culture... Like the young Pakistani, Matloob, intrigued by these people, all





men, who concerned themselves with the children and the poor of his home city; or like Lucy, looking curiously at these strangers coming to the land of her birth to learn Chinese... and becoming involved in their plans and dreams. Or like other young people present from Argentina to Mexico, from Europe to Australia, who talk about Marcellin with the love and admiration of those who see him as a father, an ideal for life...

During the various moments of reflection, prayer, exchange or simply living together, it was difficult, almost impossible to distinguish between brothers and lay Marists: the same spirit, the same passion for Marist mission. Clearly, it can be argued that, given that two or three people were chosen by each administrative unit, they would not all be on the same level... but this total harmony could not but capture the attention and provoke reflection. At the first Assembly in Mendes we were conscious of the presence of the laity: we talked about the Marist mission, about equality of dignity, as it was then called. Here in Nairobi, when someone had something to say, he or she spoke "with authority", as if expressing a real sense of belonging, a style of life, a Marist vocation. And from all sides, from the Superior General and from the young people, particularly on the day they organized the sessions, came the same incentives, the same invitations: to be more daring, to go out with courage "to a new land", to those "margins both geographical and cultural", requested by Pope Francis.

As was expressed in the final message, here in Nairobi a beginning was made to hold on to the dream of seeing Marists as ever more significant: with a new and more intense interior life, but also recognized not only as good educators, but also as defenders and promoters of the rights of children and adolescents.

5. Tam-tam!

Tam-tam. Tam-tam. Tam-tam. I do not know if drums wake you up or make you fall asleep, but they certainly set the pace of life. Participating in the second Marist International Mission Assembly was a lively experience for me indeed: dreaming about the Marist future, and waking up to listen to reality expressed in different languages, and envisioning a new dawn for our Institute, knowing that I am involved in the process of its birth.

Tam-tam. Tam-tam. Tam-tam. It may sound like a cliché, but this is what I truly experienced: the rhythm of African drums eventually becomes one with your heartbeat. I say this because I experienced it, because the Nairobi Assembly resounded in my ears, filled my eyes with images, flooded me with rhythms, colors, new smells, and touched my heart.

Tam-tam. Tam-tam. Tam-tam. The African context was decisive, with its beauty, music, warmth and contrasts, with its poverty and hope; and above all, with its children and young people, including the 80 young brothers in formation at MIC, the Marist Apostles of tomorrow. Meeting them, chatting with them, sharing some of their dreams, has renewed my Marist spirit and my own vocational dream.

Tam-tam. Tam-tam. Tam-tam. And how can I forget the depth of the Assembly itself, of the participants, and some of the central themes? I would like to point out six of them which have been decisive for me: Internationality, a present-day reality and a call to live Marist Mission in its global and multicultural richness.

The laity, their vocation, their commitment, and the search for new forms of belonging.

The defense of children and their rights, an urgent area to which Marists must dedicate more energy. Our educational and social networks, a great asset of our Institute we should be developing globally.



Br. Óscar Martín Vicario
Provincial of Compostela



Spirituality, and the thirst for fresh and invigorating sources of water in God and within ourselves.

The searching and displacement we must face up to, because the need for new pastoral options cannot wait.

Tam-tam. Tam-tam. Tam-tam. Old and new words, and faces that looked like beating hearts: the group of young people participating, the group of women, the Little Brothers, the teams that quietly got everything ready, the kind Sisters from the house, the party organizers, and the children we visited during the insertion experience. All those faces, with flashing eyes, with lips moving through a

thousand songs, and jumping feet like those of the Maasai! They were living drums indeed, which touched and questioned us.

Tam-tam. Tam-tam. Tam-tam. And, finally, the major paths, the runways of life which slowly became evident. It initially seemed that we were dealing only with mission but, as one of my companions from Compostela said, we eventually started speaking about charisma, identity, and being; about an interwoven future, and life options. I am glad that was the case, so much so that the three pillars of the Assembly's reflection have to do with the heart:

Mysticism (the insistent call to root our life in the Spirit of God, which I wholeheartedly agree with).

Prophecy (a deeper commitment to the evangelization of children, and to being present among the poor).

Communion (a new way of relating among the brothers, and among brothers and lay people, in equality and love).

Tam-tam: some proposals are new, and others are so recurrent that they rhythmically vibrate like drums gathering us together. Tam-tam: some ideas are dreams about the future, and others are well-traveled roads, like drums announcing sunrise and then sunset. Tam-tam: some commitments are firm, and others are sketches, like drums changing rhythm from soloist beating to an ostinato in the background. Tam-Tam, yes, but all dancing together, anticipating the dawn of "a new beginning", and proclaiming the stream of Marist life, which is unstoppable if Champagnat's heart keeps beating in each of us. Tam-tam!

6. *The International Impact of II MIMA Communities for a New Beginning*

Change is necessary for the third century of Marist life and Mission. MIMA was about change. We started the assembly by turning the map of our globe upside down. This was a startling image which challenged us to not continue to do things the same way over and over again, expecting a different result! Globalization can take us by surprise and we can find it overwhelming and even dangerous. The General Council even had to judge the global risks of the Ebola virus before the assembly. Similarly the challenges of climate change, human rights, refugees, terrorism, pandemics, narco-trafficking, human slavery and lost species can make us want to hide.



Br. Chris Wills,
Secretariat
of Collaboration for
Mission International



If we are not to lose vitality, we need to read the signs of the times, before we find the charism that we share situated on the wrong side of history. As we enter the third century of Marist life and mission it is essential that we globalize our solutions so that we don't become the victims of the globalization of problems.

II MIMA responded to the challenge of the upside down map of our globe

Marists are organized in much the same way as we have been for up to 200 years. Like the world, organized into nation states, Marists are organized into AAUUs which, to a large degree, have evolved to have a substantial level of autonomy. In line with the *principle of subsidiarity* this is a good modelexcept when the *principle of the common good* is neglected and the focus is on internal rather than international development. The use of a microscope rather than a telescope. An inward looking approach, compared to an outward gaze towards the horizons of the 'new lands' of heart, soul and place, can sometime result in an AU characterizing itself as an island, existing independently and possibly even competitively. We proved to ourselves that we could move beyond such a narrow vision.



Our MIMA prophets have called us to collaborate and to look outward. In words paraphrasing Papa Francesco, "... go to the periphery" because the action is not to be found at the centre.

To the extent that we don't know each other, we lack the real ability to emphasise with each other. Marists in other provinces, countries and regions, can be like cardboard cut-outs. We lived an experience that demonstrated that this is not us – we are a family. We celebrated the opportunity to sit at table with each other [a/round tables], share a meal, pray together, celebrate, and struggle with each other's language, customs and spiritual outlook. Africa taught us UBUNTU – "I am because we are"



Our MIMA prophets have called us to connect with each other. To share life and mission together in cross-cultural and mixed communities which give witness to the possible.

We continued to challenge the idea that the domestic agenda is incompatible with the international agenda. We learned that there is not one single local custom, practice or norm that cannot be more imaginatively, effectively and rapidly de-



veloped than by treating it from an international mindset, looking at the international context, comparing what others have done and bringing outsiders into the conversation. We beat the drums and danced to the rhythms of Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe and Oceania.

Our MIMA prophets have called us to go to new lands. But also to develop our ministry of hospitality and welcome Marists from other lands; to have vision that is part of a bigger picture.

Change is risky. We are an inherently conservative species because resistance to change has kept us alive and we carry on doing what will not kill us. But in these times of rapid globalization of the upside down map - a great leap of faith is needed:

“With Mary, go in haste, to a new land”.

7. “We need a new tent”



Br. Brendan Geary,
Provincial of West
Central Europe

The Second MIMA was a wonderful experience of brotherhood and sharing. In this short reflection, I would like to share some of the points which made a strong impression on me.

An African Assembly

In his closing remarks Brother Emili mentioned that Africa, which is so often considered to be on the periphery of our world, became the centre of the Marist world for these two weeks. The images of Fire and Drums were woven into the fabric of the Assembly, through music, stories, images, art and symbols. The presence of the young Brothers from Marist International Centre brought youth, life, music, energy, fun and a range of skills to help us in our work. Also, the presence of African Brothers and lay people, with their experience and perspective, reminded us of the need for the charism of Marcellin Champagnat in parts of the world where there are many poor children with

needs in the area of education and welfare.

Youth

This was undoubtedly the most youthful Marist event that I have attended in many years. It was refreshing to meet younger Brothers and, in particular, the eleven young adult lay Marists from various parts of the world. Their presentation regarding how they would like to see Marist mission in the year 2020 was creative, insightful and inspiring. They mentioned the following points: Solidarity with the poor, Joint formation, Mixed communities, Lay volunteers.

These points are consistent with the vision offered to the Institute during the General Conference that was held in September 2013, and they are reflected in the final message of the Assembly.





“We need a new tent”

During his presentation to the Assembly Brother Joe McKee, V. G., outlined the way that our understanding of the relationship between Brothers and lay people has developed in the Institute over the past 50 years. The 2001 General Chapter encouraged us to “widen the space of our tent.” Brother Joe suggested that we need, in fact, a new tent. It became clear to me during the Assembly that our current structures are no longer adequate to express our new understanding of our relationship with lay people, or to support the movement to pass on Marist works to lay people in some parts of the world, or work in communion with lay people in Marist mission and some (mixed) Marist communities. After 50 years of renewal we are being challenged to take even more radical steps to enable the charism of Marcellin Champagnat to inspire people to work in the spirit of Mary into our third century.

Conclusion

I have no doubt that the drums of Nairobi will continue to beat in the Institute as we make our way towards the next General Chapter. The “New Models” project provides a way to explore possible structures to facilitate Marist life and Mission into the future. I hope that the fire of Nairobi will also be with us, to bring light, passion and energy to our work.



8. The Fire for Mission Continues to Burn within our Hearts

The Assembly for me was truly an awe-inspiring, wonderful, holistic and life-giving experience. It was an experience of one’s whole existence in life. The melodious echoes of the African drums and the Creation Story at the beginning of the Assembly rooted each one of us into the African Context, at the grassroots level. The powerful and well prepared morning / evening Prayers accompanied by the sounds of the drums and deeply rooted with different respective cultures and traditions enhanced the unity (one heart one mission) of the whole Assembly. The burning fire reminded each participant of the presence of the Holy Spirit and the great need for each one of us to have a listening heart and to remain open to the Spirit in the Manner of Mary. I felt being empowered while listening to all the different presentations and discovered the importance of the being rather than the doer. The Superior General’s opening remarks at the beginning of the Assembly situated me and prepared me to what was expected at the end of MIMA II. He explained thoroughly the reason why the Assembly was held in Africa. In summary, he said that Africa was not at the center of the whole world where major and many decisions were made, often her people suffered the consequences of those other parts.

We have come to the periphery and not from the center as to discover the reality of the World. We greatly need to understand and see the reality from



Sister Makelita
SMSM, Samoa
(living in Tanzania)



the feet and not from the head, the soil helps us to see where the reality is. We have to take the risk without fear with great openness to the creativity of the Spirit. Magnificat is to look at the world differently like the upside map!!!! We tried to discover all these powerful information within our respective discussions. I was personally empowered and enriched holistically during our wonderful group discussions. I was the only female in the group of seven wonderful dedicated and committed males both Brothers and Lay Marists. Every member of our group discovered the great need

for change of perspective individually, to extend our tents, leave our comfort zones as to receive a new consecrated life which promotes a way towards the center using our feet, perspective of the poor in Mary's Manner. Be new Marists for mission: prophets, mystics and in communion.

I take this golden opportunity on behalf of our Congregational Leader, Sister Georgeanne Marie and her Council to deeply thank for the invitation to participate in the II MIMA. I wish to acknowledge with deepest gratitude the awesome and brilliant work of the organizing team! Thank you sincerely to the translators and all the Brothers who work behind the scenes to enhance the programme. St Marcellin Champagnat has a great family of New Marists in Mission. May the Charism of your institution be ever empowered to respond to the Montagne of today. Last but not the least, I salute the Active participation of the Lay Marists especially the youth. The Institution is greatly blessed through their great work of Evangelization and their commitment to the charism. They brought a difference to the Assembly. May each one of them be ever enriched and empowered to go forth and to make Jesus be known and loved by the children and the youth.

9. Nairobi, a dream with aspects of reality!



Br. Libardo Garzón Duque,
Provincial of Norandina

Taking part in the second International Marist Mission Assembly in Nairobi was a marvellous experience. People, topic and location left a profound mark on the development of this event so special for the Marist world. Truly, "the Spirit has made His fire burn in our hearts and has pushed us to dream of new horizons for a greater vitality of the Marist charism."

Looking back on the Assembly, I become aware of the contribution each of the participants offered, the result of previous personal, local and provincial processes. The dynamic of the small communities was an excellent opportunity for sharing in brotherhood. This experience aroused a deep spirit of communion among us.

For us, to be mystics in today's world fundamentally means to become passionate about giving life to the Kingdom of God proclaimed by Jesus. We cannot avoid a healthy tension between going beyond ourselves in a commitment to the service of others and, a simultaneous withdrawal for the purposes of continuously cultivating that deep interiority which enables us to give meaning

to our life and work. In the same way, being prophetic signs of brotherhood and communion in



the midst of poor children and young people in a fragmented society inspires us to hope that our work will transform society. We will be the leaven in the dough!

The Marist mission, growing ever wider and more complex, is fundamental to the unity of brothers and laity wishing to commit their lives to realizing the dream bequeathed by Saint Marcellin Champagnat: to make Jesus known and loved by the Montagnes of today. This vision of the Institute today inspires and challenges us to give bold responses, responses which are based on personal and institutional vitality.



Finally, the location! Someone said that we think according to where we place our feet. To have gone ahead with this experience in Nairobi, Africa, was the best thing the Institute could have done at this point in its history. Being in this continent, ignored by many, was a true gift from God. We had the opportunity of experiencing the warm welcome of our brothers of Nairobi, sensing how Marist life is springing up and expressing itself in its own African colors. God is blessing this continent with abundant vocations to the consecrated life as brothers. There are signs of life and hope for the whole Institute. Marists continue to be mystics, prophets and sources of unity in their world today.

10. Marvellous companions in life and mission

The second Marist International Mission Assembly is over. Only history will tell if it was an event, a defining moment, or merely another talkfest in rather exotic surrounds! Those of us who were privileged to be there certainly experienced it as an event - for each of us personally and for Marists generally. Holding the event in Africa had special significance. It was a choice that was made to "shake us up" emotionally and spiritually. There was the colour, music and dance, mostly led by 100 young African Brothers! There were the happy smiles and powerful community singing. There were the orphans, kids with AIDS, high school kids from the slums, single mothers with multiple partners whom we visited. There were the newspapers with their daily stories of corruption, ebola and terrorist threats. There could have been resentment and negativity but we saw hope and felt a genuine welcome. Africa was then more than a backdrop. African Marists and African Montagnes spoke to our hearts.

Tony Leon captured this brilliantly in his huge 'upside-down' map with Africa at the centre. Our narrow 'home Province' perspective was challenged as was our time-frame. We did not look back to the first two centuries of the Brothers' Institute but to the first decades of the third century of "New Marists in Mission".

Likewise the presence of significant numbers of women and young Marists impacted on the whole dynamic of the gathering and the vision that emerged. The question in the background all along was "Who will be tomorrow's Marists?". The complementary question is whether we are prepared to be open, serious and determined to build the new relationships that are assumed in the use of the inclu-



Br. Jeff Crowe,
Provincial of Australia



sive term, “Marists”. Also, are we prepared to invest in and provide pathways for our Young Marists? The statement, “Voices of Fire” communicates in words the consensus we reached around the future of the Marist charism. But also the photos on the Marist international website and the voices of Marists from around the world communicate not only the fun we had together but also our enthusiasm and spirit of oneness.

From the outset we were allocated to small groups of reference. I was in a French-speaking group of eight: Emmanuel, a university student from Congo; Donat, married, an experienced teacher also from Congo; Grace, married, principal of a Marist school in Rwanda; Marie, single, a senior teacher from Madagascar; Nikos, married, a classics teacher from Greece, Orthodox; Br Real, animator of a mixed community of Brothers and university students in Canada; Br Antonio, General Councilor from Brazil.

Slowly it dawned on us through the openness and sincerity of our sharing that we were growing into a life-giving community. We were experienc-

ing what was till then, for some of us at least, only an idealistic notion. Of course, much is possible on a short-term basis, but in today’s world the internet provides a way of remaining connected around the world. I am now part of a virtual international community of life! I feel challenged to be part of a similar local community that is real and present.

I could write volumes on the inspiring life-stories of these Marists and others present at II MIMA. I simply want to attest that each one clearly had a spark of Marcellin’s charism. As Joe McKee, Vicar General,



mentioned, the centre of Marist life and mission is not the Institute of the Marist Brothers but the charism of Marcellin. The particular group of 120 Marists who actually gathered in Nairobi could easily have been replaced many times over by others with equal Marist credentials and commitment. What marvellous companions in life and mission we have! What a wonderful time to be Marist!



VIII – *Voices of the Fire*

Final Message from the II Marist International Mission Assembly



Preamble

Around 150 thousand years ago in this African land, through the action of God, the first humans came into being; in the course of history, they grew and multiplied, moved out and reached new lands. They journeyed through valleys, deserts, mountains and oceans. A diversified humankind slowly emerged and came to inhabit all regions of the planet.

The Creator Spirit decided, 150 thousand years later, that some of them would return to this African land for a new beginning, and summoned us, the Marists of Marcellin Champagnat, to celebrate the *II Marist International Mission Assembly* in Nairobi, Kenya. The Spirit brought us together in the diversity of our vocations (lay men and women, sisters and brothers), languages, nationalities and cultures, ages and background. With joy and hope, we have witnessed the youth and vitality of those who embody the Marist charism in Africa. We were inspired and encouraged by their desire to respond meaningfully to the challenges expressed in the faces of the children of this beautiful and welcoming continent. To be able to celebrate the Assembly on African soil has been particularly significant, especially now that the continent is undergoing such a hard crisis, and invites us to shape our life and mission starting from a new point of departure.

We have experienced the centrality of Jesus Christ in our lives, and have felt how he is sending us out as missionaries and evangelisers. We have welcomed Mary's invitation: "*Do whatever he tells you*" (Jn 2:5). Walking with her, we have heeded God calling us in the depth of our hearts with an





invitation to respond as she did, to proclaim wholeheartedly the prophetic words of her Magnificat. As Mary, we want to develop a disposition of openness to the new situations emerging in our ever-evolving world.

Like a new Pentecost, the Spirit set our hearts on fire, and prompted us to dream of new horizons of greater vitality for the Marist charism, prompting us to dance to the rhythm of drums, and directing our steps towards the *Montagne* of our day. In a context of paradigm-shift and global change, we have strongly felt the need to have a new perspective, to see through the eyes of poor children, and with the tenderness and mercy of God. The Spirit has also sparked an attitude of deep communion among us, reflected in two African proverbs: *"If you want to go fast, walk alone; if you want to go far, walk together"*. *"I am because we are"* (UBUNTU).

us in the messages and



The closeness that came to prayers of so many people from our places of origin, who walked with us during these days, affirmed that this spirit of communion was across the Marist world.

In communion with our local Churches and the universal Church, the words of Pope Francis resonated in our hearts in a special way during the Assembly: *"Each Christian and every community must discern the path that the Lord points out, but all*

of us are asked to obey his call to move out from our own comfort zones in order to reach all the peripheries in need of the light of the Gospel" (EG 20).

"I hope that all communities will devote the necessary effort to advance along the path of a pastoral and missionary conversion which cannot leave things as they presently are. Throughout the world, let us be permanently in a state of mission" (EG 25).

On the threshold of the bicentenary Marist Institute, we have started to write a new story together, one in which our being prophets and mystics in a spirit of communion will become the characteristics by which we recognise ourselves as Marists of St Marcellin Champagnat, and so also we are recognised by others. Following on from the *First Marist International Mission Assembly in Mendes* (Brazil), we were called to be *New Marists in Mission*, and so we have explored new expressions of the Marist charism that beckon from the horizon of our third century.



marists 2017
a new beginning





Dreams

Our dream is that people will recognise that we Marists of Champagnat are MYSTICS because:

- we are Spirit-filled evangelisers who have been transfigured by God;
- we are prayerful people gathering in prayerful communities, revealing God's face as we grow in humanness;
- we set aside quality time and space to deepen our sense of *who we are*, so as to give meaning to *what we do*;
- we accompany people in their inner lives, in their spirituality and in their prayer, and involve ourselves in processes that foster this;
- we make visible the Marian face of the Church.



Our dream is that people will recognise that we Marists of Champagnat are PROPHETS because:

- we have moved out of our comfort zones, and are ready to go to the peripheries of our world, impelled to proclaim and build the reign of God;
- we are purposefully reaching out to the *Montagne* of our day, to be a significant presence among and with them;
- we give public voice to the promotion and defence of the rights of children and young people, in the social and political forums where decisions are considered and taken;
- we have a global missionary mindset, seeking new ways of being present on the periphery, both nationally and internationally;
- with courage and determination, we are opting for our educational works (schools, universities, social centres, etc.) to be platforms of evangelisation, and to promote an education that is inclusive, committed, compassionate, and transformative;
- we are accompanying people in Marist Youth Ministry programmes to ensure that they and their programmes are forming prophets and evangelisers for our time.

Our dream is that people will recognise that we Marists of Champagnat are men and women who live in COMMUNION because:

- we have responded to the call from Jesus to live the Gospel in the manner of Mary;
- we are a charismatic family with new and diverse expressions of community;
- we are implementing processes and structures to accompany our different ways of responding to this call to be Marist, leading to new ways of associating and belonging within the Marist charism;
- we are creating new structures that promote genuine participation and co-responsibility in decision-making;
- there are international, intercultural, and intercongregational community networks in place, marked by a missionary and responsive spirit.





Challenges

To ensure our continued relevance in the decades ahead, we name the some **challenges** and pose some key **questions** to which we invite you to respond at local, provincial, regional, and international levels:

– To generate strategies that promote and accompany the vocational journeys of all Marists, personally and communally:

How do we envision the Marist vocation? What forms and styles of community express vitality in these calls to be Marist? What new elements should we include in our Marist communities in order to achieve greater vitality? What kind of accompaniment processes would be necessary? How can we enhance a spirit of communion among us?

– To cultivate the contemplative and inner dimensions of our lives for sustaining and nourishing both life and mission:



What kind of relationship are we living with the God revealed by Jesus of Nazareth? How are we revealing God to others at personal, community and institutional levels? Which traits of Mary are we called to embody today? How can we become Spirit-filled evangelisers? What paths must we follow in order to deepen our contemplative and inner lives? How can we develop an environmentally-aware spirituality that is connected to the Earth?

– To imagine new structures that will be required for enhancing vitality in the Marist charism:

What should we change in order to give birth to a new beginning? What strategies, processes or structures could promote rela-

tionships based on communion? What kind of structures do we need in order to accompany Marist life and mission and ensure greater closeness to children and young people? What would be the structural implications of functioning as an International Institute? How can we develop structures that foster continuing missionary availability?

– To overcome any fears and resistances for moving to the peripheries and promoting the rights of children and young people:

How could we go in haste to the peripheries of poverty and exclusion to be with the young Montagne of today? How could we help people to understand that getting to know Jesus Christ and his Gospel is a right for children and young people? How could our educational works be spaces that guarantee the rights of children and young people? What plans and projects should be our priority in order to engage in social transformation? How could we defend the rights of children in social and political forums?

– To promote “inter” processes (international - intercultural - intercongregational - interecclesial), which can strengthen the Marist mission in new lands.

How could we foster ongoing missionary availability? What could we do to envision diversity as an opportunity to grow? How could we enrich each other at all these levels? What networks could we organize to be at the service of these “inter” processes?



Opportunities

With hope and joy, we have also identified the following as **opportunities** that will allow us to generate greater vitality for the Marist charism and mission:

- the thousands of children and young people for whom we are caring of as part of our mission;
- all the people already involved in Marist life and mission;
- the relevance and attractiveness of our Marist charism, which is an expression of ecclesial life for our time;
- the processes that accompany and develop new Marist vocations;



- the new forms of expression of the charism of St Marcellin Champagnat, especially among the lay Marists;
- the thirst for spirituality, and the search for meaning that is present in our world;
- the perspective that women bring to the Marist charism, integrating into our lives the Marian attitudes of tenacity, maternal tenderness, sensitivity towards those who are “the smallest”, attention to detail, and intuition;
- the strength and sensitivity of young people in our Marist Youth Ministry programmes, showing us potential for change and the face of the evangelisers of the future;
- the capacity of our works and Marist schools in the five continents with all their history and accumulated experience – the significance and relevance of the Marist educational and evangelising tradition;
- the commitment of many Marists who are already working with children and young people in situations of vulnerability and exclusion;
- the support and resources already in place at local, provincial, and international levels;



- the agencies and networks of solidarity and volunteering within the Institute that are responding to the *Montagne* of today, who are the reason for our mission;
- new technologies and social networks.

Conclusion

With a deep sense of gratitude, we thank God for granting us this experience of encounter and communion during the *II Marist International Mission Assembly*. Mary has been a companion along the way and has guided our steps. As we move forward, we hope our lives and witness will be *“like flames that ignite life so fiercely that you cannot stare at them without blinking, nor approach them without catching fire”* (Eduardo Galeano).

How wonderful is the path that lies ahead of us!
Your brothers and sisters, New Marists in Mission,



Nairobi - Kenya - Africa, on September 27, 2014





Mass at the MIC



General Council



Closing Mass



Arco Norte



Africa



Asia



Cono Sul and Brazil



Oceania



Europe

