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New provincials in Rome

Periodically the Brothers of the General Council organize a meeting with the Brother Provincials who are taking up their first mandate, to share with them the different aspects of the Institute and the processes of government. With this in mind a gathering took place in Rome, from the 21st to the 28th June 2008, attended by the Brother Provincials Sunanda Alwis (South Asia), Manuel de León (East Asia), Thomas Randrianantenaina (Madagascar), Hipólito Pérez Gómez (Central America), Antonio Peralta (Santa María de los Andes).

During their stay in Rome, the Brother Provincials have been in contact with those responsible for the various services of the General Administration to learn how these are operated. BIS demonstrated the procedures and methods of working in the field of solidarity, highlighting the initiative of being present in Geneva to promote children's rights. Brother Pau Fornells instructed the new Brother Provincials in the panoramic work being developed by the Bureau of the Laity.

The Commission of Religious Life, on the other hand, presented them with the perspectives of initial formation, spirituality and community life and some achievements of the Year of Spirituality. Brother Juan Miguel Anaya, Procurator General before the Holy See, spoke to them about the indispensable canonical principles for a Provincial, the necessary procedures to be carried out for the admission to the temporary vows, the perpetual vows or those of stability and the canonical solutions for special situations.

Jean Ronzon, Brother Secretary General, shared with the new Brother Provincials the procedures to be followed by the secretaries of each province or district in carrying out the administrative tasks, the filing of



documents, etc. The implications of the "Ad gentes Project" for the Institute and the long term perspectives that this presents were also a reflection shared with the new Provincials. Then the Mission Commission shared with the new team of Brother Provincials the work being done by the Commission to energize administration and mission.

The Commission for the evangelical use of goods highlighted the philosophy of the General Administration mainly in relationship to this topic and the scope of the recently created Bureau for the evangelical use of goods. This information was supplemented by the Econome General's contributions with regard to the finances of the Institute. Brother Ernesto Sánchez shared, in his turn, the work that his bureau carries out for the promotion of vocations. The Director of Communications informed the new Brother Provincials of the publications written on paper or in digital format that they send to all the houses of the Institute, considering the number of editions and their costs. Brother Giovanni Bigotto explained everything concerning the promotion of the causes of the saints.

Brother Seán Sammon, Superior General, reflected with the new Brother Provincials on the pastoral attention that a Brother Provincial or a District Superior must offer to his Brothers.



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The first re-evangelisation among the Bara

Testimony of Brother Tiana, a Marist from Madagascar



My first adventure among the Bara, called "santatra" or "beginning", began in 1966, with the young people in the upper classes of San Pedro Chanel school in Ihosy.

At the request of Father Giovanni Colombi and after much consideration, we went to Bevaho, a village on the plateau of Horombe, to stay for a week. It was a very difficult period since nobody was interested in us, except the children who wanted to learn some songs.

We looked on from a distance. The peasants showed themselves to be very distrustful and questions were asked of the "elders" of their village. I believe Father Colombi thought that the Bara would accept everything he said, but in spite of his presentation and his efforts, the opposite happened.

After a week spent in the rain and the cold, and with the fleas that did not allow us to sleep, we decided to leave, but a little flame of hope flickered. The peasants offered us a small shack and they invited us to stay a little bit longer. And from that moment they began to ask us why we lived in the shack, when

it was so cold. That was when the dialogue began.

They told us: "Father Colombi invites us to pray, but that doesn't interest us; it is for the white men, we don't need it for anything. What we want is for our children to go to school; then, we shall see". Starting from this moment there began for me a period of waiting and of approaching people, of beginning to know each other better: a continuous presence, to be with them, listening to what happens; seeing if there are spiritual signs in their customs

I learned many things about this virtue. The Bara explored me, they made me live, they made me doubt and they also put me on approval... so that I learned how to have patience. It makes me feel happy; now I know that God is the source of all patience, since He is shown patience with our rhythm of life, with our way of working, and, especially, he does not get tired of waiting for us.

Starting from this verification, I tried calmly to look, to listen, to receive, to participate... what helped me most was sharing life with them: food, happiness, suffering, the rhythm of the seasons and diverse traditional practices. In fact, they believe that nature is a gift of God. They also believe in the "razana" (ancestors close to God) who know very well what happens to their children and grandchildren, and that they can intercede for the living.

Patience carries an implicit notion of time. There is never any need to be in a hurry, especially dialogue, in prayer, in intercession, where each one expresses his deepest feelings, through petitions to the Creative God, whether of gratitude or the expression of personal suffering.

It is necessary to listen to everything around you: illness, death, sick animals, the joy of having a child, the joy of making money. This time of sharing helps me to admit deep within me my lowliness in the face of all that happens; I give thanks to God for the time spent with them.

What a joy to share everything with them! A key word for me is always "to be there" as much in times of happiness as in suffering, in the same way that God is always present, even when we do not feel it. Several times, in face of the suffering, I was tempted to rebel and to ask God if he was there: a boy's death, women who die giving birth, illnesses, natural disasters. Facing these things, I should be strong, but sometimes I lose heart; that is life. This "being with people" helped me a lot, then, to understand and to make a comparison with JESUS, source of all life, starting from their religious practices, like the sacrifices, for example.

In fact, my approach to these people was gradual, beginning with my love for them. Starting from there, they taught me to be patient like Jesus. I think that they also have a lot of patience with me and they accept me when I attend and participate in the events of their life, like the meals that are the source and symbol of one single life.

This love compels me to die to what I am and to what I feel, as well as to my prejudices, to be reborn and to grow with them. To have these diverse experiences and to be with them has made it really possible to reveal to them the existence of Jesus Christ, this formidable person.

But all of this was only possible after a number of years, since it was necessary to create mutual trust.



Calendar of the Superior General and his Council

July – December 2008

Meetings in Rome

- July 21 – 26:** General Chapter Preparatory Commission
- August 3 – 10:** Committee to Revise Chapter 4 of the Constitutions
- December 1 – 6:** General Chapter Preparatory Commission
- December 8 – 13:** Hermitage Community
- December 9 – 13:** Commission to Write Document: Marist Brothers' Youth Ministry
- December 15:** Plenary Session of the Council begins.

Visits to be made by the Superior General

- July 10 – 13:** Marist Brothers' Youth Festival, Sydney
- July 27 – August 4:** Madagascar
- September 10 – 25: West Central Europe

Councillors' visits

- September 3 – October 21:** Central Mexico and West Mexico, Antonio Ramalho and Pedro Herreros
- September 22 – 29:** Argelia, Peter Rodney and Emili Turú
- October 2 – 7:** Hungary, Peter Rodney and Emili Turú

Enlarged General Council

- October 25 - 26:** Preparation
- October 27 – 31:** Brazil and Cono Sur in Mar del Plata
- November 3 - 4:** Preparation
- November 5 – 9:** Arco Norte in Guadalaraja, Mexico.



Marist Brothers' Spirituality Year

Scholastics offer their reflections

Colombia

When we met together with him, Brother Teófilo Minga, presented the leading ideas of the Marist Brothers' Spirituality Year. His presentations were drawn from the booklet, *Water from the Rock*. Brother Teófilo's purpose was to lead us in reflecting upon our spirituality as it is lived out across the Marist Brothers' world. Both Brothers and lay people are committing themselves to such a spirituality and are experiencing in their lives a feeling of communion with the Institute. Such has been true especially this year. The twelve months of the Spirituality Year ought to be precisely the occasion for the Marist Brothers' "family" to find one another in the dimensions of communion and of spirituality.

Brother Teófilo is also insistent that our spirituality has value for the young people and the children to whom we are sent. It is a spirituality which ought to be vibrant in every place in which our apostolic work is exercised, in our communities. We are to make real the words which Jesus spoke to the disciples of Emmaus, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he spoke to us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?" (Luke 24:32)

Brother Teófilo emphatically stressed the pedagogical value of symbols. He told us how the five symbols of *Water from the Rock*, Source of life, are enriching the prayer and the retreats of many communities in different Provinces. This was a surprise to us, being the first time we heard such a comment. The symbols found in *Water from the Rock* help us deepen our spirituality, because they draw their power



from the Gospel; they express that which Jesus wishes to receive from us.

The ROCK, an invitation to be solidly founded upon the Lord's love. WATER, symbol of life which quenches the thirst of those in need. The WAY, an invitation to be like Jesus, who has become the way, the truth and the life. The TABLE, which brings to mind not merely the gift of the Eucharist, but also our LaValla origins. FIRE, the dynamism for apostolate so vividly seen at Pentecost. a dynamism which marks the beginning of the Church and which, over the course of Church history, has enflamed the hearts of so many apostles, Champagnat among them.

To the five symbols, both Marist and biblical, one might add the statue of Marcellin showing him with a child upon his shoulders (the photo appears in the last part of the booklet): an invitation to look beyond our "little" horizons, to carry our spirituality beyond the Marist Brother frontier and into the Church and the world. The presence of the child acts as a challenge urging us to look "beyond," to discover new horizons for future generations.



A second numerous group of martyrs moves towards Beatification

About our Martyrs

General House

Back on October 28, 2007, we all had a happy and satisfying moment when forty seven of our Brothers were beatified in Rome. Because of the exuberance of that joyful occasion and its festivities we have forgotten to give proper attention and gratitude to one person who did so much on behalf of our martyrs. That is Bishop José Luis Gutierrez, who is the "relator" of our causes at the Vatican. As relator his task was to read, correct and constantly guide the work of Brother Gabriele Andreucci, the then Postulator. The Bishop's task entailed the proofreading of thousands of pages.

In addition, he was the one who composed the preface to the various « positio » which Brother Gabriele had written for Brother Bernardo, Brother Laurentino, and the Crisanto group. At the present time Bishop Gutierrez has begun to reread the "positio" pertaining to Brother Eusebio's group. The Bishop is bringing to completion an immense work on behalf of our causes. To him we express our deepest thanks. We may add that Bishop Gutierrez is a former student of the Marist Brothers of Spain for whom he holds a special affection.

The relator is a member of the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints. The relator guides and supports the work done by postulators, guaranteeing the validity of the word before other

members of the Congregation. Given that causes come in from all over the globe, the Congregation provides itself with relators in different language: English, German, French, Spanish, Italian, Polish. The Congregation for the Causes of the Saints has become ever more international, as has the Vatican itself.

On March 14th of this year, the postulators who are promoting beatification on behalf



of Spanish martyrs decided to get started on the beatification cause of another group of martyrs, many in number. We have split the group into thirty-four causes, counting 531 martyrs all together. Among these causes are found our own Marist Brothers, represented by Brother Crisanto's group, comprising sixty Brothers and two laymen. All the same, one must

be well supplied, in this work, with patience of the Rome variety. We will not reach the point of beatification before seven or eight years have passed, that is until around the year 2015. Time, however, passes quickly, especially when one is of mature age.

We are in the last phase of the cause of Brother Eusebio and fifty eight other Brothers, the last group of Marist Brother martyrs in Spain. The cause

1-1909: Brother Lycarion, Swiss, killed in Barcelona. The studies connected with this cause have been completed and the positio written. Brother Lycarion will become part of Brother Eusebio's group.

2-1934: Brother Bernardo was executed in Barruelo. He was beatified on October 28, 2007.

3-1936: Brothers Laurentino, Virgilio and their forty four companions were executed by fire arms in Barcelona. They were beatified on October 28, 2007, along with Brother Bernardo.

4-1936-1939: Brother Crisanto, sixty five Brothers and two laymen were murdered in various municipalities of Spain. Their cause will be joined to the next group to be beatified.

5-1936-1939: Brother Eusebio and fifty eight other Brothers, murdered in various parts of Spain. The preparatory studies for their cause have not yet been completed.

Our religious family also has other martyrs linked to Oceania or Asia, African or the Americas... All these Brothers convey a message to us: that our type of Marist life leads to faithfulness to the Lord ; our kind of life is a road to holiness upon which young people and adults come together because of God's love.

Brother Giovanni Bigotto 