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Mission Ad Gentes

Third group at the Community in Chicago

United States

Mid-July saw the arrival of the third Ad Gentes group at the Monastery Community in Chicago. Brother Jose Contreras, director of the Ad Gentes group and Brother Kevin Moran, director of the Monastery community joined in welcoming the ten brothers from Spain, Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, and Italy. In addition to the Monastery community the Beverly and Blue Island communities have hosted the Ad Gentes brothers and look forward continued sharing throughout their stay in Chicago.



On August 15 the Chicago area communities gathered to celebrate the Feast of the Assumption. At that gathering Brother Luis Sobrado, Vicar Gen-

eral, thanked Brother Kevin and the Monastery community for welcoming all the Ad Gentes groups to Chicago. He also thanked Brother Rick Carey for coordinating the Ad Gentes Brothers' involvement in the life of Marist High School.



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Marist Brother's Institute

General House - Rome

At 9:00 AM on Tuesday, September 8th, 2009, members of our 21st General Chapter will gather at the General House in Rome to begin their work. This starting date, the feast of the birth of Mary, and location were fixed by members of the present General Council

Our 21st General Chapter has as its theme, New hearts for a new world. In choosing it, members of the Preparatory Commission hoped at the very least to make Ezekiel's message their own: a change of heart on the part of each and all of us is essential if we are ever to achieve the new beginning for which we so long.

*Circular Convoking the 21st General Chapter
 Br. Séan Sammon, Superior general*

III Congress of Marist Education

Marist teachers and students together to reflect on education

Porto Alegre - Brazil

From 15 to 18 July, Porto Alegre served as the venue for reflections, discussions, dialogues and meetings for the Marists of Brazil. The 3rd National Congress of Marist Education and the 1st National Congress of Marist Students surpassed expectations and transformed the Papal Catholic University of RS (PUCRS) into one great classroom for discussions and perspectives on the function of teachers and students in the XXI century.

The opening ceremony involved 2600 participants who illustrated the diversity and the wealth of exchanges and the coming together of people who have a shared Marist way of life. Brother Antonio Ramalho represented the Superior General, Brother Seán Sammon. In his speech, the president of Umbrasil, Brother Manoel Alves, highlighted two factors which characterized this particular congress: "Firstly, the fact that this is the first meeting promoted by the Marist Union of Brazil, Umbrasil. Founded in 2005, Umbrasil consolidates in an emphatic and innovative way the bases of Marist inter-provincialism in Brazil. The second element is the establishment of the 1st National Congress of Marist Students.

The second day of the congress began with a conference given by a teacher and researcher of the university of Geneva and adviser to UNESCO, Abdeljalil Akkari, on the topic "The teaching profession in the knowledge society: a profession and a mission". In a synthetic way, the researcher concluded by saying that the mission of educating has as its essence three verbs: to humanize, to socialize and to single out. "To humanize and to socialize so that the student knows how to live with and relate to others and, at the same time, to be singled out, so that he can

be himself and be different where he lives". Following this, a dialogue took place between Professor Dr. Elisabeth Rochadel Torresini (PUCRS) and Professor Dr. Ana María Eyng (PUCPR), moderated by Professor Dr. Ricardo Tescarolo, also from PUCRS. During the afternoon 15 thematic conferences were carried out on emergent and significant topics relating to the nature of the knowledge society.

On the third day we heard from Professor Dr. Consuelo Vélaz of Medrano, president of the Commission of Specialists for the formation of teachers of the Organization of the Ibero-American States (OEI). Her conference dealt with five main points: knowledge, economy and the knowledge society, the task of educating in that society, basic competences and implications for education.



Knowledge, according to her, is "never anonymous; that is where the difference resides between relationship and knowledge. It is the result of a complex process carried out by the person who, through relationship, reconstructs the knowledge. Then, knowledge is a human work, and therefore it has a soul, beliefs, prejudices and theories." The topic was studied in depth through a dialogue between the researchers, Professor Dr. Juremir Machado da Silva (PUCRS) and Professor Dr. Mário Sanchez (PUCRS), moderated by Professor

Dr. María Waleska Cruz (PUCRS).

In the afternoon, the professor of the University of São Paulo (USP) Nilson José Machado was the third lecturer. He dealt with the topic The praxis of transformation and the knowledge society. With regard to the teacher's mission, Nilson highlighted four basic points. The educator is a mediator of conflicts and he needs to shorten the distance between what is looked for by the school and what the students want, with the intention of bringing closer the interests of both. Also during the afternoon, the Marist educators and students participated in the Forum of Experiences, an exhibition of significant projects in the educational environment. In total there were 19 experiences provided by the Marist Union of Brazil (Umbrasil), the Marist Provinces (Centro-Sul, Centro-Norte and Rio Grande do Sul), the District of Amazonia, particular institutions, municipal networks, state networks and NGOs

In parallel with the 3rd National Congress of Marist Education the 1st Congress of Marist Students took place, concerning the contribution of young people and their role in relation to the school and education. The students took part in the conferences and in the exhibition of experiences; on the last day of the congress they presented a summary of what they had discussed in the three previous days. The presentation of the students was a mixture of expressions, through which they attempted to respond to important questions: "What do we, the young people, think? What do we want? What do we do? What should we do?" The answer to those questions culminated with an open Letter to the educational community that was read by the young during the presentation.



Letter of Brother Hilario Schwab

Dhaka, Bangladesh

Here are some extracts from the letter of Br Hilario, sent to his Provincial, Br Demetrio, of the Cruz del Sur Province. From Bangladesh, Br Hilario tells us of his life and that of the brothers engaged in Mission Ad Gentes (MAG) in the various countries of Asia.

"We are still studying the language even if we have a little time left over from the course to make contact with the people and to be able to practise a little what we have learnt in the books. The Archbishop has already suggested several places to us. We have already made a first sortie; next week we will make the second. I spent two weeks with the Solomon Islands brother in a parish on Nagori, which is some forty kilometres from Dhaka. In the mornings, we used to go to a school of about 1,400 girls run by the Sisters and we spent the morning in the classes. In the afternoon, several young people, at the request of the parish priest, would take us into the country to visit families living in the middle of the forest. We had a little talk with each one. We visited a good twenty families. We are discovering many things new for us, especially concerning the family structure. The houses are composed, generally, of four separate parts, arranged in a square, with a sort of central courtyard where a number of animals wander: ducks, fowls, little goats, and some cows (=Goru). The parents live in one part; the married sons with their wives in the s e c o n d ;



the married daughters occupy another part with their husbands; the sons' children live together;



the kitchen and dining room occupy another block. That is where all do their cooking and eat from the same pot. It is a matter of a long cultural tradition which, in certain cases, is losing momentum. If there are three spouses and one of them has no work, he eats with the others... but not without a certain tension. You observe also the face of human and silent suffering. In one house, I met a grandmother of 87, bedridden and afflicted by very advanced diabetes. Champagnat would qualify her as the 'pillar' of that family... I have tried very hard to say something to those people. Another grandmother was afflicted with hemiplegia for some time... She asked me to pray for her and held out her right hand to me. I took it and prayed aloud the Our Father in Bengali... I don't know... but I had the impression that someone had come into that house...

When you step into the house, what you see first is a wall covered with religious images and family pictures. I would say that they resemble chapels. The faith of the people is very visible; they don't talk about it; that is why it is credible. We found one family together; they were seated on a mat, in the process of praying with the Scriptures; we left with the intention of returning another day. The first day we took part in family prayer. These are the milieus which provide not a few re-

ligious and priestly vocations. The Holy Cross Brothers have 35 postulants. We have begun very cautiously. We are accompanying four or five young men from Khulma, which entails travelling or making use of e-mail... The archdiocesan seminary accommodates more than 100 seminarians.

Next week, accompanied by another brother, I will go the St Gregory School of the Holy Cross Brothers. They are quite strong here, seeing that they have been here for 150 years. The school counts about 2000 pupils. We will try to practise the language. A little difficulty arises from the fact that the people you meet in the streets do not speak exactly the language of the books or do not pronounce it the same way. But as I have already said elsewhere, we are making progress, so well that we say the marial prayer in Bengali. With the people we speak 'Banglish' (Bengali+English). The effort that it requires is great and sometimes exhausting... As well, there is the matter of the house. We are still living in leased houses, but for the end of the year, we would like to be together all seven in the same house. That will depend on the type and the place of the mission that we wish to carry out."

H. Hilario Schwab
23 de Agosto 2008



FMS Internazionale

A new foundation for the benefit of children

General House

BIS has gone through a transformation. What was an office of the General Administration has become a recognized juridical body listed, as of April 30, 2008, in the Italian civil register as *La Fondazione Marista per la Solidarietà Internazionale*, ONLUS.

The statutes of the foundation were notarized on 24 October 2007. In February the foundation received notification that it was recognized by the Agenzia delle Entrate as an ONLUS meaning, a "not-for-profit organization with a specific social purpose."

Taking its inspiration from the charm and mission of the Marist Brothers, the mission of the foundation is stated as follows:

The mission of the Fondazione Marista per la Solidarietà Internazionale is to promote innovative thinking and practical initiatives for the benefit of children, especially those considered most vulnerable and neglected.

FMSI works to establish a better world for children where their rights are respected and protected, where they can grow and mature in safe and healthy environments, free from violence and fear, and where their future is bright and rich with opportunity.

The Superior General, Vicar-General and the members of the General Council make up the board of administrators of the foundation along with the director of BIS serving as its president.

Following in the tradition of BIS, the Foundation works to accomplish its mission in the following ways:

- Educating, Training and Animating for justice, peace and solidarity



FMSI

in regard to children, children's issues and child rights,

- Advocating for child rights before the United Nations human rights mechanisms in Geneva along side other like minded organizations and UN agencies

- Micro- project funding and macro-project coordination which benefit children and young people. Projects include school constructions, securing educational equipment and materials, child welfare service programs and centers, child rights, food and health programs, and

- Joining partnerships, networks, and coalition-building with other child rights serving agencies which work to make the world a safer place in which children and young people can grow and realize their full potential.

Two reasons went into the decision to transform the Bureau of International Solidarity into a foundation with its own legal recognition.

First, we need to establish a legal entity if we wanted to advance our advocacy efforts for children and young people in Geneva. Now that we have our final recognition from the Italian government, we can begin the two-

year long application process that will yield our "special consultative status" with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the UN. This recognition will put us on an equal footing with other human rights NGOs operating in Geneva. It will also help us to work more closely with other like-minded NGOs such as Bureau international Catholique de l'enfance (BICE) and the NGO Working Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The second reason that moved us to form a Foundation was the need to seek new sources of funding for our projects and programs in the public sector. As an independent body with universally accepted procedures of transparency and accountability, we can work with other Italian NGO, and regional and national governmental programs to seek grants for many of our educational and child social development projects in the developing world. In September we will begin a direct mail campaign throughout Italy to raise funds from the general public who may interested in supporting the work of the Foundation.

The XXth General Chapter said they were looking for "new forms of mission and new situations." In becoming a Foundation, BIS is doing just that.

