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Meeting of the General Council with the Youth of Brazil and 'Cono Sur'

Argentina

In the city of Luján, next to the sanctuary of the Patroness of Argentina, a meeting was held of young people from Brazil and Cono Sur with Brother Seán Sammon, Superior General and his Council. This meeting is happening prior to the extended General Council meeting that will bring together the General Council with the Provincial Councils of both Marist regions. The Marist regions are functioning groups of provinces whose countries have similar characteristics that permit them to apply principles of common governing.

On this occasion, Brother Seán and his Council have set out to listen to the young people from the region of Cono Sur, made up of the Provinces of Cruz del Sur, Santa María de los Andes and the District of Paraguay as well as the region of Brazil consisting of the three Brazilian Provinces and the District of Amazonia, with the idea of reflecting and sharing on the reality of young people in these regions of the Marist world and their Christian commitment in face of the challenges that they find in their own countries as well as on the Marist vocation of brothers and laity who share the same mission. To accomplish this they have brought together some fifty young people from the ages of 18 to 30 to live with them from the 20th to the 24th of October 2008. The meeting was coordinated and run by the Vocation Bureau of the General Council with the help of the vocation directors of each province. The group was made up of young people and Brothers coming from



five FMS Provinces which conduct their apostolic works in seven countries.

An initial glance upon such a multicolored landscape, gathering so many youthful faces from such beautiful parts of the world, allows us to single out a few notable characteristics. Among the young people who have gathered in Luján one finds catechists, pastoral leaders drawn from social works or the university world, Marist Brother aspirants, volunteers working with indigenous communities, etc. Here is a treasure that gives rise to hope: young people who are mature, cooperative, dedicated to their work, joyous, overwhelmingly so in fact.

In the evaluation of the meeting the young people underlined in a special way the presence and closeness among the young people of the whole Council with the Superior General at its head.

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Marist Animators' Course

A study of Marist Spiritual Patrimony of Sydney Province

On Sunday, 28th September 2008 twenty participants, eight Marist Brothers and twelve Lay men and women, began a study program centered on the life of the Founder. The five day intensive program held at The Hermitage of the South, Mittagong, was targeted at those who have responsibility for animating the mission of Marist schools at Province and local levels. Participants came from all areas of the Sydney Province (New South Wales, Queensland and the Australian Capital Territory), including the District of Melanesia (Bougainville) and six from the New Zealand Province. The program was conducted by the Marist Ministries Office, Sydney Province, Australia.

The aim of the course was to offer a rigorous and academic study of the life of Marcellin Champagnat,

the context of the time and place that gave birth to the Marists, the sources and influences of Marcellin's spirituality, his writings, and his vision for a Christian educator. Participants were inspired by the depth of wisdom and insightfulness of the course presenter, Br Michael Green FMS. Br Michael, the Principal of St Augustine's College Cairns, last year conducted a five-month Spiritual Patrimony Program for English speaking Brothers in Rome.

Some participants' comments:

'Very informative. Presented with passion and knowledge. The enthusiasm was contagious.' (Mary Kirk, Director of Religious Studies, Marcellin College, Auckland, New Zealand)

'It has been a real grace and one of the most interesting and informative



programs I have done. (Br) Michael's presentations are so clearly given and so expertly prepared. This program has been a gift.' (Br Kevin Blyth, Marist Ministries Office, Drummoyne)

'Brilliant – all of it! Presentations were so well prepared, researched and given with such flair, enthusiasm, wit and wisdom.' (Carmel Luck, Assistant Head of School – Staff, Marist College Canberra, ACT)



Conflict in the Congo's Great Lakes Region

R. D. of Congo

In the course of the past four weeks, at least 100,000 people have had to leave their homes in the Province of North Kivu in the Democratic Republic of Congo (RDC). The cause of the flight has been the increase in hostilities between the army troops of the RDC and rebel forces loyal to General Laurent Nkunda. The hostilities are in clear violation of the January 2008 ceasefire signed in Goma (capital of North Kivu) by the Congo government, the CNDP (People's National Security Congress) and twenty-one other armed groups who operate in the eastern Congo.

The Congo Peace Network is made up of various religious organizations that work in Kivu. The Network has issued an appeal seeking major assistance from the international community. The Network has made it clear that fighting is continuing despite the presence of troops serving under MONUC (United Nations in the Congo) and under the Amani Program which was set up in 2006.

The Marist Brothers have two communities in the region. One is in Bobandana, and the other in Goma. The

communities conduct educational establishments in both cities and in Nyangezi as well. All our Brothers are bearing up well at present. As a result of the conflict, however, the Brothers of the Bobandana community have felt it necessary to move to Goma.

We invite all the Marist family to join in spirit with this long-suffering part of Congo, and to pray for peace and justice, having a special remembrance of the children and young people who are so often, in all conflicts, innocent victims.



Beatification of Br. Bernardo and the group of Laurentino, Virgilio and the other 44 martyr confreres

Apostolic Briefs of Beatification

This Tuesday 21 October 2008 I went to the Vatican Secretary of State to retrieve the two Apostolic Briefs for the Beatification of Brother Bernardo and the group of Laurentino, Virgilio and the other 44 martyr confreres. It was a little moment of joy for the postulator but also for the entire Marist family, even more so for the warm welcome we were given at the Secretary of State.

In itself this fact could be of secondary importance, if it did not remind us of our ideal of becoming saints by welcoming God's love and receiving humankind through love, service and self-giving. Our Founder said to us: "To become a Brother is to commit oneself to become a saint!"

The two Apostolic Briefs are also a true reminder that our Marist sanctity runs wide and deep and it is expressed on a daily basis: through the smile of a child, the welcome he is given, his growth and intelligence, the chances that open up for his future, the proclamation of Christ to the youth; Marist sanctity is told in a thousand gestures and shades, in fidelity and patience and the typically Marist qualities of simplicity, in a Marian environment that offers the youth the heart, intelligence and genius of the Mother of Jesus. The sanctity of our family is infinitely greater than the Marist models we wish to bring to canonisation. But these models, Brothers, urge us to live it every day.

The Brief of Beatification is the last act of the beatification process: Diocesan phase, Roman phase, Decree on the martyr, Ceremony of beatification. It is a white book bound in a light cream leather cover.

The Book contains a short biography of the martyrs, the historical circumstances of their martyrdom and it recalls the path of the cause until the day of beatification.

It is all written by hand, with the downstrokes and upstrokes of old, when quills and ink were still in fashion. The text is in Latin on a light creamy shade of parchment paper. The overall impression is of a work of high craftsmanship.

It is an Apostolic Act, and therefore issued by the Pope himself; his name, Benedict XVI, is on the opening page of the text. And at the end the signature is of the Secretary of State, His Eminence Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone.

And the second group of Spanish martyrs, the one of Brother Crisanto amounting to 66 brothers and 2 laypeople, is already on its way to beatification.

It is though us, today, Marist brothers and laypeople, that the sanctity of our family comes true, in our gestures of true humanity and through the centrality of the Lord Jesus in our lives.

Br. G. Bigotto



Marist Schools and Child Rights - Greece

From 6th to 10th October Br. César Henríquez, from FMSI Onlus (Fondazione Marista per la Solidarietà Internazionale Onlus), visited the Marist schools of Greece and met students and teachers, in order to present the Foundation, talk about children's rights and illustrate the work the

Institute is carrying out in Geneva in the field of children's rights.

Br. César Henríquez was designated three years ago as the Advocacy Officer of FMSI Onlus, the Institute's new non-profit organization, which inherited from BIS the mandate to advance the mis-

sion of the Marist Brothers at the international institutional level. He is the one who represents the Marist Brothers before the United Nations bodies and other international organizations working in Geneva in defense of children's rights.



Leaders of the Youth Ministry Meet Young Leaders in Central Mexico

The Coming General Chapter

From September 19 to 21 the youthful heart, soul and spirit of Central Mexico's youth-ministry efforts were gathered at the Marist Brothers' establishment called Instituto Queretano San Javier. The young adults and adolescents, all together totaling around 130, are responsible for directing youth groups in schools at secondary and university-entrance levels. The participants held intensive sessions on the realities of life and work in each of the participating schools. They discussed the

role of being helpers and guides for young people along two paths. One path has been pointed out at "Youth Ministry in the Americas," the continental meeting held recently in Lima, Peru. The other path is the one which is being revealed as the fruit of the meeting's invitation: "Go where the young people are."

One of the most important elements of the meeting was the explanation of the XXI General Chapter. We found out how

the Chapter is being prepared and the way in which it will take place in September 2009. Better yet was giving the microphone to young people and allowing them to express how they feel by way of giving input to the Chapter.

We also spent time working in groups set up according to class-years in order to think and plan for the various school levels (secondary or pre-university) that have just started.

The days gave us time to share, to learn, to play, to sing and, of course, to pre-sent, within the context of the final celebration, our planned activities. At the celebration, a tree was adorned with symbols to represent our dreams, and to remind us of the pathways which Champagnat and the Brothers have followed over the years. The symbols and the thoughts which the symbols provoked inspired us and brought us together in prayer. We felt connected with so many others in the world as we reflected upon the processes leading up to the General Chapter and of our coming contacts with the young people with whom we will deal as we move forward in the work of Youth Ministry in the Central Mexico Province.



47 Marist Brothers martyred in Spain

November 6th: liturgical memory

What lesson do the lives and deaths of these brothers of ours hold for us today? First of all, our brothers were teachers in the best sense of that word, teaching through the example of their lives. Like our founder they had set their hearts upon making Jesus known and loved among poor children and young people. Like all martyrs, they had come to take the gospel seriously.

Second, by their lives and deaths, these brothers of ours teach us about the importance of reconciliation. For, to be martyrs they had, first of all, to

forgive those who took their lives. All wars are bitter, civil wars perhaps more than most. In their aftermath, the work of healing and reconciliation can be as painful as war itself.

Martyrs are dangerous people. Not because of their beliefs for we all have beliefs. But due to the fact that they are willing to take action because of those beliefs. They know full-well that the gospel makes little sense unless it is visible in the words and actions of those who claim it as their own.

Br. Séan Sammon - 27/10/2007

