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Brother Gabriel Michel

1920 - 2008



!! "So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him" (Mt 24:44). These words of Jesus come spontaneously to mind as we think of the sudden departure of our Brother Gabriel, who died on Monday 17th November. Gabriel was born on 6th April 1920 in Chazelles sur Lyon, from a family of farmers. He lived a happy youth with his brother and his sister, attending the Marist School of the area. At 12 years of age, fascinated by the example of his teachers, he felt he was called to the life of a religious teacher, and in September 1932 he left for the high school of La Valla. On 14th February, 1936, before turning 16, he was part of a group of young people travelling to Santa Maria, close to Turin in Italy, where the Province of N.D. de l'Hermitage had established the Novitiate, since it could not be held in France any longer. After having passed the six months postulancy and the year of novitiate, he returned to the scholasticate of l'Hermitage to prepare for the compulsory education and bachelor's degree that he achieved, completing his classes, in Tence from 1939 to 1941.

The scholasticate and novitiate of l'Hermitage welcomed him later as a young professor full of dynamism and liveliness, before he left again for the "youth workshops" from July 1942 to March the following year. France was under German occupation at the time. Those nine months were a time of test for him. Later he remained for 6 years at the scholasticate of l'Hermitage, as professor this time, holding his classes for the young brothers and studying at the Catholic University of Lyon to attain a licence in Classic Literature that he passed in 1950. We should note his important role in the teaching team, which he contributed to with his bright personality, as an enthusiastic trainer, a great worker, and a "wonderful companion". He worked hard to provide a rich documentation to the young brothers and to further supply the library of N.D. de l'Hermitage. He offered his musical talents and his beautiful voice to serve the liturgy and the musical education of the students of the scholasticate and later of the high school as well. Many are those who are happy and proud to remember the input he gave them with his outstanding personality.

After fifteen years spent at the scholasticate and high school of l'Hermitage, in 1956 he was appointed the Director of the Major College of N.D. de Valbenoite. At 36, therefore, the age when a man is capable of giving his full, he succeeded an elderly brother in directing the college. He did not revolutionise the government. His temperament did not lead him to modify what was already working well. A number of procedures has to be implemented to attain certain contracts with the State; the arrival of the inspectors of the National Education was a source of uneasiness for

MARIST NEWS

N.º 26 - Year I - November 27th, 2008

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➔ him, but it was an opportunity to improve and develop what he had already promoted himself with prudence and determination. His government was a beautiful period for the institute: he had a profound impact on pedagogical animation, as well as religious animation, both from a cultural and cult perspective. He gave particular importance to the month of Mary, notwithstanding the objections that were raised against this.



nology of the Institute from its origins to 1976". He had a deep desire to make Saint Marcellin known, through his biography, of course, but also through the historical context he belonged to.

He was actually at the time one of the members of the team of the Champagnat Centre of l'Hermitage, that required of him, in particular, to guide pilgrims and show them the places where the Founder lived and dwelt. The

In 1965 he returned to his preferred element, the house of formation and the high school of l'Hermitage. Two years later he was the delegate to the General Chapter of 1967. Very quickly, thanks to his French nationality and literary formation, he was asked to draft the report of his Committee. He was also the main compiler of a draft of the Constitutions, which is rather more a work of literature than a code that requires obedience. The Chapter fathers appointed him Secretary General of the Institute for the period 1967-1976.

One could say that he was the right man in the place most suitable to him. A free and family-like relationship, intimate and strong, full of admiration, esteem and love, stemmed and flourished between him and Brother Basilio Rueda, the Superior General, who often praised his competence, his fidelity in his work and his profoundly religious spirit.

Later, Brother Basilio would not hesitate to trust him for the solution of delicate issues. He also gave him freedom to advance on the path he had begun: investigating our origins, starting from the documents kept in the municipal, diocesan and departmental archives. As Secretary General, in charge of the archives, he photocopied an incredible amount of documents. He therefore had a mass of papers with him that allowed him to complete his research. For the general public he published what he called a biographical novel "Born in '89", in three volumes, and more recently the biography of Brother Francois, or "60 years of Marist life". More privately, for use within the congregation, he left us his research on the "Legal recognition of the Institute", a work on "The dark years of Marcellin Champagnat or the Revolution at Marlhès", plus an agenda on "Champagnat day by day" and many articles on several magazines. At the end of his mandate as Secretary General he also published "The Chro-

visitors enjoyed listening to him in their language, in English, Italian, even Spanish, a language he had learnt late in his life for the needs of the cause. Along the itinerary by bus, leading the groups from one place to the other, he was tireless in sharing with them anecdotes and reflections, and all the members could enjoy his knowledge on the Founder and on the geographical, social, political and religious context that he lived in.

When age forced him to spare himself, he devoted himself to translation. It became his main activity during the four remaining years of his life in the house of Saint Genis Laval. And up to the very last day he carried out his intellectual activity, always as a service to others, believing that he could continue in such a way to increase as much as possible the talents that God had given to him, for his love and his glory. He therefore certainly has heard the words "Come and share your master's happiness".



N. D. de L'Hermitage



Advent and Marist Solidarity

Convention on the Rights of the Childs

This year's reflection commemorates the 20th Anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the international treaty which sets standards for the protection of children and young people. This text was compiled and edited by Br. César Henriquez, our Child Rights Advocacy Officer in Geneva. We hope this year's reflection will expose all who use it to become more familiar with some of the children's issues and groups that are working for the benefit of children on the international level.

Convention on the Rights of the Childs- For the past three years Br. César has worked on two fronts in order to advance the work of BIS and the Foundation for children and young people. His first area of work was in Geneva before international organizations. Geneva is home to the United Nations Council on Human Rights and several UN based human rights mechanisms

such as the Committee on the Rights of the Child. The Committee monitors compliance of those nations that have signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In Geneva, Br. César has joined several coalitions and working group that study and research the relevant children's issues such as a violence against children and a child's right to an education.

Br. César's second area of work has been directed within the Institute of the Marist Brothers and its extensive network of lay colleagues around the world. Here, his focus of concern has been to raise consciousness about the Convention, the work of the Committee and the current issues children and young people are facing around the world. Some of you have attended presentations he has given and read our newsletters in which he reported on the work of the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

I want to thank Br. César for putting together this year's Advent text and for his work as our Advocacy Officer in Geneva. He will be finishing his term at the end of November, just as Advent begins. All of us here in the BIS office wish him well in all his endeavors as he returns to his home province of Central America to take up a work which will put him in more direct contact with children and young people. We are confident that the experience of these past three years as the BIS/Fondazione Marista per la Solidarietà Internazionale onlus Child Rights Advocacy Officer has made him an even stronger advocate for child rights.

Br. Dominick Pujia
President/Director Fondazione Marista per la Solidarietà Internazionale onlus
Bureau of International Solidarity

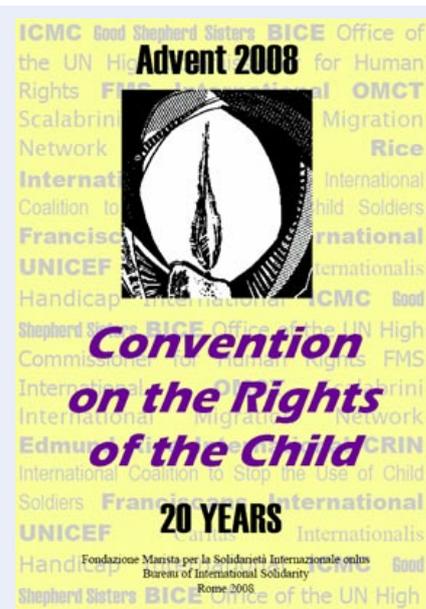


The Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on November 20 1989. It has become the document on international rights most generally accepted by the community of nations, with 193 ratifications. On November 20, 2009, the Convention will be 20 years old. For our part, the Marist International Solidarity Foundation (Fondazione Marista per la Solidarietà Internazionale onlus) would like to join in the celebration of this important anniversary and we are doing so by dedicating this Advent pamphlet to the boys and girls throughout the world, and to all of those who are working to have their rights recognized and respected at every level.

The Advent reflection booklet contains reflections written by people within and beyond our Marist environment, particularly organizations with which we share this task of promoting and defending children's rights in Geneva. In this way, we would like to show our determination to work and unite our efforts in this task which already, for several years, has been carried out by many organisations for and with the children.

The Child's Rights start, mainly, from a need: that of guaranteeing the children the power to grow and to develop integrally as people. When the most fundamental thing for that development is lacking, it is not sufficient to remember that health or education are important for this. It is necessary to demand it. The season of Advent which the Church offers us every year reminds us that justice is part of the project of God for his people, for the whole of humanity.

Br. César Henríquez - Advocacy Officer -Fondazione Marista per la Solidarietà Internazionale Onlus



XIV National Meeting of FMS Fraternities

Mexico

From October 17 to 19, the Fraternities of FMS Mexico meet in Puerto Vallarta to reflect on the experiences of the past year, twelve months having intervened since their last gathering, October 2007, in San Juan de los Lagos.

A total of two hundred participants came from Monterrey, Tijuana, Los Mochis, Guadalajara, Tepatlán, Aguascalientes, Toluca, Irapuato, Uruapan, México, Mérida, and Morelia. The chance to come together to share our accomplishments, our challenges and our needs provided a really wonderful opportunity. The group felt the close support of two General Councilors who were present: Brothers Antonio Ramalho from Brazil and Pedro Herreros from Chile. Also in attendance from the two Mexican Provinces were twenty-two Marist Brothers who accompanied their respective Fraternities.

One morning we worked on the reflection process which has been proposed to us by the XXIst General Chapter to be held next year in Rome. On Saturday afternoon, Brother Aureliano Brambila spoke to us on the topic, Marist Spiritu-



ality. His presentation and the discussion that ensued gave us a real enthusiasm for this wonderful spirituality handed down to us by Father Champagnat. On Sunday the 19th, Brother Enrique Escobar helped us reflect as to whether or not we ought to have a national Fraternities coordinator, someone who would take a lead role in the life of the Fraternities. We had a lively discussion on the topic, providing room for our various points of view. A webpage has been set up, as mentioned just above, to give the results of the meeting. The address is www.colontepic.com/fraternidad. There you can find there all the topics treated, as well as photos taken at the Meeting.



Campus ministers and religion department chairs meet in Chicago

United States

The third annual session of Sharing Our Mission for campus ministers and religion department chairpersons was held from Saturday, October 4 through Monday, October 6 at the Portiuncula House of Prayer in Frankfort, Illinois. Participants from nine US Marist schools listened to nationally known theologian and author, Robert Ludwig speak about "Youth and the Church: Today's Challenge, Tomorrow's Promise."

Sharing Our Mission has evolved into an ongoing formation program for our campus ministers and religion



department chairpersons. In 2006 Michael Thiesen from the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry spoke about the (2004) National Study of Youth and Religion and its implications for Catholic schools. In 2007 Bob McCarty, director of NFCYM spoke about "Ministering to Millennials." The theme of ministering to young people continued this year's with Bob's provocative and challenging insights on the needs of our young people.

