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Congratulations to Brother Seán Sammon on his birthday

General House



On November 26, 1947 Brother Seán Sammon was born in New York. So now he is 61 years old. A party was held in the General House to celebrate his birthday. The programme was very simple but full of affection and fraternity. The day began in festive spirit. Holy Mass took place at the end of the morning in the big chapel, with all the Brothers of the house in attendance as well as the people who collaborate, in so many ways, in the offices of the General Administration. The Eucharistic celebration presented an opportunity for a personal greeting by each individual working in the house as well as the opportunity to give thanks for the services of animation and government that are being carried out in the Institute.

During the prayer of the faithful several brothers animated the prayer with selected texts from the documents which have been published during the seven years of his mandate as General Superior. Each one of the texts led to a prayer for different people and the needs of the Institute.

The offertory was the moment to place before the Lord the whole work of anima-

tion that Brother Seán has carried out through his writings: letters to brothers of different ages, circulars or introductory words to various events. The entire collection of writings, directed by Seán to the brothers, which have already been published, were placed in a square at the foot of the altar with the flowers that completed the decoration. That was the work of animation of the Institute which the community offered to the Lord in gratitude for the gift of the person of our General Superior.

The aperitif, which was served in the Champagnat Room, gave us the opportunity to recollect some outstanding moments in Seán's life through the use of pictures. Brother Luis Sobrado García, our Vicar General, congratulated him on behalf of the General Council, the brothers of the General Administration, the whole Institute and the lay people who work with the brothers. On behalf of them all he was given a beautiful statue of Mary. All the brothers and lay people who work in the General House took part in a fraternal meal.

We pray that the Lord and his Good Mother will guard over Brother's Seán life and grant him strength and health to be able to successfully bring to a conclusion the work which the Chapter entrusted to him.

MARIST NEWS
N.º 27 - Year I - December 4th, 2008

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Michael Galovic, Icon Writer

Works Adorn the FMS Chapel at Mittagong

Australia

While attending the Marist Festival at Saint Joseph's College Sydney, an English-speaking environment indeed, I heard just behind me, someone speaking excellent Spanish with a foreign accent. I turned around to see before me - this was at World Youth Day 2008 - an individual with bright and lively eyes who was speaking warmly and animatedly to a group of young people about the icon which was before them. At once, I felt the need to make contact with this gentleman and have a word with him.

fully to the task of writing icons. All the works that I produce are, almost without exception, for the Catholic Church. My works are commissioned mostly in Australia, although some of my icons are found in New Zealand, England, Scotland, the United States, Korea.



You are speaking Spanish very well. Congratulations!

That's an achievement I owe to my wife who is from Chile, although I did study in Spain from 1978 to 1980. The years in Spain were the occasion of learning the beautiful Spanish language.

What country are you from?

From the ex-Yugoslavia. At least that was the name by which the country was known nineteen years ago when I came to Australia.

How did you come to be a writer of icons?

I have been working with icons for forty years. I began by absorbing the ancient traditions of iconography. This occurred in my earliest years because in Serbia I used to observe my stepfather restoring frescoes and icons in churches and monasteries. I began to write my first icons when I was an adolescent. Later on I pursued other kinds of work, but never was I able to leave off dealing with icons. For icons I feel an attraction that arises from within.

Now you are working solely with icons?

Here in Australia over the past nineteen years I have dedicated myself

I have heard that you were responsible for writing an icon for presentation to Pope Benedict XVI at World Youth Day.

Yes, that's right. An icon of Saint Benedict. The Pope's name, "Benedetto" in Italian, corresponds to the English "Benedict."

How did it feel to be given such a commission involving, as it does, the Pope?

A good question, really. It took me two weeks to calm down, because I just could not believe it. I was having problems sleeping. Finally I was able to get a hold of myself, concentrate and get down to work in a focused way as I had to do, since the amount of time available for the task was very short: no time to lose. What I did was to work up two or three small sketches, two or three small icons in order to get an idea of what the final product would be. I had to be sure of what I was aiming at with minimum room for error.

What are some of the features of the icon which you have prepared for Pope Benedict XVI?

Since I was asked to write a new icon, a new interpretation of Saint Benedict, I imagined him to be a simple monk

in the act of presenting to God the Benedictine Rule. The icon portrays an elderly man of wisdom. In this act of offering, in an attitude of great humility and tender petitioning, Benedict asks that what he offers be accepted. The saint is portrayed as a man of mature age, in his sixties or seventies.

Michael Galovic is also the creator of the icons found in the Marist Brothers' chapel in Mittagong, New South Wales.

Speaking of the five icons found in the Mittagong chapel and others belonging to the Marist Brothers of Australia, the following questions were posed to the artist.

How did you find inspiration for portraying Marist Brothers' spirituality by means of the icons representing certain Marists known for their holiness?

Upon receiving the commission, I had to focus my thoughts upon the Marist world and learn about it. They had asked me to write the first icon of Marcellin Champagnat as Blessed, prior to his being canonized. Then at the time of the canonization, they asked me for an icon of Marcellin as saint. That is



how I began my first days of work with the Marist Brothers. Since then I have continued my journey as a traveling companion on the voyage, creating different works which they have requested.

In writing the icons, what aspect of Marist spirituality has had the strongest impact upon you; what most caught the attention of Galovic in preparing the icons?

No question about it: it was the Marists' love of the Virgin Mary, for her compassion, for her humanness and her nearness, making it possible

to speak to her and to be close to the human family.

Among the works which you have created for the Marist Brothers, which is the one you created with the most affection, of which you are most fond?

Mary at Pentecost, in the midst of the Church gathered in prayer. This icon was commissioned by the 53-member Confederation of Marist Schools in Australia. The icon "travels," being moved from site to site according to the schedule and venue of Conference meetings.

In what ways do you feel that your life

has been enhanced by contact with Marists? What have the Marist contacts brought to Galovic?

The chance of deepening my spirituality, because learning of Marist things brought a new dimension to my life. I come from the Orthodox tradition. The possibility of letting people know what I do.

The chance of deepening my spirituality, because learning of Marist things brought a new dimension to my life. I come from the Orthodox tradition. The possibility of letting people know what I do.



MICHAEL GALOVIC was born in Belgrade, capital of the former Yugoslavia. He graduated from the Belgrade Academy of Art in 1974. He started to learn the ancient iconographic tradition at first hand during his childhood years when he would see his stepfather restoring Serbian frescos and icons in churches and monasteries. In his adolescent years he began to write icons on his own account. In the course of making his own life's journey, Michael traveled widely and spent various periods of time living in the Middle East, Spain and Africa, absorbing the contrasting beauty found in each new culture which he was discovering. In 1990, Australia became his new place of residence, and since then he has become a naturalized citizen of the country. In Australia and elsewhere many churches and private collections are in possession of Michael's creative efforts. A person could come upon his art in over seventy churches in Australia, New Zealand and other countries as well; pieces are also to be found in numerous private collections. In addition, our artist has held exhibitions in the United States (2), England (2), Peru, Serbia, Korea, New Zealand (many times). He envisions an exhibition to be held 2009 in Iceland and another – certainly the most important – in Rome in 2010.



Perpetual Profession of Brother Vincent de Paul Kouassi

Ivory Coast



On November 1, All Saints Day, at the nearby parish, we celebrated the perpetual profession of Brother Vincent de Paul. The celebration was a marvelous occasion for giving thanks to Christ and our Good Mother for our Brother now perpetually professed. The ceremony enabled one to sense African life and its religious character, to observe at close hand new Christians of Africa like a seed which is daily growing more deeply. One was able to perceive as well the people's religious sentiments and the way Marist life has taken root profoundly amongst ordinary people.

The presence of the Brothers, especially the young Brothers who had come from various communities, enabled me to have a really special day. Our District is growing, is alive, has hope, has a future. Let us thank God for the perpetual profession which our Brother has made, and for the Marist life which has taken root profoundly in our District. I am sure that Marcellin Champagnat feels very happy with what is happening in our District.



Day of Reflection and Prayer Journey beyond the Spirituality Year

Belgium

On Saturday, October 25, Brothers and lay people to the tune of about twenty all together, met at in Habay-la-Vieille, Belgium, for a day of prayer and reflection on the Spirituality Year just then drawing to a close.

In the morning, a Cistercian monk from the monastery of Orval helped the participants to understand properly what is meant by Lectio Divina. In down to earth fashion, he imparted to each one of us a real taste for taking up the Word of God each day, for savoring it and ruminating upon it. The remainder of the morning was reserved for personal prayer. Then a Marial prayer brought us to the midday meal cordially shared together.

In the afternoon, Brother Roberto reminded us of some of the important elements in the document «Water from the Rock.» He gave us various suggestions that we might follow up on, as we make our own journeys beyond the



Spirituality Year itself towards the coming General Chapter and towards the Hermitage Project. Afterwards, private prayer time, guided by some timely questions, offered us the chance to deepen the theme.



Accompanying the students in their process of formation Social Service for the high schools

Mexico

On 16 and 17 of October, the Third Social Service Workshop was held for the high schools of the Marist Province of Western Mexico in Loma Bonita, Guadalajara. The objectives of the Workshop were: to evaluate the putting into practice of the tasks proposed at the 1st and 2nd Workshops, in the SS of our schools; to define the objective of the SS in the high schools of the Province and to approve principles and approaches concerning the evaluation and pursuit of social service for our Province.

It was possible to define the objective of the Social Service in the Province: "To accompany the students in



their process of formation as good Christians and good citizens, facilitating the development of their attitudes, knowledge and abilities through significant experiences with the poor, so that, as part of their project of life, they can be co-responsible agents for social transformation".

The participants in the Workshop showed themselves to be contented and willing to face the challenges set. A greatly enriching process of learning has been generated in the three Workshops which have been carried out.

