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21/05/2009: Marist blog: Letter of thanks: Echos of the experience of the Marist educator in my life (Br. Pau Fornells / Maria do Carmo Souza)

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The "Cono Sur" region prepares for the XXI General Chapter

Argentina

The meeting was scheduled for the dates 30 April to 3 May 2009. With the participation of all those invited, it began on the 1st of May, in the Provincial house of Cruz del Sur. This was the first zone meeting in view of reaching a consensus on the contributions from the brothers and lay people of the Provinces of Santa María de los Andes and Cruz del Sur and of the District of Paraguay.

During the day on 30 April, the participants arrived: Brothers Ángel Medina and Ignacio Pruna, from the district of Paraguay, accompanied by the lay persons Zuny Silva, teacher in Horqueta, and the young Friden Bazán, who was having a vocational experience in Coronel Oviedo. For the Province of Santa María de los Andes, Brothers Antonio Peralta, Saturnino Alonso, Mariano Varona, Patricio Pino and Rafael Kongfook and the laity Enzo Bonomo and Sara Sánchez Vicuña. From the Province of Cruz del Sur, Brothers Demetrio Espinosa, Horacio Bustos, Eugenio Magdaleno, Rubén Seipel, Juan Bernal and Carlos Urrutia, and the lay people Analía Ruggeri, Yolanda Abrego, Celina Chimeno and Fernando Larrambeberé (one of the laity

invited to the Chapter). Also present were the two zone coordinators, Brothers Carlos Vélez and João Carlos do Prado. Brother Eduardo Gatti of Cruz del Sur performed the tasks of secretary and support.

The first day commenced with shared prayer, in which, after the presentation of each of the participants, they prayed for the preparatory process of the General Chapter. Each one made a contribution to this meditation on the road covered.

After the instructions of the regulations, they passed to the report from the coordinators on the steps of this process and of some of the achievements attained with the presentation of the four principal themes agreed to on the level of the Congregation.

The task which provided the work for the rest of the day was the reading of the letters sent by the delegates to the two Provinces and the District after the meetings with Brothers and laity. In the afternoon, they worked in mixed groups to analyze the letters and to find points of coincidence and points of mutual enrichment.



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Recreating Marist life together

Experience of joint formations - France

The first phase of the experience of joint formation – brothers and laity – at Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux ended on 28 April. This was the phase of integration and the participants getting to know one another and their respective Provinces.

A) Getting to know each other

Following a brief personal presentation, the other participants had to respond and write a word or a phrase expressing the «being and the person» of the person presented. One picked up words or expressions such as: organizer, great worker, openness to the future, apostolic generosity, courage in the face of new challenges, simplicity in action, humility clearly Marist, practical family spirit, joy at feeling oneself Marist in work and spirituality, educator by vocation, pedagogy at the service of the Gospel, constancy and serenity in the face of difficulties, the past and the future shape confidence in God, to feel oneself a catechist of God, man/woman of prayer, determined to live Marist spirituality.

b) Getting to know the situation of the Provinces

In presenting the actual state of the Provinces, each one had to explain three achievements and three challenges they faced.

Here are some of the achievements: a good group of leaders; a great willingness to work with laity by allowing them to take on more and more often positions of responsibility; a good relationship among brothers, laity, and the young people with whom we work; good developments in edu-



cation and the formation of brothers and laity in the sector; many young people involved in the activities and projects outside school; utilization of the Internet with a provincial page regularly opened; a growing number of welcoming communities; development of the Champagnat fraternities; continuing formation of brothers and laity; some new apostolic projects apart from the traditional school; the tradition of voluntary service which has become part of the apostolate in certain Provinces; the Provincial Assemblies on mission are opening up horizons unknown until now; spiritual formation as an integral part of the preparation for mission.

Mention has been made of some challenges: lack of adequate formation for what is happening in the Province; nostalgia for the past; reservations about the shared work of brothers and laity; inability to «invent» new projects; choices and decisions which have not always

been the best ones; formation in and knowledge of Marist spirituality; lack of unity among the various activities of the Province; the number of aged brothers in certain Provinces does not permit great apostolic projects for the youth of today; difficulties for laity in taking on certain responsibilities; autonomy of the laity in comparison with the brothers; a greater integration in the new Province of the «old» sectors which compose it; to revitalize the missionary spirit; difficulties in shaping Marist life for brothers and laity at the same time; what will be the expressions of Marist life in the future? How to put them into operation?

These three days of coming to know persons and provinces have helped create a very fine community atmosphere, and have opened the way to the formation process which began on 29 April. The first part of this process is the study and living of the theme «Faith and Vocation».



A course offered to Brothers between the ages of fifty and seventy


Spain



Guezmez and Rodrigo Cuesta), Mediterranea (Pedro Menarguez, Marino Carlavaris and Georges Sabe) and Norandina (Ramon Benseny and Juan Miguel Santos). We can communicate, more or less, in French, Italian, Arab, Portuguese, Spanish.

Because remodeling work is going on at the Marist Brothers' Center in Escorial, our Threshold course is taking place in Los Negrals, where we have been cordially received by the Claretian community in the building that used to be their novitiate.

At present we are engaged with the suggestion that has been presented as the first Threshold: to re-read - and re-live - our personal life journey as "sacred history," as the entry into our lives of the God of Life, of the Resurrected Jesus.

Several means are being used to help us with the process, among them: road maps, small-group sessions, times reserved for prayer and reflection. As a result we are being assisted in finding the most suitable path for conducting a personal examination (and a community one too) of our life history, being invited to appreciate it, to live and celebrate a personal life-journey that is ever unfolding within the outpouring of God's love. 

To move from one threshold to another: the image is a manner of describing life. Crossing the threshold, one finds a road. On the road... how many experiences, how many steps one takes to go forward and even to go back! So it is, from threshold to threshold, from year to year, from the spring times of youth to the glimpses of autumn, one advances into life traversing "DOORWAYS AND PATHWAYS."

On April 23, eighteen Brothers arrived at Negrals in order to "cross new

thresholds and enter new passages" . . . in all, eight such thresholds, as laid out on the course plan.

Where have we come from? : Paraguay (Enrique Planas), Cruz del Sur (Miguel A. Schonfeld and Oscar Enrique Perl), Iberica (Antonio Martinez Fernandez), Brasil - Centro Norte (Jose Machado and Benedito Odeto de Lima), Brasil Centro - Sul (Lino Alfonso Jungbluth and Tercilio Sevegnani), Mexico Central (Benjamin Heredia and Armando Heredia), Mexico Occidental (Manuel Franco), Central America (Andres

Summer Vocation Workshop / Seminar 2009 - Philippines

The Marist Aspirancy House hosted a Summer Vocation Workshop for those are interested to become Marist Aspirants. The workshop was facilitated by six Brothers namely, Br. Leo Siva, Br. Albert Bolibol, Br. Vince Celeste, Br. Joe Torrecampo,

the Vocation Director, Br. Wency Calimpon, the Superior of the house and Br. Larry Sevilla, the Director of this year's workshop.

The workshop was started last April 15, Wednesday until May 3, 2009

at Marist Aspirancy House, NDDU-IBED Lagao Campus. The workshopers are to experience community, prayer and apostolic life in three weeks, and at the end decide whether to join the formation year next school year.

A vocation is personal and practical

Pedro Garcia-Casals - United States



A vocation, much like Marcellin’s way of educating, is personal, rooted in real life, and practical. God calls us in our midst to meet the needs of the here and now, and we answer with love through concrete and resolute actions, but the call starts with a friendship. In this sense, my vocation as a lay Marist began and is sustained as much by my friendship with the brothers as it is tied in and enriched by my life as a husband and a father.

Although I have been working at Columbus High School for the last sixteen years, Columbus was the first place I ever held a real job (meaning that I got paid for it). It was a summer job, and little did I know back in '75, while still a junior at the public high school just a few blocks up the street from Columbus, that by God-incidence I would go from mowing and pulling out weeds in the football field to tilling for nobler harvests, and be the richer by it (and not because I’m getting paid for it).

I really first heard about the work of the brothers from family elders who to this day cherish their ‘Marista’ years in Cuba as life-defining moments. Their vivid stories came to life for me when I started teaching at Columbus and met several of the brothers who had lived out Marcellin’s dream in my native land, and whose eyes still swell up with tears of joy and their voices crack when they speak about their experiences. Piqued by curiosity and wanting to know more about the life of this man who had so stirred people across continents, I ventured into Brother Jean Baptist’s biography of Father Champagnat. And I must confess that, while trained in current, sophisticated theories of literary criticism and sceptical of pious

19th century texts, I found the reading profoundly exhilarating and self-revealing. The process impelled me to read and reflect on other documents of the Institute. Yet again, as much as the literary experience provides me with insight into my profession and serves as a spiritual journey of knowledge and appreciation for the founder, it is really because of the testimony and friendship with the brothers that I am better able to define Marcellin’s charism and my role as a Marist educator. Marcellin’s translation of the Gospel into a life dedicated to loving young people through education was certainly as revolutionary with the youth of his day in rural France as it is now for me here in Miami, Florida. The challenge today may seem a bit more complex, but the dream of educating in the Gospel –acknowledging and respecting the wholeness of the human person and sharing a way of life rooted in the person of Jesus Christ –is very much a needed reality to counter our broken homes and materialistic, self-serving social mores. Insofar as I attempt to live Marcellin’s zeal for making education a genuine act of love, I believe that I am Marist.

Sharing this awareness with colleagues at such venues as the Sharing-our-Call retreat in Esopus and our LaValla Project sessions at Columbus has also given me a greater sense of solidarity within the Institute. Whether in Miami or New York, or I dare say anywhere in the world, the brothers’ overall sense of presence and family spirit, their genuine hallmark of modesty and humility, and their celebratory love of work, impress upon me the need to pray and work harder for more vocations, more men and women, who like them, may

courageously and joyously give witness every day of God’s loving presence among us. I am truly blessed to share along side of them my vocation as a lay Marist. I am also mindful of the crucial difference between our Marist vocations, for the word lay distinguishes our different yet complementary vows. While we are all called to renew and sustain Marcellin’s vision for living the Gospel through the Christian education of youth, and particularly of the most neglected, our distinct life-styles determine our commitments and the extent to which we relate as a community. By God’s grace I often realize how my love-borne relationship with my wife and sons sustains and enriches my relationship and contribution to the greater community. As demanding and sometimes draining as family life can be in a hurried busy world, they are my main wellspring for continued insight, growth, true joy, and a gentler heart. Indeed, they keep me grounded.

(...)
Where the path may lead, I honestly don’t know. So far, it has only shown me that where He leads, I trust to follow; and I keep Micah 6 in sight to remind me of what is essential: “to act justly, to love tenderly, and to walk humbly with your God.” Everyday I am grateful for all the blessings, but in particular for allowing Marcellin’s dream and charism to continuously clear the airways that my answer may be like Mary’s in bringing Jesus to others.

