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Let all the earth be marist

Meeting of combined formation for Brothers and Lay people

At 60 years of age and as a totally blind person, riding escalators, jumping over four foot high walls, and crawling on my hands and knees under live electrical wires, were not the things I dreamed of doing. But that was precisely what I did, during my three weeks stay in St. Paul-Trois-Châteaux. They were obstacles easy to overcome due to the genuinely concerned group of human beings that surrounded me.

When our provincial asked me whether I would like to go to France for a three week seminar on Marist joint formation, I just laughed and said, "Yes," without giving any serious consideration to the details of the matter. My only companion from Sri Lanka would be a young Marist Brother.

The reality of the situation I was in, hit me properly when we had to go for our visas. I was to be accompanied by Brother Chinthana, whose name I knew but had never met him. I had three things to fear: he was a religious brother; he was very young; he had no experience in moving with blind people.

Anyway, our trips to the visa office went quite smoothly and our visas were processed within four days. Fear of my companion was diminishing by then, and rays of trust and confidence in him were building up within me.

But the social atmosphere in France was



still to be confronted. It was clear from the name of the participants that the group consisted of nine brothers, seven lay people – three men and four women including me. It did not sound very encouraging – too many religious, I thought.

Warm breezes of friendship gently blew among us, as some of the participants travelled in a specially arranged coach from the Lyon railway station to SP3C. The warm welcome followed by the two days of integration, successfully drew us closer to each other every hour of the day. My worries and fears soon faded into emptiness, as I realized that everybody around me – brothers and lay – were doing their best to make things easy and



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comfortable for me, without any signs of effort or strain.

At meals, at prayers, at the sessions, regarding accommodations, my requirements were met without having to ask. I was always special. The understanding of my difficulties and the responses to them were amazingly touching.

During outings and especially the pilgrimages, I experienced the joy of human care and concern. It made me forget my physical fatigue, handicap and age, and walked into any risky unknown, in the child-like glee, surrounded by my caring companions. No obstacle proved to formidable with that community.

The sole reason behind all this was that, I was living in an exclusively Marist community. How wonderful it would be if the whole world turned Marist! Persons with various handicaps, could still enjoy earthly life. And NOBODY would be NOBODY'S CHILD in such a world. The group at SP3C were practically living up to the ideal Marist community living, described in article 110 in Water from the Rock.

I hereby wish to extend my heartfelt thanks to the Provincial of South Asia and to every person connected with the joint formation program, for being so receptive to the passionate charism of Marcellin, which consequently provided me the opportunity to enjoy this wonderfully rich experience.

As I conclude this little note filled with feelings of gratitude and appreciation, I think it is most appropriate to recall the above mentioned message from Water from the Rock:

As Brothers and Lay Marists, we try to develop a quality of communion that allows families, religious communities and other forms of community living to become homes where the young are helped to mature, where we take care of those aging, and are especially kind to the weak; places where we forgive one another and heal wounds, where we joyfully celebrate the life we share together.

Kamala Xavier (Sri Lanka)



Assembly of "New Marist City"

Province of México Central

The best way of strengthening our experience of life and the understanding of our mission is by generating life encounters. With this aim, about three hundred young people, in the second and third years of high school, in the Province of Central Mexico, took the opportunity to come together and exchange experiences at the National Assembly of New Marist City. A weekend of games, singing, creativity and living together, with spaces for reflection on the motto of the XXI General Chapter, "New hearts for a new world."

This gathering was an opportunity to make contact with reality through visits to catechetical centres, refuges, houses of hospitality, and a school for the visually handicapped. Knowledge of these realities generated reflection and self-dedication, closeness and listening, change and commitment...

A rally for the city of Querétaro painted the streets with red, creating rivers of youth, full of joy and life, and invited those passing by to join in and sing and come to know a little of what it is to be young Marist. A huge heart added atmosphere to the auditorium for the final celebration. Listening to the message of Mother Teresa of Calcutta, of Pope John Paul II, of Gandhi and of Luther King, were a special time for becoming familiar with them and valuing their contribution to mankind.

Almost at the end of the meeting, Brother Fernando Mejía, Provincial of the Province of Central Mexico, sent us a message in which he emphasized the joy which he and the Brothers of the Provincial Council (which was also meeting here) felt when they approached and saw the football field full of young people having a good time and sharing. He acknowledged the efforts of the young animators of youth ministry, of the brothers and lay people who organized the assembly. And he finished by inviting those present to be a drop of water for the others and to change hearts to build a new world.



Martyrs rediscovered

Brothers who were killed in Peking in 1900

Sometimes someone asks: "What's the story with our Brothers who were killed in Peking in 1900, during the Boxer Revolt? Why aren't they saints when the Franciscans, killed in the same circumstances, have already been canonized?"

When we speak of this group of Brothers, we are talking in particular about: Brother Jules André Brun, Visitor, 37, killed on 12 August 1900; Brother Joseph Félicité Planche, director of the orphanage, 28, killed on 18 July 1900; Brother Joseph Maria Odon, Chinese brother, 26, killed at Chala, 17 June 1900, and postulant Paul Jen, killed at Chala, 17 June 1900. (It is necessary to distinguish this group from the Brothers who were killed in a very different context in 1906 at Nanchang: Brs. Léon, Louis Maurice, Prosper Victor, Joseph Amphien, and Marius.)

These Brothers of Peking were killed by the Boxers at the same time as four Lazarist Fathers and a great multitude of Chinese Christians.

The diocesan process for this group of martyrs was commenced in Peking on the 1st of January 1913 and completed on 28 May 1935. Two copies of the acts of the diocesan process were sent to Rome. The first copy, called the Transumptum, remains in the Vatican; the second, called the Copia Publica, was passed on to the Religious Congregation responsible for the cause: the Lazarist Fathers.

The Copia Publica, in fact, went astray and apparently was never sent to the Lazarist Congregation. Not having the documents from the Diocesan Process at our disposal, we (Lazarists and Marists) gradually forgot these martyrs.

But recently, the new Postulator of the Lazarist Fathers was able to rediscover

the Transumptum, the first copy of the acts of the diocesan process. It was in the Vatican Archives. Those in charge of the archives have wanted to make a C.D. of all the documents: 1.500 pages, handwritten and in Latin. It will be necessary to digitalise these 1500 pages, translate them into a modern language: French or Italian, and make the work known again to the Congregation for saints' causes as the Copia Publica. After this, the Roman phase of the process will begin.

This group of martyrs is certainly in the style of those we are looking for today. Around four Lazarist Fathers and four Marist Brothers, there are a great number of Christians of the young Church of China, hundreds of men and women of all categories and all ages. The ages range from 77 to 2: entire families were exterminated.

Without doubt, the Boxer Movement was a patriotic movement, in favour of a totally independent China. There is a political dimension in all this. But cases of martyrs without a political dimension are rare: the official reason for the Lord being condemned to death was political: he was making himself King: « Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews! ». The Chinese Christians who apostasized had their lives spared, the others who did not renounce Christ were massacred.

The rediscovery of the Transumptum allows us to hope for the opening of the Roman phase, where the testimonies, documents, writings, the historical context and the reasons for martyrdom will be studied by the theologians... This is a long phase but a possible one now we have the documents. Those principally responsible for this cause are the Lazarist Fathers, but we will be collaborating with them.

Br. Giovanni Bigotto, Procurador General

«La Valla» Inter-provincial Novitiate

Medellin, Colombia

From 3 to 9 May, we 14 novices, together with Brother Marco Antonio Vargas (Master of novices) and Brother Roberto Linares (in charge of vocations ministry in Central America, who directed our retreat) went, by way of San Pedro, to the house of spirituality of the Verbum Dei Missionaries, where we made our retreat.

There was a good atmosphere of interiorization and deepening our personal history, with the "Orientations" which Brother Roberto Linares offered us each day, to look at what he wanted us to live during the day and in each of the exercises.

Our day was marked by 3 or 4 exercises of prayer, followed by a daily interview of 15 minutes, at the end of the evening, to look for the «footsteps of God» through the length of the day.

At nightfall, we came together to thank God together, with the celebration of the Word, for what He had offered us during the day.

We finished our retreat by making our «harvest» of all the «fruits» or «gifts» received from the Lord during these days, which were for us full of «grace»: to continue walking together and in the hand of the One who called us to follow him.

Thank you, Brother Roberto, for your availability and for the sharing of your life as a brother with our community during these days of meeting the Lord.



Brothers martyrs in China

Letter asking for the opening of the cause

In the documents of this group of martyrs, we have a letter of 1912, from a Brother in China, Brother Antonin, asking the Reverend Brother Stratonique to open the cause. It is interesting to know its contents

Changhai, 17 May 1912
Very Reverend Brother,

On my departure for China three years ago, you were insistent on giving me a letter which could serve me as introduction to Monsignor Ferrant, in the case that it was possible to investigate the cause of the Brothers of Nanchang (1906). You know the results of my approach to the bishop; I wrote to you about them in the month of October 1909, if my memory serves me right.

Today, Reverend Brother, I am coming to talk to you, not about our Brother martyrs of Nanchang, but about those of Peking in 1900: dear Brothers Jules André, Joseph Félicité, Joseph Marie Odon and the postulant Paul Jen.

It was your circular, Reverend Brother, which determined this approach. Reading the report on the cause of dear Brother François encouraged me in an idea which I have had for a long time, and which, it seems to me, I should be doing something about: the introduction, if the Superiors are in favour, of

the cause of our martyrs of Peking.

Too little informed about a question so new to me, I consulted a Reverend Jesuit Father, who has a great experience in this matter, having been postulator for more than ten causes. The good Father has not only encouraged me, but given me some information about the procedures as well. He also informed me that the cause of the Jesuit Fathers, killed in South East Tchéli in 1900, had probably already been introduced, and that he could see no reason why that of the Brothers should not be, quite the contrary. Finally, he told me that for himself, – and he is experienced in this matter – the martyrdom was not in doubt (the martyrdom of our Brothers of Peking, I understood.)

That is why, Reverend Brother, it seems to me that the cause is a good one.

As important information, Father Rossi (Prince Rossi) has told me the following: It is enough for your Superior General to ask the Congregation of Rites for a postulator of the cause. This postula-

tor, if he is appointed in Europe, will designate in China a vice-postulator, who will undertake all the necessary proceedings, and this vice-postulator may be a Brother.

That, Reverend Brother, is the important matter that I had to tell you about today.

The Brothers who knew Brothers Jules André and Joseph Félicité have the greatest veneration for them and esteem them as Saints. Monsignor Tiberguien, passing through Peking, wanted to kneel at the tomb of these Brothers, and recommended us to begin their process without delay; it is much easier when there are witnesses still living.

It is in all simplicity, Reverend Brother, that I submit this matter to your judgment. And in the hope that it will have a happy outcome, I declare myself, Reverend Brother, your very humble and obedient servant,

Brother Antonin.

