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**21/12/2009:** Annual meeting of the European Council of the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family

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## Sadness should have no place on the birthday of life

### Christmas Message of Br. Superior General

In this city of Rome, on a day like today, more than 1500 years ago, the then Pope, Leo the Great, proclaimed to the faithful gathered to celebrate the Nativity: "Dearly beloved, today our Savior is born; let us rejoice. Sadness should have no place on the birthday of life. The fear of death has been swallowed up; life brings us joy with the promise of eternal life. No one is shut out from this joy; all share the same reason for rejoicing".

It is a beautiful thing on this night to feel oneself in communion with millions of people who, from one end of the earth to the other, rejoice in the birth of Jesus. There is no place for sadness when life is born. In the silence of our hearts, we recognize that our lives are fuller thanks to Jesus passing through them.

Amidst this profound joy, we feel especially united with our Brothers who are celebrating this feast in difficult circumstances. I would like here to remember two of our communities who, at this time, are under strong pressure.

In the first place, the community of Nyangezi (D. R. of the Congo), which was attacked on the 5th of October, in what appears to be a campaign to terrorize the religious communities of the region. In a letter to the President of the Republic, the leaders of the Catho-



lic Church state: "Practically every day we have to deplore crimes against innocent populations... The population of the south of Kivu is in shock, seeing that the Catholic Church has become a target. You know its role in society, as well as its involvement in the democratization of our country. Will it be that ecclesiastics (priests, brothers and sisters) are only considered as bothersome witnesses of all the violations of human rights perpetrated on such a scale in the south of Kivu for more than 14 years?"

In the second place, our community in Peshawar (Pakistan), a population which finds itself in an area of much conflict, near the frontier with Afghanistan. The Brothers have been repeatedly threatened, and the college where they carry out their apostolate, St. Mary's High

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#### Director:

Br. AMEstaún

#### Production:

Br. Onorino Rota

Mr. Luiz da Rosa

#### Redaction and Administration:

Piazzale Marcellino Champagnat, 2

C.P. 10250 - 00144 ROMA

Tel.: (39) 06 54 51 71

Fax: (39) 06 54 517 217

E-mail: [publica@fms.it](mailto:publica@fms.it)

web: [www.champagnat.org](http://www.champagnat.org)

#### Edit:

Marist Brother's Institute  
General House - Rome

School, was partly damaged on 23 November as the result of an enormous explosion produced in an attack on the International Intelligence Services.

Dear Brothers of Nyangezi and Peshawar, the love, support, and prayers of the Marist family are with you on this very special night. You remind us of the deepest sense of the word "incarnation", in solidarity with thousands of innocent victims who have nobody to take up their cause.



I am aware that these two communities are only two examples, among others, of Brothers living in difficult situations. And with them, we seek also to remember Brothers who will be spending this Christmas in situations of loneliness and isolation, indeed of clandestinity. All are assured of our remembrance and love.

Sadness should have no place on the birthday of life. The personal encounter with Jesus brings us deep joy because it makes us aware of our dignity and the dignity of every human person. Returning to the Christmas Sermon of Saint Leo the Great, we find these vibrant words: "Christian, remember your dignity, and now that you share in God's own nature", which recalls another of his sermons where he says, addressing not only Christians: "Wake up, O man, and recognize the dignity of your nature!"

To wake up and recognize one's own dignity. Isn't this what we aim to achieve in our educational works? Isn't this what we are called to do in committing ourselves to "promote the rights of children and young people at all levels in our Institute", as the XXI General Chapter asks us, "defending those rights before governments, non-governmental organizations, and other public institutions"?

A happy Christmas to all the Marists of Champagnat, committed to the Marist mission.

I ask the Lord's blessing for each and every one of you, so that we may continue being promoters and defenders of the glorious human dignity throughout 2010, wherever we are.

Happy Christmas!  
Br. Emili Turú, Superior General



# New Secretary General

Br. Pedro Sánchez de León



The General Council, in its meeting of 4 December, appointed as Secretary General, Br. Pedro Sánchez de León, of the province of Mediterránea, who will take up his duties on 1 April 2010.

Br. Pedro was born in 1956 in Spain (Villarrubia de los Ojos, Ciudad Real), and made his first profession in 1975. As a Marist he has international experience, since he made his scholasticate in Guatemala and spent some years in Ecuador. In 1990 he did

university studies in Rome, and in 1996 became a member of the former province of Levante. Since then, he has filled various offices in his province: teacher, Provincial Councillor and member of the Provincial Pastoral Team, Director and College Administrator. Br. Pedro, therefore, comes to his new service to the Institute with ample experience in different fields and a good knowledge of languages: besides Spanish, he can communicate in Italian, English and French.



# Province of West Central Europe

## Br. Brendan Geary new Provincial



In its session of 4 December 2009, the General Council decided to appoint Brother Brendan Geary as Provincial of the West Central Europe Province for a three year term, commencing on 13 February 2010. Brother

Brendan replaces Brother Joseph McKee, elected Vicar General by the 21st General Chapter.

Br. Brendan has been especially committed to Marist life in the running of the province, and has wide experience of Marist religious life in Great Britain, the Cameroons, and the United States. Occasion for formation in recent years has allowed him to give qualified and respectful care to others and to learn how to confront difficult and demanding situations. His apostolic work with the staff and seminarians of Ushaw College, Durham (England) has also given him wide experience in team work.

Br. Brendan takes on the animation of a Province which has made much progress in the last years. Thanks to the leadership provided by the Provincial and his team, there has been a strong effort to facilitate meeting between Brothers (retreats, meetings, seminars, commissions, etc.). Some senior Brothers point out

the communication there has been within the province and the positive results arising from this.

Among the challenges facing the new Provincial are the lack of vocations over many years, the need for new candidates, renewal of spiritual and community life, and the visibility of the Marist mission in the province.

Brother Emili Turú, Superior General, in the letter presenting the new Provincial to the Brothers, writes: "The XXI General Chapter invites us to focus our gaze on the future with hope, with our eyes fixed on the coming special celebration of the bicentenary of the foundation of the Institute. But more it urges us to set out in haste, with Mary, to a new land. I am sure that the next Provincial Chapter will be the best means of working out, under the direction of Brother Brendan and the members of his team, the objectives for the future".



# Province of the Hermitage

## Br. Maurice Berquet new Provincial

The General Council, in its meeting of 4 December 2009, appointed Brother Maurice Berquet as Provincial of the Province of l'Hermitage for a three year period, commencing on 7 April 2010. The Brothers have expressed their support for Br. Maurice, recently returned from Rome, where he completed his service to the Institute as General

Councillor, confident that he will be able to bring what the province needs for this new step.

Brother Maurice Berquet replaces Brother Xavier Barceló, who has completed his term of service as provincial, winning the appreciation of all for his simplicity, fraternal attention for each, and his great capacity for

team work. Br. Xavier has worked hand in hand with his Vicar, Br. André Déculty, and has accompanied, discretely but very wisely, the first years of the Province's existence.

Brother Emili Turú, in his letter appointing Br. Maurice and presenting him to the Brothers, pointed out the progress of the province in recent



years, emphasizing the road travelled

in the integration of the Brothers and communities of the different countries of the province, the Marist laity, the various possibilities for continuing formation offered to lay persons and Brothers, and the major commitment of the Brothers to the mission in general and the poor in particular.

Among the challenges facing the new provincial, Br. Emili pointed out the ageing of the Brothers, the number of those entering on retirement, youth and vocations ministries, mission and spirituality shared with laity, lay persons assuming responsibilities in the province and consolidating their presence, the importance of the colleges, of the presence of the Brothers among children and youth, of the social works, community life,

the personal and community life of prayer, etc.

Brother Maurice begins his ministry on the threshold of the celebration of 200 years from the foundation of the Institute and in close proximity to the inauguration of the restructured house of the Hermitage, from which the Province takes its name. It is anticipated that the Provincial Chapter in which he takes up his post will be held at the Hermitage, coinciding with the inauguration of the new house and the works of remodeling the historic building.

The Province of l'Hermitage currently includes Argelia, Catalonia, France, Greece, Hungary and Switzerland.



## Province of Central East Africa

### Br. Valentin Djawu Lungumbu Wambo new Provincial



On 4 December 2009, at the ordinary meeting of the General Council, Brother Valentin Djawu Lungumbu Wambo was appointed Provincial of Central East Africa, replacing Brother Eugène Kabanguka, elected Councillor General by the 21st General Chapter.

Valentin was born in the Democratic

Republic of the Congo. After studies in Nairobi at MIC (1987), he exercised his apostolate at Bobandana (1992), where he took on the role of community Superior. In 1999 he was appointed to Kinsangani, and in 2000 to Rome to complete his studies. Before being appointed Provincial, he was in charge of the Postulancy at Muanza. Under the previous General Government, Brother Valentin was a member of the Mission Team of Africa.

Brother Valentin begins his mandate after the holding of the 21st General Chapter and the Second Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops. Both events offer an excellent opportunity for discernment about what is expected from the Marist Brothers of this Province in the context of the Church in Africa.

Brother Emili Turú, Superior General, in

his letter presenting the new Provincial to the Brothers of the Province of Central East Africa writes: "If the 21st General Chapter has been characterized by anything in particular, it has been, apart from the content of the topics treated, the new methodology, which has been called "fraternal dialogue". Personally, I believe that it is something more than a simple change of concept: I believe that it is a more significant symbol of what the Lord is asking of the Institute over the next years. It is a matter of a profound commitment to seeing that the fraternal dialogue, which commenced around the tables in the chapter hall, continues in each province and in each community of the Institute".

Brother Valentin will assume his responsibilities during the Provincial Chapter.

