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Mission ad gentes

Communities in Bangladesh

About the **Pirgacha Community**, Br. Eugenio writes: "We have started our second year at Pirgacha, in the Bangladeshi jungle of Modhupur. Now Vigilio Bwalya has joined the community so that we are three Brothers. We live in three mud houses five minutes away from the Parish compound. We work at Pirgacha St. Paul's High School, where we teach English and Computer classes. We are not officially members of the staff, but we give a helping hand to the students and other people around. People in Pirgacha are Bangladeshi, but not Bengali; most of them belong to the Mandi tribe, an ethnic Christian matriarchal group whose land, language and culture are endangered due to demographic pressure and deforestation of their natural environment.

We go to the Parish every day for Mass and meals with the Holy Cross Fathers. We spend the day working in the school or caring about a group of boys in a hostel near our houses. In the evening, we gather together to pray in a very simple way and to have a cup of coffee while we discuss and share about what took place during the day.

We are still struggling with Bangla, the beautiful national language, but little by little, we are being able to communicate, to understand people and even to teach in that language. We hope by the end of this year we will be quite fluent so that we can start teaching, catechesis, and have meaningful conversations in order to gain the confidence of our students and have some vocations."

From **Dhaka** writes Br. Marti: "During this



month of January and probably for the whole month of February, the Brothers of the community of Sreemongol are staying in different places attending to some previous commitments or matters related to visas or of similar nature.

Br Javier Peña is already in Sreemongol. He is busy having everything in place to receive the four members of the community when they will all be moving to Sreemongol. During his free time, he teaches classes to sixth, seventh and eighth grade students at the local high school.

Br Emmanuel Achema has now been studying Bangla in the capital city of Bangladesh, Dhaka, for a few months. He is showing a rapid progress in the mastering of this language.

Br Hilario Schwab is busy with the renewal of his missionary visa in Bangladesh and, at the same time, preparing the needed papers to obtain an entry visa to the Philippines. He will beginning

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his new mission as Davao Missionary Orientation Sessions Deputy Director and as sub-master of postulants, also in Davao.

Br Marti, together with some Brothers and Sisters from different Congregations constitute the teaching staff of an Intensive English course organized by the Bangladesh Conference of Religious. The course runs from Monday to Friday on a five hour daily schedule with some extra evening sessions for reading and conversation exercises, singing practice in English and watching films."

Brothers Geoff, Nisio and Pietro are now in the small town of **Huong Khe**, one thousand four hundred ki-

lometers North of Saigon. The three of them have developed a comprehensive program of a net-work of projects that will be attending to groups of villages in the rural area around the Han Tinh City. They are very actively working in liaison with our FMSI foundation in Rome at being registered and recognized as a V. based NGO with an interest for education and social support to children and young people. When completed, the different FMSI Centres will be offering support lessons for high school students and advanced training in Computer science, English language and some practical skills according to the needs the villages to be attended to. The project has the full support of the local Church and, hopefully, will

soon have the support of the local authorities.

In the meantime, the three Brothers stay in an old hotel of this small rural town of Huong Khe and are active and present to the Catholic local population and Church. Young people are very much attracted to the community that is often invaded by young boys and girls. The Brothers are now accompanying fifteen candidates. Nisio expects three of them to be ready to begin the residential aspirancy program in August this year in preparation for the second group of the Sector Postulants in Davao, due to begin in May 2012.



«Senderos» Course

Hermanos entre 40 y 55 años de edad



On 4 February, in the house of the Claretian Fathers in Los Negrales, the SENDEROS course began for Brothers aged from 40 to 55. The animator-directors of the course are Brothers José Javier Espinosa Marticorena and Afonso Levis. The former takes up the task of co-ordinator once more, after having completed two terms in this role. In fact, the one meant to replace him, Brother Eduardo Navarro de la Torre, was appointed Provincial some time ago. Brother Alfredo Sainz Villanueva has since been giving

his community a hand in financial affairs.

Brother Antonio Ramalho, Councillor General, was present at the opening and for the first days of the course.

The Brothers taking part in the course are: Laurentino Albalá Medina, José Ignacio Rodríguez –« Iñaki » and Alejandro Urriza (Norandina) ; Maurício Dantas and Roberto de Sousa Lima (Brasil Centro-Norte) ; Antonio Benedito de Oliveira – « Benê » and Otalivio Sarturi (Brasil Centro-Sul) ; Demetrio Espinosa Espinosa (Cruz del Sur) ; Jair Heck and Lauri Heck (Rio Grande do Sul) ; Alberto Iván Ricica Siskova (América Central); Gustavo Martín Cerda Hernández (México Occidental).

The good initial entente, fraternal spirit, climate of openness and readiness are a good augury for the progress of this new group of « senderistas », ready to scale, as a community, the heights of the « new land ».



Br. Javier Espinosa
director of the
"Senderos" course



With the appointment of Br. Eduardo Navarro as provincial of México Occidental, the position of director of the "Pathways" course in Spanish and Portuguese has fallen vacant. While the General Council is looking for a Brother to replace him for a three year period, Br. Javier Espinosa will temporarily take on direction of the group until August 2010, when he takes up the direction of the Bureau of the Laity of the Institute, after Br. Pau's mandate ends. Br. Javier has accepted this new challenge with his characteristic spirit of faith and service.

Hearts connected in unity and in mysticism

Message of Br. Emili Turú, Superior general to the youth

Message via web addressed on 26 January 2010 to those taking part in the 1st National Marist Youth Ministry Congress, Colégio Marista Santa Maria, Curitiba, Paraná.



It is a great joy for me to be able to take part in this time with you. I know that, with a group of young people of the PJM so numerous coming together, it is a very important moment for Marist Brasil. I want to take advantage of this opportunity to share with you two ideas especially inspired by the congress theme: « Hearts connected ».

HEARTS THIRSTY FOR UNITY

The first aspect which strikes me as very interesting is that, in the Marist Institute in recent years, we have been speaking about « hearts ». I remember, for example, that for Champagnat's canonisation, the theme was « A heart that knows no bounds ». For the Year of Vocations, we had a logo composed of two persons forming a heart. For the International Mission Assembly, the theme was: « One heart, one mission ». In America, there was the

meeting « Hearts in solidarity ». Br. Seán wrote a circular on « A Revolution of the Heart ». Finally, the theme of the 21st General Chapter was: « New hearts for a new world ».

Why are we speaking so much of the "heart"? For myself, I believe there are two reasons for this. The first is because the heart, for western culture, signifies tenderness, love, affection, unity. I believe that there really exists an extraordinary desire for unity everywhere in the world. Not so long ago (from 29/12/2009 to 02/01/2010), there was a meeting in Taizé 1 (France). At every meeting, a letter is read to the youth, and this year the one read was a « Letter from China ». One paragraph of the letter says this: « Beyond the huge cultural differences which can create barriers between continents, all human beings make up a single family: our visit to China has confirmed us in this conviction. Whatever our culture, our age or our history, we have in common a yearning, a thirst for life in fullness ».

It is very interesting when the letter tells us that all human beings make up a single family. A year ago, more or less, a young Frenchman passed through Rome; he was travelling the world by bicycle. He crossed 14 countries, covering more than 14 thousand kilometers pedaling his bicycle. His aim was to reach the Orient. He completed his journey around the world some days ago. He passed through France, Italy, Greece, Turkey, and other countries, such as Azerbaijan, Turkistan, Uzbekistan, China, India, etc. I remain fascinated by this

young man's experience, travelling a whole year around the world, alone but for his bicycle. He set up a Blog and there recounted his whole experience of the journey. In one of his accounts he says: « Everywhere I went, the more isolated the place, the more I felt welcome. There were times when I found myself in a place where I could pitch my tent. But many people invited me to stay with them, in their homes ». We talk about countries which must face difficulties. But despite everything, people are simple, welcoming, human. That is to say, for whole year this young man had the experience of living humanity's deepest wish, the wish that all humans be a single family. Without knowing the languages of all the countries he passed through, reduced to gestures, he experienced that we are, in fact, a single family.

In December, more than 30 thousand young people came together in Poland at the invitation of Taizé. The previous year, 50 thousand met in Milan, in the North of Italy. Basically we could ask ourselves, why are we here today? Because basically we have inside us a deep thirst for unity; we have a thirst to see that the human family is finally one family. Some of you have made a long journey to be here. You spend the night in Spartan enough conditions, and why all that? Because in the heart of each one of you is this thirst for unity, to build a single family. I think you are in the process of living a marvelous Bethany. As the book of the Mystique of the PJM says: it is a moment to sit down together, to listen to one another, to share, to pray

together, to sing, and go back to daily life, as Jesus did.

In our world today, there are many young people who have a profound desire – like you – to follow Champagnat and to build a better world. And since I am speaking with young Marists, I want to tell you that, in 2011, we wish to hold an International Meeting for Marist youth, which will co-incide with the World Youth Day taking place in Madrid, in Spain. You will not all be able to take part, but we want to start a process of preparation like the one for the International Marist Mission Assembly held in Mendès, Rio de Janeiro. You will be invited to participate in it for a year, and then you will send some representatives to this international meeting. In the proposal of this meeting, the desire for unity once more finds an expression: another world is possible and, as young Marists, we can contribute to this new world.

HEARTS THIRSTY FOR MYSTICISM

The second aspect I would like to emphasize is that the heart is not only connected to the questions we have been talking about, but also, when we speak of the heart, we are beginning a process of reflection on what is most intimate to the human person, spirituality, what we call mysticism. Remember what the letter from Taizé says in this regard: « Whatever our culture, our age or our history, we have in common a yearning, a thirst for life in fulness » This is a great truth. The world needs a soul, a spirit, a meaning. And that is what we are saying when we speak of mysticism. A mystic is not someone with his head in the clouds. When we speak of mysticism, we are talking about what gives a special meaning to life, what gives a real reason for living. What to do then to live as a mystic? Do we have to pray all day long? Or have a rosary in our hand?

Some days ago, I read a book for young people written by Cardinal

Martini with Enzo Bianchi, a monk, founder of a community at Bose (Italy), along the lines of the community of Taizé, with an ecumenical spirituality. In addressing young Italians gathered at Bose, Bianchi said: « Perhaps many of you will be scandalised by what I am going to say, because it is not what one expects from a monk, but you should find time during the day to think, because at your age it is much more important to think than to pray. In fact, the one who thinks and believes is led by faith to prayer. One who does not think will never know how to pray in an authentic way; at most, he may be able to do a revision of his interior perceptions or do a little spiritual « babbling ».

It is very interesting that a monk should say that, for a youth in the modern world it is more important to think than to pray, for if he does not think, he will have difficulty praying. What do we do then so that in our life, we do not simply live on the surface of things, but we may find moments of solitude, perhaps moments to think, to read, to write, and probably to ask ourselves some essential questions: why do I exist? What do I want to do with my life? Basically, these are the most radical questions that each must ask, at least once in life. I understand perfectly the monk saying that it is more important to think than to pray, because often prayer is simply repeating words, and that does not help us take decisions and overcome difficulties in life. So, as I said, we have to pay a price for being able to reflect. We have to find the time to think, we have to look for solitude. This will be one way of constructing mysticism, spirituality.

So, let us pay attention to this theme: »hearts connected«. Today we are trying to connect hearts despite the long distances, because we have the desire that the human family become one, because we have the desire for the mystical in our interior and the desire to give time to reflection.

HEARTS CONNECTED TO BUILD THE CHURCH

Finally, I would ask: connected to do what? What do we want to do with our life? To whom do we wish to give our life? The image that comes to my mind at this moment is Assisi, the town of Saint Francis. Saint Francis felt himself called, he had an inner experience and, in a moment of prayer, he heard the voice of God telling him to rebuild his Church. And he set about rebuilding a church in ruins: Saint Damian. Some time later, he realized that it was not a matter of this church of stone, but that he had to radically change his life. People said he was mad, but he changed his Church.

There was another madman, too, who built another house, he built the Hermitage. The Hermitage is a powerful symbol of construction, of faith in the future. When Champagnat was in the process of building the Hermitage, people said he was mad. But Champagnat had put his faith in Mary; he knew that the Marist Institute had a future. Today we are in process of rebuilding the Hermitage and I myself have heard the same thing said: you are mad! In France, where the average age of the Brothers is more than 70 years, why are we going ahead with rebuilding that? Others, however, praise this initiative, saying that we are in the act of bringing Champagnat back.

At the last General Chapter, the invitation received from the Lord was very clear: « You, Marists, you are called to be the Marial face of the Church ». And today, here and now, I would say that all of us, Brothers, lay people and youth, we are called by this same God who loves us, loves each one of you, to be, with hearts connected, the Marial face of the Church.

Thank you very much.

Br. Emili Turú,
Superior General of the Institute of the Marist Brothers.