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La comunidad de L'Hermitage

History of an «exceptional» time

Joan Puig-Pey is the architect in charge of the work of remodeling our mother house at the Hermitage. For nearly two years now, he has been travelling almost every week from Barcelona to the Hermitage. He is accustomed to spending two or three days there living in community with the Brothers who have remained, to supervise the works, in an adjacent house, "Les Sources". He has told me he is always admiring and grateful for this experience. Joan has also been following the steps in the formation of the new community of the Hermitage: an international community composed of 8 Brothers, 4 lay people - including a married couple-, and a Marist priest. Eight

different nationalities and nine languages, a single heart. They intended to arrive at the Hermitage on the 8th of December last, but owing to various problems, the work was much delayed. The community started on that date at La Neylière, near Lyon, a spiritual sanctuary of the Marist Fathers. They set the date of 8 March to begin at the Hermitage. It has been an especially hard winter, but they have been on time. At the moment, they are lodged in Le Rocher, the former Scholasticate. Joan wanted to coincide with their arrival and he expressed in writing his "exceptional" experience. Here I share it with you. I am sure you will empathise as good Marists.

Monday March 8th was a special day for all who feel ourselves Marists. And I would like to quote the words of Neil Armstrong, the first man to set foot on the moon on 21 July 1969: "it is a small step for man, but a giant step for mankind."

In fact, the new Marist community of the Hermitage has just installed itself in Le Rocher, and today has marked the first step. Their residence in Le Rocher is provisional, for a few weeks, while the remaining work on the project is being completed. But the twelve are here! The only one missing is John, the Marist Father, who will rejoin them soon. He is in New Zealand at present, finishing a course of spiritual exercises.

The whole building of Le Rocher is "their home". They have been able to choose among the 31 rooms. They have studies, a very simple oratory, a kitchen-dining room, the lounge, a reading and television area, a computer room, and the laundry with

washing machine and clothesline.... Everything a newly married couple would want to find in their new house. Everything is simple and austere, but splendid and well equipped, so that all feel themselves "at home". Comme il faut!

It is not worth mentioning the anxieties of these last weeks, which the cold and the snow have transformed into an epic. And the efforts of Br. Ton, converted into a true father and mother for all; with Br. Heribert always at his side. The fact is that they are already installed here, happy and expectant.

This afternoon I prayed with them and a moment ago we finished supper. They have their meals here in the room at la Maison des Sources: the cooking is much easier for the whole group. The dining room is a little crowded, but on these occasions anything is acceptable.

The group is happy, and, at the same time,

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expectant. The adventure which is beginning commands great respect from all, notwithstanding that they have been preparing for it for some time. There is good will and a good spirit, and fortunately this is decisive. It is what our good Father Marcellin asked for when a postulant arrived at the "mother house". The nine nationalities, the difference in ages, and the plurality of languages – a prophetic sign as well – make the melding longer and more difficult.

This evening, during supper, I was sitting at a corner of the table, next to Ton. I could see everyone: Ernesto and Norma, the Argentinian couple, who were responsible for meals this week and coming and going from the kitchen; Annie and María Élidea, speaking half in Spanish,... and the rest of the Brothers, talking in little groups, jumping from French to English or to Castellan... What a challenge they will all have to face so that each can give from what he/she is and contribute from his/her own identity and state of life!

I felt a rare, unfamiliar sensation... I am beginning my fourth community here in Les Sources in the last 21 months. I am, by far, the most senior in the house. But I was thinking: It is the first time that there are lay people in 'my community'; people like me!

Nevertheless, I assure you that it does not cost me much to feel "at home" with the Brothers, with whom I have been living almost two years, and this

despite not having a common project with them. We shared time, life, prayer, table, expenses... But I felt "different"! It was a community of Marist Brothers "with" Joan. Today I felt something else. I was "one" more in the midst of a plural Marist community united by a same feeling. Although it will take some weeks to deepen this perception.

While we were washing the dishes, Norma, the Argentinian woman, told me that she has five sons and five grandsons, and that this is what proves to be most difficult: "I miss them", she said. And I, as a father, understand her very well. Ernesto, who was drying the dishes, added that the main problem for now was to change the routines of the "Brothers' community". "Today we are of all types, but they are more numerous and more accustomed and prepared to live in community. Our Provincial, when he farewelled us, told us: Don't turn into brooothers for me!" We all laughed.

After supper, as happens in many communities, people disappeared rapidly. With the work finished each one withdraws to his room. I went out with Br. Ton to switch off the lights in the new building. From the terrace we had Le Rocher straight ahead. In the old Scholasticate, empty for so many years, there was light in the windows, the stairwell and the vestibule were brightly lit up... in the building there was LIFE. What would be its future? How would it develop?

The experience of the Hermitage is exceptional. In Catalonia, the only thing I see possible of something similar would be to establish a community of this style at Les Avellanes, to choose a place that is suitable for facing these challenges. But it would remain to be seen what missionary project this community would take on. As Ernesto said: "We get on very well with one another, but we are going to see now how we begin and develop our pastoral work here. Up to now we have been nomads in formation".

Hardly a month remains until the Provincial Chapter. And there is still much work to be done. But we will manage it. We did not believe either that the community would be able to come: and they are already here! I am seeing little "miracles". And every time I hear more vividly Marcellin repeating untiringly: "If the Lord does not build the house..." One turns into what one prays for.

It is a dream. It seems to me that it was only yesterday that 10th of November 2004, when Br. Josep Maria Soteras called me by telephone to tell me that at the Hermitage they would like to fix up some toilettes... and a few other things.

The night is cold; we are 5° below zero and there is still a lot of snow remaining. But spring is just around the corner and, with it, the end of my trips to the Hermitage, at least for now. I already see the "Jordán"...

With affection,
Joan Puig-Pey
N.D. de L'Hermitage,
March 8th, 2010



A new disc from Kairoi

Celebrating the 100th anniversary of the monastery in Avellanes



During the year 2010 the centenary of the Marist presence in at the monastery in Avellanes (Lerida) is being celebrated. Because of this, Kairoi is putting out a new album which will reflect the spirit generated by the mother house of the Marists in Catalunya. An echo and a glance toward the future, will be based on this lived experience which is so significant for the Church and in the lives of many Brothers and young people. Right here experiments/experiences like the Christmas (or Easter?) at Avellanes are

seen in the testimony to many personal choices, of many times of celebration and prayer, of meeting with great people and by many hopeful dreams.

The feast of Easter will be the moment in which Kairoi will make public the new disc. It will be in both Catalan and Spanish and under the title Caminando (Marching). After almost 25 years of hard work –the group was started in 1979- this will be the twenty-eighth disc of a group that has remained faithful to its call to offer excellent Christian

songs in a tone that is both nimble and engaging. In this disc twelve new themes will be offered: Corazones Nomadas (Nomadic Hearts); De la mano (By Hand); Plegaria (Praying); Somos Iglesia (We are Church); Decir tu nombre, Maria (Say your name, Mary); Rebo-sando nombres (Overflowing names); Perdona que te lo diga (Sorry for telling it to you); Padre del hombre (Father of the man); Champagnat; Siento tu dolor (I feel your pain); Si yo cambiara (If I were to change) and No pasa nada (Nothing is happening).

The Saint Paul publishing house, which was with us at the start of Kairoi publishing in 1992 one of its most popular recordings (Jesus of Nazareth) returns to make it a sure bet by the spreading this type of music which continues having many followers and still has a strong social and ecclesial demand. You can find more information about Kairoi and its new disc on the Official Kairoi Webpage: <http://www.maristes.org/kairoi/>



Mediterranea province

Brother Daniel Pardo makes final vows in Giuliano, Italy

On February 27, Brother Daniel Pardo made his perpetual profession in Naples, at the Giugliano school-chapel in the presence of his mother, his relatives, many Brothers of his Province. the Generalate Brothers, and a large group of his friends and students.

At the school, the vow ceremony had been preceded by an in-depth week

of reflection on vocation. Throughout the school the topic had been front and center: the three vows, the FMS vocation in its general significance and its specific elements, viz.: service of youth, simplicity, Mary. Throughout the school were signs of the theme: colorful posters set up in the classrooms adorned with phrases created by the students. In the classes, to teachers and parents, to the local Fraternity

and to many groups of young people, Brother Daniel had taken the time to explain the meaning of his consecration. In this way he had the opportunity to bear witness to the choice he had made and to respond to numerous questions asked by the young people.

Brother Daniel's perpetual profession was truly a joyous occasion for everyone present.



New teachers for "Ibérica"

Group of 55 new teachers for the centres of the Province

At the college of Zaragoza the missioning of the group of fifty-five new teachers for the centres of the Province has taken place. The day began with a visit to the Edelvives publishing house, where the general manager, Br. Luis Sanz and D. Javier Cendoya explained to us the procedures required in publishing a book. We did the first activity on the programme: to write a letter to Champagnat.

The meal was at the college, which welcomed us with open arms. In the afternoon, we gathered in the chapel of the centre and listened to the response Marcellin had made to our letter. Br. Moisés, vice provincial, brought the function to a close with some stirring words encouraging us to continue growing as persons and as Marist educators.

Letter of the new teachers to Marcellin

Dear Marcellin,
It has been three years since we began our formation as Marist teachers and during that time your presence has accompanied us. At this time when we complete our initial formation, we are writing to you to share how we feel, what we have learned, what have been our experiences and what are our hopes for the future.

The Marists have placed a great value on forming us. The formation has served to help us know your face and your pedagogy, which has caused to grow in us a deep admiration for your attitude of reaching out to the most needy children, for your visionary character and your spirit of struggle, which draws us to imitate you. Moreover, the system of distance learning has allowed us to adapt ourselves to the education of the XXI century.

We have experienced the family spirit we felt on our arrival at the college and which we have made our own, passing on to our students all the values you lived and desired to be essential and distinctive elements of the Marist family.

In the course of these three years we have had the opportunity to come to know the Marist identity, to interiorize it and to reflect it in our daily lives. We have discovered that the values

which inspired you continue to be vital nowadays and give meaning to our educational work. In sharing the same ideal we form part of more than a college: we form part of the Marist family.

We have come to know the Marist mission and integrate it in ourselves and we feel part of it. Each of us has different realities to face up to, but we respond with some common characteristics, such as nearness, presence, attentiveness to families and to students who present more difficulties, without forgetting evangelization.

We are very satisfied with our work. We believe that it is important to transmit to our students values for attaining a better world. Nevertheless, we are concerned by the difficulties suffered by broken families, students without motivation... our vocation permits us to meet each day as a new challenge, with optimism, and the wish to renew ourselves as teachers.

And what will we be tomorrow? We hope to continue with will, dreams, and the spirit of work so as to be able to welcome the ever changing future generations. We dream of a school open to all, where we are members of a single family working for the same end.

These dreams, in the form of a challen-

ge, encourage us as educators to show humanity and to serve the needs of our students, bringing the message of the Gospel to a personal level.

Well, Marcellin, this will be the last letter we will send you; the next will be an email. You will recall how difficult it was to transmit your message, how long letters took to arrive. If you have a moment, to have an idea of where your work has come up to now, visit maristasiberica.es and give us your opinion immediately on facebook.

From today we want to give more love and so we will carry out the directives that that have been indicated during these three courses. We pledge ourselves to act as an example of education in values inculcating in our students the importance of effort and personal work.

With this hope we will continue in the line that you began, placing our bets on children and their education. We hope that where you are, a smile is forming on your face, for this will mean that we are doing things right.

With affection, your students, new Marist teachers of the Province of Ibérica.

PS: only one who loves educates.

Zaragoza, 13 March 2010. 