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Updates

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27/10/2010: Following the Marist Spirituality Course at Los Negrales

English Third Age Programme

Manziana: 17 October – 13 December 2010

Following the Canonization of the St Mary of the Cross the 14 Brothers gathered at the General House to travel to Manziana. The Team had prepared well for our arrival and the Brothers felt very welcomed. The first week was used to allow the Brothers to slow down and reflect on their hopes for the Programme. Each Brother was invited to share the highlights of his life as a Brother. Listening to one Brother after another proved to be inspirational as well as helpful in getting to know each other.

As the weeks proceed there will be time to visit the birth places of our Congregations, time to look at the transitions that are part of our present stage of life and Religious life as lived in our Communities. We expect

we will be able to look at choices of the heart and the model of Mary as the First Disciple.

The programme also has time for a trip to Assisi and a Papal Audience before finishing with a three day Retreat. We are all looking forward to the weeks ahead with gratitude in our hearts, towards the members of the Team and the members of our Provinces who are continuing the home ministries while we take part in this period of renewal.

Brothers attending

- Bob Hughes, Tom Oldenski - USA
- John Heng - Southern Africa
- Paul Clet - East Asia



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Saint Mary MacKillop first Australian saint

A connection between the holy foundress and our Institute

The recent canonization of St Mary MacKillop (1842-1909), the first Australian saint, has been a cause of great joy for the Church of Australia and for the Marist Brothers. It is interesting to note some connections between the holy foundress and our Institute. Fr. Julian T. Woods, who collaborated with her in the foundation of her Sisters of St. Joseph, had known the Sisters of St. Joseph, founded in Le Puy, France, in 1640.

Fr. Julian was impressed by the simplicity of these deeply spiritual women, close to the people and working in the country areas. Mary MacKillop adopted this style of life and later transmitted it to her congregation, born in 1866.

Louise Champagnat, Marcellin’s paternal aunt, belonged to the congregation of St. Joseph. Expelled from her convent by the Revolution, she took refuge in the Champagnat home and contributed to the education of the little Marcellin. It is logical to assume that, as he was growing up, Marcellin assimilated some aspects of his aunt’s spirituality and made them his own.

Consciously or unconsciously, when Fr. Champagnat founded the Marist Brothers, he incorporated some of the ideals of the Sisters of St. Joseph, their way of life, apostolate, and spirituality.

Marcellin concentrated his attention on the little boys of the country areas who had no access to education. He inculcated in his brothers a style and spirituality of simplicity, of work, under the motherly inspiration of Mary. He borrowed some prayers and profession formulas from the nuns of Le Puy.

The Australian Sisters of St Joseph, inspired by St Mary MacKillop, followed a line in close parallel with these ideals. Speaking about them, someone wrote: "They are a community of religious women prepared to go anywhere where there is need for Catholic education, even if these are isolated places without a resident priest; they are women of the people, living economically, without great material requirements."



The significant difference in the primitive ideal between them and the Marist Brothers is that the person of Mary has been replaced by the masculine figure of St Joseph. Whatever the case, we can say that Aunt Louise would recognize in her Australian counterparts, as well as in the Marist Brothers, a kinship in spirituality and practices with the Sisters of Le Puy, and rejoice in the canonisation of Mary MacKillop.

Inspired by an article of Br. Chris Wade published in the "Review of the Sydney Province, vol 9, n° 3, pages 38-40



A cloud of witnesses

Blessed Brothers Bernardo, Laurentino, Virgilio and 44 companions martyrs

The painting representing Blessed Brothers Bernardo, Laurentino, Virgilio and 44 companions martyrs is the work of Danilo Ferreira Silva, a young man in formation in the Province of « Brasil Centro-Norte ». The artist has tried to interpret, with well defined brush strokes and vibrant colours, the heroic saga of these sons of Spain who, in life and in death, were an honour to the Church and the Marist Institute.

Although painting in a classical style, he has embellished his work with dotted figurative contours reminiscent of the icons of Eastern Christian tradition, whose forms and colours, charged with symbolism, suggest mystery, and thus the transcendental dimension which surrounds and elevates humanity touched by God.

The centre of the work is the risen Christ who, surrounded by glorious light, is projected, like a « Pantocrator », towards the eyes of the person contemplating him. His open arms suggest welcome – « Come to me, all you who labour and are overburdened, and I will give you rest » (Mt. 11:28) ; but also the paschal mandate – « Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations » (Mt. 28:19). The martyrs who surround him exemplify the words of the apostle: « This explains why Christ both died and came to life, it was so that he might be Lord of both the dead and of the living. » (Rm. 14 : 9).

The presence of the 47 martyrs is not secondary in the composition of the scene, but an essential element which asserts itself by its abundance and the symbolism flowing from it. The attentive observer will notice that the martyrs are not looking towards the Risen One, but, like him, are looking in front of them, as if to say: we are not the light, we point to it! « Behold the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world » (Jn.



1: 29). « Victory to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb » (Ap. 7: 10). They associate themselves with the praise of the whole Church when she sings the Te Deum: « The venerable multitude of Prophets, the shining army of Martyrs celebrate your praises. »

The Martyrs stand in a verdant and flowering field; one has the impression that they are growing from the earth, like the plants on which they stand. The artist has also wished to place in relief the fruitfulness of the blood shed for love of Christ and his Gospel: « The blood of Martyrs is the seed of Christians » (Tertullien).

Three Brothers are represented at the head of the group; they hold in their hands symbols relating to the Christian life and the Marist mission:

Bernardo, in the centre, hold a palm, symbol of the martyr. He represents all those « standing in front of the throne and in front of the Lamb, dressed in white robes and holding palms in their

hands » (Ap. 7: 9). One of his hands rests on a gun, symbol of the cruelty with which he was murdered early in the morning of 6 October 1934. Life has conquered death. His noble gesture is a challenge: « O death! Where then is your victory? » (1Cor. 15 : 55).

Virgilio holds a book in his left hand and makes an encouraging gesture with his right. In this way, he emphasizes the Christian education of youth, the common vocation of all the members of the group. An educator without peer, it can be said of him that, strong in his pedagogy, he put into practice the advice given in the Book of Proverbs: « Instruct a child in the way he should go, and when he grows old he will not leave it » (Pr. 22: 6).

Laurentino is represented with a scroll, allusion to his circular letter of 1933, in which, anticipating the religious persecution about to fall upon the Marist Congregation in Spain, he issued a challenge to all his Brothers: « Now is the time to show just how great is the fidel-

ity you vowed to the Lord. » He was himself among the first to show the greatness of his loyalty to God. As Provincial and, therefore, the first responsible for the good of his confrères, he acted as a true shepherd: he did not flee before the menace of the « hirelings », but in remaining with his flock, he gave his life for them (cf Jn. 10: 15)

Brothers Carlos-Rafael and Epifanio, youngest and oldest of the group, are also represented in a symbolic way. The former, on his knees, holds his arms and hands open, suggesting an attitude of humility and readiness in the following of Christ. Of this young martyr – he was scarcely 19 years old – one can say that he lived the recommendation made by Paul to his friend Timothy: « Do not let people disregard you because you are young, but be an example to all the believers in the way you speak and behave, and in your love, your faith, and your purity » (1 Tm. 4: 12). As for the latter, he has between his hands a brightly burning lamp. It symbolises the experience and wisdom acquired during his consecrated life. In the course of his 62 years, 46 as a Marist Brother, he incarnated the Word of God expressed by the prophet Isaiah: « I have destined you to be ... the light of the nations » (Is. 42: 6).

Everyone knows that this group of martyrs is distinguished by a strong Marial piety. The artist has illustrated their devotion to Our Lady by placing her image in the hands of Brother Fortunato-Andrés, and the rosary in those of Brother Alberto-María. In her litanies, Mary is invoked as Regina Martyrum, and among Marists she is called Good Mother, Ordinary Resource and First Superior. Her presence, then, is doubly justified in the work: as Queen of Martyrs and Mother full of goodness of all Marists!

Saint Marcellin Champagnat one day prophesied: « ... Yes, I say without hesitation, and the very thought is a great source of joy and consolation to me, one day the Institute will have its martyrs. » Bernardo, Laurentino, Virgilio and 44 companions martyrs are the first fruits of Marist sanctity, other than the Founder, recognized by the Church. They form part of the great group of 204 Brothers killed out of hatred of the Christian faith and in the cause of the defence of justice. They undeniably corroborate the affirmation of Vita Consecrata: « The gift of self even to a heroic degree is part of the prophetic character of the consecrated life. » (n° 83). Brothers Lycarion and Félix León, crosses in hand, claim for the

group the fulfillment of Jesus' words: « If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me » (Lk 9: 23).

« With so many witnesses in a great cloud on every side of us, we, too, then, should throw off everything that hinders us, especially the sin that clings so easily, and keep running steadily in the race we have started. Let us not lose sight of Jesus, who leads us in our faith and brings it to perfection ; for the sake of the joy which was still in the future, he endured the cross, disregarding the shamefulness of it, and from now on has taken his place at the right of God's throne » (Heb. 12: 1-2).

« What we must do is not merely collect their relics and erect monuments to them but imitate them, follow the example of their radicality, their attitude of witnessing, their reasons for living and for their decisions, and ensure that their blood brings forth fruit in the form of action that will live on. Thus we can show that they neither hoped nor died in vain » (Br. Benito Arbués, Fidelity to the mission in situations of social unrest, p. 69).

Br. Rafael Ferreira Júnior, FMS



Course of studies at MAPAC

Philippines

On October 8, our 3rd Year Brothers completed their course of studies here at MAPAC. In a well prepared and much appreciated ceremony which included a Missioning service, during the Eucharist, the 11 young Brothers and an ACI sister from Vietnam received their CERTIFICATE IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES. The graduates have now returned to their home Provinces. After they complete a further 40 hours of supervised teaching, they qualify for the degree: Bachelor of Education (Religious Studies) from Notre Dame of Marbel University (conducted by the Marist Brothers in Mindanao, Philippines).

