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The child, the foundation of society

Nigeria launches a year-long programme for childcare and education

On 30 October, in Orlu, the Marist Brothers of Nigeria launched a year-long programme for childcare and education. The 21st General Chapter of the Marist Brothers commits the entire Institute at all levels to promote the rights of children and young people and to advocate these rights in government, non-government and other public institutions.

It is no coincidence that the first goal of education for all focuses on the youngest and most vulnerable children, said Koichiro Matsuura, Director-General of the UNESCO. "Improving their wellbeing at the earliest age must be an integral and systematic component of education and poverty reduction policies. High-level political endorsement is essential to getting early childhood care and education on the agenda".

The child is the adult of tomorrow. Hence,



the year of the child aims specifically:

- To draw the attention of the Marist Brothers, apostles of children and young people, to the needs of the child today.
- To draw the attention of the Church, mother and teacher (Mater et Magistra) to the needs of the child today, so as to help the programme gain high priority in the Church's pastoral concern.
- To bring the attention of the government and Nigerian society at large to the needs of the child today, so that this concern gets an adequate response in national planning and budgeting.

Why now? Education for all; roll back child mortality; reduction of poverty and discrimination against girl children, among others; these form some of the targets of the Millennium Development Goals meant to be achieved in the year 2015.



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Ad Gentes and the Champagnat Mouvement

Province of "Rio Grande do Sul"

After the 4th Meeting of the Marist Institutes of Higher Education, organised by the 'Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul' – PUCRS, in Porto Alegre (Brasil), from 5 to 8 October 2010, Brs. Josep Maria Soterias, General Councillor and delegate of the Superior General at the meeting, and Teófilo Minga took part in a meeting of the ChMMF of the Province of Rio Grande do Sul which took place on 9 October.

Despite the great « bridge » for the feast of Nostra Senhora Aparecida, some 200 members of the movement were present, so the organizers considered it would be a « little meeting ». Had it not been for the bridging period – practically a week of holiday – there would probably have been some 500. In many parts of the Marist world, 200 participants would have seemed quite a large number. This led Br. Josep Maria to say that « in Brasil, even what seems little is big ». In fact, it was a pleasure to meet 200 members of the ChMMF.

Br. Josep Maria made a presentation of elements of the General Council programme, and called on each one to take part, according to possibilities and circumstances, in putting into practice certain of its objectives in his Province and country.

In the same way, one could talk about rediscovering and delighting in one's own vocation. At first glance, one might think this applied only to brothers « disenchanted » with their Marist life. But it could certainly be extended to all Marists, laity included, in the sense of living the Marist vocation with great joy and enthusiasm. And

if this were so, this example would inspire other persons to enter on the Marist way, where they would find the meaning of their own existence, the realization of their dreams and hopes. To tell the truth, we should develop more and more new ways of living the Marist charism.

Another important principle is the Rights of Children. There too we have a principle which is not the province of the brothers only. Every Marist, whether he is working in education, health, art, politics or in any other field, should have reference to children, knowing they have rights to education, health, recreation, love, in short everything that helps them grow, so that they become active and responsible subjects in the construction of a more just and human society. But to do this, we have precisely to defend the child in situations where his RIGHTS, whatever they are, are ignored.

It is the same with internationalism and pluriculturalism. More and more the Marist Institute is showing this international and pluricultural face, for example in many of the communities founded in these last few years. Numerous recent experiences of formation have also had this international and pluricultural character. The whole current experience of mission AD GENTES in the congregation is perhaps the best example of these values. It is clear that they are also a call to live an attitude of humility in regard to cultures different from our own, and of openness with regard to certain aspects which do not precisely coincide with our ideas.

This was the moment when Br. Teófilo intervened to emphasise the example

of the new communities of the Sector AD GENTES: they are all international and, as a result, their elements come from the most varied cultures. However, the Co-ordinator of AD GENTES emphasised that equally as important as the different cultures was the centrality of Christ in the life of the missionary.

But this requirement or right or duty was not specific to the Marist missionary in the limited sense of the term. Every member of the ChMMF, from the fact of being Marist, is called to make Christ the centre of his or her life. This may be an excellent way to awake in the interior of the movement, and indeed outside, missionary AD GENTES or other vocations. On the occasion of celebrating its de la célébration 25 years of life, the ChMMF is called more and more to take on within its organisation – and in the life of its members – this missionary dimension. This is a heritage of the Institute that we must not lose. May the ChMMF help us to rediscover this dimension with an ever more powerful apostolic force and zeal.

It is said that without the missionary dimension the Church is not the Church. And if we apply the same principle to the ChMMF? We are certainly on different theological planes. But seeing that the ChMMF is an integral part of the Marist world, it is difficult for us to envisage it without this missionary dimension. Could that not be one of its objectives for the next 25 years?

Porto Alegre, Brazil - 11 October 2010
Br. Teófilo – Co-ordinator Ad gentes



"The consecrated life which I believe is the future for Europe"

José Rodríguez Carballo, Minister General OFM

The Minister General of the Franciscan Order, Fra José Rodríguez Carballo, in his talk: "Consecrated Life in Europe: commitment to evangelical prophecy", given during the 76th Six-monthly Assembly of the Union of Superiors General (USG), held in Rome from 24 to 26 November 2010, concludes his presentation with a credo and a dreamy, which we report as follows.

Below, in the form of a Decalogue, are my convictions about the future of consecrated life in Europe.

1. I believe in a European consecrated life that, living its own fragility with boldness, beginning from an initial situation of shortage, chaos, and emptiness, from a situation of not-knowing and not-being-able, allows itself to be modeled by the Lord who, with the patience of a craftsman, transforms it in his image and likeness and infuses into it his breath of life. A consecrated life willing to be born again (cf. Jn 3,3). A consecrated life that reviews its life-plan from its foundations of clay and total poverty.

2. I believe in a European consecrated life possessed by the Absoluteness of God and passionate for justice; a consecrated life that frequents and creates spiritual oases, sacred spaces of the infinite, capable of forming masters of the spirit and conveying the beauty of following Jesus Christ, obedient, poor, and chaste, without ceasing to be an expert in humanity, actively engaged, lovingly and profoundly compassionate and merciful towards those who lie half-dead along the way. A consecrated life that is lived out unconditionally for Him, that allows itself to be transformed into a visible and radiant sign for a frail and weak humanity that stumbles along, lacerated by bandits who leave her gravely wounded on the side of the road (cf. Lk 10, 30ss). A consecrated life animated by the passion of the Samaritan woman and the compassion of the Samaritan man.



3. I believe in a European consecrated life that allows itself to be drawn out of the desert of superficiality and sterile intellectualism, from the deceitful waters of banality and the desire to justify oneself. A consecrated life that lets itself be led towards depth and authenticity, placing itself existentially in an attitude of conversion and in the logic of what is essential, original, gratuitous, of the charismatic and prophetic life. A consecrated life that has the courage to place itself in the flow of the Spirit, to taste life in abundance.

4. I believe in a European consecrated life that is credible by what it lives, meaningful by the Gospel quality of its life and mission, a visible memory of the way Jesus lived and acted. A consecrated life which recaptures the Gospel as its life and rule – the supreme norm, according to the Council – and which starts afresh from it without domesticating its most radical demands in order to accommodate them to a comfortable style of life. A consecrated life

which seeks in the Gospel its youthful vitality, its wisdom ever new, its freshness and deepest newness, of which it has need. A consecrated life capable of acknowledging the thirst it has and of getting on the path towards the well from which flows the living water (cf. Jn 3, 37- 39).

5. I believe in a European consecrated life which, by letting itself be seduced by inhuman cloisters, takes the side of fragility and vulnerability as the essence of its identity and a consequence of its faith in the Incarnation of the Word. A consecrated life that lives by the hope that comes from the Lord, the only One able to renew its vigor (cf. Is 40, 3031), and therefore that sows hope in the hearts of all those who had reasons for losing it, seeing itself as a humble and simple sign of a star that still shines in the middle of the night of peoples' lives.

6. I believe in a multi-cultural and interculturated European consecrated life

which, through the logic of gift, is able to cross all kinds of anthropological and geographical frontiers, and which, through faith in God, Three and One, is capable of creating bridges on which to meet with what is other and what is different, and to be the architect of dialogue through an option and style of life. A consecrated life that sees diversity as a richness and not a threat and that takes it up joyfully as an epiphany of God who makes all things new. A consecrated life that, through a profound spirituality of communion, is a place of communion, forgiveness, and reconciliation. A consecrated life that asks and gives recognition far beyond any fundamentalism.

7. I believe in a European consecrated life that, out of faithfulness to its deepest identity and its rich history, is open with hope to the future toward which the Holy Spirit is leading us (cf. Vita Consecrata 110), making itself present in the world today, living it with passion and in a stance of adventus, experiencing in this way the presence and coming of the Lord (cf. NMI 1).

8. I believe in a European consecrated life with a vision of the future, an imagination and creativity based on the Gospel, that is capable of opening hitherto unheard of presences of witness, putting itself in the vanguard of evangelization as salt of the earth, light of the world, and yeast in the dough, proclaiming Christ those who are near and those who are far away, out of what

it has heard and seen (cf. 1Jn 1, 3), introducing men and women into the mystery of the love of God. A religious life that, after quenching its thirst like the Samaritan woman in the spring that forever quenches thirst, becomes a message in itself.

9. I believe in a European consecrated life that is on its way towards a better understanding of the demands of its vocation and mission, in search of wells and paths, and in constant discernment. A consecrated life that is a mendicant of meaning, in profound communion with the men and women of our time, aware that its mission is allowing itself to be burned, so as to diffuse light, and passion for holiness and humanity. A consecrated life that is committed to transparency and credibility, that adopts attitudes of sincere humility, listening, docility, poverty, and a sense urgency to rekindle the fire of the heart and diffuse the charity of Christ.

10. I believe in a European consecrated life that does not allow itself to be shut within borders created by the prevailing ideologies but which remains capable of presenting a counter-cultural project founded on a deep and solid experience of God in the radicalness of the discipleship of Christ, centered on Him who is All, concentrated on the essential elements of the charism of the Founders/Foundresses, de-centered in such a way that it is on the road to meet with the men and wom-

en of our times. A counter-cultural project that snatches consecrated life from the terrible nihilism which, even though it smiles, never ceases to be tremendously dangerous, and from a psychic economy that focuses solely on wellbeing and fosters a culture of relativism.

If to dream about life is to give it a future, then allow me to dream:

- I dream of a European consecrated life that takes up the call to minority, as much from the personal viewpoint as the institutional.
- I dream of a European consecrated life that takes its stand on quality rather than quantity.
- I dream of a European consecrated life that opts for a mission to be yeast, ferment, prophecy, and sign, watchmen on the wall, trumpets at dawn, sentry at night, and a lighthouse in the distance.
- I dream of a consecrated life in Europe that favors symbol over efficacy.
- I dream of a consecrated life in Europe which gives more importance to deep renewal than to survival; to re-founding people than to re-founding structures.
- I dream of a consecrated life in Europe that is closer to Jesus and closer to humankind, especially those who are the least; a consecrated life that is passionate for Christ and passionate for humanity.



Honoris Causa - Br. Cláudio Girardi

Br. Cláudio Girardi, Councillor General of the Institute 1985 - 1993, received the title of Doctor Honoris Causa at the "Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Paraná" (PUCPR) on 10 November in the "John Henri Newman" auditorium.

While in Rome, he followed with particular attention the University's de-

velopment. He assured the follow-up – or loaned his support – to different processes of expansion or consolidation which required the advice of the General Council. After this period, he was "Community Pro-Rector" of the PUCPR from July 1994 to the beginning of 1996. Competent "Articulator" at the time of transition, Br. Cláudio has always been distinguished for his

affability, his ability to listen, and his innate sense of leadership. Persons close to him can testify to his greatness of spirit and his commitment to the PUCPR. Br. Cláudio is gifted with an enviable culture and loves to write. He has published many books, has others being printed, and has written numerous articles. A polyglot, he has done a good number of translations.

