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### MARIST NEWS

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## Bureau of Laity

### The Bureau shares its programme with the General Council

#### General House



The Bureau of Laity has taken a step further in its organisation. In September 2010, it met with the Enlarged Bureau in order to draw up a three year Plan. Recently it met again in Rome, from 7 to 11 January, to share the comments from the meetings organized in the Provinces in reaction to the Bureau's Plan of action. The Director, Br. Javier Espinosa, met for the first time with the Co-directors, Ana Sarrate and Tony Clarke.

The work agenda included a first reflection on three meetings planned at regional and international levels to promote the formation of provincial animators who will work on the new Brother-laity relationship, the drawing up of a programme of dis-

cernment on the lay Marist vocation, and the process of updating the Champagnat Movement.

The Bureau also reflected on the autonomy, co-responsibility and communion, as well as the meaning of the lay Marist vocation, the sense of attachment and belonging, the better connecting up of the laity in the Provinces and Regions, and the harmonizing of efforts among the Bureaus.

Other points of the Plan were studied at the meeting: identification of the regions of the Institute most in need of attention, dialogue with other Congregations on the subject of laity, the projection of activities over the three years, promotion

of the spirit of the document Around the same table, elaboration of a Marist vocabulary, joint formation, support for experiments favouring new ways of living the Marist charism, etc.


The meeting offered an opportunity for reviewing the Bureau's means of communication and of becoming familiar with the current state of the laity web site.

The plenary session of the General Council in Rome met the Directors of the Bureaus of Mission, Brothers today and International Missionary Col-

laboration. The Bureau of Laity took the opportunity to present the Plan it hopes to develop over the next years and to exchange on the possible mutual implications. The different Bureaus met the Council to share their plans for the future.

The presence of the two lay persons – a man and a woman – in the Council room underlines the determination to promote greater co-responsibility and leadership on the part of the laity. For the same reason, it is necessary to enlarge the Bureau from 4 to 7 persons

representing the main Regions of the Institute and thus covering all the feelings of the Institute. The first meeting of the Enlarged Bureau will take place at the Hermitage at the end of May 2011. It is planned to have the first meeting by Region of the animators of the lay process in the Provinces this same year.

The meeting witnessed to the new relationship between Brothers and laity invited by the General Chapter, in an attitude of communion and with a common horizon of hope. 

# Seminar on the "Theology of the Apostolic Consecrated Life".

## Guidelines for reflection on apostolic religious life

**F**rom 7 to 12 February 2011 was held the seminar on "Theology of Apostolic Consecrated Life" in the Centre of Spiritual Exercises of the Society of Saint Teresa of Jesus in Rome. The seminar was organized conjointly by the two Unions of Superiors General, male (USG) and female (UISG). The respective Unions invited 15 Superiors General of men's congregations and 15 of women's together with thirty theologians (15 men and 15 women). Brother Emili Turú was one of the participants and had an important role as moderator of various presentations.

The presidents of the two Unions, Father Pascual Chávez and Sister Mary Lou Wirtz, gave a brief explanation of the basic objectives of the meeting in the opening session:

- Promote serious reflection on the situation of the theology of apostolic consecrated life today;
- Identify the questions and challenges that the current situation of the world and the Church pose for this theology;
- Promote the renewal of studies and research in this field.

Of particular significance was the reading of the expectations previously ex-

pressed by the participants in view of this seminar: approach the question of the prophetic, evangelical, and charismatic function of apostolic religious life, offer some creative ideas for updating this theology, outline the major themes and future challenges for religious life, treating at the same time of "re-imagining it" "with new paradigms, new frontiers, and a new vision of the world in which the Spirit leads us into the future."

In harmony with these objectives, the organizers not only offered an opportunity for sharing useful and interesting information, but for creating a "laboratory" with persons enthusiastic about and competent and interested in the specific topic of theology of the apostolic religious life.

From Tuesday to Friday, work began with a leading paper around which the day's activities revolved: communications, group work, general assembly.

The Superior General of the Verbites, Father Antonio Pernia, opened the round of presentations with the topic "Opportunities and challenges which the world and Church of today offer and pose to the theology of the consecrated life". With this presentation, the seminar came to the heart of deep re-

flexion on apostolic consecrated life. Among the many challenges, the speaker concentrated especially on the crisis of consecrated life, particularly evident in Western Europe and North America, caused by an increasingly globalised world.

The main opportunities the current situation can offer religious life are especially those of inter-culturality, inter-congregational co-operation and the growing involvement of increasingly better prepared and motivated lay people.

But there are many questions more looking for an answer. The first response to these questions, as much about the challenges as about the opportunities, came through five communications on the current situation of religious life in Africa (Bishop Faustin Ambassa), Latin America (Sister Maricarmen Bracaonte), Asia (Sr. Kallapurakkathu Sujita María), France (Br. André-Pierre Gauthier) and Oceania (Fr. Smith). All these topics were later analysed in the language groups.

The second presentation was made by Sister María Maher, Superior General of the Sisters of Notre Dame, on the topic: "Called and sent: reflections on a theology of apostolic religious life today".

The complex and difficult talk by María Maher was subsequently completed by three short communications confided to the ex-Superior General of the Dominicans, Father Carlos Azpiroz Costa (Theological reading of the principal historical forms of consecrated life), the United States theologian, Sister Sandra Schneider, (Radicality and meaning of consecrated life), and the Salesian theologian, Juan Bartolomé (Theological basis of religious life).

The working groups discussed these presentations afterwards. The new secretary of the Vatican Congregation for Consecrated Life, Mons. Joseph Tobin, took part.

The third session opened with a report by Father Camilo Maccise, ex-Superior General of the Discalced Carmelites and ex-president of the directing committee of the USG. As he was unable to participate in the work because of his poor health, the report was presented by a confrère, Father Miguel Márquez, provincial of the Carmelite Province of Castilla.

Father Maccise spoke of the achievements and questions relating to the founding and historical development of consecrated life. The most important achievements of religious life, according to him, were the overcoming of the "action-contemplation" dichotomy, evangelization and the witness of God in history, the unique mission of the Church, the apostolic dimension of fraternal life and the religious vows, the preferential option for the poor as an evangelical option within the apostolic mission.

The challenges, certainly no less numerous, are: the commitment to justice and solidarity, authentic and evangelical engagement in "practical politics", the presence in advance posts and in the new 'areopagus-es' of mission (wastelands, suburbs, frontiers), the inculturation of apostolic consecrated life capable of reconciling unity with diversity, sharing the charism with lay people, the theological aspect of inter-congregational co-operation starting from a clear charismatic identity of each religious institute.

Three communications made up the final contribution to the morning's work: from the French theologian



Sylvie Robert (The place of the three vows in the theological understanding of religious life), from the Marianist José M. Arnaiz, ex-secretary general of the USG (Consecrated life in the ecclesiology of the apostolic communion), and, last, from the Capuchin Paolo Martinelli, director of the Spirituality Institute in the Antonianum, (A theological reflection on the consecrated person of apostolic life). The presentation of Fr Maccise and the three communications gave rise to a rich debate among the participants in the small groups and in the general assembly.

The fourth and last day began with a presentation by the Brazilian theologian and Pauline Sister Vera Ivanise Bombonato. She presented a broad reflection on new experiments of apostolic religious life in the Church from the Brazilian situation, where they already number about 500. It was a question, she said, of a multifaceted phenomenon, complex and many sided, of which it is almost impossible to give a complete analysis.

Vera Bombonato's presentation took on a much more concrete outline with the presentation of some "new communities". This exposition was completed by the ex Minister General OFM, Giacomo Bini, who spoke about the "European Missionary Society in Palestrina" which he founded and directed four years ago, as "a new form born within an institute of apostolic consecrated life". This institution is favouring the birth of the first Franciscan vocations.

A different position was expressed by the Franciscan Sister Osf, Iliá Delio, who in the United States gave new life for some years, with another

sister, to a community of "Franciscan evangelical life", not renewing old forms of religious life, but trying to be present in the world as "women centred on the Gospel." For her part, Sister Suzanne Phillips confined herself simply to talking about "newness" of the consecrated life in Australia, in the existing institutes.

On 12 February 2011, the seminar concluded with a celebration of the Eucharist presided over by the new secretary of the Vatican Congregation, Bishop J. Tobin who, ex-Superior General of the Redemptorists, was also vice-president of the USG.

At the closure of the seminar, no conclusions or proposals were announced, but some important reference data given for the future work to be done in continuing the work of the seminar. This meeting was merely a point of departure for future work. The two Unions organising the seminar (USG and UISG) had not planned on a final declaration but simply indicated some lines for theological investigation that all the participants should take up personally in a responsible manner. For its part, the USG will continue and deepen the themes of the seminar in the two assemblies of 2011, and the women Superiors General will do the same at their assembly in May.

This information was compiled using the data provided by Father Ángel Arriola in Vidimus Dominum <http://vd.pcn.net/it/> a common project of the UISG and the USG, where appear in short form the texts of the presentations delivered during the seminar.

# Website [www.fmsi-onlus.org](http://www.fmsi-onlus.org)

## New version

Dear Brothers and Friends,

During the last few weeks we have been working to renew our website [www.fmsi-onlus.org](http://www.fmsi-onlus.org). It now has a new graphic layout and structure.

The objective of this effort was to give our website a more appealing look with more complete contents that clearly reflect the identity we are trying to build around FMSI. Above all, we tried to make it a better tool to work with. We would like the website to introduce, in an effective way, FMSI and how it works for the benefit of children by providing information in a transparent way so as to keep us connected with our partners and friends. We see it as a means of exchanging resources and news.

We invite you to visit the website and send us your comments. Your feedback and suggestions will be a source of



**FMSI**  
Per il Bene dei Bambini

inspiration and will be useful in improving the website.

We also ask you to contribute, whenever possible, information, news, materials, and resources related to children and their rights. We will be happy to give visibility to Marist mission work, as well as to the initiatives of those groups who share our goals and engage in children's rights advocacy worldwide. The invitation is addressed especially to those that have already collaborated

with us on projects and other initiatives; we would like to receive updates to post and follow up.

Eventually, we would appreciate if you would include our link in your websites for our mutual advantage. As you will see, we have already inserted the links of many of you and will be happy to expand the list in the coming weeks.

We hope you enjoy the website!  
FMSI staff.



## Welcome Brother Philip Member of the West Central Europe Province

Brother Philip McGee, F.M.S., formally entered the novitiate on October 10, 2010. A native of Scotland and member of the West Central Europe Province of The Marist Brothers, Brother Philip will spend the next 15 months immersed in experiencing the life of a Brother.

"It's an incredible privilege to be here and to have a year-and-a-half of your life to devote to God and spirituality," said Brother Philip. The novice also describes the community in Esopus as "lovely." "The Marist Brothers in America are like all Marist Brothers,"

he added. "They are welcoming and open to new and different ideas."

The novitiate in Esopus is one of 16 Marist novitiates throughout the world. Novice Master Brother Rob Clark, F.M.S., noted that many novitiates now have an international presence due to an increasing global society. "And that is really in keeping with our founder St. Marcellin Champagnat's vision of going out and including others," he explained. "There's definitely a value in sharing our experiences and culture that is part of our Marist internationality."

Brother Philip will also experience other Marist communities and meet other novices when he visits Colombia, South America later this spring. He will also have the opportunity to work with a group of Marist lay partners from Glasgow at Camp Marist in New Hampshire this summer. In August, Brother Philip and Brother Rob will also take the novitiate experience "on the road" when they visit four Marist communities and three ministries in Ireland.

