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100 days to the WYD

Cardinal Rouco launches the final stretch

At a hundred days from the World Youth Day, the archbishop of the Diocese hosting it, Cardinal Antonio María Rouco Varela, does not hesitate to predict that this event will become a new 'Pentecost': "We are at the doors of a new Pentecost". This is what he says in a letter published last Sunday, opening the final stretch of preparations for this event, to be held from 16 to 21 August.

From the moment the Holy Father announced, in Sydney on 3 July 2008, that Madrid would be the site of the next world youth meeting, "we have not stopped preparing ourselves and getting ready spiritually and pastorally so that the World Youth Day in Madrid, with the Holy Father, may become the providential opportunity for a close encounter, authentic and joyful, with Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior."

This meeting, he adds, "calls on the youth in the Church of Jesus Christ for their lives, now tarnished and broken, now fresh and vigorous, to be rooted and built in Him, who alone can offer and give them truth, hope and love; who alone can show them the right direction and accompany them on the way that leads to authentic and lasting happiness: here and in the hereafter!"

"The local Church of Madrid, charged by the Pope with the organisation of this great ecclesial event – without a doubt the most exceptional in all its history –, receives at the same time a singular gift and a pastoral responsibility without precedence, which the Pastor of the



Marist College of Málaga, Spain

Universal Church entrusts to her in view of the great and very current objective of the new evangelization of the youth of the Third Millennium."

Last stretch

The last stretch of preparations for the coming WYD, he says, "is already here. And so the imminence of what will be a new, fruitful and beautiful hour of grace and the Spirit for the Church and for its youth, and what is more, the certainty that we are at the doors of a new 'Pentecost' which will renew their hearts and their life projects thanks to an ardent love of Jesus Christ, imposes itself upon us with inevitable pastoral evidence. It is urgent to respond to it personally and as a community.

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Director:

Br. AMEsaún

Production:

Mr. Luiz da Rosa

Redaction and Administration:

Piazzale Marcellino Champagnat, 2
C.P. 10250 – 00144 ROMA
Tel.: (39) 06 54 51 71
E-mail: publica@fms.it
web: www.champagnat.org

Edit:

Marist Brother's Institute
General House – Rome

With Jesus, in Champagnat's way

Mexico - Friends on the march

The "Campamento Nacional de Escalada Azul" (Summer Camp) took place in the "Parque Acuático Villagasca" of the city of Villagrán, Guanajuato. The participants numbered 280, coming from eight Marist schools: Hidalguense High School, México de Toluca School, Queretano High School, Pedro Martínez Vázquez School, Marcelino Champagnat School, Sahuayense High School, and the Schools of Esperanza and Jacona.

On this occasion, our camp was organized around the Centenary of the Mexican Revolution. Games, topics, dynamics and rallies helped us to reflect on the conditions assured by our homeland for our intellectual, moral, social and economic development. We have to recognize, therefore, what the country has given us so as to be just in its regard and show it by our conduct. We have tried to develop among the participants a love for their country, for the place where they were born and have grown up, the country especially which has seen them excel themselves. The participants have identified with their culture, traditions,



language, values, in becoming aware of the reality surrounding them.

From the beginning, joy and harmony were evident. We felt ourselves members of the same family, the Marist Family. Despite the distances and the mentality proper to each town, we marched, driven by a single ideal: to reach the summit.

The camp took shape little by little in a friendly atmosphere, thanks to the 12 teams named after the heroes of our revolution. Informal chats, times for song and games, team work, meal times, and even nights without sleep, were elements which recharged our "batteries" for the hard work performed throughout these four days.

One detail which filled us with joy was the presence of the Special Marist Group of Irapuato "Taiyari"; their enthusiasm and craving for life carried us forward; they are an example of force and courage for all. We also underline

the presence of some persons who encourage us to carry on our work: Brothers Jimmy and Adán, the teacher Javier from Sahuayense High School, Br. Justino from Hidalguense High School and Br. Rodrigo Espinosa from the Jacona Marist School. Ulises Centeno, co-ordinator of the Youth Ministry of our Province, was also present.

Going by the comments and experiences shared by the children, the work accomplished in each of the towns is very positive, without a doubt. Irma, Chayo, Paulina, Luis Fernando, Jimmy, Fidel, Alfredo, Manolo, Sabás, I thank you very much for the time and work you consecrate to this project close to our hearts.

Likewise, we thank all the teachers who, on the way, have taken part in the pastoral work of "Friends on the march". They constitute an important support for our group. I invite them to continue on this track and become more and more involved.

One more, animators, I take note of your work; without your participation, your enthusiasm, your joy and your time, our movement would perish; I encourage you to give the best of yourselves, to demonstrate by your work and your attitudes that you do honour to the Marist standard.

And finally, I encourage you to continue your journey; it is difficult, but the satisfactions you will see in each smile, in a word of praise and in a heartfelt thank you from the little ones will let you know your efforts have been rewarded.



Henri Vergès and mysticism

Testimony of a friend of Brother Henri Vergès

The installation of Henri Vergès at Sour-El-Ghozlane has allowed us to deepen our knowledge of the mystic in general, on his presence in Algiers, with the direction of the Saint Bonaventure school. His professional life did not leave him enough free time to deepen his knowledge of Islam in all its dimensions. His associations were almost limited to the Catholic community living in Algiers.

On his arrival in Sour El Ghozlane, Vergès had free time available. This time allowed us to mutually enrich each other on the spiritual plane. It allowed him to discover Islam in its moral, human, and especially spiritual dimensions. It made me discover the history of the Church written by Daniel Rops and various writings of Christian saints which we meditated on together, especially Saint Augustin and, in particular, his book "The Confessions". He was always asking me to tell him about it and to make him a summary of my reading.

For my part, I spoke to him of the spiritual journey, of what one can call "the aspirant", in Arabic "el mourid":



the Moslem who is versed in the path of mysticism. He did not hide his astonishment at observing the existence of a great similarity in Islam and Christianity.

One day, I described to him the state of the aspirant in his spiritual journey and sanctity in Islam. "El mourid", the aspirant, is one who wants nothing other than his Lord and Master.

Three categories of this can be distinguished. The first, one who fosters the will to receive the blessings and divine protection, but whose aspirations are weak or who retains too many worldly attachments. The second is one who fosters the will to arrive at the divine presence proper to people of detach-

ment and to those with a strong determination. The third is the one who fosters the will to attain to the rank of lieutenant or perfect gnosis, one whose gift of intelligence has become manifest, whose merit has achieved perfection and whose function of lieutenant has been proclaimed by a "schaykh", a great spiritual master, or by an authentic interior way, "hatif".

Vergès followed my explanation very attentively. It happened frequently that I could not find the French words to give the exact explanation in the Arabic Sufi terminology.

It was at the monastery of the Trappists at Médéa and with the monks of this monastery that we discussed these matters. In my inner being, I was trying to find out the degree of spirituality of these monks with many years of prayer, austerity and meditation. This was one of the reasons which drove us to create the journal "the link", "RIBAT" in Arabic.

I conclude this testimony by praying to God and his saints for peace among all peoples.



Marist Patrimony and Spirituality

The Marist Brothers of Brazil Study the Marist Sources

From April 6-9, the first phase of the National Course on Marist Patrimony and Spirituality took place in Brazil. This initiative was taken by UMBRASIL which had as its main objectives the understanding, reflection and greater knowledge of our spiritual patrimony, the sharing of our history and the charism of the Marist Institute.

Aimed at the formation of animators, the final phase of the course, with more than 45 hours of work and study, will take place next September.

The first phase relied on the special participation of Brother Andre Lanfrey, one of the best specialists on the topic.



Pastoral Visit to Haiti

Brothers Real and Bernard of Canada visit our Marist works in Haiti

Below is a short travel diary of a visit to Haiti made by Brothers Réal Sauvageau, member of the Provincial Council and Bernard Beaudin, Provincial of the Province of Canada. The visit took place in the middle of April. Until recently, our missionary work in Haiti depended on the Province of Canada, but presently it is part of the Province of Western Mexico.

Upon our arrival April 14, Br. Frisnel was there at the airport. After leaving our luggage in the small apartment that the community rents, we visited Port-au-Prince. What devastation! It was truly moving to see that there are still hundreds of thousands of people living in patched and frayed tents, with the suffocating heat and the unhealthiest of sanitary conditions, or to see what remains of Villa Manresa: just a pile of rubble. The rented apartment is simple, rather narrow, but pleasant. Br. Frisnel, in his hospitality gave us the two available bedrooms and he slept in the hallway as Father Champagnat did in the time of the first brothers.

On Monday, he took us to the airport where we took a light plane for Jérémie. There Brother Laurent awaited us and accompanied us to Latibolière. We found a lovely community, welcoming and united, where each one contributes his unique color to the overall mosaic: Br. Antonio close to the people and always available; Br. Laurent, tireless missionary, always on the road to visit a sick person or to find a new game to motivate the young people in the library; Toussaint, the young Haitian brother, with his youthful enthusiasm, is the soul of the REMAR movement; finally there's Jean, the director, a true lay Marist, dynamic leader, close to the brothers and very much a part of the pastoral animation of the place.

The next day, we set out for Dame-Marie. How wonderful the scenery along the way! There were children everywhere who smiled at us as we passed! In Dame-Marie, we met Lucien, always active, and so sensitive to the needs of people and the youth; Sergio, for his part, little by little has found his place and we have discovered in him a teacher, a builder, a man with a thousand projects for the place. Unfortunately we were not able to meet Jean-Mance and Wilguins, two scholastics who had already departed for Port-au-Prince to get their visas to return to Mexico.

After the morning Palm Sunday procession through the streets of Dame-Marie we left for Jérémie to spend our last day with the formators and the 6 postulants. All



the members of the community had the opportunity to express themselves on whatever was in their hearts in relation to the demanding service of formation. Thanks to the power of the brotherly dialogue, open and always renewing, they have committed themselves to build the community of the "new land". We returned from this short visit with a new energy, because of the enthusiasm of each and all, despite the important challenges that the Haiti mission can present.