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## Keeping Children Safe

### Child Advocacy at MAPAC, Philippines

The two-week course organized by the Geneva Office of FMSI on Child Rights at MAPAC (Marist Asia-Pacific Centre), Cainta, Philippines, closed recently. It took place from 17 to 28 October and focused on an in-depth study of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the mechanisms of the UN and how to present a submission for the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). We are pleased to publish the account written by Br. Peter Rodney, who was among the participants.



The program at MAPAC provides us with the opportunity to conduct intensive study of special topics in a module format that can run every day for one or two weeks. It is a challenging format but it allows us to really focus on a subject in depth.

We have just completed a two week module (17-28 October) training us in child rights, entitled: Advocacy: Keeping Children Safe. It was led by two Brothers from the Geneva Office of FMSI – Jim Jolley and Manel Mendoza.

Given the importance of the topic, we were joined in our study by two members of the Mission Ad gentes Sector: Neiva Hoffelder and Br. Diego Zawadzky.

For most of the participants we needed to acquire a whole new language: the language of child rights, child advocacy, child protection; and knowledge of the terms, bodies, and processes of the United Nations. In fact we were challenged by a new paradigm – a rights-based approach to ministry with

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and for children. Over the weeks we moved from a grounding in language and terms, to advocacy at the national level, then to where we can start at our local level. Along the way there were various activities, case-studies, role plays, research assignments, that fixed all that we were learning about child advocacy in the reality of our own countries, our Institute and our ministries. The research and reflection opened our eyes to the realities of children in our own places of ministry. The reporting was a means by which we shared with each other about the realities of young people in other countries – our eyes were opened to the realities of situations where other Marists minister.

So, all along the way we were challenged to open our eyes, and see things differently – a rights-based approach for viewing the situation of young people, and how also our ministries might function diffe-

rently. Assisting us in broadening our vision were two visiting experts: Ms. Brenda Vigo, who as Executive Director of the Council for the Welfare of Children, is the head of the peak body tasked by the Philippines National Government to work for the welfare, development and protection of children. All that she presented was made very real by the presentations of Br. Crispin Betita – a Brother of the East Asia Province who for 20 years has been running the Marcellin Home in General Santos City, Mindanao for young people in conflict with the law. Crispin’s humble telling of his story of how he came to be involved in the protection of children, and how he puts the children first – often quite courageously – was truly inspiring.

The module proved to be an appropriate context also for developing our awareness of the new Institute policies and guidelines being de-



veloped by the General Council for the protection of children and young people in the care of our ministries.

It has been a very full two weeks – and an experience that has got us thinking, and hopefully inspired to take action – advocating for and protecting the rights of children in whatever places we minister, both now and in the future.



# Saint-Genis-Laval, France

## Brother Émile Helvic celebrates 100 years

**M**arist Brother Émile Helvic was born on 15 October 1911 in Metz (Moselle), but we postponed his birthday so as to have «a maximum of people present», explains Brother Paul Boyat, of the community of Le Montet. Accordingly, on Monday, 17 October, some sixty persons came to the Ehpad (Retirement Home for Dependent Elderly People) Le Montet, a good number of them Marist brothers and former colleagues of Émile Helvic, alias Pierre Victor, his name as a Brother.



As a youth, he knew the misadventu-

res of a border region with Germany, which forced him to change nationality several times.

After his Marist formation in the North and in Belgium, Brother Émile taught in various establishments, notably in the Drôme and the Ardèche. Then, after a long stay in Tare as catechist and librarian, he retired to Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux (Drôme), before moving to the Montet retirement home in 2005, after a very full lifetime as teacher and college director.

Today, although weakened by age and infirmity and confined to a wheelchair, it was with a huge smile that he received the City Medal from the hands of Mayor Roland Grimier.



# Mission ad gentes

## Br. César Henríquez

I had the chance to spend Mission Sunday, 23 October 2011, with the VIII group of Mission Ad Gentes. It is a bit bizarre to speak of a 'group' when there is only one Brother in train of following his missionary formation at the Missionary School in Madrid.

Br César Henríquez shares with the readers of the WEB site some of his feelings before setting out on mission. This is an extract of a long interview conducted by Br Teófilo Minga, co-ordinator of Ad Gentes.



### 1. Your situation in Madrid...

Thank you, Br. Teófilo, for coming to see me. In this way, I feel your closeness but also the closeness of the Institution. I feel accompanied.

The Community who hosts me has exaggerated in my regard: the Brothers have always been very good to me. Every time I have needed something, the Brothers were there, all of them; I feel at home. I have always taken part in the community life, even in the drawing up of the community project; I have been one more in the community, taking part in all community activities.

The School's schemes of work are similar to the ones in the schools of my Province – « América Central »: the organisation of the communities is very similar; so everything seems familiar to me.

### 2. The Missionary School of Madrid

The formation given at the School is excellent, very serious. It has been preparing missionaries for 20 years. It has the experience and a good solidity. But I find its perspective quite « Eurocentric », since the majority of the participants are Europeans, preparing themselves especially, to go to Latin America and Africa ; one religious sister

going to Philippines and I, we are the only ones heading for Asia.

It is clear among all the lecturers that missionary activity does not consist in imposing Christianity, but in proposing the experience of the crucified and risen Jesus. This point, common to all the lecturers and all the lectures, I have found very pleasing. Apart from respect for the local cultures, all the teachers have insisted on inter-religious dialogue. That is an essential aspect for me; I am sure that will be very useful to me in my future missionary activity. The content and structure of the course seem very interesting to me.

The School is also transformed into a centre of friendship; very quickly we felt we were friends. After the first week, we already had the impression of being in family. There is a very beautiful atmosphere among the 20 participants: 11 religious and 9 lay persons. These 9 lay people live in community, which is very interesting.

As one can deduce from what I have just said, the course seems very good to me; I would recommend it for other candidates. For me, there is only one « but »: it is not taking place in Asia. That is a pity. I was not expecting to come to Europe for formation; this was not in my plans; however I have accepted it as part of God's surprises.

### 3. Personal experience on mission : sentiments, questionings...

My missionary concern is not new, I already had it in the Scholasticate. I spoke about it several times with Br Seán. I was in Rome when the first letter of invitation was published. Since

then this subject, already in me, has returned again with more force.

So this current decision is a response to the missionary call; I do not doubt that have a missionary vocation; the call seems to me to come from God. And my commitment is very clear: to offer myself for a minimum of 9 years, subject on the renewal of my « contract »; that does not pose any problem for me. My attitude is to be available and open. « Doesn't that make you afraid? », some people ask me. And I reply: « Afraid? Why? No! » Perhaps a little anxious...

### 4. What would you say to future candidates?

I would tell them that the missionary vocation has to start from a personal experience of God and with God; that it should not be a personal adventure due to any other reason – to know new lands, discover new cultures, contact new people, intellectual or religious curiosity, even single dialogue with other religions... All that is valuable and very positive, but should not be the deep motivation for a missionary vocation. On these bases alone, the missionary could be discouraged at the first difficulties, which will not fail to arrive...

I insist: the great motivation has to come from God, knowing oneself loved by Him, and knowing, with the help of the various mediations which assist in us in our discernment, that it is He who is calling us to this missionary adventure to give Him our life in giving it to the others who are our brothers and sisters.



# Program "Horizons"

## The Brothers of "Horizons" go on a pilgrimage to the Hermitage

In the 177th issue of Marist News, October 6th, the formation experience of "Horizons" for Brothers ages 35 to 45 was featured. This experience started at the Escorial on the 4th of August. For the culmination of this formation experience, the 16 Brothers participating in the program made a pilgrimage to the Hermitage during the last days of the course.

The itinerary included a weekend in Taizé, sharing the dynamics of the monastery: prayers and songs, silence, workshops, the smiles of youth, and simplicity of life... Also included was the gift of meeting with Brothers Hector and Alois, the later being the present Prior of Taizé. In what was formally the room of Father Roger, we shared the riches of our respective charisms, threshing through our restlessness and dreams for creating fraternity and offering a path of hope for the youth of today.

On October 3rd, the group started on the road to Geneva with the view in mind of getting to know about the office of FMSI and the work being done at the United Nations in defense of the rights of children. Brother Manuel Mendoza showed them his place of work and explained the origins of the Marist



Foundation for International Solidarity (FMSI); a visit to the headquarters of the United Nations was then suggested.

The Brothers arrived at Our Lady of the Hermitage, the house of our origins and the heart of our Institute, for the final step on the pilgrimage. They were revitalized by an international community of Brothers and laity from different cultures and languages who were totally attentive to the "Horizon" group. They took them on a tour of Marist

places and proposed various dynamics for reflection, moments of sharing and periods of silence and prayer.

The steps listed above have served as the conclusion of a formation journey which began on August 4th and ended on October 9th, covering nine weeks of work, community living and shared prayer, symbolic of the nine Biblical summits which lead to the horizon in a new land and a new way of being human, building a Church around Mary.



## The General Administration receives the book Evangelizers Among Youth

On October 8, 2011, Brother João Do Prado organized a small ceremony at the conclusion of the daily Eucharist to present to the brothers of the General Administration the Marist Youth Ministry document titled: Evangelizers Among Youth. The purpose of this instrument is to promote the implementation of Marist Youth Ministry (Pastoral Juvenil Marista – PJM) in all

of the administrative units of the Institute and to place evangelization at the heart of the Marist mission.

The document was distributed to the entire Marist Institute in July and August of 2011. It was sent from Brazil, where it had been edited in four languages. Each province organized the distribution of the document according to the local custom. In some provinces

the distribution was done through the organization of meetings to study the document by brothers and lay people. Others organized the distribution according to a plan conceived by the youth ministry personnel.

Brother João Do Prado, Director of the Mission Secretariat, included the study of this document as part of the program for the whole Institute.

