

MARCH TOGETHER TOWARDS « NEW LANDS »

Enlarged Council of the Arco Norte Region

Before giving some information about the Enlarged Council, the meeting of the Br. Superior General and his council with all the Provincial Councils of « Arco Norte » in Guatemala, from 29 February to 3 March, here is a brief notice on « Arco Norte » and its historical context.

« Arco Norte » comprises, from north to south, the Provinces: Canada, United States, Mexico, Central America and Norandina.

The **Province of Canada** was founded in 1908, and was divided in 1943 into two Provinces: Iberville and Levis. A further Province was created in 1960, that of Desbiens. The whole was unified and restructured in 2002 as the Province of Canada.

The **Province of the United States of America** was founded in 1913. It was divided in 1959 into two Provinces: Esopus and Poughkeepsie. In 2003 it was restructured and unified.



GENERAL HOUSE

All the General Council are together in Guatemala for the meeting of the Enlarged General Council, with the provincial councils of the 6 provinces which make up the region: Canada, United States, Mexico Central, Mexico Occidental, America Central and Norandina. Br Alberto Ricica, director of communications, is travelling with the Council to accompany the meeting and report to the Institute on its developments.

The meeting concludes on Saturday, 3 March.

The Province of Mexico was founded in 1908. In 1959 it was divided into two **Provinces: Mexico Central and Mexico Occidental**. Haiti belongs to the Province of México Occidental.

The **Province of America Central** is complex in its origin and development. Brothers from Mexico arrived in Cuba in 1903. The Marist works in El Salvador were founded by the Province of

Colombia starting from 1923 and Guatemala in 1932. In 1949 the Province of Central America and Cuba was created by separating these works from their provinces of origin. Today it is called the Province of « América Central » and includes these countries: Guatemala, Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Porto Rico and Cuba.

The **Province of Norandina** was re-

structured in 2003. It also had a complex origin and development. Norandina was established by uniting the Provinces of Ecuador, Venezuela and Colombia. The Province of Colombia was founded in 1908. Marist works began in Ecuador in 1957 and it became a Province in 1975. Venezuela has had a Marist presence since 1925; it was made a District in 1959, and a Province in 1982.



TIME OF CRISIS, TIME OF SOLIDARITY

A reflexion of Br H. Mario Meuti
FMSI - Director- Rome Office

Crisis! There is talk only of crisis! Even the fine projects of a young couple or the expectation of a baby contribute in our days to creating agitation. No one feels prepared, no one is ready to do one thing or another, for no one has trained us to face up to the unpredictable.

We have just celebrated Christmas. Perhaps only a dim memory of it remains, but Christmas had a clear, strong, unpredictable meaning: Today a Saviorborn to you! That is to say, a Hope in the face of our fear: there has to be someone strong enough to take on our lives, to give meaning to our times and help us to catch a glimpse of a light... « The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light », said the prophet Isaiah... Some poor people of the period, the shepherds of Bethlehem, believed in it and set out to discover the mystery

of « the child lying in a manger ». How useful it would be for us, today, to learn the shepherd's calling, we who are town people, of well-being, of consumption; people who have, or had, everything, and who continue to hunger and thirst

those we discover as « neighbor ». The Apostle Paul recommended Christians who held him close to their heart to « increase and abound in love of one another and of others ». Let us make our own this invitation, even using other words: to decide to be in solidarity, to not become closed in on ourselves; less private egoism and more public courage!

In the story of the Marist Brothers, there is something of this courage. Here are two examples: before 1968 the brothers were nearly 10,000 occupied with some 200,000 children and young people. Then came the crisis... Today, the Brothers are about 3,500, but they have learned to share

for more... The task of the shepherd: to watch, guard, go in search, take care... To learn the trade of caring for someone: for the family, the mystery of life, the little ones, for those around us, for

their mission and educational style with many others: nearly 50,000 people work in Marist structures, thus reaching more than half a million children and youth in 80 countries. They work profession-



Latibolière, Haiti

ally, and with passion, especially among the little and most marginalized.

Another example: FMSI (Marist International Solidarity Foundation).

Thanks to this publicly recognized organization, the Institute can establish relations with other non-profit Institutions, present projects, look for new resources for the works serving the most destitute. A central office in Rome is in charge of these relations and attempts to co-ordinate the Marists organizations of solidarity. But there is, above all, an office in Geneva whose mission is to take initiatives for the defense of the rights of children. A new field in which no one was expert. However, after a period of apprenticeship with



Franciscans International, FMSI has already obtained consultative status with ECOSOC (Economic and Social Council), allowing it to take part in

UNO sessions which examine human rights, in particular children's rights in each of the 193 Member States. The Marist mission does not consist only of being good Christian educators, but also of being engaged in « advocacy » (denunciation – control – promotion) with the competent organs, that is to say, actively participating in civil society which can and should influence State policies.

Crisis is not a synonym for death. When one is courageous, one realizes that new life is being reborn. Let us, then, inaugurate a new style of life, with less complaining, more openness, participation, shared responsibility. « I care »: let this new style of life be ours!



TRAINING SESSION FOR THE PROVINCIAL SECRETARIES OF ASIA AND OCEANIA

Philippines, Davao - 9 to 14 February 2012

The General Secretariat has concluded its fifth session for introducing the new Data-base system for the Institute, this time in the city of Davao in the Philippines. The meeting took place from 9 to 14 February 2012 and involved the Provincial Secretaries of Asia and Oceania. Those present were: Agnes Reyes, Br Brian Kinsella (AMAG); Gelyn Simtim Niño-franco, Br John Y Tan, Br Vince Celeste (East Asia); Azariah Orovea (Melanesia); Br John Dyson (Melbourne), Br Patrick Bignell, Br David McDonald (New Zealand); Sudarshana Mohotti, Br Joseph Peiris (South Asia); Br Anthony Robinson, Br Graham Neist (Sydney) and from the General Administration, Brothers Pedro Sánchez de León, Secretary General, and Marcelo De Brito, programmer.

The purpose of these sessions has been spelled out in previous articles on the meetings in Spain, France, Mexico and Kenya published by champagnat.org, with

comments from some of the participants. I note that place, hospitality and contact with the culture of the country has always been an experience of fraternity and education.

The group present in Davao likewise manifested a diversity of cultures, capacity for adaptation and collaboration appropriate for persons imbued with the sense of fraternity and the spirit of work.

Below are some responses of the participants to the following question:

a) What is your opinion on the organization of this course?

- I am impressed by the good organization. Aware of the language barrier, I am grateful for the effort to transmit

it all in English. The course has been very warm and welcoming. A wonderful idea of having been invited to gain all the information necessary for entering data into the system.

- An excellent idea of the General Secretariat to come up with a universal data system for all the administrative units. The system is very well thought and worked out.

b) What is your opinion of the Database System?

- Once I understood how the database functioned, it is very easy to use. Also taking account of the importance of the Houses and their roles makes the entering of data easier.

- It would be very useful to have a guide to the system, more on the practical aspect, so as to be able to understand the concepts of the system. Very important the background notes can be of great help at the time of introducing the information.

- It will take a lot of time to introduce the requested data, we are going to have to do a lot of historical investigation to obtain precise information, but fortunately it will lead us to get our own province history in order and our documents nowadays very scattered.



c) Have you any suggestions for similar courses in other regions of the Institute?

-From my point of view, I think I have understood the system and how to use it. The entry of data is very simple; I do not see the necessity of another course on the international level. On the other hand, I feel the need for other persons in the Provinces to learn the system and get interested in the investigation in order to enrich the information that can be introduced.

- I believe it is necessary for one person from the General Administration to give help by responding to questions and making changes immediately in the information we are introducing, because people will become disillusioned if they have a question and it takes a long time for a re-

sponse. Problems have to be solved immediately.

- I think it would be a genuine idea to run similar courses in our regions. There are other persons who work with us and would certainly like to know all about the database so as to collaborate.

d) Do you think that the system will be useful for your Province? And why?

- It provides an opportunity to introduce historical and updated data. The usefulness of the database will depend very much on the dedication and seriousness of the information which each Provincial Secretariat realizes and introduces.

- I have the impression that the database is adapted more to the needs of the General Administration than to the needs of the Provinces. I had a wrong understanding of the database. I thought that it was going to be used by the Province to send e-mails to the brothers, add appropriate reports and other types of data. I think that this is going to require daily attention to introduce the information the base requests. For the moment, it adds to the already existing burden of work for the Provincial Secretariat.

- Yes, it is very useful to the Province in the sense that the design of the system is going to help us organize and update our records and to have access to other administrative units of the Institute.

The training course in Davao concludes the series of meetings with all the Provincial, District and Sector Secretariats. Now it is time to initiate a new step, that will be different in programming and style, with the Provincial Secretariats who may be invited in a first meeting. This meeting for formation will be held in Alcalá de Henares, Madrid, Spain, with two very concrete objectives: Evaluate the process of implementation of the Database system and the launching of version 3 of Archivum (Pergamum).

Br Pedro Sánchez de León
Secretary General



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