

ONLY WONDER KNOWS

Christmas Message 2012 of Br Superior General

Many of us, probably, at one time or another in our lives, have had an experience similar to the one G. K. Chesterton describes in his Autobiography: "At the back of our brains, so to speak, there was a forgotten blaze or burst of astonishment at our own existence. The object of the artistic and spiritual life was to dig for this submerged sunrise of wonders; so that a man sitting in a chair might suddenly understand that he was actually alive, and be happy." At any given moment every-thing appears tedious and ordinary, and only an instant later everything is seen as extraordinary and marvelous. It is as though you found yourself struck by a sudden attack of wonder, which arouses humility and gratitude before the miracle of life.

Is not this the experience of parents faced with the birth of a child? Words are insufficient to express this very personal experience, and so we must have recourse to art. The popular saxophonist Kenny G. launched Miracles shortly after the birth of one of his children, and something similar happened with Céline Dion, with her disk Miracle, which was inspired by the birth of her first child.

Human reproduction is a very natural phenom-

enon, but the artists mentioned experience it as a miracle. It is as if they wake up to see reality with new eyes; as if they see for the first time things which have always been there. A profound conviction emerges that the generation of a new human life is something mysterious, although everything can be explained on the level of biology. And before the mystery, only silent contemplation is adequate. As mothers do in long hours of silence, full of wonder, before the frailness of a new human being.

It is not difficult, this Christmas, to imagine the amazement of Mary and Joseph, surprised at discovering that life is more than life, that there is always something that transcends us in the ordinary framework of our story. A learning that they then carry on for the length of their lives, marked, like that of many of their contemporaries, by moments of serenity and peace, but also by others of extreme



violence.

A learning that the 3 brothers of our community in Aleppo, Syria, some 600 km from Bethlehem, have also been having. For some months, the civil population of this ancient city has found itself immersed in a situation of fierce violence: armed struggle, bombardment, lack of resources... The surprising thing is how, in such adverse circumstances, even here wonder can flower.

In fact, we are struck with deep admiration before the situations developing, in unexpected ways: a group of lay Marists who, defying fear, commit their time



and capabilities to be beside the most vulnerable victims, without distinction of culture or religion; the collaboration of Moslem volunteers uniting with the Maristes bleus; the spontaneous laughter of the children, at least for a few hours; the network of solidarity that has been woven, on the local as well as the international level... Yes, hope is possible. Although everything appears to show that violence and death have the last word, modest hope, as Péguy called it, persists in holding firm in the hearts of simple people.

How can we continue to support the hope of our brothers and sisters in Aleppo? I invite you to place a candle in some special place in your community or home between 18 and 25 December and light it each day at a particular time, as a symbol of our communion with them through our affection and prayer.

Gregory of Nyssa, a Christian bishop who lived at the end of the IV century in this same region of the Middle East, wrote that concepts create idols;

only wonder knows. Yes, concepts create idols and often misunderstandings leading right up to war. Only wonder is capable of penetrating reality as it appears to our eyes, and embracing the happiness of a full life, even amidst the most adverse conditions.

This is what I want to say when I wish you happy Christmas. May it be truly so for you and yours.

Br. Emili Turú, Superior General



IV PROVINCIAL CHAPTER OF "CRUZ DEL SUR"

Courageous breaks, fruitful continuities, vital innovations

The IV Provincial Chapter of "Cruz del Sur" began on the afternoon of Sunday 18 November. The Brother delegates settled the priorities for the next three years and elected the Provincial Council which will accompany Br Provincial in his tasks of animation and government.

The Chapter was preceded by three important events:

- * On Friday, the Assembly of the Provincial Teams and Directors or Co-ordinators of the Marist Works.
- * On Saturday, the Assembly of the Brothers of the whole Province - The two Assemblies reflected on the contributions of the evaluation of the three years, which covered the three levels: personal, works and geographical areas.



* Finally, on Sunday, the celebration of the jubilarians and the renewal of Br Horacio's mandate as Provincial.

More than 70 Brothers and laity from all over Argentine and Uruguay took part in Friday's Assembly. In a climate of fraternity, they reflected on the con-

tributions from the local Assemblies and made proposals to be presented to the Chapter (they can be read in Spanish by clicking on the link below).

The Saturday Assembly was also a fraternal gathering for more than 60 Brothers. In a climate of discernment we reached, in the afternoon, conclusions equally dealt with by the Chapter.

Sunday began with a warm celebration organised Anima Marista (Team of the Fraternities) in honour of the Brothers celebrating Marist anniversaries. The Mass in thanksgiving for the lives of the jubilarians was celebrated at mid-day. At the end, Br Josep M. Soteras, Councillor General, presented Br Horacio as Provincial of "Cruz del Sur" for a second term.

The Provincial Chapter started around 5.30pm. The 37 Capitulants elected met around round tables, following the methodology of the last General Chapter, which searches for a fraternal and deep dialogue aimed at respecting minorities and achieving as representative a consensus as possible.

On Monday 19 the second day of the Chapter began. Work centred on the contributions from the provincial assemblies of the Brothers and

Provincial Teams and Directors/Coordinators of Works.

Inspired by texts from Jeremiah and Joel, we discerned at the personal level on the courageous breaks, fertile continuities and vital innovations to be adopted by the Province, our gaze fixed on 2017, on the occasion of the 2nd centenary of the foundation of the Marist Brothers.



Provincial Council

The activities were pursued in work groups (round tables) where we searched for consensus and reflected on the three main challenges (breaks-continuities-innovations). The work was hard, but the coincidences and agreements we arrived at were very strong. A little work group was charged with giving shape to this data in view of a final message.

On Tuesday 20 we considered the "letter" to the Province, which had to be readjusted following the observations received. To do this, a com-

mission of four Brothers was formed. The Brothers of the District of Paraguay presented a very rich and complete report on the life and mission of the District. We were able to ask questions and request clarifications, then they notified us of their agreement not to take part in the election of the Provincial Councillors, which the Chapter accepted.

The election of the Councillors then took place. After three votes, these Brothers were elected: Juan Ignacio Fuentes, Demetrio Espinosa, José Kuhn, Gerardo Accastello, Eutimio Rubio and Damián Provens.

In the afternoon, we got down to revising the Norms of the Province

and the Rules of the Chapter.

We approved the final message of the Chapter to the Province, with the new draft presented by the Commission, and chose an inspirational motto for the stage leading up to 2017.

The Chapter closed at last with words from Br Horacio and Brothers Josep Maria Soteras and Eugène Kabanguka of the General Council. The closing Eucharist allowed us to celebrate the rich experience lived during this Provincial Chapter.



Latest deceased Brothers

04/12/2012: Julián Somavilla Rojo - Ibérica
 30/11/2012: Antonio Isidoro García Flecha - Compostela
 26/11/2012: Mario Pinato - Mediterránea

22/11/2012: Bernard Lanthier - Canada
 18/11/2012: Néstor Juan Pedrotti - Cruz del Sur
 18/11/2012: Máximo del Pozo - Santa María de los Andes

Relics of St Marcellin in Mindelheim

St Stephen's parish church in Mindelheim was reopened on Sunday, 25th November. The church was completely refurbished and a new altar was installed and blessed. The Parish priest, Fr Andreas Straub, decided to place relics of saints with whom there is a local connection alongside the relics of St Stephen, patron of the parish. The Marist Brothers have been in Mindelheim since 1926 and, as a result, the Parish Priest asked if we could insert relics of St Marcellin along with the other saints.

EUROPEAN COMMISSION ON COMMUNION BETWEEN BROTHERS AND LAITY

First meeting: Madrid, 28-30 November 2012

With several days of intense work in the house of Xaudaró, Madrid, the Commission on Communion between Brothers and Laity has begun its operations: three days of work for two lay people and three brothers representing the 5 Provinces of Europe, with Br Javier Espinosa, of the Secretariat of the Laity, and Br Brendan G., President of the Council of Provincials of Europe. Even if Ana Sarrate was not able to take part in the meeting, she is part of the commission. Br Teodorino Aller and Pep Buetas were elected Commission co-ordinators. Br Paco Castellanos helped with translation and, with his fraternal welcome, facilitated the best conditions for the meeting.



This is how the commission defines its mission: to collaborate with the Provincials' Conference in the accompaniment of the great challenges raised by the birth of a new epoch for the Marist charism in the European region, in harmony with the International Secretariat of the Laity and in communion with the processes being implemented in other regions of the Marist world.

We took note of the challenges to be faced in our region and specified our objectives. Among

these, we underline: promote reflection on fundamental aspects of the brothers-laity communion in Europe, by looking together for a greater vitality of the charism. Share experiences, resources and examples of good practice concerning Marist mission and

identity. Accept the proposals and questionings of the EMC, the continental commissions and the Secretariat of the Laity, in searching for and offering responses of vitality.

We see our commission not only as a work group, but as a community of life within which we wish to put in first place our witness of communion, all the while allowing the charism to reveal in us new ways of building the Kingdom in the manner of Mary.

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