

ON THE WAY TO THE GENERAL CONFERENCE - SEPTEMBER 2013

3. Subject and logo of the Conference

Both the motto and the accompanying verse were proposed by the General Council and submitted to the Communications and Institutional Image Sector of the Brazil Centro Sul Province, which subsequently developed the logo.

Here are some remarks about it:

The expression "awakening the dawn" appears in two Psalms (57:8-9 and 108:2-3) with almost the same words:

"My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast; I will sing and chant. Awake, my soul! Awake, O harp and lyre! I will awake the dawn!"

The word dawn expresses the search for new horizons, for the new world



General Conference 2013
AWAKENING THE DAWN
PROPHETS AND MYSTICS FOR OUR TIME

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

Br Mario Meuti took part in the Conference of Marist Superiors of Asia in Sri Lanka on 5 and 6 April.

General Councillors Eugène Kabanguka and Josep Maria Soterias are visiting the District of Amazonia in Brasil from 5 to 21 April.

General Councillors Ernesto Sanchez and Antonio Ramalho have returned from the Provincial Chapter of West Central Europe in Germany, and will attend the Provincial Forum at the Hermitage from 11 to 14 April.

Brothers John Klein, General Councillor, and Joao Carlos do Prado, Director of the Secretariat of Mission, will attend the Meeting of the Directors of America in Guadalajara, Mexico, from 11 to 16 April.

Brothers Victor Preciado, Econome General, and Pedro Sanchez, Secretary General, are back in the General House, after periods in the Philippines and Spain respectively.

we want to construct. And the phrase *Awakening the dawn* puts us in an active and dynamic attitude. The sun breaking at dawn points to the verse or subtitle accompanying the motto: the light shines on the human figures, and gives an overall tone of warmth and optimism.

Dawn normally awakes the poet to sing praise to the Lord, but here the poet precedes dawn, for he cannot contain his overwhelming joy. It's time to wake up swiftly, to sing the passing from fear to joy, from nightmare to peace, from lamentation to thanksgiving. So does the psalmist with these verses shining for their intensity and beauty. As he awakes the dawn, the poet must awake himself, discovering all the dignity that had been hidden under his fear before the



threats of the enemy.

The symbol of the globe expresses internationality (involving all Marists) and unity (meeting of representatives from all Provinces). The outlining of

the continents represents human figures in movement: it is us who build a new world through our actions.

The images of children and young people indicate the recipients of the Marist mission and reinforce the focus of the meet-ing: there is a future because there is plenty of life ahead. The prophet, represented in a dynamic and friendly way, becomes a prophet of hope: his welcoming arms show acceptance, inclusion; being outstretched and forming a cross, they emphasize the Christian dimension. Such is the Marist mission: looking through the eyes of children, we open up to a new world of hope.



SUFFERING AND HOPE IN ALEPPO

Letter of 24 March (Letter No 9 - extracts)

Resignation and weariness sum up well the current state of mind of the inhabitants of Aleppo. In fact, the people of Aleppo are resigned :

- to seeing their city cut in two with the influx of hundreds of thousands of refugees who have invaded the "safe" zones, without complaining ;
- to hearing the deafening noise of machine gun bursts and cannon fire, without flinching, and of airplanes, without lifting the head ;
- to living constantly under the threat of mortar shells falling anywhere, of sniper fire which kills anyone, and of car bombs which explode at any time, without being afraid ;
- to going home at sunset (6 pm now) and not going out until morning, transforming Aleppo into a ghost town, without any means of diversion ;
- to come across, every day, poverty and more and more beggars on the streets, without being revolted ;
- to observe that the economy is completely wrecked, the

factories dismantled and plundered and the shops burned, without despairing. (...)

And, moreover, they are tired :

- tired of not seeing any glimmer of a solution to what has been happening in Syria for 2 years (since 15 March 2011) and in Aleppo for 8 months (since 23 July 2012).
- tired of seeing Syria, called the "cradle of civilisation" by the international community, and Aleppo, the most ancient town in the world still inhabited, destroyed, their archaeological treasures stolen, their social tissue fraying, the security which once reigned there and which others envied, vanished, and the coexistence between the different communities of the country and the tolerance replaced by an imported religious fanaticism. (...)

But in spite of this gloomy context, we, "the Marist Blues" continue with determination our activities in support of

the refugees living in the three schools of Cheikh Maksoud. We go there every day to spend the day with them to accompany the mothers, divert, educate and teach the children, distribute supplies for breakfast and supper, bring a warm meal at midday, attend to the sick, inspect the hygiene and health conditions,... Clothing and shoes are distributed sometimes. For the last two weeks, the midday meal we distribute everyday to the refugees we are responsible for has been supplied without charge by a Moslem charitable association, "Al Ihssan", which prepares in its locations dozens of thousands of meals a day for the refugees in the schools. (...)

We continue with our "Mountain basket" project to provide a monthly food basket to the Christians of the Cheikh Maksoud quarter who are without resources because of these events. They number 300 families. On Wednesday 27, there will be the distribution of the 8th monthly basket and then each family will also receive a kilo of meat so that Easter can also be a feast.

Nor do we forget the impoverished families who live outside the Cheikh Maksoud quarter and whom we have been supporting for 25 years within the framework of our association

"the Ear of God".

Recently, we Marists, have taken the initiative to propose a meeting of all the charitable associations which bring aid to the impoverished Christians of Aleppo. Those responsible for the 13 associations have met twice to get to know one another and to co-ordinate their activities, to match up their lists, and to standardise their assistance.

In our increasingly difficult daily life, we are consoled by some signs of confidence and Hope :

-Our volunteers continue their commitment with us although it is becoming more and more dangerous to go to Cheikh Maksoud, with access sometimes blocked, shells falling frequently, and snipers sometimes taking victims.

-The majority of Syrians refuse violence and aspire to the cessation of hostilities and the recovery of the former climate of fraternity.

-We are amazed at this network of solidarity which has become woven around us on the local

as well as the national or international levels. We cannot give sufficient thanks to all those who, by their thoughts, messages or gifts have shown their friendship, solidarity and love.

Nabil Antaki, for the "Marist Blues".



Sunday 31 March

To my friends around the world, my Marist brothers and friends, I am sure you thought of us in your prayer on good Friday.

I know you are worried about us. I know you wish for us a resurrection, an end to the war, a glimmer of hope !

Unfortunately, I have sad news for you. Since dawn, the quarter of Jabal el Saydeh, where we have been conducting our mission for more than 27 years and where we are at the service of 300 Christian families and 3 schools accomodating refugees, has been the

theatre of fierce fighting. The people are terrorised, shut up in their houses, prisoners of the madness of shooting, snipers, mortars... They cannot leave their house in any way, they are afraid. We cannot get to them at all. When it is possible, we make contact by telephone. What a calvary ! What a cross ! What despair !

I am not writing this to you to make you sorry for my people... I am writing because I am sad, absolutely sad, with a sadness that extinguishes the little hope remaining !

I am writing to you to cry out loud :

enough ! I have already expressed on other occasions this rejection of the war. All these questions rise within me, in the name of all these people, in the name of their children, the young people, the adults : Why ? Why ? And in the name of what ? Who is the warlord who has decided to kill us, exterminate us, make an end of us ? Who is the decision-maker who wishes such suffering to be our daily bread for month after month ? Who is the one who invites us to the table of crucifixion ? I am ashamed to say that men on this land decide for death !

Brother Georges Sabe



“WHEREVER THERE’S A BROTHER, I’LL BE SURE TO FIND A HOME”

Revitalization of the Champagnat Movement

The International Commission for the Revitalization of the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family met in Guadalajara (Mexico) on March 18 to 22. This Commission consists of eight Marist members, six laypersons and two brothers: Ana Sarrate (Province of Iberica, Coordinator of the Commission); Patricia Ríos (Province of Western Mexico); Agnes Reyes (Province of East Asia); Edison Jardim De Oliveira (Province of Rio Grande do Sul); brother Adalberto Amaral (Province of Brasil Centro-Norte); brother Javier Espinosa (Director of the Secretariat for the Laity); and Alfredo García (Province of Mediterranea).

We experienced from the start a warm welcome from the brothers and laity of the Province of Western Mexico, and that famous verse of the Spanish song Familia Marista became a reality indeed: “Wherever there’s a brother, I’ll be sure to find a home”.

The task we faced was not easy: we had to collect the answers to the questionnaire that was sent out – in the first stage of the process – to all the places in the world where the CMMF operates, and from there, based on facts, look for clues to revitalize the movement. We worked with data collected from 156 fraternities and from other places where the movement is not present yet.



With the summary of the answers, we produced a proposal, which will be sent back to the fraternities for them to make it concrete, explicit and provide additional input. We hope this material will be motivating and will generate hope.

The members of the Commission felt like a Marist community lit-

erally gathered around the same table. We tried to listen to the feelings of the fraternities from across the world in order to find answers. Much life experience coming from the richness and diversity of our fraternities was placed on the table. We did a lot of discussion, arrived at consensus, and often laughed together. But above all, we felt the presence of the Spirit helping us overcome differences in culture, language, and ways of seeing and doing things. And we joined in the same call to build the Kingdom of God with our particular Marist flavor.

Each evening we gathered in the cozy CEPAM chapel and, with an intense sense of community, we entrusted the life of all the Marists of

Champagnat to the Good Mother. We have lived a strong family spirit at meals, while doing the dishes or sharing a joke, during the breaks or as we spent time chatting.

We are pleased with the work done so far and face the new stages of this process with hope. We assume with an attitude of faith the task of revitalizing the Champagnat Movement, and together with Saint Marcellin and the Marist from the entire world, we keep telling Mary: “This is your work”.

Alfredo García

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<p>Director Br. Alberto Ricica</p> <p>Production Mr. Luiz da Rosa</p>	<p>Redaction and Administration Piazzale Marcellino Champagnat, 2 C.P. 10250 – 00144 ROMA E-mail: publica@fms.it web: www.champagnat.org</p>
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Edit
Marist Brother's Institute - General House – Rome

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