

SECRETARIAT OF THE LAITY

International formation meeting in Les Avellanes

Called by the Secretariat of the Laity of the Institute, representatives of the lay animation of the Marist world of America, Asia, Europe and Oceania gathered in the Marist house of Les Avellanes, with the members of the Secretariat, Br Antonio Ramalho, councillor general, Br César Rojas, of the Secretariat Brothers Today, and the translation team from 28 May to 2 June. M. José Maria Soba and Br Juan Miguel Anaya helped the reflection on certain topics.

After the presentations and taking notice of the times in which we live, the meeting considered the themes of the lay Marist vocation, the processes of accompaniment and formation of the laity, the need for recognition of their engagement by means of bonds, and the communion of brothers and lay people living the Marist charism together.

The dynamic for the activities was essentially based on experience. On the



work table, in the groups, in the moments of informal dialogue, the dominant concern was the sharing of experiences, situation, projects implemented in the Marist world with regard to the laity. The fruit of this proposal of formation was the move towards a common language, the recognition of differences between regions and provinces and the wish to advance, despite the difficulties encountered in each situation, towards a horizon clearly marked by the last General Chapter and the guidelines of the Secre-

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

The General Council is already in its fourth week of plenary session, with the focus on topics relating especially to the Marist Spiritual Patrimony. In the third week, time was spent on preparation for the General Conference, for the approaching Bicentenary of the foundation of the Institute, the space given to the young Brothers, the transformation of the AMAG Sector into a District, the visits to the different Regions, and economic affairs.

On Sunday 23, the communities of the General House celebrated the 50 years of religious life of Brothers José Maria Ferre and Antonio Ramalho.

The International Marist Patrimony Commission is holding its annual meeting in Rome from 24 to 28 June.

tariat of the Laity.

The most important impression left by this meeting is that, in the development of lay animation, there is a surge of quality when the concept of vocation appears, that is, the call of God to live the Marist charism and the personal response.

Many things have been done, and that continues : participation of the laity in management and mission, formation

of the laity in Marist values, history and pedagogy, creation of climates of friendship and joy in the meeting of brothers and laity, joint celebration of life and faith... But, when one makes the leap of feeling oneself called to live the following of Jesus in one's own proper lay condition and with the charismatic references of Marcellin Champagnat and his community of brothers, one can say in truth that one is living, in the present-future, a charism which

enriches the Church and renders service to poor and abandoned children and young people.

In these exchanges, one also notices hesitations to grow in the Marist vocation, to live together as brothers and laity, to offer mutual recognition, to discern, and to take on responsibilities in communion to establish projects of life and mission. The lived experience continues to tell us that our Marist future is a future of communion.



TO LEARN HOW TO BE MARIST LEADERS

United States: Marist Youth Leadership Conference 2013

Seventy students from 10 Marist schools from the U.S., Canada and Mexico gathered in Esopus to learn how to be Marist Leaders. St. Marcellin Champagnat described the mission of Marist Evangelization as, "to make Jesus known and loved." His words were clear and direct. "But how do we do this," the early brothers asked? His reply was just as clear and direct, "by making of our students good Christians and good citizens." It was a balanced and practical approach.



Every school that "is worth its salt" prepares its students to live and function in society as good citizens. Like other schools, our students learn to read, write, and think critically. We teach all the basic subjects: math, sciences, history, physical education, computer science, etc.

As a Catholic school, we offer courses in religious studies: Scripture, Church History, Church Doctrine, and Catholic Social Teaching. In addition we offer retreats, prayer services, and service opportunities. It appears that all the pieces are in

place when it comes to preparing our students to be "good Christians."

As a "Marist" Catholic school, we go further. We know "being a good citizen and good Christian" is more than being able to read, write and use a computer. It is more than taking religion courses and being exposed to religious programming. It has to be internalized... it has to be integrated... it has to be acted upon... As it says in the Letter of St. James, "faith without action is dead."

Br. Zephiriny and the first brothers

who established a Marist presence in the USA knew that a Marist education was more than reading, writing and memorizing information for a test. They knew that religion classes and religious exercises like retreats and service to the poor was more than just for "show." A Marist school prepares its students for life.

Always mindful of St. Marcellin's mission and educational approach and with Br. Zephiriny and our early pioneers as our inspiration, the theme for this year's Marist Leadership Conference is: Lead For Life.



"ALL THE DIOCESES ENTER INTO OUR PLANS..."

Cuba: The parish of Tulipán

When Marcellin wrote, in his letter of 15 February 1837 to Mgr Philibert de Brouillard, Bishop of Grenoble : « All the dioceses of the world enter into our plans » (Letter 93, 22), he was surely not thinking, in a specific way, of the country of Cuba, nor of the diocese of Cienfuegos, nor of the parish of Tulipán, even if he did not exclude them from his apostolic and missionary vision. How is it, then, that we Marists have landed in this pleasant quarter of hollows and hills, ruffled palm trees and majestic kapoc trees, with carts drawn by good old horses and the infectious joy of the pioneritos (in Cuba, « pioneros » are the children who attend primary school) who, every morning, take the uneven roads to come to school ?

Here is a brief chronicle of this adventure, which is divided into two chapters.

We arrived in Cuba and in Cienfuegos in 1903. On the edge of the city of Cienfuegos, also known as the Pearl of the South, is the quarter of Tulipán. In 1959, the free primary school of « The Immaculate Conception » began operation. Two years later, in 1961, this school was taken over by the revolutionary government in consequence of the law of 6 June the same year. From that date, this building, which was well constructed and has not stopped functioning as a school, took the name

of the Pedro Suárez Oroma School. Today, it continues as a primary school and has a roll of 904. It is a public lay school situated opposite the parish church of Christ the King.

The second chapter began in 2001, when we Marists – by a stroke of destiny, or by God in his marvel-



lous Providence – returned to Cienfuegos, in this same parish. Since then, we have taken on the catechesis of the children and young people and we organise sporting and training activities in the quarter of Tulipán.

There has been a series of meetings, which has inspired the community of Christ the King with the happy idea of setting up in the church an image of Marcellin Champagnat. This gives us the opportunity to make the fruit correspond to the root. Marcellin, founder of the Marists, heart that knows no bounds : the root, with the fruit : a school and a quarter which, on different levels, have received

the life-giving seed of his charism as educator and evangelizer.

The unveiling of the image took place on Sunday 9 June during the liturgy. We began that day with the well-known hymn : « Lord, they go out with joy, those who go, in life, sowing your peace and love...

». Then there was a community prayer of thanksgiving for the gift of Marcellin. We continued the well-animated paraliturgy, during which we had the chance to receive communion, and we concluded with the hymn to the Virgin of Caridad del Cobre : « Mother, you who on the land of Cuba pour your love from the heights of heaven, mother of the poor and those who suffer, sow within us a union full of love... »

Please God that the visible presence of Marcellin in our parish church may be a permanent reminder inviting the parents and educators of the quarter to grow in love of the children and to realize what was, for him, a pedagogical credo : « To educate a child, you must love him ». Please God that all the children who, each day, come to school with their bag over their shoulder, hurrying, exchanging and joking together, seek to know something of the life of our dear Founder and thus receive his inspiration and his courage.

Marcellin, you caught a glimpse of the children of our quarter when you

encountered Jean-Baptiste Montagne, that distant day of 28 October 1816, and you decided to found a Congregation of Brothers who would give their life to the Christian education

of children and young people ! God be praised for your incarnate love and your ability to read the signs of the times ! May we know today how to read our daily situation with your

eyes and your heart and may we find answers full of evangelical audacity, creative and lasting !

Br Carlos Martínez Lavín



A LIFE-GIVING EXPERIENCE!

Italy - Manziana Mid-life Renewal Program 2013

From 10 different countries, we, 10 participants to Mid-life Renewal Program started our journey together at Manziana on the 27th January 2013. As we prepare ourselves to return to our various countries, we recall with joy and gratitude what has been our experience of living together during 4 months and half.

Mid-life Renewal Program has been:

1. A time for a greater awareness of our mental, emotional, physical, spiritual and social wellbeing. During our busy life in communities and ministries, there is less time to reflect on how we are affected by our losses, separations, and various experiences of transition as human and consecrated religious.

2. A time of an interior pilgrimage in order to be in touch with past and present experiences and our dream for a better future with God's help. The fact of having enough time for reflection and prayer made possible to notice God's presence in our lives and to cherish our belonging to Marist Family and to the Church. The experience has been a golden



opportunity to reclaim our identity as Marist by rediscovering its beauty and uniqueness in the Church. Yes, with Mary, our ordinary resource and model, we are called to live our life as events unfold, always trusting in God. And on this journey, Champagnat is a real spiritual guide!

We go back to our respective communities with a strong desire to be brothers with an apron as our uniform, deeply convinced that we are God's instruments in our different ministries. Short but indispensable, our journey has been a source of revitalization of our vocation. Now, by experience, we know that it is possible to live really as brothers in an international community. We are grateful to all those who made possible this opportunity for us.

Brother Arthur Ganiza



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