

BEING A BELIEVER IS AN OPTION, NOT A TRADITION

A significant experience in Cuba

During the first fortnight of August, I had the chance of accompanying Br Daniel Martín (provincial coordinator of youth ministry) in his pastoral activities pastorales in Cuba. As soon as you set foot on the island, you can see that you are in a different country. There are many anecdotes that could support this affirmation, but these lines have another purpose.

Knowing how complicated it is to describe significant experiences any person may have, I would like to underline three aspects which have remained engraved in my mind and my heart. Thanks, first of all, for the welcome, the attention and the fraternal sharing with the brothers of the communities of El Cotorro, Havana, and Cienfuegos. Their simple gestures mark the difference in the inside and the outside of the places they frequent daily. Through prolonged dialogues and visits to the places which surround them, I was able to grasp something of their pastoral dynamism, their enthusiasm and their creativity, their free gift in the mission. Their ability to pull through (the principal concern of the Cuban people at present) is beyond doubt. Inserted into a situation complex at all levels, they continue to drive forward projects and ceaselessly take up challenges. Thank you, Chamba, Héctor, Jesús, Manuel and Mario, for your witness and your life given. Courage on your way and... always stay Marists... who make the difference.

Secondly, I much appreciated the meeting and sharing with

the 120 adult catechists in the "Workshop for Catechists" in Havana (3 August) and with 45 young people in the "School for Leaders" in Santiago de Cuba (9-14 August), at the foot of the sanctuary of "Caridad del Cobre". These



pastoral activities offered me the possibility of getting close to the ecclesial situation which these persons live and which is like the one lived on the island in this regard. The catechists, most aged more than 50, build up experience and fidelity. They are the guardians of a faith inherited from their parents and their grandmothers, transmitted sometimes despite political adversity ; they are the witnesses in an

ecclesial community which continues to move forward. They show a great desire to train themselves to perform their mission better.

The young people of the School for Leaders come from many dioceses. They showed themselves approachable, simple, spontaneous and firm in their faith. It is good to remember that being a believer in Cuba is an option, not a tradition. The experiences they shared confirm what I have just said. Their readiness for missionary engagement within their communities is remarkable. Despite their youth (15-24), all are accompanying groups of children, preadolescents or youth. They are characterized by their joy, their artistic ability and their thirst for formation on the spiritual level. Some seriously envisage priesthood or religious life and do not hide it. Others, more critical, are looking for alternatives in less traditional models of Church...

And, finally, I underline the teamwork in what concerns the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the pastoral activities... I shared pleasant moments with Brothers Dany and Héctor, the novice Mario, Sister Eduarda, the youth leaders Gustavo and María Amelia. It was an intense labour with many challenges, which succeeded thanks to the ac-

tion of the Spirit in us and the good dispositions of everyone. However long and complicated the paths may be, it is possible to "make Jesus Christ known and loved". This is how we make the difference!

Br José Luis Merino



THE FOUR MARIST BRANCHES

Book about the Marist Family

This book, available in 4 languages, briefly describes the beauty of the Christian Journey of the Marist Family, seeking to cultivate the faith during the journey of those who are still flourishing in the face of oppressions and injustices in the contemporary world.

In reporting how the Marist Family was born, has grown and has multiplied, the book intends to awaken the faith of Lay readers, as well as to nourish the faith that inspires the journey of readers who are members – Fathers, Brothers, Sisters, Missionary Sisters – of different congregations from

around the world.

In times of new evangelization for the transmission of faith and of the World Youth Day, this material will help all of us to understand a little bit more about the call to evangelize and give testimony nowadays, taking Mary as a model.

Even though the cultural, social and religious conditions of people from all over the world are new, the words of the founder of the Marist Society revisit Christ's commandments, and at the same time challenge the members to give testimony, urging personal and community realization.

May the reader be blessed through the reading of this book and touched by the light of the Holy Spirit, accept in his/her heart the message of faith, bearing fruit in Christian actions.



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Marist Blues ~ Aleppo

Br. Bahjat Azrie sent me a short message after more than 3 weeks without internet or phone connection. They are OK and preparing new projects for the coming months: congratulations to the wonderful Marist Blues! We keep you in our prayers!

Br. Emili Turú, Superior General via FaceBook

PROVINCE OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

Br. Joseph Walton is reappointed Provincial

At the session of 8 June 2013, Br Superior General and his Council appointed Br Joseph Walton Provincial of the Province of Southern Africa, for a second term, starting in October.

Br Emili Turú, in the letter he addressed to the brothers of the Province, thanked Br Joe for his readiness to remain at the head of the Province for the next three years. The Superior General was also grateful for his devotion during the three years passed and for his attitude of service and availability towards all the Brothers of the Province.

The Province of Southern Africa is composed of Angola, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe. It has great challenges and a fine future ahead of it.

Biography of Br Joe

Born in Port Elizabeth, South Africa in August 1947, Brother Joseph Walton attended a Dominican Sisters' primary school in Uitenhage and the Marist Brothers school (now closed) in Port Elizabeth. His initial formation began with the Juniorate and Novitiate both in South Africa at the time, as well as two years in Dundas, Australia for teacher formation. He proved to be an enthusiastic and creative teacher, particularly in the area of religion, and

was much in demand to run short courses for others in this field. He has had 16 years of experience as principal, both at primary and secondary level in South Africa, and also spent a year as superintendent of Diocesan Catholic schools in Johannesburg. By way of further formation, he has participated in the Centre Champagnat programme in Rome, B.Ed studies in Australia, and the EAPI programme in Manila. He was invited to join the formation team at MIC in Nairobi in 2000, where for five years he enthusiastically shared his



love of prayer, teaching and gardening, and accompanied many young Brothers there. He served as Deputy Provincial of the Province of Southern Africa from 2005 to 2010, when he was first appointed Provincial Superior.

His second mandate will officially commence during the Provincial Chapter to take place from the 19th to the 21st of October 2013.



Haiti: Perpetual profession of Brother Frantzley Exama

Perpetual profession of Brother Frantzley EXAMA in Dame-Marie. Frantzley is the second Haitian who made this commitment in our Institute. Three other compatriot brothers have just arrived in the communities of Latibolière and Dame-Marie after their training in Guadalajara (Mexico). The pre-novitiate formation House is located in Jérémie.

Marist mission in Haiti, founded by the brothers of Canada, is now part of the province of Mexico Occidental.

We wish good and numerous vocations in this country where Marcellin Champagnat insists that "We need us Brothers".



GREATER VITALITY FOR OUR CHARISM

Second meeting of the American Sub-commission of the Laity

The American Sub-commission of the Laity, created a year ago by the Inter-American Conference of Provincials to reflect on the processes for brothers-lay communion in the three American regions, met at Coronel Oviedo, Paraguay, from 22 to 26 July. Those taking part were: Louise Fortier (Canada), Patricia Ríos (México Occidental), Br Balbino Juárez (América Central), Moisés Beltrán (Norandina), Layza Maria Gomes (Brasil Centro-Norte), Raúl Amaya (Santa María de los Andes) and Mauricio Fuentes (Cruz del Sur). Fabiano Incerti (Brasil Centro-Sul) was not able to join us for personal reasons. The Director of the Secretariat of the Laity, Br Javier Espinosa, was also present. We thank him very sincerely for his presence and his contributions.

The family spirit which characterizes us was evident at every moment. Br Chema Custodi was waiting for us and welcomed us at Asunción at "ungodly hours"... We were truly at home! The brothers constantly supported and helped us on the spot and contributed to the meeting's success... It is such experiences which foster "an international horizon in our minds and hearts, a greater awareness of the internationality of the Institute", which guarantees the revitalisation of the charism in a spirit of communion between brothers and lay people.

The first item on our agenda was an ample sharing of the dimensions of our lives, an exercise which strengthened our friendship and

sense of family, through knowledge of personal situations and the situation of our countries and Provinces. The basic work was the drafting of the Strategic Plan. After reflecting on our weak and strong points in the continent, we expressed our conviction,



as well as the mission and vision of the Sub-commission. We proposed for ourselves the following objectives for the next three years: reinforce the community and fraternal among the members of the Sub-commission. Promote and accompany the development of the Marist lay vocation. Develop processes which encourage the new relationship between brothers and laity, based on communion. Provide impulse and accompaniment for the new ways of living the Marist charism. Encourage and support different expressions of community life

of the Marist laity. Promote and accompany the structures of animation at provincial and regional levels. We gave some time to sharing on the process of revitalisation of the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family, animated by the Secretariat of the Laity.

We shared the challenges which have risen at the first stage: to have plans of formation, animation and accompaniment teams, to form leaders and move towards a greater autonomy for the laity, arrive at a connection with youth ministry, respond to the calls of the XXI General Chapter, act so that the members of the Movement feel themselves bearers of the charism. As a Sub-commission, we feel called to accompany this process.

We had the opportunity to meet representatives of the Marist laity of Paraguay. The meeting, genial and innovative, took place once more in a great spirit of family. We felt united by the same inspiration inherited from Marcellin Champagnat, reinforced in the mission and expressed in the shared life of brothers and lay people.

This second meeting helped us clarify better the presence and participation of the Sub-commission in the Marist processes of America, in collaboration with the International Secretariat of the Laity. We are making progress, the ideas are clearer, as well as the objectives and the commitments. We take note of the richness we can draw from collaboration with other sub-commissions, especially that of Brothers Today.

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