

GENERAL CONFERENCE 2013

Notre Dame de l'Hermitage, France
8-29 September 2013

The General Conference takes place at Our Lady of the Hermitage, from September 8 to 29, under the motto: *Awakening the Dawn: Prophets and Mystics for Our Time*. Today we send the chronicles of the second week. Follow the General Conference at www.champagnat.org



Monday, 16 September: La Valla: A new beginning

Morning of Monday 16 September began with prayer in the Hermitage chapel, centred on the Montagne experience, animated by Br Michael De Waas. Then in the meeting room, Br Emili Turú reminded them of the objectives of the General Conference: to understand the Institute as a whole; to further relationships between the General Govern-

ment and those responsible for the Provinces and Districts, as among all; and to promote a significant mystical and prophetic experience. For this purpose, the atmosphere and rhythm of these days is intended to foster the living of interiority, with half an hour of personal prayer each morning and the various times of silence and prayer.

The Superior General also introduced the theme for the week: to have as concrete a view of the Institute as possible. The icon of La Valla showed us a pattern lived by Marcellin: from Les Palais to La Valla, from the dream to the concrete. The "waves" of the icon of La Valla, made by Br Matías Espinosa, express this global vision Marcellin already had: "all the dioceses in the world enter into our views". La Valla was a beginning, but what matters today is a "new beginning".

Then there was time for group sharing of the summary of the previous week and subsequently each table could express the reflections of the group.

Br Emili then presented some videos of young Brothers, made at the Hermitage with the group of European Brothers younger than 45, and the video made with young Brothers from all the continents present at the International Marist Youth Meeting in Río de Janeiro.

Before the end of the morning, the architects working on the restoration of La Valla explained not only the changes made in the house but also their deep significance. One of them stated that "if the Hermitage speaks of Champagnat, La Valla whispers". From the architectural point of view, it means having an encounter with the past, with the XIX century and with a house

which looks towards the XXI century, the same as the Institute. They also explained the levels of the house: the interior, the lower part or "cellar", the ground level: the community which established itself in the interior; and the upper floor: the mission, the apostolate, the upper room of "Pentecost".



After lunch, the participants went to Les Palais, where Marcellin encountered the young Montagne. There they began Mass with the liturgy of the Word. Afterwards,

like Marcellin returning to La Valla, they were able to reflect on the experience lived, in order, like him, to come to clear and bold decisions.

After a little more than two hours walking, they arrived at La Valla. They had time for recuperation and for coming to know the house. Once more, the architects explained details of the house, elaborating on the information they had given in the morning, and accompanying the brothers on a tour of the house. Then they continued with the celebration of the Eucharist. At the end, Br Emili invited the participants to sign an image of Saint Marcellin, as an expression of commitment to "a new beginning" of the Institute, looking to the future and 2017.

TOMORROW FOR TODAY

17 and 18 September

After morning prayer (17 September), Br Emili introduced the next session of the General Conference with the question: How would you like the Marist Institute in the world to be seen in the local communities in 2020?

The dynamic followed was first per-

sonal reflection, then group work and the choosing and defining of five important statements about how they would like the Institute to be seen in 2020. The statements were then placed together in terms of similarity and there was time for all to be able to read all the statements. Finally, one person from each group was free

to present an echo to the whole assembly. The echos expressed convergences, divergences, surprises and possible omissions, whatever drew the attention.

In the afternoon, Br Emili gave some news about the Brothers in Aleppo: they were well, planning the next

school year, although without Internet communication.

To continue the work being done, he presented the participants with another question: Are we operating as an international Institute? He asked them to indicate what they thought was being done and what could be improved.

The questions served as the basis for the next day's work.

On 18 September, morning prayer was centred on the wedding feast of

Cana and directed by Br Josep Maria Soteras CG, who helped study the biblical text and gave time for personal reflection.

Then Br Emili briefly reviewed the work up to then. From the previous day's work, they managed to define 6 areas, which could be summed up as follows: the most vulnerable, global availability, international Marist communities (brothers and lay), meaningful life, evangelization and government. The Superior General invited them to study and give concrete expres-

sion to these themes. Six groups were formed, one per area, and the participants were free to choose the area which interested them.

Before moving on to the group work, Br Emili recommended them not to lose sight of the global focus of the Institute, as an international institution; with a mission arising from the Montagne experience and directed towards the "Montagnes" of today; in a Church with a Marian face, with religious life moving to the "margins" to evangelize.

I WILL AWAKE THE DAWN!

19 and 20 September

Morning prayer on 19 September took place in three different places according to language groups. Afterwards, Br Emili presented the participants at the Conference with the work to be done. He reminded them of the 6 areas decided on: the most vulnerable, global availability, international Marist communities, meaningful life, evangelization, and government. For the methodology, each group situated itself according to the 6 areas with their proposals of application and made comments, seeking consensus on each, confirming, rejecting, or noting serious reservations where necessary.

At the end of the day, the secretaries met to draw up a joint report which was presented to the whole conference by Br Luis Carlos Gutiérrez, of the Province of América Central. He indicated the unanimity of consensus on almost all the proposals and the reservations expressed by the groups.

Celebration of the Eucharist began in the old community room of the Hermitage (room of the frescoes), the place where the brothers met with Fr Cham-

pagnat, where Br François was elected as Superior General...

The following day, 20 September, morning prayer began in the exterior courtyard near the statue of Our Lady of Victories and in contact with the natural surroundings of the House of the Hermitage. In the first session, Br Emili recalled the three levels of the House of La Valla: interior life, community and mission. There was a time for personal reflection on the report of the previous day, then the brothers met in groups according to the main regions of the world: Africa, America, Asia and Oceania, Europe, and the General Administration. They had to respond to the following questions: What will be the implications for me/my Council/my Region? And: How can we support one another? The afternoon was left for personal reflection.



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21 September

Saturday, 21 September, began with prayer in the chapel around Fr Champagnat. Then Br Emili explained the programme for Saturday and Monday: days for listening to information about various topics relating to the General Government and the Institute.

First, Br Joe Mc Kee V.G. explained the situation at the General House, including the "Villa Eur" hotel, the former building of the International College. Three different bodies had been asked to make an analysis of the situation there and present a report, dealing with the obstacles, possible uses, type of payment and valuation. Given the current economic situation, sale is out of the question. For the moment, it continues with professional support, and it has been decided to confide management to a firm and change "Villa EUR" from a "holiday" inn to a hotel. This will help improve the administration, while continuing to study and seek ways to solve the problem of the General House.

Secondly, the Econome General, Br Víctor Preciado presented the model of financing the General Government. He spoke about its historical development, the processes developed and the difficulties which had surfaced along the way. The matter will be presented with more detail at the meeting of Provincial Economes in October in Rome.

Thirdly, Br Ernesto Sánchez C.G. explained the stages involved in the revision of the Constitutions and Statutes, and the setting up of a commission to launch a process of animation throughout the Institute, which will begin work in November.

Fourthly, Br Emili Turú spoke



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A W A K E N I N G T H E D A W N
P R O P H E T S A N D M Y S T I C S F O R O U R T I M E

about the Bicentenary of the Institute and its programming. He gave information about the criteria, the 3 years of preparation with a theme per year, and how to integrate this with the dates and events of the Institute and the Church.

Fifthly, the director of the Secretariat of the Laity, Br Javier Espinosa, spoke about the lay experience and the ways for the future, in particular the matter of the different forms of adherence, either to the charism or to the Institute. Br Jeffrey Crowe, Provincial of Australia, followed with a model of laity and brothers setting up a public association with civil and canonical implications.

Sixthly, the director of FMSI - Geneva,

Br Jim Jolley, dealt with the topic of child protection, which is being carried out at institute level in the various provinces, its policies and plans of actions. He indicated it had made great advances in general, but it is necessary to continue taking concrete steps.

Seventhly, Br Josep Maria Soterias C.G. spoke about the "kosmos" programme which had been established in the General Secretariat and for all the Province Secretariats for the Brothers' data, and the "archivum" programme for the documents required by the Institute at the general level. He spoke of the next stages in their implementation and asked for the support and cooperation of the provincials in the use of these systems by their secretaries.

The afternoon was left free. At the Eucharist, the homily was replaced by the reading in English and Spanish of part of the interview given by Pope Francis, in which he connected his person with the Gospel of the day, the call of Matthew.

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