

THE CHILD WHO IS GIVEN US!

Marist Blues: Letter from Aleppo N° 15

Today, 11 December 2013, is a very special day... Aleppo is covered with a white blanket! The schools are closed, many people have stayed home, some children and youth have taken advantage to play and entertain themselves, forgetting for a day a situation becoming more and more obscure and incomprehensible...

On the occasion of Christmas, the Syrian child is appealing to us...

"I need... I need shoes...I need a pull-over...I need a blanket...I need a bowl of milk...I need to get warm... I need to get food..."

All these cries, we hear from the mouths of the children who come to us every day.

Children of displaced families...or impoverished families... Children of all ages, children who come looking for us with their parents...

Children who don't go to school... who have no access to education...

Their schools have been destroyed or occupied ...

Children who do not even know how to read or write...

Abandoned children, children who sell bread on the footpath...

Children who cry with joy and astonishment when on coming home they find



the electric power has been restored: "Now we can see the cartoons..."

Children who bear adult burdens: "You know, mum could not wash my face, there was no water at home..."

Children who are already living in the nostalgia for the past.... Fadi said to his father who was explaining to him the perfect tense... "Papa, the perfect is like our house where we can't go back any more..."

Children who are worried... who ask themselves if they will ever see the persons or places they cherish again...

Children who do not want to leave their parents.... And parents who do not wish to abandon their children... What

anguish when every morning the children have to go to school: and if something happens to them, if something stops their coming home...

Children who reassure the adults by telling them: " Don't worry, the sound you hear is a bullet... a bomb... an explosion or a missile..."

Children who want to express to us their joy in living despite the sufferings of the adults...

They ask us for a space of peace, of happiness... a space of tenderness... and quite simply a space for play...

Children who hear their parents repeat "May God protect you..."

In the eyes of these children we read misery and extreme distress...

They represent thousands of children living in Syria or in the refugee camps in the surrounding countries...

We are unable not to think of each of them on this day when snow covers the Middle East...

They invite us to change our life, to move, to go out of ourselves, to go to their frontier...

The emergency cannot wait, it is necessary to risk a gesture, say a word other than feeling sorry, it is necessary to act... it is necessary to invent, create and bring to birth...

For them projects have been born, volunteers have devoted themselves, programmes have been launched...

We, the Marist Blues, have dreamed for them a world other than the one they are plunged in...

With you and thanks to your solidarity, your support and your words of encouragement, the dream has become a reality...

And this reality has been enlarged by

a new project M.I.T. : Marist Institute for Training... A centre of formation to allow persons between 20 and 45 to form themselves, to acquire skills and add to their C.V. important training and in very different fields. In 6 weeks, we have already organised 3 sessions of 12 hours each and 3 two hour conferences on topics linked to quality, communication, management of time and many other interesting topics. The number of participants is limited to 18 persons per session, while the conferences are open to all... It is a great success...

The children of "Learn to Grow" have continued their educational programmes... The interest the parents have in the educational quality offered by these two projects, the morning one for the displaced and the afternoon one for the children of the "Ear of God" families, is to be noted.

Observing the wear on the shoes worn by the children of the displaced families, we have offered each child a new pair....

The youth of the "Skill School" continue to actively prepare a project for Christmas... The animators are busy in achieving this project...

The ladies of "Tawassol" are drawing good profit from everything offered to them by the monitors, in English or in computer or in manual work...

The members of the families of the "Mountain Basket" as well as the families of the "Ear of God" of Midane, have received new clothes and new shoes, as well as their monthly basket of supplies...

We have also relaunched our former accomodation project, beginning with helping the families displaced and in need of renting a house... For the moment, a dozen families have taken advantage of it... They have just been added to the list of 30 families who lodge with us and whom we have helped find a house...

With the drawings of Fadi, Roula, Marwa and Youssef and in their name and in the name of so many children of our dear Syria,

We wish you all a Christmas of peace and hope ...

For the Marists of Aleppo
Br Georges SABE
11 December 2013



PROVINCE OF L'HERMITAGE

II International Marist Mission Assembly

In the Province of L'Hermitage, after some months (June – October) of presentation of the II Mission Assembly to communities, school and social works, movements, fraternities and Marist life groups... there are already many persons who have begun to work in groups on the proposed topics.

We have set up a web page specifically for the Mission Assembly in the different languages of our province:
<http://www.maristes.com/aimm/>

Every ten days approximately we will publish testimonies on

the mission experiences of persons engaged in the different contexts of the Province, as well as photos of the groups which let us know about their participation and send us their contributions.

You can also follow the publications through the Twitter and Facebook channels of the Province:

<https://twitter.com/maristescom>
<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Maristes-LHermitage/581237581895368>



RESTRUCTURING IN OCEANIA

Inauguration of the District of the Pacific

On 15 December, the District of the Pacific was born during its first Chapter. The new district is composed of the Brothers and works which were part of the old Province of New Zealand and includes the following countries: New Zealand, Fiji, Samoa and Kiribati.

It was decided in 2010 to restructure the region of Oceania, which now takes its definitive form: the Province of Australia –inaugurated a year ago, the District of Melanesia and the District of the Pacific. Each Administrative Unit has its own major superior.

The Assembly and the new District Chapter were held from 11 to 18 December and Brothers Emili Turú and Michael de Waas were present.



Brother David McDonald, up to now superior of the Province of New Zealand, is the first District superior.



SLAVERY IN THE TEA GARDENS

Moulovibazr, Bangladesh

November 27, 2013 has been an outstanding day for us in Bangladesh. It was the day when we have finally been able to purchase the land on which to build our dream. A beautiful plot in the municipality of Moulovi-bazar, filled with trees, with a creek crossing it from North to South, adjacent to a tea plantation, and that meets all the conditions to make our project of providing secondary education to the tea workers children.

In the morning the deed of sale between the owner and the Diocese of Sylhet was signed; in the afternoon, following the bengali tradition, Brothers Marti Enrich and Eugenio Sanz went to the plot to "take possession" officially. Then we have made a duty visit to the owner, Mr. Mahfuj Chowdury, descendant of the last zamindar of the area (the zamindars were traditionally aristocrat landowners).

We must thank God for the purchase of the land and to all

those who have made it possible with their donations, difficult task because the NGOs never help to the purchase of land. But this is only the beginning, now we have to continue raising funds for the construction of the school. Some NGOs seem favorable to contribute, such as SED and Manos Unidas. Let us hope that some others also will help, as well as private institutions and donors.

Tea plantations children deserve an education that so far is forbidden to them, an education that would open for them the doors of a worthy future. From this post, I encourage everyone to help us, to help these boys and girls, contributing economically and spiritually to this cause, which cannot be more human, or more Christian.

Read more in <http://maristmoulovibazr.blogspot.it/>



BR. JEAN MARIE BATICK

New District Leader for the District of Melanesia

Br. Jean Marie Batick has been appointed by the Province of Australia as the new District Leader for the District of Melanesia. Jean Marie will take up his role at the District Chapter to take place mid 2014. Following is a profile of Jean Marie that was part of the Institute website in recent months.

Tell us about yourself

I am Brother Jean Marie BATICK and I belong to the District of Melanesia which includes Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and New Caledonia. I was professed as a Marist Brother in November 1998 at the Pacific Novitiate in Lomeri, Fiji. My scholastic was done at the Marist Asia Pacific Centre (MAPAC) in the Philippines. My Country of origin is Vanuatu. Currently I am in charge of the Laumanasa Formation House as postulant master, in the Solomon Islands. I am also a member of the District of Melanesia Council.

What does it mean for you to be a brother today?

Being a brother today, for me, is all about committing oneself to a call of service and to the call to live my vocation as a Marist consecrated religious. And to live fully and joyously my life regardless of the challenges that the call will bring. To be available and present sensitively to the calls of those with whom I live and work.



BRAZIL

Interprovincial Novitiate of Passo Fundo



On 8 December, five Brothers of the Province of Brésil Centro-Norte, four of Brésil Centro-Sul and one from Rio Grande do Sul, made their first profession in the interprovincial novitiate of Passo Fundo.

One of the new brothers, Casiano, commented thus on the experience of two years lived before the taking of vows. "What has marked the novitiate has been the

living of inter-provinciability. We have been open to the reality of others and have learned what concerns the congregation and pastoral work. I have

reaffirmed my willingness to say Yes to God in following Champagnat".

The novices consecrated themselves to God through the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience in the Institute of the Marist Brothers during a celebration attended by the provincials: Brs Wellington Medeiros, of PMBCN, Joaquim Sperandio, of PMBCS and Inácio Etges, of PMRS, family and friends.



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4