

BROTHERS FORMATORS FOR A NEW WORLD

Interview with Brother Dennis Cooper

Among the ongoing formation programmes, our houses of Manzianna and the Escorial are offering a special programme in 2014 for the qualification and preparation of Brother formators for the stages of Marist initial formation. It is called « Brothers formators for a new world » and is intended to respond to the desire formulated by the XXI General Chapter to promote a new consecrated life which generates a new way of being brother.

Brother Dennis Cooper, of the Province of Australia, has been appointed by the General Council as the new Director of the Manzianna House and animator of the team which is drawing up the English language programme for the formators. He will be assisted by Brothers Sylvain Yao (District of West Africa) and Alfredo Herrera (Province of East Asia). During a meeting in Rome to put the finishing touches to the programme, we were able to have a very interesting interview on the future of formation and the programme for formators.



Tell us about yourself and the other team members.

My name is Dennis Cooper, from the Province of Australia and my early years as a Brother were spent in wonderful communities and in teaching. Then there were many special years living and working among Australian Aboriginal people. This experience was powerfully formative as we were called to stand close alongside some of the most marginalized people in our country. My sense of what it means to be a Brother today was shaped then.

Since participating in a program for future formators at Valpré, Lyon, France 1996 – 198 I have been involved in formation of young Brothers in Australia and at our Pacific Novitiate, in Fiji.

The other team members are Brothers Sylvain Yao and Alfredo Herrera. Sylvain is from the Ivory Coast and last year he completed six years as the District Leader for Western Africa. Along with wisdom and good humour he brings rich experience in formation work as well as in leadership to the team for our program.

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

From 26 to 31 December, Br Antonio Ramalho of the General Council has been animating the retreat for the Brothers in Angola and accompanying their Assembly.

On 28 December, Br Colin Chalmers joined the community of the General House. He will replace as Archivist General Br Juan Moral, who returns to his Province in January 2014.

Br Antonio Ramalho will represent the General Council at the Chapter of the Province of Madagascar, to be held from 2 to 5 January.

Alfredo is originally from Mexico and has spent the greater part of his life in Korea. He is a man of energy and enthusiasm balanced with clear insight and vision. Like Sylvain, Alfredo has great experience as a formator and leader.

The experience and vision of these two men for the future of Marist life in Africa and Asia will help bring to the fore the internationality and intercultural strength and life of the whole group.

Why is the Institute investing in the formation for future formators?

When Br Emili, SG and the General Council decided to hold this program for the preparation of new Formators for the Congregation they saw it is one of the means for putting into effect the call of the XXI General Chapter to prepare Brothers as formators able to work in the formation of Brothers for a new world. The Chapter emphasized that our formation programs should respond to the internationality of the Congregation by encouraging in new generations of brothers a missionary availability, a stronger sense of internationality and intercultural sensitivity.

Added to this is the importance of having sufficient well-prepared brother formators. Our experience as a congregation suggests, that the human and spiritual growth possible through active engagement in these programs, is vital for our future.

Who are the participants?

There are 17 participants preparing for the program in English at Manziana. Sixteen are Marist Brothers and one is a Marist Father. Eight are from Africa, three from Asia, three from Pacific Island countries, one from Spain and one from Australia. The Brother from Spain and one from the Solomon Islands, in the Pacific are members of the District of ad

Gentes. The age range of the participants is from 30 to 48 with the majority being in their thirties.

What are some important elements of the program?

The program will offer a participative, practical approach, in which each Brother, besides growing as a person and deepening his closeness to Jesus, will have opportunities to develop the tools and skills required for his role as a formator. Important core ideas about Marist formation will be covered, taking care to adapt to the needs and issues of a contemporary formation. In addition, the program will address the XXI General Chapter call to ensure that our formation programs promote a deep understanding of the identity of the Marist Brother in the world today and provide an integrated growth for all dimensions of the human person.

What are your expectations of the program for future formators?

Provincials or District Leaders, have selected participating Brothers as being men who have the willingness and potential to be formators for the Institute. This implies that they will be open and available in the future to carry out this important mission, whether in their own province or in some other part of the Marist world if necessary.

We could finish by saying that as future formators the congregation is looking to these Brothers to become men of sufficient human maturity and flexibility of outlook to become compassionate formators and mentors to young men who nurture the dream of following in the footsteps of Marcellin and the first Brothers. For men open to change in themselves and with a generous capacity for teamwork as well as openness to internationality – for the program itself and for future ministry.

FaceBook: [Brother-Formators-Hermanos-Formadores](#)



Marist presence in East Timor

The Marist presence in East Timor has seen significant developments during 2013. Recently we accepted three young men to begin their novitiate in 2014. This will be in Sri Lanka, starting in June with novices from East Timor, Vietnam and Pakistan. Great news.

There are other resident aspirants ready to become postulants in 2014 and more aspirants ready to start. To accommodate this new family we have purchased a piece of land near Bacau and will build a formation house on it.

To strengthen our capacity to support this new growth in a country where people are more familiar with Portuguese than English, we have forged a link with Marists in Brazil. Already we have an assistant formator from there. We are also working with the Brazilian Provincials to plan a Marist school in the coming years.

Br. Jeff, Provincial of Australia

MARIST EUROPE

Meetings of the European Provincial Councils and the Marist European Conference

The five European Provincial Councils meet together every two years. These meetings provide an opportunity for the various members of Provincial Councils to get to know each other better and to discuss matters of common interest and concern. The latest meeting was held in Berg Moriah, a Schönstatt retreat and conference centre near Koblenz, Germany, from 27 – 29th November, 2013.

Thirty-eight brothers participated in the meeting, including Brothers Ernesto Sanchez and Antonio Ramalho, the members of the General Council who have responsibility for Europe and Africa. Most of the participants were from Spain, along with brothers from Italy, Portugal, France, Germany, Belgium, Scotland and Ireland.

During the first day the brothers listened to reports from the four European work teams: Mission, Brothers Today, Vocations, and Lay People and Brothers Together. There was also a presentation from the Champagnat movement of the Marist Family. The presenters gave an outline of the objectives of each team, the nature of their activities, and their vision for the future. This enabled the brothers to understand better the current structures that exist in Marist Europe.

Experience has shown us that we benefit from taking time to relax together. With that in mind the brothers went on



a boat trip from Koblenz to the famous Lorelei statue. The brothers had their meal on the boat and enjoyed the beauty of the countryside and towns along the banks of the Rhine. Most importantly, it gave them time to relax and chat together. That evening Brother Winfried Schreieck visited the centre with his great-nephew, Wolfgang, to present a wine tasting evening. Brother Winfried's family produces a range of wines. The brothers benefited from an introduction to quality German wines in a relaxing setting.

The following day the brothers listened to presentations about important themes from the General Conference that was held in September: Internationality, Contemplation, Mission, the Poor and Evangelization, and Forma-

tion. There was also a presentation about statistics, with projections between now and 2022. At the end of the day the brothers made proposals for a future for Marist Europe. The Provincials members of the Marist European Conference (C.E.M.) discussed the proposals when they met the following day. This was the first time that some of the participants had visited Germany. Despite the weather they were able to visit places of interest, like Cologne, with its magnificent cathedral, Mainz and Frankfurt. Participants agreed that it was a profitable meeting, which helped us to move forward as Marists together in Europe.

Brother Brendan Geary



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 Foundation of the Marist Institute

MARÍA PILAR BENAVENTE SERRANO

Facilitator of the preparatory commission of the II Marist International Mission Assembly

Sr María Pilar has taken on the role of facilitator of the Preparatory Commission of the II IMMA. She was present at the Commission meeting held in Nairobi, from 22 to 27 October 2013. She will continue attending the meetings of the Commission and will also take part in the II Marist International Mission Assembly in Nairobi. We are very happy with her work in support of the Preparatory Commission. Some information on the Sister follows (Br João Carlos do Prado)



I belong to the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa (MSOLA), an International Missionary Congregation composed by 750 members of 35 nationalities. Our focus is mainly on the African peoples and on dialogue between Christianity and Islam.

I have lived and worked for 2 years in Burkina Faso, 5 in Mauritania and 6 in Algeria. In Burkina Faso I worked in social development in a remote rural area where ancestral African religions and traditions were still remarkably alive. In the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, I worked in a government center for health protection of mothers and children. In Algeria, where I lived in a populated urban area, I worked with interreligious and ecumenical teams to promote encounter,

collaboration and friendship between people of different beliefs.

The golden thread in all this, the passion that has been in me all along these years has been the intercultural and interfaith living as anticipation and co-creation of what humanity can become and that in my Christian faith terms I call the Kingdom of God. Later on I became aware of the cosmic evolutionary process of which we are part. It has been a vertiginous realization of the sacred story we are part of, together with the rest of Creation. In my consciousness, time and space are extending ever more. Thus, my original passion has been challenged and enlarged.

It is exciting to live this moment of history when -contrary to what happened some years ago- disciplines like sciences, spirituality, religion, arts, cosmology, see each other as complementary. The past self-sufficiency of, from one side, religion and, from the other, sciences seem to lessen in favor of a greater mutual interest and collaboration. This is true also regarding groups, nations. I see myself and the groups I work with as been part of this movement.

For 12 years I was a member of the international leadership council of the MSOLA

and for 6 years (until August 2011) I was the International Leader.

I was president of SEDOS for three years. SEDOS is a forum open to Institutes of Consecrated Life which commit themselves to deepening their understanding of global mission. It was a free and creative space for theological reflection.

As leader of my Congregation I have also had the opportunity to visit and know quite well 15 African countries in which our congregational members are living and working. Today I feel specially committed towards the various women religious congregations in Africa, without excluding the mens' ones. They represent a huge potential for Africa and for the world while meeting many challenges (ex. poverty and injustice, tradition vs. globalization, various cercles of belonging...). To support the leaders of these congregations with an appropriate leadership training is something in line with both, the specific purpose of the MSOLA and one of the priorities of Faith and Praxis FCJ through which I currently do my facilitation and consultancy work as international associate.

Regarding my training, I first studied music and then nursing. Besides theological training, I was given the opportunity to explore in depth dialogue with Islam at the Pontifical Institute of Islamic and Arabic Studies in Rome. At this moment I am preparing a Diploma on Organizational Analysis with the Grubb Institute.

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