

MEETING OF THE MARIST FAMILY

The four Marist General Councils reflect on interculturality

From January 16th to 18th the General Councils of the four branches of the Marist Family (the Marist Fathers, SM; Sisters, SM; Missionary Sisters, SMSM and Brothers, FMS) held our annual meeting at the SVD Ad Gentes Center for Formation and Spirituality in the town of Nemi, south of Rome.

Centering on the theme "Rejoicing in the richness of our international/multicultural reality...that the world might believe," the gathering opened with each Superior General speaking about a significant event that happened in his or her Congregation during the past year.



GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

In the week of 27 to 31 January, members of the General Council were directly involved in the animation of the Course for Formators currently being run in the Centres of Manziana and El Escorial.

The General Council's plenary session resumed its regular rhythm on 3 February and will continue to the 28th of the month. Days 5 to 7 were devoted to the Secretariats, initiating a global evaluation of the Action Plan, in the light of the September 2013 General Conference. Among other topics, the General Council gave attention to the Institute's animation activities for the next few years, especially for the young Brothers, again in the light of reflections made during the General Conference.

Brother Tony Leon, vice director of the Secretariat of Brothers Today, attended the meeting of the Subcommittee of Brothers Today for America in Brasilia (Brasil), from 2 to 7 February.

Between 8 and 12 February, Brothers Joe Mc Kee, Vicar General, and Ernesto Sánchez, Councillor General, were in Nairobi, Kenya, participating in the meetings of the Directive Council of MIUC (Marist College) and the Conference of the Provincials of Africa (CSAC).

And from 10 to 14 of the month, the Commission of New Models of Animation, Administration and Government has been meeting in the General House in Rome. With the members of this Commission and its support teams, Brothers Víctor Preciado, Councillor and Econome General, and João Carlos do Prado and Miguel Ángel Espinosa, of the Secretariat of Mission, have also been taking part.

This provided an opportunity for all of us to gain insights into the approach and direction being taken by the leaders in each Congregation.

Each presentation was followed by a period for reflection and discussion, enabling us to better understand our role as leaders in our Institutes at this grace-filled time when, under the dynamic leadership of Pope Francis, the Church is experiencing a profound renewal and transformation.

We discussed the particular challenges that each of our Institutes is facing in carrying out our mission in the way of Mary and in contributing to ongoing development of a Marian face of the Church.

The gathering also featured a workshop facilitated by two SVD priests. They helped us reflect on the topic An Inter-cultural Congregation in a Multi-cultural World. This led to fruitful discussions on how each of our Institutes could

initiate and implement steps to assist our members worldwide in deepening their awareness of this unfolding reality in our midst.

And last but not least, this much-anticipated Marist Family reunion afforded us a welcome opportunity to pray together, relax and enjoy one another's company.

Brother Michael De Waas, FMS



MARIST ROOTS IN COLOMBIA

125 years of education (1889-2014)

When Champagnat founded the brothers, his goal was to to "form good Christians and worthy citizens, and presented them with Mary as a model for educators and students because of her preference for simplicity, work and family life". He condensed this in the motto of "All to Jesus through Mary, and all to Mary for Jesus".

A number of Parent Associations aimed at creating private schools to provide Christian education for their children were organized in Colombia as a result of the new Constitution of 1886 and the signing of the Concordat with the Holy See (12/31/1887). Article 11 of the Concordat says: "The Holy See will offer support and cooperation to the Government so as to establish religious institutions in Colombia mainly dedicated to the exercise of charity, the missions, the education of youth, education in general, and other works of public utility and charity". As soon as the terms of the Concordat became public in Colombia, religious orders dedicated to education were asked to send members to direct the public schools. On August 3, 1888, Brother Théophane SG wrote to General Vélez, Minister to the Vatican from Colombia, in

response to his request, and promised to send brothers to direct two schools in Cauca Department. Finally, on March 26, 1889, the contract by which the brothers accepted to direct these schools was signed in Rome. The seven European brothers arrived in Popayan on November 26, 1889, took possession of the public school on December 4, and started classes on January 20, 1890, with approximately 300 students.



This first Foundation in Popayán was a Marist seed that has fructified during the last 125 years in cities like Cali, Buga, Palmira, Tuluá, and Cartago, in the Cauca Valley; Pasto, Ipiales, Pupiales, Túquerres and El Tambo, in Nariño; Santander de Quilichao, and Bolívar, in Cauca; Neiva, Timaná, Pital, and Elías in Huila; Ibagué in Tolima; Bogotá in Cundinamarca; Pereira in Risaralda; Quibdó in Chocó; Riohacha in Guajira; Duitama in Boyacá; Itagüí, Medellín, and Sonsón, in Antioquia; Sibundoy, Santiago, and San Francisco, in Putumayo; and Villavicencio in Meta. Unfortunately several of these 150 foundations disappeared during the War of the Thousand Days or due to subsequent political circumstances. Today, as it reaches 125 years in Colombia, the Marist community

continues to take care of its most valuable treasure: 11,300 students, children and youngsters, through 16 Marist works and 4 retreat houses in Pasto, Ipiales, Popayán, Cali, Armenia, Pereira, Manizales, Medellín, Ibagué, Villavicencio and Bogotá, directed by a group of 1,400 brothers and committed teachers, besides several hundred support workers.

Throughout these years of history, hundreds of Marists have lit up new paths in the souls of young people and in our homeland as such. Together with them, a legion of educators, administrative workers, and employees have labored from sunrise to sunset in the schools “preparing the furrows, assisting the sowing, enabling the harvest singing”, and building the great Champagnat family. And we cannot forget to mention the parents who entrusted their children to the disciples of Champagnat, and the former students,

their legitimate offspring, of whom the Marists are so proud.

The preferential option for the poor has always been a driving force along the Marist history in Colombia; the brothers’ concern for the most in need has been steady wherever they have been in these 125 years; there is as yet an effective presence, regardless of the difficulties, in many insertion communities and missions; several educational centers are also free of charge.

In the Jubilee Year of this wonderful educational odyssey in Colombia, we thank God, Mary our Lady and First Superior, and Saint Marcellin Champagnat, our Founder, for allowing this great work to move ahead so strongly and keep casting deeper Marist roots in Colombia.



VIII PROVINCIAL CHAPTER OF NIGERIA

From 4 to 8 January at Orlu, the VIII Provincial Chapter of Nigeria took place. Br. Ernesto Sánchez participated representing the General Council. Br. Joachim Ezetulugo started his second term as Provincial, and these Brothers were elected Provincial Councillors: Mark Omede, Christopher Onwasonanya, Joachim Ezetulugo, Ifeanyi Mbaegbu, Celestine Okoye and Philip Mate. Below you have the message from the capitulants.

We, the Capitulants, Lay Marists, and other Observers of the VII Provincial Chapter, held at Orlu, Imo State from 4 - 8 January, 2014, after deliberation, expressed the following chapter message:

- 1. Marist Brothers’ religious life in Nigeria today**
 - * There was a call for re-invigoration of our personal and community prayer life.
- 2. Marist Brothers’ community life in Nigeria today**
 - * We need to balance our community life and apostolate.
 - * There is also need for co-operative and collaborative effort on the part of every Brother.
 - * Dynamism, innovation and objectivity will contribute a great deal to growth and harmony in our Communities.
- 3. Marist Brothers’ mission in Nigeria today**
 - * There is urgent need for strict adherence to Provincial financial and educational policies. Furthermore, a call was made for diversification in terms of manpower resources and management.
 - * On-going infrastructural projects in the Province



need to be completed.

- 4. Vocations**
 - It was agreed that we should intensify vocation recruitment strategies and screening of candidates.
- 5. Initial formation/on-going formation**
 - * There is need to provide adequate infrastructure in our formation houses for sound spiritual and intellectual formation of the candidates
 - * The need to have a full-time Postulant Master and a Director of formation respectively was emphasized.

This will enable each of them to be focused on the job.

6. Brothers and laity searching for a greater vitality of Marist mission in Nigeria

* It was agreed that the most positive approach to this issue is awareness-raising among Brothers and

Lay people on the vocation of the Lay Marist.

7. Provincial house

* It was unanimously agreed that there should be a suitable Provincial Secretariat and Provincial house at Iva Valley Enugu.



BR. TONY LEON

Assistant Director of the Secretariat "Brothers Today"

The General Council has appointed Br Tony León, of the Province of Australia, assistant director of the Secretariat "Brothers Today". From the beginning of this year, Br Tony forms part of the Secretariat team, composed of the Director, Br César Rojas, and the Br Councillors Eugène Kabanguka, Ernesto Sánchez and Josep Maria Soteras. The Secretariat can also count on the collaboration of an international team, which met for the first time last July. This group is composed of Brs Hipólito Pérez, James Pinheiro, Daniel O'Riordan, Juan Carlos Fuertes, Norbert Mwila, Albert Nzabonaliba, Saul Placious, Peter Rodney and Jean Marie Batick.



I was born on 9 May 1962 in the city of Hong Kong. At the age of 6, my father Raymond, bravely sacrificed much comfort and security to move to the new land of Australia with a new job with less pay. However, this move to a new culture accessed greater opportunities for his nursing wife, Helen and for the three young children, Tony, Richard and Angela.

Educated by Marist brothers since Grade 5, I graduated secondary

education at Marcellin College, Randwick. After leaving school, the invitation of work in the hospitality industry attracted me, yet, after several months of training and placement, I was disillusioned by what had attracted me in the first place and felt called to another form of hospitality: to be brother for others.

I entered the Postulancy in 1981 and took my first vows in 1983 and made my full profession in 1990.

I have been blessed with a rich variety of ministry from Primary School Education to Coordinating senior students; Dormitory supervision in boarding school and residential care for youths at risk. From 2007, I worked

in Vocation and Marist Life Ministry, which graced me with working with our young people throughout Australia in school presentations, senior student retreats, leadership camps and post school ministries. In 2013, I joined the Sydney Marist Mission and Life Formation team, who worked with faith formation of our Marist colleagues.

Now in 2014, I find myself similar to what my dad experienced 45 years ago. That is, the call of a compelling invitation to a new land, which demands the awkward forfeit of familiar faces and assuring language to embrace something different for the sake of greater possibility for growth. It is with such uneasy excitement and enthusiasm that I enter into this new role in the 'Brothers Today' Secretariat. I pray that the lesson of my father's courage to move into foreign territory for the sake of new life will echo in 2014, in advancing the good work already established in the Brothers Today Secretariat towards greater opportunities.

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