

## NEW MARISTS IN MISSION

### III Marist International Mission Assembly

The XXI General Chapter, within the context of the "new relationship between brothers and laity, seeking greater vitality together", invited the Institute as a whole to "organize another Marist International Mission Assembly in the spirit of Mendes". This mandate from the Chapter was assumed by the Superior General and his Council, who appointed a Commission to carry out the preparation and implementation of the Second Marist International Mission Assembly.

The II International Marist Mission Assembly began in Nairobi, Kenya, on the 16th and finishes on Saturday, the 27th. In this bulletin we transmit the chronicle of the first days of the meeting written by Br Antonio Martines Estaun.

#### A preview of the overall program

In the next twelve days I am going to relate the impressions of a naive reporter concealed amongst the members of an international and mixed Marist community. In their luggage, the participants will have brought the experiences they lived during the process of preparation in their AUs. Information from these preparatory stages is available in [www.champagnat.org](http://www.champagnat.org). The underlying purpose of these delegations, as I have been told by reliable sources, is that upon returning to their places of origin they will try to explore new lands for news lands for Marist mission.

#### The backpack

Each participant receives a backpack with an ID badge. On the front of the badge stand the logo and slogan of the II IMMA: on the back, appear the logos of Brazilian FTD and Spanish Edelvives Group can be seen. Both Marist publishers produce millions of textbooks annually. Inside this backpack can be found: two notebooks for taking notes, a water bottle, a T-shirt and three tools for the work of the Assembly namely three books entitled "Guidelines", "Songs and Prayers" and "Marist logbook".



Each participant is welcomed in "Guidelines": "Your presence at this Assembly is a wonderful gift. You bring in your heart and mind the experiences of the local and provincial meetings and the reflections and intuitions shared in your Province, District or Region". The booklet dubbed "Songs and Prayers" offers the Ordinary of the Mass and the Eucharistic Prayer II in four languages and a rich collection of lyrics from numerous songs - "many of them are Marist to the core"- written in the four languages of the Institute as well as in Swahili. The purpose of this cast is "to sing the

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joy of our brotherhood, the joy of the encounter, the feeling of hope and excitement for a new beginning ... to raise our voices in a single choir". The presentation of this book ends off with: "Africa opens her heart to beat with you to the beat of your tunes". The "Marist logbook" is meant to be "a tool to help us discover the steps of God" during the celebration of this II IMMA. It consists of blank pages to be filled in day by day with personal experiences. This logbook tastefully bound and can become a beautiful memory of the twelve days in Nairobi.

**A proposal under the sign of the communion.**

The main dynamics of the Assembly will involve the formation of twelve small communities of eight people each. These communities composed of lay people and brothers will be invited to share life, their experiences, and reflections during the event. The dynamics of the IMMA is essentially that of a community of communities.

The proposed action of the groups is aimed at "sharing the personal experience of the path traveled up to the Assembly; sharing the life and the challenges of each province or district". It is also about reflecting on the life experiences and proposals emerging from the workshops in order to build the future of Marist mission. All this wealth of life and reflection will be recorded in a document, letter, message or final statement.

Morning prayer will be complemented by personal reflections arising in the afternoon. It is during this process that the journal will be compiled in the Marist logbook. The calendar of the twelve days of the Assembly is guided by twelve symbols: home, hands, table, earth, fire, tree, horizon, eyes, drums, dance, coals and logo. These symbols provide guidance for the theme and motivation of each day.

Along with the prayers a privileged space will be given not only to the opening and closing celebrations but

also to the themes of fraternity, cultures, solidarity, communion, ecology, and the Eucharist. Fire, rhythm and color will have a central role in these events.

**Culture, feast and folklore**

After supper, three expos are to take place. In these the cultural, artistic, gastronomic and Marist elements from each continent will be included. On two nights, after dinner, a festive space will be open to welcome the "Hakuna Matata" and the theme of gratitude "Asante Kwaheri".

**The young**

A novelty in this assembly is the presence of the youth. Eleven young people coming from the various Marist regions and a young brother studying in the MIC will join this II IMMA. They will participate in the overall Assembly but with thoughts of their own with which they will surely enrich the Assembly.

Tuesday, September 16th: Karibu Party

The participants visit the youngest and largest community of the Institute.

The morning of the second day was spent in an atmosphere of tranquility. The central commission devoted hours in finalizing every detail. Many of those who arrived yesterday, especially those who came in late at night, needed time to rest after their journeys. Earlier arrivals were able to enjoy visits to nearby tourist attractions or the city.

For the Brothers and lay Marists of the II MIMA, it was a must to greet and share a few hours with the Brothers of the

Marist International Centre (MIC) who constitute the largest and youngest community of the Institute. The property is not far away from the three houses in which the participants reside. The MIC Community made up of 97 brothers, 17 of whom are formators. 17 different nationalities are represented in the Centre. The student brothers study at the Marist International University College (MIUC) on the same campus: they come from all five administrative units of the Marist Brothers in Africa. The 17 formators come from 10 different nations. The MIC community is a realisation of Marcellin's dream of being present in every diocese in the world.



### The organizers of II MIMA thank MIC

The visit to MIC was not merely social or out of interest. It also provided an opportunity for the Coordinating Commission to officially thank the Brothers of this community for their essential support role in organising II MIMA in Nairobi.

### Tour of the facilities

Late in the afternoon, the participants were taken to MIC in two buses where, divided into small groups, they were given a guided tour of the facilities on the campus. The young Brothers at MIC are divided into several fraternities of about 16 each accompanied by two formators. These Brothers attend classes in MIUC which is administered by the Marist Brothers.

Then they were led with fun, dancing and drumming to the assembly hall where the meeting was started with a prayerful song invoking the Holy Spirit to enlighten the minds and hearts of the assembly. After the prayer, a young brother welcomed the Assembly with traditional "Dance of the Fire" used to welcome the king on his visits to the villages "because you are our kings and queens and we want to welcome you to our home."

Brother Lawrence Ndawala, Superior of the MIC community welcomed II MIMA on behalf of all of the Brothers of Africa and Madagascar. He expressed his joy at hosting the II MIMA on African soil and his gratitude for sharing with the Marist world "the dreams and mission that Marcellin left

for us". He concluded by urging the Assembly to "share the experience of the II MIMA with the young brothers of the MIC". Brother João Carlos do Prado voiced words of appreciation for the cooperation of MIC in the preparation and running of the II MIMA on African soil. He stressed the significance of this Assembly for the future of the Marist charism and mission. Brother Christian Gisamonyo concluded with a brief presentation of the presence of the Marist Brothers in Africa, a region with five administrative units and 442 Brothers. The session concluded with a repertoire of African dances presented by the young Brothers and other students of MIUC.

The fraternal meeting ended with a festive dinner in the dining hall of the Centre.



## Wednesday, September 17th: opening party of the II MIMA

The grand opening party IIAIMM started by summoning all the participants of the Assembly with the African drum rhythms. The road to the party is accompanied by the movement of the whole body. The party starts in the feet that can't help but to start dancing. The entire community walks to the beat of the drums to meet in the place where celebration will take place.

### Earth and Fire

The path leads to a bonfire around which a narrator tells two great moments of our spiritual history which gives meaning to our lives. An African girl explained the Biblical account of the creation as seen by the culture

of this Continent. This poem includes the creation of Mount Kilimanjaro. The land on which we live is a great gift of the Creator, the Maker of all. This is the reason for which the story ended with the delivery of five containers filled with soil, one for each of the regions of the Marist geography. One of the elements of the logo of the II MIMA namely the earth was also highlighted.

The second great story was that of the Pentecost. They were all together in community as the fire from the Holy Spirit descended upon them and inflamed them all with His love. At the conclusion of this story the paschal candle was lit along with five other torches to represent how the Spirit spreads throughout the five Conti-

nents. Along with the torches one of the participants took in his hands the symbol representing the flame, which is also part of the logo, joining the procession who carried the containers with the soil.

The entire group moved then to a second stage, always accompanied by the beating of the drums, where the fire transferred all its energy to the earth through the torches being extinguished upon the contact with the soil. This gesture meant to allude to the efficacy of the Spirit that dominates the face of the earth. In this space of reflection and celebration were proclaimed some fragments of the Message of the XXI General Chapter to the brothers, lay people and the young drafted in Rome



in October, 2009: "Together we have dreamt our future and discovered the fundamental call of God today. With Mary go in haste to a new land!"

The third scenario showed three books whose words give life and nourishes the spirit of the Marist today: The Life of the founder of whose zeal has been mentioned when he said: To educate children must love them and love them equally. I cannot see the children without wanting to tell them how much God loves them. And the fragment of his Testament: That among you there be just one heart and one mind. That it be always told of the Marist what was said of the early Christians: See how they love each other! The second great book was titled The Marist Book. The inside of this book contained some of the virtues characteristic of the Marist brothers: simplicity, family spirit, love of work and the way of Mary. The third volume only contains the title as it is yet to be written: The Book of the mission. To fill this new book one has to take into consideration how much it has been written on this subject over the last 200 years of the Institute. To compose a new chapter of this book we will have to find the novelty that the new Marists in mission bring, which is the slogan with which the II MIMA has been summoned. For this to happen, the animators invite the participants to enter the great hall where for twelve days they will listen each other and where they will also try to follow the sounds the Marist drums will produce to make everyone's heart beat.

**The official welcome**

Back in the room where the Assembly meets the simple protocol of the official welcome has begun. A group of scouts smartly entered the room and

has sung the national anthem of Kenya. Then Brother Valentine Djawu, Provincial of the Province of Central and East Africa spoke a few simple words welcoming all these people to Africa.

Brother Emili Turú, Superior General also welcomed everyone on behalf of the Institute. "Thank you for accepting the challenge of participating in this Assembly on behalf of many other Marist worldwide. During these two weeks the entire Institute is here." Then he raised two questions: What can we expect from this assembly? And, why was Africa chosen to celebrate this Assembly? To his first question he replied that it can be expected "a profound experience of fraternity" that makes us "more sensitive to our internationality and more open to the richness of our differences" and also to expect "future directions for the Marist mission globally". To his second question he pointed out that the II MIMA was held in Africa because the Institute needs a "change of perspective. Africa, despite all its natural and human resources, is not a center where decisions about the economy or geopolitical issues are taken ... is one of the peripheries of the world" and said, in the words of Pope Francis, "the reality is better looked at not from the center but from the periphery. I'm sure -he said- that this change of perspective will help us to be open to the novelty and creativity of the Spirit."

Brother Emili put an end to his speech with these words: "I have been told that I had to do the official opening of the Assembly, but I think it is more important that each of us is open to the Assembly, to the Spirit along with Mary who pondered everything in her heart. All participants then plunged into a deep silence for a short moment.

This is how the journey of this II MIMA begun.

Then spoke the cardinal Archbishop of Nairobi John Njue who acknowledged that his vocation was the result of the missionaries. "We are the fruit of obedience of the missionaries," he said. He encouraged the Assembly to surrender to the "essence of their vocation" which is "to invite people to surrender themselves to the Lord." He concluded by wishing a successful work of this II MIMA.



Brother Francis Lukong Yufenyuy, President of the Conference of Superiors of the African continent and brother João Carlos do Prado, Coordinator of the Preparatory Commission joined the Cardinal and brother Emili on the simple stage from where the Assembly was chaired. On behalf of the participants, brother Ismael Valls Pujol from the Asia District, Ms Sarah Nowlan of the Province of Australia, Mr. Juan Andrés Navarro Achard, from the Province of Cruz del Sur, and Anthony Young Anil Kanath, from the Province South Asia were also present.

This party concluded with a folk dance starring two young people from the Maa-sai tribe.

**Building Community**

After a short break the proposal to initiate the integration of the participants was set forth. The Assembly will work over the coming days as a community of communities. This has divided the participants into 12 small groups and they have been invited to go to meet others, to welcome and celebrate life. They will try to form communities so that they can tell the stories of life, so that they are the narrators of the life and passion of their community, their province or district.

Each community will be guided by a symbol whose set will guide the reflection of these days:

1. have heard the beat of the drums that bring us together.
2. The Dance invites us to move with the same melody, but with different steps in harmony.



3. Nairobi receives us as a home, an open door house.
4. We meet and shake our hands, sign of brotherhood.
5. We bring the experience of our land, of our province or district.
6. We admire life, we share the fruits and embrace the shade that welcomes us under this Marist tree on African soil.
7. We open our eyes to this international reality that challenges us.
8. We share on this table our personal

(logo).

**Marist logbook**

After the meeting of the 12 small communities each participant was invited to write their thoughts and impressions in their Marist logbook during a personal time of silence. Every afternoon a half hour will be devoted to fill the pages of this book.

The day ended with the celebration of the Eucharist, animated by a chorus of brothers from the MIC, praising the Lord for allowing us to live a beautiful day.

and institutional wealth.

9. The fire helps us to purify, to look at the essence of this life that unites us.

10. We look together, with hope, the horizon of the Marist charism.

11. We will be burning coals.

12. To live like New Marists in Mission

## Thursday, September 18th: sharing the road

The morning prayer dubbed "Voices of the Fire" sets the beginning of each day for the participants. The reflection of this morning was set with the narration "The Bright Mountain" from which the name of Kenya comes. This story says that "if you climb the mountain with a clean heart it will then grant you whatever you ask from it." Waku, a very pretty girl, spent a long time talking to the mountain. The more it heard the words of Waku the brighter it lit. The animator of the day told us that "the mountain of our life, of our assembly, the mountain of our mission will shine more and more with our prayer."

On the lawn a line made up of stones drew the map of Africa. Within this map, each participant placed a stone brought from their country of origin. This map represents the diversity of the lands the global village is. With this gesture, the participants welcome the diversity of backgrounds in the unity of the one loving plan of God for the mankind. In the diversity of land grows the Marist charism.

**Sharing our roads**

The first meeting space of the small communities was dedicated to sharing "the experience of the journey made to

reach the II MIMA". Within this itinerary an experience of solidarity had to be included. It was to take a step back to become aware of the flow of life from our communities and provinces that is present in this Assembly through each one of the delegates.

To have a better understanding of the contribution made in the preparation of the Assembly we provide some indicators. In the local phase of the preparation process 21 administrative units were involved and 1,123 groups were formed. 25,210 people participated in this process. Teachers formed 361 groups in which 7,751 people par-



ticipated. 140 fraternities with a total of 1,617 people played a role too. Parents integrated 38 groups in which 569 people worked. 191 communities, with a number of 1,627 brothers made their contribution as well. Young people formed 111 groups in which 9,650 people participated.

Other groups have participated in the contributing to the spirituality, volunteering, groups of life, assembly of educators, provincial teams, alumni, social units. In total there were 305 groups who made their contribution through 4,054 people.

After the break the small communities gathered to witness the contribution of the regions in the preparation previous to the assembly. The work was to focus in detecting sprouts of life and dreams of the administrative unit they belong to. All this content had to be presented in the plenary through a graphic expression.

The work of the evening began with a Marian prayer. The Assembly accompanied Mary in the key moments of her life from the Annunciation to Pentecost, and they proclaimed the Ave Maria in different languages.

**A first overview**

The experiences of the small communities that were shared in morning were presented in the afternoon to all the Marists from the same region. This was a first approach to the contributions the Marist world has sent to the Assembly. This contribution was shared in the plenary with all the participants through a graphical presen-

tation. These five summaries bring up the echoes from the continents. Thus, a voyage that started with a reflection of the personal, provincial and then the region itinerary concluded.

After the presentation, there was space for a round of spontaneous reactions after listening to what was shared in the assembly. Little by little, the sensibility of the participants is taking form in regard of the most important topics. However, we are still getting there.

Next, the participants were given quite some time to listen to the voice of the Spirit. This space is devoted each evening to fill the pages of the journal.



The proposal is for the participants to collect their personal motions that the Spirit raises day by day.

The work of the day ended with a

prayer, thanking the Lord for mother earth. The event started walking part of the way in silence, in contact with nature. Those who wish to go barefoot can do so. We walk to where the stones we brought from our home countries were placed. Stones loaded with stories, dreams, gifts and talents as part of a deal. Along the way two gestures were performed. The first, taken from the Andean culture, is to build community in what the native people call "apacheta". In significant parts of the road each one deposits a stone to remember something important, a direction, an event, a memory. This construction has the added value of being a community fulfillment. This gesture starts with the reading of the text in which Jacob woke up early and took the stone on which his head had rested during his sleep and placed it as a sign of the vision he had seen pouring oil over it. With this gesture, the participants are invited to "mark, to leave a sign in this blessed land of the II MIMA".

The second act was to dig a hole in the ground and "with permission from Mother Earth" everyone has offered grass, cereal and drink to the "Pachamama" with a grateful attitude to give back much of what she has given us. Each offering expressed the "desire to multiply the divine gifts we have received." And to make this gesture in community expresses our "commitment to justice, made of abundant tenderness to the poorest."

The day concludes with a folk, food, craft and cultural displays of the peoples of America where the Marists are present.



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