

GOD ALONE IS CAPABLE OF EVERYTHING

Letter from Aleppo No 20

It is Sunday 14 December 2014. This morning, we did not go to Mass at the St Louis Hospital as usual. We will go to the 5.00 pm Mass of the Catholic Armenians in the Barbara quarter. It is being celebrated in memory of young Soubhi, 28, killed last week.

The rendez-vous of violence

Soubhi is a young man we have known since a boy. He was a scout of the Djabal el Saydé Champagnat group. At one time, he was leader of this group. He was also one of the young volunteers of the Marist Blues. And also, he was very active in his own quarter. When it was invaded by the rebels and he found himself a refugee in his own city, Soubhi, a smith by trade, began to wander in search of work, employment, something to help his family... Far from Aleppo, in Kfarbo, a Christian village near the town of Hama,

he tried to settle down and work, because he said : " It's time I married and set up a family". Unfortunately, death had a rendez-vous of violence with him.

This death is so close! Shells, stray bullets, so many infernal machines striving furiously to destroy man and stone, destroy culture and civilisation.



Soubhi is one of the numerous young men killed by the violence... so many lost dreams... and with them, so many ruined hopes.

How many bullets we have collected in the yard at our place, where the children play. Sometimes, it is by a miracle that we are not wounded.

The quarters which continue to empty

The same violence creates in many people the feeling they have to leave their quarter. They have the daily experience of bombardment. It results in material damage (to windows, furniture, vehicles, and sometimes part of a wall struck...) and psychological... So entire families are forced to leave their homes to go elsewhere, to a safer quarter... very gradually, the building empties, the

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

Today, 18 December, concludes the visit of the two General Councillors, Antonio Ramalho and Ernesto Sanchez, to the Marist communities of the Cameroons.

From 8 to 14 December, Br Emili Turu, Superior General, was visiting the communities in Cuba.

The Vicar General, Br Joe Mc Kee, assisted at the V Chapter of the Province of Norandina in Ecuador from 12 to 16 December.

Brs Josep Maria Soteris and Eugène Kabanguka of the General Council are accompanying the Provincial Retreat of the Province of Brasil Centro-Sul.

Br Chris Wills, director of the Secretariat of Collaboration for Mission international, took part in the meeting of the Solidarity Project for South Sudan in Rome from 9 to 11 December.

street empties and one discovers as a result that the quarter has been deserted... Fayrouz sings "Wainon", "Where are they? » And I dare to add, will anyone stay?

I think of the parents of Giorgio, that child killed last year in the garden of his own house by a mortar burst. They had decided after his death not to leave their house and to stay there in order to preserve the memory of their child. Two months ago, they left... they have gone to another quarter...

Leaving one's home means having to rent elsewhere, but the rents have become very dear and the people lack the resources.

The high cost of living

By simply remaining in Aleppo, the people also have to pay other tributes: a fee to the networks of electric generators, the gas which is distributed sparingly, petrol and heating fuel in short supply... Another threat is on the way and will have very serious consequences on the daily life of the people: the multiple international organisations are in process of enormously reducing their aid to the Syrian population... this aid is essential: especially as regards basic food supplies...

The threat

Over and above all that, we are threatened... His Holiness, Pope Francis, in his allocution to the displaced Christians of Iraq, said it clearly: "the Christians are chased from the Middle East, in suffering....It seems that Christians are not wanted there, but you, you witness Christ.

I think of the wounds, the sorrows of mothers with their children, the elderly persons and the displaced persons, of the wounds of those who are victims of all sorts of violence".

The hemorrhage

Many young people and families are leaving the country by any means

possible... In alluding to the massive departure of Christians, an episcopal vicar told me yesterday: "For two months, I have been spending my time signing baptism certificates in Arabic, in French, in English and in other languages. This certificate will be added to other documents when the people go and present themselves at the offices of the consulates"...



The wager for life

Before this crippling reality, we, the Marist Blues, have chosen to live, to serve, to give ourselves, to commit ourselves to the service of the man most bruised, most wounded, most affected by the war

The service of listening

These last months, I have spent much time listening to people, their sufferings, their despair, their willingness to leave, their tiredness... The people have such need of being listened to and helped... they lose confidence in a future, near, of peace... Moreover, the Syrian president said in his statement to Paris Match: "No one can yet see when this war will end".

I am not the only one... In the team of the Marist Blues, we daily share our experience of listening... Sometimes there are experiences so sad that they cannot be described...

The service of home visits

A team of volunteers is making home visits : that may be a school class-

room, a basement, a house in a very dangerous quarter, a settlement... inhabitable, a tent in a public garden, an apartment without any wall and so many other "homes"...

These visits allow us to be close to the people. They ask us for them. They consider it an honour to be visited, to be recognized in the situation in which they find themselves. And for us it is an opportunity not simply to speculate but to touch the misery ...

Towards Christmas

These days now, all our projects tend towards Christmas... The distribution of food baskets or the different education or development projects will stop around 23 December.

We will resume after the New Year.

GOD IS CAPABLE OF EVERYTHING

By means of this letter, I would like to thank all our volunteers and benefactors, all the Marist Blues. With them, and thanks to their extraordinary effort, their devotion, their commitment to live in simplicity and love, thanks to their sensitivity to be attentive to the most destitute, we have been able to sustain 600 families, educate several hundred young people, treat many hundreds of civilian war wounded and save dozens, and animate so many development and training activities.

God is capable of everything... Such was the comment of a lady to whom I had just delivered medication indispensable for the survival of her son.

In borrowing those same words, I wish that the Lord of Peace and Love help us discover new paths, paths of hope and the gift of self.

Happy Christmas

Aleppo 14 December 2014
Br Georges Sabe, for the Marist Blues



STAY WITH US, LORD

V Chapter of the Province of Brasil Centro-Sul

The V Provincial Chapter of the Province of Brasil Centro-Sul was held from 3 to 5 December. One of the most important events for provincial life, it was lived as an authentic community, institutional and ecclesial celebration by the brothers, lay Marists, youth and collaborators with intensity, gratitude and hope. Under the motto "Stay with us, Lord," the major advances of 2011-2014 were analysed and there was reflection on the prospects for the next three years. The list of priorities was also drawn up for the journey towards the Bicentenary of the Institute, whose motto proposes "a new beginning".

About 120 persons gathered at the Marist Centre Marcellin Champagnat, in Curitiba. The first day, the participants took part in a Eucharist and heard the General Councilors, Brs Josep Maria Soteras and Eugène Kaban-guka stress the necessity of listening to "what is said but also to what is behind what is said". It is necessary to listen "with the heart and with the spirit". They also mentioned the Superior General, saying that the heart of Br Emili was united in some way with this moment so special for the Province of Brasil Centro-Sul.

The advances of the three year period were then presented and the challenges for the future of the two provincial sectors, the Corporative Areas and all the Apostolic Fronts. All present recognized with humility that there was still much to be done to move the Marist mission forward and the legacy of Marcellin Champagnat.

The second day of the chapter, the ceremony of the installation of the Br Provincial, Joaquim Sperandio, took place. Then the participants split into two groups: brothers and laity. The



brothers went into retreat in preparation for the election of the new Provincial Council while the laity discussed the shared mission, the new forms of association and community life and the work of vocations. In the afternoon, the brothers did the voting. Brothers Antônio Benedito de Oliveira, Délcio Afonso Balestrin, Jorge Gaio, Rogério Mateucci, Tercílio Sevegnani and Vanderlei Siqueira dos Santos were elected for the first three years of the Provincial Council.

On the third day, the chapter made various suggestions for the new term, particularly for the new Council to continue an administration impregnated with the charism, with special attention to the religious life of the brothers and a commitment with the laity and the other horizons indicated.

The V Provincial Chapter ended with a Eucharistic celebration.



New Provincial Council of Brasil Centro-Sul: Brothers Antônio Benedito de Oliveira, Délcio Afonso Balestrin, Jorge Gaio, Rogério Mateucci, Tercílio Sevegnani and Vanderlei Siqueira dos Santos (Provincial: Joaquim Sperandio)



Happy and holy Christmas

We wish all our readers a happy and holy Christmas. May all take advantage of this time to "grow in the conviction that our darkness is nothing other than a deep yearning for light." ([Message of Br Emili Turú](#))

The next issue of our bulletin will be sent on 8 January.

Nigeria: Final Profession of Four Brothers

Four Brothers in the Province of Nigeria made their Final Profession at Holy Ghost Cathedral, Enugu-Nigeria on Saturday 15th November, 2014. The Eucharistic Celebration was presided by the Catholic Bishop of Enugu Diocese, His Lordship Dr. Callistus Onaga.

The Provincial Superior, Br. Joachim Ezetulugo received the vows.

The four Brothers are; Br. Innocent Iloabueke, Br. Moses Fegher, Br. Bernard Aguma, and Br. Christian Obaje.

V PROVINCIAL CHAPTER OF THE PROVINCE OF NORANDINA

Quito, 12 to 16 December 2014



The Vicar General read out the letter of Br Emili Turú, Superior General, communicating to the Province Br César's appointment. At this moment, Br Libardo presented Br César with an apron, recalling the Superior General's circular "He gave us the name of Mary", which envisions Marist mission as service.

The Chapter also elected the new provincial councilors who will accompany Br César in the provincial government. Those elected on 15 December were Brothers: Carlos Alberto Rojas Carvajal, Mariano Morante Montes, Diego Antón Campo, Francisco Javier Pérez París, Orlando Escobar and Ismar Portilla Benavides

28 Brother capitulants, 12 Brother participants and 12 lay guests took part in the V Provincial Chapter of the Province of Norandina, held in Quito, Ecuador, in the presence of Brother Joe Mc Kee, Vicar General.

The retiring provincial, Br Libardo Garzón Duque, initiated the work of the Chapter with a short speech. He thanked all who had collaborated in his government and welcomed the participants. He invited all to live the meeting as a gift from God: "let us live the Chapter in an attitude of openness, listening and accep-

ance in order to find out what God is looking for in the Marist life of the Province"

On the first day, Br César Rojas, who up to October was Director of the *Secretariat Brothers Today* in Rome, took possession as the new Provincial of the Province of Norandina.



More information on the Chapter is available on the WEB page of the Province:

www.maristasnorandina.org



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