

POPE TO LUNCH WITH THE BISHOP OF HOLGUÍN, AFFILIATED WITH THE INSTITUTE

'I'm sure he'll leave a seed that will produce fruits in relation to other nations', says Bishop

During his visit to the Cuban diocese of Holguín, Pope Francis will lunch with Bishop Emilio Aranguren Echevarría – former Marist student and affiliated with the Institute – who believes the pontiff's visit will have a good impact in the country.

"He will preside Mass in a public square, then come to my house for lunch and rest and then climb the Loma de la Cruz, where he will give a special blessing to the entire diocese and the city of Holguin," the Bishop told the general house press office.

"I am sure that he will leave a seed planted in our People that will produce fruits of peace, mercy, forgiveness, both within families and in the

neighbourhood, as well as in the whole Cuban society and in relation to other



nations," he affirmed in an interview on Sept. 11.

According to Bishop Aranguren Echevarría, the pontiff's trip "is an expectation not of curiosity but of hope, as if the Pope will bring something good for the whole People."

He underscored the trip "is also important because of the moment the country is experiencing and the meaning of the Pope being an instrument of God to bring about the re-encounter between Cuba and the United States, with what it entails."

But a Cuban Marist expressed worry that the country will not be able to entirely benefit politically from the pontiff's visit.

"There are sectors of civil society and Christian communities who are

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

- From Sept. 17 – 19, the third Interamerican conference for provincials (CIAP) is taking place in Curitiba, Brazil. Participants include general councillors Josep Maria Soteras, Eugène Kabanguka and Víctor Preciado, as well as director of the secretariat for the laity, Javier Espinosa and the director of Collaboration Mission, International (Cmi), Chris Wills.
- From Sept. 16 – 20, general councillor Br Ernesto Sánchez is in the inter-American vocational encounter in Guatemala.
- The brothers taking part in the Post Perpetual Gier programme are in the Vatican until Saturday, participating in the the World Meeting of Young Consecrated Men and Women. This programme began in Aug. and will finish on Sept. 20.
- From Sept. 16 – 18, FMSI is holding its plenary meeting in the general house. As well as its members of the Rome office, also taking part was Brothers Manel Mendoza Prario and Evaristus Kasambwe, of Geneva, and Álvaro Sepúlveda of the FMSI Cono Sur office.

concerned that the visit will not be politically instrumentalised," said Brother Carlos Martínez Lavín on Sept. 15.

He told the general house press office that there is concern that it may not "contribute to the growth of Cuba in inclusion and in possibilities of a national project involving all Cubans and allowing them all to fit in."

Pope Francis is visiting Cuba from Sept. 19 – 22 before travelling to the United States from Sept. 22 – 27.

According to Br Carlos, it is a decision made by Pope Francis himself, "who suggested it with the wish to contribute to consolidating bridges between the two nations."

"Pope Francis is loved by the Cuban People," he affirmed. "His work in mediating to facilitate the normalisation of relations between the US and Cuba has been a decisive factor in this sympathy."

"He will undoubtedly have a warm reception," added the Marist.

Francis will have three public events in the country including Mass on Sept. 20 in Plaza José Martí in Havana, an encounter with the youth that evening and finally Mass on Sept. 21 in Calixto García Square in the city of Holguín – where he will meet with Bishop Aranguren Echevarría.

"I hope these three celebrations (...) are able to encourage the conscious participation of those present and awake seeds of new life," remarked Br Carlos.

There are two Marists communities in the island, one in Havana, with three brothers, and another in Cienfuegos, with 3 brothers and an aspirant. Cuba is part of the Marist province of Central America. The Brothers first arrived to Cuba 112 years ago, in 1903, and founded the community of

Cienfuegos.

But when the revolutionary government nationalised the schools in 1961, they left and returned 40 years later.

Six years later, they established a second community in the capital, Havana, in 2007.

The Brothers are involved in catechesis and youth ministry in three parishes in Cienfuegos.

In Cienfuegos, they also have a cultural Marist centre, which offers youth academic help, as well as lessons in guitar, dance, sports, English, computer science and manual arts.

In Havana, they animate the catechesis of the parish of Jesús María and they are also involved in the formation of laity in the Félix Varela Centre and with seminarians in the archdiocese's seminary.



PROVINCIALS MEET IN CURITIBA

Superior General focuses on role of the laity in video message for the third CIAP

In a meeting of the Provincials from the entire American continent in Brazil, Superior General Brother Emili Turú gave them a video message calling them to "facilitate the changes of paradigms." The third inter American conference of provincials, known as the CIAP and meeting from Sept. 14 – 19 in Curitiba, watched it on the first day of their encounter. In it, he also stresses the need for the Institute to "seriously think about the role of the laity in the continuity of the mission," highlighting that it makes up more than 90 per cent of stakeholders in the Institute's mission. "This is not a problem, it is a solution, a grace of the Holy Spirit that we have to accept and follow," states the Superior General. For the full video, visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=06438cT-rY0>



Trivializing the horror: 23rd Letter from Aleppo

If we do not write more frequently our letters from Aleppo, and yet you, our friends, do not cease to ask for them, it is because we think that the repetition of the denunciation of crimes committed and the sufferings borne by the Syrians, run the risk to be vulgarized. We fear, that in constantly reading the atrocities that are committed in Syria, you lose your faculty of indignation, that you will resign yourselves to accept the unacceptable, and by that fact, we all participate in the vulgarizing of the horror. And therefore, we cannot not tell and share with you the sufferings of our people.

Aleppo lacks water and the Aleppians were very thirsty and very hot this summer. It was not because of drought or because the level of the water in the Euphrates was lower. The station for the pumping of the water exists, it has not been destroyed. The reservoirs and the basins or tanks are full. The water found, every day, is emptied into nature instead of pumping it into the pipes for the water to the city. Thus we were left to the mercy of armed bands that decided to leave us without any water (with 40 degrees in the shade) during numerous weeks. The queues to wait are very long in front of the taps or water faucets which get the water from the wells that exist in the public parks, the churches and the mosques, in order to be able to fill cans, bottles and buckets. To solve this problem the authorities did not find any other solution than to decide on a program of drilling 80 wells, that with the existing wells could satisfy the vital minimum of water for a population of 2 million inhabitants. Aleppo has become a gruyere cheese, full of holes since they have pierced so many wells and the Aleppians begin to forget what it is to have running water because now they have to go to the wells to look for water. It is a year ago, for this same crime, you were numerous to protest and the media also. Today, with the repetition of this crime, it has become something ordinary and nobody speaks any more about it.

Aleppo lacks electricity; « they » do not give it to us. Ah, occasionally perhaps for an hour a day. Its two years already, when we had it for 4 hours a day, you protested against those armed groups allies of your government which intentionally stopped furnishing electricity. Afterwards, things became worse but now nobody speaks about it, it has become something ordinary, normal. A year ago when the barbarians began to destroy the archeological places in Iraq and in Syria, the patrimony of humanity and memory of our history, some protested. After that "they" continued to destroy the treasures of Syria;

the two principal temples of Palmyra, the jewel of the Syrian Desert were the last to be destroyed. "They" want to raze, to pull down to the ground everything that reminds us of the multi-millionaire history of the country. "They" want that the History begins with them and nobody says anything; it has become something ordinary, normal.

They cut the throat of human beings. You have protested a year ago when they cut the throat of some Westerners. But they were not the first ones! Hundreds of Syrians had already been victims of this barbarian act. Many others followed also; the last one was the director of the antiquities of Palmyra, a

wise man of 82 years of age, but nobody protests. Vulgarizing! Bof, to cut the throat of a human being as the throat of a sheep is cut and then!!! "They" have taken hundreds of Christians and of Yezidis in Iraq. This happened almost a year ago. You were indignant and your rulers protested making some thundering or violent declarations that made the noise of a wet blast. After that, "they" took hold of hundreds of Assyrian Christians in Hassake, others in Quariatayn in the center of Syria. And

nobody protested. It has become banal, ordinary, normal, it no longer shocks anybody, and then, you say, if we should get indignant also because they sell the women as slaves, we would not stop lamenting; for so little...

Syria is becoming empty of its people, especially of the Christians. They have become the « refugees » that bother you so much. It is necessary to hear them tell you their sufferings and the dangers that they have faced and undergone to come as clandestine into Europe. Ah, they only have to remain in their home, you say? But in their country at home it is hell, it is chaos, it is death. They are not migrants as you like to call them to relieve your conscience, they are refugees; and then, if the refugees bother you so much, think and twice next time before launching an attack and the war in their country. In the meantime, stop that which you started in Syria and you will see the flow of refugees who bother you, keep quiet; people prefer much better to remain at home and to keep their dignity. We cannot forget the thousands of refugees who died drowned or suffocated. You were not indignant until mass media showed you the heartrending and distressing Little Aylan on the Turkish shore. You should have done it before and also, now after this drama. But to die drowned in the sea has become something banal, normal, ordinary! In the face of so many miseries, so much suffering, deaths, destructions and dramas, we, the



Blue Marists, could not remain with our arms crossed. We denounce, we call the attention, we refuse the unacceptable, we protest, we inform and we act. Certain displaced families whom we help and the some benevolent and kind families fled from Syria for Europe taking the illegal ways of clandestine passage of the frontiers and sailing in the Mediterranean. We have no lessons to give them when they come to ask for advice or to reprimand or rebuke them. It is already a heroic deed to have been able to hold on during 4 years and a half. The most we do is to pray that they arrive safely without too much suffering. In the face of this crisis of the water, we had, 6 weeks ago, launched an appeal for help. Three Western associations of our friends responded generously to our appeal. We were able to buy three vans or trucks that we filled with reservoirs of 1000 to 2000 liters of water, from a pump and a small generator. We also bought some reservoirs of 250 liters that we installed with the displaced families. Thus we have begun a new program « I am thirsty ». Several times a day we fill the reservoirs of the vans from the Artesian wells of a church and we go and empty them into those of the displaced families or of our kind friends.

Our programme "drop of milk" that consists in distributing powdered milk to all the children of less than 10 years of age or of milk for infants to begin the 5th month, with the gratitude of the parents who want their children to grow normally in spite of the war. We continue to help the displaced families or those in need to survive thanks to monthly baskets of food that we distribute to them and also clothes to dress themselves. We help hundreds of displaced families to find lodging. We participate to pay the expenses of surgical operations or admissions to the hospital for those who do not have the means to do it. We continue to distribute hot meals at noon.

Our Program « Civilians wounded in war » continues in order to save from death those who are seriously wounded by the explosive shells or bullets.

The end of the school year did not stop our pedagogical

activities. This summer, like every summer, we organized several "holiday colonies » for the children of our different projects, particularly those of "Learn to Grow" and of "I want to Learn".

« Magic Bus 1 », « Magic Bus 2 », « I love Summer » were a real joy for the children who spent weeks of happiness and well-being forgetting the war and the privations.

Skill School continued its activities with the adolescents, boys and girls – who profited of the school holidays to live very beautiful projects. Our « M.I.T. » behaves well and in spite of the war and especially the torrid heat of this summer, the sessions continued with more petitions of participation.

This noon, a Canadian journalist asked me during a radiophonic interview in direct through the telephone what I would like to say to a European or American citizen. I would like to share with you the response that I gave: « In the first place, do not lose your faculty of indignation in the face of the Syrian drama and the suffering of the Syrians, denounce the barbarian acts, do not get accustomed to this horror, avoid that the repetition of denouncements does not vulgarize the denounced acts. Declare your solidarity with the people who are hungry, who are thirsty, who are sick or wounded, displaced or are refugees, on the road or on the sea. Consider the refugees like human beings fleeing from the war and from death and not as migrants who come to look for a better life in your place. Be generous of heart and hospitable. Then, inform, fight against disinformation used by certain media, exercise pressure on those elected and those responsible so that they will change their politics in order to reach a political solution of the Syrian drama and save what can be the being of Syria and its social fabric. Then and only then, give generously to help and relieve". Here, I leave you transmitting my greetings and thanksgiving from all our team.

Nabil Antaki, for the "Blue Marists" (8 Sept. 2015)



Perpetual Professions



Br Anthony II Nam Choi, Aug. 29
(Seoul, South Korea)



Br Wilguins François, Aug. 15
(Jérémie, Haiti)



Br Jean Mance Louis - Jeune, Aug. 15
(Jérémie, Haiti)