

MARIST INTERNATIONAL COLLOQUIUM ABOUT INITIAL FORMATION

Notre Dame de L'Hermitage, 4 - 14 October 2015



Seventy-five Marists, laity and Brothers who were representing all of the Institute's regions, met in L'Hermitage on Oct. 4 – 14 to discuss the formation process of Brothers. The Brother superior general, his full Council and the directors of the secretariats participated. The secretariat Brothers Today organised the Colloquium.

In today's news bulletin, we would like to share two texts published in Champagnat.org and the daily chronicles written by Brother Dan O'Riordan, of the United States. The complete list of participants, photos and other details are available at <http://www.champagnat.org/000.php?p=379>.



5 October

Over 75 Brothers and Lay Marist from more than 40 countries and all 6 regions of the Institute are gathering these days at L'Hermitage for the first ever Marist International Colloquium on Initial Formation. The day began with a welcome from Br Xavier Barcelo and the community of L'Hermitage. Community members Allan De Castro and Martha Martinez gave tours of Champagnat's house to those who had never visited L'Hermitage prior to the Colloquium.



A morning coffee break followed the tours of the house. The Group then gathered in the Conference room for the opening of the Colloquium with welcoming remarks from Bro. Tony Leon and Bro. Emili Turú.

Prior to Lunch, everyone participated in a beautiful and moving prayer that focused on the theme of running and living water. All participants were asked to bring small amounts of water from their home countries. During the prayer, all participants were invited to pour their water into bowls separated into the six regions of the Institute. Members of each region then walked to the bridge that crosses over the Gier and symbolically emptied their water from the collected Regions into the Gier.

An afternoon Marial Prayer was offered by Brother Michael de Waas.

The topic of Initial Formation began to be addressed in discussion groups by language for the remainder of the first afternoon.

6 October

The day began with Morning Prayer offered by Brother César Rojas and Brother José Miguel Cabellero. Brother Peter Rodney and Brother Ernesto Sanchez introduced the participants to a series of synthesis documents of a recent Institute wide survey. Each participant spent personal time reading and analysing the documents. The documents were then discussed in language groups prior to lunch.

The afternoon session began with a Marial prayer offered by Brother Chris Wills.

Participants were then divided into groups according to region in order to identify strengths, weaknesses and opportunities within their respective regions in regards to initial formation.

Brother Tony Leon concluding the afternoon session by having the participants engaging in a unique way of sharing belief statements around the topic of initial formation.

Father Michael McGuire continued to celebrate our daily liturgy.

Following supper, participants from the regions of Africa and Europe offered a cultural night of festivities with music and dance.

7 October

The day began with Morning Prayer offered in subgroups in the different chapels of Hermitage celebrating the feast day of Our Lady of the Rosary.

Fr Michael McGuire was today's Keynote speaker on the topic "The Reality of the World of Young People Today in Initial Formation."

The afternoon session began with a Marial prayer offered by Brother Eugene Kabanguka.

Participants attended two workshops during the afternoon. They selected from the following five workshop options:

- The Marian Face of the Church by Sister Teri O'Brien
- Social Media and Communication by Brother Josep Maria Soteras
- Interculturality and Formation by Fr. Michael McGuire
- Accompaniment and Supervision by Brother Eugene Kabanguka
- Mystics and Prophets by Brother Michael de Waas

The day concluded with Liturgy and supper.





8 October

The day began with Morning Prayer offered in by Brother Oscar Martin. Brother Joe McKee was today's Keynote speaker on the topic of "Marcellin as the formator."

The second morning session was an opportunity for participants to hear witness from three current formators; Brother Jose Miguel Cabellero from our Columbian Novitiate, Brother Lawrence Ndwawala from MIC and Brother Nicholas Fernando from our Asian Novitiate.

Participants attended a workshop during the afternoon. They selected from the same five workshop options that were offered yesterday:

- The Marian Face of the Church by Sister Teri O'Brien
- Social Media and Communication by Brother Josep Maria Soteras
- Inter-culturality and Formation by Fr Michael McGuire
- Accompaniment and Supervision by Brother Eugene Ka-



banguka

- Mystics and Prophets by Brother Michael de Waas
- The day concluded with a formal Thank you of the workshop presenters, Liturgy and supper.

9 October

The day was introduced as being a day all would celebrate an extended Eucharist. It began with the Liturgy of the Word offered by Brother Joarés Pinheiro, Brother Angel Bermudez Medina and Brother Alfredo Herrera. The Word continued to be broken open through numerous conversations and personal time throughout the morning.

Brother Emili Turú was today's keynote speaker on the topic of "Formation for a New Beginning".

The second morning session offered an opportunity for participants to listen to four of our young Brothers and their recent experiences in Initial Formation. The brothers were: Brother Nelson Beltran from the Philippines, Brother Leandro Cimadon from Brazil, Brother Sefe Une from Samoa and Brother Stefano Divina from Italy.

After Lunch, all participants boarded buses for a trip to the Cradle of our Institute in La Valla. After tours of the house, the Liturgy of the Eucharist was celebrated in our First Marist Home. Participants then traced Champagnat's steps in walking from La Valla to Hermitage.

10 October

The day began with our lay Marists leading the Morning Prayer and then sharing their wisdom of what needs to be included in initial formation from the perspective of the Laity. Brother Tony Leon led the group through a process of sharing convictions and concerns in regards to initial formation.

Brother Ernesto Sanchez presented a summary of these Core Values.

Todays liturgy celebrated the Fourvière Year.

11 October

Participants had four options of how to spend their free day. Some chose to travel to Taizé for Eucharist, others made a pilgrimage to Fourvière in Lyon, others reflected on Champagnat's life by hiking from Rosey back to L'Hermitage and the last group simply enjoyed the peace and quiet of L'Hermitage.

12 October

The day began with Morning Prayer and then Brother Hipólito Pérez Gómez introducing the tasks that each of the seven work groups would concentrate on until lunchtime. The groups worked with the synthesis of Saturday's results and each made three specific convictions, orientations and recommendations



around the seven topics of formation (processes and structures), joint Brother and lay formation, internationality/global availability, communities, vocation ministry, formators, and Brothers for a New Beginning.

Brother Victor Preciado led a Marian Prayer to begin the afternoon work session.

Brother Juan Carlos Fuertes divided the participants into another set of work groups to analyse the collated results from the morning sessions in preparation for Tuesday final day of work. After the day's liturgy and supper, a festive and rich cultural night was offered from the Asia and Oceania regions.

13 October

The day began with Morning Prayer offered by Brother Saul Placious.

Tony Leon then introduced the morning work task that had the

participants produce the Final version of the Presentation to be presented to the General Council.

The afternoon session began with a Marial Prayer offered by Zuni Silva Arguello.

Participants met next in their Regional groups to produce three practical ways they could implement some of the topics discussed during the past days.

Prior to supper, a beautiful prayer service allowed each Region of the Institute to share their implementation plans.

After supper, the final Cultural Evening was offered by the Americas.

14 October

The Final day of the Colloquium began with Morning Prayer offered by Brother Tony Leon that included a review through pictures of the entire experience.

Bro. Emili Turu gave an inspiring closing address. The Three words that were the focus of his talk were:

- Flowing because of how the water of the Gier flows through each of us now and how we must at times be willing to flow upstream as a way to swim against the current or be Counter Cultural in today's world.
- Ecosystems which was a topic spoken about much during the colloquium and how we have the capacity to greatly impact our own communities
- Magic was his final word. He used it in the context of a video we watched about a Flash Mob performance in a mall in Italy. He was actually present at the mall the day it happened. He shared how the creators of this experience produced incredible Magic for all gathered that day in just six minutes. He asked us to imagine the Magic we as Marist could similarly create in our lifetimes.

The Colloquium concluded with a beautiful mass. On the first day, participants brought water from each of their home countries and poured it into Regional bowls that were then symbolically poured into the Gier. Each participant received a small bottle of water filled from the Gier as a final parting gift.



Results of the colloquium 'depends on the openness of participants'

A post-noviciate director of a formation centre for young brothers in the Philippines believes the results of the encounter in France discussing changes on initial formation for Brothers will depend on the broad-mindedness of its participants.

"Where it all goes, depends on the goodwill and openness of the participants (and) we can also anticipate the action





of the Holy Spirit will be at work," said Brother Peter Rodney of the Marist Asian Pacific Center, MAPAC, on Thursday, Oct. 8.

"To add this unpredictable mix, since we are gathering in the home that Marcellin built, we can be sure that he will do all he can to guide our minds and hearts to where he wants his Institute to go at this time," he told the general house press office.

Seventy-five Marists are in their last days of a 10-day gathering in L'Hermitage to discuss ways of improving the formation process of new brothers.

The 'Marist International Colloquium about Initial Formation' has examined the current formation process through the results of a three-month survey, and has involved participants in workshops on inter-culturality, accompaniment and communication in social media.

Provincials, young brothers, laity, the general council, formators, and coordinators of vocations ministry and formation at provincial level, are participating in the conference, due to end on Oct. 14.

A formator of novices in the Marist province of Southern Africa labelled the gathering as "a special, wonderful and Spirit-filled experience."



"My expectation has turned into a lived experience and I feel privileged to be here," said Brother Norbert Mwila, based in Mozambique.

"I liked the presentation on the fourth day on Marcellin as a formator and the testimonies of the brothers who were asked to share their experiences on the topic," he said on Oct. 8.

General councillor Brother Ernesto Sánchez, who helped organise the event alongside the Institute's Brothers Today secretariat, underscored he is "very happy with the depth of reflection that is taking place, both during formal and informal moments."

He also praised the work done by Brothers Tony León and Hipólito Pérez of Brothers Today, affirming that "the huge preparation work that has been done is evident, as well as the energy that is being dedicated to accompany each day of the conference."

"The support of the community of the Hermitage is also being key to the successful development of our meeting," added Br Ernesto.

On Oct. 7, Father Michael McGuire SSC, specialised in psycho-spiritual integration, spoke about 'the reality of the world of young people today in initial formation.'

A formator of novices in Spain, Brother Ernesto Tendero Pérez, echoed the Marist commitment of "giving a face to a new way of being a Marist brother and lay person."

"The variety of dynamics makes us come forth and bring out the best of ourselves, being realistic and dreamers," said Br Ernesto.

Other speakers included vicar general Brother Joe McKee on Saint Marcellin Champagnat as a formator on Oct. 8 and superior general Brother Emili Turú on the topic 'formation for a new beginning' on Oct. 9.

On Saturday, Oct. 10, Br Tony Leon led discussions on a process of sharing convictions and concerns regarding initial formation and Br Ernesto Sánchez presented a summary of core values.

International Colloquium ends in France with final recommendations

The results of a large encounter, which discussed possible changes to the initial formation of Brothers, will be published within a month in English, Spanish, French and Portuguese.

"They are a set of conclusions and recommendations that the assembly of the colloquium will offer to the general council," explained Brother Hipólito Pérez Gómez, assistant director of the secretariat Brothers Today.

The results, titled 'Contributions of the Colloquium for the Marist Initial Formation', are divided into three sections: convictions, guidelines and recommendations.

"They cover seven topics, which we consider as fundamental in initial formation," Br Hipólito told the general house press office on Oct. 16.

They are 'on the processes and structure of the initial formation, joint formation of Brothers and laity, internationality and global availability, communities and ecosystems, vocation ministry, Brothers for a new beginning, and formators.'

The colloquium was organised by Brothers Tony Leon and Hipólito of the secretariat Brothers Today, the two general councillors Brothers Ernesto Sánchez and Eugène Kabanguka – who are the links to the secretariat – and Brothers Miguel Angel Espinosa Barrera and Carlos Saúl Corzo Uribe organised the logistics.

One of the recommendations is to ensure the learning of two of the Institute's languages during initial formation.

Br Hipólito affirmed that although the Marists are known for their education ministry, "we need to speak about being seekers of God, universal brotherhood and going out to the peripheries".



"When we come into contact with young people, we have to talk to them about these three points when speaking of the identity of the Brother," he added.

The international colloquium took place in Hermitage, France, from Oct. 4 – 14 with 75 Marists including young Brothers, formators, laity, provincials, the full general council, and coordinators of vocation ministry.

"It was a very meaningful and profound experience, with a lot of joy and communion," said Br Hipólito. "It was a passage of God through this event."

He reflected on the time that the young Brothers shared their experience of initial formation during the colloquium.

"For me, there was a satisfaction for all the process lived but also a call to update us and to respond to current sensibilities of young people," stated Br Hipólito.

Br Eugène underscored that the recommendations he thinks are important include the formation of lay people and having greater contact with the poor.

"It was beautiful," he remarked. "It all flowed really well and there were no tensions or rush."

"Brothers Tony and Hipolito worked really hard as well as Brothers Miguel Angel and Saúl," stated Br Eugène.

Br Hipolito told that the recommendations will be published by mid-November and will be released to provincials, formation teams and the participants of the Colloquium.