



“SORRY FOR ALL THE TIMES WE HAVE BEEN THE OBJECT OF SCANDAL”

THE CHURCH & THE FIGHT ON PAEDOPHILIA: THE EXPERIENCE OF THE MARIST BROTHERS



The SIR News Agency SIR (Servizio di Informazioni Religiose) of the Italian Bishops' Conference (CEI) held an interview with Br. Emili Turú, superior of the Institute, highlighting the topic of paedophilia.

The starting point of the conversation was the apology for the abuses committed, which Brother Emili made in his message to the Marists of Champagnat on the occasion of the celebration of the bicentennial of the foundation of the Institute.

We reproduce the text of the interview, made by Riccardo Benotti.

In the message you asked forgiveness for “all the times we were the object of scandal.” Why?

Throughout our history we had many reasons to give thanks and to acknowledge our sin. Situations of abuse have taken place in some of our institutions, meant to be safe places for all children and youths, which left deep scars in them.

In many cases these scars will remain open wounds for their entire lives. Our Institute was created to help children and young people become good Christians and good citizens, as wanted by our founder. And fortunately this mission was accomplished for the majority of those who attended our Marist Education centres.

The abuses that have taken place caused deep suffering among us. They are in stark contradiction with our life and our mission.

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

During the second week of the plenary session, the general council continues to prepare the 22nd General Chapter and is discussing subjects related to the Lavalla200 project (with Cmi) and the collaboration with the congregation of the Frères de la Doctrine Chrétienne de Matzenheim, in addition to providing for various appointments of general administration staff.

Brothers Manel Mendoza and Evaristus Kasambwe, of FMSI, are in Geneva until January 29 for the encounter of the Committee on the Rights of Children for Universal Periodic Review.

Brother João Carlos do Prado is representing the Secretariat of Mission at the first European Assembly of Councils of Mission, which is taking place in Valladolid, Spain, from January 23 – 24.

Br Emili Turú will take part in the plenary session of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life at the Vatican, from January 26 – 28.

How could all of this have happened?

In the past it was considered a moral problem. But today we know that it's also a psychiatric disorder and a criminal offence in most Countries. When it was believed to be a moral problem the offenders were given counsel and guidance for repentance, they were encouraged to devote more time to prayer, and they were transferred to opportune locations. But now we know that that "geographic treatment" failed, for the first person that the offender met in his new destination was himself, facing the same problem.

What measures did the Institute adopt to address these situations?

Clear institutional policies were adopted, designed to help us prevent situations of abuse and to react promptly before any suspicion or report of abuse, in compliance with the national legislation of the interested Country and the laws of the Church.

In the past six years we held a set of international seminars on the protection of minors, attended by the leaders of all Marist provinces.

This kind of formation continued in the provinces, adapted to the various local realities. We are presently networking with the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome to offer all Marist Institutes a formation programme on the protection of minors and the defence of their rights. Naturally, we ascribe primary importance to the careful selection of candidates to Marist brotherhood and their ensuing accompaniment.

Thus you adopted rigorous protocols?

Each Marist province has adopted a set of measures for the protection of minors centred on what for us is a cardinal principle, namely, the respect and the protection of children and youths.

The wellbeing of children and the support to the victims come before everything else, along with the protection of the Institute and of the person that committed the abuse.

Transparency equally holds primary importance, both in terms of informing the competent bodies and the civil authorities. However, we always try to combine justice with mercy. Justice without mercy turns into revenge, while mercy without compliance to justice and truth is a deceit.

Are special forms of accompaniment of the victims envisaged, in case the latter request them?

Yes; also for those civil cases under the Statute of Limitations we always offer the victims the possibility of accessing appropriate treatment with various forms of counsel and accompaniment: psychological, psychiatric, spiritual, etc.

It is often said that cases of paedophilia occur more frequently inside the Church. But official figures show a different picture...

Unfortunately there are more cases of abuse than most people imagine. Figures released by "One in Four", the organization set up in Ireland and in Great Britain, show that one in four adults has been the victim of some form of sexual abuse before turning 18.

It was for this reason that we launched a campaign in our Institutes to help families and minors protect themselves by identifying and reporting possible signs of abuses.

Approximately 30% of all sexual abuses were perpetrated by family members, while 60% of abuses occurred in the family environment.

This fact further complicates the situation: when the sexual offenders are members of the family it's harder to denounce them. In fact, most cases of sexual abuse occur within the family or in the family environment.

This in no way diminishes the gravity of the sexual abuses committed by priests and religious, protected only by the image of persons "consecrated to God" who in reality cause not only psychological and mental damage but also spiritual damage, thereby giving a completely distorted image of God.

THE INSTITUTE CELEBRATES THE SUPERIOR'S BIRTHDAY: 1955 - 2017

The Institute is celebrating the birthday of Superior General Brother Emili Turú, who is turning 62 on Jan. 24. Br Emili was born in Barcelona in 1955, the youngest of five brothers. He was elected Superior General in 2009.

On behalf of all of the Marists of Champagnat, we would like to wish Br Emili health, peace and that the Holy Spirit fills him with blessings to continue his work of leadership, pointing to prophetic paths for the Institute's new beginning.



FEELING LIKE A FAMILY AROUND THE SAME TABLE

FORMATION OF MARIST ANIMATORS IN COMPOSTELA

The Christmas formation encounter of animators of the Compostela Province's youth movement MarCha took place in Valladolid from Dec. 26 – 29.

The 90 young assistants, distributed by age and phases, participated in one of the three courses offered by the Escuela Champagnat de Tiempo Libre: new animators, initiation to accompaniment and Marist identity.

The younger ones reflected on the MarCha Movement - which many joined as children six years ago - as well as on its educational value, as well as the qualities of an animator. In addition, they learned several resources for their free time: games, songs and dances.

During the accompaniment course, the 34 assistants found a space where they could freely express themselves as well as listen and be listened to. And, above all, a place where they were able to face personal growth and the fears that this entails without feeling alone.

"Marist identity" was experienced as an opportunity to share one's own diversity, to listen to one's heart, to apply the Word to each one's reality and to feel accompanied during their



search of discovering, questioning and rethinking the message of Jesus Christ.

The formation moments have included moments to slow down, to contemplate, to give thanks and to share with others one's own life. The meals and the table talk were occasions for the three groups to get to know each other and to enrich each other mutually, feeling themselves like a

family around the same table: that of MarCha, Mary and Champagnat.

The Eucharistic celebration and the evening "Casi 200" was the festive climax of sharing life with each other during these three days. Animators of different phases, teachers of the Escuela de Tiempo Libre, a dozen of Brothers linked to MarCha, novices and postnovices of Europe pursued Champagnat's dream together.

MARIST FORMATION IN AN INTERCULTURAL COMMUNITY

ASIA REGION INITIAL FORMATION COLLOQUIUM

For six days prior to Christmas (12- 17 December) the formators of the three Administrative Units of Asia gathered at the Marist Asia Pacific Center in Manila, Philippines for a colloquium on Initial Formation. This gathering was a follow-up to the Institute's Initial Formation Colloquium at the Hermitage in October 2015. Since that gathering, individual AUs in Asia had also had their own colloquiums. It was now time to gather as a region.

The theme of this colloquium was: Marist Formation in an Intercultural Community. Twenty-two Brothers from Asia, from all stages of Initial Formation, came together to expand their understanding of this. They were joined by two

Brothers with responsibilities for Initial Formation in the Oceania Region.

The first day was set aside for reconnecting with the vision emerging within the Institute - from the XXIst General Chapter, through the 2013 General Conference, to the 2015 Hermitage Colloquium, and more recently in the developments of the New Models (AGM) process. Themes such as: new lands, global availability, regional co-operation, etc. kept echoing for us.

Two days were set aside for a closer study of what interculturality means, what vision of community life it lays be-

MARIST WORLD



Madagascar: Retreat of Lay People in Antananarivo



Rwanda: Novitiate Save



Bolivia: Novitiate América-Sur



Italy: Community of the General Council at Rocca di Papa



Australia: Postulants from Timor Leste in Melbourne



Spain: Valencia

fore us, the skills needed, and its implications for Initial Formation. These days were then made more concrete by a further day focusing on key formation processes, such as accompaniment.

We were assisted by Fr. Michael Maguire SSC, who had previously given input at the Hermitage Colloquium. He encouraged us especially to strengthen in the formand, the skills for inner guidance.

The final two days were devoted to reviewing current plans, and developing them further in light of the insights

gained during the previous days of reflection and conversation. The regional thinking will now be carried forward by the Formation Commission of the Marist Asia Conference.

The colloquium had many benefits: being able to break-down something of the loneliness of the formator's role and to experience the support of one's Brothers, to have increased confidence that the plans and processes in place at the moment are "good enough", and to learn from each other small but significant ways of being more effective formators.



SOUTH AFRICA: MARIST BROTHERS AND MERCY SISTERS WITH THE POOR CHILDREN

For the past 7 years, the Marist Brothers in Uitenhage and the Mercy Sisters in Addo have collaborated in running a one-week summer camp for the children of poor communities in the area.

The children become involved in a variety of activities, outdoor games and indoor activities of various kinds.

The Sisters and Brothers have regularly been assisted by a few local volunteers, but increasingly by two Marist students from each of the five schools in the country. The two students in each case are the incoming Head Boy and the Head Girl (or equivalent) appointed for the following academic year (mid-January to late November).

Last December were welcomed three hundred and twenty five children at the Summer Camp.



CANADA: "DARE TO DREAM A NEW BEGINNING"

MARIST FORUM 2016

Once again, during 2016, around 120 people of all ages and background of the the Marist province of Canada, including brothers, all sorts of lay people, directors of Marist works young

and not so young gathered at the Laval school.

The goal was to celebrate an annual encounter that would allow Marists of

the province to nourish the bond of belonging to the global body that we all form.

The testimonies, the news received and the vision of a new beginning were able to foster the desire to invest more in support of the charism on the part of all Marist agents.

It was an occasion to share ideas on the organisation of the Province and its preparation for the bicentennial of the Institute.

To achieve this, some brothers and lay people made presentations on the following topics:

- The Pre-Chapter Process;
- The new organisational structure of the Province of Canada;
- AMDL News;

Time was allocated to share the topics that emerged at the provincial meeting held last spring.



WORKSHOP ON MARIST SPIRITUAL PATRIMONY AT MIC AFRICAN PATRIMONY COMMISSION



A one-week workshop on Marist Spiritual patrimony was organised at the Marist International Centre from the 12th to the 16th of December 2016.

Brothers Elias Iwu and Vincent de Paul Kouassi, members of the African Patrimony Commission facilitated the programme for the First year Student brothers.

They revisited, discussed and shared the history, the spirituality and charism of Champagnat's Marists. They also addressed current issues

and processes in the Institute around the forthcoming Chapter, its preparation, the question of the laity, The revision of the Constitutions, new models of Animation and vocation among other topics.

They also assessed some of the foundational documents, the letters, and some new writing as they were initiated to research in Marist history and spirituality.

After the workshop, the African Patrimony Commission with Brother Spiridion as its Charman met for three

more days (17th – 19th) to discuss the future of Marist spiritual patrimony in Africa.

As a whole, it was a Fruitful Marist week for our scholastics and for the Patrimony commission.

Members of the African Patrimony Commission are the Brothers Benedict Umoh (Nigeria), Dickson Auxensio (Southern Africa), Elias Iwu (Nigeria), Henry Bashisi (Pace), Pierre Joseph (Madagascar), Spiridion Ndan-ga (Pace), Vincent de Paul Kouassi (District of West Africa).

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