



22ND GENERAL CHAPTER: RIONEGRO, COLOMBIA

Day 19 - Sept. 26 - Hearing God's Calls

The participants of the XXII Marist Brothers General Chapter reached a fundamental part.

After trying to capture the reality of the world and of the Institute, the Chapter participants now turned their attention to listening to what God wants from the Institute in terms of its identity and what it needs to do.

Today was about listening and contemplative silence. Much fewer words! To read the full story, visit: <https://goo.gl/UmoC1x>.



Day 20 - Sept. 27 - What are the 4 things that God is calling us to for a New Beginning?

The 20th day in Rionegro was a day of listening to what God wants the Marists to do.

The lines of action were identified for the Institute to enter its third centenary.

These four proposed calls are not the finished product.

They are a synthesis that will help to deepen further reflection.

To read the full story and the four proposed calls, visit: <https://goo.gl/R2dzSQ>.

Day 21 - Sept. 28 Presentation of the 'Being Lay Marist' document and key implications

Part of the morning session was taken up with a presentation on the experiences and journey toward defining the Lay Marist vocation and guidelines for animation, accompaniment and formation that are articulated in more detail in 3 documents tabled at this General Chapter.

To read the full story, visit <https://goo.gl/aqEGPO>.





Day 22 - Sept. 29 XXII General Chapter

Today, Friday 29th September, Chapter participants continued working in groups on the key implications.

Capitulants were briefed on the process involved in the review of the Constitutions and the structure of the resultant drafts.

The process of electing the Superior General and Vicar General were approved.

Brother Ben Consigli then presented to capitulants for their approval the procedure, process and timetable for the election of the Superior General and Vicar General.

This is occurring on Oct. 2 and 3. For the full story, visit: <https://goo.gl/HbVD8K>

Day 23 - Sept. 30 Farewell to the lay invitees to the General Chapter

Saturday was only a half day working session. The Chapter participants continued working the six thematic areas until lunch.

With this being the last day the lay invitees were present at the Chapter, the Chapter Assembly thanked them for their significant contribution.

A celebratory drink and lunch was organized to honour and thank the lay Marist invitees. There were no work sessions held on Saturday afternoon and Sunday.

You can read the full news story at: <https://goo.gl/kkg-VWq>.



Day 26 - Oct. 2 Moment of discernment

Today's program was divided into two key moments. The morning was dedicated entirely for private reading of the proposed texts for the revised Constitutions and Statutes and the Rule of Life. The afternoon session saw the commencement of the discernment process for the election of the Superior General and Vicar General.

Every day in Rionegro, the Chapter program begins at 7:30 a.m. with contemplative prayer in the Chapel, followed by breakfast at 8:00 a.m. Usually the participants gather in the Chapter Hall at 9 a.m. The morning session begins with morning prayer prepared by the animation team whose members are Alicia Alexandra Morales, and Brothers Fabrício Alves da Cruz, Anselmo Kim and Tony Leon.



FR JOHN LARSEN

NEW SUPERIOR OF THE SOCIETY OF MARY

Father John Larsen was elected on Sept. 30 as the fourteenth superior general of the Society of Mary, which is holding its general chapter in Nemi, Italy, from Sept. 20 – Oct. 11. Marcelin Champagnat was member of the Society of Mary.

Fr. John Larsen, born in 1955, belongs to the district of Asia and entered the Society in 1976. He carried out his ministry in the Philippines, Myanmar and Thailand.

He did his pastoral work in parishes, in prisons, with migrants, and was also a formator. He is currently a formator at the International Marist Theologate of Rome.

The Marist Institute, through the General Chapter that is taking place in Colombia, asks God to bless Fr. John, so that he can be at the service of his



brothers in the Society of Mary and promote the charism of the Marist

Family, to which the Marist Brothers belong.

SYRIA: LETTER FROM ALEPPO No 31 (SEPTEMBER 24, 2017)

NEITHER WAR NOR PEACE

Neither War nor Peace, this is how I can describe the current situation in Syria in this month of September 2017, six years and a half after the start of the events that caused the death of more than 35,000 people, destroyed a large part of the country, displaced the third of the population, exiled more than 3 million people and wiped out the dreams and future of the young people and many generations of Syrians. Currently, all the parties, the Syrian government and international powers, have only one objective: the eradication of Daech in Syria after defeating it in Iraq.

The last bastions of Daech are the two eastern cities: Raqqa, the self-proclaimed capital of Daech in Syria and Deir El Zor where half of the city, its inhabitants and its garrison were surrounded by the Jihadists for more than three years and supplied by air. The 1st one is half liberated by Kurdish troops supported by the USA. The second one is about to be, the Syrian army, despite heavy losses, was able to liberate the cities and villages of the province of Deir El Zor and broke the siege of the city by connecting with the encircled inhabitants. The Syrians from other Syrians cities have, prematurely, expressed their joy for the liberation of Deir el Zor which is not yet completely liberated. Nevertheless, when Daech will be definitely beaten in the two cities and the surrounding villages, it will be its end in Syria.

Peace process will only work with political agreement

In the rest of Syria, it is "Neither War nor Peace". Under the auspices of Russia, Turkey and Iran, at Astana where the parties have been negotiating for several months, several agreements for the evacuation of the rebels from the enclaves they used to occupy in various regions have been concluded and allowed their transportation to the provinces of Idlib, bastion of Al Nosra.

Moreover, several de-escalation agreements have allowed to freeze the fighting and the situation in several regions: east of Damascus, Homs, Idlib...

The Syrians, while celebrating the cessation of the fighting here and there, worried that the current status quo persists and leads to a prolonged chaos, a partition or sharing of the areas of influence, if that status quo is not accompanied by significant progresses in the negotiations to reach a political solution of the conflict.

Change of attitude of Arab governments

What makes us somewhat optimistic, is that most of the Arab, Western and Turkish governments, which from the start supported, financed and even armed the rebels, mostly the terrorists, have finally understood that the Syrian

MARIST WORLD



Mexico: Marists of Bachillerato "Asunción Ixtaltepec", Ixtaltepec



Thailand: Bangkok gives medical services at Marist Centre for Migrants, Samut Sakhon



Switzerland: FMSI's new child rights advocacy team in Geneva



United States: Annual 'Community Day' of Marist High School, Bayonne (NJ)



Argentina: Centro Marista Hno Isla, La Plata



Ivory Coast: St Marcellin Champagnat School, Bouaké

government will not be overthrown by arms as they thought and desired and that a political solution can only exist by keeping the president, broadly supported by the population, the Syrian army and the Russian ally. Hence, the various statements of the leaders of the western world indicating that their priority is to fight Daech and terrorism- which the Syrian government has been repeating for six years- not the fall of the regime.

The situation improves in Aleppo

In Aleppo, the situation, has improved considerably on all levels since the end of 2016, the date of the evacuation of the last terrorists to Idlib and the liberation of the city. As before July 2012, there is no more east Aleppo and west Aleppo but only one city, Aleppo, several thousand years old.

Some of the western neighborhoods of Aleppo, unfortunately, still receive mortars from the rebels situated 10km from the city on the Idlib side.

But the vast majority of the neighborhoods are safe and the Alepines come and go, and live without the fear of a mortar shell or of a bullet from a sniper. A foreigner, who had followed the events and the suffering of Aleppo, if he comes to visit us now, would be astonished by the dense traffic, the illumination of the intersections, the coffee shops that are always crowded, the roads that are cleared, and open to traffic, the public gardens full of children playing, the

school buses in operation, the sidewalks are cleared from the shacks that were used as shops, and the reopening of many businesses that were closed during the war. The running water is, again, provided to us, at least 2 days a week and the power between 12 to 15 hours a day.

There are still problems with refugees and displaced people

However, the picture is not as rosy as that. This situation of "neither war nor peace" does not encourage the hundreds of thousands of Alepines, who are refugees or displaced, to return. The IOM (International Organization for Migration) declared recently that 600,000 people, who are mostly from the province of Aleppo, have returned to their homes. This needs to be clarified, as the majority of these people were internally displaced and had moved to another neighborhood of the city or to another Syrian city.

This situation does not either help the reconstruction -why to rebuild if there is no peace- or for an economic recovery. The cost of living and the unemployment are still very high as well as poverty. The majority of the families of Aleppo still need help to survive.

Blue Marists

Facing this situation and these new developments, we, the Blue Marists, want to favor reconstruction, focus on the hu-



man development and work to build the future of the Syrians and of Syria. Since the beginning of the conflict, in the worst time of the war in Aleppo, when the relief programs consumed our human and material resources, we maintained our educational programs and we started new ones. And now, while continuing our relief projects, we decided to strengthen our human developmental programs. We firmly believe that the development of the human contributes to the establishment of peace and to the preparation of the future. We are not, however, going to stop our relief programs, the people still need them.

Help to find work

This is how we started a new project that we called JOB, job for work in English and job for the prophet famous for his patience, a necessary quality for the success of our project. It consists of finding jobs for our young people, to encourage the creation of small projects and motivate them to pursue vocational training. This is to make the families independent financially from the aids they received for more than five years and which should normally stop soon, to encourage young people to stay in the country and participate

in the reconstruction of Syria. A team of volunteers is in charge of the project. They establish lists of job offers and demands and make the links between the two. They help young people to think and realize their own work projects, and they support them financially. They train other young people in various professions by sending them at our expense to apprenticeship centers, and finally they create production workshops to create jobs while guaranteeing the profitability of the business. This is how we will soon start a workshop to recycle used clothes that will provide work to a dozen of women.

Education Programmes

Our adult education centre, M.I.T, which started at the end of 2013, celebrated its four years of existence two weeks ago, by a meeting to which we invited all the leaders of the charity and development associations. Over four years, we have organized 77 workshops of three days each, in which 1404 people participated and were led by 28 leaders. In addition, we have organized two sessions of 100 hours to teach 35 young adults "how to start your own project". We helped to finance the best 6 projects

in terms of feasibility and job creation. We will continue these long sessions about the same theme in order to give as many young people as possible the chance to learn how to create their own business and if necessary, we will finance them.

In partnership with UNDP (the United Nation Development Program), we will open a baby and kids' clothing workshop, which will provide work for 24 people, the workshop is led by a Blue Marist. We are also going to lead, for two months, at the request of the UNDP, three projects with the aim of renewing the links, perhaps tense and sometimes broken by the war, between the different parts of the population of Aleppo, to heal the wounds and to repair the social fabric of the Syria of tomorrow.

All of the other educational projects continue. The two projects for the children three to six, "Learn to Grow" and "I want to learn" are resuming their activities with the children on October 2nd after the 24 teachers have spent all the summer creating our own educational programs. The team of "Skill School" for the teenagers worked hard to prepare the program for the year. "Cut and Sew" continues with the wives, mothers and girls, "Eradica-



tion of illiteracy”, “Hope” and “Douroub” will restart their activities soon. We are trying through all these programs to develop the people, to prepare their future and to give them the tools to have a professional activity that will enable them to live.

Assistance Programs

Our relief programs continue. We believe, after deep reflection and dialogue within our team, that the assistance to the population is still necessary and that the moment to reduce the volume of our help or to stop it has not yet arrived. Especially since many of our families are recently without resources, the husband having been called as a reservist. We continue to distribute food and hygiene baskets every month to about 1000 families. We help the displaced families pay the rent of their homes, we distribute water to those who need it. At the beginning of the school year, we gave all the children of our families coupons to purchase school supplies. Our program “Drop of Milk” is at its 29th month of distribution of milk to children under the age of 10.

Health Care

As for our two medical programs, we are pleased to announce that the “War Wounded Civilians” project is, thanks God, slowing down due to the smaller number of war wounded in Aleppo since its liberation. On the other hand, our medical program to help the sick people, unable to take care of themselves financially or to be operated on, is becoming massive given the number of people in need.

Summer Camp

In the summer, we organized at our place, a summer club where families and their children came in the afternoons to

relax, play and to spend pleasant moments sipping coffee or a soda with their friends.

Finding answers to the new situation

During the past six years, we have gone through different periods that we had to manage by different means. The current situation of “neither war nor peace” is one of the most difficult because our answers to the situation are not obvious. It requires constant reflection and adaptation to the new needs, and from our beneficiary families a rehabilitation to the peace so much desired. We want to sow hope in people and see it flourish in confidence, serenity and love.

New Horizons

The Marist brothers, our partners in the Blue Marists, which whom we share the charism and the spirituality, are currently holding their 22nd general chapter in Colombia, during which the Brothers will define the orientation of the congregation for the years to come and elect a new management team. The choice of Colombia to host the chapter, while it is always at the general house in Rome, is significant for the congregation’s willingness to open up to “New Horizons” and to emphasize the peace that is preparing in this country, victims of a war that has been going on for decades.

We too, the Blue Marists, dream of moving toward new horizons, toward a new beginning of an era to construct, to build in life together, the harmony, the responsible citizenship and peace. “Neither war nor peace” was the title of this letter from Aleppo No 31. May the 32nd one in three months tells you: no war but true peace.

Aleppo, September 24th 2017
Nabil Antaki - for the Blue Marists

PHILIPPINES: ONE BROTHER MAKES PERPETUAL VOWS, ONE RE-ENTERS THE INSTITUTE

Brother Dionesio De Vera Acosta Jr. made his perpetual vows on Sept. 2 in a Mass celebrated at Notre Dame of Cotabato in Cotabato City, the Philippines.

During the Eucharistic celebration, Brother Raymund Gallardo also made his one-year vows after officially re-entering the Institute.

The provincial superior of East Asia, Brother Robert Teoh, received the vows on behalf of the general superior. The Mass was presided by Father Patrick Devlin, a Marist priest, and celebrated by Father Amador Castillo, a Missionary Oblate of Mary Immaculate. The vows coincided with this year's anniversary of 70 years of Marist presence in the Philippines and of the founding of Notre Dame of Cotabato. They also coincide with the tenth anniversary of the East Asia province, composed of



the Philippines, Malaysia, Hong Kong, China, Korea, Singapore, and Japan. Brothers Dionesio and Raymund made

their first vows at the Immaculate Conception Novitiate in Tamontaka in May 2010, alongside four other brothers.

OCTOBER 1817: TWO HUNDRED YEARS OF THE MARIST SISTERS

The townsfolk of a village in north-west of Lyon in France is gathering with visiting Marist Sisters on Oct. 3 in Coutouvre, to mark an event of great significance to them.

Two hundred years ago two young women born and bred there set out for the unfamiliar territory of Cerdon, on the other side of Lyon with its foreign dialect and customs.

Jeanne-Marie Chavoïn and Marie Jotillon had known for 11 years that they were called by God. However, the details of God's purpose only became evident when they were introduced to the Marist Project being promoted by one Fr Jean-Claude Colin and some other newly-ordained priests. Suddenly all became clear and, as Jeanne-Marie put it years later, "we left home and family to begin the Society of the Blessed Virgin". No exact date is known, but it would have been some time in October 1817. As relatively few Sisters are able to be present in Coutouvre for the occasion, the Congregational Leader, Sr Grace Ellul, has published a video message for the Sisters across the Congregation in their different languages.



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