



THE GENERAL COUNCIL COMMUNITY GATHERS IN NEMI

LAYING THE FOUNDATION OF AN INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

From Jan. 28 – Feb. 3, the members of the General Council community met at the Ad Gentes Centre (SVD Fathers) in Nemi, Italy. This was the first time that the entire community was able to gather. The purpose of this week together was to lay the foundation of their life as an international, intercultural community. Each day's dynamic began with shared prayer and concluded with a Eucharistic celebration. Woven throughout the week, each member of the community shared milestones in his life story and faith journey.

As the week unfolded, the members of the community explored what it means to be a genuine global family, developing an understanding and appreciation of each other's culture. The members recognized that they are called to be witnesses of unity and hope who respect the richness of their cultural diversity. They also spent time building community during an outing to the Pope's summer residence at Castel Gandolfo.

Underpinning their time together was



continued reflection on the Calls of the XXII General Chapter, especially in light of how they wish to live as a faith community in mission. Thursday was a day of retreat and silent reflection where the group reflected on their personal experiences of God,

their abilities to make their community a real home, and their desire to share their gifts and vulnerabilities. During the last day and a half, the community discussed and planned the more practical aspects of their community life.

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

On Feb. 5, superior general Brother Ernesto Sánchez participated in a meeting with the superiors general of the four Marist branches at the general house of the Missionary Sisters. Brothers Álvaro Sepúlveda and Rick Carey, responsible for the rights of children in FMSI, met with the general councillors of the three other Marist branches in charge of the promotion of justice and peace. The encounter was held on Feb. 5 at the general house of the Marist Sisters. The annual meeting of the Conference of the Superiors of the African Continent (CSAC) in Nairobi, Kenya, is taking place from Feb. 5 – 10. Brothers Óscar Martín, general councillor, Chris Wills, director of Cmi, and

Beto Rojas and Mark Omede, of the Secretariat of Mission, are participating on behalf of the general administration. On Wednesday and Thursday, Brother Tony Leon, director of the Brothers Today secretariat, will attend the meeting of the European Brothers Today Commission in Lisbon, Portugal. On February 9, Brothers Okey Anochie, from Nigeria, and Jeff Rhey, from the Philippines, will finish the four-month course on the safeguarding of minors, promoted by the Pontifical Gregorian University. The superior and the vicar general will participate in the concluding ceremony, together with several Brothers of the general house community.

FIGHTING AGAINST SEXUAL ABUSE

INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC CHILD BUREAU (BICE) DEVELOPS A STRATEGIC PLAN

During a meeting of the International Catholic Child's Bureau (BICE) that took place in Paris, France, from Jan. 22 – 24, participants – which included FMSI – helped organize its future actions.

Together with other members from Africa, Latin America, Eastern Europe, Italy and France, FMSI contributed to the preparation of the next strategic plan (2019 - 2022), which will be finalized at its next meeting in June.

Brother Alvaro Sepúlveda, who participated in the meeting on behalf of FMSI, affirmed that one of the lines of action in which BICE has stood out is in the fight against sexual abuse towards children.

"It has also supported the formation of resilience tutors in Marist projects that look after migrants (Lebanon and Spain)," Brother Alvaro told the general house communications office on Jan. 24.



"It is also important to highlight that BICE has favored the articulation among Catholic institutions in Latin America that want to promote human rights," he continued. "Since 2009, national BICE tables or networks have been formed in Chile, Brazil and Argentina, in all of them the

Marists have a strong commitment". FMSI is part of the BICE board of directors since 2017. It is an international network founded in France in 1948 that currently brings together almost 70 organizations from around the world committed to defending the dignity and rights of children.

BRAZIL SUL-AMAZONIA: SECOND EDITION OF VIDAMAR III

AN INVITATION TO LEAVE YOUR COMFORT ZONE

From Jan. 7 – 13, 19 Brothers, laity and collaborators from different mission spaces of the Brasil Sul-Amazonia province met for the second edition of Vidamar III.

The project is one of the main formation programmes of the province and, in that third stage, it provided an opportunity for immersion in the Marist Social Center (Cesmar) and in the Rubem Berta neighborhood community, in Porto Alegre, where the unit is located.

The programme included moments of reflection, sharing and experiential activities at Cesmar. With this perspective, Vidamar III seeks to encourage understanding of the role of everyone in the world, both Marists and citizens.

The proposal also responds to the calls of the Church and the Marist Institute to leave the comfort zone and go to meet the neediest.

About Vidamar

The Marist formation project focuses on the reflection



and experience of the charism and takes place in three stages: Vidamar I, which proposes a view towards oneself and others, where acceptance is a fundamental point for personal growth; Vidamar II, intended for the approximation of groups in moments of sharing life, stories, achievements and challenges; and Vidamar III, who proposes the experience of immersion in a Marist missionary space.

NEWS IN BRIEF

COLOMBIA

On January 27, the community of the *Noviciado La Valla* in Medellín held its first monthly retreat this year. In the afternoon, they dedicated a Marian moment so that the Brothers who have already completed their first year will formally give their letter requesting entry into the second year of the novitiate.

PHILIPPINES

The library of the Marist Asia-Pacific Center (MAPAC) has a new look, thanks to the work of the librarian, who has reorganized and catalogued the books. The library, which now has a “Champagnat’s corner” has also received a new set of furniture.

CRUZ DEL SUR

Two meetings have recently taken place in the province. The first was a meeting of Marist educators, which took place in Coronel Oviedo, Paraguay, on January 31. The second was a meeting of Marist directors at the Nuestra Señora del Rosario school in the province of Santa Fe, Argentina, held on February 1 and 2.

SYRIA

The Arabic Christian television station *Télé Lumière*, which also broadcasts under the name *Nour-sat*, aired a report on Feb. 4 on the Blue Marists of Aleppo. They cover the after-school club set by the Marists called “Ata3allam an akbar” or “Learn to Grow” for ages 3 – 7. The club aims to look after the children’s social, cultural, spiritual and psychological needs to help them overcome the war’s side effects. This year, its own curriculum and books were used and the Blue Marists have observed a change in their behaviour, being now less prone to violence, isolation and fear. To watch the report, visit: <https://goo.gl/yzrfqE>.

GENERAL POSTULATOR

NEW REGULATIONS ON RELICS OF SAINTS AND BLESSED

The Vatican published new norms on relics of saints and blessed on Dec. 16, reiterating the prohibition of selling relics or exhibiting them without a certificate.

With this regulation, we want to reinforce the prohibition to sell them, the protocol of recognition, certificates of authenticity and respect for the will of legitimate heirs.

A “relic” is what remains of the body of a saint or a blessed. The concept is also extended to the things he used, or which belonged to him.

The instruction titled *The relics in the Church: authenticity and preservation*, published by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, recalls that in no case “can they be exposed to the veneration of the faithful without a certificate of authenticity” signed by the postulator of the cause or the bishop, just as they cannot be exposed in profane places.

In very vigorous terms, the new norm reaffirms the absolute prohibition of the trade and sale of relics, disavowing not only the barter but especially the buying and selling that takes place today especially on the Internet.

Many of the relics that can be purchased on the Internet are false, but others are true and are put on sale by the children or grandchildren of the original owners as an element of liquidation of the inheritance. In that market, there are also relics from abandoned churches or that



A relic that the Marist Brothers donated to Pope Pius XII during the celebration of the beatification of Marcellin Champagnat in 1955.

appear falsely as such without being able to make any verification.

Although medieval wars no longer exist for the property of relics of saints, thefts continue, many of them with the intention of selling them to private collectors.

The new norms establish in a more detailed way the protocol for the recognition of the mortal remains of people subject to the beatification and canonization processes.

It requires the presence of medical experts in anatomy or legal medicine, as well as witnesses. The minutes must be detailed. Participants are prohibited from disclosing images or information on their own.

Naturally, the bishops and the postulators of the causes are reminded of the obligation to respect the rights of the civil heirs of the saintly person, as well as the laws of the place.

Correcting the excesses of some dismemberments in previous centuries, it is forbidden to separate relevant parts of the body – to make relics – without explicit permission from the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints in Rome.

MARIST WORLD



Lebanon: The community of the Fratelli Project



Australia: St Gregory's College Campbelltown Junior School - First day for Kindies



Chile: Volunteering project, Colegio N. Sra. De Andacollo - La Serena



Greece: Pedagogic symposium, Lycée Léonin - Athens



Philippines: postulant in Davao



Syria: Course on life skills, Aleppo

DRAFT ITINERARIES ARE ESTABLISHED FOR ALL FORMATION STAGES IN ASIA

ASIA FORMATORS MEETING

An encounter for Asia's formators was held at the Marist Asian Pacific Center in Marikina City, the Philippines, from Jan. 12 – 17 to prepare itineraries for all stages of formation in the region.

Sixteen brothers from several countries, who are working in formation houses of all levels, took part.

During the first few days, the participants had a chance to study the Message of the XXII General Chapter as well as superior general Brother Ernesto Sánchez's explanation on what "a new La Valla" means for us.

The term "Global Family" made a strong impression in the discussion as the invitation for each one to be available for mission in all parts of the world. Br Ernesto used the image of a balanced table with four legs to describe the "New Beginning." The meeting also reviewed the seven points of the colloquium on formation held in 2015.

After some days of reflecting on different messages and documents, participants started to produce the itineraries for formation.

Brother Paco García, formator of the postulancy in Davao,



introduced the draft of the itineraries prepared by the formation commission.

There were different groups working on different stages of formation, from aspirancy to post-novitiate. They tried to establish complete and achievable itineraries for the formation programme in the whole region of Asia. The new draft of the itineraries was completed with the thorough reflection and serious thought of all the members of the group.

The participants will continue to work together to come up with a complete programme that will be implemented in the formation houses.

BRASIL CENTRO-SUL: MARIST SOLIDARITY MISSION

MARIST STUDENTS BEGIN THE YEAR WITH SOLIDARITY ACTIVITIES



Leave everything and roll up your sleeves. This is the thought of the more than 400 young Marists who will participate in the 13th Marist Solidarity Mission (MSM).

The objective is to allow students to experience the day-to-day lives of residents of communities in situations of social vulnerability in some cities of the Brasil Centro-Sul Province (Curitiba, Cascavel, Florianópolis and Ribeirão Preto), from Jan. 21 to 27.

Held annually since 2005, the MSM aims to promote education for solidarity, based on an experience of reciprocal learning and dialogue, in which students can experience the day to day lives of residents of communities who are socially vulnerable.

The activity allows the sharing of life between young people and the community, in order to awaken the critical sense, the solidarity sensitivity and the spirituality of both.

In addition to the shared coexistence between community and participants, in each location there will be a concrete gesture, that is, a practical action that will collaborate for local development.

Gestures of that year include revitalizations of community spaces, such as schools, gardens and areas of coexistence.

It will also promote moments of debates, dialogue with families from nearby neighborhoods and educational and recreational activities for children and adolescents in the region.

According to Diogo Galline, representative of the Ministry Sector of

the Marist Group, young people participating in the MSM acquire a more critical view of society, capable of causing internal changes that lead to social transformation.

"The Solidarity Mission wants to contribute with education in the solidarity of these adolescents and young people, that is, help them to incorporate in their respective personal projects the importance of a life based on justice and fraternity," explained Diogo.

OFFICIAL PHOTO OF THE SUPERIOR GENERAL

The official photo of the Superior General and his council will arrive in the provinces until the end of February. You can indicate the number of copies to the General Secretariat, through the Provincial Secretary.



ONGOING FORMATION PROGRAMMES FOR 2018

BROTHERS TODAY SECRETARIAT TO HOLD FIVE PROGRAMMES

Five formation programmes are being organised for 2018 by the Brothers Today secretariat for middle aged and third age Brothers, each eight-weeks long.

■ **THRESHOLDS** will be held in El Escorial, Spain, from Feb. 8 – April 4, for Spanish and Portuguese speaking Brothers only, aged 61 – 70.

■ **CURRENT FORMATORS** will be held at the general house in Rome, Italy, from May 15 – July 12, for English and Spanish speaking Brothers.

■ **HORIZONS** will be held in El Escorial from Aug. 17 – Oct. 17, for Spanish and Portuguese speaking Brothers only, aged 35 – 45.

■ **AMANECER** will be held at the general house from Sept. 1 – Oct. 31 for Spanish and Portuguese speaking Brothers, aged 65 and over.

■ **THIRD AGE** will be held at Manziana, Italy, from Oct. 8 – Dec. 8 for English speaking Brothers, aged 65 and over.

All of the programmes include around a week's pilgrimage to Marist places in France, such as Notre Dame de l'Hermitage (Saint-Chamond).

In a letter to the provincials and district superiors on Jan. 16, Brother Tony Leon, director of the Brothers Today secretariat, encouraged them to send formators to participate in the **CURRENT FORMATORS** programme.

"This programme aims to renew their energy, to help recognise the implications of the call of the third century (of the Institute) and be recognised by other fraternal colleagues involved in their sacred task of the formation of strong minds and gentle hearts," he wrote them.

Br Tony underscored that the **HORIZONS** programme "tries to offer formative elements that respond to the human and spiritual needs of this life stage (35 – 45 years old) of the



brothers" and includes the possibility of completing a section of the Camino de Santiago.

"It is a great opportunity for the brothers of this course to reduce their speed and reflect with the totality of their being, mind heart and muscles," he added.

The programmes held at El Escorial are led by Brothers Antonio Peralta and Joaquim Sperandio, while the programmes held at Manziana are led by Brother Teófilo Minga.

The programmes that are held at El Escorial are run by Brothers Antonio Peralta and Joaquim Sperandio. This year, the English language courses in Manziana are not carried out, except for the **THIRD AGE** course led by Brother John Klein. The **AMANECER** course held in the General House for the Spanish and Portuguese-speaking Brothers is led by Brothers Landelino Ortega and Afonso Lewis.

Participants for the **THRESHOLDS** programme have already been confirmed. Any Brothers wishing to participate in **CURRENT FORMATORS** or in **HORIZONS** can contact Br Tony at tleon@fms.it by the end of February.

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