

NEW MARIST COMMUNITY GATHERS FOR THE FIRST TIME

COMMUNITY LAVALLA200> TABATINGA

The new community Lavalla200> of Tabatinga, Brazil, came together for the first time during a Mass held on Feb. 26 presided by the bishop of Alto Solimões, Bishop Adolfo Zon Pereira. Participants included Brothers Jeff Crowe and Ángel Medina, formators of the Lavalla200> members, who were visiting from Feb. 22 – Feb. 28 from Rome, as well as friends of the community and religious from other congregations. Brasil Sul-Amazônia's provincial, Brother Inácio N. Etges, and the coordinator of the América Sur region, Brother Alberto Aparicio, who held a series of meetings with Brothers Jeff and Ángel during their stay, also attended the Eucharistic celebration.

The community's members are now Brother Paul Bhatti (Pakistan), Juliana Kittel (Australia), Br Isidoro García Maté (France) and Verónica Rubí (Argentina), who has been in the community since 2016.

They are the second group to join the Lavalla200> International Communities for a New Beginning and were assigned the destination of Tabatinga after they completed their two-month formation last June. Until now, the members had been occupied with obtaining visa per-



mits and other practical aspects to prepare them for their new mission.

Tabatinga is in Brazil's Amazonas state, and borders with Colombia and Peru. The locals there face narcotrafficking and human trafficking issues. Due to their fertile land, the indigenous are also at high risk of being forced to leave in the future if foreign

multinationals were to pressure the government in to changing the law, stripping them of their rights.

The main tasks of the Lavalla200> members there include helping river and indigenous communities, whose children live situations of marginalisation in the populations where they have to go to study after primary school.

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

- From March 12 – 14, superior general Br Ernesto Sánchez will be giving a workshop at the Thresholds formation programme at El Escorial, Spain.
- On those same dates, Brother Libardo Garzón, Econome general, is participating in a meeting of the Provincial Bursars of the Arco Norte

region in Guadalajara, Mexico.

- From March 12 – 25, Br Álvaro Sepúlveda, FMSI, will be visiting Geneva, Switzerland. He will be taking part in a meeting on the adoption of Universal Periodic Review recommendations by Argentina and Peru; attending the UN's general debate

day and Mexico's UPR; and meeting with the board of the International Catholic Center of Geneva:

- Brother Ben Consigli, general councillor, will be attending a Spanish language course in Salamanca, Spain, from Monday, March 12, until May 12.

SIRIA: BLUE MARISTS

LETTER FROM ALEPPO No 32 (MARCH 4TH, 2018)

You were waiting for our letter. In addition to the news of the different projects of the Blue Marists, you wanted to be informed of the situation of the city of Aleppo, the one of Afrin and especially of what is happening in Damascus and in the rest of the country.

The situation in Aleppo is approaching normality

Aleppo was liberated in December 2016 and since the bombing has stopped, the blocked roads have been opened, the water supplied to all houses almost regularly, the electricity continues to be rationed. Some internally displaced people are trying to return to their homes in the eastern neighborhoods of the city. The small business owners are trying to open their stores. The rubbles were removed from several neighborhoods.

We are now getting aware of the desolation of the population who lived under the authority of the armed elements such as "AL-Nosra" or "Daech (Islamic state)". The schools and the universities are operating normally. The situation in Aleppo is approaching normality except for the catastrophic economy and the permanent return of the externally displaced people. Unfortunately, for thousands of immigrant families, the return is not the first item on their to do list. As you read this letter, other families continue to leave. Should we wait until the war ends in all of Syria? What is the future holding for us?

Several hotbeds of war persist in the country

I would like, first of all, to bring you up to date about the situation in Afrin, a northwestern city of Syria at the border with Turkey where the majority of the inhabitants are Kurdish. Several months ago, the Turkish president decided to wage a war against the Kurds. His army invaded the Syrian territory, performing very deadly air strikes, and a ground invasion, it surrounds Afrin and occupies a hundred of villages around it. We cannot forget that this territory is a part of the province



of Aleppo and that the inhabitants of this region, certainly of Kurdish ethnicity, are Syrian citizens.

In Damascus

In Damascus, the situation is very serious. For many years, the armed elements of the "AL-Nosra" and other militias occupy the countryside of Damascus, the Ghouta. Those jihadists have never stopped bombing the neighborhoods of Damascus, killing civilians and causing destructions.

After the liberation of Homs, Aleppo, Deir el Zor, the Syrian army has decided to liberate this enclave. This war of liberation has certainly caused deaths, injuries and suffering among the civilian population who was hijacked by the jihadists and we deeply deplore it. But we should not forget that the air strikes of the American army that helped the liberation of Mosul and Raqqa caused much more civilian casualties. And as usual, every time the circle tightens on the armed elements, the western medias begin to talk about humanitarian crises and chemical attacks to prepare the world opinion for a possible military intervention against the Syrian government. They offer a partial picture

of what is happening. On the social networks, there are plenty of images made or copied from other wars, images showing only children and civilians and never armed elements, as targets of the offensives. With you, I wonder why we do not talk about the massacres caused by the bombing of civilian neighborhoods in Damascus like "Bab Touma" or "Kassa'a"? Why the Western medias and their governments do not recount the daily tragedy of the people of Damascus?

Our optimism has turned into a growing pessimism

Our cautious optimism from a few months ago, about the end of the war and the reestablishment of real peace has turned into a growing pessimism. The situation in Syria has become an intractable impasse. With the Turkish army to the north-west, the American army, which supports the Kurdish militias, in the far north-east, the Israeli raids of the south and the situation in Damascus and Ghouta, there is nothing to be optimistic about.

Fortunately, there are some serious and honest people among the journalists, those who risk their lives and come to observe the reality on the ground. One

NEWS IN BRIEF

UNITED STATES

Young Marists met at the University of Texas at Austin with Brother Rob Clark and Matt Falon for a dinner and a meeting where they discussed the possibility of founding a Marist Youth Group within the University.

MALAYSIA

On March 3, the new St Joseph's International School was officially opened. It is a school in the archdiocese of Kuching, which since January 2017 is being run by the Marist Brothers. Only now, with the construction of its completed facilities, was it officially inaugurated by the diocesan archbishop, although last year it has already hosted 100 students.

CRUZ DEL SUR

From Feb. 15 – 17, a meeting of the animation areas of the Marista Cruz del Sur province took place to look for new ways of carrying greater fecundity in relation to the calls of the XXII General Chapter.

POSTULANCY MONTAGNE

On February 25, 4 postulants began the postulancy in Loja, Ecuador. They will be accompanied, in this initial process of way for the religious consecration, by the Brothers Julian Olmo and Carlos Regalado.

ASIA AND OCEANIA

The Marist Superiors of Asia and Oceania met for two days in Singapore to continue the reflection on the creation of a network between the two Marist regions. The areas in which the mutual collaboration is being developed are: lay people, formation, finances, volunteering, schools and religious life.

of them, Ivan from Dario de Navarra, has spent more than a week between Damascus and Aleppo. He experienced what the war is, the fear, the anguish of a population and witnessed the unimaginable destruction.

The will to live of the Syrian people

If I linger at the beginning of this letter on the situation of the war, it is not at all to show a side of death and fear, on the contrary! I want to talk about the will to live of the Syrian people. We want to live! Live with dignity! Live in peace! Live free from any constraints! Live away from suffering!

Today, we, the Blue Marists, have welcomed a 5 years old boy, M, who has his face, hands, feet completely burned.

His disfigured face haunts me. I don't have any words. I only have the strength to denounce a war that last and goes for ever. That's enough! Basta say our Spanish friends, Kafa, we say in our Arabic language.

Luckily, there are rays that come to warm our lives and shed light on our rather dark lives. One of them is Soumaya Hallak. Swiss from an Alepin origin, Soprano, granddaughter of a famous Alepin poet, she came to spend 8 days with us and for us. Accompanied by Marie-Laure, a film director and by Sawsan and Rand, 2 young ladies from Damascus who are students at the conservatory, Soumaya hosted every morning and afternoon, singing, dancing and war trauma therapy workshops for all of our groups: the children of "I learn to grow" and "I want to learn", the teenagers of "Skill school", the women form "woman's development project" and all the instructors.

Soumaya brought us joy and a little bit of happiness. She promised to come back in April and/or in the summer.

Projects of the Blue Marists

The project "Education and development of the woman" is a source of joy and pride for us. Thirty women over 30 years old and as many younger women participate twice a week in interactive workshops on topics that concern them such as keeping a family budget, repurposing food, early marriage, hygiene and gynecological diseases etc.... The participants come from different backgrounds. They established among each other very fraternal relationships. They are all so happy that no one misses a workshop. It is a 2 months session. It starts over with new participants.

With the "M.I.T" and the "Job project", we are participating in the reconstruction of the man, the families and the country.

In addition to the 3 days' workshops organized since more than 4 years, we started last week the 5th session on the theme "how to create your own small project". Twenty adults will spend 42 hours learning and applying to their own project the basics elements of the cost evaluation, the profitability, marketing..to present to the jury their well-studied project. We, the Blue Marists, will fund the best projects in term of feasibility, profitability, sustainability and job creation. In doing so, we help the families to live in dignity, independent from the aids they received during the years of war, and we create jobs that the country needs so much given the current the stagnant economic situation.



MARIST WORLD



Mexico: Br Emili Turú meets Brothers from Laredo (USA) and Nuevo Laredo.



Italy: Meeting of the Provincial Council of Mediterránea in Genova



Spain: Meeting of superiors of the Communities of Compostela in Salamanca



Chile: Colegio N. Sra. de Andacollo
Colegio Marista, Las Compañías



Spain
Maristes Igalada



Brazil:
Assembly of the UMBRASIL

One of our greatest satisfaction is the closure of our program "War wounded civilians". On the 5th anniversary of the beginning of this project, we have, at the end of November 2017, proclaimed its closure, the reason for its existence having disappeared, Aleppo being spared, thanks God, from the acts of war since 14 months; and this, during a family dinner that brought together the 3 partners of the project: the doctors of St. Louis hospital, the nuns of the hospital and the members of the team of the Blue Marists.

Dr. Nabil Antaki presented a power point presentation that summarized the project's history, its spirit, its achievements and its funding. Then all the participants received a certificate of appreciation and a silver commemorative medal (donated by a benefactor) with on one side the logo of the project, and on the other the Blue Marist logo.

Five years of free giving to care for hundreds of very seriously injured people and save the lives of dozens, unlimited generosity in free medical and surgical procedures from doctors, exemplary nursing care and endless

love from the nuns and nursing staff, and unlimited funding and a flawless administration from the Blue Marists. Yesterday, was a celebration at the Blue Marists. We had the 4th graduation ceremony, this time for 10 ladies, who had participated for 4 months in the session of our project "cut and sew". They have acquired enough skills to enter the work market, and also for their family needs.

Our clothes recycling project "heart made" makes wonders. First of all, it provides work to eleven people. And the products that come out of the workshop are really beautiful and are sold in a store in the downtown, which will allow the project to self-finance.

Our relief programs continue as usual

"The Blue Marists for the displaced" distributes each month food and hygiene baskets and cash (gift from Caritas-Poland) to more than 1000 displaced or poor families. The displaced families are also supported to pay the rent for their apartment. For Christmas, all the members of our families (over 4000), received new clothes and shoes. For Easter, they

will receive meat and a fruit basket. The "Medical program" helps in the financing of 150 medical procedures each month: surgeries, hospitalization, prescriptions, lab work and X-rays that the impoverished patients by the war cannot afford.

"Drop of milk" contributes to the physical and mental growth of approximately 3000 kids under the age of 11 by providing milk each month.

The educational projects

The educational projects are also one of the rays of our firmament. Nothing gets near the joy of the children of "I learn to grow" and "I want to learn" except the joy of their 24 instructors. The young ones are currently preparing a Mother's Day party, which we celebrate on March 21st. "Skill school" offers very interesting projects for the teenagers, including several solidarity projects for lent.

Thanks to their assiduity and to the effort of the educators, and as a part of the project "Eradication of illiteracy", many illiterate adults are now able to read a text. Other adults, men and women, are already at the fourth

level of learning English as part of the "Hope" project. They are proud to be able to help their children in their studies and to hold a conversation. If we are able to realize all these projects, it is because of the support and generosity of our friends and benefactors all over the world. I would like to thank every one of them.

Les Lettres d'Alep

Before ending this letter, I would like to announce to you a big news. At the request of many of our friends, we will, very soon, publish a book co-written by Nabil Antaki and myself. Our book "Les Lettres d'Alep", published by Harmattan, is a compilation of all the letters we wrote during the years of war enriched by extracts from interviews and texts. It is currently being printed and will be released in bookshops soon. In "The Letters of Aleppo", we painted a picture of the situation and relate the suffering of the displaced, the misery of the poor, the distress of the inhabitants and



the atrocity of the war; and we also describe our response to these tragedies through compassion, accompaniment, solidarity, and self-giving through the "Blue Marists".

A peace of justice and forgiveness

We are approaching Easter, the time to celebrate the death and resurrection of Christ.

We are all invited to pray the lord for the life he gives us "His PEACE";

a peace of justice and forgiveness; a peace that accepts the other as he is; a peace that extends a hand; a peace that refuses violence; a peace that is translated by gestures of mercy; a peace that touches the heart of men's stone heart to turn it into a heart of flesh; a peace that announces a civilization of love; a peace that realizes the will of god on our earth.

We wish you to live this peace, let it radiate through you, into our world.

BRAZIL: CHARISMA AND COMMITMENT IN THE BRASIL CENTRO-SUL PROVINCE

MEETING OF THE MARIST LAY YOUTH

On Feb. 17 and 18, 35 young people from 14 different cities of the Brasil Centro-Sur province met for the annual meeting of the young Marist laity in the city of Jaraguá do Sul.

During the two days of activities, the young people met to discuss the current reality of the lay groups, whose formation process has been taking place since 2016.

Regional groups of the province presented the proposals and ideas discussed.

This material, later, will serve as the basis for the creation of a document of the lay youth, which will guide the groups.

A youth work group will be created, which will be dedicated to the creation of that document together with the province until the end of 2018. The lay youth has many challenges, but their effort will also be great. In the end, the feeling is one of joy and union for what is to come, as affirmed by Welinton Trentin, of Joaçaba.



Trentin, of Joaçaba. "I left very happy because of what we did, shared and experienced (and) I think Champagnat is happy there in heaven to see that his promise is still alive in many hearts," he stated.

The challenges of the Young Laity are great and the effort of the young will be too. In the end, the feeling is one of joy and union for what is to come, as affirmed by Welinton Trentin, of Joaçaba.

GUATEMALA: WEAVING DREAMS

SED AND TVE DELEGATION IN AMÉRICA CENTRAL

From Feb. 4 – 17, Brothers Antonio Tejedor and Javier Salazar, representatives of SED, together with a delegation of four people from the Spanish television TVE that in charge of the “Pueblo de Dios” (People of God) programme, visited different works of the Marists in the América Central province, located in Guatemala and El Salvador.

TVE delegates Santiago Riesco, Sergio Rodríguez López, Antonio Usera and Julio Luquero, ventured into the Guatemalan towns of Santa Polonia, Chichicastenango (where the municipality of the K'iché Technological Institute (ITECK) is located), Panimaché Quinto Alto and Cobán to learn about the work of the Marists in the area.

These include the projects in which SED collaborates: the construction of a school and a clinic in Cobán (also one of the province’s solidarity campaigns), the home of orphaned



children of Santa Polonia, among others.

During their stay in El Salvador, they visited some of the 40 public centers that are part of the “Tejiendo Sueños” (weaving dreams) project, an initiative of the Marists that aims to improve the educational quality of poorer schools and those in the country’s periphery.

“Tejiendo Sueños” is responsible for developing formation for the talent

of teachers, schools of family education and coexistence with young people.

After several days of filming, the Brothers and the delegates of TVE highlighted that the Marist work continues to grow and is not only educating and evangelising young people and children, but also strengthening educational tools and promoting spaces to improve their social environment.

KIRIBATI: 33-YEAR-OLD MAKES FINAL VOWS IN THE INSTITUTE

PERPETUAL PROFESSION OF BR AMBEROTI NANTEI

Brother Amberoti Nantei, aged 33, took his final vows on Feb. 24 during a Mass celebrated at the Sacred Heart Cathedral in Tarawa Atoll, Kiribati.

The superior of the Pacific district, Br David McDonald, who is currently based in Auckland, New Zealand, received the vows on behalf of the general superior.

Other participants included the district’s Council members – Brothers Christopher Maney, Martin Pattison and Sefo Une, lay people as well as staff and students from St Louis High School.

“We brothers in Kiribati are deeply grateful and uplifted by all the support and encouragement we have been blessed with through Br Amberoti’s perpetual profession and look forward to working jointly



with our Champagnat lay Marists in creating new expressions of our future Marist mission here in Kiribati,” affirmed a press release from the district.

After the Mass, the welcoming speech of the principal of St Louis High School echoed the encouraging spirit of “new beginnings” present in the school this year.

BR VALDÍCER CIVA FACHI

APPOINTMENT FOR THE COLLABORATION FOR MISSION, INTERNATIONAL (CMI) SECRETARIAT

Br Valdícér Civa Fachi, from the Brasil Sul-Amazonia Province, was appointed last August as director of the secretariat of the Collaboration for Mission, International (Cmi). At the end of January, he arrived at the general house and, from July onwards, he will replace Brother Chris Wills, who has served as director since 2012.

Valdícér Civa Fachi was born on July 8, 1969, in the city of Arvorezinha, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. He is the son of Delvino Rossetto Fachi and Olieide Civa Fachi, and the fourth of seven brothers. He entered the Casa de Formação Marista in 1984, in Bom Princípio, cradle of the Marist presence in southern Brazil. He made his novitiate in the city of Passo Fundo in 1990 and 1991, before making his first religious profession on December 8, 1991 and his perpetual profession in 1997.

Fachi has a bachelor's degree in theology from the Pontifical University of Rio Grande do Sul (PUCRS) and is specialised in university pastoral theology from the Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, Colombia.

He also holds a degree in literature, Portuguese and English from the Universidade de Santa Cruz do Sul (UNISC). He studied mariology at the Marianum, in Rome.

He celebrated his apostolate in different areas: formator, teacher of religious and Portuguese education, pastoral coordinator in Marist schools, youth group advisor, provincial secretary, executive secretary of the União Marista do Brasil (UM-BRASIL), director of several schools, Provincial pastoral coordinator, coor-



inator of the inter American commission of mission of the Conferencia Interamericana de Provincias (CIAP) and member of the international mission commission. He was also a missionary in the Amazon region. Secretariat of the Collaboration for Mission, International (Cmi)

The Cmi secretariat was created in 2012 to respond to the call of the XXI General Chapter: "With Mary, go in haste to a new land!". This call was reinforced by the 2013 General Conference, by the 2014 Mission Assembly and by the 2015 International Marist Formation Colloquium. Today it gains new vigor with the message of the XXII General Chapter: "Journeying together as global family."

The mission of Cmi is to promote a better understanding and con-

sideration of internationality and intercultural way of living; living globalisation in an alternative way; and encouraging availability to the mission to respond to new demands, carrying forward the objectives of the General Council.

The vision of CMI is to be Marists without geographical, existential and bureaucratic boundaries. The international collaboration between the various Marist administrative units in the world is carried out through:

Institution of an international volunteer network

Support for the Ad Gentes Mission in the Marist District of Asia

Creation of new international, intercultural and interprovincial communities

Formation and communication of an international mentality among all Marists.

Institute of the Marist Brothers - General House

Piazzale Marcellino Champagnat, 2 - Rome, Italy - comunica@fms.it

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