



"WE STRONGLY CONDEMN THE WESTERN AGGRESSION AGAINST SYRIA AND THE SYRIANS"

THE LATEST NEWS FROM THE BLUE MARISTS

We want to share with you two events that took place during the past week. As you know, some countries carried out missile air strikes against Syria to punish her for allegedly using chemical weapons against the Duma enclave, occupied by terrorists of the "Army of Islam" (Jaysh al-Islam) for five years. We do not believe in this manipulation at all.

On the eve of the alleged chemical attack, the government reached an agreement with the rebels for its evacuation to Jarablous and the release of hundreds of people captured and imprisoned by the rebels for five years. The government had, in this way, won the battle – by liberating this enclave of terrorists who, for the past five years, had been throwing mortars over Damascus, killing hundreds of people and wounding them. It is absurd to believe that the Syrian government launched chemical weapons the day before (24h) of Duma's liberation, especially because it knew it was a red line for some countries. It would have been foolish for the government to use them, knowing that Syria would suf-



fer reprisals.

The government is anything but stupid. All the people in Syria are convinced that this case of chemical weapons is "fake news" and a great manipulation. We strongly condemn this western aggression against Syria and the Syrians who have suffered enough after seven years of war and who only wish to live normally and in peace.

New mission of the Blue Marists

The second event is a happy event. We started a new mission a week ago, a new project, a new act of solidarity. "Move" and well, we moved

again. We took over one of the 11 villages in the Tel Rifaat region, 50 km from Aleppo, where 200,000 displaced people, Kurdish Syrians, fled the despicable invasion of their region by the Turkish army. There are 800 families in this village who need food, sanitary products, mattresses, blankets, medical care, psychological support, attention and love.

We have been there three times in one week with approximately 20 of our volunteers to explore, assess needs, network and start our activities. Together with the Marist world, we are always moving towards a "new beginning" to "sow hope".

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

- Last weekend, Br Ernesto Sánchez, superior general, and Br Luis Carlos Gutiérrez, vicar general, visited Notre Dame de l'Hermitage in France.
- From April 16 – 19, Brother Libardo Garzón, economo general, is participating in a meeting of the International Council of Economic Affairs (CIAE) in the general house.
- From April 17 – 21, Brother Álvaro Sepúlveda, from FMSI, is participat-

ing in a formation and meeting seminar with the BICE network of Latin America in Buenos Aires.

- During this week, Brothers Óscar Martín, general councillor, and Tony Leon, director of the Brothers Today secretariat, are accompanying the International Commission Brothers Today in visits to the houses of formation of the East Asia province and the district of Asia, in the Philippines.

• Brother João Carlos do Prado, general councillor, is participating in a seminar on the General Chapter in Curitiba.

- From April 18 – 22, Brother Juan Carlos del Prado, general councillor, will participate in the reflection on the XXII General Chapter and on the implementation of the new Religious Organization of the Brasil Centro-Sul province, in Curitiba.

BLUE MARISTS PUBLISH BOOK ON SYRIA

The Blue Marists have published a book based on the letters written by Marist Brother Georges Sabé and Nabil Antaki, a Syrian gastroenterologist who chose to stay in the country when war broke out in March 2011.

Br Georges, Nabil and his wife Leyle, founded the "L'Oreille de Dieu" (The ear of God) association in 1986 that aimed to help the people most in need in the city. One year after the war began, in 2012, they changed the name to "Blue Marists," now made up of two Marist Brothers (Brothers Georges Sabé and Georges Hakim) and 80 lay volunteers, including Nabil.

The book, titled "Les lettres d'Alep" (The letters of Aleppo) is a series of letters written every couple of months to inform the Institute and



others abroad of the situation in Syria. In one of the letters, letter number 25, written on March 13, 2016, a volunteer named Rami asked Nabil why he insisted that they are a solidarity association and not a humanitarian organization.

"The answer is obvious," wrote Nabil. "For us, Blue Marists, the "beneficiaries" are not numbers on lists, they aren't virtual beings to be fed, housed and cared for. They have a name."

"Behind every name, there is a face, there is a human person with his past, often unhappy or bereaved, his dramas, his sufferings, his broken dreams, his

mortgaged future; a person who also has desires and projects."

Order this book through your book-seller on: <http://editions-harmattan.fr>.

Blue Marists

The Marists, both Brothers and Lay people that work in Aleppo are known with this name. They accompany the people that suffer all sorts of oppression and offer them, especially children and youth, gestures of solidarity that encourage them to overcome the difficulties and keep alive the Christian gift of hope. They are a group of 80 volunteers and hired collaborators, all coordinated by a team of Brothers and lay people. This group makes the third call of the General Chapter come true, Inspiring our creativity to be bridge-builders: "be agents of change, bridge-builders, messengers of peace, transforming the lives of young people through an education that integrates awakening faith and living by Gospel values."



- FMSI is promoting a support campaign to help the Blue Marists in Syria. If your local realities want to collaborate, you can see more details on the foundation's website: <https://fmsi.ngo/> or directly contact fmsi@fmsi-onlus.org.

NEWS IN BRIEF

CANADA

The diocese of Montreal, during the celebration of the World Youth Day, on March 24, awarded a prize to people who are dedicated to the mission of young people. Two Marist Brothers received the award: Réal Cloutier and René Mailloux.

MARIST OLYMPICS

The sporting event held at the Liceo Castilla de Burgos School welcomed some 1,200 people. The province of Compostela (Spain and Portugal) organises this event every year in one of its schools. Eleven schools were represented this year, competing in seven types of sports.

Also, in Córdoba, over 1,100 athletes from 85 teams from Jaén, Málaga, Granada, Sevilla, Huelva, Valencia and Córdoba will participate in the Maristiada 2018.

EL SALVADOR

From March 29 – April 1, Easter REMAR was held in the Marist retreat house El Hermitage. The aim was to promote the catechetical and liturgical experiences – centred on the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus – for young people of the Champagnat school and for Marist aspirants.

AUSTRALIA

A group of 28 Marists, mainly teachers and senior administrators from Australian Marist schools, will be in Rome from April 17-20 as part of a Pilgrimage which is organised each year by the Marist Association of St Marcellin. The group also includes four Brothers, one of whom comes from New Zealand and another from Melanesia. Their pilgrimage began with eight days in the Holy Land and will conclude with ten days in France visiting the Marist places and studying Marist spirituality and history. This is the twentieth year since the first such Australian Marist pilgrimage began.

AUSTRALIA, MELANESIA AND PACIFIC

MEETING OF OCEANIA'S COUNCIL AND COLLEGE OF LEADERS

The Oceania Council and the Oceania College of Leaders met in Auckland, New Zealand, from March 25 and 26 to develop six initiatives that answer the Calls of the 22nd General Chapter.

Aside from strengthening its network of the administrative units, the six other initiatives the region's leaders are currently working on are:

- Education Network, led by Benedict Tooming, Brother Terry Costello and Frank Malloy. They are actively exploring the probability of developing a school improvement programme for Melanesia and the Pacific, based on the experience of a similar programme developed by Australian Marists in Africa.



- Pacific Marist Schools Leaders Course – Part II Following the course for school leaders of Melanesia and the Pacific held at Lomeri, Fiji, in 2017, a second session will be held this month.
- Marists in Kiribati have been running the Early Childhood Centre for several months. In Melanesia, the District Council is exploring the possibility of creating another early childhood centre in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea.
- Financial Administration Network is made up of the bursars of the three administrative units of the Oceania region. Bursars from the Asia and Oceania regions will meet again this year, after their last meeting in February.

- Edges provides opportunities for the younger Brothers to consider community life, spirituality and future possible mission activities. There is an ongoing consultation process with the International Brothers Today Commission, younger Brothers across the region and with leaders of the Asia and Oceania regions.

- Lavalla 200>The Marist Learning Zone (MLZ) of the Lavalla 200> Mount Druitt community is running and will be launched officially on July 27.

- The Oceania Council endorsed the strategic plan for 2018 – 2020 of the Oceania Partnership Commission. The two major strategies are to continue to identify and develop future leaders across the regions and to identify the resources required to promote Marist mission. Dan Dungey, the chair of the OPC will be attend the Marist Asia Commissions meeting in April to develop stronger networks across the regions of Asia and Oceania.

- The leaders of the Oceania region are considering holding a Regional Assembly.

The Oceania Council and the Oceania College of Leaders will meet again in August through a video conference.

The Oceania region is made up of the Australia province and the Pacific and Melanesia districts. This includes 12 countries: Australia, Cambodia, East Timor, Fiji, Kiribati, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, American Samoa, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.

MARIST WORLD



France: Brothers Superior General and Vicar General in l'Hermitage



Jordan: Australia's Marist Association of St Marcellin Champagnat, Jerash



Lebanon
Fratelli Project, Rmeileh



Philippines: MAPAC and the International Commission of Brothers Today, Manila



Singapore: Meeting of the Commissions of Spirituality, Laity and Mission for Asia



Brazil: Meeting of the Marist fraternity of Nossa Senhora da Apresentação, Natal

VOCATION SCHOOL IN THE AMÉRICA SUR REGION

ENCOUNTER OF VOCATION LEADERS OF BRASIL CENTRO-NORTE

On April 3 and 4, a meeting of the provincial team of vocation leadership took place in the province of Brasil Centro-Norte, under the guidance of the vocation school of the region of América Sur.

This initiative of the América Sur region aims to be a project for the formation of Marist vocational leaders, and it already has its programme for the next three years. The working group, formed to implement the actions that involve vocational leadership in the América Sur region, will meet in May, in Porto Alegre, to discuss this issue among others.

During the meeting in the Brasil Centro-Norte province, each coordinator presented information on the region, and discussed the achievements and challenges of vocational leadership in the areas in which they act. They



also discussed strategic actions for the MCHFM and the coordination of evangelisation. They agreed that the Marist Youth Ministry and the Marist Solidarity Mission are the projects

that best help vocational leadership and make it relevant. The meeting was led by Brother Márcio Henrique Costa, provincial coordinator of vocational leadership.

PHILIPPINES: NOTRE DAME OF DADIANGAS UNIVERSITY

PERSONNEL GATHERED FOR A DAY OF DEEPENING MARIST LIFE

The school personnel of Notre Dame of Dadiangas University scheduled a day for Marist personnel formation on April 3. The agenda of the gathering included the sharing on the calls of the General Chapter, the laity in the life of the Institute, volunteering for Marists mission and nurturing Marist life in prayer and reflection sharing.

Brother Lindley H. Sionosa, the vice provincial, shared with around 40 participants highlights of the recently concluded 22nd General Chapter, its calls and the way forward. He also stressed the invitation to be contemplative listeners in our embrace of the Marist way of doing things.

The history of the inclusion of the laity in the life of the congregation of the Marist Brothers since the 18th General Chapter of 1985 down the line to the last 22nd General Chapter was presented by Elma Rafil. It allowed the participants to value the role of the laity in the life of the Institute. Elma stressed the importance of the laity in the life of the Church and that of the Marist missions. The overarching challenge for brothers and lay is how to work together as a "global family" in the spirit of communion and co-responsibility.

Brother Edgar Ceriales, the coordinator for the volun-



teer programme, shared an insightful message and a video that calls for generous service to mission and the challenge of making life meaningful by making a difference in the lives of those in need. Three among the participants expressed in earnest their desire to become Marist volunteers.

The whole day experience progressed in an atmosphere of prayer and reflection which concluded with the celebration of the Liturgy of the Word.

HAITIANS IN CHILE

RAFAEL ARIZTÍA INSTITUTE OPENS ITS DOORS TO IMMIGRANTS FROM HAITI

Around 150 Haitians received a Spanish language certificate after attending a course taught for the first time by a school in Quillota, Chile, as part of an initiative of Chilean Marists to welcome immigrants.

The Instituto Rafael Ariztía will teach the Spanish course again this year with 15 collaborators and will also offer immigrants workshops in health, emotional and employment support, laws and sports activities.

A blog of the Pastoral Familiar Instituto Rafael Ariztía, referring to the Spanish course, noted that "the support and commitment that our students also offered to this charity project was essential. They were always present in each class as assistants, collaborating in the welcoming and in attending our Haitian brothers."



According to the Marist blog, "Chile is a country that still does not welcome immigrants, especially Haitians, so our goal is to generate political and social tools so that this experience is a contribution both for our country and for immigrants."

"The changes in the economic scenario of some Latin American countries put Chile before an un-

foreseen scenario: the increase in immigration in our country - a situation that makes us wonder if we were prepared," he said.

"It is necessary to link the immigration facts with the different realities that caused it," he continued. "We work for them and we will continue doing so this 2018 and during the following years."

LEADERS FOR A GLOBAL FAMILY

Br Óscar Martín, GENERAL COUNCILLOR

During the Chapter in Rionegro, the brothers elected the superior general and his council. It is the leaders of the Institute who, during the next eight years, will put into practice the Institute's appeal: "Journeying together as a Global Family."

We invite members of the government to introduce themselves and tell us how the challenge of this new mission has been so far. Today we present the text written by Brother Óscar the province of Compostela, elected as general councillor.

Br Óscar Martín, general councillor

I am Spanish, born in Burgos and I am 51 years old. After my Marist formation in Arévalo, Burgos and Salamanca, my life has been focused on my mission as a teacher, tutor, pastoral leader...

I like teaching, and I like collegiate life. In addition to teaching, I was fortunate to be able to study philology first and theology later, and for that reason I have taught language, literature, and above all, religion. What I like the most is the work of tutoring and pastoral work with young people, who have been and are my passion.

I have also been blessed for having always lived in very fraternal and challenging Marist communities, and that has helped me a lot in my path. I was coordinator of the leadership in my province, and provincial. When I finished, I had the wonderful opportunity to go work at the Marist novitiate in Matola, Mozambique, where I was very happy, dedicated to that mission of formation and solidarity.

How did you experience the experience of your election?

It was an intense experience, full of nuances: of gratitude to the Brothers for their trust; of having me feel very intensely "Marist", very loved and with a deep belonging to this family that I love; of fear of the challenge of this new mission.

To those who asked me this during those days, I told them: it was the brothers and it was God who put me here. I trust them, in their support and in their closeness to this service, and to the Father.



How have you been experiencing until now your new life in the General House?

The change was not easy at the beginning. I was very happy in Compostela; and I was also very happy and committed to my mission in Mozambique... And I still miss it.

At the same time, the welcome that was given to the brothers, the good atmosphere we have created in the community of the general council, the trust and closeness of Brother Ernesto our superior general ... have facilitated the transition.

The structure is large and sometimes complex, but I believe in the community and in teamwork to serve the Marist Institute as well as possible; to serve all the brothers and laity who share Champagnat's dream.

Given the experience of the General Chapter, in your opinion, what should be the line of action of the Council for the next eight years?

The General Chapter itself has de-

finied the priorities very well: journeying as a global family. And, for that, let us build communities that are home and beacon of hope, re-discover a spirituality of presence and mercy that unifies our lives, build bridges and new fraternal relationships, multiply the close presence among the poorest and in the peripheries and take care of our common house.

There are many and strong challenges. Hopefully, we, the general government, will know how to encourage this path, being ourselves a true community and a team that enlightens. And that we can do so "with tenderness and courage", as the preparatory document of the synod of young people says speaking of Mary.

May she help us live this mission with these attitudes, with effective structures, a lot of transparency, service, and great closeness, as the Chapter asked us to do.



SRI LANKA: FIRST AND FINAL PROFESSIONS IN NEBOMBO

FIVE NEW BROTHERS AND FINAL PROFESSION OF BR JIJI DHASAN

A beautiful blue Sri Lankan morning greeted the people who came to Maris Stella College, Negombo to witness the first profession of Brothers Hettiarachchige Pradeep (Sri Lanka), Wang Peng (China), Xia Baoxuan (China), Rubel Nokrek (Bangladesh), Lê Danh Thuog (Vietnam); and the final profession of Brother Jiji Dhasan (India) as well as the renewal of vows of Brother Dulaj Fernando (Sri Lanka).

This sacred occasion was celebrated by the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Pierre Nguyen Van Tot.

With the young men representing different parts of the institute, the delegates for the superior general, receiving the vows were: Brothers Mervyn Perera (provincial of South Asia), Juan Castro (Marist District of Asia superior) and Óscar Martin (general councillor).

The celebration was enhanced by the music provided by the 12 first year novices, amongst whom were guitarists, a violinist and a flautist. Br Rod Thomson conducted the singing and provided the music on the keyboard.

During this ceremony, several beautiful symbols of the local culture were used. At the beginning of the celebration several participants lit the traditional Sri Lankan oil lamp to signify unity. On top of this lamp is the figure of a rooster, a symbol to connect the theme of a new dawn, a new beginning.



At the end of the ceremony, several key people were invited to the sanctuary to be honoured for their significance in the lives of the young brothers. These included the parents of Br Jiji, the provincial and district leaders, the formators and other important guests. They were wrapped in beautiful pieces of decorative Indian embroidered fabric.

With the different nationalities present on the sanctuary and amongst the congregation, the music and the symbols used, one can truly describe this day as one that reflects a global charismatic family.

BRAZIL: SEE, JUDGE AND ACT

INTERPROVINCIAL MEETING OF YOUTH COMMISSIONS

Representatives of young people from the three provinces of Brazil met from March 22 – 25 in Sao Paulo to encourage dialogue between them so that they can expand their dreams of being better represented within their own province.

Eight representatives from the Brasil Centro-Norte province, five from the Brasil Centro-Sur province (PMBCS) and two from the Brasil Sul-Amazonia province attended. Marists specialised in the ministry of the provincial teams accompanied the young people who contributed to the work.

Friday's work, based on the "see-judge-act" method, took a look at the progress of each province and participants reflected on the role and objectives of a youth commission.

On Saturday, during the mo-

ment of "judging", the young people received formation on the traditional campaign of the Church of Brazil of the time of Lent, which this year addressed the question of overcoming violence and promoting a culture of peace.

In the afternoon, the young people visited the Arsenal da Esperança,

a structure that welcomes 1,500 homeless and immigrants who need a place to stay.

On Palm Sunday, the day of "acting", participants reflected on their dreams of new horizons for Marist Brazil.

Based on their three-day experience, they thought out ways of building a new dream and of journeying together.

They expressed a desire for more spaces and moments of sharing like this encounter, in which they were able to exchange experiences, in order to strategically establish joint formation, incidents in various social spaces and, perhaps, a national structure of youth representation.

In this link, you can read the full chronicle of the meeting: <https://bit.ly/2JCqBiA>.



NAVIGATING VOCATIONAL PATHWAYS FOR MARISTS OF CHAMPAGNAT

NEW PRESENCE COMMUNITY IN THE MARIST DISTRICT OF ASIA

A New presence community of the district of Asia faces the daunting challenge of raising awareness of vocations for both brothers and laity in a country where Catholics comprise a mere 6% of the population. Taking the responsibility of actualizing the calls of the recent General Chapter for greater communion and co-responsibility between brothers and lay, the local community from that country invited the Secretariat of Laity to visit different realities, share resources, and explore pathways of "seed-sowing" and nurturing Marist life in the area.

The New presence community invited the co-director of the Secretariat of the Laity, Agnes S. Reyes, for a visit from March 4 – 6. The visit was focused on several fundamental areas of concern along with the intent of



navigating pathways of developing Champagnat Marists:

- An update for the local Marists on the decisions and implementation plans of the Secretariat of Laity, following the calls of the General Chapter.
- A discussion on an alternative approach to build the lay vocation due to the little Marist historical presence in that country.
- An audio-conference with the

Marist laity around the country for their suggestions.

- The New Presence Community is developing a discernment program for young people which assists them in discovering their vocation. Two young men are currently part of this pilot programme.
- A discussion on the significance of current programmes, such as the CMMF and the Marist Youth Movement, and their place in the developing model of partnership.

"This provided a different perspective, especially in the area of shared formation opportunities for those following their vocation as a brother or those who believe they are called to be lay Marists," Agnes said. "Brief though it was, the visit proved to be a catalyst in charting a future of possibilities."

BRASIL SUL-AMAZONIA PROVINCE

MARIST MEMORIES PROJECT

The second edition of the project Marist Memories: Stories of Love and Life was launched during an event that took place in Viamão, province of Brasil Sul-Amazônia. The meeting was attended by brothers and Marist collaborators.

Through mini-documentaries, the initiative rescues important passages from the life of the Marist Brothers and addresses issues such as vocation, mission, faith and legacy. During the launch, videos of this second stage of the project were shown, with interviews of 10 consecrated people working in their local context, highlighting experiences and memories that characterise the mission of educating and promoting life.

For Gabriela do Carmo, museologist and member of the Marist Heritage and Spirituality Center (Cepem), sharing the documentaries with the characters themselves is a demonstration of respect and affection.

"In addition to paying tribute to the life stories of the



brothers, the initiative offers opportunities to rescue and give value to the memory of the institution in different ways, in different spaces," he said.

With the two stages, the Marist Memories already has 20 mini-documentaries. You can access the digital platform of the project and read several stories. <http://maristas.org.br/memoria/>

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