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MARIST NEWS

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Promotion of Marist life and mission in Africa

ANNUAL MEETING OF THE AFRICAN MISSION COMMISSION

The African Mission Commission (AMC) held its annual meeting in Nairobi, Kenya, from 1st to 5th July, 2019.

Those present, from left to right (in the picture) were Br. Mark Omede (Secretariat for Education and Evangelization – Rome), Br. Francis Jumbe (Province of Southern Africa), Michel Maminiaina (Link Provincial and Provincial of Madagascar), Br. Michel Longena Bokolu (Province of Africa Centre-East), Br. John Kusi-Mensah (District of West Africa) and Br. Ifeanyi Mbaegbu (Province of Nigeria) – the AMC President.

A number of issues were looked at during the meeting, with a focus on the core initiatives that were approved by the Conference of Superiors of Africa in line with the Commission's strategic plan for the African region.

The Commission has made a significant progress on a number of planned activities, namely:

- a pilot project for the second phase of the New Horizon in Malawi is ongoing which will be followed by a wider project for the whole Province of Southern Africa that is to commence very soon;
- the plan to organize Marist Youth Ministry Workshop to develop a manual for the region is still in progress;
- communication is promoted in the region through the production of two editions of a regional Newsletter between now and March 2019.

It is the ardent desire of AMC to see to it that all planned activities are successfully implemented because it is for the promo-



tion of Marist life and mission in Africa. It is for this reason that the Commission requests the Superiors of Administrative Units (AUs) to attend to the following:

- appoint Children's Rights and Safeguarding Committee in each School (where this is not yet in place);
- create a regional Communication network using the existing secretaries in the AUs;
- set up a Provincial/District communication team for effective flow of information within the AUs;
- revive the first phase of the New Horizon by inviting those who participated at the workshop to continue the implementation of the outcome of the workshop;
- Give priority to MYM in the AUs.

general administration

■ Brother Ernesto Sánchez, Superior General and General Councillors João Carlos do Prado and Ben Consigli will take part in the Chapter of the Province of the Hermitage in France from 18 to 22 July.

■ Brother Álvaro Sepúlveda, of the Province of Santa María de los Andes, finishes his work this week concerning the promotion of Children's Rights by FMSI. He will follow his formation in Barcelona and then continue his commitment to this mission.

■ During this week, Brother Josep Maria Soterias, General Councillor, takes part in the retreat of the Brothers of the Province of the United States.

■ From 13 to 19 July, the "European Course of Accompaniment for Vocational Discernment" was held at the General House, with 21 participants from the 5 provinces of Marist Europe.

■ The Marist Mission area of the General Administration, made up of the secretariats of Education and Evangelisation, Solidarity, FMSI and the Department of Cmi meets this week in Santa Marinella, on the occasion of the community meeting. In addition to the directors, Brother Luis Carlos, Vicar General and Councillors Ben Consigli and Ken McDonald are taking part.

GROUPS VISIT THE MARIST PLACES.



Ibérica Province



Brazil Centre-Sul



Canada



United States



Paraguay, Cruz del Sur

Strategic Plan of the General Administration

THE VICAR GENERAL TALKS ABOUT ANIMATION, LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE OF THE INSTITUTE

The General Government completed the work of the General Administration's Strategic Plan for Animation, Leadership and Government (2017-2025) last September. The document, the result of much debate and collaboration with the different sectors of the Institute, was presented to the Provincials in March.

In June, during the traditional "week of collaboration" of the General Council with the directors of the Secretariats and Departments of the General House, the first evaluation of the application of this plan in the life of animation of the Institute was carried out. The Strategic Plan will appear in the next number of FMS Message, in September.

In the [video](#), Brother Luis Carlos Gutiérrez, Vicar General, speaks about the Strategic Plan and its implementation. On YouTube,



you can choose the subtitles of the video, in one of the 4 languages of the Institute.

MÉXICO OCCIDENTAL

Ernesto Vital, from the Province of México Occidental, completed his studies in Education and Institutional Development in Guadalajara and has been a member of the Dame-Marie community in Haiti since last week.

FMSI

The General Council appointed the new Board of Directors for the Marist Foundation of the General Administration. It will consist of: Allen Sherry (Australia), Analía María de Luján Ruggeri (Argentina), Br. Funsá Birkem Pascal, FMS (Cameroon), Inmaculada Maillo (Spain) and Br. José Libardo Garzón Duque (Colombia). The first meeting of the new council will take place in September.

HOUSE OF PRAYER, NEW ZEALAND

The Pacific District has established a house of prayer in Onehunga (Auckland). The Oasis Community aims to provide space for prayer, reflection and learning, enabling Marists in the 'Pacific area' to pay more attention to spirituality, be it personal or in community.

GERMANY

On July 1, the Furth Council of Maristen Solidarität International met with Brother Rick Carey, director of FMSI. The Marists of Champagnat in Germany raise funds which are applied to various international projects promoted by the Marist Foundation of the General House.

UNITED STATES

This week a group of around 40 Brothers is gathered in Long Branch, New Jersey for the 2019 Brothers' Retreat. The theme of this year's retreat is "Wherever we go... Today, Tomorrow, Together" and focuses on the revised Marist Brothers Constitutions and the Rule of Life. Brothers Josep Maria Soteras (General Council) and Seán Sammon (ex-Superior General) present the daily reflections.

Marists who cross borders**NOVICES FROM SOUTH AMERICA START THEIR COMMUNITY EXPERIENCE IN THE REGION**

On the first week of July three second year novices from the Champagnat Regional Novitiate of Cochabamba, Bolivia, travelled to other countries in the Region to take part in community and apostolic experiences outside their novitiate community. The novices who left for two and a half months are: Luciano Taminski (Brasil Sul-Amazônia), who will be in Paraguay, in the Community of Horqueta; Luiz Carlos Lima (Brasil Centro-Norte) will be in Peru, in the Community of Puerto Maldonado; and Rafael Reinaldo Rodriguez Fernandes (Brasil Centro-Norte) will be in Chile, in the Community of Las Compañías in La Serena.

After thanking the communities for welcoming the novices, Brother Isidro Azpeleta Sebastián, Master of Novices, said that in the Regional Novitiate of Champagnat in Cochabamba "young people are trained to be available. Not young Marists for a country or for a Province. But rather novices and brothers for the Institute, for the whole Congregation, for the Church, for the world. This is how in the heart of the novices there is a positive sense of availability".

After the first semester, the first year novices have 10 days of community experience during the winter holidays, and 15 days of pastoral experience at the

end of the year.

Referring to life in the novitiate, Br. Isidro explained that there is a balance between the reality of the Novitiate and an open house situation, where "catechists and group leaders, as well as young people in vocational accompaniment, friends and young neighbours are present in the Novitiate house or in other places, together with the novices, to experience prayer, days of spirituality, formation workshops, vocational experiences, retreats, sports, etc...".

At present the Community consists of 3 brothers formators and 12 novices. 3 novices in 2nd year and 9 novices in 1st year.

The team of formators is made up of Brothers Isidro Azpeleta Sebastián (Santa María de los Andes), Rubens José Falqueto (Brasil Centro-Norte) and Sebastião Antonio Ferrarini (Brasil Sul-Amazônia).

The first year novices are: Evanilson Ferreira Lopes, Jefferson Bonomo, Jose Elizaldo Araujo Da Silva (Brasil Centro-Norte), Nathan da Costa Cardoso dos Santos, Bruno Marcondes, Carlos Henrique de Oliveira (Brasil Centro-Sul), Danavan Farias Machado (Brasil Sul-Amazônia), Víctor Salvador Colmán Martínez (Paraguay, Cruz del Sur) and Gilber Galarza Pérez (Bolivia, Santa María de los Andes).

India: La Valla Study Centre Project Evaluation Meeting, Trichy

Ecuador
Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family

Australia
Marist Youth Ministry - Sydney



Mexico: Bachillerato Champagnat de la Montaña in Potoichán

Spain
Formation for interiority in Castillo de Maimón

Brazil
Tijuca, Rio de Janeiro

Protecting children concerns everyone

MARIST ACTIVITIES TO RAISE AWARENESS OF CHILDREN'S RIGHTS IN THE DISTRICT OF MELANESIA

During his stay in Bougainville, one of the islands of Papua New Guinea, Brother Andrew Litanga, a child rights advocate from Melanesia District, held a workshop on child rights and protection on 21 June.

More than 80 pre-school and primary school teachers were trained at MariMari House, Arawa, on child abuse, duty of care, child-centred approach and the Lukautim Pikinini Act (the child protection document for Papua New Guinea).

Brother Andrew noted that everyone was greatly interested in the subject and that "many mentioned that this was the first time they had heard such an argument

and that during their participation they had learned new things which they had not known about children's rights and protection". He added: "During the presentation, I helped the audience to better realise and understand the fundamental rights of the individual. That all students have equal rights in school, regardless of their status.

Following his visit to the schools, Br Andrew also presented in mid June at St Joseph Mabiri School, a Conference on the Rights and Protection of Children under the title "We are all equal".

Brother Andrew was also at St Michel's School in Santo from 17-21 June, work-

ing with students and teachers to raise awareness of children's rights. The activities carried out in the District to promote the rights of the child are in tune with the request of the General Councillors, Brothers Ben and Joseph Maria, who during their visit in March of this year, asked the District to draft or revise their child protection document.

"The district's child protection document was published in 2012 and we decided to revise it in 2018. The District Child Protection Document - already revised - provides general guidance to promote and protect the rights and welfare of all children in our care in the District of Melanesia," concluded Br. Andrew.

Marist bursars

FORMATION PROGRAM ON STRATEGIC PLANNING AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT IN PHILIPPINES

Twenty Marist Brothers, Sisters and Lay from Africa, Asia, Oceania and the Americas recently underwent a formation program in Philippines on Strategic Planning & Financial Management with the theme, Economy at the Service of the Charism and Mission. This program was tailored for people involved in the economic management of their respective Administrative Units. The learning sessions took place from May 20 to June 8, 2019.

The training was part of the operating plan of the Economato and integrated with the sustainability project of Africa and Asia. In January 2018 there was a meeting in Curitiba, Brazil to prepare the course for Portuguese and Spanish speaking provinces (took place in October 2018) and in August 2018 another formally planned meeting by the team composed of Br. Libardo Garzón, Econome General, Br. Devasiri Fernando of the South Asia province, Br. Francisco Baeza of the PACE province, Br. Lindley Sionosa of the East Asia province and the Management Team of the Business College lead by Dean Alfie Maria R. Custodio Ph D.

The program in Philippines started with the Review of the Accounting System & International Accounting Standards which focused on the accounting information system (AIS) and how it functions and



is applied in the organization. Strategic Planning Tools and Methods followed which is designed to cover the fundamentals needed for effective strategic planning and implementation. It also provided strategic analysis tools and techniques, considering the factors which help or hinder effective strategy implementation, control, and evaluation. This part also covered Overcoming the Challenges of Strategy Implementation and Funding Processes and Requirements.

The session on Governance and Team Leadership involved discussions on how leaders become more adept at developing employees, inspiring and guiding teams, managing change, and effectively influencing stakeholders across an organization while the sessions on Financial Management covered the strategic utilization of financial resources available to the

firm for managerial decision making. The program included a discussion on how to develop appropriate financial strategies which cover cash flow management techniques, working capital management, and capital budgeting. Audit as part of Governance was also discussed, integrating risk management processes to governance, adoption, and application of standards, techniques, and procedures in internal control and the integration of audit and risk management as an influence on management's decision making. The learning sessions was given by the professors and invited lecturers of the Business College of Notre Dame of Dadiangas University with regular workshops in the Conference Hall of the Oblates of Notre Dame Mission Center, in General Santos City, Philippines. There were technical visits in different organizations to provide the participants with a wide vision of management (both financial and strategic, practical and technology-based) and acting in different contexts. Each of the participants was given the chance to discuss his/her exit paper (Capstone Project) to a panel for comments and present to the plenary via presentation at the end of the course.

On the last day of formation, the participants, in a formal Completion Ceremony received certificates of attendance and completion from the university.



Syria and Lebanon

HOPE IS BEING BORN AGAIN AMONG THE RUINS

In the last edition of the magazine "[Maristas Século XXI](#)", of the Spanish Marist Conference, we find an article that affirms that 'Hope is being born again among the ruins' in Syria and Lebanon, with some very important testimonies. We decided to translate the text and make it available to the whole Marist world. Below is the central text published in the magazine.



A couple of months ago I had the chance to visit Syria and Lebanon in a joint team of people from the Marist NGO SED and the television station RTVE. We had three objectives: meet those in charge of the Blue Marists of Aleppo, Syria, and of the Fratelli Project in Rmeileh, Lebanon; to see first-hand the progress of humanitarian projects supported by SED; and film images and interviews for the RTVE program Pueblo de Dios (People of God). All in all, it was a tough experience but a personally enriching one.

Fernando Dominguez, Mediterranean delegate for the NGO SED

“My beloved Aleppo...”

These were the opening words of Marist Brother George Sabe in a message of hope when he was interviewed on TV in front of one of the thousands of buildings in Aleppo in a state of ruin as a result of the war in Syria. Aleppo is the second most important city in Syria after the capital, Damascus. Before the war, 4 million people lived there. Today, after almost eight years of bloodletting, there are only 2 million left. There are suburbs that have been completely bombed out and, two years after the Jihadists were driven out of Aleppo, according to Br George, “corpses are still being found amongst the rubble”. Just looking at these ruins enables one to understand why half the population has either died or fled, and how, in the latter case, they have ended up either displaced or refugees. The Marist community in Aleppo mobilised itself right from the start of the war to look after the most vulnerable people, the displaced and refugees. They, brothers and lay volunteers, set up the Blue Marists, with their distinctive blue apparel. From 2012 their mission has focussed on distributing food (with special attention to milk powder for babies) and potable water, and caring for civilians wounded in the war. They have also organised selling for minors whose “right to education” has been snatched from them.

From December 2012 to February 2019 SED sent the Blue Marists around 300,000 €, coming from campaigns in Marist schools, parishes, individuals, municipalities, as well as all the Marist Provinces of Europe, all in order to make a modest contribution to these initiatives in humanitarian assistance.

Human and social rebuilding in Syria

With the driving out of the Jihadists from Aleppo in December 2016, the Blue Marists began to refocus their work. Firstly, they changed the base of their operations when necessary: they not only maintained their involvement with displaced people in Aleppo itself, but began to collaborate in the Ref-



ugee Camp at Sahba (some 40 km from Aleppo). Secondly, they centred their efforts on human and social rebuilding in Aleppo, in parallel to the reconstruction of buildings that the government was taking up little by little. Human rebuilding includes education for peace, living together and reconciliation, as well as counselling for minors. Social rebuilding involves training and support in entrepreneurship to foster the growth of small businesses that, in their turn, can generate jobs that will keep young people in the city and avoid their having to leave the country. SED, to the best of its possibilities, is collaborating with the Blue Marists in this process of human and social rebuilding of Syria.

“We are going to look after the kids that nobody else is working with ...”

The war in Syria has left more than 500,000 dead and more than 12 million displaced, many of whom have ended up as refugees in neighbouring countries. Lebanon was the second destination of our trip, where we wanted to know the other half of the story: what has happened to the people who have seen themselves forced to abandon Syria because of the war. With a population of almost 4 million people, Lebanon has welcomed a million and a half Syrian refugees (450,000 of them minors). In 2015 the congregations of the Marist Brothers and the De la Salle Brothers set up the Fratelli Project to care for the neglected children in Lebanon. In a television interview, Brother Miquel Cubeles recalled the mission that led him to this country, “We are going to look after the kids that nobody else is working with”. This statement is a true reflection of the reality. Every day a small fleet of two mini-buses and a 9-seater head off to the Zahrani Camp, to the vertical shelter alongside the Sidon hospital, to the “Pepsi” shelter in Sarepta and the Abra shelter to pick up Syrian kids for school at Rmeileh.

I had the chance previously to visit the old Marist College of Rmeileh (near Sidon), a set of buildings abandoned during the war in Lebanon and which was showing signs of ageing and lack of use. I have to admit that it was real joy to come back today, 10 years later, to see it full of children and young people who have seized the chance (or right) to be in the Fratelli Project. More than 800 children and young people, Syrian refugees, attend school each day at Rmeileh under 40 teachers in two sessions, morning and afternoon. They are provided with school transport, breakfast or afternoon tea, classes in basic subjects,

language lessons, computer lessons and tutoring. SED has collaborated throughout the 3 years of this small miracle of Fratelli, sending 50,000 € and two international volunteers, conscious all the while that, as Brother Miquel says, “250 more schools like Rmeileh are needed to take care of the 250,000 Syrian minors in Lebanon who are not attending school.”

“Hope can be born in the ruins ...”

Traipsing through the ruins of Aleppo or witnessing the ruined lives of those who are living rough in camps and shelters around Sidon, one can easily lose heart in contemplating the wicked deeds of humankind. Yet, the courage and zest for life of the refugee population, and the dedication of the Blue Marists and the Brothers of the Fratelli Project, make the words of Brother George Sabe ring true, “Hope can be born in the ruins”.



Testimonials

Dalia Said, head of the support project for displaced people in the Al Shahba camp

The 25 volunteers in this project have heard the cry of these people. Our presence in the Al Shahba camp in the region of Tell Rifaat, some 27 km from Aleppo, and the help we offer have taught us the meaning of the word “displaced”. We feel their grief, we feel the human crisis that they are living through. The relationship that we have formed with one of them carries a responsibility since we feel called to bring them hope and give them back their dignity.

The Blue Marists are the voice of the voiceless. They are the hand reaching for an outstretched hand. Yours is the

love that makes people feel safe, that gets close to anyone in need. Your humanitarian mission is grounded in your faith since it truly is based on love.

Joseph Tobji, Archbishop

The war raging in Syria has been hard on its people and unjust. Its consequences have been terrible for the country and its people. Many Christians have emigrated for a variety of reasons: war, the economic situation, and many other factors. Young people have almost completely disappeared and this represents an enormous loss for the Church and the country.

We pray to God to convert the hearts of those with decision-making powers and those who are enriching themselves through the war. Nothing more. Enough!

This is our shout, our shout to the whole world: No more war! From the heart of Aleppo and the heart of the Maronite cathedral which is the symbol of the Christian presence in Aleppo, we ask all who come to see us to work for peace and support all the initiatives for peace to reign in our country and the whole world.

Navil Antaki, doctor

When the war began, we changed our name to be “Blue Marists”. Our slogan is “To stand in solidarity with those most in need to alleviate human suffering and sow hope”.

As the Blue Marists, we have initiated support projects for people who have been displaced: health services, the distribution of milk powder for the children, services to displaced families in a camp

outside the city of Aleppo. What guides us is wanting to sow hope in the hearts of the people, to keep on living. This is our mission: to help people live in peace, in safety and love. War can destroy the Syrian people and hope can be lost. We want to sow peace, provide opportunities for the people.

Director of the Al Shahba camp

This camp has been in existence since July 2016 when it was home to more than 260 families. It was bombed and

the number of families fell to 160. One year passed. The tents were getting old and basic services were no longer available. There was a shortage of food as well.

Gradually, from August 2018 things started to improve. The tents were replaced and the camp ground re-organised. New families arrived. With the help of the local authorities we were able to provide essential services such as food, electricity (7 hours a day) and water, supplied by UNICEF.

Now we have what we need thanks to the bosses of the local camps: they provide what they can get hold of for the families in the camp.

The Blue Marists distribute blankets, warm clothing and fuel for the stoves. Also, they provide health care a few times a month and other services like video programs, a library for the kids, setting up larger tents for gatherings, awareness programs for women and children on hygiene, health, illnesses and education.

Spain: Widening dreams

MORE THAN A HUNDRED SED VOLUNTEERS WORKING IN 17 COUNTRIES TO HELP THOSE MOST IN NEED

Some 120 Spanish volunteers have travelled to 17 different countries – starting from June this year – through the Spanish Marist NGO, SED, in support of the Right to Education in Africa, Latin America and some countries in Asia and Europe.

The countries where the volunteers are involved in the 2019 work-mission camps this summer (in Europe) are:

Benin, Bolivia, Colombia, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Guatemala, India, Italy, Kenya, Lebanon, Mozambique, Paraguay, Peru, Rwanda, Romania, Zambia and South Africa.

Preparation for and promotion of volunteering are among the main activities of



the impoverished settings where they are stationed. During their experience of volunteering, the people collaborate in projects that local organisations and communities are working on in the fields of education, health, focus on children and women, and community development. The website (<http://www.tugranodearena.org>) contains personal testimonies from the SED volunteers.

SED. According to the NGO, volunteering is understood as a lifestyle, working for peace and development through education and solidarity. SED volunteers are key agents of social transformation whose witness encourages change in

SED is just one of many Marist entities encouraging volunteering. Within the General Administration the Department of Collaboration for Mission, International (Cmi) conducts a Program for Marist Interprovincial Volunteering.



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