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MARIST NEWS

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Greeting from Brother Superior General to the Institute in Times of Crisis by COVID-19

MARY OF THE “YES” ENCOURAGES AND ACCOMPANIES US

Hoy, en este “especial” 25 de marzo, nos anima el recordar y celebrar el “sí” de María dado en la Anunciación. Este año, la celebración puede tener un significado particular para cada uno de nosotros y para el mundo entero ante el momento que vivimos de Pandemia por la veloz difusión del COVID-19.

Today, on this “special” March 25, we are encouraged by remembering and celebrating Mary’s “YES” given at the Annunciation. This year, such a celebration has a unique meaning for each one of us and for the whole world in the face the rapid spread of the COVID-19.

Clearly, it is a time of uncertainty and fear. These last weeks have been a time of great pain for those who have suffered or are suffering from the disease, many to the point of death and also an unimaginable pain for those relatives who cannot accompany their loved ones in their illness, or in their last moments or even at their funeral.

Italy, where we find those brothers and lay people who are at the service of the General Administration, as well as several Marist communities and ministries, has until now been one of the countries most affected by the pandemic. A similar situation is occurring in other countries of Europe and around the world. At present, many of the countries where the Institute is present have been affected by the crisis. I am pleased to



see the various positive reactions in the Provinces and Districts seeking to collaborate with society, governments and the whole world to aid those who are at great risk. Many of us are self-quarantining in our local communities or with our families, working to avoid

either being infected or to avoid being agents of contagion. This situation is presented to us as a burden yet, at the same time, as an opportunity. I am sure that we all have received daily brainstorms and messages (sometimes, I don’t know if it is all too much) offering us creative ways to live this present reality. Today, I think of Mary, that young woman from Nazareth who was put in a situation of surprise, of fear in the face of the unexpected and the unknown... wondering what this new situation, this new reality would be like. And yet, after the encouraging words, “for nothing is impossible with God”, she gives her YES: “Let it be done to me according to your word” (cf. Lk 1:28). She then, “got up and left quickly...”. (Cf. Luke 1:39). In the face of uncertainty and fear, there was faith, trust, passion for God and for humanity...

This scene of the Annunciation offers us three interesting steps that perhaps may encourage us to respond to the crisis in the way of Mary. At first, like Mary, we sense the doubt, the uncertainty, and feel the fear, and we ask God, “How? Why all this?” Then, we recognize that we are small in God’s hands and we trust in Him. Let it be done! And finally, we get down to work collaborating where we can, serving others.

It is difficult to predict what the future holds as a result of all that is being experienced amidst this pandemic. Just as there are forecasts of economic and societal crises, there are, at the same



time, very positive lessons to be learned in line with familial and social harmony as well as ecology and solidarity. We are a world with a connection far beyond the imagined, and that connection will have to be the strength needed to react as a global world family, seeking the good of all. While we are correctly told these days to distance ourselves physically for our own safety and for the safety of others, we should always keep in mind that this distancing seeks health and not selfish protection. Therefore, on another level, the call for social distancing links us and brings us closer together as a human family. We recognize that we are all connected. Like Mary, in the face of uncertainty and fear, we need faith, trust, and passion for God and for humanity, as solid foundations to go forward. From our moments of reflection and prayer, let us discover the new learning that this experience is offering us.

We recently held the annual meeting of Provincials and District Superiors in Rome. This year's theme focused on "care", and by all accounts, the gathering went very well. The great majority of our brothers have already been able to return to their Provinces or Districts, and almost all have spent or are spending a period of quarantine for the good of all. I thank all of them for their positive, faith-filled attitude and the initiatives that are being taken in their AUs to support the current situation. And I also appreciate the responses, gestures and solidarity of all the Champagnat Marists throughout the world. Let us pay special attention to the elderly in our communities and in our families. If any of us experience contagion and illness, let us consider the sick person as a blessing, as Champagnat told us, and let us give that person all our

fraternal attention and care. While abiding by the necessary medical protocols, may our attitudes and responses to those who are ill be both evangelical and Marist.

During these days, I also remember with special affection those of you –brothers and lay Marists--who are living the mission in international communities and projects or in provinces or countries far from your family and loved ones. Mary of the "YES" encourages and accompanies us in these difficult moments of uncertainty and pain. Our Good Mother holds us by the hand. Today, we know her as a loving mother and as a sister, as a companion on our journey and in our suffering, and a companion of all the people of God. With her and Saint Marcellin, let us live this special Lent in an attitude of prayer, united in communion with so many people throughout the world who are more directly victims of this pandemic. Let us pray in communion with the leaders of our countries and of the Church, so that we all have the wisdom that comes from the Spirit to act and respond according to God's will. Let us keep in our prayer the medical professionals, the many religious and priests, and so many others who are at the service of the sick. We join with Pope Francis who, in the Eucharistic celebration of these days, is keeping these various groups of people in mind and inviting us to care attentively for each other, especially the sick.

Receive my fraternal greeting and embrace, along with the greeting and embrace of the General Council and the General Administration.

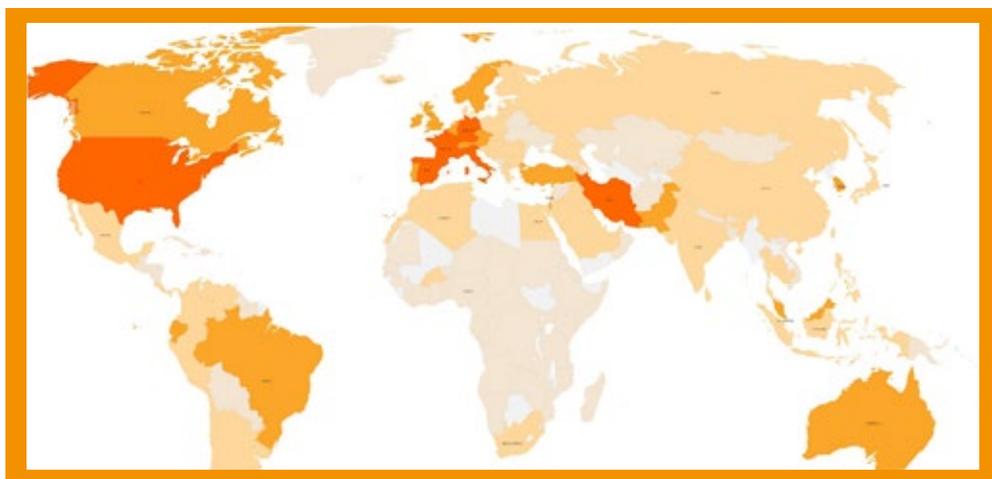
Br. Ernesto Sánchez Barba
 Superior General
 March 25, 2020

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CORONAVIRUS DISEASE (COVID-19) PANDEMIC

COVID-19 is a global challenge which mainly affects the most vulnerable. The Marist Institute, a global charismatic family that works to accompany thousands of children and young people in their educational journey, is actively involved with educators and students at this very special time.

The Marist Administrative Units and educational centres are taking several initiatives. Some examples are gathered in our site, in that link: <https://champagnat.org/en/maristas-covid19/>. If you wish to share what you are doing as an Administrative



Unit or Marist Centre, you can send your proposal to comunica@fms.it

SYRIA

LETTER FROM ALEPPO NO 38: NO, THE WAR IS NOT OVER

Me hubiera gustado darles buenas noticias... De hecho, hace casi un mes, el 16 de febrero de 2020, Alepo fue finalmente liberada por completo. La autopista, la famosa M5 fue reabierto, el aeropuerto internacional acogió, después de ocho años de cierre, el primer avión civil. Los alepinos estaban celebrando la liberación...

Dear friends,

I would have liked to give you some good news ... Indeed, almost a month ago, on February 16, 2020, Aleppo was finally completely liberated. The highway, the famous M5 was re-opened, the international airport welcomed, after eight years of closure, the first civilian aircraft. The Aleppins celebrated the liberation....

On that day, I wrote in my notebook: "Hope is now, it is not in the distant future, it is now."

I believed like many Syrians that peace was knocking on our door...

Unfortunately, that breeze of fresh air was soon replaced by an asphyxiating desperation.

Turkey has launched an operation in Syria to protect the terrorists. The Syrian army moves towards Idlib while retaking the villages which were under the control of the Al Nosra front.

The main M5 high is again cut off. The fights are raging. Hundreds of young people are losing their lives.

And I wonder:

What's going on in my country? Why do Westerners treat the jihadists as terrorists when they arrive in their countries, and when the Syrian government tries to eliminate terrorism in Syria, these same Westerners talk about a humanitarian crisis?

Why does the Turkish government allow itself the right to push back the Syrian army which is on its own territory? Why do young people have to die to defend their country from foreign aggression?

As Syrians, do we have the right to decide our fate? Are we puppets in the hands of the great powers without having a say?

Who will bring back to the parents of martyrs their children who fell on the battlefield?

And last week, a meeting in Moscow decided on a cease-fire and a reopening of the M5 and M4 motorways (it links Aleppo to Latakia).

Will this cease-fire resist the violations of the armed groups?

The forgotten of Idlib

The Holy Father invites us to act in favor of the "forgotten of Idlib".

But who are the "forgotten of Idlib"? Are they mainly the thousands of families who are currently displaced to flee the fighting or are they also the thousands of Christian and



Muslim families retained by the jihadists of the Al Nosra front and who, for more than 8 years, have prevented them from living with dignity?

I think of all these families from the villages of (KNAYEH, YACOUBIEH, JDAIDEH AND GHASSANIEH), who had to flee because of the terrorists who occupy their villages. Those who stayed were forced to share part or all of their homes with armed foreigners?

Tell us who are “the forgotten of Idlib”?

Are they the dead cities of northern Syria, archeological entirely Christian cities but plundered and destroyed by thieves in the name of democracy and freedom? If it is true that hundreds of thousands of families fled the war, the real reason should be sought. The war has transformed people in search of peace and prosperity, to displaced and forgotten people. In few days, once again, we will remember this fateful date of March 15, 2011 when it all started.

And the war is not over...

It continues announcing to us bad news every day that kills the seeds of hope that keep us alive. Don't forget that we are under embargo. An embargo that affects the population on a daily basis. An embargo that impoverishes the poorest. An embargo that makes us people of beggars. We need your friendship, your solidarity and your support to explain the suffering of our people. Your prayer supports our

daily life, but your action with decision- makers is important. Tell them that we are people worthy of living humanely like any other people on earth. Tell them that we are people rooted in culture and civilization for thousands of years. Tell them that the Syrian people choose peace as the path to rebuild everything that is destroyed.

The Blue Marists

With our people and for them, we, the Blue Marists, act. We continue to sow this hope. On February 15, we were received by the President of the Republic and the First Lady. They wanted to thank us for all the services we provided to the local community during all the years of war. They see in us a model of the ideal Syrian society: a model of openness and solidarity, an example of defending the interests of the poorest. They invited us to develop our humanitarian actions. They insisted on the importance of the values we live and on the programs we deploy in favor of the employment and of the development of the human person and the place of the woman in our society.

They explained to us their vision for the future of the country and especially during the next step after the establishment of peace. On the way back, on Sunday February 16, 2020, Aleppo was living moments of joy and jubilation: the western suburbs that were occupied by the terrorists who threatened the city, had just been liberated. From this moment, we continue to deepen the answer to the question: “What initiatives does the city and its inhabitants need at this stage of peace?”



The Marist projects

Our educational projects “I Want to Learn” and “Learn to Grow” are going well. Children are getting ready to celebrate Mother’s Day, which occurs in Syria on March 21. The teaching of values, sport, music, in the personal accompaniment of each child and often of his family, the interest in the social life and in the mental and physical health form collectively our education that is well anchored in the Marist charism. The project “Seeds”, with all its components, Lotus and Bamboo, continues to offer young adolescents a space for



a foundation of values and the expression of feelings. More than 350 young people benefit from the accompany in their personal, mental and social development.

The project "Cut and Sew" finished its 7th session and awarded diplomas to 17 women who, for 60 hours, regularly attended this training. In addition to their satisfaction and thankfulness, all of them highlighted the quality of the relationship woven between them. Many have noted the value of discovering each other and the importance of working together.

Twenty women are participating in a training as part of the women's development project. They express their happiness at being trained on different psychological, human, relational and especially personal themes.

This year, we welcomed in our premises the association "The Footprint of Happiness". It is a workshop for 30 mentally disabled adults. Their presence among us is a blessing from heaven.

We continue, every Wednesday and Sunday, to run activities and to distribute essential food and products to the camp "Shahba", a camp for displaced persons in the region of Afrin that is occupied by the Turkish army since February 2018.

We feel a great weariness among these displaced people. Our presence and our support are a great relief for these families. They have expressed their concern several times if, for one reason or another, we are absent.

MIT organizes training sessions on different topics that interest adults, especially in the fields of psychology, economics and computer science. Growing waiting lists force us to

exceed the limits of 24 participants per session.

But, it is especially in the training of entrepreneurship for micro-projects that the demand is great. Many people ask to be trained to be able to launch their own micro-project. We are happy to provide to the people of Aleppo this training service which prepares a better future for a multitude of young and older people.

Heartmade is growing rapidly. We have increased the number of seamstresses by hiring several women. We are planning to expand the workshop space. We will open soon a boutique in one of the best Mall in Damascus.

Let's live like brothers

As I finish my letter, the words of Martin Luther King come to mind: "We must learn to live together like brothers, otherwise we will all die together like idiots."

Let's live like brothers!

Let's build the civilization of love together! Let us make our earth a space of harmony! Let us return to men their humanity!

Let us be witnesses of the light! Let's expand the space of our tent!

Let us hold the hand of the most deprived! Let's lift our heads!

Let's form a chain of humanity around our planet.

Fr. Georges Sabe – For the Blue Maristes

marist world

LEBANON: FRATELLI PROJECT

SOUTH AFRICA: MARIST MERCY CARE IN ADDO

BRAZIL: CURITIBA



UNITED STATES: PRAYING THE ROSARY FOR THOSE AFFECTED BY THE CORONAVIRUS

GUATEMALA: FORMATION PROGRAMME IN PREPARATION FOR PERPETUAL VOWS

INDIA: OPERATION RAINBOW FAMILY GIVING AWARENESS ABOUT CORONAVIRUS

BRAZIL

BRASIL CENTRO-NORTE ORGANISES THE FORUM FOR THE MANAGEMENT TEAMS OF THE SOCIO-EDUCATIONAL CENTRES

Using the theme “Excellence of Evangelizing Education in the Classroom”, the Province of Brasil Centro-Norte promoted the Marist Forum of Administrators, from the 11th to the 14th March, in Recife. The event brought together the management teams of the Socio-Educational Units and the administrators of the Central Office, to promote institutional alignment.

The Superior General, Brother Ernesto Sánchez Barba, took part in the event using a video message in which he greeted and encouraged all the participants to continue working to guarantee the integrity of evangelizing education.

In the course of the event, several conferences and seminars were proposed relating to the improvement of the quality of



education, and highlighting its evangelizing aspect.

The Forum also presented an opportunity to present the strategic projects of the Province.

VATICANO

POPE FRANCIS: “WE CAN FIND SMALL, CONCRETE GESTURES EXPRESSING CLOSENESS TOWARDS THE PEOPLE CLOSEST TO US”

Pope Francis spends his days in the Vatican following closely the “During these difficult days we can find small, concrete gestures expressing closeness and concreteness towards the people closest to us, a caress for our grandparents, a kiss for our children, for the people we love. These are important, decisive gestures. If we live these days like this, they won’t be wasted.”

“During these difficult days we can find small, concrete gestures expressing closeness and concreteness towards the people closest to us, a caress for our grandparents, a kiss for our children, for the people we love. These are important, decisive gestures. If we live these days like this, they won’t be wasted.”

Holy Father, what did you ask for when you prayed in the two Roman churches?

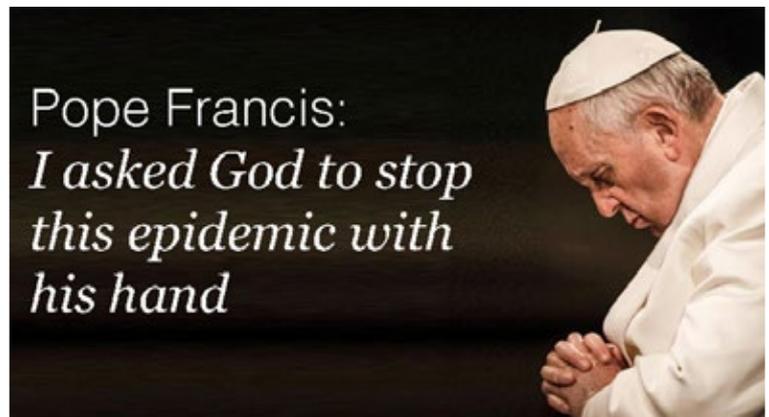
“I asked the Lord to stop the epidemic: Lord, stop it with your hand. That’s what I prayed for.”

How can one live these days so that they are not wasted?

“We must rediscover the concreteness of little things, small gestures of attention we can offer those close to us, our family, our friends. We must understand that in small things lies our treasure. These gestures of tenderness, affection, compassion, are minimal and tend to be lost in the anonymity of everyday life, but they are nonetheless decisive, important. For example, a hot meal, a caress, a hug, a phone call... They are familiar gestures of attention to the details of everyday life that make life meaningful and that create communion and communication amongst us”.

Isn’t it how we always live?

“Sometimes, we only experience a virtual form of communication with one another. Instead, we should discover a new closeness. More concrete relationships made of attention and patience. In their homes, families often eat together in great silence, but not as a result of listening to each other, rather because the parents watch television while they eat, and children are on their mobile phones. They look like monks, all isolated from each other. Here there is no communication, whereas listening to each other is important because that’s how we can understand the needs, efforts, desires of the other. This language made of concrete gestures must be safeguarded. In my opinion, the pain of these



days should open us up to this concreteness”.

Many people have lost loved ones, many others are fighting on the front line to save lives. What can you say to them?

“I thank those who give themselves in this way to others. They are an example of this concreteness. And I ask everyone to stay close to those who have lost loved ones, to be close to them in every possible way. Consolation must now be everyone’s commitment. In this respect, I was very impressed by the article Fabio Fazio wrote for Repubblica on what he is learning in these days”.

What, in particular?

“Various passages, but in general the fact that our behaviour always affects the lives of others. He is right, for example, when he says: ‘It has become evident that those who do not pay taxes do not only commit a felony but also a crime: if there are not enough hospital beds and artificial respirators, it is also their fault’. I was very impressed by this”.

How can those who do not have faith have hope in days like these?

“They are all God’s children and are looked upon by Him. Even those who have not yet met God, those who do not have the gift of faith, can find their way through this, in the good things they believe in: they can find strength in love for their children, for their family, for their brothers and sisters. One can say: ‘I cannot pray because I do not believe.’ But at the same time, however, he can believe in the love of the people around him, and thus find hope”.

From La Repubblica

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TIMOR ORIENTAL

ICFP GRADUATION (CATHOLIC TEACHERS' COLLEGE) IN BAUCAU

At least five hundred people gathered in Baucau, Timor Leste, on 7th March, for the ICFP (Instituto Católico para a Formação de Professores) Graduation Mass and the ceremony for awarding of degrees to eighty-five students. Br Greg McDonald represented the Provincial, Br Peter Carroll. The Mass, led by the Vicar General, Monsignor Francisco Pinheiro e Silva, was a beautiful celebration with musical accompaniment arranged by Br Michael McManus and superb singing by the ICFP choir. The Degree Ceremony started with the singing of the National Anthem followed by the official welcome, in both Tetun and English, by Br Paul Gilchrist, director of ICFP. Fifty-eight students were then presented with their Bachelor of Teaching degrees, followed by the awarding of the Bachelor of Education (Licentiate) degree to twenty-seven students. Guest speakers included Dr Edmundo Viegas, Director of the

Timor-Leste National Tertiary Accreditation Board, and Dr Maria Filomena Lay, Director General of Education. Graduate, Graciana Ximenes da Costa, gave a formal reply on behalf of her fellow awardees. Amongst the guests were Br Mark Paul, founding ICFP Director, and representatives from the Australian Catholic University and the Australian Embassy.

The Marist presence was also strong with all the Brothers and aspirants, in attendance. Following the formalities, a great feast was provided for all those in attendance. The Institute, accompanied by a community of three Brothers (two from the Province of Australia and one from the Province of Brasil Centro-Norte), has 264 students, divided into two courses: 213 attend the three years of the baccalaureate and 51 are students of the degree course, which also lasts three years.

TIMOR ORIENTAL

COMMENCEMENT OF 2020 ASPIRANCY IN BAUCAU

Thursday 5th March 2020, ten aspirants started their vocational journey towards being Marist Brothers at the Marist Formation House in Baucau, Timor Leste. During Mass, the ten aspirants committed themselves to following the aspirancy programme with the help of the Holy Spirit and taking Mary and Champagnat as their models. The Mass was celebrated by Father Manuel (Salesian) who is parish priest of Baucau. After their commitment, Father Manuel blessed each one individually and Brother Greg McDonald presented each one with a cross. The Brothers at the formation house are Lécio Heckler (Brasil Sul-Amazônia), Robert Spearen (Australia), João Baptista (Brasil Centro-Sul) and Greg McDonald (Australia).

Timor-Leste has shown itself to be a place full of vitality for Marist life, animated by two communities with Brothers from Australia and Brazil. In addition to the formation community, a community of 3 Brothers (two from Australia and one from Brasil Centro-Norte) works in the formation of teachers at the Catholic Teachers' College (ICFP – Instituto Católico para a Formação de Professores).



A Marist School will be built in the coming month. According to the plans of the Province of Australia, work should begin in the middle of the year and it should receive the first students in 2022. In terms of vocation to Marist religious life, native of the country, besides this group of aspirants in Baucau, there are currently three Brothers in initial formation, 10 novices (in Sri Lanka) and 10 postulants (in the Philippines).



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