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NEWS BULLETIN

CAMEROON * GHANA * CÔTE D'IVOIRE * LIBERIA * TCHAD



MARIST PROVINCE OF WEST AFRICA 1ST PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY



Theme: Let us Rise up and Build (Neh. 2:18)

Date: 1st - 6th August, 2021

Venue: SSND Provincial House, Mayera, Accra.



MARIST PROVINCE OF WEST AFRICA 1ST PROVINCIAL CHAPTER



Theme: Dying to Self; Generating New Life

Date: 9th - 13th August, 2021

Venue: SSND Provincial House, Mayera, Accra.



St. Marcellin Champagnat

Br Antonio Ruiz

Br Sylvain Kouassi

Br Francis Lukong

Br Cyprian Gandebo

MARIST PROVINCE OF WEST AFRICA

(Cameroon, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Libera & Tchad)

SPEECH OF PROVINCIAL SUPERIOR AT THE FIRST PROVINCIAL CHAPTER

The representatives of our General Superior, Br Oscar Martins and Br Ken MacDonald (General Link Councilors), Br Juan Carlos Fuertes (Provincial, Mediterranean Province), my dear Delegates to the First Provincial Chapter, Br Aureliano Garcia Manzanal (Provincial-elect, Mediterranean Province), Br Francis Lukong (Solidarity Secretariat, Rome), and Mr. Samuel Adu-Nontwiri (Lay Marist, Ghana). **Good Morning!**

With a joyful heart, and gratitude to God, I welcome you all to the first Provincial Chapter in which we will, at the same time, unveil and commence our new Province. So, on behalf of all the Brothers of this new Province, I would, first of all, like to express our heartfelt gratitude to our Superior General and his Council for granting our request to become a Province.

I would like to thank my Councilors for their availability, generosity, and collaborative attitude in assisting me to run the District for the past three years. I am also indebted to the Brothers of the District for their trust and collaboration. I thank them for the different roles they played to help me animate and govern the District. I thank the Representatives of the District Superior, Community Superiors, Headmasters/Principals, Bursars, Pastoral Coordinators, Formators, Project Coordinators, the Lay Marists, Commissions and Teams, and indeed all our lay Collaborators in the schools and communities. I also thank the chairman and members of the Chapter Preparatory Commission for their hard work in ensuring that we have a hitch free chapter.

In 2017, the Marist Institute gathered in Medellin in Colombia to celebrate the bicentenary of its foundation. It was a kind of renewal for the Institute. Today, we gather here also to mark a special moment in the history of the Marist

District of West Africa. Like the Institute in 2017, we too celebrate a New Birth – the commencement of the Marist Province of West Africa. It is worthy reminding everyone that the Marist District of West Africa was created in 2000 out of the former sectors of Côte d'Ivoire, Cameroon, Ghana, Tchad, Equatorial Guinea and Liberia. The mission in Equatorial Guinea was later closed down. These sectors belonged to the Levante, Great Britain, Nigeria, Norte and Esopus Provinces, respectively.

We are thus grateful to the Province of Nigeria and the defunct Provinces of Levante, Great Britain, Norte and Esopus for their huge contributions and accompaniment of the growth of Marist life and mission in this region. We are indebted to the Marist Mediterranean Province for being our mother for the past 18 years. Dear Brothers, we thank you for the support, the accompaniment, and for the mentorship for close to two decades. Ayekoo!

The Theme of this 1st Provincial Chapter encapsulates the idea of making sacrifices to sustain the Province – **'Dying To Self, Generating New Life'**. As Scripture asserts 'a grain of wheat must fall into the ground and dies to bear much fruits' (Jn 12:24). This might be true for us because as our Superior General (Br. Ernesto Sanchez), affirms in his circular, "Homes of Light", 'this is the time when something new is waiting to be born and we are being asked, not only to transform our hearts, but to make radical changes in our ways of being and acting and in our structures and systems, in an effort to create a renewed and different future". To achieve this objective, we may possibly have to go to certain places that we never imagined or take certain directions that we have often avoided or never considered. We may even be required to take certain unusual decisions to accomplish our objectives.

In 2018, at the 7th District Chapter, we reflected on the theme: “A New La Valla for a New Beginning” that resulted into 4 priorities: Community Living, Finance, Leadership & Mission. For implementation, we used them to draw up our community life plans. We developed a financial management software (v-track & u-school) to deal with financial leakages. We improved the financial guidelines, created an email system, a database for the Brothers, we overhauled the Commissions and created Teams in order to involve all the Brothers in the animation and governance of the District. In all these, our target was to encourage co-responsibility of Brothers for our Marist life and mission. Through workshops and seminars, we aim to empower our community Superiors so they can support the animation of the Province. Plans are underway to also engage qualified accountants in our schools as well as in the Provincial House to help ensure professionalism and transparency in our financial system. By the grace of God, we obtained the Land Certificate for Bekoko and we would commence work on that property as soon as possible.

During the three years, the Council had meetings every three months but during the pandemic we met every month. I also visited all the Brothers of the District and their places of work once every year except for Bafut and Tatum communities. The Socio-political situation in Cameroon made it difficult to visit those two communities. Similarly, the restrictions imposed by the global pandemic made it difficult to visit communities in later part of 2020. Nevertheless, we made use of the current social media platforms (WhatsApp, Skype and Zoom) to reach out to the Brothers.

We come into the new Province with vibrant, dedicated and hardworking Brothers. Currently, we manage seven Marist own schools, two Diocesan schools and also teach in

one Diocesan school. Altogether we are eighty-five (85) Marist Brothers, a hand full of Lay Marists, and approximately 7,120 pupils and students (3,62 Males and 3,496 females) with close to 488 Staff members.

As we transit into a new epoch, I encourage each of you to leave behind the bitterness, antagonism, and hatred we harbour against each other. Rather, get rid of all bitterness, wrath, anger, and slander along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, as God has forgiven you in Christ (Eph 4:30-5:2). Encourage and support each other in community to soar to your potential. I encourage you to strive to die as chickens in the farmhouse in order that we can fly like eagles. Let us die to self in order to come alive in the Province. Let us not keep our Brothers and lay collaborators in the farmhouse defining them with our own agenda instead of encouraging and supporting them to bloom and to fly like eagles. Brothers, remember always that our beliefs determine what we accomplish and what we become in the future. Br Tiburtius affirms this when he wrote ‘achieving begins with believing that we can do it’. Therefore, dear Marists of Champagnat, let us stand together to build our new Province. United we stand, divided we fall. Let us remind ourselves of our African proverb, that says, ‘if you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to far go together’. Let us build our province together on a firm foundation – a rock (Mt 7: 24 – 27).

Thank you all for your attention.

Br Cyprain Gandeabo
Provincial Leader
Marist West Africa



WE HAVE EVERYTHING WE NEED TO GET STARTED (Message of Br Juan Carlos)

I am honoured to represent today not only the appreciation that Br. Aureliano Garcia and I have for you, but the affection, admiration and support of the entire Mediterranean Province. We have collaborated on many projects since 2000. The role of the Provincials (Brothers Manuel Jorques and Antonio Giménez) as well as the District Superiors (Brothers José Antonio Ruiz, Sylvain Yao and Francis Lukong) has been excellent. Their leadership, work and understanding has been necessary for the development of Marist life and mission in West Africa.

In recent years, one project has been the focus of our attention. It has been the process of making the District of West Africa a Province. In this, we have always had the agreement and support of our Brother Superior General and his Council. Br Ernesto's prompt responses to our letters and his encouragement at all times have been precious to us. Today, the presence of Brothers Oscar Martins and Ken McDonald among us shows the communion and care that we have felt during this time.

We have seen the strength, courage and determination of Brother Cyprian and his Council. The participation of the Brothers of West Africa in this journey of discernment to start the new Province has been exemplary. There was a time when we wondered whether it was wise to go ahead because of the pandemic. Brother Cyprian's answer was clear and he was in favour of moving forward without any hesitation. His role as Superior, his pastoral vision of

leadership, his organizational skills and his deep spirituality has been a gift to us all.

The agreement drawn up between Mediterránea and West Africa has been created on the basis of consensus, with proposals based on dialogue and the will to move forward together. Thank you very much to all of you who have been part of this project!

Br. Aureliano and I arrived here representing the mother Province, but we left as part of a sister Province. And this for me is the important thing. In these years we have collaborated at all levels: mission and volunteer work, personal resources, finances... We have done so because there is something that unites us: fraternity. I would say: the miracle of fraternity, the miracle of being Brothers. That is enough. That's all we need to get started.

In the Province of Mediterránea we are 155 Brothers, almost half the number we were in 2003. Our average age is over 70 and since 2016 we have had no young men in the novitiate. If we wait to be a perfect Province we will not be able to advance in our mission. On the other hand, we are present in 22 schools. In recent years we have opened about 20 social works. The Blue Marists in Aleppo have helped thousands of people displaced by the war. In Lebanon, we are part of the Church in the Middle East in the midst of a deep economic and social crisis. We have opened new communities and presences among the most abandoned minors, especially migrants arriving in our countries.

The reality of the Marist Province in West Africa is certainly different: the number of Brothers is growing and the average age is around 40. Your formation houses are full of young people and the number of schools and students is increasing. Structures are being consolidated and the economy is being strengthened. The efforts in formation are considerable. If you wait, however, to be a perfect Province, you will not be able to move forward. You, like us, have everything you need to walk: fraternity.

Because fraternity is the strength to build relationships based on transparency, acceptance and appreciation. As the 22nd General Chapter tells us: “we are being invited to make our communities real homes, characterised by genuine relationships that allow us to build bridges between ourselves and with the people we meet around us.” Fraternity leads us to be at the side of children and young people, helping them to grow. Fraternity, as in Champagnat, has no frontiers.

Our vocation to be a Brother is that space of courage and creativity that God occupies to challenge us, to launch us into the future, to forgive us from the heart, to be at the side of those who live in difficulty. Being a Brother is the place to welcome those who come to us tired or disoriented.

Fraternity is the love that is shared and that helps others to grow, to have a dignified life, full of opportunities. Our world, our children are waiting for feet that walk beside them, that give them meaning, that take care of them and

show them what is important in life. They are waiting for eyes that look at them and can recognize in that person a brother or sister.

This is what unites us. This is what we are passionate about. This is the gospel we live out in our lives. This is what we offer here and wherever we are in the world.

Our fraternity is -as we read in our Rule of Life (No 44)- the roof that shelters us; we strengthen that fraternity to the extent that we can tell our brothers, *“Wherever you go, I will go, and wherever you live, I will live. Your people will be my people, and your God my God too”* (Ru 1:16).

We are together on the path of brotherhood. And this is what we say to you today: let us walk together, today and always, we are brothers.



Br. Juan Carlos Fuertes Marí
Provincial of Mediterrennea
Accra, 10th august 2021

Br Ernesto's message to the Marist Province of West Africa

Good morning to all the capitulants of the new Province of West Africa. My greetings also to all the Brothers and Lay people of the Province. All Marists of Champagnat.

I begin by thanking Br Cyprian Gandeebo, the first Provincial of West Africa, for his availability and generosity in accepting this service of provincial leadership. The knowledge you have of the Province (having been District Superior) helps you to follow up on many important issues and, above all, to accompany the birth of this new Province in the Institute. Your closeness and your ability to listen, as well as your fraternity and your spirituality are of great help. Your teamwork with your Provincial Council will also be a great help. We hope that the Chapter will give you a good Provincial Council, the right group to move forward in these next three years. I want also to thank Cyprian for his active participation in African Region, being the last years the coordinator of CSAC. And also for the connection with different projects at Institute level.

I would also like to thank Juan Carlos Fuertes, the Provincial of Mediterránea, for his support and accompaniment of the District over the last six years. And, in particular, for the support offered in the process of becoming a Province. We have been aware of the closeness of the Province of Mediterránea since the beginning of the District.

Thanks, Juan Carlos, for being present during these days in Ghana attending the Provincial Chapter.

Thank you, Brother Aureliano, the appointed Provincial of Mediterránea, for your presence at this Chapter and for the closeness and support you will give in this time of transition and birth of the new Province.

I would also like to acknowledge the presence and accompaniment of Brothers Ken McDonald and Oscar Martin, both during the Assembly and now at the Provincial Chapter.

Personally I found it difficult to combine the trips in this time of July and August. My first visit, after receiving the vaccine, was to Mexico, where the two Provincial Chapters were held in person. And I took some days to visit my family. In other Chapters held during this period, I was able to have an online meeting. At the moment I am still in Mexico, unable to travel until I have a negative test for covid. Fortunately I am very well, spending a few days of quarantine and care.

A Provincial Chapter is a time to dream together. Or rather, to discover together God's dream for the Province. Starting from the reality, looking at its strengths and challenges, we seek to make Champagnat's dream come alive today in these 5 countries: Liberia, Ivory Coast, Cameroon, Chad and Ghana.

Your Province has an important potential in terms of number of Brothers and youth. Just as you have just started as a Province, other parts of the world, such as Canada, just a few days ago changed from being a Province to a District (given the reduced number of Brothers and works, as well as the advanced age). So what is this West African reality telling us about the Institute? That you have the potential, the energy, the strength to move forward and strengthen the Institute in that part of the world.

And a group of capitulants like yourselves is called to be a leading group in the places where you are. You are the first to be invited to respond to Provincial calls and priorities.

The importance of caring for consecrated life, of caring for young Brothers (of whom there are many), accompanying them, offering them the space to better develop their own vocation. We must not hesitate to offer all the means to accompany and encourage the vocation of each Brother. And the same can be said of caring for the lay people who are part of the life and mission.

When I sent out my circular *Homes of light* I insisted that we are called to be beacons of hope in this troubled world. It is a prophetic call from the General Chapter. Hence my insistence that every community be a home of light, and every Marist apostolic work is invited to be a *home of light*.

And in all this, we know that Mary inspires us. Mary was able to shine the light of God. She was transparency of God's light. Mary's heart

was full of God and therefore free to embrace newness. We need to have that heart, free and full of God, that makes us capable of welcoming newness, change, God's dream in our Province.

I invite you to look at the current reality of all that we are experiencing in the world, the pandemic and its consequences, with the lens of God's gaze. May we be able to discover where God is in the midst of all this. And to discover what role God is asking of us in order to make him present in this troubled world.

I congratulate you on your presence and your service as Provincial Chapter. You have chosen 4 important priorities: communion, mission, vocations and sustainability. It's an excellent path.

I wish you all the best on your journey as a Province. From Rome, particularly through Brothers Ken and Oscar, we are close to you. Many thanks.

Thanks to each one of you, Brothers and Lay people of the Province, for making alive Champagnat's dream in these 5 Countries: Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire, Chad, Cameroon and Ghana. I have had the chance to visit almost all the communities and apostolic works. Thanks for your devotedness and for making alive the Institute in that part of the world.

Many thanks.

Fraternally,

Bro. Ernesto Sanchez



FIRST PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY



The Marist Brothers of the Marist District of West Africa held their Assembly at the Provincial House of the School Sisters of Notre Dame Accra – Ghana from the 1st to the 5th of August 2021. Due to the restrictions of Covid-19, all the Brothers living in Ghana and the delegates of the 1st Provincial Chapter participated physically at the Assembly while the rest of the Brothers participated virtually via Zoom. Brothers Juan Carlos (Provincial) and Aureliano Garcia (Provincial – elect) from the Mediterranean Province and Brothers Oscar Martins and Ken McDonald from both General link Councilors for Africa were also present. This was only the second time in our over 20 years of existence that all the Brothers in the Province were able to organize an Assembly.

The theme of the Assembly “Let us rise up and build” (Neh 2:18) was indeed very instrumental in leading and guiding us throughout the

Assembly. Brothers shared at length about their hopes and vision and we could sense that we are indeed ready to take up the new challenge of becoming a Province.

We were taken through the different stages followed towards becoming a Province, the history of the Administrative Unit, presentations from different teams and the organogram of the new Province. Brother Oscar Martins also took us through the U-process and helped us in a spirit of discernment for the priorities of our new Province while Brother Ken McDonald animated the session on Child Rights and Safeguarding children.

We thank God for this historic moment and we pray that these days of discernment, prayer and hope may truly help us to ‘rise up and build’ our Community Life and Marist Mission for a better and brighter future for the novel Marist Province of West Africa.

OPENING CEREMONY AND BEGINNING OF THE FIRST PROVINCIAL CHAPTER



The Brothers of the Marist District of West marked the beginning of their Chapter on the 9th of August 2021, which led to the birth of a new Province in the Marist world: Marist Province of West Africa. The delegates to the chapter totalled 25 persons and were made up of Brothers from all the countries that made up the Province, the link General councillors for Africa Brothers Oscar Martins and Ken McDonald as well as Brothers Juan Carlos (Provincial) and Aureliano Garcia (Provincial elect). Mr Samuel Nontwiri, a lay Marist from Ghana was also invited and participated at the Chapter.

The theme of the chapter 'Dying to Self; Generating New Life' was an invitation for all the Capitulants to indeed die to themselves and generate new life for the Marist Province of West Africa. During the ceremony the new Provincial Leader, Br. Cyprian Gandeebo was installed to take up the duty as the leader of the new Province. Delivering his speech, Br. Cyprian thanked the Brothers of the Administrative Unit for reposing their trust in him to lead them for the next three years.

Most Rev. Emeritus Peter Kwasi Sarpong of the Archdiocese of Kumasi who invited the Marist Brothers to Ghana sent the new Province a Goodwill message. He congratulated the Brothers on their new status, and asked them to do everything to cooperate with the leadership of the Province. He reminded the Brothers that their transition to a Province should not lead them to empty pride but to work harder that the Marist charism is advanced.

After the review of the working documents, election of moderators, scrutineers and secretaries, some reports were presented. This marked the end of the first day of the Chapter.



Installation of Br Cyprian as the new Provincial

DAY 2 & 3 OF THE PROVINCIAL CHAPTER



The second day of the Chapter of the Marist Province of West Africa focused on the presentation of the remaining reports from the various Teams and Commissions. The morning session was used to present the reports on Spirituality, Vocation, Marist Mission, Lay Marist and Communication. The focus was on the achievements, challenges and the recommendations of these various Teams and Commissions.

The afternoon session was dedicated to discussing the issues arising from these various reports. Brothers discussed at length about these reports and made various suggestions and recommendations. The atmosphere was very cordial and brotherly; we hope this will continue in the days ahead.

Tomorrow's session will be used to identify emerging themes from the reports as well as creating commissions to work on them. Let us all continue to journey in hope and faith as we discern the future of our Province.



Day 3 of the Chapter of the Marist Province of West Africa was dedicated to identifying emerging themes from the reports of the various Teams and Commissions. Each capitulant was given some time for reflection and to propose a theme for further study by the larger group.

This exercise was followed by creation of Commissions to formulate proposed priorities which will help guide our mission for the next three years. Four Groups were formed under the themes. These Groups will present their findings to the Capitulants on Thursday the 12th of August 2021.

Let us continue to pray that the Spirit of discernment may continue to lead and guide us throughout this historic moment of our Province

The Provincial Chapter is an assembly which represents the entire Province and expresses the involvement of all the Brothers in the work of governance. It meets at the time of the installation of the Provincial. It is convoked and presided over by the Provincial. It constitutes an extraordinary authority at the Provincial level.

'Constitutions No 123'

A summary of matters discussed at the Provincial Chapter is sent to the Brothers of the Province. Its decisions take effect on the date set by the Chapter itself.

'Constitutions No 126.2'

Day 4 of the Provincial Chapter – Approval of Provincial Norms & Election of Councilors.



Brothers Germain Beda, Oliver Tata, Cyprian Gandebo (Provincial), Birkem Pascal and Eric Kramo

This day was dedicated to the presentation of the various priorities by the Commissions which had been tasked to work on them. They presented their findings to the Assembly and after a few deliberations, they were adopted by the Capitulants.

This exercise was followed by the speech of the Superior General Br Ernesto to the Chapter. He thanked Br Cyprian for accepting to lead the new Province and wished him well in his task of animating the Province. He equally thanked Br Juan Carlos and his predecessors for the support they have provided to the Marist Province of West Africa as well as Brothers Oscar Martins and Ken McDonald for their presence at the chapter.

He encouraged the participants to be at the forefront of putting into the practice the priorities of the Province. He asked the Brothers to take good care of our vocations especially the young ones coming from the formation houses. Finally, he wished us well and asked the

Brothers to beacons of light in the Marist Province of West Africa.

The afternoon session was dedicated to the approval of the norms by the Chapter and the election of four Provincial Councilors. The norms were read and Brothers made a few adjustments and corrections. Then followed the election of Provincial Councilors which was done in atmosphere of prayers and recollection. After a series of round of votes, Brothers Oliver Tata, Germain Beda, Eric Kramo and Pascal Birkem were elected Provincial councilors. We are grateful to God for this milestone in the life of our Province and it is our wish that we may be truly beacons of hope to the many persons who look up to us.

The Provincial Council is composed of Provincial Councilors who, with the Provincial, form the Provincial Government, the key group for reflection, advice, and decision-making for the Province.
‘Constitutions No 132’

Day 5 of the Provincial Chapter – Signing of the MOU and closing remarks.



Brs Juan Carlos & Cyprian

The final day of the chapter began with Morning Prayers at 7am. This was followed by breakfast and the closing ceremony of the Chapter at 9am. The first activity was the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Mediterranean Province and the Province of West Africa. The signing was done by the Provincials and vice Provincials of the two Provinces.



Signing of the MOU btw the two Provinces

After the signing of the MOU, the Provincial of West Africa Br Cyprian Gandeebo gave his closing remarks and vote of thanks. He used the occasion to thank all those who had sacrificed their time for the Assembly and the Chapter so as to make concrete decisions for the novel Marist Province of West Africa.

He then read out the four priorities which the Chapter had set out. The four priorities to

which God is calling are to;

- Live a genuine relationship with one another, where we encounter and witness to God's love (**Communion**).
- Collaborate in responding with hope to the human, spiritual and emerging needs of society, especially of young people and children. (**Mission**)
- Be committed to nurturing Marist Vocations. (**Vocations**)
- Be sustainable in our mission. (**Sustainability and Finance**)

This officially marked the end of the First Provincial Chapter. The preparatory Commission of the Chapter then presented gifts to Brothers Cyprian Gandeebo, Juan Carlos, Aureliano Garcia, Ken McDonald and Oscar Martins to thank them in a special way for leading us during the chapter.



Presentation of gifts to the Brothers

The ceremony then ended with Holy Mass at 11am and a festive meal was shared amongst all the delegates. We are grateful to God and we look forward with hope as we begin a new milestone in the Marist Province of West Africa.

PHOTOS OF THE ASSEMBLY



Participants at the Assembly in Accra.



Brothers from Tchad following keenly.



Brs Lawrence, Aristide & Deric follow from Nigeria



Feelings & Critical areas expressed by Brothers.



Brothers in Cameroon follow from Yassa.



Br Oscar Martins facilitates the U-Process

Your experience of being with Jesus, as well as washing the feet of others, helps you to understand your place in the world. We cannot wash the feet of another person without having to stoop and approach the common ground on which we all walk and to see the world from that vantage point.

'Rule of Life No 67'



Brs. Etienne, Francis & Ken at the Assembly.

PHOTOS OF THE CHAPTER

Brothers pose with the Provincial & his Council



Presentation of the Constituion & Vademecum to the Provincial of Marist West Africa.



Brothers Francis & Sylvain (former District Superiors) congratulate Br Cyprain

Brothers Aureliano Garcia & Juan Carlos with the Provincial and his Council



BIRTHDAYS

AUGUST

August 9 th	Tiburtius Kewaiy
August 13 th	Yao Aristide
August 15 th	Samuel Nkuah
August 16 th	Nyanti Harry
August 28 th	Augustine Naatey
August 29 th	Oliver Tata

SEPTEMBER

September 4 th	Kfeban Devine
September 5 th	Paul Kwasi Adu
September 17 th	Linus Ngam
September 18 th	Stanislaus Nsotaka Germain Bery Beda
September 21 st	Isaac Kwame
September 27 th	Vincent de Paul

Happy Feast of the Assumption to all Marists of Champagnat



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MARIST PROVINCE OF WEST AFRICA

(Cameroon, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Libera & Tchad)