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MARIST NEWS

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MALAWI

MEETING OF THE PROVINCIALS OF AFRICA

From 25 to 27 January, the five Provincials of the Marist Region of Africa met in Lilongwe, Malawi. Brothers Ken McDonald and Óscar Martín, General Councilors, were present. The group welcomed two new provincials, Br. Alphonse Tiamaro, Province of Madagascar, and Br. Mark Omede, Province of Nigeria. The other provincial presents were Brothers Emmanuel Mwanalirenji-Gunduloni (Southern Africa), Cyprian Bankakuu Gandeebo (West Africa) and Venceslas Baindekeli Beimoyato (PACE).

"The meeting of Provincials of Africa in Lilongwe was a moment to closely follow the Marist life and mission on this continent," stressed Br. Óscar. "It is very interesting to see how there are regional advances, shared dreams and many projects," he added. During the meeting, the Conference of Superiors of the African Continent (CSAC), the provincials discussed a number of important issues concerning the future of Marist Life and Mission in the region of Africa. "There was open and honest discussion in an atmosphere of fraternity and a real sense of hope for the



future", said Br. Ken.

Another highlight was the visit to the Lavalla200 Community of the Region, newly created in Malawi last October. It was a moment of rich coexistence, sharing about dreams and difficulties, and living the shared charisma. The community is made up of two Brothers (Frédéric Nadji Ngarsandje from Chad and Dièudonné Byenda from Rwanda) and two Marist laywomen (Maggie Virginia Gundo from Malawi and Maria Liezel Igoy from



general administration

- The traditional plenary session of the General Council began on Monday and will conclude on February 26. During this week, the General Council is preparing the meeting of Provincials and District Superiors, which will be held in early March at the Hermitage, where the budget for 2024 will be discussed. Likewise, the work carried out by a commission on the Administrative Guide dealing with appointment issues will be reviewed.
- On Monday, Brother Ángel Diego, director of the Solidarity Secretariat, participated online in the meeting of the CCIQ Board of Directors.
- On Tuesday, the Secretariat for Solidarity and FMSI organized a moment to remember the earthquake in Syria. A special guest speaker was Bahjat Azrie, a blue Marist from Aleppo, as

well as the Brothers of the General Council and the General House, the collaborators of the General Administration, and other guests.

- From Wednesday to Friday, Br. Angel Diego will be in Geneva, where he will meet with various partners to promote human rights.
- From Thursday to Sunday, the General House will host a meeting of the directors of the Secretariat for the Laity: Manu Gómez, Ana Saborío, and Mark O'Farrell.
- The ongoing formation team (Brothers Ataide, Xavi, and Miguel) continues, until February 22, to accompany the course Spirituality of the Heart, which is being held in Florianópolis, Brazil, with 50 Spanish and Portuguese-speaking participants.

the Philippines).

The Provincials had also a moment with the bursars of the Region, who had at the same time a meeting in Lilongwe. Some topics in the agenda of the provincials' meeting were:

- Report of BOT-MIUC to CSAC
- African Mission Commission
- Recommendations of Vocational forum of Formators
- Report of MIC and MIUC: New Academic Year 2023-2024
- Budgets of CSAC and BOT-MIUC
- Courses in Africa 2024: Child rights / Spirituality of the heart / Community leaders
- Connection with Br. Luis Carlos Gutiérrez, Vicar General, about formation in leadership
- Prevision-forecast of Formators
- Commissions: Reimagining MIC-MIUC / African Structures / Marist new work
- Lavalla200> community in Malawi
- The monitoring tool Child Protection Policies

BROTHERS TODAY

MEETING OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION

The International commission of Brothers Today met on the 29th of January to the 3rd of February in the General House. Members present were Brothers Ángel Medina and Lindley Sionosa (Secretariat of Brothers Today); Br. Dominador Santiago, Province of East Asia; Juan Carlos Bolaños, Province of América Central; Anselmo Kim, Marist District of Asia; Br. Ebel Muteveri, Province of Southern Africa) and Antonio Leal (Province of Compostela). Br João Carlos do Prado, Link Councilor, blessed the commission with his presence as well.

Since there is a new appointment within the commission, the meeting began with some self-introduction. Each brother introduced himself and shared something about his apostolate. Br. Dominador, the new member, is the current Rector of the Marist Asia Pacific Center in the Philippines.

Meanwhile, due to his appointment as Provincial of Madagascar, Brother Tiamaro Alphonse is no longer a member of the commission. Br Juan Carlos will soon take up his role as Provincial of Central America; therefore, this was to be his last participation. The Secretariat of Brothers Today expressed its gratitude to the service rendered to the commission by Brothers Juan Carlos and Tiamaro.

The brothers talked about some significant events that had happened since their last gathering as well as the realities, hopes and challenges they are facing in their regions. Every member of the commission shared, learned about, comprehended, and felt empathy for the circumstances in every region, especially in formation. One of the challenges mentioned was the shortage



of formators in certain regions, while on the other hand, some formators are not as active and passionate. Furthermore, one of the significant items shared is the hope to see the communities serving as houses of formation, where newly professed Brothers can live with senior Brothers and learn from them. A substantial amount of the commission's time was spent studying the draft document on formation for the Marists of Champagnat. A chapter-by-chapter analysis and reflection was done on the document. The suggestions and recommendations will then be sent to the Formation Guide Commission. The commission concluded their meeting by talking about the future of the International Commission of Brothers Today. The members reflected on and shared the positive aspects and the challenges/frustrations faced by members as individuals as well as a commission. Suggestions on how to improve the way the commission functions were discussed, and the secretariat took note of the main points raised.

AMÉRICA SUR

FIVE NEW NOVICES

On February 2, feast of the Presentation of the Lord in the Temple, the Marist Brothers of the South America Region celebrated the entrance of five young men into the Champagnat Novitiate of Cochabamba, Bolivia. The novices, who are beginning their first year, are from Brazil: : Alison André Chila (Brasil Centro-Sul); Antônio Mardson S. da Silva, Bruno de Oliveira Fraga and Pedro Gabriel F. dos Santos (Brasil Sul-Amazônia); Pedro Antônio G. Neto (Brasil Centro-Norte).

The celebration was attended by the five provincials of the region, the brothers of the formation team and the other Marist community of the city.

Other 3 novices will begin their second year on March 19 - feast of St. Joseph, Patron of the Institute. Axil Miranda Ferraz (Brasil Sul-Amazônia), Gustavo Gomes da Silva (Brasil Centro-Norte) and João Leonardo O. Cardozo (Brasil Centro-Norte)



began their first year on March 19, 2023, on the occasion of the Assembly of the América Sur Region last year.

The formation team is made up of Brothers Rubens José Falqueto (Novice's Master - Brasil Centro-Norte), Inacio Nestor Etges (Brasil Sul-Amazônia) and Reinaldo Becerra Guevara (Santa María de los Andes). The novitiate gathers novices from Brazil, Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay.



Br. Ernesto Sánchez, Superior General, Andrea Rossi, Director of FMSI and Bahjat Azrie, Marist Blue of Aleppo

"I remember with sadness that difficult moment that was experienced a year ago with the earthquake that affected the city of Aleppo... The Marist world has united around the Blue Marists. Thanks to all the countries that have collaborated, and thanks to FMSI... We are grateful for the many solidarity projects carried out by the Blue Marists to support the most vulnerable, with 14 ongoing projects ..." (Br. Ernesto Sánchez - Superior General, during the event "Earthquake in Aleppo: One Year Later", held on February 6 at the General House, with the presence of Bhjat Azrie, Blue Marist from Aleppo, promoted by the Secretariat of Solidarity and FMSI

Photos

PERÚ

RETREAT AND MEETING OF HEADMASTERS 2024

The Directors of the 10 Marist schools in the Peru sector (Santa María de los Andes) met from January 16 to 19 to hold the Meeting – 2024 and make a retreat all together, in the Marist Village of Santa Eulalia, in Lima.

The retreat, which lasted the first two days, aimed to dedicate time to knowledge and personal growth, strengthen resilient skills, become aware of servant and prophetic leadership, as well as experience a “desert” space for encountering oneself and with God.

During the Meeting, which was held after the retreat, the managers shared key aspects such as the Sector Management Model, the Colleges model, management indicators and KPIs. A crucial space was the preparation of a diagnosis on the factors, consequences and agents that impact school coexistence, and the advancement of an improvement plan in Marist educational works.



At the conclusion of the Marist meeting, the participants expressed their satisfaction with the experience they had and thanked – in a special way – Brother Daniel Martín, for his charisma and knowledge in carrying out this activity.”

OTHER MARIST VOICES 35 AND 36

SERVANT LEADERSHIP / AN IMPORTANT ROLE TO PLAY

The publication of “Other Marist Voices” continues, messages inspired by the book “Marist Voices” related to the development of servant and prophetic leadership in the Marist mission.

Other Marist Voices 35 was written by Br. Omari Thomas, Educator, and principal of Our Lady of Orote School, in Kenya – Province of East Central Africa, who addresses the theme “Servant leadership with a heart for people” (English | Español | Français | Português) – Video. The message refers to chapter 20 of Marist Voices (Spiritual and Ethical Wisdom in Leadership), written by Br. Luis Carlos Gutiérrez.

Other Marist Voices 36 was written by Soledad Gálvez Moreno, Finance Manager of the Ecuador sector – Province of Norandina, who addresses the theme “Each of us has an



important role to play” (English | Español | Français | Português) – Video. The message refers to chapter 10 of Marist Voices (Administration: a Leadership of Service), written by Br. Libardo Garzón Duque.

marist world

SPAIN: MARIST CENTERS OF CATALONIA CELEBRATE THE DAY OF PEACE



MEXICO: MARISTIZATION COURSE IN GUADALAJARA



BRAZIL: FORMATION PROGRAM "SPIRITUALITY OF THE HEART" IN FLORIANOPOLIS



SPAIN: FORMATION COURSE FOR NEW EDUCATORS



GUATEMALA: PROVINCIAL EDUCATION COMMISSION COORDINATORS' MEETING



COLOMBIA: FORMATION AND REFLECTION MEETING FOR SOLIDARITY REPRESENTATIVES

AMÉRICA CENTRAL DEFENSE OF CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

The Marist Formation Center of Guatemala, in collaboration with the international organization Keeping Children Safe, trained more than 30 Marist brothers and lay people from the Province of Central America at the end of January. The provincial, Brother Hipólito Pérez Gómez, was also present.

The three-day training offered information and insight into child protection and international child protection standards.

The Formation Marist was designed with the following objectives:

- promote the defense of children's rights;
- create corporate policies at the provincial level that guarantee the well-being of children, adolescents and young people;
- foster a safe environment for full academic, personal and spiritual development, in line with the vision of Saint

Marcellin Champagnat;

- and continue working together to strengthen the protection of the most vulnerable.

The provincial formation is in agreement with the calls of both the 21st and 22nd the the 21st and 22nd General Chapters that involve actively advocating for and promoting Child Rights.



SYRIA

SADNESS AND TRAGEDY: LETTER FROM ALEPPO NO 48

Dear Friends,
the Blue Marists are mourning our oldest member, Marguerite També, who passed away suddenly on Wednesday, January 31.

At 92-year-old, Margot was very alert, used to come every day to our premises at the Brothers' convent, directed the "Women's Development" project, stored and distributed the used clothes that we received, listened to our volunteers and told them about her life and shared with them her experience. Margot has accompanied us since the beginning in 1986, on the paths of solidarity with those who are the most in need. Her presence will be greatly missed by us and by thousands of people in Aleppo.



I hesitated for a long time to write this letter. I found it inappropriate to talk to you about our situation in Aleppo while a tragedy is taking place not far from us; one of the worst tragedies in history.

Tens of thousands of bombs dropped on a small area with the highest population density in the world; tens of thousands of civilian victims (27,000 dead so far), the majority of whom are children and women; there is no family that has not lost one or more members; 1,900,000 displaced people out of a population of 2,200,000, most of whom were already displaced; the majority of hospitals and medical facilities are out of service; medicines, water, electricity and food are provided drop by drop; Palestinians in Gaza are suffering like no one else before. And it continues; despite the condemnation of world governments; despite the incessant requests from the Secretary General of the United Nations, UNICEF, WHO, Doctors Without Borders, Human Right Watch who demand an end of the acts of war and to allow humanitarian aid to enter and be delivered. The only positive thing in this tragedy is that it has brought the Palestinian issue to the forefront and that all governments, especially the great powers, are once again talking about the 2-state solution; while being convinced of this only possible solution, they have done nothing for 20 years to implement it, letting the excessive colonization of the occupied Palestinian territories continue and preventing the creation of a viable Palestinian state.

Back home, in Aleppo, everyone is in solidarity with the Palestinians, and to say the least, appalled by the atrocities committed against them. The Alepines' conversations, their WhatsApp messages, their Facebook posts only deal with this tragedy. Well, not exclusively; the economic situation and the daily life in Syria and particularly in Aleppo are also on everyone's lips since they are going from bad to worse.

Prices increase daily in parallel with the fall in the value of the national currency; the cost of living, already unbearable, continues to rise to unprecedented heights, which means that

90% of families live below the poverty line and cannot make ends meet. The State, not having sufficient financial resources, no longer subsidizes, as before, essential products such as bread, gasoline, fuel oil, which contributes to the worsening of inflation.

It is important to point out that before 2011, the country was prosperous and poverty was very low.

The shortage is getting worse; many products are rationed; electricity is only supplied 2 hours per day. People are suffering; just to mention the cold of winter with temperatures of 4-5 degrees Celsius without any means of heating!!

During the war years, life in Aleppo was dangerous. For 6 years, it has become more and more difficult, even intolerable. Migration is growing, especially recently, with a new Canadian opportunity. Some, among the best executives of the Blue Marists, have already left and others are waiting for their visa to leave.

What can we say to those who are desperate and at the end of their rope, when they come to ask our opinion on a possible departure? Or to those who, have obtained their visa, come to say goodbye to us? Except to wish them good luck.

Blue Marist: an essential contribution

Faced with all the sufferings that the people of Aleppo are enduring, we, the Blue Marists, believe that our contribution to alleviate them is even more essential than ever.

I will cite a few examples:

Our "Drop of Milk" program distributes the monthly milk requirement to 2,100 children. The price of the monthly ration of milk for infant (720,000 Syrian Pound (SYP)) is more expensive than the father's monthly salary (average salary 400,000 SYP). We recently received a large donation in-kind from a French association: diapers for babies. The monthly price of diapers needed for a baby (200,000 SYP manufactured locally), which amounts to half of the dad's salary!!! Our "Diapers for Babies" project helps 600 families every month.

Our “LED” project, which consists of installing a battery, an inverter and LED lamps in more than 200 elderly people or large families’ houses, has enabled them to no longer live in darkness after sunset; the beneficiaries cannot afford to subscribe to a modest monthly ampere from a private generator (400,000 SYP per month) to have a little electricity to light a few electric bulbs.

The “Food Baskets” that we distribute to 1,100 families monthly make them happy. The price (400,000 SYP) of each basket reduces the costs of each family to survive; 56% of Syrian families are considered food insecure by UN agencies. Finally, to end with this series of examples, our “Study Support” program contributes to the tuition fees, school transportation and support courses for more than a hundred pupils and students.

All our other projects are continuing as normal.

Our educational programs: “I Want to Learn” for the instruction and education of 120 children aged 3 to 6, “Seeds” for the psycho-social support of 450 children and adolescents, “Cut and Sew” for the teaching of sewing to 20 participants in 3-month sessions.

Our relief programs: “Rent” to help 120 displaced families find housing, “Medical Aid” to care for around 150 sick people per month, “Sharing Bread” to offer a daily hot meal to 260 elderly people who no longer have anyone to care for in Aleppo.

Our development programs: The “MIT” our adult training center with its 12-hour sessions semimonthly, the “Micro-projects” program which teaches how to create your own project and finances around fifty projects each year, the “Professional Training” currently with 2 modules of 20 apprentices each who learn a profession over 2 years, The “Women’s Development” project for 3 months sessions, and finally, the last but not the least, “Heartmade” which, with its 16 seamstresses, creates unique pieces for ladies from leftover fabrics.

Formation for member of the Blue Marists

This year, more than in previous years, we are doing our utmost to train the members of the Blue Marists, especially the project directors.

For the new volunteers, we implemented a cycle of three training sessions: The Marists Brothers – The Blue Marists – Solidarity; for former members, we offer hands on training by sharing the activities of other projects.

For project directors: we provide on one hand, regular meetings to reflect together on the impact of projects on volunteers and beneficiaries, on the conformity of our values with our actions, on the current state of the Blue Marists and on their future; and on the other hand, training sessions, local or with the Marists of Lebanon or Spain; the last 3 full day training session has just ended with the participation of all project managers under the direction of 2 Lebanese trainers from the Waznat Association.

We do our best within the maximum limits of our human and material capacities to help, relieve, educate, train, develop and sow a little hope in an environment of suffering which leads to pessimism and despair.

Finally, we ask you, dear friends, to pray for:

Us, the Blue Marists, so that God helps us to continue our mission;

For the Syrians who are suffering and who see no light on the horizon or at the end of the tunnel;

For the people of Gaza to stop the carnage;

For all the Palestinians, so that their rights are finally recognized, the occupation ends and they can live in their own state.

For the entire region of the Near and Middle East which, like a powder keg, risks exploding at any moment.

Aleppo February 5, 2024

Dr Nabil Antaki, for the Blue Marists



ITALY

COURSE FOR FORMATORS BEGINS IN MANZIANA



In the context of the celebration of the bicentenary of the construction of the Institute's mother house of Notre Dame de l'Hermitage, in France, the Institute has implemented a formation program called "New Builders of the Hermitage", for brothers who will be qualified for the pastoral mission of supporting the formation processes in the various houses and stages of initial formation in Marist life.

The program begins on Sunday, February 4th, at the Marist house of formation and spirituality in Manziana (near Rome) and will end on Sunday, November 24th, in France, at l'Hermitage. The course has been prepared by the Brothers Today Secretariat and by a team specially formed for this program, made up of Brothers Juan Castro (MDA), Michel Maminiaina (Province of Madagascar) and César Rojas (Province of Norandina). There are 20 participants: 19 Brothers and one Marist priest. The final message of the XXII General Chapter asks us to "reform our processes of initial and ongoing formation and offer

new paths at the level of the Institute and Administrative Units to care for our vocation as brothers: accompaniment, attention to each brother's situation and stage in life". The Brother Superior General and his Council, in collaboration with the Secretariat of Brothers Today, want to offer this program to prepare the Brothers who, joyfully assuming the gift of their Marist vocation, will live for 10 months a community experience of formation, qualification and growth in various aspects and themes that will serve them in their future mission.

Faced with the challenges posed by the formation of new vocations to the consecrated life, this program is an excellent opportunity to create an environment of growth and formation, both on a personal and community level.

We look forward to your remembrance and prayers throughout the year.

Animation Team – Formators Program 2024.

[Photos of the departure from the General House to Manziana](#)



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