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Meeting of the Capitulants from the African continent

Kenya

On the 21, 22 and 23 February 2009, the brother capitulants of the African continent met in Nairobi for the launching of the 2nd phase of preparation for the General Chapter, taking into account the Initial Consultation and the realities of this region of the Institute. In the course of their meeting, they worked out the details of the Plan of Action which will be carried out during the remaining period (February - August 2009) up to the holding of the Chapter. The meeting was attended by the four Brother Provincials and the five Brother delegates from the different African Provinces and District.

One of the difficulties encountered in this region of the Institute is the receiving of documents, since in several communities the 1st document which the Preparatory Commission sent for the Initial Consultation («On the Road to the XXI General Chapter») did not arrive, and nor did Brother Sean's circular of convocation. This explains why the sharing received was not complete. At the meeting, however, we exchanged thoughts about the summary found in the 1st part of the 2nd document which the Preparatory Commission had prepared: «Guidelines for Reflection in Preparation for the 21st General Chapter», and we analysed the replies coming from the different reports, proving that the text corresponds to the reality lived on the continent.

Another difficulty encountered in this part of the world is access to the Internet, of which many of our communities are deprived ; even for those who are able to use



this service, the speed of connection is slow, making difficult the reading of documents and acquaintance with the complete list of the participants in the Chapter. As a solution to this problem, it has been suggested that the mobile phone be used as a way of helping the capitulants come to know one another more easily.

Time was also taken to come to a better knowledge of the four subjects proposed by the Preparatory Commission in the 2nd part of the document, by comparing it with the situation as it is lived in our Provinces and in the African District. It can be noticed that there is also a «fifth» subject which strikes the African situation with full force, and which is expressed as one of the points raised by the Initial Consultation, and that is the one of «community». By inviting the different administrative units to deepen their reflection, one has given them the possibility of being able to contribute a particular vision capable of enriching the vision of the Institute. The group as a whole considered that Africa can bring important contributions to the Chapter. →

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Finally, each administrative unit concluded the meeting by presenting its specific Action Plan, which includes study of the document « Guidelines for Reflection in Preparation for the 21st General Chapter », on the part of the brothers' communities, the groups of laity and young people, and the organizations of animation which exist in the units. All the Brother capitulants have pledged to get their respective regions involved, not only in reading the documents proposed for this 2nd phase, but also in the prayer and personal

preparation which is required of each capitulant.

The 2nd meeting of the region has been set for the end of June. During that meeting, a regional letter will be able to be written, addressed to each administrative unit as well as the different members of the Chapter. In this way, one will have the perspective of the Marist world facing up to its challenges, seen in the light of the reality of Africa.



Encountering God from "Water from the Rock"

The "Horizon Programme" - Malawi



The Horizon programme that is currently going on here in Malawi at Nyungwe is such a wonderful organization that is enriching us the young Brothers from the Southern Africa and East Africa Provinces. In the past week we were privileged to have a Brother who gave us a course on Marist Spirituality. His main resource book was *Water from the Rock*. He shared with us his knowledge and experience with the book and what he gave us was really revitalizing to all of us.

Water from the Rock brought to us to a real encounter with God the Father who is loving, tender, present, compassionate, source of grace, author of vocations and indeed life giver.

As the workshop was progressing, we came to realise that as Father, God is Love. His love is boundless; he loves us despite who we are. His love is unconditional and has no limits.

In his love for us, God the Father is also Grace to all his children. He provides graces to us in all our daily undertakings so that we may be able to carry out his mission even though it may be challenging and difficult to carry out. He renews us spiritually and enhances our apostolic dynamism as we journey on this earthly pilgrimage (WFR 18).

Interestingly, we came to discover that we do not call ourselves to our vocations but that God the father is the Author of all our vocations. He enters forcefully into our lives just as he did with Mary and Marcellin Champagnat in their own lives. When he calls, he gives us our own identity as our hearts long to be with him. He transforms us and speaks to our hearts and sends us on mission. This gives us energy to accept, trust and commit ourselves to God (WFR 51, 58-59).

Another marvellous encounter with God is that he is Faithful. Our Father does not change his plans for us. He fulfils his plans for us and is always present and closer to us and never leaves us alone. (WFR 61)

We have also come to an encounter with God who is Merciful. He is always on our side when we speak the truth despite the consequences that may befall us, when we provide healing to the sick, when we receive and offer forgiveness, when we celebrate Eucharist and share his word and indeed when we do good and promote goodness among his people (WFR 57).

We cannot come to an end of our encounter with God without speaking that we came to know our God as the one who is full of tenderness. Indeed he loves us unconditionally in spite and despite our limitations. He is our friend who never leaves us alone at any given time. Actually, he is our marvellous companion.

Finally, we came to discover God as Life. He is life maker and life giver, without him our existence is useless and has no meaning. God our father is indeed Water from the Rock nourishing our lives day in and day out.



Marist Vocation Ministry in Rio Grande do Sul

Brazil

February was an important month for Marist vocation ministry. On the 20th and the 25th those beginning or continuing their formation entered the centers at Bom Princípio and Lageado, and at the Santo Ângelo formation house. There are more than 20 young men aspiring to be Marist Brothers, feeling called to follow the religious life by living the mission and legacy of St. Marcellin Champagnat.

In Lageado, eight young men between 15 and 19 years of age entered the juniorate, the first level of Marist formation. At the beginning of the first year of secondary school they may enter the house of formation, where they become familiar with more details of Marist religious life in an atmosphere conducive to reflection on their future and on community life. According to Brother Sidnei Tramontin, the arrival of the young men on February 20 was a very special occasion. They were accompanied by their parents and one Brother. There were welcoming activities

and they began to get to know their new home.

On February 25 nine prepostulants entered at Santo Ângelo. Prepostulancy is the stage for those who have completed secondary school. According to Brother Rodinei, the group was welcomed joyfully, and to make for a smoother transition, a campout was organized at a nearby spa.

Seven of the nine young men have already had contacts and experiences with the Congregation; the other two have only taken part in vocation meetings and now have the chance to become more aware of what is characteristic of Marist life. "In this stage we begin to deal with matters of autonomy and leadership so that each young man might go beyond his limitations and so grow into and live all the specific facets of the mission," commented Brother Rodinei.

In Bom Princípio, the arrival of the pos-



tulants also occurred on February 25. The postulancy is the stage that involves the young man in a more intense living of community life and of the values of the Congregation. The new postulants were accompanied by their respective vocation advisors and exhibited joy and curiosity about getting to know their new home. According to Brother Vinícius Tenedini, formator there, five of the seven came from the prepostulancy at Santo Ângelo and two from the one in Canudos. Following their arrival, the young men began to familiarize themselves with the house and used their free time to explore the city, says Brother Vinícius. During Mass on Saturday, February 28 the postulants were introduced to the community.



Meeting of community animators from the Province of Central America

In Guatemala City, from February 5 – 8, Marist brothers and sisters of Champagnat met as animators of communities. As stated in the motto or the XXI General Chapter, our objective is to animate ourselves to live out the mission with "new hearts for a new world".

What impacted all of us greatly is reality that our first mission is to accompany the brothers or our own communities in the growth of their consecrated lives. This understanding has made us put in the right place the many works and various apostolates we are involved in but

that are secondary to the real work that has been confided to us.

The first day of our meeting revolved around the issue of conflict resolution within community life. Animated by the different dynamics which were presented to us, we understood the importance of liberating ourselves from the prejudices and the "labels" with which we brand our brothers and which stain our relationships. During the second day Sister Raquel Saravia, a religious of the Holy Family of Elmet, shared with us her impressions about the Religious Life in light

of the Aparecida document. We also spoke about our dreams for Religious Life in Latin America. Perhaps in this way we were able to realize the variety of ways we see religious life, many from the fruits of our life experiences, cultures and historic times that touch our lives.

The final days of the meeting were spent organizing a visit to the new community that the Marist Brothers of Champagnat have opened outside Guatemala City.



Province of Mediterránea

Summary of the year of spirituality activities

During the Year of Spirituality, the Brothers of the Mediterránea Province organized a variety of activities to help us grow in this most important aspect of our life. We joined in prayer with the entire Institute at the opening and at the closing of the Year. We also launched formation sessions and courses for Brothers and laity. The publication of *Water from the Rock* was a great help in deepening our spirituality.

Following are some of the activities we found helpful.

1. **Community Project.** Spirituality was the central theme of our 2007–2008 community life project. So the Provincial Commission on Community Life offered some materials: the second chapter of *Water from the Rock* and *Spirituality in the Documents of the Institute*. With shared reflection on these documents and, taking the Provincial Plan for the Year of Spirituality as a starting point, each community designed its objectives and methods to promote community life for the year, emphasizing spirituality.

2. **Formation Courses.** If the Year of Spirituality meant anything to us, without a doubt it was because of this initiative, since it served to launch the project we had been preparing for some months: the formation courses. They were a way of summarizing once more the first call of the Chapter: To passionately center our lives and our communities in Jesus, as Mary did and, to this end, to put into action processes of human growth and conversion. With this directive of the XX General Chapter, we decided to launch this new approach to promoting the ongoing formation of the Brothers:

through formation courses. This year three courses were offered.

The first was centered on spirituality and had as its objective experiencing God in prayer and in everyday life. It consisted of an opening talk by Father Darío Mollá, SJ, and personal work throughout the course using selected materials based on *Water from the Rock*. Thirty-four Spanish and Italian Brothers took the course.

The second was centered on human growth. Directed by Father Carlos Domínguez, SJ, it turned out to be a most interesting way of understanding the integration of the human and the religious in personal growth. It was followed by a group of eight Brothers who came together three times during the course. The material for their personal work was based on some of Father Carlos' books: *The Elements of Longing* (?), *The Adventure of Evangelical Celibacy* and *Faith after Freud*.

The third program was entitled *The Spirituality of the Lay Marist* and was led by Don Julio López, of the fraternity of Denia (Alicante). It was taken by twenty-five lay people who, through personal work and two group sessions endeavored to come to a deeper understanding of Marist spirituality and how to live it as lay persons.

3. **Spirituality for School Communities.** The objective of this third activity was to open Marist spirituality to all the members of our school communities. Following a methodology similar to that used at the International Mission Assembly, a working plan was devised and Brothers, teachers, parents, catechists, and fraternities were invited to participate in three sessions at

the local level with the purpose of, as a group, coming to a deeper understanding of Marist spirituality. At each of these meetings the materials consisted of a motivational document, with some points for reflection and group discussion. The meeting ended with community prayer and the distribution of excerpts from *Water from the Rock* for reflection and personal prayer at home. The themes of the three excerpts were: *Eyes to See* (youth and spirituality), *From the Heart* (community life and family), *Bearers of Fire* (mission).

Reflection groups on Marist spirituality were set up at every institution of the Province, with a total of 400 people participating.

4. **Retreats on Marist Spirituality.** Our summer province retreats were centered on spirituality as a means of growing at a more leisurely pace into the theme that guided us the whole year. Each day was based on a chapter of *Water from the Rock* and helped us grow closer to the basic themes presented by the book. We followed the same approach for the Brothers' retreats as well as for the two retreats the Province has every year for Brothers and lay people.

We can say with confidence that the Year of Spirituality has enabled both the Brothers and laity of the province to deepen and share this central aspect of our lives. The rich human variety of those taking part in the various activities helped us achieve a deep level of communication on the themes presented. In addition, the formation programs have opened a new way—a type of process—of promoting both human and spiritual growth in the Brothers and laity.

