

ALBUM OF VISITS

INDIA: EXPERIENCE OF ENCOUNTER AND FRATERNITY THAT GENERATES HOPE

Br. Adolfo Cermeño, Provincial of América Central

The brothers work in India in two schools; there are twenty-seven brothers and they live a simple life and are friendly and welcoming. This was a real example of the song that says that wherever there is a brother there is a home for me. We stayed in the formation house with the postulants and aspirants. At the present time there are three postulants and nine aspirants. They are a simple, close, and kind group with a great dream for everything Marist, prepared to do whatever is needed to become Marist. They made us feel at home despite the language difficulties. We were able to visit all the communities and in all of them we appreciated



their simple style of living, as in our origins; simple in structures, in style of life, in means. The common denominator was love. All of this generates the hope that Marist life has a future and sufficient vitality to be





The brothers' school.

part of the Church building the Kingdom, giving reasons for hope to children and young people of whom there are so many. We were able to visit the places affected by the tsunami. We met people who had lost so much. The brothers have a programme for the children who suffered during the catastrophe and they help them to know how to survive giving them alternatives through group therapy and computing skills. Various brothers spend the week at these places which are 160 kilometres away from where they live. There are always two who remain during the week. Thank you to the brothers of India for all they did for us when we stayed with them and for having shared with us their simplicity and their poverty during these days.



Some students.

Aspirants, postulants and formators.



EAST TIMOR

Br. Claudino Falchetto
Provincial of Brasil Centro-Norte



My option for visiting East Timor, besides the knowledge of the history and of the reality of that young country, had as an objective to meet with Brother Raimundo Barbosa and the five laypeople sent by my Province for a period of volunteer work and solidarity in this country. The Province of Brasil Centro-Norte decided to send those volunteers as an answer to the appeals of the Australian brothers



who have been there for five years running a Teachers' College. The area of teaching in East Timor is in a dramatic situation. Most of the teachers at the time of independence were Indonesian and so they left East Timor to return to their own country. This left an illiteracy rate of 45% of school aged children. As well, the facilities and school resources had become precarious and insufficient. The situation is even worse when we take into account that most of the children do not have Portuguese, which is the declared official language, as their mother tongue. The Brazilian volunteers all have pedagogical and educational experience and will be able to contribute to the formation of teachers and students. Having noted the enthusiastic response given to the preparation of the beginning of the academic year and to the learning of the national language, I can verify that the fruit of this work will be abundant. The presence of these volunteers is an example of interprovincial co-operation, making way for new



vocations ad gentes, as much among the brothers as among committed laypeople.

Brother Claudino with Brother Raimundo and the co-workers from Brasil Centro Norte.

TO NEGOMBO BY PASSING THROUGH MALAYSIA

Br. Samuel Holguín, Provincial of Ibérica

John Chin, Théoneste Kalisa, Robert Teoh, Samuel in Kualala Lumpur.



The encounter with this marvellous Asian culture opened my heart to a new international, intercultural, inter-religious and inter-fraternal reality. The values of hospitality, delicateness, deep spirituality, love of Father Champagnat and simple, evangelical living challenged my western mind and made me

feel the richness of the plurality and the great human and religious value that the internationality of our Institute supposes, a rainbow of Marist life that was hidden from my eyes, though

respected and admired in my heart.

Meeting the brothers of the two communities that we visited, one in Petaling Jaya and the other in Malacca was for me an encounter with faithful people who love their people and the Church deeply and who, despite their age, continue to bear fruit in their apostolate, in their prayer life and in their being Marist in their service to the young people in the school and in the parish.

I perceived in Malaysia a multicolour society in race, culture and creed. The Catholics are a minority in this society (3 to 4 %) but live in a profound sense of respect, tolerance and peace. The Church is young, attractive, familial and hopeful of a future that is guiding its people to identify themselves as people of God on the move. I have not experienced Eucharistic celebrations and exposition of the Blessed Sacrament celebrated with such joy, songs and youthful dreams that were deeply spiritual and alive. With such youthful liveliness and closeness to the Church, I thought deeply about the Marist future in this land of Malaysia and about the hope for Marist vocations.



PAKISTAN

Br. Manuel Jorques Bru,
Provincial of Mediterránea

Together with Brother Pedro Herreros, whom I hardly knew, and who was my first gift in this apostolic experience, I started my visit to the communities of Pakistan. What treasures did I discover?

1. The human, fraternal and spiritual richness of the brothers living their Marist vocation in simplicity, joy and austerity. A serene rhythm of work, without haste, with clearer and more resolute options. A great concern for Vocation Ministry and the accompaniment of the postulants.

2. The respectful and friendly relationships between teachers and brothers. People conscious of their responsibility, workers, who feel loved, supported and animated. "The brothers value us and love us as people". A great respect for religious life.

3. The happiness, closeness and welcome of the students whom we were able to visit in their classes and share with them in their free time. They felt at home and were available for any need in the college: cleaning, moving of seats, flower decorations etc.

4. The delicacy and multitude of small details that made you feel part of a family, loved

and welcomed. You could not feel like a stranger or a foreigner here.

5. The faith celebrated and shared with great respect, a deep spiritual meaning that embraces all of life and encompasses you. Praying, keeping silent and addressing God as though it was as normal as breathing.

Congratulations to the brothers of Pakistan for their valiant and preferred option for the poor and those in need, because in the passion of hearts moved by the love of Jesus and of children and young people they encounter your strength, energy and courage.



*Students and teachers
in Sarghoda*

*Brothers Pedro
and Gregory surrounded
by Marist aspirants*



*Brother Pedro with
the postulants in Faisalabad*

CHINA: A VISIT THAT INCLUDED THINGS THAT WERE SURPRISING, DIFFERENT AND ENCHANTING

Br. Primitivo Mendoza, Provincial of Compostela

Zhangye: Brothers Demetrio Espinosa, Emili Turú and Primitivo Mendoza, visiting together with Tom Chin, John Lek and Rosendo Yee



On the plaque is written: Historical site of the city of Beijing. The first Marist francophone school in China was in this building

Ortega y Gasset – Spanish philosopher – said that “to be surprised and to be in awe of something is to start to understand”. There could be no better words to describe my visit to the Marist Brothers in China because my mind was continually surprised wherever I went and my heart was in awe of things trying to appreciate all that was experienced so quickly without stopping in each moment, in each visit, in the face of each brother, in the people that we met face to face.

On the first day – at dusk – we had the chance to meet the five brothers who live in Beijing. A small, simple but vastly welcoming apartment

was right for our meeting. We spoke, we shared the evening meal, we shared some photos and... we sang the Salve Regina. The emotion of this night is still with me today. After two days in Beijing we undertook a journey to the city of Zhangye. This was another two days with the two brothers who live here. Again we felt the Marist family spirit and their kindness and attention to us are hard to describe. We visited the houses in which they live and we spoke together at length – with love and affection – about their concerns and their work. Today I am participating in the VII General Conference but still my eyes can see those landscapes, my heart is filled with the Marist family and I am in still in awe of what I experienced in my wonderful trip to China. I have felt more Marist and more brother after this experience. I have better understood and admired more the life of the brothers and I will remember for a long time the example that they have given us. I pray to God that we may be able to help them so that Marist work flourishes in that beautiful land of China where the seed of Saint Marcellin Champagnat is still alive.



A VISIT TO JAPAN

Br. Lawrence Ndawala,
Provincial of Southern Africa

I was invited to visit the Brothers in Japan as part of the pre-visits before the General Conference in Sri Lanka. My companion was Br. Réal Cloutier, the Provincial of Canada. I did my visit from the 26th to 2nd September 2005. The Marist school in Kobe was first considered in 1937 but the idea finally materialized fourteen years later following the closure of foreign schools in China by the new Communist government.

The community is composed of two Brothers, both of them over seventy, Br. Ramon, Spanish and Br. Joseph, native Japanese. There is one Japanese Brother working with the Brothers in Australia, 65 years of age.

Since our arrival in Suma, Kobe it was clear that the Brothers strongly desire to keep the 'presence' of the Brothers in the school. They are looking for 'young blood' to support them from any part of the Marist world. These Brothers, 'the young blood', will be involved in the following:

1. Working with young Brazilian and Peruvian immigrants who are in Japan.
2. The church work with a large community of Philippino migrant workers who seem not to have organized shepherds

due to shortage of priests or religious.

3. To support the presence of the minority church in this part of the world.

What are the challenges?

1. Japan is the one of the first world countries. It is evident when one sees the organization of social services. It is a materialistic society.

2. The culture is the biggest challenge in Japan. One cannot do without enculturation. It is oriental and a multi-religious country where religions co-exist.

3. The language is another challenge that one needs more time to learn.



VISIT TO THE PHILIPPINES

Br. Sylvain Ramandimbarisoa
Provincial of Madagascar

The Marist Province of the Philippines consists of forty-nine brothers in twelve communities. Their mission is mainly working in schools; they offer a good academic formation and also a Christian education.

In some schools, the brothers offer poor young people the chance to pursue their studies by the system "Working student", that is to say, that they study without paying but on free days or holidays they work for the school. Similarly, certain communities have



activities to help the poor, for example the "Champagnat Community Extension Services". It is a programme to help the indigenous people to escape from their poverty. This can be assistance for starting and managing a farm or an agriculture field; to construct houses or to build wells.

I was impressed by the community of brothers at Buda which is in a mountainous region separated from the towns. It is still deprived of electricity and phone services.

On the contrary they have plenty of water. The brothers lead a very simple life, as do the people of the village: they content themselves with a wood cabin. They are working with the bishop of the diocese and the parish priest: animation of young people, supervision of school activities, formation of basic community animators, etc. The brothers in the Philippines give us a good example of mission with children and young people. They live in solidarity with the poor and help them to improve their life through different programmes of assistance.



SRI LANKA

Br. Tercílio Sevegnani,
Provincial of Brasil Centro-Sul

This was for me an immersion experience in a culture that is totally different to mine. I felt called to go out of myself and walk with the people of Sri Lanka. The brothers live in a simple and austere manner as to their housing, their means of transport, their clothing and their food. The Colleges of the Province are also very simple and accessible to all because the government subsidises 60% of the salaries of the teachers. The parents pay the other 40% and the maintenance of the buildings is done by the students themselves. The people also live in a simple and austere manner. I perceived a great esteem and appreciation for the culture of the country, from the esteem and respect for diversity. In the Marist schools, I noted the culture of popular music, folk dances and other traditional cultures. Despite current and past tensions, there seems to be a good relationship between the religions. In this country, the large religions of Buddhism, Hinduism, Islamism and Catholicism co-exist. Catholics are only 7% of the population. Due to their being a minority, the people are mainly committed practising Catholics.



The Tudella novitiate is a concrete example of interculturalism. The Master of Novices is Australian and the novices come from Pakistan, India and Sri Lanka. The Pakistanis and Indians are Tamils and the Sri Lankans are Sinhalese. Catholics are a minority group in the three countries.

I noticed a lot of discipline in our colleges during recreation time, when entering class, in the rooms and in the student-teacher relationships. According to my culture it seemed to be excessive but at the same time it seemed to be normal here in Sri Lanka; the people are thus very ordered and disciplined.



VISIT TO KOREA

Br. Carl Tapp
Provincial of New Zealand

*Novitiate group. Standing:
Brothers Paul, Carl and Damaso (N)
Alfredo Below: Br John Yang,
Francisco (N), Canudo (N),
Brothers John Thompson, John Oh.*



*Brothers Paul Gilchrist,
John Thompson, Carl Tapp and
Jacob with boys at Choong-ju*

Touching down at Incheon International Airport is the first step into a very affluent Korea. The affluence shows in many ways but more obviously in the infrastructure. It is an attractively progressive country and the very warm welcome by the Brothers added to that attractiveness. The Brothers of the Korean District have not been involved in running schools although there is one of the 27 Brothers who is teaching in a Government school. District Leader, Brother John Vianney Kim told us that one of their biggest challenges is finding apostolic works that are in harmony with the dream of Marcellin. Visiting with me were Br Paul Gilchrist (Melbourne) and Br John Thompson (Sydney). The high point of our visit was when we stayed with the community at Marist Home Choong-ju where the Brothers

are running a hostel for boys with intellectual limitations. Many of them have been virtually abandoned by their parents. Many of the brothers have Degrees in social work and they use their knowledge and skills in ways that are very much in the spirit of Champagnat. The boys clearly love the brothers and that relationship is the fruit of the brothers' patient and loving care of them. The younger boys go out for their schooling while the older ones are involved in commercially productive tasks in the workshops on the property. Lunch at the Novitiate gave us the chance to meet the 3 novices. There is a prospect of up to 10 aspirants for next year. In the land where the Church celebrates 103 canonised martyrs the faith seems strong and despite the power of the consumer oriented society the attraction of the Brothers' simple lifestyle is still having its impact. We left Korea deeply grateful for Marist hospitality Korean style and for the care by Br. John Vianney.

CAMBODIA

Br. John Thompson
Provincial of Sydney

Nothing can prepare the visitor for the welcome they receive from the physically disabled students at LaValla School. They come in wheelchair, skateboard or crutch with the most overwhelming smiles, hands joined in respectful greeting.

Brother Darryl emerges from the garden as the 90 students return to their activities and games.

LaValla School has grown significantly from its humble beginnings in rented premises in downtown Phnom Penh in 1998.

Purpose built accommodation and facilities for boys and girls were constructed in 2000 and 2005 with attractive classrooms and workshops, an aqua therapy facility, recreational areas and a developing farm making up the complex.

The project is financed by the Sydney Province, NGOs and private donations.

It is accepted that this is an extraordinary school. These students would not normally receive an education and here they are so well taught by a wonderful team of (physically disabled) teachers that many make quick progress through the Primary years.

Graduates are completing High School (previously unheard of for the physically disabled) and a hostel where students can jobskill has been set up by LaValla's financial administrator (Ouch Nimel) in Phom Penh. Bishop Emile visited for lunch and a discussion.

His relationship with the Brothers, Buddhist staff and children was warm and appreciative. His comment on the question of evangelization said it all "You give them hope (Cambodia's most vulnerable children), you bring them joy, you prepare them for a better life.

What more could God ask of you.

Surely the Spirit will do the rest".



VISIT TO SINGAPORE

Br. Maurice Berquet, General Councillor

Following several changes of programme, I finally visited the brothers in Singapore on my own. This visit took place from the 30th August to the 3rd September. They are members of the Marist Province of China whose Provincial House is in Malaysia, a neighbouring country. There are currently five brothers in Singapore, two of whom are in nursing homes. The only community is situated beside a kindergarten, one of the two Marist works in Singapore with the other being the large Maris Stella High School. The Church has one sole diocese and is in a minority situation with only 4.7% of 4.5 million inhabitants being Catholic. This situation is reflected in our schools where

the Catholic teachers and students are themselves in the minority. This apparently does not pose any problems for the parents or for the teachers of other religions. During the morning prayer at the kindergarten everyone prays the Our Father... ! I had the pleasure of meeting the two Marist fraternities in Singapore. One of the members is the world vice-president of Saint Vincent de Paul. When I questioned him on the absence of visible poverty in Singapore, he said to me, "Besides the fact that begging is an offence, why do you think Mother Teresa established one of her communities here?" Two other meetings gave me the chance to dialogue with the teachers of our schools and with the parish priest. I noted that the Catholic school in Singapore is in a privileged place of evangelisation for the children and also for the parents. I also heard the wish of a number of lay teachers that there be more brothers to work closely with the young people and to continue to show them what a Marist Brother is. I am very grateful to Brothers Paul, Joseph and Anthony who welcomed me and organised the various meetings for me. And I send my best wishes for a recovery or improvement in health for Brothers Noël and Kevin.



With the kindergarten teachers.

With some staff members of Maris Stella



WHAT IS IT?

THE MARIST CONSTITUTIONS DESCRIBE THE GENERAL CONFERENCE AS A CONSULTATIVE ASSEMBLY THAT HAS TWO OBJECTIVES: TO STRENGTHEN THE UNITY OF THE INSTITUTE AND TO STUDY QUESTIONS OF GENERAL CONCERN AND TO PROPOSE WAYS OF ANSWERING THEM.

The custom of gathering a significant group of brothers in order to look at important matters of the Institute was one of the practices introduced by Marcellin to encourage the unity of the brothers. The origin of this structure at the service of the general government, as such as we know today, started to take shape and define its function as a form of a renewed style of government of religious institutes as called for by Vatican II. The Seventh Commission of the XV General Chapter, to which was

entrusted the study of the welfare of the brothers and the care of the older brothers, presented the following desideratum: "That, on the occasion of the annual retreat, there be organised, in the General House, sessions for the Brothers Provincial in order to study together, under the direction of the Brother Superior General and his Council, the best ways of confronting the problems of the moment. The Chapter took up this desideratum and decided that the General Council should fix the time for these sessions (each three or four years)" (Circulars, XXII, p. 281)

Brother Charles Raphaël put this resolution of the XV General Chapter into practice, convoking the "General meeting of the Brothers Provincial" on two occasions (5th – 16th October 1961 and 4th – 12th May 1965). The XVI General Chapter established in the Directory (177) that the General Conference "is to be convoked twice in the course of time from one General Chapter to another", this period being nine years, thus adapting the nomenclature and the structures of the Institute to those used in the Church that had just given a renewed importance to the traditional Episcopal Conferences that existed in various countries.

The General Conference is a consultative assembly and its function differs from that of the General Chapter. The latter has full autonomy regarding the General Council and constitutes the supreme extraordinary authority of the Institute. On the contrary, the organisation of the General Conference, its programme, its daily agenda and its duration are subject to the wishes of the Superior General and his Council. The Chapters generally resolve all the affairs by voting and present documents to the Institute. In the Conferences, there is no voting on decisions, but consensus is sought on the aspects that are to be encouraged in the Provinces or in the Institute, without expressing them in documents or official statements. These differences explain why there is a different way of working, of pursuing distinct objectives and adopting other means of attaining them.



HISTORY OF THE GENERAL CONFERENCES

| YEAR | SUPERIOR | DATE | PLACE | TOPIC |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---|
| XVI General Chapter 1967 | | | | |
| 1. 1971 | Br. Basilio Rueda | 28.04 to 15.05.1971 | Rome (Italy) | Meditation aloud of a Superior General before his Brothers Provincial. |
| 2. 1974 | Br. Basilio Rueda | 07.04 to 21.05.1974 | Roma (Italy) | Preparation of the XVII General Chapter. |
| XVII General Chapter 1976 | | | | |
| 3. 1979 | Br. Basilio Rueda | 01. 10 to 14.10.1979 | Rome (Italy) | Consecrated Life, Project of Community Life Poverty and Justice... The Marist Family, Marist Patrimony. |
| 4. 1982 | Br. Basilio Rueda | 03.10 to 17.10.1982 | Rome (Italy) | To evaluate the progress of renewal in the Institute and to prepare the writing of the Constitutions and Statutes. |
| XVIII General Chapter 1985 | | | | |
| 5. 1989 | Br. Charles Howard | 21.09 to 15.10.1989 | Veranópolis (Brazil) | The Marist Brother and his mission for the future. A group of young brothers was invited. |
| XIX General Chapter 1993 | | | | |
| 6. 1997 | Br. Benito Arbués | 12.09 to 04.10.1997 | Rome (Italy) | Refoundation of the Institute. Eight young brothers and eight lay people were invited. |
| XX General Chapter 2001 | | | | |
| 7. 2005 | Br. Seán Sammon | 05.09 to 30.09.2005 | Negombo (Sri Lanka) | Fostering vitality in Marist Life and ministry today. |
| XXI General Chapter... | | | | |



PROGRAMME OF THE VII GENERAL CONFERENCE

■ Monday 5th September

Welcome to Sri Lanka. Inaugural Mass.
Reflection and sharing on the visits to Asia

■ Tuesday, 6th September

An expert and a panel: Church and Asia.

■ Wednesday, 7th September

Opening address given by Brother Seán.
A time for decision making!
Reflection on vitality from
the point of view of the five calls

■ Thursday, 8th September

Reflection on vitality from
the point of view of the five calls

■ Friday, 9th September

The Marist Brothers and the arrival
of the Church for the evangelisation of Asia

■ Saturday, 10th September

Time of assimilation
Cultural evening
Meeting with the Brothers from Sri Lanka

■ Sunday, 11th September

Free

■ Monday, 12th September

Animation and Government. Restructuring.

■ Tuesday, 13th September

Vocation Ministry

■ Wednesday, 14th September

Initial Formation

■ Thursday, 15th September

Initial Formation

■ Friday, 16th September

On-going formation

■ Saturday, 17th September

Cultural and religious visit

■ Sunday, 18th September

Cultural and religious visit

■ Monday, 19th September

Second round of visits
by the General Council

■ Tuesday, 20th September

Finances and the evangelical use of goods

■ Wednesday, 21st September

Plan for remodelling the Hermitage

■ Thursday, 22nd September

Mission

■ Friday, 23rd September

Laity. Procurator General

■ Saturday, 24th September

Time for interiorisation

■ Sunday, 25th September

Mass in the parish of Duwa

■ Monday, 26th September

The General Council's calendar
for 2005 – 2009. XXI General Chapter

■ Tuesday, 27th September

Formation of Provincial Secretaries
Marist Apostolic Spirituality Document

■ Wednesday, 28th September

The communications of the Institute
and the webpage
Visit to the Maris Stella College, Negombo
Causes of the Saints, International College,
General House

■ Thursday, 29th September

Agreement on some basic guidelines

■ Friday, 30th September

Evaluation of the General Conference
Closing address. Final celebration