



Embrace life
Sustain the future



Secretariat of the laity

Bulletin 07 - September 2014

From the Secretariat

This bulletin reports on the communion initiatives that are emerging in the Administrative Units. For the Secretariat of the Laity they are a cause for incentive, joy and hope. Making them known is the purpose of this publication. To the previous objective we unite the desire to give our efforts, languages and projects a global dimension, in such a way that the "new relationship" becomes internationalised, the proposals are shared with the whole Institute, and the vitality of the Marist charism promoted for brothers and laity as the common reference for our Marist mission, brotherhood and spirituality.

I would like to underline the meetings of the Continental Commissions. They are bodies which are slowly consolidating and which seek to be bonds of communion with the provincial councils and commissions. The processes which leave traces are the local processes. These Commissions seek to ground in the Administrative Units the major objectives of the Institute and the Secretariat. There remains the challenge of harmonizing their mission with the Conferences of Provincials of each Region.

Fraternally,
Javier Espinosa, FMS.

Brazil: National Meeting of animators of the Champagnat Movement

The national meeting of the animators of the ChMMF was held from 16 to 18 May in Ribeirão das Neves, Minas Gerais, Brasil. The event was organized by the Commission of Marist Laity of the Marist Union of Brazil/UMBRASIL. Those participating included Br Javier Espinosa, director of the Secretariat of the Laity, who expounded the vision of the future of the Marist charism, Br Adalberto Amaral, who presented the data of the ChMMF in Brasil, and Edison Jardín, who spoke about the process of revitalization of the ChMMF.



Under the direction of Layza Oliveira, the participants established goals, objectives and commitments to be taken up in the provinces and in Marist Brasil.



RETREATS FOR BROTHERS AND LAITY

1. In Peru

With much enthusiasm and expectation, 32 lay persons and 3 Marist brothers belonging to 4 lay communities existing in Peru shared the annual retreat organized by the Lay Movement in May. This is a time for growth and formation offered to the laity following itineraries of growth in the Lay Movement. This year they enjoyed the presence of Br Javier Espinosa, Director of the Secretariat of the Laity, who animated the retreat. "The retreat has meant a



greater certainty about the calls of God in our life; a strengthening of the personal and community com-

mitment in this itinerary begun five, four, three and two years ago; the certainty that each of our specific vocations contributes to the revitalization of the charism; the security of this journey we are making brothers and laity, and the challenge to make our personal and community projects concrete in the calls we are receiving from the Church and the Institute, and finally, the desire to continue journeying TOGETHER: all this nourished us on our way".

2. In Kiribati

The Marists of Champagnat in Kiribati (9 brothers and 12 laity) took part recently in the annual retreat. It was based on Water from the Rock. The participants reflected on the implications of the Marist spirituality of Champagnat for personal and community life and mission. Kiribati is an island nation composed of 32 coral atolls and one raised atoll spread over an area of more than 3.5 million square kilometres. It has a population of approximately 100,000 inhabitants. The brothers started their mission in 1984.



3. In Villa Marista de Pilar, Argentina

Animated by the director of the Secretariat of the Laity, this time of prayer and reflection was centred on the specific Marist vocation of laity and brothers in harmony with the journey of the Congregation. From the dream of God for the world, touching on the mystical dimension. From the urge from God to go out, embracing the



prophetic dimension. We recalled the call of the last General Chapter to a "conversion of heart". Conversion as search and setting out, as readiness for what makes us fully happy as persons and human community. A personal conversion closely related to and integrated with the institutional renewal.

Annual Meeting of the Enlarged Secretariat in Lima

The Enlarged Secretariat of the Laity held its annual meeting in Lima, Peru, from 27 May to 1 June. The Secretariat, representative of the seven Marist regions, had for the first time Pep Buetas (Europe), as co-director, and Joao Luis Fedel (Brasil), as a new member. The rest of the secretariat is composed of Br Javier Espinosa (director), Tony Clarke (co-director, Australia), Agnes Reyes (Asia),

Patricia Ríos (Arco Norte), Br Sylvain Ramandimbarisoa (Africa) and Raúl Amaya (Cono Sur).

The principal content of the meeting was the follow-up of the projects and courses of action of the Secretariat reflected in the three year plan, discerning the ways to follow. Among the topics treated: reflection on the recommendations on association and belonging arising from the international meeting in Rome in March; the process of revitalization of the Champagnat Movement; the animation and accompaniment of the processes of communion in the different regions through the continental commissions; the necessary drive for experiences of joint formation; the formation of laity in order to strengthen their processes of leadership and animation.

On the last day, there was a fruitful exchange with a group of laity and brothers, as can be seen in the photo. The presence of Fabiano Incerti for the first two days allowed us to thank him for his services to the Secretariat over the last three years.



Meeting of the lay persons of the General House

Two years since the meeting held at the Hermitage, various proposals have followed but what was lacking was a longer experience of the "extended community". This was what was held in fact from 13 to 15 June in Ariccia, close to Rome, on the shores of Lake Albano. The 7 laity and brothers "placed in common our stories, our deepest convictions, our experiences of life and work... all in confrontation with the Marist charism. It was a lovely achievement to display photos and stories of our families,

to speak about our formation, growth, style of life, our encounter with the Marist charism, to come to know ourselves better and break down the barriers which the "roles" of daily life inevitably create.

As a group living and working in the General House, heart of the Marist world, we assume our responsibility in the process of institutional renewal and the updating of the mission to youth of today. We shared deep reflections and simple moments of



"family life", with good meals, laughing together and watching the World Football Cup at midnight... with liberty and spontaneity.

Province of Cruz del Sur

At the present time, there are three combined communities of Brothers and Laity in the Province. They are Tacuarembó, Fraile Pintado and Neuquén- Cinco Saltos. These experiences are being atten-

tively accompanied, to ascertain what the Spirit is saying through them. It is a challenge to harmonise a project where each specific vocation may unfold in complementarity. In addition, in various places in the Province Itiner-

aries of lay Marist formation are being carried out. Systematised materials exist for this. The result is a very precious instance of deepening in the charism and growth in Marist spirituality and mission.



Assembly of the Province of Mediterránea

The Province of Mediterránea held the Provincial Meeting for the II International Marist Mission Assembly in Guardamar on 10 and 11 May. Among the elements of the summary of the Assembly: "We observe that in our Province a new relationship between the disciples of Champagnat is being born, based on openness and sharing; and we feel as a challenge the necessity



to define and structure together, brothers and laity, the vocations of both, and their processes of formation, life and mission towards a greater evangelizing and social commitment. We observe that we are making progress in the joint formation of brothers and laity, and we feel as a challenge the need for this formation to go deeper into apostolic spirituality".

CONTINENTAL MEETINGS

1. Commission of Asia

On 10-11 June, the second meeting of the Commission of Laity of Asia was held in Marikina City, in the Philippines. Br Peter Rodney offered a message of support for the Commission's initiatives, and Sister Sonia Punzalan R.C. introduced the theme of Asiatic spirituality. Action plans for the next two years were drawn up. Among others, the following received emphasis: 1. Organize joint formation at the continental, provincial and sector levels; 2. Design simple programs of formation, taking account of the various approaches in the development of commitment of lay Marists and of the religious differences; 3. Propose the creation of structures which answer to the local needs, in support of the Marist life of laity and brothers; 4. Strengthen the communications network between the brothers and laity of the region.



2. American Sub-commission



The American Sub-commission of Laity met from 22 to 26 July in Brasilia. Raúl Amaya and Br Javier Espinosa presented the work carried out at the last meeting of the Secretariat of the Laity in Lima, Peru, and the next projects. The evaluation and review of the Strategic Plan and the drawing up of the Operational Plan for 2014 – 2015 allowed the practical detailing of the projects which people wish to implement at the level of the American continent. These are the 4 most prominent projects: 1. To foster the visibility of the Marist lay vocation and the new relation of brothers and laity within the processes of provincial government and the structures of continental animation. 2. To promote and accompany the development of processes and experiences of discernment and study of the lay Marist vocation and the experiences of association and belonging. 3. To promote and accompany the development of processes and experiences which express in a significant way the new relationship between brothers and laity. 4. To increase the community and fraternal life of the members of the Sub-commission. Meetings in UMBRASIL with the sector of Religious Life and Laity and in the Central Office with the Pastoral Committee enriched the experience of the meeting.

3. African Commission

The Commission for Africa and Madagascar met for the first time in Nairobi, after having been set up in 2013. Among the points treated at the meeting: Evaluation of the process followed by the commission in the past year. Becoming aware of the processes of the Secretariat, presented by Br Sylvain, member of the Enlarged Secretariat of the Laity. Analysis of the strengths



and weaknesses for a more efficient work of animation. Taking up the Plan drawn up in 2013, seeking practicality and concrete ways of translating it in the Administrative Units. Left pending was the determination of forms of financing for future meetings, formation processes, for the integration of the continent into the institutional path of the new brothers-laity relationship.

Perpetual profession, Marist Sisters of Champagnat

On 31 May, feast of the Visitation of Mary, María Laura and Daisy, Marist Sisters of Champagnat, made their perpetual profession in Guatemala. They expressed their determination thus: "With this step of perpetual profession, I wish to express that I am happy being a sister, with all the depth and implications of this word, that this is how I find my way of being church and serving the Kingdom, and that living in this way helps me to make some return for so much life, love, tenderness and fidelity the Lord has shown me". (Sr María Laura)

"With perpetual profession I wish to harvest the living of these years of journey as a sister, in which the good God has shown me his faithful love, feeling grateful to Him because, without my being worthy, he has called me through his Son and given me the gift to hear and follow him; follow him with all that implies... How not to love one who has loved me so much, to one who has given meaning to my existence? For this reason, I continue placing my trust in God, and being grateful for the gift for my life of being a Marist sister of Champagnat I say once again. I want to be all for You!" (Sr Daisy).



Proposal of the General Council

In view of the suggestions received at the meeting on "Lay association and belonging" held in Rome in March, the General Council decided to entrust the Secretariat of the Laity with the following tasks:

- The design of a global framework of the Marist vocational process for lay people, which offers common criteria for both discernment and deepening of vocation and for lay association and belonging to the charism a/o the Institute. Such a framework will have to offer:
 - The fundamental criteria of a vocational process,
 - an itinerary of charismatic formation,
 - the possible forms of association and belonging,
 - possibilities of organization for lay men and women linked to the charism.
- The animation and accompaniment of the experiences being carried out in this respect in some provinces as well as the prompting of new experiences where interest exists and where it is requested.
- Offer the 22nd General Chapter this global framework, taking into consideration the various experiences developed in the Institute over the next few years.



Formation of lay Marists in Sri Lanka

The Marist laity of Sri Lanka accept the necessity of a basic knowledge of the religions existing in the country as an important task at the present time. The first step in this direction was taken on 29 June, when they met with the Reverend Dr. Sumangala Thera. He showed the group the fundamentals of Buddhism and its application in the life of humanity.

The meeting finished with a dialogue about different aspects of Buddhism and Christianity.



Lexicon project

The Secretariat of the Laity has seen the need of offering a Lexicon containing the terms most used at meetings and in the reflections of brothers and laity. Its intention is to make the laity more familiar with these terms and help the brothers discover new nuances of meaning in them. The project is being carried out with the participation of laity and brothers from all the regions of the Institute. A team of editors is charged with giving the definitive version, taking care for its quality and striving to respond to the different cultural sensibilities. Nevertheless, the desire is that the content of these terms can be enriched with the contributions of all, through the web page of the Institute. In a collaborative manner, we continue constructing this conceptual framework which will help us on our path of communion.



The "table" is set, Canada

On 21 June, the brothers of the new provincial council met with the members of the council of administration of the Marist Association



of Laity. The meeting had as objective to establish the bases of a new structure of animation which may contribute to perpetuating the vitality of the Marist charism in the province. For want of a definitive name, this body has been called the "(round) table of mission" or "(round) table of communion". This "table" will make sure that the current works and any future experiences and projects will be bearers of the values of the Marist charism. It will also promote an authentic Marist leadership among those responsible for the various works, projects and experiences. It is composed of three brothers and three lay persons: Brs Gérard Bachand, Jacques Bélisle and Félix Roldán, and Mrs Louise Fortier, Mrs Linda Corbeil and Mr Michel Beaulac.

Marist Conference of Asia

The leaders of Asia met at the end of April to hold their third annual meeting in Bangkok. The Conference is a time for planning joint regional initiatives. This was the first meeting attended by Mrs Agnes Reyes, member of the Enlarged Secretariat of the Laity, who was present by right. The Commission of Laity of the region has been very active. It is promoting above all formation activities, confronting with creativity the lack of resources in the region.



Journey of communion

During the month of June, the General Council once more promoted a meeting with the Secretariats, the formators of El Escorial and Manziana, and the Community of Geneva, to develop fraternal communication, co-responsibility in animation, the union of vision and communion in the same spirit and mission. These meetings, promoted by Br Emili, have become a marvellous investment of integration and dialogue.



An experience of shared life



A group of families joined the community of San Alfonso, in San Salvador, América Central, in enjoying a good experience of shared life for six days. The families and the brothers shared prayer, meals, relaxation, meetings... in a very natural and family way. Long sessions around the table sharing anecdotes, games. The daily programme involved taking part in morning prayer, the work round, some preparing lunch, someone to go for the children and the servants, someone to animate the prayer, to find a film to see, or an outing to make... Brothers and laity sharing the same house, the same table, the same daily round. All for all, from different places but joined, not by blood but by a charism which is for everyone. The experience demonstrated that a Marist community of laity and brothers is possible.



National meeting of the fraternities in Argentina

The national meeting of fraternities of the Province of Cruz del Sur was held in the Villa San José, in Luján, Argentina, on 5, 6 and 7 September. The principal theme of the meeting was becoming aware of being a positive and passionate leader, like Marcellin, which should beat in the heart of each member of the fraternity. Br Eutimio Rubio accompanied the members in discovering the value of leadership based on the personal and interior relations

of each person. We were left with the ongoing challenge of the personal awareness of each one, in order that our meetings might generate "spaces" of humanization, helping us grow in freedom, confidence and creativity. The members of the fraternities received, as a symbol of their commitment, the apron, which identifies them as servants of their brothers and sisters, in harmony with the "Church of the apron".



Retreat with the fraternities in Belgium

On 18 to 20 July, a group of laity and brothers gathered around the same table in Habay to delve deeper into Marist and Champagnat spirituality. The retreat was animated by Br Teófilo Minga, who made a comparative study of the documents "Water from the Rock" and "Gathered around the same table". Three main themes were developed: spirituality, shared life and mission. Some of the comments of the participants: It motivated me to read the book

"Gathered around the same table" again and with new eyes. I ended with the desire to set out on the journey. I was impressed by the message of internationality and boldness. The Spirit is at work everywhere. I found a group young in spirit, with the desire to repeat the experience every year and meet more frequently. The retreat opened



up new paths for our groups and fraternities.

FOR REFLECTION

Collaboration in God's mission

We are becoming more capable of working with others. It is a process and we are learning. In the beginning, we thought of lay people collaborating with us, in our works. Kolvenbach already said at the GC34 that we need to talk of the opposite: Jesuits collaborating with the laity in their works. Today this difference is already diminishing and we speak about collaboration in God's mission. We do not speak about the mission of the Franciscans, the Carmelites, the Jesuits, but about the mission of God. It is God who calls collaborators and therefore our discernment will be about who has the same heart as us to work together, not who has a vocation or not for work: it is God who decides this. But we must discern about whom we can work well with, in peace and in the same direction.

Fr Adolfo Nicolás, Superior General of the Society of Jesus