

NEWS BULLETIN



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SPECIAL EDITION: XXII GENERAL CHAPTER RIO NEGRO, COLOMBIA SEPTEMBER 08 – OCTOBER 20, 2017

DAY 5: Tuesday, September 12, 2017: *Feast of the Holy Name of Mary*
Discovering the New World and Electing the Facilitation Commission



What is *new* in today's world? How will it be in a few years? How is the world transforming? What is happening socially? These questions summarize the focus of the reflection and sharing among Chapter participants on Day 5. Another important item of the day's agenda was the election of the Facilitation Commission, which will now guide the development of the Chapter.

The feast of the Holy Name of Mary was celebrated in both the Morning Prayer and the Eucharist that ended day's work. This feast is the patronal feast of the whole Marist Family, in particular the Society of Mary.

Immersion in today's world

Day 5's morning first sessions, and the two afternoon sessions, were devoted to

participants building up a picture of today's world. Drawing on the sharing of the immersion experiences and the "Gathering the Fruits" exercise that was part of the last stage of the Pre-Chapter Process carried out in the Administrative Units, the facilitator Matthieu Daum, invited capitulants to define what is new in the world today and how they imagine the world to be in 2, 3 or 5 years' time.

This exercise invited participants, as a contemplative exercise, to identify the new realities of today's world and how they felt about them, without trying to find solutions or reasons why these realities exist. Each group represented their findings in words and symbols on large pieces of paper, which were then placed on the walls of the Chapter Hall.



Facilitation Commission

Prior to lunch, the election took place of 8 members of the new Facilitation Commission.

The following Brothers, whose names are given in alphabetical order, were duly elected:

Ben Consigli (USA), Darren Joseph Burge (Australia), Ernesto Sánchez (Mexico), , João Carlos do Prado (Brazil), Juan Carlos Fuertes (Spain), Lindley Halago Sionosa (Philippines), Michel Maminiana Razafimandimby (Madagascar) and Óscar Martín Vicario (Spain).

Brothers Today

At the conclusion of the day's last working session, those attending the Chapter were presented with a copy of the newly published photo book, "Marist Lives - Through the Lens"; the work of Australian photographer Conor Ashleigh. The photo book is a gift from Brother

Emili Turú and his Council to all the Brothers to commemorate the Bicentenary of the Institute. Those responsible for initiating, producing and printing this excellent book were the Brothers Today Secretariat, in collaboration with Marist Publishers Edelvives, FTD and Gram. In the words of Brother Emili, "*The photos in the book define the vocation of the Marist Brothers much better than any word.*"

Br. Tony Leon, Director of the Brothers Today Secretariat, in launching the book, gave details of its creation and explained how it was organized. He said, "The images reveal many hugs, many expressions of joy, the easy relationship between Brothers and lay people, the sense of tenderness in the way Brothers regard students, and the sense of mischief in some of the older Brothers". Tony noted that the book is not one to be read but to be contemplated. The books will soon be distributed to all Provinces and Districts.



DAY 6: Wednesday, September 13, 2017: Visit to social centres in Medellín

On Wednesday, September 13th, the General Chapter participants journeyed to Medellín to visit social centers and projects administered by various organizations on the peripheries of the city. The goal of the immersion visit was to meet people engaged in that Centre, and to observe and listen to their realities, needs and opportunities. The visit was also an opportunity for Chapter participants to try and put themselves in the lives of the people in these places and to listen to what the Spirit was saying to them in the experience.

Departure to Medellín

For the visits, the Chapter participants were divided into several smaller groups. Each group was accompanied by a local Colombian Marist. The groups departed Rionegro at 8.30 am for the one-hour drive into the city of Medellín. The groups visited places such as: Don Bosco City, Hogar la Liberad, Hogar Claret, Hogar Miraflores, Hogar Elena y Juan, La Honda, Fundación Huella, Vallejuellos, barrio el

Salado, Centro C.D.B and Santa Joana de Lestonnac.

Each place was an opportunity to meet people associated with the mission of the Centre and to listen, observe and discern what the Spirit is saying at this time, so as to be able to respond to two questions

- What does God want us to be in this emerging world?

Fundación Huellas

One group visited *Fundación Huellas (Footsteps Foundation)*. This Foundation is located within the barrio of Santo Domingo high up on one of the hills overlooking Medellín. Fundación Huellas receives support from the Norandia Province of the Marist Brothers. There are two social centers: a library and a community center in Manantiales and another educational center at La Torre Community Center, each staffed by volunteers. There is also a Marist Brothers community of insertion located in this neighborhood. Presently there



are two Brothers and an aspirant who live in this community.

One of the leaders of the centers shared a very moving story of how started with a sewing project for mothers in the neighbourhood. After completing the course, one of the mothers shared with one of the volunteers, "Here I have learned to sew back together my life, and my children's life because a week ago, I wanted to commit suicide". This mother, who is very poor and has three children, found in the life and activity of that center both meaning and a reason for continuing to live.

Meeting at the Medellin Novitiate

After visiting the social centers in various parts of Medellín, the Chapter participants and guides gathered together again in the center of the city and visited the Basilica of Our Lady of Candelaria. Everyone then went to the La Valla Inter-Provincial Novitiate where the community and local lay Marists hosted a very enjoyable and fraternal afternoon refreshment. The novitiate community consists of three Brother

formators and 12 novices: 7 from Norandina Province, 4 from Central Mexico and 1 from Central America.

Before leaving the novitiate, Chapter participants gathered in their fraternity group to share their personal experiences of the immersion visits. The general feeling among participants was deep gratitude and respect for the positive witness and prophetic sign shown by the people associated with the centers and projects institutions visited. The Chapter participants were also very grateful to all the Marist novices and young adults who accompanied them as guides throughout the visit.

Facilitation Commission

The 8 members of the new Chapter Facilitation Commission have begun their work. Br Ben Consigli has been appointed as the Coordinator. Br Juan Carlos Fuertes is Vice-Coordinator. Br João Carlos do Prado is the secretary.

DAY 7: Thursday, September 14, 2017: Capitulants meet young people



Within the dynamic of understanding today's contemporary world, the General Chapter on September 7, 2017 opened the door to the world of young people. 25 of them, leaders of youth ministry and other pastoral works of the Province of Norandina filled the Chapter Hall with life and energy.

Young people in the Chapter

From the beginning of week 2 of the General Chapter, 25 young people from the three countries that make up the Province of Norandina Province (Colombia, Venezuela & Ecuador) met in Rionegro to prepare for September 7's meeting with the participants of the General Chapter. Three young people were from Venezuela; three from Ecuador and the others from Colombia. Their presence represented all the young people of the Marist world. A recorded video was also shown to the assembly that contained messages from young people representing different regions of the Marist world. Later in the day, Brother Emili reminded everyone this was the first-time young people had ever been invited to participate in a General Chapter.

The young people animated the two morning sessions with singing, dancing, prayer and reflection. They also presented "A Message to the Marist Brothers of the Schools from the Marist Youth around the World".

During the first session, young people joined Chapter participants at the small tables. There were introductions and the young people heard from the Chapter participants why the Institute wanted them to participate in this important meeting. In turn, the young people shared their feelings about being invited to the Chapter. Other questions shared at the tables included: What is the history of your association with the Marist Institute? What is the best thing about being a Marist?

Message from young people to the capitulants



The second session focused on the reading of 'The Message' prepared by the young people for the Chapter, and for the whole Institute. The message was read in two parts: the first emphasizing the social situation of young people today. The second part emphasized their proposals for how a New La Valla might be built in the Institute from their perspective as young people. After each part, Chapter participants and the young people reflected together on the message at their tables.

Young people said that today's reality:

is submitting them to a culture of death, to a society where war and violence has destroyed their hopes and dreams, where many of them do not have an opportunity to raise their voices against the injustices of our world. Today's world has denied them the

opportunity to live their childhood and adolescence, leaving them feeling like slaves in a world that proclaims freedom.

From the perceived reality, the young people proposed to the Institute:

We believe that in educating and evangelizing young people, the focus should be on accompaniment.

We require your help and guidance to face of the situations and problems that the modern world is confronting: homosexuality, abortion, early pregnancies, suicide, racism, discrimination, intolerance, unemployment and the destruction of the environment.

Becoming aware of the appeal of young people



In the afternoon session, after a moment of relaxation and prayer, the Chapter participants and young people divided into their own groups to each reflect on what they had experienced in the morning sessions.

Jimena Grignani and Gabrielle Giard invited the Chapter participants, at their tables groups, to share what had most moved them, and what may have had them moving a little out of their comfort zones.

In the second session of the afternoon, the Chapter participants and young people

returned to the Chapter Hall to continue the sharing together. This session concluded with an "open microphone" where anyone could express to the assembly what they heard and valued from the day.

What was very clear from the general feedback was, thanks to the presence of the young people, many things were discovered during these days of researching what is new in our world. Conscious of this, the Institute seeks a way of being, a **new La Valla**, which is in harmony with today.

The young people demonstrated courage in being able to delicately touch various elements of Marist life with depth and prophetic courage. They invited Chapter participants to a profound reflection on a way of living Marcellin Champagnat's charism. There is an emerging world of youth waiting for the presence of the Marist charism.

Thanksgiving ends the journey

With the conviction that the Brothers need the young people and young people need the Brothers, the whole group gathered for the Eucharistic celebration in the chapel at 6.45 pm. This Eucharist concluded what was a very significant moment in the Chapter so far.

In his reflection after the Gospel, Br. Cesar Rojas said that, "the experience you have lived today is not something you have earned, but it is a gift from God. It's a commitment". Br. Emili Turú thanked the young people and reminded everyone of this same commitment; a commitment that can be summed up by the three icons that accompanied the preparation of the Bicentenary: Montagne, commitment to life; Fourvière, commitment to communion; La Valla, commitment to the roots of our spirituality.