



INITIAL LETTER

FROM THE PROVINCIALS OF ARCO NORTE IN REGARDS TO THE PROCESS OF REGIONALIZATION OF THE MARIST INSTITUTE

Dear Marists of Champagnat,

Fraternal greetings and we hope that this letter finds you well!

We are writing to you with the intention of sharing some recent events regarding our Marist region within this part of the world.

During the week of March 8-12, 2016, at the invitation of Brother Emili Turú, our Superior General and his General Council, the Provincial Councilors of the Arco Norte Region met in Quito, Ecuador. The time together was filled with great discussions, moments of reflection and prayer and Marist fellowship. On March 12, the last day of the extended General Council, the councilors of the region of Arco Norte had an opportunity to not only to reflect upon the New Model initiatives that have been proposed by the General administration but also reflect on our lives, vocations, both Brother and lay, and our mission.

ARCO NORTE

Our region consists of the following Marist provinces: the province Canada, the province of Central America which consists of the countries of Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Puerto Rico and Cuba, the provinces of Central Mexico and Western Mexico as well as Haiti, the province of Norandina which consists of the countries of Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela and

the province of the United States. Together, as a region, we serve 124,035 children and young people which comprise a total of 20% of our international Marist mission. We have 173 ministries: high schools, social outreach programs and universities which comprise 27% of our Institute's ministry. Our Marist mission is undertaken by 15,902 brothers and laypeople. In our region, we are 706 brothers who comprise 20% of our brothers in the Institute. Currently, the average age of the brothers is 63 and we have 151 communities of brothers. In terms of finances, the region of Arco Norte funds 25% of the income of the congregation.

THE ROAD AHEAD:

The main goal of our work in Quito revolved around advancing a plan to create a Marist Region. There was a sense of unity which was evident throughout our time together. There were many points of convergence and a sense that something new was beginning to awaken and grow among the participants. We realized that before us lied a hopeful journey, but not without its challenges. We are very aware that the realities of our six provinces are different, but we believe we should seize the moment to follow a common road; brothers and laypeople together, keeping in mind our diverse cultural realities and challenges of our respective areas and ministries.

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During our time together, we sensed the call of the Spirit “who makes all things new,” and encourages us to move forward as a “global community”. This Spirit is creating among us a window of opportunity for mission which is unimaginable. This is the moment to face new challenges as Marists, brothers and laypeople, which may be beyond our limits of understanding. Our lives as Brothers and our Marist charism are gifts for the Church which we share with laypersons.

In addition, we feel we are in solidarity with the Marist Institute which wishes to move forward in this area. We also wish to be in solidarity with the servant Church to which Pope Francis has invited us.

INITIATIVES TO BE UNDERTAKEN

As a result of this reflection — which is in harmony with the New Models proposal of the Institute — we have identified projects we believe are important for the present and future of the region that will inject new life in us, as individuals and as provinces.

In January, a group of brothers and laypeople representing the six provinces met in Guadalajara. At that meeting, they put into place a series of initiatives as much for the animation and attention of those present as for dealing with the scope of our mission. Also present at this meeting, representing the General Administration and their support of this endeavor was Bro. Joao Carlos de Prado and Mr. Luca Olivari.

Subsequently, through the help of videoconferencing, the group continued formulating the initiatives that would, in the end, be presented and discussed in Quito by the provincial councils. The work, although complex, due to the diversity of the participants, was important and proved to be fruitful.

As a result of the work and reflection done in Quito, it was decided that the strategies, agreed

upon, will help define the path of the region and that will focus on two primary areas: The life and vocation of the brothers and laypeople.

LIFE AND VOCATION

- Implement strategies of communication (dialogue and listening) that will be effective and will raise awareness of different cultures in order to incorporate in the regional process key leadership roles on all province levels.
- Develop a campaign of information and raise awareness regarding the regional process (pamphlets, videos, letters...)
- Maintain one or two common novitiate houses for the region (given the realities of language) and expand the proposal of a another house of formation that would be open to other possibilities of formation—for example, programs with other congregations, joint postulancy, etc.
- Collaboratively build-up of a program to promote vocations as well as a proactive vocation team for the region.
- Create, within the region, programs of instruction for both brothers and laypeople. These programs should focus on instruction in the charism as well as the Marist mission (leadership, administrative skills, etc...)
- Create a team of instructors who will develop a curriculum of Marist formation, unique and forward-looking, that will allow participants to disseminate the information upon their return to their respective provinces.

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MISSION

- Create a strategic plan for the region in the areas of personnel, mission, and finances.
- Share 'best practices' in the areas of education, finances, management, evangelization, and solidarity.
- Create a competent implementation team for these proposals with a projected budget. Bring together leaders in finance and education on the regional level to advance these proposals.

During the day of reflection in Quito, there was an intense participation, by the councils, to give our best to the proposals, to reach an agreement while at the same time listening to each others' questions and concerns. It truly was an exercise in brotherhood and discernment.

Although other proposals also were raised during the meeting, we did not have the time to give them sufficient consideration. The team that will continue this work will review the importance of each one of these proposals.

NEXT STEPS:

In April 2016, the Provincials from the region met again in Rome. We thought it would be important to request the service of various people to help us set in motion some of the proposed projects as discussed in Quito. Our objective, as a region, was to establish some concrete steps that could be presented to the next General Chapter. Therefore, a team was named that would seek the help of experts in the different areas that will require cooperation and regional involvement. We also want to extend, beforehand, our invitation and gratitude to many of you, Brothers and laity, who will be participating in these regional activities. Let us be mindful not only of the vitality and viability of our charism within the Arco Norte region but also our ministry of evangelizing our children and young people.

We believe in the importance of setting out on this journey with the input of CIAP (the International Conference of American Provincials) and with all our Marists colleagues in South America, as well as those in other regions and in Rome. This process will allow us to feel in communion with the entire Marist World and also benefit from their knowledge and experiences to create a plan.

The Brothers on the team that will lead this process are: Gregorio Linacero (Central America), Felix Roldan (Canada), Albert Rivera (USA), Justino Gomez (Mexico Central), Raul Lara (Western Mexico) and Carlos Alberto Rojas (Norandina). Their initial meeting will be in Bogotá, Colombia this coming June 29 through July 2, 2016.

Mary, who has always done everything for us, is our model of listening to the Word and of having an attitude of openness to the will of the Father. She encourages us to live our Marist charism—Brothers and lay members together—close to the most needy in a spirit of brotherhood and service.

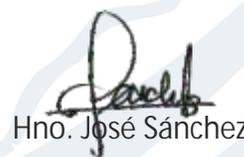
We pray also for the intercession of Blessed Oscar Romero, martyr and apostle of the most needy, and to our Brothers pioneers who have gone before us, that they give us the courage to respond to the challenges and the realities of our time.

With heartfelt appreciation,


Fr. Gerard Bachand


Bro. Patrick McNamara


Hno. Miguel Angel Santos


Hno. José Sánchez


Hno. Luis Carlos Gutiérrez


Hno. César Rojas