

Course on children's rights at the Escorial

Spain - 14th December 2011

FMSI organised a brief awareness course under the title «Formation in children's rights», at the Marist Spirituality Centre of the Escorial, Madrid, from 5 to 7 December. Br Manel Mendoza, of the Geneva office of FMSI, organised and presented the conference. It was directed to Marist Brothers of the «Umbrales» course currently at the spirituality centre following a programme of personal growth and renewal. The aim was to inform these Brothers from various Provinces of the Institute about the rights of children, the mechanisms for defending human rights at the United Nations, and the work undertaken by FMSI with the UNO through its Geneva office. The members of the Rome FMSI office were also present.

The days of formation were divided into modules. The introductory session served to show the current situation of children in the world from the point of view of statistics, and to demonstrate what had been done over the years to improve conditions of life for children, and what still remained to be done in the light of the UNO Convention on the Rights of Children. Study of a specific article, one dealing with the work of minors, helped stimulate reflection and debate on the perception normally held of the rights of minors in relation to the standard which the Convention is trying to impose on states.

The second session focused on FMSI: how the Foundation works for disadvantaged children, with the defence of their rights in the international system, and through

solidarity projects capable of improving their condition of life, while allowing them real enjoyment of such conditions.

With the third session, the participants got to the heart of the functioning of the United Nations. After an introduction on the origins of the UNO, Br Manel illustrated the role of the Security Council, the objectives and principles of the UNO, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the safeguard mechanisms for the Rights of Man and the Rights of Children, and in particular, the procedure of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). The module helped them understand the operations of the different organisations of the UNO, and especially the role played by the civil society organisations (NGO), which put pressure on governments and are extra vigilant in seeing that the latter fulfill their obligations as members of the United Nations.

The fourth and final session consisted in role play. The participants formed groups. Each played a role in simulating the operation of

the procedure of the Universal Periodic Review, the mechanism by which the UNO Council of the Rights of Man regularly examines the situation of human rights in all member countries. They found the experience very useful for understanding in a concrete way how an organisation of civil society can intervene in the processes of taking decisions applying to the member states of the UNO.



SED and FMSI sign an agreement of co-operation

Spain - 6th December 2011

SED and FMSI signed an agreement of co-operation on the 1st of December, in Madrid. The agreement was drawn up by FMSI and proposed last May to the Provinces and Marist solidarity organizations for the purpose of mutual support in the work for needy children and promotion of their rights. After the six Provinces who joined immediately, SED is the first Marist NGO to subscribe to this agreement.

This establishes the bases for reciprocal collaboration and, more specifically, spells out in twelve points the support that the Marist corporate bodies would be able to provide for FMSI, and, in eleven points, the services FMSI would be able to offer the Provinces and Marist corporations to help them implement the call of the XXI General Chapter "to become experts in the protection and promotion of the rights of children" and to take concrete steps in this direction. In

this matter, in fact, apart from supporting solidarity projects, FMSI would be able to place at the service of the Institute the experience gained by its personnel in working in the United Nations in Geneva and its potential as a Corporate body with consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC).

The co-operation agreement between SED and FMSI was signed during a meeting held in Madrid, at the headquarters of SED. In the course of the meeting, the

two organizations shared information and discussed suggestions for work, singling out concrete possibilities of collaboration in co-financing projects in Malawi and for Haiti, development of animation material on children's rights, exchange of information to make best use of the respective means of communication and to improve their own visibility.

Meetings between FMSI and SED are now a regular thing and the two organizations meet once a year in Madrid and Rome alternatively.

Despite their different nature and vocation (one International and centred on children's rights, the other typically Spanish and devoted principally to education for solidarity), they have converging areas of activity in virtue of their common belonging to the Marist world of solidarity, education and social development.



A tour of the European Agencies of International Solidarity

Italy - 3rd December 2011

Brothers Mario Meuti and Jude Pieterse recently visited, 7-14 November, several European Agencies of International Solidarity to consolidate the bonds of collaboration and present some new projects which have come to us in the last few months. One of the tasks of the FMSI Rome Office is to maintain con-

tact with European agencies which traditionally provide aid for solidarity activities, social promotion, even specifically missionary, in developing countries. We visit them every year, whether to keep in contact, or to study jointly the possibility of financing one of the many projects which come to our office.

The occasion this year was a special one: Br Mario Meuti, new Director of the Rome Office, wanted to become familiar with these agencies, and the opportunity presented when Br Jude Pieterse, former vice-president of FMSI and very familiar with many of them, was once again in Rome. So they undertook a tour together,

starting in Amsterdam (Holland) with a private donor (who requests anonymity), who has always been distinguished by his generosity and savoir faire each time we have presented to him a project of clear social usefulness. Also in Holland, at La Haye, the two Brothers met «Cord-Aid», a Catholic organisation with which FMSI is in contact, and here, the problem of the crisis, the diminution in donations from the faithful... began to be strongly felt.

From La Haye to Brussels. Meeting with «Entraide et Fraternité», the most important Belgian NGO, whose motto «For a juster world» is very similar in style and ideas to FMSI. In both cases, despite the difficulties encountered in supporting our projects, the Brothers had cordial talks and collected much useful information from people familiar with the different countries where we work.

From Brussels to Aix-la-Chapelle, in Germany, the city of Charlemagne, capital of the Holy Roman Empire. Here the German Church has several large organisations for solidarity and missionary aid: Missio, Misereor and P.M.K. (Papstliches Missionwerk der Kinder – Pontifical Missionary Work for Children). A splendid welcome for Brothers Jude and Mario, guests in the beautiful «Oblatenkloster» building in Salvatorberg, in the highest part of the city. Here they met experts from many parts of the world: Central America, Haiti and the Caribbean, Africa in general, Kenya, Southeast Asia, particularly Cambodia and Vietnam, two counties of special interest

for us. The Brothers had the opportunity to share some experiences and learn a lot from people who have visited these places many times. They showed interest in some of our projects, and contacts have already been made with our local organizers.

From Aix-la-Chapelle a voyage to Essen in the Ruhr region, to meet with «Adveniat», another missionary organisation particularly attentive to the

and Mindelheim. In each place there is a missionary animation team directed respectively by Brothers Bernhard Seigel, Karl Heinz Haag and Heinrich Schamberger, whose work of making pupils, families and people sensitive to this subject is truly admirable and praiseworthy. Each year, they collect considerable sums usually destined for works connected with so many German Marist Brothers who have worked – or are still working – in Africa or in Southeast Asia. Together they studied ways of continuing the collaboration and of having a greater share in our experiences.

There was even time for a welcome diversion to Cologne. We could not leave this part of Germany without a visit to the splendid Gothic cathedral. The train arrived at 11.11 on 11-11-11! It is difficult to imagine the spectacle of thousands of young people

gathered in the cathedral square and around it... Perhaps to ward off the ill omens of catastrophes usually associated with this unique series of '1s', the young Germans celebrated the event like a special Carnival day: everyone was wearing masks; there were musical bands, choirs, feasts and... barrels of beer!

A special thanks from FMSI to the Marist Brothers of Germany for their warm welcome, and in particular to Br Jude, who agreed to come expressly from South Africa; thanks for his availability, his valuable suggestions, and his great experience placed once more at our service.



Caribbean area. We were able to ask for some help for a project dear to our brothers in Haiti: a youth centre in Jérémie (30,000 inhabitants, in the west of the country) where, thanks to the presence of the Postulancy, youth interested in the Marist life, together with the Brothers, are developing activities of catechesis, animation and educational work outside the school among the youth and people of the zone, but without adequate space and structure.

The voyage of Brothers Mario and Jude continued on to Bavaria where, before meeting «Missio München», they visited the three Marist communities and schools of Fürth, Cham

