



## **VIA LATINA 22** **# 301 - June 2021**

News from the General Administration of the Society of Mary

### **Restructuring in Latin America: a new Region**



On May 25, 2021, Memorial of Mary, Help of Christians, the Superior General, with the consent of his Council, decided to create the new Region of Latin America, which includes the former regions of Argentina, Chile, Colombia-Ecuador and Peru. The Region will come into being in the first part of 2022, at a date yet to be determined. At that time, the four regions will cease to exist and will form part of the Region as Sectors. A Region composed of four Sectors is the structure that has

been adopted as a result of the work of the Unit heads and the General Council.

The Latin American units have a long tradition of collaboration within the CLAMAR zone. In July 2019, the Superiors had made the choice to engage in the process of restructuring the Zone based on the adoption of projects common to all the Units, placed under the authority of a Zonal President appointed by the Superior General. This restructuring scheme had been promoted at the General Leadership Assembly in July 2015. Under the presidency of Fr. Luis Casalá, SM, these two years of experience have strengthened the unity of vision of these Units and prepared the way for this even more intense stage of collaboration through the unification into one Region.

The objective of this restructuring is to free up energy for the benefit of the religious life of the brothers and their mission by lightening the administrative structures through greater centralization. Local animation will also be able to rely on a strengthened common vision. In line with the last General Chapter, the Zone is also particularly attentive to being "in mission with the Marianist Family." The communities in Brazil and Cuba are under the responsibility of the Province of Spain. They will continue their collaboration with the new Region.

We welcome this step: adapting is a sign of vitality and hope. Let us pray for the 53 brothers belonging to this new Unit and for the many works they animate with the contribution of competent lay collaborators. We entrust the work of this transition to the four superiors and the President. Finally, let us pray for all the Marianist Family of Latin America, which remains very committed to our work. Let us confide this new stage to Our Lady of Guadalupe, patroness of the continent, and ask her and our Founder to foster abundant fruits, especially in good, solid religious vocations.

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## **First Professions in the District of India**

On May 1, 2021, Bros. Aievan Tete, Melwin Britto, Praween Kerketta, and Rohit Tigga professed first vows in Nirmal Deep, Ranchi, in the presence of their community members and Marianist Sisters. Fr. Jinu Muthukattil, SM, Novice-master, presided at the liturgical ceremony for the first vows celebration. Bro. Sukirt Tirkey, SM, Assistant for Education of District of India, received the vows as he was delegated to do by Fr. Oscar Vasquez, SM, Provincial of USA.



**L-R:Bro. Praween Kerketta, SM, Bro. Aievan Tete, SM, Fr. Jinu Muthukattil, SM, Bro. Melwin Britto, SM and Bro. Rohit Tigga, SM**

Due to pandemic, the celebration was very simple but it was celebrated with meaning and joy.

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## **Institutions of the Ministries of Lector and Acolyte at the Chaminade International Seminary in Rome**

On Friday, May 28, 2021 the Institution of Ministries took place for four seminarians of the Chaminade International Seminary in Rome. Three of them received the ministry of acolyte: Anselme Mawe Agbessi, SM (TO), Peter Kulandai Yesu, SM (IN), George Stifen Mekhi, SM (IN). One received the ministry of lector: José Luis Gonzalez, SM (Mexico-USA).

The ceremony took place in the chapel of Our Lady of the Pillar in front of the two communities of the Curia Generalizia gathered for the occasion. The Superior General, Father André Fétis, SM, presided over the ceremony. The institution of ministries is a step on the path of preparation for priestly service. The current situation of the pandemic invites us to emphasize the role of consolation and support that the Word of

God and the Eucharist have in the activity of the priest who must be attentive to the needs of the world today.



**L-R: Fr. Miguel Ángel Cortés (Rector), SM, Bro. George Stifen Majhi, SM, Bro. José Luis Gonzalez, SM, Fr. André-Joseph Fétis (Superior General), SM, Bro. Peter Kulandai Yesu, SM, Bro. Frédéric Bini, SM (Vice Rector) and Bro. Anselme Mawe Agbessi, SM.**

In his homily, the Superior General recalled the roles of an acolyte and a lector in the liturgy. Indeed, the acolyte serves at the altar alongside the priest and deacon, while the lector proclaims the readings from Sacred Scripture, except for the Gospel.

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## **Fr. Helmut Brandstetter Appointed to Second Term as Regional**



In a meeting held on May 12, 2021, the General Council unanimously reappointed Fr. Helmut Brandstetter, SM, as Regional Superior of the Region of Austria-Germany. This will be his second term of three years starting on August 13, 2021.

The support for Fr. Helmut as superior was wide in the consultation. In a spirit of Faith and of service to the Society of Mary, Fr. Helmut has accepted his nomination.

The General Council is grateful to him for his positive response to the call to fraternal service.

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## **Appointment of the President of the European Marianist Conference (CEM)**



With the consent of his Council meeting on May 12, 2021, the Superior General has appointed Brother José María Alvira, SM, as President of the European Marianist Conference (CEM) for a single term of five years, beginning July 1, 2021.

José Maria is a Marianist religious of the Province of Spain, currently assistant to the novice master in Saragossa, Spain.



We thank Brother José Maria Alvira for his availability to render this service to the Society of Mary.

We also thank the outgoing President, Brother Jean-Marie Leclerc, SM, for his dedication and generous service during his term.



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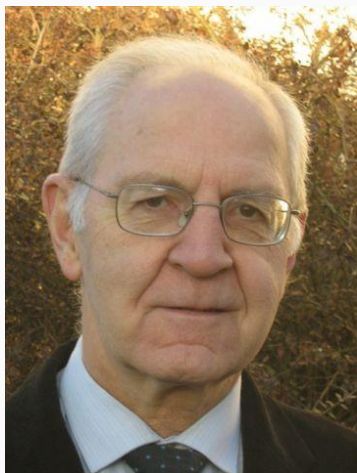
## **New Coordinator of the Centers for Marianist Studies (CEMAS)**

The General Council has appointed Bro. José Ignacio Iglesia, SM, as the new Coordinator of CEMAS. He will assume this responsibility from July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2024. José Ignacio is a member of the Marianist community of Warsaw (Poland). He recently defended his doctoral thesis in Mariology at the University of Dayton.

We thank José Ignacio and the Province of Spain for their generosity and availability.



The Centers for Marianist Studies (CEMAS) are under the responsibility of each Zonal Conference, with the president of the Zone being in charge of monitoring their activity on behalf of all the superiors. The director of each Center is responsible for his or her own Center. However, it is necessary for someone to facilitate communication and the exchange of information among the directors, to act as an coordinator for possible common projects and to encourage everyone in their work.



Since December 2017, the coordinator has been Fr. Robert Witwicki, SM. His responsibility ended in November 2020. Due to the current circumstances, the General Council asked him to continue until June of this year, a request he generously accepted. We are very grateful to Robert for his work over the years and his great interest in promoting Marianist studies.

Thank you very much, Robert!

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## Tribute to Bishop Paul Vollmar (1934-2021)

Bishop Paul Vollmar, SM, died on May 2, 2021, in Zurich, Switzerland. He was professor and director of the Marianist School in Zurich. Later he became the Provincial of the Province of Switzerland from 1984 to 1992.



In 1993, Pope John Paul II appointed him auxiliary bishop of the diocese of Chur-Zürich, together with the Jesuit Peter Henrici. He made this appointment in order to remedy serious tensions experienced in this diocese with the titular bishop. Our colleague Paul put his interpersonal skills, his moderation and his wisdom at the service of this difficult mission. The Church in Switzerland is very grateful to him for what he did in that situation as well as for all his pastoral work.

The celebration of the funeral took place on May 5, 2021 at the parish of Sainte Thérèse in Fribourg. It was presided over by the Bishop of Chur, Bishop Bonnemain, in the presence of Bishop Henrici and Bishop Gmür, President of the Episcopal Conference of Switzerland. In addition, Fr. André-Joseph Fétis, Superior General, and some of Paul's Swiss Marianist confreres were present for the Mass. Bishop Vollmar is buried in the Marianist tomb in Saint Leonard's Cemetery in Fribourg.



Listed below are three tributes given to Bishop Vollmar.

***Bishop Gmür of Basel, President of the Swiss Bishops' Conference (SBK)***

The older members of the SBK remember the creative, calm and discreet ability of Auxiliary Bishop Paul Vollmar. He was a person who knew how to be very fraternal, friendly and courteous in his relationships. He did not use his episcopal office for personal reasons. He was, above all, a modest and discreet man and pastor. He loved literature and was very cultured. This way of looking at life and the purpose of men and women brought him closer to them than any teaching would have done. We thank Auxiliary Bishop Paul Vollmar for his work in the Church in Switzerland.

***Bishop Peter Henrici, SJ, Auxiliary Bishop Emeritus of Chur: "Farewell, my brother".***

Humanly and spiritually speaking, I could not have wished for a better auxiliary bishop, a better peer and friend. Faced with the task that was ours, we understood each other quickly and well, sometimes, without words. Paul had a strong charisma for knowing and accompanying people. He was a spiritual director for most of his life. Within the Bishops' Conference, Bishop Paul has always worked effectively for reconciliation and for any necessary reforms. He has been faithful to his episcopal motto "Whatever he tells you, do it." he will now receive his highly deserved reward.

***Fr. Jonas Kpatcha, SM, Regional Superior of Togo***



The history of the Marianists in Togo began at Lama-Kara in 1958 with Fr. Robert Mattlé (Provincial of Switzerland) and three missionaries. It was not until the mandate of Father Paul Vollmar (25 years later) that the preparation of the next generation of young Togolese Marianists became a reality. Together with Father Paul Schenker and the Marianist community of Lama-Kara, he planned the entire formation program for the Togolese religious. Several generations of young Togolese religious have now followed this program.

He is the one who dared to allow Togolese religious to have access to very good religious and professional training. He saw beyond the personal development of the candidates. He planned for the perpetuation of the spirit and quality of the education given by the Swiss Marianist missionaries in Togo.

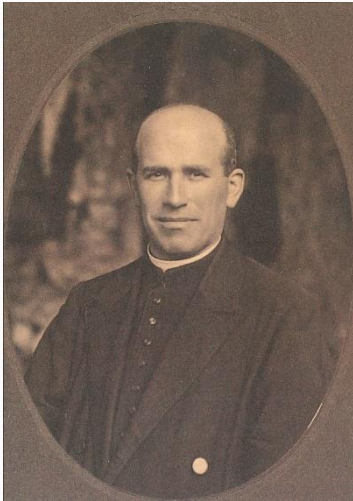
Thanks to his trust in God and in the Virgin Mary, he put his faith in the continuity of the mission with the local people. Today, what the Swiss missionaries have sown continues to flourish even beyond Togo's borders and to bear beautiful fruit. We bless the Lord for the great brother and caring father he has been to us. Bishop Paul Vollmar, rest in peace!



**Mass of the funeral of Bishop Vollmar.**

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## Blessed Miguel Leibar



On July 28, 1936, Father Miguel Leibar was the first Spanish religious to be shot by the revolutionary militias. This execution took place just ten days after the attempted military coup d'état against the Second Spanish Republic.

Because of the failed military coup, Spain was divided into two military and political zones. In addition, there was also a religious component involved in this division, because in the Spanish Civil War the contending sides transformed religion into an ideological component.

On the national side, the war was experienced as a religious war or "crusade" against communist atheism. Meanwhile, on the republican side, certain anticlerical intellectual elites and the working masses infected by anarchist and communist ideologies saw the Catholic Church as the class enemy to be destroyed, in imitation of Soviet Russia. The civilian authorities of the Republic, fearing that the Army and the Civil Guard would sympathize with the military rebels, decided to hand over the weapons to the workers. From that moment on, the militias of the leftist parties decided to implement the social revolution by violent means, carrying out arbitrary arrests and indiscriminate executions of innocent citizens.

When the coup d'état was declared, the Spanish Marianists had two schools in Madrid, one on Juan de Mena Street and the other, Nuestra Señora del Pilar, on Castelló Street. In addition, the headquarters of the Provincial Administration was in a tenement apartment at 21 Velázquez Street. The school of Juan de Mena was seized by the Young Red Guard to establish the "National Shooting School". The Colegio del Pilar was seized on Friday, July 24 by militiamen, police and members of the Republican Left and was transformed into a military hospital.

Father Leibar, who was a teacher and chaplain at the Colegio del Pilar, had to take over the direction of the religious when the coup d'état took place. Then, they decided that each of them would go to live in a previously assigned place of refuge. Father Miguel moved into the headquarters of the Provincial Administration on Velázquez Street. On July 28, anarchist militiamen broke into the apartment and threw all the furniture and documentation into the street, where they lit a huge bonfire. Then they

took Father Miguel and the two servants of the house to be shot on the outskirts of Madrid.



**Father Leibar with a group of students from Vitoria in 1925.**

Miguel Leibar Garay was born in 1885 in Aozaraza, Arechavaleta Valley (province of Guipuzcoa), where the Postulate of Escoriaza was located. The families of the valley, deeply Catholic, were very close to the Marianists and many of their children entered the Marianist Postulate. At the age of 13, young Miguel entered the Postulate, distinguishing himself by his lively intelligence, love of study, personal simplicity, family spirit and strong religious convictions.

The young Basque religious stood out because of his firmness of character, well-established authority and clear and efficient teaching method. He did not wish to become a priest, but at the invitation of his superiors, he accepted the call. He made his perpetual profession in 1907. In 1912, he entered the Seminary of Fribourg (Switzerland). Ordained in 1915, he returned to Spain and was appointed chaplain of the schools of Cadiz, Jerez de la Frontera and Vitoria and director of the San Sebastian School, standing out as a confessor much appreciated by the religious and the students. In 1930, however, when he fell ill of heart disease, his superiors assigned him as a teacher and chaplain at the Colegio del Pilar in Madrid. This was his home when the failed coup d'état of July 17, 1936, took place, marking the beginning of a civil war.

Father Miguel Leibar, along with 498 other Spanish martyrs (among them the young Marianists Joaquín Ochoa, Sabino Ayastuy and Florencio Arnaiz), was beatified on October 28, 2007, in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican.

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## Fiftieth Anniversary of the General Chapter of San Antonio - 1971

This year we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the General Chapter held in San Antonio. The 26th General Chapter took place from July 6 to August 20, 1971, at the scholasticate of the Saint Louis Province, located on the campus of Saint Mary's University in San Antonio. This Chapter implemented many of the renewal measures for religious institutes requested by the Second Vatican Council. One of the goals of the Chapter of 1971 was to finalize the definitive revision of the Constitutions drawn up *ad experimentum* in the preceding General Chapter of 1966-1967. However, the backlog of work prevented the completion of this task. Instead, the Chapter revised and updated several areas: the structures of government; life; mission; initial formation; Marianist prayer. In addition, the 1971 Chapter brought to an end the very long period of governance by Fr. Paul Hoffer (1956-1971). The capitulants elected Fr. Stephen Tutas as the new Superior General.

An extensive survey of all the religious of the Society preceded the Chapter. The title given to this assessment was - Survey SM. The study of the responses was published in French, English and Spanish. The title was - *Final Report of the Survey SM. Society of Mary. Rome, Italy, December 1970-January 1971*. The Survey informed the capitulants of the way in which the Society was implementing the reforms called for by the Council.

A Commission, elected by the capitulants, prepared the Chapter. The members of that commission were; Bro. Pietro Monti, Assistant for Education; Fr. William Ferree, Provincial of the Cincinnati Province; Fr. Stephen Tutas, of the Pacific Province; Bro. Joseph Jansen, of the New York Province; and Fr. Eduardo Benlloch, Provincial of the Province of Saragossa. Fr. Johan Roten, of the Province of Switzerland, replaced Fr. Ferree after he suffered a serious heart attack. After receiving the responses to the survey, the Commission drafted the *Working Document on Key Issues for the 1971 General Chapter of the Society of Mary*. They identified three areas of interest:1)



Marianist identity, 2) community life, prayer and apostolate, and 3) structures of government.



**The General Council elected at the Chapter of 1971. L-R: Fr. Noël Le Mire, SM (Religious Life); Bro. Gerald Schnepf, SM (Temporalities); Fr. Stephen Tutas, SM (Superior General); Fr. Juan Ramón Urquía, SM (Apostolic Action); Bro. Pietro Monti, SM (Education).**

Finally, on March 1, 1970, Father Hoffer sent out the circular convoking the 1971 General Chapter. There were seventy-nine capitulants. Their task was to deal with the current evolution of religious life and of the question that many religious were asking themselves: "What style of life corresponds best to the evangelical inspiration of Father Chaminade and to the needs of our times?" The capitulants studied the following fundamental questions: 1) Marianist spirituality, the vow of stability and how to live the evangelical counsels today; 2) Marianist community of life and prayer; 3) the meaning of the Marianist mission; and 4) a review of our mixed composition, categories of religious and the three Offices, in the context of today's world.

The elections of the Superior General and his Assistants took place on Thursday, August 12 and Friday, August 13. The capitulants elected Fr. Stephen Tutas as Superior General (former Rector of the Seminary of Fribourg and Assistant of the Province of Pacific). The rest of the General Council consisted of the following: Fr. Noël Le Mire (France) for the Office of Religious Life; Bro. Pietro Monti (Italy) for the Office of Education; Fr. Juan Ramón Urquía (Argentina) for the Office of Apostolic

Action and Bro. Gerald Schnepf (St. Louis) for the Office of Temporalities. At six o'clock in the evening of Thursday, August 19, the Mass for the installation of the new Superior General and his assistants took place. On Friday, August 20, the Chapter concluded its work. The Chapter Document was entitled in English: *Response. Documents of the 1971 General Chapter of the Society of Mary.*

Fr. Tutas, the new Superior General, explained that "the Chapter sought to respond to a single fundamental question: What style of life corresponds best to the evangelical inspiration of Father Chaminade and to the needs of our times? For Fr. Tutas "the General Chapter of 1971 is exactly the beginning of a new phase in the life of the Society of Mary. In fact, the Chapter of San Antonio is considered as the Chapter that dealt with the various areas of renewal promoted by the Second Vatican Council for the Church and for religious life.

***This is a summary of a more complete article written by SM historian, Fr. Antonio Gascón. To read the entire article in Spanish, click here.***

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## Request for prayers



Throughout the month of May, the Pope invited the faithful of the world and all people of good will to entrust to the hands of the Blessed Mother the whole of humanity, sorely tried by this period of pandemic.

Let us continue to pray, even though the month of May is ending, through the intercession of Blessed Chaminade, for the people affected by the virus, the deceased taken by the disease, the families struck by the uncertainty of tomorrow, all the health personnel, etc., so that the enthusiasm and rhythm of daily life may be resumed.

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**Marianiste  
FMI**

**"I am going to tell you my secret"**

**This is the title that Sr. Franca Zonta, Superior General of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate, gives to her 21st circular, written on the occasion of the 205th anniversary of the congregation's founding. Sr. Franca dialogues with Fr. Chaminade on the inspirations that have guided his missionary choices and his foundations. To read this beautiful reflection and to be inspired, click on the link of the language you prefer:**

**[ENG](#) - [ESP](#) - [FR](#) - [IT](#)**

## **G.A. Communications recently sent**

- **Death Notices:# 10-13**
- **May 14: *Information and Reminders***, in three languages, to the Unit Superiors and Presidents of Zonal Conferences, sent by Fr. André-Joseph Fétis, SM, Superior General.