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News from the General Administration of the Society of Mary

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Perpetual Profession in the District of Ivory Coast



Bro. Atsé Charles-Benoit Diambra, SM, in the middle, with the celebrants and the college students.

On Saturday, February 3, 2024, in the parish of Notre Dame du perpétuel Secours in Treichville, Abidjan, Ivory Coast, Bro. Charles Benoît Atsé Diambra professed his perpetual vows. The Apostolic Nuncio, His Excellency Mgr. Mauricio Rueda Beltz presided over the ceremony. In addition, the Assistant Superior of the Region of France, Fr. Jean Édouard Gatuingt, SM, the District Superior of Ivory Coast, Fr. Noël Dominique Kouao Akobe, SM, and the parish priest, Fr. Henri N'Dimon, were present for the profession. as well as other priests came who from surrounding parishes to support Bro. Charles-Benoit.

The members of the various Marianist family groups of Ivory Coast, Bro. Charles-Benoit's biological family, students from the Catholic School of Saint Jean Bosco in Treichville, employees of the two Marianist schools in Abidjan where Brother Charles worked as a sports teacher, as well as many friends and guests were also present for the ceremony.

After Mass, a festive fraternal meal was served on the grounds of the Catholic School of Saint Jean Bosco.

Appointment of the new Assistant Provincial of the Province of Spain



The General Council of the Society of Mary has appointed Bro. Hugo de Diego Akaiturri, SM, as Assistant Provincial of the Province of Spain. The first term of five years will begin on September 1, 2024.

Bro. Hugo was a student at the Marianist school in Logroño. He professed his first vows in the Society of Mary in 1987.

He has dedicated his whole life as a religious to pastoral work and teaching in various communities and works in the province of Spain (San Sebastian, Vitoria, Zaragoza...). He also spent a sabbatical year in Colombia and another in India.

Bro. Hugo assumes this mission in the province of Spain with all the energy, vitality and enthusiasm for pastoral work that characterize his life. Within the Provincial Council, he will also be the Assistant for Youth and Vocation Ministry. We assure him of our prayers and fraternal support.

Appointment of the new Provincial of the Province of Meribah

In its meeting of February 20, the Superior General, with the unanimous support of his Council, appointed Brother Joseph Bellizzi, SM, to be the next Provincial Superior of the Province of Meribah. Brother Joseph professed vows in the SM for the first time in 1980. After completing formation, he began to teach at Chaminade High School in Mineola, New York, and later at Kellenberg Memorial High School in Uniondale



Returning to Chaminade, Bro. Joe was named director of the Chaminade Community, and in 1999, he became principal of the school. He has served as principal for almost 25 years!

In addition to these responsibilities, Brother Joseph has worked in many pastoral areas, including religious education, sodality and the preparation of student-teachers for catechetical mission among children. He is respected by both the religious and lay collaborators for his dedication and creativity.

Brother Joseph will begin his term of office as Provincial on June 1, 2024. The Province is now in the midst of its consultation for Assistant Provincial.

We take this opportunity to thank Brother Timothy Driscoll, SM, for his years of service as Meribah's Provincial. Leading the Province in these complicated years, with many challenges, including the pandemic, many in the Province have expressed their gratitude for his faithful service. We echo this appreciation!

Annual visit to the Chaminade International Seminary

The annual Canonical visitation of the Chaminade International Seminary in Rome took place from February 15-20. The members of the commission were: Father Noël Dominique Kouao Akobé, SM, the Superior of the District of Ivory Coast, and Father Pablo Rambaud, SM, the Assistant General for Religious Life.

As usual, the members of the commission shared the life of the Seminary community, integrating themselves into its schedule, prayer times and meals. At the beginning of the visit, they had a meeting with the formation team of the seminary: Fr. Miguel Ángel Cortés, SM, Rector, and Bro. Frédéric Bini, SM, Vice-Rector. During the visit, they met individually with both the seminarians and the formators.



The seminary community and the two members of the visiting commission

This year, the community consists of twelve religious, ten seminarians and two formators. Each person is from a different country. They belong to eight different units of the Society. It is clear that, in addition to the challenge of learning and speaking Italian, the community faces the challenge of multiculturalism. This fact is certainly seen as a challenge, but at the same time as a great gift. The two visitors expressed their gratitude for the welcome and underlined the appreciation of the seminarians for the formation they receive (pastoral, Marianist and academic formation programs).

At the end of the visit, the commission presented its report, first jointly to the General Council and the formators, and then to the entire Seminary community, with whom they discussed their observations and proposals for the future. The

report has already been sent to the presidents of all the zones and to the superiors of all the units of the Society of Mary.

Domingo Lázaro and Educators

Pope Francis says, speaking of the saints: "*There are some testimonies that may prove helpful and inspiring, but that we are not meant to copy, for that could even lead us astray from the one specific path that the Lord has in mind for us.*" (*Gaudete et exsultate* 11).

Though we must discern our own calling, there are many who may stimulate and motivate us. This is much easier when we find the witness of holiness in a person with whom we have something in common. With this article, we want to offer to all Marianist educators the encouragement that comes to us from Domingo Lázaro, a great educator who was recently declared venerable by the Church. He was a "hands-on" educator, teacher and school principal. However, he was also an intellectual who reflected on education in dialogue with the cultural currents of his time. In addition, he was also a great promoter of an appropriate institutional and collective positioning of Catholic education in society.



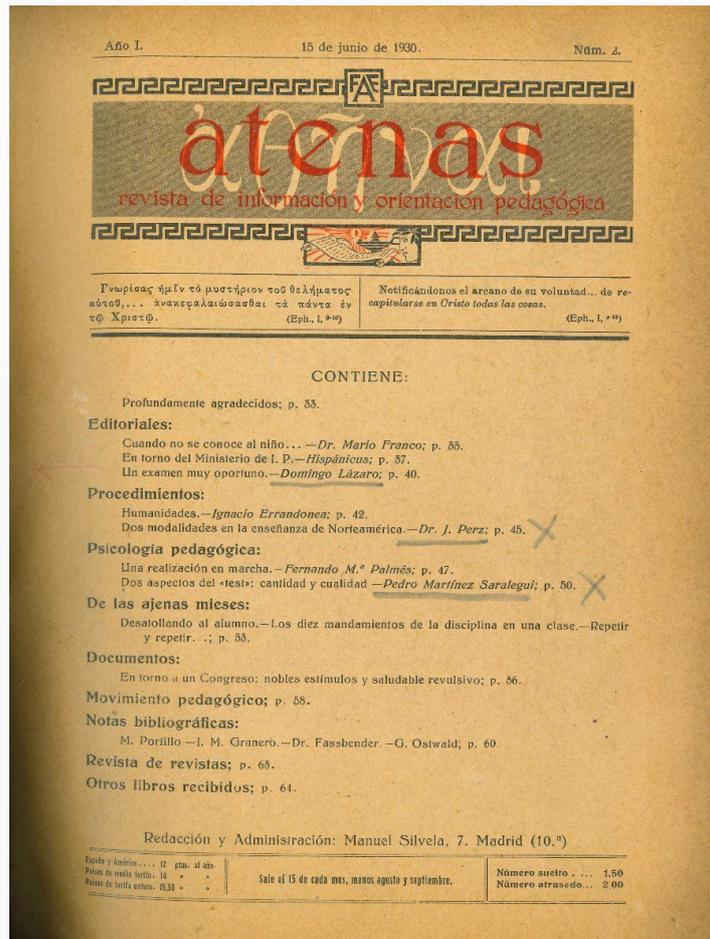
Domingo was born in San Adrián de Juarros, a small town in the province of Burgos (Spain), in 1877. He professed his first vows in the Society of Mary in 1893 and was ordained a priest in 1906. For ten years (1906-1916), he was a teacher and director of the Colegio Santa María in San Sebastián. In 1916, he was appointed Provincial Superior of the Province of Spain, the first Spaniard to occupy this position, which he held until 1924. That year he became a teacher and director of the school Ntra. Sra. del Pilar in Madrid.

He was one of the main promoters of the foundation of the Federación de Amigos de la Enseñanza (FAE), which came into existence in 1930, bringing together the Spanish Catholic Schools of the time. He wrote numerous articles on education in the magazine *Atenas*, the official publication of this association. He died in Madrid on February 22, 1935. Pope Francis recognized the heroicity of

his virtues and the Congregation for the Cause of Saints declared him venerable by the decree of May 13, 2019. **In what way does Domingo Lázaro encourage us as educators today?** We present here some paragraphs written by him as a small sample of his thinking. Among many other things, this Marianist educator invites us to:

- **An attitude of dialogue and sincere search for truth**, even in the midst of strong cultural confrontations. He said in a conference given at the Catholic Circle of San Sebastian in 1909: *"I have noticed, in many cases, how difficult it is for us to understand one another, and it is not infrequent that we understand the opposite, perhaps in the best good faith, of what the other person is saying... We form a mistaken concept, they of us and we of them. Do not think that evil is always outside of us, we also have it in us... We must know how to explain the truth to the adversary and know how to channel the good qualities that he has, qualities that I am not able to deny"*
- **To live the task of educator as a great mission:** *"Teaching and education constitute a profession. If I am a Christian... it is a sublime mission, as collaborators of God in one of the most exalted missions... The subject of education is the child, the adolescent and the young person, highly respectable beings because they carry in themselves a mysterious potential... They are a person with all attributes and rights... My authority over them can never be arbitrary or tyrannical. Am I convinced that intellectual education does not consist in filling brains with other people's thoughts, but rather in forming the intelligence, teaching how to think...? Do I not miss many opportunities to raise my students to the clearer vision of the ideal? ... Are my efforts aimed at forming Christ in the souls of my dear students?" (Atenas, June 1930)*

- **An integral education that includes the depth of transcendence:** *"The real man carries other hidden, but very vivid realities. Realities are, in fact, undeniable, the proposals and needs that impel man and orient him towards a beyond, and authoritatively claim the existence of an absolute that attracts him."* (Atenas, June 1932)



- **Educate by recognizing and stimulating the positive.** He wrote the following in a 1919 letter to a Marianist religious: *"My son, the least possible use of prohibitions... Let us try to be positive... Know how to discover in a person a good trait, a germ of goodness... and help this mustard seed to germinate, to develop... Let us discover, stimulate, support what is good, and God, who is good and wants good, will support our action."*
- **Pay attention to the uniqueness of each person:** *"My class is not a herd, nor are my students anonymous numbers. All of them have their individual personalities, their good qualities and defects, their unique possibilities and their own providential destinies. Therefore, during this course, I have to discover, study and respect the personality of each one... All this with a view to achieving the greatest good for each of my students and the greatest possible performance in my delicate mission"* (Atenas, October 1930)
- **To develop a pedagogy that renews itself sensibly:** *"In pedagogy, as in everything else, we Catholics must avoid two equally reprehensible attitudes: on the one hand that of the unconscious person who*

thoughtlessly and recklessly throw themselves into everything new, embrace it and, losing themselves, compromise the cause they unduly represent. On the other hand there is the opposite attitude of those who are shy, who bow down at the slightest hint of novelty... and take refuge, shocked and aloof, in what they call "tradition". Neither inconsiderate recklessness, nor ridiculous foolishness... Our attitude as Catholics must be a noble, sincere, serene and courageous attitude." (Atenas, April 1934)

- **Practice a educational approach that favors the student's importance.** In one of his letters, this time from 1918, we can read: *"The essential thing is not to fill the head, but to form it... It is easier to swallow thoughts than to think: to stuff brains than to help them in the work of assimilation. It costs less to prepare a class with a view to erudition, than with a view to training; easier to inject knowledge than to make them acquire it... If they themselves are not their first and most active educators, no one will educate them."*

We know that a good educator is appreciated by the long-term mark he or she leaves on his or her students. We bring here the testimony of Javier Zubiri (1898-1983), a great Spanish philosopher, who was a student of Father Domingo in San Sebastian and who later had recourse to his guidance and accompaniment in difficult moments of his adult life: *"Rarely does one have the good fortune to meet such a person in life. However, when God puts them in your path, and at the precise moment when you need it, when you have a Father Domingo to mold your spirit, then you really have had the living experience of grace. Because that was what Father Domingo was for many, as it was for me, a singular grace of God."* May we, Marianist educators, be small or large graces of God in the lives of the people entrusted to us!

Prayer for people with disabilities



O Lord Jesus Christ, Good Samaritan, Like You, on the path of life we often encounter the wounded person, who sometimes bears the traits of disability and fragility.

May the programs and initiatives of civil institutions be built on the "rock" of inclusion, so that people with physical or mental limitations are no longer marginalized, but respected and protected

Only then will the "rain, rivers and winds" of a culture of waste not threaten our common home.

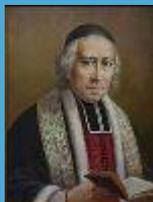
We need a common home.

Make us promoters of the culture of life, which continually affirms the dignity of every person, defending in particular disabled men and women of all ages and social conditions.

Do not let us forget that we are all fragile and vulnerable, all in the same boat, all precious in your eyes.

Amen

(Prayer inspired by: MESSAGE ON THE OCCASION OF THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF DISABLED PEOPLE, Pope Francis December 3, 2020).



Prayer Intention to Blessed Chaminade

We ask for a novena of prayer to Blessed William Joseph Chaminade for the complete healing of **Mrs. Marilena**, who has undergone surgery to remove a tumor in the brain. Mrs. Marilena, 58 years old, is employed in the General Administration and Seminary communities at the Curia Generalizia Marianisti in Rome. It is an intention proposed by the Postulator of the Society of Mary, Father Gascón.

G.A. Communications recently sent

- **Death Notices: N. 1-2**
- **Feb. 2:** *Communication n.4 and Appendices 1 and 2*, in three languages, to the Capitulants of XXXVI General Chapter from the Preparatory Commission.
- **Feb. 27:** *Report on the visit to the Chaminade International Seminary*, in three languages, to the Unit Superiors, sent by Fr. Pablo Rambaud, SM, Assistant General for Religious Life.

G.A. Calendar

- **March 8-15:** Fr. André-Joseph Fétis, SM, Superior General, visits the Area Community of Canada.

