



VIA LATINA 22 **# 339 - March 2025**

News from the General Administration of the Society of Mary

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Perpetual Vows in the District of Ivory Coast

On Saturday, February 8, 2025, the District of Ivory Coast had the joy of celebrating the perpetual vows of our brother Affi Michel Cissé, a member of the Community of the Collège de Notre Dame d'Afrique in Abidjan. Brother Michel is the bursar of the Collège Notre Dame and also the bursar of the District of Ivory Coast. The Mass was presided over by Fr. Noël Dominique Kouao Akobé, District Superior. Bro. Jean-Marie Leclerc, Regional Superior of France and of the French-speaking African Units of Congo and Ivory Coast, was on a canonical

visit to Abidjan and received the vows of Brother Michel. Fr. Romuald Mfumu, in charge of the Congo sector, was in Abidjan for the canonical visit of the religious nationals of his sector, and also took part in the celebration.



The Marianist Brothers with the members of the family of Bro. Affi Michel Cissé.

The Marianist family was well represented along with members of Bro. Michel's biological family and friends. Also present were some staff members and students of Collège Notre Dame d' Afrique. A delegation from the Marianist school of Saint John Bosco in Treichville, where Brother Michel had previously served, was also present.

In addition, there were religious men and women from other congregations who came in large numbers to support Brother Michel and take part in the celebration.

The ceremony was solemn and prayerful. It all ended with a festive meal offered by the Marianist brothers. The entire Society of Mary and the brothers of the District express their gratitude and congratulations to Brother Michel for his definitive commitment to the service of the Virgin Mary.

May he continue to grow in his dedication to the mission entrusted to him.

Priestly ordination in the Congo Sector

On Sunday, February 2, 2025, on the feast of the Presentation of the Lord in the Temple, which has a special significance as the Day of Consecrated Life, the Society of Mary, the Region of France and the Congo Sector in particular joyfully celebrated the priestly ordination of a new Marianist priest, Fr. Messi Gatien Loubiya, SM.

Father Messi was ordained in the parish of Saint Rita in Moukondo by the consecratory prayer and the laying on of hands by the Metropolitan Archbishop of Brazzaville, Bienvenu Manamika.



In his homily, the Archbishop emphasized the multiple dimensions of the priesthood. He reminded Father Messi that the priesthood is not a promotion, but above all a service. He exhorted him to be a "servant of servants," thus calling him to serve with promptness the people of God who will be entrusted to him as well as his brothers in community. He also invited him to be a light for his community, in the image of Christ, "light of the nations" who goes out to meet his people.

Addressing the consecrated persons and the entire People of God, the Archbishop urged them to be that light to enlighten the nations. He invited the

congregation to renew its offering to the Father. In conclusion, he congratulated Father Messi, thanked God for the gift of his priesthood, and assured him of his accompaniment in prayer so that he might become a priest after the heart of Christ.



Fr. Messi Loubiya with his family and Archbishop Bienvenu Manamika.

This Eucharistic celebration brought together the entire Marianist family, the consecrated persons of the Archdiocese of Brazzaville, the Episcopal Vicars, the Vicar General of the Diocese of Kinkala as well as many diocesan priests. The Region of France was represented by Bro. Guillaume Gervet. All the brothers of the Congo Sector, with the support of the members of the parish, ensured the liturgical and festive preparation of this celebration.

The new priest celebrated his first Mass the following Sunday, February 9, 2025, in the parish of Saint Rita de Moukondo, his parish of origin, where he grew up. The parish council organized that event well.

We pray for Father Messi that his mission may be effective and bear many fruits.

Fr. Pablo Rambaud and Bro. Dennis Bautista visit the Region of India

Ninety personal interviews with brothers. Thirteen community meetings. Two regional presentations. A silver jubilee celebration. About two kilos of delicious rice dishes consumed. And countless wonderful memories during Fr. Pablo Rambaud and Bro. Dennis Bautista's 17-day visit to the Region of India.



Students and teachers at Chaminade School (English Medium) begin their day with a morning assembly to pray and greet Fr. Pablo and Bro. Dennis in Bangalore.

The visit started in Bangalore with a regional presentation at Deepahalli. After meeting with local communities, including Infant Nilaya and Chaminade Nilaya, they traveled to Ranchi for a second regional presentation at Nirmal Deep and the 25th jubilee celebration of Bro. Marianus Bilung. They then spent time at the Singhpur, Gyan Deep, and Fidel Nilaya communities, and visited the Marianist Sisters at Shanti Deep, Santa Maria and Nazareth Nilaya communities. After a

five-hour drive to Odisha, they stayed at the Maria Nivas community before returning to Bangalore for a final meeting with the Unit Council.



Brothers of the Region of India break into small discussion groups to share their reflections on the General Chapter document, following a presentation by Fr. Pablo and Bro. Dennis in Ranchi.

India, the newest autonomous region of the Society of Mary, has 75 professed (48 lay and 27 ordained), with a younger average age than most units. The Region's schools and social works have a positive impact on youth and families in need. The country's culture reflects key Marianist values such as family unity, respect and relationships.

India faces challenges, including clericalism in the Church, financial struggles, and government opposition to Catholic ideas in schools. The Region's cultural diversity, with 121 languages and 270 dialects, adds complexity to formation. Like all units of the Society of Mary, they also deal with ongoing formation, vocation recruitment, and leadership succession.

Despite these challenges, India is poised to play a significant role in the future of the Society of Mary. Let's pray for the continued growth of the Marianist family and charism there.

Visit to the Chapel of La Madeleine

From February 10 to 17, Bro. Jérôme Balakiyema and Fr. André-Joseph Fétis visited the community and the work of La Madeleine in Bordeaux. To be in that place that is the source of our charism, in the presence of our Founder, is always a striking and profound experience. Bro. Michael McAward came to help organize the Chapel's accounting system.

Our visit coincided with the passing of our brother, Fr. Robert Witwicki, whom we accompanied in his last moments by giving thanks for his life and his enthusiastic service to the Marianist charism and mission.

The community is made up of nine brothers, two of whom live in retirement homes. The chapel is a point of reference in the archdiocese of Bordeaux, in particular as a place of prayer, spirituality and celebration of the sacrament of reconciliation. The presence of Blessed Chaminade shines there.



Meeting of the Association La Chapelle de La Madeleine at La Madeleine.

The Chapelle de la Madeleine Association met on Monday, February 17. This group supervises the life of the Madeleine and provides it with a legal structure. It is composed of representatives of the community, the Marianist Family of Europe, the President of the Council of European Marianists, the Regional Superior of the Region of France or his representative, and the General Council. All of them appreciated the work of the community and the growing support shown by the Society of Mary and the entire Marianist Family. One of the highlights was the increase in the number of visits by groups who have come to meet our Founder. Last year, they came from the archdiocese of Bordeaux, from our school of Grand-Lebrun, from Europe and the world, even Australia. One of our wishes is that young people feel more and more at home at La Madeleine.

Let us pray for the influence of this place that is so important to all of us. Brothers who would like to stay there for their formation in our charism or to collaborate in the mission of the place should contact one of the members of the General Council.

Visit to the Area Community of Switzerland



Meeting with the brothers in Switzerland.

From February 18 to 27, Bro. Jérôme Balakiyema and Fr. André-Joseph Fétis visited the CTS (Area Community of Switzerland). The CTS is composed of seven brothers, one of whom is on mission in the Province of the USA. With the presence of two brothers from the Togo Region studying at the University of Fribourg, the brothers are divided into three places of residence: Sion, Fribourg and Naters. With an average age of 80, the brothers continue to ensure a Marianist community life with individualized commitments at three levels: in parishes as auxiliary priests, in the accompaniment of the MLC and faith groups and in the accompaniment of other lay people.

Our presence in Switzerland began in 1839. Together with our brothers and sisters, we give thanks for what has been achieved during these 186 years and ask God that their lives in the Society of Mary may always bear fruit.

Faustino Pérez Manglano-Magro: in suffering, witnessing to our hope

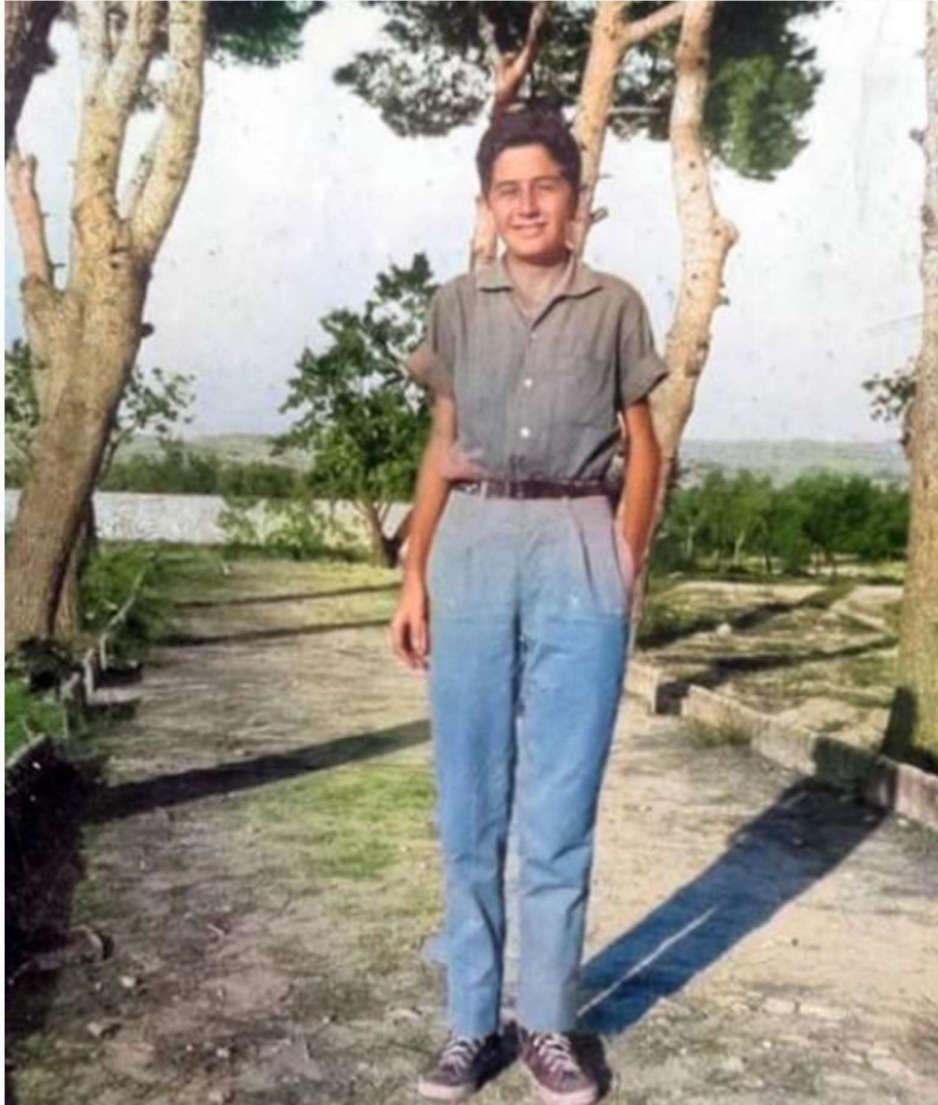
In his encyclical on hope, Benedict XVI gave three "places" for learning and exercising hope, prayer, action and suffering. Speaking of suffering, he wrote: "*It is not the dodging of suffering, of fleeing from pain, that heals man, but the ability to accept tribulations and to mature through them, to find meaning in them through union with Christ, who suffered with infinite love*" (*Spe Salvi*, 37). The example of Faustino can help us to live this type of hope.

The disease

On November 29, 1960, Faustino fell ill. After medical tests, he was finally diagnosed with Hodgkin's disease, an incurable condition at the time. He underwent an aggressive and exhausting treatment. For long periods of time, he had to stay at home, but he continued to work hard so as not to lose his rhythm. He never complained, but in his diary, we discover the most difficult moments: "*During the afternoon, I was in pain all the time*" (02/06/1961).

"*At 8 a.m., I asked mom to massage me so that I could sleep without too much pain. At 10 a.m., I woke up and we went to the Red Cross. They did two X-rays. When we got home at noon, I felt like crying. I was very bad, my morale was at half-mast.*"(11/27/1961). Since February, he had not been able to go to class. However, he spent a lot of time on his homework: he did not want to waste his year.

He had to limit all sports, but did not complain: he was satisfied with what he could do and wrote that he was happy and that everything was "wonderful": this was Faustino's favorite word. He appreciated the film club sessions that took place at the school. He watched the film *The Four Hundred Blows* by François Truffaut. Although he could no longer play sports, he was with his classmates when they participated in competitions. In 1961, he went on a pilgrimage to Lourdes and spent periods alternating life in the countryside (doctors' recommendation) and in school. There were months when he felt better, even if the radiotherapy sessions tired him out and led to a deterioration in his physical condition.



Yes to illness and suffering

Faustino's yes to illness and suffering was not at all a resigned acceptance of the inevitable. He would cope: not to let himself go, nor to let himself be broken. He would fight with all his strength. In periods when he was obliged to stay bed, he organized himself as best he could: he set himself a flexible schedule, to which he tried to remain faithful. He insisted on his hours of study. He did not want to lose a year for anything in the world, which would postpone the realization of his dream of becoming a Marianist as soon as possible. He did not want to lose touch with his friends. When he felt better, he would go to the mountains with them. His parents always left him free to achieve whatever he felt capable of. One got used to seeing him always so courageous: "*He hid his suffering so well with a smile that we didn't notice it,*" said one of his classmates. All the same, he was going through painful times. Here is what he wrote, after the first two months

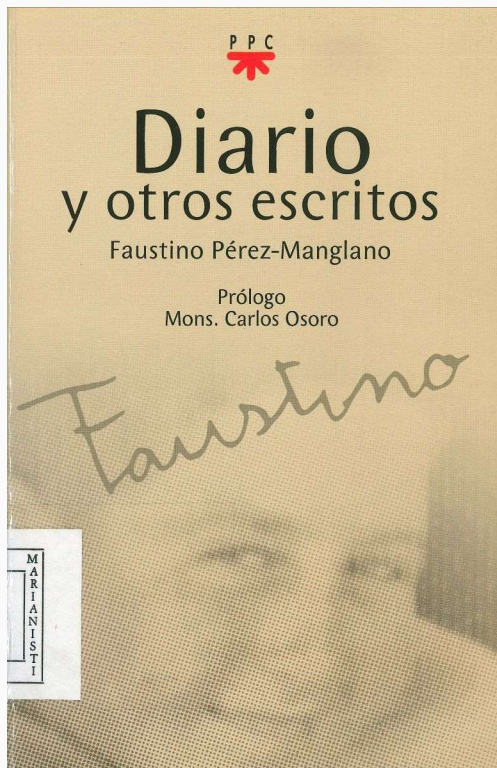
of illness, one day when he was in bad shape - fever, aches and even sparks of bad humor –:

January 20, 1961: [...] *I have to make a deep examination of conscience, because it has been a long time since I have gone to confession. My illness is making me negligent in my duties to God. I recited the rosary in the evening.*

And a fortnight later: *February 8, 1961. - At 8 o'clock, the doctors are to come and see me. I'm scared, but because tomorrow at the Red Cross, they're going to make an incision under my arm to remove a piece of lymph node and analyze it. Jesus, I want to be strong to endure everything without complaining. Mary, pray to your Son that he will give me the strength that I lack.*

The next day, he summed up: "*It hurt me quite a bit. I couldn't pray at all.* But Faustino knew where to look for the strength he lacked: in meditation on the Passion of Christ, in recourse to Mary, in frequent Communion.

February 26, 1962. - *When we meditate on the Passion of the Lord, we see all that he suffered for us... Everything out of love. He loves us with an infinite love; he thinks only of us. How can we not repay him a little of this love so great? I think that's a good reason to dedicate our whole lives to it.*



In his *Diary*, he expressed the deep impression that Lourdes left on him and his wish to return there one day as a stretcher-bearer: July 3, 1961. *We feel so good in Lourdes! I think that the greatest miracle of Lourdes is the amount of conversions that occur there. It is extraordinary to see how very seriously ill patients do not pray for themselves, but for those who are at their side, because they need to live longer, since they have the responsibility of a family.* Others always came before himself. To his mother who wanted to watch him, he said: "*Mommy, go to sleep. It's not fair. It's normal for me to suffer,*

because the disease is mine... But that you have to suffer for my sake... No, that's not fair! »

For two years, Faustino faced the disease with courage and enthusiasm. He had never lost his joy or the will to live. As soon as the shock medicine he received resulted in improvement, he resumed his usual activities as much as possible, not just studying. He could not play sports, but he did cheer on his favorite team, Valencia Football Club. Faustino knew how to enjoy life.

One of his comrades left us this testimony: *"I was his companion in the tent and in the bus. He was always the same, never angry, and was always ready to devote himself, to be satisfied with the less good, provided that others were at their ease. I sincerely believe that when someone has a flaw, it is during a camp that it is best noticed. I can only say that after the twenty days that I have slept and eaten with him, I have not been able to discover any fault in him. "*

No wonder Faustino was able to write these moving words in his *diary*. They seem to be the best summary of his life, his testament for us:

March 27, 1962. *-I am very happy. I don't know what is happening to me, but, praise be to God, I have not known misfortune and I am still happy. You feel something inside yourself. Such a great love for him that has always led me by the hand, that has never allowed me to commit a mortal sin even once. I don't know what it's like to have problems. I thank you, Lord, for the wonderful inner well-being that you give me. I am very grateful to you.*

Mineola Chorus visits Via Latina 22

On Sunday, February 16, thirty-five students and faculty members from Chaminade High School (Mineola, NY) visited Via Latina, 22. These students are members of the school's Chorus and made a pilgrimage to Italy during this Jubilee Holy Year to perform in various churches in Rome and Florence. Several parents and family members also traveled with them.



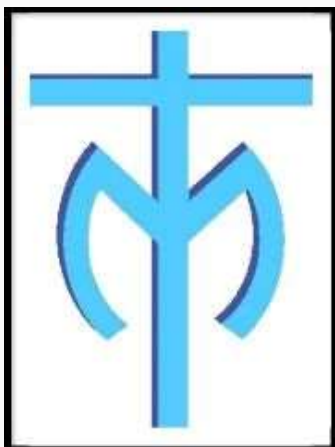
When the Chorus arrived at Via Latina, Fr. Miguel Ángel Cortés, SM, (Spain – seminary Rector and Procurator General) greeted the pilgrims in the Church of the Pillar and explained the roles of the General Administration and the Seminary within the Marianist Family.

What would their visit be without a performance! Accompanied by Bro. Robert Lahey, SM, (Meribah) on the recently-restored organ, the Chorus performed Caccini's *Ave Maria*. They were blown-away by the acoustics of the chapel and were greatly touched to sing in front of the statue of Our Lady of the Pillar. They also rehearsed the hymn *Now Thank We All Our God* which was one of the selections they sang later that evening during Mass in St. Peter's Basilica. Fr. Miguel Ángel concluded their visit with an explanation of the relics of our Blesseds and offered a blessing to the group. It was a very memorable experience for all!

Please click [HERE](#) to see a video of the visit.

Prayer

We, the Marianist religious, united to the entire Marianist Family spread throughout the world, and united to the whole Church and also to all men and women of good will in our world, pray for the health of our Holy Father Francis. We cordially invite all our readers to join us in prayer:



*Lord Jesus, we pray for Pope Francis,
whom you chose as the successor of Peter and
pastor of your Church.
Take care of his health, enlighten his intelligence,
strengthen his spirit,
Grant him courage and love for your people,
so that he may faithfully serve the entire Church
in its unity.
May your mercy protect and comfort him.
May the witness of your faithful encourage him in
his mission.
May we all remain in communion with him
through the bonds of unity, love and peace.
May he find in Mary the symbol of your love.
You who live and reign with the Father and the
Holy Spirit for ever and ever. Amen.
Adapted from the prayer "Aid to the Church in Need."*

G.A. Communications recently sent

- **Death Notices: N. 3-8**
- **February 4: *Message from FMI Chapter***, in three languages, to all Marianist religious, sent by Bro. José Ignacio Iglesia, SM, Secretary General.
- **February 5: *Horizons 2026***, in three languages, sent to Superiors of Units and Assistants for Religious life, from Bro. Dennis Bautista, SM, Assistant General for Education.
- **February 11: *Request for information for the 2025 Marianist Education Directory***, in three languages, sent to Assistants for Education of Latin America and Japan, from Bro. Dennis Bautista, SM, Assistant General for Education.
- **February 17: *Message for the Patronal Feast of the Marianist Family***, in three languages, to all Marianist religious, sent by the World Council of the Marianist Family.