



# **REPORT 2001/2005** **OF THE INTERNATIONAL TEAM**

## **REPORT OF THE REGION OF LATIN AMERICA** **DISPLAYED BEFORE THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE MLC** **IN 4<sup>TH</sup> INTERNATIONAL MEETING (JULY 2005 - BORDEAUX, FRANCE)**

### **WHERE WE ARE**

As a Region, we have the great wealth of a “natural unit” derived from our common history (so much old -aboriginal cultures, colonial period with Spain and Portugal, periods of independence and consolidation of the nations- as present -dictatorships in the years '70s and '80s, return to the democracy from the middle of the '80s-), of the advantage to speak or to understand all the same language (for every Spanish speakers Portuguese or Brazilian are easily understandable) and also of the fact that, in general there is an existing feeling of a Latin-American identity, previous to the economic and political unit efforts that are being carried ahead at the present moment (Mercosur, Grupo Andino).

I am not going to give many “data” on Latin America since they can be easily found in any encyclopaedia or economic, social or political report. We are a continent (or subcontinent considering America as a whole one) with enormous natural richness, with all the necessary commodities for any type of production and with an important population density in major cities, although we also have extensive zones of our territory which are uninhabited.

Nevertheless, in spite of including all those richness and resources, Latin America is an impoverished continent, a product of a long history of subjugations, pillaging and bad governments.

Subjugations (more or less explicit) to external wills and imposition of living and economic models, since the conquest and the colony (Spain and Portugal and the repeated intents of English and French) to our days with the omnipresence of the “central powers” (United States and Europe). This goes from putting and removing governments (dictatorships of the years '70s) to the pressures exercised by the IMF, by the OMC, the presence of troops,...

Pillaging that may go from the famous histories of the American gold that went toward the metropolises in the colonial epoch or the appropriation and extinction of natural resources that were used in the First World to the present transfer of funds that multinationals do to their parent companies (which are almost never in our countries) after keeping all the Public Companies through, at least, questionable processes of privatization.

And not all the faults come from abroad, in Latin America during these last years of return to the democracy, we have elected governments who have promised a lot and later have defrauded those expectations, not only by carrying ahead plans which have nothing to do with the proposed ones but also by creating true networks of corruption that may go from obtaining a small advantage to carry out a procedure to large bureaus privatizing public utilities (as an indicative of this you may realize the great number of former presidents and diverse officials processed and escaped from our countries).

And to continue taking charge of our reality, there is an increasingly lower participation of the common citizen (where we are included as members of the MLC) in the traditional politics.

Where there is an important participation of people (where we are also included as members of the MLC) is in the social sector and in the intermediate associations (neighbourhood associations, specific projects of social aid and human promotion, not governmental organizations, foundations ...). After having had the luck of visiting the seven countries that form part of the Region of Latin America and of having shared life with people, besides living in that zone, I am convinced that the population of Latin America has realized that politicians and politics - as we know them today- will not bring us magic solutions to our problems, but our future depends on the specific participation of each one in projects that may give small solutions to personal, routine problems and those of the ones that we have next.

### **WHO WE ARE**

Going to the concrete life of the MLC, the Region of Latin America is formed by seven



national groups of MLC (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Equator, Mexico and Peru).

In the Region there is also Marianist presence in Guatemala, Cuba and Haiti. In Cuba there is still only official presence of the Society of Mary that accompanies groups of lay persons who are arising from the parish life. In Haiti there has been a “family birth” and we already count in this 4th International Meeting with the presence of people from Haiti. Because of the way that birth happened and because of a language issue, they are part of the Marianist Family of Canada and, in our organization as MLC, part of the Region of North America. Finally in Guatemala lay Marianist from Spain have been working during these last years in the mission of Las Conchas. Although they have not formed officially MLC, we have “joined” them to our Region and they have participated in the last Regional Meeting and we are permanently in touch.

According to a quick census done at the beginning of this year, in Latin America we are about 20 MLC (156 members) in Argentina, 6 MLC (75 people) in Brazil, almost 80 MLC (643 members) in Chile, 8 MLC (64 members) in Colombia, other 8 MLC (70 people) in Equator, more than 25 MLC (231 members) in Mexico and about 33 MLC (354 members) in Peru.

### **WHAT WE DO**

Although it is very difficult to do a list of common characteristics among the approximately 180 MLC of the Region, there are some points in common that I would like to emphasize.

In all our MLC there is a very important Marian character. The presence of the Virgin Mary is practically natural, it happens without any type of instruction or intellectual construction, and it is present since we are children. The private devotions of each country are to be emphasized and, besides the main invocation of each country, there are a large amount of private devotions in each zone. And in a general level, the Virgin of Guadalupe is our Mother of Latin America and it is under her protection and guide that we have placed our life as a Region.

The rhythm of communitarian life depends on the private characteristics of each zone, but all our community meetings have a moment of formation, a very living moment of prayer and sharing life and a habitual practice of fraternal counsel and accompany the private mission of each one of their members.

That missionary mark is very strong in all our MLC and it is hardly established in our life. In general, our missions and our services are related to work with the poorest and impoverished and with the children and young. We could give examples of each one of our countries and without any doubt, these missions they respond to our charismatic call to be attentive to the signs of the times and they are on the whole tuning with the reality that we are living, being willing to go where Mary call us.

During these last years, in several of our countries we can see how a new impulse on the initiative of formation is being taken. Little by little we are all realizing that being able to carry ahead a more efficient and compromised service means necessarily being formed. And this formation is being given in both ways: general formation as Catholics and specific formation for certain services (for example, the formation of advisors and communitarian leaders who are formed to accompany new groups and communities, being at the service of our private Churches).

I would like to emphasize a last point which is the celebrative spirit of our MLC. In all our encounters (from the small communities to more extensive levels) the celebration is always present as a way of sharing our happiness, celebrate our faith and encourage us on the way.

### **REGIONAL LEADING**

Because of the emotional proximity among the different national groups of MLC and keeping in mind that leading is a task of all, since the beginning of the period that we are evaluating a Regional Leading Team was proposed. This team formed by the National Leaders and the Regional Representative has been working since then. This Team has had a good virtual



functioning through the e-mail and we have had the luck to see us personally during our Regional Meeting. In this way we have managed to be all updated of the march of the MLC of the Region and we have been able to implement some ways of concrete contribution among countries (doing a kind of “ distance consultation” in some concrete realities as the work with youths, sharing plans of formation, helping us in the elaboration of statutes, ...).

This communication among all was also carried ahead through some other media that we have given us. Since the end of 2001 we have published eight editions of our news bulletin, we have shared some articles and debated issues through some letters sent to every member of the MLC and we have maintained an important exchange of e-mails and communications specifically destined to the National Leaders. I would like also to emphasize the participation and the accompaniment of the National Leaders and of other members of the MLC of the different countries of our Region in the preparation of the meetings of the International Team of the MLC and of the World Council of the Marianist Family and in the visits that as Regional Representative I have carried out to the different countries; being in touch has meant that in every visit I have carried the greetings and the prayers of the brothers and sisters of other countries of the Region, I have been a bearer of ideas toward the International Team and the World Council,...

In this task, as Regional Representative I prompted the initiatives, but soon they were being carried ahead with the participation of all and it is an effort that should continue since, without any doubt, it has collaborated enormously to increase the conscience of ownership to a Region, to a more extensive group of the Church than my small community or my city.

About the visits to the countries I have had the luck to be able to visit during these years the seven groups: in March of 2002 I participated in the Assembly of the Marianist Family of Brazil and I visited the MLC of Campinas, Marília and Baurú; in November of 2002 I participated in the National Encounter of the MLC of Colombia in the city of Ibagué; in May of 2003 I participated in the National Encounter of the MLC of Ecuador in the city of Quindé; in July of 2004 I participated in the National Encounter of the MLC of Mexico and I visited the MLC of Querétaro and Coatzacoalcos; in August of 2004 I visited the MLC of Talca, Ventanas, Linares and Santiago in Chile; and finally, in April of 2005 I visited the MLC of the cities of Peru of El Callao, Lima, Sanme, Otuzco and Trujillo. I have also participated in the assemblies of the MLC of Argentina during all these years.

In a first period, I tried to carry out the visits coinciding with some general encounter of the country so to be able to take advantage of that opportunity of meeting and sharing with the MLC in general. In the last period we have agreed with the National Leaders to do the visiting to the MLC in their sites and to do it together, the National Leader and the Regional Representative; without doubt this last planning requires more availability from those who are visiting and from those who are being visited -they should prepare some type of zone meeting or favour the largest amount of people to meet- but it is a richer since the life is shared more and not only a presentation in an encounter, favouring the to be felt part of something larger than my community.

In all the visits, besides participating in the encounter and talking to as many brothers and sisters as possible, we have kept specific meetings with the National Leader and with the Leading Teams of each country and also with the National Councils of the Marianist Family or with the responsible of the other branches of the Family, on those places where there is not a Council yet. All these activities required of a care planning -fundamentally to be able to take advantage of my times which very often were very short and placed on the weekends so not to lose so many working days and not to impact a lot in my family life- and it has always been carried ahead with a very good agenda elaborated by the National Leaders who took care of all the details.

Beyond the anecdotes with military squads in the route, with robberies to the buses, with nights in airports without air service by eruptions of volcanoes or by torrential rains, I want to thank each one of the National Leaders (various of them presents in this Assembly) who have accompanied and opened the doors of their houses and their communities to me to feel like a family and to continue building this communitarian Church in which we believe and we have placed our efforts.

During these four years between the previous International Meeting and this one, the most important step than we have taken in Latin America has been in April of 2003 when all the responsible for the Marianist Family of Latin America meet in Peru (the Alliance Marial - present in Chile- could not be in Lima but accompanied us spiritually). By an initiative of the MLC, the Coordinator of the marianist sisters of Latin America, the President of the Marianist



Latin-American Conference (formed by the Superiors of the marianist religious) and the Regional Representative of the MLC, called and organized this “family encounter” in which we analyzed our histories and private presents and we recognized us again as part of an only Latin America, we shared our lives and our missions, each branch in particular and as Marianist Family in each of our countries and we gave us some common ways of action for the future: we agreed to face the basic initial marianist formation all the branches together, we decide to propose to all the National Councils of the Region to assume -or reconvert- some concrete mission as a group, and also we have proposed to the sisters and to the brothers to “open” the works for developing a shared vocational pastoral. It has been agreed that all these undertakings will be carried ahead by the National Councils of the Marianist Family, with which we have assumed -fundamentally the lay- the conformation and consolidation of these Councils, convinced that our contributions to the Church is our communitarian experience as a family and that in the future we will be a family -and we should be a family- or we will not be.

After the Encounter of Responsible of the Marianist Family in Latin America, the National Leaders of the MLC carried ahead the meeting of the Regional Leading Team. This new modality of encounter has replaced the previous model of Regional Encounter that was attended by delegations of each country with different number of members according to the quantity of members of the MLC. One of the reasons because of we have changed the model of encounter is related to economic issues, since the journeys in our Region are very long and the flight tickets are very expensive for our economies. At the same time, this model, more reduced in number of people collaborated to increase the exchange of experiences and to share personal processes related to the leading.

To finish this report I want to do an explicit gratitude to all my brothers and all my sisters of the MLC of Latin America. In each opportunity that I have visited them they have opened their homes and their heart for me and I felt “at home”, verifying, once more, the famous “family spirit”; especially I want to recall the National Leaders, those with who we have been able to work together during these four years and they have done simpler my service.

Also I want to do a recognition and very large gratitude to my companions of the International Team. I am convinced that, thanks to God, we have been capable of conforming a good team in which we have worked a lot and we have shared our lives a lot beyond the proper things of the service we had been called for.

And a very special gratitude to God for giving me Alejandra -since in these services it is fundamental to be able to share the issues in which one is impelled with his family and that they bear your late nights in the computer, the meetings and the trips- and to Catalina -who arrived home in the middle of this service and since tiny she has had to learn that her father is leaving by airplanes to see friends and that more than one night he also arrives late because of being met-.



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