



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

REPORT OF THE REGION OF NORTH AMERICA, ASIA AND ANGLOPHONE AFRICA **DISPLAYED BEFORE THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE MLC** **IN 4TH INTERNATIONAL MEETING (JULY 2005 - BORDEAUX, FRANCE)**

INTRODUCTION

I want to start my report by first thanking the organizers of this meeting. Special thanks need to go to Marie-France and Anne Jaffre. Anne's efforts at securing visas for the delegates in my Region is especially commendable. Her effort and responsiveness to all the requests from India and East Africa has been most helpful.

FOUR YEARS AGO

I begin my report by remembering our last international gathering in Philadelphia, USA four years ago, where we produced the document Being In Community. I want to remember two people who were at that meeting. The first is Jean Canning, who served on the organizing committee for the event. Some of you will remember her. Jean died this past spring time; all of us in the US MLC's grieve her loss, but we remember her powerful witness and faithfulness to the vision of Marianist Lay communities. The delegation from the US carries her memory in our own hearts. Also, I want to remember Bascilio Choi who was a delegate from Korea four years ago. We learned in this past year that he is suffering from cancer of the stomach and I ask all of us to keep him and his family in our prayers.

In the document Being In Community we read in paragraph 4.1:

"At Pentecost, Mary, in the midst of the first Church community, helped to sustain the faith, prayer, and expectation of the Spirit. She is the model of apostolic spirituality for those whose mission is described in the Gospel."

This is an important scripture reference concerning Mary where we find her gathered in prayer with the early Church. This is a vision of a Church where people of different cultures and languages were gathered around Mary in prayer and sent by the Holy Spirit.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM MY REGION

Using the passage just cited I want to give you some highlights of my Region. As you know, the international team to date has three Regions that cover all the MLC's in our world. We have Europe and West Africa, Latin America and the so called English speaking Region, which includes United States, Canada, Ireland, Kenya, Zambia, Malawi, Japan, Korea, India and Australia and Haiti. This Region is very large in terms of geography and is quite diverse. Of the nine countries in this Region six countries do not speak English as a first language. This Region is marked by:

- Diverse language and culture groups.
- Two of the countries in this Region, Malawi and Haiti, are among the poorest countries in the world, yet we find a richness of faith and MLC activity in these countries.
- In the majority of countries in this Region we find an over abundance of poverty, hunger, problems with displacement of people from their towns and villages and a general yearning for Gospel justice for all people.
- At the same time we find the Marian mystery of Cana alive and thriving in many of these countries. God continues to work the miracle of Cana by sustaining vibrant lay communities.
- In the last four years we have seen the emergence of six MLC's in Haiti; even now we have an observer from Haiti at our meeting, with the expectation that Haiti become a full participating member of the Region in the following four years.
- Malawi has seen an multiplication of MLC's in the last four years.



- There is a vibrant MLC network in Kenya, Zambia and Malwai and the existence of a inter family Council that discusses the development and direction of MLC's in East Africa.
- In India there has been an effort to revitalize the MLC's and there is an Family Council that meets to plan and discern direction and formation for MLC members.
- Korea has an active MLC network with a family council comprised of the sisters, brothers and lay Marianists.
- Japan also has vibrant MLC's and is concerned about ensuring that they have ongoing formation materials.
- In the US and Canada we see vibrant communities and the existence of family councils that share jointly concerns for the development of MLC's. There are family councils in the US, Winnipeg and Quebec.

AFRICA AS A REGION

One significant development in these past four years is the decision of the MLC's in Africa to petition this international body to become its own Region, thus having representation of the International Team. This decision came out of the painful circumstance of moving the international meeting from Ivory Coast to Bordeaux, France. I personally felt much distress and anguish over this decision and it was not an easy time for the MLC's in Africa or for the members of the Leaderships Team. At one time I personally feared that no one from Africa would participate in our meeting today because of the anger and hurt feelings.

But the faith, patience and good will of the lay Marianists in Africa allowed for a different solution. Mary was truly present and, like the miracle of Cana, out of tough situation and lack of solutions came a real solution. Healing took place and the members of the MLC's in Africa themselves decided that it was time for Africa to submit a petition to this general assembly asking for Africa to be its own Region in our organization. I give credit to the leaders of the MLC's in both East and West Africa for their own resolve and faith. I am personally excited about the creation of the new Region of Africa since this shows clearly the promise of Mary gathered with the Church at Pentecost. The Spirit of God continues to call us to grow into a more diverse family where all voices are represented and where God continues to create a deep family spirit and unity.

SOME CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE

I want to raise three challenges that confront my Region and indeed the entire international organization of Marianist Lay Communities.

1. Does Asia become its own Region? Now that Africa takes a seat around the table on the International Team the question of how to best represent countries in Japan, India and Korea becomes more pressing. I have not been able to visit either of these countries and a visit is overdue. India in particular has asked for a visit from a member of the International Team. With such vast distances between countries and the cultural diversity present it is a challenge to adequately represent the MLC's in Japan, Korea and India. Questions confront me. Do we encourage the MLC's in Japan, Korea and India to begin to act as their own Region as did the countries of Zambia, Malawi, Kenya, Togo, Ivory Coast and Congo? This will mean having some joint meetings. Yet with the distances involved this may be impractical. Should the International Team, even this assembly, encourage the MLC's in Japan, Korea and India to begin to unite as a Region, thus becoming a Region in 2009? This is a very concrete challenge to whoever serves as the representative to the current Region as it exists today. It is a challenge for the next International Team as well. Above all, it is up to us to listen to the delegates from each of the countries to ask themselves what is the best way to have their experiences, needs, questions, culture and spirituality represented on the leadership team.
2. A question of resources and financing. Another question that confronts my Region and the entire organization is that of adequate financing of the activities of the International Team. Just paying for someone to fly to an annual meeting in Rome during the month of November is costly. With Africa becoming its own Region it is important the MLC's



ensure that there is enough funding to allow for the representative from every Region to be able to travel without strain to his or hers personal finances. Yet if the International Team is to expand to five or six members then out costs increase accordingly. We simply have to pay attention to and solve the funding problems that confront our organization if we want to continue to become the one united family that Mary calls us to be.

3. A question of visitation. Because my Region is so vast and spread out in distance it is very difficult for one person to visit all the countries in the Region. How and when to visit are important questions facing my Region. As my wife and I found out when we went to Africa last year, visiting another country, and the MLC's within, is really the only way to understand the reality of the MLC's.

But there is another aspect of visiting that concerns me, and that has to do with the increasing problem of crossing borders. It is unfortunate but true that in the Western countries security is becoming more and more an issue. Delegates in at least five of the countries in my Region were required to secure visas before entering France. Thanks to the hard work of Anne Jaffre all who sought visas received them. But one wonders if conditions will be even more difficult in four years, or eight years. The time might come very soon when it will be easier for delegates from the US to travel to a meeting in Africa than for someone from Africa to travel to the US. When that time comes, our challenge is that we welcome the opportunity to visit our brothers in sisters and we act out of faith and not fear. Our model is Mary, who traveled with her son in her own womb to meet her cousin, Elizabeth her cousin.

Thank you for your time and attention to my report. As our organization, our community of communities gathered and sent by the Spirit, continues to grow, may the guidance of Mary our mother lead all of us to a deeper wisdom and care for the mission of her son Jesus Christ.



ANTHONY GARASCIA MLC

REGIONAL RESPONSIBLE OF NORTH AMERICA, ASIA AND AFRICA ANGLOPHONE
INTERNATIONAL TEAM
MARIANIST LAY COMMUNITIES