

FIRST ARCO NORTE REGIONAL FORUM

“A NEW PRESENT, A BETTER FUTURE”

On October 26 and 27, the first Regional Forum of the Arco Norte Region was held, which was attended by more than 100 Brothers and laypeople from all of the Provinces that are part of the Region (Canada, USA, Central and Occidental Mexico, Central America, and Norandina), along with participants from the Region of South America and the General Government in Rome.

DAY 1

On the first day, after Br. Gregorio Linacero (Central America) instructed us about how the individual sessions would work, the Forum started with Br. Hipólito Pérez, Coordinator of the Arco Norte Region and Provincial of the Province of Central America, who welcomed us to this first Forum that marked the beginning of “a new present, a better future” for all who collaborate in the Marist mission. “In this beginning, let it flow into communication and harmony. We are a Global Family”, he said in his presentation. He called as well to take these times of pandemic as an opportunity to rethink how to reach the achievement of the objectives that have been set forth by the XXII General Chapter, to build bridges and be beacons of hope.

“As Arco Norte, we look to the horizon to recognize ourselves as a Region, directing the joint work we carry out to finally reach the marked transition. Like Mary in Cana (Jn 2,5) ‘Make him tell you ‘ ” Brother Hipólito (Central America) invited all that were present, emphasizing the mission entrusted to us by the XXII General Chapter.

Afterwards, we were blessed with the special message from Br. Ernesto Sánchez, Superior General, where he recognized himself as part of the Region. He explained that the General Chapter was somewhat prophetic, pointing out realities that are coming to light and being revealed to us over time. “The motto of this meeting, a new present and a better future, is very appropriate. We are called to be a charismatic family, beacons of hope in a turbulent world, to be homes of light in each community we are a part of, and to care for and generate life in a group way. Now that the Arco Norte region is looking itself as a group, what does God want from this Region?”



To seek this better future, Br. Ernesto told us that we can only do so if we try to see this reality from God's gaze: through reflection, in silence, in dialogues, to detect all moments of grace. Who are we and what are we called to do as Arco Norte?

Finally, he stressed that leadership is key and how everyone in the Region should live leadership in a helpful and prophetic way, as the Chapter has invited us to do. It has to be confronted and create something new, even if it is difficult to do it in a context of uncertainty. We must know how to detach ourselves and have the openness to recreate. "Today, let us respond to these calls and let's not do it alone, let's be leaders

who listen, accompany, understand and challenge, but above all, trust others and that this is God's work."

The morning continued with Br. Emili Turú's conference, which focused on change and how we should respond to it.

What is happening in the world today? As in all civilizations, there have been different key phases in history and today, we are in the era of decadence and the birth of a new one.

"These are the two realities that coexist in the world today, a closed world that excludes the culture of disposal. On the other side there is a new civilization, a new culture, the culture of the encounter. To go from

a decadent culture to a culture of encounter, what we need is, following the parable of the Good Samaritan, to open our eyes, let ourselves be touched by reality, with care and tenderness. "

How to contribute to this profound transformation?

"Life changes through emergencies, not incrementally. Instead of the simple sum of the individual parts, life mixes everything in networks of relationships and produces something new. The emergency always comes as a surprise. "

Br. Emili ends with the invitation to consciously choose who we want to be as leaders for this time and for Arco Norte. "We must understand the times in which we live, focus our energies on what is possible, and voluntarily step forward to serve the human spirit. "

He also added: "The way is to open our eyes ... If we do not deal with changing the world, then we will be changed by the world ... What is needed is ingenuity and audacity."

Monday's session continued with strong internal work, where each team that works in favor of the Region presented its members, their main objectives, projects and challenges. This was done to have greater visibility, where all the collaboration that is carried out is to increase the reach that Arco Norte has with all its communities, and see ourselves as a team, as a global charismatic family.

This implied a deep analysis of the strengths, opportunities, weaknesses, and threats of the Region, together with reflections and contributions in teams so that the Regional Council has a better vision of the strategic areas that need to be renewed, to continue with the mission. This moment of work was directed by Br. Albert Rivera (USA) who assured that everything reviewed would be considered for the planning of Arco Norte.



DAY 2

Tuesday began with the participation of Sister Gloria Liliana Franco, who gave us some “Intuitions and challenges during the pandemic - A plan to resuscitate”. “What is obvious is uncertainty and what is permanent is change” she explained to us at the conference. She stated that reality is complex and we must take a realistic point of view, but with a believing and hopeful look; where we can discern what allows us to recognize God’s passage through the world.



She also referred to us that, in the time of the pandemic, we have to think apostolically and called on us to ask ourselves: where have we been? “The most important invitation that is made to us is to contemplate,” she told us; where “to contemplate is to be moved and the possibility of looking at reality in a more compassionate way arises”.

She also referenced the fact that contemplation is an attitude that places us in a vivid way and frees us from haste and unbridled activism. She closed her participation by inviting us to ask ourselves where we are as a Church and where we would like to be.

This second day continued with arduous internal work to define the main lines of action for the Region, which will be the strategic guide for the joint work of all Arco Norte teams. With different views, echoes and visions of the attendees, the Regional Council now has the task of reviewing the contributions made to integrate them into the planning of the Region and, thus, mark concrete actions to be carried out to achieve the objectives set.



Also, the work of the Regional Committee was thanked and recognized that from 2015 to 2020 began the definition of the Region, especially Br. Goyo Linacero, who served as a link between the Council and the Regional Committee, whose work largely defined what today is Arco Norte. The 2020-2023 Regional Committee was welcomed, made up of Brothers, lay women and men committed to the agreements reviewed throughout the Forum, including Br Rodrigo Espinosa (Central Mexico) who now takes office as Executive Secretary.

Within this space, a very special thanks was given to those in the Montagne Community in Holguín, Cuba, where solidarity programs are carried out in marginal areas, educational projects with boys, girls and young people at university level and different ecclesial projects. Likewise, those who come to offer their service, their hands and their hearts in the new mission they have chosen were welcomed.

For the closing of the Forum, the Marist novitiate in Medellín, Colombia, offered a joyful and musical holy mass, with all the novices in formation of the Region and the Brothers José Miguel Caballero Enrique Ruiz and Alejandro Herrera from Norandina, joined by Father Rodrigo Ortiz. In an atmosphere of celebration and communion, God and Mary were thanked for the opportunity to have this meeting despite the circumstances, which marked the path to be traveled in the Region, always under the

light and mantle of our Father Champagnat in order to reach more boys, girls, adolescents and young people, especially those on the margins of the world.

Thanks to all the communities that participated and to those who made this forum possible! May the harmony and communion that were present enlighten and encourage the very important regional mission that was entrusted, under the mantle of our Good Mother Mary and hand in hand with Saint Marcellin Champagnat.

All to Jesus through Mary!

