



VIA LATINA 22
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News from the General Administration of the Society of Mary

Visit of the General Council to the Province of France

The General Council made a canonical visitation of the Province of France from January 18 to February 19, 2022. This visit, initially scheduled for April and May 2020, had to be rescheduled twice due to pandemic restrictions. The General Council thanks the brothers of France for the welcome they received in the various communities and for their willingness to adapt the visit to the current circumstances.

The Province includes the sector of Congo and the District of Ivory Coast, although this visit of the Council was limited to the brothers living in France (and one in Belgium). This group is composed of 52 religious, including the 5 who are in Italy with different missions.



Fr. A. Fétis, SM, Superior General, Bro. M. Magnan, SM, Asst. Gen. for Education and Bro. M. McAward, SM, Asst. Gen. for Temporalities at the school Institution Sainte Marie-Grand Lebrun of Bordeaux with Mr. J.F. Berthonneau, Director of the Primary School.

The Province's mission includes 7 educational institutions, distributed between Paris, Bordeaux and the East of the country, two university student residences (in Paris and Antony) as well as other works and institutions. Among these institutions, the Chapel of La Madeleine in Bordeaux, the founding place of the Marianist Family, stands out. Educational works, several of which have a long tradition, generally enjoy great prestige and are well appreciated. All of the educational institutions are grouped into a single network (tutelle), which also includes the two schools of the Marianist Sisters in France.

The Province of France is completing its restructuring process, with its planned transition to becoming the Region of France on August 15. The meetings of the General Council also afforded a good opportunity to accompany the members of the Provincial Council in this process, which is always complicated and involves a lot of effort and work.



Saint-Hippolyte cemetery where more than 300 Marianist religious are buried, including five superior generals.

On January 23, the General Council had the opportunity to celebrate the feast of our founders, with representatives of all the branches of the Marianist Family, at the school of the Marianist Sisters in Sucy-en-Brie. In addition, during the visit, there was an opportunity to meet with members of the MLCs, FMI and Alliance Mariale on several occasions.

The General Council is very grateful for the welcome received in all the communities and especially to the Provincial Council for its work and generosity. We ask the Virgin Mary to continue to guide our brothers in their life and mission.

Lent: A Time for Hope in Heaven and on Earth

Tomorrow is Ash Wednesday. Tomorrow, we begin another Lenten season. Tomorrow, once again, we acutely recognize that we are sinners, that we need redemption, and that we have a merciful God whose great love has overcome our weaknesses. Most of us, it is likely, don't need to be reminded that we are sinners. As Psalm 50(51) reminds us each Friday morning: *My*

offenses, truly I know them; my sin is always before me. Yes, we are sinners, but that is not the end of the story.

Many of us will take up special practices during Lent, perhaps for penance, perhaps as a frequent reminder of the focus of this season. Isaiah 58, in one of the well-known readings during Lent, reminds us that our true conversion is not rooted in concentrating on ourselves, but rather repairing our relationships as individuals and as societies, to others, to our world, and to God. Paradoxically, it is in reaching outward that we are inwardly healed:

Is not this the sort of fast that pleases me – it is the Lord who speaks – to break unjust fetters and undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and break every yoke, to share your bread with the hungry, and shelter the homeless poor, to clothe the man you see to be naked and not turn from your own kin? Then will your light shine like the dawn and your wound be quickly healed over. Your integrity will go before you and the glory of the Lord behind you. Cry, and the Lord will answer; call, and he will say, ‘I am here.’



The great mercy of God is found through our own acts of mercy. Said another way: we cannot heal our relationships with God, without healing our relationships with each other. Healing relationships could be simply defined as “making things right.” This applies to each one of us, to our neighbors, our nations and our Church.

Pope Francis has been consistently vocal about these truths. His encyclicals *Laudato Si'* and *Fratelli Tutti* are particularly rich meditations about our relationships to each other, as believers in the love of God, and therefore, also in relation to our common home. Using these two encyclicals, the

international Marianist website (www.marianist.org) has prepared a small special section with weekly meditations on this theme of healing relationships, as a special focus for this Lenten season. We invite you to visit this page and use it as a resource to accompany your 2022 Lenten journey. May it be a journey of hope in the mercy of God and hope in the grace received by mutual care and respect for all God's people and for our common home.

Feel free to post a comment at the website, or to share your own thoughts by email to: lent2022@smcuria.it

Admiral Shinjiro Yamamoto

Among the Japanese Christians deeply connected to the Marianists, Admiral Shinjiro Yamamoto stands out (not to be confused with Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, who was in charge of the Pearl Harbor attack).

In 1891, when the superior of Japan was looking for a place closer to the sea where the religious could relax during the summer, he contacted the Yamamoto family. They agreed to rent him a house. Friendship and trust were established between the brothers and the Yamamoto family. The young Shinjiro often joined the religious for various activities and games.

Shinjiro Yamamoto was born in this village of Katase on December 22, 1877. He was 14 years old when he entered the Morning Star boarding school. Intelligent, studious, and joyful, he accumulated honors and awards, while, at the same time, building a strong personality. With his parents' permission, he asked to be allowed to study the Christian religion and to become a Catholic. He expressed it in these words during a conference in Rome: "... I am the first student of the Marianist School in Tokyo to convert to Catholicism. I was also the first to be baptized [with the name Stephen] in their chapel of the Morning Star School, on the feast of Christmas, 1893. I cannot remember this occasion without experiencing a deep emotion concerning what happened in my heart as a young man..."



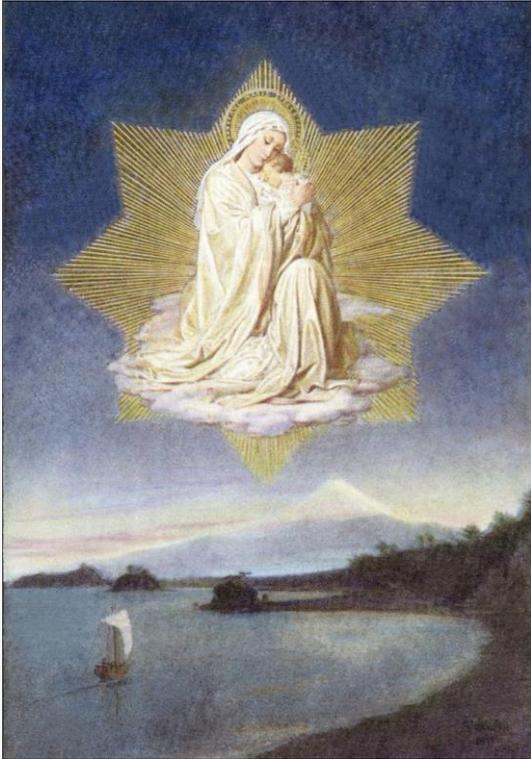
His conversion was only the beginning. Eventually, his entire family converted to Catholicism. His father himself receiving baptism at the age of 86.

After naval school, he participated in the Boxer War in China, then in the conflict against Russia in 1904-1905 where he received the Golden Milan cross for his heroic behavior. He later wrote about this event: "What I have done is almost nothing, or at least not worthy of praise. I am rather ashamed that we're talking about it. If up to now I have managed to escape a thousand dangers, it is only through the special protection of the Blessed Virgin whom you have taught me to love and honor. For more than three and a half months, I have not been in Japan. I need to be strengthened by the sacraments [...]. I hope, with Port Arthur taken, to find time for a little retreat." Shinjiro Yamamoto took advantage of the newfound peace to marry Shiyoko Yoshimara, who was also a Catholic. They had four children.



The Yamamoto spouses with their 4 children

In 1916, Japan opened a diplomatic mission in Italy. The naval attaché at this mission was Admiral Yamamoto. In fact, he was much more than a naval attaché. His perfect knowledge of French and English, as well as his membership in the Catholic religion, were a precious asset for this diplomatic mission.



For his part, Yamamoto took advantage of this opportunity to make contact with the Marianists in Rome, in particular with Father Maurice who had composed the prayer to Mary, the Morning Star, for the conversion of Japan. He said: Why not accompany this prayer with an image? He asked Mrs. Franchi, an artist, to paint a picture. He then presented this picture to Pope Benedict XV, who blessed the image. After World War I, at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, Yamamoto was appointed secretary of the Japanese commission.

His faith was great and he was anxious for Japan to be converted, as he explained at a conference in Paris in 1919: "It is important that the conversion of Japan be prompt, that it be worked on tirelessly and immediately, for the obstacles are not negligible [...]. If Japan does not quickly convert to the true religion, it will be disastrous not only for the country, but for the whole Far East, which is under Japan's influence and which is a region that has a billion pagans." And he continued: "With your prayers, may you obtain a large number of French missionaries to help us! Oh! How useful they would be for the conversion of Japan, for that of the peoples of the Far East, and finally for the peace of the world! For true peace is found only in the Church and not in leagues or in purely human or even pagan institutions. Only Jesus, who came to bring peace, is able to give us lasting peace on earth. May he grant it to the world!"

Following the Treaty of Versailles, the Carolinas, Marianas and Marshall Islands became Japanese. What would be the fate of the missionaries working on these islands? Japan manifested an openness to resolve this question. This situation earned Yamamoto the insignia of Grand Cross of the Order of St. Gregory received from the hands of Benedict XV. In bestowing this award, the Pope emphasized, "the intelligent zeal with which Admiral Yamamoto, in the fulfillment of his mandate, has corresponded equally to the views and desires of the Holy See and of his own government."

After his stay in Europe, Yamamoto was appointed to the household of Imperial Prince Hiro Hito, whom he accompanied as a translator on his 1921 tour of Europe.

Yamamoto was a Marianist at heart; he was affiliated with the Society of Mary, which he esteemed and loved like a mother. During this trip, he took the opportunity to visit the communities in the countries he crossed.

The government was delighted with the success of the visit and asked Yamamoto to make an official lecture tour through the major cities of Japan to explain the Prince's visit.

The years following the terrible earthquake of 1923 were difficult for Admiral Yamamoto because of family events and the rise of militarism in the country. In 1937, when he was retiring, the Japanese government had the idea to call on Admiral Yamamoto and send him to 16 countries in the Americas and Europe to lecture on the positive aspects of Japan. This was a very difficult task, an almost impossible mission. However, out of patriotism, he accepted the task. Before



leaving, around November 1937, he visited the Marianist community in Tokyo. He opened his soul and begged for their prayers. It was an agonizing farewell: "Please accompany me with your continuous prayers. This task is like a death for me."

After pursuing several other similar missions, Admiral Yamamoto, suffered a cerebral arteriosclerosis. He returned to his country and died on February 28, 1942.

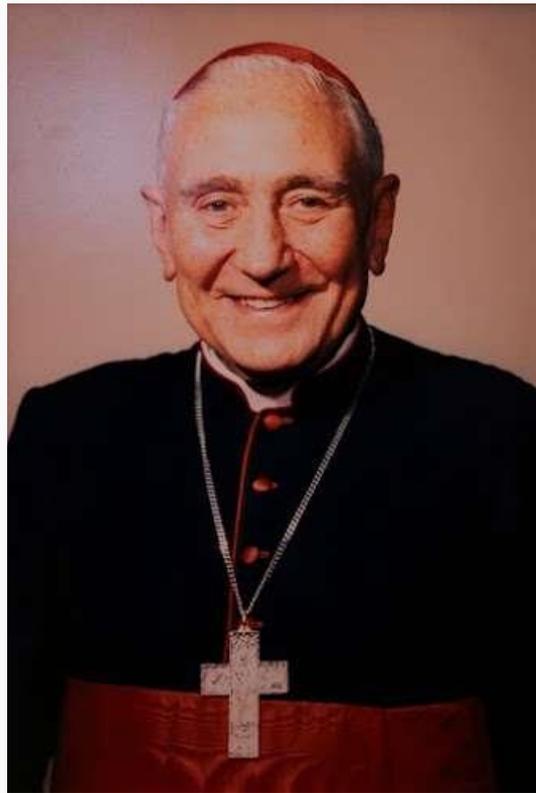
The Archbishop of Tokyo presided over his funeral before a huge crowd. On April 6, a vigil was held to remember Admiral Yamamoto. Kotaro Tanaka, president of the Supreme Court of Justice, said: "last year, the Catholic community lost Father Soiji Iwashita. Now, a year and a half later, we have lost Shinjiro Yamamoto as well. Everyone knows that these two people were the best representatives of our Catholic community. They were the two great mentors, two living treasures of our Community for all that referred to wisdom, philosophy and religion. On the one hand, they both had an intense faith; on the other, they were the disciples who clearly lived this faith and this Catholic philosophy. In that sense, there was no difference between the two."

A step forward in the Cause for the Beatification of Cardinal Eduardo Pironio

On Friday, February 18, Pope Francis, in an audience with Cardinal Marcello Semeraro, Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, authorized the decree of heroic virtues of the Servant of God Eduardo Francisco Pironio, Cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church.

As Prefect of the Congregation for Consecrated Life, Pironio, who knew the Marianists as auxiliary bishop of La Plata (1964-1972) and then bishop of Mar del Plata (1972-1975), explained to Pope St. John Paul II the Marianist *mixed composition*, which is why the Pope authorized the approval of our renewed *Rule of Life*.

Born in 1920 in Nueve de Julio (Argentina), he died on February 5, 1998 in Rome. Pope Paul VI called him to Rome in 1975, appointing him Prefect of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. In this position Cardinal Pironio was largely responsible for the approval of the Constitutions of numerous religious Institutes, renewed according to the ecclesiology that emerged from the Second Vatican Council. He rendered the same immense service to the laity when John Paul II appointed him President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity.



In this capacity, Pironio approved numerous Statutes of the new lay movements that emerged after the Council. "They call me a prophet of hope," he said, "yes, this hope is very strong in me because it rests on the dead and risen Christ."

Eduardo Pironio possessed exceptional human and spiritual qualities. He exemplified the model of a bishop who was a Good Shepherd. His pastoral charity knew no bounds. "The only thing I want," he said, "is to work and serve." His spiritual testament, written on February 11, 1996, the memorial of Our Lady of Lourdes, is moving. In it, he emphasize a single word: "Magnificat." He ended this testament by entrusting himself wholeheartedly to Mary, the poor, contemplative and faithful Virgin.

In 1984, he was diagnosed with cancer. Upon receiving the news of his illness, he gratefully greeted the doctors and entrusted himself to God's Providence, saying: "What a joy when they have said to me: my feet are standing within your gates, Jerusalem". Cardinal Pironio wished that his mortal remains lie in the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Luján (Argentina). We Marianists should be grateful for this Cause. We should follow his example of a life lived in service to others.

Prayer for Our Earth

(Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*)



All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of your creatures. You embrace with your tenderness all that exists. Pour out upon us the power of your love, that we may protect life and beauty. Fill us with peace, that we may live as brothers and sisters, harming no one.

O God of the poor,
help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth,
so precious in your eyes.
Bring healing to our lives,
that we may protect the world and not prey on it,
that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.
Touch the hearts
of those who look only for gain
at the expense of the poor and the earth.
Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,
to be filled with awe and contemplation,
to recognize that we are profoundly united
with every creature as we journey towards your infinite light.
We thank you for being with us each day.
Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle
for justice, love and peace.

G.A. Communications recently sent

- **Death Notice:N. 6-7.**
 - **Feb. 4: *Horizons 2023 (second information and registration)***, in three languages, to Unit Superiors and Assistants for Religious Life, from the Assistant General for Religious Life, Fr. Pablo Rambaud, SM.
 - **Feb. 24: *International Meeting of Educators***, in three languages, to all the religious of the Society of Mary, from the Assistant General for Education, Bro. Maximin Magnan, SM.
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