

## **Secretariat of the General Chapter of the Congregation of Marian Fathers**

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**Rome 2011**

### **Bulletin No. 9 of the General Chapter – Rome 2011**

The day started with the morning prayers and Mass. Father Pavlo Ostrovskiy was the main celebrant assisted by Frs. Skwierczynski and M. Zachara. In his homily, Fr. Ostrovskiy spoke about his time in the military and how precious saliva was to a dry mouth. Jesus used spittle to cure a blind man and to gradually return his eyesight. So also we gradually grow in our spiritual life.

After breakfast, the majority of the Chapter members went by bus to the Vatican to attend the Wednesday General Audience of Benedict XVI at the Aula de Paolo Sesto. During the audience, they were greeted twice (in Polish and in Italian) in response to which they sang in Latin the Marian Anthem refrain.

Addressing the Marians, the Holy Father said:

*"I greet especially the participants of the General Chapter of the Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, calling them to continue their generous service for Christ and the Church, faithfully following the path indicated by their revered Founder."*

After the audience, General Superior, Fr. Andrzej Pakuła, gave an interview to the Radio Vatican.

"For some General Chapter members, the encounter with the Holy Father has become a very powerful spiritual experience that has touched their religious identity and ministry in the Church to such a degree that on their way home, they repeated, «This was an unforgettable day,»" said the newly elected Superior General of the Marians. Father Andrew Pakuła also added that the Holy Father asked the Marians to faithfully serve the Church, while following in the spirit of their Founder and his charism.

"These words are very important to us because the 2007 beatification of Fr. Papczyński helped us to see him in a new light, not only as a Founder, but also as someone who is always near us in the mystery of the communion of saints, as the father of our community who cares about us in a spiritual manner, as it were, so that we may faithfully fulfill the founding charism. The beatification also heightened our awareness of the nature of the Congregation and our works," said Fr. Pakuła in his interview with to Radio Vatican.

He further remarked that in recent years many [religious] communities especially in Poland, but not exclusively, began to question themselves: "Does our work truly conform to the spirit of our charism? Or maybe, we just see a need and respond to it, without considering particularly whether or not we've been indeed raised up for this in the Church with the approval of the Holy Father." "Therefore, the words about fidelity to the Founder's spirit are of fundamental importance. We did not know what the Holy Father would say to us. In fact, it was just one sentence, but it was a very significant one," said the General of the Marians.

Father Pakuła added that the same topics are now present at the Marians' General Chapter being celebrated in Rome. "It seems that our reflection on the charism will become for us a way of deepening our own identity. We are attempting to describe this identity in the language of theology and then in that of pastoral ministry. There were unanimously accepted proposals to develop appropriate textbooks on ministry to people who are associated with our Congregation and living out our spirituality whether in the Association of Marian Helpers, in the Confraternity of the Immaculate Conception, the Eucharistic Apostles of The Divine Mercy, or in the Lithuanian Association of Blessed George Matulewicz, and the groups of Padrinhos – Madrinhas in Brazil. These groups are quite numerous. They are keenly interested in the spirituality of our Congregation and in deepening their identity," said Fr. Pakuła.

In this context, the Marians' General Superior recalled the words of John Paul II from *Vita Consecrata*. The Pope said that religious orders have a reason of being and serving the Church, in as much as they

become schools of spirituality. "Some of our lay associates experience this school of spirituality and rediscover themselves there, by drawing abundantly from it. This is the first dimension of our reflection on the charism and identity and their translation into our apostolate," pointed out the General Superior of the Marians.

The Chapter does not have any special motto. The Motto of the Congregation "For Christ and the Church" in the spirit of Mary and the Immaculate Conception is being repeated in various languages in the Provincial and Vicariate Superiors' speeches and in the submitted proposals.

"These are practically the leading topics of our General Chapter, seeing that we're now in the fourth year since our Father Founder's beatification and have also celebrated in 2009 the 100th Anniversary of the Renewal and Reform of the Congregation. Two documents were produced that have great importance to our Congregation in the matter of defining, attempting to describe, our spiritual experiences of both the beatification and the Jubilee of Renewal," emphasized Fr. Pakuła.

He also remarked that the word "*kairos*," meaning "an opportune time" or "a time of grace," frequently appears in the Chapter proceedings. "The Congregation experienced this grace at that time. We are trying to rediscover and describe it, as well as to translate it into an apostolic dimension, because since our inception, we have been an apostolic community. Therefore, we realize that what the Church has entrusted to us and the Holy Spirit has raised us up for, is not for us alone. Naturally, it is above all for our sanctification, but also it is to be passed onto those who would come to us and whom the Church entrusted to our ministry," said Fr. Andrew Pakuła.

Fr. Piotr Kieniewicz, MIC  
Secretary to the General Chapter