

(Recently Fr. Marcelo Marciel returned from his first visit to Madagascar, one of the regions assigned to his care.)

I could have never imagined that my first trip as assistant general would be to Madagascar. I guess God wanted it that way and I am happy that he did. I was happy to share in the life of the Vice-province and spend time working with the Vice-provincial Council. Living with members of Vice-province day in and day out, I felt like a brother among brothers. I am grateful to everyone and, in a special way, to Fr. Michel and all those who made this visit so special.

It is not always easy to be aware of all the work the Assumption is doing throughout the world and often our view is partial, limited. To my great surprise Fr. General asked me to take the Vice-province under my wings as a special concern. The responsibility we have as a general council to provide guidance, direction, and support is meant to extend to every corner of the Congregation. I understand how much this is a task that goes beyond my cultural and linguistic limits. However, this visit helped me to understand better that an assistant from Chile can travel to Madagascar and feel at home knowing full well that our family spirit knows no borders.

While I was there, the Vice-province celebrated the ordination to the priesthood of Aristide Hajanirina and to the diaconate of Joseph Velojaona, Hervé Tianjara and Georges Velosoa. This celebration gave evidence that the Lord never stops calling us to a deeper and fuller communion with him. I witnessed the sign of his presence in the dynamism of the young people in formation: the joyful launching of the house for postulants in Miharisoa, the serious commitment of the novices, and the care given to the preparation of so many candidates.

From my stay, I will always remember the smiles of the children. I want to thank all of my brothers laboring on this island for their courageous commitment at the service of preaching the gospel, as well as their desire for continued formation and a deeper knowledge of God. All of this, I am convinced, contributes to the development of the Malagasy people. The educational system that you wish to develop in Madagascar points to a better future for all. I discovered Assumptionists who do not allow themselves to be overwhelmed by trials and daily preoccupations. Our faith requires continual conversion. And the first step in this conversion is the recognition of our weakness and the need to help each other bear our burdens.

The potential for growth in Madagascar is extraordinary. We have every reason to hope, all the more so since the province of Africa stands ready to cooperate with the Vice-province. The community in Tulear was fortunate to be able to support the foundation of a Carmelite monastery there. May the strength of the contemplative life bless this mission and give all the courage to follow the call they have received.

Misaotra … !

Marcelo Marciel, A.A.