

## The Mandate

It was our obligation to spread the news and plans of the General Chapter, which had just concluded. We started with a thorough examination of how we were living our roles and administering the apostolate and tried to envision the new ideas that were to be adopted. We walked in the footsteps of the Founder as we planned for the modern needs of our time. Each of us was required to partake in the basic organizational work. Formerly an Assistant was put in charge of the U.S.A. and the mission in the Philippines. In the reorganization of the work of the Assistants, it was decided that I should have the United States, and since our work had spread all over the country, the Provinces such as the Philippines should be divided into two administrative units. The new administrative unit would include the Philippines, the persecuted Province of China, which was now located in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Malaysia, and Singapore. It would also be necessary to take on the mission of the Province of China, which was Sri Lanka, which would become a Province itself.

Later on, when Mexico started the mission of Korea, I would be asked to occasionally make a visitation there, since I was already covering our mission in Japan. That way I ended up in charge of the two Provinces of the United States and the Province of China including its missions in the Philippines and Sri Lanka. Even then there was talk of centralizing our training for young Brothers, and we were talking about Manila in the Philippines as one of the central houses for college studies of our young Brothers. Later we would also offer the same for all our Provinces and missions of Africa and open one central training center in Kenya for all of Africa. That would come later, of course. Besides these responsibilities, I was asked to serve on the Mission Commission, and that meant visiting the various mission countries where some of the Provinces were working. At the time we had Marist Brothers in fifteen countries of Africa, whereas now we are in nineteen countries of Africa.

The missionary spirit had started with our Founder who answered the request of the Pope to the Marist Brothers. Champagnat wanted to start the missions by personally going along with the first group of Brothers, but the Institute was still too young and needed its Founder for continued guidance. So he sent forth the first group of missionaries to New Caledonia. At this time, we had two American Marist Brothers as missionaries to New Caledonia. That would be one place I would later visit and where I would be very much impressed by the complete dedication of those first Marists who worked to get the Marist life and spirit started in that area. I would be denied this opportunity for a long time because of the impossibility of getting into China. But the Lord would eventually offer me an occasion.

My presence in Asia would help to replace Bro. Jean Emile, who had worked so hard for years building the Province of China and Sri Lanka. I had inherited both Sri Lanka and China from this devoted Marist, and I recall his advice for successful travel. He told me that it was a great help to travel light, taking along only the minimum of clothing, books, etc. In fact he shared with me one idea I felt was a bit extreme. The Brother told me that he traveled with only three stockings, and each day he would wash one and let it dry. That advice I would not follow, but it reminded me that I should go back to the U.S.A. to get my clothing. We had many changes we needed to make, and after getting my personal belongings, I offered a fond farewell to my loved ones in the United States and did not see them for the next eighteen years!