Fratelli Project in Maicao, a synodal initiative of the Marists and the Lasallians

For several years the Marist Brothers and the De La Salle Brothers have joined efforts, intentions and their own lives around the **'Fratelli Project', "a project that connects with what is most authentic in the Marist and Lasallian vocations, which is fraternity**", as explains Brother Óscar Vicario, member of the Fratelli Council. "Our Founders wanted fraternities at the service of poor children and young people, and that is Fratelli, a response to what our contemporary world needs", adds the Marist religious.

For Brother Carlos Gómez, Vicar General of the De La Salle Brothers, who is also a member of the Fratelli Council, "the initiative to work together has to do, firstly, with the traditions of our two Institutes, and also in the context of a Church which today invites us to synodality", since **"synodality will always mean working together, dreaming together, living together and, obviously, building communion, which is basically what the Church has to demonstrate to the world".**

Both congregations, the Marist and De La Salle Brothers, are convinced of the need to **"walk together in specific projects"** that respond to Pope Francis' call to revive the synodal essence of the Church and to take action in the existential peripheries.

Brothers of the migrants

Hence the commitment to set up communities with Brothers and volunteers from both congregations, to respond to the reality of children and young people in a situation of migration, as it is happening in Lebanon, where the project started more than eight years ago, and now, more recently, in **Maicao, on the northern border between Colombia and Venezuela, where the first steps are being taken under the leadership of the Fratelli Council and the Provincials** of the Marists and Lasallians in the ground.

“Fratelli is a project born of the two congregations to respond to emerging needs, especially those of migrants; it is an experience of shared life and mission”, points out Br. Valdicer Fachi, a Marist religious and member of the Fratelli Council, who also underscores that “Fratelli not only revitalises the life of the Brothers, above all by the newness of the work, the shared mission”, but also “it is something new that is born in the Church, in religious life, and in this sense, it is prophetic within the two congregations as well as within the Church”.

“We have come together to create Fratelli projects that aim to be a strong community interaction as well as the interaction with migrants”, emphasises Sergio Leal, a De La Salle Brother and member of the Fratelli Council, who also states, **“the Fratelli Maicao Project serves the Venezuelan migrant population living in the north of Colombia, in Maicao and its surroundings”**. There, a community made up of De La Salle Brothers and Marist Brothers has already been established.

A shared dream

“What seemed like a dream: De La Salle Brothers and Marist Brothers and volunteers, living together and working at the service of these migrant children, became a reality little by little”, expresses Br Oscar Vicario with remarkable hope. “Fratelli is a divine inspiration for two congregations to work together to support human tragedies, basically through non-school educational projects for migrant populations in the complex situations the world is experiencing,” adds Br Carlos Gómez.

“We Marists and Lasallians are learning to live, to join together, to go beyond borders. Why? Because reality challenges us, the Church challenges us, the needs of children and young people call us to be hand in hand with them and for them, and to move forward with them”, affirms Brother Valdicer Fachi. For this reason, “to speak of revitalisation for us, Lasallian and Marist religious, implies going through processes of conversion, and these Fratelli projects both in Lebanon and in Maicao, have a profound impact on the life not only of the Brothers, but also of the volunteers”, adds Brother Sergio Leal.