

Fratelli Project Maicao, Colombia

4 March 2020

Dear Brothers Provincial and Visitor of the De La Salle and Marist Brothers,

We send you fraternal greeting at the beginning of our journey towards Easter.

As you will recall, since 2015 our two Institutes have been in dialog on how best to respond together to the calls of our General Chapters to go “...to new lands” (FMS) and “...beyond borders” (FSC): the result was the **Fratelli Project**.

This project was born as a joint resolution with a view to providing a prompt international response to crises related to displaced persons, especially children and youth, in cross-border situations in different parts of the world. The urgency was then, and unfortunately still is today, the drama of the Syrian refugees in the countries of the Middle East. With this initial concern we opened the first Fratelli community in Rmeilleh, Saidah (the biblical Sidon) in Lebanon. There we conduct several centers for displaced Syrian, Iraqi and Lebanese refugee children and young people. The experience has been successful from many points of view. In addition to effectively attending to the needs of these refugees, the initiative has attracted the cooperation and enthusiasm of both the FSC and FMS religious and educational communities in Lebanon. One local Brother calls the initiative “a blessing” for the country.

Yet since its very beginning, the vision of our two General Councils has been oriented to the global reality and not just to the Middle East refugee crisis. We could not stop there with the satisfaction of a job well done, closing our eyes to other realities. In fact, since the beginning of 2019 both General Councils have been studying the possibility of starting a second Fratelli Project in 2020. We studied 3 possible locations: the Venezuela-Colombia border, the USA-Mexico border and Nabawan on the island of Borneo, East Malaysia. We soon realized that in Nabawan there is already an effective response in a well-structured Marist-Lasallian collaboration that can continue without our intervention.

After several reports and visits to gather data and to know better the border

situation between Venezuela and Colombia and between Mexico and the United States, carried out by Brothers and Partners of our two Institutes, as well as the exchanges with the Marists and the Lasallians in situ and inspired by the work that they are already doing at various

points on both borders, we are writing to you to inform you of a new joint educational project. The project has been approved by the two General Councils under the following framework:

Open a new Fratelli Project in Maicao, Colombia. Once this process is initiated and attentive to ongoing discernment, we remain open to future Fratelli Projects, giving preference to the option of Ciudad Juárez in the border USA - Mexico.

We will soon give you more details about the project and the way in which Brothers and Partners can formally express their interest in being part of the next Fratelli community in Maicao, Colombia.

We take this opportunity to express our appreciation and encouragement for other collaborative initiatives between our two Institutes as well as for projects that continue to emerge in various Provinces, Districts and Regions.

Let us place all these experiences, and especially this second Fratelli Project, into the hands of our Blessed Mother and our holy Founders.

Fraternally,

Brother Robert Schieler, FSC

Brother Superior

Brother Ernesto Sánchez Barba, FMS

Brother Superior