The Institute's Standing Committee of Young Brothers met in Antananarivo, Madagascar



From November 23 – 27, the Institute's Standing Committee of Young Brothers met in Antananarivo, Madagascar. The Committee, composed of Brothers Arockia Samy (LASAD), Eduardo Rivera (Bolivia-Peru), Matthew Kotek (SFNO), Miguel Marcos (Arlep), Urbain Andrinirina (Madagascar), is representative of each Region in the Institute. While the Committee has been meeting virtually on a monthly basis since its inception in March, this first in-person meeting provided the opportunity to more deeply consider the Committee's goals, how it can support vocation ministry efforts in the Institute, review the results of an Institute-wide survey of young Brothers, and form an action plan to guide their work going forward. Br. Miguel Marcos, President of the Committee, shared, "In the spirit of the II International Assembly of Young Brothers and the Leavening Movement, the Committee decided to meet 'with the peripheries, not as a goal, but as a starting point for the transformation of lives.' From that starting point, the Brother-members of the Committee met to establish their horizons, goals and lines of action for the next three years."

The choice to hold the meeting in Madagascar was made to keep in line with the spirit that is being fostered in the Institute today, to be on the ground in touch with realities. Significantly, the District of Madagascar is one of the youngest Districts in the Institute in terms of Brothers' average age. Madagascar, of course, is also the homeland of Blessed Brother Rafael Rafaringa. Meeting in Madagascar provided the opportunity to witness the great devotion the Malagasy people have for Blessed Brother Rafael. The Committee witnessed this devotion while attending mass at the shrine dedicated to him. The days also provided the opportunity to share in prayer and community with the Brothers in the Provincialate Community, Postulancy Community, and a group representing the

young Brothers of the District. These were enlivening and fraternal moments that provided much encouragement as the Committee considered the Institute today and its future. As Brother Eduardo reflected, “finding ourselves in the land of Br. Rafael Rafiringa was an opportunity to recognize the vitality of the local Church. It was a witness, along with that of the young Brothers and postulants, that filled us with hope to face the challenges in our vocation and mission. Likewise, experiencing the joy and hospitality of the Lasallian communities was a gift that reminded us of the call to be ‘witnesses of fraternity.’”



While the group worked on its agenda each day, it also gave time to ensure visits to various ministries. The Committee had the opportunity to visit the Anosibe Center an educational project for girls administered by the local Signum Fidei association. On the same day, the Brothers visited Sainte Famille Mahamasina – Hakuna Matata, a large school run by the local Brothers. It was an opportunity to see an educational ministry while having the opportunity to interact with students. Finally, a fraternal visit was made to the residence for elderly Brothers where the group was able to spend some time with Brother Vincent Rabemahafaly, the dean of the District and a former General Councilor for the Institute.

Through its work and visits, the time together provided the Brothers an opportunity to clarify and understand its purpose. As Brother Arockiasamy reflected, “[these] days made me feel that the global connection of the Lasallian fraternity has been renewed. A strong platform has been created to listen, observe, and establish stronger, new connections among Lasallians to support the mission and vocation.” He added, “I feel that the members came to understand that, in part, it was formed to establish connections between the Offices and Commissions of our Institute with a clear focus on responding to the call to serve the needy and to the peripheries.”



Br. Urbain added how the time together "was characterized by a strong sense of fraternity." In relation to the discussions, he remarked, "there were several important points made by the members, who bore in mind the challenges experienced by the young Brothers in the Districts and Regions. Every meeting became an opportunity to discuss new pathways to strengthen the life and vocation of young Brothers in the present world."

In terms of moving forward, Brother Matthew Kotek shared, "after our first in-person meeting of the Standing Committee of Young Brothers, we were able to clarify our role in relation to the young Brothers and the various Offices and Commissions of the Generalate. We hope to be able to be the link that encourages the young Brothers to further engage in Lasallian Mission at all levels of the Institute."

The meetings were attended by Brother Chris Patiño, General Councilor, who with Br. Anatole is accompanying the Committee on behalf of Brother Armin and the General Council. In the coming months, the Committee will share a more formal update on its work, goals, and action plan. It will continue to meet virtually once a month and will hold its next in-person meeting in the latter part of 2025.

* ***Source: Br. Chris Patiño.***