



World Council of the Marianist Family

Via Latina 22, 00179 Roma, Italia – www.marianist.org

Tel (+39) 06 70 47 58 92 -- FAX (+39) 06 7000 406

MARIANIST WORLD DAY OF PRAYER 2014

THE SHRINE OF OUR LADY OF FATIMA OF VILLA SOLDATI

The Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima is in Villa Soldati, a *barrio* [“neighborhood,” usually poor] in the south part of the City of Buenos Aires, capital of the Argentine Republic. It was the first shrine to the Virgin of Fatima in this country.

The origin of the Shrine was providential. The residents always said that the White Lady of the Poor, who a hundred years ago appeared to the little shepherds in Portugal, wished also to reside in Villa Soldati. History recounts that in the *barrio* near the landfill, where working class immigrant families of many nationalities, including Portuguese, live, the government was threatening to expropriate their little houses, built

with a lot of hard work. A group of residents met around a statue of Our Lady of Fatima for a novena of prayer asking for the protection and defense of their homes and their families. At the end of the novena the National Government changed plans and decided not to expropriate that area, leaving the residents in place. On that same day a flock of white doves flew over the *barrio* and the people saw in this fact the will of Our Lady of Fatima to stay in this area herself. The people went to see Cardinal Copello, the Archbishop of Buenos Aires at the time, and requested the



MARIANIST
WORLD DAY OF PRAYER 2014

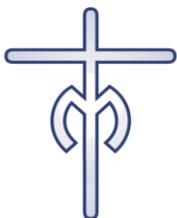


Church's presence in the *barrio*. Sometime before, the Ambassador of Portugal to Argentina had brought from Fatima an image of the Virgin to be venerated by the Argentine people. Just at this time, also, a Spanish priest, a Missionary of the Sacred Heart, was awaiting to be assigned a pastoral mission. The Cardinal immediately decided upon the creation of a new parish, the Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima, and confided the new mission to the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, entrusting them with the image that had come from Portugal so that it might be venerated in Villa Soldati.

The parish started out in a small sheet-metal shed donated by a resident and years later the church itself was built. The faithful from different parts of the city and the suburbs of Greater Buenos Aires began to come on pilgrimage to Our Lady of Fatima of Villa Soldati on the 13th of each month, and especially for the Patronal Feast Days in the months of May and October. The network of supporters of the Shrine was spread out through the various regions of the country by means of the publication of a periodical called *Ecos de Fátima*. Currently, every 13th of the month and from morning until night, hundreds of persons continue to come to the Shrine to pray, to ask favors and to thank Our Lady of Fatima.

Some years after the creation of the Shrine, and in view of the needs of the children of the *barrio*, the School of Fatima was founded, recalling that Our Lady had asked the little shepherds to "learn to read." Today, sixty years later, the School is a large educational institution enrolling 2500 students in all grades (pre-school, primary, secondary and a Higher Training Institute).

The Marianist Family has been in contact with the Shrine for the last fifty years. Already in the decade of the 1960's students from the Colegio Marianista came to teach catechism and tutor the children of the School. Then in the 1990's the collaboration increased, the Marianist religious



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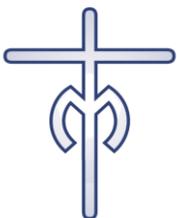
taking charge of the pastoral ministry in the two chapels of the Parish and working with the School. For several years there was a Marianist community in the area. The Marianist Sisters, upon arrival in Buenos Aires in January 2009, made their home in Villa Soldati.

On December 16, 2012, Cardinal Bergoglio, today Pope Francis, entrusted to the Marianist Family of Argentina the management and animation of the *Obra de Fátima* (the Work of Fatima). On the occasion of that celebration, the leaders of each of the branches signed the commitment before the community and before the Church. We religious and lay Marianists share our life and mission here in the Shrine of Fatima in Villa Soldati as we listen to our Mother continuing to say to us “Do whatever Jesus tells you.”



THE MARIANIST FAMILY OF ARGENTINA

The Marianist presence in Argentina already stretches back beyond eighty years. On August 2, 1932, Don Pedro Martínez Saralegui arrived to explore and prepare for the foundation of the Society of Mary in this country. Some months later arrived the rest of the brothers who were to form the first community. The first mission was that of the Benito Nazar School of the Association for the Preservation of the Faith. Two years later the Colegio Marianista was born, the first properly Marianist work in Argentina. In the 1960's began the first expansion into the interior of the country with the foundation of a Colegio Marianista in the city of 9 de Julio and one in the city of Junín. At that time the Marianist presence in Argentina and Chile separated from the Province of Madrid, constituting the Province of the Andes. In the 1970's the Marianist presence was extended northwards to Monte Quemado, Santiago del Estero with the ministry in a parish, a *colegio*



MARIANIST

WORLD DAY OF PRAYER 2014

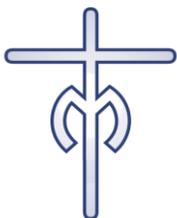


and a teacher-training institute, as well as to Patagonia, (with the parishes of Catriel and General Roca).

In 1978 lay Marianist life began with the Marianist Movement, which in 1992, bringing several groups together, created the organization of the Lay Marianist Communities of Argentina. In the same year another project was started: the Society of Mary decided to found what would become the sustaining branch of the Family, and the Marianist Mission Foundation was born to work for education, social inclusion and human development.

In January 2009 the Marianist sisters arrived in Buenos Aires, thus completing the three branches which today constitute the Marianist Family of Argentina (we hope soon to have a beginning of the Alliance Mariale). Our Family Council has been established, highlighting the grace of “our being family,” which puts our heart into sharing our life and our mission. The celebration of the 250th anniversary of the birth of Father Chaminade inspired a real movement of renewal and rapprochement through a program for all the Family called “Operation Bordeaux.” Out of all the suggestions from this program which currently continue on, the *Chamifrases* (sayings of Fr. Chaminade with a commentary and a suggestion for prayer that are sent out weekly to all the members of the Family) and the *RePi* (Retreats at the Pillar), weekend spiritual retreats in which more than 400 persons have participated. These projects have constituted and still constitute a “refounding” experience of the Marianist charism. The Chaminade Year was the spontaneous producer of a “Marianist” mindset that has multiplied in all the members of the Family and in all its branches.

The consciousness of “family” prevailed in all areas. And since that experience, a new development has arisen in the Marianist missionary vocation: the missionary and educational work at Fatima which we have taken on as Family and in which, united with the World Day of Marianist Prayer of 2014, we shall share in the National Meeting of the Marianist Family October 11-13.



MARIANIST
WORLD DAY OF PRAYER 2014



PRAYER INTENTIONS

-Let us pray for the Church, for Pope Francis, for bishops, priests, deacons, religious, laity that through the intercession of Our Lady of Fatima we may be witnesses with our words and actions of the Kingdom of God in the world. We pray to the Lord

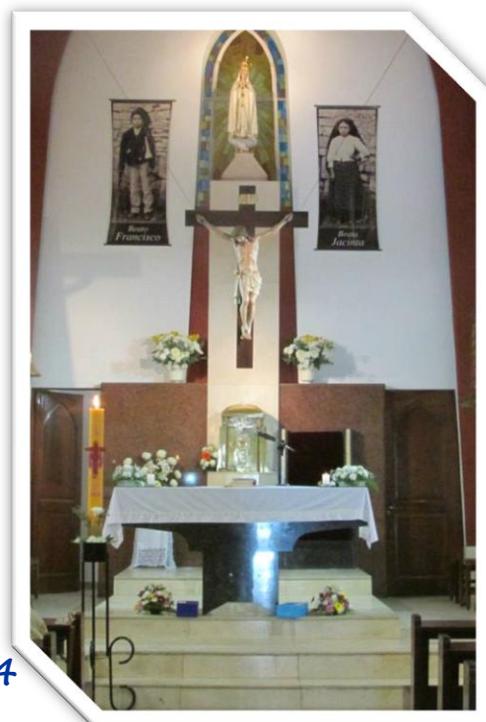
-We pray to you, Lord, on this Marianist World Day of Prayer, for all of us, that we might witness to the spectacle of a People of Saints who share the gifts of the Spirit. We pray to the Lord

-Good Father, You who inspired William Joseph and Adele, we pray to you for the Marianist Family throughout the entire world, especially in Latin America, that like Mary and as her missionaries, we might proclaim Jesus, make him known, loved and served. We pray to the Lord

-Through the intercession of Our Lady of Fatima we pray that you send new vocations to our Marianist Family. We pray that those whom you continue to call might respond with joy, commitment and availability, as did Mary, the Woman of YES. We pray to the Lord

-May Mary, who conceived us in Nazareth but gave birth to us at Calvary, at the foot of the Cross of Jesus, intercede for the sick, the suffering, the marginalized and, as children of Mary, may we make visible her maternal love in our daily actions. We pray to the Lord

-May the presence of Our Lady of Fatima in Soldati, Argentina, make us grow in solidarity, in justice, in peace, in seeking the common good and thus in building up together the true civilization of love. We pray to the Lord



MARIANIST
WORLD DAY OF PRAYER 2014