

## **THE EYM OF CHILE IS 25 YEARS OLD**

*Claudio Barriga, S.J.*

25 years ago, in 1982, the Jesuit Provincial in Chile, Father Fernando Montes, entrusted Father Eduardo Muñoz with the renewal of the declining Eucharistic Crusade, which had been the children's branch of the Apostleship of Prayer. The renewal had started in France in 1962, where it took the name of Eucharistic Youth Movement. Father Muñoz enthusiastically started the Movement in Chile, calling for this purpose on lay and religious collaborators. After 22 years of fruitful labour, during which the Movement spread throughout Chile and could depend on a mature national organization, he handed over the duties of National Director to Father Claudio Barriga, in September 2004.

The new Director travelled around the country and continued the work of training monitors and leaders of the Movement. He was able to take as his own the "EYM style" of speaking of Jesus, full of joy and creativity, and transmit it to the EYM members in numerous meetings in many parts of Chile.

Only two years after starting this mission, the surprising news arrived of his appointment as director of the EYM (together with the Apostleship of Prayer) at a world level, taking up residence in Rome.

Father Claudio left for his new mission in April 2007, when was appointed the new National Director, Father Jaime Castellón, who can already be found travelling around the country in the service of the Movement, with a marked interest in renewing quality training, above all among the leaders.

*Who are we?*

*E Eucharistic.* We celebrate the Eucharistic Jesus, who is the centre of what we do, in every Mass and in our whole life. Our actions have their meaning in Jesus, as they manifest his love among the neediest people.

*Y Youth.* Jesus renews our lives, our hearts, making us "as children". He animates us with joy in our task. We belong to the Lord. We are the pilgrim Church, which collaborates in the building of the Kingdom.

*M Movement.* We are a community in action, oriented towards service to our brothers, continuing Jesus' sacrifice: "... here I am among you as one who serves" (Lk 22:27).

*How is the EYM organized in Chile?*

The EYM Movement has a coordinating office at a national level in Santiago, where 6 people work full-time. They, together with 6 young adult volunteers, form the National Team. Their mission is to lead the EYM throughout the country and prepare the necessary material for the training of young people. The Movement then relies on a network of Area Coordinators and young Monitors or Leaders – all volunteers – in the various regions of Chile, who, with the National Team, plan weekly meetings, training workshops, days, meetings, camps and various celebrations. At present there are about 80 centres of the Movement in parishes and schools, which bring together almost 2000 children, guided by about 500 monitors (or leaders).

Since the EYM is principally a movement for young people, it is also adapted for children. In Chile most of its members are

children, from three or four years old up to eighteen and over.

The movement offers a systematic plan of training for its participants, based on friendship with Jesus in daily life, nourished and structured through the Eucharist. They are organized in "teams" or communities, in stages with specific objectives, according to the age of the participants and the time they have been in the Movement. The teams meet on a weekly basis with a theme which teaches them to know Jesus better. Living the faith in community leads them to also learn to share their own lives, to play, to pray, to serve, and they discover the joy of being Jesus' friends. The general theme we instill in them is "Living in Jesus' style". The enthusiasm with which the children participate in the EYM activities is surprising, as well as the love with which the young people prepare their meetings in the service of their younger brothers in the faith.

*A true story*

I will end telling the story of Estefania, a child of the EYM of Curacautín, a city in southern Chile. An enthusiastic member of the EYM, she never missed the weekly EYM meetings at her school. When she was 12 years old her father, who was a police officer, was transferred with his family to a small locality on the Argentinean frontier with no more than 200 inhabitants. Obviously the EYM did not exist there. Before leaving, she told Sister Raquel who was the adviser of the Movement: "Sister, I can't be without the EYM". The nun urged her to start the EYM in her new school, and gave her some material. A few months after her arrival, having just turned thirteen, Estefania had organized the other children and had started the EYM. She could depend on the active help of her parents, who were both very good Christians. She had to overcome objections and difficulties of the school director, who was a Protestant. Her soul was marked with the EYM identity and she knew how to share this with other children.

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*EYM Prayer*

I go with God,  
I with him,  
He in front,  
I behind him  
Wherever he goes  
Will suit me. Amen