

Marist ECHO

Institute of the Marist Brothers

Number 36 - Year 14 - June 2001

BUILDING BRIDGES

During his pilgrimage to Greece, the Pope reminded us that the school is a place par excellence where young people from different backgrounds come together. He praised the country's religious congregations, especially the Marist Brothers, for their role in "building bridges" and "forging a culture of dialog," objectives of inestimable human and spiritual value in the building up of society. Educational programs are not to be measured only in terms of academic success. They find their fullness in the development of profound values in harmony with Christian humanism: religious education, commitment to improve society, attitudes of solidarity with the poorest, professional competence as an ethical responsibility, a willingness to work as a team, the development of emotional maturity, the promotion of culture... Champagnat spoke of forming "good Christians" and "good citizens." Having schools doesn't guarantee the acquisition of these values if those schools are not what they ought to be. That is our challenge. As Brothers and lay people, we can make an invaluable contribution to the well-being of the young people in our classrooms.

I love them, too...

Br. Benito Arbués, Superior General

The feast of St. Marcellin reminds me of so many brothers and Marist lay people that I have met during my visits. I remember especially you dedicated men and women, Marist educators. In some countries, working in schools is a very difficult calling. And sometimes children are unmotivated and suffer failure; sometimes they get lost in overcrowded classrooms. In addition, there are governments that fail to provide economic support and do not respect the fundamental rights of families to an education for their sons and daughters and choice among the educational programs that they want.

I know how demanding it is to maintain good schools. I admire the brothers and lay people who assure the smooth running of our schools by their great generosity and dedication. Thanks to all of

you who assume the responsibilities of directing and coordinating these schools.

Whatever your role as educators, I invite you to be generators of life for the youth in your care. By your personal example show them that you take a genuine interest in them, that all your efforts stem more from a deep personal love for them than only a sense of professional duty. Let yourselves be guided by St. Marcellin's down-to-earth compassion: "Look after poor children with great care, those who are the slowest and most illiterate..."

And please tell your students that I love them and pray for them, too.



My thoughts and prayers are with you, Marist educators.

M O T H E R O F A M A R I S T

My journey to Rwanda

by Pilar Sánchez

Pilar Sánchez has twelve children. Eugenio, a Marist from the Province of Madrid, Spain, is the oldest. There are two priests, a Sister, and members of Secular Institutes in the family. From March 27th to April 3rd, 2001 Pilar was in Rwanda to visit her son Eugenio. Here are a few entries in her diary.

March 27

At the airport, no sooner had the plane landed when we saw Eugenio and Br. Stanislas, who had gone up to the observation deck to see our arrival. That's when my emotions took over, – I'm sure I'll remember this moment for as long as I live.

March 28

Eugenio showed us around the school and dormitory building. Children came from all over the place to meet me. Eugenio introduced me to many of them and I was amazed at their politeness and gentleness in greeting me. They all shake hands and smile.

March 29

Mass was in Kinyarwanda. They beat their drums and sang as if they were angels.

March 30

I talked a lot with Eugenio...

Yesterday we also went to Save. We saw the car in which

Brothers Chris Mannion and Joseph Rushigajiki were killed, and also their graves. It was deeply moving to know that I was looking at the gravesite of two martyrs.

April 1

I have prayed and said the rosary in the chapel, in front of the Lord. It's raining a lot today. Coming down in buckets.

April 2

Tomorrow we leave. On the one hand, I'm anxious to get home so I can tell everyone what it's like and how people live here. On the other hand I'd love to stay here forever. What peace, it's like heaven, I can't find the words, it just seems that the Lord is closer here because people need Him more. I think that these are His spoiled little children and I like being here with them. Thanks, Lord, for this trip! It's a gift that I'll thank you for forever. Let me never forget to pray for these fabulous people, I think that I hold each of them here in my heart. I thank you for Eugenio's vocation, and I ask you that he keep on helping these children with the same energy and enthusiasm that he has now. Keep him in good health, and may he be happy always. These children need him. Look how they love and respect him!

I've learned so much from these people, their simplicity, their sweetness, their social graces, peaceful nature, and respect for others. What devotion they showed at Mass yesterday! How they know how to forgive and live alongside people who four years ago murdered members of their family, or people whose family members they themselves killed. They sit at the same school desk, play football together without a single harsh word... Don't let them forget the genocide. Every year there are days to commemorate what took place. They say this is good, because not forgetting means this will not come to pass again. ♦



Marist cemetery in Save, with the graves of the martyrs.

Number 35 – March 2001 – Year 14
INSTITUTE OF THE MARIST BROTHERS

EDITOR IN CHIEF: Br. Lluís Serra.

PUBLICATIONS COMMISSION: Bros. Séan Sammon, Claudino Falchetto, Pedro Marcos, and Lluís Serra.

TRANSLATORS: Br. Gerard Brereton, English; Br. Aimé Maillet, French; Br. João Fagherazzi, Portuguese; Br. Francisco Castellanos, Spanish.

PHOTOGRAPHY: archives.

FORMATTING AND PHOTOLITHS: TIPOCROM S.R.L. – Via G.G. Arrivabene, 24
Rome ITALY

EDITORIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE CENTER: Piazzale Marcellino Champagnat 2,
C.P. 10250, 00144 Rome ITALY

Tel. (39) 06545171; Fax (39) 0654517217

E-MAIL: publica@fms.it

WEB SITE: www.fms.it

PUBLISHER: Institute of the Marist Brothers. General House – Rome ITALY

PRINTING: C.S.C. GRAFICA, s.r.l. – Via G.G. Arrivabene, 40 – Rome ITALY

Our Marist Heritage

An interview conducted by Br. Lluís Serra.

Brother Henri Vignau, 58, was born near Lourdes, France. He has been a teacher, leader, high school principal, and Provincial of the Hermitage. As a General Councilor, he serves on the Mission, Apostolic Spirituality, and Marist Heritage Commissions.



With the Bara tribe in Madagascar.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE OUR MARIST HERITAGE?

As a priceless treasure that ought to be within everyone's reach, not cut off from life. A gift of the Spirit for the whole Church, a seed waiting to blossom, a wellspring nourishing our lives.

WHAT RICHES ARE FOUND IN OUR MARIST HERITAGE?

Jesus Christ, the center of all; Mary, along her way to Jesus; passion for the Kingdom; evangelization of the young, especially the most abandoned; community, fraternity and simplicity.

WHAT IS BEING DONE TO ENHANCE ITS VALUE?

For the past fifty years, intensive historical research has been carried out. Today, studies continue on the origin and development of Marcellin's spirituality and his views on education.

CAN OUR MARIST HERITAGE BE EMBRACED BY CULTURES WORLDWIDE?

Champagnat was not a theoretician. His was a life passionately devoted to Jesus and His Kingdom, a heart overflowing with faith, hope and love, a charisma capable of being expressed in every culture.

WHAT CAN WE DO TO SPREAD THIS HERITAGE BEYOND OUR MARIST WORLD?

Marcellin's canonization proves that his holiness has been recognized by the entire Church. For too long, as brothers we thought that Champagnat was meant just for us. The canonization has led people everywhere to recognize him as a model for the Christian life, to follow Jesus as Mary did.

CONCERNING RESEARCH GOING ON TODAY – WHAT REMAINS TO BE EXPLORED?

We continue to deepen our understanding of Marcellin's spirituality and his views on education. We need a better understanding of how Brs. François and Jean Baptiste framed his thinking, how his charisma has graced our Institute, and how it is now enriching the lives of more and more lay people. We need a definitive history of the Institute. We have yet to document how different cultures have welcomed Champagnat's approach to education and added to his insights, adapting them to local conditions.

WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF MARIST HERITAGE FOR THE LAITY?

In sharing Marcellin's



Henri and Sean with Aborigines in Australia.

charism more and more, we brothers are discovering that lay people of all ages find his spirituality fascinating. As our awareness of his charisma deepens, brothers and laity are being mutually enriched.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE HERMITAGE AS A LEARNING CENTER FOR OUR HERITAGE?

It's the cradle of our existence, built by Marcellin and his first brothers. There we have the sites, stones, and buildings that bring us back to our origins and the passionate heart of our Founder. It is home – a center for welcoming Marist brothers and lay people from all over the world, as well as Christians living nearby, who come to reflect on their lives and refresh their spirit. ♦



Postulants in Papua New Guinea with Henri.

• OUR GOOD MOTHER INSPIRED BY MARY

St. Marcellin Champagnat's relationship with Mary, Jesus' Mother, was not just a devotional one. Our Good Mother, as he called her, was a guiding light in his everyday life. His motto, "All to Jesus through Mary, all to Mary for Jesus," is a sign of his human and religious maturity, very much in keeping with the guidelines of Vatican II. Mary was the inspiration of his life and charism. For us Marists today, brothers and lay people, what does it mean to live as Mary did, according to St. Marcellin's teachings and example?

MARY IN OUR EVERYDAY LIFE

Since we belong to the Christian community of the Middle East, we Marist Brothers of Lebanon-Syria have a special reason for claiming Mary as our Ordinary Resource. Tony and Fadi, our two Marist postulants, draw on Mary's "fiat" like drinking from a fountain that quenches their thirst as they journey towards the novitiate. Their "yes" to the Lord is communicated in Mary's attitudes of simplicity, being close to people, and total trust in God.

A married couple filled with Marist spirit finds in Mary a model of patience and commitment to serving others. This couple turns to her often, seeking her help in their mission of solidarity with poor families.

Another such couple cites the following experience: "A few years ago we suffered a grievous blow. I was dismissed from my job after being condemned unjustly for something I had not done. My wife put her absolute trust in Mary, whom she saw as the guardian of our home and family. Thankfully that attitude kept our family sane during my absence. It was through Mary's plea that the Lord heard our prayer, and cleared me of any guilt. We never cease to thank Mary, our Good Mother."

For us who are Marist Brothers, we know for certain that she has done everything for us. Indeed, since the canonization of Marcellin, and after 25 years of a desert experience, she has sent us several vocations. Mary thus continues to be at the heart of our daily life. Isn't that just where our mother should be?

Br. Georges Sabe
Sector of Lebanon-Syria
Aleppo, Syria

KNOWING AND LOVING MARY: A PROMISE TO KEEP

When beginning the school year, it's indispensable to look inside ourselves, examine our actions, and see if the plans we have made are in keeping with our intentions and the gifts that we have received.

For both the brothers and lay teachers, this certainly asks more of us than of people in other fields. Plus, we are graced with the joy and responsibility that comes with belonging to the great Marist Family. With the help of St. Marcellin Champagnat, we get to know and love that plainspoken woman who accepted the call to be the mother and disciple of Christ, refusing to doubt for even a moment.

There's no doubt that Marcellin always felt in Mary the love, tenderness, and protection that a child feels in its Mother's embrace. It was Mary's heart that impelled the young priest to recruit and train brothers to serve youth, and entrust so many lay people, in different places and situations, with that very same mission. Mary, the Mother of Jesus, is the one who is now personally calling us, through Champagnat, to take an active role in the Work of her Son. And to do so in a unique style: THE MARIST WAY. A way dedicated to serving others, no matter what their condition, by our simple way of life. A way that requires an unconditional YES, because in Mary people have a mother they can trust completely, one who in Champagnat has shown us how to be loyal and devoted to the plan of Jesus.

Claudia Aida Rojas Carvajal.
Champagnat Community Center, Bogotá
Marist Province of Colombia

GOOD MOTHER •

MARY'S EXAMPLE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What attitudes of Mary are most helpful in our efforts to do as Champagnat wishes?
2. How can we educate children and young people to love Mary and follow her example?

SHALOM, FULL OF GRACE

The truths of our faith challenge our intellect, and simply reciting them can distract us, heart and mind. What are we really saying, Mary, when we repeat, Hail Mary after Hail Mary, "full of grace"? With the aid of the Spirit that can enlighten the darkest times in our life of faith.

It is early evening. I make my way to Mary's shrine. The green roof melds into the hillside and then the earth. In the setting sun it looks like a huge soft-toned stained glass window. Inside in the rounded apse, everything is white. Here we enter into a place of peace. The window filters the evening sun so that it covers the altar like a colored embroidery. At the back there is the Blessed Sacrament chapel where people pray in the semi-darkness. In the reconciliation chapel recess the windows glow with the joyous colors of forgiveness. Everything is an invitation into mystery, into intimacy. Within the sanctuary of the Mother of God, the altar, forgiveness and worship, silence, sunlight and peace, and the people of God.

It is then that I understand "Hail, full of grace", haven of the Son, clothed in silence and sunlight, person where man and God meet, where all of us recognize our image, and our identity as temple of the Son. Mary, I see also with your eyes, and our hearts are beating as one. Because you are the person I hope to be in God's overwhelming love. I too am greeted "Hail, full of grace!"

Br. Giovanni Bigotto
Province of Madagascar

FROM THE SPIRITUAL TESTAMENT OF MARCELLIN CHAMPAGNAT

beg of you, my dear brothers, with all the affection of my soul, and by all the love you have for me, do all you can to ensure that charity is always maintained among you. Love one another as Jesus Christ has loved you. Be of one heart and one mind. May it be said of the Little Brothers of Mary as of the first Christians: "See how they love one another." This is the most ardent desire of my heart at this, the last moment of my life. Yes, my very dear brothers, listen to the words of your Father; they are the words of our loving Savior: "Love one another."

Let only the glory of God and the honor of Mary be your one aim and ambition.

May a tender and filial love of that good Mother animate you at all times and in every circumstance. Do all that you can to make her loved everywhere. She is the First Superior of the whole Society.

There are difficulties in leading the life of a good religious, but grace makes all things easy. How consoling it is, when one has to appear before God, to know that one has lived under the protection of Mary and in her Society! May that good Mother keep you safe, give you increase and bring you to holiness.

I leave you all with confidence in the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary until we are all united again in a happy eternity.

Such is my last and express wish for the glory of Jesus and Mary.

Young people joining Fraternities

NEW FRATERNITIES

The number of Fraternities in the Marist world continues to grow. Several have forwarded their Constitutions to us here in Rome during the last few months, including two in the Province of São Paulo, Brazil: the “Padre Luiz Darós” Fraternity in São Paulo, and “Santa Maria,” at our secondary school in Curitiba.

It gives us special joy that two new Fraternities, “Rainha da Paz,” made up of woman graduates of Pius XII High School in Novo Hamburgo, Brazil, and “La Valla,” organized in the Province of Levante, Spain, have been initiated by young people. “La Valla” is bringing together youth from diverse backgrounds, desirous of sharing their lives and prayers and deepening their Marist spirituality. They look upon the Fraternity as offering them a natural pathway for developing their human and Christian potential, and they intend to be proactive in their society, parishes and high school. A new Fraternity of young people in Logroño, in the Norte Province in Spain, is also being organized. Congratulations and a big welcome to all!

NEWS FROM OUR FRATERNITIES

Both by prayer and by responding to the surveys sent out by the Preparatory Commission, several Fraternities are playing an active role in preparing for the XX General Chapter, to take place this September and October.

Also, numerous Fraternities are celebrating their 10th, 11th, or 12th anniversaries, planning special re-



Br. Benito with the Fraternity in Merida, Yucatan, Mexico.

unions, always centered on the Eucharist, as well as other activities such as retreats and pilgrimages to Marian shrines. Congratulations to these Fraternities for their faithful witness.

Although not everyone has replied to our request to send information for putting together a Report for the General Chapter, there's no doubt that the Movement is enjoying sustained growth, albeit at an uneven rate in different regions throughout the Institute. Some Fraternities have disappeared, but many more are being born. Right now, here in Rome we have a list of 195 of them, and we estimate membership at more than 3000. Fraternities are present in 36 countries – 6 in Africa, 16 in the Americas, 1 in Asia, 12 in Europe, and 1 in Oceania.

WITNESSING

I have here a few personal testimonies with regard to No. 18 of the

Life Plan:

“In a certain sense, I could say that, just like St. Paul – in my personal experience of getting to know Marcellin, someone has knocked me off my horse in reference to my relationships with my family, friends, and colleagues at work. I longer feel tied up in knots and afraid to talk about my faith at work and among my friends. Naturally I realize no that this brings with it a greater responsibility on my part...” (Luisma)

“I'm a nurse, and as such I can definitely give of myself wholeheartedly in sacrifice and service to those are suffering. I can pass on my faith to my patients and their families to help them cope with their pain, fear, worry, and anxiety in the face of death. Sometimes I feel exhausted, but Jesus is always with me.” (Loly)

“It's important to give good example at work, performing your job with honesty and integrity, trying to be sensitive and fair in matters of

JOHN PAUL II PRAISES THE WORK OF THE MARIST BROTHERS IN GREECE

Schools are par excellence places where the integration of young people of different backgrounds takes place. The Catholic Church, in harmony with the other Churches and religious confessions, desires to cooperate with all citizens for the education of the young. She wishes to continue her long educational experience in your country, especially through the activities of the Marist Brothers and the Brothers of the Christian Schools, the Ursuline Sisters and the Sisters of Saint Joseph. These different religious families have shown that, with tact and respect for the cultural traditions of the young people entrusted to them, they are able to educate men and women to be true Greeks among the Greeks.

every kind, in whatever position you find yourself. Apart from my job, other vital activities in my life are teaching catechism – imparting Christian values to young people (as Father Champagnat wanted us to do), and volunteering in various organizations that help the poor and needy, our neighbors, especially immigrants, who lack the basic necessities required for a dignified life.” (Maria)

“It’s humanly impossible to solve every problem in life, but certainly you can help the people you live with and those whom you come across in your everyday life... I feel a strong desire to live Gospel values more intensely; to begin with, among those who are closest to me...” (María Pilar)

GOD DOES WONDERS WITH OUR SHORTCOMINGS...

Every morning a water vendor went over to the river, filled up his two jugs, and returned to town to sell water to his customers.

One of the jugs, cracked, lost much of its water. The other one, brand new, earned lots more money for the vendor. The poor jug with the crack felt inferior. One morning it decided to confide in its owner:

“You know, I’m aware of how worthless I am. You lose money because of me – I’m half- empty by the time we get to town. Forgive my uselessness.”

Not long after that, on their way to the river, the owner talked with his jug with the crack in it:

“Take a look at the roadside!”

“Wow, how beautiful! Flowers everywhere!”

“That’s thanks to you, you know,” the owner replied. “You’re the one who sprinkles the side of the road every morning. I bought a packet of seeds and sowed them along the way. And you, without realizing it, have been watering them every day. Never forget – all of us have a few chips and cracks, but if we just ask, our all-loving God will always find ways to work wonders with our weakness-

es.”

We’re very grateful to those who are sending us local publications from the Movement on a regular basis: Magnificat (from New Caledonia), Coeurs sans frontières (Canada), Il nostro foglio (Italy), Las tres violetas (Norte Province in Spain), Boletim do Movimento Champagnat (Porto Alegre, Brazil), Boletim Informativo (Brazil North), Frats Echos (France), and Fraternidades (Central America). Don’t forget to send along pertinent photos with your news items. We want to remind everyone that there is a web page with photos from Fraternities at

Young people counting on Marcellin.

community.webshots.com/user/champagnat ♦

PRAYER TO MARCELLIN, OUR GOOD FATHER

Father Marcellin,

I join you in giving thanks to God for the life that I see blossoming from your dream for all.

Especially the littlest ones, your favorites, to know and love Jesus Christ.

Dear Father, I feel that I’m your son, Born from the suffering of Montagnes, Nursed at the breast of our Good Mother,

Raised in the shade of your paternal heart.

May your life,

Made fruitful in the manger of the homeless,

Fed at the altar of those who are starving,

Tested on the cross of the oppressed, Wake up my life.

May each crevice in the rock endure, inflame and fill my heart

With an understanding that the life of those to whom you send me

Is more important than my own.

May I not be afraid, good Father, to pour my life out as an oblation,

As so many of your sons, my brothers, have already done.

May the Hermitage be for me like “favelas” and windswept plazas,

Like barren parks, like frontiers that

try to prevent the flowering of life that, In spite of all death, insists on blooming.

May your dream of love appear in the tear of each wounded child,

And in the suffering of those who have lost hope.

Good Father, may I never forget that I am the son of your heart,

That I became a Marist for the world, and that I ought, always and

everywhere, to CHOOSE LIFE.

Amen.

Br. Rafael Ferreira Júnior
Novice
Aracati, Brazil

Strong Mind, Gentle Heart

By Br. Frederick McMahon, Province of Sydney, Australia

Both his parents coming from sound Catholic stock, Marcellin Champagnat received additional Faith formation from a pious mother and a Sister-aunt.

From his father, a farmer and an official under the French Revolution, Marcellin learnt the skills necessary for conducting business. From his father, too, he learnt to have concern for the suffering and skill in choosing the right time to act. Further, the father's gregarious and sociable nature influenced the boy. As a man, Marcellin was able to establish a ready rapport with people.

The mountainous terrain of his district was a challenge to Marcellin. The capricious climate taught the young Champagnat the essential qualities of tenacity, adaptability and toughness. For Champagnat, devotion to Mary was imbibed with mother's milk. Besides, Champagnat's region had a devotion to Mary which went back to St Irenaeus, an early bishop of Lyon and the first Western theologian to write about Mary. Although the triumphal Assumption is the patronal Feast of the Marist Brothers, Marcellin's attachment is to Mary the Good Mother, shown in his choice of simple statues of Madonna and child.

Marcellin's asceticism was honed on the spiritual principles of the Sulpician priests, men who saw to his seminary training. A series of Retreat resolutions shows his efforts at self-mastery, but his bigness of heart and healthy upbringing saved him from narrowness of soul. A lively awareness of the presence of God was also characteristic of Marcellin.

What distinguished Champagnat the priest was his apostolic zeal, his drive, his élan. He was a good example of the virtue of simplicity - an enthusiastic, whole-hearted quest for a goal. With him, this goal was the Christian education and formation of youth.

Writing to the Queen of France in 1835 about the need for good teachers to instruct deprived youth, Champagnat declared: "I promptly hastened to carry out a project I had planned of forming an association of teaching Brothers" Champagnat knew his mission in life was to strive to foster Christian education.

This, then, was the centre of Champagnat's mission. He was willing to send his followers into every diocese, even to savage mission regions in the South Seas. He established orphanages and saw to special education for handicapped children. One of the first Marist priests, Champagnat supported the works of the Marist Fathers. He gave his all to Marist apostolic endeavors; his saintly crown is well deserved. ♦



Drawing by Marcial Fernández, Squalada, Spain.

MARIST HISTORIES

Dear Br. Lluís Serra,
I live in Costa Rica. Our school is located in the city of Alajuela and our Principal is Br. Felipe Vegas.

By the grace of God I became a member of the Marist Family seven years ago, when my older daughter entered high school. Since then I have had the opportunity to work with children needing special education. In the beginning I helped out as a volunteer in the library. Br. José A. Ochotorena, who was Principal at the time, gave me the opportunity to start an Integrated Plan of Education where my role was to be a grade school teacher. Then I understood that I had to begin studying education. I managed to achieve this goal, with the help of my family and above all, God. These days I am finishing my Masters degree in Educational Psychology, and this is encouraging me to collaborate more and more with my school. Let me tell you, living the values and philosophy of Saint Marcellin Champagnat has been a great blessing for my family and me. We have been able to grow in our Christian faith, and this in turn is leading us to study and commit ourselves more deeply to God. I thank God that I belong to the community of Instituto Marista in Costa Rica. In the name of my students, my family and me, I wish you God's blessings - you and everyone who works with you in your wonderful mission. May our Good Mother accompany you always.

Marcela Fonseca Garita
Alajuela, Costa Rica