

M Marist ECHO

Institute of the Marist Brothers

Number 45 – Year 16 – September 2003

THE PILGRIM'S FEET

According to an Egyptian proverb, "Only the pilgrim's feet really know the road." The Marist Institute is on its way to restructuring, creating new administrative units to organize our Marist brothers' presence and mission to meet the needs of today's world. It's a complex and challenging task, but going forward steadily and on schedule. A sense of the Institute and an attitude of fraternal care are making it easier for the process to go forward. In the words of the 20th General Chapter, "the challenge of vitality is at the heart of restructuring" in the Institute. Meaning that the sum of its decisions is not to be interpreted in mere legal or administrative terms. Profound considerations come into play: the role of faith in our vocation as brothers – without faith there would be no rhyme or reason to our calling; a contemporary vision of our mission with children and young people, especially the poor – without such a vision, being Marist would lose its meaning; and our shared mission with the laity – a sharing that finds its essence in the charism of Marcellin and not in a mere division of labor... It's time to be on our way.

Mary of Nazareth

Br. Seán D. Sammon, Superior General



Brother Seán and his Council beside the Virgin in Cochabamba, Bolivia

Marcellin Champagnat was strongly attached to the Mother of Jesus. He named his brothers after her, and called her our *Good Mother*, and *Ordinary Resource*.

Today, though, what place does this remarkable woman of faith have in your life and mine? Is our understanding and appreciation of Mary any different than that of believers in the 19th century? Some days, has the mother of Jesus been frozen in time, trapped in the images of Renaissance artists, placed on a pedestal out of our reach?

Mary's life was a genuine human journey. Hers was a commonplace and obscure life. Deny that fact and you will be unfair to her and to all of us. This Jewish woman of faith observed the Sabbath and the practices associated with the fervor of the poor of Yahweh, among whom she numbered. Like the vast majority of her contemporaries, she probably was illiterate. She

searched, felt anxious, laughed and cried, and struggled, as we all do, to find her way from one stage to another on life's journey.

And life did not treat her gently. She lived out the human lot that falls to us all. Therese of Lisieux reminds us that we love Mary not because she received exceptional privileges but rather because she lived and experienced

life just like the rest of us.

God graced her from the very first moment, and did great things through her. Mary is our sister in faith, a revered elder among the Communion of Saints. ♦



Expressive statue of an Indian mother in Santa Cruz, Bolivia

THE BERNE EDUCATION CENTRE - SYDNEY

Hope, Always

Elizabeth Jackson



Brother Michael Flanagan,
Director, introduces an award
winner

The Berne Education Centre, an Independent Catholic School owned and operated by the Marist Brothers, is situated in inner-suburban Sydney, Australia. Berne is a positive option for some forty students between the ages 12-16 who are experiencing a variety of difficulties involving emotional and behavioural disorders

and generally not coping academically and/or socially in a traditional school system. Consequently, for these students not only is their education at risk but their future prospects also. The school's philosophy is firmly embedded in the Christian belief that where there is life there is Hope, Always. This philosophy is the framework that defines our approach as educators and mentors to these young people. It teaches that all human beings are inherently valuable. Marcellin Champagnat always urged his followers to love the Children in your care and certainly, as true Marist Educators, we relate with the young people in our care "as if they were our own children". In adherence with this, we cannot ignore those most in need, those most neglected and those left behind by everyone else. Therefore, our school grows out of a tradition that respects both the central uniqueness of each person



9th Grade students at the Ropes Course Camp

and the bonds that bind us together. We recognise that our students have been negatively affected by many forces, regrettably, most of

them beyond their control. Despite this we believe in them and most importantly we hold realistic expectations in their capacity to overcome and succeed. The Berne strives to bring hope to these young people through a combination of specialised programmes involving nurturing, counselling and positive education. These specialised programmes are about the development and formation of the whole person. To assist students to work on their learning the school offers in addition to traditional subjects essential programmes in personal and social development. These programmes provide opportunities for students to come into direct contact with the less fortunate members of our community to engender empathy. They learn skills for independent living and how to utilise their leisure time productively. To develop future work skills students complete four work placements per year. To help them work through their emotional and behavioural issues counsellors are available at all times.

We, in the new millennium, have the privilege of appreciating the very reason for the birth of Jean-Baptiste Berne and we experience this continued privilege of working, not only within the philosophy of Champagnat, but also within a very practical approach of giving hope to every child within our Marist family.

Since 1998 Berne has given hope to more than two hundred students and the tradition goes on. ♦



Students participating in
"Surf Awareness Day" on Bondi Beach

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Using our goods responsibly and in solidarity

Brother Maurice Berquet, interviewed by Brother Lluís Serra

Maurice Berquet, 55, was born in Ste. Foy les Lyon, France. He studied youth ministry, earned a Doctorate in Electronics from the University of Strasbourg, served as Provincial of Beaucamps-St. Genis, and is now the General Councilor in charge of the Commission on the evangelical use of our material goods.



Brother Maurice with young trainees at Viamão (Rio Grande do Sul)

“IF I WERE A RICH MAN, ...” THE SONG GOES. WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF YOU WERE RICH?

If I were rich? Well, I wouldn't be a religious. Committing yourself to the religious life means bringing your own life into line with that of Jesus, thus, leaving aside wealth. My will specifies that everything I inherit be given to the Institute and its mission. That answers the question.

THE MARIST INSTITUTE POSSESSES MATERIAL GOODS. HOW CAN THESE BE USED IN AN EVANGELICAL WAY?

Goods are indispensable for our mission. As we see in the Gospel. Jesus helps others through the generosity of those who support him. His disciples, organized in community, share the goods, with the help of an administrator, Judas ... Concerning the evangelical use of goods in our Institute, it seems to me there are two essential guidelines for us to follow: accountability and solidarity.

IN SPEAKING OF GOODS, DOES THAT ALSO INCLUDE PERSONNEL?

We cannot consider people as goods. The appeal made by the General Chapter refers

specifically to “material goods.” Yet it's true that the wealth of a group is not limited to the goods that it possesses. It also includes what's called human patrimony.

WHAT CAN BE DONE ABOUT THE UNEQUAL DISTRIBUTION OF

WEALTH IN THE WORLD?

The international character of our congregation brings us face to face with this situation. As I see it, there are two possible approaches we can take as an Institute. One is to help development projects – BIS is already doing this. The other is to participate in international organizations whose work is related to our charism, teaching and the education of young people, especially the poorest. In this regard only networking with other agencies will allow us to bring about change at the national and international level.

COULD YOU CITE PLACES WHERE MARISTS ARE NOTABLY PRESENT AMONG THE POOR?



With Brothers Raúl Figuera, Antonio Silva, Francisco Ruzzarin and Zeferino Zandonadi in Brazil

Having already visited three regions in the Institute I can give you numerous examples. My most recent experience was in a community in Porto Alegre, at “Ilha Grande de los marinheiros.” There our brothers have a community in the midst of trash pickers, people scavenging for paper, and they run a free social service center open to all the children... This is genuine testimony to our solidarity with the poorest.

WHAT ISSUES WILL YOUR COMMISSION BE LOOKING INTO?

The task of our Commission is to formulate a discernment plan regarding the evangelical use of our goods and to help put that plan into practice. The plan would offer criteria to help with decision-making in this field, and encourage Provinces, works, and communities to take concrete initiatives in this area... because the evangelical use of our goods must be one of the key elements in any authentic transformation of today's religious life.



Brother Maurice heads the Commission on the evangelical use of goods

● TO BE CHAMPAGNAT

A CONTEMPORARY WAY TO P

Everyone is unique and different. Without intending to be, some people, by the strength of their personality, become guiding lights for others. Their generosity affects us deeply, their way of overcoming problems, responses in solidarity with others, intimacy with God, outlook on the world and commitment to make it a better place.

Their lives make us want to bring out the best in ourselves. So, capitalizing on our own personal qualities, we strive to imitate them.

Many of us want to be Champagnat here and now.

TODAY YOU WILL BE CHAMPAGNAT

This story that we all love
Is not a memory, it's real, right now;
That love of his love that makes us travel on
Is alive in you and me.

You are to be brothers and sisters for all
Sowers of the gospel and peace,
Faithful witnesses, serving others
United in standing up for truth.

What he dreamed is living in your hearts.
Make new dreams spring from you.
Today Marcellin is in your loving response.
Sing along with the Lord as he did,
And Mary will keep you free from harm.

Marcellin is living in you.
Today you will be Champagnat.
Don't worry about where or when.
Your response can't wait.
Jesus is also calling you
To an all-embracing love.

Only the Lord can break your chains.
Only in Him will you find freedom.
You will be happy if you give of yourself.
He will always strengthen you in times of trial.

The Kairoi musical group
Spain

WE WALK WITH CHAMPAGNAT

When do we lay teachers walk with Champagnat, held by his hand?

- When we feel called to plant the seeds of the Gospel and peace... and with hearts imbued with the presence of God, we bring the Good News into the lives of our students, with whom we interact.
- When we trust in Mary's love... and continually renew our awareness of being her daughters and sons, recognizing her as a speedy way to gain access to her Son.
- When in our daily lives we are faithful witnesses, sincere, dependable serving others... loving and giving reasons for our love, feeling we're entitled to listen, forgive, show dedication, let go, teach, love.
- When we feel we are sisters and brothers for everyone... valuing an expansive vision, nurturing an affectionate and compassionate heart that allows us to inspire, valuing diversity and our close relationship to each other.
- When we take on life in solidarity... able and qualified to bring human dignity to others, shortening distances, overcoming limitations, giving the Lord breathing room to make our Marist history new and different.
- When we allow ourselves to question things that need to change... strive to become more faithful and not get tired on the job. Our daring in mission inspires many of our young people eager to find strong role models.

Carolina Vargas
Province of Santa Maria de los Andes
Chile

AT, HERE AND NOW •

PRACTICE THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

GROUP DISCUSSION:

1. - For me, what is the meaning of “to be Champagnat here and now”? Everyone is encouraged to share his or her personal experience with the group.
2. - After expressing your opinions and feelings, those who would like to do so are asked to write down their testimonies and send them to us at publica@fms.it

HERE I AM

I used to think saints were people with special qualities, and so I admired them. Their road seemed easier. I saw St. Marcellin as one of them. One evening a brother said something that really struck me: Marcellin hadn't been born with special talents, he was like me, a human being, who had an Ideal, who allowed himself to be guided by the Holy Spirit in difficult times, and he was always true to his word.

How did he accomplish this? By sticking to his principles and decisions, with joy and enthusiasm, taking on challenges, confronting all his ups and downs and putting them in the hands of our Mother. All the while he kept on working, trusting that the Lord would take care of everything according to His own schedule, neither sooner nor later.

Being Champagnat here and now shows me how to be brave, face up to things, listen, and not be ashamed of my humanness.

Being Champagnat here and now teaches me not to give up, but with strength and confidence to pass this charism on to my children, husband, family, and friends.

Being Champagnat here and now means having the same attitude as Mary, our Ordinary Resource, who kept in her heart all the events she didn't understand, realizing God was behind them all.

Being Champagnat here and now involves living my life with its ups and downs, placing my heart and soul in the hands of Jesus and Mary.

Therefore: Here I am, guide me, give me strength, courage, and understanding, and let me never forget that I have a Father who loves me here and now for a specific reason all His own.

Mónica Valverde de Díaz
Colegio San José, Mendoza
Argentina

MAKING A COMMITMENT HERE AND NOW

- ❖ *Getting your feet dirty with the reddish earth of the streets in Horqueta: dust in dry spells, mud when it rains. Leaving for the meeting, here and now.*
- ❖ *Getting chalk dust all over your hands and clothes during class; arranging for an interview with a student having difficulty and sitting down to listen; the 60 in your class sometimes make your hair stand on end, or the Mitanguéras hide underneath your desk. That takes commitment.*
- ❖ *Throwing candy and flour at a meeting of Navegar. Discovering the joy in little everyday things that lubricate the big dry gears of daily life. Enjoying life, here and now.*

Going to that meeting, honoring a commitment and enjoying it... is being Champagnat, today.

I dream and share the dreams of the people I meet each day. They come into my life and allow me to enter into theirs. There are close encounters.

A meeting that begins at home, and continues outdoors and at school. One that commits me to be a leader in each place, involved in concrete answers to people's needs. A meeting that provides an excuse for initiating a project together.

I look at the reality of my city and country, I feel a call, aware that it is inviting me to work and inflame hopes and dreams.

And the time comes when I stop to bring my dreams up to date and draw strength from my confidence in God.

In all these places and situations, Champagnat becomes present and a partner in my dreams and commitments, and he reminds me that to be like him today, I must really want to be.

M^o Inés Cristaldo Amaro
Colegio marista de Horqueta
Paraguay

Marcellin and Fraternities



"VIVEMAR", an experience of prayer and reflection

VIVEMAR – BRAZIL MARIST CELEBRATION

VIVEMAR is a five-day gathering in which brothers and lay Marists come together to concentrate on getting to know themselves better, leading them to update their values and attitudes in dealing with life. Relationships with one's neighbors come to be seen in a new light, from the Christian perspective. In sharing life, strong bonds of affection and fraternity are formed, making it possible to experience love and divine mercy.

What makes *vivemaristas* different is that they know what it is to be Marist and, more than that, they know what it means to live in a Marist family. The spirituality of Marcellin Champagnat and the presence of Mary, our Good Mother, give VIVEMAR a clear understanding of our search for the Kingdom of God, which turns *vivemaristas* into committed

Christians, especially in the workplace.

Testimonies

– I thank our Lord for the opportunity that came my way to become a *vivemarista*. In this 4th VIVEMAR I again became part of a family that I have always be-

longed to, part of a group that in sowing seeds nurtures the presence of our Good Mother and St. Marcellin Champagnat. I want to evangelize wherever I go and especially where I am at the present moment. Moments of evangelization, prayer, and celebration energize me, and have been renewal experiences for my life. They are indispensable for all of us, daughters and sons of God our Father. Based on what I've learned here I will be taking with me the message St. Marcellin has left us: "To make Jesus Christ known and loved."

*Hisabela, Escuela y C. S. M.
"Marcelino Champagnat"
Cascavel/PR*

– The importance of what we did during this week of reflection, meetings, and togetherness jumps out at me. I feel certain I'm on my way again, catching a glimpse of the opportunity that

God has given me, the worth of ongoing education, and the effort as all of us deliver to our students and their families the divine word, true Love, the love of our master Jesus, of our mother Mary.

*Abelardo,
Centro Social Hermano Lorenzo
São Paulo/SP*

– I was a girl with health problems and from the time I was two months old my family consecrated me to Our Lady of Aparecida do Norte. When I was seven, completely cured, I returned to that shrine to fulfill a promise I had made. And now, after so many years of trial, weariness, and looking for answers in other religions, I return at 36 to consecrate myself to Our Lady of Aparecida. I do so with great joy and much inner peace. I commit myself to be a practicing Catholic, and to live my life intensely in the company of Jesus, as Mary did, and to make Him known and loved according to the Marist ideal.

*Sônia, Colegio de Brasília
E. F. – Brasília/DF*

THE ST DOMINIC FRATERNITY OF LIKUNI, MALAWI. AFRICA

We are a group of ten men and women, and Bro. Adrian is our



YEAR OF BROTHER FRANÇOIS

Five years from now we will celebrate the 200th anniversary of the birth of Gabriel Rivat, who took the name of Brother François. He was a close friend of St. Marcellin, having become a member of the Marist project at a very young age. The first Superior General, the Church has declared him venerable, the title prior to those of blessed and saint. Now that Champagnat has been canonized, our attention turns to others who have known how to be dedicated and courageous. For this reason, we are dedicating this year, from June 6, 2003 until June 6, 2004, to Brother François, to learn more about the man who gathered together Marcellin's legacy and knew how to carry it forward and expand it. To become more familiar with important figures in our Marist family, and in praying for them, drawing closer to our spiritual roots.

consultant. In the light of the Gospel, inspired by St Marcellin's spirituality, our members have discovered the powerful intercession of our Founder. Meeting twice a month and sharing prayer, we have come to attribute a number of "miracles" through his intercession. Our chairman found employment and blessings on the members of his family. Two men escaped safely from a road accident. Two daughters of a lady member secured good permanent jobs. Another member was selected exclusively for training as a teacher. The separated daughter of a member recovered her children from the husband. A man who experienced Job's loss found solace through St Marcellin's assistance. A lady could attend to her clients the whole day because St Marcellin removed the pain from her broken leg from 5 am to 5 pm. In fact, the simple faith of these people speaks loud to proclaim... Blessed are the poor, God's kingdom is theirs!

Dominic Jeremani (chairperson)

“TO RESEMBLE JESUS AND MARY MORE AND MORE”

Marist **spirituality** invites us to know how to always live and work effectively within the hearts of Jesus and Mary, and to share with them the **mission** of “saving” the world, not only in a mystical and spiritual sense, but also in a material-physical way, converting the grace of our redemption into works of mercy and solidarity for our neighbors.

Marcellin Champagnat knew all too well the cost of obedience: we remember his Bishop’s asking him to resign from his work... and the failure he experienced



Exercises aimed at self-awareness

in not obtaining official authorization for his brothers to teach. One of his biographers writes that he endured great trials throughout his entire life, but overcame them all thanks to his faith and trust in God.

Situations similar to those of Mary and Marcellin frequently present themselves in our lives, when we feel opposed to what God is asking of us. For example, when an illness comes our way, an accident, an economic setback, a misunderstanding... we forget that those trying moments are opportunities to unite ourselves to our beloved Redeemer and accept, as He did, humiliation, loss, self-denial, renunciation, the cross... In the words of St. Marcellin: “The spirit of faith will lead Marists to love the hidden life, humble employments, dependence on Providence, neediness, sufferings, humiliations, the world’s scorn, in order to **resemble Jesus and Mary more and more** (R.C. 1852: 02, 01, 004 Cepam, p. 28)

The spiritual legacy that Marcellin left his disciples allows us to understand that in the measure we accept and embrace the cross of Jesus, the greater freedom of spirit we will enjoy loving and serving God in the person of those who need us: “You did it to me.” (Mt. 25, 4)

*Prof. Miguel Angel Villalobos Gallardo
MChFM, Irapuato, Gto.
Mexico*



Brother Joseph de Meyer, from Belgium, West Central Europe Province

WHAT ARE YOU SAYING? RESTRUCTURING?

October 1993: the 19th General Chapter initiated a far-reaching movement in the Institute, pointing to the necessity of its being restructured. The delegates in 2001 confirmed the path being taken.

2003: ten years on, with the impulse of Superiors General and their Councilors, our Institute has reduced in half the number of its administrative units, working closely with the brothers from all countries, languages, and cultures that have joined together to address this new challenge to assure a future filled with vitality. Have we experienced difficulties? Of course we have. Are we bound to a once-and-for-all structure? Not really. Rather this is a step in the right direction on our continuing journey, that of our mission.

Life engenders mobility, adaptation, creativity, and boldness. The coming of our Marist future also includes the capacity to answer the unforeseen, a capacity shared by Champagnat and by our brothers in 1903. With a heart that knows no bounds. And tomorrow, at the heart of our reconfigured provinces, with an invitation to everyone to find new brothers who have received the same call to be Marists, we need to map out new and exciting roads of government, animation, and collaboration, those of 21st Century Marists. May these new roads bring vitality and meaning to the reorganization of our Institute, and help it be ever responsive to the calls of the world, with the grace of God that lights our way.

Marcellin – his trust in God

*Br. Desmond Howard
Province of Melbourne, Australia*

Are some people more predisposed to holiness and greatness than others? When we look at the influence of family and environment plus the natural aptitudes of Marcellin, we recognize someone who was certainly the recipient of a potency for both holiness and greatness. We also know of the struggles, difficulties, pain and anguish that were part and parcel of his life; that which called forth courage, tenacity and belief to an almost super-human degree. The old adage: *To those who have been given much, much will be expected* reiterates the parable of the talents, and the life of Champagnat bears testimony to a life lived to the full.

The underlying and unshakeable foundation of all that Marcellin was and all that he did was his enduring trust in God, likened to the power of the rock-face into which he built The Hermitage. The human face of his trust in God was the very attractive way of living out the Gospel values in the way of Mary.

In speaking of the essence of his spirituality, Article 2 of our Constitutions sums up this core of his life very succinctly:

Led by the Spirit, Marcellin was seized by the love that Jesus and Mary had for him and for others. His experience

of this, as well as his openness to events and to people, is the wellspring of his spirituality and apostolic zeal.... There are special attributes that were the lived expression of Marcellin's trust in God:

He constantly spoke of the **PRESENCE OF GOD.... I can be as recollected in the streets of Paris as I can in the woods of the Hermitage.** He is speaking of a total awareness of God in life, an **Incarnational God** who is continually loving, inviting, forgiving, sustaining... Champagnat certainly did not walk around the streets of Paris with his eyes downcast!

EFFECTIVE LEADERS INSPIRE HOPE. Such people as Gandhi, Nelson Mandela and Dorothy Day are modern day examples. Champagnat inspired hope in his followers. His perspective about and perception of life were totally **MAGNANIMOUS**. We see this illustrated in his capacity to live fully in the present moment with equanimity and purpose. His big-mindedness is also seen in his passion for life, his whole-hearted loving, his energy, generosity and compassion. The accompanying portrait of Champagnat depicts these qualities. We also see here a man with a vision, assessing the realities of his dream with faith and an understanding of human nature.



*Marcellin as
pictured by
Goyo*



*A new
Marist world
is born*

NEW PROVINCIALS FOR NEW PROVINCES

In April Brother Eugene Kabanguka began his term as Provincial of West Central Africa (D. R. of Congo, Central African Republic, Kenya, Rwanda, and Tanzania). At the end of June, Brother John Klein became Provincial of the United States of America Province (USA and Japan). In August, Brother Demetrio Espinosa started his term as Provincial of the Southern Cross Province (Argentina, Uruguay, and the District of Paraguay); Also in July, Brother Xavier Barceló became Provincial of the Hermitage Province (France Catalunya, Greece, Switzerland, Hungary, and Algeria). In September, Brother Manuel Jorques will become Provincial of the Mediterranean Province (Bética and Levante in Spain, plus Italy, Syria, Lebanon, and the District of West Africa). In November, Brother Samuel Holguín will become Provincial of the Iberian Province (Madrid and Norte in Spain, and also Romania). And in December, Brother Primitivo Mendoza will become Provincial of Compostela (Castile and León in Spain; Portugal, and Honduras).

VISITS OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL

Brother Superior General and his Council, together with several delegates, have given retreats in the Provinces of Europe, except that of West Central Europe. Currently they are visiting communities, and from November 24 to 27 they will hold an expanded General Council session in Madrid.