



Marist ECHO

Institute of the Marist Brothers

Number 48 – Year 17 – June 2004

EXPERIENCING GOD

Sooner or later, the brothers and lay people called to participate in the Marist project, as dreamed and launched by Marcellin, come to discover that experience lies at the heart of their vocation.

Experience; of what?

A profound experience of who we are: going within ourselves, being aware of the reflex mechanisms that hold us back from living our lives to the fullest, observing the source of the light radiating from our hearts, our very essence... In this way we embark upon a process of personal growth, woven of hopes and weaknesses, yet constant and filled with trust. A profound experience of God: deep within ourselves we discover the presence of God, love and compassion. The Lord becomes the adhesive at the core of our lives. The times we devote to prayer and meditation draw us into a deeper consciousness of His being. Only when vine shoots are one with the grapevine will they bear fruit.

A profound experience of others: presence, attentiveness, and service awaken us to the realization that the face of God is found within all of us. We can relate to others in many ways, but the strongest bond is that of fraternity, nourished by our faith. Are we communicating this three-fold experience to others? Only those who possess it can hand it on.

The pleasure of God's company

Br. Seán D. Sammon, Superior General



Br Antonio Ramalho, General Councilor, (left) and Br Seán enjoying a little chat

More often than not God has a difficult time getting our attention. And is it any wonder? Busy giving him directions, making demands, and reciting our litany of prayerful complaints, we hardly have a moment to give ear to what God might have to say. Some of us are even presumptuous enough to believe that we can speak for God: yes, we persist in telling anyone who will listen that one thing or another is actually God's will. If only for the sake of his reputation, long ago God made a decision not to follow all of our orders.

Now, undoubtedly, from time to time Marcellin Champagnat gave God a piece of his mind, but the founder realized also that silence had to be part of the rhythm of any relationship with the Almighty. He learned to listen with his heart, and eventually gave that habit this name: the practice of the presence of God.

If you have ever been blessed by the gift of a best friend, you will be

able to understand that God longs for the pleasure of your company and mine. Sure best friends talk – words help them to share a great deal with one another. But best friends also appreciate those quiet moments when just being together is enough. No words, no gestures, no agenda. Simply enjoying

the pleasure of one another's company. That's what God longs for too.

So, the next time you or I find ourselves wanting to give God a piece of our minds, let's stop and simply share our hearts with him instead – imperfect as they are, troubled as they may be.

The quiet rhythm with which they beat serves to remind us that silence, more often than words, is the language that God uses for conversation.



The presence of God, key for St. Marcellin

SAN JUAN DE MIRAFLORES, LIMA, PERU

The Marist factor in high school guidance

Orlando Cerna Dorregaray, Marist Brothers' Colegio "Manuel A. Ramírez Barinaga," Province of Santa María de los Andes. Lima, Peru.

I'd like to examine the Marist factor in our ministry as guidance counselors in our schools. At least from my perspective as a counselor at Colegio "Manuel A. Ramírez Barinaga," a Marist Brothers school in San Juan de Miraflores, Lima, Peru.

My experience in guidance goes back to my student days at *Ramírez Barinaga* from 1973 to 1980. That's when I got to know what it means to be Marist. It was through the devotedness of the brothers who worked at the school – their time and counsel – that I became familiar with the model of Marist Christian life. I was always impressed by the brothers' concern for the holistic education of their students. Still fresh in my mind and heart are the memories of the guidance they gave, of how they understood the difficult times we were facing. I can also testify to their vigilance and the corrective measures they took when our behavior sometimes required them.

In this way they brought to life the educational program of Champagnat, making us good citizens and Christians. Brothers like Lázaro Armendáriz, Mario Duque, and Santos Garrido always educated with Father Champagnat's love. With their presence, sincerity, and sense of fairness, they always showed

concern for us and gave us a chance to better our lives. Above all they made sure that our minds would be ingrained with the moral values that help us overcome evil and make it clear to us that there is nothing better you can do than serve others.

After we graduated, we participated in Marist youth groups and shared experiences with

young brothers, devoting part of our lives and education to benefit the children and young people in our school. The brothers were always ready to guide and educate youth, respecting their outlooks and attitudes. They were very understanding, and showed special concern for the most needy and those who had a hard time behaving and doing well in class.

Now, as professionals, we continue to guide, and our Marist background leads us to see that our main mission is to help students experiencing difficulties. Of course we don't become substitutes for their parents, but we do form a family in which Father Champagnat's love for Mary, our Good Mother, helps us accomplish everything necessary to "calm" these children and young people in our schools. Much like our Good Mother does, we care for, calm, admire, and welcome them, and above all assure them that Mary loves them, loves them perhaps like they've never been loved before. We only succeed in guiding and educating our students in a holistic way thanks to the love of our Father.



Training in technology isn't enough, you must educate the heart



For life's journey... a firm foundation

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Henri Vergès, bridge builder linking the Church with Islam

Brother Alain Delorme, in an interview with Brother Lluís Serra

*Alain Delorme is 72. He was born in Saint Paulet-de-Caisson, France.
General Councilor, 1985 to 1993.*

Vice Postulator for the cause of Brother Henri Vergès, who was murdered in Algiers, May 8, 1994.



Brother Henri - the Church in Algeria gives witness.

WHO WAS BROTHER HENRI?

Born on 15 July 1930 in Matemale, Pyrénées-Orientales, on the Capcir Plateau, the oldest of six children. His parents were farmers. He left his village at age 12 to join the Marists.

WHAT WAS HIS MARIST CAREER?

Henri was a novice at St-Paul-3-Châteaux and a Scholastic at N-D de l'Hermitage. At age 18, he began his apostolate as a teacher, especially in Ardèche, and he stayed 8 years in Corrèze, at N-D de Lacabane as Sub-Master of Novices. Elected delegate by his Province, he took part in the 1967 General Chapter. He obtained a Licentiate in Philosophy in June 1968. He arrived in Algeria in 1969.

HOW DID HE INCULTURATE HIMSELF?

Henri started learning Arabic ardently. He read the Koran and kept abreast of whatever could help him in his work as educator of young Muslims. At St. Bonaventure School in Algiers he succeeded in animating an educational team and launching a pedagogical project linking Muslims and Christians in trust. In Sour-El-Ghozlane, 120 kms south of Algiers, he was professor in the lycée there from 1976 to 1988. He worked wholeheartedly for his students and won the trust of his principal by his work with the weakest.

WHAT WAS HIS CONTRIBUTION TO ISLAMIC-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE?

Starting in 1980, Henri took an active part in the "Ribat," a spiritual fraternity with Muslims which met twice annually at N-D de l'Atlas, near Medea, with the prior, Christian de Chergé, killed with 6 of his Brothers in May 1996. Henri sought to the very end to deepen the meaning of the presence of the Church in the Muslim world. It was one way of

becoming one with the Algerian people. By his life and death, he was a bridge-builder between the Church and Islam.

WHAT WAS HIS INTERACTION WITH YOUTH?

Henri was careful to avoid all proselytism. The library in Ben Cheneb Street welcomed more than 1200 young students. They found quiet there and the work tools needed. Each young person's individual journey was respected. For Henri, this effort to understand could lead only to God.

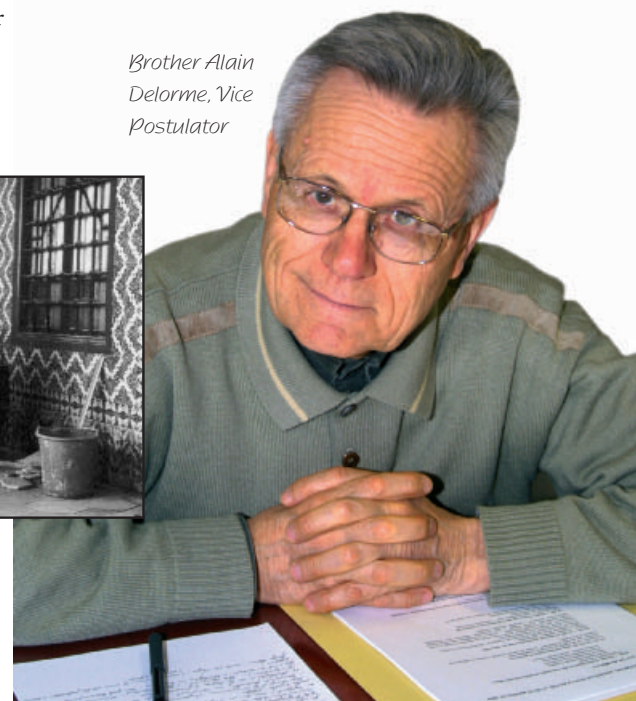
WHY INTRODUCE HIS CAUSE?

Because our brother was a witness to the Church's commitment and fidelity to young Algerians, as Cardinal Duval has asserted. Because his apostolic action is a model of respect for the other's identity and liberty.



A bridge between two worlds

*Brother Alain
Delorme, Vice
Postulator*



● “THEY HAVE SEEING THE WORLD TH

The lively conversations and air of excitement at the wedding feast in Cana didn't get in the way of Mary's noticing that the young bride and groom had run out of wine for their guests.

Never indifferent to the needs of others, she went up to Jesus and said, "They're out of wine."

The Lord invites us brothers and lay Marists to see the world through Mary's eyes – eyes more interested in understanding and loving than in passing judgment. In her tactful way, Mary helps bring about clear-cut results.

THEY HAVE NO WINE

The first messianic sign that Jesus performed unfolds at the Wedding in Cana. Mother Mary is a key figure. Through her genuine concern, she brings to Jesus' attention the critical situation in the wedding celebration. Jesus then manifests his loving action.

"They have no wine."

Mary's statement is an ardent appeal to see situations in our time with a heart filled with compassion – a compassion that impels actions for the benefit of those in need.

My work as the Coordinator of the Marist Alternative Education Program for out-of-school youth and adults gives me the opportunity to see life situations. It is disquieting hearing the story of a teenager quitting school to do farm work to augment his family's income. It is disturbing knowing that a youth has to be absent from school so that his mother can go to work as a laundry woman to earn money for her child's school project. It is moving seeing how a physically deformed girl rides on a bicycle pedaled by her younger sister in order to attend classes at our learning center. It is unsettling hearing a boy relate his story of feeling so unloved, abandoned, and left to the streets, struggling for his very survival.

"They have no wine."

With Mary's words, we just cannot remain indifferent to the many social realities that thwart the well-being of human existence. We are called to be sensitive to the dehumanizing realities confronting humanity. And just like Mary, we must opt decisively to take concrete actions in response to the needs of others – actions that will usher in the primacy of Jesus' loving response for them. In the end, we may ask: "What good is it if today we hear these words of Mary, and still remain indifferent to the cries of those in need?"

Agnes S. Reyes
Coordinator, Marist Alternative Education Program
Notre Dame of Marbel University, Philippines

THE "NO WINE" THROUGH MARY'S EYES

GROUP DISCUSSION

1. As Marist educators, what does it mean to look at others with love and understanding rather than judgment?
2. Let's look carefully at the Marist work we're doing. What's the benefit of seeing the world through Mary's eyes?

THEY'RE OUT OF WINE

As Sacred Scripture would have it, Mary was the first to recognize the embarrassing situation of the bride and groom at Cana, and she came to their aid.

Noticing that they were running low on wine, she decided to get involved.

Every text in Scripture is good news for us, not just a narrative about the life of Jesus and Mary. And so we might ask ourselves, as Mary did in her time, "What meaning can or should this event have for us?"

Drinking wine with friends can mean we're enjoying a mouth-watering meal, drinking an exquisite full-bodied beverage, imbibing a bracing elixir, relaxing in the company of gracious friends, bringing an aura of excitement to a community.

Do we have enough wine for our spiritual life, enough outgoing friends who encourage us and energize our personal life and the life of our community, friends, and associates in the apostolate?

Mary noticed the need of the bride and groom, their relatives, guests, and community long before they themselves noticed it.

She always knows what needs to be done. She's familiar with healing and life-giving powers, knows medicinal extracts for the body and soul and where they can be found, knows how to deepen and enliven friendship and inner contentment. She is close to the Wellspring of strength, the One who instills courage and knows how to face weariness, worries, and trying times.

She gives us clear advice: Turn to Christ and "do whatever He tells you."

Br. Heinrich Schamberger
Province of West Central Europe,
Mindelheim, Germany

SEEING THE WORLD WITH MARY'S EYES

Our sense of sight is probably one of the most helpful blessings for learning what's happening, both in regard to the people we meet and our surroundings. Such was the case with Mary. At the marriage feast in Cana, she noticed the wine was about to run out. Straightaway she told her Son: "They have no wine."

In our daily contact with children and young people we feel it's imperative to see their deepest yearnings ever more clearly: their need for love, care, attention, self-esteem, a meaningful life, and all that contributes to human fulfillment.

Seeing their foremost yearnings and helping them to fulfill their potential requires us as Brothers and lay Marists to "transplant" Mary's eyes and her keen sense of the needs of others into our own bodies. Then we will have eyes that can truly see, ears that can listen carefully, a mind that can discern, a heart that can empathize, and hands that can help. In this way we will enrich and give greater meaning to the lives of children and young people.

Br. Geraldo Medida
Escola Marista de Manhiça
Maputo, Mozambique

Marist fraternities, a shared vocation



Colombia: a commitment to life

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH THE MARIST LAITY INITIATIVE

A. Recent aspirations and plans

The 1993 General Chapter played a key role in formalizing and giving impetus in this challenge. A reference book with background, theology, inspiration, and structure was produced and became the blueprint for the way forward for all those attracted to Marcellin Champagnat, his charism and spirituality. *THE CHAMPAGNAT MOVEMENT OF THE MARIST FAMILY* was the way forward. Having just come from a 6-month course in Rome on Marist story/spirituality, I was given the task of promoting and spreading this information. Much energy went into it. For a few years we had several groups active, but they all seemed to run out of energy, especially when I tried to pass on the leadership of the various groups.

My reflection: Somehow it did not answer the needs of the laity.

B. School and welfare level

I was invited to form an in-service program for the staff members, mainly in schools, but with welfare involvement as well. Organizing a team and program, we launched *SHARING OUR CALL* in 1994. A 3-day inservice, running 6 times a year, with a strong Marist component, it has exceeded expectations. It's still going strong with over 1200 having participated.

A follow-up program called *ENRICHING OUR CALL*, where we try to empower lay partners to become organizers and facilitators, has had only sketchy success. The idea was to run several sessions a year, with those who had done *SHARING OUR CALL*, in twilight or half day sessions. It was hoped that this would lead to the formation of groups that might want to become part of the *CHAMPAGNAT MOVEMENT OF THE MARIST FAMILY*. The response has been patchy except in places where a brother has been assigned to keep up the momentum.

Reflection: While being enthusiastic in the big group, 3-day course level, there seems little transfer to anything ongoing in smaller groups. People don't see the need or how this could enrich their spirituality. It's worth noting that the concept of *MARIAN CHURCH* (as explained in *A Certain Way*) evokes the most positive response.

C. Marist Family Initiatives

Back in 1993 a very good initiative saw Religious explore the possibilities

of the Wider Marist Family Movement. Initially a group comprising a Marist Missionary sister, a Marist sister, a Marist priest, and a Marist teaching brother formed a committee to work on a united approach to lay involvement. We arranged weekend retreats for the laity, as well as mornings for reflection. Foremost though was the yearly *FOURVIERE* celebration, which each "branch" took turns to host. Gradually there was more lay involvement. When two dynamic lay members of the committee attended a national conference of Marist Laity in New Orleans in 2002, they brought back so much energy and "fire". That has resulted in a whole new scene: an empowered *MARIST LAITY AUSTRALIA* with a constitution and branches in three states. Already members have organized spirituality weekends. There is a great spirit of commitment to the Marist way. I'm very hopeful that this will provide a way forward that would please our founders.

Br. Des Murphy



Pamplona: a place for fraternity



VISIT US DAILY ON THE WEB WWW.CHAMPAGNAT.ORG

The Marist Institute's new web page made its debut on the net on April 18th, the 5th anniversary of the canonization of St. Marcellin Champagnat. The date was chosen not only as it relates to him personally but also to his vision: "All the dioceses in the world enter into our plans." Tucked away in a small village in France, Marcellin's heart knew no bounds. He wanted to bring the Good News to every corner of the world. Today we have the opportunity to advance his dream. Everyone can receive our Marist Bulletin Online in their inbox. All you need to do is sign up.

In every corner of the world, we know that www.champagnat.org is a meeting place for people united by the values we hold dear as Marists. Visit us daily.



Canada: in the heart of the city

WE'RE ON OUR WAY TO LOVE

From San Pedro in the Province of Jujuy, Argentina, sending a big abrazo to everyone in our fellow fraternities around the world. Our name is a very imaginative one: "Hand in hand with St. Marcellin, we're on our way to Love". We began our new year with the wonderful news that a member of another fraternity has entered the seminary to become a priest, and we have committed ourselves to supporting him with our prayers. Our agenda also includes our solidarity projects.

Carlos Cruz
San Pedro, Argentina

WITH CHAMPAGNAT'S STYLE

"You can be Champagnat today." For Fraternities in the Province of Norandina this powerful statement has become a lifetime commitment. Having this calling, the Laity for Peace Fraternity works to provide activities for a group of youngsters who live in the poorest, most violent areas of Bogotá, complementing the work they do in school. Through leadership workshops, we try to equip them with the skills they need to deal with the challenges posed by their surroundings, and in so doing, to choose life.

Constanza A. Rojas Carvajal
Bogotá, Colombia

A FIRST EXPERIENCE THAT PROMISES MUCH!

Organized by the Fraternity "In the Heart of the City," the Marist Fraternities of the Canadian Province had the opportunity to experience

a strong immersion having as theme, "To see the world as Marcellin saw it," on March 26, 27 and 29 at Madonna House in the Marial shrine of Notre-Dame du Cap. 22 people, representing 6 fraternities, were able to spend this time deepening their knowledge of Mary in the Annunciation and in the Resurrection with Brother Bernard Beaudin, using Brother Seán Sammon's circular letter presented by Brother Gaston Robert, and the witness of Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacasse, animator of "In the Heart of the City." Times for personal prayer were scheduled to integrate the various talks. Everybody said they were very satisfied with this first inter-Fraternity experience. One hopes that this experience will be repeated.

Br. Jean-Denis Couture
Accompanist for the Fraternity
"In the Heart of the City"

FRATERNITY AND FRIENDSHIP

The Champagnat Fraternity in Pamplona was among the first Marist Fraternities in existence. As members we have been sharing our lives and Christian mission from the time we were students until now, when we are raising our own families. So you can see that our Fraternity really enjoys Marcellin's charisma, and naturally, his friendship. That's why we go on a trip to a town in Navarre every year and spend several very pleasant days together, adults and children, for no other reason than to have a good time.

Alberto Cascante Díaz
The Champagnat Fraternity
of Pamplona, Spain



Sydney: a shared calling



Syrian Marist
Brother
Georges Sabé

HUNDRETH ANNIVERSARY OF MARIST BROTHERS IN SYRIA

Aleppo in the second-largest city in Syria, cradle of civilization and Christianity. The Christian community is composed of several Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant churches.

At the request of the Armenian Catholic bishop, Brothers arrived in Aleppo in August 1904 to run and animate the Armenian school there. In 1930 they opened their own school which existed until 1945. Then they opened another school which existed until 1967. Since then, the Brothers have maintained a community in Aleppo to serve the young and those most in need. The community has 3 Brothers today. It belongs to the Mediterranean Province. Aleppo has been and continues to be generous for Marist vocations. At the present time, the community is committed to several solidarity and educational projects. Likewise, the community is engaged in informal education by two groups of Scouts. Two Champagnat families, each having 6 couples, are in very close contact with the Brothers. It goes without saying that the community has vocational training as mission. Since 1999, 3 young men have been professed. The Centenary activities will be celebrated from 15-21 August 2004 with Brother Superior General present. You can get more information on our web page: www.maristes-alep.com

Being Champagnat today

*Br. Pedro João Wolter, Director of Colégio Marista Paranaense, Curitiba, Brazil
Marist Province of South Central Brazil*

If Saint Marcellin Champagnat lived today, what means would he use to energize the religious life of the Brothers, and as a result, the entire Marist Institute? ...Not an easy question to answer; on the other hand, we might arrive at one, but also encounter a lot of difficulty putting it into practice.

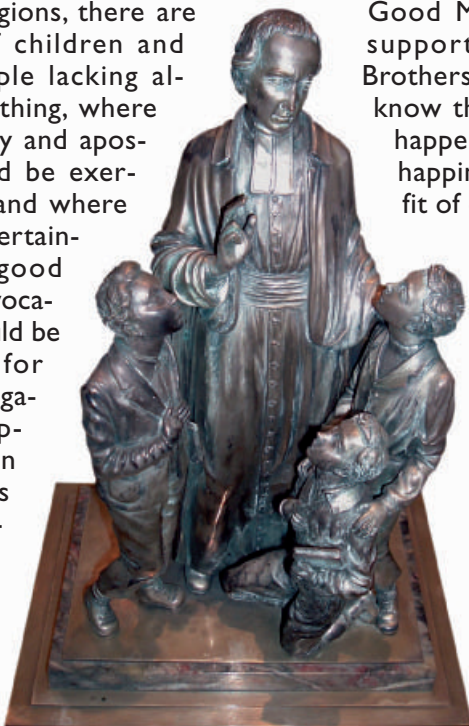
What would the attitudes of Champagnat be today when facing the lack of vocations and the current perseverance rate of trainees and Brothers? There was a time when we had over 10,000 Brothers; now there are less than 5,000 – we are going down by about 100 Brothers a year. If we continue this way, we will disappear in the next 40 years. In the year 2050, we will be an extinct or almost extinct Congregation. That's a terrible prospect.

I believe Champagnat would push for an exodus of Brothers from first-world countries, where our mission asks little of us, to the needy African continent or the teeming populations of Asia and other extremely poor parts of the globe.

In those regions, there are millions of children and young people lacking almost everything, where our ministry and apostolate could be exercised fully, and where we would certainly get a good number of vocations. It would be a rebirth for the Congregation, as happened when the Brothers were expelled from France and wound up rapidly multiplying their

numbers throughout the world. That's what happened in Mexico, Colombia, Brazil, and other countries. I think we lack the courage to leave our land behind and head off to regions poor in everything, especially information, religion, and love of our risen Lord Jesus Christ and Mary most holy, our Good Mother of the Church and of the Congregation of Marcellin Champagnat. Certainly we would be addressing the deepest desires and pleas of Pope John Paul II. The 19th General Chapter asked us to go to places where there are children and young people in need. Now these are mainly in the Third World, where they are victims of today's economic system and social marginalization.

For me, being Champagnat today means promoting an exodus to the poor on the outskirts of big cities, where one finds the greatest density of disinherited people, not to mention children and young people lost in drugs and crime for lack of education, guidance, and vocational training. With the grace of God and our Good Mother's care and support for her Marist Brothers and the Church, I know this can and should happen, for our greater happiness and the benefit of our least cared-for neighbors.



Reliquary presented to Pope Pius XII for the beatification in 1955



Children's stories... profound truths

THE LAST SHALL BE FIRST

One day a king set out to visit a Master and observe one of his meetings.

Later, over lunch, the king said to the Wise Man,

"O great Master of the Age! When you preside at an assembly, I notice your disciples sit in a semicircle – that's how I usually arrange things in my court: do you think there's any significance to that?"

The Master replied: "King of the World! Tell me the seating arrangement in your court and I will describe for you how I seat people in my place."

"Well, the inner circle," explained the king, "is for those who for one reason or another enjoy my favor; I sit them closest to me. The second circle is reserved for the most powerful and influential dignitaries in my realm, including ambassadors. As for the outside row of seats, that's for the common people."

"In that case," said the Wise Man, "there's a big difference in the way we do things. Those who sit closest to me are the hard-of-hearing – that way they can hear what I have to say. The middle row is reserved for the uneducated, so they can pay attention to my Teachings. And those in the last row are the highly educated; they don't care where they sit."