

special
issue

Message

BULLETIN OF THE INSTITUTE OF THE MARIST BROTHERS OF THE SCHOOLS

General Conference



THE MARIST BROTHER AND HIS MISSION FOR THE FUTURE

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PRAYER

Father, we rejoice in all your gifts to us, above all in the gift of your Son Jesus, whom you sent to reconcile and unite all creation with you.

We thank you for your call to us to join in Jesus' mission of reconciliation and unity. Help us to understand more fully the meaning of this call to us today, and to give ourselves completely to this mission.

Jesus came, not to do his own will, but the will of you who sent him. You know our hesitations, Father, and how we are inclined to walk a less demanding path. In spite of this, we want to be like Mary, and follow Jesus in his unremitting adherence to your will. Let us find in Mary the model of the discerning heart, learning daily to be more and more in tune with your will.

As Jesus, in your name, healed the sick, the blind, the deaf and the lame, so too may he touch us with his healing power, so that we may see with new eyes, hear with new ears, walk a new path, speak with a new voice and love with a new heart.

So may we discover ourselves and our mission anew.

Father, those whom you call, you send. On a mountain top in Galilee, Jesus sent his apostles to all nations with the promise of his abiding presence.

Confirmed in your love, and sharing your vision, may we too move boldly and confidently in the manner of Champagnat, trusting in Jesus' words to all who are sent, "I will be with you".

In union with Mary, our model in mission, we make this prayer through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord. Amen.

Br. Charles Howard

Off to Veranópolis

Editorial



Brother Albino Trevisan,
Provincial of Porto Alegre

Brothers, and you young men in formation, let's all go to Veranópolis and see what's been happening there. Just make sure your passport is valid!

Where is Veranópolis, you ask? You say you can't find it even on the latest maps? Well, it happens to be way down in the south of Brazil, about 170 kms from the city of Porto Alegre. But before we can go to Veranópolis, we have to go to another Latin American country first. We're going there to receive a new sacrament: the sacrament of the encounter with the poor. "I give you a new commandment; love one another..."

Are you among the poor right now? Then let yourself be evangelized by them. Let the grace of your encounter with the poor Christ sink into your being.

Once you have lived this brief experience, you will realize that the poor speak a different language! It is not easy to express what happens in our heart when we come close to Christ in his poor.

Is it possible that it is only now, after Medellín and Puebla, that the Church has discovered that it must turn to the poor in a special way?

Why is it that we Marist Brothers waste so much time in calculations and sophisticated discussions, instead of once and for all doing what Champagnat did: go out and meet the poor. It was for them that he founded the Institute, and no one has a right to deviate from that original aim. Our good Mother is also among the poor. She is right there beside her son.

So go on with your journey, and don't worry about the occasional setbacks. When you've reached Latin America, you're on a continent that has fallen among thieves, on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho. If you keep going, you will reach Porto Alegre, where the Brothers will be waiting for you. They got there in 1900, almost ninety years ago, to begin Marist work, not in Porto Alegre itself, but in Bom Princípio, a small town about halfway to Veranópolis. As you pass Bom Princípio, say a Hail Mary for the twenty-one juniors there, preparing to become Marist Brothers, and remember what Brother Weibert, the founder of our province, used to say: "It's all right to do just a little, so long as you do it well and keep on doing it!"

An hour more now, and we'll be in Veranópolis. When we get there, I'll hand you over, as Provincial of this host province, to Brother Charles Howard, who now represents Father Champagnat among us. It is up to him to give the impetus to our search for our Marist mission for the future.

It is now 150 years since Father Champagnat died. What are the challenges we should be tackling today, if we want our mission to remain faithful to his charism?



General Conference

In my own name, and on behalf of all the Provincials of Brazil and Latin America, let me welcome you all. I pray that the Holy Spirit may enlighten us, and that Mary and Champagnat may be present among us. The Institute is their work and it belongs to them. Now that we're here in Veranópolis, let us try to find out how we can lead people in our own day to the crib, the cross and the altar.

I want to thank Bro. Charles Howard, Bro. Benito Arbués, the General Councillors, all the Provincials and District Superiors, the brothers who are acting as translators or secretaries, and all the others who are helping in so many different ways, for coming to this Conference. In the pages that follow, you will read all about what has been happening here in Veranópolis. At this significant moment in our history, as we celebrate the bicentenary of the birth of Father Champagnat, let us all continue on our Marist journey, along the road which we have all glimpsed together.

Bro. Albino Trevisan
Provincial of Porto Alegre

"Welcome everyone"



This issue of FMS - MESSAGE does not attempt to give exhaustive coverage of the General Conference.

Some topics like the Champagnat Movement, Capitalisation and others will be treated in future issues.

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PREPARATION AND ORGANISATION



The General Conference

NATURE AND GOALS

Our Constitutions define the General Conference this way:

The General Conference is a consultative assembly, made up of the Brother Superior General, the Brother Vicar General, the Councillors General, the Brothers Provincial and, if the Statutes of the Districts provide for it, the Superiors of Districts.

The aim of the General Conference is:

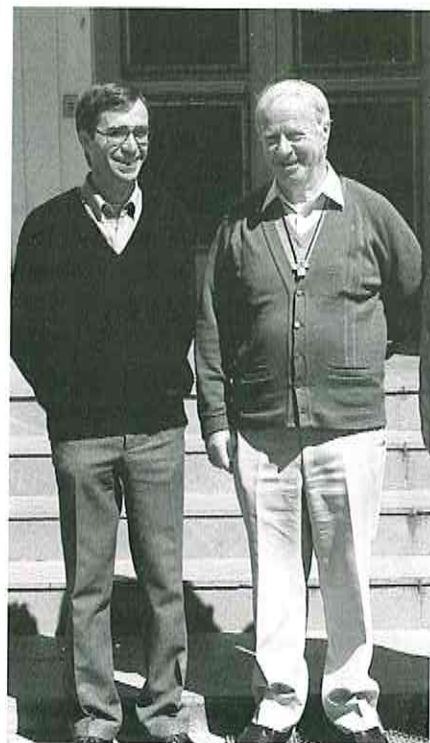
- 1. to strengthen the unity of the Institute, and to enable the superiors to have direct contact with the Brother Superior General, the members of his Council, and with one another;*
- 2. to study questions of general concern and to propose ways of answering them.*

The Brother Superior General convokes the General Conference in the period between two General Chapters. If he judges it opportune, he can invite other Brothers to attend (cc. 632, 633,1).

The 1989 General Conference in Veranópolis bore the imprint of the Church in Latin America, as it prepares to celebrate the fifth centenary of its evangelisation, and by our own bicentenary which invites us to deepen our love for Marcellin Champagnat. In the face of a world which is going through tremendous upheavals and which is crushing a constantly increasing number of men and women under an intolerable burden of misery and injustice, the Superiors were called to take on the challenges of our day with the spirit, courage and audacity of Father Champagnat.

In this context, the General Council suggested as the principal theme of the Conference:

"The Marist Brother and his Mission for the future"



Brother Herbert with Brother Charles



Led by the Spirit

PREPARATION

Preparations for the Conference included several phases at different levels:

Phase 1: Each Provincial or District Superior was invited to study the challenges his own Province or District had to face if it were to be faithful to the charism of Marcellin Champagnat in carrying out its mission.

Phase 2: The General Council synthesised the replies it received in December 1988 and drew up a program.

Phase 3: The program, listing the main topics for the Conference, was sent to all participants for their personal reflection and preparation. In addition, the Superior General offered some concrete suggestions: spiritual preparation through the meditation and study of certain Church documents.



Conference symbols

GENERAL PROGRAM

The different subjects treated at the Conference were all aimed at offering an answer to the question: What challenges must we respond today, 150 years after our Founder, if we wish to remain faithful to our charism in carrying out our mission?

The program included the following points:

1. Our specific spirituality as Marist Brothers

- * Apostolic spirituality.
- * Our charism and our Marist identity.
- * Consecration for mission.
- * Vocations and formation.

2. Our mission for today and our pastoral planning

- * Our mission.
- * Christian education of youth.
- * Catechesis.
- * Our commitment to the most neglected.

- * Apostolic priorities.
- * Putting our material goods at the service of our mission.
- * The Marist Family Movement.
- * Personal and provincial planning.

In addition, the Conference offered opportunities for meetings among Brothers who are from the same geographical region, or who are collaborating in the same apostolate. It also made it possible to share information on various subjects: the situation in Lebanon and in Sri Lanka, the REMAR movement, etc.

The program fulfilled the wish of Bro. Charles Howard, expressed in his opening talk: personal support, the sharing of others' wisdom and experience, and a clearer vision of our mission.

Bro. Herbert Scheller
Germany



Presiding over the opening session

EXPOSURE VISITS IN LATIN AMERICA

Before the opening of the General Conference in Veranópolis, all the participants were invited by the General Council to spend a week acquainting themselves with the reality of Latin America, the site of the Conference.

Well planned experiences

Latin America is a living and hope-filled reality for the Church of the twenty-first century and for our Congregation, which this year celebrates one hundred years of presence there. If it was for these reasons that our superiors chose Latin America as the site of the General Conference, it became important for us to learn about it on a first-hand basis.

A commission of the General Council contacted the conference participants, proposed a plan to them, and asked for their preferences regarding the Provinces or Districts they wished to visit.

Although not all choices could be honored, ten groups, organized by language, were set up. The Pro-



Brother Fernando Mayor, the youngest Superior at the Conference

vinces and Districts chosen were: Mexico Occidental, Mexico Central, Central America, Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Chile, Bolivia and Brazil North.

Each Province or District that was to host a group organized a preparatory commission which, over a year's time, prepared for the visit and planned the experiences.

It was not a matter of preparing a tourist itinerary or of simply planning to familiarize the visiting Brothers with our work in the Province. Rather the purpose was to allow the visitors to have direct personal contact and

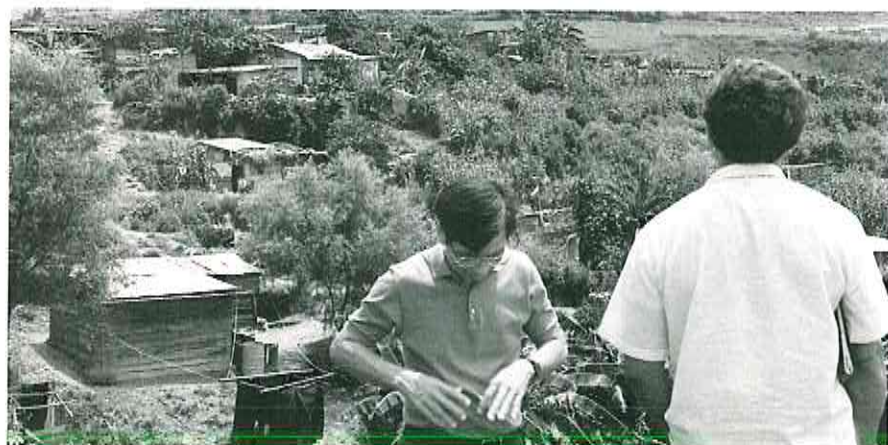
dialog, and to experience the mission of the Church and of the Marist Brothers in different parts of Latin America, especially in situations, whenever possible, where initiatives were being taken in the area of the preferential option for the poor.

The ten groups took part in carefully chosen experiences, taking time out for prayer, reflection, and personal and group discernment, which was an integral part of the program.

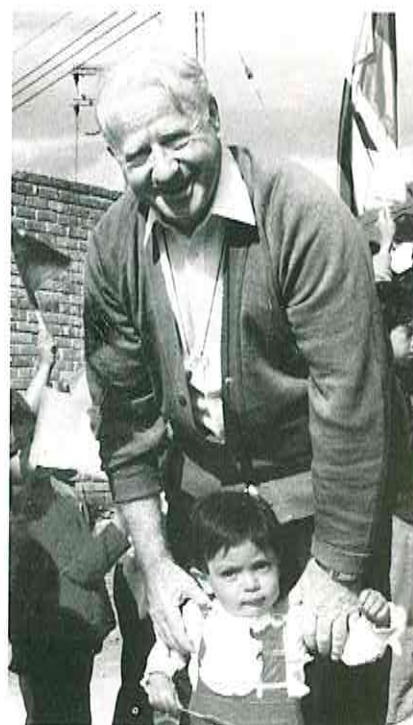
We arrived in Veranópolis a bit tired, but we had been touched by God's grace, speaking to us through the suffering reflected in the many eyes that had looked into ours.

It was a wonderful preparation for beginning the consideration of our options for the future.

Brother Fernando Mayor
Bolivia



Bros Renato Cruz and Iulio Suaesi in one of the suburbs of Guatemala City



*"To come to know the reality
and allow ourselves
to be challenged by it"*

TO THEIR EXPERIENCES REACTIONS OF BROTHERS

"I wondered if we could be daring enough to become conscious of the poverty and misery which exist in our own provinces."

"I became aware of the need to awaken myself to the need to look at the world with other eyes; the routine of the day closes our eyes to what is real in the world around us."

"I came away from Colombia with two deep impressions, suffering and joy. I felt that the poor not only evangelize us in a special way, but also give us vitality. We need the poor."

"It was moving to see how the Brothers loved the children of the streets, their deep love and respect for these children, and it was an emotional moment for me which made a new demand upon me. I asked myself if in some of our provinces life is dry, losing its elasticity, in the absence of true solidarity with the poor."

"I was truly grateful for the welcome given to us by the Brothers in Chile, and I was struck by the faith-sharing in community which I witnessed there. I realized that we can live without knowing that the poor exist —yet we must listen to the community with whom we are living and working."



"I realised the need to awaken my conscience"

"The Lord called us to Colombia, to a rendezvous with history. Perhaps this was our very last rendezvous with history, unless we take significant initiatives, initiatives which cannot come from the Church, or from our friends, or from others. It may be our last rendezvous unless we can take daring steps, like the Founder in his rendezvous with history in 1817."

"After centuries of the Gospel in Latin America, social injustice crushes us. We are convinced that God's Word lays an obligation on us, that the Church is challenged to change this social inequality."

"It was a joy to see the Marist charism so active in Bolivia, the Brothers dedicated to the poor and living in a simple and austere manner."

"In sharing with the Brothers their contact with the street children in Ecuador, my eyes were opened to the fact that we were truly following in the footsteps of Champagnat, *open to events and to people, especially the poor.*"



"After centuries of the Gospel... social injustice crushes us"

"Never was there such a need of educators as today; our youth are, as never before, the prey of the media and of drugs."



"We need the poor: they evangelise us"

"It seems to me that I have experienced four dimensions of the option for the poor: an ascetical option, living simply; a pastoral option, putting our resources at the service of the poor; a compassionate option, sharing love in the midst of suffering; and a missionary option, inserted in the community with the people. I now face the challenge to understand better the structural injustice of which, as a member of the First World, I am part."

Veranópolis

*Brother Roque A. Salet, Provincial
of Santa Maria, Brazil*



Veranópolis, formerly called *Alfredo Chaves*, is an attractive little city. Up till recently, it was known only to our Brazilian confrères. Thanks to the General Conference, it became for the whole of three weeks, the "capital" of the Marist world and is now familiar to Brothers from 74 countries.

No doubt, many Brothers would like to know more about this place that hosted such an important Marist gathering. So here are some cultural, geographic and historical data about this city and about the Marist Brothers who worked there forming and educating the people.

Veranópolis is 170 km from Porto Alegre, the capital of Rio Grande do Sul. It has a population of 25,000, mostly descendants of Italian immigrants who settled there from 1890 onwards. The local economy is based on agriculture, more specifically grapes, apples, and a great variety of fruits and vegetables. There are also a number of stores and small businesses.

Its temperature can drop to 0 °C in winter and rise to 40 °C in summer; during the Conference, it remained between 10° and 20°.

Why was Veranópolis chosen for the General Conference? The General

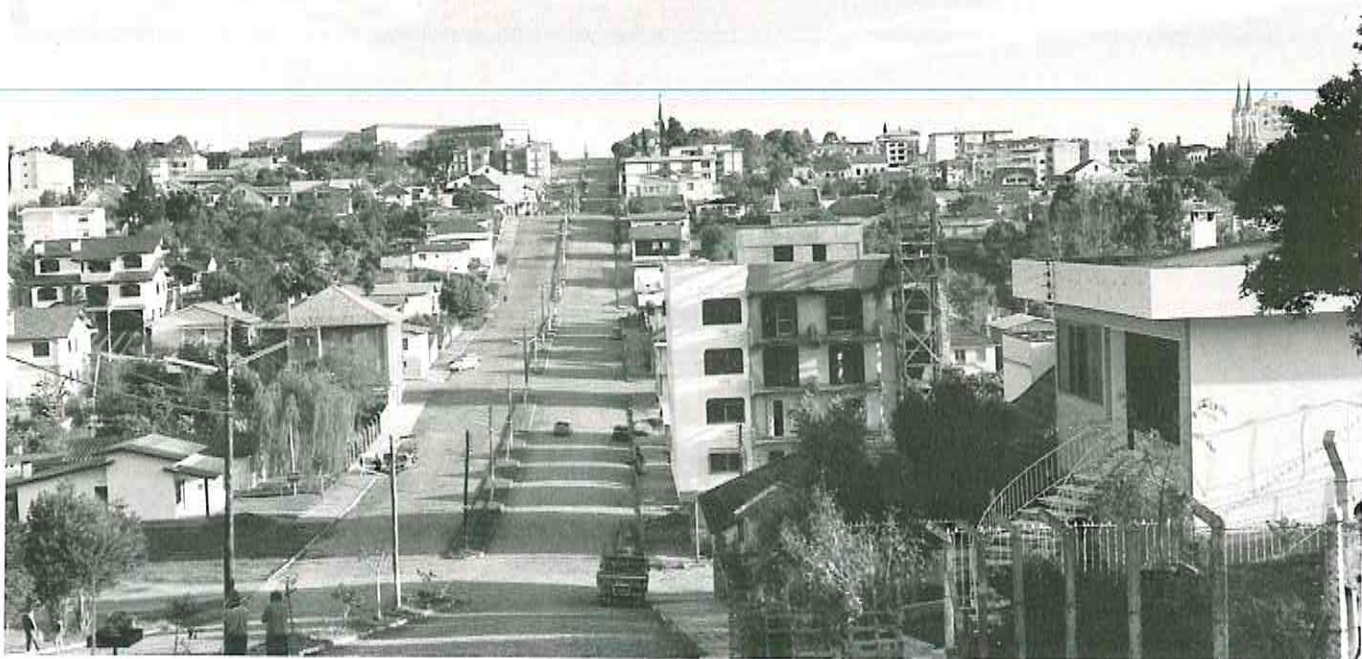
Council thought it appropriate to hold the Conference in Latin America to mark the arrival of the first Marist Brothers on this continent just 100 years ago. In fact, they set foot in Colombia in 1889, a few months after leaving France. Choosing a site in Latin America, also offered the Provincials and District Superiors the opportunity to experience at first

hand the social, economical and religious realities of this promising continent.

A few members of the General Council visited various possible places. Taking into consideration the proximity of an international airport, the significant number of Marist Brothers in Brazil and the adequate facilities offered by the Recanto Me-



*For the whole of three weeks,
the "capital" of the Marist world*



Veranópolis, a town both peaceful and hospitable

diianeira Centre in Veranópolis, they finally opted for this place. Besides, the Brothers are this year celebrating 75 years of continuous Marist presence in Veranópolis; Colegio San Luis Gonzaga was founded by their predecessors in 1914.

In 1941, the Novitiate was transferred from Porto Alegre to a 50-hectare plot in Veranópolis donated by the Lago family who had

also given two of their sons to the Congregation. The General Conference took place there. It was the first time it was held outside Rome.

From 1984 onwards, important alterations and additions were made to the existing buildings. Today, RECANTO MEDIANEIRA is an imposing Centre which can easily cater to groups numbering up to 200 for retreats or other meetings.

Although the 75 years of Marist presence in Veranópolis is remarkable, I believe that the presence of the Brothers in this city during the General Conference was something even more significant. For all that: "*Laus Deo Virginiue Maria*" (Glory to God and to the Virgin Mary).

Br. Roque Ari Salet
Santa Maria

*"Recanto Medianeira":
the first General Conference
held outside Rome*



OFFICIAL LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

MEMBRES DU CONSEIL GÉNÉRAL (12)

HOWARD	Charles	PRIEUR	Powell	HUIDOBRO	Pedro
ARBUÉS	Benito	DELORME	Alain	GANZARAIN	Marcelino
DUNLEAVY	Richard	VAQUERÍN	Ezequiel	OUELLETTE	Philip
THÉNOZ	Yves	MAGDALENO	Eugenio	GIRARDI	Claudio

PROVINCIAUX ET SUPÉRIEURS DE DISTRICTS (48)

McCRINDLE	Timothy	AFRIQUE DU SUD	RAMAROSON	Emmanuel	MADAGASCAR
SCHELLER	Herbert	ALLEMAGNE	GARCÍA-GARAYO LÓPEZ	Jesús	MADRID
ESPINOSA	Javier	AMÉRIQUE CENTRALE	CASEY	Julian	MELBOURNE
DE MEYER	Joseph	BELGIQUE-HOLLANDE	FLORES	Joaquín	MEXIQUE CENTRAL
ARTEAGA OÑA	Rafael	BÉTICA	ROMERO	J. Guadalupe	MEXIQUE OCCIDENTAL
RAMALHO	Antonio	BRÉSIL NORD	MARTÍNEZ FERNÁNDEZ	Antonio	NORTE
SÁNCHEZ MARTÍN	Jesús	CASTILLE	BLEWMAN	Bernard	NOUVELLE ZÉLANDE
BENSENY BESO	Ramón	CATALOGNE	TICÓ MARQUÉS	José	PEROU
VARONA	Mariano	CHILI	CRUZ, C. G.	Renato	PHILIPPINES
HENG	Joachim	CHINE	TREVISAN	Albino	PORTO ALEGRE
LEK	John	CHINE	DOS SANTOS MARQUES	Abilio	PORTUGAL
QUICENO	Néstor	COLOMBIE	SAMMON	Sean	POUGHKEEPSIE
PALACIOS	Lucinio	CÓRDOBA	BOUCHARD	Gérard Majella	QUÉBEC
MERINO	Teodoro	ÉQUATEUR	FALQUETO	Claudino	RIO DE JANEIRO
SHEA	Richard	ESOPUS	NKURUNZIZA	Pascal	RWANDA
DORRIAN	Lewis	GRANDE BRETAGNE	SEVEGNANI	Tercilio	SANTA CATARINA
QUIMET	Gilles	IBERVILLE	SALET	Roque Ari	SANTA MARIA
HYLAND	John	IRLANDE	BORTOLINI	Dario	SÃO PAULO
GORI	Graziano	ITALIE	PERERA	Clifford	SRI LANKA
RÚA GALINA	José	LEÓN	CHRISTE	Jean-Claude	SUISSE
LATORRE ARIÑO	Marino	LEVANTE	TURTON	Alexis	SYDNEY
JARJOUR	Antoine	LIBAN-SYRIE	CHÁVEZ	Arturo	URUGUAY
MIGUEL MARTÍN	Teófilo	LUJÁN	EGUÍA QUEVEDO	Antonio	VENEZUELA
VIGNAU	Henri	MIDI-CO, N.D. HERMITAGE	RIEU	Antonio	ZAÏRE



DISTRICTS DÉPENDANT DE PROVINCES (9)

BLEWMAN	John	FIDJI
SUAESI	Iulio	SAMOA
MARTÍNEZ CALVO	Inocencio	PARAGUAY
PITIOT	Georges	NOUVELLE CALÉDONIE
LANGLOIS	James	ZIMBABWE
MAYOR GARCÍA	Fernando	BOLIVIE
FECTEAU	Cajetan	MALAWI-ZAMBIE
PIÑA G.	Ricardo	CORÉE
HOWARD	Desmond	PAPUA-NEW GUINEA

INVITÉS (3)

CRESTANI	Alfredo	Directeur du Collège International
WANDEN	Brian	Directeur Centre anglophone de spir.
BLONDEEL	Edouard	Direct. Centre francoph. Spiritualité

JEUNES FRÈRES (6)

LLORENTE	Francisco J.	VENEZUELA
BARCELÓ	Xavier	CATALOGNE
LINARES	José Roberto	AMÉRIQUE CENTRALE
SANASANA	Antonio Armando	M.I.C. NAIROBI
DE OLIVEIRA	Antonio B.	SÃO PAULO
DE LIMA	Gerson J.	BRÉSIL NORD

COMMUNAUTÉ MAISON: Veranópolis (8)

WILDNER	Herbert	Communauté Maison: Supérieur
BET	José	Communauté Maison
CAGLIARI	Aldoino	Communauté Maison
MAROTGKI	Edgar	Communauté Maison
KARLING	Dionisio	Communauté Maison
PIVA	Modesto	Communauté Maison
RIGO	Victorio	Communauté Maison
TOLOTTI	Selvino	Communauté Maison

SERVICES GÉNÉRAUX

TRADUCTEURS (8)

DANTAS MACHADO	José	Traducteur Portugais-Français
McKEE	Joseph	Traducteur Portugais-Anglais
GALIANA	Fabricio	Traducteur Français-Espagnol
VOEGTLE	Leonard	Traducteur Français-Anglais
WILCOTT	Jean-Marc	Traducteur Anglais-Français
MANZANARES ACUÑA	Jesús	Traducteur Anglais-Espagnol
GONON	Claude	Traducteur Espagnol-Français
ALLEN	John	Traducteur Espagnol-Anglais

SECRÉTARIAT, SERVICES DIVERS (11)

FOURNIER	Valmont	Secrétariat-Coordination
CROWE	Desmond	Secrétariat
FAGHERAZZI	João Orestes	Secrétariat
HENZ	Alfredo	Reprographie
MOMBACH	Carlos Oswino	Secrétariat
FERRE	José María	Publications
KIPPER	Hugo	Appareils de traduction
NEIS	Ewaldo	Services divers
MINUSCOLI	Geraldo	Téléphone
COLVERO	Sadi	Cuisine
ZANELLA	Aristides	Secrétariat

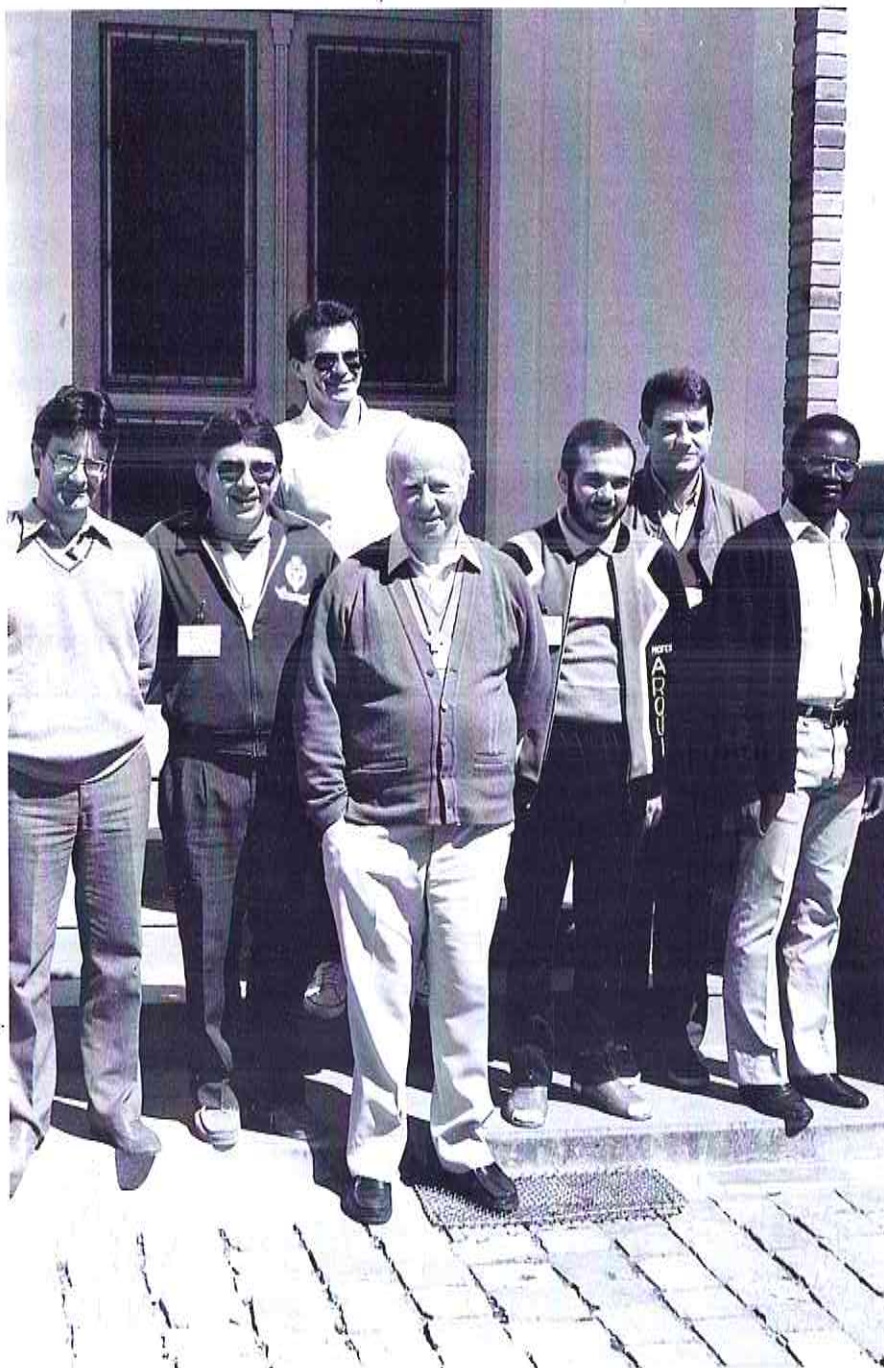
SERVICE PORTO ALEGRE (6)

CORRENT	Arlindo	Président de la Commission d'organisation
MADALOZZO	Avelino	Contacts
HUNKE	Wilhelm	PUCRS Porto Alegre-Contacts
MATUELLA	Ricieri	Économat Porto Alegre
ORTH	Mario	Économat Porto Alegre
SMADEKER	José Renato	Secrétariat-Porto Alegre

SERVICE D'AUMÔNERIE (1) HUOT Bertrand Père Mariste



YOUNG BROTHERS AT THE GENERAL CONFERENCE



The young Brothers with Br. Charles. From left to right: Javier Llorente, Roberto Linares, Gerson de Lima, Antonio de Oliveira, Xavier Barceló and Antonio Sanasana

One of the innovations at this General Conference has been the participation of a small group of young Brothers, invited by Brother Superior General:

Brother *Gerson José de Lima*, 32, from the Province of Brazil North. Professed in 1977, he is a teacher and coordinator in the Maceió community.

Brother *Antonio Benedito Oliveira*, 25, from the Province of São Paulo. Professed in 1986 and presently on the staff of the juniorate in Manaus.

Brother *Xavier Barceló Maset*, 31, of the Province of Catalunya. Professed in 1977 and does formation work for his province.

Brother *José Roberto Linares Contreras*, from El Salvador, 29. Belongs to the Central American Province, was professed in 1981, and is a member of his province's pastoral team.

Brother *Francisco Javier Llorente Guevara*, from Spain, 31. He belongs to the Province of Venezuela, was professed in 1979, and is presently the principal of one of our schools there.

Brother *Antonio Armando Sanasana*, from Mozambique, 33. Professed in 1987 and presently in his third year of post-novitiate formation at the Marist International Centre (M.I.C.) in Nairobi, Kenya.

The material organisation

In a letter of 20 April 1988, Bro. Superior General informed Bro. Albino Trevisan, Provincial of Porto Alegre, that the General Council had chosen Veranópolis as the site of the next General Conference. The Provincial Council agreed to host the gathering, and remote preparations began at once.

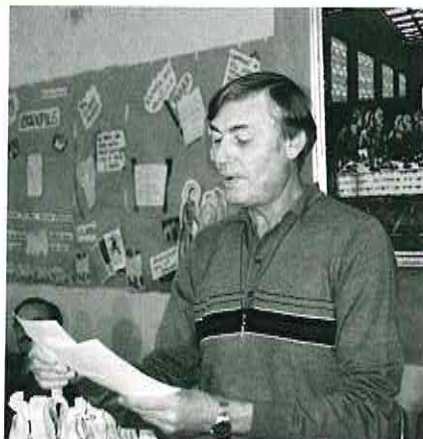
Since it was to be the first General Conference held outside Rome, it obviously presented us with a heavy responsibility. At the same time, we saw it as an honour for the province, and one which any province would gladly welcome.

*"An honour
which any Province
would gladly welcome"*

At a meeting of the Provincial Council on 17 May, a special committee of six brothers was appointed to see to the material organization of the Conference. This committee was made up of Bros. Arlindo Corrent (President), Alfredo Henz, Wilhelm Hunke, Rizzieri Mattuela, José Renato Schmaedecke and José Evaldo Neis as administrator of the "Recanto Medianeira", the Marist retreat and conference centre in Veranópolis. The latter was later replaced by Bro. Herbert Wildner who took over the administration of the house in 1989.

The house had undergone major alterations, including several new wings completed in 1986. It is spacious, peaceful and located in a tranquil setting, making it an ideal place for such an assembly.

One of our major concerns was the question of simultaneous translation. In collaboration with Bro. Norberto Rauch, Rector of the Pontifical



*Br. Arlindo Corrent,
chairman of the commission*

University of Rio Grande do Sul, we decided to make use of the human and technical resources of the university's electronics laboratory to install the necessary equipment. Its excellent functioning is a tribute to the expertise of the engineers involved.

Another important project was the setting up of a micro-computer system which would be compatible with the programmes already in use at the Secretariate of the General

Administration in Rome. The university's Data Processing Center conducted a study which showed that the XPC model, manufactured in Brazil and IBM-compatible, could accommodate the programs used by the General Secretariate. Five computers and two printers were made available to the Conference, all of which contributed greatly to the smooth running of the program. Two Xerox 1035AM machines were rented, as well as four electronic typewriters, one of which was linked to a word processor.

To improve exterior communications, three new telephone lines were added to the existing now, for the duration of the Conference.

Back in January, while these modifications were being carried out, information was sent to the Provincials and District Superiors throughout the Marist world, keeping them informed of the preparations for the General Conference and giving them some orientation for their travel to Brazil and to Veranópolis.

Fr. Bertrand Huot, a Marist Father, was invited to act as our chaplain



Brother Valmont Fournier, Secretariat Co-ordinator



Brother Leonard Voegtle, translation and computer expert



Brother Alfredo Henz; thousands of photocopies

during the Conference, and he very kindly put himself at our disposal. Born in Canada and having studied in the United States, and now superior of the Marist Fathers community in São Paulo, his fluency in French, English and Portuguese enabled him to celebrate the Eucharist in several languages and thus contribute much to the Conference. The example of his life and his active participation in all our activities won him a place in all our hearts.

Another concern was the health of the brothers. A doctor came from the university hospital once a week

to see those who might require medical attention or who might wish to consult him, and sister Carla, of the Daughters of Divine Love, a nursing sister at the university hospital, looked after the dispensary and the infirmary throughout the Conference.

A team of brothers took care of the other services, such as the supervision of the kitchen and dining room, the receptionist's desk, the secretariate, communications, etc. All of this made the Conference run much more smoothly and pleasantly.

On his arrival in Porto Alegre, each brother was met and welcomed at the airport by a brother from this province, despite the fact that some flights were unavoidably delayed.

All the preparations and the work done throughout the Conference have been a pleasure for all of us here. We ask your understanding for anything we may have failed to do. Finally, we wish to thank all of you for your presence here among us and for your witness of true Marist brotherhood.

Bro. Arlindo Corrent
on behalf of the local committee



Brother Carlos Mombach, an efficient typist

THE CENTRAL COMMISSION

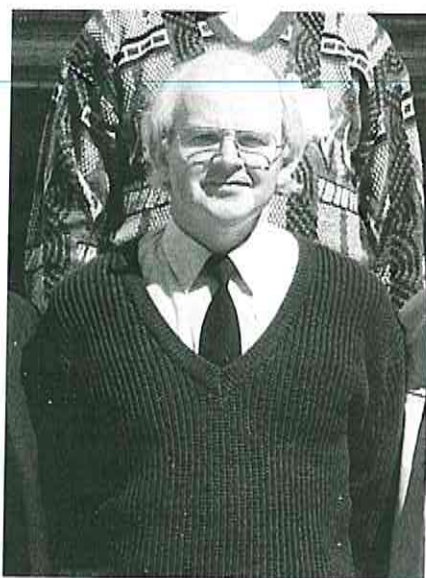


Preparation for the General Conference had been going on for two years and the task of identifying its objectives and making the arrangements had been in the hands of Br. Charles, Br. Benito, Br. Claudio, Br. Pedro, and Br. Richard.

For the duration of the conference these brothers were joined by: Br. Yves Thénoz, Br. Henri Vignau, Br. Jesús Sánchez, Br. Julian Casey, Br. Albino Trevisan, Br. Arturo Chávez and Br. Arlindo Corrent.

Each member of the Commission assumed some responsibility for one or more of the following areas:

General Organization and Liaison with other Groups, Processes of the Conference, Evaluation, Communication, House Services, Secretariat and Translation Services, Social Activities, Liturgy.



*Brother Julian Casey,
Provincial of Melbourne*

The Commission tried to ensure that the objectives of the Conference were being achieved in an effective way; at the same time it was important to do everything possible to make the Conference an experience of the Marist Family spirit, of mutual encouragement and support in our mission, and of the charism of Champagnat alive and present among us.

To this end, the Commission would meet each evening in order to receive reports from the various working committees, to review the day, to identify any problems, to attend to some details and to anticipate the needs of the Brothers. All this was achieved through a magnificent spirit of collaboration, cooperation and effective co-ordination.

Br. Julian Casey. Melbourne

THE "ANTENNA" GROUP

The "antenna" group, or commission, was set up by the General Council to assist the Conference's Central Commission. Its purpose was to gather suggestions and proposals from the Brothers and from the various language groups and working and reflection groups during the General Conference.

It also served as a link to the Central Commission, keeping up-to-date with the needs of the Brothers material needs, organization, information, dialogue: whatever would facilitate the organization and smooth running of the Conference, including recreation, rest, liturgy, participation, etc. It received feedback and passed it on to the Central Commission.

The members of the commission were Brothers:

Pedro Huidobro, C. G., Coordinator, Ramón Benseny (Catalunya), Renato Cruz (Philippines), Javier Espinosa (Central America), Claudino Falqueto (Rio de Janeiro), Sean Sammon (Poughkeepsie).

The commission met two or three times a week during the Conference,

and was an efficient means of consultation for the Brothers, as well as a way for them to propose initiatives and ideas to the Central Commission.

We believe we accomplished the work of transmitting their opinions

and thus served as a means of communication for the Brothers. We thank them for their cooperation. This is what we aimed to do and we hope we fulfilled that role.

Br. Ramón Benseny. Catalunya



*The "Antenna" Commission. From left to right:
Brothers Ramón Benseny, Pedro Huidobro, Renato Cruz,
Claudino Falqueto, Sean Sammon and Javier Espinosa*

THE MAIN THEME:

***THE MARIST BROTHER AND HIS MISSION
FOR THE FUTURE***



THE CONFERENCE RHYTHM



Brother Jesús Sánchez arriving at Veranópolis

Some Brothers who were not at the General Conference may be asking rather skeptically, "Just what did you do there?" And others may be saying, "Another meeting; so what?"

Well, I don't want to exaggerate either the reality or the results of the Conference. I will simply say that for those of us who were lucky enough to be in Veranópolis, it was a great grace from the Lord, and on that ground, we hope that its results will affect every Brother in the Congregation.

All I want to do here is to tell you what kind of work we did during those three weeks, and to describe something of the climate of reflection, prayer, discernment, assimilation and conversion which prevailed among the group.

There can be no doubt that the General Council prepared the Conference in depth: after several consultations in the provinces, they drew up a list of themes centered around the Marist Brothers' mission for the future. The theme of MISSION was very much the core and the unfolding of the work of each and every day, as we worked toward isolating the key points of Marist apostolic spirituality.

Each theme was clearly presented, and developed through a variety of dynamics, but all were prayed and reflected on individually, in groups, and in general assembly. In every case, the connection with our main theme of Mission was stressed.

We had a full timetable, from 6:30 a.m. until 9:00 p.m. Our Eucharist each evening provided an opportunity to interiorize and celebrate what we had lived that day. It was always well prepared, with extremely significant gestures and symbols, springing from the richness of our diverse cultural backgrounds.

We lived these three weeks as a Marist community. The sincere and constant sharing of our experiences with different aspects of Mission was also very enriching.

We made great efforts to overcome the language barrier, with the help of our efficient translators, since we really wanted to take advantage of this opportunity to meet all the other Provincials and District Superiors and profit by all we had to offer one another.

Our discussion of the various themes was always centered around comparison with the gospel message, the sense of Church, the presence of our Marist charism, attention to the signs of the times, and awareness of our various local realities.

Although the themes were presented on a general level, their application to concrete situations always followed a process of personal reflection, discussion in language groups and sometimes regional groups, and then general sharing in the assembly.

And, I repeat, all of this took place in a climate of openness to the Spirit, listening to the Word, and confident prayer to the Lord through the intercession of Mary and Marcellin.



"A climate of reflection, prayer and discernment"

We all recognized that on the personal level the Conference offered us a special opportunity for conversion. As Provincials and District Superiors, will we be able to communicate in all its vitality what we experienced here? Will we be capable of increasing Marist apostolic spirit in our provinces and districts... of making adjustments in our works and actions and improving their apostolic quality? That is the challenge all of us are facing now.

Bro. Jesús Sánchez, Province of Castilla

Some aspects of APOSTOLIC SPIRITUALITY

(Extracts from the talk of Br. Charles Howard)



Brother Charles during his stimulating conference

Consecration

Throughout the history of the Chosen People, and of the Church, there have been special calls to “witness”, people given special gifts (charisms) for the service of the whole people. God has invited, consecrated, and sent men and women to be his witnesses, witnesses by what they *are* and by what they *do*, to this call to communion with Himself.

This consecration and covenant are described powerfully in the first articles of the Chapter on Consecration.

In the words that we use in these articles: consecration, covenant, call, setting apart... we are using biblical

language. In our ordinary everyday reflection and prayer we may use different words but the meaning is clear —we are speaking of being set apart for a *special mission*— to help bring about the communion between God and mankind. It seems to me to be important to stress this because some Brothers are still not at ease with the idea of seeming to be seen to be “better” than lay people. They would probably be at ease with the following definition of a religious: “A religious is a person, a Christian sinner, called and loved by God, for a mission of service to all.”

Consecrated and sent on Mission

Jesus has a powerful sense of being *sent on mission*. This is how he thinks of Himself, how He expresses His identity, His awareness of who He is. Being *Son* and being *sent* go together.

And then comes the moment when Jesus says: "As the Father has sent me, so also I am sending you". (Jn 20,21) We, too, are consecrated and sent on mission to give life. We are sent on mission by God, by Christ, by the Church, by the Institute. (Const. 78-80) The Risen Lord is present and active in our lives by the power of His Spirit. It is Christ who sends, it is He who ministers. He shares His creative love with those who are open to His word and power, who give themselves to Him and His mission.



*"It is the Lord who has called us apart
for a special mission"*

Jesus, Source and Model

We are consecrated for mission, or to use the words of Paul VI, "we are consecrated to the apostolate", not just in the sense of being available for the service of others but, at a deeper level, because our lives are united with the life and the mission of Jesus, our lives are given freely to God, surrendered to Him, to be used by Him to share in the mission of Jesus. The fact of being consecrated by God means that we are endowed with the capacity to follow Christ radically and to share in His mission. We are called to this. In union with Christ, we are empowered to do this.

*"We give our lives to follow
Jesus but in many communities
we never talk about Him together"*

Obviously, if we take Jesus as model then an important part of our spirituality will be reflection on the Gospels, not only as individuals but also as a community. It will be a marvellous day when we, the Marist Brothers, are able to say that the great majority of our communities have regular sessions of sharing and prayer together on the Gospels and the Constitutions. There would be many groups of Christians who would be astonished to discover that we do NOT share in this way in many communities. We give our lives to follow Jesus but in many communities we never talk about Him together.

The apostolic work of a Brother enters into the very fabric of his life in Jesus, his cooperation in the mission of Jesus, his openness to the action of the Spirit in his life. It is a powerful source of grace for him, a most important means of conversion and sanctification, of human and spiritual growth, of greater union with God.

The article on "Mary and the Apostolate" in our Constitutions is a very rich one —the sharing in Mary's spiritual motherhood, Mary leading us to Jesus, her mission of bringing God to mankind, the awakening of faith at Cana, the standing at the foot of the Cross. Here we have a whole treasure to be more fully explored— in the life of the Founder, in our traditions, and in the lives of our Brothers today.

*"Not all the lessons given, or the
teams coached, or the buildings
constructed by the Marist Brothers
have been done for the kingdom of God!"*



Listening intently to the Superior General's words



General Conference

Activity as Mission

Our work is mission when it corresponds with the will of the Father. Not all the lesson given, or the teams coached, or the buildings constructed by the Marist Brothers have been done for the Kingdom of God! We all know that our work can be heavily tainted by self-seeking, desire for diversion and other motivations. *Mission is only mission when it is rooted in Christ*, and therefore in the will of the Father.

An "Apostolic" Obedience

Our obedience is an "apostolic" obedience, a "mission" obedience rather than a "permission" obedience. It is an obedience which seeks to make decisions and choices based on a sense of mission, based on our love of God and of others. Being a "mission" obedience it is sensitive to the Lord's calls, to the signs of the times, to the situation of young people and their needs.

Apostolic availability must obviously be an important feature of "apostolic" obedience. All of us have been encouraged and sometimes inspired by examples of this, men who have been quite heroic in accepting very difficult assignments and responsibilities, Brothers that have performed difficult tasks with wonderful generosity.

By contrast it seems to me that one of the most destructive forces to a sense of mission, both for the individual and for the group is a lack of apostolic availability. What are some of the root causes of this —insecurity, selfishness, the absence of a sense of being loved by God, anger with God, a sense of failure in life...?

Special Calls

Discerning hearts will be sensitive to (obedient to) special calls coming from the Church, the needs of our times, our traditions. Some of these are crystal clear in our present age. One such call that comes to us Marist Brothers from all three of the sources mentioned above is the *preferential option for the poor*. This is a clear call of the Holy Spirit and our responsibilities in this are indicated very fully in article 34. It is a call that enters deeply into our apostolic commitments and into the witness of our style of living. Being a call of the Holy Spirit it is a grace offered to us, which probably touches the renewal of our mission profoundly.

"One of the most destructive forces to a sense of mission is a lack of apostolic availability"

Two Ways of Loving

In Jesus, prayer and mission were integrated into one movement of love and it is this that we strive for. Both *our prayer* and *our apostolate* are two inter-related ways of growing in love and each needs the other. Both are inspired by the Spirit and both can bring us to a very special encounter with God. Obviously apostolic activities are not explicit prayer nor does apostolic activity replace prayer. But if our apostolate is truly animated by love of God, if in our work for others our hearts are raised to God, then in this sense we can join with St. John Bosco who said, *"Work is prayer"*.



"The preferential option for the poor is a call of the Holy Spirit profoundly influencing the renewal of our mission"

Personal Conversion

An important part in our own insertion into the Paschal Mystery of Jesus, into the mystery of communion-sacrifice, death producing life and love, is our own conversion, our cooperation with the Holy Spirit in the work of liberation, in the work of dying to our sins, our prejudices, our blockages, our fixed ideas.

These conversions can take all manner of forms —being prepared to accept oneself more fully, dying to previously held convictions, ridding ourselves of certain prejudices, opening ourselves more fully to collaboration with others, taking our prayer life more seriously, reconciliation with a confrere, but when we reflect on the experience it is clear that God is present in these experiences and that we are being called forth to greater richness in our lives, in our mission. And this is of vital importance for those who have been sent. There would be something profoundly illogical if those who are endeavouring to spread the Good News, who are encouraging people to be more open to the Spirit, were themselves reluctant to struggle to cooperate with the Holy Spirit in their own lives.

Br. Charles Howard, S. G.

"We were founded for the Christian Education of the young"

(Extracts from the talk of Br. Pedro Huidobro, C. G.)

Concern for the Christian education of youth was one of Fr. Champagnat's very definite preoccupations. It is a key element for understanding his mission. It affected his whole life and shines very clearly through his sensitivities and his way of acting (*C 3, 81; L 59, 159; Vie 1856, 1, p. 106*).

Having inherited his charism, and finding ourselves face to face with the challenges of the future, both as individuals and as institutions (Institute, provinces, communities):

- We are deepening our understanding of the meaning of that original experience. We are trying to discover its specific features: those which transcend time and place, and which can be applied in circumstances different from those of the original experience.
- We are trying to adapt what is timeless and permanent in those specific features to our own time, in order to shed light on the way we live today (our spirituality and our mission) and on the way we act (our options as Institute, provinces and communities) (*Cf. C 3, 165*).

Fidelity requires this reflection of us, even as it is at the same time conditioned by it (*C. 168*).



Brother Pedro during his conference



*"A specific preoccupation flowing
from Father Champagnat's own experience"*

EVOLUTION FROM A STABLE SCHOOL SITUATION TOWARD A TYPE OF EDUCATION WHICH CALLS FOR BEGINNING EVERYTHING ALL OVER AGAIN

In terms of Christian education, the evolution of the Congregation began with a type of rural schools whose program and clientele were clearly defined for that time in history (*L 159*).

This journey through many places and ages called for various modifications; most of which reflected the sociological evolution of various countries and the changing needs of the Church. While certain of these characteristics were proper to specific regions, there was still a fundamental homogeneity among nearly all of them.

In the recent decades, our function as Christian educators has undergone the same re-evaluation as education itself.

—Re-evaluation of the school in general, as a means of education and also as a means of Christian education:

- Starting from various philosophical, pedagogical, social and pastoral perspectives, which have discussed not only the immediate objectives and methods of education but also its ultimate objectives.

- In relation to the influence of other educational structures, both formal and informal, which are different from the school but which still define themselves as means of education.

—Re-evaluation of Marist education today.

- Legal/organisational structures: exterior dependency and interior limitations, ownership of scholastic centers, links with public organisations, the presence and functions of laypersons, decreasing number of Brothers and their role.
- Our clientele: decreasing educational presence in rural and poor areas. Our presence, in some areas, predominantly among the well-off and rich.
- The specific educational effort: the transmission of values in a society in which the influences of agents of education (family, school, church) have substantially modified their role.
- Apostolic effort and evangelisation: the transmission of gospel and human values based on a Christian view of the world and society; religious education in school, apostolic movements and various Christian-growth groups; the integration of all these school-based evangelizing activities into the broader Church.
- Other educational structures, seen as complementary and, on certain occasions, as alternatives: informal educational structures for young people in or out of school, sociological/educational teams, a presence in the media, a presence among interdisciplinary research groups.



"Our Institute works to evangelise people, especially by educating the young" (C. 80)



"Every time I see a child I long to teach him his catechism" (C. 2)

- The challenges represented by groups who are difficult to reach through formal education: drug addicts, street children, handicapped of all sorts, orphans, refugees, and every sort of person left on the fringes of society.

CHALLENGES TO OUR WORK AS CHRISTIAN EDUCATORS

- Resurgence of enthusiasm and zeal for work in the field of evangelisation.
- Exact understanding of the meaning of Christian education today. No cutting back. No simplification. With sensitivity and openness to the concrete circumstances of each place. This understanding ought to inspire all our activity.
- Analysis of situations which play the most influential roles today in the education of young people and adolescents in the area of acquiring values, and special attention to the interrelatedness of all those values.
- Understanding our evangelising task as a work of the Church, its complementarity with and through other ecclesial activity, and the setting up of structures for planning and coordination which will make this understanding viable. This means opening or closing works as well as reorienting them.
- This analysis and understanding should guide us in "recentering" our existing works and in our "new options".

Br. Pedro Huidobro, C. G.

“WE GIVE PRIDE OF PLACE TO CATECHESIS”

EVANGELISATION is the great common denominator which one ought to be able to apply to all of our educational work, in all its forms. Our mission as educators of young people and adolescents should always be a “service of evangelisation [aimed at] the formation of true disciples of Jesus Christ” (C 86). Nevertheless, within the broad sweep of this immense task, which takes in very diverse concrete activities, our Constitutions explicitly point out one preference: CATECHESIS (C 80, 86).

In a reflection aimed at discerning the orientation of our mission for the immediate future, we cannot bypass reflection on that preference, which is just about the only one specified in our Constitutions, when they speak of our fields of apostolate.

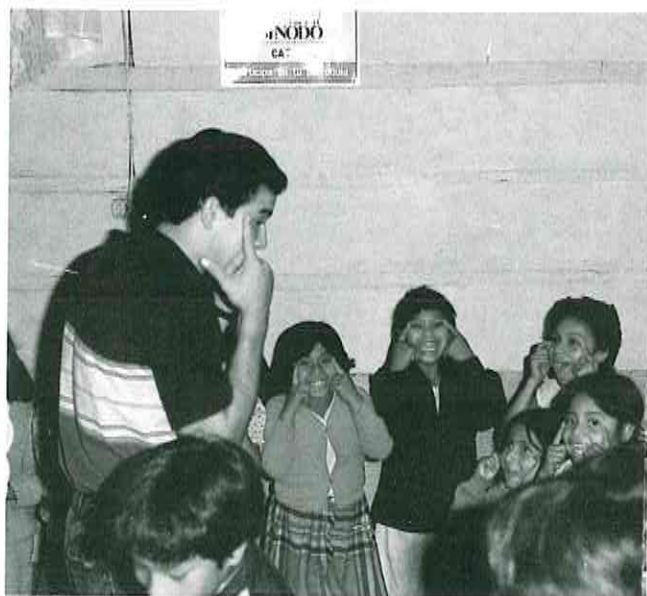
Without attempting to define rigorously and formally what is meant by catechesis (even *Catechesi Tradendae*, n. 18, did not attempt to do so), it is important to reflect on certain essential points in order to understand them more fully and interpret them better for the future of our Institute:

- The specific finality of catechesis and its necessity, in the broad sense, for growth in faith.
- Systematic catechesis.
- The integration of catechesis with other evangelising tasks (catechesis and the first proclamation of the gospel, catechesis and life-experience, catechesis and sacraments, catechesis and ecclesial community).
- What is characteristic of a “Marist” catechesis.

Br. Pedro Huidobro, C. G.



*Brother Joseph de Meyer of Belgium
offers up an apple as a symbol
of our Marist catechetical tradition*



*A young Brother in Central America teaching catechism
in a poor section of Guatemala City*

Many religious institutes for men and women came into being for the purpose of giving Christian education to children and young people, especially the most abandoned. Throughout history, men and women religious have been deeply committed to the Church's catechetical activity, doing particularly apposite and effective work. At a time when it is desired that the links between religious and pastors should be accentuated and consequently the active presence of religious communities and their members in the pastoral projects of the local Churches, I wholeheartedly exhort you whose religious consecration should make you even more readily available for the Church's service to prepare as well as possible for the task of catechesis according to the differing vocations of your institutes and the missions entrusted to you, and to carry this concern everywhere. Let the communities dedicate as much as possible of what ability and means they have to the specific work of catechesis.

(Catechesi tradendae, n. 65)

"WE ARE SENT MORE ESPECIALLY TO THE POOR"

(Extracts from the talk of Br. Marcelino Ganzarain, C. G.)



Brother Marcelino Ganzarain, C. G.

To reveal the face of God who is Love and make Jesus Christ present is a mission that is not restricted exclusively to education, much less to classroom education. At every moment and in every place we should, through our consecration, be a "call" in the spirit of the Beatitudes. There are some that we'll call "born recipients" of our evangelizing work: children and youth. For them, —to educate them in Christianity— we were founded.

Among the young, there is a preference which is reiterated in our texts: *"particularly those most neglected"*.

We are not attempting today to judge our past. It is rather a matter of looking at the present situation with simplicity and humility. It's a matter of allowing ourselves to be illumined by the thinking of the Church and the teaching of the Congregation; of putting ourselves in a position to give an adequate response regarding what God may be asking of us today.

The option for the poor and the real commitment which it implies has an universal character; it is not an option exclusive *to* and *for* the Church in Latin America.

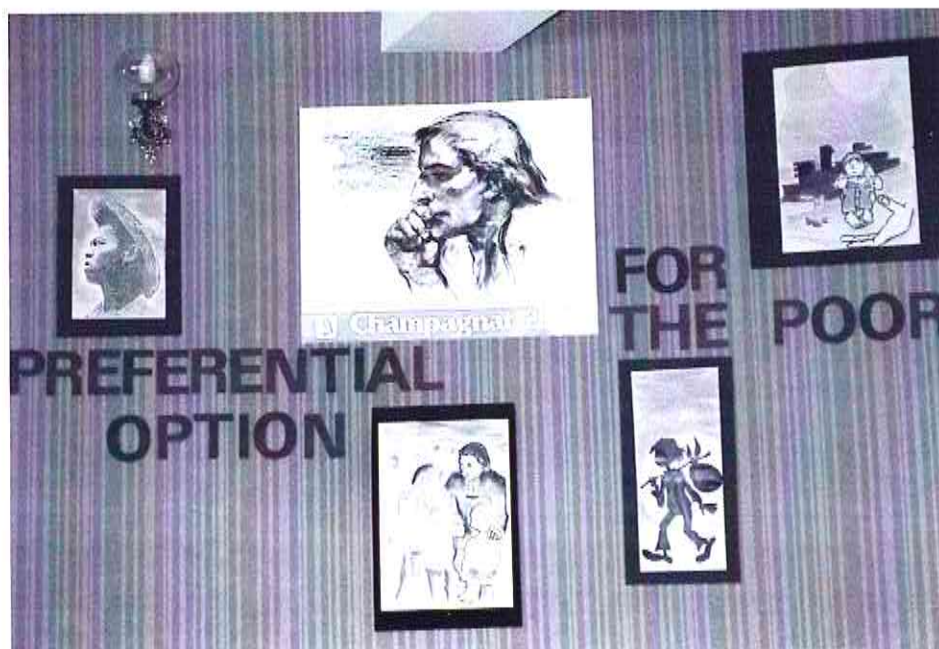
Out of an authentic commitment to the GOSPEL, the option for the poor is, then, a Christian imperative, a Gospel demand. Because (says the Pope) it was that for Christ. And Christ lives today in the members of his Body: the Church, Christians.

In this sense, I believe I can say —and pardon the play on words— that the option for the poor IS NO OPTIONAL. It is not a suggestion... it is a real demand.

It must be made everywhere, in every period of history, by every Christian, independent of his condition, his station in life, his work.

"For these same reasons, Catholic schools, in addition to enabling intellectual development, must obey the Gospel

"The option for the poor is not a suggestion, is a Gospel demand"



mandate to serve all their students and not just the brightest and most promising. In the spirit of the Gospel and its option for the poor, CATHOLIC SCHOOLS will direct their attention in a special way towards the most needy" (John Paul II to Catholic educators in Terranova, 12 September 1984).

"In effect, the educational and social actions of the Institutes, following their own charism as recognized by the Church and in close cooperation with the laity, always remains up to date, especially if the religious direct their work towards the poor, the marginalized, immigrants, refugees, etc. Their action in this sense is more than ever A PREREQUISITE OF EVANGELIZATION, and is a visible manifestation of the love of God for mankind" (John Paul II to the Major Superiors of Europe, 17 November 1983).

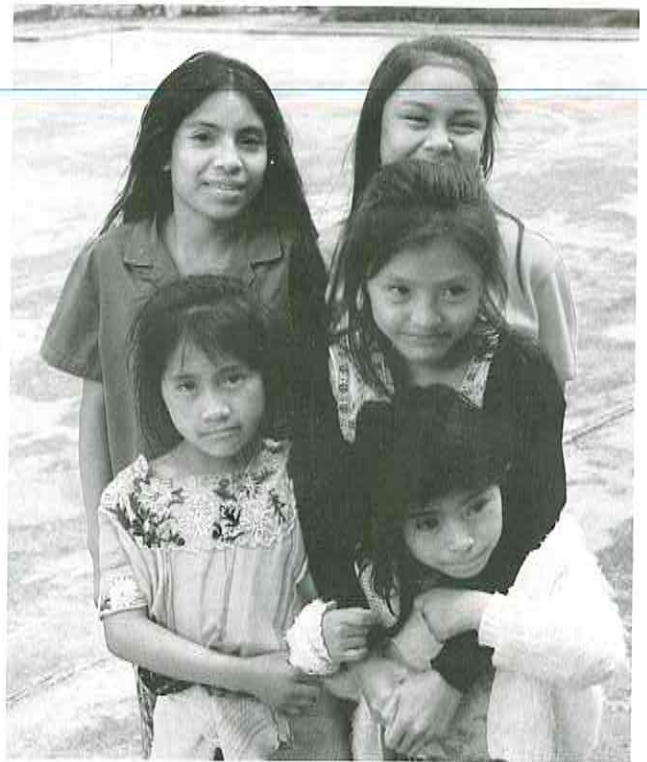
I believe that there has been arising in the Church an ever clearer and stronger realization that what we are speaking of is not only a matter of evangelizing the poor nor of allowing ourselves to be evangelized by them, but of evangelizing everyone, rich and poor, from the viewpoint of the poor.

"The *preferential option for the poor* implies, in its fullest sense, what is called a *change of social location*. It is a matter of taking on, in one's reading and interpretation of reality, a new angle or point of departure. To change one's social location can imply, for the church and for the religious, a serious effort to see the world, society, the church itself and all of humanity *from the viewpoint of the poor*, from their urgent needs and values and calls, their possible valid contribution to their own development and from the viewpoint of their longed-for building up of a just society (Fr. Marcello de Azevedo).

"In the schools that charge tuition, especially, the danger may arise of devaluing our convictions with regard to poverty and mortification, when we see the life of luxury, comfort, and pleasure that the students take pride in. For this reason, even though for very valid reasons these schools have increased in number, we must never distance ourselves from poor children" (Br. Leonida: *Our Marist Vocation*, Dec. 8, 1952).

"We have close relations with families who deprive themselves of nothing and, unfortunately, sometimes instead of our influencing them, they influence us. Instead of our passing on to them the spirit which should animate us —the Gospel— we receive from them the spirit of the world" (Br. Leonida: *Fidelity to the Virtue and the Vow of Poverty*, May 7, 1955).

In 1932 a General Chapter asked itself if the Institute had sufficiently preserved the spirit of Father Champagnat regarding the poor, and their response was in the affirmative.



"As I see it, there has not yet been the definite and clear response that would be hoped for"

In 1949 Brother Leonida challenged the Institute.

Almost 20 years later, Brother Basilio said, in his capacity of Superior General, that Father Champagnat was seriously calling our attention to this matter.

Brother Charles, the present Superior General, has never ceased to express his conviction that this is one of the ways by which the Spirit is renewing religious life and, as a result, our Institute.

Many calls...

Evidently, they have met with a response...

But as I see it, there has not yet been the definite and clear response that would be hoped for.

In twenty years time, will we be remembered as a Conference that came to an awareness of an important aspect of our charism, and nothing else? Or will we be remembered in another way —for the concrete steps which were taken or strengthened by this Conference?

I pray God that it be for the latter.

Br. Marcelino Gonzarain, C. G.

GROUP REPORT



Brother Inocencio, District Superior of Paraguay

Our personal reflection led to a valuable sharing in the groups, full of rich memories, of fear mixed with sadness, a firm resolve to reform and, also, much hope and confidence in the future.

Having recently arrived from the "experiences" in Latin America, what we lived in those countries weighed heavily on our consciences as we began the group work. Even though we realized we are doing good things to address the problem in our own provinces, it was difficult to erase the memories of those barrios in Bogota, of the street children in Quito, and of the "youth villages" in Lima.

Who could overlook Article 80 of the Constitutions and then say he has been reflecting on the Marist Brother's mission for the future?

"SEEING"

Our first meeting, in groups "B", considered the "seeing" stage, which was afterwards nuanced and amplified in groups "A". How do I view my Province today, in regard to preferential attention to the most neglected? —accomplishments, successes, difficulties, attitudes, plans...

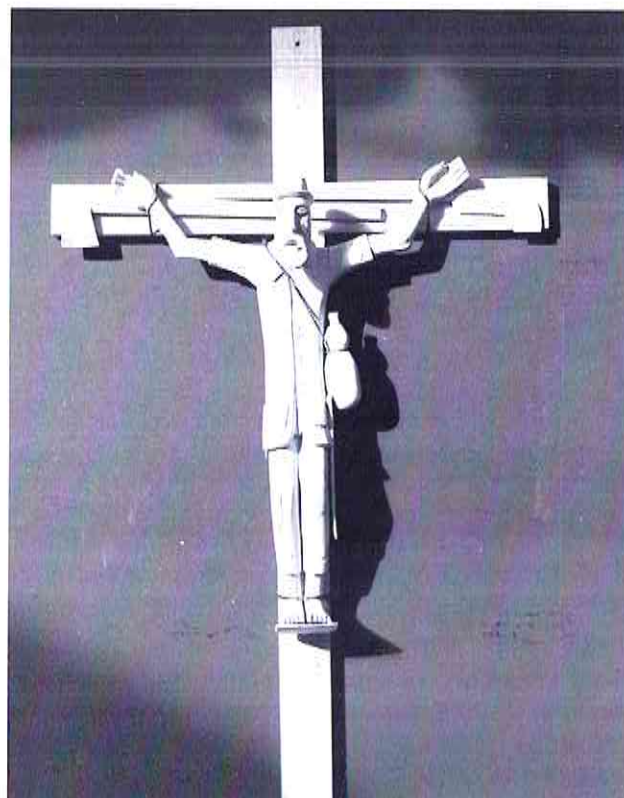
*The Institute shows a loving,
lovely and promising vitality*

It was wonderfully refreshing to see what is being done throughout the Congregation, province by province. It was impressive how far we have come in recent years. The gathering of information, the number of projects, and the apostolic efforts undertaken by the Brothers throughout

the world is simply amazing. Taken together, put in order and classified, they would be the envy of international organizations. We would be satisfied with just being able to lift the spirits of the pessimists. How true it is that the Institute, via the Provinces, shows a loving, lovely and promising vitality. A Magnificat is doubtless our heart's best response to the Holy Spirit's continuing work through the charism of Champagnat.

This topic had strong emotional and spiritual impact and we had to recognize the consequences. We cannot be deaf to the cry of the most neglected (C2, C80), or close our eyes to the material and spiritual poverty of youth (C2, C80, C81, C83).

*The "cry of the poor"
challenges our lives*



"JUDGING"

On looking at this "preferential option" in the light of the Gospel, of Champagnat, and of the texts we read, we Provincials and Superiors, found that the "cry of the poor" in Latin America was causing us to lower our defenses and question our lives, our communities, and other certainties.

What came out of the “seeing” left us feeling small and inadequate. Reflection on it led us to an individual and corporate “*mea culpa*” for those brothers and sisters of ours whom we have not managed to take fully into our lives, despite the Rules and Constitutions’ insistence. Now, and after this Conference, it will be unforgiveable for us to continue committing the same mistakes as in the past. Our MISSION as educators of youth demands that we be “bold” in our ways of incarnating and living the command, “Go to young people...”

The groups were unanimous in affirming that without contact, without insertion among and with the poor, it is impossible for “the poor to evangelize us” (C34).

When we were asked to respond to expressions like “the most neglected”, we agreed that they are the people we saw on our visits, not necessarily the students in the Marist schools of our cities and our Provinces.

And if “love of the poor” means (C33, C34) “solidarity” (C94, C32, C2) and “preference for them” (C33, C34, C167...), then it is indisputable—and in the groups there was no doubt about this—that these expressions cannot remain empty of meaning. Therefore, we attempted to arrive at a personal conversion—less philosophising and high-sounding words and much more concrete experience. There is an overabundance of pretty words and a lack of committed witness in the struggle to help our wandering young people.

*To give a generous YES
to those who are left out*



“ACTING”, with an eye to the future

The richness of the “judging” stage had a profound effect on the atmosphere of the General Assembly the following morning. Many challenging words were spoken. The Brothers returned to their groups and for an hour and a half attempted to come up with valid responses which would allow us to plan for the immediate future.

How do we make operative our “*preferential attention to the most needy*”?

The importance of the moment was not lost on anyone. The saring of plans and projects, at times nervously hinted at, spoke of good will and the decision to begin the journey. We must return to the poor and give them priority in our mission of evangelization. This is all that can be hoped for. Each Province should give its generous “yes” to those who are left out.



We Provincials and Superiors see ourselves as key players in the revitalization of the charism of the Institute. We feel our mission is to motivate, stimulate and help our Brothers to go to the poor so as to be evangelized by them. We ourselves are committed to this.

Do we want more pronouncements and nice circulars from the General Council? No. After Chosica and Cali, we have no need of more documents. On the contrary, we need courage and strength so as not to weaken in our resolve to return to the authenticity of our founding charism.

Brother Inocencio Martínez
Paraguay

REFLECTIONS OF SOME BROTHERS

"In one way or another, our charism is pushing us towards a historic redeployment of our works and our manpower. That will come about, not just because of decisions made by the Provincial Chapter or Council, but because our Brothers' lives and hearts, following in the footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat, have drawn closer to Jesus Christ, who was himself so close to the poor."

"Prophetic attention to the most neglected demands much simplicity, humility and confidence in God, at the institutional and community level. Those responsible for our institutions cannot afford to overlook this during their imperative task of discernment: like us, they are subject to the temptations of the 'old man': settling in, becoming attached to the past. Let's not forget that we will never enjoy real security; that is found only in God... remember Fr. Champagnat."

"Father Campagnat certainly does not condemn the work we have done until now, but he asks us the incisive question: 'Are you really where you ought to be?'"

"Our main reason for existing is the coming of the Kingdom. The Lord gives us a sign of that coming: 'the poor are evangelised'. There's a good criterion for a provincial evaluation!"

"We are living in a time of 'second foundation'. This is a grace which has come to us through the mediation of our Superior General. Let us develop this grace by contemplating the actions of Marcellin Champagnat on behalf of the poor, at the time of our first foundation."



"The poor evangelise us. I have received a great deal from them. One family afflicted by misery and sickness taught me how to accept death."

Other poor persons have taught me how to live in "God's today", without worrying about tomorrow, and being satisfied with very little.

Many showed me how to pray, how to carry the cross, how to understand the human person and solidarity."

"When I hear people say, 'the poor evangelise us', I feel uneasy: I spent two years among the poor and I never felt evangelised. But now, during these days, I am coming more and more to understand why we must refound the Institute."



"I am convinced of the fundamental importance of the experience of the Lord's love and of his presence, for conversion of heart to a preferential love for the poor: this is the road Marcellin Champagnat followed. Like him, we have everything to share with them, especially the experience of God."

"It is really true that the poor evangelise us. When we serve them, our heart becomes more sensitive to the Lord, to the gospel, to every human person, to fidelity. We no longer have to wonder how to pray, nor how to live our life: everything becomes simple."



PROVINCIAL PASTORAL PLANNING: APOSTOLIC PRIORITIES

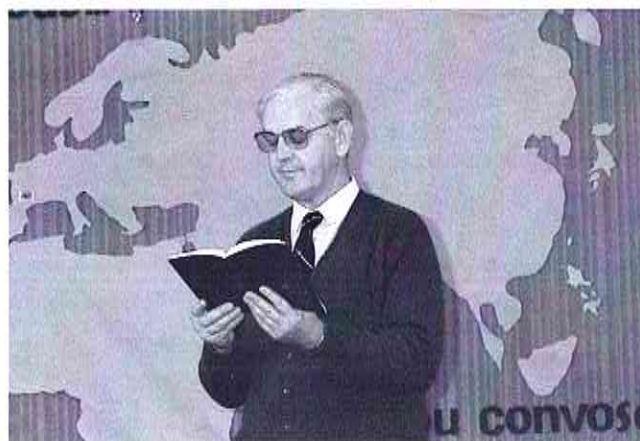
The task of reflecting on this area of the Conference theme was facilitated by Brother Richard Dunleavy. It consisted of two stages:

1. There were a number of personal and group tasks assigned for reflection:
 - The qualities of a Marist Apostle Leader according to our Constitutions.
 - Listening to the recent practical experience of full-scale Province discernment and planning in two Provinces:

Rio de Janeiro. Br. Claudino Falqueto described the two-year process used by his Province to lead the Brothers to discern their apostolic priorities in the light of the new needs of their poor youth, the reduced number of Brothers, the need for concrete structures enabling their lay collaborators to take more responsibility for the direction of their colleges, etc.

Sydney Province. Br. Alexis Turton explained their Provincial Pastoral Planning experience involving the whole Province in community, regional and Provincial assemblies throughout a three year period. The Pastoral Plan arrived at gives the Province pastoral and apostolic principles and directions to guide individual Brothers, communities, apostolates and the Province as a whole in the responses called for in the future.

- Following the above, each Brother was asked to do a Fictional Case Study on a Province of teaching Brothers in North India who had been asked to plan for new apostolic needs and priorities as part of a Congregation-wide Vision-Mission Plan called "Tomorrow 2000". This personal task was followed by the pooling of suggestions in the various language groups.



*Brother Richard Dunleavy
leading this stage of the Conference*

2. Following the prayerful study of Marist Apostolic Spirituality led by Br. Charles, each of the Superiors was given a morning in which he was asked to dialogue with Blessed Marcellin about his own Province, and the challenge posed to it by the strong call from Vatican II, the Congregation and the General Conference to deepen the charism of the Founder, and to use it as "the essential point" in adapting our mission as Marist Brothers for the future. This was a very difficult exercise for some but one which all said afterwards they found both moving and enlightening.



A session on planning

The final task of this section of the Conference was a "Planning Exercise" in which each Superior was asked to plan a three-day workshop or seminar for the Superiors and Principals of his Province or District during which he and his council would be helping the Brothers to reflect, pray and discuss the various integrated aspects of the Conference theme: "The mission of the Marist Brother for the future". In the report-back which followed this exercise more than 90 per cent of the Superiors indicated that they had chosen the workshop as their preferred approach, but that three days would not be sufficient time to achieve the goal set down.

Bro. Richard Dunleavy, C.G.



A fictional case study: "Tomorrow 2000"

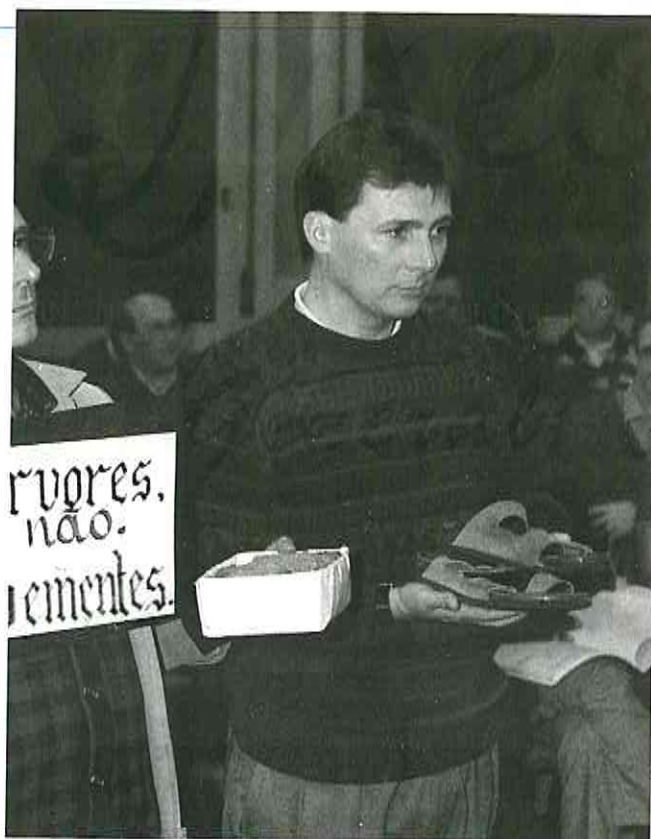
GROUP REPORT

This topic was developed in two steps. First of all, each group member engaged in a conversation with Father Champagnat, being attentive to feelings, reactions, calls, and challenges.

Second, each member prepared with his "Council" a three day workshop or series of conferences for the Province's superiors and principals addressing this topic: *An Integrated and Practical Understanding of the Key Elements of our Marist Mission in the Province for the Future.*

Reports on the conversations with Father Champagnat had an immediate and touching character to them. At the outset, many group members stated honestly that they had difficulty with the task. Some feared what Champagnat might ask of them. Others realized that an experience of our Founder is not that immediate in their lives: he is an historical figure for them or their knowledge of him is limited.

As they settled into the assignment, however, all expressed surprise and delight that Champagnat was so compassionate, understanding, and present. One member heard this instruction: become more aware of the love of Jesus and Mary; another was encouraged to think about his future and the work he would take up when he completed



Br. Sean Sammon, Provincial of Poughkeepsie, and President of the Major Superiors of men religious in the U.S.A.



Brothers Ricardo Piña, Korea, and Antonio Rieu, Zaire

his present ministry; still others heard Champagnat advise them to be aware of issues of inculturation or talked with Champagnat, the "seasoned veteran", who relied totally on Jesus and Mary.

Another group came together for the second step of the process. Four different plans for a Province workshop were presented. Prior to their gathering, the members had exchanged a copy of their plan with at least one other person in the group so that individual could critique it in more detail during the meeting.

The plans varied considerably. One member designed a three day workshop with this aim: motivate superiors and principals to get behind a comprehensive Pastoral Planning project. Each participant would be asked to bring a symbol of his ministry to the gathering: it would start with a prayer experience celebrating our Marist Brotherhood.

Another group member, adopted a "see", "judge", and "act" model; he challenged his brothers to: deepen their appreciation of Marist mission and charism; examine their resources, the signs of the times and the needs of youth; establish their priorities, and short and long term goals along with the means to achieve them.



General Conference

A third member reported that fifteen out of the fifty four members of his District would attend the workshop. He set three aims for the time together: challenge his brothers to deeper personal conversion; strengthen their commitment to their ministry in the District; develop a Mission Statement that would describe the specific role of the religious as an evangelizer.

Throughout their days together, this group would examine our Marist Charism, the meaning of a preferential option for the poor, and issues of inculturation within the Church and local community. Plans for this workshop were unique in that they included reading and other assignments to be completed prior to arriving at the gathering.

The fourth member of the group stated that his workshop would be open not only to brothers but also to lay ad-

ministrators within the Province. The group would look at their country, the Church within the country, and the Province as a whole. Areas of major concern included: ongoing formation of laity within brothers' schools; a personnel projection for ministry, recruiting and formation; this question: should the number of brothers directly involved with ministry to the poor be increased. This workshop would also include presentations by members of other religious orders working in the brothers' schools.

Members of the group critiqued each others work with positive results.

Br. Sean D. Sammon
Poughkeepsie



"Offering helpful criticism to one another was very fruitful"

DIALOGUE WITH MARCELLIN

—“Good morning, Marcellin!”

—“Good morning, Brother!”

—“Forgive me for using your Christian name, but it makes me feel more at ease and closer to you.”

So began a long conversation between a Brother Provincial and Father Champagnat during the General Conference. Certain very challenging statements made by the Superior General in one of his presentations took a rather concerned Brother Provincial back into the past, to the Hermitage and the time of father Champagnat, to try to understand as fully as possible what had led our Founder to choose the apostolic priorities he did.

—“Father Marcellin, he began, Brother Charles, your successor, has been guided by the Spirit for a good number of years now, and in his attempt to remain faithful to your charism, he issued a rather ambitious challenge to all of us: **REFOUND THE INSTITUTE!** He seemed to be suggesting that in its journey through history, the Institute has lost some of the essential elements of its mission, which need to be recovered at all costs, in the name of fidelity. This is really what I want to talk with you about.”

—“I’m delighted you’ve given me this opportunity to talk, Brother, I lived here in the Hermitage with the very first saints of our Institute, and in the 172 years since then I have been able to watch thousands of Brothers follow the road of fidelity. In their great love for Jesus and Mary, they gave themselves completely and zealously to children and young people, persevered in their vocation, and became saints in the process.”

Father Champagnat continued to talk about the Brothers, the growth of the Institute and the provinces, and the vast number of children and young people who had been educated over the years to become good Christians and good citizens.

But then, somewhat sadly, he spoke about some Marist values which have lost some of their original lustre: prayer, catechesis, involvement with young people, especially the most needy and abandoned; and he related all of this to the way we lived our poverty and apostolic zeal. It was a long conversation, and he spoke very freely and extensively.

—“The charism of the Institute is a gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church. It needs continual updating, and that takes audacity, constancy, and unlimited confidence in God and in Mary, our Good Mother. In other words, it takes great love.”

—“But, Marcellin, just what do you mean when you say that the Institute has to be updated?”



Br. Claudino Falqueto, Provincial of Rio, who until just recently was President of the Conference of religious in Brazil

—“I mean the same thing I said about our charism and the foundation under the building. Have you forgotten how I repeated psalm 126 over and over again to the Brothers? “If the Lord does not build the house, in vain do the builders labour!” If the Institute, the provinces, each individual Brother—if all of us want to be faithful, then we must constantly update it, and make that visible through our apostolic options. You are not living in the days of the French Revolution nor in a backward and rural world. You are living with your own realities, and they give you the signs of your own times. I had to interpret the signs of my time, and you have to look for today’s signs, which won’t always be very clear. What is clear, however, is that you will not be able to do it unless you yourselves are updated, unless you are men of your own time. God is just as present in today’s history as he was in mine.

Another sign of being updated is being able to hear the calls of the Church, as she points out new paths through human history, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. A



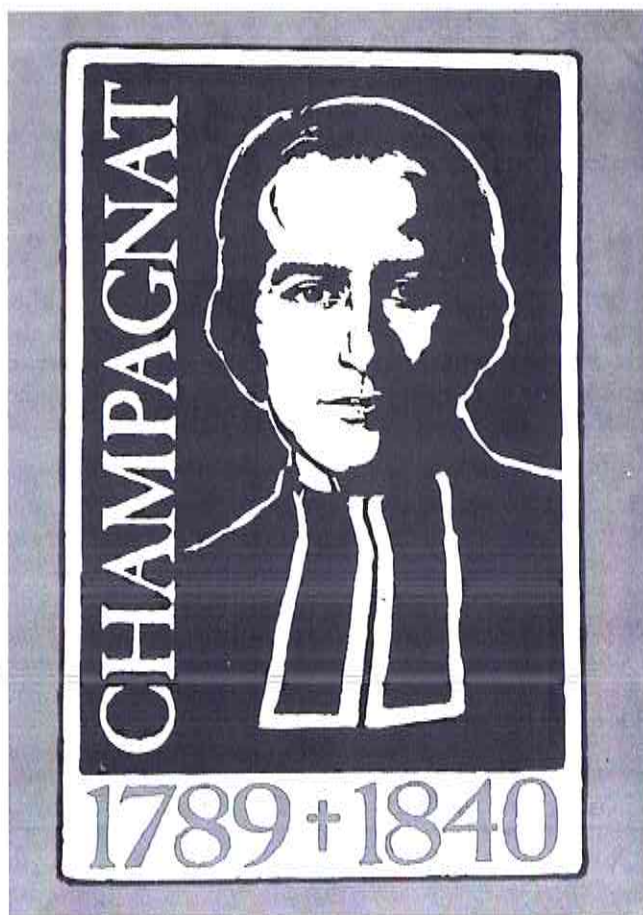
*“Do we have to redefine
our lifestyle
and apostolates?”*

Brother will never understand the mission contained in our Marist charism if he does not understand the calls of the Church and commit himself to following them.”

—“In other words, Father, we have to redefine our lifestyle and apostolates?”

—“That’s a big challenge, I know, and I’m interested in seeing how my sons are going to deal with it. But there is still another essential element of our charism and our mission. When I founded the Institute, I was aware of many calls and many needs. It was only after reflecting and praying to Jesus and to our Good Mother that I saw clearly that God was calling me to respond to the need for the Christian education and instruction of children and young people. Even though many of my colleagues in the priesthood didn’t understand me and even opposed me, I felt that I could not ignore this call from God. So I made a preferential option for those children and young people

who were most neglected and most in need. At that time, that meant children in the rural areas. Today, it may mean another group. The people we serve may be different, but never the option!”



A section of the banner made in the U.S.A.

*“That’s a big challenge
and I’m interested in seeing how
my sons are going to deal with it”*

After I thanked him and we said goodbye, Father Champagnat blessed this Brother Provincial as he prepared to return to Veranópolis, with a great challenge ahead of him, saying to himself: “I shall have to pray a great deal, to discern the will of God in these crucial and difficult times!”

*Bro. Claudino Falqueto
Provincial of Rio de Janeiro*

ALBUM

The General Council:
for years serving
the Institute



Spanish-speaking
participants



English-speaking
participants



French-speaking
participants

Portuguese-speaking
participants



Brother Pascal Nkurunziza,
District Superior of Rwanda.





Part of the dining room.
At the far end are the
devoted ladies who looked
after the Brothers' meals



An Arabian Marist Brother:
Antoine Jarjour,
District Superior
of Lebanon-Syria



The Brothers in charge of the
various ancillary services
during the Conference



A shot taken during
the mime presented
by Brother Alexis Turton,
Provincial of Sydney



The statue of Our Lady Aparecida,
Patroness of Brazil, being carried
by Brother Dario Bortolini,
Provincial of São Paulo



«Au revoir» to Veranópolis

Putting our resources at the service of our mission

(Talk given by Br. Pedro Huidobro, C. G.)

Even though we make a public vow of poverty, as an institution we retain the right to possess and administer material goods for the service of our Brothers and for our apostolic work (*Perfectae Caritatis* 13, 6; C 161.7).

Our vow should have the same effect on our use and administration of goods whether as persons or as institutions (communities, provinces and General Administration), (C 156, 157, 158).

The characteristics of this use and administration which flow from the obligations of the vow, should be seen not only in dependence on the organisation, but especially in the criteria we follow.

Since we easily forget this last point, there is evident inconsistency, to a greater or lesser degree, between our public profession of poverty and the way we really act.

“Inconsistency between our public profession of poverty and the way we really act”

The use of goods (material, cultural, financial, etc.) is necessary for the development of our mission. This use is not something external and superficial to that mission, but intimately linked to it:

- The “criteria” expressed through our personal and institutional use can be an evangelising witness, or a counter-witness which blocks the proclamation of the Kingdom.
- These “criteria” can be consistent or inconsistent with our public profession of poverty as individuals or institutions. They can express our attachment to or detachment from goods.
- The use we make of our goods, including those earmarked for apostolic works, expresses our greater or lesser concern for our effectiveness in the service of proclaiming the Kingdom of the Lord. It also expresses the importance we attach to the gospel values of sharing and gratuitousness.
- Moreover, one can also see, in our search for apostolic efficacy, how well we have assimilated the meaning of “paschal efficacy” or “the efficacy of the cross”, in the face of the “efficacy of this world”.



Our way of using goods expresses in practical terms, the difficult balance between the end and the means.

In our reflexion on our mission for the future, this section on the use of goods in general seems to have great importance:

- in itself, since there is an intimate link with the gospel message,
- in relation to the outlook of contemporary society, given its great sensitivity on this point,

“The use we make of our goods expresses our greater or lesser concern for our effectiveness in the service of proclaiming the Kingdom of the Lord”

- in terms of the “renunciation” of the use of certain goods for reasons of poverty or moderation, or even in order to share more,
- in terms of “consistency” between the apostolic goals we aim at, the economic means we use and the concept of gospel efficacy,
- in terms of “personal” use,
- in terms of “institutional” use (General Administration, provinces, communities, apostolic works),
- in its repercussions on the sensibilities of the Brothers and the provinces,
- in its repercussions on the policies and practical orientations which the Institute and the provinces must define.

The use of goods for our apostolic works in the service of Christian education deserves a very special reflexion:

- a reflexion which has been abandoned to some degree,
- a reflexion which presents certain difficulties:
 - the criterion of “poverty as privation”, is of little help to us; these apostolic works demand many expensive “tools”;

“We use valid economic criteria, which often have very little to do with the gospel”

“Obviously, apostolic profit is not the same as economic profit”

- the criteria of simplicity and moderation become difficult to define if we try to apply them to educational works, and even to our houses; cultural differences play an important role here, as in many other areas;
- we can often justify any kind of expense, provided it can somehow be linked to Christian education;
- very often, we are not accustomed to the simultaneous use of economic and pastoral criteria, when it comes to the use of goods;
- we use valid economic criteria, which often have very little to do with the gospel;
- we sometimes use goods with an air of “something for nothing” and “detachment” which needs to be looked at closely; far from representing a gospel attitude, our behaviour sometimes reveals the carelessness of well-to-do people who are running no risks, since we are protected by the institution;
- we forget about analysing apostolic profit, which obviously is not the same as economic profit, but which can certainly be evaluated, and which professional management of our goods demands of us.

Br. Pedro Huidobro, C. G.



REFLECTION

The use of material goods in our mission is a delicate and complicated issue. On the one hand, the Institute must be sensitive to its call to poverty, justice, and sharing in our apostolates since this call is an important part of our charism. On the other hand, to accomplish our mission of Christian education, even when it is for the needy, we must make use of material goods: buildings, equipment, and financial resources for purposes such as the education and formation of Brothers. In addition, within a province, we must decide on the sharing of material goods in an equitable way. Striking a balance between these various values is difficult and requires careful reflection and discernment.

As an aid to reflection the conference participants discussed a practical case study involving, in the light of the province's resources, a proposal to use province funds to expand a sports facility and add a multipurpose room in a school owned by the province. From the discussion of this case a number of suggestions and guidelines about the use of material goods evolved. Among them were:

1. Careful discernment concerning comparative needs in the province is necessary. To do this well, a province should develop a set of apostolic priorities. In turn, these priorities derive from a clear statement of mission about the apostolic goals of the province.
2. Our criteria in using material goods should be principally apostolic. Other criteria, such as competition with other Catholic schools, should not be followed.

3. The quality of education does not always coincide with the amount of money spent. Moreover, simplicity should be a mark of any Marist project.
4. Provinces should set aside a certain portion of their goods to be shared with the most needy.
5. We should avoid accumulating unneeded funds simply to gain added security.
6. Members of the province should be made aware, through budgets and financial reports, of financial matters affecting the province.

At the same time, the conference members also acknowledged difficulties about this issue. Some difficulties were:

1. Decreasing income in some provinces because of a declining and aging membership.
2. Financial problems connected with choosing and maintaining options for the poor.
3. Attachment to a comfortable life style that some brothers do not want to change.
4. Lack of financial awareness by many brothers.
5. The high costs of formation and renewal programs, particularly overseas programs.

Finally, the Brothers should realize that in a very real sense we are not owners of our material goods, but stewards to whom these goods are entrusted that they may be used to promote the evangelical efforts of the People of God.

Br. Richard Shea. Esopus



*Discussion between the two U.S.A. Provincials:
Br. Richard Shea of Esopus and Br. Sean Sammon of Poughkeepsie*

NEW HORIZONS FOR THE CHARISM OF MARCELLIN CHAMPAGNAT

(Extracts from the talk of Br. Benito Arbués)



Br. Benito Arbués, Vicar Gen., during his conference

The force with which the laity are making their involvement felt is evident. Many doors are opening in response to their insistence or, we should say, the insistence of the Holy Spirit, who invites us to take a serious look at this new "sign of the times", this "new Pentecost."

Our response, up until now, seems to me to have been weak in structural changes, but strong in insight and in plans for the future.

Each year we see increasing numbers of laity in our schools and in positions of responsibility previously filled only by Brothers.

Thirty years ago, the Congregation began a policy of incorporating lay teachers into our schools. We did not then fully appreciate the significance of this move. With the passing years, we have come to see its rich and unforeseen consequences.

This development is the source of the power and attractiveness that the idea of the Marist Family has taken on.

In their daily contact with the Brothers, lay people have seen Father Champagnat, and this is a source of encouragement for them. Some have discovered that the mission and spirituality of Marcellin Champagnat have helped them to better live out their commitment and call to holiness as baptized Christians.

The initial idea was that the Marist Family would lead to a better spiritual foundation for the teachers and more cooperation on the part of parents. This desire for greater pastoral and educational effectiveness led us to find in the lay person a "collaborator", but that was about the extent of it.

Vatican II ecclesiology broadened our understanding of religious life, and looked on Founders from an ecclesial viewpoint which went beyond that of just the individual religious group.

*"In their daily contact
with the Brothers, lay people
have seen Father Champagnat,
and this is a source
of encouragement for them"*

I think that too often we have viewed Father Champagnat as someone exclusively ours, like a piece of private property. Such an outlook runs the risk —albeit unconsciously— of belittling his place and meaning in history. Our knowledge and understanding of him must spur us on to study him in his ecclesial dimension so as to "make him available" to the laity.

We are not the ones who finally make the decisions, but rather the Holy Spirit who invites us and leads us on, raising up in the Church new ways of living the Christian life. It is difficult to see any other explanation for certain things that have been happening in the church and in the congregation:

- The conscious commitment made to our mission by so many teachers and parents.
- The admiration felt for Father Champagnat by many young people in apostolic groups.

- There are people who want to go further and who have set up "Christian communities" where they share faith and apostolic commitment in the spirit of Fr. Champagnat.
- Also of note is the insistent request of some young women who are asking our support for their wish to be "Marist Sisters of Father Champagnat".

"I am excited by the interest generated by the launching of the Champagnat Movement"

I am excited by the interest generated by the launching of the Champagnat Movement. It can be a wonderful opportunity for everyone, including the Brothers, for a renewal of apostolic fervor. To become more sensitive to the laity, we Marist Brothers need to have a deeper understanding of the theology of the laity and to convince ourselves that they have a special mission in the Church. Perhaps we have to become less clerical-minded and allow ourselves to be enriched by the witness of men and women who feel attracted to the spirituality and mission of Marcellin Champagnat.

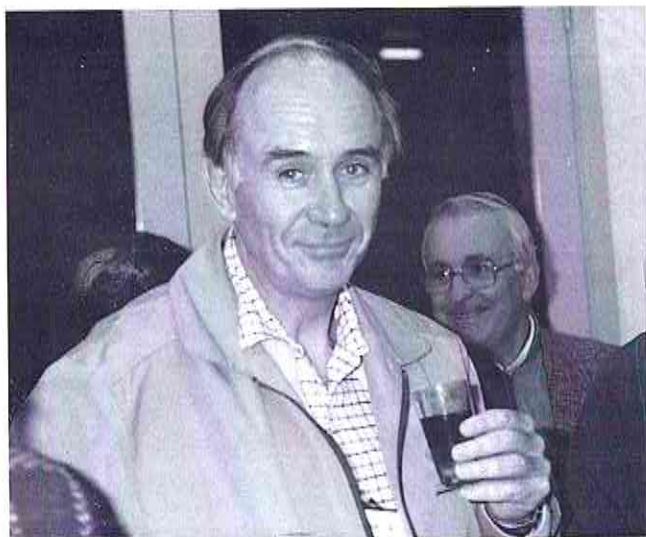
Br. Benito Arbués, V. G.



Part of the assembly

"Too often we have viewed Father Champagnat as someone exclusively ours"

MARIST FAMILY



Br. Timothy McCrindle, Provincial of South Africa

In a General Assembly, Brother Benito presented the history and development of the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family.

Firstly, he dealt with the mandate to the General Council from the 1986 General Chapter to set up a Commission to draw up statutes for the Movement. The General Chapter had officially recognised the Marist Family Movement. The Commission consisted of three General Councillors and six other members to represent different viewpoints. No laypersons were on the Commission.

The work of the Commission has resulted in three documents, one in November 1986, the next in December 1987 and now the latest, "*Champagnat Marist Family Movement: a Programme for Life*", in June 1989. In doing its work, the Commission consulted with the General Council, Provincials and their Councils, the Brothers of the Institute, laypersons and other Congregations. The Commission also had to clarify the term "Marist Family" with the other Marist Congregations. It had to deal with certain important points such as flexibility, Marist identity, lines of force for the Movement and whom we are addressing in the Movement.

The General Council has accepted the alternative of a new movement. It also felt that various forms of organisation should be allowed for various sensibilities which should be taken into account when translating the document.

After Brother Benito's presentation, five Provincials, Bro. Antonio Ramalho (*Brésil Nord*), Bro. Antonio Eguía Quevedo (*Venezuela*), Bro. Henri Vignau (*Midi-C.O., N.D. Hermitage*), Bro. Timothy McCrindle (*South Africa*) and Bro. Alexis Turton (*Sydney*), spoke of their ex-

periences with regard to Marist Family Movements in their respective provinces and their efforts to integrate the laity into our mission.

When this was finished, the Provincials were asked to reflect on what they had heard. In groups, they then shared these reflections and the attitudes in their Provinces towards the integration of laypersons into our mission and spirituality, the successes they had had, the resistance they had encountered and how they could develop the involvement of the laity.

In the afternoon, the text of the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family was given to the Provincials and various points of clarification were made. Once they had read the document, the Provincials shared in groups their hopes and fears and how the Movement could enrich and stimulate the Brothers in their Marist Mission. The results of this sharing were collated in the four language groups for a report back at a General Assembly the next day. This was then opened up for general clarification, suggestions and questions.

To complete the work on the Marist Family, Provincials were asked to consider everything they had heard and shared and then to fill in an opinion survey on the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family for Brother Benito.

Br. Timothy McCrindle
South Africa



"Lord, we offer you these little shoots of the Marist Family which have just appeared"

Our Constitutions as an application of the Gospel



Brother Alain Delorme, C. G., with Brother Richard Dunleavy, C. G.

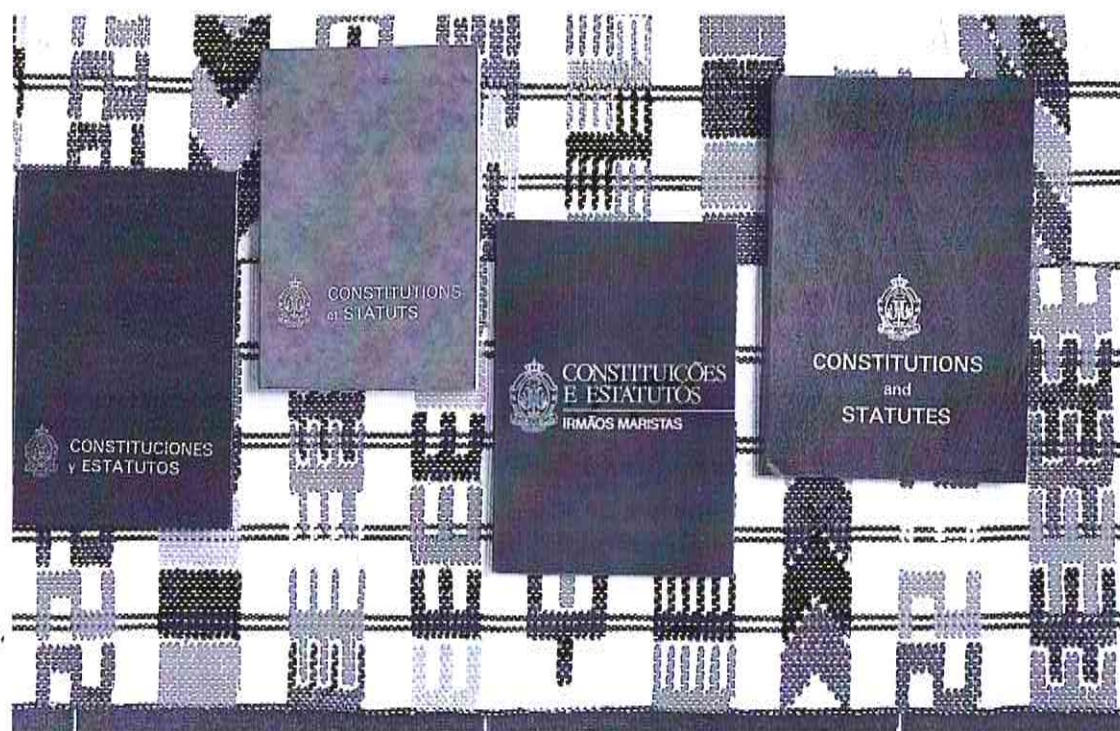
Religious will take as their supreme rule of life the following of Christ as proposed by the Gospel and expressed in the Constitutions of their own Institute (Can. 662).

This recommendation of the Church is very clearly expressed in our Constitutions, especially in articles 3, 99, and 169. What the Church approves is inspired by the Gospel, the Good News of Jesus Christ, in whom the Father has said everything. St. Francis of Assisi thought that the Rule of Life of his Friars Minor should be "the Gospel, without any commentary". Unfortunately, not all his companions were seraphic men, and they very definitely needed some practical rules to help them to live by the Gospel. The Rules of all Founders have no other aim but to apply something of what the Lord did and said, as reported in the Gospels, to the lives of their followers. Our Constitutions are no exception.

Their importance for us Marist Brothers springs from the fact that they are *our road* for going to Jesus, our only model, as did Father Champagnat, our first brothers, and all those who have followed them. They are a "sacred"

book because they were given to us by the Church, Mater et Magistra, to help us to progress toward the sanctity to which each baptised person is called, according to his or her state in life (LG 40). "By our religious profession, we have freely committed ourselves to living them." We Marist Brothers reach the ideal of the evangelical life to the extent that we incarnate our Constitutions. We have known Brothers who, having taken their commitment to heart, gradually became living Rules: Brother François, Brother Alfano and many others in each of our provinces. Regularity well lived led straight to sanctity.

The 1986 text hopes to make us all saints. This is stated clearly in Bro. Charles presentation: "*If, in faith, we allow ourselves to be challenged each day by these Constitutions, we shall be moving towards greater resemblance to Jesus, like Mary and Marcellin Champagnat*". This resemblance is nothing other than sanctity.



The Constitutions: "our way" leading to Jesus

Main "lines of force" of the text

1. *Christ - Mary - Champagnat*. A "trinity" present in nearly every chapter. Christ is presented as the goal, Mary and Champagnat as the ways leading there: (cf. 2, 4, 12, 18...)
2. *Consecration and Mission considered as a whole*. Unification of our selves and our lives: (cf. 3, 17, 26, 34, 44, 58, 71, 73, 77, 83, 90, 168, 171).
3. *Setting our charism in relief*: (cf. 2, 3, 40, 40.1, 43, 85, 90, 103, 130, 164, 165, 170, 171).
4. *Insistence on God's initiative and fidelity*: (cf. 11, 13, 15, 53, 163, 170).
5. *Call to poverty in solidarity*: (cf. 2, 32.2., 34, 58.1, 80, 83, 167).
6. *Communion with the Church*: (cf. 10, 17, 40, 69, 80, 86.1, 87.1, 110.2, 118, 168).
7. *Discernment*: (cf. 13, 41, 42, 43, 85, 96, 108, 115, 130, 168).
2. *Coresponsibility*: (cf. 44, 50.1, 57, 60.1, 77, 94, 106, 110.1, 119, 138, 165, 165.1)
3. *Subsidiarity*: (cf. 9, 119, 155, 158, 160)
4. *Gradualness - Progressivity*: (cf. 13, 14, 21, 25, 28, 30, 35, 44, 46, 63, 69, 71, 72, 77, 110, 166).

This last principle, the most relevant to our daily life, effectively guaranties that spiritual growth to which we are called by our Baptism and is referred to by article 110 on continued formation: "We grow towards adulthood in Christ" (Eph 4, 113).

It is also a principle that helps us understand what Our Lord meant when he asked us to become like little children and thus enter into the Kingdom of God (Lk 18, 17).

We are born old; we are called to die young. The conversion expected of us by Jesus is to become like little children; it is a life long task. It is what article 166 explains: "We repeatedly feel the need to be converted anew... Thus little by little Christ becomes the Lord of our lives".

Such is the itinerary to be adhered to by consecrated persons (art. 46) which but illustrates what St. Gregory of Nyssa wrote in his "Life of Moses": "Spiritual life consists in going from one beginning to another beginning, through beginnings that are ever beginning."

Br. Alain Delorme, C. G.

Inspirational Principles

- a) *On the level of form (style): comprehension* (use of simple words and short phrases, with any eye to translations, grouping of articles around a central idea evoked by the title, care to harmonize the spiritual and juridical elements - Can. 587,3).
- b) *On the level of content (ideas):*
 1. *Inculturation*: (cf. 9, 29.11, 56.1, 91, 91.4, 95, 96.2, 109.1, 150.2.11, 165)

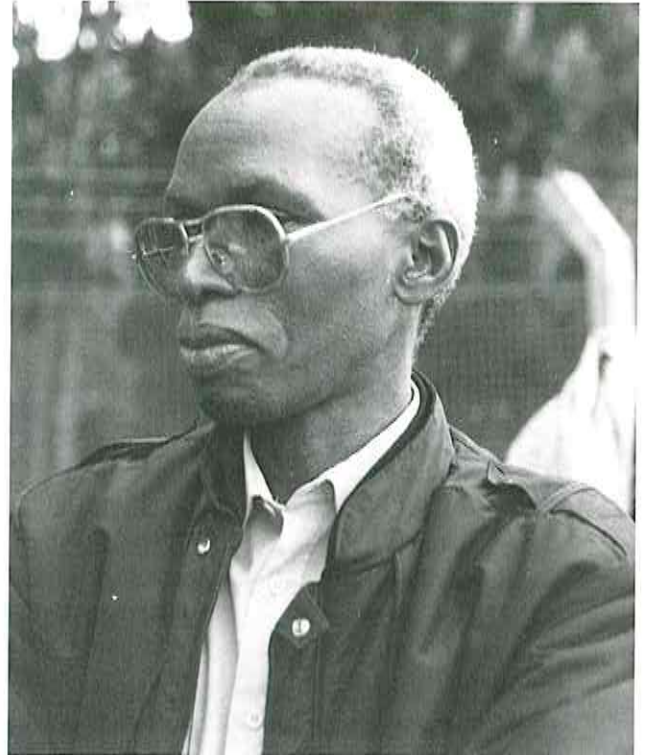
GROUP SHARING

The Provinces have used various methods to develop the use and appreciation of our Constitutions among the Brothers. For example, some have had retreats using them, sometimes guided by a General Councillor, and others by means of circulars sent out right from the beginning of 1986. Some of them have also had the text translated into the local language. There have been invitations to share the Constitutions in community, and articles published in Province reviews which encouraged the Brothers to study them. As well, they have been urged to use them in their prayer and in the community life plan.

Some communities have based their community plan on articles or objectives drawn from the Constitutions, with concrete resolutions taken from the Statutes. That in itself has meant that there were sharings and celebrations of the Word. Sometimes whole days have been arranged in that way, and they provided opportunity for valuable explanations, together with times for prayer and reflection.

At the personal level, Brothers have been helped to use the Constitutions as an excellent source of nourishment for their own prayer. Some Provinces have set up a monthly routine along those lines. It was stressed that the reading must be meditative and a real study, something many of the Brothers have taken to heart. Superiors have also taken the opportunity when interviewing their Brothers to find out how well each man was succeeding in that.

The Provincials also noted, however, that this work of promoting the Constitutions among the Brothers has not always been so easy. Here and there the Brothers are either indifferent or even resistant. Thus there are some of them have not yet discovered their real worth. Overall, though,



Brother Pascal Nkurunziza, District Superior of Rwanda

the attitude is very good: a readiness to accept them, a good degree of interest, and even a certain amount of legitimate pride in them.

Our group wishes to finish by offering two suggestions and one wish:

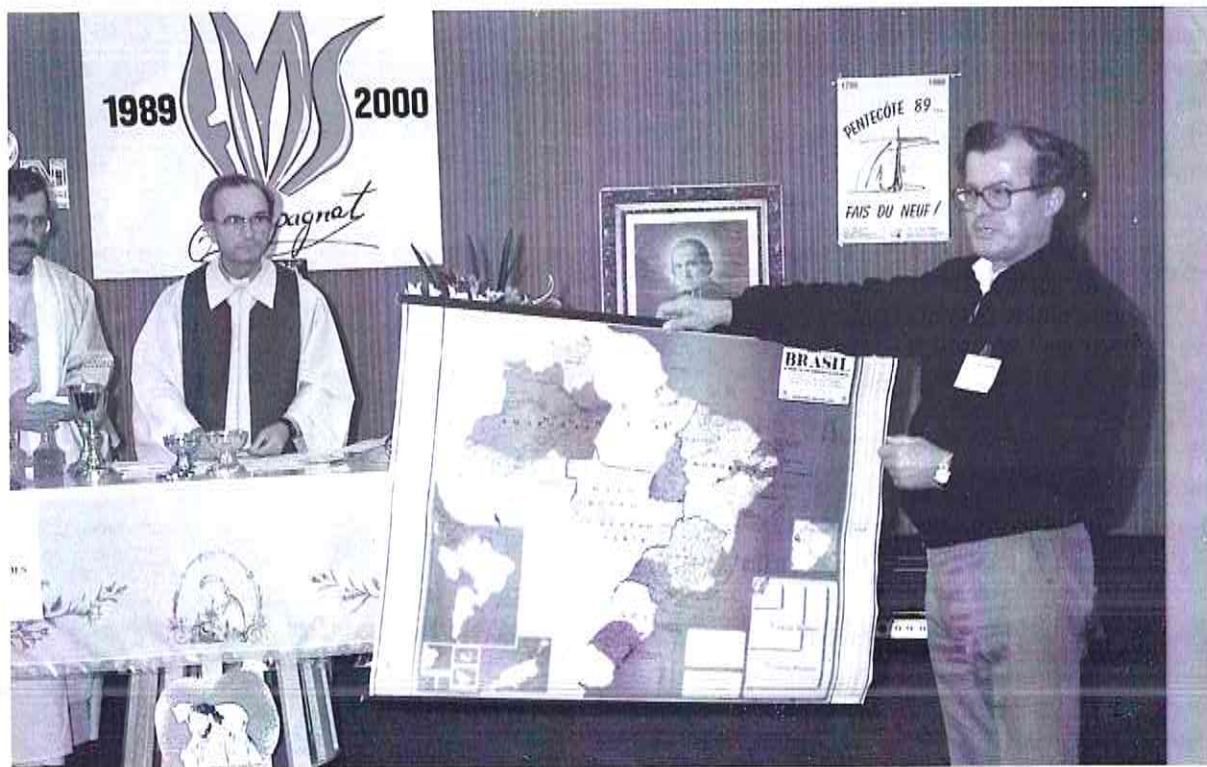
- Studies of the Constitutions should be sent out, through *FMS Message*, for example, to help the Brothers in their ongoing efforts to assimilate them.
- It is good to maintain the monthly Provincial calendar as well as the universal Marist Calendar so that Articles from the Constitutions or comments on them can be included regularly.
- *The wish:* Would it be possible to have a single type of insignia for the Brothers. The variety of Marist badges that has developed means that it is difficult to recognise one another, or to indicate to others who we are. Many Brothers wear none at all. There is a void there which needs to be filled.

Br. Pascal Nkurunziza
Rwanda



One of the reflection groups

VOCATIONS MINISTRY



Brother Claudio Girardi, Brazilian representative on the General Council

We have just reviewed some Institute statistics which should have caught our attention even though we might be accustomed to seeing those figures. At times, statistics can motivate. However, to convince someone to become involved in vocation work, there is need for more profound and convincing motivation.

We could list here a series of motivations. Nevertheless, today, I would simply like to call attention to the following: to become involved in vocation work out of FIDELITY; but fidelity to what?

1. Fidelity to God's plan for each one of us. Such a fidelity is indispensable if we love each person in Christ. Our Constitutions remind us in article 92 that *"God has a loving plan for each human being, which He makes known in a series of calls."* And article 93 says *"we help young people to develop the grace of their baptism... we encourage them to open their hearts to the will of the Father, and to make more and more their own, Mary's readiness to be of service"*.

2. Fidelity to the Holy Spirit who has given our charism to the church for the good of all. We are talking of a dynamic and living charism. Having meditated on our "option for the poor" during these days we have become aware that this has been a dominant characteristic of our

Institute throughout its history. And this, not only in documents, but in the lives of so many Brothers who, generation after generation, have handed down to us this spiritual patrimony.

3. Fidelity to the universal and local Church. Paul tells us in his letter to the Corinthians that charisms are given for the good of the Church. God grants them when they are needed. It is not a matter of superfluity but rather they are necessary for the life of the Church. If we are not able to return to God the gift of our fidelity to the Church guarantying the continuity of this charism, God himself will raise up those who will replace us.

4. Fidelity to youth. This fidelity flows from the first: our fidelity to God. In order to announce the good news of God to the young we need a profound knowledge of his creatures, of their most intimate aspirations, of their thirst for happiness, of their spiritual outlook, of their desire for eternal life.

Today, young people are abandoned; they are like sheep without a shepherd. The influence of the family has diminished; adults feel powerless; educators do not know what to do, or they are afraid to proclaim the truth. Will we ever be able to come to their aid so that they might walk resolutely in response to love.

*"Will we be able
to help young people
to find their way?"*



5. Fidelity to our consecration. A significant contribution to the awakening of vocations is the witness of a consecration authentically lived. In his circular on fidelity, Br. Basilio gives many examples of Brothers who owed their vocation to the good example of older Brothers.

6. Fidelity and love for the Institute and for our Founder. It is necessary to love the Institute wholeheartedly, with its successes and its failures, in its glorious moments and in its moments of suffering. In this historic moment of the Congregation, he who would remain indifferent would give proof of the little love he has for his religious family. He who truly loves his Institute will find the means to attract vocations to it. Today when so many novitiates are empty, each Brother must lend a hand. The situation is such that we cannot leave the work of recruitment to a single group of Brothers.

7. Fidelity to our mission. Article 81 of our Constitutions tells us that an element of our mission is to help the young discover their vocation in the Church and in the world. Article 94 is more specific: *"Every Brother in the Province should feel deeply the need to encourage vocations. We call young people to discover our life of brotherhood and apostolic action, and we invite them to commit themselves to this life."*

May our meditating on these multiple fidelities renew our enthusiasm, fill us with courage and confidence in God and Our Lady, and help us to realize what Br. Basilio said to the 1976 capitulants (and here I quote from memory): *"We must strive to give to the Institute those vocations that we failed to provide during the post-conciliar period."*

Br. Claudio Girardi
General Councillor



*"We pray the Lord of the harvest
to send labourers
to spread the Gospel" (C. 94)*

SOME CAUSES OF THE VOCATION CRISIS



Brother Néstor Quiceno, Provincial of Colombia, the nation which this year is celebrating the centenary of the arrival of the first Marist Brothers

Often all the blame is attributed to external factors, in order to justify our own laziness. But what we consider obstacles are, for persons of faith and who are clear about their mission, actually challenges which will spur us on to be creative in answering them. Such was the case with Champagnat in the wake of the French Revolution.

Another cause: the lack of confidence in the older Brothers who feel unable to invite and accompany possible vocations.

"We are 'settled in'. That work is for other people." Every time a new life arrives in a family it causes instability. This is a law of human existence. We want new life, but we balk at welcoming young people into our communities. Consider the case of a province of Sisters of Charity (Vicen-

tinas) in Brazil who have 105 sisters in temporary vows. Their secret? - all their communities are very welcoming and they have as many as seven young women living with them. These experiences are the "free samples" given to the young women and they're producing good results.

SOME QUESTIONS

Why in some of our provinces do our own schools not produce vocations and we must "go fishing" in places where we are not known?

Like colds, vocations are contagious. Might it be that the way we live our Marist vocation isn't "catching", isn't attractive?

Have we perhaps "gone off the track" with regard to the recipients of our ministry? Usually it is the middle class and the poor who have produced religious vocations. Champagnat founded us in a special way for these social classes. Might not this vocation crisis be a call of the Lord to relocate ourselves on the social ladder?

Br. Leonida said, "*The upper classes, cause the Marist Brother to lose his identity, The poor convert us to the Gospel.*" Might not the vocation crisis and the "greying" of the Congregation be a call of the Lord to reconsider to whom we should direct our ministry?

Br. Néstor Quiceno
Colombia



"Might not this vocation crisis be a call of the Lord?"

Marist initial formation

(Extracts from the introductory talk of Br. Philip Ouellette)

The vitality of our religious family and its fidelity to its mission depend, to a great extent, on the formation of its members. (C 95)

A PRIORITY FOR THE GENERAL COUNCIL

- Preoccupation of the previous General Administration.
- Report of Br. Basilio to the 1985 General Chapter.
- Concern of the delegates to the 1985 Chapter.
- A study of Institute statistics of departure of young Brothers:
 - those in temporary vows,
 - those recently professed perpetually.
- On site visit of many Formation Centers in the Congregation.

OUR CONCERNS:

No desire to be negative or to blame anyone - rather, how can we, together, come up with solutions:

- unevaluated formation programs,
- unclear objectives,
- unprepared candidates at certain levels,
- insufficient screening,
- poor staffing - poor team work,
- unprepared formators.

GOOD FORMATION, A MATTER OF JUSTICE

- A responsibility of the leaders.
- God's call - a matter of serious discernment.
- Provide the necessary structures and support.
- Should we accept candidates into a less than very good program.

FORMATION FOR WHAT?

- For Marist Mission - 2,000 and beyond.
- For Marist Apostolic Spirituality.
- To be APOSTLES:
 - apostles who are well educated;
 - well educated men who are not apostles.



Br. Philip Ouellette, C. G., offering some suggestions

FIVE AREAS FOR REFLECTION AND STUDY

1. FORMATION GUIDE

- Represents world-wide consultation and experience.
- Not perfect - not the only answer to our difficulties but it is OURS and reflects our experiences.
- Will need revision and improvement in 1993 - What will have been our experience?



General Conference

- Knowledge of the Guide in each Province - especially, formators?
- Implementation?

2. STAGES OF FORMATION

Reflections and questions on:

Pre-Novitiate:

Does it adequately prepare for Novitiate, that is

- knowledge of self,
- discernment of vocation?
 - Postulants with full-time jobs or studies?
 - Six months vs a full year.
 - Preparation of formators —In one's culture.

Novitiate:

- Would appear to be the most uniform and improved stage of formation in the Congregation.
- Preparation of the Master.
- Sufficient staff?
- Courses offered because a Brother is good in that area?

Post-Novitiate:

- Is it in need of evaluation and renewal?
- Length?
- Time to interiorize the values of Consecration
- Formation vs Education... content of programme (*Guide 46*).
- Collaboration.
- Temporary professed Brothers in apostolic communities?

3. ACCOMPANIMENT:

- Concretizes the belief that "each one, is the principal artisan of his own formation" (*C 95*).
- Essential in the discernment process.
- Necessary for valid evaluation of the candidate.
- Promotes personal growth at many levels: emotional, social, spiritual, psychological, etc.
- Positive results where applied properly.
- Fear and uncertainty of formators.
- At times, the abandonment of temporary professed Brothers in communities.



Brother Antonio Sanasana, a scholastic from Mozambique, with a novice and a postulant of Brazil

4. COLLABORATION:

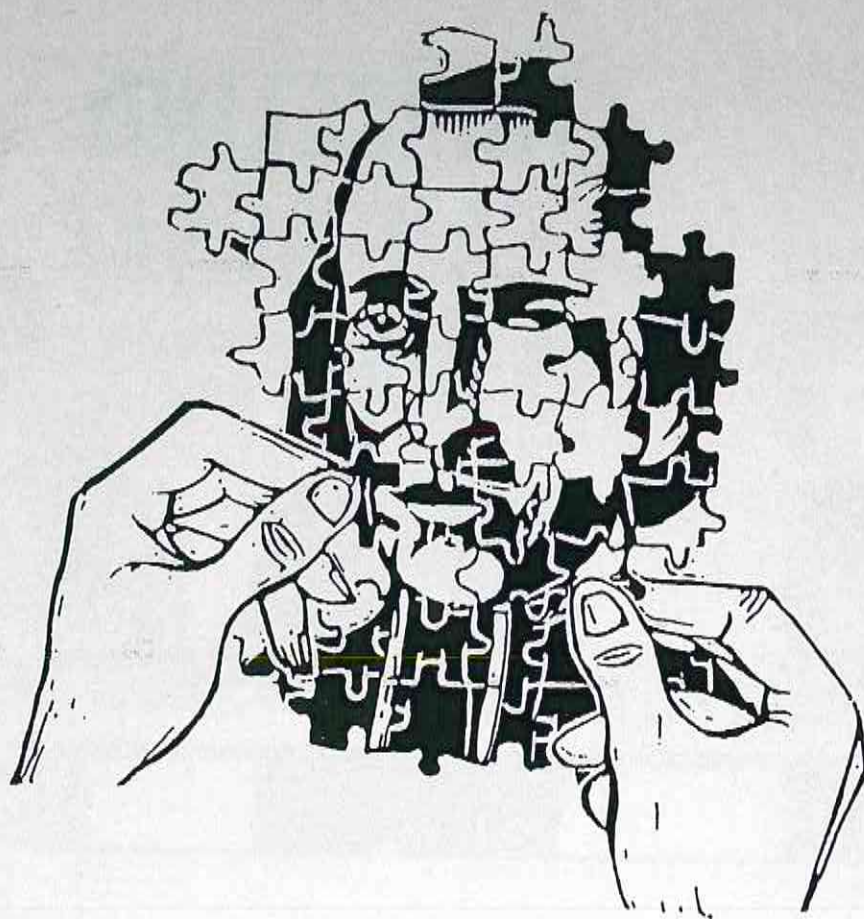
- Possibility of a stronger staff.
- Staff functions as a team (*C 107*).
- Better chance of offering solid content.
- Clear understanding between Provincials
- Put aside our differences.
- Length of time spent outside one's country?

5. PREPARATION OF FORMATORS

- Knowledge of self.
- Doctrine and psychological competence.
- Able to provide solid accompaniment.
- A clear vision of Marist identity.
- Time for preparation: special programs, apprenticeship, time in a formation community.
- Careful selection of future formators.

Br. Philip Ouellette, C. G.

OTHER ACTIVITIES



VISIT OF DOM LUCIANO MENDES

On the first Sunday of the Conference, Dom Luciano Mendes SJ, Bishop of Mariana, Minas Gerais, and President of the National Episcopal Conference of Brazil, came to Veranópolis to spend the day with the Brothers. Formerly Provincial of the Society of Jesus in Rio de Janeiro, Dom Luciano served for 12 years as Auxiliary Bishop to Cardinal Arns in São Paulo. There he assumed responsibility for the eastern sector of the city, an area where great poverty, overcrowding and unemployment gave rise to severe pastoral problems. He encouraged many religious congregations to join him, especially in ministering to the thousands of homeless street children.



Brother Desmond Crowe, former Melbourne Provincial, who was a Secretary at the Conference

PRESIDENT OF THE BISHOPS' CONFERENCE

In 1986 Dom Luciano was elected President of the Bishops' Conference, and subsequently was named bishop of Mariana. There he has continued to champion the cause of the street children; his open dialogue with the President of the Republic has awoken the national conscience to their plight, and his pastoral initiatives on their behalf have been replicated in many places in the great cities of Brazil.

On behalf of the Brazilian Bishops, Dom Luciano thanked the Brothers for their loyal and vigorous ecclesial engagement with the pastoral priorities of the Church. He spoke

MARCELINO CHAMPAGNAT 1789-1989



Dom Luciano Mendes between Brothers Claudino Falqueto and Benito Arbués

warmly and affectionately, as a brother among brothers, and with candour and simplicity shared with them his vision of the realities of the Church in Brazil.

FOUR GLOBAL CHALLENGES

Sent by Jesus, as Jesus had been sent by the Father, the Church has only one reason for its existence, mission. The context of its mission is the world, where today we see four global challenges: reconciliation and peace, the affirmation of the dignity of the human person, the promotion of justice, and upholding the value and sanctity of human life itself.

In Latin America, exemplified by Brazil, these challenges are accentuated. It is a continent full of injustice, with sharp divisions between the privileged few and the multitude deprived by poverty, hunger and homelessness. As nations, these countries suffer from the injustice of the first world, exploitation in terms of trade, and the crippling burden of increasing interest repayments which is borne by the poor. Foreign sects are making inroads on the simple faith of the people, depriving them of their traditional symbols and causing them great confusion. And in less than ten years, Brazil has undergone a change of mentality in regard to human life; abortion and sterilization, supported by foreign agencies, have become widespread.

URGENT NECESSITIES

The most urgent necessities claiming the Church's attention today include: the rebuilding of society, assuring a social justice through which the poor may claim their inheritance, an invigorated catechesis, action on behalf of youth who are, as never before, the prey of the media and drugs (never before was there such a need of educators), and the pastoral care of the great cities.



Archbishop Mendes during the Eucharistic celebration. Beside him is Father Bertrand Huot, S. M., our chaplain

THE CHURCH IN BRAZIL

And the Church which faces these challenges? It is a Church with many bishops and few priests (400 bishops, 13,000 priests, 150 million people). The unity of the bishops has been very strong during the last 30 years, a critical period during which the face of the Church has been redrawn —although some cracks are appearing in this unity today. There is remarkable unity, too, among such a diversified clergy, diocesan and religious, foreign and native born. There is great unity, too, among men and women religious and the laity. The Church manifests great vitality in a renewed catechesis, a participative liturgy, and thriving basic christian communities. There is a clear missionary dynamism both within the country and towards other nations. And the Church is characterized by a dynamism for the whole human person, sensitive to the ethical demands for political life,

for workers, for native peoples and for the environment.

Despite this, there remain certain internal problems —the tendency to an exaggerated spirituality which ignores life, some misunderstanding of liberation theology, certain gaps in the commitment to the struggle for justice and peace, some misunderstanding of the preferential option for the poor, and certain divisions regarding Church discipline and seminary formation.

"You see that we are not without our shortcomings or our sinfulness. Nevertheless, there is vitality and hope, a great sense of unity in commitment to a Church expressing its life of union with God through commitment to the life of its people. That commitment is real, it is demanding, and it costs lives. So, though in Brazil we have no Saints, we have many saints."

Br. Desmond Crowe
(Melbourne)

*"A Church expressing its life of union with God
through commitment to the life of its people"*

Information from the General Council

Compiled by Br. Yves Thénosz, Secretary General

1. THE PRIORITIES chosen for the Institute by the General Council in 1986 have a unifying thread among them which also helped to unify the work of the General Conference. These priorities were, and still are:

The Ministry of Vocations.

Formation.

The New Constitutions.

Discernment.

Mission: this became the central theme of the General Conference.

We see how necessary it is to develop a strong sense of mission throughout the Institute as we concentrate on the challenges of the future.

Under the heading of this priority of Mission, we discussed:

- The development of the spirit of apostolic discernment, with special attention being given to our choice of apostolic priorities.
- The study of apostolic spirituality.
- Openness to the call of the poor as a call from the Holy Spirit and a call to make this a more integral part of our mission.
- Giving new life to the Marial dimensions of our apostolate (to make Mary known and loved)
- Special attention to the development of the Champagnat Marist Family Movement.

2. PUBLICATIONS OF THE GENERAL ADMINISTRATION SINCE 1986

In this list will appear only the publications which, on the one hand have required the services of a printer (no question of photocopied sheets containing letters to Provincials or items of news or of questionnaires from the commissions of the General Council) and which, on the other hand, have been published directly by the General Council (not just recommended by it).

They are as follows:

1. The book of the *Constitutions and Statutes*, in our four working



Brothers Yves Thénosz, Secretary General

languages: French, Spanish, English and Portuguese.

2. The book containing the texts of *references* given in the Constitutions which was proposed, in 1988, for the French, Spanish and English speaking provinces and districts.
3. The *Formation Guide* in the four languages.
4. Two books of documents from the 18th *General Chapter*, in French, Spanish and English, namely:
 - a) Acts of the 18th General Chapter (that is to say, its decisions),
 - b) "Listening to the 18th General Chapter" (documents produced on the occasion of the Chapter).
5. The four *Circulars* of the Brother Superior General:
 - 1) Our New Constitutions,
 - 2) Vocations,
 - 3) Discernment,
 - 4) The Founder challenges his Brothers, each in the four languages.
6. The English edition of the Circular of Br. Basilio Rueda on *Fidelity*: the first edition had had to be interrupted because of the need to re-do completely the translation from the original French. This book eventually saw the light of day in 1988.
7. The second volume of the "*Lettres du P. Champagnat*", by Brs. Paul Sester and Raymond Borne, on Father Champagnat's correspondents: a work written in French.
8. The biography of the Reverend Br. Charles Raphael, also by Br. Paul Sester and in French.
9. The new-style Bulletin of the Institute, entitled *FMS-Message*: five numbers have appeared, in the four languages.
10. The 4-page folder, *FMS-Echo*, which has been appearing in the four languages also about every

three months for two years: eight numbers have appeared now. They constitute a continuation of the two folders which, on the initiative of Brother Superior General, were published in November 1985 and June 1986 respectively: during the months which followed the last General Chapter.

11. The *Marist Universal Calendar* has been circulated, up to the present, in the French and Spanish languages. It is a collection of quotations from Marist texts, suggestions for meditation on the basis of one for each day of the year. Other editions are being prepared, presenting other Marist texts.
12. We take pleasure in presenting to you our final publication: the *Bicentenary booklet*. Br. Alain Delorme is at your service to give you details about this booklet and to accept your orders.
13. In addition we can announce as imminent the re-edited edition of the *Life of Father Champagnat* by Br. Jean-Baptiste, annotated by a team of Brothers historians and researchers. There is also the matter of a gift for each Brother on the occasion of the Champagnat Year. Translations are being prepared.

3. THE PERSONNEL OF THE GENERAL ADMINISTRATION:

List of tasks performed

1. *Secretarial work* properly so called, work involving drafting and typing documents and letters, setting in order, recording and passing on information (by word of mouth, written items, telephone and FAX),
2. *the work of Secretary-Translator*, carried out by Brothers who can

handle text well in one of the four languages of the Institute and have a good understanding of at least one of the others,

3. *the position of Procurator General accredited to the Holy See*, and the position of Postulator General of our Causes of Canonisation and Beatification, two different occupations which could, we believe, be carried out by the same person,
4. *accounting*, administration of investments,
5. *research work* on Marist history and spirituality,
6. *despatch of letters and parcels by post + constant supervision of the gate and the telephone*,
7. *photocopying department*, multicopying,
8. supervision and maintenance of *machines* and supply of accessories,
9. *statistics department*, recording and checking of entries to the novitiate, taking of vows, deaths, withdrawals, postal addresses, statistical information,
10. *archives department*, classification and recording of documents and document files, reception of researchers,
11. *publications department*, collecting articles, paging up, dealing with printers.
12. *services related to the organisation and functioning of the General House*, Director, Econome, Messenger/Driver, Manager, Librarian, various tasks,...
13. *staffing of our Marist Centres*, Director, Assistant, for the Spanish and Portuguese language Centres (Escorial and Rome), for the French speaking Centre, for the English speaking Centre and for the International College,
14. *at N. D. de l'Hermitage*, reception and guidance of groups of Brothers,



General Conference

15. *Vatican*: we have been asked, for some years now, to fill two or three secretarial positions in the Roman Congregations.

Clearly we are not speaking here of ecclesiastical personnel —our chaplains— nor of lay people.

4. SECRETARIAT-ARCHIVES-PUBLICATIONS: POSSIBILITIES OF COMMUNICATING BY DISKETTES

The different data stored by computer on disks at Rome can be transferred on to diskettes and made available to the Provincials and Superiors who might be interested, on condition, of course, that the items are not confidential. This is the case with the minutes of the meetings of the General Council which are all on disk starting with 1985, but are available only to members of the General Council and in 1993 will be available to the members of the General Chapter. This is also the case with the files of certain *archive documents*: sensitive ones referring to people who are still alive. But there are many others which you can obtain if you wish by applying to the people responsible for the Archives: more than 20,000 document files are ready at present.

Also stored are the *annual statistical returns* of the Institute since 1978, the *address book* updated in July 1989, the descriptive files of the houses of the Institute, those of the *Provincial Councils*, those of the *Brothers*, which their respective Provincials can therefore obtain. There are also lists of Brothers by Province, on a statistical sheet showing their respective ages, with the age means and the pyramid of ages... We try to keep these lists up to date.

Several *Marist publications* have also been put on disk, notably the *Constitutions* in Spanish and in English, the *Formation Guide*, the *Marist Universal Calendar*, different *Circulars*,...

The diskettes holding these stored items are not all ready but there is a possibility of preparing them on request: at your service.

5. NEWS ABOUT NOTRE-DAME DE L'HERMITAGE AND SOME MARIST SITES

Notre-Dame de l'Hermitage

The two communities (General Administration and Province) were regrouped into a single community two years ago. This community has as its global project *Making Welcome* —making welcome the Brothers, members of the Marist Family, pilgrims, and various groups both at the local and regional level.

To facilitate the day by day administration and avoid possible difficulties with the management of finances, participants pay for their board by a daily charge set each year in keeping with the guest houses of the region (100 FF). This procedure commenced in January 1988. The groups of Brothers from the Centres of Spirituality are paid for by the General Administration.

The stay often includes a spiritual retreat, but there is also a first ac-

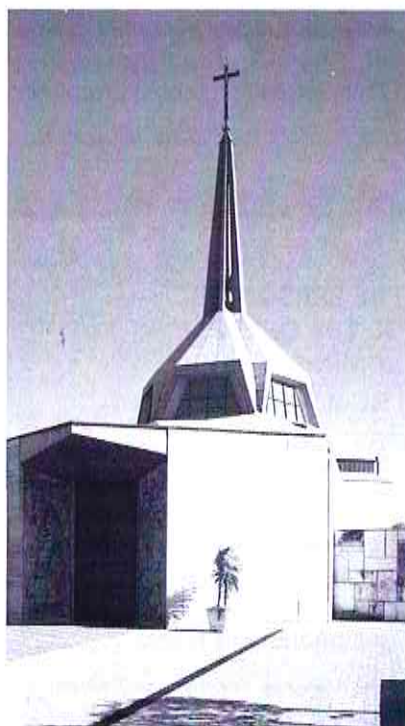
quaintance with or a deepening of knowledge of the Life of the Founder and of the first Brothers (*cf C 109.6*). More than 3,000 Brothers have spent time at the Centre d'Accueil since its foundation.

Improvements carried out recently:

- Strengthening of the rock, north side.
- Expansion of the lodging capacity (+ nine bedrooms).
- Renovation of the 3rd and 4th floors of the house, Gier side.
- Refitting of the entrance and improvements to the Historial (sound and light).
- Restoration of the chapel together with enhancement of the patrimony: altar, tabernacle, statue.
- Inauguration on the 6th of June last.
- Interior Champagnat Circuit: room of the frescoes, bedroom of the Father and the big room containing a Marist planisphere —Work carried out by M. Crepin, the author of the frescoes.
- The building on the rock (former scholasticate) - Fitting out of the ground floor: multipurpose room, vestibule containing landscape models, work rooms (documentation - processing of information). Creation of a diaporama retracing the life and work of the Founder.
- The vestibule and the exterior surroundings of the chapel are still to be improved. The organ will be set in place at the end of this year.

La Valla

On the 22nd November 1987, five new stained glass windows were inaugurated in the apse of the parish church. Two of these windows represent Father Champagnat (4th on the right) and Brother François (5th on the right). They are the work of Paul Duckert, master-glassmaker at Taizé. The Institute paid the greater part of the cost but the people of La Valla were very much involved.



Maisonnettes

The Institute was able to buy the family home of Brother François in 1984. Some important restorations have been carried out there thanks, notably, to the generous work of some young Germans under the direction of Brother Paul Sester. The house has retained its former appearance. It will be able to receive pilgrims and people who come to pray.

Champagnat Year

FMS-Echo No. 6 (March 1989) gave information on the principal activities planned for Notre-Dame de l'Hermitage. The assembly of youth—13th and 14th of May—was a splendid success. On the 15th of October there will be inaugurated the Marcellin Champagnat track in the national park of Pilat.

6. BROTHERS OF THE SACRED HEART-VIETNAM

Most would recall that preliminary steps had been taken to examine the possibility of this congregation of Brothers joining us but the end of the war and the subsequent impossibility of regular contact made any further progress impossible. Recently, we have had some fresh contacts. Reading between the lines, it seems that there may have been some lessening of interest in the possibility of a union. Please, keep these Brothers in your prayers.

7. ESTABLISHMENT OF A DISTRICT IN KOREA

In December 1988, the Provincial Council of Central Mexico, in view of the development and present situation of the Sector of Korea, asked Bro. Superior General and his Council to establish this sector as a District. After the visit of Bro. Philip Ouellette to Korea and then to the Province of Central Mexico, the General Council recognized that the conditions set down in our Constitutions for the establishment of a District dependent on a Province had been met, and the requested deci-

sion was therefore taken this past June. Congratulations to the twenty Korean Brothers and the six Mexican Brothers of this new District!

8. THE SITUATION IN HUNGARY

After a Hungarian-born Brother had visited the country, we were came to the following conclusion:

The Church in Hungary, its government, and our Institute, would be delighted if some Brothers could go there immediately.

To do so, of course, would immediately raise the language problem. It would also mean real sacrifices on the part of the participating provinces, but we still have reason to be hopeful!

9. CUBA (Br. Marcelino Ganzarain's report)

At dawn on 1 May 1961, during a six-hour speech, Fidel Castro announced the nationalization of education in Cuba. In the early hours of that day, all schools were taken over by the military.

For all practical purposes, this meant the expulsion of nearly all men and women religious who were directly involved in education, among them our own Brothers.

At that moment, we had eleven schools in Cuba, plus the juniorate, novitiate, scholasticate and provincial house. There were nearly 200 Brothers, of whom 35 were Cubans.

In November 1988, Bro. Javier Espinosa and I obtained government permission to enter Cuba, at the invitation of the Apostolic Nunciature.

We met with a number of bishops, priests, men and women religious, former students and personal friends. It was evident that pastoral work was urgently needed there. Two bishops asked us to come to their dioceses to take over the coordination of catechetical and youth work, on the diocesan level. The Church's resources are extremely limited, especially in these two areas.

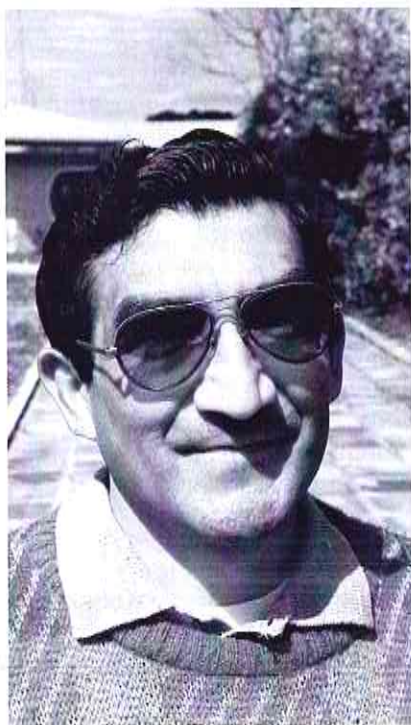
Religious trying to enter Cuba still face real difficulties. If the Province of Central America, or any other province, decides to send Brothers there, they will have to overcome the major obstacle of getting authorization from the Cuban government.

I hope that both these conditions: a provincial decision and government authorization, will soon become a happy reality.



Brother Ricardo Piña, Superior of the new District of Korea

Regional group meetings



Brother Joaquín Flores,
new Provincial of Central Mexico

EUROPE

The General Conference provided the provincials of EUROPE the opportunity for their first meeting together. Also present for the meeting was the District Superior of Lebanon/Syria.

The year 1992 signals a greater attempt at collaboration on the part of European countries and is a sign for us to work more closely as the "Conference of Marist Provincials of Europe". Since we are already confronting similar situations, problems and concerns, we are open to journeying together, creating conditions that will facilitate greater exchange and collaboration. Already some very interesting suggestions have surfaced. Among these, is the proposed meeting of all 17 provincials to be held at the Hermitage the last week of September 1990.

Congratulations to this newly formed group of "Europe Marist".

ASIA

The two meetings of the ASIA group took place in a very friendly and cordial atmosphere. Among the topics discussed were the possibility of greater cooperation at the novitiate and scholastic levels as well as possible joint programs in ongoing formation. Also discussed was the possibility of more frequent meetings between Provincials and District Superiors of Asia. The next such meeting has been scheduled for Manila at the end of February 1990.

AFRICA

The AFRICA group met on two occasions to explore the future of Marist works in Africa.

Some facts:

- The demographic explosion.
- The phenomenon of the "sects" with tremendous financial help.

—Youth: large numbers of young people; need for education. Many african bishops are continually asking for brothers to help in their dioceses.

—The development of African history with all its complexities; feelings of resentments towards the period of colonization.

—The work of the Brothers in Africa; the efforts of Provinces to found missions. Great variety in these foundations. At present there are 500 Brothers in Africa and Madagascar.

—The number of Superiors: more than 30 Brothers.

—Recent efforts to finance formation in Marist Africa. Grateful acknowledgement is expressed to all those who have helped.

—Since the original meeting in Kutama in 1986, there have been regular annual meetings.

Building the future together

It is no longer possible to continue with 19 administrative units in Africa.



Meeting of Superiors from the Pacific area

What plan should be adopted? This topic was discussed in Nairobi in April of 1988: More collaboration is needed. No group can isolate itself with its problems.

Conclusion

- Emphasis must be placed on formation.
- The young Brothers must be accompanied.
- A serious reflection on inculturation is needed in Africa.
- Missionary Brothers need to learn the language of the culture where they are ministering.

- There is need to prepare African leadership.
- More Brothers need to reflect on ways to help in the development of Marist Africa.

LATIN AMERICA

The LATIN AMERICAN Provincials met on two occasions to discuss the following topics:

- Review and evaluation of the resolutions agreed on in Cali in 1984.

- Opinions were expressed concerning the life of Father Champagnat as portrayed in the video *"Light in the Rock"*.

- Election of the new coordinator of CLAP (Conference of Provincials of Latin America) and the theme of our next meeting in 1991.

Brother Superior General was present for one of our meetings and urged us to be attentive to the needs of our Brothers and to give new life to the charism of Marcellin.

Brother Joaquín Flores
México Central



Meeting of the Marist Provincials of Europe

MARCELLIN CHAMPAGNAT ALIVE AMONG US



*Brother Antonio Ramalho,
Provincial of North Brazil*

On the morning of 25th September, at the beginning of the first session of the day, the statue of Father Champagnat was solemnly carried into the Assembly Hall by the Provincials of Brazil, while the everyone sang the Brazilian bicentenary hymn. Brother Albino Trevisan, Provincial of Porto Alegre, then presented the statue to the Superior General who enthroned it on the dais. After a few moments of personal reflection, the whole assembly sang the Marist Family hymn, as an expression of their brotherhood and their commitment to make his charism a reality in today's world.

The statue, made of wood, is the work of an artist from Santa Catarina. Six similar statues are presently being taken around all the communities and apostolic works of the six Marist provinces of Brazil. These statues were blessed at a solemn Eucharistic celebration on 13th March 1989 in Congonhas do Campo, in the state of Minas Gerais, where in 1897 the first Marist foundation was made in Brazil. This Eucharist was presided over by bishop of Congonhas do Campo and by archbishop Luciano Mendes, who is president of the Brazilian Episcopal Conference. Present at the

ceremony were the six Provincials of Brazil, as well as a large number of brothers, students, parents, teachers, and Marist co-workers.

The statue of Father Champagnat was brought into the assembly hall as a symbol of his presence among us. In this bicentenary year, he is here among us to inspire us, to give us strength, to open us up to new paths in our fidelity to the Lord and to the mission which has been confided to us.

He unites us across the diversity of our backgrounds, and confirms us in our vocation in the Church, which should be an experience of the same faith, love and service which so characterized his own life.

The statue shows Blessed Marcellin coming to meet us with open arms, to symbolize his openness of heart, his friendship and love, and the total commitment and missionary zeal which inspired him.

We, the Marist Brothers of Brazil, have opened our arms and our hearts to welcome all of you to this General Conference, and we have presented this statue to Brother Superior General to take with him to Rome as a sign of our gratitude at his having chosen to live this moment of grace with us in Latin America, and in particular here in Brazil.

*Bro. Antonio Carlos Ramalho
Provincial of North Brazil*



The Brazil Provincials enter in procession with the statue

SHOWS

Having little spare time because of the Conference's full schedule, some evenings after supper were set aside for the viewing of some of the most relevant productions of the Champagnat Bicentennial year. Unfortunately, circumstances prevented the showing of the video produced in Colombia. Its showing was postponed from night to night. Up until now we have had to settle for the exchange of opinions in one of the language groups. It is difficult to synthesize as wide a range of opinions as that coming out of the Hispanic language group. But it can be stated that there is general recognition of the value of the production and its usefulness for the pastoral purposes for which it was produced.

We did get to see "Living in the Light", a professionally produced video, fifty minutes in length, prepared by the Sydney province with the assistance and support of the provinces of Great Britain, Ireland, Melbourne, South Africa and Papua-New Guinea. The video offers

a panorama of the Brothers' work in different parts of the world and as background a simple history of the life of Marcellin Champagnat, filmed at the Hermitage and in surrounding areas. The video attempts to reflect the life and spirit of the Founder in the past and in today's world.

Finally, some comments on the musical "Society of Brothers", a production of the Argentine theater group "Catarsis". The Marist provinces of Luján and Córdoba brought the group to Veranópolis to stage the show, which had its debut only three months ago in Buenos Aires, and has since played with great success in Paraguay and Chile. This professional theater company, on learning that the General Conference was being held in Brazil, wished to offer a free showing as a gesture of gratitude to the Marist Brothers. They thought that the timelessness of Champagnat which they had captured and expressed, could reach out and catch the Brothers' attention, but they weren't sure. So they tried it, despite the language barrier, con-



*Brother Teófilo Miguel,
Provincial of Luján,
introduces the musical
"The Society of Brothers"*

vinced of the universality of the language of dance, music and light, essential elements of their creation.

They presented the show, conquered the hearts of an audience from the 5 continents, and dreamed once more of continuing to cross frontiers, since those of their own homeland had become too narrow for their legitimate ambitions. The evening of October 7, 1989, feast of Our Lady of the Rosary, will long be remembered by all those who had the good fortune to attend this show. "Catarsis" was deeply moved by their impact on an audience which was transformed into the best of promoters. Champagnat still has something to say to the Brothers, youth, children, former students, the Marist Family and to all our associates.

*Brother Teófilo Miguel
Luján (Argentina)*



*An action shot during the performance of the "Catarsis" group.
N. B. See more pictures on page 3 of the cover*

DISPLAYS

Two very attractive exhibits were on display for the Brothers at the General Conference.

Brother Agustín Carazo, Postulator General, through the kindness of Brother Ewaldo Neis, put on display a variety of "Marist material", items helpful in vocational accompaniment and for the developing Champagnat Marist Family Movement, as well as for Marist celebrations. There were also audio-visual materials, very useful in catechesis and youth gatherings. Buyers are wanted. The exhibitor, on his list of items for sale, invites suggestions. The most common suggestion: "Less expensive." Many Brothers have stopped by to browse. Many even know the price of each item. We thank Brother Agustín and Brother Ewaldo for organizing the exhibit and for the material displayed; we think it promotes knowledge of the Founder and of our Marist apostolates.

The second display takes us on a tour of the *Marist world* via statistics, photos and posters. Samoa, Fiji, Papua-New Guinea, New Caledonia, Madagascar, and Zimbabwe are seen through their picturesque ceremonies and native celebrations. The young Brothers of Rwanda, characteristically Marist, are at work. Venezuela, Córdoba and Catalunya display an attractive collection of literature on programs for children, youth and parents. All have on display significant statistics and thought-provoking photographs.

An impartial criticism that was heard: "The display of photos and posters about our schools and communities from far-flung provinces and districts is attractive. Not everyone has participated, though. I also think it would have been a richer

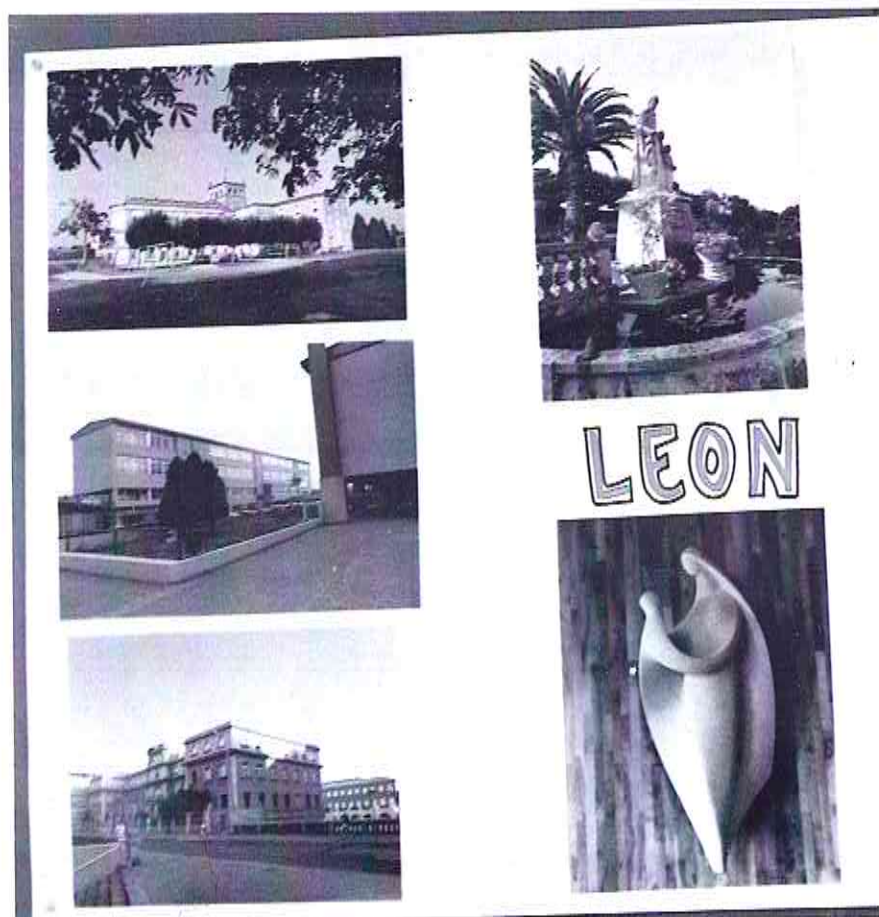


*Brother Teodoro Merino
receives a gift
from Br. Superior General*

and more interesting exhibit if the photos were more lively and expressive; if they gave a general idea of the apostolic presence and activities of the Brothers, not just photos of buildings, which don't communicate very much." We are grateful for this constructive criticism.

To the exhibitors and organizers of the two displays, our most sincere gratitude for your part in encouraging family spirit. Thank you.

*Brother Teodoro Merino
Ecuador*



A section of the "Expo" of the Provinces

Visits

1. A MEETING WITH THE COMMUNITY OF THE PARISH OF VERANÓPOLIS

During the Conference we were lucky to be able to spend a number of hours on various occasions mixing with different groups whether here at the RECANTO MEDIANEIRA or in the town of Veranópolis or elsewhere. The following are a number of those meetings.

On the evening of the 30th of September we had a wonderful experience: Mass in the town's main church.

The parish community, no doubt somewhat curious, gave us a very warm welcome indeed. We were all seated in the centre of the nave and then, at the beginning of the



*Brother Dario Bortolini,
Provincial of São Paulo*



St Louis Gonzaga Parish Church, in Veranópolis

Eucharist, were introduced in groups according to the five continents, each being greeted by a round of applause.

Present also for the occasion was the mixed choir from Santa Cruz do Sul, formed of the little singers of the Marist college São Luiz and some singers from that town. Their presence made the occasion even more memorable.

During the homily, Brother Superior General spoke words of greeting, encouragement and of gratitude to the parish community. He then went on to speak about the Institute and our General Conference. The whole Mass was broadcast from the local radio station. Once Mass was over, both inside the church and outside, small groups gathered to greet the Brothers who come from the four corners of the world.

It was not surprising that the Provincials most sought after were those who came from Italy and Germany because so many people of Veranópolis are of Italian or German descent.

This contact with the people of the town made a big impression on all of us, especially because of their great simplicity, joy and real welcome.

2. MARIST NOVICES AND POSTULANTS

On the evening of the 3rd of October 31 young men in formation belonging to the Provinces of Santa Maria, Santa Catarina and Porto Alegre, together with those in charge of their formation came to take part in our evening Eucharist and to join us for supper. There were 14 novices from Passo Fundo and 17 postulants from Caxias do Sul.

Brother Superior General welcomed them by telling them that young men in formation give the Institute a new vitality and youthfulness and he encouraged them to be faithful to their call. After the Mass the dinner extended into an evening with various songs in different languages.

We were all delighted to be able to spend this evening in a relaxed brotherly spirit with these young Marists. We finished the evening by singing the Salve Regina.



Joy and singing with the young Brazilian aspirants



Bishop Paulo Moretto, of Caxias, during his homily

3. THE BISHOP OF THE DIOCESE PAYS US A VISIT

During the last week of the Conference we received a visit from D. Paulo Moretto, the Bishop of the Diocese of Caxias do Sul, in which Veranópolis is situated. The day was particularly appropriate since it was the 12th of October, the feast of Notre-Dame Aparecida, the patroness of Brazil and of Notre-Dame del Pilar, the patroness of Spain.

The bishop celebrated the Eucharist with us and remained on for the meal afterwards. During his homily he laid special emphasis on the Marial devotion of the people of Brazil, something that linked them with us as Marists. He urged us to be faithful to our own Marial spirituality.

Br. Dario Bortolini
São Paulo

RELAXING

An important and joyful dimension of the Conference were the social evenings and outings affording the Brothers the opportunity to meet each other in a relaxed and convivial atmosphere.

The evenings spent together were occasions when the Conference entertained itself joining in the community singing of songs internationally known, partly known and sometimes unknown, from the many cultures represented at the Conference. The relaxed atmosphere enabled the hitherto unknown or hidden talent of some individuals to surface in the rendering of a song or the playing of an instrument which served as an ideal counterpoint to the more rousing choruses.

Our first outing from Veranópolis on October 1st enabled us to appreciate the majestic beauty of the surrounding landscape and countryside. Veranópolis is situated in the State of Rio Grande do Sul, 780 metres above sea level. It is an area populated by people of Italian origin who settled in the area from 1875 onwards. The area is rich in vineyards, the vine having been brought



Brother John Hyland, Provincial of Ireland

to the region by Bro. José Sion and the pioneering Brothers who were thus responsible for the first champagne in Brazil. We had the opportunity to sample the wines of the region during a visit to a wine-making co-operative called "Aurora" at the town of Bento Gonçalves.

Having viewed a video showing the surrounding grape-growing region, we were taken on a guided tour of the co-operative to view the wine-

making process. The high point of this tour was of course the wine-tasting room. Time unfortunately allowed no more than that — a taste of the excellent reds and whites. Our thirst was suitably satiated however during our next stop at Maison Forestier where we were welcomed by the Mayor of Garibaldi, Vandénir Antonio Miotti, President of the Past Pupils Association, as well as by the proprietor and friends of the Brothers. Casual conversation was later to reveal that the aforementioned Bro. José Sion had been longtime mayor of Garibaldi in the 1920's. Here in the immortal words of a Marist reveller of another time and place, libations were liberally poured to Bacchus resulting in the spontaneous singing of drinking songs from many parts of the world.

From here we proceeded to Borghetto for a meal provided by the mayor and prepared by the past pupils and friends of the Brothers. The Brothers showed their appreciation in the singing of some well-known choruses in the various language groups only in turn to be regaled with Brazilian chants by those who had prepared the meal.



A sunny day for the picnic



Brother Iulio Suaesi, District Superior of Samoa, does a typical dance of his own country

Borghetto, we later learned, is the home of Bro. José Otão, long-time rector of the Catholic University of Porto Alegre. Having taken some time at a nearby park to enjoy the beautiful warm sunshine of that Sunday afternoon, we made our way home via the Marian shrine of Caravaggio. All in all, this was a day to be remembered for its joy, generosity and sense of having been in touch with some of the many strands of Marist presence in the region over the years.

On the following Sunday, many Brothers paid a visit to Porto Alegre to see the Catholic University campus. The university was founded by

Brother Afonso and a group of teachers in 1934. Today it numbers 25,000 students. A notable feature of the university is the provision of courses and opportunities for creating social awareness among the students, of the poverty and injustice suffered by many of their fellow countrymen and women.

Meanwhile, another group of Brothers was enjoying the sights of the tourist region of Canela-Gramado. This area is a German settlement dating from 1825. Following a visit to the Brothers' primary school at Canela, we celebrated Eucharist in the school oratory. En route to the local *churrascaria* Bom-

ba e Bombacha (restaurant), we stopped off at a park to watch some would-be latter-day Pelés in action. Some felt that their chances of World Cup glory were not unduly endangered having watched this particular spectacle! The Brothers from the community at Canela had arranged this churrasco meal for us and the pupils from the school, dressed in their traditional colourful costumes and dresses, provided musical and dancing entertainment. Before our departure, the students very generously provided us with a gift of some chocolate of the region, which was deeply appreciated.

Our contact with youth was further continued that afternoon when we visited Minimundo, a typical German town of the Bavarian region in miniature, for the enjoyment of young children, but which curiously was viewed more by adults than children. The child in us all perhaps!

The warmth of the welcome and the hospitality we received from people everywhere in Brazil was nowhere more in evidence than on the night of our final outing to a centre run by the gauchos (local cowboys) who served us a traditional churrasco, before entertaining us with their Chula and Boleadeiras dance routines. Here also we were treated to further traditional dances by the pupils from the Brothers' schools at Vacaria and Camaquã, who also shared with us a gift of honey produced locally.

Our social evenings and outings brought us into contact with something of the joy, warmth and hospitality of the wider Marist family and Brazilian people. We will long retain grateful memories of food and wine, song and dance, friendship and generosity, enabling us to celebrate our joy of being together as Brothers in Brazil. *Obrigado, brasileiros e brasileiras!*

*Br. John Hyland
Ireland*

OVERALL IMPRESSIONS



Comments from several Superiors

1. What has impressed you most deeply during the Conference?

THE spirit in which we worked, prayed and reflected, and the brotherhood we lived, which proves that throughout the Marist world—in this case, the Provincials—we all see the mission of the Marist Brother in the same way.

(Br José Ticó, Peru.)

THE deepest impression made on me during the Conference is the kindness of the Brothers who are helping us in the house and the ladies working in the house. They're at your service. The fraternity of the participants.

(Br Clifford Perera, Sri Lanka.)

DOUBTLESS, the challenge to be faithful to Father Champagnat and our origins by dedicating ourselves with apostolic zeal to the Christian education of the most neglected children and youth. Using fictitious percentages, this challenge might be stated in this way: If, today, for example, 70% of the children and youth to whom we minister come from more or less comfortable families and 30% from the most neglected in society, then the challenge is to reverse those figures.

(Br Antonio Martínez, Norte.)

THE richness in each individual Brother of his mentality, attitudes, background experiences, cultures and values centred on Mary and Champagnat has made the deepest impression on me.

People of different races and languages have come to reflect and discern; afterwards have shared common elements of our lives as Brothers. Brotherhood has been evident with warmth and affection. Our Maristness has been witnessed although language barriers.

(Br Iulio Suaesi, Samoa.)

WHAT struck me most forcibly was the way we immediately plunged into the topic of "The Spirituality of our Mission", and how seriously we treated it. I very much enjoyed and appreciated the first two conferences and they are still very vivid in my memory. I will also mention the stress laid on "going to the poor". Archbishop Luciano Mendes' conference was frank and gripping.

(Br Emmanuel Ramaroson, Madagascar.)



Br Graziano Gori, Italy

THE General Conference was indeed for me a great experience. Many things impressed me deeply:

- First of all, the good spirit, the friendliness, the joyfulness, the family atmosphere that I felt in all the Marist communities that I visited.
- The moments of intimacy and sharing with the Superiors of the General Administration and with the other Provincials.
- The lively and closely-followed liturgies.
- The climate of brotherhood and understanding that characterised the days spent together despite the inevitable language difficulties.
- The very warm welcome offered us by the people of Veranópolis.

(Br Graziano Gori, Italy.)



Br Antonio Martínez, Norte

2. What are the major signs of hope that you see as you look to the future?



Br José Ticó, Peru

THE desire to live the mission of the Marist Brother in today's world and tomorrow's, following the charism of Marcellin Champagnat.

The enthusiasm with which the Champagnat Year is being observed around the world. The attraction Marcellin Champagnat has, not only for youth but also for adults who want to live his spirituality. Champagnat is truly alive today. The interest and efforts in the provinces for promoting vocations for the Church and for the Institute.

(Br José Ticó, Peru.)

THAT the Institute is keen and sincere in returning to what it was founded for —the Christian education/formation of youth, particularly the most neglected.

That there is optimism for the future of our Institute. That the Brothers are not discouraged by the fewer numbers we have.

(Br Clifford Perera, Sri Lanka.)

THIS General Conference renewed our Marist values, stirred up new and genuine enthusiasm for a return to our Marist roots, and impelled us in the direction of a simpler life, sharing, and concern for the least favoured.

(Br Emmanuel Ramarason, Madagascar.)

THE serenity, peace and courage with which we are facing reality and the future of the Institute.

Our Constitutions, with their treasures of spiritual and apostolic vitality.

The growing spiritual attractiveness of Father Champagnat in all parts of the Marist world.

The important place accorded to formation.

(Br Antonio Martínez, Norte.)



Br Clifford Perera, Sri Lanka

WE, as Marist Brothers, have a gift to offer and to share with others —the reality of the charism of Fr. Champagnat.

Only us, the Marist Brothers, can share this special gift of the Holy Spirit given to Champagnat, then to us, to share with youth, especially the most neglected.

(Br Iulio Suaesi, Samoa.)

3. What do you think are the major problems and obstacles facing the Institute?

THE weakening of apostolic spirit, threatened by professionalism, convenience, and comfort, especially in certain cultures.

The diminishing number of Brothers and the increasing number of apostolic works. This calls for serious reflection in order to adapt our resources to our efforts and vice versa.

(Br Antonio Martínez, Norte.)

THE decrease in personnel in a good number of Provinces forced us to face the problems of perseverance, formation and vocation promotion.

The demands of evangelization forced us to evaluate objectively the quality and pastoral efficiency of our institutions.

This evaluation encouraged us to accept the need for personal and institutional conversion, thus bringing our options in line with our charism.



Br Emmanuel Ramaroson,
Madagascar

Above all, we had to give concrete answers to the preferential option for the poor as asked for by our Constitutions.

(Br Graziano Gori, Italy.)

OUR biggest challenge, is ourselves as Brothers and the Marist vocation. I believe vocation will flock to our way of spirituality only when we act in our attitudes and behaviour the reality of the charism of Champagnat —every Marist Brother of the Institute.

(Br Iulio Suaesi, Samoa.)



Br Iulio Suaesi, Samoa

THE "graying" of the Brothers in many provinces, as well as the lack of vocations in those same provinces.

A "creeping secularism" that causes a loss of the sense of God and of transcendent values, and makes recruiting more difficult.

(Br José Ticó Marqués, Peru.)

WE need to overcome:

- our middle-class habits,
- our more or less conscious commitment to the rich,
- our tendency to always want to imitate the lifestyle of the higher classes of society,
- a certain "settling-in",
- professionalism and activism,
- occasional ambiguity in our apostolic work (a lack of transparency).

(Br. Emmanuel Ramaroson,
Madagascar.)

WE have to go back to the original spirit of Champagnat. He founded us for the Christian education of youth, the most neglected. We must orientate our energies and the resources we have to this aim. This is not an easy task. The reordering of our priorities has to be effected. The call of the poor is strong today. To listen to the Holy Spirit is a must today.

- We have become "workolics", activists. The contemplative dimension of our lives is weak. A stronger union with God is necessary.
- The formation and the pastoral care of our young Brothers has to be looked into. The on-going formation of our Brothers is closely linked to this. The pastoral of formation has to be well planned.

(Br Clifford Perera, Sri Lanka.)

YOUNG BROTHERS IMPRESSIONS

The General Conference opened us up to a broader view of the Institute and its journey, our spirituality and our mission.

The central theme of the Conference was: The Marist Brother and his mission for the future. The fundamental question posed was: What are the challenges facing us today, 150 years after the death of our Founder, and how can we be faithful today to our charism and mission?

This is a great challenge for all of us, but perhaps especially for us, young Brothers, and also for future generations. We must accept the challenge with enthusiasm, courage and daring. Society, the Church and the Institute expect no less from us.

We feel very happy to have been called to be part of Mary's family, to respond to Marcellin Champagnat's charism and to have been chosen to attend this Conference.

For us, participation in the General Conference has been both a grace and a gift. We find it difficult to express everything this experience has meant for us. We can only say that it was a wonderful event in our lives, one that we find hard to describe.

Our living together, the contact with Brothers from so many different countries and varied cultural

backgrounds, was certainly one of the highlights of this experience. We felt a real sense of brotherhood in every aspect of our life together: group work, sharing sessions, liturgies, celebrations and discussions. They were all enriching and valuable for us.

As the Conference came to an end, we left with a feeling of deep gratitude for the privilege of having participated in this special presence of the Spirit within the Institute, all the more so since it is the first time any young Brother have had such an opportunity. The event will, no doubt, be recorded as just another moment in the history of General Conferences, but for us, it will always be a very cherished memory.

We are returning to our provinces and our communities, full of enthusiasm, courage and love—for our vocation, our mission, the Institute, our Superiors—and with a strong determination to remain faithful.

We would also like to take this opportunity to say something to all our young Brothers: let us not be afraid to offer ourselves entirely, with all our potential, to God and to our brothers. Let us strive to be faithful to our consecration, to our Blessed Mother, to our Founder and to our Institute.

We especially want to thank Br. Charles and the General Council for giving us this wonderful opportunity. Our thanks as well to all the Provincials for the warm welcome, generous support and encouragement which they gave us.

Brothers ANTONIO, GERSON, XAVIER,
ROBERTO, JAVIER and ANTONIO



The first time any young Brother have had such an opportunity

GENERAL STATISTICS OF THE INSTITUTE

AT 31 DECEMBER 1988

	PROVINCES & DISTRICTS	POST.	NOV.	TEMP.	PERP.	TOTAL	DECES	LEFT.	TOTAL	1. V.	P.P.
01	AFRIQUE DU SUD	00	00	05	31	36	02	00	02	01	00
02	ALLEMAGNE	00	01	05	72	77	02	00	02	01	00
03	AMÉRIQUE CENTRALE	14	18	35	148	183	01	03	04	07	08
04	BEAUCAMPS-St. GENIS	00	04	05	237	242	07	01	08	00	01
05	BELGIQUE-HOLLANDE	00	00	01	149	150	05	00	05	00	01
06	BÉTICA	14	08	27	170	197	04	01	05	04	02
07	BRÉSIL NORD	05	09	12	78	90	01	07	08	08	02
08	CASTILLA	00	15	20	154	174	02	04	06	03	01
09	CATALUNYA	24	12	50	213	263	02	09	11	10	01
10	CHILI	03	03	06	100	106	01	02	03	01	03
11	CHINE	00	01	03	60	63	00	01	01	00	00
12	COLOMBIE	02	09	19	75	94	04	03	07	07	01
13	CÓRDOBA	03	00	04	89	93	03	01	04	02	01
14	ÉQUATEUR	00	02	06	42	48	01	06	07	00	00
15	ESOPUS	01	06	00	163	163	06	02	08	00	02
16	GRANDE BRETAGNE	02	05	12	63	75	02	01	03	00	00
17	IBERVILLE	01	02	01	201	202	07	03	10	00	00
18	IRLANDE	00	00	01	37	38	00	02	02	01	00
19	ITALIE	00	01	03	110	113	04	00	04	00	01
20	LEÓN	10	08	13	168	181	01	02	03	02	00
21	LEVANTE	06	07	12	103	115	01	02	03	01	02
22	LIBAN-SYRIE	00	00	00	17	17	01	00	01	00	00
23	LUJÁN	01	01	05	105	110	03	00	03	01	00
24	MADAGASCAR	07	09	19	47	66	00	03	03	00	03
25	MADRID	08	02	05	120	125	04	04	08	01	00
26	MELBOURNE	00	00	03	145	148	01	01	02	00	01
27	MEXIQUE CENTRAL	16	19	28	131	159	02	04	06	03	02
28	MEXIQUE OCCIDENTAL	28	14	20	172	192	01	02	03	01	01
29	MIDI, C. O. HERMITAGE	00	01	00	252	252	09	00	09	00	00
30	NIGERIA	03	06	14	65	79	02	03	05	01	03
31	NORTE	08	07	04	145	149	01	01	02	00	00
32	NOUVELLE ZÉLANDE	13	05	18	170	188	03	03	06	01	01
33	PÉROU	08	18	18	62	80	03	02	05	08	07
34	PHILIPPINES	09	07	06	44	50	01	02	03	01	02
35	PORTO ALEGRE	04	01	08	145	153	05	02	07	02	01
36	PORTUGAL	05	00	06	56	62	00	01	01	00	00
37	POUGHKEEPSIE	01	00	06	137	143	01	05	06	01	00
38	QUÉBEC	00	16	12	154	166	04	01	05	00	00
39	RIO DE JANEIRO	02	05	14	80	94	02	02	04	02	01
40	RWANDA	00	00	07	32	39	01	01	02	01	01
41	SANTA CATARINA	02	02	14	67	81	00	00	00	04	01
42	SANTA MARIA	07	02	09	88	97	03	02	05	03	01
43	SÃO PAULO	02	02	17	88	105	00	01	01	04	03
44	SRI LANKA	00	02	04	46	50	00	00	00	00	02
45	SUISSE	00	00	00	25	25	01	01	02	00	00
46	SYDNEY	04	05	15	312	327	05	04	09	03	01
47	URUGUAY	00	00	00	34	34	02	02	04	00	01
48	VENEZUELA	19	09	30	42	72	01	02	03	04	02
49	ZAÏRE	00	04	19	33	52	00	02	02	04	02
—	ADM. GÉNÉRALE (INDE)	00	00	05	00	05	00	00	00	00	00
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	TOTAL 1988	232	248	546	5277	5823	112	101	213	93	62
	TOTAL 1987	222	235	569	5359	5928	107	131	238	119	
	DIFFERENCES	+10	+13	—23	—82	—105	+05	—30	—25	—26	



Performance of the musical
«Society of Brothers», a production
of the Argentine theatre group «Catarsis»



And now, in the company of Mary, in the presence of Champagnat and all our Marist saints, I ask you to commit yourselves anew to the mission passed on by them.

Brothers, in joy, in hope and in love, go forth to your people all over the world. In a special way, go forth to your Brothers. Be for them men of hope, convinced of the presence of the Holy Spirit in your lives and in theirs. As Superiors, show them your love attentively, encouraging them, supporting them, challenging them. Have Champagnat's concern for the young and the poor. Be men of audacity and perseverance, and let the Brothers share your boldness and endurance. Lead your Brothers in prayerful discernment to discover God's will for them among the needs that cry out for their love and service. Let them be stirred by the zeal of Champagnat, and know his restlessness in the face of the Gospel.

Go forth, then, confident of the power of Jesus, and know that He will be with you always, even to the end of time.

Last words of the homily given by Br. Charles at the end of the Conference.