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**03/06/2008:** Colombia - Marist spirituality course with Br. Teófilo Minga

**03/06/2008:** Photo gallery: Remodeling work at the Hermitage - 9

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**30/05/2008:** United States - Esopus novitiate reopens!

**30/05/2008:** My experience of lay life - Carlos Ares Antequera (Spain)

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**29/05/2008:** Meeting in Rome of the Provincial Economes from the region of Africa

**29/05/2008:** New book received: Um jeito próprio de evangelizar (Clemente Ivo Juliatto, fms)

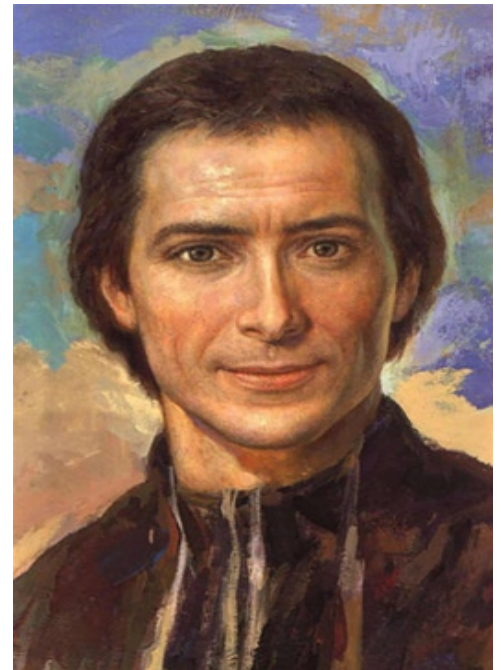
## Feast of Marcellin Champagnat

### Message from the Superior General

Let's imagine this morning that Marcellin Champagnat was born in Le Rosey, France in May of 1980 and not 1789. That's right, May 1980. That would make him 28 years of age today and if my memory serves me well, I believe that he was about that old when he founded our Institute. For the sake of our example, let's imagine further that he is a parish priest in a small town in France. The area is economically depressed but the people are hard-working, family-oriented, and a bit suspicious about all that's happening in places like Paris, Lyons, London, and surely New York!

This modern day Marcellin would have been born a little over a decade after a series of events in France that came in time to be known as May 1968. Student protests and a general strike that year had shaken up the country, challenged conventional morality, and contributed to the eventual collapse of the de Gaulle government. More importantly, a way of looking at the world began to change; old forms gave way to new understandings. Some welcomed the change, others were frightened by it, still others condemned it.

Looking back on the short life of our modern day Marcellin Champagnat we would also have to admit that he struggled with schoolwork. Not because he lacked an ability for studies but rather because his opportunities for primary education had been so limited. Early



in life, however, I wonder if at times he questioned whether he would have been admitted to seminary at all or allowed to stay had there not been a vocation crisis.

Marcellin learned one day about a young parishioner who was dying. The name didn't ring a bell but, then again, the children and young people of more than a few of the families on the parish rolls were infrequent visitors to the parish Church. So alarming was the situation in some places that the previous Pope, John Paul II, had called for a

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**Edit:**

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re-evangelization of Europe.

With all these points in mind he set out for the young man's house. What he found there stunned him. The 17-year-old knew next to nothing about his faith, and what he had managed to pick up was proving to be of precious little consolation in light of the situation he faced.

Marcellin spent some time with the boy, consoling him, instructing him, and helping him to die. But inside the priest, the last pieces of a dream were rapidly falling into place. He had wanted for quite a while now to do something that would make a difference in the lives of poor children and young people, something that would help them understand just how much Jesus Christ loved them.

Now you might be saying to yourself, "Yes, yes, get to the point. Tell us that he founded his Little Brothers of Mary and we all lived happily ever after." But let's not be so hasty about ending the story. My hunch is that Marcellin would have thought long and hard about what was best for the poor children and young people of his day, and in the case of our example: today.

So, the question before us is this one: Would the Founder have

if we had the good sense to join him.

Let me say that my hunch is that he would founded us. Yes, he would have founded us simply because faith has to do with a relationship of such absolute wonder that if I risk giving my heart to it, I cannot help but be transformed. And that is what Marcellin wanted us to be for young people, sacraments of an encounter with Jesus Christ. Not necessarily teachers, or administrators, or youth workers, or whatever, but simply brothers to Jesus and to the young with a unique capacity to introduce one to the other. The means are important and I do not wish in any way to detract from them. But those we have at our disposal--schools, catechetical centers, programs, retreats or movements of one sort or another--are but means if you and I are not men and women in love with God, men and women on fire with the Spirit, men and women of passion because we have met the Lord Jesus Christ and fallen in love with him.

And, in the midst of all of this speculation about a modern day Marcellin Champagnat, what about religious life? Were he born in 1980 and not 1789, would the founder push us toward some new form of



latter but also make these three points. First of all, he would tell us to live our religious life in a way that would intrigue and attract the young;. Make it worth the gift of your life, he would insist. Take risks when necessary, be bold in your initiatives, say "yes" without hesitation, calculation, or excessive concern about your personal needs. For religious life was never meant to be domesticated; at its best it has always been a bit wild.

And at all costs, he would tell us, avoid those styles of living our way of life that masquerade as being religious. Professional, balanced, politically and psychologically correct, how terribly dull and bloodless they are. Where is the joy, he would ask, the sacrifice, the experience of transcending oneself, the adventure of setting out in response to God's initiative, God's call, God's will and not solely according to my own lights. Above all, he would tell us, let Jesus be the center and passion of your life.

Second, Marcellin would remind us in no uncertain terms that our way of life was never meant to be drawn into the Church's parochial structures, but rather while in communion with the local Church it should also stand apart and remind the Church about its true nature. For when Marcellin Champagnat mounted a scaffold to build

**Were Marcellin born in 1980 and not 1789, would the founder push us toward some new form of Church life or might he invite us to think about living what has been known traditionally as religious life but in a renewed way, a way appropriate for today?**

founded us, had he been born in 1980 and not 1789? And if he did, what would we look like? What work would he have us doing? How would he inspire us, challenge, us, give us hope during the early years of this new foundation? That is,

Church life or might he invite us to think about living what has been known traditionally as religious life but in a renewed way, a way appropriate for today?

I believe that he would advise the

the Hermitage, he was reminding the clergy of his day—many of whom were eager to restore the Third Estate—that the answers to the questions of their age lay in the future and not the past. And when the early members of the Society of Mary decided that the Church at the margins was their proper place, they were reminding our Church and all the rest of us that numbered among our brothers and sisters are those in whom few have taken any interest and to whom even fewer attended.

Finally, he would challenge us to take on both the heart of a missionary and a heart for the poor. Step out of your narrow and predictable worlds, he would challenge, and come to understand the many faces of God. So also, no matter where you find yourself, carry within you a heart for the poor. Make every effort also to be among those children and young people who have the least. Yes, every child is important, and every child deserves the right to mature in an environment of love and safety, he would say, but you need to be with those who have no one to look out for them, to speak for them, to love them, to help them to find their voice. In all things, let Mary be your model, for she was a remarkable woman of faith who made this journey of life before you. Let her be both a mother and a sister in faith to you.

“To love God,” Marcellin often said, “yes, to love God and to make God known and loved, that is what a brother’s life should be.” Good advice no matter whether he was born in 1980 or 1879. May God give us the courage today to take on the spirit of our young founder, to make his dream our own once again. What good news that would be for our Church, for our world, and for the poor children and young people whom we have been called to serve.

Fr. Seán Sammon  
Supérieur général  
June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2008

## Plan of discernment

# Commission for the Evangelical Use of Goods

The establishment of a Plan of Discernment on the Evangelical Use of Goods came from a recommendation made by the delegates of the 20th General Chapter. We read in the records:

48. The General Chapter brings the following decision to the attention of the General Council:

48.5. To establish a Plan of discernment covering the evangelical use of goods in the Institute, and to accompany its implementation in each Province.

The first step taken was to create a team with Brothers Maurice Berquet, Antonio Martínez, Guy Palandre and Dominick Pujia, which took charge of delivering this plan to the Institute on 5 February 2004. The Commission for the Evangelical Use of Goods was formed to carry out this development, starting work in October of 2006.

One of the first actions of the Commission was to contact the Provinces to find out where they stood in this area, so as to join in a combined reflection at a later date.

The answers given can be compared to the parable of the sower. In some Provinces the seed of the Plan fell by the roadside. In others the ground was stony, and the seed dried up due to early difficulties. In some cases, the seed landed in the thorns and got lost, maybe through fear of studying the topic more deeply. Finally, the-

re were places where the ground was appropriate for sowing, and a generous and fruitful answer was produced by 30, 60 or 100 percent, according to the situations.

The Commission has also tried to widen the vision of the Plan, introducing reflections on the Evangelical Use of Goods and the universe (the first gift given to us by God), the Evangelical Use of Goods and life, talents, time, charism, etc.

Concrete actions have been carried out in various Provinces of the Institute: Norandina, Sri Lanka, India, Central Mexico, Central West Africa, Madagascar, East-Central Africa, Nigeria, and Mediterranea. We have had meetings with Provincial Councils, Economic Commissions, community superiors, directors of the schools, community bursars, administrators of educational centres, etc.

We continue to be open to the submissions which we receive from the Provinces and Districts.



Finance Committees of Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela



# Mission Assembly

## Province Cruz del Sur

**W**ith the expectations which attend every new adventure, - spontaneity, joy, difficulties too- the meeting of Brothers and laity took place in the city of Luján at the feet of the Virgin Mary. The purpose of the gathering was to create opportunities for dialogue and for the sharing of experiences, for bringing forward ideas regarding the direction which the Province and District have been taking. The basis of the exchange was twofold: the Mendes document and the general Province outlook.

**T**he participants came from all the Marist Brother apostolates in Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay. Around sixty apostolic works and organizations sent representatives, ready to accept the challenge of allowing themselves to be caught up once again in the beautiful gift which is the Marist mission. That is, to nourish the deep sources from which the mission springs and to be capable of imparting such sources to those who are working with us in every apostolic undertaking.

**A**fter the usual sign-up process, the participants went to the hall to begin the Assembly. Accompanied with songs of joy, the place of honor was given to the Blessed Virgin, as represented by three Mary images, one image for each of the three countries concerned. The meeting hall was decorated with the flags of the nations in question, and the Marial images were situated in a part of the hall which had been covered with soil, to symbolize a field prepared for the sowing. Brother Demetrio's comments led into a short exercise aimed at getting out in the open what each person was hoping for from the Assembly.

**T**he afternoon's theatre presentation featured the appeals of children and young people to which our Province's Marist mission, in its various forms, attempts to respond. Then began some personal work. Each participant was to make an effort to discover at close hand the countenances, the stories of the children and young people living in the places from which the participants had come. After a break, the gathering divided into small groups, twelve persons in each. The goal was to share ideas on the topic of identity - Who are we? - drawing upon (a) the appeals which each member of the group hears in the place each one works and (b) the manner in which we are responding to the appeals.

**T**his step brought out how rich our mission is. During the evening Eucharist, each delegation brought forward a plant in bloom, the plant coming from the part of the "apostolic garden" in which the delegation works. The plant was placed before the Marian images. The Eucharist was the natural way to close out a intense day of work.

**F**riday morning's topic was our history: that of our apos-

tolitic works and of the people who, over so many years of toil, of apostolate, of service, have come to mark the personality of each of our missions. Then, in small groups, all were encouraged to express individually their feelings on the preceding "contemplation of history". During the private work which followed, all had the opportunity to recall the way their Marist vocation began, how it developed and what motivates its forward movement, recalling those factors which made me aware of being Marist . . . reviewing mentally the happy moments, the sad ones, the resurrections (the Easters of my Marist life) . . . pondering the fire which burns within my heart this very day, the reasons which I find within myself for continuing, first of all to believe and secondly to bank on the future . . . .

**S**aturday began on the theme of «abra» the passageway between hills, which allows one to see what lies ahead and makes easier the entry into a new region or, in our case, into a new dimension of mission. The day's symbol is water which brings life.

**T**he morning got under way with one hour of per-

sonal work. We were able to pause in front of various "angles" of the Institute's documents, e.g. the Calls of the XXth General Chapter, the Mendes document, and the Province's Horizon document. The "angle" provided a space for a prayerful, meditative reading of the document concerned. A guide served to bring to light what each person was feeling in regard to the challenges and the personal invitations which God was making.

**I**n the afternoon, there was a presentation of the broad themes which had been raised during the morning session: formation, educational approaches, giving attention to the least favored, administration, spirituality, and involvement in public policy making. Group activities during the afternoon aimed at preparing suggestions for action plans to deal with the issues which had surfaced.

**T**he early hours of Sunday heralded the last act of the Assembly as well as the opportunity of attend the perpetual profession of Brother Jorge Walder. The closing ceremony of the Assembly took place in the morning. Both Brothers and lay people were able to offer their views about the work of the organizing team and the accomplishments of the Assembly. The positive and calm spirit in which the views were offered was the optimal confirmation that a new era is at hand, an era which carries with it the possibilities of growth: shared mission and better understanding of projects which are shared by laity and Brothers of Cruz del Sur. The participants also made a written evaluation of the Assembly.

