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The renovated Hermitage

Inauguration of the new Hermitage

On 22 September 2010 the renovated house of the Hermitage was inaugurated, with the participation of Brothers, authorities, friends and supporters of the Marist work, workers and companies, welcomed by a mixed international community of Brothers and Laity.

Those who arrived in time were able to enjoy a quiet morning with the architect Joan Puig-Pey accompanying them around the new buildings and pointing out many details of the work carried out and complementing his technical explanations with reflections on the person and charism of Champagnat and some delightful anecdotes.

At the end of the morning, a Mass of thanksgiving was celebrated for the completion of the work. Many people took part through symbols and sharing in the prayers of the faithful. Brother Jean-Pierre Destombes, Superior of the community, outlined in his homily the significance of the celebration.

The central act of the afternoon began with a welcome from Brother Jean-Pierre. He referred to the beautiful architectural setting they were gathered in, the courtyard of St Joseph, giving access to the different parts of the complex, full of light and symbols.

Brother Maurice Berquet, Provincial of the Province of the Hermitage, thanked all the persons involved in the work of renovation. Among the present, he made particular mention of Brothers Seán Sammon and Luis García Sobrado, Superior General and Vicar when the project was launched, "received by the provincials with enthusiasm but also with questions". Brother Maurice



could affirm that "no one among the members of the Provincial council of the time could have suspected the breadth of support we received".

Thanks then followed to the international community which welcomes pilgrims to the Hermitage, "sign of a fraternity without frontiers". Without them, "the walls would be nothing". To the architect Joan Puig-Pey and his team he showed his admiration and gratitude for having known how "to emphasize the historical aspect

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of the building while at the same time adapting it to the needs of the modern world". He was grateful to the volunteers who had collaborated in the running of the house and the Association of the Friends of N.D de l'Hermitage who supported the management of the surrounds. Gratitude was also extended to the provincials of Europe, the brothers and persons coming from different countries who "made manifest the family and international character of this house". He concluded by addressing the Bishop of Saint-Etienne, Dominique Lebrun, whom he thanked for his part in the blessing of the new Hermitage, the sanctuary where reposed the remains of a saint of the diocese, drawing in pilgrimage "Brothers and laity from all corners of the world". His concluding words were: "I am very happy to welcome all to the renovated house of Marcellin Champagnat".

M. Rochebloine, a representative of the former students of the Brothers manifested his satisfaction at being able to take part and remarked that he "remained profoundly marked by the teaching of the 'blue brothers', as they were known in the region".

M. Philippe Kizirian, Mayor of Saint Chamond, emphasised the importance the Hermitage occupied "in the cultural and spiritual diffusion in our



city". He congratulated the architect who "has fulfilled the expectations of the Marist community in translating its wishes through the colour, distribution and arrangement of the spaces favourable to spiritual reflection, and those dedicated to communal living and encounter, open to all who wanted to reflect personally or in a group". He was also grateful that he had known how to "preserve the river Gier, symbol of our city". He extended his thanks to the whole Institute because "persons all around the world know Saint-Chamond thanks to you". And he finished by wishing that "this beautiful facility be a place of spirituality, community, concord, at the same time as a polyvalent and practical place for carrying out cultural exchanges of international importance".

Those gathered were then able to take part in a guided tour of the different parts of the house, during which the historical aspect of the places where events had occurred was highlighted.

The tour over, Bishop Lebrun blessed the house. It was the moment when he observed that this international house was the sanctuary of the only canonically recognised saint in his diocese. For this reason, the house was seen in the diocese as a centre for the renewal of hearts. All the congregation walked in procession around the outside of the house to the chapel where repose the remains of Saint Marcellin Champagnat. Here was read out the message of Brother Emili Turú, Superior General.

In his message for the inauguration, he emphasised that "just like the construction of the Hermitage by Father Champagnat, the renovated Hermitage we have before our eyes is an act

of faith in the future... full of hope". And he said that for the Institute, the renovated Hermitage was an icon of a Church-communion, with a Marial face, an icon of Marist apostolic spirituality and an icon of the work of renewal going on in the Institute. He concluded with the hope that "the renovated Hermitage may continue being faithful to the spirit of universalism, daring and creativity that animated Father Champagnat".

In the courtyard of St Joseph is a painting, with Arab inscription, made by the Muslim painters involved in the works of the house, manifesting the gratitude and admiration of these workers for the treatment they experienced during their period of activity. The text of an Arab proverb reads: « We cannot veil the rays of the sun nor blow out the light of truth ».

Other plaques record the names of all involved in the construction, in alphabetical order, without giving special attention to the architects, engineers, or supervisors of the work. A beautiful sign of the community of work accompanied by the Marist charism which shows the Marial face of the community of brothers.

Thus closes a chapter of preparation for the future. The work achieved is not a museum, although it has references to the past, but a work of the present, which brings life, open to the future with great faith and a firm hope to confront the challenges of new times. The Hermitage moves towards the future with the security that Mary continues to do everything for us.



Course Manziana 2010

Spanish and Portuguese course for brothers of the 3rd age

Surprise. This is the term which best suits this course: Manziana 2010. Present here are 26 brothers, including a Marianist priest and a brother, together with the three responsible for the organization and direction of the course, called "AMANECER" (Dawn) for those who have already reached the "third age".

It is already a surprise to have reached the age near or recently passed of 70 years. We are already on these heights, the epoch of jubilation (of "jubilee"), of leaving tasks we have performed all our life, to discover ways in a MISSION that never ends. It is a group with ability that on reaching and looking from this point, cannot refrain from exclaiming "Thanks to the life which has given me so much" (V. Parra).

It was no less a surprise to receive at home (in this house) already in the first days Br. Emili Turú, Superior General, bringing us the reflection from our last General Chapter, with its call to "journey in haste" in a religious life of authentic newness, so to give response to a world which demands fullness from the disciples of JESÚS. Connected to this call, we also reflected with Br. Ernesto Sánchez, Councillor General on the "Marist community" which we ought to be, animated by the MARIAN SPIRITUALITY (Br. Giovanni Bigotto) so as to continue living the demands of the MARIST MISSION in the face of a mass of challenges. Mission has not finished, and today requires of us sanctity and offers us ways of renewal. We also received from Br. Giovanni much information about our saints and the present state of their causes: Br. François, Br. Basilio, our martyrs in the different parts of Marist geography. Another reflection which is acquiring maturity, we received from "Chema", naturally about the presence of the laity in our Church and in the Congre-



gation, pushing towards community in MISSION and in Marist SPIRITUALITY.

So from surprise to surprise, we go discovering an actuality which is also ours, when the time comes to spend 10 days in the Marist places: L'Hermitage, La Valla, Le Rosey. New surprises. In those places of the cradle of the Institute we could exclaim "In the beginning" (Gen. 1,1), thus it all began. In the modesty and humility, in the poverty and the sharing of La Valla, as it is still manifest, or in the Hermitage, renovated without losing its originality. We discovered the beginnings of a grace which has come down to us, challenging to a renewed response of Marist life with the same creativity of the Spirit it had in its origins. From the modesty and poverty came the response which God asked for, to a world questioning and anxious for instruction and Christian education. Rosey, La Valla, L'Hermitage, cradle evocative of our Marist origins. Le Puy, Fourvière, places which show society through the ages the need for God, open to Him from their often basic needs, such as health, hunger, and education. They were the sources of our Marist and other ecclesial Con-

gregations and Societies which reveal to us today the ways of the past and question us about the challenges of the future.

One further aspect, and not the least, to emphasize is the presence at the Hermitage of the Marist community formed by Brothers from different provinces, but also lay people, including a married couple, who give a brotherly welcome, and the joyful witness and inspiration of a shared Marist life, at the service of love for our sources and at the same time of the continuing relevance of the Marist charism, without geographical boundaries or the differences of states of life.

So from surprise to surprise our "Amanecer" course of the "third age" has seen itself developing in this first month. We have yet another in which, surely, we will continue being surprised by the Spirit. He hopes of us, as a religious congregation and as religious, an openness to living so many surprising stages under the maternal protection of Mary, living always "under your protection, Holy Mother of God".

Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family

2nd European Assembly of the MChFM

The 2nd European Assembly of the MChFM (Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family) was held in Guardamar, Spain, from the 4th to the 8th of August; the motto was: "On the road to a new land!"

The basic objective of the gathering was to encourage the "new life" that God is asking today of the Marist fraternities of Europe. The participants came from Germany, Belgium, Spain, France, Greece, Italy, Portugal and Lebanon.

There were three distinct, but related, stages: in the first, the reality of the MChFM in Europe was presented, as well as the challenges the European Council has been able to identify over these past four years of its existence. Then, there was a sharing of "new realities" that the fraternities in each of the provinces have lived during the past four years.

In the second stage, we had a wonderful reflection by De La Salle Br. Antonio Botana on the charismatic families that have developed in the Church-communion: that new concept of the Church that arose after Vatican II and the implications it has among us who share the same charism. Along with this, we were familiarized with two ecclesial realities that incarnate in different styles this Church-communion: the Chemin Neuf movement and the congregation of the Pious Schools (Escolapians).

In the third stage, we discerned the most important calls the European fraternities have at this time. These came to the surface very clearly and with a large consensus of the whole assembly:

1. Design and encourage processes of joint formation.
2. Live the mission, putting our gifts



at the service of others.

3. Strengthen communion among the fraternities.

We also reflected, by province, on action steps that need to be taken to respond to these calls, conscious that we have to work at the local and provincial levels in order to make real all that we saw, had insights into and discerned as a group.

Bringing the meeting to a close, the assembly voted on some proposals that the European Council of the Movement had presented. The following motions were approved unanimously:

- a. The continuation of the European Council of the MChFM.
- b. The implementation of a European delegate assembly every 4 years.
- c. To request the European Brothers Provincial for a brother to accompany the Council.
- d. To begin reflecting of the Life Project of the MChFM and to set up a calendar for dates to consider this and other common themes.
- e. To petition the European Council to initiate a reflection that might assist in moving towards greater autonomy of the Movement.

All of the work was very interesting and needed, but what everyone remarked on the enjoyed most was the familiar and affectionate atmosphere that prevailed from the beginning of the meeting: the unity we had among ourselves and a great joy of profound sharing at the different stages: the prayers, the times of recreation, the small groups, the plenary sessions, the fiesta...

A sense of great confidence and vision pervaded the entire meeting, allowing us to truly build a family that shared, dialogued, confronted and enjoyed such life that we sensed in each one of us and in our realities. Perhaps because of this, the final symbol of the assembly was a sponge, one of which everyone received as a reminder of what we had lived and what we are sent to be from now on.

We recognize in a particular way the support of the Brother Provincials of Europe in bringing this assembly about and we thank God and one another for the gift we have received and which causes us to look to the future with much hope and a desire to set out on the road to a new land.

