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23/07/2011: 195th anniversary of the «Promise of Fourvière»

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From Archivum to Pergamum

New tools and new solutions for the Institute

Finance hardly ever features in the news on our Web site, yet it is an essential activity within the Institute. So today we want to share the good news that the team studying the future financing of the General Administration is on the point of completing the first part of its work. Once this is finished, the team will study the financing of the administrative units with fewer resources and that of the Sector «ad gentes», so as to present these works to the General Council for their examination in the plenary session of January 2012.

For its part, the Secretary General's department proposed an updating of the computer services of the General Administration. The technical work has been entrusted to Brother Marcelo De Brito (Cruz del Sur), who has revised and updated these services. The new computer structure is intended to respond to the needs not only of the Secretary General's department but also of all the administrative units. Thanks to a Web system, the data from each Provincial Secretary's office can go directly to a central server. This will simplify the process of entering and consulting data and thus avoiding the duplicating of information or the multiplication of errors.

Brother Pedro Sánchez de León, Secretary General, is in train of contacting the persons responsible in the provincial secretariats, by geographical zones or working languages, in order to explain the new



system of data collecting and to do some practical exercises.

A tool which the Institute wants to promote for the good management of provincial archives is Archivum, a software program already used by the General Administration and certain provinces. The province of Brésil Centre Sud has generously offered to have Pergamum, a powerful software tool for the management of the files of archives and libraries, developed by our Catholic Pontifical University of Parana (PUCPR), Brasil, proposed as a new version of Archivum (v3) for the service of the whole Institute. Other than the computer application, the Archivum system includes an assemblage of directives, criteria, specifications and procedures for guaranteeing the correct treatment of the official documentation, its preservation and access by a third party.

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Director:

Br. AMEstaún

Production:

Mr. Luiz da Rosa

Redaction and Administration:

Piazzale Marcellino Champagnat, 2
C.P. 10250 - 00144 ROMA
Tel.: (39) 06 54 51 71
E-mail: publica@fms.it
web: www.champagnat.org

Edit:

Marist Brother's Institute
General House - Rome

Talit Community Ad gentes, India

A day in the Hostel for boys

For 10 days I have been visiting the AD GENTES community of Talit (West Bengal, India) following the normal timetable of the community. As it is presented it fills very well all the moments of the day. The boys of the Hostel follow it in a very normal way. Nothing seems imposed or something coming from outside. I was impressed even by the Morning Prayer (the same for the evening prayer) of the boys of the Hostel. It is a prayer done in their own way and style, where everybody participates, although not all members of the student community are Catholics; only 60% are Catholics.

After Morning Prayer and breakfast, the boys perform their housework in a very natural way. They are in the house and the house is part of their nature. So it is normal to have it clean. In the afternoon, the manual work continues in the garden, watering the plants and the different vegetables planted there. It is after this "garden work" that they come for the "mid-afternoon" meal: all sitting on the ground, they eat the food. They don't have benches for the dining hall yet. It is something they are waiting for, coming from help from abroad. Up to now, many works in the Hostel have been sponsored by Manos Unidas (Spain), by Dimenticati Fratelli onlus (Italy) and by FMSI (Italy). Then, after the meal, they move for sports to the school courtyard near where they have classes: just across the road. In all this, the boys appear very happy and very much at home with the education imparted to them. The relationship with the educators is most familiar and friendly.

From the academic point of view, everybody agrees that since the brothers took control of the running of the Center, academic excellence has improved considerably. During the study time, they are assisted either by a brother or an assistant teacher. And the boys are very keen to learn. I have the impression, however, that their study is very much learning things by heart.

I was able to attend a singing practice for a rehearsal of the songs for the Pentecost Mass. Well done and well performed. They like to use the local instruments of music, mainly percussion instruments, like drums. But there were others instruments as well, whose name I cannot imagine.

At night time, after the evening meal, the whole group



takes part in an authentic community recreation. It is nice to see all these children playing draughts, chess and other indoor games for more than half an hour. The brothers accompany them, making the pedagogy of presence a real gift for the children. For me, it was one of the most pleasant moments of the day to attend. And once again I realize how important it is to play together, to enjoy together, to recreate together. It helps to build up a strong family or group spirit. As there is not much space, the dining room becomes very quickly the recreation room. Both the meal and the games are directly on the ground. In the future, there is a plan for buying some benches for the dining room. It will make the meals more comfortable for the students.

This is what I have started discovering after living a few days in this Hostel for the Santal tribe boys. Knowing that these Santal boys are among the poor of the area when we compare them with those of the Bengal tribe (middle and up classes), it is easy to conclude that this community responds fully to the wish of the chapter of having a strongly significant presence of the Brothers among the poor. The simplicity of life I noticed in all aspects of the community can allow me to compare this community to the original communities of the Brothers in La Valla and the neighbouring villages.

Brother Teófilo - Ad Gentes Coordinator
Talit, 20th June 2011

Former Brothers come together

Former students of the «Hispano Americano» of Valladolid

On 25 and 26 June 2011, a group of friends, once Marist Brothers and who had lived in our houses of Hispano Americano or Peñafiel, came together at Mota del Marqués to share their friendship and their memories. It was the 31st such gathering.

On Saturday 25/06, around midday, the participants arrived from various parts of Spain at Mota del Marqués. After an exchange of greetings, we prepared for the meal, an important aspect without a doubt, and shared what each had brought as sign of friendship. A hymn served as grace before the meal.

After the meal, we had a little get-together, punctuated with songs from memory accompanied enthusiastically by stringed instruments. The afternoon was warm, so some preferred to stay in the shade playing cards, while others, not familiar with the monastery of the Clarisses – a former Palace – went to Tordesillas for a tourist visit. We admired the art of the place as we fol-



lowed the explanations of the guide.

At a certain moment, she took us into the meeting room and spoke to us about its barrel vault, its extraordinary acoustics and the frieze where one could read, in Latin, the Salve Regina. One of the group suggested to the guide that the acoustics of the room could be tested, and the group intoned the Salve Regina which we had so often sung. The acoustics proved perfect! It was an unforgettable moment of spiritual vibration which wakened pleasant memories. After the visit, we quenched our thirst in a little bar.

Saturday ended with a meeting of exchange. On the screen we viewed the voyages made by the volunteers, the activities carried out by the former Marist students of Chile and Peru, who had gathered in memory of their teachers and carry out works of solidarity in the places they find themselves.

The morning of 26 June was devoted to the celebration of the Eucharist at Tordesillas, and to a visit of the town, near Douro. The gathering ended with lunch in the hospitality centre run by the nuns.

The group photo left everyone with a souvenir of the meeting; and it is already a question of the next one... For those who do not know the group, I can say there are already 73 on the roll, not counting the wives. We also count each year on the presence, as friends of the group, of three, four, or five Brothers, who were their first teachers.



«Mary at the heart of the Church»

195th anniversary of the «Promise of Fourvière»

195 years ago on 23 July 1816, twelve new priests of the archdiocese of Lyon, among them Jean-Claude Courveille, Marcellin Champagnat and Jean-Claude Colin, consecrated themselves to the Virgin Mary, in the chapel of Fourvière, the most loved sanctuary of the people of Lyon. In their hearts they carried a desire which their lips

translated into a promise:

«We, the undersigned... affirm and publicly declare that it is our sincere intention and firm purpose to dedicate ourselves... to the foundation of the pious Congregation of the Marists... We solemnly promise to give ourselves... for the salvation of souls

in every possible way, working in the name of the Virgin Mary and under her auspices...»

This episode recalls and makes concrete a preceding episode, in 1809, when, also in front of an altar of Mary, the Black Virgin of le Puy, Jean-Claude Courveille heard in his heart

the Mother of the Lord asking him for the foundation of a society bearing her name. When, on the altar, these twelve young priests signed the Promise, they began to make this desire of Our Lady a reality. By this intrepid act of faith and deep confidence in Providence, they cast the seeds of what would become a tree of dense foliage in the Church, whose branches would extend around the whole world: the Society of Mary.

To celebrate so memorable an event for the Religious Institutes which compose the great Marist Family, Danilo Ferreira Silva, postulant of the Province of «Brasil Centro-Norte», has thought up the canvas which illustrates this text, which he has entitled «Mary at the heart of the Church». It is also a way of recalling



that the 200th anniversary of the foundation of the Society is approaching and that the quality of this celebration will be the greater as its preparation is the more intense.

The Holy Spirit opens the scene. The «soul of the Church», He hovers above the collection of images. His presence evokes Pentecost, when He came from heaven like a mighty sound, like an impetuous wind which filled the house where the apostles were gathered (cf. Acts 2:2). Mary is at the centre of the painting and draws irresistibly towards her the eyes of all who contemplate her.

The complete description of the work can be found in www.champagnat.org



Origins of the Marist Brothers

All the writings of Champagnat in three volumes

A work entitled "Origines des Frères Maristes" has just appeared. Its subtitle gives precise expression to this work which has been long in the making: Collected writings of St Marcellin Champagnat, 1789-1840, presented by Brother Paul Sester f.m.s. It consists of three large volumes. The first brings together documentation under the heading: From personal project to Congregation (566 pages); the second under: Affirmation of the identity of a religious family (785 pages); and the third: Structuring and development of the Marist Brothers (699 pages). This work forms part of the collection «Fontes Historici Societatis Mariae», whose criteria it follows as to format, type of paper and binding, dimensions and graphical criteria. It was printed by the presses of the Scuola Tipografica S. Pio X, in Rome.

The work best known to the Brothers in the collection «Fontes Historici Societatis Mariae», is «Origines Maristes (1786-1836)», produced by Fathers J.

Coste and G. Lessard, which assembles all the documents relating to the origins of the Society of Mary. Among them are numerous documents referring to the Brothers. In 1985, with the approval of the authors, Br Paul Sester produced an extract of the documents which had a bearing on the history of the Brothers' origins, and published it in the same collection under the title: «Origines Maristes (1786-1836), Extraits concernant le Frères Maristes». The work presented now has the novelty of being the complete collection of Marcellin's writings. Thus, it surpasses and completes the information contained in the 1985 publication.

Br Paul Sester, who was Archivist General from 1985 to 1988, states in his introduction that «assembling the writings of Marcellin Champagnat... is a very delicate work since it is a matter of taking account of very short writings, on loose sheets scattered among documents of all types. Their importance comes from the fact that the most insignificant writ-

ing of a person reveals something about him...». The methodology used to assemble and organise the documentation follows the criterion of chronology.

This collection of texts is a collective work, thanks to the collaboration, under Br Paul Sester's co-ordination, of Brothers Jean Rousson, of the community of Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux – responsible for correction of the copy of the manuscrits ; Louis Richard, of the Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux community – typographical corrections and organisation of the assembled work; and finally Claude Morisson, of the community of Saint-Priest – establishment of the various indexes.

This work will be very useful to researchers. They will have available a rich collection of documentation, most of it already translated into the four languages, without having to refer to the General Archives of the Marist Brothers in Rome (Download it in www.champagnat.org).

