

## I AM CHAMPAGNAT!

### Message of Br. Emili Turú on the feast of Saint Marcellin Champagnat, 2012



In the General House in Rome, we have two beautiful works of art on Fr Champagnat, which were commissioned by the then Superior General, Br Charles Howard, who died on 14 January 2012 in Australia. Both works are an expression of the deep love Br Charles had for our founder, as well as his eagerness to make Marcellin more widely known, just as he had been discovering him all his life as a Marist.

These two works face one another across the expanse of the first floor of the General House. One is a mural of the Marist Family, painted by Goyo, and the other, two large ceramic panels by Br José Santamarta. I recently made contact with the two artists, to whom the Marist Institute owes so much for their extraordinary contribution towards renewing the iconography of Champagnat, and both told me of the positive impact Br Charles had made on their lives.

Goyo remembered with sympathy the negotiations that Br Agustín Carazo, then Postulator General and untiring promoter of a renewed image of the founder, had to undertake to persuade Br Charles to accept having his own portrait form part of the mural. According to Goyo, he had to soften the tones of the portrait considerably, so that his image would be left somewhat toned down and so not offend his humility. Br Agustín himself confirmed to me that he had to use his best diplomatic talents to persuade him, and also told me many other anecdotes which, in his opinion, reflected "the great love Br Charles had for the founder".

Br Santamarta, for his part, still has the letter the then Superior General sent him, thanking him for his work. In it, he tells

him that he has "interpreted artistically the dream I have of our father Marcellin; a father, with the face of an apostle, the hands of a worker, an open Eucharistic heart, a man without frontiers and passionate for God. This is the spirit and the charism of our Father Champagnat".

Br Charles passed away in January this year, but his footprints will remain with us, not only through the artistic works he commissioned, but above all through his own life and his teaching. I believe, then, that it is most fitting that on this year's feast of Saint Marcellin, we recall his words with affection.



It is necessary to situate the two works of art mentioned within the framework of the celebration of the "Champagnat Year", 200 years from the birth of Saint Marcellin. It was in this same context, on 20 May 1989, that Br Charles published a Circular entitled "The Founder challenges his Brothers", the aim of which was to encourage all to "grow in our understanding of Marcellin's charisma, this gift of the Holy Spirit in which we all share".

This Circular relates the experience of the Ecole Champagnat in Budapest, where eight brothers were arrested in 1944 because they had sheltered and hidden Jews. This school had been founded in 1928 and the people used to say of its students: "There go the little Champagnats". The pupils were very proud of this title and liked to say: "I am a Champagnat". Starting from this anecdote, Br Charles invites us all to "be Champagnat today":

"I AM A CHAMPAGNAT". *This may sound cute on the lips of a youngster. But for us Marist Brothers, it touches a profound truth. Each of us is a Champagnat, and we endeavour to bring to young people what Champagnat did: respect, encouragement, love, Christian truth, education in all its forms, and a concern about all facets of their lives. In other words, we try to be BROTHERS for them.*

- *We are Champagnats for our own Brothers, with our concern, our encouragement, our support, our prayers, our love.*
- *We are Champagnats for a Church which is struggling to serve humankind. We follow Champagnat with his great love of the Church: the pilgrim people, the body of Christ.*
- *We are Champagnats for young people in need, for those in search of values, for those in search of credible witnesses to Christianity.*

- *We are Champagnats for young people in need of brothers, someone to listen to them, to encourage them, to love them.*

*know Mary, who do not understand her love for them, her presence to them.*



On this feast of Saint Marcellin 2012, we welcome the words of our Br Charles, five months after his death, as an authentic life programme for all of us who regard ourselves as Marists of Champagnat.

With joy, let us thank the Lord for the gift of the life of Br Charles, a real Champagnat for the Institute. And let us also give thanks for so many persons on

- *We are Champagnats for the poor, the dispossessed, the marginalised: we are Brothers for those most in need.*
- *We are Champagnats for those who do not*

the five continents who, often in discreet and silent ways, endeavour to be new Champagnats for the children and young people of today.

Br Emili Turú, Superior General



## Marist University of Mérida, México 15 Years

In Mérida, Yucatán, México, the Marist Brothers have been working for more than 90 years. One of the fruits of this work has been the foundation in 1996, by a group of lay Marists, of a University, which has now completed 15 years of existence.

On 26 April, more than 1000 persons gathered in the buildings of the University to praise and bless God with a Eucharist for this Marist university life.

The celebration was presided over by Mons. Jorge Carlos Patrón, former chaplain of the University and had an impressive youthful colouring.

The work, commitment and participation of the students was fundamental for this great celebration. As a Marist University, the brothers worked with them in the preparation and development. The participation of intendants, directors and masters made it a very family affair.

We had various signs of praise and participation, such as the formation of an enormous cross at the beginning of the ceremony, the making and presentation of images of Champagnat and our Good Mother which inspired different parts of the Mass. The youth built the altar and invited the assembly to praise God with the singing of the Sanctus in a singular and youthful manner. The Spirit was very present.



# MARIST COMMUNITY OF ALEP, SYRIA

## A letter for sharing

To all the Marists of the world, laity and brothers. Peace and hope!

We would like to share with you our life and mission in the painful situation our country, Syria, has been experiencing for a little over a year.

Horror encircles us on every side: every form of violence, hardship, insecurity, misery, poverty, and above all, an uncertain future. This situation is becoming so widespread that it threatens to engulf us!

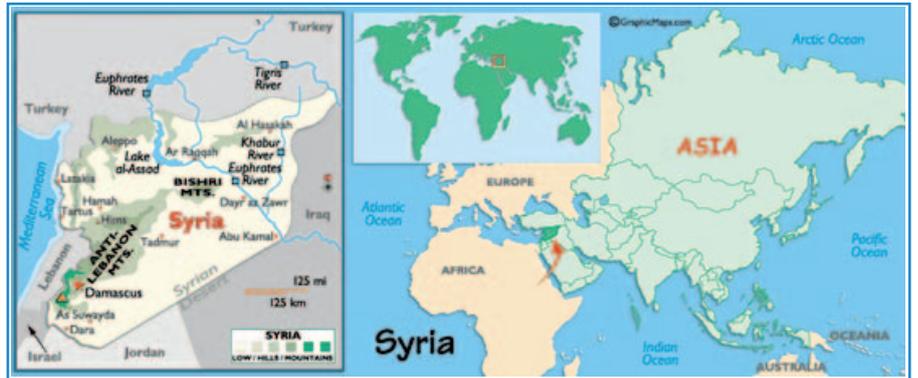
We were conscious of this from the beginning.

Our Marist spirituality has guided us to « go in haste, with Mary, to a new land ».

Accordingly, we have decided

- to choose life in the face of the culture of death,
- to be sowers of hope in the face of despair,
- to center our personal and community life on peace.

Thus, during the period of Advent, we prepared weekly times of prayer around the theme : peace, interior and



exterior. We invited all our friends.

During Lent, we also organized times of prayer around different themes inspired by the crisis (security, self-satisfaction, the other, non violence). We closed this cycle of prayer on Good Friday with prayer around the cross centred on reconciliation.

And in this month of May, we celebrate every Saturday prayer which is nourished by the lives of Mary and our founder Marcellin Champagnat.

We had, as well, to make a decision about our apostolic activities, whether the meetings of the fraternities or the scout group meetings or the solidarity activities.

Should we cease them, yes or no ?

As very audacious Marists, we chose to continue them, taking some precautions and especially taking into account the situation of the moment.

At the same time, we organized a training session in learning how to deal with crisis situations.

And we drew up a logistics inventory for managing a catastrophe.

Placing ourselves in God's care at each instant and counting on numerous friends benefactors or engaged in voluntary work, we have planned summer activities for all ages. Thus, we hope to make our house a haven of peace, security and stability.

As for you, dear brothers and friends,

Pray with us for the children, that they sleep in peace at night, that they go to school, play, that they bring happiness.

Pray with us for the youth, those without hope, those who every day risk their lives, their studies, their future.

Pray with us for the men and women, for the voiceless, the poor, for all who suffer violence,

Pray for us!

Support our choice of peace as a way of reconciliation and pardon.

May 2012

Your Marist brothers and sisters of Alep (Syria)

Letter of Br. Emili Turú, Superior General - PDF (250 KB - French and Arabic)

# SECRETARIAT OF MISSION

## Provinces of Sidney and Melbourne

**D**uring April and May 2012, the Director of the Secretariat of Mission, Br João Carlos do Prado was in Australia to learn English, become familiar with the Marist mission, make contact with the Marist leaders in the country and express the support of the General Government for the marvellous work being done there. The visit also sought to give publicity to the Secretariat of Mission and some of its projects and provide better connection with the Marist world mission.

The visit was organized by Br Michael Green and concentrated on some Marist schools in the states of New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland. The programme made possible contact with different types of school: boys only, mixed, boarding, day students only and other works for needy and indigenous persons. The schools are well recognized and valued by the local community, the Church and the government. They provide an excellent service for the development of the country and the Church and the formation of their leaders.

Contact with the Marist leaders took place especially during the meeting of the Mission Council, of the new Province of Australia, in the visit to the Montagne Centre, Melbourne, the administrative centre of the country's Marist works, and from the fact that the regional coordinators accompanied the visits to the works. A meeting was also possible with each of the directors and other local leaders. Another privileged moment was participation in the Marist Conference on Evangelization of Youth, during which there was



discussion on the document "Evangelizers in the midst of youth".

There is a good relationship between the Marist schools and the archdiocesan and diocesan Catholic Education Offices. Unlike many other countries, Australia counts on a Catholic Education System to which the majority of Catholic schools belong. The member schools (congregational, parish and diocesan) are managed and accompanied by this network. This facilitates the schools' relations with the governments of the country, the States, and with

local government and also allows approach to areas where Catholic education needs to be more present.

There is much vitality and life in the Marist mission of Australia. The Marist community formed by young people, brothers, and lay people is quite strong. The birth of the new Province is an opportunity to further reinforce the work being done. The Marist works in Australia are a privileged space for the exchange of good educational practices.

I express my gratitude to the Provinces of Sydney and Melbourne for the hospitality offered: attentive, affectionate and generous.

Br. João do Prado, Director of the Secretariat of Mission

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