



AUTHENTIC TESTIMONY OF THE LOVE OF CHRIST

8 MAY: 23RD ANNIVERSARY OF BR HENRI VERGÈS' ASSASSINATION

Brother Henri Vergès was assassinated on 8 May 1994 in Algiers, alongside Sister Paul-Hélène. In his funeral, Cardinal Léon-Etienne Duval, Archbishop of Algiers, told us: "Brother Henri was an authentic witness of the love of Christ, and of absolutely disinterested service of the Church and fidelity to the people of Algeria." [In this link](#), there are different resources available that commemorate the life and the testimony of this Marist of Champagnat. To commemorate his anniversary, we would like to share the following text by Brother Alain Delorme, where he describes a certain activity in France, that shows how the testimony of Brother Henri Vergès is also a current message for all of us.

On Thursday, 23 March 2017, the Marist community of the French region of Tricastin (Saint-Paul-3-Châteaux) felt happy to be in the company of around 100 people that attended the representation of the "fifth Gospel," a piece that recalls the Algerian journey of Brother Henri Vergès, an apostle of youth for 25 years.

Francesco Agnello, stage director, and Jean Baptiste Germain, comedian, captivated the audience with the quality of their representation.

It should be remembered that the text composed by Brother Adrien Candiard, Dominican, highlights the qualities of Henri Vergès as a religious educator.

These are 7 letters, 4 from Ahmed, an ex-student of Henri, and 3 of from Henri. In an impressive silence, the audience followed the message that was being revealed in this correspondence.

The dialogue, at the end of the performance, allowed us to emphasise some aspects of our brother's testimony that impressed the audience the most, particularly their fraternity open to all.

The last paragraph of Ahmed's last letter admirably states: "There is one last thing I had to tell you. For a long time I thought you were a father to me, as a gift from God to make up for the father I did not have. I think I told you.



GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

From May 9 – 11, the second meeting of the Communications Committee is taking place at the general house, coordinated by general councillor Br Antonio Ramalho.

From May 10 – 12, the European committee of the laity will be meeting in Madrid, with the participation of Br Javier Espinosa, director of the Secretariat of the Laity.

On May 10, the meeting of the 'ad hoc' team to elaborate the New Horizons formation programme of Africa - Phase II begins, in Rome. Br Carlos Alberto Rojas and Br Mark Omede, directors of the Secretariat of Mission, will attend.

But I realise now that that was not entirely true. You've been much more than that. You've been my brother, and that's weirder. Today, everyone wants to be a father and to impose on others, through love, their authority and their power. You have never imposed anything on me; You were content to love me. The world would be better if we had fewer parents. The world would be better if we only had brothers."

We wish the "fifth gospel" a beautiful future, especially among the youth to whom Henri dedicated his life. The success of "Pierre et Mohamed" which continues to attract viewers since 2011 when the play was performed at the Avignon festival. To date, it has surpassed nine hundred representations.

We must also remember that Francesco Agnello, on the occasion of the centenary of the death of Father de Foucauld, staged the performance entitled "Charles de Foucauld, universal Brother," premiered at Viviers in December 2016 in the chapel where Brother Charles had been ordained

priest. With the "fifth gospel," the author completes an Algerian trilogy. On the other hand, Brother Adrien Candiard, just received the prize of the religious booksellers 2017 for his book: "Watcher, where is the night? Short treatise on hope for the use of contemporaries," editions Cerf.

N.B. "The fifth Gospel" is represented in Paris, in the chapel of Our Lady of the Angels, 102 bis, rue de Vaugirard, (75006) every Sunday, until June 25, at 5:00 p.m. Free entrance.

Br Alain Delorme

Further reading:

- First representation of the work « Le cinquième évangile » (The fifth Gospel): 3 de agosto del 2016 : <http://www.champagnat.org/400.php?a=6&n=4055>
- Extract from a 12-page report written by Father François-Marie L  thel, Discalced Carmelite, theologian: <http://www.champagnat.org/400.php?a=6&n=3954>
- Various resources: <http://www.champagnat.org/530.php?p=183&b=Verges>

MARIST FAMILY: PROMISE, FIDELITY AND COMMITMENT

NATIONAL ENCOUNTER OF THE MARIST FAMILY IN BRAZIL



The celebration recalls the promise of Fourvi  re made in France. Here we celebrate the prolongation of that promise that we are living. The 12-man dream that has come true is today **the dream of this great family.**

Sister Sylvette Man  

Assistant general, Marist Sisters



UMBRASIL promoted the Brazilian meeting of the Marist Family, held in Ribeir  o das Neves, from April 20 – 23.

The meeting brought together 70 followers of the mission initiated by the founders of the Society of Mary.

Marist priests, sisters, brothers and lay people reflected on the promise, fidelity and commitment.

The welcoming prayer was animated by Brother Rafael Ferreira J  nior, Director of the Center for Marist Studies in Belo Horizonte.

Afterwards, the superior provincial of Brazil Sul-Amaz  nia and president of UMBRASIL, Inacio Etges, gave the opening address, pointing out that the 200 years invite us to look towards the present and the future.



NEWS IN BRIEF

RELIGIOUS OF MEXICO

Brother José Sánchez Bravo, superior of the province of México Central, has been elected president of the Conference of Major Superiors of Religious of Mexico, for a period of three years.

PERPETUAL PROFESSION

On April 29, Br Tiago Fedel, from the Brasil Centro-Sul province, made his perpetual profession in the Institute, in the Mother of Mercy chapel, within the context of the inauguration of the Marist Memorial in Curitiba.

RAWDON, CANADA

About 200 volunteers gathered on May 6 to prepare the Marist Campus of Rawdon for the reception of children who, in the coming months, will live a Christian experience in nature near the Marist Center.

URUGUAY

From April 21 - 23, the Champagnat Camp of Durazno received 250 Marist students accompanied of 40 animators and 28 educators of the Zorrilla, Santa María, San Luis (Durazno) and San Luis (Pando) schools to celebrate the bicentenary together.

The assistant general of the Marist Sisters, Sylvette Mané, said that "the celebration recalls the promise of Fourvière made in France. Here we celebrate the prolongation of that promise that we are living. The 12-man dream that has come true is today the dream of this great family."

Father Jose Roberto Furtuoso, representative of the Marist Fathers in Brazil,

reminded us that celebrating 200 years of religious vocation is a manifestation of joy. Two presentations stood out that were made on April 21: "Fourvière, yesterday and today - promise, fidelity and commitment" and "Marists: life, promise and mission: how do we prophetically live the continuity of the promise in situations of the peripheries?"

[Click here to access the complete story of the meeting in Portuguese.](#)

ITALY: PROJETO LAVALLA200>

INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY OF SYRACUSE



Br Brendan Geary, Provincial of West Central Europe, visited the Lavalla200> community in Syracuse from 2 - 5th March, along with his friend, Moira Macfarlane. Moira worked as British Consul in Florence for more than ten years and continues to be involved in cultural events in the city. Moira wrote an article about her visit when she returned to Scotland.

A stunned silence descended on the lounge of an elegant hotel in Bologna. Plates and glasses were pushed aside as customers and staff stared in horror at a TV screen. A boat carrying over

a hundred migrants had sunk in the Mediterranean. There were no survivors and more than half the passengers were children. Everyone in that lounge felt the immediate need to do



MAY, THE MONTH OF MARY

The relationship of Marcellin to Mary was deeply marked by an affective and total trust in her, as the "Good Mother," because it was her work that he undertook. He wrote once: *Without Mary we are nothing and with Mary we have everything, because Mary always has her adorable Son within her arms or in her heart.* This belief remained constant all through his life.

Water from the Rock, 25

MARIST WORLD



Brazil: meeting of Marist Youth in Aracati (Ceará)



Lebanon: 'Fratelli Project' in Rmeyleh



Peru: Meeting of the Coordinating Provincial Project, in Lima



Samoa: meeting of leaders of the Mulivai school and St Joseph's College, Alafua



Spain: Sports days San José del Parque school



France: Mid life formation groups of Manziana and El Escorial in L'Hermitage

something – to write to governments, to donate to aid organisations. Perhaps they did. In the years since that first, shocking sinking, the endless images of Man's inhumanity to Man have dulled our responses. Hardly a day passes without media reports of terrified children in bombed out buildings, families trudging through snow seeking refuge in Western Europe, schoolgirls kidnapped, people beaten and packed like cattle onto leaking boats. 'How awful' we say as we carry on with our daily routines. 'Someone should do something about it'.

The Marist Brothers have done something about it. Project Lavalla200>, marking the bi-centenary of the Order, was set up to provide support to children and young people living in precarious circumstances throughout the world. A new community has been established in a former orphanage in Siracusa (Syracuse) offering support to unaccompanied minors who have fled war-torn lands.

The community is led by Brother Onorino Rota and supported by two young lay volunteers, Gabriel Bernardo da Silva and Mario Araya, who have put promising careers on hold to devote two or more years of their lives to Project Lavalla200>. I was privileged to spend four days with the community in the company of Provincial Brendan Geary. These days have had a very profound impact, reigniting that first response felt so long ago in a Bologna hotel. The men in the Community bring different and complementary

strengths and experiences to the project. In a few, short months, they have shown great sensitivity in establishing constructive contacts with the civilian authorities, aid agencies, churches and religious orders involved in providing support to young refugees, identifying how best they can add to and integrate with existing provision.

Most of the unaccompanied minors are severely traumatised following long and dangerous journeys culminating in months subject to every form of abuse imaginable at the hands of traffickers in Libya, before being forced onto unseaworthy boats for the final crossing to Sicily. They have witnessed things no child should ever see.

They have no family, no possessions, no officially recognised identity. They are grieving for lost loved ones, beset by nightmares of the past, scared and uncertain about the future. Most of all, they are terrified of being refused asylum and sent back to the inferno of Libya. As they await formal decisions from the Italian authorities about their status – a process that can take up to 18 months, they need shelter, care and understanding.

To prepare them for life in Western Europe, they have significant learning needs. Some cannot read or write, others can read and write but in Arabic, some have some French or English in addition to their own language. Few have any awareness of European cultures and traditions. All have

significant learning needs, but after all they have been through, formal programmes won't work. The answer is to be responsive to mood and moment in working alongside them and, in this the Marist Community excels.

The Community is engaged in outreach work at Casa Freedom, a residential centre for 90 teenage boys. The first thing a visitor notices on arrival is the happiness and trust with which young people relate to the members of the Community.

By joining in activities and helping with learning members of the Community created an opportunity for young people to open up about issues they would have been unable to discuss in a more formal setting. The Community is also involved in outreach work with young people at a local church, a role which also brings them into contact with young migrants, helping them to access local medical or advisory services. The Community's base at Casa Caritas

is also home to a small number of young, unaccompanied migrants who have found work but still need to be in supported accommodation.

The great strength of the Marist Community in Siracusa is that they did not come with a fixed programme in mind, but have taken time to understand the context, cooperate with other agencies and, most of all, to accompany rather than direct the young people they meet. They have gained the trust of teenagers who have very good reasons to trust no one.

Project Lavalla200> in Siracusa is challenging, emotionally draining and demands great wisdom, sensitivity and patience. In the four days I spent with the community I saw all these qualities and wish them well as they develop this vital mission. It was a great privilege to spend four days with such fine people and to see something of their work. Like all privileges, it demands a constructive response!

Moira Macfarlane

MEXICO CENTRAL: INDIGENOUS RITUAL FOR A PERPETUAL PROFESSION



**A very big heart is missing
to embrace the world...
A heart similar to that of
Jesus**



Brother Adán Cantú Solís, of the Mexico Central province celebrated his perpetual profession in San Miguel el Progreso, municipality of Malinaltepec on April 21 and 22.

The celebration was carried out by means of an indigenous ritual of request of the rain.

Brother Adán expressed his excitement of the momento and

his commitment with the Marist charism with the words: "A very big heart is missing to embrace the world... A heart similar to that of Jesus." Many people participated, accompanied by the Provincial Superior, Brother José Sánchez Bravo. Brother Daniel Herrera, provincial councillor, wrote a review of the experience.

PHILIPPINES: 51 BROTHERS GATHER FOR ANNUAL RETREAT

During the annual Easter retreat in Malaybalay City, which focused on Saint Marcellin's spirituality, Brothers discussed the [pre-chapter process](#) and issues related to the Philippine sector of the Province South Asia.

"In line with the celebration of the

Bicentenary of our Foundation, this retreat was meant to revisit Fr. Champagnat's spiritual journey as well as to rekindle the same spirituality among the Brothers of today," stated Brother Manuel P. Uluan.

The retreat, held from April 9 – 16, fo-

cused on the spirituality of Saint Marcellin and was led by Australian Brother Michael Green, author of the book History of the Institute, volume 3, which will be published on 6 June.

Br Michael reflected on how the early Brothers lived the Marist spirituality



through their encounters with St Marcellin, and that thanks to his spiritual and academic help they became like “little Champagnats.”

During the last day, Brothers also discussed the third stage of the pre-chapter process, titled ‘Gathering of the Fruits,’ and the distributed key issues for delegates to take to the General Chapter this September in Colombia. They also discussed financial issues and other topics related to the progress in the Philippine sector since last year’s provincial assembly.

The 51 participants included 14 young Brothers, who renewed their vows during the Easter Vigil Mass.

SPAIN: “A MARIST NETWORK IN EUROPE TODAY”

MEETING OF THE MARIST EUROPE IN ALCALA DE HENARES

The European Marist Conference (CEM), in its mission to animate the Marist region of Europe, held another of its meetings from April 25 – 27. This time, following a rotation of Provinces, the Iberica province hosted it. The place was the Provincial House in Alcalá de Henares. The representative members of the five Provinces of the continent participated in the meeting:

Iberica - Brothers Moisés Alonso (provincial) and Alejandro Mena, West Central Europe - Brothers Brendan Geary (provincial) and Gerard de Haan, L’Hermitage - Brothers Pere Ferré (provincial) and Mattheos Levantinos, Mediterranea - Brothers Juan Carlos Fuertes (provincial) and Damiano Forlani, Compostela - Br Tomás Briongos (provincial). Br António Leal was unable to attend, since he is currently in the formation team in El Escorial. Also present were the Brothers who are the link General Councillors for Europe, Brothers Ernesto Sánchez and Antonio Ramalho, and Brother Teófilo Minga, who is the CEM secretary. Brothers Fabrício Galiana and Jesús A. Rodríguez collaborated as translators.

The work began with a theme of reflection: A network of Marist Mission in Europe today. The presenter was Daniel Irazola, director of the Marist Center of Durango (Iberica). Considering a network as a connection full of possibilities, he asked the group questions as to how the network was created and for what reason. He talked about the process of creating a network and how to develop all its possibilities, starting off with a “community of collaborators.” During later sessions, the CEM analyzed the activities and proposals of its various teams, listening to their respective coordinators: Br Gabriel



Villa-Real (Mission, Protection of Minors), Br Lisardo (Youth and Vocation Ministry), Br Aureliano (Brothers Today) and Joseba Louzao (Communion of Lay-Brothers).

Other matters dealt with were: a Marist vision for Europe and the definition of the Secretariat of the new European Mission Council, the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family, the celebrations of the Bicentenary and the next General Chapter, the European Network of Communities, the new International Communities (the one that already exists in Syracuse, Italy, and the second to be created in Romania). In the end, several practical aspects of CEM came to the fore, being the object of conversation and decision. The dynamics of the meeting included a cultural trip and conviviality in the city of Toledo, as well as various celebratory moments.

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