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# MARIST NEWS

MARISTS OF CHAMPAGNAT | GENERAL HOUSE | ROME | [WWW.CHAMPAGNAT.ORG](http://WWW.CHAMPAGNAT.ORG)

## GENERAL HOUSE

# BR. LUIS CARLOS, VICAR GENERAL: LET'S CROSS THE BRIDGE TO BE BEACONS OF HOPE

Message to Leaders of the Mission at the Province and Local Level, the Mission Commission on the Crisis of COVID-19

Dear Brothers and Lay Marists,

**D**uring these difficult weeks, Brother Ernesto has invited all of us to look at Mary for guidance. We look to Mary to know how to see, how to feel and how to act.

We are all floundering in these confusing and unprecedented historical events. In Italy, there is tremendous pain and fear. The pandemic has caused many losses, many sacrifices, many farewells ... It has also created a new appreciation of our humanity, of life itself, and of what we give importance to in our daily lives.

I think we have all been touched by this reality in one way or another, and we have been forced to take another look at what we hold to be fundamental and essential in life.

The Pope has reminded us of the value of hope, the strength of what is good, the great value of giving oneself to save the lives of others. I firmly believe in this.

Those of us in the field of education and mission feel an unavoidable responsibility to strengthen the Christian attitudes and ingenuity of our students, young people, families, and



others about what is essential for the Reign of God, and above all for humanity. God exists, is with us in our human joys and sufferings, does not play games with us, gives us light, and transcends our human reality.

The pathway that we can hold up to leaders, teachers, students, catechists, families, youth leaders, social workers ... is one of going back to basics, of caring care for one another, of more radical and deeper connections, of feeling one with others around the world, of less consumerism and more truth, of less

things and more relationships, of more ‘us’ and less ‘me’.

This heartfelt compassion and closeness can be a step forward in the lives of all of us who make up the Marist community. We exhaust ourselves in service and solidarity, in caring for the older members of our families, in doing what we can to help in general. We are happy to be exhausted because it is the result of giving. A gift that we make deliberately and wisely. A generous gift.

Right now, in many ways, we may feel hemmed in. Maybe the present situation is a challenge for us. Little by little, concerns can start to surface about how to support our ministries and our staff and their families in this time of crisis, how to look after students and those families who have lost their source of income, how to continue helping when we experience shortages, how to keep our educational, social, university, and hospital works, our publishing houses open. These are real challenges. But we have the wisdom, the capacity, and above all the solidarity with the weakest, to find our way. And we will do it well.

It is a time for creativity and innovation in mission, in life and in solidarity. For thousands of students and teachers, it is

time to learn in new ways. It is time for distance education (where possible). It is time for parents to rediscover their role in their children’s education. A time to imagine. A time to let our compassion overflow. A time to interact, hold discussions, share poems, talk about things that matter, rethink our habits, to pray, have fun, tell stories with others over the internet.

Let’s come up with new initiatives and sacrifice ourselves for the sake of charity and solidarity.

Let me conclude with the consoling words of Brother Ernesto: “Mary of the “yes” encourages and accompanies us in these difficult moments of uncertainty and pain. She, the Good Mother, holds us by the hand. Today we know her as a loving mother and also as a sister, as a companion on our journey and in our suffering, and as a companion of all the people of God.”

May we feel united to one another and close in spirit to so many who are infected or sick, to broken families and those who have died. May our prayer these days be more intense than ever.

Sincerely yours,  
Brother Luis Carlos Gutiérrez, Vicar General – 2 April 2020

PROVINCE COMPOSTELA

# WE ARE CONNECTED BECAUSE WE ARE MARISTS

The youth and vocation ministry of the Province of Compostela is launching throughout Holy Week various proposals for prayer and reflection aimed mainly

at young university students. This “Networked Easter”, supported by the social networks, is a way of celebrating together from a physical distance. As part of this initiative,

Brother Tony León has recorded a video from Australia reminding us that, as Marists, we are connected and invited to go in haste to meet the Risen Christ. You can find some of the material in this social accounts: Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/marchacompostela> Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/MarChaCompostela> Twitter: <https://twitter.com/MarChaCompostl> The [video](#) can be seen on YouTube with subtitles in English, Portuguese and Spanish.



## GENERAL HOUSE

## THE GENERAL HOUSE DURING THE CORONAVIRUS

**M**any in the Marist world are asking themselves how the Brothers are coping in the General House today, in these times of COVID-19... All locked up in the house? All in quarantine?

We can respond to these two questions, but with a certain amount of specificity... given that, if we were not in the midst of the health crisis caused by the coronavirus, we would be living practically in the same way. Obviously, life is not the same, because we take some precautions, mainly "social distance". We are more cautious if someone has some symptoms of fever. Well, like everyone, we know that in this situation, personal sensitivity, biophysical control of one's health, and when the symptoms are accentuated, "you feel" and "notice" small changes in a period... that during normal time are not perceived.

That said, every three days we usually hold a meeting to see how the situation is evolving, to adapt to the evolution of the decisions taken by the government and to provide guidance and possible responses. In the meantime, all employees have been in quarantine since 11 March and are working from home, so the second floor is virtually empty. Only the cleaning staff comes to work, with a controlled schedule. On the other hand, the coordinator of all the activities, Luca Piagnerelli, and the administrative manager, Giovanni Sebastio, are in the house with us, from Monday to Saturday.

All the brothers of the Community are here, with the exception of Brother Carlos Alberto Rojas, who travelled to Brazil a few days before the lockdown. The whole community of the General Council is also present, and likewise, Brother Canisio Willrich, Superior of the District of Asia, and Brother Juan Miguel Anaya, consultant of Canon Law for the General Administration of the Province of Mediterránea, both stayed with us after the meeting of the Provincials.

In other words, we are living in a "suspended time", with all possible activities. There is much work to be done and it has not been interrupted in any way.

The Brothers responsible for the different Secretariats and Departments are in constant contact with the situations for which they are responsible. In spite of the trips which were cancelled, the commitment is permanent, with the reorganization of courses and meetings scheduled and postponed. The General Council is in constant contact with all the activities of the Institute.

A lot of work is done through video-conferences. Finding the right time for these meetings is one of the technical challenges. It is not easy to "bring together" people from diametrically opposed continents.

There has also been a notable increase in manual work. An active group of brothers from the community spend their afternoons and sometimes their mornings cleaning the parts of our General House. And you can see the cleanliness, the new look of the whole environment. And often, after work, the little house in the woods is the community's place for "delicious" relaxation.

It is worth mentioning, besides all this, that Brother Teofilo Minga was hospitalized for a lung operation. Everything went well and in a few days he will return to the community.

So, is everything all right? Everything is fine, although we cannot say for how long. And perhaps this is the new great challenge to which we are all called: we are not sure, but we have Providence. And this is why we are given a privileged time which is Holy Week, which we entered on Palm Sunday.

Br. Antonio Sancamillo  
Superior of the General Administration Community



**SAINT GENIS-LAVAL**

Since the 25th March five brothers have died in this community of the Province of L'Hermitage in France. Three of them are victims of COVID-19 (Brothers Etienne Pitiot, Georges Pitiot and Paul Sester).



**SPAIN**

During the days of crisis in Spain, the Marist house located in Los Molinos, a nearby village in the mountains of Madrid, has been at the service of people living on the streets, of the homeless, in agreement with the social services and the Red Cross.

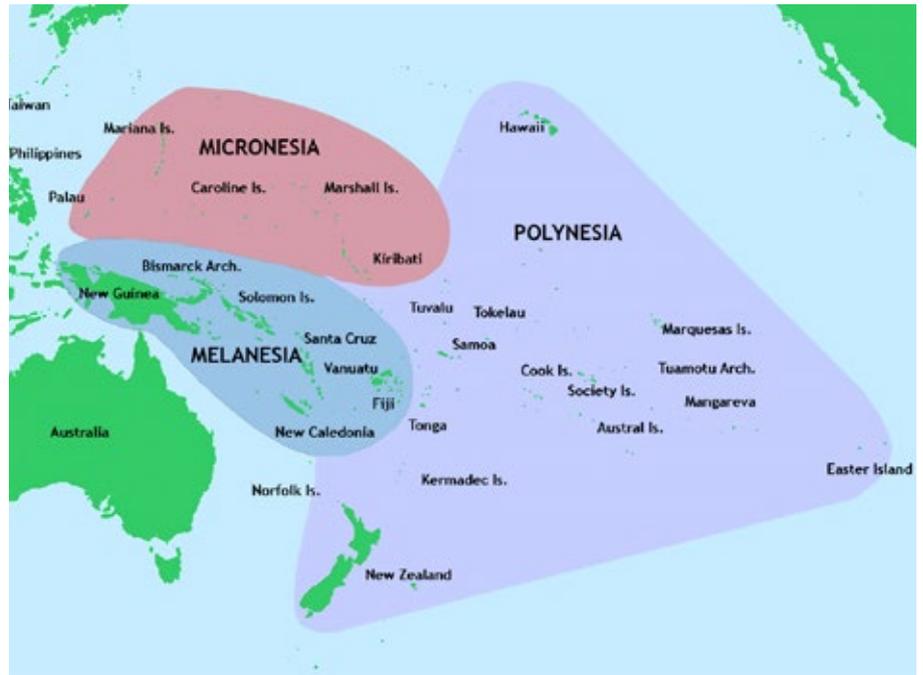
**ITALY**

The Marist school at Giugliano, near Naples, has lent its premises to be used as a food bank by the social services of the town hall there. Donations arrive and aid leaves from there: some come to collect them; others are taken to their home. This service is promoted by the Marist community (three brothers and a married couple) and a group of volunteers.

**PATRIMONY COMMISSION**

Several meetings promoted worldwide have been cancelled. The meeting of the Commission of Marist Spiritual Patrimony, planned for June, has also been cancelled. It will probably be held in September.

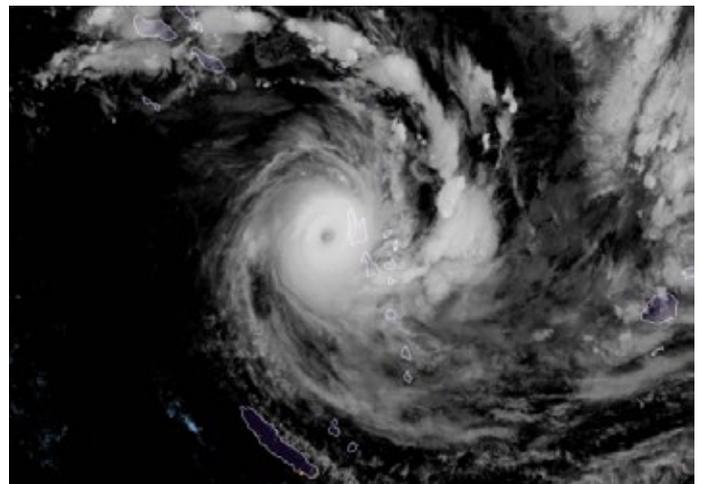
**DISTRICT OF MELANESIA**



While we are focused on the Coronavirus, Category 5 Cyclone Harold raged in Melanesia during these past days. Our Marists experienced a tragic and sad experience in Solomon Islands. Abraham Haiyasi, our deputy Principal in Tenaru, lost his wife and three sons, plus in the early hours of Friday 3rd April 2020, his brother Godfery Waronitepe, who is also a teacher of St. Joseph's Tenaru, passed away.

Brother Jean-Marie Batick, superior of the District of Melanesia, had provided a report on the cyclone, the tragedy and other news:

Cyclone Harold has moved away from Vanuatu leaving behind it a lot of damage particularly on the islands of Santo where the Brothers are, the islands of Pentecost, where Br Bonaventure comes from, and Ambrym Island where I am from. This morning, Tuesday 7, I tried to call the two Brothers in Santo and my family at home and could not get through. All the communication systems are cut off, so I don't know what type of situation they are in at the moment. Hopefully the communication system will be back sometime today. I will update people when I get some information.



BR. SYLVAIN RAMANDIMBIARISOA, COUNCILLOR GENERAL

## FROM LENT TO EASTER 2020

The Lenten period is a time of preparation for the celebration of the Resurrection of Christ. Generally, it is characterized by sacrifice as a means of overcoming our weaknesses. Fasting may be symbolic, but it is about accepting difficult privations in order to live better Christian values.

This year, 2020, Lent is out of the ordinary, due to the worldwide spread of the coronavirus. We are obliged to stay at home to avoid contagion and therefore to save lives. There are different ways to respond to this situation: accept or endure. Live it as Lent or suffer it as punishment.

To suffer, that is resignation, is to be passive and there is a feeling of powerlessness. We can consider the current situation as a punishment that we must undergo and that we can do nothing about. This can lead to death. On the other hand, accepting it would give us new impetus. Acceptance leads to transformation, to seeing the future differently, to being open to new perspectives.

This Lent 2020 helps us to put what we do into perspective and we see what is essential. We notice that it is possible to stop our daily activities that we think are necessary and unavoidable. In this way we can open ourselves to new ways of living! Focus on the essential and put the rest into perspective. God alone is the absolute, the essential, the only inescapable because He is the origin of everything, and everything ends in Him, He is the Alpha and the Omega.

The present situation deprives us of security. We are continually terrified by the figures published every day about the increasing number of people affected by the coronavirus, those who are sick and those who have died. We are afraid of death. We are

doing everything, globally, to survive. Let us contemplate Christ who had the same experience in the garden of Gethsemane. He was afraid of the death that threatened him.



He lifted his prayer to God the Father: "My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to go away without me drinking it, your will be done" (Mt 26:42). Then he surrendered himself to the will of his Father.

The Paschal Mystery that we celebrate is the contemplation of Christ's death and resurrection. We must die in order to live, "If we die with Christ, we believe that we will also live with Him" (Rom 6:8). Do we have enough faith to accept this at the depths of our being and live accordingly? This is the necessary condition to remain at peace despite life's adversities. We do everything we can to avoid death, God does the rest. We accept his will.

At least, could we die in the sense of letting go certain habits to acquire a new way of living, more efficiently, more in conformity with God's will? To adopt a new way of doing things that would respond better to the present reality and to the emerging needs? To open ourselves to the values of our time such as solidarity and living as a global family?

Let us celebrate the Paschal Mystery with faith and continue to live with hope, the true life of the risen Christ!



BR. KEN MCDONALD, COUNCILLOR GENERAL

# CELEBRATING EASTER AT THE TIME OF COVID



Easter is a time to celebrate God's lavish generosity and God's unconditional love. For me, this is the message of the risen Christ and that this love and generosity are available to all.

How do we make sense of Easter in these unprecedented times with enforced isolation, social distancing and our fear of the unknown future? We live with the uncertainty of not knowing who among our family and friends will become sick and perhaps die. People lives have changed unalterably.

Living in the General House, at this time we feel the impact of the current situation less than many. Surely those whose isolation means they spend

their day in confined apartments, those who are separated from family and loved ones and those whose who have lost their jobs and are unclear of their future will find this Easter difficult.



The coming of the light of Christ has always been associated with our experience of Easter. How do we continue to be people who believe in the risen Christ? It will be in the way we treat each other and the words that we use with each other that will be the most important message we can give this Easter. It is through our actions and words, continuing to be generous and to show our love that Christ's light will continue to be present in the world in these challenging times.

BR. ÓSCAR MARTÍN VICARIO, COUNCILLOR GENERAL

# LONELINESS?

I was surprised to read, in a recent interview with Pope Francis, that one of his great concerns at this time of pandemic was loneliness: "I am worried about loneliness", "we have forgotten communion", "we have to rescue coexistence" said the Pope. And I believe that we are certainly facing a deep experience of solitude, although perhaps with new facets.

Holy Week this year brings us a Christ who is less exposed in the processions or celebrations... but very eloquent in those who suffer and in so many who take care of them with generosity and risk. Among them, also many religious and priests.

And at the same time, it brings us an extra measure of solitude. This is the loneliness that accompanies all human beings... and that perhaps we religious live in a special way (Rule of Life, 14)... But it is also in marriages, families, the elderly. Now, in times of isolation or confinement, perhaps loneliness challenges us more: to feel weak, to feel fragile, to feel alone

Three scenes illuminate our loneliness this Easter:

- One that is re-dimensioned on Holy Thursday, the day of love: the invitation to recover coexistence as the Pope said. And to recreate fraternity, which is central to our vocation. So that this crisis does not make us more solitary but more brothers and sisters.

- Another, the loneliness of the crucified... hard and devastating, even to the point of abandonment. But that is also a loving solitude, full of compassion. And that it is an invitation for us to be more and more compassionate with those suffering today.

- And the third, which is illuminated on Holy Saturday, with the traditional devotion to the solitude of Mary, and the desire to "accompany Mary" alone after losing her son. How can we accompany those who are suffering? And those who have lost children, parents, friends in this pandemic? And, at the same time, how can we feel accompanied by our brothers and sisters, and even more, accompanied from within by the crucified and risen Jesus, alive in our hearts?



In the global Marist family, the call to strengthen ties and hearts always resounds... And, behind it, that spirituality of Champagnat, who lived all events "accompanied" by the presence of God.

Let us remember in the course of these days the beautiful stanza of St. John of the Cross who, longing for Jesus, spoke of "the quiet music, the sonorous solitude, the meal that recreates and makes one fall in love". May we discover that music in the background that gives us strength; may we feel that our solitude is inhabited; and may the Holy Thursday dinner, even if we celebrate it separately, recreate and make us fall in love. For us Marists, together with Mary of solitude, this must also be a celebration "around the same table".



BR. BEN CONSIGLI, COUNCILLOR GENERAL

## TIME OF HOPE

In his book, *A Cry for Mercy*, Henri Nouwen reminds us that the “Easter season is a time of hope. There still is fear, there still is a painful awareness of sinfulness, but there also is light breaking through. Something new is happening, something that goes beyond the changing moods of our life. We can be joyful or sad, optimistic or pessimistic, tranquil or angry, but the solid stream of God’s presence moves deeper than the small waves of our minds and hearts.” If anything, today’s pandemic challenges us to see God amid all the fear, anxiety, and death that has gripped the world. And yet, God is with us -- in the gentle care of a neighbor, in the “little virtues” of our brothers and sisters in community, in the love of our family and friends, in the self-sacrifice of our health care ministers, in the grocery store workers who provide the availability of food, and in all those who offer service and comfort during so much uncertainty.

Easter brings the awareness that God is present even when His presence is not directly noticed. Easter brings the good news that, although things seem to get worse in the world, the darkness has already been overcome. Easter allows us to affirm that although God seems very distant at times and although we remain preoccupied with many things and worries, we are reminded that our Lord walks with us on the road and keeps explaining the Scriptures to us.” He is never really far from us. Thus, there are many rays of hope casting their light on our journey.

Easter is all about hope: Jesus conquered death to give us life. Pope Francis, in his reflections during a past



Easter vigil, called us “to remember what God has done and continues to do for me, for us, to remember the road we have traveled — this is what opens our hearts to hope for the future.

May we learn to remember everything that God has done in our lives.” That is because Jesus is hope, as Francis reminded us at his first general audience: “He healed, comforted, understood — gave hope. He led all to the presence of God.”



## BR. JOÃO CARLOS DO PRADO, COUNCILLOR GENERAL HE “SAW AND BELIEVED” (JOHN 20:8)

The Gospel of John (20:1-9) on Easter Sunday this year states that when the disciple who accompanied Peter entered the tomb of Jesus and saw what had happened there, he believed. We, too, have seen and experienced many events that, especially in recent months, have caused us insecurity, doubt, and fear. In the face of all this, the voice of the Lord resounds softly in the depths of our hearts, saying “do not be afraid! (Mt. 10:31). It is a call that asks us to trust the Lord, to surrender ourselves to him and with him to go through the dark night we are living in order to reach the resurrection, the new life.

The pandemic of covid-19 is affecting all humanity and causing pain, fear, insecurity and, above all, uncertainty. We do not know exactly when we will be able to return to work, to school, to the street, and to visit family, to be able to safely embrace our friends and family. We miss many things and now we value every detail of our life in a different way. Without having made a choice, we are collectively entering a process of re-signifying our lives, history and future. This crisis, for Christians, coincides to a great extent with the period of Lent, when we withdraw to look within ourselves and deepen our existence on the basis of the word and life of Jesus.

Living this moment of human history is an invitation, to each one

of us, to BELIEVE.

The beloved disciple entered the tomb at dawn and realized that Jesus was no longer there, and he believed. Jesus had risen. The dark night had passed. It was necessary for Jesus

to go through this experience in order to have a new life and for all of us to have it. Also for each one of us, beyond wishing this experience to pass, it is important to live it and to incorporate it into our lives. There is a new world, a new reality, a new normality that awaits us. We will not be alone.

The celebration of Easter means for each one of us, Christians and non-Christians, a reason for hope and faith in a new life that the Lord has entrusted and placed in our hands. With Him we will be born this Easter to a new life. He has risen and is alive among us, giving us the comfort and the courage to make the journey. Mary and Marcellin accompany us in the birth of this new dawn for humanity. He “saw and believed” (Jn. 20:8) - Happy Easter to all!



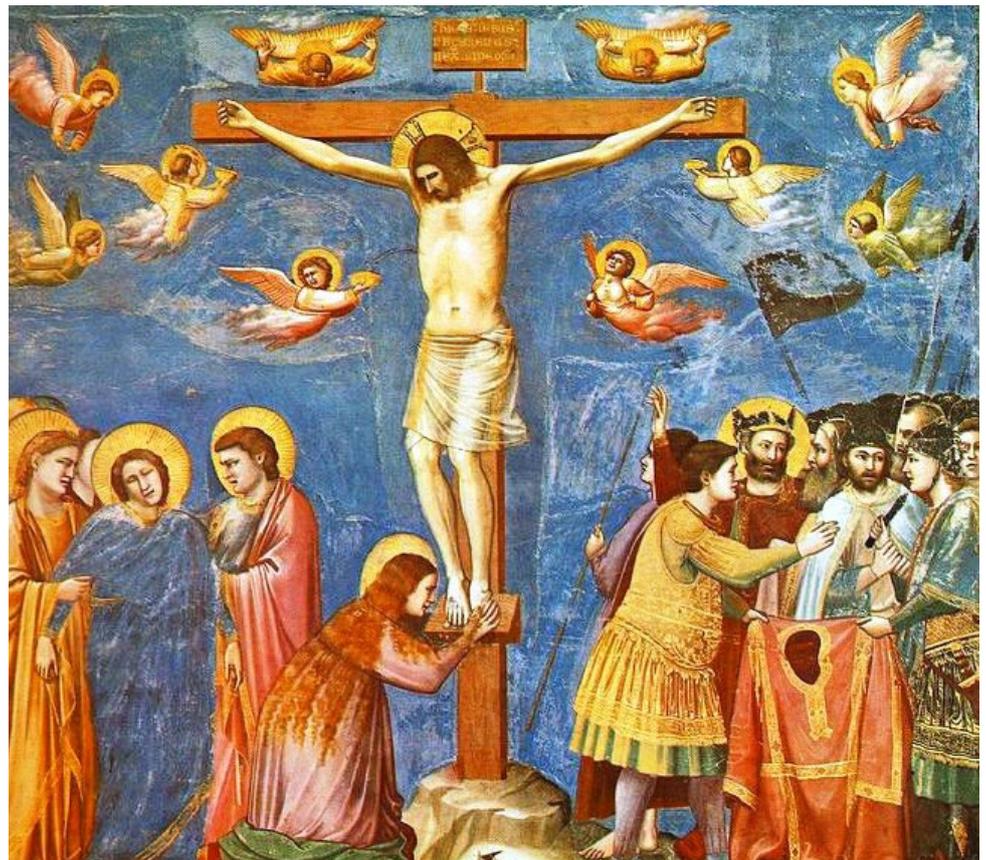
# MARCELLIN CHAMPAGNAT AND THE HOLY WEEK

The mystery of redemption was another of the special objects of Father Champagnat's devotion. He spent the whole of Lent meditating on the sufferings of the divine Saviour; and, convinced that such a subject was adequate to occupy the Brothers and to nourish their piety, he gave them no other for their meditations, their spiritual reading and often, for the reading during meals.

Holy Week was even more specially given over to contemplating that ineffable mystery of God's immense love for men; he spent it with the greatest recollection, as it were in a kind of retreat. During the last three days, the liturgical ceremonies were carried out in full with all possible devotion and solemnity. For many years the Founder himself fasted on Good Friday on bread and water and had the community do likewise. There was no recreation taken that day after the midday meal, and deep silence reigned throughout the house; the whole day was passed either attending the ceremonies, reading spiritual works or meditating on the sufferings of Jesus Christ. The pious Founder turned Holy Week into a time of renewal in piety and fervour both for himself and his Brothers. Many of the Brothers in the establishment, spent this holy time with him; he saw them all privately to encourage

them and to rekindle the spirit of their state; and in between the ceremonies, he conducted lectures and discussions on Christ's passion or on the duties of the religious life. It can be said, then, that the week was indeed a holy one, as its name suggests; he dedicated it entirely to prayer, to his own sanctification and that of his Brothers.

Jean-Baptiste Furet, Life of Blessed Marcellin Joseph Champagnat – II,6



Giotto, La Crocifissione, Cappella degli Scrovegni, Padova, Italy

**HAPPY AND HOLY EASTER TO ALL THE MARISTS OF CHAMPAGNAT!  
MAY THE RISEN CHRIST HELP US TO WALK AS A GLOBAL FAMILY**



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