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# MARIST NEWS

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FRANCE

## 8 MAY, ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEATH OF BROTHER HENRI VERGÈS

On the occasion of the 26th anniversary of the death of Brother Henri Vergès, on 8 May 1994, in Algiers, here are some reflections written for Brother Alain Delorme which will help the reader to keep alive the memory of this brother who, for 25 years, gave his life in the service of Algerian youth, beatified with 18 other martyrs of Algeria, religious men and women, on 8 December 2018 in Oran.

### BROTHER HENRI VERGÈS, A VULNERABLE MAN

#### The life and martyrdom of Henri Vergès from the angle of vulnerability

The one who “offers to take”, who forgets himself in order to open his heart to others, is vulnerable. Brother Henri Vergès, through his commitment to religious life, lived only for the Lord and the proclamation of the Gospel. He was a “wounded” man, the exact opposite of those of whom Charles Péguy speaks: “Who do not cover themselves with grace, because not being wounded, they are not vulnerable”. (Morals and grace)

Henri knew the vulnerability of the “old man” in him. At the end of eight years of interior simplicity during his service in the novitiate, he saw in this trial “a minimum to subdue in me what is in the old man” and he added: “On the other hand, it was a providential time on all levels. God be praised for this time in the desert! »

He knew he was vulnerable to death. His friend Bélaïd testifies: “On March 25, 1994, I met Henri Vergès for the last time. I was alone with him in his office in Algiers. I told him: “Mr. Vergès, you are in a red-light district; you are under constant threat; Are you aware that death is watching you day and night? He stopped his work, because he was covering a book, and he said to me: “Listen, my choice was made in 1948. I offered my life to God. My destiny is in the hands of the Almighty.” He was sincere and he concluded with a slight smile, “Believe me, I am

not thinking about my safety”. When I left him, I was worried for his life and I didn’t know that this was a farewell visit”.

Christian de Chergé, in a homily on July 17, 1994, presents the death of Brother Henri and Sister Paul-Hélène in the following way: “Those who claimed responsibility for their murder could not appropriate their death. It belonged to an Other, like everything else, and for a long time. “It’s part of the contract,”



laughed Henri, “and it will be whenever He wants. It’s not going to stop us from living, all the same!”

#### F. Henri in a Muslim environment

At Christmas 1989, Henri described his Algerian journey for a Spanish magazine on the occasion of the bicentenary of the birth of Marcellin Champagnat. He ends as follows: “In summary, it is my Marist commitment that has allowed me, despite my limitations, to insert myself harmoniously into the Muslim milieu, and my life in this milieu, in turn, has made me more deeply a Marist Christian. God be praised! ».

Henri’s heart “offered hold” to his students and their families, to the people of the neighbourhood, to the Algerian people

whose nationality he had asked for. Christian de Chergé, in the homily already quoted, writes: “Henri was also looking towards Islam which never ceased to allow itself to be questioned, from within a quest for God always on the alert. “I allow myself to be questioned, and I question, I destabilize the other a little, and the other destabilizes me... It is like Mary, I do not understand, but I look out. What the little ones have grasped, it’s wonderful. The scientists are blocking my business.”

Bishop Henri Teissier, in his preface to Robert Masson’s book: “Henri Vergès, a Christian in the house of Islam”, notes: “His life as a Marist religious and educator became a life in Muslim Algeria, for the Algerians and with the Algerians. The rise of danger, of which he was well aware, did not change this fundamental orientation, but added to it a desire for spiritual solidarity with Islam and the Muslims whose Ribat would help him to bring out all the meaning. His friendships, especially with Brother Christian, the monks and other members of the Ribat, deepened this call in him.

Henri, whose heart remained wounded at the sight of the poverty of his pupils, tried, he wrote, “to better grasp the humble means offered to me day by day in the reality of the things

offered to me so that these young people may feel through me a Presence that loves them and calls them by the best of themselves”.

**Witness to the love of Christ**

On the occasion of the centenary of the arrival of the Marist Brothers in Algeria (1891-1991), he ended his presentation as follows: “We give thanks, with the Virgin Mary, in a trusting availability, at the heart of a Church whose humble condition of servant in Love we fraternally espouse”.

At the end of the funeral Mass on May 12, 1994, at Notre-Dame d’Afrique, Cardinal Duval addressed these few words from the heart to the congregation, where there were many Muslims: “Dear Brother Henri and the admirable Sister Paul-Hélène, were authentic witnesses to the love of Christ, of the absolute disinterestedness of the Church and of fidelity to the Algerian people.

The first two of the 19 martyrs beatified in Oran, on 8 December 2018, rest in the cemetery of El Harrach, near Algiers.

Brother Alain Delorme

SPAIN

**NGO SED LAUNCHES CAMPAIGN TO HELP PEOPLE AFFECTED BY COVID-19**

The NGO SED, of the Marists of Champagnat of Spain, RESPONDS to the social clamour that accompanies the pain of the families affected by the crisis of the COVID-19, as well as the mandate of its statutes to join in the work of solidarity to mitigate the effects of the pandemic.



#QuédateEnCasa

SED takes a step forward after the actions already undertaken, launching an institutional campaign to intensify participation in the common work to overcome this health and social alarm.

The NGO SED’s OBJECTIVE is to provide the necessary means to centres and institutions that look after those affected by COVID-19 and to provide them with the necessary pharmacological and food resources so that they can do so in the best conditions. All of this both in Spain and in the southern countries

where the NGO maintains collaboration and presence, with different health centres and dispensaries.

Watch the video here: <https://youtu.be/Zs53BM6fcns>

Follow ONGD SED on Social Networks to keep up to date with all the news:

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## SOUTH AFRICA

# REFUGEE CHILDREN GET A LEARNING LIFELINE FROM THREE2SIX

Poor families struggling financially in lockdown are further disadvantaged by their children being deprived of education due to a lack of access to technology and internet at home. The Three2Six project in Johannesburg has made a plan for its children.

## A Marist non-profit organisation in South Africa

For the past 12 years, the Three2Six project, a Marist non-profit organisation based at three campuses (Sacred Heart College in Observatory, Holy Family College and Observatory Girls' Primary School) has been providing a bridging education programme for refugee and asylum-seeker children, as they are not always able to secure space in state schools.

At Three2Six, lessons are held from 3pm to 6pm daily and the children get a meal as well as a uniform, textbooks, stationery and safe transport to and from classes every day.

The programme provides love and comfort to children and families who have to navigate the winding paths of bureaucracy around refugee and asylum-seeker status in South Africa. Every child receives education, knowledge and adequate preparation to enter into a regular school environment.

COVID-19 and kids with no access to technology at home  
The week before the project's campuses closed, a nurse came to explain to the children what Covid-19 is and how we can stop the spread of the disease. The children took this information home with them but, because of the lockdown, were cut off from their regular schooling hours. If other schools managed to move to distance learning, Three2Six could not, as its learners have limited or no access to technology at home.

The team at Three2Six had to come up with a back-up plan as they could no longer provide afternoon programmes during lockdown. Families received food vouchers, but this didn't make up for a lack of knowledge development for the kids.

The answer came in the form of radio education. Three2Six partnered with the Catholic radio station Radio Veritas to record lessons for the children to listen to. Radio is still the easiest and cheapest way to get information across to those who are not fortunate enough to have Wi-Fi, smartphones, laptops or tablets.

In addition to this, the Three2Six teachers have been innovative in also using WhatsApp to reach learners. Lessons and games



are keeping learners active and intellectually engaged until normal classes can resume after the lift of the lockdown and the Three2Six project is delighted to be able to continue providing a service.

There is a message in this for all of us. We have to be resourceful and resilient and keep pushing to provide for people who need us. That is the lesson the Three2Six project has shared for the last 12 years and it is more evident now, during the Covid-19 chaos, than ever.

## 100 teachers offering a safe space to more than 2,400 children

The Three2Six project was founded at Sacred Heart College and later extended to Observatory Girls' Primary, in 2010, and Holy Family College, in 2018. It has grown from 62 learners to 335 in 2018, has empowered close to 100 teachers and offered a safe space to more than 2,400 children. Over 600,000 meals have been served. More than 600 children have been able to register at state schools with the help of the project.

In the coming days, the project will provide another round of food vouchers for each child to support their families.

At the end of lockdown, Three2Six will put in place a catch-up programme of additional classes for all children and teaching camps for older children.

Follow us on Facebook. Read our Newsletter. Any contribution of any kind would go a long way. Please contact partnerships@three2six.co.za. Charlotte Margerit, project manager at Three2Six and Erica Penfold is communications manager.

Erica Penfold and Charlotte Margerit

marist world

BOLIVIA: INTERPROVINCIAL NOVITIATE OF THE REGION AMÉRICA SUR, IN COCHABAMBA

CHILE: RADIO MARCELINO CHAMPAGNAT

INDIA: MARCELLIN TRUST – OPERATION RAINBOW



BRASIL: PONTIFÍCIA UNIVERSIDADE CATÓLICA DO PARANÁ

AUSTRALIA: BURIAL OF BR. LEONARD SMITH IN NUDGEE

CHILE: NUESTRA SEÑORA DE ANDACOLLO MARIST SCHOOL – PROVIDING JUNAEB FOOD BASKET

GENERAL HOUSE

1ST MAY: THE WORK IN THE MARIST TRADITION

The Marist tradition places great value on manual work because it brings us into direct contact with creation, with other living beings, and with inanimate objects. It involves ... caring for nature, in conserving and transforming it. It teaches ... patience and precision. As well, such labour affirms both the value of working with our hands and the example of indigenous peoples who live with great respect in close relationship to their land.

This love of manual work reveals a wider attitude in the heart of the Marist that encompasses the values of making do, frugality, service, industriousness, and devotedness. In summary – a simple life-style. This manner of living comes from a Marist tradition that seeks to live from the



work of our hands. This chosen simplicity of life creates a greater capacity to minister with the poor.

All of this ensures that, like Marcellin, our

journey with God is also one of simplicity. We approach God with transparency, honesty, openness and trust. We consciously seek uncomplicated ways to help us in this journey.

## INDIA BAGS OF JOY



The movie “City of joy” (1992) situated in the city of Kolkata finishes with the sentence of Hasari Pal: “All that is not given is lost”. This significant sentence has full actuality in this difficult moment of the covid-19. In our place, Burdwan, India, one hundred kilometers in the north-west of Kolkata, the poor people is suffering especially the consequences of this pandemic disease. The lockdown is punishing terribly the most vulnerable people around us, like the Santali and others kind of tribal people.

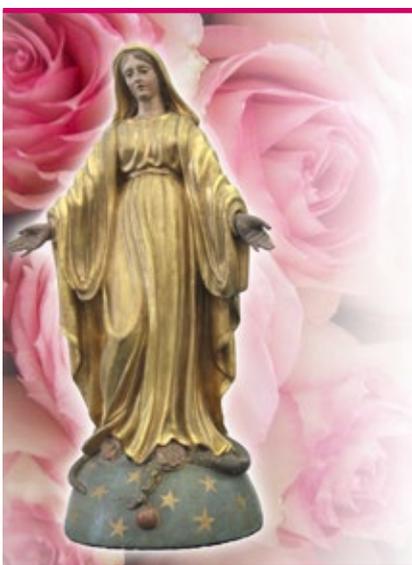
We closed, almost two months ago, the Hostel and the different classes and activities that we do in our house with the children and young people from the different Santali villages around us: Talit, Jinguti, Simdal, Fagupur, Mohanpur, Talpukur... The families stand in their villages without work and any income. Around our Marist Community of Talit, eight kilometers from Burdwan, many families are suffering of lack of food. The Government is helping and different

parishes in our Diocese of Asansol; but is not enough.

The three Marist Brothers of the Talit Community, Marist District of Asia, watching the present situation, decided to do something for these poor families around us. With some money of the Australian Marist Solidarity NGO and with some of our personal money we prepared 200 bags of essential food (rice, flour, lentils, soy bean, sugar, salt and oil) and, with the help of some young people, we distributed them among the families around us. We know that this action is a small drop in the middle of the ocean, but it’s an opportunity to give free what we received freely (Mt 10, 8). We discovered the joy of the service (Rabindranath Tagore).

After this action the bags of food changed in bags of joy. It was the miracle of the gratuitousness.

Marist Community of Talit, India



## May with Mary

The month of May is a special time of devotion to Mary, not only for us Marists but for the whole Church.

The Constitutions of the Institute remind us that Marcellin Champagnat wanted his disciples to live in the spirit of Mary (Const. 4). That is why he encouraged the celebration of the month of May, as Furet reminds us: “All the Brothers will take to heart the celebration of the month of Mary and will lead the students to do the same with joy and devotion” (Jean-Baptiste Furet).

Pope Francis, in a letter sent to the faithful for the month of May 2020, invites us “to discover the beauty of praying the Rosary at home. He also proposed the texts of two prayers to Our Lady, which we make [available here](#).

## MADAGASCAR

## SAINT PETER CHANEL MARIST COLLEGE, IHOSY MADAGASCAR



April 28 marked the patronal feast of Saint Peter Chanel Marist College in Ihosy, Madagascar. It is always an important day for the 1,200 students, educators (brothers and lay) as well as the wider community, in particular the College's ex-students and benefactors. Unfortunately, the celebration could not be held this year because of restrictions imposed as a result of the Covid-19 crisis.

### Lockdown period

Students from two year levels – third year and final year – returned to school on Wednesday, April 22 in order to restart classes and prepare for their external exams in June. This return to classes is part of the progressive lifting of the lockdown proposed by the government. Naturally we follow also their directives in terms of health measures to limit the propagation of the virus. Schools across the country were closed on March 21 and the reopening date is not yet known, except for students in 7th grade who were allowed to resume lessons from Monday, April 27. They also must pass the official exam which will allow them to graduate primary school and move on to secondary.

Pending a return to normal activities after this period of lockdown, Marist school leaders have been producing learning materials for students forced to stay at home. These materials consist of handout lessons and exercises for students to do at home. Parents come to school to collect them along with the necessary instructions from the school administrators.

### Reminder of the history of Saint Peter Chanel Catholic College, Ihosy

Ihosy is the capital of the Ihorombe region which counts about 40,000 inhabitants. It is located 600 km south of the national capital, Antananarivo. The vast majority of the region's population is engaged in zebu farming. Most of the children and young people come from families in precarious situations.

The Marist School of Ihosy was founded in 1986, at the request of the local Bishop. The first Marist community settled there and, at that time, there were only a few classrooms. Currently, the school welcomes 1,200 students from the 6th grade onwards. Br Randrianantenaina Jean Albert Thomas is the Director. School numbers have grown steadily over the years and, unfortunately, due to lack of sufficient infrastructure and respecting requirements, the school is forced to refuse a large number of enrolments each year.

The community serving this school includes 4 Brothers. About thirty lay collaborators, a few religious and priests from the diocese assist the Brothers in educating the children and young people attending the school. Beyond the school, the Brothers also take part in pastoral activities in the parish, especially catechesis, youth ministry and Catholic action movements.

School redevelopment work has recently been done to provide a more welcoming environment for students.

Br Ramarosandratana Camille

## HONDURAS

## MARISTS OF COMPOSTELA IN CENTRAL AMERICA

**The “Province of León” starts up its mission in Comayagua**

In August 1989, the former Marist Province of León, at the request of the then Superior General, Brother Charles Howard and his Council, initiated a reflection on the search for a proper place for the mission, in view of the fact that its presence in Zaire was no longer necessary. To this end, the Provincial Council appointed a Commission which, already in 1990, opted for a Spanish-American country where there was no Marist mission. The brothers opted for Honduras, and, within this country, on the 4th January 1992, they decided on the city of Comayagua, since it offered better conditions to fulfill the proposed objectives. In the process of discernment, some criteria had been established: a ministry with an educational-pastoral character; one that did not require a very large number of personnel; one that was aimed at achieving economic autonomy; one that gave consideration for the most needy in society; one that made possible the emergence of Marist vocations.

Having made contact with the bishop of the diocesan capital, Monsignor Geraldo Scarpone, in 1993 the brothers accepted his offer to organize and direct the educational centre “La Inmaculada Institute”. Similarly, the brothers were offered the opportunity to collaborate in social work for street children, called Horizons for the Future, which had been started years before as an initiative of laypeople involved in the Courses of Christianity.

The city of Comayagua is situated in the central region of Honduras. It has more than 120,000 inhabitants. It is one of the most populated cities next to Tegucigalpa (the capital) and San Pedro Sula. The illiteracy rate of the municipality is approximately 16%. Only a very small percentage attain higher

education or university level. During the years 1997-2003, in the city of Choluteca there was another community of three brothers who collaborated in various diocesan activities, such as the cultural centre “Casa de la Juventud”, the diocesan radio station, the college of “María Goretti”, the Regional Catholic University, the publication “Iglesia en marcha”...

**Marist Brothers in Comayagua**

Marist Institute of the Immaculate Conception and “Horizons for the Future

Currently the “Marist Institute La Inmaculada” has 30 educators within the teaching and administrative personnel, 5 people in charge of service and maintenance, 1050 students, all of them in 19 groups of secondary classes, and the community of 5 Brothers. The social centre “Horizons for the Future” welcomes 36 children and young people and has a team of educators. Since the beginning of the Marist presence in Comayagua, a brother from the community has been accompanying and animating this centre. It is worth mentioning that at the present time the Association Horizons for the Future has 132 members, who provide financial support, in the form of fees.

The school is currently a reference point for educational and evangelisation quality. A good number of the educators work full time in the centre. The third part is committed to the animation of youth groups, such as Aventurate y Remar, in which more than 200 students take part. Another good group is part of a Fraternity of the Champagnat Movement. The attention to the most needy which was the founding inspiration is maintained with the reception of more than 200 students with scholarships, as well as the evangelical investment of quality with the 36 children and



young people of the centre “Horizons for the future”, street children in a country where seven children seek to go daily, alone and without papers, to the United States, according to a recent report.

**27 years beyond the borders**

There have been 27 years of Marist presence in Honduras, a country of 9.3 million inhabitants and an area of 112,492 km². A history of missionary outreach in Compostela, with Brothers of all ages who have wanted to live the experience of being sent beyond the borders. The challenges of this moment continue to motivate the discernment of the community:

-To face the high levels of poverty and inequality that the country is experiencing (48.3% live in poverty); as well as violence and insecurity, among the highest in the world, with 68 violent deaths for every 100,000 inhabitants; only three out of ten children have access to secondary education. This context of the country stimulates evangelizing action, consistently and solidly, in the educational community.

– The lay presence is significant in the two centres. But, for them as for the Brothers, there appears to be an urgent need for a consistent process of lay empowerment at all levels. With committed Marists, says the last Chapter, it is possible to project the future with hope, to grow and to transmit the charism. There are no Honduran Marist Brothers, but it would be possible to make the Marist story last in Honduras, with a group of lay Marists.

– Honduras is part of the Central American region, with Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Costa Rica, where there is a Marist presence from the Province of Central America. Progressively



sively there has been growth in the organization and communication between the two provinces. The challenge remains to continue sharing efforts, exchanging experiences and responding together to the same reality of the region.

Comayagua, April 2020



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