
**CELEBRATION OF THE MEMORIAL
OF VENERABLE BROTHER**

FRANÇOIS RIVAT

1881 - JANUARY 22 - 2021

140TH ANNIVERSARY OF HIS DEATH



I. INTRODUCTION

Animator: Today, we are celebrating the 140th death anniversary of Brother François Rivat, who was the first successor of Marcellin Champagnat in the animation of the Marist Institute. Being the direct heir of the Founder, François was able to live the charism and the inspiration he received and transmit them to the succeeding generations of Marists during his 20 years of leadership. Celebrating his death is a propitious occasion to thank God for the gift that he has given us in François, the Brother – of Marcellin, of his Brothers, of young people – our Brother.

All: We walk with you, François, in the way of Jesus. You lead us, you are our guide. For us, your life is light!

SONG: WHERE THERE IS A CHILD

O Lord, I would like to tell you what I feel in me, today my soul begs you for a love that is endless.

Wherever there is a child, I want to tell him about You, my Father Marcellin taught me so.

A humble smile, sincere and peaceful, is your living Word that becomes a reality.

A TEAR, THAT OF A CHILD, A LAMENT TO LISTEN TO, A BROTHER, A FRIEND, A LIFE THAT IS GIVEN.

O Mary, my good Mother, you live with me, today I would like to thank you for having said Yes.

Wherever there is a child, I want to tell him about You, my Father Marcellin taught me so.

An unwavering faith and trust amid the struggle, your way was your example, that schooled us in the truth.

II. FRANCISCO: LIFE, VOCATION AND MISSION THAT INSPIRE

L1: Gabriel Rivat (Brother François) was born on March 12, 1808, at Maissonnettes, a village in La Valla-en-Gier (France). In his family, the rosary was prayed daily. When Gabriel was five years old, his mother consecrated him to the Blessed Virgin during a pilgrimage to Valfleury. Marcellin arrived in the parish of La Valla in 1816. Gabriel was then 8 years old and was one of the first to attend the morning catechism of the coadjutor. At the age of 10, he made his first communion, an event that marked him for life. Three weeks later he asked to join the young community that Marcellin Champagnat had just founded on January 2, 1817. Although he was very young, his fidelity would be total.

All: “Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.” (1Tm 4:12)

L2: In 1826, at the age of 18, he made his perpetual vows; his joy was overflowing, and Marcellin said to him: “I envy your happiness!” He began to work as a teacher from the age of 12: in the morning, he cooked for the community and for the students; in the afternoon, he taught reading, catechism, and prayers to slow learners. He would eventually become school director.

All: “ Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.” (Jeremiah 1:5)

L3: But Marcellin recognized his qualities. He made him his confidant, his secretary and infirmarian of the house. He had a real aptitude for these tasks: he treated the sick with medicines made from plants that he himself grew and collected; he counselled the sick, prayed with them and often obtained unexpected cures.

All: “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ Jesus” (1 Cor. 11:1)

L1: In 1839, as his health was rapidly declining, Marcellin asked the Brothers to choose his successor; they chose Brother François. When Marcellin died on June 6, 1840, François made the decision to conform his life to the style of St. Marcellin. He would serve as Superior General of the Marist Brothers for 20 years. When he took over the Institute, it had 280 members; when he handed it over to his successor, Brother Louis-Marie, it would have more than 2000.

All: “Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.” (Mt 25:23)

L2: From 1860 onwards, he lived in the Hermitage, a Marist sanctuary that Marcellin built, as superior of the community. He would always be for everyone a model of prayer and interior life. Every time he returned from communion, his smile would illuminate his face with the joy of having received the Lord. On January 22, 1881, he died on his knees while reciting the Angelus. Those near him said: “The saint has died!”

All: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.
⁸ Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day...” (2Tm 4:7-8)

III. WORDS OF BROTHER FRANÇOIS

A: “Christians are like painters who must copy Jesus Christ. Their eyes must be attentively fixed on this divine original, to reproduce in themselves the features of his virtues. Try it, and you will soon see that the contemplation of his mysteries and the example of his life, like an admirable brush, will make of you a perfect copy of the divine Savior”.

IV. MOMENT OF REFLECTION

- *Our XXII General Chapter challenges us to be “beacons of hope in this turbulent world”. How can Brother François’ life motivate us to be light and hope for the world today?*
- *The Chapter also asks us to be “creative in responding boldly to the needs of children and young people who in the margins of life. How can Brother François, the educator, help us today to be more creative in our response to the marginalized of the world, especially children and young people?*

(Those who wish may share their reflections...)

V. COMMUNITY PRAYERS

A: Trusting in the Lord who always listens to our prayers, let us pray to him saying:
Through the intercession of Brother François, we pray to you Lord; hear our prayer.

- - Lord, bless the Marist Fathers, Brothers and Sisters whom you have gathered to your service in the Church and in the world; sustain with your grace those who are candidates for Marist religious life.
- - Lord, may we never lack committed lay men and women with a deep sense of their mission as baptized Christians, their vocational commitment, and their witness to Marist life.
- - Lord, may the witness of Brother François’ life encourage the Marist family to continue to be for all “a beacon of hope in today’s turbulent world”.

(Other petitions...)

The Lord’s Prayer

VI. CONCLUDING PRAYER

A: Let us end our prayer by addressing the Venerable Brother Francis, asking his intercession for our needs, especially at this time when the COVID-19 pandemic is taking the lives of millions of people around the world.

All: Good Father, You gave Brother François a particular aptitude for caring for and healing the sick or preparing them to accept with peace the deteriorating state of their health. Let us have recourse to him so that he may, as he did in his earthly life, ask your Son and Mary, His holy Mother, for the grace necessary for the health issues we are entrusting to you (*silently ask for this grace*).

Brother François, you who listens, intercede for us.

VII. SONG TO MARY: **Salve Regina**
