

MESSAGE OF BR. LUIS CARLOS GUTIÉRREZ, VICAR GENERAL FEAST OF SAINT MARCELLIN CHAMPAGNAT

General House, 6 June 2024
Mass of the Feast of Saint Marcellin Champagnat

Dear Brothers and Sisters, friends all.

On this special day, we have gathered to celebrate not only our faith, but also our communion as a Marist family. On behalf of the Brothers of the General House communities, I am grateful for the presence of the Marist Fathers' community, the Marist Sisters and the Marist Missionary Sisters, as well as the Brothers of the various communities in Italy, the participants of the GIER program



and the Program for the International Communities, and our friends and lay collaborators. Thank you, Fr. John, for presiding over our celebration.

Today we remember St. Marcellin Champagnat, whose spirit and vision live on among us. His legacy today is a community of life and mission made up of countless people, brothers and laity, children and young people, families committed to a community that seeks to live the values of the Gospel in Mary's way.

Brother Ernesto reminded us in his message for this occasion:

We are happy to know that Champagnat had the capacity to listen in his heart to the intuitions of the Spirit and to respond with audacity, despite the difficulties he faced and the criticisms he was subjected to. He always said that everything he accomplished was not his personal work, but the work of God and Mary. He was animated every day by his contemplative prayer, his friendly and close fraternal life, and his dedication to the service of children and young people, particularly those most in need.

In these times of history, marked by situations of war, violence and polarization, and shaken by natural disasters in various regions of the world, we feel the same commitment as Champagnat: to be a sign of fraternity and family, of life and hope. In a world that often feels divided and tumultuous, our actions, however small, can be beacons of hope. Whether through a kind word, the daily work of educating or evangelizing, a gesture of solidarity or a commitment to justice, each of us has the power to make a difference. May we not forget that we are called to be bridge builders, promoters of peace and defenders of the most vulnerable.

In 1824, 200 years ago, Champagnat and the first Brothers laid the foundation stone of the Hermitage, our big house. This marked the beginning of a new stage in the development of that original community. I imagine that beyond the physical and financial effort that this entailed, Champagnat felt within himself a great hope and confidence greater than any fear or doubt. The experience of this young Founder, who learned and taught us to look beyond, encourages us today to feel the same way: in the face of any uncertainty, trust; in the face of any discouragement, hope; in the face of any doubt, faith.

On this June 6, we celebrate and pray in communion with all the places that make up the global Marist family, particularly with those who are suffering difficult situations. May the confidence that today we continue to build the work of God and Mary continue to be the engine that drives us every day in our actions and visions. May faith and hope allow us to see today and tomorrow with the same eyes and the same committed heart of Champagnat.

Happy Feast to all!