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Updates

16/04/2009: Photo gallery:
Remodeling work at the Hermitage
- 45

16/04/2009: Marist educational
community of Athens

15/04/2009: Photo gallery: The
«Horizontes» course at Los Negrales

15/04/2009: Meeting of a group
of brothers and lay people of Cata-
lonia : week-end at Les Avellanes

14/04/2009: Ten years on from
the Canonization (VI)

14/04/2009: Deceased Brothers:
Antoine-Joseph Kuntz (L'Hermitage)
- Timoteo M Cabangon (East Asia)

14/04/2009: Photo gallery:
Celebration of Easter in the General
House

14/04/2009: Marist Brothers - 75
Years in Uruguay

12/04/2009: Easter Message - Br.
Seán Sammon, Superior General

10/04/2009: Ten years on from
the Canonization (V)

09/04/2009: Marist News 44

09/04/2009: Horizons program
- Water from the Rock

08/04/2009: The World Appeal to
a New Mobilization for Childhood

08/04/2009: Ten years on from
the Canonization (IV)

07/04/2009: Korea Sector of the
East Asia Province

Anniversary of the canoniza- tion of Marcellin Champagnat

Abril 18th, 1999



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Marist Brother's Institute

General House - Rome

An event which fills us with joy

Meeting of a group of brothers and lay people of Catalonia

The week-end of 21 and 22 March, eleven lay people and ten brothers from Catalonia found themselves at Les Avellanes (Lérida – Spain), for a sharing in depth on the ways of living their personal vocations as Christians and as Marists.

It is several years now since a group of brothers and lay persons started a process of joint reflection: commission of shared mission, group of co-ordination for lay people meeting on a local level, general meetings, International Marist Mission Assembly, etc. ... In most of these areas the need to further clarify the subject of the laity has become more evident: the specific nature of the latter, the relation with the charism, and many other aspects it is necessary to study more closely, little by little, in communion with what is lived on the level of the Institute.

Apart from these aspects, the aim of the experience of the week-end was above all to live in the joy which is already an evident reality; the charism of Marcellin Champagnat has spread in the hearts of many persons – brothers and laity – as much in Catalonia as in the other parts of the world. For some it is a discovery, for others a becoming aware, indeed a waking up! In the course of this week-end we put aside the projects and reflections about the theme. We shared... life, each one starting from his/her own experience.

The brothers and laity who took part in this week-end live their daily lives in the reality of different missions, in accord with their choices and their personal states of life: teachers, parents of pupils, former students, married, single, brothers... On Saturday we shared – from the heart and face to face – our own Marist history; and on Sunday, each one's real link – and dream – with the charism. There were long periods of sharing (laity with brothers, laity with



laity, brothers with brothers), some personal time for interiorization and spaces for celebration all together.

In brief, it was a privileged time, a true gift for those who had the chance to experience it, a new landmark on the road we are walking together.

We would like to express our gratitude to the people who made this experience possible, to thank those who took part for their availability, without forgetting those who, for whatever reason, were not able to be with us.

So many questions and answers taking all their meaning from the closeness, the intimate encounter, heart to heart, of things impossible to explain. «Come and see!»

«Oh! how good it is, how pleasant, when brethren dwell as one!» we say at the end of one of these days. What emotion, though almost imperceptible, in Pep's voice when he invites us to contemplate and share our Christian and Marist vocation! «Take your shoes off, for you stand on holy ground» The Voice tells Moses. Les Avellanes, holy ground...

If a humble flower – the lily of the field – gives glory to God and He clothes it, will He do less for us? The Marist charism is not a dream, it is the action of the Spirit, incarnate and shared with Manel, Rogelio, Pere, Josep Maria, Sergi, Isidoro... A life and words ratified in the «flesh» of Cecilio, the doyen of our gathering.

At a time when one model of Church is dying, or when some would like to see us linked to institutions and to structures more than to the creative and free work of the Spirit, Jordi tries to make a forecast. And he sees only a radiant sun! «A sun which comes from on high», which pushes us towards living our Christianity, our spirituality and our mission in the Marist way. Lay people and brothers searching for and opening common spaces of quality.

Our room is a rosery. Twenty-one silent lives which, in an infinitely tender way, in opening up and projecting round about, stream from their interior spaces towards the light of day. Lives living from a common centre, called to possess nothing, to give themselves generously.



Marist Brothers 75 Years in Uruguay

On February 2, 1934, Brothers Macario Luis, Eugenio Luis, Ciro José, León Vidal and Félix Bernardino arrived in Montevideo, Uruguay in order to open the Santa Maria School. Thus, the year 2009 is a celebratory occasion marking the 75th anniversary of the start of Marist Brothers' presence in Uruguay.

The anniversary has been the occasion for creating a calendar of commemorative events that will be held in the course of the present academic year. The kick-off event, to take place at Casa San José, will be a general meeting for teaching personnel and support staff. After the Casa San José meeting, the full Marist Family of Uruguay will make a pilgrimage to La Florida. The final event will be a solidarity initiative that will bring together all those involved in Marist apostolic works in Uruguay.

In addition to such initiatives that involve the Uruguay Marist Family as a unit, each school will hold its own celebrations, sharing the anniversary joy with the families, graduates and colleagues connected to each educational center.

The happy circumstances offered by this Marist anniversary is a once in a lifetime occasion to strengthen the bonds that connect all the members of the Uruguay Marist Family, thanking God for the bless-



ings that He has poured out upon the Marist Brothers' works in Uruguay. The 75 years have been filled with life, commitment and apostolic fruitfulness for the many Brothers and lay people who, in this beloved land, have sown the Marist seed even up to this very day. It is a land that awaits the Lord's gift of abundant vocations, both to the Brothers and to the laity, so as to keep Marcellin's charism alive amidst the children, adolescents and young adults of Uruguay.



Marist educational community of Athens

Greece

Could Marist spirituality help us in our mission as Christian educators? That was the question discussed on 7 February 2009 during a day of reflection in Athens organised by the Formation Team of Marist Schools in Greece. Brothers and lay persons, members of the educational communities of our two schools, the high school Léonin in Patisia and the high school of N. Smyrni, 300 participants in round figures, we came together to work on our Marist spirituality, our mission, and our commitments. Divided into groups for reflection, each participant had to present a paragraph or two from the book "Water from the Rock". Our objective was clear: to reflect, deepen our understanding of the spirituality, give our impressions on the essential ideas and points discovered and share them with others. A preliminary reading of the book was considered necessary. In fact, its content helped us to better appreciate Marist spirituality in our way of life today, in our relations with our colleagues and our pupils and especially in our relationship with our Creator.

The Brothers have shown us the way; we lay people have to follow it. First of all, we have to have a good knowledge of ourselves. Then, our hearts should be filled with love for others. We must learn to give ourselves to others, to help people who are in need of help, our students in difficulties, the elderly, the sick, the lonely, and the marginalised. We must also be able to ask for forgiveness and to offer it willingly to all. Love and forgiveness, support and mutual assistance, respect and openness to others are going to provide the driving force of our actions. In this way we will be at peace with ourselves and with others and our image will resemble the image of God. That is when we can transmit Marist spirituality to others. That is when we can open ways for the young and help them to realize their dreams and their vision.



What does the canonization of their Founder mean for the Marist Congregation?

The official recognition of the Church that our Founder was a Man of God, raised up by the Holy Spirit to help all those following in his footsteps to walk the road to sanctity.

Br. Gabriele Andreucci - Postulator General - 1999

But today, what remains of the flame?

Ten years on from the Canonization

But today, what remains of the flame lit during the days of the canonization? The profound emotions have subsided, the articles ceased, the prayers inspired by the event have become rare, some of those who celebrated in Saint Peter's Square are no longer among us. The canonization is a thing of the past and fallen into oblivion. This is the way with what is human... But if the grain falls to the ground and dies, it bears much fruit.

Our Marist Family came away from the canonization with a much stronger sense of responsibility: being responsible for the Founder, for making his holiness known, for keeping his spirituality alive, for carrying his mission towards new horizons. The fruits of the canonization are evident in many of the initiatives which we are in the process of putting into practice.

This responsibility is stated in the message of the XX General Chapter which followed the canonization. The Message of that Chapter recognised that it had been influenced by the canonization and proved it by painting a portrait of Marcellin of a surprising richness:

« We look at Marcellin as our father and learn from him the values that he held dear. We see in him:

– A man of God, passionate for Jesus and Mary, a man of prayer, a pilgrim in faith. A heart in love with God.

– A father who cared for his Brothers as if they were his children, a man of strength yet full of gentleness, a man who knew how to bring joy and laughter to others. The heart of a father and a mother.



– A pastor who would listen to and welcome others, an apostle burning to proclaim the Good News of Jesus, a friend of children and youngsters, an educator who was both firm and compassionate, a man of creativity and daring. The heart of an apostle.

– A man whose vision extended beyond his own era, embracing the whole world and preparing missionaries ; a man who lived out his ideal so intensely that many others wished to be like him and to live like him. A heart without bounds.»

The document of the General Chapter invites us to « center our lives passionately on Christ ». An invitation which recurs in all Sean's circulars: A Revolution of the Heart, Marvelous Companions, Making Jesus Christ Known and Loved, Reclaiming the Spirit of the Hermitage.

The Brothers volunteering for the project Missio ad Gentes give new life to Marcellin's audacity and ambition:

«All the dioceses of the world enter into our views! ».

The spirituality of Marcellin and the first Brothers is taken up again, refined, deepened, brought up to date in Water from the Rock.

The very sanctuary of Marcellin Champagnat, the Hermitage, is in train of being given new structures, a new face, an international community.

The Marist Family is opening up, more and more positively, spaces for lay people attracted by Marcellin's way to sanctity.

New apostolates are flourishing in old Marist provinces, in closer contact with the least favoured children.

The canonization has made Marist families more attentive to the calls of the Spirit. The immense work in which we are all involved.

Br. Giovanni Bigotto

