

Marist ECHO

Institute of the Marist Brothers

Number 33 - Year 13 - September 2000

THE YOUNG AS A CHALLENGE

World Youth Days, in the context of this Jubilee Year, brought together more than two million young people from August 15 – 20. Great joy, optimism, a sense of purpose, enthusiasm, respect... were all in evidence at prayer times, meetings, and strolls through the streets of Rome. One evening, more than 500 students associated with the Marist Brothers, Sisters, and Fathers came together to celebrate their Marist identity at the Colegio San Leone Magno in Rome.

Many students' hearts were deeply touched by the grace of God during this epic event. For older people, it was exciting to come in contact with the world of youth in the Church of today. As August came to an end, the Pope hurled a new challenge at Catholics all over the world: to not only reach out to the young people in their parishes but also to all who never set foot in church.

It isn't enough to view the world of the young from the sterilized setting of research papers in sociology or articles in outstanding journals. You have to walk right up to young people, get into their world, and involve yourself in pastoral programs to evangelize them. The power of Christ will then reach them personally in a contagious way. As the Pope has reminded us, today boys and girls in the streets present us with a tremendous challenge that Marcellin would be eager to tackle.

Convoking the XX General Chapter

Br. Benito Arbués, Superior General

At the beginning of September, we Marist Brothers received Br. Benito's Circular convoking the XX General Chapter of our Institute. The Chapter will open in Rome on September 4, 2001. This assembly has supreme authority in the Institute. Besides electing the Superior General and the Councilors General who will animate and govern the Institute in the years ahead, it has other important responsibilities. Among them: knowing and analyzing the state of the Congregation and the quality of our lives as consecrated and apostolic religious; evaluating the means that we rely on; seeing how well they are suited to Christian education – evangelization! – of children and young people, especially those most in need. This implies being aware of our approach to the world and our nearness or distance from the young. In a special way, the General Chapter concerns and affects us as brothers. We are all called to take an active role, in an attitude of faith, searching for the will of God. Its celebration, however, is not to be seen as a "private" event held by our religious community. It has an ecclesial dimension, and it is

of interest to many lay people who share the spirituality and mission that we have inherited from Saint Marcellin. We have just begun a special time of listening to the Holy Spirit, reflecting, and praying which we hope will help us to "dream" together – brothers and lay people – about the future we envision for our Marist life. ♦



Br. Benito, meeting with the laity in Recife, Brazil. July 2000.

E X P E R I E N C E O F F R A T E R N I T Y

Honeymoon in Bolivia

by Teresa Rodríguez Pérez de Ayala and
Arturo Morales Pérez

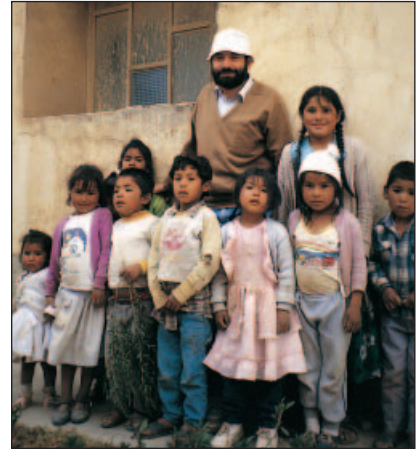
Quebrada San Antonio, Bolivia

We live in a rural community called Quebrada San Antonio. There are hardly 300 people in the town. We're near the Sub-Andean Range, about 2,700 meters or 8,800 feet above sea level. In this little corner of Bolivia and its neighboring villages, we accompany the people, sharing in their lives and their work. We devote ourselves mainly to teaching, pastoral work, and helping families, as well as the follow-up and evaluation of development projects. Once in a while, we smile in thinking of ourselves as perhaps one of the smallest "Marist communities" on the Continent. There are just the two of us, Arturo and Tere, and we arrived in this place in October of 1999, a few days after we were married. We came as volunteers with the ONG SED, although we had spent several months in previous years with Project Bolivia, a Marist missionary group that we belong to, which has been working in this area for more than ten years now.

As Marists, we are "listed" with the Comarapa community, some 45 kilometers (about 30 miles) from Quebrada. There we have rented a little house opposite that of the Brothers. Together with the four Brothers who reside there and another woman volunteer, on weekends, we share the many different tasks at school, and we pray and relax together. Without the continual support of all the others, we would find it impossible to carry out our work. At each community meeting, we have an opportunity to thank God for each other and for the constant enrich-

ment that we enjoy from sharing in the same charism and community life while living different vocations. Different but complementary, we have a wonderful opportunity to take the experience of fraternity to a new level.

This is where we wanted to begin our new family. We felt it was important to decide where and with whom we would live. Here in Quebrada San Antonio we are receiving much, much more than we could possibly give. We're enjoying a very positive experience, even though our shortcomings and limitations become clearer to us with each passing day. Life in the countryside, the climate, long treks, trips with the people perched on top of buses... often we get very tired, and our imagined "effectiveness" seems to peter out. Yet, really, we're almost positive that these children and young people, these families, would be among Father Champagnat's favorites, that he would relish making his way along the paths in this farming country. While the plight of the poor is widespread and requires concrete action, what seems to us even more urgent is the immediate kind word that makes every individual feel loved, appreciated, and empowered. Even though Marcellin lived long ago, how we desire to follow in his footsteps today, transmitting the dream of the Kingdom that Jesus has set before us. May our Good Mother help and accompany all of us. ♦



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Priority Given to Formation

An interview with Br. Gaston Robert, Councilor General by Br. Lluís Serra

Br. Gaston Robert, 52 years old, was born in the Province of Quebec, Canada. He has studied psychology in Rome, and worked in formation for the Marist Brothers and other congregations, giving spiritual direction and providing psychological accompaniment.



Visit to the Province of Sydney, Australia.

BR. GASTON, WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE STRONG POINTS IN MARIST FORMATION?

The clarity with which things are spelled out for us in the Formation Guide, a text resulting from the last General Chapter. The extensive preparation of formators in different regions of the Institute. The vigorous way in which the character of Marcellin is lived during formation.

WHAT ABOUT ITS WEAK POINTS?

The decrease in the number of new vocations demands that we deepen our commitment and better coordinate our activities in the area of vocation recruitment.



There's room for improvement in ongoing formation. In today's world, the work of formation can never be considered as finished.

ARE WE, BROTHERS AND LAY PEOPLE, SUITABLY PREPARED TO

SHARE MARCELLIN'S CHARISM?

We have a lot to learn from each other. The involvement of lay people often leads to a deepening of various aspects of our charism. It is for all of us to continue sharing the rich spirituality that we have received.

WHAT WOULD YOU EMPHASIZE IN THE FORMATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE TODAY?

The progressive development of one's calling, and openness to the other. Our world today is enticed by an exaggerated individualism. We need to provide favorable conditions for young people to discover the presence of God in themselves and in others.

WHAT IMPACT IS THE NEED FOR INCULTURATION HAVING ON FORMATION PROGRAMS?

Formation sets out to enable young people to know and love Jesus Christ in the style of Mary and Champagnat, in the context of their own cultures. This will require a major effort for years to come. Fewer and fewer formators are coming from the West. Increasingly they are coming from their local countries.

IS THERE A MARIST INITIATIVE BEING DEVELOPED IN THE FIELD OF FORMATION?

Our formation centers are becoming more and more international.

IS FORMATION IN MARIST IDENTITY A TOP PRIORITY ON THE GENERAL COUNCIL'S AGENDA?



Yes, We are becoming better at answering the question, "Who are we Marists today?" Going to the poorest with a Marian vision is our trademark. More than devotion to Mary, it is a question of her spirituality inspiring every aspect of our lives. We should stand shoulder to shoulder with lay people working to integrate the spirit of Champagnat into our hearts and minds and actions.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A MARIST BROTHER TODAY? WHY BECOME A MARIST BROTHER?

It's invaluable and rewarding to be a Marist brother today. We help young people give meaning to their lives. Our own meaning comes from following Jesus in the way that Mary did. We want to express the joy and pleasure of being a brother for others. In 2000, the brother is a very influential person in the lives of young people and the Church. ♦

• WE CHOOSE THE VITALITY OF LIFE

Br. Benito has just published the Circular to convoke the General Chapter. In it, he invites us to project ourselves into the future using our power and strength from the past. Without memory you cannot prophesy. To confront the future in terms of vitality offers a message of hope, translating itself into the slogan to choose life in the face of death. We're not starting from zero, nor have we arrived at our destination. We are engaged in a personal and communal process. Catching sight of the road and determining the direction in which we want to travel are responsibilities that we cannot delegate to future generations. It is up to us, here and now, to accomplish these tasks.

THE GOD OF LIFE

This is the central theme that has been selected for XX General Chapter. It is about the vitality of the Institute, the quality of our response to God.

(Constitutions, 171) The dictionary defines vitality as strength, the act of persevering in life, for the long term. Without these qualities, life withers away and doesn't last. Consequently, what is meant by strength and perseverance in life?

I think that, first and foremost, it means to know how to choose life itself, to be "pro-life." After that, it means to love God – the God of life; it means to listen to God and stick by God.

And so let us choose life, because our God is the God of Life. God sent Jesus so that we might enjoy life and possess it in abundance.

Then how should we respond to God who is speaking to us today?

To sum things up, by:

- loving God
- listening to God
- staying close to God

Br. Modeste Randriamanalina
Province of MADAGASCAR

LIFE, THE SOURCE OF HAPPINESS

For me life is the most precious gift that God has given me. From the moment I was born I chose life, even though I wasn't able to reason things out. The different stages of development and experiences of love, understanding, trust, values, and education that I received in my home and at school have fortified that divine gift as the source of my happiness. In spite of day-to-day ups and downs, that choice urges me on in pursuit of an ideal that lets me sing, laugh, and dance for joy, always trying to share my sunniest outlook with others.

The world and life provide us with all kinds of reasons to be happy. We have nature, our family, children, young people, the elderly... All of these gifts are close at hand, and some are even within ourselves. They amplify our inner capacity to feel, see, and hear with the openness and innocence of a child. Daily they enable us to take in manifestations of love and joy that come to us through smiles, a friendly helping hand, a word of encouragement when we think that all is lost... Raising my eyes to heaven and to my surroundings at the same time, I can find the strength and love that I need to continue my journey.

CHOOSE LIFE, the slogan adopted by the 20th General Chapter, sets something as yet unknown before us. It makes us ask ourselves what we are doing with our lives and how much spirit we are putting into them.

This slogan invites us to commit ourselves to LIFE. God grant us the courage to make that commitment and enjoy all the blessings it brings.

Janneth Burbano, Colegio Marista
Quito, Ecuador

CHOOSE LIFE •

THE MARIST INSTITUTE

DROP BY DROP

Humility and Simplicity. Two words that come to mind each time I think about the charism of Saint Marcellin Champagnat and the Marist Family. And in my imagination, these two words, which encompass such a variety of values and concepts, are turned into a drop of dew on a little flower, on a cold winter's morning at the Hermitage.

Thus can the work of the Marist family be summed up. A humble work. Drop by drop, a work aimed at spreading the values of Saint Marcellin, beginning with the most basic, so that this tiny flower, these millions of children and young people all over the world who are educated by the Marist Brothers, might flourish and new seeds of life might blossom as the years go by. That is what our choice ought to be. There is no better slogan, then, for the General Chapter than Choose Life!

Choosing life is something that we should never forget, although in easy-going times or out of habit, many never give this slogan a second thought. But our great Marist family is forever keeping it in mind. We work away humbly, tilling the ground with care, preparing the soil well so that the seed can germinate. The Marist Family supplies that drop of water that moistens and strengthens the little buds of life, so that they will grow in wisdom and goodness – so that one day they themselves will turn into dewdrops to help others know the way of Saint Marcellin Champagnat, a way that continues to thrive, thanks to our worldwide Marist Family.

**Juan Miguel Sánchez Quirós.
Contest Winner for the Chapter Logo
Seville. Spain**

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1. What signs of life and death are we picking up in our Marist and social surroundings?**
- 2. If we choose life, what must we change in ourselves, in our prayer, in our school communities, in our apostolic mission ...?**

LOGO FOR THE XX GENERAL CHAPTER

As described by its creator, Juan Miguel



The logo consists of multiple lines that symbolize the diversity of the Marist Brothers, coming together to form their General Chapter and shape their future.. The C contains a line that expresses advancing toward the future. Together with the vertical line, the G, a cross is formed, at the center of the logo, signifying faith. A shadow is cast in the background, i.e., humanity. The work resulting from the union of the Marist Family and their General Chapter.

I meditated a while and said, "Marcellin, what do you want me to do?" I created those two lines. After looking at what I did for a minute, I thought about all the interpretations. Again I said, "Perfect. This is what you wanted."

Looking at the first two lines led me to think of all the brothers throughout the world and what they do. Each time I drew a new line over the previous ones. The next step was to add color. I kept repeating to myself, simplicity, simplicity, simplicity.

Living in Marist Fraternity

NEW FRATERNITIES

The Fraternity calling itself “Prayer,” which will hold its meetings in the Marcellin Champagnat Youth Home in Madrid, has sent a letter to Brother Provincial asking for official recognition as a Fraternity in the Champagnat Movement. For several years now, they have been meeting and sharing their concerns about doing something for very needy people. The Movement has enabled them to find answers for these concerns, for they have taken to heart all things Marist.

Another Fraternity, which started out during the time of the canonization of Saint Marcellin, has taken hold in the small city of Catacocha, nestled on the steep slopes of the Andes, the cradle of our Marist presence in Ecuador. Twenty-five members attend faithfully, and on June 6, 2000 they decided to form an official Fraternity.

TESTIMONY

“My hectic social schedule led me to feel the necessity of “anchoring” myself in a religious family. People suggested I look into Marist Fraternities as a way of grounding my activity and filling it with genuine meaning. In order to live my faith in Christ in all its fullness, I needed to return to the fountains of life. In Mary, I have found someone serving, welcoming, ready to assist her neighbors in all their needs, the very way of living the Gospel that I was looking for.”



Meeting of Fraternities from the Province of Rio de Janeiro in Uberaba, Brazil. August 2000.

Fraternity of Spira de l’Agly, ECHO, Summer 2000

FRATERNITIES BY THE NUMBERS

At the present time, there are 180 Fraternities in 30 countries. Approximately 3000 people are involved in the Movement.

The composition of the membership varies. About 20% of the groups have less than ten members. 40% have between ten and fifteen, and 25% between sixteen and twenty. The remaining 15% have more than twenty members; some have more than 30.

40% of Fraternity members are married couples. Another 40% are husbands or wives who attend as individuals. In this group, many more women attend than men. Among those who are married, approximately two-thirds are younger than 50 years of age. People who are

single make up 20% of the membership.

Fraternity members working in Marist institutions – principals, teachers, administrators, staff members – account for slightly more than 30%.

There are not many students involved, only about 6%, evenly divided between boys and girls.

WAYS OF HELPING

What is most helpful for living the Christian life? Here is a list of the measures in the order of importance that the Fraternities have assigned to them:

- Sharing apostolic, social, and solidarity experiences in the group;
- Formation in the spirituality of Champagnat;
- Fraternity meetings;
- Prayer in common;
- Mutual assistance, solidarity, and



Arthur Solomon and his wife Maretta, their two sons, daughter and son-in-law holding little Champagnat.

A FAVOR ATTRIBUTED TO SAINT MARCELLIN:

On April 18 last year, at the canonization ceremony at St. Peter’s, Arthur and Maretta Solomon from New Zealand prayed that their daughter and her husband would be able to have a child since they had had some difficulty up to that point. Nine months later to the day, a son was born, and his name is Champagnat.

- friendship within the Fraternity;
- A deeper understanding of the Gospel;
- Meetings with other Fraternities;
- Retreats together;
- In this regard, some Fraternities greatly appreciate a group pilgrimage to the Hermitage;
- Working on the Project of Life at the heart of the Fraternity. ♦

Statue of Saint Marcellin Blessed by the Pope

CHAMPAGNAT AT THE VATICAN

After concluding his General Audience on September 20th, Pope John Paul II blessed the statue of Saint Marcellin Champagnat located in the central niche outside the left transept of St. Peter's Basilica. The Sculpture is a gift from the people of Costa Rica to the Vatican to commemorate the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two states 150 years ago. Br. Benito addressed a few words of greetings to the Pope. Jorge Jiménez Deredia, the Costa Rican sculptor, headed up a group of sculptors that favors an innovative style masterfully portraying Marcellin's love for children and young people. The work, of white Carrara marble, is 535 cm. (more than 17 ft.) high and weighs twenty tons.

UNVEILING OF THE STATUE

Archbishop Arrieta Villalobos of San José presided over the Mass at 5 p.m. at the Cathedral altar in St. Peter's Basilica. After that, there was a dedication ceremony with talks by Br. Benito Arbués and Cardinal Virgilio Noè, President of the Fabric of St. Peter.

The day's celebrations came to an end with a reception in the library of the Fabric. A large Costa Rican delegation participated throughout the day, as well as Brothers from the General House and those from the Third Age course for English-speaking Brothers from the Province of Italy. You can access selected photos of this event at: <http://community.webshots.com/user/champagnat> ♦



Logo of the
XV World
Youth Days

ENCOUNTERS

Alone, walking with difficulty, he wades into a sea of youth teeming with life. It's an encounter that becomes a beckoning wave of promise.

Also, 2000 years ago, a venerable prophet had an encounter, this one with an infant. And while people wondered at his sense of awe, Simeon immediately recognized that by means of this child, God was bestowing light and salvation on him.

In 1816, Marcellin encountered a youngster poor in every sense of the word. Ordinarily, a youth who dies in a remote village doesn't make the history books, and you won't find his name on any document, but the imprint that this boy left on the heart of the young priest was indelible.

A baby, a youngster... that's the way God enters human history – He takes on our flesh and blood. He asks us to welcome Him so that we can continue developing our story: yesterday's happenings, today's, and above all, tomorrow's. Just like Mary, Simeon, Marcellin...

All through history, young people have crowded around courageous men and women who radiate high ideals, who bring to light new horizons in life, and who propose goals that require all-out effort to achieve. That's the way the torch of faith, joy, and passion to better our world is handed on and burns ever brighter...

John Paul, don't you worry about your steps being slow and weary ones these days. You have witnessed to the truth, your challenge has been taken up. Joyfully can you say, "Now, Lord, you can dismiss your servant in peace." Because the most exciting adventure is not to hold on to the light but to let it shine for all to see!

Br. Onorino Rota, Italy.

The ways of God are always best

Brother Alain Delorme. *The Hermitage, France*

Marcellin's life was sailing along serenely in Le Rosey, a picturesque hamlet near Marlies. He took pleasure in his parents' love – after all, wasn't he their youngest child? He was robust, well-built, blessed with good health. His religious development was progressing well – he had made his First Communion, had a tender devotion to Mary, and on Sundays, well, you would always find him at Mass.

However, in the midst of this upbeat scenario, there was a significant little pothole in his path. Although having a sharp mind, Marcellin had done poorly in his studies, and made up his mind that books would play no part in his future. It was as simple as that! He would become a successful farmer. He certainly had the requisite abilities. The little bit of money that he had managed to save up in a short period of time was a clear indication of his budding business acumen.

What would Marcellin do in life? Well the same thing as other young people – grow in stature, earn money, buy some land, and then marry the girl of his dreams and start a family. All that in the context of his religious faith.

But, along came the summer of 1803. A priest showed up in the remote little village of Le Rosey. How he was to change Marcellin's thinking! With-

out being aware of it, this priest delivered to Marcellin a deeply personal and endearing message from Jesus: "Leave everything behind, and come, follow me." Marcellin's response sprang from his heart: "I will be a priest – that's what God wants!" Nothing would ever be the same. That boy who had decided on his own to lay aside books now dedicated himself to them rain or shine. His brother-in-law, a teacher, after privately tutoring Marcellin for a year, tried to reason with him. "Look, Marcellin," he said, "I think you'd be better off going back to caring for your little lambs, don't you?" His efforts to dissuade the boy were all to no avail. Marcellin's resolve remained commensurate with his ideals. He began a stage in which he broke with many of his established beliefs and practices.

Time passed, and as his earthly life was ending, so many of his important dreams had come true. Marcellin had set out on the road of life on May 20, 1789. He accomplished unimaginable things! On June 6, 1840, on heaven's doorstep, he found himself surrounded by a great family of Brothers and countless children who had learned to love Jesus and Mary and gradually become good Christians and good citizens. Well could Marcellin smile on those ideals that he had had as a youth: "I will sell many lambs, I will be rich, and then..." No doubt about it – God's ways turned out to be best! ♦



Sculpture of St. Marcellin Champagnat at Marist College in Poughkeepsie, New York, USA.

NEWS BRIEFS

- The Marist Publications Service has created the *Marist Intratext Library* to make the most significant Marist documents available on the internet. At the present time, you can access, among others, the *Constitutions* and the recent *Circular of Brother Superior General*. The address is: www.intratext.com/fms
- Br. Paul Nolan died on August 3rd in Johannesburg at the age of 94. He was blind and lived in the world of the blind for the past 43 years. Early on he discovered new possibilities in living out his consecration as a Marist Brother. A few years ago, Br. Paul wrote, "Spiritually and physically, I think I'm one very happy blind brother." He was blessed with generous people in his life: his community and lay people who volunteered time to care for the needs of the blind.
- Br. Benito participated in activities commemorating the Centenary of the arrival of the first Marist Brothers in Brazil.
- The United Nations report on *World Population 2000* presents data for deep thought. It states that one out of every three women has been mistreated or victimized by some form of abuse. It also underlines the fact that schooling for girls favors economic development.
- Anyone wishing to receive the newsletter "Update" by e-mail can sign up for free on our official web site: www.fms.it