

Marist ECHO

Institute of the Marist Brothers

Number 34 - Year 13 - December 2000

COLLECTIVE AND INSTITUTIONAL POVERTY

Brother Benito Arbués, our Superior General, has just published a new Circular entitled Concerning Our Material Goods. This letter, approximately 50 pages in length, centers around the theme of collective and institutional poverty. Brother Benito writes: "Personally I am convinced that our 'dreams of refounding' will remain at the level of wishful thinking unless we come to grips with Gospel options in regard to our collective and personal poverty. The management of our economic affairs, the volume of goods that we are acquiring, and the future of our patrimony and funds are factors that will have a great deal to say about our refounding and the revitalizing of our Marist charism. The study of how we are using our material resources in accordance with Gospel values is a crucial one going to the heart of our identity as Brothers today." Compelling ideas that invite us to revitalize our charism, to make important decisions, and trust in Divine Providence. Making a deliberate choice to revivify our Institute, as proposed by the Preparatory Commission of the XXth General Chapter, means that we need to put down roots in a specific set of values – among them, poverty being an essential one. If this thought in itself is already countercultural, then acting on it is likely to be even more so.

"Choose Life" But whose?

Br. Benito Arbués, Superior General

We are on the road to the XXth General Chapter. Once in awhile I'm asked what areas the Chapter will concentrate on, and what resolutions the Institute will propose. These are questions that reveal an air of curiosity and anticipation. My answer is plain and simple: "I really don't know what the XXth General Chapter will do, because our rules entrust the preparations for a Chapter to a Commission which is apart from the General Council. I receive the same news and information that the Commission sends out to the rest of the Institute." The General Chapter belongs to every Brother, and also to lay people who are Marist at heart. The type of life that the Chapter will promote and how determined it will be to share our mission and spirituality are things that really matter to these people; likewise, the excitement with which we Brothers

will take to heart the Chapter's message and our readiness to live our vocation with joy and enthusiasm, open to the world of children and young people. The Preparatory Commission has proposed this slogan for us: "Choose Life". It's up to us to give this saying form and content. We are to choose life, but what life, and for whom? A life closed in on ourselves as brothers? We cannot lose sight of the fact that we are choosing life for the youth of today, especially those in great need. I want us to choose – firmly and unambiguously – to work on developing communities of LIFE that will journey with the young and our lay associates toward the heart and soul of our faith: Jesus Christ. ♦



At the Marist Home for children in Belo Horizonte, Brazil

A T R A W D O N , Q U E B E C , C A N A D A

Forty Years of Pastoral Care Excerpts from a Camp Mariste Journal

Alain Faubert y Alain Faucher

Spirituality...! Forty years of surfing atop a spiritual wave!

“Pastoral Care!” What a familiar and comforting ring those words have for us at Camp Mariste! Although Christian faith is not always in vogue in our pluralistic society, can anyone imagine Camp Mariste shorn of its spiritual dimension and the people who bring Christian ministry to life, the children as well as their counselors? For many counselors, referring to pastoral care brings to mind the realm of a most precious mystery of life at the Camp. Thus, being a counselor at Camp Mariste has meant much more than just having a summer job. When referring to pastoral care, one envisions “surfing” on a gigantic wave that, generation after generation, goes by the name of THE CAMP MARISTE SPIRIT.

From the very beginning...

Pastoral care was a predominant feature of life at the Camp, its reason for existing, deeply ingrained in the hearts of its counselors and seen in their dedicated efforts. At first, it was manifested simply by the presence of the Brothers and the availability of daily Mass, in line with the religious atmosphere of the times, awakening in our campers the presence of God in the midst of the Camp’s beautiful natural surroundings.



Counselors and campers dressed up for Mass

...But then?

Over the years, developments in the field of pastoral care set the tone for changes at the Camp. Pre-



On Lake Morgan

season orientation programs were developed, celebrations in the middle of each session were held, and closing festivities were inaugurated. In addition, daily words of prayerful encouragement from the pastoral office, new camping activities, boathouse get-togethers for the moderators of activities to enjoy a bit of afternoon relaxation, and many other pastoral initiatives were introduced, arising from the ruminations of our creative and dynamic staff members.

A new paradigm.

The times have been changing since the 1960’s, when chaplains offered Mass on a makeshift wooden altar. There has been a very important transformation. Years ago, nature was thought to be the privileged place in which to find God’s presence. Nowadays, people look more to human interaction in the daily give-and-take of group activities to experience God’s presence.

But what has apparently not changed is a pastoral approach that has withstood the test of time, always appealing to the “triumph” of teamwork, nature, and games. To sum up, we have embarked on a new search that is realized through personal experience. Difficulties, no? Rather, pastoral ministry interprets these as challenges to its creativity, a time for letting a new Christian community arise, one having a fresh new appearance, that of a family whose members – the young and the not-so-young – are searching together for signs of the presence of God at the very core of their everyday lives. ♦

Number 34 – December 2000 – Year 13
INSTITUTE OF THE MARIST BROTHERS

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PHOTOGRAPHY: Br. Vicente Falqueto and archives.

FORMATTING AND PHOTOLITHS: TIPOCROM S.R.L. – Via G.G. Arrivabene, 24
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WEB SITE: www.fms.it

PUBLISHER: Institute of the Marist Brothers. General House – Rome ITALY

PRINTING: C.S.C. GRAFICA, s.r.l. – Via G.G. Arrivabene, 40 – Rome ITALY

Sharing our charism with the laity

Br. Lluís Serra interviews Br. Claudino Falchetto, Councilor General

Br. Claudino Falchetto, Councilor General, is 63 years old, and hails from Brazil. He was twice named Provincial of the Province of Rio de Janeiro, and has also served as President of the Conference of Religious Brothers and Priests in Brazil. His imposing height always helps him stand out in a crowd.



Br. Claudino and the statue of St. Marcellin

THE LAITY – A TRENDY TOPIC OR A MATTER OF DEEP CONVICTION?

In speaking about the Laity, we want to strongly affirm the thinking of today about the vocation of all Christians – that having been baptized, they are the first who are called to follow Jesus, the first who are called to holiness.

BROTHER BENITO AND HIS COUNCIL FOLLOW CLEAR GUIDELINES IN SUPPORT OF THE LAITY – ARE THESE SHARED BY A MAJORITY OF THE BROTHERS?

I think that the vast majority of Brothers are not only in complete agreement with the Council's position, but they firmly endorse and joyfully believe in the the guidelines of the Church and the Institute concerning the identity, dignity, sanctity, responsibility, and mission of the Laity.

COULD YOU GIVE ME THREE EXAMPLES OF HOW LAY PEOPLE ARE PARTICIPATING IN OUR MARIST CHARISM.

First of all, there are the

fraternities of the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family, characterized by their members' ever-deepening personal experience of our charism. Then I would point to the dedication of so many Lay People who are turning their profession as educators into the aim of their Christian vocation, with a refined sensitivity to our Marist philosophy of education. They are imitating Champagnat in his love for children and young people, being concerned about the least favored, practicing solidarity, devoting themselves to Mary, and experiencing the fatherly activity of God in their lives.

A third group is one that is sharing the Brothers' concern for extending our Marist Charism and experiencing it in a dynamic way. They are not content to simply go through the motions of practicing the charism of Saint Marcellin but want to spread it as something that plays a key role in their lives.

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF COMMUNITIES MADE UP OF BROTHERS AND LAY PEOPLE?

In some respects, these communities are homing in on the dream of the first members of the Marist Family, who envisioned the Laity as a fifth branch on the tree of the Marist Society. It seems to me that, more and more, Lay People will be responding to the multi-faceted wealth of our charism and expressing their desires to live it in

ever more vigorous ways.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE EFFECTS THAT THE CANONIZATION OF SAINT MARCELLIN HAS HAD ON LAY PEOPLE?

From what I've been able to understand in speaking with Brothers and Lay People throughout the world, the canonization of Saint Marcellin has strengthened the devotion and confidence of those who have already taken him as a model for their lives and their way of loving Jesus and Mary. In addition, Marcellin's image and message are becoming known worldwide.

HOW CAN A LAY PERSON GO ABOUT LIVING A MARIST-CENTERED LIFE?

The more the wellsprings of a spirituality become known, the more secure and deep-rooted is that spirituality's foundation. Choosing to live one's life as a Marist means making a concerted effort to live according to Saint Marcellin's intentions and intuitions in the world of today, with both feet planted firmly on the ground. It means pursuing reality, our only theological place, i.e., our only window of opportunity to meet God in the happenings of our everyday lives. ♦



With the Novices in Cochabamba, Bolivia

● THERE WAS NO SAINT MARCELLIN OPTED TO

Many people inhabit the pages of the Gospels. Each of them embodies some aspect of our way of looking at things. Today, as in the time of Jesus, there are innkeepers who shut the door on people, shepherds who share their joy in all simplicity, husbands and wives who search for the minimum conditions necessary to live with dignity... With whom do we identify? The child Jesus lives again in those who are unable to find a room in the inn (cf. Lk. 2, 7). Welcoming Him, here and now, means choosing to open our doors to children and young people, especially the least favored. That was what Saint Marcellin chose to do.

AND NOW THERE IS ROOM FOR THEM

"So, you managed only 270 marks out of 500 on your 8th year examination. Sorry, we don't take anyone with less than 300. There is no room for you in our school."

Every year hundreds of children in Fiji hear this kind of response repeated as they try for acceptance at school after school.

Nanise spent eight years in her primary school, usually ranked at the bottom of her class. She learned that there was not much point in listening to the teacher — she did not understand most of what was being said. So she spent her time daydreaming, trying to stay out of trouble, and copying her exercises from other students. When it was her turn to read aloud, there was always a friend to coach her with the hard words. In her seventh year she found some comfort with a boy not much older than herself. They had a baby, and she dropped out of school for several months.

When I met with her, Nanise was quite willing to attend Champagnat Institute, our new vocational school, opened especially for those excluded from secondary schools in the Suva area. Now we are trying to help her respect herself and uncover her real talents. She is fond of growing flowers and has already made a few dollars selling roses that she has grown from cuttings. She has had to learn how to listen, how to increase her vocabulary and read with greater understanding — how to take the initiative in her life.

She has also learned the truth of St. Marcellin's message — "Tell the children that Jesus and Mary love them, and that I do, too!"

Br. Fergus Garrett
Champagnat Institute
Suva, FIJI (District of the New Zealand Province)

SETTING ASIDE A LITTLE SPACE...

Two thousand years after Jesus's birth, we find ourselves witnessing similar situations. We hear the complaint of a child in a well-off family: "I can't stand it anymore; my parents are too busy and they never have time for me!" The cry of a youth: "I've had it! I'm leaving; there's no place for me in this town!" The lament of an elderly man: "I have no choice but to go to an old age home, my family doesn't want to take care of me anymore." The despairing words of a refugee with the look of a lost soul: "They're going to send us back again."

There are times when we witness aggressive behavior in our schools: children being picked on by their classmates, and then starting fights to defend themselves.

It's all so exasperating... And yet, all we need to do is put aside our self-absorption, light up the room with a smile, offer a word of welcome, approach a member of our family, and take a true interest in that other person.

We need to set aside a little space in our hearts in order to let our "traveling companions," known or unknown, fill it up with their presence, to drive away the uncertainty, confusion, and stress that poison our lives.

For Christmas 2000, let us offer our brothers and sisters an especially precious gift, for us and for them; a few minutes of our personal time... Let us set up a warm Nativity scene for them in our hearts... so that there will always be a place for them...

Angela Sestrini
Lycée Léonin – Patissia
Athens, GREECE

PLACE FOR THEM •

CARE FOR PEOPLE TURNED AWAY

A TRUE STORY

I would like to tell you what happened to a lady and her children in my neighborhood. This woman was enjoying a tranquil life with her husband and children. Harmony, joy and understanding reigned in their home. Sad to say, the husband died. After the funeral service and burial, following tradition, the husband's family held a meeting with the widow. The outcome, like a dagger, pierced the heart of that grieving widow.

What the family did was to take back everything that she possessed and throw her out on the street. The poor woman had no claim to her family's belongings, which were looked upon as the exclusive property of the husband and his family – there was no longer any room for her and her children. Disinherited, abandoned by everyone, she had no other choice but to seek shelter for her children in the poorest, most abject of slums, for... there wasn't any room for them.

This happening, frequent in our society, calls our Christian and Marist consciences to get involved and come down on the side of the downtrodden and forsaken, as Marcellin did. We cannot rest satisfied with simple rhetoric about our sorrow and dismay.

When He comes to us this Christmas, may the Infant Jesus bring joy and happiness to this mother and her children, all widows stripped of their inheritance, and all orphans throughout the world.

May the Blessed Virgin Mary, our Good Mother, intercede for them, and may Saint Marcellin watch over them, so that soon they will have a place to call home.

Viviane N'Guessan

Teacher at a high school in Bouaké.

Member of the "Saint Marcellin Champagnat"

Fraternity Bouaké, IVORY COAST

SUGGESTIONS FOR A DIALOG

- 1. Who doesn't have a place in our school, our neighborhood, our city...?**
- 2. In accordance with Saint Marcellin's style and our Marist charism, how can we offer a true and genuine welcome to those who have no place?**

2000 YEARS OF SEARCHING FOR A PLACE IN THIS WORLD

Even before He was born, Jesus got to know what it means not to have a place in this world. Could that be the reason for His preferential love for the poor, the homeless, the forsaken?

The time came for His Mother to make way for His entrance into the world of humanity, to deliver the fruit of her womb which she had lovingly nurtured within herself for nine long months, side by side with her faithful and unassuming husband, Joseph. Together, this couple lived with their wishes and dreams, hopes and fears... but there was no room for them in the inn. History is repeating itself in the lives of many newborns today, as they come into this world, notwithstanding its crosses of misery and neglect, isolation and loneliness, ignorance and hunger pangs for justice. Infants with no inkling of the reality that ruthless centers of global power are mortgaging their future.

Countless children today are waiting to run into the open arms of a tender mother, who will cuddle them in the safety of warm blankets, pay full attention to their needs, shower them with affection... May the leaders of nations and international organizations protect human life from conception, and stand up decisively to people perpetrating crimes against children by promoting protracted violence, marginalization, discrimination, exploitation, neglect, persecution, and sexual abuse. This Christmas, when the Holy Family knocks at our door, may we be able to say, "Welcome! Come on in, please! It's Christmas Eve! We have a room for You tonight," so that hopes for making this world a better place for everyone, a place of opportunity for all, may be reborn!"

Analía M. De L. Ruggeri

"Marcelino Champagnat" School - Barrio "La Boca"

Marist Province of Córdoba

Rosario, ARGENTINA

Fraternities Growing in Number by the Day

NEW FRATERNITIES

We welcome new fraternities that have started up in the last few months, according to news reaching us here in Rome. Three are in the Province of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil: "Sao Marcelino Champagnat," Fraternity in Varginha, "Filhos de Maria" Fraternity in Aruaná, and "Sao Marcelino Champagnat" in Uberlandia.

Fraternities in the Province of Santa Maria, Brazil have also grown in number. Five new fraternities have sent word of their incorporation in recent months: "Amigos de Maria" in Erechim, "Semeando Esperanças" in Passo Fundo, "Fraternidades das Missões" in Santo Angelo, "Maria Mãe do redentor" in Cachoeira do Sul, and "Santa Maria, also " in Cachoeira de Sul.

Our Founder's canonization was the starting point for the first Marist Fraternity in Haiti. Though few in number, the two married couples who have organized it are very enthusiastic and filled with dreams and plans for spreading the movement clear across this Caribbean land. Brothers from Canada have been working in Haiti since 1985.

NEWS FROM FRATERNITIES

The Fraternities in the Province of Santa Maria in Brazil enjoyed the pleasure of sharing an entire afternoon with Br. Benito, Superior General, profiting from his swing through our Provinces in Southern Brazil. Members from the six Fraternities who attended the meeting shared their lives,



VI National Meeting of Fraternities in Mexico, November 3-5, 2000

activities, experiences, anxieties, and hopes with Br. Benito. They were very pleased and received much encouragement from this encounter and from the message that Br. Benito addressed to them at the close of the session. He concluded by saying: "You are a gift for the Congregation. If we didn't open up to lay people and decided to shut ourselves off from your participation and shared responsibility in our mission, we would not be able to refound a religious life that is worthy of the name, attractive, and filled with hope."

The sixteen Fraternities in the Province of Rio de Janeiro celebrated their IV Encounter from October 12th to the 15th, 2000. It was attended by eighty Fraternity members and nine Brothers as Advisors. The encounter opened under the patronage of "Nossa Senhora Aparecida," Patroness of Brazil. In addition

to talks given by the Provincial and two other Brothers, each Fraternity gave a very enlightening presentation of its activities. This exchange of experiences brought out common problems and the diverse types of projects involved, from the simplest to the most daring. The fraternal atmosphere of the gathering, the Eucharistic celebrations, and the numerous times for prayer and reflection filled those in attendance with spirit and hope.

Regularly scheduled meetings that are being held in France for "Animators" and "Advisors" of Fraternities continue to yield results. The last one took place at the Hermitage on October 21st and 22nd. A wonderful initiative, worthy of imitation.

The Province of Beaucamps Saint Genis, for its part, organized a Provincial Assembly with the theme: "Marist mission in partnership with the laity."



A Korean image

BLESSED ARE THE CHILDREN

Every night Cedric's mom spends awhile with him before he falls asleep. This time, Cedric asks her, "Mom, do you know what infinity is?"

"Yes, a little bit. Why do you ask?"

"Because I've learned what it means!"

"OK, tell me."

"It's like a laughing cow."

"Go on! What do you mean by that?"

"Really, mom, there's a cow on the milk container, and hanging from its ears is another container on which there's another cow, and hanging from its ears..."

"All right already! Now go to sleep."

"But that's not really infinity, Mom! True infinity is when you give me a hug and tuck me in at night. Because then I love you more because you love me more and I know that you love me more because I love you more, and that never ends...!"

(Taken from "Cœurs sans frontières", New Caledonia, November 2000).

Some fifty Brothers and forty-two lay people participated, among them a good number of Fraternity members.

From November 3rd to 5th, the Fraternities in Mexico celebrated their VI National Meeting, a very large gathering. Br. Benito, Superior General, spoke about “Marist Apostolic Spirituality” and “Shared Mission.” The way the various themes were woven together, the penitential service, the Holy Hour, prayer times, and the friendly atmosphere that reigned made this event a very unforgettable experience.

WHEN A FRATERNITY MEETS

“We come together to pray to the Lord, give praise to Him, listen to Him, and involve ourselves in the school of Mary and Marcellin Champagnat.

“But we also come to our meetings in search of a driving force for our lives – ‘to keep our heads above water’ at times – in order to practice living out the Gospel and bring the Good News to those around us.

“Our meeting takes place among friends, ‘brothers and sisters’... It is a meeting among Christians gathered around Jesus and Mary.

We approach the fountain of Marist spirituality. We drink from it to nourish our hearts with wisdom, to incarnate and radiate our Marist Spirit.

“These are the dispositions that, together, we offer to the Holy Spirit when we begin our meetings, and we ask Mary to be ever at our side on our pathway of faith.”

(Taken from Frat. Echos, France, October 2000.)

Possible format for a fraternity meeting:

- A time to welcome everyone: exchange of news, various activities... Prayers:

Prayers:

- To the Holy Spirit – that the Spirit open our hearts and help us listen to what the Lord wants to tell us today – through Scripture, through Saint Marcellin, through our brothers and sisters...; that the Spirit help us respond generously to what the Lord is asking us to do.
- To Mary: that she accompany and encourage us.
- To Saint Marcellin Champagnat.
- Listening to the Word: developing a biblical and/or Marist theme.
- Exchanging reflections and listening carefully to each other, in order to clarify and deepen insights and raise questions, personally and as a fraternity.
- Prayer in silence; and vocal prayer, gradually shared, at least at the time for offering intentions.
- Socializing: sharing a meal together. (Taken from Frat Echos, France, October 2000.) ♦



Br. Robert Teoh

INCARNATE OUR MARIST CHARISM IN ASIA

Greetings from Malaysia. Maybe for many of you this is the first time you hear from a brother in Malaysia. I live in a very pluralistic country where four religions coexist and at least four languages are used.

The coming 20th General Chapter provides for us, brothers and lay partners, an opportunity to ponder how to incarnate our Marist charism in Asia. Many of us may not have had the experience of living with Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists in a pluralistic cultural setting. Living our faith as a minority among believers in other religions requires a lot of adaptation and tolerance. However, our zeal to “make Jesus known and loved” remains the same.

Almost all great religions began in Asia, so why has Christianity had a difficult time to develop on this vast continent? History is showing us that a new approach is necessary for proclaiming the Good News of Christ. So, my brothers and lay partners, I ask you to redouble your efforts to help us evangelise Asia. It’s important for our lay partners to take the initiative in incarnating our Marist charism in this part of the world. This is what we are looking for in the new millennium. Won’t you please, our dear lay partners, give serious thought to spreading your wings over this big continent? It is a challenge that all of us Marists are being asked to take.

**Br. Robert Teoh
Province de China
MALAYSIA**



Marist Fraternity in Kidapawan, Philippines with Bros. Benito and Jeffrey Crowe

Getting to know Marcellin Champagnat better

Br. Agustín Carazo. San Fernando, CHILE

Years ago, when I was a young Brother, I remember reading a book entitled *Valor divino de lo humano*, (Divine Worth in What's Human). I liked it because it contrasted with biographies of that time, which presented saints as if they were "extraterrestrials," different, practically perfect from the time they were born. Often the questions I had about the Founder boiled down to these, "Marcellin, who are you – really and truly? What gifts and qualities and what limitations and shortcomings of yours make you resemble us in today's world?" And thus, I have always liked to learn more about Father Champagnat through his own words and through testimonies and writings provided by people who knew him. I would like to present one such eyewitness able to give us an insight into some of Marcellin's very human gifts – fertile soil in which to cultivate Gospel virtues.

Marcellin had a sense of justice and fairness in disciplining children.

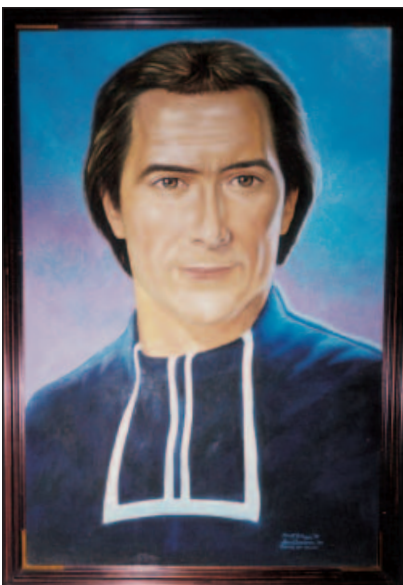
This anecdote is related by the illustrious Br. Sylvester in his *Memoirs* (*Marist Chronicles IV*, page 37). The incident took place when this well-known "little Brother" was a novice. Here's what he recorded:

"... One day, during our time for spiritual reading, I noisily arranged

some material on my desk. Our Master of Novices, no doubt a little upset due to my mischief-making in the past, told me to go and memorize no less than 1200 lines! (Editor's note: They were probably short lines from some tiny booklet such as "Le combat spirituel," which was used for instructing the Brothers.) Believing the punishment to be completely unjust, I got up the courage to go see Father Champagnat and ask him to save me from having to do all this. When I reached his room, I was crying and tried my best to explain to him in great detail why I had come.

After listening to me very attentively, he took out a sheet of paper from his desk, applied some red wax to it and affixed his seal. After that, he penned a single line, signed the paper and handed it to me, recommending that in the future I make less noise at my desk. What did he write? Just this: 'I hereby pay for the twelve hundred lines.' I thanked him the best I could and ran back to show Brother Master that note. The good Brother, when he glanced at the signature of our greatly esteemed Father, received the payment very respectfully, and that's how everything ended. One can readily see that this fair and reasonable approach of our Founder, so natural to him, guaranteed that he would be completely impartial, and it won for him the affection and confidence – the hearts – of all the Brothers and of everyone who was associated with him."

Marcellin acts in an adult manner, on the one hand displaying a sense of fairness and compassionate understanding in dealing with the frivolous behavior of a flighty teenager, and on the other, in dealing with a disproportionate punishment assigned by a fellow adult who had reacted out of haste or irritability. ♦



Picture at the Marist University of Marbel, Philippines

LATEST NEWS IN BRIEF

- The Preparatory Commission of the XXth General Chapter met in Rome November 3rd to the 11th to continue its work. A short time ago, the Commission published the results of its initial survey as well as a booklet of prayers.
- More and more, the name of Saint Marcellin Champagnat is being chosen in Baptism. Marcellin Champagnat Oh and Marcellin Champagnat Moon are two newborn boys who have been welcomed into the Church in Korea this year.
- The newly published Circular of Brother Benito Arbués, *Concerning our Material Goods*, has been posted on the Marist Intratext Library site at www.intratext.com/fms/. The Library also contains letters that Brother Benito has written for various occasions, among them his most recent Christmas message.
- "Commitment in Marist Education at the Dawn of the New Millennium" was the theme of a Congress held at the Catholic Pontifical University of Rio Grande do Sul in Porto Alegre, Brazil from October 9th to the 14th. There were 900 participants at the Congress, which the Brothers organized to help celebrate the 100th Anniversary of their presence in Southern Brazil.
- The world has enough food available to feed everyone. And yet, right now, an estimated 800 million people are starving.
- New collections of Marist photos have just come on line at: www.community.webshots.com/user/champagnat