

# Marist ECHO

Institute of the Marist Brothers

Number 35 -Year 14 - March 2001

LET THE WALLS COME TUMBLING  
DOWN

*Saint Marcellin's personality and powerful charism deeply impress those who discover him. He is touching more and more hearts. Reflecting on his life and being in contact with Marist communities open doors to journeys filled with exploration and commitment. Since the canonization, we have done much throughout the Institute to introduce Marcellin and his charism, but most of the time our efforts have only reached an "in-house" audience of Brothers and the Lay People who share our charism and educational mission. We still tend to keep Marcellin confined within the walls of our communities and schools. The canonization did indeed invite us to exemplify his style of life and carry on his work. But it also committed us to bring him and his holiness to the whole world's attention. Now is the time to "tear down the walls" and not hide behind a false humility. This is not about launching a marketing campaign; it's about being faithful to a God-given treasure that we once thought belonged almost exclusively to our Institute. Marcellin is a gift for the Church and all of society, and Lay People are ideally situated to help us spread his fame and charism far and wide.*

## Why Am I a Marist Today?

*Br. Benito Arbués, Superior General*

I'm in Veranópolis, Brazil, attending a meeting on "Future Horizons in Marist Life." 70 Brothers are here, and 18 lay people, invited to help us read and interpret signs that are revealing a new dawn for the consecrated life. Profound questions are being raised: What is the Marist Institute of my hopes and dreams? What is God asking of us as Marists, here and now? Why am I a Marist, brother or lay person? Some Brothers are a bit nostalgic for a past that seems to have been ideal. Today, the scarcity of vocations, ageing, a decline in numbers, and difficulty in understanding and being in tune with the culture of young people are realities making us keenly aware of "our limitations and weakness." Is this generating in us a greater confidence in Mary? Remember Marcellin, always saying "She has done everything for us".

I think we're overly concerned about maintaining some "sure things" that are slowly slipping away from us, while energetically pursuing nonessential matters. While security concerns reveal a certain love for our religious family, in reality they feed anxiety, close us in on ourselves, and make it difficult for us

to distinguish between the seemingly "indispensable" and the really "essential."

Thinking and acting as Church, keeping in mind the pressing needs of the world and young people, is a sign of hope that will allow us to see our future as God does, and reinforce our reasons for continuing to be Marist, brother or lay person. ♦



*Being Marist means having great love for children and young people*

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# In the Footsteps of Marcellin

Catherine Demougin, *Communauté La Valla - Mulhouse*

## 1990

A meeting with a Marist brother in Ste-Marie de Mulhouse. An image of Marcellin: first glimpse of the journey ahead. The Fraternity meets with Brother Charles Howard: a decisive encounter. The Fraternity experiences: Marist vacation in Gresse from where I bring home a hidden Mary in my bag; St Bernard, a retreat for brothers and laymembers; the Hermitage. All of these are steps on my Marist journey.

## 1996

Brother Jean-Pierre, then Brother André open the doors of the house. The community of La Valla is born. For several years the youth gathered here. What a delight to welcome new occupants who open the house every day!

## 2001

La Valla celebrates its 5th birthday. 75 young people frequent the house: reflections on life, accompanying the Youth Club, assisting with homework, visiting old folk, fixing rooms, preparing for Confirmation, times for personal formation and prayer, visits to Taizé and the Hermitage, socials festivities. Not forgetting the adults as well: a dozen of them discover Marist spirituality for the first time, and five of them take an active part in our mission.

You may well ask yourself how two retired brothers and a professional couple in full-time work can keep the mission going? It's not possible to give you the recipe in detail, but here are some of the ingredients:

- Community life just as in a family: cooking meals, house-



*A meeting with young people*

work, relaxing together.

- Shared prayer and personal prayer, and reception of the sacraments of Eucharist and Reconciliation together.



*Co-workers with Br. Maurice Berquet, Provincial*

- Our mission lived out in common: all the planning, preparation, and action together.
- Evaluation: every month we leave aside other activities to review our mission, community and personal lives.
- Joy in being together, in the same family.

These ten enriching years have been the happiest of my married life. I have discovered the treasure of self-giving, and of living simply together, brothers and lay people. Each day I let progress a little more as community removes layers from my life. Like a mirror reflecting back my identity. When it gets a little too tough, there is a little sign of encouragement from one of those I live with. I have found the simple "formula" for community: a desire to bring happiness to the hearts of others, joy in devoting myself to their needs. Pierre and I, together with Brothers André and Dédé.

Mary accompanies my life but is no longer hidden. She teaches me to store everything in my heart. It is from there that creativity wells up, in our being attentive to the calls that come our way, and getting other people involved in our mission.

I cannot close without mentioning how much this community life and mission have enriched my professional work, making me deeply satisfied with working in a team. ♦

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# Marist mission today

An Interview with Br. Jeffrey Crowe, Councilor General. By Br. Lluís Serra

Br. Jeff, 54, was born in Sydney, Australia. Besides being very knowledgeable about the Brothers' work in the Pacific and Asia, he has visited Africa and Europe as well. He co-directed the team that edited the Document on Marist Mission.



Drinking kava at the Novitiate of the Pacific in Fiji

## WHAT HAVE BEEN THE PRIORITIES OF THIS GENERAL COUNCIL REGARDING MARIST MISSION?

Firstly, to direct Marist services more to poor and troubled young people, and to be more zealous in evangelising. Our fidelity to St. Marcellin's charism, its prophetic character, is at stake. Secondly, to acknowledge, form and empower the lay men and women whose lives and work identify them as Marist.

## WHAT HAVE BEEN THE MAIN STRATEGIES?

To evaluate and transform current works, to promote new initiatives in countries where we are established and launch new international projects. The repeated message of Brother Benito and Councillors about refounding, as well as the international text on Marist education, all point in this direction.

## WHAT ARE SOME OF THE SIGNS OF VITALITY THAT YOU HAVE SEEN?

The enthusiasm, creativity, generosity and strong sense of identity of Marist educators across the world is remarkable. They have taken many new initiatives. In turn, these have opened our eyes and hearts and fostered more concrete efforts to educate young people in and for solidarity in our more established Marist institutions.

## ANY PROGRESS REGARDING "SHARED MISSION"?

In many Provinces lay people are today's leaders in Marist mission. Also, the many instances of sharing our Marist spirituality and distinctive education tradition have proven enriching for all concerned. Assemblies that include lay people have stretched the imagination and daring of the Brothers. The signs of the Spirit are there!

## ANY EMERGING CHALLENGES IN THIS REGARD?

Our mutual trust is tested at times. A new language is to be found, a new culture, new structures. Also, identifying lay leaders who share our vision of education and who are professionally competent, is increasingly difficult in some countries.

## WHAT "STORM CLOUDS" CAN YOU SEE ON THE HORIZON FOR MARIST MISSION?

I shall limit myself to just two: Firstly, keeping in touch with



With the brothers in Masonga, Tanzania

modern youth culture so as to walk with young people in their life of faith is a big challenge for Marist educators everywhere. Secondly, working in the context of violence or of acute injustice, as is sadly becoming all too common, demands extra personal and spiritual resilience.

## ANY PERSONAL HOPES FOR THE FUTURE OF MARIST MISSION?

That we invest resources in forming young adults for mission, especially young teachers. That we extend ourselves more into situations where humanity is suffering, through international communities that could include lay Marists. That older Brothers remain generous, encouraging and apostolically active, myself included! ♦



Br. Jeffrey during his visit to Trichy, India.

# • OUR SHARED MISSION

## THE ADVENTURE OF LAY PEOPLE AND BROTHERS

*"Sharing our Mission" isn't just a catchy phrase but a reality that is penetrating to the very heart of our Marist ministries all over the world. In the beginning the idea was a novel one, and as time went by, attempts to spell it out in concrete ways didn't always meet with success. Today, however, many carefully-thought-out and striking steps are being taken to confirm us in this exciting adventure that involves lay people and brothers working side by side for the Kingdom, sharing Marcellin's spirituality and mission. To come together and share common ground, we all need to take another look at where we've been and where we're headed. That is what we're doing these days, as you can see from recent surveys undertaken for the next General Chapter.*

### SEED OF HOPE

The Marist Brothers I've met over the years have put me in touch with Marcellin. His charism is so fascinating, so lively and timely, that the desire to put it into practice, even for us lay people, resonates in our hearts.

We in the Western World, with our lives so stressful and self-centered – how can we respond? We need a new way of doing business, consisting of friendship, hope, and nearness to the Brothers. We need to choose "the life" that Marcellin puts before us, in order to be fertile ground for those around us leading frivolous and shortsighted lives. We want to create a FAMILY built around his charism, to serve as a pulsating heart generating warmth and dynamism, witnessing to the Gospel in the little things of everyday life. We want to affirm that TOGETHER we – parents, teachers and Marist Brothers – can answer the call to "Choose Life," seeing and loving the poor with the eyes and the heart of Marcellin.

At San Leone Magno in Rome these days, a project is coming to life: the creation of a fraternal community bent on changing our hearts and opening them up to the many Montagnes in our midst. The example of lay people who are already living as Marist Family throughout the world is energizing and guiding our efforts. May our union in prayer and confidence in our Good Mother accompany us on our way.

**Roberta Loreti**  
Istituto San Leone Magno  
Rome - Italy

### CHOOSE LIFE

"They are the hard-to-manage boys and girls in our classes. Materially they are blessed with everything; what they sorely lack is love and affection." Benito Arbués, Christmas 2000

January 8th, 1993 – a wintry Friday morning, just before the start of classes. I was wrestling with the question of why such a promising student like Javier, a member of my homeroom class, had made such a fateful decision. Just 16, he had decided to end his feelings of hopelessness with the help of a handgun at 7:20 in the morning. I had just turned 27 years old and thought that my first year of teaching religion would be quite an easy one. As the years have gone by, I've come to realize that this is definitely not the case. Javier and his companions have taught me something tremendous, that it's sometimes easier to encounter Christ in the company of my students than anywhere else. But I'm not referring to Christ the itinerant preacher or even Christ the exuberant teenager. Not at all. I'm talking about Christ on the Cross. Many of my students have spent their entire lives on the Cross, unable to find a way to come down from it or lessen their agonizing pain. And so, how do we build the Kingdom? Only by accompanying these young people in their trials and sufferings, gently wiping away their tears, and searching for solutions together. As Marcellin has always been present for those who need him, so I want to be, too. I'm absolutely sure that Marcellin would have stayed by the Lord on Calvary. As a consequence, all I need to do is follow his teaching and example, and be present at the foot of the Cross.

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**Mexico, D.F. Mexico**

# MARIST MISSION •

## AND BROTHERS WORKING TOGETHER

I'M HAPPY TO BE PART OF IT.

*In 1994 the Dutch Brothers opened up their eyes to a new field of activity. With the start of Moriah the Brothers had a message for young people who had earlier been in prison: please feel welcome and stay with us for a while. Let's see what we can mean to one another and how we can help you to make a new start. Launching Moriah the Brothers actually began a new, rather unique and I guess daring co-production. A congregation of religious Sisters (Julie Postel) and members of the Marist group (the Dutch lay Marists, of which I am a member) were involved as equal partners.*

*In my work and in my life, Marcellin Champagnat has become an important counsellor to me. I'm sure he could have started Moriah himself. No, he would have! If he only lived here and now. He would be as sensitive to the needs of these young people as was my predecessor, Henk Wienk, a Dutch Marist Brother who died two years ago. Marcellin would see. And he would be moved and start a movement that was aiming to help.*

*He would see.*

*He would see the lives of these young men and women as precious and gifted with possibilities but also constantly endangered by a small army of enemies, lying out there in ambush, always eager to attack.*

*He would see the way God saw Abraham and his son Isaac on that mount called Moriah (Genesis 22). When people truly see one another they can start a movement of compassion and solidarity. For Marists that movement has become a tradition.*

*I'm happy to be part of it.*

**André Stuart**  
Director of the Moriah Foundation  
Nijmegen, The Netherlands

### GUIDELINES FOR DIALOG

1. Each member of the group is invited to share aspects of the personality and charism of St. Marcellin that he or she finds most attractive.
2. What are the hopes and challenges we face in our efforts to share our Marist spirituality and mission as brothers and lay people, here and now?

### NEW MARIST SCHOOL

*St. Paul's Primary School opened three years ago, alongside a highly esteemed Marist Secondary School of the same name.*

*It was built in response to local needs. Previously, children on the outskirts of Kabwe had to walk at least 12 km each way to attend the nearest primary school in the region. This daily trek was extremely tiring, especially during the rainy season. Some students lost interest in their studies; others simply dropped out of school.*

*SED, an NGO based in Spain, provided \$64,590 US Dollars to pay for construction and classroom materials. The local community donated 20 % of the project's cost in the form of labor.*

*Now the school is fully operational, with seven primary grades, a coed enrollment of 260, and a faculty consisting of two Marist Brothers and four Lay teachers. It's wonderful to see the Lay teachers and children sharing in our Marist spirituality and mission, and the students well on their way to becoming mature young citizens, putting their Christian values into practice.*

*The local community often expresses its deep appreciation for the tireless support and hard work of the Brothers in helping to build the school. Parents feel greatly privileged to witness the Church's commitment to education through our Marist Brothers' presence. The high quality of education at St. Paul's is benefiting the entire country of Zambia*

**Bro. Norbert Mwila**  
Province of Southern Africa  
Kabwe, Zambia

## Marist Way of Living is Growing and Spreading

### NEW FRATERNITIES

Echoes continue to resound from St. Marcellin's canonization. Many lay men and women who attended that event with great joy and anticipation are finding entrance into the Champagnat Movement a welcome home for their high ideals. The number of Champagnat Fraternities keeps on growing, quite rapidly in some countries.

We've just received news from Brazil about the foundation of four new Fraternities. Two are in Rio Grande do Sul: "María de Nazaret," in the city of Novo Hamburgo, and "Bom Pastor" in Porto Alegre. The other two are in the State of Acre, in the heart of Amazonia: "Nossa Senhora da Gloria" in Cruzeiro do Sul, and "Santa Família de Nazaré" in Tarauacá, both belonging to the Marist Province of Santa María.

Another five Fraternities have been organized in El Salvador, bringing that small country's total to seven. The new ones are: "Fraternidad Champagnat," at Colegio Champagnat in the city of Santa Tecla; "Hermano Feliciano Merino" at Colegio San Luis in Santa Ana; "El Rosey" at Escuela San Alfonso in San Salvador; and "Nuestra Señora de la Paz" and "El Hermitage," both at the Instituto Católico de Oriente, in the city of San Miguel.

Numerous, too, the Fraternities that have arisen in the Marist Province of Córdoba, Argentina: "Nuestra Señora del Camino" and "Gotitas de Miel," both in Jujuy, in the northern part of the country; "Divino Llamado" in the city of Rafaela; a new "San Marcelino" Fraternity in Pilar;



Fraternity Saint Michael, in El Salvador

"La Inmaculada," at our secondary school of the same name in Buenos Aires, to go along with another Fraternity that has been in existence at that school for a long time; two new Fraternities in the city of Mendoza: "Huellas de Marcelino" and "La Banda Alegre"; and "Nuestra Señora del Hermitage" at our secondary school in San Rafael.

Another new Fraternity has been established at the northern end of the American Continent, this one in Montreal, Canada – quite a large Fraternity, having 20 members.

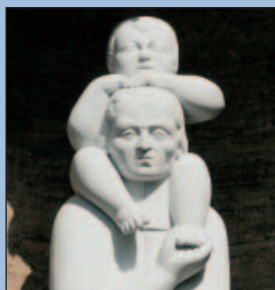
We extend a warm welcome to each of these Fraternities, and offer praise and thanksgiving to Jesus and Mary for continuing to raise up among the laity Marist men and women desirous of living their faith and commitment to our all-loving God in the way that St. Marcellin has demonstrated for us.

### FRATERNITY NEWS

Members of "Mamá Muxima," a Fra-

ternity in Angola, have shared with us their reason for choosing that name. They have a very popular Marian shrine in their country, "Nossa Senhora da Muxima," dedicated to the Immaculate Conception. Everyone affectionately refers to Mary as "Mamá Muxima." In their native language, "Muxima" means a heart that is steeped in tenderness and compassion. Owing to the fact that many people flock to this Shrine with the type of tremendous confidence in Mary that St. Marcellin had, members of the new Fraternity chose her for their Patroness. Their group is composed almost entirely of teachers and nurses. In addition to their professional duties, they teach catechism and work with young people in one of the neighborhoods in their city of Ndalatando.

In Brazil, the Province of Porto Alegre, hosted a meeting of the Champagnat Movement's advisors and moderators, bringing together 14



Detail in the statue

### BEARING THE WEIGHT OF LITTLE ONES

Jiménez Deredia, who designed and sculpted the new statue of Saint Marcellin at St. Peter's in the Vatican, has done a superb job of bringing out St. Marcellin's relationship with children and young people. Strength and gentleness are blended in this sculpture of our Saint with his two little friends. The statue draws attention to a personal trait of Marcellin, and at the same time, to a fundamental feature of our Marist charism: bearing the weight of the young with the dignified seriousness of one who is a teacher, motivated by an indispensable love. To educate children, you must love them. This statue invites everyone to look upon Saint Marcellin as a guiding light in the field of education.

Brothers and 22 lay leaders. Besides having a good time and praying together, they evaluated how things have been going in the Province's many – 20 – Fraternities, and agreed to launch several new projects.

On October 21st and 22nd at the Hermitage, Fraternities in France celebrated their General Assembly 2000. The first day featured a sharing of ideas revolving around three questions: What kinds of apostolic activity are best suited to Fraternities; how does one go about launching a Fraternity project; and what should be done to ensure that projects are apostolic and Marist. After thoroughly discussing all three questions, there was interest in having the Fraternities undertake an initiative in common, namely, "helping young people in Romania" where the Brothers are already at work. The second day of the Assembly was devoted to general information, an evaluation of the year, and voting for the new National Office of Fraternities. Time was also provided for news concerning the Institute – plans for holding the coming General Chapter, and the restructuring process underway in the Marist Provinces across Europe.

**TESTIMONIALS**

Fraternities of the Norte Province in Spain, who always put aside time at their meetings to share different articles from their Plan for Fraternal Living, have shared with us some of their feelings about Art. 17: "The Fraternity itself is another privi-

leged domain where we carry out our mission."

"In our most difficult moments we have felt the support of our fraternity members, and we have not hesitated to pull together and get a job done whenever necessary."

"As important as it is for us to help others, it is equally important that we do so without fanfare or looking for a pat on the back, that we act with simplicity and great generosity."

"Anything that affects one member of the Fraternity directly involves the group as a whole; the latter has the advantage of being better able to respond than an solitary individual, thus magnifying joys and tempering illness and any other kind of problem..."

"Even though we may have a lot on our minds, an occasional visit, a phone call, or any other thoughtful gesture can, and it's clear to me does tone down the effects of an illness. Those who are most in need of attention, accompaniment, and friendship are our members who are experiencing pain and sorrow. This is the example that St. Marcellin has given us." ♦



*Brother Afonso Levis*

**BEING MARIST TODAY**

*Look at the world around you. Observe it through the eyes of your heart, compassionately, the way God does.*

*Attune your heart to the heart of Marcellin. The heart that knew no bounds, that beat to the rhythm of God's call and Mary's example, ever ready to serve children in need of an education and religious formation; that was selfless in doing God's will, and committed to bringing together other hearts for the same purpose, in communion with the wider community, the Church.*

*Tune in to God and His Word. As you listen, what are you hearing from your heart and Marcellin's as they beat in unison? What is the Lord saying to you?*

*Share this with your neighbor! You will begin to discover the new countenance of today's Marist person. What profiles can you see where you are, with your generous and dynamic Marist spirit? Several will come to mind quickly: the face of a brother living according to the heart of Marcellin; that of a sister fashioning her spirituality along the lines practiced by Marcellin on his road to sanctity; that of a lay Christian, man or woman, captivated by Marcellin's down-to-earth way of being and doing things.*

*The question is open-ended, the possibilities unlimited today. What face does the "Marist person" have where you live?"*

**Afonso Levis**  
**Province of São Paulo, Brazil**  
**Secretary for the International**  
**Formation Commission, Rome**



*Fraternity Saint Marcellin Champagnat, in Rancagua, Chile*

## An aptitude for teaching A Hallmark of St. Marcellin

*Br. Juan Jesús Moral, Les Avellanes, Provincia of Catalunya, Spain*

In a work entitled *Sentences*, Br. John Baptiste wrote about several conferences given by St. Marcellin. In the last few chapters, he concentrated on Marcellin's thoughts about educating children and young people. Studying these and other previously unedited texts by John Baptist and Br. François, we get a clear insight into Marcellin's personality traits as an educator. How sensitive he was to the needs of the men and women of his time and the situations in which they found themselves. He projected his view of the world onto the spiritual vision of his disciples. It's intriguing. I ask myself: Where did this sensitivity in Marcellin come from? What were the sources of his child-centered approach to education? When I study these chapters – "What's Involved in Educating a Child," "The Need for an Education," "The Sacred Respect Owed to a Child..." – my questions persist, because we are not dealing here with a description of specific children like Montagne and Berne. Nor are we talking about only poor or abandoned children, ... but rather about children in general. To Mar-

cellin, every child is to be educated ("I cannot see a child..."). Marcellin sees each one as being totally vulnerable and in need; as a fragile plant meant to ripen, but surrounded by predators lying in wait; a precious lily surrounded by briars; a promising vine, which if not pruned, will bear no fruit. (Cfr 329) And so, to be a successful educator, one must daringly work as both a kindhearted, dutiful parent and a skillful teacher, must dedicate his or her efforts to the indispensable mission of both nurturing and pruning. To focus on only one of these aspects would leave the task half done. (Idem, 328) Each child is the cherished work of God's hands. It would be well for us to ask the question that people posed about John the Baptist: What's to become of this child?

Marcellin's family upbringing facilitated his arriving at the core of his insights about children and their needs. He enjoyed the richness of being surrounded by rollicking brothers and sisters and supervised by hard-working, well-organized parents.

In addition, the painful times and relationships that he endured in his early years at school built up a treasury of educational wisdom that was bound to enrich his future giftedness as a teacher.

It was the calling and charism of Marcellin to draw near to children and young people, attuned to their needs, understanding of their shortcomings, and quick to apply reasonable remedies – always helping them turn stumbling blocks into stepping stones to success. ♦



*At the Provincial House in Lima, Peru.*

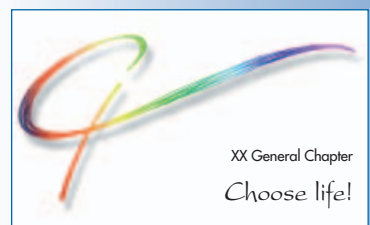


PRAYER FOR THE 20TH  
GENERAL CHAPTER:

*O God, Father of Love and unity, through Marcellin Champagnat you graced our world with a new charism, a gift for people everywhere, at the service of the children and young people in your world. Today as ever, the vitality of your gift continues to attract men and women, religious and lay people, to experience together the richness of the Marist Mission.*

*Help us to be more generous and open in working together, so that as Marists – Brothers and lay people – we will be one in heart and mind at the center of your Church. Lord, bless our efforts to accomplish this aim during the next General Chapter. We ask you through the intercession of Mary, our Good Mother, and in the names of Jesus your Son, who came that we might have the fullness of life, and of the Holy Spirit, source of all unity.*

Amen



XX General Chapter  
Choose life!