

Marist ECHO

Institute of the Marist Brothers

Number 37 – Year 14 - September 2001

FROM A MARIST PERSPECTIVE

Since early September, the General House has been a colorful crossroads of languages and cultures. 117 Brothers from 41 countries spread across the world have assembled in Rome for about 6 weeks. This General Chapter of the Institute “elects the Brother Superior General, Brother Vicar General and the members of the General Council, (and) deals with major issues concerning the nature, aim, and spirit of the Institute, as well as its renewal and adaptation, while safeguarding its spiritual patrimony.” Constitutions, Art. 139.

The Chapter is a time for delegates to learn more about each other, define key issues, work on commissions, pray personally and in community, discern using the “see, judge, act” method, hold discussions with lay people about our shared mission, elect a new government for the Institute, meet with the other Marist Congregations, and attend a Papal audience.

At stake, as emphasized by the Preparatory Commission, is the vitality of the Institute. The Chapter is aiming to look at the world and the Church from a Marist perspective, through the eyes of St. Marcellin. What would he see here and now? What would he decide to do?

Looking into the future

Br. Benito Arbués, Superior General

The XX General Chapter opens on September 4th. Everyone is summoned: brothers and lay Marists, young brothers to our most elderly, everyone who fortifies the vitality of the Institute with his or her kindness, prayer and serenity. Some of us will meet in Rome, but may our numbers be legion who experience the Chapter in every Province and local community! We have been called to enter into an Emmaus experience: taking a look at the Institute as it is now and interpreting the signs and calls of our world, especially from the young. As we travel along, SOMEONE special will pretend to join our group by chance. He will open our minds and hearts to the Scriptures, help us see things more

clearly, and empower us to make courageous decisions, even unheard-of ones! The Spirit is giving us this Chapter as a time “to dream” and scan the future horizons of Marist life.

More important than a nice set of documents is our setting out on the road, and then returning quickly to “our Jerusalem” to tell everyone who delegated us that we have seen the Lord!

As I conclude my eight years as Superior General, I feel a deep sense of gratitude to the brothers and many lay people who desire to live our Marist spirit. In your presence I have felt more and more a “brother.” Thanks especially to you young people for having shown me how to “look into the

future,” fearlessly, filled with hope and love. ♦



I feel a deep sense of gratitude

"SALLA LA VALLA" IN CAMBODIA

Maimed angels on the mend

by Stefano Oltolini, Associate Director of BIS – Rome

Writing this by candlelight, on the terrace of "Salla La Valla" center in Takmao, a few miles outside Phnom Penh, Cambodia. The heat of the day is slowly subsiding. The night is clear, the moon aglow, the countryside quiet and peaceful.

Not far from here, 26 years ago last April, Pol Pot and his Khmer Rouge unleashed insanity and their infamous killing fields were born, strewn with the corpses of slaughtered Cambodians. Phnom Penh was deserted, schools became torture centers, all of Cambodia mined and militarized.

Entire populations were wiped out in weeks: the Vietnamese minority, Muslims, Christians, political opponents – all massacred. And often the killers were just 7 or 8 years old! Little brainwashed Lucifers, molded in their stunted childhood to become butchers of their very own parents!

Today's Cambodia is marked by the crippled strides of children like the ones here in Takmao. 75 boys and girls maimed by land mines, industrial accidents, polio... you name it. 75 "different" individuals, but singleminded in their determination to rise up and get on with their lives, full speed ahead, with the joy of youth bent on overcoming any challenges that life has to offer. Brothers Terry Heinrich and Darryl Slater of the Marist Brothers of



Radiant hope

Sydney, Australia have come to Takmao to provide opportunities for these children to study, be healed, and lead dignified lives.

They run Salla La Valla, a center that aims to get handicapped children back into the classroom. Br. Terry, the school's headmaster, and Br. Darryl, teacher and administrator, started here in October 2000 after living in rented flats in Phnom Penh for almost two years.

Salla La Valla is superb in its simplicity: allowing children shut out of the ordinary school system because of their physical handicaps to obtain an elementary school diploma or return to studies in secondary school. The center brings together the essential elements of the Marist tradition – attention to the needs of the young and help for society's castaways. At the same time this is a school firmly rooted and growing in the culture in which it has been planted. The center respects the non-Catholic religious beliefs of the Cambodian families it serves – no church, no religious ceremonies, only a meditative moment together each day to reflect on those who continue to suffer in this world.

Terry and Darryl are regenerating hope and dignity in the lives of 75 boys and girls, creating an oasis of peace and serenity where, undeterred by their physical deformities and diversity, these children can look to a brighter future. Today they are celebrating the end of the Khmer year with a dance. A dance of smiling maimed angels. ♦



Silent testimony



Classes over, sleeves rolled up for outdoor work!

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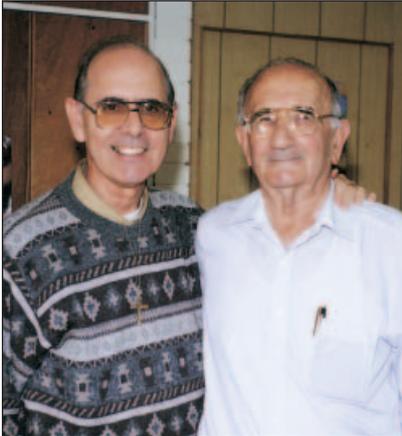
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A Chapter guided by the Spirit

An interview with Marcelino Ganzaráin, Councilor General, by Lluís Serra

Br. Marcelino Ganzaráin, 61, was born in Havana, Cuba. Educated by the Marist Brothers, he went on to serve as a formator and a Provincial of Central America. A member of the General Council since 1985, he will be taking part in his fourth General Chapter.



With Br. Zosimo Pérez, one of his boyhood teachers in Havana, Cuba

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO YOU TO BE PARTICIPATING IN YOUR FOURTH GENERAL CHAPTER?

One more opportunity to serve the Institute and share deeply in the hopes, desires, and concerns of many Brothers.

HOW HAS THE CONGREGATION EVOLVED DURING YOUR 16 YEARS AS A COUNCILOR?

One way is evident: we are fewer and we're aging. Not so evident, but just as real: we are more aware of our role as brothers for the Church and the world, and we have taken steps along the road to refounding, although without the "sense of urgency" that Br. Benito has been calling for.

WHAT CHALLENGES DOES THIS CHAPTER NEED TO CONFRONT?

Creative fidelity when it comes to getting things done. Sometimes too much talk is nothing more than a way of avoiding issues and soothing our conscience: "We've spoken about this..., We have a document on that..." Now it's time for concerted action.

DO YOU FORESEE DIFFICULTIES IN HARMONIZING THE ONENESS OF OUR CHARISM WITH A PLURALITY OF CULTURES?

Holding a dialog with culture is essential. However, dwelling on difficulties is counterproductive. Resorting to the argument of cultural differences as an excuse to avoid mutually evangelizing each other and sharing in a common mission could well be disastrous for us.

WHAT VALUES IN OUR INSTITUTE GENERATE HOPE?

There will be hope in so far as we embody the deep desires that Champagnat had for his "little brothers." That would include: family, fraternity, simplicity, the poor, a Marian way of doing things...

WHAT DO YOU EXPECT FROM THE LAY PEOPLE WHO WILL BE AT THE CHAPTER?

Expecting can mean asking for something from them, and I don't think I have a right to do that. I would like them to work together with us in a wholehearted effort to seek the will of God.

WHAT DOES THE VOCATION TO BE A BROTHER MEAN TODAY IN SOCIETY AND THE CHURCH?

It means to give testimony as disciples of Jesus, to be madly in love with Him and His Gospel, as well as to bear witness to equality – no one should feel or make someone else feel superior to others; to render beautiful deacon-like service to littlest ones, helping them BE who



With university students in Luján, Argentina

they truly are in their dignity as "images of God;" to be "prophesy," "parable," "question that won't go away."

74 OF THE 117 DELEGATES WILL BE ATTENDING THEIR FIRST CHAPTER. WILL THIS FACT ENSURE NEW DEVELOPMENTS?

Probably, but if new things do happen, I don't think that it will be because of the presence of so many "rookies" (and a few "dinosaurs"). Rather it will be due to everyone's attitude and attentiveness to the Lord. How tremendous this kind of attentiveness would be!

WHAT CAN THE BROTHERS EXPECT FROM THIS CHAPTER?

Here's my personal wish in a nutshell: more Spirit and less politics. Amen. ♦



A meeting with Brothers in Brazil

• VOICE OF GEARING UP FOR THE

117 brother-delegates will meet in Rome on September 4th to open the XX General Chapter. Responding to challenges awaiting us as Marists, these brothers will begin by focusing on the vitality of St. Marcellin's charism, and the need to adapt it to the thinking and demands of the new millennium. 18 lay people will reflect and discern with the delegates. "Choose life" has been the slogan in use during the preparatory phase. We're all looking forward to the Chapter's giving us clear guidelines and daring decisions.

THE CHAPTER FOR US AS LAY PEOPLE

This Chapter has aroused within us certain emotions, dreams, and thoughts.

We certainly experienced feelings of joy, contentment, and pride when we found out that we had been selected as the two lay people from Africa who would form part of the Rome-bound delegation.

That has led us to dream ...about Marist Brothers Schools run by lay people, about lay people attending and taking part in meetings of great importance to the Marist Brothers, about meaningful involvement in Marist planning.

Beyond this sense of satisfaction, our thoughts turn to preparing ourselves to exchange knowledge and experiences resulting from various meetings. To acquiring a thorough understanding of the mission and plans of the Marist Brothers for the next seven years. Being encouraged to contribute vital support as lay people to the mission and plans of the Marist Brothers. And working with the Brothers to adopt programs for giving young people an excellent preparation for life at the dawn of the Third Millennium.

Jean Marie Amusini Selemini
Institut Bobokoli des Frère Maristes - Kinshasa Binza
Democratic Republic of the Congo

A BLESSING AND RESPONSIBILITY

"My friend," said the elderly Brother as he held out his hand to congratulate me. "You're very lucky and you have a great responsibility as someone participating in the XX Chapter." Those words sum up expectations of the Marist world as well as my own thoughts and feelings. I feel blessed to have the opportunity to become more familiar with the different Marist realities, thoughts and concerns of today. That will be a very enriching experience. I also feel a great sense of responsibility. Many in the Marist Congregation are looking to the Chapter for an upbeat, spirit-filled message, and many Montagnes are demanding justice. Both groups are brimming with life, and we must choose life! How I hope we will be sensitive to our all-loving God who speaks to us through people and events; that we will be able to take just and necessary steps to continue being faithful to Marcellin. That all of us will work together on his dream and make it come true. And so I said to my elderly friend, "Brother, pray for me."

Fernando Domínguez del Toro
Provincial Mission Team, Province of Betica, Spain
Castilleja de la Cuesta, Seville

THE LAITY •

XX GENERAL CHAPTER

WALKING THE PATH TO THE THIRD MILLENNIUM...

When I received Br. Walmir Xavier's invitation to participate in the XX General Chapter, a mixture of joy and fear swept over me. Tears welled up, betraying my heart's emotions. I felt overwhelmed by the question, "Why me?" Was I really qualified to take part in such an important mission?

After the initial shock wore off, I began to sort out my thinking. Anxiety gave way to a great sense of peace. I saw that the answer that I was searching for needed to take shape gradually, in the light of everyday experiences and information, faces and images... in constant prayer and the presence of God.

That is how I am preparing as a layperson to participate in this critical time in the life of the Marist Brothers' Congregation. I feel I have a huge responsibility, but I'm being sustained and inspired each day by the dreams of Father Champagnat. May our Good Mother keep me close to her heart until the Great Gathering takes place and 2001 reveals itself in Marist History as a time of renewed vitality.

Silvana Elias da Silva Pereira
Colégio Marista Diocesano – Marist Province of
Rio de Janeiro
Uberaba, Brazil

A MEETING OF AND ABOUT LIVES

CHOOSE LIFE, the slogan for the XX General Chapter, prompts me to dwell on the feelings that are taking over my heart today. No need to dodge them or explain them away. Rather, reflecting on the words CHOOSE LIFE, I feel called to take a proactive role in the concrete events of my life these days, meeting them head on with serenity and courage, even when the road ahead is uncertain. This slogan invites me to go forward in faith and hope along new paths that God and life are laying out before me.

I trust that this spirit of life will be with us during happy times together at the General Chapter, embracing us in an atmosphere of sincerity and fraternity. That it will open up new viewpoints and road maps, enabling us to rediscover our genuine union with God as brothers and lay people sharing a common mission. That it will prompt each of us to respond in his or her own way to a personal calling, IN ALL ITS RICHNESS AND VITALITY, whatever our circumstances. May Champagnat and Mary, our Good Mother, always inspire us to CHOOSE LIFE...

Erika Shishido Matsuo
Movimiento Marcha - Lima
Province of Peru

LAY PEOPLE AT THE CHAPTER

September 15th to the 25th, 18 lay people, selected by Marist Administrative Units throughout the world, will attend the XX General Chapter as observers and consultants. They come from:

EUROPE. Fernando Domínguez del Toro (Spain), Carlos Robla Pérez (Spain), Ana María Sarrate Adot (Spain), Catherine Demougin (France), and Irma Eltink (Holland).

LATIN AMERICA. Ricardo Miño (Bolivia), José Francisco Murillo Ortiz (Colombia), Erika Shishido (Peru), José Eduardo Robles Uribe (Mexico), Valdecir João Bianchi (Brazil), and Silvana Elias da Silva Pereira (Brazil),

ASIA. Noemí Basco Silva (Philippines).

THE PACIFIC. Catherine Hannon (Australia), and Rita Rokocakau (Fiji).

AFRICA. Jean Marie Amusini Selemani (Congo), and Gary Michael Norton (South Africa).

NORTH AMERICA. Jacques Boudrias (Canada) and Steven E. Murphy (USA).

MOVING ON

Excitement and nervousness are what I am experiencing as I look forward to the experience and challenges of the Chapter, as we prepare to "CHOOSE LIFE" in regard to the vitality of St. Marcellin's charism in this new millennium. As we, the lay representatives and the Brother-Delegates come together in Rome, this gathering will be for me a 'melting pot' of the experience and cultures of two 'worlds', that of the laity and the religious. Through sharing our experiences, both as laypersons and religious, and entering into dialogue and discernment together, as we endeavour to CHOOSE LIFE, I hope that the spirit of St. Marcellin will move us all to see and accept changes that need to be made in light of the demands of our world "here and now." May we go forward – strengthened, inspired, and daring to move on and continue to witness, by our lifestyles, to the spirituality and charism of St. Marcellin Champagnat.

Rita Georgina Rokocakau
Chairperson, Champagnat Movement,
Suva, FIJI ISLANDS

Chapter promotes Fraternities

DEAR FRIENDS IN OUR MARIST FRATERNITIES,

By the time you receive this edition of Marist Echo, our General Chapter will have started. Many are the Fraternities that have participated in preparing for it, through prayer, interest in keeping informed about preliminary steps, or taking part in meetings to respond to surveys sent out by the Preparatory Commission.

The General Chapter exercises the highest extraordinary authority in our Institute. It is responsible for electing the government of the Congregation, i.e., the Superior General, Vicar General, and Councilors, and to set basic guidelines for the future, to be implemented by the newly-elected General Council. It can also change Statutes and put before the Holy See the modifications that may be needed on some points of the Constitutions.

As you will recall, the General Chapter of 1985 created the Champagnat Movement of the



At the regional meeting of Fraternities in Patos de Minas, Brazil, June 2-3, 2001

Marist Family and gave it formal recognition in article 164.4 of the Constitutions. By 1987 several Fraternities had sprung up, during a time when there was an ongoing dialog with brothers and lay people concerning differing situations in the Institute, with a view to establishing a Life Plan, which was

published on July 16, 1990.

The General Chapter of 1993 was the first one to invite a group of Marist lay people to take part in it. Some were Fraternity members. We decided to extend a similar invitation for the Chapter of 2001. Fraternities keep growing and every day more and more people

www.Champagnat.org

BROTHERS AND
COMMUNITIES, MEMBERS OF
THE CHAMPAGNAT MOVEMENT, AND
MARIST FRIENDS

WANTING TO KEEP A CLOSE EYE ON THE
RESULTS THAT WILL COME OUT OF THE XX
GENERAL CHAPTER OF THE MARIST BROTHERS, JOIN US
ON THE INTERNET – LOG ON TO: WWW.CHAMPAGNAT.ORG

THIS INFORMATIVE WEB SITE WILL KEEP YOU UP TO DATE ON THE
CHAPTER'S PROGRESS. YOUR FREE SUBSCRIPTION WILL GIVE YOU ACCESS
TO THE LATEST NEWS AND PICTURES, AS WELL AS ALL THE TEXTS CLEARED
FOR PUBLICATION BY THE CHAPTER'S CENTRAL COMMISSION.

OUR SITE WILL BE FULLY OPERATIONAL AT THE END OF AUGUST.

THIS GENERAL CHAPTER IS AN EVENT THAT WILL LEAD THE MARIST INSTITUTE INTO THE THIRD
MILLENNIUM WITH ALL ITS PROMISE AND CHALLENGES.

EXPERIENCE THE CHAPTER, CLOSE UP!

are being attracted by the spirituality of St. Marcellin, wanting to make his spirit a part of their lives and to radiate it to others. This is a fact for which we owe God and our Good Mother a big thank you, and one to which the Chapter delegates will be paying close attention. Fraternities are opening up some undreamed of possibilities for us. They are showing themselves to be an effective way for the charism that we have inherited from Marcellin to renew itself, take on new vigor, and spread its benefits to widening spheres in the Church and society. Serious concerns and recommendations in this regard are so much in evidence that a major theme for this General Chapter will be Marist Spirituality in all its forms. A Spirituality experienced by brothers and lay people in their diverse circumstances: open and welcoming religious communities; schools and other works; missions in solidarity, supported by volunteers; various associations of parents, teachers, students and former students; and last but not least, by Fraternities.

A new General Council will emerge from this Chapter. Consequently one of its members will be the new brother responsible for keeping in touch with the Fraternities. For my part, I would like to take leave of all of you with deep feelings of thanks and joy. Thanks to the Lord and our Good Mother, because they continue to stir up in many hearts the desire to follow Jesus in Champagnat's way, serving Him in His neediest brothers and sisters, with a special preference for children and young people. Joy and thanks to all of you for these years that we have spent together, helping each other uncover the riches of our Marist charism, experience it with greater constancy and radiate it according to our particular vocation in life. May our Good Mother and St. Marcellin bless you and your families. With their help and loving care may you be able to fulfil all your most cherished hopes and wishes. Fraternally, ♦

Br. Pedro Marcos.

UPDATE:

New Fraternity

We've received news that a new Fraternity has been established at Colegio Champagnat in Buenos Aires. Its name is "Holy Name of Mary" and it's made up of nine married couples. Welcome to our Argentinean brothers and sisters!

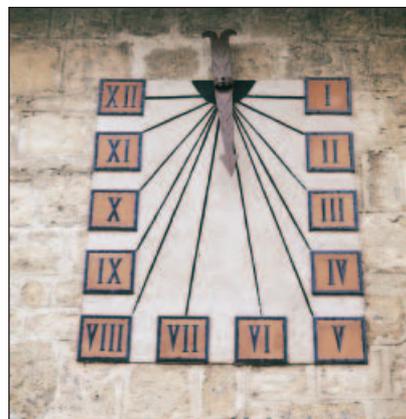
Fraternities gather together

Fraternities in the Province of Rio de Janeiro met in Patos de Minas to celebrate their 2nd Assembly together on June 2 and 3, 2001.

In Argentina, six Fraternities in the Province of Cordoba held a joint meeting in Pilar.

Congratulations to the Fraternities that organized these regional gatherings.

We encourage everyone to make plans to celebrate similar meetings, so helpful in fostering our fraternal spirit, deepening awareness of our charism, and helping us find ways of experiencing it in new and different surroundings. ♦



It's Chapter Time!

OPEN YOUR DOORS



What do all the results of the Surveys for our XX General Chapter mean to us? Are they road signs, pointing all of us in St. Marcellin's family, not just our "Chapter delegates," in the direction that we should go?

Our answer to the second question will have a lot to do with our attitudes and actions relative to the XX General Chapter. One would hope that the large amount of data and comments collected will not distract us from focusing on what is our fundamental and unmistakable task: listening attentively to Jesus, the Lord of our personal and congregational history, and discovering what He is calling us to do, here and now,

By now John Paul II's invitation is extremely well-known: "Do not be afraid. Open your doors to the Redeemer!" Yes, we can be certain that if we allow Jesus to really come into our personal lives and congregational structures, everything will turn out fine. May our welcoming Him fill us with the courage and confidence we need to tear down all our stumbling blocks, big and small. In this way, our Chapter will be "a new Pentecost." "Here I stand, knocking at the door." (Rv 3,20) In light of this biblical reference, the Pope's invitation should stimulate us to cast aside fear and open ourselves up unequivocally to the power of God in our midst.

Br. José Contreras
Province of Western Mexico
Member of the Preparatory Commission

Father Champagnat, A Man of Warm Relationships

By Bro. Alain Delorme Notre-Dame de l'Hermitage, France

Marcellin Champagnat was a man who loved human contact. First of all, because of his character: "bright, open, frank, resolute, courageous, enthusiastic, constant, and equable." [Life, p.265]

Even in the Minor Seminary, he won the esteem of his teachers who entrusted the supervision of a dormitory to him. He knew how to find the discouraged companion and tactfully help him out. [p.17] In the Major Seminary of Saint Irénée in Lyons the young seminarian manages to convince his colleagues of the need to train Brothers to evangelize and catechize country children.

At the start of his ministry in LaValla, he launches his enterprise. In this village of 2500 inhabitants spread across some fifty hamlets, the young assistant worked wonders. "An unassuming affability, a straight-forwardness and impression of kindness radiated from his face, gaining all hearts... One couldn't help following his advice and his wishes, because he was so kind..." [p.266]



"St. Marcellin" by Pauline Clayton. Assumption College Kilmore; Victoria, Australia

This easy contact with people allowed him to help the poor children of the parish. During his first year, he recruits twelve of them whom he entrusts to generous families. His steady character and the confidence he knew how to earn help him settle arguments which divide families.

The parishioners of LaValla appreciated their young assistant so much they undertook to have him named pastor. But Marcellin understood that he had to devote himself entirely to his community. The young mountain lads he had gathered together knew nothing for the most part: they had to be taught everything and formed as religious. He recognizes the need to go and share the life of his Brothers. Result: in a few months he trains a Brother Laurent as catechist and turns Jean-Pierre Martinol into an accomplished teacher.

The diocesan inquiry for Marcellin's beatification offers some interesting testimony: "He was mild, loving, and always on good terms with everybody." [Jean-François Badard, son of the sacristan of LaValla] "I always saw Father Champagnat good and affable and ready to oblige everybody." [Bro. Marie-Jubin] "He used to talk freely with the first person he met. His openness and warm informality made his conversations charming." [Bro. Aidan] It seems true, therefore, to affirm that a sense of human relations, so well developed in Marcellin Champagnat, is one of the reasons for the success of his foundation. ♦

THE CHAPTER'S CALENDAR

As specified in our Marist Constitutions, the General Chapter determines its own set of topics and the timetable for dealing with them.

Established dates:

- Aug 28: The Provisional Committee takes up its work.
- Sep 1: The Committee to verify the election of delegates begins its work.
- Sep 4: Opening ceremony of the XX General Chapter.
- Sep 12: Joint celebration by the Chapters of the four Marist Congregations.
- Sep 17: Papal audience for the members of the four General Chapters.

Planning by the Preparatory Commission:

- Sep 4-11: Initial stages of organization (opening, rules and procedures, agenda, closing date, election of the Central Commission).
- Sep 13-19: Discerning: the SEE phase.
- Sep 15-25: Shared reflection time with the 18 lay observers/consultors.
- Sep 20-27: Discerning: JUDGE.
- Sep 22: Guided reflections by an expert.
- Sep 28 - Oct 11: Discerning: ACT. Election of the new General government and adoption of decisions.
- Oct 12-13: Closure (Approval of the Acts, evaluation, and closing ceremonies).

At www.champagnat.org you can keep up with all that's going on and sign up to receive free newsletters, bringing you the latest on how the Chapter is progressing. Log on, and spread the word to others eager to know more about us through this Marist service.