

Marist ECHO

Institute of the Marist Brothers

Number 39 – Year 15 - March 2002

A LONG WAY TO GO

In his closing address to the General Chapter Brother Seán noted that “the real work of a Chapter begins when the last delegate has left for home. A Chapter is nothing more than the first step on a very long road.”

Being a process, our task will have various phases. For the first few months, activity has centered on sending out the message. Reading the Chapter document and reflecting on its challenges can serve as a stimulus to action, for that is what is essential. Each according to his or her circumstances is invited, personally and as a community member, to respond generously to the Chapter’s five calls. Momentous decisions are not about fanfare; they open the way for steady step-by-step progress toward the realization of God’s plan for our Institute. As lay persons and brothers, we share the charism of Marcellin and consequently we cannot remain indifferent in the presence of children and young people, especially the poorest, who need a word of hope and the Gospel proclaimed in their midst.

It is absolutely necessary to stay the course because we are not going to reach our destination overnight. It is important, though, to quicken our pace, knowing that the road ahead is a long one. The first step has been taken. The rest is up to us.

A Lenten Meditation: Making poverty personal...

Br. Seán Sammon, Superior General

All the signs of a life on the street were there. Cheap clothing, filthy and ill fitting. An old gray hat holding matted hair tightly in place. Face and arms discolored long ago by grime and the lack of a place to wash.

But with quiet dignity and deliberate step, she entered the Church. The eyes of the faithful shifted focus to fix on this stooped woman,

her back exactly parallel with the spotless marble floor; a small plastic bag held tightly in her right hand. She found a bench against the side wall, slowly straightened herself, and joined in reciting the Mass prayers.

This woman lives on the street, with other women and children in this city and countless other ones. Some classify her as the poor. But she is first a person: somebody’s daughter, sister, mother. She had a life before the one she now bears. And dreams, too? And plans? And maybe she loved someone, was loved in return.

But, she is a person who is poor. And Jesus tells us bluntly: we shall be judged by the way in which we treat

persons who are poor. How, I ask myself, do I contribute to keeping this woman in her place on the street with so many others?

The Mass ends. Well-dressed worshipers press a coin in her hand. For whose sake: theirs or hers? We drift out into the night, past children begging at the Church door. Thinking of her on the street tonight, every night, I cannot sleep. ♦



After his election, Br. Seán leads procession to chapel with relic of St. Marcellin.

PARAGUAY: LIVING IN SOLIDARITY

Choosing life for children and young people

Thaís Fàbregas i Comadran

SERGI BERNABEU, DIRECTOR OF SED-CATALUNYA, BASED IN BARCELONA, INTRODUCES US TO THAÍS.

For the last six years the Spanish NGO SED (Solidarity, Education, Development), together with the Marist Province of Catalunya, Spain has been promoting a long-term volunteer program for young people desirous of committing themselves for one, two or more years to the mission of the Marist District in Paraguay.

Ten young men and women have chosen this mission. Although each one has done so in a personal way, all have something in common: as Christians dedicated to building a better world, they share in the life and mission, joys and sorrows of Paraguay and our Marist District there. Circumstances vary: a married couple and some single volunteers living in community with brothers, a young woman living in the home of a local teacher, two volunteers living by themselves in a rent-free house close to a community... in different towns throughout the country – Coronel Oviedo, Horqueta, and Mariscal Estigarribia.

Now, in 2002, two new volunteers have begun their time of service – Carles for two years in Horqueta and Teresa for three years in El Chaco. Just concluding their mission are Esther and Thaís, two nurses who developed a healthcare program for mothers and infants in association with the Horqueta Healthcare Center.

“From the plane,” writes Thaís, “you would get the impression that this a mysterious land carpeted in green. Once on the ground, however, in the Paraguayan coun-



Conversing at Asentamientos Arroyito.

tryside, the rich red soil, lush vegetation and bright blue sky come together in breathtaking views. After a while you find that your life and work dovetail in much the same way.

“Revving up my motorbike, leaving Horqueta and traveling for miles until I reach an isolated community, working alongside the woman helping at the government health clinic that has hardly any medical supplies necessary for minimum healthcare, visiting traditional midwives, teaching mothers how to care for their babies, listening to people’s worries, entering homes and encountering daily struggles for survival, sharing some tereré, cold maté tea... it’s all part of our efforts to generate enthusiasm and give meaning to the little victories on which we are slowly but surely building a better tomorrow. We always receive more than we expected: human splendor and small wonders and challenges that reveal themselves in the activities of our everyday lives and help us gain wisdom.

“After thirty years Horqueta is now home to a great Marist family. An all-embracing community welcoming teachers, lay people and brothers to share and journey together. A family present for boys and girls and young men and women, whatever their circumstances and style, choosing life and turning the promise inherent in this green Paraguayan landscape into vibrant reality.”

Thaís Fàbregas i Comadran ♦



Thaís measuring blood pressure. The dispensary at Paso Mbutú.

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Marists today, challenged to commitment by children in poverty

Br. Roque Ari Salet, interviewed by Br. Lluís Serra

Br. Roque Ari Salet is the new Director of the General Administration community in Rome. Born in Cerro Largo, Brazil, he is 62 years old. He was Provincial of Santa Maria Province for 12 years, Provincial Treasurer for 10 years, and has been a delegate to four General Chapters.



Brother Roque in the Chapter Hall.

HAVING PARTICIPATED IN FOUR CHAPTERS, WHERE DO YOU THINK THE INSTITUTE IS HEADED TODAY?

More and more the Institute is returning to its roots. The heart of Marcellin is beating more and more insistently in the hearts of Brothers and lay people, leading us to show ever greater care for children and young people in need.

FOR THE CHURCH AND SOCIETY, WHAT VALUE IS THERE IN BEING A CONSECRATED BROTHER?

A Brother's vocation testifies to the fact that fraternity and solidarity are truly possible and know no bounds; that the person and message of Jesus Christ should be at the very center of our lives; that it's possible to be happy, here and now, living the Beatitudes. A Brother's daring in mission is another important feature of his vocation.

WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF MARIST SPIRITUALITY?

It's Marian, i.e., a way of relating to God that is simple, filial and filled with trust. It's

apostolic, a spirituality marked by solidarity with the joys and sufferings of the people to whom we want to bring the fully-alive person of Jesus Christ.

SCHOOLS, OTHER MINISTRIES..., WHAT IS OUR MARIST MISSION TODAY?

Schools, including universities, privileged media for educating, humanizing, and training in solidarity and evangelization, cannot be made into an absolute. To be faithful to Marcellin, we must pay special attention to caring for impoverished children and young people, with trained personnel and sufficient financial resources.

THERE HAVE BEEN STARTLING REVELATIONS ABOUT THE EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN; WHAT'S YOUR REACTION TO THIS?

The exploitation of children in its most varied forms – the sale and consumption of drugs, panhandling, child labor, sexual abuse – makes my blood boil. Children are the favorites of Jesus and they are utterly vulnerable. In my personal and corporate actions and decisions, I try to pay special attention to them.

HOW WOULD YOU EXPLAIN WHAT WE REFER TO AS OUR

SHARED MISSION AS BROTHERS AND LAY PEOPLE?

For me shared mission means that Brothers and Laity together know, love, and radiate in our lives the pedagogical principles and particular spirituality of Saint Marcellin, and that we permeate our mission with these values, giving preferential care to children and young people excluded by society. As we do this, we can learn a lot from one another.

THERE SEEMS TO BE A RESURGENCE OF VOCATIONS IN BRAZIL. HOW WOULD YOU EXPLAIN THIS?

There really is an increase of Marist vocations in our country. I think this is due to several factors: prayer for vocations in families, parishes, and religious communities; well-organized vocation programs, staffed by a large number of qualified people; Christian families that provide an atmosphere favorable to vocations; active support and encouragement of vocations within families; a clear Marist identity and a deeply felt love for the Mother of Jesus. ♦



Brothers from Brazil together for prayer during the Chapter.

• SIGNS OF VITALITY IN T

A CHAPTER DOCUMENT THAT F

Four of the men and women who came to Rome and participated in our 20th General Chapter share their thoughts on CHOOSE LIFE, the document ratified by the delegates at their closing session on October 13, 2001. A document addressed not only to the Marist brothers but to everyone who feels the attraction and call to put into practice the spirituality and mission of St. Marcellin Champagnat. Today's children and young people require new responses to be educated in the light of Gospel values and a world of equal opportunity.

SIGNS OF VITALITY IN THE WORLD OF TODAY.

"Choose Life" was the theme for the Twentieth General Chapter that we were privileged to attend as lay persons during September 2001. Reflecting back on the experiences of sharing and getting to know the International Marist Family, I was touched by the determination and commitment of the Marist Brothers and lay persons, whose aim was to continue and develop the mission of our founder, St Marcellin Champagnat. Although we were from different parts of the world and had different experiences based on Marist Spirituality, a common thread connected us in our vision and focus. The Marist Brothers welcomed us with warmth and kindness and we always felt that our suggestions and ideas were accepted in a positive spirit. A number of Marist Lay persons clearly felt drawn to the Marist Charism and the conviction that this is what St Marcellin would want in our modern world today.

The challenge for all of us – both Brothers and Lay Persons – is to identify our mission and call for action. In a world controlled by materialism and greed, we face huge challenges in order to make a difference to those least favoured by life.

As a Marist educator, I feel a calling, to not only teach skills and facts, but to do so much more. To help a young person feel loved by those around him and by God is the true challenge. We owe it to ourselves, our God and our Marist family to make a difference to as many young people that we come into contact with each day.

Gary Norton
Marist Brothers Linmeyer,
Southern African Province
Johannesburg, Gauteng, South Africa.

A BEACON OF HOPE

Fortunately, today's world – as violent, cliquish, materialistic, and consumer-driven as it is – also provides us with opportunities to come across beacons of light for illuminating the many avenues open before us.

In contrast to the features listed above, the call we have received from the 20th General Chapter of the Marist Brothers allows us to believe in the possibilities of peace, integration, and due honor and respect for everyone of us who exists on this planet. It strengthens us spiritually as it leads us to a deeper understanding of our human nature and allows us to believe in something greater than just possessing things.

The Chapter's message both fortifies and comforts when it acknowledges that faith is still able to thrive. And you and I, how will we convert this message into action?

What are we doing with our brothers and sisters, whether religious or lay persons, students or teachers, parents or children, the poor or ...?

How are we renewing ourselves in prayer? In our duties and responsibilities? Where do we stand now with those in greatest need? How have we been nurturing our spirituality?

Choose life – Is it a daily reality that we manifest in solid deeds or is it still just a useful catchword, meaningful, but like so many others, not a big factor in our day-to-day lives?

How often do I draw closer to my brothers and sisters, the people who cross my path, using new attitudes, those of Christ?

Let's get going! That means swinging into action, putting the message into practice, waiting no longer.

José Francisco Murillo Ortiz
Coordinator of Campus Ministry
Province of Colombia
Bogotá, Colombia

THE WORLD OF TODAY • HOLDS OUR FEET TO THE FIRE.

FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What ideas/accomplishments of the General Chapter appeal to me most?
2. In our particular surroundings, what specific, measurable signs of life can we concentrate on to apply the Chapter's insights?

SOWERS OF HOPE

I was very excited, (even relieved), when I read the message of the General Chapter, Choose Life, as it seemed to capture what I remembered were the thoughts and feelings that were expressed by so many of the Lay Observers and Brothers.

Part C of the message entitled Brothers and Laypeople: "Widen the space of your tent", well encapsulated the discussion that we shared on identity. The charisma that Marcellin has given us is for both Brothers and Laypeople. Even though the identities of the Brother and the Layperson are distinctively different, we both have a shared responsibility for the mission.

The message of the Chapter calls us to "deepen our understanding of our specific identities in sharing life: spirituality, mission and formation". It brings to mind the example that each year in Australia, young people commit themselves to living for a short time in a community, together with Brothers and other lay Marists. They very much see this option as choosing life. It is a choice for formation, a choice to deepen their own spirituality and a choice to share mission. Not every country, culture or Marist person can afford such an option, however we should seize the opportunities to share our gifts in order to bring about the "fire upon the earth", to be "sowers of hope".

Catherine Hannon
Assistant Principal - Campus Director
Trinity Catholic College, Auburn/Regents Park
Sydney, Australia

A MARIST PENTECOST

My experience at the Chapter can be summed up in a single word: Pentecost. Initially, the Spirit transformed the disciples' fears into apostolic drive to proclaim the Good News. Today we are experiencing similar anxieties trying to deal with immense challenges and the seeming insignificance of our own efforts. The Chapter invites us to undergo a true Pentecost experience by acting in accordance with its calls to Choose Life:

Centering our lives in Jesus, a prophetic sign for those of us wanting to live our Marist charism as brothers and lay people. If an encounter with the Lord is not central to our existence, then fame and influence, academic degrees, and years of experience mean nothing.

Revitalizing our communities as a way of following and proclaiming Jesus in a spirit of fraternity and openness. Deepening our specific identity as brothers and lay people when sharing our lives, a Church undertaking that is animated by a spirit of communion and goes beyond our shared mission. The only way we will be able to become Marists, brothers and laity, is to travel our road together.

Advancing together in the company of the poorest and most marginalized children and young people, those to whom the Lord came to announce His Good News. And Marist works geared to other levels of society need to remain immersed in that same approach. Evangelizing through education amounts to training in solidarity, because no one can know the face of God's love if he turns his back on the multitudes of the poor, for the most part children and young people like those who profoundly touched the heart of Marcellin.

José Eduardo Robles Uribe
Province Pastoral Team
Marist Province of Central Mexico

Pitching our tent, sharing life



Marist fraternities celebrate together in Puerto Rico.

“TODAY THE DISCIPLES OF MARCELLIN CHAMPAGNAT ARE NOT JUST THE BROTHERS BUT MEN AND WOMEN, SINGLE AND MARRIED PEOPLE, YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS, WHO ARE PREPARED TO SHARE HIS CHARISM WITH YOU AND ACCEPT ITS CHALLENGES.” (20TH GENERAL CHAPTER)

The Fraternities in our Marist Province of Central America were born when the 1985 General Chapter invited us to share our charism with the laity. The first one was established in Guatemala City on June 6, 1990 with Brother José Antonio López as its spiritual advisor.

That seed sown 12 years ago is now yielding abundant fruit throughout Central America.

Currently there are 254 Marist men and women experiencing life in 17 Fraternities, in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Puerto Rico.

Members include teachers and parents of students in our schools. It's clear to me that St. Marcellin Champagnat has made a tremendous impression on them. In one way or another, our Founder has been their model and awakened in them a desire to lead a more dedicated Christian life.

Our organization is simple. Once a Fraternity is established, its members choose their leaders and draw up a Plan of Life for the year ahead. A brother named by the Provincial advises them in their formation programs, applying material in the Guide for Fraternities developed by our Province for their particular needs. This lays out a three-step formation process: initiation, entering into greater depth, and maturity. For each of these phases, the Guide outlines the ideals, means, and practices for mem-

bers to experience. Presently we are working on formation topics for each phase.

St Marcellin's life and work are themes in which Fraternities like to immerse themselves. These topics have been the starting point and motivating factor for members to grow as individuals and communities.

Each Fraternity's apostolic thrust, whether within or outside of our Marist ministries, is specified in its Plan of Life. There is an awareness that the primary apostolate of members is to care for their families and the environment where they work.

The Province has two brothers delegated by the Provincial to animate and coordinate the formation program, which includes encounters, meetings, visits to Fraternities, etc.

Although we've come a long way, we are constantly encountering new challenges, urged on by the witness of brothers and lay people who invite us "to be Champagnat today."

We have clearly stated our latest challenges at our IV Provincial Meeting of Fraternities celebrated in Puerto Rico from the 23rd to the 25th of November, attended by 120 members and 12 brothers.

With the slogan **THROUGH OUR FRATERNITIES WE CHOOSE LIFE**, we proposed three objectives:

- Reaching out to others in friendship in an atmosphere of simplicity and family spirit.
- Listening attentively, brothers



BROTHER ALESSANDRO DI PIETRO, JUST ONE OF ISRAEL

On January 30th in Carmagnola, Italy, Brother Alessandro di Pietro, 94, Postulator General at the time of St. Marcellin's beatification, received the award Just Man of Israel for his work on behalf of Jews during the Holocaust. It is an honor granted to individuals who put their own lives at risk without seeking anything in return in order to save others during the Second World War. With Brother Alessandro as Headmaster, San Leone Magno Institute in Rome sheltered 24 boys from Jewish families and 12 adults as boarders at the school. The school's Marist brothers made a community decision to do this, backing recommendations by Pope Pius XII, even though they knew they were placing their lives in grave danger. A fact from our history that bears out the slogan of our most recent General Chapter: Choose Life!

and lay people, to God's calls for us to take a look at our Fraternities as they really are through the eyes of St. Marcellin.

- Finally, to frame challenges of life with a view to the future of our Fraternities.

For three days, in a warm and fraternal atmosphere, we concentrated on discerning the way things are going in our fraternities, working mainly in commissions, taking as reference points:

- The life experience of the Fraternities themselves with regard to personal and communal programs.
- The state of society in our countries.
- The calls of the 20th General Chapter.

In looking over the Chapter's calls to us in an attentive and committed way, we have come to recognize countless ideas that coincide.

These are our challenges now:

1. To center our lives on Jesus and his Gospel for bringing about change and personal and group conversion, being true to our Marist apostolic spirituality.
2. To become identified with the life and mission of the Movement.
3. To promote in-depth communication among Fraternity members.
4. To receive training enabling us to assume our responsibilities as Christians within the Church and society.
5. To define the Fraternity's apostolate.
6. To foster communion between the Fraternity and the brothers.
7. To support their mission.

Testimonies from people who attended the meeting, inspiring both the laity and brothers: "It seems to us that we've fulfilled our objectives. The program we followed and gath-

erings we held have led to solid and vigorous growth. Today we see more clearly our mission and the strength and encouragement required when we select this lifestyle. And although we are genuinely concerned about the future, on the other hand we are certain that affirmation and further clarification will come our way. We believe that today there is a strong conviction that we should concentrate on the process of living instead of being results-oriented. For in this way of life it's more important 'to be' and 'to live' than 'to do.'"

Eldra and Rafael Santiago.

"I feel that we had a very enriching experience of solidarity and fraternity and really celebrated our coming together as brothers and sisters."

Tuti Teruel

"Brothers, I remember the Pope telling us, 'Do not be afraid.'" Brothers, we, the Fraternities, are with you and we are committed to choosing life for your Institute, for this is the Lord's work and he will help us with Mary and Marcellin."

Cosme Durán

"The topics discussed were very interesting and in tune with our yearnings to dedicate ourselves and to grow in holiness if we want to bring Marcellin's charisma to the world and those around us."

Rubi Mattei

We invite everyone to keep going forward with **EYES WIDE OPEN AND READY AND WILLING HEARTS.**

Br. Salvador García. ♦



Festive moment during the gathering in Puerto Rico.



Brother Manuel Jorques Provincial of Levante, Spain

TO BE MARIST... A CALLING TO LIVE LIFE TO THE FULLEST

To be Marist is to be called to live fraternity with a new sense of purpose, celebrate the present joyfully – not pine for the past – and prophesy with the courage of hearts intimately linked to their Spring of Living Water.

To be Marist is to be called to take seriously our commitment to bring forth new lives, impelled by the power of our charism; be standard-bearers for a new generation, ready to create links with Champagnat; drink from the Gier and open up new channels to carry its waters through brand new streams.

To be Marist is to be called to experience prayer as a permanent wellspring in our lives: dwelling on God's Word in Scripture and celebrating that Word in the Liturgy, our work, day-to-day events, calls from our brothers and sisters, the Church, and the whole world. (Constitutions 66)

To be Marist is to be called to live in the world of youth, participating in their ups and downs, hopes and fears as proclaimers of the Gospel and specialists in brotherly love and compassion: "The best invitation we can give others to follow Christ is the witness of our consecration and our simple, joyful life in a community which stands for the poor." (Constitutions 94).

Men and women, brothers and sisters, don't opt for the safety and security of a life in the womb. Don't be afraid. Come out to LIFE and pass on what YOU ARE: LIFE!

Divine Providence winks on the life of Saint Marcellin

Brother Jacques Larouche, Provincial, Marist Province of Québec
Château-Richer, CANADA

Marcellin, the rustic priest from Rosey, was a chosen one of God from the day he was born. To illustrate this, let's take a look at some instances of heavenly intervention. On the day he was born, his mother observed quite a remarkable sign, a light similar to a glowing flame. "Often when she drew near his cradle, she saw something like a bright flame that seemed to be coming from the child's heart... this glowing light, after hovering around his head, drifted upwards and bathed the room in light." Wasn't that mysterious light a good omen for his baptism on the feast of the Ascension?

Marcellin was baptized on the feast of the Ascension, May 21, 1789, a day for recalling Jesus' return to our Father's house and entering into eternal glory. Now, when Jesus was baptized, the Holy Spirit appeared in the form of a dove. Jesus' promise to send us the Spirit encourages us to proclaim the Good News of salvation to the entire world. Didn't Champagnat entrust his disciples with responsibility for proclaiming the Good News? Of proclaiming it in every diocese throughout the world?

God is accustomed to choosing the humble. In regard to scholastic aptitude, you know that nature did not do Marcellin any favors. This was a cross that weighed on him constantly during his days of formal schooling. Blessed with a practical mind, Marcellin was a builder. His dynamism raised him to membership among the ranks of great educators. After he died, we see other signs of Providence. Confirming that Marcellin was a servant of God, Pope Pius XII beatified him on the feast of Pentecost

in May 1955. From that day forward, the Pope's health improved noticeably during the rest of that month.

Other signs seem providential to me. Marcellin offered his last Mass on May 3, 1840, and on May 3, 1955, the Decree on the Validity of Two Miracles for his beatification was made public.

On May 11, 1840 he received the Last Sacraments, and on May 11, 1955, the last legal formalities required for his beatification were taken care of.

In the presence of his community, Marcellin read his Spiritual Testament on May 18, 1840; well, on May 18, 1955, Pius XII issued the Decree of Approbation for his beatification. Deceased on June 6, 1840 at the age of 51, Champagnat The Builder had his portrait gracing the scaffolding in front of the façade of St. Peter's in Rome in April 1999 as Pope John Paul II proclaimed him – this humble man, a man of prayer, determination in his studies, and a liking for hard work – a Saint of the universal Church.

Marcellin's holy life invites us to put his charism into practice, boldly, in accord with our own personality. Let us be daring in responding to the urgent needs of our times. ♦



Unique image of Champagnat in the chapel during the Chapter.

IN BRIEF

- The General Council has been meeting in Rome since the middle of March to attend to ordinary matters concerning animation and government, and especially to follow up on decisions made at the last General Chapter.

- The Marist Bulletin is published regularly and sent out by email from the Brothers' world headquarters in Rome. Everyone interested in receiving a copy can sign up for free at www.champagnat.org. Subscriptions may also be given as gifts.

- A "Tent school" is taking shape in Goma, Democratic Republic of Congo to provide an opportunity for the more than 700 students who were attending Mwanga high school to finish the current school year. The school was almost totally destroyed by the volcanic eruptions of January 17th. Worldwide solidarity shown by Provinces and Districts has guaranteed the financing needed for this rebuilding project.

