

Marist ECHO

Institute of the Marist Brothers

Number 40 – Year 15 – June 2002

WHO IS MARIST?

Is the Marist Institute made up solely of brothers? Can lay men and women belong to it in some way? People maintain that brothers and lay people share the spirituality and mission identified with the charism of Marcellin, but to what extent? Is it a question of fuzzy thinking or are there clear distinctions to be drawn?

The 20th General Chapter recommended that the General Council “study various forms of belonging to our Institute.” (Chapter Message: 47, 3) Before reaching any binding conclusions in this matter, it seems indispensable to do two things. First, we need to deepen our new appreciation and insights into the charism. This would be based on thorough theological and ecclesial studies beginning with the concept that being Marist takes in more than being a brother or sister, that it is broader in scope and includes everyone attracted and called to live Marcellin’s charism in his or her own particular circumstances. Second, we need to promote various types of Marist commitment on a trial basis to determine their viability. If needed, decisions will be made by the 21st General Chapter. That’s more than seven years away, but there’s no time to waste.

Protecting children

Br. Seán Sammon, Superior General

Recent reports about the sexual abuse of children by Catholic priests and religious in North America has set in motion a collective soul searching among many believers. At the heart of their reflections lies this troubling question: Why would anyone sexually molest a child?

Contemporary scientific knowledge provides neither a simple nor complete answer. And, our awareness of the problem differs from one part of our world to another. However, of this much we can be sure: while the sexual abuse of children is commonly classified as a moral problem, it is also a psychiatric disorder and in most countries, it is a crime.

Adults who molest children take from them one of God’s greatest gifts: trust. Those of



A child’s trust is one of God’s greatest gifts.

us who minister in the Church, therefore, have an obligation first and foremost to victims. Equally compelling is our responsibility to protect possible future victims.

A pastoral approach to the problem starts with education about child abuse and what can be done to prevent it. In addition, during initial formation, in the institutions entrusted to us, and among the families that we serve, we can provide necessary leadership by reminding everyone involved that in this area, as in all others, Jesus’ message includes awareness, decisive action, reformation, and compassion. ♦



Br. Sean and Br. Ferdinand Okororie of Nigeria enjoy a conversation as the latest renewal course ends in Manzianna.

W O R L D Y O U T H D A Y S

Young people: Salt of the earth and light of the world!

Jacques Boudrias

Lay participant in the 20th General Chapter - University of Montreal, Canada.



TORONTO 2002, IT'S THE PLACE TO BE!

World Youth Days, inaugurated by Pope John Paul II in 1984, will be celebrated in Toronto this July 18 to 28. He's inviting young people 16 to 35 to set out on a spiritual pilgrimage that has for its theme "You are the salt of the earth and light of the world." (Mt 5, 13-14). A day after the September 11 attacks on New York and Washington, the Pope, while visiting in Kazakhstan, launched an appeal for solidarity among Christians and the faithful of other religions. Since then, many groups have come forward in quest of greater justice, and the spectacular Christian gathering this July will give all of us an opportunity to offer our support by proclaiming our faith to the whole world.

MARISTS WILL BE THERE...

With four sites to accommodate guests, Marists will be involved in welcoming young people to dioceses. Another 65 young people will be provided with accommodations in and around Montreal and Quebec. A Marist group accompanied by Brother Alain Steinbach, from the Province of the Hermitage in France, has already made reservations to stay in Quebec.

We also want to organize our own group of students for World Youth Days. To that end we held an initial meeting on March 23 in Montreal. In addition, we're at-



Marist youth, called to be the salt of the earth, light of the world.



Left to right: In Canada, Jean-Simon Biron, Br. Bernard Beaudin, and Jacques Boudrias, the author of this article.

tempting to bring together young people with Marist backgrounds to share past experiences in ministry and dream up future projects together.

The latter group recently met with the young people from precincts 18-30 in a poor area in Montreal. We are going to cooperate closely with those in charge of the city's Eastside Center for Culture and Sports and welcome 35 youths to take part in celebrations in Montreal July 18-21. Volunteers from the Marist Network and precincts 18-30 will foster the involvement of those young people in the diocese, and for that purpose they will organize special activities with a Marist flavor.

AN EXTRAORDINARY EVENT

Last April 19 the Cross of the crucified and risen Jesus arrived in Montreal, the one the Pope has designated as the symbol for inviting the world's young people to participate in World Youth Days, deepen their faith, and live with greater sincerity. The Cross was put on display at nightfall; I was deeply moved. The ceremony was so plain and emotion-filled – with Emmanuel, God-in-our-midst. In planning for World Youth Days, we realize that even for us, it's quite a challenge to speak about Jesus and truly believe in the Gospel. We keep yearning for signs and proof of Christ's presence. Once again we need to find Him through the eyes of faith!

Each of us must experience this for himself/herself, my witness alone is not enough. ♦

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INSTITUTE OF THE MARIST BROTHERS

EDITOR IN CHIEF: Br. Lluís Serra.

TRANSLATORS: Br. Gerard Brereton, English; Br. Aimé Maillet, French; Br. João Fagherazzi, Portuguese; Br. Francisco Castellanos, Spanish.

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FORMATTING AND PHOTOLITHS: TIPOCROM S.R.L. – Via G.G. Arrivabene, 24 Rome ITALY

EDITORIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE CENTER: Piazzale Marcellino Champagnat 2,
C.P. 10250, 00144 Rome ITALY
Tel. (39) 06545171;
Fax (39) 0654517217

E-MAIL: publica@fms.it

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We have a long way to go

An interview with Brother Emili Turú by Brother Lluís Serra

Emili Turú, 47, is from Barcelona. Has earned a Master's Degree in Theological Anthropology in Rome, worked in formation, schools, and pastoral care, and served as Provincial of Catalunya. Now he is on the General Council and heads its Mission Commission.



Br. Emili, on the left, at the final session of the General Chapter.

HOW WOULD YOU DEFINE OUR MARIST MISSION TODAY?

The definition given to us in our Marist Constitutions, Article 2, is right on target: “the Christian education of the young, especially those most in need.” However, due to the extraordinary and rapid-fire changes that are taking place, not only in society but at the very heart of the Marist Institute, we need to adapt to each new set of circumstances. This requires a tremendous spirit of discernment and honesty to overcome smugness and inertia.

OUR INITIALS FMS, FOR MARIST BROTHERS OF THE SCHOOLS – HAS THE S BEEN DROPPED?

I think the fact that there are some 369,000 students enrolled in 370 Marist education centers around the globe demonstrates the great importance that the Institute attaches to the academic world. And so the S has definitely not “been dropped”...

BUT PEOPLE SPEAK ABOUT NEW MINISTRIES.

Because our Constitutions say “especially those most in

need.” In order to reach such children and young people, often enough what our schools have to offer is insufficient to meet their needs. This is an area in which we still need to make a lot of progress, until

it's clearly evident that the expression “especially those most in need” is not just a rhetorical nicety.

THE POOR ENTER INTO THE CHAPTER MESSAGE, BUT WHAT ABOUT SPECIFIC PROJECTS?

A survey carried out in the Institute just before the General Chapter tells us that we have 49 alternative schools and 89 centers providing social services, caring for about 79,000 children and young people. I think this is quite significant, and undoubtedly we will continue to make progress in the coming years.

WHAT PRIORITIES DOES YOUR COMMISSION INTEND TO ADDRESS?

The main purpose of this General Council Commission (which includes three main areas: education – the school and related fields, youth ministry, and our mission “ad gentes”) is to support and animate all our administrative units in everything having to do with our mission to

evangelize in line with Champagnat's charism. However, our top priorities are those found in the mandates and recommendations in the concluding Message given to us by the 20th General Chapter.

IF LAY PEOPLE CAN ACCOMPLISH THE MARIST MISSION, WHY BE BROTHERS?

The Christian community is built upon diversity and gifts that complement one another. As lay people and religious, we share a single calling to lead a Gospel-centered life, but we have distinctive attributes. Being different is not a limiting factor, it is an asset. We don't take each other's place, we complement one another. ♦



Emili heads the Council's Mission Commission.

• CENTERED IN JESUS CHRIST

THE SPRING OF

In prayerful discernment, the 20th General Chapter reflected on five calls in defining its choice for life. The first one: "To center our lives and communities in Jesus Christ like Mary, with passion and enthusiasm, and to implement processes of human growth and conversion which promote this." This call is the bedrock of the Marist project, the reason for its existence. All of us who inherit the spirit of St. Marcellin, brothers and lay Marists alike, know that only in Christ will we find our spring of living waters.

CENTERED IN JESUS CHRIST, LIKE MARY

"To center our lives and communities in Jesus Christ", what a profound desire! It is so human to have profound and deep desires, and yet we fear these very urgings. This phrase sums up the Christian life. Yet, the mystery of this phrase is that we do not make Christ the center of our lives, Christ is the center and we unveil the mystery and allow Christ to be recognized. The spiritual life is to move into this reality to the core and to admit that we are not the center of our own lives. The spiritual life is a pilgrimage to the center and to surrender in fullness to the mystery. Christ is the Alpha and the Omega. Christ is the center of each of our beings, but we have covered over this reality with our own illusions of importance, self-sufficiency and arrogance. Conversion demands ongoing discipline and processes that are concrete and real. We do this as individuals and also as communities. We are always tempted to grow into a comfort zone, which lulls us into independence from God. Mary is the perfect model of fidelity; she lived her life with eyes fixed on Christ and his mission. To be followers of Mary invites us to the same passion and enthusiasm which was characteristic of her life. The more we fix our eyes on Christ the more we are our true selves, fully human, whether professed religious or lay members of our Marist family.

Br. Donald Bisson
Province of Poughkeepsie
Marist Retreat House,
Esopus NY, USA

A LESSON IN LIFE . . .

Our guide pointed to a shanty, among a huddle of makeshift huts, where we had to spend the night. Bans, my partner, and I were university professors undergoing an exposure program among the urban poor. Rosa shyly welcomed us in her bare one-room house. She looked old for her age but there was a certain pride in her bearing. She was carrying a crying baby and a toddler was tugging at her torn skirt. We sat on the sagging bamboo floor and started our interview.

"I have four children. The older kids go to public school and they sell peanuts on the streets at night. My husband cannot find a permanent job so he sometimes drives a tricycle. I take care of the younger ones." She tried to feed the baby from her shriveled breast but there was not enough milk.

As we slept on the floor, the rain fell through the nipa roof and Rosa tried to cover the children with plastic wrappers. It was my longest night as I reflected on what Rosa said about her life. "Sometimes I get discouraged because of our miserable situation. But I trust God and I find strength in my faith. I always pray to the Blessed Virgin Mary because as a mother she understands me." I realized that we came to teach a lesson or two and I learned a more important lesson in life instead: The Lord is good, a refuge in times of trouble, He cares for those who trust in Him. In Jesus Christ we find the **spring of living waters**

Noemi Basco Silva
Notre Dame of Marbel University
Koronadal City, South Cotabato
Philippines

CHRIST AS MARY WAS •

LIVING WATERS

GROUP DISCUSSION

1. As brothers and lay Marists, what is Jesus asking us to do to become his disciples?
2. Do we have personal experiences we can share about our relationship with Jesus, about our process of human growth and conversion in our particular vocations as brothers and lay Marists, men and women?

CHOOSING LIFE, CHOOSING PEACE

We constantly remind ourselves of the need “to read the signs of the times,” i.e., find ways and means to witness to the Good News at this time in human history. We, too, are called to examine our history.

At the outset of the General Chapter, we were shocked and angered by the suicidal attacks in the USA. Since then, we keep hearing about terrorists captured or still menacing humanity. Brothers and lay Marists, if we’re on the side of life, shouldn’t we be developing and proclaiming a spirituality of peace? A spirituality that aims to enlighten, better still, transform the human heart by freeing it from personal and communal stress and anxieties. Father Champagnat practiced a spirituality of peace. He didn’t lose his way during the tumult of the French Revolution. He never let a scarcity of temporal goods block his efforts to respond to God’s will.

No wonder that we call Christ the “Prince of Peace,” that the legacy of His peace is different from that of the world, that his post-Resurrection greeting to the Apostles was “Peace be with you.”

Most of the evils afflicting our society – aside from natural disasters – come from a lack of interior peace within individuals and the lack of an attitude of peace held in common by individuals and groups. Similarly, we feel in need of reconciliation whenever we abuse the gifts of creation.

Every time we celebrate Eucharist, Christ, the way, the truth, and the life, blesses us with His peace.

Brother Eugène KABANGUKA
District of Rwanda.
Rwanda

JESUS CHRIST OCCUPIES THE PLACE THAT WAS ALWAYS HIS

I took part in the 20th General Chapter. Unforgettable. Many languages, the same God. Seeking God’s will through a process of discernment, we prayed intensely to find an effective response to the realities of today’s world.

Desiring the “Vitality of the Institute” and aiming to “Choose life,” the General Chapter presented momentous calls. The first: “To center our lives and communities in Jesus Christ like Mary, with passion and enthusiasm, and to implement processes of human growth and conversion which promote this.”

Throughout his life, Marcellin Champagnat experienced and assimilated that Revelation. Here we have the secret of his greatness: he didn’t discover a new Jesus, rather he became passionate about the spirituality present at the manger, altar and cross of “Christ! Yesterday, today, and always,” the spring of living waters.

To help him in this, “Mary, our Good Mother” was Marcellin’s special companion. He saw her as an ideal model for following Jesus. Thus, the foundations of his work were built on solid ground, his life’s project assured. In Mary’s “Yes!” he found the inspiration to take up a life of authentic faith, one that generates life always and everywhere.

Brothers and lay Marists, let us evaluate and carry out our duties and responsibilities with this great call as our starting point. Centering our lives on the Jesus we know and love is what we’re all about! Mary, our Good Mother, is our number one guide!

Valdecir João Bianchi
Immaculate Conception High School
Marist Province of Santa Maria
Passo Fundo, RS, Brazil

A world fit for children



We need to deliver on the commitments we have made to the world's children.

From May 8 – 10, the United Nations General Assembly convened a special session dedicated to children. The end result, approved by the 189 member countries, is contained in the document “A world fit for children”. Its twenty-one new objectives address four major concerns: health, education, protection from abuse, exploitation and violence, and combatting AIDS. The program’s time frame extends over the next fifteen years. Beneath its surface lie grave problems, frightening statistics, international strife, and contradictory points of view.

The fundamental ideologies of representatives from the member nations weighed heavily on attempts to summarize their findings. Although the basic facts were pretty cut-and-dried, with politics and economics coming into play, substantial disagreements arose about how to solve the problems at hand. The issues of family life, birth control, and cap-

ital punishment were genuine bones of contention. This time around, the Vatican’s consistent pro-family efforts and its opposition to abortion received powerful backing from the United States delegation. The European Union and the United States clashed over the issue of capital punishment – 23 States in the US allow the death penalty for minors who have committed grave crimes. In order to gain approval of the final text, several texts expressing conflicting views were left out.

All policies having to do with children have their consequences. In the developed countries, the declining birthrate poses significant medium and long-term risks. Immigration is looked upon as a way of softening the negative impact that lower birthrates have on their economies, yet the power of the ballot box is wielded by sectors of the population having the greatest number of children. It’s a com-

plex situation. In some cultures and poor countries, parenthood is considered a badge of honor and results are left to natural selection, leading to high rates of infant mortality: you need to produce many children, hoping that some will survive. Often enough Westerners don’t take this way of thinking into account and seek to impose their brand of birth control policies without facing up to the world as it is.

There’s another important consideration, well-stated by Archbishop Renato Martino, the Holy See’s permanent representative at the UN: “During the 1990’s we learned that making promises isn’t enough. We must act.” In a similar way, Nelson Mandela affirmed: “Saying yes is only the first step, now we need to turn our promises into reality for every boy and girl in the world.” Often enough government leaders sign documents like these, sometimes without much thought, and make little effort to put them into effect. They like enforcing laws that they enact in their own countries, and sign international treaties that aren’t worth the paper they’re printed on. If what’s at stake here hardly mattered, the situation wouldn’t be so dramatic. But the lives of millions of people right now, especially those of children, are hanging by a thread. How shameful if we were to treat the world’s children and the poor as nothing more than mere statistics. ♦

Brother Lluís Serra Llansana



13-year-old Gabriela Azurduy Arrieta from Bolivia and 17-year-old Audrey Cheynut from Monaco read the Message at the Children’s Forum. In the opening paragraph, they affirm: “We are the children of the world. We are the victims of exploitation and abuse. We are street children. We are children caught up in war. We are the victims of HIV/AIDS. We are denied a quality education as well as necessary health care. We are the victims of political, economic, cultural, religious, and environmental discrimination. We are children whose voices are not heard: it’s time for people to wake up and take note of us. We want a world that takes care of the needs of children because a world that takes care of our needs is a world that takes care of the needs of all.” The final sentence of the Message says it all: “You call us the future, but we are also the present.”

Marcellin leads the way

MARIST FRATERNITIES IN ARGENTINA, URUGUAY, AND PARAGUAY

Our fraternities grew out of a challenge laid down by a brother who brought back word of the concerns and wishes of our dear Brother Charles Howard. From that day on, fraternities have sprung to life in our provinces, fraternities formed not only by people belonging to our schools but also by others in tune with Marcellin's charisma.

The apostolic works in these fraternities are quite diverse, although they always have something in common: a unity of ideals and personal experiences under the watchful eye of Marcellin, our leader.

Presently there are 22 fraternities in what we can refer to as the new Marist Province of the "Southern Cross," which includes Argentina, Uruguay, and Paraguay.

The fact that most activities being developed are connected with our schools doesn't mean that other cries for help in our society are being ignored. For example, fraternity members are involved in neighborhood soup kitchens, visiting the sick – and why not, apostolates in the workplace.

Mary is given pride of place in a fraternity's activities. For instance,

the apostolate of one member, a bus driver, is to be friendly and kind to his passengers, and when the time is right he brings up a religious topic or at least a current piece of news, presenting it in a positive light, as the Lord might look at things. Another member concentrates on spreading devotion to Mary, and he has succeeded in the getting the factory where he works consecrated to our great Patroness even though, curiously enough, its owners are Jewish. Other members pay close attention to families in great need at their school. We say in great need, but that doesn't always mean financial distress, but needs for accompaniment in times of sorrow, for tutoring children and young people when they fall behind in their studies, etc. Most fraternities have about fifteen members, and they try to work together with a uniquely Marist outlook. There are meetings for learning more about Marcellin and for praying. Most members have taken prayer very much to heart, and in addition to praying in groups, they enjoy conversing with the Lord of the harvest in the midst of their busy days at work. ♦

Brothers Ernesto Benavidez and Eugenio Magdaleno



"Our Good Mother" Fraternity, Buenos Aires Argentina. (Archive photo)



*Br. Jeffrey Crowe
Province of Melbourne,
Australia
Sector of India*

INDIAN AND MARIST

In this country of over a billion people, 85% of whom belong to the Hindu religion, a country blessed with enormous resources, a rich expressive culture stretching back millennia, and hundreds of religious orders already established here, what is the point of a Marist presence?

We are a 'drop in the ocean', 8 Indian Brothers (7 others in formation centres) and 2 Australians, a humble seed of Gospel life in the way of Mary.

The Brothers have chosen to live and work among young people from the rural areas. There are still many villages of small farmers, artisans, and many landless day labourers that suffer neglect and poor services owing to their isolation. Such is the setting for our first school community at P. Udayapatti, begun in 1988. Another school community was recently founded in similar conditions in a Catholic dalit village, Mangamunuthu.

The community at Trichy doubles as the administrative and pre-novitate formation centre. We have been blessed with a good flow of candidates over recent years. Besides teaching catechism on Sunday and making hospital visits, the young men spend a day a week helping at a centre for young kids who have left home or been forced out, working with mentally disabled children, or shaving and cutting hair at a home for old people.

Marcellin's charisma is taking root in Indian soil!

Mary: the seedbed of Marcellin's and our own Marist faith

Br. Richard Dunleavy Secretary General – Rome Province of New Zealand

On 20 April 2002 in a remote Maori village in the north of New Zealand eleven Bishops and thousands of Catholics, including delegations from France and various Pacific Islands, gathered to honour the return from Paris of the mortal remains of Bishop Jean Baptiste Pompallier. This young Bishop, aged only 34, led the first band of Marist Fathers and Champagnat Brothers to found the Church in the Western Pacific in 1838. It had been the heartfelt hope of the Maori people that their “father in the faith” be brought home to this village church. This year a group of 40 Maori people, including two Marist Brothers, went to Rome, Lyon and Paris to escort the Bishop's remains back to New Zealand. They were led by Bishop Patrick Dunn, the 10th successor of Pompallier as Bishop of Auckland.

This event once more focusses the faith of New Zealanders throughout the nation, especially all Marist religious and laity, on the planting of the seed of their faith and the foundation of their Church in the South Pacific, a faith which was so deeply marked by the strong Marist spirit and charism of the founding group of Fathers and Brothers.

Pompallier was the close companion of Saint Marcellin at the Hermitage during a number of years. Despite some differences along the way they remained close friends. In their concern for this new mission of the Society of Mary in the distant Pacific, several letters passed between

these two friends. At least one of them is especially precious for us because, in two short passages, Saint Marcellin declares simply and succinctly what we might call his “doctrine” of love and faith in Mary as the seedbed of our Marist faith:

“Oh what power the name of Mary has! How lucky we are to bear it! Without that holy name, without that miraculous name, people would long ago have stopped talking about our Society. Mary: there you have the sum-total of the resources of our Society.”

“Mary, yes Mary alone is our only prosperity. Without Mary we are nothing, and with Mary we have everything, because Mary always has her divine son either in her arms or in her heart.”

I firmly believe that it is vital to remind ourselves constantly of that seedbed from which grew the key Marist “doctrine” of Saint Marcellin, Bishop Pompallier and all the women and men who first planted the vine and branches of the Marist Family, now spread across so much of the world. ♦



Sculpture of St. Marcellin, Provincial House in Recife Brazil.

GENERAL COUNCIL

The General Council has set up six Commissions, each one headed by a member of the Council.

Religious life

Br. Antonio Ramalho

To animate the religious and community life of the brothers by supporting the structures and teams created to advance initial and ongoing formation and accompany individuals and communities.

Laity – Br. Pedro Herreros

To promote a process of reflection to deepen our understanding of the identity of the brother and the lay Marist as we share our lives, spirituality and formation.

Mission – Br. Emili Turú

To offer animation and support in our mission of evangelization in three areas: education (the school and other fields of education), youth ministry, and our mission Ad Gentes.

Governance

Br. Peter Rodney

To foster vitality by means of forward-looking structures of animation and government, undertaking three tasks: the formation of leadership, the accompaniment of Administrative Units in the process of restructuring, and the ongoing review and development of governance structures within the Institute.

Evangelical use of material goods

Br. Maurice Berquet

To establish a plan of discernment about the evangelical use of material goods in the Institute, and to accompany its implementation in each Administrative Unit.

Vocation promotion

Br. Théoneste Kalisa

To encourage a concerted effort to develop new and original ways of inviting today's young people to our way of life as Marist brothers.