

Marist ECHO

Institute of the Marist Brothers

Number 42 – Year 15 – December 2002

THE STABLE AND THE INN

Christmas draws our attention to two contrasting lifestyles, symbolized by the stable and the inn. Luke (2, 7) recalls that "...there was no room..." for Joseph and Mary in the inn. In a world awash in money, power, and prestige, there's no room for people who are poor, simple, humble. Innkeepers close their doors to anyone not prepared to pay. Lodgings are available only for those meeting fixed requirements and maintaining certain standards. Stables, on the other hand, require no ID cards and welcome the dispossessed. They have room for everyone. Stables don't shut doors – they don't have any. Angels, shepherds, Magi... all are welcome.

Jesus, turned away by the inn's owner, chose the stable. Along with the cross and the Eucharist, St. Marcellin looked upon the stable and its manger as one of his favorite dwelling places, and he hoped his brothers would do the same. Brothers and lay Marists, only from this perspective will we have room for everyone and be able to live the values of the Gospel side by side, each of us according to our personal call from God. Inns continue to allure and have been tempting havens down through the centuries. An ongoing challenge.

The miracle of Christmas

Br. Sean D. Sammon, Superior General

The true gift of Christmas? This annual reminder: Jesus is the most stunning example of God's unconditional love for you and me.

But if this last statement is true, how can we explain the ambivalence of some of us in our relationship with God? Could our hesitancy be related to a teaching often passed on early in life: to be fit for God, we must painstakingly ascend a ladder of virtues?

Unwrap the gift of Christmas and discover that this long-held belief is simply not true. How presumptuous



Brother Sean with young Marists in Nairobi

to test God's love by pretending that something freely given must be earned. How much better to admit that any relationship with Jesus begins with his initiative, and not ours. And, let's be thankful for our positive response; our hunger and thirst for God does far exceed our selfishness and sin.

This Christmas, then, why not keep these three points in mind: one, God's love is unconditional. That's right: spirituality has more to do with passion than with any pious practice. Two, getting involved with Jesus on his terms means imitating as well as admiring him. So, expect to pay a price for this relationship. And, three, the stable is still part of December 25th. After all, a suffering servant, not a conquering king came to set us free. So, go and be likewise always giving first preference, as Marcellin did, to the poorest of young people in need of hearing some Good News. ♦

Statue of our Good Mother



B E L O H O R I Z O N T E (B R A Z I L)

Lar Marista “João Batista Berne”

Angela América Leite



The João Batista Berne Lar Marista (Marist Shelter) opened in June 1994. Today, eleven staff members can provide quality care for up to 30 children. The center is a roomy facility and well suited for its purpose. Presently it is home for 24 boys, ranging in age from

6 to 11 years 11 months. They come from families struggling to survive.

Our aim is to meet the children's needs, develop their physical, emotional, spiritual and intellectual abilities, strengthen family ties, and encourage their involvement in the community. We want Lar Marista to reproduce a family atmosphere as faithfully as possible, with advice, affection, dialog, love, work, study, recreation, and duties and responsibilities. To achieve this, our teaching methods are based on a program of presence.



Eying a future filled with hope



Training under the watchful eye of Angela

This educational method gets to the heart of the problems of the shelter's youth. It goes beyond restoring the material and non-material goods of which the children have been deprived. It's a method that demands our utmost involvement in the mission of educating.

In the program, “being together” with the student is far more than a mere professional obligation. It means our working hard and effectively to do everything we can for the child to become self-motivated and committed to caring for himself and others.

Lar Marista is not a school as such. The children living here attend provincial and municipal schools in the area. Some children receive mental health care and deaf-mute services at special centers. Tutoring takes place at the Lar on a daily basis, where homework assignments are reviewed, and this is complemented with games, music, theater and dance. Special activities are also offered, such as the Africa-inspired dances *Capoeira* and *miçanga*, design and painting, etc. Some children often take part in projects outside of the Lar like ceramics classes and soccer games.

The Lar Marista Team,
Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais
Province of Rio de Janeiro

Number 42 – December 2002 – Year 15
INSTITUTE OF THE MARIST BROTHERS
EDITOR IN CHIEF: Br. Lluís Serra.

TRANSLATORS: Bros. Gerard Brereton and Joseph Belanger, English;
Bros. Lucien Labelle and Aimé Maillet, French; Br. João Fagherazzi,
Portuguese; Br. Francisco Castellanos, Spanish; Br. Onorino Rota, Italian.
PHOTOGRAPHY: Bros. Lluís Serra, Maurice Berquet and archives.
FORMATTING AND PHOTOLITHS: TIPOCROM S.R.L. – Via G.G. Arrivabene, 24
Rome ITALY

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WEB SITE: www.champagnat.org

PUBLISHER: Institute of the Marist Brothers. General House – Rome ITALY
PRINTING: C.S.C. GRAFICA, s.r.l. – Via G.G. Arrivabene, 40 – Rome ITALY

Lay Marists give a new look to the Institute

Brother Juan Pedro Herreros, interviewed by Brother Lluís Serra

Juan Pedro Herreros, 54, is President of the Laity Commission. He was born in Santiago, Chile; in Rome, earned a Licentiate in the Theology of the Religious Life; has served as teacher, formator, director, and principal, and was Provincial of Chile at the time of his election to the General Council.



Brother Pedro at a celebration during the General Chapter

THE LAITY... A TOPIC IN VOGUE HAS COME YOUR WAY!

More than a fashionable topic it's a sign of the times, a "theological place," a sphere of activity in which God is coming out to meet us. With all of religious life, we are taking on the challenge to build a new sense of church, characterized more by communion and participation and less by barriers and boundary lines.

THE GENERAL CHAPTER REFERS TO DIFFERENT WAYS OF BELONGING...

There are those who maintain that this recommendation of the Chapter may well change the face of the Institute in the future. It revolves around accompanying the spiritual search of lay Marists wanting to connect in some way with our religious family. In dialog with them and the new forms of religious life that are springing up in the Church, the Council will need to submit the results of its efforts to the 21st General Chapter.

WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THE

CHAMPAGNAT MOVEMENT OF THE MARIST FAMILY?

It was my good fortune to be closely involved with several fraternities in my home Province. I deeply value the lay-Marist plan of life that the Movement offers. With a minimum of structures it is capable of welcoming diversity and empowering people to grow in the Christian life.

THERE HAS ALSO BEEN TALK ABOUT JOINT FORMATION PROGRAMS INVOLVING BROTHERS AND LAY PEOPLE. IS SOMETHING UNDERWAY IN THIS REGARD?

We have taken significant steps in the Marist world in the last ten years. In many cases, these concern initiatives intended for Marist educators who share in our mission; in other cases, emphasis has been placed on those who share our spirituality. The Chapter has asked the General Council to support the efforts of Provinces that are still searching and to make available programs currently underway.

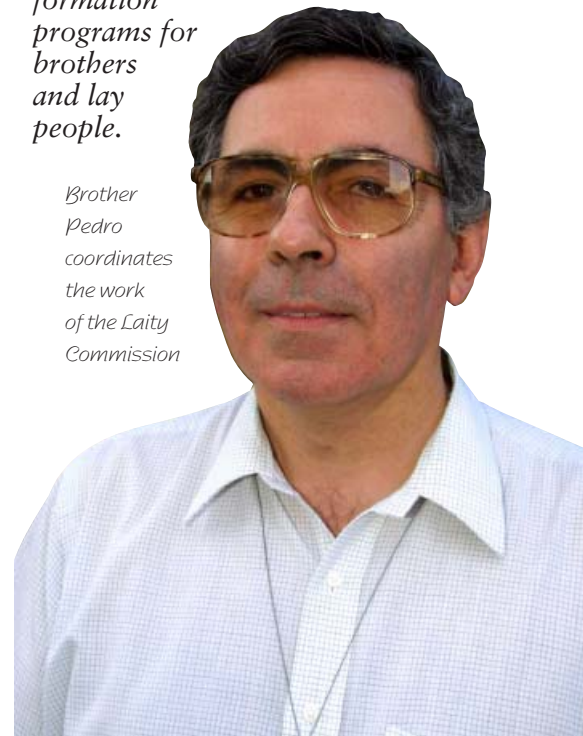
WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF OUR DESIRE TO SHARE LIFE IN COMMUNITY WITH THE LAITY?

Lay volunteers have knocked at the door of some communities, desiring to share fraternity and spirituality, together with mission. "As a Marist Community we welcome everyone who comes to us as though we were welcoming Jesus in person; this is a concrete way to live out our universal brotherhood." (C 62)

WHAT OTHER TOPICS WILL YOUR COMMISSION BE LOOKING INTO?

The participation of lay people when it comes to government and animation in the Institute: proposing courses of action and creating the structures necessary. The use of existing communications media (such as FMS ECHO) to foster exchanging significant experiences of sharing that's taking place between brothers and lay people throughout the Institute. Support for Provinces and Districts facing the greatest challenges in carrying out joint formation programs for brothers and lay people.

Brother Pedro coordinates the work of the Laity Commission



• BROTHERS AND LAY

“ W I D E N T H E S P A C E ”

The 20th General Chapter expressed the third choice that it discerned this way: “We feel called to deepen our understanding of the specific identities of brothers and lay Marists, in sharing life: spirituality, mission, formation...” Marcellin’s charism tears down restraining walls to embrace all men and women who desire to experience it according to their particular vocation in life. Together we, brothers and lay Marists, are invited to share our life and mission, because much more unites us than makes us different. The tent has room for all.

SURPASSING LIMITS

The new signs of life that we lay Marists and brothers are sharing invite us to go beyond the limits of our jobs, responsibilities and tasks, **to enlarge the space of our tent**. However, before doing that, each of us needs **to enlarge the space in our own heart and vocation to serve** others. Not to restrict our schedule to specific times and places in the pastoral care we provide. Rather, we need to be able to discover new ways of living that may frighten us at times because they will distance us from our comfortable personal routines. However, it is a beautiful risk that all of us who have felt called should take, without straying from what is essential for our own identity. We need to let ourselves get involved in a new way of looking at things, something that Marcellin’s charism encourages us to do with enthusiasm and hope for the future.

Thus, as time goes by, **“Choose life”** will take on new shades of meaning in our everyday lives because it will require us to follow up our dreams with concrete commitments; to overcome our fears and mediocrity, and in so doing to discover our individual identity as brothers and lay people, placing all our trust in Jesus as the center of our lives; to dare to widen the space of our tent, and to begin by enlarging the space in our very own hearts.

Erika Shishido Matsuo
Coordinator, Marcha Movement
Chosica, Peru
Province of Santa María de los Andes

ENLARGING THE HERMITAGE

I am, you are, he/she is!

Identity. It dwells in the depths of our being, enables us to feel happily integrated into our personal surroundings, and shelters our sense of life and who we really are.

In speaking of deepening our specific identity as a brother or layperson, we are not talking about an intellectual exercise but a dynamic, highly personal spiritual journey into our innermost self, and customizing our specific vocations as lay Marists and Marist brothers.

Marcellin’s charism is a spirited grace for today’s Church. All men and woman living as his sons and daughters have a direct line to it. At the same time it is taking us beyond the limits of our individual vocations, opening them up to the universal call of Christ. It is an inter-vocational gift!

Marcellin’s home is being enlarged, requiring us to reinforce its foundations, check the roofing, analyze new construction joints, and together provide additional rooms and renovate the interior of today’s new Hermitage. We don’t want to build a separate house that has access to Marcellin’s charism but is uniquely designed for lay people. We want to enlarge the vocational space of the house we already have, so that it will be a home for all of us Marists – men and women. That’s what we want, based on our inherent identity being brought to light!

The Father Champagnat we come to know and love as brothers on our journey of faith is the same Champagnat whom lay people discover and love. He did not found separate groups. That means he too wants laymen and women in his house, and is counting on all of us to enlarge this new Hermitage.

We are, you are, and they are!

Br. Samuel Holguín Díez
Provincial
Province of Norte, Spain

PEOPLE TOGETHER •

E OF YOUR TENT”

FOR DISCUSSION:

1. In separate columns, list achievements and difficulties in our particular circumstances as brothers and lay people trying to share our spirituality and mission.
2. What specific, ongoing, and measurable steps do we propose for widening the space of our tent “here and now”?

A QUARTER CENTURY WITH THE LITTLE BROTHERS OF MARY

I was very aware of a feeling of belonging and “a peace beyond understanding” when, as a married teacher with two young sons, I was appointed for Grade 4 class teacher. That was in 1978 but I still feel the same way today, 25 years later.

I have built up many lasting and wonderful friendships, with both the Brothers and lay teachers from other Marist Schools. They have shared numerous happy times with me. At moments of sadness, their Marist and family spirit have helped me cope.

An unforgettable event for me was the 1997 pilgrimage to Rome and the Hermitage, with 8 lay principals and Brothers Martin, Joseph and Jude. The warm acceptance by all, the hospitality of the Brothers and their enthusiastic and shining love for ‘Father Champagnat’ and oh, that delightfully correct French pronunciation, have all left an indelible mark.

The devotion of the Brothers for one another was vividly brought home to me this year when Brother Majella tragically disappeared. He had, with Brother Mario, spent an enjoyable afternoon with my family at home. At his memorial service, I felt one with them, grieving for their immense loss, but also able to give thanks with them for his life and example of simplicity, presence, love of work and devotion to Mary.

I pray that in the years that I have left as a member of the Marist family, I may continue to follow in the footsteps of Champagnat and his Little Brothers of Mary.

Mario Maidens

St Henry's Marist Brothers College
Durban, South Africa
Province of Southern Africa

THE SUN OF MARCELLIN'S CHARISM SHINES ON ALL OF US...

Marcellin has no limits, neither of length, nor breadth, nor height. Marcellin, man of heart and man of action, is found everywhere, in a very small school in Latin America, in an ultra-modern high school in Japan, in the hearts of Brothers lost in Africa, in the soul of Mary with the handicapped, of Yannis with orphans and elderly, of Brother Matthew and street children, of the recently baptized Christian Peter-Marcellin, of the humble working Brother Vaguelis, in the sleeplessness and worries of the simple Marist lay person... Education is, before all else, the work of good example, it is a group of committed people, always available, like Mary.

Our charism not only is not bound, but it spreads out, for the “workers” are many and the vineyard can accept all of us. In this “vineyard” textbook psychology meets the psychology alive in the midst of the children.

Brothers and lay people, under the same enlarged tent, share spirituality and mission and prayer, while also “building” and forming... Marcellin lives among us, I've seen him stop at my door, under my window, a woman with Him, Mary...

He is with us, He stands for the trials of life and He brings JOY. Our “tent” is small but our hearts are big, immense, without limits, without boundaries...

Armandos Vitalis

Lay teacher in Léonin de Patissia High School
Athens, Greece

We were born 27 years ago



Fraternity of Our Lady of the Hermitage in Santiago, Chile (archive photo)

On the 9th of November 1975 we established the Community of Our Lady of the Hermitage in honor of our Founder, Saint Marcellin Champagnat. He has guided our steps ever since, together with our Mother in Heaven.

So as you can see, we have been a community for a good many years. We've been through highs and lows, but most important of all we've never stopped meeting, every Monday, to read the word of the Lord, and in so doing to illumine our journey, solve our personal problems, share them, and grow. This last idea greatly pleases us and more and more concerns us: achieving the degree of virtue that Christ has shown us, which is difficult for us to fully comprehend at times.

We are positive that our community has done its best for us

who belong to it. We remember when we started out, long ago. Our children were small; now we are grandparents and watching our grandchildren grow up. Many years have gone by, colored by joy and suffering. Here we should emphasize the help of the brothers, who have always supported and enlightened us. They have transmitted their wisdom that we needed so much at crucial times. If we could go back in time, we would have done many more things, but we realize that there's nothing we can do about that now. Even so, traveling at the time and pace in which we were maturing, we're left with the feeling that we were quite faithful to the Lord. We did as much as we could.

With all our heart we hope that our experience is helpful to communities that are just starting out

on the road of faith. Looking back, it's very clear to us that one mustn't be afraid, just embrace the challenges, fully trusting in the word of the Lord our God.

Yes, our community has had its share of difficult times. They come to all communities. Two people left us because of the situation our country was going through during those difficult years. We were determined to rely on the Gospel all the more. Sadly, these people did not return. We welcomed others, but to no avail: some left with explanations, others simply moved on. But one thing we know: they all remember us with affection and admiration. In spite of all this, we are optimistic and humbly pray for them. Marcellin and our Good Mother give us strength to continue along the road of faith.

Again we say, "This journey of ours in community has not been easy." Occasionally we get discouraged, we have members in delicate health, and the truth is that only God's strength gives us the ability to get back on our feet.

We have experienced Orlando and his wife Luchita's passing to the Lord. Both are very beloved, remembered, and present in our prayers. Also our parents have died – our loss and heaven's gain. And how could we not hold dear



Rejoicing

THE CHAMPAGNAT MOVEMENT DEEPLY ROOTED IN BRAZIL

Brazil has 86 Fraternities of the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family giving witness to the apostolic spirituality inspired by Saint Marcellin and his charism. Brazil Norte has 19 Fraternities; Rio de Janeiro, 17; Brazil Centro Sul, 13; y Brazil Rio Grande do Sul, 37.

The number of laymen and women attracted by the strength of our Marist charism, people immersed in the workaday world and dedicated to raising families, is growing at an unparalleled rate. No single aspect of the human and Christian vocation of the laity is overlooked, but rather the lay vocation is seen in the light of Saint Marcellin's personality, life, and work, especially evident in his Marist Brothers.

the memory of our Marist brothers – Fernando de la Fuente, martyr, whom we look upon as a saint for his heroic decision in union with Brothers Julio, Servando, and Miguel Ángel. Brother Nemesio, whom we used to see until just a few months ago at the Marist house where we held our meetings, and so many other brothers.

Recently Lucy Cifuentes and Inés Araztoa attended the gathering of representatives from all the fraternities to celebrate the launching of the new Province. Filled with joy and radiating an infectious happiness, they told us about the human warmth and enthusiasm they experienced at the assembly.

We share with great delight, alongside the brothers of the Marist community, the lofty activity of looking at the world, trying to erase boundary lines and bring together nations where faith, the light of Jesus, and the love of our Good Mother have pride of place. That is where Marcellin's spirit is present: with him there are no geographical borders, in him different cultures come together, and there is but a single human race. With him the only thing we have to do is stay together along the paths that God is generously offering us.

We feel great admiration for the Marist Institute. And taking advantage of this opportunity we heartily congratulate the New Province of Santa María de los Andes.

May Marcellin and our Good Mother be with you always.

Gloria Quiroga Olivares
*Our Lady of the
Hermitage Community
Santiago, Chile*

NEWS FROM MEXICO CITY

— The Fraternity “Quinta Soledad,” founded by Brother Basilio Rueda, has a small but very active core group. Its numbers swell as people travel twenty miles and more to participate in its meetings; regular attendance presents quite a challenge. The life of the group centers on reflection, prayer, and service, individually and in groups. Its apostolic activities focus mainly on providing assistance in various parishes. Members took part in this year's VIII Meeting of Mexican Fraternities in Toluca, with the theme “Today's family in solidarity.”

— The recently organized Fraternity “John Paul II” with 24 people has the youngest membership in the country.



*Brother
Christopher
Muluane,
Vanuatu,
New Caledonia*

CONTINUING MARCELLIN'S DREAM

Today we are surrounded by a divided world, broken families, young people adrift, with no guidance, and the poor with no hope, seeking a word of welcome, an ear to listen, understanding, fraternity. In the face of such situations, if we don't pay attention, discouragement can take the upper hand. Through these signs of our times and all the questions we ask ourselves we can look at the world with different eyes, while going to meet the others.

To encounter Jesus in the other today is a call which is not reserved only to priests and religious. All together, as consecrated persons and lay persons, Jesus sends us into the world for His mission. He invites us to pull away from shore and throw out the net.

The last General Chapter invites each and every one of us, Brothers and laity, to be other “Champagnats” today, in order to reinvigorate our strength and continue his dream of a community of brothers and sisters living like a family, sharing our joys and sorrows, our successes and failure, our life with Jesus and Mary to make them known and loved. Society today expects of us a concrete reflection of how Jesus would act, of His love for each and every person, without distinction or qualifying adjectives.



The only way is to travel the paths of the Lord together

Father Champagnat's Profound Vision of the "The Little Brothers of Mary"

*Brother Wency Calimpon, Province of the Philippines,
Director of the Marist Brothers International College, Rome.*

In 1817, Father Champagnat's vision of the "Little Brothers of Mary" was very profound. Today, we should always keep his vision alive in our hearts to be faithful to the spirit of the Institute that he founded.

During Father Champagnat's time, the De La Salle Brothers were already working for the Christian education of youth in most of the cities and towns of France. Yet in spite of their presence, Father Champagnat founded the "Petit Frères de Marie" in La Valla on January 2, 1817. He was not trying to compete with the work of the De La Salle Brothers. He wanted his young Brothers to go to the poor and rural areas where the Christian Brothers were not present.

Father Champagnat saw the urgent need to have his Brothers in the rural areas "to make Jesus known and loved" by the youth, especially the children of poor families. The means he undertook were mostly catechism classes, an orphanage at La Valla and at the Hermitage, a boarding school, and a home for the aged at the Hermitage.

Since the De La Salle Brothers were known as "Grand Frères", Father Champagnat called his Brothers "Petit Frères" to compliment the work of the Christian Brothers. Later on, he used the title "Frères de Marie." This title appeared for the first time in the prospectus of the Institute printed in Lyons in 1824. Our present title "Fratres Maristae a Scholis" was given by Rome in 1958 when the Institute was granted Papal approval.

Father Champagnat founded the "Petit Frères" for the rural areas where the lack of money did not allow the children to go to the schools of the Christian Brothers.

While the De La Salle Brothers had 3 Brothers in one community for 1,800 francs the "Petit Frères" had 2 Brothers for 400 francs. As a consequence, the "Petit Frères" had less money and had to live simply and in poverty.

The formation given by Father Champagnat to his Brothers was very well adapted to the conditions of the families in the rural areas of France. Since the children of the poor families were needed by their parents during summer to help them with farm work, they could only attend the classes given by the Brothers during winter. Therefore, the "Petit Frères" became teachers during the winter months. During summer, the Brothers had to go back to the Hermitage to work at various trades, including nail making, gardening, shoe making, weaving, and carpentry. Aside from being a place for this, the Hermitage also had a boarding school, an orphanage, and a home for the aged.



*Statue of Saint Marcellin
in Encarnación de Díaz, Jalisco, Mexico*

NEWS IN BRIEF

– Our FMS Marist Echo team wishes all our readers a Merry Christmas filled with love, solidarity, and peace of mind and heart. May our Savior's presence allow us to be reborn into a world teeming with new life.

– Speaking of Christmas, we encourage our readers and all who know us to gift their friends with a free subscription to the Marist Bulletin that we send out by E-mail. Just log on to www.champagnat.org and fill in the corresponding information.

– Three brothers departed from Barcelona for Algeria on September 8th, re-establishing our Marist presence in that country after an interruption lasting several years. The brothers will celebrate their first Christmas in the country.

– The Congregation for Catholic Education recently published "Consecrated persons and their mission in schools. Reflections and orientations," dated 28 October 2002, the 37th anniversary of Vatican II's promulgation of the declaration *Gravissimum educationis*.

– The General Assembly of the United Nations has proclaimed 2003 as the International Year of Fresh Water, to increase awareness about the importance of this priceless commodity and promote measures to secure its availability throughout the world. Currently we're celebrating the International decade dedicated to a culture of peace and non-violence for the children of the world. (2001-2010)