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| **Brother Seán D. Sammon, FMS Superior General** |
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| January second, 2005  Dear Brothers and all who share the charism of Marcellin Champagnat,  My purpose in writing today is twofold. First of all to thank each of you for all that you bring to our Marist mission and, in turn, to our Marist way of life throughout the world. Your generous hearts, dedication and hard work, and love of our founder and his charism are gifts to our Marist Institute, to the Church, and to the children and young people whom you serve. Marcellin was fond of saying, “To love God and to make God known and loved that is what [our Marist] life should be.” Thanks for witnessing so well to this ideal Second, I write also to encourage you to prepare for and participate actively in the Marist International Mission Assembly planned for September 2007 in Mendes, Brazil. This historic gathering will bring together for the first time Marist educators from around the world to discuss our common mission and its changing face in today’s world. All who participate in the Assembly will be richer for the experience. So, too, they will have an opportunity to share something of their own understanding and practice of contemporary Marist mission.  No Assembly of this nature, of course, can be restricted to a few calendar days. While the experience of coming together will be important, no less essential will be the efforts that you and I expend today and during the weeks and months preceding our gathering in Mendes to promote the Assembly’s theme and to deepen our understanding of it.  One heart, one mission is the theme for the Assembly. The founder believed that the scope of our Marist mission was world wide. In our day and age, developments in information technology and other areas have brought all of us closer together. We realize more fully that our humanity and our faith connect us at levels far deeper than anything that might divide us. Differences among us are meant to enrich rather than separate us.  In our Marist mission, the common heart that we share with Marcellin Champagnat must be as visible today as was the union he had with our early brothers almost two centuries ago. In word and by deed we must make this belief a living reality for our time and place.  Marcellin held close the following three values: belief in God’s presence, reliance on Mary and her protection, and the virtue of simplicity. Today, they must also be found at the heart of our educational mission. As an Institute we are in the process of completing a year long program to promote vocations. At the heart of that effort was the belief that we must live Marcellin’s dream today. Our mission of education and evangelization has always been the preferred place to do just that: in the midst of the young, with simplicity and a love of work, and in Mary’s way.  Over the next several months you will receive materials that will help you prepare for the 2007Assembly. I encourage you to immerse yourselves fully in these efforts undertaken on the local level. In so doing, know that you are joining together with tens of thousands of other Marist educators throughout our world who are walking the same road in preparation for the gathering in Mendes.  Our founder lived a “practical Christianity.” So also, our Marist mission aims at effecting change in the lives of young people and in our world at large. I ask you to join with me in prayer and by preparing for this September 2007 Assembly. I know that our efforts will be richly blessed and so too will the lives of all those who have the good fortune to be touched by the spirit and life of the simple country priest and Marist Father who is our founder. Let us come together in one heart for the sake of our common mission: to make Jesus known and loved.  With prayers and affection, |