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Announcing ...

New website for the Marist Brothers of the United States Province
www.maristbrothersusa.org or www.maristbr.com

For information on the Marist Experience
 in Sri Lanka during the tsunami click on
www.champagnat.org/en/260800001.asp?num=178

click on email address to send email
 click on correspondent or topic to go to that item

Correspondents

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[Rich Foy \('45\)](#)
[Jim Gargan \('59\)](#)

[Br Pedro Herreros](#)
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(These first items connect in various ways to the role of the laity in the Church, the role of the Marist Brothers in working with the laity, and the identity of the GMC and Marists All as a unique lay involvement related to the apostolate of the Marist Brothers. Please ponder these contributions in that light. Editor)

From **BR. SEAN SAMMON, S.G.:** A team from Rome is visiting the United States

Province: Pedro Herreros from Chile, Theoneste Kalisa from Congo, and Henry Spinks from New Zealand. I have asked both Pedro and Theoneste to be in touch with groups like the GMC during the visit. Theoneste told me that he would speak with John Klein about arranging what meetings he can. The team is in the U.S. until mid-November. Later in November our entire General Council will gather with the Councils of North America (Canada and the U.S.) for what we call an extended General Council meeting to plan for the region. (Editor's note: See www.champagnat.org for news of the joint meetings of the United States and Canadian Provincial Councils with members of the General Council held November 17-19, 2004 at Maryknoll New York)

From **BR. PEDRO HERREROS**: It is with much happiness that I inform you, as Chair

of the Laity Commission, that Br. Superior General and his Council, in their meeting of August 10th, have appointed Br. Michael Flanigan, of the Province of the United States, as Executive Secretary of the Laity Commission for a period of three years, beginning September 20, 2004. Br. Michael brings to this work of animation, the youthfulness of his forty-seven years, his experience as an educator, Vocation Director, and Vice Provincial, his organizational qualities, and his ability to get along with others, as well as his facility for language (being fluent in Spanish and French in addition to his native English) and his love for Jesus and Mary whom he felt called to follow as a Marist Brother. We thank Michael for his openness in leaving his important work as President of Mount St. Michael Academy in the Bronx and his work with young people in order to serve the Institute in the area of animation of the laity for the next few years. We also thank the Province of the United States and Br. John Klein for their generosity in freeing another Brother for service to the General Administration of the Institute. The Commission on Laity is made up of Brothers Antonio Ramlho, Emili Turu, and Pedro Herreros as the Councilor in charge of the Commission. Br. Michael will assume position as Executive Secretary in the task of "widening the space of our tent" of the Marist Charism which is found incarnated in the vocations of Brothers and lay people in the Church.

From **GUS NOLAN ('48)**: For some time now I have been thinking about the possible reasons for the longevity of the Marist Brothers, as well as my own. I think the congregation is in far better shape than I am! I have considered three points: the congregation's vitality, its stability, and its sustenance by the Spirit.

A wealth of information can be gleaned from the website -- www.Champagnat.org -- on a range of topics including a calendar of important events of the past and a bulletin board with such categories as the following: Who We Are, Spirituality and Mission, World Wide Presence, Marist Saints, Marist Documents. Another page is dedicated to St. Marcellin Champagnat, his educational methods, the canonization story of April 18, 1999, and Marcellin in Art. Other pages are dedicated to commissions and publications. One such publication is the Marist magazine, Message, including pages of statistical updates listing the

names of newly professed Brothers and of Brothers recently deceased. Along with these items I found an interesting letter from Brother Sean Sammon, S.G., explaining the decision of the General Council to make this present year ('04-'05) Marist Vocation Year. In perusing this web presentation a viewer comes away with a feeling that the Marists are a spiritually vital congregation.

Interesting statistics appearing on the web site suggest a stability that defies talk of a gradual disappearance of the congregation. The annual reports listed on this site indicate that the numerical size of the Institute has stabilized.

Year	Candidates	Professed	Total	Deceased
2000	149	4281	4657	91
2001	142	4193	4562	104
2002	148	4044	4430	104
2003	125	3929	4345	105

In addition to this data, we should consider the total number of Marist associates stretching out to more than 40,000 Marist lay teachers, including former Brothers, teaching in seventy-six countries on five continents and involved with more than 500,000 students. In the United States Province alone there are a number of activities that involve the Brothers and lay associates dedicated to developing the spirit of Champagnat. I believe that the number of lay teachers and students around the world indicates an increase in interest in the spirit of St. Champagnat. Surely there is growth here.

And finally, I recall the echo of Fr. Champagnat's favorite Psalm, "Nisi Dominus." Unless the Lord build the house.... And so we pray that the Spirit enliven the laborers in the field to continue with their efforts to seize the opportunities in the various missions to make known with the help and intercession of the Mother of God the Unconditional Love of God for each of us.

GMC Picnic at Mount St. Michael

Fifty-eight participants gathered together in the garth on a chilly Saturday in early September. Ray Landry drove down from North Reading, MA. Pat and Mary Gallagher found their way from their new Bucks County, PA home, getting stuck in traffic near the George Washington Bridge. David and Judy Kammer stopped in at St. Patrick's near Van Cortlandt Park to see Br. John Colbert before their arrival. Br. Tom Kelly, acting as maitre d', was alert to anything lacking on the

smorgasbord table, attempting to fulfill those needs from the Mount's bounty. Br. Jim Adams looked for photo ops with his trusty digital camera. There was plenty to eat: salads, KFC buckets, sausage and peppers, and varied desserts. Br. John Bantz, stopping in a little late, "forgot about it" having gotten engrossed in the Mount-Fordham game. Even Br. Gerry Brereton came, fresh from Rome. Br. John Hermann was observed heating up the popular pepperoni pizza. And the Mid-Hudson GMC had a faithful representation, including Rich and Barbara La Pietra, Rich Foy, Adrian and Betty Perreault. The Mount, of course, had its faithful: Br. Luke Driscoll, Br. Victor Serna, Br. Godfrey Robertson, Br. Matthew Snowden, Br. Gus Landry, Br. Denis Caverley, Br. Nick Caffrey. Br. Joe Belanger, rushing down from Hastings-on-the-Hudson, and then rushing back to Poughkeepsie for a commitment, was heard remarking that all this rushing was not good for his health! The previous organizers of the July Marist Family Weekend at the College met near the end of the afternoon. The old guard, Gene and Pat Zirkel, Barney and Anne Sheridan, Vince and Jane Poisella, Br. Charles Marcellin, Gus and Liz Nolan, Ed and Valerie Towsley, Bob and Ginny Grady, passed the torch to Br. Bryce Brczynski and Mo Bibeau, both arduously taking notes. The picnic participants came from near and far: Jim and Ginny Gargan, Br. Simeon Gerald, Bill Kawka, Mike and Janet Kelly, Gil and Ita Levesque, Br. Alphonse Matuga, Frank McNiff, Tony Miserandino, Mark Moran, Frank and Joan Reilly, Br. Jim Ryan, John Wilcox, Joe McMahan, Marty and Ann Lang. The wonder of it all: each person brought a little food; and as in the story of the loaves and fishes, so much was left over!

(Interested parties may want to peruse the photos of the [picnic participants](#) on our Marists All website. The photographers were Br. Jim Adams and Vince Poisella. The webmaster is Rich Foy. Editor)

Eleventh Greater Marist Family Weekend Marist College July 8-10 2005

Theme: Marcellin's Beatitudes and "The Happy Gang"

Program Topics: Simplicity; Concern for the Poor; Concern for Youth; Confidence in God; Mary, our Ordinary Resource; Presence of God; Meeting the Needs of the Church

Schedule: Begins at dinner on Friday and ends after lunch on Sunday. Presentations, Sharing, Liturgy, Prayer,

Contact: John Scileppi at john.scileppi@Marist.edu

From **GENE ZIRKEL ('53)**: Volunteers are needed on Long Island! Wyandanch Homes

and Property Development is a non-profit corporation sheltering thirty poor families on Long Island. Not only do we put families into housing, we also provide counseling and much needed budget advice. Our aim is to get these people off welfare, into jobs and out of our houses so that we can bring in other needy families. We encourage them to get their high school equivalency diplomas and/or marketable computer skills. Since the corporation owns these thirty houses, we often need to repair

them. A broken banister, a leaky toilet, or electric outlet that needs replacing -- the usual home repairs we are all familiar with, multiplied by thirty! A few (a very few) of us volunteer our time on Thursday morning fixing up these homes. I like to think of it as repairing Jesus' home in Nazareth since He said, "Whatsoever you do for these, the least of My brethren, you do for Me."

We could use more volunteers. Recalling the work ethic we picked up from the Brothers, and in light of the many skills we have, are there a few people out there who would be willing to wield a screwdriver or a paintbrush on a Thursday morning? I especially invite my retired brothers and Brothers to join us. Please think about it, and if you have any questions, contact me. (472 Village Oaks Lane, Babylon Village, NY 11702-3123; 631-669-0273; genezirk@optonline.net)

From **BR. KEVIN BLYTH**: Greetings from not-so-sunny Sydney, Australia. Actually, it's cool and rainy today, but they are promising finer weather and a max temperature of 31 centigrade tomorrow. I am writing to express my sincere appreciation to the Marists All team for continuing to send me a copy of Marists All. Whilst I certainly do not know many of the names of contributors and many of the Brothers mentioned, I always love reading of all the activities. I also send a copy to a friend of mine who lives in Canberra. He was a Brother for many years and I lived with him a couple of times. He is engaged in a similar sort of activity, although he does not expend anywhere near the energy that your crew puts into this form of ministry.

It is difficult to send a donation, but I see that you can e-mail the Marists All. So, why not save paper and postage, as well as time, by adding my address to your e-mail contacts?

I was in Rome at the end of 2003 and met up with Sean, of course, and Gerry, Don Bisson, Pat Lally, John Bantz, and several other American Brothers. Luke Driscoll is another good friend, as are Bob Grady and Bob Connolly. We were in Fribourg together. Every good wish to the Marists All team! (Marcellin House, P.O. Box 775, Randwick, NSW.Australia; blythkfb@bigpond.com)

From **BR. FRANCIS KLUG ('45)**: I would like to inform our Marists All readers about the Guadalupe Regional Middle School in Brownsville, TX. This school was started to offer a Catholic education to the very poor but talented children of the area. It is sponsored by the Irish Christian Brothers, the Sisters of the Incarnate Word, and the Marist Brothers. On the staff are four Christian Brothers, one Christian Brother volunteer, one ICW Sister, and two Marist Brothers (Leo Shea and myself). In addition, there are ten lay people. Only the lay people and the ICW Sister are on the payroll. Funding is by support from the sponsoring religious orders but primarily from foundation grants, gifts from individuals, and some local fundraising. Clearly, the funding is very tenuous, but also very clearly, the funds have been available when

needed, indicating, I believe, God's blessing upon this project.

On the 13th of August, a retreat for the staff was held at our new residence in Los Fresnos, about twelve miles north of Brownsville. Here, I witnessed a very impressive display of the success of this school. Everyone was anxious to get started, eager to be with the children again. They stated very clearly how pleased they were to be teaching these very special children. During the past week several students came around the school; they also stated that they were happy school was starting again. Although I don't teach any more, I have found them to be wonderful kids to be around. Both of these reactions seem to me to indicate that the school is a success. Perhaps one has to experience the impact of these encounters, as I did, to understand the joy and involvement of all the people in the program.

So, why are so many people committed to this little school? All of us can see the difference it makes in the lives of the children. We are confident in the hope that they will make a difference in the future of the people of south Texas. It is evident that education in the Catholic Tradition makes a huge difference. Let me end by asking that the Lord continue to bless this very worthwhile undertaking. (Route 2, Box 3101-T, Henderson Road, Los Fresnos, TX 78566)

From **TOM MOORE ('61)**: Just a short update to let you know that I retired (for the moment) after forty years of high school teaching: fourteen as a Marist Brother and twenty-six in a public school in Johnstown. My main reason for doing so stemmed not from burning out but to be with my wife who has been living and working in Harrisburg since before we were married four years ago. We have bought a home in Enola, PA, which is just across the river from the Capitol. I am currently sending out resumes to the two Catholic high schools and several colleges in the area. I'd love to do full or part-time teaching somewhere. I really love being a teacher. My wife and I are becoming involved in our new parish, Our Lady of Lourdes. We are also active volunteers at a no-kill animal shelter. In addition, I got a small role in a local theatre group's production. (9 Wexford Drive, Enola, PA 17025; 717-728-4219)

From **JIM GARGAN ('59)**: Eight of us gathered for a long fun-filled lunch on September 12, marking the fifteenth year of the passing on of Terry McMahan (Br. John Joseph). We had lots of laughs and no tears. Accompanying me were Br. Dan Grogan, Binsky, Bill Doherty, Tom Hourican, Joe McMahan, my brother Bill Gargan, and my brother-in-law Joe Hanrahan. My brother Bill had been George Conboy's classmate at St. Agnes and got to know and kid Terry over the years. Joe is a super at a condo on East 82nd Street in NYC. Terry worked for him in the mid-nineteen eighties. Joe recalled a time when he was away on a weekend, one of the tenants told Terry that Joe should have stayed around. Terry said to him: "What do you want, lady, he should chain himself to a pipe in the basement?"

Tom Hourican had an apartment on one floor in Kew Gardens. Terry lived on another floor, and I on still another. We recalled how we would set an alarm clock whenever Terry visited our respective apartments. It was always good to see Terry but not so easy to get him to say goodbye. After a few settings and responsive rings of the alarm, he'd get the idea that it was time to go.

Bill Doherty recalled an invitation he got from Terry to come over for dinner. Terry told him to bring a bottle of Hickey Riggs (no doubt a rare Scotch whisky unknown to all except for the thriftiest of bargain shoppers). Bill went to a liquor store near Terry's and inquired as to whether they had it. The clerk said, "You must be a friend of Terry McMahon's."

Binsky remembered the early 70's when Terry, Binsky and Jim Gargan shared an apartment in Jackson Heights and had many "spirited" discussions into the night. The tenants above, whom we had never met, always made a noise – seemingly rolling a bowling ball in their apartment night after night but just once a night. Finally, Jim Gargan, fed up, went up there, knocked, and announced that he was from downstairs. From behind the door came, "Which one are you: Terry, Jimmy, or Binsky?" (252-08 60th Avenue, Little Neck, NY 11362-2441; 212-785-1646; garganlaw@msn.com)

From **ROBERT OMBRELLO:** *(Claire Horton of the Marist College Advancement Office received a letter and forwarded it to Br. Joseph Belanger. Claire had received it from Timmian Massie, Chief Public Affairs Officer at the College, with a note: "What should we do with this one?" Br. Joe sent it on to the Marists All editor. Here it is!)* At sixty-five years of age, I look back at my life. Born and raised in the Bronx, I left after graduating from St. Helena High School in 1956 and joined the Air Force. In April 2004, I returned with my whole family of nine for my Mom's 92nd birthday. As I passed by my old high school, I told the whole family about my "stay" there. And then I began wondering what ever happened to the Brothers from 1952 to 1956: Faustin Damian, Christopher Emile, James Thomas, William, Michael Urban, Stephen Martin, Maurice Robert, George Robert. These and others helped direct me on the proper path. In those days I wore a black leather jacket but traded it in for a jacket and tie.

(After the Editor, SHHS class of 1957, responded, the following came via e-mail.)

Thanks for the info. Sorry to hear of the deaths of some of my teachers. Br. Christopher was my homeroom teacher for two years. Br. Stephen Martin was my math teacher. In senior year I didn't want to take fourth year Latin (Virgil), so I took the easier courses of solid geometry and spherical trig. Br. Faustin was my English teacher for two years. After six years in the Air Force, they were going to send me to Syracuse University. So, I went back to SHHS for my transcripts and met Br. Faustin. That was back in '62. And he recognized me! I had joined the Air Force in '56 and retired in '79 as a Mustang Major.

Received a BS from Syracuse in '64 and an MBA from Michigan State in '68. The Air Force was kind to me. My wife and I have two daughters and three grandkids. I retired from my second job as a Director of Data Processing in '94. I'm living now about twenty-two miles east-northeast of San Francisco. And thanks again for the info, and thank Timmian, Claire, and Joseph for forwarding my e-mail to you.
(bobumbr@aol.com)

From **RICH FOY ('45)**: For fifty years I have referred to Our Lady Seat of Wisdom Chapel at Marist College as a *circular* building. During the fiftieth anniversary celebration, Marty Lang mentioned to me that when he had lunch in the dining room of the Yale Divinity School, a professor heard that he was from Marist College. The professor complimented him on the outstanding example of an *octagonal* church. Marty asked me if Nilus had designed it that way, or if the architect knew of the religious significance of the octagonal shape.

I began some research on the octagon shape. A person named Fowler wrote a book in 1853 recommending building octagonal houses, and it was re-published by Dover Books in 1973. He started a craze of octagonal house building. I remember seeing one in Vermont on the way to our house in Poultney. Fowler's book recommended octagonal chapels, but only so that the congregation could see each other and come and leave without disturbing the preacher who would be located along the face opposite the door. He gave no reference to any religious meaning for the octagon.

I contacted Marty Lang again, and he sent me this information via e-mail: "Very innocent and embarrassed at the Yale dinner table, I was not able to tell the professor why Nilus had built an octagonal chapel. I thought maybe Nilus did some homework on this and knew about early Christian churches. I still don't know where the plans came from, but it was a stroke of genius. The first octagonal church was built by the Byzantine Christians in Capernaum over the reputed house of Peter. A Christian woman pilgrim named Egeria wrote about this church in her diary toward the end of the fourth century. Scholars tend to think this site did start out as Peter's house, very close to the Sea of Galilee. It went from a simple house to a house church, then to the octagonal building. The octagon was a purposeful symbol, but I don't know why. The church of the Holy Apostles built by the Byzantines on Mt. Sion at the Upper Room was also octagonal. The octagonal church marked very special locations for the early Christians. The remains of the Church of the Ascension on the Mount of Olives also appear to be octagonal.

Interestingly, when I first started going to Jerusalem in 1980, there were only rough outlines of the foundation of the octagonal church in Capernaum. Now the Franciscans have built an octagonal church, very liturgical and artistic, over the original site. Why the octagonal shape? Still a mystery to me."

Maybe Nilus did know the religious significance. His curiosity extended

in many directions. But maybe not... Does anybody have any further information about the liturgical significance of the octagon?

(After having received the above from Rich Foy, I responded with the following note. He asked me to use my comments as an addendum. Editor)

"Thank you for your article on the octagon and Christian symbolism. I did a quick google.com look-up and found that the number eight from the earliest Christian traditions had to do with regeneration and rebirth: seven being the perfect number, and eight representing the new beginning marked by Baptism. Seemingly, that is why baptismal fonts throughout the world are generally octagonal. I found references to Charlemagne's palace chapel (Aix-la-Chapelle) as well as the baptismal font in Pisa as being octagonal. Also, architecturally, a Danish engineer by the name of Tons Brunes designed the "Sacred Cut" and showed mathematically how an octagonal structure could be easily designed. In continuing my search for symbolic references to the number eight in medieval art, I also found that the four points of a cross were sometimes flared to create eight points! The eight Beatitudes somehow were connected to that representation. Again, these were just a few of the almost 1000 sites that came up when I asked Google for information on the octagon and Christian symbolism!

"Underneath it all, I think Nilus was just being practical. The building of a perfectly circular structure with a team of neophytes may have been too much to take on. Just a little bit off, and you'd have a mess...."

(Thanks to those who wrote for this issue. Also, many thanks to those who sent monetary contributions to keep our publication alive: Don Schmidt, Mark Moran, Dennis Hartnett, Bill Kawka, Steve Sheridan, Alex Senes, Gene Donnellan, John J. Moran, Don Ryan, Paul Maloney, Br. John Malich, and Tom Moore. And a very special thanks for the prayers for our sick. The latest communication from Barney Sheridan (fxsheridan@rcn.com) indicates good news with his fight against cancer. He also informed us that Don Schmidt, who entered the hospital on 7-12-04 and came home from rehab on 11-2-04, sounds happy and strong, and the physical therapists are delighted with his progress. Don Schmidt may be reached at mfs@earthlink.net. Also, those who know Catherine Cherry from our July Marist Family weekends will be pleased to know that she too sounds strong and is doing well. Catherine's address is: cfpie@ca.inter.net. Editor)

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