

# Bro Vito Aresto fms

Received the Breath of Life

Called to Accept the Marist Brotherhood

Professed final vows

Was Commended to God  
February 2010  
Chicago IL

Mass of Christian Burial  
St. Barnabas Church  
Chicago IL  
1 March 2010

Interment  
March 2010  
Marist Brothers Cemetery  
Esopus NY

## Curriculum Vitae

### From a Chicago Newspaper March 2010

Brother Vito M. Aresto, fms, 62, beloved son of the late Angelo and Rose Valerio Aresto; loving brother of Natalie (Bob) Nicolai of Wantagh NY; dear uncle of Michael (Kathy) and Bobby (Maureen) Nicolai; fond grand uncle of Luke, Carly, Erin, Matthew and Kristen Nicolai; beloved Brother to the Marist Brothers of the Province of the United States.

Br. Vito was Chairman of the Guidance Department at Marist H.S. and former Vice Provincial of the Marist Order. He taught English, Religion and served as Guidance Counselor at Marist H. S. for 35 years. Lying in state on Monday, 3 to 10 pm at Marist High School (Brothers Chapel) 420 West 115th St, Chicago IL 61655

Family and friends will gather on Tuesday evening at St. Barnabas Church 10134 S .Longwood Dr. Chicago, IL 61643 for Visitation at 6 p.m. prior to Mass of Christian Burial, 7 pm. Interment Marist Brothers Cemetery in Esopus, NY. In lieu of flowers, memorials to the Brother Vito Endowment Fund c/o Marist High School are most appreciated

### From Brother Ben Consiglio, fms, Provincial

March 1, 2010

Dear Brothers, Natalie, Bob, the entire Aresto/Nicolai family, friends, and the Marist High School community,

On behalf of the Marist Brothers, Province of the United States, I want to offer my deepest condolences to you on the death of our beloved Vito. To Natalie and Bob and Vito's extended family, I want to thank you for the gift of Vito. The many wonderful qualities that we saw in Vito were first nurtured in his family. To the Brothers of the Leavitt Street, Blue Island, and Monastery Communities, and in particular Brother Hank Hammer, I offer our grateful hearts to you for being true Brothers to Vito during his cancer journey. To his friends, colleagues, and students, I want to thank you for allowing Vito to be such an integral part of your lives. In a real sense, all your love and support these years kept Vito "going" longer than many doctors expected. While Vito's death was not unexpected, it still is very hard to imagine our world without having Vito physically present with us. Saint Paul encourages each of us "to run the good race" for Christ---and Vito did this with every fiber of his being. While the cancer that would eventually take his life gnawed at his body, it did not destroy the goodness of his soul. He is now at peace, having completed the "good race."

In reflecting on Vito's life, I realize that volumes could be written by those with whom Vito lived and worked, but that is really not the purpose of my thoughts this day. Vito lived as a Marist Brother for over 44 years...a wonderful living witness to our lives as consecrated men. As Marist Brothers, we are challenged to become "living portraits" of our Founder, Saint Marcellin. In many ways, Vito lived that challenge. One of the earliest biographers of Saint Marcellin, Brother Jean Baptiste, said this about Marcellin:

*"Father Champagnat owed much to the success of his ministry and in the foundation of his Institute, to his bright, open, friendly and considerate character with its ability to resolve situations of strife. An unassuming affability, a straight-forwardness and impression of kindness radiated from his face, gaining all hearts and disposing minds to accept without difficulty and even with pleasure, his opinions, his instructions, and his reproofs."*

The same could be said for Vito. His Marist life and identity were rooted in his interactions with others and his sensitivity to others' feelings, temperaments and motivations... in short, his life as a Marist Brother lay in his ability to understand the very real details of human relationships. Those who knew Marcellin would describe him as calm, serene, open, constant, and compassionate in a variety of settings and situations. The same could be said of Vito.

Saint Marcellin always hoped that the quality which would define his "Little Brothers of Mary" would be simplicity, and in many ways, this quality characterized Vito. For Marcellin, simplicity was straightforwardness in relationships with others, enthusiasm for the work at hand, and an uncomplicated confidence in his God. He shared this quality with his Brothers whom he hoped would become like a family. Doesn't this ring true of Vito as well?

We know from our Marist history that Marcellin was not a man for writing spiritual treatises, but he was a man of determination and action, a man of heart and affection. His emphasis was on the heart and on relationships – both with God and other people. It was, and is, key to our spiritual heritage and to our Marist pedagogy...and it was what guided Vito throughout his life. It was through this heart and affection...for the youth of rural France and for those who would teach them...that Marcellin succeeded in doing what many thought impossible. This same inspiration guided Vito in his life and in his ministry...and in turn he inspired others to go and do likewise.

These qualities of Marcellin—"his open, friendly and considerate character..his unassuming affability, a straightforwardness and impression of kindness"—are the same qualities that helped make Vito a "living portrait" of Marcellin. May we all continue to learn from the life and legacy of Vito, and may our good and gracious God and Mary our Mother lead him home.

In union in prayer,



Br. Ben Consigli, FMS  
Provincial

**HOMILY FOR VITO**  
**Brother Hank Hammer**  
**March 2, 2010**

In 1997 and again last spring, I had the opportunity to visit what Marists around the world call "Champagnat country" in France. Both times I was thrilled to walk where Marcellin walked and to see the first Marist house in LaValla. Just a few miles north of LaValla stands Notre Dame de l'Hermitage, or the Hermitage as we call it, the huge training house that Marcellin and the first brothers built in the 1820's. The country side around the LaValla and the Hermitage is incredibly rugged and mountainous, and it was probably more so in the time of Marcellin Champagnat.

What struck me on my first visit in 1997 was that Marcellin's calling to found the Marist Brothers and to educate young children in need had to be something based deeply in his heart and in his relationship with Jesus and Mary. He faced many obstacles as he tried to bring about his vision of education for poor and illiterate children. As always there was the challenge of funding, and in addition, he faced the obstacles of local and church politics. An equally significant obstacle was the terrain itself. With no modern modes of transportation, and a region too treacherous for horses, Marcellin literally "walked the talk" in his efforts to visit the communities of brothers scattered throughout the region. It is said that in one instance, he walked 66 miles in two day, just to visit a sick brother.

This past spring, Vince Andiorio and I had the opportunity to visit the Hermitage again as gathering of lay Marists and Marist Brothers from around the world. Again, I was impressed by Marcellin's sheer determination to respond to the urgent needs of young people. Marcellin was tenacious; he kept moving forward even when others told him he was a fool. His deep trust in Jesus and Mary motivated him and gave him a confidence that helped him overcome the obstacles he encountered.

It has dawned on me many times since my first visit to the Hermitage and again since my visit last spring that our beloved Vito shares many characteristics with Marcellin. Both lived lives deeply rooted in their relationships with Jesus and Mary. With the faith and confidence that grew out of those relationships, both were tenacious, a word that our principal Larry Tucker has often lovingly used to describe Vito.

For Marcellin and for Vito, it was always about the mission. It was never about them. There was no ego involved. Perhaps that is why both of them were so successful at what they did. It was simply about the mission of "making Jesus Christ known and loved."

One of Vito's favorite Scripture passages is the story of the journey to Emmaus which we just heard read by Father Malloy. Vito saw himself as one of the disciples on the road to Emmaus. Vito's heart burned within him because the people around him so often revealed the face of Christ to him. Vito's heart burned within him because he was so clear that his call was "to make Jesus

Christ known and loved." Vito's heart burned within him because he knew that even his horrible illness could not undermine his relationship with Jesus, Mary, and Marcellin.

It might seem that Vito's burning heart has been stilled, but on reflection, it is clear that that could never happen because he has spent his life witnessing to us what it means to be a faithful son of Jesus, Mary, and Marcellin. And so, tonight, we have to ask ourselves:

Are not our hearts burning within us with the love that we feel for Vito?

Are not our hearts burning within us with his unassuming witness of his faith in Jesus, Mary, and Marcellin?

· Are not our hearts burning within us with the knowledge that he expects us to continue his work with our own vibrant commitment to Marist education and mission?

Are not our hearts burning within us with the knowledge that we have lived in the presence of a wonderfully human saint?

Are not our hearts burning within us with the knowledge that Vito is with us now in a new and wonderful way?

Are not our hearts burning within us knowing that Vito was a contemporary icon of Marcellin Champagnat?

While it would be hard to list all of Vito's accomplishments, perhaps his greatest is the creation of the Marcellin program at Marist High School. Vito had a vision for Marist education that was rooted in the lived experience of Marcellin Champagnat. Because of the ravages of the French Revolution, Marcellin attended school for the first time at age 11, and that lasted only one day because of the brutal behavior of the teacher towards another student. Marcellin was tutored for a while, but the tutor labeled him as "hopeless." Nonetheless, Marcellin persevered and struggled through the minor seminary – even being expelled at one point for grades and discipline. The wise rector of the junior seminary saw something in Marcellin and took him back.

Vito never lost sight of the wonderful irony that a young man who struggled in school turned around and founded an order of teaching brothers. This was why Vito and his colleagues Meg Matthews and Barb Duffy called the program the Marcellin program. They saw and continue to see the promise and the potential in students who experience academic difficulties. Vito took to heart a statement from the 1993 General Chapter of the Marist Brothers that said that any school that did not provide for students with learning difficulties could not call itself a Marist school. Vito recognized and understood the need for Marist schools to address the abilities of a variety of students, but he fervently and **tenaciously** believed that to be true to the charism and vision of Marcellin Champagnat that we must provide for those competent and capable students who experience learning difficulties. Vito took to heart Jesus' comment, "Whatever you did for the least of these you did for me."

The quote on the cover of the mass booklet describes Vito so well. We love Vito so much because we know that life made a home in him – a life rooted in his relationship with Jesus, Mary, and Marcellin. If Vito could say anything to us tonight, I believe he would say, "Continue to be people in whom others find life. Continue to witness to the fact that life has made a home in you."

And as we do each day in school, let us pray:

- St. Marcellin Champagnat, pray for us
- Mary, our Good Mother, pray for us
- Let us remember: to pray for each other!

And tonight, let us add one prayer from the hearts that burn within us

- St. Vito Aresto, pray for us!

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