

Homes of Light 9

Caring for Life

Generating New Life

**4. Marcellin, a light in the midst of darkness – 1 of 2**

We could envisage the whole of Marcellin Champagnat’s life as a light shining in the midst of the dark circumstances of his times. A light shining in the midst of young people to whom he gave priority and preferential consideration and attention when he founded the Institute and set about his evangelising ministry. A light in the midst of his brothers, with whom he formed a close-knit community, trying to create, from the very beginning, *homes of light*. A light among his fellow priests, showing the motherly face of the Church, wearing an apron, rolling up his sleeves…

There is a symbolic story that Br Jean Baptiste tells about Marcellin Champagnat as a new-born baby. He says that Marcellin’s mother, “several times, on approaching the cradle where baby Marcellin was lying, noticed a kind of *luminous flame* which seemed to issue from the child’s chest”. I want to stay with the idea that the author puts forward by referring to a “*luminous flame*”, without going into the historicity of the event, but noting, rather, the strong symbolism that is conveyed. Marcellin was a much-loved child, brought up in a home in which the presence and influence of his parents, his aunt, his brothers and sisters had a marked effect on his life. This was the home where the foundations were laid for him to discover his call to be a light for the world (cf Mt 5: 14), to be that *luminous flame* that young people, the brothers, and so many other people had the occasion to experience on meeting Champagnat. His life radiated *life* and this *luminous flame* continues to burn amongst us.

I would also like to recall another occasion where a *luminous flame* appeared in the life of Marcellin. In February 1823, Marcellin was lost in the snow, in the middle of a blizzard, with Br Stanislaus. He appealed fervently to Mary, “full of confidence, he knelt down beside the brother (now apparently unconscious), and said the *Memorare* with great fervour. After that prayer, he tried to raise the brother again and get him to walk. They had taken only a few steps, when they noticed a light shining in the distance; for it was night. They made in the direction of the light and arrived at a house, where they spent the night”. Mary was for Marcellin a *luminous flame* who accompanied his every step throughout his life.

I wonder if, when crises arise among us and we find ourselves in the middle of a storm, we are able to see the light shining close by, in the form of some event or concrete person… Seeing the *luminous flame* in such a way, always keeping our eyes open: this is the miracle! This is how it was for Marcellin, thanks to his unshakeable faith in difficult moments when he never lost hope but pressed on, keeping his eyes open to spot the light.

The reflection from *Homes of Light*, Br Ernesto Sánchez Barba (Superior General).

<https://champagnat.org/en/circulares/homes-of-light-caring-for-life-generating-new-life/>

**Prayer**

Lord Jesus,

you call us to discover God’s love

in the ordinary events of life.

You have promised us your Spirit in our lives.

It is this same Spirit that urges us to be prophets of mercy

and of being brothers and sisters to all.

Give us your grace at this time of a new beginning

that we may respond to your call

as Marcellin Champagnat did,

with courage and audacity.

Conscious that our work is in the hands of Mary,
our Good Mother,
may we build home of light
which care for life and generate new life. Amen.

Mary, our Good Mother, pray for us.

St Joseph, pray for us.

St Marcellin Champagnat, pray for us.

**Champagnat Marist Spirituality and Charism:**

**God’s Presence and Love ✠ Trust in God ✠ Love of Jesus and His Gospel**

**Presence ✠ Simplicity ✠ Family Spirit ✠ Love of Work**

**In the Way of Mary**