Br François 9



**Situation of the Institute at the beginning of Br François’ direction**

Br François took charge of the Institute during a period of great growth and expansion.

In 1840, the Institute comprised: a mother house and novitiate at The Hermitage; a first set of *Rules*, drawn up in 1837 with 280 Brothers and 48 schools, serving 7000 pupils. The congregation was present in the Lyon region, in the north of France and some Brothers in the missions of Oceania.

Before his death, Marcellin had established communication with the Brothers of Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux, led by Fr Mazelier, to support each other, for their congregation had legal recognition but few brothers, and the Marists had no legal recognition but many brothers. When François handed over the Institute to his successor it had grown from 280 to more than 2000 Brothers.

**Devotion to Fr Champagnat**

Brother François was both faithful and creative. He knew himself to be the superior general of a growing congregation, but at the same time a disciple of Marcellin Champagnat. François faced many challenges, among them: the legal authorisation of the institute and ecclesial recognition, the separation of the Fathers’ branch from the Society of Mary, the incorporation of several smaller congregations of Brothers.

He was a man of solid structures; during his time the *Common Rules* and *Rules of Government* were drawn up. On receiving the posthumous picture of the Founder, François decided to be “the living portrait of Marcellin”. Like Champagnat, he will know how to preserve what is essential and to renew, after much consultation and prayer, what is necessary. In this way he gained the esteem of the Brothers.

The retreat of 8 September 1840 was a long memorial for Marcellin; the Hermitage was converted into a Marist shrine, a reliquary of the Founder. A year later, in a circular dated 10 August 1841, Br François asked the Brothers to send him testimonies, letters, and notes about the Founder to serve as background for his first biography.

<https://champagnat.org/en/to-be-marist/marist-saints-2/br-francois-rivat/>

**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**