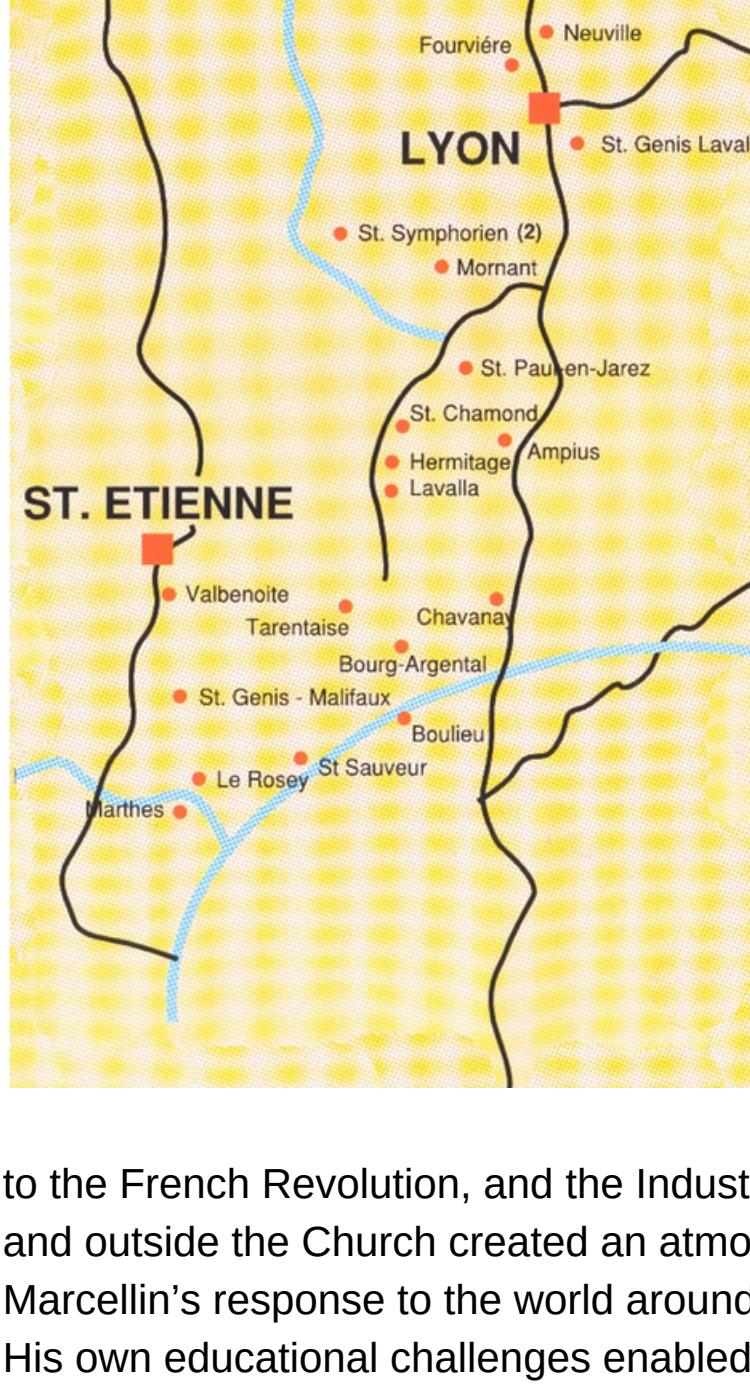


TODAY IN MARIST HISTORY:

The Birth and Baptism of Marcellin Champagnat

May 20, 1789 and May 21, 1789



Marcellin Champagnat was born on May 20, 1789 in the hamlet of Le Rosey, in the Province of Forez and the Parish of Marlhes in southeast France. Marcellin was the ninth child born to Jean-Baptiste and Marie-Thérèse Champagnat. He was baptized the next day, Ascension Thursday, at the parish church in Marlhes.

Marcellin's life would span two revolutions, the first in 1789 and the second about thirty years later. Although far removed from the center of the revolution, its effects were felt even in the rural southeastern part of France where Marcellin grew up and spent his entire life.

Marcellin's world was one of tumultuous change. In addition

to the French Revolution, and the Industrial Revolution, political division within and outside the Church created an atmosphere of tension and suspicion. Marcellin's response to the world around him was to do something about it. His own educational challenges enabled him to see the great need to educate children both religiously and academically in the desire to create "good Christians and good citizens." In response to the needs of his time, Marcellin said, "I believe more than ever that God desires this work in this age when unbelief is making such frightful progress."

As 21st century descendants of Marcellin Champagnat, our own times present strikingly similar challenges. We, too, live in a world where "unbelief is making such frightful progress." It may seem overwhelming at times, but it is helpful to step back and realize that Marcellin's faith and tenacity are what makes our present Marist reality possible.

The Marist world has seen many challenges in the generations following Marcellin. Throughout all of these, Marists have persevered, like Marcellin, by placing their trust in Jesus and Mary.

It is easy to realize that Marcellin's birth and baptism 233 years ago had a great impact on the world, but let us pause and remember that the birth of this man is the reason each one of us is reading this reflection today! We are part of something bigger than ourselves. We are a part of the Marist story, the Marist history, and we are responsible for passing this legacy on to future generations who will look back at us and see how we lived out Marcellin's vision and mission.

In that spirit, let us give thanks for the life and witness of Marcellin Champagnat. Let us also give thanks to God for our own attraction to the Marist charism and our willingness to grow in it and share it with others.

REFLECTION PRAYER:

Good and gracious God, if I could trace back through the last two thousand years, marking out routes from Jesus himself and then through people whose faith has touched others and so reached me, I would be astounded by the individuals I would encounter.

I give thanks, Father, for all those people over two thousand years who have inspired others and played their part in passing to generation after generation the living heritage of their faith.

Especially, I give thanks for those who have lived their faith through difficulties and hardships and persecution.

I give thanks for Marcellin and the first Brothers and all those who Brothers and Lay Marists who have followed them in the effort to make Jesus Christ known and loved.

I give thanks for my own call to be Marist. May I continue to live my life in this Marist spirit so that others will want to follow me.

Amen.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Champagnat".

