

MEMORANDUM TO THE MARIST COLLEGE COMMUNITY

FROM: DENNIS J. MURRAY

June 6, marks the feast day of Saint Marcellin Champagnat, the founder of the Marist Brothers. On April 18, 1999, before more than a quarter million people, Pope John Paul II canonized the French priest whose life's work was devoted to teaching and helping young people. Those gathered in Saint Peter's Square nine years ago to pay witness to the contributions of Saint Marcellin reflected the worldwide outreach of the Brothers as the order grew over the past 150 years. More than 200 members of the Marist College family -- students, faculty, staff, alumni, and parents -- made a pilgrimage to Rome to add our voices and prayers to this joyous celebration.

Just over a century ago, the Brothers, newly arrived in the United States, founded a hermitage along the eastern shore of the Hudson River in Poughkeepsie. In time, this facility developed into a center for the education and training of future Brothers. In 1946, a young Brother named Paul Ambrose Fontaine achieved full accreditation from the New York State Education Department for what was then known as Marian College, allowing the student Brothers to earn bachelor's degrees. Their educational mission expanded in 1960 when lay men were admitted to study at the renamed Marist College, with women joining the student body six years later. Ownership of the College was transferred in 1969 to the Marist College Educational Corporation with an independent, predominantly lay board of trustees. Nonetheless, the Marist Brothers' legacy of service and striving for excellence continues to inspire and enrich the academic life of the College.

Today, the heritage of the Marist Brothers is evident on our campus, first in the presence of the men called to religious life who give of themselves as professors, mentors, counselors, and campus ministers. Second, the spirit of Saint Marcellin permeates this campus through the three ideals identified in our vision statement -- excellence in education, fostering a sense of community, and dedication to the principle of service. On that last point, I can think of no other college or university that does as much for the greater good both on and off campus than Marist.

Let us pause for a moment to offer a thought or prayer of thanksgiving for our founders and all who contribute to the success of Marist College. Have a safe and enjoyable summer, and thank you for your support.