Builders of a New Hermitage

Message of the 23rd General Chapter



Institute of the Marist Brothers
Tagaytay - Philippines
8 September - 8 October, 2025




St Marcellin
Builder

Dear Brothers and Lay Marists,

From September 8 to October 8, 2025, we celebrated the 23rd General Chapter in Tagaytay, Philippines. Marists from all over the world experienced an exceptional welcome from the Province of East Asia and, more specifically, from the Filipino people. We are deeply grateful for their spirit of fraternity and their cultural richness, which provided the special context in which we shared our lives and our dreams for the future.

From the very first days, we learned that in Filipino culture, KAPWA is a central value, which could be translated as "shared identity" or "deep interconnectedness." It is a concept expressed in their sense of community and holistic view of human relationships. For us, KAPWA is an invitation to once again turn our gaze toward our Marist origins.

Two hundred years ago, Marcellin Champagnat and the first Brothers raised stone upon stone in the valley of the Gier to build the Hermitage. They worked with bare hands, great courage, and unwavering faith, but always with deep trust that the work was God's. As the psalmist reminds us, and as Marcellin always said: "If the Lord does not build the house, in vain do the builders labour" (Psalm 127:1).



Notre-Dame de l'Hermitage vers 1836

The Hermitage was never only a building. It was a home of fraternity, a school of the Gospel, and a springboard for mission. The river Gier that flowed beside it carried timber, refreshed the Brothers, and symbolized the Spirit's constant presence.

Today, under the theme "Home for All, River of Life," we too are called to build a New Hermitage. This is not a structure fixed in one place, but a living reality that moves like the river itself— wherever Marists live in faith, create fraternity, and bring life to others.

To build such a home requires us to walk together in a spirit of synodality—listening attentively to one another and to the Spirit, discerning our common path, and sharing responsibility for the journey. This is the face of the Marian Church that we wish to grow. Mary, our Good Mother, teaches us the attitudes that will sustain this task: openness, alertness, transparency, empathy, care for our common home, and attentive listening. These values are not accessories; they are the foundation stones of the New Hermitage.

The vision of a new Hermitage invites us to look beyond and to walk with boldness, tenderness, and hope. The five calls we hear — **Vocation, Spirituality, Community, Governance and Leadership and Mission** — are not separate elements, but pieces of a beautiful mosaic that reveals the face of a Marist family committed to the poor, rooted in prayer, guided by servant leadership, united in fraternity, and open to new generations.

These are calls that urge us to be Good News in contexts of fragility, to cultivate silence in a noisy world, to practice transparent and inclusive leadership, to build fraternal communities where reconciliation is real, and to nurture the Marist vocation in all its expressions. In this way, we feel summoned to be builders of hope in this turbulent world.





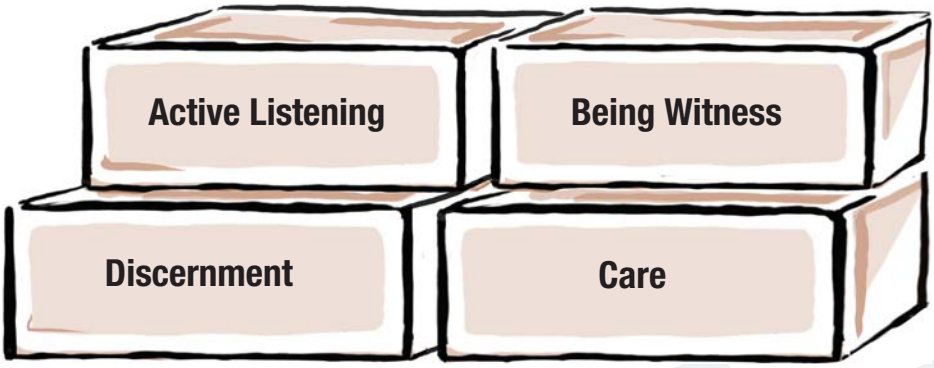
1.

BUILDERS OF A CULTURE OF VOCATIONS

God calls us today to the Marist **VOCATION** and invites us to live it with passion, as true lovers of life and mission. By giving ourselves wholeheartedly, we become living witnesses of the Gospel, inspiring and accompanying others to discover and embrace their own Marist vocation. In this way, we generate, nurture and sustain the richness of all Marist vocations.



Bricks / foundational values:



This call invites us to a conversion of heart and mind where we:

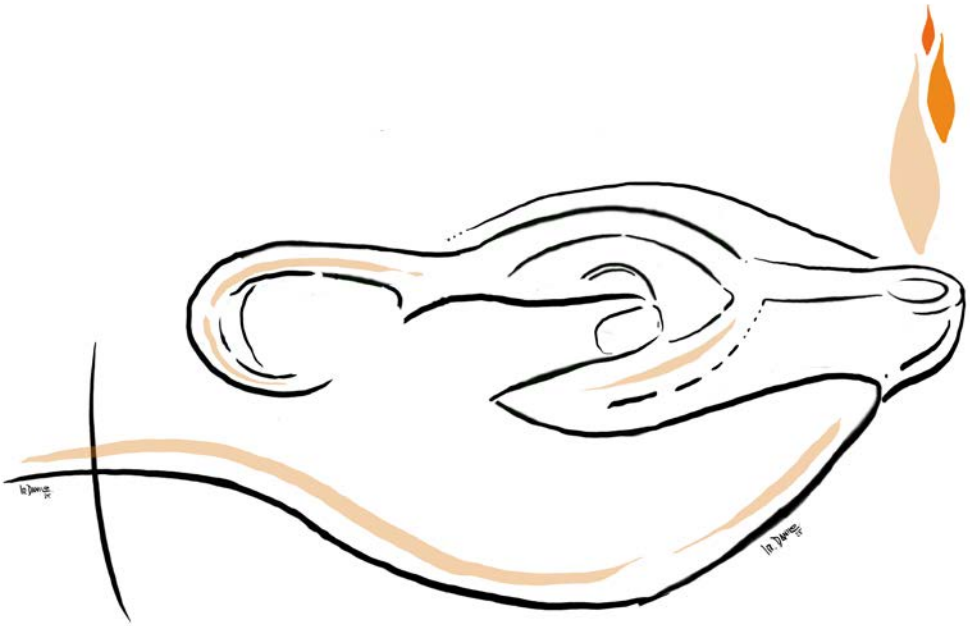
- Promote a holistic and vibrant culture of vocations.
- Focus on processes of authentic discernment, not mere numbers.
- Commit to vocational care, personally and communally.
- Foster creative audacity within the Institute that prioritizes vocational promotion.
- Awaken the commitment and enthusiasm of our communities for all projects related to a culture of vocations.



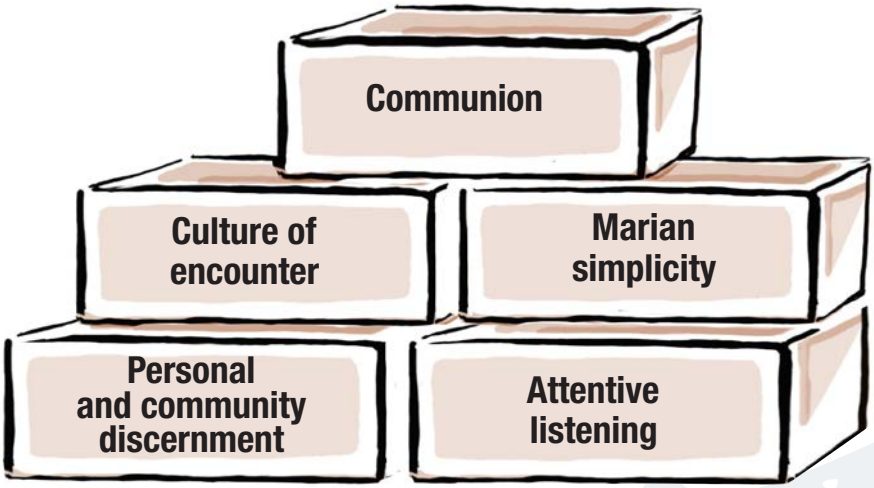


2.
BUILDERS OF A LIVING SPIRITUALITY

God calls us today to live an incarnated **SPIRITUALITY**, centered on Jesus Christ, in the style of Mary and inspired by the bold and committed vision of Marcellin Champagnat. In a world yearning for connection, healing, and hope, let us foster a transformative spirituality and journey together as brothers and sisters.



Bricks / foundational values:



This call invites us to a conversion of heart and mind where we:

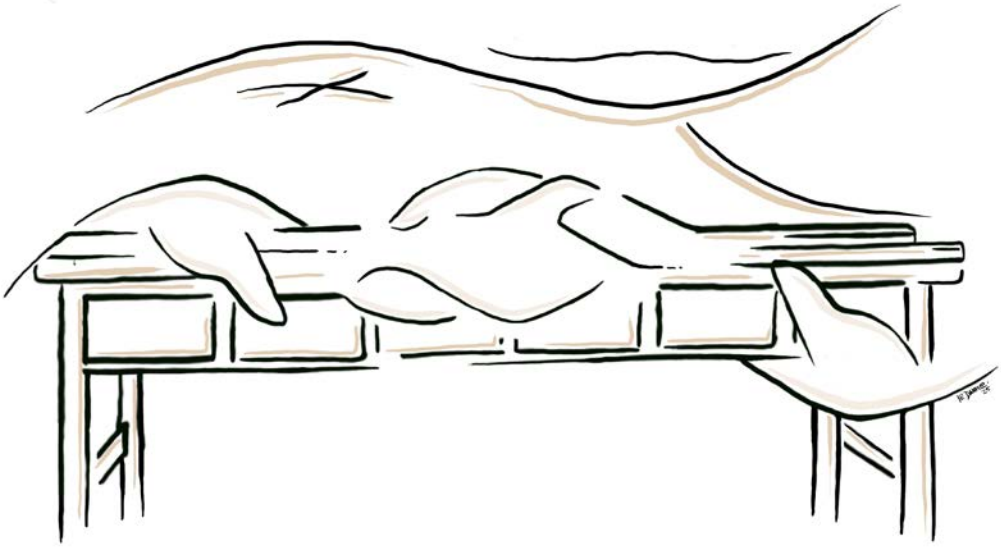
- Move from an inward-looking spirituality to one centered on Jesus Christ.
- Nurture an integrative spirituality, attuned to the lives of today's young people.
- Deepen affective and relational spirituality, beyond external practices.
- Leave behind individualistic visions of spirituality and live it as a journey shared with others.
- Move beyond theory and embrace a faith grounded in lived experiences.



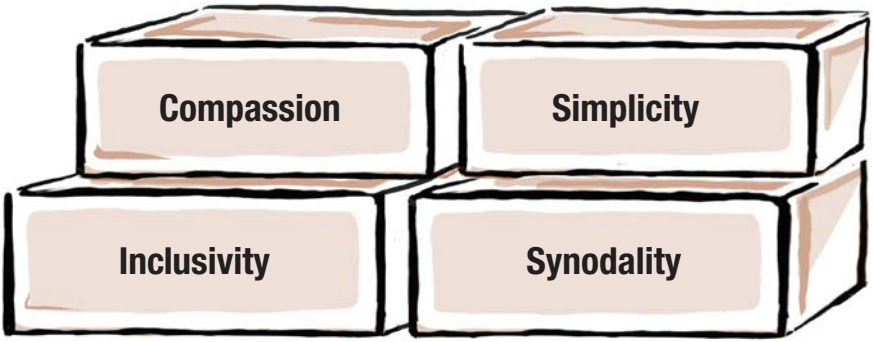


3.
BUILDERS OF COMMUNION

We are called to be a compassionate **COMMUNITY** rooted in Jesus Christ, a life-giving presence with the power to transform the reality of the life we share. We are a true home for all, embracing and caring for each other without exception.



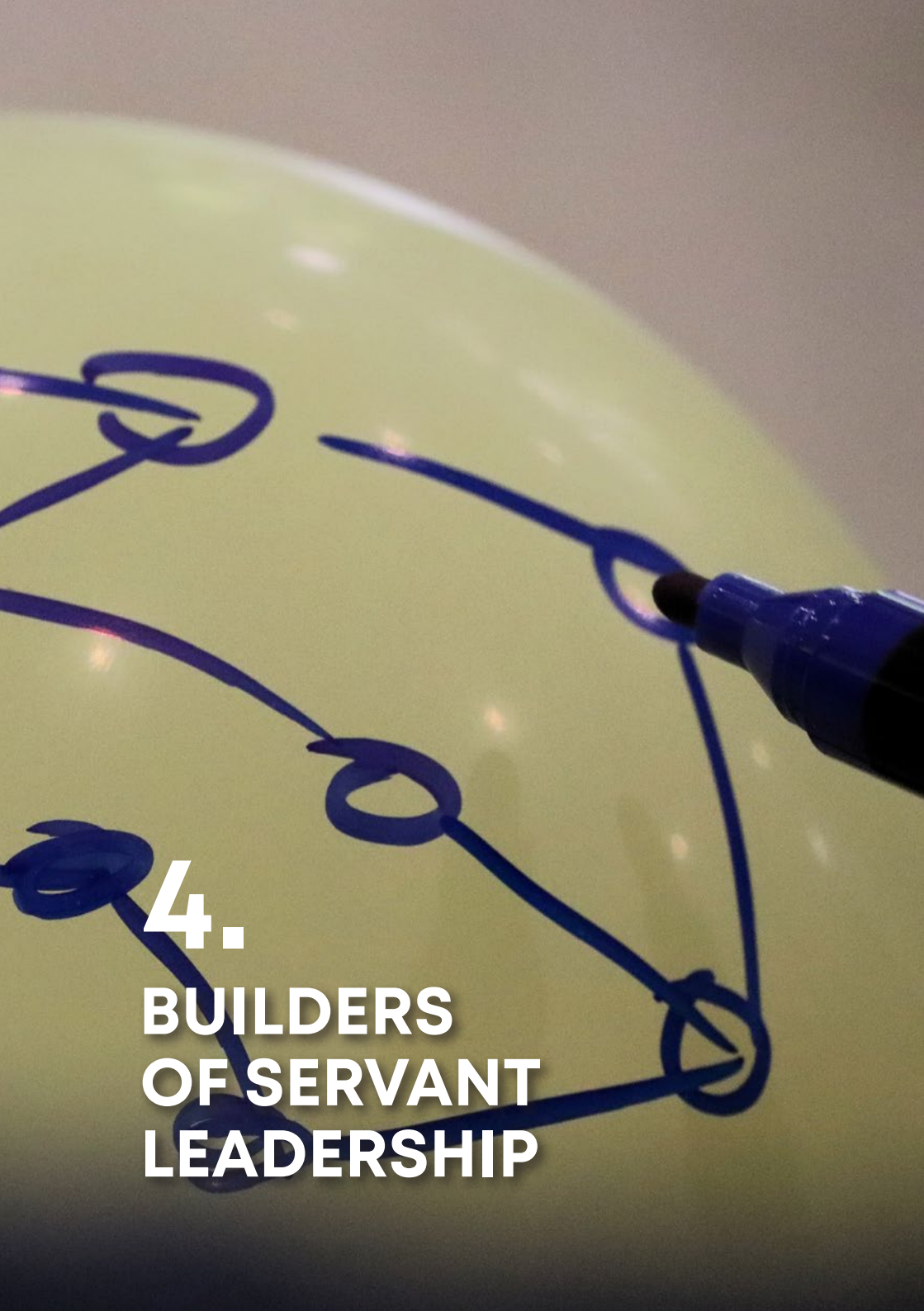
Bricks / foundational values:



This call invites us to a conversion of heart and mind where we:

- Embrace a life-giving community.
- Let go of individualism and embrace a fraternal, life-giving way of living together.
- Live community that is authentic, welcomes diversity, and remains flexible in structures.
- Build community that avoids isolation and fosters healthy relationships.
- Move from a "self-referential" community to a prophetic one.
- Strengthen generative listening in our relationships.



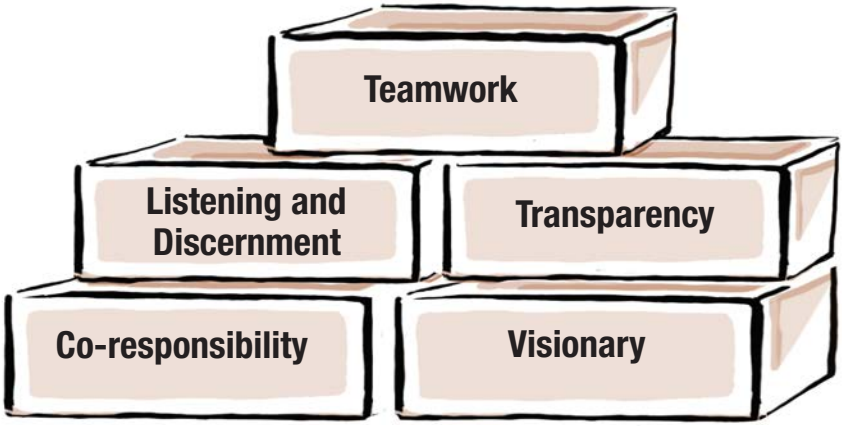


4.
BUILDERS OF SERVANT LEADERSHIP

We are committed to fostering servant and prophetic **LEADERSHIP**, along with governance and management models that open pathways toward a viable and sustainable future, aligned with both the realities of our Institute and the broader world. Inspired by the Church's call to synodality, we promote a leadership approach founded on transparency, active participation, and shared responsibility.



Bricks / foundational values:



This call invites us to a conversion of heart and mind where we:

- Reject dependency and individualism and choose shared responsibility.
- Overcome complacent attitudes and move boldly and creatively toward new styles of leadership.
- Choose openness over resistance, developing resilience and adaptability through a flexible, proactive approach.
- Adopt a strategic vision and a comprehensive approach that prioritizes long-term sustainability.



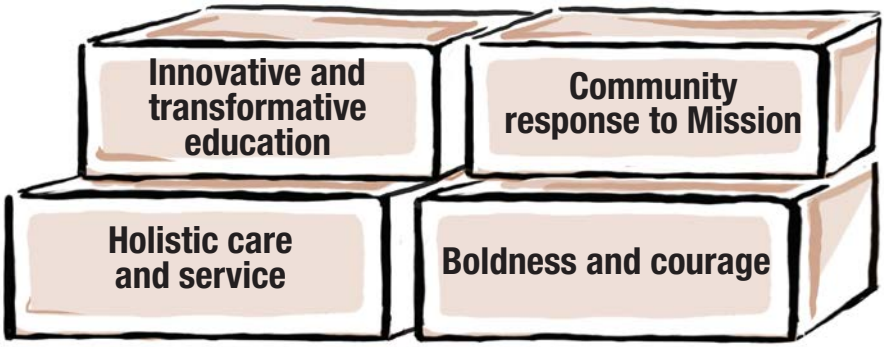


5.
BUILDERS OF GOOD NEWS

God calls us today to be Good News for the children and young people of our world, especially the poorest and most vulnerable. Living this **MISSION** with boldness and hope commits us to be welcoming hearts, caring hands, and minds that create and develop a comprehensive and transformative education.



Bricks / foundational values:



This call invites us to a conversion of heart and mind where we:

- Leave behind old ways and embrace new horizons in education and service to youth.
- Reject pessimism and welcome the creativity that builds a better world.
- Choose education that is holistic, multicultural and innovative.
- Embrace collaboration and relationships of fruitful interdependence.



Marcellin's Hermitage was fragile and yet a project full of promise. Fragile, because it began with a small group of young men and few resources; full of promise, because it was sustained by God's promise and Mary's care. Our New Hermitage is called to be the same: weak if we rely only on our own strength but enduring if we trust in the Spirit and walk together as one family.

The New Hermitage is not a building of stone, nor is it tied to a single place. Like the Gier River, which gave life to Marcellin's dream, the New Hermitage moves with the Spirit. It flows wherever there is



need, bringing refreshment to weary hearts, hope to young people, and fraternity to the whole world. It is built wherever Marists of Champagnat live with courage, simplicity, and love.

Let us embrace this challenge with faith. Through these calls, let us truly become builders of a New Hermitage: a home for all, a river of life.

With fraternal affection,
The Participants of the XXIII General Chapter



STRATEGIES

As Marists of Champagnat, Brothers, and lay women and men together we stand as builders of a New Hermitage, called to raise walls of hope, open doors of welcome, and lay foundations of faith for the generations to come. Each call of this Chapter offers us a set of tools - carefully crafted and entrusted to us- not for ourselves alone, but for the flourishing of the global Marist family.

The strategies that follow are not simply plans or tasks; they are instruments for shaping a common dwelling where the Spirit breathes life.

Through **Vocation**, we sharpen the tools of listening and accompaniment, helping new generations discover the beauty of God's call.

Through **Spirituality**, we anchor our work on the cornerstone of prayer and discernment, ensuring that every brick we lay is aligned with the Gospel.

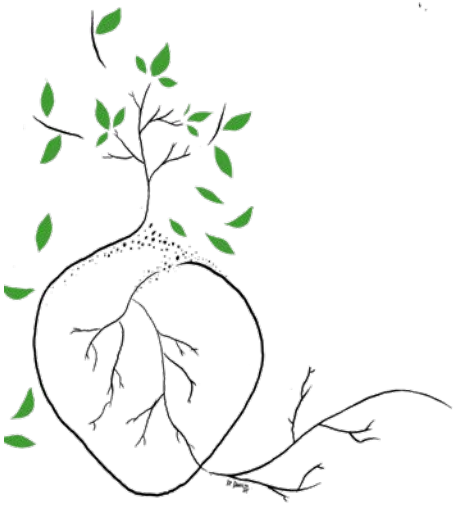
Through **Community**, we strengthen the beams of fraternity, hospitality, and shared responsibility that hold our hermitage firm.

Through **Mission**, we extend our hands outward, building bridges of solidarity and presence, especially with those on the margins.

And through **Leadership and Governance**, we design structures and pathways that ensure the house we build is sustainable, inclusive, and vibrant.

As artisans of this shared dream, we are invited to take up these strategies with courage and creativity. May they be for us not only blueprints but also signs of communion, so that together we may build a hermitage where all feel at home, and where Christ is joyfully at the center.

1. VOCATION



1. Explore and reimagine key issues such as the identity of the brother, models of being a brother, the relationship between brothers and lay people and initial and ongoing formation.
2. Strengthen the culture of vocational care through personal and community discernment, ongoing formation, personal planning and accompaniment.
3. Develop a vocational culture across the Institute through integrated plans that use technology, social networks and best practices shared between provinces. This will promote support and meaningful engagement with young people.
4. Develop an integrated vocational culture across the Institute so that there are welcoming spaces capable of connecting with, caring for and inviting youth to follow Jesus as Marist Brothers. In collaboration with Formators and Formandees, ensure our Formation houses are contemporary, open, and flexible.
5. Expand vocational ministry through exploring new spaces, developing networks of animators and collaborating with other Church groups.

2. SPIRITUALITY



1. Promote a spirituality that consciously recognises God's presence in every aspect of life and therefore leads to a contemplative approach to daily living. Develop ways for integrating reflection on inspiring Marist texts, such as the Rule of Life, the Formation Guide and Laudato Si, into personal and communal prayer.
2. Promote 'circles of spirituality' as community and intergenerational spaces where brothers, lay people, young people and older people can share and explore their spiritual experiences together, strengthening their sense of community and shared faith.
3. Establish structures to accompany children and young people spiritually, especially the most vulnerable, through a caring and active presence, inviting them to express their faith in ways that connect with their reality and language.
4. Develop training processes in Marist spirituality, interreligious and intercultural dialogue, using creative media such as videos, podcasts and visual narratives to facilitate access and participation.
5. Promote a spirituality of the heart, that is affective, relational and that opens us to transformation.

3. COMMUNITY

1. Promote care and accompaniment of brothers, especially the youngest.
2. Promote training in leadership and animation in the synodal processes.
3. Promote communities open to people and realities in our environment.
4. Improve communication (dialogue, conflict resolution, meetings, …)
5. Support networks for community leaders.
6. Promote collaboration (inter-cultural, inter-congregational, networks, etc.).



4. GOVERNANCE & LEADERSHIP



1. Review and adapt governance and leadership structures, with active lay participation, to ensure sustainability, vitality, and effectiveness. This may require a profound transformation of Marist life and mission.
2. Develop economic, financial, and administrative management strategies that guarantee sustainability, supported by professional expertise and strengthened through strategic partnerships.
3. Provide support and accompaniment for governance, management, and leadership in Administrative Units facing fragile contexts, through international bodies such as Fraters and Gier.
4. Promote prophetic and servant leadership through formation, accompaniment, and succession planning, fostering discernment in a synodal spirit.
5. Strengthen investment funds in a collaborative, transparent, professional, and ethical way, while ensuring that real estate assets generate returns that sustain the life and mission of the Institute and its Administrative Units.
6. Commission a comprehensive study of the governance and leadership model of the General Administration and the location of the General House, considering decentralization, regionalization, costs, and investments.

5. MISSION



1. Strongly commit to being present among poor and vulnerable children and young people, directly or in collaboration with other congregations or ecclesial institutions.
2. Strengthen the Institute's existing mission networks that support local, regional, and global initiatives in education, solidarity, and human rights.
3. Give bold and innovative educational and evangelizing responses to the needs of today's children and youth.
4. Implement the 7 priorities of III Marist International Mission Assembly (MIMA III).



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Marists
of Champagnat