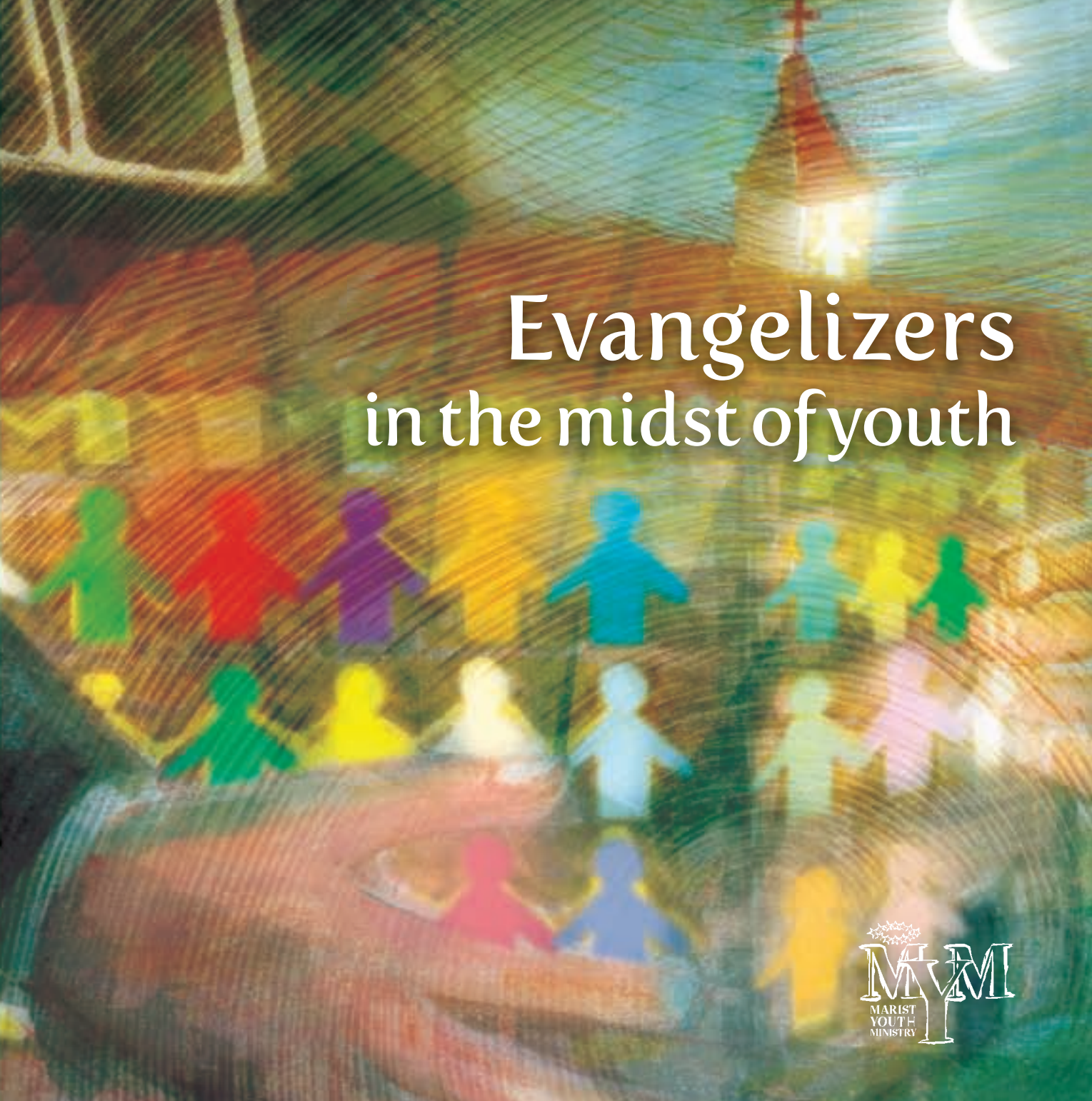
Evangelizers
in the midst of youth
MARIST
YOUTH
MINISTRY

Evangelizers in the midst of youth

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Evangelizers in the midst of youth

Reference document for the Marist Institute

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Introduction

In their "Report to the XXI General Chapter", Br. Superior General and his Council affirmed that "In some parts of the Institute, perhaps owing to the aging of its members and increasing responsibilities in running our institutions, the Brothers are distancing themselves from young people. We believe we are all invited to reverse this tendency to the point of becoming experts in matters pertaining to the evangelization of poor children and young people wherever they are to be found."[1]

The document that you have in your hands is the result of this interest of the General Council in placing straightforward evangelization of the young at the heart of our pastoral care, making it one of our highest priorities. First of all, the Council viewed in a positive light the experience that some regions of the Institute have developed in their work with young people through what we like to refer to in general as "Marist Youth Ministry" (MYM), a reality that may be known by different names depending on local situations. Secondly, however, the Council recognized that in other regions, in spite of possessing a magnificent potential for such pastoral activity, little if anything has been accomplished.

With a view to capitalizing on this experience in the Institute and sharing it in a broader context, in January 2007 the General Council created an International Commission "to prepare a reference document for the Institute concerning Marist Youth Ministry, to serve as a basis for its subsequent development on different continents, in different provinces.

The General Council has entrusted me with coordinating the work of that International Commission, which is composed of the following members: Br. Michael Schmalzl (West Central Europe), Mr. Paul Salmon (Melbourne), Br. Ifeanyi Stephen Mbaegbu (Nigeria), Br. Ramon Rúbies (L'Hermitage), Br. Rommel Ocasiones (Philippines), Mr. Fabiano Incerti (Brasil Centro-Sul, and Br. Raúl Goitea (Cruz del Sur). Brothers Juan Miguel Anaya of the Mission Commission and Ernesto Sánchez, at the time Director of the Secretariat for Vocations, also took part in these deliberations on behalf of the General Administration.

The Commission held its first meeting in August 2007, and after that on two other occasions, in March and December 2008. When all was concluded they submitted the results of their efforts to the General Council's Mission Commission, which, now that the text has been edited and given a unified style, is making it available to the Institute. I would like to express my gratitude for the work that this Commission carried out and also for the great willingness of every brother and lay member to serve on the Commission. I would especially like to mention of the excellent work of Mr. Fabiano Incerti, who in his patient way

1 MARIST BROTHERS. Report of the Brother Superior General and his Council to the XXI General Chapter, 2009, p. 98.

drew up the final version of this document, incorporating, with great sensitivity, the suggestions sent in by those who reviewed the preceding draft.

In putting this "reference document" together, right from the start we were very clear about wanting it to be of an open and general nature, able to offer guidance. A document that attempts to clearly and explicitly lay out our understanding and experience of the meaning of MYM in the Institute, valid and applicable in a universal way, not bogged down by minutiae.

It has been our aim, then, to enable the Provinces with hands-on knowledge of MYM to see their accomplishments reflected in this document and at the same time to feel greatly encouraged to build upon the successes of their ministries. On the other hand, it is our desire to offer a formative document to Provinces having little or no experience in this area, a point of reference to help them start out. God-willing, in the future, when speaking about MYM in the Institute, we will be able to refer to the heart of this matter, even though this may take on diverse expressions in accordance with local circumstances.

Given the nature of this document, we propose to offer it to all, adults and young people, who are in any way responsible for animating MYM in their administrative units.

"Evangelizers in the midst of world youth" consists of six chapters:

- Young people everywhere and the gifts they offer to our world and the Church: "Let's be where the young people are."
- The doctrinal framework of MYM: "Every time I see a youngster I can't help but tell him, how greatly Jesus loves you!"
- The definition and characteristics of MYM: "The Hermitage, home for us all."
- Educational, ministerial and methodological options of MYM: "If the Lord does not build the house…"
- The vision and hopes of youth involved in MYM: "Good Christians and good citizens."
- Networks, structures and promoting international associations: "A heart that knows no bounds."

We are mindful that evangelization is the work of the Holy Spirit, and that without the Spirit's action everything remains idle talk, gibberish. This document seeks nothing more than to be a modest instrument for benefiting the Institute.

Our hope is that it will contribute to rekindling flames of passion for the Gospel among adults and young people themselves, who, as Pope Benedict XVI reminded us so well, are called to take on a grace-filled leadership role in evangelizing their companions: "I assure you that the Spirit of Jesus today is inviting you young people to be bearers of the good news of Jesus to your contemporaries. The difficulty that adults undoubtedly find in approaching the sphere of youth in a comprehensible and convincing way could be a sign with which the Spirit is urging you young people to take this task upon yourselves. You know the ideals, the language, and also the wounds, the expectations, and at the same time the desire for goodness felt by your contemporaries. This opens up the vast world of young people's emotions, work, education, expectations, and suffering… Be prepared to put your life on the line in order to enlighten the world with the truth of Christ; to respond with love to hatred and disregard for life; to proclaim the hope of the risen Christ in every corner of the earth."[2]

The XXI General Chapter picked up on the affirmation of the International Assembly of the Marist Mission (Mendes, 2007), that "evangelization is the central point and priority of our apostolic activities, proclaiming Jesus Christ and his message." I strongly believe that MYM is a privileged means for that evangelization, though by no means the only one. For this reason, as I said in my talk at the conclusion of the General Chapter, I earnestly hope and desire that at the conclusion of our mandate, when we celebrate the 200th anniversary of the Institute's founding, we Marists of Champagnat will be looked upon as "experts" in MYM. This may sound like a very ambitious goal; it won't be if a determined effort is made in every administrative unit to either start up or keep on expanding its MYM.

I would like to express my appreciation for the marvelous ministry being carried out by thousands of people on five continents in their selfless and very generous way. And I entrust to Mary, our Good Mother and wellspring of our renewal, all the work of youth ministry being carried out in the Institute. May she, our fountain of inspiration in this area, too, (cf. C 84), bless all of us with energy, creativity and a generous heart.

Br. Emili Turú
Superior General
Rome, 31 May 2011
Feast of the Visitation of Mary

2 BENEDICT XVI. Message to the youth of the world on the occasion of the XXIII World Youth Days 2008.







Let us go where
the young people are

"We are close to young people in their actual life-situations, taking the risk of going into what may be unexplored areas where those in material and spiritual poverty await the revelation of Christ."

(Constitutions 83)

1. For those of us who think of ourselves as disciples of Marcellin Champagnat, this invitation in article 83 of our Marist Constitutions is doubtless a formidable challenge. It presupposes rolling up our sleeves, overcoming a life of ease and going beyond our comfort zone, leaving behind safety nets and daring to break through into the unknown. This is what has so typified our Marist tradition from the very beginning. A tradition that engages our entire being and calls on us to act boldly.

2. In this chapter we ask ourselves what it means to "go out and meet youth." But before continuing, we would like to reflect on "where" these young people are to be found and "who" they are.

Where do we find the young and who are they?

3. Often enough we speak of the young merely in abstract terms, and when doing so we do not facilitate a genuine close encounter. Because young people do not just pose a question for us, they provide an answer concerning the authenticity of our lives. They help us arrive at a diagnosis of today's world; they are a kind of thermometer in society. So, while keeping in mind that youth is a social and cultural concept[3], it is essential for us to look closely at the main characteristics of its present-day context.

The context of youth: a world undergoing change[4]

4. Today it is not uncommon to hear people claim that we are not only living in changing times but are witnessing an earthshaking time of change. We are talking about a profound transformation in our way of seeing, feeling, knowing, relating to and loving, all of which can be observed to an even greater degree in the young.

3 COMISSÃO NACIONAL DE EVANGELIZAÇÃO DE ADOLESCENTES E JOVENS. *Diretrizes Nacionais da Pastoral Juvenil Marista*, 2006, n. 157, 160, 161.

4 MEJÍA. *La globalización reconstruye culturas juveniles*. 2001.

5. First of all we need to acknowledge that the globalization of trade together with the emergence of a worldwide culture has brought about social inequality unprecedented in human history. Human dignity is finding itself wounded in several of its dimensions. We see evidence of material and spiritual misery everywhere, the result of an unjust distribution of wealth and a religious establishment that tries to address problems with quick fixes. A few on the planet amass unparalleled wealth in this world while countless others abide hunger, misery, and illiteracy[5].

6. For the poorest teenagers and young people in these times of change and globalization, the spectacle of exclusion has become more pronounced. This situation profoundly affects the makeup of their identity in as much as many have grown up feeling scorned or ignored by a society that often judges them without knowing them.

7. However we also recognize that globalization has allowed humanity to become more connected, which presupposes a greater openness to know other realities, go across borders and feel that our planet is "everyone's home." A multicultural environment has become commonplace in many parts of the world, and that contributes to looking upon differences as opportunities more than threats. Then, too, networking in fields like the pro-life movement, healthcare, human rights and stewardship of the earth has become easier. In the end we can say that today more and more light is being shed on some human conditions previously not recognized or cared about.

8. When it comes to interpreting how we view time nowadays, we are aware that data-filled knowledge is transmitted with lightning speed, which is helping give rise to the notion that time

5 COMISSÃO NACIONAL DE EVANGELIZAÇÃO DE ADOLESCENTES E JOVENS. *Diretrizes Nacionais da Pastoral Juvenil Marista*, 2006, n. 165.

flows instantaneously, in "real time." Hence so much importance is placed on living in the moment, with the consequent loss of a sense of historical time and delayed gratification.

9. In addition, today we find ourselves faced with new ways to express our thoughts and feelings. The virtual world has been enlarged and the importance attached to the body and senses increased. Today digital technology is creating new ways to express reality; people are placing enormous value on images, coming up with many and diverse ways to interpret them.

10. This time of change has brought about a crisis in many of the institutions that have traditionally provided structure and guidelines for children and young people looking to find their place in society: in the family, school, state and church. Because of this, in many cases young people are attempting to find their niche in society by relating to their peer groups and creating their own cultural models of identity, in ways as unique and creative as the situations in which they find themselves in each metropolitan area.

11. Within this entire context, we also find young people willing to play a role in transforming reality. Youth searching for a self-sustaining society, based on respect for nature, universal human rights, effectively administered economic justice and a culture of peace based on a comprehensive ecological perspective. Many are trying to promote change through their commitment in non-governmental organizations or the political process, determined to see that issues important to youth are discussed and dealt with.

12. We can also state that today's young people are engaged in an intense search for spirituality. This involves new expressions not

necessarily linked to the major religions. At first glance, some of these expressions might appear to be at odds with those traditionally associated with spirituality. Yet below the surface, even in the lives of those young people who claim not to believe in anything, spirituality and transcendence are latent in ways that perhaps we are failing to note and understand.

To this point we have grouped together what we consider to be the foremost features of the world of young people. We realize that they are but thumbnail sketches of a reality that transcends us. Realizing that each country and indeed every urban area has its own characteristics, we invite you to expand on the vision presented here with a more in-depth study in line with your personal experience and insights.

Who are the young and where are they?

13. It is quite a challenge for us to conceptualize the meaning of youth, in as much as it is not possible to embrace the whole range of situations in which young people are living, depending on their roots and ethnic origins, cultural influences and the diverse political, social and economic conditions in which they find themselves. Simply put: today's young people, immersed as they are in a network of relationships and multiple and complex interactions that make up a changing and erratic social universe, do not constitute a homogeneous category.

14. In spite of all this, and without specifying a chronological age, (which varies according to cultures and social configurations) there is a time when individuals begin to create a first conscious account of their personal identity, when they face and define themselves and map out their life and future. We label this time of development adolescence and young adulthood. It is a particularly sensitive period filled with hopes and dreams during which, in an intense process, one's personality takes shape.

15. Therefore, before setting out to define young people, we thought it opportune to ask them how they define themselves:

What is youth?[6]

- It's an interesting experience, awesome and exhilarating, a magical stage in our lives because we are overflowing with happiness, freedom, exuberance and energy. We have high hopes and a desire to learn, explore choices and promote change in the world around us.
- It's a stage in our lives when we live out a process of growth and maturing through our dreams, yearnings, fears and options. A time when all the changes taking place in our thoughts, ideals and actions come to the fore. A time when we strive to find our personal identity, seek happiness and remain faithful to this search by playing a bigger role in the decisions and analyses of life itself. In our world filled with a wide range of emotions, we are fully capable to grow in our aims and ambitions. Sometimes we enjoy success; sometimes we get very confused and generate doubts, uncertainty, indecision and anxiety in our lives.
- It's a time filled with curiosity to know, test and explore an infinite number of experiences, yet at times we bump up against our own loneliness, being caught in the grip of technology, homeless, our hopes and yearnings dashed. At times we don't take stock of the consequences of our actions and the impact they can have on our future, and we feel weak and vulnerable in facing an absence of love and unity.
- We're active, we like to share, help, contribute and be present when needed; we're anxious to produce results, work on things we like and be able to share the results with those around us. We long to achieve our goals in spite of adversity and to learn from our mistakes, and we are usually ready to do what's needed rather than what we ourselves would like. We're ready to welcome what's new and try to make the world a better place.

6 A survey carried out by the authors of this document, in which more than 100 young people from throughout the world participated.

- Young people today have a mindset marked by free expression and few things to tie them down. They are multifaceted; each individual's choices and expressions are an attempt to find his or her place in society. Youth possess the transformative power of paradigms that enable them to be bold, decisive and persevering in the face of obstacles that they confront on a daily basis, in situations where often enough they receive no backup or support.
- As young people we continue to place our faith in youth, our peers, companions and the human race.

After what has been shared to this point: what would you say about the young people in your ministry, region, Marist Province or country? How would you describe them? What place are we providing for the diverse cultural expressions of young people? To conclude this section, we invite you to ask yourself not only where and who young people are, but also what and how they are feeling about life today.

16. We can draw up a list of many places to encounter young people: in schools, on the street, in bars, discotheques, pastoral organizations and any other place that allows them to congregate and get to know each other as young people. However we should not speak only of places but of spaces for meeting them: at music festivals, sporting events, on the internet, in discussion groups, at service experiences in academic and cultural exchange programs, at dances, ethnic or youth-oriented cultural celebrations, civil rights marches, protests, wars, prisons, etc.

17. In this sense we are highlighting spaces of culture and leisure as privileged places for meeting the young. These are the spaces where we can zoom in on essential elements that give us insight into how they form their values, establish their relationships among themselves and especially, how they use their free time. The status of young people is pretty much determined by cultural mores, games of chance, sports and recreational activities. These let them exchange experiences and information, expand their points of reference and elaborate and revise their values. In their leisure time, young people come across possibilities for testing the limits of their individuality and the diverse identities they need to live side by side in society.

We invite you to list the places conducive to your helping young people in your city where they usually come together and interact. What places are they? How would you describe them? How do young people get around in them? What other more personal spaces are part of the everyday journey of young people, especially those you know? What characteristics of today's world are clearly manifested in the young people where you are? Do you know how they feel in those places and spaces?

Our walking side by side with the young

How have we accompanied them?

18. Down through the years in its pastoral activity the Church — and the Marist Institute within her — has developed diverse ways of accompanying the young. Although these have varied according to differing cultural contexts, it seems to us that they can be grouped into three main approaches for evangelizing youth: the **doctrinal** and **practice-based**, which time-wise we can attribute to the past, although these remain in use today, and the **experiential**, which has come into prominence especially in our day. These distinct models probably coexist in each of our apostolic works, in accordance with the kind of ministry that we carry out.

19. Some of our evangelizing activities with the young are based on what we refer to as a **doctrinal** approach. This model strongly emphasizes God's initiative in the plan of salvation. Personal and societal fulfillment is to be sought in the gift of salvation. Consequently, the task of Youth Ministry consists of educating and enabling the young person to welcome and make his or her own God's plan for people and the world. It stresses the need to hearken back to a conceptual dimension of the Christian experience, precise language, and the immediate efficacy of supernatural means: prayer, receiving the Sacraments and adhering to the norms of the faith.

20. This model is fond of presenting the Church-World relationship as being composed of two contrasting and self-sufficient realities, and view the world of non-Christian culture in a markedly negative light. It sees secularism and permissiveness as dangerous tendencies that must be held in check. Moral judgments prevail over social analysis, leading to infrequent institutional intervention in

matters of social justice. This model greatly highlights the importance of membership in the Church and is more tied to academic discipline than to personal choice.

21. Its methodology of educating in the faith is deductive. Priority is given to the knowledge of doctrine. This has a strong rationalistic bent and favors attitudes such as: feeling assured and certain about the contents of the faith, recognizing authority, and rejecting subjective and fault-finding attitudes. "Seeds hidden within the Word" are ignored.[7]

22. Young people like to talk about evangelization; they value a wide-ranging Church and relate to education as individuals. Notwithstanding this, group experiences provide opportunities for encountering youth.

23. Then again, we see that some proposals for evangelizing reflect what we call a **practice-based** approach. These endeavor to create conditions in which a young person can discover a response to his or her deep-seated needs for identity and identification. Historical crises take away the possibility to transform reality, so people seek comfort by constructing what amount to ghettoes, fenced-in havens; little islands beyond the reach of the crisis. These underscore the importance of love as the most sensitive aspect of newness of life in the faith, and of formation in putting community life into practice, a life in which individuals intensely express their experience of love.

24. In the Church-World relationship, people stand in judgment of history and emphasis is placed on cultural exchange through communitarian experiences, seedlings for a new form of being in the world and creating history. This is designed to favor young

7 VATICAN COUNCIL II. *Ad Gentes*, n. 11.

people's experience of faith in de-Christianized contexts, and it is realized without the temptation to "flee from the world".

25. Communitarian experience lies at the heart of the methodology for educating in the faith; contents are communicated and assimilated primarily on the strength of identification. The Christian community is the place where things are different. Social and political commitments are not part of the framework.

26. The basic global structure is membership in a communitarian group, by invitation only: membership is determined by how well one succeeds at being in sync with the group's aims. In saying, "We are the Church." there is a certain tendency to make this experience unequivocal.

27. Finally we can say that nowadays there are processes of evangelization that have to do with what we define as an **experiential** approach. This strives to offer young people a way to interpret their life experiences in the light of faith. It is oriented toward their earnestly taking on a project of self-fulfillment that incorporates the meaningfulness of faith. It emphasizes daily life as the privileged domain for educating in the faith. Looking into the questioning and anxieties of the young is the point of departure that leads them to ask deeper and broader questions. The communitarian dimension of the faith is seen as a space for fraternity, formation and action.

28. The Church is seen as part and parcel of the world and meant to bear witness to the plan of as salvation. There is a critical judgment of history that uses historical-political analysis, one that values the contribution of the social sciences. Commitment to the faith is never regarded as a strictly personal matter, but rather

brings into play social and collective dimensions. There is a certain tendency to minimize the place accorded to the content of faith. Church membership and a Christian identity tend to bring about conflict.

29. This approach uses an inductive methodology and insists upon historical experience with its attendant doubts and questioning. Emphasis moves from norms to the individual person; from absolute values to making personal evaluations; from generic principles to concrete situations; from abstract plans to existential situations. Or rather, one speaks of subjectivity placed in context. The proclamation is converted into a response to young people's questions and tailored to the requirements of the gradual and progressive development characteristic of the young.

30. The core group is important since it is the concrete space in which a person lives out his or her commitment and belonging to the Church and society, Group experience has a formative function. Value is accorded to a critical conscience, the incorporation of analytical elements and an informed way of being proactive.

31. When we look at the road traveled by the Marist Institute, we realize that some of these models coexisted in line with ministries such as "Marian Societies" and "Eucharistic Crusades"; organizations such as "Catholic Action", "Scout" groups, and post-conciliar youth movements like those concerned with leadership formation, "Better World", "New City", "Charismatic Renewal", "Communion and Liberation, "Focolare", "Remar" and other organizations throughout the world. [8]

32. In the Marist Institute today shared mission, apostolic spirituality and solidarity are clearly priorities, bringing considerable

8 COMISSÃO NACIONAL DE EVANGELIZAÇÃO DE ADOLESCENTES E JOVENS. *Diretrizes Nacionais da Pastoral Juvenil Marista*, 2006, n. 44-72.

unease due to the formulation of proposals that are more expansive and intercultural. There is concern about starting up encounters with young people in different spaces such as study clubs, sports programs, outdoor activities, the cause of ecological, youth advocacy, as well as the accompaniment of at-risk youth in society, drug addicts, perhaps those in prison, etc. The experience we have garnered from accompanying young people in the past is moving us to draw up plans for the kinds of accompaniment that young people need today.

33. Getting beyond formulations, there is no doubt at all that being close to young people and dedicated to their interests is the best model for evangelizing. Here is how young people throughout the world who have participated in our Marist Youth Ministry activities confirm our thinking:

THANKS…

- For the confidence you place in us.
- For opening up a world sometimes unknown to us and helping us to know ourselves and everyone else.
- For the opportunity to encounter Jesus and the Marist charism, for showing us a God who is not distant, out there somewhere, but rather right here in our midst.
- For helping us to grow humanly and spiritually; for understanding, constantly encouraging and accompanying us as we journey in pursuing our dreams.
- For sharing in our laughter and tears, our joys and sorrows; for your warmhearted care, understanding and help at all times, especially when we are most in need of this.

- For offering us a place to grow as persons, where we learn how to care for, love and value our very own lives.
- For showing us how to appreciate little things, for the patience and choices you have placed along our path.
- For the good times we shared, for vivid experiences that were very meaningful in our lives.
- For your friendship, family, service and education; for being a part of our lives and showing concern for us.
- For your total dedication, constancy, warmth, witness to love and the time you spend in sharing all this with us.
- For continuing to dream the dream of Champagnat.
- For helping us to discover what's real.

AND TAKE HEART...

- Because you have the good fortune of having opportunities to help others grow as persons and foster change in society.
- Because you give young people great support; in MYM we've met some really beautiful people who have earned a place in our heart and are a very important part of our lives.
- Because it's worthwhile fighting for the cause of God and God's Gospel.
- Continue being present among young people, close to them, visible; and don't let up. May the love you feel for young people grow day by day, and although life may be burdensome at times, take heart! Christ, Mary and Marcellin are walking with you.
- From having the grace of a clear and sensitive conscience.

Today, in many of our countries, we may come across similar situations; doubtless there are social problems that make our children and young people contend with negative circumstances that in one way or another influence their growth and their future: poverty, illiteracy, drugs, suicide, broken families, AIDS, unemployment, etc. If we had to describe the actual situation on the continent, in the region, country, state, city, town or community in which we live – what would we say?

Let us head for the encounter... attentive to the "how" and "where we're starting from"

34. On arriving at La Valla, Marcellin Champagnat found that the town was suffering the logical consequences of the crisis that France was going through at that time. Primary schools, evident almost everywhere prior to 1789, had all practically disappeared, and the majority of the teachers of Marcellin's day were described by at least one historian of that era as being "irreligious, drunkards, immoral and the dregs of the human race." As a result, according to an official report, the young people were living "in the most profound ignorance and given to the most alarming dissipation."[9].

35. For Marcellin, the historical circumstances and social context of his time must have weighed heavily on his mind and heart the morning he was called to the bedside of a dying and forsaken youth, Jean-Baptiste Montagne (17 years old).[10]

36. Church laws of the time held that confessors were expressly forbidden to give absolution to anyone who, among other things, did not know the fundamentals of the faith. The youth did not have the slightest idea of Catholic doctrine and consequently was deemed incapable of making a valid confession and receiving absolution. Marcellin sat down at his bedside and for two hours did the best he could to speak with the youth about the existence of God and the essential truths needed to attain salvation. Even though the youth was extremely ill, he made a valiant effort to grasp everything being said. Marcellin believed he was ready to receive absolution and blessed him with it. We know the ending to this story and how this incident impacted Champagnat's life and personality, confirming his intuition to found a congregation intent on educating children and young people.[11]

9 SAMMON. *Making Jesus Christ known and loved; Marist apostolic life today*, 2006, n. 3, 6; p. 23.

10 SAMMON. *Making Jesus Christ known and loved; Marist apostolic life today*, 2006, p. 24.

11 FURET. *The life of Joseph Benedict Marcellin Champagnat*, 1989, pp. 60-61.

37. Champagnat being a man of his times, well aware of the prevailing attitudes about young people and possessing a solid background in Church norms — how was it possible for him to act the way he did? Can you imagine what would have happened if he had looked upon that young man with the bias current in those days? What would have happened if Marcellin had not made the trip to that house, which surely did not encompass the characteristics of a Christian home according to the accepted definition of his day?

38. Champagnat did not go to visit, he went to "meet" the young Montagne; he did not go to pass judgment or analyze a situation, but to meet "someone" who, like him, had a history, a truth, a reality. Champagnat did not look at the youth based on what others said or assumed about what to expect from a 17-year-old youth of that time. Both persons met at the point where each one was. Without denying his being an adult and a priest, Marcellin interpreted everything in terms of that meeting, not his own status. He put the youth's needs first and foremost; laws were intended to serve people, not the other way around.

Possible risks along our way to the encounter[12]

39. People have set ways of thinking about young people just as they do about adults and the elderly, and it may be that we often approach young people based on those ways of seeing things. One such perspective is **generational authoritarianism** marked by a view centered on the primacy of the world of adults, justified by the presumed immaturity of young people in their process of "growing up." This thinking is rooted in certain cultural settings and explains attitudes of distrust, fear and wariness in the presence of young people, as if they have always and inevitably been a source of irresponsibility and lack of judgment. This leads us to see youth

12 MARX & ORTIZ. *Formar a los jóvenes según etapas de vida*, 2006, pp. 14-17.

as a transitional, preparatory phase in life. A young person is looked upon in terms of what he or she "ought to be," in terms of results to be expected a person maturing.

40. Another way of looking at things much in vogue is the opposite of the previous one. It is characterized by an **overemphasis on being young**. "The young" are valued for the fact that they are young rather than for what they contribute to culture. Young people are viewed as "trendsetters" for marketers who turn them into icons that we are supposed to imitate, no matter how old we are. Consequently the adult world is demeaned and young people's growth is stifled at a vital stage in their human development.

41. Both these two ideologies are opposite and complementary, corresponding to different cultural universes, yet they interact with each other. Although aware that the limits between these two outlooks are not always totally clear and precise, in our work we will always need to be conscious of the dichotomy that there is between what is traditional and what is modern, between what is looked upon as hackneyed and what is considered innovative.

42. These ways of approaching one another affect our encounters with the young, placing us at odds with them when it comes time to be in their presence and accompany them. In contrast to this, we are all invited to blaze trails that will enable us to develop our mission based on genuine encounters.

43. In going out and meeting young people where they are, it is not enough to "be with" them. Rather, what really matters is "how we are with" "our way of being with" them in a given situation. In preparing to go out and meet young people it is advisable for each of us to be in touch with our own individual experience of the young.

This will enable us to understand them as distinct from ourselves at this moment and put ourselves in their shoes. We are called to go out and meet the young based on the secret of being in touch with ourselves, giving the encounter a sacred character, An encounter based on contemplation because this is about looking at them not just with our eyes but our minds, and especially our hearts. In the end, this is about searching for unity, not a unity based on like-thinking crowds but the kind that makes all of us one in diversity.

What do young people expect of us; what challenges are they presenting to us?

Young people are challenging us to…

- Have the ability to reach out to all young people.
- Continue believing in them and accompanying them on their way.
- Work together to change the world, beginning with ourselves and our surroundings.
- Continue fostering the creation of a more just and ethical world.
- Intensify the formation of upright citizens in order to build a better world.
- Keep promoting cooperative programs in the most impoverished situations.
- Make youth encounter programs stronger in reflecting on building a better world.
- Intensify the projects of youth meetings to reflect on the building of a better world.
- Promote volunteer work in local communities.
- Create opportunities to venture beyond one's own borders.

- Foster intercultural dialogue.
- Enter more deeply into personal knowledge welcoming life itself.
- Help them grow in relating to themselves, God and everyone else.
- Cultivate the spiritual dimension.
- Work with greater intensity on the vocational dimension of youth ministry.
- Be daring and seize the initiative to be more mission-oriented.
- Intensify our efforts to live the Marist charism, especially fraternity, family spirit, a love of work and solidarity.
- Have the Brothers be more involved with young people in positions of MYM as a place where they can demonstrate the true nature of their vocation.
- Center themselves on reality and Christian and Marist values.
- Proclaim a Church that responds to the needs of our present-day world.
- Work in union with all Marist educational centers and those belonging to others.
- Make Youth Ministry a priority in our everyday actions.
- Take a keen interest in understanding the young.

Some avenues for working with young people today[13]

44. Before all else working with young people means being readily available to dialogue about culture and the cultures of youth, striving to listen carefully to the following elements among others, in order to bring about a more effective interaction:

13 MEJÍA. *La globalización reconstruye culturas juveniles*, 2001.

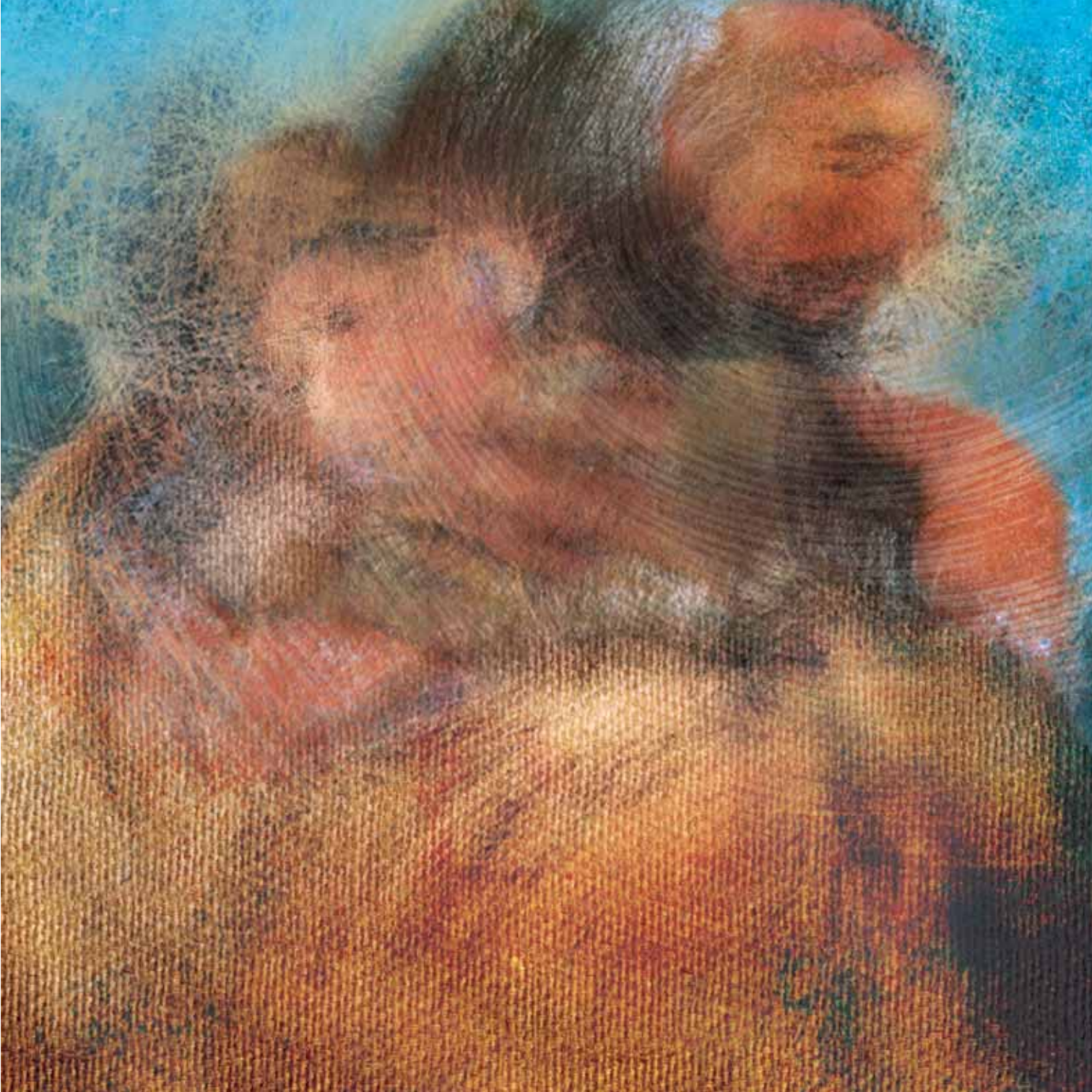
45. For many young people the encounter with their peers; peer groups are one of the places where they feel most welcomed and supported for who they are. They provide a fundamental space for the young to socialize. In fact peer groups have come to serve as the basic place for building their identity. Because of this we need to promote such groups, albeit with the understanding that we are dealing with an approach that is somewhat imprecise and ambiguous.

46. We are called to assist young people in becoming familiar with their social environment, the place where they will get involved based on their individuality and associations, making known their talents and abilities to everyone with a view to being seen and heard based on their unique identities.

47. In working with young people today we should empower their capacity to rebuild their groups with a sense of what it means to be young, recovering this quality in its truest sense so that their groups can act as privileged go-betweens in relationships with other social groupings.

48. Often enough the young are silent about things. We are to respect this and wait for appropriate times to be there for them when they need us. Respecting their silences is a way of respecting their independence and personal wisdom, of giving them the time they need to develop ways to get on with their lives.

49. When engaging the young in activities, we need to provide them with opportunities to channel their energy to get things done and to do so in their own creative ways. We are called to respect how they organize themselves. This requires not only communicating with them on the same level but also enjoying searching



for common interests, and implies involving young women in activities in which young men tend to predominate.

50. We are called to strongly encourage young people to formulate proposals as young men and women having a stake in the public sector. Our support and encouragement of youth where they are will make it possible for their interests to be in play in new settings, extending their influence in society.

51. Getting young people to be active participants is not just a matter of guiding their efforts to become full-fledged members of adult society. Through resolving conflicts and seeking consensus we also need to facilitate their involvement in both the public and private sector as a way of showing support for their personal and social identity.

52. If we are convinced that education and the evangelization of children, teenagers and young people is a grace for our time, we need to provide a fitting response to this call. It thus becomes essential to look closely and become more knowledgeable about this wondrous reality. There are various studies about the young going on, in the pastoral as well as the sociological and psychological spheres: the dreams, fears, victories and challenges in their lives. Each of us needs to view working with youth as a commitment that requires comprehension and research.

We journey with Jesus and Champagnat as Marists side by side with the young

53. Jesus is our inspiration in relating to youth. Like Him we invite them to arise: "Talitha Kum" (Lk 8, 49-56), all the while respecting their personal privacy, believing in their talents, potential and

dreams. We go out to meet them with the heart of an educator born of love for the human person and a firm commitment to accompany "life" as a privileged place to come together. So, as Jesus did with Zacchaeus (Lk 19, 1-10), we place greater emphasis on the processes of life and faith than on results. We approach the young using words that affirm, unite and send forth. We accompany them on the road of love, the love we have for one another (Jn 13, 34-35), a love exemplified by Jesus, one that when put into practice shows the world that we are His disciples. [14]

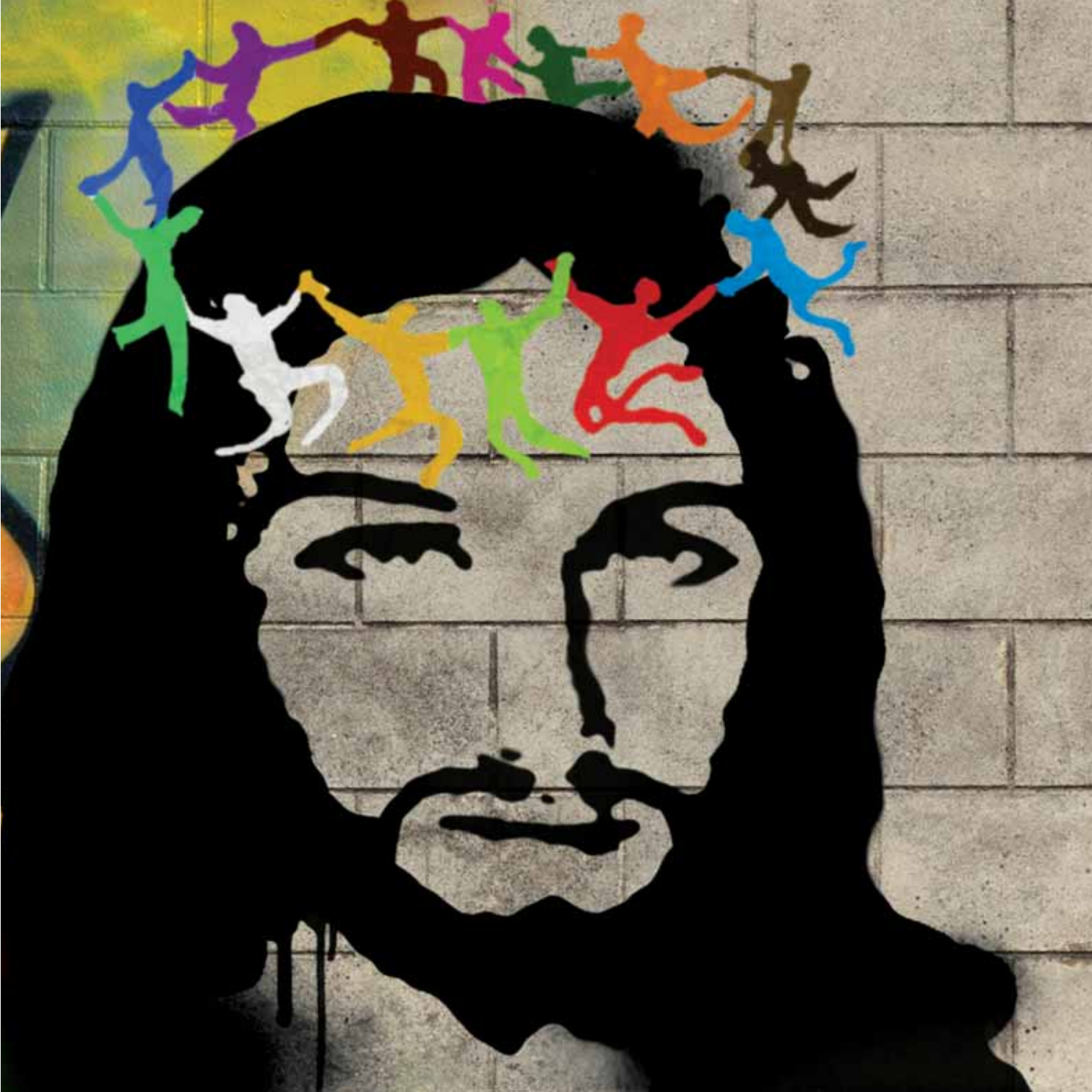
54. Our charism urges to listen carefully to the calls in our day, to people's yearnings and anxieties, especially those of the young. We welcome them with gladness, and living our Marist fraternity, together we go about planting hope. Our desire to be with young people in their own situations propels us to come up with new approaches in education and evangelization. In a very rich way the words "sister" and "brother" express our Marist style of relating to one another: a way that affirms others and fills them with hope and self-confidence. Thus, our way of living out our Marist apostolic spirituality and putting flesh and blood on our mission: being brothers and sisters to everyone we meet on our journey through life. [15]

55. All this being said, we feel a need to revise our perceptions with regard to youth. This to avoid advancing simplistic diagnoses and look into this space where we encounter God using a scientific and faith-based approach. Indeed, going forth to encounter young people is a key element of our mission's "theological loci"; that's the way it was for Marcellin and that's the way it continues to be for great numbers of his followers.

14 MARX & ORTIZ. *Formar a los jóvenes según etapas de vida*, 2006, pp. 43, 67-70, 90-91.

15 MARIST BROTHERS. *Water from the rock. Marist spirituality flowing in the tradition of Marcellin Champagnat*, 2007, n. 119, 120, 128, 139, 141, and 147.





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Every time I see young people I can not help but tell them, "How greatly Jesus loves you!"

56. Having reflected on young people and their world, we will now endeavor to put in place the theological foundations for Marist Youth Ministry. To give a firm grounding to our dedication and service to the young we need to define the reasons that urge us on in our mission at the heart of the Church.

57. Every ministry has a definite theological basis. That means that our pastoral efforts take on this or that aspect depending on our vision of God and the world around us. We may emphasize that God is our Father-Mother or insist that God is an implacable judge; we can envision the Church as a hierarchical society and without blemish or view it as the People of God. Whether we are aware of it or not, we always act based on a set way of thinking about God and a particular concept of what it means to believe and be a believer.

58. At the end of the preceding chapter we said that "going forth to encounter young people is a key element of our mission's 'theological loci.'" We know that the classic "loci" for the development of theology have been Scripture and Tradition. However, when Vatican II heeded the signs of the times, the need and urgency to interweave doctrine and life, theology and the fundamental questions of contemporary society became abundantly clear. Since then, in a critical way theology has sought to correlate the constitutive elements of Christian identity with the cultural and historical experience of humanity.

59. For us and our times, the spotlight is clearly on youth. As Marists, as educators and companions of young people, we enter into the particular situations that they are living today as a key factor in understanding the Christian message and our mission to evangelize.[16] While engaged in this we endeavor to listen to what they are telling

16 MORAL. *Cuarenta años después: El Concilio Vaticano II y la pastoral como sensibilidad dogmática*, 2005, pp. 544-545.

us, in their many different languages, so that we can hear the call that God Himself is sending our way: "Whoever receives one child such as this in my name, receives me." (Mk 9, 37)

A God madly in love with every man, woman and child

60. In essence, the characteristics of the God that Jesus revealed boil down to this: ours is a "gratuitous" God who can do nothing but love, a Father-Mother God who wants to give life and happiness to all His children. In a most profound way Jesus lived the experience of God as Love, and he was determined to communicate that deep conviction to others in word and deed his whole life long. He sums up His ideal in the image of the "Reign of God": a God who "reigns," who in this world takes pleasure in freedom, justice, being compassionate, overcoming limitations and comforting the weak.[17]

61. We find "reflections" of this God madly in love with human-beings in various images, always eye-opening, in the Bible. Among them we contemplate a creator God who creates creative people; a communicator God who makes Himself known throughout human history; a savior God who champions life, against every evil; a God who accompanies.

62. To define how God's action relates to human ones, we can come up with no better image than that of a God who creates out of love, a God passionate about human beings. This affirmation is based on three main points that we will develop: a) a creator God who infinitely affirms every human being; b) a God who reveals Himself in human terms and c) a God who stands against evil, a God who is infinitely kind and caring.

17 GONZÁLEZ FAUS. *Memoria subversiva, memoria subyugante. Presentación de Jesús de Nazaret*, 2001.

A creator God who creates creative people

63. Creation on God's part is uniquely and exclusively brought about out of love for His creatures. Therefore we can only gaze upon God as One who infinitely affirms each man and woman and their world, not as their rival. God does not substitute for the activity of creatures but "creates creators." If everything is an expression of a Love that creates, then nothing remains outside its presence. It becomes possible to discover this Love ever active in everything, so that anything introduced "creatively" as our world evolves responds to the seminal intention of its Creator.

64. Our vision of the human being includes this all-important paradox: not only do we recognize ourselves as creatures created by God, but as individuals created in God's image and likeness. This affirmation broadens the scope of our vision of God and human beings, and consequently of the young themselves. Human beings are not just beings "created" but "created for." Not forgetting our finite condition, here we want to emphasize our capacity to create and be creative. All of us, whether young people or adults, must not let ourselves become tied down by our limitations: we know that we are creative by nature, capable of rising above our limits. We need to keep in mind that this capacity for creativity that God offers us makes it incumbent on us to humanize the world and at the same time to help people live together in human solidarity.

65. God has gifted everyone with the ability to create and wants us to bring His creation to fruition. Looked at in this way, the world presents itself to us as a space to exercise our freedom where nothing exists in its final form. Human beings can only "become human" and reach their full potential when they get involved in a world marked by a continuous process of creation, when they join together and dedicate themselves to caring for this world that they

hold in their hands. In this sense human beings always remain open to immersing themselves in a Plan of creation and capable of discovering in their day-to-day lives that things exist though not yet fully revealed. Our capacity to dream of opening pathways to a perfect world is rooted in this potentiality.

66. Our potential to be creative points us in the direction of ethical responsibility. Being "with others" and "for others" is a component of the definition of a human being. We are on a journey with other men and women, sharing with them our responsibility to create and be creative in building a better world. Among the many characteristics of young people, their creativity stands out. It is a fact we must recognize. Young people are blessed with an enormous potential to be creative, one that can be actualized.

A Communicator God who reveals His presence in human history

67. Creation continues throughout revelation. God introduces His Divine Presence to human beings from the first pages of the Bible and manifests His desire to establish a covenant with them. God makes a pact with Noah so that life will never again be suppressed on the earth. He invites Abraham to leave his land and found a new people. Chooses Moses to guide this people from Egypt to the Promised Land. Sends the prophets to remind us of the covenant entered into with God. The creative word of God is also the liberating Word of a God who inserts Himself in human history.

68. In the fullness of time God sent His only Son Jesus Christ. The Word of God became flesh to live among human beings. He came to put us in touch with that very God: "He who sees me sees the Father" (Jn 16, 9). He proclaims the Reign of God to all who find

themselves "weary and downtrodden" — the poor, the sick, those rejected by mainstream religion, sinners, women and children. By His death and resurrection He transmitted divine life to all. In fact He had already proclaimed this: "I have come so they may have life and have it in abundance" (Jn 10, 10).

69. At Pentecost God poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit on the apostles and Mary. The Bible says that when they received the Spirit, the apostles began to speak in different languages and that everyone in Jerusalem who came from other parts of the world heard them speak in their own tongue (Acts 2, 1-12). Unlike Babel, the tower of confusion that led to separating people, Jerusalem is the city openly communicating with God and promoting human communion. And so the Church becomes a place where divine life is communicated to every person.

70. The Bible is the privileged place of the Word of God. That Word, expressed in human words, helps us discover a love-filled Presence that dwells in everyone and wants to reveal itself to everyone. But revelation is not something that "comes from outside." On the contrary, it "goes forth from within." It consists precisely of our realizing the Presence that dwells in us and is forever trying to manifest itself in us.[18] Revelation is brought to fruition through the slow, demanding and winding efforts of human subjectivity.[19] It is the seed of the Word concealed in the young.

71. Evangelization is based on the way in which God has revealed Himself to human beings and determines the courses of action we Christians choose in committing ourselves to continue proclaiming His liberating presence in the world: "God's words expressed in human tongues have been made similar to human speech, just as at another time the Word of the Eternal Father, taking on flesh with

18 TORRES QUEIRUGA. *Repensar la resurrección. La diferencia cristiana en la continuidad de las religiones y de la cultura*, 2003, pp. 119-122. In MORAL. *Creado creador. Apuntes de la historia de Dios con los hombres*, 1999, pp. 73-112.

19 VATICAN COUNCIL II. *Dei Verbum*, 1996, n. 2-3.

its human weakness, made Himself similar to all humankind." In light of these words coming from Vatican II we see that God's revelation can reside in no other place but human experience.

72. The task of knowing God and His plan is not begun by God in Himself. We come to know Him because He has revealed Himself to us in a specific human being, in the man "Jesus of Nazareth." Looked at in this way, the heart of relationships between God and men and women is nothing other than life. This is the reason faith or religion and the Church exist to serve life and humanize the human person.

73. The languages young people use are privileged places for communicating with God. The Church's task is to know how to listen to the young wherever they are, and take in the genuine nuances of their cultures. When interfacing these languages with the Word of God a mutual enrichment can ensue, with deeper insights and new interpretations.

A saving God who promotes and defends life against everything evil

74. The cross with all its power demonstrates the inevitability of evil. To a greater or lesser extent, but always in dramatic ways, we experience people's ability to bring about evil: wars, genocide, harsh curbs on freedom, physical and moral violence, disease, distress and contempt for life. The young find themselves among those most affected by these factors. But the cross is not the end, it leads to the resurrection, Evil does not have the final word. If God creates, it is because the world is worthwhile.

75. The core of the Gospels is precisely the proclamation of the death and resurrection of Jesus. The New Testament shows that in the

light of the Easter event, the whole life of Jesus boils down to the presence of God among people, the action of God gracing human beings, especially and preferentially those who are poor and marginalized. In Jesus Christ we discover the plan that God has envisioned for human beings from the beginning of time. Faith in the resurrection leads to seeing human beings in a new light.

76. In this way faith and human experience are found in a continuous and reciprocal relationship that is constantly repeated. The Christian religious experience consists of living an encounter with the risen Lord, in the setting of a Christian Community and through the action of the Holy Spirit. This encounter leads us to a new personal identity that manifests itself in a way of life marked by our self-giving.

We discover God in the faces, words and lives of the young

77. In the humanity of Jesus God comes to us with a face we can see, fully taking on our human reality. The mystery of the Incarnation is our starting point for understanding God's plan for liberating all people, lived and proclaimed by Jesus of Nazareth.

78. In integrating the concrete experience of today's youth with the fundamentals of Christian experience, as narrated in the Bible and later in Christian tradition, the experience of liberation for today's young people takes shape. In direct contact with them, we discover their hopes and frustrations, desires and dreams. In that way, based on their very own situations, we reflect, plan and develop how to go about proclaiming the Gospel, the Good News that comes to us from the God of life.

79. For us the lives and faces of young people (each and every one) are places where this God of life reveals Himself to us and we get to know Him. We discover and experience God in the everyday realities of our life. This faith-filled reading of reality helps us better understand His liberating action in the world. Inspired by Mary, we view the life and face of each young person as the place where we listen to, love and serve God. [20]

80. The cultures of the young are a special feature of this revelation. Considering a young person as a sign of God's presence means welcoming God's voice speaking to us through that individual and his or her forms of expression. This presumes our overcoming a narrow view of revelation, which some people think of as a static source of knowledge, a series of stringent and immutable ideas, incapable of sensing changes in society and the Christian community, and even less so the questioning that comes from the world of the young. It also means not wanting to overestimate the qualities of youth or treat them in a naive way, overlooking the dynamics of sin present in their lives and in society. [21]

Jesus Christ, alive and present in the world and the lives of the young [22]

81. Convinced that Christ is the center and reason for our lives, we think of Him as the model for our approaching the Father through the action of the Spirit. God became man incarnating Himself in the person of Jesus. "God's love became actual and visible when in the fullness of time God sent His Son." [23] In Him, "Emmanuel," "God with us" (Is 7, 14) the presence of God reaches its fullness in the lives and journeys of the young. In Jesus, God becomes man, becomes young. In Jesus alive and present, young people find abundant blessings in their lives. [24]

20 MARIST BROTHERS. Acts of the XIX General Chapter. *Marist Apostolic Spirituality Document*, 1993, n. 12, p. 14.

21 CNBB. *Evangelização da Juventude. Desafios e Perspectivas Pastorais*, 2007, n. 80 and 81.

22 CELAM. *Civilização do Amor: Tarefa e Esperança*, 1997, pp. 101-121.

23 CNBB. *Marco Referencial da Pastoral da Juventude do Brasil*, 1998, p. 124.

24 CELAM, *Civilização do Amor: Tarefa e Esperança*, 1997, p. 101.



82. At Nazareth, living the ordinary life of a youth of his time, he grew "in wisdom, age and favor before God and man" (Lk 2, 52).[25] Situated in a specific time and place, Jesus embraced the attitudes prescribed by his social, political, cultural, economic and religious environment. An authentic man, an optimist is facing the future, he confronts conflict, he lives in freedom and frees others; he goes out to meet people. In solidarity with his people Jesus prays to the Father. He extends an invitation to form communities because that is the only way one can experience and understand the Kingdom.

83. Only in a small community is it possible to learn the fundamental values of the new style of life that Jesus proposes: goods shared in common (Mt 6, 24); fraternity and equality among all (Mt 23, 8-10); authority seen as service — "If anyone wishes to be first, he shall be the last of all and the servant of all" (Mk 9, 35); friendship to the point of having no secrets (Jn 15, 15); and a reaffirmation of the bond between a man and a woman in marriage (Mt 19, 1-9). His plan of salvation is most fully grasped in community and service to others.[26]

84. Jesus calls young people together to fashion and live a life rooted in love, to pray from their lived experience, to proclaim with their joyful and eager lives that genuine love is possible, and as their journey unfolds to recognize the presence of the God of Life. He invites us to forgive and be forgiven. Today people continue hearing that very same invitation of his to bring encouragement to countless young people disheartened and dejected by the difficulties that they have to contend with in life.[27]

Evangelization, essence of the Marist mission

85. The person of Jesus of Nazareth is the foundation for the vocation and mission of the Church in the world: to proclaim the Gospel

25 CELAM, *Civilização do Amor: Tarefa e Esperança*, 1997, p. 98.

26 CELAM, *Civilização do Amor: Tarefa e Esperança*, 1997, pp. 107-08.

27 CELAM, *Civilização do Amor: Tarefa e Esperança*, 1997, pp. 110-114.

to the men and women helping build the Reign of God on earth. Evangelizing is the clearest sign of the ecclesial community. The Church is sent on mission by Jesus so that fortified by the power of his Spirit, it will manifest to people everywhere the face of Divine Love and the meaning of human life.[28]

86. As Marists Jesus and His Gospel excite us. He is the reason for all we are and all we are doing. Marcellin Champagnat laid out the essence of our Marist mission: "to make Jesus Christ known and loved." He envisioned us as educators and catechists who would structure our entire community and personal life around the mission of evangelizing by educating children and young people, especially those least cared for in society. By means of our ministries we make Marcellin Champagnat's ardent desire come true: "Every time I see young people I can't help but tell them, 'How greatly Jesus loves you!'"

87. We strive to be apostles for young people, evangelizing them through our lives and presence among them.[29] Love for the young, especially the poor, is the distinguishing characteristic of our mission.

88. We are paying close attention to the reality of today's young people. We respond to their yearnings to search for the meaning of life by introducing them to Jesus, to His personal example and His plans for establishing the Kingdom. We are convinced that welcoming the Gospel's news brings happiness and gives meaning to life. Taking this news to heart puts us at odds with some the values dominant in society:

- A generous gratuitous love that transcends the tendency to remain wrapped up in a life of self-gratification.
- A life of collaboration and sharing that places solidarity above competition, personal success and economic wellbeing.

28 PAUL VI. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 1975, n. 14. And MARIST BROTHERS. *Constitutions and Statutes*, 1988 , n. 79.

29 MARIST BROTHERS. *In the footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat; a vision for Marist education today*, 1998, n. 78.

- An invitation to experience the profound meaning of community, tearing us away from a life of individualism.
- A call to commitment with others, keeping us alert to the risk of becoming indifferent.

89. Our activities with the young take place using methods common to educational and communications programs. We help individuals become aware of their personal identity, freedom to look at their future with hope, ability to see themselves playing a leading role in the complex interweaving of their personal and collective existence, being transforming agents in their own circumstances and integrating faith and life.

90. Like Marcellin Champagnat we are bold and creative in our efforts to enter into the lives and world of the young. We maintain an open and welcoming attitude with them. We want to be brothers and sisters on their journey to human and Christian development. The Marist style of education is based on a truly holistic vision of the person. Promoting human growth is inherent in the process of evangelization.[30]

The model of Church in our mission to evangelize

91. We are Church, the people of God, a missionary Church that discovers, contemplates, loves and is grateful for God's presence and work in each human being and shares with all people, especially the poor, our joys and hopes, sorrows and anxieties[31]. Ours is a dynamic Church that sees itself on a mission so that all men and women can discover the action and ardor of the Spirit, providing mediation in timely ways so that they can encounter God in their

30 MARIST BROTHERS. *In the Footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat*, 1998, n. 169-170 and 70.

31 VATICAN COUNCIL II. *Gaudium et Spes*, 1996, n. 1.

lives. A missionary Church:

- That keeps in mind given socio-cultural realities in order to commit itself to them beginning with promoting the person.
- That looks after youth as persons, offering each one a plan of life.
- That is called to change some behaviors in order to become more human, welcoming and immersed in the culture.
- That should aspire to committing itself to serving society, especially the neediest.
- That strives to be a Mother who accompanies young people in their struggles to free themselves from co-dependent behavior.

92. Our evangelizing mission with the young impels us to be leavening and to promote a welcoming, participatory, evangelical, prophetic and fraternal Church.[32] A model of Church:

- That gives priority to the care and service to specific human persons and their problems;
- That lives religious experience authentically;
- That lives in fidelity to the ecclesial community;
- That always keeps a sense of searching for spiritual improvement;
- That finds itself in process, on the way, maintaining a realistic attitude and incarnated in the world;
- That feels compassion when faced with grief in the world and commits itself to transforming this;
- That exemplifies living out the Paschal mystery, being a witness of hope for the men and women of our time.[33]

32 INTERNATIONAL ASSEMBLY ON THE MARIST MISSION. *Document*, in *FMS Message 38*, 2008, n. 3, 6. p. 83.

33 PRAT, *...Y les lavó los pies*, 1997, pp. 194-206.

93. We show the welcoming face of the Church that manifests itself by means of a delicate balance between on the one hand extending an unconditional welcome to young people exactly as they are, and on the other a welcome conditioned on their commitment to lovingly correspond in making some changes in their lives.

94. We also express love for a young person by showing trust. The most concrete way to give today's young people confidence is by returning to them a leadership role often denied to them in society. For one thing we specifically do this in the sphere of the individual by helping personalize the process of human development (feelings and will), and for another, in the sphere of society, by actively assisting him or her to assume responsibilities with peers and their society (commitment and participation).[34]

95. Fraternity is a Marist feature that defines our way of relating to the young.[35] We feel God is calling us to share this gift with the young. Fraternity constitutes a way of relating and is a face of the Church that inspires hope and confidence.

96. We are invited to be prophets in our time, to listen to the calls that God is sending us through the lives and suffering of so many brothers and sisters who find themselves at the margin of society. In these specific conditions, feeling a responsibility to proclaim the Gospel and denounce the profaning of God's face present in each person, our mission takes shape and becomes set, enriched by the particular goings-on in the world us. In this process we approach young people and open our eyes to their dreams and plans and their genuine challenges. This offers us the wherewithal to truly become builders of justice and peace in the world. Ours is a prophetic Church in tune with the prophetic vocation of youth.

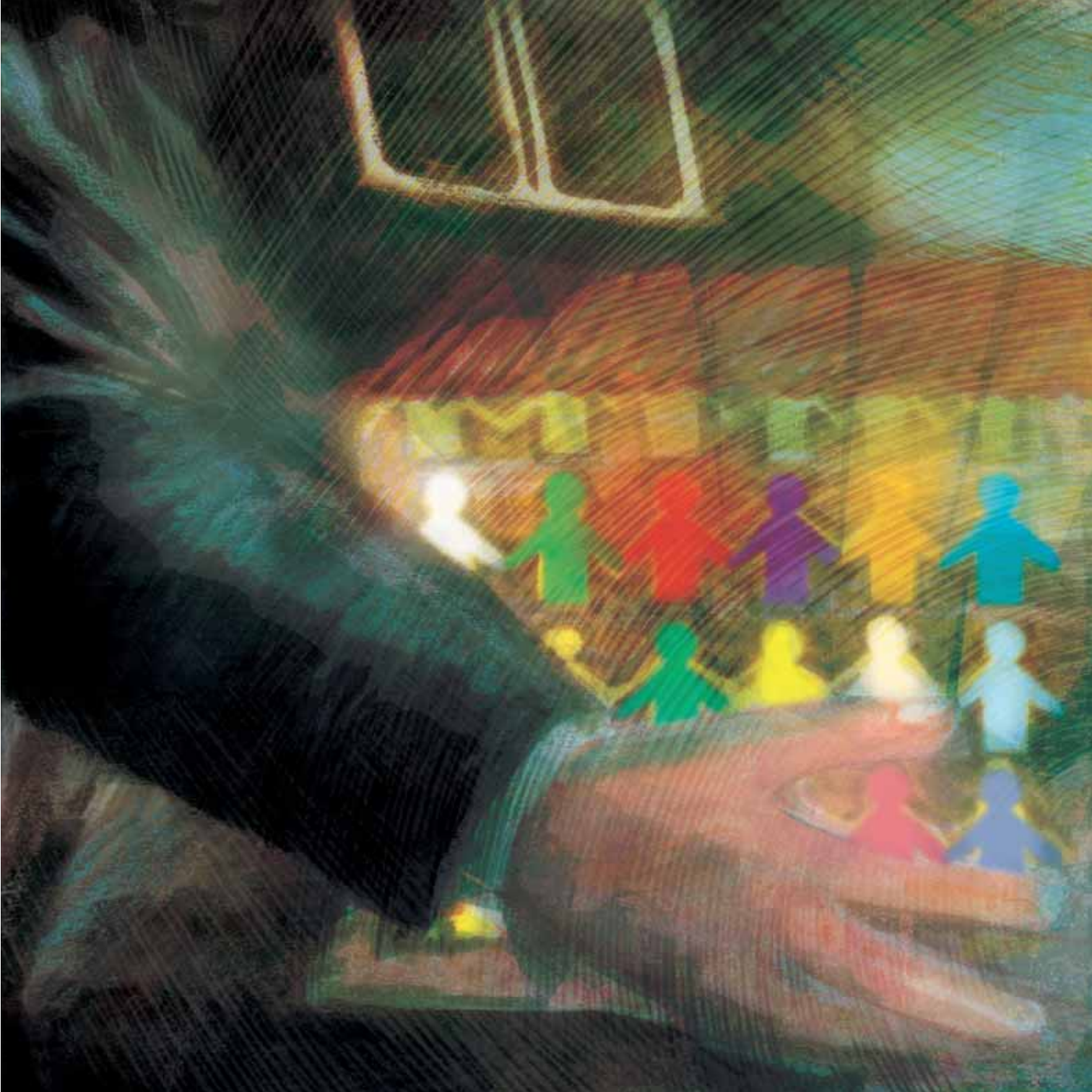
34 POLLO. *Comunicazione educativa*, 2004, p. 65.

35 MARIST BROTHERS. *Water from the rock. Marist spirituality flowing in the tradition of Marcellin Champagnat*, 2007, n. 119.

97. Just as she did for Marcellin Champagnat and the first brothers, Mary inspires the model of the Church that we offer youth, a Church modeled on that of the first Christians, "This Marian Church has the heart of a mother: no one is abandoned. A mother believes in the goodness at the core of a person, and forgives readily. We are respectful of each one's personal journey. There is a place for those with doubts and spiritual uncertainty, a place for all. There is listening and dialogue. Challenge and confrontation are done with honesty and openness."[36]

98. In our ministry we especially empower life in a group. The life of the group is the ecclesial setting of our presence among young people. We strive to make youth groups true homes where one can live the Christian experience of sharing, fraternity, co-responsibility and commitment to society, especially people most in need.

36 MARIST BROTHERS. *Water from the rock. Marist spirituality flowing in the tradition of Marcellin Champagnat*, 2007, n. 114.





3

The Hermitage, home for us all

99. Starting from the sociological and theological foundations laid out in the preceding chapters, we will now focus on our understanding of Marist Youth Ministry. We will begin with a broad definition to then specify our particular understanding as Marists.

Youth ministry, a privileged place for evangelizing the young

100. Youth ministry is the Christian community's response to the needs of young people, as well as a sharing of the unique gifts of youth with that same community.[37] "What is called for nowadays is a Church that knows how to respond to the hopes of the young. Jesus wants to enter into dialogue with them, and by means of His Body that is the Church, to propose to them the possibility of a decision oriented to a vital commitment. As Jesus did with the disciples at Emmaus, today the Church should become the traveling companion of the young."[38]

101. Youth Ministry tries to continue using a process with young people similar to the one used by Jesus with His disciples:

- It is a place where the personal and spiritual growth of young people is promoted, helping them to take a leading role their human development and offering them opportunities to build a life plan for their personal fulfillment as well as get involved in transforming the world.
- It is a place where young people can come into contact with the wider Christian community and make their faith journey together with other youth.

37 UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS. *Renewing the vision*, 1997, p. 1.

38 JOHN PAUL II. Meditation during the prayer vigil with youth at World Youth Day 1995 in the Philippines, 1995.

- As youth become more and more aware of their identity, they are committing themselves to serving others and actively participating in the life and mission of the Church.

102. Young people have an innate ability to communicate and convince, with their example making it possible for other young people to enter into a personal encounter with Jesus and his plan of life.

103. "Youth must not simply be considered as an object of pastoral concern for the Church: in fact, young people are and ought to be encouraged to be active on behalf of the Church as *leading characters in evangelization and participants in the renewal of society.*"[39] First of all, youth in leadership roles should become a reality in their own youthful environment. It is opportune to recall the words of the Second Vatican Council: "Youth should become the first and foremost apostles for the young, exercising their personal apostolate among their own companions, given their influence in the social scene where they live."[40] Paul VI in "Evangelii Nuntiandi" reaffirms the same idea: "Young people who are well trained in faith and prayer must become more and more the apostles of youth. The Church counts greatly on their contribution."[41]

Marcellin Champagnat and the young

104. During his vacations as a seminarian, Marcellin valued every possible opportunity to meet and talk to young people about God's infinite love for them.[42] We also know that as a young parish priest he went through the villages at La Valla looking for youth and teaching them catechism. He was greatly concerned about the religious, social and economic situation of the young of his time, and he wanted to do something to remedy this.

39 JOHN PAUL II. Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles laici*, 1988, n. 46.

40 VATICAN COUNCIL II. *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 1996, n. 12.

41 PAUL VI. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Apostolic Exhortation, 1975, n. 72.

42 FARRELL. *Achievements from the Depths*, 1984, p. 41.

105. His encounter with the dying youth Jean-Baptiste Montagne on October 28, 1816 in the hamlet of Les Palais[43] was the explosive moment that made the dream he had been nurturing for some time come true. Moved by the Holy Spirit he brought together some youngsters to walk through villages and talk to children about God and His great love and affection for them. Gradually he formed these young men into a community around Mary and called them "Little Brothers of Mary."[44]

106. Together with the Brothers, Champagnat devoted special care to the poorest children and welcomed them warmly at the Hermitage. And in spite of the community's limited resources, he did what he could to satisfy their most basic needs.[45]

107. Behind this passion for helping children and young people, we find Marcellin's lively awareness that God manifests Himself through the people and events of everyday life:[46]

- His spirituality rested on the solid foundation of his love for God and others. Marcellin's God was not an abstract God. He profoundly loved the humanity of God revealed in Jesus.
- He was convinced that in order to have a loving relationship with God he also needed to cultivate a loving relationship with others.
- Through the exercise of the presence of God, we see how Marcellin desired and sought out the company of a God near and dear to him.

108. Marcellin had a deep spirituality and special qualities that marked his way of approaching everyday happenings. In this we find the basis of our Marist spirituality:

- His living a down-to-earth Christian life.
- His ability to come up with fitting solutions to problems.

43 FARRELL. *Achievements from the Depths*, 1984, p. 64.

44 FARRELL. *Achievements from the Depths*, 1984, p. 66.

45 FURET. *Life of Joseph Benedict Marcellin Champagnat*, 1989, p. 70.

46 SAMMON. *A revolution of the heart*, 2003, pp. 28 and 48.

- His special knack for overcoming obstacles, even when all hope seemed lost.
- His sensitivity when offering help suited to each person's needs.
- His simplicity and his reliance on God's presence.
- His wholehearted trust in Mary's loving care.
- His desire to be Church, embracing every aspect of the world of youth.

109. All of this inspires our style of being present among youth and should therefore characterize Marist Youth Ministry.[47]

Marist Youth Ministry

110. The heart of Marcellin Champagnat's mission was "to make Jesus known and loved", seeing education as the means for bringing the experience of faith to young people and helping them become "good Christians and good citizens." As his followers, we take up this same mission,[48] though distinctive structures and projects, one of which is Marist Youth Ministry (MYM).

111. Today many young people find themselves alienated from the Church and question its relevance in their lives. We see MYM as a privileged place for being involved in the lives of youth and accompanying them in their personal and communal experience of faith, helping them discover the face of a vibrant, young and caring Church.

112. Through our many educational structures and projects across the world, we Marists are in direct contact with youth and we know their enthusiasm and their assertiveness. We are well situated to channel their hunger for belonging and offer them programs

47 SAMMON. *Making Jesus Christ known and loved; Marist apostolic life today*, 2006, p. 45.

48 MARIST BROTHERS. *In the footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat; a vision for Marist education today*, 1998, n. 69 and 70.

capable of filling their lives with meaning. In this way we find ourselves in a privileged position to make a significant contribution to the life of the Church and youth by means of a well organized, unified, structured and systematic youth ministry.

113. Starting out from their own situations in life, MYM — offered in terms of a holistic education — endeavors to assist young people to be ever more reflective, intentional, conscientious, contextualized and organized in their actions, with a view to promoting a renewal in the Church and a transformation in society. Thus our need to be attentive in forming leaders among the young themselves.

114. Helping to awaken young people to take a leading role in forming their civic and socio-political consciences is of the utmost importance in their process of maturing and their commitment to build a society marked by welcoming diversity and bringing about peace. Holistic formation aims at learning to recognize the person and needs of others, showing genuine interest and making them feel part of the family.

115. Making our own the Marist characteristics that are proper to us, in MYM we strive to accompany youth and prepared them to live as disciples of Jesus and sons and daughters of Champagnat. Open to all young people, we welcome them with affection, without regard to faith, color or ethnicity, showing special care for the most marginalized.

Features of Marist Youth Ministry

116. MYM has a clear educational dimension and therefore requires a certain level of organization, structure and systematization. This

implies that every youth group must have a well-thought-out program, with specific goals and objectives for a certain period of time. The means for attaining these objectives should be spelled out and include all the possible activities that the group intends to carry out. Other factors, such as those responsible and the places and instruments for reaching the objectives need to be identified. Finally the program should be constantly evaluated, with reliance on the participation of the young people.

117. One of the basic characteristics of Marist Youth Ministry is its being a conscious, intentional and explicit plan for evangelizing the young. Given the many different situations in which youth find themselves it is necessary to plan for a ministry that is well thought out and tailored to the diverse backgrounds and attitudes of the young in regard to faith and life. We adapt our ministry to the age, character and circumstances of the specific groups with which we work.[49] We elaborate a process in which some sort of record is kept of the steps taken and the human development that comes about.

118. Aware that God does not speak to individuals in the abstract but reveals Himself in the experience of day-to-day life, MYM takes as its point of departure those topics that affect youth directly and indirectly. Themes such as ecology, the promotion of human rights and the personal dignity of men and women should be reflected in discussions that take place or in other activities.

119. MYM aims to put the human person at the center of its interests. This requires that each activity of the group be strictly related to the life of the young, who have a stake in what transpires and have a leading role to play. "Individually and in small groups, we help them spell out their ideals and transform them into objectives befitting their age and circumstances."[50]

49 MARIST BROTHERS. *In the footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat; a vision for Marist education today*, 1998, n. 180.

50 MARIST BROTHERS. *In the footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat; a vision for Marist education today*, 1998, n. 181.

120. MYM requires a certain structuring, in which responsibilities shared among various people in charge of different functions are enumerated. This has to do with leaders, animators, moderators, accompaniers, coordinators, and other people, depending on the context. In each case, it's important that everyone feels he has something to contribute to the group. Acting in this way, the organization turns into a privileged instrument for promoting leadership among the young.

121. A structured MYM also requires:

- That there be basic training for leaders and formators with a special emphasis on youth leadership, spiritual direction and accompaniment;[51]
- That there be written guidelines, adapted to the local situation, for Marist leaders and animators;
- That a beginning and end point be clearly defined in the formation process offered by MYM, keeping in mind that the education of young people is something open and developed day by day from members' diverse experiences;
- That the objectives of each group be clear, as also the way for forming groups at each stage or level;
- That contents and goals be well-defined for each level and age group;
- That there be qualified accompaniers.

Underlying Marist principles

122. MYM is based on a mystique and characteristic teaching style that Marcellin and the first brothers initiated — in many aspects a

51 MARIST BROTHERS. *In the footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat; a vision for Marist education today*, 1998, n. 181.

very innovative style.[52] Working along with many other congregations and associations we participate in the pastoral ministry of the Church among the young, contributing the uniqueness of our charism as Marists.

Presence

123. As Marists, we know very well that we educate, first and foremost, by being present to young people, showing that we are truly concerned about each one personally. In MYM "we make time for them beyond merely professional contacts, getting to know each one individually."[53]

124. Being present does not just mean spending time with them as a group. It means we encounter them as individuals in order to establish a personal relationship and listen to their anxieties and aspirations. A relationship that seeks to go beyond superficial knowledge, offering friendship characterized by mutual trust and sharing. And this requires preparation of an academic and scientific nature.

125. Our aim in MYM is not only to provide moral or religious instruction. We want to lead youth to understand and appreciate what it means to be committed young Christians and virtuous citizens. To achieve this, we need to live among them and have them with us for an extended period of time.[54].

Simplicity, humility and modesty

126. MYM would be incomplete if it did not offer young people an opportunity to explore and understand the way, spirituality and person of Marcellin Champagnat and our first brothers. As a youth

52 MARIST BROTHERS. *In the footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat; a vision for Marist education today*, 1998, n. 97.

53 MARIST BROTHERS. *In the footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat; a vision for Marist education today*, 1998, n. 99.

54 FURET. *Life of Joseph Benedict Marcellin Champagnat*, 1989, pp. 547-548.



growing up, Marcellin serves as a model of simplicity for us. In today's materialistic and consumer-oriented world, this virtue is viewed as a sign of weakness, as a failing on the part of people not inclined to race after fame and power.

127. Among ourselves we traditionally use the symbol of the three violets to represent simplicity together with humility and modesty, and these virtues are truly the basis of Marcellin's personality and spirituality. They animate us to bring a simple lifestyle that avoids all forms of presumption and superficiality. We say what we believe and back up our words with actions, striving to be straightforward in our lives.[55]

Family spirit

128. Father Champagnat wanted his brothers to love one another just as the first Christians did. In MYM we form a worldwide family with youth and those who team up with us; we all feel at home and on the same footing, in such a way that people can say of us as they did of the first Christians: "See how they love one another."[56]

129. Taking courage and strength from Mary, as Father Champagnat and the first brothers did, education in family spirit is a school of faith for young people. We serve and accompany them on their way to encountering the love and tenderness of God. We offer love and affection so that they can progressively discover, based on their personal freedom, how to trust and dialogue, celebrate and have a community experience of faith.[57] The young person breathes through experiencing life in a family.

130. As far as possible in promoting family spirit we offer opportunities to the young so they can relate to Marist youth from other parts of

55 MARIST BROTHERS. *In the footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat; a vision for Marist education today*, 1998, n. 103-104.

56 MARIST BROTHERS. *In the footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat; a vision for Marist education today*, 1998, n. 103-104.

57 MARIST BROTHERS. *In the footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat; a vision for Marist education today*, 1998, n. 103-104.

the world, beginning with those in the same region, envisioning humanity as one great family.

Love of work

131. Champagnat did not just encourage us to value manual work. He led the brothers by example, whether in cultivating the garden, building the house or manufacturing nails. He carried out all these projects with great enthusiasm. As his followers, we do not hesitate to roll up our sleeves and get dust and mud on our hands.

132. Inspired by Marcellin, we carry out the formation of youth with dedication, zeal, and getting involved in practical ways. We prepare them to be passionate about their work and to respect the work of others. MYM helps young people to be self-motivated and creative. We promote projects of solidarity that facilitate the encounter of young people coming from diverse social backgrounds.

The way Mary did things

133. In her role as our Ordinary Resource Mary, the Mother of our Savior and our Good Mother is at the center of our apostolate to the young.[58] She is at the center of MYM just as she was during the wedding feast at Cana. There she introduced her Son to the young couple who had run out of wine for their celebration of life. In a similar way we encourage young people to have recourse to her in their prayers and imitate her in their lives. At Cana, besides learning how to be a mother, Mary learned how to be a disciple of her own Son.

134. Mary, educator of the youthful Jesus, inspires our love and accompaniment of the young. Relying on her presence, MYM attempts

58 MARIST BROTHERS. *Constitutions and Statutes*, 1988, n. 84.

to answer the great questions in the lives of youth and help them discover the unconditional love of our Father. Like the first Christian community at Pentecost, we gather together with young people around Mary. Like the first Marists, we feel inspired to build a Marian Church and we help young people experience the maternal face of that very same Church.[59]

Linkage with Vocation Ministry

135. The dimension of vocations is an essential part of the educational program in MYM. In Youth Ministry Vocation Ministry finds a vital and privileged space, and Youth Ministry is more comprehensive and effective when open to the dimension of vocations. This integrated approach helps young people to take a leadership role in charting the course of their lives, and as we mentioned earlier, presents them with an opportunity to develop their life plan. In addition, experience tells us that evangelizing young people through MYM is one of the best paths for bringing to birth and nurturing interest in a Marist vocation, whether as a lay person or vowed religious.

136. A plan for youth ministry should have as its ultimate aim the maturing of the relationship between a young person and the Lord through a personal, profound and unwavering dialogue. The dimension of vocations is an integral part of youth ministry. So much so that we can affirm that vocation ministry in particular is an essential part of youth ministry and that youth ministry is only comprehensive and effective when it opens itself out to the dimension of vocations.

59 MARIST BROTHERS. *Water from the rock. Marist spirituality flowing in the tradition of Marcellin Champagnat*, 2007, n. 28 and 114.





4

If the Lord
does not build the house…

137. In our constant desire to be apostles to youth, we want to adhere to the guidelines that Jesus used for teaching: inviting and continually engaging in conversation in order to enter the Kingdom, and doing so as individuals who are accountable, in fraternal relationships, as sons and daughters of God. In our style of educating, our efforts to evangelize aspire to contribute in building up a civilization of love. We want to share and continue the dream of Champagnat, reaffirming our prophetic option to offer youth, especially the poor, an integral, human and spiritual education based on love and all the other values of the Kingdom.

138. Pedagogical and methodological options are key when it comes to launching Marist Youth Ministry. By pedagogical options we mean mainly the attitudes and strategies that we see as priorities when evangelizing the young. Methodological options refer to the procedures and resources that we adopt in the group work that we do.

139. Like Father Champagnat, we place all our confidence in the Lord: "If the Lord does not build the house…." Notwithstanding, simultaneously we place the best of ourselves and the resources at our disposal at the service of the mission. Confidence does not mean improvising or muddling along, but rather preparing the way so the Spirit of the Lord can open a path and over time touch the hearts of the youth entrusted to our care.

Pedagogical-ministerial options in Marist Youth Ministry

140. In our work of evangelizing teenagers and young people it is absolutely necessary to be clear about the pedagogical-ministerial

options that we adopt. Keeping in mind the educational programs for ministry and the circumstances on each continent, our options at the pedagogical and ministerial level assert what we believe, select and define as the priority proposals we use to guide us in our process for evangelizing youth in the Marist and ecclesial sphere.

141. The document *In the Footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat* reminds us that, based Marcellin Champagnat's example and assuming his very same mission, we are called to be educators and lead youth to experience a personal and communal faith that results in their becoming free, just, ethical and solidarity-oriented persons.

142. As Marists we affirm five fundamental pedagogical-ministerial options:

- Youth groups and the vibrant experience of fraternity
- The process of educating in the faith
- Accompaniment
- Organization
- The formation of active, service-oriented and contemplative leaders at different levels.

Youth groups and the vibrant experience of fraternity

143. In the process of MYM one educational option is youth groups. This constitutes an area conducive to maturing in the faith and enjoying a vibrant personal and communal experience. In groups, when people share their thoughts and recognize that all are sons and daughters of God, they develop and deepen ideas and attitudes. In groups each member is welcomed as a unique individual and valued as such.

144. The group provides space for deepening community ties, strengthening one's self-image, sharing experiences and points of view, forming a critical sense, and developing community values, a sense of being Church, of solidarity and of encountering and following Jesus of Nazareth.

145. Initially, a youth participating in an MYM group may feel a mixture of uncertainty and joy. Uncertainty because one comes face to face with the unknown, new relationships and having to position oneself in the presence of others. But also joy, because of everything brought about by the newness of the group that, in fostering many new relationships, motivates the young person to want to be with others in order to confront challenges.

146. One of the main characteristics of groups that make up MYM is that they are small, composed of young men and women, and they enjoy a sustained level of participation at encounters and meetings. Jesus used small groups as a way to teach and train his twelve apostles.

147. Besides small-group encounters, MYM holds larger ones such as musical spectaculars, festivals, theatrical productions, excursions, pilgrimages, workshops, conferences, etc. These events motivate and encourage all the while giving them visibility and credibility in the eyes of the Institute, the Church and society in general. We will need to see to it that evangelizing the young is not reduced to these events alone so as to insure the integrity of the cohesive and systematic methods we use in group work, fundamental to our process of educating in the faith.

The process of educating in the faith

148. In MYM we understand education in the faith to mean a dynamic and integral process, a journey that the young people have to make

on their own. This process, i.e., the road to maturing in the faith, is not something that one creates automatically. On the contrary, it has a starting point and presupposes a distance already traveled.[60] Neither the human person nor groups are born as finished products, perfect in every way; they need to be formed over a long period of time, involving different requirements.[61] We call this process education in the faith.

149. The process of education in the faith is marked by an originality and authenticity that arises from encountering and discovering a God who reveals Himself in Jesus, human persons and nature. This process of holistic formation makes it possible for youth to live the plan of Jesus, becoming apostles for other young people, and to commit themselves as Christians to build a more just, ethical and solidarity-oriented society, a sign of the civilization of love.

150. By integral formation we understand one that keeps in mind the biological, social, anthropological, cultural, psychological and spiritual development of the young. The relationship they form with their own being, their group, society, God our Father and liberator, the Church, nature and ecology, and their educational environment.[62]

151. The educational content of MYM is transforming, liberating and communitarian. It starts out from the involvement of teenagers and young people themselves, and helps them to grow as wholesome and hope-filled persons, committed to transforming society in harmony with the values of the Kingdom. This process offers young people the possibility to reflect on and to develop their own unique life plan.

Accompaniment

152. Another pedagogical option of MYM is accompaniment, so necessary to personalize processes, heal wounds and help young people

60 UMBRASIL. *Caminho da Educação e Amadurecimento na Fé*, 2008, p. 24.

61 CELAM. *Civilização do Amor: Tarefa e Esperança*, 1997, p. 201.

62 COMISSÃO NACIONAL DE EVANGELIZAÇÃO DE ADOLESCENTES E JOVENS. *Diretrizes Nacionais da Pastoral Juvenil Marista*, 2006, n. 336.

sense the Spirit in their heart. The growth of each young person and the group to which he or she belongs is a task that requires the presence and action of qualified people. There is no growth in the faith without accompaniment, and there is no accompaniment without accompanier. Here are attributes of MYM advisers-accompaniers in their work to evangelize the young.

153. To accompany well, we need to know and understand the phenomenon known as youth. As apostles to young people and heirs to the charism of Champagnat, we believe that educating and evangelizing youth is a gift and a challenge for all of us. And so we must be competent in our response to this call. Good will is not enough. For anyone desiring to take up the cause of youth as a preferential field in evangelization, it is essential to read and study about young people and be in their midst, trying to perceive their dreams and challenges, hopes and hard times.

154. Advisers-accompaniers are educators in the faith, people who have already laid out a life plan, who are striving to proclaim Jesus Christ and live an incarnated spirituality in the world of today. They therefore understand that forming those in front of them is not only their responsibility but actually the work of the Holy Spirit. They sense that they are instruments in the hands of God at the service of young people.

155. Accompaniers know how to recognize the potential of youth. In the process of fostering growth in the faith, they are attentive to the times of growth, affective identification, assimilation and commitment on the part of the young. Following the example of Mary, dearest mother and educator of her son Jesus, accompaniers cannot be stand-ins for them, only walk by their side. In the measure that they accompany, they also advance their own process of education in the faith.

156. Although young people are primarily responsible for maturing in their faith, they do not walk alone. The first step, based on their lives and concerns, consists of illuminating their existence with the dimension of faith and spurring them on to act in particular ways to bring about personal change. The special sensitivity of young people have for situations of poverty and social inequality opens for us a spiritual path in forming their conscience.[63] We do not introduce them to a distant God but a God who is genuine in His youthful way of being, joyful, dynamic, creative and daring.

Organization

157. In support of its efforts to encourage participation and decision-making, MYM features organization as one of its pedagogical-ministerial options. This generates a dynamic process of communion, animation and accompaniment and allows for an interchange of experiences at the different levels of the Institute, the Church and society.

158. MYM is organized by means of basic groups that are equipped with structures of coordination, animation and accompaniment. From that organization arise leaders who undertake commitments to transform reality, internally in their own group and other Marist spaces, as well as outside of them. By means of organization youth begin to feel they are members of the people of God and participants in the political process of their society.

159. By means of organization, young people are educated to be tolerant and respectful, show solidarity and welcome differences, learning how to listen to the ideas of others and express their own with respect, affirming their place in history. In generating spaces for dialogue and decision-making, proper to all pastoral

63 CNBB. *Evangelização da juventude. Desafios e perspectivas pastorais*, 2007, n. 66.

activity marked by co-responsibility, organization favors formation for action.

160. During the process of organizing, so that groups not enclose themselves in a limited and superficial vision, we should offer three educational resources:

- Collective planning: starting from the life situation of youth, to facilitate distributing responsibilities and having them participate.
- Evaluation, taking stock of things to discover what needs to be changed, improved or planned in regard to motivations, processes, results, objectives and the distribution of assignments. This requires listening and openness.
- The appraisal and celebration of accomplishments. Celebrating life befits youth in their style of living and appraising the processes in which they're involved.

161. Exchanging experiences among different levels of Church with others involved in Youth Ministry, including with other Congregations that work with teenagers and young people, supports the notion that young people can evangelize other young people. This motivates youth to open up and dialogue with other traditions and realities in their world. This is how they develop their sense of belonging to the Church and the Institute; this requires inserting themselves into a vital and unifying work that has an ecclesial dimension.

162. Participation in the process of MYM's organization should help young people grow in humility and motivate them to adopt simplicity as a virtue for their lives, animating them to be authentic, open and sincere at all times. In that way they also develop a sense of motivation and personal organization that expresses itself in the use of their time, talents, and ability to be proactive in positive ways.

The formation of active, service-oriented and contemplative leaders in diverse situations[64]

163. MYM should aim at forming leaders in different places and situations; this has great potential for developing leadership as service and dialogue. Youth activism (leadership) converts young people into key figures in their formation and propels them to participate in activities that transcend the scope of their personal and family interests: this may relate to school, community life or other social venues, using campaigns, movements, and other service-oriented activities inspired by Christian attitudes and approaches.

164. In a process where citizens lead, community experiences bring young people face to face with problems whose solutions require the convergence of hard work and political will. Promoting the common good and building a social, political and economic order that is human, just and oriented towards solidarity becomes a faith commitment. Education in the faith is thought of as actively transforming a complex socio-economic and political and cultural set of circumstances.

165. Values such as tolerance, fraternity, interreligious and ecumenical dialogue and respect for ethnic and cultural differences are characteristics of youth who exercise leadership based on a culture of peace. Young people are the builders of a new reality that brings with it many and varied revelations that condition their lives and generate different perspectives, relationships and forms of expression. In addition, young people need to be educated to extend the reach of human solidarity and become architects of peace. In this sense, knowing Jesus and His teachings opens the way to experiencing His plan of life and adopting it as a model to follow.

64 These paragraphs are inspired by the following documents: COMISSÃO NACIONAL DE EVANGELIZAÇÃO DE ADOLESCENTES E JOVENS. *Diretrizes Nacionais da Pastoral Juvenil Marista*, 2006, n. 368, 372, 384, 386; and the CONFERENCIA EPISCOPAL ESPAÑOLA. *Orientaciones sobre Pastoral de Juventud,* 1991, n. 19-23.

166. The presence of a young person together with other youth and the community represents a sign of hope for the Church's road to the future. In order to be salt of the earth and light of the world it is necessary to cultivate a life of prayer and open up to the transcendent. Prayer is fundamental and the Marist charism offers youth a sacred and practical experience of its presence in our lives. We need to deepen and strengthen in the young different ways of praying with our lives, the way Champagnat was keen to do.

Methodological options in Marist Youth Ministry

167. By methodological options we understand the set of steps and procedures that a group undertakes to attain its objectives and facilitate participation in a democratic way. In our process selecting a method is not a random happening since it determines our particular way of evangelizing youth. Methodological options help in dealing with simple yet fundamental questions that arise when we are with the young: "What should I do?" and "What steps should we take?" or, put another way, "What are the best instruments or dynamics that we can use?"

168. In this sense it is important to be aware that in our ministry with youth, not just any method is useful for us. We must determine it according to the way it engages young people themselves, keeping in mind their own characteristics and realities: the geographical, cultural, social and economic context in which they live and the time when we encounter the group and its members. This being always in harmony with the educational options presented above.

169. Methods make possible living and celebrating the grace of God in our lives, for when they serve as a basis we can give new meaning to the history and process that we are working on or about to work on. In this sense, we should consider four aspects: 1) being directly involved in the lives and personal and social world of youth; 2) allowing them to get to know and accept themselves; 3) illuminating everything with the Word of God; 4) initiating revisions and evaluations, also providing the young opportunities to perceive and celebrate all the events in their lives.

170. In MYM we see Jesus's encounter with the disciples at Emmaus as a fundamental and privileged teaching moment. Basing ourselves on this encounter allows the group to choose a method most beneficial for its stage of development in life and the circumstances in which it finds itself. We also offer *seeing — interpreting reality — acting — revising — celebrating* as an excellent method.

The disciples on the road to Emmaus[65]

171. Jesus accompanying the two disciples on the road to Emmaus is a paradigm for evangelizing the youth of today. En route there a pursuit takes place, with both the evangelizer and the evangelized engaged in a dynamic cycle of dialogue and discovery. It is dynamic because it takes place "along the way," just as our efforts occur on streets and street corners, on public transportation or at the entrance to homes… in informal conversations, at unexpected times. Traveling on this road we meet the other and welcome him with the heart of our Risen Lord. This dynamism manifests itself through presence, typical of a Marist ministry side by side with youth.

65 We base this on ideas developed by Fathers Marcial Maçaneiro and João Carlos Almeida.



"Jesus himself drew near and walked with them" (Lk 24, 13-15)

172. On Jesus's part, everything begins with his gesture of being intimately concerned about his disconsolate disciples, respectful of the tough times they have been going through personally and as a group/community. This is what we mean by "inculturation", entering into the situation and circumstances of others. Walking alongside people, there where they are; taking responsibility in the personal processes and historical moments through which groups and communities are passing. Starting from concrete circumstances and inserting ourselves in them, we make the evangelization of youth a life-giving process that takes place not only in church buildings but in everyday lives and fraternal communities.

"...but their eyes were prevented from recognizing him" (v 16-17)

173. Jesus respects the disciples' inability to recognize what is happening in their lives. He does not reproach them for not recognizing him. On the contrary, he reveals the human warmth of his way of teaching: he listens, questions and shares. He does not impose his view of what has happened, but listens to his followers to gain an understanding of what they are experiencing. Jesus shows us that our encounter with others consists of dialogue, listening to their questions, and attentiveness to what they are going through. This is not education by dispensing answers prepared in advance or passing along prefabricated panaceas. The process of inculturation continues, taking into account the needs of people immersed in their current circumstances. Youth feel welcomed when this approach is used and they themselves are able to welcome other young people in authentic ways.

They told him everything that had taken place (v 18-24)

174. In that warmhearted traveler the disciples find a space where they can talk openly, unburden their hearts and express what they've

seen and heard without fear or being prejudged. When a youth succeeds in telling all about his life and experience, including parts that painful or laden with disappointment, something within him "is healed." MYM is meant to be a space where young people can express themselves freely and trustingly.

"Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them what referred to him in all the scriptures." (v. 25-27)

175. After hearing in their own words what his disciples themselves are going through, the troubles they are facing, the sorrow that they are carrying in their hearts, Jesus illuminates their situation with the Word of God. In the Scriptures he finds explanations that had never occurred to the two of them. Jesus teaches us that there is much more to evangelizing than repeating quotes from the Bible. The proclamation becomes Good News when it answers people's aspirations and anxieties. And it is the Word that enlivens when it nourishes hope and gives meaning to the historical moment that they are experiencing, with its problems and contradictions, crises and risks.

"Stay with us, for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over..." (v. 28-29)

176. Young people's loyalty to the faith is born of a faith that is questioned, one that becomes known and experienced through their own personal story. Without a feeling of support and teaching moments no one arrives at that "tactful moment." The Christian mission is meant to serve life, and therefore whoever is ready to follow Jesus commits himself to the welfare of his neighbor. Hence the attitude of concern on the part of the two disciples: "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over." Living with the

other gives birth to concern about his life and a desire for his well being MYM is a true "experience of nearness," enabling the heart to be on fire and yearn for a profound encounter with Jesus and our fellow travelers.

"Jesus took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. With that their eyes were opened..." (v. 30-31)

177. The disciples recline with Jesus to celebrate and share bread; the community comes together for a feast to celebrate life and the joy of being together. In this space the evangelizer as well as the evangelized break bread together. At that moment, their physical eyes do not see the Lord, but the eyes of their heart sense his presence and recognize him. Christ is no longer "out there," but in their "hearts," that now they sense are burning. And so they recline at the same table, share the bread and recognize the presence of Jesus in their midst. Thus, MYM is a privileged opportunity to celebrate the God who is in our midst even though at times he may seem to be a stranger.

"Were not our hearts burning within us while he spoke to us on the way and opened the scriptures to us?" (v. 32)

178. All the experiences lived in youth groups favor a deeper understanding, which gives new meaning to all of them. But, not only "were our hearts burning" but "we know it was He." When an experience touches our souls, it is necessary to find a meaning that we can make our own, one that is capable of transforming our lives and attitudes. Young people comprehend and interpret the signs of God in their lives and history through sharing life, acquiring self-knowledge, socializing, putting their spirituality into practice and becoming more involved as citizens. These signs point toward

a plan for life. And, in light of their recently found "new ardor" they understand and interpret the road they are on. The routine of everyday life takes on new meaning because Jesus is present within it, encouraging youth and walking by their side.

"So they set out at once and returned to Jerusalem." (v. 33-35)

179. Following Jesus is a response to a personal call. This is what sets apart the way that Jesus taught and is also a distinguishing characteristic of the pastoral mission that we undertake and our way of accompanying people whom we prepare for beginning their life's journey. The one who evangelizes with new ardor, who evangelizes with the heart of a disciple, acts with the Spirit's strength and power. The "missioner moment" begins a new series of events in which the youth who are involved depart, getting back on the road. In MYM young people can create this experience of intimacy with Jesus, in a small community that enables them to reinsert themselves in the Church as a wider community. And so, no longer lackluster passive participants, they begin to feel a sense of being called to accomplish great things and celebrate in witnessing to an experience that has touched their souls.

Seeing-interpreting reality-taking action-revising-celebrating[66]

Seeing

180. This is the time to perceive, be alert and discover what is truly happening in the world. Based on concrete events in everyday life, aiming to analyze our challenges and lived experiences. "Seeing" reality and incarnating ourselves in it gives us a broader, deeper and global perspective [67] and motivates us to transformative action

66 Through the initiative of Cardinal Cardjn for Catholic Youth Work in Belgium in the first half of the XX Century, the long educational tradition of the Church generated the classic methodology of "seeing-judging-acting." This methodology arose from the need to bring about transformative pastoral action, adapted to diverse environments and working to overcome the divorce between faith and life. The Church in Latin America introduced "revising" and "celebrating" to the process. CELAM. *Civilização do Amor: Tarefa e Esperança*, 1997, pp. 39-41.

67 CELAM. *Civilização do Amor: Tarefa e Esperança*, 1997, p. 299.

beginning with what has been confirmed. "Seeing" involves observing, reflecting, contextualizing and perceiving the world starting from the actual situation of a young person, brought face to face with the perception of the other members in his or her group.

Interpreting reality

181. In the light of faith, the sciences, the Word of God and the teachings of the Church, this is the time to analyze what has been observed so as to discover what helps or hinders people living as brothers and sisters and building a civilization of love. It is making a pause on the way to identifying elements that favor or make more difficult the growth and consolidation of vistas dreamed by individual youths and their group.

Taking action

182. After "seeing" and "judging" the facts rooted in reality, the sciences and the Word of God, it is time to perceive things that can be done to overcome our challenges and improve our ways of working together, in line with the values of the Kingdom. "Taking action" urges us on to become agents of transformation, taking leading roles, making our lives testimonies of faith and hope in Jesus Christ, "actively collaborating in constructing a civilization of love."[68]

Revising

183. Every step of the way needs to be revised: being conscious of the present, remembering the past and projecting into the future. This evaluation ought to value[69] all achievements, including the smallest. This is about learning from mistakes and supporting improvements, correcting courses of action with an outlook and attitude filled with hope. All this will be spelled out in a new set of plans.

68 CELAM. *Civilização do Amor: Tarefa e Esperança*, 1997, p. 300.

69 CELAM. *Civilização do Amor: Tarefa e Esperança*, 1997, p. 301.

Celebrating

184. Celebrating means recognizing the grace of the God of Life present in each moment of the process being experienced and in each person belonging to the group. Celebrating makes possible the integration of faith and life, taking note of successes and failures, anxieties, fears and hopes. The ways of celebrating will differ according to time periods, the environment and culture, but it needs to be charged with meaning, inculturated and connected to the day-to-day life of youth.

185. MYM is called to cultivate a prophetic, authentic, Marian spirituality incarnated in history and inspired by the teaching methods of Jesus. In this spirit, we celebrate our accomplishments and life itself, in the light of faith. The Sacraments when celebrated in the lives of youth are efficacious signs of the liberating action of God. We draw out this sensitivity in them, helping them recognize the action of the Holy Spirit in the Church, the living presence of Jesus in history, and the love and grace of God who accompanies us throughout our lives.

186. In the Eucharist, the young and the entire people of God call to mind and receive the Paschal Mystery in Holy Communion, celebrating the life, passion, death and resurrection of Jesus, thereby renewing hope and Christian faith. Champagnat always reminded the brothers that one of the places for encountering the risen Christ was the altar. The altar represents the institution of the community. Our faith is born of the experience of bread that is shared. The Eucharist motivates us to set out on the road and share the mission, humanizing ourselves and the world in which we live.





5

Good Christians and good citizens

187. The Second Vatican Council's Pastoral Constitution "Gaudium et Spes" recognized that "we can justly consider that the future of humanity lies in the hands of those who are strong enough to provide coming generations with reasons for living and hoping."[70] Could we ever find a better way to define the vision, the ultimate panorama of our work with young people in MYM? Reasons to live and reasons to hope!

188. Young people as well as those who educate them — all of us cherish dreams in our hearts that inspire our journey and commitment. As followers of Champagnat we draw inspiration from his dream of forming "good Christians and good citizens." In words that are as relevant today as ever, John Paul II expressed the same ideal in addressing young people: "At this stage of history, the liberating message of *the Gospel of Life* has been put into your hands. And the mission of proclaiming it to the ends of the earth is now passing to your generation… The Church needs your energies, your enthusiasm, your youthful ideals in order to make the Gospel of Life penetrate the fabric of society, transforming people's hearts and the structures of society *in order to create a civilization of true justice and love*."[71]

Marist Youth Ministry, a place to dream together

189. Throughout the world, brothers, lay Marists, animators and teachers pray and live together with the young. Our dreams and horizons for the young people in MYM everywhere emanate from this concrete way of encountering one another. WITH them, not in place of them, we dream of a new generation that is civic-minded, oriented towards solidarity, exemplifying Gospel values and

70 VATICAN COUNCIL II. *Gaudium et Spes*, 1996, n. 31.

71 JOHN PAUL II. Homily at World Youth Day VIII in Denver, 1993.

committed to life, the planet and scientific knowledge, likewise being agents transforming society in the light of our Good News.

> "The dreams I have for my personal life are quite general: to get married, to have a family that brings me happiness and to find a job with opportunities to develop my talents. Above all, to become more devoted to others." *(Laurent, 24 years old)*

190. We are all creatures with great hopes and plans in our hearts. We all have our personal history of opening our hands and heart and looking towards an uncertain future. Our main desire for ourselves and the people around us is to have a happy life and create a new world. However at different stages and situations in our lives we also feel different hopes and desires. When we look at distinct places where we would prefer to be, we yearn for the Church, society, the Marist family and the family of youth to enjoy a brighter future.

191. We are convinced that by means of MYM we have the potential to once more set our hopes and desires afire, and spread our vision. We believe that by means of our working together, our horizons and attitudes are broadened. We believe it does not matter how different we are because that is the basis of one of our treasures. Finally, we believe that by means of exchanges, apprenticeships, mutual listening and sharing our hopes and ideals, we will discover the imprint of God's plans and dreams.

> "My dream for the Church and all Christians is that they will be more and more able to confront the world as it is, so that Jesus's message may be proclaimed to people in a clearer and more convincing way." *(Roberto, 27 years old)*

192. One of the causes that most unites and energizes the young is solidarity. As they mature in a holistic way, they truly see that what

draws us together and unites us is other people and their needs. Thus solidarity experiences are extremely important in the process of maturing and committing oneself to building a society characterized by embracing a wide range of social and cultural situations and bringing about peace.[72]

193. In MYM young people look upon themselves as members of a wider community. They put their heart and soul into becoming highly qualified and motivated in doing social work. Their sense of justice and truth often takes on the economic, political and environmental realities of our times. Having frequented the school of Mary and Marcellin, they are sensitive and respectful toward others; they work hard to proclaim the Good News of Jesus; they want to prepare themselves to work with the marginalized; they have developed a keen interest in the needs of youth and labor to secure their rights. MYM fortifies the dreams of young people for a more just and peaceful world. We believe that MYM will encourage and enable young people to create and care for our world and bring about a better society in which there is no discrimination with regard to sex, culture, religion or ethnic and social origins.

194. In MYM we dream about youths who shape their lives according to Gospel values. In sharing God's dream this way, looking at the world through their eyes will lead us to create a more viable future. MYM enables young people to grow as faithful followers of Christ, the Marist community to deepen its responsibility in mission; the Church to strengthen its fidelity when proclaiming the Good News, and consequently the world to work harder at bringing about freedom and justice.

195. Our Marist work is a privileged place for making this dream come true. Setting up MYM introduces a fitting space for promoting Gospel activities in line with our Marist principles of education:

72 COMISSÃO NACIONAL DE EVANGELIZAÇÃO DE ADOLESCENTES E JOVENS. *Diretrizes Nacionais da Pastoral Juvenil Marista*, 2006, n. 137.

welcoming with open arms, simplicity, and love for children and young people, especially those who are the poorest; likewise with Gospel values such as justice, compassion, mercy and charity.[73]

> "My dream for the world of tomorrow is for us to stop treating our planet so dreadfully." *(Sara, 20 years old)*

196. We dream of young people committed to seeing our planet survive and flourish. This is one of the causes that most unites the youth of the world. This is also an area that encourages involvement in the political causes. In many places it is quite evident how non-governmental organizations that fight on behalf of environmental issues rely on an enormous contingent of young people in their ranks. By means of ecology young people look at reality in innovative ways and give renewed meaning to living in community. Many youth groups in rural areas are endeavoring to better conditions in the countryside; youth in cities, mainly on the outskirts, are bringing back greater security and better infrastructure.

197. Young people in MYM are invited to exercise their responsibilities. They respectfully make use of natural resources and endeavor to create sustainable programs to conserve God's creation. Mutually we learn how united we are with the earth! We see how, consciously or unconsciously, youth use the world's resources; they develop a deep respect and sense of admiration for all living beings. This gives us hope and encouragement for the future. Knowing that we are all part of God's creation, young people feel they have a special dignity as human beings, and at the same time they situate themselves humbly before the mind-boggling presence of our God. In a special way children, and young people can teach us what it means to be in awe of the presence of God and God's creation.

73 COMISSÃO NACIONAL DE EVANGELIZAÇÃO DE ADOLESCENTES E JOVENS. *Diretrizes Nacionais da Pastoral Juvenil Marista*, 2006, n. 377.

198. The emphasis that MYM places on regional and international connections increases our sensitivity not only to those who are near us, but we discover we have brothers and sisters beyond our small world. We learn how to participate in the hopes and visions of people from other countries and continents. We develop a consciousness of bearing responsibility for crises and problems that arise beyond our cultures and surroundings.

199. Young people want to put more faith in themselves, be independent and take responsibility for things. They discover the talents that God has given them and decide to live the Marist virtues such as work, modesty and simplicity that they see modeled in the lives of others. With these attitudes they confront the tide of self-centered thinking and consumerism. They communicate to one another the joy of living. They desire to develop their sense of self-esteem and struggle to find their role in the world and our Marist family, serving others. Many wind up finding their vocation as "leaders in service."

> "I dream of young people being fully human, with an incarnated spirituality, who take on the mystery of being a person unique and undivided, with all their limitations and potential, in service to the good, the true and the beautiful. Beings committed to what they believe is right, without seeing themselves out of necessity trapped by structures, concern over their 'status' or pious platitudes." *(Fábio, 25 years old)*

200. We dream of youth who will mature in their faith, live fully the process of searching for their identity and personal growth, acknowledging their limitations and embracing their talents, establishing new ways of relating to others, friends and family members, in discovering their place in the world and overcoming childish ideas about God. With young people we learn to be

patient and understanding during the challenging, rebellious and unstable times that characterize that stage in life. Jesus too, who "advanced in wisdom, age and favor before God and man," (Lk 2, 52) was accompanied in that process. MYM, inspired by the family in Nazareth, accompanies the young in their process of maturing as humans and Christians.[74]

201. MYM adopts a holistic program in its work with young people. One that centers on all aspects related to human life that is growing and developing. In the young we find the treasure of the dreams and ideals that it is worthwhile for us to discover together.

202. Our Marist documents often speak to us of sharing our lives with young people. MYM is a way for encountering in which brothers, companions, animators and teachers have an opportunity to share their lives with youth. If we eagerly enter into this process, perhaps we will come to see the world through their eyes. Or maybe they will invite us to dream and allow us to cooperate with them in building their visions. This is a precious gift that we should not miss.

> "Given that here, where I live, Catholics make up only 3% of the population, Protestants 15% and non-believers 80%, I want the churches to work together to be more mission-minded and stop looking only at their parochial concerns."
> *(Johanna, 19 years old)*

203. We are dreaming of youth who cultivate their life of prayer. This is fundamental, and the Marist charism offers young people a mystical theology more in tune with their own reality. We need to redouble our efforts to bring youth distinct ways to pray from life, as Champagnat desired. Prayer and spirituality should have their place in all our activities with the young, trying always to integrate

74 COMISSÃO NACIONAL DE EVANGELIZAÇÃO DE ADOLESCENTES E JOVENS. *Diretrizes Nacionais da Pastoral Juvenil Marista*, 2006, n. 384.

this well with their lived situation. The dimension of spirituality present in our Marist charism helps youth to take an interest in transformative prayer.[75]

204. In MYM young people develop a genuine love for reading Scripture, praying and sharing their faith, making efforts to go beyond tiresome ceremonies, traditions or pietisms that do not help them grow in their love for God and their neighbor. We believe that together we are contributing to the Church's becoming a more Marian one each day, far-removed from patriarchal structures and attitudes. We are dreaming about young people building a Church as the People of God.

205. We want youth capable of practicing values such as tolerance and respect for other cultures and religions. Therefore, in MYM we are strengthening training in interreligious dialogue and ecumenism and providing incentive to concentrate on those values that make us more human and fraternal.

206. We are dreaming of youth demonstrating straightforward moral leadership in championing the rights of children and young people, especially those lacking a voice and power in society. Defending these rights is not just the responsibility of Christian youth. Therefore we should explore ways to collaborate with other organizations in civil society, youth movements, NGOs, government organizations, legislative bodies, universities, other Churches and religious groups.

"My wish is for Marists to take care of the needs of young people with the same commitment and joy as they have done until now." *(Alberto, 23 years old)*

75 COMISSÃO NACIONAL DE EVANGELIZAÇÃO DE ADOLESCENTES E JOVENS. *Diretrizes Nacionais da Pastoral Juvenil Marista*, 2006, n. 387.


GROSSER OCEAN

207. Marcellin Champagnat knew how to recognize the needs and fears, hopes and plans of the young. Being a man of prayer and action, he summed up their visions and dreams in the words well-known to us: "May they become good Christians and virtuous citizens," and "Every time I see young people I can't help but tell them, 'How greatly Jesus loves you!'" For Marcellin, that was God's dream for every young person.

208. In MYM we encounter a way to being on the road with youth in the Twenty-first Century; bringing to light their very own dreams and visions and uniting them with those of God, so that they can live lives filled with meaning. When we present-day Marists become completely conversant with the word of God, the teachings and directives of the Church, and our Marist charism, and when we open ourselves to the signs of the times, then side by side with youth we will be able to risk dreaming and discovering God's dream for them and for us.

209. Thanks to MYM the Marist vocation is intensely shared with the young: their hopes grow, their capacity to dream is awakened and they are enabled to envision Marist life for today and the future. We are convinced that young people who have come to know the Marist brothers can share their expectations with us and help us to open our eyes to see their realities, joys and sufferings.

210. We dream about and are working to educate young people who will transform society, building and proclaiming the Reign of God in their own situations in life. The great challenge for young people is to listen to Christ's voice in the midst of so many others. His invitation is a personal one: "Come and follow me." Disciples are born from their personal encounter with Christ, and missionaries from disciples. Mary is the model of discipleship. In her we discover all

the characteristics of a disciple: loving and attentive listening; adherence to the will of the Father; a prophetic attitude and fidelity that leads her to accompany her Son all the way to the cross and carry forward his evangelizing mission. Whoever becomes a disciple of Jesus becomes a bearer of his message.

211. As Marists, we dream and believe that the Divine presence dwells in every young person. We dream and believe in a theology that is youthful, alluring and abounding in symbols and signs of the young. A dream and belief transformed into a faith-filled journey that becomes a major component of the life of our MYM groups and consequently the lives of youth the world over.





6

A heart that knows no bounds

212. Marcellin Champagnat, although he never traveled much beyond his own region, was someone with an all-encompassing vision: "Every diocese in the world enters into our plans." Today, almost two hundred years since its foundation, our Institute is present throughout five continents, accompanying children and young people in the most diverse situations and circumstances.

213. As an Institute we have many resources at our disposal to carry out the mission that the Church has confided to us. The combination of gifts in each Administrative Unit of the Institute in the area of MYM forms an ensemble of talents and resources of no mean significance, with each region bringing its own contribution and wealth to this ministry.

214. In an age of globalization and instantaneous communication, young people are teaching us how to create a new way of understanding the Institute, a new vision of what it means to be members of an international Congregation and the consequences of this when it comes to developing our mission in the world of today. In reality, we need to lean toward empowering efforts aimed at interacting and nurturing interdependence as basic approaches in our relationships at every level.

Sharing resources and professional development

215. We believe that developing MYM should be a priority in the Institute. That being so, every region is invited to revise its current practices in this area. Aware of the diversity of situations, we are launching structures to facilitate mutual exchanges and apprenticeships.

216. In this process of revision, being attentive to experiences coming from other regions and cultures can help us enormously, both in places where MYM has been well developed for years as well as in those where it is barely known.

217. A process of revision that incorporates looking not only inward but outward can promote growth and maturing as well as make it easier for animators to find ways to incorporate "improved" models for developing this ministry.

218. To facilitate getting these "improvements" up and running we are trying to share programs and resources we have developed, including:

- Creating or taking advantage of already existing spaces (at the local, provincial and regional levels) for training advisors/moderators and young people (or including others, educators and administrators) on topics related to the lives of youth;
- Providing formation experiences for animators at the local, provincial and regional levels, possibly made available to others;
- Sending out invitations to province delegates to visit other areas and insert themselves for a time in other experiences of MYM;
- Holding forums on formation online or in other ways.

219. Promoting in the Institute the practice of sharing by MYM animators can be very enriching for all. To this end the following could be organized:

- Commissions, teams, or encounters at national and international levels to facilitate the exchange of initiatives in various contexts;
- Linking all the MYM web sites in the Institute.

Structural support for MYM and the development of its animators

220. For MYM to be able to achieve its aims it is essential that each province and each of its local units are provided with the most appropriate measures for this: dedicating people, facilities, economic resources, etc.

221. One element we see as crucial is the formation of animators, who are often young volunteers who serve for a limited time, giving rise to a lack of continuity. If we want to be faithful to the charism of Champagnat and fully promote the values of MYM, then accompaniment and the formation of animators needs to be a priority in all our provinces.

222. Ever more frequently in the Institute lay people are assuming responsibility for animating MYM, including at the highest levels. Frequently this type of work combines the need for professional qualifications with low salaries. Thus it would be a good idea at the level of the Institute to greatly clarify the roles and structures in MYM, along the lines of what we normally do in our formal and informal centers of education.

223. It is necessary for everyone, brothers, laywomen and laymen, educators and administrators to be very familiar with MYM and commit themselves to this initiative, built by many hands and touching the hearts of children and young people. It is vitally important for everyone to get behind this program as a labor of love, born of a heart in tune with the Gospel and the dream of Champagnat.

224. The experience of the Institute tells us that groups coordinating MYM at local, provincial, regional and continental levels are very

effective. For that reason we think it is worthwhile to continue along these lines, possibly even including establishing a Bureau as part of the General Administration.

Promoting a sense of global identity

225. At this time in our history we find a growing sense of belonging to an interconnected global family, thanks in particular to advances in technology. This feeling and way of thinking is very evident among the young.

226. We try to facilitate this interconnection of our young people through initiatives on an international level. These contacts help them discover other young Marists who share their love for Champagnat and open them to the realization that the mission is not only something pertaining to their own province or country but to the entire world.

227. A privileged space for such international encounters is the Internet, where the young are very experienced. It will be profitable for us to come up with ways to capitalize on this technology in service to our Marist mission.

228. In general nowadays, young people are very sensitive to the needs of society and oftentimes strive to make the world a better place through social service programs. Some commit themselves to doing volunteer work in their own countries, while others decide to devote time in their life to helping in other parts of the world. Frequently they look to carry out these volunteer efforts living in community with other young people or warmly welcomed in a religious community.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229. Marcellin enjoyed success with his first communities because he invited young people to a vocation which blessed their lives with meaning. We must develop a similar approach with the young people working with us. Following a model used with youth doing volunteer social work would make it easier for us to familiarize young adults with MYM in other places around the world as a way to enrich their lives and broaden their vision, thus helping them to improve their own ministries on returning home.

230. Some provinces are promoting the creation of Teams or Communities of youth who dedicate themselves to a year or more of living with other young people, and sometimes with our Marist Brothers, in service to MYM. In all likelihood this could also be an area conducive to international exchanges and mutual enrichment.

231. Finally, experience tells us that international encounters of youth involved in MYM turn out to be very stimulating: they help individuals to feel a part of an international family and open their minds and hearts to take in the entire world. These encounters can be held on different levels — regional, continental and worldwide gatherings. With distinct objectives and characteristics depending on the size and scope of each encounter, they should always form part of a continuous and ongoing process and be linked with the daily lives of the participants.

232. Our Institute's commitment to developing and empowering MYM is growing. We therefore feel called to offer opportunities to exchange initiatives and advances we are making as well as foster interconnectedness and communication at every level: local, national, regional and international. Not only among the youth who

participate in MYM but also among their animators or advisors. Together with young people we are invited to commit ourselves to deepen our passion for Christ and for humanity. In doing so, we are people advancing the mission of Marcellin, "a heart that knows no bounds."





Conclusion

“With Mary, go in haste to a new land!”

233. The slogan of our Twenty-first General Chapter reminds us that Mary, in visiting her cousin Elizabeth (Lk 1, 39-45), gives us an example of love and youthful friendship. Like her, we are called to recognize a theological setting residing in others, above all young people. They reveal to us the face of God through their dreams and utopian visions, their trials and achievements. As disciples and missionaries, as we walk by their side we want to go in haste to join up with those feeling most forlorn from the consequences of poverty, injustice, and an absence of ideals able to bring them a brighter tomorrow. We recognize that the heart of every teenager and young person in our world is "a new land" for us.

234. By means of this document we renew our Institute's choosing to evangelize teenagers and young people. In these pages we set out our beliefs and way of life and proclaim the Good News. As members of Marist Youth Ministry we affirm the richness of life in groups, the importance of accompaniment and the value of process and organization. Since youth is heterogeneous we believe it is necessary to work in ways tailored to the different types of young people and the diverse conditions where they are living. We believe that the educational principles and methodology proposed are not something accidental on this journey, but that they determine our characteristic style of educating and evangelizing. We believe that the world of youth is replete with signs and symbols that are calling out to us to explain things in a language that speaks to the depths of their being. We believe that we are the Church and we are moving ahead with our mission to evangelize children, teenagers and young adults in the fields that have been entrusted to us.

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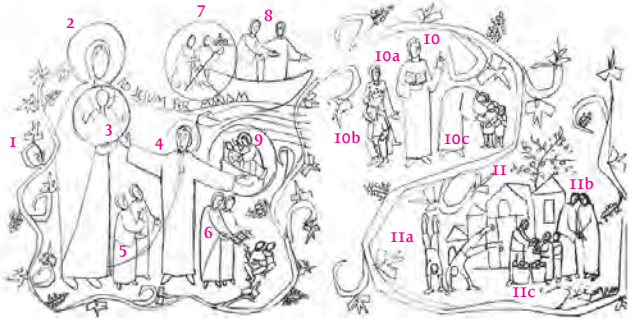
MYM Photobook

Dear reader, in this section we invite you to become familiar with the background to the creation of this book. The images have been conceived after an attentive reading of the original, inspired by study of historical Marist images, and given final form after much viewing and comment. We wish to share with you a little of this team work, of a symbolic journey in the study of a concept, uncovering and multiplying the imaginative world of our young people.



FIRST SKETCH OF SÉRGIO CERON



Cover Image

1. *Vine-Church: travelling companion of youth*
2. *Mary the Pilgrim*
3. *Incarnation of Christ*
4. *Champagnat*
5. *First disciples, Brothers*
6. *Disciples inspiring new disciples*
7. *Emmaus*
8. *Disciples going out to the world - Internationalism*
9. *The young Montagne*
10. *How the heart sees those on the margins*
    - 10a. *women*
    - 10b. *fishermen*
    - 10c. *children*
11. *God's Project in action*
    - 11a. *friendship/fraternity*
    - 11b. *new man-woman relationship*
    - 11c. *sharing/equality*



p. 6-7

"The illustration of the double page created for the introduction to the book refers to a visual representation of the Holy Spirit. It is based on popular Brasilian feasts, but with a more universal character. The essential creative idea was the idea of the seed, renewal and cycle, suggested by the ends of vegetables in the wings and tail feathers of the white dove."

Mauricio Negro



p. 12-13

"Numerous intertwined branches – sentiments symbolised by emoticons, information and ideas – in this tangle which represents contemporary youth, so dynamic, with many faces and on many levels."

Mauricio Negro



p. 34

As Marists, we are with youth. How to do that at this time? How to put it into practice with the adolescents and young people entrusted to us?

Fact from the Bible: Jairus asks Jesus to cure his daughter. When Jesus arrives at his house, he approaches the adolescent and says to her: "Talitha Kum", which means "Get up".

From the initial briefing for the illustration



p. 38-39

The central idea is that the young person is a "theological place", that is to say that a meeting with God takes place in him/her.

From the initial briefing for the illustration

"In the opening illustration to this chapter, the language of the tag has been used, young, urban and universal, to reconstruct the face of Jesus. It has a pop aspect, like an icon, even revolutionary. His crown of thorns becomes a round dance of diversity."

Mauricio Negro



p. 49

Represents the young Jesus in Nazareth.

From the initial briefing for the illustration



p. 56-57

"The illustration shows, in the hands of Marcellin Champagnat, the mother house in France, that is, Notre-Dame de l'Hermitage. From its windows, designed like the silhouettes of children, burst lights of all colours which light up the night."

Mauricio Negro



p. 49

Personifies the Marist virtues of simplicity, humility and modesty.

From the initial briefing for the illustration



p. 72–73

In this introductory image, re-inforcing the pedagogical and methodological options of the MYM, used as a graphic resource for the composition of the "M" of Mary, or the "M" of Marist

The image must be essentially a joyful one. "(...) not only of a God who comes from above, but of a God who is real in his way of being 'young', joyful, dynamic, creative and daring".

From the initial briefing for the illustration

"Here the 'M' of Mary has been used in an ethereal and subtle way, formed by the sun's rays filtered through the clouds of the sky. A composition which recalls the expressions 'the salt of the earth, the light of the world'. Birds are flying towards this M-light which, as a whole, composes a delicate counterpoint."

Mauricio Negro



p. 85

Jesus has joined them and begins to walks with them. In the second image of chapter four, work with the metaphor of making a journey.

Biblical fact: the journey of the disciples to Emmaus.

From the initial briefing for the illustration



p. 92-93

Construct an image attractive to young people, full of idealism. A strong appeal to tolerance, diversity, pluriculturalism and ecumenism.

From the initial briefing for the illustration

"The image represents here a composition formed by several four-leafed clovers forming a heart. In each of the leaves is suggested a human figure with outstretched arms. In each clover, these arms seem to be offering each other their hands."

Mauricio Negro



p. 102

Journey of faith. A homage to the entirety of the Marist ideas and imaginative universe. Construct an image with a dreamlike appeal in which Marcellin and Mary – Mary is represented in innumerable ways throughout the world – appear in a fantastic way.

From the initial briefing for the illustration



p. 106-107

The title of chapter six, "A heart without frontiers", as visual slogan for the introductory image. "All the dioceses of the world enter into our plans". In the image underline the sense of global identity.

From the initial briefing for the illustration

"The artist could consider the diversity of skin colours in the different continents, the mission of Brothers and Laity (so masculine and feminine elements and some which can characterise the Brothers' life…)

With regard to 'without frontiers', he has drawn the world. Perhaps he could translate it into some symbols expressing interreligious dialogue, new migrations, etc."

Br. João C., after a first study of the image

"In this introduction, the illustration presents two hands joined in the form of a heart radiating light, out of which myriad of butterflies emerge. Their wings are human faces. A diversity made up of faces and butterflies.""

Mauricio Negro



p. 113

Caption for the image: an international family. Visual recall: the word "Marist" written, multiplied, in the numerous alphabets and languages.

From the initial briefing for the illustration



p. 116-117

Fish-world. Fish-Christ.

Affective titles suggested for the image

"A shoal of fishes of all types, forms and colours show their human faces. They are swimming in the same direction."

Mauricio Negro


PJM
PASTORAL
JUVENIL
MARISTA
PMJ
PASTORALE
MARISTE
DES JEUNES
MYM
MARIST
YOUTH
MINISTRY

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