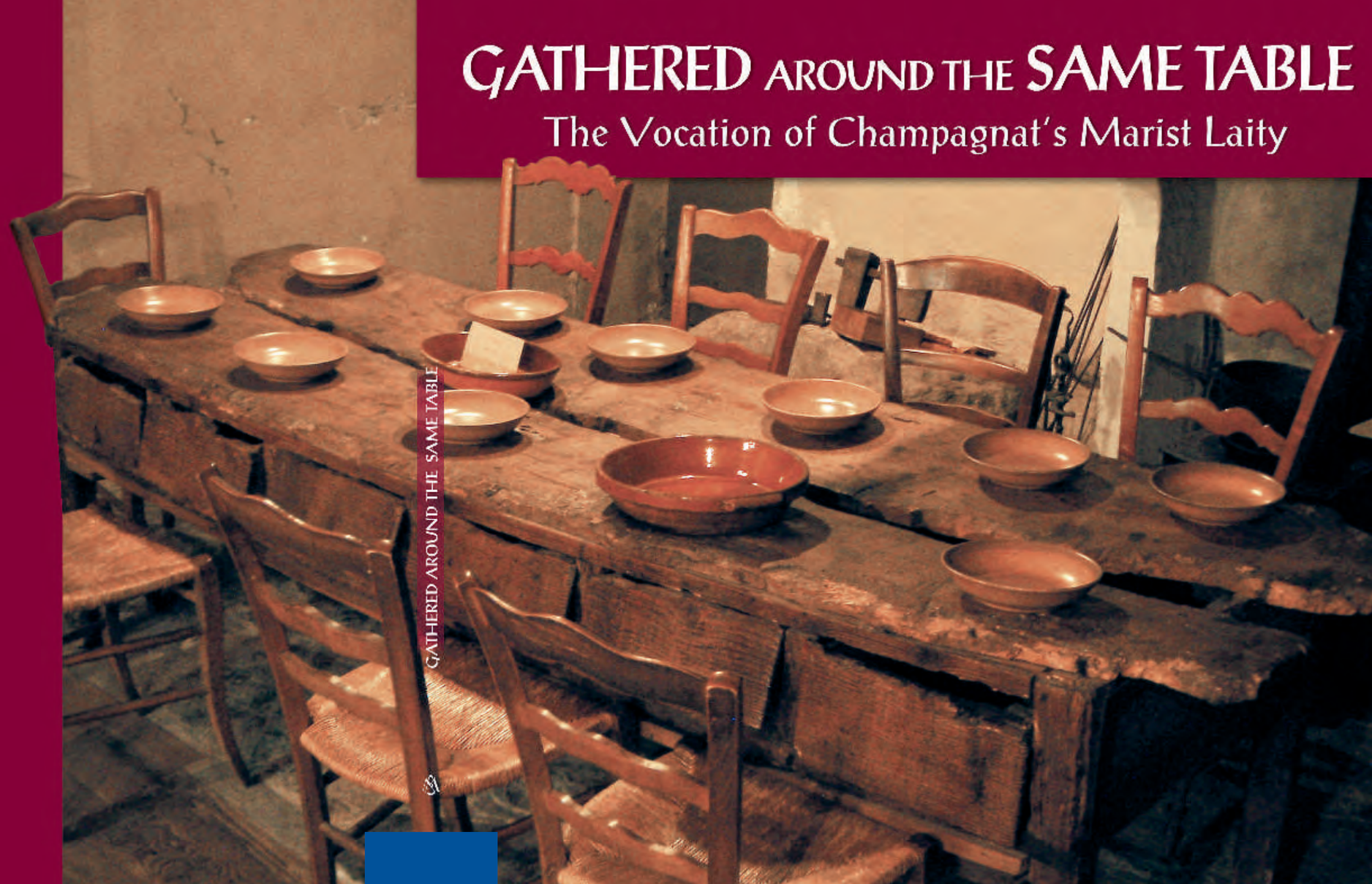
GATHERED AROUND THE SAME TABLE

The Vocation of Champagnat's Marist Laity



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The Vocation of Champagnat's Marist Laity

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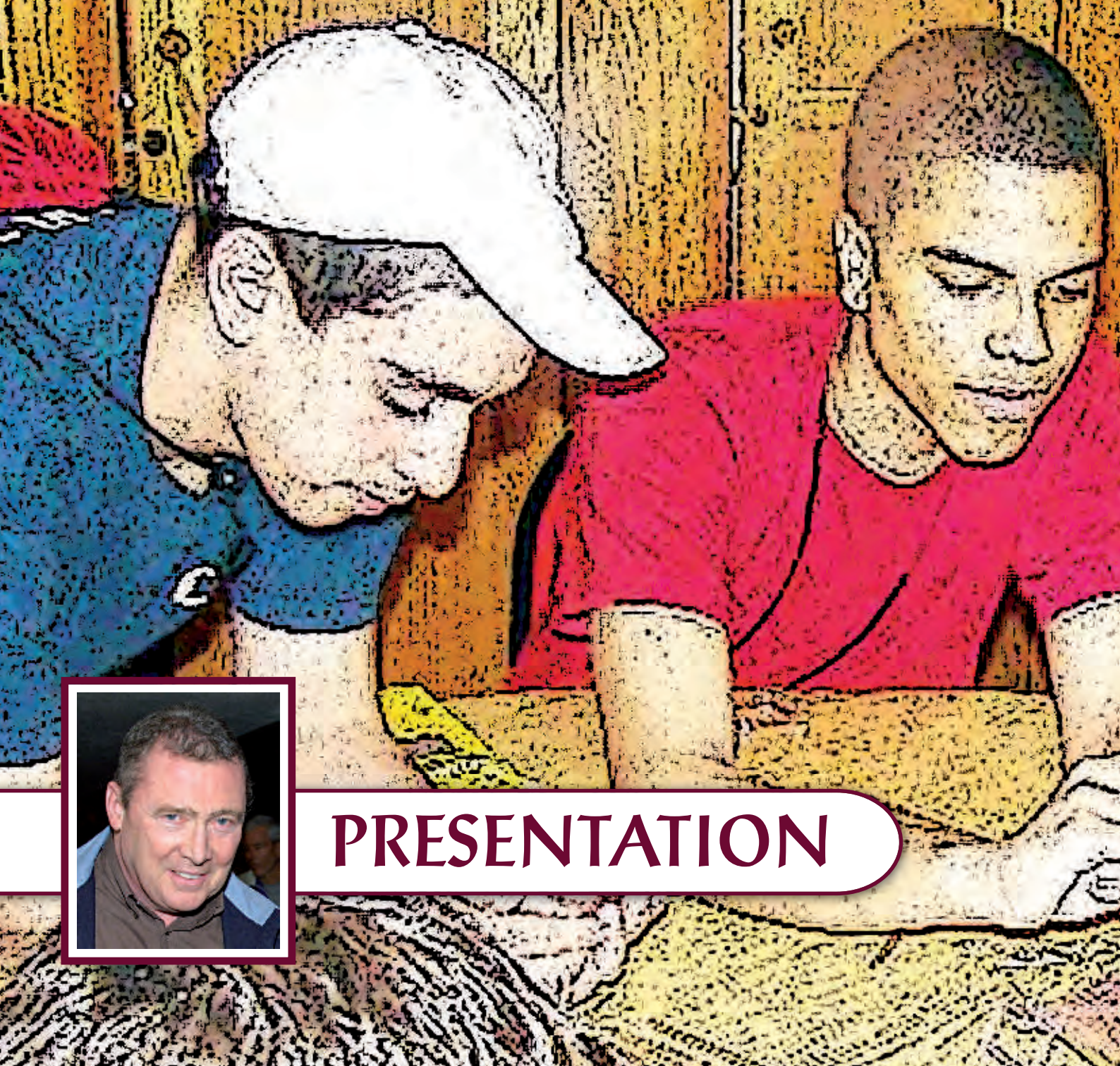

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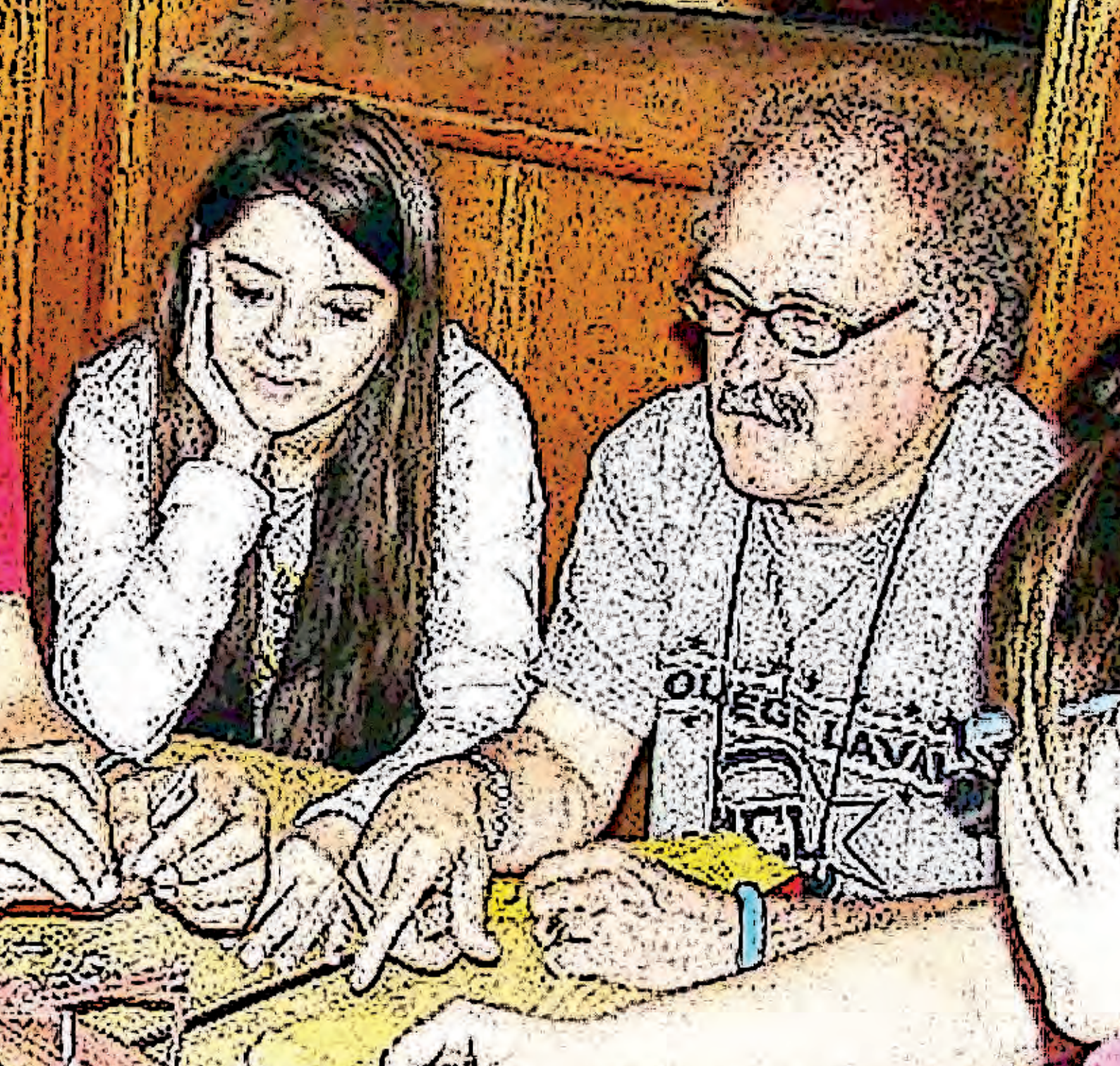

OU
GE
LAVAL

Rome, 6th June, 2009
Saint Marcellin Champagnat

Dear Members of the Marist Family,

The campus of New York's Columbia University is the setting that Chaim Potok chooses for his novel *The Promise*. The book continues the tale of Reuven Malter, an inquisitive and thoughtful rabbinical student and his friend Danny Saunders, whose decisions in life thus far have alienated him from the Hasidic Jewish community of which he is a member.

As the story unfolds Potok invites his readers to make a pilgrimage with Reuven and Danny as they struggle with conflicts that inevitably arise when the traditions of their faith come face to face with the values of the world of the 1950s. Though its author never uses the word, *The Promise* is a tale about identity and the journey that each of us must make to achieve one.

Since the close of the Second Vatican Council many lay Catholics struggling to find a new place in our Church have found themselves making a journey not unlike that of the main characters in Potock's book. The reasons are obvious. Prior to that historic gathering, only priests and men and women religious were thought to have what was called a "vocation;" laywomen and men were judged to have no true calling of their own. Thankfully, by the time the Council came to a close this misconception had been corrected and laypeople, at least in theory, had been restored to their proper place within the Church.



During the years since, many efforts have gone into clarifying the identity of lay men and women and also their place and role in our Church. No matter the cost, this is a task that we must see through to completion. For the documents of Vatican II are crystal clear: the call to holiness is universal; by merit of baptism each of us has responsibility for the Church's one mission, proclaiming God's Kingdom and its immanence.

As they sought to clarify their identity during the years subsequent to the Council, more than a few lay persons found that the charism of one or another religious congregation came to feel like a home port. Men and women religious were also becoming more aware of the fact that the charisms that had guided their congregations for so long had were in fact gifts of God to the Church at large.

The book, *Gathered around the same table: The Vocation of Marcellin Champagnat's Marist Laity*, will I believe add greatly to the conversation underway about the vocation of laymen and women in today's Church. More importantly, the text will help us all take a large step forward in appreciating more fully the important role that Marist laity play today in the life of the Institute and Church. It will also help us appreciate the responsibility we all share for living the charism and furthering the ministry that came into our Church through Saint Marcellin Champagnat.

Written by a small editorial commission, the book includes the reflections of a much wider group of Marist laity. Its content is also based on the everyday lived experience of Marist laymen and women from throughout the world. These elements give the text a rich and international flavor; the many personal testimonies placed throughout the book cannot but help the reader to identify more closely with the topics discussed.

Clearly God has raised up in our day and age Marist lay vocations. *Gathered around the same table* will provide its readers with a handbook for deepening their appreciation of this blessing for our Church and Institute. At the same time they will have an opportunity to explore more fully at least three elements that feature prominently in this way of living: its ministry, its spirituality, and its shared life.

I encourage you to read and study this document and to reflect on it by yourself and with others. May it be the first of many publications written by lay Marists from throughout the Institute and world. May it also be a reminder of the vitality and viability of the charism that came into our Church and world through Marcellin Champagnat and from which each of us draws our identity and brothers and lay Marists.

I am grateful to the members of the editorial commission for their hard work: Annie Girka (L'Hermitage), Bernadette Ropa (Melanesia), Carlos Navajas (America Central), José María Pérez Soba (Iberica), Sergio Schons (Rio Grande do Sul), and Brothers Afonso Murad (Brasil Centro-Norte) and Rémy Mbolipasiko (Afrique Centre-Est). Thanks, too, to Anne Dooley (Melbourne) who was a member of the Commission for most of its life and contributed significantly to its efforts and also to Noel Dabrera (South Asia) who also contributed greatly to the work but died before the document was completed.

Special thanks to Brother Pau Fornells who shepherded this project from start to finish. Without his efforts and those of the editorial commission I doubt that this document would have ever seen the light of day. They worked steadily and patiently to ensure that deadlines were met, content rewritten, revisions made. Truly theirs was a labor of love.



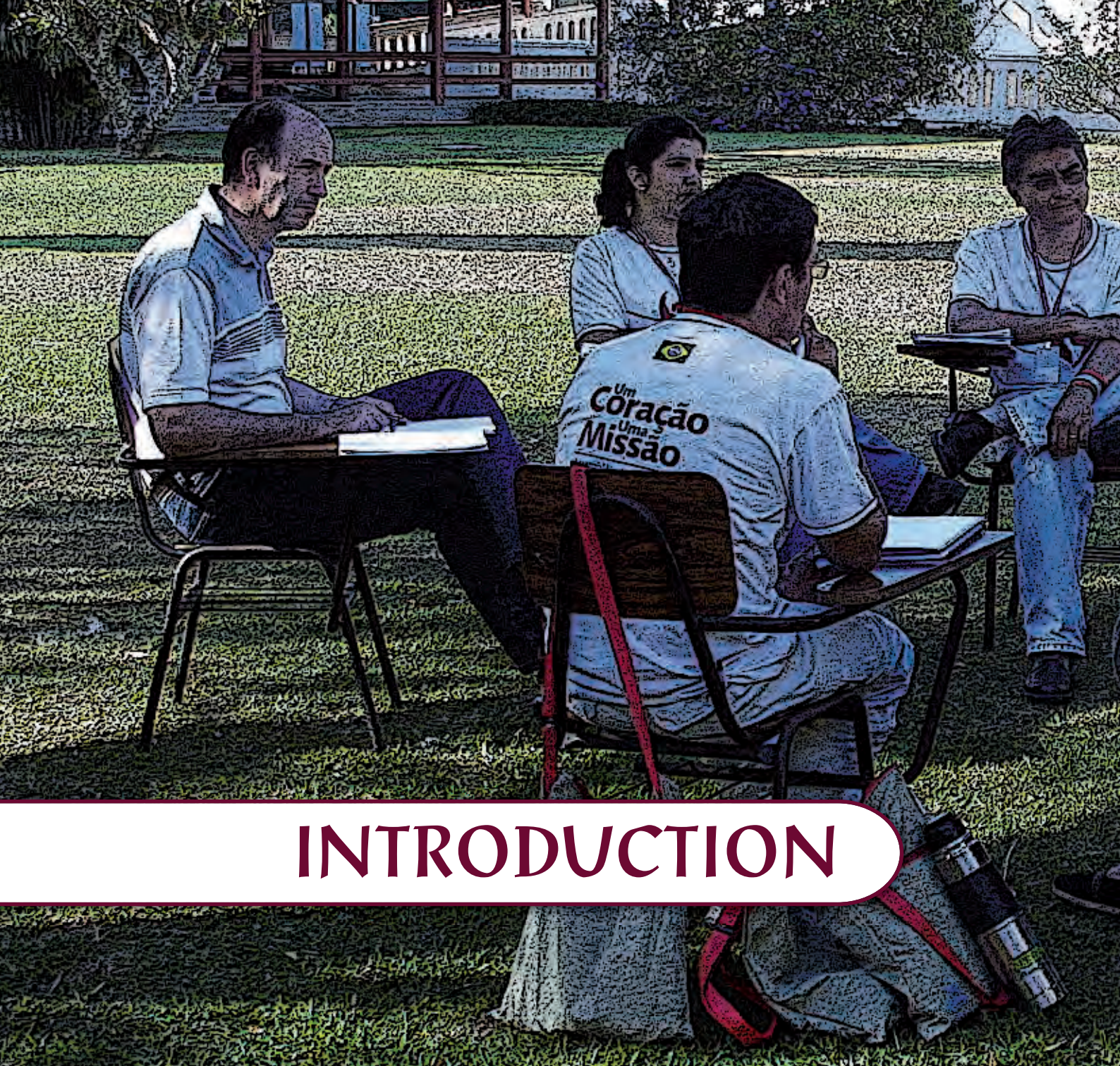
Thanks also to Brother Pedro Herreros and the members of the Laity Commission of the General Council and later Brothers Emili Turú, Pedro Herreros, Juan Miguel Anaya, and César Henríquez of the Commission for Mission and Laity for their advice and for steady support that they gave throughout to those working on the project. Thanks also to Brother Antonio Martínez Estaún, Director of Communications for the Institute, who recorded in pictures the work of the Commission and also designed the layout of the publication.

Reuven Malter and Danny Saunders, the two young friends around whom Chaim Potok built his novel, made a long and challenging pilgrimage as they sought to form their identity. The journey that all of us who love this Marist way of life and mission have made since Vatican II to form our own respective identities is just now bearing fruit. The document *Gathered around the same table: The of Marcellin Champagnat's Marist Laity* is but one example of that fact. May it enrich your understanding of Marist life and mission and encourage your faith.

Blessings and affection,



Brother Seán D. Sammon, FMS
Superior General



INTRODUCTION


Um
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Uma

INTRODUCTION

This document is a product of lived experience. The force behind it and the initiative that it has grown out of, is the experience of many lay men and lay women throughout the world who sense that God is calling them to a vocation: to be lay Marists.

It is the fruit of a long path of listening and reflection that the Marist world has been following over decades. The concerns of associations of former students searching for their identity within a renewed Church, courses in spirituality for teachers and parents, the processes of youth ministry and of solidarity, the appearance of the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family, the deepening of shared mission, the canonization of the Founder – a gift for the entire Church -, the process of the international assembly on Marist mission leading up to the meeting in Mendes (Brazil), these have been some of the more important happenings that have helped us to understand more clearly what the Spirit was raising up in the hearts of many lay men and women.

The General Council, following the action plans of the 20th General Chapter, has wished to express this experience in a





document that, on one hand, validates the reality of the lay Marist vocation and, on the other, to encourage its continued growth. To accomplish this, the Council set up an international commission comprising seven lay people and three brothers, from different language backgrounds, cultures and personal histories that has worked for three years developing the document.

This document is meant to be a response to the life of the laity of Champagnat. And so it has been developed based on their experience: ninety-two testimonials of lay people from around the world, some of which appear in the text, form the basic material from which we describe the lay Marist vocation and the elements that compose it. The observations of other lay people from each administrative unit, as well as what was learned at the International Assembly on Marist Mission and at recent meetings on shared formation and charismatic vitality, have helped improve each successive draft of the document.

Our wish has been to gather what is already happening in many hearts, present it to the Marist world and encourage everyone to build the future. Therefore, the style utilized is not the usual one found in institutional documents.



It is edited in the first person plural because it is a confession, a shared experience. For this very reason, the language does not so much attempt to be rigorous, but to be suggestive, appealing not only to reason but, above all, to the heart. At times it will be necessary to go beyond mere words, which are always limited, to arrive at a picture of the vitality they attempt to reflect.

This document is directed to brothers and lay people who feel an interest in the Marist lay vocation. It does not matter if they are searching, if they know about Marist life for only a short time or if they have lived it for years. We wish to offer a reason to experience, to question, to delve more deeply what is lived, to decide and to continue on the road.

The text follows a simple outline. We begin from the basic premise of the document: God has raised up lay Marist vocations (Chapter 1). This vocation is expressed in three charismatic elements, a mission, a spirituality and a shared life, which are integrated into a unique way of life: being a lay Marist (Chapters 2, 3, and 4). The lay Marist vocation gives way, today, to varied types of association with the Institute of the brothers, depository of the foundational charism (Chapter 5)





and, as with any vocation, it should be promoted, formed and cared for throughout a lifetime (Chapter 6).

These pages do not intend, nor are they able, to bring to a close the process of the growth of the Marist laity. Their mission is to help create an atmosphere where the Spirit, *that blows where it wills*[i], can continue nudging forward our personal and institutional history towards God's dream for us.

To this end, we believe the best way to appreciate the document is to work on it in a group, whether of lay people or brothers. Actually it can be a good opportunity for the two groups to be together, sharing life. At the end of each chapter, we present some simple questions that can serve as a guide for these meetings.

The document is entitled *Gathered Around the Same Table*. The image and the experience of the shared table is the great symbol that Jesus used to explain the Kingdom of God. The table of the Eucharist gathers is around Him and makes Him present still, after two thousand years. In a similar way, the simple table at La Valla represents for us Marists the beginning of our vocation. Brothers and sisters around the same table, we share work, prayer

[1] *Jn 3,8*



and fraternity; as at the table of our families, we come together to celebrate our life in common. There is, in these pages, a desire to invite more people to sit down at this table, to have a part in this Marist family that God wishes to continue blessing.

We, the members of the editorial commission have formed a true community of life, faith and mission over the past three years. It has certainly been a graced time for us. We have been transformed by the mission entrusted to us: the power and the example of the testimonials from throughout the world, the richness of diversity and, at the same time, of commonality, the tremendous vitality of the Marist everywhere in the world, have changed our hearts. Our wish is that the fruit of this work will help others live this same experience, and will contribute to the strengthening and the spreading of the Marist charism, revealing new horizons, engendering renewed optimism to the Marist world, and multiplying the ties of fraternity among everyone.

Finally, we realize our limitations and we know we have not succeeded in responding fully to the expectations aroused. We beg



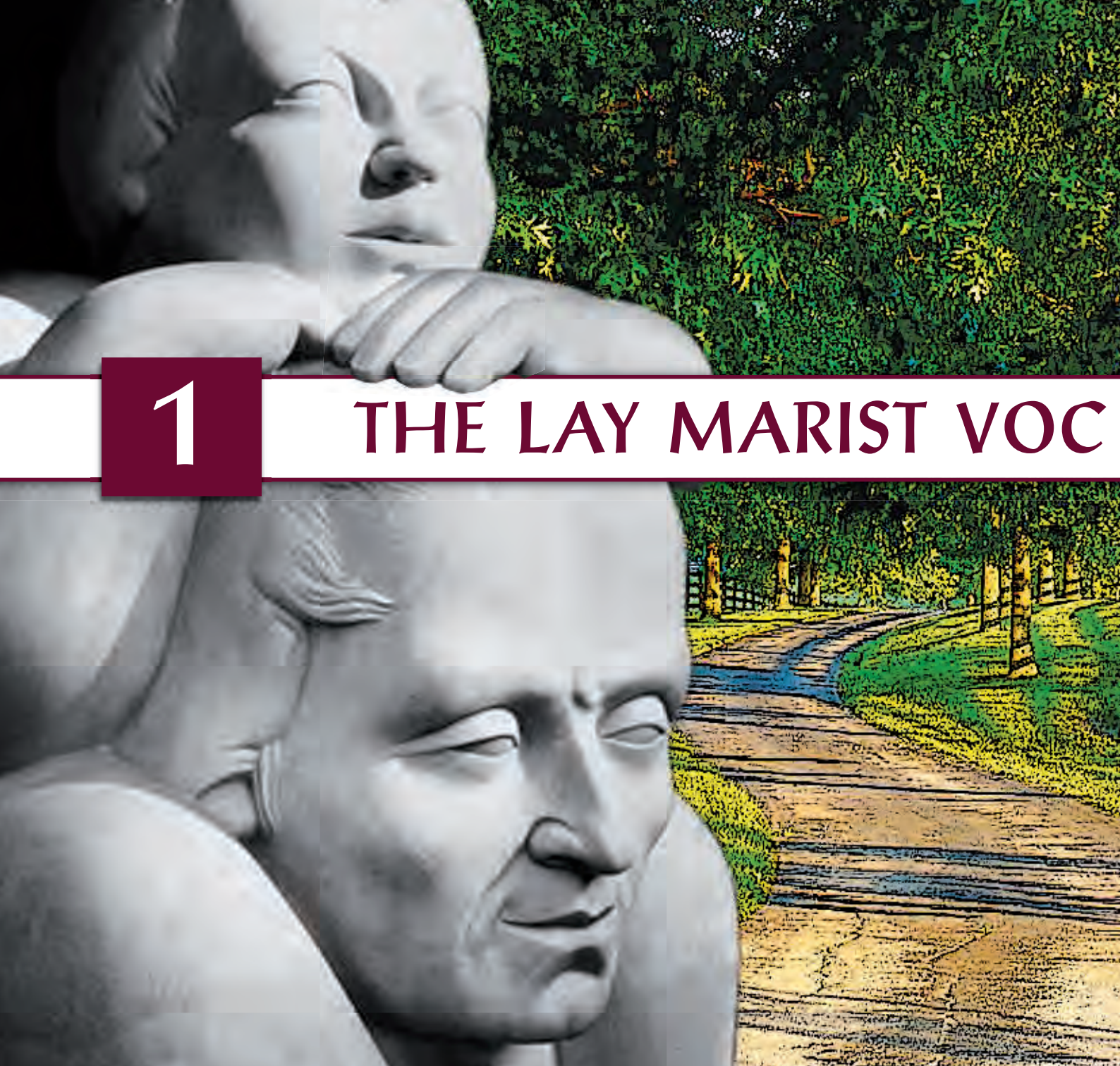


your forgiveness for this, and we ask the Lord that, despite our weakness, it may be He, beyond the words, who speaks to our hearts and kindles in them the passion for living and passing on the precious gift of the Marist charism. May Mary, our Good Mother, accompany you in your reading, reflection and prayer.

The Members of the Comission

This document is dedicated, in a special way,
to Mr. Noel Dabrera, a Marist layman from Sri Lanka,
a member of this commission, and
a good man who awaits us at the table of the Father.





1 THE LAY MARIST VOC


ATION
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Luis-Maria Theophane · Eubert
Ester Aquino · Gisalda Mariana
Philogone Chrysogone Epaphras · Chrysogone
Sernizia Araújo
Euthyme · Pascal · Félicité · Theophane · Néstor · Procopio
Avit · Norbert
Vânia Magalhães Maria de Nazaré do Nascimento · Lilian Cabar
Francisco Porres · Victor Quiñónez - Miranda · Geraldinho Costa · José Jorge Ribeiro
Eubert · Gerald · Nicet · Bérillus
Augustalis · John · Stratonique · Climacus · Césaire · Climaco · Liboire · Paulin · Angélicus
Adon · Liborio
Lauzu Gomes · Maria da Conceição Santana · Maria de Lourdes Leal · Silas Rodrigues
Pierre-Joseph · Karin Eliana Lacerda · Dalmace · Diogène · Flamien
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1 THE LAY MARIST VOCATION

- ☐ Children of Our Time
- ☐ Lay People in the Church, the People of God
- ☐ The Lay Marists
  - Different states in which lay people find themselves with regard to the charism
  - Lay Marists: a Christian Vocation
- ☐ The Vocation of the Marist Laity and the Vocation of the Brother
- ☐ The Transmission of a Gift: the Marist Charism
- ☐ Saint Marcellin Champagnat, Our Inspiration in Following Jesus
- ☐ Three Dimensions of a Single Life: Mission, Shared Life, Spirituality



A brother came up to me and asked, "Are you a Marist, too?"
(I think he meant to ask if I was a Marist brother.)
And I answered, "Yes, I'm a Marist."
This expression sprang from the depths of my being and
I felt validated on expressing myself this way.
(Spain)

Children of Our Time

1. Our epoch, like all others throughout history, is a mixture of light and shade. While there has been an increase in our sensitivity regarding matters of peace, justice, ecology and spirituality, we must also recognize that the Earth is being depleted; millions of people are enduring poverty or living superficially and seeking power.

2. We lay Christians share *the joys and hopes, the sorrow and anguish*[2] of the people of our time and, seduced by the God of Jesus, we wish to live and share today the Good News of the Gospel. Being children who breathed the refreshing air of Vatican Council II[3], we have rediscovered our baptismal vocation and we are being led by the Spirit to transform this world into a fairer and more human place, by following Jesus.

3. With this emergence of our lay vocation, some of us have discovered that our identity achieves it fullness through the charisms of orders or religious institutes[4]. Their spirituality and mission have captivated us and we feel that God calls us to share their inheritance and to

[2] *Gaudium et Spes, 1*
[3] *Lumen Gentium, 4*
[4] *Vita Consecrata, 54-55*

carry it forward into the future. Many religious families have welcomed this gift with joy.

4. And that is how it has also been with us, the Marists. The charism of Saint Marcellin Champagnat, present in the Institute of the Brothers, has put out shoots among the laity. To some of us, God has touched us and has given us a Marist heart. Certainly, more than our decision, it has been God taking the initiative. We cannot live any other way: We are Marists.

> *I can say that I feel fulfilled and proud of being*
> *a lay woman with a Marist heart;*
> *a revelation in which God, little by little,*
> *has been manifesting with new calls, initiatives, dreams;*
> *a history filled with life that never ceases...*
>
> (Brazil)

Lay People in the Church, the People of God

> *When I approached the Marist institution,*
> *I was only looking for work, but God reached out to me*
> *and I responded to Marcellin's feelings within my own heart.*
> *Somehow I realised that this call for me to work with children*
> *was something that gave me fulfillment, that gave me hope,*
> *that touched my life… something that I could do*
> *for the rest of my life and I must do it well.*
>
> (El Salvador)



5. The lay life originates, as does all Christian vocation, from the response to our encounter with God, who loves us infinitely. It is the fruit of our baptism which directs all of us to that unique Christian mission: to give witness of the Kingdom of God in this world.

6. Christ unites all of us as the People of God; equal in dignity and diverse in our service and state of life. *Each and every one of us works in the same common vineyard of the Lord with diverse and complementary charisms and ministries*[5]. We are a People united as brothers and sisters because we are children of the same Father.

7. Within this ecclesiastical communion, the Spirit has caused to spring among the lay people charisms that originally existed only in religious institutes. The gift of shared charism introduces *a new chapter, rich in hope*[6] in the progress of the Church. So too it has been among us Marists. The charism of Saint Marcellin Champagnat is expressed in new forms of Marist life. One of them is that of the Marist laity.

[5] *Christifideles Laici, 55*

[6] *Vita Consecrata, 54*

The Lay Marists

> *I can clearly hear this call in my life, as if that vocation had been intended especially for me. I am talking about a call that pervades my life completely, a vocation that helps me to be more of a person, happier and more complete. It is a vocation that constantly challenges me and which, every time I respond with a 'yes', makes me better, in the different situations that my lay condition calls me to live.*
>
> (Brazil)

Different states in which lay people find themselves with regard to the charism

8. The world of the laity relates with what is Marist through a variety of expressions. Many people come into contact, in different ways, with the life and mission of the Marist Brothers. Students, educators, catechists, administrative and service personnel, former students, parents and friends… all know the Brothers and have heard of their charism. Different attitudes arise from this relationship with the Brothers:

9. Some live identities distinct from the Marists: some, because they have made vital choices different from Christians; others, because they have already found their own place in the Church. We welcome and respect the different choices and paths, share with all human and Christian values and we work together in the building of a better world and we give thanks to God for everything we receive from the others.

10. Other lay people have felt attracted by the witness of the Brothers. They admire their life and wish to be joined in some way with their spirituality or in mission, without this signifying consciousness of a shared vocation. It is possible that some have not reflected sufficiently on the significance of these ties and need space and accompaniment which would allow them to discover what God wishes of them.

11. A third group of persons exist who, after a personal journey of discernment, have decided to live their Christian spirituality and mission in the manner of Mary, following the insight of Marcellin Champagnat. These are we, the Lay Marists.



Lay Marists: a Christian Vocation

> *It was during those years that I began to feel the presence of Jesus accompanying me, giving me strength and hope, and waiting for me. I realized that I needed to stop in order to be with Him, so that I could find him. And yes indeed I found Him! He had spoken to me through the children for some time; through the young people and through the neediest, but I did not understand him completely. So "he took me to the desert and spoke to my heart" and he made me see that he wanted me for Himself, to continue b the Kingdom with all my being.*
>
> (Spain)

12. We Lay Marists are Christian men and women, who in the course of our life have listened to the call of God to live the charism of Champagnat, and, from our lay state, we respond to it.

13. The initiative for our vocation comes from God. He loves us and wants our fulfillment, which is why he invites each one to follow a unique path. In this way, the lay Marist vocation does not originate as a necessity in moments of vocational crisis for the Brothers, or as a form of expressing friendship towards them. It is a personal call to a specific way of being disciples of Jesus.

14. The lay Marist vocation, like all vocations, originates and is developed by viewing one's life in the light of the Spirit. This discernment has different stages; and so each person should be accompanied while respecting his or her personal rhythm.

15. We Christian men and women with very different histories and very different cultures share the call to live the Marist charism through the lay state. We thank God for the gift of being part of a family that speaks a thousand languages and has one single heart.

The Vocation of the Marist Laity and the Vocation of the Brother

16. We Brothers and Lay people have much more in common than particular in our vocation: we both share the beauty and the limits of the human condition at this historical time, we live the same Christian vocation through baptism, and we have felt the call of God that drew us to the Marist charism.

17. We hold the certainty that our respective vocations are mutually enhanced. So while we continue discovering who we are by relating with others, the specific identity of Brothers and Lay Marists is clarified and enriched *by sharing life: spirituality, mission, formation…*[7]

[7] XX General Chapter: *Choose Life*, 26

> *There was something more in that Brother:*
> *his dedication, his welcoming attitude to everyone,*
> *his way of dealing with the patients, the renewed spirit*
> *that I saw in each sick person after he lavished his care on them,*
> *his spontaneity in the defence of the voiceless …*



All these details transcended the fulfillment of his professional duties... He was different. (Brazil) ”

18. The Brothers are people who opt for a way of life recognized in the Church as *religious life* or *consecrated life*. They give us their witness of following Jesus through their public commitments.

19. Their option for celibacy lived in brotherhood without being chosen, expresses the love of God as a community of Brothers open to all. The life of poverty, renouncing the possession of their own material goods demonstrates the evangelical freedom that supersedes the desire for possessions and opens them up to the service of others. The commitment of obedience to God, through the community, through human mediations[8], signifies a special readiness for the Kingdom.

[8] *Our love for God's will and our desire to carry it out throughout the whole of our lives, lead us to accept a series of mediations.* (*Constitutions*, 40)

20. The brothers offer us their particular way of cultivating spirituality, which encourages us to grow together in faith. The state of life of the brother is a special prophetic sign for the world and other Christians, which reminds us of our own call to radicalism and passion for Christ.

“ *At times, at meetings or in speeches I hear the expression 'collaborators', when referring to the lay people, and I also see it written in some documents. This sounds to me as if the lay people*

were those giving what is surplus to them, people who help when they have time, people who are in places where the Brothers are not, people who do the works that the brothers are no longer able to do … What a pain pierces my heart when I hear the word 'collaborator', because I feel that they are excluding me! I consider myself to have a lay Marist vocation; I consider myself to be part of the family.

(Venezuela) ”

21. We Lay Marists bring our specific form of living the Marist charism. Our identity is not reduced to being collaborators with the Brothers.

22. The love of a partner reveals the fidelity and passion of God, and brings to mind the passion and fruitfulness that should encourage every Christian vocation[9]. In a similar way, the love of parents for their children is a vivid image of the unconditional love that God has for us[10].

[9] Cf. Os. 2,16-25 and the complete *Song of Songs*

[10] Cf. Lk. 15,11-32

23. Commitment to the realities of the world makes us signs of God in the different social, economic and political environments in which we exist, while it qualifies us to discover, for ourselves, the calls of God in those situations.

24. Our profession is a form of personal fulfillment and service to the Kingdom. The need to earn our daily livelihood, as well as the inherent uncertainty in the lay condition, allows us a more concrete contact with reality.



25. Living the Marist charism from the perspective of women invites us all to adopt in our lives the Marian elements such as tenacity, stamina, maternal affection, tenderness, attention to detail and intuition in our daily experience.

26. Lay people and brothers strengthen our specific vocations to the extent we meet with each other, on a road that opens up to the future and from which we have already discovered significant features.

The Transmission of a Gift: the Marist Charism

> *Getting to know Marcellin Champagnat*
> *as more than the good looking guy on the wall*
> *was hard until I realized that today,*
> *we here in New Zealand have*
> *our very own Marcellin Champagnat*
> *who goes by the name of Br N.*
> *He works hard, is generous of heart,*
> *has a good sense of humour, is friendly and patient,*
> *can make you feel like you are the only person in a room*
> *full of people when he talks to you, relates to people*
> *of all ages, enjoys simplicity, makes himself available*
> *wherever he possibly can and does his best to bring out*
> *the best in everyone he meets.*
>
> (New Zealand)

27. The religious vocation of the Brothers has inspired our own lay vocation. The experience of their welcome, simplicity and presence among the young people has captivated us and encourages us to bear witness to Christ today.

28. Also the example of many lay people who have lived and still live the Marist charism with simplicity, has encouraged us to become aware of our vocation. They have written with their lives what today we put into words.

29. The vitality of a charism is shown when it is received, is recreated in the light of the signs of the times, and is passed on to others. Together with the brothers, we are responsible for promoting and extending this gift of God into the future.

Saint Marcellin Champagnat, Our Inspiration in Following Jesus

> *"I guess that is what has always struck me about Marcellin – despite many obstacles, he persevered because he believed.*
> *God must have touched his life in a profound way and like Mary, he said 'yes'.*
> *I sense his gentleness and his determination,*



his faithfulness, his trust, his firmness,
his nurturing and his vision of a better world
for young people.

(Australia) ”

30. Marcellin is our inspiration to follow Jesus. We find in him a model of Christian life that moves us, enchants us, and urges us every day to excel in following the one true Master.

31. The table of La Valla and the house at L'Hermitage are symbols that embody the gift of God passed on to us by Marcellin and they continue to be for us a source of inspiration for recreating the Marist charism in our day. Sharing bread and building a home, we feel that Marcellin is inviting, us today, to be a community for the mission.

32. Champagnat, who encountered difficulties in his studies, who spent most of his life living in rural villages, who wore himself out until he died so that the children and young people could experience the love of God, is today an example which inspires not just the Marist family. The Church, by proclaiming him 'saint', has declared him to be a model for all Christians.

33. The Church recognizes that the insight of Saint Marcellin continues to be alive in us today and that he is a gift of God for the world. The Marist mission is called upon to multiply itself until, in all the dioceses of the world, the children and young people experience God's tenderness[11]. We Lay Marists believe that God calls us to carry on this insight in history as followers of Christ in the style of Champagnat.

[11] *Notebook 4 of Fr. Champagnat*. AFM 132.4, p. 33, nº 6

Three Dimensions of a Single Life: Mission, Shared Life, Spirituality

> *The first thing that captivated me about the charism was its educational purpose, sensing that being 'Marist' is a form of being Christian in the world and for the world; an uncommon situation in religious movements.*
> *But what made me choose to be Marist, was seeing myself confirmed in my womanhood, in my being as an educator, in my being a member of the Church, in a community in which one breathes an atmosphere of family.*
> *This is seen in the depth and simplicity of the links, in accompaniment, in constant and liberating presence, in difficulties and in disagreements, just as in any family.*
>
> (Uruguay)

34. To be followers of Christ in the style of Champagnat today, means committing oneself to the three fundamental Christian and Marist dimensions: mission, shared life and spirituality. We consider these three dimensions to be inseparable: spirituality lives in and for the mission; the mission generates and encourages the shared life; the shared life is, in its turn, the source of spirituality and mission.



35. The apostolic tasks can be different in the mission; the accents of spirituality, varied; the shared life expressed in multiple forms. Mission, spirituality and communion are three colors that form one unique ray of light: the Marist charism. Depending on contexts and situations, one or other of the dimensions may be dominant, but it is impossible to follow one of them without finding the other two.



2 THE MISSION

CHAMPAGNAT MONTAGNE


MELBOURNE
MÉXICO CENTRAL
MÉXICO OCCIDENTAL
NEW-ZEALAND
NIGERIA
NORANDINA
RIO GRANDE DO SUL
Sª. MARIA DE LOS ANDES
SOUTH ASIA
SOUTHERN AFRICA
SYDNEY
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
LA VALLA FRANÇOIS BASILIO

2 THE MISSION

- ☐ Christ Sends Us:
  the Mission of the Lay People
- ☐ With the Passion of Marcellin:
  the Mission of the Lay Marist
- ☐ Jointly Responsible
  in the Shared Mission
  - Together in the Mission
  - The Working Relationship
  - The Volunteer Relationship
  - Management
    and Co-responsibility
- ☐ Passionate to Spread
  the Mission



"In my mind, I see two images: that of the bread that is broken and distributed so that it reaches everyone, so that everyone is fed; and that of the candle which, offering the best part of itself - light -, burns out, like the ideal of the life of Brother Basilio Rueda, "to burn my life for Christ", even if it consumes my own life."
(Venezuela)

Christ Sends Us: the Mission of the Lay People

36. The lay people, from baptism, are sent by Christ to the unique mission of the Church: to announce the Good News, to be the sacrament and leaven of the Kingdom of God for humanity.

37. We are evangelizers of the world, living in the midst of the world. Like salt in food, we show the depth that is hidden in daily life and, immersed in it, we give witness to the three dimensions of Christ's mission: to consecrate the world to God, to be prophets of a different future and to be at the service of others.

38. By our baptismal commitment:

- We are signs of God for others. Implanted in Christ, who makes all things new, we live the incarnation in earthly situations, helping to connect them to their true root, love. In this way we consecrate the world to God.

– As prophets, we announce a world of peace based on justice, and we denounce the causes of exploitation and exclusion experienced by millions of people, creating the hope that *another world is possible*[12].

– Through work and human relationships, we build a more fraternal and reconciled world, where the greatest is the one who makes himself the servant of others[13].

[12] Title of the final document of the *World Social Forum* held in Porto Alegre (Brazil, 2001).

[13] Cf. Mk. 9,35

39. As lay Christians we are attentive to the signs of the times, attentive to what the Spirit tells us through history, society, and people. Incarnated in reality, we live in continual dialogue with the world, showing the loving face of God.

40. This triple dimension of the mission underlines the universality of the call to sanctity of all Christians. Baptismal consecration generates a community of brothers and sisters who are equal in dignity and responsibility within the mission of the Church.

With the Passion of Marcellin: the Mission of the Lay Marist

"Mary and Marcellin encourage me and give me the strength to commit fully to this mission that I have been given, which consists in welcoming, listening and accompanying the young people, in spite of my limitations and the limitations of those



who are involved with me in this mission. In moments of doubt, when I experience the desire to throw in the towel, I turn to them both. They give me the strength to put into effect the 'Yes' that I pronounced one night in the chapel of Our Lady of the Hermitage.
(France) ”

41. Our heart beats in time with the passion of Marcellin which today is expressed in the words of Brother Seán Sammon directed to the Brothers: *living and working in the midst of young people; evangelizing primarily through education and at times by other means; and demonstrating a particular concern for poor children and young people, those living at the margins of society*[14].

42. This is our mission: to ensure that the new generations discover the face of God and *have life in abundance*[15]. Following in the footsteps of Champagnat, we also must respond to the cry of the *Montagnes*[16] who surround us. We cannot see a child without loving him and telling him how much God loves him[17].

- We consecrate the world, helping young people to discover the meaning of their existence and to be able to take their life in their hands, by the light of faith.

- We are prophets for the young people announcing to them that life in itself is wonderful, that it is worth the pain to fight to build a better world. We encourage them to be critical of the society that surrounds them and we invite them to commit themselves to transforming that dream into reality.

[14] Bro Seán D. Sammon, SG: *Making Jesus known and loved: Marist apostolic life today*. Circular of the Superior General of the Marist Brothers, volume XXXI, 6 June 2006, p. 68.

[15] Jn. 10,10

[16] Jean-Baptiste Montagne was a poor teenager, having no knowledge of God, who lived in the parish at La Valla, and was visited by Marcellin hours before he died. He has become the archetype of all those children and young people to whom the Marist mission should be directed. (Cf. Jean Coste, SM, *Origines Maristes*, IV, p. 120)

[17] Cf. Bro John-Baptist Furet: *Life of Blessed Marcellin Joseph Benedict Champagnat*. Bicentenary Edition, Rome, 1989, p. 492.

– We are also their servants, being close to them and being a reference point for their lives, always attentive to their needs and accompanying them in their successes and mistakes, in their doubts and aspirations.

43. The Marist mission is unique, accomplished with a multitude of tasks, be it the professional life, volunteer work, family or prayer. The lay plurality means that the tasks are very varied. In any work, carried out through faith, we can share the Marist mission.

44. Each individual, community or institutional action is a thread in the great network of the Marist mission. The fundamental thing is that we resonate with that unique mission and that we remain united to it though the power of prayer.

Jointly Responsible in the Shared Mission

Together in the Mission

> *To be with, to work among, to be attentive to the less favoured children, these are the realities that I experience with the instructors and Brothers. We are there for each other and for the children, like a big family.*
>
> (Canada)



45. We Brothers and Lay people have received the gift of the charism from Marcellin. Therefore, we are partners in the Marist mission, and jointly responsible before God for carrying it out.

46. Joint responsibility involves all levels: decision making, planning, implementing and evaluation. We share whatever the diverse states of life are able to contribute to the shared mission.

47. The tasks involved in the mission are, for lay Marists, wider than the works of the Brothers. There are some who feel that, at a certain point in their lives they should be devoted completely to the care and education of their children. Others live the mission being employed in educational works that depend on the State or other communities of the Church. And there are some who share their life and their time in other fields. In this diversity, characteristic of the lay life, we cultivate communion and together we look for new paths for the expression of the Marist mission.

The Working Relationship

> *"The school became our second home,*
> *the Marist community our second family.*
> *Though we received a meagre salary*
> *we did not count the cost of what we were doing."*
> (Philippines)

48. Many lay Marists live the mission employed as professionals in the work of the Institute. This relationship is a source of great fulfillment and, possibly, on occasion, it can produce friction.

49. It can be a source of fulfillment:

- For the work, since together we can deepen its Marist identity and stimulate its evangelizing life with more energy and creativity.
- For the Brothers who thus find support and their vocation and their apostolate enriched.
- For us Lay people who carry out the Marist mission more particularly in an environment which we feel is peculiarly our own and we also our find vocation in relation to the Brothers enriched.
- For the children and young people who experience the vitality of the Marist presence from diverse vocations.

50. Tensions may arise:

- Through differences of approach or a personalized concept of administration that, at times, can give rise to injustices, to injured feelings and even to the exclusion of lay people strongly identified with the charism.
- Through an attitude of professionals who do not respond with due competence or uprightness to their obligations, or who use



their responsibilities in the works for personal benefit.

– Through a deficient articulation of workplace relationships. For an adequate relationship between employer and employee, just and clear conditions in the workplace are required, that not only comply with prevailing legislation, but that are rooted in the Gospel and the social doctrine of the Church.

The Volunteer Relationship

> *"In the simplicity of life of so many brothers and lay people I have come to realize that the Marist life is not only for educators; that each one of us from our profession, from our occupation, whatever it is, are capable of giving love especially to the many people who need it, to the children, and in this way to educate them as good Christians and good citizens."*
>
> (Colombia)

51. Other Lay Marists participate in the works of the Institute as volunteers, in both social and pastoral works. This relationship can also be a source of productivity.

– Its productivity is the same as that which exists in the work relationship, as much in the work itself, as for the Brothers or Lay people. The singularity resides in the force of Christian witness that gives freely what has been received freely[18]. The giving of time and effort is a privileged image of the love of God.

[18] Cf. Mt. 10,8

– This love shows itself in a special way in those who leave their country and their family to serve as volunteers in other parts of the world with a love without bounds.

52. The relationship of volunteer can also be, on occasion, a cause of tension. To those already mentioned previously, we can add the following:

– It is not easy to find a sane balance between personal volunteering and the demands of professional or family life.

– Volunteering cannot be used to replace professional work when this is required.

– The temptation can exist to use this freely given voluntary work to satisfy personal or family interests, to seek power, prestige, etc.

Management and Co-responsibility

> *"We know that there is a long road to travel, there remain goals to reach in the search for autonomies and complementarities. Participation is power: power to speak, power to do, power to decide, power to exist and to be with others, power to be a worthy son and daughter of God wherever we are, power to know, power to enjoy."*
> (Argentina)



53. The administration of a work should be a reflection of the spirituality to which we give witness. When *family spirit* presides over our working and volunteer relations and inspires a model of shared management, internal tensions diminish and the productivity of the work increases.

54. Lay people and brothers who share responsibility should have professional qualifications, together with up-to-date ongoing formation, and must have an attitude of respect for and solidarity with people, as well as a deeply lived spirituality[19].

55. We should all do our part to overcome any tensions and injustices that can arise. This demands: creating or developing structures of participative administration, setting down with clarity a profile and attributes of each function, making systematic evaluations from transparent criteria, and guaranteeing common processes and policies, beyond the changes that might be made in the teams of animation and government of the works or of the province.

56. Feeling ourselves co-responsible for the mission, we show a readiness to assume the tasks that might be required, according to our capacities and life situations, treating them as a service, and without becoming attached to them.

57. For love of the Mission, we Lay Marists are committed to an ongoing formation that contributes to improve the educational and pastoral actions. The Marist institution is attentive to the provision of appropriate means so that this formation reaches everyone in an effective manner.

[19] Cf. *In the footsteps of Champagnat*, 51 b y 165

Passionate to Spread the Mission

> *I will retire from teaching service next year.*
> *I hope to go into active evangelization*
> *with the help of God.*
> *There is no retirement for a committed Marist.*
> (Nigeria)

58. The love of God enkindles in our hearts a passion to reach more children and young people, and to help them live life to the full. Especially, we listen today to the voices which ask us:

- to announce the Good News of Jesus, especially in places where he is unknown, doing so with a deep love, apostolic zeal and new methods;
- to denounce and to commit ourselves to the battle against the new forms of poverty;
- to educate the new generations in love and respect for creation;
- to teach about gender equality, cultural, religious and ethnic diversity, as found in the young people of the world;
- to eradicate the causes of exclusion and exploitation of children and young people, by our socio-political commitment,



– to empathize with the situation of those people beyond our own frontiers.

59. These calls ask us not only to tend to a greater number of works, but also that we be open to new forms of presence and new places where we have not been until now. The desire to tend to the needs of children and young people makes us innovators and helps us to come out of our inertia and comfort zone. Today we have at our disposal more opportunities for formation, and more human and material resources, than those Marcellin had. His daring inspires us to use these means with creativity and a prophetic voice.

60. We lay people can contribute a new way of animating Marist life in the work. Together with the Brothers, we can form local communities which are the heart of the mission and the guarantee of our Marist evangelizing identity. These communities can be the seed of a new vitality for the mission, which is not based solely on the number or presence of Brothers in any given place.

61. Our lay Marist vocation prompts us to collaborate in evangelization on the new frontiers of the universal mission: the peripheries of the cities, the victims of the social exclusion, the mass media, the promotion of peace, the struggle in favour of justice and safeguarding creation[20].

62. The International Assembly on Marist Mission, which took place in September 2007 in Mendes (Brazil), has been for many of us a symbol of the distance we have travelled and of the horizons we, lay

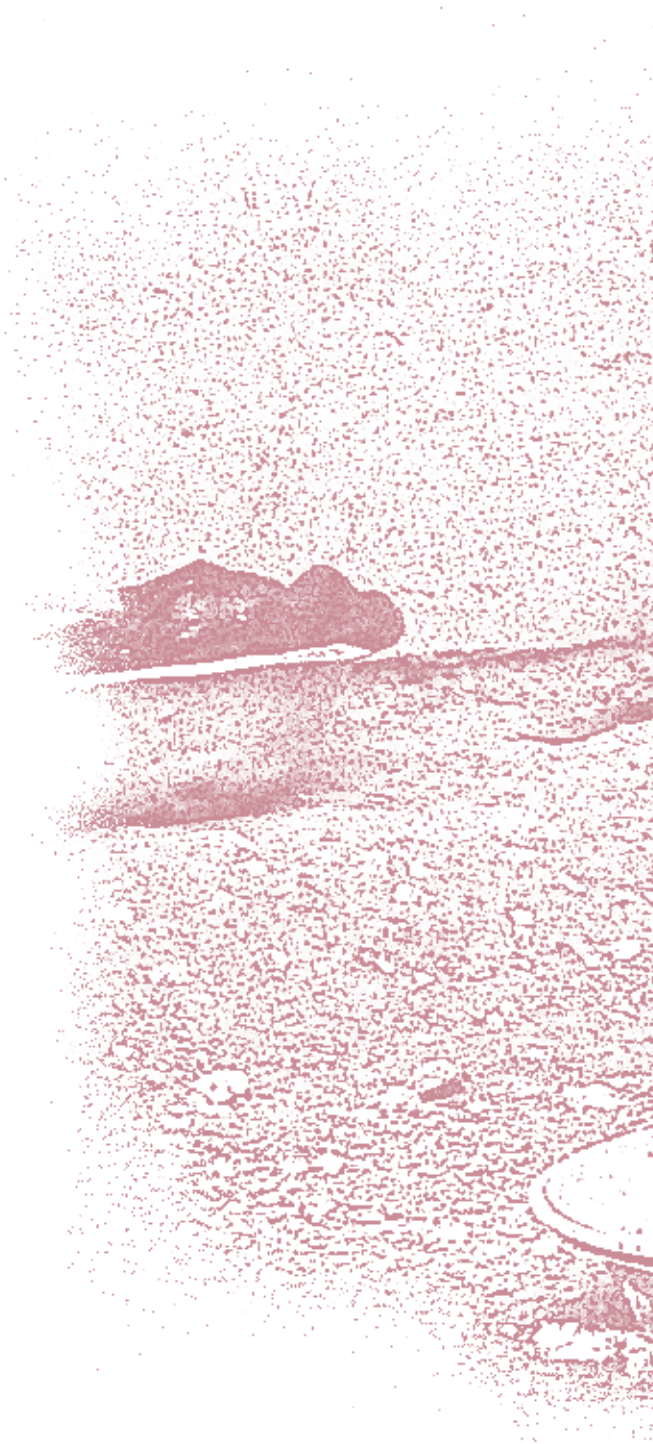
[20] Cf. *Redemptoris Missio*, 37

people and brothers, are approaching, encouraged by the Spirit. We were invited to put our efforts into *an evangelizing education, an education committed to solidarity and social transformation, attentive to cultures and respect for the environment; education without discrimination that creates opportunities for what is lacking*.[21]

[21] Final Document of Mendes, fourth call.

63. Mission *Ad gentes*, revitalized in these past years by the Brothers, is also for us lay people a call to open our minds and hearts to new forms of presence and generosity, unsuspected until now.

64. Together, from our personal and shared mission, we seek to discover the dream of God. He is calling us to revitalize the mission, widening it and opening it up to new challenges. He is sending us to convert his dream into reality.







3 THE SHARED LIFE



3 THE SHARED LIFE

- ☐ God is Communion in Diversity
- ☐ Our Experience of Communion: Family Spirit
- ☐ The Family, a Sign of Communion
- ☐ Creating Communion throughout Life
  - The table of La Valla...
  - …unites us with the whole world
- ☐ Community Comes from Sharing
  - The Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family
  - Life Communities of Lay people and Brothers
  - Other Lay Marist Groups
- ☐ New Structures for Communion



> *In the months of suffering and uncertainty,*
> *with our small son in hospital,*
> *accompanied in his bed by his doll 'Champagnat',*
> *I have felt our Marist family suffering with us,*
> *praying for us and being happy with us.*
> *We have known the authentic meaning of communion.*
> *If this is not sharing life, what is?*
>
> (Spain)

God is Communion in Diversity

65. God has revealed to us that his heart is communion in plurality; he is one and three; he is love, loving and loved[22], a loving force always loving. As children of that God, we yearn to move out of ourselves to meet others and to live the dynamic of the same being as God.

66. The Church, being the sign of the Kingdom of God, lives through that Trinitarian love. Therefore, it reflects in its interior the one and the diverse facets of humanity and, faithful to its mission, it brings about union in diversity.

67. We lay Marists who wish to follow Christ in the manner of Mary, also take part in this way of life through a specific sensibility: *family spirit*.

[22] Cf. Saint Augustine, *De Trinitate*, VIII, 10,14

Our Experience of Communion: Family Spirit

> *There is the possibility of beauty, fondness, respect and care for others, bread is baked, a place at the table in our house to rest on the road, there is a fraternal embrace. That is why so many of us Brothers and Lay people continue to opt for this dream.*
>
> (Argentina)

68. Marcellin Champagnat passed on to the first Brothers a form of relationship based on the example of Mary. They lived in an atmosphere of family, of home life, of proximity. The feeling of brotherhood went with them wherever they went and formed part of the educational style of their schools. We call this form of relationship *family spirit* and it is for us a fundamental part of our inheritance from Marcellin. It is the characteristic of our charism that, from the beginning, most attracts people in the first place and which singles us out. It is our great prophetic sign.

69. *Family spirit* is a form of existence that helps us as people and transforms us. It helps us to trust in others, to accept our own limits, to feel appreciated and to share the best of what God has given to us. When there is no need to pretend, but just to enjoy being with others.

70. From this spirit, the small details emerge with the others that characterize us. Like Marcellin, we cultivate among ourselves the *small virtues*[23]: forgiving the little day to day slights, understanding the other person's point of view and putting ourselves in his place, being cheerful, anticipating

[23] Cf. John-Baptist Furet, *Marist Chronicles. III. Sentences (spiritual lessons)*, Ch. XXVIII, Edelvives, Zaragoza, 1989, pp. 261-266. Here we wished to edit a more lay-friendly version of the *small virtues*, but would in essence be equal to those described by Br. Jean Baptiste.



the needs of others and, providing our service with simplicity, being patient and affable, knowing when to give way when it is time for others to act… In this way we nourish our daily life and continue to grow in depth.

71. Through *family spirit* we open ourselves to God the Trinity and we welcome with tenderness those who feel far from any home. And so our Marist pastoral should be steeped in this form of existence which characterizes us and saturates our mission.

72. Like Mary, we go out to assist those who need us, we visit Elizabeth, we rejoice in each other's company and create family together[24]. We are attentive to the newlyweds in Cana, we offer our help with simplicity and we enjoy good wine together[25]. We pray for each other in Jerusalem, we experience brotherhood and in this way we build a community in the Spirit[26].

The Family, a Sign of Communion

> *"By God's grace I often realize how*
> *my love-borne relationship with my wife*
> *and sons sustains and enriches my relationship*
> *and contribution to the greater community.*
> *Demanding and sometimes draining as family life*
> *can be in a hurried busy world,*
> *they are my main wellspring for continued insight,*
> *growth, true joy, and a gentler heart."*
>
> (USA)

[24] Cf. Lk. 1,39-56

[25] Cf. Jn. 2,1-11

[26] Cf. Acts 1,12-14

73. The family is the first place where we experience communion. In it we grow as persons and followers of Jesus. Along with the normal difficulties and conflicts that arise in the life of families, in them also mature understanding of partners, self-denial in the care of the children and the elderly or the sick, the acceptance of each other's differences, unity so that everyone can live with dignity and each one has his or her proper place; the cultivation of fidelity, the security of knowing that your place at the table is always waiting for you.

74. For many of us, matrimony is a fundamental part of our lay vocation. In our mutual self-giving spouses reflect the love of God, always faithful, in the midst of the world. We would hope that our families, following the example of Nazareth and La Valla, would be open families, abundant sources which increase life in the children, in the mission, and in the proximity to those who need us.

75. Celibate lay people take care of their own families with special sensitivity, seeking to be the leaven of unity among their brothers and sisters, the source of understanding and care for parents and a loving reference point for the new generations of the family.

76. We realize that there are new forms of family among us. Whatever the circumstances, we Lay Marists wish to live them like a Christian home, where love and understanding are at the centre of our relationships.

77. Marists, whatever our state of life, take care of our families as a unique gift, and we are fruitful generating family from our respective vocations.



Creating Communion throughout Life

> *Nothing gives me more joy than*
> *to dedicate my efforts so that we Brothers and Lay people*
> *can set hearts on fire and expend our lives*
> *to encourage each other,*
> *making the dream of Marcellin reality.*
> (Mexico)

The table of La Valla...

78. The strength of this family spirit gathers us who live the Marist charism into a new family of followers of Christ, through the example of Mary. The table of La Valla is a symbol of the relationship that unites us.

79. The communion between Lay people and Brothers complements and enriches our specific vocations and different states of life. There is not only a place for both at the table, but we need each other at our side.

80. This sharing requires times together. Around the table people gather to speak, to laugh, to be together. It is necessary to seek out those moments and spaces for communication in depth, meetings of a quality that unite us in what is essential. Thus it will be easier to understand the different ways of thinking and living, and accepting our own and other people's limitations in a climate of true brotherhood.

…unites us with the whole world

81. The table of La Valla is enlarged and it welcomes everyone around us... We want to be a source of peace in our professions, in our daily life, in our own heart. The efforts of daily life can distance us at times from and confront us with other people; but, from God, we wish to experience these difficulties with peace and serenity, seeking to unite and not to divide.

82. The simple table of the first brothers keeps us in communion with the Church, the People of God and with other Christian churches, brothers in faith, with whom we follow the path towards the one Master, Christ. Also, it unites us to other people, non-believers or from other religions, with whom we share a common commitment to building a fairer world.

83. Brothers and sisters in a shared humanity, we seek to build networks of mutual support as a way of making clear the interdependence of all peoples. Jesus invites us to care for our planet as a 'common home' in which all human beings live.

Community Comes from Sharing

> *"Community life took me out of my comfort zone*
> *by having me meet and live with people*
> *I would never normally have much or anything*
> *to do with and taught me to think about and be considerate*



of others before myself.
Without a doubt community living has gifted me with
broadened horizons and a more positive outlook on life.
(New Zealand) ”

84. *Family spirit* generates spaces and opportunities to share faith and life: it engenders community. Following the example of Jesus, Mary and Marcellin, we meet with others to walk together, sharing and helping each other to grow in faith and the mission.

85. We live very different lives; therefore the forms each community takes on are also diverse. The model of community where everyone lives under the same roof and that has everything in common is a possibility, but does not constitute the only lay Marist ideal.

86. Today, in the Marist world, various forms of expressing this community life exist: The Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family, life communities of Lay people and Brothers, and other Marist groups.

The Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family

“ *I am part of a Marist fraternity together with my family.*
What luck that this movement was born!
My husband, my children and I have in it a source
of living water and a constant inspiration to show that our life only
makes sense through faith. This bond that unites us closely with

the Brothers and with the Institute, leads us to reflect on our Christian life and to give testimony in our work and in the community in which we live.
(Brazil)

87. The Champagnat Movement is a form of organization recognized by the Institute for lay Marist communities. Approved by the XVIII General Chapter (1985) and encouraged by Brother Charles Howard, Superior General, in response to what he saw as an authentic *call of the Spirit*[27], it has, throughout the world today, thousands of members and, in a few decades, has created a network of fraternities constituted at regional and continental level.

88. His *Plan of Life*[28] is a fruitful way of developing community life and it continues to be, today, a source of inspiration, so that the Movement can face the challenges presented in these new times: to grow in the responsibility of its lay vocation; to connect with the new generations; to pass on the passion for the Marist vocation, both of the Brother and of the Lay person; to be involved in new forms of mission; and to become involved more and more with other Marist areas.

89. The Champagnat Movement, as the *extension of the Institute*[29], has provided many fruits in spirituality and mission, it has increased the Marist vocation and it is a source of hope for the future of our charism. The Movement needs to concentrate on updating its *Life Plan* and continue growing in vitality[30].

[27] Cf. Bro Charles Howard, SG: *Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family: A grace for us all.* Circulars of the Superior General of the Marist Brothers, volume XXIX, 15 October 1991, p. 344.

[28] Cf. Bro Charles Howard, GS, *Idem*, pp. 419-428

[29] *Constitutions*, 167.4

[30] *We are conscious that the final document should come from your own hearts, from your own faith, from your own experience, from your living the spirituality of Champagnat. We consider this document to be the first step in a process that you yourselves will complete in the coming years.* (Cf. H. Charles Howard, SG: *Idem*, p. 416)



Life Communities of Lay people and Brothers

> *We spent some days of retreat together, Brothers and Lay people. It was then, when I saw everyone together, that the call came to me to continue throughout the whole year what we experienced in that holiday retreat: to live in community, Brothers and Lay people, for the service of to young people.*
>
> (France)

90. Today a significant number of Marist communities exist where Brothers and Lay people share their life around a mission. Some have come about as a to help young adults in vocational discernment; others through the work of social inclusion, others develop projects deriving from shared life and mission. Some are temporary, others of longer duration. They are all examples of shared wealth generated by people from different states of life.

91. These communities also arise in other religious institutes and in various movements that wish to promote new forms of ecclesiastical life. They bring new vitality to the charism when they are initiated and accompanied by both religious and laity, through means of an adequate discernment.

Other Lay Marist Groups

> *Through my involvement with the Lay Marist Group the family spirit, enables me to be part of the Marist family, to offer support and be an example of how to live*

the Marist charism in the school community amongst companions and students.

(Australia) ”

92. In quite a number of places, Lay people experience community life in different structures and works of the Institute (educational communities in schools and social works, provincial commissions, animations teams) and in other Marist groups contributing their own color to the rainbow of expressions of the charism.

93. The Lay shared life, encouraged by the Spirit, is growing and will better acquire new forms of expression in the future. If we are open to learning from each other, we will strengthen, together, the Marist mission and spirituality.

New Structures for Communion

“ *I sometimes have the sensation of belonging to the Marist world because the Brothers have allowed me, and that I should be grateful for how much they have given me. While this is partly true, I would like to be recognized as Marist by my own choice and because I feel Marist and Lay by vocation; to be co-responsible in what it means to be Marist, as an equal; to a participant in the same spirituality and mission from a different state of life.*

(Spain) ”



94. New structures are arising in many provinces that demonstrate the communion of Brothers and Lay people. Mission is one of the spaces where this new development is perceived with more clarity.

95. Co-responsibility in mission has led to the emergence of assemblies, chapters and provincial commissions and teams where lay people and brothers work side by side. Other provinces have created structures where administration and provincial animation are shared. Lay people do not only carry out, but also participate in the combined planning of the mission. Enlarged provincial councils have also been created, in which Brothers and Lay people work together to respond with creativity to the current needs.

96. Lay Marist communities are offering a renewed map of Marist life, a reference point for the charism that can endow new energy in the mission, although at this time the number of Brothers is diminishing.

97. Communion goes beyond the mission. Jesus calls us to drink together of the Living Water[31]: to pray together and to share our spirituality from the heart. We need to continue developing structures that promote this dimension, such as retreats for Brothers and Lay people, experiences of shared formation and charismatic vitality, or other forms of support.

[31] Cf. Jn 4,10

98. Encounters among Brothers and Lay people are special opportunities to get to know each other better, to accept each other for what we are and to live more than ever in the communion of God who sends us, today, to manifest the charism of Marcellin in the world.

99. As long as we continue walking together, new forms of relationship will emerge more and more strongly and they will demand new structures that welcome and encourage vitality. Together also, we can think of how we want the Marist future to be, a large and shining home.



4 SPIRITUALITY



4 SPIRITUALITY

- Living in the Spirit
- Following Jesus, the Centre of Life for the Lay Marist
- Like Mary
- A Lifestyle in the Spirit
- Interconnectivity of Mission, Shared Life and Spirituality



What better lifestyle proposed to today's world than Marist Spirituality!
Love for Mary, family spirit, simplicity, working and being present for the families that need us most; these issue us with the challenge of living, day by day, step by step, with great trust in God, always with a smile on our face, the announcement of the Good News: That Jesus loves us!
(Mexico)

Living in the Spirit

100. Spirituality is living in and from God. Spirituality is like the sap of the tree. It is not visible, but it sustains, enables growth and gives fruit. In the same way, Christians experience that the power of the Spirit gives meaning to their existence, it nourishes their convictions and it drives their actions.

101. Spirituality wants to live at the root, not only on the surface. The human being open to spirituality discovers that each instant is a time of opportunity. He is able to maintain hope in happiness and pain, he commits to living fully each second of this wonderful and difficult existence. This is not to be confused with a ritualistic religiosity, but as leading to a true change of life.

[32] *Constitutions*, 49

102. Marcellin and the first Brothers lived in the Spirit. The Marist tradition has gathered their experiences and teachings, their inheritance[32], and continues to transmit it, from generation to generation, in a faithful and renewed way. The spring of this tradition is today a mighty river that renews peoples and cultures from all over the world. We Lay Marists also contribute to it, bringing our own experience of God.

103. Marist spirituality is in harmony with the lay life because it is practical and absorbs our daily experience. Its place is among the children, in the home, at work. People and their circumstances is God's book in which we learn and in which we teach ourselves to read life. It is a contagious spirituality, easy to give and to receive, and which connects us with the hopes of our children and young people.

Following Jesus, the Centre of Life for the Lay Marist

> *My way of living Marist spirituality changed when a Brother told me: "Marcellin wanted the first places for us, in the Crib, at the foot of the Cross and beside the Eucharistic table."*
>
> (Brazil)



104. Our spirituality is passionately centered in Christ. We are his disciples and we want to follow in his footsteps, enlightening our family, our profession and all our relationships through Him. By integrating the different facets of our reality in God, we grow in intimacy with Jesus.

105. We have learned from Marcellin how to base our existence on Jesus Christ, making him present in three occasions of his life: the Crib, the Last Supper and the Cross.

106. **The incarnation of Christ, the crib**, teaches us to share the joys and sufferings of our peoples, in the midst of the world; to return to the essential, by adopting a simple style of life; to admire the children and to discover, in their fragility, the face of God.

- God is there, in the children and young people, especially in those who do not have a place at the inn[33]. We wish to contemplate him there every day.

107. **The Last Supper, the altar of the Eucharist**, teaches us to live the dream of God for humanity, the table shared by sons and daughters around the Father[34]; to celebrate the feast of life; to commit to the fight against the historical forces of exclusion.

- God is there, reconciling with everyone and everything, in the bread and the wine of his dedicated life. We want to contemplate him there, at the table of the banquet of the Kingdom[35].

[33] Cf. Lk. 2,7
[34] Cf. Lk. 15,11-32
[35] Cf. Lk. 14,15-24

108. **The Cross, the final commitment of Jesus**, teaches us to be faithful to love until death, because *only love is worthy of faith*[36]; it teaches us the daily gift of self where is hidden happiness without end; the embrace that accompanies the another's pain.

- God is there inviting us to that fidelity to love and to believe in the victory of the Resurrection. There we want to adore him, drying all the tears[37].

[36] Cf. Urs von Balthasar, *Love Alone Is Credible*. Ignatius Press, 2004, title of the work.

[37] Cf. Ap. 21,4

109. To live Marist spirituality is, in short, to discover the daily source of the passion of Marcellin for the Kingdom and, like him, to respond 'Yes'. It is to revive our first love, to renew our commitment to Jesus in the style of Mary.

Like Mary

> *Mary is the model I feel called to follow:*
> *a lay woman open to the presence of God,*
> *who shares the concerns,*
> *the happiness and the hardships*
> *of the people in her village.*
> *I firmly believe that Mary continues to be*
> *our ordinary resource and that*
> *she does everything among us.*
>
> (Spain)



110. Mary is our model for following Jesus. She opens up her life so that God can model it like clay in his hands: *Be it done to me, according to your word*.[38] The first disciple, *she kept all these things, meditating on them in her heart*.[39] She listens, welcomes and gives fruit. We keep Jesus present through Mary's features.

111. Mary, a lay woman, is also a model for us of the simple and hard-working life. Next to her and Joseph, Jesus learns how to forge relationships, to see the world and to discover his vocation. Like her, we evangelize and we educate through presence. In our families, in the work place, in encounters with friends and neighbours, we manifest the maternal face of the Church in the style of Mary.

112. Committed to the processes of liberating the excluded, we proclaim Mary's Magnificat, knowing that God is the one who drives us and sustains our efforts to bring about a world in which the *hungry are filled with good things*.[40]

113. The image of Mary that Marcellin chose for his Brothers is also our symbol: the Good Mother. We want our relationships to be imbued with her tenderness and proximity. With those feelings of compassion, we present to the world the great gift of God made man.

114. We feel a special confidence in Mary. Like Marcellin, we admit that she *has done everything for us*[41], and it is our custom to go to Christ through his love for his Mother. Devotion to Mary centers us in Jesus and sustains us on the way of the Gospel.

[38] Lk. 1,8

[39] Lk. 2,9

[40] Lk. 1,53

[41] Bro. John-Baptist Furet: *Life of Blessed Marcellin Joseph Benedict Champagnat*. Bicentenary Edition, Rome, 1989, p. 93.

A Lifestyle in the Spirit

> *Marist is not something that you practice in particular places or at particular times but something that you embrace and live out all of the time wherever you are. It is, in fact, a way of life.*
>
> (South Africa)

115. Captivated by Jesus, we want to live in intimacy with Him. From Marcellin, we learn **the exercise of the presence of God** that accompanies and gives meaning to our daily chores. Throughout the day, there springs from our heart, in a spontaneous way, the prayer of thanksgiving, of petition, of abandonment in his hands.

> *The visit to the College chapel every morning taught me to place my life in God's hands through Our Blessed Mother. I consider the Marist Brothers as an instrument of God's love for me. It was through them I have got closer to God day by day and hopefully be with Him in the life ever after.*
>
> (Sri Lanka)

116. We employ many ways to grow in that presence[42]: we put the day in the hands of God and to review it by the light of the gospel, we participate with the Christian community in the weekly Eucharist and

[42] Cf. Water from the Rock, chap. 2, *'We journey in faith'*, pp. 48-52



other sacraments, we meditate on and pray with the Word of God, we share prayer and have times to meet with Mary, by praying the rosary or through other Marial practices.

[43] Cf. Water from the Rock, 33-41

117. From this intimacy with God springs, as a gift and a task, our characteristic way of being, **simplicity**[43]. Infinitely loved by Him, we want to be transparent: we know our weaknesses and we accept ourselves with them. For that reason, our human relationships tend to be fraternal and welcoming.

118. Simplicity is the source of our **sense of humour** that does not offend but rather transforms the mundane into a celebration. It helps us to overcome difficulties and confront life from a new wider perspective… the perspective of God.

119. Also born of simplicity is **the love of work**. Passionate for the Kingdom, we are available for the mission, within our capacities and life situations. We take on any task that is necessary and, like Marcellin, we show our availability to roll up our sleeves, to take up the pick and shovel. We know that the fundamental thing is to live for the service of others.

120. The exercise of our profession is not only a form of sustenance for us, but it constitutes, as well, our commitment to the Kingdom, the way of being jointly responsible for the building of a better world. We try to overcome a concept of work as alienating and destructive of nature, and we transform it into a humanizing space.

121. In this way, our life takes on a prophetic dimension that breaks with some social ideals self-centeredness. Success, prestige, the level of consumerism… has for us a different sense from the experience of God, in the style of Marcellin.





Interconnectivity of Mission, Shared Life and Spirituality

> *It is my belief that spirituality incorporates all aspects of our life.*
> *Rather than simply referring to one aspect of our life that might be considered 'religious', it is a search for God in every dimension of my life.*
> *Thus when I pause to consider the way in which my life has been shaped by a Marist spirituality I am conscious that my spirituality doesn't exist in a vacuum; that like that of Marcellin, his understanding of God and his response was shaped by his place in history.*
> (Australia)

122. Spirituality does not separate us from reality, but rather it mines it and allows us to experience it from its source: like Moses in the desert, it makes water pour from the rock[44]. Therefore, it is necessarily an apostolic spirituality where we discover God in the world and the world sends us to God[45].

[44] Cf. Ex 17,1-7

[45] Cf. Water from the Rock 4,124

123. Our life becomes unified around Christ in the three dimensions of the charism: spirituality sends us to the mission and it engenders shared life; communion strengthens us in the mission and deepens spirituality; the mission discovers for us new facets of spirituality and makes us experience brotherhood.



5 FORMS OF RELATIONSHIP



WITH THE MARIST CHARISM

5 FORMS OF RELATIONSHIP WITH THE MARIST CHARISM

- ☐ Together, Depositories of the Charism
- ☐ Relationship with Other Marist Congregations
- ☐ Relationship with the Institute of the Marist Brothers
- ☐ Liaison and Sense of Ownership
- ☐ Recognition of the Vocation
- ☐ Towards a new Marist Model in the Church



> *I don't know what the future will bring but, in a way, I feel both excited and challenged about having to ultimately find newer ways to be Marist.*
> (USA)

Together, Depositories of the Charism

124. The vocation of Lay Marists is a new expression of the charism of Champagnat. Therefore, we can only understand ourselves in communion with the Institute of the Brothers, the original form of the charism and the source from which we have discovered the treasure of our identity.

125. The lay life is expressed in a multitude of contexts and personal journeys. Therefore, the way in which the Lay Marists relate to the Institute and to other Marist groups is constantly evolving, and it is different according to the cultures and history of each place. In the face of this diversity, the essential thing is to maintain the brotherhood, accomplishing the desire of Marcellin: *That it can be said of you…. look how they love one another*[46].

126. That same brotherhood also unites us to other people who live the Marist charism from other states of life, such as the diocesan priesthood, the female religious life or other forms of religious association. In the same way, there are people from other Christian denominations who share with us the charismatic call and we enrich one another's lives.

[46] Bro John-Baptist Furet: *Life of Blessed Marcellin Joseph Benedict Champagnat (Spiritual Testament).* Bicentenary Edition, Rome, 1989, p. 236.

127. The Marist charism, gift of the Spirit, *who blows where he wills*[47], today touches the hearts of men and women of other religions or beliefs[48]. We, Marist brothers and lay people, welcome these people who find in Champagnat's charism a way to live more deeply their own religious experience and their commitment to humanity.

[47] Jn. 3,8

[48] Cf. *Redemptoris Missio*, 55

[49] Cf. Final Document of the International Assembly of Mendes (Brazil). Second call.

Relationship with Other Marist Congregations

128. From its origin, the Marist charism of Champagnat, maintains a special relationship with the Society of Mary: *Marist Fathers, Marist Sisters Marist Missionary Sisters and the Marist Third Order*. We have part of our history and spiritual journey in common with Mary toward Jesus. In some parts of the world, we are together in the mission, which reinforces our links. We want to strengthen and enrich this relationship, contributing our identity of Lay Marists of Champagnat[49].

129. In the same way, we feel ourselves to be a family with the diverse associations of religious and diocesan congregations springing from the charism of Champagnat, especially with the *Marist Sisters of Champagnat* (Guatemala) and the *Marist Daughters of Jesus the Good Shepherd* (Nigeria).

130. Also, in some places, we share with diocesan priests who feel the Marist charism as their own, which brings us a unique wealth. They, from their specific vocation, they also show a new Marist face.



Relationship with the Institute of the Marist Brothers

> *Since I heard about Marcellin,*
> *I have continued to grow,*
> *understanding more about myself and being able to feel*
> *part of the community with the Marists.*
> *Before that I was independent.*
> *The best thing that has happened since I met the Marists*
> *is that I have seen what God wants of me,*
> *is what God wants of them.*
> *He has given me a place where I belong.*
>
> (Australia)

131. To share the charism with the Institute implies, above all, the building of a fluid relationship, where there is effective communication between the Brothers and the Lay people. The original Marist charism was born with the Institute of the Brothers; it is there that we have found our vocation and we want to share our journey.

132. This relationship should be strengthened in local situations, overcoming difficulties that might arise. We look for moments to get to know one another better and to strengthen our own vocations. Both lay groups and communities of Brothers should open their spaces to one another, testifying in this way that we belong to the same family and are united with one heart.

133. In a world which becomes more global every day, meetings and national and international experiences reveal that the Marist charism overcomes frontiers and helps in the dialogue between cultures and traditions. They are an opportunity to get to know the different forms in which the Marist charism is embodied today and they contribute new intuitions to recreate it.

134. Although the important part of our relationship is found in free interpersonal communication, there exists also, among Brothers and Lay Marists, an institutional dimension. Thanks to the rich process carried out in these last decades, the moment has arrived to encourage new structures that will allow the deepening of that institutional relationship even more.

Liaison and Sense of Ownership

> *"Together with other lay people we decided to take steps to enable us to connect all Marist life which exists at a lay level in Catalonia.*
>
> *We gave the name to this project 'The Marist Lay Movement' and we dedicated a good part of our energy to it, accompanied by the Brothers. We realize that the laity has multiple forms of expression and that the Marist charism is in many hearts that beat in harmony."*
>
> (Spain)



135. The Institute of the Brothers, throughout its history, has conserved a rich tradition of lay men and lay women who have been attracted by the Marist charism. **The Associations of Former Marist Students**, came into being in this way. From their own identity, they began a reflection on the participation of the lay people in Marist spirituality and mission which has led some to discover their lay Marist vocation.

136. **The Affiliates of the Institute** are people (lay, priests or religious), whom the Institute has made participants of the spiritual goods of the religious family of the Brothers[50], because they have demonstrated an exceptional love and support for the Marist work. They already have a formal recognition of ownership of the Institute.

[50] Cf. *Constitutions*, 8

137. **The Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family** is linked to the Marist provinces and districts through the express approval of each one of the fraternities by the brother provincial. Maintaining their autonomy, there exist in each place different structures and spaces that guarantee their relationship with the province.

138. **The life communities of Brothers and Lay people** suppose another type of relationship with the Institute. The lay people share life, spirituality and mission with the Brothers, and they figure explicitly in the organization of the communities of the province or of the district.

139. **Other Lay Marist groups**, with their own particular history and journey, live their relationship with the Institute in multiple

ways. The fundamental part of a lay Marist vocation is its link to the charism, from which the communion with the Brothers is born. This communion does not imply, in all cases, the desire to belong to the Institute.

Recognition of the Vocation

> *I was invited to a spiritual retreat whose central theme was the role of the Brothers and of the Lay Marists in the refoundation. In the final Eucharist there took place the renewal of vows by the Brothers and the commitment by the Lay people. In this ceremony I formalized my life choice of following Jesus in the service of others as did Saint Marcellin, in daily life.*
>
> (Colombia)

140. All Christian vocation is born in and for the Church, and it is for the service of the world. For that reason, our vocation of Lay Marists, like that of the lay men and lay women who are attracted by other foundational charisms tend to be recognized by the ecclesiastical community.

141. According to the *Plan of Life* of the Champagnat Movement[51], the fraternities, after appropriate processes of personal and group discernment, see their Marist vocation endorsed through the recognition of the Brother Provincial.

[51] Cf. Bro Charles Howard, SG: *Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family: A grace for us all (Plan of Life).* Circulars of the Superior General of the Marist Brothers, volume XXIX, 15 October 1991, p. 405-414.

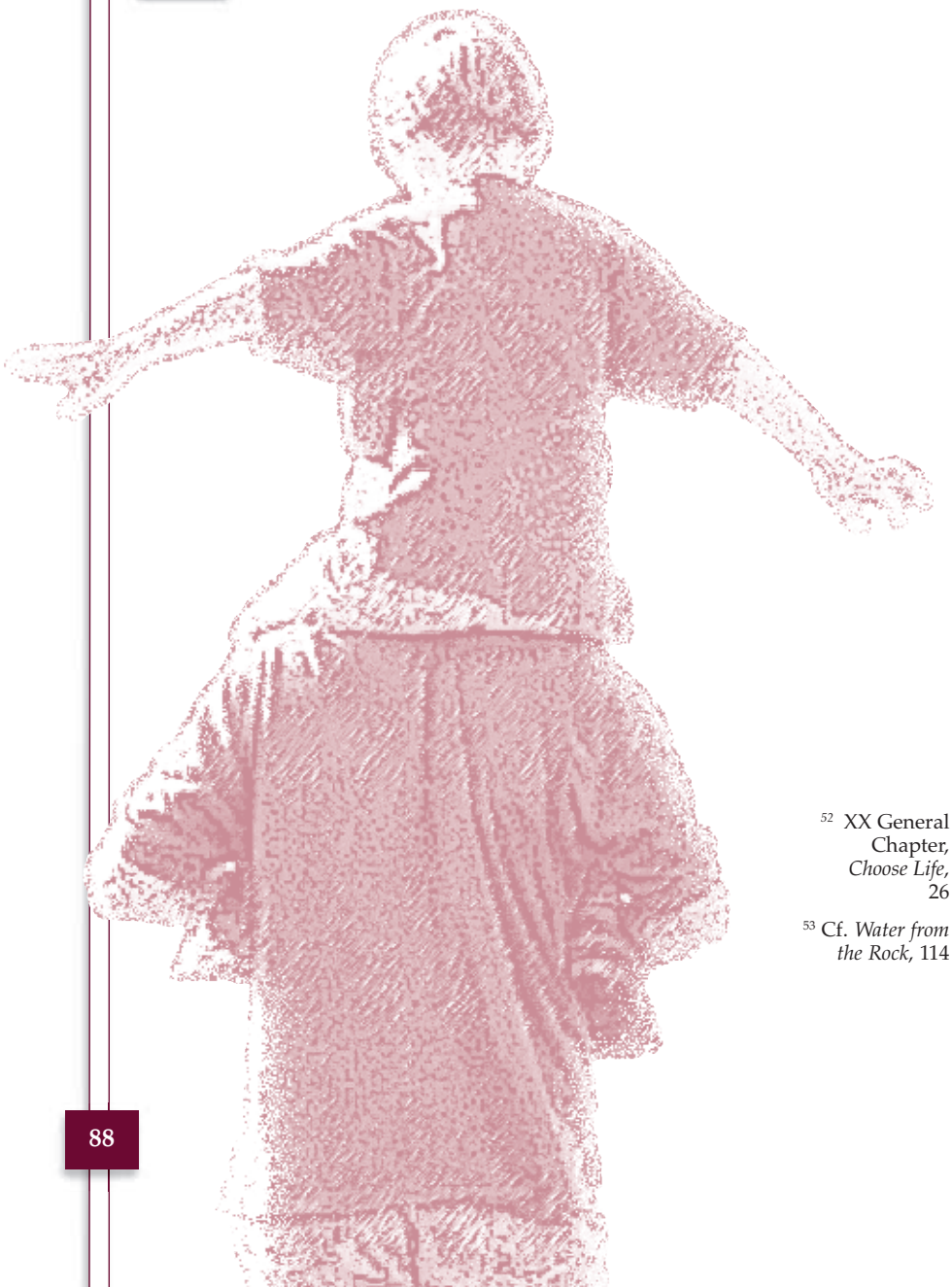


142. Other people and groups feel the need to request recognition from their Marist province of their vocation to the Institute or the diocesan Church. But there also exist those who, experiencing the Marist vocation as their own, do not believe this recognition to be necessary.

143. We are experiencing a moment of creativity which is interesting and complex. In some provinces new forms of welcoming the lay vocation are being carried out. We should discern together, Brothers and Lay people, the best ways to channel the vitality that is growing. The articulation of the initiatives instigated by the provinces will contribute to consolidating this recognition.

Towards a new Marist Model in the Church

> *"My husband and I wish to reflect on new projects that permit the integration of Lay people in the Institute. We dream of a Marist community which brings together Brothers, celibates, married couples and families, priests… all of them with the desire to commit themselves to live the Marist charism. We wonder how people like us can experience this feeling of ownership and a real union with the great Marist Family which is the Institute, without having its support, recognition and concrete bonds."*
>
> (Canada)



144. Driven by the Spirit, we are helping a new ecclesiastical model to be born, one based on the equal dignity of all Christian vocations and in the image of the Church as People of God in communion.

145. The experience of sharing the charism directs us to rethink the institutional model that until now has embodied the Marist charism in the Church. Experience seems to indicate that we not only need to *widen the tent*[52] *of the Institute*, but also to build together a new tent where everyone, Brothers and Lay people, may find our place.[53]

[52] XX General Chapter, *Choose Life*, 26

[53] Cf. *Water from the Rock*, 114







6 WAYS OF GROWTH


IN VOCATION

6 WAYS OF GROWTH IN VOCATION

- ☐ Vocation, a Journey of Faith
- ☐ Stages of the Journey
  - We Discover the Call of God
  - We Discern the Marist Life Option
  - And we live together in constant growth
- ☐ Fundamental Characteristics of the Journey
- ☐ Preparing for the Journey: Ongoing Formation



> *The future, and my desire, is that the Marist Family continues growing and that whoever sees us will say: "See how they love one another", and on seeing the fraternity that exists among us, the vocations of Brothers and Lay people may increase so that the Kingdom of God continues to extend, completing the dream of Champagnat.*
>
> (Mexico)

Vocation, a Journey of Faith

146. Vocation is the affirmative answer to the loving call of God. It does not only embrace the initial decisions of a project of Christian life, but also the renewed fidelity to the Lord in the changing circumstances of life.

147. We love our lay vocation as we love the Brothers' vocation, and we are committed to spreading both. Enthused by the charism, we participate in the responsibility of encouraging a joint and specific Marist vocation ministry that will increase the members of our family.

148. Mary is our example on the road to vocation. She teaches us to integrate life around Jesus, to follow him to the foot of the cross[54] and to savour the happiness of the resurrection[55].

[54] Cf. Jn. *19,25-27*

[55] Cf. Acts *1,14*

Stages of the Journey

> *With a great deal of emotion I can say that my experience of Marist laity is a road where there is no turning back.*
>
> (Chile)

We Discover the Call of God

> *As a pupil I was very much impressed by the then Brother Headmaster in his way of dealing with people.*
> *I am sure that he had an impact on my choice of career.*
> *For me it was very important that he should believe in me and trust me unconditionally.*
> *Without him I wouldn´t have become a Lay Marist.*
>
> (Germany)

149. Many lay people are still unaware of their own Christian vocation. In some societies, the weight of certain traditions has brought them to be passive subjects in the Church. They do not feel called to a vocation, because nobody has helped them to discover it.

150. It is necessary to invite lay people to set out on a vocational road open to the different charisms and ministries of the Church. For this, it is necessary to create gospel spaces that help them to grow in per-



sonal relationship with God. This implies putting in place a plan of human basic Christian and Marist formation, for all the lay men and lay women who are interested.

151. In these spaces we meet with people who show interest in the Marist life in its different forms. We invite them to start a process of discernment.

152. An especially important place for raising consciousness of vocation lies in the processes of juvenile pastoral. We Lay people and Brothers should be present in them, giving witness of our own Christian and Marist vocation. Living among the young people, sharing their concerns and needs, we encourage them to encounter God and to respond to him with generosity.

We Discern the Marist Life Option

> *"Often I had doubts that my vocation was in fact directed towards Marist spirituality. But God continues writing its history, even in adversity. It took me a long time to realize how simple the Marist vocation is, and, at the same time, so compromising. Little by little I began to become aware of that call in my life, as though that vocation was especially tailored for me."*
>
> (Brasil)

153. Like all vocations, the Marist life emerges from a process of discovery: we have been enchanted by Marcellin's Christian journey and that of the community of those who live his charism, and we understand that God sends us to be part of this family.

154. To arrive at this point, there is a need for a discernment that presupposes three moments: being aware of one's own history by the light of God, separating the incidental from the essential in life and choosing decisively.

155. In this process it is necessary to contrast our life with our companions on the road. Therefore, we live and offer personal accompaniment, helping others to make their own decisions, based on faith. So, just like standing in front of a mirror, they can find their true face, their vocation.

And we live together in constant growth

> *"I had to recognize that the desire*
> *to change people and to be demanding*
> *of others is not the way,*
> *that it's only about guiding and understanding*
> *the process of growth*
> *that each one has, perhaps like my own.*
> *We all have our time."*
>
> (Peru)



156. Brothers and Lay people are responsible for the vitality of the charism; therefore, the processes of joint formation are indispensable. We design, carry out and evaluate these processes that mutually enrich us. The experiences lived in this field have been very fruitful and they invite us to continue being creative, generating new and better initiatives.

157. Joint formation is supplemented with the formation characteristic of each specific vocation. The growth in the lay vocation involves deepening vital moments which are characteristically ours, from the Marist perspective: courtship and marriage, care of the children, the elderly and sick of the family, work, political options and affiliations, different life crises, retirement and old age.

158. In certain moments of specific formation, the contribution of the other states of life can uncover unexpected perspectives[56] to which perhaps we are not sufficiently sensitive.

[56] Cf. *Vita consecrata*, 54

Fundamental Characteristics of the Journey

159. The formation processes should be lived in community. Others help us to grow. Without their shared wealth and their fraternal correction we are locked in ourselves and our vocation weakens.

160. The objective of formation is to revitalize our personal history. We believe in experience as the way to growth: experience studied, interpreted and shared in community.

161. These processes are integral, embracing the different dimensions, human Christian and Marist, and they are also integrative, helping to unify our life in Christ.

162. Formation also includes the realization of the causes of so many people's exclusion in our societies and the commitment to justice and sustainability.

Preparing for the Journey: Ongoing Formation

> *"Crucial for my growth and discernment are: my love for the Good Mother, the life of Marcellin which serves me as encouragement and model in my day to day life, community experience in the pastoral of the school and in the fraternity, the experience of Church and of being open to all the other movements, the experience of my wife's love and of being a father, and the daily contact with the young people that nourishes me so much and speaks to me of God."*
>
> (Spain)

163. The lay Marist life generates its own wisdom. To share the faith in community and to reflect on it, it strengthens our Christian and Marist vocation. In this sense, lay communities should become formative communities.

164. Ongoing formation is supplemented with formative Marist plans at provincial and international level that make us look beyond our groups and discover new horizons for our faith[57].

[57] Cf. Bro Benito Arbués, SG: *Walk peacefully, yet with a sense of urgency*. Circulars of the Superior General of the Marist Brothers, volume XXX, 8 November 1997, p. 36. Bro. Benito cites a beautiful American legend: *There was a tribe that had camped from time immemorial at the foot of a tall mountain. One day their chief, who was seriously ill, called his three sons and said, "Climb the holy mountain. He who brings me the most beautiful gift will succeed me as chief." One of his sons brought back a rare and beautiful flower. Another gave his father a beautiful multi-hued stone. The third said to him, "I bring nothing. From the top of the mountain I could see, on the other side, a wide plain and a crystalline lake. So awe-inspiring was the sight that I couldn't think of anything to bring back to you; but I am convinced that the place I saw will be a perfect encampment for our tribe". The chief replied, "You will be one to succeed me as chief because you have brought me the gift of vision, the vision of a better future or our tribe."*



165. These itineraries should be created and animated by people who stimulate and know how to accompany processes. They help us to question ourselves and they invite us to find our own answers.

166. The creation of people's networks and lay communities are fundamental in the development of the lay vocation and learning about other mentalities and cultures[58].

167. To share with the local and universal Church it is indispensable to grow in faith. It helps us to contrast our life with the great ecclesiastic community and to have the certainty of our fidelity on the way to Jesus.

168. Also meeting with people of other Christian denominations, other religions and non believers reveal to us new calls of the Spirit and teach us to be more deeply human and Christian[59]. We want to know them more and better, and we participate with them in inter-confessional and inter-religious encounters.

169. We Lay Marists commit ourselves, together with the Brothers, to new and daring initiatives in formation. We have before us the challenge of *helping to bring about the dawning*[60] of new Marist life and strengthening the one that exists, making it more creative, faithful and dynamic. The future depends on our answer.

[58] International Assembly on Marist Mission (Mendes-Brazil, September 2007): *Idem*, element 2 (Vocation 4 and Mission 4) and element 4 (4).

[59] Cf. *Redemptoris Missio*, 28-29

[60] Bro. Basilio Rueda: *Opening Address of the first General Conference (Spoken Meditation of a Bro. Superior General to his Brothers Provincial).* Circulars of the Superiors General of the Marist Brothers, volume XXV, 1 July 1971, p. 358. (Citing Yves Congar)

OPEN LETTER

Today we feel part of a family.
We feel happy, blessed
and grateful because together
we Brothers and Lay people
can share the same spirituality
and the same mission.
A new experience of Church
has been born today.

(Bolivia)

Dear brothers and sisters:

We are delighted to send this letter you. We are a group of people who, while being very different from each other, feel deeply the call to be Lay Marists and we want to share the joyful living of that with you:

God has given us the Marist vocation

We have experienced that the God of Jesus of Nazareth loves us infinitely and we have been seduced by his love. Therefore, we want, above all, to be followers of Jesus, passionate servants for his Kingdom.

As a consequence of this, and thanks to the example of many Brothers, we have discovered that God has called us to live the Marist charism as a personal vocation. And, like Mary, we have responded 'Yes'.

This vocation unites us with the Brothers and allows us to share with them their mission, spirituality, formation… life. We are absolutely certain that our specific vocations are unequivocally, mutually enlightening; and we are a constant source of wealth for each other.

We feel called to be followers of Christ in the style of Champagnat. Saint Marcellin is our inspiration. He leads us to Jesus through Mary, our *Good Mother* and *Ordinary Resource*. With the Church, we believe that it is a gift of God for the world that encourages us to prolong his charism in history.

The Marist charism steeps our existence. We do not know how to be any other way. Our life multiplies and is strengthened in the mission; it is nurtured by the spirituality and becomes rich in the shared Marist life. Mission, spirituality and shared life are the three colors that, together in one single harmony, characterize us and make us admit: We are Marists!

The needs of the children and young people inflame us, and we dream that the Marist mission is increasing and is being renewed vigorously among Brothers and Lay people

We feel that the dream of Marcellin is more alive than ever. Millions of children and young people are abandoned, exploited, forgotten… Their screams are the clamours of the Spirit of God that inflame us; they take us out of our comfort zone and send us out to serve them.

That is why we feel that our Marist presence, both Brothers and Lay, people should immediately begin to grow. We should reach into the last corners of the world where we are needed.

All of us Marists have co-responsibility for responding to this shared mission, in our different tasks. Together, we want to discern, plan and carry out what God requests of us:

- To evangelize children and young people wherever they are, in their own particular ways of life, amid a pluralist, complex culture, where often there is no hope for a better future or where consumerism and superficiality absorb their life.

- To work unceasingly for a fairer world, where no one is excluded, where there is no misery, where we can all develop ourselves for what we are, sons and daughters of God.

- To develop among ourselves and in society new relationships of reciprocity between men and women, learning how to value others for what they are, educating a new generation for a world of similarity and diversity.

- To deepen inter-religious and ecumenical dialogue, because by listening to our brothers and sisters from other churches and religions, we listen to the Spirit that resides in them, waiting to guide us together towards God.

- To spread a new, more evangelical relationship with nature, born of the desire to respect it and to take care of it, and which allows our young people to marvel at creation and live a lifestyle that makes possible the sustainability of the planet.

It is for all of this that we commit, wholeheartedly, to giving the best of ourselves in this mission.

We want to live in the Spirit in the Marist way

As Christians, we want to live in the Spirit. We have learned from Marcellin how to encounter Jesus in the Crib, the Altar and the Cross. Marist spirituality:

- encourages us towards the constant presence of God in our daily life;
- invites us to live the simplicity, the transparency that comes from feeling loved by God, unconditionally, which is already a prophetic sign in the midst of the world;
- fills us with joy and creativity, ensuring that we appreciate every day as being an opportunity;
- turns us into servants of all, passionate for the work of the Kingdom;

To be disciples of Jesus, in the style of Marcellin, teaches us to live a *family spirit* that gathers us into community and unites us with the Brothers in a great Marist family.

Mary of Nazareth is our model. She teaches us to live in family, to evangelize through presence, to commit to the poor and to be welcoming to all those who live at our side. We want to live in Christ, through his mother's love. Mary, our companion on the way, leads us to God.

We want to journey together with the Brothers and revitalize the Marist charism

Together, sharing life, mission and spirituality, we get to know each other better and better. Responding to God's call, we discover and enjoy both what unites us and what distinguishes us. We say with joy that our brotherhood is growing and becoming richer, that a 'new tent' is being built by all of us.

Now is the time to take the steps asked of us by the Spirit. We cannot disappoint him. We believe that he calls us:

- **To show, together, the face of God**. We Brothers and Lay people live ways of life which are supplementary. We Lay people, located in worldly situations, consecrate this world to God. The Brothers, through their religious commitments, are prophets of the Kingdom. Together, we show the face of God to the world.

- **To create more spaces of stronger communication among us**, that allow us to share life in all its facets: to enjoy coexistence, to project the mission, to pray together, to share our history and formation… all this makes us grow in brotherhood and become an authentic family.

- **It is essential that we learn how to forgive each other**. Relationships are not always positive. There are unhappy people, hurting

inside. We should not be afraid of conflicts. The important thing is to know how to heal the wounds, to understand and accept each other's limitations and reconcile ourselves around the same table.

- **To increase and revitalize the Marist vocation**. The proposal and accompaniment of the Marist vocation, of Brothers and of Lay people, is for us a matter of urgency, because we are inflamed by the mission commended to us: the children and young people are waiting for us.

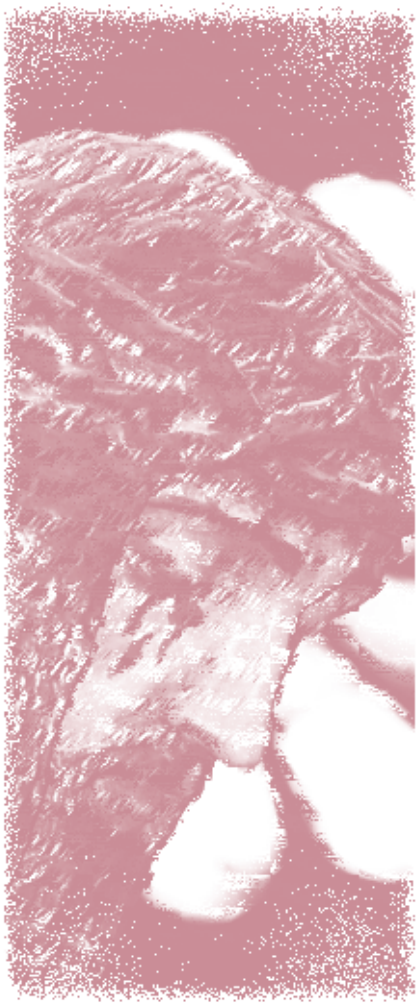
- Therefore, we commit **to involving ourselves in processes of formation in both forms of the Marist vocation**. We want our witness to attract many more people; we want to spread our dream. We are in love and we want more people to enjoy this love which fulfils our life.

Dear brother and sister, we want to tell you that today God has blessed this family by raising a new form of Marist life: the Lay Marist life. We give him thanks for this gift and we ask him to convert our hearts to be equal to the call.

In all simplicity, we ask God to help us to be faithful throughout our life. Together with the Brothers, we are sent by Him to increase and live more deeply the charism of Champagnat for the good of the children and young people, for the good of the Church and of the world. We are invited to dream, to pray and to live God's dream together.

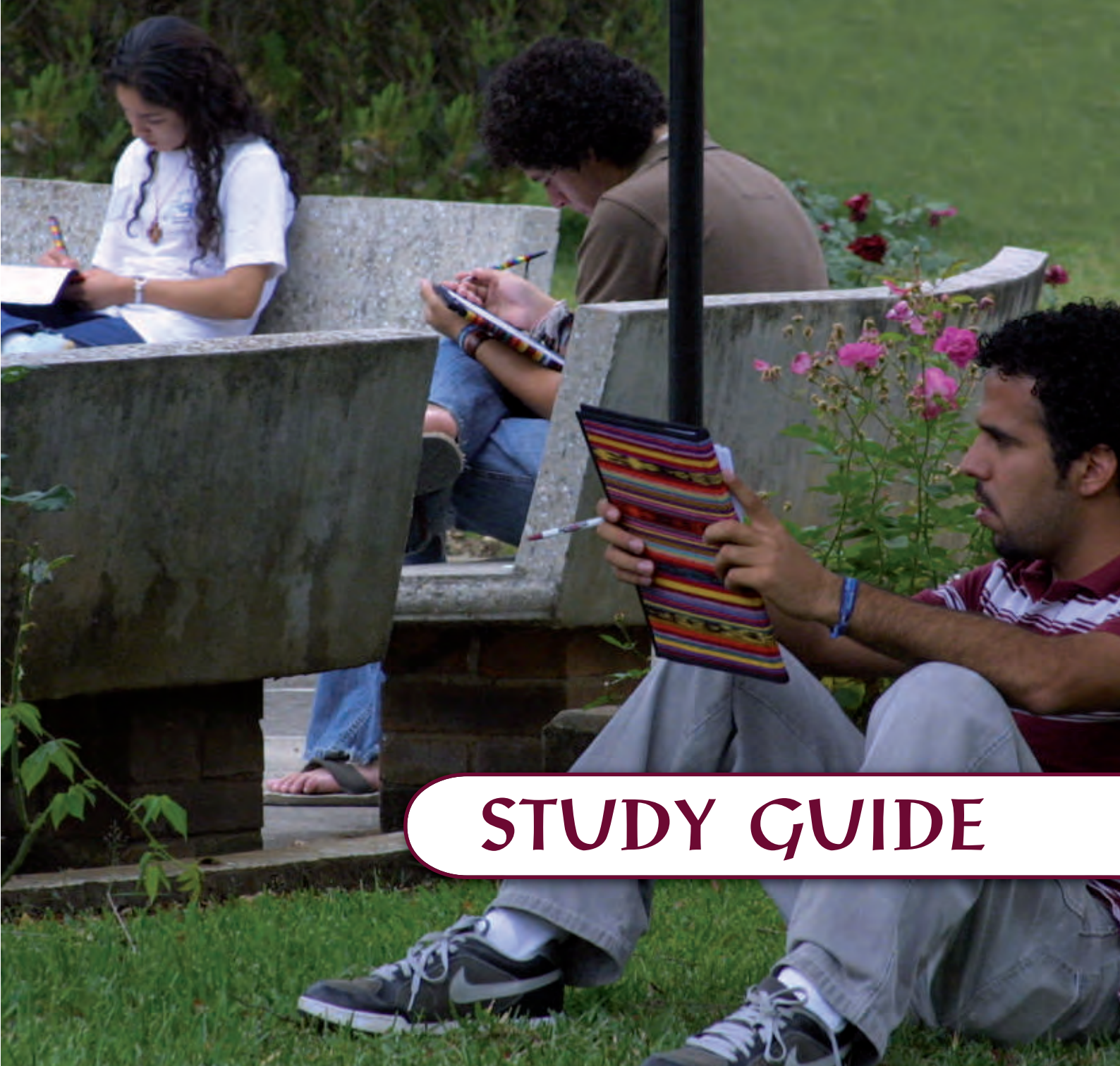
> *I dream about some Marist works where always the person comes before everything else. Where the shared mission is so real that it is planned, fashioned, and decided together, in co-responsibility. I dream that we can be more valiant every day and bold in the option for the most disadvantaged. I dream of a family of Brothers and lay people where we support each other and we take responsibility, side by side, in mutual service, a family where Jesus is, truly, the centre of our life.*
>
> (Spain)

This is, indeed, Good News.



Thank you, Jesus,
for calling me to follow you.
Thank you, Mary,
for your tender, close presence.
Thank you, Marcellin,
for your contagious passion
and for allowing me to become
immersed in your project.
Thank you, Brothers,
for sharing your treasure,
for inviting us to dream together
in brotherhood,
living the same mission
with a single heart.
Thanks to everyone,
Brothers and Lay Marists,
for showing me
that one can be happier
knowing how to work and to love:
to work for what we love
and to love what we do.
Amen

(Uruguay)



STUDY GUIDE



The Lay Marist Vocation

1. Throughout the course of your life, how has the Marist charism been made present?

2. The laity relate with the Marist charism in different ways. How do you relate to it? Why?

3. In your experience as layperson/Marist Brother, what have the laity/brothers contributed to you? What have you contributed to them?



The Mission

1. Describe (share) your experience of participating in the Marist mission.

2. What are some of the dark times and bright spots you have experienced while sharing the Marist mission?

3. To what new forms of presence, styles, places… do you feel called in service to the Marist mission?





The Shared Life

1. What motivates you to make your relationships authentic, simple, and welcoming, and to live the family spirit?

2. The element of community forms part of the lay vocation. How do you live this aspect? What would you like to see in this area?

3. How and where do you live the encounter between brothers and lay people? How can we make progress in this field, as individuals, as a province, as an Institute?



Spirituality

1. Where do you most easily find God? What are the main obstacles you experience along the way?
   Do you count on someone to accompany and help you?

2. In what way is Mary the model for your life?
   What are her main characteristics that most attract you?
   Which do you feel you should deepen?

3. In concrete terms, how do you live the presence of God in your surroundings… family, work, life groups, local church…?

NOTE:
The same question can be posed in reference to other characteristics of spirituality: simplicity, sense of humour, love of work…

Question of unifying chapters 2, 3 and 4:

4. How do you sense in your life the relationship among mission, shared life and spirituality?
Do you unify you life in Christ using these themes?



Forms of Relationship with the Marist Charism

1. ***For lay people***
Share how you feel about the relationship that, either personally or as a group of laity, you have with the Institute and/or with the Marist charism.
For brothers
Share how you feel about the lay people who either personally or as a group, want a closer relationship with the Institute and/or with the Marist charism.

2. Do you consider it important to recognize the Marist lay vocation?
Why?
What ways do you think would be most helpful to arrive at this recognition and what might that involve?



3. Looking at your own Marist experience (as layperson or brother), toward what model is the Holy Spirit guiding us, personally and as a group?



Ways of growth in vocation

1. Reflect on your own faith journey. What have been the steps or stages of your faith journey, in which you have discovered your Marist vocation as lay person or as brother?

2. What realities are you questioning at this time of new understanding and vitality of the Marist charism? What style of formation might be able to help us face these challenges?

3. For each of us, there have been important people who have helped us find, grow in and live our own Marist vocation. Reflect on and share what we, lay people and brothers, might be able to do to foster both vocations.

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