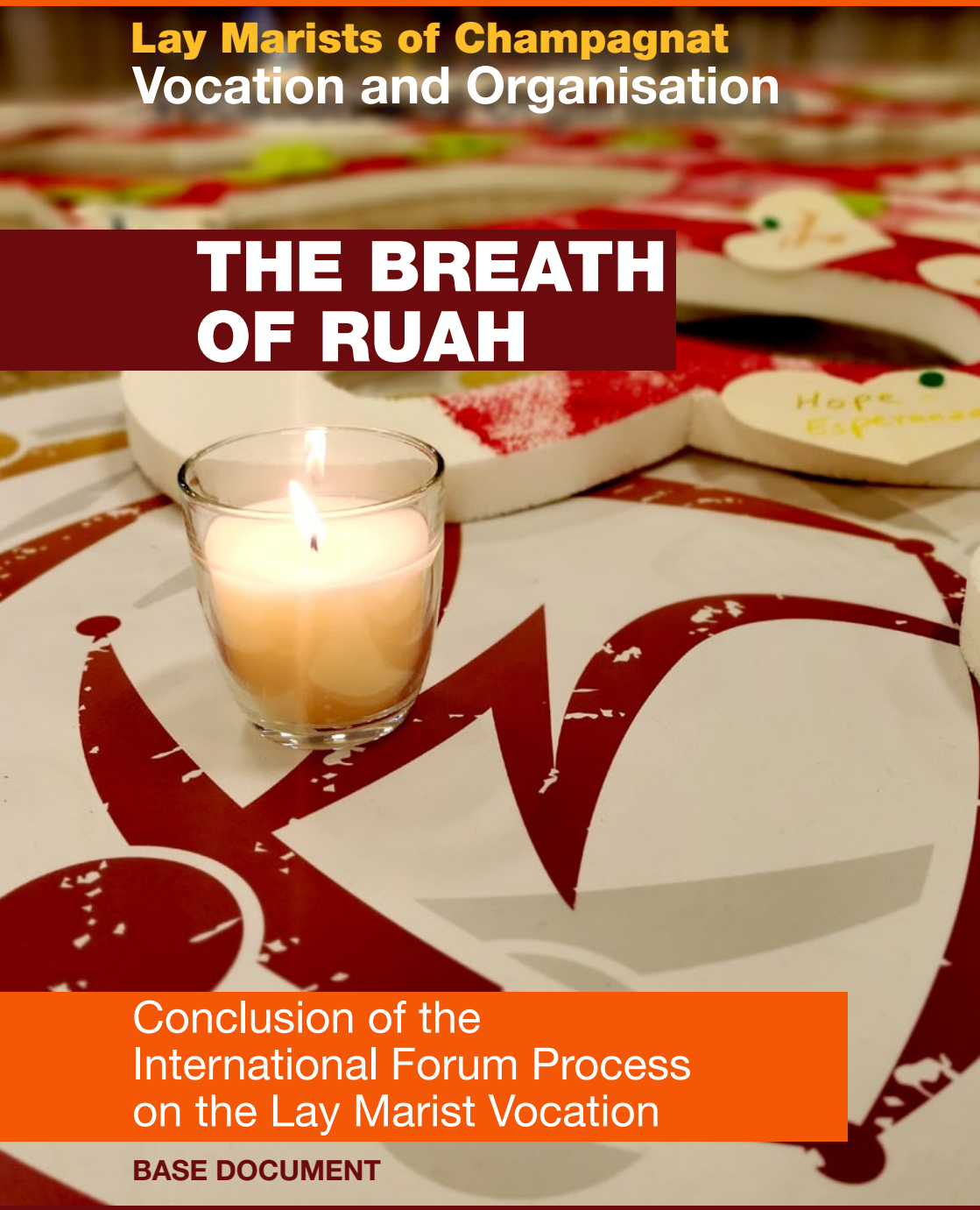
Lay Marists of Champagnat
Vocation and Organisation

THE BREATH OF RUAH



Conclusion of the
International Forum Process
on the Lay Marist Vocation

BASE DOCUMENT

Institute of the Marist Brothers
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P.le Marcellino Champagnat, 2
00144 Rome – Italy
comunica@fms.it
www.champagnat.org

THE BREATH OF RUAH
Conclusion of the International Forum Process on the Lay Marist Vocation
Base Document

Secretariat of Laity
Institute of the Marist Brothers

Director: Manuel Jesús Gómez Cid
Assistant Directors: Ana Isabel Saborío Jenkins and Mark O'Farrell
General Councillors links: Brothers Sylvain Ramandimbiarisoa and João Carlos do Prado

Realization: Department of Communication General Administration
Director: Luiz Da Rosa
Designer: Giuliano D'Orsi

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ACRONYMS

AA	APOSTOLICAM ACTUOSITATEM. Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity (Vatican Council II).
AU	ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT. Constitutions and Statutes - Institute of the Marist Brothers, No. 91.
BLM	BEING A LAY MARIST: Guidelines for accompanying people on their vocational journeys and for formation pathways.
ChL	CHRISTIFIDELES LAICI. Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World (Pope John Paul II).
CIC	CODE OF CANON LAW *(Codex Iuris Canonici)*
CMMF	CHAMPAGNAT MOVEMENT OF THE MARIST FAMILY
EG	EVANGELII GAUDIUM. Apostolic Exhortation on the proclamation of the Gospel in today's world (Pope Francis).
FT	FRATELLI TUTTI. Encyclical Letter on Fraternity and Social Friendship (Pope Francis).
GAST	GATHERED AROUND THE SAME TABLE. The Vocation of Champagnat's Marist Laity.
GC	GENERAL CHAPTER of the Institute of the Marist Brothers.
LG	LUMEN GENTIUM. Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Second Vatican Council).
MIMA	MARIST INTERNATIONAL MISSION ASSEMBLY
MYM	MARIST YOUTH MINISTRY
VC	VITA CONSECRATA. Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on Consecrated Life and its Mission in the Church and in the World (Pope John Paul II).
WR	WATER FROM THE ROCK. Marist spirituality flowing in the tradition of Marcellin Champagnat.

PRESENTATION

Dear Marists of Champagnat:

Receive my warm greetings, with my best wishes for each one of you and my gratitude for your dedication and service to Marist life and mission.

We can recall that during the 22nd General Chapter, held in Colombia, four principles were expressed:

- *The future for the charism will be founded on a communion of fully committed Marists, brothers and lay.*
- *As a charismatic family we should walk together respecting the diversity of the Marist world.*
- *All Marists are co-responsible for Marist life and mission.*
- *We need new structures and processes that recognize and support our distinctive vocational paths as Marists.*

To reflect on and discern the proposals of the 22nd General Chapter, the International Forum on the Lay Marist Vocation was held. Thank you to all who contributed to and participated in the Forum. It has been a significant four-year journey of shared reflection and discernment among laywomen, laymen, and brothers, focusing on the Marist vocation, particularly the lay Marist vocation, including formative paths, accompaniment of vocational processes, connection to the charism, and possible juridical structures for Marist laity.

This concluding document from the Forum presents the key insights from this process of reflection and discernment. It has been submitted to the General Council, where it was well received and where we offered a few suggestions. It will also be presented to the upcoming 23rd General Chapter, to be held in the Philippines in September 2025, so that it may express its views, leading to final approval by the next General Council.

I express my gratitude to the Secretariat of the Laity, the Enlarged Secretariat, and the various teams who were invited to support the reflection and discernment process and to offer proposals that were later embraced by the broader group participating in the International Forum.

Let us continue forward as a Global Marist Family, brothers and laypeople together, discerning the calls of the Spirit, Ruah, for all of us who live the charism given to us through Saint Marcellin Champagnat and the first Brothers. The logo of the upcoming 23rd General Chapter, “Hermitage 200: Home for All, River of Life”, offers us light for the future of the Marist charism.

Mary, our Good Mother, inspires and accompanies us. May we continue, like her, to love Jesus and make him loved, as Saint Marcellin Champagnat inspired us to do.

Fraternally,
Br. Ernesto Sánchez Barba, Superior General

INTRODUCTION

The Secretariat of the Laity of the Institute of the Marist Brothers presents this base document, as a conclusion of the process called the **INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON THE LAY MARIST VOCATION**[1] , which took place between 2021 and 2024, with the participation of lay people and brothers from all the Administrative Units (AU).

Between September 8 and October 20, 2017, the XXII General Chapter (GC) of the Marist Brothers was held in Rionegro (Colombia). As a concretization of the Message of the GC, ***"Journeying together as a Global Family"***[2] , Br. Ernesto Sanchez, Superior General, and the General Council, elaborated the ***Strategic Plan for animation, leadership and government***[3] , for the period 2018-2025.

In the context of the Strategic Plan's program *"...As a Family"*, the following strategy is described: *"Deepen the charismatic identity of all Marist vocations and develop new paths of animation and vocational accompaniment, as well as new language and structures that foster communion"*. This strategy is developed in the project "Beacons of Hope", whose objective is *"Generate and accompany new Marist life, so as to build up our Global Charismatic Family".* Specifically, the Institute's Secreta-

[1] https://champagnat.org/en/international-forum-on-the-lay-marist-vocation/
[2] https://champagnat.org/shared/bau/Document_XXII_General_Chapter_EN.pdf
[3] https://champagnat.org/shared/bau/PlanEstrategico_2018_2015_EN.pdf

riat of Laity is entrusted with the task of carrying out the following ***initiative***

Lay commitments: <u>Explore and consolidate forms of commitment, ways of belonging and charismatic associations;</u> share related reflections and experiences; continue working with various groups and structures such as the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family.



Acting on this initiative, the Secretariat of Laity designed a process of reflection and discernment, at a global level, under the title of the *International Forum on the Lay Marist Vocation.* It was presented to the Superior General and his Council, who approved and promoted the proposal.

The *International Forum on the Lay Marist Vocation* has been, above all, an experience of **RUAH**, the creative and life-giving breath of the Spirit of God, which has inspired each of those who have taken part of this shared journey. The listening processes, conversations and

shared discernment, took shape in the message **RUAH: BREATHS OF THE SPIRIT FOR LAY MARISTS**[4] . This message was the fruit of the international face-to-face meeting, with 93 participants, held in Rome in November 2022. It invited Marists to continue the discernment around ***four breaths of the Spirit***:

1) *To explore our understanding of the Marist vocation with particular emphasis on the vocation of lay Marists.*
2) *Reviewing and offering formation and accompaniment processes and pathways for the lay vocation.*
3) *Reflecting on and proposing possible ways of belonging to the Marist charism.*
4) *To know, reflect on, explore and propose possibilities of juridical structures (civil and/or canonical) for the Marist laity.*

After this time of grace, a group of 23 delegates, supported by Brothers of the General Government, was tasked with continuing the dialogue and discernment in order to arrive at more concrete proposals in relation to each of the *four breaths of the Spirit*.

Informed by the synodal methodology of *conversations in the Spirit*, the document that we present here is the **BREATH OF THE SPIRIT** that inspires us at this mo-

[4]https://champagnat.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Ruah_Forum2022_EN.pdf

ment in the history of the Marists of Champagnat. It urges us to *welcome, live, care for and share the Lay Marist Vocation* through the creation of an **INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LAY MARISTS OF CHAMPAGNAT**.

In February 2025, the conclusions expressed in this base document were presented to the General Council. As recorded in the minutes of its session on February 28, 2025, *"the General Council accepts the final document with the conclusions of the discernment process of the International Forum on the Marist Lay Vocation, presented by the Secretariat of the Laity. The important proposal (the creation of the International Association of Lay Marists) will be reflected on during the 23rd General Chapter and decided on by the next General Council. This document can be shared with the Institute with this proposal."*



So, this document reflects the vision for the future of Lay Marists of Champagnat. It is the breath of the Holy Spirit that has touched the hearts and minds of all the participants in the forum process. It articulates a way of life committed to Christ and his Gospel, which finds expression in being his witnesses, especially for children and young people, within the realities of the world. This way of life is inspired by Mary, Marcellin and all those who have preceded us as Marists. Accordingly, we see this document as a seed, nurtured by the Spirit, for a future of communion and vitality in the Marist charism shared by brothers and lay, women and men.

DOCUMENT STRUCTURE

The purpose of this document is twofold:

1) To gather the **most significant areas of consensus** of the entire process of the International Forum on the Lay Marist Vocation, following the inspiration of each of the four breaths of the Spirit for the Marist Laity. They now become a single breath of the Spirit, which interconnects and harmonises each of the proposals made along the way.

2) To lay the **foundations** for the task of **developing the statutes** of the *International Association of Lay Marists of Champagnat*. Following this idea, we have chosen to link all the reflection done within a schema inspired by the *Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life's* model for drafting the statutes

of an International Association of Lay Faithful linked to a Religious Institute.

The general structure of this conclusive document is as follows:

0. Introduction
1. Context and historical background: Marist vocation and charism; Global charismatic family.
2. The Breath of the Spirit: The creation of an International Association of Lay Marists of Champagnat [5]
3. Vocation and Life of Lay Marists of Champagnat [6]
4. Formative paths of belonging [7]
5. Public commitment. Promise of fidelity to the charism[8]
6. Organisation of the association, governance and sustainability. Connection with the Institute of the Marist Brothers
7. Topics for further exploration and discernment
8. Glossary

[5] Originally, this was *breath* number 4: *To know, reflect, explore and propose possibilities of juridical structures (civil and/or canonical) for the Marist laity.*
[6] Originally, this was *breath* number 1: *To deepen the understanding of the Marist vocation with particular emphasis on the lay Marist vocation.*
[7] Originally, this was *breath* number 2: *To review and offer processes and pathways of formation and accompaniment of the lay vocation.*
[8] Originally, this was *breath* number 3: *To reflect and propose possible forms of bonding to the Marist charism*.

1. CONTEXT AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

1.1 Towards a new paradigm of vocation and marist charism

1. The last decades of our Marist History have allowed us to understand new ways of living the Marist vocation and of imagining the future of the charism. This transformation of vision and experience is becoming a reality in diverse contexts where Marists of Champagnat are present.

2. The XXI and XXII General Chapters of the Institute of the Marist Brothers, in particular, have emphasised this new vision. In a fundamental way, we are immersed in a process of change towards a new paradigm. Imagining it and dreaming about it is the first step towards making it a reality.

XXI General Chapter (2009)

3. The message[9] of this GC read as follows:

"Together we have dreamed about our future and have

[9]https://champagnat.org/shared/21Capitolo/documentos/DOCXXI_EN.pdf

discovered the fundamental call that God has for us today: ***WITH MARY, WE GO IN HASTE TO A NEW LAND!***

We feel driven by the Spirit of God to go into a new land, to facilitate the birth of a new epoch of Marist charism. This presumes a willingness to move on, to let go of the familiar, to embark on a journey of both institutional and personal conversion over the next eight years. We travel this road with Mary, guide and companion. Her faith and openness to God's will inspire us to undertake this pilgrimage. The "new land" is an authentic renewal of the Institute; it asks of us a genuine change of heart."



4. One of the concrete expressions of this call was articulated as follows:

"The spirit of this XXI Chapter, the closeness of the bicentenary, and a deeper consciousness of our internationality all urge us to:

- ***A new relationship between Brothers and Lay Marists, based on communion, searching together for a greater vitality of the Marist charism for our world.***

- ***We acknowledge and encourage the vocation of the Lay Marist****. We believe that the Spirit is inviting us to live in a new communion of Brothers and Lay Marists. Together we will promote greater vitality of the Marist charism and its mission in our world. We consider this to be a "**Kairos**", a key opportunity to share and live with daring the Marist charism, forming together a prophetic and Marian Church."*

5. It is significant for this reflection that the same General Chapter added the following:
   - *We welcome with appreciation the new document **"GATHERED AROUND THE SAME TABLE"** (GAST)[10] as a source for reflection and discernment in the coming years.*

XXII General Chapter (2017)

6. The message of the XXII General Chapter, ***JOURNEYING TOGETHER AS A GLOBAL FAMILY!***[11] , seeks to respond to two fundamental questions:
   - *Who does God want us to be in this emerging world?*
   - *What does God want us to do in this emerging world?*

[10] https://champagnat.org/e_maristas/Documentos/En_torno_EN.pdf
[11] https://champagnat.org/shared/bau/Document_XXII_General_Chapter_EN.pdf

7. One of the principles or beliefs offered in response to these questions is the following:

"As Marists of Champagnat for a new beginning we believe that:

- *The future of the charism will be founded on a **communion of** fully committed **Marists,** brothers and lay**.***
- *As a **charismatic family** we should walk **together**, respecting the **diversity** of the Marist world.*
- *All Marists are **co-responsible** for Marist life and mission.*
- *We need **new structures and processes** that recognize and support our distinctive vocational paths as Marists.*

Therefore, we suggest that:

- *Each Administrative Unit discerns, proposes and accompanies concrete ways of building up communion as Marists.*
- *Each Administrative Unit develops a plan for promoting different forms of Marist life, including appropriate strategies for formation, accompaniment and belonging, drawing on the document **GATHERED AROUND THE SAME TABLE**, and others, such as **BEING A LAY MARIST** and the PROJECT OF LIFE IN FRATERNITY (CMMF).*[12]

[12] The document Gathered Around the Same Table - The Vocation of Champagnat's Marist Laity was published in June 2009. Two other documents: Being

- *That all levels of government establish and/or strengthen **structures** for all Marists to share leadership and responsibility for Marist life and mission.*
- *Create **ways forward** which respond to the reality of each country and accompany Administrative Units to share with one another the variety of experiences being lived across the Marist world".*

8. We can see that this **"new paradigm"** which is emerging and towards which Marists of Champagnat are moving, has as its horizon:
   - *Communion and co-responsibility in life and mission.*
   - *Recognition and support for the different vocational expressions, particularly that of Marist Laity.*
   - *The creation of **formation pathways**, with **personal accompaniment**, for vocational discernment and, if necessary, the **public expression of commitment and belonging to the charism** for Marist Laity.*
   - *The awareness of being part of a global charismatic family.*
   - *Commitment to the future and the vitality of the Marist charism.*

9. The **journey traversed** in the last decades and promoted within the Institute of the Marist Brothers has gone hand in hand with the **reflection and the expe-**

A Lay Marist and Project of Life in Fraternity (Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family) were presented to the XXII General Chapter (2017) by the Secretariat of the Laity, after a widely participative writing process. We consider these texts as **reference documents** for all Marists of Champagnat.

rience lived within the Church itself. From the Second Vatican Council to the present day there have been important contributions from the Church's magisterium which have helped to appreciate this new way of understanding and living vocation and charism. As significant references, we can highlight in the context of our present reflection, the apostolic exhortations *Christifideles Laici*, on the Vocation and Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World, and *Vita Consecrata*, on Consecrated Life and its Mission in the Church and in the World, both by Pope John Paul II.

10. **Pope Francis** has also reflected on the **experience of communion and the redefinition of charisms**. In his Apostolic Letter to all consecrated people on the occasion of the Year of Consecrated Life in 2014, he recognized the shared journey between consecrated persons and laity as a horizon: *"In this letter I wish to speak not only to consecrated persons, but also to* the laity, who share with them the same ideals, spirit and mission*. Some Religious Institutes have a long tradition in this regard, while the experience of others is more recent. Indeed, around each religious family, every Society of Apostolic Life and every Secular Institute, there is a larger family, a "charismatic family", which includes a number of Institutes which identify with the same charism, and especially lay faithful who feel called, precisely as lay persons, to share in the*

same charismatic reality. I urge you, as laity, to live this Year for Consecrated Life as a grace which can make you more aware of the gift you yourselves have received. Celebrate it with your entire "family", so that you can grow and respond together to the promptings of the Spirit in society today."[13]

1.2. MARIST CHARISM IN THE TRADITION OF MARCELLIN CHAMPAGNAT

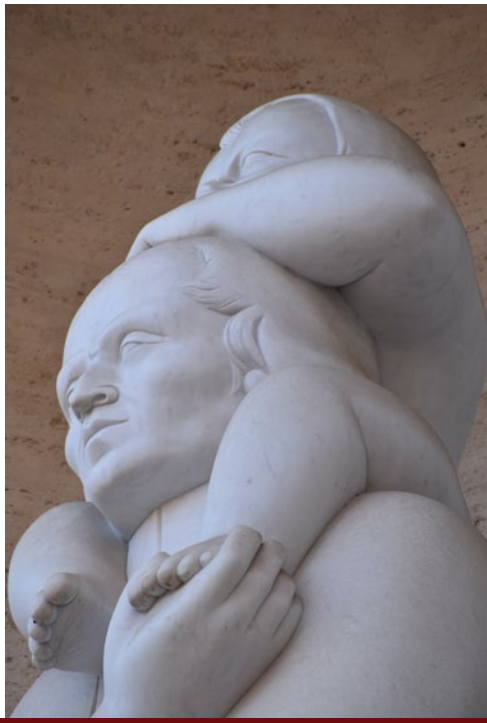
11. Like all charisms, the **Marist charism** is a gift freely given by the Holy Spirit for the good of the Church and the world. It is such a gift of the Spirit which inspires **Marcellin Champagnat** and the first Brothers to respond to a concrete need of their social and ecclesial reality: the precarious educational and religious situation of children and young people in rural France at the beginning of the 19th century.

12. This charism has been **incarnated** and has **unfolded** and been **shaped anew for more than 200 years**, first through the Institute of the Marist Brothers and the life of each one of the brothers, and later, in the life of others who, within the reality of their lay state, have been living out of the charism with a different intensity and from diverse cultural and religious expressions.

[13] https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_letters/documents/papa-francesco_lettera-ap_20141121_lettera-consacrati.html

13. Thus we can say that **this charism *"has endured over time and has been shaped by many different people***. *The presence of these two factors,* endured over time *and* shaped by many different people*, moves a charism from the realm of the personal to that of the universal Church [...] The founder was the first to grasp and live out the Marist charism, and he did so before it was institutionalized in customs and rules. And the very same charism continued to be evident in his life during the years after the Rule of 1837. The charism of our Institute has also grown through two additional periods, one encompassing the experience of Marcellin and the early brothers together, and the other, the tradition flowing from that experience."*[14]

14. Seán Sammon continues: *"Vatican II taught us that **you cannot contain the Holy Spirit**. The charism of our Institute needs to be lived and preserved not only by those of us who are members; it must also be developed and deepened in union with the People of God, who are themselves in a state of **continual growth**... Today, however, we realize that the*



[14] *Br. Seán Sammon. Making Jesus known and loved (2006) pp. 26 and 28.*

charism that came into our world through Marcellin Champagnat is touching the hearts and capturing the imagination of both brothers and laity alike."[15]

15. The development of the Marist charism has been shaped around **three** interrelated **dimensions**: the profound experience of relationship, encounter and recognition of the presence of God in life (**spiritual** dimension), fraternal life shared in community (**community** dimension), and the mission of announcing Jesus Christ and making him loved among children and young people, especially among the most in need (**missionary** dimension).[16]

16. The charism inherited from Champagnat and the first Brothers has been expressed in a **spirituality** that has two fundamental characteristics: it is **marian** and **apostolic**. Marist spirituality that **springs from the tradition of Marcellin Champagnat** has particular characteristics and its own style of living out discipleship of Jesus on the journey towards God: *God's presence and love, Trust in God, Love of Jesus and His gospel, In Mary's way, Family spirit, A spirituality of simplicity.*[17]

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[15] *id. p. 31*

[16] *From now on, whenever reference is made to the Marist Charism and its dimensions, in the tradition of St. Marcellin Champagnat, we will be speaking of the interrelation of Mission, Spirituality and Shared Life.*

[17] Cf. Water from the Rock. Marist spirituality flowing from the tradition of Marcellin Champagnat.

1.3 LAY VOCATION IN THE CHURCH AND IN THE MARIST INSTITUTE[18]

In the Catholic Church

17. The **Second Vatican Council** in the latter half of the 20th century ushered in a new understanding of the **Church** as **People of God**. This understanding is developed in the Dogmatic Constitution **LUMEN GENTIUM (LG)** which recognizes the universal call to holiness of all the baptized. The **vocation of the lay faithful** is given prominence with a new and positive vision of their vocation and mission (LG 30-38)[19]

18. The meaning of Christian community will be influenced from the experience of **communion for mission**, so that it can be affirmed that *"in Church Communion the states of life by being ordered one to the other are thus bound together among themselves."* (ChL 55)[20]

19. The decree *Apostolicam Actuositatem* on the apostolate of the laity, recognizes *"the unmistakable work being done today by the Holy Spirit in making the laity ever more conscious of their own responsibility*

[18] https://champagnat.org/en/short-marist-laity-history/
[19] https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html
[20] https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_30121988_christifideles-laici.html

and encouraging them to serve Christ and the Church in all circumstances." (AA 1)[21]

20. The apostolic exhortation of Pope John Paul II, ***Christifideles Laici***, published in 1988, explores more deeply the vocation and mission of laity in the Church and in the world. And it affirms that *"within the lay state diverse "vocations" are given, that is, there are different paths in the spiritual life and the apostolate which are taken by individual members of the lay faithful "* (ChL 56).

21. Many institutes and religious families, as has been the case with the Institute of the Marist Brothers, *"have come to the conclusion that their charism can be shared with the laity. The laity are therefore invited to share more intensely in the spirituality and mission of these Institutes. We may say that, … a* ***new chapter****, rich in hope, has begun* ***in the history of relations between consecrated persons and the laity****."* (VC 54)[22]

In the Marist Institute

22. The General Chapter of 1967, the first after the Council, undertook an enormous task of renewing and

[21] https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651118_apostolicam-actuositatem_en.html
[22] https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_25031996_vita-consecrata.html

redefining Marist life and mission. This resulted in new Constitutions, Norms and a number of most significant documents. The document on the apostolate addressed the question of former students and apostolic movements. It launched an appeal for a closer and more intimate dialogue with Christians living in the world.

23. In 1976, a group of capitulants wanted to undertake a special study on the Marist Family, in view of the new realities that were emerging and the beneficial consequences for the Church and the Institute. The Chapter, however, did not go any further, absorbed as it was by other more pressing matters; some, we can imagine, thought that the subject needed more time to mature.

24. The question resurfaced at the **General Chapter of 1985**. This Chapter was as important as that of 1967 since it had a special mandate to approve the new Constitutions and Statutes. This task was important in itself but was especially so for those who participated because it required having a profound vision of the charism. This vision influenced and permeated all reflections on aspects of our life, including our apostolic life. As for the **Marist Family**, the Chapter arrived at the following definition and description, contained in No. 164.4 of the Statutes:

"The Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family is an extension of our Institute; it is a movement for people

who wish to share more fully the spirituality and sense of mission inherited from Marcellin Champagnat. In this movement, affiliated members, young people, parents, helpers, former students, and friends deepen within themselves the spirit of our Founder so that they can live it and let it shine forth. The Institute animates and co-ordinates the activities of this movement by setting up suitable structures."[23]

25. This Chapter asked the General Council to establish a commission composed of Brothers from different countries to draw up the Statutes of the Movement "The Marist Family". Finally, in 1991, Br. Charles Howard published the Circular **"Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family. A grace for us all"**[24] . This Circular included the first version of the **Life Project of the Champagnat Movement**.

26. Our experience confirms the intuition of Brother Charles Howard that *"the laity will reveal **new facets of this charism** as they live it more fully".*

27. The XIX General Chapter, in 1993, approved two propositions: *"[The Chapter] reaffirms the determination of the capitulants to share, ever more and more, their spirituality and their mission with lay people";* and

[23] https://champagnat.org/e_maristas/Documentos/constitutions2011_en.pdf
[24] https://champagnat.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/circulares-29_7_EN.doc

"recognises that the Champagnat Movement Guidelines offer a sure path for lay people who are seeking to live a Marist spirituality ".[25]

28. The message of the XX General Chapter, in 2001, spoke of *"A number of forms of association for lay Marists are being developed, such as the Champagnat Movement. Our experience in this regard is very diverse: from simply working together to a real sharing of lives; from some attracted to one or other aspect of Marist spirituality to those who feel themselves drawn much more deeply into a total communion of spirit".*[26]

29. All of these intuitions and what evolved as a result of Vatican II and successive General Chapters, shaped the lives and reflection of many people. Together, they found expression in **two documents, fundamental for understanding the lay Marist vocation** and continuing sources of inspiration for those reflecting on the meaning of this specific vocation**:**

- **GATHERED AROUND THE SAME TABLE: THE VOCATION OF THE CHAMPAGNAT'S MARIST LAITY (GAST)**
- **BEING A LAY MARIST: Guidelines for accom-**

[25] http://www.champagnat.org/shared/documenti_maristi/CapituloXIX_Actes_EN.doc
[26] https://champagnat.org/shared/documenti_maristi/CapituloXX_Actes_EN.pdf

panying people on their vocational journeys and for formation pathways (BLM)

30. This long period has been marked by many life experiences, shared reflections, advances, meetings, forums, assemblies, creation of teams and structures for animation.

31. Other documents of the Church and the Marist Institute have helped to shape a common understanding of the life and mission of the laity as Christians and as Marists. Without seeking to be exhaustive, some of them are listed here because of their significance in the shared journey and because they illuminate life and reflection:

- *Church documents*: Lumen Gentium, Apostolicam Actuositatem, Gaudium et Spes, Christifideles Laici,



Vita Consecrata, Evangelii Gaudium, Amoris Laetitia, Fratelli Tutti.

- *Marist Documents*: In the Footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat: Marist Educational Mission, Water from the Rock, Constitutions and Statutes of the Marist Brothers, Rule of Life.

32. In some significant Marist meetings of recent years, as well as in some inspirational Marist documents, allusion is made, in one way or another, to a specific way of living the lay Marist vocation and its connection with the Institute: the **commitment and belonging**[27] of lay men and women to the Institute and/or to the Marist charism.

33. In the Message of the **First International Marist Mission Assembly**, held in Mendes (Brazil) in 2007, in section 2 "Champagnat Marists in Partnership", it says: *" We wish to promote forms of association and ways of belonging to the Marist charism, so lay and brothers may hear the call to live their identity".*[28]

34. The **XXII General Chapter**, held in Rionegro (Colombia) in 2017, proposed that *" each Administrative Unit develops a plan for promoting different forms of*

[27] On this topic of reflection, there is an interesting contribution made by Brothers Pau Fornells and Juan Miguel Anaya, in 2009, entitled "BONDING, COMMITMENT, ATTACHMENT AND BELONGING OF LAY PEOPLE TO THE INSTITUTE AND/OR THE MARIST CHARISM

28 Message of the 1st International Marist Mission Assembly (Mendes - 2007

Marist life, including appropriate strategies for formation, accompaniment and belonging, drawing on the document Gathered Around the Same Table, and others, such as Being a Lay Marist and the Project of Life in Fraternity (CMMF)."[29]

35. Some references to documents that are both inspirational and challenging can also be highlighted:

a) In the document **"Water from the Rock: Marist Spirituality flowing in the tradition of Marcellin Champagnat" (WR)**, 2007, the following is noted:

*"Each family, group or community is uniquely marked by that which unites them, that which lies at the core of their **connection**."* (WR 93)

*"In a world thirsty for **connection and belonging**, home is such a powerful symbol"* (WR 101).

b) In the document **"Gathered Around the Same Table" (GAST)** of 2009, chapter 5 *"Forms of Relationship"* refers to the theme of *liaison and sense of ownership* (GAST 135-139). Further on, it reflects on recognition of the vocation:

"All Christian vocation is born in and for the Church, and it is for the service of the world. For that re-

29 https://champagnat.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Acts22ndGeneralChapter_2017.pdf

ason, 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." (GAST 140)

"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." (GAST 142)

"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 ". (GAST 143)

c) Subsequently, the document **"Life project in fraternity. Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family" (CMMF)**, April 2017, speaking of associative belonging, offers the possibility that:

"The person has opted for a form of belonging and linkage within the charismatic family of Champagnat in the CMMF and has expressed it with a formal and public sign." (p.48).

d) It will be in the document **"Being a Lay Marist. Guidelines for accompanying people on their vocational journeys and for formation pathways" (BLM)**, of October 2017, that the expression and reality of belonging is developed with greater finesse and clarity, in a chapter entitled *"Bonding with the charism and belonging to an associative structure"* (p.49). Its content has guided the journeys of growth and commitment of many of the lay men and women who have opted for attachment in recent years.

With the bonding, the person *" is committed to developing the charism (mission, spirituality, shared life) creatively and faithfully, from the standpoint of being a lay person, within the Church and in communion with other Marists, lay and consecrated. Emphasis is given to being disciples and missionaries, sent out to be multipliers"* (BLM, p.50).

Inspired by this last document, several Administrative Units, during the last few years, have been making their own proposals and pathways for growth in the lay Marist vocation and the processes of bonding to the Marist charism.

1.4 TOWARDS A GLOBAL CHARISMATIC FAMILY

36. The concept of **"charismatic family"** has been developing in the life of the Church and of many congregations and religious movements since the last decades of the 20th century**.**

37. According to Pope Francis' definition, a charismatic family *"includes a number of Institutes which identify with the same charism, and especially lay faithful who feel called, precisely as lay persons, to share in the same charismatic reality".*[30]

38. In the case of our charismatic family, the **Brothers' institute** has been, since its origins, the organized and structured form, recognized by the Church, that has made the Marist charism visible and has made its transmission possible in different contexts and cultures.

39. With the passage of time, our charismatic family has become aware of the meaning of expressions such as **Marist vocation**, as well as the different ways of appropriating or living the richness of the charism in some of its dimensions.

30 FRANCISCO, *Apostolic Letter to all consecrated people on the occasion of the Year of Consecrated Life*, 21-11-2014, III.1.



40. One such way is the **lay Marist vocation**, our understanding of which has been deepened during the process of the *International Forum*. One of the objectives of the Forum was to explore the possibility of generating some kind of new juridical structure(s) for the laity, which would be another way of making the Marist charism visible within the charismatic family.

41. The first call of the XXII General Chapter said: *"Transform us, Jesus, and send us as a global charismatic family, a beacon of hope in this turbulent world"*. We have become aware that we form a **global charismatic family**, made up of men and women who, from different vocations and life situations, come into contact with the Marist charism and live its traits in different ways and with different manifestations.

42. This movement is recognized by the **Constitutions and Statutes of the Institute of the Marist Brothers**: *"We acknowledge and welcome the many people who are attracted to the Marist charism and*

who identify themselves as being 'Marist'. This movement of the Spirit unites all Marists of Champagnat into a global charismatic family." (C. 6)

43. In the context of the process of the *International Forum on the Lay Marist Vocation*, a reflection was generated on how to develop some international associative structure of lay character, which would harmonize a better understanding of the lay Marist vocation, the formation and accompaniment pathways, the processes of bonding to the charism and associative belonging for Lay Marists of Champagnat.

44. In the following pages we outline this proposal which, in this concrete moment of the history of our charismatic family, we believe is both call and inspiration of the Spirit for the Marist laity.

1.5 CONCLUSION

This first chapter explores the evolution of the Marist vocation and charism, from the perspective of the shift towards a new paradigm of shared life and mission among Marists, brothers and lay. It highlights the key messages of General Chapters XXI (2009) and XXII (2017), which underline the importance of communion, co-responsibility and the global dimension of the Marist charismatic family. It traces the historical development of the Marist charism, according to the tradition of Marcellin Champagnat, beginning with the Marist vocation of the Brothers and rea-

ching today to the heart of so many lay men and women who feel invited to live their Christian vocation inspired by the Marist charism. It also refers to the impact of the Second Vatican Council in the recognition of the lay vocation and how the Church invites to the apostolic mission shared in communion. The concept of charismatic family is presented, recognizing the diverse expressions of Marist identity and proposing structures to strengthen the lay Marist vocation within the global Marist community.



2. THE BREATH OF THE SPIRIT: CREATION OF AN INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LAY MARISTS OF CHAMPAGNAT

2.1 GLOBAL APPROACH

45. The whole process of the International Forum on the Lay Marist Vocation has been an extended period of listening and dialogue, in which we have experienced a mix of doubts, lack of clarity, intuitions and dreams for the future. On this journey, **Ruah, the Spirit of God**, has been the **true protagonist of our shared discernment.** Opening the door to *His* presence has been fundamental to allow a glimpse of the



horizon of the lay Marist vocation, in a new paradigm of communion and co-responsibility with the Brothers, for the future and vitality of the Marist charism.

46. At this point in our Marist story, some fundamental areas of consensus have been reached, which can be unified in a single **BREATH OF RUAH: THE CREATION OF THE "INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LAY MARISTS OF CHAMPAGNAT".**

47. This central consensus implies **asking the Institute** of the Marist Brothers to promote the **creation of an International Association for Marist laity.**

48. **Purpose:** The fundamental purpose of this association will be to **care for and promote the lay Marist vocation and mission, in communion and co-responsibility with the Marist Brothers**. As such, belonging to this association will entail the development of the lay vocation through the experience of each and every dimension of the Marist charism of Champagnat.

49. This international association is conceived **as a global reference or umbrella**, with common lines of inspiration for the different expressions of lay Marist life and vocation, in different cultures and contexts. Our wish is that, harmoniously and in **communion**, the Association assures the proper **identity and vocation**

of the Marist laity, as well as respect for and acceptance of the existing **diversity**.

New possibilities will be explored in the future, so only those around which there is more clarity are offered now.

50. **Canonical recognition:** Recognition of the association will be requested from the **Institute of the Marist Brothers** and the **Catholic Church**. The request for approval of this **canonical entity** will be formalized before the Holy See, through the *Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and the Societies of Apostolic Life*, in charge of recognizing International Associations of the Christian faithful connected to these Institutes.

This path of canonical recognition will guarantee the principles of **autonomy** of the laity **and communion** with the Institute of the Marist Brothers.[31]

The existence of an international canonical entity would also serve to **give official status and visibility to the Lay Marist vocation**, in the tradition of St. Marcellin Champagnat, within the **Catholic Church**.

51. **Members:** To the canonically recognized international association would belong **baptized lay men**

[31] According to the denomination of the Code of Canon Law in its number 303, it would have the canonical form of *"third order" or "some other appropriate name".*

and women who, after completing a **formative journey**, express a **public promise** within a Marist community, thus becoming members of the same. This membership would imply living out a life project of following Jesus based on the characteristics proper to the Marist charism.

52. **Civil recognition:** With the passage of time, necessary steps will be taken towards some kind of civil recognition of the association, at different levels, international, national or local. This recognition will allow operational capacity in the different places where there is a presence of lay Marists, especially in countries where the Catholic Church is not officially recognized, offering them visibility in society and allowing legal recognition according to the legislation of the different countries. It will also make possible a diversity of expressions of Marist life and vocation.

53. **From the global to the local:** In any case, the existence of this association at the international level will imply the care and promotion of its expression and implementation at the various local, state and interstate levels, always maintaining the link with the international association. In each context, the most appropriate and feasible legal form must be addressed.

54. **Pathways of belonging:** Membership of the international association would entail individuals fo-

llowing a **formative journey**, inspired by the four stages outlines in our reference document *"Being a Lay Marist"*: invitation, discovery, deepening and creative development of the charism. This journey requires that each person be able to do so with **personalized accompaniment** and from the experience of sharing faith and life in a **lay community**, which could have different faces and expressions.

55. **Public commitments:** At the end of the deepening and discernment stage, there is the possibility of making a public commitment, through a **promise of fidelity to the charism**, which would also entail **associative membership**.

56. **Lay Marist Vocation:** Embracing the diversity of ways of being and existing within our global charismatic family, there is a consensus that, following the intuition of the GAST reference document, the **Lay Marists of Champagnat,** members of the canonical entity, would be those persons baptized within the Catholic Church and who, aware of the gift of their **vocation**, explore ways of deepening and discernment, both personally and communally. At some point in the process they request or are invited to publicly express this vocation, being welcomed by the community as members of the association.

57. As inspirational images of what we dream this international association to be, those of the **house,** the **tent** and the **home** have resonated strongly:

- A ***house*** like the one Jesus describes in the Gospel text: *"Whoever hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on rock" (Mt 7:24*). A house rooted in God who sustains us and accompanies us along the way, with solid foundations, in which Jesus Christ is the *cornerstone*. It also evokes for us the house of *Notre Dame de l'Hermitage,* physically built by Champagnat and the first Brothers 200 years ago. For lay Marists, this is also our home, where we discover inspiration for living our Marist vocation, mission, fraternity and spirituality.



- The image of the ***tent*** at a crossroads where everyone passes by or can arrive, easily accessible, with little structure, always ready to be dismantled and to continue the search, the journey, has biblical resonances. It allows us to live *lightly*, available to move to the peripheries, with a minimum structure, just the necessary one, to welcome, to accompany, to be a meeting place for all diversities (Is 54,2). An image in tune with what it means to follow a *vocational journey*, which has little to do with predictability and much to do with searching and discernment and can lead each person to a place they hadn't planned. It is, therefore, an image to express our intuition of an open and welcoming association, which drives us to *build a new Hermitage*, alongside the Brothers and many other people who vibrate with a Marist heart.

- We envision this association as a ***home***, where we can feel the warmth of personal relationships, a place to nourish ourselves, care for one another, rest, dream and project the future together. A home with spaces to take care of life's details, where you can find time to be, authentically, people who live their vocation to the fullest. The home of Nazareth and the first community of brothers with Father Champagnat inspire the way of life within this new home. It is, at the same time, a home from which to be a light for the world, to *care for and genera-*

te Marist life and mission. A home that welcomes many people from different backgrounds, cultures and sensitivities. A home open to those living in fragile and vulnerable situations.

2.2 AIMS AND ACTIVITIES OF THE ASSOCIATION

58. The fundamental aim of the International Association of Lay Marists of Champagnat shall be as follows:

To care for and promote the Lay Marist vocation and mission, in communion and co-responsibility with the Marist Brothers

59. Derived from this, the purposes of the Association would be:

a) **To welcome, live, care for and share the lay Marist vocation**, accompanying the integral growth of individuals in the process of vocational discernment and throughout all stages of life.

b) **To make** the lay Marist vocation **visible** as a **specific way of following Jesus** and of **baptismal commitment** within families, in daily life, workplaces, neighbourhoods and societies, giving witness to the priestly, prophetic and kingly dimensions of the mission of Jesus Christ.

c) To contribute to the unique **mission** of the Church that, as Marists of Champagnat, we assume: To **make Jesus Christ known and loved**.

d) To promote the **experience of Marist spirituality**, according to the tradition of Saint Marcellin Champagnat, encouraging a deeper understanding of each of its characteristic traits.

e) To be, in the Church and in the world, signs of **family** life, promoting **shared life** with other Marists in **small communities with a lay character**.

f) To provide meaningful responses to the needs and urgencies of humanity, especially those of **children, adolescents and young people** living in the geographic and existential peripheries of our world, through educational, social and/or pastoral contexts.

g) To foster **communion** with other Marists of Champagnat, especially with the Marist Brothers.

h) To collaborate in the **educational, pastoral and solidarity projects** supported by the Institute of the Marist Brothers.

i) To promote **new ways of living the Marist charism** in the world and in the Church, in its different dimensions: mission, spirituality and shared life, from **a lay perspective**.

j) **To encourage** initiatives which promote **new Marist vocations**, both among brothers and lay people, with comprehensive and specific formation proposals.

k) To make the **Marian face of the Church** visible by our way of living and being, as followers of Jesus**.**

l) To promote **spaces for communion and participa-**

tion in which people from different contexts, backgrounds, cultures, personal situations, sensitivities or spiritual and religious traditions can find a place to experience fraternity and other Marist values.

m) To contribute to the **evangelizing task** of the Church through various types of pastoral, catechetical or social promotion activities.

n) To promote the **development of more just, equitable and fraternal societies**, encouraging social and political participation that makes visible the merciful and supportive face of Jesus towards those who suffer.

60. The Association may develop **activities** such as the following:



a) **Educational, social, cultural and evangelizing initiatives** that promote the integral development of *children, adolescents and young people*, especially those living in situations of greater vulnerability.
b) Participation and collaboration with diverse **apostolates**, giving priority to those that directly impact children and young people, both in our own projects and those of the Institute of the Marist Brothers or of other Church entities.
c) Design, planning and implementation of **courses, activities, programs and formative experiences** that promote the integral development of members or others who are aligned with the Association's purposes, **promoting the lay Marist vocation and the Marist charism** as a way of living the Gospel.
d) Creation or development of **projects and institutions** serving children and young people, especially those experiencing the greatest need, neglect or lack of protection, or others that respond to the Association's purposes.
e) Development of **partnerships** with other types of ecclesiastical and/or civil entities that promote the Association's purposes.
f) Carrying out **other activities compatible** with the Association's purposes, such as events, training programs, research... related to the educational, pastoral and social fields.

2.3 CONCLUSION

This second chapter addresses the creation of the "International Association of Lay Marists of Champagnat", as a Breath of Ruah for this moment in our Marist history. The vision of this Association supposes the global recognition of the lay Marist vocation, both in the Church and in the Marist Institute. It would be based on two fundamental pillars: the autonomy of the laity and communion with the Institute. It would be a space for sharing faith, mission, spirituality and community life, whose purpose is to care for and promote the lay Marist vocation, in communion and co-responsibility with the Marist Brothers. Membership requires a formative journey and a public commitment, ensuring the active participation of its members. The Association conceives itself as a "house, tent and



home", symbolizing welcome, openness and warmth, while fostering global and local connections. Finally, the Association's specific purposes and the type of activities it could develop are described.



3. VOCATION AND LIFE OF LAY MARISTS OF CHAMPAGNAT

3.1 THE VOCATION OF LAY MARISTS OF CHAMPAGNAT

61. Vocation is a free **gift** that God sows in the heart of each person, because he loves us infinitely. As a consequence, each person responds to God's initiative consciously and freely, in a dynamic process throughout their lives.



62. **Lay Marists of Champagnat** experience this gift of God as a call to live the Gospel, following Jesus, welcoming the Marist charism into our lives, according to the tradition of Marcellin Champagnat. We feel called to live the **Marist vocation from our lay state of life**

63. This gift of God impels us to develop the **commitment** we acquired in **Baptism**, to *"seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God"*[32] , that is, in the midst of the reality we call secular. In this way, we collaborate in the realization of God's dream for humanity in the spheres of family, work, culture, politics, economics and social reality.

64. Aware of the call to live this vocation, we **intentionally and freely** embark on a **journey within a Marist Christian community**. This journey involves building a **life project** centred on following Jesus and realizing the Kingdom of God in the world, in the style of Mary and Champagnat. It is a life project inspired by **all dimensions of the Marist charism**, in a constant process of **unification and integration**. It is, therefore, a specific way of being a disciple of Jesus, in communion with other people who live this same Marist vocation as brothers, single lay people, married lay people, sisters or other vocational expressions.

[32] Lumen Gentium, 31

65. The lay Marist vocation entails a **lifelong journey.** It begins with the discovery of the gift received from God, continues with the awareness of that call, discerning this vocation, developing an identity, making concrete choices, opening oneself to the Spirit of God and the reality of the world, and nurturing and enriching the responses given throughout life.

66. During this journey, the person can **consciously and publicly express** a life commitment through a **promise of fidelity to the charism** that allows them to be accepted and welcomed, in a visible way, into the International Association of Lay Marists of Champagnat, an international community that **welcomes and recognizes** this vocation.

67. With profound **gratitude to all the Marists of Champagnat** who have preceded us, and to all those with whom today we share charism, life and mission, we live this vocational experience given to us by the God of Love, whose face is revealed to us in Jesus Christ, and whom the *Ruah* encourages us to *welcome, care for, live and share.*

68. In this vocational journey, we gratefully contemplate the gift of **Mary of Nazareth**. In her, a lay woman, we discover how to follow Jesus in daily life, in the concrete areas of family and work. We feel close to her life experience because, in her social, cultural

and religious context, she had to overcome difficulties and misunderstandings, sharing the dreams and hopes of her people, especially the poor and simple. We are inspired by his openness and courage accepting God's gift, trusting in his Word. She is a fundamental reference for our lives because of her vocational availability and service in every moment and circumstance of her life.

69. In a special way, we are grateful for the **gift of Marcellin Champagnat,** who is an **inspiration** to live our vocation as followers of Jesus, in the style of Mary, in our lay state of life. His model of life and holiness, his way of being and building community for the mission, and his passion for announcing the Good News to children and young people, impel us to continue recreating the Marist charism in our time. [33]

3.2 THE LIFE OF LAY MARISTS OF CHAMPAGNAT

70. We Lay Marists of Champagnat wish to **live our following of Jesus**, in the style of Mary and Marcellin, **from the perspective of the Marist charism** in all its dimensions: Mission, Spirituality and Shared Life. We reaffirm what is expressed in our reference documents, *Gathered Around the Same Table*[34] and *Being a Lay Marist*[35] , which continue to inspire us and help

[33] Cf. GAST 30-33
[34] GAST, chapters 3, 4 and 5.
[35] BLM, II. Identity of a Lay Marist. The Marist Charism



us commit to this life project:

We *consider these* ***dimensions*** *as* ***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.*[36]

In our life, *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 colours*** *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.*[37]

[36] GAST 34
[37] GAST 35

3.2.1 THE MISSION

**"I am a mission on this earth,
that the reason why I am here in this world."[38]**

71. For us, Lay Marists of Champagnat, the mission is to be instruments of **God's Mission**. This is the mission *by* and *for* which the Church exists: to work to build the kingdom of God in our humanity, to transform it according to God's dream, that is, universal fraternity.

72. **Jesus Christ**, sent by the Father, is the source and model of this Mission. By his incarnation, he enters into solidarity with every human being and becomes servant of the people to the point of the total gift of his life.

73. The **Spirit**, the ***Ruah***, the creative and life-giving breath, sends us out on Mission. His presence within the world and within the human heart makes us understand that this Mission precedes the Church, and that, from it, the Church itself and the Marist community are configured and acted upon.

74. As Marists, we make our own the mission to **"*make Jesus Christ known and loved*"**, as our Founder, St. Marcellin Champagnat, expressed it.

[38] EG 273

75. **Mary** is an inspiring model for living the Mission in every circumstance of our lives. Her capacity to embrace the Mission God proposes to her as the mother of Jesus Christ, her sensitivity and commitment to the impoverished and excluded, her permanent attitude of service and availability, and her discreet and fruitful presence alongside her Son, even to the Cross, are examples of how to be Mission in this world, from our state of lay life.

76. Through Baptism, we commit ourselves to proclaim the Good News throughout the world, by our witness, as salt and light, as leaven in the dough. This Mission is addressed to all humanity and, in general, to the needs of today's world. Specifically, our privileged recipients are the most **neglected** and **vulnerable children, adolescents and young people**. They are those for whom Marcellin Champagnat began his project of education and evangelization.

77. Thus, in the midst of our families, communities, work and the society of which we are a part, our Mission as Marists is to **build fraternity**, working to make a world of brothers and sisters, establishing relationships in which non-violence, peace and reconciliation prevail.

78. This Mission unfolds in the complex and diverse reality of the world, in different **areas** of our lay state of life:

- The **family** and the care of the people with whom we live: partners, children, the elderly, friends...
- The **education of** children, adolescents and young people, in formal and non-formal Marist educational works, or in other types of educational or social institutions that are not Marist-owned.
- The **work** and **profession** that each of us performs, as a means of humanization and a dignified and fulfilling life.
- A **commitment** to solidarity and participation in the spheres of culture, politics, economics and social transformation.
- The defence and promotion of **children's rights and well-being**, especially through advocacy platforms.
- The **presence** and **witness of life**, in the style of Mary, as a fundamental element of the evangelizing mission of every Christian, being leaven, yeast, salt of the earth and light of the world.
- The **community** or group with whom we share life, faith and commitment to the Kingdom.
- **Research** and **study** in different spaces and platforms, as instruments for a better understanding of reality and for proposing ways of human development. This aspect is also developed by understanding, deepening and updating Marist history and patrimony, from a new perspective that we contribute from our lay reality.
- **Servant and prophetic leadership** in different fields of action, both in social and political life, as

well as in the Church and our Charismatic Family.

- **Pastoral service**, especially in the catechesis of children, adolescents and youth, as well as in the animation of Youth and Vocational Ministry progams.
- The animation of **educational and evangelizing programs** that foster the cultivation of interiority, the development of spirituality, the search for the meaning of life, the commitment to solidarity, justice, peace and care for creation.

79. Therefore, the Christian and Marist mission is one, but the **tasks and concrete actions** can be **diverse**. Sometimes we carry them out in the context of Marist works and, at other times, in other places where we also do *Marist Mission*, even if these spaces do not bear the name of *Marist*.

80. Whatever work and profession we carry out, the **tangible perspective of our mission as Lay Marists** should keep at heart:

- **The following of Jesus and witness to the Gospel** in the midst of the world and in everyday life, sometimes explicitly and, at other times, simply through our way of living which makes the message of the Good News transparent.
- The **perspective of children, adolescents and young people**. That is, how our life and our work impact, directly or indirectly, the improvement of their lives and give them meaning and dignity.

- A **prophetic presence** among people, being signs of fraternity, witnesses to the Beatitudes and co-creators of a future of hope.

3.2.2 SHARED LIFE

"We need a community that supports and helps us, in which we can help one another to keep looking ahead - how important it is to dream together!"[39]

81. As Marists, we are called to live and promote **family spirit** in every area of our life, as a distinctive trait that characterizes us. Like the family of Nazareth, we are encouraged to live an experience of true friendship with others, of fraternal welcome, simplicity in personal relationships, care for others, and affectionate and close dealings.

82. This spirit of family and fraternity is fundamentally expressed in the following **areas**: our own **families**; the experience of **communion** with other Marists (brothers, sisters, lay people); the **community of faith and life** in which we regularly share our faith and Marist journey.

83. In **Mary** we discover how to live closeness and welcome in personal relationships; how to build a family based on affection, love and care; and how to

[39] FT 8



experience a deep communion with people and the needs of those around us. Her presence at the foot of the Cross of her Son Jesus, next to the Beloved Disciple, is an image of the new community. And, in the midst of the apostles on the day of Pentecost, we contemplate her as a companion on the journey and a link of communion for the early Church.

84. With Mary, and around her, we feel called to build and make visible a **Church with a Marian face.** The *icons of the Visitation*, characterized by service; *of Pentecost*, characterized by its maternal and familial aspect, and *of the Annunciation*, characterized by faith in action, help us to understand the profound meaning of this way of being Church. [40]

85. The experience of **Marcellin Champagnat and the first Brothers**, initially at La Valla and later at the Hermitage, teaches us a concrete way of living and being family and community. The warmth of the

[40] https://champagnat.org/e_maristas/Circulares/32_1_EN.pdf

home, simple and fraternal relationships, shared daily work, common prayer and celebration, care for others and even the smallest details are inspiration for growing in fraternity, communion and family spirit.

86. Thus, we feel called to live our vocation as Lay Marists of Champagnat as a community. The fundamental space of this shared life is **a concrete community,** in which we **share and celebrate life and faith with other lay men and women**, where vocational journeys are refined, and where every response and life choice is accompanied and nurtured.

87. This community of life and faith **is expressed in different forms**[41] , is part of a broader community of communities, and is a sign of the catholicity (universality) of the great community that is the Church.

88. Our communities express their **ecclesial being** and manifest it in each of the tasks proper to the Church: witness, communion, celebration and service.

89. This shared life in community is rooted in the spirit of **synodality**, in the *journey together* that impels us to live *communion*, *mission* and *participation* in the Church. This will entail the discovery and discernment of **ministries or services proper** to our lay vocation.

[41] Fraternities of the CMMF, lay communities, communities shared with brothers or other forms.

90. Whatever the communal expression of our shared life, we envision it as a **prophecy of communion**, helping to give birth to a new ecclesial model, based on the equal dignity of all vocations and on the image of the Church as the People of God.

91. Within our Charismatic Family, brothers and lay people share life, mission and spirituality, based on our specific vocations and realities. We are **family in communion**, called by Jesus who sends us to make the Marist charism visible, together, in today's world. The *table of La Valla* is the symbol around which we gather to live this communion among people of different cultures, nations and mentalities. It is an invitation to live in harmony with ourselves, with God, with others and with creation.

92. As a means of mediation that offers us a direction for our fraternal journey, we consider very important the elaboration of an annual **community project** that harmonizes mission, shared life, celebration, common prayer, communion of life and goods, and distribution of services.

3.2.3 SPIRITUALITY

"What is needed is the ability to cultivate an interior space which can give a Christian meaning to commitment and activity[42]

[42] EG 262

93. The **Marist spirituality** that **springs from the tradition of Marcellin Champagnat** has two fundamental features: it is **Marian** and it is **apostolic**. It presupposes a unique style of following of Jesus and the journey toward God, with some particular characteristics: *God's presence and love; trust in God; love of Jesus and his Gospel; in Mary's way; family spirit; spirituality of simplicity.*[43]

94. We develop this dimension of the Marist charism in the context of **daily life** and in the **different realities of the world,** places where, as followers of Jesus, we are called to **experience the presence of God**.

95. We seek quality time to cultivate **an intimate relationship with the God of Life** in the silence within us, in personal and communal prayer. This experience transforms us and **impels us to mission** and to **live evangelically** in the society. Incarnated in the earth and clay of reality, **we return to God** to drink from the source and continually review how we witness to his Kingdom in the world. It is thus a spirituality that is rooted in God's love for us and that grows in our dedication to others.

96. We live a spirituality **centred on Jesus Christ**. We want to be his disciples and follow in his footsteps.

[43] Cf. Water from the Rock. Marist spirituality flowing from the tradition of Marcellin Champagnat.

From Marcellin Champagnat we learn to base our lives on Jesus, recognizing him, especially, in three significant places: the **Crib**, the **Eucharistic Table** and the **Cross**.

97. We recognize the presence of the **Spirit**, the ***Ruah***, the **breath and life of God** in our world and our history, who blows how, where and when He pleases. His action constantly inspires our way of being, living and acting.

98. **Mary of Nazareth** is presented to us as a concrete model of a profound experience of spirituality, as a lay woman, in her daily reality. She cultivates a personal relationship with God from the depths of her being. She teaches us how to contemplate him in her own history, how to sing with gratitude for the wonders he works in her, how to discover him in the processes of liberation of the impoverished, or how to *"treasure and ponder all things in her heart" (Lk 2:19).* Her whole life is, ultimately, a permanent exercise of the presence of God.

99. The experience of **Marcellin Champagnat** and the first Brothers, as well as that of so many Marists



throughout history, are an **inspiration** to bring the traits of Marist **spirituality** to life within us. Practising the presence of God, whether *in the silence of the Hermitage woods or in the noisy streets of Paris*, connects with the reality of our lay life, and enlightens us to live this dimension in our daily activities, continually connecting contemplation and action, life and mission, with the mystical dimension of our lives.

100. **Our spirituality is made up of passion for God and compassion for people**.[44] To live it deeply, we dedicate times and spaces that help us to delve deeper into that which gives meaning to our actions, and we cultivate it through different means:

a) Silence and interiority, to access our deepest self where we meet the God who dwells in us.
b) The daily practice of personal prayer and times of community prayer, which help us to become prayerful individuals and communities.
c) Frequent reading and meditation on the Word of God, nourishment and guide for the journey of life.
d) The celebration of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist.
e) The exercise of God's presence in life, in history and in people, because our spirituality permeates everyday life and enables us to discover God

[44] WR 1

among children and young people, at home or at work.

f) Nurturing personal relationships as spaces where God is present.

g) A concrete commitment to creating a more humane and fraternal world.

h) Reading for personal formation, personal accompaniment, periods of retreat or review of the day.

i) Moments dedicated to remembering Mary and Marcellin Champagnat present, entrusting ourselves to their protection: times of prayer, celebration, reflection, feasts, and special days.

3.3 LAY MARISTS OF CHAMPAGNAT IN THE WORLD, IN THE CHURCH AND IN OUR GLOBAL CHARISMATIC FAMILY

3.3.1 IN THE WORLD

101. When speaking about the proper and unique nature of the lay vocation, the Second Vatican Council, in the Constitution Lumen Gentium, expresses the following: *"The laity, by their very vocation, seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God. They live in the world, that is, in each and in all of the secular professions and occupations. They live in the ordinary circumstances of family and social*

life, from which the very web of their existence is woven."[45]

102. Therefore, the **place par excellence** in which we Lay Marists of Champagnat unfold our **vocation and mission is the reality of the world** in which we live. There we commit our lives and place them at the service of the reign of God, and there we are called to be witnesses of the Good News with our own style and characteristics, inspired by the Marist charism.

103. As we read in GAST, *"**We are evangelizers of the world, living in the midst of the world**. Like salt in food, we manifest the depth that is hidden in daily life, and immersed in it, we 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."*[46]

104. We are embedded in this reality **like Mary**, a lay woman who inspires us to be disciples of Jesus, a sister in faith who, in her journey through the world, carried the dust of the road on her feet.[47]

105. We are witnesses to the **family spirit**, which encourages us to generate new relationships with peo-

[45] LG 31
[46] GAST 37
[47] WR 29



ple, to live attitudes such as welcome, affection, tenderness and thoughtfulness in the details, both in our own families and in other areas of relationship - in our jobs, commitments and civic and social platforms.

106. We want to be an incarnated and prophetic **presence** in society, promoting the experience of fraternity and the hope of a more human world. We do this through different ways of being present in the family, work, culture, politics or any platform for social transformation.

107. We manifest **simplicity**, a countercultural lifestyle, living authentically and doing good quietly.

108. We live the **love of work** as a service to others and a means of human and social improvement. We are committed to the promotion of dignified work which respects human values, based on fair labour relations, focused on building a better world.

3.3.2 IN THE CHURCH

109. Every **Christian vocation** unfolds, is nourished and nurtured within **the Church**. Thus, speaking of the lay Marist vocation takes on full meaning within the Christian community, the Church.

110. As Lay Marists of Champagnat we aspire to **live our following of Jesus from the Marist charism**, a gift for the good of the Church and the world. We are called to live and make visible this charism, which brings a specific 'colour' to the ecclesial community. From the lay state of life, we make visible a way of living spirituality, in the style of Mary, especially in daily life; we promote fraternity and the experience of family spirit in our surroundings, in our communities and families; we seek to enable children and young people to live with dignity, building life projects of fulfillment, knowing and experiencing the love that Jesus has for them.

111. In communion with the other Marist vocations, the Lay Marists of Champagnat make possible a **new way of being Church with a Marian face**: *"To build a Church with a Marian face is something all Christians are invited to do. But we, as Marists, are invited to manifest in an original and specific way the presence of Mary in the life of the Church and of mankind"*.[48]

[48]https://champagnat.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/circulares-32_1_EN.pdf

112. In the spirit of **synodality**, we encourage creative ways of living **communion**, **mission** and **participation**, being active members of the Church through different ministries or services, whether within our own charismatic family, which is Church, in parish life or in diocesan life.

113. In many contexts of unbelief, secularization, decline, fragility or persecution, we welcome the **invitation to be creative minorities**: *"I would say that usually it is creative minorities who determine the future, and in this regard the Catholic Church must understand that she is a creative minority who has a heritage of values that are not things of the past, but a very lively and relevant reality.*[49]

3.3.3 IN OUR GLOBAL CHARISMATIC FAMILY

114. The Marist charism, as a gift of the Spirit to the Church and the world, has been made visible through the experience of concrete persons and communities. In an early period of Marist history, it was incarnated in the life of the Brothers. And, recently, it has taken on new forms and expressions in the life of the Lay Marists of Champagnat.

[49] Apostolic Journey to the Czech Republic: Interview granted by Pope Benedict XVI to journalists during the flight to the Czech Republic (September 26, 2009): https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2009/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20090926_interview.html

115. Today we are called to **create homes of light, to care for and generate new Marist life**,[50] to make possible the **future and vitality of the charism, in communion and co-responsibility with all the Marists of Champagnat.**

116. This implies **taking care of the heart of the global charismatic family**. This heart is formed by people who, in community, have discerned their Marist vocation and welcome all the dimensions of the charism in their life project. We promote the presence of Marists, brothers and lay people, in **communities** of reference for the charism, to enable many others to participate in the family and embrace the charism of Champagnat in the measure and the forms they discover.

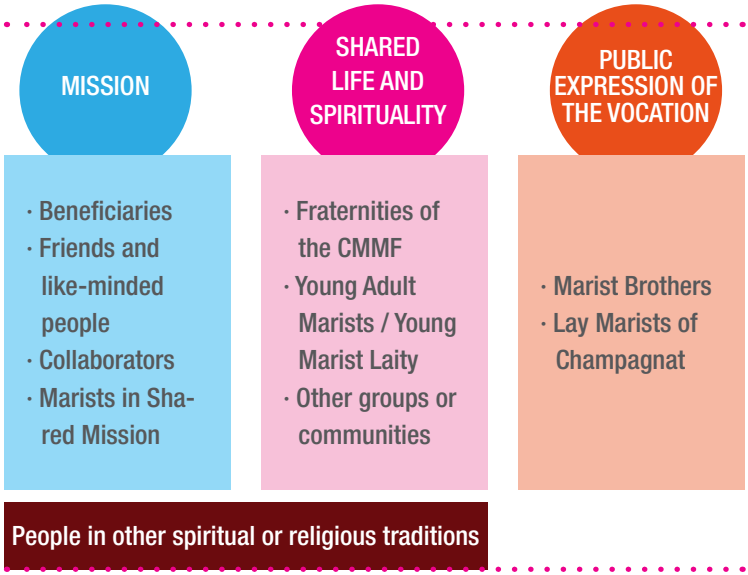
117. Therefore, we commit ourselves to a **vocation ministry** that fosters Marist vocations of religious brothers and lay men and women, supporting each other in the construction of this global charismatic family.

118. Those who give expression to this specific call to live the lay Marist vocation in our charismatic family by means of a public **promise** of fidelity to the charism, concretize this commitment in the institutionalized form of **membership** of the International Association of Lay Marists of Champagnat.

[50] https://champagnat.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Homes_of_light_Caring_for_Life_Generating_new_life.pdf

3.4 DIVERSE WAYS OF RELATING TO THE MARIST CHARISM AND PARTICIPATING IN THE CHARISMATIC FAMILY

119. To better understand our **Global Charismatic Family**, we suggest considering the **image** of a square, **the Marist Square,** a wide space in the middle of the world and of History, where the Spirit has been spreading the gift of the charism inherited from Marcellin Champagnat and the first brothers, and has made it available to the world and to the Church for several generations.



120. This Marist Square is a **meeting place for** many people, of different cultures, ages, states of life and beliefs, who share different spaces and times in a multiplicity of relationships and encounters. They live in communion, sharing tasks, educational work, sports and cultural activities, solidarity actions, volunteering, leisure and free time, festive and family gatherings, fraternal and community life, celebration of faith, mission, spirituality and fraternity.

121. In Marist Square we discover a house that was built from the beginning: **the house of the Brothers**. In this house, they meet to take care of their lives and vocation, to nourish and deepen their *brotherhood*, to dream together and to encourage each other to be in an attitude of missionary availability for all who gather in the Square, taking the Marist mission and charism beyond the Square, available to all peoples and all faiths.

122. As a *breath of* the Spirit, fruit of the process of the International Forum on the Lay Marist Vocation, the existence of **a new home** is emerging**: the International Association of Lay Marists of Champagnat**, a space to *welcome, care for, live and share their vocation*.

123. As time has passed, after more than 200 years of existence, the diversity of people who meet in Marist

Square has grown in many ways. They come into contact with the Marist charism in different ways, through experiences of mission, spirituality or shared life. This awareness of diversity allows us to **identify different ways of participating and feeling part of this Charismatic Family**. It supposes, therefore, the possibility of *'being with'* and '*being part of'* the family, with a clear sense of inclusiveness and welcome to each person.

124. The identification to which we allude does not imply any kind of classification by levels or hierarchical categories, but rather a way of **helping each Marist of Champagnat situate themself within the family** and decide how they wish to live the Marist charism.



This experience is not static and can lead each person to follow paths that allow them to delve deeper into each of the dimensions of the charism. In any case, we should speak of different *"spaces of communion",* in which the different members of this family can meet, and in which the different traits of the charism are shared with varying expressions and intensities.

125. Furthermore, these ways of identifying people help us, as a charismatic family, to **recognize this diversity** of relationships with the charism and to **offer** each person **possibilities** to deepen the features of the charism, according to their personal experience at all levels: human, christian and Marist.

126. We have been using the term **Marists of Champagnat** for some time now. It was first used in the message of the first Marist International Mission Assembly (MIMA I)[51] , held in Mendes (Brazil) in 2007. It is an **inclusive term** that encompasses all those who, in one way or another, form part of our Charismatic Family, as brothers or lay people. Since the XXI General Chapter of 2009, it has become familiar and has been used in various documents and communications from recent Superiors General.

127. The following is a **description** of these different

[51]https://champagnat.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/MIMA_Mendes2007_EN.pdf

expressions of living or relating to the Marist charism, taking into account that, on occasions, there will be people who can identify themselves in several:

3.4.1 In relation to the mission

- **Beneficiaries**: they become part of the charismatic family (young people and their families) when they enter any of the Marist mission works spread throughout the world. As time goes by, they may adopt other ways of living and relating to the charism. Their situation must be understood not as passive recipients, but as protagonists of this unique Mission to which we are called as Marists of Champagnat.
- **Supporters and like-minded people:** these are all those people who, in one way or another, feel a certain affinity for Marist values, due to the experiences they have had as alumni, friends and relatives of other Marists, collaborators at certain times in their lives, members of sports, social, cultural and youth clubs, etc.
- **Collaborators:** are those people in any place where there is a Marist presence of an educational, social or other type, who work under different forms of employment contract (teachers, educators, administrators, service personnel, employees, etc.), as well as volunteers, sports instructors, Marist Youth Ministry (MYM) leaders, catechists, etc. They coo-

perate in the mission with a professional or volunteer commitment, are familiar with the foundations and values of the Marist charism and identify with this charism to varying degrees.

- **Marists in shared mission:** are those people who understand and consciously express that their work is clearly aligned with the *mission* in Marist works and presences and who truly live it as *shared mission*. Some assume services of leadership and animation (at local, provincial or regional level), with options that go beyond a mere work or volunteer collaboration and, in many cases, imply a deep commitment and strong identification with the Marist charism.

3.4.2 In relation to shared life and spirituality

- **Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family (CMMF):** This has been and continues to be the most widespread form in which many Marists, lay men and women, live and share their Marist vocation in units called Fraternities. It is promoted and recognized by the Institute of the Marist Brothers. Its *Fraternity Life Project* explicitly invites its members to undertake formation processes that help them to deepen their lay Marist vocation.
- In many Administrative Units, the **Lay Marist Youth Movement** or **Marist Young Adults** movement has

been emerging. Depending on the context, and generally speaking, they usually bring together young people who have passed beyond Marist Youth Ministry (MYM) programs or who have joined group experiences from other areas. From different platforms (volunteering, MYM animation or others), they come together to continue their vocational search, with a clear Marist orientation in their personal and group journey. This entire movement is recognized as a significant gateway to formative pathways for the Marist vocation.

- There are also many other people who participate in **other group or community experiences**.[52]

3.4.3 In connection with the public expression of vocation

- **MARIST BROTHERS:** those who, from their vocation as religious brothers, follow Jesus Christ through profession, by vow, of the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience, forming part of the Institute of the Marist Brothers of the Schools.
- **LAY MARISTS OF CHAMPAGNAT:** those who live their lay vocation as God's call to live out his plan of life and follow Jesus in the style of Mary and Champagnat. They undertake a path of accompanied

[52] Without naming all the existing realities, we refer to lay communities, groups of Marist spirituality, Marist encounter groups, communities shared with brothers, reference communities, communities of animation of the charism or others of this style.

discernment and respond, consciously, freely and intentionally, from the experience of each and every one of the features of the Marist charism: mission, shared life and spirituality. They express this choice by making a promise of fidelity to the charism, becoming part of the International Association of Lay Marist of Champagnat, which welcomes their public commitment.

3.4.4 Living the Marist charism from other spiritual or religious traditions

128. Increasingly, we recognize people in many Marist works and presences who, without explicitly professing the Christian faith within the Catholic Church, share and live many of the characteristic features of Marist spirituality (family spirit, simplicity, love of work, etc.), which unite us in the experience of universal brotherhood, in the creation of a more humane world, and in the vocation to life to which every human being feels called.

- There are people who share and live Marist values from ***different ways of living spirituality***, who are not baptized or who do not belong to any institutionalized religion.
- In other contexts, we find people who profess ***faith in Jesus Christ in other non-Catholic christian churches.***
- In many countries we discover a growing number of

people who live their ***faith in other religious traditions***: Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism or others.

129. We recognize their participation in the charismatic family. They sit ***around the table*** with other Marists of Champagnat, and we meet them in various spaces of communion. Their spiritual and religious life and experience are a source of richness and a sign of challenge.

130. The presence of each of these people enriches our charismatic family and, **together**, we open ourselves to discover **new meanings of Marist life** for today's world, in the areas of fraternity, mission and spirituality.

131. We welcome the words of Pope Francis in his Encyclical Letter Fratelli Tutti on Fraternity and Social Friendship:

"The Church esteems the ways in which God works in other religions, and "rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these religions. She has a high regard for their manner of life and conduct, their precepts and doctrines which… often reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all men and women". Yet we Christians are very much aware that "if the music of the Gospel ceases to resonate in our very being, we will lose the joy born of compassion, the tender love born of trust, the capacity for reconciliation that has

its source in our knowledge that we have been forgiven and sent forth. If the music of the Gospel ceases to sound in our homes, our public squares, our workplaces, our political and financial life, then we will no longer hear the strains that challenge us to defend the dignity of every man and woman."[53]

"Called to take root in every place, the Church has been present for centuries throughout the world, for that is what it means to be "catholic". She can thus understand, from her own experience of grace and sin, the beauty of the invitation to universal love. Indeed, "all things human are our concern… wherever the councils of nations come together to establish the rights and duties of man, we are honoured to be permitted to take our place among them."[54]

3.5 CONCLUSION

This third chapter develops the theme of the life project and vocation of the Lay Marists of Champagnat, highlighting the call to live the Gospel and incarnate the Marist charism in their daily lives. It describes vocation as a lifelong journey that involves discernment, commitment and integration of faith into secular realities such as family, work and social

[53] FT 277
[54] FT 278

engagement. This lay Marist vocation contemplates a unified life project that integrates mission, spirituality and shared life, the three dimensions of the charism. It also reflects on their place in the world, the Church and our charismatic family. In the context of this global family, a description is proposed of the different ways of being and living within it, including all the people who are connected to the Marist charism through diverse expressions and life responses. Finally, the presence and involvement of people from different spiritual or religious traditions in the Marist mission is acknowledged, emphasizing the shared values of universal fraternity and collaboration for a more humane world.



4. FORMATIVE PATHS OF BELONGING

4.1 INTRODUCTION

132. **Discovering, deepening and discerning the lay Marist vocation** implies the availability of resources, **formation,** times, spaces and accompaniment.

133. We understand **formation** as an intentional and conscious process, carried out in an organized and committed manner. It is a lifelong experience, encom-



passing the different stages and cycles of life, and includes all areas of personal, faith and Marist life.

134. In the context of formation processes to foster the vocational journey, we consider **discernment, personal accompaniment** and **community experience** as essential elements.

135. Therefore, **formation** is a **necessary aid** for Lay Marists of Champagnat to:

a) ***give reason for their hope*** in the midst of the world and the Church.
b) ***live a life project*** rooted in following Jesus, inspired by the Marist charism.
c) ***give a conscious and free response*** to the gift we have received from God to live fully the Marist vocation from our lay state of life.

136. We speak of carrying out a **process**, that is, of making a **personal journey** inward, of **discovering** the gift that God sows in the heart, of maturation and conversion, of **making** the Marist charism **one's own** and of giving a **vocational response** throughout one's life.

137. To help in this vocational process, the mediation of a **formation pathway** is necessary. As such, it has a progressive character, and includes different tools, instruments, experiences, actions, steps and propo-

sals. It enables the person to journey through different stages and moments, with varying degrees of depth, in the discovery of their vocation.

138. Our Marist reference documents have addressed the **need to propose and implement these formation pathways.**

Thus, in "*Gathered around the Same Table"*, it is stated that *discovering, identifying, discerning and responding to a vocation implies, in every case, the realization of a journey. And if we look at it from the perspective of a believer, we speak of vocation as a journey of faith*[55] . The chapter "Ways of Growth in Vocation"[56] is dedicated to this reflection.

In *"Being A Lay Marist"* this initial intuition is made concrete, offering **guidelines** for formation, **criteria** for designing pathways and the description of **formative stages** within them.

139. Vocational processes require the use **of personal accompaniment**, which embraces all dimensions and situations of life. It is **spiritual** accompaniment**,** because it helps the person, on their journey, to deepen the experience of God, their following of Jesus and their living of the Marist charism. In the context of

[55] GAST 146-148
[56] GAST Ch. 6

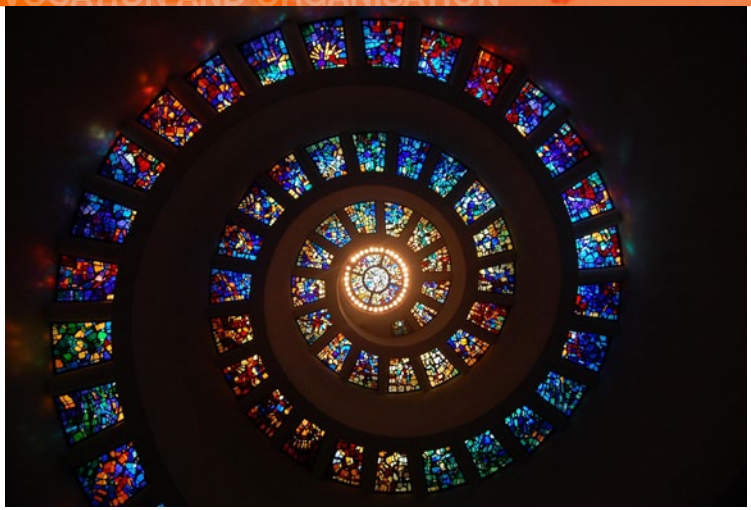
a vocational journey, it is accompaniment **for discernment,** in the search for those answers and decisions that welcome and express the gift of vocation.

140. Along with the use of personal accompaniment, we note the importance and necessity of **community accompaniment**. In the context of a community, life is shared, expressed, contrasted and reviewed in the light of the gospel. As such, the personal journey is lived, not in an individualistic way, but in relationship with others, generating dynamics of shared growth.

141. In the context of our charismatic family, these formation processes also require spaces to promote **joint formation** between brothers and lay people, in communion and co-responsibility. This type of formation involves spending time together to delve into common themes of the Christian vocation and, at the same time, to better understand each other in our specific identities and states of life. It is an experience of shared mission, life and faith, both at the personal and community level. It is a lived expression of co-responsibility and charismatic vitality.

4.2 OUR FORMATION PATHWAY

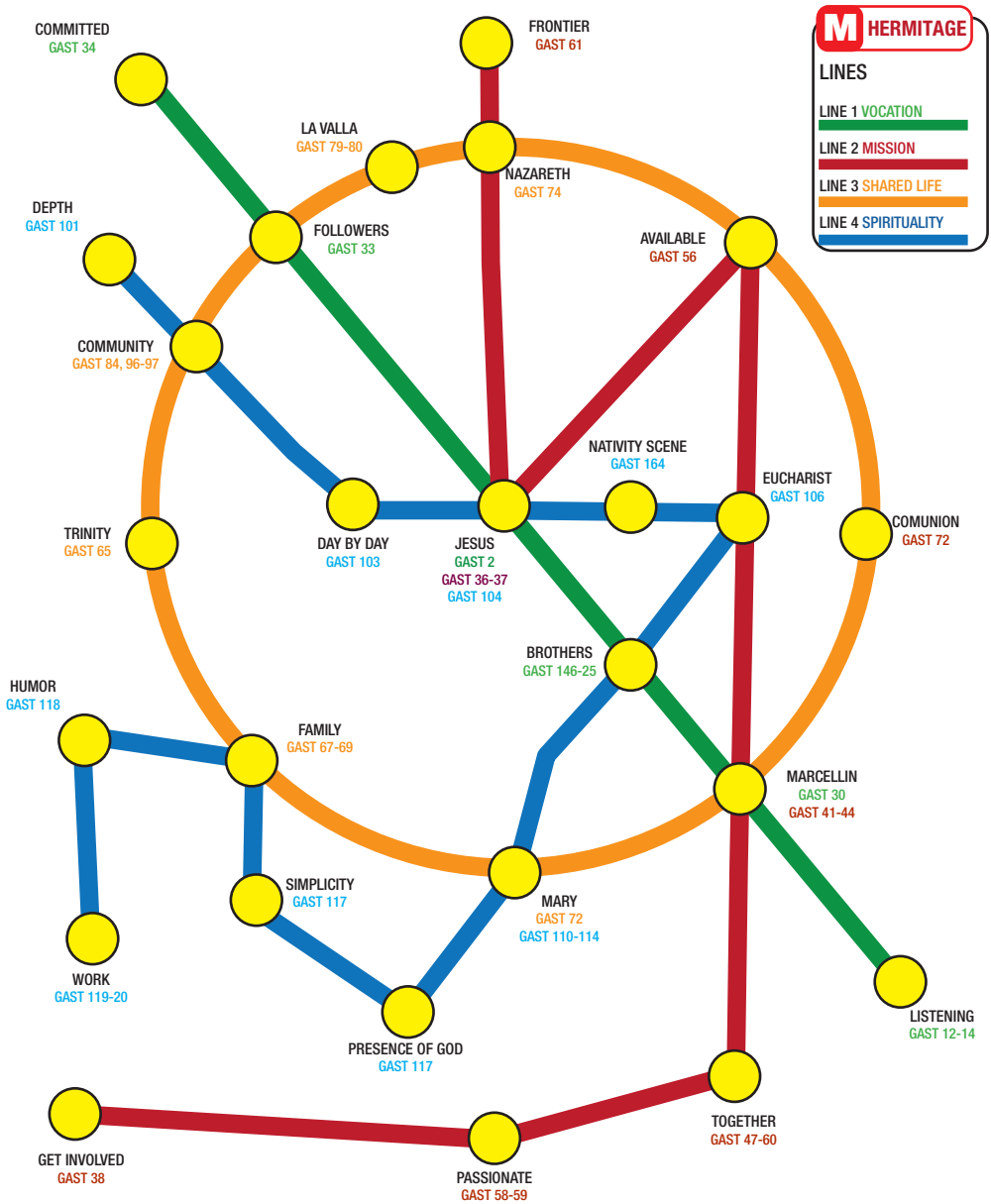
142. The **formative pathway** we propose is designed so that people can grow progressively in all areas of their lives, integrating and harmonizing the human, fai-



th and Marist experiences. It is an instrument to deepen their **following of Jesus** and, specifically, in each of the **dimensions of the Marist charism**.

143. The **diversity of lay life** implies that the formative pathway has an open, integrative, cyclical and flexible character, adapted to each individual's situation. Like any life process, the **paths** that people who accept this invitation are **unique and diverse**. Hence the importance of the **flexibility** of the offering, which must always be **at the service of people** and not the other way around.

144. This diversity implies **different entry points** to the pathway. Thus, those who accompany them must be very attentive to the different **life and faith situations** they may encounter. This will mean starting from di-


HERMITAGE
LINES
LINE 1 VOCATION
LINE 2 MISSION
LINE 3 SHARED LIFE
LINE 4 SPIRITUALITY
COMMITTED
GAST 34
FRONTIER
GAST 61
LA VALLA
GAST 79-80
NAZARETH
GAST 74
DEPTH
GAST 101
FOLLOWERS
GAST 33
AVAILABLE
GAST 56
COMMUNITY
GAST 84, 96-97
NATIVITY SCENE
GAST 164
EUCHARIST
GAST 106
COMUNION
GAST 72
TRINITY
GAST 65
DAY BY DAY
GAST 103
JESUS
GAST 2
GAST 36-37
GAST 104
BROTHERS
GAST 146-25
HUMOR
GAST 118
FAMILY
GAST 67-69
MARCELLIN
GAST 30
GAST 41-44
SIMPLICITY
GAST 117
MARY
GAST 72
GAST 110-114
WORK
GAST 119-20
LISTENING
GAST 12-14
PRESENCE OF GOD
GAST 117
TOGETHER
GAST 47-60
GET INVOLVED
GAST 38
PASSIONATE
GAST 58-59

fferent points, depending on each person, offering the most appropriate proposals and helping them achieve truly meaningful processes. We must therefore start from personal reality:

- *In relation to each existential situation at all levels: psychological, relational, personal maturity, emotional, familial, experiential, professional, etc.*
- *In relation to the diversity of religious or spiritual experiences previously lived, or to the faith paths already consciously travelled.*
- *In relation to the learning or experiences incorporated in their life project, in connection with the different dimensions of the Marist charism.*

145. There are no recipes for every situation, but there are **formative dynamics** that should support growth and experiential learning of new life paths, and that allow us to better understand how this formative pathway is conceived. Some of these dynamics would be:

- *To deepen personal self-knowledge, the appreciation of abilities and limitations, the acceptance of one's own history, the management of emotions and feelings, the healing of wounds and personal relationships.*
- *To develop the capacity for internalization, the experience of silence, prayer and contemplation.*

- *To cultivate formation in different areas related to the Christian faith: spirituality, theology, Christology, ethics, ecclesiology, pastoral care.*
- *To foster the experience of the community dimension and fraternity in different areas of life and, especially, within a specific Christian community, learning to discover and value the meaning of being Church.*
- *To help to make a faith-filled reading of reality, developing a critical sense and the ability to view people and our world from a Gospel perspective, based on justice and mercy.*
- *To discover the need for personal conversion to Gospel values, which will entail a change of mentality, attitudes, feelings, actions and choices.*
- *To become progressively involved in the social, economic and political change of our reality, committing to the causes of vulnerable and excluded people in society.*
- *To incorporate into one's personal life project the attitudes that Mary lived as a believer and disciple of Jesus, which are an inspiration for those who want to live the Gospel in the Marist way.*
- *To grow in the knowledge and appreciation of Marcellin Champagnat and the first Brothers, as well as in the Marist charism and history.*
- *To learn the practice of discernment, with personal accompaniment, as a fundamental attitude for discovering the gift of God that dwells in each person and making it bear fruit and unfold in a fulfilling life project.*

- *To facilitate experiential formative proposals, which implies that each person can live the experience of God, commitment to the mission, shared life with others and review of life, beyond theory or documents.*
- *To deepen in the different aspects of personal, faith and Marist life, understanding that the journey is a process, requiring continual integration, somewhat like a spiral.*

146. **Each person's free choice** when engaging in a journey of vocational discernment such as the one proposed, will also involve supporting the decisions that may lead them to end it at some point along the way.

4.3 ACCOMPANIMENT IN VOCATIONAL PROCESSES

4.3.1 Accompaniment and the style of accompaniment

147. Personal accompaniment is **a helping relationship** between **two** companions on the journey, one who accompanies and the other who is accompanied. The roles of each person are different. **The person being accompanied** seeks to discern God's will in their life, sharing their story and journey. **The companion** welcomes the life of the person being accompanied through active listening, closeness, echoes or questions that challenge and assist the

personal and spiritual growth of the one accompanied.

148. It is a **mediation** that allows the person, in the context of a formative process, to have the possibility of **discovering and discerning** the gift that God has sown in their heart. This requires the help of a companion on the way, who has already made a life and faith journey. This companion welcomes, listens, reflects and offers techniques so that the accompanied person can develop their life project in freedom.

149. We can say that accompaniment is an ecclesial ministry. Pope Francis has repeatedly emphasised its



importance: *"The Church will have to initiate everyone – priests, religious and laity – into this "art of accompaniment" which teaches us to remove our sandals before the sacred ground of the other (cf. Ex 3:5). The pace of this accompaniment must be steady and reassuring, reflecting our closeness and our compassionate gaze which also heals, liberates and encourages growth in the Christian life."*[57] *"Genuine spiritual accompaniment always begins and flourishes in the context of service to the mission of evangelization."*[58]

150. The **style of accompaniment** is inspired by Jesus' encounter with the disciples **on the road to Emmaus:**

a) As the mediator of the Spirit, **Jesus makes himself present in this journey** of accompaniment, and **invites us** to go back to our origins, to our history, to our daily lives, to read events in the light of the Gospel.

b) At the same time, he develops an attitude of **deep listening**, of respectful **acceptance of** the whole life of the person, and believes that the person builds their own life project, as the main protagonist of this journey, which they discern in the light of the Spirit.

c) It is a **personalised** accompaniment, which takes into account the individual's situation and context and offers the person the opportunity to share and change their life.

[57] EG 169
[58] EG 173

151. The commitment to journey with others is born from the recognition that we cannot walk alone, that community is necessary to deepen our faith and to be able to continue the journey. Therefore, accompaniment is both **personal and communal.**

152. Accompaniment is practiced **in a** specific **context**, where the daily life of the person being accompanied is the starting point. Therefore, the practice of accompaniment is carried out by adapting to different Marist contexts and realities.

4.3.2 Accompaniers

153. For a good accompaniment, it is essential to have **people trained in the art of accompanying** others, taking care in their selection and ensuring that they have the appropriate qualities and training.

154. To this end, accompaniers must be **people who have made a** personal **journey** of discernment and Marist life, who have experienced being accompanied in their own life, and who live this experience as a service, collaborating as a team with others.

155. Accompaniers have an **integral formation** in the dimensions of the person, the techniques of personal interviews, appropriate attitudes for listening to and welcoming the whole person, the different life situa-

tions and life cycles, and the specifics of accompaniment for discernment and the experience of God. This formation should encompass anthropological, psychological, ethical, ecological, theological, spiritual and Marist aspects.

156. Accompaniers must be deeply aware of the specifics of each reality and situation in the life of lay Marists and, from this perspective, offer opportunities for them to be protagonists of their own formation. **Confidentiality**, **trust**, **active listening**, **respect for the dignity of the person** and **understanding** are important elements of the process, as is the consideration of the time, duration, day, place and frequency of spiritual accompaniment.

157. The service provided by the accompaniers differs depending on whether the person being accompanied is in the initial stages of the formative journey or in the stages of deepening and discernment, in which it becomes more systematic.

158. For the proper development of the formation pathways, it is necessary to create **teams responsible for formation and support,** defining their roles and competencies, with profiles adapted to each stage of the journey. These teams:

a) Ensure the ongoing formation of accompaniers.

b) Provide opportunities to share difficulties, doubts

about the pathway and how to support certain situations.

c) Offer opportunities to share the journey of those being accompanied and to improve the accompaniment offered to them.

d) Promote contact with other Marist and ecclesial organisations for mutual enrichment, better formation and openness to different perspectives.

e) Allow for ongoing supervision, evaluation and mentoring of the accompaniers themselves.

159. These teams of accompaniers will be created **in the different areas** of **the International Association** of Lay Marists of Champagnat (international, national, local...).

4.4 STAGES AND MOMENTS OF THE FORMATIVE JOURNEY

160. As a general proposal, our formative pathway for discerning a lay Marist vocation is conceived in **four phases** divided into **two major stages.** The **first stage of Initiation** would include two phases: *1) Invitation and 2) Discovery*; and the **second stage of Commitment** another two phases: *3) Deepening and discernment; 4) Ongoing formation for the care of life and the creative development of the Marist charism.*

161. Each phase is designed to help the person **explore the vocation** to which they feel called, which

can lead to concrete choices and expressions of their vocational response.

162. The transition from the third to the fourth phase contemplates the expression of a **sign of public commitment**, with a **promise** of fidelity to the charism.

163. The design of the pathway implies having **guidelines, criteria, methodologies, experiences, tools and means** adapted to each stage of the journey.

4.4.1.1 INVITATION

164. This first moment is a time of **vocational awakening**, which begins with an **invitation** like the one Jesus made to his disciples: ***"Come and see"*** *(Jn 1:39).*

165. This invitation to begin a formative vocational journey is **open**. We are thinking of the people we meet in the different groups and clusters of our charismatic family. We also think of other people from different places to where we go out or where we are present.

166. **From a variety of experiences, tasks and activities**, people can come into contact with Marist. Sometimes, a desire to know and experience is awakened in them. When this happens, it is an occasion to invite, to dialogue and to sense the other's searching.

167. It is a time of **calling, informing, attracting and offering formative opportunities**. Through these, the person is helped to become aware of their life stage, to discover what may be a call from God and to start a journey.

168. Listed below are some of the **significant groups** to whom this invitation may be extended:

- *Fraternities and other adult lay communities*
- *Young adults coming from Marist Youth Ministry programs.*
- *Individuals in the animation and management teams of institutions or Administrative Units*.
- *Workers and collaborators in Marist-owned works: educators, teachers, administrative staff, employees, service personnel, etc.*
- *Volunteers in social and solidarity projects.*
- *Parents of students or beneficiaries of Marist works.*
- *Alumni.*
- *Sports and/or extracurricular activities instructors*
- *Other specific groups connected to the Marist realities where we find ourselves across many countries and contexts.*
- *Other people from different ecclesial realities and contexts where, as Marists, we are in mission and make ourselves present.*

169. There are many and **diverse ways to offer this**

initial **invitation**: by means of specific convocation days or meetings, personal or group conversations, informal gatherings, solidarity activities, Marist celebrations or festivals, physical or virtual advertising spaces. They should be very open and broad offerings in which each person feels welcomed and free to accept the invitation. It is a time that we could call **'open doors'**.

170. Each place should develop its own **plan** to foster this time of invitation, which is clearly a **vocational proposal**.

171. For this time of invitation, it is very important to **count on Marists, brothers and lay**, who are capable of sharing their own lives, who take care to be welcoming and value the quality of personal relationships. Their witness and living of Marist values can be the first point of access to begin the journey.

172. Depending on the individual's life and faith situation, **access to the subsequent stages** of the pathway would be made at the starting point that best suits the person, in dialogue with the animation and accompaniment teams.

173. After having had time to accept the invitation made, the question posed to the individual before continuing the journey would be, ***"Do I want to begin***

a process of discovery and personal growth in relation to the Marist experience?

4.4.1.2 DISCOVERY

174. This second phase is still part of the initiation stage. It is a time to make a proposal in which the encounter with Marist life and mission connects with one's own existence. An attitude of searching and questioning is aroused. Like Mary before the announcement of the angel at the Annunciation, the question that inspires this moment is: ***"How will this be"*** *(Lk 1:34)**)***

175. There is a motivation that springs from within the person, leading them to **know more deeply** what moves the heart of a Marist, their way of life and the meaning of the traits of the Marist charism.

176. This contact with and progressive knowledge of the Marist way of life implies a discovery of what can be a particular way of living can be. In this **process of discovery**, the person finds themself, becoming aware of their call to life, their central vocation, to be a person, a Christian and a Marist.

177. It is time to **lay the foundations** of what can become a life option inspired by the Marist charism.

178. It is a phase, of variable duration depending on each person's journey, in which both **personal** and **group experiences are offered**. All these formative experiences are aimed at raising awareness of the meaning of **following Jesus, in the style of Mary and Champagnat**.

179. In any case, the initiatives and actions proposed are in connection **with** the different areas of personal, family, work or social **life**, helping to **forge a path** that integrates the whole of life and the whole person.

180. Volunteering and solidarity **experiences**, formation days, meetings and socialising with other Marists, brothers and lay, occasions to celebrate life and faith, participation in gatherings of other ecclesial groups, experiences of silence, prayer or retreats, etc., are **opportunities** for discovery and for **making a** Marist **vocational journey** according to the lay life.



181. In addition to suggestions such

as those above, the individual is invited to seek **personal time** for reflection and prayer, with readings and materials that can help them continue to discover and deepen their understanding.

182. During this phase, two experiences are introduced that will be fundamental for later stages of the journey: **shared life in a group or community** and **personal accompaniment**.

183. **For some people**, this stage of discovering the Marist vocation and charism can be an **initiation into the Christian faith**, or an opportunity to **take up again** a faith that was not cultivated in the past. In these cases, it is very important to nurture the formative experience from a faith perspective.

184. When the person is ready to take a further step on the path of their Christian and Marist vocation, they try to answer the following questions: *What is the experience of discovering the Marist charism telling me? What is God revealing to me in it? How can I integrate it into my life?* ***Do I want to initiate a process of further deepening and discernment of my personal vocation in a Marist sense?***

185. Moving to the next stage will involve the possibility of deepening and discerning the lay vocation within the Marist charism. For this, certain **starting**

conditions are required that are known and assumed by the person who continues the journey: *adulthood, awareness of and commitment to their Christian faith, active participation in a lay Marist community, attitude of discernment, systematic personal accompaniment.*

4.4.1.3 DEEPENING AND DISCERNMENT

186. The second stage begins with a time characterized by **personalisation**, **identification** with a specific way of living, a **commitment** that matures consciously and freely, and **vocational discernment**.

187. Like Mary's response to the angel's announcement at the Annunciation, the person expresses their openness to God's will: ***"Let it be done to me"*** *(Lk 1:38).*

188. It is a time in which the person increasingly identifies with what it means to **live the Marist charism in their state of lay life**, and that supposes taking into account some key aspects specific to this moment:

a) **To discern** one's own faith journey, so that the person discovers whether they are called to the lay Marist vocation, as God's gift and plan for their life. That is to say, whether their place in the Church is our charismatic family and their way of living the Christian faith is from the perspective of Champagnat's charism.

b) To foster and deepen **experiences** of personalisation and Marist identification, with **tools** and a **methodology** that help to reread life in the light of God's Spirit. In this way, the person acquires a greater awareness that leads them to clarify where their own life is going or what options to take in following Jesus in the style of Mary.

c) To give direction to the searches of the person who feels this call to **live out the Christian and Marist option** in their **daily lay life**, in all the contexts where they are involved (family, social, work, etc.), both within Marist-owned works and outside of them.

189. As we move forward in this time of deepening and discernment, the person answers questions such as the following: *Do I feel called to live as a Marist from my being a layperson? Is this a path to fulfillment for my life at the service of the mission? Do I feel responsible for the life, mission and future of the Marist charism?* ***Do I wish to be part of this charismatic family, being recognised as a Lay Marist of Champagnat?***

190. After this personal journey of discernment, **some people identify as Lay Marists of Champagnat and feel that their place in the Church is in our charismatic family**. [59]

[59] GAST 11, 13

SIGN OF PASSAGE: THE PROMISE OF FIDELITY TO THE CHARISM

191. At this point, the person is offered the opportunity to live a key moment in discerning the expression of a **public sign of commitment**, through a **promise of fidelity to the charism**. If the person discovers that the time has come to take this step, they will make this promise within the Christian and Marist community, expressing their personal choice.

192. This public sign expressed by the promise of fidelity to the charism entails **membership**, **recognition** and **acceptance** in the International Association of Lay Marists of Champagnat.

4.4.1.4 ONGOING FORMATION FOR THE CARE OF LIFE AND THE CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MARIST CHARISM

193. Those who take the step of making the promise of fidelity to the charism, becoming members of the International Association, make their own the **life project of the Lay Marists of Champagnat**, as expressed in the chapter on their vocation and life.[60] These individuals continue to live and nurture their growth in all areas of their lives, specifically, in spirituality, shared life and mission. This involves concretizing the

[60] It is developed in chapter 3 of this document.



commitment they have made to follow Jesus from the perspective of the Marist charism.

194. As in the passage of the wedding at Cana in John's Gospel (Jn 2:1-12), this new time implies welcoming and living Mary's words to the wedding servants: ***"Do whatever he tells you".***

195. It presents itself as an opportunity and a challenge to **live the meaning of**:

- ***Being sent*** *on Mission by God and the Christian community.*
- ***Being a Church*** *with a Marian face and a global* ***charismatic family***
- *Being* ***available*** *to exercise different services or leadership within the charismatic family or the Church.*

196. In this phase, we are invited to **be part of communities** that are a **reminder and reference for the Marist charism**, in the places and works of mission.

197. Some significant experiences that should be **nurtured and promoted** at this phase are:

- *Ongoing formation to continue growing vocationally, in spirituality and mission, in Marist history and charism.*
- *Community life as a reminder of the Marist charism in the Church and in the world.*
- *Experiences of walking in communion, becoming aware of being part of a global charismatic family.*
- *Spaces of shared discernment, with other Marists, of life and mission.*
- *Commitment to animation of the charism in Marist works and presences.*
- *Care and promotion of all Marist vocations, especially those of the Brothers and the Laity.*
- *Active participation in the life of the International Association of Lay Marists of Champagnat, through the existing structures at all levels.*
- *Times of discernment to renew the option expressed in the promise of fidelity to the charism.*

198. Following a formative journey with these characteristics becomes an **opportunity to recognise God's gift** in our lay life and to express this gift in any per-

sonal situation and at any stage of life. It should help each person to recognize themselves in their **vocational journey** and to **discover the place** where they feel called to be within our charismatic family, or in other areas of the world or the Church. The different steps offered along the way, the public expression of commitment by means of a promise or associative membership, are possibilities that open up before the person, giving a specific meaning to their life, and allowing them to feel part of a shared life and mission project with other Lay Marists of Champagnat.





4.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter describes the formative paths for belonging to the Association and deepening one's lay Marist vocation. It addresses aspects such as ongoing formation, personal and community accompaniment, and the structured nature of this vocational journey, divided into different stages and phases. It emphasizes the need for discernment, personal growth and the integration of Marist values into daily life. This proposed formation journey is flexible and adapts to each person's background and life experiences. Key stages include an invitation to explore Marist life, the discovery of personal vocation, deepening through discernment and commitment through a process of ongoing formation. Accompaniment, both personal and communal, plays a crucial role, ensuring ongoing support, reflection and integration into the Marist charismatic family.



5. PUBLIC SIGN OF COMMITMENT. PROMISE OF FIDELITY TO THE CHARISM



199. In recent years, several Administrative Units of the Institute of the Marist Brothers have designed proposals and pathways for growth in the journey of lay Marist vocation, as well as in the *processes that have been called "bonding to the Marist charism"*, inspired by the reference document 'Being a Lay Marist'.

200. Various reflections, consultations and dialogues held with lay people and brothers during the International Forum on the Lay Marist Vocation, have confirmed the need to change the term *bondage*, for different reasons and sensitivities, both linguistic and cultural.

201. **A consensus** has been reached on a **more common and globally unifying term**, better understood in the ecclesial and Marist context, which provides identity and does not generate confusion with other ways of being part of our charismatic family. In any case, this change does not imply modifying the rich and profound meaning of the experience. On the contrary, it seeks to strengthen it and promote its better understanding.

202. The proposed new expression is **PROMISE OF FIDELITY TO THE CHARISM**. It is believed that this new expression will help to give meaning and better reflect the experience involved in this process, and will be much more universal.

5.1 THE PROMISE OF FIDELITY TO THE CHARISM

203. The fundamental motivation of those who make a promise of fidelity to the Marist charism is to develop a **life project as a follower of Jesus of Nazareth**, in the style of **Mary**, inspired by the features of **Champagnat's** Marist charism, in communion with the **Church,** at the service of the **mission,** from the **state of lay life.**

204. In the context of the formation paths offered in the International Association of Lay Marists of Champagnat, we understand the promise of fidelity to the charism as:

a) **A free, mature** and **conscious response** to the call that the person has experienced in their vocational journey, as a gift that God has given, that has been growing in their heart, and that is expressed in a Marist way of being, providing an identity within the Church and the charismatic family.

b) The **explicit** and **visible expression of a commitment** on the part of the lay people who have been following a formative path of belonging, at the end of the period of deepening and discernment. This is the public expression of the option to live a Christian life project according to the Marist charism.

c) **A personal option,** expressed through a **public sign** before the Marist community, which bears witness to the commitment made. This choice entails **acceptance of and acceptance by** the International Association of Lay Marists of Champagnat. For the person, it implies a clear **awareness of belonging and commitment to the vitality and future of the Marist charism**.

d) The **passage to a new stage** in the formation process, following the period of deepening and discernment, and as the beginning of the period of ongoing formation for the care of life and the creative development of the charism. This step leads the person to greater stability, conviction and projection in their vocational journey; to bear witness to their faith, their option and lifestyle; to greater availability for the mission and to prioritise their jour-

ney with others, in community, at the service of the Church and society.

205. In line with the exhortation *Christifideles Laici* on the vocation and mission of the laity in the Church and in the world, the **fundamental sense of** this proposal is *"the acceptance by lay faithful of Christ's call to work in his vineyard, to take an active, conscientious and responsible part in the Church's mission in this magnificent and dramatic hour of history."*[61]

5.2 THE PERSON MAKING THE PROMISE

206. As contemplated in the chapter on the *formative paths of belonging*, there are **people who are invited or who request to undergo a process of vocational discernment** within the Marist charism, which contemplates the possibility of making a public commitment through the *promise of fidelity to* the *charism*.

207. These people, who have already had the knowledge and experience of living the Marist charism for some time, express their intention to discern whether their place in the Church is in our charismatic family and how to make their Christian faith explicit from the perspective of our charism.

[61] cf. ChL 3



208. For a person to **begin this time of deepening and discernment**, the third phase of the formative journey, some **starting criteria** will be taken into account**:**

a) To be an **adult** *(the age will depend on cultural contexts, but we estimate 24 or 25 as the minimum age)*.
b) To be a **consciously baptised person**.
c) To belong to and actively participate **in a lay Marist community.**
d) That **he or she commits to deepening and discerning their vocation** as a Lay Marist of Champagnat, with systematic personal accompaniment.
e) That he or she **lives** some **fundamental attitudes**:

- *Awareness of what commitment entails in order to create bonds:* In an explicitly vocational dynamic, this commitment is not a privilege, nor the only way

for people to express that they feel Marist. Neither is it merely an emotional bond with what is Marist, nor is it the end of every lay Marist process, nor does it imply a path of separation or independence from the Brothers. On the contrary: it is a help to continue to grow vocationally, to walk with other Marists of Champagnat and to commit one's life to the future and vitality of the Marist charism, in communion and co-responsibility.

- *Freedom of motivation*. The realization of this formative journey and the expression of the public promise must be done with total freedom and with no other motivation than to discern a life commitment to the Marist charism.
- *Sincerity and honesty*. To begin a journey such as this should entail a great deal of authenticity, with no other interest than to explore the vocation to which one has been called as a Lay Marist of Champagnat.

209. In these paths that lead to expressing a public commitment in an associative context, it is necessary to find ways to **better understand** the **lay Marists** whose **work environment** is **different from the educational one** or who **work outside the Marist insitutions**. This also implies a process of effective inclusion in the life and mission animated by current and future Marist structures.

210. It is also necessary to clarify that making a promise of fidelity to the charism **does not** imply any kind of **access or professional promotion** in a Marist work, **or** any kind of **financial compensation**. In any case, it should be clear that expressions such as promise of fidelity, attachment, identity, belonging, adhesion, participation or feeling like an heir, should be understood in a **charismatic and spiritual sense**, and in no case imply the possibility of becoming the owner of material goods of the Marist Institute or of the International Association of Lay Marists of Champagnat.

5.3 THE PUBLIC EXPRESSION OF THE PROMISE OF FIDELITY TO THE CHARISM

211. The promise of fidelity to the charism is expressed publicly **before the Marist community** that has accompanied and welcomed the person's vocational journey and commitment. It presupposes a **reciprocal involvement** between the person and the Association.

212. In the context of a **community celebration**, a common formula for the promise is proposed, as well as a more personal one, in which each person adds some specific aspect of how they feel called to live in the areas where they live their life as a Lay Marist of Champagnat.

213. **Formula of the promise of fidelity to the charism:**

"In the presence of our Father God, of Mary, our Good Mother, of Saint Marcellin Champagnat and of this Marist community that accompanies me

After a process of discernment of my Christian vocation and my following of Jesus, inspired by the Marist charism, in the tradition of Marcellin Champagnat, and before you (*indicate the name of the person who receives the promise on behalf of the Association*),

I (*name and surname of the person making the promise)* make a promise of fidelity to the Marist charism, and request recognition as a Lay Marist of Champagnat within the International Association of Lay Marists of Champagnat,

and I commit myself (*indicate the duration of the promise according to what appears, finally, in the Statutes*) to:

- continue my journey of following Jesus in the daily reality of my lay life, especially in my family, my work and the social situations in which I am involved.
- care for and cultivate my relationship with God through our Marian and apostolic spirituality.
- share my life in community and promote communion with other Marists.
- collaborate in the Marist mission of making Jesus Christ known and loved, especially among the most vulnerable children, adolescents and young people.

- promote the Marist charism and vocations in creative fidelity.
- build, with the help of the Spirit, a prophetic and Marian Church.
- ... (*each person may add a personal commitment if desired*)."

214. Making the promise of fidelity to the charism will have a series of **implications,** both **for the person** who makes it and **for the Association** that receives it and validates it.

215. The implications **for the person making the public promise of fidelity to the charism** would be to:

a) *be a beacon of hope and a builder of bridges*, a sign of commitment to the Kingdom and a witness to Christian and Marist life, in our own family life and in the world, in different work, social, economic, political and cultural contexts.
b) *nurture their own vocation and spirituality*, committing themselves to live their faith, to share it, to proclaim Jesus Christ and his Gospel, with the help of the Holy Spirit, in all areas of their lives.
c) *continue in processes of ongoing formation*, to continue growing according to one's own capacities, availability and personal reality, in spirituality, and in one's own vocational choices, at the service of the mission.

d) *actively participate in the mission,* having availability of heart to assume possible leadership or service roles, assuming co-responsibility with other Marists, with an awareness of internationality.

e) *live a Marist community experience*, maintaining fraternal bonds with other brothers and lay people, being available to live in Marist communities that keep alive the charism for mission projects, building and making visible a prophetic and Marian Church. With this sense of community, in the spaces of communion among Marists, the two identities are strengthened, that of the brother and that of the lay person, the charism is enriched, and the mission is expanded.

f) *promote the future and vitality of the Marist charism, in creative fidelity*, from one's own state of lay life, within the Church and in communion with other Marists. Strengthen the sense of being disciples and missionaries, sent to continue the charism, promoting Marist vocations, particularly the lay vocation.

g) *become a member of the International Association of Lay Marists of Champagnat,* promoting its purposes, developing its activities, and ensuring the life of the Association, which includes its financial support.

216. The implications **for the International Association of Lay Marists of Champagnat** would be:

a) *To accompany the Marist life of its members*, offering the possibility of regular and systematic personal accompaniment for specific life situations, as well as institutional accompaniment through existing animation teams.

b) *To facilitate spaces of fraternal life and communion*, which includes communicating the life of the Association and the Institute of the Brothers, encouraging the participation of its members in Marist life in their local contexts, in the territorial area to which they belong and at the global level. For this, it is necessary to ensure good communication in relation to the life of the Association and the various initiatives it promotes.

c) *To propose ongoing formation processes,* convening opportunities for personal and spiritual grow-



th, times of prayer and celebration, and facilitating participation in formation initiatives in Marist charism and history.

d) *To facilitate opportunities for participation in the mission,* enabling individuals to feel an active part in the institutional Marist mission, according to their capacities, availability and personal circumstances.

e) *To enrol the person in the register of members* of the Association, ensuring that they can develop their life project in accordance with the commitment made in the promise of fidelity to the charism.

5.4 ACCEPTANCE OF THE PLEDGE AND ADMISSION TO THE ASSOCIATION PRELIMINARIES

217. Once the person has completed the deepening and discernment phase within the formation process promoted by the Association, and is ready to publicly express their promise of fidelity to the charism, the person (or persons) responsible for formation and accompaniment informs of **the final steps of the process**: the celebration, the implications, the official documentation necessary for admission and any other aspects that are deemed appropriate.

218. As a step towards making the public promise of fidelity to the charism, it is suggested to make a final **retreat** to review all that has been lived and personali-

ze the commitment. As a proposal for this experience, it is suggested that the individual **update or assess their personal life plan**, in a prayerful atmosphere and in the context of the step to be taken.

219. Before making the promise, the person makes a **request**, through those responsible for formation and accompaniment, to the person responsible for the animation and governance of the Association. They also complete the necessary documentation so that the responsible persons can study the request.

220. After **approval by the person responsible** for the animation and governance of the Association and their council, arrangements are made to organize the celebration of the promise of fidelity to the charism for this individual and for those who may be in a similar situation, to be made together.

THE CELEBRATION

221. The **celebration of the promise** of fidelity to the charism will preferably take place **during the Eucharist**, with the presence of a legal representative of the Association, who will have the **authority to accept and endorse this vocation** in the name of the Church.

222. It is advisable that the celebration be prepared by the people who will make the promise, in coordina-

tion with the team responsible for the process. The **presence of the** Marist **community** in which these people share life and faith is essential to give it the full **sense of ecclesial** commitment.

223. During this celebration, special attention will be paid to the most relevant moments, as well as to the symbolic dimension, which connects with the experience being celebrated as a community. The imposition **of a cross, with some Marist motif** is suggested as a **symbol of the promise**. We will need to move towards a common global symbol, inspired by the one already used by some lay Marists in current celebrations of attachment to the charism.

OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS

224. Both in the process prior to admission to the promise, and in the subsequent period of membership of the Association, it is necessary to maintain an **adequate registration**, including the relevant and necessary information to guarantee the privacy of the requested data and access to it by those responsible for the animation and governance of the Association.

225. Some of the **information that should be maintained** would be: the person's application explaining their motivations for making the promise; personal in-

formation with a simple list of experiences and Marist formation received; a report of the formation and accompaniment team responsible for the formation; and a document approving the request by the Association's animation and government team.

226. The **registration process** for individuals who make the promise of fidelity to the charism and membership of the International Association of Lay Marists of Champagnat **is important** for ensuring reliable knowledge of who are members, adequate subsequent accompaniment of these individuals, appropriate communication and connection between them and fostering a sense of belonging.

DURATION OF THE PROMISE

227. Subject to any conditions that may derive from the process of canonical approval of the Association, **it is proposed that the promise of fidelity to the charism be made, initially, for a period of three years.** After this period, it may be renewed for another three years and, subsequently, on a permanent and definitive basis. In any case, each person will discern their decision in dialogue with those responsible for formation and accompaniment, or for animation and governance.

228. At the end of the second renewal period, it is

important to **implement a simple process of accompanied discernment to assist in deciding** between the following possible options: whether to renew permanently or to terminate without renewing again.

TERMINATION OF THE COMMITMENT MADE IN THE PROMISE AND OF MEMBERSHIP IN THE ASSOCIATION

229. A person who has made or renewed the promise of fidelity to the Marist charism may end the commitments and options they have made for various **reasons**: making a personal request for whatever reasons they consider appropriate; not actually participating in the Marist community or not living the commitments made in that option; not renewing the temporary promise, which automatically ends their commitment; or being, directly or indirectly, involved in actions that are not in keeping with the values and principles of the Association.

230. In any case, it is advisable to **offer a process of accompanied discernment** for any of the situations listed above, by a member of the formation and accompaniment team or by a member of the animation and governance team. For this, a simple process of termination and leaving the Association will be offered, always respecting the person's free will.

231. The objective of these processes of accompanied discernment is to **help the person and the community** to live this moment of termination in the best possible way. It is also important that the person be able to confirm or reject their option and decide how to situate themselves in the charismatic family from their new perspective.

232. If the result of this accompaniment confirms the termination of the commitment, the appropriate steps are taken to **notify** the appropriate authorities and record this in the documentation and **records**.

233. The Association's statutes must include the grounds and procedures for conducting a process of **expulsion** from the Association.

5.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter outlines the public sign by which Lay Marists of Champagnat publicly express their commitment to the Marist charism. Renamed "promise of fidelity to the charism" for clarity, this commitment is a free and mature response to God's call, expressed in a public celebration within the Marist community. Those who feel called to take this step are baptized adults active in Marist life, who undergo a process of vocational discernment before making the promise. The commitment, symbolized by a

cross, reinforces personal faith, community participation and charismatic vitality. This public sign requires formal approval, with a duration of three years, renewable once more until permanent commitment. The situations of termination of the commitment and leaving the Association are also noted.

6. ORGANISATION OF OUR ASSOCIATION

234. This chapter will address aspects related to the **organisation of the association**. The perspective offered is the one that, to date, enjoys the greatest consensus and clarity. Some aspects of this organisation will be detailed when the Statutes of the International Association of Lay Maristes of Champagnat are drafted.



235. References to organisation, leadership, governance and sustainability are necessary for the Association to have greater **vitality**, greater **capacity to develop initiatives** and accompany processes, to be able to **respond to the needs** of the mission, to **empower** its members and to establish **networks and connections** with other individuals and institutions.

236. A fundamental aspect of its organisation will be its **relationship with the Institute of the Marist Brothers**,

which will require dialogue, agreements and mutual collaboration, in communion and co-responsibility.

6.1 ASSOCIATIVE ORGANISATION

237. The International Association of Lay Marists of Champagnat will be organised in **territorial areas**[62] **of state**, **interstate** or **continental** character**.** For each of these entities, for operational purposes and with due respect for the lay situation, a study will be made as to whether canonical recognition is sufficient or whether civil recognition is necessary, or both, in accordance with local laws.

238. These territorial areas shall be **recognized and approved** by the Association's **government**, as provided for in its Statutes.

239. Each approved and established territorial area will have **organisational and operational autonomy**, safeguarding **unity** regarding the **purposes** of the international entity, and promoting collaboration and cooperation among all the existing territorial areas.

240. In each existing territorial area, **organisational**

[62] This denomination will be used as long as it is not decided what to call these territorial divisions (we will try to find an alternative to the terminology proper to the Institute: Provinces, Vice-Provinces, Districts...), not having to coincide with the way the Institute of the Marist Brothers is organised. As an example, they could be called *Sectors*. The definitive denomination will be considered in the Statutes of the Association.

and operational regulations appropriate to the specific circumstances of each will be approved. In all cases, it will consider some basic criteria as indicated in the Association's Statutes.

241. In each territorial area, the members of the Association will organize themselves into local **bases of community life** with a diversity of forms and expressions.

242. All of these bases of community life and their members **will group together and coordinate** actions in the corresponding territorial area.

243. At the international level, the **creation of** state, interstate or continental **entities shall be coordinated** to enable the development of the purposes and activities set forth in the statutes of the International Association.

244. These state, interstate or continental entities that may be created will adopt the **legal form** that best suits the **legislation where they are created**, and may be under the **'umbrella'**, that is, **linked to the International Association.** From this 'international umbrella' orientations will be offered to guarantee the existence of common criteria in the different realities where Lay Marists of Champagnat exist or may exist.

245. Entities at state, interstate or continental level will have different **names adapted** to the legislation of the countries in which they are created. Different paths of recognition will be followed depending on whether or not there are agreements between the states and the Holy See.

6.2 GOVERNANCE

246. **At all levels** (global, territorial, local) there will be some type of **representative body for deliberation, discernment and decision-making** on the major lines of action in the chosen format. This body would be an assembly of representatives or delegates, which would act as the highest authority. From each assembly (global, territorial, local) would emerge the different organs of animation and governance at each level.

247. The organisation will have an **organ of animation and governance** at the international level.[63]

248. In developing the Association's statutes and future regulations, some practical issues regarding this global organ of animation and government will need to be considered:

- Who could constitute it.
- How it is constituted: procedure and election systems.

[63] The name of this organ of animation and governance must be decided. As a first suggestion, the possibility of a symbolic name is suggested: *Global Table*.

- Functions and powers.
- Frequency of mandates.
- Whether or not there is some type of territorial representation and how it is implemented.
- Single-member bodies of other nature.
- Others such as executive or management committees, administration, secretariat.



249. Each existing **territorial area** shall have its **own governing body.**[64]

250. The statutes of the International Association shall establish **minimum criteria** for the constitution of these territorial governing bodies.

251. For the **election and formation of** each territorial governing body shall take into account the provisions of the regulations of organisation and operation of the territorial area.

252. In any case, the person acting as coordinator or

[64] Similar to the overall leadership and governance body, it could be called, symbolically, *the Sectorial Committee.*

facilitator of this governing body shall be appointed by the global governing body, according to the criteria appearing in its statutes.

253. The development of the statutes and other regulations of the Association shall consider some practical issues regarding this territorial animation and governing body similar to those of the global body.

254. In each **base of local community life,** there will be one or more persons who will exercise the service of **coordination and animation**, according to the election procedure set forth in the regulations of organisation and operation of the territorial area.

255. The persons who provide the **service of animation and governance** will adopt a synodal, servant and prophetic style of leadership, promoting team building in all areas of animation of life and mission, as well as in management and governance.

6.3 FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

256. The viability and vitality of the Association, both internationally and in the relevant territorial areas, will require **sources of financing** that allow for its **sustainability and the promotion of its purposes.**

257. From an economic and financial perspective,

the Association and its various territorial entities will always be **non-profit entities.**

258. The Association, as well as each territorial area, may have **assets in different forms**: cash, in-kind, movable or immovable property, or other assets that comply with the law and internal codes of ethics.

259. The **sources of funding** will be as follows:

- Dues and periodic contributions of its members, as provided for in the organisational and operational regulations.
- The receipt of donations, contributions, bequests or other private donations.
- The generation of funds through any projects that may be created.
- Obtaining funds through public grants, events and activities, patronage or other means.
- Contributions from the Institute of the Marist Brothers in agreement with its management and governing bodies.

260. At the level of each territorial area, the best way for **members** to make **periodic contributions to** support of the life of the entity and the activities that promote its own purposes **shall be discerned**.

261. The organisational and operating regulations will address **how the global entity is supported**, with the

contribution from each territorial area based on criteria of equity and the socio-economic situation of each location where there are members of the Association.

262. **Transactions** (acquisition, exchange, sales, etc.) involving any type **assets** of the Association must be carried out in accordance with **established standards**, consistent with Canon Law and the legislation of the countries where the territorial divisions of the Association are located.

263. **Criteria** based on ethics, transparency, subsidiarity, solidarity, autonomy, viability and equity will be taken into account in the management of assets.

6.4 CONNECTION WITH THE INSTITUTE OF THE MARIST BROTHERS

264. The International Association of Lay Marists of Champagnat and the Institute of the Marist Brothers will establish **guidelines and lines of action between both institutions and their members**, to promote the vitality and future of the Marist charism, **in communion and co-responsibility**, at all levels.

265. Some **initiatives** that would enable this principle of communion and co-responsibility could include:

a. Mutual collaboration in mission works that already exist or that may be created in the future.

b. Times for joint formation, with opportunities to deepen our common Marist vocation, spirituality and experience of fraternity.
c. The participation of brothers and lay Marists in shared communities for life and mission, and which keep alive the charism in places of Marist presence.
d. Joint ecclesial presence in areas related to vocation promotion, education, pastoral care of children and youth, and solidarity.
e. Shared assemblies at all levels (international, territorial, local) for common research and reflection on Marist life and mission.
f. Others that help the purposes of the Association and the Institute.

266. Regarding the governance of the International Association of Lay Marists of Champagnat, the **Superior General** of the Institute of the Marist Brothers is the highest authority of the Association, as indicated in the Code of Canon Law.[65] His specific powers, those proper to the global organ of animation and governance, and their mutual relations will be considered in the statutes of the Association.

267. It will be necessary to establish **links of communion** between the Association's coordinating and governing bodies in the different **territorial areas** with the Superiors of the different **Administrative Units** of the Institute.

[65] CIC 303

268. We believe it is necessary that, until official recognition of the Association exists, there should be a **period of transition**, *ad experimentum*, with the support of the Institute of the Marist Brothers, during which the spirit of this future Association could be lived out. This would mean moving toward real autonomy in its organisation and operation.

CONCLUSION

This chapter outlines the organisational structure of the International Association of Lay Marists of Champagnat, focusing on governance, sustainability and its relationship with the Institute of the Marist Brothers. The Association will be organized into autonomous territorial areas, while maintaining unity in life, mission and collaboration. Governance will involve representative bodies at global,



territorial and local levels, ensuring participation and leadership in a synodal style. Financial sustainability will be based on membership contributions, donations and other sources of funding. The Association will maintain a close connection with the Institute of the Marist Brothers, promoting shared paths of mission, formation and co-responsibility. A transition period is suggested for its gradual establishment and recognition.



7. TOPICS FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION AND DISCERNMENT

269. Now that the International Forum on the Lay Marist Vocation has concluded, the themes presented in this document are those on which there has been the greatest clarity and broad consensus.

270. In the shared conversations and reflections, some topics have also emerged that require further exploration and discernment, in greater depth and breadth, or that require further development. We believe that this reflection is not exclusive to the area of Marist Laity but must be shared and addressed with other areas of the Marist Institute, such as Mission, Management and Governance, both globally and locally.



271. These topics are listed below:

1) The **existence and nature of future civil entities** (at the international, national or local levels), as well as different **forms of membership or types of** members, formative paths that will be required or different expressions of some kind of commitment.
2) The **forms of interaction and interconnection between the** canonically recognized **International Association and those of a civil nature** that may be created subsequently.
3) A better understanding and scope of the **term charismatic family**, as well as the different ways of being part of it and existing within it.
4) The visible recognition of **people** who live the **shared mission** with a **high degree of commitment**, even if they do not feel called to express a public promise or be part of some community organisation.
5) The presence and commitment of **people** from **other spiritual or religious traditions**.
6) The need to create a **document or guide on formation and accompaniment**, inspired by Being a Lay Marist, that addresses each stage of the formation process, from the initial moments of invitation and discovery to those of deepening and discernment, as well as those of ongoing care and cultivation of the vocation after some people make a promise of fidelity to the charism.

8. GLOSSARY

In this last section, we provide a list of different terms and expressions that have been especially significant during the process of the International Forum on the Lay Marist Vocation. Without intending to be exhaustive, to offer a final word or to provide doctrinal definitions, we hope this will help you better understand some of the key words of this document and offer insight into the understanding of some of them.

This will also be helped by the work that was done by the Secretariat of the Laity a few years ago, with what was called the "lexicon project"[66] , which is available on the Institute's web page.

The order in which these terms appear is not alphabetical, but they have been grouped by thematic blocks to help to understand them in a connected way.

1) ASSOCIATION

An entity formed by a group of people who join together for the pursuit of a common purpose on a stable basis. The association is normally endowed with legal personality, so that, from the moment of its foundation, it has an identity distinct from the members themselves

[66] https://champagnat.org/en/to-be-marist/laity/lexicon-project/



and holds the assets originally endowed by them, which it can use to pursue the purposes set forth in its bylaws.

Depending on the civil and/or ecclesiastical legislation, it can adopt different modalities and forms of operation. In general, and for a better understanding of the terminology used in this document, we distinguish between canonical associations and civil associations.

2) CANONICAL ASSOCIATION[67]

The Code of Canon Law states that *"there are associations distinct from institutes of consecrated life and societies of apostolic life; in these associations the Christian faithful, whether clerics, lay persons, or clerics and lay persons together, strive in a common endeavour to foster a more perfect life, to promote public worship or Christian doctrine, or to exercise other works of the apostolate such as initiatives of evangelization, works of piety*

[67] CIC (Can. 298-329)

or charity, and those which animate the temporal order with a Christian spirit."[68]

Among the different forms of canonical association are private associations of the faithful and public associations of the faithful.

A *private association of the faithful*[69] is one established by private agreement among a group of the faithful. These associations are directed and governed by the faithful according to the provisions of their statutes. They may acquire juridical personality if their statutes are approved by ecclesiastical authority. It is the responsibility of the latter, while respecting the autonomy proper to private associations, to oversee and ensure that the exercise of the apostolate is directed toward the common good.

A *public association of the faithful*[70] is one established by the competent ecclesiastical authority. By the same decree by which it is established, it is constituted as a juridical person and receives, as necessary, the mission to work for the ends that the association intends to achieve in the name of the Church. The Holy See is the competent authority for the establishment of universal and international associations. For national associations the authority is the Episcopal Conference, and for dioce-

[68] CIC 298.1
[69] CIC (Cann. 321-326)
[70] CIC (Cann. 312-320)

san associations it is the diocesan Bishop. The statutes of every public association, as well as their revision or change, need the approval of the ecclesiastical authority responsible for their establishment. In non-clerical associations, lay persons may serve as president.

Public associations of the faithful whose members, living in the world and participating in the spirit of a religious institute, dedicating themselves to the apostolate and seeking Christian perfection under the higher direction of that institute, are called third orders, or by some other appropriate name.[71]

3) CIVIL ASSOCIATION

A private, non-profit entity with full legal personality, formed by individuals for the fulfillment of cultural, educational, educational, sports, or similar purposes, in order to promote among its members and/or third parties some type of activity consistent with its purposes. In short, it is a private legal entity, constituted by a group of individuals who, with the due authorization of the State where it is located, join together to carry out activities that serve the common good. Their distinguishing characteristic is that they do not pursue commercial or economic gain. For this reason, they are also commonly referred to as *non-profit civil entities*.

[71] CIC 303

4) CHARISM

The origins of the term charism are found in the Pauline texts of the New Testament, in the word *charis* (χαρις), which means "gift" or "grace." Different people receive special gifts from the Spirit, in order to build up and renew the Church.[72]

The contemporary understanding is that of Lumen Gentium 12: *"The Holy Spirit not only sanctifies and leads the people of God and enriches it with virtues, but, "allotting his gifts to everyone according as He wills,(114) He distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank. By these gifts He makes them fit and ready to undertake the various tasks and offices which contribute toward the renewal and building up of the Church, according to the words of the Apostle: "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to everyone for profit".(115) These charisms, whether they be the more outstanding or the more simple and widely diffused, are to be received with thanksgiving and consolation for they are perfectly suited to and useful for the needs of the Church. Extraordinary gifts are not to be sought after, nor are the fruits of apostolic labour to be presumptuously expected from their use; but judgment as to their genuinity and proper use belongs to those who are appointed leaders in the Church, to whose special competence it belongs, not indeed to extinguish the Spirit, but to test all things and hold fast to that which is good (cf. 1 Thess 5:12 and 19-21).*

[72] Rom 12:3-8; 1 Cor 12:4-11; Eph 4:7-16.

It is precisely this Pauline understanding of the term charism that has influenced recent thinking in the Church, at a time when the term has been increasingly used in recent decades. This has led to the recognition of a great diversity and richness through which people can know God and participate in Christian apostolates as a loving response to God.

In *Christifideles Laici*, Pope John Paul II put it this way: *"The Holy Spirit, while bestowing diverse ministries in Church communion, enriches it still further with particular gifts or promptings of grace, called charisms. These can take a great variety of forms, both as a manifestation of the absolute freedom of the Spirit who abundantly supplies them, and as a response to the varied needs of the Church in history."* (ChL 24)

The founding charisms and the charismatic traditions that followed them are ways of living and expressing the Christian faith in a real-world context: in specific people, in a specific place and time. They are dynamic phenomena, adapting and renewing themselves according to time and circumstances, as the Spirit continues to give life to the spiritual families that were founded with them.

Vita Consecrata, in its number *37,* used the term "creative fidelity" to describe the sense in which a group that has its origins in a specific charism needs not only to have faith in its founding time but also to read and respond to the signs of the present time.

5) MARIST CHARISM

Within the life of the Church, one way of living and developing a charism is through the charism of a Founder and/or the Institute founded by them. The Marist charism is, therefore, a gift freely given by the Holy Spirit to Marcellin Champagnat and the first Brothers, for the good of the Church and the world.[73]

In summary, the personal gift (charism) bequeathed by Marcellin Champagnat and, consequently, the essential features that characterize the Marist charism, are expressed in a Jesus-centred *spirituality* that is Marian and apostolic; in the *fraternity* that is expressed in the spirit of family and shared life in community; and in the *mission* of "making Jesus Christ known and loved" in the midst of poor children and young people, through education and evangelization.

6) VOCATION

Defining terms like vocation, Marist vocation, lay vocation, and so on often involves nuances, perspectives and even diverse theological understandings.

In some contexts, vocation is often spoken of as something a person *has* or *does not have*, as if it were a

[73] Br. Seán Sammon. *Making Jesus known and loved*, p. 26-29

possession. Or as something that comes from God but is imposed from outside the person's reality. Rather, we should move towards an understanding of vocation as something that shapes us as persons with a life project that is constantly evolving, and we would then say that *we are vocation* in a *dynamic sense*.

We start from the conviction that every person is called to life, to live it with dignity and meaning. That we are all called to fullness, to unfold our full humanity, to develop a life project, to integrate all dimensions of being, which therefore includes the experience of transcendence and the spiritual dimension. In other words, *every person is a vocation.*

It must be taken into account that the circumstances in which a person lives and grows, their economic and social possibilities, their cultural and social reality, their family experience, their education, their religious tradition, and many other factors significantly influence their awareness of this vocation.

From a believer's perspective, we could say that every vocation is a gift, a present, an initiative or call from God. From within the human heart, taking into account all the person's capacities and frailties, God sows the yearning to discover his presence in people and in the events of history, and impels him or her to mission. And, at a given moment, the person discovers that Presence and res-

ponds from their freedom to that call, which is personal and unique.

In the context of the Church, this understanding of vocation implies that the person carries out a process of listening, of real, concrete and accompanied discernment, and with a clearly communal focus.

7) LAY VOCATION

The use of the term *layperson* in relation to the Christian vocation is somewhat confusing for many people. Beyond the awareness a person may have upon receiving Baptism, every baptized person is part of the People of God and, therefore, their vocation is that of a lay person. All other vocations (ministerial priesthood, religious life) must be understood in terms of the first and not the other way around. What we can see is that, throughout the centuries, there has been a tendency in the Church to consider the lay people *of a lesser category* than ordained ministers or members of religious life.

For this reason, it is still very necessary to reflect on the importance of the *Second Vatican Council* and the fundamental change it brought about in this understanding and *revaluation of the lay vocation.* As number 9 of *Christifideles Laici* states: *" In giving a response to the question "Who are the lay faithful", the Council went beyond previous interpretations which were pre-*

dominantly negative. Instead it opened itself to a decidedly positive vision and displayed a basic intention of asserting the full belonging of the lay faithful to the Church and to its mystery. At the same time it insisted on the unique character of their vocation, which is in a special way to "seek the Kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and ordering them according to the plan of God." "The term 'lay faithful' we read in the Constitution on the Church, Lumen Gentium, is here understood to mean all the faithful except those in Holy Orders and those who belong to a religious state sanctioned by the Church. Through Baptism the lay faithful are made one body with Christ and are established among the People of God. They are in their own way made sharers in the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ. They carry out their own part in the mission of the whole Christian people with respect to the Church and the world" (LG 31)".

As a result of a sociological and inherited Christianity, or the influence of clericalism rather than personalization, many of the baptized have not developed an awareness that has led them to live their Baptism as a vocation for a mission in the world and in the Church. Hence, in local churches, ecclesial movements, congregations and religious institutes, paths have been proposed to deepen this experience, helping many Christians to *give a reason for their hope* (1 Pet. 3:15). This has led many of the baptized to make journeys of growth in their faith, in their

faith and vocational choices, in processes that involve discernment.

Whatever the path of each baptized person, it is certain that being baptized implies the lay condition.

8) MARIST VOCATION

The Marist vocation implies a life integrated around the charism, according to the tradition of Marcellin Champagnat. This integrated vocation is often achieved through the call to some specific aspects of the charism (through mission, spirituality, community), but it acquires full meaning when the whole charismatic expression permeates one's life. This charismatic vocation, as the tradition of the Church teaches us, is discerned in an accompanied way and is expressed in a joyful public recognition of that life that wants to be transparent.

Thus, when we speak of Marist vocation, the vocation of religious brothers, the lay vocation or the lay Marist vocation, it will never be in a way that excludes those who do not express it in a certain way.

9) LAY MARIST VOCATION

When in our Marist documents we have spoken of the *vocation of the lay (Marists),* we have tried to define a group of people with a term that would include all the

members of the Church, excluding ordained ministers and members of religious life.

This has led to a process of reflection, trying to find a better way of expressing what has been called until now *lay Marists (with a vocation)*, an expression that, at times, would imply that there are lay people (Marists) *without a vocation.* Therefore, the effort made in this process of the International Forum on the Lay Marist Vocation has led to the development of a section on the diverse ways of relating to the Marist charism and of being part of the charismatic family .[74]

This is why, in addition to a name, it will be key to describe the fundamental experience behind the name.

For this reason, it is decided to identify the *Lay Marists of Champagnat* as *those people who live their lay vocation as a call from God to live their life project and follow Jesus in the style of Mary and Champagnat, who*

[74] This does not exclude other lay Marists who collaborate in the Marist mission. In the present context of the Marist Institute we know that there are more than 70,000 lay men and women committed to the Marist mission. They come from different religious and spiritual backgrounds and experiences, but their first commitment is to the task they perform at the service of the mission. They do not intend to live their life project inspired by the Marist charism, even though they may feel deeply committed. Within this group there is a group of lay people who, in addition to contributing to the Marist mission, have found in the Marist charism their inspiration for living their life project and their baptismal vocation. There are others who are part of this last group and are not directly involved in the mission of a Marist work but come from other experiences of relationship with the charism. They too have found in the Marist charism a way to live their Christian vocation. These are the ones who have been called up to now *vocational lay Marists*.

undertake a journey of accompanied discernment and who respond consciously, freely and intentionally, from the living of each and every one of the features of the Marist charism: mission, shared life and spirituality. They express this option by making a promise of fidelity to the charism, becoming part of the International Association of Lay Marists of Champagnat, which receives their public commitment.

10) LAY COMMUNITY

Community is a term used in very different contexts to express very different realities, but always with a common denominator: the grouping of people with some common objectives. From the perspective of Christian life, the Kingdom of God is proposed as a fraternity of children of the same Father - Abba. This experience, since the beginning of the Church, is not lived alone. Living the faith requires, therefore, fraternal life and community experience.

In our ecclesial and Marist contexts, to speak of the word community is very often associated with religious life. Its concrete form has been, since its origins, *life in common*, which implies, among other things, sharing the same roof or possessions.

In other expressions of Christian life and vocation, such as lay life, there is also a call to live in community.

From the beginnings of Christianity we have evidence of the existence of Christian communities formed mainly by lay people, who shared life and faith without the need to live in the same house.

A community is thus the embodiment of Christian fraternity in mission. It differs from a work team, a reflection group, a prayer group... although a community can encompass all these aspects. The Mendes International Mission Assembly, in 2007, affirmed this clearly:

" We are called to work together in radical ways to announce God´s Kingdom to children and young people, especially the marginalised, promoting opportunity for sharing life and living mixed community life (...)

As Marist Brothers and Lay Marists in partnership we affirm that evangelization is the focus and priority of our ministries. Each ministry proclaims Jesus and his message. Therefore we feel called by God to be courageous in creating Marist communities of life that visibly and effectively evangelise through their family spirit and commitment to mission.

As an ecclesial experience, a Christian community must combine the four dimensions proper to the Church: witness, communion, celebration and service. As we harmonize these dimensions, we discover features of every

community experience that will appear with different intensities and tonalities.

In the world of the Marist laity today there are diverse expressions of community life: the Fraternities of the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family, lay communities, communities of shared life with Brothers and a diversity of group expressions focused on encounter, shared spirituality or common mission. The laity live very different realities, so the concrete forms of each community are also diverse. The model of community in which one lives under the same roof and in which goods are put in common opens up as a possibility for some people who feel called to live this experience for a time.

For some time now, the existence of Marist communities in which brothers and laity share life around a mission has been noted. Some have emerged to help in the vocational discernment of young adults; others, for the work of social insertion; others develop projects based on shared life and mission; others promote care and growth in spirituality and charism. There is diversity in terms of length of stay, organisational modalities or ways of belonging. All of them are examples of the community richness generated by people from different states of life.

Therefore, Marist communities with a lay presence offer a renewed setting for Marist life, a framework for the charism that can give a new impetus to the mission.

Lay Marist life generates its own wisdom. Sharing faith in community and reflecting on it strengthens their Christian and Marist vocation. In this sense, lay communities should become formative communities.[75]

11) MARIST COMMUNITIES OF REFERENCE or OF ANIMATION OF THE CHARISM

In several Administrative Units, a project of communities has been promoted which, under different names, are associated with the care and animation of the charismatic dimension of the Marist mission presences, projects or works. With different forms of constitution and organisation, they can be formed by lay Marists and/or Brothers, with a clear and explicit experience of their vocation and the Marist charism.

They are promoted and accompanied from the structures that animate Marist life in the AUs, with a mission to care for, encourage, provide continuity and be a reminder of the Marist charism in the various Marist projects and presences. As Christian communities, their community project makes explicit the different dimensions that constitute the Church itself: communion, service, celebration and witness. They cultivate fraternal life, Marist spirituality and commitment to the mission entrusted to them.

[75] Cfr. GAST 163

The uniqueness of the Marist project around which the community revolves leads to diverse shapes regarding the models of these communities. At the base it is assumed that it should be a Christian community in which faith is lived and celebrated, Marist spirituality is cultivated, and there is a sense of connection to the other communities of reference of the AU. A community that gives continuity and assures the Marist charism in the project. It recalls the same. Moreover, like all Christian communities, it is part of the local Church and collaborates with it.

The Institute is experiencing a time of reflection and initiatives in this regard in some AUs. The meaning and characteristics of these communities are intuited, and for the future of the charism, they will be a reference point for Marist fraternity, spirituality and mission. Life itself will tell us how to constitute them, how to relate to the works of mission, how to link with the AUs, how to introduce formation processes or how to coordinate with other communities. But it is clear that the commitment to a shared future of brothers and laity in Marist life and mission must take into account these communities.

12) CHARISMATIC FAMILY

Charismatic families are groups formed by institutions and groups of believers united by a common founding charism, or the same charismatic root, but with different states and forms of life and with different accentuations of the

same charism: lay people, priests, religious men and women. The strength of the charismatic family comes from the communion among the various institutions and groups, a communion placed at the service of the same mission, which is enriched by the particular charisms of each group.

The founding charism is established as the central point of reference for relationships between consecrated persons and lay people within the charismatic family. The resulting communities share a common charism, but with different existential or vocational projects.

Therefore, the members of a charismatic family recognize themselves as belonging to the same charism of the Founder or Foundress and are united among themselves by fraternity in Christ.

This is how Pope Francis puts it in his Apostolic Letter to all consecrated persons on the occasion of the Year of Consecrated Life in 2014: *"Indeed, around each religious family, every Society of Apostolic Life and every Secular Institute, there is a larger family, a "charismatic family", which includes a number of Institutes which identify with the same charism, and especially lay faithful who feel called, precisely as lay persons, to share in the same charismatic reality".*

In a charismatic family, the care of the charism is a responsibility shared by all its members, with respect to their

own vocation and identity. Participation in the charism, in the different states of life, is a treasure, a gift that the Lord gives us, to be lived as a time of grace. It is a challenge, but also a great opportunity.

" Walking together today, consecrated and lay people, is not a necessity to fill gaps or replace absences, but it is the only true response to a call, to a vocation. What we see today, and which gives us so much hope, is perhaps only a very small part of the possible fruits, of what we will be able to offer the world, and which is realised if there is a climate of trust, of dialogue, of forgiveness. If we commit ourselves in our relationships, not only on a personal level, but among the various components of our own Family and with other Charismatic Families, if we welcome the Holy Spirit who makes us go beyond the wounds of our own histories, something new will come forth, much more beautiful than we can imagine."[76]

As Marists of Champagnat, we welcome the first call of the XXII General Chapter of the Marist Brothers: *"Transform us, Jesus, and send us as a global charismatic family, a beacon of hope in this troubled world"*. We have become increasingly aware that we form a global charismatic family, made up of men and women who, from different vocations and life situations, come into contact with the Marist charism and live its traits in different ways and with diverse manifestations.

[76] https://www.usgroma.org/l/from-i-to-we/

This movement is recognized in the Constitutions and Statutes of the Institute of the Marist Brothers: *"We acknowledge and welcome the many people who are attracted to the Marist charism and who identify themselves as being 'Marist'. This movement of the Spirit unites all Marists of Champagnat into a global charismatic family."* (C. 6)

13) MARISTS OF CHAMPAGNAT

At the first International Marist Mission Assembly, held in Mendes (Brazil) in 2007, this expression was used for the first time, which will give title to one of the chapters of its message: *"Champagnat Marists in Partnership".*

This denomination focuses on several important aspects. It encompasses all people who, in one way or another, identify as *Marists* and feel attracted to their charism, from different states of life: brothers and lay people. It is, therefore, an inclusive term for different vocational expressions. The accent *'Champagnat'* underlines the distinctive way of being Marist, as a specific charism among the other Marists of the Society of Mary.

The General Chapters following MIMA 1, adopted this term in their documents along the lines indicated. And, in the same way, Brothers Emili Turú and Ernesto Sánchez, Superiors General, have addressed most of their messages, communications and circulars, in an inclusive and open manner, to all Marists of Champagnat.

In the revised Constitutions and Statutes of the Institute of the Marist Brothers of year 2020, number 6 recognizes and welcomes *many people who are attracted to our charism and identify themselves as 'Marists' and* expressly alludes to this *movement of the Spirit that unites all Marists of Champagnat in a global charismatic family.*

14) DIVERSITY

The existence of a *great diversity in our charismatic family* is a verifiable and evident reality. This topic has been frequently discussed throughout the process of the International Forum on the Lay Marist Vocation. We have insisted on the importance of *respecting* diversity, and on how to *include and welcome* all people who want to live as Marists, from different cultures and creeds.

This invitation to embrace diversity is not opposed to the recognition of a specific identity or vocation. Respecting and accepting diversity imply recognizing that we are equal in dignity, but not in charismatic vocation. It means that each person can offer a unique and particular response, but it does not mean homogeneity or that the same proposals and paths must be offered to all people equally.

As Pope Francis has so often expressed, we are called to *promote a culture of encounter*[77] , which builds bridges

[77] FT 30, 215, 216, 216, 217, 232.

and opens doors and windows to those who profess a different faith or live in contexts different from our own. By experiencing others in their diversity, we are encouraged to step outside ourselves and to accept and embrace our differences.

In our charismatic family, we share values and traits proper to the Marist charism. In some way, regardless of our religious background, people feel touched by this charism and challenged to live it freely according to the reality from which they come. Therefore, we are called to translate this experience of the Marist charism into our way of embracing ourselves as a human family, respecting and assuming our religious, social and cultural diversity, which is a treasure for humanity, for the Church and for the Marist Institute. Our witness of fraternity, dialogue, solidarity, love and mutual respect makes us *witnesses of the human family we want to build.* As Marists, we support each other in living and respecting Marist values and principles aligned with our religious background, in our contexts of life and mission.

This is why, in our charismatic family there is *room for everyone*, there is *room for* encounter and for the recognition of every way of being and living as Marists.

We have come to the conviction, inspired by Ruah, that it is possible to *harmonize* this experience of welcoming and respecting *diversity* with the *deepening of* one's

own roots and *identity*[78] which, for some people, means publicly expressing their *Christian and Marist vocation*, in religious or lay life.

The proposal that we made in the chapter on the *Formative Paths of Belonging* confirms the respectful welcome of those who come to discover how to live in the Marist style. There are *many points of access*, many and varied ways of *coming into contact with the* Marist *charism*, *common spaces* for sharing life and fraternity.

Following the invitation received, each person makes the decision to delve into the richness of the Marist charism and to make their life project not so much a lifestyle to imitate, but to be Marist, either as a religious brother or as a lay Marist of Champagnat.

15) PROCESS

The term process refers to any dynamic of transformation that takes place in a person over time. This transformation manifests itself in changes of all kinds: physical, psychological, relational, spiritual... In the context of our reflection we refer, fundamentally, to its vocational meaning in the Marist charism.

Thus, we refer to the personal experience of interiorizing the charism and deepening one's vocation as a pro-

[78] EG 79, 102, 144, 235, 251, 253, 268.

cess. In other words, it involves an entire interior journey in following Jesus in the style of Mary, which transforms us. It is a transformation like that of a seed that breaks open, germinates, first in a hidden way, and then visibly, becoming a plant, a bush or a tree. Or like the transformation of the caterpillar into a butterfly.

A vocational process is a completely personal and unique journey. Each person has their own story, their own abilities and limitations, their own dreams, life situations, experiences, changes...

We can contemplate what might happen to us in relation to the charism, the Marist vocation, the lay Marist vocation, and become aware of what this personal process might have been like. Each person can reflect on how you came into contact with the Marist charism, and what it was that you liked, that captivated you or made you fall in love with it. A person who invited you, an experience you had, a way of living and doing things. Along the way you would gradually discover some things that caught your attention, that surprised you, that touched your heart. And, possibly, after a time of coming closer, of first contact, of first 'love', you began to make a journey of discovery, of deeper knowledge, of immersion. If the process continues, it is like an experience of 'diving', which leads you to go deeper and deeper into your own life. And, it may be that, at some point, you become aware that your life is completely new. That your life project as a follower

of Jesus is totally inspired by the charism of Champagnat, and leads you to live the mission, spirituality and fraternity in an integrated and unified way. This life project is developed along a specific vocational path, either as a Marist Brother or as a Lay Marist of Champagnat.

In conclusion, in a vocational process, each person, in a unique and personal way, undergoes a progressive transformation in many areas of their life: personal maturity, experience of God, knowledge of Jesus and his Gospel, capacity to love people, social commitment, sensitivity to the poorest, capacity for discernment, openness to the Spirit and deepening of the Marist charism.

16) FORMATIVE PATHWAY

An pathway (from the Latin *itinerarius*) refers to the direction and description of a path or route, which includes mentions of the places, stops, stages, difficulties or resources that can be found along the way.

From this it follows that the most important aspect of an pathway is the journey that a person must take to reach a place. pathway is comparable to road, route, journey; and whoever follows it is a walker, itinerant, traveller, pilgrim.

An pathway implies movement generated by a motivation and *“always supposes the existence of a starting*

point or initial situation, a path to be followed, in which one passes through different places and situations and, ultimately, a goal. Making a journey takes time, varying in length, depending on the speed, the means used, the stops, the objectives, the obstacles encountered, etc. (...) It is also possible to get lost, change paths or abandon them for various reasons." [79]

The relationship between the pathway and the person is close, because the pathway is designed to be followed by someone giving them the necessary information to complete it. They will follow it according to their own pace and abilities, a journey that each walker will experience as unique, even if others have travelled it before. Accordingly, an pathway should consider the following information: the desired destination, the direction to follow to reach the place (where you are and where to go), description of the road to travel to reach the place (places, stops, accidents, crises, obstacles...), possible means of transportation (on foot, bicycle, horse, vehicle), approximate time that each stage would take and in total, costs, items to take with you or acquire on the way and how to proceed in case of unforeseen events that may arise.

In addition, each person should have some notion of the underlying motivation for undertaking the journey and

[79] ARRIETA, Lola: Itinerarios en la formaciòn. Pistas para el camino del seguimiento de Jesús. Cuadernos de formación permanente Frontera Hegian Nº 56, 2007, Editorial Frontera, Vitoria, Spain.

of their personal characteristics, such as physical and psychological condition, attitudes and aptitudes, personal history and sociocultural context.

From a spiritual perspective, the pathway will be a path of discipleship, of following Christ, of seeking God, in the manner of the apostles and first disciples. This journey, which is carried out in direct relationship with the paths of human existence itself, is travelled with the inspiration and in company of the Holy Spirit.

In a formative pathway that follows these principles, different means are available to help navigate the path: proposed experiences of mission, spirituality or community life, formative readings, times of silence and personal prayer, resources for reflection and discernment, personal accompaniment, signs of passage, symbols, celebrations, etc.

A spiritual pathway, which seeks to live according to the Spirit, necessarily involves relationships with others. Spiritual journeys always take us further, hence the metaphor of moving forward. This is the dynamic of growth: we are born, we grow, we develop, we die. In this forward movement we always identify progress and obstacles. The key to moving forward is to go beyond oneself, beyond one's own coordinates. Forward movement is the dynamic of itinerancy.[80] Life can only be more comple-

[80] ARRIETA, L.: Op. Cit.

te, more fulfilling, to the extent that others can receive this life that is there to be shared, becoming a source of life for others. This is the community dimension of the journey. This is why we can say that spirituality must be expressed concretely in the shaping of life, according to the criteria and example of Jesus, and it must be made visible in everyday life: study, work, relationships, community life, friendships, decisions....

There are various spiritual pathways. For Marists, our pathway should be marked by the following of Jesus in the style of Mary, the first disciple, and of Champagnat and the first Brothers. Our great challenge will be, then, to learn more from them and their spiritual journey so that they can serve us as a reference and witness of how to journey toward Jesus. In a special way, our Marist spirituality highlights the person of Mary. *"Mary inspired in the first Marists a new vision of being Church which was modelled on that of the first Christians. This Marian Church has the heart of a mother: no one is abandoned. A mother believes in the goodness at the core of a person, and forgives readily. We are respectful of each one's personal journey. There is a place for those with doubts and spiritual uncertainty, a place for all. There is listening and dialogue. Challenge and confrontation are done with honesty and openness."*[81]

[81] WR 114

17) ACCOMPANIMENT

Pope Francis affirms in Evangelii Gaudium: *" In a culture paradoxically suffering from anonymity and at the same time obsessed with the details of other people's lives, shamelessly given over to morbid curiosity, the Church must look more closely and sympathetically at others whenever necessary. In our world, ordained ministers and other pastoral workers can make present the fragrance of Christ's closeness and his personal gaze. The Church will have to initiate everyone – priests, religious and laity – into this "art of accompaniment" which teaches us to remove our sandals before the sacred ground of the other (cf. Ex 3:5). The pace of this accompaniment must be steady and reassuring, reflecting our closeness and our compassionate gaze which also heals, liberates and encourages growth in the Christian life.". (EG, 169)*

And our Marist document Water from the Rock states: "*Many of us choose to share our journey of faith with a spiritual companion. This practice is helpful in that it assists us to better discern the presence of the Lord in our day to day life. It also fills the human need of unburdening our hearts, of bringing reality into the perception of our situations, and seeking adequate solutions to problems we often face. Therefore, it is increasingly recognised as a profitable means of human and spiritual development. To be effective, it needs to occur regularly." (WR 85)*

From this ecclesial and Marist perspective, we discover accompaniment as a necessary and fruitful means for those exploring paths of personal, spiritual, vocational and communal growth.

In the context of the formative paths in the lay Marist vocation, we are referring to an accompaniment that is *personal*, *spiritual* and for *vocational discernment*. For this reason, it must contemplate working on personal knowledge and acceptance of one's own history, in tune with inner feelings and motivations, as well as reconciliation and healing of personal wounds. It is spiritual because the central protagonist in this relationship is the Spirit, who is at work in the life and history of each person. Finally, this mediation aims at discerning one's own vocation, the project that God envisions for the person, which places them in a dynamic of vocational search.

Accompaniment is a ministry of the Church that refers to the relationship of help established between two people: the one accompanied and the one who accompanies. The person accompanied finds in the accompanier someone with whom to share the discoveries of their inner life, the challenges of daily life, in order to advance in their following of Christ and the experience of God

From the perspective of Jesus' style of accompaniment on the road to Emmaus, the concept of spiritual accompaniment differs from traditional spiritual direction.

The role of the accompanier is to be a companion on the journey, not to replace the will of the one being accompanied. The accompanier listens, asks questions, suggests and helps process spiritual impulses. He or she is a person who bears witness to their own spiritual journey, the one in which they are most experienced. Therefore, the relationship between accompanier and the one being accompanied implies a different attitude from that of direction, which tends to be directive and hierarchical.

Nor should the mediation of accompaniment be confused with confession, with psychological therapy, a simply friendly and spontaneous conversation, or as a relationship between someone who knows (from above) and someone who does not know (from below).

It is essential that the accompanier be explicitly trained for this task. They must have a deep spiritual life and possess prudence, humility and emotional balance. They must be a person with a vocation, with a disposition for this mission and who is recognized by the institution or community that sends them. They must have skills to listen and conduct a personal interview, to read the signs of the times and to know the depth of people. They will need to cultivate a wisdom that integrates various human and spiritual disciplines: anthropology, psychology, theology, spirituality and pastoral care. In our case, they also need a proven knowledge and experience of Marist history and charism. They perform their service with a

profoundly communitarian sense and themselves live the experience of being accompanied in their own personal and faith journey.

Spiritual accompaniment for discernment involves periodic face-to-face meetings of two people, in a gradual and systematic process, where the Spirit acts in both. The person accompanied and the accompanier dialogue and agree on the times involved in the process, both in the duration of each session and in the total time of accompaniment. In keeping with our present era, it is possible to organize this ministry in new ways, such as online or group accompaniment.

Participants of the Forum (In presence and virtual phases)

Adriano Ramón López Miranda (Cruz del Sur)
Agnes Segovia Reyes (Secretariat of the Laity - East Asia)
Alfredo de Jesús Rodríguez Márquez (México Occidental)
Alida Henri Bodomanitra (Secretariat of the Laity - Madagascar)
Alison Furlan, fms (Brasil Centro-Sul)
Allan J. de Castro, fms (East Asia)
Ana Amalia Gómez Haro (Mediterránea)
Ana Isabel Saborío Jenkins (Secretariat of the Laity - América Central)
Ana María Sarrate Adot (Ibérica)
Ángel Medina Bermúdez, fms (Secretariat Brothers Today)
Augusto Fabiao Mahumane (Southern Africa)
Azucena Ríos (Canada)
Bao Nguyen Viet, fms (District of Asia - MDA)
Barry Burns, fms (Star of the Sea)
Benjamin Consigli, fms (General Council)
Carlos Eduardo Regalado Piedra, fms (Norandina)
Christine Dispa-Lenertz (West Central Europe)
Claudia Aida Rojas Carvajal (Norandina)
Cristiane Italmar Pifano de Moura Ferraz (Brasil Centro-Norte)
Cyril Benora, fms (Star of the Sea)
Damiano Santo Forlani, fms (Mediterránea)
Danai Anagnostopoulou (L'Hermitage)
Daniel Dungey (Star of the Sea)
Edith Villalón Córdoba (Canada)
Eduardo Damiani Pavin (Brasil Sul-Amazônia)
Eladio Díez Sancho (Compostela)
Elias Iwu Odinaka, fms (Secretariat of the Laity - Nigeria)
Elma Rafil (East Asia)
Ernesto Sánchez Barba, fms (Superior General)
Fanny Cano Valenzuela (México Central)
Gilles Lacasse, fms (Canada)
Haingotiana Marie Elia Rakotondranaivo (Madagascar)
Isidro Azpeleta Sebastián, fms (Santa María de los Andes)
Jaime Comabella Callizo, fms (Ibérica)
Jaime Godoy Rivera (Santa María de los Andes)
Jaume Parés Casellas, fms (L'Hermitage)
Javier Salcedo, fms (México Central)
Jessica Bryan (Star of the Sea)
Jiji Dasan, fms (District of Asia - MDA)
João Carlos do Prado, fms (General Council)
João Gabriel Soares Sedrez (Brasil Centro-Sul)
Joarês Pinheiro Sousa, fms (Brasil Centro-Norte)

John Bwanali, fms (Southern Africa)
José María Pérez-Soba Díez del Corral (Ibérica)
Josep Maria Soteras, fms (General Council)
Josmari Aparecida Pauzer (Brasil Centro-Sul)
Juan Carlos Bolaños Viscarra, fms (América Central)
Ken McDonald, fms (General Council)
Lantohery Angelin Rasandratriniaina, fms (Madagascar)
Lindley Sionosa, fms (Secretariat Brothers Today)
Lisardo García Miranda, fms (Compostela)
Luis Carlos Gutiérrez Blanco, fms (Vicario General)
Luiz da Rosa (General House)
Manuel Eduardo Brondo González, fms (México Occidental)
Manuel J. Gómez Cid (Secretariat of the Laity - Mediterránea)
Marcos José Broc (Secretariat of the Laity - Brasil Sul-Amazônia)
Marcos Mercado de Górgolas (América Central)
Marjorie Veronica Rañeses (East Asia)
Mark O'Farrell (Secretariat of the Laity - Star of the Sea)
Matthew Pearce (Star of the Sea)
Maureen Hagan (Usa)
Michael Okutachi, fms (Nigeria)
Mónica León Dorsch (México Occidental)
Narciso Camatti, fms (Brasil Sul-Amazônia)
Nathan Ahearne (Secretariat of the Laity - Star of the Sea)
Nelly Rafanomezana (Madagascar)
Njongai Ivo Leynyuy, fms (West Africa)
Nohemy Pinto de Reyes (América Central)
Nyang Gladys Biy (West Africa)
Óscar Martín Vicario, fms (General Council)
Owen Ormsby, fms (Usa)
Pedro Manuel Chinchilla Sandoval (México Central)
Pedro Marti (Usa)
Pep Buetas Ferrer (L'Hermitage)
Raúl Amaya Rivera (Secretariat of the Laity (Santa María de los Andes)
René Giaretta Oleksinski (Brasil Sul-Amazônia)
Ricardo Palomar (Cruz del Sur)
Rita Silva (Compostela)
Romel Esleyther Quezada Salazar (Norandina)
Sabatino Abbate (Mediterránea)
Salome Ifeoma Nnamani (Nigeria)
Sara Guadalupe Sánchez Vicuña (Santa María de los Andes)
Sylvain Ramandimbiarisoa, fms (General Council)
Targo Aditay Doudou, fms (East Central Africa)
Wolfgang Hacker (West Central Europe)


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"YOUR SONS AND DAUGHTERS WILL PROPHESY" (JOEL 3,1)