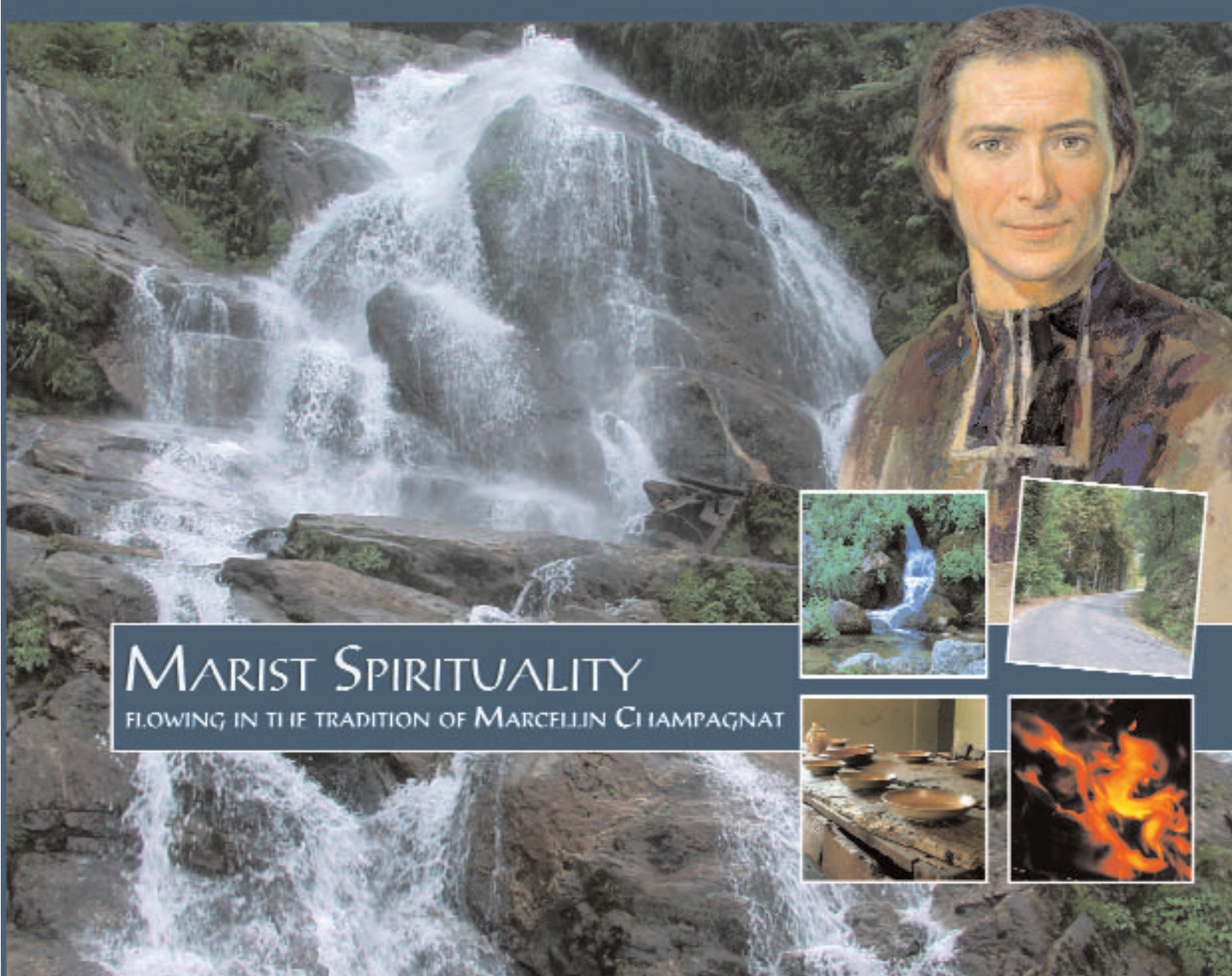
WATER FROM THE ROCK



MARIST SPIRITUALITY

FLOWING IN THE TRADITION OF MARCELLIN CHAMPAGNAT



WATER FROM THE ROCK

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Forward



Dear Brothers and members of the Marist Family...

6 June 2007

Feast of Saint Marcellin

Dear Brothers and members of the Marist Family,

Marcellin Champagnat's first recruits loved him for the elder brother and father that he was. That fact is not surprising since the young priest and his charges shared a great deal in common.

First of all, like the founder himself, Jean-Marie Granjon, the Audras brothers—Jean-Baptiste and Jean-Claude, Antoine Couturier, Barthélemy Badard, Gabriel Rivat, and Jean-Baptise Furet were unpretentious country lads who lived by the work of their hands. Second, for the most part they were initially unlettered. The founder himself had had his share of academic difficulties, and struggled in the seminary due to his lack of preparation.

But the loyalty and dedication of the young men that Marcellin gathered round himself had roots that ran far deeper than similarities in

background or experience. For the founder was a man who had fallen in love with God, and with his help his young recruits eventually did the same. Yes, under his tutelage they grew ever more aware of God's presence and began to rely on Providence.

He advised each of them also to model himself on Mary, knowing that it was a sure way for them to center their lives on the Lord. And so they strove to make her ways their own. Keenly aware of the founder's apostolic nature they mirrored his concern for God's poor and competed with one another to be of service to them.



In time their way of living the gospel became a reflection of the character and values of the person who inspired them. Years later so many of them remembered this resolute and courageous man as enthusiastic and practical, willing to take action, and blessed with a humble spirit. Herein lay the source of the simple and down-to-earth spirituality that he so freely shared with them.

That spirituality had at its heart Marcellin's own experience of being loved by Jesus and called by Mary. Along with the other early Marists, he believed she was calling their Society to a renewed way of being Church; at Fourvière they pledged themselves to make that dream a reality.

The spirituality of Marcellin Champagnat and our early brothers has been handed on to us as a precious heritage (C, 49). Made contemporary by each generation it retains its Marial and apostolic dimensions. Our task is to incarnate this spirituality in the many cultures and situations in which the Institute finds itself at the moment.

Our brothers gathered in Chapter in 2001 asked the new General Administration to develop a guide that would make the Marist Apostolic Spirituality of Marcellin Champagnat more accessible to a wider audience. They realized that since the Institute's beginnings this spirituality has had an appeal not only to Marcellin's brothers but to his lay Marists as well. It is my privilege to introduce to you *Water from the Rock: Marist spirituality – flowing in the tradition of Marcellin Champagnat*.

This text is the work of many hands and the fruit of a great deal of consultation. Aware also of the fact that any genuine spirituality is living and dynamic, we need to keep in mind that what is written in these pages is not meant to be the last word on the topic. Rather what appears here is written for our age and time in history.

Though many played an important role in shaping this document and its contents, one group in particular—an international body of brothers, laymen and women, and other Marists—shepherded the project throughout. My thanks to all involved and in a special way to the members of that International Commission: Brother Benito Arbues, FMS, Brother Bernard Beaudin, FMS, Brother Nicholas Fernando, FMS, Sister Vivienne Goldstein, SM, Brother Maurice Goutagny, FMS, Brother Lawrence Ndawala, FMS, Brother Spiridion Ndanga, FMS, Brother Graham Neist, FMS, Bernice Reintjens, Agnes Reyes, Vanderlei Soela, Brother Miguel Angel Santos, FMS, Brother Luis Garcia Sobrado, FMS, and particularly Brother Peter Rodney, FMS, a member of our General Council, who oversaw the group's work.

Marcellin's Marist Apostolic Spirituality is a living and dynamic experience of God, contemplative and action oriented at the same time.

Transformed by the love of Jesus and called by Mary we are sent on mission, announcing God's *Good News* to those children and young people living on the margins of society.

Thus, the title of this text: *Water from the Rock*. Those who know well the story of Marcellin will recall that he built the Hermitage by hand with rock that he had hewn himself. The water from the Gier, a small river that runs through the Hermitage property, was an important second source of life to the early community. Using the same two images, *Water from the Rock* gives Marcellin's Marist Apostolic Spirituality its central and rightful place in the lives of each of us and all those who come to know and love him as did those early recruits of his so many years ago. May what you read here deepen your understanding and increase your faith.



Blessings and affection,

Brother Seán D. Sammon, FMS
Superior General



VIE

DE JOSEPH BENOÎT-MARCELLIN

CHAMPAGNAT

1789-1840

PRÊTRE

Fondateur de la Société des Petits Frères de Marie

UN DE SES PREMIERS DISCIPLES

(Frère Jean Baptiste)

BIOGRAPHIES

DE QUELQUES FRÈRES

QUI SE SONT DISTINGUÉS PAR LEURS VERTUS

ET L'AMOUR DE LEUR VOCATION



Chroniques de l'Institut des Petits Frères de Marie

AVIS, LEÇONS, SENTENCES

ET INSTRUCTIONS

DU

VÉNÉRABLE PÈRE CHAMPAGNAT

UN DE SES PREMIERS DISCIPLES

nouvelle édition

F. AVIT, Henri Tilloy

Henri Tilloy

ANNALES DE L'INSTITUT

DIVISÉES EN NEUF ÉTAPES

Rédaction commencée en 1881

MANUEL DE PIÉTÉ

PREMIÈRE PARTIE,

PRINCIPES DE LA PERFECTION CHRÉTIENNE ET RELIGIEUSE.

CHAPITRE I.





Introduction

Marist Spirituality.

Landmarks of the development of our spirituality.

How to approach this document.

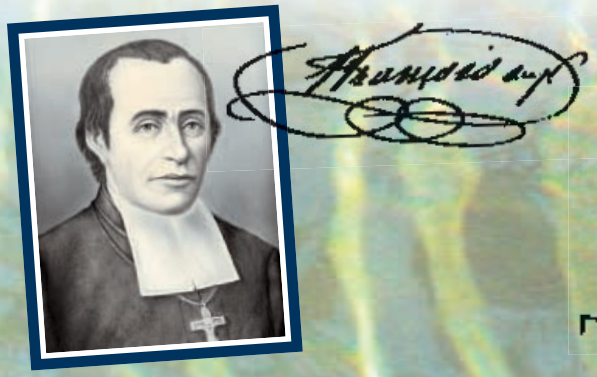
Our mandate

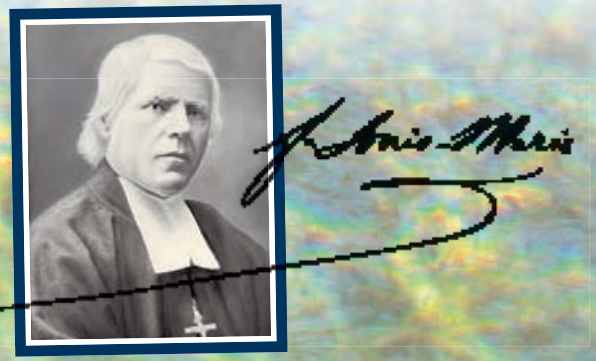
In 2001, the XXth General Chapter of the Marist Brothers requested that reflection on the subject of our spirituality be encouraged and that a document, along the lines of the Marist education document of 1998, be produced.[1] In interpreting this mandate, the General Council saw the text as helping us to reflect upon and deepen our understanding, appreciation and living of Marist spirituality. The text is not meant to be the final word on this spirituality, but rather a statement of how we understand it today. Therefore, it is essential that the document tell the story over time about how our Marist search for God was born, took root, and flourished. It would open up the richness of this spirituality and so better enable us to offer this gift to the Church and the world. It would also promote the growth of our life in faith both personally and in the different human communities in which we find ourselves. The document is intended to help develop a spirituality that is apostolic and Marial in our ministries.

Marist Spirituality

Throughout life, our inner spiritual reality interacts dynamically with the experiences we undergo. On the one hand, what we term our *spirituality* is moulded as we embrace the experiences of our lives. On the other, this spirituality shapes the way we understand and relate to the world, to people and to God.

When we speak of Christian spirituality we refer to that unquenchable fire that burns within, filling us with passion for the building of the Kingdom of God.[2] This becomes the driving force of our lives as we allow the Spirit of Christ to lead us.





Any Christian living this way grows in holiness.[3]

We live out this Christian spirituality in a distinctive *Marial* and *apostolic* way.[4] It is an incarnated spirituality springing up in Marcellin Champagnat*.[5] It developed with the first Brothers who handed it on to us as a precious heritage.[6]

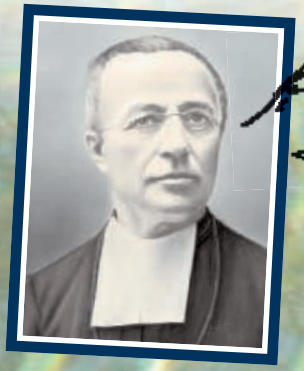
While we share common roots with other Marist* ways of life, we have a particular spirituality. It is continuously renewed through the action of the Spirit, coupled with our personal and community efforts to incarnate it in changing situations and in different cultures.[7] This spirituality strengthens our unity and is a crucial element for the vitality of our life and mission.[8] Therefore, in using the term "Marist" in this document we speak only of those whose spirituality is in the tradition of Marcellin.

Landmarks of the development of our Spirituality

Marcellin was gifted with a profound relationship with Jesus and Mary. Our spirituality began with this gift. Beginning with the early intuition instilled in him by the Spirit, which was influenced by his own personality and the events of his life, he and the first community shaped a charism*. Thanks to their creative fidelity, this charism began to express itself in a spirituality.

At the time of Marcellin's death in 1840, the spirituality was well developed, but not systematised. Soon after, his disciples began to build up a body of texts to describe the spirituality. Significant among them were: *Life of Mar-*





cellin Champagnat (1856), *Our Models in Religion - Biographies of Some Brothers* (1868) *Avis, Leçons, Sentences* (1869): *Chronicles of Br. Avit* (1855).

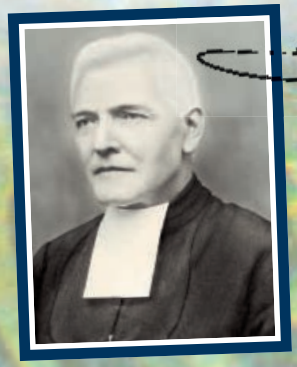
In presenting a contemporary vision of Marist spirituality we are following the example of previous generations. The *Manuel de Piété* (1855) was the first text to crystallize an understanding of the spirituality of Marcellin and of the first generation of Brothers, particularly their way of relating to Jesus and Mary. It illustrated their spirituality with practical examples, focusing on those virtues seen as characteristic of a Marist Brother and necessary for "perfection." Naturally, this work reflected the somewhat austere spiritual climate of the times.

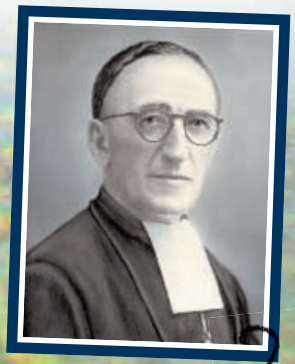
Subsequent Superiors General and General Chapters continued to reflect on how best to live out these virtues in such changing circumstances as the secularization of 1903, two world wars, and various revolutions and persecutions. The signs of the times prompted fresh reflection upon our spirituality and its re-expression to guide our life and mission.

During the XIXth century and the first half of the XXth, an ascetic view of spirituality prevailed in the Church as a whole, including our Institute. Such an approach gave little prominence to the experiential and mystical dimensions of spirituality.

Vatican II* encouraged us to bring these elements to the heart of our spirituality. With the universal call to holiness, both religious and laity enter into the mystery of God, and the mystery of the Church. By doing so, the word "mystical"* recovers its original mean-







ing as a normal Christian way of relating to God. Our present text consciously seeks to incorporate and highlight the mystical dimension in our spirituality. This Council also asked religious institutes to renew themselves according to their founding charism. One consequence of this was that it gave impetus to the systematic study of our patrimony and spiritual heritage.

After the *Manuel de Piété* (1855) the next official Marist text synthesizing our view of spirituality was *Prayer–Apostolate–Community*, the fruit of the XVIIth General Chapter (1976). This document highlighted the integration of the different dimensions of our life. The Superior-General at this time (1967-1985), Br. Basilio Rueda, through extensive and profound writing, enriched our spirituality by re-expressing its charismatic elements within the theological and spiritual currents that flowed from Vatican II. In its revision of the *Constitutions*, the XVIIIth General Chapter (1985) described our spirituality as Marial and apostolic.[9] Since then, Superiors-General and the XIXth and XXth General Chapters (1993 and 2001 respectively) have further developed the meaning and implications of this Marial and apostolic spirituality.[10]

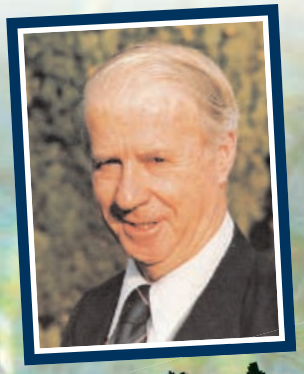
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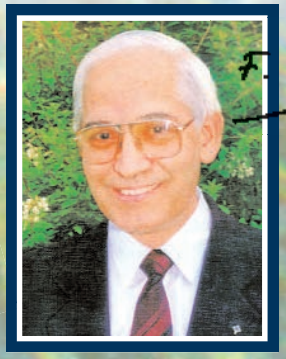
What is new about this text is that it is addressed to both Brothers and Lay Maristes. It reflects a belief that both groups share in the common charism that originated with Marcellin. They live out of the same spirituality, though in different life circumstances.



Writing for these two groups poses challenges in the use of language and images that can apply to both. At the same time, we feel the importance of using familiar terms that are part of our spiritual tradition and heritage. Therefore, we use terms, such as "fraternity" and "community," with a broad meaning. In using the term "community" we have in mind all the communities of which Marists are part: families, religious communities, different forms of educational communities, parishes, etc. Thus we are not restricting this term only to those readers who are Brothers. The terms "brother" and "fraternity" are powerful symbols of a particular style of relating. Generally, they are used, not to apply only to professed Brothers, but to be more inclusive and to describe the relational style of all Marists. Where words have an asterisk (*) you are invited to check the Glossary at the end of the document, where an explanation is provided.

This document comprises five parts. The first part presents the distinctive elements of Marist Apostolic Spirituality, which have their origin in the experience and spirit of Marcellin and our founding community. Using the image of a journey or pilgrimage to describe spiritual development, the subsequent parts portray how our spirituality can be lived out: in our search for God and meaning in our lives (part 2), in our relationships (part 3), and in our apostolic life (part 4). They describe how each of these key dimensions can enrich and develop our spiritual life. The final part directs us to look to the future in hope, inspired by Mary's canticle, the *Magnificat*.[11] Hope enables us to face contemporary challenges with the







courage of Marist saints who have gone before us. We do so with the conviction of being the heirs of a rich spiritual tradition.

For us, the members of the Commission, putting our heritage into words has been a spiritual journey that has blessed each of us. We have spent many hours together, and with other Marists, reflecting on the essential elements of our spirituality, the sources that nourish it, and the ways it integrates the key elements of our lives. We have learnt from each other through reflection grounded in prayer, passionate sharing and respectful listening.

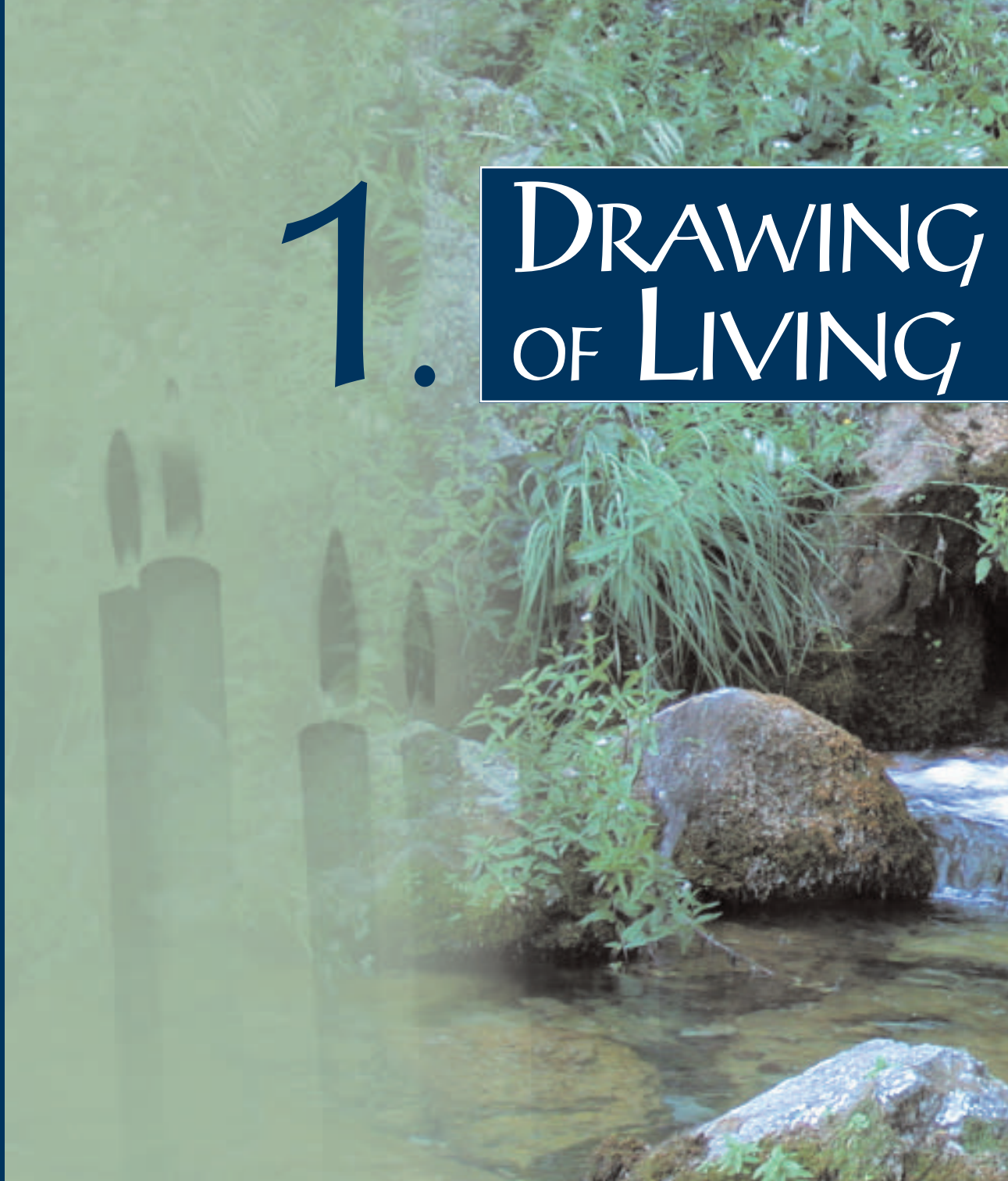
The document is intended, not so much as a text to be read, but as a companion for our spiritual journeys. It is meant to be reflected upon and worked with, not so much because it is a definitive statement of our spirituality, but rather as a point in the development of that spirituality. We invite you to pray with the text. May it help to point us to the Marist way to God, to relationships and mission.

Because of how we were blessed we believe that prayerful reflection on the text is best done with other Marists. At the end of the document we provide some questions to aid the reflection of individuals or groups who might choose to use them.

Our hope is that the document will enrich prayer, provoke reflection and inspire action. May it truly become a path leading us to streams of living water.

International Commission
of Marist Apostolic Spirituality,
Rome.





1. Drawing of Living



FROM STREAMS WATER





Let anyone who is thirsty
come to me and drink.

Streams of living water
will flow from
the believer's heart.

We become
streams of living water.

Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink[12]

1

1. The story of our spirituality is one of passion and compassion, passion for God and compassion for people.

2. Our beginnings were shaped by the caring relationship between a young country priest and a group of young people, living in a time of great social turmoil. The priest was Marcellin Champagnat*; the young people were Jean-Marie Granjon, Jean-Baptiste Audras, Jean-Claude Audras, Antoine Couturier, Barthélemy Badard, Gabriel Rivat, and Jean-Baptiste Furet. They became our founding community at La Valla*.

3. Simple and uneducated men, they lived with great simplicity and unity. Their day was spent in learning how to write, read and teach, and in manual work that sustained them economically. They lived in the midst of the people and shared their lot.

4. Ever more deeply they discovered the presence of God in their midst, and learnt to rely upon Providence. Together they developed a thirst for Jesus and for following him in Mary's way. They developed a love of Mary as a sure way of centring their hearts on Jesus. They competed with each other to help someone in need.

5. Like Mary setting out in haste to the hill country,[13] each week they went out into the surrounding hamlets to make Jesus known and loved. They cared for poor children and welcomed them into their home.[14]

6. The group's way of living the Gospel was a reflection of the character, values, and spirituality of its leader, Marcellin Champagnat. His spirituality was deeply influenced by his own personality. His first disciples remembered with affection the Marcellin they knew: open, frank, resolute, courageous, enthusiastic, constant and equable.[15] His whole life gave witness of a person with a practical disposition, a man of action, and of humility. This enabled him to draw together from various sources a simple and down-to-earth spirituality.[16]

7. Key among the formative influences that shaped his spirituality was Marcellin's personal experience of being loved intensely by Jesus and called by Mary. An incident early in 1823 ("Memorare in the Snow"*) was understood by Marcellin and his Brothers as highly significant. Marcellin and Stanislaus were lost in a snow storm. With his companion unconscious at his feet, Marcellin believed that *if Mary does not come to our aid, we are lost.*[17] Placing his life in God´s hands, he prayed the *Memorare*. His prayer to Mary was miraculously answered. Marcellin and his first Brothers saw in this incident a deeper reality: God 's choice of them to share in the same mission that was entrusted to Mary.





8. Marcellin was also deeply aware of the love of Jesus and Mary for others. This in-



spired in him the passion of an apostle. He dedicated his life to sharing this love. In Marcellin's encounter with the dying young man, Jean-Baptiste Montagne*, we see how disturbed Marcellin was to meet a boy facing the end of his life without knowing the love God had for him.

9. This event was for Marcellin a summons from God. His compassion aroused him to immediately put into action his foundational insight, *We must have Brothers!*[18] The needs of young people and his responding vision for a group of dedicated evangelizers was now confirmed. They would bring the good news of Jesus to people on the margins of church and society. He had been a priest for just four months.

10. Marcellin was responding with dedication and in effective practical ways to the needs that he saw around him. But his response to the needs of his time was also formed by the *Project** shared by the first Marists who dreamed of a renewed way of being Church, to which they pledged themselves at Fourviere*.[19] With Jean-Claude Colin*, Jeanne-Marie Chavoin* and the other 'founding Marists'*, Marcellin shared the conviction that Mary was calling them together to respond to the needs of post-Revolutionary France.

11. The Marists understood their *Project** to be a sharing in Mary's work of bringing Christ-life to birth and being with the Church as it came to be born. It was a work which they hoped would touch every diocese of the world, and would be structured like a multi-branched tree by including lay people, priests, sisters and brothers.

12. The Marist spirituality that originated with Marcellin and the founding community has been enriched by the successive generations of Champagnat's followers. It has now become a stream of living water. Future generations will further enhance this spirituality. With Marcellin, we know that Mary continues to guide its development.[20]

13. We believe the charism* of Marcellin is a gift given to the Church and to the world, a gift which we are being invited to further develop and live by progressively deepening our participation in this





charism*. Our spirituality describes and expresses this charism* as it is incarnated at any particular place and time in history. As with all authentic charisms, it is a grace of the Holy Spirit entrusted to us for the purpose of building and unifying the Church as the Body of Christ.

14. In living our spirituality we find our thirst quenched at the streams of "living water." In turn we become "living water" for others.

Streams of living water will flow from the believer's heart[21]

1

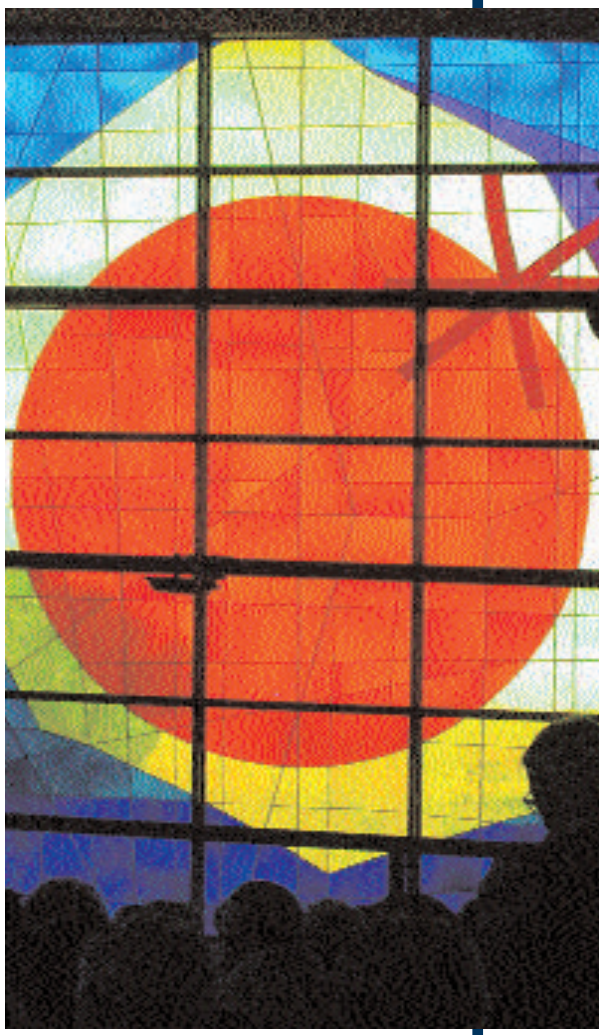
15. We are inspired by the vision and lives of Marcellin and his first disciples as we journey to God. While we share such a pilgrimage with many, we are conscious of our own distinctive style. We are gifted to share in that transforming experience of being, with Mary, loved unconditionally by Jesus. From this flow the particular characteristics of our manner of being followers of Champagnat.

God's presence and love



16. Today, those of us who follow in the footsteps of Marcellin and his first disciples are seized by the same inner dynamism. We develop a way of being, lov-

ing and doing, in the spirit of our origins. Gradually, day by day, we deepen our experience of the loving presence of God within ourselves and in others. This presence of God is a profound experience of being personally loved by God, and the conviction that he is close to us in our daily human experiences.



Trust in God

17. Marcellin's relationship with God, combined with knowledge of his limitations, explains his unbounded confidence in God. The depth of this trust amazed those who worked with him, and scandalized some who judged his actions as reckless. In his humble way, Marcellin saw God at work, and so acted with courage and commitment. *Let us not offend God, asking him very little. The bigger is our demand, the more we will be pleasing to God.*[22] Marcellin's oft-expressed invocations *If the Lord does not build the house*[23] and *You know my God*[24] were the spontaneous expressions of this confident trust.

18. We endeavour to develop our relationship with God so that, just as for Marcellin, it is our daily source of renewed spiritual and apostolic dynamism. This vitality makes us daring, despite our short-comings and limited resources. Drawing from Marcellin's experience we embrace the mysteries of our life with confidence, openness and self-giving.



Love of Jesus and His gospel

1

19. Marcellin taught the first Brothers: *To make Jesus known and loved is the aim of our vocation and the whole purpose of the Institute. If we were to fail in this purpose, our congregation would be useless.*[25] In saying this, Marcellin clearly expressed his conviction, and a growing conviction for Marists today – the centrality of Jesus in our life and mission.[26]

20. For us Jesus is the human face of God.[27] In a privileged way we encounter him in the three special Marist places, where Jesus reveals God to us. [28]

21. *At the Crib we find the innocence, simplicity, gentleness and even weakness of a God who is capable of touching the hardest of hearts. ... There is no room for fear of a God who became a child*.[29] We come to know a God who has pitched his tent in our midst, and whom we call ''brother.''

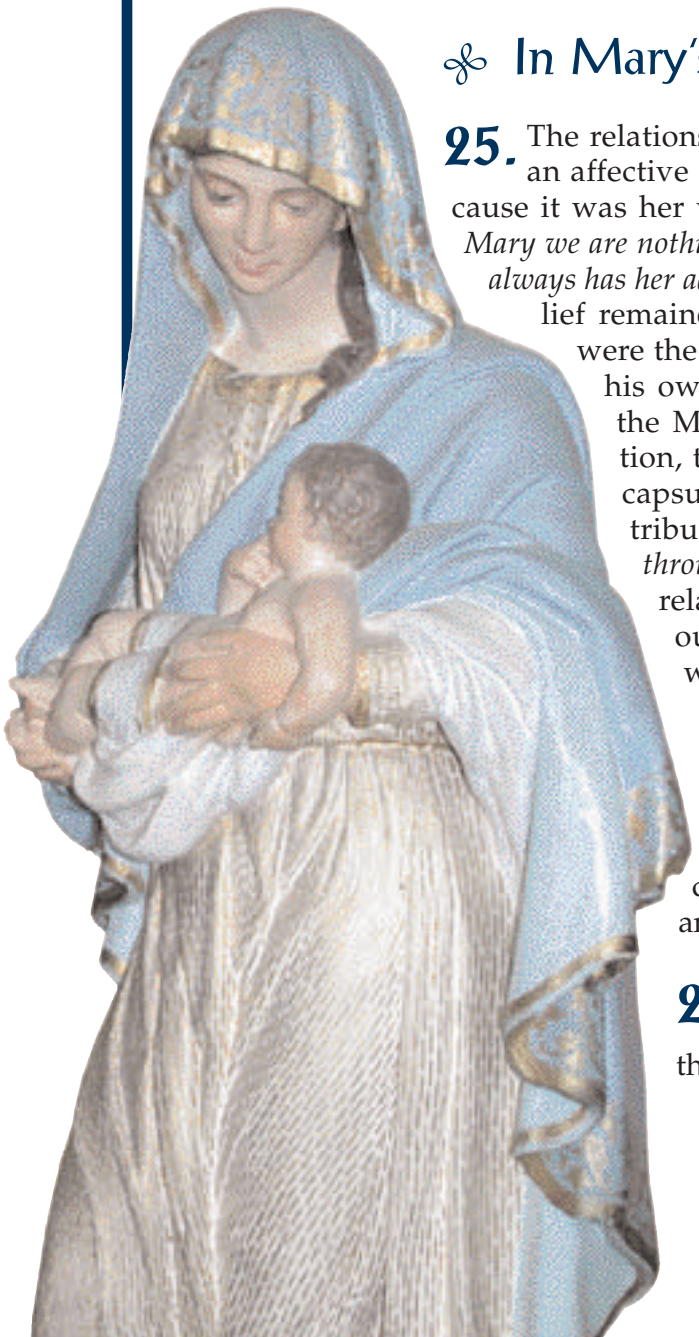
22. At the foot of the Cross, we are in awe of a God who loves us without reserve. We find a God who shares the physical and psychological suffering, betrayal, abandonment and violence experienced by humanity, and transforms these experiences. There we enter the mystery of redemptive suffering and learn humble fidelity in love.[30] The crucified Christ is the sign and deepest expression of a God who is love.

23. At the Altar, the Eucharist, we find a privileged place to enter into communion with the Body of Christ: to stand as one with all who are members and to deepen our relationship with the living presence of Jesus in our lives. The celebration of the Eucharist, and prayer in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, were intense experiences of God for Marcellin.[31] Experiencing the Eucharist as the source and summit of the Christian life leads us to the heart of the Marist's spirituality.



24. These special Marist places, where we encounter the love of Jesus, are also meeting spaces with the poor. [32] At the Crib, we are deeply touched by the situation of poverty and fragility of children and young people, especially the least favoured. At the Cross, we associate ourselves with people affected by failure and suffering, and with those who struggle for bread, justice and peace. At the Altar, we enter into communion with the love of Jesus, which leads us into a deep relationship with the poor. Our hearts go out to them and they become our brothers and sisters, and truly our friends. We open our homes to the poor and we share with them our presence, time and resources.





In Mary's way

25. The relationship of Marcellin to Mary was deeply marked by an affective and total trust in her, as the "Good Mother,"* because it was her work that he undertook. He wrote once: *Without Mary we are nothing and with Mary we have everything, because Mary always has her adorable Son within her arms or in her heart.*[33] This belief remained constant all through his life. Jesus and Mary were the treasure on which Marcellin had learned to place his own heart. This intimate relationship helped shape the Marial dimension of our spirituality. In our tradition, the phrase "Ordinary Resource"* has come to encapsulate our constant reliance on Mary. The motto attributed to Champagnat by his biographer, *All to Jesus through Mary, all to Mary for Jesus,* captures this close relationship between the Son and the Mother and our Founder's attitude of confidence in Mary, which we are invited to live.

26. *We share in the spiritual motherhood of Mary*[34] as we take our part in bringing Christ-life to the world of those whose lives we share. We nurture that life in the ecclesial community, whose communion we strengthen through fervent prayer and generous service.

27. *Our attitudes towards young people find their inspiration in Mary.*[35] In contemplating Mary in the Scriptures we impregnate ourselves with her



spirit. We go without delay into the "hill country" of the lives of young people, bringing them news of the justice and faithful mercy of God.[36] By relating to young people in a Marial manner, we become the face of Mary to them.

28. Since the time of Marcellin, his disciples have made Mary known and loved. Today we continue to be convinced that to follow Jesus in the way of Mary is a privileged way of bringing our Christian journey to fullness. With a heart filled with compassion, we share this experience and conviction with children and youth helping them to experience the maternal face of the Church.



29. Since Marcellin's time the Church has deepened its appreciation of Mary as First Disciple. Marists therefore have a growing relationship with Mary as our Sister in Faith, a woman with dust on her feet,[37] a woman who was disturbed and puzzled by God, who was challenged to trust and give without knowing all the answers, whose faith life was a journey.

Family spirit

30. Marcellin and the first Brothers were united in heart and mind. Their relationships were marked by warmth and tenderness. In their discussions about living together as Brothers they found it useful to compare the spirit of their community life to that of a family. Like our early communities, we are inspired by the home of Nazareth to develop



those attitudes that make family spirit a reality: *love and forgiveness, support and help, forgetfulness of self, openness to others, and joy.*[38] This style of relating has become a characteristic of our way of being Marist.

31. From our family spirit develops a spirituality that is strongly relational and affective. Marcellin's preferred ways of relating to God and to Mary were through familial terms: Jesus in his ''Sacred Heart,'' Mary as ''Our Good Mother.'' The relationships he encouraged among the Brothers, and between the Brothers and their students were described in similarly fraternal and loving ways. Among today's Marists, with the expanded presence of women, the image of sister has enriched the ways Marists relate, and define their ministry. Essentially, our relationship to one another is being brother and sister.

32. Wherever the followers of Marcellin are present, working together in mission, this ''family spirit'' is the Marist way of communal living. Its well-spring is the love that Jesus has for all his brothers and

sisters – all of humanity. Through this spirit we offer an experience of belonging and union in mission.

A spirituality of simplicity

33. At the heart of Marist spirituality coming from Marcellin and the first Brothers is humility. It expresses itself in simplicity of behaviour, most especially in our way of relating to God and to others. We strive to be persons of integrity - truthful, open-hearted and transparent in our relationships.



34. This attitude grew from the experience of Marcellin and the first Brothers. Marcellin's formative environment was that of a loving family in a small rural village. From his mother (Marie-Thérèse Chirat*) he learned to trust in the providence of God; from his aunt (Louise Champagnat*) he learned filial abandonment into the arms of this God. From his father (Jean-Baptiste Champagnat*) he learned sincerity and honesty. Through the joys and struggles of life he learned to be humble and confident. Aware of his limitations he experienced them as a grace when he was able to dispose himself with confidence to the will of God. The first generation of Brothers were young men from environments similar to that of Marcellin. All these providential circumstances developed a spirituality that was uncomplicated and down to earth.[39]





35. Young people are attracted to this simple spirituality. The images of God we offer them, and the language, experiences and symbolism we use, are accessible and touch the heart. The more our evangelisation and catechesis are rooted in our distinctive Marist spirituality, the more effective they become.

36. This spirituality of simplicity shapes the whole life of the disciples of Marcellin. In humility, we seek to know ourselves in our strengths and weaknesses and readily accept the help we may need. We grow to be at peace with the person God has created.

37. Approaching others with openness and gratitude, we accept them as they are, and readily listen to how they experience us. We willingly offer forgiveness and take the first step toward reconciliation.[40]

38. This same spirit encourages us to develop a simple style of life. This implies that we avoid consumerism, with its accumulation of disposable goods and wasteful use of resources. We choose to be responsible for creation, a precious gift of God to humanity. This attitude encourages us to join with others in actions necessary to preserve our environment, to enhance the harmony between humanity and na-

ture, and to collaborate with the Creator in bringing creation to its fullness.



39. Our desire to be in communion with nature is expressed in a number of ways. The Marist tradition places great value on manual work because it brings us into *direct contact with creation, with other living beings, and with inanimate objects. It involves … caring for nature, in conserving and transforming it. It teaches … patience and precision.*[41] As well, such labour affirms both the value of working with our hands and the example of indigenous peoples who live with great respect in close relationship to their land.



40. This love of manual work reveals a wider attitude in the heart of the Marist that encompasses the values of making do, frugality, service, industriousness, and devotedness. In summary – a simple lifestyle. This manner of living comes from a Marist tradition that seeks to live from the work of our hands. This chosen simplicity of life creates a greater capacity to minister with the poor.

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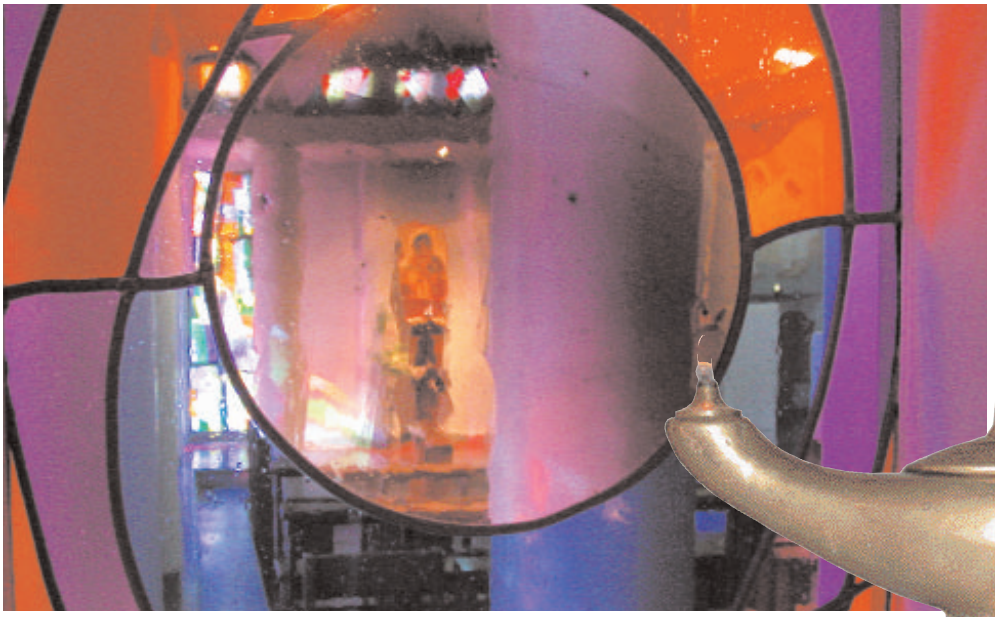
41. All of this ensures that, like Marcellin, our journey with God is also one of simplicity. We approach God with transparency, honesty, openness and trust. We consciously seek uncomplicated ways to help us in this journey.

We become streams of living water[42]

42. Our present age is characterized by a thirst for spirituality. We disciples of Marcellin believe that our way to God is a gift to be shared with the Church and the world. We are invited to join with Mary

in a journey of faith. If we are able to give witness in our daily lives to the vitality of this spirituality, people - particularly youth and children - will feel themselves attracted and invited to take it up as their own way to become "living water."

43. The story of our spirituality is indeed a simple one. It is a story of women and men who find within a thirst that only God can quench. Having drunk deeply, they find themselves filled with Jesus' own desire – to give flesh to God's Good News. Moved by the Spirit, urged by God's own longing to bring life to the world, we become streams of living water, flowing through the personal, communal, and ministry aspects of our lives.









9. We Jou



RNEY IN FAITH





The angel of the Lord
came to Mary.

Rejoice, full of grace,
the Lord is with you.

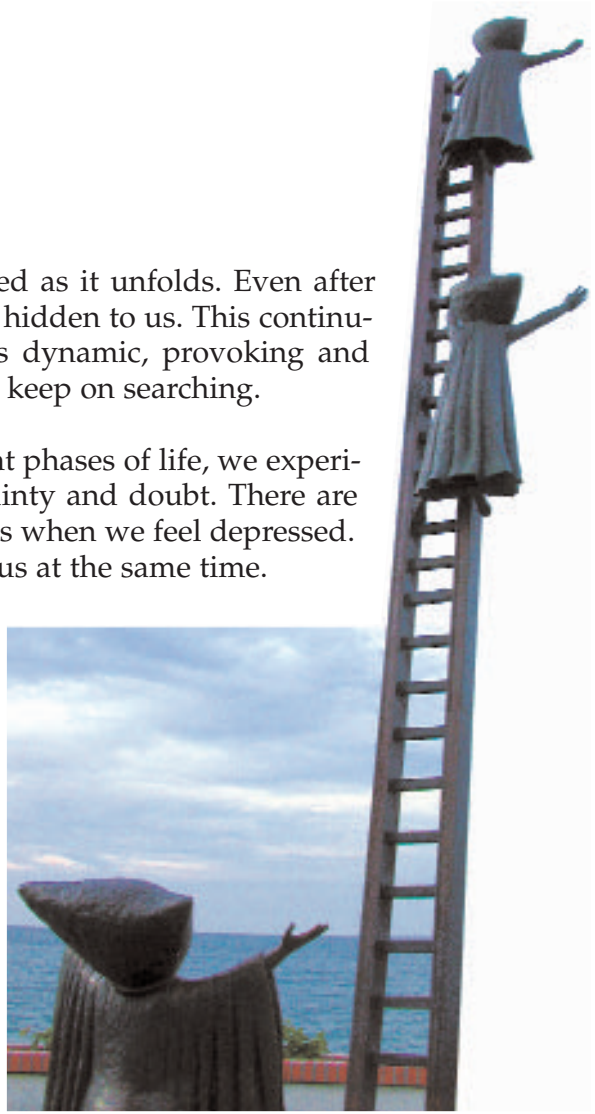
Do not fear, Mary,
the Lord has looked
kindly upon you.

The Holy Spirit
will come upon you.

Blessed are you
who believed.

I am the handmaid
of the Lord – let it be done
to me as you have said.

The angel of the Lord came to Mary[43]



44. Life is a mystery that is revealed as it unfolds. Even after many years, much still remains hidden to us. This continual unravelling of our inner depths is dynamic, provoking and challenging - an ongoing invitation to keep on searching.

45. As we pass through the different phases of life, we experience beauty and ugliness, certainty and doubt. There are times when we feel uplifted, and times when we feel depressed. All of this both attracts and frightens us at the same time.

46. Our hearts long to find happiness, to believe that we can find love and share in the blessings of life. But we also fear hurt and betrayal and so are tentative in our relationships and involvements.

47. We live in a time of fast and far-reaching cultural and social change. Boundaries are shifting and changing, old values are questioned, and practices of the past no longer seem to work.



48. We may find ourselves questioning the purpose of our existence: *Who am I? What is my life for? How can I make a difference with my life? To whom do I belong? For whom am I responsible?* Questions like these can fill our minds and hearts. As we grow in awareness of the life in and around us, this sense of unease, of anxiety is felt more acutely.

49. Yearning for something that will make sense of our lives, we search for an idea, a person, an activity that will integrate the different dimensions of living: feelings and desires, relationships and actions, sexuality and loves, rights and responsibilities, hopes and dreams.

50. In such human situations we discover God as the one for whom our hearts really yearn. We realise that this longing is not of our making but primarily the work of God's Spirit within the depths of our being. With trust, we can open ourselves and come to an experience of God.

51. Mary is surprised by the forceful entry of God into her life. She is afraid. Then she comes to be at peace because of her intuition of the presence and love of God for her. Without having all the answers to her questioning, she trusts and commits herself to a God who inspires trust.

52. Marcellin Champagnat* also had to struggle with God's unexpected intervention early in his life. That *God wills it* - suggested by the recruiting priest – forced him to look again at his project of life.[44]

Rejoice, full of grace, the Lord is with you[45]

53. God comes into the life of Mary, as it is at that moment. He opens Mary to the truth of her being and of her vocation, and proposes to her what she is able to do. The welcome she gives to the Word of God reveals the quality of her person.

54. Daily experiences are special places of encounter with God. We find God's presence in creation, in the events of every day - work and relationships, silence and noise, joys and sorrows, achievements and anguish, tragedy and death.

55. God is revealed to us through those we meet. Young and old people, members of our families and communities, the refugee and prisoner, the sick person and the caregiver, our co-worker and our neighbour, all are mirrors reflecting the God of life and of love.

56. We experience God also in the witness of people committed to peace, justice, and solidarity with the poor and those who act with generosity and self-sacrifice in the service of others.

57. All the people and events of life offer an opportunity to encounter our merciful God. Perhaps we meet God most closely when we are vulnerable and hurting or when we stand by our word despite the cost to ourselves. When we give thanks for the gift of life, when we heal relationships, when we offer and receive forgiveness, when we celebrate the Eucharist and share the Word - all can be moments of grace to meet and know God.

58. By entering into the fullness of such moments we discover our true humanity and the depth of our relationship with God. As we live within this relationship we come to know our true identity – sons and daughters of God, brothers and sisters in life.



59. Our true identity is a gift, given in the form of an unfolding invitation, a call, a vocation*. It is God's work in us.[46] The vocational way of Marcellin is marked by questionings and doubts. His pilgrimage to La Louvesc* is a time of prayer and discernment.[47] Marcellin experiences his search for identity and human growth as a time of grace.

60. *God chooses individual men and women and calls each of them by name. He leads them into the desert and there he speaks to their hearts. … By his Spirit, he transforms them constantly leading them more deeply into his love in order to send them out on mission.*[48] The more we come to know God, the more we come to know the deepest meaning



of our lives. We grow in the knowledge that we are part of God's project for the world.

61. This journey of discovery has many twists and turns. At times we struggle with our fears and doubts, as Mary did at the Annunciation. Yet, in each moment of our search God remains faithful and always present, continually inviting us to see our lives through God's eyes.

62. People make this journey of life in many and varied ways, with different rhythms and intensities. Each has a unique way of discovering the meaning of their life and of choosing their response. No matter how they engage in their personal life journey, no matter how many detours they choose to follow, there is always the opportunity to meet and know God.

63. Marcellin sees God in all things and believes all things come from God. He experiences God's presence in both the tranquillity of the Hermitage* and the noisy streets of Paris.[49] For him, every place and circumstance constitute an opportunity to meet God.

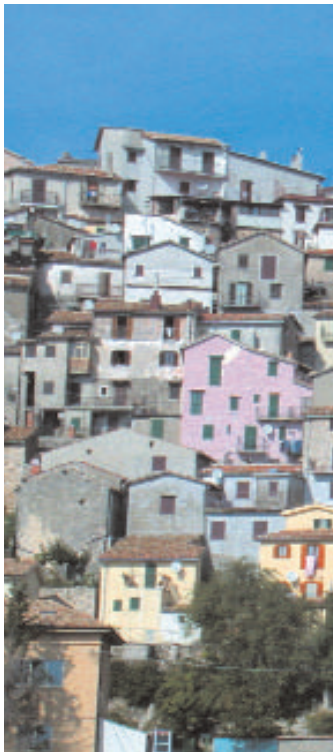
64. Like Marcellin, we can find God in every situation. Our faith does not limit the experience of God to moments of prayer or "sacred" places. We can experience God's love in all of our life. From this viewpoint, *the world is no longer considered an obstacle and becomes instead a place of encounter with God, of mission and of sanctification.*[50]

Do not fear, Mary, for God has looked kindly on you[51]

65. Being aware in this way sharpens our perception of what is happening in the present and creates a hunger to go beyond events to the giver of life itself – God.

66. In this relationship with God, we experience ourselves as unconditionally loved. A love that draws us ever more deeply into this relationship and, at the same time, more deeply into relationship with all of life.[52] With Mary we experience life as a wonderful gift from God: *Yes, from this day forward all generations will call me blessed, for the Allmighty has done great things for me.*[53]





67. We find ourselves yet again hungry, not this time for meaning and purpose, but rather to know this God more and more and to become God's loving presence in the encounters of our day.

68. Marcellin, through his way of living, helps the first Brothers to discover the loving presence of God. In our time we are similarly inspired by the witness of many Brothers and Lay Marists. In daily experiences they find God and enjoy God's presence. They hear a daily call to be God's love to their world and, like Mary, they offer their generous "yes."

69. Jesus shows us how deeply God is touched by the needs and pain of people, especially the "little ones" of life. As our lives become more centred in our relationship with God, we too are filled with God's compassion and are drawn into service of those in need, especially among young people.

70. This stance towards life, our passion for God and compassion for God's people, is our spirituality at work. At each stage in history it calls forth a certain style of presence, a way of being with God and for God in our world.

The Holy Spirit will come upon you[54]



71. Today's world deeply needs men and women who are mystics – people who are able to touch the mystery of all life, in an attitude of openness and surrender. Having experienced the love of God, they are witnesses of light among their fellow pilgrims, inspiring them to seek God.

72. The mystic believes that the Holy Spirit is always present and at work in the world. The Spirit gives meaning to life and our participation in the mission of Jesus.

73. As mystics we perceive "the footprints of God" in all the events of life. Through a reading of our reality in faith, we are taken beyond appearances and surface meanings, and brought into the depths of each situation. Our

prayer becomes, *Oh Lord, how great is your love!* And with a deep trust that comes from knowing we are profoundly loved, we confidently open our hearts to God's will.

74. To welcome God in this way, we need to develop an attitude of openness. With God's help we grow into being an attentive listener to life, reflective and perceptive when reviewing the events of our life, and generous in responding to the invitations of the Spirit contained within the substance of our days.

75. Like Mary, who ponders events in her heart[55], we are *constantly alert to the signs of the time, to the calls of the Church, and to the needs of youth.*[56] In this way we can *understand the sacramental meaning of events, people, and things which are for us a meeting place with God.*[57] This was Marcellin's understanding of his encounter with the dying boy, Jean-Baptiste Montagne*. [58]

76. Our spirituality draws us to *find God in all things* and in all aspects of life. Prayer is one means to go more deeply into our experience. We do not replace prayer with work. Listening to God impels us to continue labouring for the Kingdom. Our prayer comes from life and it returns us to life.

77. In prayer, both personal and communal, we find the opportunity to be moulded by God, as Jesus is. Ours is an apostolic prayer, *open to the reality of creation and of histo-*





ry, an echo of a life in solidarity with our brothers and sisters, mainly with the poor and with those that suffer.[59] It is a prayer that *now embraces the joys and sorrows, the anguish and hopes of those whom God has put on our path.*[60]

78. Throughout our history, followers of Marcellin have used a variety of means to nurture their spiritual life. Praying the Prayer of the Church*, visits to the Blessed Sacrament, the Rosary, daily Mass, religious study, meditation and devotional practices – all have played their part in assisting Marists to grow in holiness.

79. In our time there are certain practices that are essential to nurturing our faith life as Marists:

Lectio divina* or meditating on the Word of God

80. Daily contact with the Word of God allows us to connect with our personal journey from the perspective of the History of Salvation. It takes us beyond our personal window on life to the larger window of the journey of the People of God.

Personal prayer



81. In personal prayer, made with openness and joy, we tune our heart to the heart of God. Before the Lord we bring all our being - mind, body, yearnings - and allow God to transform and integrate all dimensions of our life.

Review of the day*



82. Looking back on the events of our day, like the disciples of Emmaus[61], we are able to see how God is present during our journey. We open ourselves to hear God's invitations and urgings within the movements of our life.



2



Community prayer

83. Our community prayer offers us the opportunity to share in faith what we live in our mission. Each one's presence helps create a sense of communion that enables us to bring into prayer our dreams, achievements, struggles, personal experiences, and community or family projects. Communal days of recollection *renew the interior unity of our active life.*[62] Community prayer is a special place for us to discern and jointly make our choices for mission. We create communal spaces where we are helped to experience and celebrate the guidance which Mary gives to our lives.

Faith sharing



84. We share our faith in many different ways: the witness of our lives, our prayers and rituals, the choices we make, and prophetic stands that we take on behalf of the voiceless. We support and nurture each other by sharing our faith in conversations that help us to name together those things that are vital for our common life.



Accompaniment

85. 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.





Celebrating Eucharist

86. Eucharist is at the centre of our lives.[63] It is far more than the ritual or the sacrament. Living Eucharistically describes the process that underpins the spiritual life and our engagement in mission: gathered, blessed, broken and shared. When we gather to celebrate this gift of Jesus we are in communion with all people, especially poor people, and with all creation. Nurtured, we feel impelled to go out as the "body of Christ" to celebrate and continue to build God's Kingdom.

Reconciliation[64]

87. As we walk together we will face moments when our relationships are tested to the limit. In other moments we will realise that our heart and mind are not attuned to the work of the Spirit. We need to be reconciled not only as individuals but as communities. We need reconciliation with one another and with God, to the vocational invitation within each one of us and to our shared mission.

Blessed are you who believed[65]

88. We pray in all situations, with creativity and generosity. No matter the difficulties and struggles of daily life, no matter the limitations and injustices we live with, we continue to see the blessings of God upon us and those we love. Like Mary in her Magnificat prayer, we are grateful to *God who has blessed us.* [66]

89. In our times of solitude, we cultivate an interior life that strengthens our love of, and communion with, the world. In this way we become more sensitive to life. Though we experience the poverty of our limitations and failures, we also recognize the beauty and wonder of humanity and of all creation.



90. Day after day, we feel called to commit ourselves to the world; to contemplate the world with the eyes and the heart of God. Our spirituality draws us to deepen our relationship with Christ and in trust to give ourselves in service in community living and mission.



I am the handmaid
of the Lord –
let it be done to me
as you have said[67]



3. As

Brothers and Sisters





Now I give you
a new commandment:
Love one another.

Love one another,
just as I have loved you.

By this
will everyone know
that you are my disciples.

See how they love
one another.

Now I give you a new commandment: Love one another[68]

91. Both Jesus and Marcellin Champagnat*, in their spiritual testaments, chose to invite their followers to communion and community.[69] Jesus expressed this invitation while sharing the last supper with his disciples. The table of the Lord has since become a central symbol of communion and self-giving for Christianity.

92. For the community today that Marcellin created, the table at La Valla* is also a powerful symbol of family and service.[70] Made by Champagnat himself, that table may be seen as the embodiment of his efforts to create a community dedicated to the Lord. Furthermore, to share more intimately with the first Brothers, the Founder abandoned the relative comfort of the presbytery to live with those first Brothers.[71] Life-together, expressed through family spirit, is an integral part of his vision.

93. At the core of our being we desire to love and be loved. We long for belonging, solidarity, the chance to share our lives and the opportunity to change our circumstances. We unite to create families, to support each other in our ideals, to transform our society. Each family, group or community is uniquely marked by that which unites them, that which lies at the core of their connection.





94. Christian families and communities are united in Christ. In him we find our communion with each other, and with all of creation.[72] In this unity with each other we strengthen our being one with Christ.

95. Jesus' message is simple but challenging: *Love one another as I have loved you.* Jesus not only preaches communion, he lives it.[73] At its heart, Christianity is communion made real in the love of neighbour. In Christ we find that a common mission unites us in community and, in turn, community impels us to mission.

96. As we build communities and set up structures that support their vitality, we must share and live a spirituality.[74] Marist spirituality understands community as an excellent place where both the self and God are revealed to us through others.

97. Such a spirituality celebrates the mystery of the Trinity living within us and in the hearts of others. It enables us to "feel with" our brothers and sisters, to share their lives, and to join them in friendship. This spirituality helps us to recognise the beauty and good in others, and to make a welcoming space in our lives for them. Little by little, a group of individuals can grow into a community with one heart and one mind.[75]



98. Marcellin shows us how we are to form and live in communities of mission. In the very name he chose, *Little Brothers of Mary**, Marcellin summarises the fundamental identity of his community: the gospel virtue of simplicity, the call to fraternity, and the contemplation of the person of Mary.

99. This identity is particularly expressed in the practice of the little virtues.* For Marcellin their practice is a way of living Mary's attitudes in everyday life. He is convinced that these virtues or attitudes are life-giving expressions of love.

100. Marcellin believes that in constructing a house he is developing a true community.[76] He finds pleasure in spending the summers at the Hermitage with the Brothers who would return for retreat, rest, formation and encouragement. Through living the rhythm of community life, both at La Valla* and then at the Hermitage*, Marcellin animates and nourishes the community life by his example, giving himself to manual work and to community prayer.

101. In a world thirsty for connection and belonging, home is such a powerful symbol. Families and communities become a crucial place for each one to grow, be sustained, healed and encouraged.[77]

102. All our relationships are enriched when they are lived by taking Mary as the inspiration for our way of being and doing with others. With Mary we learn how to express God's love in all the relationships of our personal and communal living, since from her *we learn how other people are to be loved, and we, in turn, become living signs of the Father's tenderness.*[78]





Love one another, just as I have loved you[79]

103. Marist spirituality inspires our understanding of how we are to live what Jesus commands us and what Champagnat dreams for us. At the same time it grows and develops as we love one another, honestly and simply, in our families and communities.



104. Living the Eucharist is at the heart of our community life and our way of relating. In many different places and with many different people we find ourselves, throughout our days *gathered, blessed, broken and shared.*

105. Our spirituality is communal, best expressed and lived when we are gathered as family and community. We develop meaningful relationships and assure our consistent presence within our communities and families. Thus the experience of loving and being loved become part of our life in the ordinary moments of our day.

106. Whatever the members of a community do – working, struggling for justice, serving society, praying or sharing meals and relaxation together – we recognise the blessings of God. We are

blessed with the gift of life and with companions for our mission and our life's journey. We proclaim, not just what God has done for each one of us, but what God is doing for us together, as family and community.

107. Life together supports and challenges us to be a community of mission. We listen to the invitations of God that flow through our shared life and discern our shared response. Based on a common trust in God, we offer our lives in service. In ministry we find ourselves, like Jesus, broken open for our brothers and sisters. Truly, we are bread of life for others as Jesus has been for us.

108. By giving and receiving love, we are challenged to fight our tendency to individualism, self-preoccupation and diminishing generosity. The building up of family spirit is demanding. We need to be present to others: attentive to them, able to listen, and give of our time. In this area, young and old are equal since, in the gift of self, one does not age.



109. God created us as sexual persons so that we would find in relationships with others our true human and spiritual nature.[80] Our sexual desires are an expression of the deepest human longing for union, with others, and ultimately with God. The relationship of Jesus with his disciples and friends shows us the Christian way to meaningful and mature intimacy and friendship. With God's grace we engage in the challenging



journey of growing into that inner harmony that attracted people to Jesus - humble and gentle of heart.[81] We cannot grow towards our potential as human beings without being involved with others, and responding to the support and challenges posed by those who share our journey most intimately.

110. As Brothers and Lay Marists, we try to develop a quality of communion that allows families, religious communities and other forms of community living to become homes *where the young are helped to mature, where we take care of those aging, and are especially kind to the weak; places where we forgive one another and heal wounds, where we joyfully celebrate the life we share together.*[82]



111. Through our time together, we connect our personal story and the story of our shared journey. We share endeavours, struggles, achievements and disappointments. All of this helps to strengthen the bonds of fraternity. We grow in appreciation and respect for the variety of experiences and stories of different generations.

112. A sense of humour is a wonderful gift. It helps us to bear with ourselves and companions lightly and to face

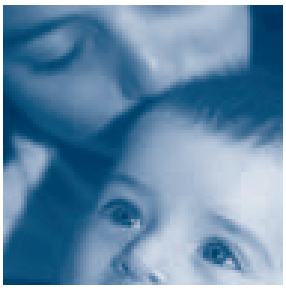


the ups and downs of life together with a joyful spirit. *Our way of life is meant to make people happy. Not in the sense of hilarity, but in that deep feeling of contentment experienced by people who have meaning and purpose in their life and marvellous companions with whom to share that life.*[83]

113. As for Marcellin and the first Brothers so also for us, Mary inspires the style of our fraternal relationships. At the marriage of Cana, Mary is sensitive to the need that has arisen, and with discretion arranges what is required.[84] She encourages us to exercise authority in a spirit of service to our community, and demonstrates that our actions can spark an increase in the faith of others. At the same time, her words to her Son, *They have no wine,* show her desire to bring those in need to the attention of her Son.



114. 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.[85] 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.





115. Those who share in Champagnat's spirituality are practical, down-to-earth people. We are well aware that living in a family or a community is not always smooth sailing. From time to time, we experience our fragility, our limits, our differences and we get hurt and wounded. We may also feel angry towards ourselves and others, or become lonely and bitter.

116. To sustain the life of our fraternity we need to live an ongoing process of reconciliation. This process enables us to return to the centre of our community, Jesus. We can know ourselves as loved and empowered to grow through difficulties. Through God's mercy and forgiveness we can find the energy and grace to work for reconciliation.[86]

117. Shared faith enables us to see beyond problems and differences. Community is a gift of the Spirit. To nurture this life in the Spirit, and to encourage and support each other, we endeavour to make our communities schools of faith for ourselves, for young people and for all who hunger for God. Our experience of God becomes bread to be shared.[87]

118. Sharing and celebrating our faith through prayer in common is a powerful means to build up communion.[88] Each time we gather to pray and celebrate the Eucharist, our union with Jesus impels us to full communion, with ourselves, with God, with one another, and with creation. The deeper we live the moments of our daily life, and the way we relate to others and the world, the more meaningful will be our prayer and liturgical celebrations.

By this everyone will know that you are my disciples[89]



119. The terms *brother* and *sister* express in a very rich way the Marist style of relating.[90] A brother or sister is one who is approachable, unassuming, authentic, attentive and respectful. Brothering and sistering are ways of relating that affirm others and inspire in them confidence and hope.[91]

120. Our world and its peoples always need hope. We can be both beautifully creative and mindlessly destructive. We may fear the "other." If we then tend to see ourselves as the centre of the universe and our way as the "only true way," conflicts will arise - in families and communities, but also between nations. Living as sisters and brothers offers a hopeful and caring means by which our differences enrich our communion. Marist fraternity becomes a sign of hope for the world with a growing need for tolerance and peace.

121. In a multicultural and multi-religious world, there is an urgent need to develop intercultural structures that show how to live this reality constructively. Communities that are multicultural invite us to share



in the richness of other traditions and faiths, to grow in respect and tolerance, and to celebrate the abundance of God's loving presence. They provide a special witness against tendencies towards fundamentalism, xenophobia and exclusion.[92]

122. As brothers and sisters sharing in Life, we want to grow in care for our planet and all creation. With others, we foster the hope that all humankind will come to appreciate the world as our home, where nature is delicately balanced. This requires our living together in an atmosphere of reverence, mutual respect, justice and participation.

123. As companions on the journey, called to build life-giving communities, we are inspired by the words of Marcellin Champagnat:

> *I beg of you, my brothers, with all the affection of my soul, and by all the love you have for me, do all you can to ensure that charity is always maintained among you. Love one another as Jesus Christ has loved you. Be of one heart and one mind. May it be said of the Little Brothers of Mary as of the first Christians: "See how they love one another." This is the most ardent desire of my heart at this, the last moment of my life. Yes, my very dear brothers, listen to the words of your Father, they are the words of our loving saviour: "Love one another."*[93]



See how they love one another[94]



4. Bringing to



Good News the Poor



The Spirit of the Lord is upon me.

He has anointed me to bring good news to the poor.

Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me[95]

124. Marist spirituality, being apostolic, is lived out on mission*. The mission of Marist apostles is born of the experience of being loved by God and of our desire to actively participate in the mission of Jesus. God is passionate about the world and its people, and Jesus expresses this love by a ministry of teaching and healing. *I came that you may have life, and have it abundantly.*[96] Like Jesus we recognise the urgings of the Spirit within, calling us to witness to this Good News. Out of these inner promptings, the mission of the Church is born: to proclaim the Kingdom of God as a new way of living for humanity, a new way to relate with God. We join in this mission of the Church as we look upon the world with compassion.

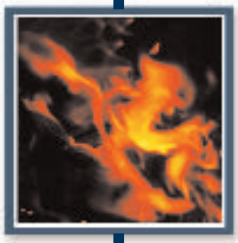
4



125. What we see in the world both amazes and shocks us. On the one hand, we celebrate the beauty and diversity of nature and its wondrous harmony. We rejoice too in the rich cultural diversity of humankind…. Yet we also come face to face with violence and insecurity, poverty and despair, AIDS and child abuse, ecological degradation and starvation, illiteracy and ignorance.



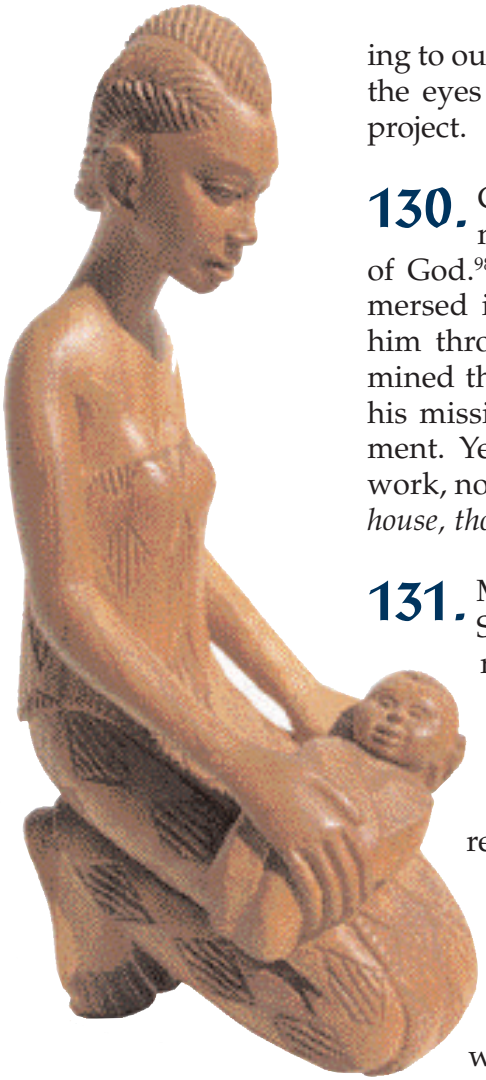
126. It is encouraging how many people, including the young, facing such apparently hopeless situations, are responding with passion and commitment. Involved in groups, they work in solidarity to make a better world for all. They seek companions who not only share their passion, but also the wisdom not to lose hope in the face of so much pain and suffering. These are men and women with a spirituality of compassion and mission. Their choices are a source of inspiration to us.



127. The cries of the world, especially those of poor people, touch the heart of God and ours as well. The depth of God's compassion challenges us to be men and women whose hearts have no bounds since *in his infinite love, God continues to be totally involved with all men and women and today's world, with its disappointments and hopes.* [97]

128. Our Marist charism* prompts us to be attentive to the calls of our time, to the longings and preoccupations of people, especially the young. Surpassing religious and cultural borders we seek the same dignity for all: human rights, justice, peace, and equitable and responsible sharing of the planet's wealth.

129. Our compassionate response to the needs of the world wells up from our spirituality. Spirituality draws us into mission and, in living that mission, finds itself nourished and rekindled. It gives mean-



ing to our human experiences and allows us to read life with the eyes and heart of God and to understand it as God's project.

130. Central to the apostolic zeal of Marcellin Champagnat* is his experience of an all-embracing presence of God.[98] He is sure that every moment of his life is immersed in this divine presence. God's will is revealed to him through the daily experiences of life. Having determined that something is willed by God it becomes part of his mission. He does not spare himself in its accomplishment. Yet he retains the firm conviction that it is God's work, not his. His core belief is that *unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labour in vain.*[99]

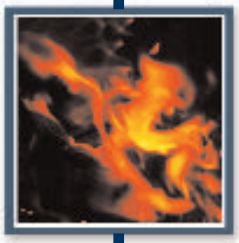
131. Mary inspired Marcellin's style of being on mission. She received the Holy Spirit at the Annunciation and responded immediately to Elizabeth's need.[100] In so doing, she shows us that contemplation* and action are both indispensable elements of spirituality. Mary's way lays the foundation of all our actions: listening, patient waiting, nurturing interiority and responsiveness to God's will.

132. Confirmed in her own vocation* by the invitation of the Spirit, Mary feels compelled to leave her own house to enter the house of another. She indicates for us the direction of mission - that we are to meet others where they are.[101]

133. Mary, as a sensitive and compassionate disciple, goes "in haste," responding quickly to those who need her.[102] She goes "in haste" to joyfully announce the news of a God who loves, and the sure promise that a reign of justice and faithfulness is at hand. She brings to Elizabeth both her hands for service and her experience of the Spirit.[103]

134. As Mary in the Cenacle in the midst of the Apostles we - joyfully, simply and humbly - bring the Good News through our presence and our faith.

He has anointed me to bring good news to the poor[104]



135. All Marists share the same mission: *to make Jesus known and loved.*[105] As apostles we passionately centre our lives in Jesus.[106] We allow ourselves to be captivated by him and his gospel. Close to



him, we want to form our hearts. Learning from him the ways of the Kingdom, we communicate his message and his way of being and acting through our presence, our words and our deeds.

136. Jesus lives out his mission by both word and witness. In his relationships Jesus transcends boundaries of religion and culture.[107] In these encounters, he values and affirms, and he challenges.

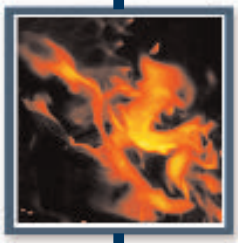
137. For the people we meet each day we seek to be reflections of God. Our desire is to be a visible and permanent memory of the loving and merciful presence of God in the midst of people: *living signs of the Father's tenderness.*[108] In some mysterious way, God works through us and in us. Despite our limitations, which we well know, our goodness is able to come through. By being with God we learn our way of being like him: shepherd, friend, faithful companion.

138. Marcellin chose to call the first Marists at La Valla* "Brothers."[109] He believes in the strength of love that builds fraternity and heals wounds. Drawn by a love that knows no bounds, he feels compelled to be Brother to all the world. His vision extends far beyond his own time and place: *All the dioceses of the world enter in our plans.*[110]





139. Irrespective of where we live our mission or with whom, being a "brother" means that our relationships are consistently simple, welcoming, and encouraging through compassion, joy and kindness. We are brothers and sisters of those we meet along life's journey. This is how we live out our Marist Apostolic Spirituality and give flesh to our mission.



140. Our mission is communal.[111] The community of Marist apostles sustains and encourages us. In encountering fellow Marists, we experience affirmation of our faith and apostolic intuitions, and in joining with like-minded people, our apostolic activities are given renewed energy.

141. Marist apostles carry out their mission by building communities that are sacred spaces where people can find God and meaning for their lives. Willingly we welcome youth seeking meaningful relationships with people whom they can trust. In this way, together we become *sowers of hope*, and show them they are dearly loved by God.[112]

142. Moved by this love we seek out occasions and reasons to be with young people, to enter their world and to journey alongside them. *For many of them, we shall be the only 'gospel' they will read.*[113] We inspire young people to be creative in developing their own identity by facing



new challenges in life and widening their understanding of themselves, of others, of the world, and of God.

143. In seeking to be present in the world of young people, at times we will encounter injustice, suffering and sometimes evil. Jesus invites us to incorporate these experiences into our lives as a sharing in his Paschal Mystery - the unity of Good Friday and Easter Sunday, the paradox of failure producing life, life drawn from suffering.

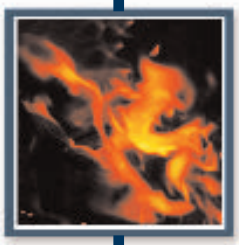
144. In following Jesus and living out our mission we are inspired by Marcellin's passionate and practical approach. With a heart for poor children and youth, Marist apostles seek concrete responses to their painful reality.

145. We carry out this mission in a variety of ways. In all of them, we seek to kindle the faith of people, and we give special value to initiatives that promote life and justice.

146. For us, education is a privileged place for evangelisation and human promotion.[114] The range of our educational works is broad – in response to the changing needs of young people wherever they are to be found. In focusing on them, each Marist ministry *shows a preference for those to whom preference is never shown.*[115]

147. Seeking to be with young people in their circumstances impels us to create new ways of education and evangelisation. Marists find themselves in a variety of pastoral roles working with other committed people, giving a face to compassion, and hands and voice to promote justice.

148. The Spirit speaks God's love ever afresh into our world.[116] Like Champagnat we desire to be continually open to its movement and urgings. The dying Jean-Baptiste Montagne* impelled Marcellin to begin his project of having Brothers to teach the deprived children of the rural areas.[117] Who are *our* Montagnes? Who today compels in us an apostolic response? These are leading questions in our ongoing discernment.



149. So we direct our journey to those places where others would prefer not to go, to enter into the suffering there, like Mary at the foot of the Cross, and to be a presence and service that remains faithful, despite its risks. *This experience urges us to move ahead, with courage and apos-*





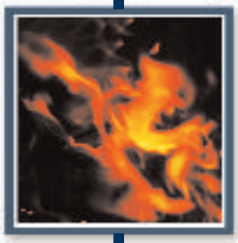
tolic zeal to difficult missions, to marginalised areas, and unexplored surroundings, where the seed of the kingdom has not yet taken root.[118] When our mission is concluded, we move on to new places that require our presence.

150. It is this dimension of Marist spirituality that has inspired thousands of Marists to generously answer the call of *Mission Ad Gentes*. Their availability and continued creative fidelity are essential in the ongoing renewal and vitality of Marist life and mission.

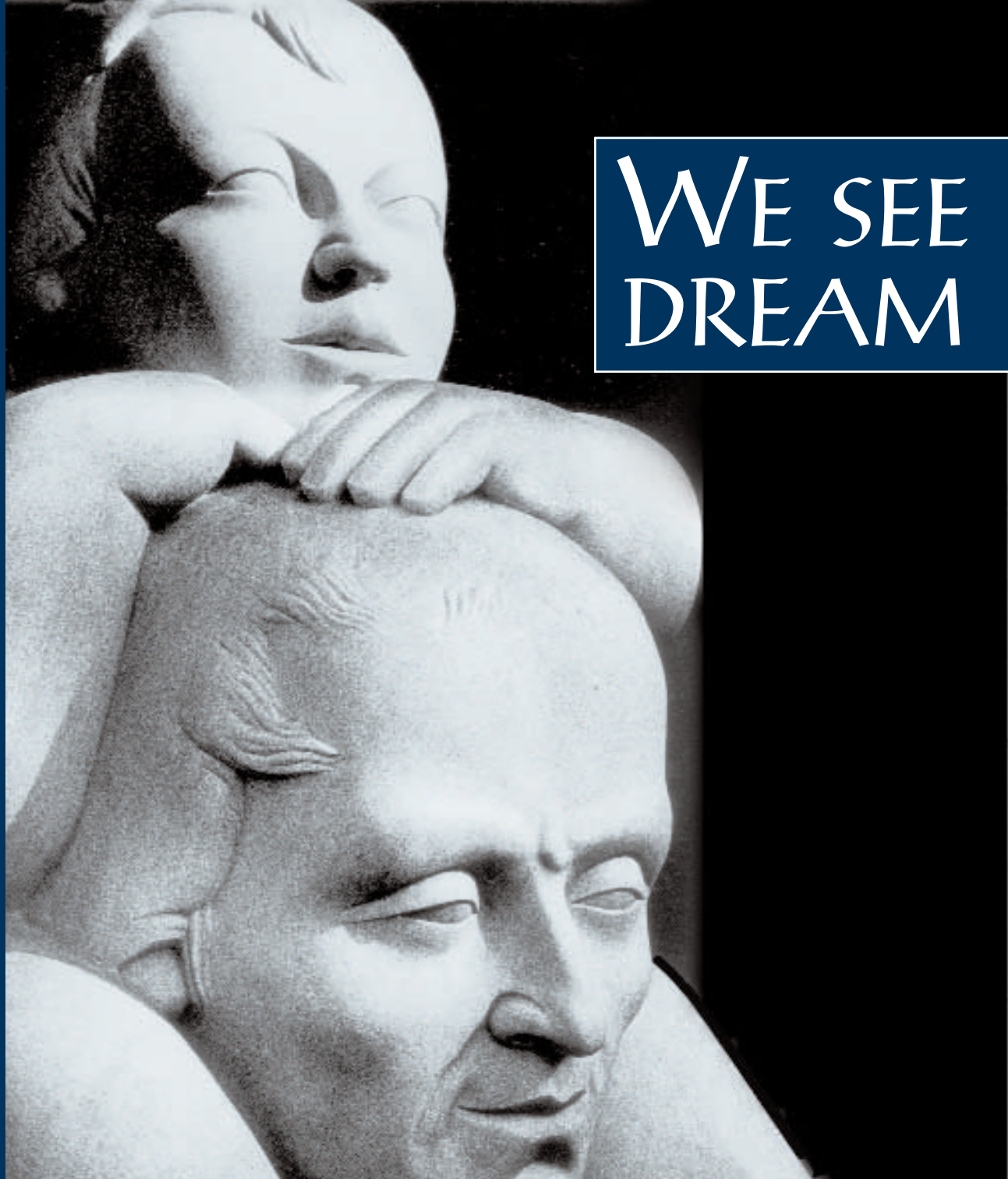
Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations[119]

151. Our spirituality, Marial and apostolic, invites us to look to Mary as Jesus' First Disciple for our response. She is for us a model of listening, of love for poor people, and of welcoming the message of God. Her way of living the Word of God inspires us and directs us along the way we should go. Like Mary, we not only magnify the Lord with our lips, but commit ourselves to serve God's justice with our lives. [120]

152. In her last words, recorded in the Gospels, Mary directs us: "Do whatever he tells you."[121]






We see
dream

NEW VISIONS, NEW DREAMS[122]





Carried
on his shoulders.

Filled with joy.

Seeing new visions,
dreaming new dreams.

Our souls
glorify the Lord.

Carried on his shoulders[123]



153. The statue of St Marcellin that stands in one of the niches on the external façade of St. Peter's Basilica represents our Founder carrying a young boy on his shoulders. We see in this artistic expression a symbol of the strength and powerful inspiration of Marist Spirituality for the world of today. It illustrates too the Marist belief of being raised upon the shoulders of a vigorous spiritual tradition, able to carry us into a future filled with the promise of vitality and hope.

Filled with joy[124]

154. Filled with the joy of a renewed purpose, with our brothers and sisters we re-affirm the growing convictions that express the core of Marist spiritual tradition:

- Our mission, founded on the experience of being profoundly loved by Jesus, is to make him known and loved.

- Mary never fails to accompany us in our pilgrimage of faith, both when we grow in fidelity and when we wander in doubt.

- God constantly renews the gift of Marist martyrs and saints to show us new horizons of passionate commitment to Jesus Christ and his Gospel.

- Marists of Africa, America, Asia, Europe and Oceania are a marvelous gift to one another and a meaningful way of Mary being present in our world today.

- Communities and families inspired by Marist spirituality become leaven that transforms the dough of our societies in a humble and effective way.

- The person and the spirituality of Marcellin Champagnat* fill with meaning and purpose the lives of many Brothers and Lay Marists today and powerfully awaken new ways of being Marist.





Seeing new visions, dreaming new dreams[125]

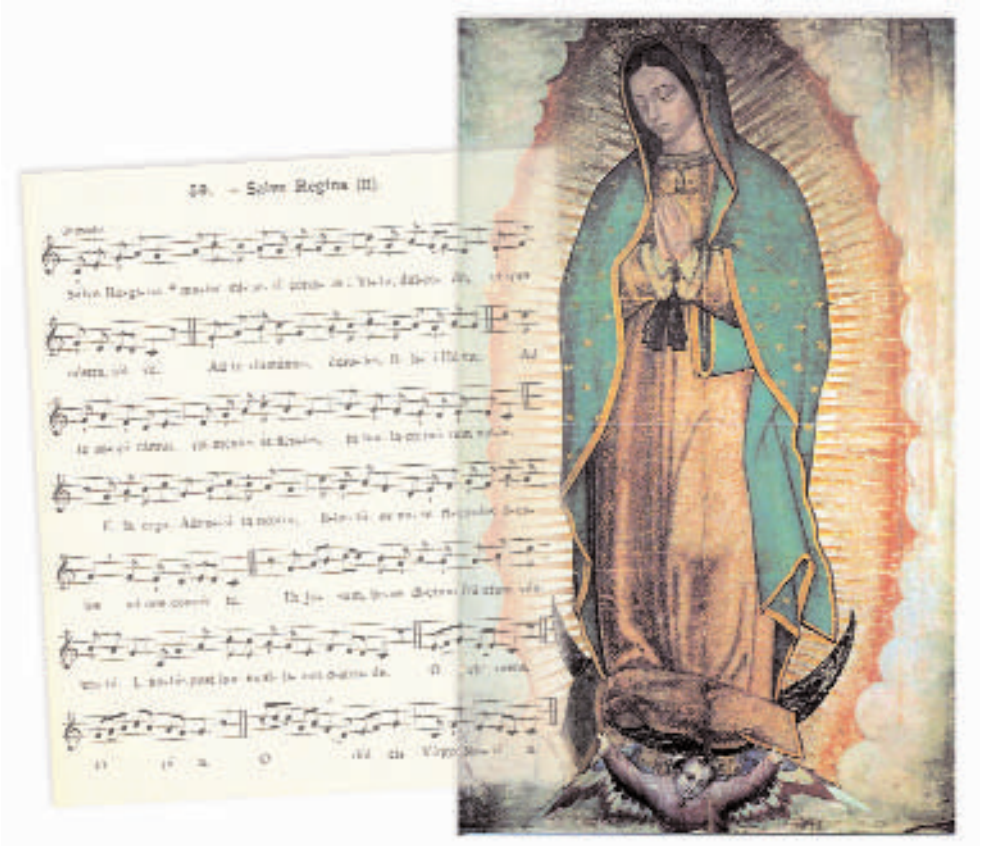
155. Sustained by the faith and example of St. Marcellin and the first Brothers, Marist spirituality urges us to move towards unexplored horizons:

- Like St. Marcellin, seeking out the poor Montagnes* of his day, we endeavour to become effective Marist educators of faith today: we open new ways that enable youth to be transformed by the experience of knowing and loving Jesus.

- Like St. Marcellin, moving from hamlet to hamlet on the hills of the Pilat*, we readily carry the gift of education and Marist presence to places and situations that might require abandoning securities and even risking our lives.



- Like St. Marcellin, humbly anchored on the rock of God's unconditional love, we actively engage in creating new paths of inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue.





And so, our souls glorify the Lord [126]

156. With Mary of the Magnificat our hearts are filled with gratitude for this gift of Marist spirituality. At this moment in history we join in the prophetic vision of her *Magnificat* and with Marcellin we pray to her:

Mary, we come to you as our Mother
to tell you how grateful we are to God
for having called us to be little brothers and sisters of Mary
and for having you, the first and perfect disciple of Jesus, as our Model.

Mary, we want to make your Magnificat our own prayer.
And so we ask you to help us come
to a greater understanding of God's love in our lives
and to recognise that all is gift, that all comes from love,
and that we are to follow Jesus in incarnating this love,
in being brothers and sisters to all
with a special love for the young and the most neglected.



You are our Ordinary Resource
and we ask you to pray for us, and with us,
so that we may continue to grow to be:

– brothers and sisters of radiant hope,
convinced of the active presence of the Spirit
calling all men and women
to be co-creators
of a new and better world;

– brothers and sisters of listening
and discerning hearts,
constantly seeking the Father's will;

– brothers and sisters of audacity,
who have not lost the passion of their lives!
Marist Apostles who are ready to proclaim Jesus and his Gospel
with heart on fire with love.

Help us to be brothers and sisters
to all those we meet on life's journey,
to be present to people as you were,
with listening and compassionate hearts.

Accept our love, dear Mother,
as we ask that, by your example and by your intercession,
Christ may become the centre of our lives.[127]



Reflection Questions



Drawing from Streams of Living Water

1. In your own spiritual journey, who or what have been significant influences? Can you identify pivotal events that shaped your spirituality? What have been some of your Montagne moments?
2. Have you ever met someone whose spirituality was "down to earth"? What was did you notice about this person?
3. Of the six characteristics given for Marist spirituality, which are strongest in your own life? Are there some elements you would like to strengthen?



We Journey in Faith

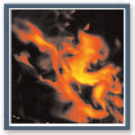
1. Can you recall incidents in your life which gave cause to questions about God and faith? How have these doubts shaped your spirituality?
2. Where is it easiest for you to encounter God? What obstacles do you experience on the journey of your encounter with God?
3. What most nourishes your spirituality at this stage of your life?
4. What symbol or image would you use to express who God is for you, and the nature of that relationship?
5. In your world, what are some of the "footprints of God" ?
6. What feeling is now welling up in you?



As Brothers and Sisters

1. In the life of Jesus, which story or incident most inspires you in the building of community/family?

2. Can you relate some examples of how your own spirituality has been nurtured through membership of some form of "community"?
3. Can you share some examples of a time when you have drawn support from the faith of a "community" when your own was being tested ?
4. What helps you to keep your relationships authentic, simple and welcoming?



Bringing Good News to the Poor

1. What are the longings and preoccupations of the world that touch your heart?
2. At your present stage of life which aspects of the Annunciation and Visitation do you find yourself suited for? Which do you find challenging?
3. What is it within your present life that holds you back from leaving the comfort of 'your own house' to enter 'the house' of those in need?
4. When you listen, with Mary, to Jesus in your life, what do you hear him tell you to do?



We See New Visions, Dream new Dreams

1. What convictions about Marist spirituality would you add to those given in the text?
2. In what directions do you see Marist spirituality developing?
3. What is it about Marist spirituality that gives you cause for rejoicing?

Notes

Introduction

[1] *Choose Life* - the message of the XXth General Chapter No. 48.1 (Rome, 2001). The text referred to is: *In the Footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat: a vision for Marist Education today* (Rome, 1998).
[2] Cf. Br. Seán Sammon, *A Revolution of the Heart: Marcellin's spirituality and a contemporary identity for his Little Brothers of Mary.* Circulars Vol. XXXI, No. 1 (2003) page 47.
[3] Br. Benito Arbués, *Walk peacefully, yet with a sense of urgency.* Circulars Vol. XXX, No. 1 (1997) page 24.
[4] *Constitutions* 7.
[5] *Constitutions* 2.
[6] *Constitutions* 49.
[7] *Constitutions* 165.
[8] *Constitutions* 171.
[9] The third of the three retreats with which Br. Basilio inaugurated the 18th General Chapter was devoted to apostolic and Marial spirituality (cf. *Acts of the XVIIIth General Chapter* [Rome, 1985] pages 45-62).
[10] Cf. Br. Charles Howard, *Marist Apostolic Spirituality*. Circulars Vol. XXIX, No. 8 (1992); *Marist Apostolic Spirituality* from *Brothers in Solidarity* - Proceedings of the XIXth General Chapter (Rome, 1993); Br. Benito Arbués, *Walk peacefully, yet with a sense of urgency.* Circulars Vol. XXX, No. 1 (1997), Br. Seán Sammon, *A Revolution of the Heart: Marcellin's spirituality and a contemporary identity for his Little Brothers of Mary.* Circulars Vol. XXXI, No. 1 (2003).
[11] Luke 1: 46-55.

Drawing from Streams of Living Water

[12] Cf. John 7: 37.
[13] Cf. Luke 1: 39.
[14] Cf. *Life*, Part 1, Chapter 10, pages 105-108.
[15] *Life*, Part 2, Chapter 1.
[16] Among those sources it is worth mentioning Francis de Sales, Alphonse Liguori and John Eudes.
[17] *Life*, Part 2, Chapter 7, pages 343-344.
[18] *Life*, Part 1, Chapter 3, page 28.
[19] *Life*, Part 1, Chapter 3, pages 28-30; Chapter 11, page 117; Part 2, Chapter 7, page 333.
[20] Cf Letter to Bishop Gaston de Pins,

Lent 1835 (Letter No. 56).
[21] John 7: 38.
[22] *Life*, Part 2, Chapter 4, page 309.
[23] Psalm 126.
[24] Draft of letter to Mr. Jean-François Preynat, 3 December 1836 (Letter No. 73b).
[25] *Life*, Part 2, Chapter 6, pages 330-331.
[26] *Choose Life* - the message of the XXth General Chapter No. 18 (Rome, 2001).
[27] Cf. Colossians 1:15.
[28] *Our Models in Religion: biographies of some early Marist Brothers* (Grugliasco, 1936) page 24.
[29] Cf. *Life*, Part 2, Chapter 6, page 321.
[30] Cf. *Constitutions* 53 and 54.
[31] Cf. *Life*, Part 2, Chapter 6, pages 322 - 330.
[32] Cf. Matthew 25.
[33] Letter to Bishop Pompallier, 27 May 1838 (Letter No. 194).
[34] *Constitutions* 84.
[35] Idem.
[36] Cf. Luke 1:39. Thus, we participate in Mary's most fundamental role which the ancient Church called *theotokos*, bearer of God.
[37] Cf. Br. Charles Howard, *Marist Apostolic Spirituality*. Circulars Vol. XXIX No. 8 (1992) page 495.
[38] *Constitutions* 6.
[39] Cf. Br. Seán Sammon, *A Revolution of the Heart*. Circulars Vol. XXXI No. 1 (2003) pages 25, 57-59.
[40] Cf. *Constitutions* 51.
[41] *Formation Guide* No. 205 (Rome, 1994) citing Genesis 1: 28.
[42] John 7: 38.

We Journey in Faith

[43] Cf. Luke 1: 26-27.
[44] *Life*, Part 1, Chapter 2, page 9; cf. also *Life*, Part 1, Chapter 6, page 57.
[45] Luke 1: 28.
[46] Cf. Br. Charles Howard, *Marist Apostolic Spirituality*. Circulars Vol. XXIX, No. 8 (1992) page 434.
[47] Cf. *Life*, Part 1, Chapter 11, page 112.
[48] *Constitutions* 11.
[49] Cf. Letter to Br. Hilarion, Paris 18 March 1838 (Letter No. 181).
[50] *Marist Apostolic Spirituality* No. 14, from *Proceedings of the XIXth General Chapter* (Rome, 1993).
[51] Luke 1: 30.
[52] Cf. Luke 1: 48-50.

[53] Luke 1: 48.
[54] Luke 1: 35.
[55] Cf. Luke 2: 19 and 51.
[56] *Constitutions* 168.
[57] *Marist Apostolic Spirituality* No. 29, from *Proceedings of the XIXth General Chapter* (Rome, 1993), *Constitutions* 43.
[58] *Life*, Part 1, Chapter 6, pages 58-59.
[59] *Marist Apostolic Spirituality* No. 26, from *Proceedings of the XIXth General Chapter* (Rome, 1993).
[60] *Constitutions* 71.
[61] Cf. Luke 24: 13-35.
[62] *Constitutions* 73.
[63] Cf. *Constitutions* 57 and 69. See also Br. Seán Sammon, *Marvelous Companions: community life among Marcellin's Little Brothers of Mary*. Circulars Vol. XXXI No. 2 (2005) page 62.
[64] "In temptations and struggles, we open ourselves to the touch of Christ, who heals our wounds, delivers us from egoistic longings, and makes us children of the resurrection. Moreover, we take advantage of spiritual direction and that source of revitalised love, the sacrament of Reconciliation." (*Constitutions* 25)
[65] Luke 1: 45.
[66] Luke 1: 46-49.
[67] Luke 1: 38.

As Brothers and Sisters

[68] John 13: 34.
[69] Cf. John 17 and Marcellin's Spiritual Testament respectively.
[70] Cf. *Life*, Part 1, Chapter 6, page 61; Chapter 7, pages 74 -75.
[71] Cf. *Life*, Part 1, Chapter 7, page 73; see also pages 74-75.
[72] Cf. Formation Guide, Nos. 13ff. (Rome, 1994).
[73] Cf. Br. Charles Howard, *Marist Apostolic Spirituality.* Circulars Vol. XXIX, No. 8 (1992) page 487, where examples are given of Jesus living communion.
[74] Cf. *Novo Millennio Ineunte*. No. 43.
[75] Acts 4: 32; cf. *Life*, Part 1, Chapter 10, page 106.
[76] Marcellin writes humbly that he is willing to make whatever sacrifice is needed for the welfare of his Brothers: "There is not one single truly good thing that I do not wish for you, and that I am not completely ready to do or undertake any-

thing in order to obtain for you." (Letter to Br. Denis, 5 January 1838; [Letter No.168]). For the testimony of the Brothers, see for example, Br. Laurent (*Origines Maristes* Document No. 756). In his letters Marcellin writes with such understanding and affection for each Brother personally, responding to their concerns with challenge and encouragement, humour and practical support. He often finishes his letters with this expression: "I leave you in the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and of Mary." A very significant gesture of his love of the Brothers and his concern for their welfare, is that it is a visit to a sick Brother which nearly causes his death and that of his companion in a snow storm. (*Life*, Part 2, Chapter 7, pages 343-344.) See also the reflection on this incident in Br. Seán Sammon, *A Revolution of the Heart: Marcellin's spirituality and a contemporary identity for his Little Brothers of Mary.* Circulars Vol. XXXI, No. 1 (2003) pages 58-59. When his fledgling community is at risk, he asks to be carried from his sick-bed so that his presence can calm and reassure the Brothers (*Life*, Part 1, Chapter 13, page 141).

[77] Cf. Br. Charles Howard, *Marist Apostolic Spirituality*. Circulars Vol. XXIX, No. 8 (1992) pages 487-488.

[78] *Constitutions* 21.

[79] John 13: 34.

[80] Cf Br. Seán Sammon, *A Revolution of the Heart: Marcellin's spirituality and a contemporary identity for his Little Brothers of Mary.* Circulars Vol. XXXI, No. 1 (2003) page 51.

[81] Matthew 11: 29.

[82] *Choose Life* - the message of the XXth General Chapter No. 24 (Rome, 2001).

[83] Br. Seán Sammon, *Marvellous Companions: community life among Marcellin's Little Brothers of Mary*. Circulars Vol. XXXI No. 2 (2005) page 64.

[84] John 2: 1-11.

[85] Cf. The Memorare, in *Life*, Part 2, Chapter 7, page 343.

[86] Cf. Luke 15: 11-32. See also Br. Seán Sammon, *Marvelous Companions: community life among Marcellin's Little Brothers of Mary.* Circulars Vol. XXXI No. 2 (2005) page 66.

[87] Cf. *Choose Life* - the Message of the XXth General Chapter No. 20 (Rome 2001).

[88] Cf. Br. Charles Howard, *Marist Apostolic Spirituality*. Circulars Vol. XXIX, No. 8 (1992) pages 466 and 469.

[89] John 13: 35.

[90] Cf. *Constitutions* 3. See also Br. Charles Howard, *Marist Apostolic Spirituality.* Circulars Vol. XXIX, No. 8 (1992),

page 458-459.
[91] Cf. *Vita Consecrata* No. 60.
[92] Cf. *Vita Consecrata* No. 51 and Br. Charles Howard, *Marist Apostolic Spirituality*. Circulars Vol. XXIX, No. 8 (1992) page 489.
[93] *Life*, Part 1, Chapter 22, page 236.
[94] *Life*, Idem.

Bringing Good News to the Poor

[95] Luke 4: 18; cf. Is. 61: 1.
[96] John 10: 10.
[97] *Marist Apostolic Spirituality* No. 13, *from Brothers in Solidarity - Proceedings of the XIXth General Chapter* (Rome, 1993).
[98] Cf. Br. Seán Sammon *Making Jesus known and loved: Marist apostolic life today.* Circulars Vol. XXXI No. 3 (2006), page 108.
[99] The reference is to Psalm 127. Cf. *Life*, Part 2, Chapter 3, pages 288 and 209 and Letter to Br. François, 10 January 1838 (Letter No. 169).
[100] Luke 1: 39-45.
[101] Cf. *Choose Life* – the Message of the XXth General Chapter No. 42.4 (Rome, 2001).
[102] Luke 1: 39.
[103] Cf. *Marist Apostolic Spirituality* No. 21, from *Brothers in Solidarity - Proceedings of the XIXth General Chapter* (Rome, 1993).
[104] Luke 4: 18.
[105] *Life*, Part 2, Chapter 6, page 330.
[106] Cf. *Choose Life* – the Message of the XXth General Chapter No. 18 (Rome, 2001).
[107] For example, with the Samaritan woman - John 4: 7-27.
[108] *Constitutions* 21.
[109] To understand the use of the term "brother" see the Introduction of this document in the section "How to understand and to use this text" and also paragraph No. 119 in Part 3.
[110] Letter to Bishop de Bruillard, 15 February 1837 (Letter No. 93.)
[111] Cf. *Constitutions* 82.
[112] This has become a quite common expression among some Christian groups since John Paul II used it to invite young people to be "sowers of hope" on the II World Youth Day in 1987 in Buenos Aires. Subsequently, Br. Charles wrote a

Circular inviting the Brothers to be men of hope and men of mission (cf. Br. Charles Howard, *Sowers of Hope*. Circulars Vol. XXIX, No. 5 (1990).

[113] Dom Helder Câmara.

[114] Cf. *Choose Life* – the Message of the XX[th] General Chapter No. 33 (Rome, 2001).

[115] *Marist Brothers Today* – the message of the XVII[th] General Chapter No. 16 (Rome, 1976).

[116] Cf. Br. Seán Sammon, *Making Jesus known and loved: Marist apostolic life today.* Circulars Vol. XXXI No. 3 (2006), page 107.

[117] *Life*, Part 1, Chapter 7, page 71: "However I want the fruits of your zeal to be dedicated to the most ignorant and the most deprived children."

[118] *Marist Apostolic Spirituality* No. 16, from *Brothers in Solidarity* - Proceedings of the XIX[th] General Chapter (Rome, 1993).

[119] Matthew 28: 18.

[120] Cf. Anglican–Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ* (2005) No. 5.

[121] John 2: 5.

We See New Visions, Dream New Dreams

[122] Cf. Joel 3: 1.

[123] Cf. Luke 15: 5.

[124] Cf. Luke 15: 5.

[125] Cf. Joel 3: 1.

[126] Cf. Luke 1: 46.

[127] Inspired by the prayer that concludes *A Letter of Thanks* by Br. Charles Howard (Rome, 1993).

CHARISM

Charism is a word very often used today in the documents of the Church and Religious Congregations. We find it in the political and civil world, as well. In spirituality, charism is a gift or a grace given by the Holy Spirit to an individual not for their own benefit, but for the profit of the whole Church.

The writings of Saint Paul especially, underline the importance of such gifts and that their variety enriches the Church community given to individual persons but for the benefit of the whole community. In this sense everybody in the Church is gifted with a particular grace so as to participate in the building up a more spiritual Church and a better world.

We may, however, speak of a charism of a group, of an Institute. Br Sean explains it this way:

"The charism that entered our Church and world through Marcellin Champagnat, therefore, is much more than certain works thought to be faithful to his original vision, more than a style of prayer or a particular spirituality – as important as both might be – and more than a composite of the qualities that marked our founder's life. Our Institute's charism is nothing less than the presence of the Holy Spirit. Allowing that Spirit to work in and through us can give rise to some surprising outcomes… Today the Spirit that was so active in our founder longs to live and breathe in you and me" (pages 27 and 42).

References:

1 Corinthians 12-14 (especially 1 Corinthians 12: 8-10, 28-30).
Romans 12: 6-8. *Lumen Gentium* No. 12. *Christifidelis Laici* No. 24.
Br. Seán Sammon, *Making Jesus known and loved:*
Marist apostolic life today. Circulars, Vol. XXXI, No. 3 (2006) pages 23 – 42.

CONTEMPLATION

Contemplation as used in a religious sense is a type of prayer or meditation in which thinking and structure are replaced by a simple focus on the presence of God. Within Christianity it is related to mysticism, and portrayed by the works of great mystic authors such as Teresa of Avila. It is a process of relative stillness and receptivity, rather than activity. It is the gaze of faith fixed on Jesus, an attentiveness to the Word of God, a silent love. Most importantly, it is a way of being, not merely of praying.

References:

Catechism of the Catholic Church No. 2724 (Rome, 1994).
Richard McBrien (Ed.), *Harper-Collins Encyclopaedia of Catholicism* (New York, 1995).

FOURVIÈRE

On a hill overlooking the city of Lyons a chapel dedicated to Our Lady was built during the XIIth century. It became the destination of pilgrimages and it was very famous especially in the XVIIth century. Fourvière was the place where Jean-Claude Courville, Jean-Claude Colin, and Marcellin Champagnat went on the 23rd July, 1816 - the day after their ordination – with nine others to entrust to Mary their plans to found an order whose mission would be the continuation of her work in the Church. The commitment was formulated in their Fourvière Pledge. It was also decided that Marcellin would be in charge of the foundation of the Marist Brothers. He went back to Fourvière to make his own promise which he fulfilled in a very short time.

Until recently, the statue of Mary contained a heart that could be opened and strips of paper were placed there with the name of the missionaries, both Brothers and Fathers, who had sailed for the South Pacific.

References:
http://www.champagnat.org
Br. Jean-Baptiste, *Life of Joseph-Benoît-Marcellin Champagnat (Bicentenary Edition)* (Rome, 1989), Part 1, Chapter 3, page 30, note No. 35.

MARIE-FRANÇOISE PERROTON AND THE PIONEERS OF THE MISSIONARY SISTERS OF THE SOCIETY OF MARY

Unlike most religious congregations, Marist Missionary Sisters do not claim any founder or foundress except, perhaps, Our Lady herself. Rather, they claim eleven Pioneers, exceptional women who went out on mission in a way that was unheard of for women of their times. These Pioneers began their missionary efforts in affiliation with the Society of Mary.

At the time of its recognition as a congregation in 1836, the Society of Mary was given the responsibility to evangelize the islands of Oceania and four Marist priests set out for the Pacific. A few years after the martyrdom of St. Peter Chanel (Marist) in 1841, the people on the island of Futuna became Catholic. It was a letter from two women of the Island of Wallis asking for someone to come and help them and their children to develop as good Christians that inspired the first Pioneer, Marie-Françoise Perroton, to leave France and travel to the Pacific.

As Marie-Françoise Perroton stepped aboard a trading vessel headed for the Pacific in 1845 at the age of 49, she took the first step towards the establishment of the Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary (smsm). Her great desire was to be missionary, happy to be associated with the Society of Mary and perhaps eventually she would become a religious. Marie-Françoise arrived in the Island of Wallis in 1846 and served the people there for some years before going to a nearby island to continue

her ministry. After twelve years in Oceania, she rejoiced in the day when other women from France joined her. Between 1857 and 1860, ten other women joined Marie-Françoise as missionaries in Wallis, Futuna, New Caledonia and Samoa. It is these eleven women, the so-called Pioneer sisters, who were there at the origins of the SMSM congregation. Although the Pioneers were lay women, their desire to be missionary, Marist and religious was evident.

Women from the islands of the Pacific joined them in the early years of their missionary activity. And, over time, women from many other countries followed in their footsteps. After years of development and being held together as a loose affiliation of missionary women, the congregation finally received official Church recognition in 1931 and became known as the *Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary.* It was then that the movement launched by Marie-Françoise Perroton came into its own.

Reference:

http://www.maristmissionarysmsm.org

GOOD MOTHER

Good Mother was the preferred title Marcellin Champagnat gave to Mary. Among the different statues of Mary that Marcellin had with him and that accompanied him during the birth and the development of the Institute, there is a special one: the statue of Mary, the Good Mother. The statue, showing Jesus in the arms of Mary, is an image of tenderness, and of the loving presence of Mary. The child Jesus, calm and confident, is in attitude of total reliance on Mary. This attitude of trust is fundamental in Marcellin's life and spirituality.

The image was quite popular in France during the XIXth century. The title is not original to Father Champagnat. It was a name very popular in the

France of his time. But he made it his own and came back to it again and again in his writings.

References:
www.champagnat.org
Life, Part 1, Chapter 13, page 142 and Chapter 22, page 238.
Bro. Alexandre Balko, *Repensons nos origines* (Rome, 2001), Chapter 3.

JEAN-BAPTISTE CHAMPAGNAT

Jean-Baptiste Champagnat, father of the future saint, was one of the better off peasant landowners and a man of some education. At first, he welcomed the Revolution of 1789, both for its ideals and for what he stood to gain from its success. In time, however, it was apparent that his ardour for the movement had cooled, and he rejected its excesses. They were many: the beheading of a King, a burdensome policy of military conscription, orders to hunt down priests and fugitive soldiers.
Throughout the revolutionary period, Marcellin's father held several important government positions in the town of Marlhes and distinguished himself as a person of patience, moderation, and political know-how. No one was killed, no one was taken away, the local church was neither burned nor sold. As a thinker, revolutionary, government official, tradesman, and farmer, what gifts did Jean-Baptiste pass along to his son? Discernment, compassion for others, diplomacy, a head for business, the skills of a labourer.

Reference:
Br. Seán Sammon, *Saint Marcellin Champagnat – The life and Mission A heart that knew no bounds* (Rome, 1999), pages 11-12.

JEAN-BAPTISTE MONTAGNE

On the 28th October, 1816, an event occurred that for Marcellin Champagnat was a conclusive sign to move ahead with his dream of founding a congregation of Brothers. The young priest was called to the house of a carpenter in Les Palais, a hamlet just beyond Le Bessat. A seventeen year old boy, Jean-Baptiste Montagne, lay dying. The lad was entirely ignorant of matters of faith. Marcellin instructed him, heard his confession, and prepared him for death. He then left to visit another sick person in the area. When he returned to the Montagne household, Marcellin learned that Jean-Baptiste had died. Marcellin's encounter with this adolescent boy transformed him. Jean-Baptiste's lack of knowledge about Jesus convinced the young priest that God was calling him to found a congregation of Brothers to evangelize the young, particularly those most neglected. Walking back to the parish house in La Valla, Marcellin decided to put his plan into action.

References:

Br. Seán Sammon, *Saint Marcellin Champagnat – The life and Mission – A heart that knew no bounds* (Rome, 1999), pages 32-33.
Life, Part 1, Chapter 6, pages 58-59.

JEAN-CLAUDE COLIN

A French Priest who became the founder of the Society of Mary (Marists).
Colin was born on the 7th August, 1790 at St-Bonnet-le-Troncy, in the Rhone département of France. His father had sheltered priests during the turmoil of the French Revolution. Both parents died when Colin was only four years old.
With his brother Pierre, Colin attended the minor seminary at Saint-Jodard, he also spent time at Alix and Verrières where he was a contemporary of Marcellin Champagnat and John Vianney. In 1813 he

entered the major seminary of Saint-Irénée at Lyon. Towards the end of 1814 Jean-Claude Courveille, who had been a student in another seminary, transferred to Saint-Irénée. Courveille recruited a group of senior seminarians to his idea of founding a Society of Mary. Many of the group including Colin and Courveille were ordained as priests of the Lyon diocese on the 22nd July, 1816. His brother Pierre was appointed the Parish Priest of Cerdon in the Aix département. Jean-Claude was to be his curate there.

For six years he worked in the parish at Cerdon and on the outline of the founding documents (*Rule of Life* and *Constitutions*) of the Marist idea. Pierre was eager to join the Marist Project and he convinced Jeanne-Marie Chavoin and Marie Jotillon to begin it with them. Cerdon had been moved into the re-created Diocese of Belley and Jean-Claude convinced Bishop Devie to allow the Marists to preach missions in the Bugey, a poor and somewhat neglected country region. He was asked to take over the College of Belley as Principal and when Rome approved the Society of Mary in 1836 he was elected as its first Superior General. Rome assigned the new Society the evangelisation of the Vicariate of Western Oceania.

In 1854 Colin resigned the office of Superior General and retired to Notre-Dame-de-la-Neylière, where he spent the last twenty years of his life revising and completing the Constitutions. The Constitutions of the Society of Mary were definitively approved by the Holy See on the 28th February, 1873. Jean-Claude Colin died at La Neylière two years later.

Reference:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean-Claude_Colin

JEANNE-MARIE CHAVOIN

The Marist Sisters recognise Jeanne-Marie Chavoin (Mother Saint Joseph) as their Foundress and Jean-Claude Colin as their Founder.

Jeanne-Marie was born in the village of Coutouvre in France on the 29th August, 1786. Her father was the village tailor so their home must have often been full of people. Jeanne-Marie grew up with little formal education, but developed a deep and sure faith. She was deeply involved in the life of the village, nurturing faith and reaching out to those who were overlooked. Though very active, she found strength and joy in long hours before the Blessed Sacrament. She was invited several times to enter different Congregations but always refused, certain that God was not calling her to these. Finally in 1817, when she was 31 years old, she received a letter from Fr. Pierre Colin, brother of Jean-Claude Colin, who had once been parish priest in Coutouvre, inviting her to Cerdon to collaborate in the Marist Project. She knew immediately that this was where God was calling her. With her close friend Marie Jotillon, she set off for Cerdon.

For six years, four of which she was housekeeper at the presbytery, she collaborated with the Colin brothers in shaping the future Society of Mary - the "Work of Mary". In 1823, Marie Jotillon, Marie Gardet and Jeanne-Marie Chavoin began to live together in community in Cerdon. The first three Marist Sisters lived in dire poverty, but nevertheless, perceiving their joy and their sanctity, many young women of the town asked to join them. Eight future Marist Sisters received the habit on the 8th December, 1824. Soon after they were invited by Bishop Devie to go to Belley where the first profession took place on the 6th September, 1826. Jeanne-Marie, or Mother Saint Joseph as she was now called, was Superior General of the new Congregation till 1853, when she was urged to resign. At the age of 69 she began a new foundation in Jarnosse, an abandoned village which was poor and needy in every way. Here she was able to live the kind of active, inserted religious life which she had always desired for her Sisters. She died at Jarnosse on the 30th June, 1858, at the age of 71.

Reference:

http://www.marists.org/beginnings.htm

LA LOUVESC

The small town of La Louvesc was a place of pilgrimage in the times of St. Marcellin as it continues to be today. People would walk or travel to La Louvesc to pray at the shrine of St. John Francis Regis who died there after a good number of years of being the apostle of the region. At the time of Fr. Champagnat, the small church where the Saint had been buried had been converted into a basilica by the same architect, Mr. Bossan, of N.D. de Fourvière.

Marcellin seems to have had a special bond with his mother: he was the last surviving child, and seems to have been marked out from an early age for something special in terms of the service of God. When he decided to study for the priesthood, Marie-Thérèse approved of and supported his determination: she sent him off to her son-in-law for some elementary education; and when it was apparent he was not succeeding in his studies she encouraged him to further prayer and devotion, and took him on a pilgrimage to the shrine of St John Francis Regis, at La Louvesc, 40 kilometres away. They walked! They were to make that pilgrimage again after his first dismal year at the seminary.

La Louvesc is also the shrine where Fr. Champagnat went when Fr. Bochard, Vicar of Lyons dioceses, tried by every means to unite the Congregation of Brothers he had founded with the Brothers founded by Marcellin. Fr. Champagnat was not of this idea and things were not easy for him. At that time "he himself made a pilgrimage to the tomb of St. John Francis Regis at La Louvesc, interceding with him for the necessary light and strength".

References:

http://www.maristoz.edu.au
Life, Part 1, Chapter 11, page 112.
Br. José Diez Villacorta, *Lugares Maristas* (Buenos Aires, 1999), pages 26-27.

La Valla

In July 1816, the newly ordained priest Marcellin Champagnat was appointed as a curate to this parish. The village is located a little more than 45 kilometres south-west of Lyons. At this time it had 2,500 inhabitants. About 500 people lived in the village itself whereas the other 2000 were scattered over more than 60 hamlets.

In 1816 Fr. Champagnat first rented and then bought a small dilapidated building. On the 2nd January 1817, he accommodated there the first two Brothers who wanted to begin Marist life. A new extension was added to the house in 1822 to allow more room for eight new postulants who came unexpectedly. Fr. Champagnat left La Valla in 1824 and moved down to L'Hermitage to help in its construction.

The word La Valla, meaning "valley," is actually something of a misnomer when applied to the area around Mount Pilat. Rather than being made up of stretches of good soil surrounded by hills, hardly any level ground can be found in the locale. Ravines, rocks, precipices, and fast mountain streams, etching their way through rock and soil, are more common sights. During the young curate's day, some places were almost inaccessible for want of passable roads. Without doubt, Marcellin Champagnat faced a tough assignment in the midst of some rugged terrain.

Reference:

Br. Seán Sammon, *Saint Marcellin Champagnat – The Life and Mission - A heart that knew no bounds* (Rome, 1999), page 28.

Lectio Divina

A very ancient method of prayer is known as Lectio Divina. It is a slow, contemplative praying of the Scriptures which enables the Word of God to become a means of union with God.

Traditionally the Lectio Divina develops in four steps.

– *Lectio*
  Read the passage slowly several times.
– *Meditatio*
  Reflect on the text of the passage, thinking about how to apply it to one's own life. Pay attention to any phrase or word that seems to be of particular significance. This should not be confused with exegesis; but is a very personal reading of the Scripture and application to one's own life.
– *Oratio*
  Respond to the passage by opening up one's heart to God. This is not primarily an intellectual exercise, but more the beginning of a conversation with God.
– *Contemplatio*
  Listen to God. This is freeing oneself from one's own thoughts, both mundane and holy. It is about hearing God talk to us; opening our mind, heart and soul to the influence of God.

Reference:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_divina

L'HERMITAGE

By 1824, Marcellin's Institute had grown to such an extent that he needed the assistance of another priest. The Archiepiscopal Council voted on the 12th May to send Father Courveille to help out.
The priest's arrival freed Marcellin for a project that had long been close to his heart: the construction of a building spacious enough to house the ever-increasing number of Brothers. He purchased a piece of property, five acres in size, in a sheltered section of the valley of the Gier River. Bounded on east and west by steep mountain slopes, it contained a grove of oak trees and was well irrigated by water from the river. Late in May, Vicar General

Cholleton blessed the cornerstone; construction was soon underway.
Marcellin and his young Brothers worked steadily throughout the six months of summer and early autumn in 1824. They quarried and carried the stones for the building, dug sand, made mortar, and assisted the professional tradesmen, who had been hired for the skilled work. Lodged in an old rented house on the opposite bank of the Gier, the group came together for morning Mass in a small shed in an oak grove. This spot came to be known as the Chapel in the Woods. A chest of drawers served as the altar; a bell, suspended from a tree branch, called the community to prayer. What heady days for all involved: the young men found support in one another; they were also proud of their achievement.
Throughout construction of the five-story building, the founder set an example for his Brothers. He was the first to start work each day and the last to put it aside at night. While the Brothers appreciated Marcellin's efforts, some of his fellow clergy were less enthusiastic. They did not take kindly to the sight of a priest wearing dusty clothing, whose hands were rough from manual labour. Marcellin's parishioners, though, stood by him. They loved him as a pastor of souls, and being working people themselves, they admired him as a labourer and builder.
The new building was ready for occupancy by the end of winter 1825. In May of that year, the Brothers from La Valla took up residence at Notre Dame de l'Hermitage. Marcellin now had a Mother House for his Institute.

Reference:

Br. Seán Sammon, *Saint Marcellin Champagnat – The Life and Mission - A heart that knew no bounds* (Rome, 1999), pages 48-49.

LITTLE BROTHERS OF MARY

In a letter to King Louis-Philippe the 24th January, 1834 Marcellin explained the reason of the name given to his Institute. In his own words: "*I gave them the name of Little Brothers of Mary, quite convinced that this name alone would attract a big number of subjects. A speedy success, in a matter of a few years, has proved my intuition right, beyond my wildest hopes*".

This title expresses well three key elements of the spirit that Marcellin wished for his new Institute: that they gathered around Mary, being brother to all those with whom they worked, living a life of humility and simplicity.

When this Institute was recognised by the Church it was given the official title Marist Brothers of the Schools (Fratres Maristae a Scholis - FMS). Allowance was also made for the continued use of Marcellin's preferred title.

Reference:

Life, Part 2, Chapter 7, page 333, note No. 4.

LITTLE VIRTUES

They are attentive listening, enlightening dialogue, willing service, availability without counting the cost, gentleness, tolerance, courtesy, mutual support, silence, prayer and meditation.

Reference:

Avis, Leçons, Sentences (Lyon, 1927), Chapter 28.

LOUISE CHAMPAGNAT

After his mother, Louise Champagnat was the second woman to encourage Marcellin. A religious Sister of Saint Joseph and a sister to Jean-Baptiste Champagnat, she was expelled from her convent by the new government and sought sanctuary with his family during the days of revolutionary excess. Louise assisted in the boy's early religious formation; she was probably the first to model for him the merging of a life of prayer with one of service to others.

Reference:

Br. Seán Sammon, *Saint Marcellin Champagnat – The life and Mission – A heart that knew no bounds* (Rome, 1999), pages 11-12.

MARCELLIN CHAMPAGNAT

Marcellin Joseph Benoît Champagnat (1789-1840)
Priest of the Society of Mary, Founder of the Institute of the Little Brothers of Mary (Marist Brothers)

Marcellin Champagnat was born on the 20th May, 1789 in Marlhes, a village in the mountains of east-central France. He was the ninth child of a very Christian family, from whom he received his basic education. When Marcellin was 14, a priest passing through the village helped him to see that God was calling him to the priesthood.

Among his companions in the major seminary in Lyons were Jean-Marie Vianney, the future Curé of Ars, and Jean-Claude Colin who was to become the founder of the Marist Fathers. He was ordained on the 22nd July, 1816.

Marcellin was sent as curate to the parish of La Valla. His ministry there included visiting the sick, catechizing children, helping the poor, and helping families to live a Christian life.

On the 2nd January, 1817 only six months after his arrival in La Valla, Marcellin, the 27-year-old curate, brought together his first two disciples. Thus commenced the congregation of the Little Brothers of Mary, or Marist Brothers.
In 1836, the Church recognized the Society of Mary and entrusted to it the missions of Oceania. Marcellin took his vows as a member of the Society of Mary, and sent three Brothers with the first missionary Marist Fathers to the islands of the Pacific.
A lengthy illness gradually wore down his robust constitution. Worn out by his labours, he died at the age of 51 on the 6th June, 1840.

Reference:
http://www.deaconlaz.org/marcellin_joseph_benoit_champagn.htm

MARIE-THÉRÈSE CHIRAT

Marie-Thérèse Chirat was Marcellin's mother. A prudent person of steadfast character, she married Jean-Baptiste Champagnat in 1775. Her life was marked by utter integrity, sterling faith, and a love of work.

Reference:
Br. Seán Sammon, *Saint Marcellin Champagnat – The life and Mission – A heart that knew no bounds* (Rome, 1999), pages 11-12.

MARIST

Towards the end of 1814 Jean-Claude Courveille who had been a student in another seminary transferred to Saint-Irénée in Lyons. Courveille recruited a group of senior seminarians to his idea of founding a Society of Mary. He had been cured of semi-blindness after prayer to Our Lady of Le Puy. In gratitude he had the inspiration and inner conviction that just as there had arisen at the time of the Reformation a Society dedicated to Jesus, the Jesuits, so at this time of Revolution there could be a Society dedicated to Mary whose members would call themselves Marists. He believed that the inspiration had come directly from Mary herself. The original dream for the Marist family consisted of one religious congregation and a lay branch. However, that dream was unrealizable.

In the new Society there was no provision for Teaching Brothers. And this was the dearest wish of Marcellin Champagnat. He would often say to his companions: "We must have Brothers! We must have Brothers to teach catechism, to help the missionaries and to conduct schools." As his companions did not envisage the existence of Brothers in the new Society they left in the hands of Marcellin the possibility to found them. He willingly accepted the task.

Today, the term "Marist" is shared by a number of distinct religious movements. Officially, there are the congregations of the Marist Fathers and Brothers, Marist Brothers of the Schools (Little Brothers of Mary), Marist Sisters and Marist Missionary Sisters. In addition there are Lay Marist groups. Some Lay Marist groups have a spirituality which originates in Father Colin. Other Lay Marist groups trace their spirituality to St. Marcellin Champagnat.

Official approval by the Church for each of the branches of the Marist family took place at different times. The Marist lay branch received formal recognition in 1830. The Marist Fathers and Brothers were approved in 1836 and undertook major responsibility for the newly opened areas of Western Oceania (the South Pacific). The Marist Brothers of the Schools (Little Brothers of Mary) received their formal approval in 1863 and the Marist Sisters in 1884. The Marist Missionary Sisters received official

approval as a religious congregation in 1931.
Each member of this worldwide family, whether they be sister, brother, lay person or priest, endeavours to live his or her life in the "spirit of Mary."

References:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean-Claude_Colin
http://www.mariste.be/maristfamily/familyindex.htm

MARIST PROJECT

This term is used to describe the Marists' self-understanding of their particular mission and distinctive style. The French word *projet* has the sense of both a rationale for action and a characteristic way of proceeding. For the founding Marist priests, their *projet* initially took shape in their seminary days, and was formalised by their signing of a pledge at the shrine of Notre Dame de Fourvière the day after most of them were ordained, the 23rd July, 1816. In the decades that followed, they deepened their understanding of what it meant to be Marist and expanded the number and type of people who shared in it: priests, brothers, sisters, and lay people. Marcellin Champagnat understood that his Little Brothers of Mary, working mainly in schools, shared in this broader *projet*.
In essence, the Marist Project is to share in the work of Mary and to undertake it in Mary's way. This work is to bring Christ-life to birth in people, and to gather them into community. It is to be with the Church as it comes into being, in French *l'Eglise naissante.* The intuition of the Marist Project is that the Church will be effectively nurtured into life by people who take on Mary's role in humility and simplicity, with mercy and discretion, sowing seeds of faith, hope and love.

Reference:
Life, Part 1, Chapter 3, pages 27-28.

MEMORARE IN THE SNOW

In February 1823, Marcellin learned that Brother Jean-Baptiste in Bourg-Argental had come down with a serious illness. Concerned about his condition, the young priest set out on the twenty-kilometre journey across rough countryside to visit him. Brother Stanislaus was at his side. On their return trip, walking through heavily timbered territory, the two men were caught in the full fury of one of the region's snowstorms. Both were young and energetic, but hours of wandering lost on the slopes of Mount Pilat led eventually to exhaustion. Stanislaus had reached the limits of his stamina. Night set in; the possibility of death in the snow increased with each passing hour. Both men turned to Mary for help and prayed the Memorare.

Within a short while, they spied lamplight, not too far away in the distance. A local farmer, Mr. Donnet, had left his house to enter a nearby stable. This particular evening, though, he had taken an unusual route, especially with the storm underway. By habit, he entered the stable through a convenient door in the wall of the house. For reasons that can be explained only by faith, this particular night he braved wind and snow and chose a route that took him outdoors with his lantern. For the rest of his days, Marcellin saw his deliverance and that of Brother Stanislaus—henceforth referred to as the Memorare in the Snow—as an act of Providence.

References:

Br. Seán Sammon, *Saint Marcellin Champagnat – The life and Mission – A heart that knew no bounds* (Rome, 1999), pages 44-45.
Life, Part 2, Chapter 7, pages 343-344.

MISSION

Jesus was sent by the Father on mission. Led by the Spirit he announced the Good News of the Kingdom, died to bring God's family together in unity and to consecrate the whole of the world to lead it to its fulfilment. In his turn, Jesus entrusted the continuation of his mission to the Church to the end of time.

The mission of the Church is that entrusted to Jesus' followers. According to the needs of the times the Holy Spirit inspires in the Church people or groups of people to bring to fulfilment Jesus' mission in the world. Religious Institutes, like the Marist Brothers, receive a specific mission through the founding charism that was given to St. Marcellin Champagnat for the service of the Church and of the world.

The Mission of the Marist Institute is defined as the one of evangelizing through education. Following Marcellin Champagnat we seek to be apostles to youth and children, evangelizing through our life and our presence among them as much as through our teaching: being neither simply catechists, nor just teachers of secular subjects.

References:

Constitutions of the Marist Brothers, Nos. 78-79.

In the Footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat: a vision of Marist education today, Nos. 75-85 (Rome, 1998).

MYSTICAL

A mystic person is one who, through prayer and contemplation of the divine mystery, wants to reach a deeper communion with God. Communion with God is at the same time a gift from God. We know that God can be known through Revelation which reached its highest point in Christ. However, this knowledge we might have of God can be pursued in a discursive or intellectual manner as theologians do, or through a prevalent approach of a loving and prayerful contemplation of God and

His mystery. It is mystical knowledge.
Such knowledge is more an intuitive knowledge of God who wants to be in communion with people, and who is calling people to be in communion with Him. Therefore the aim of the Christian mystic is one's communion with God.
Mystical knowledge is a gift of God that no human effort can produce. However, this gratuitous gift can only have an effect in the human person if one is freely open to welcome it and freely answers with love to God's initiative. It usually grows only through a considerable time of desert-like experience in the exercise of solid faith and generous love.

References:

S. De Fiores and S. Goffi, *Nuovo Dizionario di Spiritualità* (Milan, 1985), pages 985-988. Ermanno Ancilli, *La Mistica* (Rome, 1984), page 39.

ORDINARY RESOURCE

This is another common title for Mary used in the Marist tradition. The expression "Our Ordinary Resource" referring to Mary never appears in the actual writings of Marcellin Champagnat. In this sense the reflections of Brother Jean-Baptiste in his *Life* of Marcellin might not be historically accurate.
Brother Jean-Baptiste presents the following incident. By 1830 the Congregation was not approved by the Government and the story went abroad that it would be suppressed. In fact, the Prefect of the Loire was preparing to close the novitiate. It is in these difficult circumstances, instead of losing his calm and his courage, Father Champagnat had recourse to the Blessed Virgin, confiding his community to her. Having assembled the Brothers, Father Champagnat told them: *Don't be frightened by the threats made against you, and put aside all fear for your future; Mary who has gathered us*

in this house, will not allow us to be driven from it by men's malice. Let us be more faithful than ever in honouring: she is our Ordinary Resource. This was the only precaution he thought necessary to take; and Mary, in whom he had placed all his confidence, didn't let him down: the Prefect was transferred and the house was in no way disturbed. Afterwards, the singing of the Salve Regina in the morning was maintained and became an article of the Rule.
The quotation might not be fully true from the historical point of view. However the title was handed on to Brothers from generation to generation so that we may consider it part of the Marist tradition even if this title in the meaning that it evokes is poorer than the one of Good Mother.

Reference:
Life, Part 2, Chapter 7, pages 341-342.

PILAT

To care for the La Valla parish, which takes in the slopes and the passes of Mount Pilat, was one of the most arduous and demanding of tasks. Its two thousand population was mostly scattered amongst deep valleys or on steep heights. The La Valla territory really beggars description. No matter what direction you go, there is nothing but steep rises, sharp descents, crags and precipices. Several of its hamlets, situated way down in the ravines of Pilat and at an hour and a half's distance from the church, were almost inaccessible for want of passable roads.

Reference:
Life, Part 1, Chapter 4, page 34.

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH (OR LITURGY OF THE HOURS)

The Liturgy of the Hours is the name given in the Latin Rite of the Roman Catholic Church to the official prayer whereby the hours of the day are consecrated to God. The Psalter, or Book of Psalms, is by tradition the heart of the Liturgy of the Hours. The Liturgy of the Hours is recited in a cycle of four weeks.

Reference:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liturgy_of_the_Hours

REVIEW OF THE DAY

Each evening we take time to look back over the day, thanking the Father for the ways in which His love has manifested itself, asking pardon for our failings and renewing our desire to be faithful by giving ourselves to Him as His sons. (*Constitutions* 72)

We learn gradually to penetrate beyond the surface of things, to see beyond the evident to the within, to see as Jesus sees and to sense more clearly His presence in our lives and His calls, His invitations to us coming through the experience of daily living. … is therefore centred, not so much on ourselves and our efforts, but on discovering what God is doing in our lives and the kind of response we are making to Him.

Reference:
Br. Charles Howard, *Discernment*. Circulars Vol. XXIX, No. 3 (1988), page 141.

VATICAN II

The Second Vatican Council, or Vatican II, was an ecclesial, theological, and ecumenical congress convened in the autumns of the four years from 1962 through 1965. Pope John XXIII convoked the Council on the 11th October, 1962, and with bishops from all over the world, sought to define the nature, scope, and mission of the Church. The Council closed on the 8th December, 1965.

Vatican II marked a fundamental shift towards the modern Church. The Council produced 16 documents some of which are described as the greatest expressions of Catholic social teaching in Church history. The decisions of the Council, especially those regarding the liturgy, affected the lives of Catholics around the world. After Vatican II the use of the vernacular language was permitted in the celebration of the Mass. Increased participation by the laity distinguishes Catholic life after the Second Vatican Council. Bible study groups, Marriage Encounter, social action organizations, and the charismatic renewal movement are all fruits of the Council. Vatican II made possible the many post-conciliar official Church documents on Catholic social teaching.

While the basic doctrines of the Church did not change with the Council, its influence and documents created more profound changes for the Catholic Church than occurred in the previous five hundred years. Since Pope John XXIII spoke of "opening the windows of the Church" great and gradual changes have occurred.

Reference:

http://www.seattleu.edu/lemlib/web_archives/vaticanII/vaticanII.htm

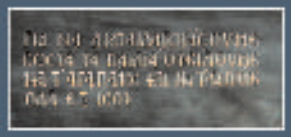
VOCATION

The idea of vocation is central to Christian belief. God has created each person with gifts and talents oriented toward specific purposes and a way of life. Particularly in the Orthodox and Catholic Churches, the idea of vocation is associated with a divine call to service to the Church and humanity through particular vocational life commitments. We may find these commitments in any way of life: marriage to a particular person, consecration as a religious, ordination to priestly ministry in the Church and a holy life as a single person. In the broader sense, Christian vocation includes the use of ones gifts in their profession, family life, church and civic commitments for the sake of the greater common good.

Reference:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vocation







To teach children well,
you must first love them and
love them all equally.



Saint Marcellin.

If the lord
does not build the house,
in vain do
the builders labour.





All to Jesus
through Mary,
all to Mary
for Jesus.