

# CHAMPAGNAT MOVEMENT OF THE MARIST FAMILY



## LIFE PROJECT IN FRATERNITY



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## PRESENTATION

This document wishes to update the Life Project of the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family (CMMF) after a journey that began in 1985 when it was launched by the 18th General Chapter of the Marist Brothers. Therefore, the document stems from and aims at a life experience.

The CMMF has been and still is a real and valuable support for many people who wish to grow within charism and deepen their Marist experience.

The document you hold in your hands portrays the identity of the Champagnat Movement. It points to the horizon towards which we want to move.

In the Movement's journey until now, with its great diversity and creativity, we acknowledge many signs of life. However, we also feel the need to respond in a deeper and better-organized way to the calls of the Church, the challenges of the world and the new vision of the Institute.

Brother Charles Howard (Superior General from 1985 to 1993) already invited us to carry out this task in his letter presenting the CMMF Life Project in 1990: *"The 'final' document will be a living word coming from your own hearts, from your own faith, from your own experience, from your living of Champagnat's spirituality. We see this modest document as the first step in a process, which you will complete in the years ahead"*.

The Movement is a treasure in our lives that we want to share with you.

## CHAPTER 1: SOURCE AND INSPIRATION OF THE CMMF

### 1. LAY VOCATION

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As every Christian vocation, lay life is the response to an encounter with the God of Jesus, who loves us without measure. It is a fruit of our baptism, which send us out on the only Christian mission: making the Kingdom of God present in this world<sup>1</sup>.

The Holy Spirit remains active and present today in the Church and in our religious family. Indeed, we fully acknowledge the Marist lay vocation among us today. It is a specific way of being disciples of Jesus in the manner of Mary, following the insights of Marcellin Champagnat<sup>2</sup>.

The CMMF is a privileged space for the development of this lay vocation.

### 2. MARCELLIN CHAMPAGNAT AND THE BROTHERS

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Marcellin Champagnat personally experienced Jesus and Mary's unending love for him. This drove him to become the neighbor of everyone, and made him sensitive to the needs of his time.

Being the practical man he was, his encounter with a dying young man who knew nothing about God moved him to consider how to open the heart of children and young people to God's love. He frequently repeated: "I cannot see a child without wanting to teach him the catechism and let him know how much Jesus Christ loves him".

In La Valla, with this very spirit, he founded the Institute of the Little Brothers of Mary on January 2, 1817, aiming at the Christian education of children and young people, especially those who are most neglected. Since then, his Institute has spread across the world.

In 1863, the Holy See approved the new Congregation as an autonomous Institute of pontifical right. While respecting the original name, they called it Marist Brothers of the Schools (Fratres Maristæ a Scholis, FMS).

By proclaiming Marcellin Champagnat's holiness in 1999, the Church acknowledged him as a model in the following of Jesus.

Brothers and laity, we feel today as heirs and carriers of the charism that Marcellin set in motion.

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<sup>1</sup> *Gathered Around the Same Table* 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Gathered Around the Same Table* 11-13.

### 3. FOUNDATION OF THE CMMF

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In 1985, the General Chapter of the Marist Brothers launched the lay group called Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family. It met a request from many lay people and brothers who wanted to share the Marist charism and experience it more deeply.

Article 164.4 of the Brothers' Constitutions defines its identity:

*"The Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family is an extension of our Institute; it is a movement for people who wish to share more fully the spirituality and sense of mission inherited from Marcellin Champagnat. In this movement, affiliated members, young people, parents, helpers, former students, and friends deepen within themselves the spirit of our Founder so that they can live it and let it shine forth. The Institute animates and coordinates the activities of this movement by setting up suitable structures".*

The Superior General of the Marist Institute, in coordination with the lay leaders of the Movement, ensures that it remains true to the spirit and tradition of Champagnat.

### 4. FRATERNITIES

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Fraternities are the fundamental units of the Champagnat Movement. A fraternity is a small community, whose members meet regularly to share life and faith in a family atmosphere, deepen the experience of God, and develop their commitment to life and to the world.

Each member is responsible for the life of the fraternity, and is always ready to invite and welcome new members.

The brothers' participation in the fraternities is a great richness. Their presence as traveling companions empowering lay people in their leading role is the most clear and tender image of the Marian way to accompany and encourage life in the fraternities.

The fraternities from different countries make up the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family as an extension of the Institute.

### 5. MEMBERS

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The Movement is open to any person who has found God and experienced God's love, and therefore wishes to respond by living out Champagnat's charism.

Applicants go through an initial preparation and accompaniment stage before formally applying to join a particular fraternity and become an active member.

As CMMF members, we are open to dialogue and collaboration with people from different religious traditions according to the local situation.

## CHAPTER 2: THE MARIST CHARISM

### THE MARIST CHARISM

The charism of Champagnat is a gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church and the world. Receiving this gift as laity and brothers makes us partners, and jointly responsible before God for living it out and sharing it with others<sup>3</sup>.

The lay dimension brings new nuances and enriches the charism. Thanks to the essence of our lay vocation, which allows a full immersion in the world, we are in a privileged situation to grasp the signs of the times and therefore update the charism.

Our life spreads and grows stronger in the mission, thrives on spirituality, and becomes richer through fraternal sharing. For this reason, mission, spirituality, and shared life are three indispensable dimensions of the Marist charism that identifies us<sup>4</sup>.

### 2. 1. Spirituality

Spirituality means living in God and according to God, experiencing the power of the Spirit who gives meaning to our existence, drives our actions, strengthens our hope, and helps us live every moment of our life deeply<sup>5</sup>.

## 6. FOLLOWING JESUS IN THE STYLE OF MARY LIKE CHAMPAGNAT

In the footsteps of Champagnat, our spirituality is rooted in the love God has for us, and grows through our commitment to others. It is Marian and apostolic.

It is a blessing for us to have Mary as our mother and sister in faith. This is the source of our particular traits as followers of Jesus in the style of Champagnat<sup>6</sup>:

- ✓ Presence and trust in God
- ✓ Love of Jesus and his Gospel
- ✓ In Mary's way
- ✓ Family spirit
- ✓ Simplicity
- ✓ Effective solidarity with the poor
- ✓ Love of work

Thereby, Marcellin Champagnat's spirituality is a source of grace and inspiration in our effort to build the Kingdom of God. It is up to us to incarnate it in our local cultures and situations<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> *Water From the Rock* 13. *Gathered Around the Same Table* 45.

<sup>4</sup> Open letter about *Gathered Around the Same Table*.

<sup>5</sup> *Gathered Around the Same Table* 100-101.

<sup>6</sup> *Water From the Rock* 16-43.

<sup>7</sup> *Water From the Rock*, introduction letter.

## 7. A SPIRITUALITY THAT ENCOUNTERS GOD IN EVERYDAY LIFE

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We do not equate our experience of God with the moments of prayer or the reference to “sacred places”. We experience God’s love every moment of our life Like Champagnat did<sup>8</sup>.

For us, our family, work activities, social relations, and involvement in the world have a sacramental value. They are privileged spaces of communion with God<sup>9</sup>. At the same time, we express a spiritual depth that underlies day-to-day life, and by doing so we give witness to Jesus and his Gospel<sup>10</sup>.

## 8. LAY MYSTICS AND PROPHETS

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As CMMF members, we need to integrate life and faith, safeguarding the mystical and prophetic dimension that makes us live in God. For that reason:

- ✓ We set aside quality time and space to deepen our sense of who we are, so as to give meaning to what we do<sup>11</sup>.
- ✓ We try to become prayerful persons and fraternities in order to let God’s face shine through us and create humane spaces in our world.
- ✓ We regularly feed on the Word of God that we share, which enables a discernment process that invites us to leave our comfort zone.
- ✓ We appreciate the process of accompaniment, which helps us grow in spirituality and become more committed.
- ✓ We celebrate the presence of God among us, oftentimes through a sacrament (Marriage, Baptism, Eucharist and Anointing of the Sick).
- ✓ When it seems suitable, we discern the possibility of making ourselves available to carry out a specific mission locally or abroad.

### 2.2. Shared Life

## 9. IN KEEPING WITH THE FAMILY OF NAZARETH AND LA VALLA

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Both in La Valla and at the Hermitage, Marcellin Champagnat invited the brothers to develop the same family spirit that Mary lived at home in Nazareth. It is made of simplicity, trust, joy, generosity, forgiveness and mutual support.

Our Movement strives to live this family spirit. In line with the first Christian communities, we share faith and life, and even material goods, when discernment leads us to do so.

We live our family spirit not only in joyful moments when everything goes well but particularly when there is trouble, sickness and pain. In these circumstances, each member gently tries to come close and offer effective support and comfort.

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<sup>8</sup> *Water From the Rock* 64.

<sup>9</sup> *Water From the Rock* 75-76.

<sup>10</sup> *Gathered Around the Same Table* 37.

<sup>11</sup> II Marist International Mission Assembly. Nairobi, September 2015.

## 10. A FAMILY LIVING IN COMMUNION

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The CMMF was born with a clear vocation to communion, and to promote family spirit. The strength of this family spirit gathers us who live the Marist charism into a new family of followers of Christ in Mary's way. The table of La Valla is a symbol of the relationship that unites us<sup>12</sup>.

Brothers and laity, when we share life, mission, and spirituality, we get to know each other better, and realize with joy that we are a gift from God for each other.

Our specific vocations are complementary and shed light on each other<sup>13</sup>, and therefore we are called to grow together through reciprocal help and shared hope<sup>14</sup>.

The fact of being a family invites us to be creative. We need to set aside time for deep sharing, learning to forgive each other, promoting formation spaces, and taking care of each other's vocation.

## 11. PROPHETS OF COMMUNION

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As Marists, we build fraternity by being a source of peace and communion in our professions and daily lives. Living in God's Presence, we face difficulties with serenity and peace, trying to unite instead of dividing.

A Church with a Marian style is our answer to the thirst for unity we perceive in our societies. In the image of Pentecost, this style of Church gathers the disciples around Mary to shape a fraternal community, which is open to dialogue and service, welcoming, and acquainted with diversity<sup>15</sup>.

As prophets of communion, we collaborate with the Local Church, ecclesial movements, and people from other religions. In our search for a more just and human world, we welcome the richness of multicultural experiences, different spiritual traditions, and people who stay away from any religious experience.

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<sup>12</sup> *Gathered Around the Same Table* 78.

<sup>13</sup> *Gathered Around the Same Table* 17.

<sup>14</sup> Open letter about *Gathered Around the Same Table*.

<sup>15</sup> Brother Emili Turú SG (2009 - ), speaking about the Marian Church.



## 2.3. The Mission

### 12. WITNESSES AND APOSTLES

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Jesus is the source of every apostolate. Lay Christians are called to be evangelizers of the world by living in the midst of the world<sup>16</sup>. Their apostolate is an integral part of the mission of the Church.

The CMMF helps its members to discover and carry out their personal mission in the construction of the Kingdom of God. “Making Jesus Christ known and loved” is the essence of our Marist mission, which makes us particularly sensitive to the needs of the most vulnerable children and young people.

Thanks to our faith experience, the different professions and tasks pertaining to lay life become an opportunity to remain united in the same Marist mission. This diversity enables us to search together for new ways to carry out the mission, and enriches the charism with new and unexpected approaches<sup>17</sup>.

Prayer is also an effective support, since it enlivens and gives meaning to our mission.

### 13. WITHIN OUR FAMILY

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For many of us, our family and its challenges is our first mission field. We promote communion and participation so that love may flourish in our homes. We make sure that fraternities take into account the different family situations they involve, paying attention to their needs and concerns.

We enable families to go beyond themselves and generate life outside their borders. At the same time, we make sure to honor our domestic, professional and social responsibilities, without neglecting or disregarding them.

### 14. IN OUR FRATERNITIES

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Fraternities are another privileged field of our mission. We set aside the time to know each other, listening and helping one another in times of trouble, and sharing our joys together. We place our talents at the service of our fellow CMMF members, and gradually learn to love each other with our limitations and differences, fulfilling the words of Marcellin in his Spiritual Testament, “have the world say of us ‘see how they love one another!’”

Fraternities are spaces in which we take care of one another, helping each other to become a better person, and sharing the courage to face the challenges of everyday life.

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<sup>16</sup> *Gathered Around the Same Table* 37.

<sup>17</sup> *Gathered Around the Same Table* 47.

## 15. WITHIN SOCIETY

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Through work and human relationships, we build a more fraternal and reconciled world, where the greatest is the one who makes himself the servant of others<sup>18</sup>.

In our cultural, social and political contexts, we strive to be faithful to the spirit of Champagnat by acting with honesty and courage, solidarity and spirit of service.

In whatever we do, we are sensitive to justice and notice the needs around us. We particularly care for the wellbeing of children, youngsters, and poor and neglected people.

## 16. AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE

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Our Marist sensitivity towards young people invites and impels us to be present among them. We provide opportunities to meet them, and ensure that our fraternities are open and welcoming enough to promote reciprocal understanding.

CMMF fraternities can be a model of adult Marist community for young people. A good relationship between the CMMF and Marist youth ministry, where feasible, is mutually enriching.

## 17. WITHIN THE CHURCH

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Faithful to the tradition of Champagnat and the Brothers, we live in communion with our Local Churches, and collaborate with other ecclesial movements and groups.

Our personal witness promotes the Marian face of the Church. We are available, like Mary, to serve, welcome and maternally care for other people.

We share the responsibility of building a committed Church, which responds to a world that suffers from the lack of solidarity and equal opportunities, and is even violent at times<sup>19</sup>.

## 18. FROM THE PERIPHERIES OF THE WORLD

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Inspired by the mission of Jesus, we are called, personally and together with our fraternities, to generate life and hope in the peripheries of society.

Being aware of the situations that people live in the peripheries of the world,

we carefully discern the possibility of participating in projects or missions elsewhere;

- ✓ we stay close to the CMMF members who volunteer, through our help, support and prayer;
- ✓ we discern the better way to use of our personal assets;
- ✓ we participate in the promotion of the rights of children and young people;
- ✓ we study the causes of social inequalities.

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<sup>18</sup> *Gathered Around the Same Table* 38.

<sup>19</sup> Free quote from Brother Emili Turú, who in turn was quoting John XXIII during the 21<sup>st</sup> General Chapter.

## CHAPTER 3: FORMATION AND ACCOMPANIMENT

### 19. CULTIVATING OUR VOCATION

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Our Marist vocational process grows and solidifies when it deeply commits to the CMMF formation and accompaniment program. This involves developing and offering the necessary formation means.

To ensure this personal process, we need to undertake a systematic CMMF formation itinerary that can help us integrate all aspects of our personality in a consistent way. It should include different stages and take into account the specific situation of lay people, their cultural diversity, and the manifold life options of CMMF members and fraternities. Thanks to this itinerary, we will strengthen our common identity as members of the Movement.

The CMMF formation program calls for leaders who can accompany the entire itinerary and the personal processes. In addition to the community accompaniment we carry out in our fraternities, we need to train available and skilled people for this mission.

### 20. FORMATION WITHIN A FRATERNITY

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Fraternities are a privileged formation setting for their members, since they offer a space to share God's presence in the events of everyday life, as well as a network of family-style relationships that both support and challenge personal growth, and which are the foundation of a personal and shared mission.

To ensure Marist growth and maturity, fraternities promote ongoing formation, which promotes the quality of personal and community prayer, an attentive listening to the experience of others, the study of the Word of God, the exercise of discernment, theological formation, and personal accompaniment.

Meetings between fraternities are opportunities for mutual enrichment, since they enable dialogue, joint discernment, inspired commitment, and the celebration of life.

A document complementing this Life Project in Fraternity includes all matters relating to the formation of CMMF members.

## CHAPTER 4: ORGANIZATION AND ANIMATION OF THE CMMF

### 21. BELONGING TO THE CMMF

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The Province or District must formally recognize CMMF fraternities in order to develop a good articulation of the Movement, which allows them to become meaningful within their social setting.

Upon completing a period of formation and discernment, a group can apply for recognition as a CMMF fraternity by sending a letter to the Marist entity in charge of this public and institutional acknowledgement, which in many places is the Provincial or District Superior, while in others the task belongs to a Provincial Team of CMMF members together with a brother appointed as a liaison with the Movement. They can eventually withdraw this recognition if the situation calls for it.

Once recognized, the fraternity will be entered in an official register including the name they choose and the members' personal data. It would be very appropriate to carry out this official recognition within a liturgical celebration.

In the event that someone wished to join a fraternity, upon completion of the initial formation period, its members officially ask the Provincial, District Superior or CMMF Team to admit this person, and they facilitate his or her full integration in the Movement. The new member's name will be added to the aforementioned register.

If there were an International CMMF Council, it would perform the functions assigned to it, including the registration of the fraternities from the entire Institute.

### 22. FRATERNITY ANIMATORS

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In tune with the lay character of the Movement, it seems necessary to empower lay leadership at grassroots level through the formation of CMMF people to accompany the fraternities and their members. It will also be advisable to provide them with the necessary conditions so that their service can be real and effective.

Those who make up the fraternity elect the animator, a member of the Movement, for a fixed period. The animator's main functions are to encourage unity and participation, ensure a proper development of the fraternity, and maintain friendly relations with the other fraternities and the communities of brothers. They carry out these responsibilities in a spirit of service.

In the places where there are no fraternities and there is hardly any lay movement, the brothers serving as animators and the support from the structures of the Institute will be essential to launch the CMMF. In such circumstances, we will gradually need to invite and train lay people as animators of their own fraternities, helping them to get involved in Marist life at the local, provincial and congregational levels.

## 23. THE CMMF AND THE INSTITUTE

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If life in the CMMF is to develop in a positive way, we need a suitable internal organization. Some simple structures are already in place, such as the animation teams at local, provincial, regional and institutional levels, which were born as an answer to the needs of the fraternities. Better organization implies growing in autonomy within a spirit of communion.

The animation team members belong to the Movement and are at the service of the fraternities throughout a Province or District. Their role is to accompany the different fraternities, networking them together, promoting meetings, facilitating formation activities, linking them with other lay structures, and fostering communion with the Institute.

A document complementing this Life Project in Fraternity includes all matters relating to the organization of the CMMF.

## PRAYER OF THE CHAMPAGNAT MOVEMENT

Today we come to you,  
our Good Mother,  
as Saint Marcellin showed us to do.  
We learned from him that you are  
the ordinary resource in our needs,  
so now we place in your motherly hands  
our lives, our families,  
and our commitment to bring  
the Kingdom of God to the world.

Oh Mary, inspire each member  
of our fraternities  
and fill us with hope;  
bring energy and passion to our hearts  
so that we can bear witness  
to Jesus your son.

We thank you, Jesus,  
for the charism of Champagnat  
we received from the brothers.  
Together we witness to the power of fraternity,  
being of one heart and one mind.  
We simply ask you to make us faithful,  
in communion with the brothers,  
to this gift we have received.

Oh Mary, we trustfully abandon ourselves,  
all our pains, and all our hopes  
in your loving heart.  
All to Jesus through Mary, all to Mary for Jesus!

Amen

