

**BEING A LAY MARIST**

**PROCESS AND PATHWAY**

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# **PRESENTATION**

In this new moment of the Church we are witnesses of new forms and expressions of life emerging and coming to birth in many Institutes of Religious Life. There has been significant growth in our understanding of the lay vocation. As Marists, there are many who feel themselves called by God to live their Christian discipleship and shape their lives in this particular way.

The Marists of today include women and men, young and old, consecrated, ordained and lay. They speak many languages and come from many countries and cultures. They are educators and social workers, catechists and administrators, nurses and child rights advocates, chaplains and youth ministers, alumni and young people.

They are imagining new wineskins for the abundant new wine that the vine is producing. In all their difference, however, they are united by their being inspired by Marcellin to follow Christ in Mary’s way, and to do so as a global Marist community.

The integrity and fecundity of the Marist project into the future will depend on women and men, Brothers and Lay people committed to their discipleship of Jesus, with a strong sense of community and passion for the mission. The continuity of this project will demand Marists to be a school of spirituality, a school of community, and a school of mission.

To respond to this moment, we present this proposal. This document was born from life. It collects the long rich experience of many lay people who, from all corners of the Marist world, have expressed their desire to live the Marist charism, according to St Marcellin Champagnat’s intuition. This desire is the starting point to offer a proposal for all those who feel the call of God to live the Marist charism as a lay person.

The proposal has been worked out based on experience, and aims to express this knowledge as a Christian and Marist pathway of growth for those who are attracted to this specific way of being disciples of Jesus. There is, thus, implicitly a desire to invite more people to join the Marist family.

What is presented here is the result also of reflection taken at the level of the Institute in recent years. Echoes of the document ‘Around the Same Table’, several international meetings, and the work of the Secretariat of Laity. Br. Emili and his Council defines it as a "framework for the identity of the lay Marist who feels called to live the Marist charism in the midst of the world. Involving a recognition of such identity within some form of Association, in communion with the brothers and with an international character".

The document provides some common reference criteria for the identity of a lay Marist with a proposal for a formation pathway, specifying some guidelines, content, experiences and resources that facilitate a vocational process of charismatic bonding and a possible legal binding. The common criteria are intended to be as a great transverse axis allowing Marist laity to be recognized as such in their identity; also recognized at the international level, while giving space to different forms that respond to regional or cultural sensitivities. I.e., the proposal provides some general guidelines for the entire Institute, but each administrative unit will have to adapt these guidelines to its own context.

September 2XXX

# **REFERENCE POINTS**



The proposal approaches a change of paradigm. It has an impact on the way of living the charism, the lay vocation, the vocation of the Brother and the ways of communion.

## EVANGELICAL PATHWAY IN A CHURCH-COMMUNION

"Only within the Church as a mystery of communion is the 'identity' of the lay faithful, revealed [their] original dignity. And only within this dignity can be defined [their] vocation and mission in the Church and in the world"(ChFL 8). This statement by the Apostolic exhortation focuses this first reference of the lay pathway proposed here. It is a pathway for believers who feel themselves as part of the Church, people of God, which referred to in LG 32: "One Lord, one faith, one baptism”; sharing a common dignity as members from their regeneration in Christ, having the same filial grace and the same vocation to perfection; possessing in common one salvation, one hope and one undivided charity. There is, therefore, in Christ and in the Church no inequality on the basis of race or nationality, social condition or sex, because "there is neither Jew nor Greek: there is neither bond nor free: there is neither male nor female. For you are all 'one' in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3,28).

The pathway offered is a proposal that is born of the Gospel. It was born from the progressive understanding of the lay vocation of so many lay men and lay women who have felt called by God to follow Jesus in the Marist way. Speaking of Marist vocation is to talk about Christian vocation where the inclusion in Christ by faith appears as the first root of every Christian evangelical dynamism and as the basis of all vocations (cf. ChfL 9).

This proposal aims to help to discover their vocation and the availability always greater to live it in the development of the mission. The lay Marist can acquire what expresses ChfL 58: “ God calls me and sends me forth as a labourer in his vineyard. He calls me and sends me forth to work for the coming of his Kingdom in history.” This personal vocation and mission are the focus of the pathway.

Following Jesus sustains the identity of the lay Marist. An identity that expresses unity between the Gospel and life, at work, in the family, in society; “an integrated approach to life that is fully brought about by the inspiration and strength of the Gospel" (cf. ChfL 34). Jesus Christ is the seed and the fruit of what it means to be Marist. He is the vine from which arises the Marist life. Christ incarnate is the source and guide of the formation pathway. Following Jesus means to live the Beatitudes, listening to his word, putting into practice the commandment of love in all circumstances of life and serving to the brothers, especially if it involves children, the poor and those who suffer (cf. ChfL 16).

This reference point for the pathway highlights that all members of the people of God work in the common single vineyard of the Lord with diverse and complementary ministries and charisms. The proposal highlights the lay identity with its original aspect, as part of the Church-Communion, where all states in life are ordered at the same time to each other, “While different in expression they are deeply united in the Church's "mystery of communion" and are dynamically coordinated in its unique mission”. ChfL 55.

This ecclesial communion assumes the diversity and complementarity of vocations, ministries, of the gifts and responsibilities. Thanks to this diversity and complementarity, each Marist layman or laywoman offers its own contribution to the Church. They perform an ecclesial service witnessing both the brothers and the Church meaning that have temporal realities in God's saving plan, as well as witnessing the Marist values in the midst of the world.

Saint Marcellin and the first Marist dreamed of a new way of being Church, a church with Marian face. The proposal also makes reference to this parameter, wanting to give life to the assertion: “Driven by the Spirit, we are helping a new ecclesiastical model to be born, one based on the equal dignity of all Christian vocations and in the image of the Church as People of God in communion. (GAST 144).

The pathway gives the possibility of joining some sort of association that the Church considers as an opportunity of "the responsible participation of all of them in the Church's mission of carrying forth the Gospel of Christ, the source of hope for humanity and the renewal of society” (ChfL 29). Among the criteria which points to an association is “the primacy given to the call of every Christian to holiness, as it is manifested "in the fruits of grace which the spirit produces in the faithful" and in a growth towards the fullness of Christian life and the perfection of charity" (ChfL 30).

## TOWARDS A CHARISMATIC FAMILY

The pathway is signaling that the Marist charism does not belong only to the Institute, but is the patrimony of the Church. It is a gift of the Holy Spirit that reaches the heart of humanity. It advocates the idea of charismatic family, where the center is not the Institute but the charism as a gift of God, which is shared by Brothers and lay people. Inside the charismatic family different existential or vocational projects have a meeting point: to live and announce the same charism.

Within the charismatic family a relationship of communion and not dependence is developed. Sharing Champagnat’s legacy in this way brings a redefinition of the Institute only understood from the perspective of communion. The Marist charism, as a follow-up proposal to Jesus, becomes a unifying element of the identity of the Brother and the laity. The follow-up to Jesus and the reference to the Kingdom are the common horizon for lay people and Brothers. The institutional future is a future of communion as a charismatic family.

In this family, everyone is sitting around the same table. Brothers and laity have the floor. From the perspective of complementarity, the lay vocation reminds the religious life that the Gospel is at the center, above traditions, and remembers that the only mission of the Church is shared by all. The charismatic family tells us that the Marist charism will continue in the heart of lay people even decreasing the number of Brothers.

New paradigms for the vocation of the Brother emerge from this experience. Sharing the charism with the laity is to assume an attitude of openness to give and to give oneself, and at the same time, to receive and be transformed. Being part of the same family implies for the Brothers to establish a genuine dialogue of life and friendship among equals, with lay men and lay women who want to live the charism. For the Brothers it means to modify ways of living, praying and doing.

## AN ENRICHED CHARISM

To live the charism as a lay person is the challenge of the formation pathway. Mission, spirituality and shared life are constituent areas of the charismatic dimension of a vocation. They complement each other and are intimately related, so it is not possible to understand one without the others. The formation pathway promotes the understanding and integration of the Marist charism in our lives, as a process. The contents and experiences offered at each of the moments described in the pathway are deepening each one of these three areas in an integrated way: the mission as a space of encounter with God; the community as a missionary community; a shared spirituality in mission. The three dimensions are inseparable: “spirituality lives in and for the mission; the mission generates and encourages the shared life; the shared life is, in its turn, the source of spirituality and mission” (cf GAST 34)

The proposal makes it possible to express the charism in all its fruitfulness and fulfillment, precisely when it is experienced by other members of the Church, not only by the Brothers. As well as intuited, Brother Charles Howard said that "lay are to reveal new facets of this charism, as they go to live it more fully". The proposal allows the Marist laity to provide a new way of understanding and living Christian life and to live the Marist charism from secular life.

**Mission**

* The lay expression of our Marist mission should take into account a number of aspects, such as:
* The power of lay testimony in the professional field, the family settings, and the world in general (GAST 37). “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” (GAST 38).
* Being a prophetic presence in our world, like leaven in the dough. The mission as a process of humanisation of social, political and cultural spaces.
* Mary as an inspiration for a careful listening to the others’ needs, for an openness to be where God wants us to be and for a global availability for the mission of the Institute.
* Developing the Marist mission outside education, in non-Marist educational works or in other areas such as: family life (children’s education); intercultural, interfaith, and gender relations; and social justice, defending the rights of children and youth (GAST 43, 47)
* Feeling called to be a sign of God’s tenderness in our own place, especially among children and young people in need.
* The resulting lay association will make sense if it serves the mission and its vitality, if it promotes a heart without boundaries, open to new projects, and a sense of internationality. (GAST 61,64)
* The diversity of tasks and jobs, characteristic of the lay life, makes possible to search together new ways for the Marist mission and to enrich the charism from new and unexpected perspectives (GAST 47).

**Spirituality**

* Making the family home a place of growth, of encounter, of life in Jesus. (WFR 107 and 110).
* Bringing the richness of the female dimension of Marist spirituality. Having Mary as inspiration for another way of being Church, disciple and believing woman (WFR 102, 103, 131).
* Living spirituality in the practical and everyday life, often in contexts not favourable. Live an Apostolic spirituality, incarnated in life and connected with the Mission (WFR 124).
* To cultivate personal relationships for mutual growth, dialogue, learning and appreciate the diversity of experiences.
* Sharing the spiritual richness of interfaith. Help deepen one's faith as a way of unifying and communion. (GAST 82, 127, 168).
* To live family, work and social relationships as privileged spaces for living God’s communion. (WFR 75).
* To take care of the mystical and prophetic dimensions that promote living in God and challenge us to have a heart that knows no bounds (WFR 127).
* To be people with a spirituality of compassion and mission (WFR 126). Men and women who have passion for God and compassion for people (WFR 1).

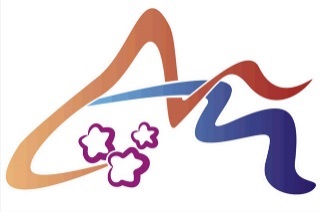
**Shared life**

* Communion and fraternity as prophetic signs. The community becomes a source of transformation for the world.
* The family as the first space of communion (GAST 73). Community experience strengthens family life and other life choices.
* Acknowledging the community or the group as a privileged space for human, Christian and Marist development, and a space to share life and grow together, where the experience of God becomes more significant (GAST 84)
* Mary inspires our careful listening to God’s will, presence of simplicity, prophetic and at the service of community.
* Different expressions of the community dimension: family, growth groups, mixed communities, lay communities, reference communities, etc. (GAST 92)
* A caring and attentive attitude to generate a true community spirit made out of trust, dialogue, life sharing, and a spirit that goes beyond discussing documents and topics.
* Every community experience is at the service of the mission, and must help the new generations discover the face of God. The members are aware of being sent by the community. (GAST 71)
* To build up community, becoming a source of peace and communion for family life and job profession.
* To build up community with the brothers, sharing life, mission and spirituality, feeling the call to grow together.
* To be prophets of communion in collaboration with the local church community, church movements and people from other religious traditions, all working for a better world of justice and peace.

These references are the background of the proposal for a Marist vocational pathway, offering lay men and lay women the participation in the charism within the same spiritual family. They echo what VC 54 says: "A new chapter, rich in hope, has begun in the history of relations between consecrated persons and the laity”.

# **BEING A MARIST**

# ***The journey of a vocational experience***



The identity of the lay Marist is shaped by a process of discernment of God's possible call to follow Jesus in the way of Mary, according to the Marist charism (cfr. GAST 12). This is a process of personal, Christian and Marist growth. A way of falling in love with God, lived as a personal response to the One who has loved us first. A way of following Jesus of Nazareth, as Saint Marcellin Champagnat did. A journey that occurs in the bosom of a Church-Communion, along with many other people that live the same charism, "we have been enchanted by Marcellin’s Christian journey and that of the community of those who live his charism, and we understand that God sends us to be part of this family.” (GAST 153).

We distinguish between process and pathway. The process refers to the experience of the person in his/her journey of interiorising the charism and it can become a vocational response. The pathway, however, refers to the different proposals made to a person in a formation path. These proposals emerge in the framework of personal accompaniment and are to facilitate the process of the person and, therefore, the person’s growth.

The process and pathway described collect the life experience of many Marists. With different stories and backgrounds they share the call to live the Marist charism as lay people. The description of the process tries to offer some references on the way for those who want to live the same experience. Each of the stages is associated with a biblical quotation, which gives an insight into the contents of the experience:

* Home - *Come and see* (Jn 1:39)
* Encountering the charisma – *How can this be?* (Lc 1:34)
* Identification with the charism of Champagnat – *Here am I, let it be* (Lk 1: 38)
* Bonding to the charism and belonging to an associative structure - *Do whatever He tells you* (Jn 2:5)

In addition to trying to describe the inner experience of a personal journey, guidelines are offered to accompany that experience. Some content, tools and resources that assist in the formation pathway are provided.

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| **BEING A LAY MARIST – THE JOURNEY OF A VOCATIONAL EXPERIENCE** | | | |
| **DISCOVERING** | | **COMMITMENT** | |
| A threshold to what can become a choice of life  A Christian proposal through a specific charismatic way | | Following Jesus in Mary’s way.  A Christian choice for a Marist life as laity. | |
| ***Awakening*** | ***Encountering*** | ***Identifying*** | ***Bonding*** |
| *Come and See* | *How can this be?* | *Here am I, let it be”* | *“Do whatever He tells you”* |
| **First contact** | **Research & Encounter** | **Living the different aspects of the charism with others**. | **An International Association** |

**DISCOVERING**

**A threshold to what can become a choice of life**

**A Christian proposal through a specific charismatic way.**

## The beginning – Come and see (Jn 1:39)

***The Story***

People come into contact with the Marist spirit in very different ways, such as mission projects, training meetings, solidarity activities, and, above all, through the testimony of Marists.

The desire to know more and to live in that spirit emerges from the proximity to those who transmit it, the simplicity, family spirit, love of work, apostolic passion, etc.

It is the time to invite, talk, build awareness and intuit researches. It is the time to call and inform the proposal of growth as Marists. The invitation is part of the formation pathway and the desire is part of the personal journey.

***Guidelines***

* It is the right time for an explicit invitation to deepen the encounter with the charism. A wide and very free invitation. Time to call and offer proposals in this regard. All formation, pastoral, solidarity and missionary projects must contemplate the link with Marist Youth Ministry and, therefore, to invite young people when appropriate.
* A welcoming attitude and the quality of personal relationships are essential elements we should take care of throughout the itinerary since they are a gateway to deeper processes.
* People deeply involved in Marist experiences in the Administrative Units become the first references to the invitation to deepen and discern one’s journey and start a formation pathway. These experiences can be religious celebrations, Marist festivals, retreat days, solidarity activities, apostolic projects...

***A new step***

It is a time to discover and wake up, which we can phrase as follows: *God is working in my life. The Marists I am meeting are an inspiration. Marist spirituality is vibrating in me. I like this invitation, and I feel welcomed. This way of being Church gives me a goal in life. I appreciate being part of this community.*

The following questions arise as part of the discernment process during this stage:

*Do I want to start a pathway of personal growth?* Vocational animation makers would offer proposals for people who wanted this desire.

***Step sign***

Application to perform the next step.

***Some proposals***

Promote an initial invitation journey.

Personal or group invitation.

People to whom one can contact.

Applying for next stage.

Personal witness is critical.

## Encountering the charism – *How can this be*? (Lk 1:34)

***The Story***

The person wants to know better what is actually moving the Marists’ heart because he or she feels in tune with our way of being and doing, with our mission and spirituality, and senses that our charism brings an important message to his or her life.

The person begins a journey of involvement and commitment with the mission, spirituality and the Marist community, a Christian choice to deepen his/her faith in the encounter with Christ and his Gospel.

This stage is an initiation experience into something that the person perceives as a possible life-encompassing choice. It is a moment to discover oneself as a person, a Christian and a Marist, to become aware of these three calls in one’s own life. The person comes into contact with his or her first and fundamental vocation: the call to life.

The foundations for a Marist option are laid. The values implied by the charism gradually become a way of being – simplicity, humility, family spirit – and they gradually permeate the person’s way of acting and being.

***Guidelines***

* Personal and group experiences are available at this time to gradually deepen the roots of Christian and Marist life. It means to offer a formation pathway to follow Jesus in the way of Champagnat, which would be connected with other proposals in the Administrative Unit: staff mission training and formation programs, parents who have joined training programs, young adults in the last stages of youth ministry, volunteers who took part in a solidarity project, lay people that have been touched by experiences of mission...
* Integration of life is promoted. To broadly look upon the journey: connected to family, working life, social life, political commitment...
* The proposals allow the experience of a fraternal Church, where everyone fits and everyone is invited. Awareness of a Church-communion, with a Marian face.
* The experiences at this time represent a mutual enrichment with the Brothers, who have chosen religious life. It is the lay identity, enriched with the identity of the Brothers.
* The group experience is introduced. Progressive growth in building a community. There is the feeling of a personal call but shared with others. Sense of "convening". The relationship with the communities of Brothers and other lay communities helps to develop this Marist dimension.
* Personal accompaniment can be introduced.
* For some people, beginning a Marist journey would mean to begin a journey in faith. Therefore, we must take into account human and Christian dimensions and special care for the personal pace and moment.

***Some proposals***

**Experiences**

Participating in Marist meetings/experiences with a more active role.

Retreats, spiritual exercises, faith celebrations (Easter…), community building days…

Service, solidarity and mission experiences, especially with those most in need.

Sharing faith with other groups, Church training programmes…

**Means and Tools**

Training programmes, basic joint formation programmes.

Personal and group prayer, Christian celebrations and sacramental experience.

Group process and life.

Personal accompaniment (not necessarily systematic), inspired by the story of Emmaus.

Marist heritage. Marist documents: *Water from the Rock, Around the Same Table…*

**Content**

Emphasis on personal growth and inner life to foster a deeper relationship with Christ.

Anthropology: self-acceptation, interiority…

Christology: friendship with Jesus.

Ecclesiology: community, people of God.

Charism: Champagnat and his first companions, Marist charism: mission, spirituality and shared life.

Promotion of the service and apostolate in a cross-cutting way.

Formation and growth in the dimensions of social justice, of working for the common good, of the option for the poor, for the defense of children, etc.

***A New Step***

It is a time to deepen and make contact with the roots of the personal experience of God and the Marist charism, which can be expressed thus: *What is this moment asking from me? What is God revealing to me in this context? How can I integrate what I have discovered into my life? Would I like to start a personal process to understand it more deeply?* This stage should last until the person is ready to answer the question.

Wanting to start a deepening process means wanting to discern one’s personal vocation as Marist. Therefore, this will require the expression of this will formally.

To apply for starting a process of systematic personal accompaniment and live such a process at the heart of a Marist community (fraternity, mixed community, local community group...).

***Step Sign***

Formal application to initiate a process of personal accompaniment and to join the experience of a local community.

**COMMITMENT**

**Following Jesus in Mary’s way.**

**A Christian choice for a Marist life as laity.**

## Identification with the charism of Champagnat – *Here am I, let it be* (Lk 1:38)

***The Story***

The person chooses to delve into the journey of faith and in the charism (experience of sharing life, mission and spirituality) and discern his/her Marist vocational journey as lay. Personal accompaniment allows the person to carry out this process in a more objective and systematic manner.

It is an experience of personalisation and identification in which the person acquires a strong Marist experience. It is a time of greater maturity in which a more conscious discernment process occurs. The experience in this time has density and depth as an expression of spiritual quality, a way of life in the Marist spirit, as vocational path in the following of Jesus in the way of Mary, as a bond to the Marist charism. Time of discipleship.

The option made as a Marist lay man or lay woman is to build the Kingdom of God in the way of Mary, in all contexts in which he/she is inserted (family, social, labor...), within the Marist works and out of them. Seeks to translate into life the Christian and charismatic choice which has been made.

***Guidelines***

* The itinerary must have a clear lay flavor, integrating family responsibilities, work obligations, and commitment to the world within the process. It should enable the person to experience the following of Jesus in the Marist style, which is lived within the family, the local Church, and society.
* To live experiences in a deeper way in relation to the dimensions of the Marist charism: fraternity, spirituality and mission.
* Personal accompaniment comes to be systematic, as well as the practice of discernment.
* Although the pathway is done with others, it should be noted that the journey is personal. So, it is important to be aware of personal rhythms and accompaniment, and formation specific needs.
* The community experience takes place in a more committed manner. The community has now a role in the process of accompaniment. At the same time there may be integration with other lay communities, building an awareness of the wider partnership between all Marists beyond their local or provincial perspectives.
* Communion with Brothers is built beyond sharing mission projects.
* This stage of the itinerary should offer greater possibilities for the person to express his or her potential, prioritizing experiences that lead to a greater personal autonomy. In this sense, we should invite the people in this stage to assume responsibilities regarding the formation of other laity, sharing what they have received, and being able to pass on the charism they have inherited.
* The personal process of maturity at this time can manifest itself with some gesture of charismatic bonding when decided by the person. It is to be performed before the community.

***Some proposals***

**Content**

Anthropology: personal integration.

Christology: followers of Jesus, choice of God for the last.

Ecclesiology: lay vocation in the Church, Church-communion, Marian face of the Church.

Charism: Mary, communion brothers and lay, charismatic family, Marist charism: spirituality, mission and shared life.

**Means and Tools**

The personal life project is a thread that runs through the entire stage.

The community or group to which the person belongs is an important means.

The community project.

Members of a group may have different processes and paces in their journey. Group balance is a key point.

Personal and community prayer.

Marist patrimony resources.

Marist documents: *He Gave us the Name of Mary, Water from the Rock, Around the Same Table.*

Retreats.

**Experiences**

To promote a stable community experience. The community accompanies the person in the discernment process.

To promote experiences of joint formation in regards to advanced levels

To promote the participation in the life of the Institute (Marists worldwide). Offer experiences at the regional and international levels in order to develop an attitude of shared responsibility regarding the Marist charism.

To promote a better connection with and participation in the life of the Province.

To provide opportunities for the person to exercise his or her leadership and group animation skills.

To invite the participants to give witness to the process.

To offer a discernment retreat regarding the bonding and belonging option.

To promote solidarity experiences.

***A New Step***

It is a moment of some vocational stability, of a lifestyle option in the Marist way, and at the same time arises the possibility of making a choice of bonding and associative belonging. It can be expressed thus: *Do I have a Marist vocation? Do I feel happy in this life style? Is it the right place for me? Am I available to motivate others to walk on this journey? Do I wish to link myself to this charismatic family? Do I want to live the communion and the other implications of this membership?*

The passage of associative bonding means the realisation of a public sign that expresses this personal choice and the acceptance and recognition by the associated group.

***Gesture of Identification***

This stage has its own identity. It is possible to make a gesture of charismatic bonding and affirmation of the choice for living the dimensions of the charism. It is not an associative bond. The person may express this gesture when he/she feels motivated to do so.

***Step Sign***

A choice for belonging to the associative structure. This choice brings with it a public sign expressing the personal choice and the acceptance, acknowledgement and welcome by a representative of the Association.

## Bonding to the charism and belonging to an associative structure - “Do whatever He tells you” (Jn 2:5)

***The Story***

This stage begins with the choice to a form of bonding and belonging to the Marist associative structure. The personal choice has been expressed with a sign accepted and welcomed by the community. The public sign of bonding and belonging express a mutual involvement between the person and the association or Marist institution that holds it. It is a clear consciousness of belonging and commitment to the vitality and the future of Marist life.

The person is committed to developing the charism (mission, spirituality, shared life). Creative fidelity, being a lay person, building the Church and in communion with other Marist, lay and consecrated. The sense of being disciples and missionaries, sent to be multipliers is strengthened. It means availability of heart to assume any leadership or services, develop training processes, assume responsibility, living in community, promote communion, feel the internationality,¡ and promote fidelity and charismatic creativity. It is time to live in communities of reference, which are memory of the charism for mission projects.

The associative bond emphasises lifelong training, support of the charismatic family and Marist associative figure, the urgency of calling other people to participate in this family and, of course, the development and the testimony of faith in society. The dimensions of bonding and belonging at this stage involve availability for the mission and it acquires a tone of internationality. The association asks apostolic availability, availability for animation, availability for charismatic leadership. It is from the perspective of the association that any initiative of communicating the experience and passing it on to future generations is promoted.

***Guidelines***

* To promote ongoing formation for growth in the vocation as a lay person in the Church.
* To promote the experience of community life, such as memory, warranty and reference of the charism.
* To enhance the sense of walking with others and of strengthening of the charismatic identity, feeling as a large international community. From this perspective, the identities of Brother and lay person strengthen in the spaces of communion between them (training, shared life, etc.). It enriches the charism and multiplies mission.
* To promote shared discernment (brothers-lay) regarding to life and the Marist mission. Together the charism is promoted.
* The option of bonding and belonging is renewed publicly on a regular basis.
* The associative structure requests determine an ideology, ways of joining it, specifying the animation at the provincial, regional and international levels, define the communion with the brothers and the relationship with the Marist Institute.

***Some Proposals***

**Experiences**

To foster the experience of community, such as memory, warranty and reference of the charism.

To promote the personal formation for one’s vocation growth as a lay person in the Church.

An invitation to be significantly involved in the mission. Development of the apostolic dimension and solidarity.

To live annual spiritual experiences, as spiritual exercises, retreats...

To encourage to have experiences of leadership and coresponsability in the transmission of the charism and the animation of the association. To assume leadership responsibility. Leadership in local groups.

Provide training on the charisma and joint formation.

To foster shared discernment (brothers-lay) in relation to Marist life and mission. Promoting the charism together.

To offer the possibility of joining mixed or enlarged communities.

To accompany those who expressed their bonding.

To enhance the bond of the association before the person.

**Content**

Charismatic contents (deepening, updating, creative fidelity)

Lay vocation in the Church. Marial face of the Church.

Formation for Marist evangelical mission leadership: human and spiritual accompaniment, Christian communities’ animation, Marist heritage, etc.

A process of “humanisation” that goes along life.

Deeper integration of anthropology, Christology and Marist charism.

**Means and Tools**

Personal project of life.

Community project.

The community or the group.

Ongoing formation.

Personal and community prayer.

Marist mission.

Personal accompaniment and community accompaniment.

Renewal sign.

Signs of communion with the brothers and the Institute.

***A New Step***

The key question the person should answer along this stage would be: *I renew my commitment of bonding and belonging, as a sign of creative to the charism fidelity?*

(To discern and specify)

*Specify the form of the association, organisational aspects...*

*Associative involvement*

*Pedagogy of the establishment of the association.*

***Gesture of belonging***

Annual renewal of the commitment of bonding.

# **MARISTS IN COMMUNION**



The vocational journey of the Marist laity makes Brothers and lay communion possible. This communion implies sharing the follow-up to Jesus, the same radical nature of the Gospel, the same faith, the same baptism, the same charism. Communion becomes in vocational complementarity, mutual enrichment and joint search for a greater vitality of the charism for today's world. Through communion the Marist institution has broader identity references than brothers and works.

* *Communion built as followers of Jesus.*

The proposal developed strengthens the path of communion with the introduction of the common elements of the same Evangelical journey. Communion emerges from sharing life as followers of Jesus . There is a common ground and this common ground holds laity and Brothers. The unique mission of the Church is shared by Brothers and lay people. All with equal dignity, which only gives the baptism. All equally called to holiness. All with important roles to play, ordered one to each other, without involving preeminence of anybody. We mutually become signs for others.

* *Communion built from the same charism.*

It is the same gift received from God for laity and Brothers. Lay Marists give a new way to live the Marist charism from the secular realm. This allows the Brothers to open up to communion with other fundamental forms of life and discover even more the wealth of the own charismatic gift. This charismatic communion allows new religious languages, new paradigms for spirituality, a better translation of the Marist fraternity and new room for mission.

* *Communion built from complementarity.*

The fecundity of the plan of God for the world emerges from the complementarity and in communion. Living the charism alone is non sense. We need each other. Our identities are enriched. This complementarity is developed in mixed communities, in Marist groups, in projects of mission, in ways of spirituality, in formation processes...

* *Communion promotes the vitality of the charism*

The future of the charism is a future of communion in the spirit of Champagnat. This future of communion invites creativity. But this creative fidelity, necessary to maintain and continue the Marist charism in the Church, does not depend only on the Institute, but also on the Marist laity. All, brothers and laity, are to continue the story that has its origin in the Evangelical journey of Champagnat, and that endures with new chapters in our world.

In this process of charismatic continuity emerges the need for new ways of being Marist. New ways that are to be in tune with Evangelical radicality and the calls of the Church. What is new demands for sure conversion and movement, as well as the commitment to promote a new awakening with a Marist Vocational Ministry among the young people.

* *Communion built from shared formation experiences.*

Sharing the same Gospel, Jesus himself, the same charism, the same call for growth and fulfillment in God's loving design, Brothers and lay communion is expressed in shared times of vocational discernment, of personal accompaniment, of community experiences, mission projects, initial and ongoing formation. Both formators and programs are the subject of communion.

Walking together, brothers and lay people, we are saying that we need each other, Marists, to recreate our common and specific identities. Initial and ongoing common formation experiences allow us to share a process of growth in faith and a mission project. It helps us for team working and building up a spiritual family. It strengthens our common vocation and enhances all the charism potential, overflowing each group.

The experience will lead us to see the main points to be included in shared formation programs (discernment, accompaniment, community, spirituality, charism, mission…). Both programs and formators are a subject of communion. Therefore, there is a need to train formators, either lay people or brothers, to accompany these formation programs.

* *Communion promoting service to the contemporary world*

In front of the situation of children and youth, the current religious and cultural conflicts, the changes in the Church and in the Institute, the Marists of Champagnat must be open to the Spirit and must have an open mind and an open heart. Living from an international horizon and projecting the Marist mission as a life-giving one for the entire world.

# **IMPLEMENTATION OF FORMATION PATHWAYS IN THE ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS FROM A VOCATIONAL PERSPECTIVE**



## PRIOR ASSUMPTIONS

* This document presents the broad outlines of a formation pathway from a vocational perspective. It is to provide a framework of a Marist journey for lay men and lay women, inspired by the experience and the document *Around the Same Table*. The proposal provides some general guidelines for the entire Institute, but each Administrative Unit will have to adapt these guidelines to its own context.
* To set up a formation pathway to accompany the vocational process of Marist lay people in an Administrative Unit is to believe that God has a *project of love* for each person. For some of them that call or project of God means to live the Marist charism as a way to follow Jesus and his Gospel.
* The *formation pathway* that is offered must allow lived processes of personal growth from a vocational perspective. The pathway will respond and will accompany the vocational process of the person in its different phases (discover, discern and choose) and the different aspects of existence: human, Christian and Marist.
* To offer a *formation pathway* requires a *team or community* who designs it, encourages and accompanies people in the Administrative Unit. The members have experienced the journey by themselves, they are trained as *accompagnateurs* and they give feedback to themselves as trainers.
* It is a critical aspect that Brothers know, comprehend and assume this pathway. Many of them will be able to invite other people to follow it.
* The Administrative Unit sets the*necessary conditions*  (resources, programs, experiences, people...) to promote the pathway and that truly requires an investment.
* If the choice made by an Administrative Unit to implement a formation pathway is important, it is not less true that for a project of this nature is necessary the collaboration and support of other *Units in the Region*. Sharing programs and resources, joining forces, is future.

## GUIDELINES AND CRITERIA TO SET UP AND ACCOMPANY THE VOCATIONAL PROCESSES

**1.** **To appoint the animation team.**

Each Administrative Unit should set up a team with the necessary conditions to accompany individuals and communities that follow the formation pathway (time, ideal people...). Among its roles: to design the pathway; to coordinate experiences, resources and formation content; to train leaders; to accompany the entire process; to provide feedback for the evaluation of the proposal.

It is recommended that at least one Brother is a member of the team, enabling the flow of information with the religious community and other sectors of the province. To ensure interactions with other animation teams (mission, Youth Ministry, solidarity...).

In the case of an international Administrative Unit, it is suggested the existence of an animation team in each country connected to the general one.

Those who animate this pathway should be trained to be *accompagnateurs* of the personal processes. This implies an ongoing training, which includes human, spiritual, and cognitive experiences.

**2. To design the formation pathway according to the proposal of the Institute.**

To set up a simple and practical design that can be run with the skills of the members of the animation team.

To specify the modalities of the formation pathway: personal and group accompaniment, community...

To develop guides and other material that allow the person deepen in the process and provide a roadmap to the *accompaniers.*

To define the fundamental questions which must be made at the end of each of the stages of the process.

To maintain an ongoing dialogue with the formative processes of the brothers to find the common spaces that complement the itineraries.

**General characteristics of the design**

* **Flexibility**

The pathway is adapted to personal process, to the reality of the laity. The Administrative Units should choose those suggested resources which best respond to its reality, adapting the global proposal.

* **Integration and cyclical pathway**

Both experiences and content are articulated around three axes: Christian, Marist and anthropological. They should be presented in an integrative and cyclical pattern. The effort of the animators is to keep the integration of the three axes. The permanent question that accompanies this personal process is to *what I feel called to respond as a person, as a Christian and as a Marist?*

Otherwise, you can talk about procedural in a spiral motion. The pathway encompasses the charismatic dimensions of shared life, mission, and spirituality. The path is not linear but in spiral. Discoveries, insights and options happen in ongoing beginnings. The elements of the pathway are available at all stages but with different emphasis.

* **Times of each stage**

No lasting times are suggested for each stage. But each one of them should have an appropriate period to implement experiences, means and content gradually. Times can be referential, but respecting the personal rhythms of those who follow the pathway.

* **The steps from stage to stage**

The recommendation is to propose a kind of sign as signaling the passage from one stage to the next. But following this pathway free and optional choices are assumed. Remaining in a stage is a personal decision. It is not expected that all reach bonding and belonging.

* **Personal accompaniment.**

Personal accompaniment should be made by experienced *accompagnateurs*, appointed by the Administrative Unit. The scope of personal accompaniment is the whole of the person, in all its dimensions: physical, historical, spiritual, human. Personal accompaniment must be a condition for a real process of growth and vocational discernment. It is in this accompaniment where is made the discovery of the vocational way and is discerning God's will.

* **Community of life.**

This pathway promotes the existence of communities. The community is built in a systematic and progressive process. The animators are accountable for a systematic accompaniment of communities and for providing resources for their journey.

**3.**  **Invitation to present the lay formation pathway.**

For those people who are open and ready to live their Marist journey as a path for personal growth, an invitation to start the lay formation pathway becomes significant. Some specific actions can be helpful in this sense:

* Organizing half-day or one-day encounters, to present the pathway.
* Collecting names of people who have expressed a desire to follow the process.
* Organizing groups.
* Delivery of leaflets, posters with the information of the proposal.

**Criteria to consider**

* **How to present the formation pathway.**

The formation pathway should be presented in a very friendly, accessible, realistic and reasonable way. Avoid being overwhelming in presenting the pathway.  The starting point must not be a call for association, bonding and belonging to either the charism or the Institute, but for a path for personal growth in the Marist charism shared with other people, building up a community spirit. Present it seeking harmony with work and family life. The witness of those who have lived the experience themselves is a powerful means. Presentation must maintain the strength of an option to follow Jesus in the way of Mary.

* **The recipients of this proposal.**

The proposal is presented to all those who wish to deepen their Christian life within the Marist charism. They can be members of the staff in Marist works or not. The Marist lay vocation needs to be discovered, assumed and accompanied. It means making the way, through a personal and communal journey of human, Christian and Marist maturity. It is a journey of faith that sustains the process of discernment and listening to God.

* **Vocational journey and contractual relationship.**

The majority of those interested in the pathway may be contractually linked to a Marist ministry. The contractual issue does not necessarily imply a link with the vocational way. From the beginning, it is important to provide clarity on the matter. One person can stop working in a Marist center but can continue his/her vocational process and eventually make an option for charismatic bonding and belonging.

* **The starting point may not be the same for all.**

The gateway can be any of the first three stages referred to in this document (with the exception of the fourth). A personal interview with the animators can help to have more clarity about the stage from which the person joins the pathway. In the future it will be more necessary for the people to go through all the stages of the process.

 4. **To animate and accompany personal processes**.

For those people who expressed their wish to begin a customised Marist formation pathway it is time to set specific steps. It will be important to set up aspects such as:

* Appointment of the *accompanier.*
* To decide the regularity of the personal encounters (the recommendation is once a month).
* To adapt the Marist growth pathway to the needs and real context of the person.
* The proposals made to the person must be in tune with the formation plan elaborated in the Administrative Unit.
* To gradually propose to the person ongoing development and advancement in the pathway to new stages, as long as it comes from a deep listening of the personal journey and it is adequate to the personal context.

5. **To animate and accompany the process of the Administrative Unit**

Relationship and dialogue with similar experiences of *other Administrative Units*.

Sense of Region. Joint efforts.

Attention to *train trainers* who continue to processes that are started.

6. **Evaluation of the process**

The animation team must be attentive to monitoring systematically the process. To avoid the risk of personality-centered, dispersed or fossilized ways.

