



COMING CLOSER TO THE NEW RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE LAITY AND THE BROTHERS

LAITY AND BROTHERS WE SHARE THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH AND THE MARIST MISSION

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The mission is what calls us. For it, we are gathered as Church.

The Marist mission is enriched by a new relationship, it acquires new expressions derived from the action of the laity and from communion.

The mission is ahead of us all, THE MISSION IS WHAT INVITES US: for it, we are gathered together in Church, it is what legitimizes the different charisms. It is multiplied into a great variety of services and ministries, but always in the one mission of the Church. It is a duty for all believers. Evangelising is not an individual or isolated act, but a profoundly ecclesial one (EN 60).

The Marist mission makes the ecclesial mission specific. Today as yesterday, the motivation for this new relationship between brothers and laity is the same as that which inspired the first brothers at Champagnat's side: to give a Christian education to children and youth, especially the most disadvantaged. The will to respond to this call of God and the poor has become the source of this common project. We affirm that EVANGELISATION is the centre and the priority of our apostolic activity, in proclaiming Jesus Christ and his message. Lay people and brothers, we feel united in the same mission.

The Marist story is the history of a communion for mission, or more exactly, of a fraternity for the education of the poor. The first Marist community, guided by Champagnat, sensed that this would also be the central nucleus of its consecrated life. It is assuredly the most decisive and prophetic characteristic of the Marist charism: to live community as response to the mission of educating the poor, children and youth.

But since we, brothers and laity, share the same mission, Brother Charles tells the brothers: "We are arriving at a very important moment in the Church's history, a moment of rebirth, an orientation towards the style of the primitive Church, when lay people carried out the Church's task of mission in its totality. Let us do all in our power to help the laity take up this challenge of being artisans of the mission of the Church." (XIX GC 1993)

The Marianist José María Arnaiz affirms that "the mission of the Church belongs essentially to the laity ». Starting with this idea, the new relationship acquires a very evangelical tone. It implies for the brothers passing from being the artisans of the mission and evangelization to acting in such a way that the laity are the artisans and the brothers their collaborators. It is a matter of being companions, serving together, learning from one another. This will



A group of brothers and laity of Australia

be a more radical, prophetic and communitarian image of brother, like the one Champagnat lived at La Valla, beginning his experiment with some lay associates. Monseigneur Geraldo Lyrio Roca, a Brazilian archbishop, expresses it thus: "The laity are not the collaborators of the ordained ministers; quite the contrary, we, the ordained ministers, are at the service of the laity, the holy people of God. We can say that the ministerial priesthood is at the service of the common priesthood of the faithful."

This is a most radical step, says Victor Codina, since it is no longer the laity who are collaborating with the religious and integrating themselves into their charism, but it is the religious who are placing themselves at their service: Religious Life places itself at the service of the full realization of the mission of the laity in order to work together with them, and including under their direction, in the common mission of the Church.

From now on it is a dimension of religious life to transcend the function and put the accent on the truly evangelical gesture of Jesus wrapping a towel around him and washing the feet. Religious life is converted into service, favoring Bishop Bello's "Church of service", adopting the attitudes of Mary, the model of simplicity who lets others be in front, attentive to the details, silent. This is to be collaborators of the laity in the mission of the Church, but with a strong and basic identity, which touches on the essence of the Gospel.

Thus, the collaboration of the brothers does not prevent them expressing their identity, but they collaborate precisely as religious, contributing their own way of being Marist from their vocation as consecrated men. It is a matter of being a ferment in the mass, thus helping true lay vocations to emerge in the Church at the service of their mission and the Marist mission.

The lay Marist communities offer a renewed scenario of Marist life, a reference point so that the charism can give a new impulse to the mission, even if, today, the number of brothers is declining (cf. GAST 96). It falls on the laity to incarnate the Kingdom of God where its establishment has been neglected or opposed. They are called to transform the world into the Kingdom. It flows from this grand project that it is the laity who will sustain the religious in the transformation of the world according to the design of God (Arnaiz).

We believe that this new brothers-laity relationship will enrich the Marist mission, a mission which acquires new modes of expression from the engagement of the lay people and from communion. Lay diversity means that they can share the mission in any kind of work, in living the faith. For the Marist laity, the activities in which they concentrate their mission are much more diverse than the works of the brothers. Certain ones feel that, at a certain time of their life, they must give more attention to the education of their children. Others live the mission by working in the educational works. There are some who share their lives and time in other fields. In this diversity, proper to lay life, we, brothers and laity, can cultivate communion and search together for new ways of expressing the Marist mission (cf. GAST 42, 47).

*We share
the mission of the Church and the Marist mission*

For deepening



*Commission of the brothers and laity who drew up the document **Gathered around the same table***

Complementary readings:

- Chapter 2 – Mission in **Around the same table**
- The article of Victor Codina: Mutual relations between religious and laity

What meaning for you has the statement of Brother Charles in saying to the brothers: « Let us do all in our power to help the laity take up the challenge **of being artisans of the mission of the Church** » (XIX GC 1993)?

What must die in me for this new relationship to be born?

It costs us to accept that, for something new to be born, something has to die. We refuse death. A new relationship between brothers and laity. What has to die in me for this new relationship to be born? (Br Emili).

For self questioning:

- As a lay person or a brother, I feel united in the same mission.
- I see the mission from an ecclesial and communitarian experience.
- I accept the task, for the laity, of being artisans of the Church's mission.
- In the mission, I feel a companion, in serving together as lay or as brother, and in learning from the other.
- Marist mission transcends works or institutions.
- Evangelising gives me reason for following Jesus.