



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

THE FOLLOWING OF JESUS WE SHARE AS BROTHERS AND LAITY MAKES US SEARCHERS AND EXPLORERS

We believe that the new brother-laity relationship requires of us the same audacity and creativity as Champagnat. To take on a journey of conversion. Die in order to live.

The following of Jesus we share as brothers and laity makes us **SEARCHERS AND EXPLORERS**. "Move ourselves, detach ourselves, take on a journey of conversion", the XXI General Chapter tells us. It is the displacement and the journeying Mary and Champagnat lived. It is the "putting out to sea" and "crossing to the other shore", that Jesus shows us. It is the experience of pilgrimage and quest. Experience of fear and admiration, of hesitation and confidence. We take on the condition of itinerants. As Newman tells us: to live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often".

According to one author: "Fidelity does not consist in remaining always in the same place but in moving systematically towards whatever provides greater fullness and conviction of soul, greater clarity of mind and integrity of heart". We are conscious, like the capitulants, that Marist life is pressing us to enter into a dynamic of exodus and displacement that leads us, brothers and lay people, to abandon the responses of the past, which do not satisfy us but give us security, and trace the ways to the promised land, crossing the desert.

The Lord requires brothers and laity readiness to take on a **JOURNEY OF CONVERSION**. This journey becomes an interior displacement in order to know how to pass from dependency to autonomy and freedom, from spiritual moments to a style of life according to God, from quantity to quality. And it is a displacement in the mission so as to pass from the brothers' works to Marist works, from being functionaries of the Gospel to witnesses of the Lord. It is a displacement in relationship, passing from replacement to collaboration, from superiority to fraternity, from distance to closeness, from mute guests to companions of the road. Conversion means passing from being in charge to the hidden and unknown of the Gospel, from centralism to co-responsibility, from directing to accompanying and animating. For José Cristo-Rey this moment demands moving from theory to praxis, from the differences of ministry to the fundamental equality, from the masculine to gender equality, from the exclusive hierarchy to authority as service, from the symbols, gestures and rites of submission to the fraternity which unites.

To set ourselves on the road to the new land, we need to live a spirituality for change, which



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comes only from the Spirit of God. “Unless we believe in the God of change, we condemn ourselves to the banality of the partial”, says Joan Chittister. The newness proposed to us by the last General Chapter we believe has this tone, which implies change of mentality, much discernment, great availability, renunciation of securities, assuming risks and a profound confidence in God, following Mary’s example.

Exploration and search should lead us to experiment and create new models of Marist life and mission which aid brothers and laity in their common and specific vocations (Meeting at St. Paul), to contribute to the dawning of a new Marist life (Laity of Venezuela), to promote the living of the Marist charism from the perspective of the woman, by integrating in our lives Marian elements such as tenacity, resistance, maternal affection, tenderness, attention to details and intuition in our daily experience (GAST 25), to becoming responsible for animating a Marist vocations ministry, joint and specific, which multiplies the members of our family (GAST 147).

This road of conversion also demands of us the quest for a better linking up of the laity in the Institute and for an organization which supports growth in co-responsibility, autonomy and communion. The document GAST puts it very well, “as long as we are walking together, new forms of relationship will emerge more and more strongly, and they will demand new structures that welcome and encourage vitality...and allow the deepening of the relationship between brothers and laity even more” (99, 134). And as the Assembly of Mendes reminds us: “We need to articulate the future of the lay Marist vocation and its structures of organization”. It appears to us normal to think of integrating the laity even into the organs of government: especially those affecting mission, but also those concerned with the life, charism, the institution, such as provincial chapters, Province priorities, formation in the charism... The novelty from the laity will also come for an awareness of the responsibility of receiving the gift of the charism to cultivate and make known, to be creative in the ways of organizing themselves and in the creation of the means necessary for giving a response to the following of Jesus in shared life and mission, among others.

We believe equally that our conversion proceeds through consistent formation processes to deepen our Marist identity (XX GC 29), revitalize our charism (GAST 156) and recreate our spirituality in a powerful experience of God.

The renovated Hermitage is for us an icon of this work of renewal and conversion that at this time concerns brothers and lay persons, as Br Emili reminds us. The construction of the Hermitage and its development constitute an adventure strewn with difficulties and contradictions. It is the journey of a group of men, guided by a clairvoyant leader, firmly established in the faith and in a vision of the future full of hope, which makes them able to go against the current, to dream together of a better world for poor children and young people.

The Hermitage constructed by Saint Marcellin was not a work completed once for all. In the course of the 185 years of its history, it has known transformations, new buildings have been built, others remodelled. The renovation of the Hermitage has also had to confront problems. The renovated Hermitage is an icon, a living sign of the importance of assuming in our lives the reality of the paschal mystery: to die in order to live.

We believe that the new brother-lay relationship demands of us the same audacity and creativity as Champagnat. To know how to die in order to live.

For reflection



Joint group formation in St Paul

Reading:

- *Letter of the XXI General Chapter*
- *Message of the laity in the XXI General Chapter*

Know how to die in order to live is the dynamic proposed by the last General Chapter. Journeying, displacement, conversion... Die to the old. Crossing the desert.

Is it easy for you to be certain of the elements of personal conversion the Lord is asking of you at this time? And what would you indicate for institutional renovation?

What needs to die in me for this new relationship to come to birth?

We need to accept that for something new to be born, something has to die. We resist death. A new relationship of brothers and laity. What has to die in me for this new relationship to be born? (Br Emili).

For personal consideration:

- From the following of Jesus, as lay or as brother, I am animated by the attitude of being a searcher.
- Understanding that the new land demands me moving myself, detaching myself, taking up a journey of conversion.
- Although it costs me, I assume that I must abandon the responses of the past.
- I believe that fidelity does not consist in staying always in the same place but in moving systematically towards whatever provides greater fullness.
- In the new relationship, I believe that conversion means passing from being in charge to the hidden and unknown of the Gospel, from centralism to collegiality, from directing to accompanying.
- I would be disposed to experiment new models of Marist life, to renounce securities, to assume risks, to place more confidence in God.