



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

THE NEW RELATIONSHIP AMONG BROTHERS, LAY MEN AND LAY WOMEN WANTS TO HELP THE RISE OF A NEW FORM OF CONSECRATED LIFE THAT PROMOTES A NEW WAY OF BEING BROTHER

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Sharing the same heritage, we feel complementary, meaning we help one another to make way for a new form of consecrated life and a new way of being brother.

The vocation of the Lay Marist is common ground from our roots. It sustains us all, Brothers and Lay Marists.

The Marist charism unites us all, brothers and lay people. But we live it from specific ways of life. The identity of the brother is described in the Constitutions as following Christ, after the style of Mary, in his life of loving the Father and others. The brother strives to achieve this goal in community.

Sharing the same heritage, we feel ourselves to be complementary, helping one another to make rise a new consecrated life and **A NEW WAY OF BEING BROTHER**, as the 21st General Chapter suggested. The road to the new relationship becomes a challenge to change. Sharing the charism offers to Marist consecrated life a new possibility: to show how to establish an authentic dialogue of life and friendship, among equals, with those lay men and women who want to share the charism with us. It presupposes a willingness to modify our ways of living, praying and acting.

Perhaps in this search, together with the lay people, for a new way to be brother, we may have to “recover that exaggeration of brotherhood, as something proper to our ‘being brother’, and in this way make visible and credible the merciful face of God. To be brother, perhaps this was the most original insight of our founders, when, following the movements of the Spirit, they discovered that our place in the Church was in the minority, in universal brotherhood, in education ministry, uniting ourselves to the saving mission initiated by Jesus Christ” (Oscar Elizalde, FSC). The term brother

encompasses a rich spirituality, full of mysticism and prophecy for our times. We can recognize that the vocation of brother is not reduced to a sector of the Church, but constitutes a global dimension of the same vocation.

We are all born to the faith and we enter the Church as lay people (members of the Christian people) and in that common framework we are called to exercise determined functions in the service of the ecclesial community, to live determined characteristics that belong to the common patrimony, and to serve the common mission from concrete charisms and ministries.



Asia Regional Meeting of Leaders of Lay Animation
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From present-day ecclesial sensibility, so genuinely evangelical, we consider that all Christians are called to a radical following of Jesus, each one from his or her particular vocation. And so, lay people have their proper place, a place not defined by the negation of other vocations. This lay dimension, that is, pertaining to the people, never leaves us: some live it in a significant way (lay Christians); others (priests and religious) as a constant reference point that reminds them for whom and in what way they exercise their ministry.

The Church was born lay. Jesus, Mary, Joseph and the apostles were all laypersons. The differentiation between clergy and laity didn't appear until the beginning of the second century to designate the ministers of worship in reference to the rest of the believers. Secularity is a specific note of the entire People of God, of the whole Church (as a consequence of the Incarnation), but lived by the lay faithful in a special way (secular character), to the degree they find themselves fully inserted in 'the mundane.' (Raúl Berzosa).

Evangelical radicality and prophetic force are not a monopoly of religious life. In the lay state are found married and single persons who have the prophetic gift of evangelical radicality and live it in the daily round (José María Arnaiz).

It is not only the religious who must search for and love God above all else (PC 6), but every Christian must do so. What is presented as descriptive and characteristic of religious life pertains as well to baptismal existence. Therefore in the present day, a Christian who undertakes the radical following of Christ does not think necessarily of religious life, as was done in the preconiliar era (Juan Antonio Estrada). In the Assembly at Mendes it was affirmed that "as Marists we are called to passionately center our lives in Jesus Christ, developing a spirituality of following".

The vocation of the lay person is **COMMON GROUND FROM OUR ROOTS**. This common ground sustains all of us, brothers and laity, and in it we encounter: a totally ministerial Church, where the mission, the unique mission of the Church, is shared by all; with reference to the Sacraments of Initiation as common source and foundation of all Christian life; where all have an equal dignity that only Baptism can bestow; where lay people, as everyone else, are leaders in, and not only the "objects" of evangelization, and this does not come to them as a concession by the hierarchy but by the very Sacraments of the Initiation; where the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial priesthood of the presbyters are ordered to one another without it supposing the pre-eminence of anyone; where each one, from his or her vocation, from his or her charism, from his or her ministry, becomes a sign for all the others; where all are called equally to holiness, and where the call to evangelical radicality is presented as a baptismal characteristic that can be lived in a diversity of Christian vocations. (Cf. Antonio Botana).

Here is how Juan Antonio Estrada relates the future of religious life with the lay vocation: The theological revaluation of the laity affects the core of religious life and obliges it to redefine its meaning and its current works. The lay condition is being converted today into the basic point of reference in understanding the following and imitation of Christ, displacing the monk as the prototype of holiness and of Christian perfection. The future of the congregations depends in good part on their capacity to incorporate laypersons into their institutions and to let themselves be enriched by their experiences. It is not only a matter of integrating the laity into the apostolic works of each congregation, nor of seeking new forms of association, but of revitalizing the foundational charism starting with what the laity can bring to make the congregations more efficient, better adapted to society and more able to coordinate contemplation and action in a worldly context. Openness to lay people and the internal restructuring of the congregations can be the seed of new forms of religious life, as in the past, but this time making the laity protagonists of the changes and partners in decision making. Spirituality will have to be built

from complementarity, recognizing the plurality of identities, which will permit the deepening of one's own, in contrast with that of the other.

It is not only a matter of integrating the laity, but of learning from them and of collaborating with them so that religious life does not accommodate itself to the lifestyles of modern society, but serve as a critical alternative regarding them. The search for new answers cannot come only from the laypersons, but with difficulty will be achieved without them. To be sensitive with respect to social changes and to be open to new experiences is one of the requirements for not remaining in a simple ornamental modernization of the old model. The deep transformation that is occurring in our societies, in the context of the third industrialization, globalization and post modernity or second modernity, made unfeasible the static state of religious life.

The change of paradigm clashes with the historic configuration taken on by religious life through the centuries, by privileging a set of structures and internal practices that define it. This perspective gives pride of place to tradition over the present-day challenges of the mission, it promotes the legal perspective with respect to creative innovations, and it highlights professional tasks and institutional loads above the people. We are allergic to what is new. When religious life is integrated into this restorative dynamic it stops being a laboratory of Christianity, as in other historic eras. And if creativity is not acceptable in religious life it seeks other paths, in the best of cases lay associations. This is the point of view that Carlos Palacios defends, which proposes the symbolism of the sacrifice of Isaac as an appeal to religious life to sacrifice its historic figure and be opened to the questions and demands of the present. It must renounce centering on itself, assume the wearing out of its historic model, and recall creatively its foundational charism, giving it new forms.

A NEW WAY OF BEING BROTHER

For reflection



Members of a fraternity in Brazil

Readings:

- The finalized document from Quito
- The finalized document from St Paul-Trois-Châteaux

The following affirmation is from Juan Antonio Estrada: **The future of the congregations** depends in good part on their ability to incorporate the laity into their institutions and to allow themselves to be enriched by their experiences. It is not simply a matter of incorporating the laity into the apostolic works of each congregation, nor of seeking new ways of association, but of revitalizing the foundational charism starting with what the lay people can contribute to make the congregations more efficient, better adapted to society and more capable of balancing contemplation and action in a worldly context.

In the future of our Congregation what do you think will be the new way of being brother?

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

It is difficult for us to accept that for something new to be born, something has to die. We resist death. A new relationship of brothers – lay persons. What has to die in me in order for the new relationship to be born? (Br Emili).

Facing myself:

- I believe that the new relationship turns into a challenge for the search for the new way of being brother.
- I am disposed to modify my ways of living, of praying, of acting... in order to establish a true dialogue with those with whom we share the charism.
- With my companions on the way, lay or brother, I feel called to the radicality of following Jesus.
- I sense that openness to lay people can be the seed of new forms of religious life.
- I feel that being “brother” encompasses a rich spirituality, full of mysticism and prophecy for our time.