



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

## **UNITED IN A COMMON CHARISMATIC VOCATION**

sheet

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*The Marist vocation is a gift offered to persons engaged in different states of life, who wish to live the Gospel according to the Marist charism.*

*The charism is revealed to be the central place of reference for the relationship between laity and brothers.*

*A brother approached me and asked: "And you too, you are a Marist?" (I think he wanted to ask me if I was a Marist brother). And I replied: "Yes, I am a Marist". This statement came from the depths of my soul and I felt grateful to be able to say it in this way. (Testimony of a layman).*

We affirm that the Marist vocation is a gift offered to persons engaged in different states of life, who wish to live the Gospel according to the Marist charism. The XX General Chapter was very clear in pointing out that it was necessary "to promote the Marist vocation of brothers and laity". So we, laity and brothers, have a common charismatic vocation: the latter live it as consecrated persons, the former as lay people (cf Assembly of Mendes). It is a blessing and a joy for us, Brothers and lay people, Br Charles said, to be able to share our common richness and to live together an exciting spiritual and apostolic adventure.

Lay people and Brothers, we have far more features in common than the differences proper to our vocation. We both share the beauty and the limits of the human condition at this time in history. We live the same Christian vocation through our baptism and we have heard the call of God drawing us to the Marist charism (cf GAST 16).

Brothers and lay equally, we can discover ourselves as the gift of the spirit to the Church for the world. We feel ourselves called to the same Marist vocation which we develop from our specific life projects, as a marvellous source of richness and growth. We learn to live the human relationship in a new

way. This relationship closely resembles the one members of a true family live; a mature and adult relationship in which there is sometimes giving and receiving and always sharing.



*Sharing our Call, Bougainville, Papua New Guinea*

Starting from this common charismatic vocation, the new relationship is enriched, and teaches us a new way of co-operating in the common mission. We have to reeducate ourselves to team work as spiritual family. A common missionary project becomes possible, as well as a unique process of growth in the faith. One learns co-responsibility in the assimilation, the living of the charism and the spirituality. As well, one learns to collaborate

and provide mutual help at the level of formation. Gospel radicalness becomes an unceasing movement of exchanges.

The ecclesiology of communion restores charisms and mission to the heart of the Church, in a way that laity may live the founding charism from other forms of life different from the ones typical of religious life and may live it in an integral way, following the different facets of the person, not in all its potentialities which transcend every group.

From the preceding, it results that the founding charism is affirmed as **CENTRAL PLACE OF REFERENCE** for relations between laity and brothers in our Marist family. With this new centre of gravity, the distinction between the states of life loses its force. The charism becomes vocation and the person responds to this vocation with an existential project. It is the unifying element, the bridge which allows the meeting, the root of the mutual relations, the link which unites and differentiates the identities, for us the identity of the lay person and that of the brother.

Thus it is the charism that is the reference point and not the institution. In the measure that we make progress in the processes of participation in the charism, and that the bonds of relationship between laity and brothers grow stronger, words become less centred on the institution and more on the communion of laity and brothers in the common charism on a basis of equality (Br Antonio Botana).

The founding charism, with its obligatory reference to the person of the Founder and his spiritual journey, is the new force field where the new lay-brothers relationship is forged. The charism, therefore, is like the family bloodline, the spirit which gives life to the family and its members. Antonio Botana will say that the charism is habitually confused with the institutional projects in which it becomes concrete and, more concretely still, with the original project of consecrated life.

The founding charism is, by nature, provocative: it creates signs, calls people to be signs, especially community signs. Prophetic signs give life to the whole family, keep it alert, in tension, in constant overtaking. In this line, the brothers give the more specific signs of consecrated life: their free commitment for the Kingdom, their experience of communion, their witness of searching for God. In parallel with that of the brothers appears the prophetic witness of the laity, celibate and married, whose life projects as single persons or couples are strongly marked by the Marist charism.

**THE FOUNDING CHARISM MAKE SIGNS  
AND CALLING US TO BE COMMUNITY  
SIGNS**

# COMMON MARIST VOCATION

As lay persons and brothers, we share the same Christian vocation through baptism and we have felt the same call of God which draws us towards the Marist charism.

## MARIST LAY PERSON

Inheritor of the  
Marist charism in  
its lay expression.

## MARIST BROTHER

Inheritor of the  
charism in its specific  
expression of  
religious life.

We share the responsibility of  
making the charism grow.

We search together for a greater  
vitality for the charism in the  
world of today.

Laity and brothers we feel impelled by God  
to foster the birth of a new epoch for the charism.

# COMMON MARIST FUTURE



# For reflection



*Reflection days for Marist Lay People and Brothers  
Tiruchirappalli, India*

## *Reading:*

- “A clearer identity for the Marist laity”, Br Séan Sammon (Bulletin 295).

Try to read from the concept of Marist vocation everything you sense **common** to brothers and lay persons and what is more **specific** to each of the vocations.

## *What must I change in myself?*

A new relationship between brothers and laity. You see clearly that the word « new » is not a neutral adjective, but speaks of a change of mentality, attitudes, practices. And not necessarily of changes on the part of others, but beginning with myself. What must I change in myself? (Br Emili)

### **For me to consider:**

- Feeling that laity and brothers have a common charismatic vocation, enthuses me.
- I live in an adult and mature manner this common vocation where one gives and receives and always shares.
- From this common vocation, it is easy for me to share the Marist mission, the common spirituality, the processes of formation, the life project.
- I see the charism as a central reference for the new relationship rather than the institution.
- The Marist mission I share impels me to render community witness of the Marist charism in our world.
- My attitude is one of confidence rather than suspicion, of co-responsibility rather than total control, of family spirit rather than compromise.