



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

# INTRODUCTION

sheet

*The accompanying inserts are meant to offer a process for reflecting on the new relationship between brothers and the laity as promoted by our XXIst General Chapter. This new relationship, based on communion, aims to increase the vitality of our charism in today's world.*

### **What is the goal of such a long process?**

We find ourselves navigating through a really complex network of pathways, avenues and processes that we need to pursue in order to address the issues raised by our mission, spirituality and formation.

In putting together the Secretariat of the Laity's agenda for the next three years we have sought to come up with a set of objectives, strategies, action guidelines and people responsible for getting things done... and we've put our whole heart and soul into everything that we've been doing. Yet in the midst of our search to find new ways to encourage and animate, the question arises, Why this plan? Where is this challenging journey taking us? Over and over the NEW RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BROTHERS AND LAITY has continued to reverberate in our deliberations, based on a spirit of communion in our efforts to bring greater vitality to our charism in the world of today, as our last General Chapter summoned us to do. Perhaps responding to all that's involved in this "new relationship" is one of the goals of the journey we see before us. Here is our approach in attempting to respond.

The topic of a fundamental call in relation to the laity was at the heart of our General Chapter, as it is for our Secretariat's animation Plan. Everything points to newness in this relationship. Even though this relationship existed before the Chapter, our Plan centers on new points of reference contained within it. In referring explicitly to brothers and laity, the Plan affirms the specificity of these vocations. Based on communion is an expression that breaks down differences and categories. Searching together speaks to co-responsibility, shaking hands. The vitality of the charism is front and center because now that charism is owned by all.

The ROUND TABLE at our XXIst General Chapter demonstrated the spirit of this new relationship. Those round tables symbolized communion within that very charism. As the Chapter progressed, those round tables invited us to build a large and growing community, a home for all. As lay people and brothers sharing the same Marist vocation, we reaffirmed that our specific vocations share a common bond, that in their diversity they complement one another, and that in our efforts to bring about full communion, "we are showing the Marian face of the Church that we so dearly love." (Emili)

Our Church is in need of this prophetic symbol of the round table and its call to fraternity. Our round table is rich with mysticism and prophecy; with meeting and journeying on; silence and crying out; waiting and urgency; contemplation and dust-covered feet; evangelical adventure and passion; opposites that at times are not easy to bring into harmony.

In earlier times the round table of the charism that we share with the Church and the men and women of our world used to be square-shaped and small. Now it is larger and round. There are no special seating arrangements or sharp angles... As it was in Nazareth, it's all-inclusive, marked by joy and tenderness, graciousness and a down-to-earth atmosphere, where Mary smiles. This round table bespeaks a "new relationship" between brothers and laity and we make this the focal point of what the Secretariat and its vision of mission is all about.

Without a doubt, rethinking the mutual lay-religious relationship at this present time in the life of the Church is a development whose time has come. This is not about being fashionable and having lay people and religious intermingle. It's about a powerful conviction: of bringing about the Kingdom in each individual member and in the Institute by means of our unity and good works. We are not reinventing the Gospel. We are joining forces to bring it to fruition.

### Process

These thoughts from the Secretariat invite us to enter into a process. The fundamental ideas driving our action turn into a way of thinking, a road to go more deeply into this new relationship, a challenge to undergo conversion and an opportunity for prayer. Based on these main points we want to bring about fraternal dialogue, occasions for us to share what nourishes our hearts and captures our imaginations as Marists. To accomplish this, we yearn to explore the same horizon and journey together.

The insets contain a text, a motivational PowerPoint and questions for personal or group reflection. Each inset comes with a suggestion for referencing a document or article.

### Secretariat of the Laity January 2012



*Laity and Brothers from Brazil at the meeting in Quito*

### Reading: Br Emili's Message to the Regional Meetings

Go back over the **approach** we are proposing and identify your initial reactions (what you agree with, questions you have...) concerning the ideas in these insets.

How would you prefer to envision **the round table** of our Marist future within the parameters of the new relationship between lay people and brothers?