



Adding lives, multiplying horizons

COMMUNITY EXPERIENCES

Secretariat of Laity

In 1991 Br. Charles stated that “the mutual encouragement in following our vocation must eventually entail a greater association in different forms including a greater number of volunteers in our missions, *the creation of mixed communities* and, obviously, the enhancement of MCHFM” (Circular Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family). Ten years later, at the General Chapter of 2001, the lay observers affirmed: “We have been discovering the challenge of creating inspiring communities through the collaboration and experience of new ways of being Marist in order to create together *new ways of being community*”.

Thus, there has been in the Institute an emergence of community experiences that have responded to the wish of the lay themselves: “We want to be a part of your life, of your spirituality and your mission” (Message from the lay people at the 20th General Chapter), as well as the conviction of a group of brothers indicating that living the Marist charism with others enriches and complements their identity.

A prior publication collected the community experiences of Brothers and lay from Santa Maria de los Andes. Here, we are offering similar experiences from other provinces of the Institute.

Rome
November, 2013

Living the Marist charism with others

Our Marist vocation is shared among us, Brothers and lay people. This commitment to God is mediated by the other Marists with whom we journey. The gift of the Marist charism becomes an alliance with God but also with those who share the same gift.

Living the Marist charism with others is living an experience of communion. Here, the community dimension is introduced as an association of people who weave fraternal ties among them based on an identical experience: the one of having been captured by God in the following of Christ with the spirit of Champagnat. This community experience is the axis of the charismatic experience and allows making a personal summary of the constitutive elements of our vocation, such as Marist spirituality, mission and fraternity.

Living the Marist charism with others does not allow reducing the community experience to the people with whom we share the same house, whether family or community of Brothers. Living the Marist charism today means opening up, like concentric circles, to all the people who share the Marist spirit with us.

As you live the Marist charism, you discover community in many different ways and styles. As a theological place where you can reach the plenitude of our relation with God. As a place that humanizes, where we feel like people. As an occasion to offer a testimony to the world, while being prophets of fraternity.

The style of a Marist community is configured in the manner of Mary, attentive to details, simple and close, promoting a spirit of family and tasting like smiles and hot bread, as acceptance and open home.

EXPERIENCES OF COMMUNION

COMMUNITY “LA VALLA”, MULHOUSE, France

It began in 1996, to respond to a dual call:

- The call of the 19th General Chapter (1993) to constitute prophetic communities.
- The call received by Pierre and Catherine Demougin to live in community with the Brothers, at the service of the young.



The founding members have the responsibility of ensuring in the community the fidelity to the work of Saint Marcellin at the heart of the diocesan Church. The mission they received was the following: “Create community, Brothers and lay, welcome and accompany the young in collaboration with the local Church, associating other adults to this mission”.

Reference point: the mission. They acknowledge what was specified at the 20th General Chapter: “To proceed together, Brothers and lay people, with determination and unequivocally, close to the poor and estranged children and youngsters, along new paths of education, evangelization and solidarity”.

The members of La Valla find their roots in the spirituality of Saint Marcellin, as a life according to the Spirit. It is achieved in all aspects of human life, consecrated life, marriage, celibacy, paternity or maternity, work, personal and social responsibilities. They receive from Saint Marcellin two vital dimensions: the Marian dimension and the apostolic dimension.

The mission is supported by these pillars: Life of prayer, family life, fraternal life, city life, testimony of the values lived by Saint Marcellin: presence, simplicity, humility, modesty, love for work, family spirit, in the manner of Mary.

The community is made up of a “community of life”, an “extended community”, a “community of young” and another of adults. The « community of life » is the driving force of the mission and collectively ensures the activities related to the mission (planning, animation, reinterpretation, prayer, integration).



The “extended community” is made up of members called by the “community of life”. It ensures co-responsibility in mission. Through their active presence, its members support the community of life in all its programs.

The community is constituted as a “Private Association of Faithful”.

COMMUNITY OF “HERMITAGE”, France.

With reference to the mixed community of Hermitage, Br. Sean stated the following at the time of its birth: if the new community of l’Hermitage truly aspires at becoming a group of people united in a single heart and with the same spirit, as Marcellin dreamed for his Brothers, its members will have to adopt the methods he suggested to reach this objective; namely, mutual respect, prayer, forgiveness and simplicity of life. Ultimately, the effectiveness of the Project Hermitage will depend on the capacity the new community displays to fully live the Marist spirit and to learn to communicate to others what that precisely means.



Sean himself signals the power of the mission for this community: At the time of departure from the Hermitage, all visitors or pilgrims must carry within the conviction that he or she has spent a time living in a Christian community that is Marist in name and in fact. That presently translates into a community that attends to the diversity of nationalities, races, cultures and lifestyles. And it also means that its members are passionate about the mission. The experience of living at the Hermitage must lead us to that, to leaving that place with our hearts burning with the desire to carry God’s Good News to the needy children and youngsters, wherever we are and work. Simply stated, it must encourage us to approach the children, like Marcellin, to tell them how much Jesus loves them.

This community wants to live the integration of provinces, nations and cultures in the same spirit of Champagnat. In addition, it seeks to develop the lay vocation and the vocation as a brother in mutual complementarity and enrichment. The community rhythms, the life project, the Marist expressions... emerge from a consensus and discernment in community. As all Marist communities, its mission is to testify to the communion and fraternity. Since it is a house that welcomes pilgrims from all around the world, they accompany the groups in their closeness to the Marist origins and their search for experiences of spiritual and charismatic growth.

The community of Hermitage, as other mixed communities, wants to explore the new paths that are opening up within the Institute, where brothers and lay share life, charism and mission in equality and complementarity. The communion in the same Marist vocation helps refine and deepen the specific identities of brothers and lay people. The experience aims at seeking new parameters in the way of being a brother in our time and on the new paths of belonging and commitment of the lay vocation.



As a community open to the Institute, it offers the possibility, especially for lay men and women, to live this community experience for periods of one, two or more years. An opportunity to be enriched from the sources of our charism, to experience internationality, to serve and welcome, to feel the community and fraternal dimension of the Marist charism.

INTERCONGREGATIONAL COMMUNITY, Valcartier, Canada.

In the objective of sharing and supporting each other in the mission, three Brothers of the Sacred Heart are living a community experience with the Marist Brothers in Vallee Jeunesse, Quebec. This experience began in 2011. The brothers from the two Institutes live in the same house of Valcartier and share their fraternal life, prayer life and the same mission, directed at the young of Vallee Jeunesse.



They find the charism and spirit of both congregations to be so similar and close that their everyday life is led very naturally.

For the academic year 2013-2014, the community is made up of two Brothers of the Sacred Heart (Bros. Patrice L'Heureux and Jasmin Houle) and 5 Marist brothers (Bros. Gilles Paquette, community animator, Leopold Truchon, Claude Desaulniers, Hugo Rivera (Western Mexico), and Jean-Denis Couture.

The community Project is designed jointly. As part of their community life pace, the Brothers come together for the morning and afternoon prayers. "We pray our life and live our prayer". Community meetings focused on different themes allow them to grow and nourish their hope.

Their mission Project is "to ensure a significant presence among the more vulnerable children and youngsters". The young they welcome are their reason for being. They offer school support to youngsters with problems in school, possibilities of socio-professional integration, day-care, weekend camps...



The General Manager of Vallée Jeunesse, François, and his wife Veronique, with their four children, participate very closely to the fraternal and community experience of the Marist Brothers and Brothers of the Sacred Heart. They live in a house located on the land that belongs to the brothers. The initial idea was to create a mixed community of Brothers and lay sharing the same mission.

Group of youngsters from the *Tremplin* (Trampoline) program.

COMMUNITY OF FRAILE PINTADO, Argentina

This community was born in 2009. Today, brothers Arturo and Quique and a couple (Mariana and Victor) live in this community; they share the mission and spaces for prayer with many lay men and women from the area.

The identity of the community was designed as follows:
It wants to be a Marist community in order to deepen and to feel a part of Marcellin's dream. The community is open to several lay communities from the surroundings. It wants to be a sign community that lives and is seen. A community in the manner of Mary and Champagnat: simple, fraternal, at work, caring for its members, along with the most neglected



individuals. It wants to be seen as a place for fraternal bonds, where wounds are healed and joy is lived; where there is care and tenderness, spirit of service, cooperative work, understanding of processes and personal and community histories.

With regard to the vocational aspect, it aims at supporting and accompanying the vocation of the lay and Brothers. A vocation that seeks to convey the good news especially to the poor, the young and their families.



The community is of an inserted nature. Kicking the mud, knowing the neighbourhood. Probing the needs of the environment, the dreams of people. Sharing their habits. Feeling their realities. Transmitting joy and hope. Special attention is given to the children. Special care for the young facing an uncertain future in society. Strength in education.

The Brothers are the core of the community, however with the awareness of being a community with lay men and women from the area in a process of reflection and common search that reveals prayer, a fraternal sense

and the power of mission.

COMMUNITY OF PUNTO FIJO, Venezuela.

We, Maria Jose Torres (Marist lay) and the Brothers Tomas Martinez and Diego Anton, started this experience as of November 26 of 2011. It is the result of a process of following Jesus Christ as Marists. Maria gradually took on this lifestyle since her experience as a student at the school John XXIII; subsequently, as a teacher, she animated youth groups, coordinated the school ministry and served as a volunteer at the Casas Hogar with street children in Quevedo, a Project of the Brothers. Her experience of life in the family, in the Marist life (mission, prayer, discernment...) as a follower of Jesus of Nazareth led her to make this decision.



In addition, the relation among the three of us has grown stronger over time. This relationship has matured over several years. This ensures that common life is a continuation of something that was being experienced, fraternal and that the conflicts are dealt with based on the understanding of the other.

Therefore, this experience emerges following personal processes discerned based on the Gospel and the invitation of the congregation to share life with the laity. It is not a result of a moment of enthusiasm or of a search for newness, or because of a lack of brothers or because it is desirable for a community to have a minimum of three members, or any other reason. We believe there are the circumstances, processes, maturity and Marist life for this experience to be a response to what God is asking of us. We continue our search.

Obviously, we are all different, with our qualities and limitations. Limits cause drawbacks; however, we are enriched and encouraged by making our skills and qualities available to others. Maria as a Marist woman, the brothers as Marist men. The Risen One and His Gospel bring focus to our criteria, values, attitudes and mission. The decision to live this experience stems from that.

Our community is located in a neighbourhood of the city of Punto Fijo, in the State of Falcon, Venezuela. After 12 years in the neighbourhood, it was decided to build the community's own house, a simple one, with materials and objects in common with the neighbours, to favour our proximity to them.

This year of experience focused on the discernment of life, sharing and mission, with essentially children and youngsters. We have been defining our lifestyle, mission, and organization, always open to what is new and to changes that favour vitality. Maria continues working in our school and in the afternoon she devotes some time to the children with cognitive impairment. The brothers are more focused on the neighbourhood through directed tasks. In addition, we have started sharing the word in family houses and monthly Eucharist. We had set other goals, but we have progressed at what we related above. We support each other with our working hours and we can give continuity to the projects on hand.

COMMUNITY OF BANGKOK, Thailand.

The community consists of Neiva Hoffker, a Brazilian lay woman and brothers Juan Castro, Mexican, and José Luis Grande, Spanish. Juan is the District Superior, Jose Luis is the administrator, and Neiva is in charge of the management of the community, children's rights and groups of youngsters.

Their community pace includes the weekly meeting to review and plan the community path. The Sunday Gospel is shared on Saturday. They take turns to animate these meetings. Dinner is usually together, the other meals usually are consumed in their own homes. Neiva lives in a house across from the brothers. Although there are spaces open to all the ones who visit, some spaces are reserved for the community.



Four days a week, they hold the afternoon prayer together. On Fridays there is a time for adoration of the Most Holy in silence. They participate to the six-day annual retreat. In addition, it is possible to have personal retreats with other religious communities.

It is a community that aims at being an open and welcoming community. The three share the cleaning of the house, they prepare meals... One typical characteristic is the flexibility that enables the members of the community to respond to the different needs of the people within the District: going to the airport, driving to the hospital, accompanying to visit the town... Sunday is a free day.

There is a certain difficulty that stems from the responsibilities or missions of their members, which sometimes forces to stay outside of the community for some time. This situation challenges to live moments of loneliness and lack of communication. Also, the fact it is a very small community contributes to this situation.

MARIST MISSIONARIES, Ciudad Juarez, Mexico.

On January 8th, 2005, at the facilities of the Preparatory School of the Mexico Institute, a group of former students of said campus made the commitment to create a pool in favour of the education of the suburbs and rural areas. The civil association Marist Missionaries of Ciudad Juarez was constituted in 2006.



They define themselves as follows: We believe that God's Spirit is giving us a great gift by developing in our minds and hearts the desire to live the Marist spirituality from a lay perspective; that is why we hope to work for the church as Marist missionaries. Our dream is to be able to tell everyone that God loves them very much, especially the *children and youngsters* who are in rural and peripheral areas of the city, through the Marist traits: family spirit, love for work, simplicity, living presence and above all, the devotion to our Good Mother the Holy Mary.

We are people who feel and know we are deeply loved, valued, respected and called by God, with a vocation to collaborate to the construction of a world of justice, love and peace for all, especially for the neediest poor, from a Marist spirituality perspective.

Our family spirit is modelled on the Nazareth home. It is made of love and forgiveness, help and support, of selflessness and opening to the others, of joy, welcome and acceptance, integrity, mutual respect and tolerance. Among us, all feel valued and appreciated regardless of their function and social status.

Our mission is to promote and manage all necessary activities to provide comprehensive support to people, sectors and regions with scarce resources, indigenous communities and vulnerable groups due to age, sex or disability problems by obtaining financial and educational resources to achieve its objective.

Faced with indolence and excessive easiness, they suggest the pedagogy of effort and perseverance, they motivate to take advantage of time, encouraging talent and initiative through the promotion of a spirit of cooperation; social sensitivity is stimulated as well as creativity, self-esteem and persistence, taking advantage of time and making good use of talent, all for the sake of collaborative work.

Its apostolate places the accent on formation, through the professional career of their Choice, "their dream". A degree in Theology or Religious Sciences is part of the basic studies of Marist missionaries. These studies will be achieved in accordance with the availability of each missionary. They encourage a third course of studies in humanities (philosophy, anthropology, sociology, pedagogy, psychology, etc.) or to continue with a masters degree or doctorate in their initial course of studies or in the area of theology.



They carry out their apostolate in the Marist homes or by supporting some marginalized area of the city or rural areas. When you feel called to do so, specify the period of attendance in a mission area where there are collaboration agreements, after completing at least the first semester of university studies.

Every year, they renew their promises before the President of the Association and the community of faithful, in these terms: I voluntarily and freely petition to begin / continue the formation as a Marist

missionary and I publicly commit to direct my efforts to the community and solidarity service in the suburbs and rural areas, while testifying to a life that is coherent and consistent with what I believe, feel and do, and to achieve a non-profit mission and to respect and democratically elect our authorities.

MIXED COMMUNITY, Cambodia

The Mexican couple describes the experience in the community as follows: We are Rodrigo Sanchez and Estela Rodriguez and we now live with our son Josue in Cambodia as part of the Marist District of Asia.

It is somewhat difficult to describe our present community experience; let me explain. We were sent to work to Pailin, a community in the north-west area of Cambodia, near the border with Thailand. There we will form a community with three Brothers who are already at work. However, we are now studying the language and we will live in Phnom Penh (the capital) until December of this year. So for the moment, we are a community with Br. Diego (a Colombian) and Evelyn (a volunteer from Malaysia). The thing is we have not had a true community experience since we see each other very little during the week due to our schedule and because we live in another house.



Allow me to share, however, in the hope they are useful, our two other prior community experiences in community life. During the induction course to the Ad Gentes Mission, we spent two months in community with three Brothers and two lay women. We got together for morning and afternoon prayer and we had our meals together. We lived in a different home, which is something we value positively since it provides us with family privacy but we remain united to the community. We took turns for the prayer and meals and we created a very enriching atmosphere of collaboration and participation. Estela and I have organized ourselves to always participate to the prayer by taking turns to care for Josue. Undoubtedly, the sharing with Brothers and lay has made us grow very much and enabled us to better relate to the people we will serve.

The other experience dates back to the year prior to leaving for the mission (2011-2012). We spent one year in volunteer service in the Sierra Tarahumara sharing life and community with two Brothers: Polo and Alfredo. That year was also very enriching, since we share with them the house, meals, work, and prayer. We have learned a lot from them and we had the opportunity to contribute our life to the community.



In both cases there were differences (although very few) due to the diversity of people, which we always resolved quickly and positively. The Brothers have always been inclusive and open to share their life with the lay and even with a family. We have experienced the joy of building a new path (mixed community life) together and the wonderful fruits it can bring. We also know that our son was for both communities a source of joy and vitality.

Based on our experience, our conclusion is that mixed communities are possible and enriching. And that it truly makes no difference if we are lay-brothers, men-women, young-old, from one nationality or another. We are just people sharing life with people and that is only possible with an open mind and a willing heart.

COMMUNITY OF ERANDIO, Spain

Community Identity

Each of us has felt the Word of the Lord inviting us to dream a new way of Marist community life and we have shared together this experience of faith. We sense that God is calling us as a community to be signs that something new is possible and we wish to respond to this call. We believe that the vitality of our life is based on the conviction that the God of Jesus is a part of our histories and drives us to get out of the comforts of the learned routines to discover him in our faces. This invites us to focus our lives on Him, as Mary did, turning spirituality and prayer into the pillars of our new community dynamics. We deem that fraternity is very important in our lives, which encourages us to share life and faith under the umbrella of love and mutual forgiveness, manifesting our authenticity and reflecting that being together is exciting. We want to continue the dream of Marcellin and look at the world through the eyes of the poor children which becomes a call to a personal and community prophetic life, being signs of hope in our immediate surrounding.



Objectives of the community project

- ✓ Focus personal and community life on the God of Jesus.
 - Enhance personal prayer and share our process within the community.
 - Stimulate a prayerful encounter with the different Marist realities in the environment.
 - Have moments within the normal dynamics of the community in which we maintain the presence of Jesus with the participation of the children.
- ✓ Increase the knowledge of other members of the community and experience fraternity.
 - Discern our identity and community dynamics to be a significant community today.
 - Hold a meeting dedicated to the challenge in life and to communication and follow-up of personal projects.



- ✓ Implement the socio-educational Project with youngsters from Erandio.

AUSARTZEN is a non-profit association that accompanies adolescents in their growth as persons. Through it, we want to work in favour of adolescents from 12 to 16 years old from Erandio through prevention, promotion and comprehensive education. We provide school support aimed at obtaining the necessary school competence to support their educational process through the assistance in achieving school tasks, orientation in study techniques...

INTERNATIONAL MIXED COMMUNITY OF WILLOWDALE, Canada.

An experience of community life with young adults.

Willowdale is an international, intercultural and interfaith mixed community. Three Brothers live and share the everyday community life with twelve young university students from 18 to 35 years old, “open to the religious dimension” but with few Christian references.



The group of youngsters, six boys and six girls, is very varied as to both the countries of origin and the religions they practice. Six of them are Canadian, of whom three are from Quebec, and the others come from four different countries: France, Egypt, Colombia and Peru. They are from religions of a Christian inspiration, but different: roman catholic, protestant, United Church and Coptic orthodox, but they all feel they are complementary. The Brothers provide a personalized and timely support.

In a way, it is a "laboratory of fraternal life according to the Gospel" that is suggested to those who seek to give meaning to their life and that question themselves about life and the major existential issues. These youngsters are therefore open to the Christian values conveyed in the group. This experience favours the discovery of their “own vocation” as citizens and as Christians, regardless of the path they choose. We dare to believe that each one will better understand their specific mission in the world and in the church.

We attempt to form a single community. Boys, girls and Brothers living together rather than in three subgroups. The Brothers chose to not reserve a part of the home exclusively for them. Everything is placed in common and in an open regime. Household chores are shared among all. They are freely invited to join the community for a daily time of prayer. There is a community period that is lived together every two weeks. The fundamental desire is to commit to live “a family spirit” with others.

In September of 2013, they began the fourth year of testing. To the brothers’ surprise, petitions are being received without ever having advertised. The youngsters themselves are those who advertise.

How can we be witnesses of evangelical values in the world today and especially with young university students? For the Brothers, welcoming young university students allows them to live the expression from the Gospel “Come and see”. Far from wanting to “preach” the Good News at any cost, they share with them their everyday life in a Project that is articulated and accepted by everyone. This opening also has its demands and challenges both as far as quality of the community life that is experienced and the belonging to a religious life inserted in a lay and secularized world.



The community was enriched by the presence of the young, their cultural and religious richness and the feminine and masculine sensitivities of its members. Willowdale lives the newness responding to the horizons of the 21st General Chapter: it is a new way of being a brother, a new spirit of communion among Brothers and lay and a presence that is strongly significant among the young.

“ROSEY” COMMUNITY OF SALAMANCA, Spain

It is a mixed an insertion community born in September of 2013. It is made up of three Brothers and one couple, Carmina Romo and her husband Eladio. Its mission consists of providing service to the immigrants, to the neighbourhood of Puente Ladrillo and the parish in Salamanca.

It is a community of the Province of Compostela, stemming from a process of research and renewal in various important core aspects: restructuring of communities, steps along the line of communion among Brothers and lay people, enhancement of solidarity, university youth ministry...



The community shares projects and life, prayer and mission, meals and leisure and partially housing, although they do not sleep under the same roof.

It is an insertion community in line with the provincial priority of “living solidarity”: community at the service of immigrants, joined to the parish and the cooperative headed by F. Antonio Romo, in an ecclesial and Marian Church perspective. The cooperative of F. Antonio Romo consists of sheep and cheese, gardens and farming...

This community aims at being a new community as to its way of life and spirituality. It also is a receiving community for Brothers and laity and open to the young, volunteers, GEM groups... and a community of closeness and family, within the perspective of the Marian Church we dream of and want.

“BELEN” COMMUNITY, Guatemala

Marist Little Sisters of Champagnat.

As women, we have deeply identified with the charism of Saint Marcellin Champagnat and we have sensed the call to experience it in consecrated life. We live in a community, as sisters, sharing life: mission, prayer, household choirs, and formation experiences. To date, we have expressed our life commitment through private vows.



Following the intuition of Marcellin, we devote our energy to being present in the midst of children and the young who need it most, whom we try to accompany through all dimensions. We especially try to be witnesses of God’s profound love for them.



Our life is very simple and we seek to be in environments where our presence can be significant, at least like a small seed of the Kingdom. Mary, our Good Mother, occupies a very important place in our lives and mission. It is truly from her that we continue learning to be women totally devoted to God, amidst Brothers and sisters.

We maintain a close and family relation with the Marist Brothers from the Province where we are (Central America). So far, we are grateful for all the support we received

throughout these years, as well as the freedom to discern the calls of the Lord. We joyfully live our feeling part of a large family in which we mutually support each other in living the values that Champagnat wished for us.

COMMUNITY OF GIUGLIANO, Italy

The reference of this community dates back to 2011. It ceased being a mixed community in 2012. Presently (2013) they are once again becoming a community of Brothers and lay with the presence of the couple Gianluca and Rosa.

At its first experience as shared community, it was identified as follows.

This table has room for Giorgio D., Giacomo, Paolo, Daniele, Giorgio B., Gianluca, Rosa, Mario and Marco. They are five Brothers, an engaged couple, a priest and a young university student in a vocational search. The Brothers are all engaged in the school as well as Gianluca, a lay man who leads ministry animation and Rosa, a criminal law attorney. They all share the same table of Marist charism. They bring diversity and pluralism in one same spirit. It was the choice of the community of Brothers to invite Gianluca and Rosa a few months ago to have this experience of mixed community.



“At the end of my days I want people to say that I always planted a flower where a flower could grow”, said Tagore.

The community of Giugliano is making the flower of the Marist charism grow with a lay face, a feminine face, in a shared life, in a multiplied fraternity, in identities that complement each other.

Gianluca and Rosa are preparing their wedding for next year; their Project of life is strengthened by the fraternity in community. The Brothers are a memory for the lay of lives dedicated to the children and the young, of fidelity tested on the way of the Gospel. The presence of Marco exposed the life of Brothers; Marco's search relates to the lifestyle of the same. They have chosen to be exposed like so. Rosa offers her work experience as a lawyer and contributes laity to the perspective of those consecrated. At this great table, God is expressing his multifaceted richness.

The large table of the community of Giugliano speaks of a Marist future as a communion of people, of a new way of being a brother, of new profiles of the charism, of a new relation among Brothers and lay people. The experience of the community resonates projects that are discussed, life being shared, close presence among children and youngsters, celebrated faith, fraternal meetings that unite. It resonates a complementing of vocations and strengthened identities. How beautiful it is to listen to Rosa about her attitude to defend, as an attorney, the cause of the unprotected and the weak; to her it signifies expressing her Marist identity among the ones at the bottom. And how beautiful it is to see a community that breaks assurances, opens to newness and displays the audacity to face the unknown.

COMMUNITY OF LA TARAHUMARA, Mexico.

In 2011, we celebrated 50 years of Marist Presence in Tarahumara. We celebrated it like that, to emphasize that the Marist presence was shared among brothers, indigenous and mestizos lay. The mestizos lay are originally from the same Tarahumara Mountains, in the State of Chihuahua, or outside of it and with them, we shared our life as Marist missionaries. The proximity to the rarámuri community (as the Tarahumara indigenous people call themselves) strengthened its culture, but it also marked and complemented the spirituality in our Marist communities, especially through the continuous encounter *with God's gaze through the rarámuri children.*



We presently have in this missionary sector three communities in Norogachi, Chinatú and Creel where 8 brothers, 2 collaborators, 6 young volunteers and two volunteer men share life and mission.

Our activities are based on the accompaniment of indigenous boarding schools, the facilities used in the Tarahumara Mountains to allow children and youngsters to attend school, in light of the dispersion they live in. Also, there are several field activities to train the children and strengthen their culture, in addition to generating income to be more self-sufficient.

In our community, we share everyday life through prayer, meals, choirs, walks, truck trips, etc. We are enriched by the diversity of our ages, origins, personalities and vocational options. We face together the challenges presented by the extreme weather conditions, social violence, the reality of the poverty affecting us, but also nature, rain, snow or enjoying conversations at the table, parties, birthdays or simply playing “no te enchiles” (an exciting board game typical of the Sierra).

Everyday life with its joys and complications becomes deeper and filled with meaning in our shared prayers, in informal dialogues or in the community meetings to relate our experiences and express our feelings. The personal interview helps us find ourselves and discover God's way in our life.

One characteristic that marks community life in Tarahumara is the opening to the townspeople; we



are pleasantly welcomed at the homes and we are offered coffee or pinole (toasted and ground corn) or a delicious “yorique” (a dish prepared with nopal slobber). Our Marist communities are also open to welcome visitors, invite them for meals, offer them lodging, listen to them and meet their needs whenever possible. We also participate to traditional feasts, accompanying the wakes and the “matachín” dances (a ritual dance), Eucharist at midnight and in the morning sharing of the “tónare” (cow broth offered during the feast) and the teswino (ritual drink of fermented corn).

This experience has transformed the life of many of us who have lived it. We have learned to be closer and more fraternal, sharing what we are, with all our qualities and limitations, experiencing through it the depth of Jesus' merciful love. This experience has also strengthened us personally; it

has made us more capable of gratuitous, constant and concrete love, at the service of friendship. It has helped us to open up to the differences, to learn from them and to also value and enrich our own culture. We have learned from the poor, their powerlessness and trust in God, accompanying them to develop their leadership and their capacity to overcome difficulties and assert their rights.

Despite our challenges and weaknesses, the Marist communities (of brothers, lay men and women) of Tarahumara want to be a source of renewal and strengthening of the Marian identity and the sense of solidarity for our great ecclesial community of the Diocese of Tarahumara and for the Marist Province of Western Mexico, making the dream of Champagnat come true, day after day.