

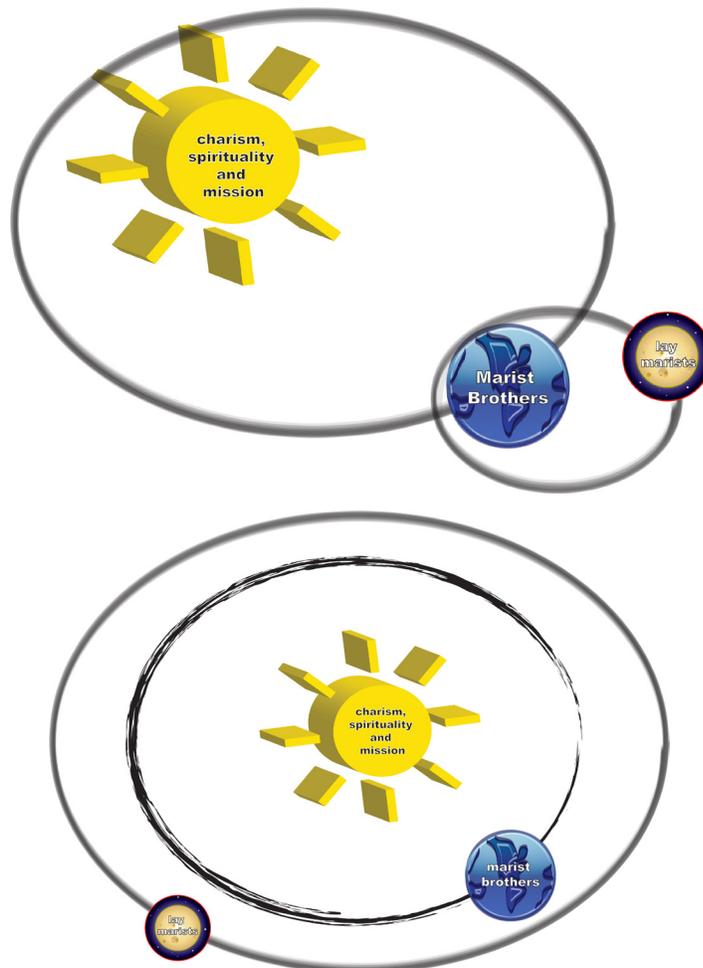
Forms of relationship with the charism

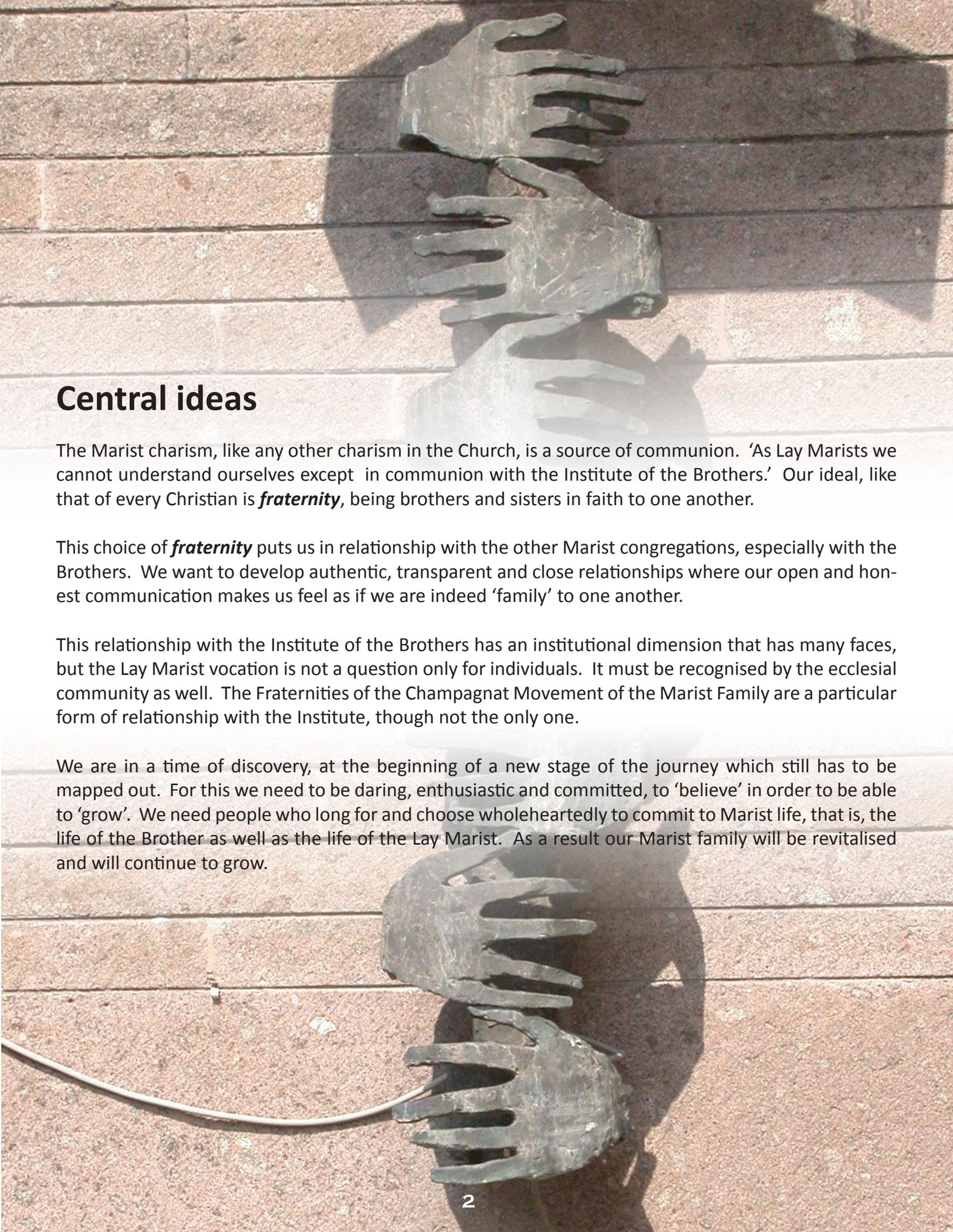
Gathered around the same table

A religious institute's charism is what gives it its particular flavour, its way of being and serving the human community. People who have gathered around religious institutes have always been guided and motivated to live their lives in response to the charism.

But we feel that a new ecclesial model is appearing based on the equal dignity of all Christian vocations and on the image of the Church as the People of God.

This leads us to rethink the institutional model which has given life to the Marist charism up to now. *Do the two diagrams on this page give us a way forward?*



A sculpture of three hands, one above the other, reaching out. The hands are dark and appear to be made of a textured material like wood or stone. They are set against a background of a brick wall. The hands are positioned as if they are holding or supporting each other. The top hand is at the top, the middle hand is in the center, and the bottom hand is at the bottom. The hands are slightly curved, and the fingers are spread out. The background is a brick wall with horizontal lines. The lighting is bright, creating shadows on the wall.

Central ideas

The Marist charism, like any other charism in the Church, is a source of communion. ‘As Lay Marists we cannot understand ourselves except in communion with the Institute of the Brothers.’ Our ideal, like that of every Christian is **fraternity**, being brothers and sisters in faith to one another.

This choice of **fraternity** puts us in relationship with the other Marist congregations, especially with the Brothers. We want to develop authentic, transparent and close relationships where our open and honest communication makes us feel as if we are indeed ‘family’ to one another.

This relationship with the Institute of the Brothers has an institutional dimension that has many faces, but the Lay Marist vocation is not a question only for individuals. It must be recognised by the ecclesial community as well. The Fraternities of the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family are a particular form of relationship with the Institute, though not the only one.

We are in a time of discovery, at the beginning of a new stage of the journey which still has to be mapped out. For this we need to be daring, enthusiastic and committed, to ‘believe’ in order to be able to ‘grow’. We need people who long for and choose wholeheartedly to commit to Marist life, that is, the life of the Brother as well as the life of the Lay Marist. As a result our Marist family will be revitalised and will continue to grow.



Questioning ourselves and sharing

Read Chapter 5 of Gathered Around the Same Table

Highlight specific times which stand out for you when you have had an experience of **fraternity**, being brothers and sisters in faith, in your relationships with other Marists, Brothers and/or Lay.

- *What are the implications for living this **fraternity** more deeply in our daily life?*
- *What are the challenges?*
- *What are the opportunities?*

- *How do you think the situation of Lay Marists and their life in our Province is understood?*
- *Are you aware of what already exists?*
- *What more needs to be done?*

- *What is your dream for the Marist family of tomorrow, in twenty, thirty years?*
- *What steps do you believe we need to take together to realise this dream?*





One heart, one spirit

We say together the prayer of the last General Chapter

« With Mary, new Marists towards a new land ».

Mary, you are our companion along the way
and the main inspiration for our pilgrimage
towards our Marist Bicentenary.

Welcome into our hearts and homes today.
Your openness, faith and spontaneity touch our hearts
to be open in our turn to the Spirit,
the gift of your Son Jesus.

As Marists of Champagnat, Lay and Brothers,
We desire to change.

We look to you as model and companion,
in living our vocation of following Christ,
with the joy, sensitivity, love and energy
you brought to educating Jesus.

You gather us all and unite us across the world,
into one international community
bearing your name, a sign
of communion to our Church and world.

When we contemplate you as woman filled with faith,
your spirit of intuition and initiative
impels us, as it did Marcellin, to be Good News
for the poor children and young people of our world
today, in “new lands”.

In trust we pray, like Champagnat:
“If the Lord does not build the house, the builders work in vain”.
And we say, “You have done everything for us”.

With you, Mary, we go to the Father,
In union with Jesus and in the Spirit of Love.
Amen