

FEATURES OF LAY MARIST LIFE



Understanding the Document

GATHERED AROUND THE SAME TABLE

The Vocation of Champagnat's Marist Laity

Extended Bureau of the Laity
Rome, December 8th, 2009

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INTRODUCTION

Dear Champagnat Marists,

Only a few months ago, we had the great pleasure of bringing out the final edition of "Gathered around the Same Table, the Vocation of Champagnat's Marist Laity." Our hope is that the document will be for everyone concerned a suitable means of deepening and increasing the generous response to the invitation that God is making to us through the charism handed down by Marcellin and so many of his Brothers.



As you are aware, the document was edited on the basis of ninety-two reports submitted by Marist Laity in different countries and continents. The reports offered testimony to the manner in which lay people have experienced a vocational calling. The document is highlighted by several striking paragraphs which give it freshness and a feeling of everyday life. We were able to present only a few of the testimonies among so many that were at hand. As a result, we feel that we should exploit more fully the treasure that has been bestowed upon us.

To that end, we decided to publish the testimonies in their complete form. We have done so on the web at www.champagnat.org. The testimonies are translated into the four, official Institute languages. You can open the texts by going first to the heading "Laity," and then to "Life Experiences-Personal Vocation."

We now wish to offer the testimonies in a format similar to the one used in "Gathered around the Same Table." We believe that these portrayals of Marist lay life can serve as an important complement to the official document. The texts are not abstract. They are drawn from real life and thus are more apt to deepen our Marist vocation whatever be our state of life. A wide range of sensibilities both personal and cultural will be found

in the testimonies. The differences help one sense the length and breadth of the Marist world. Almost certainly, the texts will give an impetus to the vocational response which each of us wishes to make.

To that end, we offer you these "Sketches Drawn from Real Life." In its chapters and sub-heading, the document is similar to "Gathered around..." even if some topics might have been placed in alternative sub-sections. We suggest that each reader first consult a chapter or sub-section. Then readers may immerse themselves in the life-situation from which the section was written, making real for themselves the charism shared among so many Marists. We recommend that the text be read slowly and attentively. One might pray along with the sections that touch one more intimately and thereby enter into greater communion with so many Marists - men, women, the old and the young - who wish to make Marcellin's charism their own and revitalize it.

We would like this communion to help us feel more intently what the gift of our Marist Family means to the Church. We hope too that Jesus, Mary and Marcellin make themselves even more present among us by means of these shared life-experiences.

With our very best wishes,
Extended Bureau of the Laity
Afonso Murad, Ana Sarrate, Linda Corbeil, Pau Fornells and Tony Clark

Rome, December 8, 2009
Feast of the Immaculate Conception

THE LAY MARIST VOCATION



The Lay Marists

The first thing that attracted my attention when I had the opportunity to get to know a Marist community was the style of welcome with which people were received, and how I was actually received. They always speak of the “Marist family” and that resonates agreeably in my heart. The captivating image of the Good Mother, she who receives and watches over all, has become for me the sign of all gathering around the table of communion. ... I did not understand very well what it was to be Marist, but I saw in that something different. It was not precisely a matter of education, but the way of welcoming, the way of treating and considering persons, the way of feeling the love of God and wanting others to also feel loved by Him. **(Brazil)**

There were things about Marcellin that attracted my attention. His difficulties as a student in the seminary and the way in which he tried to overcome them, his mixture of daring and obstinacy, his rejection of the teacher who hit the students, his devotion to Mary, his image as a man, his sleeves rolled up, the pick in his hand, his suffering before the ignorance of God... Images that in the naivety of childhood I transferred to the brothers as if all were in some way Marcellin. **(Spain)**

To be welcomed by the brothers in their house is a privilege. I quickly feel that I am part of their family by their beautiful simplicity and their sense of humour. The brothers also have a great sense of celebration. I appreciate moments of prayer with them. **(Canada)**



At the beginning I was astonished by the behavior of those persons, unrestrained in their thoughts and ideas, without rigid subordination to the traditional hierarchy. These men seemed to be happy at work, trusting one another. As time went on I came to know the institution better and I understood the reason for this difference, the way the Brothers treated us with affection, I'd say almost with tenderness, understanding, demanding when needed, but never losing respect for us. **(Brazil)**

Yes, I am Marist. I feel like a Marist because when I speak about a Marist work I use the first person plural (our colleges, our groups...). I feel like a Marist because I sense how strongly my heart beats with the children and young people, with their dreams, their problems and their preoccupations: in their real situation; because I identify myself with the dream and project of Marcellin Champagnat. **(Spain)**

I have the conviction that for many people the only thing that they expected was an invitation to belong to the Marist family. (...) It is my desire to be able to continue to launch a direct invitation to so many people. Because I know that it is the only thing that they need to put their gifts at the service of others, and as it happened for me, one day they will be able to arrive at Jesus through the Marist pathway. **(Colombia)**

To be Marist has for me a prodigious force, always richer and more motivating. This vocation places me in a position of proximity and of fraternal presence with many possibilities, even though society in general exalts individualism and that temptations to abandon all are sometimes very strong. **(Brazil)**

I am a disciple of Jesus in the way of Champagnat because it makes me happy; because it makes me feel like a better person and I live more fully; because the life of other followers attracts me; I am a Marist by contagion. **(Spain)**

The Vocation of the Marist Laity and the Vocation of the Brother

For me the attraction was linked to the Brothers engagement in life; their care for people generally and their preparedness to be involved in the lives of young people. In particular that contact had less to do with the stuff of the classroom but rather the opportunities to be involved in sporting activities, retreat programs and festivals. It was at these times that I experienced the humanity and generosity of spirit of several of the Brothers. **(Australia)**

I feel that the Brothers of the N community, already advanced in age, remain active, ardent and fruitful. To visit them, to listen to them, to have them in our pastoral activities is "to drink the water from its source", a source which continues to spring forth in wisdom, humility and



courage. In the community we find united the brothers who have given their life to education and Marist mission. With wisdom, they transform the challenge of illnesses and suffering into holiness. Often, with a smile, they teach us to let God work in us, through the docility of the Holy Spirit. **(Brazil)**

The Transmission of a Gift: the Marist Charism

At no time did anyone pressure me or try to convince me. It was always in giving humble witness that the people, particularly certain Marist Brothers, showed me the meaning of the work of Marcellin. **(Canada)**

When I reflect on what has made the Marist charism my own, I can only say that it's been the way in which the Marist Brothers I've known have embodied that charism. These individuals have been a blessing to me, helping me understand by their very lives what it means to be Marist Marcellin Champagnat's compassion, his caring nature, his determination and steadfastness, the broadness of his views, his intense commitment to education: such are the qualities that I have perceived in my dealings with various Marist Brothers. These men have made Champagnat real for me by their simplicity, compassion, determination, and vision. **(USA)**

During these years at school, I have known closely the Marist Brothers, their life and their way of thinking. Their life consecrated to their mission, their constant efforts to provide a good education for children, their humility, their faith in God and their devotion to the Virgin have made them a model to follow, which has radically influenced my life and my way of thinking. During these years at school, I have known closely the Marist Brothers, their life and their way of thinking. **(Greece)**

During my school years, I had several Brothers as teachers. It was, however, when I had between 12 and 14 years old that my greatest attention got focused upon the Marist charism and that I was drawn towards it. What did I learn about Marcellin and the first Brothers that



touched me so much? The personality of Marcellin which one could sense in the documents, his way of approaching children, young people and the Brothers themselves, his love for them, his understanding and affability, his ability to be touched by the needs he saw and his response to the needs. I was also drawn by his plans and projects - which were not "his" - he had a treasure and was not hesitant about wanting to share it with others. I suppose that everything that I was coming to discover I saw actualized in the Brothers with whom I was involved. **(Spain)**

Touched by the welcome of the brothers and the family spirit, the simplicity, we felt attracted by the charism of the brothers and of Marcellin Champagnat. That corresponded to our commitments to the poorest of children and young people. We belonged to the association of former students of the Marist school. **(France)**

It is important to point out that my first contacts with the Marists Brothers were very rewarding because they opened their doors to me, a complete stranger, when I had arrived as only a supply teacher. The charism of the Founder was reflected in them, especially in Brother Felix Aldunate (deceased), who shared his happiness with an indescribable smile and his capacity to be attentive to everyone. I did not find it very difficult to enter into the wonderful world of the Marists, because I love their pedagogy, their pres-

ence, simplicity, humility and commitment to the most needy, mainly children and young people. **(Paraguay)**

A generous response is born of a grateful heart. On looking back with gratitude on my life I remember the joyful and happy experience of a childhood privileged to be in contact with the Brothers as the captivating experience of my heart. The brotherly welcome, the respectful participation and generous dedication transmitted their enthusiasm to me. **(Spain)**

More than being excellent teachers in their domains of knowledge, the charism, their way of being, their way of treating us, was what fascinated me. I had Marist teachers for seven years, an important period for the formation of my character, and for the formation and acquisition of essential values in faith and in life. What captivated me the most in the experience with the brothers was that permanent feeling of being welcome, of joy, of sharing and of simplicity! **(Brazil)**

When I began to work with the Marist Brothers, I was simply a person who wanted to earn a living; I wanted to work and to act as a professional... Later I found myself entering into the Marist world. It is impossible to work in a Marist school and not feel and live as one. **(Paraguay)**

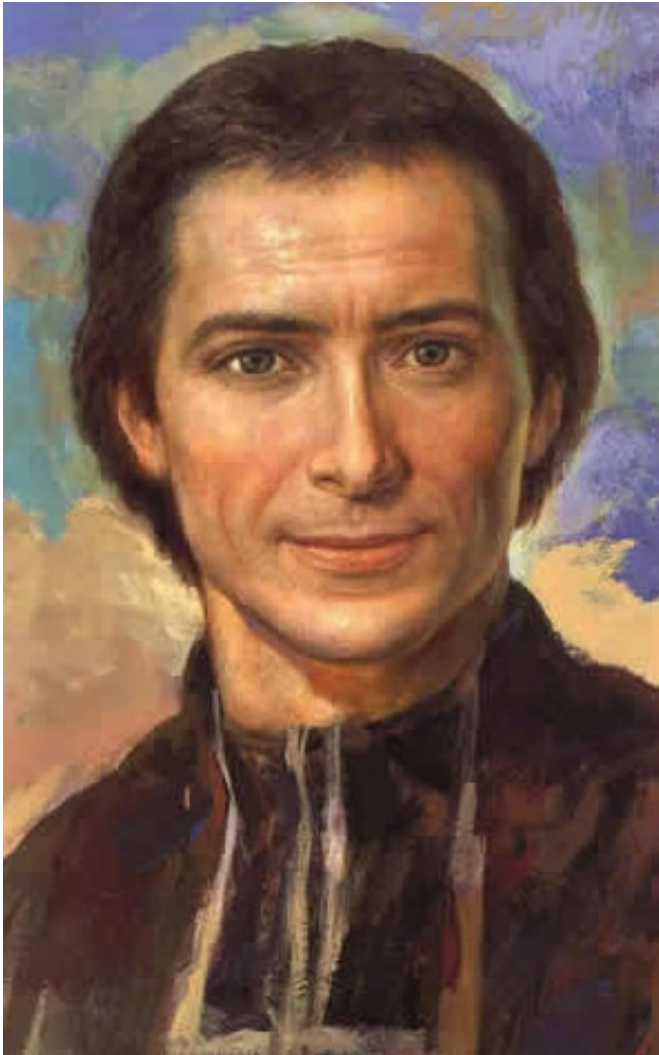


Who has been able to make me passionate about the Marist world that I came to know at the age of 16?

- The magic of community celebrations. Singing with five hundred young people at the top of our voices, encouraged by about twenty brothers, enthusiastic, full of life: it was impossible that that would leave my heart and that of many others indifferent.
- They gave me the joy of living which is encountered in the common life, the testimony of happy consecrated people, the commitment and the vitality that they showed in what they did.
- They delighted me by the originality and the intensity with which they led us to Jesus. They were Marists passionate about the person of Jesus. The simplicity and quality of their relationships made us feel that we were not strangers and that we were not a bother to them in their places: We were more than a human resource for accomplishing a task; they wanted to live an experience of shared mission with us.
- I was surprised by the assurance and the confidence that they put in the group. Above all, everything that I did was received positively. We were fulfilling the hopes of the mission and this sensation gave comfort, commitment and enthusiasm to a young and uncertain heart in search of something. **(Chile)**

The Marist Brothers left our town in 1995. The style of Mary was lacking, a style that had captivated me so much. How could we teach this style of Mary that seemed to overflow from the heart? How could we make this work started by the brothers come alive in such a way that it did not lose its roots? **(Brazil)**

Bro. Anthony had a weekly period for all upper class students for a subject which he called "Moral Science". He was looking at life in a non-religious way. He questioned the students and got from them ideas as to what was right and what was wrong. The class contained students of all faiths, and Bro. Anthony made sure that he avoided presenting Christianity and its teachings in a way inappropriate for such a mixed class. **(Sri Lanka)**



Saint Marcellin Champagnat, our Inspiration in Following Jesus

Marcellin Champagnat is a saint who has captivated me by his total love of Jesus and his filial confidence in Mary. Always attentive to events and people, he teaches us to glimpse new pathways, with perseverance. **(Brazil)**

My first exposure to Marist education was witnessing the Marist Brothers' dedication and love for young people. I was overwhelmed by their sincerity and willingness to touch the lives of students who were "emotionally" marginalized. I viewed with interest the patience and understanding of the Brothers' mission to broaden the pastoral care of all the students in my school. **(Australia)**

I wanted to know what was special about this man who created such an atmosphere of sympathy around his memory; evidently, a memory that had become life by other men inspired by the same passion. Otherwise, you could not explain his presence today. Thus, I anxiously devoured the book of Brother Jean-Baptiste, the first biography of Champagnat. There I found a heart captivated by the Lord and equally a heart nourished by an enormous tenderness for the human person and a total commitment in favour of the little ones and the neglected. **(Brazil)**

Marcellin entered to stay in my heart and I felt at the end that I had found my place. A kind of joy invaded me, and I wept. During the night I started to pray with the image and I felt this sensation of being loved, a softness in the soul, a peace... **(El Salvador)**

I try every day to follow in the footsteps of Marcellin and to mould myself to the example of his life. I try to live as Marcellin lived, in simplicity and humility, always striving to be in the presence of God, emphasizing my trust in Mary and in her protection. **(Brazil)**

What resonated with me about Marcellin was the fact that at all times he led by example. He never expected or asked his Brothers to do anything more than what he himself had done. I have always believed that leadership is service, being of service to others, and this is exactly what Marcellin accomplished. He ensured that he inspired others to follow his daring dream and he did this through consultation and constant communication with his Brothers via his visits and his many letters to them. His determination and perseverance in the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles and difficulties is awe inspiring. **(Australia)**

I am not aware of the "starting" moment of my closer relationship with the charism of Marcellin. It was step by step, day after day and drop by drop, while I was fulfilled by his experience and in making it mine under many aspects. His strength, his audacity despite difficulties, his confidence, his availability and above all his love for the most vulnerable have always impressed me. I perceive his spirit in many people around me, who are growing in this love and living this confidence. **(Spain)**

We were fortunate to spend time in Rome. While there Bro. Sean Sammon gave each of us a copy of his book: "A Heart that Knew No Bounds, the Life and Mission of Saint Marcellin Champagnat". A few of us asked him to sign our copy which he happily did. His small inscription stated:

Dear N, Many thanks for your visit and for all you do to live and promote Marcellin's dream. Enjoy your stay in Rome and the book. Blessings and affection! Sean.

Sean's words about promoting Marcellin's dream continue to take on a significance and poignancy greater than I thought at the time. In terms of my own spirituality and the implications of this on my role as an educator and lay Marist, I believe that a disposition of being sincere and just in your dealings with people is very important. My spirituality is an integral part of everything I do. Champagnat was a man for his times, a practical man and a man with a big heart. He moved among the people and many people chose to follow him because he was open and frank. He was seen as just, compassionate and genuine. My hope is that something of this is evident in what I am called to be and strive to live in my own life. **(Australia)**

Marcellin is the model for my life; he has influenced it to improve its quality as a person close to others, for trying to help others, or at least to listen to them. The quality of my Christian life is improved by living fraternity and solidarity. Marcellin has also influenced me in the love he had for Mary, but without displacing Christ, who is our centre. **(Colombia)**

We began to read, to meditate, to contemplate and to pray about this great man's life. It captured our imagination, it disturbed us and it built up hopes. We discovered in his life the testimony of values such as his love of children, of deprived young people and of all his Brothers; the faith in God that accompanies us and always protects us; the love of work that dignifies us and makes us share in the creation; the love and trust in Mary, our Good Mother; the family spirit that welcomes, accompanies and supports; the audacity and creativity to find answers to problems; the zeal to take their mission ahead; the audacity and stability to make possible what seemed impossible; the simplicity and humility to live everything as the work and manifestation of



the love of God. "If the Lord does not build the house..." How much life, how much passion, how much love! And this is Marcellin: Father, witness and model. **(Bolivia)**

Through our professional development and spirituality formation- experiences, I have been exposed to the thinking of Marcellin Champagnat whom I see as a simple man who had a clear vision and an unshakeable faith in God. His legacy of total trust in Mary is also what captured me. In a sense it's a perfect balance of strength and compassion. Walk into any Marist school and this vision is so naturally evident. **(Australia)**

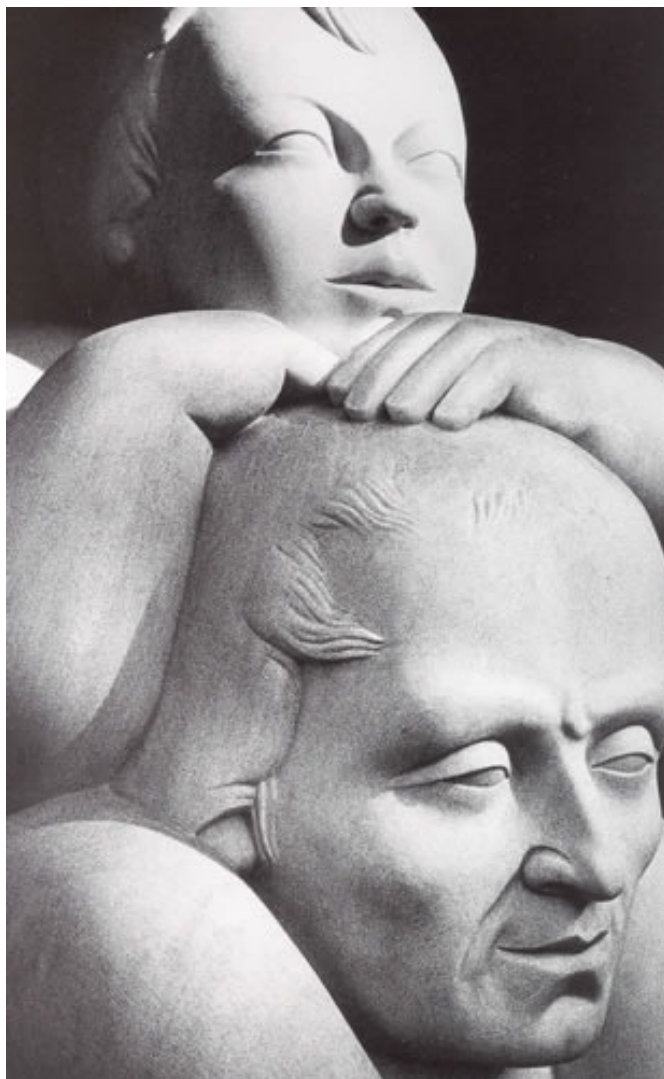
I know that the Marist call goes towards an identification that is truer with the sensibility and devotion of Saint Marcellin Champagnat in response to the call of God in his life. That was what captivated my heart, from the first camp: the sincere searching for the will of God for my life. **(Brazil)**

The capacity of Marcellin to dream of something new and to put life into it always astonishes me. With no support other than that of God, without security, with many obstacles... trusting. I am fascinated by the marvels that the Lord works in those who trust in Him and allow Him to take them where He wants. **(Spain)**

In work and in life, I must face moments where it seems that despair can enter my heart. At these times, there comes to mind the decision, the optimism and the audacity of Marcellin, and that consoles me and fills my heart with enthusiasm. **(Brazil)**

The Marist Brothers, and with them Marcel-
lin Champagnat, entered my life at nine or
ten years of age when I went to the Saturday
cinema at my cousins' school: The Immaculate
Conception at Buenos Aires. They captivated my
heart with something so simple and Marist: they
knew who I was and they knew my name, while
the teacher at the public school that I attended
– the best in the city – had to look at the list of
students to name them... and they saw me once
a week! In my childhood mind this was a sign of
love that years later would be transformed into a
true pedagogy: "To teach the children, you must
first love them and all equally". **(Argentina)**

What impressed me the most in Marcellin's
life was his perseverance and his way of
undertaking things! In times of difficulty and re-
ligious repression, he came to realize his dream
of starting his congregation, finding strength in
his trust in Mary, Our Good Mother. Building the



Hermitage, splitting rocks to build the house is
impressive. He shows strength of will that no
obstacle could break. There's no better example
to follow. **(Brazil)**

When a problem seems intractable or the neg-
ative impact of societal and family issues on
school grows ever greater, I recall that Marcellin
faced many obstacles in his time and never lost
hope. A Marist can never despair. **(Ireland)**

About Marcellin I want to highlight:

- The will to make a dream a reality.
- The fact of being aware of his own limits,
recognising that we are capable of exceeding
them. **(Brazil)**

As a teacher my aim is to imitate Marcellin's
deep respect for the pupils and his being
gentle on the children, his optimism towards their
positive development and his faith in the good in
every child. His imitation of Christ and his steady
commitment for the most neglected and poorest
impressed me very much. **(Germany)**

I was enthralled by the example of Marcellin's
life and his attitude to problems. I liked the
way he simply rolled up his sleeves and found
practical solutions to problems, since this re-
flected an attitude which I shared. Above all I
understood his deep respect and love for young-
sters who were disadvantaged and needed help.
(United Kingdom)

Marcellin also told the Brothers to spend
as much time as possible with the young
people. I spent a lot of time in the school; many
were the chats in the patios, visits to the chapel,
morning prayers, time spent in prayer groups and
Christian life, time spent in accompanying me
in my personal project of life from the tenets of
faith, the coherence of LIFE (thus the capital let-
ters.). All these experiences penetrated deep into
my heart. **(Spain)**

For Marcellin, each person is the image of God,
and therefore of great value and destined
to goodness. Besides, he had been profoundly
touched by this young person who was going to
die without knowing God. That was a profound
value of Champagnat that challenged me and that
gave me the desire to nourish it daily. **(Canada)**

I can say today that knowing Marcellin made me become a happier person for several reasons:

- It has awakened and continues to challenge me about my interest in others, in my Church, my wish to be part of it.
- It made me recognize that as a Christian I must commit myself, avoiding fanaticism, by respecting others in their beliefs.
- It made me want not only money in my life but something more that would make me go further thanks to simplicity.
- I feel proud to be a Christian disciple of Jesus with the style of Marcellin and the help of Mary. I see consistency in my family life, in my Christian life and in my Marist life. **(Guatemala)**

Three Dimensions of a Single Life: Mission, Shared Life, Spirituality

One of the pillars of my Marist life is the sharing in fraternity of my faith, as a place of meeting in a group of persons, we who be-

lieve in God and who live following the style of Marcellin. Another very important pillar is the witness that I give in the accompaniment of a group of young university students in their awakening of faith, and through the example and the style of presence in different places where my life takes place: work, family... Also the family spirit, reflected in my own family (parents, brothers) as in the fraternity and with my friends. An important mention must be made also and that is that I am taking the first steps with my fiancée to found a new family, and the way and the characteristics of that which we wish to found are going to be a faithful reflection of my experience, both personal and of faith. **(Spain)**

I found a fraternity in the Marist style, that is to say: confidence in others, in faith, in God, in Our Good Mother, in the brothers, in people and in myself; solidarity, to be with the poor and for the poor, the possibility of making something out of what I have received by the grace of God, the conviction of education as a means of saving humanity... **(Colombia)**



THE MISSION

Christ Send Us: the Mission of the Lay People

What captivated me about Marist life was the actuality of Champagnat's project: "To educate children and youth, making Jesus known and loved in order to form good Christians and virtuous citizens". The perspective of an education committed to the integral formation of the students, associated with the preoccupation for the great social questions, drew my attention very much. **(Brazil)**



Through the testimony of the older animators at the Camp, I discovered what it meant to give your life for your friends. The numerous hours in organising and animating the activities so that the children could be enriched by the life of friendship and of respect experienced at the Camp, in particular the poor children gave meaning to unconditional love. It was Brother G. who revealed this meaning to us through his ministry activity, through the morning prayer and by his witness to Marist values: family spirit, simplicity, confidence, etc. **(Canada)**

When I finished my studies, I was invited by Brother N. to visit the X district and join the activities that the brothers were carrying out. At the start it was very difficult and I will not deny that several times I thought of giving up and choosing another lifestyle for myself. But the devoted and committed work of the brothers, of some teachers from the college

and of some people from the district who were fighting to improve the living conditions, were the best motivation for wanting to continue at this time, and thanks to the spirit that I found in them, I started to understand what family spirit, simplicity of life and love of work meant. Today, when I look back on these years, I give thanks to God for having allowed me to discover this not only in others' life witness but also in my own actions. **(Colombia)**

We laypeople are also called to be a reference in our milieu, to co-operate in the building of the Kingdom and especially to make Jesus Christ known and loved. Champagnat shows us that we are not saints, but that we can seek holiness. I try in my work relationships and in my personal relationships to always be in agreement as far as possible since it is not easy to implement the little virtues which, undoubtedly, harmonise our relationships and make them better. **(Brazil)**

The essential remains invisible to the eyes of flesh, because we see well only with the eyes of the heart (The Little Prince). We all know that the essential has no age, no time, no style. It is like "truth" which is always round. To express the essential we don't need slate, or crayons, or chalk, or copybooks, or even computers. "TO LOVE... to love" is the goal, the means and the tools of education. How those words of Champagnat continue to drive and greatly attract me: "To educate you must love!" **(Spain)**

What attracted me to the Marists is the similarity and closeness to the more needy, to all that needs change, a new vision, with all that needs Life. **(Paraguay)**

I see the great challenges that we still have as educators when we let slip valuable opportunities of bringing our adolescents to the love of God and of their neighbour, because we speak instead of listening; we order instead of motivating; we prohibit when we should convince. We have the opportunity to be an example, not of virtues or debatable qualities, but of being men and women who live our Christianity with the certainty that by loving our neighbour, our students and colleagues, we build the Kingdom of God and that to do it in a school atmosphere encourages us and motivates us. **(Mexico)**

I want to announce you, Lord, by my way of living. This is a phrase from a Marist song, which speaks of the vocation of the brothers, but also expresses my vocation as a lay Marist, being at the service of children and young people, leading them to God, making them feel that God loves them, that they are his preferred ones. **(Venezuela)**

With the Passion of Marcellin: The Mission of the Lay Marist

Throughout my teaching career the children have always been my focus and I've never lost sight of Marcellin's utterance that in order to teach you must first love a child. When the going has been rough, when faced with a dilemma or a difficult decision in terms of dealing with a child, I close my eyes and picture Marcel-

lin – those words come back to me and it has always made a difference. **(Australia)**

Saddened that all new teachers are not exposed to the Marist ethos, I was determined to ensure that all teachers at my College had a good understanding of the mission which they had undertaken to continue, as it is surely the biggest gift a child can be given to be educated in a system where "In order to teach children, you must first love them and love them all equally". Marcellin asked that we "have a particular care for those least favoured by life". He was willing to walk for miles in terrible conditions in order to visit the sick or to help those in need. **(South Africa)**

I am Marist because I live out my teaching responsibilities as a vocation, not merely as a work. Even more: I live out my responsibilities as a religious mission rather than as a career. As a result, I have had the experience common to all vocations. That is, my vocation has been put to the test; and, although I have had the chance to make other life-choices, I have chosen to follow the path of being a Marist educator. In fact, I am very pleased to have lived through the moments when I was confronted with choices. In and through such experiences I have found a re-affirmation, a new strength to continue upon my chosen path. **(Spain)**



I moved on to spend more time with the students outside the classroom, being a presence for them, and I noticed that when I welcomed them just as they were, they also welcomed me and it was made easier for me to end up knowing them, to anticipate and guide some of their actions. I continued to realize that the vision of Champagnat went far beyond the walls of the School and that many Montagne awaited my missionary action in the Church. **(Brazil)**

The dream of educating in the Gospel –acknowledging and respecting the wholeness of the human person and sharing a way of life rooted in the person of Jesus Christ –is very much a needed reality to counter our broken homes and materialistic, self-serving social mores. Insofar as I attempt to live Marcellin’s zeal for making education a genuine act of love, I believe that I am Marist. **(United States)**

As happened with Marcellin and the Montagne child, I discovered that my true vocation was with the neediest of children thanks to an experience of working at N. with the marginal children of a district. This was the circumstance that convinced me to do my studies in Special Education and that led me to work with autistic children for seven years, and that brought me back to my Marist house of B, where I currently work helping integrate the special education students into the normal school structures. **(Spain)**

I have a very real sense that Marcellin’s primary focus was not only providing better educational opportunities but rather fostering in young people knowledge and experience of God’s love. I am reminded of the famous quote of Marcellin that, “I cannot see a child without wanting to let him know how much Jesus Christ has loved him and how much he should in return, love the divine Saviour.” It is about enabling young people to grow.

This aspect of growth as a key aspect of a Marist education is one that holds true for myself in my present role. I have frequently used and drawn inspiration from Oscar Romero’s reflection entitled Tomorrow’s church (date unknown), the first few lines of which states,

*This then is what we are about,
We plant seeds that one day will grow,*

*We water seeds already planted,
Knowing that they hold future promise.*
(Australia)

Towards the end of the dark days of apartheid, the Brothers were among the first to open their schools to all races. I am very grateful to work in such a non-racial environment, which has allowed me to witness the colour-blindness of future generations. It is the Marist Brothers, the lay teachers and other staff members, the children and their families, past and present, making up the wider school community, which provides the heartbeat. **(South Africa)**

Jointly Responsible in the Shared Mission



Together in the Mission

While I certainly felt most comfortable with people of faith, I kept noticing those who suffered from the lack of it. I felt bad for people who didn’t have what I had been given and wished that I could share that. Without realizing what I was doing, I wanted to “make Jesus known and loved”. I was in no position to teach or preach, but I could certainly treat people as Jesus would



want. I could continue to be Marist wherever life leads me. Marcellin had gotten under my skin and was still there and what Marcellin has to offer fits any situation, even outside of the walls of the Institute. **(United States)**

Today, I put my Marist experience at the service of the missions that had been entrusted to me by our bishop, that is, the pastoral ministry of handicapped persons. It is a mission of service, in priority, for the most damaged children and young people in life, without forgetting the adults, the families of handicapped children. I think that this mission to which I am called is indeed a Marist mission. **(France)**

The Working Relationship

Amid difficulties and uncertainties we started to be not simply employees. Little by little we started to understand the effort that we had to make and the direction that we had to take. With the years we called this the Shared Mission. We thus started to recover the warmth of being at home. **(Spain)**

Starting in 1997, I experienced some times of trials, of difficulty, of the cross faced with new realities of people with a vision that was different and foreign to the process that the College had built with so much effort. The lack of support for the movement and the youth ministry with the departure of Brother N. and other irritating situations which caused great disappointment concerning the principles and values that had been present throughout all these years, were factors that led me to make the decision to invest myself in other sectors. During this time, I learnt to understand the human fragility of religious, of people; the changes

in criteria and the lack of vision or of continuity in the projects with the transfer of brothers in the schools. **(Mexico)**

Br. Seán expressed his thanks for the work we were doing in continuing to ensure that the work of Champagnat was never lost. This was truly amazing because as a lay person I always feel extremely thankful that I am afforded this opportunity. He made us feel that we are truly a part of the Marist family. **(South Africa)**

A few years later, I was invited to be part of a work group of the Province which had as its mission the encouragement of solidarity in all its domains. That was in effect the shared mission! How many shared works, efforts, joys and dreams! And also difficulties and setbacks! We had to get along with each other because it was the first time we had worked shoulder to shoulder at this level. What happy years! **(Spain)**

I cannot speak a lot about the education of young people as I have never given courses or had a lot of contact in this way, because I have always been more in the secretariat, but I realise that even if you are not in a classroom, the desire of Marcellin to help children and young people, I can show this to the people around me. **(Mexico)**

The Volunteer Relationship

For me, the word gratuitousness started to take on a new meaning in knowing little by



little the brothers, the animators, the teachers... who dedicated hours, efforts and evenings to children, young people, families or to any person who needed their support, their understanding or their help. I discovered hours full of love, of patience, of silent presence and I learnt to fill my hours with this love towards others. **(Spain)**

Passionate to spread the mission



In our visit to L'Hermitage there was an amazing sense of common bond and mission amongst all the teachers from the Marist schools of South Africa who were at the Hermitage, as well as with those from Marist schools in other countries. We did not understand each other's languages, yet we still felt an unspoken closeness and sense of fraternity- we all shared the same vision to further develop the ethos in our schools and very evidently we shared a deep love for the work of Champagnat and for the man himself, with his 'strong mind and gentle heart'. I am so thankful to have had this opportunity as it further strengthened my commitment to all that St. Marcellin Champagnat stood for and still stands for today. It gave me the resolve to return home with an even greater passion to ensure that the Marist

ethos permeated every aspect of the school. **(South Africa)**

I do not understand an experience of faith and of Marist spirituality without a clear and radical choice for the poor, especially for children and young people, for the most neglected. In this perspective I have chosen to go beyond the enclosure of the school. **(Brazil)**

The number of Brothers diminishes, because vocations are scarce, while the work, on the contrary, multiplies. Because of this, opening up to lay people becomes necessary. Aware of this problem, I commit myself to belonging to the Marist Fraternity, to help them continue the Marist Mission in Madagascar. **(Madagascar)**

This state of life (which is translated by a vocation of service to others, with young people, presence, work, learning with them, from them, attentiveness, advice, being with them, in class, in games, in meetings, camps, walks, recreation times, in their celebrations, in their life) makes the richness of the closeness of others gratifying and that is why it is worth giving your life for young people. **(Mexico)**

By always working with the most neglected of young people, I have tried to situate myself in the perspective of the struggles of a popular movement which seeks its full citizenship, especially in the domain of the rights of the child. But as a Christian and as an educator I try to avoid making the poor merely a sociological category, an abstract group. The poor person is the face of Christ for me. From that comes the importance of the personal relationship. **(Brazil)**

Our Apostolates were: (1) Picking a stubborn student, observing and advising him to make his feelings acceptable with a view of making him improve. (2) Teaching people who have not had the chance to receive formal instructions in education centers. (3) Solidarity with the poor at Christmas or any other feast days. (4) Teaching Catechism. The four apostolates are not different from what Marist Brothers do in the spirit of Marist Family of Champagnat. **(Nigeria)**

Another joy of mine is to do what Father Champagnat used to ask: to form the children into "good Christians and good citizens,"



contributing in this way to the Marist mission, to my homeland and also probably to that mission which has been intended for me by the One who sent me. **(Peru)**

I learned the true value that education has for people's lives. I came to see that one can never stop learning and that the knowledge of the educational process is never finished. I discovered some of the virtues required in a person who wishes to be a teacher: friendly presence without presumption; humility, simplicity. I realized that to be Marist, as a layperson or brother, is to have a distinctive style of being and acting. **(Brazil)**

I choose to become a lay Marist. We take as our model Father Champagnat in the education of children and we never stop asking for his help. I am very happy educating children. I advise them to pray and to ask Father Champagnat to help them have a better life. The number of children never stops increasing because they are proud of us. Among our students from the catechism lessons, one girl has asked to enter the congregation of the Marist Sisters, two boys have gone to the minor seminary and another girl has entered the Daughters of Charity. We hope that the number of aspirants will increase and as an objective we will make the N. centre a place of vocations. **(Madagascar)**

3

SHARED LIFE

Among other terms, Marist life could be summarized for me by the word SHARING; sharing life, dreams, hopes, expectations. **(Brazil)**

I was very much taken by the simplicity and warmth of the relationships with the brothers. For me it was like the case of a person who arrives somewhere, dying of the cold, and being offered a place in the group around the fire. I felt welcomed and in a short while I was one more in the family. **(El Salvador)**



The life of the brothers and that of Father Champagnat interested me. Family spirit, his love of Mary, his easy familiarity, his simplicity, his friendship and especially his example became the model of the person that I would become. In the Remar Movement I was able to discover other facets of the Marist Brothers' life. If their closeness in the College was tangible, in the activities and experiences of the movement it was a great deal more evident. We were not in a classroom; it was another ambiance; an environment of fraternity, openness and sharing about life. **(Puerto Rico)**

I dream of a life shared without prejudice and in working together; the way is the same for all, and all of us are taking the same direction. **(Spain)**

Each summer, I impatiently waited to become closely involved with the brothers and colleagues of different communities who followed courses of catechesis and formation organized by the Province. **(Mexico)**

God is Communion in Diversity

I profoundly believe that our work as laypeople and brothers is to be always attentive to the murmuring of the Spirit so that all can hear, through our voice, the call of God to communion. **(Uruguay)**

Our Experience of Communion: Family Spirit

Even during the first year in the school I became aware of a different way of doing things and I noticed how people treated each other. We were more human... in short, I considered myself to be a member of the family, because I was in-



tegrated in the group. And I remember my first director's attitude: total welcome. **(Brazil)**

My first experience as a Marist was at school. Earlier I had spent three years at another religious order school. There was a difference, but what was it? On reflection of my school days I can identify two: one, I experienced a greater sense of community at the Marist school and secondly, the presence of the Brothers was more profound. **(Australia)**

The children of the district started to talk about the brothers; they said that they were very happy with them. Their house became theirs. There they played, the brothers listened to them, they animated groups, helped them to do their homework..., sometimes they had to send them back to their houses. It was the house for all, as if they were going to their own family. When the brothers left, they left a great void. Their house was ours. It was the place of joy, of simplicity, of welcome, of listening, of fraternity. **(Colombia)**

Fundamental to the experience of being a part of the High School family is the indisputable sense of unconditional support and of total acceptance that I have found to be unique to our school community. **(United States)**

Brothers capable of putting themselves at the level of their students, to overcome barriers of age and of interests. Some brothers gave very little time to themselves; brothers who had no fear of the foolishness of youth; brothers who made the school, especially the final years, into a house where we could enter and leave as

though it was our house; where we were at home. **(Spain)**

Each order has its own special and specific charism yet when I began teaching here I was immediately struck by the wonderful sense of family and community that underpins this College. This is evident in the way the staff and students relate to each other and the way staff, students and their families work to achieve the best for each and every boy at the College. This sense of belonging to a community is quite tangible and initially this had a definite appeal to me personally! **(Australia)**

The future and my desire is that the Marist family continues to grow, that all of us who work with the brothers will remember the charism of Marcellin, that will make it alive and widespread not only in the schools but also in our environment, that Jesus and Mary may be always present in our lives and that those who see us might say: "See how they love one another" and in seeing the fraternity that exists amongst us, that they arouse vocations of brothers and laypeople so that the Kingdom of God expands, making the Institute of the Marist Brothers arrive everywhere in the world, accomplishing the dream of Champagnat: "One Heart, One Mission". **(Mexico)**

That atmosphere, the patience, closeness and all the other virtues of the Brothers made me feel at all times a family atmosphere, in work, in the institution. **(Brazil)**



One of our students died tragically a couple of weeks ago and one moment that stood out for me was when one student sobbed openly on the shoulder of one of our young Brothers. He felt safe and cared for. We always talk about family spirit, and in this tragic death, I saw a community of people caring for one another – Brothers, staff, students, parents. Family spirit is about relationships. The most special part for me is that the Brothers invite us (lay people) to be a part of their lives, to share in their mission, their vocation. **(Australia)**

In life and in the Marist Brothers' communities, I see the reflection of the first Christian communities where all is shared and all are equal; they are companions on the journey with whom we share our joys, difficulties, pleasures and the hope of seeing each day a world that is more human. **(Colombia)**

It was the way the Marist Brothers worked with the children. They treated them as their family. The child was so important. Their devotion to Mary was so intoxicating that Mary became so much a part of the lives of the children. Most of the children who attended the school at that time were from migrant families – Croatians, Italians and Lebanese. They too shared that devotion to Mary. So all in all, we were like one big happy family with a similar attachment to Mary, Christ and family life. **(Australia)**

The Family, a Sign of Communion

In 1993, I married a marvelous man, a companion from Camp Marist, who wanted to put God at the centre of his life, as I did, and to have confidence in Him. It was a wedding in which the Marist spirit was omnipresent: place of the wedding, people invited etc. **(Canada)**

It would be difficult for me to separate the Marist family from my own family, since I have been in this atmosphere where my husband and I have been formed and have grown, where we continue to grow alongside our children. The treasures that we value in our hearts have been forged by the learning and the experience throughout these



years. I feel privileged by this coherence of family life and of work, to be able to instruct my children in these objectives. **(Spain)**

In the Institute, family spirit is a strength. It is also what we laypeople try to concretize in our own family with our parents, our children and grandchildren. It is our priority. **(France)**

Sons, pray the rosary and Mary will look after you as she looked after Jesus when he was on earth. She will pray for you so that Jesus will protect you and guide you.

These were the words of my father when gathered around the fire after morning and evening prayers. I would hear my father whisper the rosary at night. When I reflect now, it touches my heart.

(Papua New Guinea)

We were shown us a new pathway in our lives, a new call: to become parents and we thus received our two daughters in adoption. I understand today, as a special gift, that the spirit of Father Marcellin was present in this experience of adoption; to receive these children to whom

love had been refused, and to transform ourselves into parents, in their house, in their home, as Champagnat had done as a true father for all. **(Mexico)**



Creating Communion throughout Life

The house Champagnat built on rock, along the Gier, made me feel God's gift, which was life adorned with love and justice. And everything made me dream of a great family of sons living as "brothers among brothers"... And the brothers are: the young with no manners, the child with no schooling, no happy home and greeted with no morning kiss, that old man alone, that person walking not knowing where, with no companions, no friends with whom to talk, that immigrant who risks, perhaps loses, his life looking for something better for himself or his loved ones. **(Spain)**

Their charism, their lifestyle, their spirituality is 'catching' because it is real, tangible and it is so family and community oriented. They spread their charism by the way they live in community. I have not met a more welcoming presence than that of the Marists. **(Australia)**

Our team of animators formed a family with the brothers, because in more than working together, we sometimes shared in the Mass and at meals. We knew our difficulties and our dreams. We felt loved and appreciated. But, in all of that, there was also someone more: we came closer to Jesus through these brothers who gave witness to a living joy, a spirit of service, amiability and of gentleness. **(Spain)**

What strikes one most whenever one visits a Brothers' residence is their great sense of hospitality. One always feels welcome in their community. **(Australia)**

The affection and the familiarity demonstrated by many brothers in the most disparate situations have taught me to receive and be attentive to the people with whom I find myself each day. I have been able to develop my capacity of welcome in places where the doors are always open, where someone who arrives is "at home" and at every moment I feel as if I were in my own home. **(Spain)**

Community Comes from Sharing

I experienced teamwork and community life since all the animators who worked at the Camp lived there from the month of May until the month of August. But more than this, I experienced the Marist Christian values that were proposed in the daily life at the Camp: prayer times, Eucharist, simplicity, sharing, practical work, family spirit, contact with the Marist Brothers, presence of the Marist spirit, etc. **(Canada)**

Convinced that faith must be lived in community, I chose to participate in a Marist group of young university students who gathered to reflect together on their lives. In the Marist group, we initiated the process of forming a fraternity within the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family. It was here as well that I met M. the woman with whom a short time later we began family life. **(Spain)**



The Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family

The Champagnat Movement was the most concrete way that I found of living the lay Marist spirituality. **(Brazil)**

With a group of friends we formed a fraternity of the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family consecrated to couples and the family. Among the members who compose this Marist Family, three couples each having three or four children, a Marist Brother and a priest close to the Marists. During our meetings we cover themes that touch the life and the challenges of the life of a couple and of a family. We pray and we join our lives to that of Champagnat, of Christ or of Mary so that they enlighten us and guide us. The children also participate in different ways in our Marist Family meetings. It is a way for us of making them know Champagnat, Mary and Jesus better, to teach them to pray and to make them aware of the signs of God in their lives. We believe that they can also be inspired by the life of Champagnat, of Jesus or of Mary in different moments of their own life. **(Canada)**

In this family of the Church, in which I have had the good luck to grow up and to be able to grow, in this group of young people that we form, we have chosen to become a fraternity of the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family. I feel that it is my family, that fills me with joy with its enlightenment and with pain with its shadows; I thus try to contribute my "grain of sand" so that we can have more enlightenment than shadows. **(Spain)**

My fraternity is a life space of commitment which for me supposed:

- The opportunity and gift of sharing my faith in community in the spirit of Marist Apostolic Spirituality.
- Living a permanent process of renewing my personal plan
- Integrating the different dimensions of my daily life in my relationship with God.
- Feeling the force and the courage to continue my mission when I encounter difficulties.
- Offering my person for the good of the community.
- Feeling called, discerning in community. **(Spain)**

In 1987, during the launching of the Champagnat movement at Notre Dame de L'Hermitage, the life project was what we were looking for. Accompanied by Brother A., we asked a few people we knew to form a fraternity group in joy, to share and nourish our common ideal: the spirituality of the movement, by living a strong love, a dynamism for others, simplicity, love of Mary mother and model. **(France)**

Life Communities of Lay people and Brothers

With the fraternity now set up, we heard the words of Brother Benito Arbués, Superior General of the time, requesting volunteers for Rwanda. Although we did not meet the required conditions, the occasion served to give life to a goal that we have nourished over the years: to have an experience in the Third World. We offered ourselves to the Brothers as international volunteer assistants for a one year period. We were "destined" for the Chaco, Paraguay; and we

lived there our best experience of a Marist marriage. We formed a part of the Brothers' community and followed their pattern of life in every way: prayer, celebrations, pastoral projects, etc. We were able to enjoy community life with its attractive points and its difficulties, in a context - Paraguayan - that seems to make things easy. **(Spain)**

I think that we are lacking in taking more audacious steps and signs for building lives that are more shared, especially in mixed communities, or in communities of life, since today we have thousands of laypeople in the entire world who are Marists by choice and want to live this choice in a more radical way, by exchanging their spirituality each day. **(Brazil)**

In my experience of community life, discovering the Brother to be an equal, not as a stranger or a superior being. Valuing their options and gifts, and understanding their limitations and deficiencies. Having communal experiences and disagreements, being stimulated and stimulating when sharing our lives. Learning. Being welcomed, respected, and not judged. Invited and not forced. Opening up their house. Being valued and kept in mind. Knowing myself to be tolerated in my more difficult moments. Appreciated. All this through simple and fraternal relationships, of small details that say a lot. If I had to choose a couple of words, fraternal relationship and communion. **(Spain)**



Other Lay Marist Groups

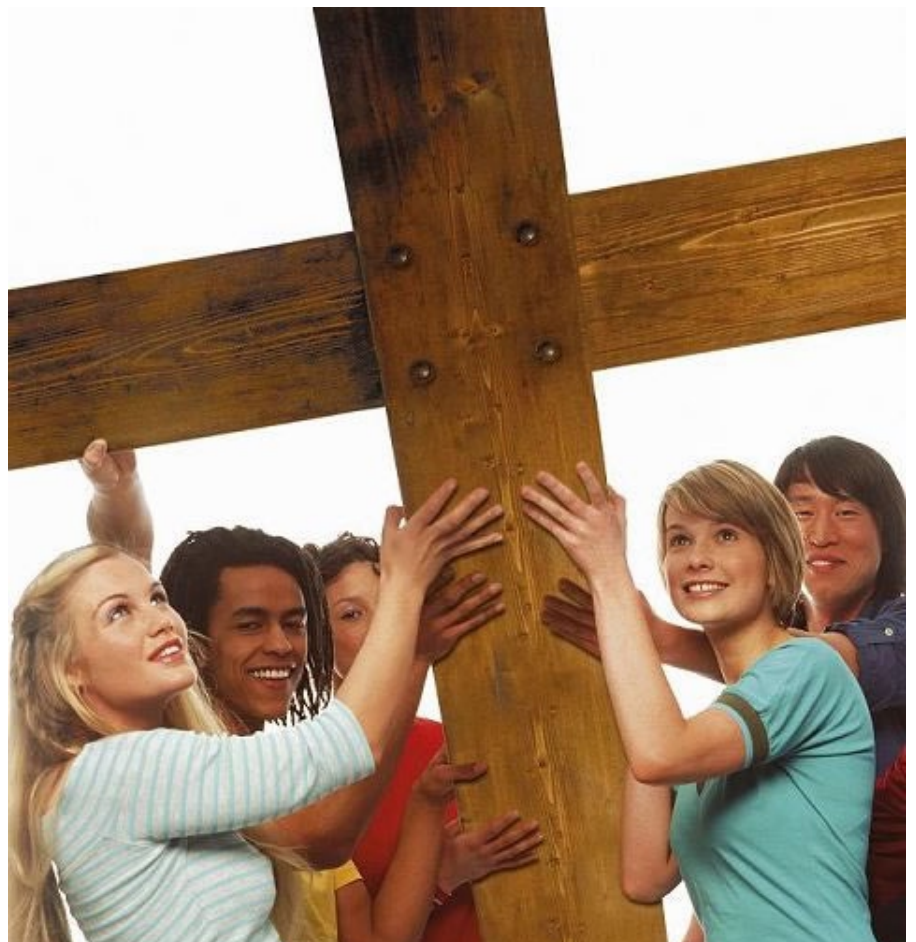
One of the things I have got the most from in these past 6 years or so has been the Lay Partnership Group. Just meeting with such people gives me a new lease of life. You just connect with people like this - gentle, sincere, kind, have faith in God and live this through their work and conversation. Through this I have been able to be involved in workshops, had input into documents and met many Marist Brothers and Marist laity from all over. As this has happened I feel I have become Marist. **(Australia)**

SPIRITUALITY

Living in the Spirit

We share this spiritual richness with the entire Church, but we are “guardians” of two sacred places: the life of children and young people and the spaces of fraternity. There are three attitudes that our heart feels invited to cultivate, because they sum up the spiritual experience of Marcellin: confidence in the presence of God (Incarnation), simplicity (transparency) and the relationship of children confident in the tenderness of Mary.

Each time that “we are there” with all our being, transparent, with God, with our brothers of the same family: consecrated and lay, with children, young people and with Mary, we Marists celebrate the sacrament of fraternity which expresses and nourishes our way of being believers today. It is there where the wind of the Spirit pushes me. **(Uruguay)**



It is my belief that spirituality incorporates all aspects of our life. Rather than simply referring to one aspect of our life that might be considered ‘religious’, it is a search for God in every dimension of my life. Thus when I pause to consider the way in which my life has been shaped by a Marist spirituality I am conscious that my spirituality doesn’t exist in a vacuum; that like that of Marcellin, his understanding of God and his response was shaped by his place in history. **(Australia)**

Following Jesus, The Centre of Life for the Lay Marist

My way of living Marist spirituality changed when a brother said: “Marcellin wanted the first places at the Crib, at the foot of the Cross and at the table of communion for us”. May God be praised in all his works! I dream of these three places and I ask God to make me deserving and

worthy of approaching him through the simplicity of the birth of Jesus, who brought us hope, and who inspires me to be reborn each day in order to find once more in the children and young people with whom I live this Jesus who is in the heart of each one of them.

The cross which is not the end, but the sign of love and of devotion, which motivates me and troubles me in this sense that I can contribute a lot more with what I am and with what I have, because all is thanks to God and I feel that I must put it at the service of my brothers and sisters.

By the Eucharist I strengthen myself; it is there where I am in Jesus and He is in me. It is there where my heart is appeased and I consider the world with eyes of hope, and I remember the table of La Valla where Champagnat ate with his young brothers. Sitting together at table is the celebration of life and of participation. **(Brazil)**

Like Mary

With the passing of time I also discovered a different form of relating with Mary. It was no longer a matter of reciting a lot of rosaries but of contemplating and imitating Mary's attitudes,



saying as she did "yes" to the will of God, to working each day, to fraternal service, to welcoming and helping people with whom we find ourselves each day, by making people happy by doing little things for them, of being attentive to the needs of others, discovering something of God in daily life and assuming with faith that which touches our life. **(El Salvador)**

Mary thus became a part of the "luggage" of my life's journey, and she has never failed to be present. **(France)**

The result of this feminine and maternal, educative and friendly presence is the development of charming personalities whom I have had the joy of meeting: men of strength and tenderness. It does not matter if they are not all or the majority. That encourages me each time to welcome Our Lady as the guide of my journey to Christ. **(Brazil)**

I must say that in my 36 years of life the loving presence of Mary has always accompanied me in my journey and like Brother Francois, from my childhood years onwards I have had the good fortune to breathe, live and feel the love of the Marist Spirit inside and outside the schools and communities. **(Mexico)**

In following the example of Mary at Cana, I try to be a discreet but attentive presence: listening to without judging their anguish and conflicts in their family, those around them and in their friendships, in the seeking of a job and in their difficulties in their existence. I try to find solutions with them, by ensuring that they are the principal actors in the search. **(Brazil)**

I was thus aged fifteen or sixteen years and studying in the fourth year of secondary school when the Marist Brothers suggested that I discover a new Mary. It was then that things took a Marial sense for me calmly, not quickly. My faith in Mary was rooted profoundly and solidly in my life. The place that she occupied in my life became omnipresent quietly and smoothly. I started to entrust to Mary my hopes, my fears and my dreams, without experiencing the least doubt that she would guide me in my vocation. **(Canada)**

What has always fascinated me is the welcome, the presence and this attitude of ser-



vice which is not a common occurrence in men. Mary is surely one reason that explains the existence of the attitude. She is for me a life model, her attitudes, her radical abandonment to God which led her to say yes when her yes risked her being marginalised, seen as an outcast regarding the Jewish laws. I like her way of treasuring events in her heart and allowing them to resurface later. **(France)**

While living with the Brothers what captivated me from the beginning was their simplicity, their concern for each one, the welcome that they gave us, whether we lived in the school or outside, but above all their great love of Jesus and Mary, our Good Mother. **(Mexico)**

I have received many gifts from God and I can affirm that, in many varied ways, it is she who has done everything for us, according to her will. I try to strengthen myself in prayer, which is expressed by my devotion to Mary, to whom I consecrate my daily activities by entrusting them to her immaculate heart. The love of Mary makes me very happy. Even though I still have a lot to know and to grow, I find in her some common points: as mother, the education of children; as a Christian, keeping in my heart the desire for God with the commitment to be attentive to the needs of the Community. The intense union of Champagnat with the Good Mother, the confidence with which he put all his concerns, worries and joys into her

hands; his dreams and his plans inspire me a lot, encourage me, help me to advance, bring me closer to Jesus. **(Brazil)**

I also find the place accorded to Mary by the Marists a softener to the amount of male chauvinism unfortunately present in the Catholic Church. **(South Africa)**

The love for Mary is like an obsession for me, as it was it for Fr. Champagnat. The motto "All to Jesus for Mary, all to Mary for Jesus" is something very important to keep in mind, because it is a very useful motto for us, Lay Marists. From the Brothers I have learned much of what it is to be Christian and I have understood the love that Mary has towards me. For that reason, I dare say that "Mary truly loves me and that I love her with all my heart". **(Madagascar)**

I dedicate this poem to all those who have wanted to follow in our footsteps in the work that we do for the glory of God and for the love of Mary:

*"I love walking with Mary,
For she is my protection,
Life is sometimes difficult,
It is for me a uniting bond.
She intercedes for us to the Father,
What is good and necessary for her children,
As she is there, she remains a mother
And nothing can happen to us hereafter."* **(Madagascar)**

A Lifestyle in the Spirit

Humility, simplicity and modesty - the three violets. What a great model to strive to meet on a daily basis in a world where money, power and personal success try constantly to negate the need for human decency and fellowship. **(South Africa)**

The simple, modest and humble life that every Marist is invited to lead captivates me; being a complete person, without boasting, without calling attention to myself. That has helped me to grow, has made me more available and committed to my people. **(Brazil)**

One evening at bedtime, the devoted Brother lay down upon a mattress on the floor. He had given the bedroom that we had offered him



to a brother who was older than he. I thought that it was right that a superior profit from some privilege and I admit to being ill at ease and surprised. There was a time for chores like cutting the wood and you would find him there as well. **(Canada)**

Without my being aware of it, I noted how humbly and simply the Marist Brothers lived although they were the school administrators. And without consciously trying I started to do the same - live simply. My years as a teacher with the Marists has been a real journey, the change in my thinking and my ways is sometimes puzzling even to me. The Marist influence has rubbed off on me all for the good. I do hope that I can influence the members of my family in the same way. **(Philippines)**

In my life, I try to be consistent in what I say and believe. Simplicity, closeness, presence, attention to details: these are values that I try to make my own in all aspects of my life: not only in my pastoral work, but I try to take them with me in the world of work, in familial and friendship relationships. **(Spain)**

The total confidence of Marcellin in God, Mary, his determination to always do the will of God, his charism with children, young people and the poorest ones, his life of prayer, his love for the brothers "that one can say of the little brothers of Mary, see how they love one another" are models for our life. **(France)**

Over the years the Brothers and Lay Marists have welcomed me, encouraged me,

strengthened me and challenged me. They have mentored me and modeled - for students, staff and parents alike. Their sense of welcoming, of treating everyone equally and enabling each person to feel they are of worth and have something special to offer has come through time and time again. **(Australia)**

My first experience in the Marist setting was my entry to school at six years of age. At this time a break started that would give fruit five years later, when I had precise memories of real brothers and times of meeting, as the meeting of the Marist family. From these first moments I remember the easy manner and simplicity of the brothers, and even though they were not all equal, the brothers with whom I dealt gave great witness in the way the related closely to one another. **(Spain)**

The pillars of my Marist experience are:

- Jesus, the friend who invites us to follow him, to listen to him, to feel his love and to share that experience of kindness and mercy with my students;
- Mary, the loving Mother who takes me by the hand and teaches me the road to reach her Son and how to be mother to my students;
- Marcellin who conquers all the obstacles that are presented in life and is always attentive and available for those who need him.

I try to communicate to those around me everything that has changed my life, speaking to them of those three loves that are with us, that always accompany us and help us in our daily journey. **(Mexico)**

My first contact with the Marist Brothers was during my college days. I used to see them quietly go about their business of teaching catechism. What struck me at that time was their humility and simplicity. I took them to be very ordinary and inconsequential people. I realized that most of them were very intelligent and highly learned. I started to wonder why they chose to live very humble and simple lives irrespective of their high academic achievements. It was only after I had that divine touch in my life that I understood the secret behind their style of life. I saw the value and beauty of such a life style. Though I had lived in modest circumstance all my life, I now more deliberately modeled my life after the Marist Brothers. **(Nigeria)**



God will provide. the Brother in charge of the group of catechists for First Holy Communion used to say to me, all of that in a semi-rural sector where we used to go on Saturday afternoons. I was so often a witness, surprised by this generous presence of God, that the only thing left for me to do was to believe! This Marist Brother showed by a smile - one of the most beautiful I have very seen - nothing less and nothing more than confidence in Providence which gives me freely the goods that my heart desires in order to be happy: peace, love, simplicity and more confidence in his Person and in his ways.

From another Brother I learnt something of service, of gift without limits, unquestionable commitment to the will of God. And in everything he always made me feel that the Lord and his tasks for the Kingdom came first. This brother led me on to total commitment to the Lord.

Another has passionately taught me to discover "that the universe is a musical score upon which every creature is like a musical line of love," that the Lord is in the streets, among simple people, all chosen by God, one by one. **(Chile)**

Speaking as a whole of Marist Education, I find that Brothers do not force discipline on students. They make the students discipline themselves by their liberal education, precepts and good example. The values and the discipline so inculcated are life-long and become part of life. At the time I entered Maris Stella my father was jobless and if not for free education I could not have entered Maris Stella. A boy of my economic status at the time could not even look at Maris Stella rather than entering it. I doubt whether St. Marcellin Champagnat could have envisaged this situation. **(Sri Lanka)**

Amongst the many gifts that the Lord gave us, we were able to get to know a group of men of faith: approachable, friends, welcoming, workers, cheerful and simple, lovers of Mary and with a total dedication to children and deprived youth. They were Mary's Brothers. Soon friendship was born and in a family spirit and with simplicity we share the mission: To make of the youth and children "good Christians and good citizens". Little by little, amid the work and sharing their life, we were discovering in the testimony of these Broth-

ers a concrete way to be and to live, spirituality, a charism, a gift. **(Bolivia)**

Interconnectivity of Mission, Shared Life and Spirituality

Even if the priority is unquestionably mission, nonetheless we must not neglect the “treasures” which lie deposited in the hearts of so many persons in the overall realization of the mission (former students, parents, etc.). These treasures are most assuredly a source of life and breath for all of us who are in direct contact with the educational mission. It is necessary to channel this source of life and breath and draw profit from it. Equally it is a manner of living Gospel qualities in the Marist way, wherever the lay person may be. **(Spain)**

I live out this Marist charism through my everyday interaction with staff, students and parents. For about 15 years I have had the role of pastoral care of the staff, as well as their professional development. I do not feel you can separate the two in a Catholic school. As I have learnt from the Marists, it is not about “talking about what to do” but about “doing it”. So many of them teach so much by their presence. By just being. You are there, quietly, and sometimes firmly, for your

students, and your staff. At the same time, you are always there in the same way for your family. **(Australia)**

We came to consider the movement as a way of life, a special call that the “Great Helmsman” (Jesus) made to us as a couple, since for ten years we did not have any children and that helped us to discover and find the pathway that the Lord Jesus was showing us at this time in our lives, as individuals and as a couple; we consecrated ourselves to young people. We served the young people with all our heart and with all our soul in the movement at the college and that also helped us to form ourselves as a couple who had not been given the gift of children until then. **(Mexico)**

I read this quote a while ago and I guess it sums up for me my life journey as a Marist.

*Do all the good you can
By all the means you can
In all the ways you can
In all the places you can
To all the people you can
As long as you can.*

And for me to ‘do all the good you can’ as a Marist means to build relationships, to trust in God and Mary, to believe in myself and to let others (staff and students) know that Jesus loves them, however I can and where I can; to continue saying “yes” to the call on my life. **(Australia)**



5

FORMS OF RELATIONSHIP WITH THE MARIST CHARISM

Together, Depositories of the Charism

Faced with the “We Need Brothers” of Marcellin I feel that I am receiving the invitation and try to respond through my position as a lay person. **(Spain)**

In the latter years at the College, I have witnessed the administrative transfer from the brothers to laypeople. This administrative passage has not always been easy. It made people realise that beyond the administration of the College there was a Marist life always taken care of by the brothers. As the brothers retired, it came to the laypeople to take this up so that this life and these Marist values could be continued. There is a heritage to



be seized while the brothers are still in a position to transmit it to us, and a heritage, a Spirit to be made productive for the coming decades. That is the mission of lay Marists in the coming years. Let's hope that we will succeed. As for me, my new responsibilities as assistant director of the College permit me, in unison with my colleagues in direction and all the members of the staff of this school concerned about the continuity of the living out of Marist values, to work at realising this mission. **(Canada)**

Even though I have not been in daily contact with children (only with mine), I feel part of a project developed for them. The enthusiasm that I put in my work, day after day, nourishes me in the dream of Champagnat, to live his charism and to share life with all the people whom we feel compelled to make this dream come true by our presence, or in the Marist school or outside of it, where life puts us at every moment. **(Spain)**

Now I feel more challenged as a Lay Marist because of the new situation in our school since the diocese has taken it over. I feel more obliged to impart Marcellin's spirituality and way of thinking in the school and also in the Association of Former Pupils. **(Germany)**

At the start, I was certain that a layperson could never have the same presence as a Marist Brother and I would often tell myself that, if we needed to make a comparison, the best of the laypeople would correspond to the worst of the brothers, as a brother had consecrated his life to God.

Today, I can say that each one of us, brother or layperson, is called to a mission: to realise the dream of Marcellin. Each one must overcome various obstacles, carry his own cross. God, alone, is in a position to know the weight of the cross of each person.

Laypeople are a new force in the shared mission as well as for the realisation of the dream of Marcellin Champagnat. It is an occasion we must not miss. We must find new means to strengthen the lay presence and to profit from this force; a force which must function in harmony with that of the brothers. **(Greece)**

My dream then is that the charism's vitality, the vitality of the Marist mission dwells as much within the Brothers as within the la-



ity. At the present one must take as a goal that the Marist laity become aware of their identity and that they identify themselves with the mission which makes the dream become a reality. **(Spain)**

We have a dream: that we are making other laypeople want to come and join us, that we dare to challenge young people to reflect on their vocation (why not, brother!) and that a community of brothers, as small as it may be, be the sign in our diocese that you can give all your life to the Lord, and that one same mission, one same charism can be lived in the various states of life which are ours, religious, lay, or ordained ministers. **(France)**

Relationship with Other Marist Congregations

I taught at a Marist Sisters' College for 6 ½ years and my learning about the Marist charism changed. Upon a discussion with a Marist Sister on what is Marist, she said to me: "The Brothers spend too much time on Marcellin. There are other Marists in the family to learn about, we don't just focus on Marcellin like the Brothers do". It opened my eyes to a greater understanding of what is Marist. The Pastoral Houses at the College are Chavoin, Chanel, Colin, Jaricot, Marcellin and Perroton. It was another opportunity to learn more. **(Australia)**

Relationship with the Institute of the Marist Brothers

During all these years, I have known and I have been in relationship with many brothers, each one with his own way of being personal which enriches the Institute. The different gifts mark him in a charming way. I see that even though we have different modes of living, we are complementary and that makes everything very special. The lay lifestyle, as that of the religious one, can be enriched by work in common, through shared action, by lived experiences and even by the divergence of criteria in thinking of the actions and the commitment for the building of the Kingdom. **(Brazil)**

It was some time in Jan 2001 when Bro N. initiated the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Fraternity, requesting me to lead the group. Our long term view of our lay Marist Vocation is to be more active in sharing the Marist Community vocation in Singapore. In humility I am looking forward for guidance from Brothers on how the Champagnat Movement can grow and work in tandem with the Marist Brothers. **(Singapore)**

I am a married man with three grown-up children. All of us, my wife, my children and I all graduated from the same institution. Presently,



the five of us are working in the same institution as teachers. Hence our lives are closely involved with the school and the Marist Brothers. In 1999, I was chosen as an Affiliate Member of the Marist Brothers, thus I am a lay Marist. My wife also serves as a member of the Community Life Commission of Philippine Province of the Marist Brothers. My wife and I, together with my eldest daughter were among the original members of the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family. My other child joined the Champagnat Movement recently. Indeed, we feel like an extended family of the Marist Brothers. **(Philippines)**

Liaison and Sense of Ownership

As I reflect on those 12 years of my life with the Marist brothers, I cannot help but feel a deep sense of attachment with the Marist spirituality that has helped to shape my personality to a great extent. **(Singapore)**

We chose to journey for three years in a fraternity with a young Christian community. This community encouraged the revitalisation of life as a couple and the children were always very welcome. Several activities encouraged their presence. But we missed the Marist presence. My feeling of belonging was first and above all Marist. That is why since last year we have constituted a new Marist fraternity for couples who want to revitalise themselves and reflect on their Christian life. **(Canada)**

I am blessed to work in a place where the people really are a true community. Our faculty, staff, and students truly care about one another and support one another. **(United States)**

Finally, and after a time of belonging to a group of university students, with several of them who formed this group, we asked to form a fraternity, as a choice of living our life as laypeople according to the charism of Marcellin and of his brothers. At this stage, where I am continuing to advance, I find myself each day with a closer relationship with the Institute, either by participating and sharing with other members, or by reflecting and working with the documents and the con-

cerns that appear day after day among the brothers and among us. **(Spain)**

After some years spent as a teacher with the Marists, I felt the need to follow Jesus in a precise way of living and I started to search for options of religious life. I wrote to different Communities, some sent me documentation, but it remained as simple documentation. One Sunday, the telephone rang after the Eucharist. It was a former Marist who invited me to attend a meeting in order to start a fraternity in the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family. I went to this meeting. It was at this moment that the Lord answered my prayer and I understood that to follow Jesus it was not necessary to be a religious. I continued to attend these monthly meetings during which we shared in fraternity in the light of the charism of Marcellin Champagnat. The experience was enriching, still more in being a Marist teacher; the style of a humble and simple life fulfilled my professional hope. **(Colombia)**

My most significant experience was that of forming a community with two other laypeople and with the Marist Brothers. With them, I shared prayer, meals and walks; we thought together about the school, the students and the teachers; we developed the Community Plan. With some I attained true experiences of friendship which are still maintained today. There were also hard times, times of fear, of solitude, of incomprehension, of feeling that the experience was destining me to be a religious sister without having proposed it or wanted it. Together we wanted to build community, to have times of prayer, relaxation and of formation, to seek our own identity as laypeople and brothers, to build



together a project at the service of the young people of the Vicariate, each one from his or her work and professional choices. The experience lasted two years, with the realisation of these desires to a large extent. **(Venezuela)**

The Grove was a bit of a shock to me in a good way. The Grove is a community where (male and female!) young adults and Marist Brothers live together in a supportive Catholic and Marist environment. The Grove is very big on hospitality, simplicity, outreach and both personal and spiritual growth. **(New Zealand)**

When I first came to N., I was at once invited in to the Marist community through a genuine, tangible love and support that I didn't know would or could exist in my professional life. My vocation would not be as clear to me and my experience would not be as rich a one if it were not for the sense of family that is lived out by the Marists, and were it not for the rapport that existed amongst the faculty and the staff. We are a strong community who work toward helping one another grow in faith and compassion. Our dearth of capital has certainly helped to keep us all humble and I believe this to be largely responsible for the spiritual growth of our students and the spiritual growth that I have undergone since joining this community. **(United States)**

Recognition of the Vocation

After only a few months working as the director of the programmes at Camp Marist I realised that I considered my work not so much as only work but more as a vocation. I involved myself fully in this Marist work and tried to follow the will of Christ, of Mary and of Champagnat. My involvement led me even to represent the Marists during the Offertory procession at the canonisation ceremony of Marcellin Champagnat in Rome in 1999. I felt particularly challenged by Champagnat who seemed to say to me that there was a place for me among the Marists and that my work with the deprived youth was recognised as having as much value as if it was being accomplished by a Brother. **(Canada)**

After these many years spent in fraternity, where we tried to live the life plan common



to all the fraternities, we felt that we needed to take one “step” more. After two years of reflection in fraternity and with Brother J., our guide, we decided in agreement with the Brother Provincial and the bureau of the Champagnat Movement to make a public commitment. At the end of the retreat at Notre Dame de L’Hermitage on the 15th August 2005, we committed ourselves with other members of the fraternity to live the life plan. This was an important moment for us.

Commitment

*In the presence of the Most Holy Trinity,
I give thanks to the Lord for having become by Baptism,
Brother of Christ and member of his Church,
without deserving it on my part.
In the Spirit of Mary, with the help of
Saint Marcellin Champagnat,
I commit myself to live according to the Gospel,
And to serve the Church as he did
with the priority concern
for the poor and young people.
In this commitment,
I count on the help of members of the
“Henri Vergès” fraternity*

*and of the Champagnat Movement
of the Marist Family.*

*Holy Spirit, may I give witness to your Love
by your grace.*

*Virgin Mary, our Good Mother,
I entrust to your maternal solicitude my life ...
and my apostolate.*

(France)

I had always thought of it as going one-way (Brothers). I am now beginning to see it as a two way thing, perhaps leading to a partnership down the track (Laypeople). **(Australia)**

Towards a new Marist Model in the Church

I believe that the Champagnat Movement can be a good milieu for experiencing new forms of living Marist spirituality, of establishing new forms of relationships between brothers and laypeople, and of making spaces possible that create a new

life, new structures of animation of the Institute.
(Spain)

Our deep feeling of being Marists will make us find the means to continue living and sharing something more than the mission with the Brothers. It will be a different format, but it is our dream to be able to continue living this new reality which has been born already, the possibility

of being a community both lay and Marist. And, why not? I dream of some kind of belonging.
(Spain)

My future with the Marists is uncertain. I think that we lay people must propose ways of being, of living our identity in the congregation and of building, with the brothers, new ways of being and of living. **(Venezuela)**



6

WAYS OF GROWTH IN VOCATION

Vocation, a Journey of Faith

I have not the slightest doubt that the Marist atmosphere was responsible for my spiritual growth. It was here that I acquired the basic strengths to live my life well and to overcome the trials to which my faith was subjected. An unforgettable fact was when I suffered a very serious illness, a cerebral aneurysm. I can assure you that I only survived that thanks to the campaign of prayers of the whole Marist family, joined to those of my relatives. I also received many demonstrations of support, companionship and closeness when my elder son died, at the age of 19, in an automobile accident five years ago. Today I give thanks to God for all that I have received and continue to receive. I feel loved by Him, happy and proud to belong to this great family. **(Brazil)**

Living in the style of Marcellin meant that my life changed radically; fighting day by day to



be a Champagnat transformed my life, not only at a human level, but as a Christian and with a hopeful outlook. Supported by the Marist Brothers, my conversion began and now it is the only thing that moves me to tears: to be able to say that I am a MARIST, unique and dear daughter of God, for that reason trying to make the life of

others more pleasant has become my daily Sacrament. To reach this state cost me sweat and tears, many sacrifices... I had to decide to be like Jesus and it hurts but it makes me grow and grow ever more in freedom. **(Paraguay)**

I was one of those neglected ones when the touch of Champagnat reached out to me. Now, I spend my days reaching out to others, following in the footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat, and I can't imagine my life lived any other way. **(United States)**

It all started on a special date, May 20, during a Champagnat celebration organized by the school for the young people from the Remar Movement. Thus, without being a student at the school, or having brothers studying there, thanks to those who invited me (classmates) this experience started something that meant my evangelization, experience of a Christian community, discernment in my professional choice, a reference point for my actions and orientation in the important decisions of my life. **(Venezuela)**

Since I started this work, my eyes and my attitudes have always sought a little more than a professionally coherent attitude, since for the work that I have been given, a simple moral and professional position was not sufficient. Cooperating in the formation of lay Marists is the same thing that, in all work of human and Christian formation, demands an authentic wager on values and attitudes that prove a life to be really Christian. **(Brazil)**

I began my Marist journey – a journey of love, faith, inclusivity, hospitality, service, generosity and a genuine belief that with God our Father, Jesus our Brother, Mary our Mother and Champagnat our Guide, our lives would be forever shaped and defined by the Marist Charism. **(Australia)**

Stages of the Journey

And as I already see the Lord waiting for me on the other bank, arms open and heart full of love and goodness, from this bank I cry to him: Stay with me, because "it is nearly evening, and the day is almost over" (Lk 24, 29). I am in total confidence in living Marist spirituality, the love

of the Good Mother and the tenderness of Saint Marcellin for the definitive day of meeting with the Lord. **(Colombia)**

As a child I decided that in the future I would be a teacher, motivated by the testimony of the brothers and of the few lay teachers that there were at this time. What really delighted me was the simple and friendly presence of the brothers among the students. **(Brazil)**

On reflection, the Marist community helped heal my rejection of God and the Catholic Church. I think I was Marist before I was Catholic. I enrolled my two daughters in a Catholic school and felt the touch of God for the first time at my daughter's sacrament of reconciliation. God was working in my life, even though I wasn't searching. I remember telling Brother N. who was Headmaster at that time, about the profound experience I had of God's love for me and the next day receiving a lovely card from him, acknowledging the call from God and the challenge for me to respond.





But it wasn't until I attended a "Sharing Our Call" programme in 1992 that it struck me that I actually had a share in this Marist vocation. I was not just a teacher; I felt very strongly the call to be a teacher and the call to be Marist. **(Australia)**

My formation, my experience of the Gospel and my Marist vocation: I owe it all to what I call the treasure of my life, the Remar Movement. During these years of my youth, years of consolidation of my identity, God captivated my heart in the way of Marcellin Champagnat with the life of the brothers and laypeople. **(Venezuela)**

The energy in such programs as Sharing Our Call and the Association of Marist Schools of Australia Conferences, provide a great opportunity for staff to learn about what it is to be Marist and are invited to become members of the Marist family. This is very evident when you meet and talk to staff who have no experience of teaching in a school that has a charism. The most challenging priority is providing opportunities for all staff if we are going to keep Champagnat's mission alive in the future. **(Australia)**

We Discover the Call of God

I was a fairly quiet, retiring boy but in my story I met a Marist Brother who saw something in me that no one had ever seen. I remember today when I was fourteen as an awakening to a passionate world. This brother, in a certain way

helped me to realize the potential that I had as a person. The fact of feeling esteemed by people who did not belong to my family or circle of friends was something that fulfilled me and pushed me to begin my Marist life. **(Spain)**

The call starts with a friendship. In this sense, my vocation as a lay Marist began and is sustained as much by my friendship with the brothers as it is tied in and enriched by my life as a husband and a father. It is really because of the testimony and friendship with the brothers that I am better able to define Marcellin's charism and my role as a Marist educator. **(United States)**

When we were twelve years old the possibility of being part of Friendship Groups was offered to us, starting, without really being conscious of it, our pathway to knowing Jesus, of being Christian with a Marist character, as "happy fault" made of what I am now and what I feel. **(Spain)**

This experience of group had a long-lasting effect on me. We felt very united; we were great friends, a true Community of brothers and sisters. In the group I also experienced intense moments of direction. It was then that I came to know the Marist spirituality, the style of Mary, the start of the conquest of my heart. **(Brazil)**

Without being able to pinpoint a precise moment, I recall how I began to feel that I needed to respond to a call, a call that came from very far away, to perform a work which I did not understand. I knew only that the call was given to serve others more unfortunate than I, as a way of coming to know God. Whenever I used to hear the lyrics of the song, "The Prophet," words which state "Leave your brothers, depart from your home, do not fear to put yourself at risk, because I myself will be with you, do not fear to tell people about me, for it is through your mouth that I will speak," the words seemed to be spoken to me. Indeed I feel the same way about the words now; I feel that I have had the grace of making a long time dream come true, a dream that makes me very happy. But since it is not a dream, it is not always easy. **(Peru)**

Little by little we discover our vocation, the call to be and to live as lay Marists, with passing of the years and when sharing the life with the

Brothers, when sharing the work with the children, young people, teachers, parents and community. When celebrating the Sacrament as the centre of our Christian life. When we overcame the difficulties and problems characteristic of any work team. While we prayed the life illuminated by the Word of God. When looking for and asking one another: What does God want of us today? When we went to Mary in trust every time we began a new mission to commend it to her, to her protection. When making an effort to live in a simple and coherent way. When loving, more every day, Jesus Christ, putting him at the centre of our life and of our family. When leaving our house in S. to go to C. to work with the Brothers, looking to see that the education that we offer to our children and young people is filled with love and is of the best possible quality. When we visited the families or shared with the children the student dining room "Good Mother." In the catechesis, in the infant and youth groups, in the experiences of solidarity, in the retreats and shared groups, in the shared meeting that we had with the students and teachers. **(Bolivia)**



We discern the Marist Life Option

With time my personal identification with the charism has grown and become more personal; I have not depended so much on the group I found myself in, but on my personal choice to follow Christ in the style that the brothers practiced and that Marcellin had set on the way. **(Spain)**

Given that spirituality is about everything we do, it is reasonable to suggest that at particular times we are more aware of our spirituality than at other times. One such experience occurred during our time at the Hermitage when we spent the day visiting sites of Marist significance with Br Gabriel Michelle, an 83 year old Marist. We stopped at Le Basset, the hamlet of Montagne. This was the place where Champagnat had met the boy who was dying in complete ignorance of God. It proved to be a moment of grace for Marcellin in strengthening his resolve to found a congregation of teaching Brothers who would be able to teach children both a knowledge and understanding of God.

Bro Gabriel's prayer alongside the farmhouse on that cold afternoon in April was as follows, "We thank you, Mary, for giving Champagnat a sign through a young man, a boy, at this place, of your vocation for him. Help us to read the signs in our lives in order to be true to the vocation given to each of us. Hail Mary full of grace..."

As we walked back to the bus I pondered on my own vocation, my love of Champagnat and the influences that had brought me to this moment in time on my own journey. **(Australia)**

Lay Marist? What would I have been able to understand if, when I started to study in a Marist school at the age of thirteen, someone had asked me this question? Surely, I would not have been able to respond to it. Neither did I realize that at that moment I was being made to enter one of the first pieces to form the puzzle that today constitutes my adult life. Today my dream is to continue to complete this puzzle of love and of life piece by piece, to make it grow and to unite it to many other puzzles of dreams and of hope. **(Spain)**

And we live together in constant growth

As a full-time educator I began to take part in courses, workshops, induction seminars and training; and while as a professional I learned Marist pedagogy, I was making it part of my behaviour and of my thinking. Understanding life as a continuous process of learning, where love is the one path to education, of meeting new experiences, of supporting those who have made mistakes and fallen, of helping them through attentive and welcoming intervention. **(Mexico)**

Fundamental Characteristics of the Journey

I admire the veteran Brothers for the strength of their witness to the Marist charisma, so contemporary and so dynamic. On the other hand, this is one of the characteristics of Marist life, its capacity to actualize itself without losing its roots. **(Brazil)**

I dedicated myself to controlling my temperament, to putting myself in the presence of God in my daily work. I found a great serenity and I continued to give religious education classes to young people. But I did more than that: I dedicated myself to listening to the students having all kinds of difficulties and I guided them so that they themselves could find appropriate solutions. **(Colombia)**

The relationship with Brothers helped me very much – they are actually ordinary people! I have met so many Brothers and have been exposed to their spirit which is a real blessing. I have always been very aware that I am a young female operating in an older male dominated religious order, yet I am constantly struck by the openness of Brothers towards me. Whenever I have faced dilemmas or problems, I know there is always a Brother to lend a listening ear and give me advice. **(New Zealand)**

These are experiences of profound encounters with what is more authentic in me, with my

dreams, with my struggles, with my fears, with my vocation from where I discover God's dream for my life. It is a time of fraternal life in community which is enriched through the searching and struggles of everyone. It's a time of experiencing incredible faith where gestures are charged with significant meaning and exceed my own experience; from where I can discover the face and the love of God, in the face, in the hands, in the words, in the look, in each gesture of my friends in passing. **(Uruguay)**

I truly came to know the Marist "trademark" and that of the brothers in the extracurricular activities: excursions, pilgrimages and especially the groups for Christian growth which were very important for me. This is when I was invited to lead a group of young people. I felt very supported and encouraged by the brothers. This experience was the start of my vocation as a teacher. **(Spain)**

I came to have a profound experience of faith and relationship with the Marist charism in a community experience of four weeks, called FORMARME (Marist Formation in Mexico). My experience with four Brothers and nine committed Laypeople gave every confidence to my soul and to the mission to which I must consecrate my life as a teacher, and especially as a lay Marist. **(Mexico)**





I am thirty-nine years old. Even though my first link with the Marists was when I was a student for twelve years, the really significant experience was my belonging to a young Marist group, a Christian life group. I started in the group when I was thirteen and I continued during my school years. Then I continued to work as a monitor during my university years until today, accompanying a group of students in their stage of Catechumenate. I am also a person who offers personal guidance to others. **(Spain)**

It is impossible and foolish for me to separate myself from what I do because my work as a Marist teacher is the most real expression of who I am. I am reminded every day of my purpose and every day I am grateful that through the grace of God I have come to know exactly what He has intended for me. **(United States)**

I believe that my Marist experience integrates all the aspects of my life bit by bit. It is very easy to be Marist in the meeting of the fraternity, with the young people whom I accompany in their own development, at home, but it is more difficult to lead this kind of life in another domain where the dominant values are different. My next steps are leading me to succeed in integrating more what I want to be with what I am. **(Spain)**

My life is like a well, like a cistern where God, through Marcellin, comes to meet me in the depths of myself, so that my well never dries out but that, from him living water surges... but the water is not only for me, because a well only makes sense if it is offered, if it is given to others. **(Uruguay)**

The experiences we had were very important for me in the Friendship Groups, and afterwards in the Christian Life Groups. In the latter I experienced the values of Jesus, moments of meeting with God in community (prayers), self knowledge and self projection in seeing others, for looking after those in most need. Here, it was also very important to share the activities of vocations with the brothers, to do accompaniment and to share our concerns, as well with the laypeople who worked with us, who left us with unforgettable experiences such as the work in marginal districts of our city with the children (in the style of Marcellin) or experiences of communion with other Christians such as the shared moments with the People of God. I mention both the brothers and the laypeople because both helped us to know Jesus through Marcellin, and thanks to both we experienced love and devotion for the children and the mission. **(Spain)**

At the beginning we focused on the conception of a formation plan for the laypeople of Colombia. But in view of the situation of poverty that so many of our compatriots experienced and the direct invitation given us in 2003 by the Brother Provincial, we understood that all this formation needed to be nourished by a project of solidarity. At this time, we rediscovered the logo of our Province: "We were born of solidarity and by solidarity we will be reborn". **(Colombia)**

From my Church experiences, I sense the Marist charism as a great gift that helps me to look at my life, to discover that the project of vocation consists in welcoming the invitation of Jesus with the strength of the breath of



his Spirit to bring me into the mission of the Church. **(Uruguay)**

I feel that in order to build and be the Church, it is sufficient to help each other discover and strengthen our personal vocations, to find the Source of all life. **(Spain)**

During my years as a student they invited me to take part, as an aide, in formation mornings where I went with a team of two brothers and some of my class friends. We went to other communities and schools that belonged to the Pastoral Sector of M. The brothers organized meetings with us to prepare the work and to distribute the tasks of the meeting to us. Only later did I realize that the brothers were forming us for leadership by putting us with other young people. From these small tasks, I moved on to permanent activities in catechesis and youth ministry in my parish, by a successive journey of commitment, care for work, growth in faith and in the mission of a layperson inspired by "the style of being Marist." **(Brazil)**

Preparing for the Journey: Ongoing Formation

The on-going formation, specialized courses in teaching technology, the study and the knowledge of the life of Champagnat and the first community of Brothers, their "exemplary presence," family spirit, with the virtues of simplicity and love of Mary... have been and are the pillars of life shared with colleagues and Brothers: "A Brother among Brothers," "One more plate among the bowls at the table in La Valla", "One more plate

and glass on the great table of the universe." **(Spain)**

Thanks to my youth group I was able to get to know many people – Marist Brothers, monitors, friends in the group, boys and girls – who were the fundamental means of my personal process. With them and thanks to them, I discovered my capacities and limits, I became confident in myself and I experienced my life in relationship with others; that was my milieu in which I sought God and in which I celebrated my meeting with him. I had a complete process of human, social, Christian and Marist formation. Thus, I also knew the person and the project of Champagnat in a concrete way.

I feel that I have been accompanied in each of my steps, even though I have not been totally conscious of it until I was able to see it with a certain distance in time, and with the perspective that is given by the years and the reflection of vital experiences. I would like to highlight the confidence that others placed in me and in my possibilities, beyond what I could see myself. Without these experiences, I would not be today who I am. **(Spain)**

The La Valla Project is a lay initiative at C. High School in which seasoned teachers mentor, guide and support first-year teachers through sharing sessions on methods, classroom management and Marist charism. **(United States)**

In 2002 they invited me to an experience of Marist Formation in Mexico (FORMARME): there I got to know Marcellin better, his fam-



ily life, his background, his vocation, the Marist work and the Brothers who, just like Champagnat, have given their life to the wellbeing of others, and to proving what is said in the Gospel: "It is necessary that the grain of wheat that has been sown die so that it gives fruit and satisfies the hunger of many". Those Brothers who died following the Gospel of Jesus continue to show us the road and they give us the necessary strength to go to Jesus, not alone, but together with those around us, and always accompanied by our Good Mother. In the month that the experience of FORMARME lasted I was able to confirm that God had called me there, in that moment of my life, and that it was worthwhile to be a Marist educator. **(Mexico)**

My option of being a follower of Jesus obliges me to a continual revision of life. I

understand my person as a process in constant development, and I believe that a reference community is one fundamental aid for this continual revision. In the Fraternity we share and celebrate our personal plans and we build our community project out of communication and interest for the other. It is the close and daily space which is the foundation of my way of following Jesus. **(Spain)**

Our fundamental concern was always that we be, not only a team but that we become a "community" in which we grow together, we pray, we share, we assist and help one another, in which we honor the gift of Father Champagnat and the gift of community, and by all such means bring a vibrant spirit to our school. **(Mexico)**



OPEN LETTER

Dreams

I dream of a larger, happier family working actively for the Kingdom here below, since, if that gives me so much life surely this will be good for them.

I also dream of Marist school centres that are more and more evangelical, each time closer and more faithful to Marcellin's dream, real homes for the young people and children who are recommended to us, with teachers who identify more and more with the mission, that we live our daily work as a gift from God and as a call to holiness, that we see each one of these children as an image of Jesus... and many, many fraternities that radiate in the world the joy and fulfillment of being Marists, of living like Mary, with the faith, the openness that God offers us each day, sharing with the brothers the way and the mission, all brothers, fraternal and all close. **(El Salvador)**



I dream of a time where we will see with more clarity the result of our efforts in helping children and young people. I dream of an Institute in which brothers and laypeople can sit at the same table, share the same bread and the same Word. **(Brazil)**

My dream? That the Colleges now administered by laypeople continue the Marist educational mission. My dream? That families follow the Marist community ideal in order to put together resources to help deprived young people. My dream? Laypeople, builders of the Marist Spirit in the footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat and of his brothers. Our world really needs them. **(Canada)**

It is certain that I am far from being an authentic witness to the Marist vocation; I know very well what is difficult to live regarding eternity and sometimes I distance myself from this vocation. But what I can certify in this small story, is how much I feel captivated by this call to have a simple heart, it is an experience that seduces me and makes me become a free person. If the persistence in listening to the call makes me more Marist, I ask God to preserve at least this desire in me and that, in or out of the Marist Institute, I remain faithful to the dreams that He has certainly reserved for me. **(Brazil)**

I dream of continuing to share life and mission with the brothers and laypeople with whom I feel very much in communion. I dream of a Marist school full of life, a school which is good news for the life of the children and young people of our time. **(Spain)**

We think that the future of the Community of the Marist Brothers is passing through the openness of the Institute and its capacity to implement ways (times of formation, spiritual accompaniment, times of prayer and of discernment) in order to encourage the commitment of laypeople (single people, men and women, couple, families) in the community to form Marist cells who share and live the same spirituality and work in the pursuit of Marist works. **(Canada)**

I remember the words of Brother Miguel A. Isla that have resonated in my heart so many times lately: "It is up to us to believe, to hope and to love always." To us, brothers and laypeople of the 21st century, it is up to us to believe that the dream of Marcellin is totally current, not outmoded. It is up to us, to hope actively and it is up to us, above all, to love. It is the present and the future that we can offer to so many boys and girls who are suffering, to so many people who do not believe in their future, to teachers and families who believe they have lost all hope, who do not live, only surviving amidst difficulties... but also to those people who want to be associated with this dream, to the boys, the girls and the young people who are growing up along this pathway, to teachers who feel their heart beat each day. **(Spain)**



I dream of a more challenging Marist Congregation, more involved in the needs and sufferings of Paraguay. I think that we can do more to help those who can do less.

I dream of a feminine Marist Congregation, formed by Marist sisters who can deploy all their fineness and womanly tenderness around the world.

I dream of a Marist Congregation that shares their entire mission with the laity practically, not only on paper and in documents.

I dream of dedicating my life to the service of others, every day with more force and commitment, wherever the Lord calls me. Nothing is impossible for Him! **(Paraguay)**

We dream that one day in the not very distant future we can leave our Latin American land to fly to new horizons and new lands. The Spirit received in baptism, like a flame that embraces and does not fade, maintains the missionary ardour and it moves us to live with passion every day, being creative in our educational and pastoral service and audacious in discovering the new calls that the Lord makes to us. **(Bolivia)**

In looking to the future, these questions are relevant.

As Lay Marists are we ready to carry the Cross without complaining. Can we recognize the Cross when it appears? What apostolate do we have to associate with? In our secular society where freedom of worship is permitted, what response has a Lay Marist for a pastor who preaches material prosperity in contradistinction to humility, simplicity and poverty? What type of support do we have for the Marist Brothers? Can our desire for material wellbeing be limited to "Give us today our daily bread." Can our chastity be violated only by our spouses? Can we absolutely obey the authority and the commandments of God? How do we present the Blessed Virgin Mary to the world? Can we see life in sacrifice, sharing accommodating all children; can we by lived example lead people to God? The lives of saints including St. Marcellin are instructive in these matters. **(Nigeria)**

GRATEFULNESS

I feel the need to say to the brothers that the lack of vocations can be compensated by the warmth and the work of those who received their values from them, and who now wish to repay the Brothers for the good things received; who want to help them see, if need be, that the lack of vocations may mean a change but does not mean failure; who wish to help them see that they have received Marcellin from the Brothers' hands which have sown a field where vocations have grown in people who will never abandon those who have given them such important values. **(Spain)**

I am grateful each day to God for guiding my life in this way, and to the brothers for allowing me "to drink at the source", a great stimulation and example for me in my journey with courage, faith, love of Mary and obedience to God. Once a Marist, always a Marist. That is what I feel in my heart. After having experienced its charism and its spirituality, one wants to always live according to this "way of being". **(Brazil)**

The Marist Brother in his workshop doing manual work, the one close to young people in their education, the one in poor neighbourhoods, the one close to the sick are faithful witnesses to the values taught and lived by their holy Founder. All of my gratitude goes to these little brothers of Mary and of Champagnat. Thank you for the confidence that you give laypeople in following the mission of Champagnat. **(Canada)**



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