



Life requires donation and that is the greatest message of the Marist Family. In each of the branches of the big tree that has flourished and multiplied there is an energy that emanates from the Holy Spirit, an essence, a mutual project from Fathers, Brothers, Sisters and Lay people. Now, somehow, this message has come to you, young people of the world.





Fr. Alejandro Muñoz
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Marist Congregations in the World

Marist Fathers

Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary

Marist Sisters

Marist Brothers

Editora Universitária Champagnat

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Preface

This book briefly describes the beauty of the Christian Journey of the Marist Family, seeking to cultivate the faith during the journey of those who are still flourishing in the face of oppressions and injustices in the contemporary world.

In reporting how the Marist Family was born, has grown and has multiplied, the book intends to awaken the faith of Lay readers, as well as to nourish the faith that inspires the journey of readers who are members – Fathers, Brothers, Sisters, Missionary Sisters – of different congregations from around the world.

In times of new evangelization for the transmission of faith and of the World Youth Day, this material will help all of us to understand a little bit more about the call to evangelize and give testimony nowadays, taking Mary as a model.

Even though the cultural, social and religious conditions of people from all over the world are new, the words of the founder of the Marist Society revisit Christ's commandments, and at the same time challenge the members to give testimony, urging personal and community realization.

May the reader be blessed through the reading of this book and touched by the light of the Holy Spirit, accept in his/her heart the message of faith, bearing fruit in Christian actions.

Enjoy your reading!



welcomed, accepted, fulfilled and even more protected than in their own blood-related families.

That is what happens with the Marists. They feel at home when meeting other Marist groups since they notice the same style, the same seal or the same call, even though they might be far away from their homelands.

The word “Marist” is a family name, heritage from a variety of groups, beginning by its four religious congregations: Marist Fathers, Marist Brothers (or Little Brothers of Mary), Marist Sisters, Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary, as well as several Lay groups.

The first Marists called this family “the work of Mary”. This expression holds rich content, based on Mary’s

School in Tonga (South Pacific).



desire: “I’ll give my name and you will do my work”. Mary’s work is to spread the Gospel of love and mercy, revealed to the world by Jesus, with a special seal of simplicity, happiness and spirit of family, from a mother who takes care of and accompanies her sons and daughters with mercy. Then, when individually or in group, these members call themselves “Marists”, stating their desire to live with a certain style or spirituality, participating in Mary’s work.

Another very special image from the Marists is “the tree with many branches”. In the beginning, the Marist Family was designed to be one project with many branches, including men, women, Lay people, Brothers, Sisters and Fathers, everybody working with the same spirit.

In the center of the Marist spirituality, as well as in all Christian spirituality, is Jesus, His word, His life, His death and His Resurrection. Mary is, for us and for all the Church, the model disciple of Jesus, the model of openness to God’s will, with her generosity in answering to community service, a model of being and living in the Church: a modest Church, servant, compassionate and open to everybody... like Mary!

Then, following Jesus in the manner of Mary is a privileged way of living in Christian plenitude (INSTITUTO MARISTA, 2007), and this is the spirituality that drives the Marist Family in its commitment to build the Kingdom of God.





A bit

of history

Like others, the Marist Family has its own history. Everything happens right after the French Revolution, a very difficult time for society and Church.

In 1812, a young man called Jean Claude Courveille¹ went on pilgrimage to give thanks for his incredible life recovery. While he was praying before the image of the Virgin, he had an intense spiritual experience. He heard, not tangibly but with the ears of the heart, inside of him, and very clearly: “This is what I want [...] and the wish of my Son, that there be another Society, one consecrated to me, one which will bear my name, which will call itself the Society of Mary and whose members will call themselves Marists”.

In Lyon, in the seminary where he studied theology, Courveille shared his experience with some students. This revelation made a profound impact on them; they remained deeply impressed and answered with enthusiasm and honesty. They were determined to consecrate



¹ In this publication, the original spelling of the names will be kept, according to the language they are derived from.



themselves to accomplish the project. Would not this Holy Virgin be the same one who was asking for a Society dedicated to her with a specific mission? The expression “This is what I want” was very important for the birth of the Society of Mary.

During the academic year of 1815-1816, 15 seminarians were already engaged in the project. The names of the four who persevered in the Society of Mary are well-known: Etienne Declas, Etienne Terrailon, Marcellin Champagnat and Jean-Claude Colin. To consolidate the project, they signed a promise.

The promise is full of zeal and youthful enthusiasm. Solemnly, they committed to do everything they could to found the Marist Society. The mission declaration is bold for a group of inexperienced young men: they promised to put their lives and everything they had, “in all possible ways”, for the salvation of souls. The promise is touching because of its honesty, fervor and openness of Spirit. Even nowadays, it is still an essential document for the understanding of the Marist Project, and even though it is not overtly mentioned in the oath, the project intended to contain four branches: Fathers, Brothers, Sisters and Lay People.

In the morning of July 23rd 1816, a day after their ordination, the 12 Marists crossed the Saone River and climbed about 800 meters up the steep hill to Fourvière, where the small chapel of the Virgin is and near the place where the Basilica was built later on. During the celebration they put the promise on the altar and, by the end of the Mass, they read it out loud. This episode



Basilica of Fourvière, on the top of the hill bearing the same name, in an old neighborhood of Lyon, France.

is considered by the Marists as the founding act of the Society of Mary.

Since then and during almost 200 years, all the Marist Family has been working to make Mary present in the Church and in the world, accomplishing its mission, loving God and one another, in attitudes of service, dialogue and humility, giving preference to the education of children and young people, for the poor and for all people who have experienced abandonment and exclusion.

“Let us go to Jesus through Mary. Let us do everything for Jesus with Mary and let us be, in heart, spirit and life, true brothers of Mary”
(Brother Francisco, or Gabriel Rivat).

A bit of history

Marist timeline

1786

On August 29th, Jeanne-Marie Chavoïn is born in Coutouvre, France.



1790

On August 7th, Jean-Claude Colin is born, close to Saint-Bonnet-le Troncy, France.



1812

On August 15th, Jean-Claude Courveille receives, in the Sanctuary of Le Puy, the inspiration to found the Society. Later, in the seminary of Lyon, he shares his experience with a group of colleagues, who become enthusiastic about the idea.



1789

On May 20th, Marcellin Champagnat is born in the village of Rosey, in the region of the Loire, France.



1796

On February 7th, Marie Françoise Perroton is born in Lyon, France.



1816

On July 23rd, the group of 12 newly-ordained Fathers signs the promise to found the Society of Mary, episode known as the "Promise of Fourvière".

1817

On January 2nd, Marcellin Champagnat founds, in La Valla, the "Little Brothers of Mary" with two young candidates.



On September 8th, in Cerdon, three women – Jeanne-Marie Chavoïn, Marie Jotillon and Marie Gardet –, establish the first community, which later would become the Marist Sisters.

1823



1834

On August 24th, Pope Gregory XVI blesses the Marist fraternity of Belley with a grant of indulgences. This blessing marks the first papal recognition of the lay branch of the Marist Family.

1824



1822

On March 9th, the letter from Pope Pius VII praising the idea of the Society of Mary and encouraging its founders, marks the first pontifical recognition of the Society.

The Marist Sisters have their first habit ceremony and, in December 8th, elect Jeanne-Marie Chavoïn as their first mother superior; she is to be called Mother Saint Joseph.

1836

- On January 10th, the Church entrusts the mission of Oceania to the Society of Mary.
- On April 29th, Pope Gregory XVI issues the approval to the Society of Mary, Marist Fathers, recognizing it as a religious congregation.
- On September 24th, 20 Marist Fathers take their vows and elect Jean-Claude Colin as the superior of the Society of Mary. On December 24th, the first group of missionaries leaves for Oceania.

1840

On June 6th, Marcellin Champagnat, founder of the Marist Brothers, dies.



1845

On November 15th, Marie Françoise Perroton leaves for Oceania as the first of the pioneer missionaries for the future Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary.



On June 30th, Mother Saint Joseph, first superior of the Marist Sisters, dies.

1858



1841

On April 28th, Pierre Chanel is martyred in the island of Futuna.

1850

On December 8th, Cardinal Louis de Bonald, Archbishop of Lyon, in the name of Pope Pius IX, declares established the Third Order of Mary (Lay Branch).

1873

On February 29th, the Church approves the Constitution of the Marist Brothers.

The Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary are recognized by the Church as a religious congregation.

1931



1875

On November 15th,
Jean-Claude Colin dies.



1954

On June 12th, Saint Pierre Chanel
is canonized. His feast day is
celebrated on April 28th.

1999

On April 18th, Saint Marcellin
Champagnat is canonized. His
feast day is celebrated on June 6th.





Marist Fathers

After the Promise of Fourvière, in 1816, the newly-ordained Jean-Claude Colin was appointed parish priest of Cerdon for six years. During this period, he writes the first outline of the “rules” of the congregation. He also writes to Pope Pius VII and, following his advice, goes to Paris to visit the Nuncio. He showed himself to be a great negotiator and was well-known for his modesty and honesty. Because of his dedication, diligent work in the foundation and in recognizing the new Society, he was elected Central Superior of the small group of Marists from Belley and Lyon, in 1830. On April 29th 1836, once the priestly branch of the Society was approved, Father Colin received an enormous responsibility for the Western Pacific mission when 24 members elected him General Superior.

During his 18-year generalate, the Society had grown considerably. He founded a number of houses in France and sent several Marists to work in the Oceania mission field. He also dedicated a great deal of time to write the *Constitutions*. It was a time filled with numerous challenges and great difficulties.

Marist Fathers



Jean-Claude Colin was a man with great passion for the “Work of Mary” and for “her Society”. A saintly man, with a great love for the Blessed Virgin, his modesty and strength was well-known. His fine intelligence and determination helped him to have great personality. He died in Neylière, on November 15th 1875, two years after the *Constitutions* were approved by the Holy See.

The Marist Fathers give testimony, in the manner of Mary, of a Church following Jesus Christ, humble and servant, including everybody, particularly those who are more abandoned, dedicating themselves to this mission. They are in 37 countries and their priority is to announce the Gospel to young people in difficulties, as well as to nonbelievers.

Spirituality

The autonomy of each of the branches of the Society of Mary, authorized by Rome, allowed the development of a particular spirituality for every single branch, with singular nuances being lived, even though there is a common project – announce Christ’s salvation to all men and women, under the protection and gaze of Mary.

In the concept of the spirituality of the Marist Fathers we can highlight: to have a sense of being freely chosen and called by Mary; to be a support for the Church, such as Mary is; to be an example of the divine mercy in a discrete manner, willing to do big things for God but in a way that is hidden and unknown in the world.

“By gracious choice”

The expression *gracious choice* describes the singular gift of being chosen by Mary. This is the radical novelty of the Society of Mary, especially for each Marist: to have been chosen by the Virgin Mary to be her presence in the Church. This responsibility requires from the Marist a new and different relationship with Mary and the Church, so the Marist can first identify himself/herself with Mary and then with the world, being her presence in this realm. This pushes the Marist to always see Mary “in the situation”, that is, working in the Church; human and close to Mary, who is beside us, not “up there”. A Mary about whom there is so much to say because she is present and reveals herself in the world.

“I supported the Church at her birth; I shall do so again at the end of time”

Mary was there, supporting the early Church. She wants to be present today as well, through a family of believers who live her spirit and accomplish her work. She wishes to unite the entire world for her Son and when everybody is touched by God’s mercy, they will be united and be of one heart and one soul, just as Mary did in the beginning, and as a family support the Christian community. There are many places where the Church of today is being born, or being reborn, places in the centre or on the edges of the Church, where people or groups

Marist Fathers



have been working to build communities where it is possible to listen to God's good news, meant for them, and experience God's love through other people.

“Instruments of Divine Mercy”

The Christian tradition sees Mary as a “Mother of Mercy”. The Marist is called to be Mary’s merciful presence in the world, acting in a way that his/her heart rules over the mind. The Marist wishes to reveal a God that is Father and Mother, who takes care of all people who suffer with the pain of their sons and daughters. The Marist wishes to reveal a relationship with God, based on the commandment of love, being compassionate and considerate with the human fragility. To be instruments of Mercy, the Marist strives to be like Mary, thinking, judging, feeling and acting as she did.



Marist Fathers newly ordained.

Mission

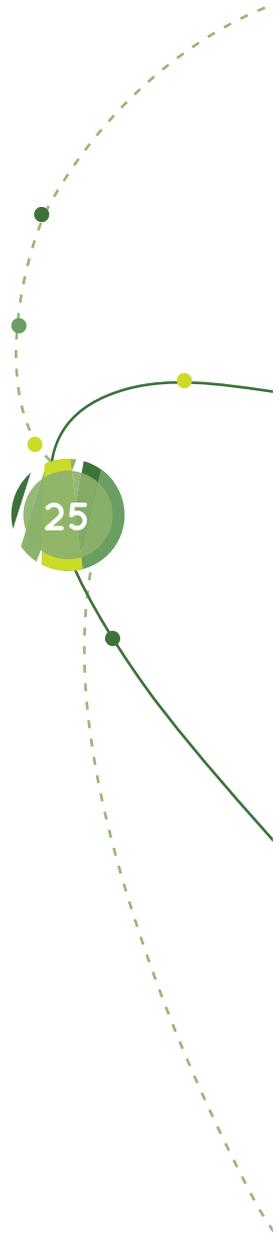
The Marist mission needs to be characterized by a community dimension. The Marists live and work in community. Since the time of its founder, the Fathers (and Brothers in the Fathers' branch) have gone to different parts of the world. Today, the Marist Fathers work in more than 30 countries: in schools, in campus ministries, forming adults for congregations and sanctuaries, working as chaplains in prisons and hospitals. Some of them work with very abandoned groups, fulfilling their mission in areas with social needs and poverty, and in non-Christian places.

Nowadays, the branch of the Marist Fathers is composed of a little less than 950 members, living in communities called Missionary Provinces and Districts. The Marist communities are more and more international, which also happens in the preparation: an international novitiate was established in the Philippines and an international theologate in Rome.

Vocations

The Marist Fathers pray and rejoice when receiving new vocations for the religious life and Marist priesthood. In the countries where they are present, they offer, to the young people interested, a spiritual vocational discernment programme, through groups working with vocation animation, inviting them to participate in life

Marist Fathers



experiences and common mission as part of the process. The formation development programme includes the study of Marist history and spirituality, philosophy and theology, during about ten years.

Testimonials and vocational awakening

Damien Diouf (Senegal)



My name is Damien Diouf, from Senegal. I am 50 years old, now on sabbatical in Dakar after 25 years of Marist life and almost 20 of priesthood. In 1978, I was 15 years old when I met, here in Dakar, Marcel Badonnel, a French Marist; we met during the Easter Vigil Mass, in between the railways and the chapel of Yarakh. He was surrounded by a crowd of catechumens. I could not see him because he was short, but his homely in Wolof impressed me because of his strange accent. I recognized Marcel when I saw him the next day, and remembered having seen him in my village during festivals he attended with relatives, while he was working in the Marist College. Few months after, I heard that he had gone out for a sabbatical period in Canada, from where he sent letters to a Catholic newspaper. Over the summer, I met another Marist priest, Alain Forissier, who invited me and my friend to read in the library of the Marist residence, and write summaries and comments on books he would correct. I accompanied him while he was dropping aspirants in the retreat center of Cap des

Biches. He refused to let me stay there, but promised I could attend another retreat if I had good high school admissions' results. After my second retreat, I asked to join the Marist Fathers. Spirituality, simplicity, closeness, mobility and multicultural community life, evangelization and education are important in my Marist vocation and mission.

Donato Kivi (Fiji)

I am Donato Kivi, a Marist Father at our International Theologate in Rome. I come from the Fiji Islands, in the South Pacific. To begin, I'll say a few words on how I found my call. It is strange to look back and think that through my childhood and even during my teens in high school I had always wanted to be an airline pilot. Becoming a priest was never on my mind. After high school, I went on to study Automotive Engineering in a Technical Institute, and at the same time I was employed as an apprentice, for a period of four years, at a local Sugar Mill. After the internship was done, I went on to pursue my dream career in flying. I was facing financial difficulties at the flying school and had to look for a job to pay for my flying hours. Since the fees were too high, I had to look for a well-paid job, so I ended up in the United States. Living a new life in the States was both promising and depressing. Promising as I had thought I would fulfill my dream, but later depressing as I had lost myself in reckless living and



drinking, since I was losing my childhood dream. It was in this depressive situation that I ended up in a hospital, one day, with a self-inflicted wound in my stomach. This was the turning point for me, lying in a hospital bed and asking for a sign from God. I began a deep self-search from here; I knew something was wrong and I was longing for something more than just to be a pilot. I moved to a cousin's house, in Louisiana, where I finally found the call to be a Marist Father. This happened through a lot of discernment and prayer. I was then asked to come back to Fiji to wait for my application for the priesthood, and also to join the Fiji region. Now, as a priest, I know that I have finally found the vocation that I have been searching for and I am happy and content.

John Guowang (China)

In Chinese I am called Guowang. As a Christian I was called John at my Baptism. Now I am a professed Marist in the Society of Mary (Marist Fathers) and in my first year of theological study at the Angelicum University in Rome. I am 31 years old.

I was born in a catholic family from a small village in the northwest of China, sixteen thousand kilometers from Beijing. I came to know the Marists when I met Brother John Lek, a Marist Brother, who taught me English when I was a college student, about ten years ago. I was attracted by his modesty and simplicity as a



foreigner professor. Right after college I joined the community of Brothers in Zhangye City and then, after two years, I was sent to Malaysia for further preparation and vocation discernment. One year later in Malaysia I felt that my vocation was more a call to the religious priesthood than a call to be a religious Brother and possibly to be a Marist priest. At this time, Fr. John Larsen, a Marist Priest, came to give a retreat for the Brothers; I grasped this opportunity and talked with Fr. John Larsen about my desire to be a Marist priest. With great generosity he invited me to go to Thailand and stay with the community there for two months. Then I went to the Philippines to start Marist priestly formation. I felt blessed to have been able to make my first profession in the Society of Mary, in 2010.

José Luis Olmos Chanfón (Mexico)

Thirty-seven years ago, I, Jose Luis Olmos Chanfón, was asked to come to a small poor rural area in Chiapas, one of the states of Mexico. The Church was very small and the people were very indifferent to religion. I was very encouraged to think about the preferences expressed in our Marist spirit and Constitutions, which called us to go to poor rural areas. At the beginning, there were just two of us, Marist priests: the first had come for a missionary experience; I arrived after, to accompany him. Later we invited the Sisters of the Company of Mary to establish a team to adequately



attend the female population. Then the bishop moved us to another area, badly in need of priests, together with two other religious Sisters of the Eucharistic Franciscan Missionary Sisters. With them we created a group that allowed us to live a community life of prayer and other elements of a spiritual life, and which also enabled us to shape a pastoral team following the guidelines of the Diocese of San Cristóbal. We strived to faithfully follow these procedures, always trying to follow Jesus in evangelical poverty and addressing social needs. The entire population is poor – at least half is more than poor, even miserable –, but people respond more and more, and better, to the gospel call. Today I am 83 years old and I am very happy offering my life and service to this Marist mission.

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Matthew Crawford (New Zealand)

My name is Matthew Crawford; I am 38 years old and currently working as a teacher in Wellington, New Zealand. I grew up in a strong Catholic family. However, at school and later at university, I turned my back on God and lived a very hedonistic life fuelled by alcohol and drugs. Living in London only fuelled this life, but I always had a sense that God wanted something of me; I just did not know what it was. When I returned to New Zealand I began to reengage with my faith and slowly turned my back on the life that had hollowed me out. As I returned to the sacraments I began to experience a

sense of joy and coming home. One day my sister rang me and told me she was praying for me, and a word kept coming into her mind: priest! When she told me, I laughed and said I wanted to get married. Yet, something awakened in me. The next day, as I was reading vocational stories on the internet and hearing young men talk about the gift of celibacy given to priests, my heart was opened and God gave me the gift of seeing that He had been calling me from the beginning, but I could not hear Him because of my sin. After tentatively taking steps towards God – like the father in the prodigal son – He rushed out to meet and embrace me. His gift of a vocation to the Marist Priesthood is a treasure I will be eternally grateful for.

Renivaldo Rodrigues (Brazil)

I am Renivaldo Rodrigues, a Marist Father. I was ordained a priest on July 28th 2012. I am 32 years old and live in Curitiba, Parana, Brazil, where I work at a University Parish (PUCPR) and help in St. Peter Chanel Seminary of the Marist Fathers. For me, vocation is the mystery of God's love for humanity. It is the unfathomable mystery of God's action that is willing to approach human beings, offering them to live fully. For me, this becomes an even more special, a colorful invitation, because I feel that God has called me to live these two loves: the Society of Mary and the ministerial priesthood. I live this loving response as



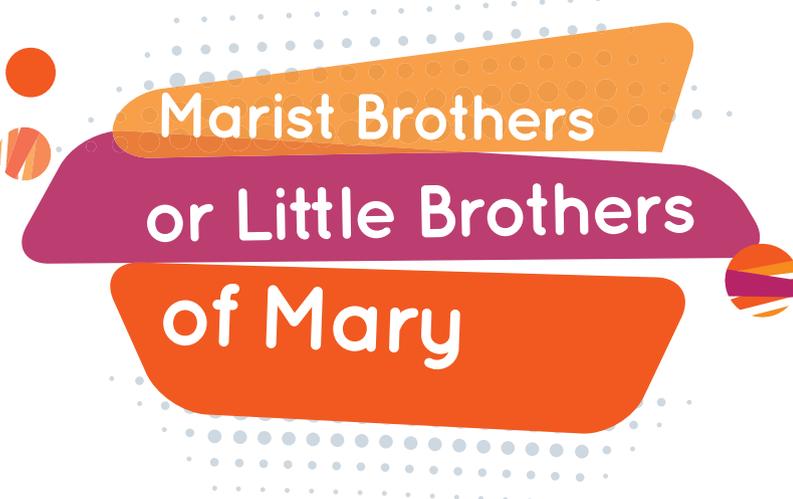


a Marist and I constantly seek to put my life in service to others in the way Mary, the Mother of Jesus, did – with humility, simplicity and above all with great mercy. Our work in the campus ministry at the Marist Brothers' University, apart from offering the youth participation in the sacraments, gives us the opportunity to create an environment of mutual help, where both, the young people and I, grow as Christians through personal encounters, courses and shared moments of life. So, being a Marist Father is for me an answer to the immense love of God, who constantly invites me to serve Him in each brother or sister whom I encounter every day. It is above all to make my life an offering, as Mary did. Finally, to be a Marist Father is to undertake the achievement of my life as a human being, as a Christian, and as a son of God.

Group of young people in Venezuela.







Marist Brothers or Little Brothers of Mary

Marcellin Champagnat was born in France, on May 20th 1789. He was the ninth child in a peasant family. One day, when he arrived home after herding his flock of sheep, Marcellin was invited by a priest to enter the minor seminary of Verrières, which he promptly accepted.

The efforts and difficulties to surpass his lack of school training were enormous and Marcellin had to go through lots of sacrifices and put a lot of effort into it. A month after his priestly ordination, he is appointed vicar of La Valla, on July 12th 1816, and uses the opportunity given by the Providence – after helping a young man on his deathbed, who was unaware of the fundamental truths of faith –, gathers two young men from the parish and founds the Marist Brothers' Institute, on January 2nd 1817.

Since he was very young, Marcellin had learned with his mother to love and to be devoted to the Virgin Mary. He entrusted the newly founded Institute to the Good Mother, as he called her, and left to his Brothers this hallmark of the Marist tradition.

His apostolate included visiting the sick, teaching catechism to children, helping the poor and giving Christian orientation to families. In 1824, he built new headquarters by the river Gier, close to Saint Chamond, to welcome a hundred candidates; the place was named Notre Dame of L'Hermitage, in honor to the Virgin Mary.

During the construction of the five-story building, the Founder was an example for his Brothers. Every day, he was the first to start working and the last to stop.

On June 6th, surrounded by Brothers, he died in L'Hermitage, at the age of 51. Pope Pius XII beatified him on May 29th 1955 and Pope John Paul II canonized him on April 18th 1999.

The spirituality of Father Champagnat is particularly found in the family, where he experienced God's love. In it, he learned to be humble, simple and modest, qualities that he would lively recommend to his Brothers. The spirituality he spread was family oriented: "I will find Jesus with Mary, his Mother" (BATISTA, 1989). In the seminary, he developed his relationship with God, oriented by Sulpician Fathers. Later on, in his pastoral ministry and in his dealings with regular people, as well as with his experience as the founder of

the Priests of the Society of Mary and in his work with the Brothers, he continued to develop a spirituality that became authentic Marist spirituality... the Marist way (CEPAM 2, 2010).

Who are the Marist Brothers

The Marist Brothers are men who are consecrated to God and follow Jesus in Mary's way, living in community and dedicating themselves to the evangelizing education of children and young people, paying close attention to the ones in need. Nowadays, there are 3.449 Marist Brothers distributed in 79 countries in five continents. They directly share their chores with 72 thousand Lay people and are responsible for about 654 thousand children and young people. The general headquarters is located in Rome, Italy, since 1961.

Animation and leadership of the Institute today

During the XXI General Chapter, celebrated in Rome during the months of September and October 2009, Brother Emili Turú was elected Superior General to animate the life and mission of the Institute, with the Brothers of his General Counsel and collaborators appointed for his term.

Marist Brothers or Little Brothers of Mary

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How to be a Marist Brother

A young man who feels called to be a Marist Brother is invited to undertake the following steps: vocation discernment; enter a formative community and become a postulant; live as a novice for a while, culminating with the profession of vows or commitments; go through a period of academic formation, which will help in the development of the tasks required in the following years; and start, in a practical manner, his dedication to children and young people, in several situations, aware that his job is priceless. This process starts by sharing this desire with a Marist Brother or an adult who could help clarifying the call.

What is the Marist Family

The spirituality and mission of Marcellin are not exclusive to the Brothers, but are open to all people, women and men, who want to permeate their lives with the Marist values, participating, each in his/her place, in Marcellin's original project. The Brothers share their spirituality and mission with many young animators, teachers, the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family and with so many people who acknowledge, in Marcellin's journey, an invitation to accomplish his/her own path of human and spiritual development.



The Marist Mission in the world

Inspired by the charism bestowed by Marcellin, the Marists adopted as a mission to “Make Jesus Christ known and loved” by children and young people. To accomplish this task, they devote themselves to education, evangelization, solidarity, and to promote and preserve children’s rights. They work to keep, in the Marist Youth Ministry, a privileged space to help finding their Christian vocation and to convert them into agents of transformation in Church and Society.

Marist Brothers or Little Brothers of Mary

Testimonials and vocational awakening

Chris Wills (Australia)



Late 1960s. I had just turned 21. I had not been conscripted to fight in Vietnam. It was the time of Woodstock, the Aquarius Festival, Apollo 8, Martin Luther King, The Paris Riots, the Prague Spring, free love and the TET Offensive, the threat of the Bomb. It was a time of turmoil, social action and intense public reflection.

I had completed my first studies by 1970 and during that time and was active, along with many of my friends, in the anti-war movement and many other forms of social and political activism. Discussion was intense over bottles of red wine and cheap food. But none of us were able to find the definitive answer to 'life's big questions'.

I started teaching in a Brothers school. I was one of three lay teachers who taught alongside a community of 14 Brothers. The life of the Brothers, particularly the witness of community life, a robust proclamation of the Good News, was a call that I could not ignore.

I loved teaching and working with young people and wanted to engage in it intensely. I wanted to be a witness to Good News in a world struggling to make sense of injustice, war, rapid change and fear. The Brothers' life seemed to me to be a radical and prophetic response to what was happening in our world. It was a time of few

educational resources; a time that called out: "If not me; then who?". My vocation was really a response to the signs of those times.

Melesio Emmanuel Tiscareño de Alba (Mexico)

Hi, my name is Melesio Emmanuel Tiscareño de Alba and I'm a Marist Brother. Nowadays, I'm working as an animator for the youth ministry of the Province of Western Mexico and I live in Guadalajara.

I grew up in a Marist environment since my parents were the source of my contact with the Brotherhood. From them I've acquired the heritage of a simple and deep spirituality. I've also had the opportunity to meet some Marist Brothers who have affected my life because of their example and joyful life (thank you to Don Nacho, Chateau, Ivan, Hector, Richard, Chuy, Toño, Kry, Augustin, Kike, Horacio, and the "Teacher", who have thought me how to be a Brother), sympathy for the needs of others and finally, their discreet work to show the face of Jesus in a lively and current way. My appreciations also to each child and young person who have allowed me to be part of their lives, consolidating Champagnat's phrase: "We need Brothers".

I decided to start my development to be a Marist Brother because I felt, deep in my heart, that Jesus had called me to know Him, follow and love Him; to discover and rediscover the meaning of my life. Now, I want to



continue being a Brother, an instrument of God to show His love for children and young people, and to bring them closer to Jesus.



Paul Edward Angulu (Nigeria)

I was born into the family of Mr. and Mrs. Edward Angulu, who come from Adi-Etulo, Benue State of Nigeria. My parents are both Protestant Christians. The kind of formation I received from them actually influenced my decision to join the Marist religious family. My desire has always been to work with young people: to groom them in the knowledge of God and prepare them in how to become good citizens. So I got a teaching job after training as a teacher in 1993. It was through this job that I found my true vocation to the Marist Brotherhood. Though I did not know who the Brothers were, I was motivated to do more for God and humanity, especially children and young people, hence the radical decision for religious life.

I first read about the Marist Brothers on an advert in a national Catholic Magazine, the *Ambassador*. Moved by the mission of the Marist Brothers, I decided to apply. After the first visit I made to the postulate formation centre at Orlu Imo State, I was convinced all the more that God was inviting me to be a Marist Brother, because of the warm welcome given to me there. I then resigned my job with the Federal

Government, which was considered very lucrative and prestigious. I had resistance from both family members and friends; some said I must be out of my mind. I tell you the truth: I am most fulfilled as a Marist Brother than ever before.

My joy also stems from the fact that there are many vocations coming from my State (Benue) since I joined the Marist Brothers in 2001.

I see my call as an imperative to “evangelize in the midst of youth”.

Wagner da Cruz (Brazil)

I'm Brother Wagner Rodrigues da Cruz and I'm from Resende, in the state of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. My vocation was born from the compromise of the Brothers with the Youth Ministry/National Conference of Brazilian Bishops (CNBB). During this time, I was part of the coordination of the Youth Ministry in the state of Rio de Janeiro. So, in a National Meeting of the Evangelization artists, a Mexican Sister started to draw a parallel of my love for the Youth and Education, according to the charism lived by the Marist Brothers. One day she introduced me to Brother Hugo Dawes, and since I had already known the Marists in their ministry, I started an unstructured monitoring; this Brother Hugo introduced me to a living charism, careful, with great love for the youth and the Brothers. He was definitely the



personification of the charism active in my life, making all the difference in my process of vocational decision and discernment. I usually look back into my vocational history and think of two people with affection: Sister Candelária Lopez, Diocesan Pastoral Missionary, for her sensibility upon the “discovery” of my vocation, and Brother Hugo Dawes, from the state of Rio Grande do Sul, in Brazil, a big man, with great faith and a sensible heart, which is grand and inhabited by many people.

Today, I live in Brasilia, in the Federal District of Brazil, and I am the Chief Executive Officer of the Marist Union of Brazil – UMBRASIL, as well as the Provincial Councilor of the Marist Province of North Central Brazil. And I am the President of the Conference of Religious of Brazil/CRB (Brasilia Regional).

I have a lot of work but I’ve never lost contact with the processes of youth Evangelization.

I love our Marist Institution, and I dream every day that it would become a prophetic answer of the love of God for the contemporaneity, especially to the youth.

I believe we are on the right path, looking for a school which will answer the contemporary calls of the Subcommittee of American Directors, remodeling the mission of the Directors of Marist Schools today.

Finally, I am enchanted by life and believe that the greeting is the joy and easy way to relate to others, characteristics of the Marist Mission, that make the difference wherever we go and where we are invited to live our mission. Let us be new Marists.

Marta Portas Suñé (Spain)

My name is Marta Portas Suñé and I'm a lay educator at the Marist School of Girona, in Spain. I feel lucky to devote myself to one of my passions – teaching children and teenagers. With every new generation, I need to adapt to the new needs of the children and teens to be able to support them better and give better answers to their requirements. I am motivated by my constant professional development.

Despite the continuous changes in education, the Marist spirit always remains intact. I was inspired by the spirit of the Marist Brothers and former educators I had, as a student, in this same school. Closeness, availability, honesty, transmission of the Christian values, looking out for the most disadvantaged members of our society... A way of living and acting, which continues beyond the school gates. This Marist spirit has developed through my involvement with different Marist projects such as volunteering in my city, Girona, and also volunteering in Paraguay, going to l'Hermitage, to Pasqua Avellanes... I have not been alone in this journey but accompanied by Marist Brothers and Marist Laity.

Sharing my life experiences with others is essential for me. That is why I'm taking part in a Marist life group, which allows me to pray and share the Marist lifestyle together with Marist Brothers and other lay members of our community. Through our commitment



I feel that we keep Marcellin Champagnat's spirit and project alive.

Estela Rodriguez Ramos and Rodrigo Sanchez Guzman (Mexico)



Our family is formed by Estela Rodriguez Ramos, Rodrigo Sanchez Guzman and Josue Sánchez Rodriguez. Estela is a 30-year-old doctor, and Rodrigo is a 31-year-old designer. Josue is now 2 years and 9 months old. We are a Mexican family from Guadalajara, and we will be working in Cambodia for the next three years.

The story of our vocation began in our adolescence. We experimented, individually, the love of God and His call to be a missionary. Then, we started dating and found out that we could be missionaries while married. During the following seven years, we kept this wish in our horizon. Since then, we started to know the Marist charism and love it more and more.

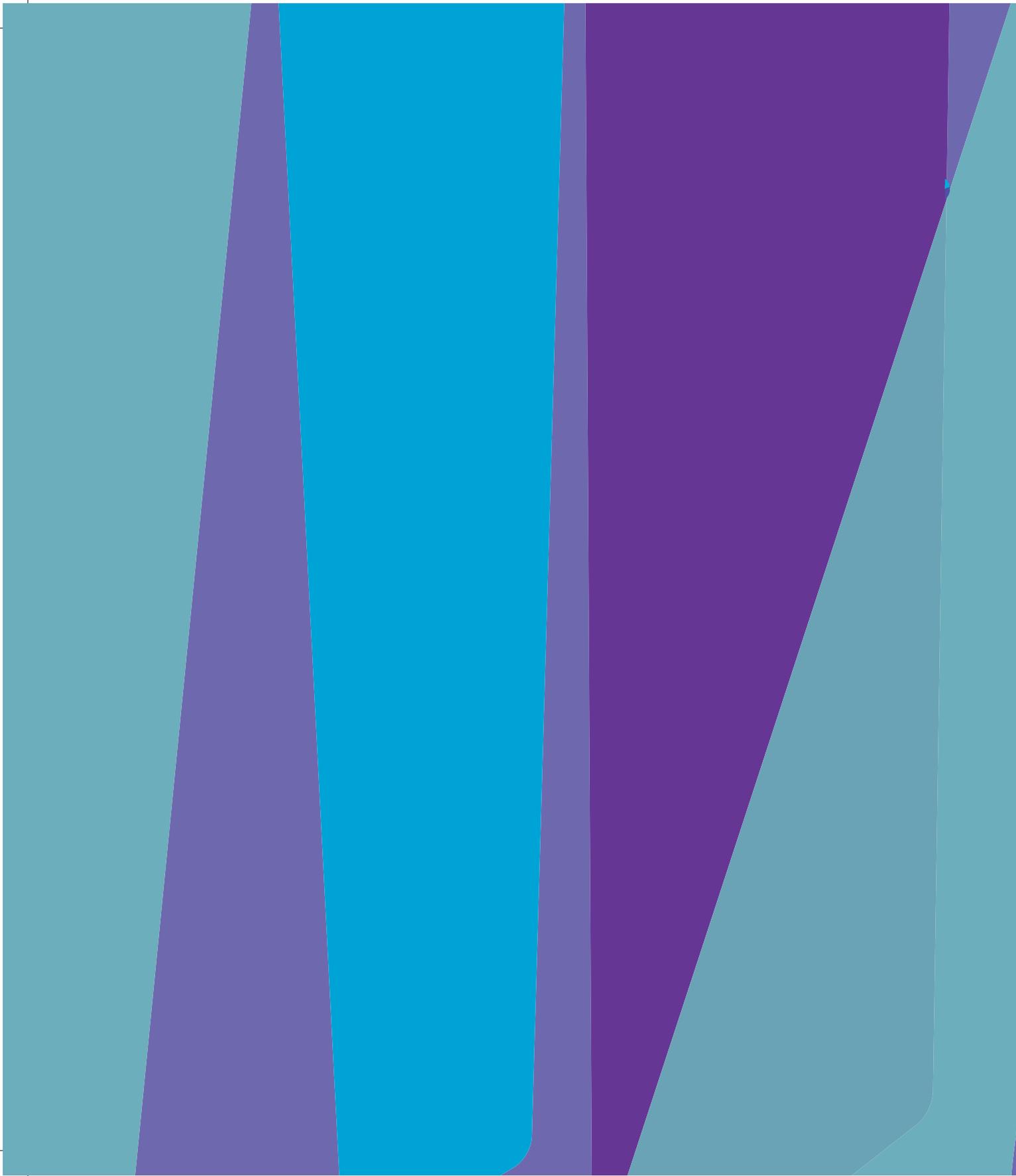
We got married in 2009, and just after that we approached the Brothers in order to share our wish to become Marist missionaries. Then, we started a process and the accompaniment. One year later, on August 3rd, Josue was born. Since then, he has been a blessing and a real bearer of the Good News for everyone. As part of our process, we went to Tarahumara Hills as volunteers, in the north of Mexico. There, we lived with two Brothers, sharing the meals, the work, the prayer, the life.

We came back to Guadalajara and started to study English. Finally, on March 2013, we arrived in Cambodia, where we will work for the next couple of years, making community with two Brothers from Ghana and another from Korea.



Detail of a mural of
Marcellin Champagnat.
Illustrator: Denis Freitas, Brazil.







Marist Sisters

Jeanne-Marie Chavoin was born in the French village of Coutouvre, in the northwest of Lyon, on August 29th 1786. Her parents, Theodore and Jeanne Chavoin, remained faithful to their Catholic beliefs in times of persecution during the French Revolution, and were well-known for taking care of the ones in need, especially those rejected by society. Jeanne-Marie spent 30 years of her life in Coutouvre. She was educated in the village school by her parents and a Priest who the Chavoin family was sheltering back then. Her closest friend was Marie Jotillon, four years younger than her, with whom she would share her spiritual joys and matters of faith, exchanging information about their search for the will of God in their lives.

They were members of the Association of Divine Love and devoted their time to personal and community prayer, visiting sick people, helping the poor and teaching catechism to the village children. Jeanne-Marie grew up in an atmosphere of faith and developed a “hidden sainthood”.

Marist Sisters

Time of discernment

It took several years for Jeanne-Marie Chavoïn to discover the will of God in her life and understand God's purpose. There is no doubt that while she was performing her tasks, maybe even drawing water from the well in her backyard, she was thinking about her future – where was God leading her?

She and her friend Marie were looking for an answer, praying honestly for illumination. When advised to join some kind of congregation – such as the Benedictines or the Carmelites, or a diocesan order –, Jeanne-Marie replied: “No, my lord! I will remain in my parents' house until God reveals his will for me”.

Then, one day, a letter from Father Pierre Colin, who had spent four years in Coutouvre and had met Jeanne-Marie, arrived. In the letter, Father Pierre reported that her brother, Jean-Claude, was trying to found a Society in the name of Mary, and that he wanted her for the female branch. Pierre invited her to go to Cerdon and work as a housekeeper; she thought about the proposition and decided to go.

The first years in Cerdon

She went to Cerdon in 1817, when the Colin brothers shared many of their thoughts and plans with her, encouraging her to take part in their project. One day, when the Fathers received a disappointing answer from

a Bishop, she suggested that they went to pray at the foot of the Tabernacle of the church. After praying for an hour or more, she stated, talking about the experience: “*We came out feeling peaceful and contented*”. And she also wrote: “those were our best moments”.

So in 1823, a new diocese was established and a new Bishop of Belley, Bishop Devie, allowed the branch of the Society of Mary to start, under the authority and direction of Father Colin, parish priest and vicar of the community of Cerdon; the branch was named Congregation of the Daughters of Mary. Then, the two long-time friends from Coutouvre, Jeanne-Marie Chavoïn and Marie Jotillon, started to live in community on September 8th 1823.

In six months, other ten young ladies joined Jeanne-Marie and Marie Jotillon, attracted by their joyful and simple way of life, as well as by their life of prayer and attention to the poor and those in need. In order to make income to support themselves, they did several sewing jobs and taught this ability to some of the young ladies.

On December 8th 1824, the residents crowded the parish Church in Cerdon to witness the first official ceremony of the Society of Mary. Three future Marist Fathers were present: Father Pierre Colin, Father Jean-Claude Colin and Father Etienne Declas. Nine young people were received by the Congregation of Mary and Jeanne-Marie was elected to be their leader; she was named Mother Saint Joseph.

They consecrated themselves to Mary, who they regarded as their first and Perpetual Superior. Mother Saint Joseph is the founder of the congregation and

Father Jean-Claude Colin, who wrote the first set of regulations, is considered the cofounder.

New horizons

Around June 1825, the Sisters had the opportunity to move to Belley, where Jean-Claude Colin had already moved to. The Bishop gave them a bigger house, and they had better chances of growing as a Congregation. In 1838, they were established in Belley; 44 of the Sisters were from Cerdon and outskirts of Belley, where Jeanne-Marie had lived. The Marist Sisters taught catechism and recruited young people for the Congregation. Marcellin Champagnat, Jeanne-Marie's close friend and Founder of the Marist Brothers, also recruited young people for the Congregation.

Jeanne-Marie Chavoin, or Mother Saint Joseph, was General Superior of the new Congregation until 1853, when she resigned. At the age of 69, she started a new work in Jarnosse, an abandoned and extremely poor village. She could then engage in a more active and inserted religious life – the one that she always wanted for the Sisters. She died on June 30th 1858, at the age of 71.

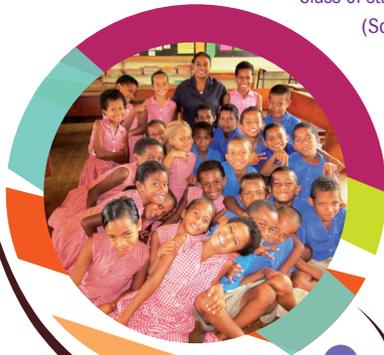
Presence and mission today

Over the years, the Congregation continued to grow, expanding to other areas of the world. It is present in

15 countries, with more than 400 Sisters working with education, social work, health, preparation of the Lay Ministries of the Church, and answering to the call wherever the needs are greater.

Following their Founder and Foundress, they go to others “in Mary’s way”. The presence of Mary amongst the Apostles does not specify the contents or the methods required to announce Jesus. She inspires a spirit of respect for all, and sees the Holy Spirit in each one.

Class of students in Fiji
(South Pacific).



Marist Sister working with young
mothers (Philippines).



Ministry for indigenous
communities in Ji-Paraná
(Rondonia, Brazil).



Invitation

Being a Marist Sister is being Mary's presence in the world, sharing Jesus Christ's mission, especially with the poor. Deciding to be part of this branch of the Marist Family could make the difference in the life of many people, including the person's own life. Sister Silvia Sanz (2013) wrote: "Who are these merciful women present in the Church in such a discrete manner, engaged in the development of leaderships and who, in a 'hidden effectiveness', are a sign of transformation and union in the communities?". And, later on, answered that those are women who "dream and want to be like Mary, that woman who was entirely devoted to God, to his Son and to the Holy Spirit". You can also be a Marist Sister with this ideal.

Testimonials and Vocational Awakening

Bridget Brady (Ireland)



Hello young people of the world!

My name is Bridget Brady, I am a member of the General Administration Team of the Marist Sisters, sm and I live in Rome. I am a simple country woman born into a large, loving and united family in Ireland.

At the age of 16, I already had a steady boyfriend; we loved each other very much and just loved dancing,

but each night, when I returned home and knelt by my bedside – as was customary in my family –, I felt there was something deeper in life. I once said to Jesus: “look, I’ll give you one of my children when I get married!”, and deep in my heart I felt the reply was: “it is you I am calling!”. I shared my thoughts with my boyfriend but he did not believe me!

We had a family friend – a priest who used to visit us – who once, as he said goodbye, made the sign of the Cross on my forehead saying: “one day you will be the bride of Christ”. His sister was the only Marist Sister I knew at the time and I was deeply influenced by her wisdom, her discretion, her love of the poor and her life of contemplation.

After all, Jesus had His way and, at the age of 22, I entered the Marist Sisters’ novitiate. The lifestyle was very different; every weekend, on hearing disco music nearby, my happy feet were dancing as I tried to sleep! On finishing the novitiate and scholasticate I was missioned to England, where I did my professional studies and then taught in primary and secondary schools. In 1984, I was missioned to Colombia and in 2001 to Venezuela – I feel very drawn to the Latin culture. In July 2012, I celebrated my Golden Jubilee as a Marist Sister and the same deep desire continues to penetrate my heart: to give all that I am and have to God from whom I continue to receive all.



Elsa Nayeli Mendez Serrano (Mexico)

I am Elsa Nayeli Mendez Serrano and I am a Marist Sister. I joined the community here in Guadalajara, in Mexico. Right after that, I went to Brazil for two years to do my Novitiate formation, and now I am in my third year of professional formation as a nurse. I enjoy my work, study and also some ministry with young people. From December 2013 to January 2014, I will be getting ready for my final vows and meeting many other young Sisters. I am enthusiastic about this.

In my option in life I strive to be totally turned towards Mary, allowing her to use me as her instrument and, in this way, be present in our needy society today.

One of the things I admire in the Marist Sister who influenced me to become a Marist is her humility, her ability to forget the self in order to help others. Each day we went out together to earn our daily bread, working in a little school where both parents and children had great social problems with their neighbors, in their work place and even with the police. After school, we visited the homes of the children who were absent that day. I was astonished by the great needs of these marginalized people. When we asked them why they did not attend school, they would answer: "ah, Sister, we had no money to buy food, even less to go to school". So Sister would give them the bus fare for the next day. This beautiful gesture from Sister made me realize that the needs of

others are also ours, to which we can respond in Mary's name and in her way.

Marie-Yvonne Menguy (France)

I am Sister Marie-Yvonne Menguy, I come from the region of Brittany, in France. I have lived in France, Senegal, Colombia and Mexico. I am presently retired and living in a little parish in France, where I'm still the minister for the old and sick in their homes and in a care home.

During my life I have been greatly influenced by a Marist Sister. I was only 15 years old when I first met her; she arrived from Senegal for her family holidays. Back then, to be a religious person was a great mystery for me, but the time came when I grew to clarify and understand this mystery. I used to ask her questions about religious life, the Marist spirit and life on the missions. Everything she told me was in accordance with my deepest desire in life; sometimes I felt overjoyed and asked myself: "could this be my way of life?". I was fired with enthusiasm to be a missionary and help, especially the poor children and their parents.

I said my "yes" to this call and have lived – and still am – a much fulfilled life in the service of the Church and of the Congregation of Mary as a Marist Sister, walking hand in hand with Mary and often chatting with the dear Sister whom God used to attract me to this way of



life. Of course she is now enjoying the splendour of the presence of God in heaven.

Rolande Lévesque (Canada)



My name is Rolande Lévesque and I am from Canada. The Marist Sisters came to Canada in 1946 and inspired me by their example, so I decided I wanted to share their life style. Then, in 1950, I became a member of the Congregation of Mary. As there was no Novitiate in Canada, I had to go to Massabielle, Saint-Prix, France. This was a big event for my family and I since France was so far away at that time, with a totally different culture.

In Saint-Prix and surrounding areas, where their communities ministered to the people, I shared life with true Marists. Mother Louis Chanel, who was responsible for the novices, was totally imbued with the Marist way of life. In her everyday life, she reflected Mary in her manner of dealing with us; she just loved young people and treated each one with great dignity, allowing us to be ourselves. She invited us to live a hidden life like Mary, our Mother, acting with simplicity and discretion.

I am very happy to have chosen this Congregation in which I can imitate the life of Mary in Nazareth, imbued with humility, simplicity and poverty. I minister to the sick in a hospital here in Edmundston, Canada, and it is with great joy that I speak with them about the life of

Mary and how we can all be like her in our world today, whether we are lay or religious people.

Thank you Mother Louis Chanel for being a simple witness to the truth of the Gospel!

Sheila Manalo (Philippines)

I write from the Philippines; my name is Sheila Manalo, I am a Marist Sister and I work as a dentist and in a prison ministry.

I met the first Marist Sister in Davao airport in 2002 and her vibrant smile awakened something new in my life. One day, I shared with her about my life and my possible future as a Marist Sister. She was very spontaneous and her dealings with me were personal and simple, yet deeply grounded in faith. We travelled by bus to Kabacan, my hometown, a four-hour drive; nearly at the end of our journey, when the air conditioning broke down and the heat was unbearable, she smiled through it all. She was very honest in her approach, saying: “remember that religious life is not a bed of roses – there will always be challenges, and that is normal in any lifestyle; but when we keep our minds and hearts focused on our mission for Jesus and the work of Mary, all will be well”.

Some time later, I decided to enter the novitiate; I was reminded that it was not my choice but rather I was being called by the gracious choice of God. I did some of my formation in Sydney, Australia, and came to know





quite a few Marist Sisters there; I was always inspired by their dedication, peace and community sharing. In 2012, I made my final vows. Right now I live in a small Marist community in Mintal, a distance away from Davao city, and continue to work as a dentist and also minister to the prisoners in the local prison.

Silvia Sanz de Diego (Spain)

My name is Silvia Sanz de Diego, I am from Spain and my call to be a Marist Sister was inspired by the Marist Fathers with whom I worked as a young girl in Madrid. Through them I came to know the Marist Sisters and in 1999 I was invited to share an experience living with the community of Marist Sisters in Manchester, England. During this time I was very inspired by a Sister called Catherine McDonagh; she had lived in Spain for some years and so was like a bridge for me, able to identify with my culture as I became inserted in hers. I was inspired by her artistic ability, her manner of welcoming people, her gift of listening and giving advice. We shared happy and deep moments, experiencing the presence of God and the beauty of community life.

At the end of three months, I returned to my family in Madrid to discern my vocation, the result being that having shared my desire with my parents, brother and friends, I decided to return to Manchester, where I did the first year of my formation. The Spanish/Portuguese

speaking Novitiate was in Brazil, so my next big step was taken when I joined some young girls from Brazil and lived in Belo Horizonte. I now minister as a Marist Sister in Caruaru, Brazil, teaching in a school and being involved in youth and vocation ministry. I say “thank you” to all Marist Fathers and Sisters who have enabled me to live rich Marist experiences in Madrid, Manchester and Brazil.





Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary

The Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary (SMSM) do not have a founder, but at the origins there is a brave group of 11 women called “pioneers”.

However, none of them could be considered the foundress. Between 1845 and 1860, they left their homeland in France to go to Oceania to “to extend the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, and to make Mary known to the ends of the earth” (Const. 2).

When the Society of Mary was recognized as a Congregation in 1836, it assumed responsibility for the evangelization of the islands in the Oceania and four Marist Fathers left for the Pacific. Some years after the martyrdom of Saint Pierre Chanel, who was a Marist Father, in 1841, the people in the island of Futuna were converted to Catholicism. It was a letter, sent by two women in the island of Wallis, asking that some women be sent there to help them that inspired the first pioneer, Marie Françoise Perroton, to leave for the Pacific (INSTITUTO MARISTA, 2007).

Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary

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Stamp commemorating the
Centenary of the 1st missionary
trip to Oceania.



When Marie Françoise Perroton boarded a merchant ship for the Pacific Islands, she was answering the call to be a missionary. Marie Françoise reached the Island of Wallis in 1846 and remained there for some years, before going to the nearby Island of Futuna to continue her apostolic work. After Marie Françoise had been in Oceania for 12 years, other women from France joined her. Between 1857 and 1860, ten other missionaries joined Marie Françoise in Wallis, Futuna, New Caledonia and Samoa. These 11 women, Pioneers, are the roots of the Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary. And, even though they were Lay women, their desire to be Marist and consecrated religious missionaries never faded (INSTITUTO MARISTA, 2007).

They understood their vocation being *ad extra* missionaries, living according to the spirit of Mary and with the desire of being consecrated religious women. This means “to be at one and the same time Missionary, Marist, Religious” (Const. 5).

The Sisters took a vow of obedience to the Bishop from their Vicariate and lived according to the rules written by the Marist Fathers.

The first vocations

From the earliest times, the Sisters were joined by some young women from Oceania, “who, in seeing their way of life, desired also to give their lives to God for the service of mission” (Const. 11).

On the islands, the Sisters announced the Good News of Salvation, especially by the Christian education of women and children, taking care of the sick and teaching catechism. Their vocation was fully apostolic, living in close contact with the people.

The pontifical approval of the Congregation

In the early stages of development, they were members of the Third Order Regular of Mary, until December 30th 1931, when this branch of the Society of Mary was named Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary and recognized as an Institute of Pontifical Right.

The Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary (SMSM) and the Universal Mission

And so open to the universal mission, they answer the calls of the Church, beyond the Pacific to the Caribbean, Africa, Latin America, Asia, Europe and the United States.

The vocation and the charism

While missionaries, “we are ready to leave our own country, to set out or set out again towards other peoples and other cultures, knowing that the Spirit precedes

Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary

us” (Const. 16). The missionaries also declare to be “sent to those who do not know Christ, to those who are seeking to know Him, or to the local churches in need of missionary service” (Const. 17).

To be a Missionary Sister of the Society of Mary one is also a Marist, inspired by Mary’s way of being – in the service of evangelization (Const. 20). The Missionary needs to contemplate Mary, in her simple life and loving service in Nazareth, in her presence and support to the early Church, being present for others in current times, like Mary was back in her time, encouraging others to live a faithful life to Christ.

The SMSM are members of the Marist Family, together with the Marist Fathers (SM), the Marist Brothers (FMS), the Marist Sisters (SM) and the Lay Marists.

As religious women, Christ has gathered them: “in one and the same family under the name of Mary to participate in His mission” (Const. 152).

Having as their motto “For the glory of God and the honor of Mary” they live and pray in international communities testifying that the love of God unites them. Their consecrated religious life is expressed by the vows of chastity, obedience and poverty.

Nowadays, the SMSM are engaged in the missionary work in 25 different countries, with more than 440 Sisters from different nationalities. Consecrated in mission, they choose to be a bond of communion where there is violence, misery and injustice. By giving themselves in professional work and charitable service for

all especially women, children and young people, they, above all, witness to the tenderness and mercy of God.

The call

Young women called to this way of life and mission of the Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary are inspired by Mary to act in today's world to bring about the reign of God. Visit the website of the Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary (www.smsmsisters.org) and learn a little bit more about their work.



Sister with students (Jamaica).

Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary

Testimonials and vocational awakening

Jhorna Gomes (Bangladesh)



My name is Sr. Jhorna Gomes, SMSM. I am currently studying in the USA, but I am originally from Bangladesh. I grew up in the village of Tuital, where the Marist Missionary Sisters (SMSM) from other parts of the world came to serve the needy, giving their lives to care for the sick and to build our faith. The SMSM Sisters were very much part of my life. Their home was my second home. When I was a teenager, my father died and my mother was struggling to support us. So I left high school and went to work with the Sisters in their hospital. Working with them, one thing that touched me greatly was their simplicity, and that drew me closer to God and to the people. “To do ordinary things with extraordinary love.” They cared for the sick and ministered to them day and night. They brought so much joy and hope to these ordinary people. I asked myself: “If these Sisters can come from all over the world and give their lives to my people, why not me?”. I asked God to show me the way to serve His people, so I became a Marist Missionary Sister. After a few years, I was missioned to Jamaica. There, when I visited shut-ins in their homes, they welcomed me with open arms and we prayed together. Their stories gave me so much joy to carry on God’s mission. I experience God’s presence when I am with them. I learned

from them how precious every human being is in God's eyes. I am also very grateful to all our SMSM Sisters who have helped me to know my Mother Mary and I am happy to be part of Mary's Family. After I finish my studies, I will be happy to return to Jamaica.

John Paul Ming-hua Chao (China)

I'm Sr. John Paul Ming-hua Chao and I was born in China. My parents, who had done their doctorates in the United States, taught Genetics and Psychology. When I was 5, we escaped to Taiwan due to the communist revolution. Growing up, I worshipped at a Presbyterian Church on Sunday mornings and at a Baptist Church on Sunday afternoons. On Sunday evening, I went to the service by seminarians. I was fascinated by God. I wanted to study Theology, but the exam for the theological colleges conflicted with the exams for the universities. My parents both taught at the National Taiwan University and they wanted me to go there. So, I put aside my longing to serve God.

I studied Anthropology at the NTU for two years. My father was asked by the UN to give assistance to the Dominican Republic. I'd be alone in Taiwan, so I transferred to George Washington University in Washington DC and did my BA and MA in Anthropology and my Ph.D. at the Catholic University of America, specializing in Psychological Anthropology and the South Pacific.



While studying I made many Catholic friends, so I converted to Catholicism. After my studies, I saw an ad: “Want to be a missionary in the S. Pacific?”. My heart jumped, and I wrote to the Order. Soon I entered the Marist Missionary Sisters near Boston. Finally, my desire to serve God and my anthropology came together! Praise God! I had happy years loving and working in Fiji, Papua New Guinea and the USA. Currently I do human trafficking research in San Francisco and work with trafficked children in Oakland. I live and teach interpersonal communication in San Leandro, California.

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Julienne Hayes-Smith (New Zealand)

Two childhood experiences were pivotal in my vocation; an intimate relationship with our loving God, instilled in me by my mother, and reading the *National Geographic*, given by an elderly neighbor. These stories of people of other countries gave rise in me to a desire to share my life with people whose cultures, way of life and religious beliefs were different from mine.

During my nursing training I came across a magazine advertisement for the Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary (SMSM). God called me to respond, but I was thoroughly enjoying my life. God kept on calling until I said: “Okay, I’ll give it a try”. Neither my family, nor my boyfriend thought

I'd last long in religious life! To my surprise I was happy and at peace, and still am. For over 40 years I've shared in God's mission to the people of Samoa, Vanuatu and Bangladesh, in Mary's way, with neglected pregnant women and those working in sweatshops, street children and those with intellectual impairment, Muslims, Hindus and Christians. In mutual respect and love, we discover that we are all beloved children of the same God, called to wholeness and holiness in the One in whose image we are created.

Marilyn Farley (Australia)

Growing up, I was aware of God's love for me through family, friends, teachers and parish. We were raised Catholics, though my mother's family were staunch Anglicans. Off and on during my adolescence I thought about becoming a religious, but it all seemed too hard. Having my own family would be better. Yet, something stayed of that inner urging in my heart.

On finishing Secondary School I happily went off to University. However, after one year there I felt I needed to settle this question of religious life. Was it for me or not? It seemed it was! I wanted to respond to this gift of God's love by sharing it with others who had not heard of this gift of God. I knew I wanted to enter a missionary group and the first group mentioned to me



Mission in Colombia.



Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary. International Community in Madagascar (Indian Ocean).



Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary (Philippines).

by my parish priest was the Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary. The most difficult part was telling my family about this decision and actually leaving them. Now, after 30 years spent in South America, working in Peru and Colombia, I have returned to Australia, continuing to share the message of God's love with those to whom I am now sent.

Noemi P. Degala (Philippines)

Being the witness of the life of the Marist Brothers in Notre Dame of Marbel University, when I was their student from 1980 to 1984, was for me an initial call. I was then a member of the Campus Evangelizers, an association inspired and under the supervision of Ms. Rose Bulao, who was very much supportive of the Marist Brothers ministry inside and outside the campus. I admired most especially Brother Leonard Sonza, fms, for his very simple, brotherly and hardworking nature. Having their scholasticate inside the school campus has given me ample opportunities to befriend the Brothers, some of whom were my classmates at the university. I particularly like their love of Mary expressed in their tender love of the little ones in school, ie, the primary school students. Though reluctant at first, I gradually began to appreciate their motto: "To Jesus through Mary". The impact of such motto, as it daily disturbed me, led me to ask one Brother if it was



okay that I joined them... Later, I realized I was an avid fan of Mary foremost, the Brothers later.

Mary was instrumental in my becoming an SMSM. She was the main reason why I got attracted to the Marist Brothers. She was the reason why I was so badly interested to join SMSM, a missionary congregation despite dissuasion from my family, relatives and yes, even from some local religious Sisters whom I befriended in my work places. It was Mary who led me to an honest evaluation of my own personal values when I place myself alongside her attitudes and values. Mary's dynamism to help, to walk long miles to offer service to another, to proclaim God's favor to the poor in her Magnificat, yes, then and now, her daring and dynamism in mission deepened my desire to serve the Church through my membership in her family, my SMSM Family.



Palepa Faletolu Ioane (American Samoa)

My name is Palepa Faletolu Ioane, a Marist Missionary Sister (SMSM) from American Samoa. I am stationed in Belmont, Massachusetts and serve as a vocation minister for our North American Province. Within my 26 years as SMSM, I've worked in the fields of education and pastoral ministry, serving in American Samoa, W. Samoa, Germany, Jamaica, and USA. My parents were catechists so I grew up in a very religious

environment. I moved to New Zealand at the age of 13 to continue my education, then, later worked as dietitian. I attended many “come and see” weekends facilitated by different religious congregations, until one day a Marist Missionary Sister approached me and said: “Palepa, you will be a great missionary. Be brave and take that first step with our congregation. Now come and join us”. I did, and the minute I set foot in the convent, I knew I belonged there. I have gained many friends, many families, and am still singing and playing my guitar. What do I like about religious life? Living in community of dedicated religious women who are forever in the service of others, and who live each day in zeal to our commitment as we place Jesus Christ and Mary as the center and passion of our lives, firmly believing that “God will always provide”.







Message to the young people of the world

Do you want to be happy? Who does not want it, right? But how? Undoubtedly, young people are not satisfied with the instant and ready answers offered by the system in several media.

Life requires donation and that is the greatest message of the Marist Family. In each of the branches of the big tree that has flourished and multiplied, there is an energy that emanates from the Holy Spirit, an essence, a mutual project from Fathers, Brothers, Sisters and Lay people. Now, somehow, this message has come to you, young people of the world.

The reality calls you to be the salt and the light of the world, to awake your vocation, to develop your life project. It is a special time to deepen trust in the Providence of God. He knows each one of us and promises: "Come to me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me,

Message to the young people of the world

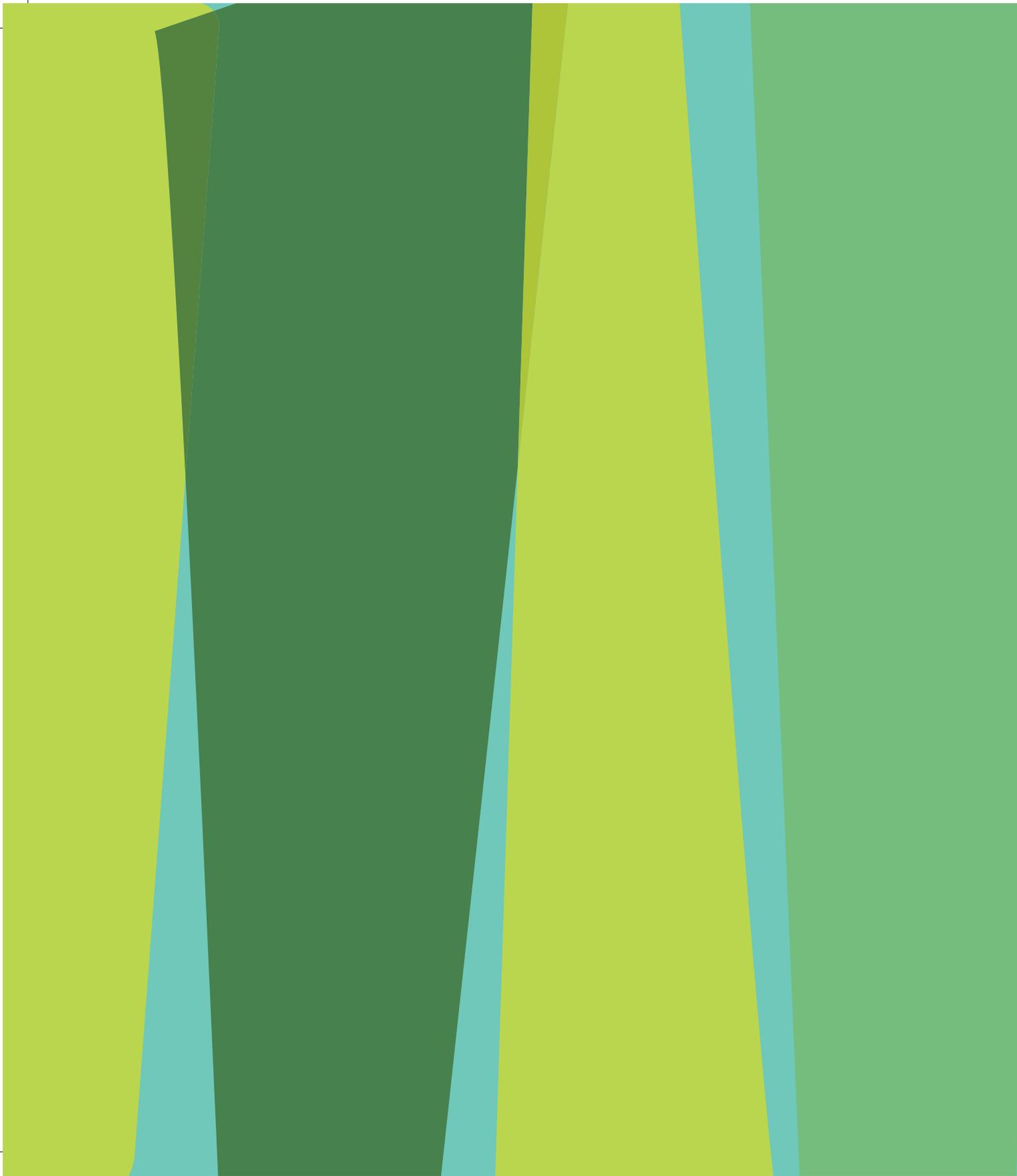


for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (Matthew 11, 28-30).

It is not a matter of thinking that the Christian life is easy and does not require some work. Surely, in this book, the accounts reveal that each member of the Marist Family went through a lot of effort, because being a true Christian involves abandonment and pain. However, when you go to Christ and answer His call, you learn with Him and will be guided according to the work that pleases God, this brings a deep inner pleasure, a greater joy, in contrast with the heavy yoke of rational and personal decisions.

Mary, the Good Mother, guides young people in a spirit of commitment in search of a deeper and critical awareness, well-thought and loving actions in favor of life and a mature faith experience. Following her guidance you will not be selfish but will look to others, and be capable of distinguishing the needs of the community and acting as agents of change in your places of everyday life. This is the project of the Great Marist Family – to be a presence in the world.

Message to the young people of the world



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Prayers

Lk 1, 46-56

Mary responded:

“Oh, how my soul praises the Lord.
How my spirit rejoices in God my Savior!
For he took notice of his lowly servant girl,
and from now on all generations will call me blessed.
For the Mighty One is holy,
and he has done great things for me.
He shows mercy from generation to generation
to all who fear him.
His mighty arm has done tremendous things!
He has scattered the proud and haughty ones.
He has brought down princes from their thrones
and exalted the humble.
He has filled the hungry with good things
and sent the rich away with empty hands.
He has helped his servant Israel
and remembered to be merciful.
For he made this promise to our ancestors,

Prayers

to Abraham and his children forever.”

Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months and then went back to her own home.

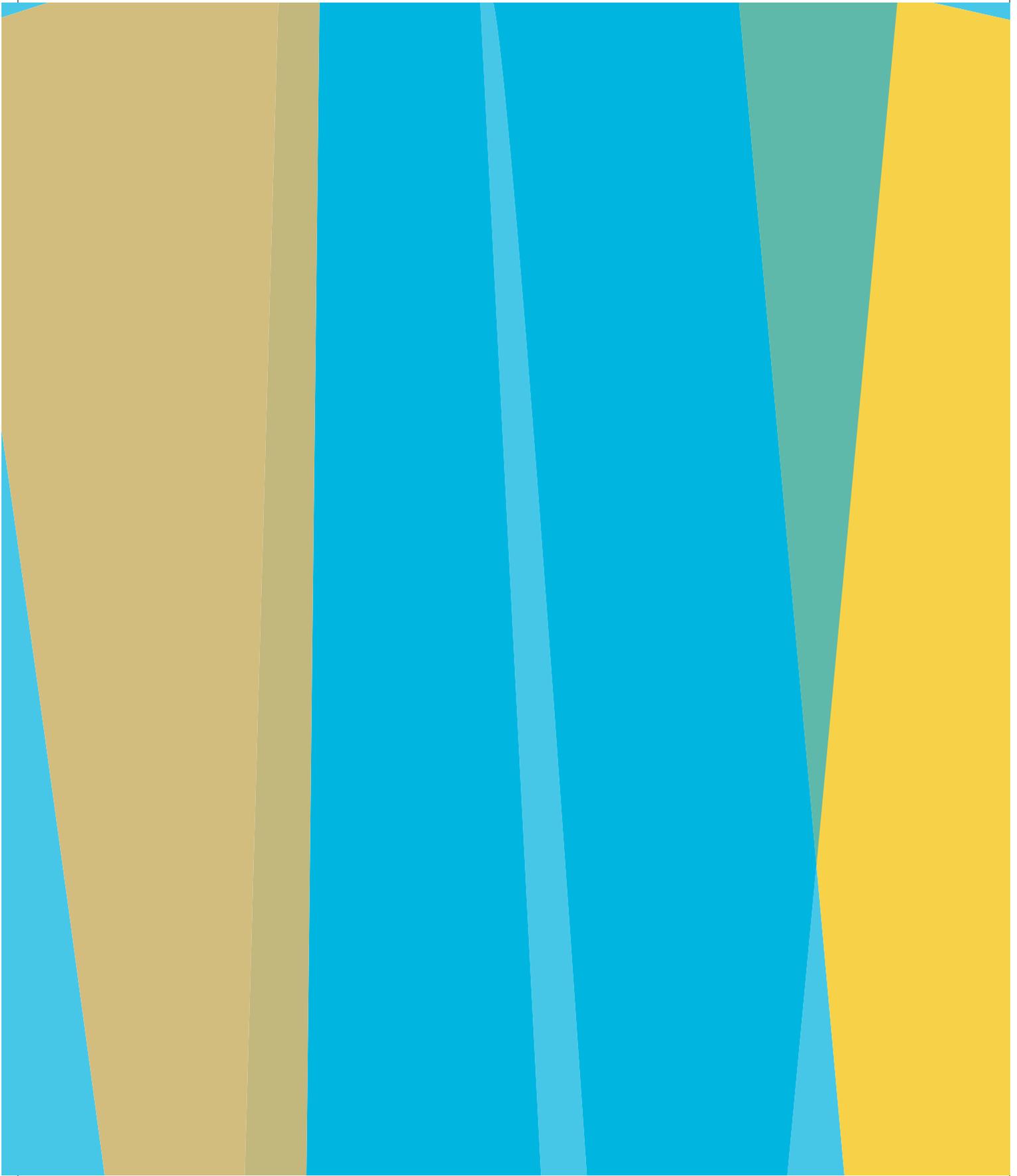
Promise of Fourvière

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. All for the greater glory of God and the honor of Mary, Mother of Our Lord Jesus Christ. We, the undersigned, wishing to labor for the greater glory of God and of Mary, Mother of Our Lord Jesus Christ, affirm and publicly declare that it is our sincere intention and firm purpose to dedicate ourselves, as soon as is opportune, to the foundation of the pious Congregation of the Marist Fathers. So it is, that by this document bearing our signatures, we irrevocably consecrate ourselves and



all that we have, as far as possible, to the Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary. We do not take on this commitment lightly or irresponsibly, for human motives or swayed by temporal gain; instead we take it on in all seriousness, after mature reflection, having taken wise counsel and weighed the whole matter before God, seeking only His glory and the honor of Mary, Mother of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Hence, we commit ourselves, for that purpose, to difficulties, work, suffering and, if necessary, every kind of torture. We can do everything in Him who strengthens us, Jesus Christ, to whom, for that very reason, we promise fidelity in the bosom of our Mother, the Holy, Roman and Catholic Church, we adhere with all our strength, to the most holy head of that same Church, the Roman Pontiff, as also to our most reverend Bishop, in order that we may be good ministers of Jesus Christ, nourished with the words of faith and of sound doctrine which we have received by His grace; we are confident that under the peaceful and religious rule of our very Christian king, this excellent foundation will see the light of day; considering all this, we solemnly promise to give ourselves and all that we possess, for the salvation of souls in every possible way, working in the name of the Virgin Mary and under her auspices. In this whole matter, however, we remain submissive to the judgment of our superiors. "Praised be the holy and Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary! Amen".

Prayers





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