

Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family

Life Project

**In
Fraternity**



Secretariat of Laity

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**LIFE PROJECT
IN FRATERNITY**



Presentation

This document originates from a process of updating the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family (CMMF) after a journey that began in 1985 when it was launched by the 18th General Chapter of the Marist Brothers. Therefore, the document stems from and aims at a life experience.

The CMMF has been and still is a real and valuable support for many people who wish to grow, deepen, and bond with the Marist charism.

The document you hold in your hands portrays the identity of the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family, indicating the horizon towards which we want to move.

REGARDIn thinking about the Movement's journey until now, we recognise multiple signs of life reflected in its great diversity and creativity. However, we also feel the urgency of responding in a deeper, more committed and better-organized way to the calls of the Church, the challenges of the world and the new and dynamic vision of the Institute.

Brother Charles Howard (Superior General from 1985 to 1993) already invited us to carry out this task in his letter presenting the CMMF Life Project in 1990: *"The 'final' document will be a living word coming from your own hearts, from your own faith, from your own experience, from your living of Champagnat's spirituality. We see this modest document as the first step in a process, which you will complete in the years ahead"*.

The Movement was born in response to the desire of many laypeople to live their Christian vocation within the Marist charism. The witness of their lives has contributed to its growth and development. They are the *raison d' être* of the Movement.



Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family



SOURCE AND INSPIRATION OF THE CMMF

1. VOCATION

As is true in every Christian vocation, lay life is the response to an encounter with the God of Jesus, who loves us without measure. It is a fruit of our baptism, which sends us out on our common Christian mission: making the Kingdom of God present in this world.¹ Lay life looks at the Church as a home for all, a school of communion, a place where all share the same faith, hope and love in the service of its evangelising mission.²

The Holy Spirit remains active and present today in the Church and in our religious family. Indeed, the Marist lay vocation is a reality among us. It is a specific way of being disciples of Jesus in the manner of Mary, following the insights of Marcellin Champagnat.³ The Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family is a privileged space for the development of this lay vocation.

2. MARCELLIN CHAMPAGNAT AND THE BROTHERS

Marcellin Champagnat personally experienced Jesus' and Mary's unending love for him. This experience became the source of his spirituality and apostolic zeal, and made him sensitive to the needs of his time.⁴

Being the practical man he was, his encounter with a dying young man who knew nothing about God moved him to consider how to open the heart of children and young people to feel God's love. He frequently repeated: "I cannot see a child without wanting to teach him the catechism and let him know how much Jesus Christ loves him".

In La Valla, with this very spirit, he founded the Institute of the Little Brothers of Mary on January 2, 1817, aiming at the Christian education of children and young people, especially those who are most neglected. Since then, his Institute, blessed by the Spirit, has spread across the world.

In 1863, the Holy See approved the new Congregation as an autonomous Institute of pontifical right. While respecting the original name, they called it the Marist Brothers of the Schools (Fratres Maristæ a Scholis, FMS). Further, the Church proposed Marcellin Champagnat as a model for following Jesus in proclaiming him a saint in 1999.

Since the beginning, the first Marists dreamt of the Society of Mary as a large tree with different branches: priests, brothers, religious sisters and laypeople. The project did not receive approval

1. Cf. *Gathered Around the Same Table*, 5.

2. Cf. *Christifideles Laici* 8.

3. Cf. *Gathered Around the Same Table*, 11-12-13.

4. Cf. *Constitutions Marist Brothers*, 2.

from Church authorities. These origins, however, remind us that both religious and lay are called to give the Church a marian face.⁵

Today, we feel that we are both, brothers and lay, heirs and bearers of the charism of Marcellin. This charism, that was originally received by the brothers, is lived out today by lay people as well and is enriched by the nuances they add.

3. ORIGIN OF THE CMMF

In 1985, the 18th General Chapter of the Marist Brothers, becoming aware of the richness of sharing the Marist charism with lay people, launched the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family.

Article 164.4 of the Brothers' Constitutions defines its identity:

The Superior General of the Marist Institute, in coordination with the leadership structures of the Movement, ensures that it remains true to the spirit and tradition of Champagnat.

4. FRATERNITIES

Fraternities are the fundamental units of the Champagnat Movement. A fraternity is a small community, whose members meet regularly to share life and faith in a family atmosphere, cultivate their Marist vocation, deepen the experience of God, and develop their commitment to life and to the world.

Each member is responsible for the life of his/her fraternity. The members are always ready to invite and welcome those wanting to join the Movement.

While respecting lay leadership in the fraternities, the participation of brothers is a great richness. Their presence as traveling companions is a tender image of the Marian way of accompanying and encouraging shared life.

Taken together, the fraternities make up the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family of the Institute.

5. Br Emili Turú, *Circular: He gave us the name of Mary*, p. 29, Rome 2012.

5. MEMBERS

The Movement is open to any person who has found God and experienced God's love, and therefore wishes to respond by living out Champagnat's charism.

A group forms part of the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family when, after a community-building process, it requests to be a fraternity. A fraternity can enrich itself with new members who, after a period of discernment, make a formal request to be admitted.



THE MARIST CHARISM

The charism of Champagnat is a gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church and the world.⁶ Receiving this gift as laity and brothers makes us partners, and co-responsible before God for living it out and sharing it with others.⁷

Faithful to our lay vocation, we feel called to contribute, from within like yeast, to the building of a better world.⁸ We are in a privileged position to understand the signs of the times and thus to keep the charism relevant.

Our life spreads and grows stronger in the mission, thrives on spirituality, and becomes richer through fraternal sharing. For this reason, we pay attention to our mission, spirituality, and shared life as the three indispensable dimensions of the Marist charism that identifies us.⁹

SPIRITUALITY

Spirituality makes us live in God and from God. We experience the power of the Spirit who gives meaning to our existence, drives our actions, keeps us hopeful and helps us live each moment as a new possibility.¹⁰

Our spirituality, like that of Champagnat, has its roots in the love that God has for us, and grows in our service of others. It is a spirituality with a marian and apostolic character.

6. FOLLOWING JESUS IN THE STYLE OF MARY

Father Champagnat gave us the name of Mary so that we would live by her spirit.¹¹ As our sister in faith and first disciple of Jesus, she inspires our way of being and acting. Following the model of Marcellin, our lives are defined by these distinctive characteristics:¹²

- Experience of the loving presence of God
- Love of Jesus and his Gospel
- Family spirit
- Simplicity

7. Cf. Water From the Rock, 15.

8. Cf. Gathered Around the Same Table 45.

9. Cf. Lumen Gentium 31.

10. Cf. Open letter about Gathered Around the Same Table, p. 102

11. Cf. Gathered Around the Same Table, 100-101.

12. Cf. Constitutions, 4.

- Effective and responsible solidarity with the poor
- Valuing work that is well done

Thereby, Marcellin Champagnat's spirituality is a source of grace and inspiration in our effort to build the Kingdom of God. It is up to us to incarnate it in our local cultures and situations.¹³

7. A SPIRITUALITY THAT ENCOUNTERS GOD IN EVERYDAY LIFE

We do not equate our experience of God with the moments of prayer or the reference to "sacred places". We experience God's love every moment of our life Like Champagnat did.¹⁴

For us, our family, work activities, social relations, and involvement in the world have a sacramental value. They are privileged spaces of communion with God.¹⁵ At the same time, we express a spiritual depth that underlies day-to-day life, and by doing so we give witness to Jesus and his Gospel.¹⁶

8. A SPIRITUALITY OF PASSION AND COMPASSION

As CMMF members, we need to integrate life and faith, safeguarding the mystical and prophetic dimensions that makes us live in God. Passion for God leads us to compassion for others.¹⁷

For that reason, inspired by Champagnat:

- We set aside quality time and space to deepen our sense of who we are, so as to give meaning to what we do.¹⁸
- We cultivate silence and an interior life. This mystical dimension of our lives gives us a sense of being one with God along with all of creation.
- We try to become prayerful persons and fraternities in order to let God's face shine through us and create humane spaces in our world.
- We regularly feed on the Word of God that we share to discern our commitment in the world.
- We feel called to engage with the world and to contemplate it with the eyes and heart of God.¹⁹

13. Cf. Water From the Rock 26-56.

14. Cf. Water From the Rock, introduction letter.

15. Cf. Water From the Rock 64.

16. Cf. Water From the Rock, 75-76.

17. Cf. Gathered Around the Same Table 37.

18 Cf. Water From the Rock 1 and 126.

19. II Marist International Mission Assembly. Nairobi, September 2015.

SHARED LIFE

9. IN KEEPING WITH THE FAMILY OF NAZARETH

Both in La Valla and at the Hermitage, Marcellin Champagnat invited the brothers to develop the same family spirit that Mary lived at home in Nazareth. It encompasses simplicity, trust, joy, generosity, tenderness, forgiveness and mutual support.

The spirit of Nazareth finds a home in our family. In it we grow as persons and followers of Jesus. In it we mature as a couple when we take care of our children and our own parents. We work for our members to stay united so that all can live in dignity and each one can find his or her place.²⁰

In the same way, we try to live this same spirit in our Movement. In line with the first Christian communities, we share faith and life, and even material goods, when we feel that God is asking us to do this.

In our fraternity we celebrate the love of God among us when people receive sacraments: matrimony, baptism, Eucharist, Anointing of the Sick ...



21. Cf. Water From the Rock, 89-90.

We live our family spirit not only in pleasant and joyful moments when everything goes well but particularly when there is trouble, sickness and pain. In these circumstances, each member gently tries to come close and offer effective support and comfort.

10. A FAMILY LIVING IN COMMUNION

The CMMF was born with a clear vocation to communion, and to promote family spirit. The strength of this family spirit gathers us who live the Marist charism into a new family of followers of Christ in Mary's way. The table of La Valla is a symbol of the relationship that unites us.²¹

Brothers and laity, when we share life, mission, and spirituality, we get to know each other better, and realize with joy that we are a gift from God for each other.

Our specific vocations are complementary and shed light on each other²², and therefore we are called to grow together through offering reciprocal help and shared hope.²³

The fact of being a family invites us to be creative. We need to set aside time for deep sharing, learning to forgive each other, arranging moments of formation, as well as promoting and care for our respective vocations.

We are called to live in communion with all the fraternities of the Movement, with a keen sense of our internationality.

11. PROPHETS OF COMMUNION

As Marists, we build fraternity by being a source of peace and communion in our professions and daily lives. Living in God's presence, we face difficulties with serenity and peace, trying to unite instead of dividing.

Led by the Spirit, we feel that sharing the same faith and same charism as brothers and laypeople is helping a new model of Church to be born: one where there is equal dignity accorded to each Christian vocation and the image of the Church is that of the People of God in communion.²⁴

As prophets of communion, we get involved in the local Church. We also engage in dialogue and collaboration with people from other religious traditions, especially in areas where there is a diversity of faiths.

21. Cf. *Gathered Around the Same Table*, 73.

22. Cf. *Gathered Around the Same Table* 78.

23. Cf. *Gathered Around the Same Table* 17.

24. Cf. Open letter about *Gathered Around the Same Table*.

THE MISSION

12. WITNESSES AND APOSTLES

Jesus is the source of every apostolate. Lay Christians are called to be evangelizers of the world by the quality of their witness.²⁵ Their apostolate is an integral part of the mission of the Church.

The CMMF helps its members to discover and carry out their personal mission in the construction of the Kingdom of God. “Making Jesus Christ known and loved” is the essence of our Marist mission, which makes us particularly sensitive to the needs of the most vulnerable children and young people.

Thanks to our faith experience, the different professions and tasks pertaining to lay life become an opportunity to remain united in the same Marist mission. This diversity enables us to search together for new ways to carry out the mission, and enriches the charism with new and unexpected approaches.²⁶

Prayer should always accompany our mission to provide support and give it meaning.

13. WITHIN OUR FAMILY

The family in all its different expressions is our first mission field. We promote communion and participation so that love may flourish in our homes. We make sure that fraternities take into account our different family circumstances, paying attention to needs and concerns.

We raise our children as Christians and help them discover their vocation and respond to it. Family prayer keeps the family united.

We enable families to go beyond themselves and generate life outside their borders. At the same time, we try to honor our domestic, professional and social responsibilities, without neglecting or disregarding them.

25. Cf. *Gathered Around the Same Table*, 144.

26. Cf. *Gathered Around the Same Table* 37.

27. Cf. *Gathered Around the Same Table* 47.

14. IN OUR FRATERNITIES

Fraternities are another privileged field of our mission. We set aside the time to know each other, listening and helping one another in times of trouble, and sharing our joys together. We place our talents at the service of our fellow CMMF members, and gradually learn to love each other with our limitations and differences, fulfilling the words of Marcellin in his Spiritual Testament, “have the world say of us ‘see how they love one another!’”

So, fraternities are spaces in which we take care of one another, helping each other to become a better person, and sharing the courage to face the challenges of everyday life.

15. WITHIN SOCIETY

We attempt to be faithful to the spirit of Champagnat, going about our lives in an honourable and courageous way, with a spirit of solidarity and service. Through work and human relationships, we build a more fraternal and reconciled world, where the greatest is the one who makes himself or herself the servant of others.²⁷

As lay people, especially connected to social and political structures, we can be agents of transformation. In whatever we do, we are sensitive to justice and notice the needs around us. We particularly care for the wellbeing of children, youngsters, vulnerable families and poor and neglected people.

16. AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE

Our Marist sensitivity towards young people invites and impels us to be present among them. We provide opportunities to meet them, for them to get to know us and our experience of life.

CMMF fraternities can be a model of adult Marist community for young people. A good relationship between the CMMF and Marist youth ministry, where feasible, is mutually enriching.

17. WITHIN THE CHURCH

We are the Church and as such we share the mission of evangelising with all the People of God. Therefore, we live in communion with our Local Churches, and collaborate with other ecclesial

27. Cf. *Gathered Around the Same Table* 38.

movements and groups. We participate in the life of our Parish churches. Together we get involved in promoting all Christian vocations.

Our personal witness promotes the Marian face of the Church: a Church portrayed in the image of Pentecost where the disciples gathered around Mary are an expression of a community that is fraternal, that values dialogue, that promotes service of others and is open to diversity.²⁸ We are available, like Mary, to serve, welcome and maternally care for a wounded world.²⁹

From the standpoint of our mission in the Church, we try to be points of reference and support in nearby Marist works.

18. ON THE PERIPHERIES OF THE WORLD

Inspired by the mission of Jesus, we are called, personally and together with our fraternities, to generate life and hope in the peripheries of society.

Wanting to respond to this call:

- we discern the possibility of participating in mission projects in frontier situations, and we accompany members who offer themselves for such mission with our help, support and prayer;
- we discern how we use our personal assets and conduct our affairs responsibly and by taking solidarity seriously ;
- we participate in the promotion of the rights of children and young people;
- we seek to be better informed in matters of solidarity and take part in immersion experiences which bring us close to vulnerable people.
- we show our sensitivity towards injustices in society and initiate ways of denouncing their causes.

28. Br Emili Turú, Circular: He gave us the name of Mary, p. 54, Rome 2012.

29. Br Emili Turú, 21st General Chapter.



FORMATION AND ACCOMPANIMENT

19. CULTIVATING OUR VOCATION

Our Marist vocational process grows and solidifies through a serious commitment to formation and accompaniment. For this, a suitable formation plan is needed and fraternities need assistance with means and resources.

To ensure this personal process, we need to undertake a systematic program that can help us integrate all aspects of our personality in the same way as is proposed for all lay people linked to the Institute. This formation program reinforces our common identity as members of an international Movement.



Besides the community accompaniment that happens in fraternities, our formation requires personal vocational processes. To this end, it is necessary that we prepare people with the skills and disposition to be able to offer personal accompaniment to members.

20. FORMATION WITHIN A FRATERNITY

Fraternities are a privileged formation setting for their members, since they offer a space to share God's presence in the events of everyday life, as well as a network of family-style relationships that both support and challenge personal growth. It is in the fraternities that we find the support needed for personal and shared mission.

To ensure growth and maturity in our Marist vocation, fraternities promote ongoing formation, which promotes the quality of personal and community prayer, an attentive listening to the experience of others, the study of the Word of God, the exercise of discernment, theological formation, and personal accompaniment.

Meetings between fraternities are opportunities for mutual enrichment, since they enable dialogue, joint discernment, inspired commitment, and the celebration of life.

IV

ORGANIZATION AND ANIMATION OF THE CMMF

21. BELONGING TO THE CMMF

In order to strengthen the feeling of communion and belonging, and also be well organised, the fraternities of CMMF are recognised by their Administrative Units.

For a group to be recognised as a fraternity of the Champagnat Movement after a period of formation and discernment, it must seek the approval and recognition of the appropriate Marist authority. This approval can be withdrawn if circumstances arise that justify such action.

The fraternity that has been recognised will be entered into an official register with the name chosen by its members. It is recommended that this happen in the context of a liturgical celebration.

When someone, after a time of familiarisation and formation, expresses the desire to join a fraternity, he /she formally requests to join. If the fraternity decides to accept the person, his/her name is added to the aforementioned register.

22. FRATERNITY ANIMATORS

In tune with the lay character of the Movement, we see it as necessary to empower lay leadership at the grassroots level. This means preparing people to animate the fraternities and their members, providing them with the means and resources they may need to carry out their leadership role.

Those who make up the fraternity elect the animator. The animator's main functions are to encourage unity and participation, ensure its animation, and maintain friendly relations with the other fraternities and the communities of brothers. Animators carry out their mission in a spirit of service for a determined time.

The support of the Brothers and Institute structures is fundamental in establishing fraternities in areas where there are none. Over time, the lay people can pick up the responsibility for leading them.

23. AN INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT

To be an international Movement presupposes having common points of reference regarding charismatic identity, backed up by appropriate organisation and animation at different levels (Provincial, regional and international). It also means growing in autonomy within a broad spirit of communion.

Within the structures of some Administrative Units, there are animation groups for the fraternities,

made up of members of the Movement. Their roles are to accompany the fraternities, set up channels of communication between them, arrange gatherings, facilitate formation programs, coordinate with other lay structures and maintain communion with the Institute.



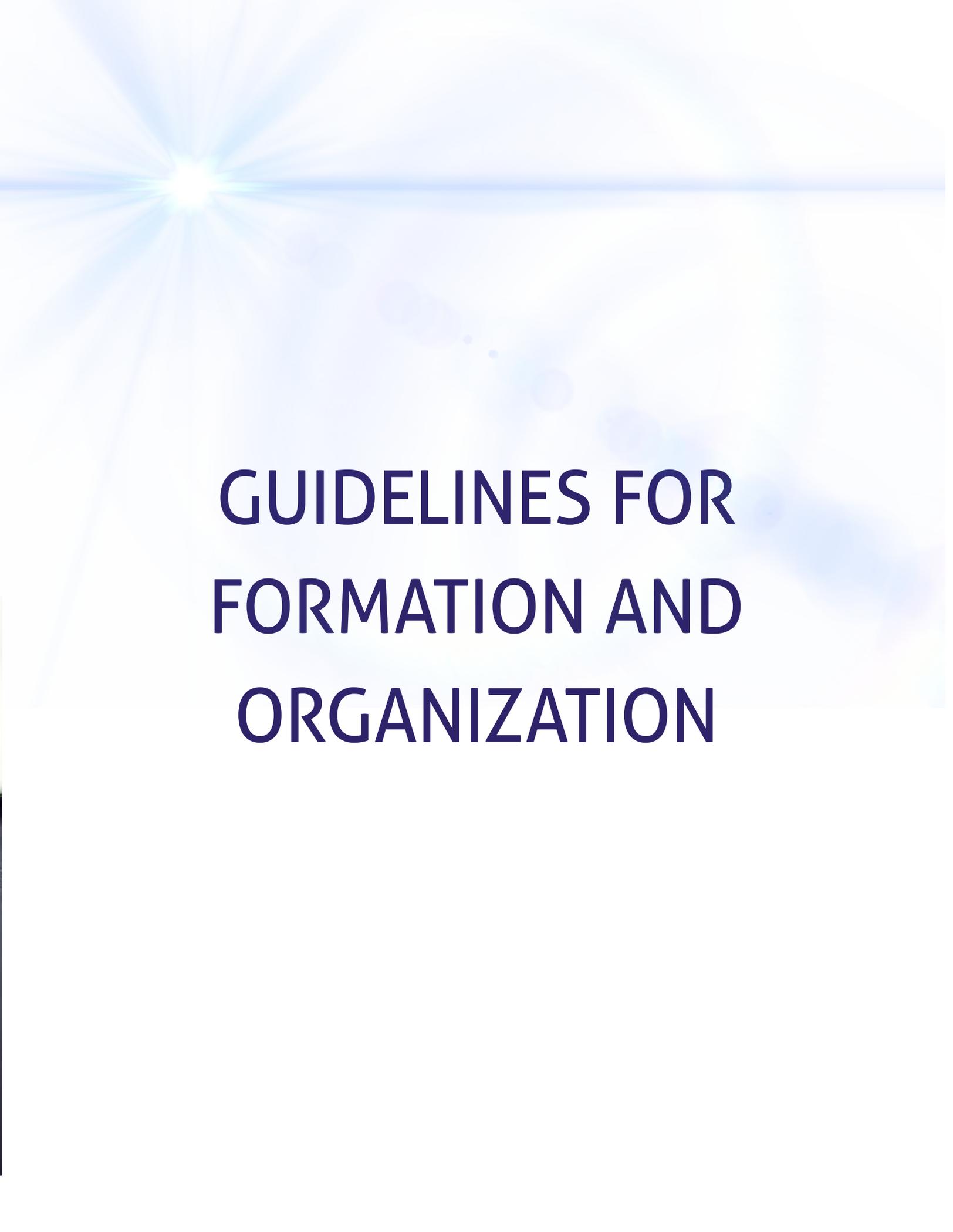
Prayer of the Champagnat Movement

Our Good Mother, we come to you
like Saint Marcellin Champagnat used to do.
In your loving hands we place our lives,
our families,
and our commitment to bring
the Kingdom of God to the world.

Mary, our sister in faith,
watch over this Fraternity,
and help us make room for the Gospel,
for communion in diversity,
for friendship as we follow Jesus
and bear witness to a servant Church.

We simply ask you to make us faithful
to the Marist gift we have received:
bless our efforts to live the charism,
and help us to make it present in our society.
Thank you, Mary, because your testimony
inspires us to contemplate
the world with the heart of God.



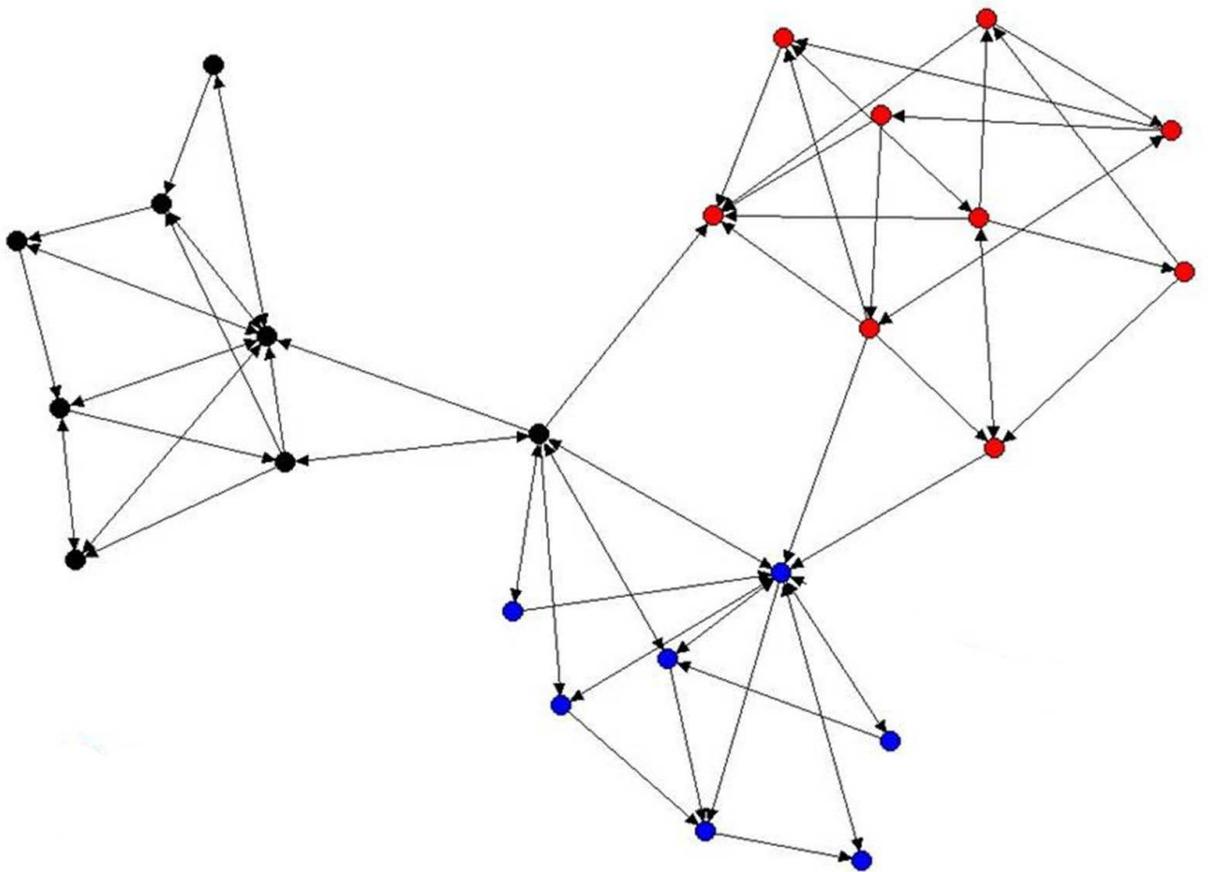


GUIDELINES FOR FORMATION AND ORGANIZATION

In the process of the updating of the MCFM contributions or suggestions were gathered referring to the identity but also others directed or aimed at giving an agreed upon and stable framework to the organization, formation and leadership in the Movement. The first ones have already been developed in the previous chapters and the second ones are described in this section.

Some indications are proposed to direct or guide and qualify life in the Fraternities, considering at every moment, the importance of taking into accounts contexts, cultures and the life and lived experience. Considering this the need has been stressed to preserve and encourage the necessary union in what is essential, respecting diversity.

These guidelines are open to continuous improvement and to the always changing reality.²⁹



50. The institutional documents *Agua de la Roca* y *En torno a la misma mesa - Water from the Rock and Around the same table*, as well as the *Proyecto de Vida del MCFM - Life Project of the MCFM* and the document *Ser Marista Laico - To be a Lay Marist*, they are reference documents of inspiration for the Movement which are integrated and are complemented with these guidelines of organization, formation and leadership.



CRITERIA OF THE FORMATIVE ITINERARY

Being in tune with the lay dynamics of the institute, the MCFM offers its members a proposal of a formative process, that has a necessary coherence with the *Life Project* and the document *To be a Lay Marist*.³¹

Criteria of the Itinerary:

1. To facilitate the implementation of the formative process: directed to accompany the lived experience of the Christian and Marist vocation, assumed by the members.
2. Integration: to create and support synergies with the lay formative itineraries proposed at provincial and institutional level, promoting common formative referents.
3. Ecclesial: itineraries enculturated in the ecclesial reality of each context.
4. Realism: with a profound respect for the possibilities and moments in which persons individually as well as the Fraternities find themselves.
5. Simplicity: propose formative proposals that can be carried out in an effective manner and be assumed in the complexity of the lay life.
6. Originality: according to the peculiarities of the persons and of the Fraternities, we try to develop a common face of the members of the MCFM.
7. A personal task lived in community: the concrete development for the MCFM that we offer here, considers a personal formative process lived within a Fraternity.
8. A dynamic process: it is not something closed, but it is subject to continuous revision.



³¹. We consider that it is fundamental to have shared criteria more than many closed models of formation and vocational accompaniment

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FORMATIVE MOMENTS

To be a Lay Marist – Journey of a vocational experience³²			
To Discover		To Commit oneself	
Experience of initiation in what is felt that it could be an option for life		Experience of the following of Jesus in the style of Mary.	
Christian proposal within a specific charism		Believing option to live the Marist Charism as a lay person	
<i>To awaken</i>	<i>To find</i>	<i>To identify oneself</i>	<i>To associate</i>
<i>“Come and see”</i>	<i>“How will that be?”</i>	<i>“Do in me”</i>	<i>“Do whatever He tells you”</i>
First contact	Experience of search and of finding	To live the dimensions of the Charism together with others	Associative Linkage with international character

Each moment described can become forms of belonging to the MCFM. The process of growth is presented like an offer that will respect in a radical way personal options, which, through a process of vocational identification, can lead to formal gestures for new commitments, whether with the charism, with the Movement, with the Institution...

FIRST MOMENT: AWAKEN TO THE CHARISM

It is the moment of invitation in which the person knows some aspects of the Marist life, when there is the first contact with the mission, with the spirituality, with Brothers and Marist Laity. It is a moment of discovery when admiration, curiosity and questions have precedence, are a priority... It is a time to accept invitations and to try out, of becoming aware and of searching intuitively.

Possible actions of the MCFM for this stage:

- To collaborate with those agencies which convoke persons for the discovery of the Marist reality.
- To organize activities for a first encounter and make known by means of witnesses the Marist identity.
- To offer experiences and first contacts with Marist reality in its multiple forms in order to know the culture and the environment.
- To invite persons who show interest in knowing the MCFM.
- Marist Days in which is explained what the MCFM is.

³². Outline taken from the 4th chapter of the document *To be a Lay Marist*

SECOND MOMENT: ENCOUNTER WITH THE CHARISM

In this moment the person desires to know what moves the heart of a Marist, because he harmonizes with that way of being and of doing, and feels that this Charism of the Church has something important to say to his life. It is a moment of greater involvement and commitment in different actions. He is interweaving relations and the bases for a vocational process in vocational key are being created.

The MCFM can offer here a privileged space of acceptance, of family and of reflection of a gift of the Spirit lived in community. The members of the Fraternity also live a more consolidated option than the affective empathy characteristic of this moment, the warm acceptance of their communities will help to make known to others what makes them live.

Here we could situate the formation of a group which desires to take steps to become a Fraternity of MCFM.

Possible actions of the MCFM for this moment:

- To perceive and accompany laity interested in deepening in the Marist Charism.
- Day of recollection for a group of persons who are interested (parents, educators...)
- Participation in some activity (session, retreat, celebration, apostolate...) of the Fraternity.
- Encourage formative proposals for deepening and encountering the Charism.

THIRD MOMENT: IDENTIFICATION WITH THE CHARISM

In this moment a process of both personal and community discernment is given. The lived experience of the Marist Charism as a layman or lay woman is deepened through an experience of community, mission and spirituality.

Formation and accompaniment are central elements during this phase, both for a group which begins to be Fraternity as well as for persons who incorporate themselves for the first time.

In both cases, the Fraternity will be a community space which will accompany the development of the person. The animators of the Movement will stress in a special way, discernment on Baptismal and Marist vocation lived in the Fraternity.

This moment directed toward a charismatic linkage, makes possible the conditions to ask for recognition as a Fraternity or as member of it.

The development of this itinerary helps the members of the Fraternities being, together to other close Marist realities, reference of the Charism of Champagnat around him and beyond.

Possible actions of the MCFM during this moment:

- To participate with perseverance and regularity in the meetings of the Fraternity.
- To organize and prepare adequately the encounters of the Fraternity.
- To offer proposals of formation associated to personal accompaniment
- To have lived experiences for the deepening of the Charism such as: experiences of solidarity, to associate to evangelizing projects such as Pascua Juvenil (a Youth's Easter celebration), participate in encounters with communities of Brothers...
- Participate actively in the community life Project of the Fraternity.
- To offer guidelines to carry out personal and community accompaniment.
- To prepare the celebration of the official recognition of the Fraternity or of the official incorporation of a member in it.

FOURTH MOMENT: ASSOCIATIVE LINKAGE.

The person has opted for a form of belonging and linkage within the charismatic family of Champagnat³³ in the MCFM and has expressed it with a formal and public sign. The person is aware of the commitment assumed with that family to give vitality to the Charism and to be, together with others, the maternal face of the prophetic and missionary Church.

In these moments the MCFM is considered as being within the lay process of the Marist world. Our structures will always be open and permeable to this process.

Possible actions of the MCFM for this moment:

- Accompaniment in the formation of new Fraternities and in the development of the lay vocation.
- Personal petition to form part of the international associative structure³⁴
- Availability to lead or head formative projects and of mission.
- Suggest responses of creative fidelity to the Project of the Fraternity.
- Openness to discern on the Marist commitment beyond the local, regional sphere or even beyond the Movement itself.

34. Cf, "Charismatic Family" in the Lexicon Web page of the Institute. The charismatic families are the joint or combined groups formed by institutions and groups of believers united by one only foundational charism, or one same charismatic root, but with different forms of life and with diverse accentuation of the same charism.

35. Fourth moment of the formative itinerary of the document To be a Lay Marist.



ORIENTATIONS FOR THE ORGANIZATION

TAKE THE LIFE OF THE MCFM IN OUR OWN HANDS

The MCFM takes its life in its own hands when its members are aware of the implications that their options imply. This is manifested in a series of decisions which are a sign of the commitment to take care of its own life and that of the others.

Some of the options that are taken want to express that majority of age of the laity in close institutional communion with the charismatic family. Among them we can find dynamics that help journey toward an economic sustainability of the organization and daily life of the Fraternities, the availability for leadership that implies time and voluntary dedication, new proposals of mission within or outside the Marist works, assiduous collaborations in the local Church, and presence and participation in Marist activities.

We believe that the formal progressive integration of its members will be of key importance when it is time to articulate, represent and animate the diverse expressions of an ecclesial, lay, Marist and institutionally consolidated life.

For this it is essential to sustain structures of animation and coordination at all levels, and to take part in them.

THE FRATERNITY AS PRINCIPAL UNITY OF THE MOVEMENT

As explained in the *Life Project*, the fundamental unity of the Champagnat Movement is the Fraternity.

Within the existing diversity there are some essential elements that contribute to a better development of the life of the Fraternities: the constitution of not too numerous groups that facilitates the relationship among the members, the adequate election of a person for the animation, the careful preparation of the meetings, the involvement of all in its functioning and the carrying out of a plan or Project of the life of the Fraternity.

ENCOUNTERS OF THE FRATERNITY

The encounters of the Fraternity express and constitute our identity as members of the Movement. For this reason we feel that we have to take great care of them.

According to experience we consider that there are some aspects that have to be present in these encounters: moments of prayer, of sharing life, of reflection on formative themes, of celebration, of community discernment, of organization....

Besides these elements, there are others that we have to take care of: moments to share

experiences of mission, accompaniment of vital situations, the development of formative programs, and the encounters with other Fraternities.

Each Fraternity determines the frequency and the place of the encounters, assuring always the quality of the community lived experience.

THE ORGANIZATION AT LOCAL, PROVINCIAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

Gradually as the life of the Movement is growing we are aware that it is necessary to have representation and animation at local, provincial, regional levels or of the whole Movement.

As we see in chapter 4, very simple structures have been given in a natural form, such as provincial teams of animation formed by members of the Movement itself who place themselves at the service of the Fraternities of the Administrative Units.

The Movement has to be creative when accompanying the Fraternities and their members.

It is important to point out the encounters of the Fraternities at different levels (of zone, province, of region,,,) because of the vitality, which from the beginning, they have contributed to the MCFM. These are opportunities that enrich one's own life because they are spaces for dialogue and discernment in common; they motivate the witness and commitment of the members and allow the celebration of the gift of faith.

INTERACTION WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS OR MARIST STRUCTURES

The MCFM, because of its lay identity, is called to participate and integrate itself in every provincial dynamic that develops this reality. It will be very positive for the Laity of a Province that good coordination and mutual collaboration exist on the part of the members of all the Marist lay structures of animation, so that their mission will develop more fully and the family spirit which characterizes them may manifest itself.

It should also try, in a special manner, that authentic communion exists with the Marist youth pastoral ministry, since both realities offer community spaces of growth and development of Christian life in the style of Mary and Champagnat.

There may be different types of collaboration: make themselves available to the animators of youth catechesis in the local Church and in Marist youth pastoral ministry, collaborate in joint actions, animate youth groups, and promote Christian experiences for the younger ones, being attentive to the quality of our presence in their midst following the style of Marcellin Champagnat.



IV

**BELONGING AND
LINKAGE**

The Fraternities of the different countries constitute the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family at international level. The richness and diversity contributed by the internationality of the Movement requires that it provides the means so that it will be transmitted and experienced by each one of its members, in this way strengthening the spirit of belonging to the family, the openness to other forms of being and of doing and the availability to go out to other lands.

The MCFM extends, universalizes and expresses the Charism in fields which are not exclusively educational and in spaces unsuspected until now. This implies a sense of linkage to the charism which can be lived both in a work of the Institute as well as in other places.

GESTURES THAT CONFIRM THE SENSE OF BELONGING

In a family there are gestures that are shared and events that are celebrated because they mark important dates in our life and make up our biography. In the Fraternities following the same spirit, we need to have signs and moments that make us feel part of one same family.

There are experiences that help to create this sense of belonging and linkage, such as: annual lived experiences during which vital projects are placed in common and the life of the Fraternity is celebrated in a special way; some especially significant event is remembered, or others are celebrated which are the result of the creativity of its members and, in a very special manner, the celebration of the formal commitment as members of the MCFM or the official constitution of a Fraternity.



V

**TOWARD A NEW
BEGINNING**

The Marist Charism is a gift from God for the Church and for the world. We the Laity who have received this gift also have the responsibility to promote its vitality. On the other side, our own lay lived experience contributes to enrich the charism according to the feminine contribution, family lived experience and the social-labor reality. Together with the Brothers we feel co-responsible to extend this gift of God while walking toward the future.

From the Church and from our own Marist Institution we, the Laity are being invited to assume, because of our Baptism and the gift of the Marist Charism which we have received, our leadership in both realities.

We the members of the MCFM accept with joy and responsibility this invitation and collaborate with the best of ourselves in the construction of that future that we contemplate like a communion of persons in the Charism of Champagnat.

Together with the Brothers and with other Lay Marists we wish to offer the Marian and missionary face of the Church with our peculiar way of being and doing, being like that a sign of hope and of peace in the world. This call invites us to continue to be open to the action of the Holy Spirit who makes us get out from what is known and leads us through new paths, inspired by the creativity of Saint Marcellin Champagnat and placing our trust in our Good Mother, knowing that she does everything among us.



