



Marist international colloquium on initial formation

4 - 14 October 2015 L'Hermitage

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/ nitial Formation for a New Beginning



marists **2017**
a new beginning

*M*arist International Colloquium on Initial Formation
Our Beliefs – Perspectives – Recommendations

L'Hermitage 4 -14 October 2015

*"May what I do flow from me like a river,
no forcing and no holding back, the way it is with children ... "*

Rainer Maria Rilke

*"We become streams of living water flowing
through the personal, communal and ministry aspects of our lives "*

Water from the Rock, 43

Seventy-five Marists, brothers and laity, representatives from all the regions of the Institute, met in l'Hermitage, from October 4 to 14, 2015, to dialogue on Marist Initial Formation of the Brothers. The group of the participants consisted of Formators, provincials, those responsible for vocation pastoral ministry, young Brothers, Marist laity, responsible for the animation of Brothers and the General Council. The Secretariat and the International Commission of Brothers Today was in charge of the preparation and coordination of the event.

In our house of origin, constructed on the rock and near the flowing water of Gier, we have been witnesses to a profound experience of communion, of internationality, listening, searching and with an openness to the Spirit. In this environment we have wanted to look at the current reality, listen to today's calls and reflect on the "Initial Formation for our New Beginning".

As fruit of the Colloquium, the Secretariat Brothers Today, gathered the suggestions of the participants, and offers to the General Council and to the Institute **"Our Beliefs – Perspectives – Recommendations"**, to continue deepening the discussion on initial formation.

These simple suggestions, express the desire to continue to inspire the flow of the search in the process of the revision of our Constitutions and in the regional and/or provincial teams of formation, according to their realities and different cultures.

This compilation intends to mark the beginning of the journey, open a door that encourages deeper dialogues, authentic searches and creative responses, for the new times which we are living, in the diverse stages of initial formation, in this new beginning of the Institute

Fraternally,

Brs. Tony Leon & Hipólito Pérez

Secretariat of Brothers Today

1. Formation - Processes & Structures

OUR BELIEF

- We need to move from a “Structure of Stages” * to one of processes** within an integrated program.

PERSPECTIVES

- We welcome each person with all his experiences and background and together we commit to a process of discipleship in ongoing discernment.
- The emphasis is on the personal process.
- The main responsibility for the process stays with the candidate, but it is shared by the community and the formator.
- The different elements of the process are jointly determined (candidate, formator...); they are open and flexible.
- We must ensure the inter-connectedness and continuity of the process in the different stages of the journey.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Each region prepares its own itineraries *** of formation that will provide guidelines for the international formation projects it takes on.
2. The itineraries need to be known, appropriated and personalised by the candidate and the community that accompanies him.
3. Ensure that evaluations involve the candidate as well as his formators and community.
4. Ensure that a reference-community accompanies the candidate and that someone takes responsibility for this process and the personal accompaniment.



* **Structure of Stages:** Change the metaphor of formation from that of a chest of drawers that has to be filled (Disjointed, separated modules) to the image of a rainbow with gradually-blending colours (Integration of diverse experiences)

** **Process:** the personalised journey consciously undertaken by the candidate.

*** **Itinerary:** a Marist programme of discipleship proposed to the candidate.

OUR BELIEF

- We need to think of initial formation as part of a wider ecosystem that includes communities with different styles of Marist life.

PERSPECTIVES

- To make sure that the candidate has experiences of community with Brothers and lay people
- In the Province, all the Brothers participate in the processes that help us make real this new way of being a Brother
- To respect the concrete situation of each region

RECOMMENDATIONS

5. With the exception of the Novitiate, the journeys of formation take place in apostolic communities: “from formation houses to formative communities”.
6. Ensure that the first steps on the formation journey take place in the candidate’s own culture.
7. Make sure that along the journey we provide joint formation opportunities (Brothers and lay people) that strengthen the identity of each person.



OUR BELIEF

- We are Brothers with a growing sense of being available for the whole world.

PERSPECTIVE

- To acquire the abilities needed to build international communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

8. Provide international experiences during the process of initial formation
9. Value and promote inter-congregational formative experiences.

2. Joint Formation - Brothers & Lay People

OUR BELIEFS

- The Marist charism is a gift for the people of God and the whole of creation. It is common to both Brothers and lay people and it is manifested in different vocations.
- The future of Marist life lies in sharing and in community.
- This union of Brothers and lay people allows us not only to strengthen our Marist identity, but also to recognise that the relationship is complementary and mutually enriching.

PERSPECTIVES

- The relationship between Brothers and lay people is a growing dialogue that shares many common elements, recognising each specific vocation.
- As Marists, we need to consider the many different situations/perspectives of life/vocation within each of the regions.
- We need to promote a change of mentality that takes into account the richness and diversity of Marist vocations (Brothers and lay people) and other vocations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.** Starting with the initial stage of formation for both, promote diverse experiences of joint Marist formation (formation, life, mission) that include discernment, accompaniment (mentoring) etc.
- 11.** Write a preamble to the Formation Guide that presents the common aspects of the charism for all Marist vocations. This document will also include an explanation of terms that will guarantee a common understanding of the context and meaning of these terms.
- 12.** Explore various pathways (ecosystems) of Marist life that promote vocations in their different forms.



3. Internationalisation - Global availability



OUR BELIEFS

- We understand “internationalisation” to mean “interculturalisation”: a common vision for the whole Institute that everyone, Brothers and lay people alike, will experience and go on to develop the charism today in openness to the awareness of cultural diversity.
- “Reclaiming our origins”. Global availability is in our genes (“every diocese...”). It belongs to our identity. The more intercultural we are, the more deeply we comprehend the richness of our charism, and it is therefore expressed with greater clarity.
- Our “interculturalisation” today is intentional: it does not arise from necessity, but emerges as a prophetic option in which we both make visible and witness to the value of universal brotherhood in a world divided.

PERSPECTIVES

- Based on the principle of reciprocity, we value each person and their culture (especially that of minorities). Each person comes to an understanding of their own culture and acknowledges its strengths and weaknesses such that they can enter into interculturalisation with both confidence and humility.
- We need formators (“key” agents) who have had intercultural experience as a preparation for accompanying the dynamics of growth in interculturalisation..
- We need to generate expectation. Each Brother (each Marist) knows that they are a member of an international institute and so prepares to live their life and mission in global availability.

RECOMMENDATIONS

13. At least one stage of initial formation must be in an international, intercultural or intercontinental environment.

14. From the “expectation key” developed in formation: each Brother will live for a specific time (3 years) on mission in an international and intercultural setting, sent by the Institute (General Superior).

Preparation and development of interculturalisation:

15a. Brothers, lay Marists and international formation communities to accompany and welcome the Brothers and laity of other cultures.

15b. Promote regional meetings (“Inter”), with the presence of people from other cultures and/or Congregations. The Secretariat of Brothers Today to value and promote interculturalisation.

15c. During initial formation, ensure the learning of two of the languages of the Institute, one of which will be to a level of fluency sufficient to engage with the process of the Novitiate.

4. *C*ommunities - Ecosystems

OUR BELIEFS

- Sensitivity to the idea of formation involving everyone is essential for a Province which is alive. This sensitivity, amongst other things, creates healthy communities. A healthy community is one in which the community life project evidences the ability and eagerness to welcome and to nurture the growth of the young Brother, is open and welcoming, able to manage conflicts and tensions and is joyful and harmonious.
- There needs to be someone in the community who will accompany a young Brother, perhaps the community leader or another Brother, or a lay Marist who is able to accompany the young Brother. It may be necessary to prepare this accompanier for the role. The person should have a good understanding of the personal situation of the young Brother.
- Personal and communal conversion is necessary. It is the community in which the young Brother is placed which forms the young Brother. A community which is too busy with the mission, for example, and lacking time for community life and the building up of fraternity is not a formative community.

PERSPECTIVES

- All the members of the community need to feel that they are both receiving and giving in community, and in so doing are building a community in which family spirit, service, leadership and self-knowledge are nurtured.
- Community members commit to developing a community life with the following characteristics: healthy interpersonal relationships, inter-generational differences are valued, personal and community prayer nurtures each Brother's spirituality, Brothers have a sincere interest in each other's ministry, and the community is joyful.
- Brothers and lay Marists together share life and work and assist young people to discern their vocation either as a Brother or as a lay Marist. Together they contribute to the formation of the young person.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 16.** To continue to increase the number of formation programmes for leaders, accompaniers and young Brothers so as to renew communities. For these programmes to be accessible they need to be conducted in different locations around the world. These programmes need to be planned and resourced.
- 17.** To involve everyone in the Province in developing or supporting the Communities for a New Beginning. This could be done through courses, assemblies, retreats etc.
- 18.** To evaluate some international communities created these past few years. (eg Ad Gentes, L'Hermitage) with the objective of obtaining criteria for the establishment of new international communities.
- 19.** To dedicate at least one community in each A.U. for the reception of young Brothers and the welcoming of young people. These communities may have varied formats (eg including lay Marists).



5. Vocational Ministry

OUR BELIEFS

- We believe that the Marist charism is a gift in the Church, shared by Brothers and lay people for the sake of mission.
- We believe that vocations ministry fosters a “vocations culture” where each person discovers God’s call and responds with his/her way of life.
- We believe in having communities of Champagnat Marists that, by their witnessing, attract young people to live the charism, thus strengthening the vitality of the Institute.

PERSPECTIVES

- Marist vocations ministry requires appropriate formation and training of Brothers and lay vocations animators at the various levels of the Institute (vocations animation, accompaniment etc...)
- There is a need for Institute-wide guidelines on vocations ministry that are clear and bold, in order to offer itineraries which promote, discern and accompany all vocations in the current context, in particular Marist vocations.
- Marist Vocations Ministry needs harmonisation at all levels of the Institute (processes connected with Brothers and lay people), thus linking Vocations Ministry with Initial Formation (eg. The Vocations Director with the Master of Postulants).

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 20.** International sharing of vocations resources (including expenses, IT, language-availability, networking).
- 21.** Vocations promotion is a priority for the Institute. Therefore we need to work in a team-approach which will include Brothers and lay people sharing responsibility for the promotion of all vocations, in particular Marist vocations.
- 22.** We must have a review of vocation and animation programmes to ensure that each Region follows the Institute’s new guidelines for vocations promotion in a way that is practical for the Region: for example, annual regional meetings to share, evaluate and supervise our programmes, and to provide support for each other.



6. *B*rothers for a New Beginning

OUR BELIEF

Seekers of God

- We are Brothers who are passionate seekers of God, who desire each day to commit ourselves to deepening our interior life with Jesus, in the way of Mary.

PERSPECTIVE

- Our communities will become oases of spiritual life, where Brothers facilitate practices that enable the community, lay Marists, and young people to grow in their experience of God.

RECOMMENDATION

- 23.** The formation processes will facilitate a variety of spiritual practices and skills to enable young Brothers to maintain an ongoing openness to seeking God in their lives.



OUR BELIEF

Universal Brotherhood

- We are Brothers who are artisans of universal brotherhood: living global availability, fraternal relationship in union with lay Marists.

PERSPECTIVE

- Our communities will become places that promote fraternal dialogue and human growth, where relationships can deepen and individuals can grow and flourish. Our communities are committed to living experiences of communion with lay Marists.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 24.** Formation houses will provide interprovincial and intercultural experiences in initial formation, in partnership with Lay Marist formators. Priority will be given to fraternal dialogue and appropriate accompaniment.
- 25.** To organise regional assemblies of younger brothers in 2017 to launch the 'New Beginning'.



OUR BELIEF

Going to the peripheries

- We are Brothers who dare to go to the peripheries to educate and evangelise young people, especially those in vulnerable situations, and to be evangelised by them..

PERSPECTIVE

- Our communities desire to respond to the call of the Gospel to witness to poor and marginalised youth. We want to draw Brothers, lay Marists and young people into God's mission.

RECOMMENDATION

- 26.** Formation Houses will be strategically placed in poor areas (geographical and social peripheries), with consideration given to different local contexts. Priority will be given to apostolic experiences among poor young people to assist in fostering the transformative growth of a simpler lifestyle among Brothers.

7. *F*ormators

OUR BELIEFS

- The team creates an environment which fosters an integral system of personal development. It also models community, offers support and help in making decisions.
- Offering a vision of Marist life and mission: “Marists in communion”
- Creating a culture of formation in Province and region.
- Forming men for inter ...
- Collaborating inter-congregationally.
- Creating a community of simple life where all are involved.

PERSONAL QUALITIES

- A man of God
- Human: simple, transparent, with a sense of self and own personal limits
- Happy in his vocation – loves the Brothers
- A person with relationships and able to work with a team
- A listener inspiring confidence, with flexibility and understanding, relating to young men in such a way as to bring out the best in the person.
- As a formator is able to form adults, create an environment for growth and freedom, be a significant presence, and witness by his life to his love of the ministry.
- Able to speak another language (Spanish/English).

PREPARATION

- Experience of life and mission.
- Formation to be a formator.
- Studies in: theology, spirituality, anthropology, psychology, on-going formation,...



SUPPORT FOR FORMATORS

- A team with defined roles
- Fixed terms for formators – 3 years renewable for a further three
- Supervision: both internal, eg the Provincial, and appropriate external/professional consultation
- On-going formation inclusive of joint formation opportunities for Brothers and lay Marists

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GENERAL COUNCIL

- 27.** More frequent programmes for the on-going formation of formators
- 28.** On-going regional and international gatherings of formators
(i.e. regional gatherings as a follow-up to this Colloquium)
- 29.** Promote inter-regional experiences for formators
(i.e. to encourage the exchange of formators of different language-groups and regions)
- 30.** Study the current situation of formation houses in the Institute in the light of greater internationalisation.
- 31.** Establish fixed terms for formators, giving time to breath, after or during service.



*R*ecommendations - Summary

- ☐ 1. Each region prepares its own itineraries of formation that will provide guidelines for the international formation projects it takes on.
- ☐ 2. The itineraries need to be known, appropriated and personalised by the candidate and the community that accompanies him.
- ☐ 3. Ensure that evaluations involve the candidate as well as his formators and community
- ☐ 4. Ensure that a reference - community accompanies the candidate and that someone takes responsibility for this process and the personal accompaniment.
- ☐ 5. With the exception of the Novitiate, the journeys of formation take place in apostolic communities: “from formation houses to formative communities”.
- ☐ 6. Ensure that the first steps on the formation journey take place in the candidate’s own culture.
- ☐ 7. Make sure that along the journey we provide joint formation opportunities (Brothers and lay people) that strengthen the identity of each person.
- ☐ 8. Provide international experiences during the process of initial formation
- ☐ 9. Value and promote inter-congregational formative experiences.
- ☐ 10. Starting with the initial stage of formation for both, promote diverse experiences of joint Marist formation (formation, life, mission) that include discernment, accompaniment (mentoring) etc.
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