



The Visual Responses to the Calls of the XXII General Chapter



Transform us Jesus, and send us
as a global charismatic family,
a beacon of hope in this turbulent world,
to be the face and hands of your tender mercy.
Inspire our creativity to be bridge-builders,
to journey with children
and young people on the margins of life,
and to respond boldly to emerging needs.



One of the first activities of the XXII FMS General Chapter

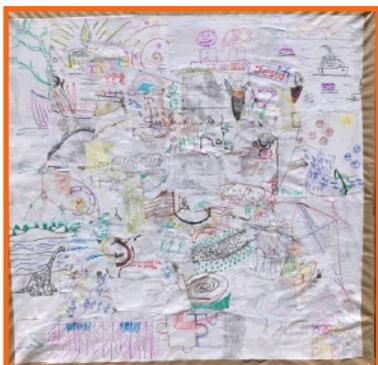
was to create visual representations of the best imaginations of what the future of the Marist institute may look like. The capitulants were invited to avoid text and think only with images, shapes and colours. These are the very images that form the physical and metaphorical foundation of the visual responses to the Calls of the XXII General Chapter.

In order to make effective use of these drawings of the participants, I followed the counsel of Br Emili who presented the concept of 'creative destruction' during the initial weeks of the Chapter. That is, sometimes, we need to destroy certain ideas, things to permit creativity to take on a new life. Thus, the Calls are built on the synthesis and refinement of these initial imaginations.

The collages of torn drawings were added to one side of the large cubic boxes that had graced the Chapter Hall from the first day. These boxes had the stencil fonts of the names of the regions, recreating a sense of the large cargo cases of the famous Colombian coffee ready to be exported to all corners of the earth. This metaphor can then be carried with the calls the Chapter. They are now ready to be delivered to all regions of the Institute.

Like the wonderful Colombian coffee, may the fruitful produce of the XXII General Chapter at Rionegro in Colombia be stimulating to all who receive it. May it be enjoyed individually or within the setting of a community. And may these visual responses awaken our senses to what it is to be Marist at the dawn of our third century.

Tony Leon
19.10.2017



1. As a global charismatic family, a beacon of hope in this turbulent world

*Jesus, today you continue to call us to relate to others
in a fundamentally new way (Mk 3, 20-31, 31-35),
to listen to your Word and put it into practice,
with urgency and without excluding anyone.*

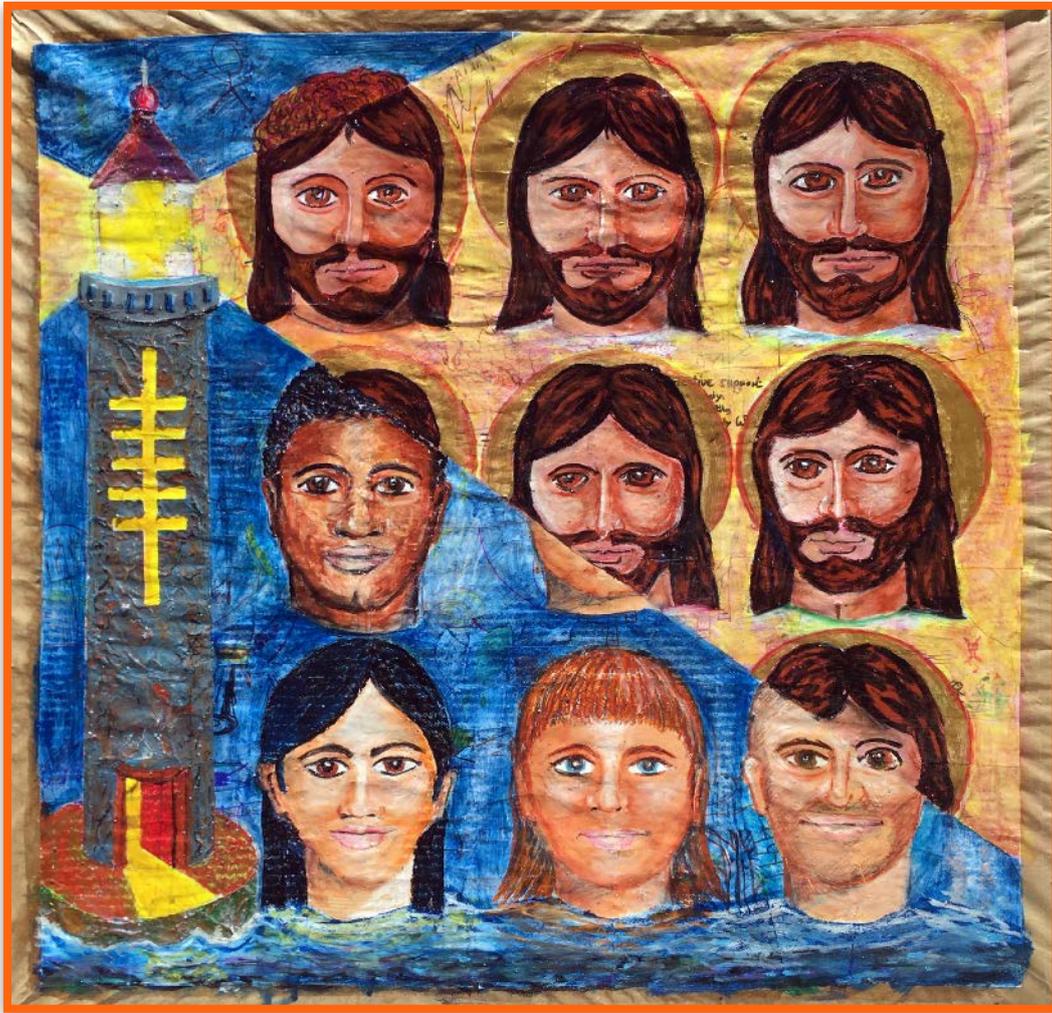
You are pressuring us to set out immediately on pathways that lead to the future:
that is, as Marists of Champagnat, to:

- form homes that are a light on the hill for those around, giving ourselves wholeheartedly to creating a family style of life that is open to all.
- promote and nourish Marist life in all its diversity, working towards our deeply-felt desire to act as “one global body”.¹
- be open, in all simplicity, to be available beyond geographic or provincial boundaries.
- rediscover, as Brothers, the original passion that inspired us to be Marists.



In the beginning...

1. During the Chapter repeated use was made of the expression *global body* as a synonym of *global family*. That is to say, all Marists of Champagnat belong to a single body or a single charismatic family, and we are being called to act as such.



The Markan gospel reference of this Call is the scene when Jesus responded with the concept of the family of God, 'Whoever does God's will is my brother, sister and mother.' (Mk 3: 34-35).

I used the reference from Emili's recent letter 'Lavalla - House of Light' - March 2017 where the house of LaValla is compared as a **lighthouse**: *a reference point in the middle of the darkness by which to navigate and reach a safe harbour.*

This theme was further developed into the idea that the light from this house allows us to illuminate the faces of others and thus recognising the face of Christ in each person, regardless of race, region or religion. In recognising the face of Jesus in each person, we are indeed a global family under Christ.

The faces of Jesus are slightly different to convey the call to imitate Christ through a personal response according to our own capacity and strength. We are not called to rigid uniformity.

The lighthouse has the Marist cross as the light to illustrate that we see the world through the light of our own charism. The Marist charism is also repeated in the symbol on the side of the house which is an Australian design to reflect the cross as well as the five horizontal lines representing the main elements of our charism: Presence, Simplicity, Family Spirit, Love of Work and the Way of Mary.

2. to be the face and hands of your tender mercy.

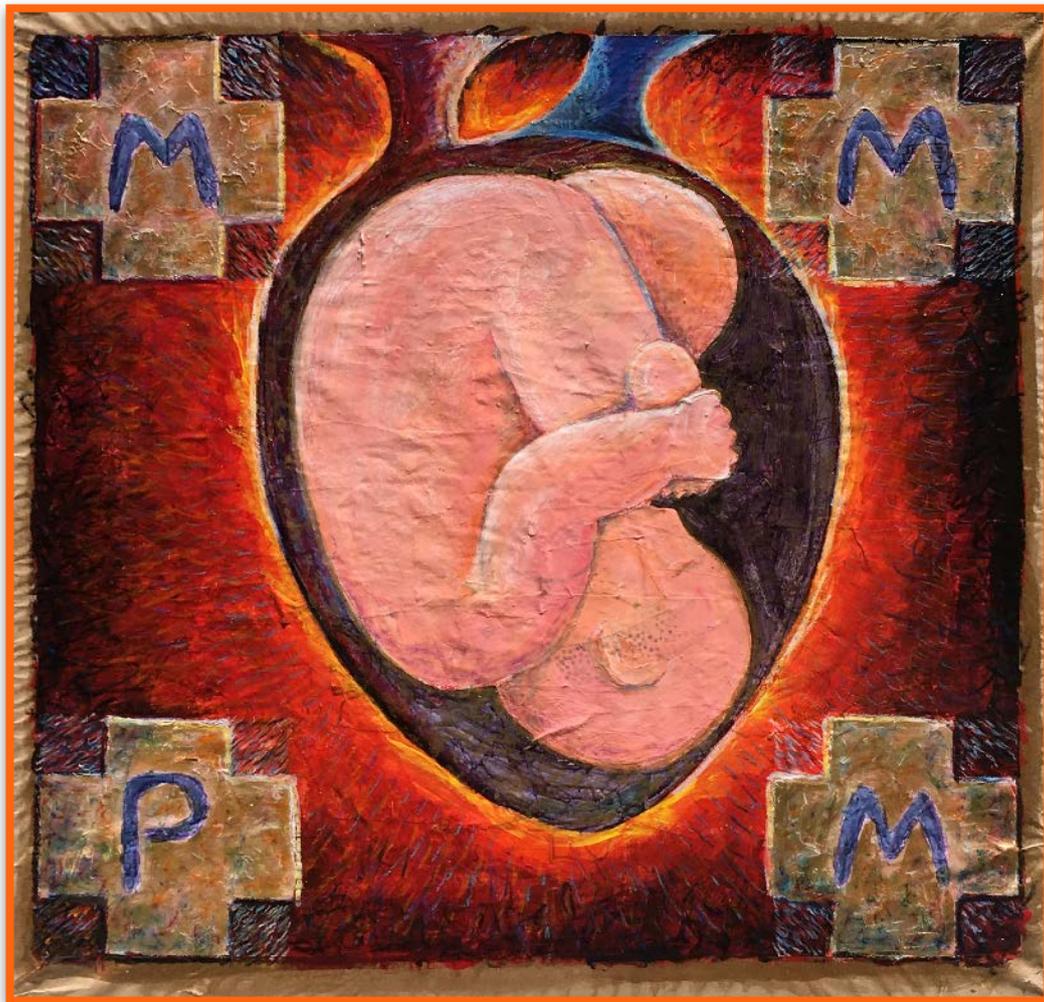
*The promise of your Spirit in our lives (Lk 1, 35)
urges us to be prophets of mercy and of being brothers and sisters to all.*

From this call, we hear you inviting us to:

- get in touch with our inner selves to be able to discover You as a God of love who is revealed in the ordinary events of our lives.
- cultivate a spirituality of the heart, that fills us with joy and makes us inclusive.
- revive the founding spirit of La Valla in our daily lives.
- live life to the full as your witnesses in a fragmented world.



The conception of the idea.



The Lucan gospel reference of this Call is the scene when the Spirit announces, *“The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.*

My imagination begins with the first of the call in the rhythm of the divine life growing from within. I also reflected on the references Br François made in his spiritual writings about the hope that ‘Christ be formed in you’ (Gal 4:19). With the marriage of these ideas came the conception of this image.

The four Marist crosses at each corner adds a hint of the Marist flavour to this image, however, the M on the three crosses do not refer to Marist but to the word “MERCY”, thus the P on the bottom left corner which represents the French translation for mercy - Pitié.

The etymology of the word, Mercy is based on the Hebrew word ‘Rahamin’ (and the Arabic word ‘Rahmann’) which means womb. This adds to the significance of the Christ child in the centre of the fifth Marist cross design. This is somewhat hidden at first but the four crosses at the corners actually form a larger cross with the incarnation of God’s mercy in the centre.

Other derivation of the Hebrew word is *rakhamim*, "compassion, brotherly love"-- the feeling one has for someone (as if) from the same womb. An echo to the previous call of being a global spiritual family.

3. Inspire our creativity to be bridge-builders.

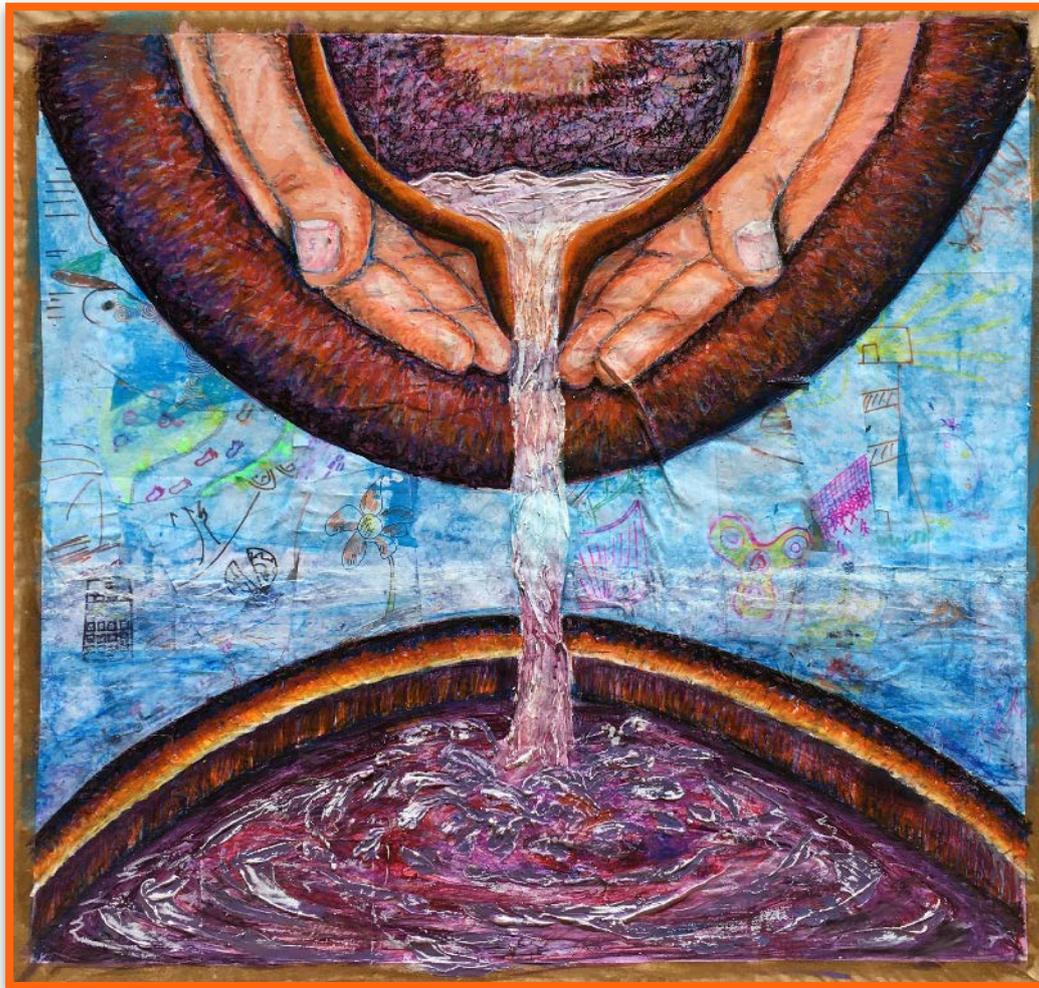
Like Mary at Cana (Jn 2, 3), we feel challenged by the needs of the world around us.

Inspired by Mary, we feel called to:

- develop a good understanding of our ever-changing world, and face current challenges, without falling into the temptation of “answering questions that no one is asking anymore”. (Pope Francis in Medellin, September 9, 2017)
- be a prophetic reminder of the common dignity and fundamental equality of the entire People of God.
- move away from a culture shaped by “ego-s” and adopt that of the “eco-s” (ecology, ecosystems, an economy of solidarity, ...) to reduce the scandal of indifference and inequalities.
- be agents of change, bridge-builders, messengers of peace, transforming the lives of young people through an education that integrates awakening faith and living by Gospel values.



The first pour...



It was a challenge to connect the Wedding at Cana story to the being creative bridge builders as well as the idea of continuous transformation and the movement from the culture of ego.

The idea of a bridge is a physical structure that crosses over obstacles such as a body of water, a valley, a road...etc. However, what if the bridge is made of water instead? Crossing over the limiting concepts of what can and what cannot be done, like changing water into wine.

The bridge in this image is the short section in between where the water leaves the jug carried by the Christ figure, and splashing into the wine vessel at the base. The 'in between' space or the liminal space is where the transformation takes place.

This image focuses on this moment where we are 'in between' what is known and the unknown, with what we are familiar from the past and with the uncertainty of the future. In this 'in between' space where we abandon the familiar culture 'to do whatever He tells you' (John 2:5), will require courageous faith which may very well result in the conversion of the heart from stone to a heart of flesh as if it was with water changing into wine.

4. To journey with children and young people living on the margins of life

We search for you, Jesus, like Mary, in the caravans of life, in the tumult of our cities (Lk 2, 41-49), and in the masses of displaced people who are seeking a better future for their children.

This is a call that urges us to:

- open the eyes of our heart and hear the cries of children and young people, especially the voiceless and homeless.
- be creative in giving resolute responses to their needs.
- empower those who have no voice, leaving behind any paternalism.
- be present in more significant ways among the children and young people on the margins of the world.



Finding the way ahead...



The Gospel reference for this Call is known either as: **Jesus lost in the temple** or **Jesus found in the temple**. It all depends on one's outlook in life.

With the reference of children and young people in this Call, I wanted to have an image which has the appeal of a game or a puzzle. I was inspired by the spiritual practice of walking the labyrinth, made popular by the spectacular medieval construction at the Chartres Cathedral in north central France. At first it appears simple but the contemplative practice can draw out some deep lessons.

A labyrinth is NOT a maze, in the sense that one cannot be lost. It is simply the need to keep journeying until the destination is reached. The return journey is along the same path but there is a greater confidence as the traveller knows that the centre has been experienced.

There are many decorative elements at the starting point at the base of the image and there seems to be less as one approaches the centre. With an experience of walking the Camino de Santiago, I remember beginning the journey carrying many things 'just in case' of many possible scenarios, however as the journey concludes, the pilgrim realises that one needs very few things as one learns to trust the Camino.

The return journey from the centre to the edge begins with very few things realising what is truly essential on one's life, however, as we return to our ministry, we become aware of the many blessings we have in your lives. We return with an almost empty backpack but with a full heart.

5. To respond boldly to emerging needs.

*Jesus, you went through life doing good
and yet many of your contemporaries interpreted your actions narrowly,
simply because you were a Galilean, a carpenter, and the son of Mary (Mk 6, 2-3).*

Today, as well, you continue to challenge us to:

- abandon old paradigms and re-imagine ways of helping people see the love of God in today's world.
- undergo a change of heart and be flexible in our structures, with all the risks entailed, so as to move to the peripheries in defence of the poorest and most vulnerable.
- make a firm commitment to promote and defend the Rights of the Child.
- awaken in ourselves and those around us an ecological awareness that engages us in caring for "our common home".²



'X' marks the where the treasure is...

2. In all the text of the XXII General Chapter, where we speak of *our common home* we are referring to *our Sister, Mother Earth* (St Francis), as Pope Francis did in his Encyclical *Laudato Si'* on the care for our common home.



The Gospel reference for this call speaks of how people misunderstood Jesus' action and how they questioned the source of His authority. Together with the calls to abandon paradigms and change our hearts, this is a most difficult concept to visualise and thus, it was to be an abstract design rather than a figurative representation.

Like the previous four images, I connected the Marist charism with the simple cross designed and developed by Br Sean Sammon and his council in 2004. I had noticed that this design can be assembled neatly together as in a tessellation and this was my starting point.

At first viewing, one sees a red 'X' in the centre of the frame. It begins like a treasure map where 'X' marks the location of where the riches are buried. However, there is also an 'N' at one side. If this is taken as North on the point of the compass, we can change the perspective, paradigm of how this image is to be viewed. In rotating the image 45 degrees to the right, the red 'X' becomes a red Cross. This is reminiscent of the red cross where Marcellin stopped to pray on his first arrival to LaValla. This is where we also take time to pray for our mission at the new LaValla of the third century. This is where we may find treasures!

The 'N' can be *North, Norte, Nord*, or it can also mean *New, Nuevo, Nouveau, Novo*.

During this pause in viewing the image as a diamond shape, one notices the well known three violets surrounded by three main strange shapes on the edges. These three shapes can represent the Trinity or the three aspects of the '*Identity and Mission of the brother in the Church*': Mystery, Community and Mission.

There are also some strategically placed golden circles or dots. When one connects these dots, they will notice that one can form a tessellation design of the Marist cross, suggesting that when one is aware of these 'turning points' in one's life, one can recognise the formation of a cross which brings an ending as well as new beginnings.

A NEW LA VALLA: PRINCIPLES AND SUGGESTIONS

A new La Valla, for a new beginning. This is what we General Chapter participants experienced together.

La Valla, the home of our origins, reminds us that Marcellin Champagnat was moved by the needs and possibilities of his surrounds and so listened attentively to the Spirit, to discover what God was asking him at that point in time.

In a similar way, we members of the Chapter undertook a careful discernment exercise, trying to answer the two fundamental questions:

Who is God asking us to be in this emerging world?

What is God asking us to do in this emerging world?

The answers to these two questions have been collected, in their essentials, in **the five calls** presented in the Chapter *Message*.

At the same time, aware that these calls contain concrete implications for all dimensions of our life and mission, we decided to develop the ideas across five areas: our vocation as Brothers; our mission; Brother-Lay relationship, as Marists of Champagnat; government and the use of resources.

Each section begins with some **principles** or **beliefs** that, in the opinion of capitulants, will open the way for a new beginning among us. Then, by way of a set of **suggestions**, there are some concrete ways of translating these principles into lines of action.



TOWARDS A NEW BEGINNING ...

a)...IN OUR VOCATION AS BROTHERS

For a new beginning as Little Brothers of Mary, as mystics and prophets of a new world, we believe that:

- we must deepen our experience of God who dwells within and in daily life, and so become God's passionate witnesses by full and happy lives.
- we are being invited to make our communities real homes, characterised by genuine relationships that allow us to build bridges between ourselves and with the people we meet around us.
- we have to embrace a simple lifestyle and experience our vulnerability as a source of fruitfulness and freedom.
- our vocation implies an availability to go anywhere in our worldwide family, working alongside the poor, especially children and young people, to transform the world.
- being brothers is a call to be signs of humanity in all its fulness, which implies healing the wounds of our own lives, promoting the dignity of each person, and caring for our common home.

Therefore, we suggest that:

- *Administrative Units launch a program for individuals and communities to reawaken a spirituality and experience of God that is truly all-encompassing and outreaching.*
- *we undertake a thorough renewal of our community living, sharing the best of ourselves, overcoming any individualism, working on healthy relationships, increasing the time we spend together. We open our doors to the people around us and relate with intercultural sensitivity so as to build a church with a Marian face.*
- *every community, administrative unit and the Institute undertake a discernment on its simplicity of life and closeness to the poor, leading us to adopt concrete actions to move out of our comfort zones.*
- *make personal and community commitments to be more present among young people, being proactive in encouraging them to live out a Marist vocation, and renewing our plans for vocational ministry generally.*
- *reform our processes of initial and ongoing formation and offer new paths at the level of the Institute and Administrative Units to care for our vocation as brothers: accompaniment, attention to each brother's situation and stage in life.*

b)...IN OUR MISSION

For a new beginning, as Marists of Champagnat, committed to the mission of evangelisation and education, we believe:

- in the cultivation of contemplative practices which give meaning to life, and of being brothers and sisters to offer a prophetic sign in a turbulent world.
- in our evangelizing mission that urges us to respond to the cries of today's children and young people in new and creative ways.
- in our committed, preferential and constant presence among children and young people in the geographical and existential peripheries.
- in promoting, protecting and defending the rights of children and young people, and in empowering them as agents of transformation.
- in urgently changing the way we live based on an integral ecology (Laudato Si', ch. IV).

Therefore, we suggest:

- *promoting a culture of encounter (Evangelium Gaudium, 220) through programs and meaningful experiences of encounters with God, with oneself and with others; establishing simple relationships where everyone is heard and valued.*
- *evaluating and adapting our mission of evangelization to the context of emerging realities.*
- *building Marist mission networks at the levels of Administrative Units, Regions and the General Administration, which favour innovation and the renewal of our education and evangelization.*
- *collaborating with other ecclesial and civil institutions, religions and Christian denominations, to provide an inclusive and integrated response to the cries of today's children and young people.*
- *identifying those who are excluded and displaced (migrants, refugees ...), choosing to be present among them, and decisively committing ourselves to defending their dignity and seeking their inclusion.*
- *strongly and proactively implementing Child Protection Policies against all forms of abuse that are consistent with internationally recognized agreements which defend the rights of children and young people.*
- *developing initiatives for the empowerment of children and young people in all our ministries.*
- *creating an integral ecological awareness in all our communities and different ministries, and developing policies at all levels of the Institute that strengthen our commitment to the care of our 'common home'.*

C)...AS MARISTS OF CHAMPAGNAT

For a new beginning, we believe that ...

- the future for the charism will be founded on a union of the heads, hearts and hands of fully committed Marists, brothers and lay.
- as a charismatic family we should walk together respecting the diversity of the Marist world.
- all Marists are co-responsible for Marist life and mission.
- we need new structures and processes that recognize and support our distinctive vocational paths as Marists.

Therefore we suggest that ...

- each Administrative Unit discerns, proposes and accompanies concrete ways of building up mutual and inclusive relationships between Marists.
- each Administrative Unit develops a plan for promoting different forms of Marist life, including appropriate strategies for formation, accompaniment and belonging, drawing on the document *Gathered Around the Same Table*, and others, such as *Being a Lay Marist* and the *Project of Life in Fraternity (CMMF)*³
- that all levels of government establish and/or strengthen structures for all Marists to share leadership and responsibility for Marist life and mission.
- create ways forward which respond to the reality of each country and accompany Administrative Units to share with one another the variety of experiences being lived across the Marist world.

3. The text *Gathered Around the Same Table – the vocation of Lay Marists of Champagnat* was published in June 2009. The other two documents, *Being a Lay Marist* and the *Project of life in Fraternity (Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family)* were presented to the General Chapter by the Secretariat for the Laity, after a process that involved wide participation. We consider these texts as *reference documents* for all Marists of Champagnat.

d)...IN OUR STYLE OF GOVERNMENT

For a new beginning, we believe in governance that:

- engages in a dynamic of spiritual discernment to be constantly attentive to God's calls.
- favours prophetic servant leadership and closely accompanies Marist life and mission.
- puts in place governance structures that are transparent, simple, efficient and flexible.
- is responsive to emerging calls from children and young people on the peripheries and fosters the care of our common home.
- promotes inclusion and greater co-responsibility between Brothers and Lay Marists.
- promotes and strengthens the Institute as a global family and lets go of structures and attitudes that are not supportive of this.

Therefore, we suggest:

- *promoting close personal accompaniment on all levels.*
- *continuing the processes of regionalisation and promotion of inter-regional collaboration to build a Global Body with structures, processes, and strategies that are agile, simple, and participative. We do this by way of following up on the process carried out by the New Models project, the contributions of which we acknowledge and support.*
- *promoting discernment and a rhythm of life that nourishes reflective and productive dialogue on all levels.*
- *identifying and forming leaders, lay and brothers, at all levels, in order to build up co-responsibility for Marist life and mission.*
- *that the Superior General and his Council have the flexibility to explore options to decide where and how to form community and provide appropriate leadership, as they closely accompany Marist life and mission.*

e)...IN HOW WE MANAGE OUR RESOURCES

For a new beginning, we believe that:

- our resources must be at the service of the life and mission of the entire Institute.
- we must ensure both the sustainability of our Administrative Units and the Institute as a whole, as well as the principles of transparency and accountability at all levels.
- we must reaffirm the principles found in the Discernment Plan for the Evangelical Use of our Goods.⁴
- we need to be a global family in communion and solidarity.
- people are our most important resource.
- we must let go of paternalistic economic models that lead to: dependency and a failure to take into account local economic and human resources and resourcefulness; the self-referential and fragmented use of resources; a lack of transparency, training and professionalism; barriers that interfere with our ability to live and grow as a global family.

Therefore, we suggest:

- *developing a plan for the just sharing of human and financial resources at all levels of the Institute, including finding new sources of income and the creation of services and funds to support formation, solidarity, and an expanded mission.*
- *develop a plan of action to achieve the sustainability of Marist life and mission at all levels.*
- *applying the principles found in the Discernment Plan on the Evangelical Use of Goods, promoting simplicity of life at all stages of formation as well as in the General Administration and all our communities and ministries.*
- *developing Institute administrative and financial policies, in keeping with ethical principles, at all levels of the Institute in the form of a Vade Mecum or Guide.*
- *ensuring formation in administration and finances at all levels of the Institute and insisting upon the effective management of resources including: real estate and financial assets; planning; budgeting and controls, external and internal audits; the appointment of professionally prepared personnel to carry out these tasks.*
- *developing a Human Resources Plan for the Institute, the principles of which can be applied locally as appropriate, so as to ensure the human and professional development of all associated with our Marist life and mission and that they are treated with human dignity, respect and justice.*

4. A document prepared by Br Séan Sammon SG and his Council in 2004. at the request of the XX General Chapter.



a new La Valla

marists 2017
22nd general chapter