



Embrace life  
Sustain the future

Secretariat of the laity

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## From the Secretariat

Once again, in this new bulletin, we present life of lay processes which appear in many projects of the Administrative Units that exude fellowship, shared mission, search and hope. The Jesuit Antonio Estrada says that "one of the criteria for evaluating religious life today is the way they relate and treat the laity and its capacity of generating its coming of age." I think our Institute is making great efforts to develop this new relationship with the laity. The experiences recounted here give us grounds to assert that a new beginning will be possible if together, brothers and lay people, continue to believe in the intuitions of Champagnat, in its proximity to the needy, in his spiritual depth and in his testimony of brotherhood.

Fraternally,  
Javier Espinosa, FMS.

## Annual meeting of Ecuador fraternities' coordinators, delegates and advisers

This meeting took place in the city of Loja, on November 22 and 23, 2014. It was very flattering to verify that the eight fraternities are active and have renewed enthusiasm. Next to the oldest, that of Saint Marcellin, of Catacocha, founded in 1999, was the "Marist Friends, New in Mission" of Santo Domingo, which is very young in age and in components. After a presentation of each of the fraternities, the national consultant, Moses Beltran, recalled some points of interest for the Marists, such as the preparation for the celebration of 200 years of the Institute, the conclusions of the General Conference and the Second Marist International Mission Assembly held in Nairobi, the need to



be prophets and mystics. The urgent need for vocational training and accompaniment became apparent.



## FORUM 2014, in Canada

Hundreds of participants who were present experienced the Forum 2014 as a time of reflection and as a way of returning to the origins. The meeting invited them to recall the beginning of the Marist charism and its peculiar features, and allowed the network formed by the various members of the great Marist family of Québec to be consolidated. This was the testimony of a female participant: "In general, the Forum has masterfully contributed to the maintenance and spread of Marist

spiritual dynamism in Canada. We can ensure and affirm that typical Marist and gospel values, such as family spirit, welcome, presence, simplicity, sharing, respect,

mutual aid, listening, unconditional love and openness to others, have become essential references for a large number of disciples of Saint Marcellin Champagnat, ensuring the sustainability of the Marist charism in this corner of the Americas."



## Meeting of animators of Colombia's Marist lay expressions

In the month of December of last year, the house of encounter 'the Refuge' accommodated 30 brothers and lay people from different regions of the country. They reflected in small groups about the different moments and processes that have impacted Marist life in the year that was ending. The encounter began with a vocational guidance workshop, animated by Cristina Angel, who had participated in the course for vocational guides run by the CEFAS Institute in Guatemala. Later on, Claudia Rojas re-



vealed her experience during the II Marist International Mission Assembly held in Nairobi, Kenya. The process was conducted in a climate of dialogue and genuine concern for the future of the laity, using the methodology of consensus. Brother Ismar Portilla presented the third module of the Graduate in Bible. The meeting expressed a permanent commitment by all to strengthen the country's laity.

## Visit to the Europe Centre-Ouest province

Pepe and Javier conducted several meetings in January with groups of lay people of the Europe Centre-Ouest province, in the cities of Glasgow, Dundee, Dublin, Athlone, Mindelheim, Furth and Cham. It was a listening experience and of being in contact with various Marist projects in the fields of education, solidarity, volunteering and Marist charism. It was a simple and fraternal approach by the Secretariat to the reality of the laity in the province. The welcoming of the brothers and Br Brendan's careful programming of the journey turned it into an enjoyable experience.



## Retreat of Marist Laity from Paraguay

The singing of cicadas, the chirping of birds and the warm day were witnesses to the retreat experienced by a group of Marist laity from Paraguay on December 27 and 28 at the Marist House Coronel Oviedo. Brother Chema was inspired by Br Emili's circular letter "He gave us the name of Mary" in order to share the great gift received from Father Champagnat and to live from her spirit.



The icons of the Visitation, Pentecost and the Annunciation, were inspiring themes that invited people to reflect on what it means to be a Marist today. A significant moment of the retreat was when Zuny Silva, a Paraguayan lay who is on mission in the community of Hermitage, recounted her experiences of sharing her life and mission with a mixed international community. Her testimony recalled that God calls people to serve.

## Marist Missionaries of Ciudad Juárez, Mexico

**A**t the beginning of January, seven youths of Ciudad Juárez issued their promises as Marist missionaries. As shown in the picture, it was their own parents who placed their hands over them during the celebration. They made a public commitment to the president and members of the association during the Eucharistic celebration. They are promises made

for one year. This group is legally constituted as a civil association. It began in 2005 and has an ecumenical character. They want to offer a different perspective or experience of the Marist charism, from a missionary lay life, contributing to the integral development of individuals located in peripheral areas of cities.



## LAY MEETINGS IN ASIA

### 1. MChFM Philippines

The third formation session for members of the Champagnat Movement in the Philippines was held in August last year. There were 45 participants. Noemi Silva, Valmie Mariveles and Agnes organised this day of reflection and family meeting. Participants included Brothers Rommel Occasiones and Paul Won of the community of Marbel. On August 15, the feast of the Assumption, 45 brothers renewed their commitments before the Provincial, Br Robert Teoh.





## 2. University in Marbel



In September, around 62 people took part in the programme Marist formation at the University of Notre Dame in Marbel, the Philippines. Elma Rafil and Agnes Reyes organized the programme.

## 4. New models

Agnes Reyes, lay person and member of the International Secretariat of Laity, was invited for the encounter of new management models that took place in Bangkok for three administrative units in Asia, from October 27 to 29.

## 5. Activity with poor children

Members of the Champagnat Movement held a beautiful Christmas activity with poor children in December.

## 3. Joint Formation



From October 20 to 24 there was a joint experience of formation for brothers and lay people. Eleven brothers and 18 lay from the Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam, Cambodia, Hong Kong, Australia, Korea and China participated. A large family.



## Towards the Champagnat Movement's "new beginning"

The revitalization of the Champagnat Movement began in 2012. This lay movement includes more than 3,000 lay people in about 22 countries. An international commission led by Ana Sarrate and under the responsibility of the Secretariat of the Laity, is accompanying the process. This commission has sought to involve all fraternities (about 270) in the proposed update of the Movement.) The first phase focused on an awareness of the reality in order to recall the history of each fraternity and to know



how to read its process. In the second stage, clues for revitalization and for the future were requested. This is the third year where the commission is working, from the contributions of the Provinces, in two ways: on the one hand, to elaborate the Champagnat Movement's Project of Life, now with the language of the laity and keeping

in mind the new references that have risen in these 30 years of the Movement's life. The second approach aims to offer a training and organizational proposal, where there are stages and personal commitments with vocational code, and clues arise for a better articulation of fraternities at a local, provincial and international level. We

can talk about the opportunity of a "new beginning" also for the Champagnat Movement. This is the challenge of the international commission that will meet at the end of July this year in Rome, trying to shape the end of the updating process.

## Meeting with the co-directors of the Secretariat

The first meeting of the year with the co-directors took place in Rome during the annual event that the General Council promotes at that time. It was the occasion of positive dialogue with the Secretariat of Brothers Today, with the General Council, with some lay people of the lay movement Focolare and of the Community of Sant'Egidio, with the team of New Models of Administration and with the other Secretariats. The upcoming projects of the course for the laity, the update of the Champagnat Movement, the meeting of the continental Commissions in 2016, the final phase of the Lexicon, the process for developing a comprehensive framework for the laity, and the annual meeting of the Secretariat expanded



in Sydney, all resumed. The encounter left the pleasant flavor of converged paths, integrated visions and shared hopes.

## Marist Laity Association of Canada

The Marist Association of the Laity (AMDL), a newly created body was born with the objective of bringing into its ranks all who yearn deeply to continue the dream of Marcellin Champagnat. A member of this Association says the following of the current moment: "Currently, the AMDL, works in formulating the basic constitutive aspects, including the following: "Marist formation, access or membership, information and communication, Marist mission, collaboration with the Provincial Council of the Marist Brothers as members of the Table of the Mission, etc."

Beyond the above, we are all aware that the AMDL should become a beacon to guide the Marist family in reinforcing

the values of its own, that promotes the development of our Marist culture, that organizes and accompanies projects for the youth and worries about educating young people who knock on

of the spirit of Champagnat.

The creation of the AMDL perfectly responds to the proposed slogan on the occasion of the Bicentennial:

"Marists 2017, a new beginning." This slogan invites us precisely to reflect together on those new ways of being a Marist today to ensure greater vitality of our charism. To achieve these objectives, the AMDL works in coordination with the Provincial Commission Animation (CAP). The CAP is at the service of all our Marist works and offers its contribution in the areas of training, escort, youth work and solidarity. Its main objective is to ensure the transmission of values and help Marist entities to preserve and/or develop a deeply rooted and significant Marist spirit."



our Marist door of the different works that we head. In this journey that we are doing, the AMDL prioritizes its actions always looking for the vitality of the Marist charism and the continuity



## 7th National Assembly of Laity - Venezuela

From January 15-17, 35 lay people and 8 brothers met at the "Casa de Los Teques" to celebrate the 7th National Assembly of Venezuela's Laity. The Assembly sought a space for upgrading and enhancing the Statutes of Venezuela's Marist Laity, specifying aspects of election and functions of the Community of Lay Leadership nationwide. And two specific calls emerged: 1. We are called to realize the vocational itinerary. We want to promote processes where the laity who are somehow related to Marist Venezuela, have the opportunity to discover God's call in their lives, to give an answer as a lay Marist of Champagnat. 2. We recognize we are called to generate new experiences and space to share the life among laity and brothers, facilitating meaningful experiences of an encounter with God.



## Workshop in the MIUC, Nairobi

Br Lawrence, superior of the MIUC, Mr Kike Greef, coordinator of the laity commission of Africa and Madagascar, and Br Sylvain R. of the Secretariat of the laity, lead a workshop on January 8 and 9. The workshop was also enriched by the contributions of professor Majawa of the East African University, Br Valentin of PACE, and Br Lawrence himself. The debate and discussion sowed the seed of a new way of being Marist in Africa. The communion between brothers and laity has its challenges but it leads to great opportunities for the continent. The workshop raised the need to ensure appropriate training for brothers and laity as well as to provide opportunities for lay people to explore and live the Marist charism and know



how to change existing structures in the provinces and schools to allow all to contribute, according to their strengths and identities.

The desire to grow in mutual trust and to accept that we are all heirs of the Marist charism, and that together we

can realize the intuitions of Champagnat was reaffirmed. The African proverb: "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go with others" was a reason of encouragement to go far, together, Marist brothers and laity of Africa.

## Pastoral Team of the Marist Association of Australia

The Pastoral Team of the Marist Association of Australia met on February 10 to plan its work. The team includes: Br Graham Neist, Sharon Williams, Br Paul Kane, Br Tony Shears and Gail Coates.



## Meetings with provincial commissions of consecrated life and laity

The Secretariat of the Laity has begun meetings with provincial commissions of consecrated and lay life to present the first draft of the Framework for the identity of the Lay Marist as part of the proposed framework, offered by the General Council ahead of the Chapter of 2017.

Br Javier recently met with the Commission of Norandina in Quito and with the Commission of México Occidental in Guadalajara. Nohemy Pinto, coordinator of the Laity Committee in Central America, also took part in the encounter in Guadalajara. This project is perhaps the most ambitious and significant facing the future communion of the Marist charism. The proposal reflects much of the thinking done in recent years; it is a way of responding to what is stated in the Chapter of 2001; it is aimed at moving beyond good intentions to concrete and specific ways of living the Marist charism with a lay identity. It is good news for many brothers that they sensed this path for years, and they are happy to see God's gift to Champagnat and the Church, as well as the Marist charism, shared in this way with other Marists.



## The Champagnat Movement meets to pray, reflect and celebrate

From February 28 to March 1 of this year, around 45 members of the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family, from different cities of the Philippines Sector (Marvel, Kidapawan, Cotabato and Dadiangas) gathered in General Santos, to pray, reflect and celebrate. The meeting's goals were: to reflect on the challenges of 2015, the Montagne Year of the Marist Institute and the Year of the Poor, proclaimed by the Church in the Philippines. To provide a time of prayer and reflection on Lent. To share updated information on the plan of life of the MChFM and propose plans for the three years of preparation for the Marist Bicentenary. To share personal experiences of faith and life together as a family, celebrating the gift of our Marist being. During the meeting, two street children, Noel and Michael,

shared their moving experience of struggle for survival, dependency of Divine Providence and hope for a better life. They were the "face" of the Montagne of our time.





# A course for lay Marists

## Co-responsible for a new start for the Institute

A course will be held for lay Marists, whose motto is: Together towards a new beginning, at the General House from May 19 to June 2 of this year. There will be 56 participants from most administrative units.

The proposed formation hopes to integrate into the process of the Bicentennial celebration, welcoming the great gift of the Holy Spirit, from which the Marist laity emerges, as Br Emili affirms. The course is a way of participating in a historic moment of birth, a new beginning for the Institute. It is aimed at lay Marists, who have already experienced a Marist journey to some extent, and who can take responsibility for animation in formation processes, whether at provincial or international level. The course aims to be a clear motivation for co-responsibility in the Institute's lay processes, such as the development of vocational itin-



eraries, the call to be mystics and prophets, and some form of lay association.

## FOR REFLECTION

### For a change of model

|| The future of the congregations is played largely in its ability to incorporate the laity into its institutions and of being enriched by their experiences. It is not about incorporating the laity into apostolic works of each congregation, or seeking new forms of entailment, but it is rather about reviving the foundational charism with contributions of the laity in order to make the congregations most efficient, better adapted to society and better able to coordinate contemplation and action in a worldly context. Opening up to the laity and the internal restructuring of the congregations can be the seed of new forms of religious life, as in the past, but this time making the laity protagonists of change and partners in decision-making. Spirituality needs to be built from complementarity and recognizing multiple identities, which is what allows the deepening of one's own, in contrast to the others."

(Juan Antonio Estrada in Religious in a secularized society, for a change of model).