



Embrace life
Sustain the future



Secretariat of the laity

Bulletin 11 - January 2016

From the Secretariat

This issue marks the beginning of the New Year. In 2016, we will keep walking towards the Bicentenary and the 22nd General Chapter. We all feel the challenge of implementing the intuitions that are emerging in relation to this "new beginning", which launches our third century of life as an Institute. The Secretariat team feels deeply connected to all the initiatives in this regard, such as the reflection on the new Constitutions, the new management models, and the preparation of the next General Chapter with the fruits we expect. In this regard, our Three-year Plan includes a full-team meeting of the five Regional Commissions in October this year at the Hermitage. This international space for dialogue aims at agreeing on the proposals and suggestions to the Chapter, which should somehow give shape to this new beginning for the Marist charism in the communion between brothers and laity. All the Provinces will send representatives to this meeting. You will receive a number of reflection and discernment guides along the year as preparation. The Expanded Secretariat team asks for your prayer so that this event may be a moment of grace bringing Marist vitality to brothers and laity.

Fraternally,
Javier Espinosa, FMS

Chile: Lay Marists complete a Diploma in Ignatian Accompaniment of the Spiritual Exercises

In mid last year, 10 lay Marists from the Chile Sector of Santa María de los Andes, together with over 60 people from the Local Church, completed a Diploma in Ignatian Spiritual Exercises Accompaniment. The Director of the Ignatian Spirituality Center, Father Juan Pablo Cárcamo, conferred this diploma entitling them to offer spiritual accompaniment according to this method, a treasure of the Church, which the Marists in Chile have implemented for a number of years as part of the laity's





formation, and is now offering to the Directors of Marist works. The Spirituality and Laity Team coordinated this initiative, which responds to one

of the strategic goals of the Sector, that is, forming the laity to assume the shared responsibility of enlivening the charism and undertaking

tasks regarding formation, accompaniment, and the animation of brothers and laity.

Mixed community in Luján, Argentina A gift of vitality for the Province of Cruz del Sur

The five community members are a young lay couple involved in local and provincial pastoral work; a university student who carries out local pastoral activities, and works in a Marist Reference Center for socially vulnerable children and adolescents; and two brothers who were in an insertion community in Merlo, and have carried out their mission in different works across the Province. The community began in 2015. The Province wanted to construct a community of brothers and lay people sharing life and mission without living under the same roof. It focuses on spirituality, mission and life sharing. *"It is a new experience that helps us deepen our Marist vocation, which needs to keep testing new possibilities and expressing itself. It is a lifelong learning process that gives us vitality and the opportunity to grow as disciples of Jesus, enjoying the richness of our different vocations"*.



Annual meeting of the Expanded Secretariat in Sydney

Our agenda included the study of different topics, besides getting to know the local Marist reality, and enjoying the conviviality within our team. We particularly discussed about the vocational itineraries for lay people,

bonding and belonging, lay association, the initial and ongoing formation processes for brothers and lay people, and the updating of the CMMF. The Continental Commissions meeting in October 2016 will revisit these issues and formulate

proposals for the General Chapter. The Province of Australia organized several visits and gatherings during our meeting to dialogue about the lay vocation, formation processes, and lay association. We visited three schools and spent time with the teachers and students; we met with the brothers and laity of the Provincial House and the administrative office; and we joined an activity of the Footsteps II lay-formation program in Mittagong. These experiences were a beautiful way of approaching Marist life in Australia. For the members of the Secretariat, the meeting was also an opportunity to gather around the same table, pray together and deepen our fraternity.



Lay Newsletters



The Brothers and Laity Team of Catalonia just published the first issue of their **bulletin ENLLAÇ** (LINK), offering news and describing different activities regarding the communion between brothers and laity in the Province. With its simple but beautiful layout,

the bulletin is an initiative that will undoubtedly help the Province grow as Marist family.

MARISTAS DE CHAMPAGNAT (MARISTS OF CHAMPAGNAT) is a magazine from Rio Grande do Sul that has been circulating for a number of years. The lay Marists are in charge of its publication. In its latest issue of February-August 2015, an editorial by Edison Oliveira (Provincial Coordinator of the Laity and director of the magazine) stated its goal: to publicize whatever regards the new relationship between brothers and laity, joint formation, Marist vocation, and lay bonding and belonging. It has a special section for



the CMMF in the Province. A beautiful publication, it fosters communication and dialogue regarding the different Provincial processes and the Institute's development.

Echoes about the Lay Animators Course in Porto Velho, Amazônia

This is the testimony of Ida Cristina Oliveira, who represented Amazonia in the course:

The meeting of 55 lay people and brothers from all Continents became a reunion of the worldwide Marist Family! An unexplainable feeling of fraternity and complicity immediately enveloped us. How was this possible, given the diversity of languages, cultures and life experiences? It seemed unreal to look at the participants and find the same features we share in our Marist families with the CMMF fellow members from Amazônia and Rio Grande do Sul. But it was true! Our fascination, our passion for the Marist charism was real. We felt we were drinking the same Water From the Rock, but taken from the Madeira or the Congo River. Our hearts that know no bounds allowed us to meet this way! The richness of the contents we discussed expanded our understanding of how valuable lay Marists are in the Institute. The sharing of experiences from the different Provinces lit the fire in our hearts, and even elicited strong emotions and tears out of joy or fear.



Yes, there was also fear. Answering the vocational call and leaving our comfort zone can be frightening experiences. However, the nearly three weeks of immersion in these realities prepared our hearts for novelty and change, for a growing inclusion of the laity in the different sectors of the Marist world, for the commitment to keeping the charism alive, and for the shared responsibility of communicating Champagnat's spiritual heritage.

We left the General House in Rome with the certainty that in every corner of the world there is someone who dreams and walks together with us, next to the people of God, and alongside the young Montagne. We also left with the hope of contributing to the new beginning of this path that brothers and lay Marists are sharing. We planted the seeds. Let us hope they will find good soil!



Course in Oceania about Marist animators

It took place in Brisbane, Australia. Coming from New Zealand, Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, Bougainville and Australia, twenty-one Marists, elected by their communities as leaders and faith animators, spent four days together to share knowledge and experiences, trying to envision Marist life in the future. The course revisited and applied what we lived in the meeting of Rome in May 2015. The participants had the opportunity to deepen their understanding of the Marist charism, the current theology of discipleship, and the responsibility that Marists have in the Church. The course challenged our perception of what it means to be



Marist apostles, mystics and prophets for our time. We discussed the true sense of our vocation and the process we need to follow in order to grow in it. There was time to analyze possible vocational processes that could effectively help Marist life grow. In the quiet and beautiful setting of Saint Teresa's Spirituality Center, we socialized, danced, sang, prayed together and opened our hearts to our own situations and those of others within the Oceania Region

Peru: Lay Marists begin the *Insight Stage*

On December 5, in a significant ceremony, eight Marists from the lay Cana Community expressed their commitment and started the 'insight stage' (etapa de profundización) of the lay vocational itinerary.

This is the first lay community that was born after a Joint Formation Experience that took place in Cono Sur. Since then, they started walking together as a community, sharing life and prayer, following a community project, undertaking a human and Christian growth process within the Marist family, and trying to be faithful to our



Founder's dream. Five brothers are accompanying this lay community: Saturnino Alonso, Patricio Pino, Oscar Montenegro, José Ticó and Rafael Herrero.

Co-directors Meeting in the Solomon Islands

As part of the Co-directors' mission, once a year we visit a different Marist setting to learn about significant experiences regarding the lay process and the communion between brothers and laity, and to offer support by promoting the sense of our Marist international community. The Expanded Secretariat Meeting in Sydney allowed the Co-directors to visit the Solomon Islands (Melanesia). We got to know the communities of Honiara and Vanga Point. The brothers are directing boarding schools for boys and girls ag-



es 12 and older, especially in rural areas. The unique aspect of this experience is that brothers, teachers and students live in the same campus. Teachers live with their families in different houses. There are shared spaces where they meet, especially the Brothers' community house. Some of the teachers strongly identify with the Marist spirit. They belong to different Christian denominations, and live the Community dimen-

sion between them in a very natural way. Brothers and laity live simply, sharing their life and prayer, and carrying on the Marist mission. A word of deep appreciation for the beautiful testimony of Ruth, Brother Mark, Collin, Theresa, Abraham, John, Sarah and Brother David from Tenaru, Honiara; and to Brothers Sixtus and Henry, Raimond, Carlos, Syphora, Charlie, Maria and Alexia from Vanga Point.

CMMF Assembly in Brasil Centro-Norte

The IV CMMF General Assembly of our Province took place in Belo Horizonte from October 31 to November 2, under the slogan of "Keeping the Flame Alive". The event brought together representatives from 17 Fraternities to evaluate the last three-year term and elect a new coordination team. The Assembly allowed us to reflect together, reform the CMMF internal rules, and choose three priorities that will guide the new team and our journey within the Fraternities. On this occasion, Brother Adalberto Amaral, Provincial Councilor, spoke about the CMMF renewal process. Brother James Pinheiro offered extensive information about the evangelization and missionary work of Brasil Centro-Norte. Eder d'Artagnan, Lay An-



imation Coordinator, analyzed the present situation of the Marist laity in the Province and the Institute.

Rome: Charismatic Families in dialogue

On November 5 and 7, as part of the Year of Consecrated Life, the Association of Members of the General Curias in Rome convened a meeting of the charismatic families that follow the foundational charisms of religious congregations. The invitation attracted many of these families. There were 155 participants (a third of which were lay people) related to 70 religious congregations, representing 52 charismatic families, including the Marists of Champagnat. Gianluca Mauriello and Rosa Ciccarelli (mixed community of Giugliano, Italy), Pep Buetas (Secretariat of Laity) and Brother Pau Fornells (Secretary of the Superior General) represented our Family. This is the first time the General Curias promote a meeting of this nature, which welcomed



Pope Francis' call to all religious congregations asking them to include the laity when contemplating the present situation of consecrated life, as a new expression of the charisms that the Spirit has elicited in the Church.

Fraternities commemorate the Year of Fourvière in Mexico

Thirteen Marist Fraternities of the Central and Western Mexico Provinces met from Oc-

tober 30 to November 1, 2015, in San Juan de los Lagos to prepare the Year of Fourvière. This twen-

ty-first interprovincial meeting of the CMMF included a visit to the Shrine of Our Lady of San Juan de



los Lagos. The participants watched a video from Ana Sarrate, a lay Marist that is coordinating the CMMF update process, who asked them to give more time to their fraternities so that people can see how much they love one another. A second video from Brother Emili Turú, Superior General, called the fraternities to become "lively communities" expressing "the Marian face of the Church".



International Formation Colloquium at the Hermitage

The recent Colloquium about the Brothers' initial formation invited six lay people representing the major Regions of the Institute. They had the opportunity to offer their testimony in relation to the certainty that GAST 17 clearly states: "our respective vocations are mutually enhanced". With the conviction that sharing life clarifies and enriches the identity of brothers and lay people, they pinpointed some implications of this common path for the life of the brothers, which stimulated the Assembly's discussion. The conclusions of the Colloquium



offered new avenues for communion in the areas of initial and ongoing formation.

Retreat for brothers and lay people in Veranópolis, Brazil

From November 5 to 8, a number of Marist brothers and laity from the Province of Rio Grande do Sul attended a joint retreat session (insight experience) in Veranópolis. The Marist Network's Department of Spirituality and Marist Heritage, which is part of the Consecrated Life and Laity Coordination Group, organized this activity. The 43 participants from Rio Grande do Sul, other Marist Provinces of Brazil, and Umbrasil, created communion and shared moments of listening and reflection, especially on the issue of the new re-



lationship between brothers and lay people. Under the motto of "Together

for a New Beginning", Brother Javier Espinosa, Director of the Institute's Secretariat of Laity, led the retreat and directed moments of reflection, prayer and sharing about the calls from God and the Institute regarding the communion between brothers and lay people, besides offering the opportunity to learn about different Marist experiences worldwide in this regard. The retreat session strengthened the communion relationship, and encouraged the participants to look for new horizons and initiatives allowing them to share life.

Province of Mediterránea Provincial Assembly in Guardamar

Coming from Spain, Italy, Lebanon and Syria, the four countries that make up the Province, around 100 participants (almost half brothers and half laity) gathered in Guardamar from December 5 to 8 under the slogan "Whit You 200+". One of the final activities was creatively entitled "Gestures to Make us Dream or Assorted Follies". The following are some of the 'follies' that came up:



- We uphold the vocation of the Marist brothers and laity straightforwardly and without fear, and accompany their process.
- We care for the accompaniment and formation of the Marists of Champagnat (at the personal and community levels) who are engaged in

- any of these 'follies', and devote the necessary human and material resources.
- We offer our availability to Brother Provincial to serve the Province and the Institute.
- We promote the internationality of our Province by fostering experiences in other countries.
- Our school curriculum includes interiority and solidarity education programs.

Proposals from two Provincial Chapters

The Provincial Chapters of Brasil Centro-Norte and Brasil Sul-Amazônia took place in December and invited a number of lay people. We want to highlight some of their conclusions for the next three-year plan. The recommendations for the laity in Brasil Sul-Amazônia were (1) to become the prophets of a new beginning in communion with the brothers, and (2) to live the Marist charism in depth



and in a committed way, becoming leading characters of

alongside the young Montagne of today.

the mission. The recommendations for the Provincial Council included the need to promote communion among brothers and lay people. The Province of Brasil Centro-Norte arrived at the conclusion that it needs to strengthen Marist consecrated and lay life during this three-year term by intensifying joint formation, vocational culture and accompaniment, the Marist mystic experience, fraternal life, the prophetic mission, and the new presences

New document from the Secretariat of Laity

We just uploaded a new document entitled To the Rhythm of the Spirit to the Institute's website (<http://www.champagnat.org/330>.

<http://www.champagnat.org/330.php?a=2&id=4377>). Starting from 1985, it collects the proposals from General Chapters and large Marist international meetings regarding the lay process we have



lived in the Institute. It aims at remembering with gratitude how the Spirit of the Lord has been guiding this process throughout the years. It allows us to perceive the progression in our perception of the Marist charism as a gift from God for both brothers and laity. This doc-

ument tells a story of communion that keeps having new implications for brothers and lay people, bringing about a "new beginning" with different paradigms for the lay vocation, the joint formation process, the new way of being Brothers, and the forms of lay association.

Sharing life in a mixed community

In the community of the Hermitage, brothers and laity are sharing the Marist charism through the daily rhythms of fraternity, prayer and mission. This experience integrates different languages, cultures, vocations, Provinces and nations. We bring you the testimony from the two lay members of the community, Marta and Zuni. This is an extract of their beautiful words.

Both of them highlight the lay vocational experience they are living. Marta tells us:

"Three years ago, I came to the Hermitage with a 23-kilo suitcase and a soul full of dreams. I also brought the wish to give my time freely by serving others; the hope of starting a new path in my Christian life, and finding God's will; and the goal of discovering Marcellin's heart, so as to understand what a life fully given to God means. I knew I would be living in a community but still needed to discover what it actually meant. This time has given me the wonderful opportunity of listening to God's call, of finding out what my vocation as lay Marist means, and of taking steps to give my life to the Marist mission".

Zuni adds:

"I have lived in the Hermitage for two years, and I can now say this experience is a gift from God and the Institute. Without renouncing my lay status, I live the charism we inherited from Marcellin, which many generations of Brothers have handed over to us. I live this in a community that prays together, and serves the people and groups that come to the house. Today I can certainly say that I am a Christian with a Marist heart! Why? Because looking at the path y have walked, I realize how the brothers' closeness through education introduced me to the knowledge and love of the Marist charism. This twofold experience has turned me into the person I am now. Today I live with joy my vocation as celibate lay Marist".

Similarly, they both underline the mixed community and the international experience. Zuni says:

"I thank God for the gift of Champagnat's charism allowing me to live in community today, sharing prayer, the formation process, and

the mission in a fraternal atmosphere. I am happy loving what I do, what I live as personal option in Christian life: being, feeling, and working in the Marist family. My small Paraguayan fountain has increased its flow and, together with my eight brothers and sisters in the community, it now pours its water to feed the Gier River. Life in the Hermitage makes it easy for me to be open to God's presence, sharing joys and concerns with the people next to me or with the pilgrims I meet on my way".

Marta also speaks about the richness of her community:

"The international experience has helped me realize that the differences I find in other people actually complement and enrich me, helping me to become myself. This particular setting constantly asks us to renew the sense of fraternity through dialogue, forgiveness, respect and sharing. The fact of living with the Brothers has helped me appreciate their vocation, the full-hearted gift of themselves, and their joy in serving others in the style of Mary. This is definitely an inspiration for my lay life. It is true that our respective vocations are mutually enhanced through life sharing. Mary has been a model of faith and service in my life. I entrust her this fourth year at the Hermitage, so that I can discover new paths in the gift of myself, in fraternal life, and in the mission".

Marta and Zuni mirror themselves in this text from Gathered Around the Same Table:

"To some of us, God has touched us and has given us a Marist heart. Certainly, more than our decision, it has been God taking the initiative. We cannot live any other way: We are Marists".

These two women feel very happy to be lay Marists indeed!



Congress of the Latin American and Caribbean Confederation of Religious Men and Women – CLAR

The Congress took place in June last year in Bogotá, during the Year of Consecrated Life. The Confederation's Secretary-General, Father Gabriel Naranjo, commented on the experience: "The Congress confirmed a new notion that the CLAR has been glimpsing for a number of years, that is, the need for a Consecrated Life that is poor and at the service of the poor, which involves an anthropological and theological option – as the meeting of Aparecida and the last two Popes have claimed – with new inter-congregational and intergenerational nuances that can enrich our charisms. In this sense, we should speak about more human and humanizing animation and formation processes, and the need to strengthen new experiences with the active participation of the laity. In this regard, it is interesting to note that the future of Religious Life also has to do with an open attitude that favors the emergence of our charisms in the laity. The charisms are no longer linked to the religious habit, but to the following of Jesus, in which the laity can truly be paradigmatic examples.



When we open Consecrated Life to them, the charism, the spaces of vocational fulfilment, and the specific vocations become richer".

Being present in the peripheries

The CMMF update process started four years ago and has promoted an exchange of experiences between more than 260 fraternities across the Institute. This process has allowed us to appreciate the silent but deeply missional commitments of many CMMF members. They are constantly present in places like social centers, parishes, and shelter facilities, bringing a bit of love and Marist closeness. The Institute's website will be presenting some of these beautiful testimonies. We want to echo one of them:

El Salvador: Brothers and sisters sharing smiles and hope

We are the New Hope Fraternity from Liceo Salvadoreño (Salvadorian Secondary School) in San Salvador, born as a group in 2006. Today we are 18 CMMF members. Our life in Fraternity consists in deeply living our family life, prayer, formation and, of course, apostolate. At present, our Fraternity has two apostolates. We affectionately call them "La Merced" and "Michapita" (geographic areas of the city). Today we will tell you the story of our 'family' in La Merced.

The parish church of La Merced is in downtown San Salvador. Opposite to the church, the parish priest has set up a public dormitory called "Divine Mercy Hostel", which shelters at least 30 homeless adult and elderly men every evening. During the day, they wander alone, looking for any



kind of chore to make some money, and begging for at least one serving of food. When the night arrives, they simply want to rest in a place that will shelter them from the dangers of the street. Our apostolate here began in 2013. We started by bringing some food, because it was the first need



we detected. Following our charism, we always begin with a prayer and a message about the love of God and our Good Mother for them. This apostolate today is more than a service to the community. Seeing their faces, we empathize with their suffering, and after delivering a message from God to them, they smile at us even in the midst of their pain. We have learned a lot from them. They all raise their hands wanting to speak and share about what they live, their hopes, illnesses, loneliness, concerns and anxieties. They

are always waiting for our visit because we speak to them about the Living Word of God, and treat them as a family. Thanks to this open attitude, we have been able to speak to them about issues like the importance of socializing and respecting each other. We have also organized 'health days', handed them clothing and articles of first necessity, and even arranged outings. They are our brothers, with whom we also share smiles and hope today.

Province Ibérica

To promote and support the Marist vocation

In the Provincial Chapter of Iberica, 10 lay people took part. At the end, the participants set the priorities for the following term, which are: To promote and support the Marist vocation and lay consecrated in all its stages and expressions caring personal and community processes; To intensify communion between brothers and laity and the search for new community realities that vitalize and make the Marist charism visible; To strengthen the charismatic dimension and innovative educational processes in the work; To prioritize care and service to the Montagne of today when evangelising.



FOR REFLECTION

It is necessary to preserve the freshness of the charism

First, it is necessary to preserve the freshness of your charism, never lose that freshness, the freshness of your charism, always renewing the "first love" (cf. Rev 2:4). As time goes by, there is a greater temptation to become comfortable, to become hardened in set ways of doing things, which, while reassuring, are nonetheless sterile. There is the temptation to cage in the Holy Spirit: this is a temptation! However, "realities are more important than ideas" (cf. Evangelii Gaudium, 231-233); even if a certain institutionalization of the charism is necessary for its survival, we ought not delude ourselves into thinking that external structures can guarantee the working of the Holy Spirit. The newness of your experiences does not consist in methods or forms, or the newness itself, all of which are important, but rather in your willingness to respond with renewed enthusiasm to the Lord's call. Such evangelical courage has allowed for the growth of your Movements and New Communities. If forms and methods become ends in themselves, they become ideological, removed from reality, which is constantly developing; closed to the newness of the Spirit, such rigid forms and methods will eventually stifle the very charism that gave them life. We need always to return to the sources of our charism, and thus to rediscover the driving force needed to respond to challenges.



Address of his Holiness Pope Francis to Participants in the Third World Congress of Ecclesial Movements and New Communities