



Embrace life
Sustain the future



Secretariat of the laity

Bulletin 13 - August 2016

From the Secretariat

"The current review process of the Constitutions, in which so many brothers are participating, offers an excellent opportunity to assess and express how this new charismatic family affects our own identity within the Church" (Brother Emili, Fourvière: The Revolution of Tenderness).

This quote by Brother Emili inspired me to write the introduction to the present Newsletter. The meetings and events we will inform you about are part of the path of communion between Brothers and Laity that the Institute is promoting. In the common house of our charism, and gathered around the same table, we are confident that our specific vocations as Laity and Brothers enlighten each other without confusion, and that we are a constant source of richness for one another. We further understand our vocations and appreciate their beauty by sharing our lives. Communion strengthens our identities, and at the same time brings us into the new family of those who follow Jesus in the style of Mary. That is why I think that the revised Constitutions should include new vocational and institutional parameters for the Brothers in terms of communion between Brothers and Laity.

In other words, following Jesus through the charism we have received is the common ground for Brothers and Laity. The one and only mission of the Church is shared by all Marists. But this common vocation allows the Brothers to perceive new ways of living the Marist charism in the secular world, and discover the richness of our charismatic gift in a deeper way as it finds new expressions and nuances regarding Marist fraternity, spirituality and mission. The revised Constitutions should include these innovative parameters of Marist life, which enrich the Brother's identity with new features. Marist lay people can offer great help in this process.

Fraternally,
Javier Espinosa, FMS.

Breaking ground for the Marist charism Province of Canada

The Assembly of laity and brothers held in Canada in late April – to which Pep and Javier were invited – was an opportunity for the Secretariat to meet with the different groups that are opening new paths for the Marist charism in that Province. The social, religious





and Marist context of Canada is challenging the Province in several ways: mission projects outside the schools; the identity of a leading group aimed at offering the Marist testimony as the communities of Brothers did until now; and the Lay

Association, whose structure will stand thanks to the quality of Marist experience its members live. Other challenges came up during the Assembly, such as the importance of opening up to internationality, committing to young people, devel-

oping a new spiritual language, and the need for the Brothers to carry on with the spirituality of "hope and abandonment in God". These new paths that Canada is opening can become an innovative point of reference for the entire Institute.

The Promise and Commitment Marist weekend in Notre Dame de l'Hermitage

This is the fourth year that Institute offered a 'recovery' weekend to laity and Brothers in France in Notre Dame de l'Hermitage. A group of 40 laity and Brothers accepted the invitation to meet, share their life experiences, listen and interiorise from April 2 – 4. The vocational coordination team in France focused this year's topic on Promise and commitment. During the first afternoon, they gathered using a symbol of a personal Marian path already travelled. In their expressions, one could see that the presence of the promise of the first Marists in Fourvière filled their hearts. The following day, three witnesses presented with simplicity and trust, the life choice that they had made: their commitment in the field of education, in the business world and in the field of the family. The three topics touched their hearts, perhaps even provoked them in a way, but the topics especially raised a reflection on themselves. At the end of the gathering,



each participant wrote their own promise, a promise that will guide their path.

Meeting in Guadalajara, Mexico



Taking advantage of Brother Javier's trip to Mexico, representatives of the two Mexican Provinces met on May 21 in Loma Bonita, Guadalajara, to discuss the lay processes that are taking place in the Institute and in the country. It was an opportunity to talk about a number of projects and best practices regarding lay animation, and to examine the General Council's proposal regarding a Marist vocational itinerary. The participants also discussed the reflection topics of the Continental Commissions Meeting that will take place in October at the Hermitage. The interprovincial experience of discussing together the present challenges aiming at a future of communion elicited the participants' interest in organizing more meetings of this kind. Brother Miguel Ángel, Provincial of Western Mexico, accompanied the group's reflection.

Around 60 participants from 13 Fraternities meet in Luján Province of Cruz del Sur



The meeting brought about a better cohesion of the CMMF members, mutual enrichment through the exchange of experiences, and the feeling that these Marist communities are part of a large movement, in which many hearts resonate with the charism of Champagnat, increasing therefore the participants' sense of belonging to the Marist mission. Brother Emili's video message expressed a deep desire: "As small Marist Christian communities, may you be able to promote the revolution of tenderness". The aim of the meeting was to proceed with the project launched last year, which consists in promoting and encouraging the specific apostolates the Fraternities are carrying out, emphasizing the need to be contemplatives in action.

Meeting to discuss the new relationship Province of Brasil Sul-Amazônia

With a spirit of communion and in tune with the Institute's calls, 40 lay people and brothers participated in the first meeting to discuss the new relationship that was held in the Patrimony and Spirituality Center of Viamão on June 2. There were some participants from UMBRASIL (Marist Union of Brazil, a non-lucrative association representing all the Marist Provinces and institutions of the country) and from the other Brazilian Provinces. The group focused on the following issues: lay bonding and belonging, vocation and formation itineraries, and joint formation. The group also evaluated the General Council's proposal regarding a Marist vocational itinerary for the laity.



Research about the lay experience of the Marist charism

How are the Marist laity living the charism in the different Regions of the Institute? This question summarizes the topic chosen by Eder D'Artagnan – Coordinator of the laity in the Province of Brasil Centro-Norte –

for his final paper in the Marist Charism and Educational Principles Postgraduate Program, which is promoted by the Marist Higher-Education International Network and implemented by the Pontifical Catholic University of Paraná in

Brazil. Eder sent a virtual questionnaire to the participants of the Lay Animators Course organized by the Secretariat of Laity in the General House from May 19 to June 2, 2015. The answers of the 26 participants were the basis for



his article entitled "Marist Laity: Nourishing the Charism Together". According to Eder, "the article meant a lot of work, since the 26 questionnaires were in three languages, but writing it was very rewarding. The participants were generous in sharing their experiences and brought back to my heart the experience of reflecting and sharing that

we lived throughout the course. It is very enriching to realize the common and the specific aspects of the way in which laity and brothers are living the Marist charism in the world, and how this is becoming the path leading to a future of communion for the Institute". The full text can be found in the laity section of the [Institute's website](#).



What are the traits that define us as Marists? Provincial Assembly of Canada

On April 28 and 29, a group of brothers and lay people met to discuss the meaning of being Marists today in the Province of Canada and in the world. Three questions motivated the discussion: How can we tell someone is a Marist? What are the traits that define us, set us apart, and motivate us? Brothers or lay people, men or women, young or old, believers or non-believers, what are the common traits that unite us?



Obviously this was not the first Provincial Assembly, but it was the first time that an Assembly focused on the continuity of the Marist charism through a joint reflection of brothers and laity as equal partners with a shared responsibility. The 43 participants used a small table exchange methodology aimed at reaching consensus.

Visit to the Central-East Africa Province

Pep Buetas, Sylvain Ramandimbarisoa and Javier Espinosa – members of the Secretariat of Laity – visited many of the communities of the Central-East Africa Province (PACE) from May 29 to June 12. The visit aimed at getting to know the lay groups, and assessing the Province's possibilities regarding the process of communion, besides motivating the launching of new experiences, and supporting the processes already underway. A number of challenges emerged during the visit: formation, the lay-group monitoring carried out by the Brothers, networking among the Province's lay groups, discovering how this process enhances the Brother's vocation, and the possibility of enriching the charism with innovative nuances. The need for a regional process of mutual support emerged quite strongly, and there was also a clear sense of communion with the Institute's process. A member of the Secretariat stated: "When we speak about Kinshasa, Kisangany, Bobandana, Mururu, Save, Byimana, Kigali and Mwanza, we



can now picture many faces of brothers and laity who see the future as a communion of hearts, and are promoting a new beginning".

Meeting with the Laity Commission of Ibérica

In June, Brother Javier participated in a reflection morning that was held in Zaragoza with the Laity Commission of the Iberian Province. In the first part of the meeting, the members discussed the Commission’s organization and dynamics, its history and projects. They also reflected on the processes of bonding, the lay spirituality proposal, and the Marist groups. The Commission presented the most recent material they have produced: “Marist Christian Communities of Reference in our Works”. During the second part of the meeting, the Commission members shared their views regarding the proposals from the Secretariat of Laity that the Institute is currently discussing, especially the vocational itinerary and the process of association. The meeting was very fraternal and the exchange quite enriching.



We Marists’ – discerning a way forward Province of Australia



In a true spirit of communion, many Marist communities across Australia have recently hosted the biannual Regional Gatherings of the emerging Australian Conference of the Marist Association of St Marcellin Champagnat. The Marist Association fosters belonging and connection to Marist life and mission, and is one of many ways this is being achieved throughout the Institute. By creating a new

shared space in the Church for Marist Brothers and all other people drawn to Marist spirituality as a primary way to bring the gospel to life, the Marist Association is a radical new expression of relationship between Brothers and lay.

At the Regional Gatherings, hundreds of Marists have come together to consider, receive and reflect on the new strategic directions document for the Association: “We Marists. Our Hopes and Priorities 2016-2018”. The document is the fruit of a twelve-month process, a key moment of which was the Marist Mission Assembly held in August 2016 at Mittagong, New South Wales. All Marist schools, other ministries, agencies, and boards, have been invited to consider how the “We Marists” document can be imbedded as a defining element of their own strategic planning. The Regional Gatherings also provided the opportunity for Marists from various locations to pray together as a faith community, and to formally acknowledge new people who have expressed interest in the Association.

On the way to the Hermitage

Over 50 people – members of the Continental Commissions and guests – will participate in the meeting that will take place

from October 3 to 8 at the Hermitage. Since the beginning of the year, they have been reflecting about the topics presented by the Secretariat in order

to develop proposals for the General Chapter. With the contributions they are already sending in, we will draw up a working document that will be



the main input for our reflection at the Hermitage. We have ensured the participation of all continents and Administrative Units. It will be an opportunity to enhance our international communion, and consolidate an iden-

tity in which the Marist laity throughout the world can mirror themselves. The fact of living this process at the Hermitage also aims at a closer experience of our foundational sources in order to strengthen the new beginning

all together. The Lay Commission Coordinators from two Regions will meet after the event at the Hermitage: the American Continent in Ecuador (November), and Europe in Les Avellanes (December).

Letter from Brother Emili, Superior General "Fourvière: The Revolution of Tenderness"



The letter, according to Brother Emili, "is an attempt to continue the commitment to renew the Church. On this occasion, we seek to reclaim, from a community perspective, the active participation of all baptized persons". He recalls the Fourvière pledge, which was a project of mercy and tenderness, and highlights the community dimension as essential to Christianity, and therefore to Marist life. In the final part, he presents the notion of charismatic family as a point of reference: all its members – religious, laity and clergy – try to rekindle the charisma that gathers them, in order to develop the specific evangelical style that expresses it, and carry out the same ecclesial mission together, which is no longer the exclusive task of a religious Institute. The letter is a beautiful contribution to the path of communion undertaken by the Institute.

Marists Together in New Times Province of Australia

In May, 90 Marist leaders came together in three separate locations to participate in a formation experience aimed at enhancing the capacity of Local Coordinators of the

Marist Association of St Marcellin Champagnat, Australian Conference. Marists gathered in Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne to share their stories of being a Local Coordinator, to

reengage with the underlying dream and vision for the Marist Association, and to familiarise themselves with recent spiritual formation resources that have been developed for use in small groups. The programme drew on the Oceania 'train-the-trainer' Lay Formation experience hosted in Brisbane in November 2015, and two of the key designers had participated in the international gathering of Lay Animators in Rome in May of last year. Local Coordinators of the Marist Association evaluated the experience as a wonderful opportunity to connect with like-minded people from other parts of Australia, a time of prayer and spiritual nourishment, and a cherished time of community. All felt supported and resourced to take the next steps for growing the Marist family in their local area.



Deepening of Family Spirit Kidapawan, Philippines



The Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family gathered in June 11-12, 2016 at the Climber's Den in Brgy. Ilomavis, Kidapawan City. They spent time in prayer, reflection, and bonding. They revisited their plans and programs, particularly the CMMF joint project on the sponsorship of the education of at least 2 Marcellin boys of the Marcellin Homes in Katangawan, General Santos City. The group agreed to formally endorse their donation on June 19, 2016 to Br. Crispin Betita, FMS.

Workshop at the international communities meeting

The formation program for the participants in the Lavalla 200> Project – which took place in San Martino a Monte, a small town near the famous monastery of Camaldoli, Italy – included the new relationship of communion between brothers and laity. In the first steps of this formation experience, we spent two days (May 19 to 20) delving into this new reality. Ana Sarrate and Pep Buetas facilitated the different group sessions. The topic seemed theoretically appropriate within the context of the formation proposal, but the workshop experience showed that the new relationship between brothers and laity is actually an essential element in any international community project.



The process during these two days began by recalling our own personal experience of the Marist path; we then identified and shared the initiatives that are

taking place in the different parts of the Institute; and finally, we reflected about the contribution of the international communities



to the process of communion among brothers and laity. The conclusions had to do both with the global level (offering our testimony, living a fully-shared Marist Mission, and being prophetic signs along the Marist path), and the daily-life level of the communities themselves (generating deep communication spaces, enriching each other's identity, taking care of

the details that matter in a close community-life relationship, and moving forward towards a deeper vocational option).

In these two days, the participants got to know each other better, and realized that the process of communion is a source of inspiration and renewal for our Marist vitality.

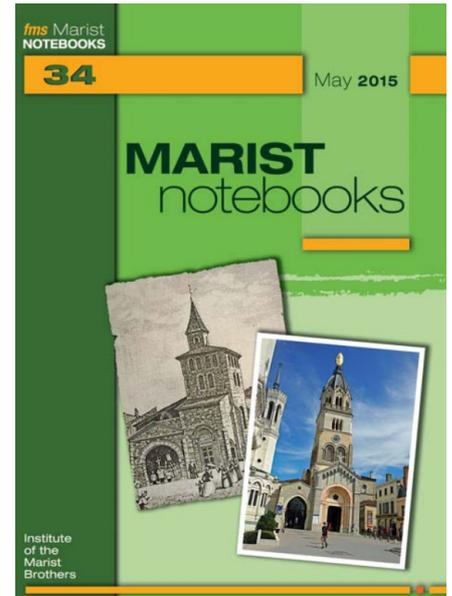
Marist Notebooks, 34 May 2016

Brother Aureliano Brambila's article dealing with "RE-FOUNDATION" suggests a context for the bringing together of various factors of our origins and traditions which lie at the very heart of who we are. By having the laity play a vital role in the "re-foundation", he brings us to the main theme of this issue of Marist Notebooks for it has been particularly dedicated to the laity. The topic of the laity has certainly generated much discussion. In the past, however, Marist Notebooks has mostly been silent in treating it. The year 2016 offers us a fresh opportunity for renewed discussion by providing time to look at various reflections on issues with authors who approach the topic from different perspectives, and reveal a unity in diversity.

In his article on MARIST LAITY, THE FUTURE AS WE SEE IT, Brother Javier Espinosa approaches the topic in a comprehensive manner, suggesting that our future should be based on a model of the Church as a community of believers. This model would place our Institute as one part of a commu-

nity of believers. In such a model the Brothers no longer see themselves as the sole owners of their charism. The sharing of their charism becomes, not an expression of diminishment, but rather an opportunity of renewal. The image is no longer one of "widening your tent", but rather of "pitching a new tent". There is a need to re-think the institutional model with which we have become so familiar, and perhaps to consider using a better model, one that is more inclusive, and in which there is a place for Marist lay people.

Heloïsa Afonso de Almeida Sousa, MARIST SPIRITUALITY FOR THE LAY MEN AND WOMEN, invites the Marist Brothers to consider the difficult questions that are asked, or often implied about lay Marists such as: "What is the motivation behind the quest of our lay colleagues for more Marist spirituality?" "Is it because they seek greater involvement in our missionary efforts?" "Is it because they have lived with the Brothers and have experienced their spirituality?" "Is it because they have experienced a special call from God?" The article brings togeth-



er four lay Marists, two men and two women. They provide us with a number of responses to the questions being asked. Some speak from their own personal experiences, while others offer responses that are also valid but are more speculative. Readers will find in these four presentations some concurrence of thought.

Accompaniment course

Lay Marists of Arco Norte and Cruz del Sur meet in Guatemala

From July 8 to 22, a group of 28 lay people from the Region of Arco Norte and the Province of Cruz del Sur participated in a course directed by a team from the Central American Institute of Spirituality, which is

ran by the Society of Jesus. The course offers formation modules from the theoretical and practical perspectives, including tools to accompany the people in formation regarding their psychological, historical and spiritual

dimensions. This Institute has been offering courses for formators for many years, following the initial inspiration of Father Carlos Cabarrús SJ. This first course at the Regional level stems from the General Council's request

to draw up a global framework for the Marist vocational process, and was promoted by the Laity Commission of the Province of Central America. The course comprises two 13-day residential modules (2016 and 2017), and 9 months of Spiritual Exercises in Daily Life. The residential modules offer a personal growth workshop, elements of human and spiritual discernment, as well as psychological, vocational and spiritual accompaniment tools. The participants were from 12 countries and 5 Marist Provinces. More than 70 lay people from some of these Provinces are following an accompaniment process and a vocational itinerary.



Joint-formation experience

Laity and brothers gathered in Cuenca (Ecuador) and Armenia (Colombia)

The Province of Norandina has been promoting joint-formation experiences in the three countries that make up the Province. This year, the meetings took place in Venezuela during Holy Week, in Ecuador in June, and in Colombia in July. There were 21 participants in Ecuador, including laity, brothers and postulants. The most recent meeting was in Armenia, Colombia, with the participation of 21 brothers and 23 lay people. There were brothers from all ages. The lay participants included teachers, pastoral coordinators, and members of the Champagnat Movement.

This experience tries to highlight dialogue and personal communication among the participants rather than theoretical contents. Both lay people and brothers have leading roles, and share the organization and animation of the four-day meetings. 'Small communities' or 'life groups' among the participants guarantee a deeper communication process, as well as an experience of community accompaniment and mutual vocational enrichment. These joint-formation experiences are an expression of communion that make prejudice and fear banish, and generate confidence and mutual appreciation between brothers and lay people.



Newness in "Gathered around the Same Table" Marist School of Sargodha, Pakistan

A talk titled 'Newness in "Gathered around the Same Table"'

took place at the Marist School of Sargodha, Pakistan, from June

21 – 22. Brother Teófilo Minga, of the Compostela Province, dedicated



a talk to Superior General Brother Emili Turú's letter, "Fourvière – the Revolution of Tenderness." Five Marist Brothers, 35 teachers of the school and Lay Marists attended the seminar. "It was worth the initiative to be able to listen to each other and to learn new things about the relationship between Brothers and

lay," affirmed Brother Paul Bhatti in a statement dated June 23 to the general house press office. Brother Rohail Niamat underscored that the seminar "came in good time, when the question of the relationship between brothers and lay Marist people is becoming a crucial one in the Marist world." Along with these

ideas Anil, who has participated in the II MIMA in Nairobi, and Anum Maria presented a report of their groups underlining the need of more sessions like the one offered now to the teachers: they could be a way to have in the future Marist people from Pakistan participating in international communities.

Lay Marists participated in the 2nd East Asia Province Assembly General Santos, Philippines

The Marist Brothers of the East Asia Province gathered during the 2nd Province Assembly held in January 13-14, 2016 at Family Country Homes in Lagao, General Santos City. In this gathering, five lay were invited to participate. Four of them came from the different Marist ministries in the Philippines while one of them is a teacher who came from the China Sector.

One of the objectives of the Assembly is to strengthen the structure of the Province and to enhance the following areas, such as: Ministries/Mission, Spirituality, Vocation Promotion and Formation, and Lay Partnership. The Assembly also aimed to orient the participants on the new direction of the Institute on Governance, Animation,



and Management. Br. Michael Green, FMS, the National Director, Marist School Australia gave a comprehensive and clear explanation on governance, animation, and management. It was a great opportunity for the lay to interact with the Brothers and to share concerns related to the lay. Elma Rafil, the East Asia Lay Coordinator, presented the Marist Lay formation program in the Philippines. She also served as a member of the Secretariat Committee during the said Assembly.

REFLECTION TEXT

From the Letter of his holiness Pope Francis to Cardinal Marc Ouellet, President of the Pontifical commission for Latin America

To look at the People of God is to remember that we all entered the Church as lay people. The first Sacrament, the one that seals our identity forever and of which we should always be proud is Baptism. By it and with the anointing of the Holy Spirit, (the faithful) are consecrated as spiritual house and holy priesthood (LG) 10). Our first and fundamental consecration sinks its roots in our Baptism. No priest or Bishop has baptized anyone. Lay people have baptized us and it is the indelible sign that no one will ever be able to eliminate. It does us good to remember that the Church is not an elite of priests, of the consecrated, of the Bishops, but we all form part of the Holy People faithful of God. To forget this brings in its train various risks and deformations both in our own personal as well as in communal living of the ministry that the Church has entrusted to us. We are, as Vatican Council II well points out, the People of God, whose identity is the dignity and the freedom of the children of God, in whose hearts dwells the Holy Spirit as in a temple (LG) 9). The Holy People faithful of God is anointed with the grace of the Holy Spirit; therefore, when it comes to reflecting, thinking, evaluating, discerning we must be very attentive to this unction.

We have often fallen into the temptation of thinking that the committed layman is one who works in the tasks of the Church and/or in the things of the parish or of

the diocese, and we have reflected little on how to accompany a baptized person in his public and daily life; like him, in his daily task, with the responsibilities he has he commits himself as a Christian in public life. Without realizing it, we have generated a lay elite, believing that only they are committed laymen who work in the things "of the priests," and we have forgotten, neglected the believer who often burns his hope in the daily struggle to live the faith. These are the situations that clericalism cannot see, as it is more concerned to dominate areas more than to generate processes. Therefore, we must recognize that the layman, because of his own reality, his own identity, his being immersed in the heart of social, public and political life, his being in the midst of new cultural forms continually gestated, is in need of new forms of organization and of the celebration of the faith. The present-day rhythms are so different (I do not say better or worse) from those lived 30 years ago! This requires imagining areas of prayer and communion with novel, more attractive and significant characteristics – especially – for urban inhabitants. (EG 73).

The laity is part of the Holy People faithful of God and, therefore, the protagonists of the Church and of the world, to which we are called to serve and not to make use of.

