



Presentation

Dear friends, this Newsletter arrives at the end of the year. Once again, it speaks about lay Marist life and its very different expressions across the Regions of the Institute. With this publication, as usual, the Secretariat aims at letting you know about the main events and ongoing processes regarding the Marist laity, and at growing in communion as Marist Family. This new issue of our Newsletter wishes to be a special message of fraternity inviting us to join hands, to gather around the table, and to look at the path we have trodden this far.

To me, it is also a farewell, since my seven-year mission at the Secretariat will conclude in December. In a few months' time, I will return to my Province of Central America. I have spent a few weeks putting the Secretariats' archives in order, folders and folders recording many meetings and programs carried out across the Institute. As I ran through the papers, I found countless names and photographs, and recalled many beautiful experiences I lived throughout these years. It was easy to evoke the faces of so many people I have come across. With a deep feeling of gratitude, I thanked the Lord for all these faces – and all the Marist hearts behind them. In their company, I have experienced a strong call to be creative and open new horizons, to engage in dialogue and aim at renewal in this period of my life. My gratitude also goes to all the laity and brothers who contributed to the grace and happiness I experienced these years.

As I look back, I am pleased with the significant step forward that the appointment of a lay Director of the Secretariat has meant. This decision is consistent with the renewal we have promoted these years. Brothers in the Institute have gradually assumed the process of delegating the management of our works to the laity; this new step expresses our shared responsibility regarding the Marist charism experience and how we spread it across the world. It states that our charism's vitality, our Marist future, and our new beginning is a commitment that all Marists share. Many thanks to Raúl Amaya for accepting the challenge of this new position, which is part of the path of communion within the Institute.

Thank you also to Pep and Agnes, Codirectors of the Secretariat; to João Luis and Kate, who remain as part of the team; to Elias and Ana, who join the Extended Secretariat. And many thanks to Tony, Paty, Ana Sarrate, Fabiano, Sylvain, Linda, with whom I shared so many moments of dialogue and hopeful searching.

The Chapter impels us to keep moving forward, and to reassert the great ideals of our Marist Charismatic family, which updates Champagnat's first insight, that is, bringing God's love to the children and young people who are most in need. From some small corner of Central America, I will keep treading this path to the future of our Marist charism.

Fraternally,

Brother Javier Espinosa





Fraternities of Mexico Meeting of CMMF Fraternity Animators

In January this year, the CMMF Fraternity Animators of Mexico had their annual meeting, which aimed at supporting each other in the task of accompanying the Mexican fraternities. The Consecrated and Lay Life Team presented their new workplan called "Welcome to things Marist". It is part of a formation plan for people who first join a Fraternity. We also studied the new CMMF Life Project and spent time discussing it and offering feedback. The Fraternity of Irapuato formally invited us to the next national meeting that will take place from October 28 to 30, 2018,



at John Paul II House in the city of San Juan de los Lagos.

Retreat from all South African Marist schools Sharing our Call

Forty-five staff from the five Marist schools in South Africa gathered from July 20 – 23 in Hartbeespoort for the annual retreat, 'Sharing our Call.' It was host-



ed at the Good Shepherd Retreat Centre by the Marist Brothers Linmeyer, an elementary school of Johannesburg. Participants came from St Henry's Marist College in Durban, St Joseph's Marist College in Cape Town, as well as from three schools in Johannesburg, St David's Marist Inanda, Marist Brothers Linmeyer and Sacred Heart College.

This year is the Institute's bicentenary and marks 150 years of Marist education in Africa. The retreat ended on July 23, the 201st anniversary of when Saint Marcellin Champagnat and the first Marists made a pledge to Mary at the shrine of Fourvière. Brother Jude Pieterse, provincial councillor of Southern Africa, and Mike Greeff, director of the Marist Schools Council of South Africa, took part in the retreat.

Workshops in Central America and Mexico

The Secretariat launched a series of workshops for the Provinces at the beginning of 2017, which went on in the month July. The Province of Central America held its workshop in Guatemala City, and the two Mexican Provinces, in Mexico City. Brother Javier Espinosa and Nohemy Pinto (Coordinator of the Provincial Commission of the Laity in Central

America) led both workshops. The contributions from the participants were added to the proposals that the General Chapter received in September. Such as the previous meetings, these workshops were an experience of participation, dialogue, and growing communion.



Mexico



Central America

Fifth Meeting of the Asia Laity Commission Developing Marist spirituality among brothers and laity

The Asia Laity Commission held its fifth meeting from Aug. 10 – 12 at the Tulana Jesuit Research Center in Colombo, Sri Lanka, for further developing Marist spirituality among brothers and lay in Asia. Its six members are Agnes Reyes (Convenor), Brother Dominador Santiago (East Asia), Elma Rafil (East Asia), Jude Preman (South Asia), Brother Roshan Silva (South Asia) and Brother Ismael Valls (MDA). They joined the Asian Spirituality Team composed of Brothers Domingo Lee (Korea), Max Meier (MDA) and Sunanda Alwis (South Asia).

Specific enabling objectives were identified and proposals were delineated to achieve the goal of forming brothers and lay imbued with Asian spirituality and zealous promoters of the “Marian face of the Church” in their respective ministries. Brother Sunanda Alwis, coordinator of the laity of South Asia, invited the members of the Asia Laity Commission to offer support to the brothers and lay of South Asia who were receiving joint formation on leadership. Brother Ismael Valls told participants from Pakistan, Sri-Lanka and India his experience in mission and laity collaboration in China. Agnes spoke about the vocation of the laity and Elma gave a testimony on being



a member of the Champagnat Movement. One of the participants underscored that they dream for “a joyful, bolder, stronger Marist Brothers and Lay in service, together.”



The Marist Spirituality Network meets in Mexico City Spirituality for a New Beginning

The 11th Inter-American Meeting of the Marist Spirituality Network (RED-EAM) took place from July 5 to 10 at Quinta Soledad (Solitude Country House), a Marist Residence in Mexico City. There were 35 participants – laity and brothers – including 8 guests from the Central Mexico Province. Brother Javier Espinosa, from the Secretariat of Laity, joined the meeting. The central topic was "Spirituality for a New Beginning", under the moto of "La Valla, mystical inspiration for our lives". We centered our reflection on one aspect of our Marist Spirituality, and discussed 'The Four Ways of Apostolic Spirituality': contemplating God in oneself; contemplating God in history and the world; contemplating God in prayer; and coming out of oneself.

At the end of the meeting, the Spirituality Network Team presented several propositions from the two Marist Regions of the Americas, which will be sent to the Provincials in August. They also reminded us that RED-EAM has been



insisting on the importance of creating spiritual animation teams in the Provinces, which significantly revitalize the Marist spiritual experience locally.

Moving towards communion and greater vitality CMMF Notre Dame Cotabato, Philippines

The work of renewing the life-plan of the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family (CMMF) across the Institute has taken forward steps. To date, advocacy has been promoted on the revitalization of the Movement through consultations and presentation of the revised CMMF Life Plan to the members of the family.

The CMMF Notre Dame Cotabato took part in this process when they convened on July 15, 2017 to pray together, to know the revised Life Plan, and to share reflections on the blessings they received and the desires they had towards invigorating lay Marist life. Members expressed that, among others, they felt a strong sense of a family within the group and membership to the CMMF provided them with rich formative opportunities and outreach activities for the poor. Many of them expressed their desires for on-going formation, expansion of membership, and strengthening more their relationship within the CMMF community. One member expressed: "I wish that through CMMF every member become more zealous in fulfilling one's mission..." The brothers in



Cotabato community were present and they expressed encouraging support to the initiatives undertaken by the Marist laity. Through CMMF, members affirmed that the relationship of communion with brothers was deepened and nourished.

Brothers and lay in a joint formation in Madagascar Revitalizing charism and mission

The congregation's future horizon indicates one of its priorities directing to the path of a new relationship between brothers and lay. Having in mind the intention of nurturing the relationship of communion, it was proposed that joint formation processes be experienced to achieve a deeper understanding of the distinct vocations of the brothers and the lay, and how these complement in carrying out creative expressions of Marist missions in the Church.

Last August 16-18, 2017, the Province of Madagascar convened brothers and lay for a Joint Formation Experience. Coming from six towns of the country, from north to south, 22 brothers and 28 laity participated in the processes that led to achieving the goal of promoting common reflection of the discovery and living one's distinct vocation, and communion and co-responsibility in the building up of the Marist life. The first two-days provided a communal sharing of faith experiences, generating reflections that responded to the challenges of re-creating Marist life along the thrust of the new Chapter. The third day was intended solely for the laity to specifically address the need to develop skills in the organization of small faith communities, particularly the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family.

The Joint Formation experience was facilitated by Agnes S. Reyes (East Asia Province Lay Animator) and Br. Sylvain Ramandimbarisoa, FMS (Provincial). For most participants, it was an opportunity for them to know more and understand the specific vocations and call for communion to revitalize our Marist mission.



Workshops in Ghana and Cameroon Marist District of West Africa

The Secretariat of the Laity and Brother John Kusi, organized two three-day workshops in Ghana and Cameroon, with the participation of about 50 laity, men and women, and 10 Brothers at the end of August. During the workshop in Ghana, district superior Brother Francis Lukong expressed his support for the efforts of improving communion between Brothers and laity at the district. In Cameroon, Brother Ivo Njongai, the national coordinator of the Marist laity in the country, accompanied the experience. The animating team was formed by Agnes Reyes of East Asia, Ana Sarrate of Ibérica, Brother Spiridion Ndanga of PACE and Brother Javier Espinosa of the Secretariat of the Laity. The main leaders were the two lay women, Agnes and Ana.



Cameroon



Ghana

The major themes that were covered in depth included: the vocation of the laity in the Church, the Marist lay vocation, formation processes, communion between Brothers and laity, responses to the African reality. One of the days aimed at presenting the Champagnat Movement as a possible proposal for a Marist path for the laity in Africa. The reflection was accompanied by the study of the documents 'Being Lay Marist' and the 'Life Project of the Champagnat Movement.' Another space was dedicated to tune into the different realities and lay experiences in

the Institute. The document was shared alongside the Secretariat's proposals to the General Chapter.

The interest and the motivation that was shown throughout the workshop was expressed in many questions posed by the participants throughout the event. The meetings revived the desire to strengthen both the group of laity in Ghana, as well as the four groups in Cameroon (Bafut / Bamenda, Tatum, Douala, Mbengwi). In Cameroon, a coordinating Committee was appointed and some future activities for the year were outlined. It is necessary to emphasize the spontaneous, vibrant and harmonious songs that arose several moments during the day. They can be watched in the video below. They are, undoubtedly, an expression of Marist hearts that manifested the strength and vitality of the charism. Contemplating the group's singing and dancing, you were encouraged by their smiles, their movements, their joy, their hope and their brotherhood. All this took place within the commitment to build a new La Valla. Then the group of Cameroon passed in front of the altar so that the priest would bless the small memory of the event that had been given to them, a mason's trowel. They wanted it to be a symbol of their desire to promote the future.

Renewing the Secretariat of Laity

The General Council appointed new members for the Secretariat of Laity during the last session they held in Rome before the Chapter. Two of them had completed their six-year term, but were moved to a new position within the Secretariat: Raúl Amaya becomes Director, and Agnes Reyes, Codirector. The new members are Ana Saborío, from the Arco Norte Region, and Brother Elias Iwu, from Africa. They are both beginning their first three-year term in the Secretariat.

Raúl Lorenzo Amaya Rivera

Born in Santiago de Chile in 1967, he belongs to the Province of Santa María de los Andes. Raúl is married to Lourdes Marcet, and has two teenage children: Montserrat and Ignacio. A Spanish and School Counselor, he completed two years of a master's degree in Psycho-spiritual Accompaniment, and a master's in School Management at the Alberto Hurtado University ran by the Jesuits. He got a diploma in Marist Heritage and then specialized in Marist Charism and Educational Principles at the Pontifical Catholic University of Paraná (PUCPR). In 2010, both the Province and the Sector asked him to coordinate the Spirituality and Laity Team of Chile, a position he holds until today. He was a two-time member of three Marist bodies: Mission Council, Extended Secretariat of Laity and American Subcommission of Laity.



Agnes Segovia Reyes

Agnes, from Philippines, graduated BS in Guidance and Counseling. She has Master's Degree in Theological Studies and a training on Pastoral Leadership and Management for Mission. Currently, she is taking courses on Spirituality and Retreat Direction at the Loyola School of Theology, Ateneo de Manila University. Agnes was a member of the International Commission on the preparation of the document *Water From the Rock* and the Commission on the Revitalization of Champagnat Movement. She served as past member of the Extended Secretariate of Laity and Chairperson of the Asia Laity Comisión. She was a lay volunteer of the Mission Ad Gentes in 2010. In her 23 years of employment at Notre Dame of Marbel University, she worked in various capacities as Guidance Counselor, Director of Champagnat Community College, and Director of Campus Ministry, among others. Presently, she is the Coordinator of Laity, East Asia Province.



The new members are Ana Saborío, from the Arco Norte Region, and Brother Elias Iwu, from Africa. They are both beginning their first three-year term in the Secretariat.

Br. Iwu Elias

Br. Elias Iwu, fms from the Province of Nigeria was born into a Catholic Christian family of six children, five boys and a girl. His first contact with the Marist Brothers was in 1998 when he did his postulancy in Orlu, Nigeria. After his Perpetual vows in 2008, he became a formator in Marist Formation Centre, Orlu. In 2011, he became the Co-ordinator of the Lay Marist, Province of Nigeria till date. At the moment, he works as the Coordinator African Lay and Brothers Commission, Principal of the Marist Comprehensive College, Onunweke, Ezzagu, Coordinator of the Marist Spiritual Patrimony, Co-ordinator Marist Past Students Association of Nigeria. He was among the Brothers that studied Marist Spiritual Patrimony in Rome in 2008, He has M.Sc in Geography and Meteorology, specialized in Environmental Management. For him, the Lay Marist vocation is a personal commitment to God and a way of Salvation, hence, it is our gift to the Church.



Ana Isabel Saborío Jenkins

Costa Rican, from the Province of Central America, Ana Isabel has been married to Alonso Martén for 29 years, and has a 25-year-old son, Sergio. She is a Marist teacher, currently serving as Director of the Marist School in Alajuela, Costa Rica. She holds a licentiate degree in Pre-school Education, a master's in Educational Administration and Psychopedagogy, and is currently pursuing a Doctorate of Education. She completed two years of the specialized course on Marist Charism and Educational Principles that was promoted by the Institute, and coordinates the Virtual Master's Degree in Educational Management that was organized by the Inter-American Commission of Marist Mission. For several years, she was part of the Provincial Commission of Laity. She followed the Vocational Accompaniment formation experience, led by the Provincial Commission of the Laity, and is a member of the 'Our Lady of the Pillar' CMMF Fraternity.



Philippines: Brothers convene for consultation on matters about the laity

Last July 23, 2017, thirteen brothers met to share reflections on the key documents that pertain to the Marist Laity. It was an opportunity for Ms. Elma B.

Rafil, the East Asia participant to the 22nd General Chapter in Colombia, to be in dialogue with the brothers on key themes, specifically, on The Vocation of the Marist Laity,



and the Notes on the Recommendations to the General Council. Ideas shared were enriching as openness permeate the course of the discussions. In exploring the identity and the process of the development of the vocation of the Lay Marists and their role, there still exist areas which are not clear from the standpoint of the brothers. On the part of the laity, the tension, among others, lies in the area of dependency on the brothers and the challenge for autonomy within the context of communion. Details of the discussion points in the consultation forum were consolidated for they provided valuable reference to understanding perspectives of both brothers and lay.



Publications underway

Being a Lay Marist, and CMMF Life Project

We are currently printing and publishing – in the four official languages – two documents regarding the charismatic process of the Marist Laity, which the last General Chapter studied. The Communication Service in Rome is overseeing the work. These documents will be particularly helpful for those who are animating the lay vocational processes in the Provinces. These are reference documents offering guidelines, concepts, and formation itineraries for those who want to follow Jesus like Mary did in the midst of the world. We will eventually ask the Administrative Units to indicate the number of copies they need for their lay groups.

Seminar on Charism and Laity

Confederation of Latin American Religious (CLAR)

The Second Seminar on Charism and Laity organized by the CLAR took place in Bogotá from September 15 to 17, 2017. Among the 80 participants, there were three lay people from the Province of South Brazil-Amazonas: Edison Oliveira, Edson Schirmer and Marcos Broc. This three-day intense seminar went under the motto of "Let us go out in haste to meet with life". Father José María Arnaiz, a Marianist, led the seminar. The following were some of the leading ideas:



- By sharing the charism, both religious and laity discover a new way of being.
- Sharing the charism revitalizes the life of the Church.
- The lay movement is vocational in

- nature, and we must acknowledge the lay vocation.
- We urgently need to rethink our formation proposals and processes with the participation and commitment of all.
- We also need to review our models of authority and animation, learning to discern and make decisions together.

Lay people at the General Chapter

Eight of us, lay Marists, were invited to participate in the 22nd General Chapter held in Rionegro (Colombia): Jimena Grignani (South-Center Brazil), Gabrielle Giard (Canada), Elma Rafil (East Asia), Mike Greeff (Southern Africa), Tony Clarke (Australia), Joseba Louzao (Iberian), Nohemy Pinto (Central America) and Pep Buetas (The Hermitage).

We participated in the Chapter until the end of September, although it went on for three more weeks in October. We were there at the opening session, and during the formal act constituting the General Chapter. We then took part in the first phase of the discernment process proposed by the Chapter. This first phase mainly consisted in becoming aware of the global body that we are, looking at and listening to the present situation: What do we see in today's world, what is the world telling us? How do we think the planet, society, economy, spirituality, religion, and technology will evolve? What impact will that evolution have on children and young people?

Encountering a group of young people from the North-Andean Province, and visiting different social projects in the popular neighborhoods of Medellin enriched this process of listening.

As part of this phase, we, the lay participants, facilitated a morning-long session to help the Chapter members explore the emotions that the lay Marist movement and the new relationship between brothers and laity are eliciting in our global body. We wanted the Chapter members to look inside themselves honestly and with a welcoming attitude. As brother Emili Turú stated, the fact that diverse people are living the Marist Charism together is a sign of the times that is here to stay. It is important to become aware of the body's feelings if we want to properly manage our emotions. This exercise was much appreciated because, instead of discussing and confronting opinions, it was a matter of paying attention to, expressing and processing our feelings.

This initial phase led us to identify, in general, the things we must leave behind so that new things can emerge. As we described the calls we perceived, we realized once again that a new paradigm has emerged regarding the way different elements of our Marist life relate to each other: brothers and laity; provinces and regions; ourselves, the planet, and the needs of our time, especially those of children and young people.



We had the opportunity to recall the main steps we have taken since the last General Chapter regarding the development of the Marist lay vocation, and the path of communion. We found that all Chapter members understood better the changes we have gone through, and were willing to "enter" the experience of communion as a sign of the Marian face of the Church.

The Chapter organized a working group to study the relationship between lay people and brothers, and four of us were part of it. Other lay people actively participated in the working groups on mission and government. Unfortunately, our stay came to an end and we could not complete the work we had started, although we know that our contributions enriched the discussion, as we ourselves were enriched.

We all agree that the Chapter was a very special and deep experience personally and as a community. The organizers took care of every detail to create a contemplative atmosphere for a community that was willing to live in fraternity and discern together. We did not feel like guests; we felt like participants who enjoyed everybody's respect and affection. What we took home from the meeting was this Marist inclusive attitude that sees everyone – with his or her own way of being – as part of the body, and looks for ways to bring about deeper relationships. We also took home this hope of letting the Holy Spirit unfold her dream among us, at the service of all humanity.

Pep Buetas



Chile: Meeting with the new Director and the Extended Secretariat from the Americas

At the beginning of November, Brother Javier met with Raúl Amaya – future Director of the Secretariat – and the Extended Secretariat members from the two Marist Regions of the American Continent, Ana Saborío and João Luis Fedel. We spent three days sharing in a fraternal atmosphere, and examining the Secretariat’s mission at the international level and in the American Regions. We discussed the following topics, among others: Facing the new challenges of having a lay Director; Decentralizing the lay animation work even further, and developing a stronger leadership in the Regions and Provinces; Implementing the calls of the General Chapter, highlighting communion and the lay vocational processes in a special way; Developing the international and global identity of the Marist laity; Accompanying the new proposals to update the CMMF; Keeping an open dialogue with the General Council.



The new Director and the two Codirectors will hold their first meeting in Rome in the first months of 2018.

Mexico – 23rd National Meeting of CMMF Fraternities

The CMMF Fraternities of the Mexican Provinces held their National Meeting in Guadalajara from October 27 to 29, under the motto of “A New Lavalla!”

Around 150 CMMF members from 19 Fraternities scattered across the country participated in the meeting, which mainly discussed the 22nd General Chapter. Brothers Ernesto Sánchez SG, Miguel Ángel Santos, José Sánchez, Víctor Jesús Hernández and Eduardo Navarro – who were Chapter members in Medellín – joined the meeting. The intervention of Nohemy Pinto, who was invited as a lay Marist to the Chapter, was a significant moment of the meeting. She shared what the Chapter had meant for her, and presented the newly-approved documents regarding the laity: Being a Lay Marist and CMMF Life Project. According to her, the Chapter has posed three challenges to lay Marists: Recognizing ourselves as a charismatic family, in which the charism becomes the meeting point for all Marists; Revitalizing the CMMF. She highlighted the laity’s leadership, which comes about when they live out their Marist vocational option; Developing a solid and well-trained lay leadership that finds opportunities to promote lay formation processes, and creates the

necessary conditions (resources, programs, experiences, people, etc.).

Nohemy concluded her presentation by quoting Brother Emili Turú: “All of us, both brothers and laypeople, have many figments of our imagination and preconceived ideas in our minds, but experience tells us that these evaporate when we sit down to share faith and life” (Reviving our Prophetic Spirit, Message to the 22nd General Chapter; September 20, 2017, p. 12). Therefore, we are basically invited to sit at the same table and dialogue like brothers and sisters, knowing that we are different but complementary.



Excited about the future!

Central America – 11th Provincial Meeting of CMMF Fraternities

The 11th Provincial Meeting of Marist Fraternities has just taken place, from November 10 to 12, in the Marist Province of Central America. Around 200 CMMF members from Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Honduras shared an intense gathering – with great energy and enthusiasm – to close the Year of Lavalla and the Marist Bicentenary. El Salvador, the Tom Thumb of the Americas (El Pulgarcito de América, a popular name indicating the country's small extension), stretched its arms to welcome this great Central American Marist Family.

Under the motto "Excited about the Future!", Brother Omar Peña and Mrs. Nohemy Pinto helped us study the calls of the General Chapter, in which they participated. Then we



had a workshop under the title of "La Valla, a Call to Interiority". We spent a whole day studying this key dimension of our life, following an experiential rather than theoretical approach, by means of interiority exercises, contemplative dancing, and practical training.

The joy and fraternity we experienced were certainly the main highlight during these wonderful days. Marcelino smiles indeed, but also impels us, CMMF members, to meet the challenges we are now facing without fearing the future, and gives us the boldness and courage to build new things.

17 Provincial meeting of CMMF Fraternities

South Brazil-Amazonas Province

The CMMF meeting of the South Brazil-Amazonas Province took place from August 4 to 6 in Veranópolis. It gathered 104 CMMF members from 26 Fraternities to discuss topics regarding the Year of Lavalla, and to share and celebrate life together. Brother Ivo Strobino highlighted some historical aspects of the Lavalla House that are meaningful for all Marists, especially for the



laity and their vocation. In addition to the central talk by Brother Ivo, we discussed other topics: Edson Schirmers shared a testimonial story about three experiences of volunteering and mission in the State of Roraima; Two more people shared their experiences of volunteering, each in a different place: Regina Biasibetti in Guatemala City, and Brenda Menine in Tabatinga, Amazonas State; Brother Arlindo Corrent presented the history of the lay Marist movement in the Province of Rio Grande do Sul; And finally, we spoke about 'mysticism and prophecy' according to Brother Emili's letter 'La Valla, House of Light'.



Vocational colloquium at the Norandina Province

Eight days after the conclusion of the 22nd General Chapter, a group of Champagnat Marists who are delegates from throughout the Norandina Province, gathered in Chia, Colombia, from Oct. 27 – 29 to carry out the first Vocational Colloquium at Norandina. Framed within the activities of the bicentenary celebration, the different presences of the province have been sharing their reflections since February on concepts such as: anthropology of vocation, spirituality, accompaniment, vocational culture and a new vocation ministry for the 21st century. Thirteen Brothers and 49 laity of Champagnat placed on the New La Valla table several dissertations about building a Vocational Culture, which guides the actions of the Marists of Champagnat within the province, with the always valid spirit of Saint Marcellin and under the protection of the Good Mother, thus going in haste to the peripheries to carry the faithful and real message of Jesus, as Good News for a wounded world that needs bridges that allow to penetrate the walls that the emergent reality puts before children and young people of this new beginning.

For three days, and with the grace of having been able to have among the participants some of the Brothers who



attended the General Chapter and with the presence of Brother Tony León who showed through his paintings the new calls that will guide the Institute in the next eight years, the participants discerned around concepts, realities, challenges and strategies that allow Marists to live in communion within the vocational ideals, ready for the call and to the needs of all the Brothers making Jesus Christ known and making him loved.

Volunteering at the Family Homes in Quevedo, Ecuador

Annie Girka, a lay Marist from the Province of the Hermitage, tells us about her recent experience in Ecuador: "This year, I spent two and a half months working in the Marist center for children and young people at risk located in Quevedo, Ecuador. It was the fifth time I participated in the project. Why do I keep going there? Every time I left the place, I told myself it would be my last visit. But my heart kept asking me to return.

This time I lived in Casa Patricio (Patrick House) with eight children and Rosita, the educator. The project accommodates around 40 children and young people in five houses.



Children normally take part in house chores like cooking, doing the laundry, and cleaning the house, but adults must assist them during these tasks. There is a difficult story behind each child. Our mission was focused on generating a family spirit, and offering points of reference to help them make sense of their lives. The Spanish verb "convivir" indicates "living with", and it reaches its full meaning in this place. The mission of the five "Moms" or educators is all about "living with". It means spending time with the children and listening to them; it implies being patient, offering consolation, and, most of all, loving them.

I certainly felt discouraged at times because of the heat, the hard work, and the noise, but I realized that only the hardship of sowing leads to the harvest. I remembered Champagnat's words: "Remember that sacrifice is the only means of being useful to others" (Life, Furet, Chapter 22). Being there required a lot of dedication to the kids, who like to play and laugh like all the children in the world. Looking at their eyes full of joy and listening to their laughter, I realized the Lord walks in their midst. At the end of my stay in Quevedo, when I felt their hugs and repeatedly heard them saying "see you soon", I understood that my pa-

tience and tenderness had achieved something.

The Assembly of Mendes in 2007 spoke about moving to the most difficult places, where no-one else is going, and I wondered: why not me? Choosing a foreign country was my response to the Lord. And then He put the children of Quevedo in my way. There I have tried to live the discreet and attentive attitude of Mary at Cana, which has always enlightened my life option. I still feel like saying to Wendy, Nancy, Carina, Naidelin, Cindy, Jandry, Tadeo and Christian: "A très bientôt! See you very soon!"

Retreat of Brothers and Laity Veranópolis, Brazil Sul-Amazonia The Art of digging new wells

The third edition of the Retreat of Brothers and Laity - deepening experience brought together 36 participants to share for six days. The meeting of the Brazil Sul-Amazonia Province took place in Veranópolis from Oct. 22 – 28 and had as its theme The Art of digging new wells. The initiative seeks to deepen and cultivate the charism and, especially, Marist spirituality.

The theme was inspired by readings based on the biblical text of Genesis 26: 12-33, where Isaac, the son of Abraham, achieved the survival of his people and their animals through the art of digging wells. The activities were led by Brother Javier Espinosa, director of the Secretariat of the Laity of the Marist Institute, and included moments of prayer, reflection and celebration. During the motivations, Brother Javier invited those present to think about how the theme of the meeting unfolds in various situations, such as in daily experiences, in the



Marist mission, in human relationships, in institutional relationships and in the vocation of Brothers and lay people.

The Coordinator of the Coordination of Consecrated Life and Laity of the province, Brother Genuino Benini, says that this relationship was very present from the beginning to the end of the retreat. "In the same way that, the more we dig a well, the more we find purer water and in greater quantity, the more deeply we seek God, the more we perceive him in our lives," he explains. Other points that stood out at the event were the sharing of life in 'small communities,' the cultivation of silence and the exercise of contemplation.



FOR OUR REFLECTION

Learning to discern and make decisions together

There is no shared mission without a shared life, without reciprocal trust, without the awareness that we are all equal and different at the same time. This is good, because we can really enrich and complement each other. The Ecclesiology of Communion is a strong call to meet one another, to open and share our experiences and structures so that they can lead us to a fuller life. It is a piece of Good News, an essentially prophetic action. The time has come to be bold, creative, courageous, and committed; to launch innovative proposals, and new experiences at the service of those who cry out for life. In fact, it means living with an eye on the future, inventing new ways of being and working together.

(...)

Knowing there is still a long way to go, and realizing the road ahead is rather twisted, we dare to accompany each other, growing side by side, developing a new shared leadership, a complementary and fruitful mission, as we radically follow Jesus Christ together. There are no recipes or instruction manuals, and we know this kind of option can be very demanding. It involves opening our hearts; recreating our styles and models of authority and leadership; learning to discern and make decisions together; breaking away from old mindsets; unlearning practices that are not at the service of life; reviewing our structures without fear, facing the need to transform them; and changing our language, so that it can truly express the conversion process we need, and include everyone.

(...)

It is essential to rethink, restructure and resignify our formation practices. We need to jointly design, plan and live our formation processes so that they can be a true answer to the present world situation. Likewise, our charisms should respect and integrate today's culture, welcoming its richness, and developing a shared way of thinking, feeling and acting.

(Final message of the Second Seminar on Charism and Laity, CLAR; Bogotá, Colombia, September 2017).