



Local and Provincial/ District phases: *Guidelines and subsidies*



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Rome, March 25, 2013

DEAR CHAMPAGNAT MARISTS,

We can truly say that the celebration of the first Marist International Mission Assembly in 2007, with the entire process that unfolded in the different provinces and districts of the Institute, was an historic event, the first time that brothers and lay men and women from all over the world, participating on an equal basis, set about reflecting on the purpose of the Institute now and in the future, as well as its very identity.

Though lived with varying degrees of intensity around the world, that experience was universally looked upon as a very positive one. So much so that the XXI General Chapter not only incorporated some of the ideas coming from that Assembly I, it explicitly issued an invitation "to organize another Marist International Mission Assembly in tune with the spirit of Mendes."

Convinced that the Assembly can once again be a very effective instrument in service to our Marist mission, the General Council has invited an international Commission to put in place the process necessary to hold a new Assembly in 2014. The members of this Commission are Mrs. Alice Miesnik from the Province of United States; Mrs. Mónica Linares, Cruz del Sur; Br. Mark Omede, Nigeria; Mr. Frank Malloy, Australia; Mr. Manuel Gómez Cid, Mediterránea; Br. Paul Bhatti, South Asia; Br. César Rojas, the Secretariat of Brothers Today; Br. Javier Espinosa, Secretariat of the Laity; and Br. João Carlos do Prado, Secretariat of Mission and the Commission's coordinator. My sincerest thanks to all of them for the excellent work that they are doing, with great creativity and a very visible commitment to our Marist life and mission.

The logo chosen for this II Assembly features giant tongues of fire. Many peoples, in particular some from cultures on the African Continent, where the final phase of the Assembly will take place, are coming together around the fire to talk about and celebrate their lives. It is this beautiful experience that we are being called to reproduce at each level of participation: local, provincial and international. Being called to gather around the fire that captivates us, illuminates our minds and warms our hearts with its mystery.

Fire is also a symbol of the Spirit, and reminds us of the events of Pentecost. I think that all who participated in Assembly I unanimously agreed that the real star of those proceedings was the Holy Spirit, who made Her presence strongly felt, leading every participant to personally experience discovering new facets of our Marist mission. And so starting now I invite all Marists of Champagnat to actively involve ourselves in these new international proceedings, very open to the action of the Spirit, present among us.





As the 200th Anniversary of the founding of the Institute appears on the horizon, the invitation could not be more clearly expressed: “New Marists in mission.” How I hope that the road that all of us Marists of Champagnat are about to travel will allow us to continue to explore the profound meaning of that call to “newness” that we heard so insistently during our most recent General Chapter.

Mary brought the first Christian community together; today, too, as the “new” woman, she is in our midst to inspire and support us in our commitment to build a Church with a Marian face. Together we ask her to bless the proceedings of II Assembly, to bring about an ever greater vitality of our Marist charism.

Faternally,

Br. Emili Turú,
Superior General





DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS:

The 21st General Chapter has called us to “go with haste into a new land in the spirit of Mendes,” the first International Mission Assembly, which took place in 2007. The Preparatory Commission for the Second International Marist Mission Assembly has responded to that call. We now pass along the invitation to all Marists from around the world to join the pilgrimage toward the Second Marist International Mission Assembly, “New Marists in Mission”. Like the two early Christians on the road to Emmaus, “Our hearts are on fire!”

The Second International Mission Assembly will take place in September, 2014 in Nairobi, Kenya. Some of you, representatives from among Lay Marists, the Marist Brothers, and Marist Youth, will be asked to attend the Assembly in Nairobi. However, ALL Marists are called to participate in the preparation phase of this journey: a life-giving process which will involve prayer, reflection, and celebration.

A group from each Administrative Unit will be distributing materials at the local level, which will introduce the call to become “New Marist in Mission” and to aid us in reflections on Spirituality, Vocation – A New Relationship, and Evangelization, the three major themes of the Assembly. All materials are to be used as you see fit.

We encourage you to listen for announcements on the local level as discussions begin. The goal is to involve as many Marists as possible: Brothers, lay adults and the young, among your schools, your Fraternities, the Marist Movements, in all works throughout the world . . . to reflect upon and to share their life experiences as a Marist. Your voices are critically important. Your thoughts and ideas will become the foundation of further discussions that will take place on the Provincial Level and ultimately inspire the work of the Second Marist International Mission Assembly.

“They asked each other, ‘Were not our hearts burning within us while He talked with us on the road?’” (Luke 24:32) We invite all Marists to engage in the journey and to discover your role as “New Marists in Mission”!

Until we meet in Nairobi . . .

With affection,

The Preparatory Commission





The Preparatory Commission of the II International Assembly of Marist Mission is offering you a set of reflection worksheets intended to facilitate the preparation process, in which all those who share Marist life and mission will be involved. They were designed as a tool for the local phase of the process.

WHAT FOR?

They intend to address the goals of the preparation stage for the International Assembly:

- a) Search and explore paths leading to a New Land, by building a new relationship between laity and brothers.
- b) Strengthen the spirituality of laity and brothers, in order to support and safeguard the personal and institutional processes, according to the calls of the XXI General Chapter.
- c) Heed the strong challenge of God's presence in our world, especially in the lives of poor children and young people, responding to their voices with the power of the Holy Spirit.
- d) Share and celebrate a life-giving experience, which generates a new era for the Marist charism, on the threshold of the Institute's third centenary.

WHERE TO?

This itinerary starts with your own life, shared with others in the community or work-group to which you belong. It will allow us to extend the round-table dynamics used in the XXI General Chapter as a space for listening and family dialogue.

Later on, a number of representatives from each Administrative Unit (Province, District or Sector) will collect the experiences identified as sources of joy and hope inspiring our gratitude, the new experiences which have taken shape and need to be accompanied, and also the challenges and thoughts about the future suggested by the different local groups.

The main calls and challenges will go from there to the International Assembly in Nairobi (Kenya), which will try to translate them into a message for the entire Marist Institute. And finally, every Marist group and each person in the world taking part in this preparation process, leading us to become *New Marists in Mission*, will get feedback from the International Assembly through a local assembly organized in each Region of the Institute.





WHAT REFLECTION LINES DO WE SUGGEST?

Following some of the thematic lines that are being developed throughout the Marist world, we propose three major reflection topics:

1. Spirituality.
2. Vocation, in the light of the new relationship between laity and brothers.
3. Evangelization.

We believe these topics are in connection with many processes initiated by the Marist Institute in recent years, and can help us imagine a New Land, as the XXI General Chapter invites us to do.

We want some important elements to be present in the background throughout the process: internationality, the cultures and realities of young people in today's world, solidarity, and the Marian face of the Church.

Each of the three topics includes a number of worksheets exploring different aspects and nuances. The worksheets will follow the same structure for each topic: an introduction presenting the proposed reflection; the account of an experience intended to help us connect with what we are living and feeling; a text from a faith perspective; and some motivating questions to help us deepen the personal and community calls emerging from our dialogue "around the table". To conclude, the worksheet includes some resources to inspire a moment of prayer or faith celebration.

WHEN AND HOW TO WORK ON THE TOPICS?

We would like the proposed reflection topics to help us deepen our personal, community, and institutional experiences as Marists of Champagnat.

Within the context of our own life experience, the reality of the world we live in, and the lives of the children and young people who are poor, we listen to God calling us to start a new era for the Marist charism, in the spirit of the XXI General Chapter.

Our suggestion is to use the worksheets freely, according to the sensitivity and culture of each Marist situation in the world. The number of groups to be organized, as well as the criteria to integrate each group, will be up to each local commission. The groups can address all the worksheets proposed or just a selection of them, although we believe it is important to study some worksheets from each of the three major topics, which are interrelated and inseparable aspects of Marist life and mission.





The Preparatory Commission invites you to study at least Worksheet 0, as an introduction to the local phase, plus one of the worksheets on spirituality, two on vocation and new relationship, one on evangelization – all at choice – and finally Worksheet 11 to evaluate and celebrate the process.

CONCLUDING THE LOCAL PHASE

Where possible, a number of groups could get together to share their thoughts, the experience elicited by the discussion, and the calls and challenges which will eventually enrich the Administrative Unit Assembly.

To close this first phase of the process, each local group can meet to evaluate the experience, arrive at some conclusions, prepare a report addressed to the general coordinator in the Administrative Unit, and conclude with a festive celebration.

The report speaks about the path each group has traveled together, the gratitude for the life and history we have inherited, the new shoots of Marist life we can see emerging in recent times, and the paths we must explore to reach the New Land dreamed by the XXI General Chapter.

The report can take the form of a letter, no more than a page in length, or an artistic rendering of our conclusions (video, painting, music, poster, etc.), or any expression the group finds suitable.

From this moment on, we undertake the path leading to the II International Assembly, which will make us become New Marist in Mission.





Theme 0:

*Opening the process and
organizing the groups*





OBJECTIVES

- To present the local-stage process of the **Second International Assembly on Marist Mission** (II IAMM).
- To invite people to participate and experience the II IAMM.
- To schedule and organize the group meetings leading to the II IAMM.

DEVELOPMENT

Preparation:

- a) The leaders or coordinators of each Marist work, community, or structure invite the lay Marists, brothers, young people, etc., to participate in the II IAMM process.
- b) They will distribute copies of the letter written by brother Emili Turú, Superior General, encouraging participation in this process. This can also be done through webpages or social networks that are accessible to everyone in the Marist institutions. They should indicate the place and date of the first meeting for each local group.

In this first meeting the leaders present the II IAMM process according to the following steps:

- 1) Opening exercise
- On the floor, around the II IAMM logo (or some kind of real flame), we place four banners, each with one of the following words: INTERNATIONAL, ASSEMBLY, MARIST, MISSION.
- We invite the participants to express the thoughts or feelings one or more of these words suggest to them.
- 2) We read together the letter from brother Emili inviting to start the Assembly process, and share how it resonates with the group.
- 3) We watch the video presenting the II IAMM, to be held in Nairobi (Kenya) in September 2014, in connection with the I IAMM held in Mendes (Brazil) in 2007.
- 4) We organize the groups: meeting schedule, choice of subjects to be studied, responsibilities within the group (facilitator, secretary, etc.), and decide how to make the final report from each group to the II IAMM coordination team for the Administrative Unit.
- 5) Video about the Marist Mission in the world.
- 6) We share how the work done together in the present meeting resonates with the participants.
- 7) We conclude with a short prayer service prepared by the person leading the meeting.





Theme 1: Spirituality

*The Heart of the
Mission That Leads
Us to a New Land*





THE HEART OF THE MISSION THAT LEADS US TO A NEW LAND

Streams of living water will flow from the believer's heart

"The story of our spirituality is a simple one. It is a story of women and men who find a thirst that only God can quench. Having drunk deeply, they find themselves filled with Jesus' own desire – to give flesh to God's Good News. Moved by the Spirit, urged by God's own longing to bring life to the world, we become streams of living water, flowing through the personal, communal, and ministerial aspects of our lives." (WFTR: 43)

INTRODUCTION

Using the text from *Water from the Rock*, take 15 to 20 minutes to read pages 22-37, re-visiting the core characteristics of Marist spirituality:

God's presence and love
Trust in God
Love of Jesus and His Gospel
In Mary's way
Family spirit
A spirituality of simplicity

Participants are invited to choose a word, phrase or passage that speaks to them at this time in their own life and ministry and share it with the group or in pairs.

Individually, quietly consider each of these questions:

1. In your own spiritual journey, who or what have been significant influences? Can you identify pivotal events that shaped your spirituality? What have been some of your Montagne moments?
2. Have you ever met someone whose spirituality was "down to earth"? What did you notice about this person?
3. Of the six characteristics given for Marist spirituality, which are strongest in your own life? Are there some elements you would like to strengthen?





HUMAN EXPERIENCE

As Marists in the 21st Century, we are called to find and explore new lands, to respond to the voices of young people in need and to share and celebrate with hope a new time for the Marist charism in the third century of the Institute. To enter into these exciting challenges, and know the heart of the Marist mission, we need the heart of the believer. In this session we will seek to share ways in which we can nourish and strengthen our spiritual heart.

"We are evangelizers of the world, living in the midst of the world. Like salt in food, we show the depth that is hidden in daily life and, immersed in it, we give witness to the three dimensions of Christ's mission: to consecrate the world to God, to be prophets of a different future and to be at the service of others". (*Gathered Around the Same Table, article 37, p.39*)

A story from Pakistan



"I came to Pakistan in 1966 as a young Sri Lankan Brother. It was then a Mission of the Sri Lankan Province. As a Missionary, things have been challenging as well as very enriching. Uprooted from the culture with which I was very familiar and moved to a strange culture about which I knew nothing, was what we call today "a new land"! I feared the unknown and uncertainties. Yes, indeed it was physically a new land. New culture, language, food and dress - everything was new for me! Being sent on mission has led me to many new lands and it continues to change my mind and heart. It continues to challenge me to change my behaviors and attitudes, the way I think and act. It has been a journey of 37 years to "new lands".

"The journey has been full of surprises and beautiful experiences. The journey has constantly changed my heart, my mind and my soul. Although being a missionary has led me to new lands, I have always felt at home. The new lands have been difficult to move in; however, it has always enriched me and those to whom I have been sent. God has played a key role in helping, strengthening and protecting me in times of fear, whenever I was uncertain of making Jesus and Mary known and loved in the challenging mission that is Pakistan." (Bro. Remigius Fernando, FMS, Rawalpindi, Pakistan)

Now read the following passages from Chapter 4 of *Water from the Rock*, "**Bringing Good News to the Poor**". Underline any key words or phrases and consider the challenges they present. Individual reflection or group dialogue may follow. The suggested reflection questions may be useful.

124. Marist spirituality, being apostolic, is lived out on mission. The mission of Marist apostles is born of the experience of being loved by God and of our desire to actively participate in the mission of Jesus. God is passionate about the world and its people, and Jesus expresses this love by a ministry of teaching and healing. *I came that you may have life, and have it abundantly.* Like Jesus we





recognise the urgings of the Spirit within, calling us to witness to this Good News. Out of these inner promptings, the mission of the Church is born: to proclaim the Kingdom of God as a new way of living for humanity, a new way to relate with God. We join in this mission of the Church as we look upon the world with compassion.

127. The cries of the world, especially those of poor people, touch the heart of God and ours as well. The depth of God's compassion challenges us to be men and women whose hearts have no bounds since in his infinite love, *God continues to be totally involved with all men and women and today's world, with its disappointments and hopes.*

130. Central to the apostolic zeal of Marcellin Champagnat is his experience of an all-embracing presence of God. He is sure that every moment of his life is immersed in this divine presence. God's will is revealed to him through the daily experiences of life. Having determined that something is willed by God it becomes part of his mission. He does not spare himself in its accomplishment. Yet he retains the firm conviction that it is God's work, not his. His core belief is that unless the **Lord builds the house, those who build it labour in vain.**

137. For the people we meet each day we seek to be reflections of God. Our desire is to be a visible and permanent memory of the loving and merciful presence of God in the midst of people: *living signs of the Father's tenderness.* In some mysterious way, God works through us and in us. Despite our limitations, which we well know, our goodness is able to come through. By being with God we learn our way of being like him: shepherd, friend, faithful companion.

141. Marist apostles carry out their mission by building communities that are sacred spaces where people can find God and meaning for their lives. Willingly we welcome youth seeking meaningful relationships with people whom they can trust. In this way, together we become *sowers of hope*, and show them they are dearly loved by God.

149. So we direct our journey to those places where others would prefer not to go, to enter into the suffering there, like Mary at the foot of the Cross, and to be a presence and service that remains faithful, despite its risks. *This experience urges us to move ahead, with courage and apostolic zeal to difficult missions, to marginalised areas, and unexplored surroundings, where the seed of the kingdom has not yet taken root.* When our mission is concluded, we move on to new places that require our presence.

151. Our spirituality, Marial and apostolic, invites us to look to Mary as Jesus' First Disciple for our response. She is for us a model of listening, of love for poor people, and of welcoming the message of God. Her way of living the Word of God inspires us and directs us along the way we should go. Like Mary, we not only magnify the Lord with our lips, but commit ourselves to serve God's justice with our lives.

152. In her last words, recorded in the Gospels, Mary directs us: "Do whatever he tells you."





Bringing Good News to the Poor

1. What are the longings and preoccupations of the world that touch your heart?
2. What is it within your present life that holds you back from leaving the comfort of 'your own house' to enter 'the house' of those in need?
3. When you listen, with Mary, to Jesus in your life, what do you hear him tell you to do?

FAITH EXPERIENCE

from Scripture

Scripture Reading: Acts 26: 14 – 18 (Alternative Readings, Luke 1: 39-45, John 4:1- 30, Luke 15:1-10, Matthew 28:16-20, Luke 15:11-32, Jonah 3:1-9)

"All of us fell to the ground, and I heard a voice say to me in Hebrew, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? You are hurting yourself by hitting back, like an ox kicking against its owner's stick'. 'Who are you, Lord?' I asked. And the Lord answered, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuted. But get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as my servant. You are to tell others what you have seen of me today and what I will show you in the future. I will rescue you from the people of Israel and from the Gentiles to whom I will send you. You are to open their eyes and turn them from the darkness to the light and from the power of Satan to God, so that through their faith in me...



from our Marist documents

135. All Marists share the same mission: to make Jesus known and loved. As apostles we passionately centre our lives in Jesus. We allow ourselves to be captivated by him and his gospel. Close to him, we want to form our hearts. Learning from him the ways of the Kingdom, we communicate his message and his way of being and acting through our presence, our words and our deeds.





136. Jesus lives out his mission by both word and witness. In his relationships Jesus transcends boundaries of religion and culture. In these encounters, he values and affirms, and he challenges.

138. Marcellin chose to call the first Marists at La Valla “Brothers.” He believes in the strength of love that builds fraternity and heals wounds. Drawn by a love that knows no bounds, he feels compelled to be Brother to the entire world. His vision extends far beyond his own time and place: *All the dioceses of the world enter in our plans.*

Additional extended readings from the documents of the 21st General chapter, “The Response is in your hands” or “Through the eyes of a child”.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Today what is the specific mission/new land to which God is calling us/me?
2. How can I respond to it? In what ways?
3. What do I need in order to reach out in this new land?
4. Where is God’s presence in this mission/ journey/ to new land?
5. How can I consecrate myself to the Marist mission, service and to God?

PERSONAL AND COMMUNITY CALLS

We have heard the call of the Lord: “You must be born again” (Jn 3: 7). Jesus invites us to conversion of heart. This implies making a firm decision to be open to the grace of God and to be transformed. Only if we are open in mind and heart can God change us and teach us to live with God’s eyes and heart. God’s love urges us to conversion, to rediscover the heart of our respective vocations. The world thirsts for authentic witnesses, people who risk their lives in order that the Good News is announced to everyone. *“The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!”* (Mk 1: 15).

We have looked realistically at our potential, and also at our limits and failings. We see hearts hardened by routine and conformity. The aging and diminishment of our Institute weighs on us. We ask questions about our identity and the future of our style of life. We find it hard to form communities that are truly prophetic. Restructuring has still not been wholeheartedly accepted. Our spiritual poverty is still a concern; we can’t seem to place Jesus and his Gospel at the centre of our lives. And our changing world continually challenges our structures and projects.





But God has surprised us with a visit, just like the Angel did with Mary at the Annunciation. For us, God has asked us to go out into a new land. Little and weak that we are, we've asked: "*How can this come about at this stage of our history?*" But our hopes have been buoyed by recalling Marcellin's favourite psalm: "If the Lord does not build the house ..." We realize that no matter how small we are, God is standing tall beside us. It is in our weakness that we experience God's tender embrace and strength.

CELEBRATION

And so, our souls glorify the Lord

With Mary of the Magnificat our hearts are filled with gratitude for this gift of Marist spirituality. At this moment in history we join in the prophetic vision of her Magnificat and with Marcellin we pray to her: (WFTR 156 ps 86-87)

Mary, we come to you as our Mother to tell you how grateful we are to God for having called us to be little brothers and sisters of Mary and for having you, the first and perfect disciple of Jesus, as our Model.

- Mary, we want to make your Magnificat our own prayer. And so we ask you to help us come to a greater understanding of God's love in our lives and to recognise that all is gift, that all comes from love, and that we are to follow Jesus in incarnating this love, in being brothers and sisters to all with a special love for the young and the most neglected.

You are our Ordinary Resource and we ask you to pray for us, and with us, so that we may continue to grow to be:

- brothers and sisters of radiant hope, convinced of the active presence of the Spirit calling all men and women to be co-creators of a new and better world;
- brothers and sisters of listening and discerning hearts, constantly seeking the Father's will;
- brothers and sisters of audacity, who have not lost the passion of their lives!
- Marist Apostles who are ready to proclaim Jesus and his Gospel with heart on fire with love.

Help us to be brothers and sisters to all those we meet on life's journey, to be present to people as you were, with listening and compassionate hearts. Accept our love, dear Mother, as we ask that, by your example and by your intercession, Christ may become the centre of our lives.





Theme 2: Spirituality

*On the road
to Conversion*





ON THE ROAD TO CONVERSION

Spirituality drives the conversion process of people and structures

INTRODUCTION

We want to delve into the elements of our spirituality which inspire us on the path of personal and institutional conversion, and which generate a new spirit.

The XXI General Chapter reminded us that this conversion process involves a willingness to move on, to let go, to undertake new paths in our lives and apostolic works.

Together with Mary – a woman who was able to venture out of her safety zone, moving swiftly to search the person in need – we invite you to be open to what the Spirit of God wants to inspire in each of us in this opportunity.

HUMAN EXPERIENCE

We invite you to read **either of the two** following texts, which present some admirable examples of Marist life or, if you prefer, you can recall an event – at a personal or group level – indicating a change of heart and attitude in a person or group of persons.

"The cries of the world, especially those of poor people, touch the heart of God and ours as well. The depth of God's compassion challenges us to be men and women whose hearts have no bounds since in his infinite love, God continues to be totally involved with all men and women and today's world, with its disappointments and hopes." (Water from the Rock, 127)

FIRST TEXT:

From a Marist Community in Cambodia

It's raining - "pliäng" - and we're in full swing! Following an eight month quest we have now joined hands with the diocese and set up a project. It has required much talking, much travelling back and forth, much reflection... And in the meantime a thousand small stories have unfolded. So, for instance, Pedro got himself two rusty nails in his foot while working; he had to travel all the way to Bangkok to get proper treatment. When Max tried the new vacuum cleaner, our dog came and ate the instructions. The City children gave us a kitten as a present. During mealtimes, she likes to sit on Max's shoulder and sniff at the dishes.





Four times already I have found myself flat on my back in the mud on our "street", or rather, our dirt path. These aren't real accidents, seeing as how I was going slowly, but somehow the motorcycle suddenly disappeared out from under me. Luckily, I ended up with only a few bruises and a shin-bone wound, but it is clear that we urgently need an all-terrain pick-up truck.

Furthermore, we have had several visitors, including the District Superior (our dog chewed through the wire of his computer), friends, volunteers, and vermin in all shapes and sizes. The ants in particular are a constant plague; the mice and rats we can take care of fairly easily with a strong trap.

In August we travelled to the pastoral centre of the Camillians in Bangkok to participate in the annual retreat with the brothers from Vietnam and Thailand.

Now, as for our main work. So far, I have only been able to share our plans and inquiries. I can inform you now that, earlier this month, we assumed full responsibility for two "hostels" (a type of Boarding College). It is a concrete project for us which is made real through several smaller projects.

In co-operation with the diocese, we now run the existing church centre and our own study centre. The centres are open to visitors and people who need help, and offer accommodation, meals and study hours for 16 young Bunong people, male and female. We are now furnishing the two buildings for these purposes. And this is where the donations we have received are used.

And so we brothers find ourselves in a new situation again. The start-up difficulties, the repairs, being subject to unforeseen occurrences and the demands of the church -- all of this makes it impossible for us to lead a regular "monastic" life. We take life as it comes and are genuinely happy with it.

Now that we have taken up our new responsibility the first problems have arisen. Some young Bunong people don't really know what they should do. And so they sign up for the study hours, then sign themselves out, then up again. One girl who did not want to attend the study hours anymore -- against her parents' wishes -- got involved with a young man and is now six months pregnant, so she has had to drop out.

The rains spoil our English lessons at the Caritas and New Humanity Centre as the muddy street is impassable at night-time. Our new "rooms" on the upper floor of our house have thin wooden walls and no ceiling. And so we hear every noise that is to be heard, feel every breath of wind, and hear every drop of rain on the corrugated iron roof. The ants, too, have an interest in the dry rooms. Hordes of them march up the outside walls and enter the house through the cracks, and so, for instance, they may come into the prayer room, where we already have two big geckos waiting to take part in our prayers and spend the night, which brings some coolness.

Despite all of this, or rather, because of all of this, life is worthwhile over here. Many thanks to all who support us and the people here with their prayers, ideas, visits, voluntary work, and money. We all work together for the future of the people in the Cambodian jungle.

Thank you, "arkun tscheran", "Vergelt's Gott" from (F. Bongpro Bernhard, F. Max et F. Pedro)





We ask ourselves:

- *What are my feelings after reading this text?*
- *What are the statements that strike me most?*
- *What valuable elements shed light on my spiritual journey?*

SECOND TEXT

Marcellin and the Needy (The Memoirs of Little Brother Sylvester, Cap. IV, # 13).

Up until then, the inhabitants had not had many dealings with the Brothers, but when they saw their school was so well disciplined and saw the rapid progress of their children, they began to open their eyes and understand that the Brothers of Fr. Champagnat were not just pious 'nail makers', but rather good religious teachers. Also, the number of pupils grew considerably. Many parents, who lived in faraway villages, wishing their children to take advantage of the teaching given by the Brothers, began to house them in the town. Unfortunately these children were not sufficiently supervised after classes and disturbed the other children. To sort out this situation Fr. Champagnat added some extensions to the house and took them in as boarders. More poor children appeared and Fr. Champagnat, counting on Providence, took them in and took responsibility not only for their education, but also for their food, contenting himself, when people complained, because it was well known that he had few resources, by saying: 'Charity does not make one poor, just as the Mass does not make one late.' And he continued the good work without worrying about the gossips.

We have seen that he had in mind another goal, which was that of forming workers for other occupations, but Brother François, when he was consulted about this, dissuaded him, as it would be harmful to the Congregation which he was governing at this time so he did not pursue the matter. However, the idea of running orphanages was always on his mind. This can be seen in the way that he sent Brothers to the orphanage in Lyon. This was more a case of giving them primary education especially in religion rather than preparing them for an occupation.

Let us say that his heart not only overflowed with love for his Brothers, but for everyone. In connection with this, I well remember that in the establishments where there were poor children he distributed after the holidays some clothes that he himself washed and mended so that they could be worn without embarrassment. He even supported through charity and at the house's expense four or five sick old men whom he treated with truly paternal kindness wishing the Brothers to work with them in the same way. I remember being reprimanded and punished for allowing myself, without any malice, to play some jokes on them. The house took care of them until they died. And there was one who was insane. He stayed with the Brothers for more than forty years although his ailments were very disgusting.





We can notice:

- Marcellin goes beyond his priestly and pastoral ministry, trying to meet the material needs of the people.
- He is able to make unprecedented decisions, even acting against a natural sense of prudence.
- He is sensitive and constant in following what he has undertaken, despite the setbacks.
- He involves his disciples in new solidarity projects.

We ask ourselves:

- *What are my feelings after reading this text?*
- *What are the statements that strike me most?*
- *What valuable elements shed light on my spiritual journey?*

FAITH EXPERIENCE

We invite you to open your heart to the Word of God by praying with any of the following Scripture texts:

- 1. The Conversion of Matthew: Mt 9:9-13**
- 2. The Conversion of Zacchaeus: Lk 19:1-10**
- 3. The Conversion of Saul: Acts 9:1-22**

We can work in groups and answer the following questions:

1. What was the conversion process about in this text?
2. At this moment of my Marist life and with all the input from our rich spirituality, what is the conversion process I feel called to undertake?
3. What is the conversion process I envision for the Institute?

In an atmosphere of prayer, we now invite you to share some of the answers, with our hearts open to God speaking through our brothers and sisters.





SOME IDEAS TO REFLECT UPON AND HELP US DEEPEN OUR UNDERSTANDING

The Lord requires from us, lay Marists and brothers, the right disposition to assume A PROCESS OF CONVERSION. This path implies an internal shift allowing us to move from dependence to autonomy and freedom, from isolated spiritual moments to a godly lifestyle, from quantity to quality. It is also a shift in our mission, moving from the works of the brothers to Marist works, from being Gospel bureaucrats to becoming witnesses to the Lord. It is a shift in our relationships, moving from substitution to collaboration, from verticality to fraternity and sorority, from distance to proximity, from being bystanders to becoming fellow travelers.

Conversion involves moving from ostentation to evangelical modesty, from centralism to shared responsibility, from directing to accompanying. It implies moving from theory to practice; from ministerial differences to our fundamental equality; from patriarchy to gender equity; from hierarchical exclusion to authority as service; from symbols, gestures and rituals of submission to fraternity linking us together.

To begin our journey to the new land we need to develop a spirituality of change, which only comes from the Spirit of God: "Without faith in the God of change, we doom ourselves to the banality of the partial" (Joan Chittister). We believe the freshness proposed by the last General Chapter has this quality, which implies a change of mentality, much discernment, great availability, stepping out of our safety zone, taking risks, and deeply trusting God, like Mary did.

CELEBRATION

Motivation:

We can conclude this experience with a prayer service. Let us recall for a moment the logo that was chosen for this Marist Mission Assembly. One of its elements is fire. The connotations of fire are multiple. In the Christian tradition it symbolizes the Holy Spirit. But it is also, by nature, a symbol of warmth and light. Associated with the Holy Spirit, it becomes a symbol of apostolic missionary strength. Let us keep in mind that the motto of our meeting is "New Marists in Mission".

In many cultures fire gathers people, it symbolizes the meeting point, the assembly, a place where history and tradition are preserved, where people celebrate the present and envision the future. Fire wants to symbolize this great assembly that will gather around Marist life and mission.

1. For this prayer service, the organizers may provide candles to the participants or, if it seems suitable, prepare a bonfire, something creative to remember the call to constant conversion. It would be very interesting to include some local cultural element or symbol evoking the path to conversion.
2. Once the group is gathered and each participant receives a candle, we can spend some time recalling the moments in which we have needed conversion or change in order to find light.





3. Then the bonfire or the main candle is lit, and each participant lights his/her own candle from it, remembering or sharing the call to conversion he/she has discerned in this meeting.
4. After the sharing, we can conclude with a song and the prayer to "Mary, Dawn of the New Times":

Mary, dawn of the new times,
I thank you because you have always done everything among us,
and you continue doing it until today.

I place myself confidently in your hands
and abandon myself to your tenderness.

I also entrust to you each of the persons who,
like me, feel privileged to bear your name.

I renew this day my consecration to you
as well as my firm intention
to contribute to building a Church which reflects your face.

You, source of our renewal,
accompany my fidelity,
as you accompanied those who preceded us.

On the way to the Marist bicentenary,
I feel your presence next to me
and for that I give you thanks.
Amen.





Theme 3: Spirituality

The Spirit makes our hearts beat in unison





THE SPIRIT MAKES OUR HEARTS BEAT IN UNISON

(Brother Henri Vergès).

***Rooted in the God of Jesus,
incarnated in the circumstances of our world,
fueled by the mission, and following Mary's way.***

INTRODUCTION

People who are involved in the Marist Mission have different backgrounds and life stories. We also have different ways of relating to ourselves, to others, to God and the world. As living beings – fully alive and spirited – we experience some kind of spirituality to a greater or lesser extent.

We are told in *Gathered Around the Same Table*, paragraphs 100 and 101:

Spirituality is living in and from God. Spirituality is like the sap of the tree. It is not visible, but it sustains, enables growth and gives fruit. In the same way, Christians experience that the power of the Spirit gives meaning to their existence, it nourishes their convictions and it drives their actions.

Spirituality wants to live at the root, not only on the surface. The human being open to spirituality discovers that each instant is a time of opportunity. He is able to maintain hope in happiness and pain, he commits to living fully each second of this wonderful and difficult existence. This is not to be confused with a ritualistic religiosity, but as leading to a true change of life.

Through these two reflections we want to invite you to realize what are the most significant traits of our spirituality, and discover new calls from the Spirit leading us to walk into a new land.

MOTIVATING EXPERIENCE

Group dynamics exercise: *The Tree of our Life*

Each participant receives a piece of paper with the silhouette of a tree. He/she is asked to imagine that this tree represents his/her own life and spirituality. Then each person writes the answers to the following questions around the picture:

- *What roots does the tree have?*
- *In what soil is it rooted?*
- *What nutrients feed the tree?*
- *What is its fragrance like? What color are its leaves and flowers?*

After some personal time, the group is invited to share the experience.





FAITH EXPERIENCE

As mentioned in the introduction, spirituality is like the sap of a tree. It means living at the root, not on the surface.

In a number of Church and Marist documents we find some texts which can enlighten us personally and as a community, providing the key to better understand the typical traits of Marist apostolic spirituality. We are invited to read them together:

a) Spirituality rooted in the God of Jesus

A God who is passionate for humankind

In essence, the characteristics of the God that Jesus revealed boil down to this: ours is a “gratuitous” God who can do nothing but love, a Father-Mother God who wants to give life and happiness to all His children. In a most profound way Jesus lived the experience of God as Love, and he was determined to communicate that deep conviction to others in word and deed his whole life long. He sums up His ideal in the image of the “Reign of God”: a God who “reigns,” who in this world takes pleasure in freedom, justice, being compassionate, overcoming limitations and comforting the weak (*Evangelizers in the midst of youth*, # 60).

b) Spirituality incarnated in everyday life

The cries of the world, especially those of poor people, touch the heart of God and ours as well. The depth of God’s compassion challenges us to be men and women whose hearts have no bounds since in his infinite love, God continues to be totally involved with all men and women and today’s world, with its disappointments and hopes.

Our Marist charism prompts us to be attentive to the calls of our time, to the longings and preoccupations of people, especially the young. Surpassing religious and cultural borders we seek the same dignity for all: human rights, justice, peace, and equitable and responsible sharing of the planet’s wealth (*Water From the Rock*, # 127 - 128).

c) A spirituality that feeds on the mission

Our compassionate response to the needs of the world wells up from our spirituality. Spirituality draws us into mission and, in living that mission, finds itself nourished and rekindled. It gives meaning to our human experiences and allows us to read life with the eyes and heart of God and to understand it as God’s project (*Water From the Rock*, # 129).

d) Lived in Mary’s way

Mary inspired Marcellin’s style of being on mission. She received the Holy Spirit at the Annunciation and responded immediately to Elizabeth’s need. In so doing, she shows us that contemplation and action are both indispensable elements of spirituality. Mary’s way lays the foundation of all our actions: listening, patient waiting, nurturing interiority and responsiveness to God’s will (*Water From the Rock*, # 131).





Mary in the Annunciation is our model of openness to the Spirit, to whom she listens attentively in silence and to whose action she abandons herself. Like her, who treasured these things and pondered them in her heart, we seek to be contemplatives in action. Our prayer, faithful to Marist tradition, is simple, inserted into everyday life, but also with specific times of contemplation. We educate ourselves and others interiorly, by cultivating sensitivity and promoting an openness to beauty (*He Gave Us the Name of Mary*, circular letter from brother Emili Turú, Superior General).

e) With a heart full of joy

Knowing Jesus Christ by faith is our joy; following him is a grace, and passing on this treasure to others is a task entrusted to us by the Lord, in calling and choosing us. With eyes enlightened by the light of the risen Jesus Christ, we are able and intend to examine the world, history, and all our peoples of the planet, and each and every one of its inhabitants, especially the God who manifests himself in the face of children and young people (Aparecida, 18).

CALLS AT PERSONAL AND COMMUNITY LEVELS

After reading the texts, we are invited to share the calls they may have inspired in us at personal and community levels.

We draw on the wall a large silhouette of a tree like the one presented on paper at the beginning of the meeting. Then we invite the participants to express the calls resonating with them.

- What is the sap that should circulate within this great tree, under which all the Marists of Champagne take shelter?
- In what new land can we plant this tree?
- What nutrients must feed this tree?

PRAYER (*inspired by Aparecida, 24*)

- As we listen to background music, we invite the participants to contemplate the tree on the wall and the calls that were expressed.
- After a few moments, the group can read the following prayer:

"We bless God in gratitude because he has called us to be instruments of his Kingdom of love and life, and of justice and peace, for which so many sacrificed themselves. He himself has entrusted to us the work of his hands to care for it and put it at the service of all. We thank God for having made us his collaborators so that we may be in solidarity with his creation, for which we are stewards". We bless God who has entrusted us with so many children and youngsters, brothers and lay people, so that we can build a new land together. We bless God, who has revealed his loving face through Mary and Marcellin.





- One of the participants proclaims the Gospel reading:

"My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior; he has looked with favor on his lowly servant. From this day all generations will call me blessed; the Almighty has done great things for me and holy is his name. He has mercy on those who fear him, from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm and has scattered the proud in their conceit, casting down the mighty from their thrones and lifting up the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty. He has come to the aid of his servant Israel, to remember his promise of mercy, the promise made to our ancestors, to Abraham and his children for ever" (Lk 1:46-56).

- After a few moments of silence and personal reflection, we take some time for praise and thanksgiving. We can sing a refrain after every two or three participants share their prayer: *Magnificat anima mea, dominum.*
- To conclude, we proclaim a fragment of Marcellin's Spiritual Testament:

"I desire with all my soul that you be constantly faithful to the devout practice of the presence of God, which is the soul of prayer, of meditation, and of all the virtues; that humility and simplicity may ever be the distinguishing mark of the Little Brothers of Mary (...). Remain true to the spirit of poverty and detachment (...). That a tender and filial love for our good Mother never fail you in all the changes of time and circumstance. Proclaim her love in every place, as far as lies in your power (...). Love your vocation, be faithful and steadfast to the end, with manly courage" (Spiritual Testament).





Theme 4: Spirituality

*In the richness of
humanity God's
life emerges.*





IN THE RICHNESS OF HUMANITY GOD'S LIFE EMERGES.

**Our Marist spirituality
open to inter-religious dialogue,
for people looking for meaning,
and in tune with the new sensibilities of the young.**

SETTING THE THEME

In the introduction to his book *Water from the Rock*, Br. Sean tells us that we have received the spirituality of Marcellin as a precious inheritance, and that it is now up to us to make it incarnate in the various cultures and situations in which the Institute is present. We live in a time of fast and far-reaching cultural and social change. Boundaries are shifting and changing, old values are questioned, and practices of the past no longer seem to work. (Cf. *Water from the Rock* 47). In face of this, Marist spirituality is challenged to open itself to interreligious dialogue, to those in search of meaning and to be connected to the new sensibilities of young people.

Here are some of the questions you are invited to consider:

- How do we approach religious change as an opportunity for spiritual awakening?
- How do we respond, based on our spirituality, to those searching for the sacred and to those thirsting for God?
- What is the Spirit saying to us in the midst of these challenging changes?

Br. Emili encourages us in this quest: "I believe that our Marist vocation gives us great liberty to become pilgrims with all the people who are seeking God and to establish an interreligious dialogue through life experience."

DIALOGUING THROUGH LIFE EXPERIENCE

Brother Henri, from France, consecrated 25 years of his life to the service of young Muslim people in Algeria. In 1994, Islamic Fundamentalists murdered him. Henri generously shared his life, presence, and witness in the House of Islam.





In the House of Islam

"God has a mysterious design over the people of Islam, a temple of his presence where I am invited to enter, a reciprocal opening to favor, a dialogue among believers to promote. Our paths to God can do nothing but converge. My Marist vocation is perfectly adapted to this hidden presence of humble service, of shoring up foundations on which the future is going to rest, in this young country -- we who are for young people -- with Mary, she who is also present at the heart of Islam. It has been my commitment as a Marist that has allowed me, despite my limitations, to insert myself harmoniously into the Muslim world, and my life in that world has been lived more deeply as a Marist Christian. Praise God!" (Br. Henri Vergès)

CHALLENGES TO OUR SPIRITUALITY

Spirituality strengthens our unity and is a crucial element for the dynamism of our life and mission. But our spirituality continually renews itself through the joint actions of the Spirit and of our efforts to en flesh it in changing situations and different cultures. Some challenges in the present age to our spirituality include:

- **A spirituality open to interreligious dialogue**

In several regions of the Institute the recipients as well as the animators of our mission belong mainly to other religions. We live in an increasingly multicultural and multireligious world that asks us to know how to live this reality in a constructive way. Our documents have invited us to be constructive in this context: To work towards a better relationship among Catholics and other religions, with a Marial attitude of listening (Cf. XX GC 43, 4). To deepen interreligious and ecumenical dialogue, because by listening to our brothers and sisters from other churches and religions, we hear the Spirit that waits for us in them to bring us, together, towards God (Cf. Letter, GAST). Multicultural communities invite us to participate in the wealth of other traditions and creeds, to grow in respect and tolerance, and to celebrate the abundance of the loving presence of God. They provide a special witness against tendencies towards fundamentalism, xenophobia and exclusion (Cf. *Water from the Rock* 121).

According to Xavier Melloni S.J., interreligious dialogue allows one to discover that his own religious tradition is only a possible access to the Mystery and at the same time allows one to be open to the spiritual wealth of humanity, that today we perceive as a necessary and common patrimony to respond to the great challenges that we have as individuals and as a species. This makes it no longer possible to think of God, of man and of the world based on a single model. In these complex times we need to resort to the background of the different wisdoms and spiritual currents to advance together as human beings and to grow in planetary consciousness. It is no longer possible to understand ourselves in isolation. Br. Emili speaks of a "religious bilingualism".





The spiritual legacy that we have received is an uncomplicated spirituality, with its feet on the ground (Cf. *Water from the Rock* 34). It is more experiential than doctrinal or theological. It is centered on the loving experience of God within ourselves and in others (Cf. *Water from the Rock* 16). This experience prepares us well for interreligious dialogue.

- **A spirituality in dialogue with those who are searching for meaning**

Another of the challenges for our Marist spirituality is to dialogue with those who are adherents of what some authors call a "spirituality without religion", which does not pass through religions nor beliefs, nor what is sacred, but which gathers "the true dimension of the human being" (Viktor Frank), the dimension of depth of the "mystery that enfolds us and in which we have our being" (Martínez Lozano). The one which "sums up everything that we are" (Br. Charles Howard), that is, the elements that make up our life, our relationships, our gifts, the joys and the sorrows, our dreams and our feelings and emotions, the struggles and the failures... everything.

Our Marist spirituality proposes living with a sense of all that we are, and allows us to dialogue with every person who acts justly, although their actions apparently have nothing to do with religion, but certainly are related with God and in union with God. In the richness of what is human, what emerges belongs to the life of God. And so, work, rest, joy and enjoying life, actions which appear so simple and not transcendent, are in reality things that approach God and have a profound religious meaning, although we hardly think about it nor are aware of it. So many men and women of our world that honestly seek to give sense to their lives are thus converted into companions on our spiritual way.

We understand that the Gospel is not a project that conflicts with what is authentically human, but it is precisely the fullness of what is human in us, and the path to follow for each of us to be fully realized as a person. That was Simone Weil's understanding: "It is not by the way which a man speaks of God, but by the way in which he speaks of earthly things that he can discern if his soul has remained in the fire of the love of God". That is how Champagnat lived, with a spirituality that was strongly relational and affective (*Water from the Rock* 31), simple and realistic (*Water from the Rock* 6), with his feet on the ground (*Water from the Rock* 34). It is as well how we can travel our spiritual road, with all those people who seek to develop the deep dimension of their being, in a life with meaning and with passion.

- **A spirituality connected with the new sensibilities of young people**

One of the great challenges for our spirituality is dialogue with the new sensibilities of young people's religiosity. Among them we can list: A subjective, individualistic, provisional and pragmatic religiosity. A personal living out clearly prevails over ecclesial obligation. They tend to interpret the Christian message based on a natural religiosity. They believe in what they can know by their own efforts and in what they can live through personal experience. From this subjective mentality it is difficult for them to believe in the central mysteries of the Christian faith. A certain interest in typically spiritual practices, that emphasize emotion and feeling, is noted. For some it is a "cafeteria"





religion, which refers to rites, beliefs and ethics. Fellowship seems to be the primary and decisive value. Their religiosity is optimistic, directed toward happiness, enthusiasm, the full realization of themselves. Suffering, the sense of duty, sin, evil, guilt... are generally absent from their faith. For the greater part of Christian youth concern for others comprises an important dimension of their Christian faith. But the way to be committed to others is above all "charitable"; they reject in general the idea of theories or of global projects at the social or political level (Cf. *Spiritualità giovanile*, Jacques Schepens-Joseph Boenzi, S.D.B.).

Many young people do not feel the proposals of the Church are of concern to them. But they remain open to the dimension of interiority. And here we have a model that enables us to resituate ourselves in the face of youthful sensibility: to educate in interiority, which one author defines as "that capacity that every human being has of arriving at his deepest dimension, that essential something inside that gives meaning to life and the ability to perceive the mystery that transcends it".

To educate in interiority would be like the entrance to the interior dimension of every human being, the entrance that can lead, later, to religious experience. Homilies and conferences are little valued by young people if beforehand there is no life experience. This pedagogical path is characterized by the development of the creative imagination, introspection, wonder at creation, personal harmony, the ability to express feelings, the interior life, full attention, the capacity to be surprised, meditation and silencing.

To live in touch with who we are, with our deepest being, to learn to be and to feel that we are free, to learn to dialogue with another, with those who are different, to educate about transcendence and mystery, to help in the search for truth and meaning in life, is a beautiful spiritual offering for the youth of our time.

WE ARE ENRICHED BY SHARING

- A deep non-Christian thinker, Ibn 'Arabí (1165-1240) wrote one of the most beautiful and profound texts about what the encounter and dialogue of believers with adherents of other religions should be like: "There was a time when I rejected my neighbor if our religions were different. Now, my heart has become the receptacle of all religious forms: it is a meadow of gazelles and a cloister of Christian monks, a temple of idols and the Kaaba of pilgrims, the Tablets of the Law and the Pages of the Quran, because I profess the religion of Love and I go wherever Love wants his mount to go, for Love is my creed and my faith".

How does this text speak to your religious experience?

- **In groups**

Based on the reflection text:

How can we approach religious change as an opportunity for spiritual awakening?

How can we respond from our spirituality to those searching for the sacred and longing for God?

What is the Spirit telling us in the midst of these changes that challenge us?





- **Our synthesis**

Create a poster that would bring together, on the one hand dimensions of religious change that we perceive at this moment (reading of religious reality), and on the other, the characteristics of Marist spirituality that in a more significant way would respond to the challenges of religious change.

WE CELEBRATE

- **Song**

Ubi caritas et amor Deus ibi est. (Taizé)

- **Reading:** Gathered around the same table 82, 127.

The simple table of the first brothers keeps us in communion with the Church, the People of God, and with other Christian churches that walk with us in following Christ. Also, it joins us with other people, non-believers or of other religions, with whom we share the commitment to build a more just world.

The Marist charism, a gift of the Spirit, that breathes where it will, today touches the hearts of men and women of other religions or of other convictions. We, as Marists, welcome these people who find in the charism of Champagnat a path to living more profoundly their own religious experience and their commitment to humanity.

(...)

- **Sharing**

Concrete points that the Spirit speaks in your heart to know how to welcome non-believers or people from other religions, but who find in the Marist charism a way to live their own religious experience and their commitment to humanity.

- **Buddhist prayer for peace**

May I be in Peace
May my heart remain open.
May I be awoken to light
that is my true nature
May I be healed
May I be source of healing.





**Theme 5: Vocation -
A New Relationship**
Are You a Marist, too?





ARE YOU A MARIST, TOO?

A new way of being Marist.

During the birth of a new age for the Marist charism

The relationship of Marist Brothers and Lay Marists is clearly articulated in the Document of the 21st General Chapter. We are called to create a “new relationship among Brothers and lay people looking together for a greater vitality.” The New Way of Being Marist is inclusive of all Marists, brother, lay, young, old. The section of the document entitled, “Brothers and lay people, in a new spirit of communion” challenges all of us:

1. We see our Marist future as a communion of people in the charism of Champagnat, where our specific vocations will be mutually enriching.
2. We give priority to formation, both individual and shared.
3. We recognize co-responsibility for the development of Marist life, spirituality and mission.

These challenges call us all to be Marist: Brother, lay, young person, fellow religious, clerics, all of us who share the charism and all those with whom we come into contact become Marist. “To live the Marist charism today means to open our lives to others, as in concentric circles, to all who are reaching to share our Marist Spirit.”(Living the Marist Charism with Others, #4). There is no doubt that to the degree we work together, there will arise new forms of relationship, each time more profound, that will demand new structures that welcome and promote vitality (Coming Closer to the New Relationship Between the Laity and the Brothers p. 1).

HUMAN EXPERIENCE

• *Building up community*

“I notice that my vocation of brother is going to be enriched by deeply sharing the Marist charism with the sisters and brothers of my community. I feel that I am making real what the XXI General Chapter expressed by saying that in our epoch “we feel driven by the Spirit to live a new relationship between Brothers and Lay Marists, based on communion, searching together for a greater vitality of the Marist charism for our world” (Br Abel)





It is difficult for me to speak as individual about dreams, feelings and expectations of this experience that we are starting; this is an option that Eder and myself have taken as a couple and as a family together with our children Udane and Oier. First of all this option is an answer to live in fidelity and as a family what God is asking us to do? It is also an option for those most in need in my people; an option to carry on deepening our being Marists. An option to continue to make real, in another way, the fact that brothers and lay are called together to bear life around the same table. (Garikoitz Etxebarria).



- A short **video** of young people in the United States.

1. Which are some of the characteristics you relate to the fact of being Marist?
2. Which examples would you use to express the "new relationship" between brothers and lay Marists?
3. How can you explain the expression of the last General Chapter, "our Marist future is a future of communion"?

FAITH EXPERIENCE

An excerpt from the Document "Gathered Around the Same Table"

"We want to journey together with the Brothers and revitalize the Marist charism"

Together, sharing life, mission and spirituality, we get to know each other better and better. Responding to God's call, we discover and enjoy both what unites us and what distinguishes us. We say with joy that our brotherhood is growing and becoming richer, that a 'new tent' is being built by all of us.





Now is the time to take the steps asked of us by the Spirit. We cannot disappoint him. We believe that he calls us:

- **To show, together, the face of God.** We Brothers and Lay people live ways of life which are supplementary. We Lay people, located in worldly situations, consecrate this world to God. The Brothers, through their religious commitments, are prophets of the Kingdom. Together, we show the face of God to the world.
- **To create more spaces of stronger communication among us,** that allow us to share life in all its facets: to enjoy coexistence, to project the mission, to pray together, to share our history and formation... all this makes us grow in brotherhood and become an authentic family.
- **It is essential that we learn how to forgive each other.** Relationships are not always positive. There are unhappy people, hurting inside. We should not be afraid of conflicts. The important thing is to know how to heal the wounds, to understand and accept each other's limitations and reconcile ourselves around the same table.
- **To increase and revitalize the Marist vocation.** The proposal and accompaniment of the Marist vocation, of Brothers and of Lay people, is for us a matter of urgency, because we are inflamed by the mission commended to us: the children and young people are waiting for us.
- Therefore, we commit **to involving ourselves in processes of formation in both forms of the Marist vocation.** We want our witness to attract many more people; we want to spread our dream. We are in love and we want more people to enjoy this love which fulfils our life.

PERSONAL AND COMMUNITY CALLS

Excerpts from the Letter of Br. Emili Turu:

In fact, the Holy Spirit has already addressed us, through the XXI General Chapter when He told us: "*With Mary, go in haste to a new land*". This reference of innovation that is all over the Chapter is very significant for me. Take notice that it talks about going towards a new land, about a new consecrated life, a new way of being a brother, a new relationship between brothers and laypeople. And it says that this will facilitate the birth of a new epoch for the Marist charism.

Talking about this innovation to which the General Chapter refers to, the aspect that concerns us more is that of this new relationship between brothers and laypeople. Of course, if it is talking about a new relationship it may be that something is not working or that it is lacking something the way it is today. **What does this new relationship mean for us?**

Pause for reflection and sharing.





In first place, it seems to me that for us brothers, the fact that the Chapter has explicitly recognized the vocation of the Marist layperson, has been very important. Upon doing that, it is recognizing that it is a gift of God. We speak of vocation and vocation is a gift of God. Therefore, it is not that we, brothers, yield something of the Marist charism to laypeople. The lay vocation is a gift from God. Therefore this situates us in a relationship of equals: the vocation of a Marist layperson, the vocation of a Marist Brother. **What consequences do this relationship of equality have for us Marist brothers as sons and daughters of God?**

Pause for reflection and sharing.

In second place, it is interesting that in the Chapter, upon speaking of that new relationship, it says, “we see our Marist future as a communion of people in the charism of Champagnat”. Communion of people, this is another point about which we are invited to reflect together. As Marists we are invited to build a Church with a fraternal face in which laypeople have clear prominence and, I would say above all female, and of communion. Unfortunately, in today’s Church that prominence and that communion are not promoted too frequently.

Can we think together what does this communion of people specifically mean? It is a new relationship between brothers and laypeople. You can see that this word “new” is not an innocuous adjective; it describes a change of mentality, of attitudes, of practice. And it does not necessarily mean a change on the part of others, but a change that should start with me. **What should change in me?**

Pause or reflection and sharing.

CELEBRATION

At this moment in our history, we turn to Mary, asking her to obtain for us the graces we need to refound our Institute. Once again, we confide to her the Marist project where each of us contributes our part.

The reading is taken from FOLLOWING JESUS LIKE MARY AND WITH HER (from Choose Life, pp. 5-6, General Chapter XX)

Jesus is our Lord and Savior. He shows us God as Father, as compassionate as a mother, the source of all life. Jesus gifts us with the Holy Spirit. When Jesus is with us on our way, he transforms our existence. In following him, we relive the attitudes of the people he encouraged:

- Like the rich young man, we are aware of his penetrating and loving gaze. Yet, we also have difficulty in giving up the goods of this world.





- Like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, we feel our hearts burning with love when Jesus walks with us.
- Like the Twelve, with Mary and the other women, we belong to the community of Jesus: we are his friends and disciples.
- Like John the Baptist, we recognize that we are but messengers preparing the way of the Lord. Like the disciples, we are witnesses to the good things that Jesus did: healing the sick, forgiving sinners, and announcing the Good News to the downtrodden.
- Like the first disciples, we are also tempted by power and status. The Lord speaks to us as he did to them: "Anyone who wants to be first among you must be the servant of all".

In Mary we find the essential aspects of our Marist identity:

- She teaches us to say YES to God with generosity; to be pilgrims of faith and disciples of Jesus; to develop a listening attitude; to discern God's call by reflecting on events and keeping them in our hearts; and to rejoice at and give thanks for the marvels God works in us.
- Mary invites us to be simple and open in our relationships, to form communities as prayerful as the group gathered in the Upper Room, and as warm as the family of Nazareth.
- Like Mary, we belong to a Church of communion, relating to lay people as brothers and sisters rather than with any sense of hierarchy.
- Mary teaches us to be close to children and young people and focused on their well-being, as she was to Jesus; to proclaim, daringly and prophetically, that God prefers the 'little ones'; and to be affectionate and kind towards them as a mother would be.

Each participant can be given a "raw stone" as a reminder that like the early Marists who were the foundation at the commencement of the Society, we, the lay Marists and Marist Brothers of the 21st Century are the "raw stones" of the present, on which the Marist charism rests.

"Marcellin continued to marvel at the growth of the Marist group in general. He once said to his fellow priests, 'We who are at the commencement of our work are but raw stones thrown into the foundation. One does not use polished stones for that. There is something marvellous in the commencement of our Society. What is marvellous is that God has wished such people to accomplish his work.'" (*A Heart That Knew No Bounds*, p. 74).





Theme 6: Vocation - A New Relationship

*God has given us
a Marist heart*





GOD HAS GIVEN US A MARIST HEART

*Heirs of the Marist charism.
Vocation as a memorial of the charism,
A Gift to welcome and encourage growth.*

INTRODUCTION

Lay and brothers throughout the world throb with the same Marist heart and celebrate this gift received from God. By this gift, we become heirs of the spirit of Champagnat. It is a gift we welcome, support, and encourage to grow. By God's initiative, it becomes a life project, a vocational response. Our existence is therefore configured by a specific lifestyle. Thus, our Marist heart transmits to the world this life we have received, becoming the memoir of the charism that perpetuates and promotes the inheritance transmitted to us by Champagnat.

This reflection aims at realizing the gift which, as Marists, God has placed into our hands for us to share with the men and women of our time.

HUMAN EXPERIENCE

- **Hands that welcome**

Invitation to observe our hands, open with palms facing up.

Contemplate what fundamental experiences of your own life are engraved in those hands, what significant people are tattooed on them, that helped shape our own Marist vocation. Share that experience.

- **Testimonies that challenge**

THE MEANING OF OUR LIFE

To be a Marist lay is an option of life; it is God's personal call within the Marist charism. That is the call we wish to share, nourish and witness in our lay communities.





We who feel this call from God find in it the meaning of our life as well as our task, revealed in many ways and with different faces: the teacher, the professor, the companion in the support personnel, the animator of youth groups, the alumni, the university student; the neighbour, the catechist, the parish priest, the bishop, the young professional, the engaged couple, the married couples with their children... thus drawing a range of expressions joined like the colours on a rainbow, in a single ray of light.

We extend the invitation to live the Marist charism to all those who feel called by God to follow in the footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat. It is a unique opportunity, a sign of the times that invites us to live and share the Marist charism with audacity.

The Marist lay men and women of Champagnat are involved with the brothers in a challenge to help bring out the dawn of a new Marist life and to strengthen the existing one by making it more creative, faithful, dynamic and prophetic.

(4th National Meeting of Marist Lay of Champagnat, Venezuela 2012).

THE GOD OF JESUS WANTS US IN COMMUNION



I sense that the God of Jesus wants us to be in communion; that the Church needs new signs which, in a simple fashion, are a reflection of the fireproof love of the Triune God that is continuously identified by reciprocal and shared living; that the Marist Institute needs to identify with new models that will allow Marcellin's charism to continue beyond the brothers...

I perceive that my vocation as a brother will be enriched through closely sharing the Marist charism with my community sisters and brothers.

Ultimately, that the God of Jesus continues to come to me, fills me with surprises and takes me away from the comforts of the learned routine to discover Him in new faces and new proposals.

(Testimony of Br. Abel Muñoz, about the experience of belonging to a new community of lay and brothers, Iberica Province).

Carefully read the testimonies below and try to define your Marist identity, as a brother or as a lay person, based on your experience. In a few words, write about what you feel and experience





FAITH EXPERIENCE

• IT IS GOD'S INITIATIVE.

The Letter from the last General Chapter states: "God has a dream for each one of us, for humanity and for our Institute." God's dream is His project of love for the world. God's dream is His project of happiness for men. God's love is therefore the foundation of our faithful life. On Him rests our fundamental identity, His project of plenitude for each of us.

Thus the initiative of our vocation comes from God. It is a personal call to a specific manner of being a disciple of Jesus (cf *Gathered around the same table* 4, 13). There is a choice of each. God calls and invites us (cf *Constitutions* 11, 13).

• WHAT DOES GOD GIVE US?

The Marist vocation is a gift offered to committed people in different life situations, who want to live the gospel according to the Marist charism.

The Marist charism as a gift speaks of *our own spiritual path*. The Marist spirituality is a contagious spirituality, easy to give and take, which connects us with the hopes of our children and youngsters (cf GAST 103). It has a Marian and apostolic character (cf C 7). It is made of passion and compassion: passion for God and compassion for people (cf *Water from the Rock* 1).

The gift of the Marist charism that lay and brothers receive speaks of *fraternity*. Marcellin and the first brothers were united in mind and heart. Their relations were marked by warmth and tenderness. This type of relation became a characteristic of our way of being Marists. Essentially, our relation with the others consists in being brother and sister. This family spirit shapes our Marist Heritage.

The common gift from God speaks of mission. All Marists share the same mission: to *make Jesus Christ known and loved*. We perform this ministry by building communities that are sacred spaces where people can find God and meaning in their lives. We gladly welcome the youth who are searching for significant relationships with people they can trust. Thus, we show them how much God loves them (Cf *Water from the Rock*, 141).

• WE SHARE THIS GIFT

Brothers and lay share this gift from God. "The lay vocation is a gift from God. It therefore places us in a relationship of equality: the vocation of a Marist lay, the vocation of a Marist brother (Br. Emili). Lay and brothers therefore have a common charismatic vocation: some of us live it as consecrated people, others as lay people (cf Mendes Assembly). As stated by Br. Charles, it is a blessing and an enjoyment for all, brothers and lay, to be able to share a common richness and live together an exciting spiritual and apostolic adventure.





United by a common charismatic vocation, we lay and brothers strengthen our specific identity and we enrich it with vocational complementarity. We deepen our specific vocations as we find each other on a path that opens to the future, whose significant traits have already been discovered (cf GAST 26). We discover that we have much more in common than specific in our vocation: we experience the same Christian vocation for the baptism and we have felt the call from God that attracts us to the Marist charism.

• **TOGETHER, WE PROMOTE THE GIFT OF GOD**

“We contemplate our Marist future as a communion of people in the Charism of Champagnat, where our specific vocations are mutually enriched”, as expressed by the 21st General Chapter. Together, brothers and lay, united by a common charismatic vocation, we face the future of the charism as a challenge to help bring out the dawn of a new Marist life and strengthen the existing one, making it more creative, faithful and dynamic (cf GAST 169).

Lay and brothers continue the narrative that originates in the evangelical itinerary of Champagnat. Together, we are responsible for promoting and expanding this gift from God as we walk toward the future (cf GAST 29).

Maintaining and continuing the Marist charism in the Church will not only depend on the Institute which represented it to this date, but also on all those with a Marist heart who have received this gift from God. That is why today, vocational pastoral becomes a joint effort between brothers and lay (cf XXI CG, Brothers and Lay 7; GAST 146). Continuing the Marist narrative also leads us to rethink the institutional model which to this date incarnated the Marist charism in the Church. “Reality seems to indicate that we not only need to broaden the tent of the Institute but build together a new tent where all, lay and Brothers, may find our place” (GAST 145).

PERSONAL AND COMMUNITY CALLS

- In your group, try to write everything you feel that we, brothers and lay, have in common and the most specific points of each of the vocations, based on the concept of Marist vocation.
- “The lay must reveal to us new facets of the Marist charism, while they live it more fully,” stated Br. Charles. Use the profile of an open hand facing upward. List the new dimensions of the charism you believe the lay are already contributing, as if they were the fingers of that large hand.
- **Our synthesis**

Sharing the charism and the common Marist vocation challenges us to create a new family, an extended one with other ways of life. “Reality seems to indicate that we not only need to broaden the tent of the Institute, but build together a new tent where all, lay and brothers, may find our place” (GAST 145).





Why a new tent? What would that represent for brothers and lay? How does that tent appear in your dreams?

Express it through a poster to share with other groups

CELEBRATION

- **Reading:** Gathered around the same table 16, 17

Lay and brothers have much more in common than different in our vocation: each shares the beauty and the limitations of the human condition at this moment in history; we live the same Christian vocation through baptism and we have felt the call from God which attracts us to the Marist charism. We have the certainty that our respective vocations mutually enlighten each other. Just as we gradually discover who we are when we relate to the others, the specific identity as brother and Marist lay is clarified and enriched when we share life: spirituality, mission, and formation.

(personal meditation)

- **Gesture:** light a candle expressing what attracts me most to the Marist charism, that which becomes the call from God for my own life.
- **Chant** of thanksgiving (Laudate omnes gentes)
- **Our Father.**





Theme 7: Vocation - A new relationship

*Capturing the beauty
of the mystery of God
in the way of Mary*





CAPTURING THE BEAUTY OF THE MYSTERY OF GOD IN THE WAY OF MARY

Called to be the Marian Face of the Church

INTRODUCTION

Brothers, lay men and women, all in this new relationship: our hands and hearts are filled with the life of so many children and young people, enabling us to foster the construction of the Church as People of God with a Marian Face.

This process leading to the Second International Mission Assembly is a good opportunity to look at and review our way of being church, and rediscover the ecclesial identity – marked by our own style – to which we are called:

“The attitudes of Mary, which we wish to take on in our lives, become the presence of the maternal face of God” (XIX General Chapter).

“We, as Marists, are invited to manifest in an original and specific manner the presence of Mary in the life of the Church and of mankind” (He Gave Us the Name of Mary, 2012).

HUMAN EXPERIENCE

This lady, a catechesis teacher in the barrio of Argentina, read the following letter in a Mass followed by a party – with the participation of the neighbors, a number of youngsters from the Marist schools, members of the Marist insertion communities and the Marist Community Centers – celebrating that together they were able to build a square, paint the Health Center and the Chapel, organize games with the children and youngsters, and share the catechesis lessons.

“Our community wants to thank all the young Marists of several ages and from different places, who are here because they chose SERVICE among the different proposals that our society is offering. Thank you for the beautiful gesture of being and sharing with us in our beloved barrio. And yes, our barrio is humble; there is poverty and the problems affecting us are painful. That is why this selfless gesture – plus the sharing among neighbors and the happiness we enjoy together – feels like a caress from God.

Our Diocese is celebrating its anniversary, and one of the biggest challenges we face as a missionary church is the need to reach out to young people in their own spaces, with persevering and patient love, offering the Gospel and the possibility of finding Jesus, as he who gives full meaning to their lives. We want you to know that, in addition to all the good things we did together, you passed on to us your strength and enthusiasm. The challenge to take care of what we have and what we are as a community lies ahead of us. Thank you very much for coming. Amen”.





We now invite you to tell stories from your own communities, which give witness to the Church with a Marian Face, renewing the passion for our Marist vocation

FAITH EXPERIENCE

"Mary inspired in the first Marists a new vision of being Church which was modelled on that of the first Christians..."(Water from the Rock, 114)

- From a set of images or photographs (located on a table) depicting different features of the Church with a Marian Face and the new relationships as brothers and sisters it implies, each participant selects the one he/she finds particularly meaningful.
- We express what we feel when we look at the photo or image we chose, and sing a refrain after a number of participants share.
- We invite the participants to read some paragraphs from the Marist documents – or others you may choose according to your local situation – which can encourage them to reflect upon their own experiences as being meaningful from a vocational and missionary perspective:

FROM THE CIRCULAR "HE GAVE US THE NAME OF MARY"

Icon of the Visitation: the Church of the Apron

- The Church of service, solidarity and justice.
- The Church of amazement: "Your vision of the world will never return to being the same as before".
- With a highly significant presence among children and young people.
- Being present and committed to defend the rights of children and young people through our educational service.

Icon of Pentecost: the Church as the Source of the People of God

- The Church of community life, whose communities are alive, able to quench people's thirst and share with others, where it can be said: "See how they love each other".
- A place where children and young people can be leading-actors and actresses, and find visible role-models, to carry out the dream of Jesus: build the Kingdom, an alternative society
- With a mother's heart, leaving no one astray.





Icon of the Annunciation: the Church of the Beauty which Will Save the World

- A Church which is open to the Spirit, in the habit of simple prayer, present in day-to-day life, and with time for contemplation.
- A Church that promotes sensitivity and openness to the beauty of silence, amazement, and selflessness, and captures the beauty of the Mystery of God.
- A Church that prays and opens her heart to people and events, which touch her deeply, and also discerns the signs of God, like Mary.

FROM THE DOCUMENT *IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF MARCELLIN CHAMPAGNAT*:

34. The roots of our renewed understanding of sharing in mission, and therefore of its concrete expressions in our ministry, are to be found in how the Church sees itself today as a missionary communion...

37. The experience of the love of Jesus and Mary for each of us personally and for others, openness and sensitivity to the needs of our times, and a practical love for young people, especially those most in need, are at the core of the Marist charism we have inherited from Marcellin.

41. We inspire one another to deeper fidelity to the charism, discovering new insights into its spiritual richness and into its dynamic expression in ministry. The women among us, especially, bring a fresh perspective to Marcellin's charism and reveal new facets of its charism for all of us today.

52. Our way of sharing mission in a spirit of genuine communion is itself a sign of the Good News for our Church, for our world, and certainly for the young people we serve. Together we seek to be creatively faithful to the charism of Marcellin Champagnat, and responsive to the signs of our times viewed in the light of the Gospel.

FROM THE DOCUMENT *WATER FROM THE ROCK*

Marist spirituality flowing in the tradition of Marcellin Champagnat

75. Like Mary, who ponders events in her heart, we are constantly alert to the signs of the time, to the calls of the Church, and to the needs of youth. In this way we can understand the sacramental meaning of events, people, and things which are for us a meeting place with God...

83. Our community prayer offers us the opportunity to share in faith what we live in our mission. Each one's presence helps create a sense of communion that enables us to bring into prayer our dreams, achievements, struggles, personal experiences, and community or family projects... We create communal spaces where we are helped to experience and celebrate the guidance which Mary gives to our lives.





107. Life together supports and challenges us to be a community of mission. We listen to the invitations of God that flow through our shared life and discern our shared response. Based on a common trust in God, we offer our lives in service. In ministry we find ourselves, like Jesus, broken open for our brothers and sisters. Truly, we are bread of life for others as Jesus has been for us.

128. Our Marist charism prompts us to be attentive to the calls of our time, to the longings and preoccupations of people, especially the young. Surpassing religious and cultural borders we seek the same dignity for all: human rights, justice, peace, and equitable and responsible sharing of the planet's wealth.

PERSONAL AND COMMUNITY CALLS

After filtering through our heart what we shared regarding the motivating experiences, what we saw in the pictures describing our personal sensitivity, and what we thoroughly read from the documents, in an attitude of dialogue we ask ourselves:

1. What signs of the Spirit, what outbreaks of vitality in the Church with a Marian Face should we nurture and encourage as part of this process?
2. What necessary changes should we go on implementing – both at personal and community level – to enliven the Church with a Marian Face?
3. What *new lands* – for the Church with a Marian Face – do we see on the horizon of our vocation and of our Marist mission?

CELEBRATION

- We remain gathered around the same table while we place different symbols at the center of the circle, expressing what we lived during the meeting (the three icons, some documents, a candle, the Gospel, some flowers, etc.).
- In a moment of silence we connect ourselves with our inner life, and listen to the echoes of the meeting.
- We share what resonates within us with our friends, and then we sing.
- We read the text of The Wedding Feast at Cana (John 2:1-12) trying to understand what it means to foster the Church with a Marian Face, with the same attitudes of Jesus and Mary, who are its first leaders.
- We can present the images and photographs we chose earlier on, and which somehow represented us throughout the meeting.
- We read aloud some phrases – resembling echoes – from our document *Gathered Around the Same Table*, previously distributed among the participants, which can resonate in the heart of the community as a call to continue building the Church with a Marian Face.





We can exchange an embrace of peace while singing, before closing the prayer service.

We invoke our Good Mother and Marcellin, and ask God to bless us all

"Brother, we count on you... Live generously the gift of your life... Giving your life to God will change the world of children... Walk in haste with a new heart for a new world!"

To you, our brother or sister Lay Marist, who, in your heart, desires to live out the fullness of your baptism within the charism of Marcellin Champagnat, let's walk together!" (XXI General Chapter).

Let us walk across the *new lands* into the two-hundredth anniversary of Marist life!





Theme 8: Vocation -
A new relationship
*God is revealed to us
through others*





GOD IS REVEALED TO US THROUGH OTHERS

Being Marist with others:

Experiencing ways of Marist life based on the blueprint of community living

Being Marist with others requires imbibing the spirit of Marcellin Champagnat, sharing it and living it with those around us. It means to be, “around the table” where “people gather to speak, to laugh, to be together”. “The table of La Valla is a symbol of the relationship that unites us.” It is sharing of the Marist Charism and mission with others. Derived from Gather around the Same Table, p. 59, #78-80

Living the Marist charism with others does not permit us to limit the way we experience community to only the people with whom we share our house, whether it’s a family home or the residence for a brother’s community. To live the Marist charism today means to open our lives to others, as in concentric circles, to all who are reaching to share in our Marist spirit. (Living the Marist Charism with Others, p. 4).

HUMAN EXPERIENCE

A reflection from a lay Marist:

“I have never worked with the Brothers under one roof; however my experience with them has been like living together and like a family. The welcoming spirit and the courage to hide the weakness of the others have been strong experiences of being/ living/working together. My twenty years experience with the brothers has made me simple to the core and this is what stands out for me in our life as Brothers and lay people, as daughters and sons of Champagnat. The experience of being together as Marists has been like the relationship of the leaves and the stump of a tree. They both give life to each other. In the same way, this experience has been life giving: A true experience of being a family”. (Mrs. Rubina Javed, Sargodha Catholic High School, Pakistan).

FAITHFUL ENLIGHTENMENT

OPTION #1:

A reading from Scriptures: Acts 4: 32-35

Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. They laid it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.





OPTION #2:

from *Water from the Rock* (pp. 57-59))

Now I give you a new commandment: Love one another

95. Jesus' message is simple but challenging: Love one another as I have loved you. Jesus not only preaches communion, he lives it. At its heart, Christianity is communion made real in the love of neighbour. In Christ we find that a common mission unites us in community and, in turn, community impels us to mission.

96. As we build communities and set up structures that support their vitality, we must share and live a spirituality. Marist spirituality understands community as an excellent place where both the self and God are revealed to us through others.

97. Such a spirituality celebrates the mystery of the Trinity living within us and in the hearts of others. It enables us to "feel with" our brothers and sisters, to share their lives, and to join them in friendship. This spirituality helps us to recognise the beauty and good in others, and to make a welcoming space in our lives for them. Little by little, a group of individuals can grow into a community with one heart and one mind.⁷⁵

98. Marcellin shows us how we are to form and live in communities of mission. In the very name he chose, Little Brothers of Mary, Marcellin summarises the fundamental identity of his community: the gospel virtue of simplicity, the call to fraternity, and the contemplation of the person of Mary.

99. This identity is particularly expressed in the practice of the little virtues. For Marcellin their practice is a way of living Mary's attitudes in everyday life. He is convinced that these virtues or attitudes are life-giving expressions of love.

100. Marcellin believes that in constructing a house he is developing a true community. He finds pleasure in spending the summers at the Hermitage with the Brothers who would return for retreat, rest, formation and encouragement. Through living the rhythm of community life, both at La Valla and then at the Hermitage, Marcellin animates and nourishes the community life by his example, giving himself to manual work and to community prayer.

101. In a world thirsty for connection and belonging, home is such a powerful symbol. Families and communities become a crucial place for each one to grow, be sustained, healed and encouraged.

102. All our relationships are enriched when they are lived by taking Mary as the inspiration for our way of being and doing with others. With Mary we learn how to express God's love in all the relationships of our personal and communal living, since from her we learn how other people are to be loved, and we, in turn, become living signs of the Father's tenderness.





Questions for Reflection and Sharing:

1. Can you relate some examples of how your own spirituality has been nurtured through membership in this community?
2. Share some Marist experiences that you have lived in community.
3. What helps you to keep your relationships authentic, simple, and welcoming?

PERSONAL AND COMMUNITY CALLS

Those who live together and share the charism of the founder, “witness to the brotherly love of consecrated people makes the community evangelising force in the local Church” (Constitutions 58).

In *Evangelizers in the Midst and Youth* (p. 26) we are reminded that, “. . . there is no doubt at all that being close to young people and dedicated to their interest is the best model for evangelizing. Here is how young people throughout the world who have participated in our Marist Youth Ministry activities confirm our thinking”:

(If young people are present, have them read the following statements aloud, pausing for reflection between each thank you . . .; if there are no young people present, the activity can still be done, projecting, based on lived experiences, what the young people would say.)

THANKS...

- For the confidence you place in us.
- For opening up a world sometimes unknown to us and helping us to know ourselves and everyone else.
- For the opportunity to encounter Jesus and the Marist charism,
- For showing us a God who is not distant, out there somewhere, but rather right here in our midst.
- For helping us to grow humanly and spiritually; for understanding, constantly encouraging and accompanying us as we journey in pursuing our dreams.
- For sharing in our laughter and tears, our joys and sorrows; for your warmhearted care, understanding and help at all times, especially when we are most in need of this.
- For offering us a place to grow as persons, where we learn how to care for, love and value our very own lives.





- For showing us how to appreciate little things, for the patience and choices you have placed along our path.
- For the good times we shared, for vivid experiences that were very meaningful in our lives.
- For your friendship, family, service and education; for being a part of our lives and showing concern for us.
- For your total dedication, constancy, warmth, witness to love and the time you spend in sharing all this with us.
- For continuing to dream the dream of Champagnat.
- For helping us to discover what's real.

CELEBRATION

To end the session chose from the list above, two or three of the most prominent, heartfelt thanks and share how youngsters help us in living our community life?.





Theme 9: Evangelisation

*Sisters and brothers to
young people, seeing
Christ in one another*





SISTERS AND BROTHERS TO YOUNG PEOPLE, SEEING CHRIST IN ONE ANOTHER

Essence of the Marist Mission

INTRODUCTION

In today's world there is no greater challenge facing the Church than the evangelisation of young people. In many countries, generations are becoming alienated from the Catholic Church. Spirituality, rooted in ever deepening relationship with Jesus, is often being usurped by philosophies which can be characterised as superficial and individualistic. As Marists, we face these challenges with open arms and energy, hope and humility. We are called to explore new ways for "new lands," where young people will hear "how greatly Jesus loves you!" through our listening and joyful presence among them. To be evangelisers, we must be constantly evangelised and possess a heart that knows no bounds.

HUMAN EXPERIENCE

Evangelisation:

- The process by which the Church, moved by the Spirit, proclaims and spreads the Gospel throughout the world. (General Directory for Catechetics).
- Evangelisation is not standing with your arms folded! (Br EmiliTuru).

Individuals are asked to reflect on the following questions and then share in small groups.

1. What was your earliest memory of God's presence?
2. What have been the important evangelizing or Spirit filled moments in your life?
3. How do you try to remain open to the Spirit in your life?

FAITH EXPERIENCE

Evangelisers in the Midst of Youth.

1. Play the video reflection titled "Evangelisers in the Midst of Youth" from the www.champagnat.org website, available in English, Spanish, Portuguese, and French.





2. Discuss the document "Evangelisers in the Midst of Youth". With the film clip as introduction and reflective music in the background, the group can read the following chosen quotes from the document. (The group may choose to broaden this activity using alternative sections from the full text of the document.)

Evangelisers in the Midst of Youth

Youth ministry reference document for the Marist Institute

53. Jesus is our inspiration in relating to youth. Like Him we invite them to arise: "Talitha Kum" (Lk 8, 49-56), all the while respecting their personal privacy, believing in their talents, potential and dreams. We go out to meet them with the heart of an educator born of love for the human person and a firm commitment to accompany "life" as a privileged place to come together. So, as Jesus did with Zaccheus (Lk 19, 1-10), we place greater emphasis on the processes of life and faith than on results. We approach the young using words that affirm, unite and send forth. We accompany them on the road of love, the love we have for one another (Jn 13, 34-35), a love exemplified by Jesus, one that when put into practice shows the world that we are His Disciples.

79. For us the lives and faces of young people (each and every one) are places where this God of life reveals Himself to us and we get to know Him. We discover and experience God in the everyday realities of our life. This faith-filled reading of reality helps us better understand His liberating action in the world. Inspired by Mary, we view the life and face of each young person as the place where we listen to, love and serve God.

112. Through our many educational structures and projects across the world, we Marists are in direct contact with youth and we know their enthusiasm and their assertiveness. We are well situated to channel their hunger for belonging and offer them programs capable of filling their lives with meaning. In this way we find ourselves in a privileged position to make a significant contribution to the life of the Church and youth by means of a well organised, unified, structured and systematic youth ministry.

153. To accompany well, we need to know and understand the phenomenon known as youth. As apostles to young people and heirs to the charism of Champagnat, we believe that educating and evangelizing youth is a gift and a challenge for all of us. And so we must be competent in our response to this call. Good will is not enough. For anyone desiring to take up the cause of youth as a preferential field in EVANGELISATION, it is essential to read and study about young people and be in their midst, trying to perceive their dreams and challenges, hopes and hard times.

211. As Marists, we dream and believe that the Divine presence dwells in every young person. We dream and believe in a theology that is youthful, alluring and abounding in symbols and signs of the young. A dream and belief transformed into a faith-filled journey that becomes a major component of the life of our Marist Youth Ministry groups and consequently the lives of youth the world over.





PERSONAL AND COMMUNITY CALLS

1. Ask each participant to note:

- Which quote inspires you?
- Which quote challenges you?
- Which quote do you feel most passionate about?
- Which quote would you like to focus on within your ministry?

2. Ask participants to share thoughts as a group.

CELEBRATION

1. Read the story of the Road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35).

Now that very same day, two of them were on their way to a village called Emmaus, seven miles from Jerusalem, and they were talking together about all that had happened. And it happened that as they were talking and together and discussing it, Jesus himself came up and walked by their side; but their eyes were prevented from recognising him. He said to them, "What are all these things that you are discussing as you walk along?" They stopped, their faces downcast.

Then one of them, called Cleopas, answered him, "You must be the only person staying in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have been happening there these last few days." He asked, "What things?" They answered, "All about Jesus of Nazareth, who showed himself a prophet powerful in action and speech before God and the whole people; and how our chief priests and our leaders handed him over to be sentenced to death, and had him crucified. Our own hope had been that he would be the one to set Israel free. And this is not all: two whole days have now gone by since it all happened; and some women from our group have astounded us: they went to the tomb in the early morning, and when they could not find the body, they came back to tell us they had seen a vision of angels who declared he was alive. Some of our friends went to the tomb and found everything exactly as the women had reported, but of him they saw nothing.

Then he said to them, "You foolish men! So slow to believe all that the prophets have said! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer before entering into his glory?" Then, starting with Moses and going through all the prophets, he explained to them the passages throughout the scriptures that were about himself.

When they drew near to the village to which they were going, he made as if to go on; but they pressed him to stay with them saying, "It is nearly evening, and the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them. Now while he was with them at table, he took the bread and said the blessing; then he broke it and handed it to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognised him; but he had vanished from their sight. Then they said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us as he talked to us on the road and explained the scriptures to us?"





They set out that instant and returned to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven assembled together with their companions, who said to them, "The Lord has indeed risen and has appeared to Simon." Then they told their story of what had happened on the road and how they had recognised him at the breaking of bread.

2. Read paragraphs 171- 186 from *Evangelisers in the Midst of Youth*, which provides reflection on the scriptural passage. Discuss shared insights in small groups.

3. Ending:

- Share prayers with a focus on evangelisation within your daily ministry.
- Conclude with singing the Hail Mary, Sub Tuum (or another reflective song), as we ask for our good Mother's help in bringing young people to know and love Jesus.





Theme 9: Evangelisation

*Called to be light of the
World and salt of the Earth*





CALLED TO BE LIGHT OF THE WORLD AND SALT OF THE EARTH

Together in Mission with a New Heart in a New World

INTRODUCTION

Speaking about Marist mission with a new heart in a new world immediately touches upon the apostolic work we are doing or intend to do in the future. We are called to carry out this apostolic work together, namely, brothers and lay Marists hand in hand.

What features should this renewed Marist mission have so that it can actually help to construct a new world?

Listening to the Toronto 2002 WYD anthem calling us to be light of the world and salt of the earth, we find some elements that are part of the Marist mission, which intends to be creative and innovative. And when we look at paragraph 142 of our recently published book on youth ministry – Evangelizers in the Midst of Youth – we find practically the same elements. This paragraph presents five pastoral and pedagogical traits that should be present in every Marist apostolate, if we want to look at the future with creativity. Three of them are also part of the WYD anthem of Toronto, namely, the experience of fraternity, educating in the faith, and the accompaniment of young people.

Let us look at the anthem and study a bit more closely these common elements. At the end we will propose some practical activities and a short prayer service about the Marist mission for the groups discussing this topic.

HUMAN EXPERIENCE

1.1 Lumière du monde - Light of the World - Luz del Mundo (JMJ, 2002, Toronto, Canadá)

1. Celui que de nos yeux nous avons vu,
Celui que de nos mains nous avons pu toucher,
Celui que nos oreilles ont entendu,
Celui que dans nos cœurs nous avons rencontré...
Voilà Celui que nous vous annonçons
Et qui a resplendi
Sur la terre où nous vivons!





2. So many in our world drift into sleep,
while others only know a darkness without end.
Let brothers rise to call them from the deep!
Let sisters take their hands
to heal and be their friends.
Together, let us stand against the storm
and in the heart of night be the watchers of the morn.

Refrain:

Lumière du monde!
Sel de la terre!
Soyons pour le monde
Visage de l'amour!
The light of the world
Christ is our light.
We shine with his brightness,
The reflection of his light
From day to day!

3. Hay tantos que se pierden al buscar
Sentido de vivir, razones para amar.
Si los pudiéramos acompañar
Compartir su dolor, presentarles a Jesús;
Quizás ellos pudiesen comprender
Que es en el partir del pan
Que podemos renacer.

Refrain

4. La gente dove andare più non sa,
In noi cercando va l'amore che non ha:
Il senso della vita troverà
Facendo insieme a noi la Comunità...
Così potrà conoscere
Gesù Spezzando il pane che
Vita eterna donerà!

Refrain





FAITH EXPERIENCE

ELEMENTS IN COMMON BETWEEN THE ANTHEM AND # 142 OF EVANGELIZERS IN THE MIDST OF YOUTH (EMY)

- **Educating in the faith**

Our mission is aimed at developing a process to educate young people in the faith, which in a nutshell implies announcing Jesus Christ and Him risen.

- **Fraternity**

Our mission should move young people to live a vibrant experience of fraternity. In other words, the anthem invites us to be brothers and sisters living an experience of friendship together.

- **Accompaniment**

Our mission, according to EMY 152, focuses on accompaniment, which is absolutely necessary to personalize formation processes, heal wounds and help young people sense the Spirit in their heart (cf. EMY 152).

- **The Holy Spirit, soul of our mission**

Chapter 4 of EMY bears a well-known biblical phrase as title, which is highly appreciated in the Marist tradition: "Unless the Lord builds the house..."

The last verse of the anthem refers to the absolute necessity of being open to the Spirit of God in the work of evangelization we do. This is another way of saying that, ultimately, it is the Lord who builds the house. The Spirit of God – the Energy of God, according to our Orthodox fellow Christians – is the soul of our mission. According to Paul, we are called to be "God's co-workers" (cf. 2 Corinthians 6:1).

GOSPEL MATHEW 5:13 – 16 SALT AND LIGHT

You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.

You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

SHARING

- Place the world map or globe at the center, in the middle of the group.
- Each participant writes on a piece of paper a call to both brothers and lay Marists regarding the mission.





- Each person reads what he or she has written and then places the paper next to the world map or globe.
- Share a life experience in which you were “light and salt” for others.
- You can sing by heart a short song after every three interventions.
- Each person attaches his/her piece of paper containing the call to the string on a balloon.
- The group can play with the balloons in a background sound.
- Then the group can chat for a while, and finish with a song known by heart about the mission, the missionary spirit, fraternity, etc.

CONCLUSION

The group can listen again to the Toronto hymn or other appropriate song to the Holy Spirit.





Theme 11:
**Contemplating the path
we traveled as a group.**





The present meeting is an opportunity to evaluate and celebrate the work done together, and to prepare the report of our local group, after having shared so many discoveries, new ideas, questions and certainties as part of this journey leading to the II IAMM.

REVIEWING THE PATH WE TRAVELED

To conclude this first phase, each local group is invited to evaluate the process, especially trying to identify any innovation, new awareness, or commitment resulting from it.

Each group chooses the most suitable evaluation method.

WHAT SHOULD WE COMMUNICATE TO THE PROVINCE?

- Our report as a local group should include the opinions and views collected by the secretary throughout the meetings, especially taking into account the concrete intuitions of the members which lie beyond the words and speeches.
- The report should speak about the path our group has traveled together, but it could also mention our gratitude for the life and history we have inherited, the new shoots of Marist life we can see emerging in recent times, and the paths we must explore to reach the New Land dreamed by the XXI General Chapter.
- The report can take the form of a letter, no more than a page in length, or an artistic rendering of our conclusions (video, painting, music, poster, etc.), a group "creed" or any expression the group finds suitable. This report should be delivered according to the Province or District schedule.
- A copy of the report could be publicly displayed in our local setting (school, community center, social work, community, etc.).

WE CELEBRATE OUR JOURNEY AS A LOCAL GROUP

Let us now celebrate our sharing and all the work we have done.

We thank God for what we have built together, for the richness of our experience, and the contribution of our report to the Province or District: like the sap in a tree, this work helps revitalize our Marist mission in the world.

The group can organize a festive celebration to conclude this stage: having a good time together is also part of the Marist life and mission.





The World

by Eduardo Galeano (Uruguayan writer)

Once upon a time, a man from the town of Negua, on the coast of Colombia, was able to climb into the sky.

On his return, he described his trip. He told how he had contemplated human life from on high, and he said we are a sea of tiny flames.

“The world,” he revealed, “is a heap of people, a sea of tiny flames.”

Each person shines with his or her own light. No two flames are alike. There are big flames and little flames, flames of every color. Some people’s flames are so still they don’t even flicker in the wind, while others have wild flames that fill the air with sparks. Some foolish flames neither burn nor shed light, but others blaze with life so fiercely that you can’t look at them without blinking and if you approach, you shine in fire.

