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OINT VOCATIONS MINISTRY

*Vocations Ministry* is an action of the Christian community – animated by the Spirit, and according to the practice of Jesus – aimed at helping the people who are discerning their life project in the Church and in the world to welcome and let grow the Kingdom of God in the specific circumstances of their life. The community that calls them on behalf of the Lord Jesus is the point of departure for this ministry. It requires a concrete pedagogy and process. It considers the person as the protagonist of his or her own existence, and the local Christian community as a point of reference in the following of Christ[[1]](#footnote-1).

In our charismatic family, vocations ministry includes all the processes, initiatives, activities, attitudes, and ways of doing, which can support the personal growth process of the people involved in the Marist mission, helping them discover their own inner space, and enhancing their capacity for religious experience at the personal and community levels. The vocational dimension is a fundamental part of Marist pastoral action in all areas because it brings about the essential orientation of each person’s existence through a life project according to the Gospel[[2]](#footnote-2).

Therefore, it becomes obvious that vocations ministry is a *joint effort* that regards every life project and vocation, including religious life, lay life, and priesthood: *“It* c*ommits to the discernment of all vocations and ministries in the Church, and is glad when some of these people’s processes lead them to join the community that accompanied them, either as Marist brothers or laity*”[[3]](#footnote-3). Although this integrated approach is clear nowadays, we still need to emphasize the word “joint” regarding vocations ministry as a new path for our pastoral work.

*Joint vocations ministry* has different implications. It presupposes an understanding of the Church as “communion of communities” with all its members involved in ministry, all having equal dignity, which only comes from Baptism. The laity, like everybody else, have a leading role in the work of evangelization, and are not only its passive recipients. The priesthood of the faithful and of the ordained depend on each other, without any kind of preeminence. Every person, according to his or her own vocation, charism, and ministry, becomes a sign for everybody else, promoting a vocational culture, an explicit invitation to personal discernment, and the accompaniment of people’s vocational search. Everybody shares in the mission, the only mission of the Church. All believers participate in the work of evangelization, without the need for a special mandate. Wholehearted commitment to the Gospel is a consequence of Baptism that finds expression in a variety of Christian vocations.



Promoting joint vocations ministry requires an understanding of religious life as a *“community of consecrated people that is part of a Consecrated People*”[[4]](#footnote-4), who seek *“to serve the consecration of the lives of all the faithful, clergy and laity alike*”[[5]](#footnote-5). It implies a sense of participation in the mission of the Church, sharing it shoulder to shoulder with other believers. It implies acknowledging that their commitment to religious life, and the commitment of the laity to human realities, both give witness to the Kingdom in a complementary way.

Joint vocations ministry leads to convey the charism through formation itineraries that bring the different vocations together in an effort of communion[[6]](#footnote-6). The process of communion essentially consists in creating links between people, which bring about a deeper interpersonal relationship, mutual esteem, and shared responsibility regarding the common project. It gradually results in a deeper communion in faith, an easier communication of the experience of God, and a more thorough experience of the Gospel. Finally, we become aware of being mediators of the mission of God and the Church, as well as carriers of a charism we must collectively carry on and develop.

1. Cf. ‘identity’ in *Sowing the Gospel of Vocation*, Inter-American Subcommission of Brothers, 2014. The *Lexicon* of Brasil Centro-Sul states that *“it is the organized action that provides suitable means and experiences to foster the awakening, discernment, and development of the person’s response to God’s call, namely, to vocation”.* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Cf*.* *He Walked Along with Them* *- Vocations Ministry Document of the Marist Province of The Hermitage*, 2013, p. 6-7. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Cf. *Sowing the Gospel of Vocation*. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Botana, Antonio. *La nueva presencia del hermano en la escuela* (The Brother’s New Presence in Schools). San Pío X, 2003, p. 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Cf. *Vita consecrata* 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. The 21st Chapter General in 2009 asked us to *“enliven vocations ministry through a joint effort of Brothers and Lay people”.* [↑](#footnote-ref-6)