N

EW BEGINNING

This expression, relatively new, has started to be used in the Marist Institute thanks to Br Emili Turú SG. In his letter ‘*Just a Tent as the Heart of our Future*’ he says “on the threshold of the third centenary, we now speak of a *new beginning* for the Institute”[[1]](#footnote-1). The 21st General Chapter expressed the content of this expression very well when it talked about a new era for the Marist charism, of going out to a new land, of a new consecrated life, of a new relationship, of a new identity for the brothers, of new styles of community, of new ways of evangelizing and educating… It manifests the novelty of every new light, the novelty of a new Marist life[[2]](#footnote-2).

The expression seems to tell us, if we want to keep our life we must change it, otherwise “we lose it”[[3]](#footnote-3). That is why Pope Francis has spoken about “a Church which goes forth,” which is a Church whose doors are open.[[4]](#footnote-4) Yet the drive to go forth and give, to go out from ourselves, to keep pressing forward in our sowing the good seed, remains ever present[[5]](#footnote-5). The Pope invites us to not cling to a nostalgia for structures and customs which are no longer life-giving in today’s world[[6]](#footnote-6). New cultures need new expressions of the Gospel[[7]](#footnote-7).

In each of history’s critical phase, in which man changes the way of understanding himself and his relation with the world and the transcendent, he outlines new profiles of life and new coordination for religious life and ecclesiastical institutions; i.e., the challenge of a *new beginning* is experienced. Since Vatican II, the words “renewal”, “aggiornamento”, “return to sources” have been repeatedly used… Br Basilio Rueda echoed these calls of the Council in his circulars[[8]](#footnote-8). The XIX General Chapter used the term “refoundation”[[9]](#footnote-9). And it was Br Benito who developed the concept[[10]](#footnote-10). To found again, he said, is to effectively reorient the Institute in line with the intuitions and intentions that the founder had at the beginning of the Congregation. It involves recovering the elements that give originality to the charism, to update them in the current historical moment and in the different cultural contexts where the Institute is present.



The *new beginning* is to accept that death is part of life and that this process involves true suffering; it involves assuming an attitude of tentativeness, of temporality, of adaptation, of living outdoors, but also of welcoming; it demands creativity, imagination, innovation.

Venturing into a new beginning requires seizing the heart of the founder and feeling God’s call in the present; using His eyes to look at today’s world with love and the emergencies that required him to take such an action as the one he took in 1817; to endeavor to embody the same values he wanted for his brothers with a new language; to undertake projects that can be more faithful to the foundational insights and intentions; to strip away whatever alienates that faithfulness, even if what we are doing is good and plausible for a certain sector of society[[11]](#footnote-11).

The term *“new beginning”* invites us to not repeat, to break the routine and inertia, and avoid structures that lead more towards conservation than conversion. It invites us to enter into paths of generous, creative, contagious, and joyful fertility[[12]](#footnote-12). The following of Jesus that we, brothers and lay people, share, makes us *seekers and explorers*.

“To move ourselves, to let go, to take a journey of conversion”, is what the XXI General Chapter will say. It is the displacement and the roaming that Mary and Champagnat lived. It is the “out into the deep” and “going to the other shore,” that Jesus points out. It is an experience of pilgrimage and of searching; an experience of fear and admiration, of hesitation and trust. It is taking on the condition of traveling. In the words of David Weinbaum: “The secret to a rich life is to have more beginnings than endings”.

1. Emili Turú, Letter *Just a Tent as the Heart of our Future*, p. 4, Roma 2014. On p. 5 he states: “The circumstances experienced by the Church worldwide in the last 50 years make us sense that we, as an Institute, are facing a new beginning that is similar to others we have lived in the past.” [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Gathered Around the Same Table, 169 (p.99): “We Lay Marists commit ourselves, together with the Brothers, to new and daring initiatives in formation. We have before us the challenge of helping to bring about the dawning of new Marist life and strengthening the one that exists, making it more creative, faithful and dynamic. The future depends on our answer.” [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Cf. Matt 16:25; Mark 8:35; Luke 17:33; John 12:25; Apoc 12:11. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Cf. Evangelii Gaudium 46. Br Emili speaks about the “sensibility of many people who dream of a different Church”, in *He gave us the name of Mary*, p. 45, Rome 2012. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Cf. Evangelii Gaudium 21. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Cf. Evangelii Gaudium 108. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Cf. Evangelii Gaudium 73. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Among his circulars, we highlight Circular 370, Vol. 24, No. 4, Rome 1968. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. The “Message” of the 19th General Chapter concludes with this invitation: “With your help, this refoundation will succeed!” [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Cf. Benito Arbués, en la Circular*Caminar con paz, pero de prisa*. Rome 1997. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Idem. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata,* John Paul II*: “*to propose anew the enterprising initiative, creativity and holiness of their founders and foundresses in response to the signs of the times emerging in today's world” (VC37). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)