V

OCATION OF THE LAY MARIST

*“Lay life is born, like every Christian vocation, from a response to encounter God, who loves us infinitely. It is the fruit of Baptism that sends us to the only Christian mission: make the Kingdom of God present in this world.”*[[1]](#footnote-1) This is how the lay person is defined in our document *Gathered around the same table.* It is a definition that expresses a response to a call, to a vocation.

This vocation is born in the baptismal consecration[[2]](#footnote-2) and we respond to it in a specific way, sharing a charism: *Within the ecclesial communion, the Spirit has brought forth charisms among the laity, which originally existed only in religious institutes. The gift of a shared charism introduces a new chapter, which is rich in hope in the way of the Church[[3]](#footnote-3).* The charism of Saint Marcellin Champagnat is expressed in new ways of Marist life. One of them is that of the Marist laity.

The Marist lay vocation, like all vocations, originates and develops reading one's own life in the light of the Spirit, where we discover a personal call to a specific way of being disciples of Jesus. “There are a group of people who, after a journey of personal discernment, have decided to live the Christian spirituality and mission as Mary did, following the intuition of Marcellin Champagnat. These are us, the Marist Laity”*[[4]](#footnote-4).*

For a lay Marist, the Marist charism permeates his entire existence. “We cannot live any other way, we are Marists”[[5]](#footnote-5). For the lay person, the Marist vocation means that his life is multiplied and strengthened in the mission, it is spiritually nourished and enriched when sharing the Marist way of life. At the same time, due to their lay state, the commitment to the realities of the world makes them signs of God in different social, economic and political environments in which they find themselves in, and it also enables them to discover, with their own gaze, God’s call in those situations.

Vocation is a gift that must be taken care of, that demands a continuous response to God’s constant calls. Vocation is dynamic, constantly growing and being defined. It is tightly knit to the mission.



*We believe we live in a “kairos,”a key moment to share and deepen the Marist charism with audacity, making together a prophetic image of communion in the Church. As long as the voice of children and young people reaches our ears, Marcellin’s charism will remain deeply present. His eyes touch our hearts, and ask us to go out to meet them together, the Brothers and the Laity of Champagnat[[6]](#footnote-6).*

The vocation of the lay Marist is reaffirmed in the 21st General Chapter[[7]](#footnote-7), in which the Marist future is contemplated as a communion of people within the charism of Champagnat, “where our specific vocations will be mutually enriched.” The vocation of the lay Marist united to that of the Brother, searching together a greater vitality of the charism. The 2nd Marist International Mission Assembly in Nairobi, is projected in the same vocational horizon: lay and brothers around the world throb with the same Marist heart and celebrate this gift from God. Through this gift we become heirs of the spirit of Champagnat. It is a gift that we welcome, accompany and make grow; as an initiative of God that becomes a life project, with a vocational response. Our existence is thus shaped from a certain lifestyle. In this way, our Marist heart communicates to the world the life it has received and becomes a memory of the charism, which perpetuates and promotes the heritage transmitted to us by Champagnat[[8]](#footnote-8).

1. *Gathered around the same table*, No.5 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Jer 1: 4-10 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Cf. *Vita Consecrata, 54.* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Gathered around the same table, No.11 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Cf. EMM, 4 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Cf. Letter of the 21st General Chapter, p.20 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Cf. *Brothers and laity in a new spirit of communion*, *1*, Doc. 21st General Chapter, p.36 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Cf. Message of the Second Marist International Mission Assembly [↑](#footnote-ref-8)