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ARIST MISSION

Jesus, the Son of God, proclaims the Kingdom of God with his life and words. Sent by the Father, he accomplished God’s will and became the model of every mission for us[[1]](#footnote-1). Jesus, in turn, sends a community of disciples to proclaim what they have seen and heard: *“Go out to the whole world; proclaim the gospel to all creation*”[[2]](#footnote-2). The Easter event, the death and resurrection of Jesus, prompts the disciples to carry out what the Master had taught them, bringing about the Kingdom of God in every time and space. The Holy Spirit generated a particular dynamism, a divine dance[[3]](#footnote-3) in early Christians, which many generations of men and women have passed on to us through the testimony of their life.

Marcellin Champagnat also takes part in this “divine dance” of the God who is mission himself. He heeds God’s personal call. He welcomes and lives the experience of Jesus and Mary’s unconditional love for him and his brothers, and decides to devote his life to the service of the Church through the priestly ministry. Endowed with a special sensitivity regarding the events of his time – especially the situation of poverty and religious ignorance of children and young people – he put his heart and soul into his vocation and particular mission: *“Every time I see a child, I long to teach him his catechism, to make him realize how much Jesus Christ has loved him*”[[4]](#footnote-4).



The project of the Society of Mary, in which he participated together with a group of young priests from the Diocese of Lyon, helps him envision an evangelization ideal. Thereafter, when he comes across a dying young man, Jean-Baptiste Montagne, who has no spiritual experience and knows nothing about God, Marcellin is deeply moved and decides to carry out his intuitions with boldness. He founds the Institute of the Marist Brothers as a way of responding to the needs of his time, and proposes a clear mission to his first companions in the project: *“Making Jesus Christ known and loved!”* Educating children would be a platform to announce the experience of Jesus and Mary’s unconditional love and make it tangible.

Marists, as consecrated or lay men and women inspired by Marcellin Champagnat’s insights, accept the invitation to live the Marist mission today as a particular expression of baptismal consecration. We become the Marian face of the Church, witnessing to the joy of the Gospel in fraternal communities, evangelizing children and young people – especially those who are most neglected – through formal and informal education, defending and promoting their rights. This Marist mission takes shape through different apostolates: schools, universities, social development centers, catechesis, child and youth ministry, solidarity projects, structures to defend and promote children’s rights, etc.

Our Marist mission stems from a personal experience of God’s love; we enrich it through our openness and sensitivity to the signs of the times, and express it in a simple and practical love for children and young people[[5]](#footnote-5). We are deeply moved when they live situations of poverty, suffering and abandonment, as it happened to Marcellin Champagnat, and we get underway, like Mary in the Visitation, bringing Christ to each of them[[6]](#footnote-6).

Through a fraternal, open and sincere dialogue, the Marist community discerns how to carry out its mission in the best way possible within its own context. We thus constantly listen to the Spirit and give creative and bold answers to the signs of the times. The new Montagnes of today question us and invite us to be generous[[7]](#footnote-7). Together with the Church and the people of good will who try to build a better world, we *“go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the ‘peripheries’ in need of the light of the Gospel*”[[8]](#footnote-8).

The family spirit that typically accompanies our Marist mission also brings about the feeling of belonging to a global community. As Marists, we express our missionary availability by building intercultural and international communities and networks, which make us visible as mystics and prophets. These communities encourage shared responsibility, integral development, and solidarity with the poor[[9]](#footnote-9).

1. Cf. Constitutions 78. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Mk 16:15 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Cf. Emili Turú. *Montagne: The Dance of Mission.* March 2015, p. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Cf. Constitutions 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Cf. Seán Sammon. *Making Jesus known and loved.* June 2006, p. 25. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Cf. *Letter from the 21st General Chapter.* October 2009. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Cf. Emili Turú. *Montagne: The Dance of Mission.* March 2015, p. 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Evangelii Gaudium 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Cf. *Message of the II MIMA*. Nairobi, September 2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)