M

ARIST SPIRITUALITY

Spirituality shapes our way of relating to persons, to the world, and to God. It is more than worship, beliefs, laws and dogmas. It refers to the deep and absolute dimension of existence. It is the meaning of life. It is lived from the roots. The document *Gathered around the same table* points out that spirituality is living in and from God[[1]](#footnote-1). Spirituality is like the sap of the tree. It is not seen, but it sustains, causes growth and gives fruit. In *Water from the Rock,* spirituality is described as an unquenchable fire that burns within us, filling us with passion for the construction of the Kingdom of God and becoming the driving force of our lives as we allow the Spirit of Christ to guide us[[2]](#footnote-2).

The Brothers’ *Constitutions,* like *Water from the Rock,* characterizes Marist spirituality as Marial and apostolic[[3]](#footnote-3). Looking at Champagnat we discover Mary, as guide, travelling companion, sister in the faith. Mary is our model for following Jesus. We find Jesus present through the features of Mary[[4]](#footnote-4). Marist spirituality smacks of the passion of the apostle, such as Champagnat lived it, and the first brothers. It is an apostolic spirituality, a missionary spirituality. It drives towards mission and in the living of the mission is nourished and rekindled[[5]](#footnote-5). Being brothers and sisters of all those we meet along life’s journey is a beautiful expression of our apostolic spirituality which leads us to be living signs of the tenderness of the Father, as the incarnation of our mission[[6]](#footnote-6).

The spiritual inheritance left to us by Marcellin, a practical, affectionate and simple man, is marked by a spirituality which is uncomplicated and down to earth[[7]](#footnote-7). A spirituality which helps us to discover the depth that is hidden in daily life[[8]](#footnote-8), when we experience the presence of God in creation and in the events of every day, in work and relationships, in silence and in noise, in joys and sorrows. All these daily experiences become places of encounter with God[[9]](#footnote-9). For this reason, Marist spirituality has the feminine dimension of the home of Nazareth, which Mary offers, model of the simple and hardworking life.

Marist spirituality is a communitarian spirituality. It understands the community as a unique place where God reveals himself through others. It makes us capable of “feeling with” our brothers and sisters, sharing their lives and uniting ourselves to them in friendship. It helps us recognize the beauty and goodness in others, and make a welcoming space in our lives for them[[10]](#footnote-10). Champagnat tells us by his example that the family spirit, inspired by Nazareth, and composed of *love and forgiveness, help and support, forgetfulness of self and openness to others, and joy,* is communion with God.

In Marist spirituality appears the mystical dimension, which transcends appearances and surface meanings to penetrate to the heart of each situation. Which sees the footprints of God in all the events of life. Which listens, meditates and discerns, like Mary who kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. Which gives utterance to praise: “Oh Lord, how great is your love!”[[11]](#footnote-11) The spirituality of the contemplative gaze, which knows how to scrutinize existence in a habitual way so as to encounter God who is in the substrata of our lives. The one which helped Marcellin to understand the significance of his encounter with the dying youth, Jean Baptiste Montagne.

1. See GAST 100 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See *Water from the Rock,* Introduction p.14. “*The story of our spirituality is one of passion and compassion, passion for God and compassion for people*” (WfR, 1). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. See Constitutions 7; Water from the Rock 151. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See GAST 110 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. See GAST 122; Water from the Rock 129; [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. See Water from the Rock 137, 139. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. See Water from the Rock 34 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. See GAST 37 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. See Water from the Rock, 54 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. See Water from the Rock 97, 105. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. See Water from the Rock 73, 75 [↑](#footnote-ref-11)