

F M S

Year 2022 - No. 11 - August 2022

message



THERE IS GREAT VALUE
IN BEING
A BROTHER TODAY

Table of Contents

Year 2023 - N. 01
 August 2023

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The gift of the Marxist church is
 Dr. Emma Söder

Page 1

CHAPTER I THE VOCATION OF BROTHER

Page 5

You can't judge a book by the cover
 The Ministry and Kinship of the Religious Brother in the Church
 Dr. Ivan Lobo

Page 8

Being a Brother is what brotherhood is all about
 Dr. John E. Sweeney

Page 9

Crucifying the cause of God
 The Commitment and Mode of Life of the Marxist Brother
 Dr. Antonio Rentería and Dr. Jesse Wade Serrano

Page 22

I don't have a vocation
 Dr. Sever María Riera

Page 22

CHAPTER II OUR BROTHER

Page 26

The vocations of the Marxist Brother
 Dr. Kishor Kulkarni, Pune

Page 26

Brother's Ministry: Grounding and Rising by the "I AM"
 Dr. Immanuel Anand

Page 28

What is the minimum age for a Brother?
 Dr. John Aguirre

Page 32

Marxist vocation in Higher Education
 Dr. Manuel Serrano

Page 32

Being Brother between young adults who are playfully challenged
 Dr. Carlos Aguilera

Page 32

Ready to respond as Marx did
 Dr. Kishor Kulkarni, Pune

Page 37

Being a young Marxist Brother in Europe
 Dr. José Luis Corrochero

Page 38

Being a Marxist Brother today in Algeria
 Dr. José M. Vico

Page 38

Being a Marxist Brother in a world community
 Dr. Martín Riera

Page 40

Being a Brother: A blessing as well as a challenge
 Dr. Manuel Serrano

Page 41

Being Brother working as Principal of a College
 Dr. Ildes Maria

Page 42

Proposing a future of life
 Dr. Manuel Rentería de Cacer

Page 42

Building bridges
Fr. Vilson Groh Page 45

I am looking forward to becoming a teacher
Salistiano FernandesPe. Vilson Groh Page 46

A Marist Brother in the Family
Peña Jacobo Family Page 47

True models of Marcellin
Aisling Demaison Page 48

CHAPTER III
AWAKENING THE MARIST LIFE Page 51

Vocation wounded by life
Br. Juan Carlos Fuertes Mari Page 52

Where is Marist life headed?
Br. Alfredo Herrera Page 55

Growing in God
Br. Ben Consigli Page 58

God has given us a Marist heart
Matt Fallon Page 62

We need more Brothers
Fonyuy Nsairun Derek Page 63

The Brother of the future needs an open mind
Jonathan Drouin Page 64

The little ones dream big
Francesco Di Costanzo and Emanuela Di Fiori Page 65

Being Brother far from the own country
Br. Noynoy Sisneros Page 66

Being Christ's face to everybody around us
Br. John Hung Page 68

Where will the Marist Brother go?
Br. Michael Alexander Anamá página 69

The future, seeking challenges and dreams
Panashe Yusufu Page 70

What is at the heart of being a Marist Brother?
Br. José Santamarta Castro Page 71

How do I dream of the Marist Brother of the future together with the Marist laity?
Constanza Amparo Rojas Carvajal Page 72

The challenge of vocation ministry
Br. Márcio Henrique Ferreira da Costa Page 73

Year of Marist Vocations
20 May 2022 - 6 June 2023 Page 78



THE GIFT OF THE MARIST CHARISM

Br. Ernesto Sanchez Barba, Superior General

Dear Marists of Champagnat, In the context of this Year of Marist Vocations, from 20 May 2022 to 6 June 2023, we would all like to value more deeply the gift of the Marist charism given to us through Saint Marcellin Champagnat.

As brothers and lay people, we want to keep alive and spread the flame of this gift through our personal, community and family witness. This issue of FMS Message focuses on the vocation of brothers and the next issue will

be devoted to the vocation of lay Marists, as part of the ongoing process of the Forum on the Lay Marist vocation. We know that we have several elements that define this charismatic gift in common and, at the same time, we are aware of the specificity of each of these vocations. Hence the importance of understanding and examining the particular content of each of these vocations, knowing that we all have a place around the table at La Valla, where Champagnat and the first Marists began this won-

derful project to serve the young people of our world.

THE VOCATION OF BROTHERS

In recent years, the Marist vocation of Brothers has been affirmed within the Church and the Institute itself as perhaps never before in history. The document Identity and Mission of the Religious Brother in the Church was published in 2015. It is the first church document to refer specifically to religious brothers. It stresses the importance of living brotherhood in a prophetic way, because it is the gift we have received to which we are to give radical witness.

On 2 January 2020, we received the official version of the text *Wherever You Go: The Rule of Life of the Marist Brothers* from the XXII General Chapter. The Rule of Life contains the broad outlines of the church document just cited, together with reflections drawn from our renewed Constitutions and from our experience as consecrated men. We



Formation Program
"Gier"



Design by Goyo, for the centenary of Colegio Chamberí, Spain (2002)

are being invited to live the gift of brotherhood in a radical way. We are happy and encouraged to find so many brothers who live their vocation with joy and passion, giving themselves day by day to the service of young people and those most in need. In the visits that I have made to various Provinces and Districts, one of the most delightful moments that I have the privilege of experiencing has been when brothers share with me their vocational stories and their life journeys as brothers. I believe that we have among us great witnesses of faith and consecrated life. So often they seem to remain anonymous, and yet I believe that they are an important component of the strong pillars that are supporting and have been supporting our Institute from its beginnings. The experience and witness of these brothers is a source of encouragement for those who may find themselves in a moment of

crisis or discouragement, a situation that often has consequences for community life and mission. Let us never forget that we are heirs to a free gift received from the Spirit, which grows and develops through our strengths but also through our vulnerability, for it is in God that we are strong. We are also encouraged by the fact that in various parts of the world today we have the living and joyful testimonies of young people who are responding to the call to follow Jesus as Marist Brothers. They are a gift to our family and a reminder that the Lord continues to call and that he counts on the generosity of young people who wish to follow him. Our mission is to facilitate the awakening of this vocational gift in these young people, to welcome them as a gift, to accompany them and, at the same time, to allow ourselves to be challenged by them as they can offer us new perspectives on the

charism for our present time. Some of the ideas I am sharing were expressed in the circular Homes of Light, worth reading again and pondering over.

THERE IS GREAT VALUE IN BEING A BROTHER OR LAY MARIST TODAY!

I invite each and every one of us, brothers and lay people, to reflect on and update the meaning of consecrated life for our times, so as to be better able to accompany those who express an interest in this way of life. At the same time, we need to review and be ready to modify structures of community life and mission in order to be really open to these new vocations, providing them with the opportunity and the environment for their growth in fidelity and perseverance. For this we need to dialogue and be open to change and transformation.

THE GIFT OF THE MARIST CHARISM

Br. Ernesto Sanchez Barba



**Br. Ernesto,
Superior General**

I thank those who have contributed in some way to the production and the articles in this issue of FMS Message. Your input and reflections stimulate our thinking and creativity. In particular, I am grateful to so many brothers, lay men and women, who, through their personal witness and dedication to mission, are living and passionate witnesses to the Marist charism among young people today.

We are encouraged by the witness of Saint Marcellin who as a young man discovered his personal vocation in life and knew how to say yes despite the difficult times in which he lived. He did not lose heart in the face of difficulties, of which there were many, throughout his vocational journey. From Marcellin we have learnt to be people of vision and action, of sensitive outlook, and of unconditional dedication to the most needy and vulnerable. Today's circumstances are inviting us to respond with similar courage and passion.

Champagnat gave us the great gift of Mary's name, which is integral to our identity. We rejoice to bear her name, as we feel her inspiration to live simply, trust in God, and commit ourselves wholeheartedly to the service of others. She, as our Good Mother, continues to inspire and accompany our Institute, reminding us that "this is her work", as Marcellin so often repeated to us.

May our lives continue to show our conviction that "There is great value in being a brother today!", as well as "There is great value in being a lay Marist today!", each of us open to the gift of the charism that we have received.

CHAPTER
I

THE VOCATION of BROTHER





Br. Tony Leon, Australia

You CAN'T judge A book

THE IDENTITY AND MISSION OF THE

IT WAS A FRESH AND CRISPY MORNING ON THE 14TH DECEMBER 2015 WHEN THE LONG AWAITED VATICAN DOCUMENT, 'THE IDENTITY AND MISSION OF THE RELIGIOUS BROTHER IN THE CHURCH' WAS PRESENTED. THIS WAS ONE OF THE EVENTS TO CELEBRATE THE CONCLUSION OF THE YEAR OF CONSECRATED LIFE (21/11/2014 – 16/02/2016).

The cover of this first edition was simply the title on a colour background. Several months later, this document was reprinted and the cover intrigued many brothers. The dubious image was of young priests in roman collars with one wearing a surplice. It seems that there is still controversy in defining 'What is a religious brother?'

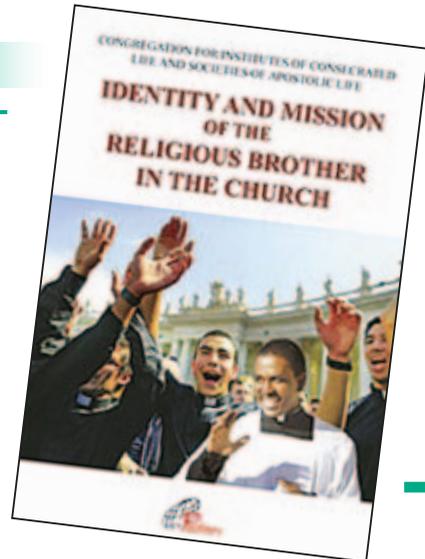
One of the original versions of this document had the identity of the brother defined as: A consecrated male who is not a priest. This definition by negation reflects that the identity of the religious brother requires a broader mindset, in order to recognise that the brother is in closer communion with the laity and yet, set apart. It is a prophetic vocation.

“Brother” is the name traditionally given to the male lay religious in the Church since the beginning of consecrated life. The title does not belong to him exclusively, of course, but it represents a significant way of being in the ecclesial community in which he is the prophetic memory of Jesus-Brother, who told his followers: “And you are all brothers” (Mt 23:8) (*The Identity*, 1).

Like in any relationship, the experience of love fuels commitment. This is evident amongst the brothers in our own institute, from the young men in discernment during initial formation to our senior men who live with gratitude in discovering the rich meaning in their lives.

by THE COVER

Religious Brother in the Church



What is the origin of the vocation of the Brother if not the experience of God's love? "We have known the love God has for us and put our faith in it" (1 Jn 4:16). That is also the source of every Christian vocation (*The Identity*, 12).

For Marcellin Champagnat, he transmitted this experience of God's love with this desire: "I can never see a child without telling him/her how much God loves him/her."

If the source of the vocation of the religious brother is an experience of God's love, then perhaps the result is not simply just the transformation of a person's identity but also in the transformation of the relationship with those whom he lives, works and serves.

...but fraternal living does not automatically become a reality through the observance of the rules governing common life. While it is true that the structures are necessary, community among brothers is expressed mainly through their attitudes (*The Identity*, 24)..

Thus, the identity of the brother is less about his position in community but about the fraternal disposition in how relationships are cultivated amongst the members of the immediate and wider community.

In the recent circular, Homes of Light, Br Ernesto Sánchez shared that despite the easy pessimism of focusing on statistics and scandals, we have a precious gift of life, happiness, and brotherhood ... if we only knew how to be, in truth and simplicity, Masters of Spirituality, Prophet of brotherhood, Agents of Happiness. Each of us and each Marist community can be. A home of light.

Undoubtedly, there are difficult moments in being a religious brother today. During these dark days of doubts and uncertainties, it is hard to see the light. Some argue that our current condition is Karma, we reap what we sow. There is something quite spiritually offensive in the concept of Karma as it is transactional, conditional. As people who relate with the person of Jesus, we focus not on Karma but Grace. Unmerited favour from God that is not transactional but transformational, It is not conditional but unconditional. Thus, in the face of many challenges, many brothers stay in the arena, they show up each day, they stay in the game, because they are reminded that the gift of life, happiness and brotherhood are ultimately, signs of God's Grace.

Consecrated life has always been a story of grace in the Church and for the world, "a gift of God the Father to his Church through the Spirit," which guides the eyes of the faithful "toward the mystery of

≡ *the Kingdom of God already at work in history... (The Identity, 32).*

Five years after 'The Identity and Mission of the Religious Brother in the Church', Pope Francis presented his encyclical, 'Fratelli Tutti' on 4 October 2020, the Feast of St Francis of Assisi.

≡ *"No one can face life in isolation (...) Let us dream, then, as a single human family, as fellow travelers sharing the same flesh, as children of the same Earth, which is our common home, each of us bringing the richness of his or her beliefs and convictions, each of us with his or her own voice - brothers and sisters all" (Fratelli Tutti, 8).*

As an institute, this has been our intuition in extending our identity and mission of religious brotherhood beyond our own immediate local brothers' community. We share communities with our brother and sister Lay Marists in the Lavalla200> projects. We share mission with our De La Salle brothers in the Fratelli Project. We share the perils and hopes with our Muslim brothers and sisters in The Marist Blue project in Syria. We truly live in a time of Grace. The question remains about whom should we have in the cover of the document, 'The Identity and Mission of the Religious Brother in the Church'? On the eve of the Year of Marist Vocation, perhaps it would be best to include an image of fraternal disposition, a photo of communion with brothers and lay...and the ordained. Why? Fratelli Tutti!

Sri Lanka



BEING A BROTHER IS WHAT BROTHERHOOD IS ALL ABOUT



Br. Sean D. Sammon
United States

AN OLD MAN SAT ON A sofa alongside his middle-aged son. A crow suddenly appeared on the window sill. The father asked his son, "What is that?" "It's a crow," his son replied.

A few minutes later the old man repeated his question. In response, his son said, "I've just told you: It's a crow." When the old man asked a third time, "What is that?," his son grew angry. "It's a crow, a crow, a crow," he said.

A fourth time, the man's father asked him, "What is that?" In re-

ply, his son shouted, "Why do you keep asking me the same question over and over; I have told you it is a crow. Aren't you able to understand that?"

A few minutes passed before the man's father went to his bedroom and returned with an old and tattered diary; he had maintained it since the birth of his son. Opening to a page in the book, the old man asked his son to read the entry. It read: "Today my son, aged three, was sitting with me on the sofa when a crow appeared at the window. Twenty-three times he asked me what it was, and I responded to him all twenty-three times that it was a crow. And I hugged him lovingly each of the twenty-three times that he asked me that question."

Now what does the story of an old man, his impatient son, and a crow on a window sill have to do with Marcellin Champagnat and his understanding about what it means to be a brother? A great deal actually. For the founder realized that our identity as brothers had little to do with what we do and everything to do with who we are. Simply put, as Marcellin's brothers you and I are asked to make Christ's fraternal face visible in the world and Church.

Now, you might rightly wonder: isn't everyone called to be a child of God and brother of Jesus? Absolutely. But living that identity fully, by simply being a brother, is the essence of our Christian vocation as brothers. This insight can be found not only in the text of the founder's Last Will and Testament, but also in our Marist Rule of Life. Brotherhood has far more to do with who we are than with anything we might do.



Brothers of the Program
"Pathways" 2022

On the next page,
devotion to
the Good Mother
in Bolivia

VATICAN II AND OUR IDENTITY AS BROTHERS

Vatican II was a Church Council held more than fifty years ago. For some, it is a fond memory; for others, an event of history. However, deliberations that took place during that gathering raised some important questions about the nature and purpose of religious life, and ultimately the identity of a brother.

Prior to Vatican II, many Catholics held fast to the belief that the structure of the Church resembled a pyramid, with the priesthood, religious life, and laity making up its three tiers. The Council, however, turned that model of Church upside down.

Vatican II was a seismic event; when the dust had settled, we were all left standing in a different place. Those of us who are sisters, religious priests and brothers were also reminded that we were never meant to be part of the hierarchical Church. Our place is with the charismatic Church; our congregations and their charisms are movements of the Holy Spirit.

During the years since Vatican II, we have come to realize more fully that our brotherhood is actually a movement inspired by the Spirit of God. The charisma that came into our world through Marcelin Champagnat was a gift to the Church, not just his brothers. In clarifying the identity of religious life, those of us who are brothers also grew in our awareness about its purpose. At its best, religious

life is meant to serve as the conscience of the Church, reminding the latter about what it longs to be, can be, must be.

MARY OF NAZARETH, OUR MARIST MODEL OF BROTHERHOOD

For Marcellin Champagnat and the early Marists, Mary of Nazareth was central to the dream that they had in mind. Many in our Church, however, have spent centuries attempting to domesticate this remarkable woman of faith. Mary, however, was a Semite peasant woman and, like the women of her day, was in all probability, illiterate. And, yet, over time we have transformed her into someone who resembles a medieval noblewoman ensconced in her villa in the Tuscany hills. Luke's account of the Annunciation, however, paints a very different picture. The evangelist tells us that Mary was greatly disturbed by the angel's message, and Paul VI reminds us that she had the good sense to question God's messenger.

Don't forget also that we esteem Mary not because she was the Mother of Jesus but rather because she was his disciple. Like all of us, she, too, passed through the dark night of faith.

A "PRACTICAL" CHRISTIANITY

The founder lived a practical Christianity; he believed that the love found in the gospel message always translated itself into concrete action. Consequently, while he knew that his brothers were never meant to be part of an ecclesiastical work force, he realized they were called, like Mary of Nazareth, to respond to the absolute human needs of their day, to reach out to what Pope Francis refers to as those living on the existential peripheries. As Marist Brothers in our world today, we are meant to be the eyes and ears, hands and feet of this remarkable woman of faith. She brought Jesus to the world in her person.

We are called to do the same





**Br. Antonio Peralta,
Team of ongoing
formation**



**Br. Josep Maria Soteras,
General Councilor**

CRYSTALLISING THE THE CONSTITUTIONS AND

IN HIS CIRCULAR, “HOMES OF LIGHT”. BR ERNESTO SANCHEZ, ASKED HIMSELF, “WHAT DREAM DO WE IMAGINE GOD HAS FOR THE MARIST CHARISM IN OUR DAYS AND IN THE FUTURE? (III,6) AND, AS A CONSEQUENCE, CAN EACH OF US ASK OURSELVES WHAT OUR ROLE IS IN THIS DREAM (III,2)..

A revised edition of the Constitutions is a response to this concern. On the one hand, it has meant crystallising the charism of Marcelin Champagnat in words and, on the other hand, for each of us as readers, to confront our vocational journey with this guide,

in order to grow as a brother and to take greater responsibility for how we feel called to live out this dream of God for us today. A dream that evolves with us and, so, our texts also need adapting as time goes by.

This was the case in 2009, when the XXI General Chapter invited us to update the Constitutions that had accompanied our journey since 1986. This began a long process of dialogue and discernment at all levels until, on 6 June 2020, the Holy See recognised the new text as the current expression of the Marist charism for the Institute: a charism that the Spirit has given to the Church and is the patrimony of the whole ecclesial community.



dREAM of God

RULE of LIFE of THE MARIST BROTHERS



I. A COMPREHENSIVE REVISION

From the outset, we can point to three aspects that particularly stand out in this in-depth revision of our Constitutions: our vocation as brothers, the contemplative dimension, and the sources of inspiration, the bible and our Marist tradition.

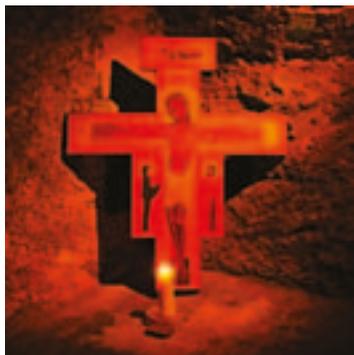
A. OUR VOCATION AS BROTHERS

In launching this process, the XXI General Chapter itself declared that it could help us to revitalise our vocation. A little later, in 2105, the publication of the Vatican Instruction “Identity and Mission of the Religious Brother in the Church” was decisive in guiding the whole process: it was a question of revitalising our vocation “as Brothers”. With this in mind, we had the idea

of having a Rule of Life, in which we could be more explicit and expressive about our identity and, at the same time, about the spirit in which we want to live the Constitutions. In these new texts, the character of “brother” and the call to brotherhood constitute the perspective from which we contemplate all aspects of our life and shed light on them, whether it be consecration, community, spirituality or mission, and even our way of organising ourselves.

B. THE CONTEMPLATIVE DIMENSION

Spirituality, prayer and the cultivation of an inner life have always been the Achilles’ heel of an Institute committed to an exciting and captivat-



La Valla

ing mission. At least since Vatican II, all the Superiors General have pointed this out as the aspect of our lives that was most deficient. On the other hand, during these same years, approaches to spirituality have been appearing which, in their simplicity, have given rise over time to a spiritual awakening, among both brothers and laypeople. The call to be contemplative in action and active in contemplation has begun to take root among us and these new texts are a good testimony of this. In turn, this tendency has led the Rule of Life to adopt a style that invites prayerful meditation, an intimate dialogue, with explicit encouragement to engage in contemplation at the end of each section (Rule 7, 21, 34, 41, 53, 65, 72, 83, 95).

C. THE SOURCES OF INSPIRATION

The theological language of the Constitutions of 1986 has been kept in the present revision, with the retention of phrases most appreciated by the brothers. Part of the theological corpus of the Constitutions has been transferred to the Rule, where it has been sensitively enriched with new touches. However, the new texts clearly privilege two sources of inspiration: recourse to the Word of God and to our Marist traditions coming from our origins. Both have a permanent value for us and root us in the essence of who we are and how we want to live. The Rule of Life underlines this in the titles given to the sections, in the numerous citations, and by beginning each of its nine sections with a biblical or Marist icon, following the pattern inherited from the previous Constitutions: Jesus (Rule 1, 35, 66), Mary (Rule 8, 42, 73) and Champagnat (Rule 22, 54, 84). In what follows, we briefly present the contents of the Constitutions, chapter by chapter, with some references to the Rule of Life. Secondly, we show some of the more novel elements which appear repeatedly in the texts, becoming cross-cutting themes running through the different sections. In this way, their relevance to the present day becomes clear.



II. OVERVIEW OF THE CONSTITUTIONS WITH SOME REMARKS ON THE RULE OF LIFE

CHAPTER I: OUR RELIGIOUS INSTITUTE OF BROTHERS IDENTITY

The first chapter offers a summary of the identity of the Marist Brother in the Church, using what we have received from our most authentic tradition and other features points that represent new emphases. The latter are expressions of new calls from the Spirit: our identity is to be brothers (Const 2); the

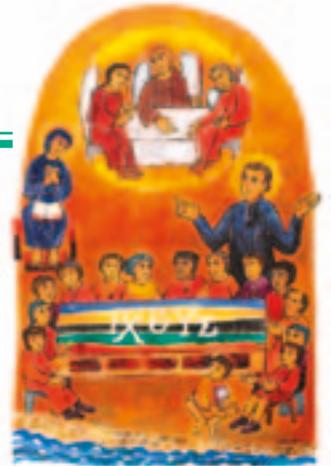


recognition and welcome of lay people who are attracted to the Marist charism (Const 6); the well-being, safety and protection of children and young people (Const 4); regional collaboration (Const 7); and the Marist Institute as a global family (Const 8). Alongside these new melodies, there is a familiar background music that comes from the wisdom of 200 years of the Marist story.

CHAPTER II: OUR IDENTITY AS RELIGIOUS BROTHERS CONSECRATION

This chapter presents our consecration from the perspective of “being a brother”, a gift we receive (Rule 2-3 and the whole of Chapter 1) as a mysterious covenant of love (Const 13), which is revealed over the course of life (Rule 4). We

consecrate ourselves as brothers, to continue the mission of Jesus and to be a sign of brotherhood (Const 14). Our response to the loving call of Jesus is to surrender our lives through the profession of the evangelical counsels of chastity, obedience and poverty as a road to human fulfilment (18-33). “To love tenderly, to practice justice and to walk humbly with our God” (Mic 6,8), is the inspiration for how we live our commitments as brothers (Rule 11-21), in accordance with the Constitutions (Const 15). As has been the case since the beginnings of consecrated life, our call to be mystics and prophets gives a particular shape to our lives (Const 17), as a gift of the Spirit to the Church, which sends us on mission (Const 16)



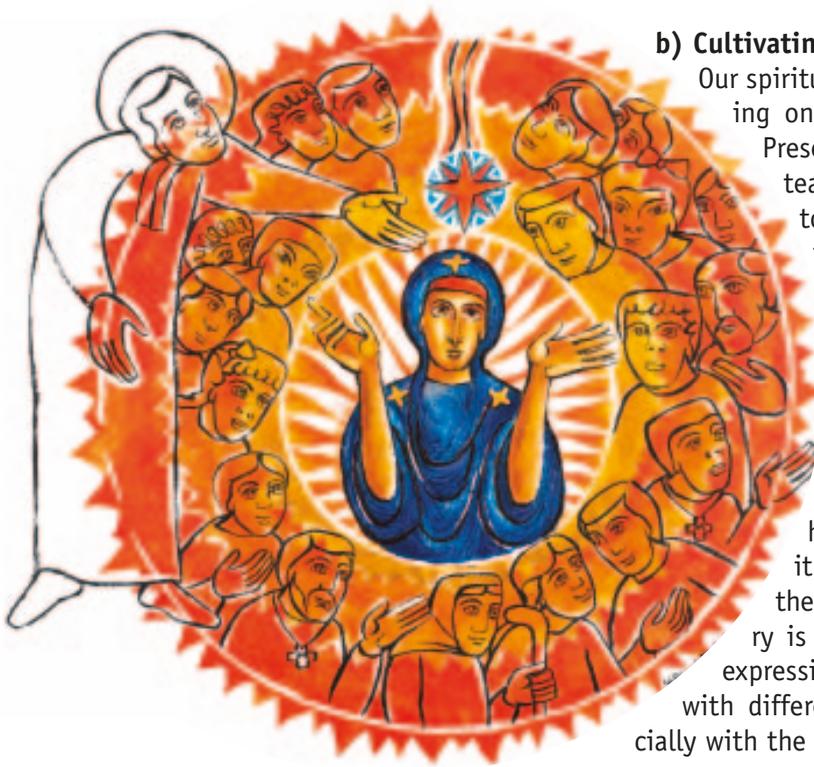
CHAPTER III: OUR LIFE AS BROTHERS BROTHERHOOD, SPIRITUALITY, MISSION

Fraternal relationship in community, Marist apostolic spirituality, and our mission at the service of the Church appear together in a single chapter. These three dimensions of our being brothers overlap in ordinary life and nourish each other when we live them in a balanced way (Const 34). This is possible when, in each of them, the others also flourish (Rule 53).



a) Fraternal Life in Community

The gift of fraternity that we have received is also the gift that we share (Rule 36-37 and all of Chapter 2). Being brothers and building community is our first mission (Const 39). Our fraternal encounters foster the human and spiritual growth of each brother and in them we share the best of ourselves (Const 40). We try to live in harmony with ourselves, with our brothers and with creation (Const 41). We offer a warm and hospitable welcome for those who visit us, especially our families, young people and Marist laypeople (Const 43). Mary's presence helps us to understand that we form the community of Jesus and around her we build a Church with a Marian face (Const 35), making our community a new La Valla for the world (Const 36).



b) Cultivating Spirituality

Our spirituality is grounded in Presence and being one with God (Const 45). To live this Presence we look to the Master, who teaches us how to listen and respond to God (Const 44). For this we daily foster interior silence. In this way we learn to contemplate the Word of God, creation, our life story, with its people and events (Const 48); and we want to live this in community, when we gather to pray (Const 47) and around the Eucharist (Const 46). Passion for God and compassion for humanity are at the heart of our spiritual journey (Const 44). Attentive to the stirrings of the Spirit, the Marist story is enriched by fresh contributions and expressions that strengthen our assimilation with different peoples and cultures, and especially with the new generations (Rule 25-34).

c) Sent on Mission

Brotherhood is the gift we give in our mission as brothers (Rule 67-68 and all of Chapter 3). In communion with Marist lay people, we share in the mission of God to respond to the needs of our world today (Const 52). We are sent to evangelise children and young people, especially the most neglected, through education and other pastoral and social services (Const 53, 55, 56, 58). We are all called to contribute to the mission by our prayer, work (Const 57) and community witness (Const 54). The promotion and defence of Child Rights and the creation of safe environments is making increasing demands in the mission entrusted to us (Const 59). Looking at the world through the eyes of impoverished children and young people, we feel our fields of mission are constantly



changing (Const 60). With missionary hearts, we welcome the call of the Spirit to have a mindset of global availability (Const 61).

CHAPTER IV: OUR JOURNEY AS BROTHERS FORMATION, PROFESSION AND MEMBERSHIP

The heart of Marist formation is to form people who come to full maturity in Christ by following Jesus like Mary and freely giving their lives to God, living in apostolic communities and being available to serve the worldwide mission entrusted to the Institute (Const 62). This purpose is developed through specific pathways and processes (Const 63). Mentoring the vocational awakening (64) and creating a vocational culture (Const 65) are the responsibility of all Marists, brothers and lay people.) Formation for brothers begins with an initial stage (Const 66-75) but continues throughout life (Const 78), and some people take on a special responsibility for accompanying others on their vocational journey (Const 76-77). Finally, the formal procedures for joining (Const 79-83) or separation from the Institute (Const 84-86) are described.

CHAPTER V: OUR ORGANISATION AS BROTHERS THE SERVICE OF AUTHORITY

Serving our brotherhood is the essence of this chapter. We are invited to look to Jesus, Mary and Marcellin to inform and inspire the service of authority. Christ, by becoming a servant and washing the feet of his disciples, left them a new model of authority in service (Const 87; Rule 66, 91, 92, 93, 94). Through the operation of Councils, leadership and government is carried out in a spirit of brotherhood (Const 90). We speak of units of life and mission making up the Institute and these are called to form a global body, in close relationship with other units and with the general government (Const 91-97). We choose to make a Gospel-inspired use of our resources, giving priority to justice, brotherhood, generosity, and the care for creation, so that our resources may be at the service of evangelisation, solidarity and Institute unity (Const 98). After establishing some general guidelines for the administration of resources at all levels (Const 99-101), the text sets out the functioning of general (Const 102-122), provincial (Const 123-141) and local (Const 142-148) government.

III. THEMES THAT ARE PRESENT THROUGHOUT

A) GLOBAL FAMILY

The longing for unity and communion present in every human being (Rule 38) appears in the call to contemplate our Institute as a global family. We are an international Institute which has taken root in diverse cultures. Our unity is grounded in Marcellin's charism and nourished in a communion of prayer, discernment, witness of brotherhood and solidarity, global apostolic action, and the service of authority at all levels (Const 8).

This dream of unity is made concrete in a mindset of global availability (Const 60-61), prepared to go well beyond the customary bounds of our Administrative Units and regions, and committing ourselves to international collaboration for mission (Const 61.2). Also, within each work (Const 58) this sense of unity is fostered by encouraging dialogue between people of different cultures and faiths (Const 58), as well as in all communities, called to minister locally with a global vision (Const 61.3).

To make this possible, the text insists on providing appropriate training (Const 61.1) and establishing that one of the objectives of Marist formation is to form people for the service of the global mission entrusted to the Institute (Const 62). Specifically, it is one of the aims of formation at the post-novitiate stage (Const 73).

Members of the Program "Pathways" visiting the Marist places in France

On the next page, Marist animators in Mexico

In Chapter V on our organisation as brothers, the theme is underlined by reference to units of life and mission. An Administrative Unit is a broad community of life, prayer and mission. Although they are administratively independent of each other, each of them is called to be part of a global body, to foster close relationships with other units and with the General Government, and to strengthen fraternal bonds and our sharing of resources (Const 91). In a particular way, this is given concrete





expression in regionalisation (Const. 7 and 96). The Rule of Life invites us to commit ourselves personally to grow in a deep sense of what being global availability could mean for us (Rule 15, 81, 82).

B) BROTHERS AND LAYPEOPLE IN COMMUNION

Our call as religious brothers is to be a prophetic reminder of the common dignity and fundamental equality of the People of God (Const 2; Rule 5). In correspondence with this call, we recognise and welcome all who are attracted by our charisma. Within this charismatic family, we brothers joyfully contribute the richness of our consecrated life in many ways (Const 6). On this path of communion, various possibilities are arising for laypeople to relate to the brothers and bond with the Marist charisma (Const. 6.1 and 6.2).

Further on, shared communities appear, where brothers and lay people share life together, as spaces of mutual enrichment and common com-

mitment to live the Gospel and the charisma (Const 36.2 and 127.1). The warm and hospitable welcome to people who visit the community, particularly lay Marists, is part of our journey together and helps us to develop a culture of encounter (Const 43). This communion is also expressed and fostered in prayer, when an invitation is extended to those who share life and mission with us. Our spirituality is thus enriched by the different ways they encounter God (Const 47.2).

As regards Marist formation, we are invited to participate in joint formation between brothers and lay Marists to strengthen our bonds of communion, share our charismatic vitality, and deepen our common Christian vocation as well as our specific identities (Const 63). In leadership and government, there are many items that emphasise the participation and co-responsibility of the laity, assuming also all kinds of roles in the service of mission (Const 89.1, 89.3, 101, 105.4, 114.3, 118.3, 119.2, 119.3, 120, 121, 121.1, 122, 133.4, 137.3, 138.1, 138.2, 139,



**Solidarity
with South Sudan**

**On the next page,
St Marcellin School,
Bouake - Ivory Coast**

140, 140.1, 141). In the three chapters of the Rule specifically for the brothers, lay Marists appear as present on a daily basis alongside the brothers as they go about their lives (Rule 31, 44, 79, 95).

C) CARE OF CREATION AND ECOLOGY

A sensitivity to respect and care for nature is reflected in several articles touching on of our life as brothers. We commit ourselves to live personal and communal poverty by adopting a simple lifestyle. We avoid consumerism and practice responsible use of natural resources. We appreciate the little things in life and feel in solidarity with all creatures. We actively engage in caring for the planet, our common home (Const 30). We live in harmony with ourselves, with our brothers and sisters and with creation, conscious of the God who dwells in everything and is the source of our being. We help each other to live in the present moment and to overcome that unhealthy anxiety that can make us superficial, aggressive and compulsive consumerists (Const 41). Also, in contemplating creation, we learn what we need to live lovingly and with integrity (Const 48).

Through our ministry, we help young people develop their capacity for reflection and discernment, for them to grow as committed and sensitive people aware of the new challenges facing our world. To respond to these, our educational and evangelising programmes encourage the cultivation of contemplative practices, the development of their spirituality, their search for meaning in life, and their commitment to solidarity, justice, peace and the care for creation (Const 58.2). These same values are taken up as the principles on which we base a Gospel-inspired approach to finances (Const 98).

The Rule of Life is also peppered with references to the theme as when it speaks of living poverty (Rule 19), presents it as a path

of spirituality (Rule 33), calls for being one with creation (Rule 38) in order to become its brother (Rule 40), invites to care for our common home (Rule 50), and points to making a commitment to ecological transformation in education (Rule 77). In a less obvious way, such care is evident in the work of the brothers devoted to manual tasks (Rule 94).

D) CHILD RIGHTS AND CHILD SAFEGUARDING

In our institutional texts (Constitutions, Rule and others), there are so many references to underprivileged children and young people as the *raison d'être* of our mission that it is obvious and exceeds the purpose of this limited space. However, related to this, there is a particular aspect that is important to mention here: active advocacy for Child Rights and Child Safeguarding, and creating safe spaces for their integral development. This responsibility is clearly especially serious when they are under our care in fields of Marist life and mission; but we also extend our vigilance to any other en-

vironment that could affect or compromise their dignity or wholesome growth.

The first article of the Constitutions that presents Marist mission in a brief way already makes explicit mention of this theme, thus indicating the relevance it has acquired among us today (Const 4). In the section on mission, there are a number of references (Const 59, 59.1, 59.2, 59.3 and 59.4). It appears again as a criterion for vocational discernment (Const 66.8) and as a topic to be prioritised throughout ongoing formation (Const 78.1). Finally, more precise and concrete directions are given for handling cases where Child safeguarding and protection have been violated (Const 86, 86.1, 86.2, 86.3).

The Rule of Life also takes up the theme when it speaks of the affective dimension of relationships (Rule 13) and of features of Marist mission today (Rule 78).

This summary provides a first glimpse of the content and approach taken by our Constitutions, Statutes and Rule of Life. Of course, there is no substitute for reading the text yourself and meditating on it.





**Br. Oscar Martin Vicario,
General Councillor**

I DON'T HAVE A VOCATION

MANY YEARS AGO, MY FRIEND ANDRÉS WHO IS A BROTHER USED THIS PROVOCATIVE PHRASE TO GET US TO REFLECT ON VOCATION IN A WAY THAT IS MORE DYNAMIC. I BELIEVE THAT HE HAS PUT HIS FINGER ON SOMETHING HERE BECAUSE IT IS TIME FOR US TO CHANGE OUR LANGUAGE AND MAYBE EVEN OUR CONCEPT OF 'VOCATION'.

Looking at vocation as something that we either have or do not have, thinking about it in static and unchanging terms, or stressing a passive stance of welcoming something received rather than active engagement ... these are ways of thinking and expressing ourselves that, although they may have helped us at some moments in the past, nowadays create more confusion than light.

Likewise, other expressions used in this area that were once common can end up causing a great deal of frustration if they are not purified and refined: expressions like "following" or "fulfilling" my vocation, or "imitation", or "attracting vocations" with their emphasis on our own efforts, voluntarism or unattainable goals (at least this happened to me along the way)

This is what I mean when I say that I do not have a vocation. Perhaps it is time to speak with fresh perspectives and ideas as some authors are doing. They prefer to speak of passion, of an integrating force, of life-giving mission, of creative paradigms, of dynamic life-projects... (we will have to look for the words). In this way we will avoid what a brother in my province used to say jokingly when telling the story of his personal vocation which came to him in the form of an unexpected illness, and which stayed with him forever (and then "I got the vocation bug", he said).

The biblical and Marist foundations and ideas from our documents about 'vocation', as presented in the previous articles of this magazine, provide some very good clues for this "purification". That is why it is time to look ahead with different eyes, more focused on the young people of today, as the Superior General also challenges us in "Homes of Light", his first circular: "Do we think that young people understand words and terms we use like vocation or discer-



XXII Capítulo General, 2017

ment...? Isn't it true that the Gospel is reaching and challenging young people, but our 'religious' structures less so?" (Br. Ernesto Sánchez, *Homes of Light*, 2020, p, 72)

In what follows, I dare to present some examples of the fresh "vocational" thinking that I am talking about. Yet, I am aware that I am giving rise to a lot more questions than answers, more dreams than refined, concrete proposals.

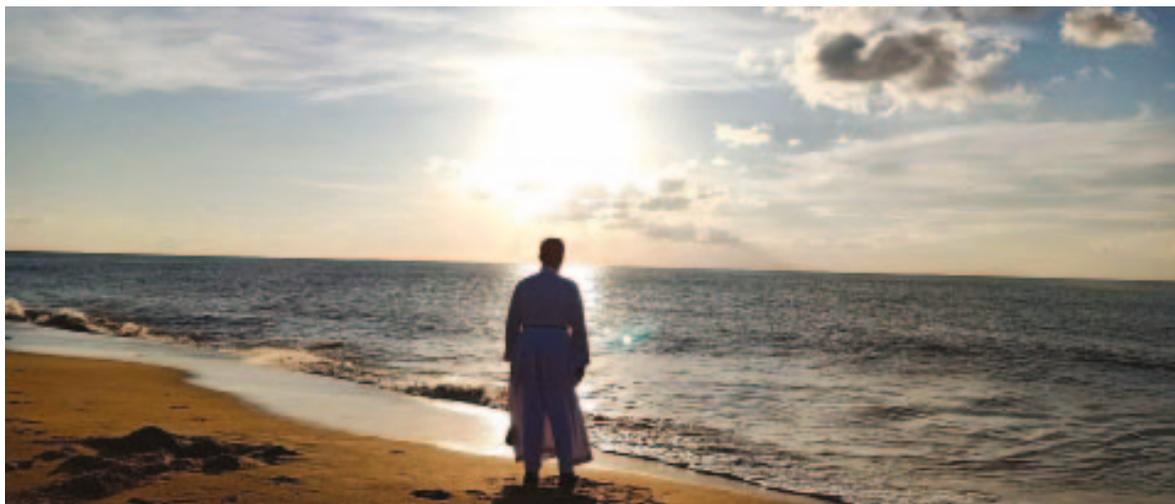
1. For many years, I have liked the approach of Jean Monbourquette in his book "How to Discover Your Personal Mission: The Search for Meaning". As someone with a pastoral bent as well as being a person of action and reflection, he speaks to us of vocation in the key of mission, and expresses with great insight that the fundamental thing is to find my "personal mission" or my "core business". And I find this thought-provoking, given that many of us, at least me, discover our vocation by being passionate about or attracted to mission. I wanted to become a Marist to be with young people, to help children without resources, to bring Jesus to them. In this line of thinking, we could say that even within the Marist charism there are many types of "core business": some are kind people and happy in announcing the gospel,

others in listening, others in teaching, others in celebrating, others in accompanying... What is your "core business"? (Jean Monbourquette, *How to Discover Your Personal Mission: The Search for Meaning*, Claretian Publications, 2009).

2. Much more recent is the vision of Richard Rohr, the ever-profound teacher of spirituality, and the Anglican theologian Jenny Bridgman. I like their proposal because it is so dynamic: "One cannot live the afternoon of life according to the program of life's morning", says Rohr. And, in that sense, partly following Jung, we are told that there are different stages, with a moment for creating a container or pot... and another for filling it. And the verbs (and what is life-giving in the present moment) are very different and propositional: perhaps the verbs relating to "calling" and "being called" are useful for the first stage of life... but then, vocation becomes not so much a calling as but a now-moment of "being", "loving" and "just knowing". What and who defines my identity and my purpose right now? (<https://jennybridgman.wordpress.com/tag/richard-rohr/> and <https://cac.org/two-halves-life-2015-10-12/>).

I DON'T HAVE A VOCATION

Br. Oscar Martin Vicario



3. Finally, of course, the enlightening words of our Pope Francis. He speaks a lot about vocation, sometimes in more classical terms and sometimes in more provocative language. I felt very connected when in one of his speeches, he proposed the verbs “to listen”, “to discern” and “to live” in reference to vocations; and he added something quite positive: begin by “reading life from within” so as to then “dream big”. I feel that this big dream is another beautiful and challenging way of talking about vocation because, as the Pope says, we are “to play our part in the unique and original story that God wants to write with us” (not “in” us, not “for” us, but “with” us, as in the Annunciation). Because, as the Pope says, “Vocation is today!”. What is your passion, the great dream of your life? (Pope releases message for 2018 World Day of Prayer for Vocations | ICN - indcatholicnews.com)

New times call for new wineskins. So, I begin by gathering all the above together: what is my core business, what and who defines my identity and my purpose right now, how do I reveal God, what is my great dream. And, from there, I try to plot a path of fullness and dedication, which is both a gift and a task, but which is, above all, happiness. The happiness of feeling myself as a brother, of living as a brother, of being a brother.

I don't have a vocation. I embody my vocation. Or project. Or fire. Or mystery. Or growth. Or revelation. Or stage. Or mission. Or unity. Or source. Or dream. Or energy. Or work in progress. And in being so, I want to express “the sacred character of the brother, a special vessel of God's presence in the world.” (Rule of Life, 6). My whole Marist self overflows with joy as I say this, and as I pursue together with my fellow Marists my own quest for fullness, for that abundant life promised, shown, and abundantly given by Jesus.

CHAPTER
II

OUR BEEING BROTHER





**Br. Fabien Bulaimu Poyo,
Rwanda**

THE VOCATION OF THE MARIST BROTHER

TXHERE IS AN AFRICAN BANTU PROVERB THAT SAYS “UMUNTU NGABANTU NA BANTU” WHICH COULD BE TRANSLATED AS “I AM BECAUSE WE ARE”. IT IS ON THIS NOTE THAT I WOULD LIKE TO SHARE THE LITTLE I HAVE ON THE VOCATION OF A MARIST BROTHER BROTHERHOOD.

I am a marist brother today because Champagnat was, because Gabriel Rivat and the first brothers were and because there are still marist brothers. Alone, it is just very difficult to be one.

CONSECRATED BROTHERS

Our consecration as religious Brothers is a gift that we receive from God’s love. It is not something that we get out of our merit nor our personal achievement. It is simply out of God’s love that he shows to whoever, wherever and whenever He wants. That is why we need to live it indeed with all humility and simplicity before God and before our brothers and sisters and live it in an open and

Perpetual profession
of Br. Lawrence Doe
Wonipokuen, in Liberia

On the next page,
Brothers in
the General House





incarnated way. In so doing, we take Jesus as the ultimate model of those who consecrate their entire life to God and to the service their fellow human beings. As a Jew, he really identified with his people and culture, but he built up his personal identity that made Him unique while remaining part and parcel of his society. This is what we are equally called to be and act.

As Marists we are supposed to be men of our people, part and parcel of our society; we should never be nor look like supermen. We should rather be, live and act like Jesus, who calls us, following the model of Mary, our Mother and Sister in faith and inspired by Champagnat, our Founder.

As consecrated brothers, we are not a group of people set apart from the others but we are consecrated to be with and for them. With them we are Christians and for them we are brothers. They are because we are, and we are because they are. As consecrated brothers, we are called to be companions in exploration of the will of God, restless seekers of this will in our daily life and perpetual bridge and community builders.

LIVING IN MARY'S STYLE

Our distinctive feature, as Marists is the following of Christ in Mary's style. Simply put, we emulate her passive and active attitudes: listening and putting into practice the Word. Our mission and action should be guided by the Word of God. This is a spirituality of life that we are called to always live and promote. It is a spirituality that

enhances self-less service, joy, charity, gratitude, courage, perseverance, meaningful presence, humility, and simplicity. We are brothers because Mary is in our company; Champagnat was there because she was there too, and our first brothers were there because she was. So, with her, we are equally assured of her motherly protection in this journey of exploring the calls that God sends to us each day of our life.

IN FRATERNITY

We are called to live our consecration as brothers in Mary's way and in community. Our fraternal life is first and foremost lived and experienced in community. It is an experience that requires the commitment of our humanity and spirituality. It is an experience that is both enjoyable and challenging. There are simple attitudes that can powerfully render this experience ever constructive and growing. These are attitudes such as the ability to say thank you, sorry, I forgive you, etc. Our fraternal life is equally reinforced by our openness to share life together, joke together, dance together, eat together, drink together, pray together, serve together, dream together, endure suffering together, and even fail together, celebrate success together because I am because we are.

In sum, we are called in life together, to be there for one another so that we can all be and live in harmony as God wants us and so live a brotherhood inspired by Jesus, Mary and Champagnat.



Br. Lindley H. Sionosa
General House,
Secretariat Brothers Today

VOCATION ITINERARY: ENCOUNTERING THE “I AM”

ONE OF THE PORTRAYALS OF THE LIFE OF MOSES AND THE BOOK OF EXODUS IS THE MOVIE GODS AND KINGS (2014). THE BURNING BUSH SCENE IS IN MY OPINION PARTICULARLY UNIQUE, IMAGINATIVE, AND CREATIVE.

It invites us to an alternative way of reflecting on one's vocation and the beginning of a journey of a "Yes" to God.

In the movie, Moses, played by Christian Bale, gets himself trapped with a broken leg in a pile of mud and rock after a landslide. He regains consciousness upon the whisper of his name and sees the

bush burst into flames. Malak, the boy who speaks for God, played by Isaac Andrews, appears and Moses asks him for help, adding that "I think my leg is broken." Malak responds by saying, "More than that." Moses, who remains in his helpless state, asks the boy, "Who are you?", a question which Malak throws back at him. Moses says he is a shepherd. Malak then comments, "I thought you are a general. I need a general."

- Why?
- To fight. Why else?

Moses with
the burning bush
(Marc Chagall)

On the next page:
Brothers visiting
Marist sites in France



AND KNOWING

- Fight who? For what?
- I thought you would know. (Silence) I think you should go and see what is happening to your people now. You will not be at peace until you do. Or they are not people in your opinion.
- Who are you?
- I am.

After this exchange, Malak disappears and Moses falls unconscious again, while the words “I am” could be heard echoing in the background. The next scene shows Moses waking up in his house.

God’s revelation, however, does not end there. In the development of the movie, there are succeeding conversations between Moses and Malak. It is the movie’s way of going away from the simple account of the burning bush as told in the Book of Exodus. The reason why I started this essay by retelling the call of Moses as presented by the movie, is to show that the ‘exciting adventure’ that is our vocational journey (see Rule of Life no. 57) always begins with an encounter. However, the surrounding circumstances of this encounter are almost always surprising, unexpected, and distinctive for each one. The Bible abounds with stories of this encounter. We could only imagine what Mary was doing when the Angel Gabriel appeared to her. On the other hand, the case of Paul was elaborately described. As Marist Brothers, we also have our respective narratives of how we discovered the call and where each one took the first step of his vocational itinerary.

To say, however, that the encounter is the beginning of the journey is not exactly accurate. The encounter is rather the turning point, the igniculus, the spark. We believe that God chose us before He



gave us life, and before we were born, He selected us...” (see Jer. 1:5). Therefore, when came the time to respond to the God’s call, we were saying “Yes” to what God has already planned for us, to the very purpose for which He created us.

THE TWO PHASES OF FORMATION

Formation to be able to serve God’s purpose, in our case, religious formation, happens in two phases. I call them the Informal-Spontaneous Phase and the Systematic-Deliberate Phase.

The Informal-Spontaneous Phase encompass all experiences before we entered religious life. By the fact that God chose us before we saw the light of day, He already determined in whose womb we would be formed, in what family we would grow and in which environment and society we would be shaped.

In this phase of formation, we learned the values that would serve as reference for our decisions and actions. We developed beliefs that influence our world view. We assimilated a way of relating with others by the behavior of significant persons surrounding us.

Our education in the faith takes place in the Informal-Spontaneous Phase. We “discovered” God, but



Professions in the Marist District of Asia

On the next page,
photos of marist novitiates:
Medellín, Cochabamba,
Tudella and Mtendere

our image of Him would have been more likely an assimilation of that of our family. Parents, or the adults with whom we grew up, passed on to us their faith and how they lived it.

School is also part of this phase. The things we were taught, the experiences inside and outside the classroom, the friendships we formed, the habits we integrated and so on, complement what we received at home. Likewise, those who have already immersed themselves in the world of work before joining the religious life would have carried with them some influences of such.

The Systematic-Deliberate Phase, on the other hand, encompasses the whole process of formation which come in different stages from the moment of encounter (as I mentioned earlier) and which covers one's entire life.

Let us go back to that movie scene of encounter between Moses and Malak. When Moses said, "I think my leg is broken," Malak responded, "More than that."

All of us are broken in one way or another. This is part of our humanness, our imperfection. This brokenness, however, should not stop us from living life to the full according to God's plan. Psalm 147:3 tells us, He heals the brokenhearted and bounds up their wounds.

Our formation as Marist Brothers is an exciting journey that requires of us a lot of courage and generosity of heart (Rule of Life no. 57). It is a journey of discernment where we seek to know God and to know his will. The succeeding encounters between Moses and Malak is an artist's interpretation of this process of discovery, which eventually made Moses accomplish the mission that God intended for him.

THE ITINERARY OF OUR MARIST FORMATION

The itinerary of our formation is much like a treasure hunt in which we 'grow to understand just what this vocation, to be a Marist and a brother, requires of us' (Rule of Life, 57). The goal is, or shall we say the treasure, is knowing and loving Christ who calls us by name, discovering what He wants us to do with our life, saying "Yes" to it and making a commitment.

The Pre-Novitiate, which has two parts – the aspirancy and the postulancy –, is where we come to a better knowledge and understanding of ourselves in the deepening experience of human, Christian and Marist life. We learn to listen attentively to the Spirit at work in our lives and to accept and transcend ourselves in a journey of Gospel conversion. Here, we discern our motivations and ascertain whether we have the qualities and dispositions needed to become Marist Brothers. (Constitutions and Statutes, 66)



LIFE IN THE INSTITUTE BEGINS IN THE NOVITIATE.

With the help of accompaniment, we continue the discernment of the call to follow Christ in the way of Mary as a Marist Brother at the service of our mission as a Global Institute. The process helps us to deepen our faith, to lead us to a loving encounter with God and to clarify our motivations and suitability. The novitiate is an initiation into living according to the Constitutions and concludes with the religious profession. (Constitutions and Statutes, 67)

As temporary professed brothers, we proceed to the stage where we continue to deepen the meaning of religious consecration in the light of our own personality, our life situation, and the call to be globally available for mission. In this Post-Novitiate stage, we engage in a process of personal, spiritual, and professional formation that prepares us adequately to actively take part in the Marist mission. The discernment that we undertake leads us to a decision whether to make perpetual profession. (Constitutions and Statutes, 73)

Once we have made perpetual profession, we assume personal responsibility for our Ongoing Formation. We keep ourselves vigilant to God's ever-renewed calls that arise as we live out our vocation in the world and in the Church. We are alert to the critical questions or issues that surface in the dif-



**Chapel in Notre-Dame
de l'Hermitage**

ferent stages of life. We perceive the need to continue to improve our competencies, knowledge and skills related to our ministries. Recognizing that ongoing formation is also a priority impels us to take initiatives to pursue formation in personal development, spiritual,



doctrinal, and professional fields. (Constitutions and Statutes, 78).

In the itinerary of our vocation, there are several movements. Let me talk briefly of two.

A LOVE RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

First, the journey is a movement from who we think we are to who we really are in God's eyes. Like Moses, who for a while only thought of himself as a shepherd, there are moments in our lives when we also ask, "Why me?" and say, "I am just a..."

However, the Lord declares, "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," (Is. 55.8). When God said, "I thought you are general", He made a statement about what He intended Moses to be. It is the same for us. Somewhere along the way we heard God telling us, "I have summoned you by name; you are mine. (Is. 43.1). You are Marist."

The second movement is the movement from who we think God is to who He really is, a God who is beyond a mere name. When we say yes, we are committing ourselves to a relationship that takes time to establish. As in any human relationship, we also go through the process of knowing God, step by step, little by little. God manifests Himself in many ways, often in the mundaneness, in the ordinariness of life. In prayerful discernment, we can recognize these revelations, leading us to an understanding of "I am."

The itinerary of vocation is all about relationship – my relationship with God. It is a relationship of love that begins with an election, having been "set apart before I was born" (Gal. 1.15). It is a relationship that grows and is sustained by our living in the presence of God (Constitutions and Statutes, 45):

As brothers we are seekers of the living God. Our prayer is not limited to exercises of piety, nor identified with our apostolic work. Rather, our spirituality is grounded in presence and being one with God, who draws nearest when we are attending to the needs of others.

Mary was said to be blessed for having heard the Word and putting it into practice. She is our model in spirituality.

Like Marcellin, we are alert to recognize the presence of God and to experience God's love in all the events of our lives.

WHAT IS THE RETIREMENT AGE FOR A MARIST?

Br. Gilles Hogue,
Canada



When, nearly 65 years ago, I made my definitive commitment as a Little Brother of Mary, there was no expiry date attached ... But I remember very clearly the emotion I felt when I pronounced, on that day (July 26, 1959), the words “ in perpetuity ” that the formula contained. Since then, I have tried to respond by adapting to the changing needs of the community and the environments in

Canada which I have been called to serve.

After a curriculum of some fifty years in different community services and apostolates, including 22 years outside Canada (Haiti and Colombia), I returned home for good, clearly expressing my desire to be able to continue to serve according to the needs of the community and my humble means. After a few years as provincial secretary, I accepted the responsibility of the provincial infirmary, which allowed me to accompany confreres who had contributed to my own formation. About ten years ago, I joined a community of “active” retirees where I took on various tasks. To occupy my free time and thanks to the Internet, I collaborate in the translation service of texts for the General Administration. But there is an activity, punctual but very stimulating, which allows me to pursue a certain apostolate since my return to my country and until today: sharing, at the request of my leaders, my experience with youth groups. These meetings allow me to stay in contact with young people in the educational environment or outside it; they give me the chance to better understand the evolution of mentalities that I had only followed from a distance during my years of absence from the country.

But for several years, there have been no new commitments of young people as ‘Brothers’ in Canada; this fact casts a shadow on this retreat that I am now experiencing. Throughout my “active” years, I was involved in vocational ministry, in Canada and in Haiti, and in the provincial formation committees; unfortunately, the social, cultural and religious context in Quebec did not help

to “anchor” the efforts of adaptation and to ensure a local succession. However, we feel the will to perpetuate the charism of Champagnat through the Association of Marists of Champagnat of Canada which brings together brothers and laypeople “around the same table”. The Lord knows how to write straight on our broken lines... and the future belongs to Him.

I am therefore “retired”, but in an “ active “ retirement thanks to my health - which I consider a gift from heaven - and to my living community which I try to serve as best I can. “Yesterday” is gone, “tomorrow” is not yet here: there remains only the “gift of God” where I feel called to live fidelity in thanksgiving.

MARIST MISSION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Br Manuir Mentges,
Brazil

We are all called to live the Gospel in Mary’s way on mission wherever we are. I work in a Marist university, the first one founded in the Institute, in 1948. The Pontifical University of Rio Grande do Sul (PUCRS) aims to contribute to the integral formation of the person through teaching, ongoing education, research, extension and innovation, as well as the provision of a variety of services to the wider community.

As Marist Brothers, we bring to higher education the tradition, values, experiences and heritage accumulated since the early days of our Institute, trying to adapt our mission to today’s circumstances.

In this sense, I believe that higher education invites us to dialogue with the Church and society, seeking to promote the formation of well-rounded citizens for contemporary society. As in other areas of mission these days, working in higher education is also a challenge with more questions than answers.

The University and its campus constitute a true community, aiming to embody and promote Marist education through its lecturers, researchers and administrative colleagues. In the same way that I bear witness to my mission through my presence

Pontifical
Catholic University
of Rio Grande do Sul

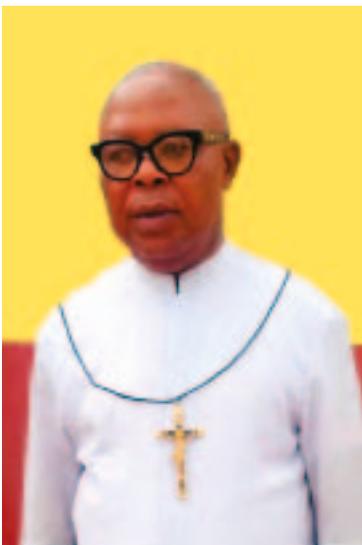


and teaching, I am being invited to act as a servant-leader of this institution, the mission of which is to produce and pass on knowledge that advances human and professional training, guided by quality and relevance, with a view to the development of a more just and fraternal society.

I feel happy and privileged as a Marist Brother to dedicate my life and vocation to Marist ministry in higher education. The experiences, stories and innovative pathways in higher education allow me to put my strengths, energies and potential at the service of Marist mission in building a new society.

BEING BROTHERS BETWEEN YOUNG ADULTS WHO ARE PHYSICALLY CHALLENGED

Br. Gabriel Igbonachor,
Nigeria



Br. Gabriel Igbonachor

I work in the Hopeville Rehabilitation Center Uturu, that was established in 1971, after the Nigerian civil war, to take care of the war victims who came back from the war without one hand/leg or both. They were gathered in that center to give them HOPE by making them realize that all hope is not lost. They were trained in different kinds of trade like shoe/bag making, dress making, electronic repairs etc. and they were able to establish their own shops to help them to take care of themselves and their families. With the graduation of the last batch of the war victims, the Province of Nigeria decided to admit young adults who are physically challenged but are willing to go to school. Now we have 34 young in our center. They are in the primary (20) and in secondary school (10), plus 4 in tertiary institutions. We, Brothers work with 5 collaborators.

The brothers are full time working with them whether in school or in their hostels. Working with them is not an easy job but for the fact that they are part and parcel of why we were founded, we cannot neglect them.

Materially the brothers try to provide them with all they needed. In this time of pandemic, we receive very small help. At the same time, Brothers take care of their spiritual needs, preparing them for the sacraments and giving them moral instructions and make sure they are at peace with themselves and with God. The apostolate of the presence by the brothers helps them to reduce the

pains and agonies they are experiencing due to their conditions. Leaving with them for over six years, means understand that we are fundamental to give these people a hope to a better future. Therefore, it is an apostolate to be encouraged.

READY TO RESPOND AS MARY did

Br. Herinirina Roland Léonard,
Madagascar

As a Marist Brother with the experience of 14 years of religious life and of being a school principal since 2015, I can say that I love my vocation as a Marist religious and educator. Taking to heart the dream of Father Champagnat “to make Jesus Christ known and loved”, I am committed to my consecration as a Marist religious. I am convinced that the right thing for me is to continue growing in my everyday life in availability and discernment, in simplicity, humility and modesty, and to be ever ready to respond as Mary did.

When I was preparing to become a school principal, I felt overwhelmed at first. Now, as principal of St Vincent High School in Betroka, I can say that I feel much more at ease in this role. I re-



Madagascar

alise that my students see me as a model for their lives since they listen to my advice. Even those considered hard cases! I talk with them in counselling sessions where they can share their problems and together we explore ways of making improvements. Parents are attracted to choose our school because of its Marist values of being kind, open and helpful and the Marist characteristics of solidarity and family spirit. They respect us as Brothers and trust us. As Marists, we add value to schooling: we keep ourselves up to date professionally and adapt ourselves to the local culture. Our lifestyle and mindset, our values and enthusiasm as educators make us special. We follow Mary's way of educating!

BEING A YOUNG MARIST BROTHER IN EUROPE

Br. Jose Luís Carvalho,
Portugal



Portugal

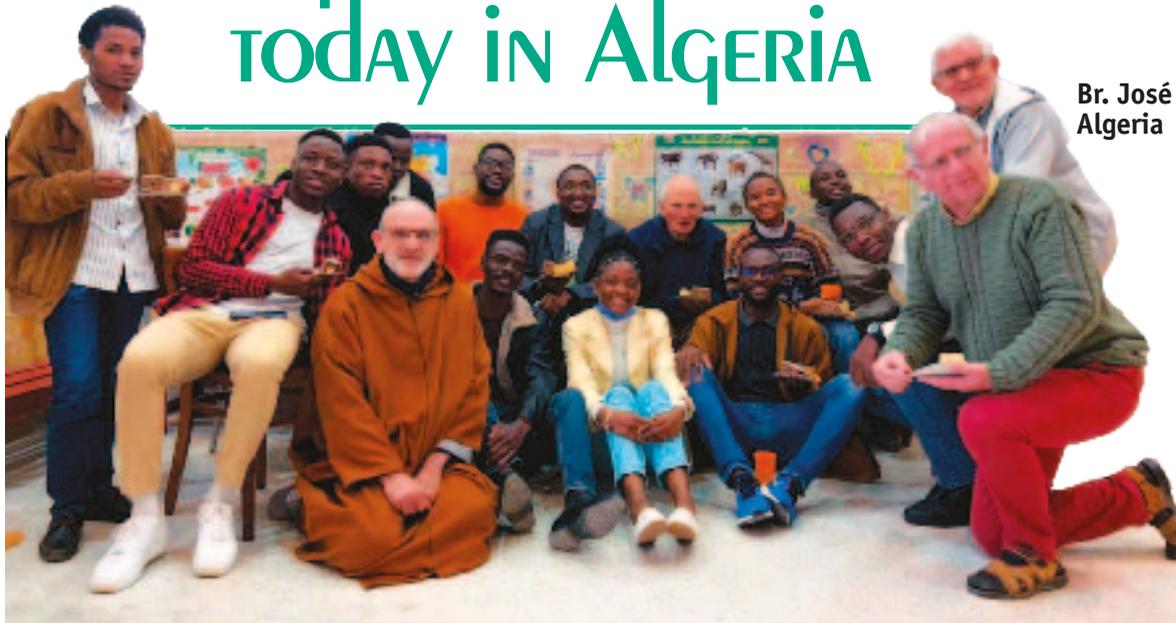
I relate very strongly to the expression of the last General Chapter: be builders of homes of Light.

I feel that for me as a young brother in Europe it is very important to belong to and help create 'homes of light', security, welcome and growth in the places and with the people with whom I share my life. First of all, I can highlight my community as a home where I feel sustained by a sense of belonging, care and affection that I then try to pass on to the children and young people with whom I work both in pastoral groups and in social works in more peripheral neighbourhoods and in the home for children with disabilities where I currently work.

Like any good builder, I also have my favourite techniques. I find it impossible to build homes without a simple and unhurried presence among young people; the option to always sit in a circle, where we are all equal; the ability to listen and recognise the concerns, fears and dreams they have; the transparency of sharing our vulnerabilities and creativity in spreading the joy we carry inside ourselves. Oh, and hugs, lots of hugs!

BEING A MARIST BROTHER TODAY IN ALGERIA

Br. José M. Rius,
Algeria



I have been living in Algeria for 20 years. We live in two communities in the north-west of the country. I am in Mostaganem. There are three brothers here and we are in charge of a university library and the parish for the sub-Saharan Christian students studying in the city. I also teach Spanish at the Cervantes Institute.

As a community we try to witness to a fraternal and prayerful life in the midst of the people who are 99% Muslim, are at the service of the most needy, especially the children, and organising activities for Algerian youth. We are active members in all the programs of the diocese, which is very small in number. We offer a ready welcome, accompaniment, formation and celebration in the parish for the young Christians coming from different confessions and churches existing in Africa and who feel at home in our house which is open from morning to evening.

As a teacher, I try to live by Marcellin's motto: "to educate you must love". My being affable, attentive and sensitive transforms the classroom into a family, creating an atmosphere of appreciation, trust and freedom in a society where it is difficult to express oneself and show emotions without fear of what people might say or think. I try to be a father, a friend, a brother and sometimes a confidant, fitting in with their age and needs, so that they can grow in personal autonomy and responsibility.

I thank God and our Good Mother for being able to live in this complex and diverse reality, being a witness of "BROTHERHOOD".

ALHAMDU LILLAH!

Algeria

BEING A MARIST BROTHER IN A MIXED COMMUNITY

Br. Patricio Maximiliano
Pino Medina, Chile



Community
of La Pintana, Chile

Since April 2014, we have been a 'shared' community, made up of the brothers resident in Juanita Street, La Pintana, on the outskirts of Santiago, and a group of laypeople, Marists of Champagnat, with whom we are in contact, either because they participate in the Tregua Programme for child rights of the Gesta for Marist Solidarity, or because they work in our free school, which is three blocks from our house. At present, we are two brothers, five laywomen and one layman. We gather every fortnight, normally in our house, around our community

life plan that we draw up each year based on the guidelines proposed by the Province. In our meetings, we share what is happening in our lives, sometimes with moments of deeper reflection, prayer, celebration and other activities outside the house.

In concrete terms, this shared community is for me a space and time of great brotherhood, of personal support, and provides an important regular contact with the reality of the Marists who make it up. It is also an opportunity for opening our horizons in daily life, because the realities of life that we disclose to one another are always a source of grounding our humanity and faith.

We recognise that we are different, but together we are on a journey of building Marist community between us. We have been able to broaden our context by carrying out some activities on behalf of the local community over the years, and by inviting others to share their life experience with us.

Over these years, I feel that my vocation as a brother, as well as the call to all Marists to experience ourselves as a charismatic and global family, have been nourished by this community, a real gift of sharing life.

BEING A BROTHER: A BLESSING AS WELL AS A CHALLENGE

Br. Farancis King,
Pakistan

A world remarkably imprinted by the prevailing pandemic and the impacts of climate change, a country always at the verge of escalation of violence against children, women and religious minorities, and an educational system that continue to struggle against rote learning and punitive disciplinary approach are perfect conditions for a Marist brother to be a blessing for others as well as to be challenged to the core at daily basis. This is brother Farancis, currently working as a High School Leader in Punjab, province of Pakistan. In relation to school leadership, I consider myself a novice because this is my second year as an educational leader, and I am encountering some general challenges as the other school leaders in other regions. Reflecting on my journey as a religious brother, and as an educational leader: challenges and difficult experiences were what catalysed the greatest growth personally and professionally.

In the contemporary Pakistani society, being a brother means to be a constant aide-memoire to oneself as well as to the people around, that Jesus is madly in love with all of us, we have given him a million reasons not to love us, none of them changed his mind, that he is present in our suffering and sorrows, and that he takes delight in our laughter and life celebrations. Being a brother also means offering untiringly a listening ear to students, teachers, admin and support staff, making pre-meditated efforts to remain kind in cruel situations and to make decisions that will revitalize and energize others with hope. Furthermore, regardless of role or

Pakistan



apostolate, being a brother entails significant competency, strong character and commitment to the best interest of students and staff's mental, physical and financial well-being. This commitment to well-being emerges from the presence, vigilance and persuasive ability of Mary at Cana who made the first miracle happened. Though, this commitment is paying dividends on our ability to cope and thrive during this challenging time where much remains uncertain.

PRESENCE, COMPETENCY AND ABILITY

As Mary, through her presence, vigilance and persuasive ability, made the first miracle happened at Cana, life of a brother has the potential to perform miracles at daily basis, in the community, in the classroom, in the playgrounds, in the corridors, in the offices and above all in the hearts and lives of people. Amidst chaos, uncertainty, fear of unknown and financial strain that engulfs life of numerous people, it is the simple presence, competency, witness of a prayerful life and above all ability that enables a brother to be a source of light, enlightenment and beacon of hope for those living in fear. It enables me to be more agile and adapt to the demands placed upon me in both work and life. One may not turn water into wine, but one can certainly make deliberate efforts to convey a ray of hope, joy and love to one's self, to community and in the mission spaces.

THE ESSENTIAL ASPECT

Life, vocation and mission of a brother is all about being joyful, remaining hopeful and most importantly being loved and loving others unconditionally. The essential aspect of being loved and loving others finds its ground and expression in the experience of St. Marcellin Champagnat who felt profoundly loved by Mary and Jesus and as a result could not resist transmitting the same love to the brothers and young children. In a contemporary world, apostolate might be the formal education or reaching out the street lads, what underpins the life, vocation and mission of a Marist brother is the delicate blend of intellectual and spiritual capacity, competence and commitment, and finally being a man of prayer who transforms self and others through joy, hope and love. It aims at the full development of the people in all aspects: physical and mental health; intellect; knowledge; morality; integrity; and desirable way of life so as to be able to live happily with other people.

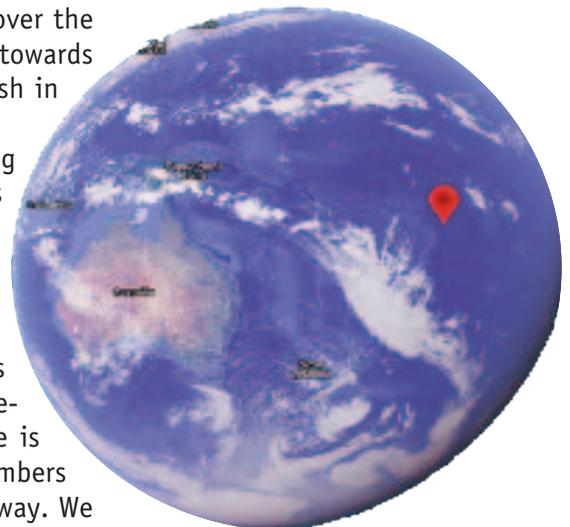
BEING BROTHER WORKING AS PRINCIPAL of A COLLEGE

Br. Afaese Afaese,
Samoa

I am currently working in Samoa as school principal of Saint Joseph's College. I am fortunate to have the opportunity to share how I continue to find myself being inspired by the life of Jesus and mission as a great teacher, servant and healer in my own encounters with students, staff, parents and ex-pupils of our school each day. I am convinced that my mission to make Jesus Christ known and love is an ongoing invitation for me to become more like Christ in my relationship and encounters with people and work. To become the face of Christ to the people with love, forgiveness, compassion, fairness and faithfulness.

Jesus was an excellent teacher who taught various people in his own time with compassion. His teachings were life giving to those who listened attentively and pondered in their hearts the meanings of his teachings. I always feel inspired when I read Jesus' encounter with children in Mark 10:13, 14 where Jesus said to the parents, "Let the young children come to me; do not try to stop them". Jesus had time for people regardless of their status and age. In our school, I find my strength by being with the students every day. There is an enormous amount of trust, honesty and love among students when they come to the office to tell me their stories. They find me not only as their leader and teacher but also as their companion. I am fortunate to have good a number of years of experience in formation houses and six years as novice director in our Novitiate, Fiji. The experience has taught me over the years to have strong faith Jesus' approaches and attitudes towards people in his mission. The experience continues to flourish in my ministry at Saint Joseph's College this year.

The other reality that helps me to deepen my understanding of life and mission is my own belief that to be a brother is to learn what it is like to become Christ like as a servant. To be a servant is to serve and not to be served. I enjoy in all that I am undertaking in my life as a Brother and mission because I love to serve others. Article 51 in our constitution tells us that we are different in many ways and yet complementary. We respect our leaders and superiors in communities and yet we are the same and there is equality among us and our ways of serving people and members of our communities. No one is being treated in a special way. We



share meals together around the same table. Even our own staff, they know very well that I do not encourage them to treat me in any special way as I did in my role as principal of the school. They know that I am there for them as their servant. To fulfil my responsibilities in my role and to help out when they need my support. I find this reality of life and in my call to be brother among people very fulfilling.

The last concrete reality that I wish to share is about Jesus' approaches towards people reaching out to him for healing. He was a healer of every kind of diseases, spiritually, emotionally, physically and mentally. I may not be able to cure people with their physical illness but I have many people been recovered from their stressful situations spiritually and emotionally with my being there in their midst to support them. I believe in the power of being present to accompany people when they are overwhelmed with all sorts of hardships in life.

What it is like to be brother is to learn what it is like to become Christ like as a teacher, servant and healer.

PROMOTING FULLNESS OF LIFE

Br. Manuel Valencia De Leon,
Philippines

I have been a Marist Brother for 47 years and all these years, I find my life as a Brother more meaningful and with a sense of purpose when I am with children and young people as a teacher, a companion, a friend and a "kuya" or older brother. At the same time, I find real joy in an orderly environment and when I am connected with the soil doing gardening and growing trees.

Since 2000, The Great Jubilee Year, right after my second novitiate in Manizana and the canonization of St. Marcellin, I was inspired to start SAGIP KA 2000 FOUNDATION, INC. which has a vision of promoting FULLNESS OF LIFE by GOING BACK TO BASICS. Going back to our basic values means observing unity and order, truth, justice, sense of others, beauty, freedom and faith in God in our daily life.

As I grow in years as a Marist Brother, I keep reminding myself that my reason for being is to take care of the earth, to take care of the children. If we truly care for the children, we need to take care of the earth that rightfully belongs to them.

Regardless of my work assignment or ministry, it doesn't really matter anymore whether I am in the classroom teaching, a uni-



iversity president or an ordinary Brother working in the community garden, I find a sense of fulfilment in my chosen vocation as a Brother today.

Now, Notre Dame of Dadiangas University has accepted the invitation of Pope Francis to join the Seven (7) Year Journey of the Laudato Si'. Part of the journey is to come up with programs and projects in line with the principles of Laudato Si.

Lately, the University has acquired 5 hectares of land to be developed into an ecology center where we plan to grow Philippine endemic trees and promote sustainable agriculture for young people to experience the beauty of God's creation.

Philippines

Building bridges

**Fr. Vilson Groh,
Brazil**

All charisms are born from some cry arising from social circumstances, a cry that is the cry of God in suffering humanity. It is, at the same time, answered by people of good will who perceive the presence of the spirit of God in the cry. This is what happened in the life of Father Champagnat: the charism was born when he listened to and held onto the young Montagne, a young man who had little religious and professional education and was deprived of his rights in the context of his



time. Champagnat's charism of making Jesus known and loved in the world was born. After 200 years, this charism remains alive because it continues to nourish dreams in the lives of children, adolescents and young people, and is borne today by the brothers who carry this light of hope forward, as a sign of the times and a time for signs.

The Marist vocation today is very contemporary in the way it can create bridges between young people from the poor peripheries and young people from other social classes, creating opportunities to gather and build a culture of encounter in living in harmony, valuing their differences.

The Marist charism is, then, a light for humanity because it empowers people to take 'revolutionary' steps. It breaks down walls such as indifference and a throwaway culture and gives rise to communities that are beacons of a sorely needed new way of living in our common home, by attending to two great cries: the cry of mother earth and the cry of the poor of the earth, because there is only ecological justice if there is social justice.

As a Marist affiliate, living in the Monte Serrat Community, Florianopolis, I am happy to be a member of a community of brothers that offers me the chance to drink from the charism and witness it in my daily life with boldness, tenderness, determination, resilience, compassion and transformation.

I AM LOOKING FORWARD TO BECOMING A TEACHER

**Salistiano Fernandes,
Timor-Leste**

I am 22 years old and was born in the district of Lautem. In 2013 I went to Baucau to study. At that time, I had a lot of difficulties because my parents are poor and could not help me pay the rent for the house and cover the food expenses for me and three other people. It was then that I met Br Tony Clark from Australia and told him about my difficulties. He helped me until I finished my secondary studies. I also came to know Br Lecio José from Brazil who was looking after the Marist aspirants. Lecio helped me whenever he could. In 2019, I also met Brothers Manoel Soares and João Batista, both from Brazil, who gave me a lot of support.

I stopped studying for two years because I could not pass the national exam for the University of Timor. In 2021, I managed to get a place at the Catholic Teacher Training Institute of the Marist Brothers in Baucau and am now in my second year there.



The Marist Brothers have been very supportive, especially these days enabling me to complete my higher education. I owe them a lot for the support they have always given me within their means. I hope to fulfil my dream of becoming a teacher.

**Instituto Católico de Formación
de Profesores - Timor Leste**

A MARIST BROTHER IN THE FAMILY

**Peña Jacobo Family,
Guatemala**

In his vocation as a Marist Brother, Omar has given us a testimony of joy, fidelity and passion for a life dedicated to service in teaching and ministry among children and young people.



Br. Omar Peña

Our parents taught us how to be free and find our way in life, step by step. So, we have welcomed Omar's vocation and shared his happiness at having found fullness in his life as a little brother of Mary. We have learned when to be present and when to give him space as necessary, respecting the demands of his life as a religious. We have also learned how to best include him in the daily events of our home and family.

His being a brother has also allowed us as a family to live the Marist charism in our own daily lives and the humble circumstances of our home. Our way of life is Marist and we feel part of a bigger family too, with the other brothers of his community and of the congregation, with whom we have shared Omar's life, time in formation and ministry.

As a family, we have taken our respective vocations seriously, have grown in them and encouraged one another. The gift of being Marist has brought us closer to one another and strengthened our sense of purpose in life.

TRUE MODELS OF MARCELLIN

Aisling Demaison,
Ireland

"People with presence ground grace"
(Daniel O' Leary)

I credit the awakening of my spirituality to a Marist Brother. A moment that has guided my future, and the Marist I have become. Of

course, it was in combination with life experiences, and at a time that I was open to connecting to a deeper level of awareness. But the beauty of it was that I was unaware I was being accompanied at the time. I now believe the Marist Brother was aware of the power of the holy spirit within me, and guided me towards this light, as they do for so many. This experience happened over twenty years ago and the accompaniment continues to this day.

AN UNIQUE AND SPECIAL VOCATION

The vocation of a Marist brother is a very unique and precious one. My experience has been of humble, hardworking, visionary men, who walk alongside us in our everyday lives, helping us to notice the moments of God that exist. True models of Marcellin. Companions on the road to Emmaus for so many lay Marists.

I started my professional journey as a teacher in a Marist school in Ireland. I often tell the story of the day I randomly approached a Marist school for any possible jobs, whilst waiting for a job inter-

Moyle Park College,
Ireland





**Meeting of
the Mission Council of
West Central Europe,
in Guardamar,
Spain**

view in a school across the road. It seemed like a simple everyday decision at the time but led to a precious first encounter with a Marist Brother which paved my future to this day. I never attended the interview across the road!

My role has evolved over the years and now I am a dedicated Marist working as Director of Marist Mission in West Central Europe.

FAMILY SPIRIT

As a Marist, I consider it a very privileged position to be part of an organization that is led by Brothers that model Marist values in every aspect of their lives. I witness teachers and students in Marist schools experience a sense of family spirit and presence from the brothers that is so surprisingly powerful in its simplicity, yet beautifully maternal in its manner. Many of the brothers have moved on from being leaders in our schools to other roles, but they continue to be attentive guides in the everyday lives of every member of the school community, which is transformational for so many. Being a Marist Brother is a true vocation.

Having witnessed such powerful examples of Marist vocation with each Marist Brother I have met, there now remains a sense of ownership and responsibility to in some way continue this vocation for our Marist future. With a desire to be to the same attentive companion for other Marists on their journey of awakening.

CHAPTER
III

AWAKENING THE MARIST LIFE





**Br. Juan Carlos Fuertes
Mari, Lebanon**

VOCATION WOUNDED by life

ARE WE, AS BROTHERS,
READY FOR LIFE TO IR-
RUPT, OR DOES INERTIA SIM-
PLY PUSH US DOWN PATHS
THAT LEAD TO DEATH? LIFE
IS NOT JUST ABOUT NUMBERS
AND STATISTICS, SUCCESS
AND REWARDS.

Life is a matter of risk, of brav-
ery, of enthusiasm, of choic-
es... Our call, yours and mine,
is a matter of life. So what is it
about a vocation like ours that
is shot through with life?

THIRST

We are driven by thirst, a desire for the one thing necessary (X. Mel-
loni), and that interior quest for the infinite (L. Boff). Thirst is that
part of our being which knows that we can only live on what is es-
sential and which never tires of searching for it. We know, besides,
that our thirst - desire - is never fully quenched but remains open
to growth and deepening (J. Tolentino).

We become experts in a spirituality of journeying – with its dynamic

Timor Leste

On the next page,
Nueva Pompeya,
Argentina





of exodus and gift, of going out of ourselves (cf. EG 21) - and we develop practices that monitor the pace and style of our lives, that give meaning to our existence and a compassionate quality to our relationships. There we experience God.

By living our own thirst this way, we connect with that of others and their multiple ways of satisfying it. By experiencing our thirst and recognising it, we become brothers and sisters to so many people who are searching for meaning and purpose in life.

VULNERABILITY

Vulnerability is the susceptibility to being hurt. It is different from weakness, which is the inability to resist attack or injury (B. Brown).

We allow ourselves to be wounded - questioned and affected - by what we are experiencing. We opt to be vulnerable as we bare ourselves personally and emotionally to reality and to the people with whom we live. We take the risk of allowing ourselves to be challenged by their needs and desires.

We live exposed to the elements, without cover or hiding place. We abandon any idea of remaining immune from everything that might lead us

to put on masks and armour to defend ourselves and keep others at arm's length (cf. EG 270). We live in uncertainty, austerity, poverty, the logic of "less is more" (LS 222).

That is why we go to places, people and situations that challenge and disturb us from within. We allow ourselves to be challenged by young people, their concerns and dreams; we open ourselves to situations of poverty and exclusion; we are present where a lack of rights robs people of their dignity. In our community relationships we share our stories, our dreams, our personal journeys and we allow ourselves to be affected by the capacities and needs of our brothers and sisters.

BEGINNINGS

We take on the risk of allowing ourselves to be "touched" by reality. For it does not really matter what we expect from life, but rather what life expects from us... Our answer must consist, not in talk and meditation, but in right action and in right conduct. (V. Frankl)

That is why we take on a different place in life: the beginning of the journey, not the end. We are beginners and disciples, rather than masters and experts. If we are only after results or a good



**Marist Brothers
in Rosey, France**

reputation, we are putting ourselves at the end of the road. Rather, we choose to stand where things are getting underway. We have a vulnerable and daring heart. We live the revolution of tenderness (EG 88) which calls for creativity, imagination and courage.

We join new projects and support innovative pastoral initiatives in our educational works. We create new ministries for new situations of need for youth. We initiate programmes that care for our common home and make it more habitable. Since our vocation has no limits, the whole world - any country, any work - can be the 'right' place for our ministry. We become companions of lay people and members of other congregations: with them we inaugurate new community paradigms.

Vocations are for the brave. The brave let themselves be hurt by people and situations. The brave create a better world. The brave generate life wherever they are. That is why we can talk about the vocation of the brave being wounded, wounded by life.

WHERE IS MARIST LIFE HEADED?



**Br. Alfredo Herrera,
South Korea**

WHEN TALKING ABOUT MARIST LIFE IN THE FUTURE, WE COULD LET OUR IMAGINATIONS RUN WILD AND DREAM OF SOME YOUTHFUL AND FORWARD-LOOKING GROUP OF RELIGIOUS BROTHERS AND LAY MARISTS, FACING UP TO THE PAINFUL REALITY OF A HIGHLY COMPLEX, MULTI-FACETED AND SECULARISED WORLD WITH A DEGREE OF HEROISM AND RESPONDING TO ITS CHALLENGES WITH FORESIGHT AND COURAGE.

This might be an interesting exercise but the truth is that as soon as I received the invitation to write about this topic, the answer to the question above struck me in a somewhat abrupt way: Marist life is heading in the direction that we, Brothers and lay Marists, are now steering it; not some 'we' of the future, but all of us who currently identify with the charism of Marcellin Champagnat and the "gang" of his first Brothers.

I know that there are those who, with a somewhat ironic smile, take it for granted that we are dying out and that the end is fast approaching. And yes, I recognise that in some places and situations this seems to be the fate that awaits us, especially if we limit ourselves to what we can see and witness from the standpoint of our own small part of the world. But I would like to invite you to lift your gaze and take note of what is happening in the Marist world beyond our own borders. Then maybe we will realise that the Spirit of God is still at work in our midst, through and sometimes even in spite of us. Other pens will better describe what Mary is continuing to do among us at the present moment, but let me list here just a few of the things that, in my admittedly very limited and partial vision, allow me to dream with my eyes open, looking at what is happening now as a portent or prophecy of what may yet emerge in our Marist life in the years ahead.

AD GENTES

In a special way, for more than 15 years now, I have seen Brothers and now also Lay Marists leave homeland and family to go to distant places to share Marist life and mission with people of diverse mentalities and

WHERE IS MARIST LIFE HEADED?

Br. Alfredo Herrera

cultures. I have seen them commit time and effort to learn a foreign language, living with the local people to discover their needs and discerning in community how to respond to them with simplicity, relevance and courage. And the Brothers and Lay Marists who have committed themselves to this adventure come from all horizons of age and background. Neither age nor health nor presenting problems have deterred them from letting themselves be led by the Spirit in this adventure of mission "ad gentes", and there are already several who have given their lives in this enterprise.

I can also observe that many others are taking this "leap in the dark" (letting oneself be led by the Spirit) in their own land. Such Brothers and lay people are leaving behind a quiet life to move to or stay in places and situations considered "at risk" due to climate, diseases, unstable social or political situations, war, migration, religious or cultural persecution, hostile environments, or the experience of discrimination or rejection even from those they are serving. I see Brothers and lay people who are daring to enter and offer a brotherly presence in slums, jungles, outer suburbs, dangerous places, indigenous populations, and remote places. I know of at least one Brother with indigenous heritage who works among his people, with the material and emotional support of his community, extending and enriching the Marist charism beyond its usual confines.

I also call to mind the Marists, Brothers and Lay, who live together and work in co-operation with other congregations and/or groups of different affiliations to carry out a wide range of tasks, such as the protection of the child rights, ministering to populations in extreme situations, advocacy and action for the right to education, and the respect, care and promotion of life in all its forms. As well, there are countless small, medium-sized and large-scale initiatives to create international networks that promote synergy in the education of and advocacy for children and young people.

**Group of brothers
of the Formation Program
"Pathways"**

**On the next page:
participants of the Formation
Program "Gier"**



WE ARE A GROUP OF CONSECRATED

Finally, I must mention the still greater majority of brothers and lay people who are "in the line of fire" every day in the classroom, in the administration office, on the playground, in para- and extra-curricular activities, in teaching catechism, in leading student groups or movements, in educational, vocational, artistic, crafts, ecological, social, or re-



ligious ministry within our schools and centres or outside of them. They have always made their own Marcellin's dream of educating good Christians and virtuous citizens and will continue to do so.

I repeat that Marist life in the future is headed in the direction we are setting now. And the good news is that the Spirit is the driving force and working among us. This brief overview shows us that Marcellin's charism remains alive and relevant in and for our time and it seems that it will be even more so in the future, although we acknowledge that its expression will have to become more diverse and be changed and transformed to respond better to emerging situations. We have the structures and the resources to respond better to the needs of tomorrow's young people, just as we are trying to do for today's.

The key point, however, is the same as it has always been. We are not merely an NGO that aims at achieving its goals in the most efficient way possible. Rather, we are a group of consecrated men and women of faith who, as brothers and sisters and following the example of Jesus, want to kindle the light of hope in our part of the world to make it more humane according to the heart of God our Father/Mother. We want to mend the ties that are broken so that mercy, compassion, goodwill, welcome, inclusion, kindness, communication, peace and well-being may flow freely among all. We want to walk hand in hand with young people so that no

one feels alone, marginalised, or excluded.

We want to make them feel that we are listening to them and want to accompany them, that we want to be their "brothers". And in all this we can choose to join forces with other people and institutions.

This means that we have to grow in humanity, in our capacity for self-awareness, listening, communication, openness, tolerance, acceptance of ourselves and of others, as individuals, communities and groups. This growth in humanity is a task that we cannot take for granted because emotional and relational limitations are the source of many blocks to our leading harmonious and happy personal and community lives.

But along with this "growth in humanity" we must foster our growth in "having the same mindset (attitudes) as Jesus Christ" because only to the extent that our hearts resemble His can we truly be BROTHERS (both consecrated Marists and lay people) and thus be "the face and hands of God's tender mercy".

The formula for letting ourselves be transformed more and more into Jesus is powerfully suggested to us in our Rule of Life ("Wherever you go"): contemplate Jesus, contemplate Mary, contemplate Marcellin. Only by being men and women of God can we become the Marian face of the Church and thus become accomplices of the Spirit in God's mission.



**Br. Ben Consigli,
General Councillor**

GROWING in God

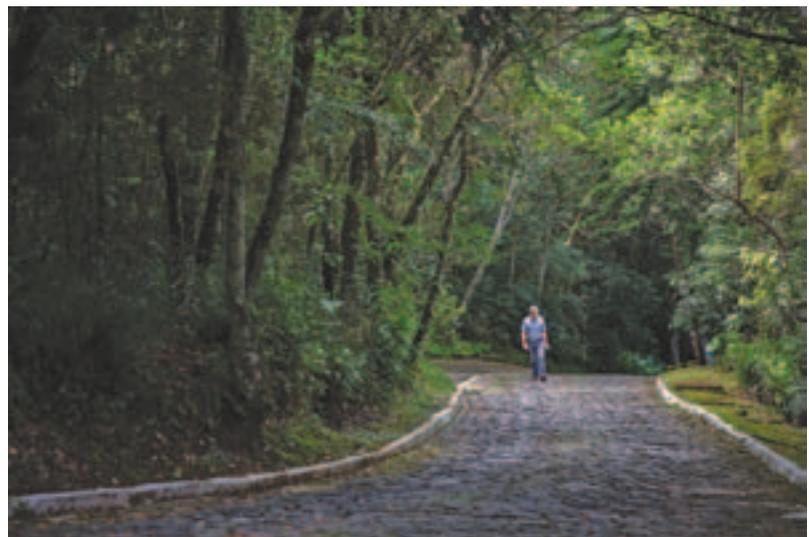
“WHENEVER WE ENCOUNTER ANOTHER PERSON IN LOVE,
WE LEARN SOMETHING NEW ABOUT GOD” (POPE FRANCIS)

LIFE IS A GREAT JOURNEY
THAT CONSTANTLY CALLS US
TO LEAVE OURSELVES BEHIND TO
FOLLOW THAT UNCERTAIN DESIRE
THAT DRIVES US.

Certainly, during this time of pandemic with travel difficult, our life’s journey may have a different meaning than it had many months ago. But even the journey

of the past year has offered us both challenges and new understandings. For me, my vocational journey has always been a process of learning and growing. It is a process of coming to know myself honestly and my God intimately, even with my own limitations.

For me, one of the most helpful ways of thinking about my vowed Marist, Christian life is to see it as a journey. The Bible itself is richly imbued with this image. Perhaps the greatest of those was the forty-year journey of the people of Israel from their harsh captivity in Egypt to the promised land of Canaan. Elsewhere, we read of Abraham stepping out in faith to leave the land of his ancestors and go to a place chosen by God. He did not know where he was going, but he



knew who he would be travelling with – and that was good enough for him.

Our history as a people of God is a journey of growing in God, learning to understand who God is and who we are. The scriptures reveal that to be a people of God means learning to be a different kind of people, a completely unusual and radical people: a people who place God as a priority in their hearts and lives, who care for strangers and foreigners, who care for the most vulnerable people, who protect each other, and who respect the image of God in each other. My experiences these past pandemic years have re-affirmed my call to follow Christ as a Marist Brother.

SEEKING THE LIVING GOD

Our Marist Constitutions reminds me to be a “seeker of the living God,” and that my prayer should not be “limited to exercises of piety, nor identified with our apostolic work”. Rather, it must be “grounded in presence and being one with God, who draws nearest when I am attending to the needs of others” (Const #45). There, too, is a call for me to journey to “grow in God”, but I do not do this journey alone.

Our Rule of Life presents us with a story from the Old Testament: the story of Ruth and Naomi (Ruth 1:16-17). Ruth journeys with Naomi to Bethlehem and later marries Boaz, a distant relative of her late father-in-law. She is a symbol of abiding loyalty and devotion. These three words of Ruth—Wherever you go— convey an “almost unimaginable strength, an ability to endure, persist, ... overcome”, and journey. Our Rule tells us that the words of Ruth can help us “express some of our deepest longings as we travel on our life’s journey” (Rule of Life, Invitation).

An on-going vocational journey is a process of personal or communal development, not simply a means of getting from one point to another. To travel to a distant land is a purposeful and intentional matter. I believe that this journey is worth undertaking. The journey itself offers me the chance to deepen my commitment to what I am seeking. As I travel, I have the opportunity of reflecting on my goal and anticipating my ar-



rival—hopefully a deeper understanding of God’s unconditional love for me. Anticipation of the joy of reaching that goal then becomes a means of sustaining me as I travel. During my journey, I become the witness to God’s love, and it is this love which strengthen me to transcend my own brokenness and pursue a more loving and life-giving future.

THE JOURNEY INEVITABLY CHANGES US

Yet traveling does more than lead any of us to our goal; the journey inevitably changes us. Life moves us, our encounters transform us. Certainly, the pandemic has challenged us, yet the journey is itself a process, which enables us to grow and develop as we press on toward our goal. To travel is certainly about finally achieving journey’s end, with all the joy and delight that this will bring - but it is also about experiencing and encouraging personal and spiritual growth within us as we travel. Journeying is a process which helps our development as people and as believers. It has

deepened my commitment to try to live my call to follow Jesus as a Marist Brother.

The journey is never made alone. In one way or another, it is always an experience in community. The pandemic has taught us that. Jesus sends his disciples out two by two because that is the beginning of a community. Along the way, they share, they argue, they reach decisions together. This mutuality is necessary so no one person “takes charge” of the journey; it is the recognition that one is not in control. The disciples also walked together so that they could be witnesses to each other because the only way to give authority to the words of another is to have a witness. With two, it is possible to support each other, for the journey also took them through moments of discouragement and mistrust.

THE WISDOM OF THE THREE VOWS

Through the global pandemic, the need for a new vision of how we live in our world has emerged. It has forced us to rethink our priorities and reminded us about what matters most in our lives as individuals and as a global community. Almost without realizing it, we are doing things differently and embracing, in small steps, new ways of living. There is a wisdom offered by the three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience which we profess that is urgent and relevant to this contemporary, globalized pandemic.

At its root, obedience is about the individual will and how much we are open to guidance from something outside of ourselves. During

Central America

On the next page:
Marist Leaders of Europe
at the General House



God HAS GIVEN US A MARIST HEART

Matt Fallon,
United States

A Marist heart is one dedicated to the mission of making Jesus known and loved. We, marist laypeople, embrace this mission in our daily lives, but the Brothers among us have a distinct and vital role in how they live that mission. Often that role is lived out in simple ways, and the witness of their Marist hearts changes the lives of the young people around them.

In 2000, as a student at Roselle Catholic, a Marist high school in the USA, I was fortunate to encounter Brother Robert James. By that time, he was about 70 years old, retired and struggling with Parkinson's Disease. His illness did not stop him from showing up every day. He was a fixture of the school community traveling the halls at his own pace and he contributed every bit of himself to make the Marist mission alive in that school community, he had a Marist heart. In my first year, I was already the tallest kid in the school, and Brother Robert James had wreaths that lined the hallway of our school which he replaced every couple of months to match the seasons. When the time came to change them, there he was, in the hallway waiting for me at the end of the day to reach up high and switch them out. His invitation for me to help him in this simple task made me feel like I was needed, that I belonged and, in a small way, that I was part of the mission of this place.



Brother Robert James is one example, but there are many of our Brothers whose dedication to mission inspires me. The Brothers who were principals and presidents of schools continue to serve in retirement, answering the phones, filling in where needed. They were the young men who were sent boldly into new areas and mission territories. They went humbly and continue throughout their lives to give witness to the power and need for Marist hearts in our Church and our world. Wherever you go, good Brothers, you are bringing our mission to the young people you encounter. You know not the seed you plant, inviting them to help change a simple decoration, could be changing their world and activating a new Marist heart.

WE NEED MORE BROTHERS

Fonyuy Nsairun
Derek, Cameroon

After working as teacher with the Brothers for more than eight years, I have come to discover more about the Marist Brothers and still think there will be some challenges that the Brother will face in future. "The harvest is great, but the laborers are few", says Matthew 9:37. The Marist Brothers have been evangelizing children through schools in Cameroon where, for the past 50 years, they have been dealing mainly with Secondary and high school education. Many parents and the society at large have welcomed this initiative but the challenge here is to increase the presence of the Brothers to help the children, especially the poor ones who need education and evangelization.

In the English-speaking part of Cameroon, where the Brothers have been working for more than 50 years, there is a political crisis that started five years ago leading the closure of the schools. Evangelization becomes difficult without schools even though the Brothers have organized community schools in some areas like Tatum in Kumbo Diocese. The church and society at large are appreciating this gesture by the Brothers and feel that more still needs to be done by the Brothers. In the future, many people would like to see the Brothers in villages teaching and evangelizing the poor children and loving them. This means we need more Brothers.

Another challenge will be how to get involved in basic education and not only in secondary and higher education. The little ones in the primary and nursery schools need to be evangelized and shown the love

Tantum, Cameroon

Down:
Marists of Canada
in La Valla,
France



of Christ. In the future, the society would like that the life of a Brother should be in such a way that their impact of evangelization be felt even by the little ones in nursery and primary schools because we still have more Montagnes in our society. This will go a long way to make Jesus Christ known and loved.

THE BROTHER OF THE FUTURE NEEDS AN OPEN MIND

Jonathan Drouin,
Canada



In a society that is becoming more and more de-Christianised and where the Church is undergoing great change, today's and tomorrow's Marist Brother needs an open mind regarding: how to conduct prayer services; how things get done in the Church; how to speak about Jesus to others, how to live in community (with lay-people); and how to form new Marists of Champagnat. Attention to such matters will bring the Marist Brother closer to the young people of today. In addition, the Marist Brother

needs an exceptional quality of “being” which grounds his ability to evangelise. A state of being centred on Marcellin, Mary and Jesus. The Word must take flesh in the Marist Brother of tomorrow. Personally, in all humility, I believe that this openness of mind and quality of “being” are the two key features of the Marist Brother of the future.

THE LITTLE ONES DREAM BIG

Francesco Di Costanzo
and Emanuela Di Fiori, Italia

Our experience with the Marist Brothers began at the age of 5 with the Grest, a summer camp full of games and friendship. It was a wonderful summer that we still remember with pleasure, full of creativity, fun, and commitment, and where we met many new friends. For us, it was our “first steps” far away from our parents and with a good group of animators.

Afterwards, we enrolled in school where there were games and more challenging activities, which we did with commitment in a very stimulating and open environment that helped us not only study but also to open ourselves more to life and to others. In this inspiring environment and in this familiar atmosphere we felt and continue to feel supported, accompanied “hand by hand” on our journey of growth. We realize that we are privileged to attend this school run by the Marist Brothers and by a good group of teachers who try to copy their way of educating the children.

What would we like future Marist Brothers to be like? From our experience, we would like them to be serene, well-integrated, empathetic people, who know how to listen to, understand, and encourage children, and who have total availability. In the small difficulties of today and the bigger ones of tomorrow, we would like to have someone who understands and advises us. But also, someone who becomes an example, someone who can inspire and involve those around him/her: a role model.



Marist College
of Giugliano, Italy



Therefore, we imagine him free, not as someone who feels forced, but who is enthusiastic about his vocation and does his work with commitment and courage. Certainly, we think of an “adult” person who knows what he is doing and can understand and help others. Based on our own experience, we would like him to have great sensitivity and to be willing to help us with gentleness, allowing us to be free.

But, even if we dream of him as an adult and mature person, we would like him to have the naivety of a child, capable of acceptance, wonder, and simplicity.

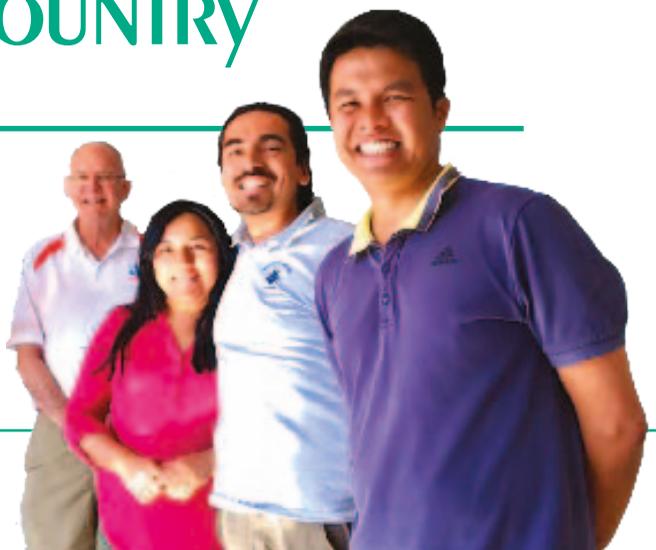
We do not know what life will bring us after our school career, but we would like to meet such a person, even in wider fields than the typical school environment, for example in the social field, where problems such as school dropouts, delinquency, maladjustment, and lack of integration are discussed.... It would be a great opportunity for Giugliano city, where we live, to have such a reference point.

BEING BROTHER FAR FROM THE OWN COUNTRY

Br. Noynoy Sisneros,
Australia

Mount Druitt,
Australia

I was born in Philip-
pines and I’m pres-
ently living in Aus-
tralia. I was part of
the Mount Druitt Lav-
alla200> Community



from 2017-2021. Now, I live in a Marist Community with two other Brothers in a suburb of Sydney called Burwood.

One of the powerful images that helped build my understanding of my life as a brother is the popular image of the Holy Family journeying towards Bethlehem. Contemplating the images of the donkey, and Mary, carrying Jesus in her womb, together with Joseph, in their life-changing journey, ignited my personal understanding and connection of the Marist tradition of presence and mission. My personal conviction of “becoming like the donkey” of Jesus’ infancy narrative allowed me to be a companion of young people I worked with in the past years, journeying with them in their struggles and in their search for identity, hope, and belonging. It has been a genuine journey of encounter, meeting them where they are, bearing with them their frustration of being unable to change their situation, and celebrating with them each of their tiny glimpse of their sense



Camaldoli,
Italy

of achievement and belonging. Whether the popular image of the Holy Family journeying with a donkey is historical or not, is of little significance. What is truly valuable is the conviction and better understanding how to live my life as a brother it gave me.

So, if you were to ask me what a brother’s life would look like in the future, I envision seeing Marist communities overflowing with “donkeys.” A Marist world where each person, each brother, carries Mary and Jesus and a companion of Joseph wherever they go, present in the lives of people they encounter. And when the time comes to let go, we brothers, quietly and gently move away, like the donkey in the story that was never mentioned again, but nevertheless contributed to the lives of Holy Family. May we become faithful bearers of Jesus and Mary and companion to people we encounter along the journey.

BEING CHRIST'S FACE TO EVERYBODY AROUND US

Br. John Hung,
Vietnam



Being a consecrated man is a precious gift from God. My first encounter with the Marist Brothers' vocation came because of having met three foreigners in my hometown. The difference between priesthood and the religious brother's vocation must have come much later but the real option to consider the brother's vocation as an overriding motivation for me came about because of the significant influence of the ways brothers relate to young people.

Since then, I have been in the Marist Brothers for about 10 years, and I have come to realize that being a religious person means to be the Christ's face to everybody around us. However, after arriving at the choice to become a Marist brother, it did not take me long before I realized that very few understood the path I was taking. In their silence, I knew that they would have given their full support if I had chosen to follow the priestly path, because in the Vietnamese culture, to enter religious life is either to be a nun or a priest. As time goes on, more people have come to understand and appreciate the vocation of religious brothers in the church through our presence and witness.

As a young brother being formed in accordance with the charism and spirituality of our founder, St. Marcellin Champagnat, I have taken the responsibility to make Jesus and Mary known and loved. Besides, through the formation experiences and training, I have learned a lot to know myself better and deepen my relationships with God and the people around me. Thus, I am so hopeful and enthusiastic that our future is bearing much more fruits as we fraternally call ourselves 'global family' despite the challenges and adversities.

Vietnam



WHERE will THE MARIST BROTHER GO?



Br. Michael Alexander
Anamá, Colombia

Bogotá,
Colombia

My name is Michael, I am from Colombia, I currently live in Bogota, where I am doing my scholastic training stage. My story began seven years ago with the Marist Brothers of the Norandina Province, for whom I am grateful for the various experiences of formation, apostolate, and mission that I have been able to share throughout this time, which are the reasons to continue in this journey of being a Brother.

Thinking about the life project of a Marist Brother, in the future can lead us to great scenarios of challenges and dreams. With his sensitivity and fearless spirit, our founder knew how to respond to his time by creating a community of Brothers dedicated to children and youth. In response to the current post-pandemic crisis, the Marist Institute is still inviting us to be part of a global family, to nurture our spirituality, and create networks of fraternity, by being men and women who live interculturality and intercongregationality, that are callings that the Church makes to us when it speaks of sodality.

Undoubtedly there will be other times, especially when our world is strongly linked to the digital world, we will face the “echoes” problems that exist in our common home, the evangelization thought in the increasingly secularized people, and others with fundamentalist positions, attending to the divisions that exist in the different social and cultural areas... all these scenarios are the ones we must be attentive to. For this reason, our life as consecrated men and women becomes indispensable and even more so when we are educators; we are called to transform the disconcerting by bringing a healthy Gospel to the different places where we are present. Our mission from the Marist values must sprout from ourselves the best poiesis, creating proposals that challenge and awaken new prophets. May the legacy that Father Champagnat left us be an invitation to the new generations of Brothers, not to abandon the essentiality of our charism and the desire to walk together as people of God.

THE FUTURE, SEEKING CHALLENGES AND DREAMS

Panashe Yusufu,
Zimbabwe



Noviciate
of Mtendere,
Malawi

When I think of our identity as Brothers, as a Marist novice, I am struck mostly by two aspects that remind me of what we are called to be and to do as Brothers: the name given to us by our founder St. Marcellin Champagnat, “The Little Brothers of Mary”, and being a sower of the Gospel.

Being a Little Brother of Mary is embracing the grace of being little before God who called us, little before our superiors, our brothers, the church’s authority, our mission as well as the young ones and the poor whom we are ministering to.

As I look at our world today, I think of how we can sow the Gospel of our Lord to the young ones especially with the challenges they are encountering such as teenage pregnancies, dropping out of school due to lack of school fees, death of a bread winner, abuses in their families which is leading them to be staying in the streets and abuse drugs. It is our duty as Marists of Champagnat to reach out to these vulnerable young ones, journey with them and bring healing and transformation in their lives. As we look at the future, we have dreams to help them to have a better life but mostly to make Jesus known, loved and named to them. Our dreams must not remain as dreams but we ought to strive to make them be a reality. As we teach in our schools

or catechize in our schools, parishes and societies, let us educate the young ones to be responsible of the decisions they make in life, to be good Christians and citizens of their nations. Let us educate them of the dangers of abusing drugs, being involved in sexual activities when still young especially still in schools and to give them counseling to find a better meaning of life. We should strive to support them in their talents and guide them on how to make use of them to improve their lives.

As Marists of Champagnat, let us go in haste to help these young ones just like Our Good Mother Mary who went in haste to Elizabeth. As we journey together with the young people and the poor in our schools and societies let us be in solidarity with them. Let us share with them the love of Christ which we experience in our communities, share our time, our skills and knowledge as well as the resources that we have. Some young people need spiritual and psychological accompaniment, therefore let us dream of drawing them closer to “Jesus the Home of light” so that they may grow in their spiritual life. Our schools and communities should be able to have the rehabilitation facilities to help the young ones who facing challenges in their lives.

WHAT IS AT THE HEART of BEING A MARIST BROTHER?

Br. José Santamarta
Castro, Spain

My 92 years give me a certain capacity to keep things simple and focus on to the essentials. At my age I have few things left and what remains is the essential. The first thing is BEING. BEING CONSECRATED. A person consecrated for Mission.

I understand a Brother as someone who is welcoming, helpful and as simple as life itself.

In my life-kit I still have five basic elements that have been shaping and reshaping my life and have helped me to be a Marist Brother:

- **COMMUNITY:** I consider myself a product of community living.
- **PRISON VISITATION:** this has helped me widen my understanding of marginalised people.
- **FRATERNITY:** a group of laypeople with whom I share life and help me to remain focussed on mission and Mary, modelling a synodal style of church.





**Marist community
of Valladolid**

- ART: feeling inhabited by the ONE WHO IS, I have felt, smelled, seen, heard and tasted LIFE in my life.
 - And leading my life as an EDUCATOR by getting closer to the ONE WHO IS, taking Mary as my model in the footsteps of Marcellin.
- I offer this brief response because I believe that an intimate encounter with Jesus personally and in community is transformative. This is what makes the future full of hope for me.

How do I DREAM OF THE MARIST BROTHER OF THE FUTURE TOGETHER WITH THE MARIST LAITY?

**Constanza Amparo Rojas
Carvajal, Colombia**

My name is Constanza Amparo Rojas Carvajal and I live in Bogota. I belong to the Norandina Province and I currently accompany and work amongst Marist laypeople in the Colombia sector. My community of reference is the Brother Eduardo Botero Arango fraternity of laypeople and I was a volunteer in "The Champagnat Community

Centre – south La Paz “, a struggling district of my city. In 2017 I made my public commitment to the Marist charism as a Marist layperson. When the Lord calls you it is hard not to respond because you know that with the Lord’s company all will be well and the best outcomes will result.

To give an answer to the question put in the title, what forces itself into my mind and heart is the witness of life and prayer of so many Brothers who have already left us for the Father’s house and of so many others who through their oftentimes silent presence have been there for those of us trying to answer the Lord’s call as lay Marists. They are men who are determined to remain constantly in the presence of the Lord through what they represent; who cultivate concern for others, their needs and problems, who share the joys, challenges and troubles of those whom God has placed in their path. They are brothers who strive to cultivate their own person to better respond in their commitment in the Church such as Father Champagnat called for, as “good Christians and good citizens”, who in an increasingly individualistic world give witness to brotherhood and community life. They are people who promote acceptance of others as they are and not as others want them to be, helping people to reach their potential as well-rounded individuals, open to serving others.

**Lay people of
the Province of Norandina**



THE CHALLENGE OF VOCATION MINISTRY

VOCATIONS SPRING FROM THE LOVE OF GOD AND GERMINATE IN THE GOOD SOIL OF PEOPLE OF FAITH, AND IN THE EXPERIENCE OF FRATERNAL LOVE! (POPE FRANCIS)

**Br. Márcio Henrique
Ferreira da Costa, Brazil**

Taking the lead from Pope Francis' message, we see a vocation as a gift that springs from God's love. The time I spent in Vocation Ministry was a privileged period in my life, a time of learning, maturing and human and spiritual growth. Being in this role was a challenge to be met every day, through understanding the issues facing young people, being a significant presence and sensitivity. In the episode of the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Lk 24: 13-35) Jesus teaches us vocational pedagogy. I took this as the basis and focus for my attention in accompanying people discerning their vocation. Jesus takes the initiative and approaches the disciples, he listens to them, he walks with them, he wants to get to know them and their reality, he empathises with their feelings, he questions, he sits at table, he shares their food, and finally he reveals himself. The disciples go immediately to Jerusalem to proclaim the Kingdom of God.

ATTENTIVE GAZE OF JESUS

The whole vocational process needs this attentive gaze of Jesus, this loving, liberating and transforming approach. The challenge of those in vocational ministry today is precisely to overcome any tendency to activism or to look for immediate results. Rather, our task is to show deep personal concern for each one, for the feelings and desires that they manifest in the vocational process. More than promoting a specific vocation or charism, those in vocation ministry are called to assist people to discern the meaning of life. Only then is the person discerning ready to consider a specific vocation. This is why I have always believed that vocations ministry involves clarifying the person's Life Plan.

BEING PRESENT

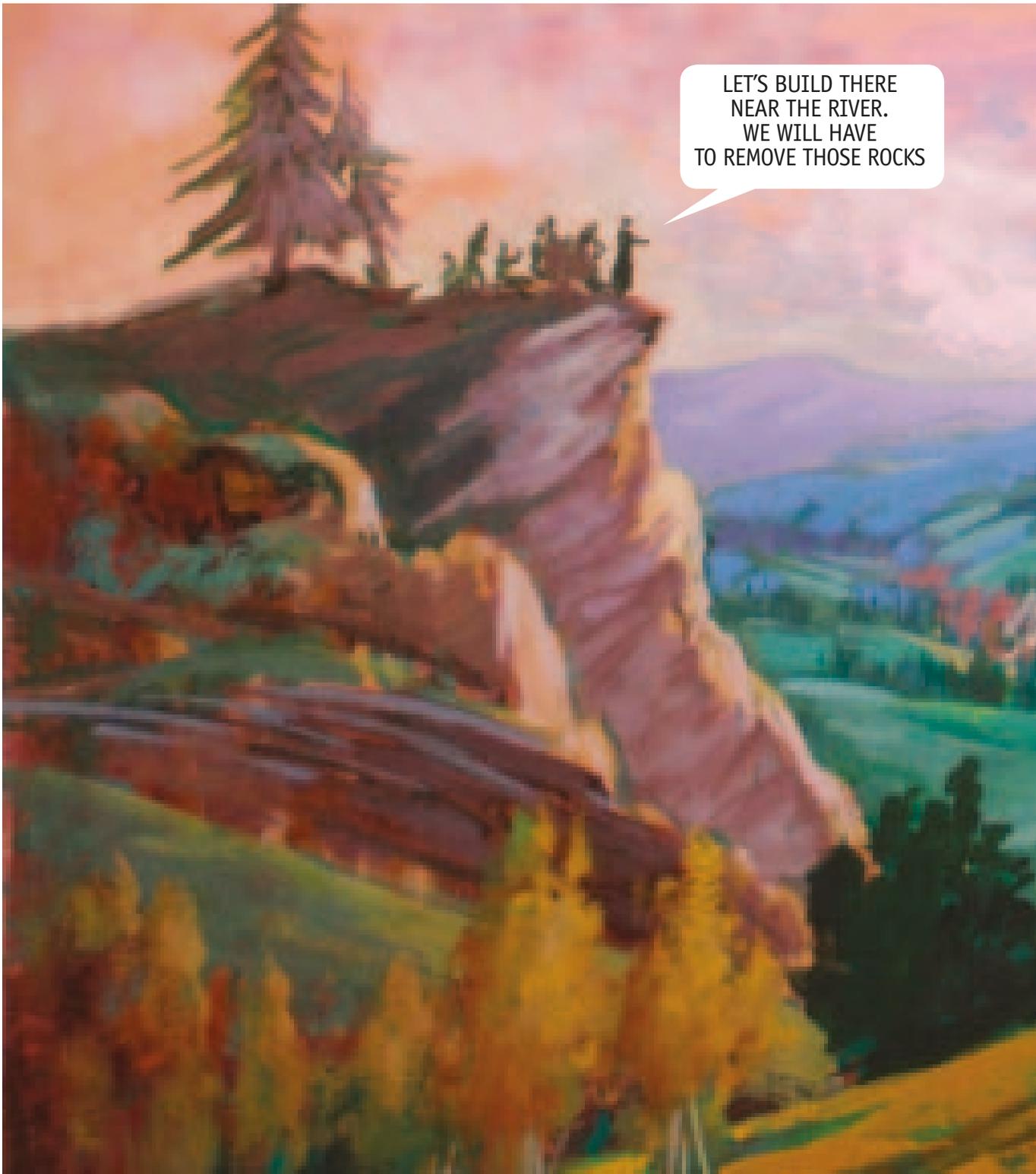
I understand that the role of the Marist Brother in this journey of vocational discernment is to assure a quality presence, someone

who accompanies, encourages, knows the individuals well, listens to them, understands their feelings, their desires and fears, prods them in their search for maturity and personal development, explains our reality as an Institute, prepares them carefully to enter a process of formation, helps them to understand religious life and the values of community, mission and spirituality, and above all examines their motivation in terms of their being consistent with our way of life and genuine. In acting this way, the Marist Brother has to be objective and discover if the discerning individuals are identifying strongly with the congregation, if they show an awareness of who we are as an Institute and if they are enthusiastic about joining the Brothers.

VOCATIONAL PROCESS AS A MISSION

Understanding the vocational process as a ministry calls us to exercise sensitivity. So, every accompaniment demands time, enough time for the person to grow, develop, mature and make a decision.





In this sense, I believe that the Year of Marist Vocations is a special and significant opportunity to focus on vocational processes. It is urgent for us brothers to develop a culture of vocations, to take



up the challenge of “looking beyond” like Champagnat. We cannot remain paralysed; now is the moment to take a quality approach with fresh vocational practices.

YEAR OF MARIST

20 May 2022

THE YEAR OF MARIST VOCATIONS IS A “TIME OF GOD’S GRACE” DEDICATED TO “CARING FOR AND GENERATING MARIST LIFE,” INAUGURATED ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE BIRTH OF SAINT MARCELLIN CHAMPAGNAT.

It coincides with the 200th anniversary of the resurgence of vocation to Marist Brotherhood in 1822, when, for three years, only three young men asked to be admitted to the novitiate.

The expression “Year of Marist Vocations” is used, on the one hand, as a continuation of the “Year of Vocations” (2005) and as a way to prioritize the call to be a religious brother, because today, perhaps more than in the past, Marcellin’s invitation “We need brothers” continues to be real and urgent. On the other hand, the Year of Marist Vocations celebrates the Lay Marist vocation and continues to promote it with the same intensity and strength for the vitality of our charism. Thus, it is recognized the specific value of the vocation of the consecrated Brother and his prophetic sense of brotherhood, as well as the fact that there have been and there are many lay persons, men and women, who have appropriated and deeply lived the Marist life

Opening of the Year of Marist Vocations at the General House



VOCATIONS

6 JUNE 2023



Opening of the Year of Marist Vocations in the Province of Norandina

and mission. Brothers and Lay people, therefore, should help each other to nurture their respective ways of living the response to the one call.

WE NEED BROTHERS!

Marcellin Champagnat always said “We need brothers” (“I cannot see a child without wanting to tell him how much God loves him”) every time he saw children and young people who needed to find God and find meaning in their lives. Today, more than ever, we are facing a parallel reality.

We firmly believe that God continues to inspire new vocations to the Marist brotherhood in our days. Thus, we must not get tired of promoting brother vocations even if in some parts of the world it has been a while since there were any; while in others, they have been very few.

THE JOY OF LIVING AS A MARIST

The Constitutions direct us to cultivate a “culture of vocations” in our communities and places of ministry by giving witness to the joy of living as a Marist, in consecrated life and in other life options.

Similarly, in Chapter 3 of his circular, "Homes of Light: Caring for Life, Generating New Life", Br. Ernesto invites us to reimagine our culture of vocation. Recognizing the many brothers and laypeople who passionately live the gift of the Marist charism, he challenges us to create opportunities for showing the Marist charism in action and talking about its continuing relevance. Furthermore, the Rule of Life opens with the statement, "There is great value in being Brother today". It is an invitation to reaffirm the 'value and necessity of [the brother's] vocation.

To bear witness to the continuing relevance of the Marist charism, first we must rediscover the original passion that inspired us to be Marists. Thus, the Year of Marist Vocations is an opportunity for every Marist brother and laity to reflect on, further appreciate, celebrate, and talk about his/her unique vocational history.

The Year of Marist Vocations is a time for Brothers and laity to extensively get involved in fostering vocations to Marist life among young people.

TENDING NEW SHOOTS OF MARIST LIFE



The Year of Marist Vocations is symbolized by a plant shoot in the gardener's hand. With it the catchphrase, "Caring for and generating Marist life". New growths in plants are very delicate and therefore need utmost care. The same is true with our vocation, our Marist life.

It must be tended attentively. At the same time, we must sow the seeds if we want the garden to flourish. The stalk shaped like an M – for Marist and for Mary – is colored green to signify life. The two leaves represent Marist Brothers and Marist Laity. The leaves are heart-shaped, proclaiming our love for the charism. However, they are not in the usual upright position, indicating the inquietude of the comfort zone and the restlessness in the face of emerging needs. The vibrant colors blue and orange speak to us of the rich variety of ways in which we respond to the call, according to our respective gifts. Blue characterizes fidelity to our commitment. Orange, on the other hand, suggests ardor and reflects our passion for Marist life. The hand and the lump of soil that supports the shoot paints a picture of caring, whether it is for the seedling, or for the sprout. This is a reminder of our responsibility to nurture Marist life – our own, that of our companions on the journey and that of those who are just beginning.

PRAYER FOR THE YEAR OF MARIST VOCATIONS

Reverend Father,

You received the prayer of Marcellin Champagnat
two hundred years ago, and delivered the Institute
from earthly slavery by liberating it
with a prodigious surge of youth.

Throughout our history,
you have done wonderful things
through the men who dedicated themselves
as little Brothers of Mary and the lay men and women
who have followed the text
to share the Marist charism and mission.

We praise and thank you
for this close collaboration
to make Jesus and Mary known and loved
by children and young people
in places where we are present.

Lord of the harvest,
we feel ourselves today in a turbulent world
Prayer for the Year of Marist Vocations shows the Founder's close
confidence in his servant, even those men.

Help us to care for and promote Marist life.
Keep us rooted in the original passion that inspired us
so that we can boldly respond
to the emerging needs of our times.

Like Marcellin, we pray today that you increase our number
by sending to our Institute those whom you call.
Share us the men and women you have chosen
and enable us to accompany them in sustaining their Marist vocation.

Empire them to take up this journey of love for and service to
the best formed in Marists of Champagnat.

May our Good Mother,
we believe this is your wish.
Be so confident that you will not allow this lamp
to be extinguished for lack of oil.
Accompany our progress to your Son,
our Lord Jesus Christ.



caring for and generating

MARIST LIFE

YEAR OF MARIST VOCATIONS

20 MAY 2022 - 06 JUNE 2023

