

A Path to Education *and Maturity* *in Faith*

The Mystique
of Marist Youth Ministry



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Development and organization

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Marist Youth Ministry

Creed

We believe in the **Triune God** who becomes community and expresses His will in the person of Jesus Christ.

We believe in life as a **gift of God** and something to treasure by caring for women and men, temples of love.

We believe in Mary, the **Good Mother** who, in her life of faith and tenderness, is an example of belonging to the Kingdom.

We believe in the **Prophetic and Missionary Church**, salt of the earth and light of the world, that welcomes youth.

We believe that the Marist charism, revealed in **Marcellin Champagnat**, touches the heart of the young.

We believe that the Ministry of Accompanying is an **expression of gratitude**, and we choose to work with young people

We believe in the **struggle of young people** against difference in the fight for a society that is just, fraternal and compassionate.

We believe in the **transforming and creative spirit** of young people that nourishes their dreams with love and hope.

We believe in the **evangelizing mission of youth**, a path to the **Civilization of Love**.

Amen!

Presentation

In 2011, with the objective of promoting the animation of Marist Youth Ministry (MYM) in all the Provinces and Districts and situating evangelization at the heart of the Marist mission, a document entitled “Evangelization in the Midst of Youth” was sent to the whole Institute. Workshops with the representatives of the Administrative Units were organized in all the regions of the Institute in order to present the proposal of the MYM and agree on common lines of action for its implementation. MYM is intended to be a common project throughout the Institute, and a space or place for youth leadership and giving a voice to Marist young people through networking.

Many Provinces and Districts revised their plans for Youth Ministry in the light of the document “Evangelizers in the Midst of Youth”, seeking greater vitality and integration with the proposals of the Institute. The Provinces which at that time did not have a concrete Plan for Youth Ministry made a great effort to plan and develop the initiatives. We are very grateful for the enormous effort that all the Administrative Units are putting into MYM.

Over the past few years, Provinces and Districts have asked for materials and guidance on supporting MYM. At the same time, we find that there is experience and abundant material to hand in various areas of the Institute. We believe that this experience when shared, will enrich all of us. This is the reason we are making a great effort throughout the whole Institute to gather, share and adapt some of these materials so that they can influence the processes of MYM which are developed and implemented in the different contexts of the mission.

Today, we present the document entitled The Mystique of Marist Youth Ministry, “a path to education and maturing in faith”. The document has been developed by the Marist Union of Brazil (UMBRASIL) and adapted by the Mission Secretariat. It offers reflections and important guidelines for the organization and running of MYM youth groups, taking into account the different age groups (“moments”) of the adolescents and young people who form part of MYM. We thank the Marist Provinces of Brazil for their generosity in offering this document to the Institute, in this way allowing its adaptation.

The Mystique document sets out a program of faith-formation for the groups of young people, taking into account their stage of human development. The program consists of five “moments” or phases which can be adopted for the formation of the group according to age. They can also be elements or stages of the group’s development – from infancy up to adult age – aiming towards life-choices.

The contents are arranged around biblical and Marist themes on the lives of Jesus and Marcellin, organized according to age and life-experience. To facilitate the understanding of the members of the group we suggest working with the various elements, getting inspiration from Marist and Biblical locations. We hope that the material in this document serves as a source of inspiration and vitality for the mission of evangelizing young people.

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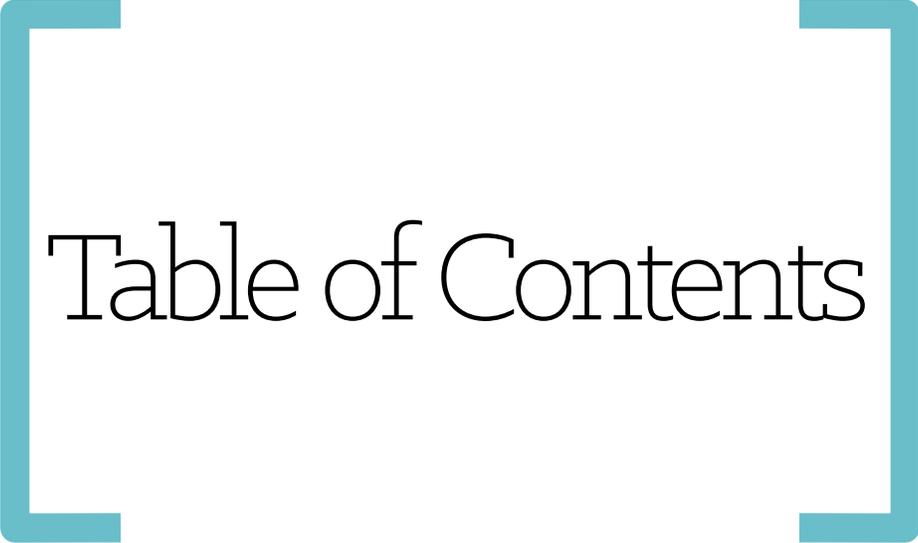


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Introduction

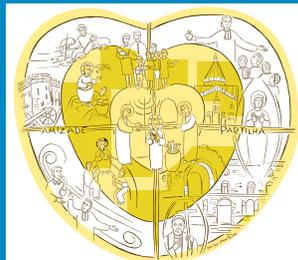
1. One of the educational elements of Marist Youth Ministry is the **comprehensive process of education in faith**. It occurs step-by-step in a dynamic and comprehensive manner as a journey undertaken by the young him/her self. It is no wonder that the word *path* means passage, trail, space, itinerary, and route. Its interpretation in Marist Youth Ministry is the belief that there is no growth in faith without a roadway or path. No one is born ready; on the contrary, formation is something that needs to be done on a daily basis, a challenge that each person must overcome.
2. The National Guidelines for Marist Youth Ministry published in Brasil remind us that the **process of education in faith**, beyond its method or technique, has an originality and authenticity which stem from the desire to encounter and discover a God who is revealed in Jesus Christ, in people and nature. That process should give rise to an experience of Jesus Christ by the young, as an apostle among other young people, through a comprehensive formation in the Marist way, to build a fairer, more ethical and solidarity-based society, a sign of the civilization of love.
3. That is why we agree with the insight of the book published by the Latin American Episcopal Conference (CELAM) **Civilization of Love: task and hope**, when it affirms that we must take into account the times of growth, of awareness of emotions, of assimilation and commitment, typical of youth. In that respect, it is fundamental for young people and the agents working with them, to be willing to experience maturity in faith by taking greater ownership of the process, since what is at stake is not just a discourse with no substance or a merely intellectual attitude, but rather an outlook on life filled with Mystique. It is not about walking for the young, but rather walking with them.
4. There are many ways to experience and present this process pedagogically. There was, for a long time, a degree of rationalizing and a positivistic tendency characterized by a logical, intellectual and detached presentation which did away with biblical and symbolic aspects present in both the explanation and the experience of the different **moments** of faith-formation. In every experience undergone by an individual and group, there is a **mystique** which can take on very different features, be a source of inspiration and express inner attitudes.
5. We need first to clarify some assumptions of the message we wish to convey. These are not small issues but are rather immensely important. They may sound as vague when described, but they do actually occur in people.



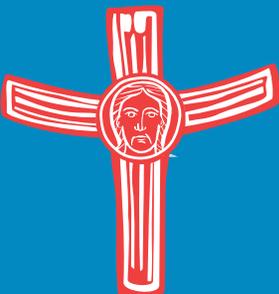


More than
Words

Comprehensive Process



of Education in Faith



Path for Education and **Maturity in Faith**

Process

6. When we look for the meaning of the term **process** in any dictionary, we find: *continued action, segment, track, course...* If we are think about it, we can perceive that these meanings are closely related to the idea of **path**. That is why the **process** implies a series of “things” that occur within ourselves for different reasons, whether searched for, provoked or emerging uninvited. It is a path that we gradually build; a road on which we face foreseen and unforeseen situations that cheer us, sadden us, challenge us or lead us to settle. It is like a journey that never stops being mysterious, regardless of how much we plan for it.
7. When we speak of **process**, namely of the **path and maturity in faith**, we are not referring to something static or automatic. There is a prior beginning and history that needs to be experienced. It can be developed or forgotten, but it will not stop. Therefore, just as we can discover what makes us grow or diminish in love, so we can discover the path of faith within us. All we have to do is listen, see and feel in order to perceive when we are right and when we are wrong. It is not a stationary process: you either move forward or backward. Speaking of the process of education in faith means that we want to perceive how this faith progresses or retreats.
8. Many things can happen during this maturing: discoveries, doubts, readings, con-



More than Words

versations, prayers, study seminars, laziness, and relaxation. It can be an immense mix of things, just like life: you walk in the midst of enthusiasm and disappointment, hope and challenges. Nevertheless, we can say that there is a direction, just as love follows its own direction and path. Our only certainty is that this **process** began one day and that it will never end. Just like love, faith has a beginning but no end. We all live out **the process of life**; we all live out the **process of faith**.

9. A person can be more complete when he or she knows how to observe what is happening **inside himself or herself**: the process of love, of growth, of maturity, of being a son or a daughter, or a father or a mother, or a citizen. When we are able to perceive all of the above, we truly can be ourselves. Because it is beautiful and mysterious, the process of education in faith carries within itself a **“vibrancy”**, a joy of meaning. That is what we call **“Mystique”**.

Mystique

10. We can say that Mystique is the soul of **spirituality**. A **spiritual** person is someone who lives with the Spirit, a gift of the God of Life. A spiritual person is one who brings out the life that is within himself/herself. He/she is a person filled with hope, solidarity, meaning, love, peace and justice. Life... Mystique is the result of the experience and integration of all those elements.
11. Mystique, however, neither comes from us nor it is destined only for us. It is the result of my relationship with the Spirit of God that dwells in us and the world. It can be experienced in spaces where that Spirit manifests itself: in our room, in the mountains, in the desert, on the beach, in a book, in a particular church, in the community, in the Eucharist, in a visit to sick or poor people. Still, I must be able, and sufficiently attentive, to see and perceive, in any of these places, that Spirit wishing to give me more life (Wisdom 1,6-7). When we speak of **the Mystique of education in faith** we mean the joy and the vibrancy found in the discovery and deepening of faith in the following of Jesus. We learn from Him that life is beautiful when we give ourselves to others.



12. An appreciation of mystery is not simply emotional, but has its own logic. Mystique is vibrant, filled with meaning and, just as it is nourished by faith, hope and love for others, it is also a means of spreading these virtues. A sense of mystery enables within us an awareness of the fundamental concepts of corporeal and affective, conceptual and practical, behavioral and philosophical, the "I" and the "Thou". When someone has an appreciation of Mystique they are like a vessel overflowing with the treasure which is within them.
13. Once again, even though it is a gift, Mystique needs to be sought out, devoured, studied, and celebrated. **It is inside and outside of us.** It has its roots in God; that is why it is revealed in many ways. My room is a mystical place when, in it, I find more of myself in God; a beach is a mystical place when I am there and find more of myself in God I am mystical when I am a divine space, where God manifests himself in his infinite richness. Although we are human, and therefore limited, the Bible says we are "images" or "icons" of God among his other creatures.
14. When we speak of ***the Mystique of the process of education in faith*** or of ***the Mystique of the journey and of maturity in faith***, we mean the human-divine within us as we set out to discover the following of Jesus. He invites us to the fulness of life in giving ourselves to others. This does not happen

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overnight but gradually, during the journey, like a river that slowly ends up in the sea.

15. Cultivating the Mystique of this **process of education in faith** just described, within Marist Youth Ministry, guides us along two paths: biblical locations witnessing to the life of Jesus, and Marist locations which encompass the historical and human context of Champagnat's life. These two scenarios complement each other. These places hold within them humanity and holiness, flavors and sensations to be experienced. They represent a way into a new perspective, enriching something already there.

Place

16. The Uruguayan author, Eduardo Galeano, reminds us of how a place can become sacred to us: (...) *And also we had found joy in that house suddenly cursed by bad winds, and joy was known to be more powerful than doubt and better than memory, and that is why that humble house, that cheap and ugly house, in a cheap and ugly neighborhood, was sacred.*
17. We don't live outside time and space. That is why we are by necessity embodied in a single location. These places can be houses, rooms, landscapes, town-centers, or even benches. We connect emotionally to memories of these places as they evoke experiences of love. Which of us does not recall Grandma's house? Or a trip to some imposing place? The first kiss? A childhood game? The church we attended when we were young?
18. Appreciation of mystery needs to be grounded. That is why we mention **place**. Biblical or Marist **place** is something concrete: a city, a house, a region. It may, however, be more than simply that: it can become a **sacramental**¹ through our maturing in faith. The **place** becomes sacred when it takes on a deeper meaning.
19. Example. If the town of Nazareth is merely a town like any other, then it is just Nazareth; however, if a close friend of mine lived and worked there, Nazareth

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would take on a deeper meaning for me. We could say that Nazareth had become a **“special place”** because we not only see it with our eyes but also with our heart. It becomes a **“sacramental”**. Looking at a place with our heart allows us to transform it into a **“sign”** that speaks to us, makes us emotional or vibrant, and provides us with a meaningful experience.

20. A **“place”** may or may not, hold our affection. That affection is what makes it more than simply geographical space. We want to emphasize that our faith needs **inspiring places** that give it a **“soul”**, an emotion, and motivates it. It is in these that we learn to think and believe. On the Marist Youth Ministry path of education and maturity in faith , the biblical places are: Bethlehem, Nazareth, Cana, Capharnaum and Jerusalem; and the Marist places are: Rosey, La Valla, Verrières, Le Palais, and L'Hermitage.

*Moments*²

21. Within the process of education in faith we wish to talk about, there are what we call **moments**. These are like *stopping places, stations, points*. There is not just one section on this path, but many. After each one, we stop, contemplate and carry on with life. Therefore, each **moment** presents us with multiple situations to be discovered and experienced. Although they are part of the same **path**, each **moment** is different. Little by little, we see more, admire more, and become more demanding as to what we want to experience.
22. We might identify these **moments** as temporal spaces, ideal for the development of a comprehensive formation process suited to specific age groups. They are favorable times for the discovery of personal and group identity and for the experiencing of faith, personhood, affectivity and solidarity.
23. One aspect we must not forget is the fact that these **moments** are linked to one another. They gradually mature to the extent we mature in them. If we are children now, we will be teenagers then; if we are naive now, we will be more critical then; if we now prefer flowers, we will then be attracted by harmful thorns; if we have no plans now, we will then feel a compelling need to plan

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our life, etc. Thus the **moments** are distinct and the environments different. We have five **moments** in the Marist Youth Ministry.

1. The discovery of the community path
 2. The discovery of the group
 3. The discovery of the community
 4. The discovery of the social issue
 5. The discovery of vocation and of the life-project.
24. Even though each discovery is related to both physical growth and maturing in faith, we need to take into account that the **moments** in Marist Youth Ministry take the form of a dialogue. That is to say that they are not organized like a series of drawers next to each other, but are integrated with each other like a net with no beginning or end. For example, the experience of the **moment** of discovery of the community cannot be separated from the discovery of the group or of the social issue, or of the life-project. However, in that **moment**, it is important to prioritize everything related to the discovery of the community. The same applies to other **moments**.
25. We emphasize this because there is tendency to forget the dynamics of the “journey of faith”. There is a belief that, if we are in Jerusalem (the theological place), we can forget about Nazareth (the theological place). When we have been on the journey for some time, certain experiences undergone at earlier times are no longer important, etc. We forget that a new group, with its own specific characteristics, also has its own “battles”. The process is life and life has to go on.
26. Thus, all discoveries are important; they never end and they are experienced as a “process”, each with its own perspective and particular issue. That is why there are special places to **nourish** Mystique, through symbols appropriate to our experience. The **symbols** express the reality and ideal of each **moment**. To value a **symbol** is to express, through an image, what we are experiencing and want to experience.

Symbols

27. Just like the **place**, the **symbol** is very important. It is something we carry inside us that we would like others to see and experience. At the same time, it is the sign of a commitment. For young people, the symbol characterizes the identification with a cause or with an ideal. These are sacramental integrators of the spiritual and human experience of the young person and we fill them with meaning, with the specific memory of all the hard work and maturity attained on the journey over the years of commitment to the Marist Youth Ministry program.

28. The symbols enable us to give a new meaning to the rational interpretation of the steps and phases of the process of education in faith, in order to savor all the **moments, processes, places, symbols and times of grace**. They are:



- **The Star of Bethlehem**, with all of the implications of birth and life.



- **The Welcoming Heart**, with open hands, represents the process of growth in faith, the welcome of the other and the solidarity to be exercised daily.



- **Mary our Good Mother** recalls the commitment to be leaders, sensitive to the reality of the environment and attentive to the most vulnerable.



- **The Cross** which, more than death, is the most evident Christian symbol, reminding us that taking on the Christian mission is a daily attitude of fighting injustice and rising to new life.



- **The Three Violets** represent the desire for, and commitment to, a life turned on living out the life-project, immersed in evangelical and Marist values.

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29. Therefore, what follows are some initial reflections, albeit incomplete, within a different way of thinking and experiencing what we know as “steps” of “phases” in the process of education in faith. These reflections are embedded in and soaked with the Marist spirit, but they offer possibilities for the whole of youth ministry.

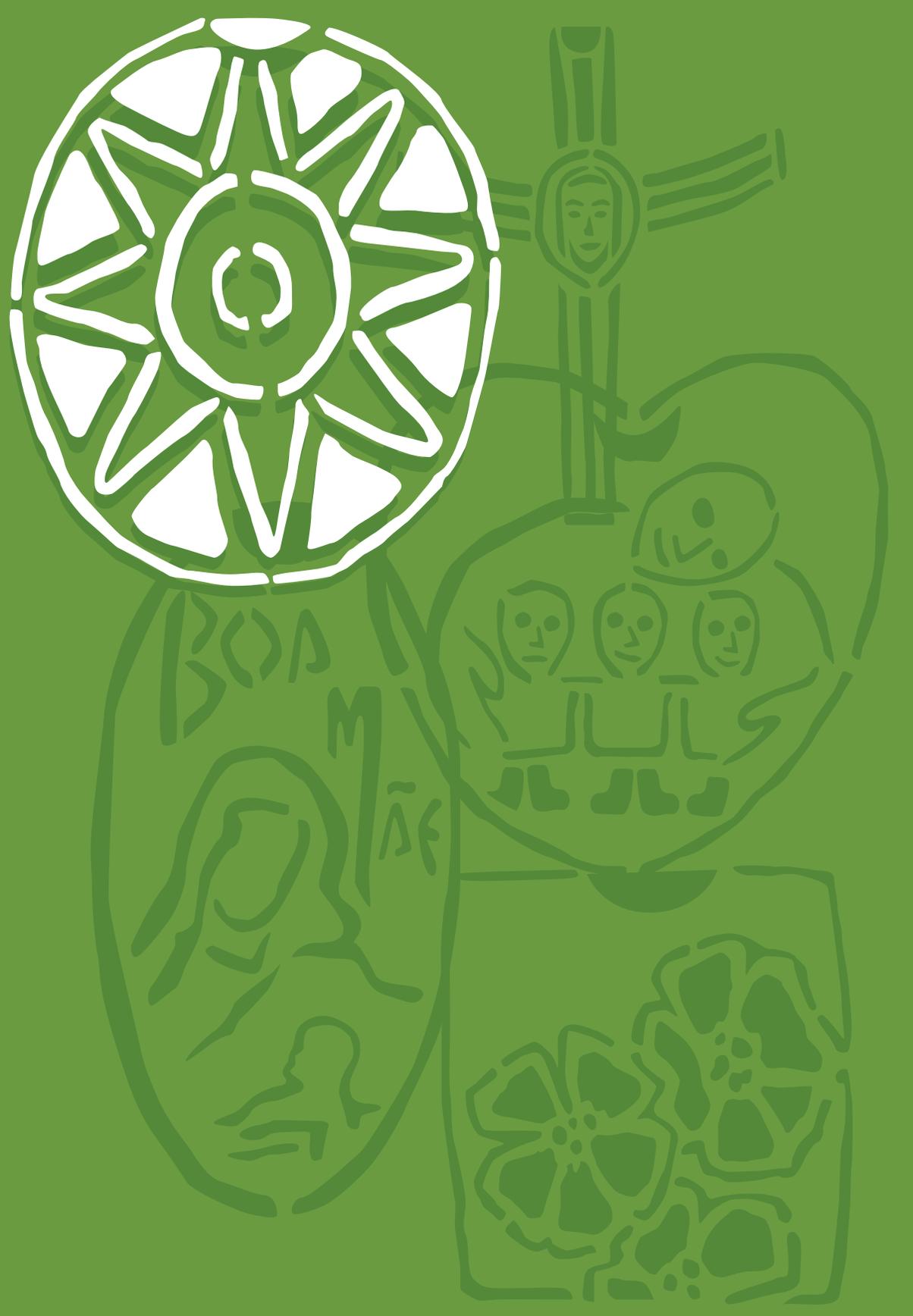
Assumptions

30. To understand the **moments** that will be presented, we need to be clear about some of the assumptions of the experience of the process. Thus we insist on the pedagogical options.

31. Throughout the process under discussion and the task being illustrated, we are convinced of the importance of **five pedagogical options**. As CELAM reminds us in **Civilization of love, Task and Hope**, the pedagogical options refer to tools, attitudes and strategies for the evangelization of youth, in accordance with a pedagogy of ministry and with the reality of the youngsters and of the groups.

32. Each “option” presented, is a sort of **act of faith** in the way to experience and spread the announcement of the Good News, especially with adolescents and young people. This is why the spirituality of the path and of the maturation of faith could not be experienced without taking into account the five options explained below. As Marists we affirm five fundamental pedagogical-ministerial options:

- a. Youth groups and the vibrant experience of fraternity;
- b. The process of educating in the faith;
- c. Accompaniment;
- d. Organization;
- e. The formation of active, service-oriented and contemplative leaders at different levels.



First Moment

The symbol is
the Star.

The biblical place is
Bethlehem.

The Marist place is
Rosey.

The values are
Acceptance and Confidence.



The discovery of the community path

33. The first **moment** is the initial step on the **path** and the **maturity in faith, experienced in a group**. Becoming human is an exercise to be undertaken in coexistence with others. We are born and remain dependent during specific phases of our existence. We learn to live with others since coexistence helps to give meaning, that is to say, to make sense of affectivity and experience of the world. Dependence on another is in part overcome through the establishment of a natural relationship of individuation and interdependence. A group-community is a developmental space in which people preserve their uniqueness while they are complemented and humanized, opening up to communal relations between themselves.
34. We must clarify that when a group is constituted it finds itself in an unstable environment of maturing people. The sense of belonging and commitment of people gradually changes this situation.
35. In the first **moment** the youth is invited, rather, "seduced" to live a new group experience. A period of enchantment follows, when group members begin meeting, knowing and discovering each other. During this **moment**, utmost care and guidance are especially important for the development of the group.

First moment
*The Discovery
of the
Community Path*

36. Intervention via counseling will facilitate an appropriation of models and references that promote the maturity in faith within the group. The counselor, either man or woman, in addition to having experience in group-work, must know what is happening in the group. His/her action needs to be “intentional”, namely, offering a credible educational theory, expanding and promoting it.
37. The beginnings of a group may represent for an adolescent or young person a combination of anguish and joy. Anguish because he/she faces the unknown, new relations, opinions which must be held in face of others. On the other hand, it may represent joy for all that is the novelty of the group which, in the multiplicity of relationships, motivates the young person to want to “join with” to face difficulties.
38. The first **moment** refers us to two inspiring places: Bethlehem, the place where humanity welcomes Christ; and Rosey, the place of birth of Marcellin Champagnat. In both, we find the simplicity of the welcome of a family on the peripheries. They inspire us to own values to be nourished, especially **Acceptance** and **Confidence**.

The Star

39. The symbol carries an energy pointing towards our ideals. For those who are willing to start and to be constantly renewed in the experience of their own faith, the star of Bethlehem speaks of originality, hope, birth, light, path, intensity, force, call, sense, invitation, response, journey, the life-project objective, and many other things. For the young person experiencing the birth of the group, the sense of the star is enriched and becomes an invitation to start on the path of living faith. The symbol has no limits, like the hunger for Mystique and the willingness to live.

The place is Bethlehem

40. Bethlehem of Judah is a town 8 km away from Jerusalem, perched on top of a hill surrounded by valleys fertile in wheat, barley, olives and vines. In Hebrew, its name means “House of Bread”: Beth (house) plus Lehem (bread) where food is cultivated



and shared in families. The Book of Genesis also says that Rachel, wife of Jacob, was buried in Bethlehem (Gen 35,19). Bethlehem is also the scene of Ruth's returning with Noemi from the exile "at the start of the harvesting of barley" (Ruth 1, 19-22). Bethlehem is the homeland of David, the delicate young man who defeated Goliath with his intelligence. The prophet Micah presents Bethlehem as the place of birth of the Prince of the house of David (Mic 5,2). The Jews believed that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem (Mt 2,1-6). Jesus, in fact, was born there and was placed in a manger for two reasons: historically, because there was no room in the inns; symbolically, because the child is born as the "bread of life" (manger = place to eat). They say it happened in a cave above which Constantine subsequently wanted to raise a basilica; however, Justinian built another one that exists to this date.

41. Bethlehem is recognized deep in humanity's psyche as a place of welcome. God made his dwelling there, incarnated in the everyday lives of the people. He did not choose palaces; he preferred to stay with the poor. This is a place of encounter with nature, reflected in the warmth of the cave, in his mother's



First moment
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lap, the welcome of a family born in simplicity and detachment. In Bethlehem, we find wonderful characters such as Mary, who kept everything in her heart, Joseph, the man who agreed to be the father of a son filled with mystery, the shepherds who were the first ones to receive the news of the birth of the awaited Messiah. Bethlehem also brings to mind the characters of the kings who came in search of the Star, following it to learn the meaning of that special event.

42. Bethlehem is on the peripheries and it is there that salvation was born. In people's imagination there is no Bethlehem without the star: the star of hope, of the way, of the meaning. In Bethlehem, the angels sing the good news of the arrival of the child. News of peace would cross the centuries. Bethlehem is a cave and a way, at the same time. That is where the blessed couple arrived. Bethlehem reminds us of Roman control through the census, to guarantee oppression. At the same time, it is lodging, welcome, news of something very good. Bethlehem is rejection since "there was no room for them in the inn" (Lk 2,7). It is in Bethlehem where the Lord's epiphany occurred. There, God was revealed to the world. There, the piety of the Magi offered gold, frankincense and myrrh. The "child" is born into reality, wrapped in mystery. The experience of faith is also a grace that is born within reality.

Aspects of Mystique wrapped in values

43. On the group's journey, as the young person gains awareness of his/her process of growth in faith, it is necessary to nourish the values of **acceptance and confidence** found in Bethlehem so that their sense may become attitudes. We mean that the Mystique of Bethlehem raises important aspects for the formation of adolescents and young people.
44. Let us start with **acceptance**. We all need to be accepted into a group, into a community, into the family, into the Church: we need to be and to have a "cave". Unfortunately, Joseph and Mary were unwelcome. The experience of the love of God is especially evident in the friendships that the youngsters



create among themselves. In this newly established bond, the young person discovers, knows him/her self, and feels important. Consider the friendship the young person needs because they are beginning to discover themselves. **Self-esteem** is also related to acceptance. Self-appreciation is part of the experience of faith: the appreciation of the mystery within us.

45. Bethlehem is a place of **confidence**, the manifestation of the power of the “yes” stated by Mary at the time of the annunciation (Lk 1, 26-38). Joseph believes in the incarnation of the Word: later, prompted by the angel, he flees with Mary to protect her. (Mt 1, 20-21). Shepherds hastily go to look on the child in the manger (Lk 2, 8-15). The Magi follow the star through the desert confident they will find the child, as stated in the prophecy (Mt 2, 5-6). When they perceive the evil intent of Herod, they change their direction of travel. While experiencing faith in a group and building relations, the young person faces that Mystique of Bethlehem, developing and exercising self-confidence, in the other and in God, making every effort to be authentic and exercise good judgment in the building of identity.

First moment
*The Discovery
of the
Community Path*

46. Another aspect of the Mystique of Bethlehem is **the experience of the poor**. The discovery and the awareness of poverty challenge the young person because they are not part of the imagined world. Running campaigns or serving as a volunteer in charitable institutions must not be considered as mere activism, but rather as a way for the other to be incarnated in our lives. Helping the young person to discover the other in his/her **radicalism** is to help them perceive the existence of the poor as being the result of an unjust society. It is not by chance that God became poor.
47. A fourth aspect of the Mystique of Bethlehem is **the spirit of the search**. In addition to the search of Joseph and Mary for an inn, we find the shepherds searching for the child, the Magi following a star. What young person is not searching for his or her own identity? It is the Mystique of Mary and Joseph, of the shepherds, of the Magi, and of all of us. Those existential questions we all raise: "Who am I? Where do I come from? Where am I going?" face us with the challenge of being "myself" and not what the others want me to be. We need to find a star; we need to hear the song of the angels. This expectation provides strength to the group and the personal journey. The beautiful thing is that no one seeks in vain. Who does not want **good news** to fill their lives with meaning?
48. In **Bethlehem** we also find **fear and conflict**. Joseph and Mary must escape to Egypt since the child unknowingly became a rival. The Magi's good intentions clash with Herod's poison. To leave the calm world of dependence, "to be born again" to take on life on our own two feet is not easy. There are adults who wish the "kids" to never stop being kids. The adolescent feels an invitation to be himself and that frightens him/her. A group may be a place where those fears, doubts and questions are placed in common and become challenges. One of these is to prevent friendship from becoming "**friendism**", namely a superficiality in friendship. The Mystique of Bethlehem teaches us that we must embrace the diverse as a part of us. Friendship brings us towards the discovery of the other and of diversity. And that is fantastic! On the other hand, the Magi discovered that Herod's intention was not among the best and they had to take a different route. Not everyone needs to. Gradually conscience awakens



and whispers that, if we want to experience the Mystique of Bethlehem, we cannot continue dreaming of a world of naive romanticism. Similarly, we must not lose the vocation to be the embodiment of poetry and gratitude.

49. In experiencing the spirit of Bethlehem, everything speaks of one thing that the young person dreams of: **simplicity**; in other words, being what he/she is. We were not created to “perform”, rather to be ourselves. In the cave, the Magi from the East were submerged in simplicity. They had to convince themselves that God is uncomplicated. Not only uncomplicated, but also unpretentious, one who does not define himself through the attachment to material things. The Magi saw that God, above all, is! (Ex 3,14). The Mystique of Bethlehem is an invitation to be all of that, in the manner of a child.

The Marist place is Rosey

50. In this small village, in the outskirts of the town of Marlies, Marcellin Champagnat was born on May 20, 1789. The village is clearly visible from the road.



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The narrow track that leads to it is crossed by a stream, at the side of which in times past were the grain mills of Champagnat's. An interesting similarity: while Bethlehem is the "house of bread" for the child Jesus, Rosey is "the house of grain" for little Marcellin. The ancient family home of Champagnat is located to the right of the entrance. An ornate plaque on the wall confirms that it is the birthplace of Champagnat. His father was called John Baptist; his mother, Mary née Chirat. They had ten children of whom only six survived.³ Rosey witnessed part of Marcellin's history. Sixteen years of family life, working and caring for his sheep. He took from his father the idea of a new social order; while he absorbed from his mother and aunt the principles of an ancient spiritual order.

51. The experience of Bethlehem is fundamental for a group that is starting off; Rosey carries that same meaning. It is the place of birth of Marcellin, where he learned a profession and values. Rosey shines through his discoveries. His childhood relationships and solid religious formation are touched by harsh experiences and frustrations which in the future would motivate in him a transformation in his life and situation. Several aspects that are important for the beginning of the groups' journey and discoveries emanate from Rosey.

Aspects of the Mystique of the Marist charism

52. The first aspect is the **acceptance** translated into **family spirit**. Such dimensions were always fundamental in the life of the child Marcellin. Just like a family welcoming a new life with much joy, in the group, all expect to be welcome. Loved since his birth, Marcellin was a desired and hoped-for child. To be well-accepted by all is a paramount factor for those beginning their journey in a group.
53. The second aspect of the Mystique of Rosey is the discovery of **initial responsibilities**. As he grows up, Marcellin must face the harshness of life. Dreams often come across financial and historical obstacles. Still, Rosey is a privileged place for maturing. The group learns about difficulties; on the other hand, it also favors many new perspectives. In Rosey, Marcellin learns his father's trade and helps



with household chores. The group takes on the aspect of a special environment for a young person to start discovering his/her early responsibilities. At the same time, it is a discovery of the self and of one's limitations.

54. In Rosey, we find the Mystique of **good examples**. Any young person beginning his group journey needs points of reference; models that, rather than teaching great theories, witness to a path to be followed. Here we perceive the importance of good counseling for the early years of the group. These models are present in Marcellin's life in Rosey. His father was an educated and sensible man who, thanks to his conciliatory and cautious character, was admired and respected by the entire community. His mother's character was at the same time firm, tender and pious. She personally and zealously cared for the education and formation of Marcellin and her other children. His aunt, who was a Religious, contributed, through her pious attitude, to the formation of the character and piety of Marcellin.
55. The fourth aspect of the Mystique of Rosey is the **spirit of justice**. As a child, Marcellin faced a society that has just come out of a revolution. He observed around him many values being sidelined, in the name of a new social order. In this context, he also faced his first crises. During his first day of school, still very shy, he was called to do the reading. Then, a fellow pupil came to the front of the class. The teacher very angrily "slapped the boy and sent him crying to the back of the room".⁴ That attitude deeply moved Marcellin and awoke his spirit of justice. This stance later led him to make serious decisions in his life. Rosey teaches us to face life with gratitude and self-giving, without ever losing a sense of indignation and taking a stand in the face of injustice.
56. The Mystique of Rosey also represents the construction of **vocation and spirituality**. This may be one of the most beautiful and intriguing aspects of Rosey as well as of the life of each of the youngsters setting off on their journey. As we grow up, we carry within ourselves the values we have built up throughout life, especially the ones we acquired during childhood and adolescence. The courage and character of Marcellin were essential in his decision-making. Vocation is connected to the way we relate to our environment and to the way certain

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values were nourished. The group is a space to undergo a deep experience of God and to gradually discover a vocation; a vocation which, in the example of Marcellin, is committed to the situation and context in which we live. The mission of the group also entails collaborating to ensure that the young person succeeds in reading his situation and discovering his potential. This is not the time for final choices, but rather the beginning of a journey, the taking of a stand. The time for a young person to become the subject of his/her story and build a personal enterprise.



Icon of the First Moment

57. The circular Icon represents an eight-point star. It recalls the marker installed in the location where tradition suggests Christ was born, in the town of Bethlehem; that place houses a star whose shape is depicted in our drawing. The characters represented inside the star – in the middle and at the points – depict facts from the childhood of the Savior. The images in the spaces between the star's points narrate the childhood of Marcellin.
58. In this first **moment**, we are invited to look at the initial steps taken by the Christ-child. We contemplate the mystery of the birth of Christ, the announcement of John the Baptist and the early revelations about the God who came

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to dwell among us. We see the angel announcing to Mary that she will be the mother of the Son of God and encouraging Joseph to become the adoptive father of Jesus; the flight to Egypt to protect the child from the persecution of King Herod; the presentation of Jesus in the Temple of Jerusalem in accordance with the Jewish tradition.

59. Based on this showing of Christ, we also discover the main events in the life of the child Champagnat: birth, family life, contact with school, education provided by his mother; all this against the backdrop of the era of the French Revolution. We learn how God called Marcellin through facts, people and values.
60. The great cross, whose arms are at the center of the circle, recalls the total mystery of Christ's Passover that connects all things. The cross and the resurrection, the joy and pain and especially the hope symbolized by the star are already present in the child that is born. Just like Jesus and Champagnat, we are enveloped by a star that illuminates and guides us.

Caption of the Icon

Centre of the star: Nativity of Christ and John the Baptist (passage from the First Testament to the Second).

In the points of the star – the Savior's childhood (clockwise, starting from top): Annunciation, Flight into Egypt, Presentation, Visitation.

In between the points – Saint Marcellin's childhood:

Chapel in Rosey, Episode of child slapped, Representation of Champagnat's father and weapons of the Revolution, Bastille, the mill, Champagnat with his religious aunt, paternal home of Champagnat, episode of flame hovering over the boy in the crib.



Second Moment

The symbol is
the Welcoming Heart.

The biblical place is
Nazareth

The Marist place is
Verrières.

The values are
Friendship and Sharing.



The discovery of the group

61. On the path of education in faith, the second step is the **DISCOVERY OF THE GROUP**. It is the time when the group begins to meet and get organized, establishing relations, discovering the importance of the other and of oneself, awakening to the community-commitment. The young person and the group gradually unveil the value and significance of taking on the role of main characters in the story. Above all, they start perceiving the contradictions permeating our environment and us, confronted with God's plan. It is therefore a time of conflict and discernment during which we expect to lead the young person toward the commitment of discipleship of Jesus Christ (MYM, 145).
62. From a plethora of information the young person is learning, as much for him/herself as for the relationship with others from the group, and is becoming a **"complete subject"**, albeit permanently unfinished. In this way, he/she reveals his/her identity and abilities, overcomes crises and conflicts, and recognizes limitations and potential. It is a moment charged with the exercise of independence and the perception of capacities and responsibilities. At the same time, one recognizes the presence of God in life calling the young person to carry on the liberating invitation of Jesus.

Symbol: the Welcoming Heart

63. In order to experience the moment of discovery of the group we suggest the **Welcoming Heart** as a symbol. A heart that welcomes friendship, understanding, family, community, vocation and struggle; a heart that accepts itself, welcomes diversity, the existence of gender, the capacity to listen and be curious, warmth, and the ability to dive into life and into the love of God. It is also a heart that shares. It is not selfish, locked in itself; it is rather altruistic, open to others and therefore becomes a subject with other subjects in relationships established with the world, growing like Jesus in stature, wisdom and grace (Lk 2, 52). It is therefore a Christian source of the experience of love of neighbor, the one who leaves everything to set out on a journey with others, to build a civilization of love.

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The biblical place is Nazareth

64. Nazareth is a beautiful location in Galilee, in northern Israel, 22 km away from Lake Tiberias. There are many flowers and its name in Hebrew refers to “blooming”. It has ancient origins that date back to 900 BC. Silos for cereals and tanks for water and wine have been discovered in the area, but it was never really held in high esteem. “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” (Jn 1,46) asked the people. It owes its fame to the Annunciation and to the fact that Joseph and Mary settled there following their flight to Egypt. Also, Jesus Christ lived there for close to 30 years, prior to his missionary life; that is why he was known as “Jesus of Nazareth” or “a Nazorean” (Mt 2,23). It was in Nazareth that Jesus spoke of his mission; however, his fellow-countrymen did not appreciate that and almost killed him. (Mc 6,1-6). Nazareth is distant from the center of power (Jerusalem). Nazareth is the place where the disciples were sent to experience the Risen One.





65. The group – like any individual – goes through an adolescent phase. A beautiful stage mixed with the whirlwinds of discovery and childhood loss. It is therefore important to experience the Mystique of Nazareth as the place of Jesus' maturing, including some aspects that, more than any others, provide us with a biblical and theological foundation for what is being experienced. In the spirit of that **moment** – of discovery of the group – Nazareth is a source of welcome and sharing.

Landing in Nazareth

66. Nazareth represents first of all **family and growth**. Learning to be a son is an adventure that begins but never ends; learning to be a father and a mother does not have a set ending either and it is daily learning. Let us not forget that Mary and Joseph were educators and that Jesus was a son and apprentice of life. Even though parents are an influence, they cannot prevent the development of the son's personality. The family is the nest we return to; nevertheless, it is necessary to break away from it so as to maintain a healthy bond: affection with independence. The passage from dependence to autonomy begins during adolescence; the group is a privileged space, where the young person develops that autonomy.

67. Secondly, Nazareth represents **adolescence and youth experienced as a process**. We perceive that growth is charged with novelty. Everything develops, not just the body, but also curiosity, relationships, feelings and affections. Adolescence and youth, with their concerns and insecurities are times to question the relationship with oneself, with the group, with society, with ecology, with God and with the different ways in which we operate. It is time to break away from egocentricity, ceasing to look at oneself as the only one in the world, and to open up to the other. Even the world, which appeared a certain way, suddenly appears different. Nazareth is a world that is discovered.

68. Thirdly, Nazareth is a place of **work and study**. Nazareth is located on the peripheries; a poor and beautiful community where all live together. That is where

Second Moment *The Discovery of the Group*

the Torah, the Law of Moses and religious experience originated. It is where Jesus worked, learned Joseph's trade and gradually discovered the inequalities between townspeople. The Romans held the central power, reinforcing the class prejudice that existed at the time and that still persists today. Thus, on the group path, those differences are important elements in understanding the existence of other people and of power and class relations. As in the Jesus' life, the centrality of the word of God triggers processes of awareness, nourishment for our faith, the overcoming of a naive reasoning and beginning of critical thinking.

69. Nazareth is also the **place of living together**. Firstly in the family, then apart from it. We don't know when, but one day the group of friends becomes the adolescent's and youngster's family. It is the beginning of the "riskier" adventures, whether more or less innocent. John Baptist was the same age as Jesus. It is difficult to imagine the two, each with his own strength, as they discovered adolescence and youth! It is very difficult to accept that everyone in the town of Nazareth belonged to the same class. The spirit of Nazareth reveals to those who so desire, a realistic world, simultaneously friendly and unfriendly. And that stirs up something in the hearts of adolescents until the awakening of class consciousness raises a daring and aggressive countenance. In the Mystique of Nazareth, we experience the bitter and the sweet.

70. Lastly, Nazareth is the place of the **discovery of mission and leadership**. It was in Nazareth that Jesus spent his longest period, a place where he suffered his first rejection because he discovered he had a mission. People are not all the same; when they awaken to their leadership role the reaction is not always one of welcome, whether from parents or the community (Lk 4, 22-30). Suffice it to recall what the Scriptures say about Jesus: at the age of 12, he went on a pilgrimage with Mary and Joseph to Jerusalem; on the way back, instead of returning with them he stayed at the Temple amidst the doctors in order to learn, ask and speak. The boy questioned his parents who were looking for him in distress: Jesus' words were very strong: "Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" (Lk 2,-49). Like Jesus, the group discovers its mission and vocation, awakening to a life-plan.



The Marist place is Verrières

71. Verrières is the minor seminary where Marcellin was enrolled as a seminarian at the age of 16. He was there from 1805 to 1813. The seminary of Verrières had been set upon a temporary basis and was not in good condition. Most of the seminarians were lodged in the rectory which, although large, was badly run-down. Those who did not find space there had to find space at a nearby farm. At the time of Marcellin, the number of residents fluctuated between eighty and one hundred youngsters. Throughout the eight years that Champagnat spent in Verrières, he sought divine help with much confidence. This trust in God was already constituting one of the cornerstones of his spirituality. Poorly dressed, malnourished and having to deal with gaps in his education, he learned to withstand and overcome the hardships of life. It was a very important lesson that led him to remain strong in years to come.
72. In a poor and unknown corner of France, young Marcellin was preparing himself and learning from his circumstances. Verrières, for Marcellin, was an occasion



Second Moment *The Discovery of the Group*

of confusion, self-improvement, insights, discernment and perseverance. It was there, as in Lyon, that he allowed himself to be guided by the strength of the Holy Spirit and by Mary's love, preparing – with a welcoming heart – to become a priest. He developed his commitment to young people, and was inspired to found the Marist Institute⁵.

73. Verrières is the place of **family support**. At the end of his first year, Champagnat was invited to leave the Seminary because of his poor academic performance. His mother, believing that her son deserved another chance, took him on pilgrimage to *La Louvesc*, to the tomb of St. Francis Regis. In addition, she interceded with the Rector to have him readmitted to the Seminary. All adolescents need someone to support them during the toughest stages in their lives. The family must be a place that inspires security in an adolescent and youngster. It is also the first place of education, where values and commitments are awakened. In the life of any adolescent, family relations are a two-way street. Openness and dialogue are necessary on both sides: thus the Mystique of Verrières signals two important movements in that **moment of discovery of the group**. The first thing I said with respect to the group is that it is a place for learning and formation; the second one aims at dialogue; an element of construction, of convergence and consensus which facilitates the progress of the group and the youngster.
74. **Autonomy and overcoming** are two other significant aspects in the Mystique of Verrières. Champagnat had much trouble with his studies at the seminary. Often times, his shyness caused his fellow pupils' contempt. Yet, little by little, Marcellin overcame the difficulties and won the respect of all his companions. In Verrières, young Champagnat left his dependence on the family to venture into a new life. The differences between him and his colleagues allowed him to discover himself as a unique being, maturing in his identity. There is no easy path in this search: "the path is traced as you walk". It is a "process" in which adolescents and youngsters discover themselves as subjects with limitations and potential.
75. For the life of the young person or of the group Verrières means **faith and perseverance**. Marcellin was approximately fifteen years old and had many



dreams aimed at the need to construct a plan for his life. The journey through Verrières was not quiet and serene, but his perseverance helped him overcome the difficulties with his studies after being told to give up the idea of being a priest.⁶ His troubled beginnings at the Seminary and his mother's death

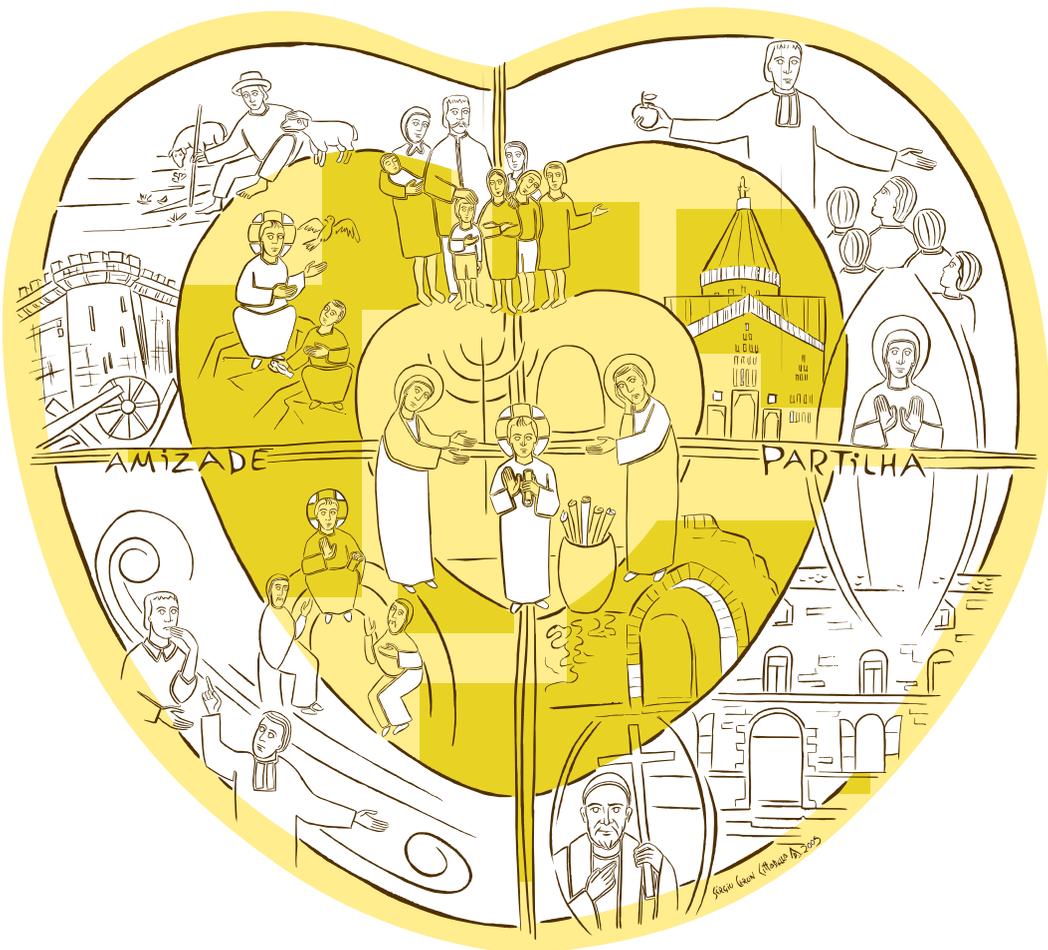
Second Moment *The Discovery of the Group*

were events that together, provided the necessary determination that led to his ordination. Champagnat's perseverance carries a meaning that should mean much to the group at that **moment**: the sense of faith. Faith is the nourishment that makes you persevere on the journey. Faith in God's Plan, in men and women who, like him, dare to dream a different world, in the Church. The latter, despite its contradictions, promotes service for the Kingdom, raising saints and martyrs, men and women committed to social justice, giving their lives for the Project of the Father.

76. Verrières is a place of **inner transformation**. Marcellin's experiences were significant and produced in him some internal changes: travelling from confusion to the discernment of his mission and from a timid experience of faith of his early years to a Gospel-based life contagious to others. The turmoil of sensations that the young feel at this stage in life, the give and take that occurs in the group, produce internal transformations which may translate into Gospel attitudes, consistent with the spirit of Verrières: of friendship and sharing, of respect for each other, of the value of life, of a deep experience of faith, of discernment, of the consistency of one's witness and a commitment over time to the cause of the Kingdom.

Icon of the Second Moment

77. The drawing is shaped like a heart. It suggests that the **moment** of the discovery of the group, in summary, should inspire us to act kindly. Those inspired by the **Welcoming Heart** rise above themselves. We are in a **moment** that leads to valuing "the other", to thinking of the family, the community and society. As adolescents, Jesus and Champagnat experienced this through the sum-total of their experience at that stage in life. They are able to show that they built, as adolescents and young persons, values that emerge from an open and generous heart.
78. This Icon depicts three hearts: the two smaller ones include images that recall the life of the adolescent Christ: Jesus in the Temple at the age of twelve; life



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with family and friends; in the community and in the synagogue. The features in the larger heart enclose personalities and facts decisive for the adolescent Champagnat: the work in the fields with his family; the call to the priestly vocation; life in the seminary; the beginning of his devotion to Mary. A large cross runs through the three hearts, recalling the great Paschal Mystery in the life of Christ.

Icon Caption

Central heart: the Family of Nazareth;

Medium heart: (always clockwise) in the upper part, the Champagnat family; in sequence: building of the Basilica of the Annunciation in Nazareth, the water source of Nazareth, Jesus in the midst of doctors of law, apocryphal scene of Christ's life.

Larger heart: (clockwise from the bottom) Champagnat's vocation, The Bastille and end of the French Revolution, Champagnat as a shepherd, Champagnat on vacation from the Seminary (episode of the apple), the Virgin Mary, facade of the Seminary in Verrières, Saint Francis Regis.



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Third Moment

The symbol is
the Good Mother.

The biblical place is
Cana.

The Marist place is
La Valla.

The values are
*Sensitivity,
Determination and Joy.*



The discovery of the community

80. And life, that is, the “process”, continues. The **DISCOVERY OF THE COMMUNITY** is a further “step”. In life and in the process, us and the group. This process features continuous new developments; there is always something to celebrate. The discovery of the community brings us closer to the celebration and youth is the incarnation of said celebration and of the Mystique of the party that needs to be encouraged every day. In the end, God wants us to live in



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community and to turn life into a celebration. The biblical place we chose to situate that **moment of the** process of education in faith is Cana. That place represents a wedding celebration: an occasion for bonds of joy, of alliance. And this takes place, specifically, in the community.

81. The process of growth in faith progresses beyond the group. We are confronted with the young Jesus at a party, giving it meaning. Just as Jesus takes on the mission for which he came, the group discovers its mission in its planning, in commitments within the community and the environment in which it is inserted. The adolescent becomes a young person. The group of adolescents becomes a group of young people. The group enhances its identity. That is why a new Mystique is also setting its roots: the Mystique of Cana, related to the discovery of the needs of the community. The lack of wine represents the challenges and shortages that society experiences and that drive the group to take on its mission.

Symbol: The Good Mother

82. *The symbol that accompanies us to represent the third moment in this process of faith journeying is the **Good Mother**. In **Cana** the **Good Mother** is not only involved in concrete reality at the celebration of a wedding; she is also loving as she rejoices with those experiencing an important occasion in their lives. Welcoming and present, she is realistic, determined and capable of perceiving where her Son's mission is headed, while serving as an intermediary and protector of those threatened by a need. Like Mary, we are invited to be faithful disciples, intermediaries of people in need, placing ourselves at their service with a specific identity. It was in Cana that Mary, in addition to being a Mother, learned to be a disciple of the son she raised. We become "models" and "points of reference" if we resonate with the desire to increasingly be followers of Jesus, disciples and missionaries in the manner of Mary. Thus she became the first disciple, serving as an example for all people: to follow Jesus in the manner of Mary is a privileged way of living Christianity to the full.⁷*



The place is Cana

83. Cana is a town in Galilee located 8 km north of Nazareth, where Jesus performed his first miracle. The “sign” occurred at a wedding party to which he was invited with the disciples and where Mary, his mother, was also present (Jn 2, 1-11). Jesus and his disciples already formed a group. During the course of the reception the wine ran out and Mary approached her son to remedy to the situation. Jesus said: “my hour has not yet come” (Jn 2,4); however, he accepted his mother’s request. According to the exegetes, the wedding is the symbol of the union of God with humanity carried out through the person of Jesus. Without Jesus, humanity experiences a wedding party with no wine. In resolving this embarrassing situation, Mary symbolized the solidarity of a community stemming from faith in Jesus. “Do whatever he tells you” (Jn 2,5), she said, leaving her son to get involved. Just as Jesus took on his mission, Mary, in addition to being a Mother, also became a dis-



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ple. It was near Cana, since Jesus came from Judea, that another extraordinary thing happened: an officer of the king with a sick son called on Jesus to ask for help (Jn 4, 46-50).

The different costumes of Cana

84. The Mystique of Cana is lined with many different coats. The first one is **nov-
elty**: the first miracle, the celebration of a new life as a couple, life acquiring meaning, ceasing to be water to become the wine of joy and hope. Cana may be considered the place where Jesus' public life began, when the group discovers that it does not just make sense to itself, but that it also exists for the community. Like Jesus, the group begins coming out of itself, although not very quietly. Revealing oneself to others requires an outing that is not always easy. Belonging to a broader reality, although desired, means giving up certain things, maturation and the overcoming of fears. Learning to be a "sign" requires being a witness. Jesus came forth following the lead of his Mother, thus Cana translates into the Mystique of novelty.
85. The Mystique of Cana has a second, very beautiful lining: the one of **festivi-
ties**. Despite the problems that emerge with a maturing of the critical conscience, when we realize that social life is short of wine, we need to act like Jesus, providing a sense of hope and joy to the world that does not stop inviting us to sadness and despair. The wine is joy. The young person and the group discover that is the reason why they are the incarnation of the novelty. God did not call us for death, rather for life; our God is not a God of the dead, rather of those risen to everyday life (cf. Mc 12, 27). The realization that the discovery of one's own mission occurs in an atmosphere of celebration is a wonderful feeling. Mission is not a burden, rather an explosion of life that feels called to be given.
86. Note that it is in the Mystique of Cana, a Mystique of celebration, that Jesus took on his role of **leadership**, as the person-subject of his own story and as the Son of God. Even as he raised objections to his mother, he knew that



time does not always depend on us. The “activism”, we speak of so much does not cease being a grace we receive. In the same way, the life-project is made concrete and strengthens the mission. The processing of the project is nourished by the taste of the wine at a wedding reception. We indeed understand that the world requires a radical transformation and not just patching, that is, transforming the water into wine is part of the Mystique of Cana. The Mother of Jesus herself, perhaps involuntarily but sensitively, saw her life change when she ceased being a mother to become the first great disciple, learning to be herself with the help of her son. We can say that Cana is an important period in the early life of Jesus: he took up his life, freed himself of dependencies, embraced humanity in its needs and shortcomings, being a witness for the disciples who never failed to accompany him in all his ventures.

87. A further meaning of the Mystique of Cana relates to the grace of **discipleship**. “Do whatever he tells you” (Jn 2,5), says Mary. In Cana, like Mary, we learn to be disciples and to have Jesus as a reference-point in our life. We don’t always think of the depth of the meaning of Jesus for us: “the way and the truth and the life” (Jn 14,6). Thus, Mary plays the significant role of reminding us of this learning, at every moment. We need to be attentive and sensitive since the path of disciple-

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ship always presents unforeseen situations that challenge and teach us.

88. In the Mystique of Cana, we find another aspect of profound consequences for the people of God: the **alliance**, an invitation to a relationship of love and commitment. The wedding symbolizes the celebration of the union of God with humanity; this is the **moment** when the group attempts to give responses to God's project of love, taking a stand of commitment to oneself, to others and to the project of building the Kingdom. Similarly, the Mystique of the counselor finds a source in Cana to celebrate the alliance of the young person with the group; and especially of the alliance of the young coordinators with the group, and of the group with society and the Church. God's dream is ultimately an alliance made with the entire universe.
89. Cana also has another important dimension of the experience of the process of education in faith. We are referring to the **sacramental experience**. The transformation of water into wine was the first "sign" of the practice of Jesus. Sacramental life, especially the Eucharist and Penance (Reconciliation), cannot be a secondary aspect in the life of those who wish to be disciples, to be leaders nourished by the celebration and the originality, celebrating the full alliance with God. We are speaking of the person and the group. We are speaking of insertion into the community. Youth will not be a "sacrament of originality" if sacramental experience is not part of the life of the person. It is not sufficient to be "young" in the body; we must be "young" in our expression, that is, be a sign in its full sense. We will lose ourselves in our own utopia unless we drink and nourish the guarantee to live in the spirit of "wine" and not "water".
90. In the passage of the feast of Cana we can perceive some symbolic elements that point us to **life in society**. The celebration of the wedding carries in it the sense of the alliance in which we take on a detachment from oneself, from the project of the individualistic life, for the planning of a joint dream. The community of the celebration is the basis where we will seek support for that project. The guests are those we care for and insist on having on our side. Wine is life. It is the element that nourishes and guarantees the strength which enhances dreams. Jesus is among the guests and in that context he is part of the society



of good will. When summoned by his mother, he wonders: “Why me?” He then feels his responsibility to lead the renewal of the joy and the dream, represented by the new wine at the party.

91. The young group is a community initially formed of people accepting and identify themselves by their ideals. Everyday difficulties and the group dynamic itself may cause the “wine to run out”. Like Jesus, the young person may wonder “Why me?” Immediately, he looks at the community, at the group and perceives the importance of coming out of self-indulgence and engaging in revitalizing himself within the community.

The Marist place is La Valla

92. *A certain simplicity marked life in La Valla. During the summer months, days were spent working in the field. The winter brought long evenings during which spinning, mending furniture and quiet moments by the fireplace were common pastimes. The neighbors came by to talk, sing or help with household chores. The family remained closely united. However, the Revolution brought a change in this perfectly accepted way of life. Men began participating to political meetings, spending less time at home. Some went to taverns to drink, talk politics, read the papers or listen to their being read. Others spent time composing satires and manifestos that were then crudely printed.*
93. The expression La Valla, which means “valley”, is truly a euphemism when applied to this region near the Mount Pilat. Instead of consisting of stretches of good soil, it is surrounded by mountains and you find hardly any flat surfaces in the area. Slopes, rocks, precipices, mountain streams wending their way through cliffs and ravines, are not uncommon landscapes. Some areas were almost inaccessible in the absence of roads to travel on. It was undoubtedly a very difficult assignment.
94. La Valla is related to availability, humility, sensitivity, audacity and the work that the newly-ordained Champagnat began, not for his own cause, but for the divine cause, committing himself to the construction of signs of the Kingdom of

Third Moment
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God. Those values inspired by La Valla must be present in a group at this time of discovery of the community as we progress from adolescence to the group of young people, when the young person seeks the real meaning of love and takes on commitments with greater seriousness, opening up to social reality. The Mystique of La Valla, like the other Marist places, is presented under different aspects.

Features of the Mystique of La Valla

95. The first one concerns **responsibility and audacity**. It no longer seems difficult to associate Champagnat's experience with that we find in Mary. As a simple young person from Nazareth, still frightened by the project that God assigned to her, she responded with responsibility and audacity (Cf. Lk 1, 28-38). Thus she will always be for Champagnat – and for us – a model of listening and of perfect discipleship. These two aspects which were present in the life of Champagnat must inspire our group work not to fear the possibility of "**doing something new**" (Is 43, 19; Revelations 21,5). We must dare to overcome old ways and establish new ones.

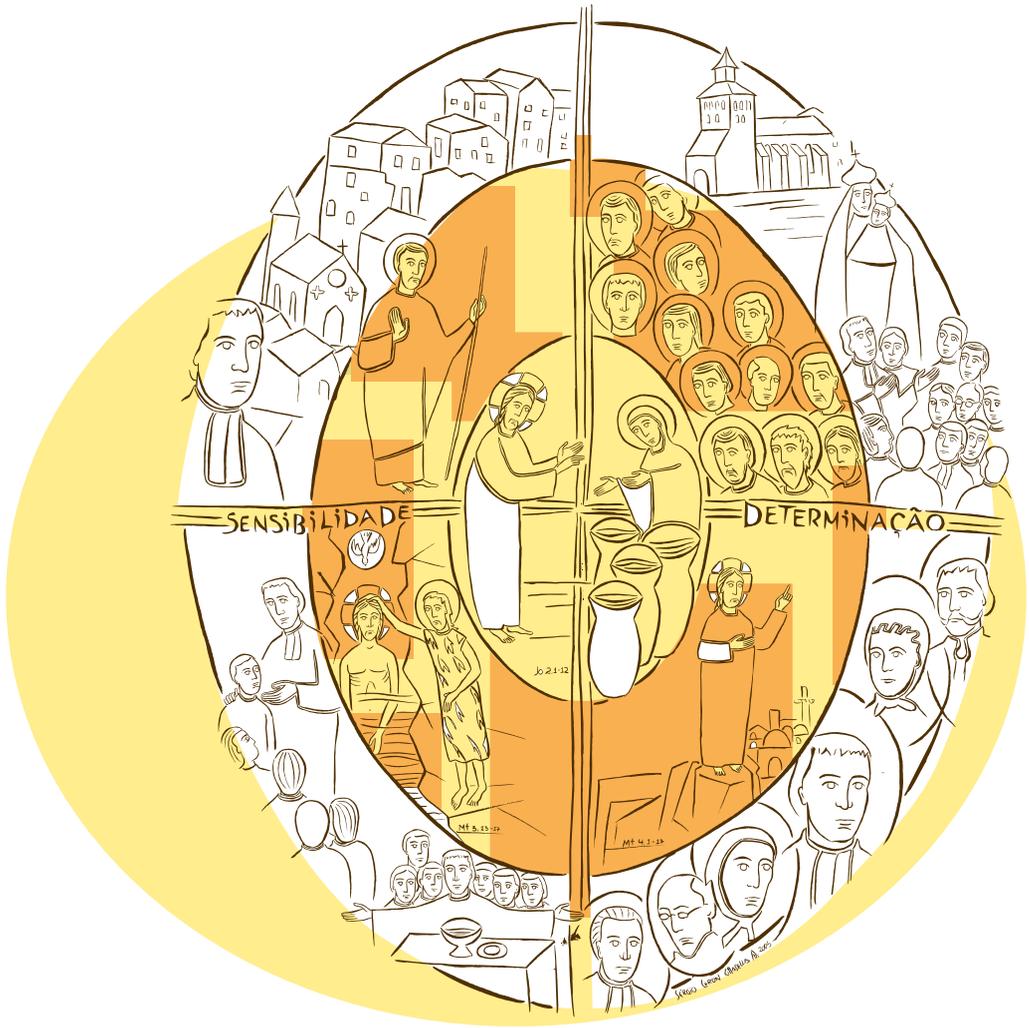


96. In addition to audacity, **responsibility** includes discernment. We cannot “embark” on a project in any old way. We must be responsible in creating and undertaking projects so they can thrive and bear fruit. Thus there is no risk of selling false news that emerges. It is necessary to dare responsibly to break through the sameness and raise the group to other possibilities, always inspired by the greater project that is of God.
97. The second aspect concerns the dimension of **service, which**, like Mary, Champagnat experienced with the same humility and gratitude. We find in La Valla, a young and newly-ordained Champagnat, with a heart burning with zeal and a desire to serve. He gradually captured the dimensions of the joys and challenges that placed him at the service of the Kingdom. We once again refer to the image of Mary who, although pregnant, placed herself at the service of Elizabeth (Lk 1, 56), or the image of Jesus who, during the washing of the feet (Jn 13, 1-17), showed us the exact dimension of his love and benevolence for us. In the life of Champagnat, both the dimension of service and the expression of love and benevolence are shown when, in a specific situation, he gave his own mattress to a person who asked him for shelter. The spirit of La Valla, namely a spirit of service, must guide the group's actions. Service to the humblest, a service that guides us in benevolence, detachment, the joy of being available for the cause of the Kingdom. There is no service without humility, benevolence and availability; these elements moved Champagnat and teach us a great deal about living in a group.
98. La Valla is the place to discern and deepen the **life-project**. Increasingly convinced that God was calling him and guiding him in that small village Champagnat experienced one of the fundamental events related to the new step God called him to take: being a founder. Undoubtedly, that new step demanded a lot of him: to reconsider and restructure his plan for his life, mainly balancing the task of a priest with the will to begin a religious congregation. He never let discouragement bring him down. Life is about launching into a challenge; it is discovering what God expects of us through our projects, in an attitude of mutual trust between us and God. The group

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is a space to build our project of life, sharing our challenges and utopias and opening to the presence of God.

99. The attitudes of Champagnat revealed in La Valla are permeated with **enthusiasm and determination**. The arms and heart of Champagnat were testimonies to those features. The arms combined the love of work with the care for little ones, based on catechesis; his heart was open, trusting and passionate for the mission that God entrusted to him. His brave insertion into the reality of poverty and abandonment was not simply the excellence of a young priest, but of a man of spirit. He felt anchored to the heart of God and rooted to the earth, committed to transforming it into a world of brothers. The spirit of Champagnat reminds us, as the group develops, that this is not a place for compliance or conformity. On the contrary, it is a space in which we are filled with enthusiasm for the cause of the other, of the poor, the humble, of the call to life and life in abundance (Jn 10,10). Let us launch into building possibilities other than those that pass a death sentence on those who have little.
100. We can also highlight **openness and sensitivity** as aspects inspired by the Mystique of La Valla. La Valla carries a very special meaning in the life of Champagnat and in the Marist tradition. As we stated above, it is a theological place in which the qualities of Champagnat as a priest, founder and educator are filled with openness and sensitivity. It is the place where, to this day, we hear his heart breaking for abandoned young people and children, where we hear the echo of his vibrant voice inspiring us in the mission and exhorting us to have confidence in Jesus and Mary. Thus, La Valla is a reflection of Cana, where next to Champagnat, we hear the invitation of Mary to obey her Son. In resonating with the significance of this, the group is invited to be open and sensitive to social issues. Reality is the point of departure and arrival of our reflections. It points us to our Christian commitment. The world is a place of mission; it is where God's Kingdom must be announced, with gratitude, as Jesus proclaims in the missionary discourse to the disciples (Mt 10, 5-15).



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Icon of the Third Moment

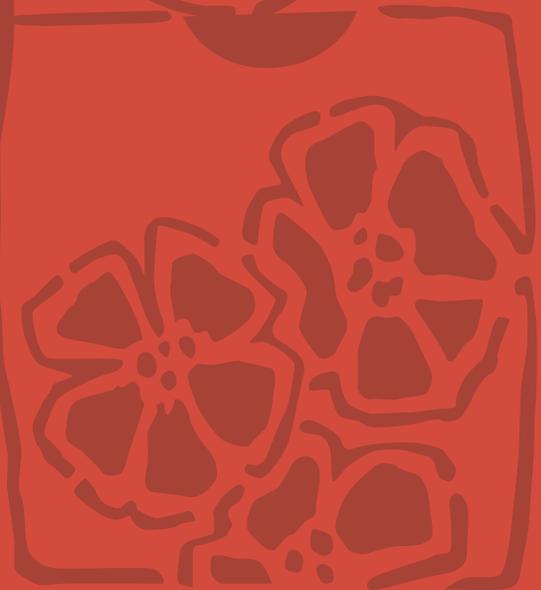
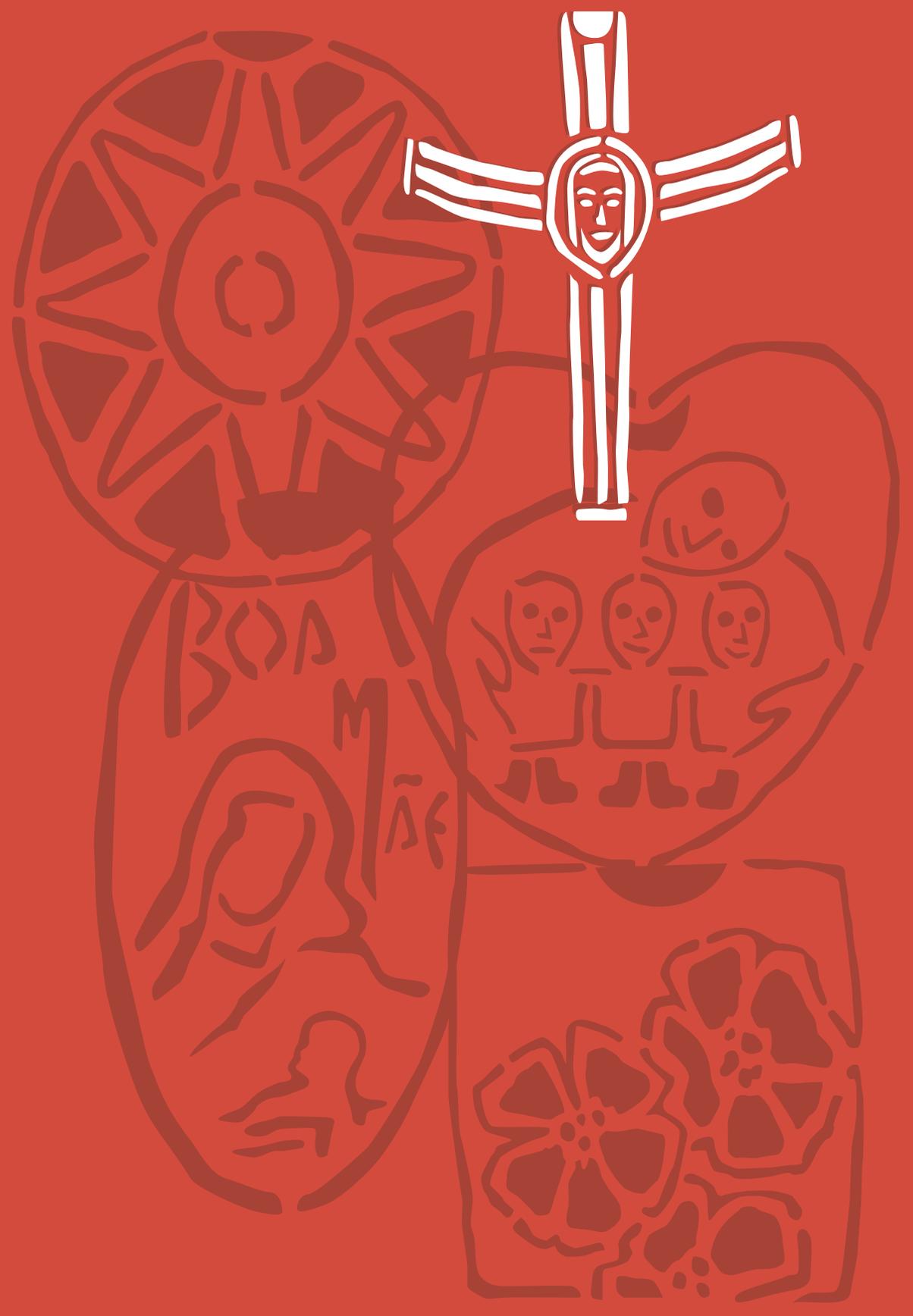
101. The drawing as a whole expresses determination, service, sensitivity and responsibility to life and the Kingdom. Jesus Christ and the young Champagnat were called forth by different situations in the world, by both people and circumstances, and they attempted to provide practical, life-giving, joyful responses. Responses come through people and circumstances.
102. The Icon, in an oval shape, is divided into three parts: the first two depict situations, people and circumstances that helped Jesus begin his mission and point him in a specific direction: the wedding at Cana, the baptism from John the Baptist, the creation of a group of disciples, the proclamation of the Kingdom to the crowds. In turn, we see important circumstances and people who led Champagnat to discover and take up his vocation: the reality of La Valla, the celebrations, the catechesis, life with the parishioners, Marial devotion and the project of founding the Institute of the Little Brothers of Mary.
103. The cross, which again frames this Icon, recalls that the Paschal Mystery of Christ runs through and gives unity to our lives. In the Mystique of Cana and La Valla, that translates into sensitivity to the will of the Father, determination to serve the Kingdom and joy in the following of Christ.

Caption of the Icon

Middle circle: Miracle of Cana.

Intermediate circle: (clockwise, from top to bottom) Apostles at the Miracle of Cana, The Temptation of Jesus, the Baptism of Jesus, Saint Joseph.

Larger circle: (clockwise, from bottom) Champagnat at work in the parish, Champagnat overlooking La Valla, a visit to Sanctuary of Fourvière, Champagnat and important individuals in his life.



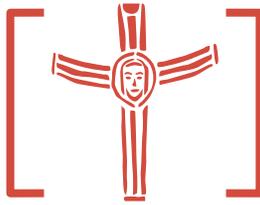
Fourth Moment

The symbol is
the Cross.

The biblical place is
Capharnaum.

The Marist place is
Le Palais.

The values are
***Detachment
and Commitment.***



The discovery of the “social issue”

104. In the discovery of the “social problem” (which we prefer to call “**social issue**”) by the person and by the group, faith increasingly blends with life and the options become concrete activities. Practical steps. We discover that the Church is nothing less than a sacrament of God’s Kingdom and thus we need to come out from behind the ecclesiastic walls to get into the “**world**” where the **Church** has its **mission**. Therefore, the limits of activity broaden out into society and the world; in no longer walking alone as part of a crowd, but as organized citizens.

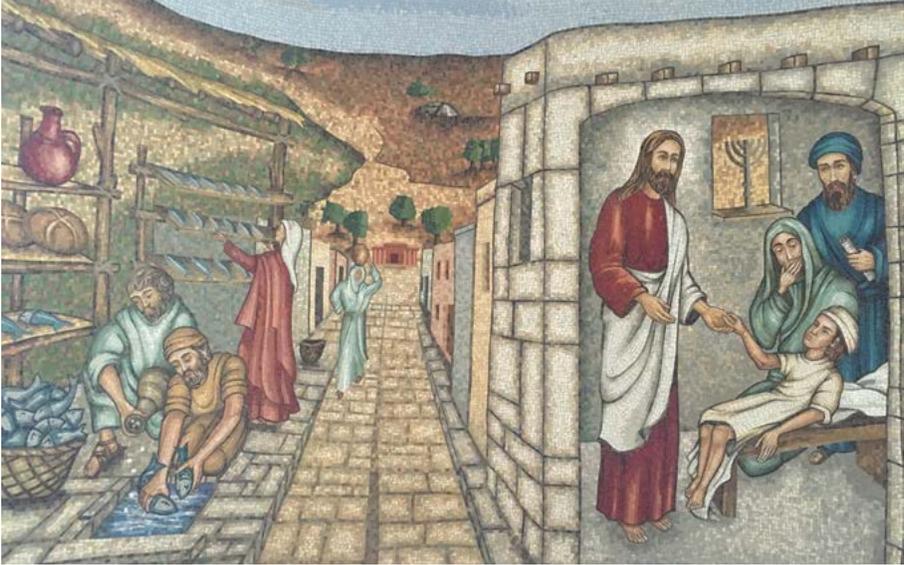
The symbol: The cross

105. The symbol that gives meaning to this fourth moment of the discovery of the social issue is the cross. The cross of Calvary is not in an unimportant position; the cross of Calvary was experienced in the same spirit of self-giving as Capharnaum. It was there, in the everyday giving that the cross acquired meaning. To “carry the cross” is to radically take on daily life in the service of one’s brothers, acting, speaking, teaching, suffering adversity and not ceasing to dedicate long hours to the development of the mission revealed by the Father. The Mystique of Capharnaum is therefore, symbolized in the cross. Jesus taught the disciples: “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me” (Mt 16,24).

The public place is Capharnaum

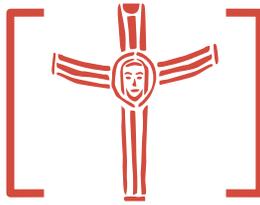
106. *Capharnaum means “city of consolation.” It is located on the edge of the lake of Gennesaret, in Galilee. It is rich in agriculture and fishing. Since it was a border area, there were many police posts. Matthew worked there as a tax collector and he was chosen, to the outrage of some, as an apostle; there Jesus healed the son of the Roman centurion. The latter, although a pagan, had helped the Jews build a synagogue. Jesus turned Capharnaum into the center of his apostolate; He gave*

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important sermons and performed many miracles, such as the curing of: the paralytic (Mt 9, 2-8), the leper (Mk 1, 40-45), Peter's mother-in-law (Mt 8,14-15), the daughter of the head of the synagogue (Mk 5, 22-43) and others.

107. Capharnaum was the place Jesus chose as the focus of his **missionary activity**. For Jesus' disciples, Capharnaum means **“miracles”** and more miracles. There, Jesus started living his mission as a preacher of the Good News through many **“deeds”**. In the Gospel by Luke (4, 31- 9, 50) everything relates to the incidents taking place in Capharnaum. The Mystique of Capharnaum is characterized by activities, conflicts and miracles. It was there that, after praying on the mountain, He chose the twelve apostles (Lk 6, 12ff). Then Jesus continued on his path toward Jerusalem.
108. Since Capharnaum is the **center of Jesus' apostolate**, the Mystique of Capharnaum calls the young person to be the **apostle to other young people**. As he takes on his mission within the group, he faces situations of conflict that are sometimes discouraging. It is essential to point out that Jesus went through situations of conflict in Capharnaum: “And you, Capharnaum”, says Jesus, “will you be exalted to heaven? No, you will be brought down to Hades”



(Lk 10,15). However, as He turned to the Father He found strength to continue his mission. The young person also tries to overcome conflicts by keeping in mind the objective of the group.

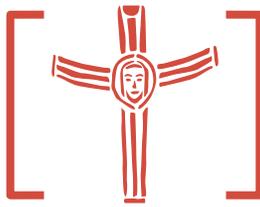
The Mystique of Capharnaum

109. The fourth **moment** – of the discovery of the social issue – therefore feeds its Mystique on Capharnaum. In this process of faith in education we are before a person committed to the Kingdom, sparing no energies to announce the Good News. The Mystique of Capharnaum is one of the **contemplative in action**. The young person discovers the social issue and contributes to the organization of society; he/she perceives the presence of God in daily personal and group ac-

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tion, has a familiarity with the local environment, and, based on the example of Jesus, takes action. Like Jesus, he/she announces and denounces, and discovers along the way the call to be a modern-day prophet. (Lk 4,17-19).

110. The second aspect of Capharnaum is one of *commitment*. **“Commitment”** demands detachment, a missionary spirit, contact with reality that develops into “compassion”. The option is for the Kingdom that evokes the Will of the Father: “I came that they might have life and have it abundantly” (Jn 10,10). Jesus freely gave His life through His commitment to the poor and the excluded. He placed His merciful gaze on them: He saw them, He was touched, and He acted. People needed words and gestures that gave them hope and liberation. In order to experience it you need to be radical. “No one who puts a hand to the plough and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God” (Lk 9,62). In the group of youngsters, the commitment is what leads to the transformation of reality. Like Jesus, young people carry within themselves a desire for personal, social and ecclesiastical change. They are enchanted with the person and the cause of Jesus, with the other, and they make an option for a full life.
111. The experience of the Mystique of Capharnaum draws our attention to the *crisis*. Jesus discovered that, more than miracles, people needed the gift of self. Through his commitments and prayers, He began to perceive that He needed to go to Jerusalem, to the Center of Power, to proclaim what He had said in the peripheries. Confronted with this, He realistically measured out the consequences of this option: “The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and on the third day he will be raised” (Mt 17, 22-23). In his faith-experience, the young person undergoes several crises and doubts. It is during these periods that he reassesses his positions and examines the fundamentals.
112. Another characteristic of Capharnaum is *courage*. Courage is not defined by an absence of fear, rather by the will to face difficulties and to want to overcome and recognize one’s own limitations. The **courage** we find in Jesus Christ entails an **interiority** which may be defined in four aspects: **absolute freedom**, even before the Law; an awareness of his mission that is perfected through times of



prayer; passionate love for humanity, especially the poor; faithfulness to the Will of the Father, to oneself and those he loves. Jesus proved his courage by giving his life and affirming that He surrendered it because “I lay it down of my own accord” (Jn 10,18).

113. It was during his “activism” in Capharnaum that Jesus taught us that we must **prepare those who wish to place themselves at the service of the Kingdom**. He awakened in people new attitudes to life, He reminded them of the importance of prayer (Lk 11, 1ss) and of the missionary spirit (Mt 10, 1ss). Capharnaum was the place of the parables, of blessedness and of the Sermon on the Mountain (Mt 5). The young person as an apostle in his service to the Kingdom motivates other youngsters to live and experience the process of education in faith in everyday life.

The Marist place is Le Palais

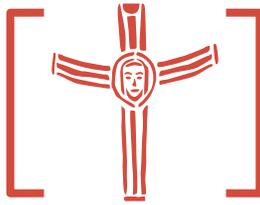
114. It was in October of 1816, three months after being ordained, that Champagnat was called to the home of François Montagne, to assist his son, Jean-Baptiste Montagne, who was dying. Work in the mine or factory in St. Etienne had weakened the young boy to the extent that it was impossible to determine his exact age. Champagnat, however knew well how little the young person knew about God. Marcellin spent some time teaching him and preparing him to meet God since, in reality, the boy’s condition was extremely serious. When he returned to the house shortly thereafter, the boy was already dead.⁸
115. At some point of life a youngster goes through Le Palais. The crisis generates a transformation, a radical change in the way of being and acting with people and the world around. It is an occasion for a decision that consciously leads to a choice. Thus, Le Palais, with the **Montagne experience**, occupies an important place in the life of the young person who discovers his activism, like Champagnat.

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Mystique of Le Palais

116. The fundamental aspect in the *Mystique of Le Palais* is **learning**. Like any youngster, Champagnat was unready. The day-to-day life was mapped out for him. The recognition of the other’s need turned Champagnat into a young person open to his own situation and that of his people. He taught **Montagne** about God and **Montagne** taught him there was no more time to lose. In the life of the group, it is time for the young person to learn to establish a relationship of faith, incarnated and maturing realistically.
117. Another dimension of *Le Palais* is represented by **commitment and detachment**. Champagnat not only read the surrounding environment, he also started developing attitudes of social transformation. He undertook projects



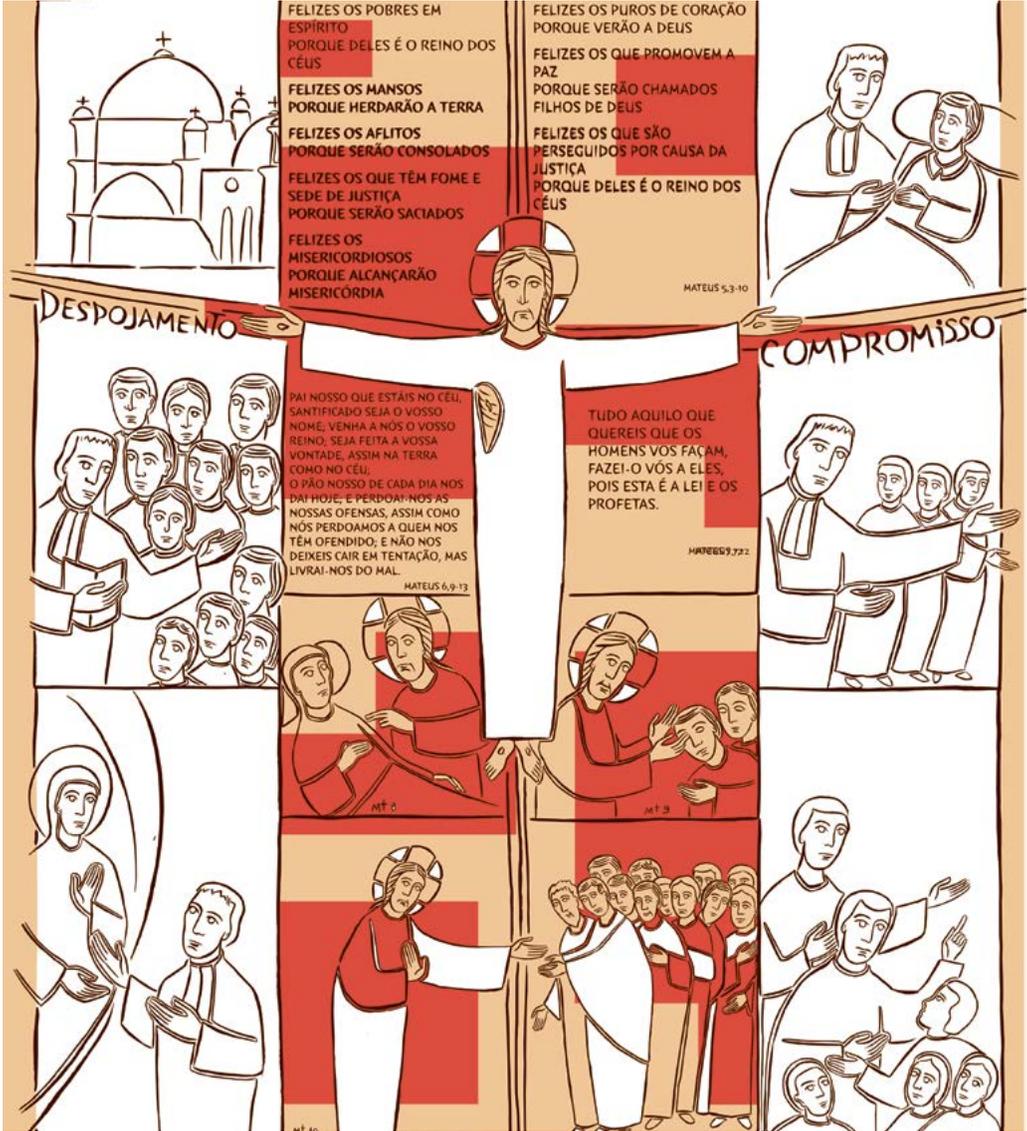
for the good of the people at a material and spiritual level. From this derived the quality of the activities he carried out on a daily basis in his struggle: confessor, preacher, catechist, counselor, reconciler and friend. In the life of the group, community commitment needs to be undertaken and experienced. Action with no formation leads to lack of meaning and formation with no action leads to alienation. A group journey requires balance. The boldness and leading role of youth give rise to changes in society.

118. Le Palais is a place for **decision**. The encounter with young Montagne generated in Champagnat an avalanche of feelings that makes us think about the different “Montagne” spread throughout the world. A fire was burning in his heart and gave him the courage that only an individual with a great passion for humanity could display. The young Father Champagnat matured during the process of education in faith and, gradually, realized the dreams he nourished during his formation: the foundation of a religious institute that would form and catechize children and young people of all the dioceses in the world, starting with the more impoverished. The young person is very much a dreamer; therefore, the group must be a space for sharing and for dreams to come true.
119. The Mystique of Le Palais carries **radicalism in the option for children and the young**, especially the **poorer** ones. Far from the streets of Paris, he performed his work in La Valla or in small villages nearby. However, his dream was bigger than this. He believed that to make a difference, his message had to reach all the dioceses in the world.⁹ Thus, he discovered that the transformation of oppressive structures depended on a slow change that started at the base. We must evangelize and also prepare people who can carry the project forward. On the one hand, he started preparing the first Marist Brothers and on the other, he personally took up the catechesis and formation of children with no access to education. Radicalism in the life of the group is increasingly linked to radical, rather than sectarian, attitudes. Radicalism demands a depth of decision-making, while being capable of facing the consequences.

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120. Le Palais is a place of **transformation**. We can imagine what happened in Champagnat’s heart when he returned to the house for the news that the young man had just died. That constant exercise of meditation, in the manner of Mary, on everyday occurrences certainly strengthened Champagnat’s spirituality. Maturity is the result of a long process of internalizing the reality that surrounds us and this then leads to consistent and thoughtful action. Generally, the most transformational attitudes in life usually stem from periods of crisis, when we can pray and reflect on them. There is no growth without crisis. Group crises are special times for assessing the journey and giving new sense to certain attitudes. The youngsters may exercise their sense of community, understanding, detachment and the maturity of their convictions. Being capable of accepting is a fundamental value for those who place themselves at the service of the Kingdom.





FELIZES OS POBRES EM ESPÍRITO PORQUE DELES É O REINO DOS CÉUS

FELIZES OS MANSOS PORQUE HERDARÃO A TERRA

FELIZES OS AFLITOS PORQUE SERÃO CONSOLADOS

FELIZES OS QUE TÊM FOME E SEDE DE JUSTIÇA PORQUE SERÃO SACIADOS

FELIZES OS MISERICORDIOSOS PORQUE ALCANÇARÃO MISERICORDIA

FELIZES OS PUROS DE CORAÇÃO PORQUE VERÃO A DEUS

FELIZES OS QUE PROMOVEM A PAZ PORQUE SERÃO CHAMADOS FILHOS DE DEUS

FELIZES OS QUE SÃO PERSEGUIDOS POR CAUSA DA JUSTIÇA PORQUE DELES É O REINO DOS CÉUS

MATEUS 5,3-10

DESPOJAMENTO

COMPROMISSO

PAI NOSSO QUE ESTÁIS NO CÉU, SANTIFICADO SEJA O VOSSO NOME, VENHA A NÓS O VOSSO REINO, SEJA FEITA A VOSSA VONTADE, ASSIM NA TERRA COMO NO CÉU; O PÃO NOSSO DE CADA DIA NOS DAI HOJE, E PERDOAI-NOS AS NOSSAS OFENSAS, ASSIM COMO NÓS PERDOAMOS A QUEM NOS TÊM OFENDIDO; E NÃO NOS DEIXEIS CAIR EM TENTAÇÃO, MAS LIVRAI-NOS DO MAL.

MATEUS 6,9-13

TUDO AQUILO QUE QUEREIS QUE OS HOMENS VOS FAÇAM, FAZEI-O VÓS A ELAS, POIS ESTA É A LEI E OS PROFETAS.

MARCO 9,7-12

Mt 6

Mt 3

Mt 23

Fourth Moment
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Icon of the Fourth Moment

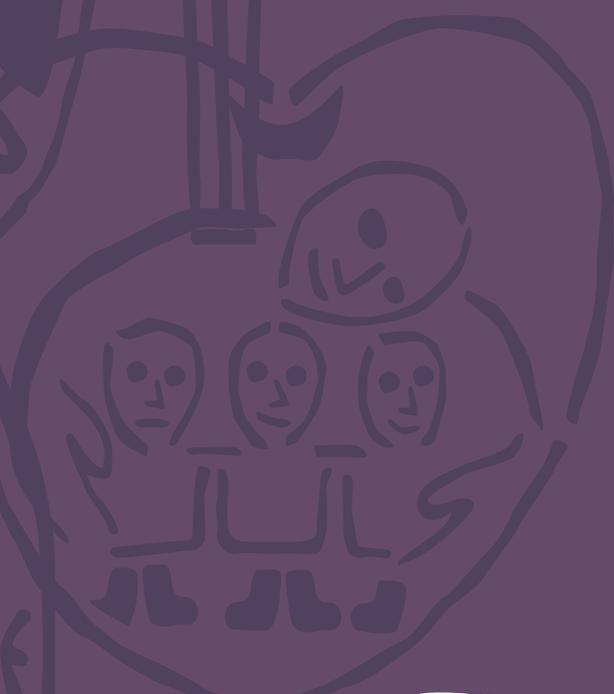
121. The drawing marks the instance of total surrender, of personal detachment in favor of radical commitment. The gift of oneself for the sake of an ideal or a cause, brings about a new situation. The option of Jesus for the Kingdom leads to the cross and death; however, His sacrifice becomes Easter, eternal life for all. Champagnat radicalized his vocation, motivated by the decisive encounter with the young **Montagne**. He felt the divine call to work on the education of children and young people, so they could become familiar with the Kingdom for which Jesus Christ died and rose again.
122. The Icon is divided into three columns. The middle column depicts images and words on the Kingdom announced by Jesus: the beatitudes, the healings, and the choosing of the disciples. The two lateral columns represent parts of the life of Champagnat in Le Palais: the meeting with **Montagne**, the work of catechesis and in the community, the contact with the first Brothers and the concerns of the mission, all under the blessings of the Good Mother.
123. All images make sense around the cross with Christ alive: commitment and detachment bring Life. The cross taken-up day to day, in Capharnaum and Le Palais, becomes a sign of full life for the followers of Jesus Christ.

Caption of the Icon

Middle column: Christ alive in the sign of the cross; the beatitudes, Our Father, text from Matthew 7,12; miracle of the healing of Peter’s mother-in-law, on the left; miracle of the healing of the blind men, on the right; mission of Apostles (lower part).

Left column: Church of the Seven Apostles - Capharnaum, Champagnat in catechesizing and forming Brothers, the presence of Mary in the life of Champagnat and of the Brothers.

Right-hand column: Champagnat and the young Mongtagne, Champagnat sends the Brothers on mission, Brothers and formation of young people.



Fifth Moment

The symbol is
the Three Violets.

The biblical place is
Jerusalem.

The Marist place is
L' Hermitage.

The values are
***Humility, Simplicity
and Modesty.***



Awakening of vocation and maturing of the life-project

124. Reality calls and the mission does not allow us to settle down. We are called to be salt and light, a lamp that lights up and illuminates everything (Mt 5, 13-16) and to be a house built on rock (Mt 7, 24-25). **Activism** and a **mature experience** in faith are a day-to-day reality. We are not satisfied with immediate and ready responses provided by the system. The spirit of commitment and of the raising of new possibilities guides us in the search of reflected action, intentionality, critical conscience, organization and option for life. Those who experience that do not stop.
125. In the fifth **moment** we experience the awakening of the **vocational option** that leads the youngster, inspired by Jesus Christ and motivated by Marcellin, to accept himself as a historic subject and to engage with others in the construction of a more just world, with more freedom and equality. It is also a time of coherence and of experiencing attitudes in which consciousness embraces a cause; a period in which, through a coherent reading of reality, we are capable of discerning, interacting and prioritizing transforming actions.
126. In order for the young person to be **salt of the earth and light of the world**, he must cultivate a life of prayer. We are in Jerusalem and Jerusalem always reminds us that God must be in first place. Prayer reinforces the mission that guides activism. The young person understands the significance and meaning of life; moved by faith he gains greater vigor while the Eucharist represents a source which in its place requires a return.
127. This is the last **moment** (never finished) of the process of growth in faith. It is not the end or the point of arrival, rather the time in which the young person “dies” to the group-experience, but not to community living, rising every day to commitment, aware of all those in need. “New life” is revealed in the commitments made and in the hope of the construction of a new land (Is 65, 16ss). It is the time to make all things new, certain that humanity will eat, drink and enjoy the result of the work (Ecc 3, 13).

Awakening of
**Vocation and
Maturing of the
Life-project**

Symbol: The three violets

128. *The symbol suggested for this moment is the one of the **three violets**. Violets are small and delicate flowers with a very strong vitality which manage to discretely alter the place they are in with their graciousness and scent. They convey humility, simplicity and modesty.*
129. *An overview of the **Marist charism** and sign of **commitment to the cause of Marcellin** for the young, especially for the underprivileged; violets assume a prophetic action grounded in the Founder's life of giving and perseverance and in the lessons of love and forgiveness of Jesus Christ. They reflect the spirit in which the values of Jerusalem and L'Hermitage should be lived, in opposition to the countervalues of the Kingdom.*
130. *The three violets are also the three theological virtues; faith, hope and charity. They represent a detachment from things, authority as service and the experience of the unconditional love for God. They are the expression of the Triune life that we reflect. The process of education in faith gives us the maturity to radically embrace the proposal of the Kingdom desired by the Father, inaugurated by the Son and continuously renewed by the Spirit. In the Joy of our process, we conclude that we are the image of a God that is Life.*

The biblical place is Jerusalem

131. *Jerusalem and its Temple were not rejected by Jesus; on the contrary, he even cried while imagining Jerusalem and the Temple destroyed. He visited it either alone or with his parents. The evangelist Luke conceives Jerusalem as a privileged place: he begins and ends his Gospel in the temple of Jerusalem and he groups the episodes in the life of Jesus in an "ascent to Jerusalem" (Lk 9, 51). At the time of the birth of Jesus, there were those who awaited the "redemption of Jerusalem" (Lk 2,38). The Transfiguration episode speaks of an exodus to Jerusalem, for "it is impossible for a prophet to be killed away from Jerusalem" (Lk 13,33). Jesus rises to Jerusalem, so that all that was written by the prophets would be fulfilled*



(Lk 18,31). The evangelist emphasizes the future downfall of the city that did not understand the message of peace nor recognize the time of salvation. Jesus cries over it because it will be destroyed (Lk 19, 41-44). Paul perceives Jerusalem as a place where the early communities shaped the Christian mission. However, he understands that salvation is not only limited to the Jews, rather it must reach all peoples (Rm 1, 16; Gl 3,28).

132. In order to perceive the Mystique that permeates this fifth **moment** we must turn to Jerusalem as a place of inspiration. Jerusalem is a very rich reference-point for the Church and for humanity and it will be an inexhaustible source of inspiration for those who desire to savor the process of education in faith. It is the symbol of a “place” we need to know.

Awakening of
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133. Jerusalem is, at one and the same time, the **“holy city”**, an ancient place of pilgrimage, the incarnation of the piety of the Jewish people and the **“cursed city”**, a center of power, oppression and exploitation. It is the most violent expression of contradictions and conflict. Jerusalem is the scene of disputes and at the same time a promise of peace, as indicated by its name: *Yerushalayim*, from the root *Yershalom*, “place of peace”. Just as Jesus wept over the city, he also chased the merchants from the Temple. And it is in its peripheries that Jesus was crucified. It is there that he instituted the Eucharist, the heart of the Church, or, as stated by Vatican II, “the fount and apex of the whole Christian life”.¹⁰ There, he rose and encouraged the disciples to start the Church. Jerusalem is in fact, a unique theological place where the lamentations of some meet the radicalism of the life-projects of others.
134. Jerusalem is the way of the cross and the place of the triumphant entry of Jesus, acclaimed by the people. It is in the temple of that city that the high priests are found, promoters of the most cynical exploitation of people’s ignorance. It is the city of welcome and conflict; of peace and fear. Just as you may find the most loving declarations of a God who became man, here we come up against betrayal, denial and religious exploitation. Just as it is a place of prayer and promises, in Jerusalem we encounter martyrdom and are confronted with the empire. The fruit of the Jewish faith is the cradle of Christianity. Jerusalem is a mystery that spans the centuries. Although the Book of Revelation refers to it as “Spouse”, still it remains the great whore. For those maturing in faith, Jerusalem is all that without losing its aura of meaning, in which life conquers death, albeit through confronting it.

Aspects of the Mystique of Jerusalem

135. Certain aspects of Jerusalem are fundamental for those undergoing this spirit of “activism” in the process of maturity. The first aspect relates to the **conflict in experiencing faith**. When faith translates into option for a commitment to transformation, it is disturbing. This is not fundamentalism, rather consis-



tency between personal experience and the experience of faith. Jerusalem teaches that following is not neutrality, rather a definition of options. Jesus was killed because he challenged the center of power not directed toward the fulfillment of God's will in conquering the Kingdom. The journey of Jesus to Jerusalem is the way for those who feel called to a radical experience of faith. Following this call presupposes maturity and readiness, in light of the possibility of being considered subversive and blasphemous. Jesus affirmed that he surrendered his life freely, which suggests his level of readiness in announcing justice and freedom. Jerusalem confronts us with the spirituality of the servant of Yahweh who, as stated by the prophet Isaiah, annihilated himself to give life (Is 42).

136. Jerusalem is also the place of **education for peace**, as a perspective of hope and integrity. Conflicts do not always carry meaning in themselves, but they invite us to search for lasting peace. The latter depends on the degree of integrity: integrity of creation, of goods, of ethics, of people and of the social order. In Hebrew, *shalom* (root of *Yerushalayim*) primarily means "integrity". Only later will it be translated as "peace", which is the 13th meaning of "sha-



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lom". So, conflicts that destroy integrity are not useful either. What we must seek is the integrity of people and things, despite conflicts. Young people need to remain upright, even in conflicts!

137. The capacity to **face up to** the most serious **challenges** is related to the option of faith. A mature faith means being consistent in the fight for a cause, especially when it is clear that the cause is the Kingdom. The implementation of the project does not measure sacrifices or life itself. The Mystique of Jerusalem is coated with courage, audacity and perseverance, for it is the absolute that is at stake in the cause taken up by the committed young person: the Kingdom.
138. Jerusalem becomes, in Christ, in addition to a theological place, the **educational space** in which the Master shows his disciples the most radical definition of mission: the cross. Thus, Jerusalem may be understood as the summit of Jesus' mission. After walking with the Risen One, the disciples of Emmaus return to Jerusalem. There were other more welcoming places where it would have been easier to continue the mission of Jesus; however, the experience of Emmaus teaches us to respond to the calls and challenges of reality not in the peripheries, but at the center of power. It reveals that faith is not a world apart; that it needs to blend with reality and take in all its complexity. We need to be **"contemplative in action"**, to have a critical conscience without fearing to develop this knowledge of human situations and divine realities: The Mystique of Jerusalem arouses in us a need for insertion into and participation in society.
139. Jerusalem challenges us to be **aware of the reality** in which we operate. It shows the difference between authority-service and authority-exploitation. It points out that even religious power can deviate from the path of the promotion of life. Jerusalem challenges us to be clear about the schemes of the Church we live in. While Jerusalem reveals our limitations, it also opens up indescribable possibilities for generosity. After all, it was in the gardens surrounding the city that the lacerated body of Jesus was raised, thereby inaugurating the spring of New Creation. The resurrection crowns this truth with certainty: the summit of any person's life-project is the capability of giving life



for the other. A life of faith with no Mystique of Jerusalem is incomplete. To live it means having the greatness of Mary at the foot of the cross; it means having the hope of Magdalene as she took her scents to the grave where Jesus was laid. Jerusalem, a place of conflict, service, learning and challenges, is the source of inspiration for the activist in the construction of the Civilization of Love.

The Marist Place is L`Hermitage

140. *The living conditions in the small house in La Valla were becoming increasingly precarious. Some slept in the farmhouse, others in the storehouse (attic), turned into bedrooms. During his trips to Saint-Chamond, Father Champagnat often contemplated the valley and told himself: "How nice would it be to have a novice in this solitude! A quiet place, very appropriate for studies; with God's blessing,*

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one day we will settle here." The valley of L'Hermitage, was separated and washed by the crystalline waters of the Gier, confined east and west by mountains, covered almost to the top by vegetation or forests of oak and fruit trees. Although it was beautiful, it was a narrow valley and the currents of air and moisture were detrimental to the health of students and brothers.

141. *In light of human wisdom, Father Champagnat was very careless to undertake, with no resources, a construction that would lead to massive costs. The announcement of the plan to transfer the community and build a large house gave rise to a new outburst of censure, criticism and insults that probably exceeded what occurred in the most tempestuous phase of the Institute. The project was labeled as insane and even Father Champagnat's own friends disapproved, sparing nothing to pressure him to desist.¹¹ It was in that atmosphere that L'Hermitage was born, the cradle of the Marist mission.*
142. L'Hermitage is not only the birthplace of the Marist mission, but also an example of the truth of Jerusalem made tangible. Champagnat, together with his brothers, founded a community based on the dream of the Kingdom. The seed of the Kingdom sprouted in the establishment of a proposal for the Christian education of the young, especially the ones estranged from society.
143. In building L'Hermitage, Father Champagnat demonstrated **vision** and great **courage**. At the same time, arising out of his Christian values, he took on responsibility for responding to the calls on his time: The number of postulants and novices was on the rise and renovations were not progressing. More space was necessary. When a fighting spirit is no longer appropriate, you undergo the experience of L'Hermitage. We need to go beyond, expand the borders and embrace society as a whole.

Aspects of the Mystique of L' Hermitage

144. We see the spirit of **perseverance** run through the construction of L'Hermitage. Father Champagnat received a piece of land where there was a large rock, exactly where he intended to build the main chapel of the house. The



strongest workmen did not dare start work, given the size of the challenge. Champagnat was known to have “impossible” ideas and knowing that the project belonged to the Good Mother Mary, he began to carve the rock. Obstacles do not discourage those who work for the Kingdom; they strive to overcome difficulties with God’s help.

145. It is in L’Hermitage that the Marist **educational space** matures, cultivating the presence, the family spirit and the passion for work, in the manner of Mary. Some expressions show the desire of Champagnat to make that pedagogy come true. We restate only three: (1) “Make Jesus Christ known and loved”; (2) “In order to educate children and youngsters it is firstly necessary to love them equally”; (3) “To form good Christians and righteous citizens”. Evangelization is always an educational act moved by an attitude of love, mainly for those estranged from society. Formation carried out through group processes helps to build a young citizen who is restless and strives to transform situations.
146. L’Hermitage is the center of the Marist **missionary action**, because it is from there that, right at the beginning, three Brothers left for Oceania with a group of Marist Fathers. Marcellin Champagnat wrote to a bishop that **“all the dioceses of the world are in our plans”**.¹² Missionary work is a prime opportunity to collaborate in the realization of God’s Kingdom. The mission is always a response to a (pro)vocation of God who unsettles us and places us on a path. It is a challenge to the person who wants to live the spirit of L’Hermitage.
147. L’Hermitage, like Jerusalem, is the **place of death** for those who devised a **project to build the Kingdom**. These are places of inspiration for those who set out to continue the mission. In his Spiritual Testament, Father Champagnat left us his teachings: the devotion to the Good Mother Mary, his humility and detachment from material things of this world and the most compelling request: “Love one another! Hopefully they will say of you: See how the Brothers love each other”. Living in love is the spirit evoked by L’Hermitage, committing people to the community. In the Marist proposal,

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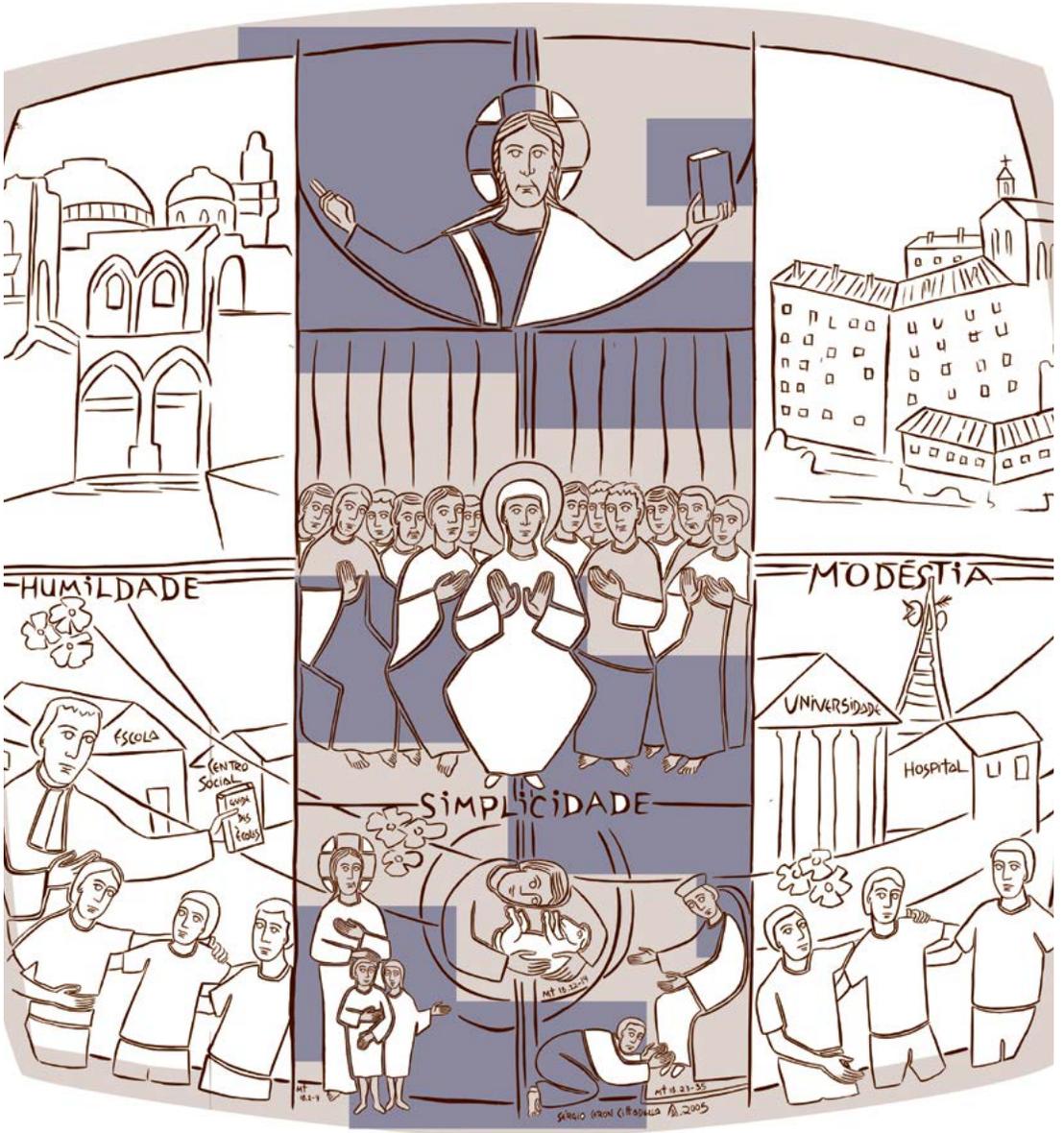
returning to L'Hermitage is like returning to Jerusalem: there, the charism rises to live in us.

148. Champagnat wished for Marists to be humble, simple and modest as violets. These virtues must not be understood as signs of submission, rather as the simple and beautiful incarnation of a critical sense of reality and of the restlessness that rises before the oppression suffered by the people of God. In a process of growth in faith, said virtues permeate life and the works of wisdom.



Icon of the Fifth Moment

149. Jesus Christ indicated the Kingdom as a path for all the disciples who were willing to follow him. Champagnat's project culminated in the foundation of the Marist Institute, with the mission to sow the Good News of the Kingdom through education, with children, adolescents and youngsters, especially poor ones. Jerusalem and L'Hermitage, therefore, are places of inspiration for translating the following of Christ into concrete options that generate abundant life.
150. The dedication of Champagnat in living and praying for the Kingdom, inspired and gave rise to a large family: the Marist Brothers, with their own way



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of sowing the Good News of the Kingdom. Jesus wanted a Church made of community-minded hearts, built on the immovable rock of the Spirit. Champagnat went from the construction of L'Hermitage, raised on rock, to the formation and building of each brother and Marist lay people who live the Gospel through virtues such as humility, simplicity and modesty.

151. The drawing that illustrates this **moment** shows the gifts generated by a complete surrender to the Kingdom. The middle column shows the life that springs from resurrection: Jesus as the center of the rising Church; the community of disciples gathered with Mary during Pentecost; the commandment of love and **service**, during the washing of the feet; Jesus as Good Shepherd, the one who gives his life for the sheep and walks with his disciples. The side columns show that the charism received by Champagnat can be lived in different ways and in different places: schools, projects for social integration, universities, hospitals, communications projects and communities. What matters is the necessary **service of the Kingdom**, with humility, simplicity and modesty.
152. The large cross combines all these realities. It generates signs of life and inspires adolescents and youngsters to follow Jesus in different places, directing their lives towards a commitment to build the Kingdom of God.

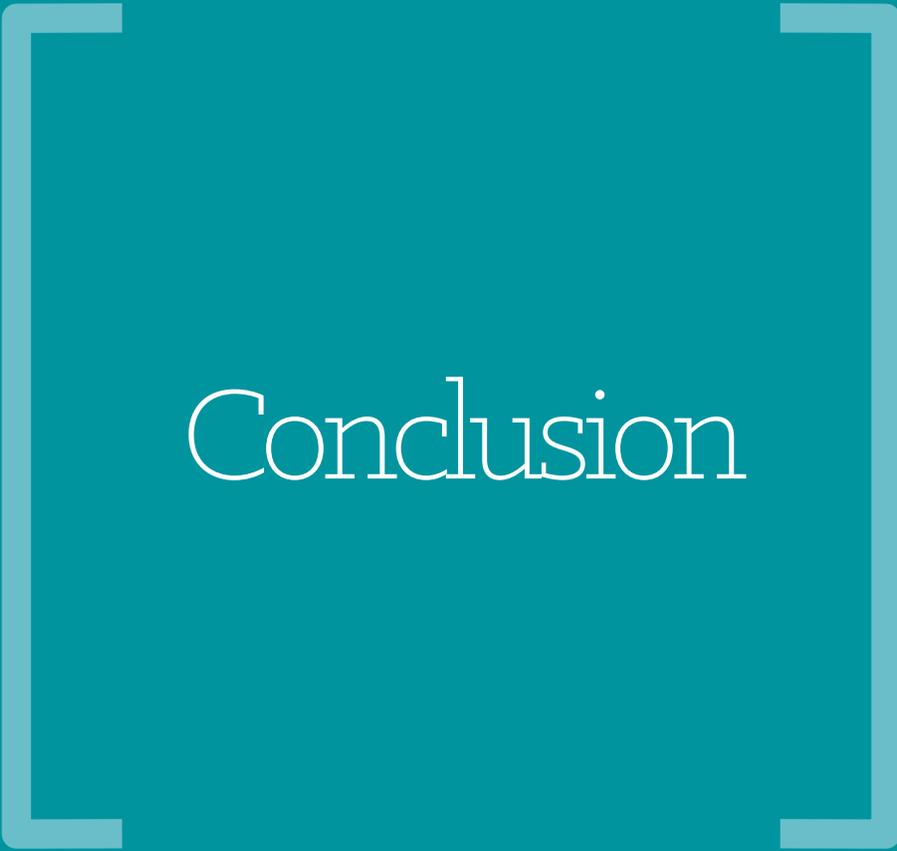
Caption of the Icon

Middle column: Jesus Christ in glory, Pentecost; in the last frame of this column: Jesus with children, parable of the lost sheep and the unforgiving debtor.

Top of the left column: Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem.

Top of right column: L'Hermitage.

Lower parts (right and left): Marist projects.



Conclusion

Have a good journey!

153. After contemplating with Christian and Marist eyes the mystery of faith that lives in us, we should say one more word, not of conclusion rather of “spirit of the journey”. We all saw that the five **moments** are not five; that the biblical and Marist places are those, but not just those; that representations never cease to be “representations”; that our discourse, however rational and poetic it may be, does not succeed in expressing the beauty of the process of the faith burning in us. We reaffirm the beauty of the journey we describe, nourishing our way of being Christian and Marist. It is likely that those who read this and the different hands that wrote it had a reaction that quietly cried out “how beautiful!” adding at each instant, beauties not noted. That too is a “process”, because it is our God and we are alive within him.
154. We must therefore confess that many “places” were missing; there was specifically one biblical place missing which we would like to recall now, after the **moments** we contemplated and live with. We do not wish to speak of a new **moment**, rather of a **moment** inside all the others where what is valuable and inspirational is the Path, Truth and Life. We are referring to **Bethany**. In Hebrew its name reminds us of the “house of gratitude” (*be-ith-anyah*): the permanent school of the disciples of Jesus.
155. *Bethany is a small village near the Mount of Olives, where life is very close to death. Bethany is where the house of Martha, Mary and Lazarus was located (Jn 11,1ff), where Jesus sought rest and where Jesus raised Lazarus. In Bethany, in the home of Simon the leper, Mary anointed the feet of the Savior (Jn 12, 1ff; Mt 26, 6-13), scandalizing Judas and others. It was in Bethany that Jesus asked two disciples to find the donkey he would ride to enter Jerusalem (Lk 19 29ff). It was to Bethany that Jesus went after his solemn entrance to Jerusalem (Mk 11,11). Luke tells about the scene of the Ascension as if it had happened in Bethany (Lk 24,50).*

156. As a “conclusion”, we therefore issue this invitation: in the Mystique that we attempt to cultivate in our process of education in faith, do not fail to often take a ride to Bethany! Bethany has many enriching aspects that can nourish us. We will only emphasize a few, perhaps the most important ones.
157. After Jesus chased the merchants from the temple, overturning the tables of moneychangers and the stalls of dove-traders (Jn 21,12s), deeply upsetting the priests and the doctors of the law, while cheering children sang “Hosanna to the Son of David”, He went to Bethany, “where he spent the night”. Bethany was a place of rest and refuge. We all need to have “places” to recover our strength and pamper the faith that is emerging in our lives. Preferably, a quiet and welcoming place where friendship and affection are flourishing.
158. It was in Bethany, in the home of Simon the leper and during a meal that a woman came into the house to anoint Jesus with an expensive scent (Mk



14,1ss), scandalizing those present, including Judas Iscariot who left, intending to betray Jesus. As faith grows, we are sometimes led to commit “follies”, to devote time that others do not understand, to give up experiences that others deem frivolous, etc. These attitudes are the result of our Bethanies. Let us recall that it was in Bethany that John Baptist was asked whether he was the Messiah and he answered no but that the Messiah was amidst them and that he was not worthy of untying the thongs of his sandals. (Jn 1,19-28). There are times that we must question ourselves about the honesty of our experience of faith.

- 159.** Bethany for Jesus was the home of his friends, both those who lived there and those who were with him “to do nothing”. Maybe to laugh at life and speak of things that happened. Maybe for no reason; just to be. A place to drink wine, to talk, to evaluate, to enjoy a life of “community” that takes the appearance of family, a new family. It was not just Lazarus; it was not just Martha; it was not just Mary, it was John the evangelist, it was Mary (his mother), it was Peter, there were so many people, a community! We all need Bethany to turn life into a celebration. Let us not forget that Lazarus died in Bethany and that Jesus cried when he saw him dead. In fact, he cried twice: when he sensed what would happen to Jerusalem and he cried because his friend had died. “See how he loved him”, said the people (Jn 11,36). Let us not forget that it was also in Bethany that Jesus scolded Martha because “she was very busy” and did not behave like Mary who was “wasting time” with Jesus (Lk 10,38ff). We saw that the experience of the process of faith makes us “contemplative in action”, that is to say, to act in such way that all becomes action and all becomes prayer. To achieve this, however, we need Bethanies.
- 160.** In order to experience everything we saw in the explosion of faith within our lives, Bethanies are increasingly necessary. It is not the time to contemplate what was meant with the “sign” of the resurrection of Lazarus that the evangelist tells about in so much detail (Jn 11,1-54). In addition to being a house to rest in, to live together, for friendship with men and women, it was also the home in which death became a threat to Jesus, so much so that

he began to take refuge in Ephraim (Jn 11,54). When the disciples saw that Jesus was determined to return to Judea (Bethany is located in Judea) they questioned him with “Are you going there again?” (Jn 11,8) recalling that there they had only recently wanted to stone him. But Lazarus, his friend, “had fallen asleep” (Jn 11,11) and he had to wake him. Bethany leads us to think about life that does not end, that is, in the resurrection. Even if there is suffering, grievances, complaints, weeping (even from Jesus), persecutions, threats, death, a need for refuge, the last word is one of life.

161. Therefore, we would like to “conclude” the description of the path of education and maturity in faith, after going through Bethlehem, Nazareth, Cana, Capharnaum and Jerusalem – and all the “Marist places” – with the meaning of a Bethany in our life. Bethany must be in all **moments**, filled with **grace** and **gratitude**. If the discovery revealed herein was one of **joy and revitalization of the mystery of faith** bubbling in us, for the authors of this “discourse”, then how good would it be for the “readers” of these “letters” to **discover unimagined newness**. Therefore, “have a good journey!”



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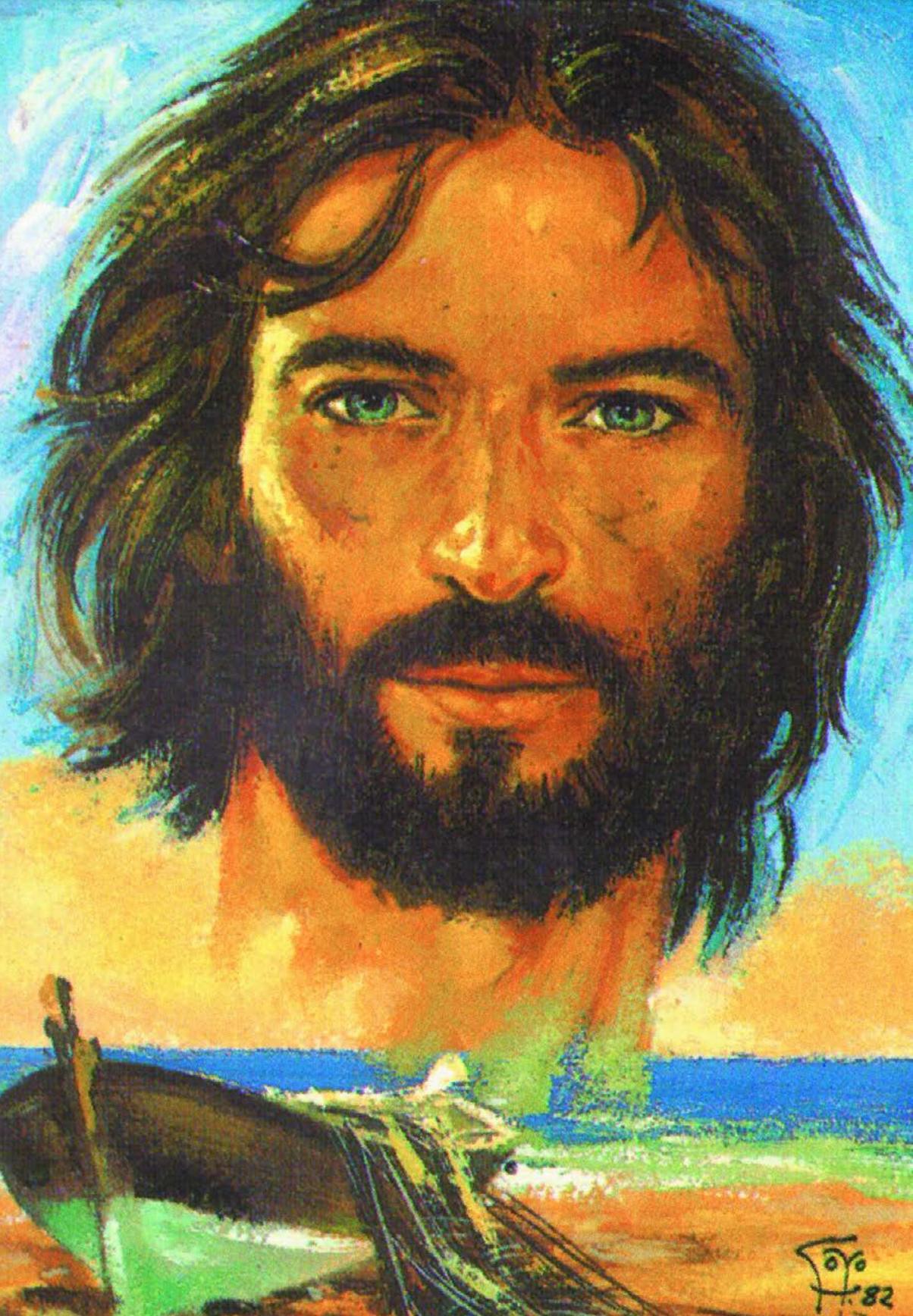
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1. According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, numbers 1667 - 1673, a sacramental is a sacred sign through which, as for sacraments, there are significant and primarily spiritual effects. A sacramental may be an action, an object or a rite of blessing and consecration. Sacramentals do not grant grace in themselves as sacraments do, but they are paths that lead to it by helping to sanctify situations and awakening feelings of love and faith in Christians.
2. Since it is a concept that expresses a specific and fundamental space in time in the process of education and maturing in faith, we choose to always highlight moment in the text in italic.
3. Four of the children of the couple John Baptist Champagnat and Mary Chirat died in infancy. Of the six surviving children, three were male and three female. Marcellin was the youngest of the family. FURET, Life p. 02.
4. FURET, Life pp. 5-6.
5. From Verrières, he travelled to Lyon to complete his studies in the Major Seminary of St. Irenaeus. FURET, Life p. 16.
6. See the second chapter of the first part of FURET, Life
7. MARIST BROTHERS, Institute of. Water from the Rock. nº 28.
8. FURET, Life p. 58.
9. SESTER (1991). Letters, nº 112.
10. ABBOTT (1967) Lumen Gentium nº 11, p 28.
11. For paragraphs 140 and 141, see chapter twelve of the first part of FURET, Life.
12. SESTER (1991). Letters, nº 112.







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