

HE GAVE US THE NAME OF MARY

*je suis
me fit sentir plus
je méditais depuis long
de Petits Grères de Marie,
succès, en peu d'année
sous la*

CIRCULARS FROM THE SUPERIORS

Brother Emili Turú - Superior general

2 January 2012

exécution le projet que
je leur donnerai le nom
de Sujets; un prompt

Co^d
En 1826

aide par ce Brevet et
maison h^o

HE GAVE US THE NAME OF MARY

In giving us
Mary's name,
Father Champagnat
wished us to live
her spirit.

Constitutions, 4

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*Monogram of Mary,
carved in stone,
dated 1824,
today can be seen
on the lintel of a door
of the house of La Valla.*



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This circular, which is the 412th of those written since our beginnings, is situated in a tradition going back to Saint Marcellin Champagnat, whose first circular was composed in 1828.

Since then, in the style proper to each person and each period, we find them, in thousands of pages, with news about family, information, instructions, recommendations, reflections on our life and mission... In each case, they are the expression of a wish to build a family united around the essentials.


It seems interesting to me to note that the word circular, apart from the meaning we give it here, also refers to what pertains or relates to the circle. As we know, the round tables were a powerful symbol of listening and dialogue during our last General Chapter, which, little by little, has been extended throughout the whole Institute.

I hope that the following pages serve to continue building family and to maintain an open and constructive dialogue, as the co-responsible people we are for the mission that has been entrusted to us.



**WHAT'S
THE MATTER
WITH US?**





Lead, *Kindly Light,*
amidst th'encircling gloom,
Lead Thou me on!
The night is dark
and I am far from home,
Lead Thou me on!
Keep Thou my feet;
I do not ask to see
the distant scene;
one step enough for me.
I was not ever thus,
nor prayed that
Thou shouldst lead me on;
I loved to choose and see my path;
but now, lead Thou me on!
I loved the garish day
and, spite of fears,
pride ruled my will.
Remember not past years!
So long Thy power hath blest me,
sure it still will lead me on.
O'er moor and fen,
o'er crag and torrent,
till the night is gone,
and with the morn
those angel faces smile,
which I have loved long since,
and lost awhile!

John Henry Newman



A few weeks before setting out to write this Circular, I was in Seville (Spain). Sitting at table with the brothers of one of the communities in this city, we were carrying on an interesting dialogue about how we see the situation of the Institute at the present time and looking towards the future. This is something I have experienced in many other places in the world, in meetings with brothers and lay people.

I consider these conversations as privileged moments, because they force one to make a synthesis together, realising that no one has the definitive answers.

Can I begin this Circular in the style of a conversation? Perhaps it may be a good way of assembling the matters that concern us and touching on them as we would do in a relaxed dialogue, with the wish of shedding more light on them.

THE INSTITUTE TODAY, IN ITS CONTEXT

- *We could say many things about the situation of the Institute today, but if we had to choose one word to describe it, what would it be?*

The first that comes to mind for me is *fragility*. If we look at the objective data, some regions of the Institute are fragile because the average age of the brothers is very high, and in other parts, by contrast, because it is very low. But, there is also fragility in the commitment *for always*, which is easily broken. Fragility in many of our personal or community lives, as synonymous with superficiality and lack of deep roots.

It is true, as well, that we are involved in a time of crisis which affects the majority of Institutes of Consecrated Life, and it is not easy to find an adequate way of confronting this new situation: this makes us more fragile.

In all ways, I think that *fragility* is a characteristic of whatever type of life we are familiar with: being born, developing, dying... ever so fragile!

I believe that we have to be very grateful to the Lord for all that has been done and is still being done through the Institute, in spite of this fragility (even, perhaps, thanks to it!). We also need to express gratitude for all the brothers who, thanks to their consistency and fidelity, have been and continue to be authentic *pillars of the Institute*, as Fr Champagnat said.

- *The number of brothers is on the decline: around a hundred fewer each year... would this be fragility, too?*

It seems to me we have to place ourselves with humility and openness before the Lord of history, convinced that the Holy Spirit has not ceased

working, although he has not acted as we would have imagined. One brother told me that, during his time in the novitiate in the 1960s, he made a projection of the growth of the Institute, based on the data gathered since the foundation; according to the mathematics, we could only increase in numbers, year after year. Not long after this calculation, reality contradicted the mathematics!

Yes, this may probably be a sign of fragility, too: it is like the image of a ship in the middle of rough seas, which we cannot control, and which people are abandoning (more than those getting on), and we must respect their freedom. If there was a time when we believed that our ship was powerful and invincible, the crossing has taught us that it is better to accept one's own fragility and place oneself confidently in the hands of Him who is among us and who at times appears to be asleep during the storm.



■ *Why this decline in numbers?*

In the past, it was because of the great number of brothers who left the Institute. Today, it is especially because of those who are dying. Some provinces have a very high average age and, for this reason, this tendency will continue for some years.

That said, the number of brothers who ask not to continue among us as religious continues to be a matter of concern: these last years, they have been as many as those making their first profession, if not more.

■ *It seems to me that many of us are attaching great importance to numbers as a criterion of success in evangelization...*

That is so. And our language well reflects the mentality behind it. For example, I have heard many times: *we are few*. . . I could accept someone saying that *we are fewer than before*, because this is an objective fact. But *few* is a subjective evaluation, which reflects our wish to be *more* or *many*. Why? And for what? Who says there is one number better than another for evangelical efficiency? Or is it that we are nostalgic for times past? Could it be, perhaps, that we want to be *more* than others?

These types of, at least unconscious, subjective perceptions, do no more than cause us frustration and loss of energy, seeing that things are not

going as we expected. Instead of paying attention to what is emerging in this *today* of God, we can be left in nostalgia for the past, which also distorts our vision of the future.

It is worthwhile considering whether the reference point for these evaluations is simply myself and not the criteria of the Gospel.

- *To all this, we must add that, when we say “we are few”, we are only talking about the brothers, forgetting the great number of lay persons who feel identified with the Marist charism and mission.*

In effect, this, the statement *we are fewer than before* included, can be called into question, seeing that never before have there been so many lay people who feel called to live their Christian vocation as *Marists of Champagnat*. From this point of view, is the Institute declining or growing?

This does not mean that, in the face of the crisis of vocations to religious life many regions of the Institute are experiencing, we should fold our arms, taking for certain that this is the way things are and that little or nothing can be done. This attitude, convenient and rather irresponsible, places the problems as if they were only outside us and it appears that we are exempted, therefore, from any commitment to a serious vocations ministry, as well as any self examination on the quality of our witness.

- *Some people in the Church, including some bishops, affirm that today is the time of the laity and the new ecclesial movements, and that the time of religious life is past...*

In the Church, it should always be the time of the laity, since that is the condition of the immense majority of the followers of Jesus, as well the point of departure we all share. It is also true that recently the so-called *new movements* have become very popular, but that does not mean that they should substitute for the different forms of consecrated life, some of them with more than 1500 years of history.

This is what Pope Benedict XVI stated in November of 2010, when he received the Union of Superiors General (USG):

The present time presents not a few Institutes with the fact of reduced numbers, especially in Europe. The difficulties, however, should not make us forget that consecrated life has its origins in the Lord. He wants it for the building up and holiness of his Church, and for this reason, the Church herself will never see herself deprived of it. I encourage you to journey on in faith and in hope, at the same time as I ask you for a renewed commitment to vocations ministry and initial and ongoing formation.

The Church will always have need of the prophetic stimulus of the communities of religious life. And if any of them are not fulfilling their function, they

have to be renewed in depth or, simply, disappear and give way to other communities which agree to live this charge responsibly.

The time of religious life is not over, and it is our task to demonstrate this in deeds.

- *However, the “Institutes of Brothers” do not appear to have much relevance in the whole Church*

During the Pope's audience to the USG which I referred to earlier, it fell to me to greet him personally, in the name of the *Institutes of Brothers*. In a brief dialogue, he assured me that he considered these Institutes as very important for the ecclesial community. It seemed to me that this was much more than a mere compliment and that it reflected a personal conviction of his.

However, it is self-evident that a very clerical structure persists in our Church. This means that the active participation in the life and government of the Church of those who are not clerics is minimalized, and that they are relegated to being passive observers or, at best, *collaborators*.

I am frequently asked with incredulity how it is that we have no priests among us. Does



it not seem ironical that, in the context of religious life, which was born lay, *Institutes of Brothers* appear today as an exception or a rarity, almost needing to justify their existence. Is it not rather the clerical Institutes who should be explaining to us how being religious can be combined with being clerics?

This situation should not dishearten us, but rather stimulate us. In a clericalized context, our choice becomes a prophetic one.

TO DIE TO GIVE LIFE

- *Fragility, reduction in numbers, irrelevance... do not appear very inspiring characteristics!*

Perhaps we should read them as an invitation to go to what is essential in our lives. Br Sean, in his last circular, *In her arms or in her heart*, touched on this same theme: *Past periods of significant change in religious life should have taught us that any process in which the old must die to make way for the new takes at least half a century to run its course. Any group needs that time to 'fall apart' sufficiently for its members to begin asking some of the right questions. And he adds: perhaps we have fallen apart enough to give a hearing also to what God might have in mind for our way of life (p. 47).*

Could the time we are living through be expressed with greater clarity? The challenge, naturally, is

not one of being left lamenting for what is lost, but of being open to what is unexpected.

- *This appears to be a law of life we see in nature: to prune to attain more energy; to bury oneself in order to give life...*

The renewal of the house of l'Hermitage appears to me, in this sense, a very powerful sign. Mr Joan Puig-Pey, the architect who directed the work, made a short video, with the help of his son, in which he recorded a whole day, specifically the 23rd of July 2009, when work was in full swing. What impressed me were the images of the night, when all the workmen had already gone; while I was contemplating the ruins and the desolation of a building left with practically only the external walls, the words of the *Ave verum Corpus* ("Hail, true Body") began to sound, with the music of Mozart.

As we know, this hymn of the XIV century was composed to be sung during the Eucharist, at the moment of the elevation of the consecrated host. Mr Joan told me himself that he had chosen this music because he had the intuition that this building, like the Lord's body, through death, was going to be converted into bread of life for the Marists who would come there in the future.

For me, this symbol can be applied not only to the house of l'Hermitage, but to the entire Institute. The hymn repeats the word *true* twice in the first verses, emphasizing that it is a matter of Jesus Christ in person and that his suffering was real



and not imaginary. What was certain for the Lord will not be less so for us. No one likes passing through the night of desolation, when we feel that everything is going downhill, and we have no security that what will come is going to be better than what we already have.

In the Institute, we have to accept that death forms part of life and that this process involves *true* suffering. What has been familiar to us is disappearing and we have not yet begun to see clearly what is new.

- *It is a matter, then, of welcoming in faith all this stripping, trusting that, in some mysterious way, it will be a source of life.*

More than that, it is a matter of collaborating with the action of the Spirit! There is no need to wait for Him to do all the work.

Already in 2001, John Paul II said in addressing the General Chapters of the Marist Family: *In setting out in haste to the hills of Judea for the meeting with her cousin Elizabeth, is Mary not teaching us spiritual freedom? It matters, in fact, that you do not let yourselves become absorbed only in the management of the inheritance received and that you discern what is advisable to abandon in a spirit of poverty, but above all that we make ourselves available with the freedom of the Gospel to the calls of the Spirit. Before the multiplicity of calls, there is in fact a need for an authentic freedom in discerning the priorities.*

What did the XXI General Chapter ask of us? Exactly what John Paul II did eight years earlier: *Go in haste, with Mary, to a new land!* The word *new* appears many times in the Chapter document: *new land; new epoch for the Marist charism; new consecrated life; new way of being brother; new relationship between brothers and laity; new Marists...* If newness is so insisted on, it must be because we are not satisfied with our current situation. Nevertheless, it gives the impression that, once enlightened by the Spirit and seeing clearly that it is necessary to head for new lands... we put it down in writing and go back to our usual occupations as if nothing had happened!

Of course, I may be exaggerating a little, because it is also certain that we are making progress in many aspects, but I ask myself where I left the *in haste* of the last Chapter. When I look at some of the decisions that we make as General Council, I ask myself what connection they have with our journey as an Institute to new lands. It could

even be that we are sabotaging ourselves, taking decisions contrary to what we proclaim in writing! Can it be that this is also happening at Provincial Council level or at more local and even personal levels?

- *We are talking about a process that is alive in the Institute, but I suppose we could also apply it to our personal life.*

The Institute has changed much since its foundation, especially with the *aggiornamento* requested by Vatican II. Structurally, we have changed more and more profoundly in the last 50 years than in all the 140 previous ones. At the same time, our way of thinking has also been modified in many aspects. As for our institutional conversion... it seems that is going more slowly! Institutional conversion depends on personal conversion. You can not have one without the other.

Conversion, *being born anew* (Jn 3:7), means to adhere to the values of the Gospel, and, as such, fullness of life and happiness. But it is not an easy road: it also means renunciation, discipline, change... death!

Anyone who wants to save his life will lose it, but anyone who loses his life for my sake will find it (Mt 16:25).

Emmanuel Mounier expressed it this way: *Suffering is necessary so that the truth does not crystallize into doctrine, but is born of the flesh.*

■ *What's the matter with us, then?*

All of us have an *immune system* which resists change with all its strength. As Steve Jobs said in a famous talk to the students of Stanford University, after he had been diagnosed with cancer:

No one likes to die... but death is our common destiny: no one will escape it. And this is how it has to be, because death is life's best invention: it is life's agent of change. Eliminate the old and give way to the new.

Who of us does not feel profound resistance before the calls to conversion? I do not do personal prayer anymore because that would mean changing my habits and routines, and moving out of my comfort zone. I do not involve myself in community anymore, because that would tend to overcome my individualism and



perhaps sacrifice part of my *freedom*. I do not want to go to a new apostolate because I have already had enough change in life and now it is my turn for a little rest... Can you continue with your own list? What has to die in me for the newness of the Spirit to be able to flower?

MARY, OUR SOURCE OF RENEWAL

- *We are where we are as Institute and as persons; we are who we are... who is offering us a vision which offers us hope to continue building the future?*

During the last General Chapter, there were moments when we felt in a very intense way the presence of Mary among us. I think we recognize this as a sign of tenderness and accompaniment from the One who has done everything for us.

But it also becomes a new source of inspiration: *We feel impelled by God to go out into a new land, to facilitate the birth of a new epoch for the Marist charism. We know that this presupposes a willingness to move on, to let go of the familiar, and to embark on a journey of institutional and personal conversion over the next eight years. We go on our way with Mary, as **guide and companion**. Her faith and openness to the will of God inspire us to undertake this pilgrimage.* (XXI General Chapter)

We know that Br Sean dedicated his last circular to Mary under the title: *In her arms or in her*

*heart. As he says himself, one of the aims of the text is that we come to accept Mary as an **important source of renewal in our Institute today**, and to take action to ensure she remains so. She was there for Marcellin during the early days of our Marist life; she was there for our brothers during the crisis of 1903; and, if we but ask her, she will be there for us today serving as a companion and a guide for the work that lies ahead (p. 20).*

For me, it is as if the Spirit were saying to us: *Don't you want a firm inspiration and reference point for your journey? Well, here you have it: Mary! How could it be otherwise with us, who bear her name?*

- *The expression “build the Marian face of the Church”, does it form part of this vision?*


In the words I addressed at the end of the General Chapter, I made mention of this expression, because it appeared to me very suggestive and in keeping with the experience lived during those weeks. At the time, I was still in a state of *shock*, so I did not develop it much... In the weeks following, especially in the work of the General Council, this image became consolidated as the principal inspiration of our mandate.

In addition, many brothers and lay people have commented to me that for them, too, it is a powerful image, and that they feel it as very inspiring, in connection with our origins and with whom we are called to be.



CALLED TO BUILD
THE MARIAN FACE
OF THE CHURCH





It is up to you today to manifest
in an original and specific way
the presence of Mary in the life
of the Church and of mankind,
developing for this purpose
a Marian attitude, characterized
by a joyful disposability
to the calls of the Holy Spirit,
an unshakable confidence
in the Word of the Lord,
a spiritual journey in relation
to the different mysteries
of the life of Christ and
a maternal attention to the needs
and the sufferings of men,
especially the most simple.

John Paul II
to the General Chapters of
the Marist Family, 2001



The expression “Marian face of the Church” was never used in the time of the Marist origins. It began to be used only recently, first by the Jesuit theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar and then, inspired by him or cited directly, by Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI.

If today, as Marists, we make it our own, it is because we feel it is in profound connection with our origins and because we believe it summarizes well our mission in the Church.

WHAT DOES “MARIAN FACE OF THE CHURCH” MEAN?

To better grasp the meaning of what we understand by *Marian face of the Church*, it would probably be good to situate it in its context.

Von Balthasar refers to the *Marian principle* to describe Mary's mission in the origin of the Church. But he also uses other expressions, such as *Marian dimension*, *Marian profile*, *Marian face* or *Marian aspect* of the Church, referring to the historical manifestations of the life of the church derived from the attitudes with which Mary responds to her mission as a believer and member of the ecclesial community. To

speak, then, of the *Marian face of the Church* is an invitation to participate in this experience and mission of Mary.

The theologian analyzes four lives that he offers as *archetypes* of the life of the Church. The paths travelled by the protagonists of these four stories, who had had experience of the risen Lord within a community, may be travelled by any believer. He cites in first place the experience of **Peter**, who discovers that Jesus, with whom he lived several years, *died on the cross* for his countrymen, *but God has raised him up*. The conviction of his faith will serve as confirmation and security for that of his brothers. The story of Peter's faith is the foundation for theological reflection on the so-called *Petrine principle*. The second story tells of the charismatic experience of the life of **Paul**, particularly his, and not identifiable with that of the Twelve. From this come reflections based on the *Pauline principle*. The third is the mystical experience of **John**, who transmits to us *what has existed since the beginning, that we have heard, that we have seen with our own eyes, that we have watched and touched with our hands: the Word, who is life* (1 Jn 1:1). This is the so-called **Johannine** tradition or *Johannine principle*. In other places in his works, Von Balthasar proposes other schemes, somewhat more complete, including a fifth Jacobean archetype (of the apostle **James**). Finally, although we could perfectly well say in first place, at a much deeper level and one closer to the centre, the experience of the **Mother of the Lord**, an intimate and total experience, which flows on to the Church and makes it fruitful, and which is the foundation of the *Marian principle*.

The Marian principle is, in distinct aspects, more fundamental than the Petrine principle. This is recognized by the Catechism of the Catholic Church (773): *the Marian dimension of the Church precedes its Petrine dimension*, and John Paul II himself (1987): *The Marian profile is as (if not more) fundamental and characteristic of the Church as the apostolic and Petrine profile, to which it is profoundly united*. This means, for every Christian, that being a believer is more important than the ministry he or she exercises in the Church.

The Marian experience, then, relates and connects faith and vision, heaven and earth, and resolves the tension between the Church Immaculate and the Church of sinners. Because Mary *believed by faith and by faith conceived* (Saint Augustine), she is *the first believer and the Mother of God*, and in Mary *the believer and the Mother of God* cannot be separated. Her experience of Christ is spiritual and corporal at the same time. For this reason, we cannot jump from a visible, hierarchical, *Petrine* church to an invisible and spiritual church in which we will encounter *the Marian dimension*.

Thus, these different paths are not opposed but complementary. And I believe that it would not be correct to contrast these different dimensions of the Church and opt for a church with a Marian face, in contradistinction to a *Petrine church*. It is an easy argument, but leads to nothing constructive.

Von Balthasar wrote that, when the Marian dimension is rejected, *everything becomes more polemical, more critical, more bitter, less friendly,*

and ends up boring, and people will flee a church like that. But it would be quite ironical to use a Church that takes inspiration from Mary as a weapon against the hierarchy, becoming ourselves *more polemical, more critical, more bitter, less friendly...* We are not, then, going against anyone or anything. In any case, the only thing that could be proved is our own lack of consistency in living the ideals we proclaim.

THE DREAM OF THE FIRST MARISTS: A CHURCH RENEWED

As we well know, at the origins of the Society of Mary is to be found the inspiration of Jean-Claude Courveille, which he says he received at Le Puy. In 1815, he explained his project to some of his companions in the Seminary of Saint Irenaeus: Colin, Champagnat, Déclas, Terrailon...



who were immediately enthused with the idea, which ended up taking concrete form in the promise of Fourvière, at the feet of the Black Virgin.

Did the construction of a *Marian Church* really form part of the dream of these twelve recently ordained priests? For Cour-

veille it was clear that it involved collaborating in the renewal of the Church; in the same way in which, at an earlier time in history, this mission had been entrusted to the Society of Jesus, he says, at this time it falls to the Society of Mary. Jean-Claude Colin is still more emphatic: *The Society of Mary must recommence a new Church. I do not say this in the literal sense, which would be a blasphemy. But, that said, in a certain sense, yes, we must recommence a new Church.*

The Marists understood their Project to be a sharing in Mary's work of bringing Christ-life to birth and being with the Church as it came to be born (Water from the Rock, 11). It is clear that Champagnat also participated fully in this project, but, as on so many other occasions, in his own way. Practical man that he was, he wanted the ideals to be made concrete. In what way was he going to contribute to the renewal of the Church? According to the chroniclers, he repeated time and again in his meetings with his companions of the Society of Mary: *We need Brothers!* His way of constructing a different Church, renewed, with a Marian face, became concrete through the foundation of the *Little Brothers of Mary*.

OUR WAY OF BEING AND BUILDING CHURCH

To build a Church with a Marian face is something all Christians are invited to do. But we, as Marists, are invited to *manifest in an original and specific manner the presence of Mary in*



the life of the Church and of mankind, as John Paul II reminds us.

In what does this original and specific manner of being consist?

As I said before, Champagnat desired that our sole existence in the Church would already be a prophetic contribution, in being *little brothers of Mary*, that is to say, religious not forming part of the hierarchical structure of the Church and aspiring to live the Gospel in Mary's way. Both words are important: *little brothers* and *Mary*, and both sum up what we are called to be. As Br Jean-Baptiste, the well-known biographer of the Founder, says in a retreat he gave to the Brothers in 1862: *What is our spirit? What particular means did our Founder give us to arrive at perfect charity? The name we bear tells us what our spirit is.*



This is the originality of our vocation, this is what specifies our contribution to the Church and to society, not only for what we do, but also for the way we do it and who we are. Our existence in the Church and in society has meaning in itself, without the need to resort to our specific function.

The same goes for the thousands of lay people throughout the world who feel identified with the Marist charism, as I have been able to observe myself, in the last ten years in the five continents. Some feel that God is calling them to live their Christian life with the Marist characteristics and so we speak of the *lay Marist vocation*; in other cases, adherence is more on the level of some aspects of the spirituality or in the field of mission.

We are not a multinational of educational services, nor an international NGO; we are an ecclesial community with characteristics of its own, in which we experience the joy of the gift received from the Holy Spirit, and we feel the responsibility to offer our peculiar contribution.

We are going to treat in a little more depth the characteristics of this *Marian face* of the Church which we feel impelled to build. We can do this with great freedom of spirit, since, as I have already pointed out previously, as brothers and as lay persons. We are not members of the hierarchy; we are not called to act as agents of the institution, but as prophets in the midst of the People of God.

Let us remember that, for many persons with whom we relate in a regular way, the only possibility of contact with the Church is going to be through us. What a marvellous opportunity of offering a Church with a Marian face!





**THREE
ICONS FOR
CHARACTERISING
A CHURCH WITH
A MARIAN FACE**

*In the preceding pages:
Monogram of Mary located in the front
of the altar of the church of the Hermitage.*



The Greek Church *and*

the Slav Churches...

have considered

the veneration of icons

as an integral part of the liturgy

like the celebration of the word.

As the reading of the books

allows us to understand

the living word of the Lord,

so the exposition of the painted icon

allows those who contemplate it

to gain access, through sight,

to the mysteries of salvation

which, in one part are expressed

through ink and paper,

and in the other,

through different colours

and other materials.

John Paul II

Duodecimum Saeculum



The icon is a parable for the eyes; what the words announce to the ears, the painting of an icon shows silently to the eyes. (Second Council of Nicea).

For many of us, who do not belong to the spiritual tradition of Eastern Christianity, icons are not easy to understand. Nonetheless, they have been gaining popularity even in parts of the world influenced by *Western* Christianity.

We know that they belong to the first millennium of the Church, prior to its division and, therefore, they reflect the most ancient beliefs and practices of the Christian community. Would that icons were the sign of a Church once more undivided in the third millennium!

In the West, we underline the importance of words, of logic, of the need to listen. In the East, by contrast, importance is given to the image, to intuition and the need to contemplate.

We are going to contemplate three icons in which Mary appears; they will bring us to a better understanding of the characteristics of a Church with a Marian face. The Annunciation, the Visitation, and Pentecost are the three events which are going to guide us and which coincide

with the main calls the Lord has been addressing to the Institute through the last General Chapters.

I believe, as well, they also coincide with the sensibility of many people who dream of a *different* Church. In October 2011, while I was gathering ideas for writing this circular, it occurred to me that I needed to find some means of interacting with other persons and hearing their opinions. What I did was to create a page in Facebook called *Marian Church*, and ask *What for you would be the principal characteristics of a Church with a Marian face?*

For those not well acquainted with the Internet, I will say that Facebook is a social network created by a student of Harvard University with the aim of facilitating communication and exchange of subject matter among students in a



free manner. With time, the service has been extended until it is now available for any person who has an e-mail account. At the end of 2011, it has more than 800 million users.

In Facebook, everything is very ephemeral, because communications, normally very brief, succeed one another at great speed. For this reason, it was perhaps not the most suitable for the interaction I wanted, but, for all that, although there were not many responses, the ones I did receive seem to me significant because they represent a very wide range of persons: different languages, cultures, ages...

Well then, what contributions did I get in answer to my question? I think they could be classified under three main headings:

- a. **Service.** Attention to the most needy persons. Social Justice, liberation of the human being.
- b. **Mother:** who creates family, in which we all have equal dignity; respect for diversity and acceptance of difference. Simplicity and humility. To live love, tenderness, compassion. Accompany, counsel, accept in place of condemning. Human.
- c. **Faith in action.** Openness to the Holy Spirit, without fears. Meditate on the words of Jesus, keep them in your heart and put them into practice.



In connection with the three icons I mentioned earlier, we could say that service is characterized by the icon of the Visitation; the maternal and family aspect by Pentecost, and faith in action by the icon of the Annunciation.

We are going to pause at each of these icons, since they bring together

the essentials of religious life: *the search for God, a life of communion, and service of others are the three principal characteristics of the consecrated life* (John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Asia*, 44). They are the three aspects which we are going to highlight, also valid, in their way, for the Marist laity.

We let ourselves be challenged by each of the icons, conscious that *the attitudes of Mary, which we wish to take on in our lives, become the presence of the maternal face of God* (XIX General Chapter).

ICON OF THE VISITATION:
THE CHURCH OF THE APRON





With Mary, *who sets out in haste,*

*we feel called to live our lives
in service and to bring
Jesus to others.*

*In this service, the most vulnerable
children and young people
have preference.*

*With them and for them,
together with many other persons
of good will, we contribute to making
the world a better, more habitable
and fraternal place.*

*Our perspective for looking
at the world is that of Jesus,
who, as he prepares to wash the feet,
looks at it from below.*

Mons. Tonino Bello, poet, bishop and prophet, often used this image of the *Church of the apron*, the *Chiesa del grembiule*, because, he said, this is the only liturgical ornament we can attribute to Jesus. And he stated in one of his spontaneous talks: *The Lord 'got up from the table, removed his outer garment and, taking a towel, wrapped it round his waist': here is the Church of the apron. Whoever wants to draw the Church as the heart of Jesus experiences it, has to draw it with the towel around its waist. Someone could object that it is an excessive image of servility, too banal, a photograph you do not show relatives when they*

come to the house to take tea. But the Church of the apron is the Church Jesus prefers because he has made it so. To become servants of the world, to get down on the ground as Jesus did... and set to washing the feet of people, the world. This is the Church. And we, whose feet do we wash?

After using this image of the *church of the apron* at a Symposium on the vocation of the religious brother in Madrid, one Brother reminded me that this could be represented by Br Henri Vergès, whose picture in an apron has been widely reproduced in prints and posters: it is true! We could not have a better image than the one of this *little brother*, a great lover of

Mary, who knew how to *bury himself*, in a symbolic, but also literal way, in the lands of Islam. To evangelize from silence, discretely, with that characteristic marvellous smile.



We share in the spiritual motherhood of Mary as we take part in bringing Christ-life to the world of those whose lives we share. We nurture that life in the ecclesial community, whose communion we strengthen through fervent prayer and generous service (Water

from the Rock, 26). To serve is our vocation. In fact, I believe that we are known in the Church and in society above all for the service we have been offering now for nearly 200 years. A service performed with great dedication and self-surrender, and which is normally much valued and appreciated.

As good sons of Champagnat, we are pragmatic people and in each historical period have attempted to offer the service required of us. Today, in the global society in which we live, we have immediate access to information that records for us the poverty, suffering, marginalization of millions of children and youth all over the world. For this very reason, the last General Chapter reminds us that we must continue increasing and evaluating our presence among poor children and young people, in such a way that it becomes *strongly significant*.

This means that every province and every district has to ask itself if it is doing everything possible to take care of those left on the margins of our societies. But every Marist work can also ask itself the same question. In fact, we should be recognized, wherever we are present, as those who have a preference for the most vulnerable children and youth, and this not because we collect money for them, but through our admission policies, our educational practice, our way of understanding discipline and resolving conflict, our curriculum, etc. A good test to find out how we are doing would be to ask an outsider how they identify us... Do they see in us the maternal face of the Church?

We have been committed, from our origins, to defending the rights of children and young people through our educational service. Today we understand that this defence has to take a more structured and political form, attempting to intervene where decisions are taken which can change the structures that generate or perpetuate the violation of these rights. Hence our presence at the United Nations, with our proper values, and hence the presence we ought to have in the social or political institutions working in the defence of children's rights in the countries where we are present.

Whether in our educational institutions or in the other areas in which we work, we share our journey with people of good will, endeavouring that service be a priority value in our societies, although the quest for prestige or power or wealth may offer very powerful competition. The presence among us of other Christian confessions or other religions, or of persons still searching, allows us to offer the witness of the open and serving Church we feel called to construct.

To look at the world from another person's perspective means that one is capable of putting oneself into that other person's shoes; of allowing oneself to be touched by him; to understand him, although one may not always approve of his actions. When Jesus bends down to wash the feet of his disciples, his perspective is *from below*. It is a question of serving, but not as leading actors or as those who have all the answers, but as from the knees, that is to say, from the humble attitude of one who serves because




he loves, without asking anything in return. How many testimonies have I heard from people whose vision of the world has changed when they agreed to get down on their knees, in the presence of those who are already *below* in our society, and have let themselves be educated by these persons, without prejudice or fear! Yes, it is true that it is dangerous to do that. Your vision of the world will never return to being the same as before.

Those who govern us let themselves be guided by the spirit of the Handmaid of the Lord. Like her, they listen, ponder, and act (Constitutions, 120). This is the Marian leadership we all share, a leadership *from below*, not with readymade answers, but with attentive listening, with the humble attitude of Mary, who knows how to let herself be challenged by God and by others.

**ICON OF PENTECOST:
THE PEOPLE'S FOUNTAIN**





We build *community around Mary,*
like the apostles at Pentecost.
Our religious or lay communities
are places
where our human and spiritual
qualities find development,
and evangelize through
their testimony of brotherly love.
Faithful to our family spirit,
we accept as brother or sister,
in an unconditional way,
any person at all.
From Mary, our good Mother,
we learn to exercise
tenderness and compassion.

*The Catholic Church is not a museum of archaeology. It is the ancient fountain of the people, which provides water for the generations of today, as it has provided for those of the past (John XXIII, 1960). The Church as a fountain, like the famous *nasoni* of Rome, more than 2,000 fountains which, at all corners of the city, day and night generously offer their water to whoever wants to drink. Many tourists are surprised at such generosity and ask themselves if the water is good. Some note that a pipe, on the outside,*

is a little rusty, or that the basin into which the water falls is somewhat cracked or dirty... but this is of no matter to the Romans, who know well that the water continues to be as fresh and good as in the age of the aqueducts. And such is the Church, according to Pope John!

Our communities, then, are not museums to visit, but living places where one can quench one's thirst and share the water of life with other people. We know that we are the fountains and not the water. This makes us humble as we experience a permanent invitation to keep ourselves open and generous. This is the community of Pentecost, united around Mary, which knows itself bearer of a gift which transcends it.

Community is something essential in the life of the Brothers, as our very name indicates, although we are not always able to situate community life at the centre of our priorities. In addition, building community, whether as religious or lay people, is our primary means of evangelization. This is what our founder reminds us of in his spiritual testament: *Have the world say of the Little Brothers of Mary, what they said of the first Christians: 'See how they love one another!' That is the desire of my heart and my burning wish, at this last moment of my life.* The young need visible models that show it is possible to realize the dream of Jesus: to build an alternative society, the Kingdom, in the here and now; to demonstrate that a group of people of different origins, cultures, ages... are capable of living together, respecting one another, loving one another, without having chosen one another. Community,

the point of departure for our ministry to youth, is also offered as a point of arrival: the space which, in a normal way, should crown our pastoral efforts.

In more than one place, on my visits to the Institute, I have noted the fact that, in my view, we have often allowed ourselves to be led by the spontaneous tendency to reproduce within our communities, provinces and institutions, the divisions which exist in society. For example, we have often made a separation between the ones who work with the children and young people of the wealthy classes and the ones who have to do with those belonging to the poorer classes. In this way, we have not contributed to overcoming this social division but, rather, we have reproduced it among ourselves. Instead of being prophets of unity and reclaiming this prophetic role, we have confined ourselves to reproducing the existing social scheme. These are situations we should not allow among ourselves, under any pretext. Can we change



this tendency? It is clear that we can change it, provided that we become aware of it and are prepared to build bridges of dialogue and encounter, first among ourselves, and then at the social level.

You have certainly heard from many people, as I myself have heard, that among us there is a very visible sense of welcome and friendly treatment which we know as *family spirit*. There is a mutual acceptance, within our communities, which helps us develop fully as persons (or, at least, this is what we would have a right to expect). But it is also an acceptance we put into practice, unconditionally, with anyone who approaches our communities or our educational institutions, just as a mother would do with her children:

• Come, come, whoever you are, come!
• Infidel, religious or pagan, it matters little.
• Our caravan is not one of disappointment!
• Our caravan is one of hope!
• Come, even if you have broken
• your promises a thousand times!
• Come, despite everything, come!

Jalal ad-din Rumi,

Moslem mystic of the XIII century

Every time I have been in Lourdes, I have been impressed to see how sick persons or those with any type of handicap take preference over everyone. At least there is one place on earth

where this occurs, and it is lovely that it is in the Church! Cannot our communities and institutions in a similar way be like oases where any person can feel welcome, simply as a person, without needing to give explanations for anything? *Mary inspired in the first Marists a new vision of being Church which was modeled on that of the first Christians. This Marian Church has the heart of a mother: no one is abandoned. A mother believes in the goodness at the core of a person and forgives readily. We are respectful of each one's personal journey. There is a place for those with doubts and spiritual uncertainty. There is listening and dialogue.* (Water from the Rock, 114).

In making a place for (Mary) in our home, we learn how people are to be loved, and we, in





turn, become living signs of the Father's tenderness (C 21). The statue of the good Mother inherited from our Founder, is an image full of tenderness: the child is sucking his finger, as a sign of trusting repose in the arms of his mother. We know that as much in the life of Champagnat as in the lives of the first Brothers, we find passages exuding tenderness and gentleness.

We remember the testimony of Br Laurent, one of the first Brothers, speaking of Fr Champagnat: *A mother has no more tenderness for her children than he had for us... Our good superior, like the tenderest of fathers, took great care of us.*

Many brothers have known how to maintain this tenderness and gentleness, although they were values often not socially appreciated. I remember some years ago visiting a very sick Brother who was in his last days; he was accompanied by one of his sisters, a nun. Suddenly, the Marist brother looking after the sick came in and, after giving him some medicine and encouraging him with his words, gave him a kiss on the forehead with complete naturalness, and left the room. I remember the emotion the sister conveyed to me: she had never seen men treating each other with such respect, but also with such tenderness.

As Sister Magdeleine of Jesus, foundress of the Little Sisters of Jesus, said: *Generous love is found quite easily, but gentle and respectful love for all creatures is less common.* We are, then, invited to live as the prophet Micah recommends: *This is what God asks of you: to act justly, to love tenderly, and to walk humbly with your God* (6: 8).

We take up with joy the responsibility of carrying on the inheritance of our first brothers, who *living close to our Good Mother, grew steadily in the sense of brotherhood, of devotedness, and of self-renunciation in the service of one another* (Constitutions, 49). Our communities and educational works, living cells of the Church, are called to continue being a reflection of this maternal face.

ICON OF THE ANNUNCIATION:
BEAUTY WILL SAVE THE WORLD



Mary *in the Annunciation is our model of openness to the Spirit, to whom she listens attentively in silence and to whose action she abandons herself. Like her, who treasured these things and pondered them in her heart, we seek to be contemplatives in action. Our prayer, faithful to Marist tradition, is simple, inserted into everyday life, but also with specific times of contemplation. We educate ourselves and others by cultivating interiority, and promoting sensitivity and openness to beauty.*

Beauty will save the world, Dostoevsky makes a character in one of his novels say. Dostoevsky himself explains: Man can live without science, can live without bread, but without beauty he cannot continue living, because he would have nothing to do in the world. The whole secret is in this, the whole of history is in this. Our experience shows us in a convincing way, that neither violence nor those who employ power for their own benefit will save the world.

What does our world need, then, so structurally unjust and so full of violence? To open itself to the beauty of silence, wonder, gratitude. The human heart is thirsting for this, even though it is not always right in the way of obtaining it.

The day Vatican Council II began, thousands of people agreed to arrive in St Peter's Square with torches, in pilgrimage from various places in the city. Pope John refused to appear at the window of his private apartment and address the crowd, because he did not wish to shift the attention to himself. Finally, Mons. Capovilla, his Secretary, managed to convince him and the Pope began to speak spontaneously. This speech came to be known around the world as the *moon speech*, immortalized by RAI. Why was it given this title *of the moon* when, in fact, it spoke of many things? Because it touched the hearts of people, moving them, as it still moves us today, when we turn to listen to his words: *Notice how beautiful the moon is tonight: one could say that it has hurried to contemplate this spectacle which not even the Basilica of St Peter with its four centuries of history has been able to contemplate. My person counts for nothing; it is a brother who speaks to you... When you go home, you will meet the children: give them a hug and tell them it is a hug from the Pope. If you find some tears to wipe away, say: the Pope is with us, especially in times of sadness and grief...*

At a time of crisis in the Church and in society, the Pope spoke about the beauty of the moon, about giving the children a hug, about wiping

away tears... And this is the only thing most people remember about so important a day!

Speaking with some young people who were taking part in the World Youth Day in Madrid in August 2011, I asked them what had most impressed them. Without a moment's hesitation, they said that it had been the silence maintained by more than a million and a half young people in adoration. I heard the same thing from the youth who took part in Sydney in 2008. I do not know if they remembered any of the Pope's words, but this silence, certainly, touched something in their lives deeply, in a way they themselves did not know how to explain. Probably something Von Balthasar has said came true here: *the first thing we grasp of the mystery of God is not usually the truth but the beauty*. And we... what do we do? Talk, talk talk...



Is all this not indicating a new direction for us and for our way of educating and evangelizing? Edgar Morin (2010) uses the image of metamorphosis to describe the changes that must take place in society: *We have to begin again. In fact, it has all begun, but without our noticing. We are in the beginnings, modest, invisible, on the margins, scattered. But there already exists, on all the continents, a creative effervescence, a multitude of local initiatives towards economic, social, political, cognitive, educational, ethic regeneration or reform of life.* In this process of metamorphosis, affirms Morin, *the unfolding-folding orientation means that the objective is not fundamentally the development of material goods, efficiency, the capacity for yielding income or what can be calculated, but the return of each to his interior needs, the great return to the interior life and the primacy of understanding one's neighbor, of love and friendship.*

The great return to the interior life. In every human person there is an insatiable longing which rises from the depths of their being. The poet José Ángel Valente calls this the *nostalgia of the gills*, because ... *we are not on the surface except to have a profound inspiration that lets us return to the depth.* In many parts of the world signs are present of this return to the interior life, to the spiritual quest. Where do I stand in this quest?

In our societies of today, no matter what continent we are on, we live in the midst of very powerful forces which, unless we are endowed with a serious discipline, lead us to live in a permanent



state of superficiality. Perhaps this was the experience of Saint Augustine, as he describes it in his *Confessions*: *Late have I loved you, Beauty so ancient and so new, late have I loved you! And here you were within me and I was outside, and outside I was searching for you; and deformed as I was, I threw myself on the beautiful things you have created. You were with me, but I was not with you. Those things kept me far from you which, if they did not exist in you, would not be at all.*

Even beneath the appearance of apostolic commitment, we can live caught up in a spiral of activism. *The years in the 'shanty-town districts' were exceptional. I could save children from death. It was extraordinary. With all that, what I do today in silence and in 'hiddenness' is no less exciting. I live in my body the suffering of poverty. Not material poverty. Today my poverty is 'inaction'. Action gave me the feeling of existing. The more*

action, the more alive I felt. And it was 'intoxicating'. It was only an illusion, but I didn't notice that while I was active. I had to suffer the proof of incapability, connected to the fact that I am an old woman, to discover this essential truth. And perhaps that is one of the greatest graces of my life, because today I am in the pure truth. I can't hide anymore behind Sister Emmanuelle, 'active' on all fronts. (Sister Emmanuelle, known as the Little Sister of the ragpickers). The world does not need frenetic activists, but peaceful people. This is the most solid foundation for peace in our societies.

Once more, Mary shows us the way to follow; Mary of the silence, of the acceptance, of the attentive listening. She who *treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart.*

A few months ago, I met in our community in Paris a brother who had spent some days in Lisieux. He told me he had been very moved in that place, because he had found much similarity between the spirituality of Therese and Marist spirituality. Without being able to formulate it very well, this brother had the conviction that our prayer should be simple, trusting, one of abandonment.

I frequently thank God for blessing us with marvelous people who, with great simplicity, live their daily fidelity, nourishing their faith, and putting this faith into action. They are people whose biographies will perhaps never be published or whose names will not appear in the news, but they are the major treasure the Institute has at its disposal.

How many brothers, I am sure of it, have lived and are living as authentic mystics, holding on to their rosaries! Can there be a simpler prayer than the rosary? It is the prayer of simple people, without complications, which expresses their love and their trust in the repetition of the same words, time after time. Does the rosary not situate us in the tradition of the prayer of the heart of the first centuries, a tradition that has never ceased being present in the Church? Fr Champagnat went to the essentials, and found in the rosary a stupendous way of expressing trust and abandonment. We know that he recommended reciting the whole rosary; if one could not, then at least a decade, and if even this was not possible, at least kissing the rosary before going to sleep, as a sign of love.

Am I recommending going back to devotional practices? The only thing I wish to emphasize is that, whatever the manner may be, we absolutely need to pray, and to pray as Marists. And the way that Mary teaches us is that of contemplation: abandonment, like a child in its mother's arms. This active abandonment opens the heart to people and events, allowing it to be touched very deeply by them, just like Mary, who tried to discern in all this the footprints of the God of surprises.

By this way we turn ourselves into contemplatives in action. With Teresa of Calcutta we can affirm that *the fruit of silence is prayer; the fruit of prayer is faith*. Only if we know how to dedicate specific times to silence, to personal prayer, to contemplation, will our eyes be opened to reality



in a new way: everything is the same but everything is different.

The Pope reminds all religious that, by vocation, we are searchers for God. *To this search you consecrate the best energies of your life. You pass from the secondary things to the essentials, what is truly important; you are looking for the definitive, you are looking for God, you keep your gaze fixed on him. Like the first monks, you cultivate an eschatological orientation: beyond the provisional, you seek what is permanent, what does not pass. You look for God in the brothers you have been given, with whom you share the same life and mission. You look for him in the men and women of our time, to whom you are sent to offer them, with life and word, the gift of the Gospel. You look for him particularly in the poor, the first destined to hear the Good News. You look for him in the Church, where the Lord*


makes himself present, above all in the Eucharist and the sacraments, and his Word, the primordial road in the quest for God, introduces us to converse with him and shows us his true face. But always searchers and passionate witnesses of God! (Benedict XVI, 2010).

How are we going to develop this mystical dimension of our life? By paying the necessary price for it to sprout, grow, flower: to keep silence, dedicate time to contemplation, to attentive listening to the Word, to the celebration of the faith... With patience and constancy, without pretention. *Although our efforts at attention for years appear to us to give no results, one day a light, exactly proportionate to those efforts, will flood the soul (Simone Weil).*





**MARY,
DAWN OF
THE NEW TIMES**



Today *we do not need great prophets,
but little prophets who live
with simplicity, without noise
and without complication,
the radicalness and the paradox
of the Gospel in daily life.*

Johann Baptist Metz





On the 2nd of January 2017 it will be 200 years since the foundation of the Institute. An excellent time to celebrate and thank the Lord and our good Mother for all the good that has been done in the world through the Institute during that time. It will also be an opportunity to remember: names, events, persons...

What can we say about the future? Certainly, it is not in our hands and probably we will be mistaken in any prediction we make. What we can do, and what we are already doing, is to act in the present. Would it not be marvelous if on our way towards this bicentenary we could feel enthusiasm and a sort of collective contagion, encouraging one another in our fidelity to the Marist project? Mary, dawn of the new times, continues at our side to be our source of renewal.

We feel called to build a Church with a Marian face. This is not a matter of an intellectual construction to show to visitors; much less a banner to raise in opposition to other visions of Church. A Church with a Marian face is **what we are committed** to build.

Marina, an Italian lay woman, expressed it thus in Facebook, in responding to my question:

· A Church able to accept,
· always unconditionally.
· A Church which smiles, shares,
· and wipes away tears.
· A Church which offers tenderness
· and lives mercy.
· A Church which pardons.
· A Church which loves
· with the eyes and the heart.
· A Church which leads
· to an all-embracing meeting with Jesus.

This Church, in order that it may exist, needs you and me to take the firm decision to make it a reality. We are not asking others to do this; it is our dream that commits us.

It is a marvelous project to which it is worth surrendering one's life.

This is what so many other persons have done before us. Br Emile François, who died in December 2005 in Beijing, and whom I had the opportunity to meet a few months before, when he was already very ill, provides an example.

Citing this true *Little Brother of Mary* is intended to pay recognition and homage to many others who, like him, were faithful to their conscience and commitment in very difficult situations. Without giving themselves importance, without witnesses who would take note of what we today would consider as heroism, but which they would simply consider *normal*: *this is what*



anyone else would have done, they would say more than once, without any theatricality.

Br Emile François, when the difficult times came during which he was forbidden to live in community, returned to his home town, but continued, like a good Marist, to teach catechism. This

caused him to become the object of false accusations and he was sent to prison repeated times, so many that he himself could not remember. Each time he came out of prison, the brother, true to his principles, returned to teaching catechism, thus bringing further false accusations against him. In total, probably, he spent more than 15 years in prison. He was only left in peace when he was already very invalid and weak.

As our brother explained, even when he was in prison he endeavoured to spread the Gospel, although very tactfully and prudently. In fact, he had baptized various of his prison companions, to whose conversion he had contributed. Including some condemned to death, with whom he shared cells at times, who then faced their sentence with peace in their hearts.

The prison officials knew that the brother had been falsely accused, and had a great respect for him. So much so, that he managed to make a good friend of one of them who had a lot of

responsibility in the prison. When this man retired, he took the trouble to travel to Br Emile François' home town to meet him and chat with him for a long time. Before departing, the former official asked him if he could give him a copy of the Holy Bible.

A brother who knew Emile François well said of him, that *he was a very intelligent man, of great calm and simplicity, and that he never showed any type of resentment towards those who had falsely accused him or condemned him.* And he added: *I am sure that, because of his unquenchable fidelity to his faith and his religious vows, he had an enormous influence on any person who came in contact with him.* Finally, he tells us: *I am very impressed*

by his acceptance of his infirmity towards the end of his life. In summary, I can say that the Marist Institute and the Catholic Church always held the FIRST place in his heart.



The image reproduced here is that of Our Lady of China, the original of which we have in Rome, given us by one of the present leaders of the Church in that great country. Together with the circular, you will also receive a copy of this image, in the

form of a print, as a reminder of all those who have gone before us in the faith, and as an inspiration for our commitment. *With so many witnesses in a great cloud on every side of us, we too, then, should throw off everything that hinders us, especially the sin that clings so easily, and keep running steadily in the race we have started. Let us not lose sight of Jesus, who leads us in our faith and brings it to perfection: for the sake of the joy which was still in the future, he endured the cross, disregarding the shameful of it, and from now on has taken his place at the right of God's throne. Think of the way he stood such opposition from sinners and then you will not give up for want of courage. In the fight against sin, you have not yet had to keep fighting to the point of death (Heb. 12: 1-4).*

Each time we take this image in our hands, we can feel in deep communion with so many witnesses of the faith yesterday and today, who rejoice to bear the name of Mary and who seek to be her presence, in an original and specific



way, in the life of the church and of our societies. I invite you to pray frequently to Mary and with her, renewing our trust and our commitment:

· *Mary,*
 · *dawn of the new times,*
 · *I thank you because you have*
 · *always done everything among us*
 · *and you continue doing it down to today.*
 · *I place myself confidently in your hands*
 · *and abandon myself to your tenderness.*
 · *I also entrust to you each of the persons*
 · *who, like me, feel privileged*
 · *to bear your name.*
 · *I renew this day my consecration*
 · *to you as well as my firm intention*
 · *to contribute to building a Church*
 · *which reflects your face.*
 · *You, source of our renewal,*
 · *accompany my fidelity,*
 · *as you accompanied*
 · *those who preceded us.*
 · *On the way to the Marist bicentenary,*
 · *I feel your presence next to me*
 · *and for that I give you thanks.*

Amen

Mary, dawn of the new times that are already beginning to appear. From her hand, we will be capable of launching ourselves towards new lands, in spite of our resistances and fears. Allow me to conclude these pages by quoting W. H. Murray, who knew very well, from his own experience, what it means to face resistance in setting out on

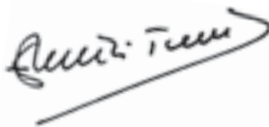
the road, particularly when the goal is the Himalayas! Committing oneself, he tells us, opens the doors to the impossible miracle.

· *Until one is committed,*
· *there is hesitancy,*
· *the chance to draw back,*
· *always ineffectiveness.*
· *Concerning all acts of initiative*
· *and creation, there is one elementary truth,*
· *the ignorance of which kills*
· *countless ideas and splendid plans:*
· *the moment one definitely*
· *commits oneself,*
· *then Providence moves too.*
· *All sorts of things occur to help one*
· *that would otherwise never have occurred.*
· *I have learned a deep respect*
· *for one of Goethe's couplets:*
· *Whatever you can do*
· *or dream you can, begin it.*
· *Boldness has genius,*
· *power and magic in it. Begin it now!*

The Scottish Himalayan Expedition

May Mary be your companion on the way,
and your blessing.

Rome, 2 January 2012



A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Luigi Bommarito", written on a light-colored rectangular piece of paper. The signature is slanted upwards to the right.

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Je fus
à mes côtés, sentant plus
je méditais de plus en plus
De Petits Frères de Marie,
succès, en peu de jours
sans la...

exécution le projet que
je leur donnai le nom
de Sujets; un prompt

^{Co?}
Con 1826

aide par ce B'elat et
maison b