M

ARIST GROUP

This term, which may appear generic and refer to any grouphaving to do with our apostolic action, actually indicates the experience undertaken by several Provinces of the Institute of periodically gathering lay people and brothers to share life, explore the Marist values together, and create community links[[1]](#footnote-1). The Marist groups do this with great flexibility, according to the participants’ possibilities, and with no fixed structures. It is a way of living the Marist charism together with others[[2]](#footnote-2).

Under different names (Marist Encounter Groups, Marist Spirituality Groups, or Marist Life Groups), they were born because many brothers and lay people felt the need to find ‘road companions’ with similar experiences regarding their search for meaning, companions who could enjoy relating to others and defining their life project with a Marist style. The table of La Valla became the symbol of the relationship they share[[3]](#footnote-3).

The groups are very different regarding size, age, life choices (religious, priests, married couples, single people, etc.) and pastoral settings the members come from (families, educators, former students, pastoral animators, etc.). The group revolves around its periodical meeting, indicating its place and timing. As in any human group, one of the members serves as coordinator and animates the group.

Marist fraternity – which implies simple and authentic communication among people, and a welcoming and open attitude – is the basis for these groups, as a space for personal and community growth. They are an opportunity to share our faith journey, and move towards a horizon of life and hope. They are a community framework that facilitates quality meetings bringing laity and brothers together to share their essential values[[4]](#footnote-4).

1. Cf. Gathered Around the Same Table 86, 91, 92. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Several Provinces have written an inspirational document to support these groups in their community experience: Marist Spirituality Groups (under the Spanish acronym GEM) of the Compostela Province, with the document The Marist Charism, a Shared Gift. From the Province of The Hermitage, Living in a Group, a Path of Communion for Laity and Brothers, and Marist Encounter Groups, from the Province of Ibérica. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. “The strength of this family spirit gathers us who live the Marist charism into a new family of followers of Christ, through the example of Mary. The table of La Valla is a symbol of the relationship that unites us” (GAST 78). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. “This sharing requires times together. Around the table people gather to speak, to laugh, to be together. It is necessary to seek out those moments and spaces for communication in depth, meetings of a quality that unite us in what is essential. Thus it will be easier to understand the different ways of thinking and living, and accepting our own and other people’s limitations in a climate of true brotherhood” (GAST 80). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)