

a new La Valla



marists 2017

22nd general chapter



Pre-Chapter Process

October 2016

22nd General Chapter - 2017

Pre-Chapter Process

Our Constitutions and Statutes tell us that “the General Chapter is an assembly representative of the whole Institute. It is an expression of the participation of all the Brothers in the life and mission of the Institute, as well as their co-responsibility in its government. It exercises the highest extraordinary authority”.

The next General Chapter will be celebrated in Rionegro (Colombia), approximately 40 km from Medellín, in September 2017.



Letter to the Marists of Champagnat

Dear Marists of Champagnat

We are on the threshold of a new epoch of our Marist history! The bicentenary of our foundation is a moment to celebrate what has been and to shape a new beginning for ourselves. The convocation of the 22nd General Chapter, under the theme A New LaValla, invites all of us to A New Beginning.

This historical moment is an invitation to the Marist global body to co-create the future we want for our life and mission. The Preparatory Commission is conscious that this is a time of importance for the whole Marist world and is inviting all Marists to participate fully in the preparations for the 22nd General Chapter.

The future is not some place we are going, but one we are creating; the paths to it are not found but made, and the making of those pathways changes both the maker and the destination.

Margaret Silf

The methodology of Chapters has evolved over the years. Previously, we adopted a parliamentary style of operation. In 2009, the 21st General Chapter saw a marked shift in our approach adopting 'fraternal conversation' as the basis of discernment. This has been reinforced at the global level and in our regions, provinces, and districts. We desire to deepen and expand these emerging methodologies.

In recent times, greater emphasis has been placed on the contemplative dimension of our lives and this has been infused into our conversation and discernment. This contemplative stance is beginning to change the nature and quality of our conversations and how we view the world.

The intention of the pre-Chapter process is to engage all of us in encountering anew the world that is becoming, in order to sense where we feel the energy and the potential are for our Marist Charism.

Keeping the conversation alive: the process is the goal!

To that end, the Preparatory Commission is inviting you to a three-stage process which is outlined below:

1. From October 2016 to February 2017: Creating New Conversations

These three conversations will explore together: (a) the meaning of living the La Valla experience today, (b) becoming more aware of world around us, and (c) what else may be going on in the world that we are not yet aware of – and to imagine ways to reach out to and encounter those new realities.



2. From February to May 2017: Immersion Encounters - Entering New Territory

Following the invitation of Pope Francis to be a Church that “goes out,” and that allows itself to be challenged by the geographical and existential frontiers, we are invited to go out to meet new realities, for example people or things on the margins, opening our minds and hearts to what the Spirit may wish to say to us through them.

3. From May to August 2017: Gathering the Fruits

As a prior step in our preparation for the General Chapter, the participants from each Administrative Unit will organize a time for communities or the whole Province or District to share experiences of the previous stages. This will help capitulants and all those invited to the Chapter capture what has come from their administrative unit and transmit this wealth of experience to the Chapter assembly.

A few words on contemplative conversations....

Contemplative conversations challenge us to listen in a different way. It means listening to the spirit within ourselves and at the same time listening for the spirit in others. It requires us to suspend our judgement, resist the urge to engage in a debate and to listen deeply to the other person. It invites each person to open his/her heart and mind to see life and experience through the eyes of other people, allowing them to enrich me and to see something new. Our contemplation may also include other realities of creation.

... To speak clearly and listen with humility...

Pope Francis

We pray that these conversations and encounters will enrich each one of us and bring us to new insights and impulses. We desire for the spirit of these conversations and immersion encounters to be one of joyful engagement with our own experience and that of our companions. It is a celebration of our lives and the beginnings of the passionate co-creation of our future together; it begins our process of exploring and discerning what God wants us to live and to be.

We hope that when the capitulants and the invited guests gather in Rionegro near Medellin, Colombia in September 2017, all Marists will have travelled the journey and the work of the Chapter will have already begun so that we can walk together into the third century of Marist life and mission.

With blessings,

The Preparatory Commission of the 22nd General Chapter

Any member of the Commission is available to answer any questions you may have. This will also help the commission with on-going planning of the General Chapter.



The Preparatory Commission members are Brothers Joseph McKee (Coordinator), Eugène Kabanguka (General Council), Carlos Huidobro (General Administration), Pau Fornells (Secretary), João Gutemberg (Brasil Sul-Amazônia), Álvaro Sepúlveda (Santa María de los Andes), Ben Consigli (USA), Juan Carlos Fuertes (Mediterránea), Vincent de Paul Kouassi (West Africa), Darren Burge (Australia), Rajakumar Soosai Manickam (South Asia) and Mr. Matthieu Daum (Facilitator).

Pre-Chapter Process

Intention for the Pre-Chapter Process

To engage the whole Institute in encountering anew the World that is becoming, in order to sense where we feel the energy and the potential are for our Marist Charism, and what we may need to let go of to enable that potential to unfold.

Key features of this Pre-Chapter Process

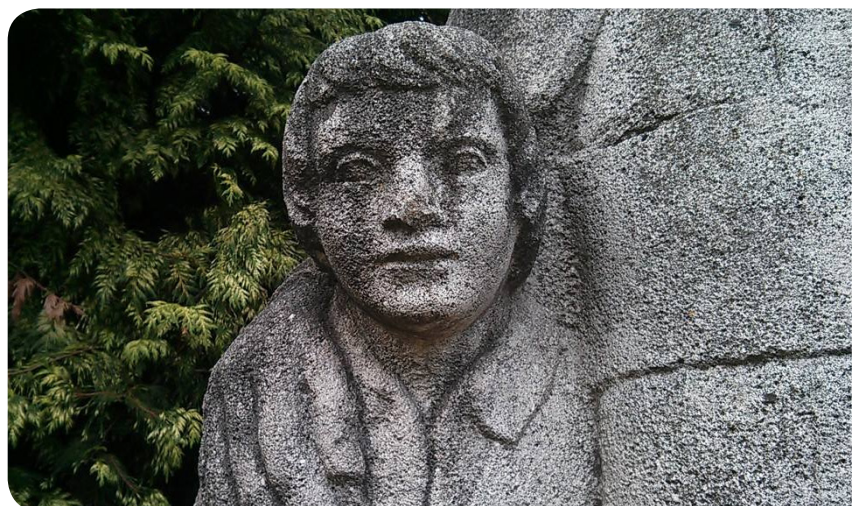
1. Inviting **every brother** to bring his voice and his perspective into the preparation process, so that the Chapter works with what the Whole Body will have generated
2. An **involvement of our Lay Marists** in this preparation process, done in the way that seems best for each community/Province
3. A **joyful engagement** through fraternal, contemplative conversations, in the spirit of those conversations we sometimes have around a fire; where a prayerful disposition and a suspension of judgement enable everyone to speak and listen from the heart.
4. **Anchored** in our individual and collective **experience of La Valla**: the original one, our own La Valla moments, and the one(s) that may be expected of us in this emerging future.
5. A process of **sense-making** that invites us to a **deep interior dive**, but also to **connect to the world around us** that we may only partially be aware of, and to **go beyond** to discover some of those peripheries we have yet to encounter.
6. The importance of **fostering the links that make us One Body**: from individual to community, and across communities to countries, provinces, continents, regions – all an expression of this One Body that we are as an Institute.

7. The importance of ***felt, lived experiences***, rather than over-focussing on data, charts, reports. The idea is to enable the Chapter, representing the Whole Body during these 5 weeks, to ***engage with what It will have (re)discovered*** in the preparation process, and, equally as important, with ***how It has been challenged, moved, consoled*** by what It has (re) discovered

8. The ***Chapter delegates*** will have a crucial role in conveying, in a heartfelt way, what their part of the Body has (re)discovered, and how this has moved It. They will ***self-organise***, with Brothers in their local areas, to see how to best convey what is emerging

9. A Pre-Chapter Process that invites every brother around ***a set of activities with clear purposes***, but with much ***flexibility around how they are actually done locally***, so that we can honour the diversity and the richness of the situations across our Institute

10. Finally, it is important to be clear that the Pre-Chapter Process is designed as a way for all of us to ***open up*** to what may need to happen, ***but not to propose nor suggest*** what may need to happen. It is a way to connect to the forces, the dynamics, the trends, the energies, the potentials that are happening inside of us (individually and collectively), and around us, and that will be the soil on which our Chapter Calls will grow – but the ***Pre-Chapter Process is not a time to try to discern what those Calls might be***. This discernment is the work of the Chapter, and need to be left to the Chapter, where, as One Body, we will be able to engage in that discernment.



Stage 1

Creating New Conversations

A. Living the La Valla Experience Today

Overview

What: a fraternal, contemplative conversation centred around La Valla

When: in October 2016

Where: in the community house, or another place that you, as a community, wish to use for this conversation

Who: the whole community + any Lay Marists you wish to invite; it would be good if the same group can engage in the whole preparatory process together

How long: set aside at least 3 hours for the actual conversation, and 45 minutes to 1 hour for the individual preparation

Individual preparation: it is probably best to take some time beforehand to prepare individually. To do so, look below at the questions offered for Conversation, let your own answers come to you, and write them down ready for the community conversation.

Alternatively, you may have a longer meeting (4 hours), and give yourselves plenty of individual time before the sharing.

The Conversation

Prayerful Setting

The setting facilitates prayerful sharing and contemplative listening. We begin with a brief moment of quiet to open our hearts and minds to leave all our other thoughts and preoccupations aside... to allow us to get in touch with ourselves and how we are coming to this gathering.

Brief Introduction

The facilitator then explains briefly the “Intention” of the gathering, the importance of engaging with open heart and mind; and everyone can read for themselves the Principles for Contemplative Listening and Noticing the Movements...

Other Resources for this Prayerful Conversation

The facilitator can also bring other resources to introduce these prayerful moments of conversation, such as short readings and/or videos. (S)he will choose what is most appropriate to create the adequate prayerful setting, so that everyone is clear that this is not a study or intellectual discussion, but rather a heartfelt contemplative conversation about everyone’s own lived experience of La Valla.

Sharing an Experience & Contemplative Listening

After a short pause for reflection¹ each brother/Lay Marist shares around the first question, whilst the rest of the group listens contemplatively (each group will choose and adapt, whether to take these questions one by one, or respond to the three together in one’s own sharing):

1. What does Marcellin Champagnat’s La Valla experience mean to me? How do I make sense of it? How does it connect to my engagement and my life as Marist?

There is a spirit of deep contemplative listening to the experience of each brother. There is a moment of silence after each sharing to enhance the listening.

Once everyone has shared on the first question, we move to a similar sharing, but this time on question 2.

2. During my own life, and perhaps in particular since I entered the Institute, what have been my own La Valla experiences? How did they happen, what was the context, how did it impact me and those around me?

Each brother shares something of their own personal experience. A moment when you felt on fire; of indignation; motivated to act like Marcellin. I have experienced a time of being like Champagnat – I am Champagnat now. How did he feel? What was the experience really like for him?

1. In case you chose not to have personal preparation beforehand, this is the time to have 45 minutes to 1 hour of individual reflection on the 3 questions structuring this dialogue.

And then on question 3:

3. La Valla in 2016: what similarities/resonances do I pick up between the situation in France in 1816, and the situation today in the part of the world where I live? What thoughts, feelings, associations are being triggered in me?

Moment of Silence

After the sharing the brothers are invited to take some moments for contemplation. What is emerging in me? What am I being invited to? What is God saying to me/us? How would I like to respond?

Sharing the Fruits of our Listening & Contemplation

Each brother shares and a community member records the main ideas, thoughts, feelings, associations shared – through a word, an image, a metaphor, but not too many words! These will help the group reconnect to its own process at the next conversation, and also share with those going to the Chapter in the “Gathering the Fruits” stage.

Closing Prayer

An optional hymn can be used as well.





B. The World Around Us

Overview

What: a fraternal, contemplative conversation centred around the world around us

When: in November-December 2016

Where: in the community house, or another place that you, as a community, wish to use for this conversation

Who: the whole community + any Lay Marists you wish to invite; of course new members can join the process at this stage

How long: set aside at least 3 hours for the actual conversation, and 30 to 45 minutes for individual preparation

Individual preparation: yes, to be done beforehand. This conversation is an opportunity for you to share with the rest of the community the one or two key issues happening in the world around you¹

that is really catching your attention; that is speaking to your heart; and that is particularly moving you as Marist.

In order to prepare, we invite you therefore to think about specific people, and their specific stories, and find a way of creatively presenting them (video, poems, drawing, short story, etc.). The aim for you is to be able to convey, during the community conversation, ***what it feels to be like*** those people going through those issues, ***what they think, what they feel***, etc.

Please explore also why and how these issues, and these people, move you personally, and as Marist.

The Conversation

Prayerful Setting

The setting facilitates prayerful sharing and contemplative listening. We begin with a brief moment of quiet to open our hearts and minds to leave all our other thoughts and preoccupations aside...to allow us to get in touch with ourselves and how we are coming to this gathering.

Brief Introduction

The facilitator then explains briefly the Intention of the gathering, the importance of engaging with Open heart and mind; and everyone can read for themselves the Principles for Contemplative Listening and Noticing the Movements...

Other Resources for this Prayerful Conversation

The facilitator can also bring some images for reflection about our world today and the experience of children and/or some quotes from Pope Francis's encyclicals "Laudato Sii" and "Evangelii Gaudium", where the peripheries and mercy are presented. Other Marist material about seeing the world through the eyes of children and our work on the peripheries can be helpful to consider the reality of the world around us today...the reality for children...and let that reality speak to us.

1. By that we mean the world around your community, i.e. in your village/town, or perhaps in your country. We also mean people, initiatives, movements beyond your country that you may be connected to or interested in through Internet for example, and that you feel is part of a world around you that the other participants in the group may not know much about.

Mission precedes the Church. Mission belongs to God: in and out of the world through the Spirit; God who, in the person of Jesus, teaches, heals, welcomes, suffers. And it is extended today through men and women whom God invites to share in his mission, through the Church, called to be a servant of God's mission in the world. That is the reason the Church exists.

Br. Emili Turú, *Montagne: The Dance of the Mission*

Sharing an Experience/Contemplative Conversation

In turn, each brother and Lay Marist has the opportunity to share the stories they have prepared about the main issues of the world around them that speaks to their heart. They then also share why and how this moves them, personally and as Marist.

There is opportunity for brothers to expand on these facts by adding their own observations and experience of the world around them today, both globally and locally.

There is a spirit of deep contemplative listening to the experience of each brother. There is a moment of silence after each sharing to enhance the listening.

Today, however, we have to realize that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.

Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 49

Moment of Silence

After everyone has spoken, we stay in silence and let the following questions find their way in us:

What is emerging in me? What picture of the world around us is emerging in the room? How is this impacting me, challenging me? What is God saying to me/us?

Today, our challenge is not so much atheism as the need to respond adequately to many people's thirst for God.

Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 89

Sharing the Fruits of our Listening & Contemplation

After the contemplative listening and the moment of reflective, prayerful silence, the group conversation about the world they find themselves in, and how it moves them.

It is essential to draw near to new forms of poverty and vulnerability, in which we are called to recognize the suffering Christ, even if this appears to bring us no tangible and immediate benefits. I think of the homeless, the addicted, refugees, indigenous peoples, the elderly who are increasingly isolated and abandoned, and many others..

Pope Francis, Evangelii Gaudium, 210

At the end of the conversation, the group finds a way of recording the key themes, ideas, feelings that emerged during the session, and finds one or several images and metaphors to describe both the world around the community, and how the (re)discovery, or the affirmation of their knowledge of this world, has touched them and moved them.

These will help the group reconnect to its own process at the next conversation, and also share with those going to the Chapter in the “Gathering the Fruits” stage.

Closing Prayer

An optional hymn can be used as well.





C. Emerging Realities

Overview

What: a fraternal, contemplative conversation centred around the world beyond – i.e. what else is going on in, and shaping the world, that we don't know much about but need to discover

When: in January-February 2017

Where: in the community house, or another place that you, as a community, wish to use for this conversation

Who: the initial group, i.e. the whole community + any Lay Marists you invited; of course new members can join the process at this stage

How long: set aside at least 3 hours for the actual conversation, but no specific time for preparation (see below)

Individual preparation: yes, to be done beforehand, although in no particularly structured way. Just let your mind wander, and sense what else may be going on in the world that you as a community don't know much about; who else might be important "players", at the heart of

important societal dynamics, that you have yet to talk to.

The Conversation

Prayerful Setting

The setting facilitates prayerful sharing and contemplative listening. The facilitator helps us begin with a brief moment of quiet to open our hearts and minds to leave all our other thoughts and preoccupations aside... to allow us to get in touch with ourselves and how we are coming to this gathering

Brief Introduction

The facilitator then explains briefly the Intention of the gathering, the importance of engaging with Open heart and mind; and everyone can read for themselves the Principles for Contemplative Listening and Noticing the movements.

Other Resources for this Prayerful Conversation

Reconnecting to the past two community conversations; reading quotes, showing photos, drawings; reconnecting to the metaphors, etc ...

The brothers and Lay Marists are then invited to reflect on the questions: What interior movements do I remember having had during those two conversations? How have things been since? What else has caught my attention, has moved me ?

Contemplative Conversation: Exploring “Beyond What We Know”

This conversation is held in a spirit of deep contemplative listening to the experience of each participant. There is a moment of silence after each sharing to enhance the listening.

To start the conversation, everyone takes some individual time to explore the following questions:

1. Who do I see or come across in my town as I walk the streets, take the bus/train etc., who seem part of a world that I don't actually know¹ much about, or not at all?
2. Who do I see or hear about in the media, that I realise I don't know much about, or not at all?
3. If I wanted to get to know them, to connect with them at a real human level, how would I go about making it happen?

Moment of Silence

After everyone has spoken, we stay in silence and let the following questions find their way in us:

What is emerging in me after hearing all the different images of the people out there at the peripheries of our lives (and beyond)? What common threads do I perceive? What is the diversity that we could reach out to? What is God trying to say to me/us?



Sharing the Fruits of our Listening & Contemplation

After the contemplative listening and the moment of reflective, prayerful silence, the group engages in a conversation about the different possibilities that emerged in the sharing, and what they feel drawn to exploring further.

The group then moves to action planning about who they will actually reach out to, and how they will go about doing so. This can be thought about in many ways: for example, the whole group can choose to embark on the same exploratory encounter; or to do it in pairs; or individually.

Though we think it would benefit everyone, this is not compulsory, and is best done if you're actually going with where your own energy and desire take you – so feel free to be creative and to engage with it in the way that fits your and your community's situation!

If members of the group are not able to go out to meet these new realities, find ways of inviting them in for a conversation!

At the end of the conversation, the group finds a way of recording the key themes, ideas, feelings that emerged during the session, as well as the concrete steps they are planning to take to start the immersion encounters.

Closing Prayer

An optional hymn can be used as well.

1. Here we mean that we may have ideas about what life is for them, but we haven't actually connected to what life must feel like for them, what moves them, how they make sense of the world and what they desire/aspire to...

Stage 2

Immersion Encounters... Entering New Territory

Overview

What: going out to meet the people at our peripheries and beyond that you have identified at the previous meeting. If members of the group are not able to go out to meet these new realities, find ways of inviting in some persons from those new realities for a conversation!

When: February to May 2017

Where: in places where they live / meet / work

Who: individually, in pair, or as a group (Brothers + Lay Marists)

How long: depending on whom you choose to connect with; anything between 2 hours and a whole day

Individual preparation: Yes, see below



Immersion Encounters

Purpose of These Encounters

To open our mind and heart to some of the realities¹ shaping the world that we may not yet be aware of.

Brief Presentation

Going out of your own comfort zone and moving into another reality is usually regenerating, because:

1. It enables you to see reality with new eyes,
2. It allows you to generate new ideas,
3. It helps you build relationships with others that could be key or instrumental for developments of your activities in the future that you wouldn't think about otherwise
4. It is likely to produce a mindset shift that is so much more profound and effective than we would have if we spent the same time in a workshop space or exploring this reality through Internet

Preparation

Do this preparation on your own if you are going on your own; otherwise, do it as a group with those going out on the same exploratory encounter.

Take some time a few days before the visit to have a conversation around the following three things:

1. What's our own question. So what is it that we are really wanting to explore in this exploratory encounter (Really clarifying your question is not at all limiting what you are going to perceive. It's sharpening your observation.)
2. Translate this key question into a set of issues, topics, or even questions that you will want to cover during the encounter. This is meant as a helping guide – not a rigid questionnaire that you will try to get through during the encounter

1. The idea is to meet people, and develop a sense of what life feels like for them. However, you may also choose to encounter physical spaces (natural ecosystems, or, conversely, degraded/toxic sites), and experience what it feels to be in those spaces – what those spaces tell you. If possible though, try to encounter people who live there too, and hear from them.

3. Write down your key assumptions (anything between 3 and 6 assumptions each), the assumptions about what you expect to see in the place that you're going to visit and the people you are going to meet.

Writing down these assumptions, making them explicit, helps you make explicit your mental model – i.e. your assumptions about what you expect to see.

It will help you, on return from your exploratory encounter, to identify not only what you have discovered about the new reality out there, but also what you have discovered about yourself.

The Actual Encounter

As an encounter, this is about opening not just your mind, but also your heart to the people you will be meeting. Whilst the set of issues, topics, or even questions can help you, don't let them govern the conversation; go with the flow, go to where the person you are encountering wants to take you, go to where the Spirit is trying to guide the conversation.

Whenever possible, this is about literally going out of your house, and immersing yourself in other people's realities. However, some of us are not able to go out – in that case, this can be done too by inviting those new realities into your home.

You will only have to do mostly two things:

- Listen deeply to those you are meeting, using the principles for contemplative listening. Listen with your heart, listen to the story and listen to the storyteller (what he/she feels as they are telling the story, what must be going on for them in the story they are telling you)
- Ask deepening questions; questions that bring the conversation to a deeper felt sense, a deeper level of meaning for them and you; as you frame your question, describe what you seem to have understood so far, and in that what is still not clear for you

Feel free to take notes so that you have a record of the encounter: notes of thoughts, ideas, but also feelings, images, metaphors, or recurring questions – though the most important is to connect at a heart level to those you will be meeting.

Harvesting the Fruits of the Encounter

When you leave the meeting, as soon as you can (instead of getting out your Smartphone for example!), take a few minutes individually to write down the key things that you observed:

- What stood out?

- What was surprising?
- What did you notice about not only the system that you observed, but also noticed about yourself?
- What new ideas have been generated that could be helpful for you?

Note that it is as important to discern what you have learnt about others as it is to discern what you have learnt about yourself...

A bit later on (that same evening or the day after), again individually, go back to the set of assumptions you had written down, and ask yourselves:

1. What is it from what I actually experienced that is reconfirming my assumptions?
2. And where did my actual experience actually deviate from what I expected to see?
3. So what's the interesting new stuff that I came across?



Conversation about Immersion Encounters

Overview

What: a fraternal, contemplative conversation on what we discovered through the Exploratory Encounters

When: within 2-3 weeks after the last encounter – by May 2017

Where: in the community house, or another place that you, as a community, wish to use for this conversation

Who: the initial group, i.e. the whole community + any Lay Marists you invited; new members can join at this stage if the group is ok with it

How long: set aside at least 3 hours for the actual conversation; for preparation time, see below

Individual preparation: for those who took part in Exploratory Encounters, just read and bring your notes from the encounter itself, plus those from the post-meeting debrief and the “day-after” debrief

Conversation

Prayerful Setting

The setting facilitates prayerful sharing and contemplative listening. The facilitator helps us begin with a brief moment of quiet to open our hearts and minds to leave all our other thoughts and preoccupations aside... to allow us to get in touch with ourselves and how we are coming to this gathering.

Brief Introduction

The Intention of the gathering (to open our mind and heart to some of the realities shaping the

world that we may not yet be aware of)... Opening my heart and mind... Remembering the Principles for Contemplative Listening and noticing the movements ... Considering the reality of the world around us today....the reality for children....let the reality speak to us.

Other Resources for this Prayerful Conversation

Reconnecting to the run up to this moment: the past three community conversations, and the immersion encounters ...

The brothers and Lay Marists are then invited to reflect on the questions: What interior movements do I remember having had during those conversations, and during the immersion encounters? How have things been since? What else has caught my attention, has moved me ?

Contemplative Conversation: Exploring “Beyond What We Know”

This conversation is held in a spirit of deep contemplative listening to the experience of each participant. There is a moment of silence after each sharing to enhance the listening.

To start the conversation, everyone reflects silently around the following questions:

- Who did I go out to meet, and why? What was I trying to discover?
- What were my own assumptions before the encounter(s)?
- What did I discover about the world?
- What did I discover about myself – my own way of seeing, interacting with, and making sense of the world?
- What surprised me (most) in those discoveries about the world, and about myself?
- What interior movements have these encounters generated in me? And in those I met?

Participants then share whatever they want from their own reflections – so that the rest of the group can access the experience they have had and the impact it has had on them.

Moment of Silence

After everyone has spoken, we stay in silence and let the following questions find their way in us:

What is emerging in me after hearing all the different stories of encounters with the people out there at the peripheries of our lives (and beyond)? What common threads do I perceive? What am I (re)discovering about the dynamics, the forces, the energies that seem to be contributing to shaping the world today and tomorrow? What is God trying to say to me/us?

Sharing the Fruits of our Listening & Contemplation

After the contemplative listening and the moment of reflective, prayerful silence, the group conversation about the (re)discoveries they have made about the world that is becoming, and how those have been affirming or/and challenging their own beliefs and assumptions.

The group then moves to exploring what they **may need to let go of** if they are to engage more fully with this world that is becoming.

At the end of the conversation, the group finds a way of recording the key themes, ideas, feelings, images and metaphors that emerged during the session. It is important to find ways of recording both the (re)discoveries and what needs to be let go of.

Closing Prayer

An optional hymn can be used as well.



Stage 3

Gathering the Fruits

Overview

What: a meeting of several communities to share what has emerged and find ways of conveying it to the General Chapter

When: From May to August 2017

Where: to be organised by the participants; it could be during an already scheduled meeting/ gathering, or a specially arranged gathering.

Who: Brothers and Lay Marists from several communities, usually from within the same province. It could be all the communities from that province, or only some of them. And it could be all the Brothers from each community, or just some representatives.

All capitulants (elected and ex-officio) and those invited should attend, or at least find a way of sharing the harvest of these gatherings prior to the General Chapter.

How long: it depends on the number of participants, but at least 1 day – 2 days would be better

Individual preparation: reading all the material harvested so far – and bringing it to the gathering

The Conversation

Prayerful Setting

The setting facilitates prayerful sharing and contemplative listening. The facilitator helps us begin with a brief moment of quiet to open our hearts and minds to leave all our other thoughts and preoccupations aside...to allow us to get in touch with ourselves and how we are coming to this gathering.

Remembering that the purpose of this gathering is twofold:

1. To make sense collectively, beyond your own communities, of the ecosystem of The Body
2. To enable the capitulants to bring to the Chapter the (re)discoveries that have taken place, and how they have impacted the Body

Brief Introduction

The Intention of the gathering... Opening my heart and mind... Remembering the Principles

for Contemplative Listening and noticing the movements ... Considering the reality of the world around us today....the reality for children....let the reality to speak to us.

Other resources for this prayerful conversation

Reconnecting to the run up to this moment: the past four community conversations, and the immersion encounters ...

The brothers and Lay Marists are then invited to reflect on the questions: What interior movements do I remember having had during those conversations, and during the immersion encounters? How have things been since? What else has caught my attention, has moved me?



Contemplative Conversation: Exploring “Beyond What We Know”

This conversation is held in a spirit of deep contemplative listening to the experience of each participant. There is a moment of silence after each sharing to enhance the listening.

The group organises its time in order to match the unfolding of the process so far. In that spirit, a whole round is spent sharing on the first conversation, around the La Valla experience.

After everyone has spoken, we stay in silence and let the following questions find their way in us:

What is emerging in me after hearing all those different stories? What common threads do I perceive? What interior movements do I notice in me?

The group then shares about what emerged in the second and third conversation, i.e. both the stories of those around them and the discoveries of whom they still needed to talk to.

This is followed, again, by a moment of silence with the same questions as above.

Then the group shares about what emerged in their exploratory encounters, and in the community conversation they held afterwards – in particular their (re)discoveries and their insights about what they may need to let go of in order to engage more fully with the world that is becoming.

Moment of Silence

After everyone has spoken, we stay in silence and let the following questions find their way in us:

What has particularly touched me in what I have heard? What, in the experiences of other

communities, resonates with our own – and what feels different? What thoughts, feelings, images are emerging in me after listening to this picture we have painted together?

Gathering the Fruits for the Chapter

After the contemplative listening and the moment of reflective, prayerful silence, the group conversation about the following questions:

1. What images, metaphors are emerging of the world, around us, that is becoming? And of our Body in this ecosystem?
2. What impact are these (re)discoveries, these insights, having on us? How is it affirming? Challenging?
3. What is becoming clearer that we need to let go of in order to engage more fully with this world that is becoming? In order to engage in a new La Valla experience for our times? What do we need to let go of in order to engage in a New Beginning?

The group then moves to creatively find ways of expressing all that has come up, so that both the “head” part and the “heart” part of this collective work can be conveyed by the capitulants and others going to the Chapter .

Closing Prayer

An optional hymn can be used as well.





Guide for Contemplative Listening

1. Slowing down and noticing more of what is present
2. Listening with all my senses
3. Open Mind: Listening to the words / images chosen: those specifically, and not others
4. Open Heart: Listening to the emotions conveyed by the person who is talking
5. Suspending judgement: not pre-empting, classifying, nor dismissing what the person is expressing; it is his reality as he is experiencing it and making sense of it
6. Noticing what I don't understand or what triggers questions for me, rather than what I don't like about what I hear
7. What do I feel as I listen to what is being said – and why?

Noticing my interior movements as I listen

1. What touches me personally? Why and how does it touch me?
2. And what touches me as a Marist Brother or as a Marist Lay?
3. What feels in resonance with my experience of reality?
4. What, in the reality presented, feels different, new, compared to what I am used to?

Guide for the Facilitator ¹

Dear facilitator

Thank you for the service you are giving to help accompany this process. The Institute is challenged to live “a Chapter experience” in the months ahead and we hope to involve all its members. Your role is, therefore, crucial if we hope to achieve this goal.

A New Beginning calls for a new way of thinking, feeling and acting. For this reason, over and above the delegates and the other invited guests who will attend the Chapter, it is important to ensure that each brother and lay Marist feels fully involved. Only in this way will we be able to create a new awareness to face up to the challenges of today’s world and rediscover the energy of our charism to co-create the new beginning.

Having a collective experience is so much more than simply carrying out an isolated task or responding to the questions of a consultation. It requires an inner disposition, as well as a clear intention of the community to commit itself.

We invite you, as facilitator, both in the conversations of the first stage as well as in the other stages to:

1. Feel free to adapt our proposal to the actual situation and needs of your community. In the case where a community has only a few members, brothers and lay Marists could join with another community.
2. In community, try to create a family atmosphere, in which we welcome the sharing of each one and are sensitive to the feelings and diverse opinions of everyone, so that our conversation will be truly fraternal and contemplative.
3. Ensure in your motivation that all the conversations are experienced in an intense atmosphere of prayer, with times of silence and personal integration. At the end of each conversation, please remember to introduce the conversation for the next gathering.

1. This role is to be taken by a member of the community (brother or lay Marist). The person will be responsible for facilitating the conversations and/or meetings. The person is not outside the conversation, but is rather involved as a participant.

4. Whenever possible, ensure that there is a presence of brothers and lay Marists at the meetings.
5. Ensure that both the time and spaces set aside allow for a calm and fraternal gathering, so that it can unfold without undue haste or distractions.
6. Ensure that the group stays with the calendar proposed for the three stages.
7. Be always aware and make reference to the fact that this process is being experienced throughout the global body (as an Institute) and within the framework of the bicentenary of our foundation.
8. Create a way of registering or taking note of what was shared, so that a summary can later be shared with the other Marist communities and with the delegates and those others invited to the General Chapter.
9. The questions proposed for the conversations have been chosen to facilitate the reflection. Try to ensure those participating understand the topic proposed for the sharing.
10. Provide support for the group during the second stage of this process, helping them to articulate a plan to carry out the immersion encounters. This will also involve facilitating the sharing after the encounters in the same spirit as proposed for the process as a whole.
11. On the Institute web page (www.champagnat.org) you will find material that could be used in each of the stages. Please choose only what you consider might help the sharing. We invite communities to share their community reflections or images on the web page or on other social media sites.





Prayer for the 22nd General Chapter

Father, Son and Holy Spirit
fill us with the faith, vision and courage
of our founder Saint Marcellin
as we prepare to enter
our third century
as Marists of Champagnat.

Gathered around Mary,
Our Good Mother,
we desire to seek You,
to be weavers of community
with all our sisters and brothers,
and to bring your Good News to young people,
especially those on the periphery.

Ever-loving God,
from our simple foundation in La Valla,
we come to the threshold of our third century,
to create together a new beginning.

Confident that you are faithful O God,
and that we participate in Mary's work,
we place our preparation, discernment
and the decisions of our 22nd General Chapter
under your protection and guidance.

May this time of remembrance, reconciliation and celebration
be marked by wisdom, audacity, gratitude and faith
as we journey in haste to the future
which beckons us,
today and always.

Amen.

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Resources

A new La Valla

"I like to think that Conversation begun at the last General Chapter has in fact continued without interruption. In every Province and District there have been a number of opportunities to delve more deeply into the meaning of the call to go in haste to a new land. The General Conference (2013) was another wonderful moment to develop in more concrete terms some of the main calls of the General Chapter, and the Marist International Mission Assembly (2014) once again initiated thousands of conversations throughout our Marist world.

A variety of other processes at General, Regional or Provincial level, have involved a great deal of conversation, promoting participation and a general feeling of being co-creators of a common future.

At this point, as we convoke the 22nd General Chapter, we are all invited once more to sit around the table or around the fire, and continue the conversation about those topics which are really important to all of us.

I am sure that many of us have had an experience of conversations that transform us. It is interesting to note that, normally, they are not conversations about how to change others; rather, the very process of engaging in conversation produces changes in each one of us. A particular phrase, spoken or heard; a life experience which has touched our hearts; a question that has taken us out of our habitual way of thinking ... these were all seeds of subsequent transformation. Yes, frequently the very process is transforming; the process, then, in some way becomes the goal."



*Br Emili Turú, A New La Valla - Letter of Convocation of the
22nd General Chapter - 8 September 2017*