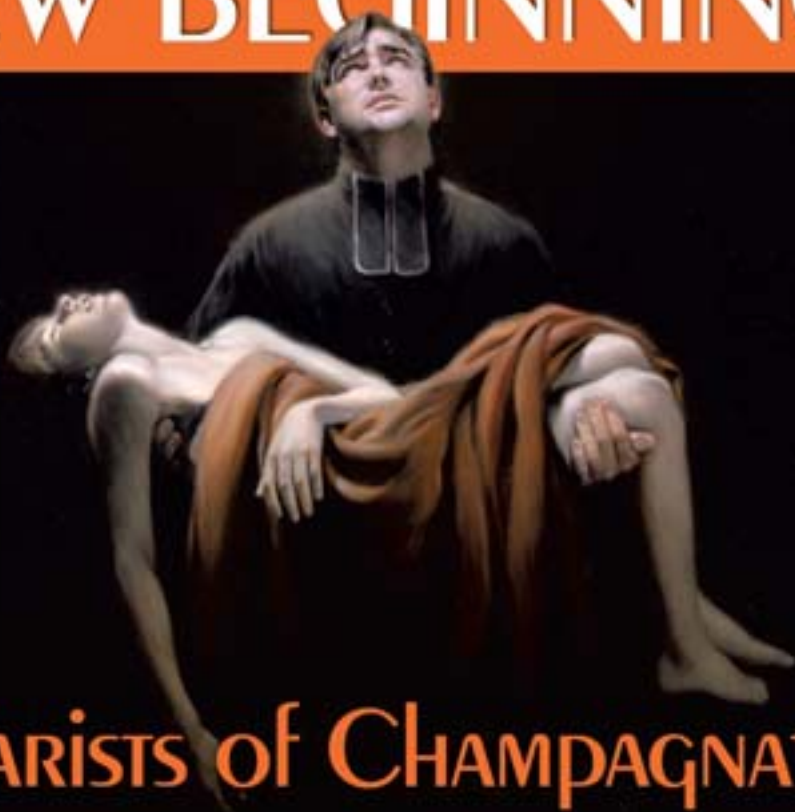




TOWARDS A NEW BEGINNING



MARISTS of CHAMPAGNAT

Year XXX – Number 46 – April 2016

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Director of Communications

BRUSHSTROKES of MARIST LIFE

One of the greatest challenges that present themselves to an Office of Communications consists in making the perception of the life of the Institution coincide with its Charism. The ideal and the reality sometimes seem to be very far. However, on the threshold of the 200 years of the foundation of the Institute, we observe that the dream of Marcellin continues to be alive and that it is reborn, with different faces, where the Marists of Champagnat are present. This is what we want to show in this number of our magazine.

LIVING THREE YEARS of PREPARATION

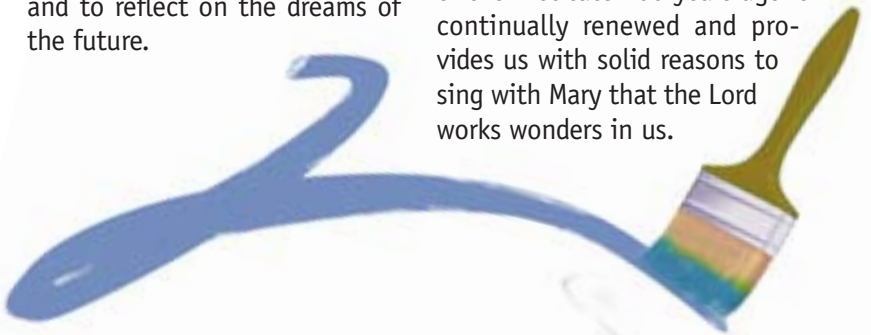
To present the life of the Institute in this historical moment, we have chosen as structure of the magazine the dynamics proposed for the celebration of the Bicentenary of the Foundation, which will take place next year. Brother Emili Turú, Superior General, invited us to live three years of preparation for this event which represents the opportunity for a new beginning. Every year, be-

ginning in June 2014, is marked by a concrete symbol of the Marist history: the young Montagne, Fourvière and La Valla. They are symbols of the essential aspects of our Charism; mission, communion and spirituality. These are aspects that also coincide with the architectural structure of the house which was the cradle of the history of the Marists of Champagnat, in La Valla: three floors of the building that represent openness to the world, fraternal life and interiority. To this we add, underlining the Marian face of our identity, the icons that mark the life of Mary and which have been recalled by the Superior in his Circular Letter of 2013: the Visitation, Pentecost and the Annunciation. This tripartite structure serves as a didactic element to reflect on the reality of the mission of the Institute and to reflect on the dreams of the future.

In this way we have divided the magazine into three chapters that group together reflections permeated by witnesses of the Marist ideal, invitations to a new beginning, rays of light of the new dawn. These three chapters speak of the mission, of communion with the Laity and interior life.

A COLOURED BRUSHSTROKE

We would need thousands of pages to narrate what happens in the Marist world. What we present is only a color brushstroke. We want to highlight or stress some of the many positive aspects that characterize the Marist work and which are the foundation of a renewed hope, showing that the dream that impelled Marcellin in the foundation of the Institute 200 years ago is continually renewed and provides us with solid reasons to sing with Mary that the Lord works wonders in us.



ABRAHAM AND SARAH LAUGHED



Superior General

The book of Genesis tells the story of the Lord's promise to Abraham – who was almost a hundred years old – and the man's reaction to the promise: *"I shall bless her and moreover give you a son by her. I shall bless her and she will become nations: kings of peoples will issue from her. Abraham bowed to the ground, and he laughed, thinking to himself, 'Is a child to be born to a man one hundred years old, and will Sarah have a*

child at the age of ninety?'" (Gen 17:16-17).

Sarah had the same reaction when she heard the unknown guest announce her pregnancy: *"I shall come back to you next year, and then your wife Sarah will have a son"* (Gen 18:10). She laughed to herself, since she knew she was beyond the age of having children: *"Now that I am past the age of childbearing, and my husband is an old man, is pleasure to come my way again?"*

(Gen 18:12). The guest did not like Sarah's faithless and ironic laughter, so he challenged her: *"Nothing is impossible for God!"* (Gen 18:14).

As we get ready to enter the third century of Marist life, we wish it brings about a new beginning for the Marists of Champagnat. However, regarding this deep aspiration – which we live as a *promise of the Lord* – I have the impression that some of us react like Abraham and Sarah, laughing to ourselves and doubting our ability to generate new life.



To be amazed by the unheard

This issue of FMS Message is full of stories expressing a tremendous vitality, which allow us to be amazed by the unheard: *"Nothing is impossible for God!"* It is full winter in Rome when I write these lines, and as usual, even in the starkest winter, almond trees are already in bloom, anticipating the spring soon to arrive. The Lord takes us by the hand and speaks to us like he did to Prophet Jeremiah (1:11-12):

ABRAHAM AND SARAH LAUGHED

By Emili Turú



- *Jeremiah, what do you see?*
- *I see a branch of the Watchful Tree.*
- *Well seen, for I am watching over my word to perform it!*

The biblical author plays with words, because ‘almond’ in Hebrew is *scha·qédh*, which is followed by the expression *scho·qédh*, meaning to watch or stay awake, therefore the English translation as ‘Watchful Tree’. Indeed, there are thousands of signs of new life around us, expressing God’s faithfulness: *“I am watching over my word to perform it!”* We are also invited to stay vigilant, attentive to what the Lord is already doing among us: *“No need to remember past events, no need to think about what was done before. Look, I am doing something new, now it emerges; can you not see it?”* (Is 43:18-19).

Blinded by the lack of hope, discouraged by a winter that seems unending, like Sarah we hear the reproach: *“Oh yes, you did laugh!”* (Gn 18:15). Interestingly enough, Sarah’s laughter was preannouncing the name of the son who would soon be born, for ‘Isaac’ actually means ‘Son of Laughter’. After giving birth to her long-desired son, Sarah describes her experience of God with a beautiful play on words: *“God has given me cause to laugh! All who hear about this will laugh with me! Whoever would have told Abraham that Sarah would nurse children! Yet I have borne a son in his old age”* (Gn 21:6-7).

The Lord finally opened Sarah’s womb and she laughed of joy, real and deep joy, because incredibly, against all odds, the dream had come true. The impossible came to happen.

“For the vision is for its appointed time, it hastens towards its end and it will not lie; although it may take some time, wait for it, for come it certainly will before too long” (Hab 2:3).



LA VALLA, A HOUSE FULL OF RADIANT LIGHT

Architect - Province of L'Hermitage, Spain



1. DEVELOPING THE PRELIMINARY PROJECT

“IN YOU IS THE SOURCE OF LIFE,
BY YOUR LIGHT WE SEE THE LIGHT” (SAL 36,10)

It was December 2011. When the preliminary remodeling project of La Valla was already taking shape, I went to Avila for work reasons. This city is a small ‘Spanish Capital’, Saint Teresa’s hometown, and the place where Saint John of the Cross exerted his influence – the two great Carmelite mystics of the 16th century. One afternoon after work, I visited a newly-opened small museum that goes under the suggestive name of *Mysticism Interpretation Center*. The place just blew my mind, and the consequences of this visit have been far-reaching.

Suddenly, the remodeling project fell into place. I clearly envisioned the renovated La Valla House with its own identity as Marist *birthplace* and *spirituality interpretation center*. This broad and enriching spiritual vision was precisely the ‘structural link’ that would order and give deep meaning to the work.

How had I come this far? The architectural rehabilitation I had been entrusted with aimed at rendering the heritage of this *birthplace* visible and understandable, highlighting its structure and meaning. In my opinion, there were three important goals. First, to look at the past in order to restore its historical sense, the “Marist roots”. Second, to look at the present and upgrade the House, making it functional and comfort-

Panoramic view
of La Valla



LA VALLA, A HOUSE FULL OF RADIANT LIGHT

Joan Puig-Pey



able, suitable for welcoming people in a conviviality atmosphere. And third, as in the case of the Hermitage, rather than becoming a museum, it should be a place in which pilgrims could touch Champagnat's spirit, renew their Marist commitment, and refresh their confidence in the future. It was a matter of highlighting the place's "roots", but also its "wings".

*Renovation work of
La Valla – 2013*

2. CHAMPAGNAT HOUSE

**"AT LAST OUR FEET ARE STANDING
AT YOUR GATES, OH JERUSALEM!" (SAL 122,2)**

The municipality of La Valla-en-Gier is located in a beautiful mountain setting deep in the countryside, on the doorstep of the Pilat Natural Park. Champagnat House provides suitable spaces for contemplation, dialogue and celebration. When visitors arrive here after a long journey – sometimes starting thousands of miles away – they find a domestic-scale small building in which they hope to find a welcoming atmosphere and experience a spiritual encounter, a true "Visitation". The restored spaces and the objects on display had to be a mediation allowing them to discover Marcellin Champagnat and his first brothers, but also the spirit inspiring both them and his followers today, brothers and lay people.

Pilgrims nowadays – as citizens of the 21st century – are usually agitated and full of 'inner noise' when they arrive here.

Therefore, the House should gradually and gently lead them to the daily life experience of the 19th century. This is why pilgrims do not access the House directly from the main street, but must get there on foot, following the façade until they reach the big playground of the neighboring school, and finally head

*The "Maison Champagnat"
in La Valla*

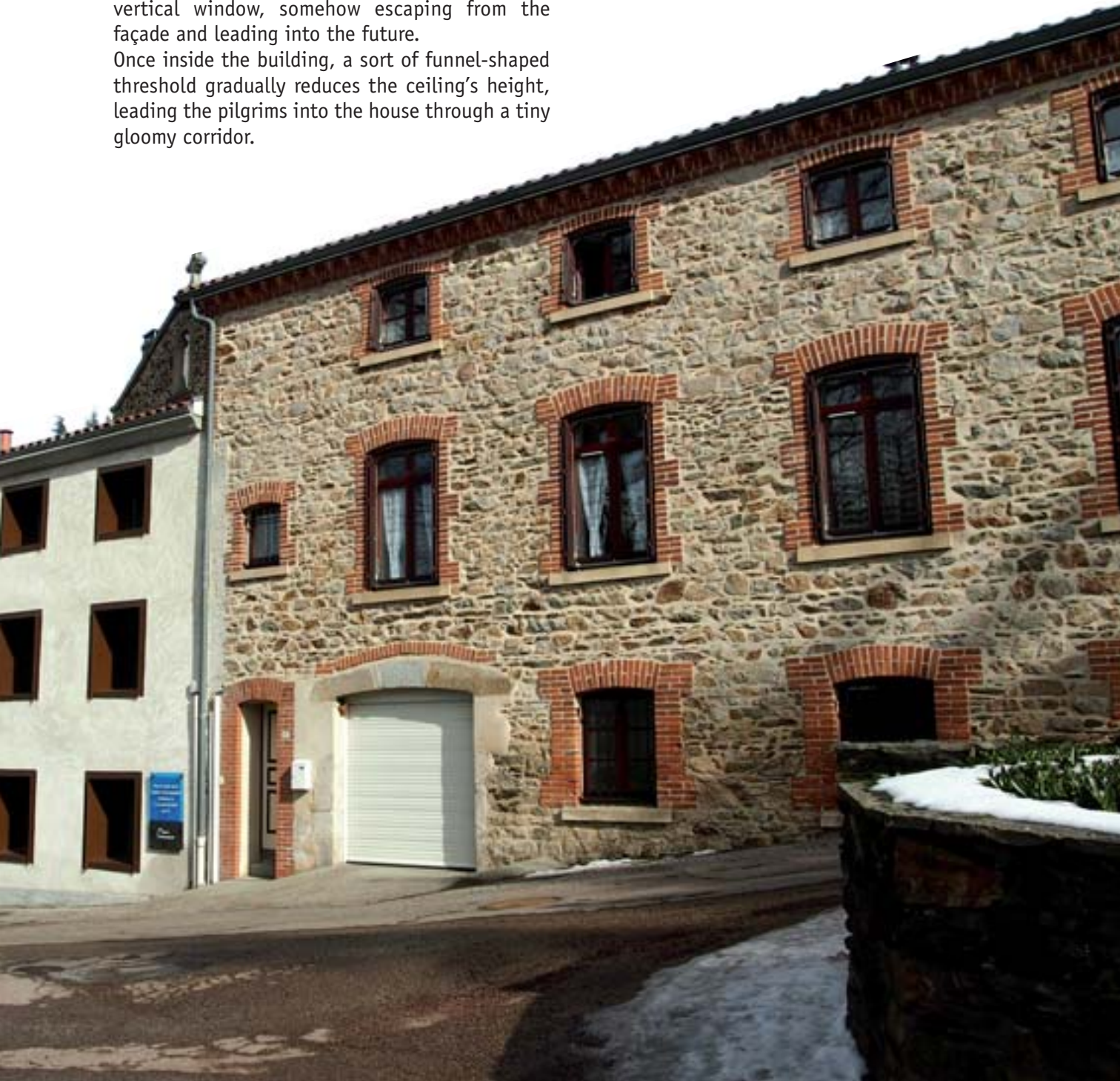


around the building to the door. It is a short itinerary allowing them to notice the passage of time just by looking at the façade and its different windows, which are an insignificant architectural element, and yet give witness to the building's history: wooden windows with small glasses in openings on the façade framed with carved natural stone, evoking the 19th century; iron-framed aluminum windows with a single glass, recalling modernity and the present; and, finally, a great vertical window, somehow escaping from the façade and leading into the future.

Once inside the building, a sort of funnel-shaped threshold gradually reduces the ceiling's height, leading the pilgrims into the house through a tiny gloomy corridor.

An image of Mary hidden in a niche appears unexpectedly, letting the pilgrims know they are entering a singular place.

The different interior spaces, the balanced combination of rustic and natural materials, the significant and evocative objects in specific positions, and finally, the contrast between modern and 19th-century architecture intimately move the visitors' heart and open their mind to this timeless encounter embracing past, present and future.



3. THE THREE FLOORS OF LA VALLA HOUSE

“YOU MUST LOVE THE LORD YOUR God
with ALL YOUR HEART,
with ALL YOUR SOUL,
with ALL YOUR STRENGTH”

(Dt 6:5)

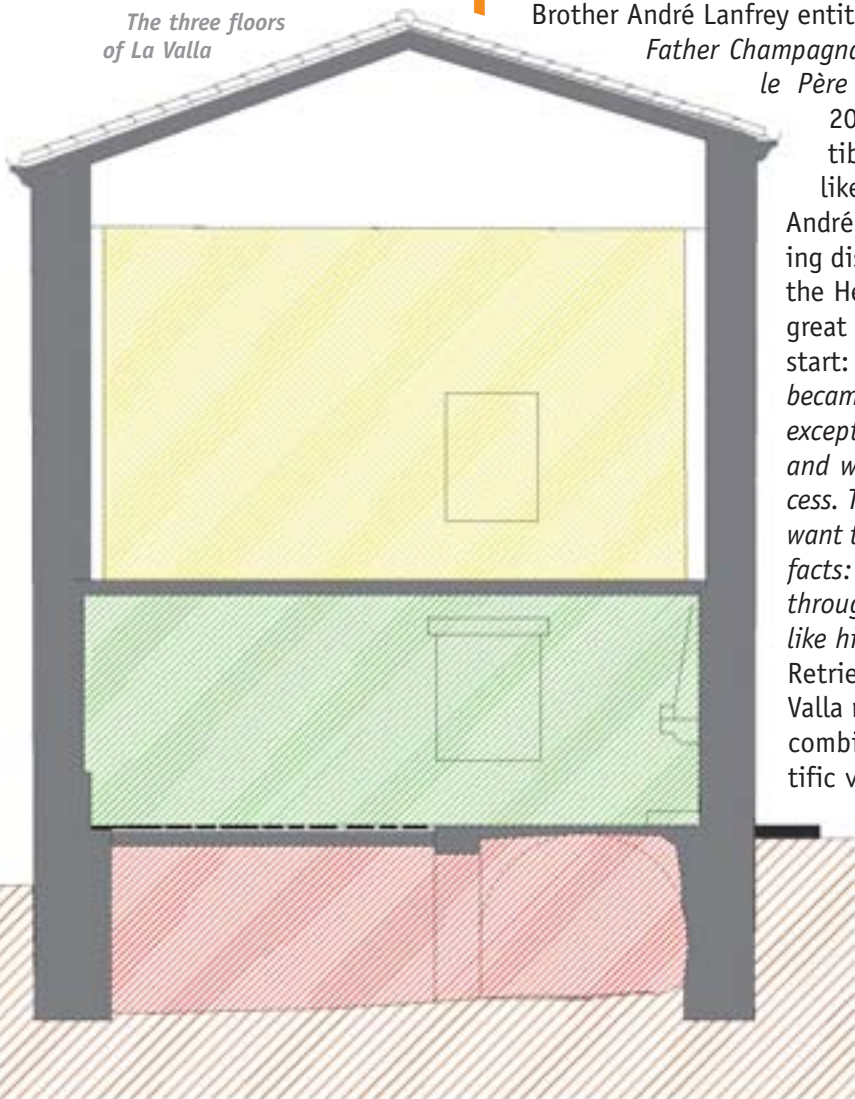
In the very first draft, I decided the building would have three main floors – basement, ground and first – that would be updated to meet European standards.

I was engaged in these thoughts when I received an article by Brother André Lanfrey entitled *Mysticism, Utopia and Institution in Father Champagnat (Mystique, utopie et institution chez le Père Champagnat)*, published in January 2011. Architecture creates an indestructible complicity between people, almost like music does.

André and I had held thorough and challenging discussions during the renovation work at the Hermitage. His article, which I read with great interest, captivated me right from the start: “*Marcellin Champagnat, son of a farmer, became a priest and a founder: this is quite an exceptional destiny that makes us look back and wonder what was the key to such a success. There are two ways to go astray when you want to present a scheme illustrating historical facts: you either try to explain everything through religion, or through human sciences like history, sociology, economy, etc.*”

Retrieving and conveying the ‘spirit’ of La Valla required a unifying narrative that could combine symbolic language with the scientific vision of human sciences. The fact that the little house Marcellin rented in 1817, in which he lived until 1824, belongs to the realm of *matter* and *physics*, and was built in a concrete time and space, falls under a scientific view that gathers information according to its own method: the house is an object you can touch and see, which you can smell – humidity,

The three floors
of La Valla



old wood, flowers in the garden – whose noises you can listen to, and at a temperature you can measure and regulate. It is an aging object, which underwent a fire, was rebuilt and expanded. Using human sciences, we could study it under the light of history, geography and economy.

But we also needed a symbolic approach to “tell” the House subjectively through symbols and metaphors, poetry and art. How can we *touch* Marcellin when visiting *his* House, how can we *feel his spirit*? In the metaphysical realm, the measure of spacetime becomes relative, and we perceive what is absent through the mediation of what is present. This is how we could open our imagination to the 19th century, and perceive the first Brothers’ ‘apostolic breath’. Different texts were progressively complementing and enriching the remodeling project, enabling informed visitors to experience the encounter they expect.

In the same article, Lanfrey goes on saying that each person and every society somehow rest on three key anthropological notions, which are relevant in the analysis of both a secular destiny and a religious journey.

“First, mysticism indicates something that transcends us and lays outside ourselves, which can be secular – good, beauty, humanity – or have to do with divinity. Second, utopia is the project of renewing the world according to a peaceful and ideal scheme. And third, institutions, the bodies in charge of ensuring people’s common good in the future (state, Church, school, etc.), which use management as a valuable instrument”.

Lanfrey concludes his article by considering the three anthropological notions as *structural pillars*, and making a proposal that implies a wider mindset and greater freedom:

“Professional managers would consider Champagnat as a textbook example because somehow he was a good model of entrepreneur. In fact, his entire life shows he was able to combine – not perfectly but boldly enough – the three pillars on which every human creation rests, be it either a company, a Church, a nation or – more modestly – a Congregation:

The mystic pillar brings the kind of solidity that is founded on transcendence, and the ability to trans-



fer a profane thought to the sacred domain. It generates constancy and self-motivation. The utopic pillar is concerned about transforming the world, and is a source of inspiration and action. And the institutional pillar confronts mysticism and utopia with reality and time”.

The threefold scheme I had been working on improved thanks to this reflection, which gave rich symbolic meaning to each floor of the House. But what architectural language could I use to express it? At that point, I remembered the conversation I held in the summer of 2010 at the Hermitage with Augustin Hendlmeier, a German Brother from the Province of Central-West Europe.

Brother Augustin was silently watching the New Building as he stood on the small bridge across the Gier. He kindly greeted me when I walked by and asked me: “Are you the architect?” “Yes”, I replied.

“I can tell you are an outstanding disciple of Mies van der Rohe, the German architect and father of the Modern Architectural Movement of the 20th cen-

ture!" I was very surprised and asked him: "And who are you?" "I'm Brother Augustin Hendlmeier", he said. When he explained to me that he lived in Dessau, the German city where this architectural style was born, I understood his remark. With the precision of an architecture critic, Augustin almost quoted the words I myself had used regarding the Hermitage, especially the New Building: "The New Style of modern architecture is characterized by its functionality, great clarity, the unity of its forms and, above all, its great simplicity. Looking at this new construction, I realize I'm witnessing the same style of the

Modern Architectural Movement that revolutionized Europe in the 20th century which, in my humble opinion, perfectly reflects Marist simplicity".

With contained emotion, he went on saying: "The harmony between the old and the new building is a real success. **We must see this as the sign of rebirth into a new dimension of Marist history deeply rooted in this place**, which also guarantees the continuity of our specific character and spirituality.

He ended up by expressing a deep desire: "Let us be inspired by Saint Marcellin's spirit, who would have certainly greeted with eagerness this new symbol of hope. Let us be inspired by the renewed spirit of the Hermitage!"

It was clear. Modernity had to preside over the restructuring of La Valla so as to face the challenges of the 21st century, using the same revolutionary language of the 20th-century pioneer architects who faced the challenge of breaking free from Art Nouveau and Neoclassicism.

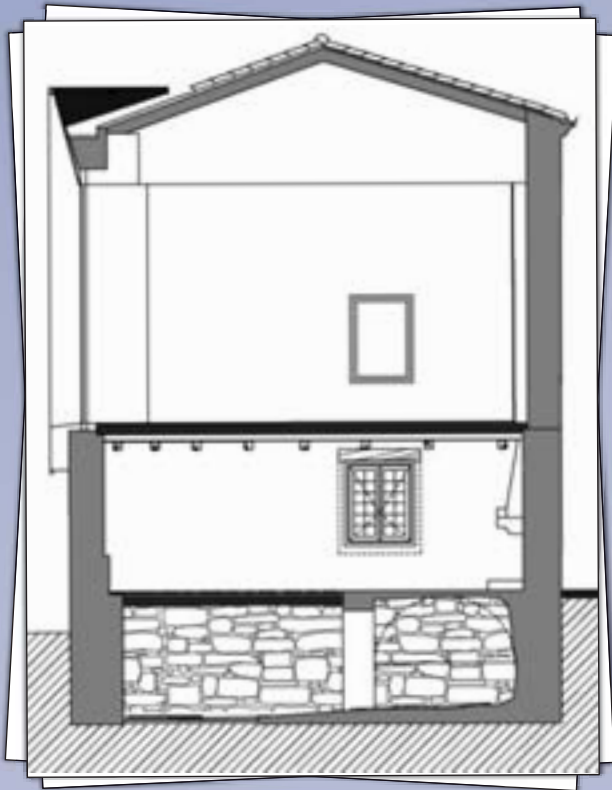
4. A TOUR INSIDE THE HOUSE

Despite its small size, several itineraries inside the renovated La Valla House are possible, depending on the order we follow when visiting the different floors. Each itinerary offers a singular experience to the Marist pilgrims.

In 2014, Brother Emili's traditional message on the feast of Saint Marcellin Champagnat explained the three years of preparation for the Institute's 200th Foundation Anniversary in 2017 through the use of images:

"To help us, three Marist icons will guide us on our journey.





First

The 'Montagne Year': we are invited to become Jesus for the Montagnes of today, to accompany them in their journey with tenderness and gentleness.

Second

The 'Fourvière Year': partners in mission, that is, gathered together around the figure of Jesus; on the one hand, without looking back, but at the same time, without separating ourselves from Jesus and simply going our own way.

And thirdly

The 'La Valla Year': an invitation to cultivate the mystical dimension of our lives, that personal encounter with Jesus, the Bread of Life, so that we can also give life in fullness to the people around us".



I. MONTAGNE: THE MARIIST MISSION





- 1. THE DANCE OF MISSION**
- 2. LA VALLA: FIRST FLOOR OR UPPER ROOM. THE MISSION**
- 3. MARY VISITS ELIZABETH**
- 4. TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH**
- 5. CHANGING PREFIXES: FROM 'PLURI' AND 'MULTI' TO 'INTER'**
- 6. FORMAL EDUCATION**
- 7. INFORMAL EDUCATION**
- 8. MARIST NGOs: UNITY MAKES STRENGTH**
- 9. MARIST YOUTH PASTORAL MINISTRY**
- 10. NEW MODELS OF ANIMATION, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**



THE MONTAGNE YEAR BEGAN ON 28 OCTOBER 2014, THE DAY OF THE CELEBRATION OF THE MEMORY OF THE ENCOUNTER OF MARCELLIN CHAMPAGNAT WITH THE YOUNG MONTAGNE. IT WAS THE FIRST OF THE THREE YEARS OF PREPARATION OF THE BICENTENARY OF THE INSTITUTE THAT WILL TAKE PLACE IN 2017. TOGETHER WITH MARY, WHO VISITS HER COUSIN ELISABETH, THE YOUNG MONTAGNE REMINDS THE MARISTS OF CHAMPAGNAT OF THEIR MISSION. FROM THIS POINT OF VIEW, THE 'UPPER ROOM' OF THE LA VALLA HOUSE, WHICH IS OPENED TO THE WORLD, SYMBOLICALLY REPRESENTS THE CHALLENGE OF IMPLEMENTING TODAY THE DREAM OF MARCELLIN.



1. THE DANCE of Mission



Br Víctor M. Preciado
GENERAL HOUSE,
GENERAL COUNCIL

ENCOUNTERING THE MONTAGNE BOY ON OCTOBER 28, 1816, WAS AN EVENT THAT DEEPLY MARKED FATHER CHAMPAGNAT'S LIFE, AND CERTAINLY TRIGGERED THE MARIST INSTITUTE'S BIRTH. TODAY IT REMINDS US ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE AND URGENCY OF OUR MISSION, WHICH IS AS RELEVANT AS IN THE FOUNDER'S DAYS.

Inspired by him, we are called to set off and reach the Montagne boys and girls in their present situation, heeding Pope Francis' invitation "to embark upon a new chapter of evangelization marked by this joy, while pointing out new

paths for the Church's journey in years to come".

The boy died shortly after the priest left the house. Champagnat was seized by joy and dismay at the same time: how many children were in the same danger of getting lost! The fact seems to have convinced Champagnat that he needed to speed up his foundation plan.

BROTHER Emili's LETTER 'THE DANCE OF THE MISSION'

In this letter, published in the *Year of Montagne*, Brother Emili offers some thoughts regarding the mission that has been entrusted to us in the Church, a precious gift we have inherited from Father Champagnat and the thousands of Marists who have preceded us. He advises all the Marist evangelizers to take Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, published in November 2013, as a preferred reading.

The letter highlights two evangelical attitudes from the exhortation: the Church in outreach and its pastoral conversion. It is a matter of leaving our comfort zone and daring to reach all the 'peripheries' that need the light of the Gospel. "Devote the necessary effort to advancing along the path of a pastoral and



On the opposite page: Young Montagne, Paul Newton – Former Marist student of Eastwood, Sydney

missionary conversion which cannot leave things as they presently are. 'Mere administration' can no longer be enough. Throughout the world, let us be 'permanently in a state of mission'" (EG 25).

Evangelii Gaudium uses the word 'reform' seven times, and ten times the word 'renewal' referring to the Church. That was the same goal that inflamed the heart of the twelve newly ordained priests who made their pledge at Fourvière in 1816 and founded the Society of Mary. Renewing the Church, giving her a Marian face, is part of our Marist DNA.

Mission as a divine dance

We need to understand mission in a theological sense, in close relationship with the image of God as movement, as an embrace, as always flowing in creation.

"We sense the challenge of finding and sharing a "mystique" of living together, of mingling and encounter, of embracing and supporting one another, of stepping into this flood tide which, while chaotic, can become a genuine experience of fraternity, a caravan of solidarity, a sacred pilgrimage" (EG 87).

Marists in prophetic dialogue

We realize that being humble and accepting our vulnerability when carrying out the mission is very important, and we are ready to be evangelized by the people we are called to evangelize, which implies true dialogue with those who clearly have different views from ours.

"Whenever we encounter another person in love, we learn something new about God" (EG 272). In a context that promotes the culture of disagreement, fragmentation, and 'throwaway' attitudes, the Pope promotes a "culture of encounter".

"To dialogue means to believe that the 'other' has something worthwhile to say, and to entertain his or her point of view and perspective. Engaging in dialogue does not mean renouncing our own ideas and traditions, but the claim that they alone are valid or absolute".

(Message of Pope Francis for the 48th World Communications Day, 2014).

*Children
of Cambodia*



MARIST AS ALLIES OF THE SPIRIT

The way in which we carry out the Marist mission today is very different from what they used to do in Father Champagnat's days or in the 1950's, for example. What methodologies and strategies should we implement in this moment of history so that the Marist mission can develop, expand in fidelity to the Spirit of God, and serve the children and youth of today in the best way possible?

We are called to work 'in complicity' with the Spirit, being aware that the evangelization process is directly related to the way in which individuals and institutions are able to convey goodness, peace, and the power of the Spirit of God. As allies of the Spirit, we should not think that everything depends on us. Activism can disconnect us from the Spirit, and make us fall into the "spiritual worldliness" the Pope speaks about (cf. EG 93-97). Mary, model of 'complicity' with the Spirit, teaches us how to fully open ourselves to Her so as to be transfigured.

MARISTS IN OUTREACH

When the Church does not step out of herself to evangelize, she becomes self-referential and unhealthy. We Marists, likewise, exist only and exclusively in order to participate in God's mission, not to seek survival. We are called to participate in the missionary outreach of the Church:



By listening to his compassionate heart, Marcellin Champagnat was able to take the risk and leave his comfort zone. The Marist Institute has tried to do the same throughout its 200 years of existence, although sometimes we have not let the situation of the new Montagne boys and girls challenge us, but have rather closed ourselves up and got used to our comfortable security.

We cannot remain indifferent today before so many young people "living without the strength, light and consolation born of friendship with Jesus Christ, without a community of faith to support them, without meaning and a goal in life". The Montagne boy today has a thousand faces; he is living an unfulfilled life and dying many times. This situation challenges us and moves us to generosity.



Painting of Françoise Gonnet

"Let us go forth, then, let us go forth to offer everyone the life of Jesus Christ (...). I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security. I do not want a Church concerned with being at the center and which then ends by being caught up in a web of obsessions and procedures (...). More than by fear of going astray, my hope is that we will be moved by the fear of remaining shut up within structures which give us a false sense of security, within rules which make us harsh judges, within habits which make us feel safe, while at our door people are starving and Jesus does not tire of saying to us: 'Give them something to eat' (Mk 6:37)" (EG 49).

DISCERNMENT AT THE 2013 GENERAL CONFERENCE



In line with the Pope's call, "each Christian and every community must discern the path that the Lord points out, but all of us are asked to obey his call to go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the 'peripheries' in need of the light of the Gospel" (EG 20).

At the General Conference of 2013, we articulated together a new vision of the Institute: Marists as vigilant mystics and prophets at the dawn of a new beginning, through a significant evangelizing presence among children and young people in vulnerable situations, with an intercultural attitude, being globally available, and living a meaningful life with an emphasis on spirituality.

Looking for concrete ways of collectively fulfilling this dream, we have launched the project of *International Communities for a New Beginning* which, together with the Marist Asia District, implies *being permanently in a state of mission; discerning where in the world the least, those whom society discards are to be found, and seeing how we can be a presence among them.*

PROVINCIAL, LOCAL, AND PERSONAL DISCERNMENT

We are invited to discern at the provincial, local and personal levels, according to the Pope's criteria – "the option for those who are least, those whom society discards" (EG 195) – and to meet the challenge of leaving "our own comfort zone in order to reach all the 'peripheries' in need of the light of the Gospel" (EG 20).

The Mother of the Migrants



WHAT WOULD MARISTS DO IF THEY HAD NO FEAR?

We speak about the Montagne boy, about being mystics and prophets, about opting for those who are least by reaching the peripheries... How can we make these beautiful words take root in us and bear abundant fruit?

Luke's Gospel portrays Mary as a prototype of the person who is capable of responding to Lord's invitation with confidence and overcoming any fear: "Mary, do not be afraid; you have won God's favor, nothing is impossible to God'. Mary said, 'You see before you the Lord's servant, let it happen to me as you have said!'"

(Lk 1:30.37-38).

2. LA VALLA:

FIRST FLOOR OR UPPER ROOM. THE MISSION



JOAN PUIG-PEY,
ARCHITECT

PROVINCE L'HERMITAGE, SPAIN

“You will receive the power of the Holy Spirit, which will come on you, and then you will be my witnesses not only in Jerusalem but throughout Judea and Samaria, and indeed to earth's remotest end” (ACTS 1:8)

We already mentioned the image of Mary in a hidden niche after the small corridor when we enter the House. At that point we find the door to a bright and spacious staircase leading to the *Upper Room*. This name evokes the

“space” in which the experience of the Pentecost took place, and clearly insinuates what can happen in this floor. It is a four-meter high and spacious contemporary-style room. Three of the walls face outside, and it has no decoration except for a small canvas on an easel that suggests a painting in progress. It portrays Marcellin next to a Brother, pointing at the Gier Valley with his arm, facing a horizon that is open to the future. The painting's message is enough to fill the entire room with meaning: “Set out!” The fact that the painting is unfinished indicates an ongoing message for our present time: “If you listen to him today, do not harden your hearts!”

Each architectural element in the room speaks about today. The windows on each of the outside-facing walls, for example, are like bridges between the inner and the outer worlds. Looking at them together, they form an abstract pattern, a unique geometry of holes. The one facing East is so high that it frames the sky. There is another same-sized and vertically aligned window underneath offering a horizontal sight towards Maisonnettes, the tiny village where Brother François was born. On the South wall, a same-sized and vertically-aligned window brings our attention to the neighboring school's courtyard, and also offers



LA VALLA: FIRST FLOOR OR UPPER ROOM. THE MISSION

Joan Puig-Pey



a glimpse in the distance of the valley in which Notre-Dame de l'Hermitage stands. Next to this window, we find the painting on an easel mentioned above.

Another window of unusual proportions surprises the visitor. A one-meter-wide, four-meter-high, and one-meter-deep window aperture on the façade faces La Valla, although you need to get very close to it if you want to see the town. The first thing you notice when you step forward is a huge France-Telecom antenna. Unheard of! We run into the 21st century being inside the house: instant online communication, Internet, Twitter and Facebook... The world of the future enters the House of La Valla to challenge us! The Upper Room, large, white and bright... is an empty space welcoming the present and the future. The tongues of fire of the Holy Spirit descend today under the form of bits and QR codes!

We are invited to become Jesus for the Montagnes of today, to accompany them in their journey with tenderness and gentleness, Emili tells us. Yes! This space invites us to “look beyond our noses”, to widen our inner space, to shed our light and lift our spirit so as to dream of a new world and discover a new utopia. We can do this thanks to Marcellin's inspiring courage and abnegation, and following the first brothers, who set out in search of the most unexpected frontiers. The Upper Room of Champagnat House is a prophetic space speaking to brothers and lay people today. Are you also setting out...?

Given the domestic nature of the House, this space is unique because of its large proportions contrasting with the lower floors. At the same time, it is welcoming and unpretentious. With its delicate architectural structure and modern language, it confirms – without imposing it – our vocation to face the evangelical mission today by traveling light. The languages of fearless faith and innovative modern architecture meet at the Upper Room in a complementary way, allowing us to hear the revolutionary voice of the Spirit, who whispers to Marists and architects alike: *Come, open up, take a look...! Renew without fear!*

The Upper Room of La Valla confirms our faith with the fire of Pentecost, in the same way it confirms a unique way of being an architect for me:

giving witness to light, to new forms and colors, to a new sense of proportion and beauty at the service of people. Confirmed in my profession – the field in which I collaborate with Him, without ever ignoring my responsibility in the construction of the world He wants – I can make the arrival of His Kingdom possible. Pentecost confirms each brother and lay person in the Marist charism, and in their particular gift as architects of welcoming living spaces, in which the Montagnes of today can find the rest, conviviality and dialogue they yearn for, tasting the Marist family spirit, and celebrating the experience of His peace and love.



3. MARY VISITS ELIZABETH



Br Afonso Murad
PROVINCE BRASIL
CENTRO-NORTE

THE biblical account of Mary's visit to Elizabeth, which culminates with the Magnificat (Lk 2:39-56), has fascinated many generations and elicited a number of interpretations.

Two pregnant women from different generations but sharing the same hope: what does their meeting reveal?

We will present a number of

ways to interpret this text, which complement each other like the narrative from different witnesses about the same fact, like polyphonic music with many voices.

MARY AS A MISSIONARY

Shortly after saying her "Yes", the young woman from Nazareth left in haste for the mountains where her relative Elizabeth lived. Her gesture speaks by itself. Leaving her home in Nazareth and reaching out to meet someone implied a geographical and existential movement. After all, a pregnancy at an advanced age, particularly in those days, carried risks and required special care. So off went Mary, the handmaid of the Lord (Lk 1:38), to serve Elizabeth, her heart bursting with joy (Lk 1:28). She evangelized through a simple gesture of solidarity.

In the Marist context, this narrative and its illustration became important for the last General Chapter. *"With Mary, towards a new land"* summarized a strong call directed to the brothers and lay people worldwide. It becomes concrete through a number of personal attitudes and collective gestures, such as adopting a simpler lifestyle, cultivating quality relationships, simplifying the animation and government structures and, above all, reaching out for the children and young people most in need. Therefore, Mary is not only the Good Mother who lovingly welcomes us in her arms, but also the educator that challenges us to leave our comfort zone and break new ground, especially in this time of "new beginnings" when we celebrate the bicentenary of our Institute.

*Calls from the
XXIst General Chapter –
Painting of Br Tony Leon*



The reciprocity of the faith

In those days, women who were pregnant, in labor and had newborn babies were assisted by other women, generally mature and experienced ladies who had already given birth to their own children and lived nearby. Why should Elizabeth need a teenager from another region, who knew nothing about pregnancy or childbirth? In addition, according to Luke, Mary left Elizabeth soon after she gave birth (Lk 1:56), when an elderly mother would have needed precisely more help.

According to Lilia Sebastiani (*Maria e Isabel. Ícone da solidariedade*), Mary looked for Elizabeth out of her desire to understand better, through dialogue, the revelation she had received. In other words, she needed to confirm her own option and find confirmation in Elizabeth. Traveling to Judea was thus a symbol of the **faith journey**, which must be witnessed and shared. At the same time, Mary went to serve and learn. Saying 'Yes' to God, therefore, involves coming together in a humanizing way and finding nourishment in these encounters. It implies eliciting new links with others. The Word of God, which Gabriel communicated and Mary welcomed in such an authentic way, is deeply creative and brings about dialogue.

So **reciprocity**, this second perspective on the Visitation, places us in the midst of the People of God in a clearer and humbler way.

We leave the small universe of our certainties and conquered spaces, and take the risk to establish new relationships, through which we learn and teach. Is this not the first sense of the "partnership" between brothers and lay people we are called to live?

INTERCULTURAL AND INTERGENERATIONAL GATHERING

The biblical scholar Alberto Casalegno holds that Elizabeth's encounter with Mary in the gospel of Luke is weaved into the narrative as an anticipation of the Baptist's relationship with Jesus. The Baptist represents the people of Israel, who yearns for the coming of the Messiah. He prepares the ways of the Lord for his people (Lk 1:76), after the achievements of the past, and the memory of a long history written by many generations. Elizabeth and John the Baptist express the positive side of tradition, which is not an empty traditionalism stuck to the past. On their side, Mary and Jesus represent the 'new time' that breaks out, the realization of hope, an open future with multiple possibilities.

One of the major challenges of education and evangelization nowadays is to promote the meeting of John



the Baptist with Jesus, of Elizabeth with Mary, turning chronological time into a time of grace (kairos). How? By rescuing the past, and learning from history. It means accepting the sunset of certain forms of life that were excellent in the past but are now outdated. At the same time, it means welcoming the newness of God's Kingdom emerging in Christ, in the midst of ambiguous human realities. Elizabeth and Mary also indicate generational and cultural diversity coming together with huge challenges and opportunities.

PRAISE AND PLANETARY CONSCIOUSNESS

The meeting of Mary and Elizabeth culminates with the hymn of praise we call "Magnificat". The first word of the Latin version means to "magnify" God, to sing His/Her wonders. Based on the song of Hannah, the mother of Samuel (1 Sm 2:2-10), the *Magnificat* begins with a blast of praise and joy: "My soul proclaims the greatness of God, and my spirit rejoices in my Savior" (Lk 1:46-47). It expresses some traits of Mary, like her integrity, humility and gratitude to God. The Visitation teaches us that the pastoral, educational and social processes the Marists are leading must also have these traits. Such processes are not self-contained. We must acknowledge the achievements, but break up any selfish, prideful and self-reliant circles. Like Mary, we say: *Yes, God has done great things in us!* But we do not attribute the merit to ourselves. Only God is Holy (Lk 1:49).

The goodness of God goes far beyond our walls and our religion, reaching out for a world without borders, for all those who respect and love Him/Her (Lk 1:50).

Finally, Mary's song proclaims in a prophetic way that adhering to God's project implies more than interpersonal relationships. In the words of Pope Francis, love is also civil and political, and becomes concrete through our initiatives to build a better world. Loving our society and committing to its common good are eminent forms of charity (*Laudato si*, 231). His encyclical states that, together with our small daily actions, social love im-



Encounter of Mary and Elizabeth, Jesus Mafa

pels us to implement important strategies aimed at effectively stopping environmental degradation and promoting an ecological culture that tries to reach society as a whole.

The vocation to intervene along with others to solve social problems is part of spirituality, it is an exercise of charity, and helps Christians to become more mature and holy (*idem*). Community (and institutional) actions, when they express selfless love, become intense spiritual experiences.

Therefore, the meeting of two pregnant women in Palestine, in a town with no name, becomes today a cry of planetary consciousness.

Like Mary and Elizabeth took care of each other in that small house, we are now called to take care of Planet Earth, the common house where we meet and share!

May Mary's visit to Elizabeth elicit new ways to interpret and live out our faith, such as the call to mission, mutual responsibility in our relationships, unity in diversity, praise of and commitment to our Common House. Under this light we can set off, with wonder and hope, following the path of a "new beginning".

4. TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

“WITH MARY, GO IN HASTE TO A NEW LAND!”

WITH THIS GRAPHIC PHRASE, THE MEMBERS OF THE XXI GENERAL CHAPTER EXPRESSED THE URGENT INVITATION THEY FELT TO EMBARK ON A JOURNEY. AND THEY EXPLAINED IT THUS:

“WE FEEL IMPULLED BY GOD TO GO OUT INTO A NEW LAND, TO FACILITATE THE BIRTH OF A NEW EPOCH FOR THE MARIST CHARISM”.

Br Emili Turú,
Letter “To the Ends of the Earth”, 2013



**BR LUIS GARCÍA
SOBRADO**
MARIST DISTRICT OF ASIA,
PHILIPPINES

4.1. FROM “MISSION AD GENTES” TO “MARISTS ASIA”

The last Chapter of the *Asia Mission ad Gentes Sector* (AMAG) on July 2013 decided to change the name of this administrative unit to *Marist Asia District* (MAD). This change indicates a significant evolution in the way its members envision the future. Three words were replaced: AD-GENTES-MISSION. The expression “Ad Gentes” denotes a predominantly geographic vision of our work – knowing and loving Jesus and Mary – and in the ears of Asian cultures, the word “mission” often sounds like a patronizing offer from the “West”.

In the first pages of his letter *To the Ends of the Earth* (January 2, 2013), Brother Emili Turú summarized the evolution of the AMAG project: 38 brothers and 5 lay persons in 6 countries of the Asian continent leading a simple life in communities that are close to the poor and located in places where the Local Church is not visible enough, making a great effort to inculturate themselves in the Asian cultures; international communities (some including brothers and lay people) taking the initial steps towards administrative self-sufficiency; and a more or less solid presence of a growing number of aspirants, postulants, novices and, this year, the first two Scholastics. Brother Emili concluded with a remark that encourages all the members of this District: “I believe we can all congratulate ourselves for the injection of vitality that the program has meant for the Institute, as well as for the achievements already made”.



Dhaka, Bangladesh

Two years later – January 2015 – *FMS Message* invited me to share my perception of the Marist Asia District. Regarding the present situation, I would add two points to Brother Emili’s overview.

First, we feel the “injection of vitality” more intensely in Asia. MAD has become a fraternal Marist presence that strengthens the communion and collaboration between administrative units in Asia (South Asia and East Asia Provinces): together we have established the Marist Asia Conference as well as different commissions. The three AUs are cooperating and still taking concrete steps to do so at the level of postulancy, novitiate and scholasticate. The members of the three Units are feeling more and more like road companions in Marist life and mission.

And second, MAD has received 8 new Marist brothers and lay people in the last two years. The District has 43 members at the moment. Ten years after this initiative started, only 50% of those who joined our communities and projects looking for a long term commitment are still in the District. Health problems in a challenging weather, and personal situations are two of the reasons. I believe, however, that the most important reason to desist has been the sense of isolation.

I am referring to a sort of existential isolation coming from the lack of communication due to a

number of reasons: the relatively long time people need to learn languages that are difficult to pronounce and write; the fact of encountering new cultures inside and outside the community; bureaucratic difficulties to settle in a given place; the feeling of suspicion towards anything that comes from the “West”; and the difficulty to discern and start new community missions.

Members of the Marist Asia District, along with the Marists of Asia, envision the future with hope. We are aware of our weaknesses, and experience every day that this is the work of Mary, our Good Mother, without whom there is nothing we can do.

Three groups of people are presently a source of encouragement for us: our young men in formation, to whom we are devoting energy, resources, and care in a special way; our communities and projects that are so close to poor children and young people, in deep communion with the Local Churches; and the Marist lay people, both missionaries and locals, that are gradually joining us in each of the six countries.



Senmonorom, Cambodia



Planning Team and Formation Team of International Communities for a New Beginning

4.2. LA VALLA 200>

In the letter “Montagne: the Dance of the Mission” of March 2015, Brother Emili Turú invited all the Marists of Champagnat, with the help of the Superiors of the Provinces and Districts, to draw up a list of Brothers and laity who show full availability to insert themselves in international communities which are soon to be created. By means of an Important work of discernment, 25 candidates were elected to begin the creation of international communities as an integral part, in the peripheries of society and which, after following a program of formation, would be assigned to those communities.

In the above mentioned letter, the Superior General asks “the creation of a minimum of 2 international communities in each of the 6 regions of the Institute, with the exception of Asia, where the current communities of the MDA will be reinforced. The remaining regions are: Africa, Arco Norte, América Sur, Europe, and Oceania. (...) It is our hope that by 2017 there will be at least one of these international communities in each of the regions. To this end, a programme of formation will be offered in February 2016 to those joining the new communities.”

Each community will have a minimum of 4 members, at least 3 of whom will be brothers. Each region will determine the best way of shaping these communities, with brothers, lay men and women, and volunteers. The duration of the commitment will be adapted to the life circumstances of the members, especially in the case of the lay people, while always seeking to assure continuity of the community. As we approach the beginning of the third century of Marist life and mission, we believe that the time has come for the Marists of Champagnat to awaken the dawn of a new beginning through:



- **A significant evangelizing presence among children and young people in situations of vulnerability** and where others do not go, giving them prominence and defending their rights.
- **Global availability:** by creating a new mentality and a new attitude, looking beyond our usual horizons of our administrative units and regions, and opening up to the possibilities of international collaboration for mission.
- **Interculturality:** Marist international communities, which promote within themselves a communion of cultures and an appreciation of their diversity, as well as their integration in the context in which they are located.
- **A significant life:** through its gospel quality and the fraternal witness of the communities, which can take different forms according to the membership (brothers, laity, other congregations...)
- **An emphasis on spirituality:** a clear commitment to enter more deeply into our spiritual experience, giving particular attention to the mystical and prophetic dimensions of our Marist life.

4.3. COMUNIDAD JUAN DIEGO

In his letter, *Montagne: the dance of mission*, Brother Emili called the Institute to build international communities on the five continents. He challenged each of us to respond "...with new and daring ways to the changing and urgent situations of our world today." Accordingly, the provincials of the region of Arco Norte (Canada, United States, Mexico Occidental, Mexico Central, Central American and Norandina) undertook a discernment process that led to the launching of what might be truly considered the first *International Community for a New Beginning*. They employed the five criteria for a *new beginning* articulated by the 2014 General Conference to guide their reflections: a significant evangelizing presence among children and young people in situations of vulnerability; global availability; interculturality; a significant life; and an emphasis on spirituality. The fruit of their discussion and prayer led to the formation of the Marist East Harlem community and ComUnidad Juan Diego. Launched in September 2014, ComUnidad Juan Diego is a grassroots initiative serving the fast-growing Latino (principally Mexican) immigrant community of New York's East Harlem neighborhood. A collaborative effort of the Marist Brothers, the Department of Education of the Archdiocese of New York and Catholic Charities, ComUnidad Juan Diego offers a unique model of what can be accomplished through shared resources combined with effective leadership on behalf of those who Pope Francis has referred to as "...those on the periphery." ComUnidad Juan Diego seeks to put its families on the path toward self-sufficiency and independence by enabling them to advocate more effectively for themselves and improve their livelihood. In fostering a sense of community among families who have come to the U.S. with little to no existing support, these programs seek to address the community's social, physical, and spiritual needs.



BR JOHN KLEIN
PROVINCE OF
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



*Walk
with families*

School age children receive afterschool tutoring and homework help to ensure that they are performing to the best of their ability in the classroom and are primed for success in college and beyond. Their parents have the opportunity to attend English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, integrating them into the mainstream of American society and allowing them to take full advantage of the opportunities available in their new homeland.

In particular, this program endeavors to address the reality that parents are often unable to communicate with teachers and school officials in English, limiting their involvement in their children's education.

Nutrition and wellness seminars featuring representatives from the health care field are regularly held to advise families on healthy lifestyle choices. Through the wonderful efforts of Catholic Charities, a Mothers' Group and a remarkable women's craft program are blossoming. Our families are particularly grateful for our faith formation initiatives, encompassing Bible study, sacramental preparation, and prayer and youth groups.

The various programs of ComUnidad Juan Diego are provided at no cost to participants and rely on the work of three Marist brothers, a group of nearly 41 volunteers, and a team of five administrators and staff members of Catholic Charities.

Today individuals from nearly 200 families participate in one or more of the various ComUnidad Juan Diego. Our hope is that by working together and developing local leadership we will be able to form a community of faith, friendship and mutual support.

*Ceremony of
course completion*



During his meeting with Superiors General of Men's Congregations Pope Francis reiterated his call to go the margins, the peripheries, to respond to people's critical needs. He advised the Superiors to "...send the best, most gifted people into these situations of exclusion and marginalization. These are the most risky situations and call for courage and a great deal of prayer."

Pope Francis' words challenge us today as we launch *international communities for a new beginning* throughout the Institute: to think in new ways; to envision an institute without borders; to send our very best and most gifted brothers and lay Marists to serve the Marist mission throughout the world.

4.4. THE PAN-AMAZONIA AND THE MARIST INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY OF TABATINGA

Amazonia has approximately 7.5 million km² that represent 43% of the total territory of South America, and which extends to 9 countries (Brazil, Bolivia, Peru, Colombia, Ecuador, Venezuela, Guyana, Surinam and French Guiana). It is the Cuenca of the river which is the longest in the world, an archipelago of ecosystems. It contains 34% of the primary forests of the world.

The Amazonia, authentic divine gift, from the most remote times, is the home of different peoples and cultures. Those people can better understand today the value of nature and of its riches and understand the challenge that the protection of the Amazonia and its sustainable development represent.

The project of the Marist International community of Tabatinga came into being as a result of taking into account the importance of the Pan-Amazonia for America and for the planet, but above all as a means of preservation and defense of life, in all its manifestations.

Since 2012 the Marist District of Amazonia, in collaboration with other entities and Marist Provinces has been reflecting on the new focus of the Marist presence in the Region. The first meeting of the Pan-Amazonia was celebrated in Manaus, in the year 2012, with the motto "share our life and mission in the lands of Amazonia, seeking for means of integration and mutual help" and the second was celebrated in Tabatinga in April 2013, with the presence of the General Councilors. In August 2014 the third meeting of the Pan-Amazonia was held in Tabatinga, with the motto "the Marist in Amazonia: enculturation of the mission in favor of life!" and with the assistance of 25 participants, from the Provinces of Western Mexico, Central Mexico, Cruz del Sur, Rio Grande do Sul, Central-North, the Marist



BR JOÃO GUTEMBERG

PROVINCE OF BRAZIL SUL-AMAZÔNIA



THE PAN-AMAZONIA AND THE MARIST INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY OF TABATINGA

Br João Gutemberg



District of Amazonia and of the General Government. Of these, 16 were Marist Brothers, 4 lay persons, 2 Jesuit priests and three religious sisters. In this third encounter it was reflected upon and discerned, especially on the possibility of transforming the Marist community of Tabatinga into an international community. In fact that was already the nature of that community founded in 1995. Tabatinga is the place of confluence of Brazil with Peru and Colombia. In this case it is the point of encounter of the Marist Regions of the Americas.

In view of the formation of the international community, some steps or measures are already being taken:

1. The Marian community already has the presence of an Argentinian lay Missionary, Veronica Rubi, who lives with the Brothers of the present community. It is necessary to name Brothers and laity who are in favor and agree with this project.
2. The Marist house of Tabatinga, which belongs to the Marist Province of Brazil South-Amazonia has been reformed and will be a proposal of support for the project which will also have an itinerant aspect and will be inserted in poorer realities.
3. In May 2015, a Brother from each Province of Brazil, named by his respective Provincial Council, and the lay person, Veronica, were in the Region of the triple frontier during two weeks to establish contacts and draw up the draft of the project of the new International community.
4. During the meeting of the III CIAP, celebrated in September 2015, in Curitiba, the project of the International community of Tabatinga was assumed by the new Marist Region Brazil-Southern Cone, and was integrated in the project of the International Communities for a New Beginning.

Taking into account the importance that Amazonia represents for the whole world, we believe that the creation of a Marist International Community in this context is something significant. That community could have as the center of its mission: an ecological conscience with global projection; the frontiers that share homogeneous surroundings are three: we are called to live fraternity and unity and to seek a common solution to common problems; to value and promote the human communities present there, with their particular cultures; the urban zones, the river side dwellers and the indigenous people, and the evangelization of the children and young people submerged in that milieu and conditioned because of the local reality. In this way, we hope to be Mystics and Prophets for a new beginning in the Amazonia land.



5. CHANGING PREFIXES: FROM 'PLURI' AND 'MULTI' TO 'INTER'



BR JOSÉ MARÍA FERRE
PROVINCE OF MEDITERRÁNEA,
SPAIN

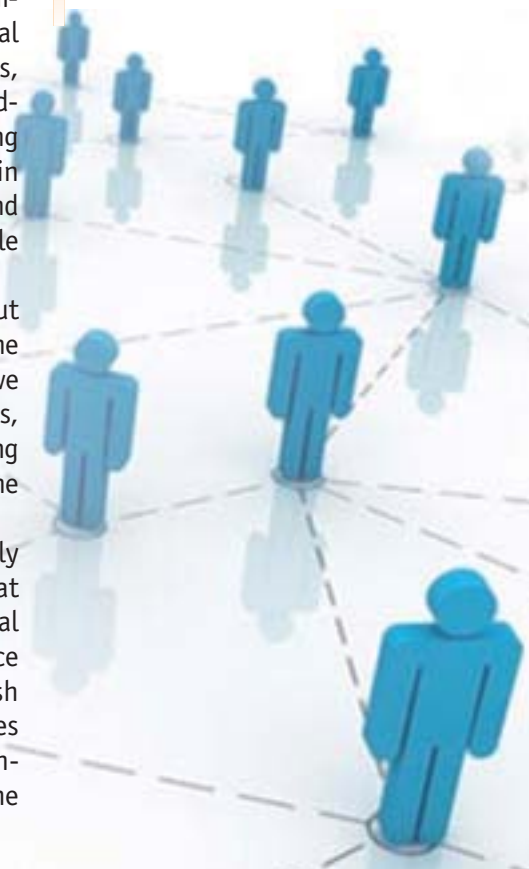
SOMEONE described the community in which he was living as international, intercultural, intergenerational and interracial. Is the fact of living with people from different nations, cultures, ages and races enough reason to describe the community using the 'inter' prefix? Is there any major difference when we use the particles 'multi' or 'pluri' instead of 'inter'?

Current language often uses and combines these prefixes. We hear about international agreements, interreligious dialogue, multi-religious gatherings, multi-party societies, pluri-cultural expressions, interracial clashes, interdependent groups, multinational companies or inter-continental alliances. Looking at all this, there is a first important finding: the reality surrounding us, the global situation in

which we live, is asking us to look beyond our own small universe and become aware of other cultures, races, religions, etc. This simple observation is enough reason to use the 'pluri' and 'inter' prefixes.

I believe, however, there is an important nuance when we talk about 'inter' situations. It is not simply a matter of bearing witness to the existence of these realities. We enter the 'inter' mentality when we gradually arrive at the conviction that religions, cultures, races, economies, political choices, and so forth are interrelated, interacting, and challenging each other. Therefore, they question us and make us change the principles, choices and beliefs that we considered sacred or binding.

Think for a moment about our Marist setting. Nowadays we do not only speak about intercommunity meetings or intergenerational conflicts at the Provincial level: the very Regions we have created are interprovincial realities, such as a number of organizations like the CLAP (Conference of Latin American Provincials), the Oceania Council, the CME (Spanish Marist Conference), etc. When referring to interprovincial novitiates and ongoing formation sessions, we can say they are international, intercultural and keep using other 'inter' words. In many Regions of the



CHANGING PREFIXES: FROM 'PLURI' AND 'MULTI' TO 'INTER'

Br José María Ferre



*Young brothers
in the Vatican,
in front of the image
of St Marcellin*

Institute, our schools and social works are increasingly becoming more 'inter'. Just look at the range of cultures, ethnic groups, languages and religions of the teachers, families and students who are part of them. Looking beyond the Institute, we can see how and inter-congregation dimension is strongly growing. In addition to classic phenomena like the conferences of religious, we frequently witness examples of cooperation in the educational and pastoral fields, of mutual support regarding solidarity actions, child advocacy, formation work, meetings of religious working in formation, and groups reflecting on our identity as brothers. Some examples are the Fratelli Project, the inter-congregation work in South Sudan, and the international (mixed) communities for a New Beginning (Lavalla 200 >).

The energy of these 'inter' situations is unstoppable. We have to take a stance. The last Superiors General have said once and again that besides knowing we are an International Institute we must think and act accordingly. 'Inter' realities do not only ask for a clear realization but are also a challenge. Intercultural and interfaith programs, for example, lead us to discover a number of values, beliefs, lifestyles, and convictions that challenge us, pushing us outside our safety zone, forcing us to open ourselves up and discover the footsteps of a God that our closed modules and schemes cannot contain.

Letting all these 'inter' situations challenge us requires a proactive attitude of dialogue and respect, of giving and receiving. It is a wonderful exchange (an expression we use to speak about the Mystery of the Incarnation), in which no one is so poor as to have nothing worth giving, and no one so rich as to need nothing from others.

'Inter' realities lead us to interact and interrelate, to join the adventure of mutual enrichment. This involves openness of spirit, willingness to let go, to accept challenge, and to question others. Experience tells us this is not an easy adventure: interreligious dialogue and cultural exchange are not simple but there is no other way out for our 'inter' world.

*Mission Team
of Asia*



5.1. THE “FRATELLI” PROJECT

Moved by the Spirit, Marcellin allowed himself to be seduced by God, like Mary and in the eyes of the young Montagne he strengthened the call to serve the poorest. And he created a family of brothers to be signs of fraternity and sowers of the Gospel open to all the dioceses of the world. Today, God continues to question and challenge us through the reality of so many poor, displaced, refugees, children and young people in the human peripheries, persecuted and expelled and many of them murdered for being Christians and opting for Jesus. We are especially called to be brothers with them and for them. The “**Fratelli**” Project is a response that we want to give to the young Montagne of today, to so many situations of suffering in which displaced and refugees of war children and young people live. The La Salle Brothers and the Marist Brothers, challenged by this reality and impelled by our General Councils we have formed an inter-congregational community in Lebanon and since the month of September 2015 we walk and share together this challenge. It is a simple sign of communion and fraternity in a Church and Congregations that we have believed we are very self-sufficient. We are a community called to grow together with other persons who wish to share this dream, to accept, to be more inserted and to live the reality of the least, of the last ones. A community convoked by Jesus whom we want to imitate and serve. In January 2016, several socio-educational projects are already being considered near Beirut and in Saida for the Syrian and Iraqi children and also for the more vulnerable and impoverished Lebanese children. It is a simple response since we could reach 200, perhaps 300 children and young people where those who as yet have no access to education in a school, whose basic needs are not covered or who have their heart wounded by the war, the poverty in their families, loneliness and abandonment are thousands and thousands. We need Brothers! And the war continues close to us and the children and their families are arriving here or are trying to follow the journey on the Mediterranean with the risk of losing their lives in that sea. How many photos! How many stories and reports have we seen ... Reality is much harder. We need Brothers! We pray and work for peace. We denounce the unjust situations which provoke war. The Project Brothers is becoming a reality in the Middle East, in a multi-religious and inter-confessional context where



**Br Miquel
Cubeles Bielsa**

PROVINCE L'HERMITAGE,
LEBANON



"FRATELLI" PROJECT
Br Miquel Cubeles Bielsa



*Brothers
Miquel Cubeles (FMS)
and Andrés Porrás (FSC)
with children in Beirut*

God is present and wants us to be brothers and where Mary unites the hearts of Muslims and Christians in her love. The spirit of Saint John Baptist de la Salle and of Saint Marcellin Champagnat continues to be alive in this land where there are Lasalian and Marist schools and communities, but no doubt, that today they will be happy to see us united in a common mission at the service of the more vulnerable ones. Let us hope that the Project Brothers, the inter-congregational response as brothers will be a reality in other countries and frontiers where the life of children and young people is in danger. Lord, thank you for calling us to be brothers of the smallest and the weakest. Give us bravery and courage to love them and serve them. Transform our fears, take our weakness and our pride and make us merciful. It is only in this way that we will be able to obtain mercy. Good Mother, accompany us on our journey and bless all the children, young people and their families. Amen.

5.2. Solidarity with SOUTH SUDAN PROJECT



South Sudan, the newest country in the world, is working towards creating sustainable structures which will address the needs of health, education and food security. The project Solidarity with South Sudan was initiated by the two Unions of Superiors General (USG & UISG) after the peace accords of 2005.

At present there are 33 brothers, sisters and priests from 26 congregations who have volunteered for service with contracts of three or more years. They

are supported by an international consortium of more than 200 congregations and attract funding from a large variety of funding agencies. The project is established on five sites providing training and accompaniment in the areas of education, health and agriculture. It is a new way of collaboration for congregations and for the church.

'Solidarity', as it is commonly called, focuses on teacher education, health education, agriculture and pastoral projects in this new country. The objective of each of the projects is to build local capacity in these focus areas.

Nigerian Marist Brothers Christian, Matthew Mary and Longinus are members of Solidarity communities in Yambio (Teachers College) and Riimenze (Agriculture) in Western Equatorial State. Their communities are mixed sisters, brothers, lay and ordained; male and female.



Nigeria's three Marist brothers together with Br Chris Wills

5.3. MARIST MISSION IN ALGERIA

THE VISITATION

TWO WOMEN MEET:
MUCH IN COMMON
BUT DIFFERENT

EACH CARRIES:
WITHIN POSSIBILITY
WAITING TO BE BORN

DISTANCE SEPARATES:
ONE MUST JOURNEY
TOWARDS THE OTHER
ONE MUST RECEIVE

GREETING:
SHALOM SALAM ALAIKOU
THE CHILD LEAPS FOR JOY

The story of the Visitation captures well how the Church in Algeria sees itself in its life and in its mission. She aspires to be a *Church of the Encounter*, an idea developed more recently along the following lines:

"A Church of alliances, between North and South, East and West. A Church that invites us to go out and visit others, but also to welcome and to live hospitality. A Church which values not only what refers to the Gospel but also what is close to the Gospel. A Church of alliances particularly between Christians and Muslims, serving the friendship between peoples. In short, a Church who wants to testify to God's love for every person."

Message of AIDA, 2014



BR MICHAEL SEXTON
PROVINCIA OF AUSTRALIA,
ARGELIA



Brothers of the
Mostaghanem
community

The newspapers remind us each day of the divisions in our world which erupt into violence; violence often linked to differences of race, culture, tribe, religion, language. Is it still possible to build alliances, to create friendships between peoples when violence seems the dominant position?

The Marist mission in Algeria demonstrates that it **IS** possible. Our experience is that we need to nurture that which we hold in common and arrive at a level of encounter with the other where differences become mutually enriching rather than reasons for separation.

After the nationalisation of schools and health centres in the 1980s, the Algerian Church feared being cut-off from contact with the Algerian people. New *platforms of encounter* needed to be developed and were: centres for handicapped, libraries, women's centres, children's holiday programs, cultural activities, prison ministry and the hospitality offered by religious communities. All of these aim to ensure Christians and Muslims continue to meet and work together, that the *dialogue of everyday* life continues.

The Marists, two communities each of 4 Brothers in Oran and Mostaghanem, are fully engaged in this mission through different formalised means – libraries, language courses, student chaplaincy, groups of inter-religious dialogue, involvement with local associations, social outings. And there are also the everyday encounters with our neighbours and others.

As much as we give, we also receive and learn – hospitality, friendship, the witness of Islam lived simply and faithfully, generosity, responsibility and care for those around us. *My brother* occurs so often in an Algerian's conversation as to seem banal. But maybe that is the most important lesson for us: that our *we are all* brothers include also our muslim brothers and sisters.

Meditating on the Visitation, Christian de Chergé, the Cistercian Prior of Tibihirine, notes that Elizabeth unlocks, "sets free" the Magnificat of Mary. Mary's encounter with the Other in Elizabeth transforms the news she receives from the angel into *good news* – "my soul gives thanks to the Lord". That is the fruit of the Encounter.



5.4. Collaboration for Mission, International

When first visiting the renovated house in La Valla in 2013 the architect for the project Joan Puig-Pey, accompanied the participants of the General Conference, and in his presentation he declared the new house to be a 'lighthouse' for Europe. During the discussion that followed, this declaration was amended to propose a 'lighthouse' for the World.

If today, a Marist were to go to La Valla and offer him or herself as a volunteer, they would enter the house at street level. This is the level of

community. It is where the first young men gathered around Marcellin 200 years ago. Now, it is where we find the table that we can gather around and share our lives, our aspirations and our plans. Both brother and lay Marist volunteers often have community as their entry point. Typically they realise that the welcoming hospitality, the call to fraternity, is underpinned by the Charism first received by Marcellin and now shared by all Marists. This **mystery** is best realised during times of reflection, prayer and contemplation which is represented by the smaller, silent room located in the depths of the house. And this mystical, interior experience can impel us to look beyond to our call; our vocation.

It is the third level of the house, the upper room, full of light and air, looking down the valley of the Gier, flowing out to the sea and the oceans of the world which represents our call to **prophetic mission.**

It is from this viewpoint that Marcellin looked down the valley and visualised the first brothers building L'Hermitage. It is from here that Marists ventured out 'tout le monde'; to Britain, to Oceania, the rest of Europe, the Americas, Africa and Asia. It is in this room that we recognise that there are new Montagnes in the world and imagine our own response; our need to 'go' to the hill country, the peripheries, as Mary did in the story of the Visitation.

It is symbolically from this space that we are sent on mission.

The secretariat, Cmi (Collaboration for mission, international) was established in 2012 with the major task of developing a more 'international mindset',



Br Chris Wills
GENERAL HOUSE, CMI



Above:
Br César Henríquez
in El Salvador and
in Bangladesh



Right: Tom Oliver,
from Australia,
in Papua New Guinea

Below:
volunteer from Chile
in Brasil





*Gabriele Giard
from Canada in Ecuador*

building on our history of going out into the world to wherever there were vulnerable children and young people; the Montagnes of today. The first activity for the development of this mindset was the continuing support of the Marist District of Asia, (originally known as *Missio ad Gentes* and later as AMAG). Secondly Cmi had the objective of animating international communities of lay and brother Marists.

The third activity has been to create a Marist Volunteer Program to support the international communities. In practical terms this has been the driving force supporting the objectives of Cmi in support of the other goals. Volunteers can be brothers, lay; young, old; short term, long term. The use of the word Volunteer is technical and some prefer to call themselves brothers, missionaries, interns or just volunteers. In all cases Cmi focusses on Marists volunteering to being sent by their provincial or district superior to another administrative unit with the agreement of the welcoming provincial or district leader.

The volunteer program is one axis around which our new international mindset is being developed. At the Marist International Mission Assembly (MIMA) in Nairobi the term 'inter...' began to be used: international, interconnected, inter-congregational, intercultural. Now the word intercultural has been recognised as a theological word (not found in many dictionaries) and is the basis for the exploration of a New Beginning through the application of the different 'inters...' The volunteer program has created a network of interconnected Marist at the global level. In related articles in this edition of FMS Message there are reports of some of our 'inter...' activities from the perspective of new models of community. Our new inter-congregational initiatives in the Middle East (Fratelli Project) and in South Sudan (Solidarity with South Sudan) will be highlighted and this article will refer later to the Lavalla200> project of International Communities for a New Beginning. From the perspective of the volunteers it is useful to mention two examples of the engagement of specifically young Marists in international Marist Communities.

In the Province of Europe, Central West volunteers from Germany regularly commit themselves to an international Marist community for the best part of a year immediately after leaving school. About eight assignments each year are organised and these young German Marists, both men and women, travel to countries such as Bolivia, USA, South Africa, Samoa, Mexico, Tanzania, Cambodia and Argentina. There they join in Marist community life and offer their energy and youthful skills

to the children in those communities. The exciting development is what happens when they return home. They form a community of young people who create a new Marist community and presence in a country that has a proud Marist history. They bring life to their own place.

From Brasil Centro-Sul we see over twenty young Marist volunteers in formation for international mission. They are all tertiary students and they will commit themselves for varying lengths of time to a Marist community outside their own country. Upon return they will join other youth ministry activities in Brazil and add value to an already vibrant presence of young Marists.

The Lavalla200> project is not only a young persons' program. Over eighty brother and lay Marists have made themselves known to the Superior General as being willing to be appointed, now or in future years, to intercultural communities administered by the regions of Brasil-Cono Sur, Arco Norte, Europe, Africa, Asia and Oceania. There are candidates indicating availability to begin from 2016 until 2019 (at this stage). Each community apostolate of Lavalla200> will be focussed on vulnerable children and young people. They will be located on the peripheries however that may be defined. In 2016 the first group of twenty five candidates will begin formation in May and June and appointments to the communities, by the Superior General, will be made from September. The focus is on creating an intercultural community bearing witness to the possibility of having a significant and prophetic presence amongst the most vulnerable. There will be further formation programs in future years thus ensuring sustainability. Marist are expanding their presence in the world in response to globalisation. This will mean that as Marist apostles with youth, we are not found to be on the wrong side of history. The connections that are made by these programs create a Marist world community not limited by geography, culture, age, lifestyle or religious consecration. It is the way the world will be. It is a New Beginning honouring 200 years of history and leading into the Marist third century.



*Volunteers
from Germany in Africa*



6. FORMAL EDUCATION

“WE KNOW THAT WE HAVE RECEIVED A GREAT GIFT IN THE PERSON OF MARCELLIN AND IN HIS EDUCATIONAL INTUITIONS AND THOSE OF MARIST EDUCATORS SINCE HIM. WE WANT TO BE FAITHFUL TO THIS HERITAGE IN A DYNAMIC WAY. IN OUR DAY, THE CRIES OF YOUNG PEOPLE ARE NO LESS URGENT THAN THEY WERE IN MARCELLIN’S TIME. THEY CALL FOR FRESH RESPONSES.”

In the Footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat

These responses are produced in many centers of formal education, which, besides being centers for learning, are, principally, places of life and evangelization. Marist Schools help students to learn, to act, to live together, and principally, to be, adopting the educational focus of Marcellin Champagnat.

In the Marist world, the ideal of Marcellin is translated into educational institutions that in a simple, frequently anonymous way reflect the dream of Marcellin, helping like Mary did, children and young people to be good citizens. The four examples that follow represent a challenge in the Marist style of education that always seeks to renew itself, placing its hope in a new dawn.

children and young people to be good citizens. The four examples that follow represent a challenge in the Marist style of education that always seeks to renew itself, placing its hope in a new dawn.



**Br Pablo
GONZÁLEZ FRANCO**

PROVINCE SANTA MARÍA
DE LOS ANDES, PERU

6.1. FROM THE HEART OF CHAMPAGNAT TO THE HEART OF DATEM UNIVERSITY MARCELLIN CHAMPAGNAT

The Project: “*A teacher for Datem*” is a Marist experience of transforming solidarity, inserted in the depth of the Peruvian Amazonia. It emerges from a fecund coincidence of several factors; the Marist Volunteer Program, the shared mission, the Marist Solidarity Project of Peru and the option of the University M. Champagnat in the field of the formation of teachers.

“OUR HISTORY BEGAN IN THE EYES OF AN ABANDONED BOY”

At the end of the year 2012 arrived to the University the petition of the native people, through their “Apus” (charismatic chiefs) and representatives, asking that we be in charge of forming their teachers.

We appreciated the proposal as a grace and as a gift: to be the presence of Champagnat in the Peruvian Amazonia. The image of Marcellin with the young boy Montagne forcefully and challenging revealed itself to us. The reflection and decision were quick: “*All the dioceses of the world have a place in our plans*”. Datem del Marañón is one of the poorest and more vulnerable zones of Peru. More than 75% of the population is native.

MONTAGNE: THE MARIST MISSION



“Go and do the same” (Lk. 10, 37)

In the face of this panorama we want “to take care” and be responsible of this group of teachers and children – unattended and vulnerable – of our country. We make a transforming solidary proposal: not only to give them fish, but to teach them to fish.

During a first stage, the fundamental objective of the experience is to be able to obtain a degree or diploma – after 7 years of study – for 500 native bilingual teachers. The Professional title or degree that will be given to them will be intercultural bilingual Bachelor in Primary Education (or Primary education). In spite of the difficulties, the desertion is practically null.

The studies are developed in a *semi in-person form*. The students concentrate during two periods of time in the year. To get to San Lorenzo they travel between one and seven days on the river, since there

Fortunately, we have been able to bring to our classrooms young persons and adults from the nine native towns who live in Datem and who frequently – in their not too distant history – have been confronted: achuar, awajún, chapra, kandozi, kichwa amazónico, kokama, shawi, shiwilo and wampis. We also take care of a small group of mixed-race people who reside in the zone.

“WE NEED BROTHERS”

On the other hand, the education of children and young people in this Amazonia zone faces a great challenge: the lack of teachers.

The majority of the teachers – including the directors of the schools – lack pedagogical formation have no degrees or diplomas. The distances and the total absence of access to Internet make the situation even more complex.

The native communities ask for teachers who speak their language (especially for initial and primary teaching), but there are no competent professionals.

The Universities, in general, avoid working in those zones because of geographic, climatic and social difficulties that this supposes.





are no roads. The Marist volunteers also go there on a trip that includes taking a plane, bus and a small boat. The trip from Lima takes two days.

A group of teachers of the zone also teaches original or native languages, some of them in a process of normalization, including running the risk of extinction.

At the same time, we offer pastoral and human attention to the participating students, a large proportion of them are not Catholics.

The small children of the students (who habitually travel with the whole family) are taken care of in what is lovingly called: "the Little School", where students of the regular program of the UMCH carry out their work in the Volunteer Program.

How beautiful it is to see THE BROTHERS UNITED! (PSALM 133)

To participate in the project as a volunteer gives a rich experience of shared life and mission.

The experience of living in community is probably more enriching than the development itself of the academic activities. We try to constitute a family where everyone collaborates in the care of the persons and of things, participating in moments of gratuitousness, prayer and reflection, in sharing dreams and concerns.

The dwelling place and the meals are simple, but nothing is lacking of what is necessary. The scarcity (sometimes inexistence) of means is compensated with the passion and enthusiasm of the participants. The diversity of our origin is a challenge, but, at the same time, an immense richness. In the four years that the Project has been functioning over 100 volunteers have participated (several of them more than once). During this summer 2016, 47 volunteers from Peru, Chile, Bolivia and Spain will work, Brothers and Laity, young students

from the UMC, former pupils and teachers from Marist works with a wide experience. Their ages go from 19 to 66 years of age. Together with them, 15 teachers of the different languages form the teaching team.

The Marist presence in Datem is a common dream, a collective Project, in which we give and receive, teach and learn, share the present and the future with these peoples from Amazonia so far away, at a great distance from almost everything but so close to the heart of God and of Marcelin.



6.2. RECIFE: MARIST SCHOOL “ON MISSION”

“THE MARIST SOLIDARITY MISSION WAS A UNIQUE MOMENT. WE CARRIED OUT DIFFERENT ACTIVITIES, SUCH AS PRAYER MOMENTS, GROUP DYNAMICS, AND A HOME-VISITING PROGRAM, WHICH WAS LOVELY AND MAGICAL. WE SPENT ONLY A BRIEF WEEKEND THERE, BUT IT WAS MORE THAN SPECIAL!”

**Júlia Lopes, 8th grade
missionary student**



**BR IRANILSON
CORREIA DE LIMA,**
PROVINCE BRASIL
CENTRO-NORTE

The words of the missionary student Júlia Lopes indicate the “tone” of our missionary experience: it was a unique, magical, charming, and special moment. No matter how challenging it may have been, a successful evangelization and solidarity process of such proportions – in today’s school universe, in the youth culture we presently work with – proves it is possible to establish strategies and great possibilities of evangelization and humanization for our students.

Looking for an ecclesial, social, and cultural solidarity experience – trying to make Jesus Christ known, loved, and followed – the students, teachers, brothers, and former students of Saint Louis Marist School in Recife participated in the *Marist Solidarity Mission*, which included the following stages:

PRE-MISSION

- The *School Pastoral Team* visited the parishes, spoke to parishioners and pastors, and then chose the community where the mission would take place.
- They launched and publicized the mission project at school, addressing both students and teachers through different means: posters, website, classroom invitations, and social networks.
- Missionary formation for students and teachers. They prepared group dynamics, workshops, and celebrations to be implemented with the different groups during the mission: children, teenagers, and young adults.





- The entire school community and the missionaries' families got involved through solidary actions, such as donating food and other goods to help the poorest parish communities the missionaries would visit.

Mission

During the mission, we carried out different activities, such as home visits to share the Word of God; moments of prayer and celebrations in the different chapels of the parish; recreational and dynamic gatherings with children and young people; conversations with the pastoral groups of the parish to develop formation topics; cultural experiences and shows; and a great closing Eucharistic Celebration that gathered all the parish communities, groups, and members.

Post-Mission

Sharing the mission experience with the school community. Returning to the parish to meet the young people and prepare next year's mission.

The central feature of the *Marist Solidarity Mission* was the leading role

of the young missionaries, who found fertile soil to live, share and animate the different activities, prayer moments, visits, and meetings with the entire local community.

So this is how the *Marist Solidarity Mission* went about. Following Pope Francis' proposal of "a Church on the move", our Marist school

– as an actual ecclesial community and evangelization center
– also got moving to share the Word of God, inspired by the charisma that Marcellin Champagnat granted us.



6.3. RWANDA: VOCATIONAL TRAINING FOR YOUNG MONTAGNE

The Marist Brothers of Rwanda have directed the *Vocational Training Centre* of Rwabuye since 1988. It was founded to celebrate the bicentenary of Marcellin Champagnat's birth in 1989.

According to the education policy at that time, it initially aimed at offering vocational training to the young people who could not continue their secondary education and eventually ended on the fringes of society, engaging in prostitution and drugs. The Brothers wanted to attend Jean-Baptist Montagne personified in the poor young people who lived next to the Center. They were offered the possibility to study agriculture, welding, carpentry, masonry, plumbing, sewing, cooking and hairdressing.

Initially, the young people who benefited from this training program were between 16 and 35 years of age, and came from poor families. Their goal was to finish their training with the possibility of being hired by local workshops or businesses and earn a living. According to our statistics, in the last twenty years over 30 hundred students completed the program and joined the qualified local workforce.

Today our vocational training is not only for those who could not go to high school, because the national education program covers all the school-age population. Our students are currently young people, boys and girls, with a particular entrepreneurial spirit who are planning on starting their own business or cooperative.

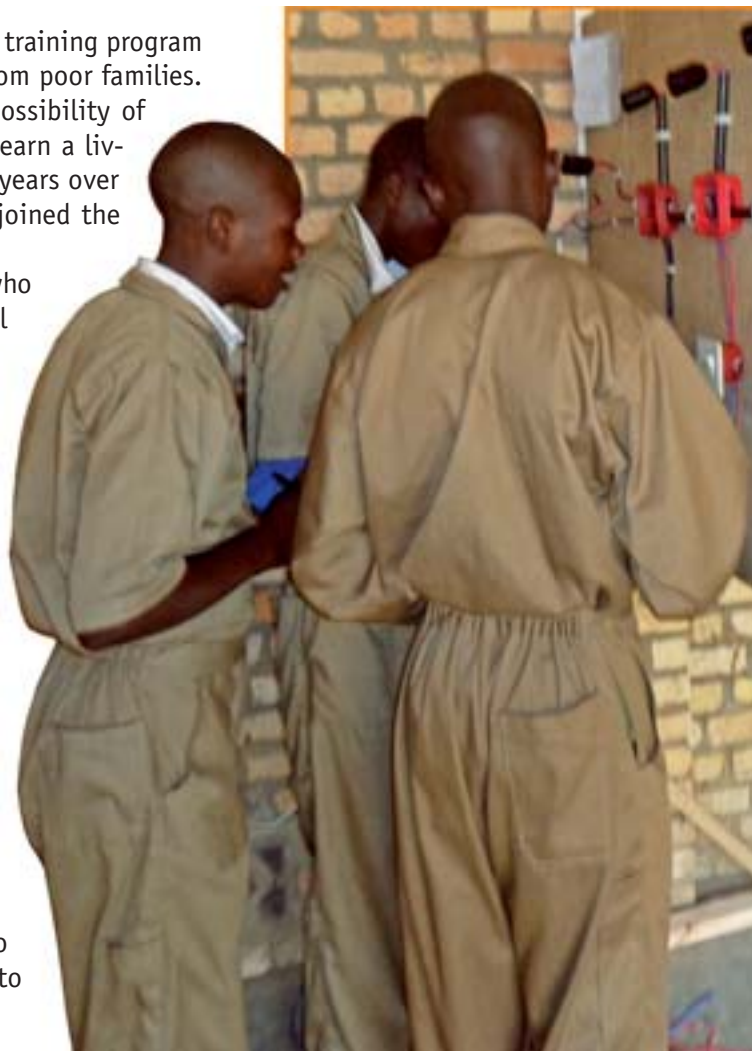
Last year, the Marist Brothers of Rwanda began a vocational training program for young Congolese refugees from several camps located in Rwanda. These young people have chosen occupations they can easily carry out in the camps, and 80 of them recently completed their training as cooks and hairdressers. They now earn a small income that helps them carry on with their difficult life in the refugee camp and meet the needs of their families.

The Center has presently joined the national employment program that aims at offering vocational training to young people, boys and girls, in order to generate 200 thousand jobs per year. In addition to



**BR AUGUSTIN
KAYISHEMA**

PROVINCE OF EAST-CENTRAL
AFRICA, RWANDA



RWANDA: VOCATIONAL TRAINING FOR YOUNG MONTAGNE

By Augustin Kayishema



the refugees, the Center has trained 250 disabled young people until now.

Regarding pastoral care, the Center collaborates with the priests and religious of the parish and the diocese of Butare to organize meetings for young people and basic ecclesial communities.

The Center invites any person of good will to participate in this apostolate, and for a few years now has been working with volunteers and welcoming anyone who wants to join our efforts.



**ELIANA ORENDÁIN
ORENDÁIN**

PROVINCE OF
MÉXICO CENTRAL

6.4. MEXICO: MARIST SPECIAL GROUPS

When I was invited to help systematize the 20-year experience of the 'Marist Special Groups' (known by the Spanish initials GEM, Grupos Especiales Maristas), I never imagined the greatness of this project, its simple birth, its silent growth, its deep philosophy and, above all, how God looked upon and operated within it. I say this because regarding disability, and particularly intellectual disability, I have seen two major reactions: we either move away to avoid looking at something that disturbs us from a human point of view, or we come close in such a way that we are transformed. Thanks to this transformation, we realize the personal gifts we have received, we explore them, we share them, and eventually – thanks to our encounter with the "other" – we understand it is all about "looking at reality in a different way".

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In the process of systematizing this experience through a participatory methodology – with the collaboration of a number of brothers and teachers who have shared their life and efforts within these groups – we were able to capture its history, original sense, and working model. The *GEM Reference Document* of 2015 reads:

Marist Special Groups (GEM) started in 1992 at Miravalles Marist School, in the outskirts of Mexico City, thanks to the efforts of Antonio Esaúl Chávez and Silvia Mendoza Aquino – a brother and a teacher who were quite visionary and deeply Christian – in order to help students with intellectual disabilities in the school community. This initiative touched people and spread to other Marist schools, which decided to serve the poorest of the poor, that is, the students with intellectual disabilities who were segregated from regular schools. More than 20 years went by, and now there are 16 Marist schools with GEM groups, which amount to a total of 32, going from elementary school to ordinary or technical high school, in urban, rural and indigenous zones within the Marist Province of Central Mexico.

But how do these groups actually work? GEM students attend regular classroom and school activities in order to develop their social and emotional skills. They also have a reference group with a special training program, thanks to which they make friends, go out for walks in the street, and learn with the school community through cultural, educational and recreational outings. The working model follows a “life education” program pursuing the objectives of personal independence, vocational training, functional autonomy, and ongoing awareness-raising in the school community, which actually “sees” our students.

Within our schools, GEM students offer the possibility of a more solidarity-based education for students in regular classrooms, and of generating a new culture regarding disability.

In this way, the GEM proposal and process become an evangelical answer to specific needs of our school communities, our society, and our time, in line with the *Declaration of Human Rights* (1948) and the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (2006).

Brother Emili Turú, Superior General, stated in 2012:

“GEM groups, in the context of the Marist schools, are ‘islands of humanity’, for it seems to me that they bring to our mind the essence of our education”.

In silence and simplicity, in the manner of Mary, these “islands of humanity” are living, growing and becoming stronger. They leave in haste to meet us, challenging and transforming our lives.



7. INFORMAL Education

“MARCELLIN’S CONSTANT SEARCHING FOR THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAY TO REACH OUT TO YOUNG PEOPLE IS AT THE HEART OF HIS CHARISM. HIS EXAMPLE INSPIRES OUR CREATIVE INTUITIONS AND ENERGIES AS MARIST APOSTLES. WE SEEK TO BE THE HUMAN FACE OF JESUS IN THE MIDST OF THE YOUNG, WHEREVER WE FIND THEM.

MARCELLIN GATHERED THE CHILDREN FOR CATECHISM CLASSES. HE WENT OUT TO THE HAMLETS HIMSELF AND SENT HIS BROTHERS OUT. HE CARED IN A SPECIAL WAY FOR THOSE WHO WERE POOR OR ORPHANED, WELCOMING THEM INTO LA VALLA AND THE HERMITAGE, AND DOING EVERYTHING HE COULD FOR THEIR WELL-BEING AND EDUCATION.”

In the Footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat, 167-168

Moved by the needs and the aspirations of the children and young people, especially of the more disadvantaged and those suffering violence, new institutions come into being that try to fill in the void left by political actions. In the five continents the Marists dedicate themselves to defend the dignity of the excluded of society.

The witnesses which follow are only a drop of what the Marist world has to deal with and they simply manifest that in the same way as they, many other initiatives can make the dream of Champagnat become a reality.



Br Kevin Wanden
DISTRICT OF THE PACIFIC,
NEW ZEALAND

7.1. CHAMPAGNAT INSTITUTE – SUVA, Fiji

The Champagnat Institute in Suva, Fiji, educates secondary students who are unable to attend mainstream schools, including children with disabilities who now have access to vocational education at the Institute. The Institute is the only secondary school in Fiji that specialises in teaching vocational and mainstream curriculum to young people with disabilities and learning difficulties. The Marist Champagnat Institute has smaller class sizes than mainstream schools which enables students to achieve their learning outcomes in a more supportive environment.

Francis Varea, the Principal comments that “The Marist Champagnat Institute is different from other special education schools because it is a secondary school where disabled students learn side by side with non-disabled students. We have 120 students from various



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backgrounds, but most have started life with a significant disadvantage due to either health, social or economic factors.”

The Institute also runs a tertiary level programme for early childhood teachers. These teachers work in a variety of early childhood centres throughout the Fiji Islands.

Aleppo, Siria

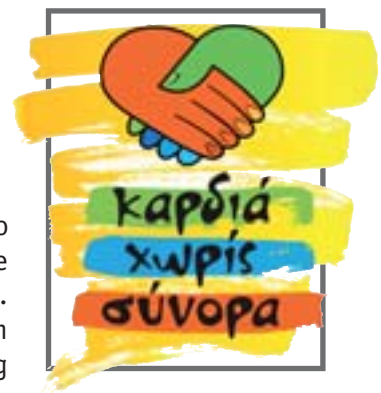
7.2. NEW MARIST PRESENCE IN GREECE

The last General Chapter of the Marist Brothers urges us to put into practice a “new way of being Brothers”, and of living “close to those who are most in need”. These mandates directly touch our life and mission. The Brother Provincial of the Hermitage and his Council appointed a team of Greek brothers and laity to reflect on the possibility of implementing a new Marist work in Greece.

Marists have been working in this country for more than a century in two large educational centers: Leonine School, with its double location of Patisia and Nea Smyrni.

The team’s reflection led to the opening of a new international community of Brothers (two Greeks, a Frenchman, and a Catalan) in September 2012, aimed at implementing and animating a social work on the outskirts of Athens.

The community started in September 8, 2012, in Acharnae (Menidi), a town now absorbed by the vast and crowded metropolitan area of Athens, which is home to half of the Greek population. This “neighborhood” has experienced a rapid and disorderly growth in recent years (arriving at over 200 thousand inhabitants), and much of its population is in transit to other European countries, besides including many Central European and Asian immigrants, and consequently the area suffers from unemployment



Br Rafa Escolà

PROVINCE L'HERMITAGE,
GREECE

NEW MARIST PRESENCE IN GREECE

Br Rafa Escolà



and the economic crisis in a special way, which brings true havoc to the families. The new community dedicated its first year to find a place for the Social Center, while its non-Greek members studied the language.

On the other hand, the social and political climate of Greece is strongly influenced by the Orthodox religion. There is no structure of the Catholic Church in our neighborhood, except for our Marist community and a small group of Catholic families, most of them Albanian and Romanian.

The **Boundless Heart Social Center** opened at the beginning of October 2013. The then Archbishop of Athens, Nikolaos Fokolos, blessed the facilities on October 5. About 25 elementary-school students participate every day in an almost personalized school-reinforcement program. This is possible thanks to a large number of teachers from our schools of Patisia and Nea Smyrni, in addition to some local people – who are gradually getting to know us – that also work as volunteers. We include cultural and sporting activities in the daily schedule, which ends with a free snack for all the children.

A MARIST PRESENCE OPEN TO THE FUTURE

In the situation of crisis Greece is going through, it is amazing to see and touch every day so many concrete signs of solidarity and support from a number of lay people, who are mainly related to the Marist school.

Therefore, we believe this Social Center – although it is promoted and supported by the Brothers as an institution – is a Marist window open to the future in Greece. Everything is new: the non-formal education work; a community of brothers living in an apartment, not in a “monastery”, as they say here; a simple style in our day-to-day relationships; and our doors open to welcome people and share prayer and work with them. All this is aimed at highlighting the “Marian face of the Church”, the “Theotokos”, thanks to which we can find a point of communion with our Orthodox brothers and sisters. Our Marist community wants to be a meeting place for all those who happen to walk along our same path – especially the young people who wonder about their future – and wants to be a germ of future vocations to Marist life in Greece.



7.3. MARIST SOCIAL CENTER of PORTO ALEGRE (CESMAR)

In this historic moment of great changes in the world, all Christians are called – especially through Pope Francis’ leadership and his closeness to the people who are most in need – to take concrete steps in order to reach the ‘existential peripheries’. Since its foundation, the Institute – throughout the different situations it has faced – always sought to be in unity with the Church and follow the signs of the times. Therefore, we must realize the importance of our work in the social field, which is also the birthplace of Saint Marcellin Champagnat’s project.

The *Marist Social Center* of Porto Alegre (CESMAR) is a fertile path to sow, plant and harvest fruits of evangelization by using our Founder’s pedagogy. Together with the staff, the children and teenagers we serve, and the local people in the area, we are incarnating one of Marcellin’s greatest teachings, that is, the importance of being present among those who are most in need.

The Marist Brothers’ education proposal – aimed at developing a free, just and fraternal society – is opening new paths and facilitating the social integration of the people from the CESMAR geographical area. Located in one of the neighborhoods of Porto Alegre with the lowest human development index (HDI), the Center has an extensive partner network at the service of social inclusion, which comprises local schools and authorities, as well as private and governmental organizations.

The area covers more than 78 thousand square meters through a number of initiatives: Service Units attending local families, socio-educational programs for youth in vulnerable situations, *Brother Jaime Biazus Middle School* offering only free-of-charge education, a *Technological Training Center* to recondition discarded electronic devices and train young apprentices, as well as leisure and conviviality activities.

Human development becomes an important goal in the whole picture of activities by offering spaces to cherish people’s life stories and values. As in any Marist Center, Marist Youth Ministry (MYM) is active in CESMAR. Each Saturday, it gathers local young people to think together, exchange ideas, and share stories and feelings. There are currently five MYM groups. Some of them carry out weekly volunteer work to help the CESMAR teachers.

As part of the socio-educational program, a number of qualified teachers who are imbued with the Marist charism organize cultural, sporting, and learning workshops in the opposite shift of their regular school hours so as to encourage group experiences, holistic formation, and respect for differences. Teachers and students share this process, which includes educational, entertaining, imaginative, and recreational activities.

In order to foster self-knowledge and a better understanding of the world we live in, we regularly organize specific activities regarding digital in-



Br Odilmar Fachi

PROVINCE BRASIL
SUL-AMAZÔNIA





clusion and computer science, as well as conferences on drug addiction, sexuality, relationships, vocations, civic and moral education, and the rights and duties described in the *Brazilian Child and Adolescent Statute*. Due to its comprehensive program, CESMAR is regarded as a testimony of the new beginning, an open-doors Marist presence, and a concrete expression of the option for the people who Father Champagnat and Pope Francis love most. The fact of facing the challenge to reach the peripheries of society is bringing about deep transformations in each member of the program, in the community, and in the city, helping everyone to see the world through a (poor) child's eyes.



**Claudia A.
Rojas Carvajal**

PROVINCE NORANDINA,
COLOMBIA

7.4. CHAMPAGNAT COMMUNITY CENTER - BOGOTÁ

“La Paz” a neighborhood located in the eastern-southern part of the city of Bogota belongs to the economic social stratum 1 of the scale in which the sectors of the city are valued, the 6th one being the one of greater income and number 1 is that of the sectors where the poorest and most vulnerable people of the cities and the Colombian countryside live. During the years 80's, and as consequence of the violence in which Colombia lived, the first cases of displacement from the country to the city began to take place. And added to this, in 1985, the ice on the volcano Nevada del Ruiz melted, and the avalanche caused a great number of victims and the land was totally devastated. Considering that the capital city could offer better conditions, persons began to arrive to the suburban zones of Bogota. One of these was the land surrounding the prison “LA Picota” the largest prison of the country, a steep land and of a very mountainous typology.

Almost simultaneously and responding to this social emergency the Champagnat School of Bogota, began to be present there with the students, who rendered a social service advancing prevention programs, first aid in health and recreation.

For the year 1989, in which the Marist Brothers celebrated the 100th anniversary of their presence in Colombia, and taking into account that no physical place existed to carry out the programs organized in the school for the benefit of the inhabitants of the neighborhood, it was suggested to draw up a Project for the construction of a Service Center, the principal objectives of which would be, health, workshops for education and qualification and the creation of a Cooperative of stores and provisions. The construction project was so rapid that on July 1, 1989 it was inaugurated by Brother Charles Howard - Superior General and Brother Nestor Quinceno, Provincial of Colombia.

For the year 2003, as result of the Colombian internal conflict, phenomena such as displacement, demobilization and reinsertion, caused the arrival of children and young people to the cities in different conditions of academic, social and economic development. As a consequence of the growing increase in number of children and young people who have arrived from the country to the city in a situation of difficulty because of their age not corresponding to the school program, the Community of the Marist Brothers of the School, the personnel of the Champagnat Community Center and a group of members of the neighborhood La Paz, carried out a process of discernment and reflection that resulted in the implementation of the educational proposal "Speeding-up Learning" seeking that once the program that lasts one year has been developed, these children and young persons will be able to be in the school in the grade corresponding to their age thus regularizing their studies.

In the year 2014 and taking into account that several of the young people who succeeded in finishing primary school, continued to have a scholastic gap because they were older than 13 years of age, a new educational program was begun called "Think" that facilitates the leveling of basic secondary education in two years.

During all this time, the Champagnat Community Center, has not only sought to develop educational alternatives that respond to the different situations and contexts of the people with whom it has influence, but also has developed the proposals of children and young people Pastoral ministry that the Norandina Province has, as well as workshops for leisure time and school support to which the other children of the neighborhood can have access. As a Service Center and also seeking to get close to the population of the neighborhood, the development of the health groups is continued, as well as the club for the older adult, a workshop of formation for parents of the family for the recognition of the rights of the children, the preparation for the Sacraments, Baptism, First Communion and Confirmation.



In writing this account, a large number of persons have come to my mind and my heart, persons who have made it possible for this Marist work to be in a permanent process of reflection and discernment regarding the different problems that the poor communities of a city such as Bogota have to face. I thank each one of the Marist Brothers, teachers, facilitators, members of Fraternities and lay groups, Marist volunteers and of other NGO's, as well as the agents of the neighborhood La Paz and personnel of the Champagnat School for their commitment in the defense of the rights of children, and the transformation of the situations that generate inequality, poverty and exclusion.



**BR RAJAKUMAR
SOOSAI MANICKAM**

PROVINCE
SOUTH ASIA, INDIA

7.5. TRICHY: CARING LIVES TODAY FOR TOMORROW'S FUTURE

Rainbow - an incredible arc of colours with full of surprise and wonder for human eyes as it naturally occurs while the sun shines when it is still raining. Many cultures interpret rainbow as a sign of peace and harmony. But what is it for us as Marists? The answer is quite simple: it is a 'Care and Support Program' for children living with and affected by HIV/AIDS in and around Trichy district, Tamil Nadu, South India.

Established in 2003 under Marcellin Trust, Operation Rainbow aims at supporting families affected by HIV/AIDS, especially children in terms of their education and healthcare, and helping them to transform their traumatic and negative experience into positive and creative energy to strengthen their interpersonal relationships within their families and realize their potential for happier life.

For someone to hear that one of his or her family members has been diagnosed as HIV positive is like the last word before death of a person and often considered as a curse on the family. The whole family becomes inconsolable, heart-broken and grief-stricken. They begin to live their life in panic as every second of their life is counted towards death. The situation is very pathetic as dreams of these children shattered and their future blurred. They begin to face new challenges such as rejection from their relatives and friends and discrimination in society. They become stigmatized ultimately.

In such circumstance, as God made rainbow appear to Noah after flood (Genesis 9:16) as the sign of new beginning and new life on earth, Operation Rainbow embraces them with love



and care and seeks to enhance the quality of life open to these children by offering new hope and creating new future.

Operation Rainbow currently offers scholarships and other education supports for 162 children from about 100 families to continue their basic education and go for higher education to sustain their life and their families. We also provide nutritional supplements and healthcare services to ensure good health of these children and their parents.

Activities such as Monthly Support Group Meeting, Rainbow Tour and Festivals bring people closer to one another in sharing their stories, offering mutual support, appreciating one another's good will and being grateful to the gift of life. Guidance and Counselling are important components of our project objectives that help people, particularly children to accept the realities and live their life with gratitude, contentment and joy.



8. MARIST NGO'S: UNION MAKES STRENGTH



BR MANEL MENDOZA
FMSI GENEVA

PRESENT DAY SOCIETY IS OVERLOADED WITH ORGANIZATIONS. SOME ARE POLITICAL (OEA), OTHERS ARE OF POLITICAL-SOCIAL CHARACTER (UNICEF), OTHERS ARE RELIGIOUS (UIP), OTHERS OF MANAGERIAL OR BUSINESS TYPE THAT HAVE ARRIVED TO BE REAL ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL HOLDINGS, POSSIBLY WITH AN ECONOMIC POTENTIAL GREATER THAN SOME STATES.

Present day economy is based on the success of managerial or business unification capable of generating richness or poverty. Why did enterprises take the option to form the great managerial or business groups? The response could be offered to us by economists, sociologists and even the politicians. I think that all the responses which they can offer to us have a

common aspect that perhaps we could summarize in the following slogans: "Union makes strength" or "Strength is on union", or if we prefer, "All for one and one for all". No doubt what enterprises obtain by forming these groups is to increase the benefits, become stronger before competition and be more present in society.

I am not going to discuss if this is a good example to focus the case that concerns us due to its social and anti-social consequences, however, I think that it can help us to understand how we should focus the new challenges. At present many NGO's are also following the same model. They have not formed groups but they have succeeded in integrating themselves into coalitions. From my experience I could name enough NGO's which have united to form the great present coalitions that act in different levels whether at world or continental level. Which is the why or purpose of these coalitions? It is simply because of the same reasons which we mentioned before. What the NGO's obtain in joining together to have common criteria for acting and, at the same time, strengthen the objectives that they jointly defend. These simple operations carried out in common allow them to mutually strengthen themselves

*Encounter of Marist NGOs
from America in Guatemala*





*Encounter of Marist NGOs
from Europe at the General House*

and that their voice is heard more attentively by those to whom they address their message. It is not the same thing to travel alone than to have some traveling companions on whom each one of the organizations of the coalition finds mutual support. At present the Marist Institute has more than twenty visible NGO's in the countries where we are present, besides the delegations of solidarity in each one of the Provinces. According to my point of view, I would say that they are few to be able to face the challenge of the defense and promotion of the rights of children. Up until a short time ago we have dedicated ourselves

exclusively to education in the schools. Then the social works were consolidated, and at present there is no Province that does not have one or more works. I think that we still have to take one more step in order to go to those who are in greater need and defend their rights. Let us recall the availability of Mary in the visitation: she did not doubt in beginning, in taking the road that would lead her to visit her cousin Elizabeth who was in need.

The premises that I have presented before are also valid for us. We cannot go alone or go on the road thinking solely on our own provincial needs. I think that we have to look up and see the horizon and reflect on the manner of facing it uniting our efforts (one of the objectives of the New Models). This is the reason why we are intending to organize a network of Marist NGO's which will help us to have a common spirit that explains what sense we give, as an institution, to solidarity, which will lead or guide the solidarity movement of the Institute at world level. For this purpose meetings of NGO's and Provincial organisms of solidarity have already been organized in America and in Europe. We are thinking of doing the same thing in the geographic area of Asia-Pacific and in the African continent. This is one of the challenges that FMSI, which leads or guides this movement, has, and not only it but the whole Marist Institute as well.

8.1. THE CONTRIBUTION OF FMSI TO THE MARIST MISSION IN TODAY'S WORLD

The Marist Foundation for International Solidarity – Onlus (FMSI) came into existence in October 2007, after 10 years of life of the International Bureau of Solidarity (BIS) which had carried out the function of an internal Office of the General Administration for the coordination of solidarity in the Institute. With its institution as a public foundation, between 2008-2009 it could begin to take the first steps in the field of the Rights of Infancy, formally opening an Office in Geneva and inserting itself in the complex mechanism of the United Nations. In 2011 it obtained the *special consultative status* of ECOSOC, the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, by which it was publically recognized as “*voice of social society*”. But it was the XXI General Chapter of 2009



BR MARIO MEUTI
FMSI, ROME

which in a certain sense allowed FMSI to go out to public life, because it indicated this to the whole Institute as a fundamental instrument for the Marist mission today: *"We feel urged to go against social, economic, cultural and religious politics that oppress children and young people. It is the moment to unite all our energies to support the efforts of the Marist Foundation for International Solidarity (FMSI)" (Doc. XXI Chap. page 23).*

Jérémie, Haiti Our lines of action come directly from **point 3** of the Chapter document:

"The Marist Mission in a new world", where we are all asked *"to see the world with the eyes of poor children and young people"*, and from this perspective promote their rights under all aspects in which we are working, even with political actions and denouncements... The Marist mission today, therefore, is no longer only to be good Christian teachers, and not even to form other good teachers for our schools and our centers of educational attention and care, but it is to have at heart all the children and young people whose fundamental rights are not recognized, because of lack of resources or because of scarce or lack of political and social consideration in certain countries. And for this reason it is necessary to be an active part of social

society and to struggle with all possible means, certainly, not alone, but together with other organizations and institutions, in order to guarantee adequate politics at local, national and international level.

But in order to do this it is necessary to be prepared and organized in a professional way.

The Marist Foundation for International Solidarity is precisely called by the Institute to respond to these challenges and to give its contribution to the programs of formation of the Marist Brothers and the Laity, accompanying them in experiences which favor sensitization toward the needs of poor children and young people.

Concretely, FMSI acts according to the following lines of action:

1. Assistance and coordination of projects "for the good of children": it assists all the Administrative Units of the developing countries, for the drawing up, the correct presentation of projects of an educational aim, and then the evaluation of them, whether to send financing from the Institute, or above all, to present those projects to external Entities. For each project the Office demands a financial and narrative detailed account or report, and it also assures itself, even with missions on that place, that the help sent is used for a good purpose.
2. Seeking of funds: to respond to the many requests in favor of children and young people who are in need, it is in contact with beneficial or charitable Entities and Associations, it presents the Marist educational



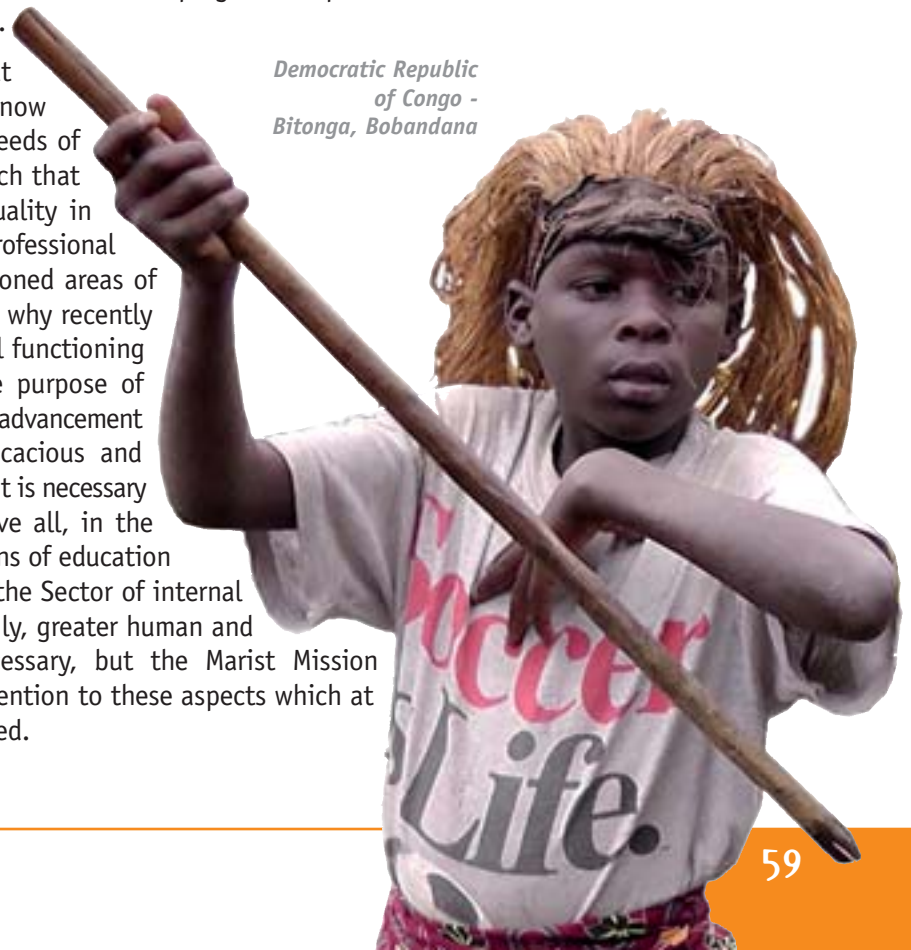
FMSI
Per il Bene dei Bambini

projects, makes known our aims of the Foundation within and outside the Marist world using the Web Site, newsletter, annual report and other publications.

3. It develops a network of collaboration whether within the Institute, meeting with the various Marist NGO's and collaborating with the Offices of solidarity present in many Provinces, or whether with national and international networks of NGO's which work with solidarity, education and promotion of the rights of children or human rights in general. (FOCSIV, CIDSE, BICE, FI, ERI, CRC, CCIG, IIMA, MMI-LAC...) and also with organizations of other Institutes that carry out activities similar to ours.
4. Defense and promotion of the rights of Infancy through the mechanisms of the United Nations to promote a change in the government programs in benefit of those who in society are traditionally marginalized. At the basis of the system of the UNO for the defense and protection of human rights there are some mechanisms of control. Those used by FMSI are especially two: the Universal Periodical Revision (UPR) that is the examination every four years of the situation of the human rights of each one of the 196 members and the sessions of the Committee of the Rights of Infancy (CRC) that examines specifically the application, in the member states, of the relative International Convention.
5. Formation on the theme of the rights of Infancy within the Marist Institute. The team in Geneva carries on proper initiatives (formation of local referents of FMSI) and acts according to the requests of the several Provinces and centers of Marist formation, whether for the promotion of rights in general, or for the coordination of programs of prevention of every form of abuse of minors.

It is necessary to recognize that in this whole area FMSI up until now has taken small steps, but the needs of the Institute are so many and such that it is necessary to advance in quality in the organizational sense and of professional management in the above mentioned areas of intervention. This is the reason why recently there was a revision of the global functioning of the Foundation, with for the purpose of giving ideas and guidelines to this advancement in quality, towards a more efficacious and functional organization. Certainly, it is necessary to promote new initiatives, above all, in the Seeking of funds, in the campaigns of education to Justice and solidarity, and in the Sector of internal and external information. Certainly, greater human and financial resources will be necessary, but the Marist Mission deserves a new and adequate attention to these aspects which at one time they were less considered.

*Democratic Republic
of Congo -
Bitonga, Bobandana*





BR ÁLVARO SEPÚLVEDA
FMSI CONO SUR

8.2. BACKGROUND AND CHALLENGES OF FMSI CONO SUR

For several decades, the Marists of Cono Sur have implemented different shared initiatives. We are presently carrying out a coordinated work in the areas of Brother formation and spirituality animation, besides a number of education, pastoral and solidarity projects. The process of restructuring that brought about our new Provinces has strengthened the exchange between brothers and lay people in Bolivia, Uruguay, Peru, Paraguay, Argentina and Chile.

In 2012, those of us who work in the area of children rights started to consider the possibility of establishing a regional FMSI office, in line with the one that was already operating in Asia.

The first goal was to coordinate the strategies to promote and defend the rights of children we were already implementing in the six countries, sharing experiences and resources. We tried to bring together a number of initiatives in this area that we were developing in the different nations and works.

It also seemed important to strengthen the FMSI presence in the Americas, taking advantage of the consultative status it enjoys at the UN. In these years, we have participated in national and international networks, and submitted reports to the Human Rights Council when it was the turn of Bolivia, Peru, Chile and Paraguay to undergo the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), besides presenting alternative reports to the Geneva Child Rights Committee.

The third major goal is to generate and systematize information regarding the children of Cono Sur in order to advocate on their behalf. We have promoted the monitoring of children rights based on the official data coming from the State (Childhood Observatories), and carried out studies to show where the greatest violations are taking place.

Cono Sur
FMSI Team



As the first office in the continent, FMSI Cono Sur has been – along with Red Corazón Solidario (Solidarian Heart Network) – a window to represent the Marists in public forums, such as the Global Movement for Children. This hub gathers the main entities discussing childhood policies in the region; it also allows us to engage in high-level discussions, such as the Post-2015 Development Agenda (Sustainable Development Goals).

The Marist works of Cono Sur are attending around 71 thousand children and young people, trying to offer the best quality educational, human and Christian service.

However, the population under 18 years of age living in these six countries is more than 35 million. Thinking about these millions of children and teenagers, we have set new challenges for the coming years:

A more active and determined presence in the regional platforms that are discussing public policies and promoting new initiatives, such as the banning of physical and humiliating forms of punishment.

Involve children and young people in defending their own rights through special events but most of all in daily-life spaces like family, school, and neighborhood.

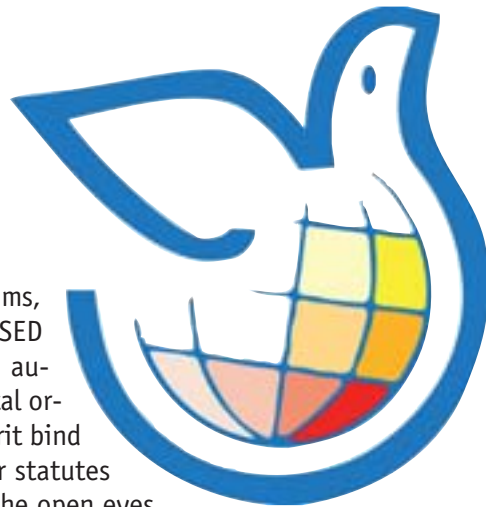
Carry out a regional monitoring of children rights, including a follow-up of the variables that can indicate either respect or disregard for such rights. By doing so, we aim at a solid, objective and well-founded advocacy work. Stimulate the movement towards new political, cultural and geographical peripheries. Many challenges are urging us to leave our comfort zone, such as the migrant, indigenous or Afro-descendant children; those who suffer discrimination because of disability, sexual orientation or other reasons, and children affected by socio-economic inequality, among others.



8.3. SED MARIST NGO

It is already 24 years that we have been sharing dreams, commitments, projects, struggles... Marists and SED have always been going hand in hand. Yes, we are an autonomous Association recognized as a non-governmental organization of social interest, but the letter and the spirit bind us together from the beginning. The reliability of our statutes expresses it in this way. We are a Marist NGO. We are the open eyes which discover the vulnerable and disadvantaged brother, the extended hand to accompany on the journey, the raised foot to walk together toward the dream of a more just world in peace. We are the point of the spear of Marist solidarity. We aspire to be a significant Marist presence in the peripheries of our world.

For sure with the description of our objectives, we give the fundamental elements to understand the commitment of SED with society. According to the Statutes of the organization, our objectives are the following:



TEAM SED
MARIST SPANISH
CONFERENCE, SPAIN

- **Transformation of society in the North:** For this we develop the following two processes: Education for Development (EpD) and Social Impact or Effect (a whole series of socio-political activities that have effect in the change of criteria, customs, norms... of society, according to sustainable development).
- **Promotion of Volunteer Program:** We consider the Volunteer Program like a life-style assumed by the person who commits him/herself in the service of disadvantaged persons and in the promotion of justice and peace. In this way the volunteer Program is a living cell of a new social fabric.
- **Cooperation for the Development in the South:** We are an NGOD committed with the development of the impoverished countries. To obtain this we seek cooperation, by establishing development projects at the initiative of communities interested and continuing to be the protagonists in the process, we create the conditions to improve the realization and promotion of different Human Rights, particularly affecting the Right to Education.



Saint Marcellin
Champagnat
School of Bouaké,
Ivory Coast

The year 2017 will mark the future for a twofold reason. In this year of the Marist Bicentenary, SED will be 25 years old. Certainly there are some numbers that have to go beyond, to increase. Increase the number of projects carried out; obtain greater economic limits, to beat records in campaigns, in the participation of volunteers... But our great objective is to keep alive the spirit of the solidarity commitment that has marked our life during these years. For this we have to be very close to our bases, we have to strengthen the solidarity teams in the schools... We must strengthen and support in all of them the evangelical value of sharing, of the struggle for justice and the seeking of peace.

9. MARIST YOUTH PASTORAL MINISTRY



**BR MIQUEL ÀNGEL
ESPINOSA BARRERA**

GENERAL HOUSE,
SECRETARIAT OF MISSION

MARIST YOUTH PASTORAL MINISTRY IS AN OPTION OF THE INSTITUTE, IT IS A WAY OF BEING EVANGELIZERS AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE AND LOOKING AT THE HORIZON WE FEEL THE DESIRE TO:

- Strengthen the processes of PJM (Youth Pastoral Ministry) in every Administrative Unit, with the adequate persons and the necessary resources.
- Open different places for PJM where the young are, adapting the proposal and responding to their vital concerns.
- Generate bonds of union or links with the local Church sharing experiences, formative processes, etc.

In order to develop Youth Pastoral Ministry (PJM) that will develop young people to be:

- **CONNECTED** with life and interior force that will allow them to live the experience of God that dwells within them.
- **FREE** from judgements and labels, recognizing that they are loved and are capable to live in love.
- **DREAMERS** of realities that humanize, committing themselves to make these possible in community and in harmony with nature.

The Horizon is not described here, it is already on the way, it is in your hands, up to you to make it possible.

MIRIAM ADRIANA BARRANCO DÍAZ, SAN CRISTÓBAL DE LAS CASAS, CHIAPAS - MEXICO

The accompaniment of the PJM was very pleasant; they gave me tools and means to see my complex reality, with critical eyes, open heart to changes, and with creativity to do and to create my history, by being an agent of transformation, according to my capacity. The reality of the Diocese of San Cristobal de las Casas has always been one of struggle and defense for a life with dignity. I, as a young person who accompanies processes of young people, the PJM has given me dynamism and creativity in my accompaniment of the young, showing in my person by (attitudes and gestures), the essence of Christ, Liberator.



INTERNATIONAL GATHERING of MARIST YOUTH (2016) “DARE TO DREAM”

As Marist Family we believe in young people, in their prominence and leadership in the construction of new realities, we believe in their constant search and in their capacity to dream and make their dreams possible, come true. For this reason from July 17 to 23, 2016, we will celebrate the International Encounter of Young Marists (EIJM) “Dare to Dream” in Lyon, France, with participants from all the Branches of the Marist Family. More than 400 young Marists will gather together; providing an international and inter-cultural experience with representatives from the whole world; it intends to be a community experience which constructs a new way of being Church with a Marian face, which meets not only to remember that with the promise of Fourvière we were born as Marist Family, but in order to travel with the founders and to get close to the fire that led them to make such a commitment and to discover what makes our life burn and to commit ourselves to a cause. Young Person Dare to Dream! Today this experience opens new horizons for the Charism and for the Marist Mission.



10. New Models of Animation, Governance and Management



BR JOÃO CARLOS
do PRADO

GENERAL HOUSE,
SECRETARIAT OF MISSION

WE ARE living a new phase in humanity and in the Church. Thanks to the media, we have never been so close to one another.

Besides, the technological and scientific advancement or progress, the economic advancement is also notable on the part of humanity. However, in spite of all the achievements, there is a great hidden social inequality

that affects the life of millions of children and young people in the whole world.

Pope Francis inaugurated a new era for the Church. We are living a time of attention to the peripheries of the world, of attention to the most varied situations of vulnerability in life. We are called to be an Institute going forth, going out, of open doors so as to respond to the cries of the children and young people. The vocation of the laity is now recognized, in fact as joint responsibility in the mission of the different charisms of religious families in the whole world. At the same time, religious life is asked for a more radical witness of presence and mission and a re-invention for these new times.

As a Marist Institute we are not foreign to this reality. Every day we feel that the great transformations of the world call to our door. Following the example of Mary and of Marcellin, we are called to look at this reality with faith and to discern the call that God makes to our Institute and to our charism.

In this sense, among the different projects to respond better to the new times and to their challenges for the Marist Institute in a “new beginning”, the General Council began the Project of Animation, Governance and Management. The project began in 2013 with the creation of the International Commission that bore the same name and which drew up the proposal of implementation of the Project as a response to the request of the XXI General Chapter. In the years 2014 and 2015 a process of broad consultation and collaboration of Brothers and Laity of all the Provinces and Districts was carried out through interviews, encounters and regional meetings. From July 10 to 14, 2015, the International Assembly of New Models was celebrated in Rome. The pro-

posals for the different levels of the Marist mission were presented and agreed upon. Below we give some of the central elements of the Project.

PROJECT SCOPE

To ensure the development and sustainability of the Marist Mission by proposing and implementing principles, guidelines and possible models of GMA (Government, Management and Animation) for the GA (General Administration) and AUs that are able to address the challenges that come out of the SWOT analysis in four broad dimensions: Internationality (how could we function better as an international Institute?); Co-responsibility and complementarity of lay people and religious for the Mission; Government and Management at the AUs level; General Administration Government and Management.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Models to achieve greater synergy and equity of resources among AU's.
- Models to achieve greater co-responsibility and communion between lay people and Brothers.
- Suggestions to change the Constitution (if necessary).
- Roles and responsibilities of key governance agents (General Council, Econome General, Provincial Councils etc.).
- Critical decision macro-processes (e.g. strategic planning, ownership succession planning for real estate and other assets,

*International Conference
on New Models at
the General House – July 2015*



funding of Institute strategic projects, risk management policies, evangelization guidelines etc.) involving the GA and the AU's.

- Governance, management and animation model of the GA (principles, structure, processes and resources).
- Principles (including animation principles), guidelines, “minimums” and possible GMA models for AU's
- Implementation roadmap (including change management approaches).
- New vitality for the Marist Mission and Life.

To respond to these challenges, we have based ourselves on a description of our institutional principles that help us to see our reality and our future more easily. We believe that the Lord offers us a “new wine” in this historical moment and that we need “new skins” to be sure to keep all the values that arise from the Marist life and mission. We are invited to look at our future with audacity and hope.

Starting from the principles of the Marist Mission, we have defined some elements that should be the basis of all the areas and aspects of our life and action. They have to assure that we can advance in the construction of the global body of the Institute. These would be: passion for the Marist life and mission; presence among children and young people; co-responsibility, solidarity and subsidiarity, global mentality; inter-cultural aspect, creativity and innovation; ability and appropriate attitudes; transparency.

Besides the principles, 7 directives were defined as a help to the evolution of the Project in all levels and Marist realities.



DIRECTIVES

- At the beginning of the third centenary we seek the more adequate forms to assure the sustainability and vitality of the Marist Mission.
- We want happy persons, passionate and committed with the Marist Charism; and for this we promote experiences and processes of accompaniment and of formation at all levels of the Institute.
- We recognize ourselves as an international Institute that acts as a global body in all the dimensions of the Marist life and Mission.
- We prioritize the presence and closeness of brothers and laity with a vocation among the children and young people, especially among the poorest and vulnerable.
- We live and assume communion and joint responsibility or co-responsibility in the Marist Mission.



REGIONAL ENCOUNTERS:

1. Africa
2. Asia
3. Arco Norte
4. Europe
5. Brazil and Cono Sur
6. Oceania

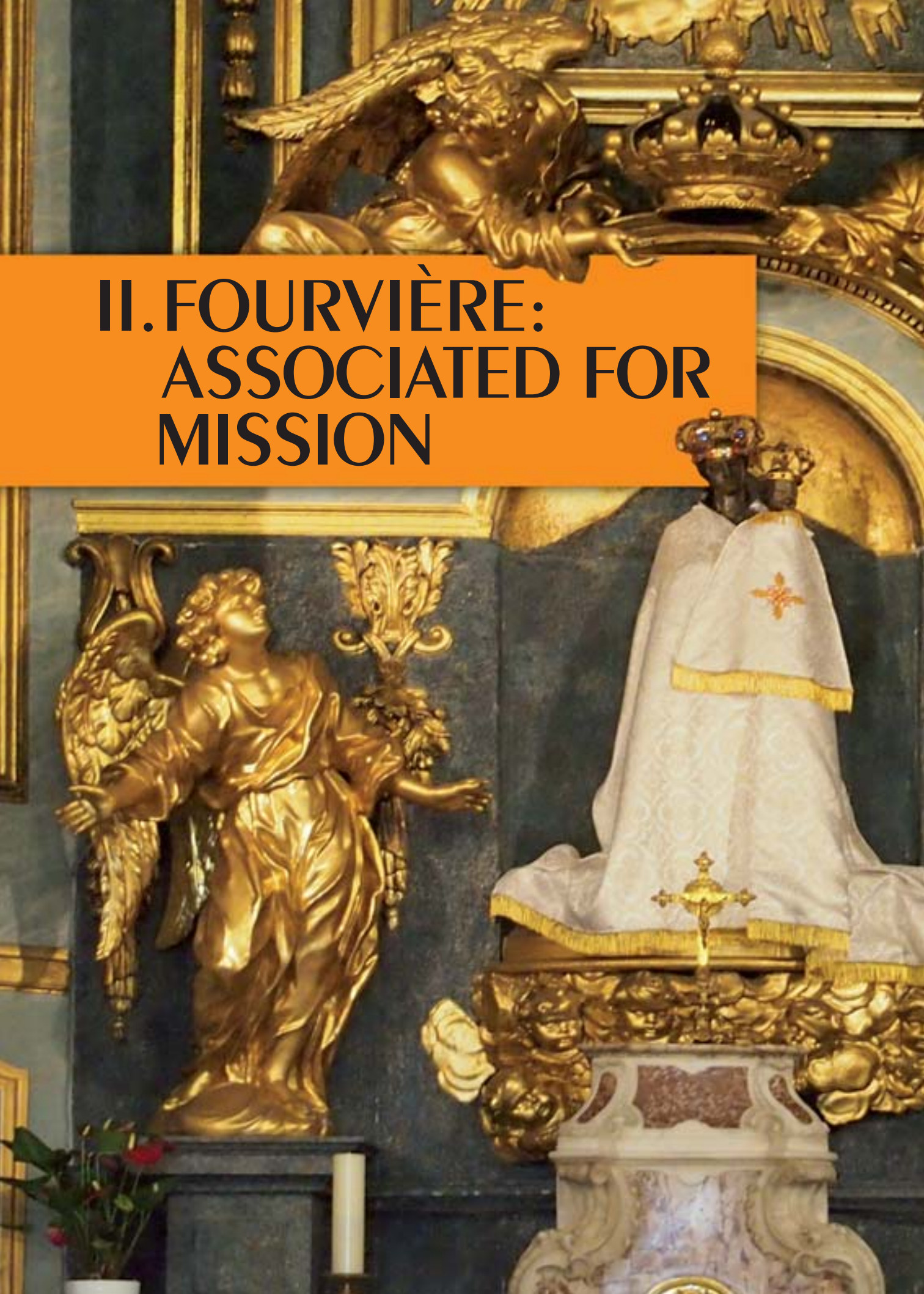


- We assume from all the organisms of the Institute (UA, Regions and General Government) the participation and joint responsibility or co-responsibility in animation, government and management of the Marist Mission.
- In order to respond to the calls and challenges of our Mission we seek for the adequate structures and we clearly define the functions and responsibilities of persons.

The Project New Models is a Project of co-creation that has to concern everyone. It is only then that we will be capable to construct something new and generate greater vitality of the Marist charism. The “new beginning” begins with our vision and needs to commit our persons and our mission. In this new horizon, the Brothers and the Laity are called to be mystics and prophets in communion, with a significant presence among the poor children and young people. This is why we understand that sustainability of the Marist Mission requires happy, passionate and committed persons to the Marist Charism.



II. FOURVIÈRE: ASSOCIATED FOR MISSION





- 1. FOURVIÈRE –
INTUITION,
PLEDGE,
AND REALITY**
- 2. LA VALLA:
GROUND FLOOR:
FRATERNITY**
- 3. A MARIAN
CHURCH**
- 4. UNITY AND
DIVERSITY OF
THE SOCIETY
OF MARY**
- 5. GLOBAL
FRAMEWORK**
- 6. CHAMPAGNAT
MOVEMENT
OF THE MARIST
FAMILY**
- 7. ASSOCIATION
STRUCTURES**
- 8. LAITY
COORDINATION**
- 9. FUTURE OF
COMMUNION,
LIFE IN
ABUNDANCE**
- 10. JOINT FORMATION
PROCESSES**



THE CHAPTER OF 2009 MADE A VERY STRONG APPEAL TO THE WHOLE INSTITUTE: WE CONTEMPLATE OUR MARIST FUTURE AS A COMMUNION OF PERSONS IN THE CHARISM OF CHAMPAGNAT. ON THE JOURNEY WHICH MARKS THE CELEBRATION OF THE BICENTENARY, THE FOURVIÈRE YEAR THAT WE CELEBRATE SINCE SEPTEMBER 2015 UNTIL JULY 2016, REMINDS US THAT CHALLENGE: LAITY AND BROTHERS UNITED IN THE EFFORT TO MAKE THE DREAM OF MARCELLIN A REALITY. THE ICON OF PENTECOST AND THE GROUND FLOOR OF THE HOUSE OF LA VALLA, THE PLACE OF THE COMMUNITY, RECALL THE URGENCY OF THIS VERY IMPORTANT STEP IN THE HISTORY OF THE MARISTS OF CHAMPAGNAT.



1. FOURVIÈRE - INTUITION, PLEDGE, AND REALITY



BR ANTONIO RAMALHO
GENERAL COUNCIL

THE FIRST **INTUITION** AROSE IN LE PUY, FRANCE. IT CAME FROM THE SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE OF FATHER JEAN-CLAUDE COURVILLE WHEN HE WAS BLESSED, HEALED, AND CALLED BY MARY TO START A SPECIAL MARIAN WAY OF BEING CHURCH, THAT IS, THE DREAM OF THE SOCIETY OF MARY.

Several fellow seminarians in the Major Seminary of Lyon shared this dream. Marcellin Champagnat and Jean-Claude Colin were among them. The vision of this group slowly matured to finally include different

branches within a common project: religious priests, religious brothers, religious sisters, and lay people.

- On July 23, 1816, the group of newly-ordained priests and some seminarians went on a faith pilgrimage to the Marian shrine of Fourvière on the top of a hill in the city of Lyon. Champagnat, Colin and Courville were among them. They celebrated the Eucharist and consecrated themselves to the Blessed Virgin, committing to devote their efforts to found the Congregation of the Marists. They made a **pledge** together and firmly stated:

"By the present act and our signatures, insofar we can, we irrevocably dedicate ourselves and all our goods to the Society of the blessed Virgin".

Over the years, a number of the signatories, joined by other men and women, gave life to the pledge, which gradually became **reality** through four concrete Congregations: Marist Fathers, Marist Sisters, Marist Missionary Sisters and Marist Brothers. Very early on, many lay men and women also found inspiration in the Marist charism as a way to live their own state of Christian life through the Marist Third Order.

Fourvière in 1830



FOURVIÈRE - INTUITION, PLEDGE AND REALITY

By Antonio Ramalho



*"The Marist Family" –
A Goyo painting
at the General House*

■ We all know that our Institute was born thanks to Marcellin Champagnat's initiative only six months after the Pledge of Fourvière. La Valla and then the Hermitage became important centers of Marist life, radiating and nourishing us to this day. These 200 years of history have seen thousands of Brothers throughout the five continents embrace Champagnat's dream. In the last 50 years, *"we gratefully acknowledge the fact that the Holy Spirit has made lay Marist vocations flourish among us; thousands of lay men and women around the world feel called to live the Gospel like Mary, according to the tradition of Father Champagnat and the first brothers"*, Brother Emili told us in a recent message. And he added: *"the origins of the Society of Mary remind us that, as religious and laity, we come together for mission, and are called to be the Marian face of the Church through our particular way of being and building Church"*.

The 21st General Chapter of 2009, taking into account this lay participation, speaks of *"a new relationship between brothers and lay Marists, based on communion, searching together for a greater vitality of the Marist charism for our world"*. Then it further develops this vision, foreseeing the Marist future as a communion of people in the same charism, with their specific vocations enriching each other.

That is how we all meet together, *"gathered around the same table"*, the table of Nazareth, the table of brotherhood, the table of the foot washing, the table of La Valla.

In a world that is wounded by so many divisions and signs of violence, there is urgent need for hearts without borders, who can build a culture based on human contact,





and promote simple and fraternal relations. We, all the Marists, want to reaffirm the relevance of this first intuition and are called to give our small contribution in building the Marian Face of the Church.

- July 23, 2016, will be the bicentennial of the Marist Family's founding event. In their letter of September 2014, the Superiors of the four Marist Congregations launched the Year of Fourvière – going from July 23, 2015, to July 23, 2016 – to celebrate together this significant moment of our history. They also indicated the purpose of this invitation:

to provoke a sense of curiosity and awe at the significance of the Fourvière Pledge for today; to foster an enhanced sense of Marist identity as "Marist Family"; to boost a renewal of energy, hope, joy, motivation and commitment to the "work of Mary".

The celebration's highlight will be the Eucharist in the Basilica of Notre-Dame de Fourvière, Lyon, on July 23, 2016, with the presence of many representatives from all the Marist Family groups.

A number of Marist young people from the four branches, who will participate in the World Youth Day 2016 taking place in Poland in July, will be meeting in Lyon in the previous days, and will also participate in the celebration at Fourvière.

For us Marists, this celebration is an opportunity to renew and update the Pledge of Fourvière.

As an Institute, in a Church of communion, we want to live the prophecy of fraternity among the Brothers, and between Brothers and Laity, all "Marists of Champagnat", as well as between the branches of the Marist tree, offering to the Church and society the different services of our mission stemming from the original charism, spaces to meet without borders, a taste of the Gospel in the manner of Mary.





JOAN PUIG-PEY
ARCHITECT
PROVINCE L'HERMITAGE,
SPAIN

2. LA VALLA: GROUND FLOOR: FRATERNITY

**“How good, how delightful it is to live
as brothers all together!”**

(Ps 133: 1)

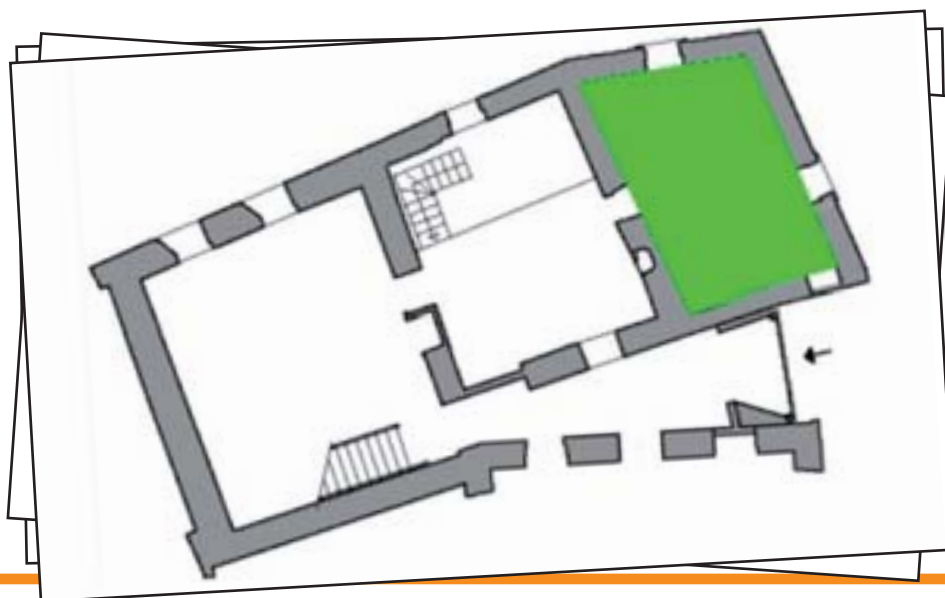
WE GO BACK TO THE GROUND FLOOR THROUGH THE LARGE STAIRWAY FILLED WITH LIGHT. IT IS THE MIDDLE FLOOR OF THE HOUSE AND HAS DIRECT ACCESS FROM THE OUTSIDE WITHOUT STEPS OR OTHER OBSTRUCTIONS.

Visitors arrive now at the geometric center of the House, and see in front of them the stairway leading to the basement, the old door on the right to the room where the famous table is, and another modern door on the left leading to the memorial room.

The ceiling is 2.6 meters high – a domestic proportion in contrast with the Upper Room – and rests on rustic wooden beams, which somehow match the gray polished concrete floor with wooden inlays nailed in as they used to do in those days. The walls made of natural stone combined with old lime plaster create a rough atmosphere with almost no decoration or any reference to the comfort we enjoy today. Only a Naïf-style painting next to the entry representing Marcellin’s encounter with the Montagne boy, and a large fresco evoking a scene from a 19th-century one-room school, indicate that the place dates from a different century.

WE GATHER AT THE TABLE AROUND JESUS

We enter the Champagnat Room through the old door and find the first brothers’ dining table within a setting that has kept the same materials Marcellin contemplated. It is a meeting point, a place for dialogue, where you recover strength and share with others. We gather at the table around Jesus!



Ground floor of La Valla. This floor corresponds to the intermediate level of the house, which is directly accessible from the outside.

Gathered together around the figure of Jesus, thousands of lay men and women around the world feel called to live the Gospel like Mary, according to the tradition of Father Champagnat and the first brothers (Emili Turú).

Our downward itinerary that began in the Upper Room reaches this intermediate point symbolizing Marist fraternity, and we clearly sense that it needs the support of a solid ground on which we can build the experience that makes people say “see how they love one another”. Contemplating the table of fraternity in its context, in this renewed space we can easily reach without obstacles, symbolizes that the *new* access to the experience of Marist fraternity is simple, spacious and resembling a family. This is what Brother Emily himself wrote in the document quoted above: *Our last General Chapter invited us to a new relationship between brothers and lay people, to better serve the inspiring mission entrusted to us by the Church.*

No mission is possible without COMMUNION

In fact, this new relationship is solid – *and serves better the inspiring mission* we confirmed in the Upper Room – when it rests on a fraternal experience. Within the House, the space for mission lies above the dining area where the table is, because no mission is possible without communion.

We easily understand the religious and symbolic meaning of the objects we see in this unobstructed space: an image of Mary, and a painting portraying the Montagne story, two signs indicating the essence and quality of fraternity, which is not self-

enclosed, but linked to other levels of experience – such as this floor is connected with the other two within the House.

THE TABLE OF A COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

The experience of fraternity around the table is not self-contained in the Champagnat Room: there are windows opening to the outside world. Fraternity is visible and expansive in any institution with a Christian ethos. As André Lanfrey states, within the *institution* – *understood as the body responsible for making the law and ensuring the common good for the future of the humble congregation* – *management appears as an element of great value*. Yes, management is essential in any structured body. If the middle floor were empty, the House would be a prodigy of mystical devotion and missionary activity, but would lack the *fraternal soul* that breathes and thrives on the contact and interaction around a family-size table, where management takes place quietly, mysticism and utopia face reality, and we ensure our common good. If the table was too big, it would give the impression that management prevails above all... It would be the table of a Council of Ministers!

Therefore, the symbolic and religious perspective allows us to see the institution as a body with a soul, as the body of Christ, the Church, in which we all drink the water flowing from the Lord himself, from the same Spirit, as we will see and explain afterwards in the basement.

The origins of the Society of Mary remind us that, as religious and laity, we come together for mission,

and are called to be the Marian face of the Church through our particular way of being and building Church, brother Emili tells us.

The fact that the Marist memorial room (with the Naïf paintings) and the image of *Notre-Dame de Pitié* are also on this floor is not only due to architectural and functional reasons but has a special meaning: the history of the Marist origins starting in La Valla entails the cooperation between all present and future members in order to reach the unity of a single human body, ensuring they all take care of each other and excluding division.

January 2, 1817, was a time of much effort, of growth and desertion, of new members, a difficult story that went on thanks to the Brothers' cooperation in unity, which generated a particular 'visage' and way of being. The architectural reform now allows us to understand better how La Valla House tells the story of a newborn community looking for an experience of fraternity and solidarity among its members in order to build the Church. For this reason, the table and the memorial room are on the same floor.

WHAT INSPIRED, CONSOLIDATED AND DROVE THE FIRST BROTHERS FORWARD?

And this brings us to a final question: *What inspired, consolidated and drove the first brothers forward?* We can answer without a doubt that it was the experience of fraternal communion, which ignited their souls and hearts, and led them out of La Valla to explore new horizons. The fact of finding the image of Our Lady of Sorrows (*Notre-Dame de Pitié*) in the same space as the table reminds us that the road is hard, that moving forward is often painful, and it helps us understand better this first chapter of our Marist story.



On the left of the table of La Valla, before its renovation and on the right, after.

3. A MARIAN Church



Br BERNARD BEAUDIN
PROVINCE OF CANADA

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

AT THE TIME OF VATICAN II, SAINT JOHN XXIII COMPARED THE CHURCH TO A GOOD OLD VILLAGE FOUNTAIN OFFERING WATER FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION TO ANYONE WHO WISHES TO DRINK.

By convening the Council more than half a century ago, Good Pope John stated he did not want the Church to become a sort of archaeological museum paralyzed in time by holding to a legalistic, hierarchical and ritualistic profile.

The old Bishop of Rome therefore had the humility to admit the need to “shake off the imperial dust that had settled on Saint Peter’s throne after Constantine”. This undated quote from Helder Camara is directly linked to Pope John’s thinking when he called the Church to an ‘aggiornamento’ (a bringing up to date) allowing her to open the windows and let the fresh air flow, without becoming outdated in relation to modernity.

The freshness of that historical moment in the Church has gradually condensed around the hierarchical/institutional and the pastoral/charismatic models that define her. In other words, we can speak of a Petrine and a Marian Church respectively.

TENSION AND BALANCE

Francis, the fifth Pope after John XXIII, is facing similar tensions today. His young pontificate “looks like a battlefield where modernity and tradition, rebirth and decline, the future and the end of a two thousand-year-old institution confront each other”¹.

The focal point of the present tensions is precisely the Marian face of the Church as communion, the balance between her Apostolic and Petrine profiles. Saint John Paul II stated that the Church is Marian, according to what Blessed Paul VI had said before him: “To be a Christian, you must be Marian”².



1. Alain Crevier, *L'Actualité*, December 14, 2015.
2. Jean-Paul II, address to the Roman Curia. *Osservatore Romano*, December 23, 1987. Bertetto, D., *La Madonna nella Parola di Paolo VI*. Rome, 1980-2390448.



Our Lady of Fourvière

You who are reading these lines now, you 'are Church' with this two-fold profile. The Holy Spirit manifests itself objectively to you through the sacraments and the Magisterium. She also and especially opens your heart to the charismatic dimension of the Marian face of the Church you are called to live. It is rather by this Church as communion that your faith is active and alive. Mary is the prototype. She is the "First Church"³. The Marian Church will bring the Church back to the path of the Gospel. Such is the Marian dream of Francis' pontificate. The year of mercy is a sign of this vision.

MARISTS AND THE MARIAN CHURCH

With the pledge of Fourvière, the Marists wanted to devote themselves precisely to this Marian ecclesial profile. To bring it about, they decided to form a community. There was a Pentecost at the origins of the Society of Mary. This Church envisioned by the three 'Cs' – Courville-Colin-Champagnat, and Chavoïn later on – needed to be constructed. Because of her faith, Mary is at the center of this Church, representing the faith of all the faithful. Mary personifies the People of God who "listens to the Word and put it into practice". Thanks to both her biological motherhood and her spiritual motherhood stemming from the Cross, Mary of Pentecost stands as the first person converted to the Gospel-event after Easter. Faith arrived at maturity when the fragile primitive Church lived a community experience, in the middle of which the discreet presence of Mary was a reassuring and necessary point of reference. When their faith experience became visible and effective, it transformed the old world.

FAITHFUL TO THE INSPIRATION SOURCE

The presence of Mary, our only Treasure and Ordinary Resource, brings about this new beginning for the Institute, about which we speak so much nowadays. What does this new beginning mean, if not to become mystics and prophets, true witnesses of our Foundational Spirit and our Founder? The Holy Spirit makes herself understood by speaking the language of different cultures. This is the language of Mary, which speaks about serenity, understanding, forgiveness, mercy, and compassion. This language is actually made of a single word: love! "See how they love each other", is what people should say about the disciples of Marcellin Champagnat.

Always MARY

Although Mary is Queen of the Apostles, she has no "apostolic powers" because God has filled her heart with "something else"⁴. Do

3. Ratzinger, Joseph, von Balthasar, Hans Urs. *Marie, Première Église*, 1987.
4. Arnais, José María. *Revivre la Pentecôte avec Marie : pour un renouveau de l'Église*. Saint-Augustin, Paris, 2009.
5. Emili Turú. *He Gave us the Name of Mary*, Circulars 2012.

we, Marists of Champagnat, brothers and laity, have a touch of that “something else”? We are dedicated and committed lay people, just like Mary. She lived at the level of a horizontal Church with the early Christians. The Marian Church – in the spirit of Brother Emili’s letter “He Gave us the Name of Mary”⁵ and according to the Pope’s insistent invitation – reaches out in haste to the peripheries of the world where Jesus is waiting for us. “Something else” is at our fingertips through prayer, and by meditating in our heart the situations we live. Like Mary, we will perhaps receive a “supplement” of the Holy Spirit’s presence in our hearts, filling us with inspiration and love.

A Simple and Down-to-Earth Marian Church

Our Marian Church sings the Magnificat and is committed to living it out. You who are Church, where will you go in haste so that those who are hungry for bread and peace can be filled with good things? How can you fulfill Mary’s song of gratitude and commitment? Look around you. If you see with the eyes of Mary, you will know how to bring Jesus to others according to what you are and live in this particular moment of your Marist journey. According to your physical, spiritual and apostolic dispositions, you will leave your comfort zone, and find God in the neighbor who expects your consolation!



I am Marian Church when I reach out to the young people who are poor, lonely, and use drugs to numb the pain they are living.

I am Marian Church when I meet the needs expressed by the people who believe I am capable of giving a positive answer to their request for help.

I am Marian Church when I offer my presence and spend time with my brother and sister who look for a listening ear to speak about their distress or disturbing emotions.

I am Marian Church if despite a wound that still bleeds I dare to offer a smile and ensure my friendship to my brother who recklessly judged me.

I am Marian Church when I spend time volunteering for a humanitarian cause.

I am Marian Church if I accept to challenge injustice and endorse child rights advocacy initiatives with my signature.

I am Marian Church if I acknowledge that the community experience is what opens peoples’ hearts to the proposals of the new evangelization.

If I am Mary, I live like her, I disappear in the very heart of the Church and remain there as a real presence that makes room for her Son, offering an extra dose of humanity in the midst of my own reality.



BR ANDRÉ LANFREY
PROVINCE OF L'HERMITAGE,
FRANCE

FOURVIÈRE: ASSOCIATED FOR MISSION

4. UNITY AND DIVERSITY OF THE SOCIETY OF MARY¹

THE GLORY OF GOD AND THE HONOR OF MARY, MOTHER OF JESUS

AROUND 1814, THERE WAS A “SMALL SOCIETY” OF FERVENT SEMINARIANS DISCREETLY GROUPED UNDER THE NAME OF MARY AT SAINT IRENAEUS. JEAN-CLAUDE COLIN AND OTHERS STATED THE EXISTENCE OF THIS GROUP.

In 1815, Jean-Claude Courveille became their leader by proposing the Foundation of a Society of “Mariistes”. The project led to the “pledge” of July 23, 1816, whose basic elements are:

- The Glory of God and the Honor of Mary.
- The commitment to devote themselves to the creation of this providential Society.
- The universal mission to the point of heroism.

Obedience to the will of God expressed by the Pope, the Bishop, and the very Christian King.

A number of important aspects of the primitive spirit are missing from this text, such as the “unknown and hidden”, the “Cor unum et anima una” of the early Church, the idea of a tree with three branches, and Champagnat’s “we need Brothers”.

In 1819², leadership no longer belonged to Father Courveille but to the Colin brothers in the village of Cerdon, who envisioned the strategy of appealing to Rome. Closely linked to them, Jeanne-Marie Chavoïn was also their source of inspiration, had an active role in the project, and founded the Marist Sisters. Meanwhile, Father Champagnat had already established a group of brothers in La Valla, which he considered as the outline of an SM branch.

From 1824 to 1825, these two groups began a second phase: with Courveille’s help, Champagnat built the Hermitage for the branch of the Brothers but also for the Fathers. For their part, the Marist Fathers

1. Marist research has addressed this topic several times. See especially Marist Notebooks 28, May 2010, p. 95-160: Colloquium of the Marist Branches.
2. Letter from Jean-Claude Colin to Monsignor Bigex, October 9, 1819, in Marist Notebooks 11, July 1997, pp. 5 - 33.
3. Marist Origins, I, doc. 236.
4. Regarding their history, see Charles Girard, S.M., Lay Marists. Collection of Historical Sources, Rome, 1992.

*Notre Dame
of l'Hermitage
around 1836*



based in Belley started missioning in the region of Bugey, and the Marist Sisters structured themselves as a congregation for women. Therefore, two SM prototypes were starting to develop: the Champagnat-Courveille model, which tried to build a quite monastic community of priests and brothers at the “Hermitage of Our Lady”; and the Belley model, distinctly missionary for the Fathers, and fairly conventual for the Sisters. When the diocese of Belley was created in 1823, the two groups were still separate. They remained in touch and held correspondence but did not really understand each other, although the ideal of unity remained clear.

While at Belley Jean-Claude Colin’s authority remained always unquestioned, the Hermitage suffered several crises. To begin with, electing Champagnat as Superior in 1825 indicated that the Brothers did not base their origin on the pledge of Fourvière. And during Champagnat’s illness and convalescence, three conceptions of the Society clashed: a very monastic one, according to Courveille; something close to the Belley formula, under Terraillon; and an emphasis on the catechetical and educational apostolate, in line with Champagnat and the older Brothers. The latter prevailed by the end of 1826. On the other hand, Champagnat stated at that point that the Society of Brothers was not the Society of Mary, and no longer believed in having the vocation to promote the Society of Fathers. But he welcomed a large contingent of young Marist priests at the Hermitage (Séon, Pompallier, etc.) who slowly focused the project towards the Belley model. For the Fathers of Belley, the problem was rather external: Bishop Devie wanted to organize them as a diocesan missionary society.

Eventually, the Revolution (July 27-29, 1830) weakened the bishop’s powers and allowed the Marists of Lyons and Belley to choose Jean-Claude Colin as unofficial ‘center of unity’. This opened a new stage for the Society, whose manifesto was the Marian Consecration of 1831, which reaffirmed the project of 1816 in less exalted terms³. The Brothers and the Sisters were in no way associated with this event, which implicitly conceived the Society of Mary as a tree rooted in a Marial Church, with the Fathers acting as the trunk, and the Brothers and Sisters being the branches.

Another consequence of this union was the fact that most Fathers from the Hermitage moved to Valbenoite to live according to Colin’s apostolic project. On his side, Monsignor Pompallier in Lyon – who remained closer to the diocese and to Champagnat – established a Third Order of *Tertiary Brothers* and *Christian Virgins*⁴. The male group lasted very little, but after many ordeals, the female group became the basis of the Marist Third Order.

From 1832 to 1836, the situation was often tense between the Hermitage, Lyon and Belley. And finally the brief “Omnium gentium” that Jean-Claude Colin obtained on April 29, 1836, granted the title of Society of Mary only to the Marist Fathers. This decision, which could have created permanent divisions, was actually interpreted as a first step towards the recognition of the SM as consisting of several branches. That is why the first Brothers – in the new chapel of the Hermitage blessed by Bishop Pompallier – made public vows in the hands of Father Colin immediately after the Fathers’ retreat session in Belley where he had been elected as Superior, and



Father Jean-Claude Colin

“according to the Constitutions of the Order”, that is to say, claiming primitive Constitutions that were ill-defined but imperative. We must add that the feminine third-order of Lyon was left on the sidelines, and that the Marist Sisters were not included in the missions of the Pacific. The reorganization of the Society in 1836-1840 brought about many tensions. The bottom line was the fact that Jean-Claude Colin barely understood the teaching brothers as a legitimate SM branch. But his passion for unity, and his attention to the signs of the times invited him to be prudent. Then Champagnat’s Spiritual Testament of 1840 temporarily clarified the relationship between Brothers and Fathers: *“May the same spirit and the same love unite you to them (the Marist Fathers) as branches to the same trunk and as children of one family to a good Mother, the divine Mary”*.

But how could they achieve this unity? In 1842 Jean-Claude Colin relied on Brothers Louis-Marie and Jean-Baptiste⁵ to ask Rome for a complete union. The refusal from Rome forced them to envision greater autonomy for the Brothers, which led to an independence that allowed their canonical approval in 1851. In 1852, at the beginning of their General Chapter, Father Colin invited the Brothers to govern themselves, leaving the spiritual link intact. But only after many vicissitudes (the opposition from the Archbishop and some Marist Fathers, Brother François’s retirement, etc.) the Brothers finally established their independence in 1863⁶.

By the end of the century, the beatification of Pierre Chanel (1889) and the introduction of Marcellin Champagnat’s cause – with Claude Nicolet, Marist Father, acting as first Postulator – strengthened the spirit of unity. But the final approval of the Constitutions in 1903 assigned a specific status to the Marist Brothers, who were not “of the Society of Mary” like the Marist Fathers, Sisters, and Third Order, but “of the schools”. The adjective “Marist” recalled the origins, but the noun “schools”, which was decisive for Rome, pointed to the *Brothers of the Christian Schools* as a model. However, the Marist Brothers knew they were spiritually attached to a unique project that had little to do with canonical categories. Nevertheless, they are the Marist branch that feels less connected to Father Colin and the Marist Fathers. They place their origin at La Valla on January 2, 1817, and acknowledge Champagnat as their founder. It was not Colin nor any of the Marist Fathers who wrote their Constitutions.

Jeanne-Marie Chavoïn and the Marist Sisters, closely linked to Father Colin from the start, had to fight toe to toe against his will to marginalize them by denying them the title of ‘Marists’ for some time, being sluggish in writing their Constitutions, and wanting them to live a cloistered life⁷. Marie-Françoise Perroton and the Marist pioneers underwent a somewhat similar story. Although they were born late, and were part of the *Congregation of Our Lady of the Apostles* for some time, they went on claiming their place as a branch of the Society of Mary until they finally obtained it in 1931.

5. Brother François did not go to the Fathers’ Chapter to seek a complete union, and did not sign the letter asking the Fathers to write the Constitutions.

See “Colin sup” I, doc. 344-345, Rome 2007.

6. For some time, the relationship was very cold due to the statute regarding the account of conscience: did it refer to confession (with the chaplains) or to spiritual direction (with the Brothers)?

In brief, from 1850 to 1950, three different situations coexisted in the Society of Mary: from a spiritual perspective, its different branches claimed the same origin; the historic process of each branch, however, was quite specific; and regarding their canonical status, they became independent congregations. With Vatican II, this predominantly canonical balance has shifted. Even before the Council, the Society had started investigating about the origins, especially because of the difficulties in Father Colin's beatification cause. But the time for a deep reinterpretation of the origins arrived after the Council. The notion of "Marist Family" was reactivated. Much more clearly than before – and perhaps in a more mythical than historical way – the "pledge" of Fourvière was recognized as the Society of Mary's foundational moment. The pledge in fact succinctly and systematically expressed for the first time "the Constitutions of the Order", which basically amounted to the "Society of Mary" and the "Marist Family".

*Encounter of the General Councils
of the Marist Family – January 2016*

Nevertheless, this last term was challenged by a new usage, particularly in the context of the Marist Brothers, who were keen to gather a Marist laity around them. To avoid ambiguity, they eventually coined the term "Marist Family of the Champagnat Movement", which stated that the Marist brothers no longer see themselves only as a Congregation, and that, finally, the congregational model imposed by Rome, freezing every branch into a canonical form, has eroded. Therefore, the historical Society of Mary faces again a changing situation, which requires the reactivation of the primitive principles: an apostolic body under the protection of Mary, and a flawless spirit of union without seeking uniformity. It also implies attention to the signs of the times.

Basically, what unites all the Marists branches beyond their avatars is the belief of having been generated by Mary. They must move about collectively and individually as loyal sons and daughters, according to their motto: *"For the greater glory of God, and the honor of the blessed Mary Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ"*.





5. Global Framework

Br JAVIER ESPINOSA

GENERAL HOUSE,
SECRETARIAT OF THE LAITY

THE TITLE REFERS TO A SUGGESTION REPEATED DURING SEVERAL INTERNATIONAL ENCOUNTERS (LES AVELLANES, 2013; ROME, 2014), WHICH FINALLY TOOK FORM IN A DOCUMENT ENTITLED:

“Basic Elements for the design of a Global Framework of a Marist vocational process for the Laity - men and women”, prepared by a group of laity in 2014. The design

of this Global Framework offers in its first draft some criteria of a vocational process for the laity, an attempt of charismatic formation, guidelines for possible forms of linking or binding and lay belonging, as well as possibilities of an association bound to the charism. The text is now undergoing a process of being renewed and enriched by provincial experiences. The Global Framework will be presented to the XXII General

*Extended Secretariat
of the Laity*





Chapter, as reference for the identity of the Marist lay person who feels called to live the Marist Charism in the world. It would imply recognition of that identity within some form of association, and in communion with the Brothers. It would have an international character, but taking into account the cultural and regional diversity.

If the document *around the table* expressed what the vocation of the Marist of Champagnat Laity means, the Global Framework wants to help to detect processes and to prepare itineraries that accompany that vocation. Both documents are the result, the product of life. The first one was born from personal lived journey experiences; the second one comes from intuitions and experiences in Provinces. The Global Framework wants to gather together the whole journey of these years. It seeks to concretize desires, attempts and dreams of the past two decades. It is a proposal that presupposes Formators, companions to accompany and lay animators of these processes and itineraries, at Provincial, as well as regional and international levels.

In the first place, the proposal of the Framework directly involves the Laity. It is related to solid processes of formation, to options of life, to organizational and associational forms, to responsibilities of animation, to availability and itinerant moving, to the dream of a charism with lay features. And in the same way it is related to communion, to the new relationship, to vocational complementarity, to the renewal of the vocation of the Brother. In the same way, the document considers the vitality

of the charism, promoted by Brothers and Laity; it considers the creative fidelity, necessary to give continuity to the Marist charism in the Church, as a shared commitment by the Brothers and Laity.

“TO ROW DEEP INTO THE SEA” AND “TO GO TO THE OTHER SHORE”

The option of the reflection contained in the Framework is an option for the future. It wants to respond to the “new beginning” that Br. Emili suggests to us, a new beginning promoted by “all together”, Brothers and Laity. It wants to be an attempt to face the “new epoch of the Marist Charism” that General Chapter XXI indicated. It presupposes to have the heart of a tent, to embrace our itinerant vocation, “to move, to detach ourselves”, as the last General Chapter told us. It translates the *impulse of God to go forth, out*, in this case as lay persons, in the midst of the family, of society, of one’s own profession, but with connotations of availability, of displacement and internationality. It is a question of helping *the dawn of a new Marist life to be born* and of strengthening the existing one making it more creative, faithful, dynamic and prophetic. The Global Framework may suppose for many lay persons, men and women, “to row deep into the sea” and “to go to the other shore” of the Gospel of Jesus. This has much to do with conversion, with going forth, out, with being itinerant to seek new roads in the following of Jesus. In this option the Brothers are also involved.



ANA SARRATE
PROVINCE IBÉRICA, SPAIN

6. CHAMPAGNAT MOVEMENT of THE MARIST FAMILY

BROTHERS, WE ARE AT A VERY IMPORTANT MOMENT IN THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH – A MOMENT OF REBIRTH, A RETURN TO THE PRACTICE OF THE EARLY CHURCH WHEN LAY PEOPLE PLAYED A FULL ROLE IN THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH. ONE OF OUR MOST URGENT CALLS NOW IS TO PROMOTE THAT RE-BIRTH, WITH SENSITIVITY, COURAGE AND VISION. IF WE DO NOT DO THIS, THEN WE WILL HAVE DIMINISHED THE CHURCH OF THE FUTURE, THE CHURCH, THE PEOPLE OF GOD, THE BODY OF CHRIST, THAT WE ALL LOVE.

Can you date the previous text as part of your personal history and that of our Marist family? These very up-to-date words were written in 1990 by Brother Charles Howard in his circular on the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family (CMMF).

At the time we did not speak about shared charism or communion relationship between brothers and lay people, but we sensed the Holy Spirit was creating something new that would become a source of enthusiasm and renewal for the Church in general, and for religious congregations in particular.

After consulting the Brothers in different places, Brother Emili stated in a video message broadcasted in 2011 that Marist laity were a source of enthusiasm and vitality in the different Provinces. It was a relevant issue everywhere, and the most important one in some places.

The CMMF was an answer to a movement that was already taking place in the Institute, which has become more mindful and organized since then: the awakening of numerous lay men and women who wished to be disciples of Jesus like Mary, in the footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat.

Has the CMMF born any fruit in its years of existence? We tend to use quantitative rather than qualitative criteria to carry out this assessment: number of Fraternities, places in which it has developed, the amount of work it has done to support the Marist mission, the organizational structures it has created, etc. Without denying the importance of quantitative measuring, the essential fact about the Movement is that it has been **a space to develop the Marist charism according to the experience of lay men**



Coordination
of the MChFM
of the Brasil
Centro-Norte
Province

and women. It has enabled them to live their faith within Champagnat's tradition, expressing it in their family experience as lay people, in a variety of professions, through social and political options aimed at helping others, etc. This is the great novelty of the Champagnat Movement.

With more than three thousand members, CMMF Fraternities are globally the most articulated lay experience in the Marist Institute so far. And after a long journey, acknowledging the richness of over twenty years of experience, the CMMF felt the need for an update process that could launch it into the future with enthusiasm and wisdom.

Lay people within the Movement itself have led this

update process. They are taking into account the contributions from all the Fraternities worldwide, and also from places where the CMMF is not present yet. At the moment, there is a first draft of what could be a new identity document ("Life Project" was its previous name), and there will be an additional document containing practical elements regarding life in the Movement, especially in the areas of formation, bonding, and organization.

The way we have conducted this process has brought about a sense of internationality, unity between Fraternities, commitment to communicate this gift in the settings where we presently live, and to establish it in new places.

6.1. WORLDWIDE VIEW ON THE CHAMPAGNAT MOVEMENT OF THE MARIST FAMILY

The CMMF was born when the General Chapter of 1985, echoing Vatican Council II, proposed to create a form of lay movement. The CMMF was recognized by the Marist Institute through article 164.4 of the Marist Constitutions. Then the General Council appointed a Commission that wrote the *Life Project*, published in 1990, which defined the main guidelines for the lay people who wanted to join the CMMF.

In 1991, Brother Charles Howard, Superior General at the time, published a circular entitled *The Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family, a Grace*



Edison Carlos
Jardim de Oliveira
PROVINCE BRASIL
SUL-AMAZÔNIA

for us All, in which he presented the *Life Project* and explained the CMMF's rationale.

That is the period when many Fraternities were born (lay CMMF communities), motivated by the publication of the documents. The Movement grew and spread throughout the world.

Although other forms of lay Marist life have appeared in recent years, the CMMF still gathers the greatest number of Lay Marists of Champagnat in the world. We currently estimate that the CMMF has reached over 35 hundred members in about 260 Fraternities. On average, a Fraternity has 15 members, depending on the Region and local culture.

The largest number of CMMF members comes from the American continent, in which Brazil stands out with almost 12 hundred members. The Province of Norandina (Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela) has 400 members. Central America, Mexico and Santa María de los Andes together count with almost a thousand. Canada has approximately 10 fraternities with 200 members. The Province of Cruz del Sur (Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay), currently has 18 fraternities. The Province of Mediterránea (Spain, Italy,

Lebanon and Syria) has around 400 members in 30 Fraternities, while there are around 10 Fraternities with 120 members in the Province of Ibérica. West-Central Europe, the Hermitage and Compostela together have over 200 members. In the Philippines, there are 5 Fraternities involving 250 lay people.

Probably due to the CMMF update process, there has been a significant increase in the number of Fraternities in some countries of the Marist Institute, for example my Province, which recently went from 27 to 35 groups.

According to the survey conducted during the update process by the Secretariat of Laity, most fraternities resulted from a special affinity with the Brothers, which is presently still the case.



Animators of the MChFM in Bolivia

6.2. A JOURNEY of FORMATION AND CONSOLIDATION

The Fraternities form a melody with their similar and different notes. Spirituality and prayer are the common denominator of all of them. In periodical meetings some theme is deepened, in the light of the Gospel, there is prayer and life is shared.

Thus, encouraged by this spirit, the Fraternities of the Province Cruz del Sur, for some time now, have been developing a journey of formation and consolidation that leads us to encounter fraternities which, from day to day, are happier to dedicate themselves to share life and mission in all the places where we work and especially being bread for our brothers in greater need. Being present in several schools and works in a large part of the Province, the individual and group apostolates and missions are very varied. There are also those which are silent and anonymous, but all sharing the same spirit, loving the Virgin, trying to live faith according to the spirit of Champagnat. The journey toward 2017, predicts for us in the Province a fecund time, full of new sprouts or shoots which are already coming up in the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family, with Fraternities ready, like Mary, "to go in haste to new lands".

At the level of general animation, we can say that in the first months of the year an Encounter of those responsible for each Fraternity was convoked for a day to discuss common lines of action for all the fraternities.

Once a year there is an Encounter of Fraternities in Argentina in the city of Lujan (Buenos Aires), where all the members of the fraternities of the Province are convoked, and during three days they reflect on themes proper to Marist life and they live in a beautiful climate of joy.

They also participate in Zonal Assemblies that involve all the areas of the Marist Province Cruz del Sur, in which each one from his place contributes his richness.

In the same way Zonal Retreats are organized so that the largest number of members of the Fraternities can participate, and these are places usually full and very fruitful.



Br JOAQUÍN BARON
PROVINCE CRUZ DEL SUR,
ARGENTINA

*Encounter of fraternities
in Luján, Argentina*





PATRICIA RÍOS

PROVINCE
MÉXICO OCCIDENTAL

6.3. THE DYNAMISM OF THE MChFM IN MEXICO

The Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family is life, is experience, is a reality in the Provinces of Mexico. In many communities the Movement began like a place of meeting for parents or for persons who work in the educational centers, who found in this place an environment where to continue to deepen the Marist spirituality. Throughout the years, the Fraternities, units of organization of the Movement, gradually, little by little, have acquired their own style of working, according to the profile of the members.

At present a vital part of these Fraternities is the presence of young Marists who, little by little, have begun to integrate themselves into the Movement. Couples of former pupils, young graduates, who in a simple but committed form, find a way of maintaining alive in their heart and in their life the family spirit so characteristic of the Marist style.

The apostolic activities that many of these Fraternities carry out, convoke and attract others. Belonging to the Movement, is begun to be seen as a true space for experiencing and living with joy, the Marist principle to take care of those in greater need, to turn our look toward the most disadvantaged, to share the Good News with those who have not as yet discovered God who loves them and loves everyone equally. The sessions and meetings of these Fraternities, develop with this charismatic hint of assuming a mission, and of doing it through a spirituality centered on Jesus Christ, proper of daily life, and of living fraternally the apostolate that offers hope and joy.

The yearly National Encounters in Mexico, in which for three days the majority of the Fraternities meet, encourage and animate all the members to continue, with perseverance and constancy, contributing the best of self.

WHAT IS DONE IN THE MOVEMENT?

There is growth in all senses. There is growth in faith, in spirituality, in the fraternal and community sense of mutually helping one another. There we learn to recognize the life witnesses of a committed lay life, in relation with the world and its realities, in which the family, the friends, the work, are privileged places so that following the example of Mary and the style of Champagnat, Jesus is followed.



6.4. CMMF: ADULT MARIST REFERENCE COMMUNITIES

We are more than 300 CMMF members grouped in over 20 Fraternities in the Province of Mediterránea today. At this time, one of the greatest challenges for our Fraternities is to be adult Marist reference-communities for young people who are at different stages of Marist youth ministry. Rosa Chafino from Granada, Spain, shares her testimony in this regard:

Each day we face a myriad of options. They lead us to live the things we choose and not others. My life has been much about options.

I opted to accept an invitation to Christian Life Groups when I was only 14 years old. "There is more to them than what you find in the Friendship Groups" – they said. I opted to become a group animator following the inevitable cycle that moves you when you feel called to "do something". I opted to become a local volunteer in my city and, almost without knowing how, this led me to cross borders, and physically separate myself from the Marist family, but options eventually brought me back in a strong, decided, and decisive way.

I opted to continue growing in my Fraternity upon reaching my 30th birthday, because we do not 'jog along' this path alone and isolated. I opted to accompany young people at school in their own options. In a word, options are less so when they become a way of being and living that affects every day, every decision, and every choice.

Another important challenge linked to the previous one, which Brother Emili mentions, is to become living ecclesial communities that can realistically live Marist spirituality, fraternity and mission in the midst of the world. In this sense, Gonzalo Sevilla offers his testimony on behalf of some members of the Marist Fraternities from Badajoz, Spain:

For some of us, it all began at school in our cities, with the faith process of the Christian Life Groups. For others, it was the fact of discovering something special in the Marist way of doing things as we followed our children's education at school. Others discovered something "different" in some people who lived the Marist charism deeply and full-heartedly. Each of us has a different story, but we have all realized that Champagnat's charism is an authentic way to encounter the God of Jesus, and we are more and more convinced that **belonging to a community** is vital in order to strengthen and develop our faith. If the word 'community' is intrinsic to a Fraternity, the word '**Marist**' is not less so. And if Fraternities have given any important contribution, it is the fact of making its members feel Marist: we drink from the charism in our Fraternities, and try to translate it into our personal, family and professional commitments.

On the other hand, joining a Fraternity directly or indirectly leads to the **mission**. Undertaking a commitment is a natural consequence of our Fraternity experience. We do not necessarily need to carry out the mission as a group, sharing it with others; we direct our steps towards the personal calling we feel.



**Alfredo
GARCÍA JIMÉNEZ**

PROVINCE OF
MEDITERRÁNEA, SPAIN





Our individual calls nourish each other. Each Fraternity member challenges and encourages the others through the initiatives that particularly “touch” him or her: missionary commitment, leading school positions, daily self-donation to the family, professional performance at work, youth ministry, SED groups (Solidarity, Education, Development - Marist NGO), ethical banking, Diocesan Caritas, formation activities, and daily prayer for one another.

We realize that we have exciting challenges to face, and that we still have a long way to go. At the same time, we are full of faith and hope, and really want to “awaken the dawn”. We are aware that a new beginning will be possible only with the commitment and contribution of all, and by trusting God like Mary and Champagnat did.



AGNES S. REYES

PROVINCE EAST ASIA,
PHILIPPINES

6.5. EXPERIENCING THE “BIRTH OF JESUS” IN OTHER RELIGIONS

Christmas day always reminds me of that encounter with a Buddhist who made me understand the real meaning of the Season. Though a non-catholic and through a language beyond words, she expressed to me the essence of the birth of Jesus.

It was during my time as a volunteer of Mission Ad Gentes that I met this Buddhist Lady. She was seen almost every day walking the alley, gathering foods from the stalls and using it to feed stray dogs. Bent-over by age, she would normally walk slow that it was not difficult to catch up with her to exchange “Sawa dee Kha” and “Hello, how are you?”. Those were simple encounters that shaped friendship.

It was my first Christmas, so far away from home. That Christmas night, I was overwhelmed with nostalgic feeling, missing a lot the warmth of my family’s celebration and the festivities of Filipino way of celebrating the Season. Absorbed with my own thoughts, I heard the buzzer rang and was surprised seeing my Buddhist friend. Worried of what took her to come late that evening, I invited her in. She could not speak English nor could I speak Thai well. But it was a gift of the moment to understand by the heart the reason of her coming over. She took out from her bag a small beautifully gift wrapped box and with the struggle to say it right in English, she said: “Merry Kritmat! (Merry Christmas).”

I carry the treasures of that experience to this day. Since Christmas is not in the Buddhist tradition, my Buddhist friend taught me that beyond the differences of our religious beliefs, we can go the extra mile and share a common ground of mutual respect. And for my part, I realized that the quality of my presence with others and the witnessing I do is already a way of doing mission. But there is something more...

As a Marist Lay doing my mission in Asia, I am challenged to face the reality that much as there is the desire to promote the Marist Christian traditions, we are constrained of the fact that we are the minority in the grounds of Asia. For a new beginning, what must we do? Have we listened and responded to the call of "new evangelization" ... and from there begin the journey to a new beginning? Have we truly dialogued with other religions in order to walk together toward truth and to work together in projects of common concerns? Interreligious dialogue is part of the church's evangelizing mission (*Redemptoris Missio*, 56). How far, as Marists have we taken steps of action on this?

It is time for us to open up to the sharing of different spiritual values, embrace mutual witness to beliefs, and sincerely explore and respect the richness of respective spiritual traditions so that we Marists and the people of different religious traditions can help one another deepen our respective religious commitment, and our way of responding to God's call. Concretely, let us "widen our tent" to provide spaces of participation of laity from other religions to be involved with us, just as we allow ourselves to be immersed in their own cultural and religious traditions.

As one non-Catholic who is a member of our Champagnat Movement here in the Philippines testified:

"Thank you for welcoming me to the Champagnat Family. Your love of Jesus and Mary and of St. Marcellin taught me to go back to my own Church and grow in my own religious commitment."

To this day, our sister Hazel Llaban spearheads our CMMF project for the children victims of violence.

Years may have passed since that Christmas event in Bangkok. But the message of "giving birth" to Jesus and the challenge of experiencing him and his values alive in other religions echo more loudly in our time today. Certainly, our way of responding to it is one concrete step forward in our journey to a new beginning...



*Encounter of MChFM
in the Philippines*

7. ASSOCIATION STRUCTURES

WHEN THE 21ST GENERAL CHAPTER DREAMED AND ENVISIONED A FUTURE OF COMMUNION, PEOPLE MENTIONED A NUMBER OF POSSIBILITIES TO EXPRESS THE LAY MARIST VOCATION IN A CLEAR WAY, SUCH AS AN AUTONOMOUS LAY ASSOCIATION STRUCTURE IN COMMUNION WITH THE INSTITUTE, A LAY PROVINCIAL COUNCILOR, AND RESTRUCTURING THE PROVINCIAL CHAPTER SO THAT A THIRD OF ITS PARTICIPANTS WERE LAY PEOPLE.

A proposal from the General Council for the Chapter of 2017 goes in the same line: acknowledging lay Marist identity through some form of association with an international character and in communion with the brothers.

The Institute has already introduced some experiences in this regard. It is a matter of envisioning a legal framework of lay animation enabling a non-paternalistic integration in communion. This legal framework or as-

sociation structure should allow lay people to understand and live the charism in new ways, helping them discern their apostolic service, develop new religious languages and paradigms for our spirituality, and find a better rendering of the Marist fraternity for our world.



ANTHONY CLARKE
PROVINCE OF AUSTRALIA

7.1. SOMETHING NEW HAS BEGUN FOR MARISTS IN AUSTRALIA...

MARIST ASSOCIATION OF ST MARCELLIN CHAMPAGNAT

In response to the growing desire of Australian Marists for genuine co-responsibility for the spiritual growth, life, and mission of the wider Australian Marist Community a new structure has emerged as a way to support and generate life now and into the future: the **Marist Association of St Marcellin Champagnat**. Between 2013 and 2015, the General Council worked with the Province of Australia to develop a proposal for this new entity. Late last year, the General Council formally approved the Association to have an international structure, and invited Australia to be its first "Conference". A Conference of the Association will be analogous to a Province of the Institute.

The Association has been formed to offer a space for Marists to gather and belong, to give support and nourishment to an emerging and flourishing spiritual movement of people within the Church, and to provide a structure for leadership and governance for the vitality of Marist ministries into the future. Marists in Australia have been growing towards something like the Association for over 20 years. For some people, being 'Marist' is much more than just the work they do – it is a deep connection to Marist



In a future of communion based on association structures, it should become easier to speak about joint vocations ministry, lay communities, shared experiences of brothers and lay people living in communities or group processes, vocational discernment and formation itineraries for the laity, international laity assemblies, lay missionary availability towards the Province or the Institute, and shared formation centers.

*General House,
Chapter 2009*

spirituality and a particular experience of being Church. It is a moment we are living where Marists are articulating an awareness of being called by God to live this spirituality in a deeper way, to share it in community, and to take full responsibility for growing its life and mission. It is a new way of being and way of relating as a spiritual family. The Association offers a structure for living this new relationship. At the same time it provides a way for Marists to continue to give vitality and viability to Marist ministries. They do so with the same confidence, audacity and hope as Marcellin and the early Marists

The Association is essentially a body of people, canonically recognised in the Catholic Church, who share the responsibility for the leadership, governance and animation of Marist ministries, and for their own lives as Marists. It has statutes as a Public Association of Christ's Faithful, and of Pontifical right. Civilly, the local Conference is registered as corporate entity, so that it can also discharge its legal responsibilities as the governing authority for Marist works. The Conference is led locally by a Council which is elected by delegates to its triennial Assembly. In all these ways, it will operate in ways similar to those of the Province of the Brothers in the past.

Who can join? The Association is open to anyone with a Marist heart! It formally brings together the Marist Brothers in Australia with other people who are passionate about, and committed to Marist spirituality, life and mission. Already over 500 people have been accepted as Members. The Australian Conference hopes that it will in time be joined by other Con-

SOMETHING NEW HAS BEGUN FOR MARISTS IN AUSTRALIA...

Anthony Clarke



*First Assembly
of the Marist Association
Saint Marcellin –
August 2015*

ferences that may be established in different countries and regions of the Marist world.

The hope of a new structure is to effectively nurture the vocation of all Marists by building a sense of community and belonging between all those who choose to share in Marist life and mission. As a spiritual movement of people, those who join the Association will ensure that the Marist charism remains a living tradition, one open to God's grace and presence through prayer and contemplation, one that excites and transforms those through living our mission, and one that continually returns to the question: 'What is God asking of Marists (in Australia) today?'



Linda Corbeil
PROVINCE OF CANADA

7.2. MARIST ASSOCIATION of the LAITY

A PROMISING FUTURE...BECAUSE TOGETHER WE ARE THERE!

As lay Marists we have received a gift, an inheritance and it is up to us to make it bear fruit, to make it shine. We are in a determinate moment of the Marist History and life in Canada and in the whole world. We are in a time of renewal. And I am convinced that the beginning passes through a serious, responsible and committed response from the laity in



regard to the mission and the Marist charism. I think that our presence contributes to the vitality of the charism and allows us to pursue the dream of Marcellin. Trust and availability of all the Marists is necessary for the life and the Marist mission.

On my part, I am happy to be in a Marist Province that prepares the future! And that in its own way, takes small concrete « steps » to organize the Marist life in order to assure the perpetuity of the charism and of the mission for all the young people in search of the sense of their life, in search of love.

It is over two years ago that a group of lay persons of Canada founded the Marist Association of the Laity (AMDLE), following the Quebec Marist Movement (MMQ). This group was concerned to perpetuate the Marist values of Champagnat in Canada in the future. The (AMDLE) is an organization recognized by the civil law and was founded in order to:

- Organize, administer and maintain a not-for-profit organism for purely charitable, social, religious aims, notably:
 - To regroup all the persons who desire to live the Marist spirit*
 - To promote and develop the Marist spirit by favoring the deepening of the values and of the charism of Marcellin Champagnat*
 - To contribute to the vitality of the Marist work linked to the Congregation of the Marist Brothers*
 - To receive gifts, legacies and other contributions of the same nature, in money, in movable or immovable value and administer such gifts or donations, legacies and contributions.*
 - To organize campaigns of subscription to gather funds.*



Like Champagnat, we roll up our sleeves in order to help, to render service, to accompany a person or a young person in need. We wish to love the others, give proofs of humanness, in one word, make a difference in the life of a person, and this, in a Marist perspective.

To form part of the AMDL is to contribute to build up the Marist life of today and of tomorrow for those who are there and for those who will follow, and this, in complementarity and in being involved with all the Marists, Brothers and Laity, each one in our own style of life. New roads open before us and this will demand from us to give proof of openness and of trust.

We are privileged to have inspiring models: passionate and happy Brothers; Champagnat, present for the young and loving; Mary, full of tenderness, humanness and trustful in the project of God for her; Jesus, model of fraternal life with his companions who left us this word: « Love one another ». Of witnesses, we are now ferrymen, guiding the boat, in turn, we become models!. It is up to us to pass, to communicate the witness to those who follow... in the same spirit which animated Champagnat and the first Brothers, for all the children who need us!



Abigail Ruiz

PROVINCE OF
MÉXICO OCCIDENTAL

7.3. MARIST LAY MISSIONARIES of CIUDAD JUÁREZ

In 2005, in the Chapel of the Instituto México, moved by the Holy Spirit, a group of former pupils commits itself to tell all in the whole world that Jesus loves them very much and they agreed to do it through education.

Their principal field of action would be the children and adolescents of the periphery of Ciudad Juarez, especially the poorest among the poor, and the more vulnerable under all aspects.

These former pupils had already worked in that zone since 1999 having integrated the apostolic groups of the system of the Schools of the Marist Brothers

in Ciudad Juarez. They had been pupils in the Schools of the Marist Brothers from Kindergarten- Pre-School. It was the Holy Spirit and the formation received from the Brothers, what made them address their heart to take care of the children and young people of the periphery. The program consists in identifying those children and adolescents who receive no support, no help in their studies from their families, either because the parents are drug dependent, or because one or both parents were killed during the wave of violence of 2010.



They give courses, workshops, academic counseling and everything which can help the children and young people of the zone whether they have a scholarship or not. They follow some of the children from elementary school, others from High School and the majority from secondary school in order to assure that they can enter the University.

In order that the Marist Lay Missionaries can carry out their mission in the best possible way they study two university careers: Theology and their career and follow all possible formative workshops.

They make the promise every year in the month of January, to attend the children and adolescents of the periphery.

Thank God, in December 2015, 10 years after this Project begun, God has allowed that 4 pupils from the periphery could graduate from the University, in this way changing the history of their personal and family life; we have accompanied them during the past 10 years.

7.4. LAY LINKING TO THE MARIST CHARISM of CHAMPAGNAT

“ *In the presence of God Our Father, our Good Mother and Marcellin Champagnat
After a process of discernment on my Christian vocation lived in the Marist Charism of Champagnat, I,... desire and is my will to be recognized as a Marist lay person in our Iberian Province.*

I ask Brother Provincial Superior to be accepted in this family and I commit myself to take care and live my faith, to share it in my community and with other Marist Brothers and Laity and to make Jesus Christ known and loved, constructing, with the help of the Spirit a prophetic and Marian Church. ”



**JOSEBA
LOUZAO VILLAR**
PROVINCE IBÉRICA,
SPAIN

LAY LINKING TO THE MARIST CHARISM OF CHAMPAGNAT

Joseba Louzao Villar



On July 4, 2015 in the Provincial House of Alcalá de Henares (Madrid) a group of twenty-one lay persons celebrated their bond of union to the Marist Charism of Champagnat in the Iberian Province. The fraternal, sincere and simple acceptance marked the celebration. In the framework of a Eucharistic celebration each one of the lay persons expressed his/her promise with which this text begins and received

a Marist cross from Br. Ambrosio Alonso, then Provincial Superior, as a significant souvenir of the commitment made. Behind these readings were found several and rich vocation journeys that gave sense to these lives. For this reason, it was an emotional and joyful moment of thanksgiving to God the Father, for everything that Brothers and Laity have lived together up to the present moment, something which enriches every day the charismatic feature of the Institute. And this celebration was not lived as something final, the arrival to the desired goal. On the contrary, the impulse of the day was a constant invitation to live and rediscover one's own vocation as a constant going forth, knowing that the Marian Charism gives sense and fulfills the biographies of these twenty-one persons. The Iberian Province, as Brother Provincial reminded us, has been opting for some time now for a significant lived experience of communion of Brothers and Laity. On the threshold of the celebration of the Bicentenary, we are living a new time that urges us to rediscover the roots or origin of our foundational charism as a source of life and encounter. Together we are becoming responsible for a legacy of two-hundred years to continue constructing the future. To be a Lay Marist and to say it publicly was a need that was perceived clearly in the Province. These celebrations form part of this long journey that we have travelled that commits Brothers and Laity in mutual care and in co-responsibility to give vitality and witness of the charism received. For this reason, in these moments a second celebration of a bond of union is being organized, which will take place on April 3, 2016 in the Provincial House of Lardero (La Rioja), where sixteen lay persons, men and women, will again express that they feel convoked to a common mission.

Without forgetting that there is already a group of persons who are following, together with a team, formed for this process, accompanying them, an experiential road to be able to discern their Christian vocation within the Charism of Marcellin Champagnat. This itinerary for the lay linking or binding to the Marist Charism seeks that the person being accompanied may discern in an integral and personalized form his/her vocation from three concrete points of view which spring from the Charism of Champagnat: spirituality, mission and life in common. Br. Emili reminded us that we are mission because God is mission. The horizon is encouraging for the Brothers and the Laity: sharing life, mission and spirituality we reaffirm our commitment of making a Church going out, going forth and attentive to the needs of the world in which we live.

8. Laity COORDINATION



Mike Greeff

PROVINCE OF
SOUTHERN AFRICA –
SOUTH AFRICA

WHEN THE 21ST GENERAL CHAPTER DREAMED AND ENVISIONED A FUTURE OF COMMUNION, PEOPLE MENTIONED A NUMBER OF POSSIBILITIES TO EXPRESS THE LAY MARIST VOCATION IN A CLEAR WAY, SUCH AS AN AUTONOMOUS LAY ASSOCIATION STRUCTURE IN COMMUNION WITH THE INSTITUTE, A LAY PROVINCIAL COUNCILOR, AND RESTRUCTURING THE PROVINCIAL CHAPTER SO THAT A THIRD OF ITS PARTICIPANTS WERE LAY PEOPLE.

A proposal from the General Council for the Chapter of 2017 goes in the same line: acknowledging lay Marist identity through some form of association with an international character and in communion with the brothers.

The Institute has already introduced some experiences in this regard. It is a matter of envisioning a legal framework of lay animation enabling a non-paternalistic integration in com-

munion. This legal framework or association structure should allow lay people to understand and live the charism in new ways, helping them discern their apostolic service, develop new religious languages and paradigms for our spirituality, and find a better rendering of the Marist fraternity for our world. In a future of communion based on association structures, it should become easier to speak about joint vocations ministry, lay communities, shared experiences of brothers and lay people living in communities or group processes, vocational discernment and formation itineraries for the laity, international laity assemblies, lay missionary availability towards the Province or the Institute, and shared formation centers.

The Community of Brothers and Lay Marists on the African Continent

The Mission Statement of the African Lay and Brothers Commission builds on the Marist foundation that we have inherited from those who have gone before us, a proud heritage.

It states, “Marist in Africa will live the charism of St Marcellin Champagnat by nurturing the existing trust and goodwill between Brothers and Lay people. Looking



*Commission of laypeople
and brothers in Africa*



Ghana

to the future we will work side by side to make Jesus known and loved by sharing the stewardship entrusted to us. The people of Africa will see the united face of a family bound by a single vision in our mission."

The vast distances and the diversity of people of Africa complicate this process but across the continent progress has been made toward this Mission Statement. To focus the process, three core areas were identified for each area to concentrate on in a way appropriate to their own situation. These three areas are Formation, Communion and Community and finally, Resources.

With regard to Formation, our objective is to promote formation for Brothers, for Lay Marists and shared formation to develop a new relationship and understanding of the Lay Marist Vocation.

Communion and Community calls on us to identify opportunities in each AU of increased sharing and collaboration between Lay Marist and Brothers to nurture our communion for the Marist Charism.

Our focus on Resources urges all to mobilise and share financial, material and human resources.

In South Africa the invitation has been extended to the Lay Marist community to become involved in starting new and different communities attached to each of the five schools. The response to the call for the formation of these Marist Lay groups has been extremely positive and very heartening, a solid foundation for the South African Marist Association. A formation strategy has been implemented in South Africa to assist people to grow in the Marist charism to a level with which they are comfortable. Exciting initiatives in the area of Marist Youth such as the Summer Camp conducted by two young Marist alumni in the Addo area of the Eastern Cape are testimony to the Spirit of Champagnat being strongly present.

South Africa



In Nigeria a meeting of the Marist Laity was held in October with a major focus being the Lay Animator formation that the Provincial delegates had missed in Rome because of visa requirements. Another focus was the celebration of the Fourviere year and this forms part of their ongoing monthly meetings.

The Marist Laity of Ghana attended a Retreat with the theme 'The Place of Mary in our life as Marists' at Our Lady's Sanctuary in Konongo, Manpong District. Br John Kusi Mensah animated the Retreat and reminded the Laity of the central importance of the Rosary in daily prayer.

In spite of the challenges faced, the Brothers and Lay Marists in Africa continue to forge ahead toward the New Beginning of our next General Chapter in 2017. Just as Fr Champagnat and the early Brothers resolutely pursued their ideal almost 200 years ago so we look forward to the vision of the next 200 years.

9. FUTURE of COMMUNION, life in ABUNDANCE



PEP BUETAS

PROVINCE OF L'HERMITAGE,
SPAIN

God had not given you the ability to dream without also granting you the possibility to make your dreams come true

Héctor Tassinari

IN THE LAST YEARS, MANY CALLS WITHIN THE MARIST FAMILY REFER TO THE FUTURE OF COMMUNION. ALL OF THEM RESULT FROM LISTENING TO THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES.

Today we clearly realize that something is happening in the Church and in religious families. It challenges us and somehow predisposes us to respond. We sense no future if it is not a future of communion¹,

we said in the Chapter. This is one of the key elements for a new beginning: communion between people touched by the Marist charism; communion with the Church, humanity and creation.

The icons of Pentecost² and Fourvière³ are an inspiration for us in the present time. They both speak of the need for personal and collective transformation. They portray two answers given in specific contexts thanks to the power of our Loving God, who inspires, creates and nourishes every movement of personal and collective transformation. These icons also reflect doubts, uncertainty, fear and limitation.

Three elements stand out in these icons, which are vital and particularly inspiring, imbued in mysticism and prophecy: TRUST, COMMUNITY, and the presence of MARY.



1. 21st General Chapter.
2. Brother Emili Turú, He Gave Us the Name of Mary.
3. 2015-2016, Foundation Bicentenary of the Institute, Marists, a New Beginning.

TRUST

In this process of communion, we must know we are in God’s hands, walking along his ways. *“If the Lord does not build the house...”* Thanks to Champagnat, this attitude of trust is part of our spiritual DNA, and we can constantly let it surface by trusting God’s action in people, and anchoring our steps in God. We must translate this confidence into a new way of being brothers and also lay people in today’s world; a new way of being in the mission, bearing witness to God’s love and tenderness as Marists who avoid role-centered leadership; and a new way of formulating vocation-ministry and formation processes for brothers and lay people⁴ from the standpoint of communion.



COMMUNITY

The path of communion leads us to love diversity as an experience of harmony⁵ and complementarity, to build our own identity and generate unity with others, and to remove old schemes in order to create new spaces. Community is a prophetic sign. It shows the face of God, interweaving different human threads, and making mutual love tangible. We experience community as an oasis, as a source where we find living waters⁶, but always at the service of the mission, without becoming self-referential⁷. Our family as Marists of Champagnat is rich in nuances, and includes many different signs of adherence and commitment. Therefore, the great challenge is that each of us may find his or her own place at the table with enough elbowroom, feeling part of the community, accepted and acknowledged as he or she is, with an attitude of free adherence. Inclusion is about art and balance. We also need to offer structures that can help us



become co-creators, accompanying life and making it grow: different kinds of communities, interreligious dialogue, and associative structures; concrete expressions of adhesion, bonding and belonging; animation structures, and lay leadership.

MARY

As in Pentecost and Fourvière, the presence of Mary brings deep inspiration and hope to us. Mary is a sacrament of God’s option for the poor⁸; an unmistakable sign of courage, simplicity and humility that unleashes God’s love; and an indication that the family is gathered in unity. In our future of communion, Mary means wisdom, light and guidance. We urgently need to rediscover her, and let her presence among us become real today.



4. This approach also became evident during the Colloquium on Initial Formation (The Hermitage 2015), in the Global Framework of a Marist Vocational Process for the Laity, and in the joint formation experiences carried out in different Regions and Provinces.
5. “The Holy Spirit would appear to create disorder in the Church, since he brings the diversity of charisms and gifts; yet all this, by his working, is a great source of wealth, for the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of unity, which does not mean uniformity, but which leads everything back to harmony” (Pope Francis, Pentecost 2013 homily).
6. Brother Emili Turú, *He Gave Us the Name of Mary*, p. 56.
7. “The Holy Spirit draws us into the mystery of the living God and saves us from the threat of a Church which is gnostic and self-referential, closed in on herself; he impels us to open the doors and go forth to proclaim and bear witness to the good news of the Gospel, to communicate the joy of faith, the encounter with Christ. The Holy Spirit is the soul of mission” (Pope Francis, Pentecost 2013 homily).
8. *Mariología desde los pobres*, David Codina SJ.

We are starting to sense the scope of change that taking this new beginning seriously requires. We are discovering new paths, contemplating new landscapes. We sense a new paradigm, and are innovating to make it possible, helping dawn to break out.

A number of experiences promoted at different levels of the Institute are already materializing the dream of this heart-deep Marist communion in ordinary life. Thanks to them, the future of communion is gradually becoming true in the present, and the participant's testimonies speak about life in abundance.

9.1. EXTENDED COMMUNITY of LAITY AND BROTHERS

I want to share with you on the experience that I have lived in my enlarged community of Laity and Brothers in the city of La Serena in Chile.

One afternoon I received an invitation from Br. Pedro Marcos to go to his house to a community meeting. I had already lived this experience in Santiago, but with laity with whom we formed a community during some years and accompanied by our spouses. I received this invitation with great affection and immediately I incorporated myself into this community. I discovered that we are three lay persons and three Brothers. Immediately the time tables and themes were organized, in places and encounters, in proposals and tasks...

It is in this way that I participate since some years ago. It is a moment which I carefully take care of, I program my time and keep the time for the encounters, and I organize my home and discover that for me this is a gift of peace, prayer and dedication... We comment on some Biblical text or letter of our Superior General, we get close to our daily lived experiences and we discover what this call means for each one of us. In the interpretation of the readings, the help of the Brothers is fundamental, in the growth and meaning of each reading.

We live our relationship of brothers and sisters in Christ in a horizontal way: there are no directive charges and silence is respected... We maintain alive our relationship of nearness with our families, who incorporate themselves every time we have an outing that we organize outside the zone of the community. We share the Eucharistic celebration with them and



MARCELA MELLA

PROVINCE OF SANTA MARÍA
DE LOS ANDES, CHILE



then our table. My children and husband are very close to the Brothers of the community and every time that in my family we celebrate a birthday or special celebration, my brothers of the community are always present.

The Brothers are part of the history of my life in the place where I work; they are a fundamental pillar at the time of concerns, difficulties or joys that present themselves. My community is a refuge for the moments in which I feel overburdened because of some difficulty that the pupils of whom we take care in the school present. It is there where I find a response and I confirm my commitment and adherence to the educational charism that distinguishes us. Certainly, that Laity and Brothers we owe loyalty and accompaniment to one another. The Brothers need the family experience, the frankness to speak about domestic themes, of dealings and thought, and we the laity need from them closeness, support and their valuable dedication of affection and understanding to firmly form a protecting nucleus that will allow each one of us to grow and to share with the others this our joy of being a community open to the "community".



The community of Mulhouse

9.2. EXPERIENCING THE COMMUNITY OF BROTHERS AND LAITY

CATHERINE DEMOUGIN

PROVINCE OF L'HERMITAGE, FRANCE

Our community is the fruit of two calls: The call of the XIX General Chapter (1993) which desired the creation of prophetic communities and an interior call received by the couple, Pierre and Catherine, to live the community of brothers and laity, in the service of the young.

After two years of discernment, the community came into being on September 1, 1996. In the Eucharistic celebration there were six priests, among them Father Rudi Vigneron, Episcopal Vicar of the Diocese of Strasbourg, some Marist Brothers, among them Maurice Berquet, Brother Provincial of Beauamps-St Genis, some young people, families and friends.

We received our mission from the Marist Province and from the Diocese of Strasbourg: form a community, Brothers and Laity, in the service of the young, more particularly from the pastoral zone. Throughout the years, Brother Provincial has asked us to involve other adults, to give a special attention to the young who have drifted away from the Church and for the more disadvantaged; the Diocese charged us with the preparation of the young of the Center of Ville de Mulhouse for Confirmation and to accompany them afterwards to take their place in the Church and in society.

Today, the community is formed by three community members and eight other members committed for two years (among whom Brother Jean of the community Ste-Marie of Mulhouse) in what we call the « enlarged community ». These eleven members assure two by two the responsibility of all the activities with the young and the adults. We meet approximately one-hundred young/young adults from 13 to 25 years, 25 from 25 to 40 years and about thirty who are older, all in regular teams (teams for revision or review of life, Marist teams, Solidarity teams).

20 years of community life in the service of the young has given to my personal life, to my life as a couple, to my interior life, an intensity and depth that I could never have imagined. At 56 years of age, after ten years, I chose to stop my professional life, even if passionate since I travelled all over the world to put into action a Quality Policy, which integrated the respect for persons, the quality of processes and of products, in order to dedicate myself totally to the service of the young. Never have I regretted this choice, on the contrary, a true harmony has been forged interiorly within me. Community life is for me a source of faith, of love. Soon it will be 25 years ago that I wrote to Brother Alexandre Lefèvre that Mary had embarked in a clandestine way in my baggage... today she is very present there and what a great joy when the young sing to Mary at the end of the celebration of their marriage or when the team of the « Marist Guides » reread the way of Mary with these words: gift of self, sharing, joy, protection, teaching, trust, resilience (of the cross), sent out (Pentecost), mother who becomes disciple and apostle... a true program for life!

Our grandchildren join the community regularly during the holidays... participate in its life, meet the young, pray with us. They no longer think of their grandparents without this community life, not more than their parents who join all the community in the family feasts.



What a wonderful gift!

THANK YOU

THANKS to the Lord for having dared to call us to such a radical commitment, for giving us his Force and his Spirit to live our mission in joy and hope.

THANKS to the Institute of Marist Brothers and particularly to Brother Benito, Brother Superior General at that time, for having encouraged us in spite of the numerous obstacles and for having asked us to remain « lay ».

THANKS to our children for having supported us always, to all the young, to their parents who trust the community, to Brother André who launched himself to this adventure and who lives it with happiness.

THANKS to Pierre for this wonderful adventure that we are both living and which gives to our post-professional life such dynamism!



9.3. MARIST VILLAGE IN ST. JOSEPH'S TENARU, SOLOMON ISLANDS

ABRAHAM AND RUTH HIHIRU

DISTRICT OF MELANESIA, SOLOMON ISLANDS

In the Solomon Islands we live a very unique experience of communion. Everyday life gives us the chance to live actually the call for a Marist New Beginning, brothers and lay people.

Villages where the Marists are become a seed of life and it is turning to be a new sign of the Marist presence and vitality for the people.

Our Marist Village in Honiara is made up of the Brothers' Community, Lay teachers and support staff and our families and the Champagnat Youth Group of students. The Marist Family is inclusive of the Brothers and five families (Lay Core Group).

Our gatherings are based around prayers, celebrating achievements or events, and also gathering to support each other in times of need.

The Tenaru Marist village (Whole school community) is divided into 6 Area groups. We have Area group prayers, Marist family prayers, Marist Core group prayers, individual Small Marist family prayers and the Champagnat Youth Group prayers.

Each family or area group has the privilege of hosting and leading the prayers. During the prayer times, we share tea or coffee and some food together as our children freely interact together while we share our life stories together as a family. This is a very unique and rewarding experience of encountering God in each other.

WE ARE THE FACE OF THE MARIST LIFE

As Lay Marists, we accept the gift of St Marcellin's charism and we and the Brothers are the face of the Marist life in this part of the world, together with the presence of the different Marist branches in this land. We are conscious of the fact that the number of Marist Brothers in the District continues to decline over the years and more and more there are few men choosing the pathway of becoming religious. This is the challenge we are all invited to respond to and make this our commitment as Marists to serve the people of God. Our hope as Marists, in interacting and sharing life with our families and students, will become an attractive style of presenting Gospel values to our younger generation in helping them to choose their own vocational and spiritual pathways.

9.4. BROTHERS AND LAY MARIST SHARING THEIR LIVES

BR Iwu Elias Odinaka
PROVINCE OF NIGERIA

Identity/Laity Commission is the commission that coordinates the Lay Marist, province of Nigeria. They are made up of five members, two Brothers and three lay people. The Lay Marist Province of Nigeria has fourteen Fraternities/Centres in various Marist establishments.

Each fraternity organizes meeting, recollection, spiritual readings, hospital visitation in the manner that suits their program at least once a month.

The Lay Marist National body meets every three months for their national meeting while they do have their annual retreat October.

Lay Marist identifies students who are weak in various subjects and help them in their studies. Lay Marist visit the sick, less privileged, advising and assisting them spiritually and materially. They teach catechism and prepare students for sacraments.

The Lay Marist identify with the Brothers in different occasions like burial, Provincial Assembly, Provincial Chapter, Religious profession, Silver/Golden Jubilee and Champagnat feast days.

By 2020, the Marist Brothers Province of Nigeria will be able to provide uniform working structures that carry out Marist Educational and Administrative policies, standardized policies on vocation and formation and to give a place of pride to Nigeria Lay Marist.



10. JOINT FORMATION PROC

THE FOUNDATION CHARISM – WITH ITS DUE REFERENCE TO THE FOUNDER AND HIS SPIRITUAL JOURNEY – IS THE FORCE FIELD IN WHICH WE ARE WEAVING THE NEW RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BROTHERS AND LAITY. THE CHARISM, AS A WAY TO FOLLOW JESUS, IS OUR FAMILY BLOOD, THE SPIRIT BRINGING LIFE TO OUR FAMILY AND ITS MEMBERS.

It is the unifying element, the bridge allowing us to meet, the root of our mutual relations, and the link uniting and diversifying our identities. Initial and on-

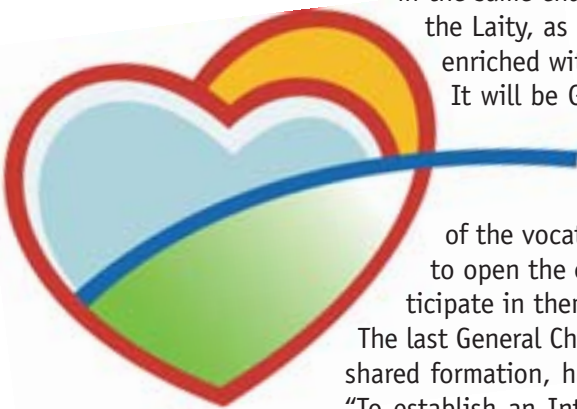
going formation must offer joint spaces for brothers and lay people, so that they can become signs of communion in the same Marist spirit by following Jesus together and sharing the Founder's legacy. In this common path, we inspire each other to become more faithful to the charism, discovering new aspects of its spiritual richness and missionary energy. We complement the joint processes with specific formation moments allowing a concrete implementation of the vocational discernment itineraries for the laity that the Institute is promoting, as well as the new proposals for the brothers' formation. By nature, the founding charism is provocative: it generates new signs; it calls

10.1. GENERAL CHAPTERS

The *Colloquy or dialogue* on initial formation, held in l'Hermitage, opened new perspectives for the formative processes of Brothers and Laity. It stressed strongly the importance of formation for all those who live and transmit the Marian charism. The participants in the Colloquy interpreted very well that formation is a task that jointly concerns the Brothers and the Laity, as the last General Chapters have affirmed. Participating in the same charism we are called to interpret it today, in union with the Laity, as General Chapter XIX said. It presupposes that we feel enriched with vocational processes that we share.

It will be General Chapter XX which expressed itself with greater clarity regarding this. It spoke about programs of formation for Brothers and Laity, prepared together, promoting the specificity and the complementarity of the vocations within a Church of communion. It was suggested to open the existing Spirituality Centers so that the Laity may participate in them.

The last General Chapter underlined that the specific formation as well as shared formation, has to be a priority. And, among the proposals made: "To establish an International commission formed by Brothers and laity, the objective of which would be to prepare a guide for joint formation, adapted to cultural and regional differences".





on people to become signs themselves by pointing especially towards the community dimension. Prophetic signs enliven the entire charismatic family, keeping it awake, outstretched, and constantly seeking self-improvement. In this line, the brothers offer the specific signs of their consecrated life, such as their free self-giving for the sake of the Kingdom, their experience of communion, and their testimony as God seekers. Lay people's prophetic testimony arises side by side with the brothers: celibate and married laity whose project – either personal or shared with a partner – is strongly marked by the Marist charism.

10.2. MARISTS COMMITTED TO THE FUTURE

We are approaching 2017, the year in which as Marists we will celebrate with profound gratitude the 200 years of the foundation of the Institute. This is an event which allows us to recognize the audacity of some simple men who living in the midst of the people and in the simplicity of daily life, gradually discovered the presence of God and found, in the passion for Him, the most profound sense of their lives: Jesus Christ and His compassion and surrender for others.

Before this great celebration, it is worthwhile to ask ourselves, what implications does it have for us Marist Laity to promote the Charism toward the future? The first one will be to look at the future with hope, like Mary accepting the unexpected, living always on the way and daring to promote new forms of living the Charism. A second one will be to embrace life like a vocation, that is, become conscious, aware, that the call of God shapes the understanding of our life, of our commitments and that our response to this call becomes concrete in an existential project destined to collaborate in the implementation of a more human, fraternal world of solidarity. A third implication is to contribute, according to our lay reality, inserted in the world, with the family, in society, some novelty, or originality in the manner of understanding Marcellin and of living his spirituality, to feel that we are communicators, transmitters of the Charism in the different



NOHEMY PINTO

PROVINCE OF
CENTRAL AMERICA,
GUATEMALA



places where we are, recognize ourselves as “Lay Marists” in the world, discovering the richness of internationality and the diversity of the lived experience of the charism according to different lay expressions. A fourth implication is the conviction that the Charism is the place of reference for a new relationship of Laity and Brothers, based on the vocational specificity, in the communion the breaks differences and categories and makes us companions on the journey, sharing what is essential in the Gospel and in the Charism. And a fifth implication is to feel the joint responsibility of the mission, together serving, Laity and Brothers, by our presence, accompaniment, generosity and service to those made invisible to history.

In the Province of Central America, one of the responses to this responsibility to promote the Charism toward the future is through the *Itinerary of Marist lay vocational accompaniment*. Such an itinerary was proposed in 2013 to a group of lay persons of the Province who together with the Brothers are involved in the educational, pastoral and administrative mission of the Marist works and which we see in these responsibilities, not a work, but a project of God for our lives. *Personal accompaniment* is proposed as a means, in order to help towards a balanced integration of the different aspects of the personal, Christian and Marist existence. At present we are 51 lay persons participating in the process and we have a team of 13 Brothers and 3 lay persons accompanying us. We also have three vocational group annual experiences and a Provincial encounter. This journey of vocation appropriation makes us become aware that as lay Marists we are invited to contemplate this future, with audacity, hope and trust, we can confirm that “something new is being born...” and that the future demands our commitment, dedication and creativity so that this new beginning may be born which will give greater vitality to the Marist charism.



BR CARLOS VÉLEZ

PROVINCE OF
CENTRAL AMERICA

10.3. NEW MARISTS AND VOCATIONS MINISTRY IN THE AMERICAS

The essence of the Gospel is the call – vocation – to follow Jesus and commit our entire life to the project of the Kingdom. The Marists of the Americas, brothers and laity, want to live a new insight on and enthusiasm about our vocation, bearing a full-hearted, open and joyful witness to it in the Church and in the world today, and activating the spirit of boldness of the Hermitage. Grateful for this gift, laity and brothers are committed to encourage a vocational culture at the service of all vocations, which is based on

Christian communities that are firmly rooted in the Gospel, and therefore significant and credible. In this sharing of life and mission, we accompany with joy and fraternal spirit those who feel encouraged to consider the Marist religious or lay vocation as an option for their lives, following Jesus like Mary in the manner of Saint Marcellin Champagnat. We want to be sowers of this good news. In order to guide the Provinces and Regions of our continent in this effort, the *Inter-American Conference of Provincials* asked the *Commission on Spirituality, Brothers and Laity* to develop clear vocations-ministry criteria for the new Marist of Champagnat. In 2014, after observing and studying the experience and principles of each Administrative Unit, along with the calls from the Church and the Institute, we published a reference document entitled *Sowing the Gospel of Vocation - Vocations Ministry Criteria in America* (*Sembradores del Evangelio de la Vocación - Orientaciones para la pastoral vocacional en América*). It presents a new vision of vocations ministry, an analysis of the situation of the target population, the necessary means, and the expected results. We want to commit to a new approach on vocations ministry that may drive us, as we walk together with Mary, on the way to a new land, so as to witness the birth of a new era for the Marist charism in the Americas. This will be true if:

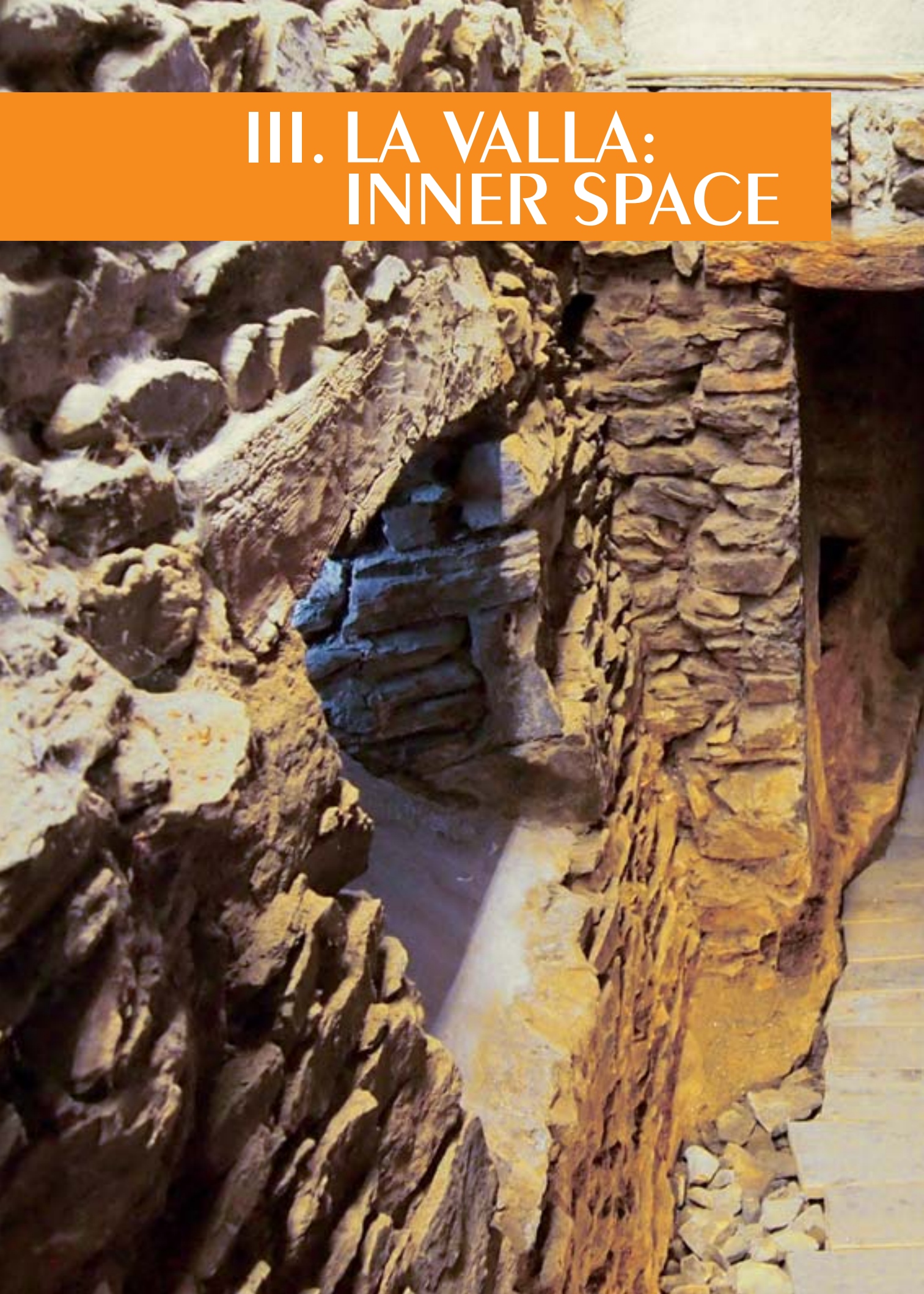
- We passionately proclaim Jesus and his Gospel, and live our relationship with Him at the personal and community levels.
- We are all committed to vocational promotion and accompaniment through the quality of our presence and ability to listen.
- We aim at a vocational culture resulting in pedagogies and strategies that are explicit and rooted in our evangelization process, with a strong sense of “being Church”.
- We set vocations ministry and animation as a firm provincial option, realistically assuming its implications.
- We integrate spirituality, community and solidarity through meaningful experiences.
- We develop guides and programs for both young people and adults in their process of vocational discernment.
- We guarantee the formation of vocational animators at every level.
- We use – in a systematic and critical way – the social networks and media to expand our vocational service.
- We transform each community into a ‘New Nazareth’ where people live in simplicity, humility, forgiveness, commitment, and evangelical joy, as well as facing the challenge of planet sustainability, taking care of our Big Home.



Province of México Central



III. LA VALLA: INNER SPACE

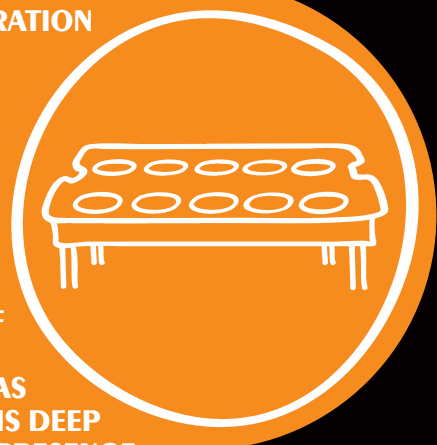




- 1. DEEP
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THE ICON THAT WILL GUIDE OUR THIRD YEAR OF PREPARATION FOR THE BICENTENARY, FROM AUGUST 2016 TO AUGUST 2017, IS THE HOUSE AT LA VALLA. AS AN IMMEDIATE PREPARATION FOR THE 22ND GENERAL CHAPTER, THIS YEAR WILL FOCUS MORE ON THE UPPER FLOOR OF THE HOUSE THAT REMAINED, UNTIL RECENTLY, HIDDEN TO VISITORS. IT IS A SMALL UNDERGROUND SPACE. TO GET THERE WE MUST 'GO DOWN'. IT SYMBOLIZES THAT INNER SPACE IN WHICH EACH OF US IS INHABITED BY THE MYSTERY. IT IS THE SPACE OF INTERIORITY, THE MYSTICAL DIMENSION OF OUR LIVES. WE KNOW THAT COMMITMENT TO SPIRITUAL GROWTH WAS A FUNDAMENTAL ELEMENT FOR FATHER CHAMPAGNAT: HIS DEEP SPIRIT OF FAITH OPENED HIM QUITE NATURALLY TO THE PRESENCE OF GOD, WHETHER IN THE FORESTS OF THE HERMITAGE OR IN THE NOISY STREETS OF PARIS. TO LIVE LIKE HIM INVOLVES CULTIVATING SILENCE, DEDICATING ENOUGH TIME TO PERSONAL AND COMMUNITY PRAYER, AND LISTENING TO THE WORD OF GOD, LIKE MARY AT THE ANNUNCIATION. LIKE HER, WHO KEPT AND MEDITATED EVERYTHING IN HER HEART, WE STRIVE TO BECOME CONTEMPLATIVES IN ACTION.



(LETTER OF BR EMILI TURÚ – 6 JULY 2014)

1. DEEP REFRESHING WATERS



BR ERNESTO SÁNCHEZ
GENERAL HOUSE,
GENERAL COUNCIL

JANUARY 2, 2017, A MUCH-ANTICIPATED DATE IN OUR MARIST WORLD THESE DAYS, IS DRAWING NEAR. OUR PREPARATIONS BEGAN A YEAR AGO WITH THE MONTAGNE YEAR; THIS WAS CLOSELY FOLLOWED BY THE YEAR OF FOURVIÈRE AND, IN A SHORT TIME, WE WILL BEGIN THE LA VALLA YEAR. WE BEGAN WITH THE 'DANCE OF MISSION', TRYING TO GET TO THE VERY HEART OF OUR SHARED CALL AND MISSION.

We then sought to revitalise the gift of fraternity, to 'widen our tent', to make room for all those who share Champagnat's charism. During the *La Valla Year*, we wish to undertake a journey into the depths where we will drink clear water, 'water from the rock', whose unique flavour can generate new enthusiasm in us. It will quench our thirst, and

the more we drink from it, the stronger will be our desire to share it with others and invite them to taste it.

It is a journey, a pathway that begins with entering our inner space, the place we call *interiority*. From this place, we become more aware, and are able to interpret and tell our own story. This story is composed of our past history, and primarily integrates our day-to-day experiences, as we become more aware of each waking moment. *Interiority* is a place that allows us calmly to get in touch with our inner world of ideas, feelings, and moods; a place where we have a better sense of the interconnectedness of the different dimensions of who we are: our body, emotions, psychology, and our intelligence in all its different forms, including spiritual intelligence. It allows us to see clearly the present as gift, perceiving it in every breath and action, in every person we meet, and in every circumstance.

From this *inner space*, the heart opens out to mystery, to *The Mystery*, which empowers our *spiritual experience*, and from which confidence, peace, harmony, and beauty are born. This space awakens in us the desire to respond to the challenge Jesus presents: *If you knew the gift of God...* (cf. Jn 4:10). Here we touch what is deeply human, to the point of being able to catch a glimpse of divinity, to begin to see those un-

touchable and *unreachable* realities. In this space, we come to a greater sense of our own vulnerability, and embrace it with the creative energy of life, seeking to be healed of any attachment or weariness, and of all that seems to desire freedom. It is the very ground from which the deep joy of a grateful heart arises, where mercy and understanding towards ourselves and others emerge. It is the place of forgiveness, and it is there that we find the energy to give of ourselves and to serve, where we find the courage to act. It is there we ultimately find our reason for living.

EXPERIENCE OF SILENCE

Being able to touch these deep waters, and immerse ourselves in them requires time, appropriate spaces and, above all, the experience of *silence*. This *silence* allows us to discover a more human life-rhythm and offers a better quality of life. *Silence* helps us welcome the gift of each moment, each event and person we meet in the light of the Spirit, who is always active and present. In the midst of the most perplexing situations that bring doubt and uncertainty, *silence* allows us to question ourselves, and to enter the Mystery, bringing us peace and acceptance. *Silence* enables us to *meditate in the depths of our heart*, as Mary did (cf. Lk 2:19).

The *La Valla Year* encourages us to enter the deep waters of *interiority and spirituality*, to immerse ourselves more deeply in the *foundational intuition* that moved Marcellin and the first Marists to listen, answer, and give of themselves selflessly, an intuition that continues to be alive in every person who is part of the charism. On the threshold of the third century of Marist life, we are invited to experience *a new beginning*, so that we may be *born again* (cf. Jn 3:3). It seems to me that something new can indeed emerge from the deep waters of *interiority and spirituality*.

SOMETHING NEW IS EMERGING IN THE FIELD OF SPIRITUALITY

In the area of spiritual life, we have made progress in the Institute, and share a rich and abundant *home-made spirituality*, which has nourished many generations and will continue to do so: our Marist origins, the experience of our tradition, the characteristics of Marist spirituality, Marist Apostolic Spirituality, *Water From the Rock*, etc. We treasure the remarkable experience of so many people, brothers and laity, who have undertaken a spiritual journey into the depths. Many of them have persevered with spiritual practices that have nurtured and supported them over the years. Others have committed themselves to seeking new pathways that perhaps still





lie largely unexplored by many of us. In different parts of our Marist world, there are signs that something new is emerging in the field of spirituality. In an attempt to adapt to the present cultural context and respond to it, several Provinces have initiated projects offering itineraries of *interiority and spirituality* to Marist communities, educators, and students. How can we come to know about and share all these experiences during the *Year of La Valla*, and beyond?

Together with this vast experience, we are aware that there is still a long way to go. What can we do to explore, refresh and move forward in this field of *interiority and spirituality*? What is the next step for each of us in our particular situation? What about experimenting with new approaches? The *Year of La Valla* could perhaps be an opportunity to draw up a plan that is concrete, specific and simple, something that we can actually do and that can be followed up... I believe that we will only learn the way by following the path, by doing it! It is a matter of embracing silence and

meditation, listening to the Word through different forms of personal and community prayer, and sharing our all efforts and exploration in our spiritual journey.

I believe our *rebirth* as an Institute will have much to do with the way in which each of us concretely commits to his or her *inner spiritual* life. It will also depend on how we encourage one another in this spiritual seeking, so that it goes beyond a personal seeking to something that we do together.

This inner experience, then, can generate new enthusiasm for fraternity, living it in communities of brothers, or communities of lay people and brothers, or in family life. It can awaken new passion for mission, and can inspire us to show a simpler and closer face of God to children, young people and those who live on the margins of our society. May Mary, woman of silence and of a contemplative heart, guide and accompany us in this inner journey. Her tender care and closeness to us ease our journey.



JOAN PUIG-PEY
ARCHITECT
PROVINCE OF L'HERMITAGE,
SPAIN

2. LA VALLA: THE BASEMENT. Mysticism

**“Seek out the Lord while he is still to be found,
call to him while he is still near.” (Is 55:6)**

MYSTICISM IS A REFERENCE TO TRANSCENDENCE LAYING OUTSIDE ONESELF, WHETHER OF SECULAR NATURE – GOOD, BEAUTY, HUMANITY – OR CONCERNING DIVINITY.

The lower level of Champagnat House is a basement mostly excavated from the rock. The restoration has cleaned it up, respecting its original size, and leaving it almost intact: visible carved

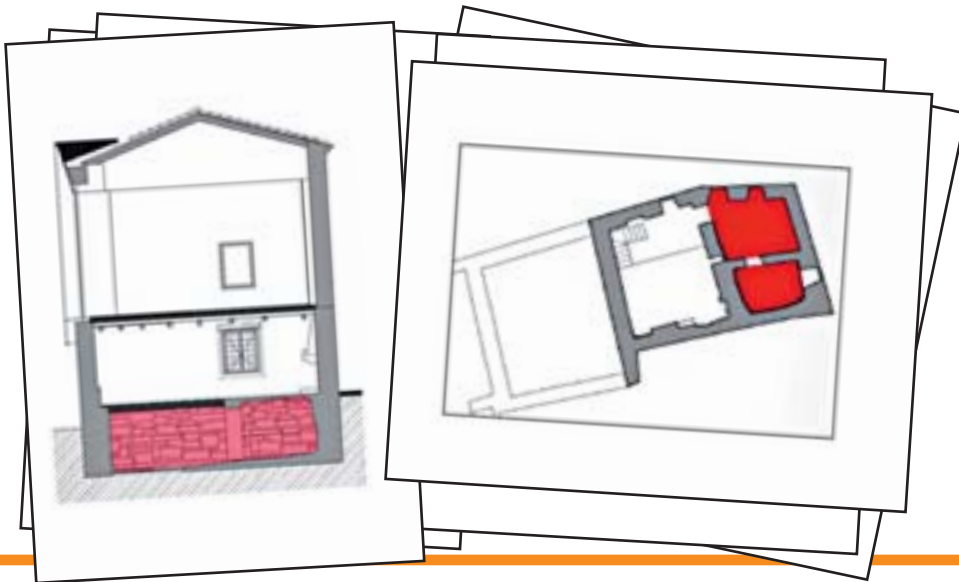
rock, rough stone masonry, and lintels with old wood remains. There are few decorative objects: the huge stone on which the first brothers used to forge nails, and a cross in the most intimate area of the small vaulted cellar... The basement has three consecutive small and dark rooms, with an intermittent water spring. A ten-step metal staircase descends into it from the ground floor.

We can perfectly read the story of the Foundation's early days in 1817 in this space: a typical 19th-century farmhouse construction, forging nails as part of a precarious economy, cold and damp winters, and a hard life without the convenience and comfort to which we are used today.

This space allows a powerful symbolic reading: going down into the basement, into the hidden cellar within the house, evokes the 'descent' into the space of mystical experience. There is an inscription evoking Saint John of the Cross presiding over the entrance to a very similar cellar in the Barefoot Carmelite convent of Fuenciscla in Spain:

*“Lead us to the inner cellar,
where life is in God transformed,
where faith becomes bright and quiet,
where death becomes life renewed”.*





*The basement floor
of La Valla*

It is the innermost dwelling, the kingdom of silence and contemplative prayer, without fanfare, often in darkness. Ten steps lead down to this intimate space. Ten, a number symbolizing completeness in the Scriptures: ten commandments of the law; ten lepers healed by Jesus; ten virgins waiting for the bridegroom; ten silver coins belonging to the woman in Luke's parable... Ten steps leading within ourselves and symbolizing a path to fulfilment.

The renewed La Valla House makes us realize without effort that both the consistency of our fraternity and the purpose of our apostolic mission are based on the mystical experience of unity with Jesus in the depths of our heart.

The staircase going down to the cellar is made of the same metal that covers certain walls of the Hermitage and the walkway over the Gier River. This fact connects La Valla to the Hermitage, and also means that the path into the depths of our heart requires solidity and strength, the same attitudes we need to go up from the old 19th-century building in the Hermitage to the new construction symbolizing the 21st century.

The cellar also evokes the fact that wine needs a concrete amount of time to mature. We cannot stay forever in the intimate cellar, in this dark, moist and silent setting! When life is transformed, when faith becomes bright and quiet, we must go back upstairs to the fraternal room, and then set out to the world, letting people 'drink from us' as witnesses to life renewed.

In addition, there is an intermittent water spring in the basement that flows only in the rainy season. This would be a big drawback in an ordinary house. In La Valla, however, it is rather powerful symbol: "From their heart shall flow streams of living water" – the gospel of John tells us. "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me! Let anyone who believes in me come and drink!" – Jesus himself proclaims.

In a word, the La Valla basement states that a solid and full mystical experience is essential for a complete Marist spiritual life. The 'cellar experience' within ourselves sets the necessary foundations, and opens an inexhaustible source of energy; it keeps our soul 'fit', and prepares us to begin each day 'in good shape'.

André Lanfrey tells us in his article:

Mysticism brings a kind of solidity that is founded on transcendence, and the ability to transfer a profane thought to the sacred domain. It generates constancy and self-motivation. But it can be reduced to esotericism and/or forgetfulness of the real world.

LA VALLA: THE BASEMENT. MYSTICISM

Joan Puig-Pey



In order to avoid these two dangers – esotericism and alienation – we must return to the ground floor and confront the mystical experience with the reality of our time, reading our life under a social perspective. We must climb up the ten steps, coming together again around the table, rediscovering that the Marists, brothers and laity, are united in the same life flowing from Christ, in which there is no room for anything esoteric or alienating.

In this foundational place, Marcellin gathered his brothers around the table and mystically made them become his own body, bestowing his spirit on them, a spirit we can still perceive in La Valla today.

We find the cross of Jesus in the intimacy and darkness of the La Valla House basement. The icon that pilgrims and visitors find at the end of their descending itinerary lights up the journey to the center of their hearts. The cross invites us to worship and contemplate, and to take it up in the following of Jesus. The silent and dark cellar transfigures the darkness of death into radiant light.

In the renovated La Valla House, spirituality – people’s natural disposition to delve into, share and develop the characteristics of their spirit – finds an architectural, symbolic and religious expression that defines it without using many words.

La Valla is bonfire, a powerful beacon of light for today’s world.

Personally, the task and mission of renovating La Valla House has been a kind of ‘cherry on the cake’ regarding my professional experience in the Marist world, a journey that somehow began in 1988 when I registered my first daughter at *Immaculate Conception Marist School* in Barcelona. My son Pau – with whom I have shared great and unique experiences of visual creation – was born that same year. Twenty-seven years later, we both have reached the maximum and radiant level of satisfaction in La Valla.

**“I have received
in abundance, and
in abundance I give”**

*Le Corbusier,
architect 1887-1965*

3. OUR Lady of THE ANNUNCIATION



BR EUGÈNE KABANGUKA
GENERAL HOUSE,
GENERAL COUNCILLOR

THE TWELVE SIGNATORIES OF THE FOURVIÈRE pledge COMMITTED THEMSELVES TO “FOUNDING THE PIOUS CONGREGATION OF MARISTS”. THE NAME OF MARY WE BEAR WAS THEREFORE IN THE ORIGINAL plan of THE SOCIETY of MARY.

Brother Emili Turú mentions this in the circular “*He Gave us the Name of Mary*”, in which he also refers to three Marian icons. I would like to comment on that of the Annunciation which, in

my opinion, leads us directly into the *Year of La Valla*, as part of the celebrations of our Institute’s 200th foundation anniversary.

“NO TRAIL LEADS TO A FRUITLESS TREE”

The gospel of the Annunciation (Luke 1:26-38) portrays the greeting to Mary as “*full of grace*”. She was therefore ready to participate in the great project that the angel Gabriel presented her with, and courageously accepted her vocation of bringing Jesus to the world. Her consent becomes an icon of both God’s fatherhood and motherhood as the Author of Life. In this sense, she is a prophet who welcomes and conveys God’s Word – the Word become Flesh. But she first welcomes, since you cannot give what you do not have!

She is also an icon of the Holy Spirit, through whom everything is done, the new creation begins by the Incarnation of the Word, and the newborn Church overcomes fear in Pentecost. And she is an icon of Christ, from whom she learns to be in communion with God’s salvation plan.



Nazareth, Grotto
of the Annunciation

OUR LADY OF THE ANNUNCIATION

Br Eugène Kabanguka

Her answer, *"I am the handmaid of the Lord"*, echoes the obedience of the Son:

||| *"You took no pleasure in burnt offering or sacrifice for sin; then I said, 'Here I am, I am coming', since in the scroll of the book it is written of me, to do your will, oh God" (Heb 10:6-7).*

She treasured everything in her heart. In this sense, she was mystical, the Lord was with her, as the angel's greeting stated. Finally, she is an icon of humanity, which is also called to welcome, live, and proclaim the Word.

We learn from Mary what Karl Rahner said:

||| *"The devout Christian of the future will either be a mystic, someone who has experienced something, or [s]he will cease to be anything at all".*

And Pope Francis asked us to bring prophecy –

"a trait that characterizes consecrated life"



– and mysticism together. Mysticism and prophecy are the signs of a fruitful inner life.

Mary knows about inner life and fruitful contemplation because she is able to keep silence and live fully reconciled with reality, ready to be moved by the Spirit of God and attentive to the needs of humanity. And yet Africans, who are used to gold prospectors, usually say that

||| *"silence is the only golden thing that people dislike!"*

Should we not welcome silence and reconciliation in order to cope with a world beset by multiform distractions and violence? The icon of the Annunciation leads us into the kind of spirituality that

the *Year of La Valla* is inviting us to live: interiority bringing inner peace and preparing us to welcome God's plan, live it in community and proclaim it with courage. Matthieu Ricard, the French nuclear biologist who became a Buddhist monk, warned us against the loss of interiority:

“Without inner peace and wisdom, we have nothing we need to be happy. Living on a pendulum between hope and doubt, excitement and boredom, desire and weariness, it’s easy to fritter away our lives, bit by bit, without even noticing, running all over the place and getting nowhere. Happiness is a state of inner fulfillment, not the gratification of inexhaustible desires for outward things”

Happiness. A Guide to Developing Life’s Most Important Skill

“WITHOUT INNER PEACE AND WISDOM, WE HAVE NOTHING WE NEED TO BE HAPPY”

We learn true happiness from Mary, who *“treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart”*:

☰ *“More blessed still are those who hear the word of God and keep it!” (Lk 11:28).*

The Spanish composer Cesáreo Gabaráin speaks to Mary in one of his songs and repeatedly tells her: *“That is not like you”* (Tú no eres así). He points out that many paintings portray Mary dressed in silk, lace and pearls, on a kneeler surrounded by tapestries, her hands folded and eyes closed, alone in prayer... According to the Gospel, the real Mary is more in tune with us than this portrait version of her. She was a humble, simple, and ordinary woman from the folk who trusted God, served others and was attentive to their needs, always discreet but active, a sincere and poor disciple. This is the actual Mary to whom the angel Gabriel was sent. This is the woman who generated a space for the Spirit within her and lived an unshakable confidence in God.

She was naturally disturbed by the conversation with her unknown guest but she carefully listened to her *“vocational recruiter”* who revealed what God expected from her. Mary was not naive. She asked a clarification question: *“How can this come about, since I have no knowledge of man?”* She is a model of openness to the Spirit.

After this clarification, she realized that *“nothing is impossible to God”* and gave her consent: *“You see before you the Lord’s servant, let it happen to me as you have said”*. From that moment on, her life-project changed. God’s plan took precedence

over everything else. She agreed to become a mother. But did she understand all the implications? Not necessarily. She began a long faith journey knowing that *“nothing is impossible to God”*, as the history of her people had shown. She is a model of trust in God.

In his second chapter, Luke tells us that Mary

☰ *“treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart” (Lk 2:19.51)*

without jealously keeping for herself the joy that inhabited her, the mystery that had been revealed to her. She felt the urgent need to bring Jesus, who lived in her heart, to the world that expected him after a very long advent. In 2009, using Saint Marcellin Champagnat’s words, Brother Seán D. Sammon recalled that Mary holds Jesus either *“in her arms or in her heart”*. And the last General Chapter, acknowledging Mary as a model of contemplation that leads to concrete action, invited us to *“go in haste with Mary to a new land”*.

Conclusion

The icon of our Lady of the Annunciation, which will inspire the *Year of La Valla* within the celebration of the Institute’s bicentenary, invites us to discover and appreciate silence as the greatest treasure we hold in ourselves. Silence is neither sulkiness, indifference, idleness nor ignorance, but a sign of inner peace preparing us to welcome the project of God, who wishes to do great things with us in favor of humankind throughout the next hundred years. May we be fully available to the Lord and answer like Mary: *“let it happen to me as you have said”* in this new beginning.



BR JOSEP MARIA SOTERIAS

GENERAL HOUSE,
GENERAL COUNCILLOR

4. ENCODING THE LIFE OF THE PROCESS OF THE CONSTITUTIONS

REVISING THE CONSTITUTIONS IS ONE OF THE PROCESSES WE ARE DEALING WITH IN THESE THREE YEARS OF PREPARATION FOR THE INSTITUTE'S 200TH FOUNDATION ANNIVERSARY.

The 21st General Chapter recognized the value of the Constitutions as an *"application of the Gospel to our lives"*, and stated – aiming especially at finding a new way

of being brothers – that *"for a new world, we need a conversion of heart, and a thorough revision of the Constitutions and Statutes, with the full participation of the Brothers, can help to revitalize our vocation"*.

A first Commission appointed by the General Council set up a process to carry out the revision and initial consultation, which was launched at the Institute level in 2015. A second Commission is now collecting the results to elaborate a first draft that will be sent out to the Brothers in 2016. Based on the feedback they will receive, the Commission will write a second draft at the beginning of 2017, which will be finally

sent to the Capitulants in the months prior to the beginning of the 22nd General Chapter (September 8, 2017).

The first consultation gathered around 700 reports, which differed according to the process each Administrative Unit has followed. Taking into account the 5 themes (identity, consecrated in mission, fraternity and belonging, spirituality, and organizational aspects) and the three questions (what to keep, that to change or delete, and what to add), we received

*First Commission
(2013-2014)*



A BROTHER - REVISING



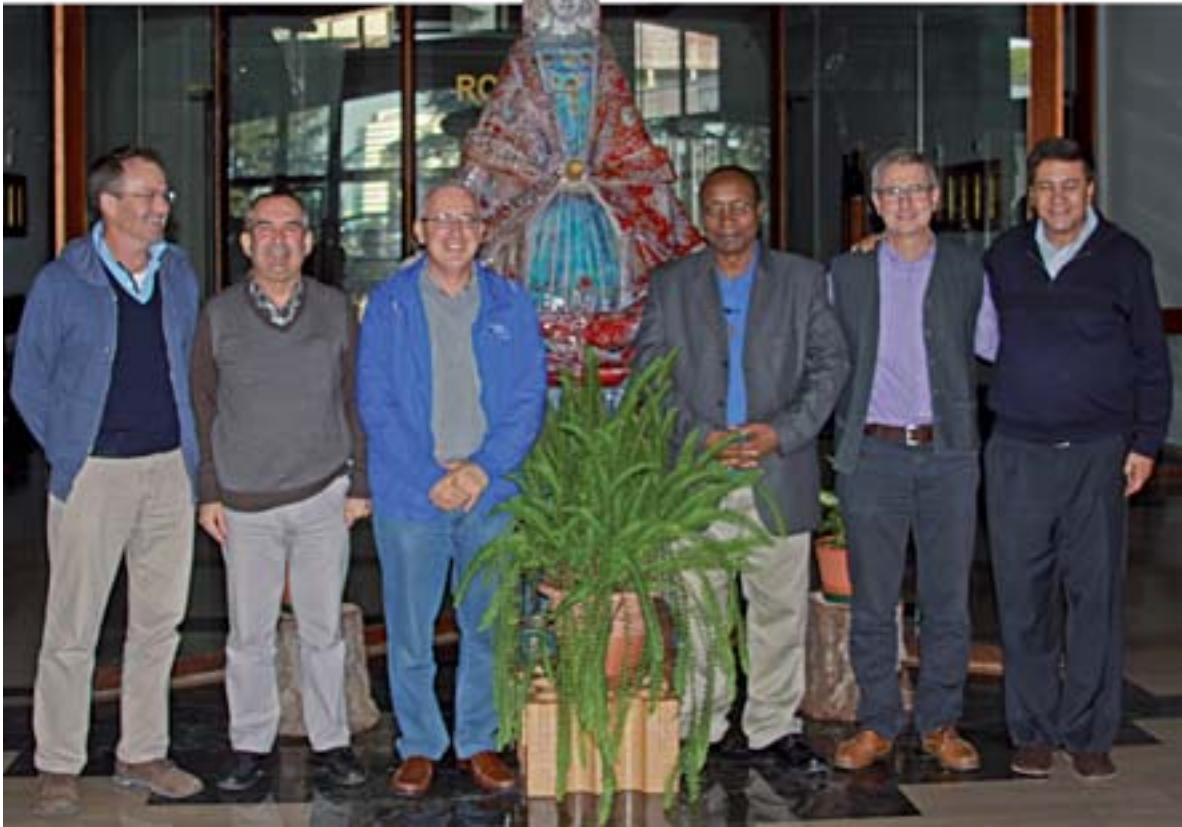
more than 22 hundred specific contributions. Although the amount of answers is important, the most significant aspect of this first phase was the rich sharing between brothers it brought about – together with some lay people in a number of cases – which included the exploration of their personal experience and the narrative about the inspiration that keeps moving our life. Echoing this first phase, the Commission sent a message out to the Institute, mentioning the main lines of action the entire Institute has indicated:

- **Keep** the Marist basic principles and values, **but carefully revise** the entire text.
- Somehow **clarify** and **distinguish** the “inspirational” from the “normative” aspects.
- **Simplify** the general structure and language.
- **Update** the language and some contents, incorporating topics and references from Marist documents dated after 1986.

Before starting to develop the first draft, the Commission established some guidelines for the revision work:

- The recipients of this text are the Brothers, but the work should also acknowledge the presence of the laity, welcoming them and being ready to walk together (although respecting the laity’s own process to define their specific Marist identity).
- The current Constitutions are the reference text for the revision, which aims to *clarify*, *simplify* and *update*, trying to respond to the desire of inspiring a new religious life and a new way of being Brothers.
- It is important to take into account the cultural diversity of the Institute through an attentive listening of the Brothers and Communities, aiming at fostering greater unity in Marist life and mission.

To meet this desire for **clarification**, **simplification** and **updating**, the Commission is already working on the first draft that follows the requirements of Canon Law regarding any Constitutions. Rather than an obligation we must submit to, this mostly normative “minimum requirement” is an explicit and formal link with the great community of the Church, and that is the sense with which we want to assume it. However, this is not the only link we must establish. The most inspiring aspects of our vocation connect with other levels of experience that are not always included in Canon Law. Following this approach, we aim at bringing together in a separate space all the elements from the present text that try to explain what we are called to be and live. Concretely, this could constitute a preamble or even become a ‘Rule of Life’ in its own right, which would find canonical translation in the Constitutions. They would be published together in the same volume to show the unity of our life that the drafting group wants to clearly highlight. Indirectly, this proposal has other advantages, such as:



Second Commission

- Simplifying our Constitutions can favor their stability and continuity, while a text at the highest level – like a Rule of Life – would allow a more flexible and suitable upgrading of our theology and Marist images.
- This initial text could include new proposals for our life and mission that Canon Law does not contemplate yet (since life experience usually precedes the norms).
- In countries where Canon Law has legal value, the Constitutions would become an essential document regarding legal and banking procedures, etc. A concise, legally clear, and not extremely theological text comes in handy in these situations.

Finally, I cannot close without mentioning that for us, the Commission members, this task is a real privilege. We can understand the verb “encoding” in two different ways. For us, it does not mean “legislating and commanding” but rather “putting into words” the inspiration that moves our life, such as the people who “encoded” the Bible, or those who “decoded” DNA and are still full of wonder as they witness the miracle of life, and awestruck before the hands that designed it. And yet, we believe that this gift is not only for us brothers, since anyone can live it out as well. Will you seize the opportunity?

5. WE YEARN FOR A NEW WAY OF BEING A BROTHER



Br Hipólito
PÉREZ GÓMEZ
GENERAL HOUSE,
SECRETARIAT BROTHERS TODAY

“I do not intend to follow the steps of the ancients
but I seek the same thing that they sought”
(Oriental Proverb)

TO ASSUME THE CHALLENGE
of helping the dawn to
rise from the first horizon
of the future is a task that
some years ago, the GENERAL
CHAPTER OFFERED US

(“A new consecrated life that
will promote a new way of being
brother”) in relation with the
searching and invitations that we
have received in the following

events of the Marist life: The General Conference (Prophets and mystics for our time”); the itinerary toward the Bicentenary of our foundation (“Montagne Year, Fourvière and La Valla”); the II International Assembly of the Marist Mission (“Voices of fire”); and the audacious intuitions that Pope Francis is promoting in the Church and in Religious Life.

These events encourage and become an authentic commitment, which in a germinal way, little by little will conceive and make possible a **new beginning** for the life of a renewed Marist Institute¹.

It is not the moment to present recipes or formulas that will guarantee the renewal that we yearn for, it is the time to set out on the journey and, from life, from convictions and the personal and institutional options, begin to see the dawn, get a glimpse of it....

Three attitudes, among many others, could give new energy to our pilgrimage in this new beginning: **interiority, itinerancy, creative memory.**

THE JOURNEY TOWARD THE CENTER: THE PLACE OF THE HEART

The General Chapter already invited us to the conversion of heart like a profound decision that implies openness to God's gratuitousness to be transformed by Him. It is God who converts us, if there is openness of mind and heart, teaching us how to live with his eyes and his heart².

In spiritual tradition, the heart is the unifying center of the human person. It is the Hebrew “leb”, which the prophets call the place of

1 Cf. Turú Emili, Sg. FMS.
Letter on the occasion of
the Marist Bicentenary

2 Cf. Document of the XXI
General Chapter, p. 15

- 3 Cf. Melloni Xavier, SJ, *Sal Terrae*/98/01, pp. 17-26
- 4 Cf. Contemplete. Letter to consecrated men and women following the footsteps of beauty, *CIVCSVA*, pp. 45-46
- 5 Cf. Document of the XXI General Chapter, pp. 25-26
- 6 Cf. Melloni, Xavier, *Nomads of the Absolute*, *CONFER*, 17-19 of April 2015, pp. 1-5

conversion (Jr. 4, 14; 17, 10) and is the “kardía” of Saint Paul and the Fathers of the Desert, the door of true knowledge.

We need to invoke the Spirit and ask him to pour his love into our hearts since many times we live in exile from ourselves, so that he can help us to integrate, to harmonize our three fundamental bonds: regarding our Origin which is God; regarding ourselves, the earth that we are and that we are called to dwell in; and regarding others, the faces that live on this same earth, in this way becoming **men of God for others**³.

Pilgrims in depth⁴

We feel impelled by God to go out toward a new land that will favor the birth of a new epoch for the Marist Charism. Now, is the moment to undertake together this pilgrimage⁵.

In the origin of Christian life is the fundamental movement of faith: to go toward Jesus Christ to center life on Him. It is an exodus that leads us to know God and his love; a pilgrimage that has a goal. To be pilgrims invites to movement, to activity, to commitment. The road to be travelled implies risk, insecurity, openness to novelty, to unexpected encounters. Our vocation comes from the call of Jesus to abandon everything in order

to leave place for God and to embrace a greater part of humanity. It is to empty ourselves to be filled by God and of God and to be able to accept reality more. To be capable of a continuous pilgrimage toward the Other by the other, where we know the starting point but not that of arrival, because God is beyond every boundary, every horizon. What seemed to be a displacement horizontally is, in truth, advancement in depth towards one’s own center and towards the center of everything. The greater that depth becomes, the more is perceived the closeness of God in all things. The more one is in the center, the more one is in all places, and this is what makes us nomads of the Absolute⁶.

But what we want, what we dream is not only our will or our dreaming but it is the moan of a great part of humanity, and this is why religious life is knitted in history, in the world, in cultures, it is not a





separated life but it is interwoven, knitted with many others who are different, fundamentally on the margins, in the peripheries, where others do not arrive.

WITH WINGS AND ROOTS⁷

Let us go back to the heart of our life of brothers, of consecrated religious to be able to be an evangelical memory for the world⁸.

To remember Jesus is to unite ourselves to his life, in the here and now of our world, in its realities. Besides, we form part of a **community of memories**, sustained by a charismatic tradition; an account of sense that gives us ground and because of this we have the capacity to grasp and advance toward what is different, toward the new. We are people of **roots and wings**.

Our root or origin is Jesus, the Christ, our principle and foundation (Jn. 15, 5-6) and what is underlined in the Gospel by each one of our charismatic traditions makes the nuances proper of the color of our charism as a gift for the Church and for the world.

Our wings are the display or show that this tradition makes according to its originality of the gift of the Charism in each one and according to the challenges of history of our here and now (Jn. 14, 12-14).

This memory and this tradition do not ask to be repeated, imitated, but rather that in a creative dialogue with the present and its challenges be recreated, if it is not like that the dangerous memory becomes a domesticated memory and loses its reason for existing. And for this reason, memory and exploration, memory and transformation, memory and change are not contradictory, but rather are united; they are the two faces of the same coin.

To be an evangelical memory has the character of daring or boldness, of risk, it can never be a calming or sedative account just as the life of the One in whom our life project is based and modeled was neither calming or sedative.

7 Torres, María José, Ap. CJ. Notes on conferences in Madrid

8 Cf. Document of the XXI General chapter, p. 19



BR MICHAEL DE WAAS
GENERAL HOUSE,
GENERAL COUNCIL

6. HERE-AND-NOW MOMENT...

AS WE PREPARE TO LAUNCH NEW BEGINNINGS IN THE CELEBRATION OF OUR MARIST BROTHERS' BICENTENNIAL IN 2017, WE ARE ENGAGED IN A THREE-YEAR PROCESS THAT IS PROVIDING US WITH A WONDERFUL OPPORTUNITY TO LOOK INTO VARIOUS ASPECTS OF OUR MARIST LIFE AND CHARISM.

Following on the first two years that have focused on the themes of "Montagne" and "Fourviere," the third year is dedicated to "La Valla," providing us with the space – the basement of the renovated La Valla building – to deepen our reflection on Marist spirituality, providing us with an opportunity to en-

rich our personal and communal prayer and be active participants in God's mission. I hope that this personal reflection will shed light on how I understand Spirituality in general, and how that leads me to make sense of my Christian and Marist Spirituality.

Among the various definitions of spirituality the one I like most is: "A state in which we are connected to GOD, nature, each other and the deepest part of ourselves."¹

There is a Sanskrit saying: "The Absolute is here in the present. See, enjoy and communicate with him. And do not trouble your mind with the past or the future. You cannot bring the past to life, nor can you tailor the future as you would like it to be, because both are beyond the control of the individual... With the memory of the Absolute you should try to make use of the present, with all the glorious things which the Absolute is offering to you in the here-and-now."

By referring to the Absolute in the present, His Holiness Shantanand Saraswati explains that paying attention to the here-and-now is a spiritual activity, putting us in touch with the Creator, with God. (Saraswati 1992, p. 68-69²)

It is the "here-and-now moment" that gives me the space and the singular opportunity to connect with God, nature, others and myself. The question then remains, what do I understand by the word "God"? Exposed to many images of the Divine all around me, I find myself chal-

- 1 www.essentiallifekills.net
- 2 Saraswati, His holiness Shantanand, the Shanarachaya of Jyotir Math (1992), Good Company, Sayings, Stories, Answers; Shaftesbury, Dorset: The Society for the Study of Normal Psychology, Element Books Ltd.
- 3 Religious Life in the service of God in the Church and world today: New Zealand Community Bulletin – April 2015, page 19
- 4 Ibid page 23
- 5 Dan Stockman: Global sisters' Report, August 13, 2015
- 6 Water From the Rock, Article 1

lenged to express my own experience and understanding of God.

Karl Rahner's insistence that being a Christian (a follower of Christ) means being a mystic has given me some food for thought to deepen my understanding of God. John Fullenbach, SVD explains, "What Rahner meant was, being a person with a deep experience of the God whom Jesus came to proclaim. As Christians we believe in a God who revealed himself ultimately in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, who through his life and teaching revealed to us who God is: a God with a face, who has a personal interest in each one of us, a God who affirms my being as unique, accepted, appreciated and infinitely loved."³

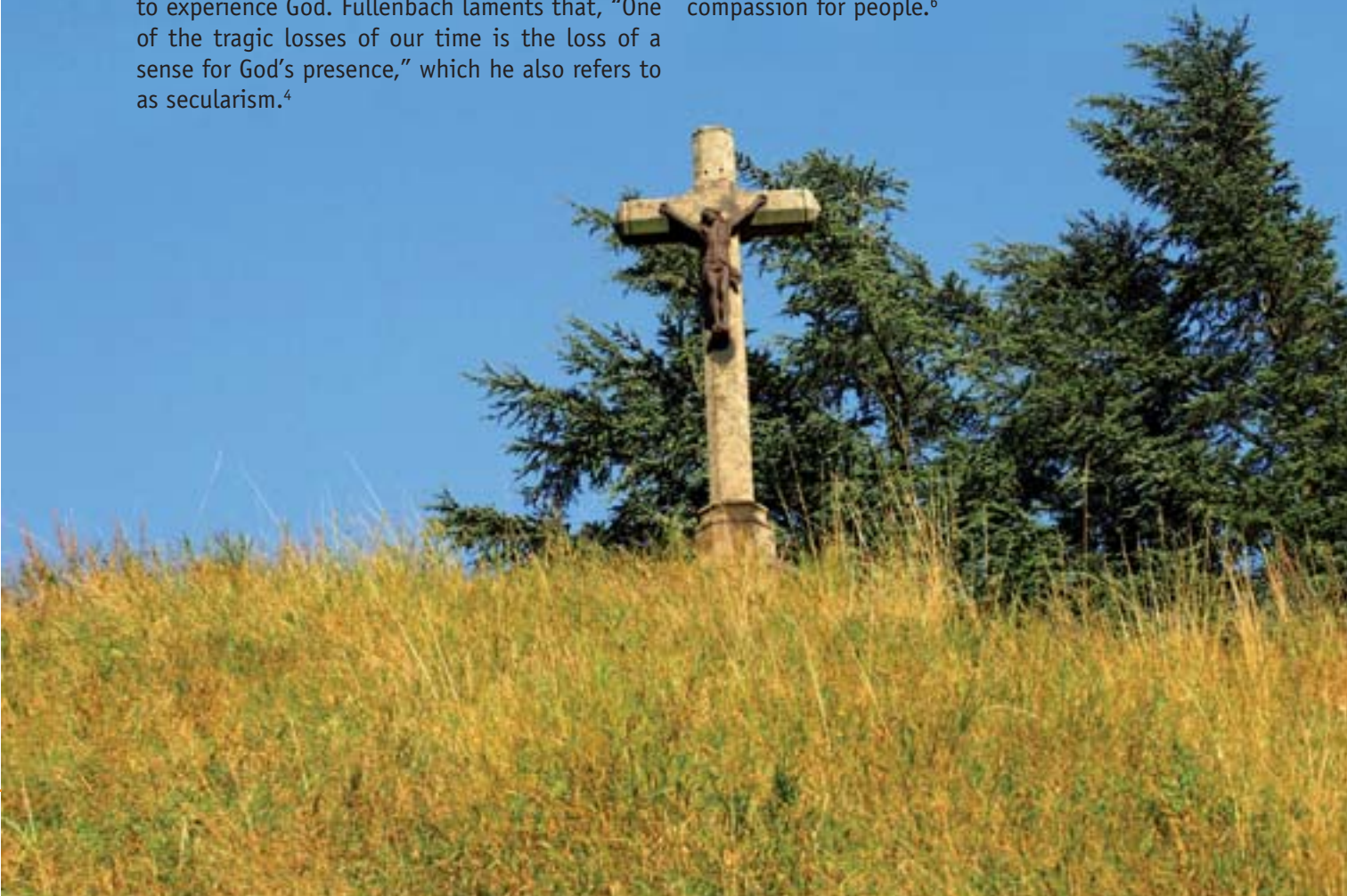
This clarification empowers me to understand the image of GOD that Christ came to proclaim. His revelation facilitates my search for many experiences of God in the here-and-now moments of my life. I am convinced that being very conscious of the present moment, being PRESENT to what is happening around me, is what is required for me to experience God. Fullenbach laments that, "One of the tragic losses of our time is the loss of a sense for God's presence," which he also refers to as secularism.⁴

How do I cultivate an atmosphere that would lend itself to my being fully aware of GOD's presence in order to understand GOD's Mission for me?

One simple but profound way to do so is to become accustomed to taking advantage of contemplative moments in my life, allowing God's spirit to work in me. I'm invited to have a disciplined style of life, choosing to be faithfully attuned to these sacred moments that arise in my day-to-day life.

Steven Bevans, SVD, in addressing the members of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious in the USA last year said it well: "To live God's mission, the church must live in prophetic dialogue – being open in contemplation to discover the thirsts of the world, and a determination in humility to work for the slaking of those thirsts."⁵

The implication is that prophetic dialogue requires both contemplation and action. My developing such a profound spirituality in turn will facilitate my efforts to enter into the essential meaning of St. Marcellin's spirituality and charism: a spirituality of passion and compassion, of passion for God and compassion for people.⁶



7. IN SEARCH OF INTERIORITY

WE MAY find ourselves questioning the purpose of our existence: Who am I? What is my life for? How can I make a difference with my life? To whom do I belong? For whom am I responsible? Questions like these can fill our minds and hearts. As we grow in awareness of the life in and around us, this sense of unease, of anxiety is felt more acutely.

(WATER FROM THE ROCK 48)



**JOSÉ MARÍA
MARTÍN SÁNCHEZ**

CONFERENCIA
MARISTA ESPAÑOLA

7.1. PEDAGOGY OF INTERIORITY: DEVELOPING THE SPIRITUAL DIMENSION

PROJECTS IN THE FOUR SPANISH MARIST PROVINCES TO IMPLEMENT THE PEDAGOGY OF INTERIORITY

What do we know about ourselves? How do we get to know our inner world? How do we discover transcendence? These and other similar questions have to do with the term *interiority*, a concept that for some years now has acquired great importance in Marist education, not because it is something new – since we have always spoken about it – but perhaps because there is newness in the fact of clearly defining a pedagogy to develop it.

Interiority refers to the deepest depths of the human being, to each person's innermost reality, which makes his or her life meaningful. It implies the ability to recognize oneself from within in order to relate to others, the environment, and transcendence in a genuine and profound way. It is thus related to the spiritual dimension of the human being.

Developing this spiritual dimension leads to a particular way of relating to reality and understanding the world, which is very different from "other ways of living" outside this process. From this perspective, and from a Marist point of view, educating for interiority and developing spirituality must lead us to "live in faith and according to the faith".



Different itineraries for an inward journey

In order to discover inner realities, we must set off and start an inward journey to the center of our being. Realizing the importance of this process and being sensitive to this need, each Marist Province of Spain has accepted the challenge of designing and drafting its own interiority education framework.

The Pastoral Team of **Mediterránea** drafted its *Spirituality or Interiority Education Framework* in April 2013. They proposed a common frame of reference that could “unify and orient the interiority education effort in the schools of the Province”. This framework is aimed at shaping “the concrete initiatives that each center carries out according to its own circumstances and possibilities” – as the same document reads – which must follow a “local interiority education plan”.

In October 2013, the **Province of the Hermitage** published its interiority education project entitled *Daring to See* (Atrévete a mirar) in the 9th issue of the *Champagnat Foundation Notebooks*. In the same way as we cultivate other basic skills in our students, the document speaks about spiritual development under the perspective of educational competences. Therefore, considering interiority as a cross-cutting topic, they visualize the different school subjects as “the most favorable context to implement interiority education”. They eventually made this general framework more concrete through a second document entitled *Would you dare?* (T’hi atreveixes?). It is an initial-formation proposal for teachers that includes a number of interiority experience itineraries, which Marist schools and social works are already implementing.

Inspired by the river that watered the Brothers’ humble vegetable garden at the Hermitage, the **Province of Compostela** published its spirituality framework entitled *Gier* in April 2014. A text with “the vocation of a river”, its “greatest virtue and potential consists in its fluidity and ability

to suggest”, as Brother Óscar Martín indicates in the document’s initial presentation. It is a spirituality proposal aimed at “flooding” people’s life in Marist schools, according to one of its objectives:

“help to develop skills and abilities that have to do with the inner world: listening, silence, contemplation, awareness, prayer, and presence”.

In September 2015, the **Province of Ibérica** published its *Qereb Project*, using a Hebrew word that *“evokes the innermost part of a living being, what it has inside: entrails, intimacy and interiority”.*

According to Brother Andoni González, *“the project stems from the need to cultivate an inner space that may give Christian sense to the commitment and activity we carry out in our schools”.*

The objectives, content and methodology of Ibérica are based on the educational proposal entitled *Within You (En Ti)*, a set of books published in June 2014 by Edelvives (Marist publishing house), which includes over 450 interiority education exercises for children and young people, from kindergarten to high school.

This publication by Edelvives has gone well beyond the Marist context, and is currently reaching around 25 thousand students in 250 schools. The proposal translates into *“classroom sessions in which students exercise different forms of meditation, use critical thinking, express feelings, and develop fully-conscious attention”.*

In brief, these frameworks or interiority proposals open new roads into the heart of teachers and students in a holistic, experiential and creative way, in order to develop spirituality in harmony with the other dimensions of the human person.

These frameworks and projects try to meet the new challenges of the 21st century in the field of education.



7.2. IN THE STILLNESS I RECEIVED MY ANSWER

The bag filled with books and some items of clothing remained closed. That day I went out for a walk into the red, yellow, green and brown coloured forests on the hills of Nijmegen alongside the German border.

Something happened as I was touched by the rays of sunshine piercing through the clouds and they threw their light on me and on some small patches of the vast landscape. I was silent, truly silent. And I saw, and I felt, and I heard – I heard me. It was then and there that I finally received my answer, and that I met my God.

It is Thursday evening, and I enter the woody grounds of the Marist Brothers on the outskirts of the city of Nijmegen. Between the trees with their red autumn colours stands the modest building of the House of Stillness. There is an odd sensation in my stomach at the thought of having to be silent till Sunday. Here, I won't be able to crack jokes to hide my insecurity or seek acknowledgment by joining up with others. What will I discover when I am truly silent? I ring the doorbell and a figure appears behind the greenish brown frosted glass of the door. "Hello Klaas-Aart. It's good to have you with us!" says Thomas with a wide smile as he opens the door. The warm welcome makes the tension slide away.

Thomas and Annelieke are the driving force behind the House of Stillness. It was their ambition to create a place where young adults between the ages of 18 and 35 years can escape briefly from the outside world and the many stimuli it constantly throws at them. This is felt immediately on entering the House. As soon as the door closes behind you, it is peacefulness you breathe. A blanket of calmness drapes itself over you and your movements begin to slow down in the most natural way. The lights are soft, the people warm. That evening, although it is not customary, there is a short introduction session among the participants. Then, following a succinct explanation of the programme and the rules of the House it is time to face up to it; from now on there is nothing but silence.

We begin with a shared meditation, a fixed part of the programme for each morning, afternoon and evening. The motion and unrest of the outside world are still pulsating through my body. I want to make contact with the people around me, talk, ask questions, exchange eye contact, and, of course, be the clown. During the sessions that follow I feel myself settling down, and suddenly realise that I *am* making contact with the others, on a very intimate level; in the silence I hear their deep



KLAAS-AART Kok

PROVINCE OF
WEST CENTRAL EUROPE,
NETHERLANDS

“Het Stillehuis”, the House of Stillness, is located in the building that lies behind Westerhelling Villa, the community house of the Marist Brothers in Nijmegen. Guests of the House of Stillness are invited to experience the benefits of silence in an atmosphere of stillness within a simple daily structure. We have learned that the reason for seeking such experiences is a need for peace and quiet and that behind this reason lie profound life questions, such as, Who am I really? What is important in my life? How do I relate to others and to the Source of Life? Annelieke and Thomas are the hosts for those who come to spend time at the House of Stillness and with Brother Jacques are available for one-to-one meetings.



breaths, every little cough, even the soft gurgling of the stomach of the woman sitting beside me. It is very pure, free of any masks or role play. When we see each other in the hallway we refrain from the usual obligatory small talk. We are able, simply to be.

The greatest revelation, however, comes after a meeting with Brother Jacques. I tell him I find it difficult to believe in a God who lets me experience so much injustice. The love of my life has deceived me and I have lost my job due to the new manager's pestering. "Why is this happening to me? I have read so many books, spent so many hours fretting, filled a pillow with tears of incomprehension. I have called out to God and received no answer. He says nothing, I hear nothing!"

"Perhaps you should consider closing those books and being still", says Jacques in a calm gentle tone. The words break through the little wall around my heart and I feel that he is right and yet at the same time, I feel a certain resistance. "So, the book I'm reading now, *Letting Go*, I should let go of that too? Some irony, the author will love that." But in my heart I know that Jacques is right. And so I become completely silent, close my books and put on my walking shoes.



BR ÁLEX MENA

PROVINCE OF IBÉRICA,
SPAIN

7.3. PREPARED FOR THE ENCOUNTER

"Men and women of today continue to ask themselves regarding the sense of life. It is good to accompany these searches and offer the Gospel as a proposal full of life and sense, not as a recipe of norms or prohibitions"

Jesús Rojano

There is an oriental proverb that says: *"If you have a friend, frequently travel with him to his house, on the contrary you run the risk that the weeds will grow so much and you will no longer find the way"*. When we speak about the experience of prayer we can make the same parallelism. Together with this reflection, the words of Pope Francis at the beginning of *Evangelii Gaudium* can also help us, when he says that *"the joy of the Gospel fills the heart and the whole life of those who encounter Jesus. Those who allow themselves to be saved by him are liberated from sin, from sadness, from interior emptiness, from isolation. With Jesus Christ joy is always born and reborn"*. Prayer needs this encounter so that it will become life and a life that promotes joy. This is what we have lived during several encounters held throughout these

years. One of these, like those lived in Taizé, workshops of prayer and of interiority. The experience of encounter with other forms of prayer lived by many young people in our Province has supposed throughout all these years a source of richness for its spiritual life. They have gradually discovered in places like Taizé, People of God or Basida, the encounter with God through prayer and the poorest. Besides they have been conscious or aware that prayer, together with the Eucharist nourishes faith, consolidates hope and increases love. To be oneself in prayer means to receive the life of God, be grateful for it, and become responsible for it. The one who opens himself to God's action has to know who He is. The life of prayer that we find in Taizé was a complete exercise of peace and calmness. In sharing, many important themes have emerged such as the relationship with God, since in many occasions they have observed many persons who are friendly, committed with the Gospel who, when they throw themselves into uncontrolled activism, they begin neglecting prayer and end losing their faith. A second element is the community experience. In Taizé we saw it reflected in the words of Brother Roger himself:



“ I think that since I was young the intuition that community life could be the sign that God is love and only love, has never abandoned me. Gradually, little by little there arose in me the conviction that it was essential to create a community with men decided to give all their life and to seek to understand and to reconcile themselves always: a community where the goodness of heart and the simplicity would be at the center of everything. ”

For many young people this lived experience has been very interesting and motivating. The Christian is not so alone, he is so in community. God is there in the encounter with the Other.

Finally, I would like to point out or highlight this experience together with others on the way to the Bicentenary. What is more important is that this experience of encounter with God in the person of Marcelin Champagnat may become “flesh” in each one of us. His experience, his life was marked not so much by theories and doctrines but rather by a strong witness of encounter and trust in God. For this reason I would like to end with the following words of León Felipe which can help us to live this same experience. Life cannot be closed up in doctrines, it is necessary to make it a reality.

“There was a man who had a doctrine. A great doctrine that he carried on his chest (near his chest, not inside his chest), a written doctrine that he kept in the interior pocket of his vest or sleeveless pullover. The doctrine grew. And he had to put it in a cedar ark, in an ark like that of the Old Testament. And the ark grew. And he had to take it to a very big house. Then the temple was born. And the temple grew. And it ate the cedar ark, the man and the written doctrine that he kept in the interior pocket of his vest. Then another man came who said: Anyone who has a doctrine let him eat it, before the temple eats it, let him pour it, and dissolve it in his blood, and make it flesh of his body...and that his body may be a pocket, ark and temple”.

León Felipe, Antología rota, 1977

Courage! Happy journey towards the great feast of 200 years of life!

8. PERSONAL WITNESSES

KEY AMONG THE FORMATIVE INFLUENCES THAT SHAPED HIS SPIRITUALITY WAS MARCELLIN'S PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF BEING LOVED INTENSELY BY JESUS AND CALLED BY MARY.

An incident early in 1823 ("Memorare in the Snow") was understood by Marcellin and his Brothers as highly significant. Marcellin and Stanislaus were lost in a snow storm. With his companion unconscious at his feet, Marcellin believed that *if Mary does not come to our aid, we are lost.*¹⁷ Placing his life in God's hands,

he prayed the *Memorare*. His prayer to Mary was miraculously answered. Marcellin and his first Brothers saw in this incident a deeper reality: God's choice of them to share in the same mission that was entrusted to Mary.

(Water of the Rock, 7)

The personal witnesses that we offer below show that the spirituality constitutes the basis of the Marist mission and that in it is renewed the hope of the ideal of Champagnat.

**THANKS
BE TO GOD**
BR JOHN McDONNELL
PROVINCE OF UNITED STATES



**How do I live
my spirituality?
Gratefully!**

For me,
gratitude is
THE attitude.

I have been and continue to be our God's spoiled child: growing up in a very loving family – no more dysfunctional than most!... educated by selfless, professional, consecrated Sisters and Brothers... called to the ideals of Marist Brotherhood enfolded in men I love living and working with... two or three intimate friends I can be transparently me with... constant, changing incarnations of God's amazing graces in my life. Thanks be to God!

**How do I live
my spirituality? Humanly!**

Like you, I've known pain and heartbreak: deaths of loved ones, cancer, disillusionment, sinfulness... I've focused too much on what's wrong with me. But I've been learning that God's grace is stronger than my vulnerabilities & peccadilloes... that in God's time, God brings good things out of bad

(ex, my Mom's death freed me up to serve as a foreign missionary; colon cancer prevented my return to my beloved ministry in Nairobi but allowed me to journey with Brother Raoul, my best friend, in his last months on earth)... That I am unconditionally loved by God in flesh and blood ways - loved sinner that I am... That focusing more on Jesus and our Father than on myself lies in me...

And that three belly laughs per day are a must for a sound

spiritual life.
Thanks be to God!

**How do I live
my spirituality? Prayerfully!**

With the nourishment of daily Eucharist in our parish church... Prayer with my Marist community every morning and evening... Eucharistic adoration Wednesday evenings... Shared prayer each Saturday... Daily meditation which gets less and less complicated the older I get: show up/shut up/listen up – usually to the day's Mass readings... Recollections and reconciliation... Annual retreat. Thanks be to God!

**How do I live my spirituality?
In Mary's way!**

I try, sometimes successfully, to live simply. Rooted in Saint Marcellin Champagnat's "presence of God" spirituality, I attempt to see and



to seek God in the ordinary events of every day life – like Teresa of Avila said: “God is in the pots and pans.” All this in Mary’s way – a pondering heart focused on Jesus, allowing God to lead her. She didn’t jump up at Gabriel’s invitation and shout “I’ll do it!” She falteringly responded: “Be it done to me according to Your word.” Giving God control. Thanks be to God!

How do I live my spirituality? Apostolically!

Saint James insists: “Faith apart from works is lifeless.” Saint Francis of Assisi cautioned; “Preach the Good News at all times; if necessary, use words.” Whenever ministry has been my choice, I’ve lived and worked among the economically poor and the marginalized who have and do – yes, they do! – evangelize me. Where? Africa, Asia, and USA inner cities.

Today as a senior citizen, that means a food pantry... Teaching Hispanic immigrants English... Offering spiritual direction to religious and lay... Cooking community meals... Promoting justice, especially inclusiveness, in our church and in our society. Thanks be the God!

SPIRITUALITY-AN ENCOUNTERS WITH LIFE AND GOD

BR SEFO UNE
DISTRICT OF THE PACIFIC,
KIRIBATI



Recently, the younger brothers of our District of the Pacific were in Sri Lanka for the second module of our leadership course. What captivated my mind and spirit while in Sri Lanka was

what I called ‘the road experience.’ This road experience taught me something about the fact that every living (and non-living things) has the right to exist and use the road. The Sri Lankans, while driving their cars, riding bicycles, and three-wheelers, will give way to jaywalking pedestrians, cows and dogs wandering on the road. The drivers will toot their horns at the cows, dogs and the jaywalkers but eventually, they will drive around them without much fuss and continue the journey to their intended destination.

If you come from an environment where the rules are for cows to be put in a paddock and dogs to be kept in a kennel or in the house, you will certainly think the road in Sri Lanka is chaos, without rules or order.

You are missing something if rules and order preoccupy your thoughts. In the midst of such disorder and chaos, there is a harmony and coexistence between humans and other animals. There is an awareness that my rights are not greater than those of other living things. Other living things are part of this cosmic ecosystem that human seem to dictate with rules and laws to suit themselves without consideration for other living things around them. The spirituality that I am living today in my journey in life as a Marist brother is a confluence of different streams of

experiences and encounters with people, religions, scripture, environment, culture, politics, and the social issues that exist in the world today.

It is in and through these experiences that I am constantly stimulated and impelled to find God's will and at the same time have an experiential awareness and sense of God's presence in the midst of those above mentioned realities.

The pinnacle of those experiences is the inner realization that I do not exist on my own and from that awareness there is a call to go beyond myself and do something not only for what

I am called to be and do, but ultimately to reach out to others and the whole universe. Our founder, St. Marcellin Champagnat is an example of being open-minded to the realities of his time, prompted by his encounter with Life and the experiences of his time. His experience of God and his life moved him to do something about the young people who were at the margin of society. Certainly, the harsh environment where he grew up formed him to be a man of action with a gentle heart to every living thing around him.

Even though we as Marist brothers have a particular and well-defined spirituality, yet that Marist spirituality can be enriched and informed by the richness of other forms of spirituality. Such openness to other spiritualities certainly helps us to adapt and readapt in

our ways of being and acting in the world today.

WHERE CAN I FLEE FROM YOUR PRESENCE? (PSALM 139, 7)

Br Nicholas FERNANDO
PROVINCE OF SOUTH ASIA, SRI LANKA



It's a privilege to share my experience on how I live my spirituality.

I am collecting

my thoughts together in the spirit of our Good Mother of Magnificat:

"My soul proclaims the Lord.....the mighty one has done great things for me."

The stark reality of my story is, in spite of my repeated unfaithfulness, God has being exceptionally faithful, constantly inviting me and giving me new opportunities.

Perhaps the foundation of my spirituality could be recognized as the experience of this "extravagant" God.

I don't see in life some moments "spiritual" and other moments "non spiritual".

For example, one may tend to categorize "community prayer" as a spiritual act and "playing foot ball" as a non spiritual act.

But for me both these activities are occasions to livemy spirituality.

The intensity of my approach and living them in the proper spirit of what they are meant to be will enhance the spiritual experience of any activity.

So for me spirituality is **to experience and grow in my correct relationship with God, myself, my sisters and brothers of whole humanity and nature.** It is the abiding presence of God in other three realities: namely in my self,



in whole humanity and in nature that makes the difference in my relationship with them.

What I have written here may sound a bit theoretical.

Let me share some practical ways of how I am living my spirituality.

I do not claim to have mastered them but this is how I am trying.

- I try to become conscious of my breathing.

- At moments of success and failure, fulfillment and disappointment etc I try to maintain my peace trusting that God is in control.
- I try to see my sister or brother in other person and see God in him/her and welcome him/her in to my life.
- I Ask pardon and give pardon when necessary.
- I try to eat and drink only what contributes to the health of my body, mind and spirit and enjoy fully what I take in.
- I try to do some “yoga” exercise every morning for the good of my total self.
- I try to grow in relationship with trees and other creatures. I intend no harm to them, instead, I enter into a pact with them: “I do not harm you and you do not harm me”.

Spirituality is a twenty-four hour commitment for me. Someone might ask me, “what is the place of religious exercises for you?” Certainly they have a great place since these practice such as community and personal prayer, Holy Eucharist, review of the day, meditation, Rosary etc sharpens and deepens the experience of the quality of not only of transcendental God who is beyond, but the immanent God, who is so close and abides in all reality. And helps me to satisfy my innate thirst for God (Ps 63: 1).

BEING BROTHER

Br Kevin Dobbyn

DISTRICT OF THE PACIFIC,
NEW ZEALAND



At this stage of my life, I am not sure that I am following God's will.

Thirty years ago I left my homeland and the people I loved because I felt that to know God more deeply, I had to leave behind the familiar.

I had fallen in love with God when I was at novitiate, and at the time I felt that to give my whole life would not be enough, so marvellous was the experience of God's love. In some ways I still feel that, even if I have made some mistakes and blundered my way in the dark.

Do I know God any better? I cannot say, though I know myself a little better. All I know is that I desire to know and love God, so much as to say that when I speak of spirituality, yes there are certain practices I keep but it is more that I am breathing Christ all the time, and am in the process of being Christified, divinized as the Greek Fathers suggest. I am still a sinner and still need refining in so many ways. I thought I could say that I am not sure I know God



any better, just that I've got used to him. But I now know that I cannot say that either because He surprises me when I least expect it.

At the same time, I think I have a heart that has grown in compassion just a little more, shaped more consciously now by Mary as first disciple and even as sister.

For me that spirituality is centred on being brother as Jesus was to all, and as Marist that means being brother (as well as mother and father in some sense) in building community and being there for young people.

PRAYER AND PRESENCE OF GOD

BR YOHAN
(SEON GOUN) OH

DISTRICT OF ASIA, JAPAN



The Virgin Mary is for me, the same that she is for all the Marist Brothers, the model of my life and my source of inspiration. Consequently, personally I feel invited to live my reality in "the style of Mary" knowing that everything that I do is, in a certain way, the continuation of the same mission that Jesus has entrusted to Mary. A fundamental element of this "style of Mary" that stands up or excels among all others, I believe, is her dedication to the personal



encounter with God in prayer. Mary is "the woman of prayer". It is in prayer that she relished and nourished herself of the presence of God and from them she took the strength to respond to the calls that she discovered in her life. It is also well to remember that our Founder insisted very much on the exercise of the "presence of God". All this has convinced me of the importance of constant prayer, and it is because of this that from the time of my Novitiate and all along over twenty years, I have been practicing the simple form of "the prayer of Jesus".

At the beginning when I entered in the Congregation I did not know well what prayer was, but I found the book "The Russian Pilgrim" and I began to practice the prayer that the protagonist tried to live during his whole life. Beginning with the constant practice of this prayer, little by little, gradually I began to discover the liking for prayer and to live more intensely and with perseverance in the presence of God. On some occasions, I have

been able to experience deeply, intensely that it is the Spirit guiding me as by "the hand" in this prayer. I have also discovered that to pray is "to listen" and that listening leads one to try to put into practice what prayer reveals to us. The more I try to be faithful to my life of prayer as time goes by, more frequently I remember and I become aware of the importance of prayer in my life, just as it was also in the life of Marcelin and of Mary herself. The simple form of the "prayer of Jesus" allows me to say it at any moment, whether when walking from one place to the other and while I work, or when doing any other activity, but I cannot describe with words the enormous richness that it has given to my life to be able, every day, to dedicate a good period of time to silent and peaceful prayer before the Tabernacle... and this same vital richness leads me once again to the tabernacle in a silent and serene prayer. These long years of prayer have led me to think that prayer is like a tree. The seed is sown, we take care, with love and constantly, of the little plant, and when we less think about it, the stalk springs up and little by little, it grows and produces leaves, flowers, and fruit. In the same way prayer, if it is practiced with love and trust, every day it acquires greatest depth and gradually produces fruit. And as my prayer becomes more personal and profound I feel I am more in tune with Mary and Marcelin and I understand

better the importance of this practice of the presence of God, in the life of every Marist and of every Christian.

MAKING JESUS KNOWN AND LOVED

BR MAURICE
JUVENCE HERINIAINA

PROVINCE OF MADAGASCAR



At the time when the Marist Institute prepares itself for the Bicentenary,

the Holy Spirit invites us to reflect profoundly on our origins which continue to be the references of our spirituality, Charism and mission. When we speak of La Valla, we place ourselves before a living symbol of the Institute, the cradle of the Marist Congregation. The project of the Founder became flesh when he established a community of brothers. For this reason the Mystery of the Annunciation should be for each one of us a personal call when living our Marist vocation. The Annunciation is the personal experience of Mary because the angel Gabriel announces to her the coming of the Savior. She accepted to receive in her womb the divine message, the Savior of humanity. The Annunciation is not always an experience

that is easily accepted. Let us remember the experience of the humble servant of God Mary: "She was disturbed on these words of the angel", Sacred Scripture says. God in his infinite goodness calms her with his divine grace through the message of the angel: "Do not fear, Mary, because you have found grace before God".

"Make Jesus Christ known and loved", is the foundation of our Charism. The contemporary world presupposes a challenge for the spirituality of our mission. We are called to get out and go toward a new land. The Institute has always used the term "new", like a "new world", "new land", and "new beginning". It is a question of beginning a new movement, that is to say, to overcome our comfort, it is a call to conversion, to know how to read the signs of the times and to go out on mission to where our presence is more necessary today. In reality, the "new land" does not

always show, at first sight, pleasant circumstances. We speak about lands devastated or destroyed because of the war, the conflicts, the religious ideologies and poverty. We take the example of Syria, South Sudan and others, we should not delay when it is necessary to respond to a situation that requires an immediate action. We should go out in haste to a new land.

La Valla is a symbol of our fraternity. Champagnat had founded a community of brothers. From the community centered on Christ we receive all the force necessary for our mission. Christ who sends us on mission is Himself the initiative of God. God creates a community of apostles. We share our experiences of life in common, the joys and the sorrows around the same table.

Our spirituality is Marian because Mary occupies a special place in our tradition, mission and daily life. She is the living source of our virtues



of simplicity, humility and modesty. She will never abandon her son like the child who always has recourse to his mother. We should always learn how to get close to Mary in our journey toward Jesus. Our spirituality like our charism belongs to the Church. Our fraternal life, our mission and our spirituality have to be shared with all those associated to our mission.

THE TABLE OF LA VALLA CONTINUES TO MULTIPLY THE BREAD

CARMINA ROMO

PROVINCE OF COMPOSTELA, SPAIN



"I was invited to the feast of this world, and thus my life was blessed, my eyes have seen, and my ears have heard"
Tagore

It is always very pleasant to remember the facts of life, sentiments emerge, and a song of praise and gratitude arises. I always tell how my birth was like a real Sacrament, and this is why my life is blessed and to live in this world is a feast, I received my first embrace, my first kiss on January 20 and on my skin remained, always, like a tattoo, the love of my family of my people. Life is the expression of God in each one, in his whole creation. To feel, to live, is a gift



of one's own life and I have received an abundance of gifts and blessings. The life of the people, of the town and the country have helped me to discover and to strengthen all the path of my human, professional, spiritual formation, projects, dreams, utopias.... Day after day, God has made me recognize easily that we are a family. Eladio, my husband, Mari Angeles and Irene our daughters, the town, the school, the Parish, we are all a family. Jesus in the Gospel asks: and who are my mother and my brothers? This one... and that one... and that one... and you... I think that this evangelical experience opened the doors for me and the world began to be my house. My profession as a teacher has also been my vocation. And this is how I have received everything. I am aware of the life in abundance that has filled me: work, human and spiritual formation, Marist spirit, life style, our own Charism, companions, children...young people. I can say: I am because we are, I am Marist because we are. Every dawn, silence is more profound and I can breathe better. And this was your will, Lord, that

I feel universal. In this house, on this table, we all fit, have a place; those coming from any part of the world, migrant families without documents, without work, without a house, sick, with Aids... young...children... To feel, to relish, in generosity nobody can beat LIFE. It is the best meal, the best drink; to advance together, to learn, to study, to work, to dream...to obtain personal dignity, to live with dignity. This experience has been like fire that burns me or wind that drags me or knocks me down. I remember some passages, like that of the Apostles at the Resurrection. For whom are you looking? He is no longer here, he has risen, resurrected. And the room of Marcellin, when Brother Benito Arbués said to us: Are you looking for Champagnat here? He is no longer here. He is in the children and the young people whom you have in your schools, in the colleges, in the neighborhoods, in the mission fields...there; it is there that you will find him. And this is real because he continues to be alive. And...now, it is only love that makes possible the miracle

to continue to live singing and giving thanks. The dream of Champagnat is lived today: "You will be Champagnat today". Little Brothers of Mary, Marists of Champagnat. The table of La Valla continues to multiply the bread, the dreams, the families. The Rosey Family, Our Rosey Family.

THE SPIRITUAL DIMENSION IN MY LIFE

Br Afonso Levis

PROVINCE OF BRASIL CENTRO-SUL



Having already climbed many steps on the mountain of life, and being close to the

Tabor of the final Easter, I can see the path I have walked over the decades, and understand the different stages and approaches I have gone through in this confident journey towards the Father. At the beginning, I remember I used to look for the Lord. Today I realize He is the one who waits and looks for me. The meaning of my life consists in letting the God of Mercy find me.

A number of constant elements in my inner path characterize my particular way of understanding spirituality. The generous self-donation and effort to be consistent with the standards and rules

I assimilated throughout initial formation have left traces of voluntarism in me. Structures marked my life and had after-effects. Today I see them not as a burden or an obstacle, but as scaffolds that shaped my way of being and acting. They allowed me to bloom and grow in Marist life, and to discover the joy of walking with Jesus Christ.

I tried to respond to the Lord's love along my Marist vocational path. My efforts to help the neighbor, giving the best of myself, colored my spirituality. I felt the joy of humble day-to-day service to others. I was available to them, with discretion and no ambition, aware of my strengths and limitations. Many times I was not able to trust and give myself to the Lord so as to answer his calls. I resisted, went through periods of crisis, had falls, and sometimes wanted to throw in the towel.

I was always reluctant to accept the reality of being internally divided and to realize that "the good thing I want to do, I never do; the evil thing which I do not want, that is what I do" (Rm 7:19). However, I was always open to accept God's will and let Marcellin Champagnat's testimony and wisdom guide me: "I am not sorry that you have troubles... That will put you in the happy necessity of placing your confidence in God!" In the midst of all these difficulties, I never doubted the Lord's unconditional and eternal love for me. I felt this way since my early childhood. There has always been a Marian accent along my spiritual path. At birth, my mother offered me to God through Mary. A tangible protection in some tragic moments of my life leaves no doubt about Mary's maternal presence and intercession. I want my life to be a hymn of praise and



gratitude. My third diary shows the language of a repetitive love for our Good Mother – although free from routine and monotony. Besides the different exercises of piety, there were other means that nourished my inner life: listening to the Word of God daily and in tune with the Church; the liturgy of the Eucharist, in which I renewed my religious vows every day and welcomed the life that Jesus shed for humankind; God’s love and presence through people, in particular the children and youngsters I worked with; and welcoming God’s manifold action in history, through the vitality of our charism, in the support I received from my community, and in the Marist laity. I am sure that the world has been saved by Jesus Christ, and will come to fulfillment with my participation. To sum up, I can say that spirituality for me today means living every moment of my existence with joy, love and gratitude; feeling loved by the Father, chosen to follow his Son, our brother Jesus, in the manner of our Good Mother and according to Champagnat’s charism; and being guided by the Holy Spirit that inhabits me, leading me to widen my inner tent, and dedicate my life to serve my neighbor. The Lord is eternally faithful. He calls me to express his ‘eternal’ faithfulness through the ‘time-ridden’ faithfulness of my existence by following the ways of love!

FAITHFULNESS TO LITTLE WAYS

Br Rosendo J. Yee

PROVINCE OF EAST ASIA, PHILIPPINES



Nurturing Spiritual life can be so challenging with the demands of

mission work but I am convinced that it is my faithfulness to spiritual exercises that deepens my relationship with Jesus. My life in Buda mission usually began at 5:30 AM when, after doing my morning routine, I read and reflected on the Gospel of the day. Our community breakfast was scheduled at 6:30 which was followed by our community morning prayer and communion service at 7:30.

With my backpack and doggy bag ready at 8:00, off I went pedaling my bicycle to Sinuda National High School, 3 kms from Buda to teach 50-minute religion to students.

I had a total of ten classes spread out during the week. The other school was Buda National High School, 700 meters away from the house.

I had 7 classes there.

I taught the students in these two schools alternately every week. During my free time, I had the joy of visiting three other public elementary schools.

Bringing with me my pencil sharpener machine, I would sit at a place where the pupils could see me. Most of them would come and did the “mano po” (Similar to hand-kissing, the person giving the greeting bows towards the offered hand of the elder



and presses his or her forehead on the elder's hand. Usually performed with the right hand, the person showing respect may ask "Mano po" to the elder in order to ask permission to initiate the gesture). A number of pupils would have their pencils sharpened. The looks of their pencils spoke clearly of the poverty they lived in. On my way back home, I visited people I knew and spent time connecting with them. By the time I arrived home, I would be tired but happy because I had done something beautiful for Jesus and Mary. Towards the end of the day at 5:00 PM, I committed myself to do my spiritual studies by reading the Catechism for Filipino Catholics, continuing on the pages I left the day before. By 6:00, I began my evening prayer with my office book and silent prayer followed as I occasionally glanced at the Blessed Sacrament at the small prayer room just close to my bedroom. Community supper is shared at 6:30. At 7:30, we had our community night prayer. After which, I did the preparations for my catechesis classes. At 9:00, I did the review of the day to see where I met the Lord and experienced his presence. Part of this was the reading of the Gospel for the next day from the Vatican II Weekday missal. And as I lay down to sleep, I prayed the Holy Rosary with



Mary, our Ordinary Resource. My life is simply lived that way but it is nourished daily by little acts of faithfulness to my spiritual exercises. And so, another day begins...

SHARING SOMETHING OF MY SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

Br Juan Carlos Bolaños Viscarra

PROVINCE CENTRAL AMERICA,
COLOMBIA



At the present moment I am forming part of the Formation Team of the Inter-Provincial Novitiate "La Valla" of Medellin, Colombia. At 36 years of age and from this formative mission,

I feel that the spiritual dimension is more consistent in my life, little by little, gradually it has become something fundamental and an impulse to develop as a person and as a religious brother. It helps me to live more conscious, more serene and more compassionate. In this dimension I find the energy to surrender to the mission with passion and hope, trying to be a joyful witness of the Gospel. If I look back to the past, I feel a profound gratitude to God. He has been good to me and has permitted me to experience his gratuitous love through so many persons: my family, my friends, the Marists – brothers, laity, children, young people – with whom I have shared, the poorest people who teach me to see the world in a different way, the places, the mission experiences and those of fraternity... everything has been an

experience of the gratuitous love of God. The daily exercise of keeping silence, of listening, of calming down, of becoming aware of my life and of what surrounds me, meditating on the Word of God, celebration of the Eucharist, contemplating Mary... have been practices that allow me to experience that gratuitous love of God and help me to live in trust and in abandonment. The trust that my qualities, my work, my efforts, my surrender will only be completed by Him and without Him they lose sense. It is the trust "of the child who rests in the arms of his mother"; the trust that "nothing will be able to separate me from his love". I have discovered that my spirituality is also nourished from the encounter with others. The authentic and profound relationships are a place of God, where fraternity is created and the spirit of Nazareth and of La Valla is created. And the encounter with poverty- the personal poverty expressed in my limitations and the material poverty of so many persons around me – allows me to be realistic, to keep myself connected with the world and to try to be more simple and compassionate. And if I look ahead, I feel invited to live my life as a pilgrim, always on the way, according to the dynamism and the novelty of the Spirit. The pilgrim does not know well what awaits him on the road, but he advances, with hope and illusion. The difficulties and uncertainty do not allow him to stop. Mary of

Nazareth, with her simplicity and maternal love, inspires me in the following of Christ and in my journey toward new lands.

LIVE THE PRESENT MOMENT

Br RENÉ M'Bumba

PACE, DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO



Time passes, the hour passes by and I remain waiting, We are going to present to you our humble

experience of a Little Brother of Mary. At the beginning of our religious formation we were technicians before becoming catechist, animator, teacher, director. All along our journey we continue to live the present moment, the only one available for us. Thank God during the years 80's and 90's we had elderly Brothers who helped us without omitting personal responsibility. The hard moments were the event of the Third Republic of ZAIRE at that time in 1996-1997, living in a



milieu hostile for the liberators. We have known the opening of a community (Nyangezi) after an absence of ten years following the time of insecurity. Then the attack on this community by armed men on October 5, 2009 when we were accepting 4 Pre-Postulants who had come from Kinshasa accompanied by Brother Motanda. What can we say of this second attack approved by the kidnapping of Brother Jules on Sunday August 9, 2011, when we were reciting the Magnificat in the Oratory of that same community? There are only clouds that cover this milieu in the measure in which a program of school reinsertion was set up with the help of FMSI / Amici dei Popoli (Friends of Peoples) for unoccupied, the idle, and deprived. And since we do not make profession of stability in any community, we were named to another place (Bobandana) in September 2012 where we were received by the hostility between the regular forces and the M23. Towards the month of November a Primary School for displaced children will function in the premises or buildings of the secondary school. In 2014 this school did not function, but beginning in 2015 until now, with the help of FMSI, we accept four-hundred children who benefit from free teaching. We can mention that two primary schools have also been constructed (Bitonga and Buhumba). When we have done what has

been asked of us, we consider ourselves as useless servants, but we have only done our duty says THE LORD.

With the help of Jesus, Mary, Champagnat we pray for good and numerous priestly, religious and Christian vocations, without forgetting to pray for the perseverance of one each one of us.

WITH MARY, GO OUT IN HASTE TO A NEW LAND!

Br FÁBIO OLIVEIRA

PROVINCE OF COMPOSTELA,
PORTUGAL



I started the postulancy during the 21st General Chapter, which means that, even

before officially “entering” the Marist “land” I was acquainted with, I was ordered (yes, because “go out” is in the imperative) to leave in haste for a new land. This thought did not cross my mind at that point, but after a number of years I now realize that this troubled and itinerant beginning did not only seal my growth and discernment process, but still marks my way of living and understanding spirituality. From the beginning, I had to cope with a Marist setting that was always moving, developing. Nobody imposed absolute certainties,



methods or truths on me, but I found help to develop the desire and the need to explore, experience and walk together (perhaps through different paths) trying to live more deeply rooted in God. That is why I am still – as I walk between lights and shadows – a “passionate seeker of God” (and the Church asks us, religious, not to give up this identity). I have learned to accept the fact that perhaps there are no definitive answers or miraculous recipes for all; that we neither learn spirituality in books nor lock it in sacred practices and spaces; that it is not a matter of reaching goals but of finding roads (or of simply walking, because I believe ‘spirituality’ is somehow a verb). Throughout this process of searching (in which, as someone said, the most important thing is to let God find us), everything can be helpful, any circumstance can be the occasion and place for a meaningful encounter. And although I believe that spirituality is something as full and natural as life itself, and that many things cannot be achieved through force, more and more I realize the

importance of personal responsibility and commitment. Fortunately, He always insists! Fábio, Fábio, you worry and fret about so many things, and yet only one is needed: Me! Do not be afraid, come, remain in Me... In my experience of going out in haste to a new land or constantly moving to a new house, I must confess that the words “with Mary” were (and sometimes still are) only a slogan added in order not to disregard the charism. However, little by little, quietly – in the way she likes to do things – Mary became a partner that inspires me, that helps me realize and savor life in the Spirit: a listening attitude, interiority, intimacy, attention, availability, service, passion, openness, boldness, gratitude, community, abandonment in God, trust, silence... And a fundamental lesson: God also grows within me, announcing the Life of the Kingdom. Magnificat!

But then, of course, I need more commitment and fidelity, I need consistency, I need models sometimes, I need truthfulness, humility, and an ear that can listen to love. And I also have too many unnecessary things! It is consoling to know that, no matter how lost I may be, I will always walk very close to (and also within) God’s heart. There is always room in the basement (like in the La Valla house, being present in His Presence). It is mainly there where we live a new beginning.



Conclusion





SEPT VAGIES - SEPT

CONVERSUS DOMINVS
RESPEXIT PETRVM



GREGORIVS XVI PONTIFEX

CROSSING THE THRESHOLD



Br Tony Leon

GENERAL HOUSE,
SECRETARIAT BROTHERS TODAY

IT SEEMS SUCH AN ANTIQUATED RITUAL! IMAGINE HAVING THE MAIN DOORS OF A BUILDING CLOSED, LOCKED, THEN BRICK IT UP LAYER BY LAYER, FROM BEHIND. AFTER WHICH, THE KEY IS PLACED IN A ZINC BOX WHICH IS SEALED WITHIN THE BRICK WALL SO THAT NO ONE CAN ACCESS THE KEY UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE WHEN THE BRICK WALL IS REMOVED TO GAIN ACCESS ONCE AGAIN, IN ABOUT 15 OR 50 YEARS TIME.

Meantime, visitors will use the smaller side entrances.

This is the description of the Holy Doors at St Peter's Basilica in Rome, which are ceremoniously opened to mark the beginning of a Jubilee year designated by the Holy Father, a ritual, which began in the 15thC. Traditionally, the

Jubilee Year, a holy year with a special theme, begins when the pope opens the doors of St Peter's. However in 2015, Pope Francis began the Jubilee away from Rome; it was at the newly declared Holy Doors of Bangui cathedral in the Central African Republic several weeks earlier.

In doing so, Pope Francis signals the opening of the special year of grace with 'Mercy' as the focus, and according to traditions, pilgrims who cross the threshold of these doors, gain plenary indulgences.

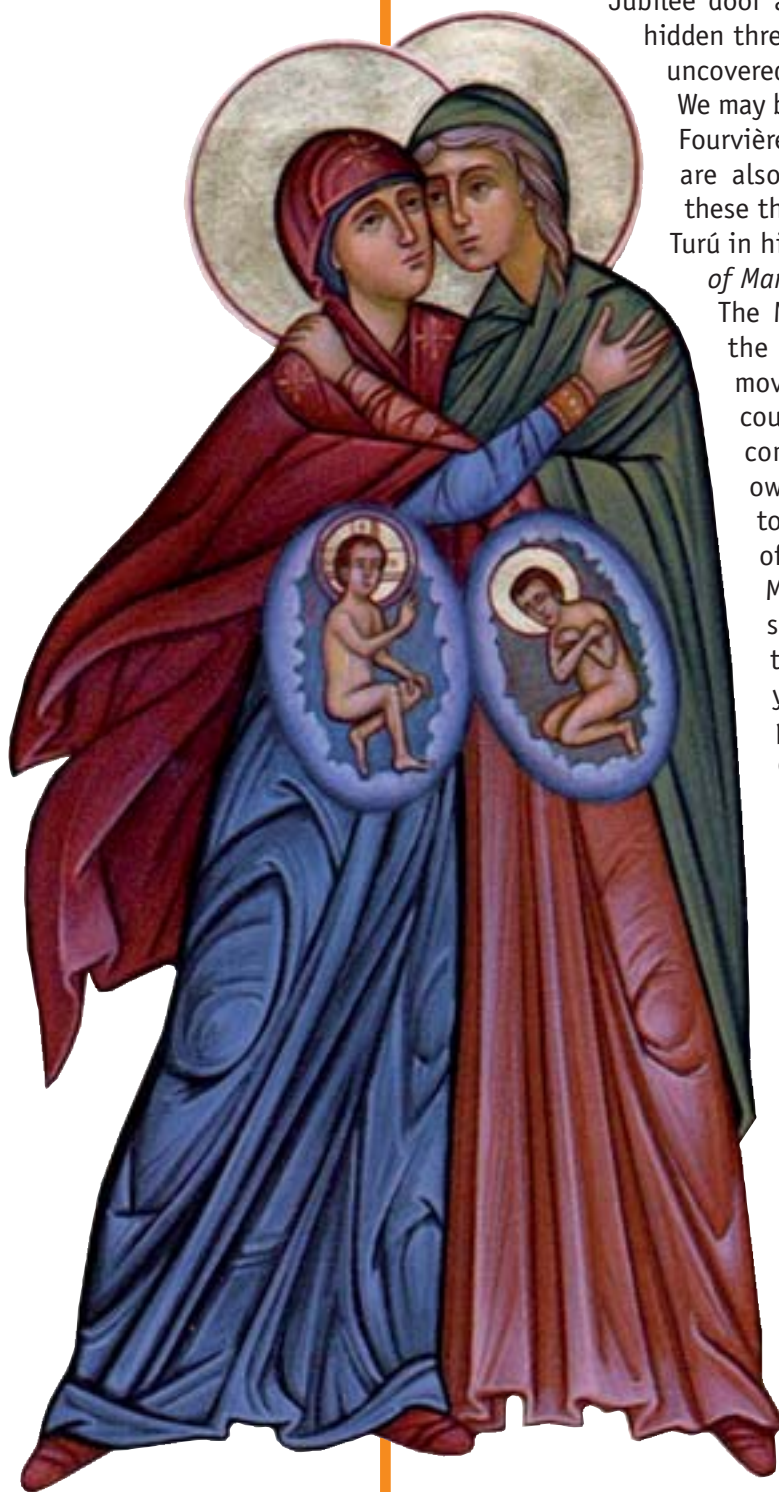
The original meaning of such blessings was based on a person's right for sanctuary from persecution within holy ground. This year, Pope Francis adds that such indulgences are not limited to the doors of Rome but can be accessed in many dioceses around the world.

*Opening of the Holy Door
of the Cathedral of Bangui,
Central African Republic*



A hidden threshold THAT HAS BEEN UNCOVERED

I believe that in many ways, as an institute, we are also approaching our own particular Jubilee in 2017. We do not have a Jubilee door at the General House but there is a hidden threshold that has been slowly gradually uncovered in the three years leading to 2017. We may be aware of the well known Montagne, Fourvière and Lavalla logos, however, there are also the Marian icons associated with these themes, which were shared by Br Emili Turú in his 2012 circular, *He Gave Us the Name of Mary*. The initial part of the triennium, The Montagne Year carries the theme of the **Visitation** icon. Like Mary, who moved from the lowly plains into the hill country to visit Elizabeth, our reflection combines with the tale of Marcellin's own visitation to the hill of Le Bessat to visit J.B Montagne. These moments of significant changes for Mary and Marcellin invite us to consider the shifting of our traditional interpretation of our *Mission* amongst the young. This movement from our usual point of view gains us a clearer vision of the contemporary ways of engaging with the most vulnerable young people today.



Acquiring sight

Like the curing of the blind man, who at first saw blurred tree-like figures moving around, the clarity of sight gradually dawned in him. After acquiring his sight, Jesus instructed the cured man not to return to the village. As having crossed the threshold into vision, his life was no longer to be lived in the limited confinement of blindness; new vision means new pastures. (Mk 8:22-26).

For us, these pastures have been in the dioceses around the world where we are engaging with young people and making Jesus known and loved, as well as in the new lands where Jesus is yet to be named.

A NEW COMMUNION OF BROTHERS AND LAY MARISTS

The second part of the triennium focuses on the **Fourvière** logo with the Marian icon of the **Pentecost**. This Marist and Marian moments contain the key themes of *Fraternity & Community*, which unlock our imagination of Marist Vocation today. In 1816, the pledge was amongst the fraternity of several young men to form a Mary-ist society. The XXI General Chapter continued the call for a new communion of brothers and lay Marists, guiding us to deeper sense of contemporary brotherhood and encouraging us to define our identity as expressed in our lives as brothers and as lay Marists. There is much energy invested today where men and women are articulating the solid principles of being Marists, thereby creating a new pledge into which we can all enter.

NEW HEARTS

The General Chapter of 2001 decided to **Choose Life**. The following General Chapter in 2009 longed for **for a New World**. These significant moments in our institute began at decisive thresholds where we left one way of being and entered into another. We chose life and we live with new hearts.

These threshold moments are intense frontiers that divide worlds of emotions and frequently, these thresholds only become clearly visible once we have crossed them.

These crossings become the line dividing our past and the future. Oftentimes we cannot return to where we were as we have changed and we are no longer the people who crossed over.

Perhaps the Marian icon associated with the final Lavalla logo of the triennium is starkly appropriate



– **The Annunciation**, the moment when the young Mary is deeply disturbed by the invitation from the Divine Mystery.

“How can this come about...?” (Lk 1:34)

We are at the Annunciation threshold where we may decide to leave the safety of our habits and repetition to a space worthy of the grandeur of *our spirituality*. Here is the liminal space where responding faithfully, truthfully and generously will lead us to real pastures.

The Brothers Today Secretariat offers a course for brothers who are between 55-65 years old. It is a program designed for those men who are in a period of transition in their professional ministry. The Spanish title for this course is UMBRALES (translated as *threshold*). The English title for this course is TRANSITION. Being an English speaker, I have to humbly forfeit to the Spanish translation as being the more potent and accurate

CROSSING THE THRESHOLD

Br Tony Leon

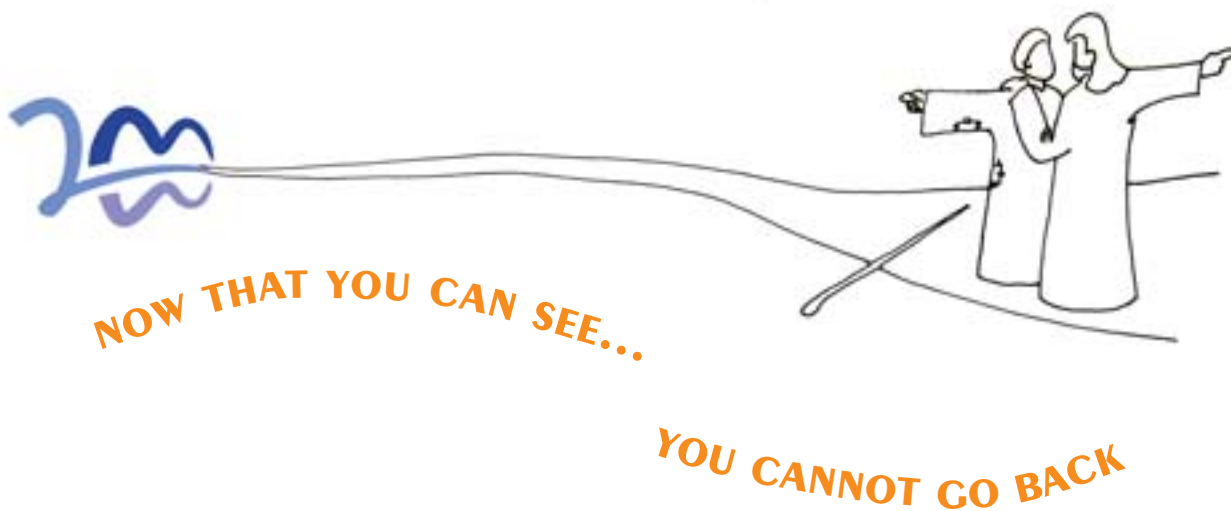
definition. TRANSITION seems pale, impersonal, functional and automatic compared to THRESHOLD, which creates a more intense, personal, affective and deliberate meaning. Imagine Mary's 'Magnificat' included what is often heard today? *"I can't decide. I'm in transition at the moment, I'm in between jobs, relationships, houses...etc"*.

In English, the origin of 'Threshold' refers to the word 'thresh', which was the separation of the grain from the husk or straw when the oat was flailed. Along with the current meaning of 'entrance', 'crossing', 'border' and 'beginning', the deeper sense of crossing the threshold is to leave behind the husks and arrive at the grain.

A process that calls for shedding what was once valuable but now hinders our growth. In our two centuries of evolution as an institute, it is still exciting that we continue to discover richness that waits beyond the threshold.

Similar with Pope Francis opening this Jubilee year away from Rome, our next General Chapter will not be in the 'Eternal City'.

The blessing of our Jubilee year is in every diocese where we dare to enter. Prepare to cross the threshold - there will be no turning back. Perhaps going through these holy doors may not be such an antiquated ritual after all!





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

Lucy: Tere



marists **2017**
a new beginning

