

## BEING POETRY, BUILDING BRIDGES AND CREATING A COMPACT: A NETWORK OF SCHOOLS WITH THE SOUL OF A GLOBAL FAMILY

Message of thanks to the Ad Hoc Team of the Network of Schools

Dear Friends:

It is a pleasure to be here and to wish that these days are filled with goodness--full of those things that make our authentic human and Marist spirit, our solidarity, and our educational aspirations **GROW**. I join you in your different missions, activities, and tasks and I know that each one of you is doing extraordinary work in many areas and with many people. This is the fresh and stimulating air that fills the Marist mission with hope and, moreover, helps us to see the present and future with eyes of hope. You are men and women with extraordinary individual talents, imbued with a very rich personal faith that speaks of being Marist. I want to tell you that it has been an honor working with each of you.

### **BEING “POETRY”**

Together we have traveled a little-known road. A road not traveled at all. I was moved from the beginning by the attitude of seeking, of creativity, and of acceptance of novelty.

There is poetry in this project. Really, there is an existential poetry in everything we have experienced. The author Scott Peck has some beautiful words that represent part of this life challenge that we have walked together:

*It is in the whole process of encountering and solving challenges (problems) where life makes sense. Problems are the edge that distinguishes between success and failure. The challenges (problems) bring out our courage and our wisdom; in fact, they create our courage and our wisdom. It is only through challenges (problems) that we grow mentally and spiritually. It is through the pain of facing and resolving challenges (problems) as we learn.*

The Pope, in 2018, made this invitation, which has full meaning for us:

*Forming a network with education "means getting people back on their feet, getting them back on the road with full dignity, with the strength and courage to face life, valuing their talents and their work".*

This is human poetry, poetry in life and for life.

In this spirit is the vital poetry that we have discovered on our shared path and remains to be discovered.

### **BUILDING BRIDGES**

Building bridges. The XXII General Chapter reminded us of the importance of building bridges amid a world full of challenges. In this commission... we have made a beautiful journey with all our national, regional, intercultural, and international experience. In the

Institute, we are actively working to build a culture of collaboration, of understanding, of networking. The Chapter affirms our call and asks God to:

**Inspire our creativity to be bridge builders.**

**Like Mary at Cana (Jn.2, 3), we are challenged by the needs of the world around us.**

In the educational action in which you are involved, I invite you to connect:

- with all the networking effort,
- with all the possibilities of transforming society together as a global family,
- with all the strength we must defend the dignity of children and young people and their fundamental equality, and
- with the desire to be a conscience of a different world that we dream of and wish to build.

As the Chapter says, let us move forward in...

- Knowing in depth our ever-changing world and facing today's challenges.
- Being a prophetic memory of the dignity and fundamental equality of all God's people.
- Being agents of change, bridge builders, messengers of peace, committed to transforming the lives of young people through an evangelizing education.

## **CREATING A COMPACT**

If we want to network, we must make compact for the good of all, for education, for humanity. In the Institute, we are transforming ourselves to live more in a "network" with society and the Church. We want to make alliances:

- with the **Global Education Compact** launched by Pope Francis in its 7 key aspects,
- with the **SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals - UN)**,
- in the participation of the jubilee of "**Laudato Si**" from the point of view of integral ecology,
- in **Marist global citizenship** as an expression of what it means to be "good Christians and virtuous citizens" in and for the 21st century,
- and in other initiatives that help promote a culture of encounter.

From the Global Network of Schools, we hope to capture the core spirit of what it means to create partnerships and alliances:

- The Global Network will be the main **VEHICLE** of educational connection in the Marist world.
- The Global Network's main strengths will be its core **CONTENT**, the core projects that give it direction and create interest and connection.
- The Global Network will have an extraordinary cultural, social, and spiritual **WEALTH** that will be inspirational for the Marist world in the 79 countries that compose it.

- It will have a **SOUL** made up of all the stories of children, adolescents, and young people:
  - who will engage in the search for intercultural communion in a fractured world,
  - who will learn collaboratively to seek solutions to planetary problems,
  - who will learn about realities in other parts of the world, not through the news but through contact with their own peers in diverse places, and
  - who will learn to be Marist global citizens.
  
- The Global Network will have its **STRENGTH** in you, in the provincial, regional, and local directors when you carry out initiatives:
  - that translates global citizenship.
  - that explores the different meanings of “being good Christians and virtuous citizens” in the 21st century.
  - that face contemporary challenges.
  - that interconnect all the vitality, wisdom, and intelligence of the Marist educational world.

To do so:

- We need to make a solid compact with each other.
- We need to make a compact with the universal Church.
- We need to make a compact/partnership with those who build bridges, heal and unite humanity.
- We need to make a compact/pact with those who hope to rescue lives from poverty, segregation, marginalization, rejection, or harassment with dignity.

These are the foundations that you have helped to concretize, with patience, time, inventiveness, and dedication over many months. All your contributions, commitment, passion, fortitude, and intuition have been fundamental in getting us this far. I am sure that these words of wisdom of Pope Francis now resonate in a special way in your hearts:

*The good, as well as love, justice, and solidarity, cannot be achieved once and for all; they must be conquered every day. It is not possible to be satisfied with what has already been achieved in the past and to settle in and enjoy it as if this situation would lead us to ignore the fact that many of our brothers and sisters still suffer situations of injustice that call out to all of us.*

I conclude here with the words of Brother Ernesto Sanchez, our beloved Superior General, in his circular, **Homes of Light** (2020), which seem to me to be a very accurate description of these foundational moments of the Marist Global Network of Schools:

*The times we live in are not so different from the circumstances and experiences that Champagnat lived. Many models and ways of acting, related to society, with politics, with religion, with the Church, seem to be in crisis and no longer respond to these times of continuous change and evolution. [...] The experience lived in the world, in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic, seems to be leading us*

*to a revolution, asking us to rescue solid and fundamental values if we really want to build a more humane and fraternal society.*

We are precisely in this active construction of solid values.

Today, we close this stage with a grateful heart. It has been a beautiful journey, full of ideas and also of friendship and companionship. Thank you very much!

- Beto, Mark, Diugar, Ben Consigli (CG), ...
- Ana, Andreu, Chano, Ador, Frank, Llorenç, Montserrat, Natalino, Nice, Henry...

Thank you for your intense effort in favor of the Marist Global Network of Schools and for this seminal and extraordinary moment. You all have a very beautiful personal gift. There is poetry, there are bridges and there is covenant in each one of you!

Thanks be to God for you and for the service you have done, as well as for all that is to come in the future.

Many blessings.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "H. Luis Carlos Gutiérrez". The signature is stylized with a large, circular flourish at the end.

H. Luis Carlos Gutiérrez, fms