



**Let's make an effort to rekindle
and pass on the gift of the Marist charism**

Message of Br. Ernesto Sanchez Barba, Superior General

Feast of St. Marcellin Champagnat

6th June 2022



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Dear Marists of Champagnat,

This June 6th we give thanks for the gift of the person and vocation of Saint Marcellin Champagnat. On that day, while the community of brothers at the Hermitage were praying to Mary by singing the Salve Regina, Marcellin was called to our Father's House.

It is a joy for all of us to celebrate our Founder with deep gratitude for the gift of the charism given to us through him.

As a young man, through the mediation of a visiting priest, Marcellin said Yes to the call he felt from God to become a priest. Difficult as it was for him, he undertook his formation, paying close attention to the intuitions he perceived from the Spirit. Thus it was that, even before his ordination to the priesthood, he felt inspired to found an institute of brothers to be at the service of children and young people, particularly those most in need. Indeed, at the age of 27, as a young priest, he began this wonderful project, giving us the name of Mary.



On May 20th, the birthday of Champagnat, we launched the Year of Marist Vocations throughout the Institute. We will bring this period to a close on today's date next year.

In my words at the launching, I invited us all to celebrate and give thanks throughout this year for the gift that we have received, as Marists of Champagnat - brothers, lay Marists, all of us who resonate with the Marist charism, to the point of living it at depth, making this gift our way of life.



I also invited us, besides celebrating and giving thanks, to renew our efforts with enthusiasm regarding Marist vocations, giving form to a revitalised culture of vocation.

On the one hand, we can take this opportunity to review our personal, community, and family lifestyles as well as the way we are carrying out our mission. We have the capacity to pass on the gift we have received, through the witness of our presence and dedication, our joy and authenticity.

At the same time, we can foster an atmosphere wherein young people can learn to listen and search their hearts. We can give opportunities for all young people to discover the gift they have been given and how to develop it. We want to accentuate caring for and generating Marist life, accompanying particularly those who feel called to live out the gift of a Marist vocation, whether as religious brothers or as lay Marists. I believe that the Lord continues to awaken this gift in young people, and so we want to offer them opportunities for searching their hearts, their accompaniment and their formation.

I reminded us all that what is important is not how many brothers and lay Marists there are or will be in the Institute, but the quality of our lives that passionately witness to the presence of a God who is alive and close to us, as well as our dedication in solidarity with those most in need.

In recent visits to some of the homes of older Brothers, I have told them that, when I meet them, I do not take note of their age, their possible ailments or whether someone is using a wheelchair, but I take note of the look on their faces that shows the presence of God and Mary in their lives. I also call to mind the years of their devoted service to young people, in classrooms and sports fields, correcting homework, being a presence among them. Can I invite all the older Brothers to support the year of Marist Vocations with their prayer and with their witness that there is great value today in giving oneself unconditionally to God's call.

I invite you other brothers and all lay Marists to ask yourselves how you can be more faithful today to the gift of the Marist charism you have received, making this gift more visible in the way you live your brotherhood and in how you are engaged in mission. Perhaps we need to develop a deeper inner life and spirituality. Perhaps we need to review how we relate to one another, acting out of a spirit of mercy, forgiveness and reconciliation. Perhaps we could look at our attitudes and actions of solidarity, especially at a time when new forms of poverty and needs have emerged, multiplying the number of marginalised children and young people.



Along with witness and visibility, we need to be creative in providing young people with the chance to encounter their inner selves and a merciful God who calls them to be happy by being of service to others. We want to accompany and care for the new shoots of Marist life, budding in those young people who are connecting with the gift of the charism. We want to open our doors to share our brotherhood, prayer and mission with them.

Marcellin knew how to listen to the intuitions of the Spirit within himself, in a challenging context, and was able to respond with generosity and passion. Mary, our Good Mother, was his constant inspiration. Today we can count on this same inspiration and are being invited to respond to the challenges of our day.

May we be able to rekindle and pass on the gift of the charism we have received!

Happy Feast of Saint Marcellin!

