



INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON
**THE LAY MARIST
VOCATION**

WELCOMING, NURTURING, LIVING AND SHARING OUR VOCATION.
"YOUR SONS AND DAUGHTERS WILL PROPHESY" (JOEL 3,1)

Ruah Breaths of the Spirit for lay Marists

**Message of the assembly
for all Marists around
the world**

**3RD STAGE: 4-11 NOVEMBER 2022
MEETING IN ROME**

Dear Marists of Champagnat...

We are happy to offer you a simple message that emerged from the shared life and work of the participants in the 3rd stage of the International Forum on the Lay Marist Vocation, which took place in Rome from 4 to 11 November 2022. It was a real experience of the Spirit (the Ruah), which allowed us to continue to explore possibilities for strengthening intuitions and pathways related to the lay Marist vocation.

After the first year of this process which began on 19 March 2021 in the different Provinces and Districts, the delegates of each Administrative Unit of the Institute continued the reflection which had started in their places of origin, but now, in this phase constituting themselves as an expression of our global charismatic family.

This message does not contain definitive conclusions. They are rather “promptings of the Spirit” around the four objectives set for the whole Forum process. We have two years of discernment ahead of us to arrive at concrete proposals for the virtual Forum in November 2024. So, the purpose of this message is to provide a snapshot of our reflections during the face-to-face Forum, to help us stay connected to the themes of the Fo-

rum, to offer you ideas and guidelines to support our reflection and discussion at Administrative Unit and Regional levels, and to contribute to the building of a consensus on the four promptings.

The participants of the face-to-face Forum in Rome will continue to contribute to the reflection and preparation of concrete proposals to be presented at the international virtual Forum in November 2024. Your support, reflection and input can be offered directly to the representatives of your Administrative Unit.

We are grateful for all the support received, the expressions of gratitude and the prayers from everywhere there is a Marist presence. We will continue to be attentive to the “promptings of the RUAH” that urges us to “welcome, care for, live and share our vocation”.

In this time of Advent, which opens us to hope and to welcoming “the Light that shines in the darkness”, we walk hand in hand with Mary, a woman who was totally open and available to the action of the Spirit. May she continue to inspire and encourage us in our quest. Fraternally,

Agnes Reyes, Manu Gómez and Raúl Amaya
Directors of the Secretariat of the Laity



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With open hearts we arrived at stage 3 of the International Forum on the Lay Marist Vocation with 48 lay men and women from all the AUs of the Institute and 33 Brothers as support and companions on the journey. Since its beginning, the experience of the Forum has been one of true communion where we have shared life, moments together, concerns and dreams in relation to the lay Marist vocation. Moved by the Spirit, we have looked to our future with the same hope and confidence as Mary and Marcellin.

As a global family and aware of the common gift we share, we let ourselves be challenged by exploring the issues that touch our life, mission

and organisation. It is with joy that we share with all our brothers and sisters in the Marist world the breaths of the Spirit in this phase of the Forum.

This message you hold in your hands is not intended to be a document with conclusions from the Forum. Rather, they are themes connected to the four objectives of the Forum (the vocational identity of lay Marists, formation processes and pathways, linking to the Marist charism, and civil or canonical juridical structures for Marist laity) and which we will continue to study and shape into concrete proposals to be put to the Virtual Forum to be held in November 2024.



Breath one**TO EXPLORE OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE MARIST VOCATION WITH A PARTICULAR EMPHASIS ON THE VOCATION OF LAY MARISTS**

We worked on a common understanding of the lay vocation that includes and embraces the whole person. This implies embracing and integrating all dimensions of such a vocation, leading us to transform our hearts, our minds, our wills... in short, our whole lives, based on Marist principles and values.

We understand the lay Marist vocation as an invitation, a gift from God to live our lives inspired by the Marist charism. We accept this invitation freely

and voluntarily. Our experience is respectful of all cultures and faiths and is rooted in our own experiences and realities.

The Spirit is inviting us to further probe the language and meaning of the terms 'inclusion', 'vocation' and 'formation' for us as lay Marists.

As an open question for further reflection, the question arose as to how people from other religious or spiritual traditions can live as Marists, in line with our desire to be inclusive and welcoming of all people.

Breath two**REVIEWING AND OFFERING FORMATION AND ACCOMPANIMENT PROCESSES AND PATHWAYS FOR THE LAY VOCATION**

We recognise the importance of having pathways and criteria for the discernment of lay Marist vocations. Vocational processes require personal accompaniment that is respectful and appropriate to the rhythms and realities of each person.

We commit ourselves to continue exploring criteria, suggestions and formation pathways for carrying out vocational discernment processes adapted to contexts and cultures.

At both the personal and institutional levels, we will make efforts to guarantee financial and human resources for supporting and promoting lay Marist vocations.

Besides continuing what is happening at local and province levels, we will share and strengthen lay formation initiatives at the global level.



Breath three**REFLECTING ON AND PROPOSING POSSIBLE WAYS OF BONDING TO THE MARIST CHARISM***** Understanding of the phrase “bonding of laypeople to the Marist charism”**

We embrace the diversity of lay Marist life and the different moments of the spiritual journey in which we find ourselves.

We recognise the call to live the Gospel in Mary’s way and choose to incarnate the Marist charism in the Church and in the world.

We come to this conviction through a process of discernment which, if it ends with the recognition of God’s call to a Marist vocation, leads to a formal commitment and attachment to the charism. This new vocation is welcomed and celebrated by the Marist community as a gift from God.

There already exist in the Marist world different ways of expressing this commitment and attachment to the charism (mission, community, spirituality), from a lay perspective, which are mutually recognisable.

We understand this link to the charism as our public witness to the Marist vocation and our sense of unity and belonging to a global charismatic family, following a process of vocational discernment.

We feel challenged to explore some aspects of such bonding further.

*** Forms of bonding to the charism**

Those among us who have chosen to bind ourselves to the Marist charism have done so intentionally and freely through a public commitment, as a result of a process of vocational discernment and accompaniment.

This choice implies a profound co-responsibility for



the future and vitality of the Marist charism. The approach to bonding differs according to the diversity of cultures and contexts of the Marist world. Before us lies the challenge of clarifying the terms used to define what we mean by “forms of bonding”.

*** What is needed to support and encourage the processes of lay people who feel called to move towards such bonding?**

To support and encourage the processes of lay people who feel called to move towards such bonding, we see it as necessary to:

- Make personal invitations to begin a process.



- Generate networks, teams and resources to accompany those engaged in this process.
- Design pathways based on different prior levels of formation (that are accessible and flexible).
- To train mentors who are inspiring, give personal witness and promote communion.
- Grow in autonomy (e.g. decision-making and finances) and develop structures with lay leadership.
- Develop common guidelines for the formation processes.
- Be sensitive to cultural differences.
- Provide opportunities to live our charism both personally and in community.



Breath four

TO KNOW, REFLECT ON, EXPLORE AND PROPOSE POSSIBILITIES OF JURIDICAL STRUCTURES (CIVIL AND/OR CANONICAL) FOR THE MARIST LAITY.

* Contribution of associative structures to Lay Marist Vocations

The existence of associative structures can contribute in the following ways:

▪ *In the vitality of the Marist charism*

- Continuity and charismatic growth;
- It gives us a body;
- It facilitates our connection with the Institute;
- It encourages the commitment of members

and the growth of our charismatic family as a response to the actions of the Spirit.

▪ *In giving visibility to the lay Marist vocation*

- Visibility in society and church;
- Sustaining formation, programs and overall organisation of the life of lay Marists;
- Brings a degree of formality, structure and organisation;



- Ensures the legitimacy and recognition of this vocation.
 - ***In regard to identity***
 - Ensures a sense of identity and belonging (adopting values, collaboration and community)
 - Gives a sense of something bigger than oneself for sharing life and resources;
 - Gives rise to an internal network of people active in promoting identity and belonging to the charism;
 - Contributes to our positioning ourselves in church and society as a distinctive entity.
 - ***In regard to mission***
 - Leads to a greater capacity and opportunity for Marist mission and life;
 - Promotes unity and cooperation.
 - ***In terms of sustainability***
 - Better organisation;
 - Is a basis for taking new initiatives;
 - Generates stability regarding financial, human, spiritual and charismatic resources;
 - Can assist in creating unity among all lay Marists, but uniformity is to be avoided and diversity respected.
 - ***In terms of autonomy***
 - Grasp the implications of autonomy (leadership, decision-making, finances and functionality);
 - Be able to respond to specific needs;
 - Grow in responsibility and maturity to be ready to invite others to join us.
- * **Possibilities of associative structures for Marist laity**
Brainstorming generated a number of possibilities to be explored further.
- * **Different challenges emerged that will have to be taken into account over the next two years as such associative structures are considered.**



We are grateful for all the support received from the AUs and the Institute as such and to all the people who supported the Forum through their service. We treasure in our hearts the chance we had to be in contact with the General House and the Church during our visit to the Vatican.

May Mary our Good Mother continue to enlighten our vocational journey as Marists.

Rome 11th November, 2022





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