



Sharing

THE LAY
MARIST
VOCAATION

N. 19 | 19 DECEMBER 2022

3RD STAGE: 4-11 NOVEMBER 2022

INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON THE LAY MARIST VOCAATION



The third stage of the International Forum was a meeting with participants from all the Administrative Units, brothers and lay people, together with the Superior General and his Council and the Bureau of the Laity. There were 93 participants (56 lay people and 37 Brothers). A support team of 10 people helped to organise the event, which was held at the Nostra Signora Madre della Misericordia Spiritual Retreat House in Rome.

The Forum is a four-year process of dialogue and discernment involving all Administrative Units. This process has as its central axis the vocation of lay Marists, their formation and accompaniment, possible ways of their bonding to the charism, and reflection on the organisation of the laity in an associative structure (civil and/or canonical). It is a dialogue about the present situation of Marist laity, the future we dream of and our communion with the brothers for a greater vitality of the charism.

On the Institute website all the material from the meeting can be found: objectives, participants, pho-

tos, news reports, videos... (<https://champagnat.org/en/meeting-lay-rome-2022/>)

In this bulletin we would like to share the message that the assembly produced for all Marists around the world, along with six letters that the participants wrote to their respective Regions.

Next steps

The fruits of the reflection of the participants of the Forum in Rome are very valuable, but not definitive. They provide an orientation for the in-depth follow-up work to be carried out in small groups until June 2024, each group focussing on one of the four objectives. These groups will be made up of some of the participants of the in-person Forum. Finally, the proposals of each group will be discussed at the online International Forum, made up of the same participants who were in Rome in November 2022. This virtual meeting, to be held in November 2024, will produce the final document that will be submitted to the General Council of the Institute.

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

Ruah – Breaths of the Spirit for lay Marists

Message of the assembly for all Marists around the world

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 Fo-



rum. 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, spiri-

tuality), 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

Letter from the participants of the Forum to the Marists of their Regions

Letter of the Region of Arco Norte



The International Forum on the Marist Lay Vocation has been a great opportunity to celebrate together, as Brothers and Lay Marists, our Marist Vocation as a Gift of the Spirit.

Such is the joy in our hearts that we desire and dream of revitalising the Marist charism through formation processes and programmes that take into account our diversity in terms of cultures, life rhythms and languages.

What a blessing to know that we are more and more Marists, all heirs of Champagnat's charism. This feeling also invites us to consider organisational structures to continue to journey together as one vast Global Marist Charismatic Family.

Letter of the Region of América Sur

During these days we have gathered in Rome as lay women, lay men and brothers coming from different parts of the Marist Institute. We have come with open hearts, following the intuition of Champagnat, who taught us to have unlimited trust in the intercession of our Good Mother.

The word that has struck us most during this meeting is RUAH (Spirit), the breath of life, the breath of God. We have spoken a lot about sensing this prompting, which has made restless and inspired us to continue our journey with audacity.

In this face-to-face stage of the Lay Marist Vocation Forum, we have come together to reflect on and share the richness of our experiences. This will continue over the next few years

We have the joy of communicating 4 items of good news to you

- The Marist vocation is a precious way of living out Champagnat's charism, bringing the Gospel to life in Mary's way, as lay people or brothers.
- We believe that it is necessary to undertake a process of formation and accompaniment so that this lay vocation may be relevant, mean-

ingful and prophetic in today's world.

- We are all invited to commit ourselves when we know that our time has come.
- We look forward to good times ahead when the Church and the world will recognise that the lay Marist vocation is a way of life that makes us happy.

We have a journey to make and determine together, open to the gifts of the Spirit, with an attitude of acceptance and docility like Mary.

We lay people and brothers who have participated in the Forum warmly invite you too to make the lay Marist vocation your life project in the present and in the future.



Letter from Region of Africa

We are grateful for all the support received from all the Administrative Units and the Institute and all the people who supported the development of the Forum with their services. We were delighted to have been in contact with the General House and with the Church during our visit to the Vatican.

The African Region participants identified the following issues that should be part of the message to all Marist of Champagnat:

- Lay Marist vocation is a new flavor to Marist charism and spirituality in some Provinces.
- To be patient and supportive with the lay Marist vocation in some parts of the Africa region as they are moving at their own pace.
- Challenges identified:
- The region has serious problems of communication.

- Movement and travel is difficult from one country to another.
- Financial difficulties in the Provinces affect the activities of Lay Marist.

May Mary our Good Mother continue to enlighten our Marist vocational journey.



Letter from the Region of Oceania

As we voyage into the new Star of the Sea province, we do so with a heart that is full of joy to embrace the vision of what it means to be a Lay Marist.

We are men and women, committed to being Marist. We have a deep desire to belong in community with each other whilst we live out vocation.

By sharing our stories, we will learn to understand each other and the diversity of the Star of the Sea province.

We come with open hearts to share bread in communion with each other. As we move forward from this forum, our mission is to promote the Lay Marist vocation within each of our local contexts. To make Jesus Christ known and loved in the way of Mary.

We are brothers and sisters with our own rich histories and diverse stories. Part of this shared history



is the relationship which we have with the Marist Brothers, who we will continue to journey with, as companions to deepen our Lay Marist Vocation. Our vocation is to simply deepen each of our calling to be Marist.

Letter from the Region of Europe

What are you thirsty for?

When you feel that your journey makes sense. When you feel that you walk together with others. When you feel that with them you carry a message of



hope, because you believe in the goodness of people. When you feel that you are family with those who share your path. When your way of being in life is that of Mary and Saint Marcellin. This is your place; this is your table. Together we have dared to explore what God is doing in our lives, in each other, in our global family. Together we want to continue to offer to children and young people and to society the gift of our charism, because the spirit continues to move among us and inspire us. Sharing stories, talking, listening to all the voices, celebrating, dancing, co-creating in our forum, in your forum. We have been dreaming together, brothers and lay people, of a better future for our global family and for the world that awaits us.

Get up, let's find the water from the rock, and let's build something new together. Join us!

Letter from the Region of Asia

Dear Marists of Champagnat in ASIA.

We are blessed to have lived the experience of the International Forum on Marist Lay Vocation where Brothers and Lay around the globe gather to share the wealth of our stories and the richness of our experiences of living Marist life.

We live the same values, dreams and hopes. We shared our stories; we have reflected together, proposed different ideas, discussed, and dialogued. It was for us, a sacred space of encounter, being fully aware of the presence of Ruah, the breath of the Divine, gently guiding us in all moments of our experience.

We were faced with and received the challenge to keep alive the Charism of Marcellin in our world today, particularly in our context in Asia. We, however, embrace among us the richness of the diversity of culture, faith, and tradition. And it is in this diversity that we celebrate Marist life with you:

“Come to the table. You are welcome to celebrate life as we gather at the Table of La Valla. We are a family. We are Marists.”

We continue to believe that this is our call, our vocation, to be Marists of Champagnat today: one family amidst diversity, zealous partakers in the Divine mission.

And so, we go forth ...caring for and generating Marist life in whatever we can.

Come, journey with us, with Mary and Marcellin.



SOCIAL NETWORK MARIST LAYTY

We invite you to share your experience as a Marist lay person on social media by posting texts, photos and videos using the hashtag #MaristLayVocation.

It will help us to develop an internet identity for Marist life worldwide.

At the same time, the Secretariat of Laity has created a public group in FaceBook: [“Laicos Maristas / Marist Laity - Global group”](#). It is a place to build an online community of Marist Laypeople and to share our emotions and experiences. You are invited to subscribe to the group and to start posting and gathering online with other members of our global family.

Forum's Meeting in Rome

[Objetives](#) | [Participants](#) | [Program](#) | [Photos](#) | [Video](#)

- [Closing Event of the 3rd Stage of the International Forum on the Lay Marist Vocation.](#)
- [Day 7: Hanging on to the next phase – 2024.](#)
- [Day 6: Discernment on possible structures of bonding.](#)
- [Day 5: Forms of bonding and new juridical structures for the Marist laity.](#)
- [Day 4: Bonding, Commitment, and Promise on the Lay Marist Vocation.](#)
- [Day 3: Meeting with Champagnat at the Vatican and visit to the General House](#)
- [Day 2: the Vocation and Formation of Lay Marists of Champagnat](#)
- [Opening day of the 3rd stage of the international forum on the lay marist vocation](#)
- [How did we get to the international forum on the lay marist vocation?](#)
- [3rd phase of the International Forum on the Lay Marist Vocation](#)

#LayMaristVocation

The newsletter will be issued monthly. Each time, a different Region will oversee it. You can [subscribe here](#) to receive Marist News and SHARING.



Institut of the Marist Brothers - Secretariat of Laity

Piazzale Marcellino Champagnat, 2 - Rome, Italy - comunica@fms.it

Website

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