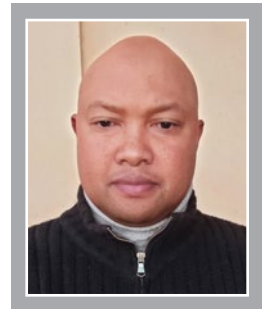

How do we live empathy with people or students in our Marist mission? Experiences and realities

“leading from vulnerability can seem contradictory if we have in our mind
the image of a leader who has all the answers
and who controls everything”

Br. Juan Carlos Fuentes

Br. Maurice Juvence
Principal. Saint Joseph School – Antsirabe
Madagascar



My name is Heriniaina Maurice Juvence, and I am a Marist Brother who serves as the Director of Saint Joseph School in Antsirabe, Madagascar, since 2018. Within our vibrant educational community, we welcome 2,400 students, both girls and boys, spanning across primary and secondary levels.

Throughout my journey as an educator, I have come to deeply appreciate the essence of empathy towards our students. This invaluable quality has enabled me to embody the core values and vision of the mission of Saint Joseph School. At the heart of our educational philosophy lies the goal of nurturing good citizens grounded in Christian and Marist principles. As educators, we strive to instill these values in our students by sharing with them the aspirations and ideals that underpin our school's foundation.

Living empathy in our school context entails more than just imparting knowledge; it involves strengthening the life skills of young individuals throughout their educational journey. We believe in creating a compassionate and supportive environment where mutual respect forms the bedrock of our relationships. We treat others as we ourselves wish to be treated, fostering an atmosphere of understanding, tolerance, and care.

In the spirit of our founder, Marcellin Champagnat, we hold a profound responsibility to care for those who are most in need. This spirit of compassion extends not only to our students but also to the broader community we serve. By demonstrating empathy and addressing the needs of our less fortunate peers, we aim to foster a sense of interconnectedness and solidarity among our students. Living empathy also inspires us to act with righteousness and encourages our young learners to cultivate integrity in all aspects of their personal, professional, and social lives.



By instilling a sense of moral values, we hope to shape individuals who will contribute positively to society and lead lives of purpose and dignity. In this way, we can build a better future and an environment where the rights of children and young people are respected.

Within our Marist spirit, we encourage our students to develop a genuine love for their work in all school activities. By nurturing a passion for learning, we hope to kindle their enthusiasm and dedication to achieving their full potential.

However, to succeed in our mission, we recognize the paramount importance of self-discipline. By emphasizing the observance of self-discipline, we equip our students with the tools to navigate challenges, overcome obstacles, and attain success in their academic and personal lives.

Understanding the realities of our students is central to our empathetic approach. For instance, rather than immediately resorting to punitive measures for a consistently late student, I chose to delve deeper into the underlying reasons for his tardiness. Through compassionate communication with the student and his parents, we found a resolution together that took into account the difficulties he faced in reaching the school since he had to travel several kilometers each morning. Understanding other people's realities and perspectives and acting accordingly is a great quality in our educational mission.



Listening is also an essential skill in the practice of empathy. By asking open-ended questions and attentively listening to our students, we can better understand their perspectives, challenges, and aspirations. This fosters a deeper connection and enables us to provide personalized support to meet their unique needs. Together, as a compassionate educational community, we can shape the lives of our students, empowering them to thrive and contribute meaningfully to society.

The opinions expressed in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Marist Institute.

If you would like to share your ideas, reflections, or experiences about servant and prophetic leadership with the Commission as a result of these reflections, write to fms.cimm@fms.it