
Formation for prophetic service: my life story

“The programs established have guided us and helped us find our way through the mountainous path of our history and have given us common objectives and content as well as a shared awareness of keeping Champagnat’s dream alive”

(Br. Chano Guzmán)

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I am a former Marist student and an educator for 33 years. I have a Master’s in Leadership and Management, and a Doctorate in Education. Married for 18 years to Ximena Gutiérrez Figueroa, I am the proud father of Martín Ernesto and Ángel José. I have been a teacher and Principal in Marist schools for almost 30 years, and 8 years ago the Brothers honored me by giving me the responsibility of the post of Delegate for Life and Mission in Chile, a part of the Marist Province of Santa María de Los Andes (Peru - Chile - Bolivia). I am honored to be here sharing my testimony!

How and when did God give me this call, which has led me to live and serve as a lay Marist?

This is a question that I have asked myself many times. I have been trying to answer it and discover at what specific moment in my life God showed his love by giving me such a singular and diverse way of living in community, in another family which is as much mine as my own family. Perhaps the opportunity given to me today to try to set down these feelings in black and white will allow me to formulate an answer. I am convinced that each stage in my life has helped my self-development and helped me acquire new personal, spiritual and leadership skills which today enable me to serve my Marist community.

My Marist formation began when I arrived at the age of 5 at my beloved Alonso de Ercilla Institute of the Congregation of Marist Brothers in Santiago, Chile. There I made my First Communion, received Confirmation, and married my beloved Xime in the same chapel where I was welcomed and taught how to join hands and pray to Mary. I have faces and lessons engraved in my heart, people and friendly hands that are generous of soul, who have accompanied me in the



joys and also in the most painful moments a family can experience, as when a child departs too soon for the house of the Father.

I discovered Marian spirituality and made it my own. This filled my life and that of my family, giving me a meaning, an identity and a purpose on my journey. We lay people have also listened to God's call, we have accompanied ourselves and the Brothers, and in the diversity of apostolates we have made Marcellin's charism our own, as a new way of living.

To be formed is to share dreams, faith, life and spirit. Together these build hope; this means going out with determination to meet young people, the Montagnes of today, to commit ourselves to love of work and fidelity to the mission, to be messengers of the Good News to others. It is a privilege to find meaning and purpose in a troubled, diverse and broken world, a paradox of universality, and this requires us to be prepared and formed.

This call from God, Brothers, has been an invitation to walk with you in the footsteps of Marcellin. And in this journey, together, we have been integrally formed; we have learned to lead ourselves and to lead with simplicity, wisdom and disinterested presence in the service which has fallen to us. We, the laity, are the fruits of good seed – in my case – those seeds arrived here, and germinated in this far corner of the world.

I have talked with many of them about everything, including God, who is that presence that is beyond any culture and is present in history in many ways. I have been able to open my heart in confidence (with faith), to set forth my ideas, without ceasing to be me, without ceasing to have an opinion and to believe in what I believe. I recognize that, although points of view are different, they have never stopped inviting me to be better, to be a dreamer about education, to be a servant with the smell of sheep.

Reflecting on my own history, I realize that it is a woven cloth, an indissoluble weave of the personal and the Marist, between what God wanted me to be, family values and this encouraging, seductive, demanding, comforting charism.



I received the gift of, very early on, having been invited by the Brothers to share important experiences and formative examples of great charismatic vitality promoted by the Marist Institute: with Brother Benito, in Chosica, in 1997, then with Br. Pedro Marcos, who appointed me a participant in the Inter-American Mission Commission representing the Southern Cone and led by Br. Emili Turú, who invited me to lead the Inter-American Sub-Commission on Education, which resulted in two international meetings (Florianópolis 2011 and Guadalajara 2013). From the work of the Sub-Commission and those meetings, the book “The Director and his Management at the Service of the Mission” was published, which contains a formative model for Directors. This allowed me to undertake the Master’s in Leadership and Management in collaboration with the Province of Central America and the Marist Universities of Lima and Guadalajara, a program that already has several cohorts of graduates. All these experiences and many others, were forming me as a lay Marist with deep adherence and commitment to the charism of our Founder.

In 2015, the Brothers set up a new milestone in the history of the Marists in Chile; entrusting to a layman the management and governance of the educational works of the country. This is a responsibility that honors me and that I try to respect by learning from my mistakes and following in the footsteps and wise advice of those who formed and preceded me. My greatest challenge has been to keep alive the flame of the charism that gives us the necessary unity to take on the challenges of the present and future. Today I can say with joy that this sense of Marist community in Chile is being achieved, calling everyone to live the charism in depth: the students, their families, the educators, the Principals and the former students.

As Delegate for Life and Mission in Marist Chile, I walk in community, under a collegial government, accompanied by Brothers and lay people, always seeking the unity in diversity that enriches and that day by day demands more and more: strength, serenity, conviction and courage in the style of Marcellin, to educate and form in the values of Jesus and his Gospel.

For this reason, formative spaces are crucial for preparing oneself and facilitating the development of intrapersonal and interpersonal skills or competencies if we want to have consistent leadership: (1) Analytical and innovative thinking; (2) Active and strategic learning; (3). Complex problem solving; (4) Critical thinking; (5) Creativity, originality and initiative; (6) Leadership and



social influence; (7) Use of technology; (8) Technology design and programming; (9) Resilience, tolerance of stress and flexibility; (10) Reasoning and problem solving.

I am comfortable promoting a servant-, collegial- and co-responsible- government, based on the principle of conscious, interdependent and lucid autonomy, inspired by Champagnat. I have made an effort so that we continue to grow in “evangelical transparency and educational efficiency”, I have tried to take good care of “our house” and “our family”, assigning - as in a home - the tasks and responsibilities of each one, so that they harmonize in the mission. Spirituality has given flavor and quality to the management. It fills me with joy and inner strength to know that our Marist Institute is the Marian face in the Church, because the faith that Mary incarnated, is what invites us every day to go out to new lands to sow the good seed, again and again, educating and opening up opportunities for the children and young people of today, especially the most needy. In Marist Chile, we are motivated to continue the task of sowing these seeds so that they may germinate in new lives, there in the most arid territories. We are also committed to motivate and seek - as a community - new religious and lay vocations.

And I return to the beginning, how and when did God make this call to me? ...I do not know, but I do know that he did... they are the ways of the Lord, unfathomable and mysterious, but always, always, luminous.

Thank you, Brothers and Lay Marists, for allowing me to be part of this Family and giving me the opportunity to walk together on this stretch of the road for the benefit of educating and evangelizing in the style of Mary and Champagnat.



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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