



LAY MARIST VOCATION

THE INTERNATIONAL FORUM PROCESS IS MOVING FORWARD

The process involved in Phase 4 of the International Forum on the Lay Marist Vocation is one of reflection and visioning, following the face-to-face meeting held in Rome last July 2023 [[see Bulletin Sharing 21](#)]

Building on the first agreements reached at that meeting, each of the reflection groups has had its own rhythm of working together, online. Little by little, they have been determining answers to the questions and aspirations that are part and parcel of their particular area.

Periodically there have also been meetings of all the

delegates of this phase 4 and of the members of the Extended Secretariat of the Laity, who are leading this whole process, with the presence and support of the link brothers from the General Council. At the last meeting, on 21 November 2023, each of the groups shared where they are up to in the process and progress made, and identified crucial questions and priorities to focus their work in the coming months.

The following are the specific themes on which each area and working group is focusing its reflections.



general administration

■ From Wednesday to Friday, Brother João Carlos do Prado, General Councillor, will take part in the meeting of the Provincial Councils of México Central and México Occidental in Guadalajara.

■ Brother Ángel Diego García, director of the Solidarity Secretariat, is visiting the Marist social works of Portugal this week, mainly in preparation for the country's Universal Periodic Review, which will be presented to the UN.

■ From Friday until Sunday, Brothers Ernesto Sánchez, Superior General, and Óscar Martín and Ken McDonald, General Councillors, will take part in the Provincial Chapter of Madagascar, which marks the beginning of Brother Alphonse Tiamaro's term as Provincial.

■ On Saturday, Brother João Carlos begins his pastoral visit to the Haiti sector of the Province of México Occidental.

Area 1: Identity, formation and accompaniment processes and bonding to the charism

The first area of reflection aims at building consensus around identity, processes of formation and accompaniment, and bonding to the charism of Marist laypeople. For this task, there are three groups, each working on one of the themes:

Group 1, made up of Ana Saborio (Central America), Br Damiano Forlani (Mediterránea), Elma Rafil (East Asia), Josmari Pauzer (Brasil Centro-Sul) and Marcos Broc (Brasil Sul-Amazônia), is working on the theme of “lay Marist identity and vocation”. More concretely, they are developing ideas on:

- Different ways of relating to the Marist charism.
- Clarification of terminology and language around the lay Marist vocation.
- Clarification of the identity, spirituality, shared life and mission of Marist laity.
- Reflection on the place and mission of lay Marist vocations in the context of the Marist charism and the Church.

Group 2, made up of Alida Bodomanitra (Madagascar), Ana Gómez (Mediterránea), Br. Jaime Comabella (Ibérica), Nathan Ahearne (Star of the Sea) and Pedro Martí (United States), is reflecting on the theme of “formation and accompaniment”, and is working on the following:

- Proposed criteria for guiding the growth and accompaniment of lay Marist vocations.
- Proposals for formation pathways (itineraries) at the local, province and international levels.
- Proposed methodologies and concrete tools for accompanying Marist laypeople in their personal vocational growth.
- Guidelines on financial and human resources for the formation and accompaniment of lay Marist vocations.
- Proposals for means of sharing experiences and formation and accompaniment practices in networks.

Group 3, made up of Rita Silva (Compostela), Br. Isidro Azpeleta (Santa María de los Andes), Christine Dispa-Lenertz (West Central Europe), Ana Sarrate (Ibérica) and Raúl Amaya (Santa María de los Andes), has focused its work on the theme of “bonding to the charism”, with the following tasks entrusted to it:

- Mapping of the different expressions of “bonding” of laypeople to the Marist charism.
- Clarification of terminology and language for a better understanding in our different languages and cultural contexts of the words “bonding, commitment and promise”.
- Consensus building on the “bonding” of laypeople to the Marist charism and its implications, discernment processes and specifics (criteria, aims, duration, responsibilities, province acceptance / welcome, public expression...).
- Guidelines to support and encourage the steps of lay people who feel called to follow a path towards “bonding”.

Area 2: Legal, canonical and/or civil structures

The members of the Area 2 reflection group on legal, canonical and/or civil structures are working in parallel, with focus groups of two or three people for various topics. They are Claudia Rojas (Norandina), Br John Bwanali (South Africa), Danai Anagnostopoulou (Hermitage), Sara Sánchez (Santa María de los Andes), Br Lisardo García (Compostela), Pep Buetas (Hermitage), Mark O’Farrell (Star of the Sea) and Manu Gómez (Mediterránea). The main tasks they have to address are:

- Design proposed model(s) of juridical structure(s) for the Marist laity that covers identity, nature, organisation, governance, patrimony, financing, operation, mission, aims, associates, links with the Institute...
- Guidelines with criteria for the development and implementation of civil and canonical structure(s) for Administrative Units and Regions.

In relation to the first task, concrete proposals will be made for canonical and civil structure(s) at the global level. This will involve the drafting of statutes for both structures.

The process will continue during 2024, with a calendar of virtual meetings and a face-to-face meeting in July to refine the proposal to be presented in Phase 5, during the Virtual Forum in November 2024, and subsequently to the General Council.

The Bureau of the Laity hopes that we will continue to listen deeply to the RUAH, the Spirit that continues to inspire and animate this journey. We hope that the dream of the prophet Joel, which has characterised the whole process of the Forum, be fulfilled: “Your sons and daughters shall prophesy” (Joel 3:1).

2 JANUARY

207TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE MARIST INSTITUTE

After visiting a dying boy on October 28, 1816, Saint Marcellin Champagnat decided that there was a need to found an order of teaching Brothers to provide a religious and academic education for the poor children of rural France. The first two young men to train as Marist Brothers joined Father Champagnat on January 2, 1817. This day has come to be known as the Foundation Day of the Marist Brothers.

At the General House, on January 2, the Brothers of the General Administration together with lay collaborators celebrated the 207th anniversary of this event. Here down you can read the **message of Br. Ernesto Sánchez, Superior General**, delivered at the end of the Mass.

"Happy New Year 2024! It is a joy to celebrate today, January 2, the 207th anniversary of the founding of our Marist Institute. It is a time to give thanks for the gift of the charism that has been given to us. And also to reflect on how we can live it and share it better in our days.

In this year 2024, in the month of April, we will celebrate 25 years since the Canonization of our Founder, St. Marcellin Champagnat. It encourages us to review how we live the Gospel values in the way Marcellin lived them.

Also this year, in the month of May, we will celebrate the bicentennial of the foundation stone of the house of Notre-Dame de l'Hermitage. A house built by Marcellin and the Brothers, together with the workers. A house founded on rock and next to a small river of living water. Symbols that animate our spirituality, fraternity and mission.

And also in this year, we will remember the 100th anniversary of the birth of Brother Basilio Rueda, Superior General from 1967 to 1985, a person of great dedication and support to the Institute in difficult times. With gratitude, we have initiated the process of his beatification.

And I conclude by quoting Pope Francis, at the Angelus yesterday, January 1. He speaks to us about Mary, who

is our inspiration and support as Marists of Champagnat:

"Today the Gospel reveals to us that the greatness of Mary does not consist in performing some extraordinary deed; rather, while the shepherds, having received the announcement from the angels, hurry towards Bethlehem (cf. Lk 2:15-16), she remains silent. The Mother's silence is a beautiful feature. It is not a simple absence of words, but a silence filled with wonder and adoration for the wonders that God is working. 'Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart', Saint Luke notes (2:19). In this way she makes room within herself for the One who was born; in silence and adoration, she places Jesus at the centre and bears witness to Him as Saviour. (...) Let us pray today to Mary Mother of God, and our Mother, that in the new year we may grow in this meek, silent and discreet love that generates life, and open paths of peace and reconciliation in the world."

Let us continue to walk together, listening to the voice of the Spirit, as the process of synodality invites us to do.

Happy Feast of the Marist Institute!"

Br. Ernesto, Superior General



WEST AFRICA

6 BROTHERS CELEBRATED THEIR FINAL PROFESSIONS IN IVORY COAST, CAMEROON AND TCHAD

In solemn ceremonies held respectively on the 23rd of December in Bouaké, Ivory Coast, the 28th of December in Bafut, Cameroon and on the 30th of December in Koumra, Tchad, six Brothers from the Marist Province of West Africa recently celebrated their final profession, marking a significant milestone in their lifelong commitment to service and education. They are Brothers Kouakou Alex, from Ivory Coast; Gueradi Takaki, from Chad; and Ndim Gilbert, Habig Wiyenyuy and Njuakom Augustine from Cameroon.

The Brothers living and working in these countries witnessed the celebration in their numbers as well

as parents, family members and students. The Provincial Superior for the Marist Province of West Africa, Br Cyprian Gandeebo received the vows of Brothers Alex and Destin in Ivory Coast and Tchad respectively, while Br Oliver Tata received that of Brothers Gilbert, Habib and Augustine on behalf of the Superior General.

The final profession of these six Brothers in the Marist Province of West Africa symbolizes not just the end of a discernment period but the beginning of a lifelong commitment to the Marist values of love, humility, and service.

We thank God for the gift of their vocations and we pray that through them, the Lord may call other young men to join them in the service of children and young people to whom we minister.



marist world

IVORY COAST: CELEBRATION OF THE FOUNDATION OF THE MARIST IN BOUAKÉ



PUERTO RICO: CELEBRATION OF THE FOUNDATION OF THE INSTITUTE IN GUAYNABO



MÉXICO OCCIDENTAL: FIRST PROFESSIONS OF BROTHERS ALBINO AND JESUS IN GUADALAJARA



MÉXICO CENTRAL: PROVINCIAL RETREAT IN MEXICO CITY



L'HERMITAGE: BROTHERS' MEETING IN THE MONASTIR DE LES AVELLANES



UNITED STATES: MARIST YOUTH MISSION CONFERENCE LAUNCH

MADAGASCAR

BROTHERS CELEBRATE FIRST AND FINAL PROFESIONS

On December 17, 2023, two Marist brothers made their religious vows in Alarobia Ambatomanga, a village about fifty kilometers from Antananarivo, the capital of Madagascar. They were Brother Ranaivo Andriamady Rivo Roger, who made his perpetual profession, and Brother Rabetombozandry Scolastique Vienei, who made his first profession.

The ceremony took place in the local Catholic church. Many faithful attended the mass celebrated for the occasion, in the presence of Brother Maminiaina Michel, Provincial of Madagascar, many other Brothers from various communities, lay and young Marists, friends and families of the two Brothers. The mass was presided over by the Vicar general of the Antananarivo diocese, assisted by three other Priests.

Brother Ranaivo Andriamady Rivo Roger was born in Alarobia Ambatomanga. He discovered the Marist Brothers thanks to a nun who helped him after he expressed his wish to become a Religious educator.

Brother Rabetombozandry Scolastique Vienei comes from the province of Antsiranana, in Andapa. He met the Brothers at the Saint Joseph Marist school in Antsiranana.



na. He was also inspired by the life of the Brothers, who are close to young people.

This ceremony was a time of joy and gratitude for the Marist Brothers of Madagascar, who celebrated the commitment of two of their confrères. It also served to strengthen the bonds between Brothers, laypeople, young people and families, who make up the Marist family.



BRASIL SUL-AMAZONIA BR. ÓSCAR MARTÍN'S PASTORAL VISIT

From November 18 to December 22, 2023, Brother Óscar Martín Vicario, General Councilor, made a canonical visitation of part of the Province of Brasil Sul-Amazônia, in the territory of the state of Rio Grande do Sul. The Amazon region will be visited in 2024. The purpose of the visit of the General Councilors to their regions of competence is to accompany the work done during the triennium and to have moments of formation and rapprochement with the brothers, collaborators and lay Marists on behalf of the General Government of the Marist Institute.

During his stay, Brother Óscar visited nine cities, passing through the mission institutions as well as the Brothers' communities in those places. The program included formative moments for Brothers and collaborators; dialogues with Brothers and Provincial Councilors; participation in the Provincial Council and other government meetings; inauguration of the Chapel of the Good Mother at the Provincial House of Porto Alegre; animation of the Provincial retreat and participation in the first profession of two Brothers.

For Brother Óscar, the experience of visiting the Province was full of blessings and discoveries: "I felt like a brother among brothers and I am sincerely grateful for the fraternal welcome. It was truly an opportunity to discover a Province full of vitality, but also with important challenges," he said. Among the highlights, the General Councilor underlines the Marist fraternal life and the generous commitment of the brothers and laity, as well as the commitment to carry out the mission in various educational and social areas. "Let us hope that the Province will have the courage Champagnat had to make



decisions and continue to make real its two priorities, which are centered on Marist identity and the care of life in solidarity," says Brother Óscar. The Provincial, Brother Deivis Fischer, reinforced the feeling of gratitude expressed by the General Councilor during the more than 30 days of living together: "It was a joy to receive the visit of Brother Óscar. It was a sign of unity with the Institute, of animation and of the closeness of the General Government to the Province. It was a fraternal and joyful presence that provokes us to be always very attentive to our life, vocation and mission, in fidelity to the foundational charism", affirmed Brother Deivis



MÉXICO OCCIDENTAL

BR. LUIS ENRIQUE APPOINTED PROVINCIAL FOR A SECOND THREE-YEAR TERM

Br. Ernesto Sánchez, Superior General, sent a letter to the Marists of México Occidental announcing that the General Council, after having studied the results of the survey carried out in the Province, has appointed Br. Luis Enrique Rodríguez Santana as Provincial for a second three-year term.

Br. Ernesto thanked Br. Luis Enrique for his generosity in accepting to continue in this service of leadership. He also thanked the Provincial Council and the different provincial animation teams for their work of animation during these three years.

Br. Luis Enrique's second term of office will begin with the celebration of the Provincial Chapter to be held from July 20-23, 2024.



Br. Luis Enrique Rodríguez Santana



Born on 2 July 1965, in Guadalajara, Mexico. Son of Salvador and Baudelia, he is the 14th of 16 siblings.

He began his Marist formation in the juniorate in

Tepatitlán, in 1978. He did the 2nd and 3rd years of his Juniorate in Loma Bonita, in Guadalajara. He also did his first year of Postulancy there. He did the other two years in Querétaro, while he was studying at the teacher training school. He did his Novitiate in Morelia and the Scholasticate in Querétaro and made his first religious profession on 6 July 1986.

Luis Enrique has a degree in Psychology.

He began his work as a Marist Brother in the community of Nuevo Laredo. Later he moved to the city of Aguascalientes. "I had the good fortune to begin my apostolate in

two communities with excellent Brothers. It was here, in Aguascalientes, that I made my definitive consecration on 20 July 1992."

The third community where he lived was in Mexicali. Here he worked in a school for children from humble families, three years as a teacher and six as director.

After nine years in Mexicali, he was asked to join the Vocation Ministry Commission, where he worked for eight years. During this time, he lived for three years in the Provincial House, for four years stayed with the young Brothers of the Scholasticate, and spent one year in the insertion community of Villa de Guadalupe.

From 2010 to 2019 he was on mission in Haiti, firstly in Jérémie and for the last five years in the city of Okay, where he shared his life in the formation of the young postulants who were interested in following in Marcellin's footsteps as Marist Brothers. "Here Life goes on and our God who is Love is who makes Life sing".

On his return to Mexico, he returned to being on the formation team in the Postulancy and Scholasticate of Guadalajara, and in 2021, when he was animator of the Postulancy community in Morelia, he was appointed provincial.

STAR OF THE SEA - TIMOR ORIENTAL ASPIRANCY PROGRAM CONCLUDES IN BAUCAU

For the past five months, 11 candidates to the Marist Religious Life from Timor Leste, from the Province Star of the Sea, have participated in the first stage of Marist initial formation in Baucau. The group has included a variety of young men from across Timor-Leste. Each aspirant brought his culture, language and gifts to the group, along with good questions and an openness to learn about the vocation of a Marist Brother.

Throughout the past five months a solid formation and study program have helped them to experience the Marist way of life. Studies in Scripture, Sacraments, Marist Pedagogy, spirituality, psychology and human development, life of the Founder, youth ministry (pastoral) and basic technology have provided them with a good grounding in the fundamental areas of learning, and weekly pastoral work at St Mary's school for hearing and speaking impaired children has allowed them to work with children with special needs.

The spiritual formation has included daily Mass and prayer, regular accompaniment, weekly choir for Tuesday morning Portuguese mass in the Cathedral, Friday evening Adoration, reflection mornings and a 3-day retreat.

Gradually, the individuals molded well to become a cohesive and inspiring group of aspirants. Their love of mu-



sic and natural capacity to laugh and enjoy each other's company and get to know the Baucau Brothers made the program a positive experience. Given the growing number of professed Timorese Brothers back in country, the aspirants were also able to observe the potential for Marist religious life among their own countrymen.

At the end of the program, eight aspirants have written to the Provincial, asking to take the next step as postulants, with letters of support from their formators. They have now received their letter of confirmation from Br Peter Carroll.

BRASIL CENTRO-NORTE FIRST PROFESSIONS AND PROVINCIAL RETREAT



From December 15-20, about 80 Brothers of the Province of Brasil Centro-Norte gathered in Mendes at the Marist House of São José das Paineiras, which celebrated its 120th anniversary in 2023. This year also marked the 20th anniversary of the foundation of the Province. One of the highlights of the retreat was the first profession, on the 20th, of Brothers Hiury Haffid and Levy Menezes, who had just finished their novitiate in Cochabamba.

The objective of the meeting was to enable reflection on mission and fraternity through Marist spirituality.

Two daily motivations were facilitated by Brothers Afonso Murad, Adalberto Amaral and Rafael Ferreira Junior.

The meeting was also marked by various celebrations: a tribute to the nine Jubilarian Brothers who celebrated 25, 50, 65, 70 and 80 years of consecrated Marist religious life in 2023; a thanksgiving for the 20 years of the Province; a celebration in memory of the deceased Brothers; and, on December 20, the celebration of the aforementioned first profession of the two new Brothers of the Province, Hiury and Levy. During the retreat, Brother Eduardo d'Amorim took the vows of stability and other brothers renewed their vows.



“Our Annual Retreat is an opportunity to return in a meaningful way to the Marist-Christian sources through joy, encounter and the common journey,” said Brother José de Assis Elias de Brito, Provincial.

BRASIL SUL-AMAZÔNIA YOUNG PEOPLE COMMIT TO CONSECRATED LIFE

Brothers José Francisco Souza da Silva and Thiago Gomes Bittencourt, from Brasil Sul-Amazônia, professed their first vows as Marist Brothers on December 9, in Veranópolis, in the Recanto Marista Medianeira, during the closing mass of the Provincial Meeting of the brothers, from December 8 to 9. They completed their novitiate stage at the Novitiate of the Region América Sur, in Cochabamba, Bolivia, along with other novices from the South American region.

“For me, the first Marist Religious Consecration symbolizes joy and dedication. Joy of being part of this global charismatic family, and commitment to the mission. I thank God, my family and my confreres for their support and encouragement,” said Br. José Francisco.

Renewal of votes and candidates

The Provincial Meeting of the brothers was also marked by the renewal of temporary vows of Brothers Alexandre do Nascimento Lima, Donavan Farias Machado, Enos da Silva Ângelo, Jean dos Santos Arcari, João Pedro Würzius Zambenedetti and Luciano Taminski; as well as Antônio Rai Costa de Menezes, who renewed his vows in the Marist Community of Boa Mãe, in Sinop.



Likewise, three young people, who concluded their postulancy, were sent to begin their next stage of initial formation at the Regional Novitiate of Cochabamba, in Bolivia: Antonio Mardson Souza da Silva, Bruno de Oliveira Fraga and Pedro Gabriel Farias dos Santos.

NIGERIA

A SIGNIFICANT STRIDE TOWARDS EMPOWERING THE GIRL CHILD IN NGOR OKPALA

On 8th December 2023 was inaugurated the Girl-Woman Initiatives for Sustainability and Education (G-WISE) Leadership Ambassadors Club for girls in the Marist Bicentenary College Ngor Okpala (MBCU), located at the heart of Umuota in Ngor Okpala. The club's formation aimed at not only to provide a platform for discussion but also to implement initiatives that promote education, health, and self-expression.

The Marist College is a full boarding school for both boys and girls. It is owned and managed by the Marist Brothers. The school was established in September 2020. Marist Brothers are known in Nigeria as experts in education and have been providing holistic education in Nigeria since 1965.

The inauguration of the Leadership Ambassadors Club for girls in the school marked a significant stride towards fostering, empowering, promoting equality, and creating supportive environment for the girl child.

The ceremony was held with enthusiasm and purpose, reflecting the school's commitment to nurturing not just academic excellence but also holistic development. The event kicked off with an inspiring address by the Dean of studies Mrs Magdalene Echefu, emphasizing the importance of creating spaces where young girls can thrive, voice out their aspirations, and contribute meaningfully to the society. Distinguished guests, educators, and parents also joined to champion the cause

of empowering the girl child and highlighting the pivotal role women play in shaping the society. The GWISE's mission, encapsulated in her emblem and motto, was unveiled during the ceremony by the founder and executive director of G-WISE, Mrs Nikky Nkeiruka Nzekwe. These symbols serve as visual representation of the values of empowerment, education, and unity that the club stands for. The air was filled with anticipation as

the girls, donned in the club's sashes, took an oath pledging to support each other to pursue knowledge, and break barriers. Throughout the inauguration, poignant stories and anecdotes were shared, underscoring the potential and resilience of young girls. The ceremony concluded with a heartwarming performance by the girls' dancing group, showcasing their talents and dexterity. The school echoed with the harmonious tunes of celebration, symbolizing the beginning of a journey where girls will be encouraged to pursue their ambitions.



The Inauguration of the GWISE Ambassador Leadership Club was not just a ceremonial event; it was a commitment to creating an environment where every girl feels empowered, valued, and equipped to face the world. As the club sets out on its journey, it is poised to become a catalyst for positive change for the female students of the school, inspiring them to embrace their potential and emerge as leaders in their own right.



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