
Gift and commitment: to serve

...in the care taken by the servant-first to make sure
that other people's highest priority needs are being served"

(Marist Voices, cap.1 – Br. Ben Consigli, Br. Luis Carlos Gutiérrez)

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I have been living for 38 years in this land of grace, Venezuela. At present, I am on a mission with Br. Dorindo and a great team of lay people in the school of Our Lady of Chiquinquirá in Maracaibo, the cradle of Marist life in this country. I emphasize the importance of continuing to be PRESENT among the children and young people in the classroom, in the children's and youth groups, with the families, directing the school ministry, and accompanying and offering significant experiences to the students so that they can find meaning in their lives by experiencing what God offers us in Jesus of Nazareth, in the Marist style.

I feel called, together with many Marists of Champagnat, to promote educational processes of evangelization, to lead, from selfless service, programs that help everyone to live fully in and from God.

In the context in which we live, there is an urgent need for people who are leaders who SERVE and who love. I understand that an "a Marist servant-leader" is a lay person or a Brother who is present, close, who welcomes and builds from diversity; he or she is a leader who listens, who knows how to look at the other person, who enables participation by all, who discerns with them, who questions and encourages, who is disinterested but who does not expect anything in return. A servant-leader looks with the other person and from their point of view.

A Marist leader lives to serve. We lay Marists and Brothers have been discovering our vocation and making our vocational journey, sharing with Marist men and women who lived serving quietly and with love; people who, with passion and compassion, were attentive to their "neighbors",

companions on the way, sharing the daily journey, with its joys and conflicts, without selfish interests of power, fame or possession.

It has been a journey where the Spirit has been present and active. It is God who has been encouraging each one of us to be open to his will and has made possible our generous response to the invitation of Jesus to follow him as Marists.

I thank God that we have not been alone. We have always had milestones that have marked our way in selfless service.

In a world where the focus is on individualism, efficiency, and consumerism, living God's plan in the Marist way is counter-cultural, conflict-producing, and joy-giving.

Making servant leadership a reality is possible if we are in God, who gives us his strength to live in gratuitous service, who accompanies us, who trusts us, who is always there.

We have someone to follow: Jesus. He has shown us the way and invites us to walk the path today, in our situation and in community. He tells us: "whoever wants to be first must be the servant of all. I have come to serve". He came to serve, to be a servant. He lowered himself, girded himself with a towel and washed feet. The apron remains a symbol of the Marist leader today.

And if we look at Mary of Nazareth we find her serving selflessly, as a response of love, as a response to what God was asking of her. At the Annunciation, she proclaims the Good News; at the Visitation she goes out to meet with faith and hope; at Nazareth she is attentive to Jesus; at Cana she is attentive to the needs of others; at Calvary she welcomes and forgives; and at the Upper Room she gathers and builds community.

And, if we look at Champagnat, we discover a man who knows he is loved by God and loves those with whom he lives. Marcellin allows himself to be touched by reality, he is attentive and gives himself completely and selflessly.





In today's situation, the urgency to be attentive to discovering emerging needs, to allowing ourselves to be touched by them and to respond with dedication and generosity resounds more and more in my heart. As Marists of Champagnat, we can only be significant in our society if we are united to the source of life, Jesus, and if we are coherent in our response to the calls that God makes to us in children and young people. These will be responses led by service; it will be a liberating leadership that invites us to leave the culture of the ego and promote the culture of selfless service.

Today we continue to hear the cries of people who, aware of the manipulation of many political leaders, of many leaders of economic power who use everything in order to have more, cry out for leaders who are focused on making sure that everyone lives with dignity, as brothers and sisters. Leaders are needed to make it possible for us to live happily, serving one another, trusting and believing in one another.

Each one of us has become what we are thanks to the fact that others have been reference-points on this journey. We were thrilled, and in love, with their way of life, their dedication, their closeness, their shared work, the availability of their time... almost, as the song says, as if we are so important "that if it doesn't have it (time), it creates it for you" (Gente luminosa).

Looking back, I recognise the support and input I have received from wonderful people with whom I have been journeying. I would like to thank God for each one of them: parents who knew how to share their daily lives and how to live, both within the family and outside, with hospitality towards someone in need, Brothers, companions on the journey, who share in fraternal life, a simple way of life, close to us, attentive to serving children and young people, parents and fellow-members of the educational community, lay men and women with whom I have had the opportunity of sharing life and mission as equals, with great understanding and patience, and who have helped me to value my identity as a Brother, a servant-Brother.



I am a practical, hard-working person who likes manual work. I would stress that my service has always been selfless, that I have been available for whatever was needed. In this last stage, my service is marked by listening and accompaniment.

Today Marist life needs more than ever leaders who are at the service of others: simple and working co-operatively and responsibly, humble, sharing their truth and welcoming the truth of others; modest, welcoming and accepting of difference and the different.

Yes, Lord! Chagnagnat Marists, lay people and Brothers, we are called to “serve first and foremost”: always putting others first, taking care of all the situations we encounter, without expecting anything in return. It is a surrender of everything, not of what we

have to spare. It is creating “time” for each other. It is the knowledge that no great events or commitments are necessary, but that it is built and demonstrated from the simplest things of everyday life.

May Jesus, Mary and Marcellin continue to encourage and transform our hearts towards giving and loving others, being helpful like them.



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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