



INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON THE LAY MARIST VOCAATION

STAGE II
July 2021 - June 2022

WELCOMING, NURTURING, LIVING AND SHARING OUR VOCATION.

Theme 0 - Anex 2
Opening and organization

LOCAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS GATHERINGS

INTRODUCTION WRITTEN BY THE SECRETARIAT OF THE LAITY

Dear Brother Provincials and District Leaders, members of the Provincial and District Councils, Provincial and District Team members for the formation of Marist Laypeople, formation leaders in the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family (CMMF) and other Marist lay groups and associations:

The Extended Secretariat of the Laity has chosen 19th March to launch the process of the International Lay Marist Vocation Forum because it is the date on which we celebrate the feast of St Joseph, the patron saint of Marists. Marcellin was deeply devoted to St. Joseph: "Who, after Mary, could better express all that we feel than St. Joseph, that great saint! (Letter 238).

It also coincides with Pope Francis' words of praise for him in the apostolic letter "Patris corde" where he dedicated this year 2021 to his devotion. He describes him as "a beloved father, a tender and loving father, obedient and accepting; a father of creative courage, a worker, always in the shadows". For Marists, St. Joseph is the self-sacrificing spouse, the father committed to his family, an exemplar of humility and absolute generosity, the educator of Jesus together with Mary. For us too, he is an attractive model for the laity from whom we can learn a lot.

The convocation of this International Forum is the result of a long lay Marist journey: from the first steps of the Champagnat Movement more than 35 years ago and the appearance of a number of subsequent expressions of the lay vocation; passing through the recognition of the vocation of lay Marists by the XXI General Chapter (2009); the valuable documents that continue to guide us on our journey and which are the fruit of the shared reflection of many laypeople and brothers: "Gathered around the



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same table" (2009) and "Being Lay Marist" (2017) and others specific to the CMMF such as the renewed "Project of Fraternity Life (2017); the organisation of various District, Provincial, regional and international meetings where we have reflected on the lay vocation; the creation of structures for the formation of laypeople in almost all the AUs and in the regions to create pathways for vocational growth; preparing lay leaders and formators to mentor others in their vocation in some Provinces; the current experience of some laypeople making formal commitments to the charism in some provinces; and examples of some kind of associative structure, as already exist in two provinces.

All the accumulated wealth of these years and the need to respond to the calls arising from the XXII General Chapter underscore the importance of engaging in a process of dialogue and discernment in the context of an International Forum. The Chapter stated that, "The future of the charism will be founded on a communion of fully



committed Marists", that "We need new structures and processes that recognize and support our distinctive vocational paths as Marists" and that "Each Administrative Unit develops a plan for promoting different forms of Marist life, including appropriate strategies for formation, accompaniment and belonging ...", among other declarations and suggestions. Further, initiative 2. 1.5 of the General Administration's Strategic Plan is: "To explore and consolidate forms of commitment, ways of belonging and charismatic associations, to share related reflections and experiences; to continue working with various groups and structures, such as the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family".

The Forum has as its motto "Welcoming, nurturing, living and sharing our vocation", made up of four actions characteristic of vocational growth in which the Spirit, each person and the community interact, dialogue and walk together in an ongoing process of discovery and development. It aims to show the importance of each moment and how they fit together in a gradual process of discipleship that impels us to be men and women for others, to go forth, to be brothers and sisters at the service of all. They also remind us of the words of Br. Ernesto Sanchez in his circular "Homes of Light" where he invites us to care for life and to generate new life. A biblical quotation is attached to the motto, taken from the book of Joel, "Your sons and daughters will prophesy", which reinforces the image of the future, of projection, of hope, of new generations who will continue Marcellin's charism. It emphasises prophecy understood as announcing a better future in a visionary way, denouncing injustice and oppression, and committing oneself to be faithful to the love that comes from God.

The International Forum will be a process of dialogue and discernment to which all Administrative Units are invited and which will run over four years. Our intention is to pro-

vide answers to a series of questions being asked by lay Marists in different parts of the world and which we have expressed in four major objectives. The results we arrive at and the agreements or consensus we reach will also be important, as they will help us to take concrete steps to live our lay vocation in a more conscious and committed way in the coming years.

The Brazilian Archbishop Hélder Câmara, was a person of reference for many Christians in the world, a fierce defender of Human Rights, a four-time candidate for the Nobel Peace Prize and someone whose life gave clear witness of a Christian committed to his people. He had a beautiful thought that he often used and that can inspire us today for this journey that we are about to undertake together:

**"When you dream alone, it is only a dream;
When you dream with others, it begins to come true."**

Our invitation to you is to dream with others, in a spirit of communion, in dialogue, in listening to the Spirit and to each other. To dream together so that sharing our vision of the future may itself be the beginning of what God wants for us. May this dream shared by thousands of Marists, lay people and brothers, help us to be what the Spirit is encouraging us to be: a Global Charismatic Family, united in the service of the Church and of all people.

Our Good Mother, Marcellin and so many brothers and lay men and women who have gone before us will be with us, sharing this dream, companions on our journey.

Fraternally,
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Secretariat of the Laity

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