

MARIST ASSOCIATION OF ST MARCELLIN CHAMPAGNAT



Growing the Spiritual Family
MARISTS FOR THE WORLD

THIS HANDBOOK BELONGS TO

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Foreword

The question that has led us to the Marist Association is a simple, yet profound one:

What is God asking of Marists in Australia today?

A similar question echoes across the Marist Institute in many parts of the world as it becomes attentive to imagining what 'Marist life' and 'Marist community' will look like in the future. The mission of bringing gospel hope to young people, especially those most distressed and marginalised, is unwavering. The question remains, though of:

Who in the future will deliberately and consciously bring witness to and lead these particular works of the Church?

Further, there is the challenge of growing belonging and identity within and between people who continue to be inspired by the dream and vision of Marcellin Champagnat and the early Brothers, and embrace God's mission with Marian hope, joy and audacity. The question is something like:

How do we build and lead life-giving, meaningful and Christ-centred community between all committed Marists in the future?

If we peel back another layer, there continues to be a yearning for spiritual nourishment and deepening that helps us to understand our participation and contribution to Marist mission and life in broad context of the mission and life of the Church. So a further question is along the lines of:

How do we best provide and resource the nurturing of our spirituality and develop a culture of spiritual formation?

The offering that follows is what will be formally known as the Initial Formation Program for members of the Marist Association, titled: *Growing the Spiritual Family - Marists for the World*. Those who shared in writing the program have provided for us a way of exploring the core questions named above. The six modules are separate, yet connected. The intention is for them to be a source of reflection that will fuel rich dialogue between Marists. The hope is that by doing so, we engage both our imagination and tradition to discover our future together.

I pray that the pages of this Initial Formation Program become tattered and coffee stained with use, and that throughout the shared experience, we continue to listen to God's invitation within us and among us.

God bless,

Joe McCarthy
Deputy Leader of the Marist Association of St Marcellin Champagnat



Christian Discipleship

GROWING A PROPHETIC CULTURE

Christian Discipleship

GROWING A PROPHETIC CULTURE

CONSIDER

The story of our spirituality is one of passion and compassion, passion for God and compassion for people (*WFR, n1*).

Our primary Marist Spirituality document, *Water from the Rock (WFR)*, sets the tone from the very beginning of the document. Marist Spirituality is grounded in the practical, the reality of life, the apostolic way.

Marcellin had fallen in love with God, he felt called by Mary. The Fourvière Pledge was a renewed way of being church, in Mary's way, the Marian Church.

Marcellin and the first Marists were unpretentious country lads, living by the work of their hands. Marcellin was deeply aware of the love of Jesus and Mary for others. He dedicated his life in sharing this love. In the encounter of the dying boy (Montagne) we see how disturbed Marcellin was to meet a child facing the end of their life without knowing the love of God. (*WFR, n8*).

Marcellin's apostolic nature sets our example: caring for the poor, practical works, courageous in times of adversity, willing to take action, humble and simple, and trust in God and Mary.

Put simply, our Marist Spirituality is categorised by:

God's presence and love
Trust in God
Love of Jesus and His gospel
In Mary's way
Family Spirit
A Spirituality of Simplicity
(*WFR, n16-41*)

What do these mean to you and how do you see these being lived in your place of ministry?



CONTEMPLATE

In living our spirituality we find our thirst quenched at the streams of "living water." In turn we become "living water" for others (*WFR, n14*).

Former Superior General, Br Charles Howard, wrote,

"The ultimate source of our spirituality is God"

Our spirituality embraces all that we are, all the elements that go to make up our living (joys, sorrows, dreams, struggles, successes, failures). Its formative agents are our parents, family, friends, teachers and a multitude of other influences, including the messiness of life – for example, family responsibilities, conflicting demands on time, the reality of day to day living. (Howard, 2001).

Our spirituality is drawn from those before and those around; we in turn become models for others. Jesus is our ultimate model; which is the essence of discipleship.

Our Marist discipleship is passionately centred on Christ (GAST, n104) which sets a profound challenge, requiring conversion and transformation. It is framed around our "mission", which is "to make Jesus Christ known and loved" (WFR, n19).

Marist discipleship is a way of living Christian discipleship, where Christian discipleship means following Jesus' way. Franciscan theologian, Richard Rohr, 2012, points out..

**"Jesus did not say Worship Me.
Jesus said Follow Me".**

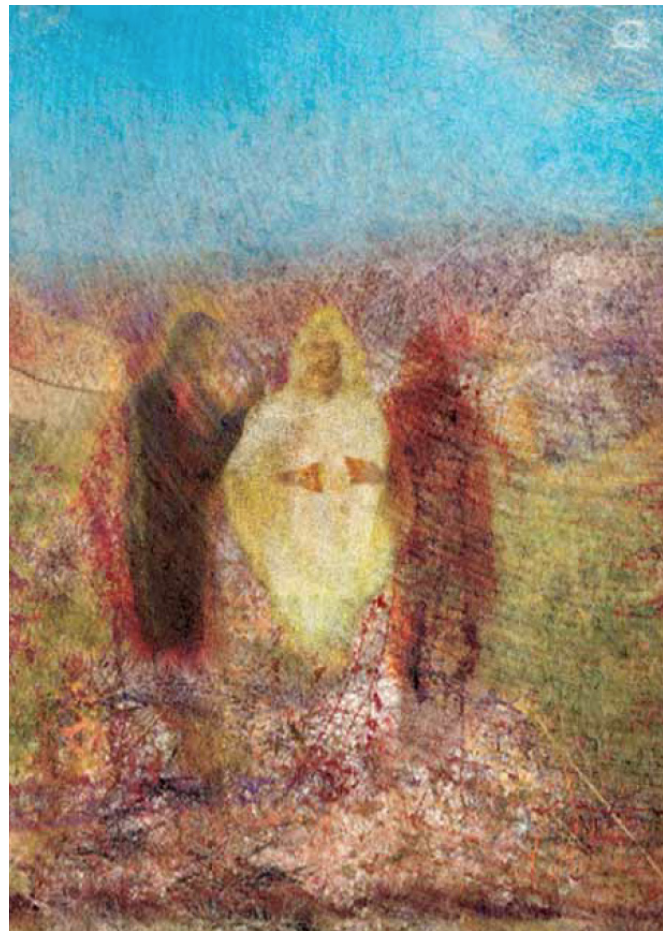
But it is not easy to follow Jesus. It is not meant to be easy! So what are the conditions of this Discipleship?

The "Conditions of Discipleship" are about conversion and transformation, the concept of dying to oneself in order to grow and have life, and have it abundantly (John 10:10).

Let's contemplate the following extract from Br Charles Howard:

St Teresa of Avila, a woman full of wisdom and great human qualities, was a mystic also and she had a vision in which it seems that the devil was there in the guise of Christ. She confronted the devil and when he asked her how she knew that it was not Christ, she said, "You didn't have any wounds. Christ has wounds". Christ has wounds and so must his disciples. Jesus was very clear about this and he frequently insisted on it.





IMITATE

There are numerous parables and stories where Jesus spoke of discipleship (eg. The Good Shepherd [(Jn10), Parable of the Rich Young Man [Mt19]); but the simplest is often the best...

**"Love one another. As I have loved you.
By this will everyone know that you are
my disciples, if you love one another"
(John 13:34)**

Marcellin connected strongly with this in his Spiritual Testament to his Brothers.

Dear Brothers, I beg of you with all the love of my heart ... love one another as Jesus has loved you .. have the world say of the Little Brothers of Mary, what they said of the first Christians "See how they love one another!" (Furet, 1989)

Let us look at what this discipleship might mean in our lives and our ministries.

Radical Discipleship: Thomas Merton (1996):

“Do not depend on the hope of results. When you are doing the sort of work you have taken on, essentially an apostolic work, you may have to face the fact that your work will be apparently worthless and even achieve no result at all, if not perhaps results opposite to what you expect. As you get used to this idea, you start more and more to concentrate not on the results but on the value, the rightness, the truth of the work itself. And there too a great deal has to be gone through, as gradually you struggle less and less for an idea and more and more for specific people. The range tends to narrow down, but it gets much more real. In the end, it is the reality of personal relationships that save everything. All the good that you will do will come not from you but from the fact that you have allowed yourself to be used by God’s love. Think of this more and gradually you will be free from the need to prove yourself, and you can be more open to the power that will work through you without your knowing it.”

DIALOGUE

1. To what extent is Merton’s statement true to you in your work/life experience?
2. How are we living Marist Spirituality in our local community?
3. What do you see as the challenges of living in Christian Discipleship?

CLOSING PRAYER

Let us now turn to scripture to reflect upon the call to discipleship.

As you are listening to this passage, reflect on a word or phrase that speaks to you. Sit in a relaxed position, close your eyes, slow down your breathing and listen to what is stirring within. Spend time contemplating the words and listening to what God is saying to you in this moment.

The Inescapable God

Psalm 139: 1-18, 23-24

New Revised Standard Version



O Lord, you have searched me and known me.
You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from far away.
You search out my path and my lying down,
and are acquainted with all my ways.

Even before a word is on my tongue,
O Lord, you know it completely.
You hem me in, behind and before,
and lay your hand upon me.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is so high that I cannot attain it.
Where can I go from your spirit?
Or where can I flee from your presence?
If I ascend to heaven, you are there;
if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.

If I take the wings of the morning and
settle at the farthest limits of the sea,
even there your hand shall lead me,
and your right hand shall hold me fast.

If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me,
and the light around me become night,"
even the darkness is not dark to you;
the night is as bright as the day,
for darkness is as light to you.
For it was you who formed my inward parts;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.

I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works; that I know very well.
My frame was not hidden from you,
when I was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.
Your eyes beheld my unformed substance.
In your book were written all the days that were formed for me,
when none of them as yet existed.

How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God!
How vast is the sum of them!
I try to count them — they are more than the sand;
I come to the end — I am still with you.
Search me, O God, and know my heart;
test me and know my thoughts.
See if there is any wicked way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting.

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The image shows the interior of a Gothic cathedral, characterized by its soaring height and intricate stonework. Tall, slender columns support a series of pointed arches that create a sense of verticality and lightness. The lighting is dramatic, with a warm, golden glow emanating from a light source in the upper left, casting long shadows and highlighting the textures of the stone. The upper right portion of the image is bathed in a cool, blue light, creating a stark contrast with the warmer tones. The overall atmosphere is one of grandeur and spiritual depth.

The Association Model
RENEWING THE CHURCH

The Association Model

RENEWING THE CHURCH

CONSIDER

In March 2016, the Marist Association Council reflected on the deep yearnings and hopes of the members of the Association, to establish some priorities and directions for the coming 30 months (the period of the current Council's Term). The vision that emerged, written as a brief statement at the beginning of the document says:

We Marists are a vital faith community, an expression of Church that embraces God's mission with Marian joy, hope, and audacity.

Our discipleship of Jesus Christ and the priorities of all of our ministries are inspired by the Gospel passion and compassion which fired Saint Marcellin.

We remain attentive to the God of all life, and we are committed to nurturing our spirituality through ongoing formation.

We draw on both Marist tradition and imagination to be game-changers for young people, particularly those most on the peripheries.

We foster connectedness and communion among ourselves as an Association, with the Marist spiritual family around the world, and with the wider Church of which we are part.

Members of the Marist Association will make up a canonical body in the Church, responsible for bringing energy, vision and leadership to the works in Australia that flow from St Marcellin's dream and charism.

The people who are part of the Association also seek to build community and connection with each other, to share the life of a spiritual family – the Marist expression of Christian life in the Church.

PURPOSES OF THE MARIST ASSOCIATION

1. *The Association provides a spiritual family within the Church for people committed to living the Gospel of Jesus, with Mary as their inspiration, in the style of St Marcellin Champagnat.*
2. *The Association seeks to continue the core mission of the Institute of making Jesus Christ known and loved, in the way of Mary, and bringing hope to the youth of today.*
3. *As a public association, the Association conducts the religious and education ministries of the Institute as the Institute decides, with the right to establish and suppress apostolic works in accordance with canon law and these Statutes in the name of the Church.*
4. *The Association brings together a group of vocationally minded people who are responsible for the life of the wider group of people who are in some way connected to Marist mission and life across the Institute and includes all the Brothers and their affiliates, people who self-identify as Marists, people who work in Marist ministries, members of the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family, people who volunteer in or contribute in other ways to Marist ministries.*

5. The Association seeks to ensure vitality and viability for all Marist ministries, through a body of faith-filled people who embrace the Marist expression of Christian life in the Church. It is imbued with the values, spirituality and charism of St Marcellin Champagnat as nurtured and passed on by the Institute today as in the past.
6. The Association seeks to provide and bear witness to an experience of Church community that is Marian, Eucharistic, faith focused, mission driven, and inclusive.

(Taken from the International Statutes for the Marist Association of St Marcellin Champagnat).

In the list of purposes that were used in the canonical statutes, is there one that names something of why you are passionate about being Marist?





CONTEMPLATE

Communion was named as part of the vision at the beginning of this module: *We foster connectedness and communion among ourselves as an Association, with the Marist spiritual family around the world, and with the wider Church of which we are part.* Pope John Paul II wrote an Apostolic Letter in 2001 that named the challenge of the 'communion' aspect of the Church.

John Paul II - Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 2001

To make the Church the home and the school of communion: that is the great challenge facing us in the millennium which is now beginning, if we wish to be faithful to God's plan and respond to the world's deepest yearnings. (n43).

Communion must be cultivated and extended day by day and at every level in the structures of each Church's life. There, relations between Bishops, priests and deacons, between Pastors and the entire People of God, between clergy and Religious, between associations and ecclesial movements must all be clearly characterized by communion...

The spirituality of communion, by prompting a trust and openness wholly in accord with the dignity and responsibility of every member of the People of God,

supplies institutional reality with a soul.
(n45).

Therefore the Church of the Third Millennium will need to encourage all the baptized and confirmed to be aware of their active responsibility in the Church's life. Together with the ordained ministry, other ministries, whether formally instituted or simply recognized, can flourish for the good of the whole community, sustaining it in all its many needs: from catechesis to liturgy, from the education of the young to the widest array of charitable works...

Along these same lines, another important aspect of communion is the promotion of forms of association, whether of the more traditional kind or the newer ecclesial movements, which continue to give the Church a vitality that is God's gift and a true "springtime of the Spirit" (n46).

Reflection

How will having a Marist Association improve our ability to 'be faithful to God's plan and respond to the world's deepest yearnings' (n43)?

What is your sense for how a 'spirituality of communion' will provide the Association structure with a 'soul' (n45)?

How do we nurture this spirituality of communion into the future?

David Ransom (2015), in an article discussing the passing on of charism and works from religious congregations to new groups of people, raises the following points:

'a creative tension between the originating memory of the institution and the personal sense of mission that our new leaders can develop out of their own spirituality'..

'formation must acknowledge, respect and encourage this sense of spirituality and mission with which people enter...we need to engage the spirituality that people bring



with them in such a way that they deepen their appreciation of its significance in their life and work, and mature in their use of it as the primary source of their sense of mission'..

'when people have a developed and conscious sense of the common good of society, a mature focus on service and on sacrifice for the well-being of others, an informed vision of what makes for a truly human life, a recognition of personal vocation in what they are doing and hence of their contribution to the common good, and a recourse to sources deep within themselves which sustain them in their vision of life, then our institutes have every prospect of being truly enlivened with mission, precisely out of the spirituality that people bring with them into our organisations'.

(The Ministry of Governance – developing the theological competencies to steward the mission)

IMITATE

*We Marists – Priorities and Hopes
2016 - 2018 Document*

“We foster connectedness and *communio* among ourselves as an Association, with the Marist spiritual family around the world, and with the wider Church of which we are part.’

We are called to be in ‘Communion’ with one another as Marists.

‘Like Mary we build and lead communities in ways that are Christ-centred: relational, inclusive, hope-filled, and invitational’

“We believe the charism of Marcellin is a gift given to the Church and to the world, a gift which we are being invited to further develop and live by progressively deepening our participation in this charism.
(WFR, n13).

DIALOGUE

If we look back on our lives and are truly honest, we have to admit that of all the invitations that God has sent us, we’ve probably accepted and acted on only a fraction of them.

There have been countless times we’ve turned away from an invitation. For every invitation to maturity we’ve accepted, we’ve probably turned down a hundred. But that’s the beauty and wonder of God’s richness. God is not a petty creator and creation, itself, is not a cheap machine with barely enough energy and resources to keep it going.

God and nature are prodigal. That’s plain everywhere. Millions and millions of life-giving seeds blow everywhere in the world and we need only to pick up a few to become pregnant, fecund, capable of newness, maturity, and of producing life.

(Rolheiser, 2006)

1. What are some of your spiritual convictions?
2. What would be different if you were to deepen your appreciation of the significance of your spirituality in your life and work?
3. What would you name as the ‘work to be done’ to make our dream of *communio* become tangible and real?

CLOSING PRAYER

The Father knocks at my door
seeking a home for his son:
Rent is cheap, I say.
I don't want rent. I want to buy, says God.

I'm not sure I want to sell,
but you might come in and look around.
I think I will, says God.
I might let you have a room or two.
I like it, says God, I'll take two.
You might decide to give me more some
day.
I can wait, says God.

I'd give you more,
but it's a bit difficult. I need some space for
me.

I know, says God, but I'll wait. I like what I
see.
Hm, maybe I can let you have another
room.
I really don't need that much.

Thanks, says God, I'll take it. I like what I
see.

I'd like to give you the whole house
but I'm not sure –

Think on it, says God, I wouldn't put you
out.
Your house would be mine and my son
would live in it.
You'd have more space than you'd ever
had before.

I don't understand at all!

I know, says God, but I can't tell you about
that.
You'll have to discover it for yourself.
That can only happen if you let him have
the whole house.

A bit risky, I say.
Yes, says God, but try me.

I'm not sure –
I'll let you know.

I can wait, says God. I like what I see.

(Margaret Halaska OSF, Covenant)

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Availability to Each Other

COMMUNION - THE SPIRITUAL FAMILY

Availability to Each Other

COMMUNION - THE SPIRITUAL FAMILY

CONSIDER

As Marists we all have a unique understanding of what it means to be in communion. We understand and experience communion every day, in our families and in our working communities.

Our local Marist groups promote communion through the sharing of faith, by the hospitality we share when we gather, and the way we carry out our apostolic tasks. They offer a new way to live the Marist charism with others.

This new communion is clearly grounded in our past and has its foundations in Marcellin's spirituality which calls us to relationships with one another.

Our Marist Spirituality texts speak of communion as a lived experience and expression. We read:

"To live the Marist charism with others is to live an experience of communion. People reach their full potential in so far as they enter into a relationship of communion. The quality of that communication conditions the quality of our existence and the lives we lead. We need one another." (Secretariat of the Laity, 2012).

"When [a local group] looks upon itself as a community it sees that it is more an

organizing or sponsoring entity. In any group that seeks to build a community, discernment, dialogue, listening and communion take center stage. Its members experience beforehand what they intend to promote. They put into practice beforehand what they want to proclaim. They create space for sharing their lives, significant times of prayer and opportunities to demonstrate their mutual care and support." (Secretariat of the Laity, 2012).

Our uniqueness stems from the Marial qualities that we bring to our relationships. Since the time of Marcellin, his disciples have made Mary known and loved. Today [as Marists] we continue to be convinced that to follow Jesus in the way of Mary is a privileged way of bringing our Christian journey to fullness. (WFR, n28).

Each of us is related by our Baptism from which we all started our journey of faith. During this journey we have gained a variety of companions, some related to us through faith and some through traditions. To be Marist means to be in relationship; we can't do it or be it alone.

In light of these comments, reflect on your experience of communion and share your thoughts.



CONTEMPLATE

As Marists we embody a spirit and attitude of welcoming. When we gather, we are in a privileged space where we can allow ourselves and others the opportunity to be who God created us to be, free from judgement and open to the spirit.

The Lay Marist vocation was acknowledged and encouraged at the XXI Marist Brothers' General Chapter in 2009. At that time we knew the Spirit was inviting us to live in a new communion of Brothers and Lay. Today we know that we need each other to strengthen our Marist identity, as well as our specific identities, and to live the Marist charism together in a Marian Church.

The Spirit is inviting us to live in a new communion of Brothers and Lay Marists. (XXI General Chapter)

Communion is about relationships.

People sharing in the same spiritual journey

A sharing of wisdom, rituals and experience

Vocation – a call from God and our personal response to it

We recognise that this new spirit of communion calls for many elements including:

- dialogue
- spirituality
- experimentation
- invitation
- the common good
- patience in the process
- consistency
- passion
- risk
- challenge
- faith and trust
- call to be mystics and prophets
- experiences of life
- necessary structures

What do these mean to you and how do you see these being lived out in your life and/or place of ministry?



IMITATE

Romans 12:3-13
Gifts of Grace

For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of themselves more highly than they ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in their teaching; the one who exhorts, in their exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.



In this scripture, St Paul invites us to acknowledge that:

Our [community] has many members

Each member of our [community] is important.

Each member of our [community] depends on other members.

St Paul is saying that in belonging to the body, we belong to each other and we all have some kind of giftedness which enables us to serve others.

He suggests that our gifts help us to locate our niche, our role in our own and others' lives and he asks us to play to our gifts and find the area of service to which God might be calling us.

We are truly in communion, when we understand that by connecting with Christ we are connecting with each other.

DIALOGUE

Local groups are privileged formation spaces for their members where we can share God's presence in our lives, where we can pray together, help each other to become better people and provide ways to be of service to others.

Whatever the members of a community do – working, struggling for justice, serving society, praying or sharing meals and relaxation together – we recognize the blessings of God. We are blessed with the gift of life and with companions for our mission and our life's journey. (*WFR, n106*).

1. Personally, how do you see yourself growing your Marist identity?
2. As Marists what do we need to do to grow this new communion?
3. All relationships bring challenges and gifts. What might be some of these facing your local community as you move to keep the Marist tradition alive into the future?

Reflect on some of your struggles and joys in your experiences of community.



CLOSING PRAYER

In the words of Pope Francis:

...a community is more than the sum total of persons that belong to it. It is the place where one learns to love, it is the natural centre of human life. It is made up of faces, of people who love, dialogue, make self-sacrifices for one another and defend life, especially of the most vulnerable and the weakest. (*Beliefs and Teachings, 2015*)

Let us help one another to make it possible to “stake everything on love”. Let us help one another at times of difficulty and lighten each other’s burdens. Let us support one another. Let us be families which are a support for other families. (*Beliefs and Teachings, 2015*).

In the words of our Founder, “...see how they love one another”.

Acknowledge a word or phrase that speaks to you and reflect upon it for some minutes.

Amen

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Mary's Work, Mary's Way

A DOORWAY INTO GOD'S MISSION



Mary's Work, Mary's Way

A DOORWAY INTO GOD'S MISSION

CONSIDER

From the very beginning the aims and objectives of the Society of Mary were clear: 'the Marists understood their Project to be a sharing in Mary's work of bringing Christ-life to birth and being with the Church as it came to be born.' (WFR, n11)

St Marcellin Champagnat had a deep love and devotion for Mary. He was fond of saying, 'Where you find Mary, there you find Jesus' and this is expressed in the motto he chose for the Brothers, 'All to Jesus through Mary, and all to Mary for Jesus'.

The Marist story begins when a group of twelve - eight newly ordained priests and four seminarians - came together at the Chapel of Our Lady of Fourviere in Lyon on 23rd July 1816 and promised to work at creating a new religious order in the Church: the "Mary-ists", whose work in the church would be dedicated to Mary. This Society of Mary tried to emulate and model themselves on the life and work of Mary. For them this way of living the Gospel answered some of the spiritual needs of their post-Revolution world and was a definite response to a hierarchical and patriarchal Church.



The Fourviere Pledge

All for the greater glory of God and the greater honour of Mary, Mother of the Lord Jesus.

We the undersigned, striving to work together for the greater glory of God and the honour of Mary, Mother of the Lord Jesus, assert and declare our sincere intention and firm will of consecrating ourselves at the first opportunity to founding the pious congregation of Mary-ists.

That is why by the present act and our signatures, in so far as we can, we irrevocably dedicate ourselves and all our goods to the Society of the Blessed Virgin.

We do this not childishly or lightly or for some human motive or the hope of material benefit, but seriously, maturely, having taken advice, having weighed everything before God, solely for the greater Glory of God and the honour of Mary, Mother of the Lord Jesus.

We pledge ourselves to accept all sufferings, trials, inconveniences, and if needs be, torture, because we can do all things in Christ Jesus who strengthens us and to whom we hereby promise fidelity in the bosom of our holy mother the Roman Catholic Church, cleaving with all our strength to its supreme head the Roman Pontiff and to our most reverend bishop, the ordinary, that we may be good ministers of Jesus Christ, nourished by the words of faith and by the wholesome teaching which by his grace we have received.

We trust that under the reign of our most Christian kind, the friend of peace and

religion, this institute will shortly come to light and we solemnly promise that we shall spend ourselves and all we have in saving souls in every way under the very august name of the Virgin Mary and with her help.

And may the holy and immaculate conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary be praised.

Amen.

What strikes you most about the pledge?

What is the significance of this pledge for Marists today?



CONTEMPLATE

Mary inspired in the first Marists a new vision of being Church which was modeled on that of the first Christians. This Marian Church has the heart of a mother: no one is abandoned. A mother believes in the goodness at the core of a person and forgives readily. We are respectful of each one's personal journey. There is a place for those with doubts and spiritual uncertainty. There is listening and dialogue. (WFR, n114).

It is these traits which form the core characteristics of our Marist spirituality and mission. The Society of Mary was established to help renew the Church in a particular Marian way where she is always seen in relationship to Jesus, to the church and to the contemporary world.



What for you are the principal characteristics of a Church with a Marian face?



IMITATE

Luke 1:26-38

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you." But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God." Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

Gospel Reflection from 'He gave us the Name Mary' - Br Emili Turu

In the story of the Annunciation 'Mary shows us the way to follow; Mary of the silence, of the acceptance, of the attentive listening. She who treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart. We absolutely need to pray, and to pray as Marists. And the way that Mary teaches us is that of contemplation: abandonment, like a child in its mother's arms. This active abandonment, opens the heart to people and events, allowing it to be touched very deeply by them, just like Mary, who tried to discern in all this the footprints of the God of surprises. By this way we turn ourselves into contemplatives in action. Only if we know how to dedicate specific times to silence, to personal prayer, to contemplation, will our eyes be opened to reality in a new way: everything is the same but everything is different. How are we going to develop this mystical dimension of our life? By paying the necessary price for it to sprout, grow, flower: to keep silence, dedicate time to contemplation, to attentive listening to the Word, to the celebration of the faith... with patience and constancy, without pretention.

DIALOGUE

Mary shows us, like she showed Marcellin, that the only way to bring about God's Kingdom here on earth is to allow God to work in and through us. She urges us to help those in need or marginalised and to bring the charism of Marcellin and the essence of Marist Spirituality to the service of all, especially "to lead young people to know and love God in the way of Mary, in the belief that they all can become good Christians and good citizens". (Letter 273, 1839)

1. What does Mary teach us about discipleship in the story of *the Annunciation*?
2. How do you personally show this Marian face of the church in your life and ministry?
3. What do you see as the challenges of living with a Marian face?



CLOSING PRAYER

Be still and allow the words/phrases/images to speak to you. In this stillness listen to what God is saying to you.

The Marian Church by Francois Marc, SM.

The Marian Church follows Mary into the mountains, going off with her to encounter life; she visits men and women and, though things may seem to be sterile, she is on the watch for what is coming to birth, for possibilities, for the life which beats in things.

The Marian Church rejoices and sings. Instead of bemoaning its fate and the world's woes, she is in wonder at the beauty there is on the earth and in the human heart, as she sees what God is doing there.

The Marian Church knows she is the object of a gratuitous love, and that God has the heart of a mother. She has seen God on the doorstep, on the lookout for the improbable return of a son; she has seen him throw his arms around his neck, place the festal ring on his finger, and himself organise the home-coming feast. When she pages through the family album, she sees Zaccheus in his sycamore, the woman taken in adultery, the Samaritan woman, foreigners, the lepers, beggars and a common prisoner at his place of execution. So you see, the Marian Church despairs of no one, and does not quench the smoking flax. When she finds someone on the side of the road wounded by life, she is moved by compassion, and with infinite tenderness tends their wounds. She is the safe harbour, who is always open, the refuge of sinners, "mater misericordiae", mother of mercy.

The Marian Church does not know the answers before the questions are posed. Her path is not traced out in advance. She knows doubt and unease, night and loneliness. That is the price of trust. She takes her part in the conversation, but makes no claim to know everything. She accepts that she must search.

The Marian Church lives in Nazareth in silence and simplicity. She does not live in a castle. Her home is like all the other homes. She goes out to chat with the other villagers. She weeps with them, she rejoices with them, but she never preaches to them. Above all she listens.

The Marian Church stands at the foot of the Cross. She does not take refuge in a fortress or in a chapel or imprudent silence when people are being crushed. She is vulnerable in her deeds as in her words. With a humble courage she stands alongside the most insignificant.

The Marian Church lets in the wind of Pentecost, the wind which impels one to go out, which unties tongues. In the public square, not for the sake of hammering doctrine, nor to swell her ranks, she proclaims her message: the promise has been kept, the fight has been won and the Dragon crushed forever. And this is the great secret which she can only murmur: to win the victory God has laid down his arms. True, we are in an intermediate time, the time of human history. And that history is a painful one.

Brothers and sisters, let us belong to this people. Let us make a place for Mary in our home.

Amen.

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SERVING THE YOUNG PEOPLE OF TODAY

Our Gift to the Church



Our Gift to the Church

SERVING THE YOUNG PEOPLE OF TODAY

CONSIDER

"in the way of Mary, bringing hope to the youth of today"

As Marists 'our Marist charism prompts us to be attentive to the calls of our time, to the longings and preoccupations of people, especially the young. Surpassing religious and cultural borders we seek the same dignity for all: human rights, justice, peace, and equitable and responsible sharing of the planet's wealth.' (WFR, n128).

We are called to do this in a Marian way for 'Just as she did for Marcellin Champagnat and the first brothers, Mary inspires the model of the Church that we offer to youth, a Church modeled on that of the first Christians, "This Marian Church has the heart of a mother: no one is abandoned. A mother believes in the goodness at the core of a person, and forgives readily. We are respectful of each one's personal journey. There is a place for those with doubts and spiritual uncertainty, a place for all. There is listening and dialogue. Challenge and confrontation are done with honesty and openness.'" (Evangelizers in the Midst of Youth, n97).

What is your initial response to this?



Let us spend some time looking at a collage of issues, taken from the **Mission Australia Youth Survey 2015**, which relates to young people today.

MISSION AUSTRALIA | together we stand

Youth Survey 2015



Alcohol & drugs was the most important issue in Australia today for the first time (27.0% in 2015, 22.1% in 2014 and 18.7% in 2013)

1 in 4

people indicated that **equity & discrimination was an issue of national importance**

1 in 5

young people highlighted that **the economy and financial matters was a key issue in Australia today**

Just over half of respondents indicated **high levels of confidence in their ability to achieve work/study goals**

10.3% indicating they were **extremely confident**

40.3% indicating they were **very confident**

Top 3 concerns:

Stress



38.4%
highly concerned

School



33.6%
highly concerned

Body image



26.5%
highly concerned

More females than males felt that academic ability and financial difficulty would pose a barrier to the achievement of their post-school study/work goals



Females were slightly less confident than males in their ability to achieve their study/work goal

52%

of young people across Australia felt that there were barriers which may impact on the achievement of their study/work goals

Top 3 barriers:

Nationally, the top three barriers that young people felt would impact on their study/work goals were:

academic ability (18.2%)



financial difficulty (16.9%)



lack of jobs (12.2%)



However, around

1 in 10



were less confident in their ability to achieve their goals

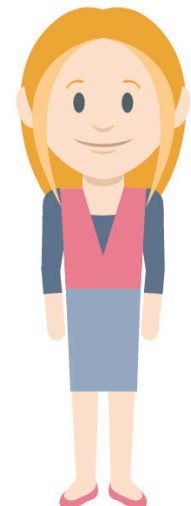
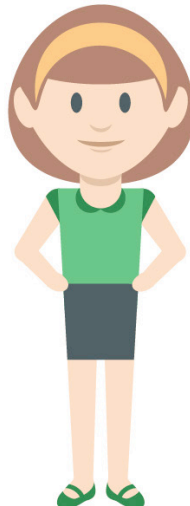
8.1%
indicating they were **slightly confident**

in their ability to achieve their study/work goals after school

2.3%
indicating they were **not at all confident**



What aspects of this collage do you find confronting and/or surprising?



Our Marist Response

Marist Ministries information is taken from www.maristassociation.org.au

Marist Youth Ministry (MYM)



MYM, one of the largest Catholic youth ministries in Australia, is committed to an inspired way of discipleship, which gives young people a story to connect into, a community to belong to, a work to do, a way to pray, and a face of God to see. MYM invites young people to an experience of home and an authentic encounter with Christ, so that they can enact real change in the world.

Australian Marist Solidarity (AMS)



AMS is the agency for the aid and development work of the Marist Province of Australia throughout Asia and the Pacific Islands. AMS works with the people in this region on a combination of long-term and short-term development projects, which aim to develop, or support, locally sustained education opportunities for young people. It also offers educational and support services for MSA schools involved in solidarity and immersion projects, and is the base for Marist Volunteers Australia. The AMS vision is of a world that reflects Marists' desire that vulnerable young people are brought towards the centre from the margins through access to education.

Marist Youth Care (MYC)



MYC, with over 110 years experience, has developed into one of the largest service providers for youth at risk in Australia today. MYC provides services to over 4,000 young people and their families every year and, each night, accommodates 600 young people in the Residential and Asylum Seeker Services. MYC services are designed to help young people who are homeless or who are at risk of homelessness or are living away from their families. MYC focuses on addressing the issues faced by young people and helps them develop skills for independent living in the future.

Marist Schools Australia (MSA)



MSA draws together Catholic schools which shape their identity and mission through the spirituality and educational approach that was introduced into the Church by St Marcellin Champagnat in the early nineteenth century and which has continued to be developed by the Marist Brothers and Lay Marists. MSA provides its member schools with leadership, support and, where applicable, governance, in order that they can continue to be authentic Marist educational communities. The first priority of MSA is to nurture the faith and spirituality of today's Marists.

CONTEMPLATE

1 John 3:17-18

But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.

In silence and stillness listen to the words of Micah's Song (based on Micah 6:8).
Please find under Additional Resources.

and **WHAT** *Lord* require of you?
DOES THE
To act **JUSTLY** and
To love **MERCY** and
To walk **HUMBLY** *God*
with your
MICAHA 6:8

'Faith without action is dead' (James 2:14-26). How does this statement from James support Micah's challenge?



IMITATE

A considerable number of Marist texts speak about our call to 'go to the margins.' Spend some time reading the following extracts from *In the Footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat*, *Water from the Rock* and *Evangelizers in the Midst of Youth*. You are asked to highlight words/phrases that resonate with you and prompt you into action.

Excerpts from *In the Footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat*:

- We are Brothers and Lay people, together in mission, in the Church and in the world, among the young, especially the most neglected. We are sowers of the Good News. *(Introduction)*
- We seek to be the human face of Jesus in the midst of the young, wherever we find them. *(n167)*
- We create opportunities for get-togethers and common solidarity projects among young people from different social backgrounds, cultures and lifestyles. In this way, we develop their open-mindedness and initiate them into the habit of sharing time, talents and skills in the service of others. *(n176)*
- We form young believers as Christian leaders in society. We journey with them in their desire to be sensitive to and in solidarity with the problems of other peoples and other cultures. We offer them the possibility of studying the social teachings of the Church. *(n185)*

Excerpts from *Water from the Rock*

- The cries of the world, especially those of poor people, touch the heart of God and ours as well. The depth of God's compassion challenges us to be men and women whose hearts have no

bounds since in his infinite love, God continues to be totally involved with all men and women and today's world, with its disappointments and hopes. (n127).

- Our compassionate response to the needs of the world wells up from our spirituality. Spirituality draws us into mission and, in living that mission, finds itself nourished and rekindled. It gives meaning to our human experiences and allows us to read life with the eyes and heart of God and to understand it as God's project. (n129).
- Mary inspired Marcellin's style of being on mission. She received the Holy Spirit at the Annunciation and responded immediately to Elizabeth's need. In so doing, she shows us that contemplation and action are both indispensable elements of spirituality. Mary's way lays the foundation of all our actions: listening, patient waiting, nurturing interiority and responsiveness to God's will. (n131).
- Confirmed in her own vocation by the invitation of the Spirit, Mary feels compelled to leave her own house to enter the house of another. She indicates for us the direction of mission – that we are to meet others where they are. (n132).

Excerpts from Evangelizers in the Midst of Youth

- [Jesus] is the reason for all we are and all we are doing. Marcellin Champagnat laid out the essence of our Marist mission: "to make Jesus Christ known and loved." He envisioned us as educators and catechists who would structure our entire community and personal life around the mission of evangelizing by educating children and young people, especially those least cared for in society. (n86).
- We strive to be apostles for young people, evangelizing them through our lives and presence among them. Love for the young, especially the poor, is the distinguishing characteristic of our mission. (n87).
- We are paying close attention to the reality of today's young people... We are convinced that welcoming the Gospel's news brings happiness and gives meaning to life. Taking this news to heart puts us at odds with some the values dominant in society:
 - ✦ A generous gratuitous love that transcends the tendency to remain wrapped up in a life of self-gratification.
 - ✦ A life of collaboration and sharing that places solidarity above competition, personal success and economic wellbeing.
 - ✦ An invitation to experience the profound meaning of community, tearing us away from a life of individualism.
 - ✦ A call to commitment with others, keeping us alert to the risk of becoming indifferent. (n88).
- Like Marcellin Champagnat we are bold and creative in our efforts to enter into the lives and world of the young. We maintain an open and welcoming attitude with them. We want to be brothers and sisters on their journey to human and Christian development. The Marist style of education is based on a truly holistic vision of the person. Promoting human growth is inherent in the process of evangelization. (n90).

DIALOGUE

1. What are the “cries of the world” I hear?
2. What are the preoccupations of young people of which I am particularly aware?
3. What reflections can I make about the balance between contemplation and action in my spirituality?
4. What does “making Jesus Christ known and loved” mean to me?



CLOSING PRAYER

The Litany of Remembrance by Joyce Rupp

I remember the children of the world. As Jesus called to the children to come to him, so I gather in prayer the children of my world who are hurting. I embrace them with loving kindness and with a desire to mend the systems that bring such pain to their young lives. I remember the children:

...who will go hungry today,
...whose parents are on drugs,
...who have no one to teach them to read,
...who are handicapped and unattended,
...who do not know love,
...who live in filth and degradation,
...who have no friends,
...who are not listened to,
...who have never been sung to or read to or taken by the hand or experienced earth's
mystery and beauty,
...who do not have anyone to tuck them into bed at night,
...who are stunned or mistreated because of their color, their religion, or the place where
they live,
...who have no awareness of their inner goodness,
...who have stopped believing in love,
...who are filled with anger and hate,
...who are receiving a poor education,
...who are ill or in pain,
...who are grieving the death of a loved one,
...who are suffering from AIDS or drug-related diseases,
...who feel lonely, desolate, and unloved,
...who are filled with fear for their lives,
...who hear only harsh words and hostile language,

...who have been bruised, beaten, and mutilated,
...who are victims of incest, rape, and pornography,
...who hide in fear from sounds of war,
...who are ill and have no medical attention.

Yes, I pray for the children of my world today and I pray for each man and woman of this world, including myself, that we will do our part to create better living conditions for these children. Show us the way and prod us into action. God of justice and compassion!

Amen.



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Deepening Our Relationship with God
PRAYER - OUR DAILY BREAD

Deepening Our Relationship with God

PRAYER - OUR DAILY BREAD

CONSIDER

Saint Mother Teresa of Calcutta was once asked about her prayer life. The interviewer asked, "When you pray, what do you say to God?" Mother Teresa replied, "I don't talk, I simply listen." Believing he understood what she had just said, the interviewer next asked, "Ah, then what is it that God says to you when you pray?" Mother Teresa replied, "He also doesn't talk. He also simply listens."

There was a long silence, with the interviewer seeming a bit confused and not knowing what to ask next. Finally Mother Teresa breaks the silence by saying, "If you can't understand the meaning of what I've just said, I'm sorry but there's no way I can explain it any better."

Some people are disappointed that Mother Teresa didn't spend more time pleading and begging God to heal the many sick, maimed and disfigured people that she confronted everyday ... could it be that she just grew tired of praying like that or grew frustrated with this kind of praying because God obviously wasn't answering her prayers? Or could it be that Mother Teresa learned the hard way; that prayer is not so much getting God to do what you think he should do (even though it is all extremely admirable and noble) but that the purpose of prayer is to absorb God's heart, to become more like him, to see even the most depressing circumstances of our world through his compassionate eyes, to gain daily motivation and strength in the ongoing struggle of being his hands and feet in this world?

The fact that you can't explain deep, intimate prayer to someone who hasn't

experienced it, speaks of a spiritual maturity. You are able to look backwards and show understanding and compassion to all those in the stages where you've already passed. But it is almost impossible to help someone understand a level of maturity into which they have not yet entered. Wisdom is knowing how to dance with this difference.

(Mother Teresa and Prayer, 2015)

Where is your relationship with God at this "stage" of your spiritual journey?



CONTEMPLATE

Our spirituality draws us to find God in all things and in all aspects of life. Prayer is one means to go more deeply into our experience. We do not replace prayer with work. Listening to God impels us to

continue labouring for the Kingdom. Our prayer comes from life and it returns us to life. (WFR, n76).

You don't have to go to sacred places to pray or wait for holy days for good things to happen. You can pray always, and everything that happens is potentially sacred if you allow it to be. Once we can accept that God is in all situations, and that God can and will use even bad situations for good, then everything becomes an occasion for good and an occasion for God. "This is the day Yahweh has made memorable, let us rejoice and be glad in it!" (Psalm 118:24).

Richard Rohr's Daily Meditation, February 16, 2016.

One of the oldest, classical definitions of prayer defines it this way: *Prayer is lifting mind and heart to God.* Too often in our efforts to pray formally, both communally and privately, we fail to do that; namely, to actually lift our hearts and minds to God. Why? Because what is really in our hearts and minds, alongside our gratitude and more gracious thoughts, is not something we generally connect with prayer at all. Our frustrations, bitterness, jealousies, lusts, curses, sloth, and quiet despair are usually understood to be the very antithesis of prayer, something to be overcome in order to pray.

But a deeper thing is happening under the surface: our frustration, longing, lust, jealousy, and escapist daydreams, things we are ashamed to take to prayer are, in fact, already lifting our hearts and minds to God in more honest ways that we ever do consciously.

(Rolheiser, 2014)

What is it that you place before God in prayer? How is this influenced by the here and now?

IMITATE

Jesus prayed, and he prayed often. He was a man of prayer. He prayed for others (Mt 19:13, Jn17:9), he prayed with others (Lk 9:28). He prayed alone (Lk 5:16), he prayed in nature (Lk6:12). He taught persistence in prayer (Lk 18:1). He knew that not all his prayers would be answered as expected (Mt 26:36-44).

Jesus prayed to set an example to his followers. He prayed as was his humanly custom as a believer. As God the Son, Jesus could pray to God the Father.

When asked by his disciples how to pray. Jesus told them to use simple words. He told them to pray like this

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come.
Your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And do not bring us to the time of trial,
but rescue us from the evil one.
(Mt 6:9-13)

Take some time to explore the moments of prayer that Jesus demonstrates using the above references or others.

Is there a method to Jesus' way of prayer?



DIALOGUE

To welcome God in this way, we need to develop an attitude of openness. With God's help we grow into being an attentive listener to life, reflective and perceptive when reviewing the events of our life, and generous in responding to the invitations of the Spirit contained within the substance of our days. (*WFR, n74*)

In our time there are certain practices that are essential to nurturing our faith as Marists:

Lectio divina –
(Meditating on the Word of God)
Personal prayer
Review of the day
Community prayer

Faith sharing
Accompaniment
Celebrating the Eucharist
Reconciliation
(*WFR, n79-87*)

1. What most nourishes your prayer life?
2. What obstacles do you experience on the journey to deepen your relationship with God?
3. Describe a symbol or image that would express the nature of your relationship with God?
4. Discuss the opportunities possible to deepen our faith as a Marist community.



CLOSING PRAYER

THE ROAD AHEAD – A PRAYER OF THOMAS MERTON

“My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think that I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it. Therefore will I trust you always, though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.”

Mary our Good Mother	<i>pray for us</i>
St Marcellin Champagnat	<i>pray for us</i>
St Mary of the Cross MacKillop	<i>pray for us</i>
And let us always remember to	<i>pray for one another</i>



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Marist Association Formation Program
2016