



History of the Institute
Dawn's uncertain light
(1985-2016)

Volume 3

Brother Michael C. GREEN

MARIST BROTHERS

**HISTORY OF THE INSTITUTE
OF THE MARIST BROTHERS**

VOLUME III

**Dawn's uncertain light
(1985-2016)**

Brother Michael C. GREEN

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*It shall come to pass in the latter days
that I will pour out my spirit on all people,
and your sons and daughters will prophesy,
your old men will dream dreams,
and your young ones will see visions*

Joel 2:28

INTRODUCTION



Brother Michael C. Green

Ecrire la vie d'un saint ...

“To write the life of saint ...” So Brother Jean-Baptiste began his biography of Marcellin Champagnat in 1856. “... to make known his struggles, his achievements, his virtues, and all that he did for God and neighbour, is to proclaim the glory of Jesus, the divine redeemer of the world, the model and author of all holiness.” It would not be until the end of the next century that his subject’s sanctity was definitively proclaimed by the Church. But by the time of Saint Marcellin’s canonisation in 1999, the Church and its understanding of who was called to holiness, and how they were called, had changed enormously.

This is also a book about saints. Marist saints. Thousands of them. Their holiness is rooted in the “joys and hopes, the sorrows and anxieties” of their world.¹ They are ordinary people, unpretentious and grounded people, who together have woven the threads of something extraordinary. They have sought to be attentive to the movement of God’s Spirit in and among them, and have been heartened by the sense of joy, mercy and justice which has filled them. Their hearts have been moved by the needs of young people and they have given the best of their lives to help to bring about what should belong to all young people by right – an education, a home, and manifold reasons to believe, to hope and to love. They have been inspired by heroism in their midst, and wounded by failure. Unlike the nineteenth century hagiography of Brother Jean-Baptiste, the story of their Marist holiness has not been something defined by otherworldliness or sanitised perfection, but one in which Christ-life has come to birth in the unpolished reality of their lives and their world.² They have lived through a time when the Church has come to a new understanding of the “universal call to holiness” that belongs to all its members.³ New ways of forming Christian community have emerged and fresh thinking around the place and purpose of the consecrated life has led apostolic religious to search for new ways of living out their consecration. These developments have changed radically the face and character of *le Projet mariste* that Marcellin and his co-founders began two hundred years ago. It has also been an age

¹ *Gaudium et spes*, #1

² The concept of “bringing Christ-life to birth” is one that is at the heart of Marist spirituality. The Marist is to share in “Mary’s work” of doing this. Cf. *Water from the Rock*. #11

³ *Lumen gentium*, Ch.5

of rich discourse and debate in theology and ecclesiology, not least concerning a renewed understanding of the fundamental Marian principle of the Church. The Marists of the modern era have also found themselves in the midst of the seismic social, cultural, political and philosophical shifts of their age. Post-modernism, secularism, moral relativism and disillusionment with institutional authority have defined much of the public discourse they have known. A digital revolution has altered forever the ways that people communicate, build knowledge, and interconnect globally. The collapse of state communism in eastern Europe, the opening and growing prominence of China and Asia more generally, a retreat into ideological fundamentalism in many places, the pernicious effects of the ethnic and political conflicts of Africa, the Middle East and elsewhere, the forced displacement and migration of people across the world, the emergence of a post-industrial sensitivity to the fragility and care of planet Earth, the apparent dying of Church life in some regions and its growing vitality in others – all this has helped to define the world in which Christ-life seeks to be born and in which Marists have tried to carry the Good News of God's immanence.

It is essential for both author and reader to approach this period of Marist history with a critical consciousness of these broader realities – to the “joys and hopes, the sorrows and anxieties” of the world's peoples during these decades. Not to do so would be to risk a self-referential and insular orientation towards all that has transpired. Pope Francis, the third Pontiff of the time under consideration, warned the Church before his election of the dangers of a Church that was focussed primarily on itself;⁴ the same could be argued of any community within the Church, such as the Marists. It is not simply a matter of having a broad-brush background; this is the Bethlehem, these are the poor shepherds, to and for whom God has been revealed today. While the approach of this book is to provide some contextual commentary in each section that may help to alert the reader to such a wider reality, the scope and length of the book necessarily limit the extent to which analytical commentary on the social, economic, ideological, cultural and ecclesial developments of the time is possible. It is hoped and presumed that the reader will bring such critical awareness to the text.⁵

The ways in which individual Provinces and Districts have realised the Marist dream, every school and social work, every community, and indeed every Marist, could each provide more than enough material for a full book. So, also, could any topic such as formation, education, the consecrated life, laity, inculturation, solidarity or many others, be the subject of a book on its own. A modest work such as this cannot pretend to do justice to the richness of the many thousands of people and communities who have written the Marist story of the last thirty years, and the projects and ideas they have pursued. Marist communities and works have spread

⁴ In a short four-minute speech to his fellow Cardinals before the Conclave which elected him, the then Archbishop of Buenos Aires argued for a Church that was present to the “existential peripheries” of the world, and not inwardly focussed. His intervention was later made public, with the Pope's agreement, by Cardinal Jaime Ortega, Archbishop of Havana. Cf. www.news.va/en/news/bergoglios-intervention-a-diagnosis-of-the-problem. (Accessed 22 January 2016.)

⁵ One starting reference for a reader may be *The Millenium Development Goals Report 2015*, United Nations, New York.

to eighty countries around the world. Thousands of brothers and tens of thousands of other people are today responsible for realising the project that commenced in all simplicity in a house in La Valla on 2 January 1817. This is but a single book, not a stacked library. Its contents, therefore, are inevitably selective, its treatment of many matters necessarily scant. The general approach of the book has been to name the major trends and movements, and to provide some illustration of these. Such examples can only be indicative of a greater whole. In this sense, the book does not aim to offer a comprehensive survey of every country, every Province and District, or everything initiated by the General Administration in Rome. It is, rather, a global history coloured by a representative selection of actual people and places. It has also been important to give an account of all the more significant events, decisions and projects that have had an impact on the Marist world as a whole.

It is a challenge to write the history of a past that is so recent, indeed one that is still unfolding. Many people would argue that there is insufficient distance or perspective to be able to do this well. It is presumptuous, they might say. They would be right, of course. The approach, therefore, has not been to shape a narrative history that begins in 1985 and moves sequentially and analytically through to 2016. The book, rather, names the principal questions that have marked these decades. It is a story of ideas as well as a story of people. It frames these in five sections, each as an essay within the book, and each covering the whole three decades. Part 1 is a survey of some important documents of the period – those associated with the four General Chapters of 1985, 1993, 2001 and 2009, and also the Circulars of the four Superiors General. The discussion of these documents aims to provide a contextual background for the exploration of four themes. In Part 2, the topic is Marist mission, its reorientation and expansion. Part 3 looks at Marist spirituality, and how this has come to be described and developed since 1985. Part 4 centres on the structural and administrative changes that have taken place and the directions in which these appear to be headed. The process of restructuring and regionalisation presented itself as a specific subject of this section. Finally, in Part 5, perhaps the most significant section of the history, there is an extended exploration of how the Marist community has moved through attempts first at renewal, then re-foundation, and finally re-imagination. In this section, there is discussion of the renewal of the brothers' consecrated life, the issues and developments in the area of formation, and the complex matter of the "widening of the tent", as a broader group of people has come to share in a Marist identity.

Extensive consultation was undertaken during the framing of the schema of the book, particularly the naming of the four general themes of Parts 2 to 5. The essence of the plan first emerged at the annual meeting of the International Patrimony Commission in June 2014, and a refined version was confirmed at its next meeting in 2015. Meanwhile, comments on the draft schema were invited from a large number of brothers around the Institute – a majority of the present and former members of the General Council, the three living Superiors General, and others who had held leadership roles, especially in international contexts. Some helpful suggestions for change were received and included, but there was clear consensus in support of the basic plan. It will be the readers of many years hence who will be the judges as to how well these directions have been named. They will have the benefit of longer hindsight.

There are some other comments to make about the way the book has been conceived and written. First is to recognise that this is a history of the Institute of the Marist Brothers. Its primary and major subject is, therefore, the brothers. Written on the eve of the bicentenary of Marcellin's invitation to a twenty-three-year old former soldier and a boy of fifteen to form the first community in La Valla, it is a book, in the first place, for them and about them. At the same time, a highly significant element of the story of the last thirty years has been the appropriation of Marist spirituality by a wider group of people, and their growing place in sharing responsibility for Marist mission and life. As a consequence, these men and women also form an integral part of the history. Many would see this as flowering of post-Vatican II ecclesiology. Their increasing role has been one of the catalysts for the Institute to begin to imagine a "new way of being brother" as the XXI General Chapter chose to describe it. The change of mindset that this has brought about has arguably been the largest paradigmatic shift of the period that is being considered. It is one that has been, however, differentially embraced across the Marist world.

Second, it is the intention of the book to remain anchored as history, and to resist the temptation to predict the future. At the time of its writing, a phrase of the moment is "towards a new beginning". A recent colloquium on initial formation directed its attention to "forming brothers for a new beginning"; a current project of the General Council concerns "international communities for a new beginning". A milestone such as a bicentenary naturally invites such thinking, and it is typical of Marists to engage in it. It is deep in their collective psyche to be drawn to the dawn of what is to come rather than to bask in the sunset of what has been. Just look at the themes of the last three General Chapters: "Audacity and Hope" in 1993; "Choose Life!" in 2001; and "New Hearts for a New World" in 2009. From that last Chapter came another slogan "Go in haste with Mary to new lands." The last International Mission Assembly used as its theme "New Marists in Mission". The language of "new" seems to sit easily with Marists. This book might serve as one foreword to the third Marist century.

Finally, although the year 1985 presents a natural marker from which to begin this history – as the year of a General Chapter, new Constitutions, a new Superior General, and the end of the Marist *ad experimentum* period after the Council – it is also a somewhat arbitrary choice. And 2016 is equally artificial as point of closure. While there has been no attempt to project beyond 2016, there is frequent reach back into the years before 1985. This is not to repeat what has already been well covered by Brother André Lanfrey in Volumes I and II of this series; indeed, it is presumed that the reader will have familiarity with what has been written in those books. Where there is discussion of pre-1985 matters, the purpose is to provide the reader with some continuity of context for understanding the longer story of a particular matter.

Two stylistic decisions call for mention at the outset. First, the word "brother" is not usually capitalised in this text (except in the case of an individual's name), as has been past custom in most languages. Recent decades have seen a growing trend to prefer a lower-case "b" in an attempt to capture something of the relational essence that the word signifies. This trend is not universally accepted, especially in a language such as English. It is acknowledged that readers will have their

own preferences on this matter. Second, footnotes are used throughout the text not only to cite sources and references, but also to provide further detail and background to subjects under discussion. It has been sometimes a matter of subjective judgement as to what would be kept in the body of the text and what dispatched to a footnote. The intention has been to maintain a flow of narrative that does not become confused by interesting but non-essential detail.

The gift of our God is the time and place in which we live and the people with whom we have the privilege to share it. It is there, and among us, that God seeks incarnation. The years 1985 to 2016 have provided the Marists of the present age with the same graced opportunity that Marcellin and his co-founders had when they climbed the hill of Fourvière on 23 July 1816. To understand and to give purpose to what they were about, those young French men were intuitively drawn to Mary. They took her name as their own. They were to be Mary-ists. Marists. They sought to *be Mary* for the Church of their day. For them that meant they would incarnate the mercy of God in ways that were distinctively Marian: they would nurture, empathise and gather; they would go out, teach and reconcile; they would be bearers of joy, justice and love. And they would do it in ways that were grounded, accessible and inclusive. Like Mary, their response to God in their own lives would allow the reign of God to come alive in their world. Christ would be born in their midst. They called this “Mary’s work” and they dedicated their lives to it. What follows is a story of men and women who seek to continue in that sacred trust as Marists. They have spread all over the world; they speak many languages; they have inculturated the Marist way of Jesus’s Gospel in a plethora of contexts. As he did with the Colossians, Saint Paul would know them to be “saints”. He would urge them to strive for compassion, kindness, humility, patience, forgiveness, peace and love. He would want them to be thankful, always. That Christ may dwell in them richly.⁶

⁶ Colossians, 3:12-13; 15-16.

History of the Institute



PART 1

Signs and mileposts

*The principal directions
and concerns of the Institute
as they are reflected
through the General Chapters
and the Circulars
of the Superiors General.*



2. On the previous page:
The bell that is rung when new
Superiors General are elected.

1.

THE GENERAL CHAPTERS

The Chapters as markers of the journey

Very little of Marist life and mission is to be found in what transpires in the few weeks of a General Chapter, held once in eight years. Only a tiny proportion of the brothers of the Institute – less than three percent of them – has ever personally taken part in one, and an infinitesimal number of lay Marists has ever visited one. The formal *Acts of the Chapter* and the messages from the capitulants that are published long after the aeroplanes have left Fiumicino and the Chapter Hall has been packed up are mostly taken up with aspirational ideas and concepts; they rarely mention an individual brother's name, other than those who might have won election to positions of leadership. The flesh-and-blood story of the Institute is to be found, rather, in the daily lives of thousands of brothers and communities, in the young people they serve, and in those with whom they share their ministry of evangelisation. It is grounded in their own joys and struggles, their nobility and failure, their generosity and personal challenges. It is a story of a multitude of personalities and situations, and of ordinary fidelity, frailty, and fraternity, lived day-in and day-out, year after year. There is always a risk in misrepresenting history when it is written from the centre.

So, also, there are many other occasions when brothers gather to reflect, to decide, and to produce documents – those at provincial or regional level, and Institute-wide meetings such as General Conferences, International Mission Assemblies, and various meetings, courses, programmes and colloquia for leaders and brothers with specific responsibilities. Lay people have been increasingly part of such forums, much more than they have been at any General Chapter. Often these meetings are closer to a specific issue or a situation in a particular part of the Institute than a General Chapter can be – and therefore closer to the immediate lives of the brothers.

So, why begin with the documents of four General Chapters? Why turn to them to provide a framework for the story of the Institute over the last thirty years? There are two principal reasons for beginning here. The first is that a General Chapter is not, of course, an insulated event that involves only a hundred or so brothers for a few weeks in Rome. Typically, at least from the preparatory phase of the XIX Chapter, it has had a lead-in period of at least two years during which all the brothers of the Institute, and an increasing number of other Marists, have been able to be involved. The data show, in fact, that the great majority of them have done just that. The business of each Chapter has been, therefore, a quite organic thing; the main issues to be discussed have emerged from the ground up. The subsequent distillation of these issues has been done through a thorough and increasingly consultative process. There is validity, therefore, in the view that the topics that

have been explored at each Chapter have been, in fact, the most important questions for the majority of brothers. Religious institutes such as the Marist Brothers belong to a centuries-old tradition of chapter-based discernment and decision-making, the roots of which are sourced in Benedictine monasticism. The whole dynamic of chapter is one to which most brothers will easily feel connected, even if they may not later study every detail of the documents that are produced.

The second reason is the nature of the way leadership has been exercised in the Institute during this time. Faithful to a *modus operandi* that comes from Marcellin himself, the Superior General and Council have given priority to their being physically present to the brothers of the Institute; they have come to know them and their contexts well. For the greater part of each year, most of them are away from Rome. Additionally, it has been a mark of each of the four Superiors General that he has addressed matters with frankness and honesty. While each has sought

as leader to encourage, to inspire, and to maintain an *esprit de corps*, this has not been at the cost of a loss of candour or lack of a willingness to name shortcomings and frustrations for what they are. The reports of the Superior General and Council to each Chapter, and also the opening remarks of the General when the Chapter has assembled, provide ample evidence of this. They have been neither uncritical catalogues of achievements nor anthologies of *bons mots*.



3. Brothers Basilio Ruenda and Charles Howard.

The documents of the General Chapters, especially when augmented by the personal memories of some brothers who took part, do provide some sure signs and mileposts for framing the story of the Institute over the three decades. They name well the major questions and aspirations, as well as the progress and blockages to progress during this time.

The XVIII General Chapter of 1985, that of the new Constitutions



4. Members of the 18th General Chapter.

The principal task before the 132 capitulants⁷ who gathered at the General House for over two months through September, October and the first week of November 1985 was quite clear to them before they arrived. In addition to the election of a new Superior General and Council which is the task of every Chapter, they knew that they were not leaving Rome until they had agreed on a text for the new Constitutions and Statutes. The *ad experimentum* period that had lasted for the full eighteen years of Brother Basilio's Generalate was to be brought to an end. The 1976 Chapter had not been ready to do this, as Brother Charles Howard later explained:

*Our hope was that that Chapter would do the Constitutions but it was clear that, in fact, they weren't ready and they wouldn't be ready.*⁸

Following a General Conference on the subject in October 1979, a permanent Commission of four had been finally appointed in 1982,⁹ augmented by another

⁷ One was to be added, to bring it to 133, meaning that there were 24 fewer than the 157 of 1968, the largest in the history of the Institute. The size of the drop in the number of capitulants was indicative of the fall in the total number of members of the Institute.

⁸ Brother Charles Howard, transcript of interviews recorded in May 2006 for the *Oral History Project* of the Province of Sydney, p.15. (These interviews were done as part of the "Oral History Project" of the then-Province of Sydney, the purpose of which was to record the oral memoirs of members of the Province concerning their lives as brothers. The interviews with Brother Charles were conducted by Brother Gerard Williams. They are held in the Archives of the Province of Australia.)

⁹ Brothers Aleixo Autran, Alain Delorme, Fergus McCann and José Antonio Vera

eight the following year.¹⁰ They came from ten countries and brought a considerable knowledge of theology, spirituality, history, law¹¹ and experience of the Institute to their work which began in earnest in the summer of 1983. Twelve months later a draft was agreed and translated from the base working language of French into English, Spanish and Portuguese to be circulated around the Institute for comment. Between March and May of 1985 those comments were considered and an amended draft completed by June for translation into English and Spanish. It was this draft that was ready for the capitulants to consider, a process of decision-making which Brother Basilio regarded to be the most significant for the Institute since the General Chapter of 1852.¹² As it turned out, it was a process that was to occupy them for almost their entire time from the end of summer to the first hints of approaching winter.

For Brother Basilio, the main context for the Chapter was the renewal of the Institute that had been demanded by the Vatican Council, taken up by the XVI Chapter, given some concrete direction by the XVII Chapter, and animated by him and the General Council for almost two decades.¹³ "Our Chapter is to be a Chapter of renewal," he told the capitulants. In a series of three addresses during the opening retreat of the Chapter, the Superior General who had worked tirelessly for so many years to introduce the brothers of the Institute to a radical renewal of their religious life, insisted on the "extraordinary importance" of genuine renewal coming from the Chapter. The alternative, he told them, from his reading of history, was death:

*Religious life either generates new forms or it dies.*¹⁴

Was the Institute dying? From what Basilio called the "bulging file of statistics" which the capitulants had been given, the number of withdrawals from the Institute since the time of the Council was glaringly clear to them, as was the collapse in new recruits in many Provinces. The 9,704 brothers of the mid-1960s had become 6,230. But he expressed his hope that things might be turning around.¹⁵ That was not to be the case in most Provinces.

¹⁰ Brothers Julián García, Aureliano Brambila, George Fontana, Majella Bouchard, Peter Appuhamy, Emmanuel Ramarosan, Paul Sester, and Quentin Duffy. (Brother Julian was to die the following year.) From October 1983, Brother Aureliano was president of the Commission, with Brother Aleixo as secretary.

¹¹ The new Code of Canon Law for the Catholic Church had been promulgated in 1983. A particular concern, particularly of Brother Quentin Duffy VG, was that the new Constitutions complied with the requirements of the Code, in order to ease their path through the Sacred Congregation, which in the end needed to approve them.

¹² *Listening to the Eighteenth General Chapter*, (a document completed in April the following year, and which reached the Provinces in the four languages of the Institute by the end of August) p.106

¹³ Brother Basilio in his Report on the State of the Institute. *Listening to the Eighteenth General Chapter*, p.67.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* p.16

¹⁵ *Ibid.* p.78. A detailed analysis was provided to the capitulants which summarised the numbers and reasons for all the brothers who had left the Institute between 1967 and 1984.



Brother Basilio developed at length what he judged to be the strengths and weaknesses of the Institute as it stood in the middle of the 1980s, and to name the challenges it faced. He identified five strong features: the attachment to the spirit of the Founder, something that gave “remarkable unity” to the Institute, and a “harmony that was deep and enduring”; the relationship of the brothers to those in leadership, both between the General Council and Provincials, and between Provincials and the members of their Provinces; the “caring, simple and brotherly” quality of relationships in community and the way that they rose above the “negative aspects of our formation”; the apostolate of the Institute, something he noted was still almost entirely in educational institutions, but that was in some Provinces expanding to serve young people at risk of “being drawn away from Christianity and morality”; and the fidelity to prayer of so many senior brothers who were like “old oak trees standing erect against wind and tide.”¹⁶ The six weaknesses that he had observed included: the poor rhythm of community prayer in many places, especially the increasing trend to opt to pray alone and to attend Mass alone; the inauthenticity of personal prayer, too much stifled by the demands of work and, in an interesting point, too much “attraction to social and political causes”. The fourth weakness, and the one to which he gave most attention, was the low value that many brothers put on their religious consecration. There were two essential elements of the Marist consecrated life, said the Superior General: first, to follow Christ with the total gift of one’s life and, second, to be fully integrated into the charism and spirit of the Institute. The latter was not the main issue, he thought, but the sense of what it meant to be *consecrated* was “insecure, unstable and immature”.¹⁷ It was not focussed on Jesus Christ, as it needed to be. The last two concerned identity and formation. On the first he observed

*We Marist Brothers need to redefine our mission in the world as it is now, and to establish clear criteria for membership. [This is] to make Jesus Christ known, and to direct our efforts exclusively to the young, with preference for the underprivileged, and to do this as a mission from the Church entrusted to the community.*¹⁸

¹⁶ *Ibid.* pp.79-81

¹⁷ *Ibid.* pp.81-85

¹⁸ *Ibid.* p.87

The main weakness in formation was at the post-novitiate stage, Basilio suggested. There were “serious gaps” there, especially “weaknesses in prayer and understanding of consecration”. Brothers had the “right to a solid formation”. Indeed, this was one of the two challenges that the Institute particularly needed to address, he said, the other one being the finalisation and transmission of the Constitutions.

So it was with the draft text of the Constitutions that the capitulants set to work. They divided themselves into five commissions, grouped around the chapter headings of the text, and with some attention to languages spoken. The commissions were: The Nature and Vitality of the Institute (Chapters 1-3); Consecration (Chapters 2-5); The Life of the Brothers (Chapters 6-8); Formation (Chapters 9-10); and Government (Chapters 11-12). There was much debate, many revisions, some re-ordering, and some additional articles written – most notably the final Chapter on the “Vitality of the Institute”.

Some things were welcomed, such as the use of the first-person plural throughout the text, a major difference from the approach of the 1968 text. Many of the deficiencies and inadequacies of the 1968 document which had been addressed by the Constitutions Commission were well received, but not everyone was supportive of the integration into the document of the new Statutes (which were replacing the old Directory not finished by the Chapter in 1968, and now needing to be in conformity with the new Code of Canon Law). Some felt that it detracted from the richness and the tone of the Constitutions proper. Brother Seán Sammon, attending his first Chapter as a young delegate recalled one memorable intervention from a Provincial who was of this view. He remembered this capitulant warning to his subject and saying that

6. 18th General Chapter (1985), Program of work for a week.

Day	Time	Activity
20	07:30	Colazione (grand Chapter)
	19:00	Adorazione (Lectio)
	19:30	Supper
21	06:45	Colazione per gruppi linguistici
	09:00	Pranzo in Comunità
	10:30	Pranzo in Comunità
	12:30	Prayer: Mariale
22	09:00	Pranzo in Comunità
	10:30	Pranzo in Comunità
	12:30	Prayer: Mariale
	18:45	Colazione per gruppi linguistici
23	06:45	Colazione per gruppi linguistici
	09:00	Pranzo in Comunità
	11:00	Assemblea generale
	12:30	Prayer: Mariale
24	09:00	Assemblea generale
	10:30	Pranzo in Comunità
	12:30	Prayer: Mariale
	18:45	Colazione (grand Chapter)
25	09:00	Assemblea generale
	10:30	Pranzo in Comunità
	12:30	Prayer: Mariale
	18:45	Colazione per gruppi linguistici
26	06:45	Colazione (grand Chapter)
	09:00	Pranzo in Comunità
	12:30	Prayer: Mariale
	19:30	Supper

... if anyone needed a copy of the new Code of Canon Law, all they needed to do was pick up the Marist Brothers Constitutions! He built it up and he finished by saying, "In Chapter 2 there is a stray line about the freedom of the children of God. Let the children of God with their freedom line up on the left, and those with your Canons line up on the right. Ready! Aim! Fire!" Half the group was cheering, half was booing. It was marvellous. It was theatre.¹⁹

Debate was sometimes indeed robust. Hissing and other non-verbal signals of disagreement were not absent in the Chapter Hall, with differences of opinion often enough becoming apparent along language lines. One source of debate was disagreement around the nature and purpose of law.²⁰ For many of the brothers who came from Latin cultures, a law was seen to be something which enshrined the ideal of an aspect of life, something to which to aspire; but for those from Anglo-Germanic cultures there was a view that law should be more grounded in reality, and should not present something that was unattainable or from which there would inevitably be shortfall. One particular capitulant, from the latter group, was always to regard it as a personal triumph that he was able to persuade his confreres to insert two sentences into Article 46: "As we journey on, we may experience doubt, loss of enthusiasm, dryness of heart, or waywardness by pursuing false consolations. We shall fight our way through all this, especially by recourse to Mary, and with the help of our Brothers."²¹

One major question that was finally resolved, after a debate that had gone on for much of the twentieth century and had been given extra impetus by a particular provision in *Perfectae caritatis*.²² By a vote that drew more than a two-thirds majority, the XVIII General Chapter decided that the Institute would not include any ordained members.²³ It was only one of two Acts of the Chapter that were

¹⁹ Brother Seán Sammon, in recorded interviews with the author, 13 and 20 May 2015. The Provincial to whom he was referring was Brother Robert Van Bruwaene, from the Province of Belgium-Holland

²⁰ Brother Charles Howard referred to this in his Closing Address. *Ibid.* p.125

²¹ The capitulant was Brother Alman Dwyer, from the Province of Sydney, the matter recounted by Brother Richard Dunleavy (the Commissioner of that General Chapter) in a recorded interview with the author on 18 March, 2015. Brother Carlos Martínez Lavín, who was a member of the commission which considered that part of the draft Constitutions, reported to the author that the commission was in strong support of the wording proposed by Brother Alman (personal correspondence with the author, 28 January 2016.)

²² *Perfectae caritatis* #10: "The sacred synod declares that there is nothing to prevent some members of religious communities of brothers being admitted to holy orders by provision of their general chapter in order to meet the need for priestly ministrations in their own houses, provided that the lay character of the community remains unchanged."

²³ There were both active lobbying (including from the Roman Curia) and passionate debate at the Chapter about this subject which, as Brother André Lanfrey has detailed in Volume II, had been an open question since at least the 1930s. One capitulant left the Chapter. Another was to leave the Institute. Brother Basilio, in order to remove all doubt concerning the intention of Chapter, asked the capitulants to vote twice – once to vote "no" on a motion that the priesthood be accepted, and once to vote "yes" that the priesthood NOT be accepted! (Brother Richard Dunleavy who was Moderator of this session which he described as "quite dramatic". Personal communication with the author, 12 January 2016.) Although, the matter was decided by the 1985 Chapter, any future General Chapter may re-open it.

7. Pope John Paul II receives the Capitulants of the 18th General Chapter (1985) in an audience.



recorded as formal rejections of major proposals before it, the other being a decision not to appoint a brother as Secretary to the World Union of Former Students. This latter decision was not one taken so much against that body which had been established at the time of the Beatification of the Founder, as one which indicated that the Chapter wanted to assist a nascent wider group that it called the “Marist Family Movement”. It envisaged that the Former Students Union would become integrated into this new structure.

Other topics that concerned the Chapter were the elections, formation, poverty and justice, the finances of the Institute, the General House, the desirability of having a document on the apostolic dimension of Marist education,²⁴ and the administrative tasks to do with the Chapter itself. A draft of a new “Formation Guide” was approved in principle, with the recommendation that a commission be appointed to edit a final text, and that this be implemented in the Institute with a view that a revised text, based on the experience of this implementation, would be presented to the next Chapter. The topic of “poverty and justice”, as it was being called at that time, had been a major one at the 1976 Chapter, resulting in one of the three documents of that Chapter that ended up in the hands of every brother in the Institute. The Report of the Poverty and Justice Commission to the 1985 Chapter detailed the significant progress that had been made in the intervening

²⁴ This came from the deliberations of the French capitulants in particular who were concerned with matters such as the place and means of catechesis, relationships with State schools, and the emphases of contemporary Marist education. It was not something taken up in a major way by the incoming Council, although in the intervening period a number of Provinces would do so in a formal way. The Council did, however, support the publication of a small book by Brother Gregory Ryan from the Province of New Zealand which described the qualities of the “Marist Educator”, possibly the first time this term had been used formally for teachers who were not brothers, other than in Brazil where courses had been conducted since the 1970s. The matter surfaced again at the next Chapter and became a particular part of the mandate of the following General Council.

nine years, both at the level of the Institute and in individual Provinces. Brother Charles Howard was generally recognised as the champion of this cause. Amongst his own comments in the Report, he argued that the initiatives for social justice and for a preferential option for the poor were genuine “calls of the Spirit” that “would bring LIFE” to the Institute.²⁵ Given his prominent profile in the Chapter of 1976,²⁶ his election to the Council and leadership of its Poverty and Justice Commission, and his place at the 1985 Chapter, it was no surprise to anyone that he was elected Superior General. It was an affirmation by the Chapter of the kind of emphases that he had been promoting and a measure of the confidence of the members of the Institute in his capacity to lead them further in that direction.

In his Closing Address to the Chapter, the newly elected Superior General focussed especially on the Constitutions, the “Gospel interpreted for us” and a “sure guide in accomplishing God’s will”.²⁷ He saw them in a line of continuity from 1863, 1922 and 1968, a means for the Institute to “choose life”. He turned especially to focus on the question of poverty and justice which, along with the calls for greater prayerfulness and a deeper spirit of interiority, was indeed a “clear call” of the Spirit to new life in the Institute. It would be a call that would “disturb” and “change” the brothers, too many of whom were, he thought, “middle-aged and

8. Brother
Charles Howard,
Superior General.



²⁵ *Report of the Poverty and Justice Commission to the XVIII General Chapter*, p.8.

²⁶ Brother Quentin Duffy in recounting the election of the XVII Chapter describes this prominence of Charles at the event. When Brother Basilio, after a personal three-day retreat, decided that he would make himself available for a second term, the decision as to who would be his Vicar needed to be taken. According to Brother Quentin’s recollection, the talk of the capitulants turned to make it a “two-horse race” between Charles and himself. As it turned out, Quentin was comfortably elected, something he interpreted as the Chapter’s affirmation of the government of the previous nine years. (Recounted in the transcription of interviews done in January 1999 as part of the *Oral History Project* of the Province of Sydney, pp.81-82.)

²⁷ *Constitutions* #169.



9. General Council elected by the 18th General Chapter (1985).

middle class". In strong language, he told the capitulants that the Institute needed to act vigorously against "incipient sclerosis".²⁸ The major document of the Chapter would be, of course, the new Constitutions and Statutes. It would be the first and absorbing task for Charles and his Council to finalise them, to have them approved by the Holy See, and to introduce them to the brothers of the Institute.

***Audace et Espérance* – the XIX General Chapter**

The title was quintessentially Charles Howard. It was much more a deep conviction than any catchy conference theme, one that he sincerely hoped would grip the entire Institute. Charles was not a leader to shrink from grand vision or from describing situations in dramatic ways. He also had a strong leadership style, one through which he sought to exert significant personal influence on the course of events.²⁹ In the Report of the Superior General and Council to the XIX Chapter – which was circulated well ahead of time to all the brothers of the Institute – he painted this picture of the world of the early 1990s:

²⁸ *Listening to the Eighteenth General Chapter*, pp.126-28.

²⁹ It was reported to the author in many interviews that Charles was particularly active in informal ways during an event such as a Chapter – slipping notes under people's bedroom doors in the early morning, seeking one-on-one meetings, signally his support to opinions and individuals.

*We live in a chaotic world where every day brings news of wars, massacres, massive injustice, economic uncertainties, corruption, rejection of institutions, including, often enough, the Church. We live in a time of massive cultural change, of religious and social upheaval to an extent rarely experienced in the history of the world.*³⁰

There had indeed been what the capitulants later described as “remarkable changes” in the world since 1985. They named, for example, the fall of Eastern European communism, the end of apartheid in South Africa, the peace accords of Israel and the PLO,³¹ the rise in nationalism and growing ethnic identity in Europe, the growing awareness of ecology and the fragility of the planet, and the “incredible developments in communications”.³² In his opening address to the Chapter, Charles proposed that the “turmoil” that had taken place in the Church since the Vatican Council was the “most fundamental since the time of the first Christians.”³³

Through such claims, perhaps contestable, Charles wanted to inspire and to evoke response. Building on the principles of identity and action that had been named at the General Conference in Veranópolis four years before, Charles focussed the capitulants pointedly on solidarity, the needs of the poor, and the call for the Institute to be audacious in responding to these.³⁴ The Superior General wanted the brothers of the Chapter to arrive in Rome with a heightened sense of the reality of the time in which they lived and some ideas for what it might imply for the Institute. In a similar way to the requirement put on participants before the General Conference, the capitulants of 1993 were asked to make a “pilgrimage of solidarity” on their way to the Chapter. The aim was twofold: to give brothers a broader view of the reality of the Institute than they would otherwise have from the physical and mental boundaries of their own Provinces, and to sensitise them to the needs very poor young people and perhaps provoke some response as to how the Institute and their own Province may be able to respond more effectively to serve those needs.

³⁰ *Audace et Espérance. Report by Brother Superior General and his Council to the XIX General Chapter.* p.1. The Report had been compiled largely by Brother Richard Dunleavy, with the assistance of Brother Marcelino Ganzaraín.

³¹ The Palestinian Liberation Organisation which, after the peace agreements signed in Oslo in 1993, recognised the right of the State of Israel to exist in peace, and was recognised by Israel as the representative body of the Palestinian people, something that the UN and most its member countries had long done.

³² Report of the Mission Commission on the Chapter, in *Acts of the XIX General Chapter*, p.16.

³³ *Opening Address to the XIX General Chapter*, p.14

³⁴ *Ibid.* p.20

*What the world and the Church expects us religious to be, first and foremost, are people of God, people of faith in God's love for all, and therefore people with a great love for others and with a special care for the unloved and the marginalised.*³⁵



10. Members of the 19th General Chapter (1993).

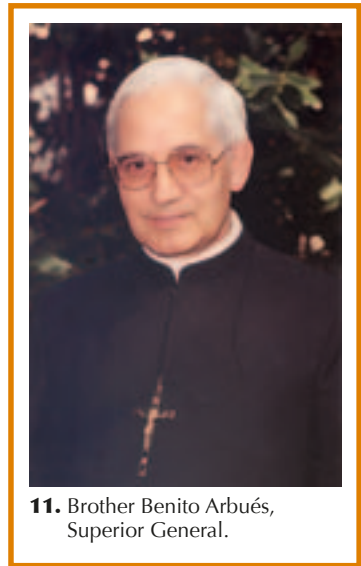
An effort to involve all the brothers of the Institute and to name the particular challenges faced by the Institute in each region was a priority taken on by the Preparatory Commission for the Chapter.³⁶ It signalled a Chapter process that was to be more directly connected with the ordinary members of the Institute than any before it. A comprehensive list of challenges was compiled identifying the most pressing issues facing the 526 brothers in North America (average age 61.6), the 1,653 in Latin America (average age 54.1), the 187 in Asia (average age 50.7), the 615 in Oceania (average age 55.1), the 2,068 in Europe (average age 57.9), and the 443 in Africa (average age 47.6). For North America the main topics included evangelisation in an increasingly secular world, the low number of vocations, and achieving balance in leading a religious life. Among the issues for the Latin Americans were formation and perseverance, putting into practice a greater commitment to the poor, inculturation, capacity of leadership, and involvement of lay people. In Asia, there was a concern for what witness meant in a society that was only 2.5% Christian, for vocations, for inculturation in a post-colonial age, and difficulties in making Christ the centre of their lives. In Oceania, the brothers were

³⁵ *Ibid.* p.21

³⁶ The members of the Commission were: Brothers Benito Arbués, Yves Thénoz, Pedro Herreros, Claudino Falquetto, Jean Thoullieux, Jeffrey Crowe, Eugenio Sanz and Étienne Rwesa.

focussed on how to provide Christian education through schools, self-sustainability issues for the brothers in the Pacific, secularism, and integrating an apostolic spirituality into their lives. The Europeans were concerned about maintaining vitality among an ageing group and their diminishing direct contact with young people, about responding to migrants and refugees, and the new evangelisation, their emerging identity as Europeans, and the impact of the opening of central and eastern Europe. Finally, in Africa, there was concern about problems that seemed to be endemic across the continent – things such as disease, drought, war and ethnic/religious/political conflicts, population growth and the proportion of youth, economic difficulties, and corruption – as well as formation, expanding the apostolate, and inculturation.³⁷ The list is worth citing in full for the window it gives into the diversity and spread of the Institute.

The factors that were to shape the Chapter also emerged from the experience of the General Council over the preceding eight years, a lot of which had been captured in the eight Circulars of the Superior General.³⁸ Brother Charles had made no secret of some annoyance he had at the end of the 1985 Chapter that the capitulants had not identified specific priorities for his Council to take up.³⁹ The Council, therefore, set about doing this for itself. Before the Chapter had ended, Charles and selected members of the new Council met with Provincials one-on-one and in groups, and also invited them to make written submissions, which a number did. From these meetings and documents, the new Council chose five key areas which it would seek to animate, through Circulars and other Institute publications, during formal visits of Provinces and in retreats and seminars, through the General Conference of 1989, and through personal letters and interaction. The first presented itself: the new Constitutions. The others were discernment, mission, formation, and vocations.⁴⁰ In one sense, the Constitutions permeated each of the other priorities, most especially discernment and mission. So, indeed, did mission which, Brother Charles explained in his Report, touched on apostolic spirituality, the centrality of evangelisation, discernment of priorities. In particular, it brought attention to the issue of solidarity and the “cry of the poor and needy” which he saw as “a call of the Holy Spirit.”



11. Brother Benito Arbués,
Superior General.

³⁷ *Daring in Hope*, preparatory document for the XIX General Chapter. 1992.

³⁸ See the second part of this section for a discussion of these Circulars.

³⁹ Brother Charles mentions this in the Report (p.24), and it was also confirmed by members of his Council in interviews with author: Brothers Richard Dunleavy (14 March, 2015), Benito Arbués (30 April, 2015), Alain Delorme (5 May, 2015), and Philip Ouellette (15 May, 2015)

⁴⁰ Report to of Brother Superior General and Council, p.24ff

From their efforts in leading these priorities and their other observations of the Institute, the General and Council summarised for the capitulants their views on the “positives” and “negatives” they perceived in the brothers. On the credit side of the ledger they named the way that Marcellin Champagnat was a “focus and model” for the brothers’ lives, a quality that led to three trends across the Institute: the value placed on being lay religious; a “quest for greater pastoral presence among the poor”; and a rediscovery of the place of catechesis.⁴¹ They were also pleased to note the strong sense of belonging among the brothers, the progress that had been made in improving initial formation, the growth in ministries among the “most neglected” with ninety per cent of new works being in this area, the increase in structured discernment in province planning, and the “beginning” of an understanding “in some Provinces” of the possibilities for the role of laity in Marist mission. Commendation on the last point was clearly somewhat muted.⁴²



12. General Council elected by the 19th General Chapter (1993).

⁴¹ *Ibid.* p.48

⁴² *Ibid.* p.51

On the debit side, the Council pointed to inadequacies in the ways communities expressed their religious consecration, resulting in their often being more known for their work than for their fraternity, openness and poverty:

*Our communities do not seem to witness sufficiently clearly to the evangelical values which give religious life its prophetic character.*⁴³

They felt there was too much individualism in communities, especially evident in the inadequate accompaniment of young brothers, in the role of the local superior, and in poor community discernment. They felt there was a need for significant enhancement of apostolic vigour in many educational institutions, in vocations ministry, and in how ongoing formation was pursued. They recommended that attention needed to be given to developing attitudes of discernment, the strengthening of solidarity (both *ad intra* and *ad extra*), and greater openness to the laity. It is interesting that this last point emerged so strongly towards the end of this Council's mandate; the Report insists strongly on "greater cooperation and co-responsibility":

*[the Marist charism] is not our exclusive property ... It is very likely that we will discover new dimensions of our charism and our spirituality.*⁴⁴

When the 126 capitulants gathered to begin on 8 September 1993, they were to agree on four main themes for their work, and organise themselves into working commissions, one for each theme: mission, Marist apostolic spirituality, solidarity, and formation. A fifth commission worked in the area of government and animation. The sixth key thread of the Chapter was the place of the laity, amplified by the novelty of there being, at the initiative of Brother Charles, a group of fourteen invited lay guests present for part of the period. By the time that they voted to close the XIX General Chapter, its delegates had agreed on a 30-point *Message* to the brothers (written in the singular with the greeting "Brother"), and had finalised summary reports from each of the Commissions.

The *Message* was written in language that was highly evocative, bold and daring in its tone, with a strong sense of imperative about it. It sought to inspire and enthuse so that the brothers, like Abraham, could be "fruitful even in old age".⁴⁵

⁴³ *Ibid.* p.51

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* p.57

⁴⁵ *Message of the XIX General Chapter*, #15.



13. Members of the 20th General Chapter (2001).

The capitulants shared with their confreres around the Institute the impact that their pilgrimage of solidarity had had on them, and the way that they had kept coming back to the “Montagne experience” as a “wellspring of our response today to the signs of the times.”⁴⁶ They singled out the identity of the brothers’ needing to be sourced in their being lay religious, Christian educators, working through “pedagogy of presence” and “family spirit”, with a simple lifestyle, and a Marian way of making “the motherly face of God” visible.⁴⁷ They named some specific matters that needed attention: moving away from activism to a spiritual life “that makes room for the presence of God in our life and the presence of life in our prayers”; living as community not simply as individual brothers; making “real partners of everyone who wants to share our spirituality and mission”; moving closer to the poor; being witnesses and catechists; moving out of places no longer aligned with

⁴⁶ The growth of the so-called “Montagne incident” in the collective psyche of the Institute had become quite significant by this time, but unchallenged in its historical veracity. A major reason for this was the promotion of the story by Brother Gabriel Michel after 1967. Between that year and 1989, over three thousand brothers visited the Hermitage, almost all of them addressed by Brother Gabriel. (*FMS Message*, No.4, January 1989). It was not a view shared by all. For example, Brother Charles – like Marcellin himself or his biographers – never gave a name to the “dying child”, and Brother Quentin a few years later reported (in the Sydney Province’s *Oral History Project*, recorded in 1999) that he was rather baffled by the emphasis on this one event because “Father Champagnat had his inspiration long before he met that young man.” But, by the end of the twentieth century, the linking of Marcellin to the death in Les Palais of Jean-Baptiste Montagne on 28 October 1816, and its significance for understanding Marist identity and mission, had developed a myth-like status. Later research (by Brother André Lanfrey and by this author) was to discredit the likelihood that Marcellin had ever met young Montagne, and to hypothesise that the incident with a dying boy was more likely to have occurred in 1818 or 1819 with another child in another hamlet. This is not to deny, however, the reasons for the Montagne story capturing the imagination of Marists: his ignorance of God, his marginalisation, his poverty, his lack of opportunity, and Marcellin’s immediate and personal response to the need, and so on.

⁴⁷ *Message of the XIX General Chapter*, ##5-7; 11-12

mission; and being open to solidarity beyond Province borders.⁴⁸ There was a strong emphasis on the Founder, “our life-giving root”,⁴⁹ and to the brothers’ being – in the words of Brother Charles’ Circular – “Champagnats for today.”

The reports of each of the Commissions, which will be considered further in other sections of the book, reveal the spirit and content of the Chapter in larger and rarer terms. For the principal themes of the Chapter, each Commission devoted part of its report to establishing principles and understandings, before making recommendations for concrete actions. Worthy of particular highlight are the lively worded statements of the Mission Commission concerning solidarity:

*This is the hour for us to accept, decisively and unequivocally, the evangelical call for solidarity.*⁵⁰

It was this Commission which compiled a rather fulsome report, written as were the next two, in Spanish. The Marist Apostolic Spirituality Commission admitted the “difficulties that we continue to have in regard to our lived spirituality”,⁵¹



14. General Council elected by the 20th General Chapter (2001).

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* ##16-23

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* #11

⁵⁰ *Acts of the XIX General Chapter*, p.30.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* p.32

and proposed ways to deal with this, one of which was soon to become three language-based “networks” for the development of Marist apostolic spirituality. The Formation Commission’s discussions and report were principally concerned with the Formation Guide which was formally adopted by the Chapter as part of the Proper Law of the Institute. The fruit of Animation and Governance Commission’s work, presented in French, were two terms that were to occupy a great deal of time and effort in the Institute in the ensuing decade: “restructuring” and “regionalisation”.

Another term which was to figure prominently in the discourse of the incoming Superior General and Council is found in the last sentence of the Message: “With your help, this *refoundation* will succeed.”⁵² The call of 1993 was for re-founding the Institute.

Choose Life! The XX General Chapter

In an address that was incisive and quite challenging, Brother Benito opened the Chapter on 4 September 2001 by speaking about how he understood re-founding, developing a theme on which he had also spoken strongly at the General Conference of 1997.

*When I speak of REFOUNDING the Institute, I am not suggesting that we Marist Brothers need to renew ourselves, to become better, to adapt in some way. Neither do I limit myself to saying that the [individual] brother must convert, pray better, be more poor, more apostolic ... I speak of REFOUNDING in its literal sense, and this touches the conversion of the Institute as a whole ... To refound is to effectively redirect the Institute along the lines of the insights and the intentions that Father Champagnat had ... To make our own the heart of the Founder ... To use his eyes to look with love on today’s world ... To take on projects that are more faithful to his insights ... To divest ourselves of whatever may distance us from that fidelity ...*⁵³

He went on to name six concerns he had for the Institute, again themes that had been present in his conferences and writings in the preceding years. His first concern was spirituality. Although he recognised that the language-based networks for promoting Marist apostolic spirituality had made some gains, these had been mixed. But Brother Benito’s show-stopping line – the same one that he had used at the General Conference and which had then appeared in his Circular *Walk Peacefully But With A Sense of Urgency* – was that it seemed to him that there was evidence of a weak faith among the brothers, “very little faith in the Lord”.

⁵² Message of the XIX General Chapter, #30.

⁵³ Opening Address to the XX General Chapter, 4 September 2001. #11 Acts of the XX General Chapter.

He pointed to growing secularism as a cause, and wondered if the brothers' faith, and their "watered down spirituality" were going to be adequate for sustaining the life and mission to which they were called. Theirs was a life that "made no sense" without "an intimate life with Jesus".⁵⁴ He named eight symptoms of this malaise that he had observed among the brothers: their resistance to change; their attachment to material, social and reputational securities; their diminished enthusiasm for apostolic ministry and their having less direct contact with youth; their poor perseverance, specifically those who were experiencing emptiness when they reached their forties; their weak practice of personal prayer and over-formalised community prayer; insufficient inculturation of the charism and the brothers' distance from the religious practice of ordinary people; and the brothers' being more admired for what they did than for their spiritual fruitfulness.

Brother Benito's second concern was integrally connected with his first: identity. The critical debates of the 1970s – centring on the nature of the religious brother, with the question of ordination being a touchstone for this – had evolved, in his view, into a larger confusion among the brothers concerning the purpose of their lives and whether or not brothers were necessary for the Marist charism to continue into the future. Some wanted to focus on the consecrated dimension of the brother's life, others on its lay state, others on education, others on being apostles to youth, and others on evangelisation among the marginalised. It was, Benito pointed out, all of these. But the current "identity crisis", as he called it, required an answer to the questions "Who am I? What is my purpose?" He was being not negative in this, he said, because the very process of searching for an answer could lead to a deeper understanding of what it meant to be a brother in today's Church.⁵⁵

Other concerns of Benito had to do with: the flip-side of inculturation which he saw leading the brothers to becoming overly secularised and accommodating, and so losing their prophetic edge; their being fewer and older, and more caught up in administration; their poor evangelical discernment and his judgement that "in general the brothers are losing their sense of the value of money"; and, lastly, whether restructuring could move from the first stage of simple new groupings to a second stage of being able to generate new life.

This address of the Superior General to the 117 capitulants⁵⁶ who had gathered once again in the Chapter Hall of the General House – although with their desks arranged in an elongated u-shape rather than in the serried ranks of previous gatherings – came at the end of the longest and most consultative lead-in to a Chapter in the history of the Institute.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* #14

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* ##15-16.

⁵⁶ The number was to be increased to 118 after the election of Brother Théoneste Kalisa to the General Council, the first African to be a Councillor. Brother Théoneste had been present at the Chapter as a translator but not officially a capitulant until his being elected.

The Preparatory Commission⁵⁷ had been active for the customary two years. It had prepared a prayer book to be used throughout the Institute and had carried out two detailed sondages – in 1999 and 2000 – each of which attracted responses from over three and a half thousand respondents, mainly brothers but some lay people also. This time, Africa and Asia had the highest percentage of return. Of the issues that emerged, the strongest was spirituality, particularly in the responses from Latin America. In the first sondage, the topic of solidarity rated second most important issue, followed by mission, vocations and the laity all with similarly levels of importance. After a detailed analysis was shared with the Institute, the second sondage again surfaced spirituality as the number one issue, followed by mission and solidarity.

Along with the range of other reports and sets of statistics in the hands of the capitulants was a document that had grown over the last two Chapters to be both comprehensive and informative: the Report of the Superior General and Council to the Chapter. The Council of 1993-2001 put together a quite extensive account of its stewardship, its analysis of the present state of the Institute, and its recommendations on four key directions that needed to be addressed to ensure the vitality of the Institute. This was theme that the Council had identified for the Chapter: *vitality*. Its slogan: *Choose Life!*

The detail of the Report will be taken up in other sections of the book. Some aspects of it are, however, worthy of comment for the way that they helped to shape the scope and focus of the XX General Chapter. “Vitality” had emerged early in the mandate of this Council as a touchstone for how its members sought to lead and to animate the Institute. In developing their plan for their first four years they crystallised their hopes for their work into this statement:

*To live out, with daring and hope, our mission of animating and governing the Institute, seeking an ever greater vitality (conversion, fidelity, transformation) at all levels of Institute life, based on the Gospel, our Marist Constitutions, the calls of the world, and the orientations of the XIX General Chapter.*⁵⁸

From this, the Councillors developed specific goals around five themes – mission, solidarity, Marist apostolic spirituality, formation, and restructuring – with the additional two themes of the laity and discernment weaved through the other five. Spirituality – as it was echoed in Brother Benito’s opening address and in the two preparatory sondages – was a crucial matter for the Councillors. They saw that there was radical surgery needed here:

⁵⁷ Its members were: Brothers Seán Sammon, José Manoel Alves, Juan Miguel Anaya, José Contreras, Christian Mbam, Peter Rodney, Jean Ronzon, and Robert Teoh. Brother Juan Miguel Anaya was named Secretary. As had become customary, the Commission included a mix of someone from the General Council and General Administration with brothers from a wide range of countries and cultural contexts, usually with one or two of relatively younger age.

⁵⁸ Report of the Brother Superior General and his Council to the XX General Chapter. *FMS Message*. No.29. December 2000 – January 2001.

*The XIX General Chapter judged our spirituality to be unsuited to our vocation as lay religious involved in active life*⁵⁹

Among other major foci of this Council were the writing of the new document on Marist education and the commencement of a comprehensive process of restructuring, both tasks with which it had been entrusted by the previous Chapter.

The Report devoted considerable space to a detailed presentation of “signs of hope, concerns and challenges” around six topics: identity, Marist apostolic spirituality, mission and solidarity, formation, animation and government, and restructuring. There was no shortage of hopes, concerns and challenges for each of the six areas; it was quite a long list. All of the concerns expressed in Brother Benito’s opening address were manifest in the Report, for example: issues around unity/integration of life; superficial spirituality; focus on doing rather than being; quality of prayer; poor discernment; too many brothers caught up in administration; a high level of resistance to genuine sharing with lay people; the collapse in new vocations; and adequacy of formation. But there were also many signs of hope to give reason to be encouraged, for example: the witness of the brothers killed in Africa in the mid-1990s, the energy generated by the canonisation of the Founder, the creativity and enthusiasm of so many brothers, the number and quality of new programmes and initiatives in spiritual formation, the many new solidarity projects, the vitality of youth movements, and the better preparation of formators.⁶⁰

The Council proposed four things to the Chapter that it felt would determine the future of Marist life:

- a. *To be passionate for Jesus and his kingdom since a religious has no other raison d’être. The Council was particularly insistent on the point because “on the whole we cannot say that Jesus is the centre of our lives”*⁶¹
- b. *To be at the service of the poor: “... are we where we should be, and doing this in the distinctive way the Founder dreamt for us?”*⁶²
- c. *To be a community of brothers who follow Jesus as Mary did, with Marian attitudes of openness to the Spirit and to the world, humility, and discreet service*
- d. *To be with lay people, welcoming the variety of possibilities that is opened for the brothers and to develop the brothers’ distinctive place.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* #2.1

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* ##3.1-3.6

⁶¹ *Ibid.* p.29

⁶² *Ibid.* p.42

Armed with this Report, the results of surveys, other submissions from the Marist Apostolic Spirituality Commission, the Finance Commission, the Bureau of International Solidarity, sundry other documents, as well as their own experience of the Institute (and, for many, an immersion in another part of the Institute on the way to the Chapter), the capitulants were ready to begin their work. They opted for a classic SEE-JUDGE-ACT methodology of group discernment,⁶³ dividing most of their time in two: 13-25 September for the SEE-JUDGE phase (during which time the 18 lay participants were actively part of the process); and 25 September to 11 October for the ACT phase.⁶⁴

Five calls were discerned from the SEE-JUDGE phase,⁶⁵ and accepted by formal votes of the Chapter:

- a. *to centre the brothers' lives and communities in Jesus Christ like Mary, with passion and enthusiasm, and to implement processes of human growth and conversion which promote this;*
- b. *to revitalise communities so that they might be places of brotherhood, simplicity and Gospel life in service of our mission;*
- c. *to deepen the brothers' understanding of the specific identities of brothers and lay Marists, in sharing life: spirituality, mission, and formation*
- d. *to go forward, brothers and lay persons together, in a clear and decisive way, drawing closer to the poorest and most marginalised of young people, through new ways in education, evangelisation and solidarity;*
- e. *to create structures of animation and government, at all levels, that would foster the vitality of the Institute.*

The discernment was thoughtfully and thoroughly done, with each call aligned to a Scriptural reference. These were seen to be five expressions of the single theme of the *vitality of the Institute*, one that could also be captured by the Chapter slogan "Choose Life!"⁶⁶ For the ACT phase, a working Commission was formed for each of the five calls, in order to define the call further, to identify signs of vitality that were life-giving for the Institute, and to propose choices for life which

⁶³ This methodology of Catholic social transformation, developed first by Belgian Cardinal Joseph Cardijn in the early twentieth century and given Papal affirmation by John XXIII in *Mater et magistra* and by the Council in *Apostolicam actuositatem*, came to be widely used by Church movements in various parts of the world, notably by the Basic Christian Communities of Latin America

⁶⁴ Before this, there was an introductory three-day phase which finished with the election of the Central Commission, and after it a two-day concluding phase. In addition, there were two days to benefit from the coincidence of the four General Chapters of all the Marist Institutes to come together – one to discuss their mutual heritage, and another for an audience with Pope John Paul II at Castel Gandolfo.

⁶⁵ The Chapter did not see these five as an exhaustive list, but as a way of guiding the next phase of the Chapter's work. (Brother Peter Rodney, personal communication with the author, 27 February 2016).

⁶⁶ *Acts of the XX General Chapter*, pp.19-20.

were put to vote for acceptance by the whole Chapter before being referred to a four-person writing team. The resulting document – what the capitulants called the “sole message” of the Chapter – was written to each brother.⁶⁷ It was a lengthy piece, comprising fifty-one articles, quite longer and more detailed than the communiqué of either the XIX Chapter before it or the XXI Chapter after it. A shorter supplementary letter of just three-and-a-half pages was written to all members of the worldwide Marist family.⁶⁸ Communication before, during and after the Chapter was the most extensive of any in the history of the Institute. In addition to all that was formally printed and distributed in documents, it is worthy of highlight that this was the first General Chapter of the internet age. With the energetic and diligent attention of Brother Lluís Serra, Director of Communications, the Institute’s website became the source of daily bulletins and updates. Marists all around the world could, for the first time, follow the daily progress of the Chapter and, through the ease of electronic communication, stay in touch more readily than ever before with the capitulants.

The final message began by setting some context, one notable aspect of which was the terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre in New York City and three other targets in the USA on 11 September, just days after the start of the Chapter. This had focussed their attention of the impact on young people of issues such as



15. Superiors General of the four Marist branches at the audience with Pope John Paul II (2001) during the 20th General Chapter.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* pp.21-40. The base text was written in French.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* pp.41-44. The base text was written in Spanish.

terrorism, economic injustice, insecurity and religious intolerance. It was a world in which young people were already negatively affected by other factors such as great inequities of opportunity, exploitation of resources, secularism, violence, family breakdown, moral decline, social fragmentation, the denial of basic education to more than 110 million children, and illiteracy among 880 million adults. There were also many signs of hope, of course. It all made the Marists' "mission as educators [to be] more relevant than ever."⁶⁹

In their global analysis of the Institute, the capitulants had been encouraged by a number of "signs of life": the ways in which Marist apostolic spirituality was being better understood and lived; the number of new brothers' communities that were "flexible, open, brotherly, and alert to the needs of the Church"; the increased sharing of the charism with lay people; progress in the area of solidarity; and increasing inter-province and regional cooperation, most evident in the preparations for restructuring and openness to it. On the other hand, they were worried by the brothers not always having a passion for Jesus, and a weakness of faith that was not always strong enough to support their lives and mission. In saying this, they were repeating the assessment of Brother Benito, almost verbatim. To this concern they added a further four: communities not always being places that nurtured human growth; the brothers who were questioning the value and purpose of their own vocation in the context of greater lay involvement and the responsibility being entrusted to laity; inadequate discernment in ministries, noting that their "preferential option for the poor is an unfinished task"; inadequacies in structures for government, animation, and in preparation of future leaders.⁷⁰

The recommendations were grouped into five sections: those to the brothers individually, to communities, to administrative units, and two sets for the General Council – one comprising six recommendations and the other detailing seven Capitular decisions for the new Council to implement. The whole document was flavoured by the imperative and urgent tone that is not unusual for such communications after the intensity of almost two months in Chapter. With faith and confidence, it urged the brothers to "put out into the deep water" and to "cast our nets for a catch", and to do this "without delay".⁷¹ First among the recommendations to the brothers concerned the importance for them to practise discernment. The brothers were also encouraged to share their lives more openly, to be creative in their evangelising, to get out of their offices to renew their direct apostolic presence among young people, and to promote vocations. Most of the recommendations to communities were to do with Marist spirituality and Marian attitudes.

⁶⁹ Message of the XX General Chapter, #9. In *Acts of the XX General Chapter*.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* #10

⁷¹ *Ibid.* #51

The leaders of Provinces and Districts had a long list of recommendations to consider, concerning formation, accompaniment, discernment, co-responsibility and empowerment of lay people, evangelical transformation of educational institutions and attention to the most needy of young people, and inter-province cooperation.⁷²

Quite tellingly, five of the six recommendations to the General Council had to do with the laity, including the specific character of the lay people vis-à-vis the brother, as Marists together. The place and role of the laity in Marist life and mission had emerged as a major priority at the Chapter, even more so than seems to have been the case in the preparatory phase. From the discussions and debates during the weeks of the Chapter, it became evident that there was quite a range of experience of this across the Institute, and considerable differences of readiness, willingness and even capacity to advance the matter. The eighteen lay participants who, in a step further than in 1993, had actually participated in the work of the Chapter rather than passively observing, had written their own message while there. In it they assured the brothers that they could “rely on us” and they named three challenges: clarification around lay Marist identity; the building of healing communities that afforded “new ways of being Marist”; and greater co-responsibility in mission, including lay leadership and lay initiatives.⁷³ Taking this forward, the capitulants recommended to the new Council that it study new ways of belonging as a Marist, including the possibility of trialling some *ad experimentum* arrangements, with a view to its then making a recommendation to the XXI Chapter. They also recommended there be new structures for formation for lay people and brothers together, for the inclusion of lay people in commissions and assemblies, and for more effective ways for sharing and communicating between brothers and lay Marists.⁷⁴

The decisions of the Chapter formally left to the Council to take forward covered seven areas: the new document on Marist education (*In the Footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat, A Vision for Marist Education Today*)⁷⁵ which had been formally adopted; the continued fostering of Marist apostolic spirituality; formation for leaders; a revision of Chapter 4 of the Constitutions; accompaniment of Provinces in their plans for the evangelical use of material goods; structures, formation, cooperation and advocacy (although that precise term is not used) for the shared mission of brothers and lay among the poorest and most marginalised; new forms of Marist presence and solidarity. The key priorities are again evident: spirituality, evangelisation, lay partnership, formation, and solidarity.

⁷² *Ibid.* ##42-45.

⁷³ Message of the Lay Observers, 25 September 2001. In *Acts of the XX General Chapter*, pp.138-39.

⁷⁴ Message of the XX General Chapter, #47. In *Acts of the XX General Chapter*.

⁷⁵ Also referred to in this book as *The Marist Educational Mission*

In his closing address to the Chapter, the new Superior General, Brother Seán Sammon, centred his remarks on three issues: spirituality, identity, and lay partnership. Drawing from the writings of Canadian theologian Ronald Rolheiser OMI, and using a line to which he would return often during his Generalate, Seán proposed to the departing capitulants that their spirituality was their answer to the question: “What do I do with my passion?” With reference to both Mary and Marcellin, and the basis of religious life to be found in seeking God, he named three factors working against the spiritual lives of the brothers: their activism, which for some “borders on the pathological”; their preoccupation with efficiency “that does violence to a listening heart”; and a restlessness that “bears little or no fruit”. In a freshness of expression with which brothers were soon to become familiar, Seán approached the issue of identity – which was to be one of his most frequent topics – by quoting English Dominican Timothy Radcliffe’s observation that many religious today were like “blacksmiths in a world of cars”, running around looking for something to do. Again he suggested three things the brothers needed to do to reformulate their identity in today’s world and Church: a discernment process around a radical dependence on Jesus and commitment to his mission; the re-establishment of the brothers’ presence primarily among poor children and young people – an imperative that Seán was to keep putting to the brothers in terms that were arguably more unequivocal than any Superior General before or since; and decisions around directing the considerable resources of the Institute towards evangelisation. The final theme of his address concerned what was then being described as “lay partnership”, an imperative that now was the time to embrace. He left the capitulants focussed on the mission of bringing to poor children and young people the Good News that “Jesus Christ is the answer to the question that is every human life”.

A specific mandate given to the new General Council was a request for a new document on Marist spirituality, as the previous Council had overseen the publication of a document on Marist education. A recognition of the centrality of a well-articulated and distinctive spirituality to Marist life and mission in the contemporary world had been gathering momentum for several decades. During this Chapter, Pope John Paul II, speaking to the Marists in the language of their Founders, had given impetus to this by urging them “to make visible” the presence of Mary “in an original and specific way” and to do this by developing a Marian attitude – something he judged to be characterised by joyful availability to the Holy Spirit, unshakeable confidence in the Word of the Lord, spiritual growth into Christ’s mysteries, and a motherly attentiveness especially to the smallest.⁷⁶ In doing this, the Pope said, they should look to education as their missionary priority.

⁷⁶ Address of Pope John Paul II to the men and women religious of the Institutes of the Marist Family, #3. In *Acts of the XX General Chapter*.

New Hearts for a New World – The XXI General Chapter

The eighty-six delegates to the 2009 Chapter – the smallest number since 1932 – arrived in Rome with one slogan and left with an entirely different one thirty-three days later. It was a Chapter of a few surprises. Each General Chapter develops its own character and its own approaches to the questions of the moment; for the twenty-first in the history of the Institute the catch-cry was “newness”: new hearts, new world. Someone suggested that a new tent might also be needed, rather than a simple widening of the existing one. Arguably, many of the issues were the same but, as always, it was a different group of people who were wrestling with them, and they would bring the freshness of their own eyes and their peculiarity of their own experience to them.

Once again, in conformity with the provisions of the Institute’s Statutes, a Preparatory Commission had been at work for two years beforehand.⁷⁷ It met seven times before the Chapter and developed a highly consultative and engaging method for involving Marists across the Institute. Because of the high degree of involvement of so many people during eighteen months, the capitulants agreed that they would need a period of less than five weeks in Rome.⁷⁸ The Commission set to work to develop resources and materials that included a brief discussion paper (*On the Road to the XXI General Chapter*), a logo and slogan, and a pilgrim calendar that invited Marists to accompany the journey from twelve months ahead of the official start. By the term “Marists”, the Commission deliberately sought to include not only the brothers, but also members of fraternities in the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family, teachers and others in Marists ministries, young people in Marist youth movements, parent groups and others. Facilitators were nominated for each administrative unit, and members of the Commission became directly involved by staying in personal contact with these facilitators and by taking responsibility as Coordinators of the different regions. The process built up from local gatherings, to Provincial/District assemblies, and eventually to the elected capitulants from each region meeting to compose a letter to the Chapter on behalf of the region. In addition, once the capitulants had been elected, three pre-Chapter commissions set to work on Animation and Government,⁷⁹ Finances,⁸⁰ the

⁷⁷ Its members were: Brothers Graham Neist; Albert Nzabonaliba; João Carlos do Prado; Lindley Sionosa; Josep Maria Soteras; Carlos Vélez; Maurice Berquet; Luis García Sobrado; and Seán Sammon. Brother Teodoro Grageda was named as its full-time Secretary

⁷⁸ Respondents in the first phase of the process included 464 communities representing 2,483 brothers, 162 groups of Marist lay people (2,072 people), 71 Province Commissions or Councils (556 people) and 62 groups of Marist youth (816 people). The second phase involved the capitulants themselves meeting regionally. *Acts of the XXI General Chapter*. p.11

⁷⁹ Brothers Peter Rodney (co-ordinator), Antonio Giménez, Josep Maria Soteras, Maurice Tailde-man, John Klein, Claudino Falchetto, Demetrio Espinosa, Lawrence Ndawala, Michael De Waas, and Jeffrey Crowe.

⁸⁰ Brothers Maurice Berquet (co-ordinator), Julian Casey, Manny De Leon, Nicholas Banda and Víctor Preciado (Econome General)

Revision of the Constitutions and Statutes.⁸¹ All capitulants were encouraged to make contact with one another by use of email, although in practice this was more limited. The preparatory phase was well augmented, nonetheless, by frequent and detailed coverage of preparations via the Institute website, with thirty-five separate updates on progress, including fifteen accounts of various Provincial and regional gatherings.

In a significant initiative, the Commission decided that it would prefer a Chapter marked by:

*fraternal dialogue, open to the different realities of our Institute; a style inspired by an incarnational model which seeks to reach agreements reflecting the different voices of the Institute. For that, it will be necessary to achieve a climate of confidence and openness.*⁸²

To that end, in a major departure from past practice, it opted to plan for a consensus approach to discernment and decision-building during the Chapter (and before it), based on a methodology developed by the UK-based Grubb Institute. Dr Bruce Irvine from that consultancy group assisted the Commission with its own meeting, and continued as a resident adviser to the Central Commission of the Chapter. The old Chapter Hall was substantially refurbished to allow for ten-person round tables on a level floor surface. The sharp and sometimes polarising dynamic of the “parliamentary system” that had been used in previous Chapters was left behind, to be replaced with this gentler and more inclusive approach. The displaying of green, yellow and red cards by the participants became a feature of the plenary sessions of the Chapter.⁸³

⁸¹ Brothers Antonio Ramalho (co-ordinator), Juan Miguel Anaya, Antoine Kazindu, Eduardo Navarro and Robert Teoh. This Commission had to hand the Report of the team that had been commissioned to revise Chapter 4 of the Constitutions at the specific request of the previous Chapter. As it turned out, the XXI Chapter felt that Chapter 4 could not be revised independently of a revision of the entire document, something it requested the new General Council to undertake. This was initiated in 2014, with a process for Institute-wide consultation planned by a Commission comprising Brothers Emili Turú SG, Joseph McKee VG, John Hazelman (Pacific), Adnan Fischer (Rio Grande do Sul), Diogène Musine (East Central Africa), Patrick McNamara (United States), Juan Ignacio Fuentes (Cruz del Sur), António Leal (Compostela) and Nicholas Fernando (South Asia). A resource booklet was produced called “Stories of the Journey, told around the fire”. It sought to engage brothers in sharing their experience of living their consecration as brothers. With the results of that consultation to hand, a new commission was established to undertake the re-writing. It met for the first time in November 2015: Brothers Josep Maria Soteras (General councilor coordinator), Tony Clark (Australia), Eduardo Navarro de la Torre (México Occidental), Albert Nzabonaliba (East Central Africa), António Leal (Compostela) and Antonio Peralta (Santa María de los Andes).

⁸² From the website update on the 7th Meeting of the Preparatory Commission, 22 June 2009.

⁸³ In fact, it was up to the capitulants themselves to decide on their preferred meeting style once they had gathered. The rules for the old “parliamentary” approach – with its time-limited individual speeches to the whole assembly, the putting of motions, and formal voting – was fully explained to the capitulants by Brother Juan Miguel Anaya, but was never taken up during the five weeks of the Chapter.



The life and work of the Chapter were also considerably enhanced, and to some extent shaped, by a creative “animation team” which had been appointed the previous March and which worked before and during the Chapter.⁸⁴ In particular, the visual imagery of Brother Tony Leon, who painted with amazing alacrity overnight, helped the capitulants to ponder on the directions that were emerging. His images of Marcellin and Mary setting out in haste became emblematic of the Chapter itself and were used for years afterwards across the Marist world.

The Report of the Superior General and Council was once again a rich source of input, not only for the capitulants themselves but also for the many thousands of other Marists across the world who became actively involved in the preparatory phase. Although the report, like those before it, provided a comprehensive summary of the foregoing eight years, the way the Council had organised its own life and work, the ways by which the mandates of the XX Chapter had been progressed, the initiatives that had been taken, the personnel involved, an analysis of the state of the Institute, and recommendations, the document presented itself differently from any that had proceeded it. Most clearly it did this in its use of visual imagery. The photos and the graphic design of the report reflect a Marist world of breadth, complexity, and vitality. The prominence of lay Marists is arresting. Through more than eighty pages, the report presented a detailed analysis in terms of the five calls to vitality from the previous Chapter. The Council saw that progress had been made in all five areas, but there was much more that could be done. An emphasis on the centrality of spirituality in the living of the consecrated life, and also the lay Marist life, had been a particular priority for this Council. The publication of *Water from the Rock* had helped in this regard, but it was judged that there was much more to be done in spiritual formation for both brothers and lay Marists.

⁸⁴ Brothers Afonso Levis, Tony Leon, Albert Nzabonaliba, and Balbino Juárez made up this group.

In terms of the brothers in particular there was a concern about the “shallowness and superficiality” of some of the post-novitiate programmes, and too much of an “a la carte” approach to ongoing formation that had become “selective and individualistic”, contributing to a “weakening of faith” and a “diminished sense of consecration”.⁸⁵ This seemed functionally related to an underlying and continuing confusion around purpose and identity, and about what was of essential importance for the brothers of today.

Commentary on the areas of growth and challenge in community life covered eight areas. The Councillors noted that, from their visits, they had observed that the communities which showed most vitality tended to have a number of traits in common: their fidelity to community practices (prayer, meals, and time together); a community life plan where being “centred on Jesus” was explicitly addressed; hospitality and welcome to young people; the habitual sharing of faith; simplicity; and a mission-centeredness. In other places they had observed a growing “pernicious understanding” of community as only having a social dimension rather than a religious or prophetic one, and a “pervading individualism”. Formation for leaders was essential, but it noted there were “remarkable differences” among Provinces as to how they used or did not use the learnings of their participants in community animators’ courses that had been run at Nemi and El Escorial in 2005.⁸⁶

The Council commented on the differential progress of involvement with lay people across the Institute, ranging from considerable to very little. The Council itself had invested significantly in this area, through the establishment of the Bureau of the Laity after the 2005 General Conference under Brother Pau Fornells and the generation of the document *Gathered Around the Same Table*. The Council admitted, however, that it had not adequately attended to its mandate to do a study on new ways of belonging to the Institute and possible juridical structures.⁸⁷ It noted that the International Mission Assembly spoke of new forms of connection “to the charism” rather than “to the Institute”.⁸⁸ This important nuance of conceptualising today’s Marists was to become more significant in the years after the XXI Chapter.

The longest section of the Report concerns Mission and Solidarity. The Council’s emphasis had been on the XX Chapter’s call to “draw closer to the poorest and most marginalised of young people”, and it believed that there had been “significant advances”. While it noted that the meaning of the phrase “preferential option for the poor” continued to generate “deep differences of opinion among the broth-

⁸⁵ *Report of the Superior General and his Council to the XXI General Chapter*, 6 January 2009. pp32-33

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* pp.36-45

⁸⁷ An informative discussion paper by Brothers Juan Miguel Anaya and Pau Fornells was, in fact, written on this subject after this Report had been published and in time for the General Chapter, but it was not fully or officially translated from Spanish to all of the other three languages, and so it did not have the impact it might have had at the Chapter had it have been part of the preparatory phase. So, also the book *Gathered Around the Same Table* was published after much of the preparatory phase of the Chapter had been completed.

⁸⁸ *Report of the Superior General and his Council to the XXI General Chapter*, 6 January 2009. p.54

ers”, the treatment of the subject seemed to be more peaceful than in the past. Other pleasing developments were associated with the enhancement of efforts in many Provinces “to make our educational works centres of evangelisation”, the growth of Marist youth ministry in many Provinces, the work of FMSI,⁸⁹ a growing sense of internationality, and the Asia Mission Ad Gentes. In some places, however, it was “difficult to see how evangelisation [was] the priority and focus” of educational institutions. For the future, the Council saw there was continued growth needed in moving closer to the poor, becoming active in the promotion of the rights of children and young people, the work of FMSI, developing Marist youth ministry, and greater internationality through Mission Ad Gentes and the possible establishment of a Marist International Volunteer Service.⁹⁰ The question of how to act more effectively as a global Institute was taken up also in the analysis of the fifth call, a major part of which was restructuring.

The Report ended where it began, with spirituality. It was here that the heart of the brother’s identity was to be found, but the Councillors felt that generally the brothers

*... [had] not taken seriously the task of converting [themselves] to ‘spiritual masters’ ... the majority of our communities cannot be recognised as schools of spirituality ... Why is it difficult for us to advance in this area?*⁹¹

The Council left the capitulants with two images: an Australian painting of a pregnant Mary setting out for the hill country and a Lebanese icon of Marcellin building the Hermitage.

After agreeing to the proposals for their *modus operandi*, and mastering the technology they were to use,⁹² the first major task which the capitulants gave themselves was to discern what they understood to be the “fundamental call” facing the Institute. The majority of the first two weeks was given to this. The distilling of the concepts, images and words that best described this fundamental call was to continue to percolate through the whole Chapter. It became one of the four “work-streams” for the capitulants. On each round table there were capitulants who signed on to one of four work-streams, with the ongoing progress of these discussed by the table-groups, and a process of Chapter-wide consensus gradually built. This largely replaced the use of the separate commissions of previous Chapters. The other three work-streams were: Marist brothers and laity; consecration and religious life; Marist mission – new hearts for a new world. The fruits of these four work-streams, and the other buzz-words that emerged through the Chapter – such as conversion, new lands, urgency, communion, Mary – were crafted

⁸⁹ *Fondazione Marista per la Solidarietà Internazionale.*

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* pp.56-67

⁹¹ *Ibid.* pp.99-100

⁹² In another initiative, Brother Marcelo De Brito had supervised the setting up of a special wireless network for the Chapter, and the development of software to support the processes and internal communications of the Chapter. Most of the communication and the voting (except for the elections) were done electronically. Each capitulant was required to bring along his own device to allow this to happen.

eventually into the Letter of the Capitulants to “Brothers, Lay Marists and Young People”. It was the first time that the main document of a Chapter was targeted more broadly than to the brothers alone. The group which had been working on the fundamental call proposed four ways of representing it: as a text, as a slogan, as a prayer, as in visual images – all of which were published along with the Letter.

The Letter, drafted by a team of four,⁹³ and styled dialogically as a response to the Letters that had been received from the regions, was readily endorsed by the Chapter. It was one of four elements in the final “Document of the XXI Chapter”, along with the slogan (*Go In Haste with Mary to a New Land*), a section called “Future Horizons” (which elaborated on the Letter to list some principles for the three topics of new ways of being brother, communion/co-responsibility, and mission, and which proposed courses of action), and a summary of formal decisions that had been taken.

The Letter and the slogan were finalised and translated immediately so that their diffusion across the Marist world could be done as soon as the Chapter finished. Indeed, through the use of social media – another first for a General Chapter – the Marist world had been in close and immediate dialogue with the capitulants throughout the course of the Chapter. It was no longer the distant and secret business that it might have been in the past.

The presence of Mary in the Letter – as in fact in the lived experience of her through the Chapter itself – was stronger than perhaps any other communiqué from a General Chapter in the modern era:

*Mary made her presence felt in our assembly. She took us by the hand, revealing her maternal love and urging us to go in haste to a new land.*⁹⁴

It was a presence that had both a relational dimension and an exemplary one, for it called Marists both to go with Mary but also to learn from her experience of God:

*... God has surprised us with a visit, just like the Angel did with Mary at the Annunciation. For us, God has asked us to go out into a new land. Little and weak that we are, we’ve asked: “How can this come about at this stage of our history?” But our hopes have been buoyed by recalling Marcellin’s favourite psalm: “If the Lord does not build the house ...”*⁹⁵

⁹³ Brothers Patrick McNamara, Pedro Ost, Hipólito Pérez and Jean-Pierre Destombes – one from each language group. Their working language was French.

⁹⁴ *Acts of the XXI General Chapter*, p.49

⁹⁵ *Ibid.* pp.49-50



17. Members of the 21st General Chapter (2009).

◆ ... With Mary, we go in haste to a new land!
 ◆ We feel driven by the Spirit of God
 ◆ to go into a new land, to facilitate the birth
 ◆ of a new epoch of Marist charism.
 ◆ This presumes a willingness to move on,
 ◆ to let go of the familiar, to embark on a journey
 ◆ of both institutional and personal conversion
 ◆ over the next eight years.
 ◆ We travel this road with Mary, guide and companion.
 ◆ Her faith and openness to God's
 ◆ will inspire us to undertake this pilgrimage.
 ◆ This "new land" is an authentic renewal of the Institute;
 ◆ it asks of us a genuine change of heart.⁹⁶

⁹⁶ Ibid. p.51

There were to be three aspects to this “genuine change of heart” for Marists in the following eight years:

- a. *A new consecrated life, with a strong Gospel identity, that would promote a new way of being brothers.*
- b. *A new relationship between brothers and lay people, based on communion, for the sake of greater vitality of the Marist charism for our world today.*
- c. *A highly significant presence among poor children and young people.*⁹⁷

Although the complementary “New Horizons” section of the document – which was the direct product of the three work-stream groups and sub-groups – included a rather long list of sub-issues, specific principles, and concrete actions,⁹⁸ there remained a sharpness and simplicity to the outcomes from this Chapter. There was nothing especially novel about the three areas themselves; they were the same elements of any Christian life – personal conversion, living community, and sharing mission. But there was freshness in phrases such as a “new way of being brother”, a “new spirit of communion” and a certain forcefulness in expressions such as “we recognise the value of the vocation of the lay Marist”, “we recognise co-responsibility for the development of Marist life, spirituality and mission”, “we feel impelled to act with urgency to find new creative ways to educate, evangelise, be advocates for and be in solidarity with poor young children and young people”, and “we are called to have hearts and minds that are international in outlook”.

Taking a sounding from four Chapters: resonances, dissonances, and silences

An analysis of the documents from the Chapters of 1985, 1993, 2001 and 2009 reveals several themes which recur, others that are emerging or perhaps where the message is less consistent, and others again that perhaps are noteworthy by their absence or muteness. Any critical textual analysis will seek to examine what is being written, by whom and for whom, and for what purposes. It will be alert not only to the words that are written, but also to how a text tries to position the reader vis-à-vis its content, and also on what the text may be silent or muted. By a long measure, the most commonly addressed theme in the documents of these four Chapters is a concern with the spiritual vitality of the brothers as they lived out their religious consecration and, related to this, the essence of their identity and purpose as religious brothers. A second theme, but one that has evolved in its depth and importance is concerned with the nature and the priorities of the mission of the Institute, and specifically how the marginalised and poor youth are to be served. It has not, though, been a theme which has been voiced with an even

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* pp.51-55 and p.58

⁹⁸ *Ibid.* pp.60-65

or harmonious pitch. There have also been gaps and silences in this, particularly for an Institute whose mission has been associated principally with education: apart from a consistent concern for the place of evangelisation, Chapters have not been greatly concerned with other aspects of the educational work of the Institute, such as its quality or characteristic style or emphases. A third theme, and one related to each of the first two, is the question of evangelical discernment, at both the personal and collective levels. Fourth is an evolving understanding of who can be a Marist and the question of how Marists of complementary vocational states of life can grow in genuine *communio* – understood theologically, rather than functionally or sociologically – and share responsibility for the maintenance and development of Marist life and mission. Again, the musical notes sounded around this theme are not wholly in tune with one another. To push the metaphor a little further, it is perhaps more akin to a school orchestra where the musicians are learning to play their instruments and to interpret the score, than to the rich power and grace of a full symphony orchestra that has mastered a work and has perfected the contribution of each section, from the power of the percussion to the delicacy of the woodwind. A fifth theme, and one that has emerged possibly as the key to progressing each of the others, is Mary and the Marian character of Marist life and mission.

The documents of each Chapter have been written by brothers and, with the exception of the XXI Chapter, they have been composed primarily with other brothers in mind. This is not to suggest that lay people have been excluded from the concerns of the capitulants – quite the contrary – but they have not been the primary focus of their attention. Or, to put it another way, the Chapters' recommendations for enhancing the lay involvement and responsibility are recommendations about lay people for the brothers to take up. The Chapters, and the documents which have emerged from them, have been, for the most part, internal documents. There is, of course, legitimacy in this; the General Chapter is by definition a meeting of brothers, convened for them to reflect on their lives as brothers, to attempt to discern what the Spirit of God is asking of them at the present time, and to elect their leadership. It is helpful, nonetheless, to acknowledge this,



18. General Council elected by the 21st General Chapter (2009).

especially in the context of the brothers' becoming an ever-decreasing proportion of the larger picture of Marist life and mission in the Church.

The first theme of spiritual vitality has certainly pre-occupied each Chapter, and each Superior General and Council. From the first prayer-apostolate-community questions around unity of life of the 1970s, through the introduction of the new Constitutions and the active fostering of Marist apostolic spirituality from the late-1980s, to the nurturing of interiority as fundamental Marian disposition, it has been a nagging concern. Disappointment around the absence of the centrality of Jesus in many brothers' lives and a sense of personal, daily, evangelical conversion have been echoed through the decades, from the time of Brother Basilio to that of Brother Emili. Brother Benito wondered if this resistance to a radical openness to Jesus and commitment to the will of the Spirit reflected a weakness or even crisis of faith. For Brother Seán, the identity and purpose of the brother's life depended his centring his passions, struggles and hopes in his relationship with Jesus. Different words and phrases have been used, but the issues have been the same. Although the exit documents of the Chapters have tended to be a little more affirming and aspirational in their tone that the sometimes more pointed pre-Chapter remarks of the Superiors General, there has been no inconsistency in their theme: a brother's life has no *raison d'être* outside of a primary and intimate relationship with Jesus, and the radiance of this within and from each brothers' community, through each Marist apostolic presence, and in the Church and world at large. There has been less attention, in fact quite little until after the XXI Chapter, to the centrality of Christian discipleship in the lives also of other Marists, and the different ways this can be lived out in the wider Marist community.

There has been significant evolution through the four Chapters for how the apostolic lives of the brothers should be shaped and directed. Again, the language has changed – from that of “poverty and justice” of the pre-1985 Chapter, through that of “solidarity” from the late 1980s to the early 2000s, to a strengthening of sentiments that more exclusively focus on “poor children and young people” and begin to focus more on “advocacy” and “defence” of their “rights”. From the 1990s, and especially the emphases of Brothers Benito, Seán and Emili, the place of evangelisation has gained more explicit focus. Yet, each Chapter has wrestled with these matters: to what extent should the poor and marginalised be an integral part of the mission or, rather, its primary focus? to what extent should the work of evangelisation be concerned with bringing young people to know and love Jesus personally, or to what extent should it be bringing about the reign of God in a more anonymous way through the promotion of Gospel values such as solidarity, liberty, reconciliation, human dignity, and peace? Unanimity of opinion has not always been achieved. Additionally, the Chapters and their documents have not given extensive or nuanced consideration to the distinctive contributions of the different Marist vocations around these imperatives: is attention to the most marginalised the prerogative of the brothers distinctively, or the rightful locus of ministry for all Marists? to what extent can the apostolic presence and activity of the brothers be discerned independently of that of the wider Marist project? what might the role of religious as the “conscience of the Church” and its “living memory” – to use the phrases of Brother Seán – mean for answering these questions? These have not been much explored by General Chapters.

On the matter of Mary, however, there appears to have been a surer and clearer trajectory. It was Brother Basilio who first invited the Institute to make a “new space for Mary”. Her place as the main point of reference for the whole Marist project – and the brothers within it – has grown with each Chapter. From an almost peripheral consciousness of Mary, or at least an overly devotional one, capitulants have moved to identify with and through Mary, and to reclaim in a conscious and explicit way their own Marian identity. This is even more evident in the Circulars of the Superiors General. The prayer to Mary, which formed part of the communiqué of the XXI General Chapter is worth quoting in full for the way that it gives a sense of this:

◇ *Mary, you are our companion
along the way and the main inspiration
for our pilgrimage towards our Marist Bicentenary.*

◇ *Welcome into our hearts and homes today.
Your openness, faith and spontaneity
touch our hearts to be open in our turn to the Spirit,
the gift of your Son Jesus.*

◇ *As Marists of Champagnat, lay and brothers,
we desire to change.*

◇ *We look to you as model and companion
in living our vocation of following Christ,
with the joy, sensitivity,
love and energy you brought to educating Jesus.
You gather us all and unite us across the world
into one international community bearing your name,
a sign of communion to our Church and world.*

◇ *When we contemplate you as woman filled with faith,
your spirit of intuition and initiative
impels us, as it did Marcellin,
to be Good News for the poor children
and young people of our world today,
in “new lands”.*

◇ *In trust we pray, like Champagnat,
“If the Lord does not build the house...”
and we say, “You have done everything for us”.
Magnificat!*

◇ *With you, Mary, we go to the Father,
in union with Jesus and in the Spirit of Love.
Amen.⁹⁹*

⁹⁹ Acts of the XXI General Chapter, p.59

2.

THEMES IN THE CIRCULARS OF BROTHER CHARLES

The words of leaders, and the means that they choose both for the crafting and conveyance of their words, provide a window not only into the leaders themselves but also into the most urgent of aspirations and challenges, the most telling of achievements and shortcomings, of the communities they lead. No-one is better placed than the leader to have a perspective of the whole, to form a view about what needs to be said, and said at a particular moment. From the time of the Founder, each Superior General of the Marist Brothers has brought both heart and head to his words, and has written as a brother to his brothers. Their styles and foci have differed, as time and circumstance have required, but the Circulars of each of the Superiors General have all called the brothers to what it means to be a brother for their time, and to what the Institute more generally is being called to be and to do. Especially from the time of Brother Basilio, they have been Circulars written with a first-hand and a deep knowledge of the brothers on all five continents. In that, the Circulars provide their own story of the Institute, its concerns and emphases. The four brothers who have led the Institute since 1985 have each had a distinctive approach to the composing of his Circulars, each man quite different from the others – and each doing so through considered choices of content, method and timing. Of course, the Circulars represent only a small fraction of what each Superior publicly wrote and said during his Generalate, and an even smaller fraction of the way in which he led, responded to people and situations, and sought to influence the directions and priorities of the Institute. They do represent, nonetheless, an informed and strategic attempt by each man to name the issues of the moment and to propose the ways for how they should be addressed. When taken together they provide a revelatory narrative of these three decades of Marist history.

In marked and deliberate contrast to the style of his predecessor, Brother Charles' decided that his Circulars should be shorter and more succinct. Rather than the more characteristically Latin method of the extended and reinforced argument used by Brother Basilio, the first Superior General of Anglo-Saxon ethnicity preferred a more linear and direct way of writing. While some Brothers were reportedly dismissive of this approach and questioned its gravitas,¹⁰⁰ Brother Charles himself was more pragmatic:

¹⁰⁰ Reported by Brother Michael Hill in a recorded interview with the author, 16 October 2015.

*I changed the approach: a copy [of the Circular] to go to each brother; not too dense; not too long. While Basilio wrote good stuff, I think a lot of the Brothers would have never read it.*¹⁰¹

His approach was also differently pitched from that of Brother Basilio. In the years immediately following Vatican II, there had been a need to be more didactic in order to introduce the brothers to the theology and the ecclesiology, and the new orientations towards religious life that were to underpin its renewal.¹⁰² That having been done so masterfully by Brother Basilio, his successor felt freer to adopt a more pastoral tone. His Circulars were filled with vignettes of brothers with whom he had met. Of these there were many because, like Brother Basilio, he was on the road for much of the time and in direct personal communication with countless brothers; he visited over fifty countries in his first three years. While the subjects of the Circulars were each matters of great moment, the way of opening them up was grounded and accessible:

*In a real sense they were family stories ... and the brothers could resonate with them. This style reflected the personality of Charles ... There was something tender about his writings ... of the sensitivity and compassion that is [part] of our charism.*¹⁰³

The topics of the Circulars of Brother Charles defined his Generalate, and their contribution was generally recognised to have had a shaping influence on the subsequent direction and priorities of the Institute. After his death, in Sydney in 2012, a commemorative issue of *FMS Message* was devoted to his life and legacy. The greater part of the publication was given to a summary of his eight Circulars and, in a clear indication of their enduring relevance to the Institute, this was done by mainly Brothers who had current or recent responsibility for the subjects on which Charles had written over two decades previously.¹⁰⁴ Each one wrote of the way in which Brother Charles had been something of a trail-blazer in what he had proposed for the Institute and the continuing significance of his writing to their present day.

¹⁰¹ Brother Charles Howard, interview transcript, *idem*, p.23. It is also interesting to note that translations of Brother Basilio's Circulars did not appear immediately in all languages, another factor that may have prompted Brother Charles to write shorter and simpler Circulars. It was three years, for example, before Brother Basilio's final Circular on Fidelity was printed in English.

¹⁰² Brother Peter Rodney, *FMS Message*. No.42, September 2012, p.48.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.* p.49

¹⁰⁴ See *FMS Message* 42. Brother Alain Delorme (author, former Councillor General, and President of the Commission which drafted the Constitutions) wrote on the Circular on the Constitutions; Brother César Rojas (Director of the Brothers Today Secretariat) on Vocations; Brother Peter Rodney (Chair of the Spirituality Commission during the drafting of the document *Water from the Rock*) on Discernment and Marist Apostolic Spirituality; Brother Mario Meuti (Director of FMSI) on *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*; Brother Carlos Wielganczuk on Sowers of Hope; and Brother Javier Espinosa and Ms Ana Sarrate (Co-Directors of the Secretariat of the Laity) on the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family.

Our New Constitutions¹⁰⁵

Just as it had been the chief preoccupation of the XVIII General Chapter, the finalisation of the text of the Constitutions, its approbation by the Holy See, and its diffusion among the brothers was the first and absorbing task of the newly elected Superior General and Council. It was a deep delight for Brother Charles that the Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes not only accepted the document in its original French in October 1986, almost without amendment, but also was so high in its praise of it. It was certainly the fruit of an extended and intense journey of experimentation and evaluation that had begun back in 1965 when the first attempt at a revision had been met by the Provincials with what Brother Charles described as a “cold reception”.¹⁰⁶ The fourth draft of *ad experimentum* Constitutions were approved almost unanimously by the XVI General Chapter in 1968 after they had been laboured over article by article, an exhaustive seven-week process that was to be mirrored in the processes used by the XVIII Chapter 1985. The earlier document provided a basis for the new one, but there had been considerable recasting and refinement, a process that was further continued by an editing committee after the Chapter.¹⁰⁷ The result was a document marked by theological depth, Scriptural richness, post-Conciliar freshness, canonical robustness, structural balance, and linguistic elegance. It has served the Institute well in the decades since, Brother Alain Delorme noting that only three of the 171 articles have needed to be modified in the ensuing thirty years, and then only slightly.¹⁰⁸

After such a lengthy period of experimentation, reflection and debate, drafting and re-drafting, Brother Charles’ introduction of the new document to the Institute is rather brief; only twenty-pages of his Circular are devoted to it. For Charles, all of the toing and froing to come up with the definitive text was not so much a “technical exercise” but a “collaboration with the Lord”. The resultant document was now an invitation to personal and collective conversion,¹⁰⁹ a concept that has continued to echo through Marist documents. The reception of the Constitutions by the brothers needed to be “an affair of the heart”,¹¹⁰ something that could lead them closer to a life in Christ. The number of times that Charles mentions Christ and the brother’s personal relationship with Christ, and even the Pauline verses which he cites, are of striking similarity to the Christocentric themes and some of the very same Scriptural references of the first major doctrinal Circular in the Institute’s history – that on the *Spirit of Faith* by Brother François, written in four instal-

¹⁰⁵ *Circulars of the Superiors General*. Vol. XXIX. No. 1. 25 December 1986

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.* p.21

¹⁰⁷ This committee was led by Brother Alain Delorme CG (who had also led the Constitutions Commission before the Chapter), and included Brothers Quentin Duffy VG, Aureliano Brambila, Juan Moral, Alexis Paquet and Jean Thouilleux.

¹⁰⁸ *FMS Message*, No. 42, p. 45. During the same period, 89 changes have been made to the Statutes.

¹⁰⁹ *Circulars of the Superiors General*. Vol. XXIX. No. 1. 25 December 1986, p.27.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.* p.30

ments between 1848 and 1853.¹¹¹ For both Superiors General, to “know Christ”, to “have Christ”, to “live in Christ” is at the centre of the life of the brother, and the essence of the ongoing conversion to which Charles calls his confreres, so that little by little “Christ becomes the Lord of our lives”.¹¹² He focuses them particularly on Article 166, which recognises the need to be continually “converted anew”. He urges them “to read, study and pray” both the Scriptures and the Constitutions and, ever the pragmatic teacher, provides some concrete ways to do so through the practice of *Lectio Divina* and suggested methods for individuals and communities to become familiar with the new Constitutions and to internalise them. The Constitutions are to Charles an expression of the charism of Marcellin which the brothers have inherited and which, like all charisms, are nothing more or less than a distinctive way of living the Gospel. Fidelity to this charism is something that is incumbent upon all brothers, a “serious responsibility” they have to both the Institute and the Church.¹¹³ “Fidelity”, or creative fidelity, was a preferred term for Brother Charles to “vitality”,¹¹⁴ his recurring point of reference being the charism of Marcellin and the first brothers.

Vocations¹¹⁵

As he had done in his first Circular¹¹⁶, Brother Charles begins by locating the topic of this Circular in a period of crisis that was “unprecedented” in both “its length and severity”.¹¹⁷ Many of the Institutes novitiates were almost empty.¹¹⁸ The profound changes over four decades in society, culture and Church meant that

*religious life is caught in the pack-ice pressure of a variety of shifting values and emphases... [bringing] painful confusion, a weakening of identity, and the absorption of some false values of society.*¹¹⁹

¹¹¹ L'Esprit de Foi. *Circulars of the Superiors General*. Vol. II. Nos 1 (15 December 1848), 2 (16 July 1849), 5 (24 December 1851), and 11 (9 April 1853).

¹¹² *Ibid.* pp.26-28, and Article #166 of the *Constitutions*. It is interesting to note that discussion around the wording of the first part of #166 was one of the debates of the XVIII General Chapter: not all Capitulants were comfortable with the including of words in the Constitutions that recognised a shortfall of perfection in the brothers. (Reported by Brother Richard Dunleavy, interview *idem*.)

¹¹³ *Ibid.* p.20.

¹¹⁴ Brother Benito Arbués, *FMS Message*, No.42, p.32.

¹¹⁵ *Circulars of the Superiors General*, Vol. XXIX, No. 2, Feast of All Saints, 1987.

¹¹⁶ In *Our New Constitutions* Brother Charles claims that the Brothers were “living through a period of transition, probably more complicated and more difficult than any other in the history of the Institute” with the possible exception of the expulsion from France in 1903. *Circulars* Vol. XXIX, No.1, p.5

¹¹⁷ *Circulars of the Superiors General*, Vol. XXIX, No. 2, p.49.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.* p.72

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.* p.53

The causes were not to be simplistically addressed, and in a salutary warning Charles cites the research of Belgian Jesuit Raymond Hostie in *Vie et Mort des Ordres Religieux* where a typical life-cycle of religious institutes is proposed, based on the experience of the centuries.¹²⁰ As in his previous Circular, the key to avoid the “death” that is the fate of most institutes after two or three hundred years is to focus on the “fundamental importance” of the Founder’s charism and, in the case of the Marist Brothers, to heed that which Marcellin might have to teach the Institute as it faced this vocations crisis. The lessons were fourfold, according Brother Charles: 1. to believe in the vocation of the brother, and to feel thankfulness for this gift; 2. to attend to the importance of praying for vocations; 3. to have unshakeable confidence in God and Mary; 4. to take action in time of crisis.¹²¹ Again in a succinct and linear style, Brother Charles address each of these four intuitions: first he challenges each brother to appreciate his own vocation and to be willing to share the story of it with young people; second, he urges the brothers to invest genuine prayer for vocations; and third, he uses the image of the solidity of the rock at The Hermitage as a metaphor for the kind of confidence that should mark the brother at this potentially discouraging time.

It is in the fourth intuition that he is typically most expansive: what to do in practice. Among the strategies of an eight-point plan, he reminds each brother that he has an individual responsibility for fostering vocations. In line with new Formation Guide, he expects that each Province would have a formal plan for vocations ministry, and that this would include such key features as personal interaction with young men by the brothers, their skilled accompaniment of potential candidates, and fostering of apostolic youth groups. Of critical importance would be brothers’ communities which were vibrant and dynamic and marked by warm relationships, which prayed in ways that engaged young men, which were welcoming and invitational, and which were apostolic. In brief, the Circular was unequivocally in its proposing to the brothers that if they wanted young men to follow in their footsteps at a time when, at least in many western countries, they no longer seemed much inclined to do so, then they needed to witness to being the kind of brother that their Founder would have wanted them to be – in their spiritual depth, their warm fraternity in community, and their apostolic boldness.

¹²⁰ Brother Basilio had quoted the same research in his opening remarks to the General Chapter in 1985.

¹²¹ *Ibid.* pp.63-70

Discernment¹²²

In a small memoir written at the time of Brother Charles' death in 2012, his Vicar and successor, Brother Benito, identified discernment as one of Charles most characteristic emphases:

*Personal and community discernment was habitual for Charles. He introduced it as the style for the Council and above all in matters affecting dispensation from vows, appointments of Provincials and brothers in service of the Institute, formation centres, and important financial decisions ... More than once he postponed decisions, but at the same time he provided resources so that decisions could be reached in calm and peace ... From the start, he focussed the Institute on social justice and discernment.*¹²³

It is something to which other brothers who worked closely with Brother Charles recurrently attest.¹²⁴ It is also important to highlight the interplay of discernment, personal and institutional conversion, and social justice as an evangelical imperative. This was to become a theme of growing urgency through the Generalate of Charles, and even more so of Benito. The 1988 Circular was designed as a catalyst for introducing the practice to the Institute as a whole. As he and his Council began their mandate, Charles explains in the Circular that they named twelve main issues that they needed to address in the Institute, a number they reduced to five. The first four of these – vocations ministry, formation, the new Constitutions, and revitalisation of mission – would be guided by the fifth which was discernment, which Charles saw as a key to renewal.¹²⁵

Continuing the approach of the first two Circulars, Charles develops his argument by drawing heavily on the example of Marcellin, the spiritual dispositions of Mary, and the way that the new Constitutions give expression to both. He draws the brothers' attention in particular to Articles #38, #39 and #43 of the Constitutions to present discernment as something that was not some post-Vatican II gimmick or fad,¹²⁶ but central to the brothers' way of life as religious vowed to obedience:

*to discern is to endeavour to ensure that our actions and the pattern of our life, are in tune with God's living action in the world.*¹²⁷

¹²² *Circulars of the Superiors General*. Vol XXIX. No. 3. 30 July 1988.

¹²³ Brother Benito Arbués, in *FMS Message* 42, p.33 and p.36.

¹²⁴ In interviews with the author, other members of the General Council in Charles' time made similar comments: Brothers Richard Dunleavy (14 March 2015), Alain Delorme (5 May 2015) and Philip Ouellette (15 May 2015).

¹²⁵ *Circulars of the Superiors General*. Vol XXIX. No. 3. pp.104-06.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.* p.107

¹²⁷ *Ibid.* p.108

It was an enlightened way of understanding the vow of obedience, something that had been already extensively developed by Brother Basilio thirteen years previously.¹²⁸ Charles put it simply: it was Marian to discern, to model one's life on what Paul VI had called in his Apostolic Exhortation *Marialis Cultis* in 1974 the "attentive Virgin".¹²⁹ Again typically, Charles is drawn to translating this theology and thinking into quite practical strategies for the brothers to use. He outlines some concrete methods for individual and communal discernment, and names in rather grounded language the factors that can either assist or block genuine discernment. Drawing on the work of George Aschenbrenner SJ, who took the traditional Ignatian "examen" and developed into what he called the "Review of the Day", Charles put together a tiny pamphlet that would allow the brothers to fulfil what is asked of them by Article #72 of the Constitutions to pray over the day. The pamphlet – which, like the Circular itself – was supplied to each brother in the Institute, was printed in such a way that it would slip neatly into the brother's breviary or prayer book. Charles was nothing if not pragmatic. This little initiative was to introduce into the life of the Institute a practice that countless brothers have used and continue to use as an integral part of their day.

The Founder Challenges his Brothers¹³⁰

The bicentenary of the Founder's birth in 1989 was an anniversary that Brother Charles was determined would not be reduced to a nostalgic celebration of an historical event but, rather, could be used as an opportunity for the brothers to get to know Marcellin more closely and to be affected by his charism. He wanted them to encounter "a man of the earth, a man of God, a man of great love, a man of good sense."¹³¹ A revised and newly edited version of *The Life* was to be published, with a personal copy for each brother. In the General House, a new ceramic sculpture of the life of Marcellin by Brother José Santamarta was to be unveiled, a work that captured the zeal of Marcellin, his reaching out to youth, his enthusiasm and family spirit. By this time at the end of the 1980s, most brothers had benefited from the fruits of the renewed scholarship on the life of the Founder begun a quarter of a century previously and, at the initiative of Brothers Basilio and Quentin in particular in the mid-1970s, the recasting of The Hermitage as a centre of renewal. Already more than three thousand of them had benefited from a visit there during their renewal programmes since that time.¹³² Brothers all over the Institute were discovering that their Founder was somewhat different from the nineteenth century saint that the hagiography of Brother Jean-Baptiste Furet had portrayed. They warmed to him.

¹²⁸ *Circulars of the Superiors General*. Vol XXVI. No. 1. 30 May 1975.

¹²⁹ *Circulars of the Superiors General*. Vol XXIX. No. 3. p.114.

¹³⁰ *Circulars of the Superiors General*. Vol XXIX. No. 4. 20 May 1989.

¹³¹ *Ibid.* p.157.

¹³² A figure claimed by Brother Gabriel Michel, in *FMS Message*, No.4, January 1989.

One of the most efficacious means for coming to a renewed knowledge of the Founder was proving to be the publication of his letters. They presented an unfiltered view of Marcellin, and a compelling insight into his intuitions, his faith, and his love for the brothers and for young people. Brother Paul Sester had begun to collect these and to provide commentary on them two decades before, and by 1985 had published in French a collection of the 339 Letters that were known at that time to be extant.¹³³ Translations in the other three languages were soon to follow. With a second volume of references explaining the people, places and events mentioned in the Letters, prepared with the assistance of Brother Raymond Borne,¹³⁴ the Institute had a ready and rich resource for knowing and understanding the Founder more deeply. Recognising, perhaps, that many brothers may not be easily enticed into delving into this 1293-page tome, or even knowing where to begin, Charles chose ten of the Letters as the first part of his Circular.¹³⁵ The selection is interesting. They address the purpose of the Institute to serve young people in particular need, and they deal with the difficulties of some brothers and even of Marcellin himself.

The letters to Brothers Dominique and Barthélemy are to two quite ordinary brothers, less than perfect in so many ways; neither was someone who would have been considered for inclusion in Brother Jean-Baptiste's *Biographies de Quelques Frères* in 1868 as models of Marist life. Marcellin is both encouraging of them but also wise and sharp in his challenges to them. The choice of these letters is echoed in Brother Charles' choice of how to construct the second part of this Circular: a series of short testimonies of eleven anonymous modern-day brothers, of various cultures and ages, on the ways in which Father Champagnat has impacted on their own lives. What is named in their writing is the warmth of Marcellin, and his compassion, his fidelity, his simplicity, his relationship with Mary, and his humanness. Brother Charles invites each brother to reflect on the impact of the Founder on his own life.

In a charming little story of the "little Champagnats", as the students of the brothers' former school in Budapest were known in the 1930s, he suggests that it would be a "profound truth" for a Marist brother to be able to say "I am a Champagnat". In a phrase that continued to be used in the Institute for years afterwards, Brother Charles proposes to his readers that "We are Champagnats" today for young people, for the poor, for fellow brothers, for the Church, and for those who do not know Mary.¹³⁶

¹³³ *Lettres de Marcellin J.B. Champagnat, 1789-1840, Fondateur de l'Institut des Frères Maristes. Vol. I Textes.* Présentés par Frère Paul Sester fms. Rome 1985, Fratelli Maristi.

¹³⁴ *Lettres de Marcellin J.B. Champagnat, 1789-1840, Fondateur de l'Institut des Frères Maristes. Vol. II Répertoires.* Par Frère Raymond Borne fms et Paul Sester fms. Rome 1987, Fratelli Maristi

¹³⁵ The letters included were (according to the numbering used by Brother Paul Sester): 3 (to Father Gardette); 14 and 24 (to Brother Barthélemy); 42 (to Brother Cassien); 49 and 234 (to Brother Dominique); 163 (to Father Moine); 171 (to Archbishop de Pins); and 323 (to Father Pradier).

¹³⁶ *Circulars of the Superiors General.* Vol XXIX. No. 4. p.156.

Sowers of Hope¹³⁷

This phrase of Brother Charles, which he borrowed from Pope John Paul II, is another that captured the imagination of his brothers and continued to be used long after the period of his Generalate. The year of this Circular was one where the world was given reason for hope: the Berlin Wall had come down the year before; *glasnost* was permeating the countries that had been on the eastern side of the Iron Curtain, and the Soviet Union was on the brink of collapse; meanwhile in South Africa, Nelson Mandela had been freed after twenty-seven years imprisonment; contact had been made with the brothers in Communist China who were still alive and had shown inspirational fidelity to their vocation in all kinds of trials. Charles mentions these points of context, but he also draws the brothers' attention to other places in the world where hope was dimmer, highlighting in particular the civil unrest in Central America, and noting the killings of six Jesuits and others in El Salvador and tens of thousands in Guatemala. He was not to know that a Marist Brother, Moisés Cisneros who was Principal of Escuela Marista in Zone 6 of Guatemala City, would also be assassinated in his office the following year. Charles again looks to Marcellin for inspiration and guidance, and centres his fifth Circular again on the Founder. It is Marcellin, writes the Superior General, who prompts the brothers of today to be men of both mission and hope.

As a way into his topic, Charles quotes in its entirety a document from a group of Marist youth animators from the Provinces of Spain who composed a message to the brothers during their annual gathering, at Burgos in the previous July. Their letter, written in the middle of the Champagnat Year, was entitled "Marcellin Lives Today".¹³⁸ It is written with the strength of conviction and the open enthusiasm of the young: thanking the brothers for their simplicity most especially, as well as their educative presence, their sense of work, their family spirit, their love of Mary, and their following of Christ as Mary did; and expressing their own hope to be Marist animators who can minister alongside the brothers among youth in the Church. Charles draws hope from desire of these young people to be Marist "in a new and joyful" way.¹³⁹

Sourcing inspiration from the experiences of Marcellin, most especially in his times of darkness and trial, Charles develops the theme of hope in a deep and penetrating piece of writing, arguably the richest of any of his Circulars. He draws also on the lived experience of a number of brothers as well as on Scripture, some saints and mystics, and contemporary theologians. For Charles, hope is characterised by serenity, patience, audacity, creativity, courage, living the Paschal mystery in daily life, and in authenticity. It was a Circular that resonated profoundly across the Institute.

¹³⁷ *Circulars of the Superiors General*. Vol XXIX. No. 5. 12 March 1990.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.* pp.239-44.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.* p.240.

Towards the end of the following year, Charles commented on how pleased he was at the reception the Circular had received and the number of brothers who had written to him directly to express their appreciation of his words.¹⁴⁰

An Urgent Appeal: Sollicitudo Rei Socialis¹⁴¹



19. Brother Charles Howard, Superior General, during a visit to the barrio of La Paz, Bogotá, Colombia (1989).

The appearance of another Circular before the end of 1990 was less surprising for its being the second Circular in the one year than for its having taken five years for Brother Charles to write a major piece specifically devoted to the topic for which he was perhaps best known when elected as Superior General. Personally captured by questions of justice, especially after the 1971 Synod on Justice in the World,¹⁴² which itself had been preceded by the clarion call of the Latin American Bishops at Medellín in 1968, at the General Chapter of 1976 it was Charles who had been a driving force in the third major document of the Chapter, “Poverty and Justice”. Elected to the General Council at that Chapter, he became President of the Poverty and Justice Commission of the Council, with Brothers Arturo Chávez, Luiz Silveira and Javier Terradillos and, from 1980, Powell Prieur and Renato Cruz. He ensured the topic stayed as a major focus of

Brother Basilio’s Council, and was pleased that the Council established the Social Secretariat in 1977 with Brother Powell as Executive Secretary.¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ *Circulars of the Superiors General*. Vol XXIX. No. 7, p.341.

¹⁴¹ *Circulars of the Superiors General*. Vol XXIX. No. 6. 30 November 1990

¹⁴² Brother Charles reported that this was a significant event for him, and helped to shape his own thinking. Interviews *idem*.

¹⁴³ A detailed report of the work of the Secretariat and the Commission are in the *Report of the Poverty and Justice Commission to the XVIII General Chapter* September 1985.

Charles championed the emerging narrative around “poverty and justice” in the Institute, and even in the crowded agenda of the 1985 Chapter ensured attention was given to it.

The issue was well and truly pushing its way into the mainstream of Marist priorities by the late 1980s, particularly after the defining meeting of Latin American Provincials at Chosica, Peru, in 1984. His own involvement in Marist Africa is well attested. While Charles was attentive to all that was happening in these different parts of the Institute and, indeed, was proactive in fostering it through both his words and actions, this Circular remains his only one which is entirely devoted to the social teaching of the Church and its significance for the Marist Brothers.

Brother Charles does not shrink from naming the sensitivity around the issue. For some brothers, he says a little provocatively – perhaps with an eye to parts of Spain or Latin America – the promotion of the Catholic social teaching is judged to be little more than “watered down Marxism”.¹⁴⁴ But he challenges all brothers to see the present time as a *kairos* moment: the changing geo-political world order, the great North-South and East-West issues, and the Church’s growing commitment to a preferential option for the poor. While John Paul II’s Encyclical *Sollicitudo rei socialis* (1987), written on the twentieth anniversary of Paul VI’s *Populorum progressio*, is the trigger for Charles’ Circular, and in it he insists that “no Marist Brother should be ignorant of its contents”,¹⁴⁵ his scope is broader. He warms to his theme and becomes ever more insistent on it: the Institute – and each Province within it – needed to look at what a genuine option for the poor might mean for it.¹⁴⁶ It did not necessarily mean the abandoning of present schools and ministries – although some change may be judged to be good – but it did require that all brothers have contact with the poor, and to be evangelised by them. The Superior General was naming an issue that has continued to be something of a thorn that has taken up permanent residence in the side of the Institute. The language of the following two Generals was to become even more insistent.

The Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family¹⁴⁷

For the first time in the history of the Institute, a Circular of a Superior General was explicitly addressed to a broader readership than simply the brothers. “Dear Friends” is the salutation that begins Brother Charles’ seventh Circular, published in 1991, and his longest to date. It was also the most translated, arguably the most prophetic and, even with the hindsight of two decades, one that can be judged not only “ahead of its time” but also definitive for how laity are understood within the

¹⁴⁴ *Circulars of the Superiors General*. Vol XXIX. No. 6. p.297.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.* p.297

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.* pp.321ff

¹⁴⁷ *Circulars of the Superiors General*. Vol XXIX. No. 7. 15 October 1991.

Marist spiritual family to the present day.¹⁴⁸ The Synod on the Laity in 1987 and John Paul II's subsequent Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles laici* at the end of the following year had recently given both impetus and further definition to Vatican II's signature declarations concerning the universal call to holiness and the essentially missionary nature of the Church. Brother Charles and at least some parts of the Institute were well alert to this – with Provinces such as those of Brazil having conducted intensive residential formation courses for lay people in Marist schools since the 1970s, and the General Chapter of 1985 having asked the incoming Council to develop some concrete structures and guidelines for a movement to be called the “Marist Family”. It was something that was seen as:

*... an extension of the Institute; it is a movement of people who find themselves attracted to the spirituality of Marcellin Champagnat. In this movement, affiliated members, young people, parents, helpers, former students and friends deepen within themselves the spirituality of the Founder so they can live it and let it shine forth.*¹⁴⁹

Following the Chapter, a Commission had drafted Statutes and a Plan of Life (which are presented in the Circular and discussed in more detail in Part 4 of this book). What was novel was the use by Charles of the term “lay Marist spirituality”.¹⁵⁰ It was not, he said, to be understood by the brothers as a kind of “watered down religious life”,¹⁵¹ but something in its own right, complementary to the spirituality of the brothers. Charles anticipated a process of mutual enrichment between brothers and laity as Marists together, and cautioned the brothers about taking the superior role of “teacher” in this relationship.

*I want to emphasise the importance of this sharing with one another and learning from one another; it is a very enriching experience.*¹⁵²

One specific contribution to which Charles looked forward was the contribution of women in helping brothers come to an appreciation of Mary as a lay woman, a mother, busy in daily work and family, and, in all that, a disciple.

Several aspects of the new movement present themselves as being of paramount importance for Charles. First, it was essential for Charles that the movement be apostolic in character; its members needed to have an apostolic mindset and a readiness to become personally involved in apostolic endeavours. The Circular is bookended by references to the “new evangelisation” promoted at Medellín, and taken up by Paul VI in *Evangelii nuntiandi* (1975) and John Paul II in *Redemptoris*

¹⁴⁸ Brother Javier Espinosa in 2012 when he was Director of the Bureau of the Laity, in *FMS Message*, 42, p.62.

¹⁴⁹ *Circulars of the Superiors General*. Vol XXIX. No. 7. p.380.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.* p.389.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.* p.387.

¹⁵² *Ibid.* p.389.

missio (1990). According to Charles, this new evangelisation carried different imperatives for different parts of the world: in Africa, mostly just in its second century of evangelisation, a major issue was inculturation; in Latin America it was justice and peace; in Europe, the new social and cultural interaction of West and East; in Asia, dialogue with other religious traditions.¹⁵³ For Marist works engaged in the work of evangelisation in these various contexts – in schools and other social projects, and at the level of the Province - it was clear that lay people needed to be fully involved:

*When lay people are seen to be at the heart of our institutions, when they participate at every level, our institutions can be a more authentic expression of Church.*¹⁵⁴

He recognised that some brothers may be saddened or confused by this change, and this sharing of responsibility but he asked them to see it as one of the authentic signs of the times and as a call of the Church.¹⁵⁵

In addition to expecting the members of the new movement to be apostolic, Brother Charles judged it to be essential that they were in communion both with the brothers, and with the Church. And thirdly, of course, the movement needed to be prompted and led by a Marist spirituality. Spirituality, communion, mission – the three constitutive elements for the new movement. They have remained at the core of the discourse on lay Marists in the years since.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.* p.348

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.* p.373

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.* p.372

Marist Apostolic Spirituality¹⁵⁶

The last Circular¹⁵⁷ of the Generalate of Brother Charles was self-consciously a significant communication to his brothers. It addressed their very *raison d'être*. In many ways it was a culmination of a journey on which Charles Howard had been personally and closely since at least the General Chapter of 1976 which had called the brothers to a greater integration of life.

This was synthesised in what came to be known as the “PAC Document” – prayer, apostolate and community. In essence these were the same three things that Brother Charles had presented as the three dimensions of the Marist life in his Circular on the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family. They are, of course, the three elements of any life of Christian discipleship. His approach in this Circular is, however, somewhat more broadly cast, more discursive and multi-faceted. He comes at his subject from a range of angles – from the perspective of spirituality, from the call to mission, from the prism of the vows, through various theological and spiritual points of view, and finally with an eye to what he feels must be addressed for the Institute to have a future.

These different perspectives reflect key insights that emerged from the personal and institutional experience of Charles over the preceding fifteen years, and before: the spirit of the post-Conciliar period, most particularly its deepened understanding of mission and church; the urgent renewal of religious life, especially in its re-connection with the Founder's original charism, its apostolic dimension as described in *Perfectae caritatis*, and its re-casting of community life; the new Constitutions as an articulation of the life of a brother today; his experience as Provincial, Councillor General and Superior General and the thousands of brothers' lives with which he had intimate engagement; and all of this explored and refined through countless encounters and exercises of discernment, with the General Chapter of 1985 and the General Conference of 1989 in Veranópolis being significant among them. The result is a Circular that explores “Marist Apostolic Spirituality” under ten headings plus an “appendix”.

While each of the eleven sections has its own logic and integrity, the overall document is less cohesive or monochrome. It is more a garden of many flowers, bigger and richer than can be captured by any single schema or formula. This is amplified further with the Supplement of 1993 which approached the topic from

¹⁵⁶ *Circulars of the Superiors General*, Vol. XXIX. No. 8. 25 March 1992. A “Supplement” to this Circular appeared in July of the following year, written by Brothers Pedro Huidobro and Marcelino Ganzaraín (Councillors General), and Yves Thénoz (Secretary General), based on presentations they gave at the General Conference in Veranópolis in 1989. Although it was not uncommon for Brother Charles to include contributions from other brothers in his Circulars, there was a certain novelty in the Supplement in that Brother Charles made no contribution to it himself; even the introduction was written by Brother Yves.

¹⁵⁷ Technically, the last Circular was a short one issued in September 1992 convoking the XIX General Chapter of 1993. Other than a few words about the theme of the Chapter, it is mainly administrative in its content.

yet different emphases, specifically around the brothers' educative mission and their option for the poor and for poverty. All fourteen sections are essays on what it means spiritually to be a Marist apostle today. Each is a study in itself.

A key point may escape notice but perhaps it is the most important: by the beginning of the 1990s there is a readiness to describe and to own something that was called "Marist spirituality". It had not always been so. This is among the choicest fruits of the Generalates of Basilio and Charles, and their leadership of the Institute in the decades after Vatican II. "Marist-ness" was to be seen first of all as a distinctive and characteristic way of responding to God in love. This is where Charles begins his Circular. He then moves through mission (at some length), the vows, prayer, love, discernment, community, and living the Paschal Mystery. He finally leaves his reader in the same place he begins the Circular – with the new Constitutions. For him this document is "the best answer to the question, 'What is a Marist Brother?'"¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.* p.421 and p.520.

3.

THEMES IN THE CIRCULARS OF BROTHER BENITO

For a quarter of a century, the Superiors General of the Marist Brothers had chosen to use the Circular as a major means of exercising their leadership, and for bringing their influence to shape the directions and priorities Institute – a Circular each year during the time of Brother Charles and no fewer than twenty-five, of various lengths, from the pen of Brother Basilio. The Institute had no shortage of words on which to draw. Their successor opted to lead in different ways for the most part. There were just four Circulars issued during the time of Brother Benito, and one of these – the first – was an edited version of his addresses at the General Conference of 1997, while another – the third – was that to convoke the next Chapter. Each of the four is, nonetheless, a quite significant document, not lightly written or lacking a particular and urgent purpose. They are written with a mix of the deep empathy, piercing honesty, keen intelligence, unshakeable faithfulness, knowing experience, and warm humanity for which Benito was known. It should also be noted that during this Generalate, and in fulfilment of a specific mandate of the 1993 Chapter, a major new document was written on the Marist educational mission.

Walk Peacefully Yet With a Sense of Urgency¹⁵⁹

The theme of the General Conference that gathered in Rome in the autumn of 1997 took as its theme: *Now! Ahora! Agora! Maintenant!* The mood of *carpe diem* is obvious, and this was to be an insistent tone in the Circular of Brother Benito which resulted. It was also a Conference that gathered under the melancholy shadow of the violent deaths of no fewer than eleven brothers in Africa – Algeria, Rwanda and Zaire (now the DRC) – in the preceding years, including Brother Chris Mannion from the General Council. Indeed the Conference itself had been reluctantly transferred from Nairobi to Rome because of continuing African unrest, something which was a great disappointment to both the Council and to the brothers of Africa.¹⁶⁰ The tragedy of these events had reverberated around the Institute, but had especially affected the Superior General and his Council.¹⁶¹ So it was with

¹⁵⁹ *Circulars of the Superiors General*. Vol. XXX. No.1. 8 November 1997.

¹⁶⁰ Brother Jeffrey Crowe, who had become the Councillor General most closely associated with the brothers of Rwanda and Zaire following the outbreak of civil war. Reported in interview *idem*.

¹⁶¹ Reported in recorded interviews with a number of members of this Council: Brothers Seán Sammon (13 May 2015); Gaston Robert (16 May 2015); Jeffrey Crowe (9 October 2015); Luis García Sobrado (13 October 2015).



20. Brother Benito Arbués, Superior General, during a visit to a Marist school in a barrio in Porto Velho (Brazil).

some mix of sentiment that the Provincials and members of the General Administration assembled to review the four years since the XIX General Chapter and to provide advice on a course for the next four years. The title of Benito's Circular – which in fact was that of his closing address to the Conference composed on its last day¹⁶² – grew organically from that. Benito was always close to reality of the Institute, sensitive to its pulse, and never fooled by rhetoric that did not match lived experience. His first Circular provides a telling overview of his assessment of the state of the Institute and the challenges it needed to address in the last years of the twentieth century.

In his opening remarks, Benito refers to the “presence of the Cross” through the previous four years in the deaths of the brothers who had been victims of “an atrocious genocide”, who had “risked their lives” and who had “chosen to stay”¹⁶³ and its impact on the Institute as a whole:

For many brothers this experience of martyrdom among our own continues to be a strong call of the Lord to go out to the “margins”, to the “frontiers”¹⁶⁴.

¹⁶² *Circulars of the Superiors General*. Vol. XXX. No.1. p.9

¹⁶³ *Ibid.* #3

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.* #4

In making this statement, he introduced a theme into the discourse of the Institute that was to remain and to grow, and by the time of the second International Mission Assembly held in Nairobi in 2014 to have become central to its self-understanding: the call to go to the peripheries.¹⁶⁵ For Benito, the first fruit of this was the heartening response of over sixty brothers who had volunteered to go to Rwanda in response to the crisis.

In his overview of the state of the Institute following the first round of General Council visits, Benito had reason for hope but also concern for the Institute's vitality. While there were many factors that were energising mission, vocations ministry and formation, there were also factors working to slow down or block such vitality. In the latter case, he cites almost twenty weaknesses, including things such as the large schools and other projects that had become burdens, a low sense of apostolic zeal and prophetic mindset, the impact of secularisation and the demands of work, the way of life of the brothers, and quite a number of inadequacies in formation.¹⁶⁶ While he reports some good reason for hope, there is much that worries him, particularly in some Provinces. He questioned the capacity or positioning of some Provinces to engage the kind of discernment and conversion that was needed. He shares a particularly sobering intuition that in some places

*at the heart of the community is a faith that is weak, ailing or in crisis.*¹⁶⁷

A crisis of faith! Perhaps no Superior General since Brother François had cut to the quick so incisively. For both François and Benito, it was *faith* that was the source and most authentic trait of the heart of the Institute; if it was not there, all the brothers' activity would count for little. He wonders in particular about the number and size of the works of the Institute:

*By their sheer number and the weight of responsibility they impose, I feel they obstruct and influence our capacity to examine and discern and, of course to take decisions ... I feel we are expecting the brothers to renew themselves while putting them in situations that choke and exhaust them.*¹⁶⁸

It is with that background that Benito turns to his main point: refoundation, and on what it needed to be based. For Benito, this was spirituality.

*When our Institute becomes a "school of authentic evangelical spirituality" [Vita consecrata #93] we can be sure that we will be on the right road to refoundation*¹⁶⁹

Drawing extensively from the *Vita consecrata*, Benito urges the brothers back to the documents of the XIX Chapter and in the words of Apostolic Exhortation

¹⁶⁵ This insight was provided to the author by Brother Richard Dunleavy, interview *idem*. See also: *Voices from the Fire, the Message of II MIMA*. Nairobi, Kenya. 27 September, 2014.

¹⁶⁶ *Circulars of the Superiors General*. Vol. XXX. No.1. #8

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.* #10

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.* #10

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.* #13

To propose anew the enterprising initiative, creativity and holiness of founders and foundresses in response to the signs of the times emerging in today's world.¹⁷⁰

He quotes John Paul II who called for creative fidelity to founders as the underpinning of any re-foundation, a term which he sees as emerging more strongly since the early 1990s as an evolution of the "renewal" and "aggiornamento" of the 1960s. He goes on:

*To refound is effectively to reorient the Institute in line with the intentions and intuitions of the Founder ... It means recovering the elements that give originality to the charism, in order to make them relevant to this present period of history and to the different cultural contexts in which the Institute finds itself ... to undertake projects which will be more faithful to the mind and will of our Founder. Getting rid of all that draws us away from that fidelity, even though what we are doing may be good and plausible for a certain section of society.*¹⁷¹

The three "constants" that would be part of any such discernment would be: the poor – the Montagnes of today; a readiness to transcend frontiers; and a spirituality of greater involvement in the world.¹⁷² To this he adds the involvement of the laity, and the recognition of their gifts.

It was a provocative opening of the General Conference. After three weeks together, Brother Benito returns to the same themes, perhaps with even greater force. Again, he emphasises the foundational element of spirituality, and supports the continuation of the Marist Apostolic Spirituality networks set up after the XIX Chapter as one way to foster this.¹⁷³ He expounds on his conviction that the hopes of the Chapter would be realised when Provinces took decisions to "die to some things" and to leave them in the hands of lay people. He cites the "tutelle" approach for the ongoing governance of Marist schools in France as an example of how this might look in practice. To avoid such decisions would be fatal, Benito suggests:

*To hang on to works, unable to subject them to evangelical evaluation and discernment, justifying everything from a position of inertia or fear, will in the end bring spiritual death to these works and, possibly, the death of enthusiasm for many apostolic vocations of brothers or lay people*¹⁷⁴.

Brother Benito was calling his brothers to an evangelical radicality, something that was to grow in the second half of his Generalate.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.* #12 (citing *Vita consecrata* #37)

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.* #16-17

¹⁷² *Ibid.* #19.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.* #30

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.* #32

Fidelity to the Mission in Situations of Social Unrest¹⁷⁵

The purpose of Brother Benito's second Circular was twofold and quite specific: first, to outline briefly the three priorities that the General Council had set for itself in the years 1998 to 2001 and, second and principally, to make some reflections on the martyrdom of brothers, especially prompted by those who had died since 1994. On the first point Benito indicates that Councillors General would focus on: the accompaniment of Provincials and District Superiors in their implementation of the themes of the previous year's General Conference; further reflection and decision-making around re-structuring; and preparation for the General Chapter. Each of these would be undertaken from the key perspective of refoundation.¹⁷⁶

As he turns to consider the eleven deaths of recent years, there is a poignant sadness in the Circular. The loss has been felt deeply. The facts of each event are re-told and there is, inevitably, some reflection on the role that a major superior should play in such situations, and the processes of discernment that went on for these brothers – both their own, and that of their superiors. He considers this at



21. Brother Benito Arbués, Superior General, visiting the graves of the four brothers killed at Bugobe.

¹⁷⁵ *Circulars of the Superiors General*. Vol XXX. No.2. 8 May 1998.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.* pp.64-65.

length, again a measure of the impact that these deaths have had on him and his Council, and on the Institute. While Benito brings a theological and a missiological lens to the tragedies, his own pain is evident on every page. It is a sorrow shared with the whole Institute, and amplified by the inclusion in an appendix of the personal writing of some of the brothers and other first-hand testimonies to their commitment and sacrifice.

Brother Benito puts the deaths of these brothers in the context of a history of martyrdom in the Institute which goes back to the killing of Brother Hyacinth in the Solomon Islands in 1847. Since then 203 other brothers had been murdered as a result of their ministry or identity as brothers. Their names are included, and prominent among them, of course, those who were killed in the Spanish Civil War. The troubles in Algeria and the Great Lakes region in 1994, and the events of Bugobe-Nyamirangwe in 1995-96, are described, and Benito adds other situations where brothers were remaining to minister in dangerous situations of civil unrest, such as in Chiapas (Mexico) and Bougainville (Papua New Guinea).¹⁷⁷ Does one have to be a saint, someone extraordinary to choose to be or remain in such situations? Benito was asked this very question just days before the assassination of the four brothers in Bugobe:

My reply was – and would be the same now: “They’re ordinary brothers, just like you and me.”¹⁷⁸

He adds that the lives of such brothers show us how to look for God among the suffering, the weak and the poor.

All of this reinforces my conviction that it is the Spirit of the Lord who leads us to the edges, to the “no-go” areas. He is continually urging us to uproot ourselves and centre all our existence in God. It is precisely this search for God which brings us face to face with the other, the service of our neighbour, especially where there is abandonment and death. The experience of God is radically linked to the sharing of pain and sorrow. Love is the beginning and the end of the experience of God.¹⁷⁹

Brother Benito’s reflection brings him to four points about a brother’s vocation: first, that is dynamic and there must always be a readiness to listen and to leave; second, the call or inspiration come through mediation of others; third, that it will involve an entry into the Paschal mystery and a witness to Jesus as lord of one’s life; and fourth, that of this represents a call to be lived as a gift, a grace.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁷ In Chiapas, the southernmost State of Mexico and with a large indigenous population, the Zapatista Army of National Liberation had been active, especially in the mid-1990s. Bougainville is a large island Province of Papua New Guinea and the place of a civil war between the national Government and the Bougainville Revolutionary Army since the beginning of the 1990s. In both regions the brothers had communities.

¹⁷⁸ *Circulars of the Superiors General*. Vol XXX. No.2. p.93

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.* p.93-94

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.* pp.100-01

To Convoke the General Chapter¹⁸¹

In the Circular required of him, twelve months ahead of time, to convoke the next General Chapter, Brother Benito attends to the formal administrative and technical matters that need to be included, but he also takes the opportunity to provide some historical and current points of context for the Chapter. The sixteen pages are instructive. After offering some thoughts on the importance of this Chapter for the Church, for celebrating the fidelity of God and the brothers, a time to be open to the Spirit and to discern the way ahead, and on the coincidence of the four Marist institutes having the Chapters at the same time in 2001, he turns to offer a commentary on the last four Chapters since the call of *aggionare* by Vatican II.

For Benito there are clear imperatives that emerged from these Chapters, matters such as: the need to define more clearly the Institute's understanding of Marist spirituality, including unity and integration in the brothers' lives; the identity and mission of the brother today; the re-direction of apostolic priorities in favour of the poor; a new way of exercising general government and animation; vocations ministry and the improvement of initial formation; inculturation; discernment and conversion; openness to the laity; the taking up of the new Constitutions; refoundation. He questions why the same topics keep coming up again and again,¹⁸² and quotes the admonition of Brother Basilio to the Capitulants of 1985 when he spoke of "the glaring divide between what our documents say and the world of reality."¹⁸³ Benito affirms his predecessor:

*[These topics] continue to be a challenge and a sore point for the vitality of the Institute ... In spite of the clarity of our documents, when it comes to putting them into practice, roadblocks always seem to arise.*¹⁸⁴

While he recognises that these matters do not generate as much controversy as in the past, they remain unresolved. He would be worried if such diminishment of controversy came from weakness or weariness. He cites five examples:

- a. *Desiring to be close to young people, but keeping brothers in institutions and administrative roles that remove them from direct contact with youth*
- b. *Accepting a call to evangelise and be evangelised by the poor, but following a lifestyle marked by creature comforts and top-of-the-line consumer goods*
- c. *Wanting to live in open and fraternal human communities, but retaining a strictness and formality of structures where being men of God and Mary is not obvious*

¹⁸¹ *Circulars of the Superiors General*, Vol. XXX. No.3. 1 September 2000.

¹⁸² *Ibid.* p.138

¹⁸³ *Ibid.* p.134

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.* p.138

- d. *Being men consecrated for mission, yet being tied inordinately to institutions which can be capably run by lay people, and so “sowing the seeds for yet another identity crisis”*
- e. *Interest and effort in vocations ministry, yet there remains ambiguity and confusion of purpose*¹⁸⁵

Brother Benito leaves his readers to ponder the question that had to be answered not only by the Chapter but by each brother in his own heart: “Why and for what purpose be a brother today?” To emphasise his point, he includes a table which shows an overall drop in first professions during the foregoing decade of 28.5%, with the three highest regions being those which had been traditionally fertile ground for new vocations: Europe other than Spain (-67.6%), Oceania (-57%) and Spain (-43.6%).

Concerning Our Material Goods¹⁸⁶

Just as Brother Charles had left a topic dear to his heart to be treated in his final Circular, so also did Brother Benito. “For quite some time” he had been concerned about the “Gospel criteria relating to the use of material goods and the way they are administered.”¹⁸⁷ This was, of course, a theme that Benito had addressed more than once during his time as Superior General, most notably at the General Conference of 1997. It was a topic for him that went to the heart of the vitality of Marcellin’s charism in the Institute and therefore to refounding.¹⁸⁸ He acknowledges, however, that it is a matter on which there was not unanimity among the brothers, even among the members of his own Council which had debated the topic in depth during two plenary sessions without achieving full consensus.¹⁸⁹ Benito also admits that there was quite a range of understandings and agreements around the meaning of poverty across the Institute in its various cultural contexts. It could be argued of course, that other gospel values could be used as evangelical criteria – virtues such as mercy, joy, reconciliation, liberation, self-sacrifice, peace, integrity, healing and compassion, each of which is amply evident in the Gospels. Brother Benito does not refer to these, remaining quite strong in his conviction that the evangelical imperative of solidarity is foundational and central, a view that he judges to be consistent with that of Charles Howard before him, and Article #167 of the Constitutions.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.* p.139-41

¹⁸⁶ *Circulars of the Superiors General.* Vol XXX. No.4. 31 October 2000.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.* #1

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.* p.5

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.* #5

The Circular is concerned with the evangelical use of goods at an institutional level, both by individual works and by administrative units, rather than at the personal level of the individual brother. Benito considers it important that Provinces evaluate their policies regarding capitalisation,¹⁹⁰ something that Charles had also advocated at the 1985 Chapter. He suggests that the inadequate way that this occurs in some Provinces, and their reliance on income from investments rather than salaries, can lead to a “bourgeois lifestyle” that was not consistent with the consecrated life or indeed the Gospel. Drawing on *Perfectae caritatis* and *Vita consecrata*, and with specific reference to *Sollicitudo rei socialis* and Charles’ Circular on this encyclical, Benito directs the brothers to ponder specific Articles of the Constitutions, specifically #32-34, #83, #156 and #159.¹⁹¹ Returning to a subject he opened up at the General Conference, he is negatively critical of institutions that he sees spending highly or going into debt for unnecessary upgrades and enhanced facilities, and wonders again why there is “no exit strategy” for Provinces to withdraw from such places.¹⁹²

The passion and strength of conviction of Brother Benito jump from the pages of this Circular. “Every page of the Gospel,” he writes, “speaks of solidarity.” He sees solidarity to be the basis of the Gospel. It was therefore an imperative for Provinces to evaluate the mission of their schools and the community lifestyle of the brothers in this light.¹⁹³ He proposes some concrete means and benchmarks for going about this: the separation of the legal/financial entities of schools from the brothers’ communities; schools should be working towards being transformative with regard to solidarity rather than just becoming bigger and better; schools should include students with high needs; they should keep tuition fees as low as possible; make their facilities available to the poor; and involve local people and lay faculty in decisions about all these matters. He suggests that every community should have a standard of living that is aligned with the bottom half of the socio-economic level of the country in which it is located.¹⁹⁴ He is unequivocal in his linking the revitalisation of the charism and refounding with, first, a readiness to “modify, redirect and even withdraw from works” and, second, to “live plainer, simpler lives, close to the poor and youth on the margins of society.”¹⁹⁵

The message of the Circular fed into the emerging agenda for the upcoming General Chapter, and led to the “evangelical use of material goods” becoming one of the key priorities of the next General Council.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.* #7 and #26

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.* #7

¹⁹² *Ibid.* #11

¹⁹³ *Ibid.* ##15-16

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.* #14 and #26

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.* #28

4.

THEMES IN THE CIRCULARS OF BROTHER SEÁN

The eleventh successor of the Founder was, by his own admission, someone at ease with the pen. Brother Seán liked to write.¹⁹⁶ And, by general consensus, he did it well. Recognising this, Brother Benito had asked Seán when he was Vicar to write a new short biography of Marcellin to coincide with the canonisation in 1999,¹⁹⁷ a publication that proved enormously popular around the Marist world. With that, and a series of other books and articles which he had written in the 1980s and 1990s on topics covering ministry, psychology, religious life, and spirituality, Seán came to his Circulars and other writings as Superior General with skill and purpose. He was to write five pieces that were categorised formally as “Circulars” and a number of other substantial letters and addresses, many of which were printed and published. In this section, consideration will be given to the four principal Circulars: one on each of three elements of the consecrated life – spirituality, community, and mission – and his final Circular on Mary. They were planned that way from the start, and spread across the years of his Generalate.¹⁹⁸

Brother Seán’s style is engaging and accessible, with the clarity and simplicity of a good teacher who is master of his subject. His letters are carefully structured and sequential. He typically begins each section with an illustrative story, often enough taken from his own culture; rabbis and native Americans seem to figure often. He writes with his reader in mind. With a professional background in both history and, especially, clinical psychology, he intuitively seeks to include both contextual perspective and the lived experience of real people in his treatment of any topic on which he is writing. Although, at the time of his election as Vicar General in 1993, he had had quite limited experience of the brothers and the realities of Institute outside of his own country,¹⁹⁹ by the time he came to write as General, he had accumulated a considerable knowledge of both. This is evident in each Circular, and grounds his reflections and convictions in the lives of the brothers. In a method reminiscent of Brother Charles, he breaks his Circulars with a series of reflection questions that would be suitable for either individual or community use. He is a teacher, and he seeks to evoke engagement and learning.

¹⁹⁶ Brother Seán, interview *idem*

¹⁹⁷ This was called, in an echo of the theme of the canonisation year, *A Heart That Knew No Bounds, the life and mission of Marcellin Champagnat* and was published in a number of languages. Unfortunately, in the interests of costs, a substantial part of the original text was taken out of the first edition. A later edition, with the full text restored and other items revised, was published by Brother Seán in 2014, both in hard copy and as an e-book.

¹⁹⁸ Brother Seán, interview *idem*

¹⁹⁹ Brother Seán, interview *idem*. By this time, however, Brother Seán had had experience as Provincial and also President of the USA Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM).

A Revolution of the Heart, Marcellin's spirituality and a contemporary identity for his Little Brothers of Mary²⁰⁰

The identity of the brother would be a recurring theme during Brother Seán's period as General, and it is in this Circular that he begins. He links it with other themes on which he had frequently spoken and written: the renewal of religious life and spirituality.

*The urgent task of forming a fresh and compelling identity for our Institute has been with us since the close of Vatican II and needs resolution.*²⁰¹

He prefers to use the term "Marcellin's spirituality" than "Marist apostolic spirituality",²⁰² and rarely speaks of the "Marist Brothers", using instead the older title of "Little Brothers of Mary" or, often enough, "Marcellin's brothers". The identity of these brothers would be determined by their answer to this "central spiritual question": *On whom or on what do you and I set our hearts?* Answer this, writes Seán, and most else falls into place: a twenty-first century image of Mary, a preferential option for the poor, clarity around community and ministry, identification with the Montagnes of today, and so on.²⁰³

He was not the first Superior General to begin his reflections on the state of the Institute by commenting on the magnitude of change of recent times, but Seán's particular focus is on the substantial change that this has signified for how religious life is both understood and lived:

*We are living through a time in the history of our way of life where a paradigmatic shift in its image is taking place.*²⁰⁴

He is careful, however, to acknowledge that a brother's perspective on this change would be influenced by his age: those who knew religious life before the Council would be different from those (like himself) who came to it in the aftermath of the Council, and different again from those for whom the Council is someone else's history and who look more to the 1990s for reference points in religious life than to the 1960s. And in that decade they may well be confused when they searched for markers to identify what a religious brother was, what he did in ministry, how he lived in community, or what distinguished him at all. After four decades of searching, argues Seán, it was high time for the Institute to come to some agreement on just what exactly it cherished and held dear about its way of life and mission.

²⁰⁰ *Circulars of the Superiors General*, Vol. XXXI, No.1. 6 June 2003.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.* p.7

²⁰² *Ibid.* p.24

²⁰³ *Ibid.* p.11

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.* p.20

Seán situates this search in the theological, ecclesial and cultural contexts of these decades: the somewhat incomplete recasting of religious life by *Perfectae caritatis*, at least in contrast to the way that *Lumen gentium* re-positioned and empowered the laity, (an inadequacy redressed to a large extent by *Vita consecrata*); the growth and impact of secularism, consumerism, post-modernism, and new understandings of psychology and sexuality. But through all of this, from the time of the 1967 Chapter, Seán sees that there had been two constants: that the life of the brother must encompass and integrate the three elements of prayer, ministry and community life; and the central place of Marcellin's spirituality needed to have in the construction of any identity of the brother.²⁰⁵ In proposing this view, he is clearly consistent with his three predecessors.

There are three constitutive elements of Marcellin's spirituality – a term which for Seán is synonymous with Marist spirituality – that today's Little Brothers of Mary had to appropriate for themselves. He presents them in slightly different language in different parts of the Circular but it is essentially the same idea. Earlier in the document, he identifies three key things that are in the Founder's Spiritual Testament: his confidence in God's presence in his daily life; his devotion to Mary and reliance on her protection; humility and simplicity.²⁰⁶ In the third section of the Circular which is devoted specifically to describing Marcellin's spirituality, he describes it as, "incarnational, Marian and transparent".²⁰⁷ It is incarnational in its being centred in the heart of everyday life, its having an abiding sense of the presence of God in that daily reality, and its having an unshakeable confidence in that presence. Its Marian element, suggests Seán, needs to be central for the brothers of today as it was for Marcellin, but it also needs to benefit from contemporary theological insights into Mary and what Marian way of living might mean for them. He was to come back to this important theme in his last Circular. Transparency, of course, is another way of talking about what Seán calls the "uncomplicated virtues" of humility and simplicity, as attitudes towards both God and other people. It is about sincerity and lack of pretence, directness and lack of duplicity in love and service.

What a brother does with his passion is for, Seán, the most telling insight into his spirituality. Passion is an intimate part of his spirituality, more to do with "an unquenchable fire that burns within us than with climbing any ladder of virtues."²⁰⁸ For Marcellin, this passion was lived out in relationship with Jesus, whom "he came to see as the centre of his life." Seán reminds the brothers that this was the same call as the XX General Chapter gave them. It is a relationship that, as for Marcellin, should build over time, gradually allowing Jesus to take control and to give him the freedom to love us as he wants.²⁰⁹ So what stops this happening, asks Seán. There is nothing new here, he suggests: Brother Basilio was the first

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.* p.37 and p.7

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.* pp.24-25

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.* p.50

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.* p.47

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.* p.49

to propose that the brothers were known much more for their working than their praying, and perhaps this was still the case. It was busyness and activity that was the most common impediment to devoting the time that was needed to grow and mature in a spiritual relationship with Jesus.²¹⁰

Brother Seán becomes stronger and more challenging on this theme as his Circular draws to its conclusion, and in doing so names a malaise that seems to characterise the Institute at the start of the twenty-first century: an inadequate attending by the brothers to their spiritual lives. “For years” he writes, “we have been discussing our need for personal prayer and talking of our failures in this area” and yet it was one of the two main reasons that brothers were giving for seeking dispensation for their vows.²¹¹ The identity of the brother needed to be most definitively a spiritual identity. The vitality and the future of the Institute depended on the brothers coming to live this. He points out that all the congregations to have been re-born successfully during their history have shared this in common: a profound change of heart and centeredness on Jesus Christ. He then makes some simple and practical suggestions for personal and communal prayer.

While the message of Brother Seán is presented in challenging terms – as those of Brothers Benito and Charles had been before him – he is, like them, also encouraging and quick to point out the many ways and examples that brothers around the Institute are living joyfully and fruitfully the imperatives he has described.

Marvellous Companions. Community life among Marcellin’s Little Brothers of Mary²¹²

The context and purpose of Brother Seán’s second Circular are the same as his previous one and the one to follow: the critical importance for the brothers to be clear on what constitutes their identity as religious brothers today, and the brothers than Marcellin Champagnat would want them to be. Again, the Superior General grounds his discussion in the lived reality of the Institute, and brings to it insights from the Constitutions and Chapter documents, as well as from contemporary theology, spirituality, psychology and other social sciences.

The matter of community life is one that he describes as “urgent in our Institute today”. It is urgent, he says, because, like the spiritual lives of the brothers, if their experience of community life dies or diminishes into brothers living or feeling alone, then so will the Institute:

²¹⁰ *Ibid.* pp.61-62

²¹¹ *Ibid.* p.62

²¹² *Circulars of the Superiors General*, Vol. XXXI, No.2. 25 March 2005.



22. Br Seán Sammon, Superior General, with Young Brothers during a visit to Nairobi in 2006.

*... our Marist mission and way of life will die out eventually in those provinces and districts where ever increasing numbers of brothers are either living alone, or might as well be, considering the little interaction they have with other community members*²¹³

While Seán acknowledges that there is much richness of community life in the Institute, that it is something honoured and celebrated from the time of Marcellin, and that there is much experience of mutual living of joyful, generous and prayerful men – as typified by the comment from the brother from whom he borrowed the title of the Circular – he has also been “preoccupied” by situations of brothers who are living alone, either literally or de facto even though they are under the same roof as their other confreres. He reports the loneliness that some brothers feel, and other sources of difficulty in community such as irritability, activism, hurts, disappointments, and dealing with dysfunctional behaviours. He asks what has to be addressed for brothers to “form and nurture a loving heart” which is really the basis of healthy community living.²¹⁴

Seán briefly looks at the rich theology of community that the Constitutions propose, a six-dimensional ideal that is at once Trinitarian, Marian, spiritual, apostolic, human and evangelical. The brothers would do well to draw on the richness of these theological aspirations. He points out, nonetheless, that community is not lived in the abstract and that there are cultural, generational and psychological factors at play, and the realities of the demands of brothers’ ministry commitments,

²¹³ *Ibid.* p.42

²¹⁴ *Ibid.* pp.11-12

that have made the incarnating of these ideals problematic for many of them. An answer to these problems is not going to be found by turning to the remedies that might work for therapy groups, or families, or professional work groups that find themselves different for functional purposes – because a religious community is essentially different from each of these; it is formed on different bases.²¹⁵ There are lessons to be learnt, nonetheless, from how groups are formed that would assist community building, and he proposes ways to build community: for coming together, for resolving differences, for establishing norms, and for being brothers for one another.

The role of the local superior is critical for forming the kind of community that is characteristic of Marcellin's brothers. His role is threefold, whether he does it himself or he ensures that others do it: to interview his brothers, to animate the community's prayer, and to call it to meet together. Seán presents other aspects of the distinctive traits of a Marist community, and does so without losing sight of the challenges that it can bring, for example the presence in community of quite difficult people. A healthy brothers' community, in the tradition of Marcellin, would have these qualities: prayer together, including the Eucharist; basic interpersonal skills; sense of humour; active concern for one another; a spirit of reconciliation and forgiveness.²¹⁶ Love will underpin it. Then, proposes Seán, will there be communities where the brothers can grow in humanity and in Christian discipleship, and be impelled to mission.²¹⁷

Making Jesus Known And Loved. Marist apostolic life today²¹⁸

Given all that Brother Seán had written about the pitfalls of activism, there is at least a touch of irony – certainly unintended – that his Circular on the apostolate the longest of the three in this series. It is also interesting to note that this Circular was translated into more languages than either of the others. But to be fair, no one would disagree with Brother Seán that “mission lies at the heart of our identity as brothers”, and it is with that very question – an exploration of the essential identity of a brother of Marcellin – that he is primarily concerned.

A major concern of this Circular, arguably Seán's principal focus, is a topic which – with the possible exception of initial formation – he observes had caused more discussion and dissension in the Institute for decades. The issue was to do with whom and where the brothers are meant to serve; what should be the focus of their apostolic works.²¹⁹ It turns on the proper place of the poor in the apostolic ministry of the brothers.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.* pp.33-35

²¹⁶ *Ibid.* pp.62-67

²¹⁷ *Ibid.* p.70

²¹⁸ *Circulars of the Superiors General.* Vol XXXI. No.3. 6 June 2006

²¹⁹ *Ibid.* p.14



23. Br Seán Sammon, Superior General, on visit to Mexico for an extended General Council held in Guadalajara (2006).

Brother Seán proposes three essential aspects of the brothers' apostolate, centring his argument strongly on the charism and intuitions of Marcellin: first, that it was about making Jesus Christ known and loved, and that educational institutions provided a particularly privileged and effective locus for doing this, but not exclusively; second, it was concerned principally with the young; and, third, was directed specifically to those children and young people who are poor and marginalised.²²⁰ The third aspect was the controversial one. He notes that there had been sharp divisions on this question in the Institute, especially with respect to the continuing place of existing institutions.²²¹ He wonders, however, if some Provinces and Districts had simply avoided serious reflection on the matter, or had redefined the term "poor" to suit themselves. It is a strong and unequivocal point of view from Seán, ostensibly stronger than that of Benito who seems to have had allowed more space for the contribution of existing institutions to be transformed to be places to educate young people in and for solidarity. Like Benito, however, and indeed Basilio and Charles, Seán argues for the gospel discernment of works that Provinces had been asked to undertake, something affirmed strongly by the XX General Chapter. He questions whether there had been adequate analysis or action in parts of the Institute.

²²⁰ *Ibid.* pp.32-33

²²¹ *Ibid.* p.58



24. Br Seán Sammon, Superior General, during a meeting between the General Council and young people from Brazil and South American countries in Lujan, Argentina (2008).

*Let's be honest. As an Institute, we have been discussing these questions for almost half a century.*²²²

The time was ripe for “bold action” for those on the margins. The “apostolic mentality” of the Founder, Seán claims, was to the materially and economically poor. He was not suggesting “one or two initiatives” by a Province, but something that affected all its brothers.²²³ He argues that such a reorientation was at the heart of a redefinition and a renewal of the identity of the brothers as religious, and therefore would be reflective of the vitality and future of the Institute:

*Make no mistake about it: genuine renewal of consecrated living and our works will, over time, move us to the margins of society.*²²⁴

In this Circular – as in the previous two – Brother Seán is targeting his comments specifically at the brothers, and not the wider family of Marists. He is conscious of this, and clear in targeting his readership.²²⁵ At the same time, he asserts the integral and essential role of laity in Marist mission and life. He does not seek in any way to underplay its importance. Indeed, he argues for a genuine partnership and shared responsibility. His particular purpose in these particular Circulares, however, is to define the identity of the brother, addressing the “unique and complementary” natures of the vocations of the brother vis-à-vis the lay Marist. Perhaps the Circular was not the place to develop this theme further by a deeper exploration of the ways in which these specific contributions to Marist life and mission played out in practice. For example, the call of the Church to go to the margins, which is a major theme of this Circular, is not one for religious *per se*, but one for the entire People of God. How this is played out in a partnership of mission where the reality is that the brothers are numerically the minor partner, and

²²² *Ibid.* p.80

²²³ *Ibid.* p.85

²²⁴ *Ibid.* p.85

²²⁵ *Ibid.* p.9

the partner that is older, would have been an interesting case-in-point to explore. Since the publication of this Circular, the relative identities and contributions of all of those who understand themselves to be “Marist” has continued to be examined. It has perhaps become clearer that the vocational identity of one cannot be defined in isolation from that of the others. The specific role of the consecrated Marists is within a broader group of vocationally minded people seeking to make their own the spirituality of Marcellin, to share responsibility in mission, and in ways appropriate to their state, to share life.

In the fourth and final part of the Circular, Brother Seán introduces formally the new project of mission for the Institute that had been some time in the planning and affirmed by the General Conference in Sri Lanka the previous year, what was being called “Mission Ad Gentes”. He invites all administrative units to become part of it, expressing the hope that over the following four years over one hundred and fifty brothers would be missioned for new works in Asia. He puts out the challenge, something he sees going “to the heart of the Institute” and faithful to Marcellin’s missionary and outward-looking spirit.²²⁶ He summarises the main points of the letter of invitation he had sent to every brother in the Institute on 2 January that year, and includes the full text as an Appendix. It represented a major initiative of this General Council.



25. Br Seán Sammon, Superior General, during a meeting between the General Council and young people in Arco Norte in Guatemala (2008).

²²⁶ *Ibid.* pp.96-97.

In Her Arms or in Her Heart. Mary Our Good Mother. Mary Source of our Renewal²²⁷

With Brother Seán's final Circular, we have, for the third time in succession, a Superior General in the last year of his mandate writing on a matter that is of special significance for him, and which he sees going to the core of what the Institute needs to embrace if it is to maintain its authenticity and its vitality. For Seán that is Mary.

It is perhaps a little surprising in hindsight that, in an institute which bears Mary's name, there had not been a Circular devoted exclusively to her since that of Brother Basilio on the eve of the XVII General Chapter,²²⁸ or an official Marian reference text since the *Marial Document* published after the XVI Chapter. Each was a rich document theologically and spiritually, and provided the brothers with a fresh and integrated understanding of Mary. But, like much of what had been written during the 1968-85 *ad experimentum* period, these publications had been largely put aside and did not figure any longer in the programmes of formation houses or the frequent use of the brothers generally. Of course, the Constitutions included some excellent articles concerning Mary, and the the Circulars of Charles and Benito were replete with Marian references, as were other Institute documents. But Seán's decision to write on Mary was the first document specifically on her for well over a generation; no brother under about fifty-five years of age would have previously received something like it. For that reason alone, it has significance. But it is also significant for what he reveals about some maturation in the theology of Mary in the Institute and the "new space", to use Basilio's phrase, she was beginning to enjoy. In many ways it was a reclaiming of something of the originality of the Marist project. This was to be a point of departure for the next Superior General, Brother Emili.

Seán approaches his topic first by considering the place of Mary in the spirituality of Marcellin, and then her place in the lives of the brothers today. He traces the journey of Marcellin's relationship with Mary – from his family experiences, within the theology and culture of his day, through his challenges and difficulties. He presents Marcellin as someone who understood himself to have a share in the work of Mary, and who grew in his habitual attitude of turning towards her in times of need, of recognising her protection, and of coming ever closer relationship with her. As Marcellin sought to involve Mary so intimately into the challenges facing the Institute – for example the vocations shortage of 1822 or the threats from the Revolution of 1830 – and as did his successors in times of crisis such as that of 1903, it was important for the present-day generation of brothers to bring Mary into their work of renewal.

²²⁷ *Circulars of the Superiors General*. Vol XXXI. No.5. 31 May 2009

²²⁸ Un nouvel espace pour Marie. *Circulars of the Superiors General*. Vol XXVI, No.4. 8 September 1976

So to the sub-title of the Circular: Mary who both protected them as a Good Mother, and who was their source of renewal because to find Mary was to find Jesus.

The key to this renewal was for the Institute to be authentically Marian, that is, for the brothers to fashion their lives and their discipleship on hers.²²⁹ She was their sister in faith. They needed her apostolic disposition – being ready to set out, rather than having a mentality that was too stationary, fixed, monastic or geographically bound. The five decades of renewal were not over; perhaps the process had a long way to run:

Brothers often ask me about our future: Do I think we have one as a group and, if so, what might it look like? I believe without question that the mission for which God brought our Marist way of life into existence is as urgent today as it was during the time of the Founder ... that religious life is meant to be the Church's conscience, its living memory of what it can and should be ... that the vocation of the brother is needed in our Church today more urgently than in the past. Power, position and prestige were never meant to be our concerns; only proclaiming God's kingdom and its immanence ... I believe that we run the risk of missing the moment, that we could preoccupy ourselves with maintaining the status quo ... Our way of life was never meant to be predictable. Rather it was meant to shake us up and stretch us to our limits, to be judged a bit foolish by some, and ultimately to be a blessing beyond measure to our Church and world. Consecrated life, pure and simple, only makes sense if you and I are in love with God.²³⁰

It was important, Brother Seán argues that the brothers of today follow Marcelin's idea that they be apostolic, that they have a "programme of holiness founded on humility, obedience, charity and zeal, and that each of these virtues be Marian in character."²³¹ Mary's place in the Institute was to be at its heart, as a vibrant and life-giving presence.²³²

²²⁹ *Circulars of the Superiors General*. Vol XXXI. No.5. p.41

²³⁰ *Ibid.* pp.47-48

²³¹ *Ibid.* p.49

²³² *Ibid.* p.53

5.

THEMES IN THE CIRCULARS OF BROTHER EMILI

With each new Superior General, there comes a degree of freshness and a certain novelty of approach. This has been invariably the case through the modern era, from the time of Brother Basilio. While there has been continuity of themes and concerns, each new Superior has brought to them his own pastoral style, his own emphases, and his own way of leading the brothers and of communicating with them. And, in various ways, each has brought his own measure of surprise. Brother Emili has been no exception. In the first place, he was a man from the post-Vatican II era. He became a brother a decade after the Council and, unlike Brothers Charles and Seán especially, did not find himself instinctively turning to its agenda for reference-points. He has, of course, like his predecessors, turned to Scripture, the Founder, and the Pope, but he has found markers just as readily in other sources and has been somewhat post-modern in his tapping of them – in the literature of various cultures, in art, in the theologians of the time, in the culture of the day, and in his own encounters around the Marist world. He has also chosen not to use the medium of the traditional Circular as his customary means of communication.

He has, indeed, issued only one. That is not to suggest that his pen has been idle or, more accurately, the keys of his computer keyboard have been still. On the contrary, Brother Emili's words have been many. Arguably, because of the means he has exploited for communication, it is fair to claim that he has been read, seen and heard by many more people than any of his predecessors, and has maintained a dialogue with them. First, and most frequently, his words have been put out through social media and a strong "web presence", particularly through Facebook and Twitter. Second, there have been other letters on various topics, in a genre which his predecessors may have designated as "Circulars" but he has not. There have also been messages to accompany Christmas and the Feast of Saint Marcellin each year. He is a frequent invitee at all kinds of events around the Marist world and in the Church more generally, and called upon to give formal addresses or interviews, which have later been published, typically on-line. And quite significantly, he has communicated visually. A recorded message by video has been a preferred means. Indeed, the Marist bicentenary was launched through this medium, with the words published in unadorned format only online. So, also, his printed communications have been replete with visual imagery – not for decoration or aesthetic effect, but as a key means of communication of the message itself.

So, the Marist world has not only read much from Brother Emili, but it has seen him and heard him a great deal, and it has followed him in social media. His audience has been as much among young people and Marist lay people than it has been the brothers, possibly more so. The Institute's website has provided a ready

means for that to occur. But it would be a mistake to focus on the means of Brother Emili's writing (and speaking and posting and tweeting) at the expense of the content of his messages, for there has been great richness in that. In this section, consideration will be given only to his single Circular. Other writings and communications will be treated in relevant sections of the book, particularly his letters *To the Ends of the Earth* (2013) *The Dance of Mission* (2014), and *Just a Tent as the Heart of our Future* (2014), and the the letters written for the lead-in to the Bicentenary in 2017.

He gave us the name of Mary²³³

It was Brother Seán's final subject, and Brother Emili's first. Mary was again recognised as the focal point for Marists. The subject of this Circular echoed Mary's place at the General Chapter that was held two years before. In their message to the Marists around the world, the capitulants of the XXI Chapter commented that Mary had "made her presence felt" at the Chapter; she "took us by the hand, revealing her maternal love and urging us to go in haste to a new land."²³⁴ One capitulant wryly observed that she had entered the Chapter through the "front door", a veiled reference to a comment at the previous Chapter, but also a statement of the centrality of the Marian way of thinking that had quite naturally and intuitively defined the 2009 Chapter. Reference to Mary and to the way of Mary is the most consistent theme of the Chapter documents and perhaps of the Chapter itself. It helped to create a Marian framework for the decisions and priorities of the new General and Council in a more explicit and named way than previously. The Institute was developing a Marian self-image, a direction from which Emili was to take the subject of this Circular.

Emili begins by naming this Circular as the 412th written since Marcellin's first one in 1828. It places it in this tradition and says that it would be like all the others in its attempt "to build a family united around the essentials". Without disputing this claim, his readers could not but feel that the Circular in their hands was also quite different from the 411 that preceded it. It had a new shape and size, for a start. Its graphic design included different fonts and a variety of layout. It was in full colour. It was highly visual. All of this reflected the creativity and skill that Brother Antonio Martínez Estaún had brought to his role as Director of Communications in the preceding years, building on the professionalism and enthusiasm of Brother Lluís Serra Lansana before him.

It is to the fragile state of the Institute that Emili first turns – a fragility of age, of numbers, of commitment and even of relevance in some places – and refers to Seán's pondering in his last Circular that there may need to be a certain degree of "falling apart" before people will begin to ask the right questions of themselves.²³⁵

²³³ *Circulars of the Superiors General*. Vol XXXII. No. 1. 2 January 2012.

²³⁴ Document of the XXI General Chapter, pp.12-13

²³⁵ *Circulars of the Superiors General*. Vol XXXI. No.5. p.47



26. Brother Emili Turú, Superior General, with young Marists during the International Gathering of Young Marists in Brazil before the World Youth Day (2013).

Emili found himself asking such a question as he watched a video put together by the architect Joan Puig-Pey of a day of work on the renovation of the Hermitage (actually 23 July 2010, the anniversary of the Pledge of Fourvière). As he looked at the images of the empty shell of the building at night, he heard the strains of Mozart’s *Ave Verum Corpus*. He asked himself what indeed was “true” not just for that building but for the Institute as a whole, what perhaps needed to die for new birth to take place, and the role of Mary in bringing about this new birth. It is from that insight that Brother Emili turns to the main foundation on which he is to build his Circular. Drawing on the theology of Hans Urs Von Balthasar he proposes that the mandate of Marists is to be the “Marian face” of the Church.

Von Balthasar, a favourite theologian of John Paul II, had written extensively of what he described as principles or dimensions of the Church – the Petrine, the Pauline, and Joahnnine, and also the Jacobean. The primary principle of the Church was, however, the Marian – a teaching that Emili points out is now formally enshrined in the Catechism of the Catholic Church.²³⁶ Although it was not a theology with which the founding Marists would have been familiar when they pledged to form the Society of Mary, it is legitimate, suggests Emili, to understand their intentions through the lens of Balthasarian theology and ecclesiology for they indeed had a vision for how to renew the Church and for a new way of being Church – a Marian way. Among them, Marcellin had his own practical way of implementing this vision: *We need brothers!*

²³⁶ #773 of the Catechism. *Circulars of the Superiors General*. Vol XXXII. No.1. p.34

Aligning himself with Brother Seán's intuition that Mary would be the source of renewal for the Institute, Brother Emili devotes the rest of the Circular to exploring what it means to be Marian. He uses three icons of Mary to do that: the Visitation, Pentecost, and the Annunciation. The image of Mary in the Visitation is one of service, the "Church of the apron", to use Bishop Tonino Bello's expression. Mary at Pentecost is an image of a mother with her family, an image of the Church as "a fountain" or "spring" rather than a museum – borrowing the expression from John XXIII. Mary at the Annunciation is an image of beauty – the beauty that is discovered in contemplating mystery, in attentive listening. It is on the fundamental importance of developing a sustaining interior life that Brother Emili especially insists:

... we absolutely need to pray, and to pray as Marists. And the way that Mary teaches us is the way 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.²³⁷

It is a call for Marists to be mystics, something that would grow in the imagination of Marists in the ensuing years.

Brother Emili ends his Circular by inviting his readers to focus on the Marist bicentenary of 2017. In doing so, he named an event that was to have an increasingly defining role on the discourse of the ensuing five years, a narrative around who today's Marists sought to be, and how. Before a final prayer to "Mary, dawn of the new times", Emili used the touching example of the fidelity and love of Brother Emile François – a Chinese brother who suffered much and remained steadfastly faithful as Marist contemplative-in-action despite his persecution by the Communist government – as model for all Marists.

²³⁷ *Ibid.* p.69

6.

THE CHAPTERS AND CIRCULARS: A RICH NARRATIVE OF THE ESSENCE OF BEING MARIST

In October 2013, the renovated house at La Valla-en-Gier, the “cradle of the Institute”, was re-opened as a place of Marist pilgrimage. Its three levels had been re-modelled to reflect the three inter-generative dimensions of what it was to be Marist. On the top floor, the windows looked out over the Gier valley and to the horizons beyond; they symbolised mission. On the middle floor, there was the old table, with its many scratches and divots bearing silent witness to the innumerable Marists who had sat around it; it symbolised community. And below, in subdued light and stillness, a small place of prayer symbolised the life of interiority and intimacy with Jesus. The house had been re-furbished in a beautifully simple way. It was both new and old. It evoked both a sense of history and a sense of what a modern-day Marist was called to be.

From one perspective, those who were now to come to this house were quite different from the two young men of that valley who had first taken up residence there on 2 January 1817. Now, they spoke many languages, came from many cultures, and their purview covered all five continents. The complexity of their institutions and the reach of programmes would have been unimaginable to the early nineteenth century inhabitants of La Valla. Their technology and resources would have bedazzled them. But in other ways they were the same.

Like the first Marists, they also lived in uncertain times, where revolution and new ideas had upturned the old order of things. It was not clear where society was going. And, like them, they felt particularly moved by the needs of young people, wanting to offer them education, care, hope, and the life that could be theirs through the knowledge and love of Jesus. They themselves sought to be that Good News for the young. Like them, they had to work out ways to understand who they were in the Church and the world, to whom they were sent, and who was the God of their lives. It had been the same for each generation of Marists. For those Marists who took up the challenge between 1985 and 2016, the issues and documents of four General Chapters and the Circulars of this period offer a rich narrative of their response.

The documents reveal the ways they kept returning to the three aspects of their Christian discipleship, and to their graced way of following the path of Jesus, building ecclesial community and sharing the Good News – the Marian way.

For all their differences from Jean-Marie Granjon and Jean-Baptiste Audras, these modern-day Marists could still feel at home in the house of La Valla. Marist life and mission are always lived in the present. T.S. Eliot might have told them:

◇ We shall not cease from exploration.
◇ And the end of all our exploring
◇ will be to arrive where we started
◇ and know the place for the first time.²³⁸

²³⁸ T.S. Eliot, in *Little Gidding*, the fourth Quartet.

History of the Institute



PART 2

Marists in mission: reorientation and expansion



27. On the previous page:
A lamp on the table
for all to see by.

7.

THE REORIENTATION OF MARIST EDUCATION: PARTICULIÈREMENT DES PLUS DÉLAISSÉS

The magnitude of change

In giving an account of his stewardship to members of the XVIII General Chapter, Brother Basilio said that for eighteen years he had tried “to orient the Institute” towards “the poor” and “the missions”.²³⁹ To the “missions”, that was something noble. There was nothing especially unsettling for most of the capitulants about that term, nor the Superior General’s intent in using it. From the time of Marcelin in the 1830s, Marist Brothers had always liked to see themselves as having a missionary edge; many Provinces had long histories of sending “missionaries” to foreign lands. The Institute had spread and grown through the generosity, dedication, and grand vision of such men. Since 1968, this spirit had prompted a number of new missions.²⁴⁰ But to the “poor”? Behind that single word lay a multi-layered story of passion, theology, controversy, resistance, daring, fear, and sometimes fiery debate that was to continue to play itself out for some time to come.

The four French words – *particulièrement des plus délaissés*²⁴¹ – that appear at the end of Article 2 of the new Constitutions of 1986 may seem unremarkable to today’s Marists, a phrase that they are likely to read simply as a given. Similar words had first appeared in the *ad experimentum* Constitutions of 1968.²⁴² Now, almost half a century later, at least three generations of Marists have been introduced to this phrase as part of the definition of the Founder’s charism, and they are likely to be able to explain without difficulty or hesitation the ways in which they and their fellow-Marists around the world are attentive to the educational and evangelical needs of the “Montagnes of today”. But, at the time, the change was a quite significant one. The expression was new. And it was strategically placed in the document.

²³⁹ Report on the State of the Institute. In *Listening to the 18th General Chapter*. p.67

²⁴⁰ For example, in Paraguay 1968 (Province of Catalonia); Côte d’Ivoire 1969 (Province of Levante); South Korea 1971 (Province of Mexico Central); India 1974 (Province of Sri Lanka).

²⁴¹ *Constitutions and Statutes of the Marist Brothers of the Schools*. October 1986. #2

²⁴² *Constitutions of the Marist Brothers of the Schools*. Rome, 21st September, 1968. #2. The expression is a little different in this document, but not especially different in its sense: “... *en particulier au service des moins favorisés*.”

The primary focus of the Institute's work has a mixed history. No-where among the 492 Articles of the old *Règles Communes* had there been any explicit statement concerning a preference for the poor or disadvantaged. The brothers simply were to devote their endeavours to the "Christian instruction and education of the young".²⁴³ There was no chapter which described where, with whom, or by what means they should do this; indeed, no chapter devoted to their apostolate *per se*. This was, rather, implied throughout the Rule: it was to be in schools, and with young people generally. The old Rule included chapters on the "zeal" and the "love of work" that the brothers were to bring to their teaching, and on the "relationship" they should have with their students.²⁴⁴ But, that was it. It needs be noted, however, that in France and elsewhere before 1903 the majority of the brothers' schools were ordinary parish primary schools, and from the beginning these were distinguished by their inclusion of students from poor circumstances and from families unable to contribute anything towards tuition fees. The Rule was written with this situation as an unwritten understanding. On the other hand, the brothers who knew Marcellin and were formed by him began other types of institutions as well.

In the companion document to *Règles Communes* – the *Constitutions* – more was said: after the "Christian instruction and education of the young" was the phrase "particularly those of rural areas".²⁴⁵ This was a phrase that came from the time of the Founder and reflected the historical reality of the origins of the Institute. The relative weight that should be given to whether such students were, on the one hand, of the very essence of Marcellin's vision or, on the other, were included in his various letters and prospectuses for a more pragmatic reason – that legal approval for the Institute was more likely if its work were seen to be limited to this group – is a matter for the historians to debate. Certainly, Marcellin's biographer and the main drafter of the old Rule, Brother Jean-Baptiste, would have argued for the former; perhaps Brother Louis-Marie would have tended more to the latter. In any case, the words had been there from 1854 until the 1958 Chapter, when it the sentence was changed to read: "The less fortunate students will be the object of their special care."²⁴⁶ But that is not quite the same as "the poor". A number of General Chapters in between had questioned the presence of large, higher-fee schools in many Provinces, especially in countries outside of Europe, and the extent to which this was in keeping with the spirit of the Founder.²⁴⁷ It was not, however a topic that sparked polemic debates.

²⁴³ *Règles Communes des Frères Maristes des Écoles*. (1960). #2

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.* Chapters XV, XVI, XXXVIII.

²⁴⁵ In the original French: "principalement ceux des campagnes". *Constitutions de l'Institut des Frères Maristes des Écoles*. 1930. It is also worthy of note that in this category was the majority of young people in France at that time in history.

²⁴⁶ In the original French: "les élèves moins fortunés seront l'objet de leur prédilection". *Ibid.* 1960

²⁴⁷ A brief survey of this is made by Brother Marcelino Ganzaraín in the "Supplement" to Brother Charles's Circular on "Marist Apostolic Spirituality". Cf. pp.559-60; 587-88

Although it would be fair to claim that there had always been in the Institute an alignment with the families from ordinary circumstances, and a genuine affection for those in most need, the principal focus for the brothers was on their conducting Catholic schools wherever they may be found.

Along with the reference to “the least favoured”, the *ad experimentum* Constitutions introduced a number of other new and challenging phrases that were to survive into the 1986 document, such as: a brother “likes the places and houses which give him a chance to share the condition of the poor”; the “Marist Community [gives] preference to the apostolate of the poor”.²⁴⁸ In the section on the brothers’ apostolate, however, the pitch of the 1968 document is not greatly different from that of the old Rule, in its being concerned principally with regular schools and, at least by implication, with regular students.²⁴⁹ Like the former Rule, its main focus is on the purpose of the Catholic school, and the religious motivation and guiding attitudes that the brother should have for his work. There is one article, however, on “the missions”; the need was recognised for developing “in us and our pupils” a concern “to help those who are less well-endowed either spiritually or materially” in foreign countries. “Missionary brothers” would be chosen from “among those who have sufficient spirit of detachment, zeal, and openness to others, to be able to understand a civilisation other than their own, and to be able to adapt themselves to it, to develop it, and to unite what is worthwhile there to the good things of modern civilisation.” Their role in these places would be “the work of education”.²⁵⁰

Apart from the somewhat dated understandings of missiology and the Eurocentrism that are reflected here, a key point to highlight is the presumption that this work – as valued as it may have been – was reserved for a select few brothers. The clear implication of the article is that the great majority of brothers would be in mainstream schools, and that the young people to whom they ministered would be the students of those schools. While there was recognition of the importance of “Catechetics” outside the school – something that had emerged particularly in France – and a vague provision for “other forms of apostolate among youth”,²⁵¹ there was really little in this section of the document that proposed any fundamental change in the brothers’ field of endeavour.

For the most part, the 1986 document reflected similar emphases to that of 1968, but with some notable new insertions. It was these changes which caused considerable debate at the 1985 General Chapter. The working groups which struggled more than others to agree on the wording for the parts of the Constitutions on which it was focussing were the Commissions working on poverty and the apostolate. It was into November, with pressure mounting to bring the Chapter

²⁴⁸ *Constitutions*, 1968. ##21, 23.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.* ##42-49.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.* #47.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.* #46.

The language is strong. The use of the first person plural lends additional impact. It makes it normative for all brothers to be oriented towards a love and service of the poor. While certainly not being the exclusive domain of the Institute – there remains a clearly implied role for the brothers as educators for justice among a broader group of young people – a sense of social justice and a commitment to its promotion were now to be elements of the life and mission of every brother. More than that, here in the Constitutions of the Marist Brothers of the Schools, there were deliberate allusions to the social teaching of the Church that had flavoured the 1960s and 1970s, and to the discourse of liberation theology that had emerged from it. Phrases such as “stand in solidarity with the poor and their just causes” and the “root causes of their wretchedness” touch into social action narratives that were far from unanimously accepted, either at the Chapter or across the Institute.²⁵⁵ Reflecting on the differences of attitude among the brothers during these years, Brother Charles Howard was later to comment:

*At the [1976 General] Chapter the Poverty and Justice Commission was the smallest commission and the least popular ... One brother who was there said to me, “If the brothers in my Province knew I was going to join this commission, they would have never voted for me to become a delegate to the Chapter.” It was very sensitive, you know, poverty and justice.*²⁵⁶

One of the reasons for such sensitivity, according to Brother Charles, was the political agenda intimated by such ideas and such language, notably among Spanish-born brothers both in Latin America and in Spain itself. For some of these brothers, the issues that had been at stake in the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s, and which the Franco regime had carried forward – especially the role of Francoism in the safeguarding of the Church, as many saw it, and fostering of proper social order – were deeply felt. The brothers’ sentiments emanated not simply from a particular ideology or dispassionate political preference. It was personal for them: the blood of both confreres and family members had been spilt for these causes, and lives had been stolen. The alternative to the status quo was judged often simply to be communistic, and all that that implied. As a result, the words used in Article 34 of the new Constitutions to describe the mission of the Institute was, at least for some brothers, reflective of a Marxist analysis of society from which the Institute should distance itself. These were live issues. Franco had died only in 1975; other regimes of similar flavour – particularly military ones – were to continue to be active in some Latin American countries through the 1980s and 1990s. Brother Charles ran into trouble in even using the word “justice”:

*We were starting to propose things ... [Brothers] were imploring us not to use that word because it was a leftist word ... Even though the ideas were not radical at all; they were just Gospel ideas ... and had the clear mandate of John XXIII and Paul VI ... Debate was pretty passionate.*²⁵⁷

²⁵⁵ Brother Richard Dunleavy, interview *idem*.

²⁵⁶ Brother Charles Howard, interview transcript, *idem*. p.16

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.* pp.16-17.

Indeed Pope John's *Pacem in terris* (1963) and, even more, Pope Paul's *Populorum progressio* (1967) had captured the imagination of socially progressive thinkers around the world, both inside and outside the Church. These two encyclicals challenged the legitimacy of privilege, and named as unjust the hegemony of the few over the many. In 1975, Paul VI advanced this thinking significantly through *Evangelii nuntiandi* by situating the Church's mission of evangelisation within the context of social justice, peace, and God's intention for the right development of society. The Gospel and social justice were thus inextricably linked. Although a noticeably different lens was to be brought to the Latin American issues after the election of Pope John Paul II in 1978 (from his personal experience of European Communism), there was no retreat from the social agenda that the Church was coming to embrace. Events such as the assassination of Archbishop Óscar Romero in El Salvador in 1980, or those of four women missionaries from the United States there in the same year, only helped to raise awareness in the wider Church to this trajectory, and to foster an acceptance of it. It was in the context of such *conscientisation*²⁵⁸ that the Institute – especially under the leadership of Brother Charles – was opting for a deliberate reorientation of its mission. Already, as the capitulants in 1985 had been told, the Institute had changed. Of the eighty-six new apostolic initiatives across the Institute since 1976, the great majority were reflective of these emphases: new schools in poor urban areas, new schools in developing countries, orphanages, free evening classes in existing schools for poor children and adults, increased inclusion in mainstream schools of children with handicaps and disadvantage, literacy programmes for refugees.²⁵⁹

The hearts and minds of the brothers towards developing a new collective self-identity for the Institute that was consistent with such thinking. This was done explicitly through his visits and those of the Councillors General, as well as through his Circulars and retreats and seminars. More subliminally, use was made of *FMS Message* and *FMS Echo* – the new media of the General Council's communication – to portray an image of an Institute that was actively seeking fresh apostolic presences among the poor and marginalised. In the *FMS Message* of July 1988, for example, Brother Charles linked the release of John Paul II's encyclical *Sollicitudo rei socialis* in the Church's "Marian Year" to an imperative for the brothers to become involved in "action for the poor", and to do so irrespective of "ideology of the right or the left."²⁶⁰ The journal then juxtaposed reflections on Mary in the new Constitutions with a pictorial of brothers involved in a range of education and social projects with the least favoured: three brothers in the forests of the Amazon; others in Lazarus House in Lawrence, Massachusetts; various social and education centres among the poor in Brazil; others in Hollange (Belgium), Moerewa (New Zealand), Algeria, El Salvador, and Australian brothers working with refugees in

²⁵⁸ The term – *conscientização* in Portuguese – is often associated with Brazilian educationalist and social activist Paulo Freire (1921-1997), but was promoted by the Latin American Bishops' Conference from the late 1960s. It refers to a person's and a society's becoming critically aware of the reality of society through both their reflection and their action.

²⁵⁹ Interim report to the Province of Sydney by its delegates to the XVIII General Chapter, 21 September 1985.

²⁶⁰ *FMS Message*. No.3. July 1988, p.2.

Thailand. The following year, the Institute's "Champagnat Year", *FMS Message* carried similar reports, and did so within a new narrative: that the time had come for "re-founding", and that this would be based on a "conversion of heart" in each brother so that he could be a "Champagnat for today".²⁶¹ Later that year, there were feature-stories of young brothers working in the "Homeland" regions of South Africa, the new German brothers' foundation near Lake Victoria in Kenya, the brothers working in youth ministry, catechesis and social projects among the people of Naviraí in central Brazil, and the brothers conducting schools in challenging circumstances in Pakistan.²⁶²

For Brother Charles and many of the shapers of Marist life and mission around the world, there was a growing conviction that the integrity of the Institute and any chance of its renewed vitality depended on its making such apostolic choices,²⁶³ and doing so as the fruit of ongoing conversion and discernment. He saw it as an essentially Marian option, a response to the Holy Spirit who was speaking to the Institute through "the cry of the poor and the needy".²⁶⁴ The final chapter of the Constitutions, which the capitulants in 1985 had written themselves – it had not been in the draft text – saw that evangelical poverty and a spirit of the discernment that sprang from it were essential for the vitality of the Institute:

Experience teaches us that the vitality of a religious family is closely linked to the way in which it practises gospel poverty.

... Our preference is directed towards the poor, with whom we share our lives and our work.

... *Fidelity to our mission requires us to be constantly alert to the signs of the times, to the calls of the Church, and to the needs of youth. Such alertness makes it easier for us to adapt structures and to take courageous, even unprecedented decisions.*²⁶⁵

In 1991, Brother Juan Moral, who had already authored or co-authored a number of books on Marist history and education, published in Spain a work entitled *The Poor and the Meaning of Poverty in Marist Spirituality*, approaching the topic from historical, theological and spiritual perspectives. For Brother Joan, "the poor are the 'humus' where the Marist takes root, where he grows humanly and spiritually"; a Marist's apostolate needed to be defined by the poor.²⁶⁶ Although the book's direct impact may have been limited to its Spanish readership, it was indicative of a growing conviction and self-understanding across the Institute by the time of the 1993 Chapter.

²⁶¹ *FMS Message*. No.4. January 1989. P.2

²⁶² *FMS Message*. No. 5. July 1989.

²⁶³ *Report of the Brother Superior General and his Council to the XIX General Chapter*. p.28

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.* p.33

²⁶⁵ *Constitutions and Statutes*, ##167-68.

²⁶⁶ Cited in *FMS Echo*. No.14. February 1992.

A Marist seed that sprouted in Chosica

From where had the impetus for such significant reorientation by the Institute sprung? Reference has already been made to the prophetic leadership of Brother Basilio, and later Brother Charles, in their responding to the calls for *aggiornamento* in the immediate post-Conciliar period, and more specifically to the Church's social teachings and its theology of evangelisation in the modern world, embodied in Papal encyclicals such as *Populorum progressio* and *Evangelii nuntiandi*. But, of course, the context was much broader than this. The 1960s was a decade of dramatic self-awakening all around the globe: the unshackling of so many people in the Catholic Church following Vatican II, with its range of consequences; *les événements de mai* 1968 in France and their broad social repercussions, particularly western countries; the collapse of the colonial era in Africa and south-east Asia; the civil rights movements in the United States, South Africa, Australia and elsewhere. Few people needed it to be pointed out to them by secular prophets such as American singer Bob Dylan that "the times, they were a-changing". But it was in Latin America that some of the most profound thinking and acting were taking place. The social imperatives of the Church found no more fertile ground than on that vast continent, and a region of significant Marist presence. In 1968, in Medellín, Columbia, the Latin American Bishops Conference (CELAM²⁶⁷) had given voice and legitimacy to emerging currents of social and political thought, placing them explicitly in terms of justice and evangelical priority for all in the Church. Eleven years later – despite vigorous push-back from some elements of the Latin American episcopacy and early signs of resistance from the new Pope – more than 350 bishops had gathered again in Puebla de los Ángeles, Mexico, with Pope John Paul II to discuss "The Present and Future of Evangelisation in Latin America". The published messages from Medellín and Puebla to the peoples of Latin America provided a template for profound change, and a spark for beginning it. Five years after Puebla, it was the turn of the Marist Brothers to take up the call in a collective way. They did so in Chosica, Peru, in a ten-day meeting of Provincials that was to alter irrevocably Marist life and mission in Latin America and, over the following years, to ripple across the whole Institute. "Chosica was our Medellín."²⁶⁸

The Medellín meeting had been two years in the planning and was influenced by various thinkers and theologians, not least the Jesuits. Among them, of course, was the later good friend of Brother Basilio, Pedro Arrupe SJ, their new Superior General.²⁶⁹ From Arrupe, CELAM took the phrase "preferential option for the poor" and gave it to the whole Church of Latin America, along with a term that would be later picked up by John Paul II and Benedict XVI, albeit used differently

²⁶⁷ *Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano*

²⁶⁸ Brother Antonio Ramalho, in a recorded interview with the author. 7 July 2015.

²⁶⁹ Elected in 1965, Father Arrupe led the Society of Jesus until 1983. He was the first Basque since Ignatius himself to hold this position. As a point of interest, his early education had been with the Marist Brothers.

by them: “new evangelisation”. It also introduced the concept of “basic Christian communities” (BECs) as the locus for the empowerment of poor people, especially through programmes of literacy. It sought to liberate the people from the preventable “institutionalised violence” of poverty and hunger. This was the beginning of what came to be called “liberation theology”, developed by theologians such as Gustavo Gutiérrez OP. The bishops’ call went to all sections of Church and society. They called into question the

... extreme inequality among social classes: especially, though not exclusively, in those countries which are characterised by a marked bi-classism, where a few have much (culture, wealth, power, prestige) while the majority has very little. The Holy Father [Paul VI] describes this situation when directing himself to the Colombian rural workers: “... social and economic development has not been equitable in the great continent of Latin America; and while it has favoured those who helped establish it in the beginning, it has neglected the masses of native population, which are almost always left at a subsistence level and at times are mistreated and exploited harshly.”²⁷⁰

It was a call that required action and the development of a social conscience by everyone, not only “workers and peasants” but also “professionals, clergy and religious”:

Also responsible for injustice are those who remain passive for fear of the sacrifice and personal risk implied by any courageous and effective action. Justice and, therefore, peace conquer by means of a dynamic action of awakening (conscientisation) and organisation of the popular sectors, which are capable of pushing public officials who are often impotent in social projects when there is no popular support.²⁷¹

At Puebla, dioceses and religious congregations were urged to

... give priority in the educational field to the numerous poor sectors of our population who are materially and culturally marginalised.²⁷²

These unequivocal calls were, of course, pertinent for all of the Marist Provinces of the continent but it was a matter for each of them as how they were heard and received. Before 1979, there had been no forum for Latin American Provincials to come together to speak with a unified voice in the way that their bishops had done. The six Provinces of Brazil, who had had some years of cooperation in forming joint commissions and shared visioning, took a lead in inviting all the other Provincials to convene.

²⁷⁰ Document on Peace. Second General Conference of Latin American Bishops, Medellín, Colombia, August 24–September 6, 1968. #3.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.* ##17-18.

²⁷² Cited in *FMS Message*. No. 11, April 1992.

This occurred for the first time – but not without resistance from some – at the General Conference in Rome in 1979, and again in 1982. Brother Charles Howard CG was also instrumental in making it happen.²⁷³ At both meetings, the issues which had been raised at Puebla and their possible implications for the Marist Brothers provided the focus for discussion. It was agreed that they would meet on Latin American soil in Chosica in 1984 to take these matters forward.²⁷⁴ The meeting was well planned, assisted by people such as Brazilian Brother Joaquin Panini who had been working for CELAM for some years – involved first with education and then the renewal of religious life – and had a good sense of a range of Latin American realities.

The Provincials directed their attention to the Marist mission in Latin America, looking at what “the Church leaders were saying to Latin America, and being in communion with the directions of Medellín and Puebla.”²⁷⁵ Most of them came from situations where the traditional Catholic school was the main locus of the brothers’ apostolate, these often enough being large, tuition-paying institutions drawing students from the wealthier classes of society, and usually quite highly regarded.²⁷⁶ Certainly, the Marists were complicit in the “bi-classism” of which the bishops had spoken in Medellín.

Brother Arturo Chavez CG read a message from Brother Basilio, urging the brothers not to be concerned so much with drawing up a detailed plan, but to engage in genuine discernment. Brother Charles – then president of the General Council’s Poverty and Justice Commission – sent a message imploring the Provincials to “hear the cry of the poor”. These messages had a big impact on the participants as they moved into a SEE-JUDGE-ACT process for naming what should be important for Marist mission.

Writing in 2014 to the former Provincials thirty years after their co-signing of the “Letter from Chosica”, Brother Carlos Martínez Lavín – now part of the re-established Marist presence in Cuba – surmised that it had been an event that had affected them all. For him, it had been one of the most “serious and thorough experiences of communal discernment” that he had ever known as a brother.²⁷⁷

²⁷³ Brothers Antonio Ramalho and Pedro Herreros in recorded interviews with the author, 7 July and 10 July, 2015.

²⁷⁴ The Provincials who took part were: Brothers Pedro Marcos (Chile); José Luis Soler and Carlos Gonzales (Argentina); Claudio Lozano (Uruguay); Juan Torrelles (Paraguay); Maurino Ortega (Bolivia); Elijah Pena (Peru); Antonio Ramalho, Roque Ari Salet, Gentil Paganotto, Arlindo Corrent, Davide Pedri and Aloysio Kuhn (Brazil); José Manuel Gómez (Colombia); Julián González (Ecuador); Gerardo Reloso (Venezuela); Marcelino Ganzaraín (Central America); Manuel Menchaca and Carlos Martínez Lavín (México); with Arturo Chavez (General Council).

²⁷⁵ Brother Pedro Herreros, interview *idem*.

²⁷⁶ *FMS Message*. No.11, April 1992. p.1

²⁷⁷ ¿A qué me siento llamado a los treinta años de Chosica? (“To what do I feel called thirty years after Chosica?”) Unpublished open letter of Brother Carlos Martínez Lavín to the surviving participants of the Third Conference of Latin American Provincials, September 1984.

It was also one which had a deep personal impact on many, an experience of genuine conversion.²⁷⁸ In the end, despite some tensions and debates, all came to a common position that they would give priority to taking concrete actions at all levels of their Provinces that demonstrated their “preferential option for poor children and young people.” This was an expression of their very *raison d’être* as Marist Brothers who modelled their lives on Mary and Marcellin, and would lead in a “process of conversion” to follow Christ, poor and a brother to all.²⁷⁹ For Brother Carlos, it was not only the option for the poor that had been important, but that it was done through and from Marist intuitions; it was the way of Mary and Marcellin.²⁸⁰

While all the Provincials committed themselves to the outcome, some of them – such as Carlos himself, Marcelino Ganza-raín, Pedro Marcos, Antonio Ramalho and the others from Brazil – were better placed than others to lead change in their own Provinces. Others faced a more daunting task. One Provincial expressed his anxiety about it, saying he “didn’t know how he could begin to share it even with the Provincial Council”. Apparently, he didn’t.²⁸¹ Another Provincial broke down and cried at the prospect of what was ahead of him. “I see clearly now that this should be our mission as Marist Brothers, but I don’t know how I can transmit it to the brothers of my Province.”²⁸² But the die had been cast.

The immediate repercussions of Chosica were felt, of course, at the General Chapter the following year, not least in the work on the new Constitutions. In his closing address, Brother Charles, who had taken a close interest in what had transpired and wished to spread its spirit across the Institute, singled out the Latin American capitulants:

*A combination of historical circumstances has placed you in a particular position with reference to this call of the Spirit. One could sense the presence of the Spirit in your meeting in Peru last year. At this particular moment of history, the Lord may be asking you to give a lead to the Institute.*²⁸³

It was a “clear call” of the Spirit to the whole Institute, Brother Charles suggested, alongside the calls to greater prayerfulness and a deeper sense of interiority – all calls that would bring new life, but ones that would also “disturb us” because they would “change our lifestyles” and “our relationships with people of prestige and power.”²⁸⁴ Just as Latin America had played its part in influencing the whole Church through the 1971 Synod on “Justice in the World” three years after Medellín, so could the Latin American Provinces do something similar across the Institute of the Marist Brothers in their response to Chosica.

²⁷⁸ Brother Antonio Ramalho, interview *idem*.

²⁷⁹ *La Carta de Chosica*.

²⁸⁰ Brother Carlos Martínez Lavín. *op.cit.*

²⁸¹ Brother Charles Howard, interview transcript *idem*, p.38

²⁸² Brother Antonio Ramalho, interview *idem*

²⁸³ Closing Address of the XVIII General Chapter, in *Listening to the 18th General Chapter*, p.127

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.* p.127

In September 1987, the Provincials of the continent assembled again, in Cali, Colombia, this time with the Superior General present among them. Indeed, from this meeting on, successive Superiors General made it a priority to attend the Conference of Latin American Provincials (CLAP), usually with two or three other members of the General Council, a sign of the significance for the whole Institute of these meetings.²⁸⁵ Brother Charles spoke with passion at the start of the conference, in a way that touched each Provincial deeply.²⁸⁶ He invited them to share their experiences and feelings about what had happened in the Provinces in the three years since Chosica. They spoke honestly. Much was *en train*, they said, but there were pockets of strong resistance and divisiveness. One Provincial reflected that in his Province there were two big elephants: one was the Province and the other was a large institution which the Province administered, and each was pulling in its own direction. The metaphor of the Provincials as elephants became something of a tragi-comic narrative for the gathering – dancing elephants, singing elephants, mother elephants.²⁸⁷ But it also allowed them to ponder on their own leadership, something the Superior General helped them to do especially in a half-day retreat. The Provincials directed themselves to a particular topic: the profile of the Marist Brother that was needed for Latin America today, with a view to identifying what would be most important for his formation. From a detailed analysis of the continent, and with the new Constitutions freshly printed in their hands, the Provincials composed a comprehensive picture of the ideal Latin American brother. He would be a man who identified with Marcellin Champagnat and, among other things, who:

... engaged in the evangelising mission of liberation, through means of Christian education of children and young people, with a preference for those in need ...

... prized his vocation as a catechist ... overflowing with enthusiasm to make Jesus Christ known ...

... followed the way of Mary – simple, welcoming, fraternal, in solidarity with ordinary people and sound values ...

... took on the orientations of the Latin American Church in its preferential option for the young and the poor ...

²⁸⁵ After the next meeting, which coincided with the General Conference in Veranópolis in 1989, CLAP usually met at four-yearly intervals. After the General Conference of 2007, with formal inclusion of the Provinces of USA and Canada, the gathering's name changed to the Inter-American Conference of Provincials with the acronym CIAP.

²⁸⁶ Brother Pedro Herreros, interview *idem*.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid*.

... was able to opt for the poor, to share their life, and to allow himself to be evangelised by them ...

... was capable of adapting himself to local cultures ...²⁸⁸

The momentum from Chosica and Cali, the priorities of new Constitutions, and the active support of the new Superior General and Council, all worked together to ensure it was not long before Provincials and Provincial Chapters were looking at new apostolic initiatives, and reorienting their priorities for life and mission. For example, in the Province of América Central in 1986 four brothers began a project in Chichicastenango, at the heart of an indigenous district of Guatemala, to work with the formation of catechists, youth workers and teachers. In a poor quarter of Bogotá, the Province of Colombia established a social centre, “La Paz”. In 1988, the Province of México Central began a school with an insertion community in a marginalised area of Mexico City. In Brazil, the Province of Porto Alegre had started three new insertion communities by 1989. In Chile, in a poor suburb of Santiago, the Province began a free school, “Escuela Champagnat” with supplementary social services for 1,400 students. In Paraguay, which had been founded by Catalonia only in 1968, the Colegio de la Inmaculada Concepción began in 1991 a new school in a poor part of Caaguazú. In the same year, the Province of Mexico Occidental began a presence in a secondary school in the north, in Mexicali on the border with the United States which was home to many poorer people. In Argentina, initiatives of the two Provinces included projects in the needy suburbs of Buenos Aires and others in remote areas such as the Neuva Pompeya misión among indigenous people in the north. The list is far from exhaustive; it only an indicative sample of the types of many initiatives that were taken over just a few years. But more than simply finding themselves in new foundations, many brothers were living in new ways – typically in smaller communities, less institutional in lifestyle, and among poorer people.

There was also growing support for such initiatives across the spectrum of the brothers of individual Provinces, even if this was less than unanimous. The difference of perspective did, however, start to lose some of the fiercer acrimony of the decade before. Brazilian Brother Antonio Ramalho, in reflecting on the experience of his own Province, echoes that of others:

*I remember very polemic Provincial Chapters in the 1970s, concerning the work of brothers on the peripheries and among the poor ... Many of these projects did not go well. We lost many brothers, many of those who believed in the new ways ... For a time we lost some capacity ... The movement to the poor created a real identity crisis for some brothers.*²⁸⁹

²⁸⁸ In *FMS Message*, No. 4. January 1989.

²⁸⁹ Brother Antonio Ramalho, interview *idem*.

Certainly, not all brothers were growing in their ease with the new orientations or the assumptions which underpinned them. Commenting twenty-five years later on a conversation that took place in one community in Chile, for example, when he was Superior General, Brother Charles remembers that the delicate topic of General Pinochet came up for discussion:

*The conversation got quite tense. In the end, we just had to agree to disagree.*²⁹⁰

Chilean Brother Pedro Herreros was later to reflect that it would be “years before we could talk about these things without shouting at one another”. He judged, however, that one moment which helped to shift the debate from being pre-occupied with the socio-political agenda of Latin America to one more dispassionately centred on the Gospel, and on a discernment based on Marist criteria, was the General Conference of 1989.²⁹¹

Three years after that General Conference, the year 1992 marked the 500th anniversary of the arrival of the Christian gospel in the Americas. A special edition of *FMS Message* offered a comprehensive profile of the then-eighteen Marist administrative units of Latin America. Overall, it revealed a picture of a mission that remained principally devoted to education – primary, secondary and tertiary – almost entirely in Catholic schools and universities. “We are convinced,” wrote Brother Inocencio Martínez in Paraguay, “of the urgent necessity of the school as an instrument for the development of these people.”²⁹² The changing nature of schools, however, was clear. Each Province could describe its work among the poor and the marginalised. In the Province of São Paulo, for example, with 26% of the brothers then involved in social projects and missionary work, it was observed:

*In our retreats, Provincial gatherings, assemblies and Provincial Chapters, a constant theme has been that of becoming more closely involved with the world of the poor.*²⁹³

Looking back over the quarter century since Vatican II, and the influence of Medellín and Puebla, Chosica and Cali, and also the General Conference in Veranópolis, the experience of the Latin American Provinces was summed up in this way for readers around the Institute:

*It was a time for seeking answers, for deep questioning, critical and radical, of all that had been done, of the structures of institutions, of vocation, of the Institute and its mission, of apostolic works, of personal life and how it was lived, of personal identity, of the charism of Marcellin and of the Institute.*²⁹⁴

²⁹⁰ Brother Charles Howard, interview transcript, *idem*. p.17

²⁹¹ Brother Pedro Herreros, interview *idem*.

²⁹² *FMS Message*. No. 11. April, 1992. p.69

²⁹³ *Ibid.* p.53

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.* p.78

An exercise of discernment for the whole Institute

It was in Veranópolis that a decisive attempt was made to spread to the whole Institute the momentum that was gathering pace in Latin America. Alert to what could be learnt from an exposure to another reality, Brother Charles and his Council decided that the 1989 General Conference would be held, for the first time, away from the seat of the General government.²⁹⁵ The place chosen for the sixty-nine Provincials and the General Councillors to assemble (and, in another novelty, six young brothers from different countries) was Veranópolis, Brazil. As part of the lead-in to the Conference, each Provincial was required to make a “pilgrimage of solidarity”. It was typical of Brother Charles’ style of leadership that this requirement was both prophetic and also non-negotiable: “It was not optional. Everybody had to go.”²⁹⁶

Indeed, the visits were centrally and carefully planned, with nine countries of Latin America allocated for visits by the Provincials.²⁹⁷ They arrived for the Conference with a first-hand experience of some aspect of the reality of the continent, and how the different Provinces were responding. The aim was unapologetically to put the visitors through an experience of “significant displacement”, and to invite them to be “evangelised by the poor”.²⁹⁸ When they came together and Charles spoke to them, complemented by Latin American leaders such as Brothers Marcelino Ganzaraín CG and Claudino Falquetto, the participants were much better placed to enter into the SEE-JUDGE-ACT process that was used.

The topic was “The Marist Brother and his Mission for the Future”; the dynamic was discernment. Already Charles had addressed the importance of personal discernment in his Circular of 1988. At Veranópolis, the focus moved more to collective discernment. While some participants and others in the Institute thought that Charles may have been insisting too much on an Ignatian overlay to the brothers’ fundamentally Marian spirituality,²⁹⁹ all entered into the process.

The charism of the Founder, in the bicentennial year of his birth, was central to the content of successive speakers. Brother Charles drew the links from this to Marist apostolic spirituality. Brother Benito was later to judge that this was the place where Charles’ approach to spirituality was first received in a significant way, and provided a basis for the discernment that took place.³⁰⁰ It was Marcellin’s charism and the intuitions that should be the characteristic traits of a Marist apostle. Interventions by Brothers Alain Delorme CG (on the Constitutions), Rich-

²⁹⁵ The group that was the planning committee for the Conference comprised Brothers Charles and Benito, with General Councillors Richard Dunleavy, Claudio Girardi, and Pedro Huidobro.

²⁹⁶ Brother Charles Howard, interview transcript, *idem*. p.21

²⁹⁷ The Provinces and Districts that were asked to host visits were: Mexico Central, Mexico Occidental, America Central, Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Chile, Bolivia, and Brasil Norte.

²⁹⁸ *FMS Message*. No.6. November 1989.

²⁹⁹ Brother Richard Dunleavy, interview *idem*.

³⁰⁰ Brother Benito Arbués, interview *idem*.

ard Dunleavy CG (on Province planning), Marcelino Ganzaraín CG (on the least favoured), Pedro Huidobro CG (on Christian education) and Yvez Thénoz (on the brother as an apostle) were among those that developed these ideas. The last three were later to become a supplement to the Superior General's Circular on Marist Apostolic Spirituality which was published three years later. Brother Pedro argued for the continuing relevance of the school as the ideal environment for evangelisation, and Brother Marcelino noted that schools, colleges and universities were indeed the most common place for the brothers to be involved, but both Councillors challenged the Conference regarding the place of the poor.³⁰¹ Brother Marcelino was especially adamant on this issue, pointing to the logic that a "preferential option" meant that the poor should make up most of the schools, involve most of the brothers, and attract most of the resources – something, he emphasised, was far from the case.³⁰² He gave a reminder of Brother Basilio's call to personal and institutional conversion, and linked it to the "re-founding" to which Brother Charles had dramatically called the brothers.

Although the Conference may not have resulted in the dramatic and immediate kind of reorientation for which brothers such as Charles and Marcelino may have yearned, it did bring the term "solidarity" into the mainstream of Marist discourse. In opening the General Chapter four years later, Brother Charles was to point to this concept as the key challenge to emerge for the whole Institute from Veranoópolis: a solidarity which needed to be genuine and Institute-wide, which stood with the poor and their just causes, and in which the Institute should be more audacious.³⁰³ The 1993 Chapter became known to many as "the solidarity Chapter".³⁰⁴ It did so in large measure due to a seed that had first sprouted in Chosica, and had been well watered over the ensuing nine years.

³⁰¹ Supplement to the Circular on Marist Apostolic Spirituality. *Circulars of the Superiors General*, XXX, 8.

³⁰² *Ibid.* p.566

³⁰³ *Opening Address to the XIX General Chapter.* p.21

³⁰⁴ Brother Jeffrey Crowe, interview *idem*

The growing discourse of solidarity, evangelical discernment, and re-foundation

The “Montagne experience” was a key image for the capitulants in 1993, something they saw as a “gospel experience of solidarity”.³⁰⁵ In assessing the Institute’s journey of recent years, and prompted by their own physical journeys to come to the Chapter, they perceived that

... the entire Institute is making its own pilgrimage of solidarity, becoming more conscious of Marcellin’s love for the poor and his desire to have us “serve them first, without excluding anyone.”³⁰⁶

They called for the Institute

... to place an emphasis on solidarity as a basic principle of our educational mission and to put our works at the service of the poor.³⁰⁷

and they provided a long list of ways for Provinces, institutions, communities and individual brothers to do this. For the General Council, the Chapter recommended that



28. The visit of Brother Benito Arbues, Superior General, to an indigenous community.

³⁰⁵ *Message of the XIX General Chapter, #11.*

³⁰⁶ *Ibid. #4*

³⁰⁷ *Ibid. #9*

- *solidarity experiences and education become an integral part of formation programmes*
- *new projects be fostered that showed a preference for the least favoured, and*
- *a “Secretariat of Solidarity” be established to succeed the Social Secretariat and to include a new “Solidarity Fund”.³⁰⁸*

The last recommendation was to become the new Bureau of International Solidarity three years later.



The calls of the Chapter were taken up at the level of the general administration, in administrative units and institutions, and individually by both brothers and lay Marists. Of course, Provinces outside of Latin America had also been active before the Chapter, in the 1980s and earlier, in discerning their apostolic priorities and making new educational foundations in their response to the calls were being made by the Institute. Close to two hundred separate initiatives had been taken around the world, a not insubstantial figure. For example, in 1986 the Province of Madagascar had established a new school, St Pierre Chanel College at Ihosy

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.* #14

in the south where only 12% of children were going to school; the Province of Nigeria had begun an educational and social project in 1985 at Ezzagu in an area of material and spiritual poverty; in Australia, the Province of Sydney had taken over two struggling Catholic primary schools in the remote rural towns of Bourke and Murgon, each with a marginalised indigenous population, and the Province of Melbourne at Santa Teresa; the Province of México Central had since the 1970s been involved with indigenous people in the south of the country in Chiapas, and México Occidental from 1982 was in Oaxaca; in 1991, the Province of the Philippines began “Marcellin House” near General Santos City as a refuge and training centre for street children. Among those looking for new foreign missions were the Province Iberville which had gone to Haiti in 1985, the Province of Léon which had established a presence in Honduras in 1992, and México Occidental in Tanzania to take over a secondary school in the town of Masonga the same year.

In the 1980s, these moves did not always win unanimity among the brothers of a Province. Sometimes, indeed, it became quite divisive. Rather than proposing some new initiative in order to be more inclusive in the apostolic reach of Province, options were often advocated at Provincial Chapters in terms of choosing against one type of work in favour of another. Brother Emili Turú recalls the experience of some Provinces in Spain, for example:

In some parts of Spain, options were being made against something. That was causing divisions among the brothers ... There were fractures – those who were with the rich, those who were with the poor ... At the beginning there was more confrontation like this ... It's a division that persists a little in some places in the Institute.³⁰⁹

The Chapter of 1993 gave added impetus to Provinces to continue to move into fresh educational fields, devoting more of the resources, personnel and energies to projects which put the Provinces in concrete solidarity with the poor and marginalised. From 1993, there was also significantly more attention given to the involvement of lay people in such initiatives, not simply as



30. The departure of the first brothers (Michael O'Hara, Andreas Krupp, Gerard Gillespie, and Ewald Frank) to Roo, Kenya (1984).

³⁰⁹ Brother Emili Turú, interview *idem*

co-workers or functionally filling gaps because of insufficient numbers of brothers, but as Marists in their own right. Again, examples are manifold. For instance, the 1993 Provincial Chapter of São Paulo decided that every fee-paying school would support a work for the under-privileged, so, for example, in 1996 a new primary school named after Brother François Rivat opened in the densely-populated quarter of Samambaia (Brasília) with the support of Marist College Brasília. The Province of Sydney, in looking for a new foundation in the war-ravaged country of Cambodia, opted to start a primary school in 1996 in Phnom Penh for children with physical disabilities who in Khmer culture were often forgotten and had little opportunity. The leader of this project, Brother Terence Heinrich, appointed only teachers who also were challenged by physical disabilities – a prophetic but respectful statement of evangelical engagement with a predominantly Buddhist society that would have found such an arrangement to be unusual. By 1996, in the District of Paraguay, still dependent on the Province of Catalonia, the primary school established three years earlier in the new town of Mariscal Estigarribia in the remote Chaco Boreal region of Paraguay had grown to include a pre-school, secondary, and two-year teachers' college, actively integrated into the local Church and was receiving lay Marist volunteers from SED in Spain. In the same year, in a further example, the Province of Melbourne established with two brothers, some lay people and young volunteers, a new education and youth welfare project for teenagers at risk – those who were homeless, out of school, and juvenile offenders.

In the Great Lakes region of Africa, so wounded by the Rwandan genocide of 1994 and the on-going unrest in then-Zaire (now the DRC), the brothers were actively teaching, catechising and providing material support in the refugee camp of Nyamirangwe, near Bugobe, on the border of Rwanda and Zaire. When it became unsafe for Rwandan brothers to continue in the camp, there was no shortage of volunteers from brothers of other Provinces in the Institute to take their places. The Province of Italy established a new secondary school in Taormina in Sicily in 1995 for families that would struggle to have access to Catholic education, while in Mozambique, the Province of Portugal was able to re-establish and grow its educational initiatives following the sixteen years of the destructive civil war which ended with Rome Accord of 1992.

In the Central African Republic, the French Province of Beaucamps-St-Genis-Laval was able to plan the building of a new primary school in Berberati, partly financed by schools in France and Melbourne. In 1997, the Provincials of Europe planned an expansion of the Marist presence in Eastern Europe, with Catalonia, Levante and Beaucamps-St-Genis picking up responsibility for a new foundation in Hungary in addition to the school already established in Győr, and Bética, Castilla, Madrid and Hermitage, to look for a foundation among needy young people in Romania. In 1995, the *Instituto Marista de Solidariedade* (IMS) was established in Belo Horizonte by the Province of Rio de Janeiro, one of a number of agencies and foundations dedicated to solidarity which were beginning to start in different parts of the Institute.



31. First Marist Community, Győr, Hungary (1994).

Across the six Provinces of Brazil

... more and more we moved to new models ... The traditional schools became more committed to solidarity, opening programmes for the poor in their own facilities ... There was a new wave of foundations in social works ... taking place in a less conflicted ambience.³¹⁰

Education in and for solidarity was also beginning to establish itself firmly in the different levels of initial formation, even if some thought that this was an area which received inadequate attention in the Formation Guide that had been formally accepted at the 1993 Chapter. At MIC in Nairobi, for example, the teaching practicums for the under-graduate brothers at university typically involved their being assigned to schools and educational projects in remoter areas, and their living in less-institutional ways, as the people of those regions. Some Provinces moved their houses of initial formation to be in poorer quarters of cities and towns, for example the scholasticate of the Province of Central America in Guatemala City. In 1997, five administrative units from the Asia-Pacific region (Sri Lanka, Melbourne, Fiji, the Philippines, and Sydney) combined to organise an extended solidarity immersion for post-novitiate brothers in the Philippines.

³¹⁰ Brother Antonio Ramalho, *op.cit.*

The narrative of solidarity that was being fostered by the Superior General, the Council's Solidarity Commission,³¹¹ and the newly established Bureau of Solidarity, was increasingly interwoven with that of evangelical discernment and re-foundation. In re-assessing the influence of the Gospel of Jesus Christ within Marist educational institutions, and the possible re-orientation that this may demand of both them and their Provinces, Marist leaders were being led to two inter-related imperatives: the rejuvenation of their strategies for the evangelisation of young people, and an evangelical discernment of the purposes and processes of the institutions themselves. In their report to the 1993 General Chapter, Brother Charles and his Council, had re-stated what they had been emphasising recurrently, that "mission is at the heart of our lives as brothers", but that this was facing difficulties because of

- the ageing of brothers in most Provinces, and a subsequent diminishment of the boldness of their initiative³¹²
- inadequate discernment of apostolic priorities
- the pervasive secularism, materialism and individualism that were affecting cultures
- some tiredness and loss of enthusiasm

They judged that the Institute needed to discern, strengthen and diversify its ministries, with attention to the most neglected and the needs of young people. Part of this was to embrace the call of Pope John Paul II to the "new evangelisation".³¹³ In 1992, the thirty-nine brothers who attended first European Congress of Marist Education in Barcelona (which was convened by the Province of Catalonia³¹⁴), had explored the ways in which Marist schools were answering the needs and hopes of modern day European youth. Meeting six years later at Champville in Lebanon, the European Provincials gave their attention to the "re-evangelisation" of Europe, a theme that was close to the heart of John Paul II, and also to his successor Benedict XVI.³¹⁵ Benedict, in particular, gave it prominence, culminating in its being the topic of the Synod of Bishops in 2012, attended by then then Superior General, Brother Emili.

³¹¹ By the mid-1990s this comprised Brothers Claudino Falchetto, Marcelino Ganzaraín, Allen Sherry and Yvon Bédard

³¹² This phrase was Brother Charles' preferred English translation for the French word *audace* which was one of the twin themes of the Chapter.

³¹³ *Report of Brother Superior General and his Council to the XIX General Chapter*. pp.32-33

³¹⁴ 11-15 May, 1992. Brother Lluís Serra was a key figure in bringing this about, with the Champagnat Foundation of Catalonia. *FMS Echo*. No 15. June 1992.

³¹⁵ John Paul II's thinking on this topic is best captured in his encyclical *Redemptoris missio*, published in December 1990. Drawing on *Evangelii nuntiandi*, the Pope urged the Church to a revitalised missionary spirit, with a Pauline emphasis on inner conversion to Christ and an outreach to others and to secular culture that sprang from this.

By that time, however, in some sections of the Church – both in Europe and elsewhere – there were strong moves to a kind of restored Catholicism, typically quite conservative in its modes of expression.³¹⁶

In 1995 the concern of the Provincials of Europe was for a “re-launching” of the Marist mission across the continent, a sign of both the march of secularism and the diminishment of the impact of Marist education in many countries.³¹⁷ This was in line with the wider malaise in the vitality of the Christian faith that was being experienced in many parts of the world, and which John Paul II described to be affecting especially

... countries with ancient Christian roots, and occasionally in the younger Churches as well, where entire groups of the baptised have lost a sense of the faith, or even no longer consider themselves members of the Church, and live a life far removed from Christ and his gospel. In this case what is needed is a “new evangelisation” or a “re-evangelisation”.³¹⁸

This kind of situation touched, of course, the very *raison d’être* for the Marist project. It has challenged Provinces and their various institutions and programmes to address both their identity and purposes, and to be creative and resourceful in their strategies for evangelisation and the formation of those who teach and evangelise.³¹⁹ It has meant different things in different places. For example, in a country such as Canada where the teaching of religious education in schools has been largely prohibited by law, it has meant that anything that was explicitly concerned with evangelisation or catechesis had to take place outside the school.³²⁰ In Asian countries such as Malaysia, Singapore, India or Hong Kong where the Christian population was relatively small, and the public expression or teaching of

³¹⁶ A longitudinal research project on this topic that has relevance to Marist education is that which has been undertaken by a team led by Prof. Didier Pollefeyt of the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies at the *Katholieke Universiteit* of Leuven (Belgium) since 2006. It has explored how school communities understand the deep identity of Catholic educational institutions – and indeed of Catholicism itself – in today’s world. Since 2012, Marist schools in the Provinces of West Central Europe and Australia have participated in the study, including the generating of a measure to correlate the Marist approach to education with various orientations towards Catholicism. The academic position of the research team is to promote what it calls “post-critical belief” against other ways of understanding the purposes and intent of Catholic institutions, including schools that it describes as “re-confessionalising”. Cf. Pollefeyt, D. and Bouwens, J. (2010) ‘Framing the identity of Catholic schools: empirical methodology for quantitative research on the Catholic identity of an education institute’, *International Studies in Catholic Education*, 2, 2, 193 — 211.

³¹⁷ See *FMS Message*. No 18. November 1995.

³¹⁸ *Redemptoris missio*, #33.

³¹⁹ These are challenges which have been extensively addressed also by diocesan and Vatican authorities. See, for example, the series of documents on the Catholic school which have been published by the Congregation for Catholic Education: *The Catholic School* (1977); *Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith* (1982); *The Religious Dimension of the Catholic School* (1988); *The Presence of the Church in the University and University Culture* (1994); *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium* (1997); *Consecrated Persons and their Mission in Schools* (2002); *Educating Together in Catholic Schools, a shared mission of consecrated persons and lay faithful* (2007); *Religious Education in Schools* (2009); *Educating Today and Tomorrow, A Renewing Passion* (2014).

³²⁰ Brothers Gérard Banchard and Yvon Bédard in meetings with the author, 16 May 2015.

Christian religious belief could often be a sensitive issue, the challenges were different again. In countries such as France or Belgium, which have a rich Catholic heritage but have developed quite secular cultures, the expectations that parents or students had for Catholic schools may not have included religious education as a high priority. In countries in some parts of Africa or the Pacific where the practice of faith was stronger, problems may have been more associated with the capacity or readiness of teachers. In Australia, where schools were often quite well resourced and teachers professionally well prepared by Catholic tertiary institutions, the majority of the population had little or no active connection with the Church or with a religious faith.

In assessing the vitality of the mission of the Institute in 2001, the General Councillors in their Report to the XX General Chapter indicated that they had been encouraged by many things that had transpired since 1993. They highlighted the generosity, love, enthusiasm and fidelity of so many of the new Marist NGOs, the health of apostolic youth movements in some countries, and the enthusiasm of lay Marists.³²¹ Evangelisation through the education and the accompaniment of young people, particularly the least favoured, was how the Council had interpreted the mission priority of the previous Chapter,³²² and this provided a simple criterion for assessing the health of the mission. The Councillors were concerned, therefore, by several things they had observed: the high proportion of brothers whose administrative roles kept them from direct contact with young people; some passivity due to ageing; and the residual “high resistance” in some Provinces to genuine partnership with lay people and a regrettable “sense of superiority” on the part of some brothers that lay behind this resistance. Of most concern to them, however, were the apparently low level of apostolic priority in many educational institutions, an inadequate evangelical transformation of them, and the avoidance of decisions to withdraw from places that were no longer consistent with mission objectives. Brother Benito had been particularly strong on both the last points at the General Conference in 1997; they are repeated in the Report to the Chapter. They saw a need for institutions and other educational programmes to be transformed so that they might “evangelise at depth” and “form youth for solidarity”. They also emphasised the need for more “new initiatives in favour of the poor” which “were a requisite for re-founding”.³²³

The interconnectedness of solidarity, evangelical discernment and re-founding had gathered force in the second half of the mandate of Brother Benito’s Council. It was a natural intensification and focussing of the directions that had been set by the Chapter. One of the touchstones that emerged for Benito and others was the incongruity of the elitism of some large institutions in some Provinces. The strong call for such works to become more inclusive had begun at least as early as the Poverty and Justice Document of the 1976 Chapter, but similar questions had been

³²¹ Report of the Brother Superior General and his Council to the XX General Chapter. In *FMS Message*. No.29. December 2000 – January 2001. #3.3

³²² *Ibid.* #1.2

³²³ *Ibid.* #3.3

addressed at General Chapters as far back as those 1932 and 1948.³²⁴ One of the first Provinces to take this on in a comprehensive way was South Africa where the policy of *apartheid* was still in force.³²⁵ In defiance of this strictly enforced policy, the brothers decided they would introduce integrated enrolment. It was a daring move, one that brought them not only into conflict with the authorities but also with many of the parents. Brother Charles Howard was later to comment:

Jude³²⁶ was one of the most inspiring men I have known. One time as Provincial he was addressing a meeting of parents to explain the introduction of racial inclusion in a particular school. One of the leading parents accused the brothers of being “traitors” ... And there were others among his own brothers who were not in favour.³²⁷

In some parts of Latin America, where this question was perhaps more sensitive and more vexing than in elsewhere, Provinces had made a start on initiatives. The Province of São Paulo has been mentioned above; another example was the Province of Cordoba (Argentina) where the Colegio Marista Señora del Rosario had galvanised its school community and had converted the dilapidated buildings of an old railway station in “La Boca”, a slum district of Rosario, to establish Escuela Marista Marcelino Champagnat which by 1998 had 550 pupils. There were many other examples, in Latin America and elsewhere, but not enough to satisfy the capitulants in successive General Chapters that there had been the kind of “personal and institutional conversion” for which Brother Basilio had been the first to call. The Council of Brother Seán took up the baton from its predecessor – prompted by the final Circular of Brother Benito and the express wishes of the General Chapter. A new bureau for the Evangelical Use of Goods was established and a secretary appointed to advance matters.³²⁸ By the time of the General Conference in Negombo



32. New pastoral perspectives in Canada (2008).

³²⁴ See Brother Marcelino Ganzaraín on this point, in Supplement to the Circular on *Marist Apostolic Spirituality*, p. 567.

³²⁵ A legislated policy of severe racial segregation that affected all levels of South African institutions and society, officially in place from 1948 until 1994, but with its roots going back to early Dutch colonial times.

³²⁶ He is referring to Brother Jude Pieterse, the then Provincial. Ethnically, Brother Jude was Afrikaner, which was the group most associated with the ruling National Party and the apartheid regime. This amplified the sense of betrayal that some felt towards him and also the degree of delight felt by others.

³²⁷ Brother Charles Howard, interview transcript *idem*. pp.30-31.

³²⁸ Brother Pedro Ost who had a strong background in social action and social projects in his native Brazil.

in 2005, about half of the Provinces had begun their requested “Plan of Discernment”.³²⁹ In a hard-hitting address to open the Conference Brother Seán expressed the view that “we haven’t done the evaluation of works called for by the XX General Chapter.”³³⁰ Four years later, he and the General Council were somewhat more nuanced in their assessment of progress. In many parts of the Institute, they judged that there had been “significant efforts ... to make our educational works centres of evangelisation.” The Councillors referred to work of pastoral and spirituality teams, the level of resourcing, the place of prayer and retreats, of youth ministry programmes, and the use of clear criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of evangelisation. For other places, however, they concluded that “it is difficult to imagine that evangelisation is the priority and focus of the school.”³³¹

Over a period of two decades, the narrative of re-founding from Rome remained strong. For Brothers’ Benito and Seán it was inherently linked to the authenticity and intensity of the personal conversion that was or was not happening.

*... nothing would change without the conversion [of the individual]. We needed to face the problems of both the young and the middle-aged brothers.*³³²

Brother Seán was worried that a “growing professionalism” was threatening to “overshadow the apostolic nature of our life” and, that despite all the new works, the new ways of living community life, new forms of prayer, and dress, “the long-hoped-for renewal had failed to come about.”³³³ Exemplars of what the alternative may look like were frequently the subject of Institute publications, through pictures, profiles, news items, and extended interviews in the weekly *Marist Bulletin* or quarterly *FMS Echo*. In one such interview with Brother João Gutemberg, after thirty-five years of the brothers’ presence in the Amazon, their life and work were portrayed in terms of re-founding. At that time, a District dependent on the Province of Rio Grande del Sur, its thirty-five brothers were spread across ten small communities, ministering in schools, youth ministry, catechetical work and as moderators of BECs. For part of the year, many brothers lived with the *ribeirinhos*, the local people who lived by the rivers and streams.

First, we are forming fraternal communities, inserted and rooted in the culture of the broader community of the people we serve. We seek to play a meaningful role in the life of the wider community, giving priority to living a simple lifestyle and maintain dialogue with the local people in the situations in which they find themselves. A consequence of taking on this challenge is the need for the brothers to find ways to support themselves.

³²⁹ *FMS Message*. No.34. December 2005

³³⁰ *Opening and Closing Addresses by Brother Seán Sammon to the VII General Conference*. Negombo, Sri Lanka. 7 and 30 September, 2005.

³³¹ *Report of the Superior General and his Council to the XXI General Chapter*. p.16

³³² Brother Benito, interview *idem*.

³³³ *Opening and Closing Addresses by Brother Seán Sammon to the VII General Conference*. p.10

*The brothers want to earn their own living in solidarity with the people around them ... We need to go on mission in a more itinerant way ... Thus it is better not to own the centres where we work and to collaborate with other congregations, dioceses and institutions ... We need to make our own a new way of thinking about our consecrated life as Marists.*³³⁴

Whatever might have been inspirational and valued about these fresh expressions of the brothers' life as consecrated men, their style of life and the nature of their work remained exceptional rather than normative. For brothers, and more especially for the great numbers of lay Marists who were being increasingly included in the collective understanding of who was a Marist, the more frequent locus for Marist life and mission remained educational institutions and programmes in cities and towns around the world. That these works may well have experienced a significant re-orientation to be more inclusive and more alert to evangelical imperatives may be true, but the reality is that it was here that most Marists of the world continued to find themselves. The time had come for them to be able to describe the purpose and their distinctive approach in contemporary language.

There were many parts of the Marist world where mainstream schooling, often secondary schooling, remained a key priority for the brothers and they felt it to be justified as their major focus. Sometimes this was the result of socio-historical factors that ensured that Marist schools, or at least the majority of them, had not become elitist. This was the case in some western democracies where social democratic principles had created societies where there was not the disparity of wealth and privilege that afflicted some other places. Sometimes, there were also adequate levels of public funding of Catholic schools to allow them to keep their tuition fees low and within the reach of ordinary families. Countries such as Ireland, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Spain were examples of this. In other parts of the world – particularly in so-called developing countries where access to education was limited and good schools were few – Provinces judged that the Catholic school retained a legitimate place at the heart of the mission of the Institute. New schools continued to be established and struggling ones taken over by the Institute. This was the case in countries of Asia such as India³³⁵ and Pakistan, in those of Oceania such as Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Kiribati³³⁶ and Fiji, and in most of the countries of Africa³³⁷ where literacy rates, poverty and displacement were so high. In 1998, Brother Eugène Kabanguka reported that

³³⁴ *Marist Bulletin*. No.46. 10 January 2003.

³³⁵ In 1988, as the first work of the Indian Brothers, a school was taken up in P. Udayapatty, in Tamil Nadu.

³³⁶ The Province of New Zealand took over St Louis High School on this remote Pacific island country in 1984.

³³⁷ In 1986, the Province of Germany established a school in Kenya where a tiny percentage of students continued to secondary school. 1988/89, the Provinces of Norte and Hermitage established in Equatorial Guinea, and in 1992 the Province of Mexico Occidental took up a school in Tanzania

*In almost all the countries where we are established in Africa, bishops are building schools and appealing to us to run them ... As in Father Champagnat's time we see ignorance due to the poor education systems and little access to the media, an endemic poverty, civil wars ...*³³⁸

This raised questions for the African brothers as to what types of schools to take on, and what role schools would play. It also led Brother Eugène to wonder if it were more accurate to speak of Africa being in a period of “founding” rather than “re-founding”.³³⁹ One particular example of such dire need for education was Angola which had suffered through a long civil war.

*The aim of our Marist mission in Angola is to alleviate the devastating effects of the long civil war that pitted the government against the UNITA rebels and devastated the country. At the present time, the Province of Rio Grande do Sul has five brothers working in Luanda. During this summer break, two brothers and two lay people from that Province are giving a training course to 70 teachers in Kwito-Bié on interpersonal relations, educational development and our Marist educational mission.*³⁴⁰

A reference text which addressed the purposes, priorities and approaches of brothers and lay Marists in education, one that expressed these in ways that spoke to the realities of the contemporary world, and which reflected the new directions and emphases of Marist works, would be a resource to assist with such formation.

The reformulation of Marist education

The call for a new document on Marist education or the Marist school was part of the mandate to the new General Council from the XIX General Chapter of 1993. The Council was asked: (a) to set up “an international commission to describe the characteristics of a ‘Marist Educational Project’”; and (b) to give “direction and animation to Marist education”, through its own work and also through “regional teams.”³⁴¹ The task was overdue. The previous Chapter had asked for something similar. In 1985, the capitulants had wanted a definition of “Marist education”, as one of three priorities they named for Marist mission.³⁴² Brother Charles’ Council, however, at the start of 1990 formally “adjourned” their attention to this request from the XVIII Chapter, with no real progress having been made with it. They felt that resources in the General House were too stretched by other priorities to do it properly.³⁴³ Indeed, the call had been deferred from an even earlier Chapter: the

³³⁸ *FMS Message*. No.25. December 1998. p.47

³³⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁰ *Marist Bulletin*. No.49. 31 January 2003.

³⁴¹ *Acts of the XIX General Chapter*. #35.

³⁴² The other two were: apostolic movements for youth, and the place of Mary in the brothers’ apostolate.

³⁴³ *Report of the Brother Superior and his Council to the XIX General Chapter*, p.45.

commission looking at apostolate in 1976 had also seen the need for a document on the Marist school.³⁴⁴ That call had come particularly from the French who, like others in western countries but probably ahead of most of them, were dealing with a post-1968 mélange of a collapse in new vocations, significant changes in approaches to catechetics, a rampant secularism and growing moral pluralism, and fundamental questions about the place and purpose of the Catholic school.³⁴⁵ Direction was needed. The French themselves were to respond in different ways: of the two Provinces (Beaucamps-St Genis and MCO-Hermitage), one decided on a course that embedded all its works within diocesan frameworks – situated in the mission of the local church as Marcellin had done, and with no particular attention to Marist identity or spirit beyond the brothers themselves; the other looked to define what was distinctive and effective about a Marist school and to look for ways to support the directors and teachers (mainly lay people) in this particular way of education.³⁴⁶ What to do with schools in which there were now few or no brothers? To what extent was it either valid or useful to promote a distinctive form of Catholic education that could be described as “Marist”? To what purpose? If so, how would it be resourced? Could there be an authentically Marist school beyond the administration of Marist Brothers? Did lay people have any role in deciding the best way forward? These were questions with which not only the French Provinces were dealing by the 1970s. The same issues were emerging, and rapidly so, in Belgium, in the Netherlands, in the United Kingdom, in Canada, in Hong Kong, in Lebanon, in Greece, in Italy, and elsewhere. By the 1990s, every Province of the Institute was facing similar questions, and their responses to them varied widely.

The only Institute-wide text specifically on the theme of Marist education – apart from the XVII Chapter’s “Apostolate” document which had had a somewhat underwhelming impact – was the *Le Guide des Écoles* of 1853.³⁴⁷ The world had changed. A major element of this change was made by the XIX Chapter in its opting decisively to include lay people “as genuine partners”.

We commit ourselves to develop and to deepen our “partnership” with lay people, both in our community practices and in our apostolic work. This implies:

- *involving lay people in all aspects of Marist works, including their direction;*
- *promoting and accompanying systematic formation of lay people in spirituality, Marist education, leadership, justice and solidarity;*

³⁴⁴ Brother Richard Dunleavy, interview *idem*.

³⁴⁵ *Ibid*.

³⁴⁶ Brother Maurice Berquet and Brother Alain Delorme, recorded interviews with the author, 4 and 5 May, 2015. According to these brothers, it is a decision that continues to attract a divided opinion among the French brothers. It was undeniably quite a significant one.

³⁴⁷ In addition to this were other documents, mainly from the hand of Brother Jean-Baptiste (e.g. *Avis, Leçons, Sentences, La Vie du Marcellin Champagnat, Biographies de Quelques Frères*, and *Le Bon Supérieur*) which had described different aspects of how Brothers taught and cared for the young, how they directed their schools, and revealed the principal features of their priorities and emphases. But, for most people by the 1980s, these had fallen into disuse.

- communicating the Marist charism and spirituality to lay people and being open to being enriched ourselves by their way of living the Christian vocation.³⁴⁸

This was a game-changer. At least, it was for those Provinces which were ready to embrace the concept, or had the capacity to do so. Not all did, at least not immediately. This statement of the Chapter went well beyond the rationale for the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family, which was largely concerned with lay people sharing in Marist *spirituality*. This was about mission, and it was underpinned by a view that lay people could be Marist, and could take a role in responsibility for Marist mission in a way that was as valid as the brothers.

Even though the Council of Brother Charles had not attended to preparing a document on the contemporary Marist school, or to developing ways for using such a resource to allow brothers and lay people to be able to describe the twentieth century Marist school and themselves as Marist educators, individual Provinces had begun to do so after 1985. One such initiative, and indeed one that was welcomed by the General Council which lent its support to it, was small book written by New Zealander Brother Gregory Ryan, called *A Guide for the Marist Educator*.³⁴⁹ It followed on others such as that by Catalan Brothers Josep María Escorinhuela, Juan Moral and Lluís Serra in 1983, *El Educador Marista*. That of Brother Gregory drew on the recently-adopted Constitutions of 1986 and his own experience of the modern Marist school. He argued that it was important for a religious institute to be conscious of the distinctive elements of its charism otherwise it would have little claim for separate existence.

The booklet codified what it called the “shape” of Marist education into three basic aims which it accompanied, after the manner of the *Guide*, with a large collection of practical strategies for ensuring the aims are achieved. It proposed the three essential aims of Marist education to have: a sense of Jesus and his Church; a sense of person, with special love for the most neglected; and a sense of Mary, and a family-based spirituality.³⁵⁰ A “Marist educator” needed to have, first, a sense of Jesus alive, by accepting Jesus as a real person in his or her life, by knowing Jesus and wanting to share him, by consciously belonging to a church community, and by being committed to the mission of the Church. The educator then was to have a concern for all people but especially the most neglected, by his or her own sense of self-worth, by a sense of fulfilment in society and wish to find a fulfilling role for others, by being socially critical, and by being ready to act and to work for a better society; and an ability to relate to others, by accepting Mary as model and mother, by sound family values, by being able to relate widely, and by living out a family/Marian spirituality.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.* #34

³⁴⁹ Ryan, G. (1989) *A Guide for the Marist Educator*. Rome: Marist Brothers.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.* p.14

The strategies which followed were heavily anchored in a particular educational context, one most relevant to secondary schools of the late 1980s. It was, also, an arguably confected synopsis. It did, however, offer two important developments in the evolution of the thinking on Marist education. The first was the use of the term “Marist educator”, referring equally to all who taught in Marist schools, both brothers and lay, women and men. The second was to introduce “spirituality” as a constitutive element of Marist education, and to propose that this spirituality was shared by all Marist educators. In both these proposals, this booklet anticipated themes of the 1993 Chapter and indeed went further than the Chapter itself.

By the 1990s, in both Spain and France, there had been several attempts to encapsulate the essence of Marist education. One Spanish text³⁵¹ named four constitutive elements of Marist education: simplicity; presence and closeness to young people; work and constancy; with Mary as a reference point. Within the school, these features were seen to be present in an additional four ways: in a family spirit; in the involvement of all; in attention to the neediest; and in the proclamation of Jesus and his gospel. Marist education also was seen to have a four-dimensional impact beyond the school, each concerned with developing a critical social conscience and a disposition to act from it. Finally, the authors proposed the four qualities that should constitute the profile of the Marist teacher in the modern world. Such a person should be first a “contemporary person”, a person with “feet on the ground”, with a sense of history but in touch with the major social and intellectual movements of the day, and forward looking. Second, the person should be a professional, with thorough knowledge of particular disciplines, effective pedagogy, and up-to-date understandings of educational psychology. Third, a Marist teacher needed to have a sense of vocation with respect to teaching, something that manifested itself through a commitment to work and the development of the students, a concern for the nature of the relationship with the students, a concern always to witness to human and Christian values through good example, and an ability to work as a team member. Fourth, the Marist teacher needed gradually to come to know the charism of Marcellin Champagnat to identify with it, to express it in everyday activity, and to integrate it into his or her own life and teaching.

A French text by Brother Maurice Bergeret,³⁵² prepared a few years later, after the XIX Chapter and with reference to it, the Constitutions, the writings of Brother Jean-Baptiste and other documents, named six characteristic educational values in the Marist school:

³⁵¹ *Marco Educativo Marista: El Carácter Propio en el Desarrollo Curricular*. Madrid: Delegación Nacional de Educación, 1992.

³⁵² Réseau de la Tutelle mariste, Province de l’Hermitage *Texte de référence de l’éducation mariste*. St Chamond: Frères Maristes, Commission provinciale d’animation pédagogique, 1997. Brother Maurice was to become a member of the International Education Commission to draw up the new international text.

- **Simplicité**, which it saw reflected in the nature of personal relationships as well as in pedagogical practice
- **Espirit de famille**, which grew into certain educational attitudes such as inclusion, respect, hospitality, belief in every student, extended opportunities for students and teachers to form relationships, a warm ambience in the classroom.
- **Solidarité**, which began in mutual support at the level of faculty, and moved to showing special attention to the students most in need, to sowing hope among students, and to moving outside the school into further outreach.
- **Présence et écoute**, which expressed itself in the knowledge of each student and respect, being available, and having open eyes, hearts, minds and time for the young.
- **Pragmatisme et créativité**, drawing on the example of Marcellin and the first Brothers.
- **Annoncer l'évangile à la manière de Marie**, through living each day and teaching with Marian attitudes such as humility, simplicity, selflessness, respect, discretion, and listening to the will of God.

Other texts and resources were emerging in Catalonia, Brazil, Australia, and elsewhere, often the fruit of attempts to develop resources for the formation of teachers in Marist schools. National or Provincial “Marist Education” congresses and conferences were beginning to be held, such as that in Pasto, Colombia, in 1989. What was evident to Province leaders in all these countries was, first, that there was something called “Marist Education” that was an identifiable and distinctive subset of the broader concept of Catholic education. While this was perhaps obvious, it was the first time that it had been called such by the Institute. Since at least the time of Brother Louis-Marie, if not of Marcellin himself, the brothers had valued their own educational methods and textbooks, and they had typically ensured that their terms of engagement in different dioceses and parishes guaranteed their right to teach in their own ways, use their own textbooks, and to direct their own schools. But this needed to be claimed and named in a new way. This was the task of the Commission to be appointed after the 1993 Chapter.

The challenges facing the Institute in the 1990s were, in one way, not dissimilar to those which it had to face in the 1850s and 1860s when the previous documents had been written. During the early period there had been exponential growth. A major challenge had been how to form such a rapidly increasing number of brothers in consistent ways so that all of them were characteristically Marist in their spirituality and in their manner of educating and caring for the young. It was a particular priority to form well the Brother Directors. One of the ways to address this problem was the publication of the canon of Marist texts during this period. They provided a ready means for the spirituality and the pedagogy of the Institute to be formulated and to be passed on. They gave the Marist way a language. They gave it a method for induction and formation. They gave it, in more modern parlance, “benchmarks” and “key performance indicators”. In the 1990s, Marist education was also dealing with rapid change, and had been doing

so for two or three decades. The change was not a rapid increase in the number of Marist brothers, but in Marist lay people. It was a change process no less dramatic than that of the previous century, and even more so. Rather than hundreds of new Marist recruits, there were now many thousands of them. Rather than being in a single country and culture, they were all around the world. Rather than being in reasonably similar kinds of schools, they were involved in everything from kindergartens to universities, and a range of non-formal educational and welfare settings. The challenges, indeed, were much greater.

When the International Marist Education Commission began its work by January 1995,³⁵³ it was not doing so in a vacuum. As well as the direction it had received from the General Chapter, it was able to tap into momentum that was already gaining pace in parts of the Marist world. In order to develop a better understanding of this, it resolved that it would be useful to go through a process of consultation throughout the Institute. In going this way, the Commission adopted a process that was similar to that of another commission of almost a century-and-a-half earlier, the one that had drafted *Le Guide des Écoles* before 1853. It was a process that asked Marist educators to describe what they did, how they did it, and why they did it that way. Put together with the wisdom and insights of the Commission's members, drafts were prepared which could be sounded out with these educators around the world. Different members of the Commission brought their own perspectives and emphases.³⁵⁴ Gradually a final text emerged. It was taken to the Provincials at their General Conference in 1997. Some changes were suggested, principally to do with the emphases on solidarity and the poor, and some recasting of the structure and order of the text.³⁵⁵

The first comment to make about this document is to highlight that it was formally addressed to both brothers and lay people. This was the first official text of the Institute to do that, apart from Brother Charles's Circular on the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family seven years before.³⁵⁶

³⁵³ Members of the Commission were: Brothers Jeffrey Crowe CG, Henri Vignau CG, Carlos Martínez Lavín (Mexico), Dominick Pujia (USA), José Manoel Alves (Brazil), Honoré Rakatonorivo (Madagascar), Manuel de Leon (Philippines), Mark Farrelly (Australia), Maurice Bergeret (France), Miquel Cubeles (Spain), Ms Emma Casis (Philippines) and Mr Alberto Libera (Bolivia). The Commission was constructed deliberately to include both brothers and lay Marists, drawn from both educational and pastoral ministries, and from all continents.

³⁵⁴ According to Brother Jeffrey Crowe, to whom it largely fell to bring the final draft together, some of these emphases included: an alertness to the importance of evangelisation (Brothers Carlos and Dominick), to lay people (Brother Mark), to non-school ministries (Brother Miquel), to Marcellin and the distinctive characteristics of his education approach (Brother Maurice and Brother Jeffrey himself). Brother Jeffrey Crowe, interview *idem*.


³⁵⁵ Brother Jeffrey Crowe, interview *idem*.

³⁵⁶ The document first was a formally adopted text of the General Council in January 1998, after consultation with the General Conference in 1997. It would become an official text of the Institute after its acceptance by the XX General Chapter of 2001.

The new document, *The Marist Educational Mission*,³⁵⁷ recognised that both groups shared responsibility for the carriage of the Marist education project, and both were called to be Marist educators. In his introduction to the document, Brother Benito, speaks of the “shared mission” of Marist Brothers and, for the first time, “lay Marist brothers and sisters”. The second thing to point out is the first line of the charter which prefaced the text: “Disciples of Marcellin Champagnat”. The word “disciples” roots Marist identity of the brother and lay Marists in a shared spirituality. It was not just a sense of partnership in mission, but a mission sourced in a spirituality which they share. Brother Benito’s introduction also reflected a pre-existing reality. The year of the document’s publication, in 1998, meant that the message of the Chapter had been clearly heard in sufficient sections of the Marist world for the Superior General to write about something that was already being experienced.

The structure of the document is based around the carefully crafted words of the charter. This charter emerged very early in the Commission’s deliberations and guided its work.³⁵⁸ It bears quoting in full:

◇ *Disciples of Marcellin Champagnat,*
◇ *Brothers and Laypeople,*
◇ *together in mission, in the Church and in the world,*
◇ *among the young, especially the most neglected,*
◇ *we are sowers of the Good News,*
◇ *with a distinctive Marist style,*
◇ *in schools,*
◇ *and in other pastoral and social ministries.*
◇ *We face the future with audacity and hope.*



Every line carries meaning, and each of them was developed into a chapter of the text. The first chapter, “Disciples of Marcellin Champagnat”, puts today’s Marist educators in touch with what it calls the “life-giving root” of Marist life: Marcellin Champagnat and the first generation of Marists. The term came from the XIX General Chapter. This is a rich chapter of the text. It describes the personal faith and life-story of Marcellin, his founding of the Marist Brothers, his giftedness and priorities as an educator, his formation of his brothers as apostles, the way that his legacy is entrusted to present day Marists to carry on. The chapter sets the stage for the special emphases of Marist education: its basis in Christian faith and mission, its closeness to the world of the young and its love of them, its mix

³⁵⁷ In English it was given a different title: *In the Footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat, A Vision for Marist Education Today*. In this book it will be referred to as *The Marist Educational Mission*.

³⁵⁸ Report of the Brother Superior General and his Council to the XX General Chapter. In *FMS Message*. No.29. December 2000-January 2001. #2.2.1

of creativity and pragmatism, its Marian character centred on her faith and hope. It presents Marist education as a living and evolving reality. A useful way to approach this chapter, and indeed the entire book, is to skim through the phrases that are in bold font in each paragraph. This was done deliberately, and gives the reader an insight into how the text was constructed, the elements that its authors judged to be constitutive of each of the lines of the basic charter.

Chapter 2 represents a significant development in Marist education because it describes who today's Marist educators are. More than any previous Marist document, *The Marist Educational Mission* not only names both brothers and lay people as sharing responsibility for carrying out the mission of Marist education, but goes on to explore their distinctive contributions. The word "co-responsible" is used, emphasising just how important this concept is regarded. The "different but complementary" gifts of brothers and lay people are named, recognition that Marist education is richer for the inclusion of both groups. Each requires formation, support, and valuing. In using the term "communio" to conclude the Chapter, it touches into one of the richest concepts promoted by Vatican II. In doing so, *The Marist Educational Mission* goes further than the documents of the XIX Chapter. Any paternalistic sense of the brothers towards the lay has now vanished, at least in the words of the document. The identity and legitimacy of lay Marist life is affirmed to the extent that the document recognises that a Marist school can exist without the continuing presence of brothers.

The third chapter "Among the young, especially the most neglected" and the fourth "We are sowers of the good news", while they carry less novelty than Chapter 2, do address the essence of Marist education: a practically-expressed love of young people and the primary purpose of Marist educators being among them being to evangelise and to catechise. The priority for those who are poor and education in and for solidarity – the fruit of twenty years of reflection in the Institute – is unambiguously stated. This had been a separate chapter in the draft text before 1997, but was eventually moved to be part of Chapter 3 to emphasise that this imperative was of the essence of Marist education and pastoral ministry in all their expressions.³⁵⁹ The sequencing of the two chapters is interesting: first the encounter with the young, in their own world, and second the response to want to bring them the gospel. It is reflective of the Montagne story itself, which had been important at the Chapter in 1993.

*We laboured for some time over how to frame Chapter 4 ... the Christology in it ... the focus of our mission ... In the end, we tried to make it clear through Chapters 3 and 4 that it is evangelisation and solidarity that are at the heart of our educational approach.*³⁶⁰

³⁵⁹ Brother Jeffrey Crowe, personal communication with the author, 20 January 2016.

³⁶⁰ Brother Jeffrey Crowe, interview *idem*.

Chapter 4 expounds in some depth the Marist approach to evangelisation. First, and clearly, it re-states the basic purpose of Marist education to make Jesus known and loved, and to develop their vocation to be good Christians and virtuous citizens. Although some people, including this author, may take issue with using Jean-Baptiste's adjective "virtuous" rather than Marcellin's "good" to qualify "citizens", the essential point stands.³⁶¹ Marist education is about Jesus and about bringing forth the reign of God in the here and now, and through the full human growth of each young person:

71. *But **we go further**. Inspired by the words of Marcellin, "I cannot see a child without wanting to teach him catechism, to make him realise how much Jesus Christ has loved him", we present Jesus to the young as a real person they can come to know, love, and follow.*
72. *In **Jesus** we see God. He comes among us so that we may "have life and have it to the full". He unveils for us what it is to be fully human. His words and actions address our deepest human longings. He provides healing and hope for all. He pardons sinners, reconciling all facets of their human brokenness. He welcomes the poor and those on the edges of society with a special love. He teaches us how to pray.*

It reflects the kind of spirituality that is typical of Marists, and which has made their evangelising so effective with the young: it is simple, accessible, affective and relevant.

78. *We choose to be present among young people **in the same way that Jesus was with the disciples on the road to Emmaus**:*
 - *respectful of their consciences and stages of understanding,*
 - *passionately immersed in their concerns,*
 - *walking alongside them as their brothers and sisters,*
 - *gradually unfolding for them the richness and relevance of Jesus' transforming vision of the human person and of the world.*

³⁶¹ The term "good Christians and good citizens" was the phrase in Marcellin's letters. A modern reader may not be alert to the significance of the juxtaposition of the word "good" and "citizen". The term "citizen" was a new word of Marcellin's time. Before the revolution, the ordinary people had been "subjects" of the King; now they were citizens of France. The word became lionised by its later inclusion in *La Marseillaise*, and remains an informal form of address in some parts of the French-speaking world. For Marcellin to speak of forming "good citizens", there were clear allusions to the new way. Writing later in the nineteenth century, when secularist movements were seen to be more antithetical to the interests of the Church and of the faith, Brother Jean-Baptiste tempered "good" to "virtuous" in the books he wrote. This had not been the Founder's intent.

79. We **welcome** young people. We **listen** to them, we **challenge**. We see in each one the image and likeness of God, worthy of our respect and love, no matter what his or her circumstances, religious belief, or personal need of conversion. We give **personal and community witness** of our joy, our hope and our Christian living.
80. We help the young to grow in **personal freedom** and a sense of the demands of life. We lead them to freely give of themselves and what they have, and to commit themselves joyfully. We lead them to discover their **spiritual dimension**: their personal experience of the Spirit, inspiring encouraging, supporting, consoling; their sense of wonder at the marvels of creation and of new life; their intuitions of the transcendent, of our ultimate destiny to be with God. We engage young people in a **dialogue of life** which brings them into touch with the Word of God and the Spirit at work in their hearts.

The Marist ways of going about this are realised primarily through Christian education, and one that is strongly relational, respectful, communitarian, inventive, ecclesial and sacramental. Most importantly for Marists it is done through presence and example. That implies, necessarily, a Marist educator engaged in this primary mission is someone who has also encountered Jesus and has found that his or her response to this movement of God in his or her life is best lived out in a recognisably Marist way, for the work of evangelisation is actually the work of the Holy Spirit.

94. **Our work as educators is not just a career, it is a vocation.** Pope Paul VI reminded us that “modern men and women listen more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if they do listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses.”

With the purposes, the targets, and the practitioners of Marist education each defined, the text could then move in Chapter 5 to describe five characteristic features of Marist style. Much of what is there has already been introduced in the preceding Chapters, but the five features are succinctly and richly encapsulated in this one. Any attempt to offer such definitions, however, is inherently confected and limited to some extent. The reality of Marist education is quite complex, and language chosen to name it or categorise its elements will always provoke discussion. The five elements chosen by the Commission – “simplicity”, “family spirit”, “presence”, “love of work”, and “in Mary’s way” – certainly resonate with other texts and definitions that had emerged, but there will be always other ways of doing it. For example, other documents – such as that from France cited above – often include a sense of creativity, enterprise or daring as a discrete characteristic

of Marist style, rather than including it in “love of work” as it is in Chapter 5.³⁶² Another possible trait that could have been included – and one for which Brother Charles argued, as did some at the General Conference³⁶³ – is some sense of the Marist openness for young people in difficulty or challenged circumstances, even an affection for these particular youth.

Chapters 6 and 7 are more discursive, in their description of how the education mission is played out first in schools and secondly in other forms of pastoral and social ministry. The chapters provide a usable checklist for school and ministry leaders, and Marist educational communities, to shape and to evaluate the more specific dimensions of their institutions and programmes. One particular question for the Commission in the drafting stage was how to approach the topic of contemporary teaching and learning without becoming hijacked by various philosophical debates of the time.

*We had the Teachers Guide, but we needed to put our teaching tradition into today's language. What we settled on was the UNESCO framework of learning written by Jacques Delors. Even though it didn't translate well into English [in which the base text was drafted] it focussed us well on learning: **apprendre à connaître, apprendre à faire, apprendre à vivre ensemble, et apprendre à être.***³⁶⁴

Finally, the document brings Marist educators back to the breadth of vision they must have as evangelisers and educators in their approach to young people. In essence, they are called in this document to be Marian in their motivation, their purpose and their style: people of audacity and hope, people of faith and love, people who can draw strength and identity from the Lucan and Johannine images of Mary in the New Testament.

In a background project, other people were generating footnotes and references for the document – Brothers John Phillips, Carlos Martínez and Aureliano Brambila.

³⁶² Cf. paragraphs 113, 114 and 115 which each mentions “creativity” or “creative”, and 116 which includes “initiative”.

³⁶³ Brother Jeffrey Crowe, interview *idem*.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid*. The four pillars of learning throughout life which had been developed by Delors for UNESCO were (from the footnote in *Marist Educational Mission*): 1. Learning to know, by combining a sufficiently broad general knowledge with the opportunity to work in depth on a small number of subjects. This also means learning to learn, so as to benefit from the opportunities education provides throughout life; 2. Learning to do, in order to acquire not only an occupational skill but also, more broadly, the competence to deal with many situations and work in teams; 3. Learning to live together, by developing an understanding of other people and an appreciation of interdependence ... in a spirit of respect for the values of pluralism, mutual understanding and peace; 4. Learning to be, so as better to develop one's personality and be able to act with ever greater autonomy, judgement and personal responsibility. Formal education systems tend to emphasize the acquisition of knowledge to the detriment of other types of learning; but it is vital now to conceive education in a more encompassing fashion. *Learning: The Treasure Within*, Report to UNESCO by J. Delors, President, 1996

Formation and association of Marist educators

The new document provided a rich resource for the formation of Marist educators and it was immediately welcomed around the Marist world, particularly in English-speaking countries which had had very little published before this. Workshops and seminars were conducted extensively through Asia, Africa, Australia, Mexico, Central America and other countries. Some regions such as Europe, Arco Norte and Brazil used it to develop new resources including, by this stage, internet-based ones.³⁶⁵

*It gave people a language to take things forward.*³⁶⁶

This was not, of course, the beginning of formation of people in Marist education and spirituality. The first region to take this up in a systematic and strategic way had been Brazil, as early as the 1970s. The six Provinces combined to conduct a two-month long programme in Marist education and spirituality, originally for brothers only, but within a few years also for lay people. Up to sixty people at a time followed these live-in formation programmes, run three times a year.³⁶⁷ After a time, mainly because of the size and popularity of the programmes, individual Provinces took them over. The courses involved brothers and lay together, were self-consciously aimed at the development of people as Marist educators.³⁶⁸ Similarly, in Spain formation in Marist education began in a strategic way in the 1980s, with all Provinces cooperating with the Marist tertiary institutions to develop professional development opportunities.³⁶⁹ Also in the Provinces of México, América Central and Chile, programmes were put in place during the 1980s. After the 1993 Chapter, more and more Provinces developed courses in Marist education and the formation of “Marist educators”. In France, for example, a two-year cycle of formation in Marist history, spirituality and ministry was implemented by the Province of MCO-Hermitage.³⁷⁰ The Brazilian Province of Rio de Janeiro spent \$US120,000 in 1994 alone in programmes involving over a thousand teachers. In the Provinces of Spain, the seeds sown in the 1980s were bearing fruit, and the formation was becoming more specifically Marist. It had reached the point where, in the Province of Norte where over half the teaching faculties of schools had completed Marist programmes, it was observed that:

³⁶⁵ *Report of the Brother Superior General and his Council to the XX General Chapter.* In *FMS Message*. No.29. #2.2.2

³⁶⁶ Brother Jeffrey Crowe, interview *idem*.

³⁶⁷ *FMS Message*. No.17 July 1995.

³⁶⁸ Brother Antonio Ramalho, interview *idem*.

³⁶⁹ Brother Emili Turú, interview *idem*.

³⁷⁰ *FMS Message*. No.17, July 1995.

today we regard it as normal that lay teachers direct our works, and talk to us about the Marist spirit, discuss with us the religious programme of our colleges, form teams to accompany training courses for our faculties ...³⁷¹

In Argentina, summer schools in *maristización* had been introduced, and the Province of Chile from 1997 adapted the “shared mission” programmes developed by Spanish Brother Antonio Botana FSC for the De la Salle Christian Brothers.³⁷² In the Australian Provinces, as another example, residential programmes in Marist education – mainly for lay Marist educators but always also including brothers – began in 1993. Conferences for Marist schools, Marist educators, or Marist educational leaders started to become more common across the Institute. For example, in 2003 the first Marist Education Congress was held in Argentina, with 500 participants. In Australia, a national biennial Marist Education Conference started in 1999, and two years later a formal Association of the Marist Schools of Australia was formed, under the leadership mostly of lay Marist educational leaders. In Brazil, national conferences had also begun by the first years of the new century, attracting over two thousand delegates. By 2012, the Province of West Central Europe had come also to see that it was in need to a similar event, and organised its first Marist Education Conference in Guardamar, Spain, in 2014. Collective identity was also being enhanced by a range of journals, magazines, books and other resources produced by different Provinces.

These examples of formation opportunities and gatherings were emanating from the increasing self-awareness of educators and educational leaders as “Marist”. It was more and more recognised across the Institute that there was a need to build people’s identity as Marists, and their capacity to continue to develop Marist education as a relevant and viable tradition of Catholic education. Of particular importance was attention to leadership in Marist schools. Provinces such as the United States began a biennial “Marist Leadership Institute” in the summer. More broadly in the Americas, planning began by 2013 for a formation project for directors of Marist educational works. A parallel project had been in the pipeline in Africa since 2011 when the skilling of Marist school principals was identified as one of three key objectives in the five-year Strategic Plan of the African Mission Commission.³⁷³ The first programmes were delivered in 2015. Marist universities started to become more sophisticated in their offerings in Marist education. In Mexico, for example, the Marist University of Guadalajara began in 2015 a masters-level degree in school leadership based on Marist educational principles.³⁷⁴ Two years previously, the Marist-administered Pontifical University of Parana, Curitiba (Brazil) had begun to offer a two-year online post-graduate course in Marist charism and educational principles, in the four languages of the Institute. This had been developed by PUCPR as a major project on behalf of the international network of Marist Institutions of Higher Education.

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p.10

³⁷² Brother Pedro Herreros, personal communication with the author, 12 March 2016.

³⁷³ *Marist News*, No. 242.

³⁷⁴ *Marist News*, No.360

This strategic growth in the self-identity of Marist educators was a phenomenon which had its parallels in the experiences of other religious institutes. In 2000, the Union of Superiors General meeting in Rome took as its theme “Charism and Spirituality”. A number of the papers and much of the sharing was concerned with the various forms of lay association that had begun to grow, as people other than the vowed members of their institutes had come to align with both the mission and spirituality of their founders and the traditions of the institutes.³⁷⁵ In 2007, the Congregation for Catholic Education published *Educating Together in Catholic Schools, a shared mission of consecrated persons and lay faithful*. It used the term “spiritual families” to capture the ways in which this wider embrace of people could draw from a common spiritual tradition and share responsibility for an educational work of the Church, lived out in complementary ways.³⁷⁶



33. Marcellin Champagnat School founded in 1989 in a barrio in Rosario (Argentina). In 1992 it had 570 students.

It doing so it recognised that, across the Church, the work of Catholic education had become very much a shared undertaking. The first part of the document approached this broader understanding of a spiritual family in the modern Church, by describing it as *communio*. It was not a sociological concept, but a theological and ecclesiological one, founded on the complementary and unified states of life in the Church as the Body of Christ: the laity, the ordained priesthood, and the consecrated life.³⁷⁷

³⁷⁵ *Charism and Spirituality, Proceedings of the 56th Conference of the Unione di Superiore Generale, Rome:USG*

³⁷⁶ *Educating Together in Catholic Schools, A Shared Mission between Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithful*, #28-30.

³⁷⁷ Joseph Ratzinger (later Pope Benedict XVI) commented most clearly on this point in 1992 when he wrote an editorial piece for the twentieth anniversary of the theological journal *Communio* of which he was one of the co-founders. See Ratzinger, J., *Communio: A Program*, in *Communio*, Fall 1992 (American edition)

This was the challenge that the Marists had begun to face: how to ensure that the growing body of Marist educators were authentically Marist, not only in their professional identity but also in their faith and spirituality. Early in its 2007 document, the Congregation for Catholic Education made this critically important point:

The project of the Catholic school will be convincing only if it is carried out by people who are deeply motivated because they witness to a living encounter with Christ, in whom alone 'the mystery of man becomes clear'.³⁷⁸

The Marist Constitutions of 1985 and the *Marist Educational Mission* of 1998 remained clear on the central purpose of Marist education: to make Jesus Christ known and loved among young people, especially those most in need. This was more than a distinctive educational style or a focus of social action; it was about evangelisation. The adequate ongoing formation of Marists and their association with one another as a living community of Christian disciples had begun to emerge as a major priority for many Provinces.

In other Provinces, factors were working against this. In Malawi, for example, where the schools had been largely integrated into the government system in order to attract funding, Brother Lawrence Ndwala was to lament in 2004 that

Participation of the laity with the spirit of Marcellin is often lacking ... There is hardly any teacher in the Marist schools who says he aspires to take on the spirituality of Marcellin as a way of life.³⁷⁹

He attributed the main reasons for this not only to the teachers themselves but also to the brothers. Most of the teachers were not Catholic and saw themselves as government employees. The brothers either did not “see the need for it”, “needed enlightenment” or “needed to rediscover and appreciate the spirituality of Marcellin”. He knew, however, that the laity would need to take a lead because the number of brothers would not be sufficient to maintain the mission. This “will force us to look for alternatives, as has happened in other regions of the Marist world.”³⁸⁰ There were, however, major differences in how things were transpiring in these “other regions”. Those Provinces which had been investing strategically in the formation and association of lay people as Marist educators were not only maintaining the reach of Marist schools but significantly expanding it, even if, as was typically the case in every Marist Province by the early 2000s, schools had no or very few brothers in them. In other countries, by contrast, the network of Marist schools was shrinking to the point of their disappearing altogether. As the brothers became older and fewer in some countries, and communities were

³⁷⁸ Congregation for Catholic Education (2007) *Educating Together in Catholic Schools: A shared mission between consecrated persons and the lay faithful*. Rome: Libreria Edrice Vaticana.

³⁷⁹ *Marist Bulletin*. 154. 10 July 2004.

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

closed, Marist education did not continue as a recognised entity. In France, for example, from the 1970s there was a catalogue of closures, sometimes in places where there had been a Marist school from the time of Father Champagnat,³⁸¹ and with those closures often the end of a self-consciously Marist school. Similarly in the Netherlands, Belgium, the United Kingdom, Canada, and Germany decisions were taken to hand most or all Marist schools over to the management of dioceses or private incorporated bodies, once there were no brothers to continue to administer them.³⁸²

The re-orientation of Marist education in the three decades following the Chapter of 1985 had taken markedly different courses in different Provinces: the foundation of new educational projects more aligned with the poor and marginalised; moves to ensure institutions were more inclusive and more evangelically alert; the rejuvenation of strategies of evangelisation of youth; the expansion of existing networks of schools to continue to meet needs of young people in new places; the re-articulation of the purposes and means of Marist education; priority and resources given to the spiritual and professional formation of lay people as Marist educators and ways they may be associated with one another; and, other places, the continuing of the educational work under a patronage and identity other than Marist.

Marist Tertiary Education

A particular sphere of expansion of Marist education in recent decades, but one little mentioned in the document *Marist Educational Vision*, has been in the tertiary sector. The reformulation of Marist education in that document was mainly directed to primary and secondary schools which had been, and remained, the major focus of the Institute. Institutions and programmes of higher learning formed a smaller but growing part of Marist educational work.

Of course, the Institute has always been involved in higher education in one form or another, from the time that Marcellin Champagnat constructed the Hermitage. Marcellin used the appellation *école normale* for the Hermitage when

³⁸¹ For example: in 1978, the community closed at Charlieu, having being started by Fr Champagnat in 1824; in 1985 the brothers left Saint-Genest-Malifaux after 150 years; St Louis in St Chamond closed in 1987, having been founded by Fr Champagnat in 1838; the same year the brothers withdrew from Lyon-Denuzière, having been there since 1835; in 1989 the brothers left Saint-Saveur-en-Rue having been there since 1820; in 1996 from Neuville-sur-Saône, having started in 1826; in 2002 from Valbenoîte, the primary school founded by Fr Champagnat with Fr. Rouchon in 1826, and the boarding college taken over from the Marist Fathers in 1856.

³⁸² In Scotland, the schools (other than St Joseph's, Dumfries) had been integrated into the government-funded arrangements early in the twentieth century. As the century unfolded, they came under the control of the Local Educational Authorities. While there were brothers to lead and staff the schools, they did so. When there were no longer any brothers, the LEAs exercised the governance role that had long been theirs. In that sense, they were not handed over. (Brothers Joseph McKee and Brendan Geary, personal communication with the author, 4 and 8 January 2016.)

writing to King Louis-Phillipe in 1834,³⁸³ and included the same descriptor for the Hermitage on the letterhead of the house during the 1830s. In fact, that is exactly what it was: a centre for teacher education. Scholasticates were later developed for the post-novitiate education of young brothers. In 1882, during Brother Nestor's short tenure as Superior General, a formal programme in pedagogical principles was introduced at St Genis-Laval which became the model for others. It was from such scholasticates for brothers that, as early as the 1940s but more commonly from the 1970s, in some countries Marist institutions of higher learning began to evolve. One of the first places that this happened was in the United States, at Marist College, Poughkeepsie.³⁸⁴ Another country which led the way and in which two very large multi-faculty Marist universities were to grow was Brazil, in the cities of Porto Alegre and Curitiba. In other places, such as Salamanca, Spain, the Marist scholasticate became a faculty of education under the administration of the Marist Brothers but within the framework of a larger Catholic university, while in others again, such as Australia, the Marist Brothers collaborated with other religious institutes and dioceses to pool their resources and to found a new Catholic university. In another category were establishments that were handed to the Marist Brothers or established by them either as colleges of advanced learning, and which grew into larger institutions and universities. By the end of the twentieth century there were Marist institutions of higher learning to be found in The Philippines, Brazil, Argentina, Peru, Spain, the United States, Mexico, and Kenya. About half of them had begun relatively recently. In the next decade, the Province of Melbourne began a new teachers college in Baucau, East Timor, and plans were made to establish new Marist universities in Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of Congo. There were, however, very few links among these institutions and no collective vision for Marist engagement in higher education.

At the prompting of Brother Clemente Juliatto, Rector of the Pontifical Catholic University of Paraná, Brazil (PUCPR), the General Council decided in 2003 that a gathering of representatives of these institutions would be timely and worthwhile. Brother Clemente made available the facilities of PUCPR, and people from twenty-one different institutions accepted the invitation of Brother Emili Turú CG to gather in Curitiba between 4 and 9 November 2004.³⁸⁵ The aims of the meeting were: to consider the merits of writing a document which addressed the principles of Marist higher education; to explore possible avenues of future collaboration; and to get to know one another on a person level.³⁸⁶ The meeting proved to be highly valued, and similar meetings for rectors or the representatives have been held biennially since 2004.³⁸⁷ A more formal network was subsequently established, with a Council elected at these biennial meetings to manage business in between conferences.

³⁸³ Letter 34. *Letters of Marcellin Champagnat*, Vol.1. (1985)

³⁸⁴ Formerly known as "Marian College".

³⁸⁵ Brother Clemente Juliatto, in a recorded interview with the author. 16 November, 2015.

³⁸⁶ *Marist Bulletin*. No.160. 24 September, 2004.

³⁸⁷ Guadalajara, Mexico 2006; Salamanca, Spain 2008; Porto Alegre, Brazil, 2010; Marist University of Mexico, 2012; Koronadal, Philippines, 2014.

At the first conference, it was discovered that there were at the time twenty-two Marist tertiary institutions in the world, comprising thirty-nine different campuses, and including seven university hospitals. About eighty brothers were involved in them, over fifteen thousand lay faculty, and more than a hundred religious sisters and clergy. They taught 116,370 students in 477 different programmes.³⁸⁸ They judged their institutions to be a highly effective way of realising Marcellin's goal of forming "good Christians and good citizens",³⁸⁹ but named four areas of challenge for them:

- *on behalf of the Church, they shared in the mission of evangelising youth culture;*
- *as part of the Institute, there was more they could do to define the Marist approach to higher education, to be involved in the formation of future Marist leaders, Marist teachers, and Marist vocations ministry;*
- *in relation to youth, they had roles both in humanising the "post-modern, pragmatic and utilitarian culture" in which their students found themselves, and also in leading research into youth issues; and*
- *it was seen important that more be done to ensure the "Marist colour" of their institutions.³⁹⁰*

In an address to the fourth meeting of the Rectors at Porto Alegre in 2010, the Superior General reflected on how much distance had been travelled since the first meeting six years before. There was now a better sense, said Brother Emili, of the place of higher education in the work of the Institute. He offered five dreams for the future of this sector of the Institute's work in the field of education. He hoped that Marist tertiary institutions would be:

- *referents for Marist educators and exemplars of what Marist education could be;*
- *experts in the evangelisation of youth, and in education in and for solidarity;*
- *experts in the defence of the rights of children and young people;*
- *builders of bridges of dialogue and reconciliation in society; and*
- *responsible members of a global society.³⁹¹*

³⁸⁸ *First Meeting of Representatives of Marist Institution of Higher Learning*. Curitiba, Brazil, 5-9 November, 2004.

³⁸⁹ Brother Clemente Juliatto, in *Marist Bulletin*. No.124. 12 December 2004.

³⁹⁰ *First Meeting of Representatives of Marist Institution of Higher Learning*. Curitiba, Brazil, 5-9 November, 2004. pp.3ff.

³⁹¹ Brother Emili Turú. *Some Dreams for the Future. Address to the fourth Meeting of Rectors of Marist Institutions of Higher Learning*. Porto Alegre, 7 October 2010.

Two concrete outcomes of the network have been the publication of a document, released on 6 June 2010, which describes the vision and principles of Marist higher education, and the development by 2013 of an on-line course in the Marist charism and educational principles which has been offered by PUCPR on behalf of the network and to which reference has been made already. The document *The Marist Mission in Higher Education* has become a reference text for the Institute. It situates this work in the context of the place of higher education in today's society and the particular role and expectations of a Catholic university before looking more specifically at the distinctive Marist approach. It describes eight distinguishing features of the Marist style as it operates in Marist universities:

34.
First International
Meeting of Rectors
of Marist Tertiary
Institutions.
Curitiba,
Brazil (2004).



- *A Marial pedagogy*, this being the fundamental feature. The twin aspects of having the Marian attitudes of nurturing Jesus, and being ready to set out into the hill country are identified.
- *A pedagogy of love*, as Marist education is a work of love

- *A pedagogy of integral formation*, as one of the hallmarks of the Marist approach in higher education. Therefore, such things as philosophy, ethics, theology and solidarity should be parts of all degree programmes, and a Cartesian fragmentation of knowledge avoided.
- *A pedagogy of family spirit*, and the kind of relationships and style of campus community that emerges from this.
- *A pedagogy of presence*, marked by direct contact, deep dialogue, and personal affirmation.
- *A pedagogy of simplicity*, in contrast to the prevailing academic culture of competitiveness, intellectual arrogance and formalism, the Marist institution is marked by its lack of ostentation and its closeness to students.
- *A pedagogy of love of work*, as a key characteristic
- *A pedagogy with a practical and innovative spirit*, after the example of Marcellin Champagnat.

Although the term “pedagogy” is used for each feature, and undeniably there is a clear pedagogical implication from each, together they also represent a certain cultural mindset, a characteristic way of proceeding which would find expression in much more than pedagogy alone. The document concludes by placing this characteristic Marist approach within the broader vision of higher education and the role of the Church in this field.

8.

THE EXPANSION OF THE MARIST MISSION: “OTHER SOCIAL AND PASTORAL MINISTRIES”

The *ad experimentum* Constitutions of 1968 had made passing reference to the non-school ministries of “catechetics” and “other forms of apostolate among youth”.³⁹² Their primary focus and those of 1985 remained, however, on education. Opening the General Chapter in 1985, Brother Basilio observed that there was increasing “openness in the apostolate” and, although it was “mainly still educational”, some Provinces were taking on other works with “young people at risk of being drawn from Christianity and morality.”³⁹³ Although the 1998 document *The Marist Educational Mission* was to expand significantly the cast of Marist mission, the mandate that the XIX General Chapter gave for its writing was more limited to the “Marist school”. Schools had been long at the core of Marist identity; indeed, the word itself was included in the official name of the Institute. From the time of the XVII General Chapter, however, there had been movement in a number of the older Provinces to expand the locus of the brothers’ work. Brother Maurice Taildeman reflected on the experience of Belgium and the Netherlands:

*In Belgium just after Vatican II, there was a big move away from schools to pastoral ministries, especially among the young brothers ... Holland quickly got rid of its schools to take on pastoral projects.*³⁹⁴

This broadening of thinking was occurring also in other parts of the Institute. For example, when the Province of México Central established a new presence in Korea in the 1970s, the brothers decided that they would not establish traditional schools. Thirty years later, by the time the *Ad Gentes* mission for Asia was launched, such openness to non-school ministries had become the norm for new foundations, rather than the exception, for many Provinces. This could be the case even when the preference of local bishops was for the Institute to establish Catholic schools.³⁹⁵

The *Marist Educational Mission* document decisively named such new fields of ministry in its charter for today’s Marists. To “schools” it added “and in other pas-

³⁹² *Ibid.* #46.

³⁹³ In *Listening to the XVIII General Chapter*, p.81

³⁹⁴ Brother Maurice Taildeman, interview with the author, 10 July 2015.

³⁹⁵ Brother Michael de Waas CG (foundation Sector Superior of the Ad Gentes Sector) in conversation with the author.

toral and social ministries". In Chapter 7 of the document, there is development of what this means in practice, the Marist purpose in being involved in non-school situations, and the distinctive emphases that should mark such work:

169. Moved by **the compelling needs and aspirations of today's young people**, especially those who are most deprived or disturbed, we seek to **multiply our ways of entering** into their lives and their world. With a missionary spirit, we are open to all young people irrespective of their faith background. We know we cannot walk the same path with each of them in our mission of evangelisation
210. Our vocation as educators in these pastoral and social settings ... is a calling to be **prophetic people**, especially on behalf of the "little ones", those on the side-roads of society. We seek to be light for them and to point to the Light, Jesus Christ.

It envisaged that Marists, brothers and lay, could be with young people in a variety of settings:

170. We seek opportunities to **be with** young people in the places and activities where they gather in their free time, for example, sports, places where they relax, artistic and cultural pastimes within the local area or parish, camping, and movements such as the Scouts. Where necessary, we assist them to organise such activities after class, on weekends, or during vacations. We make particular efforts to be present as pastoral workers among deprived young people, for example, on the street, in slums, and in detention centres.

The document goes on to name other situations, for example "centres for recreation and sport", "media services", "get-togethers and common solidarity projects", "more intensive experiences of prayer and of Christian community", "apostolic activities" and "youth movements", "volunteer and missionary programmes", "spiritual direction and personal accompaniment", non-formal education programmes "in deprived areas and marginalised situations", social programmes for young people, "especially those at-risk or on the fringes of society". The last category of services could include:

196. ... homes for "street children"; institutions for the protection of minors and orphans; centres for young people in critical family situations; centres for helping broken families; projects for the disabled; services for ethnic minority groups, immigrants, and refugees; rehabilitation centres and programs for young people who are drug addicts or suffering from AIDS; and programs for helping youth who are imprisoned, who are former prisoners, or who are in trouble with the law.

Among these young people, the Marists would be attempting to build “critical consciousness” and “social conscience”, to nurture “spirituality” and “personal balance and maturity”, to “educate for life”, and to encourage “a strong practical sense of solidarity among them that reaches out to others”. These aims would be pursued through the “distinctive Marist approach”

171. ... *We are convinced of the educating value of quality relationships between ourselves and the young, and of the importance of being ourselves in their presence and their feeling at their ease with us. We are convinced, too, of the value of work and of working together, especially in situations where people are inclined to be passive or to give up. Such values are of particular importance in the sometimes **unstructured** settings of our ministry outside formal education. We begin from where they are.*

It would be a “pastoral approach which is simple and experiential”, where “the witness of our joyful lives”, “our own spirituality”, “our hopeful and caring presence”, and a “family spirit”, through which Marist would be known as being “initiative-takers” and as “hopeful”, “authentic” and “persevering”.³⁹⁶

Social projects among needy young people and communities

The number and spread of social projects had been given a boost after the 1993 Chapter, so that what came to be described in the 1998 document was already a reality in many places. For example, in the Netherlands in October 1994 a halfway house was established for up to five young people, as joint project of the Marist Brothers and the Sisters of Julie Postel.

*Our General Chapter invites us to leave our fixed positions and risk a journey off the beaten track in the service of the world as it is today. The Moria project is an attempt to answer that challenge.*³⁹⁷

The following year, it was decided to feature the social works of the Institute in an issue of *FMS Message*. Among those mentioned were:

- *A project in Badajoz (Spain, Province of Bética) where three brothers were involved in Caritas project for rehabilitation of drug addicts;*

³⁹⁶ For all of these quotations, see *Marist Educational Mission*, ##167-210 *passim*

³⁹⁷ *FMS Echo*. No.19, December 1994.

- A project of the Province of Chile, in Tocopilla the remote Antofagasta region in the north of the country, concerned with education and material assistance
- A project of the District of Korea, in Chun-ju, where 80 abandoned young people were being helped to acquire technical skills which may create options for them.³⁹⁸

Other examples of the mid to late 1990s include that of the Montagne Community's work with street children in Guatemala City, the Province of Rio de la Plata's decision to put an insertion community in central north of Uruguay in the diocese of Taquarembó,³⁹⁹ and an inter-Province initiative to begin a community of three brothers and one lay Marist (a woman) among the indigenous Aymara people in Tiquina (Bolivia) on the shores of Lake Titicaca. Plans for this began after the seventh meeting CLAP (in Campinas, Brazil,) which had asked for creation of at least one regional community. Well established by 2004, its members saw themselves meeting the aspirations spelt out by the other significant CLAP meetings of Chosica, Cali, Guadalajara and the General Chapter.

*Our mission is to incarnate the spirituality and charism inherited from Marcellin Champagnat in the Bolivia high plateau, in the hope of opening new paths of Marist life in fidelity to the XIX General Chapter ... to be 'Good News' for the Aymara communities, in communion with the local Church.*⁴⁰⁰

Meanwhile, the European Provinces were also cooperating in joint projects, for example the new presence in Romania which initially involved four brothers (three from Spain and one from Greece) and was to lead by 2004 to the establishment of the St Marcellin Centre which could accommodate up to forty street children in four houses.⁴⁰¹

Before the General Chapter of 2001, a survey was done across the Institute which revealed that, by that time, 49 alternative educational centres and 89 other social projects were being operated by different Provinces, altogether serving 79,000 needy and marginalised young people.⁴⁰² At the same time, it was noted that there were 370 more traditional educational institutions, serving almost 370,000 students. Nevertheless, there had been a broadening of operations which was to continue after the 2001 Chapter. For example, in 2002 the Province of Rio de Janeiro began, in Belo Horizonte, *Lar Marista*, a home for up to thirty needy young boys. It was named *João Batista Berne*, after the young homeless boy whom Marcellin had taken in at La Valla.

³⁹⁸ *FMS Message*, No. 16. March 1995.

³⁹⁹ *FMS Echo*, No. 24. June 1996

⁴⁰⁰ *Marist Bulletin*. No. 118, January 2004

⁴⁰¹ *Marist Bulletin*. & Jult 2005.

⁴⁰² *FMS Echo*. No 40. June 2002.

The Province of Sydney had used the same name four years before for a new centre for teenage students at risk of falling out of the educational system. In 2002 in Dessau, in an economically depressed region of former East Germany, a new brothers' community was established to work in parochial, prison, school and post-school ministries. Further examples included a house of spiritual discernment in Habay-la-Vielle (Belgium) with four brothers, and a house of welcome for recently released juvenile offenders in Rubí (Catalonia), with a community of three brothers.⁴⁰³

By 2005, in Europe projects had grown to such an extent that some networking was thought desirable. The first European meeting of representatives of social projects was organised by the European Mission Commission and the General Council's mission commission. Eighty participants working in projects for needy and marginalised young people gathered from four of the five Provinces, coming from Syria, Hungary, Romania, Portugal, Greece, France and Spain.⁴⁰⁴ In all areas of the Marist world, new presences among marginalised youth have continued to grow.



35. The first European meeting of representatives of social projects. Guardamar, Spain (2005).

⁴⁰³ *Marist Bulletin*. No. 25, 25 July 2002.

⁴⁰⁴ 29 October – 1 November at Guardamar, Spain. In *Marist Bulletin*. No 217. 30 October, 2005

Marist Youth Ministry

A term which had come prominently into the Marist lexicon by the end of the first decade of twenty-first century, and had emerged as one of the key ways in which the Institute was realising its mission of evangelisation, was “Marist Youth Ministry” or “MYM”. While the intuitions and underlying principles of MYM go back to Marcellin Champagnat, its more recent antecedents were to be found in the various apostolic youth movements and societies for Catholic young people that emerged during the twentieth century, inspired by such people as Joseph-Léon Cardijn. These had operated both within the context of the school and also independently of it. One of the reasons for the brothers becoming involved in such movements was the need to find innovative ways for vocations ministry. By the 1970s, juniorates had begun to be closed. The Christian Encounter movement in which brothers in the Province of Great Britain became involved from the mid-1970s was an example of this.⁴⁰⁵

Another such a movement, and a specifically Marist one, was begun in Colombia in 1977 by Brother Néstor Quiceno, as a four-year pastoral programme for senior students, again with an explicitly vocational focus in its initial years. *Remar* drew on nautical imagery so that, for example, its youth groups were known as “caravels”, each year called a “crossing” with the “rowers” being guided by a “helmsman”.

It used the Marcellin story and Marist language to integrate experiences of Christian spirituality, community and service of others as its three constitutive elements. *Remar* grew quickly into a full youth ministry programme, and spread to other Provinces in Latin America. By the time of its tenth anniversary, it was operating in ten Provinces across the continent,⁴⁰⁶ and five years later was to be found in seventeen countries, among them Australia and New Zealand.⁴⁰⁷ It continues in 2016 in many of these Provinces, either as “*Remar*” or by another name, and has been continually adapted and developed to suit changing times and circumstances; in 2005 it arrived in Haiti. One such development was an off-shoot programme known as “*Semar*”, aimed at younger students aged 8 to 11, which began in 1993.⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰⁵ Brother Ronnie McEwan had first led an initiative for vocations ministry, first based in the former Juniorate (“Hetland House”) and later at “Kinharvie House” (former Scholasticate and home for older brothers) when the work became broader in its cast, and moved into Christian Encounter. It saw Kinharvie change to be a centre for programmes for young people. Brother Brendan Geary (interview with the author, 14 November 2015) and Brother Colin Chalmers (personal communication with the author, 21 January 2016).

⁴⁰⁶ *FMS Echo*. No. 1, January 1988.

⁴⁰⁷ *FMS Echo*. No. 12, June 1991.

⁴⁰⁸ *Marist Bulletin*. No. 211. 1 September, 2005.

Whether it was Remar itself or another Marist-oriented programme of youth ministry, Provinces began to appreciate the rich potential of drawing on concepts and methods that were distinctively Marist to foster the growth of the spirituality and personal maturity of young people, and for developing in them a critical awareness and sense of practical compassion. Gradually it came to be called “Marist Youth Ministry”. In 2005, in Curitiba, after a year’s planning, MYM was officially launched in the Province of Brasil Centro Sul in a gathering of 200 people;⁴⁰⁹ within five years in the same city there was the first national gathering for MYM for Brazil. In other Provinces, such as America Central, dedicated leaders of MYM were beginning to be appointed at Province level and animation teams put in place. Some Provinces, such as those of Spain, became active in campus ministry at university level. The value of residential colleges for university students was seen.⁴¹⁰



36. Brother Néstor Quiceno.

The effectiveness of gathering a large number of young people in a single place, and tapping into the “event culture” of youth, also began to be used. In Australia, as one example, the initiative to hold an annual Marist youth festival began in the mid-1980s.⁴¹¹ In the United States, as another example, the Memorial Weekend⁴¹² has been used since 2001 for a biennial gathering of senior students from Marist schools, and by 2015 was attracting over 300 young people not only from the USA but also Marist students in Mexico and Canada. International gatherings were also beginning to occur, following the celebrations in Rome in 1999 for the canonisation of Marcellin which attracted not only brothers and lay Marists but also thousands of young people who identified as “Marists”. One of the events of the Canonisation week was a large gathering for Marist young people at the Marist college of San Leone Magno in Rome. The next year, at the Word Youth Day event in Rome, 500 students “from the Marist family” gathered at the same school “to celebrate their Marist identity.”⁴¹³ The attraction to young Marists of such international gatherings had been recognised.

⁴⁰⁹ *Marist Bulletin*. No. 217. 30 October 2005.

⁴¹⁰ Brother Ernesto Sánchez, in a recorded interview with the author. 6 July 2015.

⁴¹¹ Brother Mark O’Connor first proposed this in the Province of Melbourne in 1986 and this major national event was to continue for two decades with its focus on developing the sense of faith and justice of 17-25 year-olds.

⁴¹² In the USA, the day for honouring those who have served their country and died in war is a public holiday called “Memorial Day” and is marked on last Monday of May each year. The three-day weekend is unofficially known as “Memorial Weekend”.

⁴¹³ *FMS Echo*. No.33, September 2000.

Eight years later, when World Youth Day was hosted in Sydney, an invitation was sent to all Provinces to support a Marist youth gathering the week before. Over 700 came, from 38 countries. Similar events were subsequently held in Madrid in August 2011 and Rio de Janeiro in July 2013. The 2016 World Youth Day was preceded by another international gathering of Marist Youth in Lyon and Notre Dame de l'Hermitage, including an event on 23 July marking the two hundredth anniversary of the Pledge of Fourvière.

Another characteristic feature of MYM has been volunteering, with young Marists giving their time either for short-term projects or for extended periods in Marist communities, both in their own countries or regions, or in more distant countries. This has taken place within the MYM programmes of individual schools or Provinces, and also has entailed some inter-Province cooperation. Since the 1980s, the Mexican Provinces are among a number of Provinces in the Institute which have had programmes for high school graduates to volunteer for up to a year in insertion communities. A more recent example is that of Sacred Heart College in Johannesburg where a programme began in 2008 to provide educational and personal support for up to 200 young refugees, mainly countries such as Zimbabwe and the Central African Republic. It has drawn volunteers not only locally but from countries in Europe and Oceania. One country that developed a strong volunteer programme as part of its youth ministry initiatives was Germany. Since its establishment in 2012, the Secretariat for Collaboration for Mission, International has provided coordination, support and impetus for Provinces who send and receive volunteers. One important element of this has been the establishing of the role of Province Volunteer Coordinators.⁴¹⁴

Just as it had been judged to be timely in the 1990s to write a reference text for Marist education, so it was thought by the mid-2000s that a parallel reference text on Marist Youth Ministry would be useful. It was one of several significant initiatives of Brother Emili Turú who convened the Council's Mission Commission. A working group was convened for the task.⁴¹⁵ This group held its first meeting in August 2007, followed by two others March and December 2008, when the text was close-to-finalised for approval by the General Council, with the title: *Evangelisers in the Midst of Youth*, but planning for the upcoming Chapter overtook it. Approbation was to happen finally with the next Council in 2011. Following its release, the recently appointed Director of the Mission Secretariat, Brother João Carlos do Prado, led regional seminars across the Institute to introduce the document and to workshop it with leaders of MYM in many countries.

⁴¹⁴ Brother Chris Wills, interview with author, 13 November 2015.

⁴¹⁵ Joining Brother Emili on this group were: Fabiano Incerti (Brazil) Brother Ifeanyi Stephen Mbaegbu (Nigeria); Brother Michaël Schmalzl (Germany); Paul Salmon (Australia); Brother Ramon Rúbies (Spain); Brother Raúl Goitea (Argentina); Brother Rommel Ocasiones (Philippines); Brother Juan Miguel Anaya (General Administration); Brothere Ernesto Sánchez (General Administration). One of the group, Fabiano Incerti, was responsible for editing the final draft into a consistent style.



37. International Gathering of Young Marists before World Youth Day. Sydney, Australia (2008).



38. First International Gathering of Young Marists at St Joseph's College. Sydney, Australia (2008).



39. A day of low temperatures during the First International Gathering of Young Marists when they went to the "Hermitage". Mittagong, Australia (2008).

In his introduction to what is a quite long and discursive document,⁴¹⁶ Brother Emili wrote of the high value he put on MYM:

The XXI General Chapter picked up on the affirmation of the Marist International Mission Assembly (Mendes, 2007), that "evangelisation is the central point and priority of our apostolic activities, proclaiming Jesus Christ and his message." I strongly believe that MYM is a privileged means for that evangelisation, though by no means the only one. For this reason, as I said in my talk at the conclusion

⁴¹⁶ With 232 articles, it is the longest of any of the reference texts in use in the Institute.

of the General Chapter, I earnestly hope and desire that at the conclusion of our mandate, when we celebrate the 200th anniversary of the Institute's founding, we Marists of Champagnat will be looked upon as "experts" in MYM.⁴¹⁷

The document presented the sociological and theological bases for MYM and described a distinctively Marist way of going about youth ministry. It recognised that over the decades there had been a variety of programmes, movements and strategies outside of school through which the Institute has sought to evangelise youth,⁴¹⁸ but the text was content only to propose guiding principles for the Marist approach to youth ministry, rather than a defined model or particular programme. It understood youth ministry in terms of going into the space of young people, engaging with them there, and affecting them by means of accompaniment, pedagogy, and opportunities for prayer, community and service of others. It described MYM as a contemporary way of forming the "good Christians and good citizens" of whom the Founder dreamed. Evangelisation was to be at its heart:



40. The Commission responsible for the document *Evangelizers in the midst of Youth*.

⁴¹⁷ *Evangelisers in the Midst of Youth*. p.11.

⁴¹⁸ It gives the examples of *Marian Societies* and *Eucharistic Crusades*; organizations such as *Catholic Action*, Scout groups; and movements concerned with leadership formation such as *Movement for a Better World*, *New City*, the *Charismatic Renewal*, *Communion and Liberation*, *Focolare*, and the Institute's own *Remar* programme. *Ibid.* #31.

As Marists, Jesus and his Gospel excite us. He 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. By means of our ministries we make Marcellin Champagnat’s ardent desire come true: “Every time I see young people I can’t help but tell them, ‘How greatly Jesus loves you!’”⁴¹⁹

It proposed that for MYM to be effective, Provinces needed to have these elements in place: youth groups where there was a vibrant experience of fraternity; effective processes of educating in the faith; strategies for accompaniment; sound organisation; and the formation of active, service-oriented and contemplative leaders. It argued that Provinces had to invest in strategic planning and provide adequate resourcing for MYM if it is to be effective.

One of the basic characteristics of MYM is its being a conscious, intentional and explicit plan for evangelising the young. Given the many different situations in which youth find themselves it is necessary to plan for a ministry that is well thought out and tailored to the diverse backgrounds and attitudes of the young in regard to faith and life. We adapt our ministry to the age, character and circumstances of the specific groups with which we work ... For MYM to be able to achieve its aims it is essential that each Province and each of its local units are provided with the most appropriate measures for this: dedicating people, facilities, economic resources, etc. One element we see as crucial is the formation of animators, who are often young volunteers who serve for a limited time, giving rise to a lack of continuity.⁴²⁰

It is a document that situated itself quite deliberately in the mission and purpose of the Institute and aligned itself with the priorities and figurative language then current in the Institute:

*The slogan of our XXI General Chapter reminds us that Mary, in visiting her cousin Elizabeth (Lk 1, 39-45), gives us an example of love and young friendship. Like her, we are called to see the theological depth of others, above all young people. In their dreams and utopian visions, their trials and achievements, they reveal to us the face of God. As disciples and missionaries, as we walk by their side we want to go in haste to engage with those who suffer from the consequences of poverty, injustice, and an absence of ideals able to bring them a brighter tomorrow. We recognise that the heart of every teenager and young person in our world is “a new land” for us.*⁴²¹

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid.* #86

⁴²⁰ *Ibid.* ##117,221-22

⁴²¹ *Ibid.* #233

By the time of the XXI Chapter, it was reported that over half the Provinces of the Institute had systematic MYM structures in place.⁴²² Once *Evangelisers in the Midst of Youth* had been launched and workshopped in 2011-12, oversight and support of directions and developments across the Institute continued through the work of an International MYM Commission which met annually. Additionally, the Mission Secretariat of the General Administration was strengthened by the appointment in 2014 of an Assistant Director with a background in youth ministry.⁴²³

Animating and co-ordinating social justice and solidarity

Administrative structures and specialist personnel to lead and coordinate the Institute's efforts in the area of solidarity began with the Poverty and Justice Commission of Brother Basilio's Council, and the Social Secretariat. The Report of the Commission to the 1985 Chapter lists fifteen examples of projects for which the Social Secretariat had sourced funding from agencies such as Misereor and Missio.⁴²⁴ This structure was to remain during Brother Charles' Generalate. The XIX General Chapter in 1993 called for the setting up of a new "Secretariat of Solidarity" that would incorporate the former Social Secretariat and manage a new "Solidarity Fund" to be financed by the Provinces.⁴²⁵ The old Secretariat had had a more limited mandate that saw it supporting requests that had been submitted to the General Council and approved by it.⁴²⁶

In practice, it had been a fairly small operation which attempted to finance projects of the General Council, often the Superior General himself. By the time the new entity was established in 1996 as the "Bureau of International Solidarity" (BIS) under the leadership of Brother Allen Sherry its brief had been widened and clarified. It had a fourfold role: conscientisation and education for the Institute in the area of justice and solidarity; micro-project funding and assistance (its principal work); networking of Marist entities which were involved in these fields; and advocacy for just causes.⁴²⁷ These continued to be the foci for BIS over the next decade, although they developed in different ways.⁴²⁸

⁴²² *Report of the Brother Superior and his Council to the XXI General Chapter.* p.59

⁴²³ Brother Miguel Ángel Espinosa Barrera from Mexico.

⁴²⁴ *Misereor* is the German Catholic Bishops' Organisation for Development Cooperation. *Missio* is a global Catholic charity with funding bases in a number of countries, including the United Kingdom.

⁴²⁵ *Acts of the XIX General Chapter.* #14

⁴²⁶ *FMS Message.* No.23, July 1997.

⁴²⁷ *FMS Message.* No. 23, July 1997

⁴²⁸ *FMS Message.* No. 33, July 2004

One of the ways that BIS chose for fulfilling its first responsibility, which it also found to be its most difficult,⁴²⁹ was the production of a prayer resource for Advent, published in the four languages of the Institute and bringing focus to the needs of young people around the world. The publication has continued for two decades. Fund-searching occupied much of its time, and Brother Allen and his team were to develop a high level of expertise in it.⁴³⁰ Early projects included the new foundations in Romania and Tanzania, and formation houses in Kenya, the Philippines and Sri Lanka. In this, BIS worked closely with the office of the Econome General, at the time under the direction of Brother Yvon Bédard.⁴³¹ The Solidarity Fund established by the XX General Chapter assisted in the scope of this work, providing “seed funding” for projects that could then attract larger amounts from other foundations and agencies.

BIS was able also to take a lead in coordinating the Institute’s response to unforeseen emergencies such as the lava flows that set Goma (DRC) alight in 2002 and destroyed the Marist school there,⁴³² and the Indonesian tsunami of 2004 which had devastating impact on coastal areas of Sri Lanka and India.⁴³³ In each case, BIS coordinated the financial appeal to the Marist world, helping to fund a “tent school” for the 1200 students of Mwanga Institute in Goma, and raising over \$US1.2 million for the tsunami appeal. At the conclusion of his tenure at BIS, Brother Allen was especially satisfied that what had been the prophetic and sometimes divisive calls to solidarity of Brothers Basilio and Charles had become part of the accepted priority of the Institute, and had been concretised in a range of ongoing and new projects.⁴³⁴

In the middle of the next decade two emerging directions led to a restructuring and renaming of BIS as *Fondazione Marista per la Solidarietà Internazionale* (FMSI). This was prompted also by an external review of BIS conducted in 2004.⁴³⁵ First, one of the four aspects of BIS’s work – advocacy – was growing in prominence. In the review, this was named, along with education for justice, as the principal area for growth for BIS.⁴³⁶ The particular focus was advocacy and defence of children’s rights. To advance this, following the review a Marist presence was established at the United Nations in Geneva.⁴³⁷ Second, it was seen as advantageous for the

⁴²⁹ Brother Allen Sherry, in recorded interview with the author, 12 August 2015. And *FMS Message*. No. 23, July 1997

⁴³⁰ It is worth noting that the two lay members of the BIS team were the first two lay professionals to be employed full-time in the General Administration.

⁴³¹ Brother Allen Sherry, interview *idem*.

⁴³² *Marist Bulletin*. No. 10, 16 February 2002.

⁴³³ *Marist Bulletin*. Nos 177, 211 and 238. 2005-06.

⁴³⁴ Brother Allen Sherry, interview *idem*. Brother Allen was to be followed by Brothers Dominick Pujia and Richard Carey (from the USA) and then Mario Meuti (from Italy).

⁴³⁵ Cf. *Report to the General Council of the International Review Team on the “Bureau of International Solidarity (BIS)”*. 10 June 2004

⁴³⁶ *Ibid.* Recommendation #1.1.1

⁴³⁷ *Ibid.* Recommendation #2.1.3



41. Community in Geneva working for the defence of children's rights.

Institute to establish a legally recognised not-for-profit NGO under Italian law,⁴³⁸ something that would facilitate the raising of funds in Italy and also give the Institute a legal status for its work in this field. FMSI was notarised in 2004 and officially registered in April 2008.⁴³⁹ Its four loci of action were essentially the same as they had been in 1996, but with a sharper and more intense focus on advocacy for child rights, and broader role in developing partnerships with like-minded agencies, both Marist and non-Marist. Among the latter were *Franciscans International* (who had facilitated the Marists establishing in Geneva), *Edmund Rice International* and *Bureau International Catholique de l'Enfance*. Among the former, were a number of Marist foundations and NGOs which had first begun to appear in the 1990s.

It was in Spain that the first Marist NGO – *Solidaridad Educación Desarrollo* (“SED”) – was established by the Conference of Spanish Provincials in 1992. It was founded initially to finance the growing number of the solidarity projects of the Provinces of Spain. Three years later it could describe its objective this way:

... to unify all the activities, to animate and support volunteering by religious and lay people ... in projects of development in the South.

... SED creates and promotes solidarity in sustaining and developing universal fraternity and North-South dialogue⁴⁴⁰

It was involved in the preparation, formation and debriefing of volunteers. It organised working camps in which volunteers were involved in offering literacy programmes, catechesis, health services and manual work. In 1994 there were 110 volunteers who served in 11 countries, including Spain itself.⁴⁴¹ Educational resources had been prepared that reached 30,000 young people and members of fraternities of the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family.⁴⁴² By this time its annual fund-raising campaign was well established and it had begun work in advocacy.

⁴³⁸ In Italy it is known as an *organizzazione non lucrativa di utilità sociale* or “ONLUS”

⁴³⁹ *Marist News*. No.5. 19 June 2008.

⁴⁴⁰ Brother Jack González, in *FMS Message*. No. 17, July 1995. p.42.

⁴⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴² *FMS Message*. No. 23, July 1997

In Brazil, a NGO was set up in 1995 by the Province of Rio de Janeiro – *Instituto Marista de Solidariedade* (“IMS”) – under lay management. Its focus was on micro-projects to improve the lives and educational opportunity of young people, especially in rural areas, a work that also involved some advocacy.⁴⁴³ Others began in Guatemala, Argentina, Colombia and Chile, and the other Provinces of Brazil. By 2004, SED and BIS were able to bring together for a meeting for the first time Marist agencies and NGOs which were by then involved in leading, animating and supporting solidarity and advocacy projects in Latin America.⁴⁴⁴ Attending along with SED and BIS representatives were 29 people from: Fundamar (Guatemala), Casa Familias (Ecuador), AVESOL (Brazil), Fundación Marista (Argentina), PUCPR-Parana (Brazil), Fundemar (Columbia), IMS (Brazil), Fundación Gesta (Chile), Punto Fijo (Venezuela), and REDE Marista (Brazil), as well as representatives from SED Bolivia and Paraguay, and PNAEE, Misión Guadalupe and Comisión Solidaridad, from Mexico. Such meetings were to continue. In the ensuing decade, further development and networking took place in Europe, supported by SED and FMSI, leading to the first meeting of European Marist NGOs in Rome in October 2015. FMSI expanded to Asia in March 2013, with a regional office in Thailand, but this was discontinued. A FMSI regional office for the administrative units of *Cono Sur* was established in the same year.⁴⁴⁵ In Australia, the different arms of solidarity developed to the point where a new NGO – Australian Marist Solidarity was established in 2013. It was expected that such international Marist networks would continue to coalesce.

FMSI’s capacity for advocacy received a significant boost with its being granted “Special Consultative Status” with the Economic and Social Council of the UN (ECOSOC) in 2012. FMSI had first presented the application for the consultative status in May 2010. With consultative status FMSI could participate in the meetings of ECOSOC and be better placed to advance the rights of children which was its recognised “area of competence” at the UN.

In February 2014, after eight years of its existence, the General Council (in its capacity as the Board of FMSI) decided that it was timely to initiate a comprehensive review of it. An evaluation team was commissioned to consider its structures, its strategies, its personnel, and its effectiveness with a view to making recommendations to enhance its institutional capacities for “responding creatively and dynamically to the calls of the Church and the Institute.”⁴⁴⁶ Overall, the team concluded that there remained considerable untapped potential in FMSI. It recommended a radical overhaul of its structure, greater investment in its leadership and personnel, a more strategic approach to its core work of child rights, and re-thinking of the most cost-effective way to link with the UN.

⁴⁴³ *Ibid.* p.40

⁴⁴⁴ Held May 6-9, 2004 at Centro Villa María in Santa Cruz, Bolivia

⁴⁴⁵ *Marist News*. 25 October, 2013.

⁴⁴⁶ Imma Guixé, *Final Evaluation Report for FMSI, July 2015*. Report prepared for the Board of FMSI, p.4

It suggested a more integrated approach across the Institute, with an enhanced and more professionalised FMSI playing a coordinating role among better linked Province offices and agencies.⁴⁴⁷

The rights of children and young people

From the late 1990s, the Institute had become increasingly involved in initiatives for promoting and defending the rights of children and young people. Advocacy on this topic had been one of the four responsibilities of BIS on its establishment in 1996. As its work grew and as other Marist NGOs were established, the imperative for the Institute to become active on the issue of child rights became more pressing. By the time of the first Marist International Mission Assembly (in Mendes) in 2007, it was named as one of the five elements of Marist mission which were a source of its vitality and would be important in its future.⁴⁴⁸ In Nairobi, seven years later, the importance for Marists to be involved in advocacy in defence of the rights of children and young people was a frequently named priority. In the final communiqué, it is mentioned four times.⁴⁴⁹

After the review of BIS in 2004, its transition to become FMSI in 2007, and the Marist presence in Geneva by then operative, the new entity described its purpose in these terms:

FMSI has a primary focus on child rights. We seek to promote innovative thinking and practical initiatives for the benefit of children and young people, especially those considered most vulnerable and neglected. Our hope is to provide opportunities for children and young people to receive a meaningful education and to develop their full potential⁴⁵⁰

The siting of a FMSI office in Geneva was done because it is the base for the work of the United Nations Human Rights Council and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. This gave FMSI the opportunity to participate in UN conferences, meetings and working groups dealing with child rights, and the UN's monitoring of child rights around the world.⁴⁵¹

⁴⁴⁷ *Ibid*, *passim*.

⁴⁴⁸ *Message of the Participants of the Marist International Mission Assembly*). Mendes Brazil, 12 September 2007

⁴⁴⁹ *Voices from the Fire. The Message of the Participants at II MIMA*). Nairobi, Kenya. 27 September 2014.

⁴⁵⁰ FMSI website: www.fmsi-onlus.org. (Accessed 15 November, 2015.)

⁴⁵¹ *Ibid*.

In addition to its activity within the UN and with similar agencies which have presences in Geneva, FMSI became active across the Institute through its publications, the FMSI and Institute websites (including its blogs), training programmes, and policy advice. In 2006, the director of the office in Geneva, Brother César Henriquez described his responsibilities this way:

*... to bring a new vitality to the efforts of renewal which are currently being carried out throughout our Institute ... By contributing our voice ... we collaborate with the many people and organisations seeking peace and justice for all through the United Nations.*⁴⁵²

It was work, wrote Brother César, that addressed the Marist role in redressing violence, denial of education, poverty, abuse, poor health, exploitation and lack of evangelisation among young people.

FMSI began to conduct seminars, training experiences and conferences across the Institute to support and to improve the ways that various Marist agencies and NGOs were becoming involved in the defence of child rights. For example, in June 2010, it convened in Chile a seminar for representatives of the Gesta Foundation and Marist schools to advance their awareness and skills in the area of the rights of children and young people.⁴⁵³ The next month, at the seventh meeting of the Spanish and Latin American NGOs, held in Buenos Aires, FMSI representatives ran a forum on the same topic for delegates from nineteen countries.⁴⁵⁴ By 2012, a link person FMSI Geneva had been nominated in most Provinces, and a training programme for them could be organised, this being done over two weeks in May-June 2012 in Rome.⁴⁵⁵

The place of advocacy for child rights became increasingly prominent in the ministries of the Institute, its administrative units, and individual institutions and programmes. For example, it was written into the reference text *Evangelisers in the Midst of Youth* as one of the elements of Marist Youth Ministry:

*Along with other persons and institutions, we accept an **advocacy role** on behalf of young people who are victims, or where their rights and well-being are concerned in any way, and on behalf of greater social justice generally. We communicate with our Province community regarding our experiences and the concerns that arise, seeking collective support where this is appropriate.*⁴⁵⁶

An internship programme, conducted in liaison with the CMI Secretariat at the General House, allowed for young Marist volunteers to spend time living with the brothers in Geneva and being exposed to the work of FMSI, other agencies and

⁴⁵² *Marist Bulletin*. No.271. 23 November 2006.

⁴⁵³ *Marist News*. No.107. 3 June, 2010.

⁴⁵⁴ *Marist News*. No.114. 15 July, 2010.

⁴⁵⁵ *Marist News*. No.196. 16 February, 2012.

⁴⁵⁶ *Evangelisers in the Midst of Youth*. #204.

the UN itself. The fruits of their learnings and experience could then be shared in MYM and solidarity teams in their own Provinces. These interns have been mainly young lay Marists from countries including Brazil, Australia, Malaysia and Malawi – often studying for careers in law or international development – but they have also included one young brother.⁴⁵⁷ Their internship programmes have included training in child rights, UN mechanisms and UN procedures, with a view to raising their awareness of the quality of life for children around the world, and encouraging their ongoing engagement with the advancement of this.

One of the particular tasks with which the FMSI Geneva office became involved early in the Generalate of Brother Emili was the enhancement of safeguarding protocols for children and young people who were being served by the Institute itself.⁴⁵⁸ For a group whose Founder had been so explicitly unequivocal in his condemnation of any kind of maltreatment of children, it was a matter of sad and tragic irony that the Institute had become increasingly aware of historical of-



42. Members of FMSI.

⁴⁵⁷ Brother Chris Wills (Director of CMI Secretariat), interview with the author, 13 November, 2015.

⁴⁵⁸ Cf. Superior General's *Bulletins to Provincials*, #10 and #11.

fences against children perpetrated by some of its own members, employees, and volunteers.⁴⁵⁹ It was felt to be critically important that this matter be addressed thoroughly at all levels of the Institute. There was a need, first, to be assured that appropriate preventive strategies and safeguarding protocols were in place in each administrative unit, and, second, protocols for responding to reports of either historical or current abuse were being fully and appropriately followed. All victims needed compassionate, just and timely redress, and the consequences for offenders had to be clear. An *ad hoc* task-force was established by the General Council to advise it and the leaders of Provinces and Districts on these imperatives.⁴⁶⁰ A handbook was developed and sample guidelines to help administrative units. In March 2012, a major seminar was organised in Rome for the people responsible in each Province for the safeguarding the rights of children and young people, with presentations and workshops led by an international expert panel.

Subsequently, a second *ad hoc* committee was set-up to review the policies and protocols that were then operating in the various administrative units.⁴⁶¹ It did this during 2013 through the lens of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and other contemporary benchmarks, and it gave feedback to individual Provinces on the adequacy of what they had in place. Ongoing responsibility for support of Provinces and Districts was then entrusted to FMSI, Geneva.⁴⁶² Training courses, advice and assistance were provided on local and regional bases as needed, and quality assurance mechanisms set in place.

A second international colloquium for all administrative units was held in mid-2016. In giving urgent and thorough attention to this matter at a global level, the Institute was dealing with matter that the Church and society more generally were facing. The extent of abuse of young people, and its consequences, both in institutional and domestic settings, were matters to which the world at large was more and more alert in the last decade of the twentieth century and the first decade of the next. Enquiries, studies, victim-support organisations, and the media were revealing the extent to which children and young people had been denied the protection that was their right, and had been often poorly treated when such abuse was reported to those in authority.

The Church was prominent among those organisations which had been inadequate and even negligent in its preparation and supervision of its members, in its response to victims, and in its very understanding of the issues. What may have once been seen as a moral lapse that could be simply corrected by an act of will

⁴⁵⁹ In an interview in 2006, Brother Charles Howard reported that during his seventeen years on the General Council (1976-1993) he recalled only two occasions where a matter of the sexual abuse of a young person had come to his notice. Interview for the *Oral History Project* of the Province of Sydney, May 2006.

⁴⁶⁰ Its members were Brothers John Klein CG, Brendan Geary, James Jolley, Nicolás García, and Gérard Bachand.

⁴⁶¹ Its members were Brothers John Klein CG, James Jolley, Gérard Bachand, Alexis Turton, Lluís Serra, Luis Carlos Gutiérrez; and Sandro Bobrzyk.

⁴⁶² This information and supporting documentation were provided to the author by Brother John Klein and Brother Michael de Waas.

was now recognised to be criminal behaviour that could be the result of chronic psycho-emotional dysfunction. Such deep dysfunction may have been caused by inadequate formation, affective deprivation, arrested sexual and emotional development, personal experience of abuse, unhealthy organisational cultures, and insufficient operational protocols. The Institute needed to examine forensically its own shortcomings and errors on each of these issues, and what had led to them. In addition, the pernicious and residual effects of abuse on children were becoming much better understood.

Wide-ranging enquiries such as the *Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse* in Ireland (1999-2009) and the *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse* in Australia (2013-2017) brought focus to these matters, and helped organisations such as the Institute, and the Church and civil society more generally, to ensure that robust child protection measures had been established, and that just responses to victims of historical matters would occur. For an institution which had a primary focus especially on marginalised young people in situations of vulnerability, this was a most difficult but very important period for the Institute.

Mission Ad Gentes

The essentially missionary nature of the Church, and more particularly the way it understood its approach to this mission in different cultures, was a particular focus of the Vatican Council. The Decree *Ad Gentes* was the last to be approved by the Council, but no less important for its timing. It proposed that the Church would evangelise in and through culture, promoting the concept of “inculturation” as a principle of missionary activity. The Institute, from its foundation, had had a missionary focus. The distant Oceania missions of Marcellin’s time were joined by the end of the nineteenth century by foundations in Asia and the Americas and, of course, significantly boosted by the exodus of so many brothers from France in 1903. While such foundations continued through the twentieth century, for example those of Great Britain and Ireland in Nigeria and Cameroon, the United States in the Philippines and Japan, the Mexicans in Korea, and the Canadians, Spanish, French, Belgians, Portuguese, Brazilians, Mexicans and Germans in various countries of Africa, it was in the Generalates of Brother Charles and Brother Benito that attention turned to re-establishing Marist presences in countries from which the brothers had been forced to leave – places that included Hungary, the People’s Republic of China, and Cuba. During the Generalate of Brother Seán, a decisive move was made to turn the attention of the whole Institute towards the largest and least evangelised continent, and to a region where the Marist presence was relatively small: Asia.

With the devolution of authority to Provincial Superiors that had come with the Constitutions of 1903, the degree of centralised strategy for new missionary foundations and the appointment of personnel directly by the General Council diminished considerably. It was left almost entirely to individual Provinces to make

new missionary foundations.⁴⁶³ While this continued to be the norm between the Chapters of 1985 and 1993,⁴⁶⁴ Brother Charles, as also his successors, tried to re-establish an element of central strategic planning for where and how the Institute could establish new presences.

China was of particular interest to Charles, but possibilities were quite restricted there. More potential existed in eastern Europe, and it was there that the Superior General invited the Institute to look. He directed his request to the Conference of European Provincials, holding their second meeting in 1990 at Notre Dame de l'Hermitage in France.⁴⁶⁵ A commission was established under the leadership of Brother Herbert Scheller of Germany. The bishops of Hungary were placing a high priority on Catholic education. In February 1990, the General Council had taken the decision in principle to return to Hungary, and in its June plenary meeting decided on Győr in the parish of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁶⁶ In September, an international community took up residence. While the new school was being built, the brothers devoted themselves to the learning of the language, and began the "Győr Champagnat Group" for sixty young people.⁴⁶⁷ At the beginning of the following academic year the day and boarding college accepted its first students. In 2000, after nine years in Győr, the brothers' presence was expanded to Esztergom to work among Romany children. In 2002, a youth centre was begun next to the brothers' house, attracting up to sixty young people (aged 2 to 25) between 4.00 and 7.00pm in the evenings.⁴⁶⁸ Meanwhile, the European Provincials, as has been mentioned already, had decided to allocate responsibility for Hungary to the Provinces of Catalonia, Levante and Beaucamps-St Genis, and for those of Bética, Castilla, Madrid and Hermitage to establish in Romania. In 2004, the St Marcellin Centre was opened there.

Two other significant returns were to Cuba and Algeria. The return of the brothers to Cuba had been something long anticipated. It was the Council of Brother Charles that had begun in 1993 the process of re-establishing there, just after the decision to return to Hungary. It was to be another eight years before Brothers Efraín Martín Oropesa (a Cuban) and Carlos Martínez Lavín (from Mexico) could take up residence "in a country rich in sunshine, in golden beaches, in friendship, solidarity, rumba, dreams and good humour".⁴⁶⁹ The following year they

⁴⁶³ Brother Charles Howard, in interview *idem*. Brother Charles, in a separate personal conversation with the author in 1999, lamented the fact that, as the result of this practice of devolved authority, the Institute had not founded in India until quite late in the twentieth century, and in Indonesia not at all. He hypothesised that an early foundation in each country would have proved worthwhile and fruitful for the Institute.

⁴⁶⁴ New foundations during this period included those in Haiti 1985 (by Iberville), Liberia 1986 (by Esopus), Thailand 1986-91 (by Sydney), Kenya 1986 (by Germany), India 1988 (by Sri Lanka), Equatorial Guinea 1989 (by Norte), Vanuatu 1991 (by Beaucamps-St Genis), Tanzania 1992 (by Mexico), Honduras 1992 (by Léon) and Chad 1993 (by Norte).

⁴⁶⁵ The Conference had been established in 1989 at Veranópolis.

⁴⁶⁶ *Chronologie d'Institut*.

⁴⁶⁷ FMS Message.

⁴⁶⁸ *Marist Bulletin*. No.52. 19 February 2003.

⁴⁶⁹ Open letter from the brothers in Cuba. *Marist News*. 23 February, 2007.

were joined by Brother Héctor Ávalos (Mexico), and in 2004 by Brother Salvador Salinas (El Salvador). Three years later Brothers Jesús Bayo (from Chile) and Carlos Scottá (Brazil) had arrived. The brothers, not permitted at the start to become involved directly in education, turned to parish animation, youth ministry, and providing other assistance to the dioceses. From their two communities in Cienfuegos and Havana they also commenced vocations ministry, which was soon rewarded with some postulants and novices. By 2013, some more freedom was emerging and the brothers started to work in teacher formation and some non-school education programmes for young people, with the hope that education could again become a major focus of their work in Cuba.⁴⁷⁰



43. Brothers Carlos Martínez Lavín and Héctor Ávalos (2006) with young Cubans after the new start of the Marist presence in Cuba.

⁴⁷⁰ *Marist News*, 11 January 2013.

In Algeria, the brothers had left Algeria following the tragic murder of Brother Henri Vergès in the library in which he worked in Algiers in 1994. In 2002, an international community returned: Brothers Aléx Gómez and Xema Rius (Catalonia), Arturo Chávez (México Central). Taking up residence in Mostaganem, they were part of a tiny Christian presence in an Islamic country, seeking to live in respectful dialogue:

*The small Church of Algeria is conscious of living a prophetic mission, of creating for tomorrow a climate of tranquil dialogue between the Christian faith and the Muslim faith, with the certitude that we are all children of God, the work of his hands, and that his children will one day come to know each other as brothers and sisters.*⁴⁷¹

The brothers saw the aim of their presence in these terms:

*Our hope is to incarnate Marist life and mission in Algeria and to share the life and mission of the Church ... we are deepening our knowledge of Islam so as to give better service and establish a cultural and religious dialogue. Following our Marist charism, we are looking for ways to welcome and accompany Algerian children and youth, especially the poorest. In the way of Mary our presence is simple, discreet and almost hidden.*⁴⁷²

By 2007 their ministry had become focussed on the chaplaincy for the sub-Saharan Christian students, Spanish courses at the Cervantès Institute and at the house, IT courses and tutorial support for French students. A library was also soon to begin in the house. In that year a second community began in Oran with Brothers Michael Sexton (Australia), Jean-Louis Rognon (France) and Germán Chaves (Chile). In the libraries the Brothers sought to be a presence to young Algerians and, where possible, offer courses in English, French, and Spanish.

Meanwhile in Rome, the attention of the General Council had turned also to Asia. The project of what became known as “Marist Mission Ad Gentes” emerged early in the thinking of the Council after the 2001 Chapter,⁴⁷³ within the context of the strong narrative of “vitality” that had been present at the Chapter and would become the theme of the 2005 General Conference. The Council saw that the path to this vitality would be through greater internationality, more attention to the needs of the poorest, and enhanced expressions of fraternity.⁴⁷⁴ In his letter of convocation to the General Conference, which was sent to all the brothers of the Institute, Brother Seán addressed this theme:

First of all, we have been an international Institute for over a century, but we have not always acted like one ... Second, we profess the importance of “mis-

⁴⁷¹ *Marist News*. 26 April 2006.

⁴⁷² *Marist News*. 14 October 2007.

⁴⁷³ Brother Luis García Sobrado, in recorded interview with the author. 13 October 2015.

⁴⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

tion ad gentes," and yet this fundamental aspect of our lives has grown steadily weaker in recent years. Once again, the consequence of this situation is obvious: a waning of the missionary spirit that has always marked our Institute ... Our spirit of mission ad gentes needs strengthening today. While in recent years new foundations have been established in Algeria, Chad, Cuba, East Timor, Equatorial Guinea, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Liberia, and Romania, a number of these efforts have suffered setbacks. Unprepared for what faced them, some brothers involved have left the Institute; a few became disenchanted. While each of these missions continues at the moment, their future vitality and viability will depend upon the efforts of all of us.⁴⁷⁵

As an Australian Superior General had brought the leaders of the Institute to Latin America to be affected by what they saw and felt, now an American brought them to Asia.⁴⁷⁶ Similar to what happened in 1989, the Provincials were invited to come to the Conference in Negombo, Sri Lanka, by first spending time in a Marist community and work in an Asian country. The countries visited were Cambodia, China, East Timor, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, and the Philippines. Endorsement was given by the Provincials to what was proposed: an invitation to the Institute for 150 brothers and also lay Marists to relocate to a new country, with the intention of building fresh expressions of Marist life and mission among needy young people.

On 2 January the following year, a letter was sent to all the brothers. Brother Seán received 186 replies to this letter. Within six months, the first group had begun a six-month preparation programme in Davao, the Philippines,⁴⁷⁷ and received assignments for the start of 2007. Others had gone to the United States to learn English before coming on to Davao. The Vicar General, Brother Luis, had charge of the project. Brother Michael Flanigan was appointed as Delegate of the Superior General to seek out and prepare possible locations, in liaison with local Church authorities. Some assistance to him was given by Brother Iván Buenfil, the Director of the International College. By 2008, foundations had been made in six countries, involving 41 brothers of 21 nationalities.⁴⁷⁸ Numbers were eventually to fall short of the goal,⁴⁷⁹ and some were to return home, but Brother Seán and his Council were to tell the Institute before the 2009 Chapter that the initiative was "the point of departure of a new vision"⁴⁸⁰ which had helped it

⁴⁷⁵ Brother Seán Sammon. *Life-giving Leadership Fostering vitality in Marist Life and ministry today. Letter of Convocation to the Seventh General Conference.* 7 October 2004 Our Lady of the Rosary

⁴⁷⁶ The expression is that of Brother Antonio Ramalho. Interview *idem*.

⁴⁷⁷ The team in Davao comprised Brothers Tim Leen, Alfredo Herrera and Roy Deita. Others were coopted for short periods to address specific topics.

⁴⁷⁸ *Report of the Brother Superior General and his Council to the XXI General Chapter, p.64*

⁴⁷⁹ Seven years later, Brother Seán was of the view that one of the reasons for this shortfall was not the shortage of volunteers, but a reluctance of Provincials to allow applications to go forward. In hindsight, he wondered if it would have been better for applications to have been made directly to the Superior General and appointments made by the General Council. (Interview, *idem*.)

⁴⁸⁰ *Ibid.* p.18

*to create among us a missionary culture, helping to relativise the arbitrariness of our administrative units ... and to cultivate a spirit of availability*⁴⁸¹

Nine years later, Brother Luis who, after his time coordinating it as Vicar General, was asked to become Sector Superior, reflected on what had gone well, what had not met the original hopes, and the questions that had emerged. He was much in admiration of the forty missionary brothers for what by then had become the Marist District of Asia: their stamina, their down-to-earth spirituality, their love of the poor, their simplicity, and the love of the Marist way. Their experience had been close to that of Marcellin. But, he saw that it had not been easy for them: the challenge to learn local languages and adapt to new cultures, a resistance to the presence of westerners in some places,⁴⁸² isolation, and practical issues such as the getting of visas. Solid starts had been made in Vietnam, Bangladesh and another country, and the first brothers to come from those countries had begun their formation. It had proved more challenging in Thailand and Cambodia to find effective ways of connecting with young people and engaging in evangelisation. A recurring question had been around whether or not to establish schools and institutions. This was not the preference of many of the brothers in the District but it was an insistent request from some Churches who felt the need for high quality Catholic schools. In Bangladesh this option had been taken.⁴⁸³

The experience of the Institute also revealed that institutional presences in a country often helped to build ongoing capacity and legacy for Marist life and mission: new Districts and Provinces without institutions struggled to develop a strong Marist presence beyond the individual brothers or community, and old Provinces that had moved away from their institutions were usually witnessing a diminishment, even an extinguishing, of Marist life and mission as brothers aged.

⁴⁸¹ *Ibid.* p.64.

⁴⁸² Brother Ken McDonald, who attended the General Conference as District Superior of Melanesia, felt that the message of the Asian theologians who spoke at the Conference had not been sufficiently heard. They had emphasised the importance of dialogue with local culture and a readiness to be changed by this dialogue. Recorded interview with the author, 29 September, 2015.

⁴⁸³ Brother Luis García Sobrado, interview *idem*

9.

THE MARIST INTERNATIONAL MISSION ASSEMBLIES OF 2007 AND 2014: WINDOWS INTO A NEW WAY OF BEING MARISTS IN MISSION

Nothing quite like an international mission assembly had ever been held before. Long in planning and high in expectation, the first “MIMA” at Mendes in Brazil in September 2007, with the theme “One Heart, One Mission”, proved to be something of a Rubicon moment in the history of the Institute. Marist life and mission would not be quite the same thereafter. Perhaps the most noteworthy aspect of the gathering was that it was not a brothers’ congress with a few lay people invited along to give a little additional perspective.⁴⁸⁴ This was an event that was planned and implemented as a genuine exercise of partnership.⁴⁸⁵ Over 20,000 people were involved in some way during the pre-Assembly consultation,⁴⁸⁶ a number that dwarfs any for a General Chapter before or since. Brother Emili Turú, who led the preparatory commission, played a defining role in conceiving the Assembly in this way.⁴⁸⁷ Two years previously, in Sri Lanka, Brother Seán had told the Provincials of the Institute:

*Partnership runs deeper than participation in a common work: it is about the sharing of faith, being in love with Jesus Christ, and the collective experience of having Marcellin Champagnat capture your heart and seize your imagination.*⁴⁸⁸

Among the five elements that the Superior General named to be important for reclaiming the “spirit of the Hermitage” was a real “partnership with Marist laity”. The language is significant. It reveals that by 2005 the term “Lay Marist” had been firmly established in the Marist lexicon. There is a vocational dimension in this term, something that was by then being actively explored by the Bureau for the La-

⁴⁸⁴ Some of the lay people who attended the General Chapters of 1993 and 2001 had expressed the disappointment that they felt they were there only in an auxiliary or second-rung capacity. This was due in part, of course, because a Chapter had to be, *de jure*, a brothers’ event; the lay people were not members of the Institute.

⁴⁸⁵ *Report of the Superior General and his Council to the XXI General Chapter*. p.62

⁴⁸⁶ *Ibid.* p.62

⁴⁸⁷ Brother Seán Sammon, interview *idem*. Other members of the Commission were: Brother Pedro Herreros CG, Ms Erica Pergorer (Melbourne), Mr José María Pérez Soba (Iberica), Ms Dilma Alvez Rodrigues (Brasil Centro Norte), and Brothers John Y Tan (Philippines) and Alphonse Balombe (Africa Central East), and from the General Administration Brothers Juan Miguel Anaya and Pau Fornells (who replaced Michael Flanigan).

⁴⁸⁸ Closing Address of the VII General Conference, p.38.

ity. The work of this office, developed by the General Council as a direct response to one of the calls of the XX General Chapter, was to play a key part in fostering a sense of lay Marist identity and function. So, when “Marists” gathered in Mendes they did so as both consecrated and lay Marists, in equal numbers and with equal voice. The maturation of this lay/consecrated Marist dialogue that had taken place over the previous fifteen years was clear and present. In their report to the General Chapter two years’ later, the Superior General and Council described Mendes as “an historic experience”:

*... for the first time, brothers and lay Marists from all administrative units found themselves together at world level on the basis of equality to discuss questions of common interest ... We were at a crossroads*⁴⁸⁹

The Institute’s Director of Communications, Brother Antonio Martínez Estaún, a Marist scholar in his own right, agreed that “a new chapter” of Marist history had indeed opened. In his experience of Mendes, he was struck by three things especially: first, it was the first assembly of Marists based solely on mission, but in doing so it also focussed on the holiness and conversion of heart that was required of them; second, co-responsibility was amply evident, something that had implications for Marist living and formation into the future; and, third, the defence of the rights of children which had emerged as a new element of the Marist apostolate, was endorsed by the Assembly.⁴⁹⁰ Brother Claudino Falquetto had similar sentiments, on the basis of what he had experienced.:

*I have two certainties ... The first is that the centrality of mission cannot be anything but Jesus Christ. This can be seen in the development of the mandala,⁴⁹¹ in the group work, and the whole atmosphere: Jesus Christ is the centre. But an incarnate Jesus, Jesus who has a face, who has presence among those who are served by our mission, especially the most needy. And the other certainty is that the Marist mission ... can no longer be limited to the brothers, but will be carried forward by brothers and lay people together.*⁴⁹²

Brother Pau Fornells, who had become Director of the Bureau of the Laity, commented on the frequency that the word “new” had been used during the days in Mendes: new wineskins for new wine, new birth, new epoch, new dawn. It was very much a moment of arrival for the Marist laity.⁴⁹³

The Assembly gathered 120 people from fifty countries and each continent: thirteen from Africa, forty from the Americas, ten from Asia, twenty from Europe, and twelve from Oceania. It was a gathering full of life – with music, clowns,

⁴⁸⁹ *Report of the Superior General and his Council to the XXI General Chapter.* p.19

⁴⁹⁰ *Marist Bulletin.* No.308. 20 September, 2007.

⁴⁹¹ The design of a large mandala was a process used by the Assembly to symbolise what the participants wanted to say about Marist mission.

⁴⁹² *Marist News.* No.316. 15 November, 2007.

⁴⁹³ *FMS Message.* No.38. June 2008. p.103



44. I International Mission Assembly. Mendes, Brazil (2007).

face-paint, streamers, social events, dancing, and uplifting liturgy. This was not the same as a brothers' Chapter! A special issue of *FMS Message* published the following year and, larger than any previous issue at 127 pages, gave a fulsome report of what had happened in words, pictures, and personal testimonies.⁴⁹⁴ The event was described as a "flowering of seeds planted at Vatican II". What had previously been "the Brothers' school" was now "the Marist school" and now, despite the halving of the numbers of brothers and their ageing since the time of the Council, never had Marist works been so numerous or so widespread.⁴⁹⁵

The major concerns of the Assembly addressed each of the three areas of Marist life: the individual Marist's personal call to relationship with Jesus: the ways for Marists' to be associated with one another, and the distinctive vocational calls of lay Marists and brothers; and the focus and priorities of the mission of the Marists. The *Message of the Participants* is a rich document to examine.⁴⁹⁶ It was future-oriented in its tone, brimming with both challenge and hope. The members of the Assembly described five themes that Marists were addressing as they built together their future mission:

- *A revolution of the heart, open to the breath of the Spirit*
- *The partnership among all Marists*
- *Marist presence in evangelisation*
- *New challenges in Marist education*
- *Advocacy for children's rights.*

The first of these themes claims for *all* Marists the phrase that Brother Seán had used in his first Circular for the core of the brother's life, one that had percolated from the XIX General Chapter's imperative for the brothers to re-centre their lives on Jesus, and to be passionate about this. At Mendes, the participants were concerned about the same thing for all Marists, so that their mission would be rooted

⁴⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹⁵ *Ibid.* passim.

⁴⁹⁶ *Message of the Participants of the Marist International Mission Assembly, Mendes Brazil, 12 September 2007.*

in a Christocentric spirituality lived out in a Marist way. They concluded that there were six things required for this to happen:

- *good formation, specific to brothers and lay Marists separately, and also shared between them;*
- *new resources for formation;*
- *study of Marist spiritual patrimony;*
- *promotion of ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue;*
- *personal accompaniment and vocational discernment;*
- *new structures for belonging and realising partnership, in addition to the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family.*

Formation that was well-resourced, broad, deep and integrated, and was both academic and affective, was emphasised as being critically important. While this had always been valued for brothers, it was now being recognised as similarly indispensable for all who were attracted to the Marist way. There was also a call for new structures for the emerging forms of Marist life. This was seen as necessary if “co-responsibility” for mission was to be genuine. The participants proposed that this required new forms of association and belonging to be developed, so that partnership for mission could be real at all levels. Very significantly, they spoke of “new forms of connection to the Marist charism” rather than new ways of belonging “to the Institute”.⁴⁹⁷ This was a way of thinking for which many, perhaps most, in the Institute were not ready. The General Chapter two years later did not go as far in its imagining of Marist life in such a way.

The third, fourth and fifth themes are all concerned with mission. In each of them, the centrality of evangelisation of the young is unambiguous, as is the continuing imperative for this to be associated with solidarity and those who are marginalised in the present global context. While a profound focus on the poor was a strong and pervading theme of the Assembly, it is both more nuanced and considerably wider in its cast than that which was proposed by Brother Seán two years before. For example, there was no call to move away from present institutions – as had been suggested at the General Conference, and also by Brother Benito during his time as Superior General – but, rather, a challenge to evaluate and to transform them so that they could become clearer in their witness of evangelical values and be even more effective agents of justice and social change through their educational programmes and priorities. The significant presence of Marists in places of greatest exclusion and disempowerment is also championed. Finally, an emergent theme was gaining prominence in Marist discourse: that of advocacy for the rights of children and young people. Prominent among the themes of the Assembly were inclusion, solidarity and internationality, and underpinning them all was a shared Marist search for creative fidelity to the gospel of Jesus Christ in the contemporary world.

⁴⁹⁷ *Report of the Superior General and his Council to the XXI General Chapter.* p.54



45. 11th International Mission Assembly. Mendes, Brazil (2007).

Seven years later, it was the turn of Nairobi, Kenya, to host a Marist International Mission Assembly). The 117 delegates to “II MIMA” were welcomed to Africa,⁴⁹⁸ and accompanied in their time there by the beat of drums and the lively music of the “MIC Band”.⁴⁹⁹ It was once again an event that had been shaped by a comprehensive lead-in phase, now with the support of the new Secretariat of Mission, led by Brother João Carlos do Prado.⁵⁰⁰ The theme was “New Marists in Mission”. In addition to the two delegates from each administrative unit, each region was invited to send two

young Marists. These eleven participants gave added vitality to the gathering and brought a welcome spontaneity and boldness of perspective, as did the large number of student brothers at the nearby Marist International University College who assisted in animation and hospitality.

During their two weeks in Nairobi, the delegates explored what was most important to their identity and mission as Marists at their particular time in history. It was a process that led them to recognise first the importance of their inner lives as disciples of Jesus. Brother Emili was later to reflect:

In addition to drums, fire was one of the principal themes of our Assembly in Nairobi. Around a common fire, we listened to each other’s experiences and asked ourselves about the foundation and source of our commitment. Echoing the words of Pope Francis, the participants in the Assembly expressed their desire

⁴⁹⁸ Several administrative units had reduced or cancelled their participation due to concerns stemming from recent terrorist activity in and near Kenya and an outbreak of the Ebola virus in some parts of western Africa. In the weeks immediately before the event, the General Council had surveyed all participants to gauge their opinion on these events. The decision was to proceed. In 1997 it had been unfortunate that the General Conference had needed to be transferred from Nairobi at the last moment. II MIMA was the first world-wide Marist event to be held on the African continent.

⁴⁹⁹ This musical group was comprised principally of student brothers of the Marist International Centre, and some lay students.

⁵⁰⁰ The full Preparatory Commission included: Brother João Carlos do Prado (Chair), Mrs Alice Miesnik (USA), Brother Paul Bhatti (South Asia), Brother Mark Omede (Nigeria), Mr Manuel Jesús Gómez Cid (Mediterránea), Dr Frank Malloy (Australia), Mrs Mónica Linares (Cruz del Sur), Brother César Rojas (Secretariat for Brothers Today), Brother Javier Espinosa (Secretariat for the Laity), Brother Teófilo Minga (Mission Ad Gentes) Brother Miguel Angel Espinosa (Secretariat for Mission) Sister Pilar Benavente (Faciliator) Brother Albert Nzabonaliba (Province of PACE – liaison)

to become Spirit-filled evangelisers, **transfigured by God's** presence. As the Pope reminds us, whenever we say that something is "spirited", it usually refers to some interior impulse, which encourages, motivates, nourishes and gives meaning to our activity. Otherwise, our life is just a set of tasks we experience as a burdensome duty, barely tolerated and endured, since we feel it goes against our own inclinations and desires. Certainly, **no words of encouragement will be enough unless the fire of the Holy Spirit burns in our hearts** (*Evangelii gaudium*, # 261). That is why the final message of the Assembly **invites us to set aside quality time and space to deepen our sense of who we are, so as to give meaning to what we do, and involve ourselves in processes that foster inner life, spirituality and prayer.**⁵⁰¹

This imperative to attend to interiority led the participants to see that, as Marists, they needed first to be "mystics" – people attentive to the movement of God in their lives and their world, and responsive to the calls that they felt from this movement. They could then become genuine "prophets" of the kind of world for which God dreamed, and work to help to bring this about. In their message to their fellow Marists around the world, they expressed the hope that Marists would be recognised as prophets because ...

- *we have left our comfort zones, and are always ready to go out to the peripheries of our world, impelled to proclaim and build the Reign of God;*
- *we go out purposefully to encounter the new Montagnes and to be a significant presence among them and with them;*
- *we are a public voice in defence of the rights of children in political and social forums where decisions are considered and taken;*
- *we have a global missionary mindset, seeking new ways of being present on the periphery, whether national or international;*
- *we have made courageous and determined choices for our educational establishments (schools, universities, community centres, etc.) to be places of evangelisation, fostering education that transforms lives and that is inclusive, critical, committed and compassionate; and*
- *we accompany young people in Marist Youth Ministry programmes in order that they in their turn become prophets and evangelisers.*⁵⁰²

The third element of their message was concerned with how they would relate to one another as Marists. They sought to be "in communion" with one another, an aspiration which they described in these terms:

- *We value the way that we have each responded to the call of Jesus Christ to live the Gospel in the Marist way.*

⁵⁰¹ FMS Message. No.45. February 2015.

⁵⁰² *Voices from the Fire. The Message of the Participants at II MIMA*. September 2014.

- *We are a charismatic family, adopting new and differing community arrangements for the sake of a greater vitality of the charism.*



46. Morning prayer during the I International Mission Assembly. Mendes, Brazil (2007).

- *We have developed processes and structures to accompany our different Marist ways of responding to Christ, leading to new ways of belonging and relating with one another as bearers of the one Marist charism.*
- *We have created new structures that promote genuine participation and co-responsibility in decision making.*
- *There exists a network of international and multicultural communities that can move as needed for the sake of mission.*⁵⁰³

The African concept of *ubuntu* found resonance with the Assembly delegates: *I am because we are*. It captured for them the importance of continuing to develop means of genuine communion, a word that had come to eclipse the previous concept of “partnership”. Brother Brendan Geary saw this as a challenge for some brothers:

⁵⁰³ *Ibid.*

*It became clear to me during the Assembly that our current structures are no longer adequate ... After fifty years of renewal, we are being challenged to take even more radical steps to enable the charism of Marcellin Champagnat to inspire people to work in the spirit of Mary into our third century.*⁵⁰⁴

The essence of II MIMA) was encapsulated in the phrase “to be *mystics and prophets*, in *communion* with one another as Marists”. It was a call that faced a number of challenges, said the delegates, but the opportunities were also many. Among them were:

- *the calibre of people already involved in Marist life and mission;*
- *the validity and appeal of the Marist charism, as an expression of Church suited to our time;*
- *the development of ways of inviting others to be Marists and accompanying them;*
- *the charism of St Marcellin Champagnat being lived out in new ways, especially by lay Marists;*
- *the thirst for spirituality and search for meaning in our world;*
- *the perspective that women bring to the living out of the Marist charism, incorporating and integrating Marian aspects in our lives such as tenacity, maternal tenderness, sensitivity towards the little ones, attention to detail, and intuition;*
- *the strength and sensitivity that we recognise in young Marists and in our Marist Youth Ministry activities, where can be found indications of changes that are coming and the faces of the new evangelisers of the future;*
- *the potential of our Marist schools and establishments on all five continents, all their history and accumulated experience, and the validity and relevance of our Marist educational tradition;*
- *the commitment of many Marists already working with children and young people in situations of vulnerability and exclusion;*

47. Participants at the I Marist International Mission Assembly. Mendes, Brazil (2007).

⁵⁰⁴ FMS Message. No.45. p.83





- the administrative and service structures and material resources existing at local, provincial and international levels;
- new technologies and social networks; and
- existing agencies and networks of solidarity and volunteering in the Marist world in response to those who are at the centre of our mission: the Montagnes of today.⁵⁰⁵

The Marist International Mission Assemblies of 2007 and 2014 revealed powerfully not only the vibrancy of Marist life and mission in many parts of the world, but they also clearly showed the ways Marists needed to proceed if they were to continue to be a viable, vital and generative charismatic family of the Church. It seemed evident that they needed, first of all, to be well formed as genuine Marists, both in their personal journeys as disciples of Jesus, and in their professional capacities to engage in Marist ministries. Formation was a recurring and central theme. Second, they needed to have models that allowed them to live out their different vocational paths as Marists, to be associated with one another in Christian community, and to share in complementary ways responsibility for the development of Marist spirituality, Marist life, and Marist mission. The urgency of a new paradigm for this was evident, and recurrently named by them. Among its constitutive elements would be more internationality and interculturality, and deeper appreciation of *communio*.



48. Groupwork during the II International Mission Assembly. Nairobi, Kenya (2014).

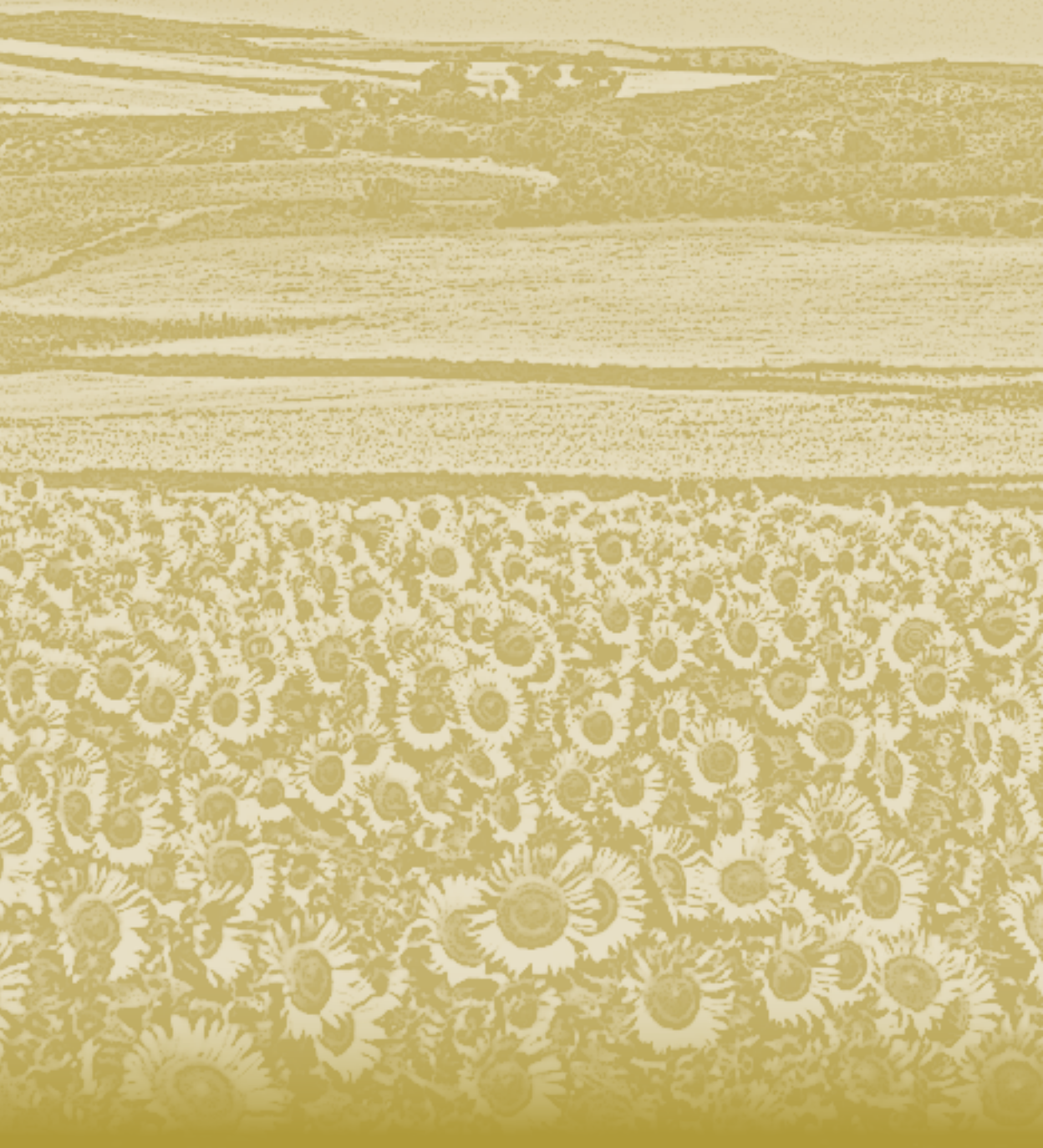
⁵⁰⁵ *Voices from the Fire. The Message of the Participants at II MIMA).*



49. Participants at the II Marist International Mission Assembly. Nairobi, Kenya (2014).

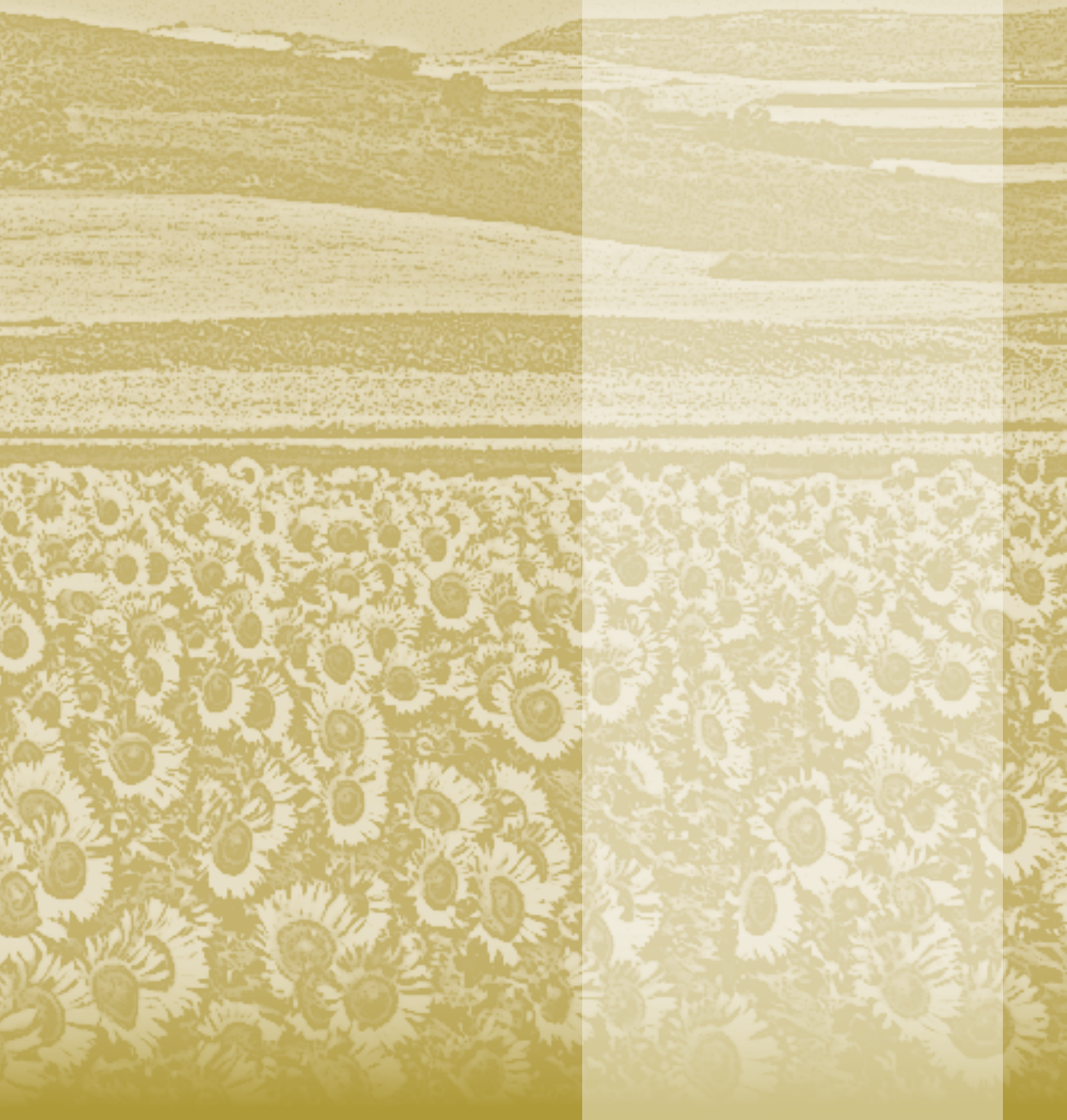
Thirdly, for the most part, the means for their being Marist prophets were already in place for them: their educational institutions, their other educational and social projects, their solidarity agencies and foundations, and their channels for advocacy concerning the rights of children and young people. Indeed, it was because these works existed that people had the means to become lay Marists in the first place. In addition, of course, their Marist missionary intuitions led them continually to search for new and innovative presences. Whether their projects were new or existing, the key priority for these “new Marists in mission” was that they ensured the evangelical integrity of their works, so that the projects remained true agents of the reign of God, most especially in the interests of the neediest of children and young people.

History of the Institute



PART 3

Marist Spirituality: the heart of being a marist



50. On the previous page:
Spiritual fruitfulness watered by *Water from the Rock*.

10.

SETTING A CONTEXT

Spiritual families as schools of spirituality

The story of God’s people reveals that it has been the founders of religious orders who have had some of the “great gospel ideas”,⁵⁰⁶ the grace-filled ways of Christian discipleship, community, and apostolic action that helped the Church to rejuvenate and to re-position itself. Many of these initiatives have stood the test of time and have continued to prove fruitful. They have inspired successive generations of Christians to recognise and to love their God, to build enduring communities, and to share in God’s mission in the Church in ways that are inspiring and efficacious. They have given people a story to join, a community of mission to which to belong, a work to do, a way to pray, a face of God to see.⁵⁰⁷ The Spirit-prompted intuitions of these founders – sometimes called their personal *charisms* – have led like-hearted people to gather, and have allowed these people to develop rich and wise traditions of Christian discipleship and of missiology. Over time, these have become ways of incarnating the gospel that people have found both compelling and impelling, sometimes for many centuries. The Church has always been revitalised by such movements of grace. The “spiritual families”⁵⁰⁸ of the universal Church have been the result. The movements that have continued to have relevance and vitality in the Church are those which have been able to re-contextualise themselves, to read over and again the signs of their times, and to re-cast themselves in ways that speak with credibility and relevance to people of each age and address their needs. The Institute of the Marist Brothers and, in the modern period, the broader Marist spiritual family, have developed in this way.

The most fundamental purpose of any spiritual family, and arguably the ultimate litmus test of its integrity, will be its alignment with mission, *Missio Dei*. In the sense that Stephen Bevens SVD and others propose God as mission,⁵⁰⁹

⁵⁰⁶ The phrase is Claude Maréchal’s, the then Assumptionist Superior General, who delivered an insightful paper on this topic at the 56th Conference of Superiors General, in Rome, in 1999: *Toward an effective partnership between religious and laity in fulfilment of charism and responsibility for mission*.

⁵⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰⁸ The term has been used increasingly in Church documents, for example in that of the Congregation for Catholic Education (2007). *Educating Together in Catholic Schools, A Shared Mission between Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithful*. ##28-30. Other documents speak of “ecclesial families” and “charismatic families”. Although each has its own nuance of meaning, the terms are used in this book interchangeably.

⁵⁰⁹ See, for example, Bevens, S.B. 2004. “The Mission has a Church”. *Compass*, 43, 3, 314; Bevens, S.B. and Schoeder, R.P. 2004. *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today*. New York: Orbis; Bevens, S.B. 2011. “A Theology of Mission for the Church of the Twenty-first Century, Mission as Prophetic Dialogue” in Bevens, S.B. and Tahaafe-Williams, K. (Eds.) *Contextual Theology for the Twenty-first Century*. Eugene: Pickwick Publications

this essentially means alignment with God. To share in the life of God – God who is love – is to encounter Christ who reveals this love.⁵¹⁰ This is the heart of mission because this is where the Reign of God is incarnated. Brother Emili, in his letter to launch the “Montagne Year” of 2014-15, referred to Bevans’ preference for describing God in this dynamic and personal sense, and the invitation to become one with God in realising mission:

*the God revealed by Jesus of Nazareth is best described not by a noun, but by a verb. This means that we do not picture God as some kind of static person – a little like us, but rather wiser and more powerful – someone who is out there or up there, but rather as a Movement, an Embrace, a Flow – more personal than we can imagine – always and everywhere present in creation.*⁵¹¹

Spiritual families will be before all else, therefore, schools of Christian spirituality.⁵¹² They will be also schools of community and schools of mission, but first of all they are graced spaces in which people can be schooled in Christian discipleship. People encounter Christ there, personally and profoundly. They experience conversion of heart. In such spiritual families, people can become mystics and prophets. Indeed, in the most vital of Christian spiritual families, it is especially the mystics and prophets who are the honoured holders of wisdom and authority.

It is a misunderstanding of the Church’s spiritual families – including those associated with the so-called “apostolic” religious institutes such as the Marist Brothers – to try to understand them and their members by looking at what they *do*, or to focus on their works as their *raison d’être*. That is not the essence of the mission in which they share.

While the personal charisms of founders, such as Saint Marcellin, were typically concerned with addressing urgent human needs, there is a deeper way of understanding these groups. All founders of the great spiritual traditions of the Church acted out of a prior and intense God-encounter in Christ. This was indisputably the case with Marcellin; those who seek to follow him are called to the same. Brother Emili put it in this way in *The Dance of Mission*:

*It is as though God’s self were a dance of life, of love, of energy, moving throughout the world, inviting each one to join in the dance. And as more people join the dance, even more feel drawn to it.*⁵¹³

⁵¹⁰ See the opening three paragraphs of Benedict XVI’s 2005 encyclical *Deus caritas est* for a sense of this Christ-encounter

⁵¹¹ Brother Emili Turú, *Montagne: the Dance of Mission*. Letter of the Superior General, 25 March 2014. p.2

⁵¹² Cf. *Vita consecrata*. #93: “The spiritual life must therefore have first place in the programme of Families of consecrated life, in such a way that every Institute and community will be a school of true evangelical spirituality.” The document also speaks of the consecrated life as a “school of love and holiness” #35, and as a “school of his generous service of God and neighbour” #36.

⁵¹³ Brother Emili Turú, *Dance of Mission*, p.3

In 2005, Benedict XVI introduced his encyclical *Deus caritas est* from the same theological premise and, unknowingly, cited a favourite Scriptural text of Marcellin:

“God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him” (1 Jn. 4:16). These words from the First Letter of John express with remarkable clarity the heart of the Christian faith: the Christian image of God and the resulting image of humanity and its destiny. In the same verse, Saint John also offers a kind of summary of the Christian life: “We have come to know and to believe in the love God has for us”.

We have come to believe in God’s love ... Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction ... Since God has first loved us (cf. 1 Jn. 4:10), love is now no longer a mere “command”; it is the response to the gift of love with which God draws near to us.⁵¹⁴

A spiritual or charismatic family will be a community where a person can become a disciple in this way. “Charism” is a term that is often associated with the distinctive ways that these groups live out Christian discipleship and make it attractive to others to join them, and is a word that has been often employed in Marist documents of the modern period. For the purposes of the discussion which follows, it is useful to distinguish between the concepts of “charism” and “spirituality”. A charism is, first, a graced way for individual people to share in the mission of God in the Church, a way of being Christian that is appropriate to them, and which is effective in meeting the needs and imperatives of their particular circumstances. Second, charisms have a purpose beyond the people who have received them: they animate God’s mission and to so strengthen the Church. As *Lumen gentium* puts it, they exist to complement “the sacraments and the ministries of the Church”.⁵¹⁵ Charisms, most especially those of founders such as Marcellin, concretise *Missio Dei* in the real world: in actual people, in time and place. Indeed, Christian revelation is essentially incarnational. Charisms can be usefully understood distinctive ways through which inspirational people have incarnated and have lived the Christian faith, and so helped the Reign of God to come to life.

⁵¹⁴ *Deus caritas est*. #1

⁵¹⁵ *Lumen gentium* #12. This paragraph of LG is often seen as the moment of the Church’s reclamation of the word first coined by St Paul (“charis”, Χάρις in Greek): “God distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank. By these gifts he makes them fit and ready to undertake various tasks and offices for the renewal and up-building of the Church. Whether these charisms be very remarkable or simple and widely diffused, they are to be received with thanksgiving and consolation since they are fitting and useful for the needs of the Church.” Pope Paul VI applied the Council’s understanding of charism to the religious life itself and as well as to individual founders and foundresses, helped to take the concept further than is found in the Pauline texts such as Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; Ephesians 4:7-16. Cf. *Evangelica testificatio, On the renewal of the religious life according to the Second Vatican Council*. (1971) #2, #11, and #24: “The Holy Spirit, while bestowing diverse ministries in the Church communion, enriches it still further with particular gifts or promptings of grace called charisms. They can take a great variety of forms both as a manifestation of the absolute freedom of the Spirit who abundantly supplies them, and as a response to the varied needs of the Church in history.”

When a founder such as Saint Marcellin attracts others around him, and these people are inspired to appropriate his distinctive way of discipleship, then a personal charism can evolve into a spirituality or a spiritual tradition. A new ecclesial family is born, one which has a characteristic approach to quenching the spiritual thirst or calming the spiritual restlessness that is in all people. They develop common phrases and terms, their own customs and practices, and their particular emphases and priorities. They begin to have places that are sacred for them, memories and stories they tell about themselves, and heroes whom they honour for the ways that they have been exemplars of their distinctive way of the gospel. They develop a language and an expertise so that each new generation can learn from the previous one. Indeed, a treasure of wisdom can build – a body of thought and insight. They will write books and articles to describe their ways, compose poems and songs, and grow their iconography and symbolism. These words and symbols, places and stories, wisdom and accumulated expertise all allow them to be what any genuine spiritual family must be: a *school* of spirituality, and a locus for teaching and appropriating the gospel of Jesus. The best spiritual families and the ecclesial movements work first on an inspirational level; people are attracted to join them intuitively. They provide ways of incarnating Christ-life into time, place, mission, and the hearts of people. As a founder's charism moves over time to become a spirituality, others can learn from those who have walked and are walking the same spiritual path. It develops a family or movement of people who continue to enrich and enliven it, and to incarnate it for new times, new places, new needs and new contexts. The works of a spiritual family – its projects and programmes – are its means for sharing in *Missio Dei* by drawing on the richness of their traditions of spirituality, community and mission. Marist spirituality and what has come to be seen as the Marist spiritual family have developed in this way.

11.

DEVELOPMENT OF MARIST SPIRITUALITY

Sources and foundations

In order to appreciate the significance of how Marist spirituality came to be developed in the period 1836 to 2016, it is helpful to revisit briefly some of its foundational history. What came to be called “Marist” spirituality, in the tradition of Marcellin Champagnat, had its first primitive expression through the maxims that Marcellin put on the walls of the house at La Valla. Aside from the significance of what was written, the relevant point for this discussion is that something was in fact written, with the aim of its being taught and learnt.⁵¹⁶ By the time of Marcellin’s death, we have in his *Spiritual Testament* a much more developed synopsis of what Marist spirituality had become over the previous two decades. It is not a complete synopsis; there are notable gaps, such as no mention of the Eucharist. But that is simply reflective of the less than ideal circumstances of its drafting. The relevant point is, as with the sayings on the wall, it was written for the purpose of instruction of those who were to continue as Marists after the Founder’s death, and those who were in turn to follow them. As an example of how a spirituality can develop from the charism of a founder, it is worth pointing to the consistency of expression and conceptualisation between the opening paragraphs of the *Spiritual Testament* and the way that the two Circulars of January 1836 and 1837 also begin.⁵¹⁷ In each, Marcellin draws deeply on the Johannine image of God who is love, and even uses some of the actual words of the First Letter of John. This had already become a distinguishing feature of Marist spirituality – a highly affective emphasis on a loving and immanent God, and the call for a loving response. It stands in contrast to the more ascetical emphases that were growing in prevalence at the time.⁵¹⁸ It is also pertinent to note that it was probably Brother Louis-Marie, with Brother François, who helped the Founder who was seriously ailing in health, to compose the document. That is to say, his words had become their words, his spiritual sentiments theirs.

⁵¹⁶ See André Lanfrey, «Sentences de La Valla», in *Cahiers Maristes*. No.34. May 2016. Brother André points to the Trinitarian, Eucharistic and Marian elements of the sayings on the wall.

⁵¹⁷ Cf. Letters 63 and 79 in *Lettres de Marcellin J.B. Champagnat, 1789-1840, Fondateur de l’Institut des Frères Maristes*. Vol. 1 Textes. Présentés par Frère Paul Sester fms. Rome 1985, Fratelli Maristi

⁵¹⁸ A serious consideration of sources and emphases of early Marist spirituality is beyond the scope of this book. It is touched on here for the sake of providing a contextual background. See Volume 1 of this History by Brother André Lanfrey, or others of his studies, in particular *An Essay on the Origins of Marist Spirituality* and *Anthologie de textes spirituels maristes inédits*. Aspects of the former work are in an article in *Marist Notebooks*, No.19. June 2003.

Marcellin wrote very little; it was not his gift. The Institute was not left, therefore, with a comprehensively written spiritual itinerary for a Marist Brother. There are revealing glimpses of what it might have been, nonetheless, that come to us indirectly. These can be found in his Letters, for example. They can be seen also in his choices of novice masters – Brothers Louis and Bonaventure. Just two men were entrusted by the Founder to form the novices for almost the entire period between 1820 to his death. What did Marcellin see in two these brothers that he would want them to be the ones to introduce new brothers to the Marist life? We can only speculate on this, but from their profiles in *Biographies de Quelques Frères*,⁵¹⁹ it is reasonable to form a view. They were men of deep mystical spirituality, passionately caught up in an affective, warm and personal relationship with God. They were not men who were slaves of a Rule; indeed, there is an example cited when each man is excused by Marcellin for his non-compliance with the Rule. Each is quoted as speaking openly about the way that an all-consuming love of God has captured his life.

Another source for understanding the spiritual intuitions and emphases of the Founder is to look at what was written by the brothers he formed. Of course, there is the prolific body of work by Brother Jean-Baptiste, but it is arguably more instructive to examine the writings of his closest disciple, protégé, and successor, Brother François. A treasure of enormous wealth is contained in the retreat notes of François, for example, which he kept from the time of his boyhood in 1819 until the last years of his life. They tell the story of the journey of a soul, and are a study in themselves. There are also his letters and notebooks. One document that should be highlighted for our purposes in setting the context for the way Marist spirituality was defined one and a half centuries later, are his four Circulars which are collectively known as the “Circular on the Spirit of Faith” to which reference was made in Part 1.⁵²⁰

Again, this is a study in its own right, but three simple points can be made that are pertinent to this discussion. First, François wrote the Circular with the express intention of describing the essence of the “spirit of the Institute”. In that sense, it is a self-conscious attempt to describe what today would be called “Marist spirituality”. Second, François makes no mention of the Founder. This is not a matter of neglect; quite the contrary. It reveals the way in which Marcellin formed him. There was not any sense of a cult of personality around the Founder or dependence on him for ongoing identity, but only a genuinely Christian spirituality. Third, the Circular is intensely Christocentric and mystically so. This last point is critically important for unlocking Marist spirituality, and for understanding the way it has been developed since 1985 as a way for a contemporary Marist to live. The “spirit of faith” is, for François, a spiritual disposition that allows Christ himself to come alive in a person.

⁵¹⁹ Brother Jean-Baptiste wrote *Biographies de Quelques Frères* ten years after *The Life* and as something of a companion volume to it. Like the previous work it was unapologetically hagiographical in its approach. For each of the early brothers for whom a short biography is given, a particular quality is highlighted. First place is accorded to Brother Louis, and he is honoured as having a “love of God without measure”.

⁵²⁰ *L'Esprit de foi. Circulars of the Superiors General. Vol. II.* Nos 1 (15 December 1848), 2 (16 July 1849), 5 (24 December 1851), and 11 (9 April 1853).

It is a theology that aligns with what Eastern Christianity understands as *divinisation* or *theosis*, although he does not put it in these terms. The intuitive base is quite Johannine. Let us remember that the two first bishops of Lyon, Pothinus and Irenaeus, came from a Johannine school. It was Irenaeus who wrote: “If the Word became a man, it was so men may become gods.”⁵²¹ The kind of spirituality in which Marcellin himself was formed – sometimes known as *the French school of spirituality* – was marked by its emphases on such immanence, love, and mystical engagement with the Divine. The Johannine and Pauline Scriptures are the go-to books of the Bible of this school from which Marist spirituality emerged. A window into the Christocentric, affective and mystical spirituality of François, a spirituality in which Marcellin formed him, and which he was wanting to be definitive for the brothers of the Institute, is provided in this brief selection of extracts from the Circular:

The Christian is ... surrounded and penetrated with the holiness and the majesty of God: his providence ... his power ... his goodness and his mercy ... his justice ... his will ... for in him we live, and move, and have our being (Acts 27:28)

Jesus Christ deigns to call himself – and actually is – our companion! our friend! our brother!

But, above all, let us seek him within ourselves, in the depths of our hearts; for it is here that he dwells as in his sanctuary ... Let us often retreat, therefore, to this inner cell, this temple of our soul, there to find God.

We may sum up by saying, with the Apostle, that by this virtue [of faith] Christ will be formed in us (Gal.4:19) and we shall live in him and by his Spirit (2 Cor.5)

The Spirit of Prayer and the Spirit of Faith ... are one and the same thing. A person of prayer will ever be a person of Faith ... The great source of the Spirit of Faith is Jesus Christ. The great secret to acquire, preserve, and perfect this virtue within us consists in approaching nearer to Jesus Christ ... Our chief occupation in prayer, therefore, should be the study of Christ.

*Let us spend our meditations in searching and penetrating [the teachings of Christ], appropriating them, and making them, as it were, a part of ourselves, as if they had been written for us alone. It is thus that the thoughts of Jesus will become our thoughts, that our judgements will conform to those of the Divine Master ... we shall truly enter upon the life of Faith, the life of the Son of God himself. I live now, no not I, but **Christ lives in me, thinks, judges, loves, hates, and does all in me.** (Gal.2:20)*

Let the life of Jesus Christ ... be the rule of our own life; let the sentiments of Jesus Christ be our sentiments; let his affections become our affections; let all our actions have no other principle than his will, no other end than his glory, let them be performed in him, for him, with him, and according to

⁵²¹ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*. Book 4, Ch. 38

him, in order that, in life and in death, in time and in eternity, Jesus Christ, the author and finisher of our Faith, be all in all to us. Amen!⁵²²

The four principal means for the developing of this spirit, according to Brother François, are: reading and meditation on Scripture, what today we would probably call *lectio Divina*; a spirit of prayer; frequent communion; and the practice of the presence of God. He does not include on his list things such as keeping the Rule, self-mortification, perfection, or duty. It is not that he would have denied the importance of such elements, but for François they are of another order.

As things transpired, however, it was Brother Jean-Baptiste's emphases – characteristically more ascetical, more dutiful and more self-abasing – that were to gain ascendancy in the early literature of the Institute. The second part of *The Life* was a means he used for describing the qualities of the ideal brother. While among these, admittedly, are to be found “joy”, “love of prayer”, “presence of God”, “trust” and “love of God”, there are many more of the long list of twenty-four chapters of this part of the book which are concerned with ascetical practices. The difference between François and Jean-Baptiste is perhaps most obvious in the different ways they understand the “spirit of faith”. For Jean-Baptiste there is little of the mystical sense of being caught up in loving and all-consuming relationship with Jesus that is so strong in the writings of François. Indeed, while Chapter 2 of Part 2 of *The Life* presents the Founder's “spirit of faith” as pre-eminent among his virtues, this is described as being evident in his respect for sacred spaces and vessels, and his insisting that the religious habit was worn properly, that the sign of the cross not be made sloppily, and that prayers be not rushed. This is the Chapter than contains the somewhat disturbing incident of the Founder's throwing a brother's “grand means of success” – his meticulously prepared lesson aides – into the fire because the brother was apparently too reliant on his own talents rather than his faith. It is an austere and almost mean-spirited orientation.

Similarly, the *Common Rules*, largely drafted by Jean-Baptiste and in place in much the same ways until 1967, had “Spirit of Faith” as Chapter 2. The topic is placed prominently in the document, and done so because it is presented as one of the principal defining characteristics of the Institute. But, as in *The Life*, it seems to describe something that is qualitatively different from the spirit of faith that Brother François had in mind. Again, it is not so much a matter of François' being likely to disagree with what is there – indeed most of what is written in the ten articles of the chapter are found in his Circular – but that it lacks the soul of François' approach. For François, his religious life was an affair of the heart – as it was for Louis and Bonaventure. In contrast, Chapter 2 of the Rule paints the life of the brother as a test of faith, and as a battle in which he is to prove himself faithful. It concerns itself with obedience – the Constitutions and Rule to be equated with the will of God, and the person of Jesus Christ in the directives of Superiors. Charity is a duty; prayer is a task; reading of Scripture is a respectful exercise.

⁵²² *Circular on the Spirit of Faith*. passim.

Yet this document remained, for over a century, the only definitive statement of the Marist spiritual way. To what extent did it accurately align with the living tradition? How much of a gap was there between what was written and the lived reality of the brothers? Was, in fact, there more of an affective and mystical tradition that continued? Answers to these questions cannot be given definitively, but some conclusions can be drawn from the way the *ad experimentum* Constitutions were received in 1968. It was clear that the new document was a rupture with the past. The tone and pitch of the new Constitutions are so markedly different from what went before it is reasonable to hypothesise that the new document may well have captured more validly the kind of spirituality that the brothers actually lived, or wanted to live. Rather than presenting a catalogue of duties and expectations, Chapter 2 of the new document describes the brother's consecrated life in terms of a loving call and a loving response:

*God calls those Christians
to whom He gives the gift
to live more intensely
with the full confidence of the Father
the adoption of sonship
which they received in Baptism.*

*In responding to this choice
in their Religious Consecration
they undertake TO FOLLOW CHRIST
chaste, poor and obedient.*

*... It is a firm expression of Christian hope
which is ready to lose all
in order to gain Christ.*

*But it is charity
which gives it its full meaning,
its final end,
for without charity, we cannot be united to God.⁵²³*

That a group could compose such a paradigmatically different articulation of its collective spirituality from that described in its old documents, *and* recognise itself in it, must say something about what had survived among them. It speaks of the abiding and defining power of a living tradition. In the post-Conciliar period, this living tradition was re-connected to the founding time, and a welcome resonance was discovered. *Perfectae caritatis* had urged religious institutes to engage in renewal by rediscovering their origins.

⁵²³ *Constitutions of the Marist Brothers*, November 1968. ##7-8

For the Marist Brothers, by 1968, there had been a beginning of rediscovery of Marcellin Champagnat as someone less austere than the person they had known only through Jean-Baptiste's biography, and his other works. They met a Founder as someone to whom they could readily relate, someone who could inspire them. By the mid-1960s, some scholarship was revealing this but much more was to come. For example, most brothers were yet to re-discover Brother François and some of the others of the founding generation, men who had been captivated by the personal charisma of Marcellin Champagnat and had developed a spirituality which came to be lived within a charismatic family. It was a spirituality that seemed to have lasted for over a century, *despite* much of its written formulation rather than *because* of it.

The degree to which Marists over the next fifty years were to continue to plumb the depths of the spirituality of their founding time, and to be inspired by it time and again, is indicative of the fecundity of the grace which prompted it. In the Circulars of Brother Charles and Brother Seán, for example, and in so many other documents and formation programmes in the years after 1985, including *Water from the Rock*, the spiritual intuitions of the Founder became a continual source of referral and justification for what it meant to be a Marist and a brother. The 1985 Constitutions make recurring reference to him. This had not been the case in the old Rule. Indeed it was not until after his Beatification that a General Chapter judged it to be important to include something on Marcellin Champagnat in the text of the Rule, and an additional chapter on "Devotion to the Founder" was inserted – curiously enough just before the Chapters on "Penance and Mortification", "Zeal", "Love of Work", "Silence" and "Regularity and Punctuality".⁵²⁴ But the eight Articles of this Chapter are substantially different in tone and spirit from those of the new Constitutions in 1986. For example, it was to be "above all by their courageous and constant observance of their Rules that the Brothers would show that they are his true sons".⁵²⁵ This dutiful and ascetical approach was to be replaced by one that was more inspirational and relational.

The Constitutions of 1986 and the introduction of "Marist Apostolic Spirituality"

Again, it is the second Chapter of the document that provides a signpost for seeing the way in which Marist spirituality was coming to be understood and articulated by 1985. Like the 1968 document, the Chapter is entitled "Consecration" and it pivots on the personal relationship of a brother with his God. In 1985, however, there is a deeper sense to this: that of *conversion of heart*. Its opening paragraph is one that would become a familiar focus of spiritual direction and vocational discernment for innumerable brothers in initial formation in the decades ahead:

⁵²⁴ Chapters XIII- XVIII of the *Règles Communes* of 1960.

⁵²⁵ *Ibid.* #142

God chooses individual men and women and calls each of them by name. He leads them into the desert and there speaks to their hearts. Those who heed him he sets apart. By his Spirit, he transforms them constantly, leading them more deeply into his love in order to send them out on mission.

Thus is born a covenant of love in which God gives himself to the person, and the person to God – a covenant which the Scriptures speak of as betrothal.

From the heart of this covenant flows the whole dynamic of consecration.⁵²⁶

Whether or not they were aware of it, the Scriptural allusion to Hosea,⁵²⁷ is the very same one that appears in the retreat notes of Brother François. His retreat journal from 1825 begins with “The advantages and necessity of making a good retreat”; he first quotes from Hosea 2, and comments: “It is in the retreat that God speaks to the heart. It is there that it discovers itself as a faithful soul.”⁵²⁸ It is most telling that the same spiritual intuition of the then eighteen-year-old François – no doubt planted in him by the Founder himself – would find itself in a Marist document written 160 years later, without its ever being part of a formal document of the Institute.

It was to conversion of heart – a daily, life-long process – that Brother Charles invited the Brothers as they came “to love, pray and live” their new Constitutions.⁵²⁹ His Circular in 1988 had encouraged the practice of “Review of the Day” as an important means for fostering of an attitude of gospel discernment in each brother.⁵³⁰ The following year at Veranópolis, the Provincials asked for more (not without the encouragement of the Superior General to do so), and a working group was formed to prepare a manual for individuals and communities to reflect on and to appropriate the new Constitutions.⁵³¹ Brother Charles was concerned that the Constitutions had not yet penetrated the minds and hearts of the brothers. He was firmly of the view that conversion of heart would come from an attitudinal and habitual practice of discernment, especially through use of the Constitutions, and that it would be from this discernment that a genuine renewal of the Institute would emanate.⁵³²

⁵²⁶ *Constitutions*. #11

⁵²⁷ Hosea 2:16; 20-21.

⁵²⁸ *Pensées par le F. François et Carnet de retraites n° 1 (1819-1831) (AFM 5101.302)*

⁵²⁹ *Circulars of the Superiors General*. Vol XXIX. No. 1. 25 December 1986, p.22

⁵³⁰ *Circulars of the Superiors General*. Vol XXIX. No. 3. 30 July 1988. He saw it as a way of giving concrete expression to the Constitutions #72.

⁵³¹ The members of this commission were Brothers Alain Delorme CG, Jaime Andrés Bacardit, Jules Bradfer, Eugenio Sanz, André Thizy and Jean Thoullieux. They worked expeditiously over two weeks in the summer of 1990 to produce a 229-page manual published in the four languages which aimed to help the brothers know and use the Constitutions. Recorded interview of Brother Alain Delorme with the author, 5 May 2015. The name of the resulting document was “Living our Constitutions”.

⁵³² Brother Charles Howard interview transcript *idem.*, p.23

For Brother Charles, it was part of being Marial – making oneself attentive to the presence and voice of the Spirit, and heeding it. He described it as a kind of “new obedience.”⁵³³

The “Review of the Day” was reflective of the move away from the more ascetical requirements of the old Rule to a spiritual life that was explicitly based on a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and also rooted in the reality of the life of the brother as he sought to be a Marist apostle. This was the “unity of life, in faith” concept that had been introduced the *ad experimentum* Constitutions of 1968:

*What appear to be isolated activities
in our Religious Life –
prayer, our relations with our Brothers, our apostolate –
become one single desire in faith,
namely to accomplish the will of the Father.*

*... Mary, blessed because she believed
is an excellent model.
From the first moment of her call,
through the most sorrowful events
of her spiritual maternity,
she remained faithful.⁵³⁴*

The “PAC” document in 1976 developed the idea and cemented it in the psyche of the Institute.⁵³⁵ The capitulants also introduced a new term, “Marist apostolic spirituality” with the hope that the Marist Brothers’ character as an “apostolic institute” would have more “equilibrium”.⁵³⁶ This became simply encapsulated in 1986 in a key article:

The spirituality bequeathed to us by Marcellin Champagnat is Marial and apostolic. It flows from God’s love for us, gains strength as we give ourselves to others, and leads us to the Father. In this way, our apostolic life, our life of prayer, and our community life are blended into harmony.⁵³⁷

⁵³³ *Ibid.* p.37

⁵³⁴ *Constitutions of 1968*, #33

⁵³⁵ Brother Charles’, in his Circular on Marist Apostolic Spirituality, mentions that “the ‘PAC Document’ came to be used widely through the Institute in retreats, assemblies and renewal programmes” p.519. The PAC Commission at the 1976 Chapter had adopted the word “apostolic” to describe Marist spirituality – seeing it as different from the “monastic spirituality which had undergirded our history in prayer, community, discipline, etc.” (Brother Richard Dunleavy, personal communication with the author, 5 January 2016.)

⁵³⁶ *Acts of the XVI General Chapter*

⁵³⁷ *Constitutions of 1985*, #7

Perfectae caritatis, although it had distinguished between “contemplative” and “apostolic” religious life, presented this difference more in terms of apostolate and lifestyle, than as any distinctiveness in spirituality.⁵³⁸ *Evangelica testificatio* did make a link between apostolic life and the spirituality of the religious, but quite briefly and without using the term “apostolic spirituality”:

*In every age consecrated men and women must continue to be images of Christ the Lord, fostering through prayer a profound communion of mind with him (cf. Phil 2:5-11), so that their whole lives may be penetrated by an apostolic spirit and their apostolic work with contemplation.*⁵³⁹

The drafters of the new Constitutions and the capitulants in 1985 were, therefore, sourcing the concept of “apostolic spirituality” more in their own lived experience, as well as in the understandings of apostolic religious life in the broader discourse of the Church, than from the Church’s official teachings on the consecrated life.⁵⁴⁰

Brother Mariano Varona, who was to play a leading role in the fostering of apostolic spirituality especially in Latin America, described it this way:

Apostolic spirituality finds and experiences God in daily life; it finds the essence of the sacred in the most human things, in the life of the person who listens, serves and loves, in the events of history and in apostolic action. It is the spirituality of those who “read” reality with the eyes of faith, who looks at events until they reveal a message from God.



51. Brother Mariano Varona.

⁵³⁸ *Perfectae caritatis*, #9

⁵³⁹ *Evangelica testificatio*, #9

⁵⁴⁰ Even in *Evangelii nuntiandi*, which had an influence on the Constitutions, and on Brother Charles more particularly, there was no sense of “apostolic spirituality” for religious, more a witness to holiness. (#69) It was not to be until 1996 in *Vita consecrata* that “apostolic spirituality” was first to appear as a heading, with this explanation: “Institutes involved in one or other form of the apostolate must therefore foster a solid spirituality of action, seeing God in all things and all things in God ... Jesus himself gave us the perfect example of how we can link communion with the Father to an intensely active life. Without a constant search for this unity, the danger of an interior breakdown, of confusion and discouragement, lurks always near.” (#74) Six years later *Starting Afresh from Christ* urged consecrated people to a “generous apostolic spirituality” (#4) and noted that “religious men and women dedicated to teaching, to the care of the sick, to the poor, encounter the face of the Lord there.” (#25) In neither document, however, is there an extensive development of the principles that underpin apostolic spirituality. In theological discourse, however, there was considerably more attention. The definition of spirituality by Sandra Schneiders IHM is a typical example of the way that theologians rooted a person’s spirituality into the experience of daily life: spirituality is “the experience of consciously striving to integrate one’s life in terms not of isolation and self-absorption but self-transcendence toward the ultimate value one perceives”. (“Spirituality in the Academy.” *Theological Studies*. No. 50, 1989, p.684)

*It is the spirituality of the person who perceives God's loving closeness in all things, thanks to a faith experience that integrates and unifies everything.*⁵⁴¹

Most obviously, of course, such an understanding has Ignatian origins; it was the Jesuits who had most radically combined a non-cloistered style of apostolate with a non-choir style of praying as a way of religious life. Well-worn phrases such as “contemplatives in action” and “seeing God in all things, and all things in God” were quintessentially Ignatian. For the Marists, however, there were two significant differences. First, they had an essentially Marian way of understanding their discipleship:

*... we come to Mary, the handmaid of the Lord, to be schooled by her, and we respond to her call: “Do whatever He tells you.” It is from Mary that we learn responsiveness to the Spirit and an obedience that is courageous and clear-sighted ...*⁵⁴²

And they also had a self-consciously Marian understanding of their ministry, which they described as a “sharing in the spiritual motherhood” of Mary.⁵⁴³ The “three violets” of Marist spirituality, defining it since the time of Marcellin, are also seen as Marian:

*The three Marial virtues of humility, simplicity, and modesty come to us from Marcellin Champagnat. These virtues give a quality of authenticity and kindness to our relationships with our Brothers and with other people we meet.*⁵⁴⁴

Second, the Marists differed from the Ignatian approach in the central place they gave to praying and living communally:

Prayer in common is an essential element in Marist community life. Since our faith in Jesus has brought us together, it is, above all, our prayer that builds up the community each day.

*We are all jointly responsible for this prayer, which weaves together the threads of daily events in our lives. Each of us draws support from the presence and example of his confrères. It is especially in the Eucharist that our community prayer reaches its highest level.*⁵⁴⁵

⁵⁴¹ Cited in ‘Marist Spirituality: its possibilities for lay men and women.’ *Marist Notebooks*. No.34, May 2016.

⁵⁴² *Constitutions* #3.

⁵⁴³ *Ibid*, #84

⁵⁴⁴ *Ibid*, #5

⁵⁴⁵ *Ibid*. #57

By the time that Brother Seán wrote his Circular *A Revolution of the Heart* and the publication four years later of *Water from the Rock*, the word “apostolic” had largely been dropped. It had become more customary to speak simply of “Marist spirituality” or, as preferred by Brother Seán, “Marcellin’s spirituality”. But, for twenty-five years after 1976, and more especially after Brother Charles’ Circular on the subject in 1992, the term of choice was “Marist apostolic spirituality.”

In introducing the topic in his Circular, Brother Charles began with the strongly incarnational and affective nature of Marist spirituality:

... our spirituality embraces all that we are, all the elements that go to make up our living – our relationships, our gifts, our joys and our sorrows, our dreams and our moods, our struggles and our failures – everything. As Christians, we see the face, the hand, the word, the breath of God in every aspect of our human life, and of creation and life beyond itself.

The greatest gift which we have received is the gift of love – an unconditional love. In that personal experience of being loved, of being found lovable by God, we find life ... The greatest gift our community can give us is to be caught up in this experience of love and Champagnat knew this well. Without this sense of being loved, there can be a dangerous vacuum at the centre of our lives.⁵⁴⁶

Most of the chapters which follow have mission as their focus: the call to mission, the vows and mission, manifestations of love, community for mission, mission and the Paschal mystery. The Superior General hoped that the brothers would always be “men of passion, men on fire for mission”,⁵⁴⁷ men who, like Mary, would bring Christ to others “with simplicity, enthusiasm and love”, waiting “patiently for the right moment to take the initiative”, and being focussed “on Jesus”.⁵⁴⁸ But he reminded them that “mission is only mission when it is rooted in Christ. Jesus is the only true vine”,⁵⁴⁹ something that brings him back to discernment and personal conversion.⁵⁵⁰

⁵⁴⁶ *Circulars of the Superiors General*. Vol. XXIX. No. 8. March 25, 1992. p.425

⁵⁴⁷ *Ibid.* p.444

⁵⁴⁸ *Ibid.* p.447

⁵⁴⁹ *Ibid.* 462

⁵⁵⁰ *Ibid.* p.502

Promoting Marist apostolic spirituality after 1993

For Brother Charles, and then strongly in the mind of the General Council after 1993, “Marist apostolic spirituality” was integrally bound up with the living of the brothers’ consecrated life. So, also, a focus for Brother Seán in *Revolution of the Heart* was to be what Marcellin’s spirituality could mean specifically for the contemporary identity of the brother.

Although there was a clear and generally affirmed view, from at least 1990, that lay people could also live out a genuinely Marist spirituality, a major emphasis in the fostering of the concept of Marist apostolic spirituality during the 1990s was on integration in the brothers’ life, and the vitality of consecration that would come from this. In particular, it was an encouragement for the brothers to move away from what was seen as an ill-suited conventual style of praying which had little interactive connection with the apostolate with which they were engaged, a kind of imposed separation between their personal prayer life on the one hand and their professional life on the other.⁵⁵¹ It was felt that this was life-giving for neither their prayer nor their work. This comment by Brother Pedro Marcos, then a member of the General Council, captures the sense of what was trying to be redressed:

*If our prayer has become formalistic and disembodied it is because we continue to think of whatever has to do with God as “sacred” and what has to do with man as “secular” and tending to distract us from our relationship with God. Moreover, we sense our apostolic working becoming detached from its gospel roots. Without our even being aware of it, other aims and business take the place of the Gospel ... [Our prayer] takes refuge in formalism, in compliance and ritualism, losing in the process the life-giving power which it ought to have. Little by little we become complacent and deaf to the demands of the Gospel and to the voice of discernment, and we allow the sparkle to go out of our lives, so that we are no longer likely to attract anyone to follow Jesus in the way of life we profess.*⁵⁵²

The Chapter of 1993 listed Marist apostolic spirituality as one of the four priorities for the upcoming years and saw this in terms of a need for greater integration of mission, community life and prayer, both for individuals and Provinces.⁵⁵³ It suggested a deeper study of it, courses for animators of it, and the inclusion of Marist apostolic spirituality in formation plans and programmes, in workshops, and in strategies for spiritual direction – all associated with the brothers. In doing so, the General Chapter was recommending a course of action that was one of the main “issues of the moment” for apostolic religious institutes in the Church.⁵⁵⁴

⁵⁵¹ Brother Tercilio Sevegnani, in *FMS Message*. No.22, April, 1997, pp.4-6

⁵⁵² Brother Pedro Marcos, *ibid.*, p.13

⁵⁵³ *Acts of the XIX General Chapter*, #28.

⁵⁵⁴ Brother Edouard Blondeel, in *FMS Message*. No.22. April 1997. p.17



52. General Council Commission on Marist Apostolic Spirituality with the brothers leading the Marist Apostolic Spirituality network (1994).

One of the major initiatives that was recommended by the XIX General Chapter, and taken up quickly by Brother Benito and his Council,⁵⁵⁵ was the appointment of three part-time animators of Marist apostolic spirituality for the Institute, brothers who were charged with setting up and leading three language-based networks for its ongoing animation.⁵⁵⁶ These brothers would work in collaboration with the General Council's own Marist Apostolic Spirituality Commission (through an annual meeting in Rome), and would attempt to set up parallel commissions at the level of each administrative unit and generate strategies and resources on a language basis.⁵⁵⁷ Their work was to meet with mixed success. Workshops, seminars and retreats were indeed organised. Some Provinces set up commissions with a brother appointed as an animator, and some language-based inter-Provincial meetings were held. The General Conference of 1997 gave time to a review of progress.⁵⁵⁸ It again turned its attention to integration. Brother Javier Espinosa, Provincial of America Central, saw that all of the challenges that emerged at the Conference could be reduced to one:

⁵⁵⁵ Brother Gaston Robert remembered Marist apostolic spirituality, and the work of the Council's Commission on this topic, as the major priority of his time on the General Council, working closely with Brothers Claudino Falchetto, Marcelino Ganzaraín and Jeffrey Crowe. Recorded interview with the author, 16 May, 2015.

⁵⁵⁶ This team comprised Brothers Mariano Varona, Jean-Pierre Destombes and Alexis Turton

⁵⁵⁷ *Report of the Brother Superior General and his Council to the XX General Chapter. #2.1*

⁵⁵⁸ *FMS Message*. No.24. October 1997

*Integration ... To centre ourselves on life in Jesus as the point of unification [in our lives].*⁵⁵⁹

In their report to the next Chapter in 2001, the General Council gave extensive consideration to the gains that had been made and to the challenges that remained. They commented favourably on the number of Provinces which had organised their annual Province retreats on this theme, and the number of programmes that had been held (for between three and fifteen days), the investment of Provinces in appropriate preparation and updating of formation personnel, the resources that had been developed, and various other initiatives that Provinces had taken. They also noted that Councillors had been able to support it during their visits to Provinces, their meetings with new Provincials, and in other meetings.⁵⁶⁰ They had seen evidence of a greater focus on Marist apostolic spirituality in community life plans and personal life plans, in new styles of community living, new communities and apostolates that aligned with the spirit of refounding, and the in the support given to networks of Marist apostolic spirituality in some places.⁵⁶¹

Yet in 2001, a decade after the Circular of Brother Charles and a quarter-century after the naming of “Marist apostolic spirituality” by the XVII General Chapter, the concerns of the Council were still deep. Fundamentally, they doubted that Jesus was “at the centre of our lives”.⁵⁶² It was an objectively disturbing judgement to make on a group of men who professed to do just that; it interpreted a deep-centred dysfunctionality among them. Their report ends by naming a “passion for Jesus and his kingdom” as the number one factor for ensuring the future of Marist consecrated life, because it had “no other *raison d’être*”.⁵⁶³ It was a view affirmed by the capitulants when they gathered.⁵⁶⁴ The General Councillors identified symptoms of this, for example a continuing attachment to outdated formulae and structures of praying, the neglect of personal prayer, inadequate practice of review and discernment, communities “turned in on themselves”, poor inculturation, little faith-sharing, and a persistence of a “split vision of the spiritual life”.⁵⁶⁵ In some countries almost nothing had changed in the pattern and emphases of the brothers’ life.⁵⁶⁶

In choosing decisively for “life”, Marist apostolic spirituality continued to be a priority for the Institute and its General Council after the Chapter of 2001. Some life was attempted to be pumped into the language-based networks. For example, the French group gathered eleven brothers from Belgium, Congo, Côte d’Ivoire

⁵⁵⁹ *Report of the Brother Superior General and his Council to the XX General Chapter.* p.11

⁵⁶⁰ *Ibid.* #2.1

⁵⁶¹ *Ibid.* #3.2

⁵⁶² *Ibid.* #3.2

⁵⁶³ *Ibid.* p.41

⁵⁶⁴ *Message of the XX General Chapter,* #10

⁵⁶⁵ *Report of the Brother Superior General and his Council to the XX General Chapter.* #3.2.

⁵⁶⁶ Brother Maurice Taildeman, reflecting on some regions of his own Province, in an interview with the author, 7 July, 2015.

and France the following March.⁵⁶⁷ Twenty-four Spanish-Portuguese (and Italian) animators met in the summer for their sixth network meeting, in Portugal.⁵⁶⁸ It was this second network, largely through the efforts of its key animator, Brother Mariano Varano, which was to remain the most active and fruitful.⁵⁶⁹ In 2002, it published a book of texts,⁵⁷⁰ and its locus of operations became centred in Latin America. In Bolivia the next year, brothers and lay Marists met to plan the future of a Latin American Network of Marist Spirituality.⁵⁷¹ Geography rather than language was presenting itself as helpful way to move forward.⁵⁷² Even after the Provincials at the General Conference in Negombo requested a new model to replace the old spirituality networks,⁵⁷³ in Latin America the existing network model was to continue and indeed expand to cover all of the Americas. As it did, a greater inclusion of lay people took place. At the sixth meeting of the Inter-American Network of Marist Spirituality in 2011, it was noted that

*At each meeting one sees that the presence of Marist laity is becoming more and more important, in number and in quality of participation.*⁵⁷⁴



53. V Meeting of the Inter-American Marist Spirituality Network at Luján, Argentina (2010).

⁵⁶⁷ *Marist Bulletin*. No 17. 12 April 2002.

⁵⁶⁸ *Marist Bulletin*. No.27. 30 September 2002.

⁵⁶⁹ Brother Pedro Herreros, interview *idem*.

⁵⁷⁰ The texts were prepared by Brothers Mariano and Vanderlei Soela, and intended for both brothers and lay Marists. *Marist Bulletin*. No.25. 7 August 2002.

⁵⁷¹ *Marist Bulletin*. No.69. 16 May 2003.

⁵⁷² Brother Sean announced formally the move from language-based networks to regional ones in 2004. *Bulletin to Provincials*. 6 May.

⁵⁷³ *FMS Message*. No.34. December 2005.

⁵⁷⁴ *Marist News*. No. 157. 25 May 2001.

Meanwhile, Brother Seán Sammon was bringing fresh and challenging language to the spirituality discourse of the Institute.⁵⁷⁵ His approach was to bring his confreres to address what he saw as the single core question for them – on who or what it was that they were setting their hearts. Like Brother Charles, he situated the best answer to this question in a personal relationship with Jesus, and looked to Marcellin for a way to do this. It was from the time of this Circular that the word “apostolic” tended to be dropped as a descriptor of the spirituality of the brothers. This was not through any sense of diminishment of significance of mission but more a recognition that, in the understanding of Marists, to be Marian was to be apostolic, to be a contemplative in action. Although Seán preferred the term “Marcellin’s spirituality”, it was “Marist spirituality” that grew to become the norm.⁵⁷⁶ The three constitutive elements of Founder’s spirituality that Seán identified – its incarnational, Marian, and transparent elements – brought a sharper focus to Marist spirituality than had been there in Brother Charles’ Circular or much of the thinking of the 1990s. For example, a feature issue of *FMS Message* in early 1997 dedicated to “Marist apostolic spirituality” included contributions on the subject from twenty-nine Marists (almost all of them brothers).⁵⁷⁷ While there are recurring themes and ideas – such as the importance of Jesus at the centre, Marian attitudes, Marcellin as a reference point, integration and unity of life, the place of discernment, and closeness to those in need – their approaches for describing Marist apostolic spirituality are quite varied. Among the contributions of Seán’s Circular and the challenges of the XX General Chapter was a sharpening of what constituted the collective spirituality of the Marists at the start of the twenty-first century.

The development and contribution of *Water from the Rock*

It was in this context of a growing impetus and clarity regarding Marist spirituality that the new General Council took up one of the specific mandates given to it in 2001: the production of a reference text on Marist spirituality, similar in style to *The Marist Educational Mission*, which would address its twin dimensions – “the Marial and the apostolic”.⁵⁷⁸ A three-phase process was devised: first, preliminary planning of the project by a “think tank”; second, the appointment of a commission to coordinate the production of the document, with some working groups;

⁵⁷⁵ *A Revolution of the Heart, Marcellin’s spirituality and a contemporary identity for his Little Brothers of Mary. Circulars of the Superiors General*. Vol. XXXI. No.1

⁵⁷⁶ This particular question was given considerable attention by the Commission which supervised the writing of *Water from the Rock* between 2004 and 2007. Although it recognised that the full phrase “Marist apostolic spirituality” had been quite important for the Institute for over twenty years, and that it had strong ownership in some parts, the final decision was that “Marist spirituality” was preferred. (Brother Peter Rodney, Chair of the Commission, in written communication with the author, 8 July 2015.)

⁵⁷⁷ *FMS Message*. No.22. April 1997

⁵⁷⁸ *Acts of the XX General Chapter*. #48.1

third, the testing and refining of the document. The Council sought to respond to the task it had received by producing

... a “user friendly” document that will be used by brothers and lay Marists to deepen their knowledge and experience of our spirituality as Little Brothers of Mary. It must speak to various cultures, experiences of faith within our traditions, and be accurate in content and attractive in design.⁵⁷⁹

The Council wanted something that would be pastoral in its pitch and accessible in its style. Its intended audience was presumed not necessarily to have a high level of theological formation. The Council was quite alert to the fact that the new document would become a significant one for years to come, so it had to be done well. It was also concerned to produce something that was faithful to Marist and Catholic traditions but also spoke to the diverse and multinational Marist world. Another question it had was the extent to which the project should interconnect with another mandate which it had received, the revision of Chapter 4 of the Constitutions.⁵⁸⁰

The first phase took place in Rome in June 2003, with a think tank of twelve brothers who met for a week.⁵⁸¹ The group was chosen to be geographically diverse, with a range of age and perspective.⁵⁸² The outcome of the meeting was to recommend to the Council that three groups be established – a resource group, a writing group, and a communications group – to undertake the task with a new International Commission for Marist Apostolic Spirituality providing oversight and guidance. A draft schema for the new document was also proposed, and a recommendation that it be pastoral in its approach, seeking “to promote the growth of faith life, personally and communally” and to affect “hearts and minds.”⁵⁸³ Within a few weeks Brother Peter Rodney CG was appointed to the chair of the new Commission, and the other members named shortly thereafter.⁵⁸⁴

⁵⁷⁹ Brother Peter Rodney, in written communication with the author (8 July 2015), and quoting from the minutes of a Council meeting.

⁵⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸¹ The group comprised: Brothers Michael de Waas, Raúl Figuera, Juan Carlos Fuertes, André Lanfrey, Carlos Martínez Lavín, John McDonnell, Lawrence Ndawala, Antonio Peralta, Seán Sammon SG, Luis García Sobrado VG, Vanderlei Soela, and John Thompson.

⁵⁸² Brother Peter Rodney, *idem*

⁵⁸³ *Ibid.* The proposed schema included eight sections: (1) Forward; (2) Introduction; (3) Spirituality; (4) Christian Spirituality; (5) Marcellin’s Spirituality; (6) Evolution of Marist Spirituality today; (7) Marist Spirituality Today, Marial and Apostolic; (8) Footnotes and References.

⁵⁸⁴ The full Commission membership was: Brother Peter Rodney, Brother Benito Arbués, Brother Bernard Beaudin, Brother Nicholas Fernando, Sister Vivienne Goldstein SM, Brother Maurice Goutagny, Brother Lawrence Ndawala, Brother Spiridion Ndanga, Brother Graham Neist, Ms Bernice Reintjens, Mrs Agnes Reyes, Brother Vanderlei Soela, Brother Miguel Angel Santos, and Brother Luis García Sobrado.

It was to be four years of considered work and extensive consultation before a final document appeared. During this time, the Commission met in full session four times,⁵⁸⁵ and considered nine drafts of the document. It supervised a widely-cast and multi-faceted process of consultation. The first phase, during 2004, involved brothers, lay Marists, the regional Marist apostolic spirituality networks where they existed, the International Patrimony Commission, and various individuals with expertise in theology, history and spirituality. Lay and consecrated Marists were asked to describe their own spirituality, how they lived it in an apostolic and a Marial way, what they thought of the draft structure of the text, and any other comments they may have.⁵⁸⁶ It was, therefore, a document that came organically from the lived experience of contemporary Marists, rather than from a distillation of pre-existing texts. In this way, the writing process was similar to that of the *Marist Educational Mission*. Drafting and re-drafting was done, particularly by Brothers Luis and Peter, to be considered by the Commission. Eighteen months into the project, a communications group that included professional journalists was established and began to work on the graphic design and visual presenta-



54. International Marist Spirituality Commission who prepared the text *Water from the Rock*.

⁵⁸⁵ February 2004, February 2005, February and November 2006.

⁵⁸⁶ The working title at this stage was *A Marist Spiritual Way*. It was envisaged that it would be in four parts and follow a structure somewhat akin to the Constitutions: *a Marist way to identity; a Marist way to God; a Marist way with people; a Marist way of ministry*. Brother Peter Rodney, in *FMS Message*. No 39. June 2009. p.18



55. 1 Meeting of the International Marist Spirituality Commission.

tion of the text. After a second phase of structured consultation across the Institute in 2006, a five-person writing group withdrew to the mountain town of Lavarone for an intensive session in August of that year. The text was considerably re-shaped and nuanced into the basic style and structure that was to be its final form. It was made more Christocentric, more oriented around Scripture, more pastorally worded and grounded in story, and given more Marist context.⁵⁸⁷ It was not until the next full Commission meeting in November that it received its name.⁵⁸⁸ A helpful glossary of terms was compiled by Brother Peter, a forward written by Brother Seán, and the final draft redacted (in English) by Brothers Peter and Luis for General Council approval on 19 April 2007. *Water from the Rock, Marist spirituality flowing in the tradition of Marcellin Champagnat* was officially promulgated by the Superior General on 6 June. Four months later, it was to be the main resource for the launch of the “Year of Spirituality” in the Institute.

The final structure of the document included four principal sections, augmented by a foreword from the Superior General, an epilogue including a prayer based on one written by Brother Charles Howard, notes and references, reflection questions, and a comprehensive glossary of terms. Importantly for the Commission, it was not a text which transmitted its message solely in words; the visual imagery was integral to it. It was not just a matter of decoration. The sensitive work of the communications team, which was masterfully prepared for publication by Brother Antonio Martínez Estaún, resulted in a document that spoke in both word and picture, appropriate for a highly visual modern generation of readers, of contempo-

⁵⁸⁷ Recorded interviews of the author with Brothers Graham Neist (30 September 2015) and Luis García Sobrado (13 October 2015).

⁵⁸⁸ Brother Peter Rodney, *idem*

rary Marist spirituality.⁵⁸⁹ For example, the internationality of Marists is captured through Marian images from different cultures.⁵⁹⁰ Like *The Marist Educational Mission*, and modelled on it to some extent, the text was structured in paragraphs that had a thematic flow but also could be used singly for prayer or reflection. Also, like the mission document, it began with reference to the foundational story, but there was difference:

*One thing that we learnt along the way, was to move from the “big man” view of our history (that is, a focus only on Marcellin), and to focus more deliberately on the founding community ... Therefore, in the first paragraphs of Water from the Rock, the names of the first brothers are given, and the dynamic among them is developed.*⁵⁹¹

The decision to do this, and the premise of a living and evolving spiritual family of Marists on which the document rests, is consistent with the earlier discussion which considered how a charism evolves into a spirituality. A measure of any group's being a genuine school of Christian discipleship is the extent to which its followers are centred in Christ, not on their founder. The personal charism of the founder is a way to Christ and his gospel. This is clearly a feature of how *Water from the Rock* was conceived and produced.

The diversity in Marist life and experience around the world provided its own set of challenges for the writers. For example, there were marked variances in the progress that Marist spirituality networks had made in various regions; some had done a great deal, others relatively little. There was, therefore, quite a range of readiness. Yet a text was needed that spoke to them all. There were, additionally, differences of culture, of ecclesial reality, and of popular spirituality to take into account. One way to deal with this diversity was to only cite from three sources – Scripture, Church documents, and Institute texts – rather than from writers or theologians from one culture or another. At the same time, it could be through the visual images that the polychromatic diversity of the Marist world was celebrated. A particular care was given to use concepts and language that were inclusive of all Marists, and to avoid terms that were exclusive to the brothers, or may have carried particular connotations for them. For example, terms such as “community” or “fraternity” could be problematic because their particular meaning for the brothers. There was also alertness to the fact that “Marist” did not belong solely to the tradition of Marcellin Champagnat.⁵⁹²

⁵⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹² From interviews with Brothers Peter Rodney (20 March 2015), Graham Neist (30 September 2015) and Luis García Sobrado (13 October 2015), and written communication with Peter Rodney (8 July 2015).

In the first section or chapter, a synopsis of the characteristics of Marist spirituality is described, in terms of both its original intuitions and its ongoing expression. Something that distinguishes this text from the mission text of 1998 is the notably more extensive context it provides for the “Marist Project”:

Marcellin was responding with dedication and in effective practical ways to the needs that he saw around him. But his response to the needs of his time was also formed by the project shared by the first Marists who dreamed of a renewed way of being Church, to which they pledged themselves at Fourvière. With Jean-Claude Colin, Jeanne-Marie Chavoïn and the other founding Marists, Marcellin shared the conviction that Mary was calling them together to respond to the needs of post-Revolutionary France.

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. It was a work which they hoped would touch every diocese of the world, and would be structured like a multi-branched tree by including lay people, priests, sisters and brothers.⁵⁹³

This recognition of the deeper purposes of what it meant to be “Marist”, and the explicitly Marist context in which Marcellin until his dying breath wanted to situate the particular project of his teaching brothers, was indicative of a growing awareness of a term used by each of Marcellin Champagnat, J-C Colin, Jeanne-Marie Chavoïn – “the work of Mary”. This is a foundational Marist concept, one which was reclaimed by this document. It named for contemporary Marists what is arguably their most fundamental identity theologically, something captured well in this paragraph from *Water from the Rock*, as it puts a clause from the Constitutions in a theological, spiritual and ecclesial context:

We share in the spiritual motherhood of Mary as we take our part in bringing Christ-life to the world of those whose lives we share. We nurture that life in the ecclesial community, whose communion we strengthen through fervent prayer and generous service.⁵⁹⁴

This is the essence of being Marist; it is actually to “be Mary”. This document perhaps names it more succinctly than any before it. Several years after the publication of *Water from the Rock*, Brother Emili was to develop this concept further in his Circular *He Gave Us the Name of Mary*. To share with Mary – to be as Mary – is to see Mary as a “sister in faith”. It is to be a “disciple” as she was a disciple, on “journey of faith” as was she. It is to go with her on mission into the “hill country” pregnant with new life and brimming with good news of joy, hope and mercy. It is, like her at Pentecost, to nurture community among the dis-Spirited. *Water from the Rock* describes it in these terms:

⁵⁹³ *Water from the Rock* ##10-11

⁵⁹⁴ *Ibid.* #26

Our attitudes towards young people find their inspiration in Mary. In contemplating Mary in the Scriptures we impregnate ourselves with her spirit. We go without delay into the “hill country” of the lives of young people, bringing them news of the justice and faithful mercy of God. By relating to young people in a Marial manner, we become the face of Mary to them.

Since the time of Marcellin, his disciples have made Mary known and loved. Today 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. With a heart filled with compassion, we share this experience and conviction with children and youth helping them to experience the maternal face of the Church.

Since Marcellin’s time the Church has deepened its appreciation of Mary as First Disciple. Marists therefore have a growing relationship with Mary as our Sister in Faith, a woman with dust on her feet, a woman who was disturbed and puzzled by God, who was challenged to trust and give without knowing all the answers, whose faith life was a journey.⁵⁹⁵

Along with the following of “Mary’s way”, the first section names five other characteristic elements of spirituality of Marists: “God’s presence and love”; “trust in God”; “love of Jesus and his Gospel”; “family spirit”; and a “spirituality of simplicity”. It encourages them to continue to be “streams of living water” in the continued evolution of this path of the Gospel.⁵⁹⁶ The following three sections of the text explore each of the three interrelated elements of Christian life – personal faith and vocation, mission, and community. These were also to be the Marian moments that Brother Emili was later to develop in his Circular, using the Annunciation, the Visitation and Pentecost as icons of these.

It had been hoped that the communications group might have developed some useful multi-media resources for the dissemination of *Water from the Rock* but these did not eventuate.⁵⁹⁷ The “Year of Spirituality” began strongly, nonetheless, and the new document became a focus and major resource.⁵⁹⁸ Brother Teófilo Minga, who had been appointed Secretary to the General Council’s Religious Life Commission, was active in leading seminars and retreats on the document in various parts of the Marist world, as were Brother Pau Fornells, of the Bureau of Laity, and members of the General Council.⁵⁹⁹ Much of the work for the document’s diffusion fell, however, to individual administrative units, and also to regional networks where they existed, as part of their strategies for participating in the Year of Spirituality.⁶⁰⁰ Within a year, over 60,000 copies had been printed in Rome alone, in the four official languages as well as Catalan and Italian; additional printings

⁵⁹⁵ *Ibid.* #27-29

⁵⁹⁶ *Ibid.* #15-45 *passim*

⁵⁹⁷ Brother Peter Rodney, *idem*

⁵⁹⁸ Another focus for this year was the work of a commission to revise Chapter 4 of the Constitutions, a project that did, in the end, become separate from that of the *Water from the Rock*.

⁵⁹⁹ *Marist News*. No.17. 29 August 2008.

⁶⁰⁰ Brother Peter Rodney, *FMS Message*. No.39. June 2009. p.11

were organised in other countries in more than ten other languages.⁶⁰¹ A special edition of *FMS message* the following year celebrated how widely the text had been used. Individual testimonies from eighteen people in as many countries indicated both the profundity and the timeliness of its impact on brothers and lay Marists.⁶⁰² It proved to be a “landmark” text, one that spoke to Marists “of the best of themselves; what they aspire to; the path that Champagnat shows them for going to Jesus; a simple formulation of the Marist way to holiness.”⁶⁰³

⁶⁰¹ Brother Teófilo Minga, in *FMS Message*. No 39. June 2009, p.21. p.1; *Marist News*. No.17. 29 August 2008. The languages in which the document appeared within two years included: English (the base text), Spanish (both Castilian and Latin American), French, Portuguese (different for Portugal and for Brazil), Catalan, German, Dutch, Hungarian, Korean, Tamil, Sinhala, Arabic, Kiswahili, Urdu, and Greek.

⁶⁰² *FMS Message*. No 39. June 2009

⁶⁰³ *Report of the Brother Superior and his Council to the XXI General Chapter*. p.20

12.

GIVING LIFE TO MARIST SPIRITUAL PATRIMONY

The members of the XIX General Chapter were convinced that the renewal and vitality of the Institute would depend on its creative fidelity to the missionary intuitions of the Founder:

*In a very special way, we Marist Brothers need to get back to the life-giving root from which we have grown: Marcellin Champagnat.*⁶⁰⁴

It was a phrase which the Commission that drafted *The Marist Educational Mission* chose to use to open the document four years later:

*Marcellin Champagnat is the **life-giving root** of Marist education. Times and circumstances change but his dynamic spirit and vision live on in our hearts. God chose him to bring hope and the message of Jesus' love to young lives in the France of his day. God inspires us to do the same in our time and place.*⁶⁰⁵

An emotional attachment to the Founder was something frequently observed by General Councillors as they visited all parts of the Institute, a phenomenon they saw to be a source of unity and inspiration for the brothers.⁶⁰⁶ The challenge was for this to move beyond the emotional so that, in the words of Brother Charles, the brothers could be genuinely “Champagnats for today”, men who would have the discernment and the passion to “re-found” the Institute.⁶⁰⁷ Brothers Benito, Seán and Emili were to return often to the same idea. In writing to the brothers shortly after the death of Brother Charles, for example, Brother Emili was to recall the words of his predecessor and hold it again as an ideal: “I am a Champagnat”.⁶⁰⁸ Brother Charles had attempted to “mobilise the brothers around Marcellin Champagnat”.⁶⁰⁹

⁶⁰⁴ *Acts of the XIX General Chapter.* #11

⁶⁰⁵ *Marist Educational Mission.* #1

⁶⁰⁶ See, for example: the Opening Address by Brother Basilio to the XVIII General Chapter (in *Listening to the 18th General Chapter*, p.67); *Report of the Brother Superior General and his Council to the XIX General Chapter*, p.48; *Report of the Brother Superior General and his Council to the XX General Chapter*, #3.1.

⁶⁰⁷ Brother Charles Howard, in *FMS Message*, No.4, January 1989. This issue of *FMS Message* was an introduction to the “Champagnat Year”.

⁶⁰⁸ Brother Emili Turú. Message for the Feast of St Marcellin, 6 June 2012.

⁶⁰⁹ Comment of Brother Alain Delorme, interview *idem*.

From the 1960s, scholarship into the founding period had been extensive, both in the Society of Mary and the Marist Brothers. The publication of the four volumes of *Origines Maristes* by Jean Coste SM and Gastón Lessard SM between 1961 and 1967 (and the later *Extraits* concerning the Marist Brothers edited by Brother Paul Sester) had been a watershed time for the Marists. Through the work principally of Brother Paul, previously unpublished letters of Marcellin and other early documents began to become available. This was augmented by the research of others, and a new lens was put on the founding time. At the start of the Champagnat Year in 1989, Brother Charles acknowledged the debt that was owed to the researchers and animators of the preceding three decades, men such as Brothers Paul Sester, Gabriel Michel, Juan María Merino, Alexandre Balko, Romuald Gibson and Pierre Zind.⁶¹⁰ It was research and animation that was to continue with others such as Brothers André Lanfrey, Aureliano Brambila, Juan Moral, Alain Delorme, Antonio Martínez Estaún, Frederick McMahan, and Manuel Mesonero. Each year since 1985 has seen new studies, books, academic dissertations, and journal articles on Marcellin, François, Marist history, Marist spirituality, Marist education, and Marist saints of the modern era. They number in the hundreds. Increasingly, their authors are lay Marists. Never has there been such plethora and richness of material on Marist spiritual patrimony.

Although *Water from the Rock* was to call Marists to have a broader appreciation of their origins than to focus only on Marcellin, the imperative is the same, and is consistent with that offered to all religious institutes at the time of *Perfectae caritatis*. The closer that they could align themselves to the charismatic intuitions of their founders, and be creatively faithful to these, the more they would be able to remain a vital and relevant presence for the mission of God. Documents such as *Water from the Rock* and *The Marist Educational Mission*, as well as the 1985 Constitutions and many of the Circulars of the Superiors General in the post-Conciliar period, and more recent documents such as *Gathered Around the Same Table* and *Evangelisers in the Midst of Youth*, have all drawn deeply on the scholarship and formation that had taken place in the spiritual patrimony of the Institute, the spiritual legacy of Marcellin Champagnat and the first brothers. It was the intention of the Founder that this should be so. His “Spiritual Testament” was a self-conscious and powerfully worded effort to ensure that a distinctive spiritual heritage would continue to abide among the brothers.

Courses and Centres of Formation

Among the catalysts for a reinterpretation of the person and spirituality of Marcellin Champagnat was the publication in 1985 of a collection of all 339 of his letters, or drafts of letters, that were known to be extant.⁶¹¹ In his editing of the collec-

⁶¹⁰ *FMS Message*. No 4. January 1989.

⁶¹¹ Brother Paul Sester. *Lettres de Marcellin J.B. Champagnat, Fondateur de l'Institut Frères Maristes. Vol. I. Textes*. Since 1985, two more have been discovered, neither of great significance.

tion, Brother Paul Sester provided a broad historical overview for each period, and a brief context for each letter. This was augmented considerably two years later with a second volume of references which gave details of every person and place mentioned in any of the letters.⁶¹² Even though the letters represent only a fraction of the number which Marcellin would have written during his lifetime, they do provide a revealing insight into his spirituality, personality, priorities in mission, pastoral emphases, leadership style, relational traits, as well as his struggles and challenges. Often, they do this more transparently than do formal documents, or the indirect and edited reports provided by others, particularly Jean-Baptiste. Without the somewhat hagiographical filter of Jean-Baptiste, the personal charism of the Founder is more proximate. This is not to undervalue, let alone dismiss, the invaluable work of Jean-Baptiste who remains the principal source of information on the life of the Founder, but only to point to the more complete picture of him that his letters provide. When studied with other early documents that were either not used by Jean-Baptiste or not known to him, the letters have proved to be a rich resource for modern day Marists in their quest to come to know Marcellin and to be affected by him.

Each General Administration since the 1980s has organised or sponsored a range of courses, programmes, seminars and workshops that have had an emphasis on Marist spiritual patrimony. For example, two important seminars were convened in Rome in 1997 and 2000 by Brother Henri Vignau (assisted by Brother Gaston Robert in 1997 and Brother André Lanfrey in 2000) to explore themes in Marist history and spirituality. The first seminar had the theme of Marist education,



56. Conclusion of the Spiritual Patrimony Course in Rome (2008).

⁶¹² Brothers Paul Sester and Raymond Borne. *Lettres de Marcellin J.B. Champagnat, Fondateur de l'Institut des Frères Maristes. Vol. II. Répertoire.*

and the approach taken to it by Marcellin Champagnat and the first brothers.⁶¹³ The second seminar looked at the manuscripts of Brothers François and Jean-Baptiste, especially their correspondence and personal notebooks.⁶¹⁴ Worthy of particular mention are the “Patrimony Courses” of 1993 and 2008. In each of these years, a six-month programme was offered in Rome to introduce, at some depth, a new generation of brothers to the riches of Marist history and spirituality. In 1993 it was conducted by Brother Aureliano Brambila, and in 2008 he was joined by this author as director. Several other presenters were also involved for shorter periods of time. The first programme, which included thirty-two participants, was offered in French; the second, with twenty-two brothers, was in English. The members of each programme followed a curriculum that included an intensive study of the letters, French and Marist history, other Marist documents from different periods, and a personal research project. A major element of each programme was to use a method developed by Brother Aureliano in Mexico at *Centro de Estudios del Patrimonio Espiritual Marista* (“CEPAM”). Across all four major languages of the Institute, but most especially in Spanish and Portuguese, both the place and the method of CEPAM have made a quite significant contribution to the diffusion of Marist spirituality.

The Centre was formally begun in 1989 in the Province of México Occidental, first in Morelia, and from 1994 in Guadalajara. Originally conceived as a centre to store documents and to facilitate research, Brother Aureliano was to develop a distinctive method for engaging with Marist spiritual patrimony, as well as building



57. Participants attending the course on Spiritual Patrimony visiting La Valla (2008).

⁶¹³ Held between 20 and 27 November; it involved eleven brothers.

⁶¹⁴ Twenty brothers, from each region of the Institute, gathered between 24 August and 2 September.

up a large and valuable library of resources, both in print and on-line. At the time of writing, the on-line library has over 40,000 items. Brother Aureliano describes his approach:

CEPAM is not only a place in which Marist archives are found, but it is also, and above all, a focus, a style of investigation in Marist spiritual patrimony. In part, this is its originality. It is based on a particular way of thinking and engaging with the spiritual heritage of the Institute. It aims to make Marcellin and his work more loved by a person's coming to know them more intimately. The fruits of this encounter are rich. It leads to spiritual growth.

CEPAM immerses a person deeply into Marist spiritual patrimony, with special focus, of course, of the Founder. It does not encourage any sense of nostalgia or hankering after what has been but, rather, fosters a journey of discernment so that the person can be a source of renewal of Marist life and mission.⁶¹⁵

Since 1989, hundreds of Marists – mostly brothers but increasing numbers of lay people – have benefited from CEPAM.⁶¹⁶ At the Centre itself, two or three month-long programmes have been conducted each year.⁶¹⁷ In addition, weekend seminars, retreats and other workshops have been held. CEPAM programmes have been offered in other countries such as Spain, Brazil and Bolivia, and at MIC in Nairobi and MAPAC in Manila.⁶¹⁸ CEPAM works on the premise that Marist life and mission continue to evolve, inspired by the Holy Spirit. The approach of CEPAM – which brings people into direct contact with a wide range of Marist sources and studies, and uses inductive methodology in both individual and group situations – is both academic and spiritual. It is both an individual and communal experience. The resources that are used in a CEPAM programme typically include:

- *correspondence to, from and about the Founder;*
- *other documents written by or about the Founder;*
- *studies on the Founder – books, articles, and theses;*
- *legislative texts and documents of the Institute, from 1818 to 2010;*
- *documents concerning Brother François (his letters and notebooks; biographies and testimonies);*

⁶¹⁵ Brother Aureliano Brambila, in written correspondence with the author.

⁶¹⁶ The number and country of origin of people who have followed a CEPAM programme in excess of two-weeks' duration were, in 2015: Germany 1; Guatemala 3; El Salvador 7; Costa Rica 3; Argentina 9; Australia 4; Belgium 1; Brazil 40; Canada 16; Colombia 19; Korea 25; Côte d'Ivoire 1; Chile 3; China 1; Ecuador 3; Scotland 1; Spain 25; USA 2; Philippines 20; France 2; The Netherlands 1; Madagascar 2; Malaysia 1; Mexico 75; Nigeria 2; New Zealand 2; PNG 1; Peru 1; Sri Lanka 1; Uruguay 3; Venezuela 5; DRC 1; Zimbabwe 1. (Information supplied by CEPAM).

⁶¹⁷ The full CEPAM course runs over a three-year cycle.

⁶¹⁸ *Marist Bulletin*. No.10. 4 December 2003.

- *biographies of other brothers;*
- *Circulars of the Superiors General and documents of General Chapters;*
- *histories of the Institute, and of individual administrative units;*
- *books, articles and other resources concerning the historical, political, social, educational and geographical contexts of Marist origins;*
- *the CEPAM website;*⁶¹⁹
- *other Marist documents;*
- *Marist art and music.*⁶²⁰

It aims at equipping contemporary Marists with the knowledge, attitudes and spiritual dispositions to exercise creative fidelity to the charism of the Founder and the spirituality of the founding time. The intention is that each CEPAM participant encounters Marcellin Champagnat, in the hope his intuitions can be appropriated and re-contextualised for today's world, as part of Marist re-founding.⁶²¹

Other courses and centres have also been active in bringing people into an intensive study of Marist spiritual patrimony, in countries such as Spain, Brazil and Australia, as well as in houses of initial formation. For example, in Spain the Institute of Marist Studies ("IEM") at the University of Salamanca, conducted a graduate diploma programme over three years (2009-2011) on the writings of Marcellin Champagnat. It involved research, reflection and prayer – drawing strongly on the CEPAM methodology – and brought students together twice each year for a residential experience, with the other learning taking place on-line over a semester. Brother Fernando Hinojal Citores provided mentoring for the participants.⁶²² Another example was post-graduate seminar, run over two semesters (in 2014 and 2015) by the Pontifical Catholic University of Parana in Curitiba (Brazil) which focussed on the correspondence and notebooks of Brother François. It was led by Brother André Lanfrey. At the same institution, the first three units of the on-line specialisation course *The Marist Charism and Educational Principles* (offered in four languages), to which reference has already been made, focusses on Marist history, Marist education and Marist spirituality. Like CEPAM, it aims to build capacity and intuitive alertness in contemporary Marists, so that they can be creatively faithful as genuinely Marist educators in today's contexts. Structured and sequential study of Marist spiritual patrimony has been included in scholasticate programmes, for example and MIC in Nairobi where it has been part of the four-year formation programme since 2007.

⁶¹⁹ At the time of publication of this book the address for this site was: <https://sites.google.com/site/cepamespiritualidadmarista/>

⁶²⁰ This information about CEPAM has been provided to the author by Brother Aureliano.

⁶²¹ *Marist Bulletin*. No.10. 4 December 2003

⁶²² *Marist News*. No. 157. 25 May 2011.

Marist Notebooks and other written and electronic publications

A new publication was introduced to the Institute on 6 June 1990, an academic journal to be known as *Marist Notebooks*. In his Introductory Note to the first issue, Brother Paul Sester described its aim this way

*... to make known our latest findings in the research of our Marist origins and on those things which characterise us as Marist Brothers ... to be a means of dissemination of these findings and of publishing documentary sources.*⁶²³

This was an aim to which the journal has remained faithful during the quarter-century since, although its readership has broadened beyond the brothers alone, as has the source of its contributors. In the first years, most articles were written by brothers who had carried the weight of Marist research and animation in the previous decades, men such as Brother Paul himself, and Brothers Alexandre Balko and Gabriel Michel. Brother André Lanfrey was an early contributor, and has remained so. Over forty other writers have been published in the journal. Its three-part structure was determined in 1990 and remained largely the same during the fourteen years that Brother Paul remained the editor: the first section provided information and updates; the second was several research papers; and the third, some brief critical commentaries on early documents that had been previously unpublished. Variations on this occurred for special issues, such one in 1995 devoted to Jean-Claude Courville,⁶²⁴ in 1997 one dedicated to the personal notebooks of Brother François,⁶²⁵ and in 1998 to publishing the papers on the patrimony seminar on the history of Marist education held the previous year.⁶²⁶ Between 1993 and 2001, general editorial oversight was provided by the Patrimony Commission of the General Council, mostly in the person of Brother Henri Vignau who helped to shape it and give it direction.

After 2004, editorial supervision was passed to the newly established International Patrimony Commission, under the leadership of Brother André Lanfrey. Carriage of the production of each issue fell to the Secretary of that Commission (first Brother Henri Réocreux, then Brother Michel Morel) in liaison the General Administration (the Coordinator of Translators and the Director of Communications). The format of the journal initially remained the same, but after 2010 was improved through contemporary graphic design, and the inclusion of an editorial which introduced the articles in each issue. Special issues continued from time to time, such as that of December 2009 which included a selection of the research

⁶²³ *Marist Notebooks*. No. 1. 6 June 1990.

⁶²⁴ *Marist Notebooks*. No. 7. June 1995.

⁶²⁵ *Marist Notebooks*, No. 12 December 1997.

⁶²⁶ *Marist Notebooks*, No.13 July 1998. Papers included by Brothers Auteliano Brambila, Danilo Farneda, Edward Clisby, André Lanfrey, Gabriel Michel, Juan Moral, José Perez and Paul Sester.

papers completed by the graduates of the 2008 Patrimony Course.⁶²⁷ Since 2013, there has been an attempt to include several articles on the one theme, such as La Valla (2013), brothers in war (2015) and Marist laity (2016). Except for a short-lived experiment in 2001-2002 when articles were published only in languages in which they were written, *Marist Notebooks* has appeared in the four working languages of the Institute.

The three decades since 1985 have witnessed a large number of other publications in the Marist world. Among these have been both new works and critical editions of older works. For example, the revised edition of *The Life of Marcellin Champagnat* was prepared for the Champagnat Year of 1989-90. Several years later, a book length critical companion volume to it was published by Brother André Lanfrey.⁶²⁸ Older work by Marist writers and researchers has been collected, edited and published in definitive form; early documents have been critically studied and published for the first time; fresh research has been done on previously treated topics; new biographies have been written; even an historical novel. Some studies have focussed more specifically on the Founder's spirituality. A few examples of a very large library include:

- ***Ensayo Sobre Una Biografía Espiritual del Bto Marcelino Champagnat***, by Brother Juan María. 1988. (545 pages). The culmination of years of research and personal interiorising by Brother Juan María of Marcellin's journey with the Holy Spirit.⁶²⁹
- ***Témoignages sur Marcellin Champagnat*** edited by Brother Agustin Carazo, Postulator General. 1991. Testimonies drawn from the diocesan enquiry for the Beatification process of Marcellin Champagnat.
- ***Une congrégation enseignante: Les Frères Maristes de 1850 à 1904*** by Brother André Lanfrey. 1997, 210 pages + 25 annexes.
- ***Né en 89***, by Brother Gabriel Michel (1988, 1990). An historical novel of the life of Marcellin Champagnat, written as a trilogy.
- ***Annales de l'institut*** (Vols.1-3) by Brother Avit. 1993. And *Annales des maisons* (Vols.1-12) published by Brother Paul Sester.
- ***Repensons à nos origines***, by Brother Alexandre Balko. 1998 A collection of 43 articles.
- ***Les années obscures de Marcellin Champagnat ou la Révolution à Marlhes, Loire, 1789-1800***, by Brother Gabriel Michel. 2000 (180 pages)

⁶²⁷ *Marist Notebooks*, 27 (October 2009) included papers by Brothers Ben Consigli, Augustin Hendlmeier, Peter Walsh, Benedict Umoh, Colin Chalmers, Christopher Maney, Vincent de Paul Kouassi, Elias Iwu, Robert Teoh,

⁶²⁸ *Introduction à la Vie de M.J.B. Champagnat*, published in notebook form in 1998, then in book format in 2000, Rome (246 pages).

⁶²⁹ *FMS Echo*. September 1988. p.4

- ***Pour mieux connaître Marcellin Champagnat***, by Brother Gabriel Michel, with a preface by Brother Henri Vignau. April 2001. (292 pages). It comprises three parts: the socio-political context of Marcellin Champagnat; the religious context of Marcellin Champagnat; a compendium of eight earlier articles.
- ***Champagnat au jour le jour***, by Brother Gabriel Michel, with a preface by Brother Henri Vignau. April 2001 (370 pages). An extended chronology covering the years 1789 to 1840.
- ***Sur les traces de Marcellin Champagnat***, Vols. 1 and 2, by Brother Pierre Zind, with a preface by Brother Henri Vignau. Feb. 2001. (265 and 236 pages). They include articles by Zind between 1955 and 1988, and extracts from *Les nouvelles congrégations de Frères Enseignants en France de 1800 à 1830*.
- ***Prier 15 Jours Avec Marcellin Champagnat***, by Brother Jean Roche. 1999. Spanish edition 2009. A book that could be used as a prayer companion. (125 pages)
- ***Marcellin Champagnat, les improbables de Dieu***, by Robert Masson. A book for general readership by a well-known French author, published in conjunction with the canonisation in 1999, having been commissioned by Brother Henri Vignau CG. (200 pages).
- ***Essai sur les origines de la spiritualité mariste***, by Brother André Lanfrey. 2001. (188 pages). English translation by Brother Jeffrey Crowe.
- ***Elaboration de la pensée éducative mariste, ses sources, son influence (1824-1868)*** by Brother André Lanfrey. 2000, A critical introduction to *L'Apostolat d'un Frère Mariste*, an educational treatise written by Brother Jean-Baptiste Furet before 1850 based on instructions by the Founder and various educational authors (259 pages).
- ***Un chaînon manquant de la spiritualité mariste. Les manuscrits d'instructions des FF. François et Jean-Baptiste***, by Brother André Lanfrey. 2000 (158 pages)
- ***Espiritualidad de San Marcelino Champagnat. A Partir de studio critic de su biografía***, by Brother Manuel Mesonero. Zaragoza, 2003.
- ***El Carisma Mariano de Marcelino Champagnat***. (Tesina para la Licenciatura en Ciencia Religiosas), by Rafael Miguel Gil Moncayo. Málaga, 2004.
- ***Un Saint pour Notre Temps. Marcellin Champagnat, maître spiritual***, by Brother Jacques Larouche. Quebec, 2007
- ***Marvellous Companions of Marcellin Champagnat (Vols. I and II)***, by Brother Alain Delorme. 2009 and 2011. A set of short biographies of some of the early brothers, and several from a later period, with supporting texts for reflection and prayer.

- **Origines des Frères Maristes**, Vols 1-3. Edited by Brother Paul Sester. 2011.⁶³⁰ A complete collection of the extant writings of Marcellin Champagnat, with a critical commentary.

Additionally, extensive digitalisation of documents has been completed in France by brothers such as Louis Richard, Jean Rousson and Jean-Marie Girard. Among these are the letters and notebooks of Brothers François and Jean-Baptiste, to which critical commentary has been made by Brothers Paul Sester and André Lanfrey. Other work was done in Rome by Brother Henri Réocreux, in liaison with Brother Henri Vignau. In 2007, Brother Joseph De Meyer, then in Rome, catalogued a great number of these electronic documents and other resources and made them available. The extensive digital library of CEPAM, compiled by Brother Aureliano Brambila has already been mentioned.⁶³¹

Music, art and other media

In addition to the plethora of written works both in print and online, Marist spirituality has been increasingly expressed through other visual and acoustic media. The Marists of the modern era have sought to give expression to their spirituality, and to deepen their appropriation of it, through song, music, painting, sculpture, film and electronic media.

In October 1979, the “intense gospel experience” of a group of young brothers and university students,⁶³² led them to form a musical group to express in music their dreams and hopes, and to bring the Good News to young people in fresh and engaging ways. For almost four decades, *Kairoi* has continued to do just that. Through the release of twenty-six albums in Catalan and Spanish, through live music in liturgies and concerts, and through its direct participation in workshops and festivals associated with solidarity and Christian life, it has helped Marists and other Christian communities to be inspired by the Gospel. Their music has proved very popular across Spain and in many countries of Latin America.⁶³³ In other countries, other Marist musicians have been active in composing songs that have lyrics based on Mary, Marcellin and the Marist way of living the Gospel. For example, Brothers Maurice Goutagny and Guy Desprez in France and Brother Michael Herry in Australia have produced songs and albums for many years, often taking up the themes of special events such as the Canonisation, General Chapters and

⁶³⁰ This work has been added to the wider Marist collection of primary sources, coordinated by the Marist Fathers and known as *Fontes Historici Societatis Mariae*. Brother Paul was assisted by Brothers Jean Rousson, Louis Richard and Claude Morisson. *Marist News*. No.167. 28 July 2011.

⁶³¹ A more comprehensive account of these projects can be found in *Marist Notebooks*, Nos. 2-5 (1991-93), 20 (2004) 26 (2008)

⁶³² Among them Brothers Miquel Cubeles, Toni Torrelles, Jaume Palau and Eladi Gallego

⁶³³ Personal communication with Pep Buetas and Brother Miquel Cubeles, and information from the band's website: www.maristes.cat/kairoi (26 November 2015)



58. Performance of the musical group Karoi on the occasion of the beatification of a group of Spanish Brother martyrs. Barcelona, Spain (2013).

Mission Assemblies. In Nairobi, the “MIC Band” has produced several albums of worship and praise, in the vibrant liturgical spirit for which that formation house has become well known.

The Champagnat Year (1989-90) prompted a number of initiatives, for example two videos produced jointly by the Latin American Provinces in Spanish and Portuguese (*El Carisma de Marcelino Champagnat América Latina*) and two in English in Australia (*Champagnat, the Man and his Vision*), a play produced by *Catarsis* in Argentina and performed elsewhere (*P. Champagnat, su tiempo y su obra*), a song contest, commissioning of new art works.⁶³⁴ The Canonisation of St Marcellin ten years later prompted another flurry of new artworks and music. Two works that were to become widely known were the specially commissioned portrait by Spanish artist Gregorio Domínguez (“Goyo”) and the statue by Costa Rican sculptor Jorge Jiménez Deredia. Goyo had painted and sketched many images of Marcellin since his time as a Marist novice. They are found in paintings, murals, comic books and other resources that used all over the Marist world. In the canonisation portrait, Goyo’s aim was “to express all the personal and spiritual richness” of the Founder that he had come to know and admire.⁶³⁵ The image from the painting (the original now in the foyer of the Superior General’s Office in the General House) presided over the piazza in front of St Peter’s Basilica and was later installed in the General House chapel. The huge 535cm statue of St Marcellin was installed in a niche on the outside of St Peter’s and blessed by Pope John Paul II on 20 September 2000.⁶³⁶ It is notable among the statues of founders which are located on the exterior of the basilica, because the saint is engaged with young people. The artist attempted to capture in marble both the strength and gentleness of Marcellin, with his sense of vision and purpose, and his closeness to the young.

⁶³⁴ *FMS Echo*. No.6 March 1989.

⁶³⁵ *FMS Message*. No. 33. July 2004

⁶³⁶ *FMS Echo*. No. 33 September 2000. Negotiations for the placement of the statue were carried principally by Postulator General, Brother Gabriele Andreucci (cf. *FMS Message*. No.43. December 2013).

Another artist who has helped Marist communities to develop their appreciation of Marcellin and their Marist heritage is Brother José Santamarta Castro whose many mosaics, ceramics and sculptures are found especially through Spain and Latin America.

The canonisation prompted artistic expression in other fields. A stage musical, for example, was written by Argentinian Manuel González Gil entitled *Un Corazón sin Fronteras*, a production that attempted to convey in song, dance and music the dreams and hopes of Marcellin, “a love that gives life meaning” and continues to be able to be realised.⁶³⁷ All over the Marist world have appeared – especially since the 1980s – innumerable statues, paintings, songs, poems, prayers, liturgies, films and websites that are testimony to the enduring vitality and fecundity of Marist spirituality.

International Commission of Marist Spiritual Patrimony

Maintaining the momentum that had gathered under the previous General Council, a large meeting was convened in Rome in December 2003, chaired by Brother Pedro Herreros CG, to consider the most effective ways to carry forward the study of the Institute’s spiritual patrimony.⁶³⁸ An outcome of the meeting was to appoint a six-member Commission which was to hold its first meeting the following May.⁶³⁹ Working in three-year mandates, the International Commission of Marist Spiritual Patrimony, or the “Patrimony Commission”, has continued to meet annually (usually in June) each year since.⁶⁴⁰

The responsibilities and tasks of the Commission have included being the editorial board for *Marist Notebooks*, organisation of seminars and courses, coordination of research and animation of Marist spiritual patrimony across the Institute, being a forum for discussion for those engaged in this work and a means of encouragement for them, mapping of translations of key documents, and provision of advice and recommendations to the General Council.

⁶³⁷ *Marist Bulletin*. No. 204, 7 July 2005

⁶³⁸ *Marist News*, 113. 23 December 2003. Attending were: Brothers Pedro Herreros, Peter Rodney, Antonio Ramalho, Théoneste Kalisa (from the General Council), Aureliano Brambila, Edward Clisby, Alain Delorme, Michael Flanigan, Benino Genuino, Michael Green, André Lanfrey, Manuel Mesonero, Juan Moral, Jaume Pares, Gastón Robert, Paul Sester, Ivo Strobino (from the Provinces), Jean Pierre Cotnoir, Paulo Celso Ferrarezi, Giovanni Bigotto, Lluís Serra (from the General Administration).

⁶³⁹ The members of the first Commission were: Brothers André Lanfrey (Chair) Auréliano Brambila, Michael Green, Jaume Pares, Paul Sester, and Ivo Strobino. This group was to stay in place until 2010, except for the replacement of Brother Paul by Brother Robert Teoh. Brother Henri Réocreux became the Commission’s Secretary.

⁶⁴⁰ A new Commission was appointed in 2011: Brothers André Lanfrey (Chair); Antonio Martínez Estaún, Demosthenes Calabria, Mrs Heloisa Afonso de Almeida Sousa; Brothers Michael Green, Patricio Pino, Spiridion Ndanga, Michel Morel (Secretary). Brother Demosthenes finished in 2014 and was replaced by Brother Colin Chalmers in 2015.



59. Members of the International Commission for Marist Spiritual Patrimony

Among the initiatives that have been taken as a result of the work or recommendations of the Commission are: the 2008 six-month patrimony course in Rome; the enhancement of Marist spiritual patrimony in initial formation programmes; a new collection of Marist studies and works of significance called *FMS Studia*,⁶⁴¹ several symposia for members of the four branches of the Marist family; the writing of the three-volume *History of the Institute*. Advice has been provided to: the Commission on Renewal of the Marist Places; the International Spirituality Commission in its drafting of *Water from the Rock*; successive Archivists General (Brothers Jean-Pierre Cotnoir, Juan Moral, and Colin Chalmers); Brother Jean Ronzon, Secretary General, on the publication of the *Chronologie*; the writers and course designers for the on-line specialist course *Marist Charism and Educational Principles* offered by PUCPR; various other Marist researchers, writers and animators for their work.

The Renewal of the Marist Places

In 1974, the Provincial Council of the Hermitage Province had approached Brother Basilio's Council with the proposal that *Notre Dame de l'Hermitage* be sold, as it was "falling down around their ears", and the Province did not have the funds to restore it.⁶⁴² A proposal from Brother Quentin Duffy VG that responsibility

⁶⁴¹ *Marist News*. No. 162. 30 June 2011. The three first works in this collection are: the *Chronologie* of the Institute (updated through until 2010); *La Regla del Fundador* (a revised version of Brother Pedro Herreros's 1984 Licentiate in Theology thesis on the Marist Brothers' first Rule of 1837); and the *History of the Institute*, Volumes I, II and III to be included by 2017. Except for the third work, which is in four languages, it is anticipated that the works of *FMS Studia* will be published in the original language in which they are written.

⁶⁴² Brother Quentin Duffy, interview transcript *idem*. p.97

for the house be taken over by the General Administration, that it become a centre of renewal and pilgrimage, and that it be home to an international community of researchers, was warmly taken up by the Superior General.⁶⁴³ Brother Bruno Cortés Ramirez from México Occidental was appointed Director and a new community formed.⁶⁴⁴ Thousands of brothers – indeed more than half the brothers of the Institute – were to pass through *l’Hermitage* in the following three decades.⁶⁴⁵ Further improvements were done, especially during the time that Brother Henri Vignau was Provincial. By the turn of the century, it was clear to the General Council that a major renovation was needed.

It in its plenary meeting at the beginning of 2004, the General Council took the decision that such an initiative was timely and something that could be used to enliven Marist renewal. It resolved to take a recommendation for a significant renovation of the Marist places to the General Conference to be held in Sri Lanka the following year.⁶⁴⁶ Brother Seán was to propose it not simply as a project for rejuvenating a building in France, but as something that could inspire a dynamic of rejuvenation for the whole Institute. “Reclaiming the spirit of the building of the Hermitage” became the theme of his closing address to the VII General Conference in Negombo. He saw this as a spirit of “hope, enthusiasm, boldness and audacity”.⁶⁴⁷ Two years later, following extensive planning, he wrote to the whole Institute to introduce the project and to invite their support by entering into the spirit of what was planned.⁶⁴⁸ The overall plan involved the four Marist places of Le Rosey, La Valla, Maisonnnettes and *l’Hermitage*. It would commence in 2008-2009 with *l’Hermitage*, financed and managed jointly by the General Administration and the Province of *l’Hermitage* (with the Province meeting two-thirds of the costs and the rest of the Institute the remainder).⁶⁴⁹

⁶⁴³ *Ibid.* Also see article by Brother André Lanfrey in *Marist Notebooks*, No.26, pp.9-24.

⁶⁴⁴ Among these brothers, both then and in the following years, were Brothers Owen Kavanagh, Juan María, Gabriel Michel, Jordan, Alexandre Balko, Aureliano Brambila, Alain Delorme and others.

⁶⁴⁵ By 1989, over three thousand brothers were recorded as having visited there on pilgrimage during the previous twelve years. *FMS Message*. No. 4. January 1989.

⁶⁴⁶ *Marist Bulletin*. No. 130, 10 March 2004.

⁶⁴⁷ Brother Seán Sammon, *Reclaim the Spirit of the Hermitage. Closing Address to the VII General Conference*. 30 September, 2005. p.27

⁶⁴⁸ Brother Seán Sammon, *Let Us Reclaim the Spirit of the Hermitage*. 6 June, 2007.

⁶⁴⁹ *Ibid.* p.3

Its aim was to create a new strategy for welcome and animation in these places, and to renovate the buildings to allow for this. The Superior General stressed that this was to be “no exercise in nostalgia”, “no museum”, but a way for “an encounter with Marcellin Champagnat and those who were his contemporaries, and making our own their faith, their vision, their courage, and their boldness of action”.⁶⁵⁰ The plan was to have an international community of twelve at l’Hermitage (seven brothers, four lay and a chaplain), and brothers’ communities at La Valla and Le Rosey as part of the overall project.

The work was imaginatively and audaciously undertaken by a project team led by Catalan architect Joan Puig-Pey (who had led the renovation some years earlier at Les Avellanes), in liaison with a Commission appointed by the General Council and the Province. The old buildings were completely gutted and refitted;

60. Renovation work. Notre Dame de l’Hermitage (2008).



61. The renovated buildings. Notre Dame de l’Hermitage (2010).



⁶⁵⁰ *Ibid.* p.20

later additions were demolished for a new dining, hospitality and conference facility. The strength and the beauty of the property were accentuated in the design, and the natural features of the hardness of the rock and bubbling of the Gier were featured. It was a challenge to maintain the integrity of the original building while, at the same time, meeting the needs and expectations of modern-day users. For Mr Puig-Pey it was both a personal and a professional experience:

*Working at the Hermitage meant mobilising my best self, as an architect, as a person and as a Marist, and putting into it my whole heart, all my mind and all my strength, my feelings and my interior life, intelligence, imagination and senses.*⁶⁵¹

All the time, the project team and the community that was being formed⁶⁵² kept before them the imperative that the renovated Hermitage was to be something to animate the present and the future, not to take people into a nostalgic encounter with the past. At the next General Conference in 2013, which was held at The Hermitage, Brother Emili Turú was to describe the whole exercise of the “bold renovation” as “an act of faith in the future.”⁶⁵³ Three years previously, on the occasion of the official opening and blessing of the building, Brother Emili was to comment:

*This is the “house of Mary” ... [It is] an invitation to rediscover all that Mary signifies for us, Marists, and the place she occupies in our lives, our communities, charism, identity, spirituality and mission. We translate this reality through the expression “Marian Church”, or the Marian face or Marian principle of the Church.*⁶⁵⁴

The Hermitage and its community were called, he said, to be signs and icons of the Church with a Marian face, of authentic Marist apostolic spirituality, and of the renewal going on in the Institute.

⁶⁵¹ *Marist News*. No. 127, 11 November 2010.

⁶⁵² The international community was named in 2008, and began an intensive period of formation and (for some) language study. Its members were: Brothers Jean-Pierre Destombes (Director), Michel Morel, Georges Palandre (all from France), Neville Solomon (Australia), Diogène Musine (Rwanda), Allan de Castro (Philippines), Miro Reckziegel (Brazil), and Annie Girka (France), María Elida Quiñones Peña (Mexico), Norma and Ernesto Spagnoli (Argentina). They were to be joined the following year by Father John Craddock SM (New Zealand).

⁶⁵³ Brother Emili Turú, in *FMS Message*. No 44, June 2014.

⁶⁵⁴ Brother Emili Turú, in *Marist News*. No. 119, 23 September 2010. In fact, the Superior General's prepared text was delivered by Brother Joseph McKee, due to Brother Emili's illness on the day of the opening.



62. The three architectural levels are also richly symbolic. Renovation of La Valla (2103)..

63. The architect, Joan Puig-Pey.



Once the Hermitage was completed, attention turned to the house at La Valla. Once again, the plans that emerged were both imaginative and sensitive. A three-level renovation was undertaken, creating a lower ground floor that represented interiority, a ground floor (with the famous table of La Valla) representing community, and an outward-looking upper floor to capture mission. The three elements of the design concept mirrored the first Circular of Brother Emili *He Gave Us the Name of Mary*. The renovated house at La Valla was able to be opened during the VIII General Conference on 5 October 2013.⁶⁵⁵

The experience of the participants at the General Conference was emblematic of the hopes that had inspired and guided the whole project of the renewal of the Marist places over the previous eight years. This was about bringing contemporary Marists into encounter with the founding charism of Marcellin Champagnat, which the first brothers and those who had followed them as Marists to the present day had been inspired by the Holy Spirit to grown into a distinctive living



64. First meetings to discern the profile of a new mixed community at Notre Dame de l'Hermitage. Rome (2009).

⁶⁵⁵ *Marist News*. No. 293, 21 October 2013

spirituality. It was this spirituality and this spiritual family that continued to seek new ways for being in mission. It was well captured by Brother Libardo Garzón, using the language and concepts that had emerged at the Conference:

The icons of The Hermitage, La Valla and Fourvière inspired the itinerary of the Conference. They allowed us to get in touch with the very sources of our history and spirituality, evoking the experience of our father and founder leading us to a new beginning of the Marist Institute. This new Marist dawn, full of dreams and hopes for the future, is shaped by a life increasingly more focussed on Jesus and his gospel, offering a meaningful life in fraternal communities which are close to the poor, and encouraging of internationality and multiculturality.⁶⁵⁶

⁶⁵⁶ Brother Libardo Garzón, in *FMS Message*. No. 44, June 2014, p.65

13.

WITNESSES AND MARTYRS: SEEDS OF NEW LIFE

Just as the vitality of a spiritual family is fired initially by the charism of its founder, it is kept aflame and inspired through the living witness of its members, most especially those who remain true to their Gospel path in situations of extreme trial. Throughout Marist history, there have been examples of heroism and extraordinary fidelity, even to point of death in violent and hostile circumstances. Indeed, from the time of the first Marist generation, over two hundred brothers have died in the name of their faith. Knowledge of the lives of these brothers is a source of inspiration for the Marist family, and also a means of its ongoing identity-building. What is honoured in remembering them are the evangelical ideals at the heart of the Marist spiritual tradition, what Marists aspire to be. In announcing in 2007 the first beatifications of the brothers killed during the Spanish Civil War, Brother Seán Sammon borrowed from Tertullian to write of them as “seeds of new life not only for our Institute and its mission but also for the universal Church.”⁶⁵⁷ Over the last three decades, the soil of Marist spirituality has been richly sown with such seeds.

Fidelity: the Brothers of China

Fidelity was the theme of Brother Basilio’s parting Circular and of pivotal significance for his successor. Brother Charles prized nothing more; he was firmly of the conviction that the future of the Institute would depend on it.⁶⁵⁸ Shortly after becoming Superior General, he made moves to reconnect with the brothers who had remained behind in mainland China after the Communist takeover in 1949. Cut off from contact with the Institute, these were men who had been tortured, imprisoned, and forced to practise their faith and to live their religious lives under severe threat and at great risk. They had remained faithful – faithful to the Gospel, to their Church, to their vows, and to their mission as Christian educators. It was of enormous personal significance to Brother Charles to visit them, to encourage them, to thank them, and to tell their story of their fidelity to all the brothers of the Institute.⁶⁵⁹ Due to the delicate political situation, and out of sensitivity for the safety of the elderly men themselves, the first visit was arranged in considerable secrecy and with great caution. And also with solemn ritual. Before leaving Rome, Brother Charles invited all the brothers of the General House to the main chapel

⁶⁵⁷ Brother Seán Sammon *A Letter to my Brothers*, 6 June 2007.

⁶⁵⁸ Brother Benito Arbués, *FMS Message*, No.42, p.32

⁶⁵⁹ Brother Charles, interview transcript *idem*, p.41

where, dressed in full habit, with a lighted candle in hand, he knelt to receive their blessing and to be missioned formally by them. One of the brothers in Hong Kong had made indirect contact with the old brothers through relatives in Beijing, and the visit was set up. Brother Charles entered China incognito. The Chinese brothers were understandably nervous about the visit, yet they all gathered to meet their Superior General, to tell him their stories, and to renew their vows before him in a quiet celebration of the Eucharist. They gathered in the modest quarters of that some of them shared, first in Shanghai and then in Beijing. There were three in Shanghai, and nine of the ten known to be in the north came to Beijing. They sang together the *Salve Regina*. Brother Charles was deeply affected by it all. He was inspired to learn of the ways they had maintained contact with one another, had supported the underground Church to keep the light of faith flickering, and had created opportunities to continue as catechists and teachers both in and out of prison.

*What a great joy it was for me to thank them all, in the name of the Institute, for their remarkable witness of fidelity. Tears were shed.*⁶⁶⁰



66. Brother Charles Howard, Superior General, in Rome during the canonisation of St Marcellin, in the company of Brothers Cletus and Norbert coming from Beijing (1999)

65. Renewal of vows in the presence of Brother Charles Howard, Superior General. Shanghai, China (1998).



⁶⁶⁰ *FMS Echo*. No. 5. December 1988. p.1

Brother Charles was to make extensive reference to these brothers. For example, the front cover of the first issue of *FMS Message* in February 1987 carried a photo of Chinese Brother Alexandre with the Superior General and Pope John Paul II; in 1993 one of his first points in his opening address to the XIX General Chapter was to welcome Brother Norbert from China. In his Circulars and other communications he referred frequently to the stories of the Chinese brothers, emphasising in particular their fidelity and their humble heroism.

*... the example of fidelity of our brothers in China is a remarkable witness. They have been prophets of fidelity for us all. Their response to God's fidelity to them, to his love and faithfulness, helps us in our own fidelity and helps is also to put our own difficulties and problems in better perspective.*⁶⁶¹

The Spanish martyrs

By far, the largest numbers of brothers to be killed for their faith have been in Spain, almost all of them before and during the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s. Their deaths were brutal and tragic. These men were the first brothers of the Institute to be beatified, their heroism recognised by the Church as martyrdom. The political, ecclesial and social complexities of Spain at that time, the shades and nuances of good and evil, the ambivalences of purpose and the mixed sources of the horrors that so wounded the country, are all debates for historians. What is unequivocally noble and awfully sad are the deaths of these Little Brothers of Mary who became caught up in a crisis much greater than themselves, but one which cost them their lives. Memory of them persists poignantly, both in Spain and across the Marist world. The beatification of forty-seven brothers in Rome in 2007 and a further sixty-eight (sixty-six brothers and two lay men) in Tarragona 2013 were major occasions for the Institute to remember, to mourn, to celebrate, and to be inspired.

Brother Seán and Brother Emili presented the brothers as models for the present generation of Marists:

*They have been described by the Church as "martyrs of the Christian education of youth." Despite persecution, these men did everything possible to remain faithful to the children and young people entrusted to their care. We would do well to take them as models of Marist mission at its best ... Let us honour them by imitating their virtue and their zeal. With Marcellin and all of the brothers who have preceded us in Marist life, we give thanks to the Lord for the blessing of these beatifications. Let us, like Mary, acknowledge that God has looked upon us with favour and pray that our work may continue to be truly His own.*⁶⁶²

⁶⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶² *FMS Message*. No.36. September 2007. pp.5 & 7

Each of the brothers has his own story, each a source of such inspiration. Among the many grateful and heartfelt testimonies for Brother Bernardo, who was murdered, and his body desecrated, in the early hours of 6 October in 1934, is this one:

A heart of an apostle beat in Brother Bernardo. Everywhere he went, apostolic initiatives increased: choirs, former students' associations, Catholic Action groups, movements of young apostles among the students, open doors, enthronements of statues of the Sacred Heart, prayer vigils, study circles, cultural and religious conferences, classes for adults, savings banks for the sons of miners, study scholarships, a travelling library, theatre troupes, folk activities, visits to the families of the miners, visits to the sick, vocations ministry, accompaniment of young brothers, and all that on top of his ordinary work as Director and as a teacher in school.

Nine hours of classes each day, he wrote to one of his former students, hours that seem to me to be minutes, because I am happy to find myself with the children, and all that I do for them seems to me to be so little! All that we describe here matured in an intense life of intimacy with the Lord and with the Good Mother, without forgetting mortification and the hair shirt. He used to say, What good can I do for the students if I am not the first to live what I tell them.⁶⁶³

The brothers had lived for years under threat of death but had remained faithful. They were well aware of the dangers they faced. Three years previously, as Provincial of the then single Province of Spain, Brother Laurentino had written to his brothers of the grave situation that faced them and offered them encouragement. Between the penning of that letter and the night of 8 October 1936 when he and forty-five of his confreres, aged between 19 and 62 years, were summarily shot in the cemeteries of Barcelona, over a hundred other brothers had lost their lives. All of them would have read these words in 1933:

... You who tell God every day that you love him with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your being, well, now is the time to show this. Yes, now while those who persevere in loving him are mocked, abandoned, defamed, deprived of their legitimate rights as citizens, insulted and made the target of a satanic persecution.



67. Poster announcing the beatification, celebrated in Tarragona (Spain), of 66 brothers and 2 laypeople martyred in Spain.

⁶⁶³ *Ibid.* pp.26-27

*Now is the time to show how great is the fidelity that you have sworn to the Lord. Now is the time to prove that your desires for sacrifice are not illusory and pure fantasy. Perhaps those who today show cowardice and desert the good cause once believed they were invincible... The time is coming when we will see the valiant, those for whom there is nothing that they cannot master with the help of the One who gives them strength, those for whom nothing in the world can take away their peace, but who shelter behind the rampart of God, give the impression that their souls are becoming stronger as they face the present difficulties and worries.*⁶⁶⁴

In 2007, and again in 2013, there were considerable resources produced to recall the personal stories of each of those beatified. They were occasions to encounter these saints from the 1930s, to enter into their lives, to touch into the hopes and fears they must have had, their resilience and their humanity. The 498 beatifications of 2007, of which the forty-seven Marists were part, were held in Rome. This allowed the General House to be a focus for the pilgrims who came for the event. They included brothers, families of the martyrs, lay Marists, clergy, and current Marist students. Brother Carlos Alberto Rojas, who was then studying in Rome, commented

*The time of the beatifications was a real time of grace. The martyrdom of our brothers led me to feel the tangible presence of God, and the internationality of the Institute. To sing and to be with a thousand people from the five continents ... was great experience of faith and of community ... The house was simply a fiesta: the banners with the images of the brother martyrs on the front of the building, the flags draped in the foyer, the corridor of the Superiors General with the life and work of the martyrs, the Sala Champagnat with the relics of Marcellin, the chapel with the symbol of the lamps, seeds and cross ... and, of course, all of us there: lay and brothers!*⁶⁶⁵

Six years later, on 13 October 2013, Tarragona was to be the location for the Mass of Beatification of 522 martyrs who gave their lives in various parts of Spain. The choice was significant since it had been there that the first martyrs of Spain in the third century had died for the faith. Additionally, no fewer than 147 of the new *beati* were from Tarragona. The sixty-eight Marists were killed in nineteen different places across the country.⁶⁶⁶ Again, the sadness and tragedy of their deaths were

⁶⁶⁴ *FMS Message*. No. 36. September 2007, p. 37.

⁶⁶⁵ *FMS Message*. No. 37. March 2008. p.18

⁶⁶⁶ The causes of these men had been pursued by the Institute, on and off, since 1946, by a number of Vice-Postulators in various dioceses of Spain. From the time of Brother Agustín Carazo as Postulator General they came to be brought together. Most of the forensic and meticulous preparatory work that was required was undertaken by Brother Gabriele Andreucci (Postulator General, 1989-2001) and in Spain by Brother Mariano Santamaría (long-serving Vice-Postulator for the Spanish causes). Brother Giovanni Maria Bigotto (Postulator General, 2001-2010) carried on this work, and was responsible for writing and publishing much of the biographical detail of each of the martyrs, with the assistance of Brother Antonio Martínez Estaún as Director of Communications. Brother Jorge Flores Aceves (Postulator General 2011-2016) attended to the final negotiations with the Congregation for the Causes of Saints and with Church authorities in Madrid. Brother Antonio Martínez Estaún, the current Postulator General, continues work with the *positio super martyrio* for the last group of Marist martyrs of this period: Brother Eusebio and 58 other brothers. To this cause will be added that of Brother Lycarion, killed on 28 July 1909. (For more detail, see the articles of Brothers Giovanni and Mariano in *FMS Message*. No.43. pp 127-32.)

poignantly called to mind, the memories honoured and their loss of life mourned. But, also, their martyrdom was seen to be something to fire new life. The slogan in 2007 had been “Seeds of Life”; this time it was hoped that the martyrs, as “witnesses of faith” could help the present-day Marists to “re-ignite the flame” of the Marist vision they had inherited from Saint Marcellin:

Our 68 new beati, inspired by Mary, disciples of Marcellin Champagnat, today challenge us, we who live at the dawn of the twentieth century ... In truth, they can surprise us with a message that is entirely relevant today ... As one of the Church's many martyrs, Saint Thomas More, said: “Tradition does not consist in keeping ashes, but in passing on the flame.” Such is the task that falls to us today: to pass on to future generations a flame which does not belong to us and which we have received, in our turn, as a gift ... Cardinal Martini expressed this desire magnificently – together with a certain frustration – in an interview accorded a little before his death: Fr Karl Rahner used the image of the embers hidden under the ashes. “I see in the Church of today so much ash over the embers that frequently I am overwhelmed with a sense of powerlessness...”

The arrival of Pope Francis has been like a breath of fresh air in the midst of this atmosphere of powerlessness and frustration. Many feel that a new ecclesial spring is possible, like that experienced at the time of the Second Vatican Council. In fact, the name chosen by the new pope reminds us of the experience of San Damiano: Go, Francis, rebuild my half-ruined Church. Marcellin Champagnat burned with that same desire to renew the Church, under the inspiration of Mary. As heirs of Champagnat, we are invited to participate fully in this movement of personal and institutional renewal, brushing aside the ashes which threaten to extinguish the embers and prevent them from spreading warmth and rekindling the fire. May our contact with the lives of these witnesses to the faith help us awaken and revive the embers of that faith which we received at Baptism.

Our martyrs ... encourage us to give our lives and to be witnesses of the experience of God and of the marvellous gift of community. Humbly, discretely, we will contribute to moulding this Church with the Marian face of which we dream.⁶⁶⁷

The day before the large Mass at Tarragona, a smaller family gathering of around six hundred people took place at the Marist school, *Maristes La Immaculada*, close to *Sagrada Família* basilica in Barcelona. The guests were welcomed in these words:

We meet today to celebrate life, to celebrate the Faith, to remember our brothers and lay Marists who gave their lives for Christ, and to give thanks for their testimony. We are in communion, we are a family, and we thank the Good Lord because our Marist martyrs are true Witnesses of the Faith, who invite us to be generous in our commitment and service to others, and to continue living the Marist charism as a gift for the Church and the world.⁶⁶⁸

⁶⁶⁷ FMS Message. No.43. December 2013. p.3

⁶⁶⁸ From the account by Brother Lluís Serra, in *ibid.* pp.113-116.

The names of the seventeen communities were read out, and those of each martyr. With some emotion, one family after another brought forward a picture of their brother, together with the palm of martyrdom. During the service, Brother Emili addressed the gathering, focussing on fidelity and forgiveness as the qualities that today's Marists could learn from these new Marist saints:

... We can only imagine how the murder of these men – whose ages ranged from nineteen to sixty-three, and two-thirds of which were under forty – impacted on their families and the Institute ... What can we take with us after these celebrations? In the light of faith, what is the sacrifice of our martyrs telling us today?

It is not easy to find the reasons why our martyrs were killed, given the complexity of the historical moment in which they lived. But it is extremely easy, however, to guess the reasons why they gave their life so generously. As disciples of Jesus – No one takes my life, but I give it freely (Jn 10:18) – they had laid down their life long before it was snatched away. Their death was nothing else but the continuation of a generous day-to-day offering.

They had decided to live according to the message of Jesus: ... poverty in spirit, meekness, thirst for righteousness, mercy, purity of heart, peace, and forgiveness. They tried to be faithful to those values throughout their life and, consistently, they were true to them in extreme situations, when they were forced to openly take sides ... Yes, they were faithful to the end. And through faithfulness, the victims prevailed over the executioners, who took away their lives, but could not prevent them from being consistent with the life style they had freely decided to embrace.

... When you read the accounts of our brothers' martyrdom, you are taken aback by such violence against defenceless and peaceful people, whose life was dedicated to serving others. The history of humanity gives an example from time to time of how cruel people can be. And yet, at that very moment, the response of those who suffer violence highlights the best a human heart can give. It is touching to recall the words of forgiveness pronounced by our martyrs, just like Jesus, who prayed to the Father upon the cross: Forgive them for they know not what they do. If you answer violence with violence, you enter a vicious circle that inevitably leads to destruction. Forgiveness, however, contains within itself the power to break this destructive cycle, opening spaces for reconciliation.

... Fidelity and forgiveness, two life attitudes through which all people of good will can become seed and leaven for a better world: will we be able to embrace them as part of our own lives?⁶⁶⁹

⁶⁶⁹ Brother Emili Turú, in *ibid.* pp.121-23

Fidelity and witness in the modern era

The violent deaths of the brothers in Spain, and the destructive attacks on Marist schools by groups hostile to the purposes of the Institute, came just twenty years after more than 150 brothers had been killed as soldiers in the First World War (of 1037 who had been conscripted to enlist for their respective countries).

In France, the secularisation of the early years of the century had decimated the work of the Institute in that country. In Germany, by the 1930s, the re-building of Marist education was again being thwarted; schools were to be closed⁶⁷⁰ and brothers were to lose their lives in Europe, in Asia and in Oceania in the tragic decade of war that lay ahead.⁶⁷¹ In Nigeria, during the Biafran War (1967-70), the brothers found themselves at the centre of a bitter war and a need to re-orient their lives and work to respond the critical needs of wounded and displaced people.⁶⁷²

This was to be a recurring trial of the twentieth century, and one which would continue into the twenty-first: brothers who found themselves in situations of extreme risk, threat and conflict. Towards the end of the 1980s a number of Latin American countries were moving away from military governments (which had mixed results for the security of the works of the Church) or settling long-running civil unrest, countries such as Chile, Brazil, Bolivia, Argentina, Uruguay. El Salvador and Guatemala also did so in the 1990s, but not before the tragic murder of Brother Moisés Cisneros on 29 April 1991. It was just a normal school day for *Escuela Marista* in the poor quarter of Santa Isabel in Guatemala City. Aged only 45 and director of the school, Brother Moisés had led a project to give opportunity to those young people who had least possibility of it.⁶⁷³ Unrest was to continue to simmer in other countries such as Colombia, Paraguay and Haiti.

⁶⁷⁰ Not only in Germany, but also foundations made by the German brothers in Poland, Denmark, Hungary and Austria.

⁶⁷¹ Brother Augustin Hendlemeier, in his centenary history of the Marist Brothers of Germany (1914-2014), provides detail on the numbers of brothers from Germany and elsewhere who were conscripted into military service or died in custody in the World Wars, and the enormous impact this had on the work of the Institute. See also, *Marist Notebooks*, 33 (2015) for a survey of brothers in these wars.

⁶⁷² A state of civil war existed in Nigeria from July 1967 until January 1970, when the south-eastern part of the country (largely people of Igbo ethnicity) seceded to establish the Republic of Biafra. The brothers found themselves geographically split. Irish Brother Francis McGovern, the Sector Superior, appointed Brothers Alban Okoye and Clement Okere as Visitors to each of the two groups. At the juniorate and novitiate at Uturu, in Biafran territory, Brother Frank organised for the brothers to accept refugees. This was the beginning of what became the Hopeville Rehabilitation Centre. Originally focussing its work on the victims of the conflict – providing amputees with prosthetic limbs, working with paraplegics, teaching, and assisting in the post-war reconciliation and reconstruction process – Hopeville has continued to work with young people in physical, material and emotional need. (Brother Christian Mbaum, personal communication with the author, 5 May 2015.)

⁶⁷³ *FMS Echo*, No.12, June 1991

In other parts of the world, wars and ethnic or political conflict were growing in intensity. For example, in 1989 civil war had broken out in Bougainville as a separatist militia became involved in an extended war with the national government of Papua New Guinea. What had been a flourishing Marist boarding school at Kieta had to close, and was never to re-open. Brothers – both local and Australian – escaped or went into hiding. After the civil unrest was settled in the late 1990s, the brothers established a centre in Mabiri for men whose education had been interrupted by the war. Other brothers became involved in the work of reconciliation.⁶⁷⁴



68. Brother Moisés Cisneros killed in Guatemala while serving the poor (1991).

69. People paying their respects to Brother Moisés Cisneros.

In the Middle East, the brothers' work in Syria and Lebanon was interrupted in the 1970s and 1980s, the school in Rmaileh, outside Sidon in Southern Lebanon, having to close, not to re-open. By the end of the first decade of the 2000s, the situation in Syria had again badly deteriorated, the country torn apart by different factions. The brothers in Aleppo found themselves in a situation of extreme danger and deprivation. Their decision was to remain, and to sustain hope among people in desperate circumstances. In an age of social media and internet-based communication, Brother Georges Sabe was able to use Facebook and the Institute's website to invite the whole Marist world to be in solidarity with the group that came to be known as *Les Maristes bleus*.⁶⁷⁵ His regular "Letters from Aleppo", with associated images and video clips, inspired the Marist world. Marists – brothers, lay, students, young people – in schools and communities on the five continents came to know them. As well as material assistance offered to the group, coordinated through FMSI, and encouragement of them through message and prayer, it was they through their fidelity and quiet heroism who gave immeasurably more to their fellow Marists. In 2012, Brother Georges was to write:

⁶⁷⁴ Interviews of the author with Brothers Ken McDonald and Jeffrey Crowe, (29 September and 9 September 2015).

⁶⁷⁵ Cf. *Marist News*. No.222 17 August 2012

*Horror encircles us on every side: every form of violence, hardship, insecurity, misery, poverty, and above all, uncertain future ... We have decided to choose life in the face of a culture of death ... to be sowers of hope in the face of despair ... to centre our personal and community life on peace.*⁶⁷⁶

The more than fifty volunteers – both Christian and Muslim – who worked alongside the brothers gave contemporary and powerful meaning to what it meant to be “Marist”. Three years later, with the situation having only deteriorated, Brother Georges wrote in his twenty-fourth letter to the Marists of the world:

This morning it is cold in Aleppo, it is an icy, bitter cold and we are not able to have heating because of lack of fuel ... We have been completely deprived of electricity for more than fifty days. But at least the water which we severely rationed came back after an interruption of several weeks ...

Yesterday afternoon, A.H., a nine year old boy came to our house. It took him an hour to get here. He is the tenth child of a family that has twelve children. He wanted some bread. His mother sent him to us so that we could give him some. He ceaselessly repeated: “I hope not to return home with empty hands”. He would not. He returned happy. Like him many children live in a precarious situation: cold, hungry, threatened health, insecurity...

On 20 November the whole world commemorated the International Day of the Rights of the Child. The children of Aleppo, like many children of the world, suffer because of the atrocity of the war at a moment when the great of the world only seek their own interests. What can we say? What to do? How to support so much and so many children in this situation of misery? How can we give these children emotional, human and spiritual support that will allow them to live the childhood fully?

We have opted to guarantee a quality education, an education according to the best Marist tradition, an education which, according to the desire of our founder Saint Marcelin, will produce future “honest citizen and good believer”.⁶⁷⁷

In his Christmas message in 2012, Brother Emili was to draw from the witness of these men and women:

... [It is] learning that the three brothers of our community in Aleppo, Syria, some six hundred kilometres from Bethlehem, have also been having. For some months, the civil population of this ancient city has found itself immersed in a situation of fierce violence: armed struggle, bombardment, lack of resources ...

⁶⁷⁶ Marist News. No. 213 5 June 2012

⁶⁷⁷ Letter from Aleppo, #24, 9 December 2015.

www.champagnat.org/400.php?a=6&n=3810#sthash.AJL2sRGb.dpuf. Accessed 10 December 2015

The surprising thing is how, in such adverse circumstances, even here wonder can flower: ... a group of lay Marists who, defying fear, commit their time and capabilities to be beside the most vulnerable victims, without distinction of culture or religion; the collaboration of Muslim volunteers uniting with the Maristes bleus; the spontaneous laughter of the children, at least for a few hours; the network of solidarity that has been woven, on the local as well as the international level ... Yes, hope is possible. Although everything appears to show that violence and death have the last word, a small hope, as Péguy called it, persists in holding firm in the hearts of simple people.

How can we continue to support the hope of our brothers and sisters in Aleppo? I invite you to place a candle in some special place in your community or home between 18 and 25 December and light it each day at a particular time, as a symbol of our communion with them through our affection and prayer. Gregory of Nyssa, a Christian bishop who lived at the end of the IV century in this same region of the Middle East, wrote that concepts create idols; only wonder knows. Yes, concepts create idols and often misunderstandings leading right up to war. Only wonder is capable of penetrating reality as it appears to our eyes, and embracing the happiness of a full life, even amidst the most adverse conditions.⁶⁷⁸



70. Blue Marists of Aleppo.

⁶⁷⁸ www.champagnat.org/400.php?a=6&n=2618. Accessed 9 November 2015.

In many countries of post-colonial Africa, ethnic and political unrest was also a continual reality, something which often impacted on the brothers' works. In more than half of the twenty-one countries of Africa and Madagascar in which the Institute had works, brothers found themselves in dangerous situations that required them to seek refuge, to move, or to close institutions. At various times during the 1980s and 1990s in, for example, Angola, Mozambique and Liberia, this was the case, as it was in the 2000s in Côte d'Ivoire, Central African Republic, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. One group of novices which had begun their novitiate in Nyangezi, Zaire (now DRC) had been forced to move twice in 1996, first to Bangui, Central African Republic, then to Obala, Cameroon (for the first-year novices) and to France (for the second year novices). The latter group of seven were to make their first profession, quite historically, in the chapel of *Notre Dame de l'Hermitage* before the Superior General, Brother Benito, in June 1997.

In the north of the continent, in Algeria, was to be the first of eleven violent deaths of brothers in the space of just a few years. Brother Henri Vergès, had been pleased to have been given the opportunity in 1969 to become a missionary in Africa after many years as a teacher and director in France. The nationalisation of schools in 1976 in Algeria meant that he could not continue as director of *Collège Saint-Bonaventure* in Algiers. After twelve years teaching in a government school in the south, five of them living on his own, he accepted willingly the invitation to return to Algiers to be part of the local church's re-opening of the library of the White Fathers in the Casbah district. He

... directed all his Catalan dynamism, his ardent faith in youth, his rich experience in learning, his love of Arab culture and of his adopted country, to making this new place of apostolate an attractive and welcoming centre for youth, an effective aid to their study, a place of dialogue and liberty ...



71. Novices, who had been forced to leave their novitiate, make their first profession in the Hermitage Chapel in the presence of the Superior General, Br Benito (1997).

*In Algiers, Henri was at the peak of his vocation as a Marist teacher ... His life, his action and his death challenge us.*⁶⁷⁹

With an Islamist insurgency having plunged Algeria into civil war from 1991, ironically enough the same year in which the Institute celebrated its centenary in the country, by 1994 the conflict was at its height. Various rebel factions were active, one of the more extreme being the Armed Islamic Group. It was at their hands that Brother Henri and Assumptionist Sister Paul-Hélène were brutally shot in their library on Sunday morning 8 May 1994. With others who were martyred for their faith during this tragic period of Algerian history, the cause of Brother Henri's beatification has been introduced. His life and death have been the source of much inspiration among Marists, most especially in France.⁶⁸⁰

Two years previously, in a much more optimistic ambience, a representative group of African brothers had gathered in Nairobi with Brothers Charles and several General Councillors for the first Congress of Marist Africa. The theme of the meeting was the "Marist Brother in Africa Today." During the 1980s, the first generation of African leaders had begun to assume responsibility for institutions and for administrative districts,⁶⁸¹ and it was timely for such a meeting. It resulted in a significant statement of identity for what it meant to "Marist and African", and the way that Marist life could be inculturated in the contemporary African context.⁶⁸² The brothers considered their priorities in mission and embraced the challenges that would lead them into the next century. Within just a short period many of them were dealing with a challenge of an entirely different and tragic character.

Long simmering tensions and rivalries, which often had an ethnic or tribal face to them but were in fact more complex in their social and political origins,⁶⁸³ had begun to erupt in Great Lakes region with more intensity by 1990. In 1991, in Zaire – especially in and around Kinshasha – the brothers faced considerable danger as elements opposed to the regime of President Mobutu plundered parts of the region. In neighbouring Rwanda, with the invasion of the Rwandan Patriotic Front in October of the previous year, a state of civil war gripped that country. A power-sharing accord agreed in 1993 was shattered by the shooting down of the plane carrying President Juvénal Habyarimana in April the following year, unleashing what was soon known as the "Rwandan Genocide". Among an estimated eight-hundred thousand people slaughtered in the space of a few months, there were four Marist brothers, as well as many Marist teachers and

⁶⁷⁹ Brother Michel Voute (who was with Brother Henri in community in Algiers at the time of his murder), in *FMS Message*. No. 15, October 1994. p.5

⁶⁸⁰ See, for example, books by Robert Masson. *Henri Vergès, un Chretien dans la maison de l'Islam* (2005), Brother Alain Delorme's *Du Capcir à la Casbah* (1996) and *Prier 15 Jours avec Henri Vergès* (2008), and the short biography in Brother Giovanni's booklet *Models of Marist Sanctity* (2008)

⁶⁸¹ Brother Eugène Kabanguka CG, in a recorded interview with the author, 5 July 2015.

⁶⁸² Brother Théoneste Kalisa in *FMS Message*, No.12, November 1992. The congress ran from 16 to 21 August 1992.

⁶⁸³ Brother Eugène Kabanguka, interview *idem*.

students, and members of the families of all the Rwandan brothers.⁶⁸⁴ The first to be killed was an exceptional Rwandese brother who had been Provincial, District Superior, Master of Scholastics, Master of Postulants, school Principal, a member of the team to lead the renewal programme in Rome. Brother Etienne Rwesa (aged 52) was killed on 22 April 1994, in Burundi as he fled Rwanda. His death was followed shortly after by those of Brothers Fabien Bisengimana (aged 45) with Gaspard Gatali (aged 24) and Canisius Nyilinkindi (36) all killed in Byimana where they were teaching.

By mid-year, there were increasingly grave concerns for the welfare of the brothers still in Rwanda. In an effort to secure the safety of those in Save, Brother Chris Mannion CG (aged 43) flew from Rome to Burundi at the end of June, and crossed into Rwanda. It was a trip that he and the General Council knew would be a risky one, but Brother Chris was quite determined to do all he could to get to assist his confreres. After driving 160 kilometres through the war zone in a convoy, under the protection of French troops, it was just on the outskirts of Save, only a very short distance from their goal, that he and Brother Joseph Rushigajiki (aged 41) were killed.

In the confusion of those weeks, their fate was not immediately known. Hopes were held for the survival of at least one of them. Despite the efforts of the General Council, especially Brothers Benito and Seán, to find out, the exact circumstances of their deaths were not to become clear. One charred body was recovered but it was not known which one it was. The violent death of a General Councillor, of course, had a strong impact on the General Council itself and

on the Institute more generally. He was remembered for his passion, his affability, his generosity, and the strength of his conviction. One particular extract from his personal journal was shared with the brothers:

*More and more I'm convinced that it isn't length of life which is important but the passion and commitment with which you live it ... I must live this gift of life now without worrying about what will be afterwards ... If I don't, then what is the purpose of the incarnation.*⁶⁸⁵



72. Brother
Chris Mannion



73. Brother
Etienne Rwesa

⁶⁸⁴ FMS Message. No.20, July 1996

⁶⁸⁵ FMS Message, No.15. October 1994. p.12

The Institute rallied in prayerful and material support for their confreres.⁶⁸⁶ The District Superior in Rwanda, Brother Spiridion Ndanga, was later to express heartfelt gratitude in an open letter:

*You have been there to support us, to encourage us. We have never felt alone. The Institute is a family and we bear each other's burdens. Thanks.*⁶⁸⁷

Wounded in their hearts by the horror that had transpired, but encouraged by such tangible support and the sacrifice of the lives of their confreres, the Rwandan brothers sought to re-group and to look at how and where they could best be Marist brothers in their country at this time of special need, and what of their previous work could be resumed. It was not a simple matter. The hurts were deep, the loss was keenly felt. Some brothers left the Institute. Some could not immediately come to terms with what had happened, or forgive those whom they felt were complicit in it. Most were in need of trauma counselling.⁶⁸⁸ Almost all of them, however, were able to assemble in Nairobi in August, with Brothers Benito and Luis García Sobrado, the first of three assemblies of the brothers of District that the Superior General was to convene in the next two years to rebuild their family spirit and to be reconciled in and among themselves.⁶⁸⁹ They resolved to work with Rwandan youth, both inside Rwanda and also in the refugee camps that were being established over the border in Zaire (now DRC). Before too long, there were twenty-one Rwandan brothers and six foreign brothers working back in Rwanda, in two boarding schools and a skills training centre. In addition, six brothers had gone to work in the Nyamirangwe refugee camp in Zaire, establishing themselves in modest circumstances on church property three kilometres away at Bugobe. Their work was in education, with primary and secondary students, and in various social and administrative responsibilities with the refugees. Unfortunately, by the second half of 1995 it had become too risky for them to continue. The Rwandan brothers needed to withdraw, and an invitation was issued to the Institute for their work to be continued by brothers from other Provinces. Meanwhile, in other parts of Zaire – in Bobandana, Goma, Bukavu, Nyangezi and Kinsangani – the brothers were under threat. It was a situation of heightened insecurity.

Such volatility did not dissuade many volunteers from coming forward. The four brothers who were chosen in 1995 for Bugobe came from the Provinces of Chile, Zaire-Madrid, and Côte d'Ivoire-Betica. Commissioned in Rome by Brother Benito, Brothers Miguel Angel Isla (aged 52), Servando Mayor (aged 43), Fernando de la Fuente (aged 51) and Julio Rodríguez (aged 39) moved to begin their work among the Rwandan refugees.

⁶⁸⁶ By 1995, over \$840,000 had been raised for Rwanda by Marist around the world. *FMS Message*. 20, July 1996

⁶⁸⁷ Letter to the Institute, in *FMS Message*. No. 20, July. p.36

⁶⁸⁸ Brother Jeffrey Crowe, interview *idem*.

⁶⁸⁹ *Ibid*.

By the following October the situation had become quite delicate. Rumours of an imminent attack on the camp were growing. While the brothers were acutely aware of the dangers they faced, in response to frequent invitations from Brother Benito and Brother Jeffrey Crowe to leave,⁶⁹⁰ their response was: "We cannot abandon those who are already abandoned by everyone. If you were here, you would do the same. We have decided to stay, if you will allow us."⁶⁹¹ From 23 October, they were in daily telephone contact with Brothers Benito and Jeffrey. On the day they were murdered, Brother Benito had spoken twice to Brother Servando. He was, the Superior General observed, "so calm, so full of faith, so clear-minded about the decision they had taken and the risks they were running."⁶⁹²

Servando had told Benito that "everyone has left the camp of Nyamirangwe. We are alone. We are expecting an attack at some time or other. If we do not call back this evening, it will be a bad sign."⁶⁹³ They did not call back. Apparently shot



74. Brother Servando Mayor and refugees. Nyamirangwe (1996).

⁶⁹⁰ After the death of Brother Chris Mannion, Brother Jeffrey Crowe CG was asked by Brother Benito as a delegate of the Superior General to accompany the brothers of the region. It was a responsibility that took him frequently to Africa, and also into situations of danger.

⁶⁹¹ Quoted by Brother Benito, in *FMS Message*. No.21. December 1996. p.6

⁶⁹² *Ibid.*

⁶⁹³ *Ibid.*

by a group of armed men who then occupied their house for some days,⁶⁹⁴ the four bodies were recovered two weeks later and buried in the brothers' property at Nyangezi.

Brother Jeffrey was to reflect on the lives and deaths of four Marist confrères whom he had come to know well:

These were four exceptional but ordinary brothers. The daily grind of serving the refugees was exhausting, the frustrations multiple. Their joys were simple and immediate: the smiles and expressions of thanks they received from mothers at the end of their strength in caring for malnourished children, the moments of happiness shared with the thousands of little ones surviving one day at a time, small victories won to gain a little more justice and care from various authorities. They shared the uncertainty, the worry, the fears and frustration of the refugees, but not their politics, the hatred, the dreams of a return to Rwanda with force.

They had no illusions as to their ability to influence the political thinking of people in such circumstances, formed as it was by generations of tribal discord in Rwanda.

In fact, this was one aspect of the suffering of the brothers: they were limited to simply staying with a suffering people while unable to address the underlying causes of their suffering, being men of faith, hope and love in this people's darkest hour. They did not choose death, but along with many thousands of those they had come to serve, they died as victims in a shameful and evil chapter in human history. Their experience is a definition of brotherhood, more compelling than any text.⁶⁹⁵

The troubles in Africa were to continue, immediately in the DRC over the next seven years and later,⁶⁹⁶ and in other countries to the present day. Each place was to witness the brothers, time and again, conducting their schools bravely, faithfully and creatively, establishing new ones, and working with youth in other ways to give them hope and opportunity, to lead them to be good Christians and good citizens. To give the Institute some perspective for the challenge of sharing in God's mission in situations of such risk and danger, Brother Benito, in his Circular of 1998, drew all the brothers to see their mission as Marist brothers from an evangelical point of view. Indeed, it was only "in the light of faith" that the deaths of the eleven brothers in Africa, or the life of any religious, could be understood, he wrote.⁶⁹⁷ He recalled for them the teaching of Bonhoeffer: "Living for others is the

⁶⁹⁴ It has not been determined whether these were Interhamwe militants or Rwandan government soldiers.

⁶⁹⁵ Brother Jeffrey Crowe, quoted in Brother Benito's Circular, *Fidelity to the Mission in Situations of Social Unrest*. pp. 94-95.

⁶⁹⁶ For example, see the account of Brother Giorgio Bigotto in *FMS Echo*, No.26, February 1997, concerning the violence in and near Goma, from which the brothers (including Brother Jeffrey) were fortunate to escape with their lives.

⁶⁹⁷ Brother Benito Arbués, *Fidelity to the Mission in Situations of Social Unrest*. #22.



75. Br Henri Vergès, killed in Algiers, Algeria (1994).

only way we can experience transcendence”.⁶⁹⁸ In the end, Brother Benito told his brothers, it must come back to the Cross:

The choice that our martyrs made for Jesus is bound up with the cross of love, which renders one vulnerable and exposes one to suffering; it is bound up in God’s message of love for the least and most abandoned of society. It arouses the hostility and the disdain of the mighty; it is linked to hope and to life, and provokes the opposition of those who love power and destruction.

Only from Jesus’ perspective is it possible to understand the efficacy of the cross and to make sense of martyrdom. Destruction, death, absence, loss are all turned into gain, presence, life, fullness. “If you had not found a cause worthy to die for, you would not have found reasons for living,” said Martin Luther King. The death of our Brothers is confirmation of the fact that taking up one’s cross with Jesus is inseparable from discipleship. Their deaths clearly reveal the mystery of the cross, a manifestation of the love and compassion of Christ for the world, especially for the weakest and least important.

*... It is only the Cross that can teach us, in the face of these horrors, how to say “Your ways are holy”.*⁶⁹⁹

*... It is only the Cross that can teach us, in the face of these horrors, how to say “Your ways are holy”.*⁶⁹⁹

Brother Benito was guiding the brothers of his day with the very same spiritual intuitions that his predecessor, Brother François, had used in his landmark Circular on the essence of what it meant to be a brother. It was only with “a spirit of faith” that a brother’s life could have meaning and purpose, wrote the closest disciple of the Founder. And that spirit led surely and inescapably to the Cross. The consistency of intuition used by Brother Benito and Brother François for what is at the heart of Marist spirituality is remarkable.

⁶⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹⁹ *Ibid.* #27-28.

[The spirit of faith] is ... to think, to speak and to act according to the Gospel ... It does not simply mean some pious practice ... but the doctrine of salvation which is essential to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. The Spirit of Faith is how to understand properly these words of our Saviour: Whoever would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me. (Luke 9:23). ... It is the conforming of our thoughts, our judgements, and our actions with the thoughts, judgements and actions of our Lord.

In the absence of this living and acting Faith, we would be like a man deprived of food, scarcely able to move, without strength or courage to do good, without help or defence against sin, without fervour or constancy ...

The Christian is ... surrounded and penetrated with the holiness and the majesty of God: his providence ... his power ... his goodness and his mercy ... his justice ... his will ... for in him we live, and move, and have our being (Acts 27:28) ... May we not say that true religious are as rare as true Christians? ... Where among us are the truly poor in spirit, the truly humble of heart, the true lovers of the Cross of Jesus Christ?⁷⁰⁰

The spirituality that had been bequeathed to the Institute by the charism of Marcellin Champagnat – one which is profoundly rooted in the paschal mystery of the Gospel, and lived out in a distinctively Marist way – continued to be re-contextualised authentically in situations that would have been beyond the imaginings of Brother François and the founding community. Nowhere more powerfully than through the blood of Marist martyrs was such integrity renewed and enlivened.

⁷⁰⁰ *Circulars of the Superiors General. Vol. II. 15 December 1848. passim*

The Canonisation of the Founder

The long-anticipated canonisation of Saint Marcellin on Sunday 18 April 1999 was the fruit of a process that had been re-launched by Brother Charles Howard,⁷⁰¹ and pursued with diligence and skill by initially by Brother Augustín Carazo and, especially, by Brother Gabriele Andreucci. News in 1997 that the miracle cure of Brother Herberto Weber Nelsson in Uruguay in 1976 had been recognised by the Congregation for Causes of Saints was greeted with great joy around

the world. In 1998 a Commission was formed to plan the celebrations,⁷⁰² and a theme chosen: *A Heart that Knew No Bounds*. Brother Seán was invited to write a new short biography, and the massive task of organising a global event was begun. It was important for the organisers that the canonisation event was not devalued into a series of shallow celebrations, but that it be a means for bringing contemporary Marists into an encounter with the charism of the Founder, and an occasion to build a stronger sense of Marist identity and family.⁷⁰³ It had been less than ten years since the “Champagnat Year” of 1989-90, but there was a noticeably different scope to the way the event was marked: whereas the Champagnat Year had been mainly a brothers’ event, the canonisation was for the much wider group of people who were now identifying with Marcellin’s spirituality. The three consecutive issues of *FMS Message* published around canonisation themes treat not only the way that the Marist world had celebrated the event, but also the way that Marist life and mission was being expressed in new and contemporary ways, and especially how Marists were seeking out the “Montagnes of today”.⁷⁰⁴

But a celebration it was. In Rome, Brother Benito and the committee had decided early in their planning to orient celebrations towards young people.⁷⁰⁵



76. Brothers Alessandro Di Pietro and Gabriele Andreucci, Postulators General, attending the canonisation of Champagnat (1999).

⁷⁰¹ A point made strongly to the author by former members of his Council, Brothers Benito Arbués and Alain Delorme, interviews *idem*.

⁷⁰² Its members were Brothers Benito Arbués, Henri Vignau, Onorino Rota, Gabriele Andreucci, Lluís Serra, José Contreras, and John McDonnell.

⁷⁰³ *FMS Message*. No.28. (February 2000) p.3

⁷⁰⁴ No. 26 (April 1999) No.27. (6 June 1999) and No.28. (February 2000). The phrase “Montagnes of today” had grown in use after the XIX General Chapter in 1993.

⁷⁰⁵ *FMS Message*. No.28, p.10

And they came in their thousands. Many Provinces gave priority to sending students and young adults. Over 1,400 of them gathered at San Leone Magno for a vibrant youth celebration on Saturday 17th, and they made up a large proportion of the capacity audience in the Paul VI Hall that evening for a concert which showcased Marist musical and dramatic talent from every continent. On the same evening, a formal reception was hosted by the French Embassy at Villa Bonaparte. In a major logistical exercise, over ten thousand pilgrims were welcomed to the General House over several days, where displays and tours had been organised and carefully scheduled by the brothers' community. For the Mass itself, over eighty thousand packed St Peter's Square, many of them wearing or waving their specially designed scarves, to hear the Pope proclaim that Marcellin Champagnat had been enrolled in the Book of Saints.⁷⁰⁶ Among them were brothers, members of fraternities of the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family, other lay Marist and Marist students, friends and supporters of the Institute. Brothers had travelled from most of the eighty countries in which Marists were found, among them two elderly men from mainland China – Brothers Norbert and Celestine. The Pope reminded the huge and lively congregation that Saint Marcellin continued to invite them all

*... to be missionaries, to make Jesus Christ known and loved, as the Marist Brothers did, even as far as Asia and Oceania. Mary as guide and mother, the Christian is a missionary and a servant of people. Let us ask the Lord to give us a heart that burns like that of Marcellin Champagnat, to recognise him and to be his witnesses.*⁷⁰⁷



⁷⁰⁶ Canonised with St Marcellin, were two Italians – St Giovanni Calabria and St Agostina Livia Pietrantoni.

⁷⁰⁷ *FMS Message*. No.28, p.64

On the Sunday evening, over 800 brothers who were in Rome gathered at the General House in perhaps the largest-ever assembly of brothers in the one place. It was about one sixth of the entire Institute. A special programme of welcome, prayer, the unveiling of a new icon,⁷⁰⁸ and a celebratory meal had been prepared. But the brothers took matters into their own hands: crowded shoulder-to-shoulder into the main chapel, one brother spontaneously intoned the *Salve Regina* and all eight hundred of his confreres joined it. It was a special moment.⁷⁰⁹

The following day, 7,000 Marist pilgrims had an early start to make it to a Mass at the Basilica of St Paul Outside the Walls at 8.00am, celebrated by the Superior General of the Society of Mary, Father Joaquín Fernández, with Brother Benito giving the homily. The pilgrims then headed back to the Vatican for a Papal Audience at Noon, and the formal close to days of celebrations.



78. St Peter's Square was filled with tens of thousands of people.

⁷⁰⁸ Written by the Carmelite Sisters at Harissa, Lebanon, for the Canonisation

⁷⁰⁹ Brother Seán Sammon recalled this as a "wonderful moment of our international brotherhood". Interview, *idem*.

In his address, the Pope made special mention of the eleven brothers, “witnesses of truth and love”, who had been martyred in Africa in the previous five years.

They were memorable days that gave a window into what Marist spirituality had become, and how it was giving life to the gospel in all corners of the world. Brother Seán commented:

The variety of pilgrims who streamed through our house in EUR over several days filled me with a sense of wonder. What a diversity of cultures, languages, and political realities; and yet, in the midst of all the differences stood Marcellin Champagnat, a simple country priest and Marist Father, who bound us all together profoundly.⁷¹⁰



- ▲ **79.** More than 800 Brothers gathered in the Chapel of the General House on the Sunday night.
- ▶ **80.** The Superiors General of the four Marist branches at St Paul's Outside the Walls for the Thanksgiving Mass after the Canonization of St Marcellin.



⁷¹⁰ FMS Message, 28, p.9

14.

CREATIVE FIDELITY TO THE FOUNDING MARIST SPIRITUAL INTUITIONS

From the foregoing discussion, it can be seen that, through the three decades that followed the publication of the new Constitutions of the Institute in late 1986, Marist spirituality came to be more richly and clearly expressed in word and image, more broadly lived by a growing and multi-faceted spiritual family, and more authentically in touch with the charisma from which it was born. This has called all Marists to a deeper sense of their being disciples of Jesus Christ, with Mary as their sister in faith and their model as First Disciple, and to a distinctively Marian way of gathering and ministering together. For the brothers within this family, these years presented a particular challenge to define who they were as religious in the Church of today, and to an integration of the spiritual, communal and apostolic dimensions of their consecration. It has been a challenge that successive Superiors General and General Chapters have presented to them in terms of centring their lives on Jesus Christ and his Gospel, of developing ways of praying, living and working that foster this, and of the personal and collective conversion and discernment that needs to be ongoing. The calls have been clear. From the reports of Councils and Chapters, however, it is evident that there have been variances in the ways that the calls have and have not been heeded by Provinces, communities, individual brothers, and the wider Marist family.

The increased attention on Marcellin Champagnat, which has unquestionably marked these years, has gone through its own journey. Particularly in the 1980s and 1990s, the use of the Founder as a point of reference was continual, for example in his recurring mention in the Constitutions and the Circulars, and through the series of events and initiatives that included the Champagnat Year, the re-launch of Brother Jean-Baptiste's biography and the writing of a number of new ones, the emphasis on him especially in the Chapter of 1993 and the *Marist Educational Mission* document, the publication and study of his Letters, and the Canonisation. While certainly there was validity in "tapping into" this "life-giving root", there was also an inherent risk if it were done uncritically or non-evangelically. There always lurks a danger of the fostering of a personality cult around a founder, something that can potentially supplant the essence of a founder's personal charisma with a dynamic that is not primarily concerned with Christian discipleship and *Missio Dei*. In his being such a compellingly inspirational figure, both in his person and his action, Marcellin was the kind of figure that could have created an institutional culture defined only by its distinctive style and its particular locus of operation, rather than being a school of Christian discipleship. There is no evidence that this occurred in the 1820s and 1830s, nor during the decades that followed; quite the contrary. But the intensive re-appropriation of Marcellin in Marist life and mission in late twentieth century created the possibility of its hap-

pening, even if unwittingly. It is always a risk for institutions within the Church, when its members are motivated primarily by things other than the Gospel. In his first homily as Pope, the day after his election, Francis warned of it. Using concepts that are wholly consistent with those of Brothers François and Benito cited above, the Pope described the essence of Christian discipleship in terms of the cross. Without Jesus, and without the cross, he said, the Church becomes little more than a humanitarian NGO.

*When we walk without the cross, when we build without the cross, and when we confess Christ without the cross, we are not disciples of the Lord: we are worldly. We might be bishops, priests, cardinals, popes, but not disciples of the Lord.*⁷¹¹

The capacity of an institutionalised group such as the Marists to nurture Christian discipleship generally, and consecrated life in particular, becomes a diminished one, whatever its other valued achievements.

Among the factors that seem to have been at play to help the Institute, and the Marist spiritual family more generally, to maintain a centeredness on Jesus and the Gospel, are the priorities and insight of its leaders, the witness and giftedness of its members, the richness and fecundity of its spiritual patrimony, and its agility in re-contextualising and re-casting itself as a contemporary spiritual family. And all of this, of course, in and through the action of the Holy Spirit.

First, the imperative to have a passion for Jesus and the Gospel has been a continual theme of the messages of the Superiors General and of General Chapters. Brother Charles in his emphasis on daily conversion, Brother Benito his urging of evangelical discernment, Brother Seán in his encouragement for his fellow Marist to quench their spiritual thirst and passion in Jesus, and Brother Emili in his focus on the need for a Marian interiority, has each maintained an unequivocal Christocentricism in his writing. Successive General Councils in their reports, and the General Chapters in their messages, have echoed this emphasis, albeit often with a measure of dissatisfaction as to how it might be being lived out in different parts of the Institute. The key thing, nonetheless, is the focus on Jesus and the meaning of discipleship.

Second, the profundity of the witness of Marist lives, especially but not only those which have been lost in violent circumstances, has given impetus and inspiration to their Marist companions. Included among these have been the Spanish martyrs, the brothers who were killed in the 1990s, and also the many others in every Province who have lived faithful and generous lives, and who have given witness to the Marist way. In this context, it is important to mention the brothers such as Basilio and Alfano whose causes are in progress.⁷¹² In addition to this

⁷¹¹ Homily of the Holy Father, Pope Francis. *Missa Pro Ecclesia* with the Cardinal Electors in the Sistine Chapel, 14 March 2013. w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20130314_omelia-cardinali.html. (Accessed 29 November 2015)

⁷¹² The decision to open the cause of Brother Basilio (1924-1996) was taken by the General Council in 2001 (FMS Echo 41), the diocesan process opened in Guadalajara, Mexico, in 2004, and is progressing with some rapidity (FMS Message, 43, p.8). A number of biographies and other resources for Brother Basilio have been produced. The herocity of the virtues of Brother Alfano (1873-1943) was recognised in 1991, and he was made "Venerable", as had been Brother François (1808-1881) in 1968.

witness, are the plentiful examples of the creativity, daring and initiative that have been the mark of brothers and other Marists in many Provinces, something that has been recognised and celebrated in the two International Marist Mission Assemblies.

Third, the resources which have been invested into scholarship of Marist spiritual patrimony, and animation of it, have borne much fruit. As well as a re-discovery of the Founder himself, the significance of founding intuitions of the wider Marist project has emerged more strongly, as has also the defining contribution of Marcellin's "marvellous companions". Of the latter, Brother François has come more and more to be seen as especially important, something recognised in the "François Year" of 2003-04, and publications and seminars in the years since. The former point deserves particular highlight for it represents no less than a fundamental re-claiming of the deep Marian purposes and identity of what it means to be "Marist". In 1993, Brother Charles had been concerned that Mary had been neglected by the General Chapter, and in 2001 that her entry was somewhat belated.⁷¹³ He was of the view that the Marists had a particular contribution to make to the realisation of the dreams of Vatican II in their being Marian. Towards the end of his life he remarked:

*Vatican II is a quite unfinished project. We have to let fresh air into the Church ... One of these elements is its Marian dimension ... We need to bring about a Church with a Marian face and the compassionate heart of a mother.*⁷¹⁴

Pope John Paul II had given the Marists a decisive prod in this direction when he spoke at special Audience for the members of the General Chapters of four Marist institutes in 2001:

*Today, yours is the call to make the presence of the Blessed Virgin Mary visible in the life of the Church and in the lives of men and women in an original and specific way and, for this, to develop a Marian attitude.*⁷¹⁵

He understood this to mean a joyful availability to the Holy Spirit, an unshakable confidence in the Word of the Lord, spiritual growth in Christ's mysteries, a maternal-like attentiveness especially to the smallest, and to keep education of youth as a special missionary priority.⁷¹⁶ In the following years, as reflected in *Water from the Rock* and the Marian Circulars of Brothers Seán and Emili, Mary began to provide the key for opening the door to a new horizon of Marist spirituality. As has been discussed above, by 2009 she had come to be seen as pivotal in understanding contemporary Marist spirituality, and the Marist project.

⁷¹³ Brother Luis García Sobrado, in interview *idem*. Affirmed by Brother Benito Arbués, interview *idem*.

⁷¹⁴ Brother Charles Howard, in interview transcript *idem*.

⁷¹⁵ Message of Pope John Paul II to the Delegates of the Marist General Chapters, 17 September 2001. In Acts of the XX General Chapter. #3

⁷¹⁶ *Ibid.* #3, 6.

Marists had found for a new age the same conviction that Marcellin and his fellow seminarians had intuited two centuries before – that they were called to share in “Mary’s work”, and to go about it in Mary’s way. And Mary’s work was nothing less than *Missio Dei*, to bring to birth the reign of God, to nurture its growth, and to gather community. The language that the present generation of Marists chose to for this was that they were called to be “mystics and prophets”.

Fourth, perhaps because it was a defining element of the audacious style that came from Marcellin himself, Marists were instinctively drawn to the new and the bold. It was for renewal of the Church that they were founded, and at their best they are always drawn to what achieves that.

*To renew the Church. That was ... the vision that inflamed the hearts of the twelve newly-ordained priests who, in 1816, went up to Fourvière to make their pledge at the foot of the Black Madonna, thus giving birth to the Society of Mary. Part of our DNA as Marists ... is to renew the Church, giving it a Marian face.*⁷¹⁷

They continued to want to see themselves as both alert to the signs of their times and daring in their response to them. The language of successive General Chapters and the two MIMAs is replete with evidence of a group of people which is creative in its imagining and big in its dreaming. In 2009, the capitulants wrote to their fellow Marists around the world:

*We desire to carry on God’s dream: as men and women of God, prophets of fraternity in a dehumanised world searching for meaning and searching for God. In the light of the Chapter experience, we feel called to respond, as brothers and sisters, witnesses to the maternal face of God ... We have heard the call of the Lord: “You must be born again” (Jn. 3:7) ... Jesus invites us to conversion of heart.*⁷¹⁸

For the capitulants, being “born again” meant both a “new way of being brother” and a “new relationship” of all Marists that was “based on communion”.⁷¹⁹ At MIMA II, five years later, the language of newness and vitality again leaps from the page:

Like Mary, we have heard in our hearts the invitation to respond to God’s call and loudly proclaim the prophetic words of her Magnificat. Like her, we want to live an attitude of openness to the new situations emerging in our ever-changing world. We welcome her invitation to “do whatever he tells you.” We recognise the centrality of Jesus Christ in our lives and we feel sent by him to be evangelisers and people-on-mission.

⁷¹⁷ Brother Emili Turú, *The Dance of Mission*, p.2

⁷¹⁸ *With Mary, Go in Haste to a New Land, Document of the XXI General Chapter.*

⁷¹⁹ *FMS Message*, No.40. March 2010. p.13

Like a new Pentecost, the fire of the Spirit has burnt in our hearts and has encouraged us to dream of new horizons for an enhanced vitality of the Marist charism ... In a context of global change, we have felt the need strongly to change perspective, to look at the world through the eyes of poor children, and to do so with the tenderness and mercy of God.⁷²⁰

Along with the imaginative and daring language, some key Marist spiritual intuitions remain clear: a Marian sensitivity to the Spirit of God and to young people in need, a missionary mandate framed by the Magnificat, and centeredness on Jesus Christ.

⁷²⁰ *Voices of the Fire, the Message of the Delegates II MIMA*). Nairobi, Kenya. 27th September, 2014.

History of the Institute



PART 4

**Government and
structural
development:**

*looking for
new wineskins*



81. On the previous page:
Handing over of responsibilities
at the 21st General Chapter.

15.

A CONTEXT OF CHANGE

When a representative group of 155 Marists gathered in Nairobi in September 2014 for the second Marist International Mission Assembly, they found that the slogan printed on their conference satchels and embroidered into their polo-shirts was *New Marists in Mission*. Five years previously, when eighty-six Marist brothers met in Rome for the twenty-first General Chapter of their Institute, they were greeted by a banner painted across the large windows of the General House foyer that had the words: *New Hearts for a New World*. It is instructive to pause on each of the expressions in these slogans, and to ponder the concepts that underpin them: “new”, “new Marists”, “new hearts”, “new world”, and “mission”. They provide a window into the contexts and priorities that need to be understood in any discussion of why and how the leadership, administration, and structures for Marist life and mission have changed over the three decades from 1985.

Most obvious is the recurrence of the word “new”. The term implies change; its repeated use suggests major change. From the time of the 1960s, in both church and society, change had become normative. Even a cursory glance at the content and outcomes of General Chapters and the major initiatives taken during this period reveals that, at least at the level of the whole Institute, there have been strategic and repeated attempts to embrace such change. The Institute has clearly aspired to be an agent of change rather than to find itself as a victim of it. While, at the level of individual administrative units the responses may have been more varied both in their scope and their effect, the Institute has time and again sought to re-contextualise itself, to re-position itself, even to re-interpret itself, in an effort to be creatively faithful to its founding intuitions.

It has indeed been a “new world” in which the Institute has gone about this, a time of genuine revolution and fundamental change. Among the major phenomena of the time one could point to:

- the digital revolution, no less significant in its impact on society than the agricultural and industrial revolutions of former centuries, its effects experienced in “globalisation” in all its positive and negative facets, in the information explosion, and in new ways of communicating and educating and leading;
- the emergence of post-modernism in thought and culture, and with it the breakdown of previously trusted metanarratives and the institutions associated with them;
- the continuing geopolitical realignment of the world, part of which has seen the demise of European communism but a certain fragility in what emerged in Europe in its wake, the end of the colonial era in Asia and Africa but not always with economic and political structures to foster justice and equity

both within countries and between continents, the massive displacement of peoples and cultures caused often enough by non-state terrorist entities, and the exacerbation of ideological and military volatility through new technologies;

- the growth in ecological awareness and action; and, of course,
- the massive ecclesiological, theological, liturgical and missiological changes ushered by Vatican II, what Karl Rahner SJ famously described as the most decisive change in the Church since the Council of Jerusalem in the Apostolic times.⁷²¹

All of these trends have impacted on the Institute's core mission of evangelisation of young people through the education and care of them, and advocacy on their behalf. It has called for new responses, but before that for "new hearts", or new sensitivities and new ways of responding in love. The authentic Marist response is born first in the heart.

Quite significant is the use of "new Marists", a term which carries a sense of fresh perspective in self-identity and purpose. The XXI General Chapter called both for "new ways of being brother" and also a "new communion" of all Marists, one which recognised their "co-responsibility" for Marist life and mission.⁷²² When the new Constitutions were drafted in the 1980s, there was really only one category of "Marist" in mind – that of the brother – and only one structure for exercising governance and to which to belong – that of the Institute, with its Provinces. But, just as theologians such as Hans Küng had been long arguing for a "paradigm shift" in the Church's understanding of itself,⁷²³ by the second decade of the twenty-first century the same need for conceptual change was beginning to be felt among Marists.⁷²⁴ At a meeting of all Provincials and other representatives with the General Administration in Rome in July 2015,⁷²⁵ this term was used for what the Institute needed to do, and with it another one used by Jesus: that "new wine" required "new wineskins".⁷²⁶ In welcoming participants, Brother Emili addressed them with the challenge that "change is coming and we will need to lead

⁷²¹ See, Karl Rahner. *Theological Investigations XX: Concern for the Church*. Translated by Edward Quinn. New York, Crossroad Publishing Company. 1981.

⁷²² *Document of the XXI General Chapter*, 2009.

⁷²³ See Hans Küng. *Theology for the Third Millennium: An Ecumenical View*. New York: Anchor Books, 1990.

⁷²⁴ The term "paradigm shift" became popularised beyond its first use by physicist and epistemologist Thomas Kuhn in the 1960s when he coined the term to describe the nature of revolution in scientific conceptualising when unexplained anomalies to existing paradigms are observed. (See Kuhn, Thomas S. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. 3rd ed. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996.) It came to be used more broadly in fields such as sociology and ecclesiology.

⁷²⁵ 10-14 July, 2015. A meeting of 85 participants that included all Provincials, one other Province representative, all the General Council and Directors of Secretariats, and the Commission and Project Team for the "New Models of Animation, Government and Management Project".

⁷²⁶ *Marist News*. No.380. 16 July 2015. Scripture references: Matthew 9:14-17, Mark 2:21-22 and Luke 5:33-39

it."⁷²⁷ In all of this, however, the guiding imperative was the one word “mission”. “New” Marists only had validity if they were sharers in the eternal and unfolding *Missio Dei*.

While it is true that an *ad experimentum* period for the Institute had concluded in the mid-1980s with its adoption of new Constitutions, it needs also to be seen that another and even greater period of searching lay ahead. Much of “new Marist wine” was yet to be barrelled: the reorientation and expansion of mission, the re-expression and re-claiming of Marist spirituality, the emergence and recognition of the lay Marist vocation and with it a growing sense of a more complex spiritual family of Marists, and the deepening of the Church’s understanding regarding the place of consecrated men and women in its life and mission. At the same time, there had been a dramatic fall in the number of brothers in the Institute, a rise in their average age, and a threat to ongoing viability of more than a few administrative units.⁷²⁸ In some countries this resulted in a concomitant diminishment of the vitality of Marist life and mission more generally, while in others, despite fewer and older brothers, Marist works grew and, with them, fresh forms of Marist life began to flourish.⁷²⁹ In other places again, where cultural and ecclesial realities were less conducive for the fostering of lay Marist life, and/or the proportion of younger brothers was relatively high, the realities were different again. In some Provinces, including those with strong histories, it was not clear from where the next generation of leaders would be drawn.⁷³⁰ Change was therefore not being experienced in uniform ways, with the same momentum, or with the same capacity or readiness for engagement. Despite the use of common language and concepts at the level of the Institute, the lived reality was more complex. This is the context for considering the developments in leadership, administration and structures for Marists over the last three decades.

⁷²⁷ News item on Institute website. www.champagnat.org/400.php?a=6&n=3666#sthash.Wtrqt8s.dpuf. (Accessed 30 November 2015)

⁷²⁸ In 1985, there were 6110 brothers; in 1995, 5163; in 2005, 4151; and 2015, 3270.

⁷²⁹ Cf. *Report of the Brother Superior General and his Council to the XIX General Chapter*. p.1

⁷³⁰ Brother Charles referred to the shortage of potential leaders in his opening address to the XIX General Chapter. It was a recurring concern mentioned to the author in interviews with present and former General Councillors. In older Provinces, they pointed, for example, to the number of former Provincials who had been re-appointed to leadership In Europe, Latin America and Oceania. Brother Michael de Waas CG, for example, described it as “looming crisis of leadership for the Institute”. (Recorded interview, 4 July 2015.)

16.

DEVELOPMENTS IN LEADERSHIP OF THE INSTITUTE

The General Council's approach to its twin responsibilities of animation and government

It had been the 1976 Chapter that had made a break with the old model of "Assistants General".⁷³¹ Although the 1968 Directory had already done away with the term,⁷³² replacing it with "General Councillors", these brothers had retained specific leadership responsibilities and authorities. Between 1967 and 1976, the General Councillors included a Vicar General, and two categories of other Councillors: those in charge of "Regions", and those in charge of "Services". In the latter group of five, there was to be a Councillor in charge of Formation, another with oversight of "the Apostolate and the Missions", the Secretary General, the Econome General, and the Procurator General.⁷³³ There was, however, some continuing discontent among the Provincials regarding the ways by which the Regional Councillors sometimes exercised their leadership, exacerbated by their often being past-Provincials from within the Regions which they were overseeing.⁷³⁴ The Statutes approved with the new Constitutions in 1985 allocated no specific responsibilities to the General Councillors, other than the Secretary General and Econome General.⁷³⁵ The manner in which the Councillors worked, and where and how they directed their energies, had become something for each new Superior General and Council to work out for themselves.

One result of this change, whether intended or not, was even more autonomy for the Provinces. The concept of Provinces as individual administrative units, each with its own major superior, had been imposed on the Institute by the Holy

⁷³¹ This had been on the recommendation of Brother Basilio and Council who had wanted a "sufficiently large Council", with Councillors in direct contact with Provinces, but not in charge of Regions. *Report of the State of the Institute to the XVIII General Chapter*, p.70

⁷³² The *Directory*, the direct successor to the *Common Rules*, did not receive the same extensive attention as the *Constitutions* at the XVII Chapter. The *Constitutions* was a more poetically crafted document, which the Preface of the Directory recognised as describing the "essence of our religious life". It included, however, only scant mention of the way leadership would be exercised in the Institute, restricting itself to some broad principles about the nature of leadership in a fairly brief Chapter 5, with nothing concerning the specific responsibilities or structures of the General Council. This was all left to the *Directory* which was more juridical in tone and quite detailed in its provisions.

⁷³³ *Directoire*, 1970 edition. ##163-174

⁷³⁴ Brother Charles Howard, in interview transcript, *idem*.

⁷³⁵ These Statutes were to be amended in 1993, so that both these people did not need to be General Councillors.

See in its approval of the Constitutions of 1903. Prior to that time, the Institute had its authority focussed much more at the centre and, with that, more practical agility for acting as a single body. It was not unknown, for example, in the nineteenth century that missionary brothers were appointed by the Superior General to several countries in the course of their lifetimes. Although the Provincials had become major superiors after 1903, the degree of their autonomous operation was, in practice, still limited until the 1960s by a number of factors. First was the prescriptiveness and restrictiveness of the Constitutions and the Common Rules. There was little room for variation in anything: the nature of the apostolate, the pattern of community life, the daily and annual rhythm of the brothers' life, the religious habit, or the local implementation of the Rule. Second, the spirit of these documents made for an institutionalised and micro-managed culture. Every initiative either required a Superior's permission or was the subject of a Superior's inspection and report. A brother could not even write a letter without its being available to be opened for inspection by his Director or leave the house alone or without permission (so as to safeguard against any "dangerous liaisons" with "seculars").⁷³⁶ This was hardly conducive to building a culture of discerned initiative or responsible creativity. Third, the way in which Assistants General conducted their Visitations, and the minutiae which they included in their written reports, ensured that the reins on Provincials were usually held firmly. Added to this was the situation whereby the Superior General appointed both Provincials and Provincial Councillors without consultation with the Province, and typically on the recommendation of the relevant Assistant General.

From 1968, many of these in-built measures of centrality, supervision, and up-the-line accountability had begun to loosen. There had also been deliberately different emphases woven into the documents regarding the nature of authority in the Institute. In 1968, the Chapter on "Government" was subtitled "Unity in Love", and the twin concepts of "subsidiarity" and "co-responsibility" were introduced.⁷³⁷ The clear intention was to enhance the degree to which personal and shared responsibility was exercised in the lives of the brothers and the working of the Institute, at all levels.

*Decisions will be made
at the level best suited
to maintain the dignity, the rights and the duties
of persons, as well of communities or other groups
who have responsibilities*

*This encourages commitment and creativity,
develops natural talents,
as well as efficacy in the apostolate,
and helps to make all brothers
true members of the Congregation.*⁷³⁸

⁷³⁶ *Constitutions*, 1930. #206

⁷³⁷ *Constitutions*, 1968. ##81-83

⁷³⁸ *Ibid.* #82

*Without losing his personal initiative,
but with humility and disinterestedness,
each brother will examine in prayer
and by means of sincere exchange of views,
the means which others envisage
to attain this goal.⁷³⁹*

Province-level commissions were envisaged as a means of sharing responsibility;⁷⁴⁰ Provincial Chapters – elected by all the brothers of a Province – were introduced to review and plan the community and prayer life of the brothers, the apostolate and the finances of the Province, and Provincial Councillors were elected locally to lead this.⁷⁴¹ All of this was confirmed in the 1985 *Constitutions*, but with one interesting omission. Whereas the *Directory* in 1968 had envisaged “Regional Conferences” of Provincials to plan cooperative ventures among them, these were not provided for in the 1985 *Constitutions* and *Statutes*, perhaps indicative of just how much Provinces themselves had become the primary locus of action. It was to fall to Brother Charles and his Council to keep breath in this regional concept, beginning in Latin America and building on what was already happening in Brazil. The degree of devolution that had developed was something that came to be questioned by later Superiors General. Brothers Seán and Emili, in particular, addressed it. “We were functioning more as a federation of provinces than as a single body.”⁷⁴² By the time of the General Conference of 2013, “internationality” had emerged as a priority in itself. It was taken up the following year at II MIMA) in Nairobi, where the participants dreamt of “a network of international and multicultural communities that can move as needed for the sake of mission.”⁷⁴³

When they gathered after the 1985 Chapter, the Council of Brother Charles had a relatively free hand in determining how it would work. Brother Yves Thénoz had been elected Secretary General and Brother Ezequiel Vaquéryn as Econome General, but the responsibilities of the others could be determined by Brother Charles and the Council itself. Some matters presented themselves as urgent, particularly the finalisation of the *Constitutions* and the question of post-novitiate formation in Africa. It was natural that the former could be guided by Brother Alain Delorme who had been on the drafting commission before the Chapter, and initial carriage of the latter could be entrusted to Brother Powell Prieur, given his knowledge of Africa and his close collaboration with Brother Charles on the Social Secretariat under the previous administration. Brother Philip Ouellette’s background in formation also involved him in this, something that led him over the next few years to

⁷³⁹ *Ibid.* #84

⁷⁴⁰ *Ibid.* #83

⁷⁴¹ *Directoire.* ##187-96

⁷⁴² Brother Emili Turú, interview *idem*.

⁷⁴³ *Voices from the Fire, Message of II MIMA).*

all the formation houses in the Institute.⁷⁴⁴ Looking at the Institute more globally, the Council accepted Brother Richard Dunleavy's recommendation that it plan a series of short initial visits to all Provinces and Districts in order to develop a view of the whole Institute and a shared sense of the issues it faced, then a second round of longer, more traditional visits. A third round of short visits could be done at the end of the mandate.⁷⁴⁵ The visits were to be pastoral in their character rather than inspectorial, and done usually in pairs.

The aim was for the leadership to be more shared and the directions of the Institute collectively discerned. For example, the Council developed together the five priorities which it intended to pursue through its visits, the establishment of international commissions, personal presence at special events, and the publications of the Institute. These were: the new Constitutions, discernment, the mission, formation, and vocations. They developed a pattern of two longer "plenary sessions" where the whole Council met for some weeks at a time, and set of permanent sub-committees of the Council, or "commissions" which had responsibility for particular areas, such as formation, which were the key areas for the Council. According to need, some special ad hoc commissions were established involving Councillors and non-Councillors with expertise, for example for the Constitutions, and the re-editing of the *The Life*.⁷⁴⁶ It was to be a model of government that, with some variation, was to remain much the same with each successive General Council. True to his own wishes for the whole Institute, the practice of discernment in decision-making was also a priority for Brother Charles within the Council.⁷⁴⁷ At the same time, the Superior General was a man of strong conviction and purpose; his personal style – "ever the headmaster"⁷⁴⁸ – meant that "we never went on a visit without some riding instructions from Charles".⁷⁴⁹ It could be argued that it was perhaps such force of personality that led to such major initiatives as MIC in Nairobi, MAC in Manila, and the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family.

In reflecting on their experience at the end of their mandate, the Council noted three areas that had created some problems for them. There were the personal challenges of matters such as work/life balance, and the building and maintaining of community amidst all their travel and time away from Rome. There were also a range of technical and legal matters that occupied their time. The difficulty which proved the most significant for them, however, was the maintenance of on-going contact with Provincials and follow-up on matters that had surfaced during their visits.

⁷⁴⁴ Interviews with Brothers Alain Delorme and Philip Ouellette (5 May and 15 May 2015), and transcript of interview with Brother Charles (May 2006)

⁷⁴⁵ *Report of the Brother Superior General and his Council to the XIX General Chapter*, p.24; interview with Brother Richard Dunleavy, *idem*.

⁷⁴⁶ *Report of the Brother Superior General and his Council to the XIX General Chapter*, p.24

⁷⁴⁷ Brother Benito Arbués, interview *idem*.

⁷⁴⁸ Brother Richard Dunleavy, interview *idem*.

⁷⁴⁹ *Ibid*. Affirmed also by Brother Philip Ouellette, interview *idem*.

The main cause of this, they observed, was the absence of Councillors permanently based at the General House who could do this.⁷⁵⁰ It is an interesting observation because this is the very thing that the 1985 Chapter had rejected. One consequence of the lack of sustained follow-up with Provinces, and no-one with authority over a particular area such as education for the whole Institute, was that Provinces were less shackled and were more at liberty to proceed in their own ways. It should be noted, nonetheless, that the Council took three initiatives that were to continue to play an important role in the way the General leadership of the Institute did maintain a direct connection with Provincials and involved them effectively in shared decision-making. The first may seem small, but it did keep Provincials in touch with the mind of the Superior General and Council, and Brother Charles saw it as important⁷⁵¹ – the introduction of a regular Bulletin to Provincials. Second was the way the General Conference was prepared and executed. There had been General Conferences in Rome during Brother Basilio's time, but Veránopolis in 1989 was planned and resourced much more extensively, with Provincials involved in intense processes of shared decision-making. Third was the creation of continental Conferences of Provincials – in Latin America, Africa and Europe – with the direct involvement of the General Council in their meetings. This was a particular initiative and project of Brother Charles.⁷⁵²

By 1993, it was becoming clearer that something had been lost with the move away from the old Assistant General model in 1976, in particular the way that responsibilities for services and regions could be equitably spread. Brother Charles expressed this view in his opening address to the XIX General Chapter.⁷⁵³ In practice, he observed, a disproportionate amount of work fell to the Superior General, the Vicar General, and the Secretary General. Whether they judged this to be more a function of the centralist personal style of Charles's leadership, or whether the memories of the capitulants in 1993 cautioned them against a return to the pre-1976 arrangements, or whether it was for other reasons, there was no change recommended by the Chapter. Indeed, matters went the other way, with the Secretary General and Econome General no longer members of the Council.⁷⁵⁴

⁷⁵⁰ *Report of the Brother Superior General and his Council to the XIX General Chapter*, p.22

⁷⁵¹ Brother Charles Howard in interview transcript, *idem*. p.38.

⁷⁵² Brother Benito Arbués, interview *idem*.

⁷⁵³ *Opening Address to the XIX General Chapter*, 1993. "Annexe on Government."

⁷⁵⁴ In fact, according to Brother Jeffrey Crowe, this became one of the early disagreements on the new Council. Some, he among them, proposed that a number of Councillors not only have regional responsibilities but also be residentially based in the regions. The idea was that they would operate for most of their time within a region and come to Rome for plenary meetings – along the lines that the Brothers of the Christian Schools (De La Salle Brothers) were to introduce. The idea was quickly quashed on the basis of an interpretation of Article 136 of the Constitutions which described the General Council's "forming a community" with the Superior General. (Br Jeffrey Crowe, interview, *idem*.)

The Council elected in 1993 was, by general consensus, a particularly capable one – men of considerable intellect, proven experience of leadership, breadth of vision, passion and faith; several were in their forties; men elected from a Chapter with the theme “*audace et espérance*”. There also were among them, by their own admission, brothers with strong personal convictions for whom consensus did not always come readily.⁷⁵⁵ Their time as a Council was also, sadly, soon to be affected and, to some extent at least, defined by the tragic and violent deaths in Africa, among them one of their own number. It needed also to deal early in its time with the diagnosis of the brain tumour of the Vicar General, Brother Seán, and the immediate surgery this required. The Council, nonetheless, set its goals more sharply and planned its work more strategically than perhaps any before it. Its first two months together were spent doing just that: reflecting at depth on the four themes of the XIX Chapter (mission, solidarity, Marist apostolic spirituality, formation) and the documents that had come from it. From this, they developed a “pastoral plan” for the first four years of their mandate, with this overarching goal:

*To live out, with daring and hope, our mission of animating and governing the Institute, seeking an ever-greater vitality (conversion, fidelity, transformation) at all levels of Institute life, based on the Gospel, our Marist Constitutions, the calls of the world, and the orientations of the XIX General Chapter.*⁷⁵⁶

The global goal translated into five specific goals concerned with mission, solidarity, Marist apostolic spirituality, formation, and restructuring. Each had emerged from the Chapter, even though there was not initial clarity or agreement around the scope of the fifth one.⁷⁵⁷ To take forward the goals, the Council formed five Commissions among its members (Mission, Solidarity, Marist Apostolic Spirituality, Formation and Finances).⁷⁵⁸ It also introduced more formalised focus for the Councillors by allocating them to six (?) “continental groups” (for Africa, Asia/Pacific, Europe, Latin America, and North America) with some overlap of Councillors among these groups. There were several ad hoc groups for more specific matters (Rwanda, *las Hermanitas de Champagnat* in Central America, Cuba, an Administration Manual for the General House, and the Canonisation), and Councillors appointed as special delegates of the Superior General for three specific matters: Rwanda/Congo, Formation Houses and Renewal Centres, and the International College/new *Casa per ferie*. In addition, Councillors divided up responsibility for coordinating aspects of the general administration by forming “work groups” for government, publications, patrimony, personnel, statistics, finance.

⁷⁵⁵ Each member of this Council who was interviewed by the author expressed sentiments along these lines. At the same time, it was generally agreed that Brother Benito’s approach as leader of the Council was always one that emphasised discernment and strove towards consensus. In their Report to the Chapter, the Councillors listed this as their first principle of operating. (#1.4)

⁷⁵⁶ *Report of the Brother Superior General and his Council to the XX General Chapter, #1.2*

⁷⁵⁷ Brothers Seán Sammon, Jeffrey Crowe and Luis García Sobrado, interviews *idem*. The matter of restructuring is treated further below.

⁷⁵⁸ After the General Conference of 1997, the first two were combined



82. Conference of Marist Superiors of Africa and Madagascar at MIC, Nairobi (Kenya), together with Brothers Benito Arbués, Superior General, Seán Sammon, Vicar General, and Jeff Crowe, General Councillor.

It was an ambitious arrangement. It is not surprising that, among the concerns they had at the end of their time, was how much their responsibilities and their required absences had “stretched” them. They had questions about the way the Council needed to work to cover their responsibilities.⁷⁵⁹

Brother Benito’s Council maintained the basic pattern of two plenary sessions a year, but cut the visits to Provinces back from three to two. It did, however, place more emphasis on regional visits, and introduced the concept of bringing together all members of the Provincial Councils of a region, an idea developed by the next General Council into “extended meetings” of the General Council. Its preferred emphases during their visits and the regional meetings were on “animating and coordinating” rather than “deciding from above”.⁷⁶⁰ They sought to be “brothers among brothers”, trusting local leadership, and respecting subsidiarity.⁷⁶¹ This emphasis was especially important for Brother Benito.⁷⁶² Their achievements were,

⁷⁵⁹ *Report of the Brother Superior General and his Council to the XX General Chapter, #3.5*

⁷⁶⁰ *Ibid.* #1.4

⁷⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶² Interviews with Brother Seán Sammon and Brother Emili Turú, *idem*. Brother Joseph McKee (interviewed 8 July 2015) gave the example of Brother Benito’s trusting the Provincials of the re-structured Provinces of Africa to make their own decisions about mission priorities and formation strategies, and to come to conclusions that may have been different from the preferred positions of the General Council.



83. Brother Benito Arbués, Superior General, with the new community at Quito, Ecuador (2000).

nonetheless, considerable. Among them were: a major re-structuring of the Institute, a new document on Marist education, significant initiatives to introduce “Marist apostolic spirituality” to the Institute, the implementation of the Formation Guide and a two-year course for formators, the Canonisation of the Founder, a major lift to diffusion of the spiritual patrimony of the Institute, and a reform of the Institute’s finances.

It was during this period that the first steps of what might be called a permanent bureaucracy or curia began to be taken. At least from the moment that the Founder had made Brother François his secretary, there had always been in the Institute some brothers who were engaged full-time in the service of its administration but were not part of the Council. Indeed, in Rome, they formed one of the three distinct brothers’ communities of the House: the General Council Community, the General Administration Community, and the Community of the International College. It was, however, the Superior General and Council who had hands-on charge of most matters. Overall responsibility for one area or another was directed by a Councillor, or by two or three Councillors in a commission. Sometimes, as for example with the Social Secretariat established in the second Council of Brother Basilio, there may have been another brother seconded to be Secretary to a Commission of the General Council, and to assist in its day-to-day business. This began to change when, first, the Procurator General was not a member of Council – Brother Quentin Duffy continuing in this role for three years after finishing as Vicar General in 1985. In a similar way, Brother Paul Sester continued in charge of the General Archives which had previously been part of his remit as Secretary General. Then, after 1993, when the Econome

General and the Secretary General needed no longer to be Councillors, it meant they could run their own offices, coordinate the services and any personnel who attached to those offices, and have direction of a particular area of the General Administration while not being members of Council.⁷⁶³ While, of course, they had their own lines of accountability to the General Council, or perhaps to a separate Commission, it was they who were largely responsible for directing their own departments. In 1996, with the establishment of the new Bureau of International Solidarity, with its own Director and a team of two lay professionals, another step had been taken in the development of a permanent curia. The Council was careful, however, to ensure that appointments to these roles were limited, usually a three-year term that could be renewed only once.

While a Council-with-commissions was to remain an important leadership and administration model for the next General Council,⁷⁶⁴ gradually the appointment of full-time Secretaries of these Commissions began to be made, for example Brother Téofilo Minga for the Religious Life Commission, Brother Michael Flanigan for the



84. Brothers Benito Arbués, Superior General, and Jeff Crowe, General Councillor, in the Philippines, leading a meeting on pastoral planning for the Province.

⁷⁶³ During Brother Richard Dunleavy's tenure as Secretary General in the last two years of Brother Benito's Council, a review of the General Administration was conducted by a team comprised of Brothers John Klein, Antonio Martínez and Clemente Juliatto. It recommended a consolidation of the services of "the second floor" under the Secretary General, with the exception of BIS. Prior to that individual Councillors had ill-defined lines of authority among some members of the administration. (Brother Richard Dunleavy, in interview *idem*.)

⁷⁶⁴ Its six Commissions and their chairs were: Religious Life (Antonio Ramalho), Laity (Pedro Herreros), Mission (Emili Turú), Governance (Peter Rodney) and Evangelical Use of Goods (Maurice Berquet). Each developed a mission statement, with objectives and specific strategies. Cf. *FMS Message*, No.33. July 2004.

Laity Commission, and Brother Juan Miguel Anaya for the Mission Commission. There was also some development during the time of the Council with the creation of a Bureau of Vocations and later a Bureau of the Laity, each with its own Director (Brothers Ernesto Sánchez and Pau Fornells, respectively).



85. Extended General Council for the Arco Norte Region Guadalajara. Mexico (2008).

This was consolidated after the 2005 General Conference, with the continuation of only three General Council Commissions, each with its own permanent secretary (Mission, Religious Life, and Evangelical Use of Goods). The Council established other permanent International Commissions to meet from time to time – that for Economic Affairs and that for Spiritual Patrimony – and a number of *ad hoc* International Commissions to undertake or oversee specific tasks: Marist Spirituality (the writing of what became *Water from the Rock*), Vocation of the Lay Marist (the writing of what became *Around the Same Table*), Marist Youth Ministry (the writing of what became *Evangelisers in the Midst of Youth*), Marist Places, Guide for Province Secretaries, and Revision of Chapter 4 of the Constitutions. With more support in place in Rome, the General Councillors became a little freer to attend to their roles of animation and pastoral accompaniment of the Provinces. The XX General Chapter had specifically asked the incoming Council of Brother Seán to be “pastoral” and “creative” in its animation and government.⁷⁶⁵ For Brother Seán’s Council, the priority was to focus its effort on “fostering the vitality of the

⁷⁶⁵ *Acts of the XX General Chapter*, #III.3.1.4, 3.1.5

Institute” which it saw as its primary responsibility given to it by the Chapter.⁷⁶⁶ Central to nurturing this vitality was the need for greater clarity around identity, as Brother Luis García Sobrado noted at the time:

The brother’s identity (not only that of the lay Marist) is a topic that has steadily emerged as a fundamental issue for both spirituality and mission.⁷⁶⁷

The Council pursued this goal in a number of ways. First, “Link Councillors” were nominated for each administrative unit, as well as for various formation and renewal centres, and the General House. It continued the model of two visits to Provinces – one long and one short – but it looked for every opportunity to be present in Provinces for other purposes such as conducting retreats and workshops, participation in Provincial Chapters and Province Assemblies, and the introduction of Extended General Council meetings. All of the Council went to every Region for these meetings. A sense of unity and teamwork was a particular priority for this Council, as were its members’ own efforts to build community and to be of mutual support to one another.⁷⁶⁸ The Councillors also gave emphasis to their pastoral accompaniment of individual brothers. A specific example is individualised letters that Brother Seán wrote to brothers who were younger, those in mid-life, and the more elderly.⁷⁶⁹ He put a great deal of time into this, and the response from individuals was large.⁷⁷⁰ Many of them appreciated Seán’s deep understanding of the humanity of the brothers, and his American freedom to write candidly of their personal struggles in personal growth and spirituality.⁷⁷¹

One particular decision taken by the Council of Brother Seán at the beginning of its mandate carried its own symbolism for the Institute. The new Council decided that its working languages would be Spanish and English rather than French. Up until 2001, the language of the General Council – whether it was located in France or Italy – had always been French. Meetings were in French; the language spoken in community was French. Meetings of international commissions and task-forces were usually in French. A little anecdote, which indicates the extent to which the General House was something of a French colony on Italian soil, is told by Brother Seán, and relates to Italian-born Brother Gabriele Andreucci.

⁷⁶⁶ *Ibid.* #III.3.2.A.2

⁷⁶⁷ *FMS Message*. No.33. July 2004.

⁷⁶⁸ This point was recurrently made by members of this Council to the author. Brothers Peter Rodney, and Maurice Berquet, Seán Sammon, Emili Turú, Antonio Ramalho, Pedro Herreros, and Luis García Sobrado, interviews *idem*.

⁷⁶⁹ The first was written in 2002 to the 834 brothers who were under 40. Its 20 pages addressed the themes of fidelity and gift of oneself to God. *Marist Bulletin*. No.31, 21 October 2002.

⁷⁷⁰ Brother Peter Rodney and Brother Antonio Ramalho, interviews *idem*. Brother Seán himself regarded it as a personal project to which he gave special priority. It led to extended contact with many individual brothers. He reported, for example, more than 400 replies to his letter to the older brothers. (Interview *idem*)

⁷⁷¹ Brother Antonio Ramalho, *idem*.

The Postulator General, asked one day by Seán where he might be going as he was heading towards the door, responded with a smile, “To Italy!”⁷⁷² While the Italian language was, from the time of *Jesus Magister*, that of the International College, the other half of the General House had retained the language of the Founder. Its demise was indicative of the change that had occurred in the centre of gravity of the Institute. The Council now had only one native-born Frenchman; the next Council was to have none. Relatively few of the works of the Institute were any longer in France or in French-speaking countries. In his opening remarks to the XXI General Chapter, Brother Seán, suggested that the Institute might be able to act in a more unified way if all its members spoke at least one language in common. Ironically enough, he proposed French.⁷⁷³ Among the ideas of the outgoing Superior General taken up by the Chapter, that one was not to be among them. Increasingly, international Marist meetings and gatherings came to be conducted in mainly in two languages, Spanish and English.

The *modus operandi* of the new Council in 2009 served well the priorities it set for itself. In its first extended session, the Council drew up a strategic plan for its animation and governance of the Institute through to its bicentenary in 2017. An important part of this planning involved extensive consultation and dialogue with others. Two years later, Brother Joseph McKee was to reflect:

*The hallmark of our working together as a Council has been the methodology used by the XXI General Chapter of a “new way of being and doing” together – a methodology which puts emphasis on dialogue, consensus building and a greater openness to the international and intercultural reality of our Institute in today’s world. It was also quite clear to us from the very beginning of our time together that we needed to involve more voices than our own in the work of animating and governing the Institute ... The Directors of the various Secretariats, members of the General Administration, those brothers responsible for ongoing formation in the Institute, as well as persons from outside our Marist world, have helped us in our reflections to discern and elaborate our objectives and the values that would underpin these and which we wished to promote. And so, little by little and over time, our integrated **plan of action for the Animation and Government of the Institute** began to take shape in the form of the eight “Objectives”, each with its “Courses of Action” and “Strategies” ... And all this based on a common and agreed upon set of understandings enabling us, hopefully, to move together in the one direction – towards a “new land”.⁷⁷⁴*

⁷⁷² Brother Seán Sammon, *idem*.

⁷⁷³ Brother Seán Sammon, *Opening Address to the XXI General Chapter*.

⁷⁷⁴ Brother Joseph McKee, in *FMS Message*. No. 41, December 2011. P.13

86. Meeting of the International Commission of Brothers Today. Rome (2015).



An early decision was to maintain the concept of “Link Councillors” but with two changes: first their link would be to Regions and in pairs of Councillors;⁷⁷⁵ second, for the most part, and if their languages allowed it, Councillors would work with Regions which were not their own, something that was hoped may assist them to work with a certain degree of “cultural freedom” and be something of a witness to interculturality.⁷⁷⁶ Four Secretariats were established, each with its own Director: Mission, Brothers Today, Laity, and Collaboration for Mission, International. The first two were also to have, in time, an Assistant Director, and the third to have two lay Marists as “Co-Directors”. Each Secretariat had its own reference body – either an International Commission or an extended membership.⁷⁷⁷ FMSI formed a fifth entity. General Councillors were linked with each Secretariat; in the case of FMSI, the link Councillor was officially the President of the Foundation.⁷⁷⁸ Other divisions of the General Administration were included under the Vicar General’s, Secretary General’s, Postulator General’s, and Eco-

⁷⁷⁵ The aim was that these Link Councillors would remain the same for all eight years. Brother Ernesto Sánchez, in recorded interview with author, 6 July 2015.

⁷⁷⁶ Brother Joseph McKee, interview *idem*. (Brothers Josep Maria Soteras and Eugène Kabanguka were linked with the Americas, Antonio Ramalho and Ernesto Sánchez with Africa and Europe, and Michael de Waas and John Klein with Asia/Pacific. With the later resignation of John Klein from the Council, Joseph McKee took his place in Asia/Pacific, and Víctor Preciado was linked to the Americas.)

⁷⁷⁷ Not all of these were in place from the start. For example, the International Mission Commission was established in 2011 to support the work of the Secretariat. (*Marist News*, No. 204, 5 April 2011). It was to meet annually. The International Commission for Brothers Today was not to be convened until July 2013. (*Marist News*. No.279, 2 August 2013.

⁷⁷⁸ This was Brother Michael de Waas CG.

nome General's purview.⁷⁷⁹ Thus the full transition had been achieved from the pre-1976 model of government and animation to a new one, with an elected leadership group (the General Council) and a permanent bureaucracy (the Secretariats and other teams). The Council developed an organisational chart to capture the way this worked:⁷⁸⁰



87. Organizational Chart of the General Council (2010).

⁷⁷⁹ As was its right, the General Council elected an additional member to make Brother Víctor Preciado, the new Econome General, a General Councillor. At the conclusion of his term as EG in 2015, Brother Víctor remained an ordinary member of the Council and his successor, Brother Libardo Garzón became EG but not a Councillor. The Procurator General as a Rome-based role was re-cast, with one brother the nominated link with the Holy See and another providing canonical advice to the General Council; neither as part of the General Administration.

⁷⁸⁰ *FMS Message. No.41*, December 2011. This issue includes a detailed description of the plan of the Council, its priorities, and its strategies.

It was a simple structure – just five Secretariats and five other offices. It actually involved fewer brothers in Rome than any of the three administrations preceding it.⁷⁸¹ These departments of the General Administration could devote the full-time attention to the areas for which they were responsible. At the same time, there was the challenge that their work be coordinated and that there be collaboration and cross fertilisation of ideas. Brother Chris Wills was to observe:

*One of the things that we have worked at in recent years is the breaking down of the invisible walls between the Secretariats. When I arrived here, there was a culture of each Secretariat's working away on its own, without much interface with the others, and without recognition that this arrangement would benefit from a change. We now see that it is important that we are all on the same page on matters that involve us all, such as communion and co-responsibility, Marist spirituality, priorities in mission, understanding the identity of the brother, and so on.*⁷⁸²

The Council's aim was that, in and through their leadership, they would themselves try to live the kind of brothers' life that they hoped would characterise the Institute more generally – a simple lifestyle, prayerful, being of service rather than seeking power and authority, cooperative and collaborative, men of God, mystics and prophets.⁷⁸³ As well as an emphasis on personal presence to their confreres and other Marists, new technologies gave them fresh ways to communicate and to stay connected. Brother Emili was to use such media extensively, and to do so in a way that was both contemporary and Marian.⁷⁸⁴ A priority of the Council early in its mandate was that this Marian way of Church would mark not only the Council's life and work but that of the whole Administration:

"The mission of the General Administration is inspired by Mary at the moment of the Visitation. She senses that there is a need and sets out diligently to place her abilities at the service of others" (Staff Manual of the General Administration). "To visit" figures among the principal obligations of some members of the general administration and it is, without any doubt, what occupies most of their time. But those who are more stable in Rome, on the other hand, endeavour much more to give a warm welcome to the many persons who visit us. In both cases, Mary is our source of inspiration. We know well that if we want to build a Church with a Marian face, we have to begin with our own daily lives. And, certainly, our way of working and relating to one another must let this Marian tone shine through. For this reason, when we ask ourselves in the General Council what values we want to emphasize in our way of organising ourselves and operating, we underline the following:

⁷⁸¹ Brother Emili Turú, interview *idem*. Part of this reduction in number could be explained by the increasing use of translators who lived elsewhere and with whom communication took place electronically.

⁷⁸² Brother Chris Wills, interview with the author, 4 December 2015.

⁷⁸³ Brother Michael de Waas, interview *idem*.

⁷⁸⁴ Brother Antonio Ramalho, interview *idem*.

- fraternal dialogue,
- active participation,
- constructive interaction among the persons and organisms involved.

*The icon of Pentecost represents very well the ideals of the Marian Church, which we want to make our own: a circular community, but not closed in on itself; unity and understanding but there from the multiplicity of tongues; openness to the fire of the Spirit; sign of fraternity and reconciliation in the midst of the people; a community of men inspired by a woman who presides over them.*⁷⁸⁵

The Contribution of General Conferences

Although there had been meetings of Provincials with the General Council from the time of Brother Charles-Raphaël, they were formalised by the *ad experimentum* Directory in 1968, as were Regional Conferences. As was mentioned above, little happened regarding the latter until after 1985 even though, ironically, the concept was not mentioned in the Constitutions or Statutes. Since the XVIII General Chapter, the normal practice has been to have a General Conference at the mid-point between General Chapters, with twin aims:

- *to strengthen the unit of the Institute, and to enable the Superiors to have direct contact with the Brother Superior General, the members of his Council, and with one another;*
- *to study questions of general concern and to propose ways of answering them.*⁷⁸⁶

Since the XXI General Chapter in 2009, the above Statute has been listed under the heading of “General Government”, indicating its place in the shared leadership of the Institute.

There have been four General Conferences since 1985, although there have also been other shorter meetings of Provincials with the General Administration.⁷⁸⁷ The way in which the first of those, convened by Brother Charles in Veranópolis in 1989, departed from the style and purpose of the four held in Rome in Brother Basilo’s time has been discussed above. The ambitious theme of the gathering (“The Marist Brother Today”), the resources given to it, the scope and thoroughness of its organisation and contents, its prelude in the “pilgrimage of solidarity”, its location in Latin America six years after landmark meeting in Chosica, the proc-

⁷⁸⁵ Brother Emili Turú, in *FMS Message*. No 41. December 2011. p.8

⁷⁸⁶ *Constitutions and Statutes* #137.11.

⁷⁸⁷ Two significant meetings were in June 2007 (to review the initiatives agreed in Negombo) and in July 2015 (to discuss the New Models of Animation, Governance and Management Project)

esses that were used and the brothers chosen to make presentations, the presence of young brothers from each region, and its extensive reporting in a special issue of *FMS Message*,⁷⁸⁸ were all indicative of the strategic importance which Brother Charles placed on the event. He saw it in terms of a way of winning hearts and minds to a fundamental reorientation of the Institute, along the lines that the Latin American Provincials had agreed six years before, and the aspirations of the Constitutions which were still quite new.

In 1997, an event of similar significance had been planned to take place in Africa. Unfortunately, security fears meant its last-minute transfer to Rome, and into the same Chapter Hall in which many of the participants had spent two months four years before. The pitch of the VI General Conference, as discussed already in a discussion of the Circular which emerged from it, had a certain urgency about it. “Now!” was its theme. “Refoundation” was its message. Yet its outcomes, despite the strong calls of the Superior General in his opening and closing addresses, were less momentous. The eight young brothers present brought some immediacy to the questions of formation that were discussed, as did the eight lay people to growing significance of the laity and their place in Marist life and mission. They had some provocative comments to make to the brothers about the brothers’ living of Marist spirituality.⁷⁸⁹ At the same time, the objectives for the Conference were fairly modest, more about confirming directions than imagining new ones. Brother Benito was to write:

*It had as its goal to evaluate the implementation of the Chapter recommendations and to give fresh impetus to us brothers for the next four years. The General Councillors, by means of working commissions, directed discussion on five themes: Marist Apostolic Spirituality, Solidarity, Mission and Education Charter, Formation and Vocations Ministry, and Administration of goods. An evaluation which was done in every province was the starting point for the study of these themes. Rather than drawing up new directives, the emphasis was on following the way of the Spirit along the lines suggested by the Chapter.*⁷⁹⁰

Feedback was given on the new education document which resulted in some changes,⁷⁹¹ the General Council was urged to get moving with a broadly-cast project of re-structuring,⁷⁹² and there was criticism of the Council from some quarters for the non-replacement of Brother Chris Mannion, but no changes were made to the Council.⁷⁹³ Brother Benito reported to the Institute on the unity and harmony that prevailed, the good will and commitment, and the mix of hope and realism. But the plans that the General Council was to devise for the second half of its mandate carried little by way of difference from what had been worked out after

⁷⁸⁸ *FMS Message*. No.4, November 1989.

⁷⁸⁹ See *FMS Message*. No 24, October 1997. pp.27-28

⁷⁹⁰ *Walk Peacefully, yet with Sense of Urgency*. pp.6-7

⁷⁹¹ Brother Jeffrey Crowe, interview *idem*.

⁷⁹² *Ibid*.

⁷⁹³ Brother John Klein, in recorded interview with the author, 22 May 2015

the 1993 Chapter.⁷⁹⁴ With the possible exception of the impetus that was given to restructuring, it would not be a General Conference to be remembered as a major milestone in the story of the Institute.⁷⁹⁵

By contrast with 1997, the objectives that were framed for Negombo in 2005 were quite ambitious, in that sense more akin to the scope of hoped-for reorientation that was envisaged for Veranópolis sixteen years previously. Indeed, it was the hope of the General Council that it would be a “defining moment” in the history of the Institute:

to refine further the vision of the future of Marist life and mission that has been emerging for some time now and to put into place the means to realise that vision more fully.⁷⁹⁶

The list of topics chosen for the event was long:

- *The proposal of the Ad Gentes project*
- *Reflection on progress with the five calls of the XX General Chapter*
- *The General Council’s animation and governance of the Institute over the previous four years, with a particular focus on implementation of re-structuring*
- *Vocations and formation, and the hope of fostering a “culture of vocations” through the Vocation Year*
- *Planning the second round of General Council visits*
- *Finances, and the progress with the Province Plans regarding the Evangelical Use of Goods*
- *The proposals for renovations of the Marist Places*
- *Marist apostolic spirituality, with focus on the writing of the new document, and the variable success of the language-based spirituality networks*
- *The laity, with a consideration of the results of a questionnaire sent to all Provinces concerning formation, the Champagnat movement, co-responsibility, identity, and connectedness*
- *Mission, with a particular focus on the first Marist International Mission Assembly*
- *Training for Province Secretaries*⁷⁹⁷

⁷⁹⁴ These are described at the beginning of 1998 Circular of Brother Benito (pp.63-66) and briefly mentioned in the Council’s Report to the next General Chapter (#1.9).

⁷⁹⁵ This was certainly the view of Brother Seán Sammon when interviewed, *idem*.

⁷⁹⁶ *FMS Message*. No.34. December 2005. p.6

⁷⁹⁷ *FMS Message*. No.34. December 2005

The length of the list was indicative of the many projects that the Council had on the go, and the extent to which it sought to involve the Provincials and of the Institute, and others, into decision-making on these matters. As well as affirmation for major initiatives such as the Marist spirituality document and the international mission assembly, the Provincials gave their support to two projects that were indeed to have a re-defining impact: the renewal of the Marist places and the Asia Mission *Ad Gentes* project.



▲ **88.** Work session of the 7th General Conference. Negombo, Sri Lanka (2005). ▶



89. Participants at the 7th General Conference. Negombo, Sri Lanka (2005).

The projects were presented as complementary, with the AMAG commitment seen as a way of “reclaiming the spirit of the building of the Hermitage”. The results were soon seen in a significant re-allocation of material and personnel resources, and the re-casting of the Council’s administrative structure. Its significance is indicated by the decision to hold an extraordinary conference of Provincials two years later in Rome to review progress.⁷⁹⁸

⁷⁹⁸ For the purposes of this book, the 2007 Conference of Provincials is not categorised as a General Conference.

As with the General Chapters, the style of General Conferences, most especially their processes for discussion and decision-making, changed enormously over the three decades. The XXI Chapter, with its innovation of round tables and consensus-building methodology, was to have an impact right across the Institute, and even in Church bodies outside the Institute which learnt from the Marists. Members of the General Council began to notice that genuine dialogue, extended work in small groups, and the diminishment of power-plays and defensive argumentation, had all begun to become the norm in Provincial Chapters and other Assemblies.⁷⁹⁹ Brothers who had been at several General Conferences comment on how the meetings had become “less tense, more humane, more transparent and with less suspicion”.⁸⁰⁰

The three weeks spent at The Hermitage in September 2013 invited members of the VIII General Conference into a dynamic that sought to nurture a sense of their being “mystics” and “prophets”, people who could “awaken the dawn” of a new Marist future.

The General Conference held in the Hermitage could be described as an experience of the heart. It meant standing on sacred ground, taking the sandals off to listen to the Lord who spoke so deeply and in so many ways. It also helped us focus our radar on the present cultural context, on the challenges and horizons regarding the future of our world, of children and young people, of the Church and



90. Participants at the 8th General Conference. L'Hermitage, France (2013).

⁷⁹⁹ Comment of Brother Emili Turú to the author, 1 December 2015.

⁸⁰⁰ Brother Peter Rodney, interview *idem*.

the Institute. The Conference could be summed up as a “prompting of the Spirit” to the Marist mind and heart, helping us to see more clearly the calls that the Spirit itself addressed to us in the 21st General Chapter.⁸⁰¹

It was not to be a Conference chock full of addresses and workshops, with the aim of producing a polished final document. It was, rather, to be something much more organic and contemplative. It did not seek to have a Cartesian logic about it, but to be an event that was less tidy, more experiential. “The General Council was more open, and less directive, and able to let things emerge.”⁸⁰² This mind-map, which captured the movements of the Conference and priorities which grew from discussion, would be a document that an earlier generation of Chapter or Conference delegates may have found quite bewildering.⁸⁰³



91. and **92.** Work Session at the 8th General Conference. L’Hermitage, France (2013).



93. Word Cloud

⁸⁰¹ Brother João Carlos do Prado. p.76
⁸⁰² Brother Ken McDonald, recorded interview with the author. 29 September 2015
⁸⁰³ *FMS Message*. No.44, June 2014. pp.88-89

The planners wanted the medium to become the message, by constructing a programme around the three ideas of “The Hermitage”, “La Valla” and “Fourvière”. As all General Conferences, it looked back to what had been identified by the previous General Chapter but rather than a sequentially analytical treatment of each call, there was an extended encounter with Jesus, with Mary, with Marcellin and with the signs of the times:

We lived the theme of the General Conference, “prophets and mystics for our time”, through a journey of faith in the footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat. We moved from the Provinces to The Hermitage, then to La Valla, finally to Fourvière, looking for the source from which Marcellin drank and was inspired. We found the source: it is the trust in God and the conviction that Mary’s care will never fail us. It filled Marcellin with passion for God and compassion for persons, especially poor children. In response to the XXI General Chapter that called us to “new life for a new world”, our sharing and gestures, during these three weeks, were all about a new beginning. Like Nicodemus I felt invited to “be born again from above” in order to co-create and live the new Marist culture. It is clear to me that only close relationship with Jesus will give meaning to my human relationships and to my mission. Otherwise, I am an agent of a NGO! At Fourvière we too pledged to undergo the process of personal and institutional conversion and to build a Marian church, simple and attentive to everybody’s needs no matter the risks. Internationality and interculturality were obvious, given our various origins, and were highlighted in our liturgical celebrations.⁸⁰⁴

In the end, the participants named the six features they hoped would describe the Institute by the year 2020. Of these six, seventy-five per cent of the Conference participants chose “internationality” as the strongest:⁸⁰⁵

⁸⁰⁴ Brother Eugène Kabanguka CG, *ibid*.p.85

⁸⁰⁵ *FMS Message*, #44, pp.90-91



94. Six features to characterise the Institute until the year 2020.

The impact of the General Conference became quite significant for the second half of the mandate of Brother Emili’s Council, as it began to focus on framing 2017 as a “new beginning” which would be marked by these characteristics, internationality and interculturality prominent among them. The experience of the Conference was a deeply mystical one, the leaders returning to their Provinces and to Rome with a commitment to collegial prophetic action:

A Marist prophet is the man or woman who, inspired by Father Champagnat and our first Brothers, becomes a witness of fraternity in the midst of a world that increasingly divides and separates people by setting social, racial, cultural, religious and economic barriers. We live an epochal change that challenges us to leave ourselves and our comfort zone in order to explore and experience the rich-

ness of internationality, and invites us to develop a new heart that bears witness to Jesus Christ, in a life of unconditional love and wholehearted availability.⁸⁰⁶

The General Conference had grown to be a highly collegial experience and a major means of shaping the language, directions, and priorities of the Institute.

Regional Conferences

Also growing in significance, albeit somewhat differentially in each Region, was the strength and role of the Regional Conferences of Provincials and, in some cases, Regional Mission Assemblies. Easily, the most developed model of this has been in the Americas. As has been mentioned already, it was the Latin Americans, although not without the resistance and mutual suspicion of a few,⁸⁰⁷ who first moved in this direction, to form the Latin American Conference of Provincials (“CLAP”) in 1979. Before the General Conference of Veranópolis in 1989 such formalised inter-Provincial collaboration in the Institute was not common; the Provinces operated with a high degree of autonomy, more or less like a federation, as has been discussed. Amongst the Provinces of Brazil, there had been more cooperation than in most other places, principally in the area of formation,⁸⁰⁸ and this gave Brother Charles a good basis on which to encourage something more broadly developing across the continent.⁸⁰⁹ It was to be also in Brazil, some decades later, that the first large cross-Province structure for resourcing and leading Marist mission and life was created with the establishment of UMBRASIL.⁸¹⁰ CIAP was to continue to benefit from the resources that the Brazilians could provide through UMBRASIL.⁸¹¹

⁸⁰⁶ Brother César Rojas, *ibid.* p.74

⁸⁰⁷ Brother Valdicer Civa Fachi, in an unpublished paper on the history of CLAP and CIAP, written in 2014: *Conferência Interamericana de Provinciais*, pp.1-2

⁸⁰⁸ According to Brother Antonio Ramalho, it was particularly in the area formation that all six Provinces had first collaborated. The first tangible example may have been a prayer-book for Brazilian Juniorates that was produced in 1959. In the 1960s the collaboration became “very strong” through the production of resources for initial formation, and joint novitiates. (Interview, *idem.*) It proved more problematic, however, for the Provinces to sustain a single and mutually acceptable post-novitiate programme. According to Brother Alain Delorme, this had been a particular hope of Brother Charles and his Council. (Correspondence with the author).

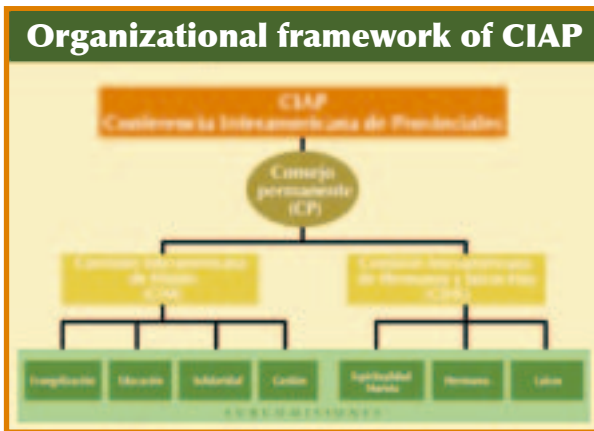
⁸⁰⁹ Brother Charles Howard, interview transcript, *idem.* p.39

⁸¹⁰ The Union of the Marists of Brazil (“UMBTRASIL”) was formalised by statute in 2005, to provide an umbrella organisation for the Provinces of Rio Grande do Sul, Brasil Centro-Sul, Brasil Centro-Norte and the District of Amazônia. It began in 2006 with a central office in Brasília with purview of three areas of religious life, mission, and governance. It would also provide single entity for representing the Institute before civil and ecclesiastical bodies. (*Marist Bulletin*, No.222, 17 November 2005) UMBRASIL had been preceded by SIMAR, a joint inter-Provincial project which provided joint services for then six Provinces of the country, and EMIR an inter-Provincial reflection group with one representative from each Province (Brother Antonio Ramalho, *idem.*)

⁸¹¹ Brother Eugène Kabanguka CG (a Link Councillor for the Americas), in interview *idem.*

From early on – at its second meeting in 1982 – CLAP had set up a support team (ELAMAR) to resource it, organise its meetings, facilitate communication, and help to action its decisions.⁸¹² This allowed for directions to be firmed and momentum to be maintained between meetings. The focus of early meetings concerned the identity of the Marist brother today and mission priorities.⁸¹³

By its ninth meeting, in Cochabamba, Bolivia, in 1999, CLAP’s agenda was increasingly inclusive of lay Marists and Marist spirituality more generally. With its last meeting, in Los Teques, Venezuela, in 2004, permanent structures had become firm and others were decided to be established (for example, a Mission Commission for the American continent, the spirituality network, the solidarity network, a new structure for Marist youth ministry). Three years later, in Negombo, it was expanded to include the United States and Canada.⁸¹⁴ CIAP was to have three regions initially: Brazil, Cono Sur, and Arco Norte (much the same as CLAP had had, but with the two North American Provinces now part of Arco Norte). In September 2015, the third meeting of CIAP decided to combine Brazil and Cono Sur to become a single region. From 2011 a solid infrastructure was in place – an elected President (and three-member standing-committee), two commissions and several sub-commissions, each with its strategic priorities and plan:⁸¹⁵



95. Organizational framework of CIAP.

⁸¹² Brother Valdicer Fachi, *op. cit.*, p.2

⁸¹³ This was the major theme of Chosica (1984), Cali (1987), Guadalajara (1991), Campinas (1995) and the other meetings that had been held in conjunction with the General Chapter and General Conference. Fachi, *op. cit.* pp.3-10.

⁸¹⁴ At the tenth meeting of CLAP the Canadian and US Provincials as guests, and a decision in principle was taken to expand the Conference. At this stage, the Provinces of the USA and Canada were the only ones in the Institute which were not part of a formal regional structure (cf. *Report of SG and Council to the XX General Chapter*, #2.6.) The same CLAP meeting decided that the new CIAP would take responsibility for Haiti (a Canadian foundation originally) and also establish a new community in Canada. (*Marist Bulletin*. No.163, 7 October 2004)

⁸¹⁵ Brother Valdicer Fachi, *op. cit.*, p.16

This allowed for concrete outcomes to be achieved across the three (later two) regions and at the level of the continent, for example a formation manual and university level credential for directors of Marist educational works, spirituality resources, new international communities, support structures for those involved in similar areas of work such as solidarity and youth ministry.⁸¹⁶ Particular mention should be made of the Spirituality Sub-Commission of the Brothers/Lay Commission which was the ongoing entity for a long-running spirituality network. By 2011, it was being directed much more by lay Marists than brothers, and had developed a range of strategies and resources for the spiritual formation and association of Marists.⁸¹⁷

Other moves for convening continental meetings of Provincials, and eventually forming Conferences governed by formal statutes, began in small ways after Veranópolis. By 1993, “regionalisation” was named by the Chapter as a priority for the Institute, the capitulants recommending that

*... the Superior General and his Council support and encourage the development of inter-Provincial collaboration, in the spirit of solidarity expressed through this Chapter. This can be achieved through a developed process of regionalisation.*⁸¹⁸

In Africa, MIC gave the Provincials a ready-made point of focus – a reason to meet regularly, and a place to do it. MIC was quite influential in helping to create a pan-African Marist identity.⁸¹⁹ A Conference of Superiors of Africa and Madagascar began in 1995. After the restructuring of the various Provinces, Districts and Sectors into five new administrative units, this became an even more straightforward grouping, with extra strength coming from the level of authority that Brother Benito was keen to devolve to it. This allowed the African Provincials and District Leader – by that time, all Africans – to assume responsibility for their own Region. By 2011, an African Mission Commission was in place and a continent-wide strategic plan developed around leadership, lay partnership, and youth ministry; the Commission had begun to meet annually. One of the more significant of these was a formation programme for directors and principals.⁸²⁰

The European Provincials, again with some nudging from Brother Charles, had made some initial plans at Veranópolis.⁸²¹ The following year, the sixteen of them gathered with the Superior General, the Vicar and the Secretary General for their first formal meeting.

⁸¹⁶ *Ibid.* pp.16-39.

⁸¹⁷ *Ibid.* pp.36-39

⁸¹⁸ *Acts of the XIX General Chapter, Animation and Government, #5*

⁸¹⁹ Brothers Richard Dunleavy and Luis García Sobrado in interviews, *idem*.

⁸²⁰ *Marist News*. No.229, 4 October 2012; No.242, 7 December 2012

⁸²¹ *FMS Message*. No.9, December 1990.

While there were fewer shared works and areas of common interest around which the Provincials could coalesce, the new mission field of Eastern Europe, the need to rationalise formation, and the process of re-structuring did help the European Conference to assume a more prominent role. Two years later, all of them were present for the first-ever European Congress of Marist Education in Barcelona in May, and again in Győr with Brothers Charles and Benito.⁸²² A biennial meeting schedule was adopted and commission/committee structure began to develop.



◀ **96.** A group of brothers from Central Africa with Brother Luis García Sobrado, Vicar General, during the African Assembly on restructuring. (December 2001 – January 2002).



97. First meeting of the Provincial and District Councils of Oceania with members of the General Council to discuss restructuring. Brisbane, Australia, 1997. ▶



98. Conference of Superiors of Africa and Madagascar. Nairobi (1996).

⁸²² *FMS Message*. No.12, November 1992



By 2013, there were four working committees of the Conference: Mission, Brothers Today, Laity, and Youth Ministry and Vocations.

In the Asia/Pacific progress towards effective regional structures was more cautious. In both Asia and Oceania, the way forward for restructuring was slower to find clarity and agreement than in most other parts of the Institute. Despite a relatively small number of brothers, there were a number of factors that worked against

the growth of a cohesive regional identity. Among these were the enormous physical distances involved, the large number of countries and contexts, the differences of direction that had been historically chosen for Marist life and mission, and various cultural sensitivities. Australia as a country, for example, was increasingly tending to see itself aligned economically, socially and culturally more with Asia than Oceania. Formation, however, was a matter that involved all the Provincials and District Leaders together, and in Oceania, until 2012, a shared novitiate in Fiji for Melanesia and the Pacific brought together the Provincials of New Zealand, Melbourne, Sydney and the District Leader of Melanesia. From the annual gathering of those Provincials, a regional structure concerned mainly with formation was established in 1997 known as the Oceania Regional Council, and later simply as the Oceania Council with a broader remit. When the administrative units of Oceania finally re-structured in 2011-2012 into the Province of Australia, the District of the Pacific and the District of Melanesia, the Oceania Council was transitioned into the new arrangement, with greater interdependence the goal. For the most part, however, most of the mission and life of these three administrative units continued for the immediately ensuing years to be animated and led by each of them individually. Meanwhile, the creation of the Provinces of South Asia and East Asia in 2007, and the later evolution of the *Ad Gentes* Sector into the Marist District of Asia in 2013, allowed for a re-cast Conference of Asian Provincials to be established.⁸²³ In 2015, a regional Asian Mission Assembly was held in Sri Lanka. Also in 2015 (in Rome in July and Manila in October), the Provincials of Asia/Pacific met to discuss possibilities for greater regional collaboration.

⁸²³ A first Conference had been established in 1999. The new grouping was called the “Marist Asian Conference”, and set about establishing several commissions.

17.

RESTRUCTURING

Carrying little indication of the magnitude of the change that was to follow, later claimed to have been “the most significant structural reorganisation in our Institute’s history”,⁸²⁴ a single sentence in the Acts of the XIX General Chapter asked that

*the Brother Superior General and his Council evaluate the viability of the administrative units of the Institute.*⁸²⁵

The topic of “restructuring” did not form part of the “Message” of the Chapter, and appeared only towards the end of the *Acts of the Chapter* – after the main reports on Mission, Solidarity, Marist Apostolic Spirituality and the Laity, and the adoption of the Formation Guide as part of the Institute’s proper law. Nor was there much that was evident in the reasons for this recommendation to suggest that, within two decades, almost every brother in the Institute was to find himself living in a new Province or District:

The number of brothers in some administrative units is decreasing (cf C125.2) while in others the number is increasing. In some areas there is a significant number of senior brothers. Some sectors of administrative units are too small to be viable.

As a result of this ostensibly modest re-structuring to involve “some” administrative units, the capitulants hoped there would be:

- *the renewal of purpose, mission, vitality, and viability in the restructured administrative units;*
- *greater collaboration in formation at the postulancy, novitiate and post-novitiate stages;*
- *more co-operation with regard to the optimal use of resources, personnel, and specific skills, in vocations ministry, leadership, administration, finance, and mission;*
- *the creation of administrative units with a larger number of brothers and a better age distribution;*
- *interdependence within the context of solidarity at the local and international levels;*
- *inculturation of the Marist charism in the Institute.*⁸²⁶

⁸²⁴ Report of the Brother Superior General and his Council to the XXI General Chapter, p.75

⁸²⁵ *Acts of the XIX General Chapter*, Animation and Government, #6

⁸²⁶ *Ibid.*

And it offered some advice to the Council regarding the criteria it might take into consideration when proposing any new structures:

- *common vision and understanding of mission;*
- *possibilities for sharing of resources;*
- *acceptance and commitment by all administrative units involved;*
- *financial viability;*
- *geographical aspects – flexibility and adaptability;*
- *physical size of the administrative units;*
- *political implications if the new administrative unit includes different countries;*
- *number and age of brothers involved;*
- *language.*⁸²⁷

Without any apparently pre-determined outcome in mind, the capitulants proposed to the Council that

... if, after considering the situation and the objectives and criteria for restructuring, they decide that this is desirable and necessary for some administrative units, the following procedure may be helpful:

- *Consultation and discernment on restructuring as defined by the XIX General Chapter should take place with the brothers in the relevant administrative units.*
- *A meeting of the Superiors of the administrative units should be held and facilitated by the General Council to identify urgent needs and to study the process of restructuring.*
- *To initiate the process, assemblies of brothers in the respective administrative units should take place followed by a joint assembly / congress leading up to a new Province (based on a federal or a fusion model) by the Superior General and his Council.*⁸²⁸

In making these proposals, the majority of the capitulants did not believe that restructuring would need to involve their own Provinces; it would be something for others.⁸²⁹

⁸²⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸²⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸²⁹ Brother Peter Rodney, in *Waltz, Flamenco, Jig and Salsa: Restructuring for Vitality the Experience of an International Congregation*. Presented at an international conference: "To Tangle or to Tango: the reconfiguration of religious institutes". Sydney, 2005.

It would not be until its summer plenary meeting in 1994 that the Council first turned its attention to the topic. There was a range of opinion among the Councilors as to how urgently and how broadly the matter should be progressed.⁸³⁰ Some felt that the recommendation of the Chapter had been “ambiguous” and there were some “fiery exchanges” about how the Council should act.⁸³¹ As always, Brother Benito was a “discernment man” and he let the question mature.⁸³² As they looked at the overall situation, and as each Councilor became more aware of the contexts in each part of the Institute, these observations were made:

- *There was the same number of administrative units as when membership was almost twice the size.*
- *Some glaring anomalies: Provinces whose numbers were now much fewer than those of some Districts.*
- *While some administrative units were not yet at a critical point, trends were clear and restructuring would be needed in the future. So why delay?*
- *In other administrative units, where numbers and ageing might not be significant issues, there was another issue: the recycling of leaders. Some Provinces were being led by two or three brothers who took turns to be Provincial.*
- *In yet other Provinces, the brothers were losing hope and vision. There had not been vocations for many years. A certain degree of malaise was settling in, and the mission of the Province was losing focus and dynamism.*
- *Then there was Africa. The situation was becoming chaotic. For many years every Province had been requested by the General Council to have an overseas mission. Many Provinces chose Africa. So the situation of Marist Africa in 1993 looked like a carve-up from colonial times; with each country having its piece. It meant a patchwork of nineteen administrative units of varying sizes. The vast majority of these had their Provincial thousands of kilometres away.*

*Significant questions were emerging about financing and economic sustainability, and the development of local leadership.*⁸³³

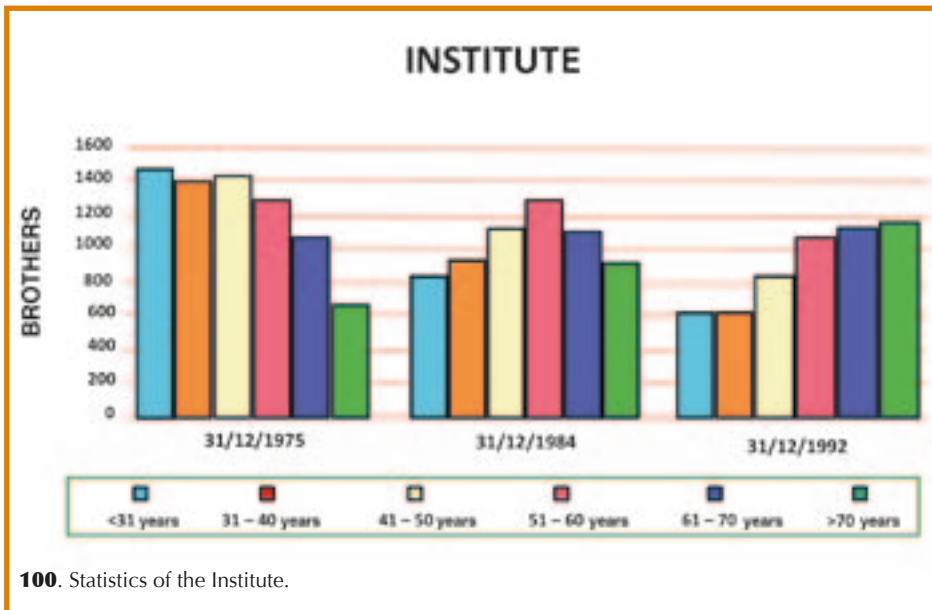
⁸³⁰ Brother Benito Arbués, interview *idem*. The same idea is included in the *Report of the Brother Superior General and his Council to the XIX General Chapter*, #2.5.

⁸³¹ Brother Luis García Sobrado, interview *idem*

⁸³² *Ibid.*

⁸³³ Brother Peter Rodney, *op.cit.* p.6

As well as the trend in numbers of the Institute, it was also telling for the Council to consider the trend in median ages in the previous two decades:



100. Statistics of the Institute.

The Council eventually agreed that there was reason:

- to look at how administrative units could be in ad intra solidarity with others in need;
- to discontinue the practice of having some Districts and Sectors dependent directly on the General Administration;
- to integrate the so-called “missionary” Districts and Sectors into local geographical regions;
- to open up new fields for apostolic action;
- to find leaders;
- that some Provinces were already overdue for change.⁸³⁴

It was therefore decided that it was to be a process that should involve the whole Institute, with the exception of Asia where it was judged not opportune in the immediate term.

⁸³⁴ Report of the Brother Superior General and his Council to the XIX General Chapter, #2.5.

With other matters claiming priority, and further refining of the project to be done, it was not until 1996 that it was launched formally with the Provincials. Brother Benito invited each Province to do a “vitality and viability study”. These thirteen criteria for the study were communicated by the Superior-General in February 1996:

- *The principle of solidarity ad intra. Interdependence in the context of solidarity.*
- *Reading the signs of the times. Noting the formation of international groupings, usually for economic reasons, without any one group losing its own distinctive characteristics.*
- *Taking a long-term view. Looking well into the future so as to avoid frequent changes. At that initial stage, the projection was to 2010.*
- *No Districts to be dependent on the General Administration*
- *Number in an administrative unit. For a Province the number of Brothers would need to be about 100, and for a District at least 50.*
- *Balance of age groups. 40% of the Brothers should be under 60 years of age; and on average there needed to be three new professions each year, and two Perpetual Professions.*
- *Critical age groups. Especially the number of Brothers in the 35-55 age bracket who would be the leaders of communities and ministries.*
- *Inculturation, multi-culturality, and internationality*
- *Viable vitality for mission*
- *The social and religious impact of the brothers’ presence, in terms of evangelisation of youth, fostering of social justice and gospel values;*
- *Animation of the administrative unit. Provision of Ongoing Formation and the development of leaders.*
- *Morale*
- *Financial autonomy.*⁸³⁵

Over the next four years, the criteria were refined to eight:

- *the number of brothers available for mission;*
- *the flow of vocations;*
- *leadership needs and potential leaders;*

⁸³⁵ *Bulletin to Brother Provincials. #7, February 1996, pp.3-5. See also, Brother Peter Rodney, op.cit. pp.8-10*

- apostolic commitments that were “capable of generating vitality”;
- the social and religious impact of the brothers’ presence;
- the morale of the brothers and their attitudes concerning the future;
- financial autonomy;
- possibilities that may exist beyond Province boundaries.⁸³⁶

Visits and meetings began, led by the members of the General Council. The experience of those meetings and the further discernment of the Council led to a sharpening of purpose. Later in the year, Brother Pedro Marcos CG was to write to the Provincials:

*The fundamental principle which should guide us in all this process is the mission-resources-structures relationship. The point of departure is our mission as brothers and apostles in the Church, and its capacity to respond to the new needs for which the evangelisation of young people calls today.*⁸³⁷

It was very important to Brother Benito, in particular, that any decisions for change be based on a comprehensive process of discernment, and that proposals come forward from the Provinces themselves.⁸³⁸ It was also a frequently expressed view of the Superior General that if Provinces were going to re-structure it had to be for greater vitality, and not just for maintenance and survival.⁸³⁹ While some General Councillors had their preferred views on what the new structures should be, and their meeting room had maps and proposals aplenty,⁸⁴⁰ it became clear that the original hope that new structures could be in place before the 2001 Chapter was not going to happen.⁸⁴¹

Some administrative units moved quickly to develop proposed new structures, perhaps not always ones that were discerned primarily using the criteria of vitality and viability that were being promoted by the General Council.⁸⁴² The first two new Provinces, and two that were in place before 2001, were West Central Europe and Southern Africa. In Europe, there was urgency because of the rising median age and the fall in numbers, even though this sense was not felt by brothers in every country.⁸⁴³ Some in Italy and Spain, for example, thought that re-structuring was a matter for others rather than them.⁸⁴⁴ It brought much

⁸³⁶ *Report of the Brother Superior General and his Council to the XIX General Chapter, #2.5.*

⁸³⁷ *Bulletin to Brother Provincials. #8, July 1996, p.8*

⁸³⁸ Brother Seán Sammon, interview *idem*.

⁸³⁹ Brother Luis García Sobrado, interview *idem*.

⁸⁴⁰ Brother Jeffrey Crowe, interview *idem*.

⁸⁴¹ *Report of the Brother Superior General and his Council to the XX General Chapter. #2.6*

⁸⁴² Cf. *Bulletins to Brother Provincials* #8 (July 1988), #11 (March 1999), #12 (August 1999) and #13 (February 2000).

⁸⁴³ Brother Benito Arbués, interview *idem*.

⁸⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

planning around age projections and possible configurations, including some extra-continental ideas such as the linking of Ireland and the UK with the USA.⁸⁴⁵ Resistance to change came from those who argued that factors such as language, culture and national identities would present obstacles for unity.⁸⁴⁶ But in the end “fraternity carried it”.⁸⁴⁷

The four Provincials of Ireland, Great Britain, Germany and Belgium-Holland were the first to move. On their way to meeting in Caracavellos on the topic of European restructuring, an informal pre-meeting took place at Brussels airport.⁸⁴⁸ A proposal was hatched that was taken to Portugal and then back home to each Province for further consultation. The decision was to go the way the Provincials had suggested. While some were later to question whether it was more of an amalgamation guided by the management of diminishment,⁸⁴⁹ rather than a new province with a vision for greater vitality,⁸⁵⁰ the brothers of the new Province of West Central Europe, from the time of their first Assembly in Furth in 1999, worked purposefully at building a Province identity and looked at new missions. Taking office at the first Chapter in April 2000, the first Provincial Brother Jacques Scholte’s capacity in management and his facility with all the languages of the Province was recognised as an important factor in achieving this.⁸⁵¹

It remained a challenge for the General Council to keep the discussions and planning driven by the criteria of mission, vitality and fidelity.⁸⁵² An abiding concern for Brother Benito was that no amount of rhetoric about either restructuring or refoundation would amount to much if it were not sourced in or lead to individual conversion.⁸⁵³ Some in France, for example, reported that they had already gone through two reconfigurations and it had resulted in no discernible change for them; they were not inclined towards another.⁸⁵⁴

⁸⁴⁵ Brother Maurice Taildeman, Brother Jeffrey Crowe, interviews *idem*.

⁸⁴⁶ Brother Benito Arbués, interview *idem*

⁸⁴⁷ Brother Luis García Sobrado, interview *idem*

⁸⁴⁸ Brother Jacques Scholte recalls it this way: “...the beginnings of our province lie at Zaventem airport (Brussels). “It was probably 1997 or 1998 when P.J., Ronnie, Edouard and I were waiting for Manfred to travel to Lisbon together for one of the last meetings on the restructuring of the European provinces. Of course, while we were waiting we discussed possible combinations of various provinces. Then, spontaneously, the idea came up to examine in all seriousness whether the four provinces and the five countries we represented might go together. By the time Manfred arrived, we decided to tell him that the first new province had been formed and that Germany was going to be part of it. It is easy to imagine his surprise!” (in *Jubilate, the Province of West Central Europe, 2000-2010*)

⁸⁴⁹ Brother Jeffrey Crowe, interview *idem*

⁸⁵⁰ Brother Michael Hill, interview *idem*, reported this to be the view of a number of delegates to the 2001 General Chapter

⁸⁵¹ Brother Maurice Taildeman, interview *idem*

⁸⁵² Brother Benito Arbués, interview *idem*

⁸⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵⁴ *Ibid.* Also Brother Maurice Berquet, interview *idem*. It had been Brother Basilio who had called the French brothers together on this topic, leading them in a three-week meeting in 1974, followed by other meetings in the ensuing years. An inter-Province commission was set up, resulting in the move from five Provinces to two in 1982.

With West Central Europe having presented more or less a *fait accompli*, the General Council continued discernment with the other Provincial Councils of Europe. Different options were considered. As it panned out, the linking of Catalonia with France presented itself as a potential way forward for rejuvenating mission, and the other final configurations brought the Spanish brothers into greater internationality in their own region.⁸⁵⁵

There were various options and possibilities considered for the twenty-one existing administrative arrangements of one sort or another that existed for brothers in Africa and Madagascar, just three of which were Provinces in their own right (Madagascar, South Africa and, only since 1992, Nigeria). The issues were complex. Should the re-structuring be based around linguistic considerations or geographical ones? What to do with Rwanda and Congo, given the sensitivities of recent years and the fact that they had already been a Province that had been divided into two Districts? How would Madagascar fit in? What about the stand-alone projects which were almost entirely in the hands of European or American brothers? How could future financial sustainability be achieved? How would the preference of many African brothers to remain in their own countries and the issues with work visas impact on multi-country Provinces?⁸⁵⁶ While these and other questions did not have ready answers, what was clear was that the time of the expatriate missionary brothers was quickly coming to an end, and that transition to African leadership needed to happen.⁸⁵⁷ It was also clear that re-structuring in the mother Provinces would impact on their foundations in Africa.

The new Province of Southern Africa happened quickly, driven by some strong leadership.⁸⁵⁸ There was more discussion to take place about the rest of the continent, and various options were canvassed. Finally, when the dust settled, the Provinces of Nigeria (without its District of Ghana) and Madagascar remained much the same, and the rest found themselves grouped into two new administrative units – the five-country Province of East Central Africa (to become universally known by its acronym in French but pronounced as if it were the Italian word “PACE”) and the six-country District of West Africa, linked to the new four-country Province of Méditerranée.

⁸⁵⁵ *Ibid.* A significant decision was for the Spanish Provinces not to opt for a single Spanish entity, but for each to have an international and intercultural dimension within the European/Mediterranean context. This was seen to be different from their having a missionary relationship with countries in Africa or Latin America.

⁸⁵⁶ These questions were mentioned to the author in interviews with Brothers Luis García Sobrado, Jeffrey Crowe, Eugene Kabanguka, Seán Sammon, and Peter Rodney.

⁸⁵⁷ Brother Jeffrey Crowe, interview *idem*. It is also interesting to note that in the latter part of the century and into the next, brothers who had retired because of age from their professional work in their home Provinces, volunteered to go Africa and other countries in support roles for local brothers. This was the case, for example, with nine brothers from the Province of Great Britain and Ireland (Brother Brendan Geary, personal communication with the author, 12 January 2016).

⁸⁵⁸ Brothers Benito Arbués, Luis García Sobrado, Seán Sammon, and Jeffrey Crowe interviews *idem*.

There was not to be unanimity of opinion achieved on the configurations of the five new administrative units, and there long continued some residual feeling among the African brothers, in particular, that the final arrangements were not the fruit of “real consultation” but had been “forced on them” by the restructuring that was taking place in Europe.⁸⁵⁹ Knowing the depth of feeling and open to considering other possibilities, the question was re-opened by the next General Council. In 2008 two rounds of meetings took place in Nairobi regarding proposals for different configurations. In the end, discussion was allowed to lapse. As time has progressed, and an increasingly higher proportion of African brothers were all graduates of MIC, a pan-continental Marist identity has been enhanced among the brothers. “Nairobi has shaped Marist Africa”.⁸⁶⁰

In the Americas, a range of contexts – different in nature from Africa but no less complex or fraught – guaranteed a less-than-smooth ride to resolution of new configurations. In Brazil, for example, despite its relatively strong history of inter-Provincial cooperation, hurdles emerged among the five Provinces around their differing financial positions, debt-levels, and the size and nature of educational institutions.⁸⁶¹ In other parts of Latin America, there were differences concerning history of foundations, particularly the nature of ongoing links with Spain in some places and the influence of Spanish-born brothers.⁸⁶² Most Provinces were at first suspicious and were resistant to surrendering their autonomy.⁸⁶³ In Mexico, differences in how each Province approached mission and some historical unease were problematic for a potential re-union,⁸⁶⁴ while in Central America, where little change was anticipated, answers came more easily. Some in North America were suggesting more daring proposals such as two new administrative units that each involved Mexico, the USA and Canada. Such proposals were driven by what might foster vitality and growth for the younger brothers.⁸⁶⁵ In the end, as in Africa, it was geography that proved to be the criterion that was most influential in shaping the final outcome.⁸⁶⁶ In all cases, amalgamation was based on proximity. At the same time, there were benefits soon experienced through mutual sharing and encounter.⁸⁶⁷

⁸⁵⁹ This was the view relayed unambiguously to the author by Brother Eugène Kabanguka, appointed as the first Provincial of “PACE”.

⁸⁶⁰ Brother Eugène Kabanguka, interview *idem*.

⁸⁶¹ Brother Luis García Sobrado, interview *idem*.

⁸⁶² *Ibid.*

⁸⁶³ Brother Pedro Herreros, interview *idem*

⁸⁶⁴ Brother Benito Arbués, interview *idem*

⁸⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶⁷ Brother Pedro Herreros, interview *idem*

Most of the new structures had been agreed before the XX General Chapter, with some additional tweaking to take place in the two years afterwards. In April 2001, Brother Benito communicated to the Institute the decisions that had been taken. Although not all names of the new entities had been finalised, the groupings and territories had been finalised.⁸⁶⁸ Inaugural Provincial Chapters were a recurring feature of the Institute in the years 2000 to 2004. The previous eleven years, since the disarmingly innocuous recommendation of the XIX Chapter was made, had seen the number of Provinces in the Institute reduce from 44 to 26, and Districts from 13 to 5. Whatever might have been the range of opinion on the final reconfiguration, it was indisputable that the scale of the change had been huge and the decisions had been audaciously taken. The Marists were sought out by other religious institutes to share their experiences.⁸⁶⁹ The first phase of restructuring was physically done:⁸⁷⁰



101. New Marist map after recent restructuring.

⁸⁶⁸ *Bulletin to the Provincials* No.16., April 2001.

⁸⁶⁹ For example, Brother Seán Sammon SG was asked to address the Union of Superiors General in November 2002, with the USG giving a day to the topic. (*Marist Bulletin*, 5 December 2002). Brother Peter Rodney CG gave a paper in 2005 at a conference in Sydney which had the theme "To Tangle or To Tango: The Reconfiguration of Religious Institutes". It attracted representatives from 65 religious institutes from 14 countries. (website of 'Governance and Management' (www.governance.com.au), accessed 4 December 2015).

⁸⁷⁰ *FMS Message*, No.33, July 2004, pp.46-47

The next step, as named by the XX General Chapter, was for new structures to translate into new life:

*The challenge of vitality is at the heart of restructuring. We have created new Provinces. Now we need to set about creating “renewed” Provinces.*⁸⁷¹

It was an echo of what Brother Benito had suggested to the Provincials a few months earlier:

*The structures and arrangements for getting ourselves organised are not ends in themselves but means to spur us on to new life ... To dream and design the Marist contours of this new Province ... Changing our government structures ... doesn't produce the desired results automatically ... Making them come alive depends on us.*⁸⁷²

Asia and Oceania remained unchanged. In eastern Asia, by the 2000s the Province of the Philippines was well established in the hands of Filipino brothers, even its total number of brothers seemed stubbornly reluctant to increase. Korea and Japan had their own histories with Poughkeepsie and México Central; the diaspora of the old Province of China was becoming older and fewer, although a brave foundation of a new school had been made by the Province in the north of the People's Republic of China.



102. Extended General Council for Africa. Nairobi, Kenya, 2006.

Meanwhile, each of the two Australian Provinces had relatively new Asian foundations in Cambodia and East Timor, and had *pro tem* oversight of the Sector of India which was still fragile, and where there were ethnic sensitivities to take into account. Elsewhere in southern Asia, growth had slowed in the established Province of Sri Lanka, and its own original outreach in Pakistan remained small. In Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific, the first discussions around restructuring in the 1990s had evoked divergent opinions and had failed to win support in all the administrative units. The issues were left to mature. One of the main questions raised in the 1990s had to do with diminishment in age and availability of the brothers in Australia vis-à-vis the continued expansion of Marist schools and ministries there. By the first decade of the next century, this issue had evolved to be focussed more on the significant growth of lay Marist life, and a concern for establishing the best structures for continuing to nurture this and for allowing these

⁸⁷¹ Message of the XX General Chapter: *Choose Life* #37.

⁸⁷² *Bulletin to Provincials* No. 16 April 2001, pp.2-3.



103. Extended General Council for Asia. Korea, 2006.

new Marists to lead and govern the range of educational and other works. This was a change in perspective. Brother Jeffrey Crowe who, as a General Councillor in the 1990s had seen some advantage in a single Oceania Province, was viewing things differently fifteen years later as Provincial of Australia:

*What we didn't do [in the 1990s] was take lay people into account. We didn't really do it in any part of the world. We really just focussed on the brothers. Vitality and viability in terms of the brothers, and mission in terms of the brothers.*⁸⁷³

By 2014, steps were under way in Australia for a new canonical and civil entity that would involve all Marists, inevitably with the brothers as a numerically small proportion of it. The brothers would be members, but the Institute *per se* would not be in charge of it. The same questions around how to respect the sprouting of new forms of Marist life, and to carry on Marist mission with few or no brothers, were beginning to emerge elsewhere. Ideas were beginning to emerge for mission structures that would be different from Institute structures. In West Central Europe, for example, where the brothers had continued to age and retire from active ministry, lay people were beginning to take a more prominent role in the animation of Marist works. The only way available for them to do this, however, was still within the increasingly fragile and uncertain structures of the Institute which did not seem likely to survive in the medium term.⁸⁷⁴

⁸⁷³ Brother Jeffrey Crowe, interview *idem*

⁸⁷⁴ Brother Maurice Taildeman, interview *idem*

Meanwhile, new structures for the brothers had been developed in Asia and the Pacific, with the establishment of the Provinces of South Asia and East Asia in 2007, and the transition of the *Ad Gentes* Sector into the Marist District of Asia. The District of the Pacific was established in 2011, from the previous structures that made up the Province of New Zealand. The new District formed an inter-dependent relationship with the District of Melanesia and the new Province of Australia (formed in 2012). At the same time, as in other parts of the Institute, moves towards increased regional cooperation were growing stronger, along with a growing openness to internationality.

As the Institute approaches its bicentenary, the impact and results of fifteen years of radical re-structuring continues to be evaluated. In some places, particularly the older and once numerically strong Provinces of Europe, the Americas and Oceania there would appear to have been a range of experiences and effects. Ongoing decline in the number of brothers and their increasing withdrawal from active ministry and administration has been the mark of most places. In some, usually where there has been a continued network of Marist schools and ministries, sustained and broad investment in the formation of lay Marists, and comprehensive strategic planning around Marist life and mission, then there have been encouraging (although not uniform) signs of new vitality expressed through a broader communion of Marists. In others, where such infrastructure has not continued or where co-responsibility has not been fostered, capacity would appear usually to be quite diminished.

18.

OTHER MATTERS IN THE GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

Financial management

Mission has to be financed. From the time of the Founder, the Institute has had a record of managing its financial affairs with a mix of prudence, foresight, competence and some boldness. The early brothers in Brazil, for example, began a project of printing and selling school textbooks to help to generate some income. “FTD”⁸⁷⁵ has grown to be the fourth largest publishing firm in the country, and continues to provide significant financial and material support for the Institute. The Brothers in other Provinces have had similar and other means for securing the financial viability of their work.⁸⁷⁶ At the level of the Institute a number of issues and questions have been addressed in the three decades from 1985 till 2015. Among these have been the professionalism of accounting practices, effectiveness of investment strategies, securing of ongoing sources of income, coordination of *ad intra* solidarity among the Provinces, consistent policies and practices in the Provinces, evangelical and ethical investment, and the training of Province Bursars and business managers.

In thanking his outgoing Council at the start of the General Chapter in 1985, Brother Basilio highlighted the “exceptional” service that had been given by the Econome General, Canadian Brother Olivier Sentenne through an approach to management that was

*... free from error and imprudence, [and which] has enabled our financial patrimony to produce appreciable sums of money which were used for the benefit of our missions, our Provinces that are poor, and for other social works.*⁸⁷⁷

⁸⁷⁵ The acronym is taken from the name of the fourth Superior General, *Frère Théophile Durant*.

⁸⁷⁶ The establishment of publishing houses was seen as both as a means of supporting a Province financially but also as an apostolate in its own right. From 2012, on the initiative of the Secretariat of Mission, the several large publishing entities then operative in the Institute in Spanish and Portuguese speaking countries, have come together on a regular basis to learn from one another in order to enhance both their managerial practices and their apostolic purposes.

⁸⁷⁷ Brother Basilio Rueda, in *Report on the State of the Institute*, in *Listening to the 18th General Chapter*. pp.76-77.

Brother Olivier was commended by the Commission which studied the finances for the “well-kept and healthy accounts” and his astuteness in investing.⁸⁷⁸ It was an assessment that was generally shared.⁸⁷⁹ The question of his replacement was one for the Chapter. Brother Charles was later to recall it this way:

... we had trouble getting a suitable nomination because Provincials have to be prepared to give somebody up. There was one person whom we would have liked to have but his Provincial felt that he was his key man,⁸⁸⁰ and I wasn't prepared to push it with him ...⁸⁸¹ The Brother finally elected as Econome General had been a member the previous Council, but he was not the new Superior General's preferred candidate.⁸⁸²



104. First International meeting of Marist Publishing companies in the premises of FTD. São Paulo, Brazil (2013).

⁸⁷⁸ *Acts of the XVIII General Chapter*, #6.

⁸⁷⁹ Brother Richard Dunleavy, interview *idem*. Brother Quentin Duffy, the outgoing Vicar General, also had high praise for Brother Olivier for “straightening out the rather confused and shadowy way that the finances worked”. (Transcript of interview, *idem*. pp.80-81.)

⁸⁸⁰ According to Brothers Richard Dunleavy and Jeffrey Crowe, this person was Brother Julian Casey from the Province of Melbourne, interviews *idem*. Other delegates had favoured Brother Pedro Huibobro for the role, and some Brother Yvon Bédard, who was to be appointed to the position nine years later.

⁸⁸¹ Brother Charles Howard, transcript of interview, *idem*. pp.27-28.

⁸⁸² This was Brother Ezequiel Vaquerín, a highly-respected brother of sharp intellect, who had been elected as Vice-Commissioner of the Chapter.

There was also, however, a suggestion that some capitulants were suspicious that Brother Charles, if he were given too much of a free hand in getting his own choice of Econome General, would over-spend the Institute's resources in support of projects he was supporting in Africa.⁸⁸³ These brothers judged it to be wise to put someone on the Council as Econome General who might provide a check on this.

The difficulties that emerged, however, were on other fronts. One serious problem arose around losses on investments as a result of what turned out to be poor advice from a Swiss adviser to the Institute, someone who was in fact an Affiliate. Considerable reserves were to be lost, including all the proceeds of the sale of the brothers' property in Fribourg, and funds belonging to the Provinces of Germany and Catalonia.⁸⁸⁴ In January 1989 an International Commission on Finances was convened – ten brothers who came together in Rome to look broadly at financial management, investment, budgeting, and sharing across Provinces.⁸⁸⁵ It was becoming clear that things had gone awry, but that the General Council was not fully apprised of all that had transpired.⁸⁸⁶ The sorting out of these mismanaged investments was to take the next Econome General some years to achieve; he was to see it as his major task.⁸⁸⁷

Progress on other matters had also stalled. Although the 1985 Chapter had recommended the introduction of more uniformity in Provinces' financial management procedures, the ethics and evangelical principles of their investment strategies, and their ways of contributing to a *Caisse Commune*,⁸⁸⁸ advances had not been made. In an attempt to initiate some reflection by Provincial Councils on appropriate evangelical capitalisation, a booklet was prepared in 1987 but the Council was to report to the next Chapter that "many Provinces did not have a clear understanding of what was required of them."⁸⁸⁹ Although the Provincials had been "almost unanimous" at Veranópolis in 1989 in their agreement that "capitalisation should be studied in the wider context of the use of our goods and property in the spirit of the Gospel",⁸⁹⁰ this remained little more than an aspiration. "Finances were the biggest disappointment for Charles of his time as General."⁸⁹¹

⁸⁸³ According to Brother Richard Dunleavy, it was Brother Olivier who argued this way, and he was also the one to lobby for the nomination of Brother Ezequiel. Brothers John McDonnell (interview with the author, 22 May 2015, echoed this perception of Brother Charles' spending by some of the capitulants)

⁸⁸⁴ Brother Yvon Bédard, interview *idem*. Brother Richard Dunleavy (interview, *idem*) reported to the author that, at one stage, things had become so serious that the Econome asked if he could sell the gold that was apparently secreted in a safe in the Chapel at Saint-Genis-Laval.

⁸⁸⁵ *FMS Echo*. No.7, May 1989.

⁸⁸⁶ Brother Richard Dunleavy, interview *idem*

⁸⁸⁷ Brother Yvon Bédard, interview *idem*.

⁸⁸⁸ *Acts of the XVIII General Chapter*. #6

⁸⁸⁹ *Report of the Brother Superior General and his Council to the XX General Chapter*. p.43

⁸⁹⁰ *Ibid*.

⁸⁹¹ Brother Richard Dunleavy, interview *idem*.

One of the Commissions of the Chapter of 1993 made a detailed study of the finances of the General Administration. Its report was quite critical of the state of affairs. It drew the Chapter's attention to these matters in particular:

- expenditure exceeded income through the eight years, meaning that the value of the investment portfolio had been depleted;
- no process of auditing of accounts;
- some confusion in the way the accounts were presented;
- land valuations had not been included among the list of assets;
- lack of uniformity in the ways the Provinces reported their finances;
- need for better control of expenditure, for better internal accounting procedures, and for the development of a manual of operations.⁸⁹²

All these were shaped into recommendations by the Chapter and passed to the incoming Council to address, along with an additional recommendation that it establish an International Commission for Economic Affairs. Such a Commission could propose new systems that could be introduced as well as study three other specific issues: the merits of setting up an investment fund to finance the General Council; how to achieve greater uniformity and security at the levels of the Provinces; whether Rome or another city should be the centre for the Institute's finances.⁸⁹³



105. Meeting in Rome of the International Council for Economic Affairs (CIAE).

⁸⁹² *Acts of the XIX General Chapter. Report on Finances. #4*

⁸⁹³ *Ibid.*

Brother Benito, in receipt of the Chapter's strong recommendations, and as someone who by nature was given to prudent management of resources, wanted to act quickly to address the financial state of the Institute.⁸⁹⁴ Because the Chapter had done away with the requirement that the Econome General needed to be a Councillor, the Superior and Council were able to look broadly across the Institute. Fortuitously, they selected Brother Yvon Bédard, a Canadian with professional training and experience in the field.

Brother Yvon's challenges had been made clear by the Chapter, and the untangling of the investment issue was urgent. He was also keen to re-establish productive relationships with the Provinces – which he thought had “become awful”⁸⁹⁵ – and to re-earn their trust. He did this though “opening the books of the General Administration” to them, developing personal relationships with Province Bursars, and offering training and support.⁸⁹⁶ Several practical ways through which this was pursued were the convening of language-based meetings for Province Bursars, the holding of training courses, the introduction of a regular bulletin for Provincials and Bursars, and the establishment of a mutual investment fund for those Provinces which were interested in having their funds managed professionally. The last initiative was to grow into a quite significant fund, and be of benefit to the General Administration and to individual Provinces. Originally established under US law in 1996, then moved to another country, and finally reconstituted in Canada by 2004-05 as a not-for-profit charitable fund, it allowed Provinces and the General Administration to pool their investments, to have them prudently and professionally managed, and to ensure a yield that would provide secure support for their work. Eventually, eighteen Provinces would participate along with Rome. Managed by a board of eight people and with a broad range of investments in two major currencies, and clear protocols, it has returned a steady and safe return since 2005.

By the time of the XX General Chapter, the Superior General and Council could report that the recommendations with which it had been entrusted had been met, with the single exception of a complete external auditing process. Differences in international practice had made this last task difficult to implement. (It was to be achieved during the tenure of the next Administration.⁸⁹⁷) It was particularly pleased that the Solidarity Fund (established in 1995) was attracting \$US0.5M additional investment each year, that criteria for ethical investments had been developed, that twenty Provinces were working directly with the Econome General to enhance their procedures and capacities, that investments and asset management systems for the General Administration were in place, and that the new International Finance Council was providing informed and professional oversight.⁸⁹⁸

⁸⁹⁴ Brother Benito Arbués, interview *idem*.

⁸⁹⁵ Brother Yvon Bédard, interview *idem*

⁸⁹⁶ *Ibid*.

⁸⁹⁷ *Report of the Brother Superior General and his Council to the XXI General Chapter*, p.83

⁸⁹⁸ *Report of the Brother Superior General and his Council to the XX General Chapter*. #2.4

After a further year with the new Council, and nine years in the role of Economic General, in 2002 Brother Yvon was most satisfied with these achievements in particular:

- *the establishment of the Solidarity Fund, as requested by the XIX Chapter;*
- *the training sessions that had been run for Provincial Bursars;*
- *the setting up of the Marist Investment Fund (Fonds d'Investissements Maristes);*
- *the supervision provided for the investment funds of individual Provinces; and*
- *the conversion of the former International College into a Casa per ferie.*⁸⁹⁹

The infrastructure, policies, procedures, relationships, and oversight established during these nine years allowed the successors of Brother Yvon (Brothers Antonio Martínez, Víctor Preciado and Libardo Garzón) to build on a well-established foundation. By the time of the XXI General Chapter, with more security in place,⁹⁰⁰ the capitulants were able to devote their attention more to broader principles of operation, most especially those to do with *ad intra* solidarity:

Several sessions were devoted to studying the economic and financial situation of the General Administration. The criteria of solidarity, internationality and mission coming from the fundamental call resonate with special intensity with regard to the use and destination of the resources at the disposal of the Institute.⁹⁰¹

Freed of the need to address any urgent malady, the Chapter was able to approve these six guiding principles for the financial administration of the Institute:

1. *The resources of the Institute serve its life and mission.*
2. *The government and animation of the Institute are financed principally by the administrative units.*
3. *The administrative units are responsible for the ordinary expenses of the General Administration on an equitable basis.*
4. *Transparency and accountability are respected in the administration of the resources of the Institute.*
5. *Financial independence and lasting viability are the long-term objectives of the administrative units.*
6. *The administrative units, in the spirit of solidarity, are prepared to provide mutual assistance so that these objectives may be realised*

⁸⁹⁹ *Marist Bulletin*. No. 37, 5 December 2002

⁹⁰⁰ Cf. *Report of Brother Superior General and his Council to the XXI General Chapter*, p.83

⁹⁰¹ *Acts of the XXI General Chapter*, p.70

The Chapter had only two recommendations:

- *that the General Council appoint a team of specialists in finance to draw up a plan for the financing of the General Administration ...*
- *that the General Council appoint a team of specialists in finance to draw up a plan for the progressive achievement of the economic autonomy of the administrative units, as well as the Mission Ad Gentes Sector.*

The new Council moved quickly on the first recommendation,⁹⁰² and commenced a series of regional consultations spread over twelve months.⁹⁰³ The second became involved in the much broader project for “New Models of Animation, Governance and Management”. Meanwhile, a growing unity and collaboration across the Institute continued to be evident, for example in the first full international meeting of Province Economes and Business Managers at the General House in October 2013.⁹⁰⁴ A major topic for them was the planning around the “New Models” project. At the same time, the tenure of Brother Victor as Econome General witnessed an expansion of the professionalism of the operations, with the outsourcing of significant financial management to a specialist firm. Employees of this firm were appointed to work in a newly designated space within the General House.

The question of the General House

It was just fifteen years after its move from Saint-Genis-Laval to large and purpose-built facilities in EUR, Rome, in 1961 that the XVII General Chapter voted to sell the General House. The house in Rome had been planned on a grand scale, to accommodate the General Council, the General Administration, and to be the base of a large international house of studies. It envisaged an enormous community of up to 150 brothers living and working in a contemporary monastery that befitted the twentieth century – with suitable spaces for work, prayer, community life, and recreation. Its internal “cloister” was symbolically open to the world by its lacking a fourth wall; it included an imposing chapel, a large Chapter Hall, a two-storey library, specially designed offices and meeting areas, an internal swimming pool and gymnasium, a football field, a four-storey *foresteria* for guests, and special wing for the chaplains, and even a convent for a community of religious sisters who would provide services in the house. The world, the Church, and the Institute were to change quickly. By 1976, the members of the General Chapter wanted “to take all necessary steps” for its sale.⁹⁰⁵

⁹⁰² *Marist News*. No. 116, 29 June 2010

⁹⁰³ *Marist News*. No. 169, 8 August 2011

⁹⁰⁴ *Marist News*. No. 298, 21 November 2013

⁹⁰⁵ *Acts of the XVII General Chapter*

In the forty ensuing years, the matter was thrown back and forth, with the Institute oscillating between actively seeking a sale to looking for better ways to utilise and to finance the complex. After the XVII Chapter, a property firm was asked to canvass potential buyers and seek other sites for the Institute to base its centre. Various options were explored. Some possible replacement houses were considered, including one on the Via Cassia.⁹⁰⁶ Negotiations with potential buyers proved to be inconclusive and negotiations were suspended in 1982. A major stumbling block was the legal requirement that the sale of tax-exempt Church property for commercial gain would require the paying to the civil authorities the accumulated value of previously-exempted land taxes.

The house was expensive to run and to maintain. An opportunity to ameliorate matters presented itself in the lead-in to the Church's "Jubilee" in the year 2000. Large numbers of pilgrims were expected in Rome to mark the two thousandth anniversary of the Incarnation and, as a way of providing accommodation, religious houses were permitted to develop spare space they may have into basic commercial accommodation. The General Council seized this opportunity to convert what had been the International College into a "casa per ferie" to be known as "Villa EUR" in "Parco dei Pini". Appropriate legal arrangements were made for a new entity, and a major refurbishment was undertaken. As part of the new arrangement, the new *casa per ferie* would provide some services in kind to the General House. It began its operations in 1999, and the College – which had reduced in recent years from numbers in the forties to levels in the twenties – relocated to the *fores-*



106. Villa EUR Hotel.

⁹⁰⁶ This was the General House of the Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Picpus. It was considered by the General Council in December 1976. *Acts of the General Council*. Vol.9 p.43

teria. A little later, part of the old football field was sold to a development group to construct an office building. The financial situation improved, but not enough to prevent the 2001 Chapter's again recommending that "the Superior General and his Council ... continue efforts being made to reduce the financial cost to the Institute of the General House."⁹⁰⁷

In the lead-up the XXI General Chapter, there was again pressure from some quarters – not least among them the Vicar General Brother Luis García Sobrado – not only to sell the General House, but to relocate the General Administration to another country, for example in Asia or Latin America. It was an idea that found some traction at the Chapter:

*Following other General Chapters which made decisions with regard to the General House, this one also discussed this matter. In this case, the Chapter considered a previous study on the functioning, services and costs of the General House, in addition to outlining and evaluating some alternatives. With this data in hand, the Chapter assembly recommended the General Council to continue with the study and, if they fulfilled the conditions detailed below, to plan for the possible sale and transfer of the General House.*⁹⁰⁸

The Chapter made these recommendations to the incoming Council:

1. *The possible sale of the property and building at Piazzale Champagnat*
2. *The subsequent translation of the seat of the General Administration, under these conditions: the General Council*
 - *will appoint an international commission of experts to further the study already carried out, to request a second valuation of the property and building, to ask for and evaluate various offers, and to accompany the process of the possible sale and the installation on the new site;*
 - *will guarantee a profit which the commission of experts considers reasonable;*
 - *will guarantee adequate information to the whole Institute about the significance of this decision;*
 - *will decide the destination of the profit, taking into account the strengthening of the funds of the General Administration and the solidarity fund in favour of the poor.*

⁹⁰⁷ Acts of the XX General Chapter

⁹⁰⁸ Acts of the XXI General Chapter, p.73

It further asked the Council to

- *decide the most appropriate site for the new seat, keeping in mind the specific needs of a General House;*
- *make sure that the new seat reflects the values of simplicity, moderation, functionality and promotes/supports the quality of community life.*

In 2010 the new Council established the requested Commission.⁹⁰⁹ It held the first of its meetings in July of the following year.⁹¹⁰ After considering comprehensive legal and commercial advice, it reached a conclusion similar to groups before it. A world financial crisis in 2008 had also reduced the pool of potential buyers, and indeed none could be found who was willing to pay an acceptable price. The decision was, once again, to maximise use of the house, through expansion of the operations of the hotel (which was subsequently leased to new management),⁹¹¹ and the accommodating of more of the Institute's programmes and courses in the house. Meanwhile, ongoing refurbishment of office areas was planned to allow the General Administration to function in ways that were contemporary, and improvements were envisaged for the brothers' living and community areas to help them live as brothers.⁹¹²

Communication: from an analogue to a digital world

From the time of the Founder, Circulars had been used by Superiors General to communicate both news and more discursive teaching. From 1909, the *Bulletin de l'Institut* had been also used as an important way to communicate with the Institute, to provide updates on developments, and markers of progress such as the annual statistics of membership. Brother Basilio added the "F.M.S." in 1969, a brief publication with largely a news focus. At its first plenary meetings, the Council of Brother Charles set up a Commission to study the matter of communications.⁹¹³

⁹⁰⁹ *Marist News*. No. 116, 29 July 2010

⁹¹⁰ *Marist News*. No. 172, 2 September 2012

⁹¹¹ There had been growing dissatisfaction with the original arrangement, and a recognition that it was costing the Institute rather than earning income for it. Specialist external advice was sought, resulting in a lease to a new firm. Part of the new lease (which was for twenty years) was the re-classification of the facilities from a *casa per ferie* to legal registration as a three-star hotel. A financial arrangement between the Institute and the lessees of the hotel, more favourable than the previous one, was put into place. This was done in 2014.

⁹¹² Information provided to the author by Brother Joseph McKee VG, who had carriage of the matter during these years.

⁹¹³ Its members were: Brothers Yves Thenoz SecGen, Richard Dunleavy CG, Jean Dumortier (France, *Presence Mariste*), Ignacio Pérez (Spain, Luis Vives publishing house), Antonio Sancamillo (Italy).

It was recommended that the *Bulletin* and the *F.M.S.* be combined into a single publication, given a new name and a fresher look, and published in the four working languages of the Institute.⁹¹⁴ *FMS Message* first appeared in February 1987, printed in black-and-white, with a scattering of small photos to accompany the articles. The first issue was 36 pages; others were to range up to 60 pages. Brother Raoul Goffinet from Belgium was appointed as full-time coordinator of publications. Printing was done by the Vatican's printing service, and the copies mailed to the Provinces. The aim of the publication was to be "a messenger and witness of the life of the Institute" for the brothers through "news and longer articles", in order that they all could get a sense of the "international richness" of the Institute, share in its joys and sorrows, offer their support and prayer, and "strengthen our sense of mission as sons of Marcellin Champagnat".⁹¹⁵

Within a year, a second publication had appeared. *FMS Echo* was to be a short newsletter (initially four pages, and later eight), published in the four languages, in black-and-white type, and prepared "collegially" by members of the General Council.⁹¹⁶ It would be published four or five times per year, with short pieces of news. Often, but not always, the Superior General would provide an introductory word. Other contributions typically came from experiences in Councillors' travels and small items of news of decisions of the Council, appointments of Provincials and members of the General Administration or developments in Rome. The third issue carried an item of news of another means of communication that had arrived at the General House: the installation of its first "fax machine".⁹¹⁷ From Issue No.20 in its fourth year, the publication introduced a permanent feature on the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family, so as to "extend our family communication to all those who share in some way the Marist way of following Jesus along the path that Marcellin and Mary have shown us."⁹¹⁸ Increasingly, the Champagnat Movement fraternities became a major part of the target readership of the publication. At the same time, a new newsletter aimed more specifically at the brothers was introduced, *FMS Update*. Like *Echo*, it was short, newsy, and mainly text. Subtly, also, the quality of the graphic design and layout of both newsletters began to improve. By March 2000, with developments in desktop publishing, they could be received in electronic format, and in full colour. *Echo* also had a small but significant name change from *FMS Echo* to *Marist Echo* (with the FMS remaining as a logo in the banner), a "recognition that more and more lay people want a stake in Marcellin's spirituality and mission."⁹¹⁹

⁹¹⁴ Brother Charles gave an overview of this history in his introduction to the first *FMS Message*. No.1. February 1987.

⁹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹¹⁶ *FMS Echo*. No.1, January 1988.

⁹¹⁷ *FMS Echo*. No.3, June 1988

⁹¹⁸ *FMS Echo*. No.20, May 1995.

⁹¹⁹ *Marist Echo*. No.31, March 2000.



107. Echos, FMS Echos, FMS Marist Echos, FMS Update, FMS Message

The publication was to last until 2005, aimed almost entirely at a lay Marist readership by that year. The last issue, in June, made no mention of its being the final *Marist Echo*, but it did tellingly record that by 2005 the Institute’s website was receiving an average of 3,716 visits a day.⁹²⁰ Communications had moved to a new space.

⁹²⁰ *Marist Echo*, No.49, June 2005



Web-based publishing had arrived. And so had Brother Lluís Serra Lansana as Director of Communications. A website had first been developed by him in 2000 as part of the lead-in to the XX General Chapter (www.fms.it), and to assist with the preparatory phase and to provide instant reporting of it while it took place. The Communications Office was proud to win the “2001 International Multimedia Award” for excellence in the “use of communications media in an evangelising mission” (category websites).⁹²¹ Immediately after the Chapter, a new means of communication was launched, to be known as *Marist Bulletin*. It would be sent out to subscribers (beginning with the 1,750 who had been subscribed for the Chapter). It hoped “to share Marist life across all borders ... to be a meeting point for all who feel attracted to Marcellin’s charism.”⁹²² It was a text-only communication, originally carrying snippets of news, but later some extended interviews on Marist themes. It continued until June 2008, through 339 issues, sent out on a weekly basis.

A new website (www.champagnat.org) was launched on the fifth anniversary of Saint Marcellin’s canonisation, 18 April 2004. It was offered to all Marists – brothers, lay, young and old – with five aims:

- to promote Marcellin Champagnat’s project in both domains of spirituality and mission
- to promote unity in the diversity of languages, countries and cultures
- to present news
- to carry other information and resources on Marist themes
- to create exchange among Marists worldwide.⁹²³

⁹²¹ *Marist Bulletin*. No.1, 25 December 2001

⁹²² *Ibid.*

⁹²³ *Marist Bulletin*. No.136, 15 April 2004



108. www.champagnat.org

Within twelve months the site had 3,400 subscribers. The webmaster, Mr Luiz da Rosa (who nine years later was himself to become Director of Communications), developed it into an active and contemporary space. With the website launched, in August 2004 Brother Luis Serra passed the baton to Brother Oronino Rota for a year. It was during the time of Brother Lluís – a man of both initiative and spiritual wisdom – that the publications of the Institute moved from the world of print to that of digital communications. As he departed, he highlighted these changes that had taken place in just a few years:

- *the transformation from “publications” to “communications”, and the introduction of a website as “meeting place”;*
- *the evolution of Echo into a publication for lay Marists;*
- *the updating of graphic design to contemporary standards;*

- the use of digital photography, sound recordings, and video clips;
- the creation of *Marist Bulletin* as an on-line, subscription-based newsletter.⁹²⁴

In September 2005, the Institute's communications were to take their next leap forward with the appointment of Brother Antonio Martínez Estaún as Director. It was now a role that oversaw *FMS Message*, *Marist Echo*, *Marist Notebooks*, *FMS Update*, *Marist Bulletin*, the website, and any special publications of the Institute such as *Water from the Rock* which was to set a new benchmark in the publications of the Institute. The website continued to grow, the number of visits increasing, and blogging becoming an increasingly used element of it.⁹²⁵ Another change to strategy was made in 2008 when it was decided that *FMS Update* (after 281 issues) and *Marist Bulletin* would be replaced by *Marist News*, which would be published electronically both on the website and with notifications sent by email directly to subscribers, rather than to Province offices (as *Update* had been). Its aim would be to report on what the General Council and the Secretariats were doing. The weekly *Marist News* was to draw its material mainly from news items that by then were appearing almost on a daily basis on the website. These had been introduced in 2004; by 2013, the 3000th item had been posted.⁹²⁶ The subscriber base had grown by 2015 to over 5,000.⁹²⁷

The communications methods of the Superiors General paralleled the developments in the Institute more generally. Brother Charles had written letters by hand and typewriter; his Circulars were printed in booklets, almost entirely in black-and-white. With advent of word-processing and emailing, and the growing sophistication of graphic design, this was to change for Brother Benito and even more so for Brother Seán. Brother Emili, a man quite at ease with digital technology, was to take it further. As has been already discussed, his printed communications included extensive use of visual imagery. But, his more frequently chosen media for communication were electronic: video, social media, and other digital means. Whereas Brother Charles had written a formal Circular to introduce the Champagnat Year in 1989, the three-year lead-in to the Institute's bicentenary was launched by Brother Emili through a digital video message, filmed on location in France, and posted online. His messages for Christmas and Easter, and to various Marist groups meeting around the world, have used similar means. Brother Seán had published, in addition to his Circulars, other significant messages, such as his letter to launch the Vocations Year in 2005 (*Rekindling the Fire*) and to introduce the renewal of the Marist places in 2007 (*Let Us Reclaim the Spirit of the Hermitage*). They were printed in booklet form.

⁹²⁴ *Marist Bulletin*. No.160, 17 September 2004

⁹²⁵ *Marist Bulletin*. No.266, 10 October 2006

⁹²⁶ *Marist News*, No.296, 8 November 2013

⁹²⁷ *Marist News*. No.400, 20 November 2015.

Brother Emili may be seen to have introduced a new genre of communication by the Superior General – that of the electronic letter. Its text is sharply written, its graphic design and visual images serve its theme, and its layout is creative and engaging.

Archival storage and data management

With the first register of names begun by Marcellin Champagnat in 1822 an archive of the Institute was initiated. Its development from that time until the 1960s was largely unplanned and sporadic. Care of archival material, and the keeping or loss of documents and records, were more a function of good or poor fortune than of any strategic design.⁹²⁸ Many documents were lost, including an unknown number during a “burning that went on for days” at the time of the expulsion from France in 1903.⁹²⁹ From the 1960s, after the move to Rome and the appointment of full-time Archivists, improved organisation and classification were introduced, even the beginnings of some technologically advanced storage and retrieval methods (originally through the use of microfilm).

After 1985, the Council of Brother Charles came to the view that the multitude of documents and books and other materials that occupied fifty square metres of the second floor of the General House – in a hotchpotch of boxes, filing cabinets, cupboards and shelves – should be housed in a purpose-fitted archive. Two of the large vaulted areas under the main building were subsequently converted and ready for the transfer of the Archives by 1991.

The new areas provided a space of over two hundred square metres, with appropriate storage, work spaces and display areas. Additionally, there was provision for a library. The move was supervised by Brother Paul Sester, former Secretary General and then Archivist, to whom the Institute owes a great debt. Of the succession of brothers who have served as director of the General Archives – and the others who have toiled “hidden and unknown” in the meticulous transcription and digitalisation of documents – it has been pre-eminently the care, vision, knowledge and commitment Brother Paul that have ensured the preservation and accessibility of the historical patrimony of the Institute. Brother Paul was followed in 1997 by professionally-trained archivist Brother Jean-Pierre Cotnoir (from Canada), in 2005 Brother Juan Moral (from Catalonia) some of whose works have already been mentioned, and in 2013 Brother Colin Chalmers (from Scotland).

⁹²⁸ Brother Paul Sester has an interesting account of the development of the general archives from the beginning of the Institute until 1985 in *Marist Notebooks*. No.1, June 1990. pp.1-15

⁹²⁹ *Ibid.*

Brother Jean-Pierre improved the physical area through the introduction of temperature and humidity control, lighting and fire-retardation measures, and also re-located items that did not technically belong in the Institute Archives. Among the major projects of the Brother Colin has been the ultra-high quality digital scanning by Vatican professionals of precious documents, beginning with the letters of Saint Marcellin and the notebooks of Brother François.⁹³⁰

From 1987, a computerised catalogue of the tens of thousands of documents was gradually compiled. The original documents and files themselves were classified into seven categories:

1. *The Founder*
2. *General history of the Institute*
3. *Administration*
4. *External relations*
5. *Personnel – the brothers of the Institute*
6. *Provinces*
7. *Finances and material goods*⁹³¹

It is an overall classification system that has been maintained, but much more detailed systemisation was introduced into it by Brother Jean-Pierre after 1997. In addition, the digital transcription of documents began – with priority given to those written by Father Champagnat and Brothers François, Jean-Baptiste, Louis-Marie, Avit, and Sylvestre. Work was completed by Brother Paul himself, by participants in CEPAM courses, and by several brothers both in Rome and in France.⁹³² It has continued since, and is ongoing. Meanwhile an electronic database of the personnel records of all brothers was commenced, with two assistants employed to undertake the data-entry.⁹³³ Brother Jean-Pierre began the extensive task of digitally scanning documents, using *Archivum* software. A team of four was engaged to undertake this work.⁹³⁴

⁹³⁰ The documents were scanned professionally. Assistance has been provided by the Vatican Archive Service to mount the letters of the Founder in archive-standard albums. (Brother Colin Chalmers, personal communication with the author, 20 January 2016.)

⁹³¹ *Marist Notebooks*. Nos 2 and 3 (June 1991, May 1992)

⁹³² Brother Paul recognised the service of these brothers in *Marist Notebooks*, No.20, June 2004. The work has continued since then.

⁹³³ Around 40,000 men have been members of the Institute, at least for a time.

⁹³⁴ Information supplied to the author by Brother Jean-Pierre Cotnoir, 9 December 2015.

As the sophistication of technological storage and management of data improved, initiatives were taken by successive Secretaries General to introduce software that would allow for the electronic archiving and retrieval of all documents generated by the General Administration. During the time of Brother Jean Ronzon's tenure as Secretary General, *Archivum* was increasingly used for this purpose.⁹³⁵ In 2011, this was succeeded by a programme known as *Pergamum*, a data management system developed by the Marist university in Curitiba (*Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Paraná*)⁹³⁶. Its aim was "a smooth and constant correspondence with all Provincial Secretaries; the modernisation and update of the Institute's database and implementation in all Provinces and Districts".⁹³⁷ *Archivum* and its successor programmes such as *Kosmos* allowed for a more comprehensive cataloguing of both historical and current documents, and a more integrated system for accessing, filing and retrieving data regarding many aspects of the life and work of the Institute. Much of this increasing sophistication has been guided by the advice and support of Brother Marcelo De Brito from Argentina, with specialist services provided by PUCPR in Brazil. A global plan was developed that was envisaged eventually to involve all administrative units:⁹³⁸



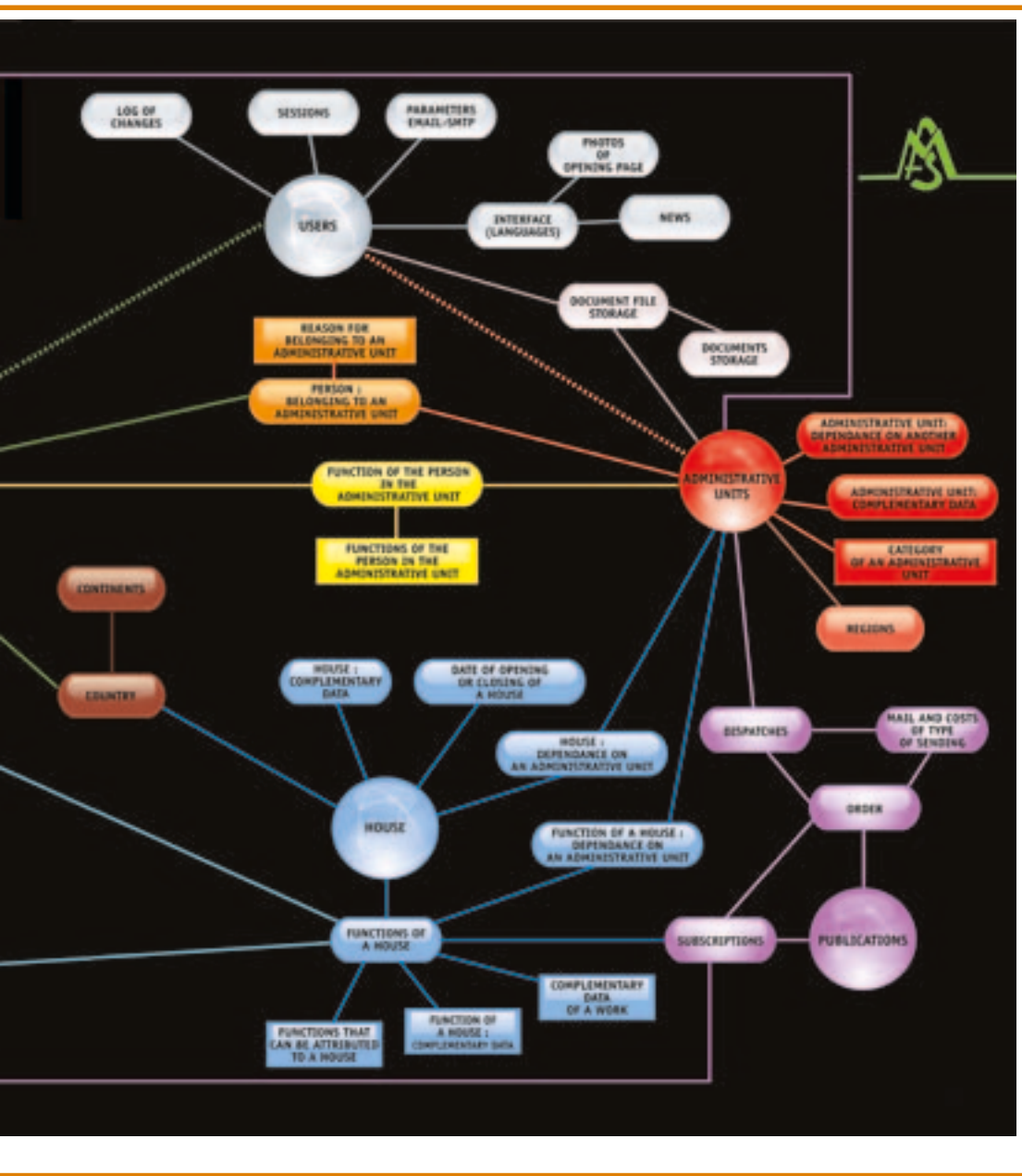
109. Marist Communications Structure

⁹³⁵ The previous data storage system in for the Archives was known as *Ficdoc*.

⁹³⁶ *FMS Message*, No. 41, December 2011.

⁹³⁷ Brother Pedro Sanchez SecGen, in *ibid.* p.60

⁹³⁸ Brother Marcelo De Brito, in *ibid.* pp.82-83.



New Models of Animation, Government and Management

In their report to the XIX General Chapter in 1993, the Superior General and Council commented on the quite limited role of the General Council in governance and administration.

*The principles of co-responsibility and subsidiarity (C.119) mean there is a large measure of decentralisation in our Institute. Thus, the major decisions of government for the Council are relatively restricted in number, for example the naming of Provincials, the erection of a new Province or District ... but for the most part the other governmental decisions concern mainly routine administrative and financial matters.*⁹³⁹

Whatever might have been the benefits and attractions for having such devolution, it did carry with it inevitable challenges for building unity, consistency and *ad intra* solidarity across the Institute. For example, it had been a challenge for Brother Charles' Council to convince all Provinces to implement the Formation Guide.⁹⁴⁰ The Council was also frustrated by the level of secrecy that some Provinces kept around their finances.⁹⁴¹ The experience of the next Council was similar with the new document on the *Marist Educational Mission*, with the decision to use it or not being largely a local one.⁹⁴² The same Council had concerns about the closure of major educational works in some Provinces, but little practical influence in stopping them.⁹⁴³ Brother Seán's Council, after its launch of the *Ad Gentes* initiative with the pledge of support of the Provincials at the General Conference of 2005 ran into problems with the same Provincials not always being forthcoming in the release of brothers who wanted to volunteer from their Provinces to join the new Sector.⁹⁴⁴ All these examples were expressions of a model of animation, government and management in which the loci of decision-making tended to be more devolved than centralised. It made for inconsistencies in Marist life and mission, something exacerbated by the considerable differences in capacity that existed among the Provinces. With the growing number of lay people involved in Marist works, and complex civil structures for management and control, there was a growing concern that the model may need recalibrating.

⁹³⁹ *Report of the Brother Superior General and his Council to the XIX General Chapter*, p.16

⁹⁴⁰ Interviews with Brothers Philip Ouellette, Richard Dunleavy, Gaston Robert and Michael Hill, *idem*.

⁹⁴¹ Brother Benito Arbués, interview *idem*

⁹⁴² Brother Jeffrey Crowe, interview *idem*; *Report of the Superior General and Council to the XX General Chapter*, #2.4

⁹⁴³ Brother Jeffrey Crowe, interview *idem*.

⁹⁴⁴ Brothers Seán Sammon and Luis García Sobrado, interviews *idem*

The XXI General Chapter in 2009 did not give much sharpness to its recommendations on this matter, other than to suggest somewhat imprecisely to the Council that it “impel processes of collaboration and organisation among administrative units and/or Regions”.⁹⁴⁵ As the capitulants were leaving, however, the new Superior General suggested to them five “learnings” that they could take home from their experience of the Chapter. The fifth was that it had been an

*... apprenticeship in internationality. I believe that we lived, as never before, this factor of internationality in an open and profound manner. I believe that it is a prophetic sign that another form of globalisation is possible. We are also taking home this task of internationality. The question is if you are ready to pay the price, so that our Institute may become each day more global, more internally given to solidarity, with greater interaction among all.*⁹⁴⁶

It was to be a growing theme of the new Council, one that came to be strongly endorsed by the General Conference four years later. One of its early realisations was in a project that was called “New Models of Animation, Governance and Management” (AGM). The initiative was to be driven especially by the Director of newly formed Mission Secretariat, Brother João Carlos do Prado, who had been Director of UMBRASIL. By 2011 an International Commission had been formed,⁹⁴⁷ and a concept refined. The basic goal of the project was named:



110. International Meeting on Management of Marist Institutions. Campinas, Brazil (2006).

⁹⁴⁵ Acts of the XXI General Chapter, “Animation and Government”, Recommendation #2, p.67

⁹⁴⁶ Closing Address of the Superior General, in *Acts of the XXI General Chapter*, p.215

⁹⁴⁷ Its members were: Brothers João Carlos do Prado, John Klein CG, Víctor Preciado CG, Gabriel Villareal and Michael Green, and Mr Marco Cándido.

*To ensure the development and sustainability of the Marist life and mission by proposing and implementing principles, guidelines and possible models of animation, governance and management for the General Administration and administrative units.*⁹⁴⁸

The project also had some history in the years before the XXI Chapter. In 2006, a meeting had been convened in Campinas for the Provinces of the Americas, with some European participation, to look at the most contemporary ways to govern and administer Marist institutions at the level of the Province.⁹⁴⁹ Three years later, the General Council – through its Mission Commission – organised a meeting in Guatemala to which up to four representatives from all Provinces were invited, both brothers and lay Marists. The topic had broadened to “Governance and Animation in the Service of Mission”.⁹⁵⁰ While it was focussed on what arrangements could be developed *within* Provinces rather than *among* them, broader concepts were introduced into the discourse, most especially around the co-responsibility of lay Marists with brothers in the governance of mission, and the formation of such lay people so that they were spiritually and communally Marist. In writing to Provincials to invite attendance, Brother Emili Turú (as chair of the Mission Commission) addressed this point in particular:

The large presence of lay men and women in our works calls for a type of participation based on trust, clarity of roles and responsibilities, and agreement with whatever we affirm in our documents when we speak of “co-responsibility”. That



111. International meeting entitled, Management at the service of mission and its future. Guatemala (2009).

⁹⁴⁸ Project documentation supplied to the author

⁹⁴⁹ Held in November 2006 in Campinas, Brazil, with the theme: “Proposals for administrative models for the group of educational Institutions of a Province.”

⁹⁵⁰ A sub-commission had been formed to plan the meeting, comprising: Brothers Juan Miguel Anaya (Rome), Wellington Medeiros (Brazil Centro-Norte), Michael Green (Sydney), Juan Ignacio Poyatos (Mediterránea) and Carlos A. Huidobro (Cruz del Sur)

is why the XX General Chapter asks us: “To establish the necessary structures so that co-responsibility is effective among brothers, lay men and lay women in the planning, in the animation and in the administration of the works. And this, particularly, in the realisation of new apostolic projects” (44.7).⁹⁵¹

Some possible changes to the Constitutions were mooted,⁹⁵² but there turned out to be inadequate time to prepare anything concrete for the upcoming Chapter. At the same time, the first MIIMA had taken place and the Bureau of the Laity was finalising the text *Gathered Around the Same Table*, published just before the Chapter. Both looked for significant changes in paradigm. Meanwhile, the Procurator General and the Secretary of the Bureau of Laity – Brothers Juan Miguel Anaya and Pau Fornells – had jointly written a paper on the canonical, civil and theological possibilities and implications for lay people’s belonging not simply to the Institute, but “to the charism”.⁹⁵³ It proposed some new canonical entities, and some recommendations for the General Council and General Chapter. Unfortunately, the paper was not translated into all other languages by the time of the Chapter, and received only limited circulation among capitulants. All this revealed that there was growing agitation for some new and creative thinking around what the Mission Assembly five years later was to call the “new Marists”. Thinking was not at a stage of maturity, however, for the Chapter in 2009 to give it the consideration it needed.

The “New Models” project was an opportunity to do that. In 2012 after three meetings of the Commission, a management consultancy firm was engaged to assist with the planning project.⁹⁵⁴ Some initial planning was done and some fine-tuning of the expected outcomes. It was hoped that the project would result in:

- *models that achieved greater synergy and equity of resources among administrative units (AUs);*
- *models that achieved greater co-responsibility and communion between lay Marists and brothers;*
- *suggestions for changes in the Constitutions;*
- *clarity in roles and responsibilities of key governance entities (General Council, Econome General, Provincial Councils etc.);*
- *improved critical decision macro-processes (e.g. strategic planning, ownership succession planning for real estate and other assets, funding of Institute strategic projects, risk management policies, evangelization guidelines etc.) involving the General Administration (GA) and the AUs;*

⁹⁵¹ Letter to Provincials, 8 June 2008. p.2

⁹⁵² *Ibid.* p.1

⁹⁵³ Brother Juan Miguel Anaya and Pau Fornells, *Bonding, Commitment, Attachment and Belonging of Lay People to the Institute and/or the Marist Charism*. 1 June 2009

⁹⁵⁴ The firm, chosen after an extensive tender process, was ATKearney.

- a new governance, management and animation model for the GA (principles, structure, processes and resources);
- principles (including animation principles), guidelines, minima and possible AGM models for AUs;
- implementation (including change management approaches).⁹⁵⁵

A Project Team was formed to take carriage of the work.⁹⁵⁶ Further work was done on the guidelines and principles for the project, resulting in these principles:

- *At the beginning of the third centenary we are searching for the most adequate ways to ensure the sustainability and vitality of the Marist mission.*
- *We want people who are joyful, passionate and committed to the Marist charism; for them we promote experiences and accompaniment and formation processes at all levels of the Institute.*
- *We identify ourselves as an international Institute acting as a global body in all dimensions of the Marist life and mission.*
- *We prioritise the presence and closeness of Brothers and vocational lay people among the children and young people, especially the poor and vulnerable.*
- *We promote communion and co-responsibility in the Marist life and mission.*
- *We take up at all levels of the Institute (AUs, Regions and GA) participation and co-responsibility in the animation, government and management of the Marist life and mission.*
- *In order to respond to the calls and challenges of our mission, we are searching for appropriate structures and clearly defined roles and responsibilities of people.*⁹⁵⁷

After finalisation of research and analysis instruments, the project was to unroll through three phases: diagnosis (2014); analysis and consultation (2014-15); and implementation (from mid-2015). Extensive visits were made by the Project Team, and seven regional meetings held over the course of a year.⁹⁵⁸

⁹⁵⁵ Project documentation supplied to the author

⁹⁵⁶ Its members were Brothers João Carlos do Prado and Miguel Ángel Espinosa Barrio (from the Mission Secretariat), Brother Carlos Alberto Rojas, Mr Peter McNamara and Mr José Maria Sanz (from the AUs) and Mr Luca Oliveri and Mr Francesco Fusca (from ATKearney)

⁹⁵⁷ Project documentation supplied to the author

⁹⁵⁸ The meetings were: Arco Norte, Oceania, Africa, Brazil, Cono Sur, Europe and Asia.



112. Launch of the Project *New Models of animation, governance and management*, proposed by the General Council. Rome (2014).

A major consultation in July 2015 brought together in Rome two representatives from all administrative units (one being the Provincial), with the General Council, General Administration, the Project Team and the Project Commission. Over four days, the 85 participants worked through the results of the diagnosis and analysis, and workshopped the recommendations of Project Team.

The whole “New Models” project proved to be an undertaking of considerable size and complexity, and this provided a challenge for its gathering momentum and singularity of purpose. The reasons for this became apparent early in the process:

1. *The issues under consideration touched on every aspect of Marist life and mission. It was not possible, therefore, for the project to be undertaken independently of the directions and projects of each of the other Secretariats – those of the Laity, of Brothers Today, of Collaboration for Mission, International (CMI) and FMSI – and of any other major projects under way, such as the Review of the Constitutions, and the plans for “International Communities for a New Beginning”. A coalescing of thinking and acting was needed among each of the major departments of the General Administration, and also the General Council. To the extent that that happened, it was during the process rather than before it. It was not until a meeting in February 2015 that members of all Secretariats, the General Council and the Commission met for the first time together.*

2. *The disparity across the Marist world was considerable. Differences were apparent in various ways: the size and complexity of works, and the infrastructure supporting them; formation programmes; the readiness and capacity of lay Marists to assume responsibility (and the openness on the part of the brothers for it to happen); capacity for leadership, both lay and brother; levels of resources; the ages and vocational flow of the brothers, and their preferences for ministry; and the range of histories, cultures, languages, civil requirements and legal limitations, and ecclesial realities.*
3. *The project bore on significant conceptual questions around which there was a range of opinion and experience: the nature of Marist life and the living of Marist spirituality and life by men and women who were not brothers; where the focus and priority of Marist mission should lie; the possibility of new structures that were different from the model of the Institute itself. At the first Marist International Mission Assembly in Mendes, at the two meetings on governance for mission in Campinas and Guatemala, and in the Anaya-Fornells proposals, there had been more creative thinking around these matters. The "New Models" project was perhaps hampered by its not attending to guiding principles on these questions at the start of the project, before its looking at how Marists could act cooperatively and equitably across the world.⁹⁵⁹*

New models for any or all of the three facets of the project – animation, governance or management – would be defined by the ways that the issues in these three areas were understood and pursued. At the meeting in July 2015, the term “paradigm shift” was used by members of the General Council but it was apparent that there was a range of willingness or readiness to embrace a fundamental change in a “Marist paradigm” if that implied something other than the Institute. For some, perhaps most, at the meeting, the Institute remained the basic conceptual structure for animation, governance and management of Marist life and mission. The experience of others called for something different, perhaps one where the Institute – meaning the brothers – was part of a larger Marist entity, and was not necessarily in ultimate authority over it.

Because of this variety of experience and readiness, the 2015 meeting resolved that it may be more appropriate to use the term “roadmap to a new dawn for Marist mission” than “new models of animation, government and management”, and to recognise that there would be different ways of proceeding across the Marist world. It was a recognition that there was a range of self-understandings among the people who described themselves as “Marist”, and it was preferable to focus on the people rather than the models.⁹⁶⁰ The “roadmap” would be marked by: (a) flexibility, (b) unity in diversity where various initiatives may be different but

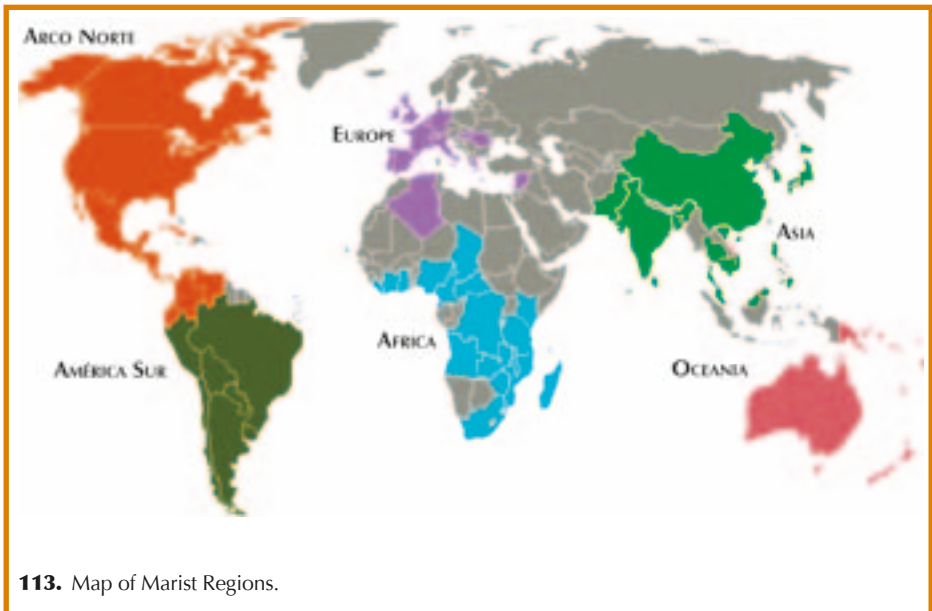
⁹⁵⁹ This summary is the author's, based on many conversations and meetings during his involvement in the project between 2011 and 2015.

⁹⁶⁰ From personal notes taken by the author during the last working session of the meeting.

would be compatible with one another, and (c) openness to new possibilities.⁹⁶¹ In later distillation of the meeting, an ad hoc working team of the Mission Secretariat named four “paths to the future”:

- *towards greater specialisation in each of the areas of animation, governance and management where all Marists contribute according to their skills and experience;*
- *towards a more global and interdependent body;*
- *towards more shared responsibility, where the Institute would be part of a larger charismatic family;*
- *towards creating more evangelising opportunities with needy young people, beyond formal education.*⁹⁶²

There was, nonetheless, agreement at the July 2015 meeting on greater regional collaboration (on a geographical basis) and the enhancement of structures to support this. Six regions were proposed to the meeting, all of which were subsequently endorsed by conferences of Provincials with the exception of Asia-Pacific.



⁹⁶¹ *Roadmap for a New Dawn of the Marist Mission*, Rome, October 2015. A document of the Mission Secretariat. p.10

⁹⁶² *Ibid.* p.11

In the last case, while regional cooperation would continue to be developed, it was judged that an immediate move to a single region was not timely. In others, such as Europe, two decades of increasing cooperation had created not only closer structural links, but also a growth in mutual trust among Province leaders and sense of inter-connection.⁹⁶³ The meetings did not want the regions to create yet another federated model, but one that was inter-connected and co-responsible.

Different regions would undertake to pilot different initiatives at the beginning of the implementation phase. By 2015, it seemed clear that the “new Marists in mission” would find a variety of ways around the world to live out their distinctive path of Christian discipleship, to be associated in *communio* with one another as Marists, and to be co-responsible for the Marist way and Marist works. One of the emergent areas of difference was the degree to which to maintain the nexus between the structures for the brothers and the structures for Marist mission and/or broader Marist life. In some places, they would continue to be the same structures; in others, especially where the number of brothers was fewer or even effectively no longer active, new structures were being developed or explored. There was, nonetheless, a growing unanimity among them that they would be increasingly interconnected and interdependent.

⁹⁶³ This view was shared with the author by Brother Brendan Geary, personal communication, 8 December 2015.

19.

CRYSTALLISATION OF SOME KEY QUESTIONS

The New Models project was the continuance of a discourse that had been growing in its depth, breadth, and complexity for three decades. It was concerned with who were the Marists of the modern era, how they understood themselves and their relationship to one other, and how they could most effectively, in a spirit of *communio*, exercise co-responsibility for Marist life and mission in the Church. The purpose of any structures of governing, managing, or animating would always be to be of service to these Marists – to allow them to be who they aspired to be, and to do what they aspired to do. More and more, the old “Marist wineskins” did not seem suitable for the wine they were to hold in the third Marist century. In some cases, the wine seemed to be running dry, while in other cases the skins were bursting with fresh wine. The search was on for wineskins that could offer solutions for Marists that suited their times: ways for being administered locally, regionally and internationally; their strategies for developing and deploying their human and material resources; the building of their leadership capacity and their generativity; their means of communication; their civil and canonical legal frameworks.

The New Models project, through its exploration of what were the most appropriate models for these things, had exposed some underlying differences of perspective and capacity among the Marists of today and tomorrow. In doing so, it had helped to focus this wide-ranging narrative into a sharp question: what was the fundamental paradigm that people wanted for Marist life and mission into the future? There seemed to be two basic options. One was to continue with the Institute as the umbrella paradigm, and to imagine ways in which Marists other than brothers could belong to it or be associated with it – as lay Marists, as religious sisters, or as priests – and could also share responsibility to a certain level. To keep this paradigm would be to presume that the Institute could continue to offer viability and vitality in all places where Marist mission was present. The other way forward was to imagine a new paradigm for the Marist family, a new charismatic and juridical entity of which the religious institute of brothers would form part – even to be its charismatic heart – but no longer be in overall sole authority, either juridically or charismatically. The brothers would maintain their integrity as a religious institute but in *communio* with a broader spiritual family. On the eve of the bicentenary, this question was the subject of a process of discernment that had not reached maturity. In many places, a resolution was becoming an urgent need; in some, the context allowed for more time. In others, perhaps the window of opportunity had already closed.

History of the Institute



PART 5

**Renewing and
reimagining**

**marist life,
identity
and ways
of belonging**



114. On the previous page:
Life begins anew.

20.

CONTEXT: THE ECCLESIOLOGY OF THE POST-CONCILIAR CHURCH AND THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

At the end of November 1985, after most of the members of the XVIII General Chapter had arrived back in their home Provinces, another international gathering was just starting in Rome: an extraordinary general assembly of the Synod of Bishops, convened by Pope John Paul II to mark the twentieth anniversary of the close of the Second Vatican Council. For two decades, the Church had been working through its reception of the teaching of the Council. It would continue to do so for a long time to come. As it did, differences of interpretation would emerge. This was already apparent at the Synod. The Synod Fathers recognised, nonetheless, that the “signs of the times” to which the Council had responded continued to evolve,⁹⁶⁴ and so must the Church in its understanding of itself and its approach to mission. Whatever might have been their differences of perspective on this, they affirmed clearly two key insights of Vatican II: first, the reclamation by the Church of the universal call to holiness and the involvement of all Christians in the apostolate of the Church as a function of their Baptism and, second, an understanding of the Church as the People of God,⁹⁶⁵ in a relationship to God and to one another based on *communio*.⁹⁶⁶ On the matter of religious life, however, the Synod made only passing mention and offered no nuancing as to what its “special mission in the Church” or its “true renewal” might mean in practice.⁹⁶⁷ These two aspects of the final report of the Synod are emblematic of the story that lay ahead of the Institute after 1985: a growing clarity and urgency for lay people to take their rightful role in Marist life and mission, on the one hand, but an ongoing struggle to settle on a compelling definition for the identity of the brother, on the other. It would take the Church another thirty years before it had something substantial and concrete to offer institutes of religious brothers such as the Marist Brothers.⁹⁶⁸

⁹⁶⁴ *The Church, in the Word of God, Celebrates the Mysteries of Christ for the Salvation of the World*. Final Report of the 1985 Extraordinary Synod. #II.A.1

⁹⁶⁵ Cf. *Lumen gentium*, Ch.2

⁹⁶⁶ *Ibid.* #II.A.4 and #II.C.1

⁹⁶⁷ *Ibid.* #I.A.4-5

⁹⁶⁸ It did so in late 2015 with the publication by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life of *Identity and Mission of the Religious Brother in the Church*. This document will be a key point of reference in some of the discussion which follows in this section. Although late in coming, the document provided affirmed the male religious as a state of life that could be understood in its own terms and valued for its own contribution to the life and mission of the Church – rather than as simply “non-clerical”.

The general optimism with which the Church had greeted the message of the Council in the late 1960s and into the 1970s had also been felt across the Institute. Its embrace of the spirit of the Council had been widespread, due in no small measure to the insightful, attentive and indefatigable leadership of Brother Basilio Rueda. Indeed, it is fair to suggest that the high regard with which Brother Basilio was held by other Superiors General, and the confidence he enjoyed among members of the Roman Curia, allowed him to have an impact on the shape and direction of religious life well beyond the Marist Brothers. It is also true, nonetheless, to see that the Church's understanding of its challenge to religious at Vatican II was not of the same order as that presented to the laity. The essentially missionary nature of the Church and the integral role of all Christians within that mission offered an easily liberating and empowering message for lay people. In the ecclesial and cultural contexts where it was well transmitted and received, it allowed lay people to enrich their sense of who they already were – in their families, their work, and their lives. It called them to greater responsibility and deeper possibility. The intention was clear, the purpose unambiguous. As has been discussed in an earlier chapter, however, the call to "renewal" in the Council's *Perfectae caritatis* and Paul VI's *Evangelica testificatio*, was not as unequivocal.⁹⁶⁹ "Renewal" was certainly the call, but renewal of what? And a deeper question: renewal for what? The atrophied patterns of living and praying that many religious orders and institutes had allowed to develop, the pettiness and perversion through which the vows were often interpreted, inadequate human formation, and the distance of the drift from founders' original intuitions – those were issues that could and should be addressed. By and large they were. But these changes did not go to the core of the identity of the religious, or offer a compelling answer to the questions: "What was the purpose of religious life in a post-Conciliar Church where all people are called to holiness and to be evangelisers?" and "Why become a religious?" In their report to the XXI General Chapter, Brother Seán and his Council noted that during their visits they had often had the experience of being asked "What does it mean to be a lay Marist?" but they also felt there was a more insistent question: "What does it mean to be a Marist brother?"⁹⁷⁰

One of the challenges for the renewal of religious life, and one that could not have been really anticipated by the Council (although it had been by Brother Basilio) was the dramatic collapse in membership of religious institutes from the 1960s onwards. At least in most western countries, the efforts in renewal of religious life were being pursued in a context of quickly falling numbers and rising ages. The very countries that had led the Church into the Council – those such as Belgium where the first seeds of the liturgical reform had sprouted, and France, The Netherlands and Germany which had produced many of the giants of the theological discourse – were among the first to experience a collapse in numbers of men and women joining religious institutes. In those places, the Marist experience was little different from those of other groups. In many coun-

⁹⁶⁹ See Brother Seán Sammon, *Marist Bulletin*. No.295, 17 May 2005, on this point.

⁹⁷⁰ *Report of the Brother Superior General and his Council to the XXI General Chapter*, p.47

tries, also, there was a commensurately dramatic increase in the number of lay people who were taking the places of religious in ministry. When Yves Congar OP and others were writing of the coming age of the laity back in the 1950s, and when the Council captured many of these hopes in documents such as *Lumen gentium*, *Gaudium et spes*, and *Apostolicam actuositatem* it was not envisaged that lay people would or should replace an ageing clergy or a vanishing band of religious. Indeed, the new thinking emerged at a time when numbers of clergy and religious were at their height. It was not an ecclesiology that was prompted by any crisis in clerical or religious vocations or intended to undermine the value of religious life in the Church. So, also, in pivotal gatherings such as the Synod on the Laity in 1987,⁹⁷¹ and the landmark document *Christifideles laici* that came from it, there is no sense of a Church or a mission that was the province of lay people on their own.

Any ecclesial community is at its richest when it is inclusive of all people and all states of life, and centred on Christ. Benedict XVI who, as a theologian, was a champion of *communio*, was to remind the Church that *communio* has both horizontal and vertical dimensions: its complementary union of the states of Christian life, united in the holiness to which all are called, and focussed on Christ. This holiness and Christ-centeredness is represented archetypically in Mary.⁹⁷² Another theologian, one who was arguably the most influential in shaping the thinking of John Paul II on the nature of the Church – Hans Urs Von Balthasar – drew people back to one of the oldest understandings the Church had of itself: that portrayed in the visual theology of the traditional icon of the Ascension.⁹⁷³

⁹⁷¹ Or, to give it its full title: A Synod on the Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World.

⁹⁷² Joseph Card. Ratzinger, *The Ecclesiology of the Constitution on the Life of Church, Lumen Gentium*. Address at a symposium on the reception of the Council. Rome November 2000. Reported in *L'Osservatore Romano*. 19 September 2001, p. 5

⁹⁷³ The icon of the Ascension is an icon of the Church. It represents an ecclesiology that recognises the Church's fundamental Marian principle: that the disciples of Christ assemble in all their giftedness around Mary, First Disciple, who, like them, is centred on and enlivened by the Risen Christ. Flanked by Peter at her right hand and Paul at her left, with John cloaked in Divine red on her far left, and James, the brother of the Lord, holding the Scriptures, the breadth and purpose of ecclesial life is held in unity in Mary. Discipleship and the full reign of Christ on earth and in heaven are the two defining elements. Heaven has come to earth and earth has come to heaven. The figures in the icon reflect the different dimensions of the life of the Church, its poles of reference – the Petrine, the Pauline and the Johannine, unified in the Marian. Although Mary is prominent in the icon, providing something of a pivot and a unity, the visual flow of the image is towards the ascended Christ figure. Mary is no-one's object of devotion, yet she is there at the heart of the Church, as a kind of model and archetype of Christ-life on earth. It is she who has a halo, a symbol of holiness. She is *Theotokos*: the bearer of God, as all the Church is called to be. The ecclesiology of this ancient icon is very much a post-Vatican II one. This is the people of God, in all its charismatic diversity, and in communion with one another, with God, and with the eternal cosmos. It is a visual theology that could be applied not only to the universal Church, but to all manifestations of church – whether they be diocesan, parochial, or within one of the ecclesial movements or spiritual traditions of the Church. The same poles of reference apply and the same universal call to holiness. The lives of all its members lead to and from Jesus, forming a community of disciples, on mission.



115. Icon of the Ascension.

During the last three decades, Marists have come to a deeper understanding of this way of being Church, and their specific giftedness in living out this Marian principle of the Church. Theologian Craig Larkin SM, for example, was to draw explicitly on Balthasarian ecclesiology to describe the “Marian Church” of which Marists were to be the herald.⁹⁷⁴ Brother Emili Turú was also to tap into the same theology in his Circular *He Gave Us the Name of Mary* and in other of his writings.⁹⁷⁵ By the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, Marists were bringing a richer theology to their efforts to understand their identity as individuals and as a community of the Church. They were reclaiming their “Marist-ness” in a profound way.⁹⁷⁶

Part of this reclamation was to discover anew the original Marist conviction that Marcellin Champagnat, Jean-Claude Colin, Jean-Marie Chavoïn and their co-

⁹⁷⁴ See Craig Larkin SM, *Mary in the Church, Marist Insight*. Address to the General Chapters of the Marist Family (Rome, 12 September 2001) for a synopsis of the different dimensions of the life of the Church that are represented in the traditional icon of the Ascension. Father Larkin developed his ideas a little further in *The Icon of the Ascension, A Marian Church*, Keynote address to the Biennial Conference of the Association of Marist Schools of Australia. (Brisbane, Australia. 29 July 2005.)

⁹⁷⁵ *Circulars*, XXXII, No.1, 2 January 2012.

⁹⁷⁶ Brother Seán Sammon proposed to the author (interview, *idem.*) that a re-capturing of the original vision of the Society of Mary was an important call of the present moment for Marists.

founders of the Marist project had intuited, that this “work of Mary” to which they committed themselves was something that involved everyone – priests, religious brothers and sisters, and lay people. It was a way of being Church. In their challenge to the XXI General Chapter, Brothers Juan Miguel Anaya and Pau Fornells, argued that the Marist spirituality that grew from Marcellin and the first brothers came to be narrowly defined in terms of the life of a lay male religious. They go further to suggest that this was a categorisation imposed by the Church, but that now was the time to look creatively for other structures for living the spirituality more inclusively.⁹⁷⁷ In a parallel article, Brother Juan Miguel advocated more explicitly for “new wineskins” for the new wine that was evident in a more broadly lived Marist spirituality, and in a wider sense of Marist co-responsibility.⁹⁷⁸ Like all spiritualities of the Church, Marist spirituality would be most completely and powerfully expressed when it was done so ecclesially.

In his Opening Address to the 1993 Chapter, Brother Charles spoke for “a new model of Church”, one that was based on the participation of all rather than a focus on the diminishing number of religious. He urged the capitulants to cultivate “a mentality of partnership, of collaboration, of communion.”⁹⁷⁹ This Chapter was to be the launch-pad for a great growth in lay Marist life in many Provinces (although certainly not all) over the next decade, but in 1993 the conceptualising of this was still nascent. Two years previously, in his Circular to introduce the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family, Brother Charles suggested to the brothers that lay people would reveal to them new aspects of the Marist charism.⁹⁸⁰ The conceptual language of the Superior General oscillated between two concepts through the Circular. At some stages, he seemed to understand “the charism” only in terms of the religious life of the brothers and something that belonged to the brothers, and that the “charisms” of lay people were something else, also inspired by Marcellin but lived in their own way. In other parts of the Circular, he argued for everyone’s sharing in the one charism and a shared mission. There was, at this stage, still some degree of propriety from the brothers that being Marist was theirs to share with others, rather than the possibility that there could be a mutual sharing and enriching of Marists together. The kind of Marist family that was to be described in the next decade in documents such as *Water from the Rock* and *Gathered Around the Same Table* was in still in gestation in 1993. Indeed, the recently established Champagnat Movement was conceived essentially of as ancillary to the Institute, more akin to a traditional third order.

⁹⁷⁷ Brother Juan Miguel, as a canon lawyer, develops this case from a juridical point of view, noting that it was not until the 1917 Code of Canon Law that the brothers were recognised by the Church as “religious”. He argues that through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries there was considerable experimentation that went on as new apostolic movements were founded. Some were later codified as religious institutes, others as secular institutes and as societies of apostolic life. The inspirational dimension of a fresh form of ecclesial life typically precedes its codification by the Church. Such codification does not always accommodate the richness of the inspiration.

⁹⁷⁸ Brother Juan Miguel Anaya, “We have new wine; do we have new wineskins?” *Marist Notebooks*. No.28, May 2009.

⁹⁷⁹ Brother Charles Howard, *Opening Address to XIX General Chapter*, p.16

⁹⁸⁰ *Circulars*, Vol.XXIX, No.7, p.41

There was, however, another trend in ecclesial life that was flowering in the post-conciliar Church, one that it was inevitable that the Marists would need to engage at some stage. This was evident in the exponential growth of groups that were collectively known as “new ecclesial movements”.⁹⁸¹ In some quarters there was a caution about such groups because of perceptions of elitism, exclusion or restorationist conservatism among them, or that they lived in a kind of parallel church. In fact, there was a broad range of such groups. In some countries, a high percentage of active members of the Church were identifying with them as their primary association within the Church.⁹⁸² In 1999 Pope John Paul II, who made no secret of his support of this, convened the first International Congress of Ecclesial Movements. Although the new movements had a range of style, structure and emphasis, many of them shared a number of characteristics: they were predominantly lay in their membership but often with some clerical members, as well as a few who make a deeper, life commitment (in some cases as consecrated people, in some cases not); they had a more radical way of living the gospel than was the norm; they emphasised fellowship and community experience rather than private spirituality; they were zealous in catechesis and evangelisation; and they were attractive to young people in particular by proposing Christ in compelling and fresh ways.⁹⁸³

At the same time, many religious institutes were recognising the imperative that they needed to widen the space of their tents.⁹⁸⁴ For some that led to the revival or the introduction of tertiaries, oblates or associates. For others, it was different. The universal call to holiness espoused by the Council was challenging them to be open to all Christian women and men who were attracted to their distinctive ways of discipleship, forming community, and evangelising. While the newer ecclesial movements had often been shaped by this kind of thinking from their inception, it could be more of a challenge for some older ones, especially those which had had their identities rather tightly framed around the religious or clerical state, or narrow patterns of life or ministry, or an identity that was more sourced in a type of work rather than a spirituality. The growing reception of the message of the Council, however, was producing a generation of people who were no longer satisfied merely to serve professionally within the works of religious institute or attach to themselves to it in a kind of lay-associate way. They were looking for a more radical re-imagining of what it might mean to be, for example, Benedictine

⁹⁸¹ By 2015, the Pontifical Council of the Laity maintained a Directory of over 150 different groups which had international approval from the Council. (Information from website www.laici.va/content/laici/en. Accessed 9 December 2015). In addition to these are hundreds others approved by Episcopal Conferences and Local Ordinaries, and other which have an association with a religious institute or other group and may have been approved by another body.

⁹⁸² A study by Tony Hanna offers a comprehensive, critical and well-balanced analysis of the new ecclesial movements in general, with a specific focus on three of them: *Communion and Liberation*, *The Neo-Catechumenate*, and *The Charismatic Renewal*. It revealed 43% of active Catholics in Spain in the 1990s identified with a movement rather than a parish. See Hanna, T. *New Ecclesial Movements*. Sydney, St Paul Publications, 2006.

⁹⁸³ Hanna, *op.cit.* considers these features and supports them by a comprehensive survey of relevant literature.

⁹⁸⁴ Cf. Isaiah 54:2

or Ignatian or Franciscan. Or Marist. They were calling, in fact, for *communio* as Vatican II had imagined it.⁹⁸⁵ The “older” spiritualities were being called to the same thing that most of the newer spiritual families of the Church were: to be largely but not exclusively lay, to be able to integrate their charismatic vitality into the institutional life of the Church, and to inspire their members to a holiness that impelled them to mission.

Increasingly, the Church was coming to see the consecrated life in terms of its place within broader spiritual or ecclesial families. In 1996, *Vita consecrata* took a major step in this direction, just at the time that the Institute was beginning to broaden its understanding of who could be a Marist. One of *Vita consecrata*'s main contributions was to describe the distinctive place that consecrated life was called to have in the life of the whole Church: that consecrated men and women could be its spiritual guides and, in the case of apostolic religious, could be a leaven of community and an impetus to service. The consecrated had their role within the *communio* that was Church.

In recent years, one of the fruits of the teaching on the Church as communion has been the growing awareness that her members can and must unite their efforts, with a view to cooperation and exchange of gifts, in order to participate more effectively in the Church's mission. This helps to give a clearer and more complete picture of the Church herself, while rendering more effective the response to the great challenges of our time, thanks to the combined contributions of the various gifts.

*... Today, often as a result of new situations, many institutes have come to the conclusion that their charism can be shared with the laity. The laity are therefore invited to share more intensely in the spirituality and mission of these Institutes. We may say that ... a new chapter, rich in hope, has begun in the history of relations between consecrated persons and the laity.*⁹⁸⁶

The relationship of the consecrated vis-à-vis the lay still had an element of paternalism about it in this text, and the works were still envisaged as belonging to the Institute. The key advance, however, was that the consecrated had a role in relationship to the lay, and that was primarily a spiritual one:

⁹⁸⁵ *Christifideles laici*, is a document which emphasise *communio*. See especially Chapter II. For a succinct discussion of the topic see also the article by Joseph Card. Ratzinger, an editorial written for the twentieth anniversary of the theological journal *Communio* of which he was one of the co-founders. ‘Communio: A Program’, in *Communio*, Fall 1992 (American edition). Brothers Juan Miguel Anaya and Pau Fornells in their paper prepared for the XXI General Chapter (*op.cit.*) discuss the possibilities for the Marists of today in a juridical structure that would be similar to others of the new ecclesial movements. In particular they draw a possible parallel structure with the “Work of Mary” (the Focalari movement).

⁹⁸⁶ *Vita consecrata*, #54

Moved by the examples of holiness of the consecrated members, lay men and women will experience at first hand the spirit of the evangelical counsels, and will thus be encouraged to live and bear witness to the spirit of the Beatitudes, in order to transform the world according to God's design. The participation of the laity often brings unexpected and rich insights into certain aspects of the charism, leading to a more spiritual interpretation of it and helping to draw from it directions for new activities in the apostolate. In whatever activity or ministry they are involved, consecrated persons should remember that before all else they must be expert guides in the spiritual life, and in this perspective they should cultivate "the most precious gift: the spirit".⁹⁸⁷

Six years later, on the "birthday" of the Church – Pentecost Sunday – the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life issued *Starting Afresh from Christ*. It was a document that again placed the consecrated life firmly in an ecclesial context, one of *communio*. It affirmed the new forms of association that were beginning to be seen, and the sharing of mission and life that was taking place. But it took religious a critical step further in proposing to them that their identity could not be resolved in isolation. So, also, would their vitality and renewal be diminished if it were not open mutual enrichment with lay people:

Only in an integrated ecclesiology, wherein the various vocations are gathered together as the one people of God, can the vocation to consecrated life once again find its specific identity as sign and witness. The fact that the charisms of founders and foundresses, having been born of the Spirit for the good of all, must once again be placed at the centre of the Church, open to communion and participation by all the People of God, is being increasingly discovered.

In this line, we can see that a new type of communion and collaboration within the various vocations and states of life especially among consecrated persons and laity is beginning.

The new phenomenon being experienced in these days is that some members of the laity are asking to participate in the charismatic ideals of Institutes. This has given rise to interesting initiatives and new institutional forms of association ... Whereas at times in the recent past, collaboration came about as a means of supplementing the decline of consecrated persons necessary to carry out activities, now it is growing out of the need to share responsibility not only in the carrying out of the Institute's works but especially in the hope of sharing specific aspects and moments of the spirituality and mission of the Institute.

Whereas in times past it was especially the task of religious men and women to create, spiritually nourish, and direct aggregate forms of laity, today, thanks to an ever-increasing formation of the laity, there can be a mutual assistance which fosters an understanding of the specificity and beauty of each state of life. Communion and mutuality in the Church are never one way streets. In this new climate of ecclesial communion, priests, religious and laity, far from ignoring each other

⁹⁸⁷ *Ibid.* #55

or coming together only for a common activity, can once again find the just relationships of communion and a renewed experience of evangelical communion and mutual charismatic esteem resulting in a complementarity which respects the differences.

This ecclesial dynamic will be helpful to the renewal and identity of consecrated life.⁹⁸⁸ *As the understanding of the charism deepens, ever new ways of carrying it out will be discovered.*⁹⁸⁹

The complementarity and mutuality to which lay and religious were called was also the subject of an entire document published by the Congregation for Catholic Education five years later. *Educating Together in Catholic Schools, a Shared Mission between Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithful*⁹⁹⁰ situated the mission of the Catholic school in the context of *communio*. It used the metaphor of “spiritual family” to describe the expressing of *communio* among people who were attracted to the same spiritual intuitions and were associated with one another around them:

The development of spiritual families, of groups of associated lay people or other forms that permit the lay faithful to draw spiritual and apostolic fruitfulness from the original charism, appears as a positive element and one of great hope for the future of the Catholic educational mission.

In the two decades since the 1985 Chapter, and the four from the Council, there was by the mid-1990s a growing sense of the Church as a community of disciples, the giftedness and vitality of each being interdependently related to the others, and thereby mutually enhanced. Its basic principle was Marian, something of especial significance for a spiritual family that bore her name, and saw itself as sharing in “Mary’s work”. When the renewal of religious life was instigated after the Council – including that of the Marist Brothers – it was begun within an ecclesiology that was less developed than was the case forty years later. Similarly, some of the early attempts to grow the “Marist family” after the 1985 Chapter were undertaken with a less mature ecclesiological understanding. The full message of the Council had not yet been received. By 2015, the “ecclesial dynamic” that was proposed by *Starting Afresh from Christ* had a deeper meaning for a group of people who had a better sense of themselves as one of the “spiritual families” of the Church.

The changing language that has been used is instructive in this context. It began with a focus on “renewal”; by the end of the 1980s, another word had been introduced into the narrative, that of “refoundation”; within fifteen years, Marists had moved to a re-imagining of how they could be associated and animated. Renewal, re-foundation, re-imagination. They were not a linear progression, more

⁹⁸⁸ The emphasis is the author’s.

⁹⁸⁹ *Starting afresh from Christ*, #31

⁹⁹⁰ Congregation for Catholic Education, 2007.

a widening and a deepening of consciousness. All three concepts remained in play, but in relationship with each other. Brother Charles and his Council had reminded the Chapter in 1993:

... This gift, this charism that we share and for which we have responsibility, is something dynamic, ever-growing under the influence of the Spirit, ever adapting to new circumstances.⁹⁹¹

It is with this backdrop that consideration can be given first to the directions and emphases that were pursued in the Institute concerning the renewal of the life of the brothers, the developments in formation, and the broadening of the Marist spiritual family.

⁹⁹¹ Report of the Brother Superior General and his Council to the XIX General Chapter, p.2

21.

THE RENEWAL AND RE-CONCEPTUALISING OF THE LIFE OF THE BROTHERS

Rejuvenating the essentials

It had been a part of Brother Basilio's approach to renewal of the Institute to ground it in the lived reality of the brothers. His visits, his surveys, his seminars, his Circulars, and his extensive personal interaction with innumerable brothers held up a mirror for them: this is who you are. It was from that starting point that he hoped to reveal to them who they could be, and challenge them to genuine renewal. He was doing so in largely "uncharted waters".⁹⁹²

By 1985, some surer reference points for renewal had begun to emerge from the fog of change. Brother Charles believed that he saw them clearly: a greater unity of life – (already encapsulated by the "PAC" Document of the 1976 Chapter), a re-positioning of the brothers' mission in solidarity with the poor and their just causes, and a life-long conversion to Christ that was the fruit of ongoing evangelical discernment using the new Constitutions as the "Gospel interpreted for us".⁹⁹³ The essential three elements of the brother's life which 1976 Chapter had named to be in need of both attention and integration have remained the focus for efforts in renewal in the ensuing four decades. While the naming of them has been refined over the years and, more significantly, the context in which they have been pursued has come to be better understood, the elements are the same.

⁹⁹² This image of Brother Basilio's time was foreshadowed by another brother who had been considered by many to be the most likely successor to Brother Charles-Raphaël in 1967 – Brother Paul Ambrose AG. Brother Aureliano Brambila, at the XVI Chapter as a young translator, recalled this incident. "Chatting with Brother Paul Ambrose, Assistant General – who had been my superior at Marian College in Poughkeepsie (1954-1956), and who enjoyed the support of many brothers in the Institute – I asked him in an informal and friendly way how he felt about his almost certain appointment as Superior General by the upcoming Chapter. I remember he said with great Marist simplicity and prophetic depth: 'No, brother, you know me well. I may indeed be capable as a leader, but I need sure reference points, something like clearly-mapped roads or rail lines on which I can powerfully lead the convoy. In this difficult aftermath of the Council the Church is living, the Institute needs a brother who is able to sail through the rough sea of ideas, without clear navigation charts, without sure reference-points, and bring the boat to safe harbour.' After the election, it was Brother Paul Ambrose who introduced Brother Basilio Rueda Guzmán, the new Superior General – *le petit mexicain* – to all the brothers in the General House. It was quite an event!" *Marist Notebooks*, No.34, 2016.

⁹⁹³ *Constitutions*, #169. Cf. Brother Charles's *Foreword to the Constitutions*, 1986 and his *Circular* on them: XXIX, 1, pp.30-36.

The capitulants in 1976 judged there to be a “serious problem” all around the Institute with the difficulty that brothers were having in unifying their “community life, apostolic availability, and prayer and contemplation”.⁹⁹⁴ Over the next two or three decades, there seemed to be more emphasis given to the second and third of these elements than to the first in the Institute’s efforts at renewal. Perhaps because a sense of brotherhood and a “family spirit” were so deeply engrained in the collective psyche of the brothers, and therefore taken for granted to some extent, or perhaps for other reasons, there was more written that proposed the renewal of the brothers’ life would be sourced primarily in a deepening of their spiritual lives and in a better discernment of their priorities in mission.

It is not to suggest that the role or importance of community were ignored – that is certainly not the case – but explicit emphases on them were not as frequently or as forcefully presented. An objective look at all the Circulars, Chapter Messages and other documents of the Institute between the 1985 and 2001 Chapters reveals many more column-inches devoted to themes such as conversion, prayer and personal relationship with Jesus, and to orientation to the poor, evangelical discernment and evangelisation, than to the community dimension of the brothers’ lives. For example, Brother Charles in his Circular of Marist Apostolic Spirituality in 1992 (and also in the Supplement of 1993), the major concern is what mission means for the brother and how his personal spirituality integrates with this. While Part 7 of the Circular is devoted to “Community for Mission” and there is recognition of the importance of the brothers’ witness of community and their experience of communion, these are not themes that pervade the rest of the document in an explicitly frequent way.

It was a bias of emphasis that was to linger. Even after the 2009 Chapter when the language of “mystics” and “prophets” was to emerge at the General Conference and II MIMA to describe the spiritual and ministry dimensions of Marist life, the third element of the phrase sometimes dropped off: “in a spirit of communion”.

The brothers’ concern for the quality of their community life was, however, something that kept surfacing. In their Report to the XIX General Chapter, Brother Charles and his Council named the “community expression of religious consecration” first among its “negative” observations of how they saw the Institute at that time, and suggested that the brothers were known more for their work than “our brotherhood, openness and poverty.”⁹⁹⁵ There was “too much individualism” in communities, they wrote, resulting in communities that lacked “the mutual

⁹⁹⁴ *Proceedings of the XVII General Chapter*. “Prayer, Apostolate, Community” document. This idea was also captured in the Letter from the XVII General Chapter entitled “Marist Brothers Today”. This concise but rich document – the main author of which was Brother Lucien Brosse – was well received and used around the Institute in the years immediately following the Chapter. It described the contemporary challenge for Marist Brothers in terms of: personal conversion and prayer; an educating apostolate marked by presence, receptivity and availability; community life that is linked to this apostolate, is open and hospitable, and joy, love and friendship. The Capitulants recommended to the Brothers of the Institute that they look to the Founder for a model of all of this.

⁹⁹⁵ *Report of the Brother Superior General and his Council to the XIX General Chapter*, p.51

support we need to sustain us".⁹⁹⁶ The capitulants agreed with this assessment, and affirmed the importance of the "prophetic dimension of religious life lived in community."⁹⁹⁷ They urged the brothers of the Institute to

... move away from living together as individuals, toward living more as a community. We can't sidestep the words of one young layman at the Chapter: "I keep meeting wonderful Brothers, but I don't see any community," nor can we evade his challenge: "Open up your communities so we can share with you whatever it is gives you life!"⁹⁹⁸

In their consideration of Marist apostolic spirituality, they identified these things among those that needed the brothers' attention:

- *reaching a greater integration of life;*
- *developing the practice of community and personal discernment; ...*
- *adopting a more simple, Gospel-oriented, and welcoming style of life;*
- *having more open communities which are attuned to the needs around us and which allow us to be challenged by those needs; ...*
- *... sharing the Word of God in community and making our community celebrations and prayer more suited to our life and mission;*
- *making our witness as a praying and apostolic community more evident; ...⁹⁹⁹*

Eight years later, the second of the five calls identified by the XX General Chapter concerned community: "To re-vitalise our communities so that they might be places of brotherhood, simplicity and Gospel life in service of our mission."¹⁰⁰⁰ In its message to the Institute it named these goals:

- *Our communities will become real homes if they help each brother to centre his life in Jesus, to integrate faith and life as he discovers God in the events of daily life, and grows in communion with his brothers.*
- *We have a strong desire to build communities where each one's growth is our common concern, where trust, healthy interpersonal relationships, and a family spirit prevail; places where young brothers are helped to mature, where we take care of the senior brothers, and are especially kind to the weak; places where we forgive one another and heal wounds, where we joyfully celebrate the life we share together. With hearts open wide, we ensure that no one feels left out and that visitors feel welcome.*

⁹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹⁷ *Message of the XIX General Chapter, Letter to the Brothers, #22*

⁹⁹⁸ *Ibid.* #17

⁹⁹⁹ *Ibid.* Marist Apostolic Spirituality, #11

¹⁰⁰⁰ *Message of the XX General Chapter.*

- *We form communities for the sake of our mission, communities open to the service of the world. We are attentive to the needs of those around us and to take our place in the local Church. Our witness becomes more credible when our style of life is simple and poor.*¹⁰⁰¹

When the *Circular Marvellous Companions, Community Life among Marcelin's Little Brothers of Mary* appeared in 2005, it was the first time in a quarter-century that a Superior General had devoted a Circular exclusively to the subject of community life. Given the importance that successive General Chapters had attached to the issue, and also the Reports made by General Councils and other mentions in passing by Superiors General, it was curious that there had been such a time gap. In 1970, Brother Basilio had chosen to devote his first major Circular, after those written during the 1967-68 Chapter period, to the subject of community life.¹⁰⁰² He followed this one ten years later with another on the Project of Community Life, something that had been ratified by the 1976 Chapter.¹⁰⁰³ Brother Basilio was in no doubt as to centrality of community for fostering the fidelity of the brothers and the renewal of their consecrated life as religious brothers. Brother Seán was of the same view.

In his first three Circulars, Brother Seán called the brothers to the tri-faceted essence of their consecrated lives. In each one, he emphasised both the importance and the urgency of the particular dimension under discussion – their spiritual lives centred in Christ, their lives in community, and the orientation to evangelisation of poor young people. Since 1985, there had been much written and said about the centrality of a deep personal spirituality and a collective preference for the poor as two key elements of the “personal and institutional conversion” that was needed. The importance of a life-giving and faith-nurturing experience of community – the ways it prayed, shared in the apostolate, and lived fraternally – was often portrayed more in terms of supporting the brothers in their personal conversion and sustaining them in mission. This is the sense of the extracts cited above from the XIX and XX Chapters. Brother Seán was to put it differently, and more strongly. Just as the Institute would likely go out of existence, he wrote, if the brothers did not have both a passion for a life in Christ and a closeness to young people and an enthusiasm for bringing the Good News to them, so also it would die out if brothers did not live and work in healthy, fraternal and prayerful communities. He was unequivocally critical of those Provinces and Districts that allowed brothers to be alone.¹⁰⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰¹ *Ibid.* ##23-25

¹⁰⁰² *Circulars of the Superiors General*, Vol. XXV, 2 and 7.

¹⁰⁰³ *Ibid.* Vol. XXVII, 3.

¹⁰⁰⁴ *Circulars of the Superiors General*, Vol. XXXI, No.2. p.42

Community was not ancillary to the other parts of their life; it was constitutive of it.

Then, ten years later, the Church was to offer something of a surprise. In the Year of Consecrated Life,¹⁰⁰⁵ the Vatican released a long-anticipated document on the identity and mission of the religious brother.¹⁰⁰⁶ While the overall structure of the document drew on the way the same three dimensions of the Christian life¹⁰⁰⁷ – which it presented as *mystery*, *communion* and *mission* – it proposed that the specific identity and *raison d'être* of religious brothers was found in communion. It developed the identity of the brother as a *mystery of communion for mission*.¹⁰⁰⁸ At the heart of the very identity and mission of the brother was *fraternity*. This was what was specific about his vocation; it was in his very name – “brother” – that his particular place and purpose in the Church and the world were to be understood. Community was not something that just supported him in his personal holiness and impelled him to mission. It was, rather, who he was. A brother could only be a brother in relationship, and this relationship was expressed first and fundamentally among his own brothers, and then among “the least of the brothers” of Jesus.¹⁰⁰⁹ This was his “way of being”;¹⁰¹⁰ his name “brother” captured “the fundamental mission of his life”.¹⁰¹¹

¹⁰⁰⁵ From the beginning of Advent 2014 until 2 February 2016.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life in its latest document *Identity and Mission of the Religious Brother in the Church*, 4 October 2015. The document had been eight years in gestation. Its genesis was a request to Pope Benedict XVI in 2007 by the Union of Superiors General for a document on religious brothers. The matter was referred to the CICLSAL which invited several brothers’ institutes to collaborate in its drafting. The (De La Salle) Christian Brothers played a significant role in this. A draft document was completed by 2010, and was submitted to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. It then fell from public sight. It was reported that some members of the Curia were not in favour of such a document, including at least one prominent Cardinal who was a member of a clerical institute that included lay brothers. After the election of Pope Francis, the matter was raised with him by several Superiors General. The new Pope was familiar with the draft, as he had seen it as Archbishop of Buenos Aires when it had been sent around for consultation. He agreed for it to be resurrected. There had been many theological objections to the draft document from the CDF, a major sticking-point being the document’s frequent reference to the Church as a communion rather than as a hierarchy. A small team of three brothers took carriage of its redaction, Marist Brother José-María Ferre being one of them. Extensive references to Vatican II and other Church documents were made. Its dense and inaccessible language was worked on. Eventually, the document was approved (May 2015) by the Pope, but again it seemed to disappear. The personal intervention of the Pope was again sought. The document, in multiple translations from its original Spanish, was finally released on 13 December 2015 by the Prefect and Secretary of CICLSAL. (This information was provided to the author by Brother José-María.)

¹⁰⁰⁷ *Christifideles laici* had emphasised that all Christians were called to the three “inter-penetrative” elements of Christian living – to holiness, communion and mission – by virtue of their Baptism. The consecrated life is sourced in Baptism.

¹⁰⁰⁸ *Identity and Mission of the Religious Brother*, #4

¹⁰⁰⁹ *Ibid.* #27. Cf. Matthew 25:40;45

¹⁰¹⁰ *Ibid.* #10

¹⁰¹¹ *Ibid.* #11

The search for a compelling identity of the brother

In their long journey of renewal, brothers in many parts of the world had stumbled when confronted with the growing place of lay Marists. It had caused them to question and even to doubt the value or role of their own vocation. Brother Benito, in his address to open the XX General Chapter in 2001, commented:

For some brothers this confusion can become a serious obstacle to growing in fidelity to our vocation and to committing ourselves to vocation ministry. It can limit our apostolic daring and our joyful living out of our own vocation.

There are some aspects of this identity crisis which have their origin in a change of functions or of roles. In the past, certain set functions were considered proper for and exclusive to brothers: establishing and directing schools, being catechists and pastoral leaders, being vocation recruiters and directors... Today these roles are filled by lay people or shared with the brothers. This "territorial" displacement is seen as a crisis by some: Who am I? Of what use am I? What is there to distinguish me from the layperson who is now doing this job? It becomes obvious that the crisis arises out of a prior confusion of roles.¹⁰¹²

Brother Seán and his Council reported to the XXI General Chapter their observation of the same confusion and doubt across the Institute.¹⁰¹³ *Identity and Mission of the Religious Brother in the Church* was to turn such questioning on its head. Rather than being a source of confusion for brothers, it was through an engagement with this increased participation of lay people in the life and mission of the Church that they would find and understand their own identity and mission. The document went further: the brothers would do this most effectively within particular expressions of Church-communion – its "charismatic families". It was to be in the growing sense of a broader Marist charismatic family that the Institute could find its rightful place, and offer a compelling vision for distinctive vocation of the brother within a larger vocational family:

The founding charisms ... now take the form of rivers watering the surface of the Church and extending far beyond it. The faithful come to their shores from different states of life to drink from their waters and to participate in the mission of the Church from the constantly renewed inspiration and vigour of such charisms.

Laity and religious ... and priests unite together in a charismatic family to revive the charism that has given rise to this family, to incarnate together the Gospel face that the charism reveals, and to serve together in the same Church mission, which is no longer the mission of a particular Institute.

¹⁰¹² *Opening Address at the XX General Chapter, #16*

¹⁰¹³ *Report of the Brother Superior and his Council to the XXI General Chapter, p.34*

The religious brother finds in this charismatic family an environment conducive to the development of his identity. In such an environment, the brothers share the experience of communion and promote a spirituality of communion, being the true blood which give life to the family members and which extends to the whole Church from them. In the charismatic family, religious brothers place themselves together with other Christians and in accord with them. It is with them that the brothers build a fraternity for the mission, motivated by the foundational charism; for them they are signs of that same brotherhood that they are called to live in the consecrated life.¹⁰¹⁴

To be the “true blood” that gave life to the Marist family: here was an identity for its brothers, something that could only be achieved through and from community.

The Institute’s discernment about its renewal since 1967, its efforts at revitalisation and then at “re-foundation”, had been undertaken for the most part on its own terms rather than centred in the context of the wider family of Marists. Brother Basilio had told the General Chapter in 1985 that there was a lack of criteria for “Marist identity”, by which he meant the identity of the Marist Brother:

We Marist Brothers need to redefine our mission in the world as it is now, and to establish explicit and consistent criteria for membership. [The mission is] to make Jesus Christ known, and to direct our efforts exclusively to the young, with preference for the underprivileged, and to do this as mission from the Church entrusted to the community.¹⁰¹⁵

The “community” was the Marist Brothers. Eight years later, Brother Charles despite a growing sense of the role of lay people and a commitment to partnership, still presented an understanding of the identity and mission of the brothers somewhat independently. Drawing on the theme at the 1989 General Conference at Veranópolis, “The Mission of the Marist Brother for the Future”, the Superior General told the capitulants:

What the world and the Church expect us religious to be, first and foremost, are people of God, people of faith in God’s love for all, and therefore people with a great love for others and with a special care for the unloved and the marginalised.¹⁰¹⁶

Mission was seen to be “at the heart of our lives as brothers”, but this mission was described – both at Veranópolis and at the Chapter – in terms of the apostolic priorities and options of the brothers alone.¹⁰¹⁷ Brother Benito’s strong challenges to the Institute for re-foundation and for the re-prioritising of apostolic choices were framed in similar terms, as was the whole process of re-structuring in the late

¹⁰¹⁴ *Identity and Mission of the Religious Brother*, #38

¹⁰¹⁵ Superior General’s address to the XVIII General Chapter, in *Listening to the XVIII General Chapter*, p.87

¹⁰¹⁶ *Opening Address XIX General Chapter*, p.21

¹⁰¹⁷ Cf. *Report of the Brother Superior General and his Council to the XIX General Chapter*, pp.30-33.

1990s. The “identity crisis” to which he referred at the start of the XX Chapter was something that he hoped the increased participation of lay people in apostolic works could help to resolve. There was, nonetheless, a continuing sense that this would free the brothers to make their own more radical choices for mission, something that was important for re-capturing their founding spirit:

*For myself, I believe that religious life must redefine itself and its essential charism in a new cultural context. I do not see this as something negative. It could be a crisis that could bring us Marists to a deeper understanding of our roots and to commit ourselves more enthusiastically to our vocation, leaving some things behind and taking on others that may enable us to understand more intensely our reason for being.*¹⁰¹⁸

After 2001, even with a decisive commitment for a “widening of the tent” and a demonstrably strong belief in the validity and importance of lay Marist life, Brother Seán’s three letters on spirituality, community and mission continued to intimate that the brothers’ own renewal was something for them to pursue primarily in their own way. At the General Chapter in 2009 in addressing the future of “Marist life and mission” – by which he was referring to *brothers’* life and mission – Brother Seán said to the participants:

*Like our brothers in 1967, we stand at a crossroad. Building the future of Marist life and mission will require us to make decisions that will allow us to be who we were meant to be: men in love with God, brothers visibly evangelising poor children and young people, religious building communities marked by a spirit of hospitality and welcome, and like the Founder, disciples of the Lord with the heart of a missionary.*¹⁰¹⁹

He suggested that the brothers and lay Marists had much to “learn from each other” about Marist spirituality, but he did not use the language that the Chapter was later to adopt, that of “communion and co-responsibility” in Marist life and mission.

*What is the brother’s role in the Marist lay movement? Our job is to assist without taking over. In so doing we will participate in what many consider to be one of the most important experiences of renewal at this time in Church history: the emergence of a fully adult and responsible laity.*¹⁰²⁰

After the Chapter, Brother Emili echoed the subtle but quite significant shift when he named as one of the three directions that had emerged to be the “new relationship between brothers and lay Marists, based on communion, searching together for a greater vitality of the Marist charism in our world”.¹⁰²¹

¹⁰¹⁸ *Opening Address XX General Chapter*, p.21

¹⁰¹⁹ *Opening Address XXI General Chapter*, p.8. Brother Seán had developed these ideas at length in his Opening Address to the General Conference in Sri Lanka four years before. In that address, in which he explored the questions around the brothers’ identity, and their mission, his focus was very much on the brothers themselves.

¹⁰²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰²¹ In *FMS Message*. No.41, p.13

This provided a context for the other two directions – “a new way of being brother” and “a highly significant presence among poor children and young people”. Five years later, Brother Emili was to propose to the brothers that a key element of their identity was to be “weavers of fraternity”. This was one of the three “non-negotiables” of the brothers’ life, with their being “seekers of God” and “evangelisers of the young”.¹⁰²² It was new language for the three constitutive elements of the brothers’ identity. The emphasis on fraternity was significant, and in line with what was soon to be named in *Identity and Mission of the Religious Brother*.

It was an emphasis that called the brothers back to the essence of their identity. In 2013, in developing the theme for the General Conference – “Awaken the Dawn: mystics and prophets for our time” – Brother Emili had focussed on the importance of “being brothers”. It was necessary that the brothers overcome the “allure of activism”:

*... many value us because of what we do, as a simple “workforce” at the service of the Church and society, while in reality our existence as an Institute has meaning in itself, without its being necessary to focus on any specific job ... “to BE brothers” ... to be what we are called to be.*¹⁰²³

To be “mystics and prophets”, yes, but to be so as brothers. *Identity and Mission of the Religious Brother* drew on the twin stories from Chapter 10 of Luke (the audacious service offered by the “Good Samaritan” and Mary’s choosing the “better part” in sitting at the Jesus’s feet)¹⁰²⁴ as emblematic of the life of the religious brother:

*both icons complement each other’s message and remind the religious brother of the essential key to his prophetic identity, that which ensures his permanence in the love of Christ: the brother is called to be a transmitter in the chain of love and covenant which comes from the Father through Jesus and which he has experienced personally.*¹⁰²⁵

The document re-emphasised *Vita consecrata*’s imperative for religious brothers to be “spiritual guides”, and for their communities to be “schools of spirituality”,¹⁰²⁶ but preferred the expression “guides in the search for God”. They do this especially through their witness in seeking God in their own lives.¹⁰²⁷ It also dwelt on the

¹⁰²² Address to the Colloquium on Initial Formation, September 2015, Notre Dame de l’Hermitage, France.

¹⁰²³ *Marist News*, No.271, 7 June 2013.

¹⁰²⁴ Luke 10:30-37 and Luke 10:38-42

¹⁰²⁵ *Identity and Mission of the Religious Brother*, #40

¹⁰²⁶ This had been identified as a particular priority also at the XXI General Chapter. Cf. *Acts of the XXI General Chapter*, pp.99-100. Cf. *Vita consecrata* ## 55, 109

¹⁰²⁷ *Identity and Mission of the Religious Brother*. #30

importance of their witness of their service, as *Vita consecrata* had done.¹⁰²⁸ But it pointed out the particular role they had for doing both these within their own charismatic family. The first and most efficacious place for the brothers to respond to Brother Emili's call for them to be known as "God seekers" and "evangelisers of youth" was with and for their fellow Marists.

But their "true blood" was called for most especially in their "weaving of fraternity". *Identity and Mission of the Religious Brother* used two Gospel passages for understanding this fraternity: Mark 6:37 ("Give them something to eat") and Matthew 25:40 ("Whenever you did this to one of the least of the brothers of mine, you did it to me.")

The brother's mission follows the same movement presented by these two icons ... On the one hand, it is the fruit of a heart that is open to suffering with the needs and miseries of humanity. The brother experiences in them the call of Christ who sends him to alleviate their hunger in many forms; his charism makes him particularly sensitive to some of them. But that is not enough. The brother, whose vocation ultimately is identified with the Son of Man, feels compelled to be like him, brother of the least ones. This is how the gift of brotherhood he has received and is living in community now is shared in the mission. It is a gift whose ultimate recipients are the little ones with whom Jesus has identified. The mission is not "what he does" but rather his very life itself made communion with the least.¹⁰²⁹

The role of the religious to keep the People of God mindful of the essence of Gospel,¹⁰³⁰ by being a "living memory" of Jesus,¹⁰³¹ therefore took on a distinctive focus for religious brothers: to witness to a God who serves as brother, who washes feet and goes to the peripheries.¹⁰³² They were to live and to serve as brothers. Their holiness of life was to be a witness of "fraternity of service".¹⁰³³ Their role was also to be a living memory of particular incarnation of the Gospel that came from their founding charism.¹⁰³⁴ Within their own charismatic family, they were to be "as leaven in the dough."¹⁰³⁵

¹⁰²⁸ *Ibid.* #23. Cf. *Vita consecrata* #63

¹⁰²⁹ *Ibid.* #27

¹⁰³⁰ *Vita consecrata*, #33, 84

¹⁰³¹ *Identity and Mission of the Religious Brother.* #7

¹⁰³² The document uses the term "peripheries" which had been promoted by Pope Francis. It named those on the peripheries as those "in impoverished countries, in developing countries, and also in deprived areas of developed countries" ... people living in situations of "migration, hunger, injustice, indifference and lack of sensitivity to the pain of others, superficiality and the loss of religious and human values." #30

¹⁰³³ *Ibid.* #23

¹⁰³⁴ *Ibid.* #9

¹⁰³⁵ *Ibid.* #10

This ministry of being a “living memory” of the Gospel and of their founding charism was the “first ministry” of the religious brother.¹⁰³⁶ The identity and mission of the Marist brothers – and indeed therefore of the Institute – was therefore within the ecclesial family of the Marists. It would be defined not so much by what they did – that would vary – but by who they were as brothers.

¹⁰³⁶ *Ibid.* #7

22.

FORMATION OF THE BROTHERS

Issues and developments in initial formation

Has there been a hotter topic in the recent history of the Institute? For at least the fifteen to twenty years that followed the 1985 Chapter, there was considerable discussion, and at times heated debate, among formation personnel, chapter delegates, councillors, and the brothers at large, concerning the most appropriate methods and priorities that should be used for the recruitment and formation of new brothers. It was a discourse marked by some enlightened thinking and strategic initiatives, but also one which provoked its share of mutual suspicion and even defensive subterfuge. Opinions varied, and were often strongly put.

The need to improve and update strategies in vocations ministry and in programmes of initial formation was clear to Brother Charles in 1985. He sought to put both vocations and formation among the highest priorities for the Institute's attention after the Chapter.¹⁰³⁷ Prominent among his concerns were outdated modes of formation that did not always align with the developmental situations of individuals and did not offer them the kind of personal accompaniment and vocational discernment that they needed to grow as integrated human beings and as consecrated lay men.¹⁰³⁸ His feelings were not universally shared. While in some Provinces the numbers of brothers had been decimated and new vocations had shrunk to a trickle since the time of the Vatican Council, in others the old methods of juniorates and the traditional stages of lock-step formation appeared to many brothers still to be producing acceptable numbers of first professions, while in yet other areas of the Institute there was encouraging new growth. Despite this range of experience and perspective, any objective assessment of the Institute could not escape the conclusion that there was little uniformity in either method or content in initial formation, inadequate agreement on the goals and priorities, and no agreed means for the preparation of formation personnel, and for providing them with the skills and knowledge they required for their work.¹⁰³⁹

¹⁰³⁷ Brother Charles Howard, interview transcript, *idem.* p.24

¹⁰³⁸ Brother Joseph McKee (Rector of MIC 1999-2005) judged this to be a particular insight of Charles, and one especially needed in Africa. Interview, *idem.*

¹⁰³⁹ Brother Michael Hill, interview *idem.* Brother Michael helped to plan and run the first course for Masters of Novices in 1990-91.



116. Formation Commission meeting to edit the Guide of Formation. Rome (1993).

The potential benefits of having a formation manual that could be used across the entire Institute had been seen by the previous Council. Brother Basilio had judged formation to be a weakness in the Marist Brothers.¹⁰⁴⁰ In 1982 a commission was established for this purpose, charged with preparing a draft to be considered by the XVIII General Chapter.¹⁰⁴¹ Other than the text of the Constitutions, this became the longest document, at 139 pages, which was provided to the capitulants. It was considered by them in the context of the extended analysis they were making of the state of the Institute after its eighteen-year *ad experimentum* period. Among the other documents, they were given was a detailed report on all the brothers who had left the Institute between 1967 and 1985 – including their reasons for leaving.¹⁰⁴² In 1985, the seating of the capitulants was still done in language groups, something that highlighted, and probably exacerbated, fractures along cultural lines.¹⁰⁴³ Nowhere was this more expressed than in discussion about the draft Formation Guide.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Opening address of Brother Basilio to the XVIII General Chapter.

¹⁰⁴¹ The chair of the commission was Brother Eugene Dwyer (Melbourne) who was a graduate of the Institute of Psychology at the Gregorian University, led by Luigi Rulla SJ

¹⁰⁴² *Acts of the XVIII General Chapter.*

¹⁰⁴³ All brothers who were interviewed and had attended the XVIII Chapter made this comment. The XIX Chapter seating was similarly arranged.

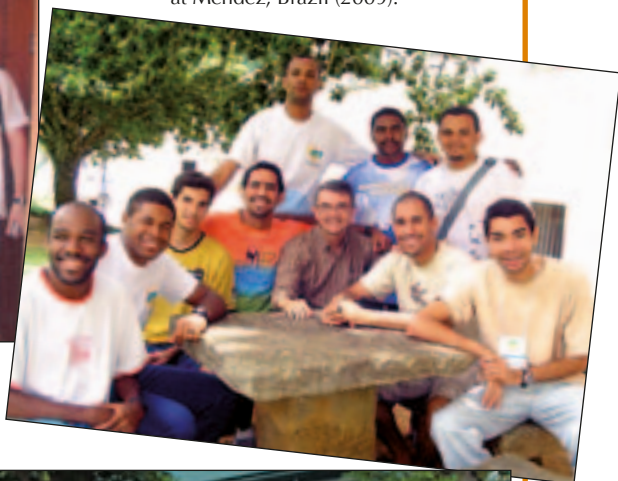
What was it about this document that evoked such strong responses? Much of the debate turned on the role of psychology and the human sciences in the assessment, accompaniment, and formation of young brothers, and in the nature of religious vocation itself. That, in turn, was informed by different perspectives on human anthropology and how the action of grace was understood. It is also honest to acknowledge that, at least in some cases, opinions on these topics were influenced by how some protagonists were perceived personally and culturally by others. This seemed especially the case among younger brothers in formation for whom experiences of accompaniment or therapy were not always well received, and may even have been psychologically harmful.



▲ **117.** Scholasticate, City of Guatemala, (2005).

▼ **118.** MAPAC (2007).

119. Brothers in Temporary Vows gathered at Mendez, Brazil (2009).



The focus of much of the debate in the 1980s and 1990s narrowed in on an approach to formation that was being promoted in one school – the Institute of Psychology at the Gregorian University in Rome – and on the name of one professor, Luigi Rulla SJ.¹⁰⁴⁴

Dr Rulla, a psychotherapist,¹⁰⁴⁵ had developed a theory of the psycho-social dynamics of the Christian vocation, based on empirical research mainly of seminarians and religious in formation.¹⁰⁴⁶ On the basis of his findings, from the 1970s he promoted an approach to formation that involved giving therapeutic attention to the sub-conscious psychological factors that may limit a person's vocational growth to spiritual maturity. Techniques for doing this were taught. At a time when there was very little available by way of specialist training for formation personnel, the programme was widely taken up. Both Brothers Basilio and Charles encouraged Provincials to send brothers to follow it, attracted especially by its rigour, its empirical basis, its contemporary thinking, and by its emphasis on personal accompaniment and individual counselling.¹⁰⁴⁷ In time, other programmes became more available and the approaches of other schools of psychology and human formation provided different perspectives. Brother Charles was later to criticise some graduates of the Institute of Psychology's programme because "they tend to say that theirs is the only method that works. Well, that's dangerous."¹⁰⁴⁸ "Rulla men" was a label that came to be pejoratively directed at some formation personnel who were practitioners of the approach.

¹⁰⁴⁴ See Luigi M. Rulla, *Anthropology of the Christian Vocation (Vol.I)*. Rome, Gregorian University Press. 1986; Luigi M. Rulla, Joyce Riddick and Franco Imoda, *Anthropology of the Christian Vocation (Vol.II)*. Rome, Gregorian University Press. 1989. 940 subjects were studied. For a brief introduction and critique of the Rulla theories, see Peter Egenolf SSCC "Vocation and Motivation, The Theories of Luigi Rulla," In *The Way*, No.42. July 2003. pp.81-91

¹⁰⁴⁵ He had previously been a thoracic surgeon.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Rulla's research claimed to show empirically that 60-80% of priests and religious were hampered in their vocational and personal growth by unconscious psychological factors. These may present even in a person who may appear to be compliant and motivated. This was described in terms of a mismatch between the conscious ideal-ego and the unconscious real-ego. Feelings such as inferiority, or repressed sexual or aggressive impulses, caused by unaddressed childhood experiences, may in later life be expressed as excessive needs for security, harmony, or affirmation. These were blocks to growth that needed to be addressed in formation. The role of psychological therapy in formation was therefore given a high importance.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Brothers Richard Dunleavy and Luis García Sobrado, interviews *idem*. Also, Brother Charles Howard, interview transcript, *idem*, p.20. Luigi Rulla was also a personal acquaintance of Brother Basilio who respected the Rulla theories but later questioned the way that they were applied in some parts of the Institute. Basilio himself, as a Master of Novices in later life was more nuanced in his approach to initial formation. (Reported by Brother Gaston Robert, interview *idem*; and Brother Carlos Martínez Lavín, personal communication with the author, 28 January 2016).

¹⁰⁴⁸ Brother Charles Howard, interview transcript, *idem*. p.20

It was, however, a labelling that others judged to be simplistic and unfair, even if they themselves may not have subscribed fully to the theories.¹⁰⁴⁹ As more brothers became qualified in clinical psychology and spiritual formation in other universities, the discourse within the Institute took on a broader and more informed character. A clearer distinction between accompaniment and therapy, for example, came to be accepted.¹⁰⁵⁰ Some questioned what they saw as an overly pessimistic or Augustinian human anthropology in the Rulla school.¹⁰⁵¹ But, more and more, mutually respectful and open dialogue took place among formators who had studied in different schools, and strategies best suited to individual brothers were implemented.¹⁰⁵² In the 1980s and early 1990s, however, such openness to shared learnings was not always the order of the day. In at least three Provinces, inter-Provincial joint novitiates and scholasticates split apart over differences of approach.¹⁰⁵³ It was in that climate, the draft Formation Guide hit the Chapter floor in 1985.

Many of the capitulants were ill at ease with what they saw as the heavily psychological emphases of the draft, and thought that the spiritual dimension of vocation was underplayed.¹⁰⁵⁴ In many ways it was an argument about incarnational theology. The Commission which worked on the draft, however, re-shaped it extensively and it was accepted by the Chapter for *ad experimentum* use.¹⁰⁵⁵ The text was redacted in the first months of 1986. Unsurprisingly, it was not welcomed in all Provinces, and there remained continuing resistance in some quarters to the anthropology on which the Guide rested. One indication of the level of resistance was a sentence that was omitted from the Superior General's introduction in

¹⁰⁴⁹ It was anecdotally reported to the author that some formators gave the method a poor reputation from their uncritical use of it, or even as a function of some degree of psychological dysfunction in their own lives. Brother Richard Dunleavy and Brother Philip Ouellette reported from their visits as General Councillors that some formators applied the "Rulla methods" quite rigorously, and did so indiscriminately among scholastics whether they were emotionally robust or more vulnerable. It was also reported that later graduates of the programme – after the departure of Dr Rulla from it, and after its mystique had been somewhat dented – seemed less ideologically driven by its name and or narrow in their own methodology. A number of brothers (Brothers Luis García Sobrado, Gaston Robert, Eugene Kabanguka, Joseph McKee, Ernesto Sánchez) expressed the view that most of the African graduates of the Institute of Psychology seem to have integrated its methods well, and have developed a balanced approach to formation.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Brother Brendan Geary, a clinical therapist with long experience in formation of religious and seminarians, made this point to the author. Interview, *idem*.

¹⁰⁵¹ Brother Antonio Ramalho mentioned this as a theme of discussion among formators. Interview, *idem*.

¹⁰⁵² Brother Antonio Ramalho, in his visits to formation houses during two terms on the General Council, had observed this. He noted it was certainly the case in Brazil. Interview, *idem*.

¹⁰⁵³ Brother Richard Dunleavy mentioned three joint programmes in Latin America where this occurred. Interview *idem*.

¹⁰⁵⁴ A major figure in the drafting commission was Brother Eugene Dwyer (Province of Melbourne), who was seen to be a strong proponent of theories of Dr Rulla. Some delegates were dismissive of the draft Guide, describing it as the "Eugene Dwyer Guide". Brother Eugene was later a capitulant in the 1993 Chapter, but agreed not to speak from the floor concerning the Guide, as it may have had a divisive effect. Reported by Brother Gaston Robert. Interview *idem*.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Brother Gaston Robert. Interview, *idem*

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- 120.** Novitiate. Lomeri, Fiji (1997).
- 121.** French-speaking Novitiate. Save, Rwanda (2001).
- 122.** Novices, Kumasi, Ghana (2002).
- 123.** Novices, Cotabato, Philippines (2003).
- 124.** Novitiate. Lomeri, Fiji (2005).
- 125.** Novitiate, Matola, Mozambique (2007).
- 126.** Novitiate, Medellín, Colombia, (2008).
- 127.** Esopus Novitiate, Province of USA (2008).
- 128.** Novitiate. Sevilla, Spain (2015).
- 129.** Novitiate. Cochabamba, Bolivia, (2011).

Spanish translation – the one which indicated that it was mandatory for the Guide to be used across the Institute.¹⁰⁵⁶ The majority of Provinces, however, welcomed the document¹⁰⁵⁷ and looked to see how the Guide could shape the programmes and arrangements that they had for all levels of formation: vocations ministry, pre-novitiate, novitiate, post-novitiate, and ongoing formation. As required by the Guide, integrated Formation Plans came to be developed.¹⁰⁵⁸

The General Council felt that it was essential that formators from across the Institute be well prepared in using the Guide and also the new Constitutions in their local programmes. The Councillors felt that the Institute now had an “excellent Formation Guide” but that there were “few formators to put it into practice.”¹⁰⁵⁹ To this end, an eighteen-month course for prospective masters of novices was planned,¹⁰⁶⁰ and Brother Charles was keen to see participation from as many Provinces as possible.¹⁰⁶¹ In a deliberately strategic move, the former Superior General, Brother Basilio, was asked to lead a team of four brothers to direct it.¹⁰⁶² Two of the team had studied at the Gregorian’s Institute of Psychology; the two

others had different backgrounds. There was also a range of viewpoints among the thirty brothers from twenty-four countries who assembled near Castelgondolfo.¹⁰⁶³ Such an initiative – in both its scope and purpose – had never before been organised in the Institute. “It was a landmark event.”¹⁰⁶⁴ The course was taught in

¹⁰⁵⁶ Reported to the author by Brothers Gaston Robert, Philip Ouellette and Michael Hill, interviews *idem*. Resistance to the Guide was reported to be strongest in some Provinces of Spain, and among some in Latin America. Some saw this as the reason that Brother Charles was so insistent that that 1993 Chapter adopt the Guide as part of the Proper Law of the Institute.

¹⁰⁵⁷ *Report of the Brother Superior General and his Council to the XIX General Chapter*, pp.42 and 48.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Brother Philip Ouellette who visited all the main formation houses of the Institute during his time on the Council. Interview *idem*.

¹⁰⁵⁹ *Marist News*. No.9, December 1989.

¹⁰⁶⁰ The course was organised by the Council’s Formation Commission: Brothers Philip Ouellette, Claudio Girardi, Eugenio Magdeleno, Marcelino Ganzaraín and Powell Pieur. *Marist News*. No.9, December 1990.

¹⁰⁶¹ Reported by Brother Luis García Sobrado. Interview *idem*

¹⁰⁶² Its members were Brother Basilio Rueda, Gaston Robert, Michael Hill and Alejandro González. Brother Victor Luizzo was Bursar.

¹⁰⁶³ They were there for twelve months; the last six months were at the General House. Two brothers withdrew early from the programme.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Brother Michael Hill, interview *idem*



- ◀ **130.** Postulants from Fianarantsoa, Madagascar (2006).
- ▼ **131.** Brothers Pedro Trainotti, Ilário Caresia and Vicente Caresia with Juniors from the first years of high school at the Meeting of Marist Formators on the occasion of the Bicentenary of the birth of Marcellin Champagnat, Campinas, SP, Brazil, Province of São Paulo, 1989.



French, and the new Formation Guide and the new Constitutions were its guiding sources of reference.¹⁰⁶⁵

Meanwhile, based on the experience of its implementation, the text of the Formation Guide was being refined for presentation to the 1993 Chapter.¹⁰⁶⁶ It retained its basic structure and its aim “to provide basic ideas and necessary resources” to form the brothers so that they could become “men capable of vowing their entire lives to God in an apostolic Marist community (C.95) ... and grow towards adulthood in Christ (C.110)”.¹⁰⁶⁷

¹⁰⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶⁶ A commission was appointed, under the chairmanship of Brother Philip Ouellette, in 1992 to re-write the Guide based on the feedback that had been received from formators around the Institute.

¹⁰⁶⁷ From the Superior General’s introduction to the version approved by the XIX General Chapter, p.3

It looked to provide an “integrated formation of the person – to perfect his communion with nature, with others, with himself and with God.”¹⁰⁶⁸ Its anthropology emphasised these four basic relationships of communion, something that involved the brother in a life-long conversion to Christ. In response to criticism from some that there needed to be more on spirituality, and specifically on Marist spirituality, the Guide described the “Marial and apostolic” character of the brothers’ spirituality in terms of its faith and confidence in God (C.33), its simplicity (C.32), its filial relationship with Mary (C.4) and its family spirit (C.6).¹⁰⁶⁹ It was a long and carefully constructed document – over five hundred articles, thoroughly indexed, and with a comprehensive glossary of terms.¹⁰⁷⁰ The Councillor General who chaired the writing team, Brother Philip Ouellette, was later to reflect that it – along with the formators course that he led in Lyon in 1996-98 – were the “two most satisfying achievements of [his] time as a brother.”¹⁰⁷¹ Most brothers involved in formation were appreciative of the document:



132. Course for Masters of Novices in Castelgandolfo (1990).

*For me as a formator the Guide was very helpful ... It gave a unity of approach for the Institute. Just as the new Constitutions had integrated humanity into religious life, for example into community life, obedience and chastity, ... the Formation Guide did the same in formation ... It included psychology as an important element in formation, but I don't think it was psychologism ... The benefits were accompaniment, and the ongoing formation of the formators themselves.*¹⁰⁷²

The improvements made to the text between the Chapters were not enough, however, to satisfy all the capitulants in 1993. Once again, the Guide received a rocky reception. In a General Chapter that was remembered by many capitulants as often fractious, the debates on the Formation Guide were among its

¹⁰⁶⁸ *Formation Guide*, #13

¹⁰⁶⁹ *Ibid.* #10

¹⁰⁷⁰ The document which was considered by the Chapter did not yet include individually numbered articles. This work was done after the Chapter. Brother James Langlois reviewed the text voted by the chapter and Brother Valmont Fournier was commissioned to produce an index, glossary and translation Guide in four languages under the direction of Brother Gaston Robert CG.

¹⁰⁷¹ Brother Philip Ouellette, interview *idem*

¹⁰⁷² Brother Antonio Ramalho, interview *idem*

most animated.¹⁰⁷³ Chapter 1 was a particular source of angst for some capitulants who tried to “drown it with amendments”.¹⁰⁷⁴ This was the part of the text that described the anthropology and the nature of the religious vocation, on which the rest of the text was based. This contested conceptual base was seen to ripple through the document and to compromise the formation strategies that were described. For example, there was disquiet that the “psychological counsellor” was listed among the formation personnel, along with the formator, the priest and the formation team.¹⁰⁷⁵ Eventually, Brother Alain Delorme proposed to the general assembly of the Chapter that a vote be taken to accept Chapter 1 “in principle”. A large majority voted that way, against the wishes of a “very resistant minority”.¹⁰⁷⁶ “It almost came to blows,” recalled several one capitulant. “Basilio had to step in to cool things down.”¹⁰⁷⁷

With the Formation Guide promulgated, it needed to be implemented. That was not to prove to be straightforward. Resistance persisted. Brother Gaston Robert CG recalled that when visiting one Province he noticed an unopened box of Formation Guides in the Provincial House. The Provincial advised him that they would remain that way during his tenure as Provincial.¹⁰⁷⁸ From another Province he received in the mail an alternate Formation Guide which included a different version of the disputed Chapter 1. Misgivings were also evident among some members of the General Council who argued against the holding of another course for prospective formators that would be based on the Guide. There were concerns it would become a “mini Rulla course”.¹⁰⁷⁹ Objections were put up, one them being funding; it would expensive to run such a long programme, and in France. Brother Yvon Bédard EG, however, was able to secure independent financing from a number of Provinces,¹⁰⁸⁰ and the General Council voted to proceed. Brother Philip Ouellette was asked to lead the programme in Ecully (Lyon), assisted by a team of three others who came from a range of backgrounds and viewpoints.¹⁰⁸¹

¹⁰⁷³ Brother Brian Sweeney, recorded interview with the author, 25 September 2015

¹⁰⁷⁴ Brother Gaston Robert recalls the over a hundred amendments that were moved as “an orchestrated campaign” against the Guide. Interview *idem*.

¹⁰⁷⁵ *Formation Guide*, #47

¹⁰⁷⁶ *Ibid.* This was the incident that “nearly came to blows”.

¹⁰⁷⁷ This was the memory of Brother Philip Ouellette who was a member of the Commission that had carriage of the document at the Chapter. Brothers Gaston Robert and John McDonnell recalled the debate almost identically. Interviews, *idem*.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Brother Gaston Robert, interview *idem*. Brother Ernesto Sánchez, both as Secretary of the Vocations Bureau and later as Councillor General, suggested that the Formation Guide took a long time to be implemented in Spain (which had become the only major locus of initial formation in Europe after the 1980s), and that some formators never subscribed to its approach. Interview, *idem*.

¹⁰⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸⁰ Brother Yvon described to the author how he did this by personal approaches to some Provinces. Interview, *idem*.

¹⁰⁸¹ Joining Brother Philip were Brothers Francis Hough, Javier Espinosa and Daniel Herrera. After twelve months Brother Javier was replaced by Brother Efraín Martín Oropesa due to his appointment as Provincial of America Central.

Like the programme held in 1990-91, this was a major initiative for the Institute. Using a house of the Assumptionists, “Valpré”, brothers from twenty-seven Provinces followed the course through 1996-98.¹⁰⁸² Many of their number were not only to later become formators but also take leadership positions in Provincial and General government.



133. Course of Master of Novices in Valpré (1996-1997).

Sound preparation of formation personnel has been a priority for General Councils since the 1980s. Eight courses were organised during the mandate of Brother Charles’ Council – three of five months’ duration, four of two months, and the major undertaking of the eighteen-month programme for masters of novices.¹⁰⁸³

¹⁰⁸² It ran from 8 September 1996 until 22 July 1998. The original number of participants was 27, but three left during the programme.

¹⁰⁸³ These were: 1987 – Rome, 5 months in Marist spirituality and patrimony; 1988 and 1989 – El Escorial, also 5 months, on similar topics, with more emphasis on spirituality for formation; 1989 (twice) – 2 months, in Nairobi for masters of postulants; 1992 – the same course for masters of postulants repeated in Luján (Argentina) and Auckland (New Zealand) .

Altogether, 185 brother formators took part in these courses.¹⁰⁸⁴ Programmes were to continue under the patronage of next Council. A short-course in accompaniment took place shortly after the Chapter, in December 1993,¹⁰⁸⁵ and then the long course at Valpré. While both of the previous long courses had been offered in French, the next one was to be in English, in Nairobi 2005-2006. In 2014, two parallel courses were conducted at Escorial (in Spanish) and Manziana (in English), with two extended periods together at l'Hermitage in France.¹⁰⁸⁶ The last three programmes were far broader in their accommodation of different models of formation than the earlier ones of 1990-91 and 1996-98.¹⁰⁸⁷



134. Course for Formators. Nairobi (2005).

Through the mid-1990s rumblings around the Formation Guide and approaches to formation, especially at the post-novitiate level, continued. A feature issue of *FMS Message* on vocations and formation in 1996 sought to emphasise the growth

¹⁰⁸⁴ *Report of the Brother Superior General and his Council to the XIX General Chapter*, pp.34-35.

¹⁰⁸⁵ Thirty-six brothers took part. It was run by Brother Brendan Geary and Fr Gerry Bourke. *FMS Message*. No.16, March 1995.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Drawing 32 brothers from 20 administrative units, the programme was entitled "Brother Formators for a New World." *Marist News*. No.305, 16 January 2014. The teams were: Brothers Ángel Medina and Joarês Pinheiro (at El Escorial) and Dennis Cooper, Sylvain Yao and Alfredo Herrera (at Manziana).

¹⁰⁸⁷ Brother Ernesto Sánchez expressed to the author that the first two had been strongly influenced by the Rulla theories. He had personally participated in the second one, and was involved in planning those of Nairobi, El Escorial and Manziana. Interview, *idem*.

of personalisation in formation, and emphasis on individual vocational discernment, self-awareness, human development and ongoing conversion of the person. Brother Seán wrote of the rationale for use of psychology:

*... psychology is one tool among others for assisting in initial, mid-life and senior formation, especially to deepen our understanding of living celibate chastity, skills for effectiveness in ministry, life in community, self-awareness and self-acceptance ... Rightly used can lead to greater freedom of spirit and more effective ministry*¹⁰⁸⁸

He pointed out that “the vast majority of us have had inadequate education about human sexuality and celibate chastity”.¹⁰⁸⁹ By word and image, the journal portrayed an impression of consistency of method and emphasis across the Institute. It was, however, not always the case in practice. It was still an issue up to and during the General Conference in 1997. The issues were touched on by Brother Benito in his opening address, noting that some confusion between the spiritual and the psychological foundations of formation was still present in some parts of the Institute and was a weakness.¹⁰⁹⁰ In the lead-up to the next Chapter, the Superior General and Council remained concerned that the Formation Guide had not been implemented at the post-novitiate level in a number of Provinces and that, where it had, there was evidence of inadequate preparation of formation personnel to provide a desired level of accompaniment.¹⁰⁹¹ By the time of the Chapter, however, when new vocations had also become scarce in the Provinces that had previously argued most strongly against the new methods, it seemed that more openness and less narrow ideology began to mark the discussions.¹⁰⁹²

Just as its implementation was complete, the Guide itself was becoming dated. Originally drafted in the early 1980s, there was growing view that an update was needed. Youth culture had changed, a digital revolution had taken place, there had been considerable development in thinking concerning the role of consecrated life in the life of the Church, and new emphases and priorities were emerging for the Institute. In February 2007, a meeting of post-novitiate formators from across the Institute was held in Rome, the first such meeting ever held.¹⁰⁹³ It had been especially with the area of post-novitiate formation that many of the debates of the previous two decades had been concerned. Organised by Religious Life Commission of the General Council, the meeting agreed that the Guide was certainly in need of updating. The Commission’s Secretary, Brother Teófilo Minga, summarised the view of the formators in saying that, “young men today are different from those of twenty-five years ago.” It was “important to know the youth of

¹⁰⁸⁸ Brother Seán Sammon, in *FMS Message*. No.20, July 1996, p.15

¹⁰⁸⁹ *Ibid.*p.11

¹⁰⁹⁰ Opening Address to the VI General Conference, in *Circulars*, XXX, I, p.19

¹⁰⁹¹ *Report of the Brother Superior General and his Council to the XX General Chapter*, #3.4

¹⁰⁹² A number of respondents reported this to the author, among them Brothers Gaston Robert, John Klein, Seán Sammon and John McDonnell. Interviews, *idem*.

¹⁰⁹³ *Marist Bulletin*. No.286, 8 March 2007

today".¹⁰⁹⁴ It was felt that their programmes needed to re-assess how issues such as interculturality, affectivity, sexuality, and the prevailing culture of young people were being treated. While things such as spiritual formation and accompaniment, basic Marist knowledge, methods of praying and living in community, were not being questioned, it was felt that new strategies were needed. The meeting also considered the tension they were all experiencing in balancing and integrating the professional and religious dimensions of post-novitiate formation. Most felt that it had become too much tilted towards the professional preparation of the brothers.

It would not be for another seven years that a major colloquium was organised to review the broad topic of initial formation. In October 2015 seventy-five Marists – brothers, lay and a priest – met for this purpose at Notre Dame de l'Hermitage. They included formators, province leaders and team members, and brothers from the General Council and General Administration. It was planned as a significant initiative. Emphases in the recommendations which emerged included: greater involvement and preparation of communities at all stages of initial formation, and effective accompaniment of brothers in formation; priority for building sensitivity and capacity in internationality and interculturality, and for living and ministering to youth on the peripheries; joint formation experiences with lay Marists; sharing



135. Participants at the Colloquium on Initial Formation. Notre Dame de l'Hermitage, (2015).

¹⁰⁹⁴ *Ibid.*



136. National gathering of Young Brothers with Br Emili Turú, Superior General. Bel Horizonte, Brazil (2010).



of resources for vocations ministry; and the ongoing preparation and renewal of formators.¹⁰⁹⁵ It was largely a new generation of formators which was preparing a new generation of brothers for a new reality in the Institute. Most of the old battles had become the stuff of history.

The search of new vocations

Vocations ministry had been a priority of each Council since 1985. Brother Charles' second Circular had been on this subject.¹⁰⁹⁶ He had presented the situation in terms of its being a "crisis", seeing what was happening in the Marist Brothers through the Raymond Hostie's lens of the life cycle of religious orders.¹⁰⁹⁷ It was clear to the Superior General that if the Institute did not learn the lessons of history as Hostie had described them, then it was bound to repeat them. It required a change of direction for the Institute, and action on the part of Provinces and individual brothers.¹⁰⁹⁸ Part of the draft Formation Guide was that each Province would develop a plan for vocations ministry; the Superior General expected that all would do this. A key element of such a plan was, with juniorates by then almost all closed, that brothers could have direct personal contact with young men through apostolic youth movements such as Remar, and the direct involvement of young men with brothers' communities that were vibrant in their community life, engaging in their ways of praying, and bold in their apostolic action. To assist in this, the General Council organised four extended international conferences were held for brothers involved in vocations ministry in Santiago de Chile (1986), Pilar (1989), Notre Dame de l'Hermitage (1992) and Manziana (1993). By the time of the next Chapter, however, the Council was not satisfied with what was happening, naming vocations ministry as one of the six "negatives" in the state of the Institute.¹⁰⁹⁹

It was a concern that was to increase. Although it had included vocations among one of its key priorities, the Council of Brother Benito, in its report to the 2001 Chapter, rated the "vocations crisis" as "very serious". It pointed out that, while there was enthusiasm and growth in some places, there had been only twelve professions in western countries between 1995 and 1999; "even in Spain", which had maintained its level of new vocations through the 1980s, the average number of professions was now less 0.4 per annum.¹¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁹⁵ *International Formation for a New Beginning. Our Beliefs, Our Perspectives, Our Recommendations.* Report of Marist International Colloquium on Initial Formation, 4-14 October 2015, Notre Dame de l'Hermitage, France.

¹⁰⁹⁶ *Circulars of the Superiors General.* Vol.XXIX, No.2. Feast of All Saints, 1987

¹⁰⁹⁷ Hostie, R. *op.cit.*

¹⁰⁹⁸ *Circulars*, XXIX, 2, pp.63-70

¹⁰⁹⁹ *Report of the Brother Superior General and his Council to the XIX General Chapter*, p.51

¹¹⁰⁰ *Report of the Brother Superior General and his Council to the XX General Chapter*, #3.4

The Council questioned how close the brothers in some Provinces were to youth and to youth culture, proposing that there needed to be more adaptability, flexibility, and creativity in vocations plans. Above all, the brothers needed to be able to answer for themselves the question: "Why do we want vocations?"¹¹⁰¹

Brother Sean's Council was to continue to give emphasis to the question, deciding that 2004-05 would be a "Vocations Year". In his letter to launch the year, the Superior General directed the focus of the brothers towards mission, asking them if they truly believed in the mission and its urgency.¹¹⁰² Building on a theme to which he often returned, Brother Seán proposed to the brothers they needed to have clear sense of their identity as brothers if they wanted to invited young men to join them, and that that identity was to be sourced in mission, and marked by their lives being genuinely spiritual, prayerful and joyful.¹¹⁰³ Like Brother Charles, he urged practical action and planning, which should involve up to twenty per cent of their best time.¹¹⁰⁴ A Vocations Bureau was established under the direction of Brother Ernesto Sánchez. While the Council was to report some encouraging signs during and after the Vocations Year, the annual average intake of new novices was to halve over the next seven years.



137. Year of Vocations.

¹¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰² Brother Seán Sammon, *Rekindling the Fire*. Opening letter for the Marist Vocations Year. 6 June 2004, p.9

¹¹⁰³ *Ibid.* p.14

¹¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.* p.3

MIC and MAPAC

In two regions where vocational trends were much more promising, Brother Charles believed it to be very important that resources be pooled so that post-novitiate formation could be pursued in a systematic, contemporary and sustained way. Whereas the old Provinces of Europe, North America and Oceania had arrangements and practices that were not readily open for change, and the Latin American Provinces had both ideological and practical difficulties in setting up international scholasticates,¹¹⁰⁵ the Superior General judged it timely and possible to do something in Africa and Asia.

He wasted no time in moving on Africa. Brother Charles later described it as his “first major initiative”,¹¹⁰⁶ the value of which he had become convinced during his time on the previous Council. Now, in the role of Superior General, he felt that he needed to act decisively.



138. First meeting of the Superiors of Africa with Brothers Charles Howard, Superior General, and Powell Prieur, General Councillor, to plan post-novitiate formation (1986).

We badly needed to do something in Africa and Asia about formation. At the Chapter, I spoke to Powell Prieur who had been elected to the Council, and who knew Africa pretty well and had been a missionary there. I said, “Get them together and say, ‘Well, what are we going to do for the formation of our brothers in Africa.’” He did that, but there was no agreement. A few months later I got them together in Kutama [Zimbabwe] ... Within five days we had it worked out ... We

¹¹⁰⁵ Ideological differences have already been mentioned. A major practical hurdle was caused by the fact that academic or professional qualifications were often non-recognised across national borders. (Brother Ernesto Sánchez. Interview, *idem*)

¹¹⁰⁶ Brother Charles Howard, interview transcript, *idem*, p.20.

would start a single post-novitiate centre, we would staff it well, and the brothers would get accompaniment during their time at university. If we could make our own place a university, or affiliate it with another university, then we would do that.¹¹⁰⁷

It was no simple matter to convince a disparate group of nineteen superiors – most of them still from Europe or the Americas, with a variety of formation arrangements in place that had little to do with each other – that they should go in this direction.¹¹⁰⁸ It was an achievement in itself to get them in the one room. There was also some resistance from the young brothers who would no longer have the attraction of travelling to European or North American universities to do their post-novitiate studies.¹¹⁰⁹ But it was clear what the new Superior General wanted. He also “knew the one we’d name as Rector; that was Luis García Sobrado.”¹¹¹⁰

The search began immediately for a suitable location. It came down to a choice between Kinshasa and Nairobi.¹¹¹¹ Brother Powell believed that the latter had the better claim,¹¹¹² and a farm was bought in Karen. A team of five formators and a group of twenty-seven young brothers crowded into the buildings as best they could.¹¹¹³ Within five years, with financial and personnel assistance from a number of Provinces across the Institute and funding from European agencies, significant capital development had been completed, and the Marist International Centre was well established. Initially, it was dependent on the General Administration, with the Superior General nominally Chancellor of the College.¹¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.* The meeting in Kutama was in April, attended by 14 of the superiors with Brothers Charles, Powell and Pedro Huidobro. Marist Africa in 1987 consisted of two Provinces, five Districts and ten Sectors. There were 291 African-born brothers, 201 foreign-born, and 49 Novices. *FMS Message*, No.1, pp.5-7.

¹¹⁰⁸ Brother Joseph McKee, then a headmaster in Cameroon and later Rector of MIC, reported to the author that the formation models across Africa were old and ill-suited to preparing young African brothers for their contemporary contexts. There were also questions as to how well the human formation of the African brothers was being undertaken, and how personalised it was. Interview *idem*.

¹¹⁰⁹ Brothers Eugène Kabanguka and Luis García Sobrado, interviews *idem*.

¹¹¹⁰ Brother Charles Howard, interview transcript *idem*.

¹¹¹¹ Brother Luis García Sobrado, interview *idem*. Harare and Abidjan had also been early possibilities and visited by Brother Powell (*FMS Message*, No.42, September 2012).

¹¹¹² Brother Eugène Kabanguka, interview *idem*. Brother Eugène succeeded Brother Luis to be the second Rector of MIC.

¹¹¹³ The staff comprised Brothers Luis García Sobrado (Rector), José-Maria Ferre (Dean of Students), Adrian Beaudoin (Bursar), Léonide Rabemahasoa and Teofilo Minga (Lecturers), Robert Pates (Administrator), in addition to external staff. The twenty-seven students came from nine countries. *FMS Message*, No.1, p.5

¹¹¹⁴ The initial structure had a Chancellor (Brother Charles, as Superior General), a Board (the General Council), a Visitor (Brother Powell), a Rector (Brother Luis) and a Dean of Students (Brother J-M Ferre).

An arrangement was established with the Pontifical Urbaniana University in Rome that the three year degree in religious education with some secular subjects would qualify students for a Bachelor of Missiology degree.¹¹¹⁵ Already by 1996, the possibility of MIC's becoming a university in its own right was being considered.¹¹¹⁶ The decision was, however, to align with the Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA) which had a major campus nearby, and of which MIC was to become a constituent college by 2002.¹¹¹⁷ By 2014, the governance and alignment of the institution – by then known as Marist International University College¹¹¹⁸ – was again under discussion as a result of regulatory changes introduced by the Kenyan Commission of Higher Education, and financial challenges at MIUC. Negotiations began between MIUC and Tangaza College, a nearby Catholic tertiary institution which had begun as a joint project of a number of religious institutes and missionary groups.

In 1987, the plan had been for MIC to be fully bilingual so that all the brothers of the continent would be fluent in both English and French, but with its location in an English-speaking country, and with courses taught in English, this was not practicable. Brother Charles was not pleased by that and never really accepted it.¹¹¹⁹ His original vision for MIC was changed also in another way. Brother Charles imagined that, as well as offering a solid post-novitiate formation, MIC's main emphasis would be on preparing brothers as catechists. From the very first group of students – among them brothers who were already finally professed and had had some years of teaching – there was pressure for MIC to be something more than that.¹¹²⁰ They wanted MIC to offer high-quality



139. A view of MIC, opened officially in 1989.

¹¹¹⁵ The possibility of affiliation with Marist College, Poughkeepsie NY, were also investigated, but Kenyan regulations did not allow for it to confer degrees. (*FMS Message*, No.42, September 2012)

¹¹¹⁶ Brother Eugène Kabanguka reported on initial negotiations during his time as Rector. Interview *idem*.

¹¹¹⁷ *Marist Bulletin*, No.23, 29 May 2002.

¹¹¹⁸ MIC had been accredited in 2011 by the Kenyan Commission for Higher Education as a University College (*FMS Message*, No.42, Sept.2012)

¹¹¹⁹ Brother Luis García Sobrado, interview *idem*.

¹¹²⁰ Brother Eugène Kabanguka, interview *idem*

ty professional preparation for the brothers to be teachers and educational administrators in Marist schools. The need for good Catholic schools in the countries of Africa, and contribution that the Institute could make in achieving that, was something that was important for the African brothers.¹¹²¹

When, during Brother Benito's time, governance of MIC was passed from the General Administration to the African Provincials, this direction was confirmed. The Centre has certainly provided the Marist educational mission in African with a new generation of brothers who are confident and competent as teachers and school administrators. From having just a few lay students, MIC grew to be a large tertiary college in its own right. The role of Rector was split into two: that of the Community Superior, who led the formation team, and the Principal, who administered the College.¹¹²²

One lasting element of MIC, which was also to be a feature of MAC (later MAPAC), was that the student brothers would be accommodated in "fraternities" – stand-alone community residences, with brothers from a mix of countries, with a certain degree of responsibility for shaping an internal community life, and with one or two members of the formation team as resident "animators". The formation emphases at MIC had been well planned from the beginning, and regularly evaluated. The Formation Guide had been its key document from inception.¹¹²³

Personal accompaniment was a key element, a particular priority for Brother Charles.¹¹²⁴ As in most centres of post-novitiate formation in the Institute, an abiding question at MIC became how to achieve the most desirable balance between its twin purposes of religious formation and professional credentialing. One of the recurring concerns for the formation personnel – not only at MIC but also at MAPAC – was the apparently high number of graduates who left the Institute within several years of completing their studies. It brought into question their preparedness for the next stage of their lives as religious brothers, as well as what the experience of post-novitiate formation was nurturing in their personal motivations.

¹¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹²² This occurred in 2005, with Brother Spiridion Ndanga as Superior and Brother Joseph Udeajah as Principal. At that stage MIC had 69 student brothers and 13 formators. (*Marist Bulletin*, No.282, 8 February 2007).

¹¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹¹²⁴ In his report at the time of MIC's tenth anniversary in 1996, the Rector, Brother Eugène, emphasised the continuing priority that was being given to personal accompaniment and individual vocational discernment. He highlighted the need for preparation of African-born brothers as formators. (*FMS Message*, No.21, p.32.) Brother Joseph McKee drew the author back to Brother Charles' intuitions that the quality of formation was essential and that this needed skilled individualised accompaniment. (Interview *idem*.)

At both formation centres this was an issue that was examined and re-examined. Some saw a need for a more intense religious formation and better skilled accompaniment to help ameliorate this level of attrition;¹¹²⁵ others saw the root of the problem in some of the emphases of the Formation Guide itself;¹¹²⁶ some felt that the level of institutionalisation did not foster sufficient personal responsibility in brothers;¹¹²⁷ while others again pointed to the counter-productive effects of the kinds of community life and ministry that graduates entered after they left MIC or MAPAC;¹¹²⁸ some simply pointed to the attractiveness of a professional and Christian life outside the brothers for someone who had graduate qualifications. Most would agree that all these factors played a part and needed to be continually addressed.

The decision to establish a regional inter-Provincial scholasticate in Asia had both similarities and differences from the move in Africa. In places such as the Philippines, Korea, India and Melanesia the time of the missionary brothers was coming to an end; in these and other countries of the region there was insufficient capacity in any single Province to provide the quality of post-novitiate formation that was wanted.¹¹²⁹ There was a real fragility in some countries, a function in some of them of the young average age of the brothers, in others their quickly advancing median age, and in others the smallness of the presence. The region, however, had less collective identity than did Africa, and there was an enormous variety in culture, ethnicity, ecclesial realities, education systems, and the state of

¹¹²⁵ A review at MAPAC in 2013-14, resulted in the re-casting of the three-year course to become a two-year formation-focussed programme that included some professional studies, with the expectation that most of the brothers' professional studies would take place in tertiary institutions back in their own Provinces. Brothers Jeffrey Crowe and Peter Rodney (both Rectors of MAPAC) and Ken McDonald (long-time District Superior and MAPAC Board Member) all welcomed this development as an improvement in the MAPAC programme. (Interviews *idem*.) The General Council, in its report to the XXI General Chapter, was critical of the "shallowness" and "superficiality" of scholasticate programmes and how the vowed life was understood. (*Report of the Brother Superior General and his Council to the XXI General Chapter*. p.32)

¹¹²⁶ Brother Eugène reported to the author that some formators thought that the Guide, at least from an African perspective, was too centred on human perfection, and lacked sufficient emphasis on nurturing a real "passion" in young brothers for they what wanted to do for young people and for God. Interview *idem*

¹¹²⁷ Brother Joseph McKee suggested to the author that at each level of initial formation there was the challenge to ensure the experience was not a prolonged adolescence by its being akin to a boarding school environment. Interview *idem*.

¹¹²⁸ A review of MAPAC in 2008 by Brothers Michael Hill and Antoine Kazindu assessed this third reason to be the most influential one. They found that many young brothers went to communities that did not nurture them in their spiritual lives or their sense of religious consecration, where they became lonely and lacked the companionship that had been their experience in formation, and where the demands of their work were unreasonably high. Brother John McDonnell, reported similar sentiments based on his time on the formation team at MAPAC and his knowledge of MIC (interview, *idem*). A number of formation personnel at MIC relayed the same comments to the author. Brother Eugène pointed out that the highest rate of perseverance post-MIC was in the Province of Nigeria, something he attributed to the strength of the communities into which the young brothers went (interview, *idem*). Brother Benito told the author that he had been particularly concerned about the companionship and support of the young brothers in the early years after post-novitiate formation (interview, *idem*).

¹¹²⁹ Brother Michael de Waas, interview *idem*.

the Institute's development in each place.¹¹³⁰ The number of brothers was smaller but they were spread across vaster distances.

The first concrete discussions about a possible joint initiative took place in 1986 at a regional meeting of Asian superiors held in Sri Lanka.¹¹³¹ There was not universal support for it, but Brother Charles was determined that it would be realised.¹¹³² Brother Philip Ouellette was tasked with advancing the plans.¹¹³³ Questions about the viability and sustainability of an Asian centre were considered, and it was clear that it would have to be conceived differently from MIC; the numbers would not be the same. It would need to be a more open institution.¹¹³⁴ There was also no agreement across the region on



140.
Visit of the Superiors of Asia to MIC to discuss with Brothers Philip Ouellette and Powell Prieur, General Councillors, the possibility of undertaking a similar initiative in Asia. Nairobi, Kenya (1991).

¹¹³⁰ Brother Charles mentioned each of these factors when commenting in 2006 on his decision to push the Asian Provincials towards the establishment of MAC. Interview transcript, *idem*. p.39

¹¹³¹ *FMS Message*, No.15, October 1994. Actually, during the time of the previous Council, Brothers Quentin VG and Renato Cruz CG had convened a meeting in Singapore of the Provincials of China, The Philippines and Sri Lanka to discuss the issue in principle. The Sri Lanka meeting five years later was a follow-on from that, at the instigation of Brother Charles. (Brother Wency Calimpon, *A Brief History of the Marist Asia Pacific Center, Manila, the Philippines*, April 1997, p.2. This unpublished document of 31 pages includes a detailed history of the negotiations around the establishment of MAC/ MAPAC, its early years, its rationale and structures.)

¹¹³² Brother Wency Calimpon, *op.cit.* p.1

¹¹³³ Brothers Philip Ouellette and Jeffrey Crowe, interviews *idem*. Brother Philip met with the Asian Provincials at the General Conference at Veranópolis in 1989 to advance plans. With Brother Renato's return from being on the General Council to become Provincial in The Philippines, local impetus was given to the project. Brother Wency Calimpon, *op.cit.* p.3.

¹¹³⁴ That is, larger numbers of external students were envisaged from the start. (Brother Jeffrey Crowe, interview *idem*. Brother Jeffrey was involved in the planning of MAC; at the time he was Visitor to India. Previously he had been District Superior of Melanesia, later Councillor General, and later again Rector of MAPAC.)

what should constitute post-novitiate formation, especially the type of professional study that could be pursued at a new centre,¹¹³⁵ since university degrees awarded in the Philippines would not be recognised in all countries of the region.¹¹³⁶ Manila had been chosen because of its being something of a centre of the Church in the region, the presence of other formation centres there, and the availability of potential lecturers.¹¹³⁷

The first sixteen students were enrolled in 1991, comprising brothers from the Philippines, Korea, India and Sri Lanka.¹¹³⁸ The founding Rector was Brother Wency Calimpon from the the Philippines, and the Dean of Students, Brother Colomanus Pratt from Australia (who also later doubled as clerk of works for the building programme).¹¹³⁹ They were all housed in the existing brothers' residence at Marakina Heights which had originally been built to accommodate scholastics and where there was a large Marist school.¹¹⁴⁰ The formal blessing and official opening of the partially-complete new buildings on the same property took place in 1993.¹¹⁴¹

It was soon agreed that credentialing for the studies at MAC could be done through one of the Marist universities which were conducted by the Province of the Philippines. This was arranged through Notre Dame of Marbel University (NDMU) which was located in Koronadal City, South Cotabato. Within three years, the administrative units in Melanesia and the Pacific had decided to send their brothers to Manila for their post-novitiate programmes,¹¹⁴² something that strengthened the relationships of the Australian and New Zealand Provinces with what then became known as the Marist Asia-Pacific Centre – MAPAC. Brothers from those countries have continued to be members of the academic and formation teams, and their Provincials members of the Board. Although this has not resulted in the same degree of common identity and focus that MIC gave to the Superiors of Africa, MAPAC has provided a forum, at

¹¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹³⁶ The degrees were recognised as full teaching qualifications only in the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Hong Kong.

¹¹³⁷ Brother Wency Calimpon, *op.cit.* p.1

¹¹³⁸ The previous year six newly professed brothers (four Filipinos and two Sri Lankans) had begun their scholasticate at Marikina in what was called "The Marist Brothers Center". At the start of 1991, the Asian Provincials met at MIC in Nairobi, with Councillors General Philip Ouellette, Powell Prieur and Richard Dunleavy, to study the MIC programme. At this meeting, the original concept of a two-year post-novitiate course with an emphasis on formation, was adapted to a three-year programme with more academic content. The name was changed to the "Marist Asian Centre". Brother Wency Calimpon, *op.cit.* p.7.

¹¹³⁹ Two "accompagnateurs" were also on the foundation staff: Brothers Hermes Daga-as and Serimal Kerewgoda. Brother Columbanus stepped in to supervise the works when the first construction company abandoned the project.

¹¹⁴⁰ The original plan had been for the Centre to be in another part of Manila, and close to an existing institution. Brother Wency Calimpon, *op.cit.* p.3.

¹¹⁴¹ The buildings were incomplete at this stage, but adequate enough for occupation.

¹¹⁴² This was formally agreed in October 1994, and the Superiors from the Pacific joined the Board of the newly named "MAPAC" in December of that year. Brother Wency Calimpon, *op.cit.* p.11.

least annually, for the Major Superiors across the Asia-Pacific region to come together, often in the presence of one of two members of the General Council.

As at MIC, the Superiors – acting in their capacity as the Board of MAPAC – have recurrently examined and evaluated the strengths and challenges of the Centre. While the experience of internationality and interculturality have been highly valued, there have also been some issues that have emerged from the interface of such a diversity of cultural mores and the range of age and maturity of the student brothers, and some questions about the benefits and costs of the human development of young men living in such close quarters for extended periods of time.¹¹⁴³ Other challenges have concerned the finding of faculty and formation personnel who are both suitably trained and also effective in the distinctive inter-cultural dynamic of MAPAC.¹¹⁴⁴

Ongoing Formation

In their Message to the Institute, the members of the XIX General Chapter in 1993 described the new Formation Guide as a “sure path of growth for a Marist Brother regardless of his age”.¹¹⁴⁵ It was an affirmation of the importance of ongoing formation over the lifetime of a brother, every brother.

Ongoing formation has developed dramatically since a “second novitiate” course was first introduced into the Institute by Brother Théophile in 1897. Selection for that programme was necessarily restricted by geography, numbers, and language. In 1969, Brother Basilio introduced three language-based programmes at St-Paul-Trois-Châteaux in France (French), San Lorenzo de El Escorial, near Madrid in Spain (Spanish-Portuguese), and Fribourg in Switzerland (English). Gradually more brothers were given the opportunity to attend, until it became the norm that all did. Demand for the French course began to wane by the 1990s, and it came to be offered more irregularly.

¹¹⁴³ Brothers Michael de Waas and Ken McDonald spoke to the author about some cultural misunderstandings and personal hurts that have occurred between Asian and Melanesian/Pacifican brothers. Apart from cultural differences, there were also often differences in age. Until 2016, when two additional years of secondary schooling were introduced in the Philippines and recruitment policies were modified, the Filipino brothers tended to be some years younger than those coming from most other countries. Interviews *idem*.

¹¹⁴⁴ Brother Jeffrey Crowe, interview *idem*.

¹¹⁴⁵ *Message of the XIX General Chapter, Formation #3*

At the instigation of Brother Charles,¹¹⁴⁶ the English programme was re-located to Italy, first in temporary accommodation in Rome and Nemi, then in a refurbished building that had been the Juniorate of the Italian Province, at Manziana. El Escorial and Manziana became the main centres of renewal for the Institute, with programmes also often accommodated in the General House, and sometimes in leased premises in other places.

The 1993 Chapter proposed a range of strategies to accompany the launch of the Formation Guide, among them courses for formators at different levels, for community superiors, and for companions. It was particularly concerned about building the capacity of leadership. It also saw the need for courses for younger brothers preparing for final profession.¹¹⁴⁷ At the start of that Chapter, the capitulants had read that Brother Charles's Council had considered that ongoing formation to be one of the negatives in the state of the Institute.¹¹⁴⁸ With formation as a named priority for the next three General Councils, the following two decades saw an expansion of offerings for brothers in different stages of life and other courses with more targeted participation. To the five-month mid-life programmes were added annual two-month courses for older brothers.¹¹⁴⁹ Other courses have been offered for community leaders/animators, formators, and brothers in the age bands 35-45 and 55-65.¹¹⁵⁰ Additionally several inter-congregational programmes have been held: mid-life courses for the four Marist branches; a course for brothers from different institutes; and the inclusion of Marianists in the mid-life and senior renewal courses.

Increasingly, the programmes have sharpened their focus on assisting the brothers' to deepen their interior lives as the basis of their consecration, and helping them to understand the elements of their human development that might be working for or against this at different stages of their lives.¹¹⁵¹ There has been an effort to redress what was seen as a somewhat haphazard and eclectic approach that many brothers took to their ongoing formation, and its overbalance towards professional training.¹¹⁵²

¹¹⁴⁶ Brother Charles had been concerned that both the cost of the Fribourg programme and some aspects of its content were discouraging participation from some English-speaking Provinces. He was keen to re-locate it to Rome, or near Rome, and to re-shape it. Specialist presenters were also more available in Rome. Manziana had been considered but dismissed. When a way of executing a commercial arrangement between the Italian Province and the General Administration was found to be possible regarding the Manziana property and the Institute's property at Campagnola in the north, the decision was taken to proceed. A \$US3M refurbishment was done. Meanwhile, Fribourg had been sold for \$US7M to a tyre company. (Report from Brother Richard Dunleavy, interview *idem*.)

¹¹⁴⁷ Acts of the XIX General Chapter

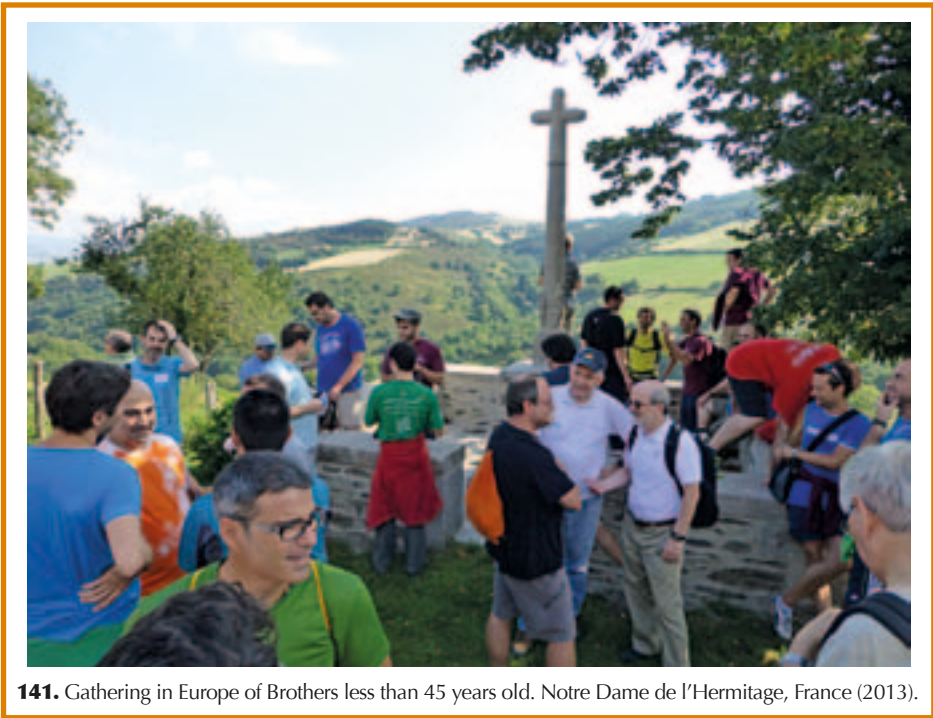
¹¹⁴⁸ *Report of the Brother Superior General and his Council to the XIX General Chapter*, p.52

¹¹⁴⁹ "Mid-life Renewal" and "Third Age" for the English, introduced during the time of Brother Charles's Council; "Senderos" and "Amanecer" for the Spanish/Portuguese. From 2014, the mid-life programmes were reduced in length because of issues with visas and security of employment.

¹¹⁵⁰ Called "Horizons/Horizontes" and "Transitions/Umbrables" respectively. These were introduced after a comprehensive evaluation of renewal programmes in 2006. (*Report of the Brother Superior General and his Council to the XXI General Chapter*, p.32)

¹¹⁵¹ Brothers Emili Turú and Tony Leon, interviews *idem*

¹¹⁵² Reported to the XX General Chapter by the Superior General and Council in their *Report*. #3.4



141. Gathering in Europe of Brothers less than 45 years old. Notre Dame de l’Hermitage, France (2013).

For many brothers the programmes of ongoing formation provided by the Institute (at El Escorial and Manziana) are key moments of renewal. The programs are regularly evaluated: by the Teams and by ourselves during visits to the centres of renewal. Based on this feedback we believe the programs are special times of grace that have enabled brothers to rediscover afresh their religious vocation, to strengthen their Marist identity, and return home recommitted to personal prayer, community life and our mission.¹¹⁵³

The International College

One particular sphere of ongoing formation that was to eclipse during this period was the international community of brothers who studied in Rome. Originally the base for “Jesus Magister”,¹¹⁵⁴ the large eastern wing of the General House had become known by the 1990s as the “International College”.

¹¹⁵³ *Report of the Brother Superior General and his Council to the XXI General Chapter*, p.33

¹¹⁵⁴ The first students in 1960 had spent their first academic year residing at the Marist college of San Leone Magno in Rome, waiting for the General House to be completed.

During that decade, it was the residence of an international community of brothers – most of them aged in their thirties or early forties – who were doing post-graduate studies at various Roman universities. Although on the same property as the General Council and General Administration, it operated as a separate community, and even used a different language (Italian).

By the start of the 1990s, the number in the community was typically between thirty-five and forty-five.¹¹⁵⁵ Although it drew brothers from all over the Institute, the College was especially supported by the European and Latin American Provinces, and through them brothers from Africa developed the practice of coming.



142. International College. Rome, Italy (1992).

¹¹⁵⁵ With renewal courses sometimes also run in that building, it meant that as late as the 1990s, there could be almost a hundred brothers resident in the General House complex – in three or four separate communities. In the Report to the XX General Chapter, the Rector of the College, Brother Antonio Ramalho reported that 98 brothers had studied at the Collège between 1993 and 2001 – 50 from Latin America, 24 from Africa, 21 from Europe (20 from Spain) and 3 from Asia.

The College played an important role in opening the international horizons of these brothers, and allowing hundreds of brothers to live with and get to know confreres from all parts of the world. For the significant proportion of these brothers who were later elected to Provincial and Institute leadership, the relationships and experiences made in Rome were quite important.¹¹⁵⁶ The high financial costs to Provinces, a fall in the number of brothers available for graduate studies, and the increase in attractive university opportunities in other places, all contributed to a trend to smaller numbers by the end of the 1990s.¹¹⁵⁷

With the opportunity presented by the Italian government for the re-development of the College into a hotel, the decision was taken to move the students into the *foresteria* section of the General House in 1999.¹¹⁵⁸ The bottom floor of this wing was refurbished for a chapel, recreation and meeting spaces, and the International College continued to function as a separate community. Now residing in the same building as the General Council and the General Administration there was, however, inevitably more interaction among all the brothers. At the same time, the resident priests who were also students at Roman universities, moved from what had been a dedicated chaplains' wing to live with their fellow students. But numbers continued to fall. In 2003-04, a review was conducted,¹¹⁵⁹ the final outcome of which was a decision to integrate the students into the General Administration community. An important phase in the life of the Institute had come to its end.

¹¹⁵⁶ A number of brothers interviewed made this comment to the author.

¹¹⁵⁷ Brother Antonio Ramalho, interview *idem*.

¹¹⁵⁸ The actual move was completed in November of that year.

¹¹⁵⁹ The review team comprised Brothers Antonio Ramalho, Wency Calimpon, Javier Espinosa and Christian Gisamonyo. *Marist Bulletin*. No.154, 10 July 2004.

23.

TOWARDS A MORE INCLUSIVE SENSE OF BEING MARIST

It had not been since 1852, when Brother François welcomed Mme La Comtesse de la Grandville to the II General Chapter at Notre Dame de l'Hermitage,¹¹⁶⁰ that a Superior General had the reason or occasion to offer words of greeting to lay people in the Chapter Hall of the Marist Brothers. In 1993, it happened again but the circumstances and the consequences were very different. Taking part in his first General Chapter, as its second youngest capitulant, Brother Emili Turú recalls an event of which he has retained a strong memory:

I remember the moment when the doors of the Chapter Hall were opened, and the lay people entered. I recall feeling quite emotional. It was powerful ... It had been a risk, because Charles Howard had invited them before asking the Chapter ... They were already in the house, and Charles had to ask the capitulants, "Can they participate in some sessions?" ... It was one of those magic moments – it was announced they were outside, the doors were opened, they entered, and the whole Chapter Hall stood and applauded. For me it was prophetic.¹¹⁶¹

¹Like many of the capitulants, Brother Emili had come from a Province context where not many brothers were imagining the future in the same way that the Superior General was doing in 1993. "I think the Institute was a long way from Charles Howard's thinking."¹¹⁶² While his Province, as others in Spain, had been active since the 1980s in providing Marist professional development for teachers, Brother Charles was dreaming of something that was conceptually more profound. He was proposing a new way of acting co-responsibly and co-respectfully as an ecclesial family. In welcoming the fourteen lay participants, Brother Charles challenged both them and his confreres:

Your presence here is a powerful symbol of a new model of church, and an encouragement to us all to continue our work of collaboration together, to deepen our appreciation and respect, to assist and complement each other, appreciating and promoting each other's vocation in collaborative communion.¹¹⁶³

Brother Basilio had addressed the Chapter not long before this. Brother Emili recalled being quite impressed by what the former General had to say, but also not quite understanding what he meant:

¹¹⁶⁰ *FMS Message*, No.14. November 1993, p.46

¹¹⁶¹ Brother Emili Turú, interview *idem*.

¹¹⁶² *Ibid*.

¹¹⁶³ *FMS Message*, No.14. November 1993, p.46.

He said to us that that there were big, big changes coming. “Be ready, be open, and follow the movement of the Spirit” ... For me it was a shock. What were these big changes that were coming? In our Provinces in Spain, there had been some changes after the [Second Vatican] Council but we hadn’t really lived the big changes ... Our dreams were concerned with renewing community life, going to the peripheries, to those most in need, and so on. But sharing life and mission with lay people, we had not really considered that ... Vocations were strong. I was superior of the scholasticate with thirty scholastics, just in our own Province. But I don’t think at that moment we were aware of the new paradigms that were coming.¹¹⁶⁴

More than two decades later, in the same house, at the time of a gathering of Provincials and other representatives with the General Council 2015 to consider the project “New Models of Animation, Governance and Management”, Brother Emili was now the one in the shoes of Brothers Basilio and Charles. He thought that the meeting could be a moment to affirm what had begun symbolically at the 1993 General Chapter with the opening of the doors of the Chapter Hall. He saw that the “paradigm shift” which the 2015 meeting was being invited to embrace to be “more than opening doors. It was opening hearts, opening everything.”¹¹⁶⁵

What had been the journey of these years?

The Chapter of 1985 as a defining moment for Marist life

Although 1993 had seen a symbolic “opening of the doors” to laity, it was not the first time since 1852 that lay people had sought to be admitted to a brothers’ General Chapter. A small meeting that occurred during the XVII Chapter in 1976 provides a window into a story that had been decades in the making, and would usher in a new epoch nine years later at the XVIII Chapter when the vote was taken to establish what came to be called the “Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family”. Two figures in this story were the World Union of Former Marist Students and Brother Virgilio León Herrero of the Province of Catalonia.¹¹⁶⁶

¹¹⁶⁴ Brother Emili Turú, interview *idem*.

¹¹⁶⁵ *Ibid*.

¹¹⁶⁶ In Volume II, Brother André Lanfrey traces the origins of this body and touches on its significance for the development of a broader sense of Marist life and identity. Two articles in *Marist Notebooks* treat the subject at depth: Brother Alexandre Lefebvre, “The Old Boys and the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family” in *Marist Notebooks*. No.15, May 1999, pp.123-75; Brother Antonio Martínez Estaún, “The Marist Family According to Brother Virgilio León” in *Marist Notebooks*. No.30, February 2012, pp.7-44. Brother Pau Fornells draws on similar sources in his unpublished article, “El Movimiento Champagnat de la Familia Marista en la Historia y en los Documentos del Instituto”, Brasilia, 14 February 2010.

In the last week of the Chapter,¹¹⁶⁷ a sub-committee of eight capitulants met on the sides with a delegation from the Union. The Union had requested the opportunity to meet with the whole General Chapter as it discussed a proposition that the Union had submitted. The side-meeting was a compromise. After its establishment at the time of the Beatification in 1955, the World Union had spread, growing to link national associations of Marist ex-students in twenty-seven countries. It saw itself as providing a means for its members (all male former students of the Marist Brothers) to maintain their association with the brothers, live out a Marist spirituality in their own lives, and to support the work of the Institute. Mostly, but not exclusively, they were graduates of the larger and more privileged Marist schools in various Provinces.¹¹⁶⁸ From the early 1970s, the Union had been influenced by Brother Virgilio, first in Catalonia and then at the level of the Union's international leadership.¹¹⁶⁹

For a long time, the passionate and energetic Brother Virgilio¹¹⁷⁰ had been promoting the idea of a "Marist Family", something that he came to see in increasingly broader and more inclusive terms.¹¹⁷¹ He began to draw together the idea of a "Marist Family" and the calls of Vatican II, seeing that this family of Christian people could live out their Baptismal calls in association with one another and be inspired by the charism of Marcellin Champagnat. The concept of "Marist Family" began to take on greater depth and meaning for him. After finishing as Provincial in 1972, Brother Virgilio was appointed as adviser to the Spanish federation of former students, and actively promoted his ideas with them, and also with the French federation. The Union leadership became supporters of Brother Virgilio's ideas, but it hoped also to preserve its own structures and identity. It was this hybrid model that it wanted to propose to the 1976 Chapter: that the Institute move to provide some structure to the concept of the "Marist Family", but also give practical support to the Union.

So that this incorporation in the Marist Family may be fruitful and efficacious, the Marist authorities are asked:

- a) *To make a study, in collaboration with the Former Students, of possible ways of participating that would fit in with the specific aims of the Institute;*
- b) *for a deepening of the mystique and spirituality that should be lived by those lay people who are in close relationship with the Brothers;*

¹¹⁶⁷ 23 October 1976

¹¹⁶⁸ This was one of the misgivings of Brother Charles, in particular. (Brother Richard Dunleavy, interview *idem*.)

¹¹⁶⁹ Brother Alexandre Lefebvre, *op.cit.*, traces this in detail, drawing on various sources, including a great number of Brother Virgilio's own writings.

¹¹⁷⁰ His nickname in Spanish was *Chispas* (Sparks or Livewire). Brother Alexandre, *op.cit.* p.132.

¹¹⁷¹ This is a different usage from the way "Marist Family" has been used as a term to refer to the four Marist Congregations. See Brother Antonio, *op.cit.*, who points out the use of the term by Brothers Leónidas SG and Charles-Raphaël SG in their Circulars. Brother Virgilio traces his own use of the term back to his time as a Junior in 1940 as a way of conceptualising the Institute, but from 1968 used it to refer to a much wider group of people – the families of the brothers, benefactors, friends, colleagues, former students.

- c) *that a study be made of how best to lead to a Christian maturity in the active relationships those Former Students will engage in.*
- d) *We ask the General Chapter to deal with this project, however they may feel is appropriate, but – at the same time – leave the Federations free to discover the best base possible for the stance and direction the Marist Family should take.*
- e) *[We propose] that the Chapter also study ways of forming closer links between lay people and the Institute, but leave each Federation free to choose the connections that most suit it.*¹¹⁷²

Brother Virgilio, however, had already moved further ahead in his thinking. After the meeting with Union delegation, he circulated an 18-page paper on the “Marist Family” to the capitulants. His vision was that all Marist schools would have at their heart a critical number of people whom he called the “Marist educative community”. Within this core group of teachers and others would be a relatively small number of brothers who could be a “leaven” for it and for the school more generally:

*If Marcellin were alive today and saw the present circumstances of Catholic schools, he would repeat his saying, “We must have Brothers”, but he would add to it, “And we also need dedicated lay people!” Today’s Church asks for a re-commitment of ourselves ... Religious should give a great deal of attention to animating the laity: they should consecrate themselves to forming dedicated lay people by inspiring them with the spirit and standards of their own religious congregations.*¹¹⁷³

Mission was his *raison d’être* for the Marist Family. He imagined it would include brothers, lay teachers, former students, and families of students and the brothers, and it would find its “nucleus” in the educational work. Within the “Marist educative community” the brothers would have a distinctive contribution to make:

*As for us brothers, we must live a spirituality that is more in line with our present times since our vocation is to be present-day apostles: this spirituality must be more open and more easily shared, in its aspects of poverty and Gospel simplicity, with all the members of the Marist Family ... While staying on close to our schools, it is absolutely necessary that at every possible time we act conjointly in our evangelising apostolate with those groups of lay people who have been attracted by the essence of our charism, who are dedicated workers in the same apostolate, and who share our spirituality – especially its Marial and fraternal dimensions ...*¹¹⁷⁴

He asked why “a new branch of the Marist tree” could not be born:

It is possible to achieve, in a structural way and in an acceptable fashion, an efficient integration of lay people in the Marist Family. Fitting in with our basic

¹¹⁷² Cited in Brother Alexandre Lefebvre, *op.cit.* pp.137-38

¹¹⁷³ *Ibid.* p.140

¹¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.* p.140

*objective of evangelisation and into the scheme of our charism, these people can share in our spirituality, adapting it to their situation as lay people.*¹¹⁷⁵

Some major shifts of mindset would be entailed if such a structure were to be established:

*All this, of course, implies that changes have to be made – both by the brothers and by our lay associates. Our Institute must undergo a radical change in outlook, of perspective – and then change quite a number of things. We have to find a suitable definition for dedicated lay people: we have to give them an identity similar to our own, but adapted to their lay status; we have to establish what are their duties and privileges in regard to our Institute and our works; we have to get going a means which, easily and freely, will prompt dialogue, sharing, for short or longer periods, community life – all this so that we can share our spiritual patrimony with them ... We must also give thought to the formation of these dedicated people – especially their Christian and catechetical formation.*¹¹⁷⁶

They were prophetic words, but their time had not yet come. It was too late in the day for the 1976 General Chapter, and the proposal was not really in line with its major preoccupations. While the capitulants gave its assent for the Union of Former Students to continue its study of matters (rather hurriedly on the second last day),¹¹⁷⁷ they were not ready to engage the revolutionary ideas of Brother Virgilio. What had occurred, nonetheless, was that the concept of the “Marist Family” had been introduced to the mainstream of the Institute’s discourse.

In the years between the XVII and XVIII Chapters, the Union continued to advocate for the “Marist Family” (as it understood it) and also for its own ongoing place in relationship to it. The topic came up again at the 1979 General Conference. Other meetings and debates were held, including with Brothers Basilio SG, Quentin VG, and Paul Sester (Secretary General) in 1982. It became increasingly apparent, however, that the axe was going to fall on the Union as an international body¹¹⁷⁸ – not because of any diminishment of esteem for the contribution of former students and or hopes of their continued involvement in Marist life and mission, but because the model they had developed back in 1955 was now seen as anachronistic.¹¹⁷⁹ That of the “Marist Family” was in the ascendancy.

¹¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷⁷ There was not unanimity among the capitulants, nor among the incoming Council, regarding the future of the World Union. (Brother Richard Dunleavy, email communication with the author, 16 December 2015).

¹¹⁷⁸ Associations of former students have, of course, continued strongly in many individual institutions and, in some cases such as Spain, with national federations.

¹¹⁷⁹ A small delegation from the World Union once again came to the Chapter. It was 8 October 1985, midway through it. Brother Basilio and a group of delegates met with them in a short but cordial meeting, the aim of which was “to bring the matter to an end”. The reality was that the Union’s leadership had diminished, and there was no-one really to take it forward. (Br Alexandre Lefebvre, *op.cit.*, and email correspondence [15 December 2015] of the author with Brother Antonio Martínez Estaún, who worked with Brother Virgilio to prepare a paper for the Chapter.)

At the same time, a change of emphasis was also emerging for what the “Marist Family” would be. Brother Virgilio had conceived of its being centred on Marist mission and, at the time, that meant Marist schools. He proposed that the core unit of the Marist Family would be the “Marist educative community” in each school. By the time of the 1985 Chapter, however, and in the years immediately after it, thinking around what was then being called the “Marist Family Movement” was taking a different tack.¹¹⁸⁰ It was coming to be centred more on spirituality; its core unit would later be named as a “fraternity” that did not have any direct responsibility for an educational or other Marist work. From one perspective, this was a broadening of the concept of the Marist family, but from another it was a retreat from the more audacious thinking of Brother Virgilio. It would not be until the XXI General Chapter in 2009 that the aspirations for “co-responsibility” and “communion” came decisively back together in the same sentence as “Marist mission”.¹¹⁸¹

The Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family

The recommendation of the 1985 Chapter that the Institute “recognise the *Marist Family Movement*” was, nonetheless, a watershed moment.¹¹⁸² The Institute had decided that there could be a structural way in which a broader group of people, other than the brothers, could live out their Baptismal call inspired by the charism of Marcellin Champagnat, and could be associated with one another in a formal way.

*The Marist Family is an extension of our Institute; it is a movement of people who find themselves attracted to the spirituality of Marcellin Champagnat. In this movement, affiliated members, young people, parents, former students and friends, deepen within themselves the spirit of the Founder so they can live it and let it shine forth. The Institute animates and coordinates the activities of this movement by setting up suitable structures.*¹¹⁸³

¹¹⁸⁰ Brother Richard Dunleavy (email correspondence with the author 16 December 2015) reported that Brother Charles was keen to move in this direction. There was some residual support from some quarters for continuing with the former students’ associations, but most of the Chapter and the new Council were seeing things differently by then. There was also a recognition that the term “Marist family” was in use in some other parts of the world to describe the groups that gathered around the brothers and around Marist schools. (Brother Pau Fornells, *op.cit.* p.3).

¹¹⁸¹ *Message of the XXI General Chapter.*

¹¹⁸² *Acts of the XVIII General Chapter*, #10. The Chapter suggested that former students could integrate into the Movement. While it recognised that separate associations could continue, they needed to adapt to this new reality. Brother Seán Sammon (interview, *idem*) suggested to the author that some members of both the Chapter and the Council were uneasy with the wealth and the conservative political/ecclesial allegiances of some prominent members of the Former Students Union especially in Latin America, and that that was factor in their wanting to distance the brothers from the Union. Brother Seán reported that, during his time as Superior General, he met informally with some of these men. He found that they might have indeed been conservative in their leanings but he felt that they were “good men” who retained their affection for the brothers and remained somewhat puzzled as to why the Institute had not continued to support the World Union.

¹¹⁸³ 1985 *Constitutions*, #164.4. Reference is made to Canon 677.2

A Commission was established in 1987 to develop the Statutes of the movement, and worked through November of that year under the leadership of Brother Benito. It reported that its reflections were “rich” but “difficult”, due to the range of expectations and understandings around the Institute.¹¹⁸⁴ They were conscious of a “hidden clericalism” that could intrude into their work and might prevent their full appreciation of the vocation and mission of the lay person. In his letter of invitation to the members of the Commission, Brother Charles had urged them to maintain



143. Logo of the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family

*... frequent contact with lay people, with a view to listening to them, collecting what they have to offer and supporting their reflection, especially that of the young and of persons of faith most inclined to involve themselves in the apostolate by sharing our Marist charism. We will have to accept this collaboration without paternalism, but in an attitude of simple listening to the Spirit, at this important moment for the laity in the Church.*¹¹⁸⁵

With the perspective of hindsight, it seems curious that this desire to avoid “hidden clericalism” and “paternalism” did not translate into any lay membership of the Commission.

A draft text was prepared, and sent out for feedback. The General Council was uneasy with the text. Some points of concern for it were the nature of the movement’s participation in mission, the complexity of internal structures and formation programmes, and whether Catholicity should be required for membership.¹¹⁸⁶ The Commission’s membership was slightly changed and a revised text drafted during a month-long meeting at the end of 1988.¹¹⁸⁷ The General Conference at Veranópolis provided further opportunity for comment. A final text for the Plan of Life was finalised by the end of 1989, and accepted by the Council in May 1990.

¹¹⁸⁴ *FMS Echo*, No.1, p.1

¹¹⁸⁵ Brother Charles Howard, cited in *FMS Echo*. No.1, p.1

¹¹⁸⁶ Brother Richard Dunleavy, interview *idem*.

¹¹⁸⁷ The meeting went from 13 December to 11 January. The Commission’s members were: Brothers Benito Arbués VG (chair), Eugenio Magdaleno CG, Richard Dunleavy CG, Antonio Eguía, Carlos García, Anthony Hunt, Alexandre Lefebvre, Roque Salet, and Tomas Tizziani. *FMS Echo*, No.6, March 1989.

The Plan was later endorsed by the XX General Chapter as “a sure path for lay people who are seeking to live a Marist spirituality.”¹¹⁸⁸ Its twenty-five articles described the rationale for the Movement as a response to where the Spirit was leading the Church:

The Holy Spirit is stirring up lay people in the Church today, sparking a new response to their vocation as followers of Jesus and sharers in His mission of evangelizing the world. As a result, numbers of people closely associated with the Marist



¹¹⁸⁸ Acts of the XX General Chapter, “Sharing with Lay People”.

Brothers around the world asked the Brothers to help them make their personal, daily commitment more profound and concrete. They want to share more fully in the spirituality and sense of mission which the Brothers have inherited from their founder, Blessed Marcellin Champagnat.¹¹⁸⁹

... The organisation and activities of the Movement exist to enrich the life and spirituality of all the members, so that they may fulfil their vocation and mission: to be disciples of Jesus Christ and His witnesses and evangelisers bringing the good



- 144.** Members of the Fraternity “Nuestra Señora del Hermitage” renew their commitment. Guatemala (1993).
- 145.** Interprovincial gathering of Brothers and fraternity members of the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family on the occasion of the canonisation of Marcellin Champagnat- REMAR, Riberão das Neves, Belo Horizonte, MG., Brazil. Marist Province of Rio de Janeiro, 1999.
- 146.** VI National Gathering of Fraternities of the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family. San Juan de los Lagos, Guadalajara, Mexico (2000).
- 147.** Meeting of members of the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family in Lujan, Argentina (2002).

¹¹⁸⁹ *Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family, Plan of Life, #1*

news of his life and love to all those around them. By sharing the spiritual heritage of Blessed Marcellin Champagnat, members of the Movement fulfil that vocation and mission, in the family of Mary, their special Mother and Model.¹¹⁹⁰

The life of fraternities, including their formation, was initially left as largely an internal matter for each fraternity to be worked out with the brother animator.¹¹⁹¹ There was also little specificity in the focus of mission, and no direct links to any shared responsibility for the works of the Institute:

*Each Christian is called to carry out that mission among those with whom he or she lives and works. The apostolate of the laity is clearly an integral part of the mission of the whole Church. The Champagnat Movement leads its members to recognise and undertake the mission given to each one in baptism. That apostolic activity not only helps build God's Kingdom on earth, it also fosters the spiritual growth of the members, and stimulates the spirit and vitality of the whole Group.*¹¹⁹²

Such activity would find expression in members' families, in their fraternity, in the wider community, in the Church, and sometimes in missionary placements.¹¹⁹³ Although, the Movement was conceived as an "extension of the Institute", ancillary to it in much the same way as the tertiary groups of other religious orders and institutes, this was not meant to imply any sense of its members being quasi-brothers. Asked in an interview for *Marist Echo* if membership of the Movement was a kind of "watered down religious life", Brother Pedro Marcos responded clearly:

*Absolutely not. People attracted by St Marcellin's spirituality seek to live their Christian life in a Marist way, according to the family and work situations in which they find themselves.*¹¹⁹⁴

Most, but not all, Provinces launched the Movement; many were well under way with this before Brother Charles' Circular was being read. In some Provinces, especially in Latin America, it grew strongly. In others, for example Catalonia and Sydney, the seed was planted but did not flower. In Africa, it was not tried in most countries.

The period of largest growth was during its first fifteen years. Frequent reports in Marist publications in the 1990s and until the early 2000s, especially *Marist Echo* after 1995, gave accounts of new fraternities being established. By 1999, the Movement had 2,300 members in 150 fraternities.¹¹⁹⁵ Within another five years

¹¹⁹⁰ *Ibid*, #25

¹¹⁹¹ Brother Pau Fornells, *op.cit.* p.13

¹¹⁹² *Ibid*, #15

¹¹⁹³ *Ibid*, ##16-19, 21

¹¹⁹⁴ Brother Pedro Marcos. *Marist Echo*. No.31, March 2000. p.3

¹¹⁹⁵ *FMS Message*, No.26, April 1999

it was approaching 3000 members, 75% of whom were in Latin America.¹¹⁹⁶ By its twenty-fifth anniversary, its numbers were hovering around 3,200, in around 260 fraternities.¹¹⁹⁷ Outside of Latin America, the largest numbers were in Europe (Spain and France mainly) with around 650-700 members,¹¹⁹⁸ and the Philippines with around 230 members.¹¹⁹⁹

A continuing issue for the Movement has been concern for the identity and formation of members. Because of the quite devolved way that the Movement started, it attracted different kinds of members in different countries. While all shared a common Marist spirituality, their ways of living out their mission as Marists varied. In some Provinces, teachers and directors of educational institutions joined, but not in others. In some, many of the members were parents and families of students in Marist schools. In others, they were friends, colleagues and relatives of the brothers. In some, former brothers (including former juniors and novices) were encouraged to join in numbers.¹²⁰⁰ In 1992, a small commission developed a “Profile of a Fraternity of the Champagnat Movement” which helped to enhance the focus, identity and consistency of fraternities in different places.¹²⁰¹

During the last six years of *Marist Echo* (until 2005), the shared identity and formation of members were also helped by the newsletter’s regular format and content. Typically, each issue included a message from the Superior General, a profile of a particular Marist community or ministry, an interview with a Marist leader (often a Councillor General), two pages of brief personal testimonies from lay Marists (usually members of the Movement), news from some fraternities, and a short article on Marcellin or Marist spirituality.

It was rare, however, for there to be any functional connection between a particular fraternity and an individual Marist work.¹²⁰² That is, fraternities did not form community for the purpose of sharing together in Marist mission – as had been the tradition of the brothers, and the way that the charism of St Marcellin had been developed. This created two problems: a weakness in the link between spirituality and mission; and a challenge for developing a unified strategy or goal

¹¹⁹⁶ *Marist Bulletin*, No.224, 2 February 2005

¹¹⁹⁷ *Marist News*, No. 137, 13 January 2011; Brother Javier Espinosa, interview with the author, 15 December 2015.

¹¹⁹⁸ *Marist News* No.34, 29 January 2009 reported 661 members in 60 Fraternities, from four of the five European Provinces.

¹¹⁹⁹ *Marist News* No.264, 29 April 2013 reported 225 members, linked with each of the schools in the Philippines. An internal document of the Secretariat of the Laity in 2012 indicated there were that year 3,263 members in 254 fraternities: 2,350 in the Americas (72%), 708 in Europe (20%), 225 in Asia (5%) and 3% in Africa. There were no fraternities in Oceania.

¹²⁰⁰ Brother Javier Espinosa, interview *idem*

¹²⁰¹ The Commission comprised Brothers Benito Arbués, Emili Turú, Mariano Varona and Carlos García. Its one-page profile named key axes of orientation for members: their vocational call as followers of Jesus, their sharing of faith and life in community, their recourse to Mary as a model of faith, their commitment to evangelisation and solidarity, their communion with the Church, and their attention to ongoing formation.

¹²⁰² *Ibid.*

in formation. Interviewed in 2006, as Director of the Bureau of the Laity, Brother Pau Fornells drew attention to this issue when he argued that “charism, spirituality, and mission are inseparable”. Brother Pau pointed out that, because many fraternities did not have individual life plans that included direct involvement with “Christian education of the young, especially those most in need” – which was the core mission of the Institute as Marcellin had begun it – it could be difficult for them to nurture Marist spirituality and Marist lay identity. “Without mission, there is no spirituality”. It was not possible to live the spirituality cut off from its charismatic source, he wrote.¹²⁰³

In time, there were moves to hold Provincial and continental meetings of representatives from fraternities, a development which naturally helped to build more consistent identity and to provide formation opportunities. The Mexican Provinces were early to do this.¹²⁰⁴ In some places, thorough strategic planning was done for formation. For example, in Colombia such planning began in 2000. In 2005 a Province gathering of laity was held, drawing together 294 people from 20 Fraternities, with 36 brothers, as well as delegates from Ecuador and Venezuela.¹²⁰⁵



148. Advisors to fraternities of the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family of the Marist Province of Brazil Centro-Sul on the occasion of a visit from Br Seán Sammon, Superior General, Curitiba, PR., Brazil, 2008.

¹²⁰³ Brother Pau Fornells, *Marist Bulletin*, No.270, 16 November 2006.

¹²⁰⁴ Brother Carlos Martínez Lavín, personal communication with the author, 28 January 2016.

¹²⁰⁵ *Marist Bulletin*, No. 215, 29 September 2005



149. Members of the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family. Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil (2011).

In the same year, 25 Fraternities across in Argentina gathered in Luján for a first national meeting. In Central America, the 19 Fraternities that gathered from four countries of the Province were doing so for the sixth time.¹²⁰⁶ Their topic? Lay Marist identity and formation.¹²⁰⁷ Also in 2005, the first pan-American meeting took place, in Fusagasugá, Colombia.¹²⁰⁸ It looked at challenges for the Movement : its ecclesial identity, its links with the Institute, formation plans, the role of liaison brothers, spiritual accompaniment of individuals, and how to keep it growing.

As the number of brothers who were available to accompany fraternities began to fall – something that had been a key element of the Movement – the formation of lay animators emerged as a priority. By 2003, it was already a problem

¹²⁰⁶ *Marist Bulletin*, No.222, 17 November 2005

¹²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰⁸ From 2 to 5 November 2005, with 42 participants (26 laity and 16 brothers). The first European gathering was held from 10 to 13 August 2006, also with 42 participants (33 laity and 9 brothers) from 8 countries: Spain, France, Belgium, Germany, Portugal, Italy, Greece and Syria. The second European assembly was held four years later, 4-8 August 2010. (*Marist News*, No.120,28 September 2010).

in Mexico, for example, which reported the fewness of brothers associated with the fraternities as “acute”.¹²⁰⁹ Countries such as Brazil responded to the need, bringing together its animators for training.¹²¹⁰

By the time of the 2009 General Chapter, some particular challenges for the Movement were becoming clearer. Of concern to Brother Seán and his Council, for example, was the growing median age of the members of the Movement in many countries – a problem of “generational transition” which was exemplified in its difficulty in attracting to it young people from Marist Youth Ministry programmes.¹²¹¹ It seemed evident that, in Provinces where the brothers’ average age was rising and where there was little by way of formation of lay people as animators, then the same thing was happening to the average age of the fraternities.¹²¹² Both the brothers and the members of the Movement were growing older and fewer. If a major motivation for the formation and continuation of fraternities had been sourced in a nostalgic affection for the brothers, or a wish to stay associated with them, then this trend was exacerbated.¹²¹³ In other Provinces, where there had been more sustained formation in Marist spirituality and where the Movement had more of a link to Marist mission, vitality was more apparent. In Brazil, for example, the animators of the Movement were pressuring the General Council for a revision to the Statutes of the Movement in order that they might better capture lay Marist life and its relationship to Marist consecrated life “in the light of today’s ecclesiology,” and the developments that had taken place over the previous two decades.¹²¹⁴

In 2012, the Secretariat of the Laity initiated a comprehensive review of the Movement.¹²¹⁵ Meeting in Montreal with an *ad hoc* International CMMF Commission, most of whom had had long experience with animation of the Movement in their own Provinces,¹²¹⁶ a plan was developed for a detailed evaluation and revitalisation.

¹²⁰⁹ *Marist Echo*, No. 46, December 2003, p.6

¹²¹⁰ The first national meeting of Animators of the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family was held at Brazlandia, from 13 to 16 February 2010. (News item on champagnat.org, 3 March 2010.) UMBRASIL continued to have regular meetings.

¹²¹¹ *Report of the Brother Superior General and his Council to the XXI General Chapter*, p.52. This was echoed to the author by Brother Luis García Sobrado, interview *idem*.

¹²¹² Brother Javier Espinosa, interview *idem*.

¹²¹³ Brother Antonio Ramalho, interview *idem*.

¹²¹⁴ Cited in the report of the national meeting of Animators of the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family Brazlandia, 13 -16 February 2010. News item, champagnat.org, 3 March 2010.

¹²¹⁵ Brother Pau Fornells had identified this as a priority in his time as Secretary of the Bureau of the Laity. *Op.cit.* p.14

¹²¹⁶ The group which met in Montreal comprised Agnes Reyes (Asia), Patricia Ríos (Mexico), Edison Carlos de Oliveira (Brazil), Brother Réal Sauvageau (Canada), Brother Javier Espinosa (Secretariat of the Laity) and Ana Sarrate (Spain). The Commission to take forward the project was: Edison Carlos de Oliveira, Brother Adalberto Amaral (Brazil), Brother Javier Espinosa, Ana Sarrate, Patricia Ríos Gómez (Mexico), Agnes Reyes, Michel Beaulac (Canada) and Alfredo García (Spain).

This process seeks to reread what has been lived in those years through studying our personal and collective histories, discovering the richness of the charism as it has been lived out in our lay state, and realising the gift of community that helps us grow as persons and believers. We put a basic question to ourselves: What new contribution have we brought to the gift received by Marcellin? With this proposed process, we want to go on discovering the calls that God is making today to each of the members of the fraternities as we respond to the conversion the Spirit is inviting us to make together with the whole Institute. Brother Emili, in his last Circular, asks us very clearly: What has to die in me in order that the newness of the Spirit can flourish?¹²¹⁷

Considerable data were returned for analysis by the start of 2014, with responses from 150 fraternities. The themes that had recurringly surfaced at various Provincial and inter-Provincial meetings were confirmed: there was a deep and broad attraction to Marist spirituality as a way of Christian discipleship, a desire to be associated with other Marists in Christian community, and questions around connection to Marist mission. The need for clearer identity, sustained formation, relationship to the brothers, internationality, more autonomy for the Movement, leadership, and for models that allowed members to share responsibility for Marist life and mission were all expressed.¹²¹⁸ On the basis of this, the Commission began a re-drafting of the Plan of Life document for the consideration of the XXII General Chapter.¹²¹⁹

Widening the space of the tent

Just three years after the launch of the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family, it was evident that it was not going to be a structure that would be inclusive of all people who considered themselves Marist, or would suit all their ways of being spiritually, communally and ministerially Marist. It was telling that, already at the Chapter of 1993, only a minority of the fourteen lay people invited were members of the CMMF. Among those who were not were two principals of Marist schools, others from Province animation teams, from youth ministry, and a director of a house of prayer. All had strong Marist self-identities, and were involved in leading or animating Marist ministry in their Provinces. What was to become urgently clear from this Chapter – although the capitulants readily acknowledged that it was not yet a view accepted by all brothers – was the imperative to “partnership”, as it was then called.

¹²¹⁷ Ana Sarrate, “The Champagnat Movement to a new land”, *Marist News*, 19 June 2010.

¹²¹⁸ *Global Summary of the Situation of CMMF*. Internal document of the Secretariat of the Laity.

¹²¹⁹ *Agenda and Commitments of the International Commission of CMMF*. Internal document of the Secretariat of the Laity.



150. First American meeting of representatives of the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family. Fusagasugá, Colombia (2005).

*Let's make real partners of everyone who wants to share in our spirituality and our Mission. Let's take the risk of losing a little power and be daring enough to collaborate freely with laypeople, not because there are far fewer of us now, but because we recognise their vocation and mission as baptised Christians.*¹²²⁰

The capitulants also used the richer word “communion” to describe the relationship they proposed and, critically, they linked it to the mission.¹²²¹ They concluded that there was no other way that the Institute go move forward at this time in the Church. It was a recognition that it was insufficient to imagine that sharing could only take place at the spiritual level; it needed to be also be based in community and for mission. He did not live to see it, but Brother Virgilio León would have been delighted to read the Acts of the XIX General Chapter. They were beginning to approach his idea of the “Marist educative community”. During their two weeks at the Chapter, the lay visitors took part in plenary sessions on a range of topics, and also worked on their own. The reports of each of the major Commissions of the Chapter – Mission, Solidarity, Marist Apostolic Spirituality, Formation and, of course, Laity – included recommendations concerning the inclusion of lay people.¹²²²

¹²²⁰ *Acts of the XIX General Chapter*. Message, #19

¹²²¹ *Ibid*, #14

¹²²² *Acts of the XIX General Chapter*, *passim*.

The Chapter saw that the implications would be wide-reaching, and would include the involvement of lay people at all levels and their formation for this.¹²²³

They requested that the new Superior General and Council to be proactive in leading the brothers and communities of the Institute to travel further along this path of communion.¹²²⁴ The Council accepted this mandate with energy and vision. An example of the self-image of the Institute that it tried to foster is captured in an issue of *FMS Message* in 1995 which profiled the rich and varied ways that ten countries around the Marist world were expressing genuine partnership in mission, shared life, and Marist spirituality.¹²²⁵ Meanwhile, work had commenced on the new document requested by the Chapter, *The Marist Educational Mission*. The Secretariat of the Laity was later to see the publication of this document in 1998 as a watershed moment in the development of Marist laity.¹²²⁶ Inherent in the document was a sense of shared responsibility for the evangelising mission in Marist schools and social works, but one based in a shared Christian spirituality inspired by Marcellin Champagnat. The Secretariat of the Laity described the change of mindset this way:

Shared Mission is not possible without true co-responsibility in mission.

... Lay people and the brothers feel God calling them to a mission. Together they are caught up in being passionate about Jesus Christ. They share apostolic programs. They exercise co-responsibility in animating educational centres. The belief that shared mission is an option has become a conviction that it is a necessity. This involves entering a phase of authentic internal charismatic ecumenism.

*... Shared mission implies the need to foster structures that assist in transmitting to the laity the spirituality and apostolic zeal that we have inherited from our Founder. This is not achieved by simply offering theoretical formation courses or spiritual exercises. Something else is needed, specifically, "sharing what makes us tick." ... Oddly enough the brothers have not been well trained in this area and they often seem to have no time for getting out and meeting people.*¹²²⁷

¹²²³ *Acts of the XIX General Chapter*. Report of Mission Commission, #34

¹²²⁴ *Acts of the XIX General Chapter*. Report of Laity Commission, #2

¹²²⁵ *FMS Message*, No.17, July 1995. Examples of partnership were drawn from France, Brazil, Spain, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Australia, Germany, the USA, Canada, Mexico, and Venezuela.

¹²²⁶ *Growing Openness to the Laity and the Process of Coming to a New Understanding of the Meaning of our Brotherhood*. Secretariat of the Laity. 2012. This document, intended for the brothers, describes a six-phase evolution that has occurred in the Institute and which has called for a change of the brothers' mindset at each stage. Its marker points are 1962 (Vatican II), 1976 (XVII General Chapter and Brother Virgilo's concept of the "Marist Family", 1998 (shared mission as described in *The Marist Education Mission*), 2001 (XX General Chapter and "widening the space of the tent"), 2005 (the idea of "charismatic family" from Brother Antonio Botana FSC of), and 2009 (XXI General Chapter and the introduction of the idea of a "new tent").

¹²²⁷ *Ibid.*

What was being alluded to here was something that was becoming clearer after the publication of *Vita consecrata* in 1996: that a critical role for consecrated people in the life and mission of the Church was to be its spiritual guides and to be a leaven of community.¹²²⁸ Brother Seán Sammon was later to emphasise the responsibility of religious to be the “conscience” and the “living memory” of the Church,¹²²⁹ calling the disciples of Jesus to what was most essential and authentic for them as people of the Gospel.¹²³⁰ The role of religious was not to hold onto power and authority, but to be in and among the community of believers. It was the beginning of a discourse concerning the specific identities of brothers vis-à-vis lay people, sparked by the 1993 Chapter, and to continue during the following two decades.

At the General Conference in 1997, the lay participants were among those who welcomed the new education document as “a contemporary expression of our vision and practices”, and they expressed the hope that

*... the Marist Institute in all parts of the world remains open to the possibility that Marist vocations can be lived in a number of ways. Some are called to the religious life, some to family life, and some to the single life. Each has the potential to contribute to the Marist mission.*¹²³¹

While membership of the CMMF continued to be promoted actively as a way of sharing Marist spirituality,¹²³² there was an even stronger growth of self-awareness and empowerment of other Marists. Brother Pedro Herreros CG was later to look back on the journey that was under way by the late 1990s. They had been years where major steps had been taken “for Marist educators” to share in mission, spirituality and formation.¹²³³ The XX Chapter was to bring the spotlight more explicitly on the “specific identities” of “brothers and lay Marists” in these fields.¹²³⁴ By that stage, there had been a subtle but significant change of language. In its Report to the Chapter, the General Council wrote of the way it had animated the sharing of “Marist spirituality”.¹²³⁵ The significance was that it did not use the term

¹²²⁸ *Vita consecrata*, ##55, 47.

¹²²⁹ *Circulars of the Superiors General*, XXXI, 5, p.41

¹²³⁰ *Identity and Mission of the Religious Brother* describes this role of being the “living memory” of the Gospel and calling the People of God to the essence of the Gospel as the “first ministry” of the religious brother. #7.

¹²³¹ *FMS Message*. No.24, October 1997, p.28

¹²³² For example, one of the three issues of *FMS Message* (No.26, April 1999) published to commemorate and celebrate the canonisation of St Marcellin was dedicated to the variety and vitality of Marist life and mission around the world. It portrayed members of CMMF fraternities, but also brothers, lay people, and *las Hermanitas de Champagnat* in Central America. The following year, Brother Claudino Falchetto CG, in an interview with *Marist Echo* (No.34, Dec 2000), spoke of three groups of Marists – members of fraternities, Marist educators, and those who were living Marist life more intensely in shared or intentional communities

¹²³³ *Marist Echo*. No. 42, Dec 2002, p.3

¹²³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²³⁵ *Report of the Brother Superior General and his Council to the XX General Chapter*, #1.1



151. Lay Marist Commission begins its work on writing what would be called “*Gathered around the Same Table*”.

“our spirituality” which previous Councils had done; it lacked any proprietorial or paternalistic sense. *Marist* spirituality was now being understood more and more as something shared among people in different states of life, much as Brother Charles had proposed it to the 1993 Chapter. The next General Chapter was to borrow the Prophet Isaiah’s image of a “widened tent”¹²³⁶ as a metaphor for what the Spirit was asking of this broader group of Marists.

The Laity Commission of Brother Seán’s Council in 2004 decided it would be timely, before the 2005 General Conference, to do a comprehensive mapping exercise of the Marist world, and to consult Provinces on what was needed to foster the widening of the Marist tent. A questionnaire was developed on five topics: formation programmes for lay Marists; the CMMF and other groups; the participation of lay people in Province works; the traits of the relationship between brothers and lay; and the identity of the lay Marist.¹²³⁷ Twenty-seven Provinces responded, revealing that there were at that time:

- 81 formation programmes.
- 257 CMMF fraternities.
- 89% of Provinces had lay people in leadership positions in their works; in 81% there were lay members of Province commissions.
- In 59% of Provinces there was pressure from lay people for new ways of belonging.
- 70% were looking for greater clarity around the identity of the lay Marist.

¹²³⁶ Isaiah 54:2

¹²³⁷ *FMS Message*, No.34, December 2005. The Secretary of the Commission who had carriage of the project was Brother Michael Flanigan.

Provinces reported that the factors which accelerated lay partnership were:

- *joint formation opportunities;*
- *the attraction to lay Marists of Marcellin's spirituality and his passion for Jesus Christ;*
- *lay Marists' sharing responsibility for mission and being encouraged to live Marist spirituality;*
- *the direct participation of lay Marists in Commissions, Chapters and Assemblies.*

Factors which impeded growth included:

- confusion over who is and who is not a "lay Marist";
- continuing resistance from some brothers, and the questioning of their own vocation by some brothers;
- inadequate funding for programmes and travel;
- lack of trust;
- lack of skilled formation personnel.

The outcome was a decision to form regional teams for formation and to plan meetings for those responsible for lay Marist formation, to proceed with the writing of the document on Marist spirituality, to organise continental meetings for the Champagnat Movement, and to hold at least two international joint-formation programmes. Each of

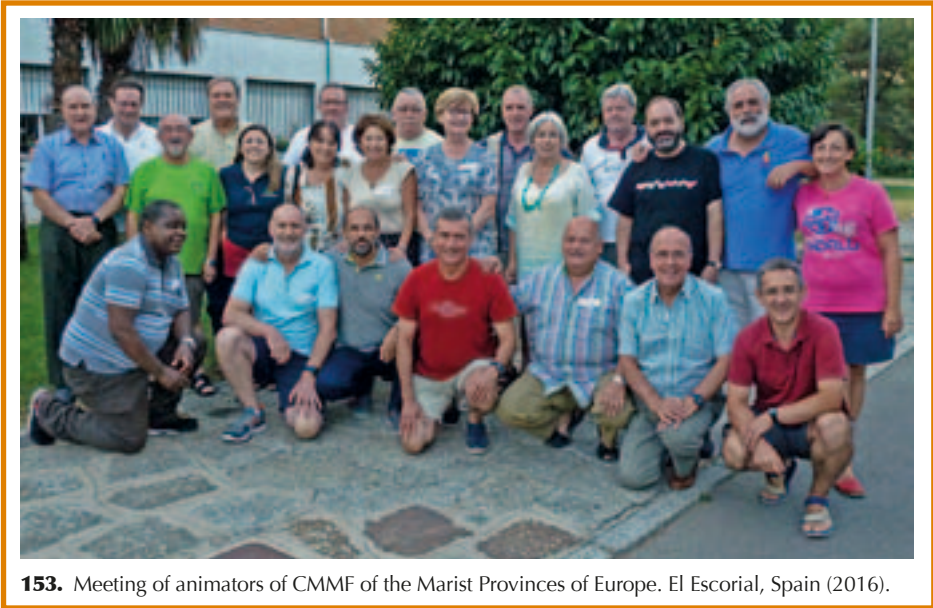
these decisions was put into effect over the following four years. For example, in 2007 a meeting was held at Les Avellenes, Spain, to share what was happening around the Institute in shared formation processes for brothers and lay Marists and to develop some principles and strategies for moving forward. Forty-one people attended, from twenty-two Provinces, six CMMF fraternities, and the General Administration.¹²³⁸ Using a see-judge-act methodology, the group considered fifteen different programmes that various Provinces were conducting and identified priorities for the years ahead. The outcome was to opt for emphases in formation that were more experiential, communitarian, process-based, and which promoted co-responsibility and a sense of vocation.¹²³⁹ The participants, in an open letter to all Marists, shared their conviction that



152. Some resources produced by the Secretariat for the Laity for Marist formation.

¹²³⁸ Brother Pau Fornells, *op.cit.* p.6

¹²³⁹ *Ibid.*



153. Meeting of animators of CMMF of the Marist Provinces of Europe. El Escorial, Spain (2016).

*... the vocation of lay people and brothers is for mission: one heart, one mission! ... We firmly believe that the future vitality of Marist mission is rooted in the commitment of dedicated Marist lay people and brothers. We believe that the Holy Spirit is at work in the Marist world by calling us to complementary vocations which will fulfil Marcellin's dream "to make Jesus Christ known and loved" and to be witnesses to building up the Kingdom of God.*¹²⁴⁰

In July 2008 and May 2009 two extended joint-formation experiences were held, in Quito, Ecuador (in Spanish and Portuguese) and Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux, France (in French and English).¹²⁴¹ The participants collaborated to make a combined submission to the XXI Chapter, recommending that the Chapter support all initiatives that would

- develop processes of joint formation for laity and brothers in all the administrative units;
- promote the creation of new models of shared life and mission, brothers and laity, which can be community nuclei of reference for the vitality of the charism and the co responsibility in the mission, as much on the AU level as on the Institute one;

¹²⁴⁰ *Marist Bulletin*, No.297, 31 May 2007.

¹²⁴¹ There were 37 participants (19 lay, 15 brothers) from 20 administrative units, and three brothers from the General Administration – Brothers Pau Fornells, Javier Espinosa and Teófilo Minga.

- continue to animate reflection on a new Marist formation, joint and specific, which takes into consideration the richness of the specific identities as much as their complementarity, and makes progress towards a new Marist Formation Guide;
- enable the new General Administration to continue taking an active role in the formation of Marist formators, brothers and lay people, by this joint and specific formation;
- promote, in different places in the Institute, among the laity interested, the living (*ad experimentum*) of distinct forms of commitment to the Marist charism ... which allow greater co-responsibility and joint decision making by brothers and laity on Marist life and mission;
- continue to develop, through the General Administration and its interaction with the AUs, “new ways” of communicating the “new life” which is already coming to birth in the Marist world ... in order to achieve an international vision of greater communion with the Marist charism.
- develop formation programmes for accompanying young adults in the discernment of and engagement in their vocation.¹²⁴²

Before the XXI Chapter three other major initiatives were to give impetus to the goals that were being pursued at the level of the General Council, and in most parts of the Marist world: the first Marist International Mission Assembly) in 2007; the publication of *Water from the Rock*; and the writing of *Gathered Around the Same Table* in 2009. Each was novel.

The significance of the first MIMA) and the contribution of *Water from the Rock* have been discussed earlier. If there has been a defining moment of arrival for lay Marists, then this was at Mendes) in 2007. It was the first time – at least for an international Marist event – that the brothers were not numerically in the majority. The language of the final message was unequivocal in its naming and claiming a new way for a spiritual family to understand itself and its shared way of participating in God’s mission:

*We believe that God is calling us now to be partners, men and women, co-responsible for furthering the mission in a spirit of trust, understanding and mutual respect.*¹²⁴³

Such awareness was spreading around the Institute, and had emerged from the experience of different regions. For example, the five Provinces of Europe had each had its own Mission Assembly as part of the lead-in to MIMA, before a continent-wide one was held. It gathered “112 Marists” who crystallised their deliberations into five questions.

¹²⁴² *On the process of joint formation of lay people and brothers, Call to the 21st General Chapter. Letter from the participants in the joint formation experiences of Quito and Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux.*

¹²⁴³ *Message of the Participants of the Marist International Mission Assembly, Mendes Brazil, 12 September 2007.*

Three of these had to do with their own identity:

- *What common and specific aspects of the Marist vocation of a brother and a lay person do we need to identify and cultivate?*
- *What formation do we need as brothers and lay people of Europe to serve our Marist mission?*
- *What types of Marist communities do we need to form and to consolidate in order to promote our mission?*¹²⁴⁴

Water from the Rock was conceived as a reference text for all Marists. Wide consultation marked its drafting, and both its language and conceptual underpinnings were deliberately inclusive. *Gathered Around the Same Table* went a step further in its being written almost entirely by lay Marists.¹²⁴⁵ It was the

*... product of lived experience. The force behind it and the initiative that it has grown out of, is the experience of many lay men and lay women throughout the world who sense that God is calling them to a vocation: to be lay Marists.*¹²⁴⁶

The writers consciously placed themselves in the journey the Marist spiritual family which had been unfolding for some time. They saw the new document as

... fruit of a long path of listening and reflection that the Marist world has been following over decades. The concerns of the associations of former students searching for their identity within a renewed Church, courses in spirituality for teachers and parents, the processes of youth ministry and of solidarity, the appearance of the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family, the deepening of shared mission, the canonisation of the Founder, the process of the international assembly on Marist mission leading up to the meeting in Mendes, these have been some of the more important happenings that have helped us to understand more clearly what the Spirit was raising up in the hearts of many lay men and women.

They cited the CMMF fraternities, affiliates of the Institute, associations of former students, intentional lay and mixed communities, and other lay groups as all part of this broad family,¹²⁴⁷ and saw that it was time to name and to formalise the lay Marist vocation as a Spirit-given element of the broader family of Marists:

¹²⁴⁴ *Marist Bulletin*, No.303, 19 July 2007.

¹²⁴⁵ The editorial team was: Annie Girka (France), Bernadette Ropa (Melanesia), Carlos Navajas (América Central), José María Pérez Soba (Ibérica), Sergio Schons (Rio Grande do Sul), Anne Dooley (Melbourne) Noel Dabrera (South Asia) and Brothers Afonso Murad (Brasil Centro-Norte) and Rémy Mbolipasiko (Afrique Centre-Est). The team was supported by Brother Pau Fornells as Secretary of the Bureau of the Laity. (Mr Dabrera was sadly to die during the time of the Commission, and the book is dedicated to his memory).

¹²⁴⁶ *Gathered Around the Same Table*, p.5. In its shaping of the text, the Commission drew heavily on written “vocational testimonies” sent in by over a hundred lay Marists from thirty countries. They are named in an annexe to the document.

¹²⁴⁷ *Ibid.* ## 87-99; 135-39. Chapters 5 and 6.

The charism of Saint Marcellin Champagnat, present in the Institute of the Brothers, has put out shoots among the laity. To some of us, God has touched us and has given us a Marist heart. Certainly, more than our decision, it has been God taking the initiative. We cannot live any other way: We are Marists ...

*... We Lay Marists bring our specific form of living the Marist charism. Our identity is not reduced to being collaborators with the Brothers ... [We] have decided to live their Christian spirituality and mission in the manner of Mary, following the insight of Marcellin Champagnat. These are we, the Lay Marists.*¹²⁴⁸

Although they used the term “lay Marist”, the writers recognised that two groups of religious sisters and also some priests were consciously living out of a Marist spirituality, and were part of the same vocational group.¹²⁴⁹ The document offered a detailed consideration of the Marist vocation, in which they took Mary as their model,¹²⁵⁰ and Marcellin as their inspiration,¹²⁵¹ for their Christian living. The vocation is presented as having three “charismatic elements” which needed to be “integrated”: a mission, a spirituality and a shared life.¹²⁵²

Proposing what was needed for this God-given grace to grow, the document concludes that a new structure needed to be imagined, that simply a “widened tent” was not sufficient:

Driven by the Spirit, we are helping a new ecclesiastical model to be born, one based on the equal dignity of all Christian vocations and in the image of the Church as People of God in communion.

*The experience of sharing the charism directs us to rethink the institutional model that until now has embodied the Marist charism in the Church. Experience seems to indicate that we not only need to widen the tent of the Institute, but also to build together a new tent where everyone, brothers and lay people, may find our place.*¹²⁵³

A bulging tent

Calls for a “rethinking” of the Marists’ “institutional model” had been growing for some time. The XX General Chapter in 2001 had recommended to the incoming General Council that it study new “ways of belonging to the Institute” for lay people and that it foster “*ad experimentum* arrangements”, with a view

¹²⁴⁸ *Ibid.* ##4, 21, 11.

¹²⁴⁹ *Ibid.* ##129-30

¹²⁵⁰ *Ibid.* #110

¹²⁵¹ *Ibid.* #30

¹²⁵² *Ibid.* Chapters 2, 3 and 4.

¹²⁵³ *Ibid.* ##144-45

to submitting a proposal on a new juridical model for the decision of the next Chapter in 2009.¹²⁵⁴ Indeed, three of the six final recommendations to the General Council from the Chapter had concerned the laity. Although, the Council did not take forward the recommendation in the way that the Chapter had envisaged it, it did much to nurture the new expressions of Marist life. By the end of its mandate and into that of Brother Emili's Council, ways of living Marist life had become manifold.

By then, there was an emerging opinion in some quarters that “new ways of belonging to the Institute” was not going to be the paradigm that would accommodate this diversity. The preference of the MIMA) delegates in 2007 in their call for new ways of belonging to “the charism” rather than “the Institute”, and the formal propositions that came from the conference in Guatemala in 2009, were both suggesting something more, something new.

The Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family, by then a quarter of a century old and in the process of attempting rejuvenation for a new generation, was one example of the diversity. Among the others, the General Council suggested to the 2009 Chapter that there were three main categories: volunteers; those in vocational discernment; and those who were “sharing life and mission”.¹²⁵⁵



¹²⁵⁴ *Message of the XX General Chapter, #47.3*

¹²⁵⁵ *Report of the Brother Superior General and his Council to the XXI General Chapter, p.53*

During his time leading the Bureau of the Laity, Brother Pau Fornells had drawn attention to the large number of people other than brothers involved in Marist mission – over 40,000 in 2006 to the number of brothers (then 4,200 and many retired from active ministry)¹²⁵⁶ – pointing out that it was critical that a “sense of Marist life and mission” be developed among them, and that their relationship with the brothers be built on “dialogue, sharing, mutual respect, and prayer together.”¹²⁵⁷

It fell to the Secretariat of the Laity to support and to coordinate much of what was happening, and to help to lead discussion on what could grow from it. The Secretariat had gone through its own development. The first Commission of the Laity – a committee of the General Council – was established in December 2002.¹²⁵⁸ In 2005, a Consultative Group was set up for the Commission.¹²⁵⁹ After the General Conference, this changed into a new Bureau of the Laity which worked under the Mission Commission of the Council.¹²⁶⁰ In 2007, the Bureau was extended to involve four others (three lay and one brother who provided ongoing advice to the Director and met in person each year.¹²⁶¹ After the XXI General Council, the Bureau of the Laity was replaced by the Secretariat of the Laity with a Director and two Co-Directors (one brother full-time and two lay Marists part-time),¹²⁶² and an extended group that met annually.¹²⁶³

The Secretariat became increasingly involved in supporting, advising, offering formation, and cross-fertilising Province and Institute initiatives in Marist community living that were emerging. In 2015, an indicative summary of the kinds of Marist communities and ways of sharing Marist life and mission was prepared by the Secretariat:¹²⁶⁴

¹²⁵⁶ Statistics provided to the author by the Secretariat of the Laity indicated that ten years later the numbers were: 72, 855 lay people (95.5%), 3, 400 brothers (4.5%), but the proportion of brothers would be smaller when the number of retired brothers is taken out.

¹²⁵⁷ *Marist Bulletin*, No.270, 16 November 2006.

¹²⁵⁸ Brothers Pedro Herreros CG (Chair), Emili Turú CG, and Antonio Ramalho CG; with Brother Paulo Celso Ferraresi as *Secretary* (2003-04), replaced by Brother Michael Flanigan (2004-05)

¹²⁵⁹ Marta Porta (Catalonia), Frank Aumeier (Germany), Claudia Rojas (Colombia), Joe Reganato (United States), Achi Godwin (Nigeria), Edison de Oliveira (Brazil), Encarna García (Spain), Anne Doolley (Australia), Andrés Magallanes (Philippines) and Adrienne Egbers (Zambia)

¹²⁶⁰ Brother Pau Fornells was appointed director for a three-year term 2006–2009.

¹²⁶¹ Ana Sarrate (Spain), Linda Corbeil (Canada), Tony Clarke (Australia) and Brother Afonso Murad (Brazil). The appointments were for three years.

¹²⁶² Brother Javier Espinosa, Ana Sarrate (Spain) and Tony Clarke (Australia) began in 2010. Pep Buetas replaced Ana Sarrate in 2013.

¹²⁶³ In addition to Ms Sarate (Europe) and Mr Clarke (Oceania), there were: Linda Corbeil (region of Arco Norte), Brother Sylvain Ramandimbarisoa (Africa), Agnes Reyes (Asia), Fabiano Incerti (Brasil) and Raúl Amaya (Cono Sur).

¹²⁶⁴ This summary is an edited version of material provided to the author by the Director of the Secretariat of the Laity, Brother Javier Espinosa, and conversations between the author and Brother Javier.

- **Communities whose members live separately and who come together for mission.** *Such communities include one or more brothers' religious communities, married and single lay Marists in various situations, and possibly clergy. Marist schools in many countries would fit into this category – where there is a core “Marist educative community” as Brother Virgilio would have imagined it. Sometimes, there is greater focus and identity to the mission and the community living. For example, the Province of Cruz del Sur has extended communities, in which a religious community of brothers, together with lay men and women committed to a Marist educational centre at a given location, carry out the mission in a co-responsible manner. At the same time, they mutually support each other in their specific vocations through prayer and joint reflection.¹²⁶⁵ The Province of Santa María de los Andes has several communities along similar lines established after the XX General Chapter.¹²⁶⁶ Each has a detailed community life plan. Another example is the Marist Encounter Groups of the Province of Ibérica, in their bringing together committed Marists associated with Marist projects.¹²⁶⁷*
- **Communities whose members live separately and who may have separate ministries.** *Such communities come together regularly for prayer, faith-sharing and mutual support as Marists. Examples include the Marist Life Groups in Catalonia, and the Marist Spirituality Groups of the Province of Compostela.*
- **Communities of lay people, living in their own situations and coming together in mission.** *Examples of groups of this kind are the Marist Missionaries in Ciudad Juárez, México, the lay men and women of the Marist Movement in Québec (MMQ). The Marist Missionaries started out as a small group of students at a Marist high school. Now they consist of graduates, teachers and others who have united without having any contact with a Marist establishment. They feel that the Spirit of God has gifted them with a desire to live Marist spirituality, based on their lay vocation. MMQ is a Private Association of Christ's Faithful which is in liaison with the brothers but separate from them. The concept is that the Province and MMQ come together to plan mission.*
- **Mixed communities where brothers and lay Marists form the same physical community, living together.** *Examples include: the community at Notre Dame de l'Hermitage, France;¹²⁶⁸ the community of a married couple and*

¹²⁶⁵ Such extended communities were set up in Nueva Pompeya, Fraile Pintado, Neuquén, Merlo, La Inmaculada, La Boca, Pando and the Province's Marist Youth Ministry Team.

¹²⁶⁶ In Santa Cruz and Comarapa, Bolivia; Alto Hospicio, La Serena, and Los Andes, Chile; and Sullana, Huacho and Surco, Peru. In 2013 there were 19 brothers and 15 lay people involved in these communities.

¹²⁶⁷ During the 2012-2013 school year, 19 Marist Encounter Groups were formed, which included 216 people from around the Province, both brothers and laity.

¹²⁶⁸ Both the brothers and lay Marists are appointed for set periods, live in a single community, and share responsibility for ministry of the Hermitage.

two brothers in Mulhouse, France;¹²⁶⁹ a number of communities in the Province of Santa María de los Andes where lay people and brothers live together in Marist community and share in a common Marist mission;¹²⁷⁰ the community of Giugliano, Italy.

- **Volunteer communities.** Often in such communities lay Marists come to live with a brothers' community (sometimes in association with other Marists living there) for a short or extended time, sharing in responsibility for the life and mission of the community. Examples include volunteers of various ages, single and married, living with and in communities in Cambodia, Papua New Guinea, Kenya, Madagascar, South Africa, Mexico and other countries who have welcomed Marist volunteers.¹²⁷¹
- **Associations of Marists.** While two private associations of the faithful for Marists had existed (in Canada and France) for some years, in 2014-15, the General Council took up a proposal from Australia to sponsor the establishment of an international public association of Marists.¹²⁷² The novelty of this proposal was that it provided a full model for the "new tent": a way that brothers, lay people, and also sisters and priests, could be all associated, both juridically and charismatically, in a way that nurtured their chosen Marist spiritual path of Christian discipleship and also allowed them to be co-responsible for Marist life and mission. In December 2015, the General Council voted to petition the Holy See to erect **The Marist Association of St Marcellin Champagnat** whose members would be known as "Marists". Australia was invited to form the first "Conference" of the Association. By 2016, over 600 members had been accepted into the Conference as provisional members, waiting for the approbation of the Holy See.

In 2014, the Superior General launched *International Communities for a New Beginning* an initiative that would provide yet another experience of life and mission for brothers and lay Marists. The project aimed to establish, from 2016, two international communities in each region of the Institute.

¹²⁶⁹ Established in 1996 as direct response to the XIX General Chapter, this is constituted juridically as a Private Association of Christ's Faithful.

¹²⁷⁰ In Puerto Maldonado, Peru; La Pintana, Chile; Roboré and San José de Chiquitos, Bolivia. In 2013, there were 12 brothers and 13 lay people involved in these communities.

¹²⁷¹ Many of these volunteer placements have been coordinated through the Collaboration for Mission, International (Cmi) Secretariat, set up by the General Council in 2012 under the Direction of Brother Chris Wills.

¹²⁷² "Private" and "Public" Associations of Christ's Faithful are categories of Christian community recognised canonically by Church authorities. A "public" association, once approved, is able to act in the name of the Church in the same way that other "public juridic persons" such as religious institutes can do. The new Marist Association is a public association of pontifical right, i.e. it is erected under the authority of the Holy See, rather than a local ordinary or a national episcopal conference. Brothers Juan Miguel Anaya and Pau Fornells, *op.cit.*, give the example of a similar model with the Focalari, the only difference being that the "Work of Mary", or Focalari, is a private association of pontifical right.

Each community would have a minimum of four members, at least three of whom would be brothers. They would be associated with an apostolic work working with young people in vulnerable situations.¹²⁷³

In its analysis of the evolution that was taking place in the midst of all this diversity, the Secretariat of the Laity suggested to the international meeting of Province representatives on “New Models of Animation, Government and Management”, in Rome in July 2015, that it was a mistake to look to the Institute, or the brothers, or the works of the Institute, to be at the centre of any model. The centre was the charismatic way that Marists embraced the Gospel of Jesus, shared life with one another, and took responsibility together for evangelisation.¹²⁷⁴ It proposed eleven guidelines which provide an instructive summary of emergent Marist thinking two years from the Institute’s bicentenary:

1. *The new relationship is based on communion. Communion stems from the shared experience of being disciples of Jesus, and from the same charism we all receive and promote*
2. *In this communion, our specific vocations complement and enrich each other.*
3. *The path of vocational complementarity leads to a new way of being brothers, as stated by the Chapter’s fundamental call.*
4. *The lay vocation is emerging with new strength, reaffirming the call from God to lay men and women through the wholehearted experience of following Jesus within the Marist spirit.*
5. *The brothers, the Institute, and the works are not at the centre of the Marist project. Our being and our doing revolve around the charism, which is our distinctive way of living the Gospel.*
6. *The Marist charism comprises three fundamental dimensions: mission, shared life and spirituality.*
7. *The path of communion is driven by joint formation processes, integrated community experiences, and shared mission projects.*
8. *The development of a lay vocation is a process of faith leading to sanctioned forms of belonging and connecting to the charism and to a group. Therefore, not all the lay people related to our centres are Marist laity.*
9. *In order to develop shared responsibility, the educational centres – as a mediation of the Marist mission – are organised with new management structures in which the brothers are not the proprietors and directors.*

¹²⁷³ Cf. *The Dance of Mission*, Letter of the Superior General to launch the “Montagne Year” 2014-15.

¹²⁷⁴ Secretariat of the Laity, *Awaken the Dawn*. Paper presented at International Marist Meeting, Rome, 10-14 July 2015.

10. *The mission of the brothers no longer relies on the direction and administration of the works, but on the witness of their presence, as a living memory of the Gospel and the Marist charism*
11. *The process of the new relationship, based on communion, implies looking for a new institutional structure which can strengthen the leadership and autonomy of lay people, in deep communion with the new way of being brothers.*¹²⁷⁵

Imagining a new tent

The bases for any new model or models were growing in clarity and urgency. First, it was necessary to attend to the three constitutive elements of any group of Jesus's disciples – spirituality, community, and mission. Second, it was necessary



155. Assembly of the Marist Association of St Marcellin Champagnat. Australia (2015).

¹²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

to be inclusive and informed by a theological sense of *communio* that respected and nurtured the different states of Christian life, and was in and of the Church. Third, it was going to involve a shift of paradigm.

During 2014 and 2015, several significant gatherings took place in which these themes were progressed. In March 2014, fifty-five people from twenty administrative units and the General Administration met in Rome to look at possibilities for lay Marist belonging. It was an invitational event, and an outcome of the previous year's General Conference; it was perhaps telling, therefore, that some administrative units opted not to take part. Brother Emili challenged the participants in his opening remarks, "If not now, when? If not us, who?"¹²⁷⁶ He set the scene in terms of what the third century of Marist life and mission could look like.

Brother Emili gave focus to the meeting by recalling the original project of the Society of Mary, formed by religious, lay persons and priests. He emphasised that the time had come to complete this project of the Marist origins. If the first century,



¹²⁷⁶ *Marist News*, No.317 8 April 2014

he said, was one of foundation and structuring, the second meant re-foundation and restructuring. The third century should open with a new beginning for the Marist charism ...¹²⁷⁷

The meeting looked at all that was happening, and the ways that Marists around the world were searching for ways to live Marcellin's dream in on the eve of its bicentenary:

... We heard about various forms of lay association ... On the basis of these experiences, many questions surfaced about charismatic and structural, public and private association, autonomy and communion, canonical and civil, unity and diversity, international and local ... But we arrived at the conclusion that the time had come to offer processes of vocational discernment for the laity and to envisage some structure allowing recognition for those lay Marists who opt to belong on the charismatic level.

Despite the diversity of processes, cultures, and experiences ... we are united by the same following of Jesus, the same spirituality, the same fraternity, the same Marist mission. In any new future structure, these elements cannot be missing.¹²⁷⁸

Following this conference, a smaller meeting took place in Barcelona in October, at the invitation of the General Council, "to lay the foundations of a global framework" that had been discussed in March. Questions of lay Marist vocational identity, discernment, formation, and ways of expressing communion with the brothers were again processed and draft guidelines framed.¹²⁷⁹ Meanwhile II MIMA had taken place in Nairobi, highlighting once again the lived experience of vitality and breadth of Marist life in most parts of the Marist world; its call to "imagine new structures" for "the charism" went out.¹²⁸⁰ The language of "new Marists in mission" was prominent in Marist discourse into the next year as regional Mission Assemblies continued. At the same time, during the first half of 2015, the outcomes of the first phase of the "New Models" project were being refined, and the major meeting of July 2015, which has been discussed earlier, took place. At that meeting, as he had done with Provincials of the Americas at II CIAP four years before, Brother Emili urged them as Marist leaders to be ready to "think outside the box".¹²⁸¹ Such thinking needed to be driven by a certain degree of displacement, and a willingness, figuratively if not literally, to be "exiles".¹²⁸²

¹²⁷⁷ Brother Javier Espinosa, in *ibid.* pp1-2

¹²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷⁹ The meeting was held 13-18 October. Attending were: Joseph McCarthy (Australia), Eder D'Artagnan (Brasil Centro Norte), Nohemy Pinto (América Central), Ana Sarrate (Ibérica and the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family), Raúl Amaya (Santa María de los Andes), and, representing the Secretariat of the Laity, Pep Buetas and Brother Javier Espinosa. *Marist News*, No.346, 7 November 2014.

¹²⁸⁰ *Voices from the Fire*, Message of the Participants of II MIMA), Nairobi, 27 September 2014.

¹²⁸¹ News item on 22/09/2011

¹²⁸² *Ibid.*

In his video message to the next meeting of CIAP, which was held later 2015, three months after the July international meeting on the “New Models Project”,¹²⁸³ Brother Emili suggested that there were two aspects to paradigm shift that the Provincials as Marist leaders needed to engage: the first was internationality; the second, the presence and role of lay people in Marist mission. He referred to two sections of Pope Francis’s encyclical *Evangelii gaudium* to amplify his points. On the first, he reminded the Provincials of the imperative to think and act globally that had been affirmed at the General Conference, a conviction that had been helped by the experiences of re-structuring and the “Ad Gentes” project. He quoted from the Pope to urge the Provincials to keep their horizons broad:

The whole is greater than the part, but it is also greater than the sum of its parts. There is no need, then, to be overly obsessed with limited and particular questions. We constantly have to broaden our horizons and see the greater good which will benefit us all. But this has to be done without evasion or uprooting. We need to sink our roots deeper into the fertile soil and history of our native place, which is a gift of God. We can work on a small scale, in our own neighbourhood, but with a larger perspective. Nor do people who wholeheartedly enter into the



156. Formation program of the first group to participate in the Lavalla200> initiative. Camaldoli (San Martino a Monte), Italy, (2016).

¹²⁸³ Cf. www.youtube.com/watch?v=06438cT-rY0 (Accessed 18 December 2015)

*life of a community need to lose their individualism or hide their identity; instead, they receive new impulses to personal growth. The global need not stifle, nor the particular prove barren.*¹²⁸⁴

On the second point, he drew again from the encyclical: “reality is greater than ideas”.¹²⁸⁵ The reality, he emphasised, was that over ninety per cent of Marist mission was in the hands of lay people. (He was speaking about the context of the American continent, but it was the same in every region.¹²⁸⁶) “This is not a problem,” said Brother Emili. “On the contrary, this is a solution. It is a grace of the Holy Spirit.”¹²⁸⁷ He urged them to live in the grace of this reality, and joyfully so, rather than to cling onto some idea of the past. To be anchored by the ideas of the past would result in the Institute’s regressing rather than moving forward. Quite significantly, he proposed to them that it was not sufficient to foster the vocations of lay Marists, to accompany them, and to provide formation opportunities. There needed also to be structural change. And that structural change needed to be co-created with lay Marists, and also with Marists globally.¹²⁸⁸ The Superior General was thus bringing together all that had happened over the last two decades in terms of broadening of the embrace of Marist spirituality, on the one hand, with all that was being currently planned for new structures and models of responsibility for mission, on the other. They were two sides of the one coin, the coin of “new Marists”. The reason for this coming together of the ideas was simple, said Brother Emili: it was for mission.¹²⁸⁹ It is this that would best serve the mission – the family of Marists that had both the charismatic integrity and the juridical security to live in communion and to act with co-responsibility.

¹²⁸⁴ *Evangelii gaudium*, #235. Cf. ##234-37.

¹²⁸⁵ *Ibid.* ##231-33

¹²⁸⁶ In 2013, the proportion of lay people vis-à-vis total number of brothers (including the brothers who were retired) was Africa 91.7%, Europe 89%, Asia 94.6%, 92.8%. Figures in *Awaken the Dawn*, document of the Secretariat of the Laity, June 2014.

¹²⁸⁷ Brother Emili in message to III CIAP, video *idem*.

¹²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

24.

NEW MARISTS IN MISSION: THE KEY FOR UNLOCKING THE NEW

The journey of renewal had begun in earnest in the heady years after the Vatican Council. Half a century later the word “new” still had currency, indicative of the mood of anticipation that had pervaded those five decades and continued to do so. The work of making all things new again had begun with the brothers alone, focussed on the renewal of their consecrated lives – in its spiritual, communal and apostolic expressions. Within a decade, the place of lay people in a more broadly cast Marist family had begun to be discussed, sometimes tentatively and inconsistently, sometimes paternalistically, but ever increasingly. It would be a long time, however, before these discussions had reached a point where the communion and co-responsibility of all Marists could be named, and could sit comfortably with both the brothers and with the wider family of Marists. But by then, there was a considerable range in the readiness and capacity of different parts of the Marist world to embrace and to progress the emerging concepts. In some places, decisions in the 1970s to 1990s had ensured the continuance of schools and other works with strong Marist identities, investment had been made in developing both the professional and spiritual identity of lay people with Marists, and from the 1990s strategic thinking had taken place for how all this could be sustained and be regenerative. In other places, where decisions had been different, or where the focus of Marist life and mission had remained mainly on the brothers alone, mostly it had diminished and grown old, along with much of the Church. In other places again, there were cultural, social and ecclesial contexts that presented challenges for moving forward, despite a faith-life that was alive and where religious vocations continued to grow.

Meanwhile, the Church had developed its thinking on the consecrated life, and the interdependent relationship of religious within the People of God.¹²⁹⁰ They were “at the very heart of the Church as a decisive element for her mission,”¹²⁹¹ and they were at the heart of many spiritual families of the Church as their living memory of Jesus and the graced way that different founders had interpreted the Gospel.

¹²⁹⁰ Cf. *Christifideles laici*, # 55.3

¹²⁹¹ *Vita consecrata*, #5.

The Marists – women and men, young and old, religious and lay and some clergy – had increasingly come to see themselves as one such charismatic family, and were in the process of coming to a deeper appreciation of the distinctive Marian spirituality to which they were heirs and for which they were now co-responsible. Their creative fidelity to the spiritual and missionary intuitions of Saint Marcellin and the founding generation was leading them to re-imagine the ways in which they could be disciples of Jesus as



157. Meeting to discuss Bonding and Lay Belonging. Rome, Italy (2014).

Marists, how they could be associated with one another both charismatically and juridically as Marists, and how they could together as Marists share responsibility for the privileged ministry of the evangelisation of young people through the education and care of them, and advocating on their behalf, especially those young people of the peripheries. They were re-imagining what renewal and re-founding could mean, and the wineskins that would best hold this new wine. They were the new Marists.



CONCLUSION:

AWAKENING DAWN

Anticipation of dawn has both framed and coloured the decades of the recent Marist past. It was Brother Basilio who, drawing on the poetry of Edmond Rostand,¹²⁹² first urged the brothers to awaken the dawn of their renewal by believing that it would come. More than forty years later, Brother Emili was to use the same figurative expression as the first part of the theme for the 2013 General Conference, and again in his launch of the three-year lead-in to the Marist bicentenary.¹²⁹³ The year 2017 was presented as a moment of dawn. Such expectation for the new has been an abiding theme of Marist discourse during these years. Each Superior General has taken it up, as have the participants at each General Chapter and General Conference, and at both International Mission Assemblies. Innumerable gatherings in Provinces and Regions have been themed expectantly. It has been a kind of default Marist intuition. Yet, over the years, many have wondered when the dawn would break. Others have doubted it would. Some have stopped looking.

The light before dawn can be tricky. One cannot be certain what is really out there. Figures are not distinct, their true identity still uncertain. Some are hidden altogether. Proportion and perspective can be difficult to gauge. In the dark, sights and sounds can be misinterpreted. Fear can mount. If one is travelling, it can be difficult to see where the road turns. Anxiety can result. Trees and other objects sometimes mean that the new light is perceived only in glimpses and glimmers. Only gradually does the light emerge, and even when it does, its first rays can be blinding. As a metaphor for the Marist experience of 1985 to 2016, all of this is obviously apposite.

As a way of entering a little more deeply into the metaphor, it may be helpful to pause for a moment on the piece of literature to which Brothers Basilio and Emili refer. Like the roosters of the medieval fables on which he is based, Rostand's *Chantecler*,¹²⁹⁴ had to learn a critical lesson. This was not easy for him; indeed, it humiliated him. It required of him a complete change of mindset, and a re-construction of his self-image. One day, while he had his mind on other things, the dawn broke. It had happened without his singing. In his pride and pretence, he had believed the reverse – that the sun's rising each morning occurred as the result of his full-throated "*Cocorico!*" To learn that it did not jolted *Chantecler* into a personal crisis. He questioned his identity and purpose; no-one needed him

¹²⁹² Edmond Eugène Alexis Rostand, French neo-romantic poet and dramatist (1868-1918)

¹²⁹³ Brother Emili Turú, *Just a Tent as the Heart of our Future*. Letter of the Superior General, 28 October 2014.

¹²⁹⁴ In 1910, Edmond Rostand published *Chantecler*, a play in four acts, all in verse. All its characters are farmyard animals. The title character is Chantecler, the rooster, whose crowing before dawn heralds the new day.

anymore to bring on the dawn. Dispirited, he left the farmyard. But soon the hens and other animals wanted him back. They saw another meaning to his faithful and beautiful crowing – a deeper one, a spiritual one. In the hours of darkness before the dawn, he was the herald of hope. His *cocorico* dispelled the fears which the night evoked. It drove away the animals which preyed under the cover of night, and gave heart to all in the farmyard. Dawn was indeed coming in its own good time, but it fell to *Chantecler* to believe in the dawn and to nurture that belief among the others in the farmyard. What is significant is that his crowing occurred *before* the dawn appeared, while it was still dark. He sang surely – *chanter cler*.¹²⁹⁵ He gave heart and meaning to their little community, and sustained it.

Marcellin Champagnat had his “Chantecler moment”. It was 1826, a veritable dark-night-of-the-soul time for him. Some of the key brothers and priests had deserted him, one in disgrace; he had to dismiss his first recruit for reasons of mental health; debts were mounting; people questioned his capacity, including Church leaders; the demands of his role stretched him to his limits; he was physically, emotionally and spiritually spent. He collapsed. But the Marist project did not, for God had another dream. God needed Marcellin to trust him, to move with him. As someone who admitted that his flaw was his pride, Marcellin had to come to the realisation that the success of the project did not depend on him alone. It would not be a function of his efforts that Christ-life would be born in the hearts of young people. That would be God’s doing. It was from that year that Psalm 127 became Marcellin’s signature piece of Scripture. *Nisi Dominus*.¹²⁹⁶ Of course, he was the same person psychologically. He had the same character traits, the same strengths and weaknesses. But spiritually he was different. He had new vision, new faith, a new *raison d’être*.

Brother Emili, in his Letter to begin preparations for the Marist bicentenary, *Just a Tent as the Heart of our Marist Future*, recalled that it was Pope John XXIII who spoke of dawn at the start of the Vatican Council in 1962.

*The Council which is now beginning rises in the Church like a day shining with the most splendid light. It is barely dawn, but already how delightfully are our hearts affected by the first rays of the rising sun! Everything here breathes holiness and stirs up joy!*¹²⁹⁷

Tantum aurora est – it is barely dawn. In 2014 Brother Emili enquired of his brothers their attitudes towards their life and mission half a century after Pope John’s words.

¹²⁹⁵ The name “Chantecler” comes directly from Old French “chanter cler”, to sing clearly

¹²⁹⁶ The first verse of Psalm 127 (126) in Latin is: *Nisi Dominus ædificaverit domum, in vanum laboraverunt qui ædificant eam*. (Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labour in vain.) Marcellin is reported to have made frequent reference to it in his conferences and homilies. In his notebooks, often it is just the first two words “Nisi Dominus” that appear.

¹²⁹⁷ Pope John XXIII in his speech *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia* which opened the Council on 11 October 1962. Cited in *Just a Tent*, p.6.



158. Some participants at the II Marist International Mission Assembly, under the slogan, *New Marists in mission*. Nairobi, Kenya (2014).

*How do you feel on the threshold of the Marist bicentennial celebration? How do the challenges we are called to address sit with you? Are you perhaps tired after so many changes? Or discouraged because things did not go as we planned? Are you by any chance full of energy, excited by your leading role in a situation you perceive as full of grace and blessing?*¹²⁹⁸

What, indeed, had been the Marist experience of this long dawn? Through the years since the Vatican Council, each Chapter, each Assembly, and each Council sought to identify what it was that they believed they were seeing, what the coming light of dawn was revealing to them. Since 1985, this led them to re-orient Marist mission in a spirit of solidarity, and to expand it beyond the work of traditional Catholic schools to where the young people most in need were found. A broader horizon was coming into view. They found new ways for bringing Good News, for being Good News. It took them to new countries, and to new places within the countries where they were already present. In the document *The Marist Educational Mission* they put new words around their purposes and their manner of

¹²⁹⁸ *Just a Tent as the Heart of our Future. Letter of the Superior General. 28 October 2014. p.6*

pursuing them. Beginning with the *Constitutions* of 1985 they tried to describe in a new way the essence of the consecrated life of the brothers. Conversion of heart seemed to be them to be to what they were called, something that depended on continual evangelical discernment. They saw that they needed a unity of life, one that integrated their faith lives, their ministry, and their community experience. Gradually, they began to develop a deeper appreciation of each element, and the way they could be brought together in a spirituality that sated their deepest thirsts.

As the light built, the brothers discovered that they were not alone. There were many, many others standing around them. Thousands of them. These people were also inspired to a creative fidelity to the charism of Marcellin Champagnat. They had always been there, but darkness had hidden them until then. The brothers did not always know who these people were, or how to form a single family with them. But, little by little, they all developed together new words for their shared spirituality and their shared mission. They began to help one another to understand their distinctive roles and the contributions that each could make. Lay Marists became more comfortable with their responsibilities, and the brothers more at ease with surrendering their authority. The brothers came to a deeper appreciation of their identity as religious brothers – as companions for those who were seekers of God, and as weavers of fraternity.¹²⁹⁹ Through their word and their witness in mission, the brothers were called to keep alive the essence of the Gospel, and the distinctively Marist path of Christian discipleship. The brothers' foundational sense of family spirit and simplicity, forged through two centuries of brotherhood, was a leaven for a particular way of being Marist, that inspired by Saint Marcellin. They imagined new ways of being brother. As the growing light took away fears, all these Marists began to describe themselves all as part of a single living stream that flowed from the rock of their foundation. They became more aware that this stream was covering the whole world, not just the valley of their own Province or region. The more the dawn broke, the more their apprehension dissipated and their mutual trust grew. They began to see the horizon differently. It was much more brilliant that it had been in their small imaginings.

To his brothers, Brother Emili described what dawn's light was making more certain for him:

*Dawn is breaking, and we already sense the signs of a new day. In the General Conference, we tried to identify some of these signs of the future. One of them, which in my opinion will radically mark the new centenary, is the emergence of the Marist laity. It is a great gift from the Holy Spirit, which I am sure we will warmly welcome. Besides that, I believe the other two very important trends for the future will be the call to move to the peripheries, and the attentive care of the mystical dimension in our lives.*¹³⁰⁰

¹²⁹⁹ Cf. Brother Emili's address to the Colloquium on Initial Formation, September 2015, Notre Dame de l'Hermitage, France.

¹³⁰⁰ *Ibid.* p.6

But not all was yet revealed. It was unclear what the collapse of brothers' numbers in many Provinces, and indeed the demise of Provinces themselves, might mean. Where were the structures and resources to build the future? How would they deal with the fragility they faced? Who would be the ones to lead the way? How would or could lay Marists carry on Marcellin's project on their own in some parts of the world? Could there also be religious sisters and priests in the family, as there had been in the original plan? What could happen in the places where people were gazing more at the twilight of yesterday rather than turning around to see what was coming to light in the other direction? What would be the place of the brothers? Would they be more itinerant, more international and intercultural? Should their walking-packs be lighter; would "just a tent" suffice for them?

Brother Emili offered a word of caution about the difference between optimism and hope:

The objective data around us could probably leave little room for optimism, but we still have hope, that small hope Péguy spoke about. With hope, if we let her lead us, we move forward, for hope is definitely not the same thing as optimism. It is not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out (Václav Havel). In other words, we do not work to ensure our expectations will become reality, but because we simply feel it is up to us now to do what we are doing, and that fills us with hope, for we know we are in God's hands.

*Like Mary, Humble Tent of the Word, we can become people of hope, open to the novelty of the Spirit, who lurks hidden in the folds of our history. Following the invitation of John Paul II to young people, we can become sentinels of the morning.*¹³⁰¹

Anchored and heartened by such hope, there was reason, wrote the Superior General, that Marists as they entered their third century "should judge the past with respect and even gratitude; the present, with patience and charity; and the future with confidence."¹³⁰²

It is not recorded at exactly what hour of the day on 23 July 1816 that Marcellin Champagnat, Jean-Claude Colin, and their ten companions set out from the Seminary of Saint-Irénée where they had been ordained the previous day, but it is a reasonable assumption that it was probably near dawn. It was the height of summer, and they had to cross the city and make the steep climb of Fourvière hill before celebrating Mass. They would have wanted to get an early start. Besides, they had something important to do, something burning within them, a project that they had discussed and planned for a long time. Imagine the beat in their hearts as they walked briskly through Lyon that morning, the sounds of their hob-nailed boots on the stone streets signalling a group with some urgent intent. Enter for a moment into the dreams they carried, their sense of adventure and anticipation.

¹³⁰¹ *Ibid.* p.8

¹³⁰² *Ibid.*

They brimmed with the unbridled confidence and sure conviction that belong to young men. They felt called by Mary that morning, to do her work. No doubt, the early light of a pending dawn heightened in them a sense of promise and purpose. Dawn does that.

The intuition that impelled them that morning was that it would be as Mary-ists that they could most effectively heal, reconcile, encourage, teach, and bring the Good News of Jesus to the people of their time. The Church needed them to be Marist. That was the name they had chosen for themselves. It encapsulated both their identity and their spirit. Among them, Marcellin treasured a way that their project could be realised among children and young people. It was dawn in Lyon. Less than six months later, a new family of the Church had taken its first small steps.

As she was at Pentecost, and as she was at Fourvière, Mary has continued to be present with the Marists of today, as their Sister in Faith and their Good Mother, as their companion and guide. Gathered around her, First Disciple, they have kept faith in the dawn which they are called to herald. For they are sowers of hope, these Marists of Marcellin Champagnat. That Christ-life may be born.

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Michael Green FMS

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