



# SIMPLICITY

## Simplicity

***Simplicity is a spiritual attitude. It is to be oneself before God – openly and genuinely. It is to hide nothing, to pretend nothing. It is to have an uncluttered relationship with God, something direct and transparent like any genuine relationship. Some would say that simplicity is the most quintessential of the Marist traits.***

***(Marist Reflections by Br Michael Green FMS)***

**This [Marist] spirituality of simplicity shapes the whole life of the disciples of Marcellin. In humility we seek to know ourselves in our strengths and weaknesses and readily accept the help we may need. This same spirit encourages us to develop a simple style of life. We choose to be responsible for creation, joining with others in actions necessary to preserve our environment, to enhance the harmony between humanity and nature.**

**(Water From the Rock 36,38)**

Marcellin believed...that simplicity really means accepting ourselves as [we] are, with all [our] strengths and weaknesses. Being thankful for the gifts [we] have been given in this life...and to rejoice in them; to use them for everyone's benefit; to look for the good in everyone, even the least attractive; for the God who loves us has made each of us basically good.

He urged us to be transparent, be people of integrity, practice what [we] preach, let people – especially young people – see [us] just as [we] are. And, by the warmth of our presence and our good example, form others to be the same. It was a revolutionary insight he shared with few others among his contemporary Founders. It was a seed planted by the Spirit among the Christian people in rare individuals like Marcellin Champagnat.

**(Extracts from A Simple Gift by Br Mark Farrelly)**

### **Our Simplicity expresses itself:**

- through genuine and straightforward relationships with our young people
- through a simplicity of method in our teaching and organisational structures
- through a simplicity of expression, avoiding any ostentation
- through encouraging our young people to be themselves in every situation and to be open and truthful
- through helping them to value themselves and others for who they are
- through helping them to value an integrated, balanced and loving life, built on God's love
- through following Jesus' simple yet challenging message to: Love one another as I have loved you
- through consciously seeking uncomplicated ways to help us journey with our God

**We approach others with openness**  
**We willingly offer forgiveness**  
**We use accessible language, experiences and symbolism**  
**We strive to be persons of integrity**

**with a spirituality**  
**of Simplicity**



# LOVE OF Work

***Marcellin, the builder, shows us the importance of being ready to “roll up our sleeves”, prepared to do whatever is needed for the sake of our mission. We follow his example in being generous of heart, and constant and persevering in our daily work.***

***(In The Footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat 112)***

## **Our Love of Work:**

- is acknowledged, in a school setting, by our careful preparation of our classes and educational activities
- is acknowledged by our additional accompaniment of those who are experiencing any sort of difficulties
- is acknowledged by our vision and decision to develop creative responses to the needs of young people
- is acknowledged by the need to train our young people to discover the dignity of work and its value as a powerful means of self-fulfilment
- is acknowledged through a pedagogy of serious effort which develops a sense of resilience, teamwork and a socially sensitive approach to serving others

**To devote ourselves to study;  
To promote our sense of wellbeing;  
To give us purpose and meaning;  
To strive for justice and liberty...**

**the dignity of  
human work**

**Marcellin teaches us by his example and is the first to put into practice what he asks of us. Work was never a problem to him and from his childhood he gave himself to it with pleasure. He was able to construct the house of La Valla himself. Similarly, a large part of the construction of the Hermitage was done in this way.**

**(In The Footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat 5.14)**

The Church has long recognised the “dignity” of human work. Through work, human beings transform the created world and constantly improve the quality of life for themselves and their societies. Marcellin

Champagnat was a man of work, his life often characterised by dogged effort and total confidence in God. These attributes were significant in helping to complete his life’s work.

The idea of working together as a team; students with students, staff with staff, students and staff together, and doing this with a sense of enthusiasm and zeal, is a hallmark of the Marist approach to work. In our love of work, the Marist spirit finds expression and gains strength in a special way; it pervades our attitudes and behaviour to such an extent that it makes itself felt wherever we are.

**(Extracts from A Simple Gift by Br Mark Farrelly)**



# PRESENCE *Presence*

*Marcellin wanted his followers to do nothing less than immerse themselves in the lives of the young - “constant presence” among them, he called it - and to show them at all times what it is to live as a good Christian and an upright citizen - “good example” was his catch phrase.*

*(Life, pp. M-130.)*

**Marcellin’s constant searching for the most effective way to reach out to young people is at the heart of his Charism. His example inspires our creative intuitions and energies as Marist apostles. We seek to be the human face of Jesus in the midst of the young, wherever we find them.**

**(In The Footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat 167)**

“We are close to young people in their actual life-situations, taking the risk of going into what may be unexplored areas where those in material and spiritual poverty await the revelation of Christ.”

**(Constitutions 83)**

Being present to our young people means opening up a world sometimes unknown to them. It is about providing opportunities for them to encounter Jesus and the Marist charism, showing them a God who is not distant, out there somewhere, but rather right here in their midst. It is about helping them to grow humanly and spiritually; constantly encouraging and accompanying them as they journey in pursuit of their dreams.

**(Gathered Around the Same Table p27)**

Continue being present among young people, close to them, visible; and don’t let up. May the love you feel for young people grow day by day, and although life may be burdensome at times, take heart! Christ, Mary and Marcellin are walking with you.

**(Gathered Around the Same Table p27)**

## **We immerse ourselves in the lives of the young:**

- in ways that establish authentic relationships with them
- in ways that are optimistic and focussed on their personal growth
- in ways that respect their own space and culture
- in ways that are attentive and welcoming
- in ways that engage them in dialogue
- in ways that promote active listening
- in ways that foster their trust and openness
- in ways that offer true accompaniment
- in ways that assist them to acquire knowledge, competence and values
- in ways that strive to help them reach their full potential
- in ways that foster their participation and creativity in the learning process

**Encourage their capacity for God;  
Meet them with the heart of an educator;  
Accompany them on the road of love;  
Listen to their yearnings and anxieties;  
Let them know they are loved by God...**

**through your  
presence**



# FAMILY spirit

***There may be nothing more characteristic of the Marist way than what we have always called, from the time of St Marcellin, our 'family spirit'. (Br Michael Green)***

## **It is something tangibly experienced:**

- You feel it in the warmth of the place
- You feel it in the welcome and hospitality
- You feel it in the lack of pretence or arrogance
- You feel it in the sense of belonging and the broad inclusivity of that
- You feel it in people's care and kindness
- You feel it in trust and respect
- You feel it in hanging-in there with the one in difficulty
- You feel it in our intuitions that are nurturing rather than exacting
- You feel it in our deep desire to reconcile and heal what is fractured rather than punish or ostracise
- You feel it in the priority and character of interpersonal relationships
- You feel known and loved
- You feel it in our approach to young people to be 'a brother or sister' to them

**You feel at home  
You feel that you belong  
You feel present rather than distant  
You feel something genuine and heartfelt...**

## **like a family**

**The spirit of a [Marist] school ought to be a family spirit. Now, in a good family, sentiments of respect, love and mutual trust prevail, and not fear of punishments.**

**(Life of Marcellin Champagnat, Part 2, Ch.22, p.530.)**

Marcellin Champagnat drew deeply on what he called 'family life' to imagine what a good school and a good religious community could be. We can only conclude that he did so because of his own experience of family life. We know how close he remained to his family. We know how frequently, and with what intensity, he spoke and wrote about love. To do so, he must have known love. Deeply and abidingly.

The concept of 'family spirit' was even more important for Marcellin as a defining feature of the Brothers themselves, before it was a descriptor of the kind of schools they conducted. It was central for Marcellin.

*Water from the Rock* encapsulates much of the above in how it introduces the spiritual trait of family spirit:

*Marcellin and the first Brothers were united in heart and mind. Their relationships were marked by warmth and tenderness. In their discussions about living together as Brothers they found it useful to compare the spirit of their community life to that of a family. Like our early communities, we are inspired by the home of Nazareth to develop those attitudes that make family spirit a reality: love and forgiveness, support and help, forgetfulness of self, openness to others, and joy. This style of relating has become a characteristic of our way of being Marist.*

**(Water from the Rock, #30)**



# IN THE WAY OF *Mary*

**Marcellin believed that Marist schools would make a broader social difference if they followed Jesus “in the way of Mary” (Constitutions, #3. 38.)**

**Marcellin and his seminary friends believed that what their time needed was a Society of Mary. Mary would be the model of how to heal a deeply wounded world by her thirst for justice, her simple neighbourliness, her compassion, her reflectiveness and her trust in the gentle power of her Son.**

**(A Simple Gift by Br Mark Farrelly.)**

Marcellin knew Mary would be the best possible model of one who prized each human being for their own sake. In a society that admired the wealthy and the selfish, Mary’s life would stand as a sign that the powerless were God’s chosen ones. In an atmosphere of narcissism, Mary would show by her humility and generosity the claims of the common good. In a world which put up and pulled down a procession of empty idols, Mary would reveal that the real God was someone with dusty feet.

As Marian people, we do not look for God in the ethereal, but in our daily living, with its joys and struggles, its relationships and fractures, its fulfilment and frustration, its rewards and dryness, and most of all in people. To be Marian is to be alert to this indwelling God, the Spirit who irrupts from within, who speaks to the now of our lives.

Mary inspired Marcellin’s style of being on mission. She received the Holy Spirit at the Annunciation and responded immediately to Elizabeth’s need. In so doing, she shows us that contemplation and action are both indispensable elements of spirituality. Mary’s way lays the foundation of all our actions: listening, patient waiting, nurturing interiority and responsiveness to God’s will.

**(Water From The Rock 131)**

## **We are inspired by:**

- Mary’s heart which is free and full of the warmth of God
- Mary’s motherhood as we, too, bring Christ to life for others
- Mary’s daring by setting out to be with someone in need
- Mary’s capacity to stand by the cross of her crucified son
- Mary’s silence with a heart that knows how to listen
- Mary’s attention and response to others – ‘they have no wine’
- Mary’s experience of the movement of God in her life – she said ‘yes’
- Mary’s personification of what it means to be a disciple
- Mary’s intuition to ponder and question
- Mary’s trust as she commits herself to a God who inspires trust
- Mary’s humanity and her belief in what she was able to do
- Mary’s love which draws us even closer in our relationship with Jesus

**Mary, the sensitive and compassionate disciple  
Mary, compelled to leave her house to enter the house of another**

**Mary, a model of listening, of love and service to others**

**Mary, directing us to ‘do whatever he tells you’...**

**in the Way of Mary**