



Welcome to Module 2B - Catholic Identity and Christian Spirituality – Champagnat Marist Spirituality



Opening Prayer

Let us pause and call to mind
God's presence within and among us,
today and always.

Brief pause

God of mercy and infinite love,
we place ourselves before You.
Help us to be open to Your Word,
responsive to Your Spirit,
and alert to Your call.
May Your peace be with us.

We make this prayer through
Christ our Lord.

Amen.



Introduction

In the second part of Board formation module 2, we delve into our Champagnat Marist Spirituality as part of our Catholic Identity. We will reflect on the three dimensions of Champagnat Marist Spirituality which are underpinned by our Christian Tradition. Champagnat Marist Spirituality encompasses a call to personal holiness, is communal and is lived out in mission.

Our objectives for this module are:

- To reflect upon the core of Champagnat Marist Spirituality as it is a call to personal holiness.
- To recognise that Champagnat Marist Spirituality is communal and lived out in mission.



Our Beginnings

*At the very core of Marist Spirituality is the experience of being loved by God and being in **relationship** with Jesus. Our Marist story is about a relationship of **compassion** and **passion**: passion for God and compassion for people. (Water from the Rock (WFTR), # 1)*



Our beginnings were shaped by the caring relationship between a young country priest, Marcellin Champagnat, and a group of Brothers caring for and educating young people. As Marists, we understand our Project to be a sharing in Mary's work of bringing **Christ-life** to birth and to bring **good news** to others, especially to young people who are suffering. Marcellin, like Mary, saw the need to make the person of Christ known and shared by all generations and all nations, fuelling his need to care for the young and to teach them how much God loves them.

From Marcellin's compassion for the young and marginalised, our Marist identity is shaped; our charism a gift from the Holy Spirit. It is this charism that supports us in our role as custodians of the flame of faith. Our Marist Spirituality is, above all, **relational**. Just as

Marcellin built a home filled with brothers and young people who lived in community, relationships and fraternity were at the heart of this home. The home, the community established by Marcellin, was under the care of our Good Mother Mary. Mary's love for her son, her 'Yes' to God, was based on an unwavering faith and love of God.

Our spirituality is deeply **Marial** – living Mary's attitudes in our daily lives and in our interaction with the young people in our care. Mary was Jesus' first disciple and a model for Marcellin and for us today.

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. (WFTR, # 29)

Our Marist spirituality is also our way of **appropriating the Gospel**. We are called to think, judge and act as Mary did. Marcellin Champagnat was inspired by the Holy Spirit to discover a fresh way of living the Gospel as a concrete response to the social and spiritual needs of the

young people in rural, revolutionary France. Our values, being streams of living water, are our way of being Jesus to others.



Dimensions of Champagnat Marist Spirituality

There are three important dimensions of Champagnat Marist Spirituality which are underpinned by our Christian tradition. Our Spirituality is:

- **A call to Personal Holiness**
- **Communal**
- **Lived out in mission**



Dimensions of Marist Spirituality 1

A Call to Personal Holiness

Firstly, we have a clear sense of who we are and that we have each been called by God, our **call to personal holiness**. God invites us to be living expressions of his love of and for others. We come to understand that our mission is then to be God's love in our work with young people. To be the face, hands and feet of God that make up the Body of Christ and the Church means that we must use our gifts of the Holy Spirit, our talents and strengths, to work to being the voice of the voiceless, those who are living on the periphery. Our young people need us to be, like Marcellin and the early brothers, people of action driven by social justice.

God chooses individual men and women and calls each of them by name. He leads them into the desert and there he speaks to their hearts...

By his Spirit, he transforms them

constantly, leading them more deeply into his love in order to send them out on mission. The more we come to know God, the more we come to know the deepest meaning of our lives. We grow in the knowledge that we are part of God's project for the world. (WFTR, # 60)

God is revealed to us through those we meet, and our personal holiness is found in these daily experiences which are also special places of **encounter with God**. Pope Francis reminds us that it is in our relationships with those 'everyday' people who we live along side of where our personal holiness is manifested.

I like to contemplate the holiness present in the patience of God's people: in those parents who raise their children with immense love, in those men and women who work hard to support their families, in the sick, in elderly religious who never lose their smile. In their daily perseverance I see the holiness of the Church militant. Very often it is a holiness found in our next-door neighbours, those who, living in our midst, reflect God's presence. We might call them "the middle class of holiness".

[APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION GAUDETE ET EXULTATE OF THE HOLY FATHER FRANCIS ON THE CALL TO HOLINESS IN TODAY'S WORLD: 7]

Marcellin also reminds us that God's presence is not just found in those people around us but rather in all of God's creation. He is an example for us in allowing the opportunities of encounter with God to be found in the everyday.

Marcellin sees God in all things and believes all things come from God. He experiences God's presence in both the tranquillity of the Hermitage and the noisy streets of Paris. For him, every place and circumstance constitute an opportunity to meet God. (WFTR, # 63)



Reflection

Spend a few minutes reflecting upon the following question –
Where have you encountered God this week?



Dimensions of Marist Spirituality 2 - Communal

We live out our call by being in **relationships with others**. Marcellin and the first Brothers were united in heart and mind. Their relationships were marked by warmth and tenderness. His love of family translated to the family community he built with the early Brothers.

Our spirituality is communal, best expressed and lived when we are gathered as a family and community. We develop meaningful relationships and assure our consistent presence within our communities. (WFTR, # 105)

We are called to build **life-giving** communities inspired by Marcellin Champagnat, to live with one another as a family, caring for one another.

The Table that Marcellin built is a symbol of the importance of community, brothers and sisters, together breaking and sharing bread. **Table Fellowship** where all are welcome, no one is excluded. Our young people are unique, they are diverse and they are **ALL** members of our family.



The terms brother and sister express in a very rich way the Marist style of relating. A brother or sister is one who is approachable, unassuming, authentic, attentive and respectful. Brothering and sistering are ways of relating that affirm others and inspire in them confidence and hope. (WFTR, # 119)



Reflection

Spend a few minutes reflecting upon the following question –
What does the table image speak to you of community?

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**. As a family each member plays their role but fundamentally each person role is to be responsible for the wellbeing of all within that household. The physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing of each member is the responsibility of all members.

*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. (WFTR, # 30)*

This family spirit was born out of the love that Marcellin had for his own family and his family of Brothers and most importantly those young people in his care. He modelled his role as 'father' on the love and support he received from his own mother, father and family.

Father Champagnat's great desire and legacy is that we relate to each other and to the young people in our care as the members of a loving family would intuitively do. We undertake to build community among all associated with each of our institutions and activities... (In The Footsteps, # 107 & 108)

A strong community is one which has **love of other** at its very heart. Pope Francis, as Marcellin did, reminds us of the importance of a community based on love of other, outlining the simple features and small details that contribute to a flourishing and thriving community:

Let us not forget that Jesus asked his disciples to pay attention to details.
The little detail that wine was running out at a party.
The little detail that one sheep was missing.
The little detail of noticing the widow who offered her two small coins.
The little detail of having spare oil for the lamps, should the bridegroom delay.
The little detail of asking the disciples how many loaves of bread they had.
The little detail of having a fire burning and a fish cooking as he waited for the disciples at daybreak.

A community that cherishes the little details of love, whose members care for one another and create an open and evangelizing environment, is a place where the risen Lord is present, sanctifying it in accordance with the Father's plan.

[APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION GAUDETE ET EXSULTATE OF THE HOLY FATHER FRANCIS ON THE CALL TO HOLINESS IN TODAY'S WORLD: 144-145]



Reflection

What is it that we as a community see as being the essence of our Marist Family?



Dimensions of Marist Spirituality 3 – Lived out in Mission



And thirdly our Marist spirituality is lived out in **mission**. Part of God's mission; a mission which is shared, that has a preference for the least favoured and is underpinned by our commitment to evangelising through education. To live out our spirituality as Marists we must be a presence in the world of our young people. Surpassing religious and cultural borders, we seek the same dignity for all: human rights, justice, peace, and equitable and responsible sharing of the planet's wealth. It makes us living signs of the Father's tenderness.

Our charism urges us to listen carefully to the calls in our day, to people's yearnings and anxieties, especially those of the young. We welcome them with gladness, and living our Marist fraternity, together we go about planting hope. Our desire to be with young people in their own situations propels us to come up with new approaches in education and evangelization. In a very rich way the words "sister" and "brother" express our Marist style of relating to one another: a way that affirms others and fills them with hope and self-confidence. Thus, our way of living out our Marist apostolic spirituality and putting flesh and blood on our mission: being brothers and sisters to everyone we meet on our journey through life. (Evangelizers in the midst of youth, # 54)

Evangelisation is an important aspect of our Mission. Marcellin Champagnat and his Brothers devoted themselves to making Jesus Christ known and loved. Marcellin's hope for the Brothers was that they go out to parishes around the globe, to spread Jesus' message to the young and the marginalised.

Just as the Gier River runs through L'Hermitage and out into the international waters of the Mediterranean Sea, our mission calls us to go out into the world. Just as living water hydrates all that it flows through we too are called to feed, change and benefit the lives we touch, this is our mission.

*The story of our spirituality is indeed a simple one. It is a story of women and men who find within a thirst that only God can quench. Having drunk deeply, they find themselves filled with Jesus' own desire – to give flesh to God's Good News. **Moved by the Spirit**, urged by God's own longing to bring life to the world, we become streams of living water, flowing through the personal, communal, and ministry aspects of our lives". (WFTR, # 43)*



Reflection

How can we as a Board/Council live out this Marist Spirituality in our lives?



Prayer

God of the journey, You have pitched your tent in our midst,
And have gifted us with the spirituality of Marcellin Champagnat,
your servant and our brother.

You continually call people to experience the richness of Marcellin's spirituality
and to be of service to young people particularly the marginalised.

You call us forward in hope as we, Brothers and Lay together
to seek new ways to live out Marcellin's vision in our world.
As we explore the richness of Marist charism and spirituality,
help us to respond to the promptings of your Holy Spirit,
to be faithful to the vision we have received from Marcellin
and to respond with audacity and creativity to your call to us today. Amen.



References

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WATER FROM THE ROCK (Marist Spirituality Document)
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