



### **Champagnat Marist Charism ∞ Mission ∞ Schools**

#### **Our Charism**

Marcellin's story is one example of the renewing power of God's activity in human history. We believe he received a charism, a unique spiritual gift given through him to the whole Church in its service of humanity. He was inspired by the Holy Spirit to discover a fresh way of living the Gospel as a concrete response to the spiritual and social needs of young people in a time of crisis.

The experience of the love of Jesus and Mary for each of us personally and for others, openness and sensitivity to the needs of our times, and a practical love for young people, especially those most in need, are at the core of the Marist charism we have inherited from Marcellin.

As sharers in Marist mission, we are invited to commit ourselves freely and generously to the same charism as consecrated religious or as single or married, whatever our situation or culture. We identify with the charism in ways that are different but complimentary. Together we witness to a unity of story, spirituality, mutual trust and common endeavour.

Those of us who are Lay people bring our own individual qualities as well as the fruits of our personal commitment, our professionalism, and our experience of family and social life. As Christians, we witness through our personal lives to the possibility of finding in Jesus Christ the ultimate meaning of life, and of living by His Gospel.

Those of us who are Brothers, in addition to our own individual qualities, bring the gifts that emerge from the prophetic character of our lives as consecrated people. We inspire one another to deeper fidelity to the charism, discovering new insights into its spiritual richness and to its dynamic expression in ministry. The women among us, especially, bring a fresh perspective to Marcellin's charism and reveal new facets of it for all of us today.

#### **Disciples of St. Marcellin Champagnat**

St. Marcellin Champagnat is the lifegiving 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.

Europe during Marcellin's life time, 1789 to 1840, was the scene of great cultural, political and economic upheavals, a time of crisis in society and in the Church. This was the context in which he grew up and was educated, the setting which brought forth his response of founding the Institute of the Marist Brothers.

During the fifty-one years of his life, Marcellin laboured to the point of exhaustion to found a family of religious educators. He experienced the Cross in his life, with countless



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disappointments, difficulties and setbacks but his hope and vision remained strong. When he died on 6 June 1840, this family numbered 290 Brothers in 48 elementary schools. Brother Francois and the first Brothers took up Marcellin's project with enthusiasm. In a similar spirit of faith and apostolic zeal their successors have taken it to the five continents.

As contemporary Marist educators, we share and continue Marcellin's dream of transforming the lives and situation of young people, particularly the least favoured, through offering them an integral education, both human and spiritual, based on a personal love for each one.

### **Our Mission**

Marist spirituality, being apostolic, is lived out on mission. The Marist Mission is 'to make Jesus known and loved by young people especially those young people at the margins.' New Zealand has a long and rich tradition of Marist mission. A Brother missioned by Champagnat himself was with Bishop Pompallier when he landed on the shores of the Hokianga Harbour in 1838. Brother Michel Colombon (who died in 1880 and is buried in Reefton) was the first of nine Brothers who came from L'Hermitage to work alongside the first Marist priests in New Zealand. One of the landmarks of their labours is Pompallier Mission (and its restored printing works) at Russell now carefully maintained by the New Zealand Historic Places Trust.

Champagnat founded the Brothers when his soul was seared by his encounter, as a young priest, with a dying boy who was totally ignorant of God and Jesus Christ. It is known in the lore of the Marist world as the Montagne experience (Montagne being the name of the boy). Given the total state of chaos in education in the post-Revolution France of the time Champagnat resolved to combat this ignorance by seeking young men to staff schools as religious Brothers. This was in contrast to the vision of Jean-Claude Colin, the leader of the Society of Mary or Marist Fathers who saw Brothers as sacristan Brothers - that is catechists and support staff for the priests.

Thus, the supply of the early Brothers to New Zealand dried up and not until 1876 did the second wave arrive in New Zealand - teaching Brothers who began a primary school in Wellington that year. From this small contingent from London began a rich history of Catholic Marist schools from Panguru (in the far north) to Invercargill and from New Zealand to Fiji, Samoa, American Samoa, Tonga and Kiribati.

Some features of Champagnat Marist mission are:

- A Champagnat Marist lives out their mission by both word and witness.
- The Champagnat Marist mission is communal.
- Champagnat Marists carry out their mission by building communities that are sacred places where people can find God and meaning for their lives.
- Champagnat Marists seek out occasions and reasons to be with young people, to enter their world and to journey alongside them.
- Champagnat Marists are inspired by Marcellin's passionate and practical approach to mission.



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- Education is a privileged place for the evangelization of young people and their human growth.

### **Champagnat Marist Schools**

A Marist school is a centre of learning, of life, and of evangelizing. As a school, it leads students 'to learn to know, to be competent, to live together and most especially, and to grow as persons.' As a Catholic school, it is a community setting in which faith, hope and love are lived and communicated, and in which students are progressively initiated into their life-long challenge of harmonizing faith, culture and life. As a Catholic school in the Marist tradition, it adopts Marcellin's approach to educating children and youth, in the way of Mary.

The circumstances and profiles of Marist schools around the world vary greatly depending on their social, cultural, political and legal settings. In all our settings, we express our sense of shared mission in the way we come together as a single community of educators: the teachers, non-teaching staff, and parents, supporting one another in our complementary roles. Together, we seek to develop a pattern of relationships which reflect our Gospel and Marist ideals, and witness to the values we want to pass onto our students.

Together, we develop a statement of mission and guiding values, based on our broad vision of Marist education. Such a statement makes explicit our identity, our ideal of education, the particular character of our school in its local context, and our priorities. It serves as a source of inspiration and a reference point for planning, programme development, and for the evaluation of school structures and activities.

Our students are at the centre of our concerns in all that touches on school life and organisation. We assist them to acquire learning, competence and values through discovering the world, others, themselves, and God. While providing for all, we give special attention to the personal capacity of weak and vulnerable students. We create learning situations where each one can succeed and is affirmed.

Our Marist tradition in relation to discipline emphasises creating an encouraging and friendly environment of calm and order in which students can study well, and preventing problems before they occur. Our school regulations should clearly reflect our commitment to the 'Gospel spirit of freedom and charity'.

To be true to our mission of evangelising through education we develop explicit ways of nurturing the students' personal faith and social commitment.