



# Welcome to Module 1A - The Marist Story

## Mission of God



### 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

As the first of a series of modules, we are going to explore **The Marist Story** as part of the **Mission of God\***. The story is rooted in one man being called by **God** to bring hope and the message, the **Good News**, of **Jesus'** love to young lives in the France of his day. God inspires us to do the same in our time and place.

The message of the **Good News** was told through **Jesus** life (death and Resurrection). It touched people in a way, or changed their lives so profoundly, that they couldn't hold back from wanting to tell people about it. At **Pentecost**, God sent His Spirit to be with them in the mission of sharing this great news.

A young farm boy heard the good news and this fired him in his call to become a priest. Eventually his role in the Marist story was significant as he established the teaching brothers, to be called the **Little Brothers of Mary\***, or Marist Brothers. This young lad was **Marcellin Champagnat\***, canonised a Saint by the Catholic Church in 1999.

In Part One of this Module we will reflect upon the Mission of God as the Good News of Jesus coming into the world and how this good news governs the Catholic Church's social teaching. Part Two will focus on St Marcellin, his **charism\*** and the Marist Project as a wonderful **gift of the spirit** to the Catholic Church today.

We will recognise the great responsibility each of you has as members of Boards to continue to bear witness to the good news as we express the mission today in our various places of ministry.

Our **objectives** for this module are:

- to reflect upon the Mission of God as the Good News of Jesus
- to recognise the Marist story as a gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church



## What is God's Mission?

As Christians, we belong to a rich spiritual tradition dating back 2000 years. The Church tells us, the mission of God, **Missio Dei**, flows directly through every believer and every community of faith that adheres to the teachings of Jesus Christ. In our work we share in **God's mission**.

Many have contributed to the telling and building of this rich tradition and story since the time of Jesus. Mary the mother of Jesus, the early disciples, St Paul, the Desert mystics, St Hildegard, St Francis and the Jesuits to name a few that impacted the Christian story.

A pre-eminent theologian and scripture scholar from Spain, Jose Pagola, has spent his life devoted to studying and writing on Jesus. He speaks of God's mission as the **Reign of God** that Jesus came to build on earth. Pagola says:

*Jesus left the desert, crossed the Jordan River, and walked back into the land that God had given his people. It was around the year 28; Jesus was about 32 years old. He went straight to Galilee. There was fire in his heart. He needed to proclaim to those poor people the news that was burning inside him: God was coming now to liberate his people from so much suffering and oppression. He knew what he wanted to do: he would bring fire to the earth by proclaiming the irruption of the reign of God (Pagola, 95).*

Pagola says all the sources point to one thing beyond any doubt: Jesus saw himself as the bearer of **Good News** because God was good:

*What God cared about was liberating the people from whatever dehumanised them and caused them suffering. Indeed, his message would inspire great joy among the poor and humiliated. The reign of God that Jesus proclaimed was the answer to their deepest hope: to **live in dignity** (Pagola, 106).*

Now you find yourself part of the **Marist story** and a Marial tradition with a special devotion to Mary, born at a time of crisis in the church in 19th century revolutionary France.

As God so often does throughout human history, God intervenes in humanity and speaks through people, in this case **Marcellin Champagnat**.

Marcellin came to understand the mission of God as simply:

***“To Make Jesus Christ Known and Loved.”***

Br Michael Green says, “...the **charism** of their founder, Saint Marcellin, is simply defined in terms of his being called by the Spirit, from his deep personal experience of being loved by God, to bring Christian education to young people, especially the most needy, in order that he could help ‘to make Jesus Christ known and loved’ (Marist Brothers Constitutions #2). It is this last clause that Marists claim as their bedrock”. (Green, *New Wineskins*).

Central to this mission for Marists is the role of **Mary** in our lives. Mary stood at the **foot of the cross** with Jesus (John 19:25-27) and was a unifying figure, the first disciple, amongst the followers of Jesus that gathered after the Resurrection to celebrate and shape the early Church. The core reference text on Marist spirituality, ***Water from the Rock***, says this beautifully:

*The founding Marists understood their mission as a sharing in Mary’s work of bringing Christ-life to birth in the lives of young and being with the Church as it came to be born.*  
(WFTR, #11)



## **What is the Good News?**

The mission of God is modelled on the life, death and resurrection of **Jesus**. God sent His only son into the world to share the ‘Good News’ of God’s love for His people, and His call to us, His Church to take part in the mission. John’s Gospel records succinctly the **Good News** that Jesus came to bring and share:

*‘I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.’ (John 10:10)*

*Like Jesus we recognise the urgings of the Spirit within, calling us to witness to this Good News. Out of these inner promptings, the mission of the Church is born: to proclaim the Kingdom of God as a new way of living for humanity, a new way to relate with God. We join in this mission of the Church as we look upon the world with compassion. (WFTR, #124)*

Pope Francis echoes the joy of the Gospel message of Jesus in his Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*. He says the mission of Jesus was to give life to others. And this mission comes alive in the hearts of people through: “bringing light, blessing, enlivening, raising up, healing and freeing” (EG, #273).

Through his life and vision Marcellin put new life into the mission of God as he sought to bring ‘abundant life’ to others through his work and ministry as a Priest at LaValla\* and the establishment of the Little Brothers of Mary or Marist Brothers.

The Marist story continues through our ministries today in over 80 countries of the world as we seek, in our place and time, to make Jesus Christ known and loved, especially to the young and most neglected.



## Reflection



## Catholic Social Teaching

**Catholic Social Teaching** provides the Church a **framework**, a blueprint if you like, for Jesus’ mission today. It is the good news that Jesus came to share and give dignity to each human being, especially the poor and those on the margins of society. Catholic Social Teaching is an important reminder of our responsibility to our students and families in our places of Marist ministry.

Central to Jesus’ teaching and the principles of Catholic Social Teaching is the concept of the **Common Good**.

Paul VI, in his Encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, (1967) said: *Each person is a member of society, and we are all called to further the development of human society as a whole.* (PP, #17)

Living this mission with Jesus is about sharing your individual gifts and talents with others so that as a people we enjoy a **communal fulfillment in God**.

Catholic Social Teaching is the Word of God speaking and guiding us in our **decision-making** processes in our ministries and recognises **three cornerstone principles**:

1. **Human Dignity** – how is the dignity of every person made in the image and likeness of God upheld?
2. **Solidarity** – how are we making a firm commitment to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all responsible for all?
3. **Subsidiarity** – how do we coordinate and support life within our communities?



### Reflection

As a Board how are we attentive to these three principles in our decision making?



### Prayer

God of love, the Gospels calls us to that wholeness which you God wants for all people.  
In Marcellin we are inspired by a man of faith,  
a man of action with a preference for the poor.  
A man who relied deeply on the Providence of God,  
a man who was innovative, collaborative, pragmatic.

Our mission is that of Jesus, the one who listened, touched and restored.  
Gracious God be with us gathered here.  
Fill us with your creative energy.  
Hear us. Guide us. Shape us.  
We ask this in the name of Marcellin Your faithful servant and Jesus our brother. Amen



## REFERENCES

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING - PRINCIPLES

<https://caritas.org.nz/catholic-social-teaching>

EVANGELII GAUDIUM

[https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20131124\\_evangelii-gaudium.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html)

Green, M. (2014). New Wineskins: Reimagining Australia's Marists. In *International studies in Catholic education*, Vol.6 (2), p.148-163

Pagola, J. A. (2011). *Jesus: An historical approximation*. Trans. Margaret Wilde. Miami: Convivium Press. ISBN: 9781934996096

POPULORUM PROGRESSIO

[https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_enc\\_26031967\\_populorum.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_26031967_populorum.html)

WATER FROM THE ROCK

[https://www.champagnat.org/shared/documenti\\_maristi/AcquaRoccia\\_EN.pdf](https://www.champagnat.org/shared/documenti_maristi/AcquaRoccia_EN.pdf)

\*More information is available in the glossary of *Water from the Rock*:

- Charism, page 96
- Little Brothers of Mary, page 108
- Marcellin Champagnat, page 109
- Mission, page 114