

MARIST SPIRITUALITY: WATER FROM THE ROCK

1 DRAWING FROM STREAMS OF LIVING WATER

Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink

The story of our spirituality is one of passion and compassion, passion for God and compassion for people. (1)

Recall a time when your response to someone was an expression of “passion for God and compassion for people.” How can you more regularly respond to others with compassion springing from your passion for God?

Marcellin and the early Brothers discovered the presence of God in their midst and learned to rely upon Providence. They developed a love of Mary as a sure way of centering their hearts on Jesus. (4)

How have you seen the presence of God in your midst today?

Key among the formative influences that shaped his spirituality was Marcellin’s personal experience of being loved intensely by Jesus and called by Mary. (7)

What influences have formed your spirituality?

In Marcellin’s encounter with the dying young man, Jean-Baptiste Montagne, we see how disturbed Marcellin was to meet a boy facing the end of his life without knowing the love God had for him. (8)

His compassion aroused him to immediately put into action his foundational insight, *We must have Brothers!* The needs of young people and his responding vision for a group of dedicated evangelizers was now confirmed. (9)

Reflecting on your own experiences and on society today, what disturbs you enough to take action?

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 Fourviere. 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. (10)

How can you join with others to respond to the needs our time?

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 that 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. (11)

How can you challenge yourself to continue to give birth to Christ in our day?

We believe the charism of Marcellin is a gift given to the Church and to the world. As with all authentic charisms, it is a grace of the Holy Spirit entrusted to us for the purpose of building and unifying the Church as the Body of Christ. (13)

What gifts do you bring to the building of the Church? How might you better use these gifts to contribute to the Body of Christ?

Streams of living water will flow from the believer's heart

We are inspired by the vision and lives of Marcellin and his first disciples as we journey to God. While we share such a pilgrimage with many, we are conscious of our own distinctive style. (15)

What about Marcellin's vision inspires you?

God's presence and love

Today, those of us who follow in the footsteps of Marcellin and his first disciples are seized by the same inner dynamism. We develop a way of being, loving and doing, in the spirit of our origins. Gradually, day by day, we deepen our experience of the loving presence of God within ourselves and in others. (16)

Take a moment to review the past year or so. How has your experience of the loving presence of God deepened within you?

Trust in God

Marcellin's relationship with God, combined with knowledge of his limitations, explains his unbounded confidence in God. (17)

How does the knowledge of your own limitations increase your trust in God?

We endeavor to develop our relationship with God so that, just as for Marcellin, it is our daily source of renewed spiritual and apostolic dynamism. Drawing from Marcellin's experience, we embrace the mysteries of our life with confidence, openness and self-giving. (18)

What are some of the mysteries of your life? Spend some time sharing these mysteries with God.

Love of Jesus and His gospel

These special Marist places, where we encounter the love of Jesus, are also meeting spaces with the poor. **At the Crib**, we are deeply touched by the situation of poverty and fragility of children and young people, especially the least favored. **At the Cross**, we associate ourselves with people affected by failure and suffering, and with those who struggle for bread, justice, and peace. **At the altar**, we enter into communion with the love of Jesus, which leads us into a deep relationship with the poor. (24)

What are the special places where you meet the poor?

In Mary's Way

The relationship of Marcellin to Mary was deeply marked by an affective and total trust in her, as the "Good Mother." This intimate relationship helped shape the Marial dimension of our spirituality. (25)

How do you approach Mary in prayer? How might you better approach Mary as your "Good Mother?"

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. (26)

How have you brought Christ to life today?

We go without delay into the "hill country" of the lives of young people, bringing them good news of the justice and faithful mercy of God. (27)

How do you bring the good news to other young people?

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. (29)

How do you view Mary and how to you relate to "our Sister in Faith."

Family spirit

From our family spirit develops a spirituality that is strongly relational and affective. Essentially, our relationship to one another is being brother and sister. (31)

Consider how you have been a brother or sister to someone today.

A spirituality of simplicity

At the heart of Marist spirituality coming from Marcellin and the first Brothers is humility. It expresses itself in simplicity of behavior, most especially in our way of relating to God and to others. We strive to be persons of integrity – truthful, open-hearted and transparent in our relationships. (33)

How do you exercise humility? How can you challenge yourself to even greater humility?

Through the joys and struggles of life, Champagnat learned to be humble and confident. Aware of his limitations he experienced them as grace when he was able to dispose himself with confidence to the will of God (34)

How can you experience your limitations as a grace?

The more our evangelization and catechesis are rooted in our distinctive Marist spirituality, the more effective they become. (35)

How do you evangelize others with humility and simplicity?

This 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. We grow to be at peace with the person God has created. (36)

How well do you receive help from others?

We become streams of living water

Our present Age is characterized by a thirst for spirituality. We disciples of Marcellin believe that our way to God is a gift to be shared with the Church and the world. If we are able to give witness in our daily lives to the vitality of this spirituality, people – particularly youth and children – will feel themselves attracted and invited to take it up as their own way to become “living water.” (42)

How do you give witness to the vitality of your spirituality on a daily basis?

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. #43

What is it that you thirst for?

2. WE JOURNEY IN FAITH

The angel of the Lord came to Mary

We may find ourselves questioning the purpose of our existence: Who am I? What is my life for? How can I make a difference with my life? To whom do I belong? For whom am I responsible? (48)

Take a moment to dialogue with God about one of the above questions.

We discover God as the one for whom our hearts really yearn. (50)

Speak to God about what it is that your heart yearns?

Mary is surprised by the forceful entry of God into her life. Without having all the answers to her questioning, she trusts and commits herself to a God who inspires trust. (51)

How well do you trust God despite not having all of the answers?

Marcellin Champagnat also had to struggle with God's unexpected intervention early in his life. That *God wills it* – suggested by the recruiting priest – forced him to look again at his project of life. (52)

Think of a time when you were surprised by God's will. How did this change your perspective?

God comes into the life of Mary, as it is at that moment. He opens Mary to the truth of her being and of her vocation. , and proposes to her what she is able to do. The welcome she gives to the Word of God reveals the quality of her person. (53)

As you allow God into your life, what is God saying to you about your being and vocation?

Daily experiences are special places of encounter with God. (54)

Where are the special places that you encounter God?

God is revealed to us through those we meet. (55)

Spend a few moments reviewing your day. Where did you meet God in others today?

We experience God also in the witness of people committed to peace, justice, and solidarity with the poor and those who act with generosity and self-sacrifice in the service of others. (56)

Think of someone that you know who is committed to serve the poor. How has this person's actions spoken to you of God?

All the people and events of our life offer an opportunity to encounter our merciful God. (57)

Recall a time when you experienced God's mercy.

Our true identity is a gift, given in the form of an unfolding invitation, a call, a vocation. It is God's work in us. (59)

How would you describe your true identity to a friend?

For Marcellin, every place and circumstance constitutes an opportunity to meet God. (63)

Name the places and circumstances where you meet God.

Like Marcellin, we can find God in every situation. (64)

Recall a situation that you encountered today. Where can you find God in that situation?

Do not fear, Mary, for God has looked kindly on you

In this relationship with God, we experience ourselves as unconditionally loved. (66)

Thank God for a time when you felt unconditionally love.

Marcellin , through his way of living, helps the first Brothers to discover the loving presence of God. In our time we are similarly inspired by the witness of many Brothers and Lay Marists. (68)

Who has inspired you to discover the loving presence of God? Thank God for that person.

As our lives become more centered in our relationship with God, we too are filled with God's compassion and are drawn into the service of those in need, especially among young people. (69)

How do you serve those in need? How can you further extend God's compassion to others?

This stance towards life, our passion for God and compassion for God's people, is our spirituality at work. (70)

Take a few moments to describe your spirituality at work.

The Holy Spirit will come upon you

Like Mary, who ponders events in her heart, we are constantly alert to the signs of the time, to the calls of the Church, and to the needs of youth. In this way we can understand the sacramental meaning of events, people, and things which are for us a meeting place with God. This was Marcellin's understanding of his encounter with the dying boy, Jean-Baptiste Montagne. (75)

What are the things that you ponder in your heart? How can your ponderings lead you to action?

Our spirituality draws us to *find God in all things* and in all aspects of life. Prayer is one means to go more deeply into our experience. We do not replace prayer with work. Listening to God impels us to continue laboring for the Kingdom. Our prayer comes from life, and it returns us to life. (76)

Take a few moments to “pray your experiences” today. What is God saying to you in that experience?

In prayer, both personal and communal, we find the opportunity to be molded by God, as Jesus is. (77)

How has your prayer molded you?

Lectio divina or meditating on the word of God

Daily contact with the Word of God (Lectio Divina) allows us to connect with our personal journey from the perspective of the History of Salvation. It takes us beyond our personal window on life to the larger window of the journey of the People of God. (80)

Spend some time with the word of God and see how it connects you to a world beyond yourself.

Personal Prayer

In personal prayer we tune our heart to the heart of God. (81)

Spend some time in personal prayer, bringing your mind, body, and yearnings to God.

Review of the Day

Looking back on the events of our day, we are able to see how God is present during our journey. (82)

Spend some time reviewing your day. Where do you see the presence of God?

Community Prayer

Our community prayer offers us the opportunity to share in faith what we live in our mission. (83)

Where can you share prayer and your journey in faith with others?

Faith sharing

We support and nurture each other by sharing our faith in conversations that help us to name together those things that are vital for our common life. (84)

Spend some time today sharing your faith with someone who shares your journey in life.

Celebrating Eucharist

Living Eucharistically describes the process that underpins the spiritual life and our engagement in mission: gathered, blessed, broken and shared. When we gather to celebrate this gift of Jesus, we are in communion with all people, especially poor people, and with all creation. Nurtured, we feel impelled to go out as the “body of Christ” to celebrate and continue to build God’s kingdom. (86)

Recall a time when you felt “nurtured” by the Eucharist and “impelled” to go forth and “continue to build God’s kingdom.”

Blessed are you who believed

We pray in all situations, with creativity and generosity. No matter the difficulties and struggles of daily life, no matter the limitations and injustices we live with, we continue to see the blessings of God upon us and those we love. (88)

Recall a difficult time when you were able to turn to prayer. How were you able to see God’s blessings among the struggle?

In our times of solitude, we cultivate an interior life that strengthens our love of, and communion with, the world. (89)

Spend some time today, in solitude, reflecting upon your day and the world in which you live.

Our spirituality draws us to deepen our relationship with Christ and in trust to give ourselves in service in community living and mission (90)

Commit to going beyond yourself today and be of service to others.

3. BROTHERS AND SISTERS

Now I give you a new commandment: Love one another

Both Jesus and Marcellin Champagnat, in their spiritual testaments, chose to invite their followers to communion and community. (91)

Where do you find community in your life?

Life together, expressed through family spirit, is an integral part of Marcellin’s vision. (92)

Family spirit involves a welcoming sense of hospitality. Where can you extend Marist family spirit today?

Each family, group or community is uniquely marked by that which unites them, that which lies at the core of their connection. (93)

What unites your family, group or community? Thank God for this gift.

At its heart, Christianity is communion made real in the love of neighbor. (95)

Jesus commands us to “Love one another as I have loved you.” How have you felt “communion” – connectedness – when giving or receiving love?

Marist spirituality understands community as an excellent place where both the self and God are revealed to us through others. (96)

How has God been revealed in your communal relationships with others?

Marcellin shows us how we are to form and live in communities of mission. In the very name he chose, *Little Brothers of Mary*, Marcellin summarizes the fundamental identity of his community: the gospel virtue of simplicity, the call to fraternity, and the contemplation of the person of Mary. (98)

To be “little” is often seen as a negative. How can you lessen yourself yet still have an impact on your community?

All our relationships are enriched when they are lived by taking Mary as the inspiration for our way of being and doing with others. (102)

Mary was open to the will of God and became the first disciple of Jesus. Like Mary, how do you approach others in the way of Jesus?

Love one another, just as I have loved you

Living the Eucharist is at the heart of our community life and our way of relating. (104)

Eucharist calls us to be “blessed, broken and shared.” In what ways do you relate to others as one who is “blessed, broken” and willing to be shared?

Our spirituality is communal, best expressed and lived when we are gathered as family and community. (105)

How do you experience your spirituality in situations where you are able to give and receive love?

Life together supports and challenges us to be a community of mission. (107)

How do others speak to you, directly or indirectly, about your mission?

By giving and receiving love, we are challenged to fight our tendency to individualism, self-preoccupation and diminishing generosity. (108)

How has your “giving and receiving love” changed the way that you approach others?

The relationship of Jesus with his disciples and friends shows us the Christian way to meaningful and mature intimacy and friendship. (109)

Jesus was warm and welcoming to everyone. How do you exercise this "mature intimacy and friendship"?

As Brothers and Lay Marists, we try to develop a quality of communion that allows families, religious communities and other forms of community to become "homes" where the young are helped to mature, where we take care of those aging, 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. (110)

What is your definition of "home"?

As for Marcellin and the first Brothers so also for us, Mary inspires the style of our fraternal relationships. At the marriage of Cana, Mary is sensitive to the need that has arisen, and with discretion arranges what is required. She encourages us to exercise authority in a spirit of service to our community, and demonstrates that our actions can spark an increase in the faith of others. At the same time, her words to her Son, *They have no wine*, show her desire to bring those in need to the attention of her Son. (113)

How do you balance authority and service so as to "spark an increase in the faith of others"?

Mary inspired in the first Marists a new vision of being Church which was modeled on that of the first Christians. This Marian Church has the heart of a mother: no one is abandoned. A mother believes in the goodness at the core of a person, and forgives readily. We are respectful of each one's personal journey. There is a place for those with doubts and spiritual uncertainty, a place for all. There is listening and dialogue. Challenge and confrontation are done with honesty and openness. (114)

How have you experienced the "Marian Church"? How can your actions help to contribute to a "Marian Church"?

Those who share in Champagnat's spirituality are practical, down-to-earth people. (115)

What qualities do you possess that might be labeled as practical and down-to-earth?

To sustain the life of our fraternity, we need to live an ongoing process of reconciliation. (116)

To whom do you need to be reconciled? Reach out to that person today.

Shared faith enables us to see beyond problems and differences. Community is a gift of the Spirit. To nurture this life in the Spirit, and to encourage and support each other, we endeavor to make our communities schools of faith for ourselves, for young people and for all who hunger for God. Our experience of God becomes bread to be shared. (117)

Where do you experience God in the difficulties and differences you encounter?

Sharing and celebrating our faith through prayer in common is a powerful means to build up communion. (118)

Recall a time when you experienced God's love in a time of faith sharing. Set a goal for to engage in a common celebration of faith during the next week.

By this everyone will know that you are my disciples

The terms *brother* and *sister* express in a very rich way the Marist style of relating. (119)

Brothers and sisters approach each other as equals. How do you relate to others, both those younger and older than yourself, as an equal?

Living as brothers and sisters offers a hopeful and caring means by which our differences enrich our communion. Marist fraternity becomes a sign of hope for the world with a growing need for tolerance and peace. (120)

Where have you met yourself in others different than you?

In a multicultural and multi-religious world, there is an urgent need to develop intercultural structures that show how to live this reality constructively. (121)

How have you meet God in people from a different culture or religion?

4. BRINGING GOOD NEWS TO THE POOR

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me

Marist spirituality, being apostolic, is lived out on mission. (124)

Jesus lived out his mission through teaching and healing. How do you live out your mission?

The cries of the world, especially those of poor people, touch the heart of God and ours as well. (127)

How have the cries of the poor touched your heart?

Our Marist charism prompts us to be attentive to the calls of our time, to the longings and preoccupations of people, especially the young. 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. (128)

Where can you bring greater dignity to others?

Our compassionate response to the needs of the world wells up from our spirituality. (129)

Spend some time today reflecting on how you can better respond to the world's needs.

Central to the apostolic zeal of Marcellin Champagnat, is his experience of an all-embracing presence of God. (130)

How does your vocation relate to your experience of the presence of God?

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. (131)

How well do you balance contemplation and action? If one area seems to take precedence, consider how you might create a better balance.

Confirmed in her own vocation by the invitation of the Spirit, Mary feels compelled to leave her own house to enter the house of another. She indicates for us the direction of mission – that we are to meet others where they are. (132)

Mary "goes in haste" to her cousin's house. Where are you called to go to help others?

He has anointed me to bring good news to the poor

All Marists share the same mission: *to make Jesus known and loved.* (135)

Take a moment to recall the many ways in which you "make Jesus know and loved."

Jesus lives out his mission by both word and witness. (136)

How does your word give witness to the presence of Jesus?

For the people we meet each day we seek to be reflections of God. (137)

*Recall a time when **you** were a reflection of God today.*

Irrespective of where we live our mission or with whom, being a "brother" means that our relationships are consistently simple, welcoming and encouraging through compassion, joy and kindness. We are brothers and sisters of those we meet along life's journey. This is how we live out our Marist Apostolic Spirituality and give flesh to our mission. (139)

Take a moment to evaluate your relationships in terms of the criteria “simple, welcoming and encouraging through compassion, joy and kindness.”

Our mission is communal. The community of Marist apostles sustains and encourages us. (140)

How are you sustained by the communities to which you belong?

We seek out occasions and reasons to be with young people, to enter their world and to journey alongside them. (142)

How are you “gospel” to other young people?

For us, education is a privileged place for evangelization and human promotion. Marist ministry shows a preference for those to whom preference is not shown. (146)

Who are those who receive little preference in your life and in your work place? How can you show them preference?

Seeking to be with young people in their circumstances impels us to create new ways of education and evangelization. (147)

What are some innovative approaches you might try to educate and evangelize?

Who are our Montagnes? Who today compels in us an apostolic response? (148)

Inspired by a young man named Jean-Baptiste Montagne who was ignorant of his faith, Marcellin was compelled to found a group of Brothers dedicated to the Christian education of youth. What experiences have compelled you to respond?

Our spirituality, Marial and apostolic, invites us to look to Mary as Jesus’ First Disciple for your response. She is for us a model of listening, of love for poor people, and of welcoming the message of God. Her way of living the Word of God inspires us and directs us along the way we should go. Like Mary, we not only magnify the Lord with our lips, but commit ourselves to serve God’s justice with our lives. (151)

What inspires you about Mary’s life and way of being?

5. WE SEE NEW VISIONS, DREAM NEW DREAMS

Carried on his shoulders

The statue of St. Marcellin that stands in one of the niches on the external façade of St. Peter’s Basilica represents our Founder carrying a young boy on his shoulders. We see in this artistic

expression a symbol of the strength and powerful inspiration of Marist Spirituality for the world of today. It illustrates too the Marist belief of being raised upon the shoulders of a vigorous spiritual tradition, able to carry us into a future filled with the promise of vitality and hope. (153)

Recall the Marist shoulders on which you have been raised. How have these individuals influenced your life and your Christian response?