



## Welcome to Module 3B

### Ministry - Champagnat Marist Dimensions



#### 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

Champagnat Marist spirituality, being apostolic, is lived out on mission. The mission of Marist apostles is born of the experience of being loved by God and of our desire to actively participate in the mission of Jesus. God is passionate about the world and its people, and Jesus expresses this love by a ministry of teaching and healing. *I came that you may have life, and have it abundantly* (John 10:10). – (Water From the Rock, #124)

Our objectives for this module are:

- To explore the dimensions of Champagnat Marist education.
- To recognise that Marist education is part of the mission of the Church.
- To reflect on the Calls of the XXII General Chapter.



## Identity and Mission Comes Through Story

Anthropologists suggest that personal and communal identity is presented best through the telling of stories and narratives. It is through such mediums that we come to a greater understanding of who we are as individuals, but also who we are as a people. Our Catholic identity comes from the narrative of Jesus' life – His teachings, actions and message, and as such, informs how we live out our mission.



As Jim and Therese D'Orsa (2019) put it:  
*The mission narrative of the Catholic community is that of people who grow in understanding as they journey on together in faith and experience new things.*

The theme of journey is fundamental to both our Christian and Marist mission and is also an important part in telling our story. To journey or 'accompany' with others is a sacred task and one that occurs in our daily lives. Each day we are constantly walking with others, standing side by side, guiding and supporting people through their life and work. As Marists we are called to be present to those in our care and to listen to them intently. Part of responsibility and mission is to provide opportunities for the heart to connect to the head, and to live out our evangelising nature of *making Jesus Christ known and loved.*

A favourite Scripture passage about people on journey is the story of the Road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13- 35). This post-resurrection narrative takes place between two disheartened travellers who are leaving Jerusalem. While they walk along the way, they are accompanied by a man whom they do not recognise. They share with him all that they have experienced in the previous days. He listens to them, and in return, He breaks open the Scriptures to them. They are so captivated by the man's presence that they invite Him to stay. As they share a meal together, He blesses the bread which they are about to share, and they recognise him as Jesus, the Risen One.

### **Read Luke 24:13-35: The Walk to Emmaus**

*Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While*

*they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?" He asked them, "What things?" They replied, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him." Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.*

*As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over." So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?" That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.*

Jesus accompanying the two disciples on the road to Emmaus is a paradigm for evangelising people of today. En route a pursuit takes place, with both the evangeliser and the evangelised engaged in a dynamic cycle of dialogue and discovery. It is dynamic because it takes place "along the way," just as our efforts occur on streets and street corners, on public transportation or at the entrance to homes... in informal conversations, at unexpected times. Traveling on this road, we meet the other and welcome them with the heart of our Risen Lord. This dynamism manifests itself through presence...

*(Evangelisers in the Midst of Youth, no.171)*



### Reflection

What is your experience of accompanying others?

What does this look like in your daily life?



## Our Mission is Concrete and Practical

Our role as Marists calls each of us to take up the mission of Jesus anew. Being 'Marist' concerns itself with understanding how, in our age and culture, we understand and articulate the mission and level of commitment we bring to these demands. Pope Francis challenges us to become a community of 'missionary disciples.'

*From a theological perspective, identity and mission is intrinsically connected. They are, as it were, two sides of the one coin. Whenever there is confusion about identity, there will also be confusion about mission, and vice versa. (D'Orsa, 2019, p. 13)*

Gerard Egan, a Catholic priest and noted U.S psychologist, tells the story of working at Central Command in the Pentagon with a brief to resolve tensions among the members. He began his session with the generals by asking: 'What is the mission of Central Command?' 'Let's not waste time on that' said the general in charge. 'We all know the answer.' 'Humour me,' said Egan and, with that, he produced a number of filing cards and passed them around the room. 'Will you each write down what you think Central Command's mission is?' he asked.

When the group had finished writing, he collected the cards, shuffled them, and then read each one out. Of the eleven generals present, no two agreed on what the mission of Central Command was. It took very little further discussion to clarify why there was tension in the group.

Our Marist mission is clear: we are to continue to do the work of Jesus of making the Kingdom of God present. Marists respond to this by being present in the current world and in the cultural settings in which people live.



Mission involves creating 'Kingdom spaces' within the life of an organisation - initiatives that stand as a witness to living the Gospel authentically. In this radical sense 'being Catholic' is an invitation open to everyone. It goes beyond institutional adherence, inviting all in the community to commit to the Kingdom of God.

'Kingdom spaces' are hard to define in the abstract, but we do recognise what they are when we encounter them in practice. They are defined by relationships and the quality of those relationships, and thus seem to exist provisionally, always open to renewal and improvement. Kingdom spaces are perhaps best described as places, times and encounters when the Spirit of God is clearly at work empowering people to do things for each other that at one point they would not have believed to be possible.

Kingdom spaces are the times and places where 'mission' is translated into concrete, practical action. When they appear in the life of the organisation, leaders and workers have a sense of belonging to the community and of being captured by its mission narrative.

*(Kingdom Spaces by J & T D'Orsa, 2019)*



**Reflection**

What do you think the mission of your organisation/ministry is? How does this align with the actual mission statement of the organisation?

How are we creating 'Kingdom spaces' in our daily lives and in the life of our organisation/ministry?



## A Simple Gift – Dimensions of the Champagnat Marist Charism

*“Gentleness, presence and good example should be the mark of a Marist”* - Marcellin Champagnat.

The uniqueness of the Marist vision of Marcellin Champagnat – his gift – is in the “spin” or the “edge” that it puts on key elements in the life and mission of any Marist ministry.

They are in harmony with Marcellin’s Golden Rule. Do you remember it? “If you want to educate young people, first you must love them ...” Love them by valuing their uniqueness, responding to their needs, celebrating their cultural diversity.

From this principle flows the particular dimensions of our style of working and relating with others.

Each dimension is modelled for us by Marcellin himself – and each remains relevant to us, even though our world is different in so many ways from the world of 1817. In our approach we seek to adopt the following attitudes and values as our way of inculturating the Gospel.

### **1. A Family Spirit**

All Marist ministries are committed to being faith communities characterised by caring, hope, service, celebration and a partnership with the local Church and neighbourhood. However, they are called to become something more than communities. Marcellin wanted them to be families.

### **2. Presence**

What is distinctive about the Champagnat approach to evangelising is the way it is done. Marcellin wanted his followers to do nothing less than immerse themselves in the lives of others – “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 catchphrase. A Marist’s distinctive means of evangelising others, especially the young, is through the twin virtues of presence and example.

### **3. A Spirit of Simplicity**

Marcellin believed that simplicity really means accepting yourself as you are, with all your strengths and weaknesses. Be thankful for the gifts you have been given in this life. Rejoice in them. Use them for everyone’s benefit. Look for the good in everyone, even the least attractive; for the God who loves us has made each of us basically good.

### **4. A Love of Work**

Marists seek to help people develop a strong character and resilient will, a balanced moral conscience and solid values on which to base their lives. We want to produce able contributors to society who are not afraid to live their lives for others through their day-to-day work.

### **5. In the Way 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. Just like our world, the Church to which our Marist ministries belong is changing rapidly. What was a hierarchical institution is beginning to learn to respect the equality of all its members and to value their different, yet complementary, gifts. In our places of work we must model this for each other. To an extent, we do it and we do it well. But there is always still a way to go. So, like Marcellin, we have to be practical about it, too. He showed us the importance of “rolling up our sleeves” and being prepared to do whatever is needed for the sake of our mission.



## Reflection

Take some time reflecting on how effectively you put these characteristics into practice.



## Forms and Modes of Mission

The early Christian community formed their identity and mission around:

- Proclaiming the Good News of what God had done in Jesus through Word and deed
- Celebrating Jesus' memory in the breaking of the bread
- Following 'the way' that He had modelled in His lifetime

The interplay of these three elements has shaped the unfolding understanding of mission across two thousand years. In the 21st century, we find ourselves in a time of great change and challenge as we experience the complexities of living the Catholic mission in a multicultural and pluralistic modern society. Our modern [New Zealand] society has been transformed over the decades with the increase of diverse cultures, traditions and faith, so too have Catholic organisations. Such realities call for faith leaders and the Catholic Church to embrace the changing patterns as 'signs of the times' and use them as a new way of mission (*Catholic Schools at a Crossroads*, 2007).

However, in light of such change,

"the process of mission found in the midst of everyday life, contains elements essential for us today – the sharing of good news as we live, work and develop relationships: a form of mission authenticated by generous Christian living. The forms of mission are responses people make to areas of human life that generate concrete human needs. In this context, people endeavour to live out the call of the Gospel in service to others. The forms of mission bring focus and assign priority to the ways in which a group responds to needs in the service of the Gospel. Each form of mission has both a 'what' and a 'why.'

*(Kingdom Spaces by J & T D'Orsa, 2019)*

Jim and Therese D'Orsa (2019) state that the *modes of mission* are the essential activities associated with any form that mission takes. They speak of three modes of mission:

- Proclamation by word (Word) – the message or the why – that links service of others to the call of the Gospel
- Proclamation by witness (Witness) – the what – providing a specific service to others

- Dialogue – the how (Dialogue) – engaging with partners with whom it is necessary to collaborate in meeting deep human needs.

In ensuring that Catholic organisations are places that are living the Church’s mission, an organisation should be able to answer the following questions:

1. How can our efforts to create Kingdom spaces in the lives of our colleagues/students/families be interpreted as carrying on the mission of Jesus? (Witness value)
2. How do we explain to others why what we do is important in carrying on the mission of Jesus? (Word value)
3. Who are, or should be, our dialogue partners in this endeavour and how do we engage with them? (Dialogue value). (D’Orsa, 2019)



## Call to Mission

*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. (WFTR, #75)*

In October 2017, an international gathering of the Marist Community took place in Colombia, South America. Following a process of careful discernment, the gathering identified that the Marist global family respond to ‘five calls’ for actions to meet the growing needs of children and young people in the world. (*Calls of the Marist Global Family, 2017*)

1. Be beacons of hope in this turbulent world.
2. Be the face and hands of compassion and mercy.
3. Inspire our creativity to be bridge-builders.
4. Journey with young people on the margins of life.
5. Respond boldly to emerging needs.



**Reflection**  
What key words stand out for you?  
How do you see these calls being expressed in the work of this ministry?



## Prayer

Jesus the Christ, we rejoice that you are transforming us and sending us out on mission.  
We rejoice that through your grace we are a global family Beacons of hope in this turbulent world.  
You call us to be the face and hands of your tender mercy.  
Inspire our creativity to be bridge-builders,  
to journey with children and young people on the margins of life,  
and to respond boldly to emerging needs. Amen.



## References

D'Orsa, J. B., & T. (2019). *Educator's guide to mission in practice: Discipleship in action in Catholic schools*. Mulgrave VIC: Vaughan Publishing. ISBN: 9780648524601

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS AT A CROSSROADS

<https://www.csnsw.catholic.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/catholic-schools-at-a-crossroads.pdf>

CALLS OF THE MARIST GLOBAL FAMILY

[https://www.champagnat.org/shared/bau/Document\\_XXII\\_General\\_Chapter\\_EN.pdf](https://www.champagnat.org/shared/bau/Document_XXII_General_Chapter_EN.pdf)

[https://www.champagnat.org/shared/bau/Document\\_XXII\\_General\\_Chapter\\_Print\\_EN.pdf](https://www.champagnat.org/shared/bau/Document_XXII_General_Chapter_Print_EN.pdf)

EVANGELISERS IN THE MIDST OF YOUTH

[https://www.champagnat.org/e\\_maristas/Documentos/PJM\\_en.pdf](https://www.champagnat.org/e_maristas/Documentos/PJM_en.pdf)

WATER FROM THE ROCK

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