



Meeting of the Marist Global Network of Schools

Tlalpan, Mexico

28 November 2022 +ChChWYD

Dear friends of the Champagnat Global Network:

A warm welcome to the Champagnat Global face-to-face gathering. I hope you all had a safe journey. I greet all those who follow us, in the same way, on the internet. Welcome! Ernesto greeted us a moment ago and focused the reflection in a very welcoming and profound way on the construction of the global charismatic family as a fundamental call of the XXII General Chapter. This call has resonated in us from the beginning of the design of Champagnat Global because we have always considered this network as a practical expression, an immediate connector, a catalyst of this call in the scenario where the Marist mission is expressed in the broadest form: the schools and the colleges. Therefore, this intuition, full of poetry and prophecy, of a sense of collaboration and of possibilities, of tradition and of innovation, has inspired us from the beginning: **to build the global charismatic family from and with our schools to continue making the knowledge and love of Jesus the centre of our humanist and evangelical action!**

A little more than a year ago, we launched the Champagnat Global Network with an online activity that made us all vibrate internally. We were able to meet Marist faces from the 5 continents, in the first structured effort to bring together our schools. It was an extraordinary milestone along the way, a unique and historic moment.

Today we mark yet another milestone as we begin the first face-to-face meeting of the Network, made up of representatives of all our AUs and interprovincial and regional bodies. It is the first time in the history of the Institute that we have held this type of meeting: the first time that we, the participants of the Marist school system at world level, have come together around a common project: the construction of a Network at the service of the schools and with the protagonism of the schools.

What we are experiencing now is something new in the Institute. It is an experience of global, international, and intercultural interconnection to put together what it means to be Marist in our educational mission. This world community is represented here by each one of you. The presence of all of you shows the richness and diversity of the Marist educational experience in 79 countries around the world. We celebrate, for that very reason, our communion, unity, and

diversity. Likewise, we celebrate the communion, unity, diversity, and richness of our schools.

We are invited to **contribute, co-create, and discover** what it means and can mean to be online.

What does this mean?

1. **The Champagnat Global network is a project** and, therefore, it is an experience in constant development. It is a project to develop the Marist educational mission. It is a proposal. It is a movement. It grows with the interests and contributions of all of us and with the proposals of the Institute. The more creative and interesting the network is, the more enriching and proactive it will be and the more beneficial it will be for the personal and local experience. In the process of networking, we opened the Champagnat.global platform and, within it, "Agorà", the space for exchange around various themes proposed by the participants themselves. To mention the current groups of collaboration and discussion: the scientific pioneer, the Global Pact, the Spiritual Patrimony, the Service-Learning methodology, the Interiority Project, the "Stand Up-Speak Up- & Act" project, educational innovation, the Marist classroom, the global Marist student council, digital security, global citizenship, language learning, the third educator and internationalisation. What can you contribute and what can you participate in to enrich the network in its themes and possibilities? The Network is open to create and collaborate around your interests and needs. We firmly believe that this democratic and collaborative mechanism is fundamental to channelling the value of this Network in a practical sense.
2. The Network wishes to be a meeting place between schools and for schools, with all their possibilities and potential. Our schools, rooted in the Catholic and Marist tradition, are places of life, learning, faith, solidarity, innovation, experimentation, socialisation, inclusion, diversity, dialogue. They are places of pastoral action, of sports, of art, of projection in service. Our schools are experimenting with different educational models. They are in different cultural and social spaces; in societies whose demographic majorities are very different. Our schools interact with families constituted under multiple models and concepts. When we open the doors of our schools, we Marists are opening the doors to a changing, transforming and living world in which we want to say something, offer something and experience something... that is truly valuable and meaningful. This is an extraordinary richness. The Champagnat Global Network is the channel for all this richness contained in local, national or provincial experiences to be interconnected, shared, revalued. In these days, the encounter will be evident.

We are invited to offer the best suggestions and ideas to make ChampagnatGlobal the best house of exchange and connection between Marists in our schools, and, by extension, in our social works and universities.

3. A Global Network for a Global dream: "All the dioceses of the world". Champagnat left us a dream and an aspiration: to reach "all the dioceses of the world". "All the dioceses" represents the thrust of the mission. For us, "All" represents a vision that goes beyond. It opens us to a broad and deep sense of our mission, which looks at the local in depth and the global in breadth. We are a community that continues to aspire to more and to look beyond. How can we support each other so that we can reach better, more deeply to respond to the challenges and frontiers where the meaning of mission is at stake? We are a charismatic community that carries at its heart a vibrant mission, a mission that is not exhausted in today's world, but takes on new meanings, expressions, and possibilities. We are here because we believe that this dream remains a provocation, a call, a vision for the future: "All the dioceses of the world". We are here because we believe that Champagnat's project is not only valid for my local reality, for my national environment, but that it is a gift for the world, for our global reality. And, because we believe that, with reflection, support and knowledge of the global, my local reality is enriched and develops more fully. The Network must reach all our dioceses, and, above all, it must be a light for those works whose conditions are more difficult and fragile. Incorporating everyone into the network is the great ethical and apostolic test that we must overcome. Particularly those who are more limited by unfavourable socio-economic situations are those who need to be an active part of debates and proposals in the world so that exclusion does not leave them behind again.
4. "Looking beyond" and "Educating to look beyond". The last General Conference (2022) had as its theme the invitation made by Br Ernesto Sanchez, our SG, on 6th June 2021: "To look beyond" as Marcellin. This statement is provocative, since it represents very well the attitude of our Founder and of the first Brothers: to go out of the comfort zone, to think of something higher, to look at a world in need and in constant change, to feel the impulse to do something good, for the good of society and of the Church. Pope Francis, in commenting on this expression, invited us to "educate our children and young people to look beyond". How can the Network help us to educate them to look beyond? What kind of experiences, activities, webinars, exchanges will help us to promote a model of Christian and citizen that looks beyond? Beyond what? Beyond a self-centred look; beyond a

a look devoid of commitment; a look devoid of solidarity; a look devoid of multiculturalism and internationality; a look devoid of worldliness, materialism, and superficiality; a look devoid of inclusion; a look devoid of curiosity; a look devoid of communion. The Champagnat Global Network would like to help our Institute in this outstanding and important request and intuition requested and expressed by Brother Ernesto and echoed by Pope Francis. It will certainly be a particular contribution from the Network's own perspective. For one thing, it offers us the possibility of expanding our vision to participate in the richness of the Marist educational world: people, educators, processes, cultures, apostolic responses, organisational forms, emerging needs, social trends. It also facilitates the exchange of ideas and possibilities to take up the challenge of creating a different world, through the sharing of experiences, the recognition of other visions and the development of initiatives between schools in different places.

5. To evolve as societies and education evolve in the contemporary world, in today's world. We Marists in the world are evolving with and in the times in which we are living, the times in which it has fallen to us to live. Certainly, our Founder, a restless, proactive, practical, concrete man, sought to build an educational community at the height of his time, of his circumstances and historical needs. This disposition of Champagnat's has given us an interesting dynamic: to offer an education and an educational project in keeping with the times in which we live. This becomes easier when we join forces and reflections, when we encourage exchange and the search for joint solutions. Therefore, the Network must encourage an educational project which, as it says, paraphrasing the Rule of Life, number 77:

To offer an education that helps young people to integrate **faith, culture, and life**. (...)

May he make our schools, works and presences
forums for human growth and evangelisation
that promote education

**inclusive and committed, compassionate and
transformative** (...) that fosters **intercultural and
interreligious** dialogue,
on an **equal** footing

that fosters **respect** and **mutual enrichment**.

Commitment to **solidarity, social
transformation, and
ecological action**,

and invite others to **add to** {and *multiply*} their
efforts (cf. RL 77, paraphrase).

We are here because we believe in the importance of being relevant today and tomorrow through innovation.

6. **With a living project, to be shared, exchanged, contrasted!** It is a project that becomes more relevant and meaningful when we involve and connect students from Bangladesh with students from Sydney, teachers from New York with teachers from Caracas, managers from Nigeria with their colleagues from France, pastoralists from Bogotá with their peers from Grenada, counsellors from Mexico with our psychologists from Chile, and so on and so forth. Encounter. This is the fundamental word and the aspiration of the network. Pope Francis affirms:

"Life is the art of encounter, even if there is so much misunderstanding in life. I have repeatedly called for the development of a culture of encounter, which goes beyond the dialectics of confrontation. To speak of a "culture of encounter" means that as a people we are passionate about trying to find each other, to seek points of contact, to build bridges, to project something that includes everyone. This has become a desire and a way of life (FT, n. 215-216).

7. **We believe in a project of global citizenship.** Marcellin Champagnat's project was to develop "**good Christians and virtuous citizens**" through our schools and catechesis: neither simple education nor simple catechesis. It was and is an inclusive project. In the 21st century, these two aspects have new meanings that we must carefully incorporate. To the development of a local citizenship, the value of a global citizenship is added. This means a set of values, based on open and constructive dialogue, to influence, impact and improve this world. It also means developing a shared awareness and responsibility for the major social issues and debates that challenge us: ecology, inclusion, equality, responsibility for the planet, universal human rights, children's rights, quality education, among others. The development of a constructive, proactive, and critical citizenship is an antidote to the current tendencies towards massification. It is a tool for cooperation between Marists of different nations in the understanding and solution of diverse situations. It is a great project for the Network. And it will be one of the most promising contributions of the network. Together, in dialogues and proposals, the Marists of the world can exchange in this virtual space our ideas and initiatives to better understand this world and to change it. To paraphrase Pope Francis:

It is also in a network that true citizenship is built. (...) It brings with it a responsibility for the other, which we do not see but which is real, has a dignity that must be respected. The network can be put to good use to build a healthy society that is open to sharing. ¹

8. **A Global Network, yes, but not a uniform one.** Our Network hopes to be a network of many networks that help each other and grow together:

- A network of experiences, a network of values, a network of people, above all, of people who, as Pope Francis says: The current context calls us all to invest in relationships, to affirm also in the network and through the network the interpersonal character of our humanity².
- Content networks that are at the heart of collaboration and added value. These are the global issues and priorities in education that we can advance.
- Also, an organic network with national Marist networks (Network of Schools of Brazil), a network with regional networks (Marist Europe, ...) or interregional networks.
- And Network together with other networks, such as the Catholic School Network, the Global Education Pact, or inter-congregational initiatives.
- And to be a Network that integrates and is integrated with the Institute's Networks: Higher Education Network, Publishing Network, Marist Youth Ministry Network, Solidarity Network-Heart in Solidarity, Rights and Ecology, Volunteering Network, Network of Memorial Centres, Spirituality Network.

In the organic, we find a fertile field that does not scatter us, but encourages, strengthens, and helps us.

9. **One step at a time.** The Network is as big as your aspirations or as small as your imagination. It is up to all of us to take the first step. One action. One action per school, per teacher, per year, can help us make the profound educational value of the Network valid for your school or provincial community.
- a. We live in a time of obligation but also of gratuitousness.
 - b. in the time of saturation, but also of targeting.
 - c. in the time of dispersion, but also of significance.

Everyone can identify the path that works best for them and for others. What we want is for it to be a **useful, simple**, collaborative network, like

<https://es.catholic.net/op/articulos/61353/cat/548/el-papa-francisco-y-las-redes-sociales.html#modal>

² MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS FRANCIS MESSAGE FOR THE 53rd WORLD DAY OF SOCIAL COMMUNICATIONS: Vatican City, 24 December 2008

January 2019, feast of St. Francis de Sales.

The criteria of the General Chapter are mentioned: building the global body with agile, simple, and participative structures.

Finally, I make a threefold appeal to all of you at this Meeting:

1. **Contribute:** Shape your best Networking project
2. **Assume the leadership** that corresponds to you, as described: A leadership, with global courage, that facilitates Institute-wide processes such as networking, connection and interconnectedness, innovation, internationality, interculturality and co-responsibility for Marist life and mission.
3. **Articulate:** Make the necessary connections for addition and multiplication.

La Valla (1817) and **L'Hermitage** (1825) express a continuum of Marist development and experience. L'Hermitage is the big house, built on rock, collaboratively and above all with deep trust in people and in the presence of Mary. It is the big house to make Jesus known and loved on a level complementary to the experience of La Valla. It is the big house for an Institute called to live the fundamentals and to move forward in a new experience of local and missionary mission. It is for us the symbol of this new time of collaboration and dedication.

I hope that we all enjoy these days of encounter. May the good Mother of Guadalupe accompany us on this journey and may we be able to sense the goodness of our proposals.

I am very grateful to those who have been working intensely on this beautiful project: Carlos Alberto "Beto" Rojas, Mark Omede, Javier Llamas, Luis Pérez and, in this last part, José "Pepe" Sánchez. Our gratitude and recognition to the Province of Central Mexico where this Encounter is being held and to the two Provinces of Mexico for providing all the human and logistical support for them. Thanks to all the local team. To them and to all of you, I ask for a strong and warm embrace.

Thank you!

H. Luis Carlos Gutiérrez, fms
Vicar General

³ Marist Voices, p. 34