

MARIST COLLEGE HAS GONE **SOLAR**

by Phil Isacco and Ted Keating, SM

“All of us can cooperate as instruments of God for the care of creation, each according to his or her own culture, experience, involvements and talents.” – Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*

The next time you drive down tree-lined Varnum Street in northeast Washington, DC, you will surely notice a new addition on the roof of Marist College. With the help of New Columbia Solar, 123 new SunPower solar panels were installed on both the main building and the chapel. The beautiful chapel at the north end of Marist College was a perfect spot to install solar panels due to its east-west orientation. The southern roof façade of the chapel has direct, unobstructed exposure to the sun throughout the day. The western side of the main building also has a large array of panels for additional solar power production.



We will derive a variety of direct and indirect benefits resulting from the installation of our new solar array. The new panels should produce enough direct electricity to meet 77% of the total electrical need of Marist College on an annual basis. During several days, it will produce more energy than needed and will sell the unused energy back to the local utility. Of course, we are still connected to the grid for days when we need power.

In addition to the production of electricity, our solar array will also accrue SRECs (Solar Renewable Energy Credits) based on the total power output from our panels each year. Recently, the government of the District of Columbia set ambitious goals for producing new solar energy. In order to meet these goals, the District is directly subsidizing solar production via these SRECs. The sale of SRECs will produce enough cash flow within 19 years to pay for the cost of the installation of the new solar energy array on Marist College.

While our financial savings will be significant, the potential impact on our environment is staggering. Over the next 25 years, the power produced from our panels will directly negate the emission of 790 metric tons of carbon dioxide, a primary driver of climate change. This is equivalent to planting 43,801 mature trees or recycling 1,357,800 pounds of garbage. Put another way, the environmental savings would be commensurate to pulling 4,125,960 driving miles off the road or saving 194,472 gallons of gasoline. We are proud to have found a project that can produce such dramatic economic benefits while also helping to protect and conserve our environment for years to come. In our own little corner of the world, we are happy to hear and respond to Pope Francis' call.