

Society of Mary

Marist Vocation News

December 2021



Critical Elements in Vocational Recruitment

Since 1995, the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA), a Catholic Research Organization at Georgetown University in Washington, DC, has published *The CARA Report*, providing readers with the most important and up-to-date research on American Catholics and the Catholic Church in the United States. In 2009 CARA conducted a study analyzing religious communities that were receiving vocations.

Some of the key findings from the study are ...

- Candidates encounter members (and a group) clear about their identity, mission, and place in the Church and world and show enthusiasm about it.
- Candidates encounter members whose lives exemplify the charism and spirituality of the group.
- Religious communities receiving vocations are groups with a culture of vocations. This means that it is not just the work of the vocation director but clearly an emphasis and work of every member of the community.
- Deeper questions of culture from past CARA studies show that a religious community attuned to differences in culture and ready to welcome these differences and embrace them will more likely draw candidates who are different from their own culture.
- When the candidates visit communities they find places of prayer and shared faith different from the secularized locations they encounter in the rest of their lives.

These key findings from *The CARA Report* are critical elements in vocational recruitment. On November 15, 2021, John Larsen, SM, the Superior General of the Society of Mary (Marists) launched a Marist Vocation Year, to reflect, to pray, and to promote vocations for the Church and to the Society.

The year's focus is on the celebration of vocations. The year is dedicated to work and reflection on vocations to the Marist way of life and to encourage Marists to reflect on the mystery of their own vocation and their call to personal holiness. This will also be a time for Marists to deepen their own commitment and invite others to share in their lives.

To engage in the Marist Vocation Year, we are beginning this series of short essays in our Vocation Newsletter reflecting on the question "*Why is Marist vocation critical for our world today?*" This question will be reflected on from different perspectives throughout the Marist Vocation Year.



Why is Marist Vocation Critical for Our World Today? - *A Marist Laity Perspective*

by Bev McDonald, Coordinator of Marist Laity New Zealand

"I am a mission on this earth; ... We have to regard ourselves as sealed, even branded, by this mission of bringing light, blessing, enlivening, raising up, healing and freeing." (Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 2013)

Why am I a Lay Marist? The simple answer is that Mary called me with a persistence I could not deny. Marist spirituality felt like putting my hand into a well-fitting glove. Realizing I could simply be, was truly freeing. I believe every age receives a particular spirituality for that time. Today, as in Fr. Colin's, SM time, the mistrust and betrayal felt in society produces an almost endemic suspicion of structures and authority. Colin found in Mary, a Lay person, living a quiet ordinary life, an almost hidden way to carry God's love everywhere. Mary's 'Yes' to God was a resounding 'Yes' to service and love for humanity. She focussed on Jesus and represented no to power, pride or greed. Mary is safe, approachable and non-threatening. She is good news. God calls disciples to live that way today. *"We Christians were not chosen by the Lord for little things; stake your lives on noble ideals."* (*Evangelii Gaudium*)



The world yearns for authenticity, love, hope and joy. I am married with a wonderful but agnostic husband, one daughter and my husband and I are raising our grandson who is 12. Life is messy, ordinary, sometimes tragic, joyful, yet filled with the presence of Christ and Mary's guidance. When Mary acted, it sprang from deep encounter with God. She invited the Holy Spirit to work through her. Mary's witness calls me to accept that my true value is not in what I do, but in who I am in myself and before God. Her life challenges me to put God first, responding to others with generosity, simplicity, humility, and to work at building communities where Mary's virtues thrive. The world is crying out for this. Being Marist means to find my home in God every day, strip away my masks and be real with God, myself and others. This dependence on God means I begin again each morning.

Christ is in the world (Lk 17:20-21), and our vocation is to reveal that presence through surrender to the Spirit and living the mercy, compassion, faithfulness, joy and integrity of Jesus and Mary. Like logs in a fire, we burn brighter when we come together, and Pentecost calls us to community. Lay Marists gather in all ages and faith stages online and locally. Through prayer and action, our presence in the world helps others see Jesus. As quiet companions, immersed in ordinary life we can walk alongside anyone in their unique journey to find God hidden in their midst, and can gently encourage each person to offer their own 'Yes' to God.



Bev McDonald lives in New Zealand and made her personal Lay Marist commitment in 2012.

Why is Marist Vocation Critical for Our World Today? - *A Marist Novice Director's Perspective*

by Fr. David Sanchez, SM, Novice Director, Rome, Italy

Tasting God ... that feeling that delights not only the senses, but also the heart and makes us vibrate towards our deepest call ... By “tasting God”, each religious and lay Marist begins his journey in Marist spirituality and discovers that his call is for the community and within a community, he discovers that it is with God and for God at the same time. A call that does not seek to impose itself but rather to accompany, in the style of Mary, the one whose heart is wounded.

“You have ... to learn to taste God, yes, to taste God, and that is feeling your heart wounded.” When in 1843 Fr. Jean-Claude Colin suggested those words to Gabriel Germain, a scholastic of the time, he could not imagine the strength these words would gain because they indeed have established a whole way of forming religious. Today it is these words that move us to discover our vocation, as a call from God, within the Society of Mary in the full sense. Why?



Fr. Sanchez, SM

Each of us is called to a very specific plan. Plan that we discover throughout our lives, sometimes with great fatigue. But, while we are on the road, there is one thing we need to keep in mind: for our call we need to be aware that Someone is calling us. God calls us. And therefore, to taste Him, being with Him, is important. And He is the only one who starts the call!

Our vocation, however, is not just for us. We share it with others, with those who suffer, with those in need, with those who walk with us. For this, tasting God is the way for us in which we have a heart for others, where we are thus “instruments of divine mercy.” Instruments that have the feminine touch, the touch of the Mother who accompanies and is with the one who needs it.

The world today is wounded. Today more than ever there are people who need to feel the love of the Mother, the touch of mercy in a world that rejects the different. Today more than ever it is required that each one, first, recognize his wounded heart in order to be able to accompany the wounded heart of his brother and thus be able to see in his neighbor the living face of Christ.

This is done by the Marist. Today, therefore, the role of the Marist vocation in the world is crucial. It is not about running large campaigns to cover large masses. It is about being like Mary, with the specific person, who has a name, who needs to be recognized and accepted today and here. But this is only possible if we are able to taste God wherever and whenever we are. Are you ready to discover Him, to taste Him and to follow Him?



To follow God is to be in the midst of the children of God.



To taste God is to taste the way of the cross.



Teaching the children is sharing the experience of God.

Why is Marist Vocation Critical for Our World Today? - A Priest's Perspective

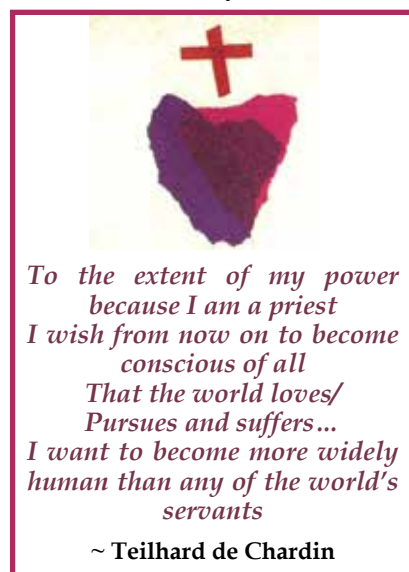
by Fr. Ted Keating, SM, Director for Vocation and Formation U.S. Province,
Marist College, Washington, DC

All vocations come to us in the way that we are. I was discerning final vows and ordination in the early 1980s after thirteen years in a corporation and a law firm. I had no difficulty discerning final vows after a month at New Melleray, a Trappist Monastery near Chicago, where I had spent time over the years. I did have difficulty discerning a vocation to the priesthood as a Marist. I had had many experiences of the priesthood over those 13 years, some absolutely inspiring and some others a little troubling. The Many Catholic lawyers I knew and worked with had left the Church. (A surprising number had spent years in the seminary.) They would come back from Catholic funerals and weddings still troubled with the Church. It still had to do with some issues of power expressed as "How can he (the priest) possibly think he knows more about my life and family than I do. He talks down to us as if he has some supernatural knowledge that I don't have." There were other issues as well but that was a key response. I was close to many of them now discerning whether I would offer myself for ordination to the Marists. I also had a number of good friends who were Catholic women equally troubled about the women's issues in the Church. I can't say that I always differed with them. I actually asked to defer ordination to the diaconate more than puzzling my formators as they had already secured a Bishop for this ordination.

This was this "me" now discerning. This quote, "To The Extent Of My Power Because I Am A Priest ..." from Teilhard de Chardin on an old holy card had been a principal discerning focus for me in its own way.

He was personally an inspiring image of the priesthood as well, especially with his writing entitled "*Mass on the World.*" This card has been in my breviary for forty years. So I went back to New Melleray determined to integrate my Marist life (very clear to me) as best I could with the help of an older monk I had known for many years hoping to face squarely the possible call to ordination. I knew in my heart of hearts that much of what I was struggling with was almost precisely the concerns of Fr. John Claude-Colin, SM about his Church that he loved so dearly. Fr. Charlie Girard, SM had suggested sometime earlier that I read the novel, *The Red and the Black* by Stendhal and it would help me understand the context that Colin was looking at as he mystically reimagined a Church for a different future.

After some palpably felt questions in prayer about the quality of my courage; about being too hung up on my own perceptions and feelings and a critical need to move beyond them; about the unavoidable realization that I had already opened my heart and mind to the Marist call of "self-emptying" to be filled with God's will as Mary had. I finally did discern the call to be a Marist priest driven by the mission of the Society in my exercise of that role, leaving the unanswered questions in the hands of God, but with a promise to never forget those good friends in Chicago and their questions in my heart. What I had been struggling to accept was precisely the Marist vocation and mission to and in the Church, and to society all around us. It is one way of saying that this is why the Colinian vision for the priesthood is critical for the Church today.



Fr. Ted Keating, SM

Why is Marist Vocation Critical for Our World Today? - A Brother's Perspective

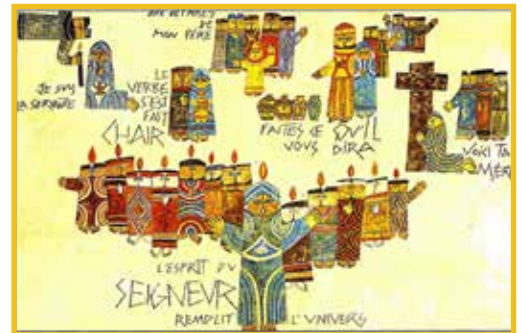
by Br. Randy Hoover, SM, Associate Director for Vocation and Formation U.S. Province,
Marist College, Washington, DC

There has been a long history of Brothers from the very beginnings of the Society of Mary (Marists). Our understanding of this vocation in Society has changed significantly since our origins. Our recent 2017 Chapter reaffirmed the vocation of the Brothers emphasizing again that we share one common vocation with different ministries as a Society. The distinctiveness of the Brothers, as stated at that Chapter, is the ease of their ability to work directly with the laity who are often more direct with them seeing them at one with them. Being a brother isn't about status or position, nor power or privilege. We seek to be brothers to all, to build communion in the family of the Church and the world.

As Edwin Keel, SM pointed out, "...the original group of Marists, who were clerics, conceived of the Marist project, among other things, as a way of reforming their own priestly ministry precisely by immersing themselves in a community of non-priests doing this in order to bridge the gap that existed between clerics and the laity of the Church. He goes on to say: "... the presence of Brothers in ministry is a fulfillment of the hopes of our own day, marvelously appropriate to the new vision of Church and ministry that is emerging from the original Marist concept of many kinds of people in the one Marist congregation/movement, working together for the renewal of the Church and modeling in their life together with the renewed Church they dream of." (*Brothers In Ministry*, 1983)

Community life is at the heart of our life as Marists priests and brothers. As Marists, we actively minister to others in a wide variety of apostolates but we are more than just workers in an enterprise. We share our lives, our mission and our vision just as a renewed Church can do.

Without a doubt, we know that we are living in very challenging times. We continue to navigate and face the challenges of our changing world ("a change in epoch more than an epoch of change" according to Pope Francis). Every day new information floods us with another new set of uncertainties. Rapid change creates more stress. It is within this context that we Marists share our lives, our mission, and our vision. It is within the challenges of our changing world that a Marist Vocation for Brothers is so critical to the Church today with its emphasis on the Marian Church. Former General Jan Hulshof said in his Superior General's Letter of 2005 *With a More Lively Confidence*: "Brothers are important to the Society for what they do, but even more so for what they are: witnesses to the primacy of brotherhood in the lives of all us." (p. 13) Brothers do not stand apart from the People of God, the Brothers within the Society of Mary stand with them.



Because they bear the name of Mary, Marists desire to be like her and follow Jesus as she did. Contemplating Mary in the mysteries of Nazareth and Pentecost and her role at the end of time, they come to share her zeal for her Son's mission in his struggle against evil, and to respond with promptness to the most urgent needs of God's people. (Marist Constitutions n.8)

As Ted Keating, SM reminded us in the article *A Plea for a Marian Church*: "We Marists do not seek to become famous as a Congregation but we seek to see a Marian Church pouring its mission, ministries, witness, and proclamation of the mysteries of Christ over into a world and Church that represents the values of "The Marian Church." (*Today's Marists*, 2020, Vol. 6, Issue 1) The Marian Church "does not know the answers before the questions are posed. Her path is not traced out in advance. She knows doubt and unease, night and loneliness. That is the price of trust. She takes her part in the conversation but makes no claim to know everything. She accepts that she must search." (Francois Marc, SM) So we Marists may be quite adapted for this era. We can be more comfortable with it than others.

In a rapidly changing world, the Marist priests and brothers follow in Mary's footsteps keeping their eyes fixed on Jesus alone and "understand that Mary is the one who knows that we worship a God for "whom nothing is impossible." (*Today's Marists*, 2020, Vol. 6, Issue 1) This is a critical reminder to the Church today.



Br. Randy Hoover, SM

Vocation Resources



Consecrated life through the ages

We invite you to read **this** article by VISION editors that gives a history of consecrated life from ancient desert monasteries to contemporary religious communities.

What the 2020 study reveals about attraction to religious life

This article draws from the 2020 study on recent vocations, conducted by the Center for Applied Research in Apostolate (CARA) for the National Religious Vocation Conference (NRVC). NRVC asked newer members of religious institutes to directly name what attracted them, selecting from several choices.



A leading factor in the attraction to religious life is a desire for spiritual growth and depth through spirituality, charism, and mission.



Key findings about Catholic youth and young adults

The National Religious Vocation Conference was one of approximately 75 Catholic organizations that took part in an extensive, multi-year process of listening to the concerns of young people and those who minister among them. The young adult conversations discussed the need for the church to accompany them through the transitions in their lives.

Society of Mary (Marists) Vocation News

Pre-Novitiate Program Starts in Rome, Italy

Between November 4th-13th, 11 young people from the provinces of Oceania (Manuele, Mosese, Milio, Jamie, Hansford and Zulu), New Zealand (Tom and Joseph) and Mexico (David, Eduardo, and Bani) arrived in Rome to start their orientation program for the novitiate which begins on January 6, 2022. During orientation Sr. Judith Moore, SMSM facilitated a workshop where the group had the opportunity to share their different experiences of life and culture. Fr. John Harhager, SM led a discussion regarding all the branches of the Marist Family. Sr. Cristina, SMSM, Br. Teofilo Minga, FMS and Sr. Vivienne Goldstein, SM each facilitated a workshop during orientation. The activities during orientation will help each of them to strengthen his interpersonal relationships, to form a community and to prepare their hearts for the start of the novitiate. Let us keep them in prayer so that the gentle spirit of Mary may guide them!



Marist Vocation Year Prayer (2021-2022)

Jesus, Good Shepherd, we ask you to look on this family of Mary, your Mother, with eyes of mercy. Throughout this year of vocations, we ask you, Lord, to enrich the Marist world with the fire of your Holy Spirit.

**May Mary's subtle and delicate presence enable us to breathe her spirit.
So that, committed to our own vocation,
we will be credible witnesses of your Gospel.**

And, renewed and strengthened with the fire of your Spirit, we may help bring to life the seed of a vocation which you have implanted in the hearts of the young.

**Enable us to accompany them in the fulfillment of their personal vocation.
Lord Jesus, give us vocations according
to your heart. Amen.**

**Jean Claude Colin
- Pray for us.**

