

Society of Mary

Marist Vocation News



April 2022

Introduction

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

In this season of Easter and as we remember the Marist feast day for St. Peter Chanel in this month of April, we thank you for your encouragement regarding our series for the Marist Vocation Year. As we continue our series and reflect on the question “*Why is Marist vocation critical for our world today?*” we invite you to read the following reflections from three Marists with significant parish appointments around the country, as well as one Marist who currently works in prison ministry and who has previously ministered in a parish.

We are responding to the call of our Superior General in Rome by dedicating this year to reflecting on our own Marist vocations and why they are critically important in the church and surrounding society today. With upwards of 175 religious orders of men and 196 dioceses all seeking vocations, we need to be clear about why our Marist vocation is not only relevant but critical to the Church and the world around us today. Thanks for your support of this Marist Vocation Year project of our Superior General.



St. Peter Chanel, SM

Image Credit: Catholic Art by [Tracy L. Christianson](#)

What does the Easter season have to do with why the Marist Vocation is critical to the Church today?

by Hector Cruz, SM, Pastor, Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Tampa, Florida



Hector Cruz, SM

The Marists, who have ministered in Our Lady of Perpetual Help (OLPH) parish for more than 30 years, have all been driven by our Marist mission - to minister in the way of Mary to the marginalized and to whoever feels lost or forgotten.

As a concrete embodiment of that spirit, there was for many years a sub-kitchen at the parish that fed the poor a hot meal every Thursday. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic the kitchen had to close and we have not been able to reopen it.

During these past two years I have been meditating on the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ during the periods of lockdown and reduced activities because of the pandemic. I felt like I have been in a tomb accompanying the body of Jesus, waiting for the end of the pandemic to rise to new life (physical and spiritual).

I think that all Christians - but especially us, who draw our vocational inspiration from Mary – are called to accompany Jesus through all our life, following Mary's steps.

Jesus left two empty wombs: Mary's (Luke 2: 6-7), and his own tomb (Luke 24: 4-6). I would like to add a third womb, although He really never left it, the womb of His Church (I am referring to what happened on the feast of the Ascension (Luke 24: 50-53) and on Pentecost (Acts 1: 12-14). On these three occasions Jesus, leaving those wombs, reached new and higher quality of life and presence among us. Mary witnessed to the three of them in different ways.

I want to present you with a humble example of how, through this pandemic, we have been suffering but gestating new life in the womb of our OLPH parish community. Alfredo Figueroa, our Parish Assistant, began the groundbreaking work to produce a juvenile group of the Legion of Mary. This group was incubated (like in the catacombs of the early Church), through the social virtual media, until it was recently born. This group received a commendation from the local Curia of the Legion of Mary for the Hispanics.

That is why I think the way Mary has been present to Jesus and to his Church, throughout the history of salvation, is critical for our Marist vocation and hence, for today's Church.



OLPH Junior Legion of Mary

What does the Easter season have to do with why the Marist Vocation is critical to the Church today?

by Joseph McLaughlin, SM, Notre Dame des Victoires, San Francisco, California

One of God's great graces was my missioning in the Philippines for 12 years. For three of those years I lived and ministered with several other Marists in a squatters area by the sea. Our ministry was to be a Marian Christian presence walking with the people in their daily lives. At the end of three years when our mission was ending, I reflected on the past years. My eyes teared as I thought about what was really accomplished during the time among these thousands of people. I asked God: "What has changed by our being here?"



Joseph McLaughlin, SM

In my heart I heard: "I am the one who changes things. The lives of these people will continue. You were here to be present to them, to learn compassion and caring."

Now, at Notre Dame des Victoires in San Francisco, California with Easter embracing our lives in 2022, have I learned anything from my missionary years? I have often reflected on Mary after the resurrection and the great mercy, forgiveness and compassion with which she embraced Peter and the apostles who abandoned her son in His passion and death. In a quiet hidden way she supports and strengthens them. Their shame and guilt must have been great. What then is my vocation as one who wants to breathe in and grow in her spirit which magnifies the Lord?

It is usually easier to show compassion, mercy and care toward the people who live on the street and who come to the feeding center in the San Francisco Tenderloin area. I can reach out to Sonia who is sitting alone and is quite unkempt. She lacks any external beauty and would probably have been left alone even as a child because of her appearance. I can smile and greet her and show some concern. It is good to have lunch with Steve as he keeps talking and spitting toward my tray. Do I put up my hand or move quietly to one side?

These are good actions but how much greater is the Marist calling to compassionately love and forgive family members, confreres, parishioners and acquaintances as we journey through the ups and downs of life. And, as the Lord shows me how I have hurt others, am I willing to ask forgiveness?



*Statue in Notre Dame des Victoires
San Francisco, California*

A recent article by Sister Simone Campbell, a Sister of Social Service, awakened me to a great struggle in our society. Sister Campbell desires to gather people who will learn to listen and share divergent views without condemnation or judgement. She has found this to be a great challenge because of the entrenchment of thought. Forgiveness, compassion, mercy and all the Spirit of Mary demand a listening, non-judgmental heart. Is this my vocation today in a world and society filled with anger, suspicion and intransience? Yes, I believe Mary calls me to develop a truly listening, compassionate heart. That will take the rest of my life.

What does the Easter season have to do with why the Marist Vocation is critical to the Church today?

by John Ulrich, SM, Parochial Vicar/Parish Administrator, Our Lady of the Assumption, Atlanta, Georgia



John Ulrich, SM

As I sit in my room in the Our Lady of the Assumption (OLA) rectory, I look out the window and see all the signs of new life with the blooming of the trees and flowers. Atlanta, Georgia is absolutely beautiful in the Spring (and muggy in the summer). I have been a Marist for fifty years, and with the exception of three years, I have always been in an academic environment, a high school or college. The pace of parish life is relentless and so are the demands. Parish life also offers challenges to community life. It is easy to fall into the diocesan mode. And so, what does Marist life have to offer to the parish scene? I believe the witness of our vows and our community life can be an example for our parishioners. The way we work, pray and share our lives together is a living witness to Gospel values. Being there with and for people in all the ups and downs of everyday life calls us to be signs of hope for those we serve. I

find in Mary, Our Mother, a tangible sign of hope. When we look at the life of Our Blessed Mother and reflect on her approach to the challenges of life, we can find comfort. Several years ago I was privileged to participate in a thirty day silent retreat. All during those thirty days I reflected on the events in Mary's life as she sought to trust that "God will provide." The retreat culminated in a reflection that I wrote and would like to share with you.

Mary, Model of Trust in God

At the Annunciation, Mary heard the message of the Angel. Her heart was troubled and she said, "How can this be?", but she trusted - God will provide.

As she entered Bethlehem, Mary heard Joseph say, "There is no room at the inn." Mary was tired and anxious, but she trusted - God will provide.

Joseph told Mary the message from the Angel, "Take the child and His mother and flee into Egypt." Mary was frightened, but she trusted - God will provide.

In the Temple at her Son's Presentation Mary heard the words of the wise man Simeon, "You yourself shall be pierced as with a sword." Mary was confused, but she trusted - God will provide.

Mary found twelve-year-old Jesus teaching in the Temple and she questioned Him, Jesus responded "Why do you search for Me?" Mary did not understand, but she trusted - God will provide.

At Cana the wine ran out. Mary brought this to the attention of Jesus and He responded, "Woman, how does this concern of yours involve Me?" Mary was troubled, but she trusted - God will provide.

Mary and the Disciples went to see Jesus and when He heard that they had come to visit Him, Jesus said, "Whoever does the will of My heavenly Father is brother and sister and mother to Me." Mary wondered about her motherhood, but she trusted - God will provide.

Jesus came to teach in the Synagogue. The people found Jesus "too much for them", and Jesus said "No prophet is without honor except in his native place." Mary's motherly heart was heavy, but she trusted - God will provide.

Mary saw her Son on the way to Calvary, she could barely contain her grief. Mary's heart was breaking, but she trusted - God will provide.

The Mother of Sorrows held the lifeless body of her only Son. Mary's heart was broken, her spirit severely tested, but she trusted - God will provide.

Mary sat with the Apostles, and in her own grief she consoled them. She was mother and friend, filled with grace and love. Mary prayed to understand God's will, but she trusted - God will provide.

Jesus rose from the dead and Mary's joy knew no bounds. Mary tells - God has provided. God will provide. Place your trust in God.

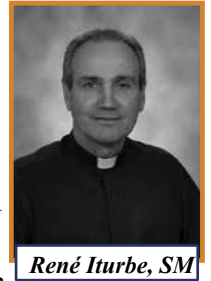


2022 Holy Saturday Easter Vigil at OLA

What does the Easter season have to do with why the Marist Vocation is critical to the Church today?

by René Iturbe, SM, Marist Center of the West, San Francisco, California

Jesus, the transforming love of God, calls us to our potential. Jesus is the resurrection, the truth and life. One aspect of the Marist Charism demonstrated by Mary enables us to be responsive to this transforming process of resurrection which does not necessarily begin at the point of death, but includes death as part of the process. That aspect of Mary is humility: being who you are and not more or less than you are. Mary of the scripture shows this humility. She does not have the answers through preconceived notions but says how? Even in fear she listens, she is not closed to the new and ponders deep within herself that which she has heard. She is open to the Spirit and then acts - be it done according to your word. This humility is evident at the annunciation, the wedding feast of Cana, finding Jesus in the temple and the foot of the cross. She verbalizes it in the Magnificat when she meets Elizabeth. A humble person makes her or his self available to the transforming love of God - available to the resurrection process. Teresa of Avila said: humility is the queen without whom none can checkmate (win) the king. When we finally come into the consciousness of who we are, God can really be for us what God truly is.



The challenge to all of the above is the reality of our world. We value our uniqueness and learn to emphasize it so that it sets us apart: like gold which is scarce and therefore more valuable. We have something no one else has, we feel it gives us a value and worth that makes us stand out as most important. Merton would say: basic humanity can be valued more than the dream of "Separateness" and special unique accomplishments. We do not belong to humanity but to humanity which is wounded. We experience this wounded condition along with the reality of a desire to be great. Thomas Aquinas called it *Desiderium Naturale*. Everything living wants to persist and expand in being. In plants and animals this drive stays on the biological level but in humans it is more complex. Not only do we want to biologically survive, we want to be important and esteemed, the center of attention, receive adulation. This inner urge or impulse determines how we evaluate our lives. We weigh everything in terms of what promotes or diminishes us. We attach our happiness to promoting experiences and our sadness to diminishing experiences. The desire to be great takes the form of pursuing promotion and avoiding diminishment. The twin cravings, often unconscious, lead the course of our lives day in and day out. As one writer says: The hierarchical structure of society becomes a natural benchmark for how we are doing. This is the world in the gospel of John. Are we with the rich and powerful, respected and admired? If so, the inner drive is satisfied. However, if we are poor and unknown, the inner drive is frustrated. The comparative mind is deadly for the spiritual life.

Okay then, if this drive is natural, as Aquinas says, how can Jesus encourage a movement to be least, to serve, be as a little child and expect us, who have an impulse to be great, special or unique to follow him? If we experience a place within us that needs to be filled - according to Augustine, it is a restlessness within each of us and for Aquinas the impulse. This world we live in is conducive to us trying to fill the "hole" as it were with success, power, prestige, uniqueness, etc.. The real drive is not to be great but to fill the "hole" or restlessness within. Only with humility are we able to go into this hole or restlessness within ourselves and not try to fill it up with deeds or greatness. The hole, the restlessness is really the entrance into the kingdom. If we can, as Merton tells us, humbly dwell there, purified by liquid fire, it will become salt. Our natural innate potential will emerge as a gift. This is the truth that drives us but which we have difficulty grasping. We desire greatness because we are already great. It is not a quest for what we do not have; it is a quest to become conscious of what we already are. This is what Jesus told his disciples: you are light, you are salt that makes a difference - realize it!

The consciousness of innate worth that we arrive at once we have been purified of all grandiose projects and cut away all that keeps us from life, comes from humility. Life is gift and we are to live it as gift. Mary said in humility: be it done according to your word.

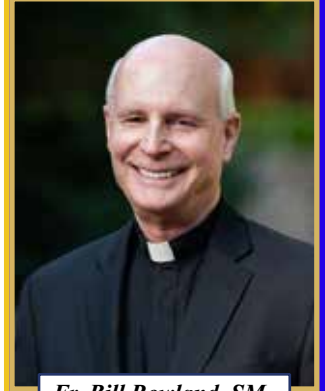


Additional Vocation Reflections

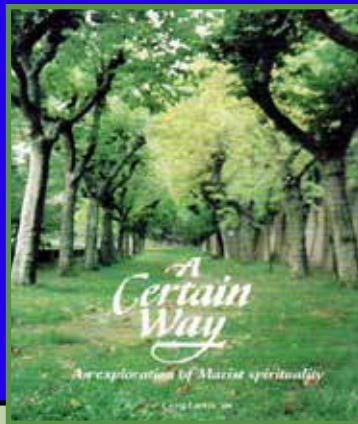
Marist School President Fr. Bill Rowland, SM Reflects on Marist Spirituality

Marist School students will be reading the encyclical by Pope Francis, *Rejoice and Be Glad*. Pope Francis affirms the declaration of Vatican II that all the baptized are called to be holy. Pope Francis emphasizes the need for prayer and discernment to hear each person's unique call or vocation to holiness. He provides very practical examples of holiness. This encyclical complements the school's emphasis on teaching our students at all grade levels about listening for and responding to their vocation or call from God. This approach to vocations will be a permanent feature of our curriculum at Marist. It ties in nicely to Marist Vocation Year that the Society of Mary has declared for 2022.

We invite you to [read](#) Fr. Rowland's reflection, "[Breathing in the Spirit of Mary](#)".



Fr. Bill Rowland, SM



The "Work of Mary"

From *A Certain Way - An Exploration of Marist Spirituality*

by Craig Larkin, SM

For further reflection on Marist spirituality, we invite you to read [this](#) excerpt from *A Certain Way*.

Vocation Resources

Intercultural Spirituality

by Sister Sophia Park S.N.J.M.

Sister Sophia Park, S.N.J.M. belongs to the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary. She is an associate professor in religious studies and philosophy at Holy Names University in Oakland, California. Her field is women's spirituality from a global perspective. Recently she published *Conversation at the Well: Emerging Religious Life in the 21st-Century Global World - Collaboration, Networking, and Intercultural Living* with Sister Teresa Maya, C.C.V.I.



Society of Mary (Marists) Vocation News



St. Peter Chanel Novena

As the month of April concludes we would like to share the full novena to St. Peter Chanel for vocations in this Marist Vocation Year.



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.

