

Society of Mary

Marist Vocation News



May 2022

Introduction

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

A critical point in understanding a Marist vocation is well articulated in this series of essays. We as Marists believe that we are not only called in Baptism to a new life in Christ, but we are also called by Mary in a way that adds direction in that Baptismal call to a life of thinking like Mary, judging like Mary and acting and feeling like Mary in our response to that call. In this way, it is more than just a spirituality for being a Marist, but also a sense of how mission and ministry come together for us in our Marist life. We perceive that we need to be instruments of mercy in all we do in the Church. We also tend to envision a Church whose mother is Mary and which can and should bring a mother's love to the Church, and which should be evident in pastoral ministry in the Church. Our founder, John-Claude Colin, perceived that a "new Church", not literally but perhaps constantly renewed in that sense, was required for dealing with the people of our time.



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)

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

by Ben McKenna, SM, Assistant to the Superior General of the Society of Mary, Rome, Italy



Ben McKenna, SM

God called us by name before we were born (Jer.1:5); even before the foundation of the world (Eph.1:4). Our Vocation is to discover that name, that identity, which God has given us, which is deeper and more profound than any other name we may have been given.

A person's name, in the Biblical tradition, signifies that person's place, identity and mission in the universe, as destined by God – the One in whom we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:8).

Mary's name – and hence her identity and mission - in Hebrew is "Miriam": a name which means "to be born, to stand upright, to come to fullness of life." (Fritz Arnold: *'Like Mary'*, Columba Press, 2001)

To be a Marist is to identify with Mary, to continue her God-given mission of enabling others to be reborn, to stand upright and to come to fullness of life – particularly those who are on the 'edge' of life.

Wherever we are, in whatever place we find ourselves, we are called, as Pope Francis insists, to come to the aid of those who are on the 'existential' peripheries of life. Our Marist *Constitutions* call these the neglected and abandoned (#s 12 & 54).

Our way is Mary's way: to daily ponder the Word, present to us in many available forms: creation, events, people, prayer and sacrament. This pondering, in God's Presence, is a contemplative practice out of which the energy for our mission is born.

Since the 2017 Marist General Chapter our Superior General has established three Commissions: Ecology, Inter-Religious Dialogue and this year, Migrants and Refugees. These commissions are symbols of what we are all called to do in our time: minister to the wounds of the Earth, our common home; walk in synodality – encounter, discover, journey – with all people striving to live a life of virtue; and give support and refuge to those who are displaced due to war, famine and intolerable circumstances.



This is Mary's Work, holy work, because it is God's work. With Mary we are God's partners and co-workers. God is working in and through us as we say our "Yes" to Him over and over again in the everyday events of our lives, in all the ages and stages through which we pass.

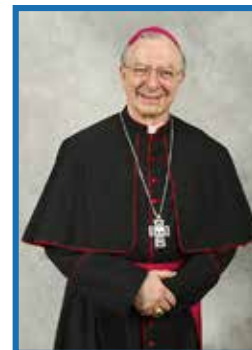
We are not alone in this. We are inspired in our life and work by all who have thought, judged, felt, acted and prayed as Mary – all 'Marists' who have lived this way of life since the commitment was made to establish our small congregation over 200 years ago.

It is important to share our stories of the great Marists who have inspired us, and whose memories live on in us. In this way we encourage one another in carrying on Mary's Work. May these Marist lives, well-lived, also attract many young, generous and capable hearts to join us in her mission: to enable the broken and wounded world to be born again, to stand upright and to come to fullness of life.

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

by Most Reverend Joel M. Konzen, SM, Auxiliary Bishop of Atlanta, Georgia

As someone who was a seminarian for the diocesan priesthood before entering the Marist novitiate, then was a professed Marist for 43 years before becoming a bishop in the Archdiocese of Atlanta, I have lived a variety of vocation experiences in service to the Church. The question of why Mary is important in today's Marist Vocation prompts a personal and immediate response.



Bishop Joel Konzen, SM

When I attend the funeral of a Marist or another priest, the religious and the diocesan priests alike bid farewell to the deceased by intoning the “Salve Regina,” the medieval Marian hymn that is beloved by diocesan clergy as well as by Marist religious. There is a deep sense that our vocation is aided by our devotion to and the intercession of the Mother of Our Lord. So much of our ministry and prayer is carried out under her protection. How many times a day do we offer the Hail Mary, the Magnificat, the Angelus, the Memorare, the rosary itself, as well as hymns to the Blessed Mother? Her spirit and her closeness to Jesus are inspirations for us both in our quiet and busiest moments.

In addition to hearing the “Salve Regina” at burials of those who have served the Church, I now hear it sometimes sung by school children. Mary brings us together - across the divides of ages, temperaments and degrees of wellness. Her profound care for us in our human need unites and does not separate at a time when we long for unity of heart and mind as a People of God. Along with the Eucharist, Mary's role in the Church draws the curious and the ardent alike.

Naturally, the Society that bears her name, the Society of Mary, is especially aware of the role that Mary has played in our vocation. We Marists speak of her as our ‘first and perpetual superior.’ In other words, the loyalty we owe to her whose life is our model and our encouragement is second only to that we owe to Christ Himself in the Blessed Trinity. We are reminded of that daily by the way we pray and by the way we speak of our work as “Mary's work.”

We would, I am afraid, experience our vocation as impoverished without our reference to and our recourse to Mary. Today's Christians, bombarded by extreme and half-true messages of every type, long for something true and something balanced as they come to worship and to live the essence of Christ's gospel. When we connect with the Holy Family and their tremendous fidelity to God, unfailing respect and generosity and active witness to the truths of Holy Scripture, we have a picture that, from Nazareth to Pentecost, directs us in confidence and courage to renew our passion, our blessed commitment to serve according to our vocation. I cannot help but be thankful for being “renewed by her merits and prayers,” as the Marist Constitutions state, in order to “share her zeal for her son's mission.”



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

by Michael Coveny, Marist Way Director, Marist School, Atlanta, Georgia



Michael Coveny

Exploring a Marist vocation comforts me during these unsettled times in the Church and in the world. One interpretation of a Marist vocation was shared with me over a decade ago.

While working at Marist School in Atlanta, a priest handed me the book on Marist spirituality, *A Certain Way* by Craig Larkin, a book that I had never seen before.

I read a sentence that described the activity of a Marist vocation. The Marist vocation was to “go to from place to place.”

To “go from place to place” implied freedom, the text said. What struck me though, was the statement that going from “place to place” meant being “unsettled as a permanent attitude.”

Being unsettled as a permanent attitude ...This is an attitude that seems especially relevant to our times.

Such a “permanent attitude of unsettledness” helps me face difficult exchanges and communications prevalent in the Church today.

Mary is the foundation of the Marist spirit, but we rarely think of Mary as “unsettled.”

Yet we read in Scripture that Mary was bewildered, startled, pondering and anxious. We read that she traveled, followed, witnessed and gathered.

In these accounts, Mary lived through such “unsettledness” with a spirit of strength and through God’s grace, she kept the faith.

That Mary was “unsettled” in her life helps me engage in a changing and unsettled Church.

The Marists have taught me to think, judge, feel and act as Mary did. To live out that call in today’s turbulence, I feel I need to “listen like Mary.”

For instance, I hear many different arguments in the Church today, especially from regular lay persons in the Church pews. I want to move on from them and enjoy the peace that my Church brings to me.

Instead, in these days, I try to make a better effort and affirmatively focus on listening in a new way. Where are their ideas coming from? Who are they listening to? What are they reading? What are they hearing? What are they fearing?

Put another way, my Marist vocation, as inspired by Mary, gives me a capacity to hear things that I would otherwise ignore.

A Marian heart leads me to listen in new ways in the face of such uncertainties and ambiguities. A Marist Way keeps me secure in my faith.

This new kind of hearing and listening is a re-found Marist Vocation that accepts a “permanent attitude of unsettledness.” In the end, recognizing Marist “unsettledness” is a great wisdom.



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

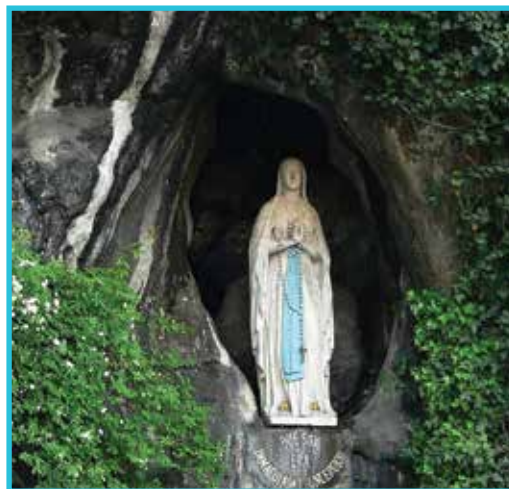
by Philip Parent, SM, Director of the Lourdes Center, Boston, Massachusetts

When I was a seminarian with the Marists through college and theological study, I was always happy when I was able to join my family in Maine for Christmas and Easter. We were a family of 8 children, and with the inclusion of other relatives and eventually with in-laws, there was always a large number of us gathered in a rather small house for these festive gatherings. Also, quite regularly, my mother invited a man from my hometown to join us in celebration. This was until the time he moved out of town. His name was John; he was unmarried and she wanted to be sure that he would have a place to go for the holidays. He was a nice man, however I would often be the one he would seek out for conversation and, to be honest, I thought he was rather boring. My preference would have been to spend more time with my brothers, sisters and other relatives. One time, referring to John, I asked my mother why we couldn't just have family for these gatherings. She got upset with me and said: "But John is family! We are his family and he will always be welcome here!" I was quiet about the subject after that! She was much wiser in the ways of faith than I was and I later realized that I certainly had something to learn about being a Marist.



Philip Parent, SM

Over the centuries, Mary has always been seen as refuge for the needy and abandoned and for those who have nowhere else to turn. She cooperates with her son Jesus in seeking out the lost and those who are considered outsiders. She is truly the Mother of Compassion. The Gospels reveal that when she learned that she was to bear the Son of God, the Savior, her first thought was to go to her elder relative Elizabeth who was with child. At the wedding feast in Cana, she was the one who noticed that the newlyweds were running out of wine. Mary interceded with her son Jesus for them, asking Him to spare them from embarrassment. She was present at His crucifixion, showing her love and compassion as she suffered with Him to the end. In living in the spirit of Mary, Marists are meant to notice those who are most in need and to respond to them in compassion. With Mary, they are called to stand together in solidarity with those who suffer, giving witness that they are not alone. In imitation of Jesus and Mary, Marists include, rather than exclude, and act in the words of their founder, Jean-Claude Colin, as "instruments of divine mercy" (*Marist Constitutions*, #11). This is part of the mission of the Church and Marists participate in this mission by seeing and acting as Mary did 2,000 years ago and as she does today. In this matter, my mother was a good guide for me in the process of living in the spirit of Mary.



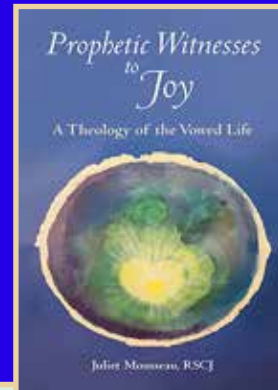
Vocation Resources



Leadership makes the difference

by Sister Mary Rowell C.S.J.

Sister Mary Rowell, C.S.J. is vocation coordinator for her community, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto. She also serves as president of the National Association of Vocation and Formation Directors in Canada. In addition, she teaches theology at two universities and is on the team of the Villa St. Joseph Ecology and Spirituality Centre in Cobourg, Ontario.



Book notes: Much needed contemporary theology of vowed life

by Sister Susan Francois, C.S.J.P.

Sister Susan Francois, C.S.J.P. is the assistant congregation leader for the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace. She is the author of *My Friend Joe: Reflections on St. Joseph* (Kenmare Press 2021).



Led by the Spirit

To discover your vocation, ask yourself: What brings you great joy?

by Fr. Bryan Massingale

Father Bryan Massingale is a professor of theological and social ethics at Fordham University in New York.



We Are Called

To find your calling, don't be afraid to ask: What am I looking for?

by Matthew Gummess, O. Carm

Matthew Gummess, O. Carm. is a Carmelite friar and a graduate student at the University of Notre Dame.



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.

