

# ADVENT

# 2024



**“Mary of Nazareth, the first disciple of the Lord and Mother of the Church, is the heart of our identity as Marists. This remarkable woman of faith, has called us to this way of life. We believe that we have been called by a ‘gracious choice’ into the family of Mary. It is her work that we do and so we commit ourselves to think, judge, feel and act as she did. ... Our spirituality, which is both mystical and practical, responds to the reality and circumstances of today’s world. Jean-Claude Colin, acting on what he believed to be Mary’s desire, encouraged us to establish a Marian Church, a Church with the heart of a mother beating at its center. ...” (Statement of Identity, US Province of the Marists Assembly and Chapter of June 2013)**

**The Marists Constitutions say, “The spiritual life is nourished by contemplation of the Word of God. This heightens awareness of the presence of the risen Jesus in the everyday life and work of Marists. His presence inspires them to make of their lives and unceasing prayer.” (*Constitutions*, 118).**

**The Marists encourage us to explore glimpses of our spirituality this Advent in silent contemplation because in order for us “to form a communion for mission, we need to deepen the contemplative dimension of our lives. With Jesus at the center, we can, like Mary, be missionaries of hope.” (2017 General Chapter, 30)**



SUNDAY

December 1

“If we think of Church simply as ‘the place where people can be saved’, then it is difficult to see where Mary fits in, because there is only one Savior and Mediator - Jesus Christ. But if we think of Church as ‘the place where people grow in life’, then it is easy to look on Mary - woman, mother, disciple - as one who teaches us how to be disciples of Jesus, and how to keep the Gospel values always in focus.”

(~ Craig Larkin, S.M., *A Certain Way: An Exploration of Marist Spirituality*)

*My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,  
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,  
for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant.*

MONDAY

December 2

“To be a Marist ‘By Gracious Choice’ is to have a sense of being chosen and called by Mary. Marists feel themselves in some mysterious way called to be not only followers of Christ (as all Christians are) but also called by Mary to hear her name and share her concerns for the Church, the world, and the whole human race. This grace is an invitation to participate in her spirit and in her desire to see the Gospel of Jesus take root in our contemporary world. The unity of all Marists lies in the name and spirit of Mary.”

(~ “*The work of Mary*”, The Marist Way pamphlet, Sharing the Marist Way)

*From this day all generations will call me blessed:  
the Almighty has done great things for me,  
and holy is his Name.*

TUESDAY

December 3

“Viewed from a Marist perspective, the movie *Nomadland* (2020) immediately resonates with something very deep in our “Marist DNA” - the missions to the Bugey - a region in the department of Ain in eastern France. ... the similarities are found in lives of the people. Both in *Nomadland* and in the Bugey, the people have been left behind by the world in which they live. They struggle, as Jessica Bruder, author of *Nomadland*, suggested, not only to find food or shelter but also hope.”

(~ Brian Cummings, SM, The Need for Hope: Prayerful Reflection with the Movie *Nomadland*, Today’s Marists, 2021 Volume 6, Issue 2)

*He has mercy on those who fear him  
in every generation.*

**WEDNESDAY****December 4**

“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)

*He has shown the strength of his arm,  
he has scattered the proud in their conceit.*

**THURSDAY****December 5**

“Mary is the master work of the hands of God, the prodigy of His power, the miracle of His wisdom and mercy.”

(~ Sermon of Jean-Claude Colin, SM)

*He has cast down the mighty from their thrones,  
and has lifted up the lowly.*

**FRIDAY****December 6**

“Contemplation is not born of techniques or deliberate effort. It does not come to us as conquest but as gift. It therefore requires a capacity and commitment to listen to what is happening, to face the truth of our experiences, and to submit to the truth.”

(~ Michael Whelan, SM, “The Marist Way, a Contemplative Way”, *Today’s Marists*, Spring 2018, Volume 4, Issue 1)

*He has filled the hungry with good things,  
and the rich he has sent away empty.*

**SATURDAY****December 7**

“The Synod on Synodality is critical for the Church today in light of the Society of Mary *Constitutions* (no. 16), which states, ‘Marists support the Bishop of Rome with all their strength; they place themselves at his disposal to answer the needs of the Church throughout the world. Because of their desire for the unity of the Church, the healing of divisions among God’s people will be one of their constant concerns.’

Pope Francis has said, ‘It is precisely the path of synodality which God expects of the Church of the third millennium.’ The Pope would like to see this type of decision-making not only among the bishops meeting in Rome but ‘at every level of the Church’s life.’ If we as a Church can share his vision regarding synodality, we will be living the spirit of another of our *Constitutions* (n. 8), ‘Because they bear the name of Mary ... they come to share her zeal for her Son’s mission ... and to respond ... to the most urgent needs of God’s people.’”

(~ Most Reverend Joel M. Konzen, SM, Auxiliary Bishop of Atlanta)

*He has come to the help of his servant Israel  
for he has remembered his promise of mercy,  
the promise he made to our ancestors,  
to Abraham and his children forever.  
Amen.*

SUNDAY

December 8

“In a world where cruelty and violence all too often reign, the Magnificat proclaims that God’s mercy and justice will be finally victorious. The Magnificat is Mary’s version of Jesus’ Sermon of the Mount (Matt. 5:1-12).  
(~ Gerard Hall, SM, *Marist Mission as Prophetic Dialogue*)

*My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,  
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,  
for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant.*

MONDAY

December 9

“I am reminded of the (contemplative) call at the very heart of Biblical revelation. It is revealed, for example, in Samuel’s ‘Speak, Lord, your servant is listening!’ (Samuel 3:11) and Mary’s ‘Here I am, the Lord’s servant. Let it happen according to your word!’ (Luke 1:38)”  
(~ Michael Whelan, SM, “The Marist Way, a Contemplative Way”, *Today’s Marists*, Spring 2018, Volume 4, Issue 1)

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and holy is his Name.*

TUESDAY

December 10

“...Jean-Claude Coln was one whose life was most marked by the French Revolution. If he could speak to us today, we might imagine him saying something like this:

‘They were searing times, ... It’s no wonder that for me, ‘the world’ was not a friendly place at all. ... You can see why I wanted to be unknown, to be hidden from the world ... To be alone with God alone was more important to me than anything else. But there was another idea that kept coming back to me like a constant master thought. What did Mary do in the Church after the Ascension? And what if we copied her way of life in the Church? Gradually, I came to realize that my call was not to be hidden from the world, but in the world. There were worlds to conquer, souls to save, and the best way to do it was by not imposing myself, by being unobtrusive, by putting myself in the shoes of others. ...’”

(~ Craig Larkin, SM, *A Certain Way: An Exploration of Marist Spirituality*)

*He has mercy on those who fear him  
in every generation.*



**WEDNESDAY****December 11**

“I would like to plead for a Marian Church; not for a church which multiplies processions and blesses huge statues ... rather a Church which ‘lives the Gospel after the manner of Mary.’”

(~ Francois Marc, SM, *A Marian Church*)

*He has shown the strength of his arm,  
he has scattered the proud in their conceit.*

**THURSDAY****December 12**

“To cultivate Mary’s sprit is also to cultivate a sense of service: ‘Behold the handmaid of the Lord.’ Singing the Magnificat frees me from all self-concern: I am fully available for service. To know how to serve is another way of disappearing, of making oneself hidden and unknown. What is required for service? Two things: identify the need, be equipped to respond to it.”

(~ Gaston Lessard, SM)

*He has cast down the mighty from their thrones,  
and has lifted up the lowly.*

**FRIDAY****December 13**

“To form a communion for mission, we Marists need to rediscover the contemplative dimension of our lives (*Marist Constitutions*, 118). Jesus and Mary should be at the center ...”

(~ Marist General Chapter 2017)

*He has filled the hungry with good things,  
and the rich he has sent away empty.*

**SATURDAY****December 14**

“Let them strive with every fiber of their being to emulate these wonderful examples of humility as grace will allow, so that, empty of all vainglory, they may be filled with grace and become, in God’s hands, suitable instruments of the divine mercies towards their neighbor.”

(~ *Marist Constitutions* of 1872, 428)

*He has come to the help of his servant Israel  
for he has remembered his promise of mercy,  
the promise he made to our ancestors,  
to Abraham and his children forever.  
Amen.*

**SUNDAY****December 15**

“The Founders were convinced that they were responding to a wish of the Mother of Mercy who sought to be with the Church of these times as she had at its beginning.”

(~ Marist *Constitutions* n. 2)

*My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,  
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,  
for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant.*

**MONDAY****December 16**

“The Church with a Marian face does not feel the need to create bigger and bigger things to ensure that God is properly honored. It is a Church which understands that small things can be, and often are, the most significant things.”

(~ Craig Larkin, SM, *A Certain Way: An Exploration of Marist Spirituality*)

*From this day all generations will call me blessed:  
the Almighty has done great things for me,  
and holy is his Name.*

**TUESDAY****December 17**

“Like the first missionaries ... they proclaim the Good News of God’s mercy to those most in need.”

(~ Marist *Constitutions* n. 92)

*He has mercy on those who fear him  
in every generation.*

**WEDNESDAY****December 18**

“When Pope Francis launched the synod on synodality ..., I immediately thought of Fr. Colin’s prophetic intuition of the action of Marists in the Church, inspired by the short phrase ‘all these devoted themselves with one accord to prayer, together with some women, and Mary the mother of Jesus ...’. (Acts 1:14) Like Mary, Marists of all branches are invited to be present and actively engaged with the whole Church in prayer, listening to the Holy Spirit, the world and each other as we seek a new way to reveal the Reign of God today.”

(~ Sister Michelle de Silva, smsm, Society of Mary USA *Vocation E-Newsletter*, June 2022)

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he has scattered the proud in their conceit.*

**THURSDAY**

**December 19**

“Sustainability Covenant (adopted by the Marist General Administration on July 19, 2022) is founded on three Principles: Trinitarian... .

Our Marist covenant is rooted within the ‘ecology’ of an ever-generative love and compassion that is the Holy Trinity. This dynamic of relationship and communion is the source and inspiration for the life and love of the human community and all of Creation, which we are called to through our baptism. In this way we make our own the Trinitarian dynamism which God imprinted in us when we were created. [Laudato Si’ 240] ...”  
 (~ *Sustainability Covenant* by Marist Ecological Commission coordinated by Fr. Ben McKenna, SM)

***He has cast down the mighty from their thrones, and has lifted up the lowly.***

**FRIDAY**

**December 20**

“Sustainability Covenant (adopted by the Marist General Administration on July 19, 2022) is founded on three Principles: ..., Incarnational, and Marian.

“Our Marist covenant is Incarnational. It celebrates God-with-us in the very matter of our earthly dwelling. Jesus Christ, the embodiment of life and love Divine, raises the web of creation into a new realm. Immersed into this new realm by our baptism we labor with all creation to ‘bring all things in heaven and on earth together in Christ.’ (Eph. 1:10)

As Marists our sustainability covenant will be enfolded and lived out through the Spirit of the Society of Mary. Marists are called to be Mary, to think, judge, feel and act as her. Mary nurtured the vulnerable Incarnate Son of God at Nazareth and embraced his dead body at the foot of the cross; she was at the heart of the Church when the Spirit was poured out at Pentecost. Empowered by this same Spirit we are called to care for the most vulnerable, and the poor of our common home who are always the first to be affected by our ecological crisis. (Laudato Si’ 241)”  
 (~ *Sustainability Covenant* by Marist Ecological Commission coordinated by Fr. Ben McKenna, SM)

***He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty.***

**SATURDAY**

**December 21**

“Luke the evangelist describes Mary as: one who hears the word of God and accepts it wholeheartedly (1:38); one who believes that what she has heard will be fulfilled (1:42,45); one who treasures what she has been told and ponders it (2:19-51) ...”  
 (~ “*The work of Mary*”, The Marist Way pamphlet, Sharing the Marist Way)

***He has come to the help of his servant Israel for he has remembered his promise of mercy, the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and his children forever. Amen.***

**SUNDAY**

**December 22**

“Our emphasis is not to look at Mary, talk about Mary, nor do we have many Marian images and statues in our houses. ... because that is not our point. ... We are Mary. That is the point. And Mary would not talk much about herself but would get on with it. This is the ultimate Christian form of Marian devotion - not to have a particular devotion to someone, but to be that particular person.”  
 (Alois Greiler, SM, Marist Retreat 2016, Monday Day 1: Like Mary - *Marist Identity*)

***My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant.***



MONDAY

December 23

“As Marists, we are to become ever more thoroughly Gospel-people in our relationships – just like Mary herself. This also implies being bearers of Christ to others, ‘missionary’. ... we need a place where we learn to process and integrate all that is happening within us ... For Marists, Nazareth is that place.

...

... Nazareth, then, represents our need for God, of being ‘alone with God,’ and of taking time to sift and discern our plans and actions together with God. ...

... Nazareth means learning to be ‘a servant of the Lord.’ As we grow in such an openness to God we will certainly also come to see just how close God is to us personally. ...

... Nazareth primarily means growing in the profound consciousness of God that filled that house and family at Nazareth. ...

... Nazareth then, is about making space to be formed by God, and our heavenly partners. The point behind making time to ponder on things as Mary herself did at Nazareth, is not merely to promote a sense of interior calm or confidence. It is about centering ourselves and what we are doing on God. ...”

(~ David Kennerley, SM, *Nazareth*)

*From this day all generations will call me blessed:  
the Almighty has done great things for me,  
and holy is his Name.*

## An Advent Poem

by Saint John of the Cross

If you want, the Virgin will come walking down the road  
pregnant with the holy, and say,  
“I need shelter for the night,  
please take me inside your heart, my time is so close.”  
Then, under the roof of your soul,  
you will witness the sublime intimacy,  
the divine, the Christ, taking birth forever,  
as she grasps your hand for help,  
for each of us is the midwife of God, each of us.  
Yes there, under the dome of your being  
does creation come into existence eternally,  
through your womb, dear pilgrim  
- the sacred womb of your soul,  
as God grasps our arms for help:  
for each of us is his beloved servant, never far.  
If you want, the Virgin will come  
walking down the street  
pregnant with Light and sing.

