



Marist Worldwide Missions

Christmas 2024

Dear Marist Mission Office Friend,

As we open our hearts to the wonder of the birth of Christ, I share with you warm blessings for a joyful Christmas from the priests and brothers of the Society of Mary (Marists). We are grateful for your friendship, prayers and support of our missions around the world.

While our world is fraught with divisions and wars, the Christmas season brings a message of hope. As the Superior General of the Society of Mary, Fr. John Larsen, SM, has shared, “The call of the Gospel is to be united in Christ. Our Marist call is to unity, peace and reconciliation.” As Mary was born to “trust and hope in God with such faith, hope and love”, we find our inspiration in Mary as we undertake her work with faith, hope and love.

I write to you this Christmas season sharing news from New Caledonia, one of our mission areas in the Oceania Marist Province. The first Marists arrived in New Caledonia in December 1843, with the first mission established in the village of Balade. Despite numerous setbacks, including attacks on the mission, it was through the persistent efforts of the Marists that over 30 mission stations were established.

In a particular way I want to highlight the contributions made by Fr. Neil Soucy, SM, who spent the last 29 years of his life in New Caledonia. Fr. Soucy was born in Grand Isle, Maine in 1935 and was ordained a priest in the Society of Mary in 1962. He ministered at St. John Parish in Brunswick, Maine, before realizing his missionary dream to the nations of Oceania. Fr. Soucy’s mission work first took him to the Solomon Islands where he served in various capacities for 22 years. He later returned to Oceania, specifically in New Caledonia, in 1994.

Fr. Soucy first served at the parish of the Good Shepherd, in Vallée-du-Tir, until 2011. He was described as a pastor very close to his flock, “with a generous, simple, devoted, open-minded heart, who constantly repeated: live unity in diversity.” Following a visit to the United States, he spent a few months in Koumac, before an active retirement in the service of the parishes of Saint- Louis (2012-2013) and then at La Conception (2015-2023), where he was happy to do as much ministry as his health allowed. Fr. Soucy died on July 7, 2023 in Nouville.

During the more than 180 years that the Marists have been ministering in New Caledonia they have encountered various highs and lows. Most recently, the beautiful church of Saint Louis, where Fr. Soucy served, was deliberately burnt down by protestors. The Provincial of Oceania has asked for prayers for the leaders of New Caledonia and for the guidance and protection for the Marist missionaries and their work with the people there.

I ask for your continued prayers for all of our Marist missions around the world and invite you to submit your prayer intentions using the space provided on the back of the remittance slip or on our website www.societyofmaryusa.org. Please consider doing what you can to contribute to our annual Christmas appeal so that we may be able to continue supporting the vibrant ministries in our global missions.

As always, be assured of our prayers and gratitude to you this Christmas season and throughout the coming year. May the joy and peace of the newborn King be with you and your loved ones this Christmas and in the New Year!

Shalom!

Rev. Walter Gaudreau, SM
Director, Marist Missions Office of the U.S.

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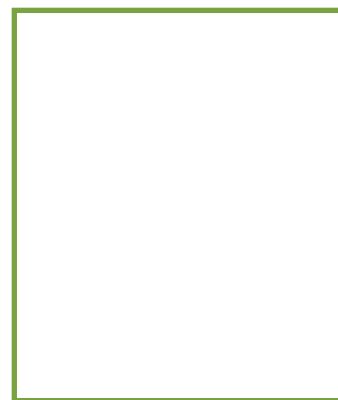
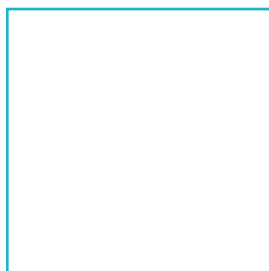
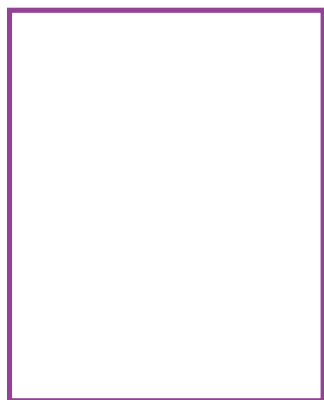
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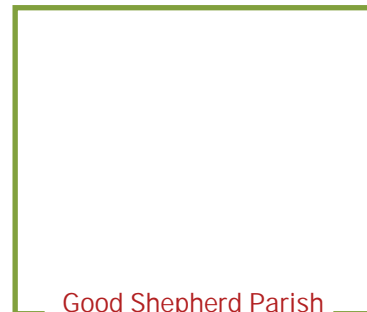
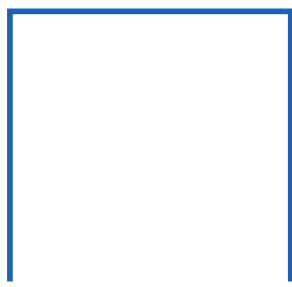


Marist Mission in New Caledonia

Past & Present



Fr. Neil Soucy, SM



La Conception Parish

Saint- Louis Parish

Good Shepherd Parish

