



A MARIAN PEOPLE, A MARIAN CHURCH

Marist Craig Larkin described a Marian Church in “A Certain Way: An Exploration of Marist Spirituality” as a place where the presence of Mary is very much alive through the presence of others. The people of Holy Rosary Church, a Marist parish located in Buckhannon, West Virginia have a long history of reaching out and embracing brothers and sisters in need. In many ways, they are what Marist founder Jean-Claude Colin called all Marists to be: “instruments of divine mercy.”

In 1985 the Buckhannon area experienced what is known as a “hundred year flood.” It devastated the community. Many lives were lost and destruction was widespread. There was confusion and hopelessness and people didn’t know where to turn for help and consolation. The local Methodist and the Catholic churches provided both. With the help of Marist Brother Matt Wade, the two churches formed an organization called Crosslines and established an ecumenical board to oversee its operation. The bond between the churches is just as strong today as it was then. Both are jointly involved in witnessing to Christ by serving as “instruments of divine mercy” at Crosslines.



Marist Roy Madigan serving lunch salad

Their witnessing includes a Wednesday lunch program begun by the people of Holy Rosary and offered at Crosslines. Between 25 and 35 “neighbors” are offered what might be the only healthy and full meal of the day for many. Yet more than a meal is provided. Those who come are offered a welcoming and caring environment - a place to “tell their story” and know they will be listened to with an open heart. People who come know that the Marist spirit of welcome and caring will be waiting.

That same Marist spirit can be found at Holy Rosary’s Diaper Bank which is staffed by parishioners and is located at Crosslines. Diapers can cost from \$70 to \$80 per month. Most government programs do not cover such an expense. Through its Diaper Bank, the church is able to provide no-cost relief for these families. Again, those who come are warmly welcomed.



Participants in Diaper program

These programs are only two ministries the Marist laity at Holy Rosary are engaged in. Through all these ministries they have become imitators of Mary and bearers of God’s love and mercy and have lived out Gospel values with open and gentle hearts. Like Mary at the Annunciation, they say “yes” to what God and life asks of them. Like Mary, the Mother of Compassion, they are moved to stand by the cross of others. They are a servant people. And, through their ministries, the Marist laity have “stepped up to the plate” and assumed their rightful place in a Marian Church.

by Roy Madigan SM

The Marian Church stands at the foot of the Cross. She does not take refuge in a fortress or in a chapel or imprudent silence when people are being crushed. She is vulnerable in her deeds as in her words. With a humble courage she stands alongside the most insignificant.

A Certain Way, Larkin, p. 61