

AD MAJOREM DEI GLORIAM  
ET DEI GENETRICIS HONOREM

**TO LIVE THE FULLNESS OF OUR MARIST VOCATION**

**JOHN HANNAN SM**  
SUPERIOR GENERAL

**“to live the fullness of our Marist vocation”**  
(Foreword to General Chapter 2009, *Statements & Decisions*)

Dear Confreres,

When I wrote to you last March I presented a draft programme for action outlined in my first circular letter to embrace wholeheartedly our Marist identity. This programme formed the basis of the joint meeting with the major superiors and the general council in September 2010. In the light of our exchanges and having discussed the matter further I now wish to present the decisions made in the general council subsequent to that meeting.

I am well aware that these decisions will have little effect unless there is a concerted effort on the part of each and every Marist. This is where the partnership of solidarity in mission takes hold between leadership and membership. It is only in getting back to our roots as mapped out for us within our Constitutions and legislative texts will we be genuinely Marist.

**COMMUNITY – A MINISTRY OF LOVING SERVICE TO EACH OTHER**

The General Chapter of 2009 made some fundamental decisions with regard to community life. Our vocation is not just a question of choosing ministries. It is also about constituting communities of faith and service. Our Marist project is as much about renewing Marist community life as it is about ministry, *“a first contribution to evangelisation is to live out in our own community the communion that is the heart of the Gospel we announce to others”* (SD23). This ideal is confirmed in our Constitutions, n.127, where we are told: *“The ministry of loving service to each other is a primary apostolate”*. Obviously, the intent of being together is the central part. Living out our Marist identity is the basis from which our living, interaction and ministry flows. Therefore, the ‘Conditions for community living’ are particularly important (SD26).

The general chapter calls for communities with at least 4/5 members which:

- a) focus on deepening our Marist identity (see SD 11);
- b) reflect our identity as apostolic Marist religious and express the corporate nature of our mission (see SD 11, 18, 23, 20, 21 23);
- c) provide avenues for evangelisation above and beyond maintenance ministry, and thereby present a clear Marist profile for potential candidates (see SD 8,18, 29);
- d) provide diversity in their make-up and take account of the abilities of persons to achieve the stated goals of each community and its works (SD 26);
- e) are simple in their furnishings, with appropriate space for community living and prayer, with the possibility of offering hospitality (SD 26).

For one reason or another, not all Marists can live in community. Whilst recognising this reality the creation of dynamic communities is a core element of our congregation. I am asking each province, region and district, as a priority, to work explicitly towards the creation of communities and ministries within the parameters of this framework.

**PERIODS OF RENEWAL**

The general chapter states: *“A long period of renewal, for “spiritual growth and conversion” following the model of a ‘second novitiate’, will be offered to Marists after about ten years of final profession”* (SD 41).

This call presents something radically new in the recent experience of the Society. Father Colin had high expectations and aspirations as regards the holiness of Marists.

The period envisaged is not a sabbatical in a general sense, nor a period of general updating, nor a period of training for a specific task such as formator, nor even a general period of spiritual renewal. It is a second novitiate-type experience. The focus is on personal conversion leading to a more profound interior life, stronger bonding to the Society, and a freedom and availability for the communal mission of the Society. The period in question will be a structured time in community under the direction of an experienced Marist. We are thinking of a renewal period of about six months.

In order to be faithful in our changed circumstances to the basic insights and intentions of Father Colin, a simple repetition of 19th-century practice will not be adequate. What is needed is “*a creative retrieval of tradition*”. Like the 19th-century second novitiate, contemporary periods would include an important amount of study oriented specifically to personal change and development. Topics studied, using creative pedagogical methods, might include some of the best contemporary and traditional writings in spirituality, mariology, the theology of religious life, Marist history and Marist spirituality. Elements of importance would be a holistic discipleship rooted in the Scriptures and Liturgy including a sane and balanced asceticism. It would feature structured prayer and retreat experiences. Faith-sharing, journaling and other contemporary techniques would be pressed into service.

This type of renewal will be offered to Marists after about ten years of final profession. This can be interpreted in a wide sense. The chapter does not specify who is to organise these periods – it could be a province, grouping, or the general council.

Should these programmes be run by the general council and/or units or groups of units? The view among the major superiors during our consultation in September was not uniform. The majority considered that both GA and units or groups of units might become usefully involved. The general administration, in collaboration with others, is in the process of organising the first of these renewal periods. It would take place in January 2013. The location will be decided once we are clear what language groups are being catered for, and from where the candidates emanate.

## **RECRUITMENT OF VOCATIONS**

Apart from ongoing personal and community renewal, nothing should take precedence over the work of seeking new members. The small number of people in formation and those investigating the possibility of a vocation is alarming. We do not have a future without a radical growth in numbers of convinced and capable members. There are Marists working with young people, who organise different youth activities including the sharing of our spirituality and elements of our vocation. Nevertheless in most of our units we have neither clear directories or solid vocations programmes nor full-time Marists working on recruitment.

There is a variety of realities to consider and to face. In the provinces of the more economically developed countries, the challenge is to be in contact with young people and to interest them in the Society; while for the units in other countries, the main challenge is to release people and resources for this work, and to determine how to make a good discernment and offer a good training programme.

There is a team working already in the European Province on preparing Marist activities around World Youth Day and this team has links with other areas of the Society.

The call of the general chapter (SD 32) is:

- a) to create a shared vocation culture within the congregation and among the communities;
- b) to encourage and offer ongoing formation to our people who are already working on vocations;
- c) to develop more focused youth ministries and which are committed to recruitment.

Serious studies link successful recruitment to people who work full time, are well trained and with resources, when they make good use of media, have a clear vision, and are involved in youth ministries. Within the context of a clearly enunciated spirituality and mission courageous invitations can be made. Linked to this is the necessity of having a formation programme that is well planned and of high standard, linked with a serious process of renewal in communities through prayer, witness and action.

### ***Proposed Actions***

- a) Each major superior is asked to ensure that his unit has at least one Vocations Director who is freed up to do his work.
- b) The Vocations Director will have a person in each of the communities and ministries within his unit to work as a link person with him in recruitment.
- c) The International Co-ordinator of Vocations, Alejandro Munoz, will keep in contact with the Vocations Directors and ensure the flow of information and ideas.
- d) The International Co-ordinator encourages vocations promoters and others in the various Marist units throughout the Society to participate in the World Youth Day (WYD Madrid 2011) through the offices of the Marist WYD team of the European Province.
- e) The International Co-ordinator will organise an international meeting of Vocations Directors, probably in Brazil in May 2011.
- f) We encourage the unit leadership to seriously reflect on the recruitment of vocations in their work of prioritisation of ministries.
- g) There are other things mentioned in SD 23 which need doing; such as the setting up of an international web site, a year of vocations, a forum, etc. These will be dealt with at the international vocations meeting.

### ***Those who Accompany Prospective Candidates***

Since recruitment is the responsibility of every Marist it is important that we keep the following criteria in mind when helping someone in his discernment of a possible vocation. Candidates must be beyond doubt men of quality in the following areas:

- a) Maturity assessed through professional psychological screening with particular attention to maturity in the areas of affectivity and sexuality.
- b) Gospel attitudes, e.g. attachment to the person and teachings of Christ, a desire for prayer, respect for others, concern for the poor, justice & peace etc.
- c) Knowledge of the faith and religious practice.
- d) Academic/professional formation.
- e) Celibacy: the candidate must be living a celibate life for at least two years.

- f) Freedom from chemical dependency: the candidate's history of use of mood-altering substances such as antidepressant medications, alcohol, yaqona, drugs needs to be examined carefully.
- g) Has a realistic work alternative in life other than a religious vocation.
- h) Is free to enter religious life as regards family and finances.
- i) A medical examination that includes a test for HIV.
- j) Freedom from canonical impediments (Can. 643).
- k) Candidates must be 34 years of age or under.
- l) A candidate who has not been accepted in a Marist formation programme for reasons regarding his suitability for Marist religious life and ministry should not be accepted by another province or district.
- m) A candidate expelled from a religious community or a seminary is never to be accepted.
- n) Candidates should only be accepted from other congregations in exceptional circumstances.

## **FORMATION ISSUES**

Since the first circular we have made some good progress on a number of key issues with regard to formation:

- a) There are seven confreres in training in Rome to be formators: 2 from Africa, 2 from Oceania, 1 each from Brazil, Mexico, and the Philippines. The presence of this young group of Marists in the general house is a blessing and a sign of hope for the future.
- b) The International Theologate will open in Rome in Via Livorno in September 2012. Despite the inconvenience, our Italian confreres and the province of Europe have facilitated this project greatly.
- c) Two novitiates, one English-speaking in Tutu, Oceania, the other in Spanish and Portuguese in Bello Horizonte, Brazil, will begin on 1 February 2011.
- d) For the first time an international novitiate will take place in Tutu, Fiji, on 1 February 2012. Pat Breeze (New Zealand) and currently on the formation team in Guadaljara, Mexico, will be the master of novices and Boniface Kevon (Oceania), the socius.
- e) A special word of thanks to those Marists who are working in formation in various parts of the world - I am thinking especially of those who have left their home unit to be of service to the wider Society in this time of transition.

Our numbers in formation are decreasing everywhere. The situation is disquieting to say the least. The challenges are great. Each Marist is reminded of the importance of having new vocations. It is incumbent on all to seek vocations, to actively encourage and support those who may be thinking of joining the Marist religious life.

## **THE CAUSE OF BEATIFICATION OF FR COLIN**

The 2009 General Chapter mandated the superior general to explore the possibility of re-opening the cause of the beatification of Jean-Claude Colin (SD 62)

After an initial reflection in the general council, Carlo-Maria Schianchi, general archivist, was asked to investigate the matter with the Congregation for the Causes of Saints. In May 2010, his report was studied. The principal points were:

- a) Because the cause has lapsed for more than 30 years (since 1941), we have to begin the process officially again, starting with the diocese of Lyons. In fact much of the work is already done.
- b) The objections presented in the past are surmountable.
- c) It is impossible to say how long a cause will take, as we have to consider:
  - The time it takes for the archdiocese of Lyons to produce its report – This is largely concerned with the *fama* of sanctity diffused among the faithful concerning (1) the purity and integrity of life of Fr Colin and his virtues and (2) some signs of graces received through his intercession.
  - The time it will take to gather, evaluate and present all the writings of the founder.
  - How well the postulator succeeds in his goals.
  - The length of the waiting list in Rome of the causes already in process.
  - The occurrence of the miracle necessary to lead to beatification.
- d) Costs are difficult to estimate with any degree of certitude but should not be very high. The principal cost will probably be that associated with the beatification ceremony itself.

The general administration, having sought agreement at the joint meeting in early October, has decided to go ahead with the beatification process. We will proceed year by year, evaluating the outcome as it unfolds. Our goal is to proceed with the founder's process as an integral part of the renewal of the Society of Mary at this time.

Carlo-Maria Schianchi, of the European region of Italy, is the postulator of the cause. Justin Taylor, of the province of New Zealand, will work on the biography of Fr Colin from 1836 onwards. We are fortunate to have such gifted men do this work on our behalf.

Larry Duffy, vicar-general, has special responsibility for the cause of Fr Colin and Marist studies on behalf of the general administration. He will work on some printed material useful for the promotion of the cause. Ron Nissen, Australia, is helping with the production of website material. Units and individuals are encouraged to produce their own material in order to spread devotion to Fr Colin, and to note any favours received through his intercession. However to ensure that the use of such material works in favour of the cause with the Congregation of Saints, it should have the *nihil obstat* of the superior general.

### **THE CONTINUATION OF THE RESTRUCTURING PROCESS**

Restructuring is a process whereby the Society of Mary adapts or radically changes its administrative structures in order to respond better to its mission world-wide, among units, and within units.

The Society has been involved in various restructuring processes over the years and both CS 2005 and the general chapter mandated this to continue. The need can be traced to a variety of factors: decreasing numbers, geographical shifts in the location of personnel, ageing, shortage of vocations, large numbers involved in the internal administration of the Society, personnel and financial imbalances, need to provide good formation coupled with scarcity of formators, a certain lack of mobility of suitable personnel for various tasks due to inadequate permeability of borders within the Society.

Restructuring has a fundamental spiritual dimension. Mere administrative change will not in itself bring about a renewal of the Society of Mary, nor even less a seeking of power. It should help to release energies, resources, personnel, and leadership potential so that the spiritual mission can be more effective.

Restructuring is a call to let go of familiar ways of organization, autonomies, and geographical divisions etc., which have served us well in the past and to which we have perhaps become attached, but are now no longer helping the Society of Mary to achieve its mission in the best way.

Our primary goal must be to fulfill the ends of the Society and this requires detachment, liberty of spirit, and a willingness to change. Restructuring usually involves a painful change and a sense of loss, but this is so that the Society can be better prepared to fulfill its mission.

The process of restructuring involves many components: realistic assessments of each particular situation evaluated in terms of its mission, active imagination in finding new possibilities, methods of developing and retaining interest over a reasonable length of time, dialogue between levels, planning, preparation of minds and lives for the necessary cultural change.

Important aspects to be taken into account in any restructuring are:

- a) a realistic projection of the future of the Society, unit, or region;
- b) capacities to provide for future leadership (superiors at different levels and councilors), bursars, formators, active men to staff corporate ministries, the contribution of personnel to the international society, together with vocation prospects;
- c) the availability of finances and personnel;
- d) the creation of common and more cost-effective services;
- e) the incorporation of young Marists into suitable communities and corporate ministries.
- f) the allowing for the selection and ‘protection’ of selected ministries for the future – such as specific works in areas where there are perhaps few or no vocations and where collaboration of men from different cultures is important e.g. *La Neylière*, some city-centre churches, etc.;
- g) a balancing the cost of change with expected gain – this must be seen in the light of the perspective of the whole Society.

### ***Restructuring: application of the principles***

Very important is the ongoing quality of the dialogue between the general administration and each unit and groups of units, and of the relevant units among themselves. Such a conversation can be guided by the above and the following elements:

- a) The charism of our apostolic congregation within the framework of community life is fundamental and has priority over institutional matters.
- b) The mission is at the centre of the process.
- c) We approach the task from the stance of the refoundation of the whole Society rather than of its survival.
- d) Whilst acknowledging diminishment, we look to the future with hope.
- e) Moving forward must involve everyone - at times tough decisions may have to be made for the good of the whole even if not everyone agrees.
- f) There is a sense of urgency, even if the extent of change will not be uniform.

The specifics of the final goal can only be worked out in the process. Is it worth considering that given the disparate nature of the units - some being very small and others getting smaller - is it time to consider moving to a uniformity of a limited number of provinces made up of regions perhaps with a yet to be determined autonomy? The degree of autonomy could vary from region to region. In this way we can maximize the limited leadership, formation and bursaring capabilities. Then in an ongoing fashion as size of regions change the relation between the regions and their province can also change.

Restructuring or reconfiguration has many forms. Of course, nothing will happen unless there is a generosity of spirit and availability on the part of each confrere. Our vowed commitment gives us the freedom to express in concrete ways the fact that we are rooted in solidarity with each other.

### **EXTERNAL REVIEW OF ALL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT**

*“That the superior general, in consultation with the major superiors will undertake an external review of all levels of government – general, provincial, district and their relationship with each other – before the next Council of the Society with a view to continuing structural change” (SD 14).*

The review will:

- a) extend to all levels of government and their inter-relationships;
- b) be carried out in view of continuing structural change;
- c) be done by an external person, competent in the field, who understands the nature of religious life and how leadership is exercised within a religious congregation. He will be accountable to the superior general and council.

The main reason for the review is a degree of dissatisfaction with current structures and decision making processes:

- a) Our administrative and leadership structures are too complex and cumbersome given our size.
- b) Leaders tend to be caught up with having to deal with maintenance rather than the mission.
- c) A substantial proportion of confreres, with much to offer in terms of apostolic outreach, are principally engaged in the Society’s internal workings (cf. Circular Letter of 25 March 2010, p. 15).
- d) Our structures are not conducive to swift decision making and action.
- e) We have difficulty of getting competent leaders for important responsibilities.

#### ***The task of the Reviewer:***

- a) to examine the Constitutions of the Marist Fathers, the statutes, chapter documents, and other Marist leadership documents describing the nature, role of authority as exercised within the Society;
- b) to devise an oral and/or written consultation process with the various major superiors throughout the Society, the general administration and other Marists with an interest in this area;
- c) to examine the relationship between the external review and the ongoing process for restructuring and to determine the links and consequences;



- d) to seek to streamline and rationalise our leadership structures and to make them fit-for-purpose in a fast changing Society;
- e) to keep the focus on the mission and how this can be carried out effectively.

***Framework and Timeline:***

- a) The reviewer will draw up a preparatory document to be discussed at the meeting of the major superiors with the general administration from 23–30 September, 2011, in Rome.
- b) The reviewer will take on board the findings and carry out further research as required.
- c) The reviewer will present an outline report and the fruit of his research to the general administration, the major superiors and their councils for their critique and evaluation at the joint meeting of major superiors and the general administration in Rome from 21-28 September 2012.
- d) The reviewer will make further amendments and draw up the final report.
- e) The final report will be submitted to the general administration and the council of the Society in 2013.

**THE PRIORITISATION OF MINISTRIES**

Linked to the ongoing development of community life is the prioritisation of ministries:

*“Each province/district through its major superior and council will review and prioritise ministries by way of a process provided by the general administration. The focus of this review is to enable flexibility and the availability of resources, both locally and internationally, for the good of the mission of the whole Society” (SD 12).*

The basic criteria driving prioritisation are to be found in chapter 1 of our Constitutions, and most particularly in article 2 *“The name and purpose of the Society”* (C. 6 – 14, and see also C. 137).

Our present situation demands nothing less than a re-founding of the Society. The core task for each unit is to decide which community-based ministries to develop into the future, taking account of our limited personnel resources and with an eye to providing suitable communities and ministries for our younger men and future vocations (SD 55). This does not imply a negative judgment on the work done by so many Marists in their existing ministries but we must make choices, at times difficult ones, and plan intelligently, trusting in the providence of God and searching for his will.

Should we think in terms of a single uniform prioritisation process for all units in the Society? Given the different situations in the units of the Society in terms of size, government structures, and existing ministries, we feel that a uniform process would be inappropriate. Therefore, the general administration will work collaboratively with each unit on an individual basis to find a suitable agreed process.

**CITY-CENTRE CHURCHES: THEIR PURPOSE AND MISSION**

The general chapter unusually focused its attention on the desirability of developing the mission of some of our existing inner city churches throughout the Society (SD 21). There was a high level of consensus on the way forward. The project has three dimensions: mission, community and ministries:

*Mission:* The project is an expression of our conviction that we are called to make a distinctive contribution to evangelisation, and to be a vehicle for Mary's support for the Church in these uncertain times. The mission of the communities in the network is to establish the Church where it does not exist and to renew existing communities, in the context of the increasingly secular reality of contemporary urban life.

*Community:* It is not just a question of choosing works. It is also a question of constituting communities in accordance with the criteria as set out above. This project is as much about renewing Marist community life as it is about ministry.

*Ministries:* Focus on city-centre evangelisation providing ministries not already available and other than typical parish ministry. An emphasis will be on the neglected and the poor. 'The poor' refers to socio-economic groups such as refugees, the unemployed and other similar groups. 'The neglected' is obviously a much broader term.

The project will have the following characteristics:

*Open-ended* – 'different forms of evangelisation and Church renewal'. There is no suggestion that the work in the different locations should be uniform. Some churches might have an extensive sacramental ministry, others not.

*Flexible* – 'Confreres of all ages, and with a variety of skills and experience, can make a valuable contribution'. In particular, older confreres have resources of experience and wisdom that are invaluable for the ministries of welcome and reconciliation that frequently figure in the missionary profile of city-centre churches.

The project has links with other chapter decisions: working with Marist laity (SD 59) and other members of the Marist family; education (SD 20) and justice and peace (SD 22).

To implement the project, we suggest proceeding in two stages. In the first stage the major superiors concerned will select locations that fulfill the following criteria:

- a) they offer a real possibility of creative initiatives for the evangelization of an increasingly secular world;
- b) they are formed within a Marist community of at least 4/5 (SD 26);
- c) there is a realistic possibility of ensuring personnel for the medium-term future (SD 55);
- d) the city-centre ministry chosen will be among ministries given priority when evaluating and choosing ministries (SD 12).

When the major superiors have selected locations, a joint approach arrived at with the general administration will explore ways of collaboration through the exchange of ideas and personnel.

## **THE FINANCIAL REVIEW**

The 2009 General Chapter recommended that the new general administration "*prepare and circulate to the major superiors, before the next council of the Society, a draft policy on financing the future of the Society*" (SD 64). After consultation with the major superiors and the general administration, the superior general appointed the Finance Review Committee to carry out this recommendation. The committee consists of four Marists and a chartered

accountant. The Marists on the committee are Kevin Mowbray, bursar general and chairperson of the committee, Joaquin Fernández, provincial bursar for Europe, John Harhager, provincial bursar for the USA, and John Murphy, provincial bursar for New Zealand. The chartered accountant is Mr. Donal O'Brien from Dublin, whom numerous religious congregations, including the Marist Fathers, in Ireland, have previously contracted as a financial consultant or as auditor of their financial statements.

The task of the committee is to prepare the draft policy requested by the general chapter. They will do this through a two-step process:

Firstly, during the calendar year 2011, the committee will gather and analyse all relevant financial data from every community and individual member in the Society. They will do this in order to gain an accurate picture of the financial position of the whole Society of Mary. During this first step the committee will be accompanied in its work by an internationally recognised professional consulting firm, which will be contracted to monitor and audit both the process and the final report of the committee. All provinces and districts will have the opportunity to review and comment upon the financial data pertaining to them before the report is written.

Secondly, the committee will use this report, based on the financial data gathered, to draft a policy for financing the future of the Society. It is hoped to have a first draft ready for submission to the general council early in 2012. The committee chairman will present the draft policy to the major superiors and their councils for review and comment. Depending upon the reception of the draft policy, this preliminary version could be re-drafted and reviewed at least two more times before it is finally presented to the council of the Society in 2013.

The committee met for the first time during November 2010. Apart from clarifying their task and their roles, the committee produced a series of worksheets which will form the main financial tool for gathering the financial data necessary for its report. Once a consultancy firm has been contracted and has approved the format and content of these worksheets, they will be sent to each unit bursar who will have the responsibility for ensuring that every community and member in his unit completes the worksheets as completely and as accurately as possible. Provincial and district bursars can expect to receive these worksheets within the first quarter of this year.

## **CHILD PROTECTION AND ALIGNED ISSUES**

The general administration has the responsibility to ensure that each unit under the authority of its major superior is committed to best practice with regard to child protection and appropriate professional relationships.

The major superiors will ensure that structures are in place to properly deal with all forms of sexual misconduct in ministry. Preventive measures and procedures for managing complaints should be agreed on and ready to hand when allegations are made. These measures must reflect best practice within the Church and the Society of Mary and meet the requirement of the civil authority. Directories are required for all levels of responsibility.

- a) The general administration directory will contain the ethical principles underlying the policies and the internal procedures to be followed including communication;

- b) the unit directory, including those provinces who have regions, will contain the principles underlying the polices, the standards for prevention and the provincial communication procedures to be used when a case arises;
- c) and finally, the administrative directories (provincial, district and regional) will integrate into their policies and procedures the requirements of civil and church law.

We wish these procedures and policies to form an integral part of the renewal of our Society. Let us hope it will be good news for us and those we serve, especially young people.

We agreed at the joint meeting that:

- a) the general administration will continue its review of the general directory in accordance with current legislation a propos child protection and sexual misconduct;
- b) each major superior will study the requirements within his own country, taking account of canon and civil law, concerning these matters and make the necessary revisions of their unit's policy and directory;
- c) each major superior will send to the superior general the draft of the revised directory before Easter 2011;
- d) There will be ongoing contact with the assistant with special responsibility for these matters, Alejandro Muñoz, and the assistant general who is the link person for each unit is recommended;
- e) at the next meeting of major superiors with the general administration there will be a review of the policies in place;
- f) a final revised directory will be presented before the end of 2011.

#### **PROGRAMME OF RENEWAL BASED ON THE CONSTITUTIONS**

The call to deepen our Marist identity is central to the whole renewal process. The primary aim of this programme is to ensure that Marists prayerfully and reflectively read the Constitutions and be more engaged in the Society of Mary and its tradition. We wish *'to ensure that the priority focus of both individuals and of the province/district collectively is on our Marist identity'* (SD 11). This programme is the initiation, as it were, of the call to implement SD 24.

The programme will start on 12 September, 2011, and end on the silver jubilee of the approval of the Constitutions on the same date in 2012.

Each individual Marist is asked to focus on the Constitutions and to bring them into his personal prayer. In particular, it is recommended that each of us takes the Constitutions as the subject of his period of personal prayer (see Constitutions 120) at least once a week.

Every Marist community is invited to read a single number of the Constitutions at a meal each day throughout the year. Communities or units might choose to coordinate this personal meditation on a particular day, for example each Saturday, a day of special devotion to Mary in the tradition of the Society.

Provinces & Districts are encouraged to search creatively for a means of opening up the Constitutions thus enabling conversion and growth. Annual retreats in 2012 represent promising opportunities to do this.

At the request of the general administration, Craig Larkin has undertaken to write a guide for prayerful reflection on the Constitutions. He will have this work completed before the end of July and we hope Marists worldwide will have it in their hands during September.

During the annual meeting of the general administration and the major superiors in September 2011, a day will be given over to reflection on leadership in the Constitutions.

### **SOME FINAL REMARKS**

It is clear from this circular that the Society of Mary has a major task before it. The challenges presented are by any measure a major programme for government between now and the Council of the Society in 2013. I am confident that in reading the circular you will see the interconnecting parts form one whole. It is a many-pronged effort to bring about spiritual renewal in our Society, to refound it in a certain sense, to give each Marist the opportunity to contribute to the revitalisation of our congregation, so that it is best prepared to take on the challenges of the modern world as they impinge on the Society in so many different ways.

Change is always difficult but when embarked on with a spirit of confidence and courage, expressed through the combined actions of all, when organised and driven for a clear purpose, it will bring about the transformation we are seeking, namely a greater fidelity to our founder's intuition.

With great generosity and singular commitment to the common endeavour of the Society of Mary we can do so much. Our efforts, however, will achieve little if we do not see our vocation and the tasks before us as the work of Mary. She is the one who has confided to us an important mission. Let us turn towards her in prayer trusting that, through her special role in our foundation, our personal vocation and corporate life, we can achieve the exalted goals given to us by our founder and confirmed by the General Chapter of 2009.

I wish to thank the major superiors for their leadership in these very challenging times. I wish to thank each and every Marist working at the coal-face for your dedication and ministry. Without your personal and communal commitment there is no Society of Mary. Your work makes real that we belong to an unwavering and dynamic Society in a rapidly changing world. Our commitment to the Society and its mission expresses the way in which we are rooted in abiding relationships with each other. Our work and community living are signs which give us strength and identity. Let us be grateful!

Mary, Mother of the Society of Mary, watch over us.

Rome, 2 February 2011.

John Hannan sm  
Superior General

Tony Corcoran sm  
Secretary General