

To lead our Society in rediscovering our deepest identity as Marists

Superior General's Report
General Chapter 2017

John Hannan sm

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1. It is with gratitude that I look back over the past eight years. I realise that the leadership of the Society though always exacting was a grace-filled time. At this juncture, I am pleased to be part of the dynamic that will lead to the election of a new superior general who will bring the Society forward in the spirit of our Blessed Mother, and with the guidance of the Holy Spirit advance the reform that is being propelled by Pope Francis and to which we are called to be active collaborators.
2. We are living in a bewildering¹ world, where uncertainty and turmoil prevail and there is an inherent danger in not understanding the magnitude of the task before all of humanity to ensure peace, justice and the integrity of creation. Pope Francis specifies this perplexing phenomenon as *“a change of era rather than an era of change.”*²
3. Experiencing such mammoth change will be confusing and disorientating for many, specially religious and priests. One may ask what is driving our modern world into such confusion. High on the list has to be the destructive individualism that asserts subjective rights over those that respond to ensuring the needs of the common good. Growing skepticism, indifference and hostility towards religious faith convictions give way to the demolition of long cherished beliefs which are treated as if they are no longer cutting-edge or relevant. Such tendencies systematically weaken the spiritual longing of the human heart. But not only that,

¹ Antonio Spadaro – Crux interview, This is isn't ordinary time on the Jesuits' historic gathering. <https://cruxnow.com/interviews/2016/11/25/isnt-ordinary-time-spadaro-jesuits-historic-gathering/>

² Pope Francis, Florence, November 10, 2013. <https://cruxnow.com/church//2015/11/10/pope-francis-says-catholics-must-be-open-to-change/>

they separate communities and alienate us from our history and the witness and experience of the past. The secularist agenda is an imminent danger to deep-rooted religious living more than we might like to acknowledge.

4. Our core identity as a religious congregation is an expression of an initiative by Mary, our Mother, to evangelise an ever more secular world. Therefore, our compelling call is to discipleship, promoted by the teachings of Jesus who invites us to look inward and outward to a more focused understanding of the spiritual through contemplation of the Word of God and service. Every gift that God gives is not just for us. It is for others, to be shared, and will bring most joy when it is shared.
5. Change is never-ending and will continually call on us to adapt our ways of understanding and living, of bearing witness to our faith in Jesus through witness and action. I am not talking about doctrine but the way we profess and live out our faith commitment. Such reform can only happen by *“grafting ourselves to and rooting ourselves in Christ, leaving ourselves to be guided by the Spirit.”*³
6. In this context Pope Francis’ leadership is an irrepressible beacon of hope, a guiding light enabling us to face up to increasing challenges. I pray that the new superior general and his team will have the self-assurance to move forward knowing what all Marists are called to do in bringing to fruition the seed sown by our first and permanent superior, Mary.

³ Ibid.

A special thanks to Marists everywhere

7. This report will focus on a limited number of aspects of our work as a general administration in tandem with the major superiors and may not focus sufficiently at times on the enormous gratitude the Society owes to each Marist who works ‘at the coalface’, those, who in the words of Pope Francis, are close to the people through their daily ministries, bringing the healing power of God’s grace to those in need... being *“shepherds living with the smell of the sheep.”*⁴

8. In a circular letter in 2014⁵ I listed at random many examples of such tireless Marists working in numerous Marist communities, labouring steadfastly at the service of the overall mission. I wish to repeat what I wrote then *“that I am confident we have the heart of Jean-Claude Colin. We work to know his mind and his mission intention... walking with the people listening to them, supporting them, praying with them, all because we have integrated a personal love of Christ, a love for Mary and a burning desire that others too will come to value, adopt and deepen their commitment to the Lord through prayer, fidelity and study.”*⁶ Many thanks to one and all.

⁴ Pope Francis – Chrism Mass homily, Holy Thursday, 2013. http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2013/documents/papafrancesco_20130328_messa-crismale.html

⁵ Be United with a Common Purpose, §§ 5-14.

⁶ Ibid § 13

The mandate of the General Chapter 2009

9. The superior general, assisted by the general councillors and officers, *“exercises responsibility and care for the whole Society and for each of its members. His chief concern is that the Society should grow and develop, that it be governed effectively, and that it be led with wisdom towards its ends, for the greater glory of God and the honour of Mary, Mother of God...”* (Const. 180).

10. I am guided in writing this report by the constitution just cited and n.163 which states that *“the general chapter represents the entire Society gathered to evaluate its fidelity to its spirit and mission, to resolve important questions concerning the Society as a whole, to decide on directions to be followed for the future...”*

The General Council elect,
General Chapter 2009



11. So the work of a chapter is about all of the Society represented by its delegates working as a cohesive capitular body towards the building of a dynamic future for the Society. So, this report will touch on many aspects of the work of the general administration - though not all - which was its responsibility in law or delegated to it by the 2009 Chapter. The call "*to resolve important questions concerning the Society as a whole, (and) to decide on directions to be followed into the future*" will influence the paths I choose to follow. The fundamental instruments which guide this work are the Gospels, the Constitutions, the mind of the Church, and the mandate given to us by the General Chapter of 2009.
12. Below are listed the specific tasks given to the General Administration by the General Chapter of 2009 to implement its mandate. It is best to study the entire chapter document *Statements and Decisions* N.176 –X111, 1 (SD) in order to get a deeper understanding of the context in which the various recommendations were rooted. I have checked where I think the general administration has achieved its goal, or is in the process of doing so or has yet to do so. I will focus on a number of the most important ones in terms of the overall goals of the last General Chapter and the work of the general administration and its work with the major superiors and units.

THE TASKS SET BY THE GENERAL CHAPTER 2009 FOR THE GA					
	Decision	Primary responsibility	Done	Being actioned	Pending
11	Deepening vision and culture of unit > focus on Marist identity	To be agreed by GA and major superiors (M-S) *		✓	
12	Each unit to review and prioritize ministries	Process devised by GA and implemented by M-S and councils		✓	
14	Setting-up an external review of government	GA	✓		
15	Annual meetings of GA with major superiors	GA	✓		
16	Superior general (and GA) participation in meetings of major superiors	Initiative of superior general	✓		
19	Strive to increase presence in Asia	GA with M-S		✓	
20	Continue reinvigoration of education	GA		✓	
21	Network of city-centre churches	GA & M-S -exchange of ideas and personnel		✓	
24	Program of renewal based on Const	GA to create program & provide practical tools		✓	
25	Training of local superiors as spiritual leaders by 2011	M-S in dialogue with GA*		✓	
32	Appointment of coordinator for vocations	GA	✓		
34	Ongoing Implementation of program for international formation	GA	✓		
35	Providing sufficient formators	GA & M-S		✓	
36	Program for formation of formators	GA	✓		
39	Provision of structured program for young Marists to live Marist charism	GA	✓		
41	Offering of long period of spiritual renewal after 10 years of final vows	GA & M-S	✓		
42	Selection and preparation of members for higher Marist Studies	GA			✓

	Decision	Primary responsibility	Done	Being actioned	Pending
48	Review and stimulation of Special Projects Fund	GA, GFC, M-	✓		
49	Coordination of ongoing formation programs for those in the first 10 years of Marist life	GA		✓	
50	Establishment of Ongoing Formation Fund	GA		✓	
52	Identification of Marist who could provide services for Society by end of 2010	GA	✓		
55	Nomination of the important works for SM and development of plans for international staff	GA in consultation with M-S			Unable to achieve goal
58	Process to enable Marists to recognize the place of Lay Marists	GA			✓
59	Appointment of promoter of Laity	At all levels	✓		
60	Further investigation re Formation of International Marist Family Council	GA			No apparent energy
61	La Neylière	EU provincial with GA and M-S	✓		
62	Cause of Fr Colin	GA	✓		
64	Draft policy on financing the future of the Society	GA		✓	
64	Implementation of finance for Mission Policy	GA		✓	
64	Task-force to study needs of financially dependent units	GA		✓	
64	Assessment of resources	GA		✓	
64	Assessing appropriateness of further dedicated funds	GA with M-S		✓	
64	Identification of burdensome assets & properties	GA with M-S	✓		
65	Assisting needy units to be more self-sufficient	GA	✓		
66	Valuation of properties and assets	G	✓		

The Relationship of the General Administration with the Society

13. When we took up office the members of the general administration spent time articulating our roles, responsibilities and what it means to lead effectively. We agreed as an administration that our primary task was *“to lead the Society in rediscovering our deepest identity as Marists, individually and as a body, by living the Constitutions and implementing the Chapter decisions.”*
14. From the outset each member of the general administration sought to develop an ever closer collaborative relationship with the major superiors as a body and with each one in particular within his assigned unit. This approach was convincingly endorsed by the Council of the Society meeting in 2013 through the mission declaration, which reads:

The Council
of the Society,
Dublin, 2013



We, the Council of the Society of Mary, through reflecting, discerning and working together, are convinced that the Society will best carry out its mission in this world of profound change by embracing wholeheartedly the reality of our being a small congregation within the Church.

This challenges us to become
 more focussed,
 more overtly Marist
 in spirituality and community life,
 in our identity and our mission,
 more international, more collegial,
 more open to working in collaboration
 with the laity, and more courageous.

In the light of this reality,
 we, Superior General and council
 and the major superiors,
 commit ourselves to building a future together,
 by exercising a leadership, globally and locally,
 in which priority is given to animation,
 competent government, increased collegiality
 at all levels, and appropriate structures.

15. In line with previous administrations, each member of the administration was assigned specific roles and responsibilities. Each assistant general was given responsibility for certain portfolios and assigned as a link-person between several units and the general administration. Obviously, each person had his own style and this naturally impinged on what could and would be done. Our systemic work as a general administration ensured a careful preparation of

visitations and a thorough study of the reports drawn-up subsequent to the visitation.

We focused our actions through:

- formal and comprehensive visitations,
- attendance at provincial and district chapters,
- presence at other major meetings such as councils of the province, regional meetings,
- meetings with formators,
- regular contacts with each major superior mainly through the use of Skype and/or email,
- correspondence as the need arose.

16. Success is attributable to the quality of the relationships forged and the trust that was strengthened through time despite some initial resistances and fears on both sides.

17. We sought to advance the mandate given by the 2009 General Chapter. The area of formation was very much at the centre of our concerns, as well as financial questions, and the attempt

Kevin Duffy
on visitation
in the District of
the Philippines,
2011



to open each unit to its potential as a change agent within the Society. The advances are noted especially in the areas of:

- formation (training of formators, raising standards in formation, recruitment, participation in international formation, rationalising houses),
- prioritising and strengthening of ministries,
- leadership training, formation of regional superiors, specialist renewals, etc,
- financial management and planning - building up and diversifying investments.
- improving governance and greater collaboration,
- research - as evidenced from reviews in governance, finance, and formation, carried out at the behest of the General Chapter and the General Administration.

The deeper integration of our Marist Call

*“As the Constitutions are
the fundamental charter of the Society,
the chapter’s intention is to exploit
the Constitutions as a powerful means
of renewal (Const. 230)...”
(SD, 24).*

18. The GA from the very outset sought to develop a simple and accessible process to lead confreres to a deepening of our understanding of the nature of our Marist Call and the implications of this Call in our personal and community

lives and ministry. Obviously, our Constitutions are the key source from which such a deepening might begin. In 2011-12 we initiated a yearlong consideration of our Constitutions and prayer culminating with the 25th anniversary of the approval of our Constitutions in 2012. For this we commissioned Craig Larkin to write an accessible series of reflections on our Constitutions both old and new - *Bearings*. We also asked local superiors to initiate the reading of one of the constitutions each day at the principal community meal. That practice is still continued in a number of houses.

19. Many of the districts and provinces have held annual retreats on Marist themes, particularly on the Constitutions. Justin Taylor was commissioned to write a biography of our founder. Other works were written by Francois Drouilly⁷ all of them focusing on a deeper understanding of our founder's spirituality and vision of what the Marist vocation entails. The bi-centenary of the "*Fourvière pledge*" was well prepared and well celebrated. In this we were joined by the wider Marist family as a means of deepening our understanding of our shared Marist roots and our common heritage. Linked to the event were initiatives such as that of Canada where Gaston Lessard's *Devenir mariste* (2015) was a helpful tool for French speaking Marists as indeed was the *Ascent to Fourvière* by Justin Taylor and Francois Drouilly (2015). All of the above in my view led to a greater consciousness of our rich spiritual heritage which was taken up by many in the Society and the wider Marist family.

⁷ Fifteen days of prayer with Jean-Claude Colin, 2010; The Logbook of a Spiritual Adventurer: The correspondence of JC Colin, superior general, 1836-1854, 2013; Weaving a Mantle of Mercy, 2016

The Colinian Period of Renewal

“A long period of spiritual renewal, for “spiritual growth and conversion”, following the model of a “second novitiate”, will be offered to Marists after ten years of final profession” (SD, 41).

20. Because of the difficulty in finding and eventually being able to release suitable leaders for this program, we scheduled the first six-month program from March to August 2015. Following the assessment of both the participants and leaders it was perceived to have been a successful and uplifting spiritual experience. Happily, another such program began on March 1 of this year concluding on July 31 in *La Neylière*.
21. It is important to note that the province of Australia, on behalf of Marist Asia Pacific (MAP), successfully planned and executed several three-month long renewal programs for confreres from Oceania and Asia over a five year period.



Spirituality and Lifestyle Program,
Australia, 2014

International Formation

22. The previous administration devoted much time to the setting up of an international formation structure that would guarantee “*quality, consistency and continuity*” in initial formation, including the provision of trained formators and the necessary finance to make it possible. The General Chapter in 2009 endorsed this approach and simply asked the incoming administration to “*ensure the implementation of the Society’s program for international formation*” (SD, 34).

The general council, after reviewing the work already done, confirmed its intention to continue with the objectives of having international formation for both the novitiate and theologate. This practically speaking meant that the theologates would continue in Oceania at Marist College, Bomana, and Marist College, Suva, in addition to a theologate for all other Marists in Rome. Later on it was decided to close Bomana and locate the Oceanian students in Suva. Other houses of

Students of
the International
Theologate
“Casa di Maria”,
Rome, 2015



study would continue in a number of the units mainly for pre-novitiate preparation, as well as providing training in philosophy as a prerequisite for theological studies.

23. The International Theologate in Rome was opened in 2012. An English Language International Novitiate had already started in Dumalag, Davao, the Philippines, in January 2009. The novitiate transferred to Tutu in 2011 and after some major difficulties in the short-term was transferred to Maryvale, New Zealand, for novices other than those from Oceania who remained on in Tutu. Also in 2011 a Spanish - Portuguese Language International Novitiate was held in Belo Horizonte. In 2012 the International Novitiate was established in the Philippines first in Dumalag and finally in 2014 in Eden, Davao.
24. On the recommendation of the Council of the Society in 2013 a committee was set-up to *“review the current and potential formation programmes in the Society of Mary”* with a view to *“quality, consistency and continuity of the whole of initial formation in the Society and the Society’s human and financial ability to sustain these programs”* (CS2013, 45).
25. This report was affirmative in terms of quality and consistency for both the international novitiate and the international theologate formation houses. There were a number of important recommendations which were accepted for the most part by the general council after consulting with the major superiors at the ARC meeting in 2014 and the formators concerned. The ARC meeting composed of the major superiors and general administration continues to review the programs as part of its annual review. Similarly the directors of formation evaluate the work in their own houses of formation with reference to the review.

26. A previous report on theological formation, *Review of Marist Theologate Formation in Oceania*,⁸ was carried out, at the initiative of the provincial of Oceania, in the houses of formation in Bomana and Suva in 2012. This report led to some significant changes and developments in formation within the province of Oceania.
27. The *General Directory of Initial Formation* was revised in 2014. The document is available on line and is the standard reference on procedures to be followed in all formation houses.
28. One of the recommendations of the report on international formation is the appointment of “*a coordinator of Marist formation*”.⁹ I believe this is an important issue which can be taken up amongst others at the chapter as part of our conversations on formation.
29. Since the opening of the international houses of formation, members from the general council have made several visitations of the International Theologate and Novitiate. I have also had the opportunity to visit all the major pre-novitiate formation houses in the Society.
30. My overall conviction is the quality of international formation is good and the young men are entering well into the process, and are systemically well-formed for the challenges that will face them as religious and priests. The

⁸ Frank Hoare ssc & Andrew Murray sm, *Review of Marist Theologate Formation in Oceania*, 19 December 2012. Final Report.

⁹ *Ibid.* P.(3) C

fears some had with regard to receiving formation outside of one's own culture did not impact as might have been expected. Our overall satisfaction should not, however, be interpreted as "job done, let's focus on something else". Complacency has no place where high formation standards are concerned.



The superior general visits the International Novitiate in Davao, 2012

Other developments in formation

31. A number of important developments have produced improvements in the quality of formation, worldwide:
- a. The increased vigilance in recruitment and more proficient accompaniment programs ensure a better quality of candidates entering the Society. Ongoing progress is rigorously needed in this area and we can learn much from the outcomes of the work of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Australia.
 - b. Better selectivity in the admission of candidates to the Society ensures a more discerned entry to the novitiate, to temporary and final profession and indeed to ordination. All of this leads to greater stability among those who remain and are ordained. The world in which young men are called to minister *“is increasingly sophisticated, so we must accept only those who are capable of ministering in terms of personality balance, academic ability, spiritual awareness and commitment”*.¹⁰
 - c. Finally, it goes without saying, that our numbers of entrants need to increase greatly if we are to maintain strength as a congregation - *“Without Vocations we don’t have a future”*.¹¹

¹⁰ Leadership for Mission, 2016-2017, mark 3, § 5.

¹¹ Ibid., § 3.

Training of Formators

32. Since 2009 we have provided basic formation training for four confreres from Africa, eight from Oceania, one from Mexico, two from the Asia and one from Brazil. Many of these are already engaged in formation and my sincere hope is that such systematic training will continue into the future.
33. An encouraging outcome of these initial studies is that one confrere is about to complete his doctorate in spirituality, two more have completed licentiates in spirituality and a further two are currently involved in studying for a licentiate at a local university within their own units whilst continuing their formation or other ministry.



Formation
of Formators 2014

34. Our goal in training as many formators as possible is to ensure quality and depth in the number of trained formators so that in all units every element of the formation process, such as discernment training and accompaniment of vocation skills, spiritual direction, and development of the spiritual life, are covered systematically and adequately from the point of entry until final profession and ordination.
35. There are a number of formators who were trained many years ago and still carry out essential formative functions in our various units within the Society. Their experience and continued availability to work in formation is greatly appreciated and indeed essential for the foreseeable future.

Formation of
Formators, 2011



36. A number of confreres have suggested on occasion that we have enough trained and competent formators for our needs. Regrettably, this is not the case. For example, if two or three of the current formator delegates to the general chapter were elected to the forthcoming general administration who would take their places as formators? This does not mean they should not be available for election! A closer look at the numbers of competent formators available to work in the provinces and districts of the Society will reveal that even some of the bigger units do not have younger men to train as formators or, if they do, they are already engaged in other important works of the Society. I actually believe the time is now ripe for a more radical and creative approach in the provision of formation into the future, if we are to avert a crisis within the Society. For example, could we conceive of our having fewer pre-novitiate formation centres in the Society to service all our aspiring candidates?
37. In July 2016, as part of the Fourvière bi-centenary celebration, the vast majority of the recently trained formators were invited to *La Neylière* for an intensive ongoing training program. It was a successful learning experience, so much so that, at the suggestion of the formators, the general administration recommends the incoming general administration to have a similar program in 2019 to continue the upskilling of our active formators.



Formators
workshop in
La Neylière
July 2016

Review of Governance

“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.”¹²

38. This important *Review of Government of the Society of Mary 2011-2013*¹³ was carried out by Dr John Honner who devised a consultative process employing some Ignatian principles to enable us to evaluate the effectiveness of our

¹² Ibid., § 14.

¹³ John Honner, *Review of Government of the Society of Mary 2011-2013*. Report to the Council of the Society, 2013.

governance structures. He presented an interim report to the ARC meeting in 2012 and the final report at the Council of the Society meeting in 2013. The outcomes from our governance work at CS2013 are presented in *Concilium Societatis Mariae 2013*, 6-12.

39. The ongoing work of the general administration since 2013 has been guided by the recommendations endorsed by the CS2013 and the post-ARC meeting documents, cf. *Leadership for Mission 2013-2017*.¹⁴

Ongoing work of Reconfiguration

40. The challenges of reconfiguration are great, as all those involved in the field know at some cost. Many are familiar with some of the abundant research on the topic carried out since Vatican II and before, all of which has helped religious to familiarise themselves with the realities and to grapple with the complexities.
41. Unlike many other religious congregations, the Society of Mary has a unique problem in that it is thinly scattered across great distances with a wide range of continents, languages and cultures,¹⁵ which makes us especially vulnerable as a transnational Society to achieve unity of purpose and

¹⁴ *Leadership for Mission 2014-2017*. Letter to the major superiors and Provincial and District Councils of the Society of Mary. Three separate documents were published after each of the subsequent ARC meetings.

¹⁵ Cf. John Honner, *Review of Government of the Society of Mary 2011-2013*, p.4.

solidarity in mission and leadership. Further factors add to this complex reality – with the small numbers in most units and an ageing and diminishing body of capable confreres in others, we are already seeing signs of our not being in a position to provide enough able leaders. We continue to grapple with these realities, seeking out ways of bringing units into a much deeper collaboration, in order to ensure a more co-ordinated and effective leadership-cohort into the future. I will now lead you through the progress so far:

42. Canada, Mexico, USA

A reconfiguration working document was agreed by the three provincials and their councils at a multiparty meeting in Washington in November 2015. This document has been confirmed by the three provincial chapters which took place over the past twelve months. The Marist membership of the three provinces are consulted at each stage of the process and the findings of those consultations will be developed into a final working document which will be studied by the three provincials, two members from each of the provincial councils and the superior general in May 2017. The outcomes of that meeting will be presented to the superior general and council for a decision in July 2017.

43. Australia, Asia, New Zealand

An open examination of the merits of a restructured single province of Asia, Australia and New Zealand was concluded in August 2016. The Asia and Australia chapters opted for the proposed restructuring model. The New Zealand chapter decided against it but did express a willingness to engage in a collaborative enterprise. Hopefully, some concrete co-operative initiatives will happen sooner rather than later. Asia and Australia have agreed to con-



MAP leaders during ARC, Rome, 2016

tinue an exploration of the possibilities open to them through reconfiguration. They have exchanged working documents between their councils. The consultations are ongoing. No decisions have yet been made.

44. Oceania

The restructuring of the province centred on the formal suppression of Marist regions with the goal of building up a greater unity and solidarity within the province and its works. This was unanimously welcomed by the capitulants at the recent provincial chapter and much energy was put into realigning the legislation to this new reality. A substantial change in mentality will be required on the part of all in view of the cultural and linguistic diversities and ongoing financial constraints, in order to create a more unified province, but there is great determination and great good will.

45. South America

The districts of Brazil and Peru-Venezuela have worked conscientiously to develop the two units into a more cohesive governmental unit. There was a carefully prepared process where the members initially agreed to have one major superior for the two units. After a further experimental period this culminated with the amalgamation of the two units into the one District of South America on November 15, 2016. It was a good cooperative initiative despite the obvious challenges.

The Annual Review Consultation (ARC)

*“The superior general, together with his Council, will introduce annual meetings with major superiors, in order to continue restructuring, to make and review plans, to strengthen and deepen communication, understanding and collective ownership of initiatives for the Society.”
(SD, 15)*

46. This was an initiative emanating from the 2009 General Chapter. The rationale behind the setting up of the Annual Review Consultation (ARC) meetings was:

- *“To deepen trust and confidence in the way we relate within the Society.*
- *To promote communication across the Society of Mary at all levels.*
- *To strengthen the connection between the various parts of the Society of Mary.*
- *To enhance participation, co-responsibility and agility in decision making.*

ARC meeting
in Rome 2012



- *To improve the allocation of resources throughout the Society.” (SD, 13)*

47. Judging ARC in the light of these criteria confirms it as an important contributor to the development of more able leadership through shared work and insight. The growing level of trust emerging at various levels was impressive. The general administration and the major superiors got to know and appreciate the complexity of the issues more clearly. The ARC meeting was also a good opportunity for individual provinces and districts to make known their particular needs to each other. As a consequence the provision of candidates for training as formators, the delivery of personnel for new mission ventures, and the need for financial support were more fully appreciated understood.
48. ARC certainly was an important player in the build-up of trust between the general administration and the major superiors. It took time for people of different cultures, with different experiences, different needs and outlooks, to adapt to mainly western operational systems and to work more collaboratively for the common good. The age and experience



of the leaders was also a factor which brought variety in approach and differences in leadership style. Supportive formation was also helpful for those with less experience.

49. As I look back over the years, my heart fills with gratitude for the sensitive and respectful approach that grew among the ARC members with time. We the Society as a whole have grown in that time to be a more universal and inclusive congregation with an increased ownership of the wider mission of the Society as a whole.

The Financial Review

50. The review of the finances of the Society of Mary was the initiative of the General Chapter 2009, which required 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).
51. The superior general appointed a committee and gave it the task of:
- determining the financial position of the international Society by gathering all relevant data accurately and as thoroughly as possible,
 - using the data gathered to produce a report which would recommend financial goals and strategies to the 2013 Council of the Society,
 - circulating the report for consultation to the major superiors, their councils and other persons, and re-



vising the report as necessary in the light of the feedback prior to the Council of the Society.

Meeting of the Financial Review Committee, Rome, 2011.

52. The level of trust displayed by the major superiors, their councils and provincial and district bursars during the process of the review and its implementation was impressive. We were able to gather reliable information necessary to formulate future policies, so we can be confident the information on hand represents the factual financial situation of each unit and the Society. Transparency augurs well for increased solidarity and co-responsibility in the provision of an adequate flow of financial resources among all Marists, in an even-handed way, in the development of the worldwide Marist mission.
53. The work of creating a more level financial playing field within the Society is a work in progress. There have been some remarkable signs along this line such as the development of the International Formation Endowment Fund; the gesture by the Australia province to fund the buying the new International Novitiate house in Eden, Davao; and

the generosity of provinces in the support of the many mission projects throughout the developing world where Marists are engaged. These concrete actions are tangible signs of our corporate responsibility for the support and upkeep of Marist missions abroad.

54. This said more will need to be done over the coming years to make available excess funds held locally but not required at unit level for the wider and more deprived mission needs of the Society, some of which are still unevenly funded.

City Centre Evangelisation

“In order to address the needs of an increasingly secular world, the Society will develop a network of selected city-centre churches where Marists presently minister. The ministry will focus on city-centre evangelisation rather than typical parish ministry. Emphasis will be given to the neglected and poor (Const. 12), and different forms of evangelisation and Church renewal (Const 14)...” (SD, 21).

55. The international network of city-centre churches asked for by the last general chapter is gradually taking shape. The sharing of personnel and ideas among units has begun.
56. The network corresponds to our core Marist mission of evangelising a modern secular world, linking different activities and approaches in a single global view. A workshop in

San Francisco in 2015 and an ongoing *Blog* have helped this. A follow-on conference will take place in London in May of this year, under the auspices of the province of Europe.

57. Developments not expressly mentioned in the chapter have included increased collaboration with lay people and with the wider Marist family. The SMSM have founded a community at *Notre Dame de France* in London.
58. There is a core network of San Francisco, London, Sydney and Wellington. Other locations can be seen as analogous - such as Passau in Germany, Toulon in France, and Deventer in the Netherlands.
59. City Centre Evangelisation may be a better title for these prioritised community-based ministries. They are linked to churches but envisage a broader missionary outreach.

The Marist Laity and the forthcoming Chapter

60. The Marist laity has been an essential part of the Marist project from our origins in that we share common roots and have a shared spirituality and mission outlook. Nevertheless, each Marist branch has its own particular configuration, and it is up to each branch to develop and deepen its own call.
61. We celebrate the fact that during the past eight years we have witnessed a growth in the internationality of the organisation. In 2015, the *Worldwide Marist Laity Coordina-*

tion body was constituted with representatives from all the places where the Marist Fathers, the Marist Sisters and the Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary, are present. While the Marist Brothers in most countries have their own fraternities, in some countries they participate actively in the Marist laity inter-branch. Our hope is that this new step will bring added life to the Marist laity and to the Marist Family as a whole. It is a good framework for the Society of Mary to deepen our relationship with them, respecting each other's identity, whilst looking for elements of a common mission to show the Marian face of the Church. The context in which the Marist laity wants us to have this dialogue is interdependency, having always in mind the autonomy of each branch.

62. At our ARC meetings and indeed during CS2013 we have been discussing our role in their life and vice versa. The last ARC meeting devised some questions to put to the Marist laity on the matter, the results of which will be passed on to the pre-capitular committee.

Marist laity
in Lyons,
2015.



Marist Research

63. I am indebted to many for the continuing the work of the previous general administrations, and indeed new ventures:
- The work of translating and editing original documents in *Colin Sup* and *Colin Fondateur* was done principally by Gaston Lessard, with the assistance of Bernard Bourtot for volume four.
 - *The Favre Generalate* and *Poupinel as Mission Procurator* were the work of Bernard Bourtot.
 - Charles Girard transcribed, annotated and indexed two sets of letters on the generalate of Jean-Claude Colin in 2008 and latterly 1,365 *Lettres reçues d'Océanie*. An anthology of these letters was completed by Charlie Girard and translated and produced in English by the New Zealand and Australia provinces.
 - *A Mission too Far...Pacific Commitment* by Jan Snijders, 2012
 - The annual *Forum Novum* and the *Chronology* of Colin's life were produced by Alois Greiler.
 - Justin Taylor has concluded his biography of the founder and hopefully it will be produced before the general chapter begins.
 - Craig Larkin produced two popular publications on Marist themes as well as guides to *Colin places* in Rome and France.
 - François Drouilly has written three important works whose goal was to make more accessible the spirituality and person of our founder.

- We are also indebted to a number of people for translation work, especially Francisco Chauvet, François Grossin and Philip Gage.
64. It has been difficult to get younger confreres to do some prolonged research. The talent to do the work is there, but such confreres are already engaged in other important works in the Society.

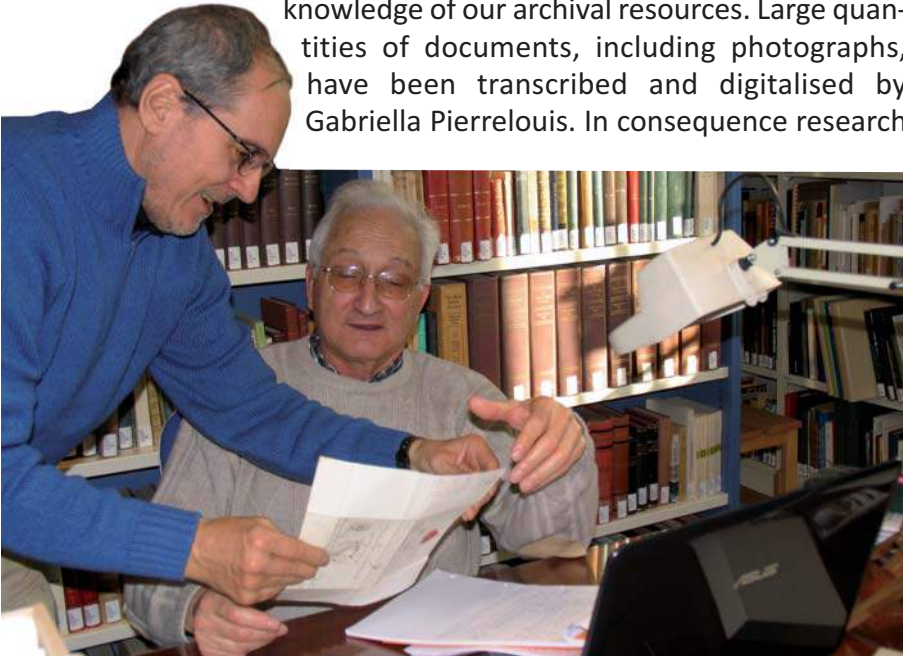
The Beatification of our Founder

65. The General Chapter of 2009 asked the general administration to study the possibility of opening-up the cause for the beatification of Jean-Claude Colin. This was done and a decision was made to proceed. Carlo Maria Schianchi was accredited by the Congregation for the Cause of the Saints as Postulator General. Bernard Thomasset was appointed as vice-postulator for the Founder's cause. After the required *nihil obstat* was received from four Vatican dicasteries, the official process began in the Archdiocese of Lyons on January 26, 2017.
66. Each of us is called to propagate amongst the faithful and actively seek to intensify devotion to Venerable Jean-Claude Colin as a spiritual teacher and holy founder so that the necessary *fama* (fame, reputation) is attained. For this purpose a Colin website has been developed and managed with a wide variety of contents by Ron Nissen. A useful aid

in this task, and I encourage all to reflect on it, is the recently published personal witness of Gaston Lessard, *Who is Jean-Claude Colin for me?*

Archives & Research

67. We are blest to have the services of Carlo Maria Schianchi our archivist whose principal task is the up-building and upkeep of the archives. He also assists those undertaking research. His dedication to the task is matched by his knowledge of our archival resources. Large quantities of documents, including photographs, have been transcribed and digitalised by Gabriella Pierrelouis. In consequence research



becomes much easier for scholars from various parts of the world without necessarily having to come to Rome. A more powerful server has also been installed to accommodate the increased use of the on-line facility.

La Neylière

68. Due largely to the commitment of Hubert Bonnet Eymard and his provincial council in Europe, the refurbishment of *La Neylière* “as a place of significance to the whole Society” (SD, 61) was realised after extensive consultation throughout the Society, with the general administration, and within the province of Europe. It was not an easy decision with convincing reasons for and against the costly refurbishment programme. Finally, a decision to restore was made, rooted in a good discernment. It is a successful refurbishment project due in large measure to the careful planning and supervision of the provincial and his team.



The Society has assured the continuity of the home of our founder in his final years, providing a warm, welcoming community and house of welcome for renewals, retreats, chapters, conferences, etc.

Our Senior Confreres

69. Now that I am among the senior category of confreres, I sometimes ask what kind of religious life do I need to embrace as a Marist and as an elderly person. Happily, religious are a people of faith, so no matter what age we are at we remain living witnesses to Jesus Christ, not only in what we do but how we do it, not only in our activities but also in our contemplation, prayer, work and relationships.



70. When I think of our elderly confreres I think of people being in solidarity with the Society of Mary on mission. I think of you being actively engaged, insofar as you can - in community and mission - by supporting 'younger' confreres and being their co-workers in mission. I think of the centrality of prayer and being of service.
71. And so I give thanks for the extraordinary witness of our elderly. They continue to play a crucial role, one that is not imposed but rather treasured as a further step in their lifelong commitment of service to God and the Society of Mary.

Sharing Expertise and Competencies

*“There are Marists with special skills and expertise who can help the Society worldwide. We seek to share these competencies throughout the Society”
(SD, 51)*

72. When I think of the sharing of such skills and expertise amongst us, I am especially mindful of the following. It is these kinds of action – and there are many more - that do much to revitalise our Society.
- The personnel who worked to put into place the *Spirituality and Lifestyle* programmes for Marists mainly from Asia and Oceania at Hunters Hill over a five year period.
 - The *Colinian Renewal* work at *La Neylière* which relied on the availability of Marists to provide an expertise



in spiritual direction, spiritual formation, retreat work and course direction and content.

Workshop
on administration,
Rome 2014.

- The various education programs such as *Keeping our College Marist* and those *Marist Education Forums* carried out by the New Zealand province in the field of education.
- The work of *Refounding and Pastoral Development* in Sydney and the work provided including facilitation skills for ARC, the renewal courses in Sydney and of course the rich output of publications.
- The US province which makes one of its key members available as a finance advisor to the general administration despite other onerous responsibilities.
- The *Reports* researched and written on Finance, Formation (2), Governance and Education. These were decisive tools in the advancement of the ministry areas researched.

- The availability of individual Marists for special tasks on behalf of the general administration such as facilitation, writing and research, financial advice, financial planning and ongoing formation, ensuring in the long-run better quality decision making, better strategic planning and leadership.
- The releasing of valuable personnel resources by many units to be trained as formators for the whole Society is essential for the life-being of the congregation and a concrete sign of generous sharing of competencies.

Safeguarding Children, Adolescents and Vulnerable Adults

73. Marists throughout the Society realise that the problems surrounding the abuse of children and vulnerable adults are no longer afflictions hitting certain cultures but are an integral part of fallen nature and an ongoing concern for all our units. The sexual abuse of children is now so well documented especially in its destructive power, so great care is needed now and always to protect the young and vulnerable. I urge all Marists to be acquainted with:

- the complexity of cultural and sociological issues prevailing within the Catholic Church which allowed abuse to happen;
- how decision making occurred, who was involved and why;
- where responsibility lay and to what degree accountability and compliance processes were effectively deployed;

- how priests and religious were selected and trained in decades past as well as in current times and what needs to change, radically in our formation systems.¹⁶
74. There is much to be learned from the painful experiences resulting from our failures and serious mistakes made because safeguards were not put in place. Each and every Marist - all of us – has a responsibility for Child Care and we must become familiar with the learnings that emanate from such painful and searching investigations.
75. For these reasons it is so important that all units in the Society have the most up to date operative policies in place. I know there are units where the dioceses in which some minister are still trying to cope with the emerging problems and have not as yet a fail-safe procedure in place. Let this not be a reason for us to do likewise. Since we are an international congregation we have at our disposal the wherewithal to access the best policies made available to us.
76. The safeguarding scandals bring home how our ways of promoting vocations and of selecting and training candidates in the second half of the twentieth century are no longer fit for purpose. We need the most sophisticated instruments on hand to promote the necessary psychosexual maturity of future Marists, and to equip them with the knowledge and skills – that is, the education – necessary to evangelise the world as it really is.

¹⁶ Cf. Francis Sullivan, CEO of the Truth, Justice and Healing Council of Australia, to the Australian Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, February, 2017.

77. Currently we have a confrere from the District of Africa, Albert Kabala, studying for a diploma in *Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Adults* at the Gregorian University. When he has completed this work he will be among the first to be trained in the African continent for such vitally important work.

The Education Ministry

78. The education ministry in all its forms is one of those ministries that regenerates itself through the enthusiasm and devotion of educationists on the ground. It remains, as I hope it will always do, one of the major ministries of the Society. (SD, 20).
79. There are encouraging signs coming from the structured formation programs for school staffs, parents and students in Marist spirituality and our educational goals in Marist



education. Of course, the knock-on effects of such activities on the morale and educational ethos of the schools can be remarkable.

80. We have two schools in the US, two in Mexico, one in Canada, seven in Europe, three in New Zealand, one in Peru, five schools in Oceania. The district of Africa owns and runs a junior school in Voundou, in a challenging zone of rural Cameroon. The African district will, please God, take ownership and direction of a junior school in the outskirts of Dakar in September, which will grow with time into a secondary school (*Lycée*) as the pupils advance through the school program.
81. Together with these formal institutions, we have several important informal educational initiatives in place, reflective of the special needs of those who are being well served, e.g. Ranong, Thailand, which provides for the basic educational needs of Burmese economic refugees. There is the centre for the integration of cultures in Brescia, Italy, and, last but not least, we have the unique education initiative in Tutu, Fiji. Recognising the distinctive identity of each national structure is essential to understanding the uniqueness and richness of the education on offer. Furthermore, there are so many educational projects that are associated with parish life, prison ministry, school chaplaincies, which are truly at the core of what good education is all about.
82. The work of school formation bodies such as the “*Marist Way*” activities in our two schools in the United States of America where the schools’ direction have identified several constituencies to be the beneficiaries of the Marist message: students, staff and faculty, board of trustees, parents and alumni. Using a four-year program, Marist val-

ues and virtues are transferred using a variety of methods: prayer, talks, retreats, videos, etc. Work with different emphases is being carried out by the *Marist Education Authority* and *Maristes en Education* in Europe. There are reassuring signs of the progressive development of an increasing understanding of Marist spirituality through the ongoing formation of the teaching staffs, the schools' leadership. The province of New Zealand has a team which runs several forums each year to train and help education staff to do what they do in a Marist way - explaining what the Marist way is, on what it is based, and how it informs everything that is done.

How I see the Society Today

83. At the General Chapter of 2009 there was broad acceptance that, if there could be a deeper and shared commitment to the core principles of the Marist religious life, we could position the Society in pathways leading to renewed gospel living in accordance with the mind and spirit of our founder. This happened sporadically but not consistently.
84. At our next chapter one of the questions that we must boldly face is whether or not we have a long-term future as a religious congregation. And, if we have, what must we do to ensure that the work of the Lord continues to grow in our little Society.



85. I wish to bring you back to Jan Hulshof's report to the last chapter- *How can We Sing the Lord's Song in a Foreign Land*. In §124 he wrote, "*On the whole, our congregation finds itself in a situation which I do not hesitate to call alarming. We need to be prepared for drastic changes.*"¹⁷
86. I invite you now to face this crisis with a faith perspective and confidence despite the imminent and real dangers. Jesus encourages us to faith and hope even in circumstances where we "*feel fragile, threatened, small, broken or insignificant (Matthew 8, 23-27).*"¹⁸ What counts is the intensity of life, of faith and vigorous action flowing from the mission conviction that we are sent to be bearers of Good News.

¹⁷ How can We Sing the Lord's Song in a Foreign Land. N.175, X11.4. (2009).

¹⁸ Ibid., §124.

87. It is firmly within this faith-frame that I acknowledge the severe diminishment which has taken place over the years and I invite you to face the future with the mind of Christ in face of *'the storm'* as we strive to find a way forward that defines our vocation and mission.

Our current situation

88. A number of you are familiar with our core statistics but not all. I present some key ones as a reference point during our chapter proceedings.

a) Since January 1, 2009:

- We have decreased by 227, from 1005 to 778.
- The number of those in formation and ordained approximates the numbers who have left us, coupled with those who are no longer in active ministry, 124 vs 134.
- 237 of our confreres have died in the hope of the Resurrection.
- 36 Marists asked to canonically leave the Society. The majority are historic cases, men who left ministry 'informally' years ago.
- There have been 82 first professions of whom 34 have left.

- There were 48 ordinations, 46 of whom remain in ministry.

b) At present:

- The number of candidates entering the Society remains alarmingly low.
- Our demographics make it more difficult to staff current apostolic works and in many instances Marists are overstretched.
- Of those less than 75 years of age, there are 400 out of a possible 452 in active ministry.
- There are 294 Marists over 75, the majority of whom are still ministering within their capacities.

c) In the field of formation

- The small number of candidates entering the Society remains alarming.
- There are 35 professed Marists in formation including those professed on January 18, 2017.
- There are five novices in the current 2017-2018 novitiate.

89. We are a much smaller and more dispersed group. Are we dying out? Not necessarily so. To prosper, on the other hand, we will need a new approach and way of living religious life incorporating a more explicit ownership of our founder's insights capable of rousing interest amongst young men which is not entirely obvious in the modern secularised and secularising age to which we belong.

The Challenging Tasks before us

*“Go out beyond ourselves, and our problems,
and orientate our efforts outwards
to the needs of our brothers and sisters,
especially the poor.”¹⁹*

90. These words, echoing the Holy Father, taken from the last circular letter *Time to Look Outward* **are** a stark reminder of the imperative of staying focused on our mission as an apostolic religious congregation in the 21st century and not being over indulgent through a self-referential reflection. I realise I may be taking the risk of doing so in my reflections to follow but I do so because it is so necessary to revitalise the necessary vigour for the Marist mission. For this to happen there is need for *serious and urgent change* within our Society. We are capable of greater creativity in our approach to community and mission in order to generate a more rapid and wise response to current mission needs.
91. ***The lived experience.*** Our work and renewal efforts over the past eight years have not led to a significant personal and corporate conversion across the Society. Yes, there is an increased awareness of the founder’s intuitions and will for the Society and yes, there are some quality communities. But is there amongst us a broadly accepted conviction that the route to go is to strengthen and consolidate personal and communal prayer, community fraternal life and apostolic action?

¹⁹ Time to Look Outward. N.183, X111,8. (2016).

92. **Activism and individualism.** Preference in terms of energy and commitment continues to be given by the more active members to their work and other areas of interest and not to the heart of religious living!
93. **Engagement in ministry** requires that we are ready and willing to answer a call that may involve leaving what we have been working at, perhaps for many years, in order to take up another assignment, one that is perceived by the superior to answer a more urgent need.
94. **Individual ministries.** Realism makes obvious that some Marists are more suited to working in an individual ministry. Nonetheless, we seem to have an excessive number of men in individual ministries, given the fact that we are a religious congregation with a common mission.
95. **Our vowed commitment.** The social expression of our religious consecration is manifest in community life and the way we live the three vows. The intentional living of the vows will more than anything else create a *consecrated family*, which expresses its spiritual witness through a preferential love for Christ above creatures and things; through a desire to do all things with the mind of Christ in dialogue with one's superiors and the call of the Church; and finally through a spiritual quest of Christ as the absolute pinnacle of love. Where the vows are lived faithfully and truly, they become a powerful cohesive force for faith, fraternal life and mission.
96. **Community life.** Our Constitutions speak of community life which if it is to be authentic requires a personal and communal prayer base, where ministry is understood by the members to spring from their shared mission and the depth of their personal and communal contemplative



lives. Fraternal life requires honest and true communication and above all an uninhibited Christian interest in and care for one another. This cannot be guaranteed, but is something to be always worked towards. For this to happen, community requires a minimum number of members. This was a passionate concern of our founder, who wished for at least 6 priests in a constituted community and perhaps brothers in addition.²⁰ This has been a concern of several general administrations and the 2009 Chap-

²⁰ 1873 Constitutions 32 - the requirement of “at least six religious living together over and above the temporal coadjutors for a constituted community”.

ter specifically asked us to aim at communities of 4/5.²¹ The founder had many struggles with the early bishops in Oceania and his own confreres over the issue, yet he maintained his convictions which are unequivocally presented in the forthcoming biography of our founder. I believe that consistent efforts in this direction are essential for our ongoing renewal as a Society. This will require hard choices at times, but they are worth facing with courage.

97. **Vocations fostering.** Several provinces and districts have made valiant efforts to procure vocations. They researched and explored many channels and yet few vocations ensued. I salute them wholeheartedly in their work and encourage them to continue the search. However, there are some Marists who will not encourage capable people to join us. Why is this? The answers often centre on personal disillusionment. Or they do not see future hope in the Marist vocation. I invite you to resist this temptation and reject it. I know this is not easy!
98. **Be men of hope.** In the words of Pope Francis *“authentic hope is born of trust in God’s word...”* It *“is the only bulwark capable of transforming us into His children, who share His life. Hope in God makes us enter, as it were, within the range of God’s action, of His memory which blesses and saves us.”*²²

²¹ J Fernández, *If We Let the Spirit Lead Us*, 2001. Pp 27–30; Council of the Society, Mexico, 2005. §3.2; J. Hulshof, *With a More Lively Confidence*, p.42; *Statements and Decisions of the General Chapter 2009*, §26.

²² Pope Francis weekly audience, Wednesday, January 11, 2017. http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2017/documents/papafrancesco_20170111_udienza-generale.html

99. All of us are called:

- to be *courageous*, now more than any time in the past, in responding to the real challenges facing our Society;
- to become ever more conscious that ***we are an inter-dependent consecrated community*** of believers who are willing to do what is necessary to attain personal and congregational conversion;
- through the action of the Holy Spirit and with the mindfulness that we are called by Mary, to ***rediscover the vision*** of our founder.

*“Be witnesses of a different way
of doing things, of acting, of living!
It is possible to live differently in this world.
We are speaking of an eschatological outlook,
of the values of the Kingdom
incarnated here on earth.
It is a question of leaving
everything to follow the Lord.”²³*

100. The reform movement that may usefully renew the Society of Mary will not find it *“useful to search for solutions in conservatism or fundamentalism, in the restoration of obsolete conduct and forms that no longer have the capacity of being significant culturally.”²⁴* It is about something deeper which we must discover together trusting in the Holy Spirit

²³ Pope Francis to the USG, November, 2016.

²⁴ Ibid.

and using the fundamental intuitions and spirituality of our founder as a base. I believe anything less far-reaching will not enable the Society to overcome current problems and pave the way for a new relevance, growth and vitality.

101. Let us not at the forthcoming chapter discuss the issues I have outlined above in an isolated manner. Renewal must be approached within the complete framework of an all-encompassing Marist religious community/mission life project as distinct from a disconnected approach by which core issues like community life, prayer and mission are discussed as if they are separate entities rather than inextricable parts of the whole.

The Call

102. Reflecting on the past eight years I ask myself how we have achieved such a degree of unity despite our presenting obstacles, diversity in terms of culture, language and situational contexts. I recognise with gratitude the fact that we talked and shared with each other, and worked with each other on the issues within our Society in a framework of respect, and trust supported by prayer - all of which made a difference.
103. Of significance too were our efforts at deepening our understanding of the mind and heart of our founder as presented to us in our Constitutions, retreats, reflections and study. Differences remain, of course, yet we can never relent at working towards the achievement of *Cor Unum et Anima Una*.



104. Reflecting on the alarm emanating from the disarray, disunity, confusion and the radical counter positions taken up by many ordinary people, we have reason to fear. The world seems to reject a moral compass capable of modifying and directing it. So, facing the 'isms' of today, activism, individualism, secularism, consumerism, populism, we can be wounded in spirit, especially those on the peripheries of life. But as Marists we are confident that the message of Christ is relevant and vibrant and we are the bearers of that hope. This is our mission.
105. Our Faith has a lot to say on where the roots of evil lie, about what is happening in our world and the political upheaval prevailing in many countries both North and South, in the developed and developing world. Thank God we have a strong voice in Pope Francis to lead us and our world. We have the Christian message which brings freedom, bestows wisdom and paves the way for deliverance. As leaders in the Marist world we want above all to work with the mind and heart of Christ, with the compassionate love of God as exemplified so completely in Mary.
106. Let us look at the challenges before us and above all let us not become disheartened or discouraged neither of

which come from God. The Holy Trinity, the compassionate God, is with us despite our limitations. Having this perspective in mind and heart we can meet on the face of it unreachable challenges. Yes, it is with a prayerful stance in relation to the world and towards the Society of Mary, that we will move forward together to greater fidelity, having more deeply the mind and heart of Mary our first and perpetual superior.

My Thanks

107. I am conscious that I will be handing over the authority of superior general to someone else in September. I received the call with some apprehension. I will pass it on with peace of soul knowing that it was good to have served and have experienced the blessings of working closely with you. When I look back over the years I am filled with gratitude because of your service in mission and your collaboration.
108. I know I could not have done my work without the wise and constructive advice and support of the general council: Larry Duffy, the vicar general, the general councilors Kevin Duffy, Lote Raiwalui and Alejandro Munoz. The best compliment that I can make of them is that I never experienced among them a will to be anything other than being serious collaborators. I was happy and contented to be in community with them. Trust was the glue that made our work operative.

109. I extend my thanks to Tony Corcoran, local superior, secretary general and procurator to the Holy See. I thank the bur-sar general Paul Martin and his predecessors, Kevin Mowbray and Paul Cooney. I wish Paul Cooney well in his fight against serious illness. Without the diligent and enterprising approach to team ministry the quality work of these men mentioned above would not have been possible.

110. My gratitude also extends to the ancillary staff of the general house: Aline Gamberale, Sophie Janssens, Paolo Mancinelli, Gabriella Pierrelouis, Girlie Verzo, Alessia Scacchi, and Johanes Verzo. Each and every one was ready and willing to be of service as required. My thanks to Br Visesio Teugasiale who served for many years in the general house and who now works faithfully on a new mission in New Caledonia. Each of these staff members played a unique role which makes for a very effective administration and a pleasant work environment. Finally, a word of thanks to the Missionary sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Our Lady of Guadalupe who work so quietly and lovingly in our midst.

111. I want to thank by name the major superiors who served with me over the eight years: Damien Diouf and Didier Hadonou from



Africa; Larry Sabud and Pat Devlin from Asia; Paul Cooney and Bob Barber from Australia; Hubert Bonnet-Eymard and Martin McAnaney from Europe; Jean Vienne and Pedro Alarcon from Mexico; Alfred Rösener from Brazil, José Maria da Silva from Brazil and Peru-Venezuela, Michele Palumbo from Peru-Venezuela; Roberto Furtuoso from South America; ; Brian Cummings and David Kennerley from New Zealand; Paul Donoghue and Ben McKenna from Oceania and Ted Keating and Paul Frechette from the USA.

112. Finally, I will always remain grateful to Jan Hulshof for his guidance and support during the General Chapter of 2009 and his shared wisdom during the induction period prior to the new administration taking up office.

“Let us unite ourselves with the Holy Spirit;
let us place ourselves in the hands of God,
for we are out to know his will.
This is God’s work, not ours.”²⁵

Ní neart go cur le chéile
There’s strength in unity

Rome, March 25, 2017

John Hannan sm
Superior General

Anthony Corcoran sm
Secretary General

²⁵ A Founder Acts. 265, §6

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