



Dear Confreres,

Greetings from Villa Santa Maria, in Rome!

These are strange and difficult times for everyone. We know all people are suffering – some terribly - and we can be overwhelmed by all the stories of the effects of Corona Virus. Marists, too, have been struggling. Many of you have found ways to communicate what has been happening wherever we find ourselves.

We pray for our confreres who have died of the virus and those who mourn for them - Crescente Manzo (Esp), Paul Loubaresse (Fr), Paddy J. Byrne (Ire) and Paul Noblet (Fr) - RIP

In his impressive meditation on St Peters' Square, Pope Francis said: "We have realized that we are on the same boat, all of us fragile and disoriented, but at the same time important and needed, all of us called to row together, each of us in need of comforting the other" (*Urbi et Orbi*, 27 March 2020). We know that our Marist communities in all countries have lived this in a very concrete way.

In the past months it has not been possible to issue the weekly SM Bulletin. However, there seems to be a growing need to share what we have been experiencing so far, and to tell each other what is happening during these exceptional times. This is the purpose of this Newsletter.

Let us keep praying for and with each other at this time.

John Larsen s.m.

General House from Pat Devlin



The Marist community of Villa Santa Maria has five members of the general administration and five student priests. We also have two guests from Syria who joined us through the humanitarian corridor and a diocesan priest from New Zealand whose sabbatical program closed and air travel has not been available.

For 9 weeks we have been in lockdown. The two Syrians have been the only ones leaving the property for their essential work for the Sant'Egidio programs.

The general councillors have been able to continue administrative work although planned visits to units have been cancelled or postponed. The student priests have continued their studies online and are currently preparing for the academic year final exams. Our employed staff have worked only when necessary and the sisters have continued their service while observing the same lockdown.

The strict lockdown has enabled all of us to remain free of infection while other communities and places in Italy have been badly affected.



Members of the General House community on 28 April, after the Mass of St Peter Chanel.

Australia from Tony Corcoran

Lockdown in Australia has never not been complete – streets have never been completely deserted. As May begins restrictions are being slowly lifted, we still must stay at home unless we are going to work (if we cannot work from home), we can go out to shop for food and other essentials, for medical reasons and to take care of others, we can also leave the house for a jog or walk the dog, always keeping our distance.

People 70 years and over must stay at home except for serious reasons, that means that two-thirds of the province have been house-bound for the last month! The confreres in our aged care facilities continue to experience complete lockdown, fortunately all have escaped the virus.

Confreres in our two parishes of St Pat's and Hunters Hill are providing Mass-on-line. They were particularly busy over Easter providing liturgies online, which were very well received by many people: on Holy Thursday the St Pat's mass received 9792 hits!

There is uncertainty about the future and we have had to postpone our Provincial assembly and chapter

The pandemic has had made a serious impact on businesses, workers and on financial security. Covid-19 certainly makes everyone review the way we live.

With restrictions starting to be lifted, we are waiting expectantly for the time when we will be able to open our churches again, visit our confreres in nursing homes, and gather as confreres.



Members of the Villa Maria community on Holy Thursday

The government has decreed the closure of all churches in Canada, and our confreres are confined to their homes.

Let's make a tour of our communities:

Buckingham (50 km East from Ottawa): our four parishes are closed and the personnel have to stay home. Our confreres celebrate the eucharist in the sacristy every day.



Sherbrook: At the Sanctuary of "Sacré-Cœur de Beauvoir" we are able to remain rather active, even if it's in a different way. On Sundays we are able to broadcast the Mass in streaming, and also through Facebook we are able to transmit some items. Confreres have shared some online courses on the Eucharist, St Peter Chanel and on Mary.

Québec: Most of our confreres live here, some are in elderly care, and are confined to their rooms, even for meals. Other confreres work as much as they can from home, including some pastoral care respecting social distancing.

In the community of St Michel our confreres celebrate Mass around the table in the dining room.

At "Maison Beauvoir de Sillery" our confreres keep busy with usual activities, including writing books, translation work, art work, and the redaction of newsletters. The school where they minister is closed until September. Every morning they start the day with the celebration of the Eucharist.

At the provincial house confreres continue some of their usual work, and they have provincial meetings via Zoom. The confreres from St Michel join them for lunch.



So far none of the confreres has caught the covid-19 virus.

We had a virtual provincial gathering at which almost all the communities and confreres were present. It was an opportunity to meet each other after weeks of confinement. The communities prepared by answering four questions: How are you living this time of quarantine? What significant experiences do you have? What are your concerns? Do you have learnings from this time? The confreres also shared how they were able to continue some ministry and pastoral accompaniment specially with the poor.



Most confreres said they were appreciating the increased time together and the quality of our community living. Some said that it is like going back to the novitiate because of the prayer, house work and sharing. To celebrate the Mass together has been really important. The confreres at the same time are concerned for the people, especially for the poor. Many people are losing their jobs and their financial situation is getting worse.



A lot of work and creativity has been evident in the youth pastoral teams and many Masses have been streamed. A parish food center has been established providing take away food. Our Schools are doing their best to accompany the students and their families. Many are also asking for help we are trying to help them through the school communities.

In so far, no Marist or close relative is sick. We have not been permitted to minister among the sick or even the families of the victims of the

COVID-19, but we don't want to be far from the people who are suffering.

A Mexican bioethics scholar said last week, "Mexico has not only a pandemic of Coronavirus, it has 4: also a pandemic poverty, a pandemic politic polarization and a pandemic violence."

New Zealand

from Tim Duckworth

We always knew there had to be a good aspect to living at the other end of the map from where many others live and work. We finally found it! Because of that "Social Distance" Covid-19 has not ravaged NZ quite as badly as it has many other countries. Our other advantage is, because we are an island nation, it is reasonably easy to close our borders.

So far less than 30 people have died and have all been older people, many who were in rest homes.



In New Zealand we have had lockdown for about 6 weeks. All shops have been shut, except pharmacies and supermarkets. People have been encouraged to go outside for a walk or a run each day. We are currently able to order online and collect items or have them delivered. This includes prepared food. We hope to be back at work about the middle of May.

There has been a problem for our confreres who were out of the country and needing to return. When airlines closed down, it became very hard to get home. When they did arrive back in the country they were quarantined in a hotel provided by the government for 2 weeks and were restricted to their room.

All our Marists have remained well. None has had the virus, though some have been tested. All churches are closed. Funerals are limited to 10 family members and cannot be held in a church, most are held at Funeral Directors' premises or at gravesides.

Currently the Australian and New Zealand governments are considering allowing travel between the two countries. Other good news from the MAP region is that some Pacific Island countries, who are our neighbours, have avoided the virus completely. So we have to be very careful that we do not take the virus from our country to theirs.

Sadly many people have lost their jobs and the economic depression which has unfolded has caused the government to borrow and spend a great amount of money. That means that taxation will need to increase to pay that back. Many people are finding it difficult to pay their bills and feed their families. The government has given generous support but the future is bleak.

Apart from a couple of our members not being able to be present in their current ministries due to travel restrictions, members are trying their best, despite lockdowns, curfews, social distancing, and travel bans, to faithfully carry out their respective ministries.

During this covid19 times a beloved member and a lecturer in the seminary passed away. Like other deaths at this time, they were marked more with the loneliness of the cross rather than the hope of the resurrection.



The Corona virus has kept us apart even within our own communities. However, the fidelity of the technological communication has kept us connected. Zoom meetings have become common as is happening with the Provincial council. Communications from the sectors have revealed that a light is appearing at the end of the tunnel.

Travel bans are still observed but other restrictions are beginning to loosen up. Schools and church services are allowed in some countries. Lockdowns are lifted in some. At the moment some of the island countries are still free of the Covid-19 like Vanuatu, Solomon, Tonga, Samoa and Wallis-Futuna.

Yet, they were going through the same restrictions as the infected countries. We are grateful for the donations coming in towards Vanuatu for the victims of Cyclone Harold. The impacts of Covid-19 has obviously affected all aspects of our lives but on the personal level, it is profound. As we isolate and distancing ourselves from each other, it has never been more evident how connected we are.

United in prayers with all units of the Society.

United States (1) from Paul Frechette

Our teachers in all of our schools are still teaching. They are teaching their classes on line and the teachers and administrators are having their professional meetings on Zoom.

In our two main high schools, in Atlanta, GA., and in Pontiac, Michigan there are daily Masses offered in the schools' chapels and presented on the school websites. One of the schools have the photos of the senior class (soon to graduate) on the wall in the chapel to pray for them in a special way. Both high schools plan to have a special graduation ceremony in mid summer when the Lockdown will be ended. Our Marist Atlanta school has two educational programs to minority populations: Reach for Excellence and Centro Hispano Marista. Centro Hispano has been able to offer classes on line for some of their students. It looks like both programs will be closed for the summer. Some of our local Marist communities are doing their own shopping and cooking. This is the case for both Marist school communities.



The Marist missionary sisters (SMSMs) living in Waltham, MA called the provincial office and wanted to assist at Mass for St. Peter Chanel on April 28th, but presided and preached by a Marist priest on line. They were able to connect with the Marists at the school in Atlanta and the sisters were delighted.

Some of our parishes are using the post office as well as digital means to keep in contact with parishioners. They offer daily Mass and support. Our Lady of the Assumption in Atlanta had 400 parishioners following the Sunday Mass online. In some other parishes Face Book is the principal means of communication for now. By means of photos of events, announcements and homilies encouragement is offered to the parish members

During these difficult times our pastors ask their parishioners for financial help, since there are no Public Masses and so no weekly collections. Some send their weekly support on line via the parish website. Our pastors try to let the parishioners know about the economic situation of the parish and the need to keep afloat. (This is of course taking into account their awareness that the parishioners may be without work income.) The response has been very good.



United States (2)

The Mission Co-ops planned by our national Marist Mission Office for May and June have had to be postponed because of the Shelter-in-place policies still operative in many different States and Dioceses. This will probably bring down the final figures of donations this year.

Wherever there is a large number of immigrants such in Boston, Brownsville, Texas, New York City, Washington DC, the number of victims is higher. The immigrants fear to tell the civil authorities of their health issues for fear they may be deported back to their homelands.



The ministries to the incarcerated in Boston, San Francisco and Brownsville, Texas are on lockdown as well. The crowding of the inmates in tight quarters is dangerous for the contagion of the coronavirus. Many of the inmates are calling our Marist chaplains on the phone for advice and reflections.

Some dioceses seem ahead of others in planning dates to open up the churches. Sunday Masses will have no more than 100 attending.

Worshippers will have to register ahead of time for which Mass they will attend. The bishops will give permission to those who can't attend a Sunday Mass to do so during the week. Our parish in St. Paul, Minnesota, opens its chapel daily from 6am-3pm, and this is mostly for private prayer and

confessions. When they do open the church for Sunday attendance at Mass they will have no musical hymnals, no Holy water, and only communion in the hand. May 18th seems to be the date the churches will be open in the archdiocese of St. Paul. Classes will end at our Marist School in Atlanta and Pontiac, Michigan around the same date.

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