



MARIST VOCATION YEAR

1

Questions for reflection and sharing:

- I review my own Marist vocation and compare it to Mary's vocation. How does her experience shed light on my own?
- When I think of my Marist life and of the future of the Society of Mary, how does my prayer translate Mary's question: "How shall this be?"
- How does Mary's Visitation experience help me to be a missionary of Christ, to offer the gift of Christ as Mary did?

MARY'S VOCATION and Our Own Marist Vocation

Read the Annunciation Narrative: Luke 1:26-38

In this Advent season, with Mary, we are getting ready for the coming of her Son. For Mary, this preparation began with her Immaculate Conception, the mystery we celebrate on December 8. On that day, Mary was transformed by God's grace. This is manifested by the way the angel Gabriel greeted Mary at the hour of the Annunciation: "Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you." (Luke 1:28) The Greek expression *kecharitômenè*, which we translate as favored one, indicates that Mary has been touched by a unique grace coming from God, a special gift at the hour of her conception. She was transformed by God's love and that bears permanent effects on her person. God's loving-kindness prepared her for a particular mission: to become Mother of the Son of God.

Mary was of modest origin. When Luke introduces John the Baptist's parents, he writes: "In the days of Herod, King of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah of the priestly division of Abijah; his wife was from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. Both were righteous in the eyes of God, observing all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blamelessly." (Luke 1:5-6) And when he presents Mary's betrothed, he speaks of "a man named Joseph, of the house of David." (Luke 1:27) Mary for her part is not of prophetic or royal descent. Luke does not even say to which Israelite tribe does Mary belong. He only says about Mary that she is "a virgin" (Luke 1:27) and that she lives in "a town of Galilee called Nazareth." (Luke 2:26) This city is not even named once in the Old Testament. Let us recall Nathanael's reaction when Philip speaks to him about Jesus of Nazareth: "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" (John 1:46)

Just like Mary, we are of modest origin. The words saint Paul writes to the Corinthians suit us well. "Consider your own calling, brothers. Not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. Rather, God chose the foolish of the world to shame the wise, and God chose the weak of the world to shame the strong, and

God chose the lowly and despised of the world, those who count for nothing, to reduce to nothing those who are something, so that no human being might boast before God." (1 Cor 1,26-29)

However, just like Mary, we have been called by God, touched by his grace, transformed by the loving-kindness of our God and of Mary, mother of Jesus. Our Constitutions remind us of that. "A person enters the Society of Mary [...] sharing in the common vocation of the Society in his response to a call from God and a choice of Mary." (CSM § 33) Mary, "by a gracious choice (*delectu gratioso*) called them and gave them her name." (CSM § 144) Called by the Lord, Mary remained free to accept or to refuse the invitation. She asks the angel: "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" (Luke 1:34 ASV) To ask: "How shall this be?" means that one believes that what was foretold will indeed happen. Mary's question is a question of faith. This shall be through the Holy Spirit who, just like the pillar of cloud of the time of exodus came down and covered the tent of meeting, will come down and shine around her.

Just like Mary, we had to discern our own calling, to allow the Spirit to guide us in our choice for life. Because we walked in her footsteps, we were able to say yes to our vocation. "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." (Luke 1:38) Just like Mary was, we are called to follow her Son every day of our lives, saying yes to his love, welcoming the Holy Spirit.

Once she said "yes" to the Lord, "Mary set out and travelled to the hill country in haste" to the house of Zechariah and Elizabeth. She was carrying Christ in herself and it is Christ who gave the Holy Spirit to John as he was still in his mother's womb. May we become like Mary, carrying Christ within us in order to give him to whomever we might encounter. May our loving answer to God inspire all those whom God our Father continues to call so that they will walk in his footsteps. May Mary continue to cover with her loving mantle all those she is giving her name as an inheritance.

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