

Reflection from the Superior General

Marists are usually known to be committed to generous service wherever we are sent.

As I travel around I find that there are so many people who appreciate how we minister among them. People tell me how “the Marists” have touched their lives and helped them along the way. I have often heard people speak of us as being “different” and saying how much they appreciate our Marian approach with its simplicity, and compassion and unpretentious manner. This is a great strength, an expression of the Marian face of the Church.

Naturally, there is also no shortage of people who have strong ideas on how we could do better!

Usually Marists make great sacrifices to minister among the people, remaining with them through good times and bad. Our ministry shares in the creativity of God. It is a gift from God. It is also an expression of our vow of poverty. Through our work we sustain ourselves so that we can live simply and share our resources with others.



However, this generosity can also have a shadow-side. We can become so dedicated to our ministry that we identify ourselves only by our work. It can become “my work” rather than the Work of God, the Work of Mary, in which we are happy and blessed to participate. Our world can become defined only by what we do and where we live. We can lose the broader panorama of our ministry being a free generous response to God’s loving call and our humble participation in his creativity.

One sign of this constricted vision is when we have little or no time for prayer, reflection or gracious leisure. We can be so busy that we become distracted “with many things”. We can

concentrate on unnecessary things, like Martha thrashing away in the kitchen. (Lk. 10:38 – 42) In this way we can become an empty shell, echoing the noises from the world outside of us and deaf to the still, quiet voice of the life-giving Spirit. The generous, faithful response to the call to one hour’s contemplative prayer daily can help us to keep attentive to the voice of the Spirit. A rich interest in serious theological up-dating and a commitment to daily spiritual reading will nourish our inner lives. Finding time to take the Sabbath seriously, that day which is the summit of the Lord’s work of creation, will give us graced time to breathe fresh air, humanly and spiritually.

Some of our confreres are not able to work so hard for various reasons. Perhaps some of us are older or we have health issues or our ministry is restricted in one way or another. It is beautiful to see such confreres with such a loving simplicity and detachment that we are able to “let go” and move on and still support others as best we can with our interest, prayer and encouragement. Normally a young confrere, fresh from a formation house, will say to his Superior: “although I have expressed my discerned preference for mission I am very happy to go wherever you send me and do whatever I can there”. It is especially beautiful when our more senior confreres continue to manifest this same freedom of Spirit.

Recently the Superiors General and Councils of the four branches of the Marist family met here in Rome to discuss, among other things, our places of heritage in France. The Brothers spoke of Marcellin’s “Hermitage”. The Marist Sisters spoke of Belley. We talked of “La Neylière”. I was especially struck by the SMSM Sisters who offered the image of a sailing ship taking the Pioneers to the Pacific. The SMSM “place of heritage” was a sturdy sailing ship with its sails full of the winds of the Spirit leading them into vast new worlds. This is a good image of both Marist commitment and the freedom of Spirit to move on.

Mary, Stella Maris, show us the way!

John Larsen s.m.