



PRAYER INTENTION FROM LAUDATO SI'

All-powerful God,
teach us to discover
the worth of each thing,
to be filled with awe
and contemplation,
to recognize that
we are profoundly
united with every
creature as we
journey towards
your infinite light.

We thank you for
being with us each day.

Encourage us,
we pray, in our
struggle for justice,
love and peace.

Amen



EUROINFO

GREETINGS FROM PARIS!

The restrictions on travel and assembly are beginning to ease around Europe. However, due to these limitations, the annual provincial retreat took place on the video conferencing platform, Zoom. After so many months of isolation, it proved to be a prayerful experience and at the same time, a joyous reminder that we are connected by fraternal bonds and a shared spirituality.

As we emerge from the severe effects of lockdown, will we remember the important messages we learned about ourselves, our neighbour and our world? In a recent address Pope Francis urged us to create a culture based on closeness to each other and fraternal love, and pleaded with us not to fall back on the illusion of a society based on individualism. It is easy to recognise the wisdom of his plea in the light of our recent experiences as a society.

We need look no further than the encyclical of Pope Francis *Laudato Si'* for insights and perspectives to motivate and guide us in our response to this call. What can we dare to dream of doing differently? Collectively, we form part of the society in which we live and it is important to believe that we have the power to shape it too! God's loving design for creation revealed in the Incarnation is still unfolding. Since we are all created from the same matter, solidarity with one another and collaboration are stepping stones to a future for our world which respects God's designs.

In this issue, some participants in the provincial retreat offer their reflections in response to its theme, *Laudato Si'* and its connections to Marist spirituality.

Francisco Chauvet and Martin McAnaney





THE ANNUAL PROVINCIAL RETREAT, 26-30 JULY, 2020, HELD VIA THE INTERNET

In June 2019, the Provincial Solidarity Committee planned that the retreat would take place in La Neylière this year. However, the pandemic intervened and all that changed. Recognising that the annual retreat is an important moment in the life of the province, the committee took the creative initiative to offer the retreat via Zoom conference system. It was led by Ben McKenna (Marist general assistant) and the theme of *Laudato Si'*, to mark the fifth anniversary of this remarkable encyclical of Pope Francis. The subject took on greater relevance as we now live under the threat of the Covid-19 pandemic. A Marist participant remarked, "At 95, I noticed that I am five years older than the next oldest confrere! However, there is a saying: "To get old is not so difficult, but to be old is not so easy." I am lucky to have visited the Marist sites several times, Le Puy, Fourvière, Cerdon, Bugey and I have experienced life for 43 years in Oceania (Solomon Islands). So, I know where and what Ben is talking about when it comes to the wealth to be found in creation and the interdependence of all things!"

Mr Jean-Claude Boidin, a member of the solidarity committee shares his impressions: "It was from Brussels that I followed with interest the retreat animated by Ben McKenna. Being neither a Father nor a Marist, I am not familiar with the annual retreats held at La Neylière and I had a bit of difficulty imagining what a "virtual" retreat could offer. During the sessions, I was struck by three aspects: (1) The obvious warm kinship between the members of the congregations - the joy of meeting and greeting each other at the beginning of each session...; (2) I didn't expect to discover links between the Marist roots and the founders intentions of 200 years ago and the message of Pope Francis in *Laudato Si'* but I understand it - these are the common roots which unite the Marists of today in the same spiritual family; (3) The way an "integral ecological approach" resonates with the Marists spirituality with its emphasis on hiddenness, simplicity of lifestyle and contemplation".

Another member of the Provincial Solidarity Committee, Sr Catherine Jones SMSM writes: "Live the day under the gaze of Jesus' – was the gentle invitation at the beginning of our retreat. It is the same contemplative gaze Pope Francis invites us to have with regard to our cities, "a gaze of faith which sees God dwelling in their homes, in their streets, in their squares ... fostering solidarity ... (Joy of the Gospel 71). In the light of *Laudato Si'*, we revisited the Marist places - Le Puy, Fourvière, Cerdon, the mountains of the Bugey, and the vast Pacific Ocean. The call was to live these foundational moments in a new way, with a new world view of "deep incarnation". I was grateful to Ben for the invitation on the final day to find humour and joy in an event in the past: it reminded of an incident in my Fiji days, one evening in community watching a full moon rise over the sea off Suva Point, a *Laudato Si'* experience of awe and wonder but with a twist that can only now make me smile ... In addition, I lived a new experience of solidarity with our sisters (SMSM) in Rwanda and Burundi, who followed the retreat too, and am grateful to the European Province for including them."

It will be interesting to receive feedback from the participants to get a real sense of the concrete changes made in lifestyles and responses to the challenge to find the best ways to shape and prepare "the world to come".

