

Reflection from the Superior General

Rome, 1 November 2018

Dear Confreres

We start this month of November by celebrating both All Saints and All Souls.

The first reason for entering the Society of Mary is "to grow in personal holiness"(Const.10). The feast of All Saints calls us in that direction. To achieve that holiness there is a lot of "dying", ultimately including bodily death. All Souls starkly reminds us of this.

Traditionally in our communities we go to the chapel daily and pray for deceased Marists. We read the names of our confreres whose anniversaries of death occur on that day.

Some of the names are those of our friends. However, most of the names that are read out each day are unknown to us. I often wonder what stories they would tell us of their Marist lives. Probably they would tell us of their own earthly journeys towards God as Marists in their own time and place.



Perhaps they would tell us of when they failed or gave up. Perhaps something happened – some sin or personal disaster or relationship – that they found almost impossible to endure. From their life now, conformed to Christ in holiness, surely they would advise us to return humbly and completely to God. They would challenge us to go to Christ on the Cross and find our strength there.

Perhaps others of our deceased confreres who are now saints would tell stories of what blocked their growth into the fullness of life in Christ. There was perhaps something – a person, a habit, a memory, a fear – that they just could not leave behind. They would be challenging us to surrender to God whatever it is that holds us back. They would tell us that our only security is the Word of God, his Will, his Love.

They would talk of the life of holiness which is love of God and love of neighbor, the second reason for being a Marist (cf. Const. 10).

As we listen to the echoes of the names of our deceased confreres we know that we are called to holiness in the community of the Society of Mary. There are

innumerable other communities in the Church. However for us it is within our Marist communities that we ourselves find our way to live the Gospel call of love. This is our spiritual home. This is where we are called by Mary to live as brothers and serve our neighbour in her way.

Recently we had our annual gathering of the leaders of our Society of Mary here in Rome. It was a wonderfully rich gathering, full of faith, fraternity and encouragement. The gathering reminded us that we undertake together as brothers the call to holiness – facing our vulnerability with faith, letting go of all that holds us back and trusting in the Lord. The call to holiness is both personal and communal. We live as communion of saints, living and dead and those still to come.

As we look around our confreres we see a whole family of brothers which has grown holy by living the Gospel in our Marist way. We also see some who may seem to have been overcome by the difficulty of the journey and to have given up. We may also see some confreres, living and dead, who seem not to have been able to surrender to God and who became weighed down, crushed. We pray for and with them and give them reason to hope because we are on this journey together.

On November 15 we celebrate the death anniversary of our confrere and founder, the Venerable Jean-Claude. He was able to overcome huge obstacles – both personal and communal – and become an heroic friend of the Lord. We hope and pray he will be recognized by the Universal Church as a Saint one day. Let's remember all our deceased confreres this month of November and let them encourage us by their struggles and their holiness as we pray for and with them.

John Larsen s.m.