

# Today's Marists

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Society of Mary in the U.S.



# Today's Marists

Fall 2019 | Volume 5 | Issue 2

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## Cover Explanation

Our cover represents Mother Mary, Seat of Wisdom, comforting an obviously anguished child with the gift of peace and discernment in a troubled and confusing world.



*from the Provincial*

Fr. Paul Frechette, SM

## Introduction to *Bearing Witness*

### A Sensitivity Program for High School Students & Parents

A first meeting of the Marist Commission for Interreligious Dialogue and Reconciliation was held in Ranong, Thailand from April 23-25, 2019. During this gathering they prayed, reflected, and visited with Buddhists and Muslims seeking creative new ways for Marists to promote dialogue, peace, and reconciliation. Pope Francis has echoed the words of peace and reconciliation of the Risen Lord when he greeted our Muslim sisters and brothers in the Middle East and in Morocco with the Arabic greeting of peace: "Assalam Alaikum". We Marists continue to hear the call of the Risen Lord to bring peace and reconciliation to our conflicted and violent world.

In today's society, cultural sensitivity is extremely challenging as evident in the various forms of media communication. As Pope Francis reminded us in his speech to the United Nations in 2015, it is important to "... pay homage to all those men and women whose loyalty and self-sacrifice have benefitted humanity as a whole. ... In particular, I would recall today those who gave their lives for peace and reconciliation among peoples, from Dag Hammarskjöld to the many United Nations officials at every level who have been killed in the course of humanitarian missions, and missions of peace and reconciliation."

It is our good fortune to have great examples of this sensitivity for other cultures and religions right here in our own United States Province. In 1996, one of our lay teachers, Brendan Murphy, at Marist School in Atlanta, Georgia, developed a seminar, titled *Bearing Witness*. During this year-long seminar, the students are expected to gain special sensitivity and thinking skills by analyzing the history of the Holocaust through survivor testimony, Holocaust literature, art and poetry,

and primary documents. It is Brendan's vision that this seminar "engages the heart, develops better judgement, and teaches empathy" for the participants. Brendan's article in this issue of *Today's Marists* (Page 10) explains in depth the purpose of the establishment of this seminar. I wish to recognize his work in my provincial column for this issue because it is such a remarkable effective and creative program. This is a stunning example of Marist education at its best - mind and heart, head and experience.

Now in its 18th year, *Bearing Witness* has evolved to include a class trip to Europe to visit the site of some of the concentration and death camps, seminars for parents, and collaborative projects with foundations dedicated to Holocaust remembrance. Participants are challenged to develop social and emotional skills with journal writing that enhances their reflection, expresses feelings, and facilitates critical thinking. One of objectives of *Bearing Witness* is to inspire the students to apply their insight and innate empathy to a project in their local community that promotes understanding among different peoples, religions, and cultures. Recently Brendan received an email from Ben Ferencz, the last living prosecutor from the Nuremberg war crime trials. At 99 he is still fighting the good fight for justice. Mr. Ferencz took the time to write a letter to the seminar participants where he offered his thoughts on the importance of learning about the Holocaust and empathizing with the victims.

As the director of *Bearing Witness*, Brendan assists Catholic school educators with training and providing the resources necessary to teach about the Holocaust and anti-Semitism. Some 20 years ago, Barbara Rosenblit, a teacher from the Jewish Weber School, attended a seminar in Atlanta sponsored

by the Faith Alliance of Metro Atlanta (FAMA), an interreligious dialogue group for adults. During this seminar the idea of developing a high school interreligious group evolved. Barbara reached out to Brendan about developing this group. The program, known as Peace by Piece, is an organization which works to promote respect and understanding among Jewish, Christian, and Muslim high school students in Atlanta. While it was developed separately from *Bearing Witness*, it shares the same goals of instilling an awareness of our common humanity.

In addition to Brendan's commitment to *Bearing Witness* and *Peace by Piece*, he also participates in programs and fellowships with the Archdiocese of Atlanta, the Jewish Foundation for the Righteous, and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

When asked what he hopes his students come away with after completing the *Bearing Witness* seminar, Brendan stated, "I hope that they take away the fact that the Holocaust is not just an individual historical occurrence but a living and breathing event that reverberates to this day. We hope that this is a key part of *Bearing Witness* - that students not only come away with an understanding of anti-Semitism throughout the centuries, but that their experiences and reflections during the course enable them to always keep an open and rational mind with regards to all events. To not just accept so-called fact, but to always study and question it."

I invite you to read more about the *Bearing Witness* seminar in Brendan's article and hope that you enjoy all the articles in this issue focused on the Marist mission of discernment.



# DISCERNMENT: A Process or A Mission for the Marists?

by Ted Keating, SM

In February 2019, the Jesuits worldwide, after a 16-month process of discernment, settled on what they call four new “Universal Apostolic Preferences.” Their discernment process was based on three main questions:

1. Where do we hear the call of Jesus today as He carries His cross in the world?
2. What is the Church asking of us?
3. Where are we most needed?

The four new “Universal Apostolic Preferences” are:

1. promoting discernment and the Spiritual Exercises;
2. walking with the excluded;
3. caring for our Common Home (a reference to Pope Francis’ *Laudato Sí*), and
4. journeying with Youth.

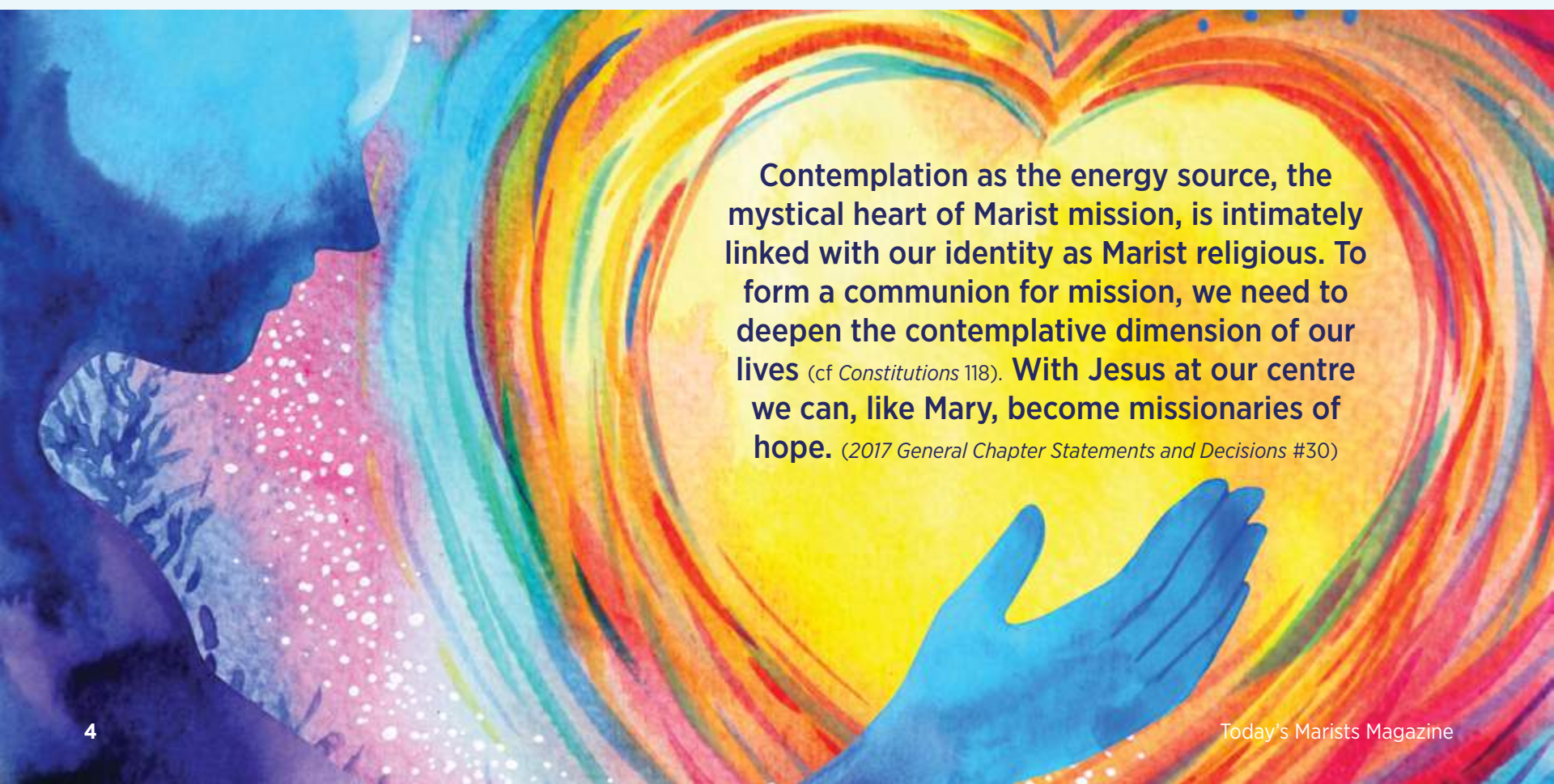
Jesuit Superior General Arturo Sosa’s public announcement of these preferences (in Spanish) is available at <http://bit.ly/SosaAnnouncement>. He explains why they are called preferences because they will become the work of further discernment through the Jesuits infusing local mission and ministry with these preferences while understanding that

current ministries remain in place. They are not priorities but preferences that are to be discerned among and with other good works of the Society of Jesus, infusing present works and perhaps suggesting other works but always in a discerning way. In other words, the discernment continues throughout the works of the Society of Jesus.

I begin with this to once again evoke our theme of discernment for Volume 5 of *Today’s Marists* coming out of the Marist 2017 General Chapter which flows naturally out of the theme of Contemplation:

Contemplation as the energy source, the mystical heart of Marist mission, is intimately linked with our identity as Marist religious. To form a communion for mission, we need to deepen the contemplative dimension of our lives (cf *Constitutions* 118). With Jesus at our centre we can, like Mary, become missionaries of hope. (*2017 General Chapter Statements and Decisions* #30)

This call to contemplation leading into discernment, where our charism calls us as Marists in our mission and ministry, flows naturally then to discernment as a communal style of helping contemplation to become the “energy source,



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the mystical heart of Marist mission.” We have many good paths into ministry that we can take as Marists and be quite effective at them. However, in order for them to be authentic, they need to emerge out of prayer and discernment amid a suffering world filled with poverty, marginalization, and violence. Our communion for mission requires a communion in discernment.

Marist Kevin Duggan’s article in this issue (Page 6) evokes the reality of youth today often wandering in a world of false lights calling them into lifestyles that will often fail to lead them towards the true satisfaction of the “peace that the world cannot give”. They are often surrounded by the empty promises of money, status, power, with slick answers to the challenges that life brings, etc. Kevin’s unpretentious effort to feed the hunger for envisioning life choices in a deeper way by raising significant questions in a group of young people takes our own life of discernment into a ministry of helping others to discern their life choices within the vision of the Gospel more than the vision of the media world in which we live.

Perhaps we discern as Marists in order to model, witness, and lead others into deeper ways of discerning choices in an often secularized and materialistic culture rooted in the all-encompassing world of media. The journey within is a first step but often requires a guide to listen to the voice of God within that St. Ignatius describes as “weak as a light breath which scarcely agitates the air. It shirks from noise and is silent amidst agitation.” Even St. Augustine needed the mentoring of St. Ambrose before he finally could exclaim: “You were within me, but I was outside, and it was there that I searched for you.” Read St. Augustine’s *Confessions* to learn about the impact this mentoring had on his life along with his own distinctive style of discernment.

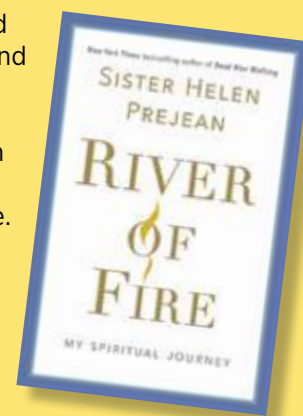
So, when the Society of Jesus, who brought Ignatian discernment into our world and Church looks around that world and Church and finds a need for a new emphasis on discernment in their apostolic preferences, they are on to something. Given the power of contemporary secularism with its ever-present deafening voice of media pounding away at the values of a materialistic culture, discernment moves from being a process of our own renewal to a mission and ministry, especially to youth. The deeper the contemplative nature of our own lives and the more experienced our life of discernment becomes, the better we are able to model it, demonstrate it, and be a witness to it in a commitment to youth and the Church in general. Hope in transforming our world by a new generation and seeking ways to live authentically there may depend on it. Discernment becomes more than a process and shows itself as a critical mission, ministry, and witness of life in our time.

There is so much that is generous, kind, respectful of human dignity, and seeking peace and justice in our surrounding culture. Our Founder, Jean-Claude Colin, seemed to believe that firmly and it demonstrably affected his vision for pastoral work. Knowing how to sift the *Weeds Among the Wheat* (Thomas Green’s classic on discernment) shows the path as does the parable of Jesus by the same name. Jesus told us that we must be in the world, but not of it. Discernment is the way we find the path through it without getting lost in its vain promises.

## BOOK CORNER

by Ted Keating, SM

Sr. Helen Prejean, CSJ, a long-time friend of the Marists, has published a moving and inspiring spiritual memoir entitled *River of Fire: My Spiritual Journey*. Sr. Helen has spent most of her life as a St. Joseph sister in New Orleans, Louisiana and knew many of the Marists assigned there. In her spiritual memoir she talks about her formative years of change in Hope House, a New Orleans neighborhood community service organization founded by women religious. The Marist Fathers and Brothers would send their young seminarians there for a year of immersion. Sr. Helen was also a member of the Marist Holy Name of Mary/St. Julian Eymard two-parish urban ministry team in Algiers, New Orleans while she was doing her early work on the death penalty that led to her book, *Dead Men Walking* (later a film and then an opera at the San Francisco, California Opera House).



There is a sense that Sr. Helen is a living history of the impact the Second Vatican Council had on the lives of men and women religious. In this compelling story we see those changes lived out concretely from the strong call of that Council to place the social justice mission of the Church as one of the central outcomes of the Council. While this sounds abstract, Sr. Helen’s memoir spells out the month by month, year by year, and decade by decade unfolding of the response by women religious to the call. There was nothing abstract about it as experiences of immersion with the poor and margined had its impact on the daily lives and on new ways of formulating traditional spirituality bubbling up from experience. It took women religious to margins of life they could never have predicted when they entered the convent in the late 1950’s and early 1960’s as they engaged poverty first-hand and sought creative ways to respond.

Sr. Helen quite respectfully honors the early years of her religious life and the rituals, lifestyles and assumptions about spirituality of that time coming from hundreds of years of experience in Europe and the traditional life of nuns in the United States. However, nothing in those years could have presaged for her the impact of her agreeing to write letters to prisoners on death row in the 1980’s. Her simple but passionate witness of her experiences with the men on death row combined with her capacity to speak in a way that can be heard by her opponents in talks all over the country are keys to her effectiveness. She has a Cajun sense of humor and gift for storytelling that serve this ministry well.

However, the center of her engaging book is the “River of Fire” that has flowed through her life in deep prayer and experience of God pouring over into a life of service and witness as a St. Joseph Sister. That is what she describes as the background and source of it all. I invite you to read her wonderful memoir to hopefully be inspired and led to actions of service and justice in one’s own life.



# 'Living a Discerning Life'

## A Day of Recollection with College Students

by Kevin Duggan, SM, Campus Minister, Marist College, Poughkeepsie, New York

When I ministered as a campus minister at California Polytechnic State University (CalPoly) in San Luis Obispo, California, I led a Day of Recollection with Catholic college students focused on 'Living a Discerning Life'. I decided to offer this recollection day for students because during our regular conversations several students expressed an interest in coming to know God's plan for their lives as they moved closer to graduation. However, they were unsure of how to go about figuring out what God wanted them to do concerning life direction, course of study, career path, etc. In many ways, this is the air that college students breathe as they prepare for their future, while trying to be attentive to the here and now of the college experience.

During those conversations I also had a sense that many of them seemed to think God had their plan worked out and written in stone for each of them. They also hoped that God's plan for them would somehow simply drop out of the sky, clearly spelled out in every detail. Wouldn't that be nice! I had to remind them that it doesn't really work like that.

This day of recollection was my attempt to be of some help to these students who were in the process of coming to know what God's Will might be for each of them in the many important decisions of life both now and further down the road. The day provided an opportunity to come together to reflect, share, and hear ideas about how we can get a better sense of God's Will or Plan for each of us. It was not a day to talk about 'vocational choices,' although I presume that that was in the minds of a few participants.

**Instead, the day took a wider view of how we can come to some sense of knowing God's Will regarding the many choices that we have to make in life.**

Coming to know God's Will or Plan for each of us is important, because from the Christian perspective true, deep, and lasting happiness is found only when we do the Will of God in all aspects of life. We know deep down that this is true,

since at one time or another we have all experienced the lack of peace that comes from going our own way, not God's way.

We started out the day very simply by spending time talking about the difference between 'deciding' and 'discerning.' We also recalled how they came to make the choice to come to this college. Obviously, some part of their decision had to do with scholarships, locale, the standing of the college related to science, technology, agriculture, etc. But they also spoke of prayer as part of the decision. These students were faith-filled men and women, and so it wasn't too surprising that they brought God into their decision-making process. Allowing God to be a part of this process is really what discernment is all about.

A significant part of the day of recollection focused on prayer and our relationship with God. The only possible way of coming to know God's Will, even indistinctly, for any choice we must make is if we are in relationship with God, and spend time regularly opening our hearts to God.

**Prayer is an essential piece in coming to understand God's Will.** The type of prayer that is more helpful in understanding what God's Will might be for us is prayer that is less wordy, more contemplative in nature, and one that takes a more listening stance. We talked about how difficult this can be in our culture and especially in the college scene. The need for a regular prayer routine, using Scripture and having an open listening heart, were strongly encouraged as the path to coming to know God's Will and Plan.

**I think one of the most helpful things we offered during the day, and that students deeply appreciated, was the reminder that God's Will or Plan is always a dialogue between God and us.** God created us to be who we are with our individual personalities, gifts, talents, likes and dislikes. These various aspects of 'who we are' are all included in the

mix of our dialogue with God as we try to understand where God is leading us in life's choices. **Ultimately, God wants us to be happy and will not lead us to decisions that are antithetical to who we are or what we believe.**

If for no other reason, this day of recollection was helpful and well received because it allowed students to talk together about a topic they do not usually discuss with each other. It opened the door to other meaningful conversations about living the will of God beyond the context of the day of recollection. They now knew that they were not alone in trying to live according to God's Will and Plan.

The participants were relieved to hear that God's plan for each of us includes us. **God wants us to express our hopes and dreams and our fears and concerns about the various choices and options that lie before us in life.** God's Will and Plan for us is already rooted in who we are. God is not going to move a person in a direction contrary to the type of person they are becoming. That had been a fear expressed by many of these students.

We live in a practical and individualistic world. We want things to be clear and for answers to emerge quickly, and we tend to want to make decisions that same way. The Christian call, however, is to bring God into the mix of all our choices and decisions. Anything and everything we can do to help each other be open to allowing God to guide our decisions will, in the end, bring us a life that is more meaningful and more joyful. This was the purpose and the goal for the day of recollection on living a discerning life. It was a good day, and I was deeply touched by the desire of these college Catholics to be faithful to what God wanted for them now and in the future.

## AT TABLE WITH VENERABLE JEAN-CLAUDE COLIN

# A Marist Way of Mindful Eating

by Tom Ellerman, SM

Father Jean-Claude Colin could not be more timely than in the three sections of the 1872 *Constitutions*, numbers 126, 139, and 234, that mention food. For him eating was not simply a physical necessity but a spiritual, social, and religious act.

It is no secret that today food is in a state of crisis. Some eat too much, especially of foods that are harmful to one's health, while others suffer from starvation and/or malnutrition. The kinds of food we consume may negatively impact the earth's environment. People reveal their socio-economic status by the kind, the quantity, and the quality of the food they eat. Some express their religious and philosophical beliefs by their diet. Since food is more often than not involved in "for profit" big businesses, one might say it has been offered to idols, the god mammon. Some get fat on the starvation and malnutrition of others. The production, distribution, consumption, and waste of food makes us all interdependent and all interrelated. Sometimes this interrelation is the cause of joy, but it is also the cause of suffering. We never eat far from the foot of the Cross. The Upper Room and Calvary are intimately related.

In number 26 of the *Constitutions* Fr. Colin identifies the Marists and their food with the poor. The way we dine often shows where we stand on the socio-economic ladder. What we eat depends on how much money we have. The Marist menu should be designed to test our virtue and maintain our bodily health so that we can be of greater service to God. Our meals should help us to become holier, healthier, and more useful to the Kingdom of God. What kind of meals should we serve and eat to accomplish those ends? Fr. Colin takes a minimalist view of food by saying it must be simple, ordinary, and without delicacies. What those qualities may mean will differ among cultures and nations. Fr. Colin uses the expression "ordinary dishes used by the poor." He wants his Marists to identify with the poor at table. The poor are the guests (sometimes invisible) at every Marist table.

The words "not exquisite; but of the people; of a quality the poor can afford" are especially strong in a country like France, known worldwide for its refined and sometimes sophisticated cuisine. Given the cultural context, Marists should eat what is readily available, economical, and simple to prepare. The food may not always please the palate, but it should strengthen the religious in his work for God. In number 139 of the *Constitutions* food is briefly referred to once again as food associated with the "poor." This does not mean that it should be poor quality food since not all good food is expensive.

Festive celebrations are the topic of number 234. Like the Church, Fr. Colin respects the rhythm of feast, fast, and ordinary time. On festive occasions some special things are allowed; coffee, additional courses and desserts and "a better quality, though not extravagant, wine." Remember, the Society of Mary was born in wine country and Jean-Claude Colin's family owned vineyards. Two feast day rules must be observed - everyone must have their fair share and no strong liquor may be served.

Marist meals are not only community events, but they are made acts of worship by the prayers that accompany them. In years past Marists recited the liturgical meal prayers of the church at the table. Today they are more creative and



spontaneous in their meal prayers, if not less verbose.

Since its beginning, the writers of the Church have had much to say about food and eating. The ascetics of eating are especially clear in the monastic tradition. Not only Christianity but also other religions have concerned themselves with food and its consumption. Food is a topic in inter-religious dialogue. Thich Nhat Hanh, a Buddhist monk and friend of Trappist Thomas Merton, is especially eloquent. In his contemplative view of food he reminds us that food is a gift of the earth; that we should eat with mindfulness, gratitude, and moderation but without greed. By eating compassionately, we avoid harming the earth and its inhabitants; thus, we nurture our brotherhood and sisterhood, build community, and serve all living beings. "The eyes of all look to you, O Lord, and you give them food in due season. You open your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing." (Psalm 145, 15-16)

### Cause for Canonization of Venerable Fr. Jean-Claude Colin, SM

**Pray** for the Canonization of Venerable Father Jean-Claude Colin, SM, Founder of the Society of Mary (Marists)

Encouraged by the Holy See and the Archdiocese of Lyons, France, the Marist General Chapter and General Administration call on us all to pray and work for the canonization of Father Colin.

1. Pray for his canonization
2. Bring your needs to him in prayer
3. Report any extraordinary favors granted to you through his intercession to:  
The Marist Provincial House  
815 Varnum Street, N.E. | Washington, DC 20017 | USA
4. To find out more about Father Colin visit this website: [jeanclaudocolin.org](http://jeanclaudocolin.org)



# On Discernment and the Power of Narratives

by Nik Rodewald, Marist Novice

To be a Christian means to believe in a fundamental narrative - Salvation History - that underlies all of reality. It means believing that God once spoke to a man named Abram, and called him to set out into an unknown and foreign land. It means believing that God delivered his chosen people, Israel, from slavery in Egypt. It means believing in the new heavens and the new earth promised by God through the prophet Isaiah. And it means believing that the salvation of the world comes to fulfillment in Jesus Christ. It means that one believes that God became human in the Nativity, lived among us as a prophet and teacher, was crucified and died, yet rose again, conquering death. It means believing that God continues to live among us in the body of believers, the Church, and, indeed, that God is alive within our own lives and our own narratives. In that context, discernment is about hearing, *within our own stories*, the unfolding of Salvation History. Based on what we hear within our proper stories, discernment culminates in a decision, either big or small, on how we will live our lives. I want to share a little more on what that process is like for me during this year of discernment, my novitiate year at the Cerdon International Marist Novitiate in Davao City, Philippines.

## Becoming Still

During the novitiate, a novice decides to dedicate one full year to discerning the will of God in his or her own life. That time is a grace and a luxury that many are unable to experience, and yet it is also surprisingly difficult to take advantage of

that year, because it is a challenge to remain still enough to really listen to the sacred story written in our own hearts. In my own case, coming to the Philippines, alongside other novices from different cultures, was initially a distraction from becoming still. For the first few months, everything was new and fascinating, and that very newness made it difficult to find the quietness of heart needed to listen. Even if one is not a novice, this is probably the greatest challenge to any long-term discernment - becoming still enough to listen to God working in our lives. It is easy to want to “jump the gun” on making a decision, to look towards the future, or to dwell on the past, but discernment, despite being oriented towards a choice that is made in the future, can only really happen when we are able to become still in the present. T.S. Eliot describes this in his *Four Quartets*:

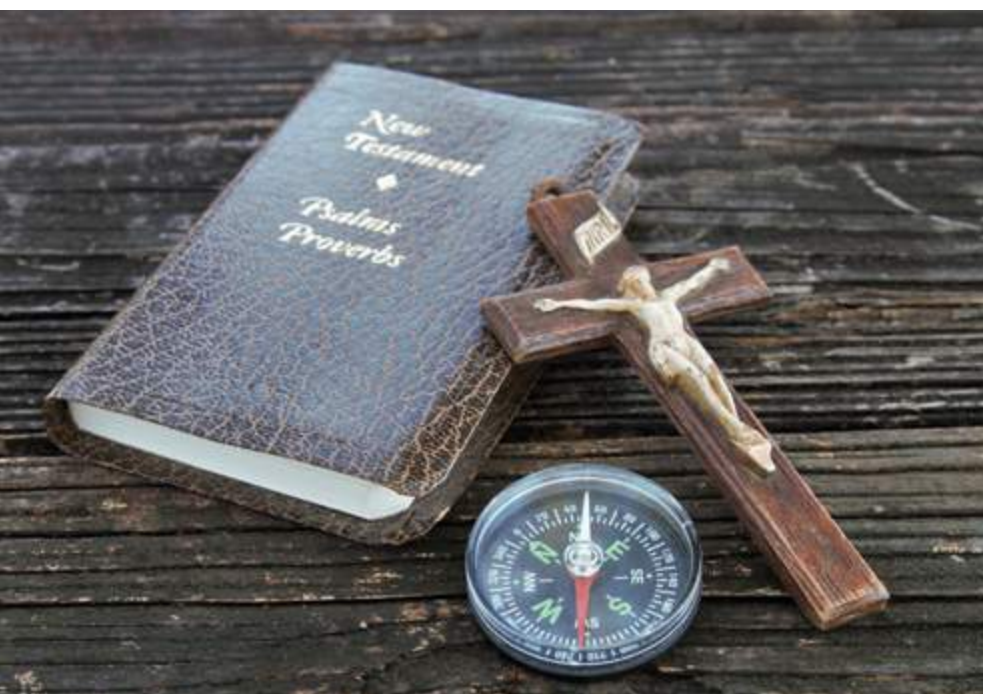
*Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is...  
Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from  
nor towards.  
Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point,  
There would be no dance, and there is only the dance.*

The dance of discernment must be done in the present. In any sort of long-term discernment, one learns to accept uncertainty. Will I profess vows as a Marist? Will I keep those vows beyond the initial term of commitment? Having to admit that I do not know, and cannot know, right now is hard but necessary if I wish to enter into good, long-term discernment. Even as I have been in the Philippines for ten months now, it is still a daily challenge to remain in the present and go about the work of discernment.

Becoming still and entering into the present, though difficult, is not a mystery beyond our reach. It first means allowing our minds to rest. For me, breath awareness and centering prayer are daily tools to enter into this space. From there, I find that having periods of intentional reflection each day are helpful to me. I have begun journaling with my own history from different perspectives, spirituality, human relationships, professional aspirations, the various ‘dreams’ that I have had. I try to listen to the events, thoughts, and feelings of the past and detect the presence of God working in them. I ask to see these events not just from my own perspective, but also from God’s perspective. In doing this, I often meditate on stories from Scripture to see if I can find comparisons with my own, using the story of how God worked throughout Salvation History in order to see how he is working in my own story.

## Building a Vision Through Our Stories

As I put together these different stories, I begin to see a certain narrative take shape, that is, a certain way in which God has been active in my life. This way – influenced by relationships,





experiences, my own sins, and my personality – indicates to me the way in which God calls me to love. All Christians are called to follow in the way of Jesus, and since we are all individual people, called by name, our paths will all look a little bit different. Seeing the love of God at work in our past sheds light on the *specific way* God calls us to love in the present and future.

An example of this can be found in Shusaku Endo's novel, *Deep River*. In the novel, Otsu is a Japanese priest who has consistently found himself at odds with his religious order and with the wider Church because of his own theological perspective. Even so, he feels that coming from Asia, his view of Christianity is necessarily different from that of European Christianity, and he believes that God embraces both worldviews. In the end, Otsu is cast out of his order and spends the rest of his life in India, carrying "untouchables" to the river Ganges so that they can be ceremonially cremated. Otsu struggled for years with the cognitive dissonance of his Japanese upbringing and his French theological training, a dissonance between deep, personal faith in Jesus Christ and how he is simultaneously at odds with the Christian Church. Yet, in the end, he "discerns" his place in all of it: he is still a Catholic priest even though his vision calls him not to serve in any traditional ministry, but rather to bring the untouchables to the Ganges for a proper Hindu funeral. He has finally

reconciled his own story and put it into a practice uniquely his own; he has discerned his vocation. My own story, and all of ours, will reveal dissonance and tension between competing loves and ideas. In the end, discernment is not about relieving that tension but, rather, finding the way to live it, and thus honoring God.

### A Free Choice

The end of discernment is a choice made in freedom. It is not trying to answer the question in the "right" way, but rather to come to see who we really are in our true selves and how God has been at work in our lives. From there, God gives us the freedom to choose how we will live out and accept the sacred humanity that has been entrusted to us. Not having a "right" or a "wrong" choice is both frightening and liberating – frightening because it becomes our responsibility and we cannot really blame God if something goes wrong, but also liberating in that we receive the knowledge that God is not looking for us to choose either this or that, but simply choosing to live out the humanity he has given us in the most beautiful and loving way we can.

## News Brief

### New Website - Society of Mary USA Province

Our newly recrafted bi-lingual (English & Spanish) website ([societyofmaryusa.org](http://societyofmaryusa.org)) launched on October 7, 2019 (the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary).

For the past year, we have been working with NewGroup Media and DOJO Creative Marketing Group on the development of our new website. We would like to thank all those who have contributed during the different stages of development on the website. It has truly been a team effort.

We are hopeful that you will appreciate the careful aesthetic work on our new attractive website as well. The website reflects the Marist call to be truly missionary to the cyber world: "...announcing the word of God, reconciling, catechizing, visiting the sick and the imprisoned, doing the works of mercy...attending to the most neglected, the poor and those who suffer injustice." (*Constitutions of the Society of Mary* #12).

Please check out the new website and send us your feedback at [smpublications@maristsociety.org](mailto:smpublications@maristsociety.org)! Thank you!







# Bearing Witness

by Brendan Murphy, Social Studies Teacher at Marist School, Atlanta, Georgia

“It is said the greatest journey starts at the heart. In the years to come you will have a chance to clear the mirage clouding the views, lift the veil of misconceptions and serve as a beacon of enlightenment to mankind. You are a gift of history to our legacy.” These words were written by Holocaust survivor, Murray Lynn, in a letter to the students in my *Bearing Witness* program at Marist School in Atlanta, Georgia. Inspiring my students as well as to the countless educators, administrators and staff - both clergy and laity - at Marist schools, parishes, and missions around the world, his words speak to the important difference between schooling and education.

Beginning with the leadership of Fr. Jean-Claude Colin Marist teachers have always understood the distinction between schooling and education. Schooling is the piling on of names, dates, and facts: it is “Columbus sailed the ocean blue in 1492,” quadratic equations, and the Periodic Table. Important to be sure but only a part of one’s education. Education comes from the Latin *educere* which means to bring out, as in, if properly nurtured one can educe a flower from a seed. One’s education then is the bringing out of who God intended us to be.

Educators who teach in Marist secondary schools around the world, know that their students are in a special time in their lives when they are desperate to leave childhood and leap into adulthood to live their lives deliberately with intention and purpose. However, before they look forward to this new stage in

life, they must first look inward to better understand what they believe in, love, dream of, and value because what they value, they will become.

Many years ago I created the *Bearing Witness* program, a humanizing endeavor intended to help students across this threshold by taking them on a journey through the past that helps them reconsider how they understand themselves as human beings. The program uses the history of the Holocaust to engage the heart, develop better judgement, and teach empathy. As Pope Francis said while visiting the Great Synagogue in Rome, “The Holocaust teaches us to always maintain the highest level of vigilance in order to be able to intervene immediately in the defense of human dignity and peace.” With their natural energy, curiosity, and wonder, the students in *Bearing Witness* are challenged to cultivate the qualities of heart and spirit necessary to live a life in a way that matters, in a way that makes a difference.

Some of the many objectives of the *Bearing Witness* course include, students:

- gain critical thinking skills by analyzing the history of the Holocaust through survivor testimony, Holocaust literature, art and poetry, and primary documents;
- understand the roots and ramifications of prejudice, racism, and stereotyping to see how remaining indifferent to the oppression and suffering of others in any society can perpetuate and enable hate;

- think about the use and abuse of power;
- recognize how democratic institutions are not automatically sustained, but need to be appreciated, nurtured and sustained;
- express their understanding of this history through music, poetry, painting, and in producing a Holocaust memorial on our campus by creating a daffodil garden as part of the worldwide Daffodil Project.

Since the best journeys are never traveled alone but rather in the company and encouragement of those we love, I created an adult version of the Holocaust seminar for my students’ parents. The hope for the adult course is that parents and their children will travel this journey together through dinner table conversations about a history that demands both the inquisitiveness of youth and the life experience of adulthood to confront it.

Critical to the *Bearing Witness* experience is an immersive nine-day trip to Munich, Prague, and Krakow - cities chosen for their direct relation to the objectives and meaning of the program as much for their astounding beauty and proximity. The curriculum I created for the trip includes visits to important sites related to the history of the Holocaust including ghettos, memorials, and concentration and death camps, such as Dachau and Auschwitz, as well as activities designed out of an appreciation for the unique history and culture of the German, Czech, and Polish people.





Traveling to places like Dachau and Auschwitz can sometimes overwhelm and even frighten students who sometimes lack the life experience to process the inhumanity, extreme brutality, and death one confronts there. For this reason, it is important that students be given the time and opportunity to journal by themselves at appropriate times throughout *Bearing Witness*. Journal writing can facilitate and enhance reflection and critical thought in a safe and private space. Moreover, for the students their journals provide a great resource when it comes time for group discussions on *Bearing Witness*.

To better understand the meaning and lessons of the Holocaust, it can be helpful for students to hear varying perspectives on the subject from local and world leaders who have thought about and pondered man's inhumanity to man. Each year I reach out to certain individuals from our community and beyond to invite them to write to the *Bearing Witness* students to offer their own understanding of why young people should study the Holocaust. Individuals who have written to *Bearing Witness* students in the past include former presidents Obama and Carter, senators, governors, Holocaust survivors, artists, writers, museum directors, educators, State Department members, religious leaders, and many others.

In its original meaning, a witness is not only one who sees something but is one who sees something and is changed by it. To study the history of the Holocaust is to become a witness to a story that reaches our students in that place where truth is kept and inspires them to become that beacon of enlightenment to mankind. Essential then to their experience is the *Bearing Witness* Promise, an invitation for each student to commit to a unique project that makes a difference in their communities in a way that is meaningful to them. One example of a *Bearing Witness* Promise is the annual inter-faith Peace by Piece program run by myself and two other directors from the Weber School and WD Mohammed School, two local high schools in the Atlanta area, Jewish and Muslim respectively. Throughout the school year, we bring Christian, Jewish, and Muslim students from our schools together for on-going fellowship and dialogue. In 2015, Pope Francis called dialogue with non-Christian religious traditions "a school of humanity and a builder of unity." In that spirit, the Peace by Piece program is designed to foster a respect for and an understanding of the richness and integrity of other religious traditions and



**p.10:** Sydney Morlan, Marist Class of 2018, at the Dachau Concentration Camp, with the Church of the Mortal Agony of Christ in the background

**Top Left:** Sean McVay and Nolan Daniels, Marist Class of 2014, outside Munich at the Dachau Concentration Camp crematorium

**Top Right:** Laura Harrison, Marist Class of 2016, at Auschwitz

**Below:** Kendall Brothers, Marist Class of 2017, at Auschwitz



to eliminate discrimination and harassment because of differences in race, religion, or condition in life.

Marist students sometimes wonder why we have to study the past. We do so in part to reveal how much of it still lives in us today. When we look back to the history of the Holocaust it must be to see who was lost, what happened, what failed to happen, and it must be to consider what roles and responsibilities we have in the challenging times in which we live.





# Giving Marist Meaning to Helping Others Within the Mission of the Gospel

## BALAY PASILUNGAN: A Shelter for Street Boys and Boys Abandoned on the Streets

by Lauro Arcede, SM and Lionel Mechavez, SM

Balay Pasilungan was founded in the Philippines in 1989 by the Society of Mary - Marist Fathers and Brothers. Patrick Devlin, SM was its first executive director. It is a shelter and a home for street boys and abandoned boys. It is in Davao City's largest public market, where many street boys play, beg, sleep, and do odd jobs. Many street boys come to our house for meals, to bathe, and to rest. At their request and follow-up assessments by their social workers, these boys will go to school, and they can rely on in-house study to help them keep up with their classes.

In addition to Marist priests, other religious congregations took over at significant times. From 1999 to 2005, the Marist Sisters administered the center. The Sisters transformed the place from a drop-in facility to a residential center where boys could be admitted, supervised by social workers, and offered rehabilitation programs. The Sisters introduced formal education for resident boys by sending them to the nearest elementary school. During this time a

bakery was built, next to the center, where older boys could learn how to bake bread that was then sold, and others learned how to make sandals. One of the great contributions the Sisters made was to provide a transitional center for the boys who were ready to leave Balay Pasilungan. This transition center is called "Balay Kalambuan" (House of Growth).

From 2005 to 2013, the Marianist Fathers and Brothers replaced the Marist Sisters. They strengthened the non-formal education started by the Sisters by building classrooms where the boys could take classes. The changing face of Davao society had also changed the character of the street boys. They stopped hanging out at the public market and moved to shopping malls, underpasses, walkways, bridges, churches, and tourist centers. The Marianists expended great effort to invite the boys to stay at Balay Pasilungan. During this time period, the boys at the center began to attend formal schooling. The center provided tutors to help with lessons. An effort to re-integrate the boys with their families became one

of the goals of the center, and so programs were provided to prepare families for how to care for their sons.

In 2013 the Marist Fathers again took over Balay Pasilungan. Lionel Mechavez, SM, was appointed executive director of the shelter. During this time, the center developed a partnership with the local school to provide home school programs for boys who were not comfortable going to school because they were older than the other students. Fr. Lionel also began a triathlon for the boys. Their participation in this event earned them various awards and won them recognition in several competitions.

The operation of the center remains completely dependent on the help and support of generous sponsors. Some donate food supplies for a month or a year. Some raise funds to pay for the education of the boys. Some give clothes and mattresses, and others give monetary assistance to pay for building maintenance and the salaries of professionals and house staff. Clearly the mission of the Marists at the center



is not to provide all the luxury the boys want. According to Fr. Robert Devlin, SM, the second executive director of Balay Pasilungan, “What is important is that at least they (street boys) experienced being loved even for just one day.”

### The Story of a Boy of Balay Pasilungan

Louie was seven years old when the Balay Pasilungan team rescued him from an underpass near an old shopping center in Davao City. When he came to the center, he had a meal and a bath. The team immediately noticed that he was not a typical street boy. He, in fact, looked clean after taking a bath and was enthusiastic to attend school. Once he was enrolled in school, he was never absent and was always serious about his studies. He was always sweet, loving, and interested in helping others. After almost two years in the center, some nights he began asking the caregiver if his mother or father ever thought of him. The caregiver did not know how to respond. As a deeply Catholic mother whose heart went out to the boy, she struggled to tell the boy these words: “Maybe they do. But if they don’t, never forget that our Father in Heaven always keeps us in mind. He wants us to be happy even though some things in our lives turn out to be difficult.”

Louie’s question about his mother and father continued for almost four months. The answer he got from adults around him did not seem to satisfy him, and that was the time that he started sharing his story.

Louie had four siblings, and he was the third child. Since his mother’s brother did not have children, and he and the wife were in their early 40s, they asked Louie’s parents if they could adopt him when he was two years old. His uncle, who became his adoptive father, fell seriously ill.

Louie was left in the care of his aunt, his adoptive mother, who was herself busy earning money for their family. She was always away at work. One day while Louie was alone at home a fire broke out in their neighborhood. Louie did not know what to do when he saw the people running in panic. He also ran, ending up running towards an unfamiliar area, and was unable to find his way home after the fire. He did not know how to live on the streets, and he did not know how to beg. He stayed on the streets for almost two years surviving from the generosity of other street boys until the Balay Pasilungan team found him at the underpass.

As soon as the social worker learned of his story, she immediately posted Louie’s



Balay Pasilungan triathlon team

photo as a lost child on Facebook. Louie’s biological mother, who was working in Malaysia at the time, saw the Facebook post and contacted her husband who lived six hours away from the center. Louie’s father confirmed with the center that the boy was indeed his son. He told the social worker that the whole family had been searching for Louie on the streets of Davao City for three months following the fire. Louie was soon reunited with his family. Certainly, our Father in Heaven had unceasingly in mind that Louie needed a family to be truly happy.

## Giving Meaning and Orientation of Life to Street Boys

by Albert Kabala, SM, District Superior of Africa; and Christian Abongbung

In 2005, the Marist family (Marist Fathers and Brothers (SM), Marist Sisters (SM), Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary (SMSM) and Marist Laity) in Senegal started an association for the rehabilitation of street boys in Dakar along with a center for home economics training for girls in poor neighborhoods. Keur Nazareth, now commonly known as Nazareth Centre takes care of the street boys in the capital city. Since the team at the Centre obtained legal status from the Senegalese government, it has been working tirelessly for the rehabilitation of families as well as the social reintegration of the boys. It is worth noting that a big social problem in Senegal is precisely so many young people on the street, especially those who join the heavy exodus from the country into the city. According to our past statistics, Nazareth Centre

registered more than six thousand boys living on the street. We have been able to get 302 boys off the streets, and they are now enjoying family life with their parents and attending either academic school classes or vocational training, thanks to the help and support of our generous benefactors.

Nazareth Centre offers the following weekly program for the boys:

**Street Outreach:** The team goes out twice a week to meet the street boys in places where they usually spend the night and generally live near garbage dumps.

**Wednesday in Keur Nazareth:** On this day we welcome the boys to the Centre and provide them with a safe, quiet environment where they can shower, change clothes, and receive medical

attention (First Aid). They enjoy two good meals and have time to talk and listen to others as well as be listened to.

**Reintegration Camp:** One of the major ways we have of getting most of the boys off the streets is through the reintegration camp organized each year by Nazareth Centre. With the help of the camp, we recover an average of 45 street boys annually. This year’s camp was held from February 6-15<sup>th</sup>. The theme this year was: “*As a child I have rights and obligations.*” The main purpose of the camp is to prepare the street boys to leave life on the streets and to move into life with family, and from there to build a responsible, satisfying life. For a period of ten days, the educators spent quality time listening to the boys individually, identifying their problems, and initiating dialogue and mediation with parents to



**Left:** Burmese migrant children - without education they will remain in the cycle of poverty. **Right:** Burmese migrant children at Marist Mission in Ranong, Thailand.

## Marist Mission in Ranong, Thailand

by Frank Bird, SM, Director, Marist Asia Foundation, Ranong, Thailand

Burmese migrant children at Marist Mission in Ranong, Thailand

Migrant children and families from Burma are the focus of the Marist Mission in Ranong, Thailand. As Marists we know our calling is to be 'another Mary' going out to the edges of society. And so, here, we concentrate on supporting education and health for the most abandoned.

Marist Education Programs support about 200 Burmese migrant students. Their parents work in fish factories, charcoal factories, and the many other 3-D jobs (Dirty, Difficult, Dangerous) that employ migrants. Life is so difficult for them.

We work in the border crossing town of Ranong, between Southern Myanmar and Thailand. One of the great challenges of a poor community is that education and health come only after food on the table, house rent, and basic security are taken care of. Money for legal documents, children's school fees, school transportation, doctor's visits, etc. are often unaffordable.

We often visit families that cannot pay the monthly school fee or bus fee, and we ask them to please continue to send their children, and we will find ways to support them while the family faces their other financial challenges. The parents often cry. They feel both ashamed and thankful at the same time. They are sad because of their problems, yet happy that we can find support for their children.

Most migrant children end their education about the age of 12 because their bodies are big enough at that time to take up a paying job on their own, or they can look after their siblings at home and let their parents go to work. Leaving

school really limits their future and keeps their families in poverty.

We often visit the homes of migrant parents who are struggling. They will say, "Education does not feed us." So they are tempted to withdraw their child from school at the age of 12. We share with them that if they can let their child remain with us for four years of secondary school, the child and, indeed, the whole family will have such a better future. However, this is always a big challenge and risk for them.

We see the love that parents have for their children. They certainly want brighter futures for their children, yet they struggle to live on eight dollars a day. I often think that the cost of a cup of coffee and a snack in America or New Zealand would pay for school fees for a whole month here in Ranong. Such a contrast between societies seems incredible.

This year we made some big decisions. Our Marist school is one of only two opportunities for a child from 12 to 16 years of age to get a secondary education. We want to give hope toward a much better future to more and more young Burmese migrant students.

Thus, we have a plan to improve our school buildings and to double the number of Burmese migrant teenagers who can come to our Burmese Migrant Secondary Education Program (BMSP). We need some water tanks, a large shade roof, extra classrooms, tables, and chairs. For the past two years we have had over 75 students apply for Year 1 of our secondary program, but we have had

enough room and resources for only 30 students.

We are also developing our Young Teachers program. This program will train students to become teachers and will prepare them to achieve their Certificate in Teaching and Learning. Some of our most talented young graduates of this program are then willing to give back by offering two years of service to the community.

One of the most rewarding sights each day is to see the three school buses arrive at Marist Center. The sound of laughter from girls and boys joking and talking with each other and their bright smiles convey their joy at coming to a safe place as well as their growing sense of confidence that comes from the experience of learning and attending school.

Our new young students, just about 12 years old, share on Facebook that they are "studying at ACU." That refers to our final Online University Diploma Program in partnership with the Australian Catholic University (ACU). It shows they want to continue through our four-year education program, then continue into the two-year English program, and finally to progress on to the two-year University Online Diploma Program. This education opportunity has graduated over 55 talented young Burmese leaders who have become teachers, community workers, translators, health workers, and inspirational role models for their community.

The Marist Community has been here for 12 years, and we have witnessed so



many of the challenges of migrant families. We recognize how precious each student in the classroom is. Unfortunately, 85% of Burmese children do not receive an education. We are, however, seeing more positive signs of parents wanting to give their children a chance for secondary education. About 90% of our students do complete their studies, and this indicates to us a great success rate.

Our education pathway has produced over 24 young teachers. When we visit some of the local medical clinics, it is our graduates who are working as translators in three languages: Burmese, Thai, and English.

When we go to large meetings with government officials or Non-Government Organizations, we are filled with pride and joy at how often we see one of our graduates as the chief translator. These and so many other signs of success convince us that education is the best gift we can give to a migrant community.

At the end of August we faced a challenging situation when 32 Burmese migrant teachers were arrested and removed. The arrests came as a result of an order from the Thai Department of Labor to search all ten Burmese migrant learning centers in Ranong. As a result of this action, currently about 3,000 migrant children are without a school since we had to close our learning centers to protect the staff from possible arrest. We are working with the government and the United Nations, UNICEF, UNESCO, and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to find a solution.

We appreciate the prayers and support that comes from all around the world. We feel it a great privilege to be part of Mary's work in Mary's way. Perhaps more than ever before, the Church and the world needs a Mother's love to reach out with compassion to some of the most abandoned children so that they can have brighter futures. May we have the courage of Mary as we see her in the Gospel of Luke 1:53 to extend one hand to the powerful and the other to the lowly and bring them together in a spirit of building family with each other.

*We ask for your prayers as the mission continues to dialogue with the Thai government to find a way to reopen its doors and welcome the children back to the classroom.*

#### *Giving Meaning, continued from page 13*

accept the boys back home. At the end of this year's camp, a total of 24 boys (between 7 to 18 years of age) were successfully taken off the streets. Twenty-one boys are back with their families and three boys are in specialized centers for the rehabilitation of homeless boys.

**Follow-up and Vocational training:** After reuniting street boys with their families, the most important part is the follow-up and accompaniment that insures a successful integration. Nazareth Centre also offers a support program for former street children to either learn a trade in an informal training center/workshop or to return to formal education.

For many years Nazareth Centre has been supported by other Marist communities and institutions around the world. However, it has recently been experiencing difficulties due to lack of regular funding. The demands are high because of the socioeconomic situation in this region and the limited resources we have to respond to them. We are immensely grateful to all who continue to support our work in any way they can.



Sharing a meal at Nazareth Centre



## We Appreciate Your Donation!

We ask for your prayers for all of our Marist foreign missions. If you are able to help financially, please use the envelope in this magazine to send your gift. **Please check the circle "Marist Foreign Missions" on the inner flap of the envelope.** Or Donate online at our website: [societyofmaryusa.org](http://societyofmaryusa.org). Thank you for your generosity!

# Of Choice and of Discernment

## Prayerful Reflection with the Movie *The Children Act*

by Brian Cummings, SM, Director, Pā Maria Marist Spirituality Centre, Wellington, New Zealand



If the movie *Of Gods and Men* (2010), which I reflected on in the previous issue of Today's Marists (Spring 2019), illustrates perfectly what is meant by "group discernment", then *The Children Act* (2018) can be said to illustrate perfectly how "choice on a personal level" is not necessarily discernment.

Before getting into what is missing from *The Children Act* regarding discernment, let's focus on what is there – or more accurately, who is there: Emma Thompson.

And here I confess to a personal bias. I will watch anything that showcases Emma Thompson because I believe she is currently, without question, one of the leading stars in movies today. It remains one of life's frustrations for me that one of her greatest performances (*Wit* from 2001) did not receive the recognition it deserved because the film was released directly to HBO rather than to the usual cinema screen with easy access to the movie-going public.

Nevertheless, receiving two Academy Awards and becoming a Dame Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (the equivalent of a knighthood) does indicate the superior standing that Emma Thompson enjoys for any film where she is involved.

Furthermore, since the movie in question is an adaptation of the novel by world famous author Ian McEwan, then there is added reason to take it seriously.

*The Children Act* is essentially a movie about choices, and those choices largely revolve around British High Court Judge Fiona Maye (Emma Thompson) and her professional and private lives.

Fiona Maye sits on the bench of Family Court and is a highly respected and well-regarded judge. She knows the law thoroughly, and she knows how to apply it properly.

Directed by Richard Eyre, the movie begins with a graphic demonstration of Fiona's talent and acute legal mind as she rules on a much-publicized case involving a Catholic family where the question is whether conjoined twins should be separated (which would result in the death of one of them).

The parents say "No" because of their faith; others say "Yes" on the principle that it is better that one baby live than that both die. Not surprisingly, Fiona rules in favor of separation, because that is what Parliament has legislated, specifically in the *The Children Act*. Hence the title of the movie.

The situation is, ultimately, decided by logic and what the law decrees, rather than by the personal beliefs of the parents or of Fiona herself, for that matter.

While law and logic might work (and be required) in court, it is not necessarily the same on a personal level for Fiona. Another major choice presented in the movie involves the relationship between Fiona and her husband, Jack (Stanley Tucci), a university professor.

Jack complains bitterly that their relationship has become totally subordinated to Fiona's work, and he announces his desire to have an affair with a younger member of his faculty. The "choice" is not entirely his alone; he does ask Fiona for her permission to have the affair. In his own mind, he wishes to treat his wife with respect and keep an open relationship between them, while at the same time he is seemingly totally oblivious to the enormous pressure Fiona is under at work. Likewise, Fiona is

oblivious to the effect her focus on court cases is having on her marriage.

And while this unravelling of their relationship proceeds apace, Fiona confronts another major case, this one involving the 17-year-old son of a Jehovah's Witnesses family who urgently needs a blood transfusion to survive leukemia. The son, Adam (Fionn Whitehead), and his family, who are clear and adamant about their religious obligations and observing the tenets of their faith, absolutely reject a blood transfusion. Fiona becomes involved only because Adam is just short of his 18th birthday and, therefore, he still comes under *The Children Act*.

Once again, Fiona makes a choice – this time (and highly unusual for her) to visit Adam in the hospital. Although she maintains the best of intentions, to get to know Adam as a person, things spiral rapidly out of control, both for Fiona and for Adam.

This is a complicated movie and compelling to watch, posing "sophisticated questions around family, religion, marriage, law and the delicate boundaries that can or cannot be crossed in each institution." (Quote from Tomris Laffly, *Roger Ebert*).

This is also a movie about *choices* rather than about *discernment*, as is evident from the abundant religious threads in it.

As was noted in our earlier reflection on *Of Gods and Men*, "A decision is not necessarily a deliberate, self-conscious choice, and it does not necessarily occur in the context of prayer. Discernment does both. With discernment, we enter into a dialogue with God after establishing a right relationship." (Monty Williams, S.J., in *The Gift of Spiritual Intimacy*)

*The Children Act* is full of major choices. In the case of Fiona, she makes choices





# THE CHILDREN ACT

emma THOMPSON

against a background of her learning, experience, and an awareness of the legal parameters within which she has to work. In the case of Jack, her husband, the major choice he makes (and soon regrets) arises out of frustration, desire, and a sense of urgency that his options in life are rapidly running out. And as for Adam, his choices emerge through a mixture and a conflict of religious upbringing, personal beliefs, and personal desires.

All of these choices are significant. All are life-changing. All are made (or at least begin) as deliberate and self-conscious.

What they are not is “discernment in action.”

So, how do we distinguish between “a choice” and “a discernment”? Perhaps the key distinction lies in how one arrives at the choice.

As we see in *The Children Act*, choices are consciously made, either because of personal desire or because of awareness and knowledge of what is appropriate in this situation, recognizing, however, that awareness and knowledge are susceptible to becoming blurred if the memory and consequences of earlier choices begin to make themselves known.

In discernment, there is also a “consciousness,” but it is focused more on how a choice is made, rather than primarily on what the actual choice is.

There is an underlying awareness and acceptance that “my choice” is not simply and solely *my* choice. The choices I make involving major decisions are not solely the outcome of my learning, my desires, and my environment.

There is, rather, an awareness that my choices flow out of my relationship with God. And if that is the case, then what is involved in this “relationship with God”?

There are several key elements, including the following:

**Self-Belief:** A belief that God loves me as *I am* with all my strong points and all my weaknesses

**An Awareness of Others:** We do not try to live a self-contained, isolated life, but recognize that we belong to different groups or “communities” – family, parish, work, religious community – and that we are enriched by, and have obligations to, them.

**Awareness of Our Emotions and Our Intellect:** We live out of both our intellect and our heart, not just one or the other.

**Understanding the Movements in Our Spiritual Life:** “In Ignatian terms, we talk about *spiritual consolation* and *spiritual desolation*. How we understand spiritual consolation and spiritual desolation depends on whether our basic orientation is towards intimacy with God or away from that intimacy. Consolation and desolation are not feelings. They are indicators of the direction in which we are pointed based on our underlying attitude.” (Monty Williams, S.J., in *The Gift of Spiritual Intimacy*)

**Our Desired Grace:** We develop a sensitivity to and awareness of “What do I need God to do in my life at this time?”

**Knowing our Deepest Desire:** In prayer and reflection we seek to deepen our understanding of what most fundamentally motivates us. What determines why I get out of bed each day? What am I trying to achieve in my life?

Ultimately, whether we view *Of Gods and Men* or *The Children Act*, from a Marist perspective there is an additional question to be asked – one that fundamentally underpins and gives context to all our actions, our choices, our discernments: “Is what we are doing in the spirit of Mary?”

# Marist Laity

## A Call to Live as a Marist in Mission

by Michael Coveny, Director, Marist Way and Theology Teacher at Marist School, Atlanta, Georgia

From July 28 to August 4, 2019, I attended a Laity conference in and around Dublin, Ireland with Christine Colomban, the lay leader of Marist Laity USA, and Elizabeth Piper, a Marist School mother and leader of an emerging Marist Laity group at Marist School in Atlanta, Georgia.

My journey to attend these conferences began when I attended Sunday morning Mass in Ireland. After disembarking from my Delta flight from Atlanta to Dublin, I walked right into Our Lady Queen of Heaven Catholic Church on the airport grounds. Little did I know that after Mass, my life would be changed in a way that only Mary could have known.

The trip was divided into two parts – first, a gathering of European Lay Marists (98 in attendance), and second, a gathering of the International Marist Laity Network, consisting of 28 representatives from different provinces throughout the Society of Mary.

### In One Irish Heart and Mind

The European Laity conference was held in the town of Termonfeckin, a hidden Irish gem on the east coast, barely an hour north of Dublin in the middle of County Louth. From there, we visited Faughart and the ancient shrine of St.

Brigid. We also visited the water-rimmed town of Carlingford, on the border with Northern Ireland.

Later in the week, we were brought back in time to early Celtic spirituality at the ninth-century monastery of Monasterboice. We then returned to Dublin where we spent an afternoon touring in and around St. Stephen's Green. All the tours and visits helped us connect with many other lay Marists and Marist priests.

The European lay community resembled a "family" of like-minded people: different countries, different languages, different approaches to laity, but all with One Spirit, a Marist Spirit of community and prayer.

We were treated to the warmest and most splendid hospitality from the Irish team, participating in the nightly fellowship and singing in the conference center bar, a recurring evening ritual of joy. Supported in this way, many of us gathered during the week and discussed the similarities and differences in our lives and in living as Lay Marists.

The four days we spent with European Laity provided an example of "building community." In my personal reflections,

I wondered if and how this was the kind of community that the Marist religious I have known experienced.

At the beginning of each conference day, in a gentle Marist way, different delegations provided morning prayer to share our common Marist Spirit. The delegations from Italy, Spain, France, and New Zealand led the prayer and the singing, kicking off each day in one voice. Mass was celebrated every day, led by the delegations from Ireland, Germany, England, and Norway. At Mass on the third day, all members of the different delegations made a Commitment (or Re-Commitment) to the Society of Mary in the local Termonfeckin parish church, aptly named Immaculate Conception.

Thought-provoking talks were provided throughout the conference. An Irish Ph.D. student, Niamh Brennan, opened with a review of spirituality and the "Cosmic story," underscoring the compatibility between creation sacred history and science.

Two Irish lay Marists, Mary O'Connor and Ian Neylon, offered a reflection on the Magnificat. The indelible image of Mary in their own Marist journey of faith was "*The Walking Madonna*," found in





Salisbury Cathedral, England. (Look it up: Mary can be seen walking away from the Church building and into the nearby village of need.)

An English lay Marist, Maureen Meatcher, shared how she was living her call as a Lay Marist by “Bringing God to People” in many vital ministries in London.

Superior General John Larsen, SM closed the conference by exploring the question, “What really is a Lay Marist?” Offering his view, he described Marist lay life and the Marist journey as the following: **Call. Ecclesial Community (with Formation). Commitment. Mission.** Essential to Fr. John’s vision was that Lay Marists “have been formed in Marist Mission” and must be actively pursuing a “mission.”

Christine, Elizabeth, and I welcomed these talks along with an amazing team of representatives from Australia and New Zealand. We called ourselves the “ANZUS” group, short for Australia, New Zealand, and the United States. We were touched to be joined by Fr. Martin McAnaney, SM, the European provincial, who helped us connect our call to the call of European laity.

Inspired, engaged, and enlightened by the broader Marist mission, we left Termonfeckin, to attend a smaller conference for a newly-developing World Laity group.

### Graciously Chosen for a Worldwide Vision

The International Marist Laity Conference was held in the town of Swords outside Dublin at the Emmaus Conference center. For us, Emmaus was a fitting place for such a gathering, as Emmaus represents a special name for all of us at Marist School in Atlanta, Georgia. “Emmaus” was the original youth group and retreat program established by John Ulrich, SM.

Our USA group presented an outline of our laity work in the United States. Christine spoke about the Marist Laity in general and the Lay groups mentored by the late Edwin Keel, SM. Elizabeth discussed her parent participation program in developing “Home Groups” through the Marist Way at Marist School. In addition to that, she spoke about developing a new separate formation group with Tom Ellerman, SM. I discussed the growth of the “Spirit of the

Society of Mary” within Marist School through the Marist Way program and the steps that we have taken to develop and form such a Spirit into a “movement” with concrete activities for parents, faculty, alumni, and students.

The conference was blessed to be joined by Paul Walsh, SM, and former superior general, Jan Hulshof, SM.

There was considerable discussion and general agreement among attendees that the Laity needs a “Commitment to the Society of Mary” component. This commitment would not be a “one size fits all” model. It would, rather, be based on the following tenets, echoing John Larsen’s, SM vision: (a) a commitment as an individual response to Mary’s call, (b) a commitment that begins by being in a community to be formed in Marist Spirituality, and (c) a commitment to live as a Marist in Mission.

In the closing hours of the conference, World Laity originator/founder, the extraordinary servant leader Michel Macquet, stepped down as leader of the International Marist Lay Network. Others were asked to take on the responsibility to form a World Laity framework and to report to Rome. Elected was our own Elizabeth Piper (USA), Jorge López (Mexico), David Sanz (Spain), and Bev McDonald (New Zealand). These individuals will work together, recognizing different regional approaches and more effective communication to meet the hopes of a broader lay community.

Just as my Irish trip began with Mass, I celebrated Sunday morning Mass inspired, affirmed and committed, but this time with a newfound, supporting Marist community. Christine, Elizabeth, and I took leave of our new friends, grateful to the Society of Mary for supporting these laity conferences, blessed that Paul Frechette, SM (Provincial, Society of Mary U.S. Province) and Ted Keating, SM (Director, Marist Laity U.S. Province) sent us to participate in these conferences, and mindful in prayer and spirit of Edwin Keel’s, SM memory and tireless devotion to the Marist Laity.



**p.18 Left:** Marist Laity USA representatives: Elizabeth Piper, Christine Colomban, and Michael Coveny

**p.18 Right:** Presentation at Marist Laity meeting

**Top:** Mass was held at St Fechin’s Church

**Middle:** New Caledonia Marist Laity offer gifts to the Marist Laity from Ireland who organized the European Lay Marist Gathering

**Bottom:** Attendees at 4th European Lay Marist Gathering



# Union With God

by Joseph Hindelang, SM

One of the most popular saints in Christian history is St. Francis of Assisi (1182-1226) whose feast day is October 4. He is known for having lived a self-centered life in his youth until, as a young man, he encountered Jesus. After this experience he became other-centered and inevitably attracted numerous followers through his simplicity and poverty. He lived the rest of his life in *union with God* through deep prayer and a life of serving God's people. At his death he left behind a religious order known as Franciscans. Today a great family of Franciscans in various religious orders still dedicate themselves to prayer and serving God's people while living in poverty and simplicity, yearning for union with God.

When Father Jean-Claude Colin, the Marist founder, stressed the value of *union with God* for his Marist followers, he was drawing from a tradition that stretches back through salvation history. Union with God is an invitation God extends to all people. All believers are called to be saints, people who unite their lives with God in prayer and in action. Fr. Colin called Marists to follow the example of Mary along with countless other holy women and men who strive for a life of union with God. This goal of *union with God* is one of the 20 Marist values that Marist-sponsored schools are invited to instill in their students, staff, and families.

The 2019-20 school year at Notre Dame Preparatory in Pontiac, Michigan recently began with a one-day retreat for 140 teachers and staff members. This retreat centered on the Marist value chosen for the coming school year, Union with God. The group gathered at the nearby Benedictine Subiaco Retreat House, and the presenters were members of the Campus Ministry team: Cathy Zuccaro, Della Lawrence, Eric Olson, and Fr. Jim Strasz, SM. Fr. Paul Frechette, SM, Provincial Superior, participated in the retreat and celebrated Mass. Fr. Ron Nikodem, SM preached the homily.

While this year's value mainly comes from Fr. Colin, some of the reflection quotes come from Pope Francis. He



Faculty and staff in attendance at retreat Mass

writes: *"We need to walk in union with God, recognizing his constant love in our lives. We need to lose our fear before that presence which can only be for our good. Once we accept him, and stop trying to live our lives without him, the anguish of loneliness will disappear."* (*Gaudete et Exsultate*)

The purpose of our retreat day was to walk through the process of discovering the presence of God in our lives and in our relationships. During the year we will work to develop our relationship with God so that we can be in union with God as a faculty. In fact, our campus ministers stressed a point at the opening of the retreat: "I encounter God in my relationships with others by the Love I give and by the Love I receive."

Throughout the school year, for all of us, students, faculty, staff, and families, our goal is to be open to the spirit in our everyday lives and in the lives of those around us. We encourage our school community to encounter God through one another. This openness, this encounter, brings us closer to God and a fullness of life. We will work as a team of faculty and staff to be open to the spirit, to build happiness, and reduce the stress,

the exhaustion, the fear, the anger, the doubt, the loneliness, and all the other barriers that drive us apart from one another and from God.

Notre Dame Preparatory, like each of our Marist schools, is centered on Christ. Through liturgies, morning prayers, afternoon reflections, class retreats, religion classes, campus ministry clubs, and Christian service-learning projects, we hope to foster growth in a relationship with Christ and putting faith into action. All of this is part of our Marist value for this school year, *union with God*.

Whether it is St. Francis of Assisi inspiring others to a deep life of prayer and service to God's people, or whether it is Fr. Colin reminding Marists to follow the example of Mary, the first disciple of Jesus, or whether it is Notre Dame Preparatory encouraging our 959 students to grow in a relationship with Christ while looking for opportunities to serve others, all of these emphasize the importance of a life lived in union with God who created us out of love.



# Reflections on Laudato Sí and the U.S. Catholic Church Conference

Elizabeth Ann F. Avila, Coordinator of Communications for U.S. Province Interviews Ted Keating, SM

Fr. Ted Keating, SM, Vicar Provincial of the Society of Mary U.S. Province, was invited to attend *Laudato Sí and the U.S. Catholic Church: A Conference Series on Our Common Home* held at Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska from June 27-29, 2019. The conference, sponsored by Creighton University and the Catholic Climate Covenant, was the first of three biennial conferences of this series. Fr. Ted was one of 200 U.S. Catholic leaders invited to gather to discuss how to bring about a greater national response to the *Laudato Sí* encyclical of Pope Francis. I asked Fr. Ted to share some of the highlights from the conference and the significance of the message conveyed in *Laudato Sí* within the context of the Eucharist.

## Why was it important for you to attend the “Laudato Sí Conference Series on Our Common Home”?

*Laudato Sí* is a fairly significant shift in paradigm of the Catholic Church and the direction of understanding the role of the earth in our spirituality, our liturgies, our way of dealing with issues. ...I was asked to work with a group of leaders on shifts that need to occur in the celebration of the Eucharist and the other sacraments based on *Laudato Sí* because I have an interest in this. *Laudato Sí*...talks about a deficit in our self-understanding as Church, and even in our celebration of our sacraments with respect to a focus on the earth, especially the Eucharist. There are areas where there needs to be change. This piece is critical – Pope Francis clearly says that if you are going to run off and do a bunch of little things without a shift in consciousness, it's not going to be much help because the peril we're facing is so enormous that it's going to take a shift in consciousness to do it. There are specific ways of seeing the Eucharist and its struggles with this. It's not a critique of the Eucharist – this is a different era with the Earth in peril. ...

Our Eucharists are often focused on redemption and salvation of human beings as they should be, but our Eucharist is not necessarily calling us to a new relationship with the Earth that would generate tremendous energy that deal with the perils we're facing and better reflect the focus of the Old Testament on the glory of God shown in the creation. ...We have no true redemption without the Earth (the Universe) being redeemed according to the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians. Both emphasize that redemption is of the universe and the Earth taken up into the Incarnate Christ as well.

## What were a few of the key “take-home” messages from the speakers who presented?

*A key take-away is that this is a moment of absolute peril for humanity. ...But we haven't just begun this now. There are all kinds of examples, especially of women religious who have been onto this issue for 20 years. There are examples out there of how to do this that are generated more by a love for the earth than it is by only a number of practical things to do.*

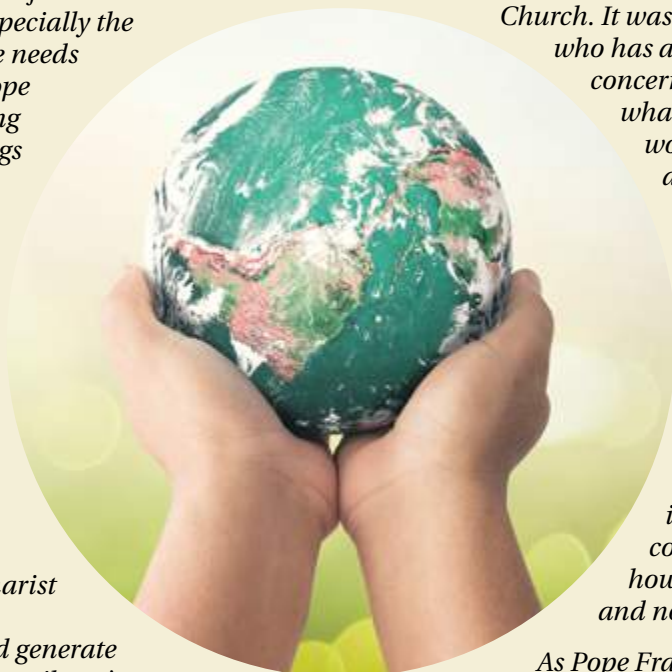
*We have to make a major consciousness shift in our view of humanity and our relationship with the earth. The shift is towards a deeply held sense that ‘we are one with it.’ ...The words of Genesis are all over this – we're of the earth but we have a species arrogance to think ‘we're not like the earth – we think that we are much better than that.’ We began by being of the earth and are becoming more aware of that. ...[This shift] has to become a central piece of our faith and there has been a deficit on that. “Remember man that you are dust and unto dust you will return” as we say on Ash Wednesday.*

## What is the significance of the development of the new Liturgical season, Season of Creation?

*This [liturgical season] was not begun by the Catholic Church. It was begun by an Orthodox bishop who has a deep theological sense of care and concern for the matter of the Earth and what's happening to it. He and other world religious leaders came together around this notion of ‘how do we create a season of creation?’ To keep our Liturgical Year focused on this.*

*The Season of Creation is meant to be five weeks long (beginning with the First Sunday of September and ending with the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi on October 4). It is a universal celebration around the world at this point in many of its religions - a time of repentance, conversion, and increasing awareness of how so much of this belongs in our faith and not just in our head.*

*As Pope Francis said of the first chapter of John's gospel, it doesn't say ‘Jesus became a human being’ [it says] ‘Jesus became flesh, matter’. Francis says that our misreading of the first chapter of John makes it look like the Incarnation is only about us whereas if you look at it more closely with the Epistles mentioned earlier and especially Romans, the whole universe is crying out in agony until humanity comes to its consciousness of the redemption of creation.*



continues on the bottom of page 22

# OBITUARIES

## Father Robert E. Champagne, SM 1922-2019

Father Robert E. Champagne, SM, entered eternal life on September 3, 2019, on his 97th birthday. Bob was born in Peabody, Massachusetts on September 3, 1922 to Arthur B. and Aurelie (Gagnon) Champagne. He made his first profession on September 8, 1945 and was ordained on February 2, 1951.



Fr. Champagne's first assignment was at Cathedral Central High School in Detroit, Michigan. He went on to serve as a teacher and principal at numerous schools across the country. Fr. Champagne also served as chaplain for more than 25 years at MetroWest Hospital.

In retirement Fr. Champagne assisted the pastor at Saint Bridget's Parish in Framingham, Massachusetts. He also helped the Marist Missionary Sisters and aided at the retreat house on the grounds of his retirement house, Elizabeth Seton Residence, in Wellesley, Massachusetts.

Fr. Champagne is survived by numerous nieces and nephews and their families. Memorial donations may be made to the Marist Mission Office. Please mark the inner flap of the enclosed donation envelope "Marist Foreign Missions."

## Father Edwin Leo Keel, SM 1943-2019

Father Edwin Leo Keel, SM, entered eternal life on July 1, 2019 at the age of 76. Ed was born in Jersey City, New Jersey on March 27, 1943 to Edwin and Anne (Guckenberger) Keel. He attended parochial schools in Jersey City and Maywood, New Jersey. He then attended Bergen Catholic High School in Oradell, New Jersey.

During his senior year, a Marist vocation recruiter spoke at Fr. Keel's school, and he decided to pursue a priestly vocation in the Society of Mary at St. Mary's Manor, the Marist minor seminary in Penndel,

Pennsylvania. He entered in 1961 to begin college studies. After two years, Fr. Keel progressed to the novitiate in Rhinebeck, New York.

He was professed in the Society of Mary on September 12, 1964. After studies at Gregorian University, Fr. Keel was ordained July 5, 1970 by Archbishop Héctor Cunial at Chiesa del Rosario in Rome, Italy.



Fr. Keel's first assignment was as spiritual director and teacher at St. Mary's Manor in Penndel followed by serving as superior/rector at the Marist seminaries in New Orleans, Atlanta, and Washington, D.C. He was associate pastor at St. Pius X Catholic Church in Bedford, Ohio; St. Louis King of France Catholic Church in St. Paul, Minnesota; and St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church in Wheeling, West Virginia. He also served in campus ministry and was chaplain and instructor at the Marist Brothers' Second Novitiate program for three years in Switzerland (1982-1985).

In 1985, Fr. Keel became the director of the Center for Marist Studies at the General House in Rome and served there for eight years. He was the promoter of the Marist laity from 1978-1980 and 1999-2008, and remained active with the Marist laity programs for many years.

Fr. Keel produced *A Book of Marist Texts for the Study of Marist Spirituality*, an indispensable compilation of foundational documents and texts on history, charism, and in the spirituality of Fr. Colin. It has become practically the principal source anyone would ever need for in-depth studies on the spirituality of the Society. In his memory, the book is being republished with an index. Fr. Keel was noted for promoting and teaching Marist spirituality with a focus on joy, forgiveness, and reconciliation. In 2015, he joined the Marists at Our Lady of the Assumption Church in Atlanta, Georgia and assisted with pastoral needs.

Fr. Keel is survived by his brother, Brian Keel; sister, Barbara Duda; a niece, and numerous cousins. Memorial donations may be made to the Marist Laity Programs. Please check the "Marist Laity Programs" box on the inner flap of the donation envelope.

*Interview, continued from page 21*

**There are varying opinions among some Catholics concerning which life issue is most important (i.e. abortion, euthanasia, death penalty, etc.). How do the issue of global climate change and the encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, fit into this discussion?**

*I totally agree – if the earth in peril itself is an issue, is all of human life not at issue and how would you have anything left to have as a principle about life? This intensifies the 'Seamless Garment' approach of Cardinal Bernardin and accepted by so many others, saying – if you're only concerned about the child in the womb – do you lose that concern when they're born? As Cardinal Bernardin said in his talk 'A Consistent Ethic of Life: Continuing the Dialogue' (The William Wade Lecture Series) given at St. Louis University in 1984, "A consistent ethic of life ... identifies both the protection of life and its promotion as a moral question. It argues for a continuum of life which must be sustained in the face of diverse and distinct threats. A consistent ethic does not say everyone in the*

*Church must do all things, but it does say that as individuals and groups pursue one issue, ... It is not necessary or possible for every person to engage in each issue, but it is both possible and necessary for the Church as a whole to cultivate a conscious explicit connection among the several issues."*

*This is an underpinning to the life issues. The way we have been dealing with the earth is the way we've been dealing with life. My answer would be to look at the web of life – the consistent ethic of life is another way of putting it – pay close attention to the evolution of not just the earth but the whole web of life on earth and how it has come about from our lifestyles as human beings. We must be concerned about children in the womb, but if that's the only concern, then we may well miss many of the other issues of life that affect children in the womb – the toxics in our rivers and in the air, and the future itself of our children, imperiled by the coming environmental effects of this crisis.*



DONOR THOUGHTS

# Why I Support the Marists

by Bob Barcewski

I was first introduced to the Marist Fathers in the early 1960's while attending Saint Peter Chanel Seminary in San Rafael, California. Although I did not continue through to ordination, the extraordinary people I met during that experience left positive influences which I've taken with me throughout my life. My earliest experiences with the Marists at that seminary have given me strength over the years and inspired me to give back to the Marists when possible.

Fr. Patrick Coyle, SM, (aka. Paddy Coyle) the Marist priest who led the seminary as Rector was always approachable and inspiring. He was a native of Dublin, Ireland and was fond of singing "Danny Boy." His rendition always brought tears to my eyes. The other seminarians would beg him to sing it one more time, and although I am not of Irish heritage, for those few minutes I was definitely Irish.

Interestingly, from my perspective, I have found over the years that converts-to-Catholicism have always seemed to have a unique appreciation for the Catholic faith while those of us who inherited the faith seem to take much for granted. Much of my spiritual exercise goes back to the early morning daily Mass with the practice of silent prayer. I believe my attending daily Mass goes directly back to the training by the Marists. The Marist devotion to Mary has formed the center of my spiritual life.

While it is not my current parish here in San Francisco, California, I have always considered Notre Dame des Victoires, the Marist French National Church, as my home parish. Until recently, the pastor of Notre Dame des Victoires was one of my fellow seminarians, René Iturbe, SM. The parish is so much more than a building - especially when one has attended so many Masses, weddings, baptisms and funerals there. It is a sacred space well-tended by the Marist Fathers & Brothers of the U.S. Province.

The Marist Way is and always has been very special to me.



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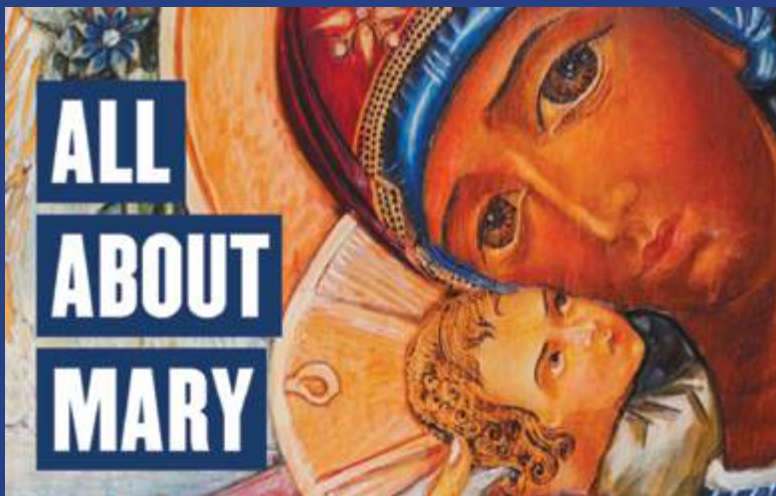


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The University of Dayton's Marian Library hosts a website called "All About Mary". The website puts centuries of information about the world's most famous mother at anyone's fingertips. Checkout the website (<https://udayton.edu/imri/mary>) for:

Biblical references to Mary

- Devotions, meditations, and liturgical celebrations
- Miracles and apparitions
- Artistic portrayals of Mary
- Mary in film -from "Lord of the Rings" to "Pinocchio"
- Shrines and Churches associated with Mary in the USA and worldwide
- Information on Mary in popular culture, including Marian symbols in "Buffy the Vampire Slayer"
- Why a parrot is sometimes depicted in artistic works of Mary

### Spirituality of the Society of Mary: Contemplatives in Action

While the Church has always emphasized Marian devotion, "We (Marists) are called to something much deeper ... we are called to become Mary's devotion in the midst of the Church."

– Fr. Ed Keel, SM

Checkout the website [maristspirituality.org](http://maristspirituality.org) for featured articles and talks.

# Are you or someone you know interested in discerning a call to priesthood or brotherhood?


See contact information below.  
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*"In all things let us look to Mary, let us imitate her life at Nazareth... Let us unite silence and prayer with action. The Society of Mary desires that we, her children, should be missionaries of action and missionaries of prayer."*

Fr. Jean Claude Colin, SM, Founder

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