

Reflection from the Superior General

Our ten younger confreres who gathered in Thailand recently for a Marist Mission Studies Workshop may have spoken different languages at home, may have different formation and mission experiences and may have grown up in diverse cultures, unknown to each other, yet it seemed easy and natural for them all to relate to each other as brothers in one Society of Mary. For all their differences, they share the one call from Mary to bear her name, to live in Marist communities, and to undertake her Work in her special way. Their experience of fraternity deepened over the three weeks as they shared their life-experiences, good and difficult. They were also able to share their dreams for the future of our Society.

This sense of coming from diverse backgrounds while still being united fraternally in one Society of Mary was also clear as Clinton Kube from Cameroon pronounced his vows last week to "the Superior General and his successors", professing to entering one international Society of Mary. He was surrounded by confreres and friends from a dozen different parts of the world. "When they make profession, Marists ... choose to follow Christ more closely in a community *that has one heart and one mind*". (#93)



We all share in the prayer of Jesus to the Father: "*may they be one, as we are one. May they become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them just as you have loved me*" (Jn. 17, 22). Our faith in Jesus Christ unites us and sends out to proclaim the Good News.

The profound image, so loved by Fr. Jean-Claude, of Mary uniting all people under her protection at the end of time is always a powerful call to unity among all of us within Mary's compassionate heart.

We are indeed one Society divided into different units only for the sake of mission. (#157)

The Spirit of Mary calls us to live as one Society. However, there are plenty of factors that can divide us – languages, nationalisms, race and culture and the fear that those who are different might challenge us. Sometimes we feel we know our confreres so well we can be inclined to take them for granted. Some of our confreres feel isolated, lonely or unappreciated. This month we are gathering as a Church in Synod, but the synodal process begins at home. The heart of "journeying together" is that we listen respectfully to each other. One way of working for unity in our Society is "the apostolate of the ear", as Pope Francis says in his prayer intention for October. No matter our age or state of health we can all make every effort to communicate well with others within our Marist Family, using all the means at our disposal, trying to discern the promptings of the one Spirit of God by our respectful conversations.

Another way of growing in our unity as one Society is by sharing our material resources, both locally and internationally. As we try to live simply ourselves and as we trustfully share everything we possess, avoiding any personal or hidden "wealth", we give witness to one Society of Mary. It would be a scandal if some Marists were living like kings while others were searching for enough to get by. "A Society of rich men could hardly claim to be a sign of the presence of Jesus and Mary in the world". (#226)

Our call to unity welcomes others into our Marist Family, especially the stranger and those who are struggling, even among our own confreres. Our unity is never exclusivity, but rather magnanimity.

October is the month of the rosary. This simple and profound prayer, walking with Mary while contemplating the mysteries of her Son's life, invites us to pray for and with each other. As we come to the end of our daily rosary let's look upon the icon of Father Founder together with Our Lady that is hanging in most of our communities and let us be united in prayer for each Marist in the world, especially those who may be standing with Mary in the shadow of the Cross at this time.

Blessed Mary and Venerable Father Jean Claude - pray for us!

John Larsen s.m.