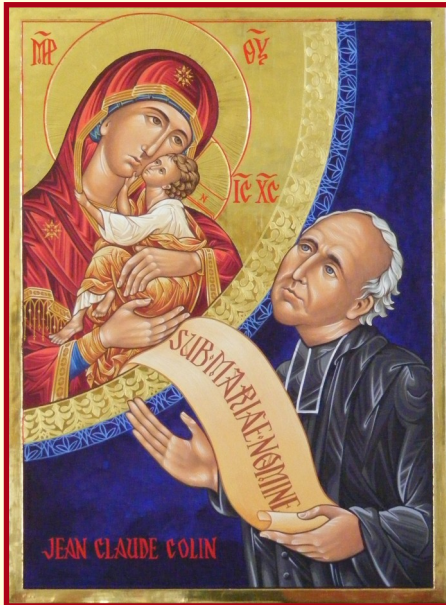


Reflection from the Superior General

I recently asked one senior confrere, who seems to have mastered particularly well the art of growing old graciously, "how have you managed to age so serenely?" After a while he came back to me: "When I was younger I took everything for granted" he said "and just went along with things. Something significant happened in my life and I started to learn the profound grace of gratitude. I learned to be grateful for everything. That shapes my life".

I am conscious of his response as I write my final Reflection, a monthly spiritual exercise.



Gratitude is at the heart of our faith. When we pray "blessed are you Lord God of all creation" we rejoice in God's creation. As we pray the Eucharist Prayer daily, our hearts are echoing gratitude to God for all that is happening. We see the fruits of this Eucharistic gratitude when we encounter confreres who, free from harsh judgements or rancour, are appreciative of everything and everyone.

In my time as Superior General I have been privileged to meet with most of you. There have been many grace-filled conversations during which you have shared your own struggles, joys and hopes over your Marist lives. I have come to appreciate the wisdom and generosity of our confreres in the Society, aware that all of us go through bright and dark seasons of our lives. One Provincial once commented to me: "Look John, even with all our problems, you can be sure all the men are doing their best." Very true!

As I prepare to leave Monteverde, I am so grateful for these years of leadership.

Leadership is a team effort. It has been encouraging and enlightening working together with our Major Superiors. As a Society we have been blessed with wonderful General Councillors – John Harhager, Setefano Mataele, Ben McKenna, and Juan Carlos Pina. As we experimented with various approaches to General Leadership, Setefano was preceded by other Councillors – Paul Walsh, Albert Kabala and Christian Abongbung. There are also bursars and secretaries, archivists, an outstanding financial team and our wonderful lay companions, who are also our close friends, working at Monteverde. I give thanks for the privilege of living and working in Monteverde. These have been blessed years.

Now it is time for us to go "with Mary at Pentecost" into the General Chapter. It is time to give thanks for our Marist call and mission and to discern together how the Spirit is calling us into the future. Please continue to pray for the Spirit's guidance. I have prepared a report which sums up my reflections on these last eight years and proposes some future directions. You will receive the document soon. It is also attached to this Reflection. The new leadership team that will emerge is inheriting a Society of Mary in a time of great transition, but also, I believe, in a wonderful moment of grace and new beginnings.

For the last eight years, every evening when I have been at home in Monteverde I have tried to finish my day by going to the chapel and praying before the icon of Our Lady and Father Jean-Claude and concluding with "Mary, pray for your sons. Father Jean-Claude, pray for your sons". That continues to be my prayer as I finish my term as Superior General very aware that, whatever happens, all is grace.

John Larsen s.m.