

# Reflection from the Superior General

Rome, 3 August 2018

Dear Confreres

I have recently completed a pilgrimage around the Marist places in Belley and the Bugey. In Belley I reflected one morning in the room at La Capucinière where the chapel used to be. Here, in 1836, twenty Marists made their vows to the newly elected Superior General, Père Jean-Claude Colin. Each one of them, and P. Jean-Claude himself, knew in his heart that Mary had specially chosen him and was inviting him to respond with the commitment of his whole life – everything – to do her Work, to live her life, to breathe her Spirit. Within a few months several of them were on the high seas bound for the other end of the world. That small group of twenty quickly grew in numbers. Each one was prepared to forgo his own plans and dreams and commit himself to the plans and dreams of Mary, discerned with his superiors.



La Capucinière, Belley

While the Marist commitment is profoundly personal, it is never made in isolation but always in the context of community. In our own age we can be attracted to go it alone. That is very natural, especially when we are fit and able. However, Mary invites us to live and work in community. For P. Jean-Claude a community would normally include at least six confreres. Community life at its best involves appreciating and encouraging each other in his commitment, sharing our time and our prayer and our ministry. It's our first mission.

Mary calls others to her Son as well, especially those who are struggling in any way. She is one of the "anawim". She journeys with the poor. When we breathe her Spirit we too will be journeying with the poor by our compassion and simplicity of life-style and generous hospitality to any who are suffering around us.

When we are young and idealistic Mary's call to us and our committed response can be professed with a great generosity and freedom of spirit. The challenge is to keep growing in this commitment through the years. We never "retire" from our commitment. Like a good Cerdon wine, our commitment matures. How encouraging it is to encounter confreres who are more committed than ever to responding to Mary's call as they mature in age and experience.

There are so many wonderful examples of confreres whose commitment only grows more profound over the years. Two of our confreres especially need our prayers at this time as they re-launch "into the deep" – Joaquín Fernández is finishing as bursar of Europe and joining the formation team at the novitiate in Davao, and Tony Corcoran is finishing as general secretary in Rome and returning to Australia as provincial. We think too of so many confreres who are always encouraging others by their prayers, words and interest, no matter how advanced they themselves may be in years.

P. Jean-Claude encouraged all Marists to re-commit themselves, especially around the Feast of the Assumption. He wrote his 1872 Constitutions (nos. 202-3) that all Marists were to renew their vows on August 15, "*in honour of the Blessed Virgin and in thanksgiving for their vocation to religious life. They may prepare themselves for renewal of these vows by spending six days in greater recollection and making a confession covering the time since their last general confession*". We are also invited "*on the feast of the Assumption, or on another day within the octave, to spend an hour before the Blessed Sacrament in honour of the most pure heart of Mary.*"

P. Jean-Claude gave this direction in 1872, but it's his advice for us, too, on the Feast of the Assumption, 2018. Today, more than ever, we need to hear Mary's call to undertake her Work and to re-commit ourselves with ever more generous hearts just as our confreres did in that chapel at La Capucinière, in Belley, so many years ago.

*John Larsen s.m.*