

Reflection from the Superior General

For many months we have been staying close to home. This poses both dangers and opportunities. The danger is that we retreat into a fortress mentality, building walls not only against the virus but also against much interest in anyone or anything outside the walls. The opportunity is to create a cocoon from which we emerge with new, more dynamic Christian and Marist lives. We can try to live and communicate more profoundly with God and with others from right where we are.

September 12 is the feast of the Holy Name of Mary. Probably we will need to scale back our celebrations this year. This could be a blessed opportunity for us to contemplate more deeply the significance of Mary's Name for each Marist and to celebrate more simply, profoundly and locally as best we can. "To choose Mary's name is to enter into a special relationship with her". (Const. 15). Mary unites us all "in one mind and one heart" as one universal family.



Here in Rome it is not possible to meet for our annual ARC gathering of Marist leaders this October. We needed to search for other ways to work collaboratively. We are trying to meet by Zoom every month. There are advantages in that we save airfares and there is neither jet-lag nor carbon footprints. We can consider issues together during the ninety-minute meeting. However, it is frustrating not to be meeting personally and so we need to search for other ways as well to express our fraternity.

Our international formation programme is facing special challenges. One path would be simply to revert to localized formation and that has been necessary this 2020 by having two international novitiates running simultaneously, one in Yaoundé and one in Davao. However, interculturality and internationality are essential values in Marist formation now and for the future. We need to search for realistic ways to continue to express these values as best we possibly can.

We had planned a Marist Studies Programme this northern summer for younger Marists so that they could study source material intensively for several weeks and each one work on a project of his choice. It would have been easy to abandon the plan. In the end, the experience was trimmed by the new circumstance and was held here in Rome rather than in La Neylière. Yet it was certainly a blessed time.

All communities are asked to pray daily for Marists elsewhere. Some communities pray each day for specific confreres by name. Here in Rome we pray daily for one particular unit. Most communities also pray every day for the Society, for our deceased confreres, for vocations, for the Superior General and for our benefactors. We are united in prayer with and for each other and with the Marists who have gone before us. This all encourages our Marist family unity even when we are isolated.

As Marists we are invited to join Christians everywhere by responding to Pope Francis' call during "this Season of Creation, which concludes on the feast of Saint Francis of Assisi on the fourth of October. During this period, Christians worldwide renew their faith in the God of creation and join in prayer and work for the care of our common home". (Message on the fifth anniversary of "Laudato Si").

We ask you to pray for us as a General Leadership team this coming week as we undertake a discernment retreat under the direction of an experienced Jesuit to attempt to ask the hard questions with courage and search for the Spirit's guidance to answer them in Mary's way.

A blessed fiesta of the Holy Name of Mary to you all! Pray for each other.

John Larsen s.m.