

# Reflection from the Superior General

We can be overwhelmed when we hear about probable and imminent ecological disasters. Our 2017 General Chapter (#44 – 47) helps us to find a Marist way to respond to these crises. This Chapter asks us to interpret our Marist Spirit and our Constitutions in the light of the teachings of *Laudato Si'*.

The heart of our response as Marists to the crises in the natural world around us is a profound “ecological conversion”. Pope Francis writes: “what is needed is an *ecological conversion* whereby the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationships with the world around them”. (L.S. 217). “Ecological conversion” happens when we meet Christ both in Word and Sacrament and at the same time also in the cry of the poor and the cry of the land.

Our Marist spirituality is our particular way of deepening the work of grace called “ecological conversion”. In our distracted world a profound inner silence, one dimension of “ecological conversion”, enables us to hear the Word of the Lord both in the Scriptures and the Tradition and also in the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth. Father Jean-Claude writes: “Marists combine a love of



solitude and silence and the hidden virtues with works of zeal”. (1872 Const. #50). Pope Francis speaks of serene attentiveness: “we are speaking of an attitude of heart, one which approaches life with serene attentiveness, which is capable of being fully present to someone without thinking of what comes next”. (L.S. 226)

This call to “ecological conversion” is heard in the very place where we find ourselves today rather than in some remote and idealized utopia. We grow to love and care for the place where

we have been assigned and appreciate it as our particular meeting place with God. *Laudato Si'* says: “The entire material universe speaks of God’s love, his boundless affection for us. Soil, water, mountains; everything is, as it were, a caress of God” (# 84). Our own environment becomes a sacrament of “intimate union with God and ardent love of neighbour”. (1872, # 49). Part of the asceticism of our Marist missionary vocation is to live creatively with the tension between loving and caring for the people and place where I live right now while always maintaining the inner freedom to “go from place to place”. (Const. 12).

Our Marist spirituality challenges us to a simple way of life, another aspect of “ecological conversion”. Marists are called to let go of the “spirit of the world, of any greed for earthly goods, and to be totally empty of self-concern; seeking not their own interests but only those of Christ and Mary”. (1872, #50). Fr. Jean-Claude seemed always to have chosen the simplest means of travel, or place to stay, or food and drink, or clothing. This simplicity of life-style is also at the heart of *Laudato Si'*. “Obsession with a consumerist life-style can only lead to violence and mutual destruction”. (L.S. 204).

Our Marist Ecological Commission has prepared a [Sustainability Covenant](#) to help us to make some of the practical, down-to-earth decisions demanded by “ecological conversion”.

I invite each Marist and each community to access this Covenant and, after prayer and discussion, to implement it as far as possible. Alternatively, with the help of this document, you may choose to design your own Covenant. A good time for you to do this may be at your 2021 community meeting “to plan our religious and apostolic life”. (Const.176). Adopting this Sustainability Covenant will help us to heal our damaged eco-systems so that our world, like the Queen of heaven and earth, forever “proclaims the greatness of the Lord”.

Every blessing for 2021 as we strive together to live our Marist vocation ever more courageously!

*John Larsen s.m.*