

Reflection from the Superior General

So much around us can look as if it is broken. We see fractured countries and societies from Afghanistan to Myanmar, from Ethiopia to Venezuela. A huge earthquake tears Haiti apart while the rest of the world, ravaged with Covid and with fears about potential ecological disaster, hardly notices. Sometimes these fractures seem to cut right through our own hearts and our own communities.

The Gospel message, which invites us to see everyone as my sister and my brother, all of us as sons and daughters of one Father, brings grace and the hope of healing. Pope Francis' letter *Fratelli Tutti* is an extended meditation on this theme. I recently read one other helpful letter written by Bishop Vesco of Oran, in Algeria, who develops *Fratelli Tutti* within his own context. (c.f. attachments). I wonder how each one of us would express the message of *Fratelli Tutti* within our own experience of living with brokenness?



We Marists have our own particular way of responding to this Gospel demand to bring healing to our broken world. We look to Mary herself, whose Name is Holy, as we celebrate this September 12. This feast invites all of us who bear Mary's Name to know and welcome everyone by his or her special name. Each person we meet has a unique story to tell and each is called to be a holy son or daughter of God. We breath the Spirit of Mary's Holy Name when we encounter respectfully and warmly our brothers and sisters, learning their names and sharing in their stories as echoes of the holiness of God.

One special way we Marists are called to heal division in the broken world is by our Marist community lives. Within communities it can be difficult to live with others whom we judge as so different from ourselves. Sometimes we can feel hurt when we believe that we ourselves are treated as being unacceptably "different". We may feel marginalized. When we can live simply, prayerfully and fraternally, even with all our differences between us, then we are a sure sign of hope to a broken world. Among ourselves we might disagree strongly, even angrily, about some things. However, there always remains a deep fraternal respect forged by our shared discipleship in Mary's Name. When our community life is embraced vibrantly, even within all its fragility, it serves as a parable of the healing Reign of God.

Our welcome for everyone within our own communities bears fruit in our lives and ministries, no matter how humble. We reach out to everyone around us but especially to those who are struggling in some way. Like Mary, we know and respect each person with a unique name and call to holiness. We reject those prejudices and harsh judgements which are so divisive and offer a listening ear and a warm welcome. Our own world can be healed by this personal experience of the Kingdom of God.

When we see so much brokenness around and within us we can easily surrender and retreat into our own safety zones. The Fiesta of the Holy Name calls us to go out and encounter our sisters and brothers, especially those who are struggling, seeing in each of them a reflection of the holiness of Mary. Just as her name is holy so we Marists call each person to healing and holiness by his or her unique name.

Marists are inspired by the beautiful image of Mary gathering the first disciples together in all their rich diversity so that they become "one in mind and in heart". Our Marist community lives and our ministries reflect the same image of Mary calling people to healing and the fulness of life in all our differences.

Reflection Question: "To choose Mary's name is to enter into a special relationship with her..." (C.15). For us as Marists, how can this "special relationship" bring hope and healing to our broken world?

A blessed feast of the Holy Name of Mary!

John Larsen s.m.