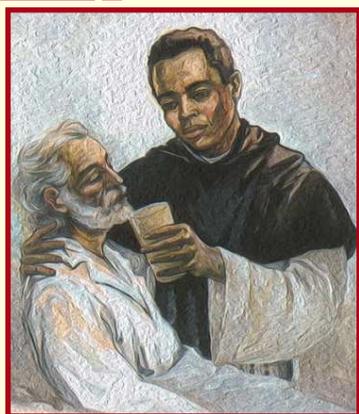


Reflection from the Superior General

Recently I was in Peru. I witnessed first-hand the lives of just four of our confreres who, rather isolated, are missioned in Lima. They work with our wider Marist family to serve in two schools and one parish. I found their welcome, their enthusiasm for mission and their community life together, inspiring.

At the same time, I learned of our recent Marist history when there were considerably more confreres in Peru and Venezuela ministering in many more ministries. We visited and prayed at two cemeteries where several confreres are buried. Would these deceased Marists have been disappointed that so many good works in different parts of Peru and Venezuela are now apparently reduced to the efforts of one small community of four confreres - and their companions-in-mission - in one single place in Lima? In terms of "Marist works", in Peru and beyond, we are much reduced from former times. Important as our work may be, Marist life is so much deeper and more significant than simply what we do.



St. Martin de Porres
Peruvian Saint

More fundamental than the extent of our works is the depth of our appropriation of our Marist Charism. We serve people most fundamentally because we have been called by Mary to follow her Son as she did. Our Charism is a "gracious call" from Mary "to bear her Name". To be authentic, all our activity needs to be enlightened and motivated by our Charism. Furthermore, for us as Marist Religious, this Charism thrives when we are living simply and prayerfully, in robust and fraternal communities, sharing everything together - our lives, our faith, our time and possessions, our money and our prayer.

More fundamental, too, than any of the particular work that may we undertake is our call at Baptism and Marist Profession to be truly missionary. (Constitution 12). We are all called to be missionary, as God – Father, Son and Spirit – is missionary. "To form a communion for mission we need to deepen the contemplative dimension of our lives. With Jesus at the centre we can, like Mary, be missionaries of hope". (GC 2017, 30)

Our particular Marist works are simply expressions of the deeper reality of our Marist Charism and of our Marist Profession, rooted in Baptism, which calls us to be missionary. Our works are "successful" to the extent that they express our Marist Charism – lived in the reality of our daily Marist lives – and that they are truly missionary. If there is good work, but it is not obviously in line with our charism, then it is time to encourage other competent people to undertake that work. If it is good work, but hardly evangelizing in the Gospel sense, then we are best to leave it to other people.

We need to discern the future of each of our ministries under the guiding lights of our Charism and Mission as consecrated Marists living prayerfully in community. Surely it will be time to let go of some works even if they were outstandingly "successful" in their day. This is call for wisdom, detachment and flexibility.

In Peru and Venezuela there are other people who are doing most of the works that were once "ours". Yet our charism and mission are still flourishing in the simple lives and ministries of our Marist family there, and also, in a special way, among Lay Marists who carry on the best tradition of our Marist Charism and Mission.

John Larsen s.m.

Note: The world media is dominated at this time by the news of the spread of the Corona virus. This is the Lenten season, a time to slow down and trust in the Lord more deliberately. Let's especially remember and care for our aged or fragile confreres - and people whom we serve - who may feel isolated and vulnerable right now. Every blessing for this anxious time.