

Reflection from the Superior General

Four of our young confreres are making their Perpetual Professions this Saturday, October 2, here in Rome. This commitment would be incomprehensible to many people in our world today and some might call it reckless. However, the testimony of many of our senior confreres would give encouragement to these young men. Last week in Spain I heard many stories from our senior confreres. Mostly, they are full of enthusiasm, joy and generosity. Also, while I was in Spain I heard the story of one of our seminarians from Cameroon who was living in the community of Sahagún for his summer mission-immersion. The time came for him to renew his temporary vows. Most of the confreres from that region of Spain had not witnessed a renewal of vows for decades. They rejoiced to be able to participate. Our young confrere also rejoiced in so much support from his seniors.

Both the Professions and the personal testimonies of so many of our senior confreres would challenge each of us to ask how to grow graciously in our vowed commitment through the years.

Our commitment grows when we are grateful for our personal call to live our beautiful Marist charism, both simple and profound. Like Mary before us, we live immersed in the lives of ordinary people. Like Mary, our Spirit-led lives are hidden in the ordinariness of everyday life and incarnate the Good News.

We are grateful to be called to such a way of life and invite others to share in it with gratitude and joy.

Our Marist commitment flourishes when we keep open, flexible and available. It is challenging to embrace joyfully whatever may be asked of us. This can become even more difficult as the years pass by and we are more settled into our comfortable ways. Spiritual poverty involves abandoning everything into the hands of God and being prepared, again and again, to risk leaving behind the shallows and setting out into the deep. This is the profound inner poverty that we celebrate

with the Church this October 4, on the feast of Saint Francis of Assisi.

Some confreres may believe: "I am past the stage of talking about "setting out into the deep". I have finished with all that". These confreres will be encouraged by the patroness of the missionary Church, Saint Therese, whose feast day we celebrate today. She was totally confined to her monastery and suffered greatly both spiritually and physically but she grew in her commitment to her missionary vocation which was always "to be love at the heart of the church".

Community life, lived well, supports our commitment. If one of us goes alone he may be faster, more efficient and productive. He may even be a star. However, when we journey together we can go further because we can rely on each other for support and encouragement both when we are struggling and also when we are excelling. Good communication is essential for this ministry of encouragement.

All of us struggle sometimes with keeping our commitment to our Marist way of life. Sometimes we fail, even badly, and we can lose our direction and our energy. It may seem hopeless to endure. This is the time to return to "the new and eternal covenant" that we remember at each Eucharist. Our faithfulness is a response to our faithful God. It would be reckless to be committing ourselves with perpetual vows if we depended only on our own resources. We are called to an ongoing conversion to trust in God who calls us day by day, year by year, and accompanies us on the journey.

Next month, on November 15, we begin one year, 2021 – 2022, dedicated for vocations to the Marist way of life. It is a time for us to deepen our own Marist commitment and invite others to share our lives.

Question: What encourages or discourages me/us to grow in my/our Marist commitment? Does anything need to change?

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