

Reflection from the Superior General

A few days ago the Supreme Court in the USA ruled that no citizen has a constitutional right to an abortion. The ruling has caused an uproar. Whatever any court ruling may decide, wise Christian teaching always molds minds and hearts, starting with our own, that are committed to care for human life in all its forms and especially for life when it is most vulnerable. We Marists have our own small but important role to play in forming consciences that choose life over death.

From our earliest days our Founders called us to commit ourselves to being disciples of Christ by living the life of Mary simply and discreetly. We are to “breathe her spirit ... to think as Mary, judge as Mary, feel and act as Mary in all things”. (Const. 228). Mary’s presence, as the Mother of God, is life-giving. We share in her vocation to nurture life by our Marist commitment. This July 23 we remember the first young men who made this commitment at Fourvière. We walk in their footsteps.



Like Mary, the Mother of God, we nurture all life, especially when most vulnerable, as she cared for her Son “through whom all things were created”. (Jn. 1:3). Constant personal renewal keeps us focused to live our Marist charism without compromise. We do this daily by our commitment to the Liturgy of the Eucharist – “the bread and wine of life” – and to the Hours, by our daily sacred hour of personal prayer, by our spiritual reading and theological study and by our prayerful devotion to Mary, especially by praying the rosary. Our enthusiasm for our vocation, constantly renewed, is infectious and attractive to others.

When we say “yes” to the Word of God we also say “yes” to responding with compassionate love to the needs of all our sisters and brothers, especially the most needy – whether it is a mother who is pregnant in very difficult circumstances, or to people struggling on the margins of society or simply to our confreres battling with their own demons. Sometimes compassion needs to start with our own weaknesses, abandoning ourselves to God’s mercy and love and confronting honestly and bravely (and, sometimes, professionally) whatever is damaging our graced vocation to thrive as Marists.

Our Society of Mary, too, is called to constant renewal for new life to flourish. We look around us and ask honestly “what gives us life as Marists and where are we most giving life to others?” and also “what may be stifling the life of the Spirit?” “Choose life then!” (Deut. 30:19) Our commitment to choose new life, ahead of the simply comfortable and the familiar, demands courageous decisions. I am writing this reflection from the District of South America where our confreres in Brazil have bravely discerned that, for the sake of a more dynamic Marist community, missionary and formation commitment they would make some very difficult decisions. There is a new vibrancy in the District.

The search for life-giving renewal within the Society will include seeking the wisdom of our senior confreres, acquired over years of faithful Marist commitment to prayer and ministry. Often, in their old age, these confreres can see “the one thing necessary” much more clearly than those of us who are caught up in the tyranny of the next urgent demand.

When we commit ourselves to nurturing graced life in our world, like Mary before us, we also hear the “cry of the land” and we resolve to live with an ecological sensitivity that cares for creation as a sacramental revelation of God’s life and rejects projects which destroy his image in the world.

This July 23 we celebrate Fourvière Day in the tradition of our Founders who committed themselves to live Mary’s life in our Church and in our world. Our Marian charism is hopeful and life-giving. Let’s prepare well for Fourvière Day with more intense prayer and, on July 23, gratefully renew our vows.

John Larsen s.m.