

Reflection from the Superior General

Formation for Marist life and mission can sometimes seem a rather exotic ministry within the Society of Mary. We can come to believe the ministry of formation is best reserved to just a few “experts”. Some of our confreres have not witnessed a Profession Ceremony for years and we can feel remote from the formation communities when so much formation is “off-shore”.

Yet “formation” is a ministry that vitally involves each one of us in our different ways.

A commitment to formation begins with accepting responsibility for our own on-going formation, striving to keep updated theologically and spiritually, rather than becoming like salt that loses its taste.

There are many on-going formation programmes available, whether on-line, or with physical presence. Our confreres have been going to EAPI in Manila for years, for example. The Society has also offered several programmes over these recent months including the “formation for formators” programme here in Rome, the Colnian renewal in La Neylière, the Marist Summer Studies programme in Rome and this September there will be the Marist Mission Studies programme in Thailand. We also welcome several Marists every

year to on-going studies at different universities. There is certainly a lot going on. Thanks to all who have been involved in these programmes and to the Superiors who have sponsored them.

We participate in formation when we pray for vocations and for all those in formation. Each community is invited to arrange for one hour of Adoration every Saturday, specifically to pray for vocations.

Hopefully the days are long over when we saw some students as “ours” (concerned only with “our” unit) while “the others” are of more peripheral interest. All our students are preparing to be available for the international mission of the Society and they give

us all great hope for a different but vibrant future. We participate in formation when we show interest and gratitude for the regular news disseminated from our formation communities so as to involve as many of us as possible in this Marist ministry.

It is difficult to find and educate well-formed formators in the Society who are willing and able to dedicate themselves to his demanding ministry over a long period of time. We thank those units that have contributed formators and those who have agreed to undertake this responsibility. One way to show our appreciation is to respect their particular roles and competencies and give them the healthy space they require for their task. When we doubt the wisdom of some of their decisions it is best to discuss our concern fraternally and directly with those responsible for making the decisions.

Internationality is at the heart of the modern formation programmes and serves the evolving international Marist mission. This has involved a lot of our young confreres going to different countries and communities for wider inter-cultural experience and improving language skills. Thank you to the many host communities who so warmly and generously welcome these younger Marists from far away.

Formation involves the wider Marist family, too. It was a joy to participate recently in the Young Marist Gathering in Lisbon, Portugal, the week prior to Pope Francis’ arrival there, along with more than two hundred young people celebrating their participation in the wider Marist Family. The call for formation includes the wider Marist family, especially our lay sisters and brothers.

In October the European Province is sponsoring an Education Forum in Toulon for Marists – Lay and Religious – with a focus on forming people to hand on our Marist tradition in education. Whatever our ministry we are all called to form Lay Partners in mission and to be formed to be Marists who collaborate well with each other within the Marist Family for the sake of mission.

Mary, Seat of Wisdom, pray for all of us involved in formation in so many different ways!

Johñ Larsen s.m.

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