

Reflection from the Superior General

Pope Francis' most recent encyclical encourages us to return to the heart: *"our heart is the ultimate judge of who we truly are. It is the basis for any sound life project; nothing worthwhile can be undertaken apart from the heart. False appearances and untruths ultimately leave us empty-handed"*. (Dilexit nos, 6).

November can be a month for each of us to return to the heart of Marist Religious Life and letting go any "false appearances or untruths, leaving us empty-handed". (What might they be?)

Today is All Saints and tomorrow we celebrate All Souls, both feasts calling us to profound holiness. The heart of religious life is our relationship with Jesus Christ, nourished by personal, communal and liturgical

prayer and the Sacraments. We build our personal and communal asceticism around a healthy discipline of daily prayer, which is our search for the living God, the expression of our faith. I was struck last Sunday at the Ordination here in Rome of six young Marist deacons when each one of our young confreres committed himself loudly and generously to pray the Prayer of the Church every day for the rest of his life. Most of us have made the same commitment. Fr. Jean-Claude: "The Spirit of Mary is something most delicate and most profound, obtained only through sustained meditation and prayer".

On November 15 we celebrate the death anniversary of Fr. Jean-Claude, our Venerable Founder. The sub-text of Fr. Justin Taylor's wonderful biography, "Reluctant Founder", is Fr. Jean-Claude's outstanding faithfulness to his own calling as a Founder and as a Marist, in spite of his reluctance. The heart of Marist religious life involves this same faithfulness to our Marist vocation, day after day, decade after decade. We are called to be faithful to our vows and to our charism and to the Church. However, much of our faithfulness will be expressed very simply. Faithfulness involves all the small decisions around living simply and poorly, prayerfully, and with kindness and generosity, in the heart of the community. When we have been unfaithful, we seek reconciliation from God and anyone we may have offended, relying on God's mercy, and start again. Religious life is a marathon rather than a sprint.

Our communities may choose to honour Fr. Jean-Claude in a special way this November, perhaps with a novena. There is an abundance of material available to help us, including on the website: www.jeanclaudecolin.org. This website is well worth a visit.

On November 24 we celebrate the Feast of Christ the King. Our king is crowned with thorns. The open wound of our king exposes a heart pierced for love of all his people. The heart of religious life will bring us to the heart of God and the heart of the people, especially the most wounded among us. Marist mission can be as simple as opening our own hearts to those around us, especially those who are most wounded, and responding with love and compassion, as Mary has responded before us. Sometimes those suffering most may be our own confreres right next door. We bring those who are suffering the healing of God's grace and salvation in human "signs" that mediate the divine. We believe we will be able to say "my lord and my God" only when we touch the wounds of our brothers and sisters. (Jn. 20:24 –29).

When we return to the heart of religious and priestly life our own hearts become joyful, attracting those around us with our welcome. Let's be praying for vocations. As so many times before, I am asking each of our communities to pray for vocations through Mary's intercession during every Saturday Eucharist and to dedicate one hour of prayer every week (ideally on Saturday, also) for vocations.

A blessed November, when we are invited to re-commit ourselves to the heart of our Marist vocation.

Fraternally, in Mary's Name .

John Larsen s.m.

