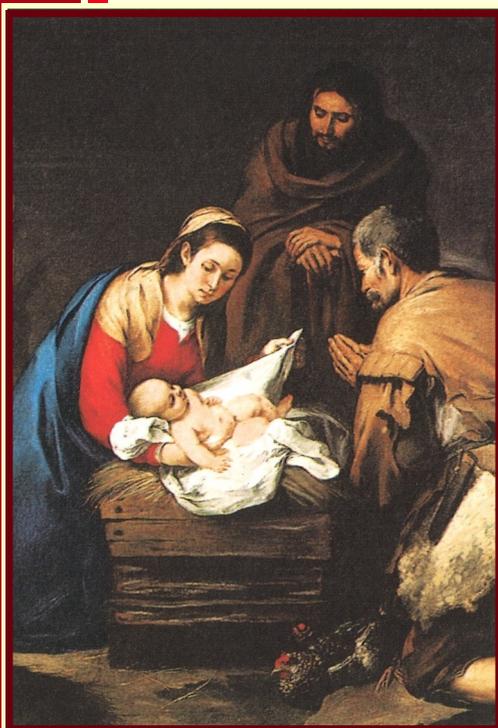


Reflection from the Superior General

Rome, 1st Sunday of Advent

The Light of the Christ-child, who brings joy to a darkened world, illumines the Word of God and the Liturgies of Advent and Christmas. Marists celebrating Christmas in the South enjoy the long summer days, while Marists near the equator relish the heat of the sun, and Marists in the North enjoy the lights shining out through the long, dark nights of the winter months.

Mary is the woman, *par excellence*, who, through her faith, brought joy to the world with the birth of her Son, the Saviour, the light shining in the darkness. We Marists share Mary's vocation, proclaiming the Lord whom we know by faith, and so bring the joy of the Gospel wherever we find ourselves in our world. How to deepen our sharing in Mary's vocation over Advent and Christmas?



One of the remarkable (and perhaps unexpected) challenges that arose from our recent General Chapter was the clarion call for all Marists to live a life of contemplation.

Contemplation as the energy source, the mystical heart of Marist mission, is intimately linked with our identity as Marist religious. 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. (2017 General Chapter, 30).

Ours is not a monastic vocation but a call to a deeply contemplative life bearing fruit in mission. Whether Marists are feeling the aches and pains of ageing or, like Fr. Orlando Rojas sm in Peru just ordained, or like the novices presently preparing for First Profession in January in Davao, we share this same Marist vocation.

As Mary pondered the Word, so are we called to a life of contemplation, centered on the Eucharist, bearing fruit in service within the Church and beyond. (General Chapter, 4)

One of the especially challenging decisions of this Chapter was:

Marists are recommended to spend one hour in private prayer each day. (General Chapter, 32)

This is a welcome challenge that can lead to a renewal of our vocation to be Marist missionaries of the light and joy of the Christ child, both in this Season and throughout the year.

Long ago Craig Larkin introduced me to this story from the desert. It speaks of light and contemplative prayer:

Abba Lot went to see Abba Joseph and said to him: "Abba, as far as I can I say my little Office, I fast a little, I pray and meditate, I live in peace as far as I can, I purify my thoughts. What else can I do?" Then the old man stood up and stretched out his hands towards heaven. His fingers became like ten lamps of fire and he said to him: "If you will, you can become all flame."

A blessed, joyful Advent and Christmas to each confrere wherever you may be!

John Larsen s.m.